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VROUW EN MOEDER

Opvattingen over vrouwen in de ideologie en de parlementaire standpuntbepaling van de ARP, CHU, RKSP en KVP 1879-1967

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ZO GOD WIL IN HET OPENBAAR TE VERDEDIGEN

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door

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SUMMARY

This thesis presents the results of an investigation of views on women in the social thought and anthropology as well as in parliamentary positions of the Dutch Christian political parties ARP, CHU, RKSP and KVP during the period 1879-1967. The focus is on how neo-Thomist and neo-Calvinist principles compare to the positions taken by lawmakers representing these parties in the Lower and Upper Houses of Parliament. Chapters 2 and 3 discuss neo-Thomist and neo-Calvinist views on the social position of women and such developments as these views underwent. Chapters 4 and 5 examine two areas of parliamentary decision-making: women's suffrage and women's employment outside the home. Both issues figured recurrently and prominently on the agendas of the Lower and Upper Houses during the years 1890-1967 and were held to be of fundamental importance by the Christian parties.

Chapter 2. Neo-Thomism: motherhood as an ideal
The Catholic parties RKSP and KVP's ideas about women, as a department of their social thought, were developed within the framework of neo-Thomism, a school of thought initiated by Pope Leo XIII (1878-1903). The pope expressed his views on the social position of women in the encyclicals *Arcanum* (1880) and *Rerum Novarum* (1891). The dominant ideas on women in neo-Thomism can be traced to one ruling ideal regarding all women – Motherhood, symbolized by Saint Mary as the salvific mother of all believers. The ability to bear children defined women's lives in all respects: physically and spiritually, in the home and in public life. Motherhood, according to *Rerum Novarum*, implied that women had no calling for work outside the home. In 1930 and 1931, Pope Pius XI reiterated this message in the encyclicals *Casti Connubii* and *Quadragesimo Anno*. He advocated family wages, partly in order to enable women to entirely devote themselves to their duties in the home. Statements about women and the labour market were thus issued at the top levels of Catholic social teaching. The pope in his encyclicals refrained from statements of a more specific and politically feasible nature on the proper extent of women's participation in politics and society. It was up to social philosophers such as Aengenent and Aalberse to translate the papal statements into politically and socially amenable terms.

Contributions from Catholic women who raised their profiles ideologically have been underreported by historians. These women included a group of Nijmegen academics united in "De Sleutelbos" ("Bunch of Keys"), who aspired to an independent social position. While accepting neo-Thomism, they were critical of the motherhood ideal because, in their view, it had no place for women pursuing a profession. They ar-

gued for a "third class" of women: those not practising motherhood neither in marriage nor outside it as a religious "bride of Christ," but occupying their own positions in the labour market.

The notion that God's truth could be known both from the Bible and from "Nature," a view derived from Thomas Aquinas, encouraged the emergence of neo-Thomistic scholarship in the interwar period. The research results of social scientists in particular seemed to confirm the doctrinal ideal concerning women. From the 1930s (Pius XI and Pius XII), due to influences from Phenomenology and Personalism, women increasingly tended to be seen as independent persons, and this development implied a partial recalibration of thinking about women. In addition, spiritual leaders during the 1930s came to acknowledge specifically female characteristics that were considered as "complementary" to characteristics attributed to men. The ideal of motherhood remained unchanged in ecclesiastical and popularizing documents from 1930 until Vatican II (1964). However, this cannot be attributed exclusively to neo-Thomism. The interwar period and the two decades after 1945 were characterized by a general social appreciation of the family and of the position of women as mothers and wives.

The increasing authority of the human sciences, notably from 1945 onward, detracted from the Church's pretence to final truth regarding female identity. In the course of the postwar years, Catholic conceptions of equality and complementarity of men and women blended with the demand for their individual legal equality. These developments were infused with dynamism, partly based on Catholic scholarship produced by educated women as Nolte and De Waal, but also based on a critique of neo-Thomism by theologian Tine Govaart-Halkes.

Chapter 3. Neo-Calvinism: God's "creational ordinances"

Neo-Calvinism was wholly Dutch in its origins, rooted in the Calvinist tradition of the Reformation, and developed by one man: the leading theologian, politician and journalist Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920). He developed his doctrine from what he considered Reformed principles: the Bible and the Canons of Dordt. These made it possible to learn God's commandments. By "God's ordinances," Kuyper meant regulations anchored in the creation. One of the most crucial creational ordinances was the family, being the origin of numerous other social spheres that had organically emerged from it. Each sphere had its own sovereignty, derived from God. This so-called "sphere sovereignty" determined the structure of society. Governments had to foster conditions conducive to the proper functioning of these circles. Kuyper considered himself an authority on the interpretation of Reformed doctrine. This brought him into conflict with other neo-Calvinists, such as his initial supporter De Savornin Lohman. Lohman challenged Kuyper's views on the right of the government to intervene in spheres such as the family. He also questioned the way Kuyper used the Dordt Canons to derive truths from the Bible and give them political applications. The CHU, co-founded by Lohman, kept an enduring critical distance from this doctrine.

