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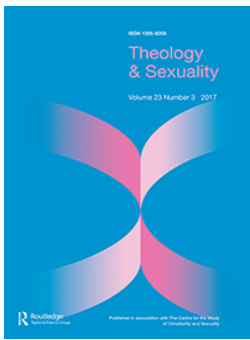
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“Equal rites before the law”: religious celebrations of same-sex relationships in the Netherlands, 1960s–1990s

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ABSTRACT

The opening-up of marriage to same-sex couples, which became Dutch law in 2000–2001, is often presented as a triumph of emancipation and secularization. Well into the 1990s, however, the majority of Dutch LGB organizations would have none of it – whereas Catholic and mainline Protestant initiatives at solemnizing homosexual relationships had been taken already since the 1960s. After explaining progressive, secular objections to marriage, this article discusses a number of more or less official, clerical initiatives at public, ritual recognition of same-sex relationships from the 1970s and 1980s. Next, as a historical backdrop, it sketches the emergence of a pastoral discourse on “the homophile neighbor” since the late 1950s. Lastly, it discusses three highly publicized “stunts” from 1967 to 1970. It is argued that religious institutions and traditions have not only posed an obstacle to non-heterosexuals, but offered them a repertoire of symbolic expression and contestation.


KEYWORDS

Church and state; homosexuality; marriage; the Netherlands; pastoral care; rituals

1. Introduction: a Dutch myth

Both by its proponents and by its opponents, the legalization of same-sex marriage is commonly depicted as an ultimate achievement of sexual minority emancipation and of secularization. The fact that the Netherlands were the first country to open up civil marriage for same-sex couples, in 2000–2001 – not to mention other “gay friendly” policies – is often explained from their alleged secular character: ‘no other country is as secular as the Netherlands; no country in the world has a less religious population.’¹ Actually, many European countries *are* more “secularized” but it is understandable that this myth has come into being. Just like the legalization of euthanasia, brothels, and shop opening on Sundays, the decision to open civil marriage for same-sex couples was taken in the years following the 1994 parliamentary elections, which brought a landslide defeat for the mighty Christian Democratic Party (CDA) and led to the formation of the first “Purple” government coalition, which was so called because it consisted of “red”

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Social Democrats alias the Labor Party (PvdA) and “blue” free-market Liberals (VVD), plus Social Liberals alias Liberal Democrats (D66). For the first time since 1918 – when general suffrage and proportional representation became law – the country was ruled by a coalition that did not include any faith-based party.

Acceptance of homosexuality and granting equal rights to gay and lesbian citizens became an emblem of this new political constellation, which was given a second term in 1998. The pride it took at its progressive LGB policy is exemplified by the title of a national policy memorandum: ‘Purple on Pink.’²

2. “Presents we haven’t asked for”: gays and lesbians against marriage

On closer inspection, though, things are not as pink and purple as they seem. It was not until 1998 that the (second) Purple administration committed itself to opening up marriage to same-sex couples. Until then, the free-market Liberals had been deeply divided about it. ‘Under the influence of societal debate,’ half the VVD representatives – including their then leader – had grown convinced that ‘the Netherlands should not walk all too much in front of other countries.’³ In their view, equal treatment of same-sex couples could be achieved by legalizing “registered partnerships” alias “civil unions.” Denmark had introduced this alternative to marriage in 1989, soon followed by other Scandinavian countries. In the Netherlands, a bill of this tenor became law in 1997, and took effect in 1998.

Unlike Scandinavian examples, the Dutch law offered the possibility of civil union also to *opposite*-sex couples. On the other hand, it markedly differed from the original bill, which had been brought in Parliament in 1994 – by the then ruling center-left coalition of Social Democrats and *Christian* Democrats. This bill had offered partnership registration not only to homosexual couples but also to “partners” of a very different kind, for example, relatives or neighbors who wanted to formalize the responsibility they felt for one another.⁴ This lumping together of all sorts of non-marital relationships resulted from the bill being a compromise between Christian Democrats – who wanted to preserve traditional marriage, while legally recognizing alternative relationships – and Social Democrats.

The latter were eager to ensure equal treatment of gay and lesbian citizens but on the other hand, many of them – including minister Hedy d’Ancona, a prominent feminist politician who then held the Emancipation portfolio – believed marriage was an overrated, outdated, patriarchal institution that bred inequality.⁵ In 1986, when the Christian-Democratic think-tank published a report that pleaded for the public, legal recognition of non-marital relationships,⁶ the Left laughed it off, suggesting that CDA wanted to force gays and lesbians into the straightjacket of matrimony. An – openly gay – editor of the Dutch Communist daily wrote:

[H]omophiles get the right to marry; [that’s] three shitty things in one sentence; because homophiles is a dirty word; rights are wrongs; and marrying gays is a mistake. Show me one true-and-blue homosexual who has asked for marriage. [...] CDA should stop giving presents we haven’t asked for: nuclear plants, cruise missiles, gay marriages. [...] As if we haven’t got our hands full with AIDS.⁷

Three weeks later, a Communist party executive published another long, biting criticism, titled ‘Papist tactics revisited’, equating the CDA proposal with attempts of the Roman

Catholic Church to infest civil law with its sacramental conception of matrimony. The author – who was a queer activist and founding member of ‘Christians for Socialism’ – criticized the fact that the report narrowed down the covenant between God and man to couples.

[A]s if no fidelity and solidarity exist in women’s groups, communes, queer groups and action committees. The committee should realize that the first time a married couple appears in the New Testament [Acts 5:1–11] things immediately go wrong: Ananias and Saphira withheld part of their wealth from the congregation – which was organized on a communist footing (the first covenant!) – for the benefit of just the two of them.⁸

Instead of making marriage more inclusive, many progressives thought it should be made less important, by stripping it of societal privileges. Adult citizens, whether married or single, straight or queer, monogamous or polyamorous, should be seen not as members of a couple or a family but as individuals. This was also the stance of the Netherlands’ main gay and lesbian organization, COC – since 1971 officially called the Dutch Association for the Integration of Homosexuality.⁹

2.1. “The battle on gay marriage”

COC was founded in 1946 as a shelter for “homophiles” and a prudent advocacy organization, but since the late 1960s – under the influence of LGB¹⁰ student groups – had become more activist, and critical of the social structure.¹¹ Homosexuality, it now argued, was not a personal trouble but a public issue that called for societal change.¹² Same-sex marriage was not a solution, and neither was monogamy. ‘It’s bad that among many gays you still find this craving for Steady Partnership,’ said Joke Swiebel, chair of the federation of LGB student groups, in 1969. ‘It’s an imitation of marriage.’¹³ And Rob Tielman, COC secretary-general in the early 1970s, wrote in his 1982 dissertation: ‘With its pluralist view on relationships, COC has won the battle on gay marriage.’¹⁴

These words would soon be belied. The 1980s saw the rise of *Gay Krant*, a commercial magazine that was rather right-wing and focused more on entertainment, human interest and shopping than on societal change.¹⁵ It would grow into the most influential mouthpiece of Dutch gays and lesbians, eclipsing COC. In 1988, *Gay Krant* started a campaign to open up civil marriage for same-sex couples. With the guidance of legal experts, two men – who were in a long-term relationship – applied for marriage in their municipality and took legal action when the local authorities, unsurprisingly, refused them. They lost this test case but with the help of *Gay Krant* gained much publicity, by repeating their request in one municipality after the other.¹⁶ A similar, slightly earlier but much less publicized case of two women¹⁷ even made it to Supreme Court, which ruled on 15 October 1990 that the exclusion of same-sex couples from marriage was not discriminatory – but added ‘that there might be insufficient justification for the fact that specific other consequences of marriage are unavailable in law for same-sex couples in a lasting relationship.’¹⁸ This addition (*obiter dictum*) started off ‘the extremely gradual and almost perversely nuanced (but highly successful) process of legislative recognition of same-sex partnership in the Netherlands.’¹⁹

