

## THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN THE DUTCH SCOUT MOVEMENT (1911-1973)<sup>1</sup>

If a Dutch Boy Scout today were asked, which religious backgrounds the game of Scouting has, he would probably look puzzled and might then guess that Scouting has nothing to do with religion at all. In that case, one can only wonder why about fifty Dutch Scout groups participated in the ‘Peace Light from Bethlehem’ program in 2015<sup>2</sup>—an event with abundant Christian symbolism, directly connected to local parish churches. In many European countries, it is common for Scouts to be members of religion-based organizations. The Scout leadership in, for example, Belgium or Austria until recently attached value to the epithet ‘Catholic’. Even though the Dutch Scout Movement is apparently ‘the odd one out’ in this respect nowadays, it has a history of long-running debates about the role of religion as a central element in Scout associations. Much of the history of Scouting in the Netherlands can be analyzed in the context of the changing role of religion in Dutch society.<sup>3</sup>

Religion traditionally played an important role in the Netherlands. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, religious communities had regained

<sup>1</sup> We would like to thank Scouting Nederland for its kind permission to study its and its predecessors’ archives, Mrs. Adri Saltzherr from the Scouting Museum in Baarn for her cooperation, and two anonymous referees for their helpful suggestions.

<sup>2</sup> Figure according to the Vredeslicht Nederland organising committee; cf. <http://www.vredeslicht.nl/index.php/Utrecht/deelnemers-manifestatie-utrecht-2015>.

<sup>3</sup> Research on the history of Scouting in the Netherlands is confined to the following works: Willem J.M. DINGS and Marco de GREEF, *Katholieken en het spel van verkennen: Van RKP tot Scouting Nederland, 1912-1973* (undergraduate thesis), Nijmegen, 1986; E.H. EDINGA, *Op zoek naar het rechte spoor. De beginjaren van de Padvindersbeweging in Nederland* (undergraduate thesis), Groningen, 1976; Jan VAN DER STEEN, *Padvinders. 100 jaar scouting in Nederland*, Zutphen, 2010

influence in politics and society all over Europe.<sup>4</sup> According to the 1909 population census, 95 per cent of the Dutch population were members of a religious denomination.<sup>5</sup> The so-called ‘pillarization’, suggesting that these communities, disposing of their own political parties, Churches, civil society organizations, newspapers, et cetera, were completely isolated and disciplined, has been a subject of scientific debate in recent years.<sup>6</sup> This leads to the question of how the Scout Movement, a new and initially not religiously-defined organization, was introduced to this new national context. Why did several different Scout associations come into existence between 1911 and the Second World War? How did the role of religion change in such a way, that different Scout Movements merged in 1973?

Even though the Netherlands can be considered to have been a ‘pillarizing’ country at the time when the Scout Movement was introduced, the development was opposed from the start. Liberal intellectuals and politicians feared that the subdivision of society into religious communities could endanger national unity. Therefore, they welcomed and favored the development of Scouting and other nationalist organizations, which promised to instill good citizenship and patriotism in Dutch youth.<sup>7</sup> However, as will be shown below, the question of religion became strongly contested in these first liberal, denominationally ‘neutral’ Scout organizations. Even this allegedly ‘neutral’ liberal community, boasting an education in citizenship and patriotism, was disinclined to consider religion a purely private matter. Besides, Scouting did

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Olaf BLASCHKE, *Der “Dämon des Konfessionalismus”. Einführende Überlegungen*, in ID. (ed.), *Konfessionen im Konflikt. Deutschland zwischen 1800 und 1970: ein zweites konfessionelles Zeitalter*, Göttingen, 2002, p. 13-69; Hugh McLEOD, *Religion and the People of Western Europe 1789-1989*, Oxford, 1997, p. 13-22, 36-38; Peter van ROODEN, *Religieuze regimes. Over godsdienst en maatschappij in Nederland, 1570-1990*, Amsterdam, 1996, p. 27-45.

<sup>5</sup> *Volkstelling 1909*, <http://www.volkstelling.nl/nl/volkstelling/jaarview/1909/index.html> (12 August 2014).

<sup>6</sup> Johan Cornelis Hendrik BLOM and Jaap TALSMA (eds.), *De verzuiling voorbij: godsdienst, stand en natie in de lange negentiende eeuw*, Amsterdam, 2000; Peter VAN DAM, *Staat van verzuiling. Over een Nederlandse mythe*, Amsterdam, 2011, p. 47-120; Piet de ROOY, *Zes studies over verzuiling*, in *Bijdragen en Mededelingen betreffende de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden* (hereafter *BMGN-LCHR*), 110 (1995), p. 391-392.

<sup>7</sup> Henk te VELDE, *Gemeenschapszin en plichtsbesef. Liberalisme en nationalisme in Nederland, 1870-1918*, 's-Gravenhage, 1992, p. 220-223.

not remain a strictly liberal project and spread to the other ‘pillars’. Scout troops with an explicitly Protestant or Catholic background emerged and achieved a special organizational status.

For several decades, Dutch Scouting was divided into several religiously defined associations, until Catholic and Protestant views on the role of religion in society started to change radically. During the Sixties, a gradual rapprochement took place, leading towards the merger of the different movements in 1973. The new association *Scouting Nederland* was one of the very first associations in the Netherlands to abandon its ‘pillarized’ past and unite all Scout troops in the Netherlands irrespective of their religious background.

The convergence of these ‘pillarized’ associations links closely to an intensively debated question in Dutch historiography about ‘pillarization’ and ‘depillarization’. Prominent Dutch and Belgian scientists called for a broader, international perspective, using the concept of ‘pillarization’ as a basis for comparison between the Netherlands and models of society organization in other European countries.<sup>8</sup> Drawing on sociological concepts, the historian Peter van Dam prefers the notion of ‘heavy’ and ‘light’ communities to describe the gradual transformation of Dutch society. ‘Heavy communities’ are characterized by a strong, disciplined internal and ideological coherence, mobilizing their members and claiming their allegiance in all or most aspects of social life. A too narrow focus on the disruption of ‘heavy communities’, the process known as ‘depillarization’ in the Sixties and Seventies, often obscures the fact that religious communities continued to exist as ‘light communities’, based on a voluntary, open, and non-exclusive kind of membership. This explains why religious ideas and traditions were all but abandoned after the ‘depillariza-

<sup>8</sup> Maarten VAN GINDERACHTER and Minte KAMPHUIS, *The Transnational Dimensions of the Early Socialist Pillars in Belgium and the Netherlands, c. 1885-1914: An Exploratory Essay*, in *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire*, 90 (2012), p. 1321-1337; Staf HELLEMANS, *Strijd om de moderniteit. Sociale bewegingen en verzuiling in Europa sinds 1800*, Leuven, 1990; Hans RIGHART, *De katholieke zuil in Europa. Een vergelijkend onderzoek naar het ontstaan van verzuiling onder katholieken in Oostenrijk, Zwitserland, België en Nederland*, Meppel, 1986; Henk te VELDE, *Inleiding. De internationalisering van de nationale geschiedenis en de verzuiling*, in *BMGN-LCHR*, 124 (2009), p. 499-514.

tion' period.<sup>9</sup> However, this approach does not explain how and why the transition process to a 'light community' was triggered in the Sixties. Recent contributions have returned to the level of individual historical actors, their decisions and mutual relations, and focus on the changing relationship between actors and institutions, and on discussions about the importance of religion within the respective pillars.<sup>10</sup> Last, but not least, the debates in the Dutch Scout Movement before the merger and the actual role of religion within the association *Scouting Nederland* after 1973 touch upon the emergence of Dutch society as a highly individualized and secularized society.<sup>11</sup>

In order to trace the role of religion in the Dutch Scout Movement, we used internal debates and discussions as found in archive documents and the associations' own journals. Because the contributions to these discussions made at the time reflect the thoughts and considerations of contemporary actors, these sources are slightly more reliable than statements from the present with the knowledge gained from hindsight. Two important discussions could be identified within this broader theme of the role of religion. The first debate revolved around the religious character of the Scout oath and the reference to God during the Scout's installation ceremony. The second discussion, particularly relevant for the Catholic Scout Movement, was dominated by the implicit question of whether it was necessary or appropriate to have a separate Catholic movement. Although the debates of the Dutch Girl Guide associations about the role of religion partly mirrored

<sup>9</sup> Peter VAN DAM, *Een wankel verloog. Over ontzuiling als karikatuur*, in *BMGN-LCHR*, 126 (2011), p. 52-77; VAN DAM, *Staat van verzuiling...* [see n. 6], p. 75-100.