Kuyper developed a theologically grounded approach to the social position of women. Chief among his benchmarks were the creation story from the Bible's book of Genesis and the classical church marriage formulary. From these he construed a creational order instituted by God that defined the relationship between the sexes in and outside marriage. Thus, the woman's vocation for life was marriage, home and family while the man's vocation was elsewhere, in the public domain. Kuyper viewed this arrangement as the "twofold life," consisting of two strictly separate worlds. Kuyper took this distinc-

tion as the basis for decision-making in politics and in the church.

Kuyper's vision became authoritative in neo-Calvinist circles, even though leading theologians such as Herman Bavinck nuanced it, based on a different exegesis of the creation story. For Kuyper, however, deviant Bible interpretations contravened the Calvinist tradition. As a result, neo-Calvinism became a static ideology with no prospect of further development except on the basis of theological study from within.

Kuyper's heirs provided neo-Calvinism in the 1930s with a "reformed" pedagogy with the marriage formulary as its moral starting point, assigning the private spheres of life to the wife and the public spheres to the husband. The publications of these pedagogues were widely read as guides to marriage and family life in Protestant circles and far beyond from the 1930s to the 1960s.

After World War II, a young generation of Reformed women grew increasingly convinced that it was time for a reassessment of doctrine. Their critique of the ideology successfully challenged the hierarchy of leaders and the authority of their doctrinal views. Bavinck's Bible interpretation emerged as an alternative on the initiative of Fenna Diemer-Lindeboom. Diemer distanced herself from Kuyper's notion of a "twofold life". In her view, humanity had a God-given cultural mission intended for women as well as for men. She further argued, in defiance of the prevailing Reformed theological view, that the relationship between the sexes in marriage must not be blandly transferred to society at large. Theological innovation was thus accompanied by a perpetuation of the old attachment to classical views of the creational order as the one truly Biblical foundation for the relationship between the sexes.

Chapter 4. Women's suffrage in Christian politics, 1905-1967

This chapter describes the ideological principles that emerged in political decision-making regarding women's suffrage. The extension of suffrage set the political agenda from about 1880 to 1922.

Unlike Liberalism and Socialism, neo-Thomism and neo-Calvinism did not view enfranchisement as a democratic right of individual citizens but as a divine empowerment of families. Families were the foundation of society, each represented by its head. Representing it was the husband's task, not the wife's. Both Kuyper and Catholic moral theologians advocated a form of "family-head suffrage" based on this line of thinking. Suffrage became a politically hot topic around 1905. A process of opinion forming ensued in Catholic and Calvinist circles, continuing for more than a decade and characterized by mutual divisions, especially over the interpretation and elasticity of concepts. Kuyper came to regard family-head suffrage as an sacrosanct neo-Calvinist principle and also, in 1914, developed a conviction based on the notion of a "twofold life" that governmental power did not belong to women and therefore neither did the right to vote. The ARP enshrined both positions in its program of principles in 1916. Although there was agreement with these views within the CHU, Lohman and others doubted that the suffrage issue was crucially important and doubted the political feasibility of an alternative based on organic suffrage. For the RKSP, too, suffrage was somewhat less of a fundamental issue. The pope had never commented on it, and publications approved by the Church left room for arguments both for family suffrage and for universal suffrage, including women.

Parliamentary decision-making on suffrage took place between 1916 and 1922. Political and electoral considerations proved decisive. Christian political leaders became convinced that suffrage was a distraction from more important issues, such as equal

rights for "special" (specifically Christian) education and public education. This issue had dominated political agendas for almost forty years, and the Christian parties were now willing to make concessions on the suffrage issue so as get their way on special education.

For the RKSP and the CHU, the introduction of passive and active women's suffrage marked the end of the fundamental debate on this issue. Not so for the ARP. The party held firmly to its principle. Although the ARP had accepted active women's suffrage, it decided as a matter of principle in 1921 to reject women's eligibility for office. The party followed Kuyper's view that governing power did not belong to women. Thus the ARP did not nominate women until the revocation of this decision in 1953, which happenend partly as a fruit of Diemer-Lindeboom's theological study.

The introduction of women's suffrage between 1916 and 1922 compelled the Christian parties to face the issue of the role of women in the party and in politics. The answer was entirely consistent with their principles and organic worldview. The ARP saw the party as a "family", with women belonging to it as a matter of course through the husband's membership. The establishment of a party-based women's organization was vetoed on the ground that the women in a family did not organize on a separate basis either. The CHU and the RKSP welcomed women in the party and in parliament as an addition to the male element. Specific qualities were attributed to women in the fields of social politics, education and health care.