According to a 1990 poll – commissioned by *Gay Krant* and a national television talk-show – a slight majority (52.8%) of the Dutch population was in favor of opening up marriage to same-sex couples.²⁰ *Gay Krant* therefore called upon local authorities to offer

semi-official registration of same-sex partnerships.²¹ Despite the fact that the Dutch Association of Municipalities advised against it – because registration offered no more legal certainty than a notarized partnership contract, which a couple was advised to make first²² – 60 local governments immediately responded favorably.²³ On June 5, 1991 the first “wedding” took place, in an eastern province town called Deventer. Neither of the two brides wore a dress, but they did come to town hall in horse and carriage. Left-wing politicians quickly gave up their previous objections to marriage, and after a few years even COC came round.²⁴

2.2. Civil rites in the 1990s

By 1995, about 100 municipalities – that is, roughly one in six, but representing the greater part of Dutch citizens – had opened an alternative “marriage”²⁵ register, into which some 300 couples had been inscribed. A few municipalities refused to do so because they saw it as a sop, perpetuating unequal treatment. The municipality of Rheden said that if government did not make haste with opening up marriage, local registrars would proceed to conduct same-sex weddings. Haarlem threatened to do the same, or stop issuing marriage licenses altogether.²⁶

Whereas registration had no legal status whatsoever, it did have great symbolic value, if only because it usually took place in the so-called “wedding room” of town hall, and included virtually the same rituals and formulas as a regular civil marriage ceremony – notably a personalized speech by a civil servant, if not by a sworn marriage registrar.²⁷ Nine years before civil marriage was opened up to same-sex couples, Dutch gay and lesbian couples had thus gained access to equal *rites*.²⁸ “Gay marriage” (*homohuwelijk*) became a household term, and many Dutch citizens began to believe that the matter had already been legally settled. On the eve of Parliamentary debates about opening up marriage, a poll showed that, although about two thirds of the Dutch population agreed with the bill, almost half deemed it superfluous, given the possibility of civil unions.²⁹ This explains why the very first official same-sex marriage ceremony – on 1 April 2001, in Amsterdam’s city hall – went by almost unnoticed by Dutch media: ‘While the world was flabbergasted, the Netherlands had become bored with this feat.’³⁰

If one looks at *celebrations* rather than legislation, at *rites* instead of rights, the history of same-sex marriage goes further back in time than the first decade of the twenty-first century – and even further back than the early 1990s. In the following sections, a number of such celebrations that received substantial media coverage will be discussed. Section 3 focuses on more or less official religious solemnizations, which took place from the late 1970s onward. Section 4 sketches a general backdrop: the emergence of a pastoral discourse on “the homophile neighbor” since the end of the 1950s and its influence on social acceptance on homosexuality. Section 5 describes three highly publicized “bottom-up” initiatives for celebrating same-sex relationships in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

3. Contested celebrations since the 1970

In the Netherlands, as in many other European countries, a religious wedding has to be preceded by civil marriage: ‘No religious ceremonies may take place before the parties have shown to the foreman of the religious service that the marriage has been contracted

before a Registrar of Civil Status.³¹ Religious officials who violate this prohibition can get a €5000 fine or two months imprisonment.³² Nevertheless, religious solemnizations of same-sex relationships occurred well before 2001.

3.1. Official (Protestant) initiatives, 1979–2004

In 1986, the Remonstrant Brotherhood – as the first religious denomination in Europe – officially allowed the blessing of same-sex relationships, by adopting new ecclesiastical ordinances that expressed the equivalence of married and unmarried, heterosexual and homosexual couples.

Two people who promise before the congregation or its representatives to share their lives together in love and fidelity [Dutch: *trouw*] may have the covenant they have thus entered into blessed at a service of the church.³³

In January 1987, two men received such a blessing of their ‘life commitment’ or ‘life covenant’ – in Dutch: *levensverbindtenis*, an expression that avoided ‘marriage’ – and later that year, 10 more couples followed suit.³⁴ The new ordinances were the result of a general revision of the Remonstrant Church Order, started in 1978.³⁵ In the committee’s very first meeting already, one of the ministers had proposed to explore the feasibility of ‘homophiles’ marriage’ (Dutch: *homofielenhuwelijk*) and the recognition of non-married couples in general.³⁶ Since 1970, the number of marriages in the Netherlands had dramatically decreased, many couples choosing cohabitation instead.³⁷ The Remonstrant Brotherhood – a small, ageing, upper-middle class, liberal Protestant denomination – regarded ‘freedom and tolerance’ as its religious hallmark, and had been the country’s second denomination to ordain female ministers, in 1915.³⁸

Dutch Mennonites – who had been the very first to have female pastors, in 1905 – soon³⁹ also welcomed same-sex couples for receiving a blessing. So did a third small, liberal Protestant denomination: as early as in 1972, the Lutheran Synod had declared that sexual orientation should be considered irrelevant for church offices.⁴⁰ In 1995, it stated that ‘there are no theological arguments against blessing people in their promise of steady friendship, fidelity [Dutch: *trouw*] and devotion.’⁴¹ Blessing same-sex relationships was then already common practice in many Lutheran congregations, but the Synod shied away from making this official, in order not to offend conservatives within the country’s two biggest Protestant denominations with which it was about to unite: the Netherlands Reformed Church (NRC) and the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (RCN).⁴²

On 1 May 2004, these three effectively merged into the Protestant Church in the Netherlands (PCN). The event was hailed as the long looked-for healing of centuries-old schisms but immediately produced a new breach. The most Puritan, Pietistic wing of the NRC seceded – mainly because the PCN’s ecclesiastical ordinances allowed local churches ‘to bless other life commitments [Dutch: *levensverbindtenissen*] between two people as a covenant of love and fidelity before God.’⁴³

In both these mainline Reformed denominations (the NRC and the smaller RCN), blessing same-sex relationships had occurred long before 2004. For example, in March 1979 the church council of the NRC in the city of Groningen gave its permission for a special but *public* church service in which two men would ‘express the profound significance of their relationship, promise fidelity to each other, and pray for their friendship.’⁴⁴ The local

hospital chaplain who had requested permission – and was himself in a homosexual relationship – emphasized the *pastoral* reasons for allowing such a blessing, both men having suffered discrimination. ‘The church has a debt of honor,’ he argued. ‘These people should not be rejected again.’⁴⁵ Numerous conservative Protestants protested against the church council’s decision, some of them objecting to the public character of the church service, others to the equation of this relationship with marriage, and still others to any ‘sanctioning of homosexual practice.’⁴⁶

3.2. Blessing behind closed doors in the 1970s and 1980s

The aforementioned conflict among Protestants coincided with public upheaval about statements by the Netherlands’ most conservative Catholic bishops, Simonis and Gijzen.⁴⁷ In 1979, the latter – bishop of Roermond since 1972 – had said that practicing homosexuals did not belong in church, and should not receive the sacraments. Thousands of gay and lesbian activists marched against the bishop on the Saturday before Easter, which they dubbed ‘Pink Saturday.’⁴⁸ A poll showed that merely 8% of Dutch Catholics agreed with Gijzen, over against 10–15% of the Reformed respondents. A few Catholic bishops also distanced themselves from the statements of their peer, thereby reaffirming that things were not as black as they seemed.⁴⁹

Maybe this is why in 1983 two Reformed young women – Harmanna alias Marna Kalsbeek (25) and Ria Bultena (19) – from a northern hamlet named Foxhol turned to a *Catholic* clergyman for having their relationship blessed. The priest agreed to celebrate a private mass in the provincial cathedral, on the condition that it would remain secret, but one of the girls’ friends – in order to add to the gaiety – informed the press.⁵⁰ Their “wedding portrait” – with one of them holding a Bible, a traditionally Protestant wedding gift – appeared on the front page of the number 1 national newspaper, under the header ‘Two women married.’⁵¹ The bishop, however, who had explicitly forbidden the ceremony beforehand, forced the priest to publicly apologize, and stated: ‘Pastoral care for homophiles cannot imply a pastor being involved in the solemnization of a friendship. Anything resembling the celebration of marriage [...] is contrary to the views of the Roman Catholic Church.’⁵² A regional religious LGB group protested, arguing that the Church should openly bless same-sex couples, instead of only allowing this ‘here and there, behind closed doors.’⁵³

Discrete solemnizations of same-sex relationships also occasionally took place in mainline Reformed (NRC and RCN) churches. Only in exceptional cases did they gain any media attention.⁵⁴ Until the turn of the century, officially allowing these celebrations proved a bridge too far, because homosexuality as such was controversial – notably in the NRC, which encompassed both latitudinarian and orthodox Protestants.⁵⁵ The willingness of some mainline Protestant and Catholic⁵⁶ clergy to – more or less openly – solemnize same-sex relationships should be seen against the backdrop of a pastoral discourse on “homophilia.”

