

The Dutch Augustinians, 1920-1962. Expansion and the discovery of Augustinian identity

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For the Dutch Augustinian province, the forty years or so between 1920 and the opening of the Second Vatican Council in 1962 were a period of great expansion. Membership swelled from 93 in 1920 to its historical peak of nearly 400 in 1960; more than a fourfold increase. But there was more to this expansion than numerical growth alone. In 1920, parish ministry was the largest field of work for Dutch Augustinians, even though the province's priories also housed members involved in other activities, such as teaching in secondary school or lecturing at the provincial houses of study. By 1960, parish ministry had lost this status and had become just one field of activity alongside secondary education, the missions, academic research, chaplaincy work and adult education.

Expansion meant the arrival of a new generation of Augustinians. Some of these young men were sent to university to prepare for careers as teachers at secondary school or as philosophy or theology professors. Like other young Catholic intellectuals, both clerical and lay, they were idealists, with aspirations for deep, authentic religion, for a spiritual life that could bring personal fulfilment. They were critical of their parents' generation and particularly of the clerical and lay leaderships, whom they judged to be complacent and lacking in radicalism. In the interwar years these young intellectuals were important drivers of the new discovery of an Augustinian identity – or rather: identities, because different narratives were constructed that did not overlap in all respects.

Towards the end of the 1930s, and in the 1940s and 1950s, these young Augustinians began to enter the provincial workforce as schoolteachers and seminary professors. In this capacity they conveyed to their students the importance of developing a personal, mature commitment to the faith and to the religious life. They stressed the necessity of an interior, spiritual experience as opposed to mere devotion to duty, which they saw as external conformism. It was on account of this that the first generation to emerge after the Second World War (1939-1945) was particularly sensitive to the ills of formalism, externalism and ritualism. They were convinced that reform was necessary in order to rid the church and the religious life

of everything that inhibited the personal freedom which was required to become a true Christian. On the cusp of the 1960s, the youngest generation of Augustinians above all desired *aggiornamento*.

This contribution tells the story of this most vibrant of periods in the history of the Dutch Augustinians. It does so in two parts. The first will discuss the external aspects of the expansion: how did the province manage to grow so strongly, how did it acquire the new fields of activity that it required for its new members, and to what extent did the province through these activities contribute to the building up of Dutch Catholic society in general. The second part will look at the construction of narratives about Augustinian identity, about what different groups in the Dutch province thought at different times about what it meant to be an Augustinian.¹

Expansion

Monasticisation

The Dutch Augustinian community had undergone a profound transformation during the decades prior to 1920. Augustinians had been continually present in the Netherlands since the seventeenth century, in the capacity of missionaries working in *staties* or missionary stations. In 1853 Pope Pius IX (1792-1878, pope 1846-1878) restored the hierarchy in the Netherlands. The newly-appointed bishops began immediately to exert control over ecclesiastical life, turning *staties* into regular parishes, suppressing some of them and claiming ownership over the secular goods of these *staties* for newly appointed parish councils. Religious orders whose main activity had been pastoral ministry turned to other activities.² They also started to emphasise the monastic aspect of their identity to create a profile that could distinguish them from the secular clergy. In both respects, the Augustinians – numbering only a handful – were slower than other religious orders in responding to the new situation.

Their revival did not begin until the 1880s, and coincided with the takeover of the government of the order in 1880 by Pacifico Neno (1833-1889; prior general 1887-1889). One of the young Augustinians whose intervention led to Neno's appointment in 1880 was Luigi

¹ This contribution is largely based on chapters 3 and 4 of my forthcoming book: B. HEFFERNAN, *Een kleine orde met allure. De augustijnen in Nederland, 1886-1920*, Hilversum 2015.

² T.A.J. JANSEN, *De pater op de pastorie. Het aandeel van de regulieren in de parochiële zielzorg van Nederland 1853-1966*, Nijmegen 1976, pp. 196-202.

Sepiaci (1835-1893).³ He had been rector of the Ghent Augustinian seminary in the 1860s when a young Dutchman called Jan van Eert (1839-1905; provincial 1895-1905) was a student there. It must also have been at Sepiaci's instigation that Van Eert was appointed *prefectus missionis* in 1880. Van Eert embarked on a programme of monasticisation, involving the establishment of priories, the conversion of presbyteries into priories and the introduction of a more monastic lifestyle, including the *vita communis perfecta*. This led in 1895 to the erection of the *provincia Hollandica* and opened the way for the Dutch Augustinians to become involved in other activities beside parish ministry.⁴ It was not intended to turn the Augustinians into contemplative monks, but to give them a sense of identity vis-à-vis the diocesan clergy and other religious. In fact it managed to strengthen the Augustinians' parish activities, with the province acquiring four new parishes between 1886 and 1920.

Numerical growth

Monasticisation created the preconditions that were necessary for revival, primarily by founding priories that could house a noviciate and seminary. In 1888, the mission had 22 members; as has been seen, this number had grown in 1920 to 93. The period between 1920 and 1962 saw growth at a similar rate, with the province reaching its peak in 1960 with approximately 400 members. The early 1930s in particular were a fruitful period for recruitment, with the province gaining nearly 70 seminarians in the space of five years. German occupation during the Second World War (1940-1945) slowed down the numerical expansion, even if it did not halt it completely, but growth returned to pre-war figures in the early 1950s. The province reached the figure of 70 seminarians again in 1955. But that year proved to be a turning point. From 1955 on the number of seminarians began to decrease, with new entries falling to nil over the following decade. Inevitably, once the glut of the mid-1950s had been offset by mortality and increasing departures, the provincial total also began its slow decline in the early 1960s.⁵

³ P. BELLINI, *La risposta dell'ordine in Italia alle soppressioni del secolo XIX*, in L. MARÍN DE SAN MARTÍN (ed.), *La ripresa dell'Ordine. Gli agostiniani tra 1850-1920*, Rome 2012, pp. 33-84, at pp. 57-8.

