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The Apostolate of the Book Revisited. New Evangelisation and the Mission of Publishing House Betsaida

Summary

In 2012, publishing house “Betsaida” was founded to render service to the new evangelisation in the Netherlands and in the Dutch speaking part of Belgium. This article tries to explain the success of this initiative from the perspective of recent Church history.

Keywords: publishing house, pillarisation, secularisation, evangelisation, intellectuals

Streszczenie

Ponownie odkryty apostołat książki. Nowa ewangelizacja i misja wydawnictwa Betsaida

W 2012 roku zostało założone wydawnictwo “Betsaida”, aby służyć nowej ewangelizacji w Holandii i holenderskojęzycznej części Belgii. Ten artykuł próbuje wyjaśnić powodzenie tej inicjatywy z perspektywy najnowszej historii Kościoła.

Słowa kluczowe: wydawnictwo, filaryzacja, sekularyzacja, ewangelizacja, intelektualiści

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1. Knowing the past to understand the present: A short survey of recent Dutch Church history

A few decades ago, nothing predicted the necessity for a new, Catholic publishing house in the Netherlands.

For nearly a century, the Catholic Church in the Netherlands formed a well-organised part of the pillarized Dutch society. The English neologism *pillarization* is coined after the Dutch word *verzuiling*, indicating the confessional ('vertical') segregation of the society in autonomous, all-embracing social structures.

The formation of the Catholic pillar started after the reestablishment of the episcopal hierarchy – that had been abolished during Reformation times – by the papal bull *Ex Qua Die* from Pope Pius IX (March 4, 1853). The quick emancipation of the Catholic community intertwined with the need to protect the proper religious and social identity in front of the other confessions and upcoming ideologies.² As such, the pillarization of the Church was a kind of ecclesiastical strategy to make life in a pluralistic society bearable.³

The Catholic press formed an important part of the pillar. During the period of pillarization, many Catholic publishing houses, educational institutes and media enterprises were founded. Corporate unions for Catholic publishers and book sellers arose⁴ and gave origin to an insti-

² A presentation of the different hypotheses to explain the formation of the Catholic pillar is given by J.A. Bornewasser, *De katholieke zuil in wording als object van 'columnologie'*, in: J.A. Bornewasser, *Kerkelijk verleden in een wereldlijke context. Historische opstellen*, Amsterdam 1989, p. 289–323. A new dimension is presented by J. De Maeyer, *The concept of Religious Modernisation*, in: *Religion, Children's Literature and Modernity in Western Europe 1750–2000 (KADOC Studies on Religion, Culture and Society 3)*, ed. J. De Maeyer, Leuven 2005, p. 45–46 by focussing on ideological developments inside modernity.

³ Cf. J. Bots, *Zestig jaar catholicisme in Nederland*, "De Rots" 11.7–8 (1981), p. 18.

⁴ For the history of the *Rooms-Katholieke Nederlandsche Boek-handelaren- en Uitgeversvereniging 'Sint Jan'*, founded in 1924 and liquidated in 1979, and divided into the *Nederlandse Bond van Katholieke Uitgevers* and the *Nederlandse Katholieke Boekverkopersbond*, see: *Een literaire prijs zonder genomineerden, De Brand - Van Gentprijs van de Katholieke Boekverkopers- en Uitgeversvereniging Sint Jan*, "Erasmusplein" 6 (1995) n° 2.

tution that reviewed books from a Catholic perspective.⁵ In short, the apostolate of the book had acquired its proper place inside the Catholic pillar.

In the mid-20th century, when the pillarization of the Dutch Church and its organisational strength had reached their summit, Karol Wojtyła and his friend Stanisław Starowieyski made a bike trip through Europe. Visiting also the Netherlands, the future Pope John Paul II noticed 'the vigor of the Church... its active organisations and lively ecclesial communities'. At the same time, however, he also observed the lacking of a personal prayer life in the 'stubborn' Dutch Catholicism.⁶ Being an astute observer, the later Pope had discerned not only the beginning of the process of *de-pillarization*, but also its internal cause.⁷

During the second half of the twentieth century, the de-pillarization of the Dutch Church and society emerged with a unique speed and thoroughness.⁸ A new type of permissive society spread by means of the media and of the increasing mobility of the people.⁹ It put the objective claims of Catholic doctrine and morals into doubts. Simultaneous

⁵ On the *Informatiedienst Inzake Lectuur (Idil)*, see C. van Eijden-Andriessen, 'Moralinezuur' en voorlichting. *De twee gezichten van Idil in het katholieke debat om de moderniteit 1937-1970 (Bijdragen tot de geschiedenis van het Zuiden van Nederland)*, Tilburg 2010.

