

Jo Spaans

## Time for Prayer and Time for Work. Rule and Practice among Catholic Lay Sisters in the Dutch Republic

(R.N. Swanson (ed.), *The Use and Abuse of Time in Christian History*, [*Studies in Church History* 37] Woodbridge 2002, 161-172)

One shall rise at five in the morning and go to communal prayers at six. After prayer and meditation one shall read the first three canonical hours: matins, lauds and prime — but those who do not have the leisure can also do this over their work.<sup>1</sup>

This is how the Rule of a community of seventeenth century Dutch Catholic lay-sisters started. Theirs was a very flexible rule, designed to accommodate both wealthy sisters, who could spend much of their time in their devotions, and poorer ones, who had to work for their living. Their Rule provides a good illustration of attitudes towards the use of time among pious Christians in the seventeenth centuries.

The community whose life and devotional routines are considered here was one of semi-religious women. These Catholic lay-sisters lived in Haarlem, one of the larger towns of Calvinist Holland. They called themselves *kloppen*, a word of unknown etymology and thus untranslatable.<sup>2</sup> They belong to a well-known type, however. They chose to live a celibate and sober life, in obedience to a father-confessor, but without taking any formal vows. They devoted themselves to both contemplation and works of piety in the service of the Church. The Counter-Reformation produced a series of Orders and congregations of this kind, some male but most female. They carried out an active apostolate of teaching, nursing and works of mercy, under clerical supervision. Whereas the Church had always been rather shy of female religious who were active in the world, in the course of the seventeenth century these groups came to be valued and encouraged.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Utrecht, Library Rijksmuseum Het Catharijneconvent [hereafter Library Catharijneconvent], collection 'Parochie St. Joseph' [hereafter St. Joseph], Ms. 102(*Regel en onderwijzing der Maagden*, hereafter cited as *Rule*), fol. 7r.

<sup>2</sup> Most informative on the Haarlem kloppen: Eugenie Theissing, *Over kloppes en kwezels*, Utrecht 1935, more general on kloppen in the Dutch Republic: Marit Monteiro, *Geestelijke maagden. Leven tussen klooster en wereld in Noord-Nederland gedurende de zeventiende eeuw*, Hilversum 1996, and Elisja Schulte van Kessel, *Geest en vlees in godsdienst en wetenschap. Vijf opstellen overgezagsconflicten in de zeventiende eeuw*, 's-Gravenhage 1980, ch. 2-3, pp. 51-115.

<sup>3</sup> Generally: Ruth P. Liebowitz, 'Virgins in the service of Christ. The dispute over an active apostolate for women during the Counter-Reformation', in Rosemary Ruether and Eleanor McLaughlin (eds.), *Women of Spirit. Female Leadership in the Jewish and Christian Traditions* (New York 1979), pp. 131-152, Ronnie Po-chia Hsia, *The World of Catholic Renewal 1540-1770* (Cambridge 1998), pp. 33-41, 138-151; on specific communities: Anne Conrad, *Zwischen Kloster und Welt. Ursulinnen und Jesuitinnen in der katholischen Reformbewegung des 16./17. Jahrhunderts* (Mainz 1991); Elizabeth Rapley, *The Dévotes. Women and Church in Seventeenth Century France* (Montreal 1990); M. de

The congregation of *kloppen* in Haarlem started around 1580. From the start it existed in an officially Protestant environment. The sisters do not seem to have considered themselves a direct continuation of earlier types of semi-religious, even though there were contacts with the members of beguinages in Haarlem and other Dutch cities, and they took over certain characteristics of the Sisters of the Common Life such as the writing of Lives and the composition of *rapiaria*, collections of devotional texts for private use. They most closely resemble the Counter-Reformation non-contemplative female congregations.<sup>4</sup> It will be argued here that the *kloppen* should be seen as a link in the tradition of semi-religious communal life, bridging the gap between the late-medieval beguines and Sisters of the Common Life on the one hand and the Counter-Reformation Orders and congregations on the other. After describing the religious niche these Catholic women filled in Protestant Holland and the tradition in which they stood, attention will move on to how they regarded themselves, and how the appreciation of the religious life changed in the later seventeenth century. Essential for this characterization will be their views on the relative merits of work and contemplation, that the above quotation from their Rule touches upon.