⁴ B. HEFFERNAN, «*Spiritus Ordinis nostri paulatim reviviscere incepit*». *Augustinian revival in the Netherlands, 1886-1920*, in MARÍN DE SAN MARTÍN, *Ripresa*, pp. 349-73.

⁵ 1888: *Neerlandia catholica of het katholieke Nederland. Ter herinnering aan het gouden priesterfeest van Z.H. Paus Leo XIII onder goedkeuring van HH.DD.HH. den aartsbisschop en de bisschoppen van Nederland*, Utrecht 1888, p. 361; 1920-1960: List of membership tables, 1896-1960 (Het Utrechts Archief [*The Utrecht Archives*, HUA], 1392-1: Archief Nederlandse Augustijnen [*Archives of the Dutch Augustinians*, ANA], 460) and *Catalogo van de Nederlandse Provincie OESA – November 1955*, s.l. 1955, pp. 15-21 (HUA, 1392-1: ANA, 709).

The fact that there was a spike in recruitment figures during the crisis years of the early 1930s suggests that young men sought entry for many different reasons, not excluding that of seeking shelter from economic instability. From 1920 onwards, there was an increase in departures of friars before solemn profession. There had been only three such departures between 1896 and 1920; there were 88 between 1920 and 1960 (including lay brothers). This meant that the «yield» of the province's recruitment was decreasing, and it was only because entry figures were so high that it was still possible to realise growth. The decision to enter the religious life was becoming less stable. This phenomenon was not unique to the Augustinians and can be explained by the fact that options for social advancement for young Catholic men were multiplying. This in turn caused their expectations of professional and personal fulfilment to rise as well.

The geographical expansion of the province – a result of the monasticisation campaign's drive to found new priories, as well as the province's constant search for new parishes – meant that by the 1920s the Augustinians had an infrastructure in place that enabled them to recruit very effectively. New candidates traditionally came from Amsterdam and Utrecht, where the Augustinians had city parishes, and from the eastern part of the province of North Brabant, where two «Latin schools» were large-scale purveyors of entrants to the country's religious orders, and where the Augustinians had a priory since 1891 (Mariënhage in Eindhoven). As the province opened new priories, parishes and secondary schools elsewhere in the country, the diversity of geographical backgrounds increased. An important step in the recruitment effort was the establishment in 1926 of a minor seminary or *juvenaat* attached to St. Thomas of Villanova College in Venlo. Augustinians across the country drew the attention of altar boys and their parents to the existence of this institution, which soon began to provide a large percentage of new entrants. The opening of the *juvenaat* is an additional explanation for the spike in recruitment of the early 1930s.⁶

There is much evidence to show that during this period Augustinian seminarians joined primarily because they wanted to become priests. The priesthood, more so than the religious state as such was the object of many Catholic young men's ambitions. It offered social status, the opportunity to achieve personal development and the possibility of attaining leadership

⁶ The geographical backgrounds of the Dutch Augustinians can be found in the successive catalogues of the order, for instance *Catalogus fratrum ordinis eremitarum Sancti Augustini iussu Revmi. P. Mag. Fr. Eustasii Esteban eiusdem ordinis vicarii generalis anno jubilaei MCMXXV editus*, Rome 1925, pp. 32-41 and *Catalogus fratrum ordinis eremitarum S. Augustini iussu Revmi P. Mag. Fr. Ioseph A. Hickey eiusdem ordinis prioris generalis editus. Status kal. ianuariis 1953*, Rome 1953. For the establishment of the Venlo minor seminary see Van Rijn to Vermeulen, 13 May 1926 (HUA, 1392-1: ANA, 79) and minutes of definitory meetings, 26 May and 23 June 1926 (HUA, 1392-1: ANA, 61).

positions, while the expansion of the Catholic middle classes made it financially accessible to an increasing number of young men. The choice to join the Augustinian order was often secondary and was normally inspired by the fact that the models of priesthood which new candidates encountered in their parish or school happened to be Augustinians. For lay brothers this different. The emphasis which their obituary cards placed on monastic virtues reflects the fact that the religious state itself was supposed to be the object of their ambitions. Depending on social and economic background, and on job assignment once inside, joining a religious order as a lay brother could nonetheless also mean climbing a few rungs on the social ladder.⁷

Parish ministry

Parish ministry as an Augustinian field of activity went from employing 45 per cent of Augustinian priests in 1930 to just 19 per cent in 1960. This decline was relative, however, not absolute, and mainly due to the large increase of new Augustinians otherwise engaged. For most of the period under scrutiny here, parish ministry remained a significant part of Dutch Augustinian activities. The Dutch province acquired four new parishes between 1920 and 1962, bringing the total number in 1962 up to 10. Many of the parishes acquired before 1920 were financially healthy, but those founded after that year often struggled and had to be subsidised by the province. Old areas in cities, towns and countryside were already taken and bishops tended to reserve «good» new areas – for instance the suburbs of cities – for their own clergy, leaving poorer areas to religious.