⁶ See the article entitled 'stubborn Catholicism' from K. Wojtyła, *Katolicyzm uporu*, "Tygodnik Powszechny" 20 (2002); cf. G. Weigel, *Witness to Hope. The Biography of Pope John Paul II*, New York (NY) 2005, p. 83. Interestingly, the Pope's homily during the concluding Mass of the extraordinary synod of the Dutch bishops on January 31, 1980 reflects this same concern: 'In the future, the life and pastoral care of the Church in the Netherlands will depend more from prayer than from discussions and consultations'.

⁷ For the different stages in the process of de-pillarization (and eventual re-pillarization), see T. Duffhues, A. Felling, J. Roes, *Bewegende patronen. Een analyse van het landelijk netwerk van katholieke organisaties en bestuurders 1945-1980 (Publicaties van het Katholiek Documentatie Centrum Nijmegen 12)*, Nijmegen 1985, p. 265 ff.

⁸ See J.A. Coleman, *The Evolution of Dutch Catholicism, 1958-1974*, Berkeley (CA) 1978, p. 11. The speed of the changes has also been related to the allegedly typically Dutch urge to act (J. van Eijnatten, F. van Lieburg, *Nederlandse religiegeschiedenis*, Hilversum 2005, p. 303) and to the liberalist mentality of merchants (J.A. Coleman, *Evolution*, op. cit., p. 26 ff.).

⁹ See K. Dobbelaere, *Het 'volk-Gods' de mist in? Over de Kerk in België (Nikè-reeks. Didachè; Kerk-zijn in de huidige wereld 1)*, Leuven 1988, p. 26. Cf. also E. Simons, L. Winkeler, *Het verraad der clercken. Intellectuelen en hun rol in de ontwikkelingen van het Nederlandse katholicisme na 1945 (Publicaties van het Katholiek Documentatie Centrum Nijmegen 19)*, Baarn 1987, p. 89, who mention social tendencies as growing individualism, pluralism, a declining willingness to obey

evolutions in different sectors of society unleashed a comprehensive disintegration of the Catholic pillar. Along with this process, the social relevance of faith and Church gradually diminished.¹⁰

As Karol Wojtyła had fairly observed, the crisis and dissolution of the Catholic pillar ultimately emerged from within. The decline of the Catholic pillar was the result of changes in the heart of ecclesiastical convictions and life.¹¹ A decisive role was played by Catholic intellectuals, in a unique interaction with the ecclesiastical authorities and the media. In conformity with the common interest during the '60s - '70s, the primacy of theology was transposed by newer sciences as sociology and psychology.¹² By stipulating the ideological framework for the discussions on ecclesiastical matters, these human sciences accentuated the historical delimitation and contextual setting – and therefore the relativity – of ecclesiastical structures and morals.¹³ The spreading of these convictions, however, was facilitated by the efficiently organised structures of the pillar.¹⁴ In opposition to their original purpose as means to safeguard Catholic faith and

to the morals of the Church, a decreasing institutional bondage, and a change in relationships of authority (op. cit., p. 52).

¹⁰ See T. Duffhues, A. Felling, J. Roes, *Bewegende patronen*, op. cit., p. 272 ff.

¹¹ Vgl. G. Harinck, L. Winkeler, *De twintigste eeuw*, in: *Handboek Nederlandse kerkgeschiedenis*, ed. H.J. Selderhuis, Kampen 2006, p. 849; cf. J.M.G. Thurlings, *De wankele zuil. Nederlandse katholieken tussen assimilatie en pluralisme (Publicaties van het Katholiek Documentatie Centrum Nijmegen 1)*, Deventer 21978, p. 145 ff.; M. van den Bos, *Verlangen naar vernieuwing. Nederlands katholicisme 1953–2003*, Amsterdam 2012, p. 20.

