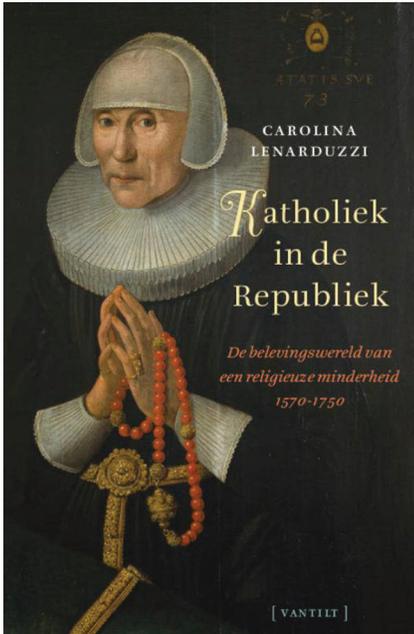


Review

Carolina Lenarduzzi, *Katholiek in de Republiek. De belevingswereld van een religieuze minderheid 1570-1750*, Nijmegen, Van Tilt, 2019, 475 pp. ISBN 9789460044359.



In the last dozen or so years, the historiography on the religious culture of the early modern Netherlands has taken a kind of ‘Catholic turn’. Historians such as Charles Parker, Judith Pollmann, Geert Janssen, and myself have analysed the experience of Catholics in the Low Countries during the tumultuous centuries of the Reformation, Revolt and Republic. The latest example of this turn is Carolina Lenarduzzi’s 2019 monograph *Katholiek in de Republiek*. In this work Lenarduzzi hunts for that most elusive of historical quarries, identity. That is, she is in search of how Catholics, a subaltern, second-class community in the Dutch Republic, understood themselves and how that self-understanding informed their experiences as a disadvantaged religious minority.

She succeeds brilliantly. It has been a long time since I have read an academic monograph written with such verve, clarity, and empathy. Lenarduzzi examines a variety of

sources, principally ego-documents, to provide a ‘non-institutional’ perspective on Dutch Catholic identity. Rather than relying on the official documents of the Holland Mission and its prelaty, all of which have already been heavily mined by previous scholars, she focuses on sources produced by ordinary Catholics (both lay and clerical), including most centrally the famous *Annales* of the priest Franciscus Dusseldorpius. Dusseldorpius, a bitter sectarian, had little good to say about the regime of toleration that came to function as the officially Reformed Dutch Republic’s ecclesiastical settlement, but his lengthy chronicle describing the political and religious history of the years 1566-1615 is a gold mine of information on Dutch Catholic experience and mentality. Lenarduzzi, to her credit,

is the first modern scholar since Robert Fruin to examine and utilise this unique source so thoroughly and extensively. In doing so, she turns yet another lens on early modern Dutch Catholicism – this is not a history of the Holland Mission, or an examination of confessional coexistence, or a study of how war creates religious displacement. Instead it is a patient, pain-staking, and finely grained analysis of what it meant and how it felt to be a Catholic in a society, polity, and culture so completely dominated by Reformed Protestantism.

The introduction succinctly describes the legal, political, and social boundaries within which the Catholic minority could operate. Under the new Republic's ecclesiastical settlement, its regime of toleration, Dutch Catholics were not obliged to join the public church, and they were promised freedom of conscience; but, like all other religious minorities, they were forbidden to worship God according to their rites openly or publicly. This situation put Catholics, as Lenarduzzi rightly observes, in a strait jacket – they were tolerated, but they were not free. The Reformation and Revolt had turned their world upside down; they were toppled from the privileged mainstream and shoved into the social and political margin. This state of affairs forced them 'to discover themselves again' (11). To the south, in the Habsburg Netherlands, post-Tridentine Catholic reform and revitalisation occurred full-speed with the enthusiastic support of the state. Catholics in the Republic had no such resources and instead had to rely on a meagre and attenuated Holland Mission (as well as the missions of several religious orders) that distributed priests among the faithful as best it could, despite the sometime hostility of the Republic's rulers and the permanent hostility of its public church.

Catholics in the Republic were thus forced to rely much more on themselves than they ever had before. Part two of the book cleverly examines how Catholics tried to exercise their beliefs and demonstrate their devotion in ways both material and immaterial. One chapter describes the 'agency of things'. The Republic essentially robbed Catholics of their large-scale material culture, principally churches, chapels, and monasteries. But if they could not be publicly devout, if their sacraments could not be visible, Catholics could still use material culture on a smaller scale to signal their identity. Clothing, rosaries, relics and reliquaries, ornaments, and the powers associated with them – all were used to reinvigorate piety, to attack heresy, and to increase solidarity among the faithful. Likewise, the immaterial soundscape could also serve Catholic devotion. That soundscape was now confined to private spaces, but as Lenarduzzi argues, making religious music was still something Catholics could *do* to make themselves heard both within their own community and without. *Klopjes* in particular participated avidly in non-liturgical music-making and sometimes even sang liturgical accompaniments, much to the disapproval of the Holland Mission's leadership. Spiritual music in the vernacular, separate from Latin liturgical song, was widely practiced by Catholic families, at home in relative privacy and security. Catholic devotion was by law supposed to be private, that is, not visible to the larger society, but music was sometimes an audible form of devotion that spilled over confessional boundaries, much to the ire of Reformed worthies, who numbered loud singing and organ-playing among their many instances of 'popish impudence'. Lenarduzzi persuasively argues that music was a multifunctional medium that established the Catholic presence in Dutch society in ways that could either unify or

polarise. It served a variety of Catholic identities, 'from activist to accommodationist', in a multiplicity of contexts (244).

The author also devotes an interesting chapter to comparing the lot of Catholics in the Generality Lands with their co-religionists in the north, a subject not much explored in the literature. After the Peace of Münster in 1648, Catholics in these conquered regions were ruled directly by the States-General rather than by any province, and all local officeholders from the smallest village to the biggest city were members of the Reformed Church. The population was overwhelmingly Catholic, however, and had to a certain extent undergone the post-Tridentine Catholic revitalisation directed by the Habsburg government in the south. They were therefore much less marginalised in day-to-day society and culture than their northern counterparts, less a subculture than a counter-culture, Lenarduzzi perceptively notes. In this sense, northern and southern Catholics did not share the same cultural and social identity, despite their unity in belief.

Indeed, one of the great lessons of this work is to underscore that there was no single Catholic identity in the Dutch Republic, but rather a congeries of multivalent practices, approaches, and attitudes that could easily shift according to time and place. The schism within the Holland Mission in the early eighteenth century, which the author notes distantly mirrored the schism within the Reformed Church a century earlier, points to a larger condition about living in a multiconfessional society: solidarity and uniformity were sometimes hard to maintain, even in a subaltern minority, in the face of an environment that allowed for such a high degree of religious choice.

Finally, some credit should go to Uitgeverij Vantilt for publishing such a handsome product. The book is lavishly illustrated, in colour no less, with images directly relevant to or illustrative of the author's analysis. *Katholiek in de Republiek* is, in all senses of the word, a successful volume. It is both a model of cultural history and a fine example of book-making, and will be required reading for students of early modern Dutch religious culture for many years to come.

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