### Dutch Catholicism

In the Dutch Republic the Catholic Church was formally outlawed. Catholics enjoyed freedom of conscience only. Any form of exercise of their religion was formally forbidden and from 1580 penal laws of increasing severity were devised. These laws were never so draconic as those in force in England at the time, and moreover were never fully enforced, but they did limit Catholic religious practice to the private sphere. In this situation semi-religious could render their Church eminent service.<sup>5</sup> The remaining priests in the Republic had to work within a rudimentary church organization. In 1622 the Pope had declared that the traditional hierarchy had collapsed and that consequently this area was a mission field. Vicars apostolic coordinated the work of secular and regular priests, who were technically missionaries. These priests had to gain the confidence and tacit approval of local magistrates in order to be able to carry out their ministry.<sup>6</sup>

The penal laws against the Catholics were based on the suspicion that some of them remained loyal towards the Spanish enemy. Priests were closely watched for signs of seditious activity, especially when these were foreigners or regulars, who necessarily stood under the direction of superiors residing abroad. Jesuits were suspected above

---

Vroede, *Kwezels en zusters. De geestelijke dochters in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden in de 17e en 18e eeuw* (Brussels 1994).

<sup>4</sup> Most Counter-Reformation female congregations were founded later than the *kloppen*. On chronology cf. Conrad, *Zwischen Kloster und Welt*, and Rapley, *The Dévotes*, De Vroede, *Kwezels en zusters*, pp. 95, 115-118.

<sup>5</sup> John Bossy, *The English Catholic Community 1570-1850* (London 1975), p. 282 suggests that female semi-religious, by mediating between Catholic clergy and the 'matriarchal' familial religiosity in recusant families could have made the English Catholic community grow.

<sup>6</sup> On Dutch Catholicism in the seventeenth century L.J. Rogier, *Geschiedenis van het katholicisme in Noord-Nederland in de zestiende en zeventiende eeuw*, 3 vols. (Amsterdam 1945-1947), W.P.C. Knuttel, *De toestand der Nederlandsche katholieken ten tijde der Republiek*, 2 vols. (The Hague 1892-1894).

all others. Among indigenous secular clergy there were also strong and generally known feelings of resentment towards the Protestant establishment. The first two Vicars Apostolic, Sasbout Vosmeer and Philippus Rovenius, condemned any accommodation of Catholics to the institutions of the officially Protestant Republic, from civil marriage to service in the army. This forced upon Dutch Catholics a division of loyalty between their Church and the civil authorities, and made pastoral work, for which priests needed the tacit approval of these same authorities, something of a balancing act.<sup>7</sup>

Soon after the religious alteration it became common for Catholic priests, both secular and regular, to gather groups of *kloppen* around their person. They kept house for the priest, swept the church, sewed and embroidered vestments and linen for the altar, enlivened church services with vocal and instrumental music, taught the catechism, engaged the faithful in pious conversation, collected alms for the needy and contributions towards the education of candidates for the priesthood, cared for the sick, kept watch over the dying, and prayed for the souls of the departed. As they often were the daughters of local Catholic families of some social standing they provided the priest with a dense network of local connections, that protected him, but at the same time ensured that he would not provoke the local magistrates by overstepping the boundaries set on Catholic religious activity. In this way they both supported and domesticated the clergy.<sup>8</sup>