¹² See W. Goddijn, J. Jacobs, G. van Tillo, *Tot vrijheid geroepen. Katholieken in Nederland: 1946–2000*, Baarn 1999, p. 280, referring to W. Goddijn, *De beheerste kerk. Uitgestelde revolutie in Rooms-Katholiek Nederland (E 70)*, Amsterdam 1973.

¹³ E. Simons, L. Winkeler, *Verraad der clercken*, op. cit., p. 206. On the discussions between the proponents of an open and a more traditional Catholicism and on the theological conflicts in topics of dogmatics, (sexual) morals, ecclesiastical discipline and popular religiosity, see J.M.G. Thurlings, *De wankele zuil*, op. cit., p. 145.

¹⁴ See J.A. Coleman, *Evolution*, op. cit., p. 84 ff.; p. 94 on the 'unique mobilisation resources' in the Netherlands. Some specific structural circumstances, that facilitated far reaching changes (the parsimonious integration of Catholic opinion leaders in governing responsibilities and the presence of social circles of intellectuals) were analysed by E. Simons, L. Winkeler, *Verraad der clercken*, op. cit., p. 116 and *passim*.

morals,¹⁵ the pillars became the instruments of the internal secularisation of religion.¹⁶

The Catholic publishing houses played an active role in these developments. Significant is the fate of the largest Catholic publisher, *Paul Brand Publishing*. Paul Brand sr., who founded the company in 1911, maintained personal relationships with prominent theologians such as Romano Guardini and Karl Rahner and published their books in Dutch translation. His son Paul Brand, jr., who took over the company in 1959, used this network for the foundation of the Dutch edition of the review *Concilium*, advocating the modern school of theology.¹⁷ In spite of the efforts in proclaiming a new theology in accordance with the interests of human sciences, *Uitgeverij Paul Brand* ended its activities in 1975. The Dutch edition of *Concilium* was suspended in 2003. The destiny of *Paul Brand* and *Concilium* is symptomatic for the Catholic press as such, that after a decline in the publication of religious books since the middle of the 20th century¹⁸ nearly evaporated in the years 1985–1999.

In recent publications, the qualifications that are used to designate the actual religious situation in the Netherlands are not unambiguously positive: after the ‘religious utopia’ of the Pastoral Council of the Dutch Church Province (1966–1970) followed a ‘destructive neurosis’ and finally ‘religious poverty’.¹⁹

¹⁵ On the ‘inverse functioning of the pillar’, see E. Simons, L. Winkeler, *Verraad der clercken*, op. cit., p. 249; cf. op. cit., p. 320 ff.

¹⁶ J. Bots, *Katholicisme*, op. cit., p. 18, describing the situation in the ‘60s.

¹⁷ Cf. P. Brand, *Hoe Concilium begonnen is*, “Concilium” (NL) 36 (2000), p. 141–147.

¹⁸ Cf. A. van der Weel, *Modernity and Print II: Europe 1890–1970*, in: *A Companion to the History of the Book (Blackwell Companions to Literature and Culture 48)*, ed. S. Eliot, J. Rose, Chichester 2009, p. 359.

¹⁹ See Van den Bos, *Verlangen naar vernieuwing*, resp. p. 123; p. 177; p. 209 (with question mark).

2. New Ways for Evangelisation in a Secularised Country: Challenges for a New, Catholic Publishing House

The inspiration to found a new Catholic publishing house arose at the foot of Wawel Castle in Kraków on June 20, 2012. Returning by car from a trip through beautiful Małopolska, together with the late Mons. Prof. Dr. Stefaan Van Calster, there was a discussion on the above described developments and on the difficulties that people experience in having religious books published in Dutch. The difficulty of handbooks of theology for students was especially mentioned because the market is too small to be of any interest for commercial publishers. At that moment, it was Rev. Prof. Dr. Hab. Henryk Sławiński, who was driving the car, who launched the idea to start a little company ourselves.