<sup>10</sup> Maarten VAN DEN BOS, *Verlangen naar vernieuwing. Nederlands katholicisme 1953-2003*, Amsterdam, 2012; George HARINCK and Paul VAN TRIGT (eds.), *"In de vergifkast?" Protestantse organisaties tussen kerk en wereld*, Zoetermeer, 2013.

<sup>11</sup> Anton van HARSKAMP, *Simply astounding. Ongoing secularization in the Netherlands?*, in Erik SENIGERS (ed.), *The Dutch and their gods. Secularization and transformation of religion in the Netherlands since 1950*, Hilversum, 2005, p. 43-57; James Carleton KENNEDY, *Recent Dutch religious history and the limits of secularization*, in SENIGERS (ed.), *The Dutch and their gods*, p. 27-42. For an international perspective: Patrick PASTURE, *Religion in Contemporary Europe: Contrasting Perceptions and Dynamics*, in *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, 29 (2009), p. 319-350.

those of the Boy Scouts and definitely deserve consideration, the abundance of source material let us decide to leave these developments for future research. Whereas Protestant troops and associations and their development will be addressed in general terms, the Catholic Scout organizations will be scrutinized more closely. Comparisons to the Belgian context are drawn where a glance at the neighboring country is useful to elucidate the social, cultural, and religious processes taking place, and to place them in a European perspective.

### Religion as a (dis)integrating force

Scouting was embraced in the Netherlands with the same educational objectives as in the country of origin, England. Lord Robert Baden-Powell (hereafter: BP) (1857-1941) published his highly influential *Scouting for Boys* in 1908.<sup>12</sup> He drew from his military experience and alternated adventurous army stories with practical advice about outdoor life and scouting techniques. The book was full of ethical directives; BP seized every opportunity to stress the necessity of actively incorporating certain virtues into Scouting. To him, Scouting was not an end in itself but a game designed to raise good citizens. Unleashed by *Scouting for boys* and with its pedagogical mission as a catalyst, the game of Scouting was institutionalized as an international youth movement in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>13</sup> The international and national headquarters regularly communicated that this movement was open to all boys, whatever their religious or political denomination. Although Scouting was in this sense destined to bridge denominational differences, it was never a 'neutral' youth movement.<sup>14</sup> Especially the urban youth was to be protected against alcoholism, socialism and, for the sake of religious virtues, atheism. Another major reason for the popularity of the game was the central importance of nationalism. In the ethos and practice of Scouting, boys could get the feeling that they were

<sup>12</sup> Robert BADEN-POWELL, *Scouting for Boys. A Handbook for Instruction in Good Citizenship*, Oxford, 2004 (reprint of the 1908 original).

<sup>13</sup> THE SCOUT ASSOCIATION, *An Official History of Scouting*, London, 2006, p. 170-173.

<sup>14</sup> Michael ROSENTHAL, *The Character Factory. Baden-Powell and the Origins of the Boy Scout Movement*, New York, 1984, p. 280-281.

doing something good for their country.<sup>15</sup> In the instable international atmosphere at the turn of the century, in which the threat of war was always imminent, Scouting could instill a sense of national belonging and of duty in boys.

The discourse of moral decline, the attempts to prevent this, and a sense of urgency were also present in Dutch society. Based on the British example, Scouting was seen as a practical instrument to suit the action to the word. Its organization was built up by the middle classes. Early leaders were often teachers, small businessmen or office employees. They were backed by members of the upper middle class; local boards and committees were filled with directors, professors and local governors who shared a liberal world view. Support was offered by publicists who introduced BP's ideas to a broader audience through books and newspapers.<sup>16</sup> One of them was the journalist Gos de Vogt from Amsterdam. After a visit to England, where he became acquainted with the game, he shared his enthusiasm for Scouting in the *Telegraaf*. Another publicist was W.J. van Hoytema, who wrote the book *Op! Hollandsche jongens naar buiten!*

With Gos de Vogt in a leading role, the first association was founded in 1911. It was called the *Nederlandsche Padvindere Organisatie* (NPO). The organization strived for a close copy of the British example, including the way in which new members were sworn in. The installation ceremony served as a rite of passage. The boy would have to raise his right hand next to his shoulder, bring his little finger and thumb together and raise the three remaining fingers. Then, the Scout Promise was read out loud by one of the Scoutmasters and repeated solemnly by the prospective Scout. In the same manner in which medieval knights had had to swear their loyalty to God and the King, Scouts had to swear an oath in order to belong to the fraternity of Scouting.<sup>17</sup> In his *Scouting for Boys*, BP proposed the following oath:

<sup>15</sup> Robert H. MACDONALD, *Sons of the empire. The frontier and the Boy Scout Movement, 1890-1918*, Toronto 1993; Sam PRYKE, *The popularity of nationalism in the early British Scout Movement*, in *Social History*, 23 (1998), p. 309-324; Allen WARREN, *Sir Robert Baden-Powell, the Scout Movement and Citizen Training in Great Britain, 1900-1920*, in *The English Historical Review*, 101 (1986), p. 376-398.

<sup>16</sup> VAN DER STEEN, *75 Jaar Scouting in Nederland*, Zaltbommel, 1985, p. 12-14.

<sup>17</sup> BADEN-POWELL, *Scouting...* [see n. 12], p. 22-23, 36-37.

‘On my honor I promise that –

1. I will do my duty to God and the King
2. I will do my best to help others, whatever it costs me
3. I know the scout law, and will obey it’<sup>18</sup>

In opposition to the religious character of this oath, an alternative organization was founded in 1912. The *Nederlandsche Padvindere Bond* (NPB) counted Van Hoytema among its members and rejected the British oath. Leaders of the *Bond* emphasized the open character of Scouting. In their opinion, a compulsory oath to God would exclude those boys who held no religion at all. The discord between the NPO and the NPB reflects disagreement within the liberal community in the Netherlands. The existing liberal tradition, with its emphasis on individual freedom, was complemented by the increasingly popular ideal of national unity in a bid to counter emerging “demoralization” and the disintegration of society into separate pillars.<sup>19</sup> With reference to the ideal of freedom, some liberals rejected the oath’s mandatory and religious character. Despite their enthusiasm for BP’s innovative game, they found the religious character of his installation ceremony incompatible with the Dutch tradition of religious freedom.<sup>20</sup> The discourse of discipline and national unity, on the other hand, caused others to favour one unitary formula. This would both respect Dutch religious traditions and protect the Scout Movement and Dutch society from fragmentation and demoralization.

The introduction of the Scout Movement in Belgium after 1910 faced similar issues and problems. The movement was endorsed by a liberal, nationalist elite, concentrated in Brussels and Antwerp and with close connections to the army. The direct appeal to BP’s own method was countered by pleas to develop a youth movement adapted to Belgian circumstances and national traditions. The reference to God in the Scout Promise was initially omitted and only added as an option in 1911. The dominant liberal-Catholic antagonism on a political and cultural level and the

<sup>18</sup> BADEN-POWELL, *Scouting...* [see n. 12], p. 36.

<sup>19</sup> TE VELDE, *Gemeenschapszin.....* [see n. 7], p. 272.