4. Pastoral care for “the homophile neighbor” in the 1960s

During the 1930s, 1940s and much of the 1950s, the Dutch Province of the Roman Catholic Church had been the most conservative in Europe. From 1958, when Pope John XXIII

was elected, it suddenly turned into the most progressive: ‘a salto mortale from Ultramontanism to avant-gardism.’⁵⁷ The dense infrastructure of Catholic civil society organizations which had served up to that point to keep the believers on the straight and narrow, became a motorway for the dissemination of progressive ideas, for example, on sexuality.⁵⁸ Traditional morality was now tested against a modern norm: mental health.⁵⁹ Instead of curing homosexuality, self-acceptance was the word and in place of asceticism came authenticity: ‘the regime of self-realization.’⁶⁰

In 1958, Catholic priests and psychiatrists opened a help center for homosexuals in Amsterdam, that then had Europe’s most vibrant gay scene. In 1961 they published a booklet in which they cautiously called for acceptance.⁶¹ Protestants published a similar pocket book, titled *The homosexual neighbor*,⁶² which included an article by a homophile man. Both publications found a large readership, also outside the Catholic and Protestant communities for which they had been intended. Other media played an even more important role. In 1960–1961, the leading Catholic psychiatrist Cees Trimbos held four radio-talks on homosexuality, reaching millions of listeners.⁶³ Also in 1961, and in even stronger words, the mainline Reformed radio-pastor Alje Klamer pleaded for acceptance in two radio talks and a newspaper article – after which he received thousands of letters. Together with a Protestant and a Catholic peer, he set up get-together groups for “homophile” Christians, which would grow into a dense national network that exists until the present day.⁶⁴

In 1965, Trimbos, Klamer, and about 20 other Catholic and mainline Protestant clergymen and psychiatrists founded a Pastoral Taskforce on Homophilia, which soon was recognized by the Catholic and Protestant national centers of mental health and by the Council of Churches in the Netherlands.⁶⁵ Interestingly, in its very first meeting, a disagreement emerged between one of the Catholic members (Henricus Ruygers, professor of moral philosophy) and Protestant pastors. The latter proposed to allow the religious solemnization of same-sex relationships. Ruygers objected, because many of these relationships were rather short-lived. The Protestant pastors admitted this, but thought that religious solemnization could encourage sexual fidelity.⁶⁶ Notwithstanding this disagreement, all members agreed that pastors should a) never try to break up an existing homophile relationship, b) never advice heterosexual marriage as a remedy, c) not expect the average homophile to abstain from sex (although this remained the *via regia*), d) recommend a steady love relationship instead and e) promote sexual fidelity.⁶⁷

Pastoral care for “homophiles” fitted in well with the new role that the Catholic and Protestant clergy saw for themselves, namely as “pastoral counsellors.”⁶⁸ Prudent or even conservative as it may have been in comparison with “queer” activism in the 1970s and subsequent decades, this pastoral care seems to have made major contributions to the social acceptance of homosexuality in the Netherlands. At a time when “homophiles” were hardly visible, and their organizations barely had a voice, pastors stood up for them, by not only listening to them but making them heard, for example, by referring to their existence and experiences in sermons, public prayers, columns, and other writings. Whereas “visibility” is nowadays commonly regarded as the magic bullet of LGBT emancipation, in the 1960s – and much of the 1970s – it was rather “audibility” that made the difference. All the same, then already some gays and lesbians were eager to show. For this, too, religious institutions offered opportunities.

5. Three 'lay' Catholic initiatives, 1967–1970

5.1. Exchanging rings in Rotterdam (1967)

On 1 June 1967, the Catholic daily *De Tijd* reported that priests in the deanery of Rotterdam had conferred about pastoral care for homophiles. According to one of the speakers, rector E. Schraven, the Church should try to influence public opinion, for example, by 'solemnizing a homophile friendship by means of ecclesiastical rites.'⁶⁹ In an editorial, on the front page of the same issue, this plan was rejected.

Strange idea, nonsensical proposal. [...] Homophilia need not be an obstacle to being a Christian. That's our, but not *everyone's* opinion. Let the church first see to it that the un-Christian prejudices against the deviance called homophilia are removed, instead of sprinkling holy water where it cannot flow. In our view, that's puppetry, which in the end will make homophiles the victims of exaggerated progressivism and will alienate many believers from any kind of ecclesiastical rites.⁷⁰

The challenged priest, rector Schraven, wrote a furious reaction, claiming he had said 'not one single word of all the nonsense you presume. Is this clear?' He, as well as the other speaker, 'held the view that homophile friendships should not be solemnized. Is this also clear?'⁷¹ Yes, answered the editors, all things were clear now, but they had based their editorial on a report of the conference, issued by the organizers. 'If a committee of 12 clever intellectuals asks us black on white to enter something you did not say, you must not vent your gall on the newspaper. [...] Is this clear?'⁷² Next, the organizers themselves reacted, affirming that rector Schraven had not said it 'in this form.'⁷³ In what form then *did* he say it, asked the editors. 'Our only mistake has been to assume that a group of 13 intellectuals can issue a correct communiqué. We'll never do it again.'⁷⁴

This squabbling between journalists and clergymen gained relevance within weeks. On 1 July, *De Tijd* reported that in a Rotterdam chapel a 'strange ceremony' had taken place that could be called 'solemnizing a homophile friendship by means of ecclesiastical rites' – exactly the phrase the newspaper had used one month earlier. During a votive mass, the two young men who had "commissioned" it, had exchanged rings.⁷⁵ The Rotterdam episcopacy quickly distanced itself from the event, and assured that it had 'no sacral value' – but parishioners were alarmed.⁷⁶ Some of them even refused to receive communion from the responsible priests. The clergymen initially claimed that they had been 'misled in an almost sacrilegious manner' – but soon admitted they had known beforehand about the nature of the 'lifelong friendship' for which the mass was intended. '[U]nder the influence of the more human attitude that the R. C. Church, too, has adopted toward homophiles' they had not objected,⁷⁷ but by way of precaution the parson had left the matter to his chaplain – 'who has slightly more modern views' – and relocated this votive mass from the parish church to the inconspicuous chapel of the Brothers of the Immaculate Conception.⁷⁸ What remains unclear is whether the clergymen knew that the 'new enterprise', for which the mass was also intended, was a gay bar.⁷⁹

De Tijd denounced the deceitfulness and impudence of the two men, but on the other hand casted doubt on the innocence of the clergymen.⁸⁰ All of this made rector Schraven's denial sound even less convincing than it had one month earlier. The couple itself was criticized not only by the clergy and parts of the press, but also by COC.⁸¹ Its then chairman, Benno Premsele, said that exchanging rings was 'highly unusual' among homosexuals, and

called the event ‘an untenable publicity stunt.’⁸² The editors of a regional newspaper, however, expressed sympathy with the couple’s initiative. Responding to the statement of a Rotterdam pastor ‘that homophile friendships can receive pastoral support, but no sacramental support,’⁸³ they argued that pastoral care had liturgical implications.