Already after a couple of months, the first steps were made to prepare the foundation of the company, which took place on March 28, 2013. The name Betsaida is derived from the Biblical town, which literally means ‘house of fishing’. It refers to the mission of the seminary, where Betsaida is located, to give formation to priests who are called to become ‘fishers of men’. The logo of Betsaida is a stylised fisher’s house from biblical times with the $\iota\chi\theta\upsilon\varsigma$ motif.

By founding a confessional publishing house, it was not the purpose to try to restore a part of the former pillar, which has irrevocably disappeared and whose weaknesses grow gradually more evident as it becomes clear that the actual crises in the Church are, to a large extent, related to the failing or even inverse functioning of the internal control mechanisms of the pillar. Betsaida wants to be at the service of the New Evangelisation²⁰, not defensively pulling back to the strongholds of the ecclesiastical institutions, but having a mission to the society, with a principal role for lay people as a way to exercise their proper apostolate, with a primary focus on youth, families and intellectuals.

Insofar as social sciences had the tendency to monopolise the ecclesiastical discourse in the 1970s and 1980s, Betsaida wants to return

²⁰ For this reason, Betsaida published S. Hahn, *Evangelising Catholics (Katholieken evangeliseren)* [2016]; *Compendium voor de Nieuwe Evangelisatie*, ed. M. Spruit-Borst (2017).

primacy to theology from an integrated perspective of its different disciplines, as this is a genuine approach that academic research must not ignore.²¹ The purpose is to bring about serious theological research that is at the service of a personal encounter with the Living Word of God, ‘coming to know him and the power of his resurrection, and partake of his sufferings by being moulded to the pattern of his death, striving towards the goal of resurrection from the dead’ (Phil 3:10–11). Through study and prayer, word and sacraments, authentically Christian orientations arise for adequate social action and genuine reform of Church and society.

The fund of Betsaida is conceived from this evangelising perspective. We try to focus on two general target groups at the same time. Because the intellectuals were the main actors in the process of de-pillarization, Betsaida aims at them as principal agents of the New Evangelisation. In the second place, we try to support Catholic families in the countercultural testimony that they bring by living the Christian faith and morals.

Betsaida publishes original, academic works,²² but also theological books in Dutch translation.²³ Important are the manuals for students, offering introductions in the different theological disciplines.²⁴

²¹ See in this context also the instruction on the Ecclesial vocation of the theologian from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Donum Veritatis* (May 24th, 1990), AAS 82 (1990), p. 1550–1570.

²² I. Verhack, *Een weg naar God voor deze tijd* (2016); *Secularisation & Europe*, eds. J. Van Reeth, F. De Rycke, e.a. (together with Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Papieskiego Jana Pawła II w Krakowie, 2017); T. van Eijk, *Levend Brood voor onderweg. Een theologisch commentaar bij de litanie van het Heilig Sacrament* (2017); L. Peetam, *Homilien von Piet Penning de Vries* (2020); H. Tercic, *God is een lofzang voor zijn heiligen* (2020).

²³ To this category belongs the *Percorso* of L. Giussani (*Het religieuze zintuig* [2017]; *Aan de oorsprong van de christelijke claim* [2018]; *Waarom de Kerk* [2019], but also *Sporen trekken in de geschiedenis van de wereld* [2019]) and the Dutch translation of the elementary work for the renewal of fundamental moral theology, S. (Th.) Pinckaers, *Les Sources de la morale chrétienne (De bronnen van de christelijke moraal* [2013]).

²⁴ D. Melé, *Cristianos en la sociedad (Christenen in de samenleving* [2018]); F. Suárez, *Después de esta vida (Het leven na dit leven* [2018]); A. Fernández, *Moral especial (Geboden en deugden* [2019]); V. Ferrer Barriendos, *Jesucristo nuestro Salvador (Jezus Christus, onze Verlosser* [2019]); M. Aquilina, J.L. Papandrea, *How Christianity Saved Civilization... And Must Do So Again (Hoe het Christendom de beschaving heeft gered... en dit opnieuw moet doen* [2020]).