<sup>20</sup> In 1912 and 1913, the NPB expressed its views in the weekly journal *De Nederlandse Padvinder*, of which some numbers prevailed and are accessible in the Scouting Museum in Baarn.

upcoming Flemish nationalism were the main reasons for contention within Belgian Scouting in the interwar period.<sup>21</sup>

During the First World War, when the pressure for national unity and cooperation was omnipresent in the Netherlands, both sides reached a compromise on their fundamental conflicts. The *Bond* and the *Organisatie* merged in 1915 to become the *Nederlandsche Padvindere Vereniging* (NPV).<sup>22</sup> A new, two-pronged Scout Promise, which left the decision to involve God to the groups themselves, became the new compromise. The first Scout Promise translates as 'I solemnly promise to do my duty to God, the Queen and the Country'. The second one translates as 'I solemnly promise to be a good Dutch boy'.<sup>23</sup>

The importance given to the religious issue was connected to tensions within the liberal milieu, and, as a consequence, to the Movement's struggle to position itself within society. By accepting all boys, regardless of their religion or political conviction, Scouting set itself apart from the Christian youth organizations and the socialist youth movement. The Scout Movement wanted to convey principles devoid of specific religious or political ideologies. Instead, their aim was to improve characters: Scouting was to make boys into healthy, responsible and law-abiding young men. These ideals were frustrated, according to some, by the two-pronged Scout Promise.<sup>24</sup> A national board member, A. Slingervoet Ramondt, described the discomfort over the dual promise fittingly at a Scoutmaster meeting in 1920: Because of the two-pronged promise, 'the ceremony for admittance into the

<sup>21</sup> Eddy LOUCHEZ, "De notre mieux - toujours prêt - à servir". *La genèse du scoutisme en Belgique, 1910-1929*, in Françoise ROSART and Thierry SCAILLET (eds.), *Entre jeux et enjeux. Mouvements de jeunesse catholiques en Belgique, 1910-1940*, Louvain-la-Neuve, 2002, p. 83-110; Thierry SCAILLET, *La Fédération des Scouts Catholiques. Naissance et développement du scoutisme catholique en Belgique francophone (1912-1940)*, in Gérard CHOLVY (ed.), *Le scoutisme. Un mouvement d'éducation au XX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Montpellier, 2002, p. 57-73; Maurice DE VROEDE, *Les structures du scoutisme en Belgique vers 1920*, in Gérard CHOLVY (ed.), *Mouvements de jeunesse chrétiens et juifs. Sociabilité juvénile dans un cadre européen, 1799-1968*, Paris, 1985, p. 179-185.

<sup>22</sup> EDINGA, *Op zoek...* [see n. 3], p. 37-38.

<sup>23</sup> NIJMEGEN, KATHOLIEK DOCUMENTATIE CENTRUM (hereafter KDC), *De Nederlandse Padvindere* (hereafter NPV), 333, J.H. GERRITSEN, *Historische schetsen betreffende de Padvinderebelofte*.

<sup>24</sup> *Geestelijk wakker, zedelijk sterk, lichamelijk gezond*, in *Hel Leidersblad*, 6 (1922), p. 19.

group has become half-hearted and ambivalent, and the older, experienced Scout will have beneath him a fundament, that is not firm and solid, but one that is, due to overarching, threatening to fall apart'.<sup>25</sup> But bearing in mind the fierce debates between 1911 and 1915, the board did not dare attempt to alter the two-pronged promise. It understood that enforcement of the religious principle could result in a schism. The majority of the Movement was satisfied with the compromise, deeming the Movement's unity more important than the argument over the Scout Promise.

More pronounced viewpoints, however, were taken by its supporters and opponents. For its supporters, the two-pronged nature of the promise meant an admittance of the principled tolerance advocated by Scouting. Scouting was seen as an apolitical, neutral movement, which also welcomed non-religious boys, and so these leaders could not accept the exclusion of atheistic boys from the movement. The supporters had to defend the 1915 compromise against its opponents. That group was not much larger than the group of supporters, but its members held more important positions, and so it was more powerful. One such member was Jan Schaap, Scoutmaster of a group in The Hague and editor in chief of NPV's magazine *Hel Leidersblad*. Schaap defended the real 'Scout spirit' very strongly in the 1920s. He was particularly frustrated by the Scout Promise: by tampering with the religious premise within the Scout Promise, the leadership invited 'ambivalence and half-heartedness into the bosom of the Scout Movement'.<sup>26</sup> Schaap was apparently not religiously motivated, but in his resolute style, he reduced the religious issue to the (rhetorical) question, of whether or not there was a place for atheists within the Scout Movement. His conviction was not confined to religious principles; instead, the Scouting virtues were a kind of religion to him. Therefore he pleaded for a strict translation of the English promise, including its reference to God.

The ardent wish for one promise was connected with the ideal of a strong and undivided movement. The movement should communicate middle- and upper-class values. In the interwar period, religion was still unmistakably part of such values: 'neutral' did

<sup>25</sup> A. SLINGERVOET RAMONDT, *Eenvoud*, in *Hel Leidersblad*, 5 (1921), p. 13-15.

<sup>26</sup> Jan SCHAAP, *Onder het mes*, in *Hel Leidersblad*, 2:16 (15 April 1919), p. 525.

not mean 'non-religious'. Along this line of reasoning, it was quite befitting for a Scout to pledge his allegiance to God. The opponents used BP as another key argument. BP never spoke about his own religion in great detail.<sup>27</sup> But he stressed on different occasions that a Scout needed to be religious. In *Scouting for Boys*, for example, he wrote: 'No man is any good unless he believes in God and obeys His laws. So every Scout should have a religion'.<sup>28</sup> This conviction did not necessarily exclude other monotheistic religions. According to the opponents, this attitude would guarantee the desired pluralism and openness within Scouting.

### Rambonnet's power play

An important measure towards the implementation of the religious element within the Scout Promise was taken in 1927. In that year, the national board decided to reorganize the Movement according to the model described in the booklet *Policy, Organisation and Rules*, printed by the English Boy Scout Association. This model curtailed the power of the general assembly, of which all members were allowed to vote on proposals made by the national board. Instead, the general assembly would be replaced by a board of trustees. J.J. Rambonnet (1856-1943), President of the NPV since 1920, used this English structure to draw more power to the national board. Rambonnet, who had had a career in the military and in politics, was used to centralized power. He was convinced that in order to flourish, an organization needed to be hierarchical. Locally, however, Rambonnet's ideas encountered skepticism. His authoritarian ways estranged many local leaders from the national board. Partly because of this, his first proposal for reorganization was rejected by the general assembly.<sup>29</sup> Rambonnet then gave the association an ultimatum: he stepped down as President of the association and would agree to resume only after the general assembly accepted his proposals for reorganization. The general assembly, however, retained its final say with

<sup>27</sup> TIM JEAL, *The Boy-Man. The Life of Lord Baden-Powell*, New York, 1989, p. 430.

<sup>28</sup> BADEN-POWELL, *Scouting...* [see n. 12], p. 230.

<sup>29</sup> THORWALD EGIDIUS, *Van het Hoofdbestuur*, in *Hel Leidersblad*, 11 (1927), p. 69-71.

regard to the Promise, and the reorganization would be limited to a trial period of five years.<sup>30</sup>

Rambonnet used the trial period to take the next step in resolving the religious issue. The President felt that his fellow board members and the new board of trustees, which he had partly put together himself, were behind him, so in 1932 he bluntly presented a new proposal. This proposal affirmed the changes suggested in 1927 and removed the restrictions on changing the Scout Promise. This meant the board would be able to change the exact nature of the Scout Promise without interference from the general assembly. It was quite obvious that the board would use its authority to introduce the 'duty to God' promise, as Rambonnet had often voiced disapproval over the existing two-pronged Scout Promise. His opponents argued that the English promise was contrary to the Dutch tradition of freedom of religion. But Rambonnet disregarded their criticism. In May 1932, the proposal was passed during a highly tumultuous meeting.<sup>31</sup> As expected, a translation of the English Scout Promise was introduced as the mandatory Scout Promise in the Netherlands.

As a reaction to the national board's power play, part of the association decided to separate itself from the *Nederlandsche Padvindere Vereniging* (NPV). From 1933 onwards, groups from the north, east and west of the country regrouped as *Padvindere Vereniging Nederland* (PVN). As can be seen in table 1, the PVN was far from the largest neutral Scouting association, but it was neither a tiny splinter group. One of its board members was Scoutmaster P.M. Cevaal from Veendam. Cevaal had joined the discussion on the religious issue early on. He was firmly convinced that religious dogmas did not belong in Scouting and should be avoided at all costs.<sup>32</sup> Cevaal's involvement illustrates the fact that the PVN was led by principled leaders.<sup>33</sup> The PVN's geographical concentration in the north and the east of the Neth-

<sup>30</sup> Proceedings General Assembly 18 June 1927, in *Hel Leidersblad* 11 (1927), p. 105-107.

<sup>31</sup> Proceedings General Assembly 29 October 1932, in *Weest Paraat* (hereafter: *WP*), 16 (1932), p. 298-302.