In the decades before 1920, the Dutch clergy had been engaged in building up a Catholic subsociety in the Netherlands, a «pillar», involving the setting up of many Catholic social, cultural, professional, educational and political organisations and stimulating mass membership of these. The idea was to insulate and protect Catholics from dangerous aspects of modernity, but the mass mobilisation which this drive involved also had a modernising effect, bringing Catholics into contact with modernity on Catholic terms. Parish clergy in the interwar years faced the task of binding a new generation of Catholics to the church, young men and women at ease with modern society and better educated than their parents. Priests rose to this challenge by focusing on Christianising families and family homes; for instance by teaching young

⁷ Priesthood: minutes of definitory meeting, 3 April 1928 (HUA, 1392-1: ANA, 61); interviews of the author with Cees Mertens, 4 August 2011 and Marinus van Leur, 6 February 2012, and, mainly, the obituary cards of Augustinian priests who died between 1920 and 1962 (St. Augustine's priory, Utrecht, «Memoriale»); lay brothers: obituary cards (St. Augustine's, Utrecht, «Memoriale»).

Catholics how to be good husbands, wives and parents, for instance during the house calls that were a staple of curates' pastoral activities.⁸

They also did this by setting up parish organisations that catered to specific target groups. In contrast with the traditional confraternities, these associations did not offer generic devotional programmes, but activities especially designed for their target group. In Augustinian parishes, the *Pia Unio* of Our Lady of Good Counsel was relatively successful in attracting a female following, but it proved more of a challenge to interest boys and men. *Jongenspatronaten* or boys' youth groups and Boy Scout troops succeeded to some extent, as did the *Altaarwacht* for adult men, a guild of «altar guardians» who protected the Blessed Sacrament from desecration. The Third Order was also a predominantly female affair, although the Venlo chapter was exclusively male and served to introduce pupils of the minor seminary to the order and its spirituality. This chapter's focus was on building character and on spiritual formation rather than on devotions, with members in the mid-1930s for instance attending talks on Augustine and the *Confessions*. At the instigation of provincial Sebastianus van Nuenen (1898-1966, provincial 1946-1952), the province set up a national chapter in 1947, intended specifically for young intellectuals and men of consequence. It attracted young alumni of Augustinian schools and members of a Catholic lay elite such as lawyers, academics and mayors.⁹

In the 1950s, young Augustinians who had themselves been formed by priests wary of devotionism and formalism began working in parish ministry and started to criticise what they perceived as the superficiality of spiritual life in the parish. They feared that for many of their parishioners, religion was a matter of conformism, obligation and duty rather than true faith. This meant, in their view, that the church was more vulnerable to the onslaught of materialism and secularism than many people realised. The Augustinian Alphons Lutterman (1920-2005) argued in his contribution to *Onrust in de zielzorg* («Unrest in pastoral ministry»), a famous 1950 book that gave voice to these concerns, that preaching should become more effective in

⁸ «Pillar»: see for instance J.M.M. LEENDERS, *'Zijn dit nu de handelwijzen van een herder...!' Hollands katholicisme 1840-1920*, Nijmegen 2008; focus on Christian families: T. VAN OSSELAER and P. PASTURE (eds.), *Christian homes. Religion, family and domesticity in the 19th and 20th centuries*, Leuven 2014.

⁹ For an example of the *Pia Unio* see F. SAVELKOULS, *Toen stond de kerk nog in het midden. Geschiedenis van de parochie St. Thomas van Villanova in Nijmegen*, Nijmegen 2012, p. 77; associations targeted at specific groups: J. DE CLEEN, *Zestig jaar parochie van de H. Rita Amsterdam Noord 1918-1978*, s.l. s.a., pp. 19-21 and «Registrum memoriale», St. Augustine's parish, Nieuwendam, p. 207 (HUA, 1392-2: ANA, 4470); *Altaarwacht*: «Relatio status conventus S.P.N. Augustini Ultraiecti», 30 July 1932 (HUA, 1392-1: ANA, 235); Third Order: «Register 3e Orde van den Heiligen Augustinus», Eindhoven chapter, 1921-1963 (HUA, 1392-1: ANA, 1013) and announcement of meetings of the national chapter of the Third Order, 19 July 1949 (HUA, 1392-1: ANA, 109).

helping Catholics to develop a true and authentic experience of the faith.¹⁰ And in 1951 the canonist Raphael Kuiters (1917-1983) published a book entitled *Onze parochiestructuur een belemmering voor de zielzorg* («Our parish structure an impediment to pastoral ministry»), advocating replacing territorial parishes by chaplaincy-style ministries geared to specific groups.¹¹ The call for reform became louder towards the end of the decade, focusing particularly on giving lay people a greater role in church life and on liturgical change.¹²

This concern also inspired the province to become involved in chaplaincy work. In 1955, two friars established *Het Portaal* («The Portal») in an Utrecht shopping street: a centre from which they attempted to reach out to lapsed Catholics and to non-Catholics who were interested in the faith but reluctant to contact the clergy in their local parish. And in 1958 two other friars were appointed chaplains to workers in the catering and hospitality industry in The Hague. Augustinians also ran so-called St. Benedict Labre Homes for homeless people in several Dutch cities. This apostolate predated the chaplaincy initiatives by about a decade and arose more from a desire to provide charity than to re-evangelise the Catholic middle classes.¹³