Noteworthy are also the books with a popularising scope, stimulating to reflections on matters of Church and society.²⁵ The source books in Dutch translation and with introductions are meant to disclose primary texts of Catholic faith and culture.²⁶ Books with texts from the Popes belong to this category,²⁷ but also works that present the splendour of the Christian faith and its doctrinal and spiritual foundations.²⁸

According to our convictions, the necessary intellectual support is of a twofold scope: at the same time *ad intra* and *ad extra*. Efforts are required *ad intra* by sustaining the Catholic community in understanding better their faith,²⁹ morals,³⁰ sacraments,³¹ and history.³² Given the fact that the disintegration of the faith in the Netherlands started with

²⁵ See e.g. N. Diat, R. Sarah, *Dieu ou rien (God of niets* [2016, 22017, 32018]; S. Lauras, *Comme un feu dévorant (Als een verterend vuur* [2016]); G.-L. Müller, C. Granados, *Informe sobre la esperanza (Het fundament van onze hoop* [2017]); N. Diat, R. Sarah, *Le soir approche et déjà le jour baisse (Het wordt avond, de dag loopt reeds ten einde* [2019]).

²⁶ P. Claudel, *L'annonce faite à Marie (De boodschap aan Maria* [2014]); C. Péguy, *Le Porche du Mystère de la deuxième vertu (Het portaal van het mysterie van de tweede deugd* [2014]); C. Virgil Gheorghiu, *De la vingt-cinquième heure à l'heure éternelle (Van het 25e uur tot het uur dat eeuwig duurt. Vertaling en toelichting* [2017]); L. Bloisius, *Institutio spiritualis (Richtlijn voor het geestelijk leven* [2018]); Prudentius, *Liber Cathemerinon* [2019].

²⁷ For instance the encyclical of Paus Franciscus, *Lumen fidei (Het licht van het geloof* [2013]); and the catecheses of Pope Benedict XVI on saint Paul and on prayer (*Getuige en leeraar van het geloof. Catechesen over de apostel Paulus* [2013] and *Ademhaling van de ziel, oase van vrede. Catechesen over het gebed* [2014]).

²⁸ M.I. Rupnik, *Totus Tuus. Een uitleg bij de mozaïeken in het heiligdom van de H. paus Johannes Paulus II te Krakau* (2017); N. Govekar, *Il rosso della piazza d'oro (Het rood van het gouden plein. Een interview met Marko Ivan Rupnik sj over kunst, geloof en evangelisatie* [2020]).

²⁹ S. Hahn, *A Pocket Guide to the Bible (Handige gids bij de Bijbel* [2014, 22016]); see also the highly acclaimed DVD-series *Catholicism (5 DVD)* (1+22014, 32015, 42016, 52017). This project (as many others) arrived in a providential way. It had been refused by other (even ecclesiastical) publishers, and that was presented to us, who previously didn't know it, by three different persons in two days time.

³⁰ E.g. M. Timmermans, *Johannes Paulus II en Franciscus: barmhartigheid als prioriteit* (2016); D. van Schalkwijk, L. Hendriks, *Levenskunst en levenseinde* (2017).

³¹ V. Flynn, *7 Secrets of Confession (7 ontdekkingen over de biecht* [1–22016, 3–42017]); D. van Havre, *Prends soin de ton âme (Genezing van innerlijke wonden* [2017, 22018]).

³² For instance J.W.M. (Jan) Peijnenburg, *Bisschop Gisbert Masius knielt al 400 jaar in zijn dierbare kathedraal* (2014); P.W.F.M. Hamans, *Het Pastoraal Concilie van de Nederlandse kerkprovincie (1966–1970) en het bisdom Roermond in de jaren zestig* (2018); M. Lindeijer, *Seminarie Boven-donk. Reisgids door een monument* (2018).

a lacking personal relationship with Christ, the books and movies that give introductions in prayer life³³ and authentic Catholic spirituality³⁴ are of an extraordinary importance. The lives of the saints³⁵ have a special meaning in these, because they show the power of God and the beauty of Christian life through the living example of men and women. Related to the Kraków origin of the publishing house and the veneration of its founders for saint John Paul II, the first projects were about the life of the Polish Pope.³⁶ A special attention is also paid to saints who figure in local history, in order to sensitise for religious questions through the interest in the past and in its relevance for the present.³⁷

³³ *Gebeden tot de Heilige Geest*, ed. R. de la Haye (2014); L. Landete, *Comment prier chaque jour? (Hoe leer ik bidden van dag tot dag?)* [2019]).