### **The tradition of semi-religious life**

Such semi-religious women have not been very extensively studied. Moreover, any scholarly interest has mainly focused either on the late-medieval or on the Counter-Reformation periods.<sup>9</sup> Communities of semi-religious women emerged in Western Christianity from the twelfth century onward, as with the growth of the cities lay religiosity developed new forms. The highly urbanized Low Countries were rich in semi-religious, as were the Rhine valley and Northern Italy. Women who could not afford the dowries required for entering a convent, or who had family responsibilities that prohibited leaving the world, but still wanted to lead a religious life, entered communities of beguines or Sisters of the Common Life or affiliated with an established religious Order as tertiaries. These alternatives were cheap, and did not necessarily mean leaving the family home. This does not mean however that this middle-state, between monastic and lay, was seen as second-best to entering a convent as a professed nun. Many seem to have been attracted to the relative freedom it

---

<sup>7</sup> M.G. Spiertz, 'Pastorale problemen in de Noordnederlandse katholieke kerk van de zeventiende eeuw', *Kleio*, 20/3-4 (1979), pp. 42-48.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Hsia, *World of Catholic Renewal*, p. 84.

<sup>9</sup> Separate historiographical surveys in Kaspar Elm, '*Vita regularis sine regula*. Bedeutung, Rechtsstellung und Selbstverständnis des mittelalterlichen und frühneuzeitlichen Semireligiosentums', in Frantisek Smahel, ed., *Häresie und vorzeitige Reformation im Spätmittelalter* (Oldenburg 1998), pp. 239-273, and De Vroede, '*Kwezels*' en '*zusters*', pp. 7-15.

offered. The pressures that the ecclesiastical hierarchy eventually brought to bear on these groups to transform them into enclosed monastic Orders were often resented.<sup>10</sup>

The Church, often presented as somewhat inimical to these lay initiatives, also had an interest in them. It has been convincingly argued that semi-religious groups emerged mostly in periods of change. The middle state, with its lack of strict rules and its flexible organization, offered the opportunity to experiment with new devotional styles. The eventual transformation of these experimental communities into monastic Orders can be seen as a natural evolution, a stabilization of newly developed forms, adapted to new situations. Canon law was stretched in order to accommodate semi-religious groups, uneasily at first, but with growing confidence as time progressed. By the beginning of the sixteenth century some theologians defended the position that the middle state more closely followed the example of the early Church than the monasticism developed in the course of the Middle Ages. In the heyday of humanism with its reverence for the pristine purity of the apostolic and patristic Church, it could be presented as the highest Christian vocation.<sup>11</sup>

The Counter-Reformation Church was at first highly ambiguous about semi-religious women. The Council of Trent prescribed strict claustration for women religious. With these rulings the hierarchy of the Church not only protected male clerical prerogatives, but also responded to social pressures. Women who entered religious communities without strict vows had the right to return to the world, marry, and demand their dowries. A daughter or sister who did not leave the world for good by taking solemn vows and confining herself behind convent walls could prove a financial liability to her relatives.<sup>12</sup> On the other hand the Catholic reform movement favoured an active apostolate. Hesitatingly at first, but from the middle of the seventeenth century wholeheartedly, the Church came to see semi-religious female congregations as a valuable asset in its outreach to the faithful.<sup>13</sup>

The period from the Council to around 1630 appears to have been one of experimentation. Only a few groups, those who with full support of the local bishop proved themselves valuable to the introduction of reforms, were exempted from the general rule of enclosure. The Dutch *kloppen* of the late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth centuries were among these, together with the Ursulines after their reorganization by Cardinal Borromeo and before their transformation into an enclosed order, and also some more local communities in Italy, the German Empire, and the

---

<sup>10</sup> De Vroede, *Kwezels en zusters*, p. 75, Florence Koorn, 'Women without vows. The case of the beguines and the Sisters of the Common Life in the Northern Netherlands' in Elisja Schulte van Kessel, ed., *Women and Men in Spiritual Culture. A Meeting of North and South* (The Hague 1986), pp. 135, 141.

<sup>11</sup> Elm, '*Vita regularis*'.

<sup>12</sup> Leibowitz, 'Virgins', pp. 140-142, Rapley, *The Dévotes*, pp. 38-41.

<sup>13</sup> Rapley, *The Dévotes*; Kathryn Norberg, 'The Counter-Reformation and Women. Religious and Lay', in J.W. O'Malley, ed., *Catholicism in Early Modern History* (St. Louis 1988), pp. 133-146.