Education

One of the earliest new activities that monasticisation had made possible was secondary education. In 1898 the Augustinians opened a first secondary school in Eindhoven, the *Gymnasium Augustinianum*, but it was not until a decade later that the province decided to concentrate its efforts on expanding this field of activity. In 1908, the first friars were sent to the state universities to obtain degrees, thus creating a group of qualified teachers in the province. This enabled the *Gymnasium Augustinianum* to seek government recognition, which it received in 1917, allowing the school to issue diplomas that gave access to university. This was an important step that established the Augustinians' reputation as providers of quality education. It was not long before the province saw a return on its investment, because in 1920 it received two new offers of secondary schools. In that year the Augustinians took over a school in Venlo from the diocese of Roermond (renamed by them St. Thomas of Villanova College),

¹⁰ J. VERMEULEN and A. LUTTERMAN, *Evangelische moraalprediking*, in H. BOELAARS et al. (eds), *Onrust in de zielzorg*, Utrecht and Brussels 1950, pp. 97-113.

¹¹ R. KUITERS, *Onze parochiestructuur een belemmering voor de zielzorg*, Laren, s.a. [1951].

¹² B. HEFFERNAN, *Dutch Augustinian theologians and the Second Vatican Council*, «*Analecta Augustiniana*», 76 (2013), pp. 415-45, at p. 424.

¹³ *Het Portaal*: E. ZILKENS, *Het Portaal. Open gelegenheid om de kerk te ontmoeten*, «*Nederlandse Analecta OSA*», (1962), pp. 120-2; The Hague chaplaincy work: M. DE HAAS, *St. Cleophas in Den Haag*, «*Nederlandse Analecta OSA*» (1962), pp. 147-8; Labre work: memo Christophorus Vasen, «*Labre-werk*», undated (HUA, 449: Archives of the Archdiocese of Utrecht, 1477).

and two years later they opened the new *Triniteitslyceum* («Trinity College») in Haarlem near Amsterdam. Three further schools followed after the war: Mendel College in Haarlem in 1953, St. Liduina's College (later *Spieringshoekcollege*) in Schiedam near Rotterdam in 1961 and Waterlant College in North Amsterdam in 1962.

Beginning with the Eindhoven *Gymnasium Augustinianum*, Augustinian schools had always been accessible both to future candidates for the order and to pupils aspiring to a secular career. In the long term there was a financial incentive for this, because schools catering for non-clerical students required government recognition, which came with state subsidies. Part of these flowed into the province's coffers through the salaries of Augustinian teachers. On the other hand, it required a substantial prior investment by the province in the form of training friars at university to obtain the required teaching qualifications. Moreover, the numbers of Augustinians available for teaching jobs always fell well short of the demand, so that the majority of teachers at Augustinian schools in the Netherlands were lay. In fact, the motive of training members of a Catholic lay elite was paramount in the decision to specialise in secondary education. It also led the province to agree to accept not only *gymnasium* schools, which offered a classical education and prepared for university, but also *hoogere burgerscholen* («higher civic schools»), which prepared for careers in industry and trade. This gave the Augustinian involvement in secondary education a modern aspect: its goal was not only to produce good Catholics, but also men who were properly equipped for successful careers in modern society.¹⁴

During the interwar years and increasingly so after the war, the first objective – producing good Catholics – no longer primarily meant rote learning of the catechism or of devotional practices and prayers, even though this was never completely abandoned. For the young, university-trained Augustinians who ran these schools, religious education meant fostering a personal and authentic commitment to the faith. The biblical scholar Ansfried Hulsbosch (1912-1973) argued in 1954 that «the young man who is about to enter the wider world has to possess the faith as a personal decision. A purely intellectual formation is the best recipe for a faith crisis.»¹⁵ The second objective, equipping pupils for success in modern society, also meant training them to become competitive and sportsmanlike. Thus sports became an important part of the extracurricular programme, as did debating competitions and

¹⁴ Cf. M. DERKS, *Modesty and excellence. Gender and sports culture in Dutch Catholic schooling, 1900-40*, «Gender & History», 20, 1 (2008), pp. 8-26, at pp. 8-10.

¹⁵ A. HULSBOSCH, *Het godsdienstonderwijs op de middelbare school*, meeting 4 and 5 January 1954, «Analecta Augustiniana Provinciae Hollandicae», special edition between nos. 63 and 64 (1954), pp. 10-17, at p. 10.

literary and musical contests. Two contrasting images dominate recollections of past pupils of Augustinian schools: on the one hand as places with an open and free atmosphere conducive to critical thinking, and on the other as dark and forbidding places repressive of individuality.¹⁶ These conflicting memories reflect the two sides of Catholic education in the 1940s and 1950s: a relatively progressive, reformist attitude against the backdrop of an older institutional setting designed to drill and discipline pupils.

Among the many alumni of Augustinian schools who went on to have successful careers were those who continued to identify – at least to some extent – as Catholics, as well as those who more or less explicitly renounced the Catholic religion. The first category included the popular writer and broadcaster Godfried Bomans (1913-1971), the Christian Democratic politician Dries van Agt (1931), prime minister of the Netherlands between 1977 and 1982, and the right-wing politician Pim Fortuyn (1948-2002). The second included the progressive politician and minister Hans Gruijters (1931-2005), the writer Cees Nooteboom (1933) and the journalist Paul Witteman (1946). This suggests that the Augustinians were on the whole more successful in realising their objective of producing men well-prepared for modern society than that of producing good Catholics. In this they were no different from other Catholic educators of Dutch lay elites, such as the Jesuits or the Dominicans.