³⁴ For instance different books of J. Philippe, *Trouver la paix intérieure (De innerlijke rust* [2015, 32016]); *À l'école de l'Esprit-Saint (In de school van de Heilige Geest* [2019]); *La liberté intérieure (De innerlijke vrijheid* [2019]); G. J.M. van den Aardweg, *Honderdjaar Fatima (1–2017)*; H. Dumont, *La miséricorde divine, une grâce pour notre temps (De goddelijke barmhartigheid* [2017]); N. Diat, R. Sarah, *La force du silence (De kracht van de stilte* [2017, 202018]); W. Stinissen, *Nieuwe wijn. De vrucht van de Geest* (with Carmelitana 2018); R. Stockman, *Een spirituele tocht naar binnen* (2019); R. Cantalamessa, *La vita in Cristo (Leven in Christus. De spirituele boodschap van de Brief aan de Romeinen* [2019]); T. Špidlík, *The Art of Purifying the Heart (De kunst het hart te zuiveren* [2019]).

³⁵ Johannes XXIII, *Giornale dell'anima (Het dagboek van mijn ziel* [2016]); J. Gauthier, *J'ai soif (Ik heb dorst* [2016, 22017]); *Uit de pen van Pater Pio*, ed. J. Smith [2016, 22017]); Léonie Martin, *van hopeloos tot heilig*, ed. H. Opstal, J. Smith (2017); R. Stockman, *Ga tot Jozef* (2018); E. Janssens, *Hij had de moed om te spreken. De zalige Clemens August kardinaal van Galen* (2018); E. Janssens, *De held van mijn kinderjaren. 52 bezinningsteksten van Edward Poppe* (2018; also in French: E. Janssens, *Le héros de mon enfance*, 2019); H. Tercic, *Al het goede is een schaduw van God. Essays over John Henry Newman* (2019); F. Occhetta, *Carlo Acutis* (2020). Apart from the DVD's on Pope John Paul II, we published movies on other saints, as *Teresa van Avila [S. Teresa de Jesús]* (3 DVD) (2016, 22017); *Thérèse. De kleine weg van de jonge heilige uit Lisieux* (2017); *San Filippo Neri. Preferisco il paradiso (Ik ga liever naar de hemel [miniserie*, 2019]).

³⁶ Cf. the *infra* mentioned comics on his life, further the DVD's *Karol I. De man die paus werd; II. De paus van de hoop* (2 DVD) (2014); the biography from S. Dziwisz, *Una vita con Karol (Een leven met Karol* [12013, 22014]) and a series of lessons for catechesis by I. De Rycke, e.a., *Held van God - JP II* (2014).

³⁷ A.-J. Bijsterveld, R. de Visser, V. Blom, *H. Oda van Sint-Oedenrode* (2013); M. Tjäder, *Maria Elisabeth Hesselblad en de nieuwe tak van de Orde van de Allerheiligste Verlosser van de Heilige Birgitta* (2016).

In fact, we consider it important not only to publish books that cover theological topics in an abstract way, but also to bring products with a testifying character, in accordance with the conviction of Pope saint Paul VI: ‘Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses’.³⁸ This is the purpose of the books and movies that give evidence of the healing power of grace and of the beauty of the faith.³⁹

These products, that are aimed to support the Catholic community *ad intra*, are complemented by books that support the faithful in their mission *ad extra* by demythologising the urban legends about the faith⁴⁰ and by succouring in the articulation of religious convictions in a language that is at the same time adequate and accessible for a secularised audience.⁴¹

The topic of priesthood and vocations to religious life is a distinct interest for the publishing house that is named after Christ’s commission to become fisher of men.⁴² Obviously, a new religious interest is arising among young people that are bored by the delusions of secularisation.

³⁸ Paul VI, *Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Nuntiandi* (December 8th, 1975), 41; referring to Paul VI, *Address to the Members of the Consilium de Laicis* (October 2nd, 1974), AAS 66 (1974), p. 568.