[I]t is unavoidable then, that eventually the religious homophile will also want to have his friendship accepted by the church, to dedicate it to the God in whom he believes and whose blessing he, as a human being, needs.⁸⁴

The two men themselves stated they had simply ‘felt the need to seal our friendship before God,’ but lost much of their credibility when photos of the ceremony showed up in foreign magazines. Contrary to what they had previously assured, the spouses had apparently sold them.⁸⁵

5.2. *Sacrilege and solemnization: Gerard van het Reve (1969)*

The first Dutch public figure who came out as being homosexual was the novelist and poet Gerard Kornelis van het Reve (alias Gerard Reve; 1923–2006). In his 1947 debut,⁸⁶ he had only hinted at having a dark secret, but in the letters and poems he published in the early 1960s and in a 1963 interview on national television⁸⁷ he spoke out loud and clear. Interestingly, this coming-out coincided with a religious turn. Van het Reve, who had been raised an atheist, converted to Catholicism – old-school *Roman* Catholicism with all its devotional camp, pomp and circumstance. He was baptized in June 1966, shortly after having been charged with blasphemy. In a 1965 published letter, he had written that God’s next incarnation would be as a Donkey, with Which the author would have anal intercourse.

If God ever lets Himself be captured again in Living Matter, He will return as a Donkey, capable at most of formulating a few syllables, disowned, maligned, and whacked, but I will understand Him and directly go to bed with Him, but I will swathe His sweet little hooves, so as not to get too many scratches, when he thrashes while coming.⁸⁸

What followed was a long, highly publicized court case, known as ‘the Donkey Trial.’ While van het Reve could have easily defended himself by referring to the literary, fictional character of his writings, he instead claimed having expressed a sincerely religious view. In 1968, the Netherlands’ Supreme Court by peremptory decree acquitted him. Further rehabilitation followed the next year, when van het Reve received the State prize for Dutch literature. Three months later, the prestigious Society of Dutch Literature staged a public homage, which was broadcast live on national television. It included serious contributions by a prominent journalist and a professor of literature but also performances by an acrobat, a conjurer, a juggler, a brass band and – the campiest element – a torch-song artist called *De Zangeres Zonder Naam* (‘The Female Singer With No Name’). The homage took place in an Amsterdam Catholic church – a literary critic called it ‘the greatest show in church’⁸⁹ – and ended with the author walking down the aisle hand in hand with ‘Teigetje’ (‘Tigger’), his then boyfriend. ‘The essence of love is, that it is *not* free,’ he had stated a few minutes earlier, ‘that it gives itself captive and bound, and that it is sacrifice, and that it serves.’⁹⁰ This scene would soon become an icon, a *lieu de mémoire* of the Dutch 1960s and of gay liberation.⁹¹ The next day already, the country’s leading television-critic called it ‘[a] unique image, never shown before, nowhere in the world.’⁹²

Later Van het Reve said he had walked hand in hand with ‘Teigetje’ because the latter had taken off his glasses, and was afraid he would stumble,⁹³ but he seems to have actually cherished the idea of solemnizing same-sex relationships. In a 1963 interview he said that the Catholic Church’s stance on homosexuality was getting more and more tolerant. ‘It is therefore conceivable that a priest blesses the rings of a pair of friends,’ he concluded, ‘which has actually happened.’⁹⁴ It is unclear what specific event – if any – Van het Reve referred to. Had a Dutch priest solemnized a same-sex relationship? The controversial 1967 “wedding” in Rotterdam may have been not the first time that a “homophile” couple celebrated their love in a (Catholic) church.⁹⁵

5.3. Harry Thomas’s wedding party (1969–1970)

Two weeks after ‘the greatest show in church’, Van het Reve participated in a panel discussion on ‘emotions about homophilia’, hosted by the Catholic College for Theology and Pastorate.⁹⁶ At this occasion, he voiced his pessimism about the social acceptance of homosexuality, but proved quite optimistic about development in Dutch Catholicism: ‘It looks like the church will recognize monogamous homophile relationships.’⁹⁷ The college’s professor of ethics agreed with this, and urged pastors to comply if a homophile couple requested ‘sanctification’ of their relationship – a call that did not go unnoticed by the press.⁹⁸

Not before long, same-sex marriage again made headlines, thanks to the coming on stage of a new “homophile” public figure: Harry Thomas, a 23-year old, corpulent, conservatively dressed bookkeeper, who participated in a pastoral get-together group for homophile Christians (see section 4), while also being a member of COC. In June 1969, he had published a book titled *Herman, de liefde van een homofiel* (“Herman, the love of a homophile”), which offered sensationalist descriptions of the gay subculture, criticized promiscuous homosexuals, but on the other hand denounced the societal oppression of homophiles – for which the author not only blamed the Nazi’s but also Christian churches, the Dutch government and other societal institutions, such as the police. More specifically, he described how his friendship with a young man, Herman, had been sabotaged by homophobic colleagues.⁹⁹ Parts of this text were simultaneously issued as a 7” record, with musical accompaniment of an electronic organ patiently playing *We Shall Overcome*.¹⁰⁰

May the Church finally practice the word it preaches, by accepting us as God’s children and giving us with our friend[s] the Lord’s Blessing; because our love, too, is honest and sincere. May the State accept that there is a second expression of love; it will then repeal the sections that humiliate us and issue others, that put us on a par.¹⁰¹

On 11 December – one month after the aforementioned panel discussion – Thomas announced the establishment of the Dutch Homophiles’ Party (*Nederlandse Homofielen Partij*). In contradistinction to COC – which it blamed for “demoralizing” homophiles, by overemphasizing sex – the party would be right-wing, Christian, and support monogamy.¹⁰² Its sole political objective was the cultural integration of ‘the homophile relation of friendship,’ by means of its legal recognition and religious solemnization.¹⁰³ It reported having a board of 29, and – after a few months – over 14,000 members.

COC dismissed the initiative – saying it preferred *all* political parties supporting emancipation and equal treatment – but several newspapers interviewed or quoted Thomas, and a local parish priest let him speak in a special mass, in which he himself also pleaded for the religious solemnization of steady homophile relationships.¹⁰⁴

5.3.1. “Entitled to equivalent recognition”

A few months later, Thomas announced that on Sunday 28 June 1970, he and his lover – Alex Verhoeven – would have their relationship solemnized in a Catholic church. The ceremony would be assisted by 14 Catholic and 4 Protestant clergymen, plus a fair amount of foreign media, including NBC. Bernard Cardinal Alfrink, the Netherlands’ only archbishop (in 1955–1975), was also invited, and ‘from the prelate’s answer cannot be deduced that a friendship relation cannot be solemnized in church.’¹⁰⁵ Next, the Party reported that Thomas had had a ‘thorough and very sympathetic conversation’ with the Cardinal about the intended ceremony.¹⁰⁶ A group of conservative priests warned the Vatican about this ‘outright disgrace to the Church and its holy Eucharist’ – which seems to not have passed unheeded: the *Osservatore Romano* published a fierce theological condemnation of ‘marriages against nature’.¹⁰⁷ A few months later, the *Osservatore della Domenica* published another article in the same vein, written by an auditor of the Roman Rota – the Vatican’s Supreme Court.¹⁰⁸

By then, the Dutch episcopate had already dismissed Thomas’ plan – but only after having consulted the aforementioned Pastoral Taskforce on Homophilia.¹⁰⁹ Interestingly, its “lay” homophile members were much more critical of Thomas’ plan than the clergymen. After full consideration, the Taskforce advised against a public religious ceremony, but mainly for *strategic* reasons. ‘As long as the church community does not respect its homophile members in their specific orientation,’ public weddings would be counter-productive, because of the hostile reactions they might provoke. Pastors should facilitate *private* celebrations, though. (Hence the discrete religious solemnizations of same-sex relationships in the 1970s and 1980s.) ‘As marriage and homophile relationship essentially show a great similarity, both forms of living together are entitled to equivalent recognition by the churches,’ the Taskforce wrote.¹¹⁰ The Dutch bishops of course did not entirely subscribe to this, but much in line with the Taskforce’s advice stated that same-sex church weddings could jeopardize the social acceptance of homophiles – which the bishops apparently deemed a goal worth pursuing.¹¹¹

This reflected a general shift of Dutch public opinion on homosexuality in these years: “homophiles” had come to be regarded victims of societal prejudice and discrimination. A telling example is the public response to yet another scandal. On 4 May 1970, at the annual commemoration of World War II in Amsterdam – a textbook example of civil religion – a couple of young gay activists tried to place wreath for the homosexual victims of Nazi persecution. They were violently removed by armed forces, but triumphed they next day, when the editorials of numerous Dutch newspapers – secular and religious, left-wing and right-wing – criticized the authorities.