The solicitude to combine sound religious formation with thorough preparation for a career in modern society inspired the province in the 1940s to become involved in adult education. The Augustinians set up the *Nederlands Schriftelijk Studiecentrum* or «Dutch Distance Learning Centre» in Culemborg in 1946; it was almost instantly successful in attracting students for its correspondence courses. The NSSC was designed to compete with non-Catholic distance learning centres and offered a wide range of courses and diplomas for the trade, retail and administrative sectors, as well as the religious education qualification required for Catholic teachers. But it was also set up to combat the success of the American self-help courses and popular psychology books that were flooding the Dutch market in the years after the war. Its Catholic philosophy courses taught the «healthy principles» that would immunise students against the influence of materialism.¹⁷

¹⁶ Positive image: J. VAN MERRIËNBOER, P. BOOTSMA and P. VAN GRIENSVEN, *Van Agt biografie. Tour de force*, Amsterdam 2008, p. 33; speech by Cees Nooteboom on receiving P.C. Hooft Prize 2004, 21 May 2004, The Hague, <http://www.literatuurplein.nl/litprijseditie.jsp?litPrijsEditieId=144> (accessed 12 November 2014); negative image: C. NOOTEBOOM, *Labyrint Europa. Alle vroege reizen*, Amsterdam 2010. See also M. DERKS, *Een ongehoorde geschiedenis. Historici, herinneringen en geschiedschrijving rond misbruik*, in E. BORGMAN and R. TORFS et al., *Grensoverschrijdingen geduid. Over seksueel misbruik in katholieke instellingen*, s.l. 2011, pp. 88-102, at p. 97.

¹⁷ «Voorstel tot oprichting van een R.K. Briefschool», 18 February 1946 (HUA, 1392-1: ANA, 2387) and *Prospectus Nederlands Schriftelijk Studiecentrum*, 1946 (HUA, 1392-1: ANA, 5357).

Missions

As has been seen, the Augustinian monasticisation campaign had enabled the province to branch out into secondary education as a first field of activity beside parish ministry. Van Eert's second ambition had been to accept a foreign mission, but the involvement in education made it impossible to realise this. The province did not lack missionary impetus, however, and friars in Witmarsum in Friesland decided to undertake initiatives for the conversion of non-Catholics in the Netherlands itself. It was not until the province began to grow in numbers in the 1920s that it could seriously consider accepting a foreign mission. Missionary zeal, the desire to enhance the province's prestige and pressure from the Dutch Prefect of the *Propaganda* Congregation, Willem Cardinal van Rossum, C.Ss.R. (1854-1932), caused provincials Patritius van Rijn (1868-1937, provincial 1907-1915 and 1922-1929) and Servus Makaay (1893-1959, provincial 1929-1935 and 1938-1946) to seek suitable territories. In 1930 the province reached an agreement with the archbishop of La Paz in Bolivia to send Dutch Augustinians, mainly for missionary work and parish ministry in the vast Yungas area. The task proved too daunting for the first group of friars, but the idealistic and ascetically minded Thomas van der Vloodt (1869-1934) and his companions managed in the early 1930s to set up an Augustinian mission in the Yungas. It was complemented in 1938 by a city parish in La Paz.¹⁸

The considerable response which Makaay's call for volunteers received in 1929 shows that many Augustinians were motivated to go abroad to preach the faith. The promotional material developed by the province in the 1930s and 1940s to attract recruits and funding for the mission emphasised the radicalism of life as a missionary, which required the total gift of self, but also stressed the spiritual fulfilment which this could bring. One young missionary, Edmund van Beek (1911-1938), was quoted as saying: «if you are up to the challenge of self-effacement and of living among people who do not need you, ... then you should come, it will be good for your soul.» The focus of Dutch missionary activities in Bolivia changed somewhat in the 1950s, when the province founded a secondary school in Cochabamba, the *Colegio San Agustín*. The fact that this was not a minor seminary, but a school that specialised in the technical disciplines and the sciences shows that the province's two-pronged approach to Catholic education in the Netherlands could also be transposed to Bolivia. Like the *Gymnasium*

¹⁸ Beke to Vermeulen, 19 July 1921 (HUA, 1392-1: ANA, 77); minutes of definitory meetings, 26 November 1925, 25 May, 4 and 27 July and 24 October 1928 and 16 January 1929 (HUA, 1392-1: ANA, 61). See also H. VAN DEN BERG, *El restablecimiento de la orden en Bolivia*, in MARÍN DE SAN MARTÍN, *Ripresa*, pp. 607-51.

Augustinianum or *Triniteitslyceum*, the *Colegio San Agustín* aspired to form good Catholics who were also well-prepared for secular careers.¹⁹

The Dutch Augustinians' second mission, in France, came about at the general curia's behest, which in 1948 looked to the flourishing Dutch province to help it realise its goal of re-establishing a French province. One of the Dutch friars who moved to France in the late 1940s and early 1950s worked as a student chaplain in the centre of Paris; the others as parish assistants in the Parisian suburb of Bagneux. The opening of a priory in the heart of the university quarter in 1952 was important for the Dutch province. It served as a house of studies and was visited by philosophers and theologians of the Eindhoven and Nijmegen seminaries desirous of acquainting themselves in the French capital with modern secular thinkers such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961) and Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980). This helped occasion an intellectual transition from neo-Thomism to phenomenology in the province's seminaries, even if the Parisian mission never succeeded in attracting large numbers of French candidates.²⁰