<sup>32</sup> P.M. CEVAAL, *Scouting for Boys*, in *Hel Leidersblad*, 6 (1922), p. 184.

<sup>33</sup> This information was generated from the PVN journal *Waakt* (July 1936), accessible in the GRONINGER ARCHIEVEN, 1276 (*Medusa*), p. 5.

erlands can be explained by the large distance from The Hague and the traditional distrust in these regions of centralized power.

The schism was followed by a period of reconciliation. The year 1937 proved to be a turning point for relations between the two Scout associations. Firstly, because the international Jamboree was organized in the town of Vogelenzang. By initiating a partnership with the NPV, the PVN made sure it was welcomed at the event. And secondly, Rambonnet stepped down as President of the NPV. His unbending character had been the main obstacle to attempts at reconciliation. A compromise with the PVN was eventually reached in 1939. The Scout Promise remained as it was, but an important clause, which did the PVN's principles justice, was added. In this addition, the national board could grant prospective Scouts who did not want to pledge their duty to God an exemption from the 'full' Promise.

Scouts association	Total members
<i>Katholieke Verkenners</i> (KV, Catholic)	5546 <sup>34</sup>
<i>Nederlandse Padvindere Vereniging</i> (NPV, 'neutral', founded 1915)	7160
(including the N.C.V.P. scouts, protestant, founded 1927)	(1767) <sup>35</sup>
<i>Padvindere Vereniging Nederland</i> (PVN, 'neutral', founded 1933)	2100 <sup>36</sup>

Table 1: Membership overview (1934)

### Confessional Scouting organisations

Notwithstanding the unitary ideals within the NPV, it was anything but self-evident for Catholic or Protestant children to join non-confessional or 'neutral' youth organizations. It was out of the question to consign religious education, character development and pastoral care to a religiously uncommitted youth or-

<sup>34</sup> *Jaarverslag over het jaar 1933*, in *De Katholieke Verkennersleider*, 3:5 (May 1934), p. 59-64; Jan BANK, *Katholieke verkenners in de jaren '30. Een natuurlijk religieus reveil in Nederland*, in *Jeugd en samenleving*, 5 (1975), p. 689-707, here: p. 706.

<sup>35</sup> *Jaarverslag 1933*, in *WP*, 18 (1934), 3, p. 43-144; BANK, *Katholieke verkenners...* [see n. 34], p. 706.

<sup>36</sup> GRONINGER ARCHIEVEN, 1276 (Medusa), 9, *Leaflet*. The numbers for the PVN are treated with caution: most likely, registrations for the PVN were not reliable in the second year of the association's existence.

ganization.<sup>37</sup> The first interest in Scouting from Protestant circles was connected to one of the oldest youth movements in the Netherlands, the *Nederlandsch Jongelings Verbond* (NJV), founded in 1853.<sup>38</sup> The NJV's open organizational structure allowed local associations to join and retain their independent status. The so-called *Christelijke Jongemannen Verenigingen* (C.J.M.V.), an association with loose connections to the Dutch Reformed (*Hervormde*) community and with branches in all parts of the Netherlands, operated within the NJV's organization structure. The first Protestant Scout troop was founded in Amsterdam in November 1912 under the auspices of the C.J.M.V., and joined the NPO.<sup>39</sup>

The C.J.M.V. Scout troops were conceived as being open to anyone who wished to play the game of Scouting. However, their Protestant religious background was emphasized by their designation as 'C.J.M.V.-troops and by attention to religious norms and values. Within the NPV, the C.J.M.V. troops formed their own confederative structure in 1927 and were recognized according to their special status in 1935.<sup>40</sup> Until the Dutch Scout Movement was dissolved under German occupation in 1941, the Protestant troops were united in the *Nederlandse Christelijke Vereniging van Padvinders* (N.C.V.P.), connected to the NPV on the basis of a federation. After the Second World War, the so-called X-groups replaced the old N.C.V.P.. The X-groups had their own symbols and badges and committed themselves to their Protestant religious background.

Although Catholic children had shown an interest in the Scout Movement since it was introduced in the Netherlands, the method of Scouting was initially severely distrusted within the Catholic community. Scouting was deemed naturalistic, militaristic or infested with freemasonic ideals.<sup>41</sup> The episcopate, fearing undesir-

<sup>37</sup> Peter SELTEN, *Het apostolaat der jeugd. Katholieke jeugdbewegingen in Nederland 1900-1941*, Amersfoort, 1991, p. 75-135, 187-194.

<sup>38</sup> Ger HARMSSEN, *Blauwe en rode jeugd. Ontstaan, ontwikkeling en teruggang van de Nederlandse jeugdbeweging tussen 1853-1940*, Assen, 1961, p. 22.

<sup>39</sup> EDINGA, *Op zoek...* [see n. 3], p. 41.

<sup>40</sup> *Overeenkomst*, in *WP*, 19 (1935), p. 719-720.

<sup>41</sup> DINGS and DE GREEF, *Katholieken...* [see n. 3], p. 93-96; Antonius Cornelis RAMSELAAR, *Naar de bron*, in *De Katholieke Verkenner*, 9:4 (April 1940), p. 10-12; SELTEN, *Het apostolaat...* [see n. 37], p. 188-194. For the Belgian case: cf. Jean-Jacques GAUTHÉ, *Église, maçonnerie et scoutisme. Jeux de miroirs franco-belges, 1910-1930*, in Thierry SCAILLET and Françoise

able influences, saw no need for the founding of a Catholic Scout organization and regularly communicated its decision on this matter.<sup>42</sup>

The Belgian bishops had equally distrusted the Scout Movement as a liberal attempt to influence youth education, but allowed the founding of Catholic Scout troops as early as 1913. Because of direct contacts with BP during the First World War, the Belgian and French Catholic Scouts played a pioneering role in the establishment of the concept of a 'Catholic Scout Movement', for example when it came to adopting the Jerusalem cross as a symbol, besides BP's fleur-de-lis. Scouting's military repertoire and its strong connection to Belgian army circles, which even prescribed that a Scoutmaster should be familiar with forms of military training, entailed an inherent tension with Catholic religious values and educational ideals, according to which the priest had a more significant position. This tension even brought about a schism in the Belgian Catholic Scout Movement.<sup>43</sup> In 1929, the Catholic Scout Movement even split in a Dutch- and a French-speaking association, united in a federation, as a result of the linguistic conflict in Belgium. In 1937, the Flemish *Vlaams Verbond van Katholieke Scouts* (VVKS) first participated in the Yser pilgrimage, a manifestation of Flemish nationalism.<sup>44</sup>

From 1927 onwards, steps were taken to convince the Dutch episcopate that Scouting was a harmless and potentially genuinely Catholic method of religious youth training. The *Scouts de*

ROSART (eds.), *Scoutisme et guidisme en Belgique et en France. Regards croisés sur l'histoire d'un mouvement de jeunesse*, Louvain-la-Neuve, 2004, p. 11-38.

<sup>42</sup> DINGS and DE GREEF, *Katholieken...* [see n. 3], p. 15-31.

<sup>43</sup> LOUCHEZ, "De notre mieux..." [see n. 21]; Thierry SCAILLET, *Fleur de lys et croix de Jérusalem. L'histoire du scoutisme catholique belge à travers un insigne*, in Jean PIROTTE et al (eds.), *Images et paysages mentaux des 19<sup>e</sup> et 20<sup>e</sup> siècles, de la Wallonie à l'outre-mer*, Louvain-la-Neuve, 2007, p. 19-336; SCAILLET, *La Fédération des Scouts Catholiques...* [see n. 21]; DE VROEDE, *Les structures du scoutisme en Belgique...* [see n. 21], p. 181-183.

<sup>44</sup> Marnix BEYEN, *Op wacht bij het erf. Jeugdbewegingen en historisch besef in Vlaanderen, 1920-1969*, in *Cahiers d'histoire du temps présent*, 8 (2001), p. 31-68 (46); Vic DE DONDER, *Patrouilleleiders komen getreden. Katholieke scouts en gidsen in Vlaanderen*, Antwerpen, 1993, p. 208-211, 224-225; Jacques PERQUY, *Pedagogiek van scouting. Aanpassing aan het katholiek en Vlaams milieu (1910-1940)* (undergraduate thesis), Leuven, 1970.