Integration of women within the party organization hardly occurred. Women had their own Christian domain in society, organized in the NCVB for Protestants and the RKVB for Catholics. The latter was represented on the RKSP board through 'quality seats' ensuring female input into the party. For the politically involved CHU women, their being relegated to the NCVB created an unsatisfactory situation. In 1935 they managed to set up their own Christian-Historical women's organization, affiliated with the party, although they met with little understanding among the party leadership. In the RKSP and in the KVP, no such organization ever materialized. In the ARP, the party leadership reluctantly accepted a women's organization in 1959.

Chapter 5. The politics of married women's employment, 1904-1967

In the years from 1904 to 1925, the ARP, CHU and RKSP developed a politics of Christian principle concerning the employment of married women. Women's work was initially approached from the vantage point of traditional marriage law. But in a 1904 parliamentary debate, RKSP lawmakers turned it into an issue of moral principle – an aspect of social politics that, neo-Thomistically, offered rich prospects for principled policies. This view of the matter was mainly based on *Rerum Novarum* and on insights derived from it by leading clerics.

The ARP lacked a feasible political position in 1904. The Anti-Revolutionaries Talma and Heemskerk floated a neo-Calvinist position modelled on the principle of sphere sovereignty. But great disagreement arose between the ARP and the CHU over the interpretation of this concept. Lohman considered a labour ban for married women to be an encroachment on the sovereignty of the family, and the CHU saw no need for regulation. The Anti-Revolutionary member of parliament Beumer tried to find a way out of this controversy by drafting an alternative position. He suggested that the family was a social circle formed by God at creation with a naturally given division of labour between the spouses. Because of its basis in creation itself, marriage was normative and merited protection by the state. Once more the CHU initially dismissed this view. The

government had no vocation to propagate principles, Lohman said in 1910. Heemskerk's bill for dismissing female civil servants and teachers upon marriage foundered because of disagreement within the Protestant camp.

After the suffrage reform of 1917, the political landscape looked different. Christian coalitions had a large parliamentary majority. Aided by an economic recession and the RKSP's social-political agenda, support for dismissing female civil servants and teachers who got married had grown strongly. The Ruijs II cabinet (1922-1925) provided the dismissal bill of 1910 with a neo-Thomistic grounding: family formation was the main purpose of the family, and motherhood and the educational task of women in the family had to be guaranteed by the government. There was broad support for this view, even outside Christian circles. The ARP fully supported Ruijs, and thanks in part to the economic recession, the CHU now also supported this principled political approach.

Unlike the ARP and CHU, the RKSP saw substantial programmatic renewal regarding the family during the 1930s. The 1930 encyclical *Casti Connubii* initiated an ambitious family-based Catholic social policy. The centre-right cabinets Colijn II, III and IV (1933-1939) worked out a coherent policy of family politics that enjoyed broad social support. Policies focused on things like housing, wages based on the breadwinner principle and child benefits. A total ban on married women's work was also part of this policy, initiated by the RKSP and supported by coalition partner ARP and, due to the economic recession, now the CHU as well. However, in 1937 the radical Romme bill restricting employment for all married women led to a revival of CHU values such as aversion to government interference. After World War II the KVP continued the RKSP's family policy in a modernized form as part of a more comprehensive social policy.

Although few married women entered the labour market, more and more progressive politicians considered the labour ban for married female teachers and civil servants unnecessary and unjust. Receptiveness to this view also arose within the CHU. The 1955 parliamentary debate on a modification of the Kleuterwet (Kindergarten Act) caused the Christian parties to reflect on their own principles. In the KVP, new ideological insights from neo-Thomism emerged, as did arguments from the social sciences and the UN charter on human rights. Abandoning the pre-war politics of principle was not easy for the KVP, however. The ARP stuck to its neo-Calvinist views of yore. The CHU balanced, as it often did, between the Anti-Revolutionary vision and its own ideas on legal equality of men and women.

Chapter 6. Principles and Parliament

The main conclusion of this dissertation is that the neo-Thomist and neo-Calvinist schools of thought were a highly determinative factor of political decision-making regarding women's suffrage and the employment of married women. For the ARP, the most fundamental ideological ideals were family-head suffrage and, following from this, the rejection of universal women's suffrage. For the KVP, on the other hand, the Catholic ideal of the family, with motherhood as a central element, was a weighty ideological point of contention. The CHU showed ideological reticence on both issues.

Second, this dissertation shows that the ideological struggles of the Christian parties from 1879 to 1967 (roughly the period of so-called Pillarization) have been neglected in the historical literature both in terms of ideology and political positioning.

Third, this dissertation shows that Christian views and politics regarding women

showed much more diversity and development than has been suggested by the literature on women's history.

In sum, this dissertation not only fills a gap but also updates the existing historiography.