1952 was also the year in which the province accepted a third mission, in Dutch New Guinea (the present-day Indonesian provinces of Papua and Papua Barat). The Netherlands clung tenaciously to this last remnant of its colonial empire in Asia even after ceding sovereignty over the rest of the former Dutch East Indies to the Indonesian republic in 1949. The prefect apostolic of the capital of Hollandia (present-day Jayapura) asked the Dutch Augustinians in 1952 to come and help the Franciscans who already had a presence in the colony. The fact that he asked the Augustinians to establish a *hogere burgerschool* and a branch of the *Nederlands Schriftelijk Studiecentrum* shows that their reputation as educators was an important reason for approaching them. These school plans did not materialise immediately, and the Dutch friars who went to New Guinea from 1953 in fact became involved in the «ordinary» mission tasks of trying to build church communities, providing pastoral care and primary education and doing all kinds of development work. The Augustinians were assigned their own territory in the Vogelkop peninsula in the northeast of the island, which became an apostolic prefecture in 1959 with Petrus Malachias van Diepen (1917-2005) as its prefect.²¹

¹⁹ Call for volunteers: circular letter Makaay, 15 December 1929 (HUA, 1392-1: ANA, 106) and minutes of definitory meeting, 5 February 1930 (HUA, 1392-1: ANA, 61); Van Beek quote: *De roepstem van Copacabana*, Culemborg² s.a. [1946], p. 15; Cochabamba school: N. BEUMER, *Niemand zat op hen te wachten. Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse augustijnen in Bolivia*, Nijmegen 2011, pp. 21-4.

²⁰ C. MERTENS, *Augustijnse aanwezigheid in en om Parijs*, in M. SCHRAMA, *De regel van de liefde. Over de volgelingen van Augustinus*, Kampen 2006, pp. 241-47; for an example of the significance of a Parisian sojourn for the philosophical development of one intellectual see interview Kees Kwant, *Eindhovens Dagblad*, 2 April 1983.

²¹ P. GIESEN, *Opbouw van een kerkgemeenschap. Vijftig jaar augustijnen in Papoea – Indonesië 1953-2003*, 1: *Het begin (1953-1960)*, Nijmegen 2003.

Identity

As has been seen, the Dutch province decided in 1908 to send young friars to the state universities to obtain degrees in the secular disciplines. By 1920, some seven friars had thus been educated, but their number continued to grow in the interwar years and after the Second World War, bringing the total up to nearly forty by 1950.²² From the end of the 1920s, other young Augustinians were being sent to Rome and to Catholic universities elsewhere to take higher degrees in philosophy and theology. Van Eert and his successor Gregorius van Etten (1830-1909, provincial 1905-1907) had sent seven friars to the International College of Santa Monica in Rome for this purpose between 1894 and 1906. One of them, Leo Beke (1879-1922, provincial 1915-1922), became provincial in 1915 and made a number of attempts to improve the quality of teaching at the province's seminaries. Thus he sent Servus Makaay to Fribourg in Switzerland to become the province's first philosophy professor to hold a doctorate – or indeed any academic degree – in the subject. But it was not until Makaay himself became provincial in 1929 that a steady flow of young Dutchmen was sent to universities abroad to take degrees in the sacred disciplines. It resulted by the end of the 1930s in a total of nineteen academically trained philosophy and theology professors, and this number rose further after the Second World War.²³ Together, these two developments were of momentous significance for the province, because they brought with them the creation of a new kind of Dutch friar: the intellectual.

Van Eert's and Van Etten's enthusiasm for monasticisation had been motivated by the desire to provide the Augustinians with a profile that would distinguish them from the diocesan clergy which they so closely resembled. Their campaign produced a generation of Augustinians proud of their order's heritage and acutely aware of their identity as religious. As priests, they regarded themselves as soldiers for the Catholic cause, and they were inclined to think that, as religious priests, they were more committed and more effective in their endeavours than the secular clergy.²⁴ But the young intellectuals who began to make their presence felt around the beginning of the interwar period looked coldly on the ardour of this older generation. These older friars' activism seemed superficial, focused too much on the construction of a Catholic

²² Information based on an analysis of the personal files held in ANA, Mariënhage priory, Eindhoven.

²³ *IBID.*

²⁴ For examples see: A. ABELS, «Reguliere en Saeculiere Geestelijkheid», speech for Cassiciacum Literary Academy, 25 November 1903 (HUA, 1392-1: ANA, 3588) and circular letter Van Rijn, undated (HUA, 1392-1: ANA, 103).

«pillar» with its associations and institutions, and their sense of Augustinian identity seemed lacking in depth and spiritual significance. Beke was the first to believe that something needed to change, and he looked for new inspiration to the history of the order. His plans to establish a new house of studies in the form of a «sacred hermitage» came to nought after his sudden death in 1922. But Beke's concerns were adopted by Makaay, who hoped that a return to the intellectual tradition of Giles of Rome (c. 1243-1316) and the Aegidian or Augustinian scholasticism of the Middle Ages might provide what the province lacked.²⁵