*France* served as the foreign example for this possibility.<sup>45</sup> In a theme issue of the magazine *Dux* on the topic of Scouting, which was published in April 1928, several clerics expressed their positive view on Scouting. After it turned out that the International Bureau in London would not accept a second Dutch national Scout Movement, an arrangement with the NPV could finally be found. The association *De Katholieke Verkenner* (KV) was founded on 23 April 1930 as a separate and independent association. It was loosely connected to the NPV in a federation. The NPV was to supervise 'technical' matters concerning the Scout method, whereas the Catholic episcopate remained solely responsible in organizational questions and matters of religious education.<sup>46</sup> Although technical training in the Catholic Scout Movement was provided by lay youth leaders, the Scout troops were regularly visited by priests who celebrated Holy Mass, heard confession and provided religious education. In the first phase of the KV's existence, Catholic religious demands even tended to hinder the correct way of playing the game of scouting: because of moral dangers, the episcopate at first forbade outdoor camping. Only at a later stage did the bishops permit camping for Boy Scouts—and for Boy Scouts exclusively—provided it took place under adult supervision and included religious moments.<sup>47</sup> Concerned about the possible immoral effects of Scouting, the bishops imposed a lot of restrictions on scout leaders and chaplains. The latter were not permitted to stay at camp overnight, should always wear a cassock and prevent all too close bodily contact with the

<sup>45</sup> BANK, *Katholieke verkennerij...* [see n. 34], p. 694-697; RAMSELAAR, *Naar de bron...* [see n. 41], p. 13-14.

<sup>46</sup> HAARLEM, NOORD-HOLLANDS ARCHIEF (hereafter NHA), *R.K. bisdom Haarlem*, 1914, B.H. de GROOT and G.J. SUTENS, Letter to the Dutch episcopate, November 1928; NHA, *R.K. bisdom Haarlem*, 1916, Hubert MARTIN, Letter to The Interdiocesane Jeugdcommissie, 23 May 1929; Jean Jacques RAMBONNET, *Op den Uitkijk en Aan het Roer*, in *Het Leidersblad*, 14 (1930), p. 77-78.

<sup>47</sup> NHA, *R.K. bisdom Haarlem*, 1916, Johannes Dominicus Joseph AENGENENT, Concept-notulen der vergadering van 30 Sept. 1930 te 's Hertogenbosch; Gerhard L.W.A. de GEUS, Letter to the Dutch episcopate (May 19, 1930). Cf. KDC, *Katholieke Jeugdbeweging en Katholieke Verkennerbeweging* (hereafter *KJB/KV*), 422, Arnold Frans DIEPEN, Richtlijnen voor kampeeren en bivakkeeren; het lezen van de H. Mis en jurisdictie voor de begeleidende priesters. Aldus vastgesteld in de vergadering van het Hoogwaardig Nederlandsch Episcopaat te 's-Hertogenbosch, 27 September 1939.

Boy Scouts. They should above all ‘beware to undress themselves even partially in the boys’ presence, *a fortiori* not go swimming with the boys, and not participate in a Scouts camp abroad, unless with the bishop’s permission.’<sup>48</sup> After the Second World War, the bishops still held to these prescriptions. They argued that ‘our people expect this’.<sup>49</sup>

The organizational structure of the Dutch Scout Movement seems at first sight a prime example of Dutch pillarization. The Catholic KV was a separate and independent organization, whereas the ‘neutral’ NPV was subdivided in its turn due to its Protestant troops and the splitting apart of the PVN, which rejected the explicit reference to religion. The Dutch Scout Movement was completely fragmented and split up among the various Dutch ‘heavy communities’ of the time, which were based on religious principles. On the other hand, Dutch Scouting could qualify as a ‘light community’ *avant la lettre*. Catholic, Protestant and non-confessional Scout troops shared BP’s method and met each other at national and international Scout camps. Moreover, the Catholic Scout Movement illustrates that the new youth organization was inherently a serious challenge to inner-pillar discipline.

### **Discord and consensus within the Catholic Movement**

Within the Catholic pillar, Scouts were the only group in which lay youth leaders significantly contributed to youth activities, unlike other Catholic youth organizations, in which only priests carried responsibility.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, contacts with non-Catholic Scouts suggest the clergy’s control was vulnerable at least. After the end of the Second World War, the re-established ‘neutral’ and Catholic Scout associations saw no harm in retaining and continuing their wartime contact and cooperation with other Scout associa-

<sup>48</sup> NHA, *R.K. bisdom Haarlem*, 1921, Johannes Petrus HUIBERS, Notulen der vergadering van het Hoogwaardig Episcopaat gehouden te ‘s Hertogenbosch 24 Sept. 1936.

<sup>49</sup> KDC, *KJB/KV*, 422, J. Klep, Letter (July 28, 1953). Cf. KDC, *KJB/KV*, 422, DIOCESAAN HOOFDKWARTIER KATHOLIEKE JEUGD-BEWEGING ‘s-HERTOGENBOSCH, Letter to Mr. J. Verhoeven (July 10, 1946); Joseph Hubert Guillaume LEMMENS, *Richtlijnen voor aalmoezeniers bij kampen en bivakken* (April 28, 1949).

<sup>50</sup> BANK, *Katholieke verkennerij...* [see n. 34]; DINGS and DE GREEF, *Katholiek...* [see n. 3], p. 73-88.

tions. And not without reason: they played the game of Scouting according to BP's method, obeyed roughly the same Scout Law and Scout principles, recognized each other as belonging to the same national and international Scout Movement and had recently cooperated in the resistance movement.<sup>51</sup>

The episcopate, however, discouraged Catholic membership in 'neutral' national organizations. Its first priority was rather to restore undivided unity in Catholic youth care. This led to the founding of a new umbrella organization for all Dutch Catholic youth organizations, the *Katholieke Jeugdbeweging* (KJB) in 1946. The KJB method was loosely based on the game of Scouting; the proper BP method was only practiced in the VKJB (*Verkenners* of the KJB, renamed KV in 1962).<sup>52</sup> Even though this return of pillarized structures was broadly criticized, the episcopate's prescriptions were obeyed. The pre-war KV *hoofdverkennersgeestelijke* (Chief Scout Chaplain), A.C. Ramselaar, opposed this new structure and its underlying vision for the Dutch Catholic youth, but he was silently removed from office.<sup>53</sup> Jo Cals, chairman of the Catholic Youth Council and future Dutch Prime Minister, emphasized in November 1947 that a merger of NPV and VKJB could not even be considered, because the two organizations pursued different objectives. Whereas for the NPV, the game of Scouting was a goal in itself, according to Cals, for the VKJB it was a means to educate Catholic boys in Catholic principles.<sup>54</sup>

The Fifties saw no significant challenges to the Catholic 'heavy community'. Discussions about religious components mostly concerned practical consequences and questions about everyday affairs in Catholic Scouting. Fundamental questions, like whether religion had a place in the game of Scouting at all, were not asked,

<sup>51</sup> DINGS and DE GREEF, *Katholieken...* [see n. 3], p. 100-114; VAN DER STEEN, *Padvindders...* [see n. 3], p. 219-226. For deliberations concerning the role of the Catholic Scout Movement in the advancement of new forms of spirituality and religious participation: see Jean PIROTE, *Une idéologie en images. Prolegomènes à l'étude de l'art scout catholique en Belgique francophone, 1930-1965*, in *Cahiers d'histoire du temps présent*, 8 (2001), p. 69-100; Antonius Cornelis RAMSELAAR, *De R.K. Verkenners in het geestelijk klimaat van de jaren '30*, in *Jeugd en Samenleving*, 6 (1976), p. 62-83.

<sup>52</sup> DINGS and DE GREEF, *Katholieken...* [see n. 3], p. 110-122, 134-137.

<sup>53</sup> DINGS and DE GREEF, *Katholieken...* [see n. 3], p. 122-124.