5.3.2. Epilogue

Harry Thomas called off his “wedding,” which he had already postponed a few times. COC expelled him as a member, for having ‘severely harmed gay emancipation’, by vilifying not only COC and *homosexuals* in general but also the – Jewish – minister of Justice (‘a

complete Anti-Christ’, ‘walked right out of the murderous books of Moses’). In December 1970, a journalist found out that the Dutch Homophiles’ Party – which had been making headlines for a full year – existed only in Harry Thomas’s imagination. The same was true of his intended wedding, his audience with Cardinal Alfrink, and probably also his lover.¹¹² In July 1971, newspapers reported that Thomas had died of a cardiac arrest – but a few days later the deceased stated he had merely been unconscious.¹¹³ Thomas gave up politics, and made a career switch from bookkeeper to record producer and impresario, especially of *Schlager* music (alias ‘German hit mix’). His biggest commercial success though – a 1977 international chart-topper – was *The Smurf Song*, performed by “Father Abraham” and an all-male, all-blue choir.

Harry Thomas, who was severely obese, died at age 46, on 29 October 1991 – long before the opening-up of civil marriage to same-sex couples, but shortly after dozens of Dutch municipalities had invited them to register, and celebrate their relationships in the wedding room.

6. Conclusion

This article has presented an inverted history; not only by reading history backwards, but by challenging a dominant narrative, that frames disagreements about same-sex relationships in terms of a – putatively “essential,” “eternal” – conflict between religious and secular institutions or ideologies. Historical data show that this narrative suffers from amnesia. In the Netherlands, at least, Catholic and mainline Protestant pastors, churches, and faith-based political parties – notwithstanding their moral hesitations about homosexuality – were among the first to *propose*, whereas the gay and lesbian movement and much of the political left categorically refused. This history has close parallels in the United States¹¹⁴ which may not be coincidental, given the transnational networks of both Catholics and (liberal) Protestants, for example, in the field of pastoral counseling and clinical pastoral education.

The willingness of several Catholic priests and Protestant ministers to allow, recognize and sometimes even solemnize steady ‘homophile’ relationships seems to have been inspired not only by their unease with sexual promiscuity but also by their ambition to re-conceptualize marriage, now that the link between sexuality and family-formation was being severed, and women were increasingly regarded as being equal to men. Since same-sex relationships were much less than before the 1960s characterized by differences of age, class, and gender expression, they fitted in well with the emergent view of sexuality as an expression of egalitarian “partnership.”¹¹⁵ Same-sex couples had become more equal than others.

The emancipation of Dutch “homophiles” during the 1960s was in a complex way connected with contemporary religious changes that cannot be reduced to secularization. While Dutch churches lost members, and clergy lost authority, the latter succeeded in re-styling themselves as *pastors*, responsive to the personable experiences of individual believers.¹¹⁶ Conservative as it may seem in comparison with fighting for equal rights or challenging the heteronormative order, pastoral care for “homophiles” did make a difference, because liturgical, canonical, and political consequences could be drawn from it – both by clergy and by laity.

The fact that the social acceptance of homosexuality increased so much earlier in the Netherlands than in other European countries,¹¹⁷ may have been partly a result of the 1960s revolution in Dutch Catholicism. Each of the three “stunts” described in Section 5 took place during the Pastoral Council of the Roman Catholic Church in the Netherlands (1966–1970), the Dutch follow-up to the Second Vatican Council. Soon after this radically progressive church assembly had called for the abolition of mandatory clerical celibacy, the Vatican terminated it, and nominated one reactionary bishop after the other. Still, it was not until the 1990s that this fundamentally altered the Catholic Church’s reputation of practical permissiveness. Van het Reve’s public performance, and the responses to it, illustrate the complex way in which gay liberation in the Netherlands was connected with Catholic emancipation.¹¹⁸

Notwithstanding camp and canard characteristics, the aforementioned three ‘stunts’ deserve serious scholarly attention because they are indicative of fundamental shifts in the social representation of homosexuality. First, whereas until the late 1960s, discourse on homosexuality had been dominated by experts – psychiatrists, psychologists, lawyers, and clergy – the *gay lay* now began to speak and act for themselves, sometimes by appropriating religious language and practice. Second, whereas “homophiles” had previously only (been) made themselves heard, they now visibly appeared – with some of them choosing the church as their stage. Third, whereas discourse had previously focused on homosexuality as an individual way of being or feeling, it was now presented as a way of relating – not only to heterosexuals – or belonging. This third shift can also be perceived in the incident at the 1970 commemoration of World War II, which would lead to the creation of the Amsterdam *Homomonument*. Since 1987 this monument has served as an “altar” for rituals such as the commemoration of queer “ancestors” but also deceased friends or lovers.

The HIV/AIDS crisis of the 1980s and 1990s not only made gays and lesbians more interested in marriage (or legal partnership) because of its practical, juridical advantages but also because the premature deaths of friends and lovers had increased their appreciation of rituals – religious or secular, funerary or nuptial.¹¹⁹ During the 1998 Amsterdam Gay Games, the organizers of mock wedding ceremonies in a former chapel – where even marrying one’s goldfish was possible – found out to their surprise that many (foreign) visitors took this quite seriously.¹²⁰

Whereas in many other Western countries the HIV/AIDS crisis sparked radical queer activism, in the Netherlands – where the authorities closely cooperated with COC – the 1980s and 1990s saw a depoliticization of LGB communities.¹²¹ To some extent, the legalization of same-sex relationships illustrates this trend: although it has led to innumerable political debates – often in terms of “equal treatment” versus “religious liberty” – critique of social institutions other than churches and faith-based organizations has all but completely disappeared. On the other hand, the opening-up of this heterosexual bastion by excellence seems to have greatly enhanced queer citizens’ sense of dignity – not just by giving them access to equal rights but also by enabling them to play leading roles in time-honored, “sacred” rites. In this respect the clerical and lay, official and clandestine, serious and ironical initiatives for solemnizing same-sex relationships in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s are of historic importance – not because they paved the way to juridical “marriage equality,” but because they explored a powerful repertoire of symbolic expression and contestation.