At this stage an initiative by General Eustasio Esteban (1860-1945, general 1925-1931) caused a decisive change. 1930 was the 1500th anniversary of Augustine's *dies natalis*, and from the moment of his election Esteban determined to make of this year a great jubilee for the Augustinian order. He invited the whole order to prepare for it and to become reacquainted with Augustine and his view of the religious life.²⁶ Esteban's proposal caused the Dutch province for the first time to discover Augustine as the model of Augustinian life. The jubilee was celebrated in the Netherlands with various scholarly and devotional meetings, the publication of a book on Augustine and a new Dutch edition of the *Confessions*, and a pilgrimage to the Eucharistic Congress in Carthage.²⁷ But the fruits of this new encounter with Augustine were much more profound. The main bearer of the new interest in Augustine was Alphons Claesen (1867-1937), an older friar without a university education, but who as a charismatic professor in the seminary was influential with fellow professors and students alike. Claesen argued in 1929 that the «spirit of St. Augustine» should be the «living, specifying force» of the order; and in 1930 defined this «spirit» as the «striving to perfect one's love of God and of one's neighbour by sacrificing one's own interest and by dedication to the community».²⁸ Younger friars such as philosophy professor Innocentius Wilderbeek (1904-1978) picked up on Claesen's emphasis on the significance of the community, derived from Augustine's rule, and this soon became the heart of a new discourse on Augustinian identity. The rule's principle of *anima una et cor unum in Deum* had previously been interpreted in the province simply as a statement of the importance of unity and uniformity; now it began to be seen as the key to a spirituality of community.

²⁵ Beke: Beke to Vermeulen, 17 December 1919 (HUA, 1392-1: ANA, 77); Makaay: for his enthusiasm for scholasticism see for instance *Verslagboek van het 4e Nationaal Congres van Sobriëtas gehouden te Nijmegen, 30-31 Juli en 1 Augustus 1928*, 's-Hertogenbosch 1928, p. 80.

²⁶ Circular letter Esteban, 20 October 1925 (HUA, 1392-1: ANA, 424).

²⁷ Meetings: «Plechtige herdenking van het 15de eeuwfeest van Sint Augustinus te Nijmegen», 15 November 1930 (HUA, 1392-1: ANA, 2293); book: *Miscellanea Augustiniana. Gedenkboek samengesteld uit verhandelingen over S. Augustinus bij de viering van zijn zalig overlijden vóór 15 eeuwen CDXXX-MCMXXX*, s.l. 1930; edition of the *Confessions*: J.A. VAN LIESHOUT, *De belijdenissen van den H. Augustinus in XIII boeken*, Amsterdam 1930; pilgrimage: minutes of definitory meeting, 24 April 1929 (HUA, 1392-1: ANA, 61).

²⁸ Claesen to Jurgens, 23 January 1929 (HUA, 1392-1: ANA, 2295) and [A. CLAESSEN], *De augustijnen* in W. NOLET (ed.), *Katholiek Nederland. Encyclopaedie*, The Hague 1930, pp. 91-103, at p. 101.

For intellectual young friars who despised sentimentalism and superficiality this was an attractive proposition. But for some it lacked the masculine radicalism, the uncompromising heroism which they sought. A number of young intellectuals in the 1930s preferred to look to the eremitical origins of the order for inspiration. Valentinus Hutjens (1913-1994), for example, a young friar studying history at Nijmegen university in the late 1930s, corresponded widely with fellow Augustinian students about the eremitical aspects of Augustinian identity. The outcome of the debates that ensued among young friars was that the community was indeed the most important principle of Augustinian identity, but that the order also had a legitimate eremitical aspect. Hutjens spelled out his view at length in an influential book he published on behalf of the province in 1948, significantly called *De monniken van Sint Augustinus* («The Monks of Saint Augustine»).^29 Strengthening the eremitical aspect of Augustinian identity became an important preoccupation for young friars in the 1940s and 1950s. They did this by stressing specifically monastic practices, such as the observance of silence in priories and even in Augustinian schools, stimulating the singing of the divine office in choir, the diligent observance of liturgical rubrics and the singing of plainchant. The province's decision in the late 1930s to establish a convent of contemplative nuns was another result of this trend. This plan was delayed by the outbreak of the war, but a house of the Second Order was eventually opened in Maarssen in 1946.^30

The new spirituality of community proved to be acceptable to large sections of the province, even if for many it remained somewhat at a remove from their daily work, and Augustine's works were rarely read outside the seminary. But the revival of an eremitical-monastic ethos met with active resistance from friars in parishes, in the mission and in schools who felt it was a hindrance to their work. These friars' most important representative in the province, Sebastianus van Nuenen, eventually attempted to reconcile the two camps by proposing a creative interpretation of the new discourse. Van Nuenen had been parish priest of St. Augustine's parish in Utrecht before being elected provincial in 1946. In a number of circular letters after his election he stressed the importance of the community to Augustinian life, while his own endeavours to introduce communal recitation of the divine office in his parish church show that he was not opposed to monastic practices *per se*. But he portrayed these contemplative aspects not as forms of asceticism, but as spiritual nourishment that could restore

²⁹ V. HUTJENS, *De monniken van Sint Augustinus*, Heemstede s.a. [1948].

