De vrucht van de Bijbelsche opvoeding, populaire leescultuur en opvoeding in protestants-christelijke gezinnen circa 1880-1940
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SUMMARY
“The fruit of Biblical upbringing”
Popular Reading Culture and Education of Protestant Families
circa 1880-1940

In this dissertation the images of family and educational messages conveyed in popular reading material in the period ca. 1880-1940 have been researched. Firstly, which images and educational messages were passed on to children? Secondly, why these images and messages? And thirdly, which issues were at hand caused changes? But before examining these matters, the second chapter investigates Bible-reading families and the acknowledgement of the Protestant authorities, such as ministers and teachers, to the growing amount of appropriate and controversial printed-matter published in the period 1880-1940. How did Protestant ministers, teachers, and authorities respond to what they presumed could augment the declining interest in the reading of the Bible? And how did they evaluate books, magazines, and newspapers that might to the deteriorate the Protestant world view, the faith in religion, and the conduct of children and adults?

The emergence of appropriate and controversial printed-matter at the end of the 19th century was connected to economic and social changes. The combination of improved printing techniques and a declining price of paper enabled printed-matter to be produced quicker and cheaper. By the end of the 19th century reading was no longer a luxury exclusive to the happy-few. Because of these factors and an increasing literacy rate, newspapers, magazines, and books became more accessible to a larger group of society.

In chapter two the Protestant authorities are examined. They regarded the increasing amount of reading-matter as a threat to the traditional position the Bible had held as sole reading material. Since the Reformation the Bible had been regarded as an irreplaceable component of family life. The reading aloud of the Bible by family members had been a daily ritual.

Nineteenth century ministers and educators worried about the decline of this daily ritual in Protestant families. The custom since the Reformation of a family reading God’s word a few times a day, was no longer taken for granted. The ideas of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution which emanated from those ideas were accounted as the foremost reasons for the declining interest in that custom. But also the hurried-lifestyle of many adults and children had apprehended that daily family ritual. Because of strict office and school hours, the reading of the Bible at the breakfast table had become neglected.
In order to prevent alienation from the Bible, a surge of new confessional reading material encouraging children and adults in their faith flooded the reader's market. New instruction books for parents and educators appeared which translated the complicated State Bible and matters of Biblical stories into the language of everyday life. These new instruction books also advised about when the Bible should be read, where it should be kept, and what parents should and should not let their children read aloud.

The language of the State Bible – the adult Bible –, also known as “the big person’s Bible” for adults, was considered to be too difficult for children to comprehend. A solution to this was to publish bibles for children which in the 19th century endorsed straightforward morals, namely that children grow up to be good, obedient, and diligent citizens. However, bibles of the 20th century aspired in creating a biblical sphere in which a pledge of one’s faith would become internalized.

The youth commission of the Dutch Bible Society tried to introduce the Bible to children of elementary school age. The youth commission sought to convey biblical norms and values to children by publishing books with stories and subjects based on the Bible in which biblical themes were explained and made simple for children readers. The goal was that children become pious adults with the Bible as a pivot in their lives.

Chapter three examines what Protestant authorities considered to be proper and controversial reading material. Unlike the Index of the Roman Catholic Church which banned controversial reading material, Protestants did not suppress questionable reading material but rather they offered reading advice. On the contrary to the Roman Catholic Church, Protestants did not have a centralized church organization which compiled forbidden reading matter. Protestants did, however, have a Family-and School Index which provided helpful guidelines to parents and teachers when supervising the reading matter of children.

The ideal Protestant upbringing meant that educators would teach children to be able to distinguish for themselves what was good and bad reading material, thus internalizing censorship. This correlates with the civilization theory of Norbert Elias. In Über den Prozess des Zivilisation (1939) Elias introduced the terms Fremdzwang and Selbstzwang. The Index which forbids controversial reading material for Roman Catholics symbolizes Fremdzwang because it is suppressed externally by the Roman Catholic Church authorities. For Protestants the individuality of faith has always been prominent with responsibility being a matter for the individual. By teaching Protestants to internalize censorship, they are able to discriminate themselves between proper and unproper reading material. This is an extension of Elias’ Selbstzwang.
Protestant leaders offered a helping hand by providing their community with appropriate reading material. That reading material, however, was not always appreciated by Protestants who sometimes read non-Protestant reading matter.

Sunday school or Christmas books were popular Protestant children's books. Each year pupils of Sunday schools would receive an edifying book. These books were, of course, based on the Bible. A good example of these are the Orange books - stories portraying the Dutch Royal Family "Orange" - and stories written by W.G. van de Hulst (1879-1963).