<sup>54</sup> KDC, *NPV*, 374, Notulen van de vergadering van de Nationale Padvinderraad, 24 November 1947.

either by religious and intellectual leaders, or by Scout leaders or the boys themselves. This started to change at the beginning of the Sixties. Especially the program of *aggiornamento* and the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) triggered new debates concerning the role of religion in society. The Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* on the Church in the Modern World defined the Church as the People of God on its earthly pilgrimage, as the community of baptized men and women, brought together by Christ. It urged the Church to open itself to the world and to dialogue with society. Inspired by this Council document, Catholic theologians, bishops, and clergymen favored a more open and liberal approach to their leadership and the autonomy of individual believers and their organizations.<sup>55</sup> The debates on modernity, secularization and society were started and pushed forward by key religious figures, leading Dutch Catholicism to become Rome's most progressive outpost. Theologically founded critiques of the Church of Rome even found their way into the VKJB leaders' magazine.<sup>56</sup>

A key aspect of contemporary debates consisted of the prominent concept of 'secularization'. The diminishing role and function of religion in society was deemed an automatic and inevitable effect of modernization.<sup>57</sup> Even when Dutch Catholicism was not yet endangered or so much as touched by this development, many religious and intellectual leaders thought it wise to prepare themselves for 'secularization'. It was deemed a one-sided atheistic interpretation to think that God would in the near future be excluded from society and vanish from public life. In a modernizing and secularizing world, Catholicism had the chance to redefine its relation to the world and its original and fundamental mission in society. In order to do so, radical changes would be necessary. Many Catholic organizations in the Netherlands started to discuss

<sup>55</sup> James Carleton KENNEDY, *Nieuw Babylon in aanbouw. Nederland in de jaren zestig*, Amsterdam, 1995, p. 82-116.

<sup>56</sup> Jan van der MEULEN, *De zichtbare Kerk: steen des aanstoots*, in *Leidersblad van de KJB* (April 1962), p. 179-180; ID., *Katholiek verkennen en Kerk '63 II*, in *Leidersblad van de Katholieke Jeugdbeweging* (hereafter: *Leidersblad van de KJB*) (October 1963), p. 37-38.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Marjet DERKS and Chris DOLS, *Sprekende cijfers. Katholieke sociaal-ingenieurs en de encensering van de celibaatcrisis, 1963-1972*, in *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis*, 123 (2010), p. 414-429.

how useful their inclusion in the Catholic ‘heavy community’ was after all.<sup>58</sup>

The Dutch Reformed Church followed a similar path in this period. The Reformed Synod first discussed the meaning of being Christian in modern Dutch society in 1955. In the following years, the Church regularly took a position on social and political issues.<sup>59</sup> The consequences of these discussions on the Protestant X-groups in the NPV are obvious. As religion was to be an integral part of life and of society, Protestant troop leaders were invited to reconsider their own religious motivations, to apply these to the way they led their Scout troop, and to take on a serving role in society. It was felt that speaking about religion and religious values should not be an artificial addition to the game, but a natural result of engaging with one’s individual religious conviction.<sup>60</sup>

At the same time, all Dutch Scout organizations saw a development in the conception of Scouting in itself. The KV’s new Chief Commissioner (*hoofdcommissaris*) Herman Post opened the debate about a revision of the Scout Law and Promise with a view to ‘modernization’ in 1963.<sup>61</sup> In a modernized and depillarized society, where a vast array of recreation activities was offered to youngsters, it was assumed that youth organizations should reconsider their role in society and understand themselves purely as a professional ‘service institution’, complying with ‘demand’ from the younger generation. In such a situation, a youth organization

<sup>58</sup> VAN DEN BOS, *Verlangen naar vernieuwing...* [see n. 10], p. 143-155, 177-187; Peter VAN DAM, *Religion und Zivilgesellschaft. Christliche Traditionen in der niederländischen und deutschen Arbeiterbewegung (1945-1980)*, Münster, 2010, p. 253-291; KENNEDY, *Nieuw Babylon in aanbouw...* [see n. 55], p. 95-98.

<sup>59</sup> Joris van ELJNATTEN and Fred van LIEBURG, *Nederlandse religiegeschiedenis*, Hilversum, 2005, p. 325-326; HARINCK and VAN TRIGT (eds.), *“In de vergifkast?”...* [see n. 10]; KENNEDY, *Nieuw Babylon in aanbouw...* [see n. 55], p. 89-91.

<sup>60</sup> KDC, NPV, 225, De Heer Van Eygenhuizen op de “X”-Groepen-Koempoelan September ’52; KDC, *KJB/KV*, 48, Leendert van der JAGT, Praatpapier voor jonge leiders en leidsters van X-groepen.

<sup>61</sup> Herman J. Post, *Inleiding van de HC bij de opening van de koempoelan*, in *Leidersblad van de KJB* (July 1963), p. 257-258; idem, *De nieuwe verkenerswel*, in *Leidersblad van de KJB* (September 1963), p. 12-14.

could hardly claim to have ideological or pedagogical goals.<sup>62</sup> A January 1963 article by Frans Josso stated that a Scout leader should not wish to 'smuggle' far-fetched religious messages into the game of Scouting. God should not be involved in the game, because 'the Lord does not play the game'.<sup>63</sup> Josso was at this point still strongly contradicted. One critical commentary read as follows: '[Josso] sees Scouting too much as a goal in itself and too little as a means to raise young people to become good Catholics'.<sup>64</sup> Exactly this last argumentation was undermined in the next few years by changing ideas about what Scouting actually was. The 'means to raise young people to become good Catholics' was increasingly perceived as a nice game and leisure activity.

This gradual demise of the understanding of Scouting as a method of religious education provided an additional argument questioning the existence of separate Catholic Scout Movements. The KV leaders' magazine argued in September 1963 that segmentation had made sense in a historical period in which Catholics and Protestants had rigidly opposed each other. In 1963, however, the ecumenical process had created a new situation, in which the common method of Scouting had to receive priority. This contribution was, significantly enough, written by the KV's highest clerical representative, J. van der Meulen.<sup>65</sup> Van der Meulen's successor H. Bary stated explicitly that the results of the Second Vatican Council should now be applied to the Catholic youth movement. The KV should now complete the transition 'from Church affiliation to self-responsibility, from a paternalistic attitude to possibilities for self-development'.<sup>66</sup> In a document

<sup>62</sup> Kerk: *Service-instituut?*, in *Leidersblad van de KJB* (February 1967), p. 28; Harry J.H. BRENTJENS, *De integratie van het jeugdwerk in de moderne maatschappij*, in *Dux*, 32 (1965), p. 345-348, 361-369; H.J. PENDERS, *Nieuwe functie van het verkennen. Van ideologie naar service-instituut*, in *Leidersblad van de KJB* (June 1965), p. 162-165.

<sup>63</sup> Frans C.M. JOSSO, *Jeugdleider en Kerk nu!*, in *Leidersblad van de KJB* (January 1963), p. 84-87. Josso was editor of the libertarian Christian magazine *G3 (Goede Geestgemeenschap in Leger en Luchtmacht)*.

<sup>64</sup> N. KRAETZER, *Commentaar*, in *Leidersblad van de KJB* (March 1963), p. 150.

<sup>65</sup> Jan van der Meulen, *Katholiek verkennen en kerk-'63 I*, in *Leidersblad van de KJB* (September 1963), p. 25-27.

<sup>66</sup> H.J.M. BARY, *Jeugdbeweging na concilie*, in *Leidersblad van de KJB* (December 1967), p. 215.

distributed in May 1966, Bary asked directly: 'Should not the entire structure of Catholic youth welfare be explicitly disassociated from the Church hierarchy and conferred upon Christian civil society?'<sup>67</sup>

One consequence of these deliberations was a debate about the priest's presence in the Scout troop, previously thought indispensable. An increasing number of chaplains believed that their own societal function would inevitably decline and agreed with the notion that pastoral care and spiritual assistance had nothing to do with youth welfare. The chaplain now stepped back and became a mere member of the service personnel, supporting and inspiring the 'team' on the spiritual level.<sup>68</sup> It should be emphasized here that this demise of the priest's specific role in Scouting was actively supported and brought about by the chaplains themselves. They seemed relieved to abandon their formerly so dominant function in Scouting and to leave youth care to lay Scout leaders.