Southern Netherlands.<sup>14</sup> The forms of lay apostolate developed in these communities would be taken up in the great flowering of active female congregations from the second half of the century.

### Work and prayer

The Haarlem community of *kloppen* has left a wealth of documents from which to determine their own appreciation of the middle-state. The most important of these are a collection of over two hundred Lives, the Rule, and about sixty volumes of sermons and devotional texts.<sup>15</sup> The Rule, in combination with material from the Lives, gives an insight into the sisters' views on the use of time. About rest and play we can be very short: the Rule recommends an hour of recreation after lunch, which the sisters seem to have used for a stroll in the garden, to sing spiritual songs or chat. Good cheer was considered important. The spiritual directors ordered celebratory banquets twice a year: indoors at Carnival and a garden party in the summer. Similar festivities came to be held when new *kloppen* were received into the community. These occasions for merriment are only mentioned in passing in a few Lives, and it is clear that older sisters considered them frivolous innovations.<sup>16</sup>

The main interest of the sisters was the cultivation of their spiritual lives through prayer, meditation, reading of devotional literature and not least the Sacraments of the Church and the sermons of their directors. Only the richer sisters, however, could spend much of their time at their devotions. Quite a number of *kloppen* had to work for their living. The Rule gives extensive prescriptions for the techniques through which secular preoccupations like work could be turned into prayer. These techniques were not specific for the *kloppen*, but can be found among many semi-religious groups, from the Sisters of the Common Life to the Counter-Reformation *dévotés*.<sup>17</sup> They were devised to discipline the mind of those who did not partake in the safe and regular liturgical rounds of monastic timetables, but led a religious life in the world, whether in a community or individually.

The sisters were to formulate a pious intention for everything they did. Getting up early in the morning should remind them of the trumpets that will raise the dead from their graves at the Resurrection, or of the women who went to the grave where Jesus was buried early on Easter morning. While dressing themselves they had to

---

<sup>14</sup> Schulte van Kessel, *Geest en vlees*, pp. 95-110, Rapley, *Les Dévotes*, pp. 48-56, De Vroede, *Kwezels en zusters*, pp. 85-94, Conrad, *Zwischen Kloster und Welt*, pp. 95-102.

<sup>15</sup> All of this in the Library Catharijneconvent, collections St. Joseph and 'Preciosa Warmond' [hereafter Warmond].

<sup>16</sup> Life of Machteld Bickers († 1624), Library Catharijneconvent, Warmond, Ms. 92 B 13, fol. 159r, of Apollonia Areians († 1628), *ibid.*, fol. 234v and of Annetge Sixtus van Emingha († 1632), Ms. 92 B 14, fol. 84v, cf. Theissing, *Over kloppes en kwezels*, p. 95. For criticism of frivolity see the Life of Tryn Jansdr. Oly († 1651), Ms. 92 C 10, fols. 431r, 435v.

<sup>17</sup> A.G. Weiler, 'Over de geestelijke praktijk van de Moderne Devotie', in P. Bange et als eds, *De doorwerking van de moderne Devotie, Windesheim 1387-1987* (Hilversum 1988), pp. 29-45; Louis Chatellier, *The Europe of the Devout. The Catholic Reformation and the Formation of a new Society* (Cambridge 1989), pp. 33-38.

contemplate how the first humans had been as if dressed in righteousness, a virtue lost by their inobedience.<sup>18</sup> The work they did was to be dedicated as a sacrifice to God. Not only the priest sacrificed, although he alone was authorized to officiate at the Mass. Everyone could sacrifice, remaining in the state in which she had been called. Each according to her status had to do what needed to be done, keeping her thoughts fixed on God, to avoid them straying into vain matters. Quick prayers, renewal of the pious intention, meditation on the sermon or lecture of the day, or other pious materials could help in this. Also they were advised to let the actual work they did inspire them to pious thoughts. Making clothes or anything that would serve as an ornament to the body should remind them of the virtues that adorn the soul; cleaning or repairing utensils of renewal of the spirit or attaining perfection; serving others for a meager salary of what to do to deserve the heavenly reward that God promises the faithful.<sup>19</sup>