Notes

1. Waaldijk, "Small Change," 437.
2. VWS, *Paars over roze: Nota homo-emancipatiebeleid*. Den Haag: Ministerie van Volksgezondheid, Welzijn en Sport, 2001. Full details of research material are only provided in notes, not in the list of references.
3. "VVD-fractie verdeeld over homohuwelijk," Algemeen Nederlands Persbureau (ANP), 20 March 1996.
4. Waaldijk, "Small Change."
5. In a 1989 interview with *Gay Krant*, D'Ancona said she was against the legalization of same-sex marriage. In 1990, however, she spoke out in favor of it (see "Een kwart eeuw Gay Krant"; <http://archive.is/YfXU#selection-689.0-689.45>, consulted on 10 February 2014). See also Elsbeth Etty, "Huwelijk afschuwelijk," *NRC Handelsblad*, 1 November 1997 (*huwelijk* is Dutch for "marriage"; *afschuwelijk* means "horrible").
6. T. Bot-van Gijzen, *1 + 1 = samen: Publieke erkenning van lotsverbondenheid: Een christen-democratische bijdrage tot de gedachtenvorming over huwelijkse en niet-huwelijkse tweerelaties: Rapport van een commissie van het Wetenschappelijk Instituut voor het CDA*. Den Haag: Wetenschappelijk Instituut voor het CDA, 1986. ('Samen' in the main title means 'together.')
7. Bart Luirink, "Onerbaar," *De Waarheid*, 3 June 1986. (Unless mentioned otherwise, all translations from Dutch in this article are mine).
8. Herman Meijer, "Roomse taktiek in de herhaling," *De Waarheid*, 24 June 1986.
9. From 1964 until 1971 its official name had been 'Dutch Association for Homophiles.' Before that time, it only bore the "cover-up" name *Cultuur- en OntspanningsCentrum* ('Center for Culture and Leisure'). See Warmerdam and Koenders, *Cultuur en ontspanning*.
10. Strictly speaking, this is an anachronism: these student activists, too, called themselves "homophiles." In Dutch, unlike English, terms like "homophilia" continue to be used until the present day.
11. Warmerdam and Koenders, *Cultuur en ontspanning*; Tielman, *Homoseksualiteit in Nederland*; Hekma, *Homoseksualiteit in Nederland*.
12. Cf. Mills, *The Sociological Imagination*.
13. "FSWH voorzitter Joke Swiebel: 'Studenten moeten koplopers zijn in de seksuele revolutie,'" *Seq* 1, no. 1 (1969): 31. Swiebel also co-authored a 1969 pamphlet that urged COC to steer a more radical, critical, left-wing course: Henk Branderhorst et al., *Afscheid van een moederbinding: Uitdaging van Nieuw Lila aan het COC*. Amsterdam: Nieuw Lila, 1969. See also H. W. Methorst, "De homofilie heeft positieve aspecten." *C.O.C. periodiek*, no. 6 (1963): 1–5; Gerry Pendel, "Over het homofiele huwelijk." *Vriendschap* 19, no. 99 (1964): 137–9.
14. Tielman, *Homoseksualiteit in Nederland*, 201. Like Swiebel, Tielman had been a founding member of the political ginger group that published the aforementioned pamphlet. From 1977 until 1987, he was chairman of the (secularist) Humanist Association (*Humanistisch Verbond*). In the 1980s he was head of gay studies at Utrecht University.
15. See: Tielman, *Homoseksualiteit in Nederland*, 232; Hekma, *Homoseksualiteit in Nederland*, 126.
16. See, for example, "Frank en Gerard trouwen ook niet in Haren," *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden*, 25 September 1990.
17. "Huwelijk homo's niet erg in zwang," *Leeuwarder Courant*, 8 July 1989.
18. Quoted in Waaldijk, "Small Change," 443; see also idem, "De heteroseksuele exclusiviteit."
19. Waaldijk, "Small Change," 441; see also idem, *More or less together* and *The Right to Relate*.
20. "Veronica's wonderkind Lenferink mist open doel," *NRC Handelsblad*, 31 October 1990.
21. "Homo's pleiten voor trouwregister," *NRC Handelsblad*, 27 November 1990; "Plan gelanceerd voor 'trouwregister' homo's," *Leeuwarder Courant*, 27 November 1990.
22. "VNG: Trouwregister is juridisch niet mogelijk," *Leeuwarder Courant*, 21 December 1990; see also: "Hoezo huwelijk?" *Nederlands Dagblad*, 28 November 1990.
23. "Register voor homoparen in Deventer: Gemeente komt als eerste tegemoet aan oproep Gaykrant." *NRC Handelsblad*, 22 March 1991.

24. In 1989 already the then director of COC said: 'Of course, one may wonder if it is advisable to copy heterosexual marriage. On the other hand, "gay marriage" brings with it more equality before the law.' ("Ja, ik wil ... gelijkheid: Ontbreken relatiewetgeving noopt homo's tot proefproces," *De Telegraaf*, 4 November 1989).
25. Instead of *huwelijksregister* (marriage register) it was named *trouwregister*; *trouwen* means 'to marry' but *trouw* also means 'fidelity' or 'loyalty'.
26. See: "Haarlem wil huwelijk voor homoparen," *Het Parool*, 16 February 1995. In this respect, "refusing registrars" (see Derks' article in this issue) date from well before 2001.
27. Cf. Derks' article in this issue.
28. Cf. White, "Gay Rights and Religious Rites."
29. "Ruime steun voor homohuwelijk, twijfel aan noodzaak," *Reformatorisch Dagblad*, 2 September 2000.
30. Hekma, "Ups-and-Downs," 5–6; cf. "Dutch Legislators Approve Full Marriage Rights for Gays," *New York Times*, 15 September 2000.
31. Dutch Civil Code, art. 1:68; <http://www.dutchcivillaw.com/civilcodebook01.htm>, last consulted on 5 November 2014.
32. See, for example, "Celstraf voor eerst trouwen in de kerk," *Trouw*, 28 October 2000.
33. *Kerkorde* 1989, I, art. 6; quoted in Van der Burg, "Recognition." The Dutch word for "fidelity" (or "faithfulness," "loyalty"), *trouw*, has strong connotations of marriage: *trouwen* means "to marry."
34. W. J. Overdiep, "Inzegening van levensverbintenissen." In *Homosexualiteit en theologie*, edited by Yko van der Groot and Dinand de Vries, 52–56. 's-Gravenhage: Boekencentrum, 1988.
35. Wouter Geurtsen, Annet Hofmeijer, and Ton Zondervan, *Homo of hetero, gezegend ben je! Remonstranten over huwelijk en andere relatievormen*. Utrecht: Interfacultaire Werkgroep Homostudies, 1991.
36. Van der Burg, "Recognition." See also Wielie Elhorst, and Tom Mikkers, *Coming Out Churches – Dutch Edition: Gids voor kerk en homo*. Zoetermeer: Meinema, 2011.
37. Latten, "Trends in samenwonen en trouwen," 46–60.
38. Lim, *Het spoor van de vrouw*.
39. When exactly is hard to say, given Mennonites' decentralized form of church governance.
40. Van der Burg, "Recognition."
41. "Lutherse synode stemt voor homo-huwelijk en duidelijkheid over SoW," *Trouw*, 6 November 2000.
42. "Amsterdamse lutheranen eisen alsnog synodebesluit over homohuwelijk," Algemeen Nederlands Persbureau (ANP), 20 June 1995.
43. *Kerkorde en ordinanties van de Protestantse Kerk in Nederland* (2004), Ordinantie 5, art. 4.1.
44. "Verontrusting over besluit Kerkeraad: Dienst voor homofiel 'huwelijk,'" *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden*, 16 March 1979; see also: "Hervormde kerkerend staat homofiele trouw-plechtigheid toe," *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden*, 9 March 1979; "Homofielen 'trouwen' in dienst Hervormde gemeente," *Nederlands Dagblad*, 15 March 1979.
45. "'Kerk heeft ereschuld tegenover homofiele medemens': Veel reacties op besluit Groninger kerkeraad," *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden*, 15 March 1979.
46. "Grondslag," *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden*, 13 March 1979; "Homofiele relatie in kerk bevestigd," *Leeuwarder Courant*, 17 March 1979; "Unicum," *Leeuwarder Courant*, 17 March 1979; "Groningse GB-wijkkerkeraad: discussie over homofiele relatie moest vooraf gebeuren," *Nederlands Dagblad*, 28 March 1979. The church council had taken its decision with 9 against 6 votes.
47. Both had been appointed by the Vatican in the early 1970s, to curb the revolutionary trends in Dutch Catholicism; cf. Coleman, *Evolution*.
48. See <https://www.historischnieuwsblad.nl/nl/artikel/6324/25-jaar-na-de-eerste-roze-zaterdag-in-roermond.html>, last consulted on 25 February 2017.
49. "Kerk heeft ereschuld tegenover homofiele medemens': Veel reacties op besluit Groninger kerkeraad," *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden*, 15 March 1979. The 10% pertain to *hervormden*

(i.e. members of the NRC), the 15% to *gereformeerden*, which can refer to mainline Reformed (RCN) as well as ultra-orthodox Calvinists.