This shows that the 'depillarization process' of Dutch Catholic Scouting was not the result of any strong bottom-up resistance to 'pillarized' structures. It was, rather, actively supported and pushed forward by religious and intellectual elites, inspired by ideas that Catholicism had to adapt to a changing, modernizing and secularizing world and should step out into society in order to contribute to its development. The clergy itself started discussions about new visions of Church and society and acted according to what they thought was the progressive and desired solution. Surveys among ordinary Scout leaders were not carried out until the merging process was well under way; the children's parents were never asked for their opinion.<sup>69</sup>

### **The birth of Scouting Nederland (1973)**

The history of the manifold roles of religion in the Dutch Scout Movement finds a logical conclusion in the founding of *Scouting*

<sup>67</sup> KDC, *KJB/KV*, 47, BARY, Hoofdstuk III. Het religieuze en het jeugdwerk.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*; KDC, *De Nederlandse Gidsenbeweging*, 140, BARY et al., Nota betreffende de confessionaliteit van het jeugdwerk, January 1967, p. 18-27; KDC, *KJB/KV*, 322, DIOCESAAN INSTITUUT JEUGD EN JONGEREN, De priester in het katholiek jeugdwerk.

<sup>69</sup> The NPV organised and supported a few surveys about the Scout Promise. Cf. KDC, *NPV*, 332 and 333.

*Nederland*. The recommendations for closer cooperation among the two male and two female Scout organizations were to a great extent induced by financial pressures from Dutch government institutions, as these would no longer sponsor four similar associations performing the same activities.<sup>70</sup> After a federation came into effect in 1967, the idea of merging the four organizations into one national Scout Movement was raised. After the NPV and KV announced their intention to merge in 1970, the girls' associations could hardly stay behind.<sup>71</sup> The old, 'pillarized' idea, that 'neutral' and Catholic Scouts should avoid joining the same youth organisation, was silently abandoned.

Within a few years, the formerly so independent associations experienced a momentum which led to the founding of *Scouting Nederland* on 6 January 1973. *Scouting Nederland* formulated as its goal 'to promote the game of Scouting in the Netherlands, based on Lord Baden-Powell's ideas, and to provide a pleasant leisure activity to boys and girls, which contributes to character-building'.<sup>72</sup> Although religion was not referred to here at all, it did play a role in the negotiations leading up to the merging process. The so-called *Kommissie Levensbeschouwing* (Life Stance Committee) spent years formulating the attitude of the new organization toward religion. *Scouting Nederland* would formally be neutral in religious affairs, but would welcome Scouts and Guides from every religious denomination and give them every opportunity to live according to their religious conviction.<sup>73</sup> Catholic or Protestant Scout troops would be registered as ordinary troops and could no longer claim a special position. Registration as a denominational Scout troop was no longer a matter of tradition; it now depended on the local Scout leader's 'conscious choice'. The leaders had to reconsider their troop's identity and consciously

<sup>70</sup> VAN DER STEEN, *Padvindere...* [see n. 3], p. 243. More information can be found in the archives KDC, NPV, 484 and 1293, and KDC, *Scouting Nederland*, 683 and 2245.

<sup>71</sup> KDC, *Scouting Nederland*, 1543, De Nederlandse Gidsen en de fusie; F.F. VENSTRA, *Fusie NPV/KV*, in *WP*, 52 (1970), p. 119.

<sup>72</sup> KDC, *Scouting Nederland*, 663, Fusieovereenkomst, p. 2.

<sup>73</sup> KDC, *KJB/KV*, 50, Verslag van de bijeenkomst van de Werkgroep Religieuze Begeleiding (Convent) te Odijk op 15 april 1970; KDC, *Scouting Nederland*, 1708, WERK GROEP GEESTELIJKE TRAINING N.P.V., Nota inzake "levensbeschouwing" in de nieuwe vereniging.

choose a 'Catholic', 'open' or other designation.<sup>74</sup> Neither Catholic nor Protestant Churches ever put forward any demands concerning the future role of religion. Table 2 shows that Catholics were slightly overrepresented in the new national association, but they did not use this relative preponderance in the merging negotiations. On the other hand, the influence of the Protestant X-groups would be far less significant as compared to the old NPV. When the representatives of the X-groups presented their own demands regarding the position of confessional troops, these were rejected by the negotiation partners: if every denominational group put forward its own special claims, the merger would recede into the distant future.<sup>75</sup>

Scouts association	Number of Scout groups
<i>Katholieke Verkenners</i> (KV, Catholic)	664
<i>Nederlandse Padvindere Vereniging</i> (NPV, 'neutral')	588
(including the Protestant X-groups)	(120)
(including other Scout groups with a Protestant signature: Mennonites, Salvation Army, Adventists)	(47)
<i>De Nederlandse Gidsen</i> (NG, Catholic girl guides)	551
<i>Nederlands Padvindsters Gilde</i> (NPG, 'neutral' girl guides)	306 <sup>76</sup>

Table 2: Approximate membership overview (1973)

The Scout Promise proved to be a key theme of discussion. Contemporary inquiries revealed that the two Boy Scout and the two Girl Guide associations used no less than four different versions of BP's original formulation.<sup>77</sup> The simultaneous internation-

<sup>74</sup> KDC, *KJB/KV*, 77, Verslag bespreking fusiewerkgroep Organisatie, 2 November 1970; KDC, *Scouting Nederland*, 1123, Verslag van de vergadering van de Gewestelijke Raad van Distriktsvoorzitters, 15 May 1972, p. 3.

<sup>75</sup> KDC, *KJB/KV*, 48, Nationaal beraad X-groepen, March 1971; KDC, *NPV*, 70, Kommissie Levensbeschouwing. Kort verslag van de vergadering, September 1972.

<sup>76</sup> In total, *Scouting Nederland* counted 82,755 members on 3 September 1973. KDC, *Scouting Nederland*, Landelijk Bureau, Aantal groepen per organisatie in 1972, 6 September 1973; KDC, *Scouting Nederland*, 1708, Nota inzake een visie op de toekomst, 5 March 1970.

<sup>77</sup> KDC, *KJB/KV*, 66, Interim-rapport van de Wet & Belofte-Commissie. Cf. the February issue of *WP*, 53 (1971).

al debate about the religious component of Scouting, most notably in Britain and France, did not play a significant role in discussions in the Dutch Movement.<sup>78</sup> The NPV insisted on retaining traditional elements of the game of Scouting, like uniforms and the Scout Promise, whereas the KV was much more prepared to look forwards and abandon the remnants of its former denominational orientation. Many NPV Scout leaders opposed God's disappearance from Scouting, insisting that Scouting should continue to demand a certain level of commitment and that 'something like' a Promise and Scout Law should remain.<sup>79</sup> In the end, this issue never significantly delayed the merging process. The reference to God in the Scout Promise became an optional addition.

After the 1973 merger, it became clear that the Scout leaders, most of them young adults, were not at all interested in discussing and reconsidering their religious views and convictions. They simply wanted to work with children and play the game of Scouting.<sup>80</sup> For the surprised progressive clergy, who had expected a revitalization of Catholic Scouting through a more conscious and outward-looking experience of faith, this was most disappointing. Later religiously-inspired initiatives in *Scouting Nederland* were confined to occasional projects, like the 'Peace Light from Bethlehem' program. Additional research may be necessary to determine to what extent such projects and their religious background are still considered constitutive elements of the game of Scouting.

## Conclusion and discussion

The case study of Scouting can be considered a microcosm of the long history of struggle over the issues of religion and nation-building in the Netherlands. The history of the Scout Movement shows that we must be reluctant to discern a linear transition from 'heavy' to 'light' communities, or to assume that attitudes

<sup>78</sup> KDC, NPV, 341, J. van der GRAAF, Letter to mw. C.J. Vellinga-Loran, 12 December 1963; KDC, *Scouting Nederland*, 1708, Jan Willem Maria RADEMAKER, Afschrift. "Nouvelle proposition de Charte".

<sup>79</sup> Cf. KDC, *Scouting Nederland*, 1708, Kort verslag van het Nationaal Beraad van de X-groepen, 24 March 1970; KDC, NPV, 333, H. ten BOKKEL HUININK, Letter to the *Weest Paraat* editorial board, 23 April 1970; Freekje WETHIMAR, "Iets" als wet en belofte, in *WP*, 53 (1971), p. 30-31.