The *Life of Magdalena van Dam* († 1634) describes in great detail how she kept the schedule prescribed by the Rule. She was moderately well off, so she could spend relatively much of her time in the church, attending Mass, hearing sermons and meditating. She was not a purely passive listener, but also sang in the choir and played the violin during services. With some other wealthy sisters she spent part of the day doing the sewing and mending for the sisters who had to go out to work for their living, and did other charitable work. Still all her time was dedicated to prayer and meditation. She had devised pious exercises for each of the twenty-four hours of the day and the night. For each hour she took into consideration a moment from the life of Christ, his hidden life during the night, and his public life during the day, and meditated on certain aspects of that episode. Also she invoked certain saints. At night, when suffering from sleeplessness, she kept these exercises, and for those she had missed while asleep she made up on waking again. When during the day she was unable to keep to her schedule, she relied on the saints she would normally invoke to do her exercises for her. In this way she was with her Bridegroom always, but also could do her work without worrying about neglecting her devotions.<sup>20</sup>

Interestingly the same Rule has a very exalted view of the virtues of work. It very explicitly states that as there is a time for prayer, there also is a time to work, because prayer alone cannot produce holiness. Contemplation should always be accompanied by some useful work. This is proved by two main arguments. The first is that mankind was created to work and that if any would not work, neither should he eat. The second asserts that human nature of itself is too prone to the temptations of the world to be able to sustain a life of prayer only.<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup> Library Catherijneconvent, St Joseph, Ms. 102, fols. 8v-20v.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, fols 98v-105r.

<sup>20</sup> Library Catharijneconvent, Warmond, MS 92 B 14, fols 182r-217r (*Life of Magdalena van Dam*); for the 24-hour schedule of devotions, fols 200r-205r.

<sup>21</sup> What follows is a paraphrase of the chapter ‘On work’ in the *Rule*: Library Catherijneconvent, St Joseph, Ms. 102, fols. 81r-105v.

The Rule starts by proving the first point from the order of creation: According to St Augustine already before the Fall Adam was obliged to cultivate the Garden of Eden. In his pristine state of sinlessness this task was both easy and rewarding. It was only after the Fall that labour became a punishment. The Rule continues by pointing out that Scripture does not contain any exemplary lives of pure contemplation. Jesus himself left heaven to spend his first thirty years on earth as a carpenter. Mary and Joseph, although they were in the company of the Son of God continuously, both worked. The Apostles, after being granted the vision of the glorified Christ on Mount Tabor, returned to their fishing; and Paul, who had been transported to the third heaven, repeatedly indicates in his letters that he will not live from gifts or alms, but that he and his companions will work for their living day and night. It is not denied that pure contemplation is the most perfect state, but only God, his angels and the saints in heaven can remain in this state of perfection continuously. Therefore the founders of the first monastic communities prescribed work as a fixed part of the daily routine of their monks. The Desert Fathers, Augustine, Chrysostom, Jerome and Cassian are all quoted as defenders not only of a modicum of manual labour, but actually of monasteries as self-supporting communities. They moreover condemned the accumulation of wealth in monasteries. The early monks were exemplary in that they lived a sober life, taking from the fruits of their labour only their daily needs. Surplus wealth was given to the poor and not accumulated.<sup>22</sup>

The medieval monasteries, which exempted their monks from the biblical commandment to work for their living, are presented as having lost the perfection of this early simplicity. They lived from the endowment of their house or from begging. This set the monks free to spend their time in contemplation — and after the foregoing argument that only the denizens of heaven were entitled to pure contemplation this appears definitely presumptuous. But this is not the only criticism contained in the Rule. Idleness led the medieval monks to inconstancy, disquietude and evil greed. The ambition to build large estates in order to draw fat revenues led them to flattering the rich and powerful and involved them in continuous litigation. All this involved them in the world, and made them dependent of creatures, instead of setting them free.<sup>23</sup>