50. "Conflict bisschop met pastor om lesbisch huwelijk in Groningen," *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden*, 12 March 1983 [front page]; see also "Twee vrouwen trouwen," *Het Vrije Volk*, 12 March 1983; see also "Priest Faces Discipline For Lesbian Wedding," *Logansport Pharos-Tribune*, 13 March 1983.
51. "Twee vrouwen getrouwd," *De Telegraaf*, 12 March 1983. A few days later, the couple was interviewed in a popular talk show on public television ("Tros TV-show," 15 March 1983) and explained – speaking with a markedly northern accent – they had turned to the Church because civil marriage was impossible.
52. Quoted in "Pastor betreurt nu lesbische 'trouwerij,'" *Leeuwarder Courant*, 19 March 1983.
53. COC-werkgroep Geloof en Levensbeschouwing Friesland, "Gezegende relatie," *Leeuwarder Courant*, 25 March 1983. The local 'political queer collective The Pink Rat', on the other hand, briefly occupied the wedding room of city hall, in order to denounce 'the oppression of homosexuals by heterosexual society,' stating they were 'unwilling to adapt to this straight symbol called marriage' ("Trouwzaal bezet," *De Waarheid*, 25 March 1983).
54. On the eve of Pink Saturday 1989, a male couple had their relationship blessed in an RCN church in The Hague, with the explicit permission of the local church council. In this respect, the event differed from the discrete solemnizations by the church's previous pastor, A. J. R. Brussaard. See "Trouwviering homopaar in Haagse Kerk," *Leeuwarder Courant*, 7 June 1989; "Homo-relatie wordt ingezegend – In (syn.) gereformeerde kerkdienst in Den Haag," *Nederlands Dagblad*, 8 June 1989; "Gereformeerde viering trouwbelofte mannen," *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden*, 8 June 1989; see also "Huwelijk homo's niet erg in zwang," *Leeuwarder Courant*, 8 July 1989. Brussaard was one of the pioneers of the pastoral approach to homosexuality that will be discussed in the next section. See also A. J. R. Brussaard et al., *Een mens hoeft niet alleen te blijven: Een evangelische visie op homofilie*. Baarn: Ten Have, 1977.

In 1992 a joint NRC-RCN parish in The Hague officially announced that same-sex couples could have their relationship solemnized. See: "Homo-huwelijk," *Het Parool*, 23 October 1992.

In 1993, the minister of a joint NRC-RCN parish close to Amsterdam asked the local church council permission for having her same-sex relationship blessed in church. A minority objected, mainly to the public character of the church service. At their request, a "referendum" was held among the ca. 400 members of the congregation. 51 of them voted for, 10 against. The blessing eventually took place in February 1994. See "Lesbisch predikante vraagt kerkelijke inzegening relatie," ANP, 10 June 1993; "Lesbische dominee wil inzegening," *Het Parool*, 11 June 1993; "Homo-predikante," *Trouw*, 11 June 1993; "Lesbische predikante," *Het Parool*, 23 June 1993; "Inzegening lesbische relatie in kerk," *NRC Handelsblad*, 23 June 1993; "Een lesbische relatie is een godsgeschenk," *Het Parool*, 13 November 1993; "Zegen," *Trouw*, 13 November 1993; "Lesbische liefde dominee in eigen kerk gezegend," *Trouw*, 11 February 1994.
55. Mader, "Exclusion, Toleration, Acceptance, Integration." Bos, *De aard, de daad en het Woord*.
56. In May 1989, Taskforce of Catholic Gay Pastors (established in 1980) sent a "pastoral letter" to all Catholic parishes in the Netherlands, in which it pleaded for blessing all sorts of intimate relationships. See Werkverband van Katholieke Homo-Pastores, *Tot zegen bereid: Pastorale brief over het vieren van vriendschap*. Hilversum: Gooi & Sticht, 2000. also Korte, Vosman and De Wit, *Ordering*.
57. Suër, *Niet te geloven*; cf. Kennedy, "Recent Dutch Religious History."
58. Coleman, *The Evolution of Dutch Catholicism*; Oosterhuis, *Homoseksualiteit in katholiek Nederland*.
59. Westhoff, *Geestelijke bevrijders*.
60. Van Stolk, *Eigenwaarde als groepsbelang*; Tonkens, *Het zelfontplooiingsregime*.

61. A. F. C. Overing et al., *Homosexualiteit* [Pastorale Cahiers, vol. 3]. Hilversum: Paul Brand, 1961.
62. A. L. Janse de Jonge et al., *De homoseksuele naaste*. Baarn: Bosch & Keuning, 1961; see also Goossensen and Sleutjes 1985, "De homoseksuele naaste."
63. C. J. B. J. Trimbos, *Gehuwd en ongehuwd*. Hilversum: Paul Brand, 1961; cf. Oosterhuis, *Homoseksualiteit in katholiek Nederland*.
64. At the end of the 1960s there were twenty get-together groups; at the end of the 1990s no less than 225. See: Alje Klamer, "Praktisch pastoraat aan homofielen." In *Pastorale zorg voor homofielen*, edited by A. J. R. Brussaard, 46–9. Utrecht: Het Spectrum, 1968. See also: <http://www.dekringen.nl/hoe-zijn-de-kringen-ontstaan>, last consulted on 31 October 2014; Posthumus, *Kringen in de branding*.
65. J. J. M. Vriend, "De werkzaamheden van de Centrale Pastorale Werkgroep Homofilie." In *Een mens hoeft niet alleen te blijven: Een evangelische visie op homofilie*, edited by A. J. R. Brussaard et al., 159–66. Baarn: Ten Have, 1977.
66. Westhoff, *Geestelijke bevrijders*, 431.
67. J. B. F. Gottschalk, "Het pastorale gesprek met de homofiel." In *Pastorale zorg voor homofielen*, edited by A. J. R. Brussaard et al., 36–41. Utrecht: Het Spectrum, 1968.
68. Bos, "Woe the pastor."
69. "Homofiel wordt door zielzorg verwaarloosd," *De Tijd*, 1 June 1967.
70. "Vrijmoedig commentaar," *De Tijd*, 1 June 1967.
71. E. J. Schraven, "Leugenachtig," *De Tijd*, 3 June 1967. The other speaker was Theo Beemer.
72. Redactie, "Nawoord," *De Tijd*, 3 June 1967.
73. Th. A. Terwindt, "Namens de werkgroep," *De Tijd*, 3 June 1967.
74. Redactie, "Naschrift," *De Tijd*, 7 June 1967.
75. "Vreemde plechtigheid in kerk: Bisdom afwijzend," *De Tijd*, 1 July 1967; see also: "Bisdom distantieert zich van homofiel huwelijk," *Het Vrije Volk*, 3 July 1967; "Bisdom Rotterdam niet achter homofiel huwelijk," *Leeuwarder Courant*, 3 July 1967.
76. "Homofielen wisselden 'trouwringen' tijdens mis te Rotterdam – Katholieke gelovigen verontrust," *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden*, 3 July 1967.
77. "Homofiel 'echtpaar' dreigt bisdom met een proces," *Het Vrije Volk*, 4 July 1967.
78. "Homofielen lieten hun 'huwelijk' inzegenen: Geestelijken misleid," *Limburgsch Dagblad*, 4 July 1967.
79. Welkom Bar alias Welcome Bar, Watergeusstraat 115 A, Rotterdam.
80. "Het homofielen-huwelijk: Geestelijken zijn om de tuin geleid: Bisdom niet op de hoogte," *De Tijd*, 5 July 1967.
81. "Homofiel 'echtpaar' dreigt bisdom met een proces," *Het Vrije Volk*, 4 July 1967.
82. In an interview with a regional newspaper, the spouses – 'H.R. (26)' and 'J.M. (24)' – responded to all this criticism: "Getrouwde homofielen: 'We hadden behoefte voor God vriendschap te bezegelen'," *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden*, 7 July 1967.
83. "Het homofielen-huwelijk: Geestelijken zijn om de tuin geleid: Bisdom niet op de hoogte," *De Tijd*, 5 July 1967.
84. "Deze week: Homofilie," *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden*, 8 July 1967.
85. In a letter to the editor, a reader of *De Tijd* reported having seen an illustrated report of the 'wedding' in the British tabloid *News of the World*: M., "Rotterdams 'huwelijk'," *De Tijd*, 12 July 1967. Earlier the men themselves had announced they would sell the pictures to a West-German tabloid, *Bildzeitung*, and threatened to sue the episcopacy: "Homofiel 'echtpaar' dreigt bisdom met een proces," *Het Vrije Volk*, 4 July 1967. See also: "Mann zu mann," *Die Zeit* (28 July 1967); Charles Sanders, "Homosexuals become 'man' and 'wife' in unusual wedding: Catholics are outraged," *Jet Magazine*, 21 September 1967.
86. English translation: Gerard Reve, *The Evenings: A Winter's Tale*. London: Pushkin, 2016.
87. "Kijk en luister: Voortreffelijk portret van Gerard van het Reve," *Leeuwarder Courant*, 12 December 1963.
88. G. K. van het Reve, "Brief aan mijn bank." *Dialog: tijdschrift voor homofilie en maatschappij* 1, no. 1 (1965): 20–1. This letter was published in the very first issue of a new 'magazine for