³⁰ See for examples: visitation report St. Augustine's priory, Utrecht, 30 July 1934 (HUA, 1392-1: ANA, 502); minutes of definitory meeting, 15 October 1936 (HUA, 1392-1: ANA, 62); Maarssen convent: G. MAASSEN et al., *Monialen augustinessen te Werkhoven*, Amstelveen 1985.

and revive Augustinians as they returned home weary from their daily apostolate. For Van Nuenen, community life, including its contemplative aspects, brought enjoyment to the friars and was therefore spiritually and psychologically beneficial to them. Its main benefit was no longer that it could earn eternal salvation or that it was heroic and radical, but that it was a way of finding personal fulfilment here on earth.³¹

Van Nuenen's concern that religious observance should contribute to making Augustinians mature, well-balanced and happy people tied in with wider intellectual developments that were taking place at the time, both within and outside the province. The province's seminaries – its philosophical and theological houses of study (the *philosophicum* in Eindhoven and the *theologicum* in Nijmegen) – had previously aspired to offering the best of neo-Thomist thinking.³² But the discovery of Augustine in the 1930s gave rise to a new focus on patristic and biblical theology. Wilderbeek was an important protagonist of this new approach, which was reminiscent of the French *nouvelle théologie* and was critical of neo-Thomism. It was also Ephraem Hendrikx's (1909-1985) main inspiration, who, as prefect of studies, was able to help strengthen it in 1943 through reform of the curriculum.³³

This was not a purely intellectual shift from one school of theology to another: it was motivated by the concern that contemporary Catholicism was too rationalistic and too remote from the lived experience of modern human beings. This made it ill-equipped to deal with the challenges posed by modernity, and put it at risk of losing the multitudes, who were, it was feared, already on the verge of mass alienation from the church. The answer was to develop a theology and a spirituality that would be authentic and would resonate with the lived experiences of the faithful rather than satisfy an elite's thirst for radical heroism. This would help turn Catholics from outward conformists into mature Christians who had made a personal commitment to their faith. These considerations stimulated young Augustinian intellectuals in the 1950s to look to modern philosophy for clues on how to renew Catholic thinking. The Eindhoven professors Remigius Kwant (1918-2012) and Nicodemus Luijpen (1922-1980) gained some prominence nationally in the late 1950s and early 1960s with their publications on phenomenology and existentialism, while the Nijmegen theologian Ansfried Hulsbosch

³¹ Circular letters Van Nuenen, 4 September 1946 and 30 August 1947 (HUA, 1392-1: ANA, 109).

³² See for instance «Ratio studiorum» (HUA, 1392-1: ANA, 859); «Geschiedenis van het klooster van den H. Johannes a S. Facundo», p. 9 (HUA, 1392-2: ANA, 4649); C.E.M. STRUYKER BOUDIER, *Wijsgerig leven in Nederland en België 1880-1980*, 3: *In Godsnaam. De augustijnen, carmelieten en minderbroeders*, Nijmegen and Baarn s.a., p. 26 and neo-Thomist studies by Dutch Augustinians such as D. VAN MEEGEREN, *De causalitate instrumentali humanitatis Christi iuxta D. Thomae doctrinam expositio exegetica*, s.l. s.a. [1939] and R. KWANT, *De gradibus entis*, Amsterdam 1946.

³³ «Onze hogere studies», undated [1943] (HUA, 1392-1: ANA, 760).

explored the consequences of evolutionary thought for Catholic theology.³⁴ The «desire for renewal» that inspired this generation was an important driver of change in the 1950s, not only in the province's seminaries, but also in its parish ministry, its liturgical practice and its educational activities.³⁵ It also ensured that the Augustinian missionary activities in Friesland in the late 1940s and in the 1950s developed from proselytism to ecumenical dialogue.³⁶

Conclusion

By 1962, the *provincia Hollandica* was not only bigger than it had ever been, but it had also acquired a prestige in Dutch Catholic society that had only been a distant objective in 1920. The Augustinians could never hope to rival the influence and standing of large orders such as the Franciscans, the Jesuits or the Dominicans. But their reputation as providers of quality education for a Catholic lay elite, their participation in the renewal of Catholic thinking, and their new-found identity as heirs of the great Augustine nonetheless earned them a certain esteem.

The early 1960s were a time of immense optimism for young Dutch Augustinians, who were hopeful that their dreams of a new church could be realised, and of a new experience of the religious life that would be meaningful to modern people. Their hopes of reform were ever rising, stimulated by the course of events during the first session of the Second Vatican Council. It was almost inevitable that these expectations would be disappointed sooner or later, as it became evident that considerable sections of the church and the order did not share the more radical of the reformers' aspirations. When this happened in the late 1960s, it precipitated a profound crisis.

Reformers have a vested interest in depicting the status quo in an unfavourable light – otherwise there would be no need for reform. Moreover, thwarted reformers often – and quite naturally – look back on their past with a degree of bitterness. The predominance of reformers and thwarted reformers among Catholic elites in Northwestern Europe has meant that the accepted image of the period before the 1960s was bleak, characterised as it was by all the ills they had hoped to remedy: inauthenticity, formality, backwardness, repression, authoritarianism and rigidity. It is hoped that this contribution has succeeded in unmasking at

³⁴ HEFFERNAN, *Second Vatican Council*, pp. 420-3.

³⁵ «Desire for renewal»: M. VAN DEN BOS, *Verlangen naar vernieuwing. Nederlands katholicisme 1953-2003*, Amsterdam 2012.

³⁶ D. DE CLOET, *Het Apostolaat Augustijnen Friesland 1901-1951*, in E. BRUNA et al. (ed.), *Bijdrage tot de kerkgeschiedenis van Friesland*, Franeker 1951, pp. 211-31, at p. 227.

least some of this image as a myth. Not all of it was untrue, nor, certainly, was the period between 1920 and 1962 some halcyon era of virtue and prosperity. As in all other times of human history there was both light and darkness. But the argument here has been that a balanced account of this episode in the history of the Dutch Augustinians must recognise it as a time of successful expansion and of high spiritual and intellectual aspirations.