The second argument in favour of work was that human nature is too weak to sustain a life of prayer and meditation only. Work alone could keep away the evil temptations that beset the praying soul. Pure contemplation is not wholly impossible for mere humans, but it is given only to the very few, and usually only in the form of temporary transports. The leaning towards creation instead of the Creator is the effect of original sin, an effect that cannot be eliminated except by the divine grace that is the reward for those who during many years have striven for perfection in the middle state, that is a life of both prayer and work. Just as a blacksmith mixes iron with other metals, because pure iron is weak, the founding fathers of the monastic Orders prescribed a mixture of prayer and some useful work, either manual labour, study or teaching. This was even more necessary for virgins and widows, because of the weakness of the female nature. Jerome himself knew from experience that even

---

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., fols 81v-86v.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., fols 86v-87v.

fasting and prayer in the solitude of the desert could not break away the human spirit from the seductions of the created world. It was the study of the Hebrew language that restored his peace of mind.<sup>24</sup>

In the end, work is the only certain way to deny the devil access to the heart. As long as David was a warrior he did not have time for adultery or murder; and as long as Solomon was busy building the Temple he did not succumb to idolatry. Judas became a traitor to Jesus because even years of discipleship could not cure his excessive sloth. Without work spiritual progress is impossible and holiness out of reach. Even those with independent means, who did not have to work for a living, should work, if only to give the results of their handiwork or their earnings from it to the poor. And this part of the Rule ends, as it had started, with the injunction that after death one would be held accountable for one's use of time. Time after all was God's gift, and only those who had spent it productively could die with a quiet conscience.<sup>25</sup>

### **The winds of change**

The views of the Haarlem kloppen on the relative importance of prayer and work concurred with a number of more general currents of ideas in the sixteenth and early seventeenth century. Their criticism of the lifestyle of monks and nuns reflects reforming ideals, both in Protestantism and within the Catholic Church of the early sixteenth century. In the 1530s, while the preparatory negotiations that would lead to the convocation of the Council of Trent were under way, the Pope established a committee of four cardinals to formulate a list of reforms. In their report, the *Consilium de emendanda ecclesia* of 1535 the cardinals were critical of monastic life. They boldly proposed to abolish the contemplative Orders.<sup>26</sup> The new religious Orders, first of all the Jesuits, show new, reforming ideals. They focused on missionary activity, both to bring the faith to the heathen and to reinvigorate that same faith among Christians — that is, as long as it involved male Orders. Female religious participation in this mission of teaching came a bit later, as we have seen.

There was also a wider hostility, from the early sixteenth century, towards a life without work. In this period all over Western Europe reform of the system of poor relief and the repression of begging was being discussed. In these discussions also the Pauline text on the necessity for man to work in order to eat was prominent. Criticism was directed not only against able-bodied beggars and lazy vagabonds, but in general against all those who lived from accumulated wealth and called it Christian living. The most radical of the sixteenth-century reformers may have been Vives, who held that it was plainly wrong to accumulate funds and endowments, even for the support of the poor. He expressly rejected hospitals. Of course the honestly indigent were entitled to charity, but this ought to be living charity. If all would give alms, according

---

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., fols 87v-90v.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., fols 90v-105r.

<sup>26</sup> Text-edition in *Concilium Tridentinum. Diariorum, actorum, epistolarum, tractatum nova collectio*, 13 vols. (Freiburg im Breisgau 1901-50), 12, pp. 131-145, German translation by Luther (who must have had a field day), in J.K.F. Knaake et al., eds., *D. Martin Luthers Werke*, 67 vols. (Weimar 1883-1997), 50, pp. 288-308.

to their wealth and according to the actual need of the moment, the poor could be provided for in their own homes more efficiently and in a more Christian manner than by admitting them into an endowed hospital. Hospitals corrupted all those involved: it fostered greed in those who had to administer their funds and laziness in the poor.<sup>27</sup> These very same arguments are levelled against monasteries by the Rule of the Haarlem *kloppen*. The proposals for welfare-reform are still sometimes considered inherently Protestant,<sup>28</sup> but they also reflect social views very generally held in the sixteenth century, in all confessional camps.