homophilia and society' that had Van het Reve himself as one of its editors. In the third issue, the Rev. A. J. R. Brussaard (RCN) and the Catholic father J. Gottschalk protested against Van het Reve's epistle, because it might harm acceptance of "homophilia." Both pastors were pioneers in pastoral care for homosexuals, and led get-together groups of homosexual Christians (see Section 4).

The blasphemy charge also pertained to a passage in Reve's 1966 book *Nader tot U*: 'And God Himself would come over to me in the form of a one-year-old, mouse-grey Donkey and be standing in front of the door and ring the bell and say: "Gerard, that book of yours – will you believe I cried at some parts?" "My Lord and my God! Praised live [sic] Your Name for all Eternity! I love You so terribly much," I would try to say, but would burst out blubbing halfway, and start to kiss Him and pull Him inside, and after an enormous scramble getting up the stairs to the little bedroom, would possess Him three times in a row and at great length in His Secret Opening, and then give him a complimentary copy, not sewn but hardbound – no time for stinginess and pettiness – with the inscription: TO THE INFINITE. WITHOUT WORDS.' Gerard Reve, *Nader tot U*. Amsterdam: Van Oorschot, 1966, 120.

89. J. H. W. Veenstra, "The greatest show in church." *Tirade* 14, no. 1 (1970): 50–4.
90. In 1966, Van het Reve had written a Dutch translation – first titled *Knippen en Scheren*, later: *De Trap* – of Charles Dyer's theatre play *Staircase*, which he called a 'comedy about the inadequacy of human love, about the disintegration of all illusions by old age, and about the ubiquitous, unknown God: Death.'
91. Kennedy, *Nieuw Babylon in aanbouw*; Bos, "Vooral protestants opgevoede mensen."
92. Nico Schepmaker, "G. K. van het Reve's feest: Een onvergetelijke avond," *Leeuwarder Courant*, 24 October 1969. See also: Jaap Koopmans, "Van het Reve's poppenkast," *Het Vrije Volk*, 24 October 1969; N. N., "De G.K. van het Reve'show," *De Tijd*, 24 October 1969.
93. [92] Maas, *Gerard Reve*, 511.
94. "Van het Reve: Algra, Luns en andere stenengooiers," *Het Vrije Volk*, 2 November 1963.
95. In the mid-1960s, a Dutch Catholic priest blessed the relationship between two women (personal communication Gea Zijlstra, July 2016).
96. In this panel, Van het Reve clashed with Swiebel, who spoke out against marriage. One month later he terminated his membership of COC. See Maas, *Gerard Reve*, 518–19.
97. "Van het Reve vindt: Forum homofilie modeverschijnsel," *Limburgsch Dagblad*, 10 November 1969; see also *Het Vrije Volk*, 10 November 1969.
98. "Dr. Heggen in Heerlen: Homofiele vriendenband kerkelijk bevestigen," *Limburgsch Dagblad*, 10 November 1969 (front page).
99. Harry Thomas, *Herman: De liefde van een homofiel*. Huizen: Triton, 1969. The book was announced on 16 May 1969 in the leading social-democratic newspaper, *Het Vrije Volk*.
100. Harry Thomas, *Ik ben een homo / Herman*; Delta (DS 1318; 7" vinyl). See also: "Moeilijkheden homo op plaat," *De Friese Koerier*, 24 May 1969.
101. Thomas, *Herman*, 159–60.
102. Harry Thomas, *Een homofiel wordt geslagen*. Utrecht: Harry Thomas, 1970, 152.
103. *Trouw*, 12 December 1969, quoted in 'Harry Thomas,' *Informatiebulletin Dialoog* 3, no. 5 (1970): 433. See also: "Homofielen-partij wil in de Kamer: Contra COC en vóór wettig 'vriendenhuwelijk'," *Het Vrije Volk*, 15 December 1969.
104. *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 2 February 1970, quoted in "Harry Thomas," *Informatiebulletin Dialoog* 3, no. 5 (1970): 437.
105. "Voor tweede keer in kerk 'huwelijk' van homofielen," *Het Vrije Volk*, 11 May 1970.
106. "Kardinaal spreekt met voorzitter homofielenpartij," *Het Vrije Volk*, 5 June 1970.
107. See: "Osservatore fel tegen 'huwelijken' homofielen," *De Tijd*, 27 July 1970; "Osservatore tegen homofiele huwelijken," *Leeuwarder Courant*, 27 July 1970.
108. "Rota-rechter: Homofiel huwelijk is geen huwelijk," *Limburgsch Dagblad*, 17 September 1970 (front page).
109. According to one of the members of the Pastoral Taskforce, Alfrink had already received a request for allowing the solemnization of a same-sex relationship in March 1970 – that is, before Thomas publicized his plan. See J. J. M. Vriend, "De werkzaamheden van de Centrale

- Pastorale Werkgroep Homofilie.” In *Een mens hoeft niet alleen te blijven: Een evangelische visie op homofilie*, edited by A. J. R. Brussaard et al., 159–67. Baarn: Ten Have, 1977. See also “Harry Thomas,” *Informatiebulletin Dialoog* 3, no. 5 (1970): 454.
110. “Zielzorgers wijzen inzegening af,” *De Tijd*, 4 June 1970; “Inzegening homofiele vriendschap taboe,” *De Telegraaf*, 12 June 1970.
 111. “Bisschoppen: Inzegening vriendschap ongewenst,” *De Tijd*, 12 June 1970; “Bisschoppen keuren kerkelijk huwelijk homofielen af,” *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden*, 12 June 1970; “Bisschoppen keuren kerkelijk ‘huwelijk’ homofielen niet goed,” *Leeuwarder Courant*, 13 June 1970; “Geen inzegening van homofiele vriendschap,” *Nederlands Dagblad*, 16 June 1970; “Homofielen zien af van inzegening,” *De Tijd*, 16 June 1970.
 112. *Informatiebulletin Dialoog* 3, no. 5 (1970): 453–9; cf. Tielman, *Homoseksualiteit in Nederland*. Meppel: Boom, 1982, 199–201.
 113. “Thomas overlijdt aan hartverlamming,” *Nieuwe Leidsche Courant*, 3 July 1971; “Harry Thomas niet dood,” *Nieuwe Leidsche Courant*, 8 July 1971.
 114. White, “Gay Rights and Religious Rites”; idem, *Reforming Sodom*; see also White’s article in this issue.
 115. Hekma, *Homoseksualiteit in Nederland*.
 116. Martin, *A General Theory of Secularization*; Bos, “Woe the Pastor.”
 117. Kuyper, Iedema and Keuzenkamp, *Towards Tolerance*, 17.
 118. Bos, “Vooral protestants opgevoede mensen.”
 119. Jordan, *Blessing Same-Seks Unions*; Petro, *After the Wrath of God*.
 120. Hekma, *Homoseksualiteit in Nederland*.
 121. Mooij, *Geen paniek!*; Hekma and Duyvendak, “The Netherlands.”

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