In the Orange books young readers became acquainted with historical and contemporary members of the House of Orange. The Protestant population and the House of Orange had an age old close bond which continued to be manifested in the Orange books with its biographical stories about royal family members. The stories warned about socialism which was atheistic and anti-monarchial. The majority of the books portrayed the members of the royal family, crown Princess Juliana, Queen Wilhelmina, and Prince-consort Hendrik, as model Christians in which its readers could reflect.

Van de Hulst, a Protestant leader, was considered by almost all denominations of the Protestant faith in the Netherlands to have reformed the children’s book genre. The 19th century children’s book was regarded by early 20th century readers to be dull reading material with unrealistic stories of conversions. Van der Hulst on the contrary, re-newed the genre by identifying with the soul of children, and telling stories which were more realistic in the eyes of children. He wrote according to contemporary beliefs by incorporating elements of the Reform Pedagogy. The stories were good and exciting with life-like characters. Van de Hulst was also traditional in his writings. His ideas were embedded in the concepts of the Réveil – the church revival at the beginning of the 19th century – and his books had an evangelical tenor.

In the fifth chapter, the illustrated family magazine De Spiegel (The Mirror) founded in 1906 is examined. As in Sunday school books, the content of the stories in De Spiegel was based on the Bible. The magazine’s founder, Willem Kirchner (1866-1921), who was a Protestant publisher of Amsterdam is depicted. Besides being a pious Christian, Kirchner was also a keen businessman who by means of modern marketing techniques made his magazine accessible to a large reading public.

De Spiegel was regarded by contemporaries as an educator for young and old alike. In the early days of the magazine critics called it the pedagogics of illustration: the numerous photo’s and drawings were educative. Weekly features of good Christians from diverse Protestant communities in the Netherlands were illustrated as model Christians. Also the magazine informed readers about non-spiritual matters such as art, biology, and history – which were put into perspective of the
The Protestant community of the pillarized society of the Netherlands was not completely isolated from the rest of the population. A magazine such as *De Spiegel* informed its readers about the outside world, however, it did criticize that world. The Sunday school books of Van de Hulst were of the same nature. The books were based on the Protestant tradition — the gospel, conversion, Bible but also the "modern" outside was depicted.

Despite the division of the Protestant community in the Netherlands, there was almost little disparity amongst them when it came to the culture of popular Protestant reading-matter. Sunday school books written by the Dutch Reformed publisher Callenbach could be read by the pupils of the stricter Dutch *Calvinistic*
Reformed Sunday schools. The children’s books of the Dutch Reformed writer, Van de Hulst, were distributed at both Dutch Reformed and Dutch Calvinistic Reformed Sunday schools. *De Spiegel* as well, which was founded by a Dutch Calvinistic Reformed publisher, was aimed at the reading public of both confessions. The same applies to the Dutch Bible Society. Its board members consisted of both persuasions. The books published by the youth committee were distributed to Christian schools and Sunday schools of both denominations.

However, if the examined sources indicate that both confessions read the same reading material that does not necessarily mean that they were in complete agreement about this matter. The Dutch Calvinistic Reformed Sunday School Club, “Jachin”, was sometimes critical about the content of Van de Hulst’s books. The books were not regarded as being forbidden reading matter, on the contrary, there was not enough gospel in the stories for the pupils of their Sunday schools. The books received the status of being “limited”, still worthy of being a children’s book but not a Sunday school book. The criticism from the Dutch Reformed Sunday school were never so harsh about Van de Hulst’s books.

By way of popular reading material ideal family images were conveyed to Protestants. The holy family of Jesus, Joseph, and Mary, the royal family of Wilhelmina, Hendrik, and Juliana, the stories of Christian families in *De Spiegel*, and W.G. van de Hulst were used in this study as examples of the ideal Christian family. The members of the holy and royal families were presented as people instilled with honesty and a sense of responsibility in which the building of character was an important component of the upbringing. The upbringing of children in the stories of *De Spiegel* and Van de Hulst had a moral and religious nature.

Sunday school books and the illustrated family magazine *De Spiegel* were founded on the teachings of the Bible, but that did not imply that this reading matter was only intended to assist in the religious education of children. Also matters such as leisure and aesthetics were not neglected. The books of Van de Hulst were good and exciting to read. *De Spiegel* was regarded as a magazine offering its readers pleasure and relaxation. The books from the Protestant community were often disapproved of because they did not meet the aesthetic requirements of a good novel.

Translation: Benjamin B. Roberts