Prayer alone would not make one holy. For the *kloppen*, as for earlier and contemporary semi-religious, work was necessary: mankind was created to work, and would be morally corrupted without it. Work and prayer were not mutually exclusive; on the contrary, a whole array of techniques was available to dedicate all one's time to devotion, and make work into prayer. These assumptions made it possible in the sixteenth century for people of a wide spectrum of social backgrounds to live a religious life while staying in the world. From the middle of the seventeenth century this seems to change, at least in the Dutch Republic. Piety, a devout lifestyle, increasingly became something for the well-to-do, for Protestants as well as for Catholics.

The answer to Question 43 in the *Heidelberg Catechism* states that believers should offer their lives as a sacrifice to God. The doctrine of the priesthood of all believers implied that each church member, staying within his or her calling, could lead a dedicated life of piety, pleasing to God. Interconfessional polemics accordingly portrayed Protestantism as a religion for weavers, cobblers and women, reading and discussing the Bible over their daily business, and Protestants rather gloried in this image. With the emergence of pietistic strains in Dutch reformed Protestantism, this egalitarianism faded. Pietists themselves acknowledged that those who had to work for their living could not lead a religious life.<sup>29</sup> True piety demanded leisure time, to read, pray, examine one's conscience and cultivate the spiritual life in the meetings of pious conventicles. Work had come to be regarded as a distraction.

A similar shift in perspective seems to have affected the Dutch Catholic semi-religious. After the middle of the seventeenth century the typical *klop* was a woman from a good family, who lived alone, or with one or two others. Communities, like the one in Haarlem, in which richer sisters subsidized the poorer members, disappeared. These later *kloppen* took their guidelines for an individual spiritual life from printed

---

<sup>27</sup> Ludovicus Vives (ed. Armando Saitta), *De subventionem pauperum* (Florence 1973); on hospitals see pp. 70-2.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Ole Peter Grell, 'The Protestant imperative of Christian care and neighbourly love', in Ole Peter Grell and Andrew Cunningham, eds, *Health Care and Poor Relief in Protestant Europe, 1500-1700* (London 1997), pp. 43-65.

<sup>29</sup> Peter van Rooden, *Religieuze Regimes. Over godsdienst en maatschappij in Nederland, 1570-1990* (Amsterdam 1996), pp. 69-70.

manuals.<sup>30</sup> Where in Catholic countries the religious aspirations of poorer women could be channelled into teaching and nursing,<sup>31</sup> in the Protestant Republic there was no place for semi-religious in these fields. This was so not only because they could not openly act as Catholic religious, but mainly because the Republic boasted extensive public systems of both education and welfare, in which, increasingly so from the middle of the seventeenth century, provision was made for dissident religious groups.<sup>32</sup> *Kloppen* hardly took part in this. Here only the model of the solitary, well-to-do devote remained.

---

<sup>30</sup> F. Smit, 'Klopjes en klopbroeders binnen de clerezie', in: F. Smit, *Batavia Sacra* (Amersfoort 1992), pp. 39-62, the kloppen described by Schulte van Kessel (*Geest en Vlees*) and Monteiro (*Geestelijke Maagden*) may be examples of this later type. In the Dutch Republic printed manuals appeared mainly from the second half of the seventeenth century, Monteiro, *Geestelijke maagden*, 355-360.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Rapley, *The dévotes*, pp. 69, 83-94, 113-116, De Vroede, *Kwezels en zusters*, pp. 135-179.

<sup>32</sup> Joke Spaans, *Armenzorg in Friesland, 1500-1800. Publieke zorg en particuliere liefdadigheid in zes Friese steden. Leeuwarden, Bolsward, Franeker, Sneek, Dokkum en Harlingen* (Hilversum 1998).