<sup>80</sup> Jack de GROOT, *Scouting beschouwd. Een Sociaal-Pedagogische verkenning van het werkveld van de Commissie Levensbeschouwing van Scouting Nederland* (undergraduate thesis), Amsterdam, 1975.

towards the role of religion changed automatically or necessarily. The road towards the unitary association, *Scouting Nederland*, was long, winding and complex.

When Scouting first entered the Netherlands in 1911, it was received by a 'pillarizing' society. The emerging Catholic and Protestant 'pillars' accepted the game of Scouting only reluctantly and only as long as their Scout troops' religious background was reflected by a special organizational status. Scouting's main proponents, the representatives of the liberal community, considered the game of Scouting as a means to spread a sense of discipline and patriotism in the younger generation, to foster national unity and counter the fragmentation caused by 'pillarization'. However, the 'neutral' character of the early NPV conceals an outspoken commitment to religion. Following BP's example, the reference to God and the idea that a Scout should have a religion were adopted, even though this went against Dutch traditions of religious freedom. The senior leaders of the Movement, especially Rambonet as President of the NPV, stressed the importance of a unitary Scout Law and Promise, overcoming religious cleavages. Another group of liberal Scout leaders gave priority to the individual Boy Scout, who should not be excluded or forced to promise something he did not believe in. The role of religion in the NPV proved such a problematic issue that it provoked an organizational schism. This conflict about the role of religion in society and in the Scout Movement occurred *within* the 'neutral' pillar. Independently of the emergence of Catholic and Protestant 'pillars', religion was at the time still considered a vital element of youth education by large parts of Dutch society.

As long as the Catholic religious community in the Netherlands was an exemplary 'heavy community', the dominant role of religion in the Catholic Scout Movement was never a point of contention. Plans to achieve closer cooperation with the NPV emerged after the Second World War, but were quickly and silently abandoned after Catholic leaders forbade such initiatives. The fact that discipline within the Catholic community was maintained for over forty years and was not openly challenged, speaks against the image of early resistance against power structures within the Catholic 'pillar'.<sup>81</sup>

<sup>81</sup> The perspective of diversity and 'depillarization' tendencies before the Sixties were put forward by Tjitske AKKERMAN and Siep STURMAN (eds.),

On the other hand, a description of these social and religious structures as 'pillars' cannot provide an insight in the changes in the Sixties and Seventies, especially when an international perspective is taken into account. Processes of secularization and 'depillarization' can be identified in other European countries, leading to significant shifts in civil society structures. What is surprising in the Dutch case is not that Scouting loosened its ties to the respective 'pillars' and merged into one national organization. The striking feature of the Dutch case is that these events preceded, rather than followed, the social and religious developments known as 'depillarization'.

Therefore, it is necessary to consider the cultural background of this transition to a 'light community', in which religion was deemed a private matter and no longer a basis for separate organizational structures. Analysis of the Catholic Scout Movement shows that this new idea was introduced and mooted by the clergy and the Scout leaders, rather than by a strong opposition movement from below. In the wake of the Second Vatican Council and expecting a process of secularization anyway, these progressive leaders encouraged a new view on the role of religion in society, according to which a single national association in the form of *Scouting Nederland* seemed an obvious choice. These ideas were supported by developments in the Dutch Reformed Church and were warmly welcomed by the 'neutral' NPV. This organization had gained extensive experience in uniting Scouts from different denominations and could now see the realization of a long-cherished wish, a national association for all Dutch Scouts. This discursive development, leading to new understandings of religious belief and its function in society, occurred 'behind the scenes'.

It can be assumed that Scouting was among the first movements in Dutch civil society to become a 'light community', because it had been just such a community for years, linking Scouts from different religious communities on the basis of the shared game of Scouting. The question of how religious identity is manifested in Scouting in the context of the rapidly secularizing

*De zondige riviera van het katholicisme. Een lokale studie over feminisme en ontzuiling*, Amsterdam, 1985; Paul LUYKX (ed.), *Andere katholieken. Opstellen over Nederlandse katholieken in de twintigste eeuw*, Nijmegen, 2000; Harm OOSTERHUIS, *Homoseksualiteit in katholiek Nederland. Een sociale geschiedenis 1900-1970*, Amsterdam, 1992.

society since 1973 has only been hinted at, but can be recommended for further research. The question why the Belgian Scout Movement, on the other hand, remained organized according to ‘pillars’ or ‘heavy communities’ after the 1970s, is another topic which demands the attention of scientific research.

In many cases, the role of religion is not decided on the level of associational structures or a discussion about the Scout Promise, but may be determined through local practices and customs of Scout troops like attending Holy Mass or participation in local pilgrimages or in actions like ‘Peace Light from Bethlehem’. In any case, we can conclude that the fundamental discussions in the Dutch Scout Movement(s) about the role of religion, the arguments brought forward, and the compromises reached, provide a fascinating insight into attitudes towards religion in a Dutch civil society organization.

Kristian MENNEN

Ebelingstraße 15  
10249 BERLIN  
GERMANY

*Fryske Akademy*  
Postbus 54  
8900 AB LEEUWARDEN  
THE NETHERLANDS

Marijn MOLEMA

*Summary.* — This article investigates the role of religion in the organizational history of the Scout Movement in the Netherlands, from 1911 until 1973. When Scouting was first introduced into the Netherlands, it had to be adapted to a ‘pillarizing’ society. Members of the liberal community welcomed the Scout Movement into the Netherlands as a means of instilling a sense of patriotism and national belonging in Dutch youth, but faced a protracted struggle over the inclusion of a mandatory reference to God in the Scout Promise. Catholic and Protestant religious communities formed their own and separate Scout associations. Scouting functioned as a *de facto* ‘light community’, bridging denominational gaps and uniting all Dutch Scouts on the basis of a shared method. However, the unitary national organization, *Scouting Nederland*, was only founded in 1973, after Catholics and Protestants themselves redefined the role of religion in society and in their youth organizations.

*Résumé* — Cet article étudie le rôle de la religion dans l’histoire de l’organisation du mouvement scout aux Pays-Bas, de 1911 à 1973. Lorsque le scoutisme a été introduit dans les Pays-Bas, il a dû être

adapté à une société « pilarisée ». Les membres de la communauté libérale se sont félicités du mouvement scout aux Pays-Bas comme un moyen d'inculquer un sentiment de patriotisme et d'appartenance nationale aux jeunes Néerlandais, mais ont fait face à une lutte prolongée sur l'inclusion d'une référence obligatoire à Dieu dans la Promesse scout. Les communautés religieuses catholiques et protestantes ont formé leurs propres associations scout. Le scoutisme a fonctionné *de facto* comme une « communauté light », en comblant les clivages confessionnels et en unissant tous les scouts néerlandais sur la base d'une méthode partagée. Cependant, l'organisation nationale unitaire, Scouting Nederland, n'a été fondée qu'en 1973, après que les catholiques et les protestants eurent eux-mêmes redéfini le rôle de la religion dans la société et dans leurs organisations de jeunesse.

*Zusammenfassung.* — Dieser Aufsatz erforscht die Rolle der Religion in der Organisationsgeschichte der Pfadfinderbewegung in den Niederlanden von 1911 bis 1973. Die Pfadfinderbewegung musste bei ihrer Einführung in den Niederlanden zunächst in die damals ‚versäulten‘ Gesellschaftsstrukturen eingeordnet werden. Die Bewegung wurde von Mitgliedern der liberalen Gemeinschaft als erfolgversprechendes Mittel begrüßt, die niederländische Jugend in gutem vaterländischen Sinne zu erziehen. Gleichwohl entstand ein längerer Konflikt über die Frage, ob im Pfadfinderversprechen der Verweis auf die Pflicht Gott gegenüber verpflichtet werden sollte. Katholische und protestantische Religionsgemeinschaften bildeten ihre eigenen Pfadfinderverbände. Die Pfadfinderbewegung funktionierte zwar *de facto* als ‚leichte Gemeinschaft‘, indem sie über religiöse Gräben hinweg auf der Grundlage der gemeinsamen Pfadfindermethode Jugendliche zusammenbrachte. Trotzdem wurde der einheitliche nationale Verband *Scouting Nederland* erst 1973 gegründet, nachdem sowohl Katholiken als auch Protestanten im eigenen Kreis die Rolle der Religion in der Gesellschaft und in ihren Jugendverbänden neu erwogen hatte.