³⁹ T. Guénard, *Plus fort que la haine (Sterker dan de haat [2016])*; M.-T. van het Kruis, *The Silent Struggle (De stille strijd [2016])*; Y.-S. Kagoyire, F.-X. Ngarambe, J.M. Twambazemungu, *Rescapés de Kigali (Ontsnapt uit Kigali. Getuigenis [2017])*; D. C. Mattson, *Why I Don’t Call Myself Gay (Waarom ik mijzelf niet gay noem [2018])*; J.Masih, *No Longer Strangers? (Niet langer vreemdelingen? [2019])*.

⁴⁰ R. Stark, *Bearing False Witness (Vals getuigenis [2018, 22019])*; M. Lütz, A. Angenendt, *Skandal der Skandale (De verborgen geschiedenis van het christendom [2020])*.

⁴¹ E.g. the movie on the problematics of muslim converts to Catholic faith *L’apôtre (De Apostel [2015])*; but also the apologetic books from A. Ivereigh, K. Griffin, *Catholic Voices (Geloof in alle redelijkheid [2014])*; M. Cabello, *El cristianismo a examen (Geloven vandaag? [2017])*; AA.VV., *Pillar of Fire, Pillar of Truth (Bron van Licht en Waarheid [2019])*.

⁴² Apart from the *supra* mentioned work of Gheorghiu e.g. H. Putman, *La joie parfaite (De ware vreugde [2017])*; J. Schröder, *De priester als profeet (2017)*; Benedict XVI, R. Sarah, *Dal profondo del nostro cuore (Uit de grond van ons hart [2020])*; and the DVD *La última cima (2015)*. For priests, we also have the exemplary homilies by V. Neckebrouck, *In de leer bij het Evangelie. Homilieën bij de evangelielecturen van cyclus A–B–C van het kerkelijke jaar (2016–2014–2015)*, the inspirational reflections of Wim Peeters, *Hij is onder ons komen wonen (2017)* and orientations for pastoral practice: M. White, T. Corcoran, *Rebuilt (1–22019)*; A.P. Villahoz, *¿Y de qué hablo en mi dirección espiritual? (Op koers met geestelijke begeleiding [22017])*.

It is quite a challenge for the Church to offer sound spiritual food, in order to help people avoid the pitfalls of false religious prophets. Betsaida wants to engage itself here, too.

Supporting Catholic families has a high priority for Betsaida, because families are the cornerstone of Church and society and the gateway to the future of our culture. In a similar way as with the general books on the faith, Betsaida tries to provide sustenance on different levels: by explaining the theology of married love in a more theoretical way⁴³ as well as by bringing testimonies of its holiness, beauty and mystery.⁴⁴ Also in this field, the example of the saints takes a prominent place⁴⁵ as a way to contribute to marital prayer and spirituality.⁴⁶ In the field of education, Betsaida offers catechetical material, especially also for a genuinely Christian sexual education⁴⁷,

⁴³ C. Granados, *La esperanza de la familia (De hoop van het gezin. Dialoog met kardinaal Gerhard-Ludwig Müller [1+22015]*; A. Léonard, *L'Église vous aime (De Kerk heeft je lief) [2015]*; Johannes Paulus II, *Teologia del corpo (De Theologie van het Lichaam [2016])*; S. Seminckx, *Aimer c'est ce donner (Liefde is... jezelf geven [2018])*; J. Granados, S. Kampowski, J. José Pérez-Soba, *Acompañar, discernir, integrar (Begeleiden, onderscheiden, integreren. Handleiding voor een nieuwe gezinspastoraal vanuit de exhortatie Amoris Laetitia [2018])*; *Openheid voor het leven. Bewust en verantwoord ouderschap volgens Humanae Vitae*, eds. F. De Rycke, L. Simons, M. Timmermans (2018); M. Healy, *Men and Women Are from Eden (Mannen en vrouwen komen uit Eden [2019])*. On the 'female genius', Betsaida published *Walk in Her Sandals (In haar sandalen. De lijdensweg van Jezus door de ogen van vrouwen*, ed. K.M. Wahlquist [2018]).

⁴⁴ C. Miriano, *Sposati e sii sottomessa (Trouw en wees onderdanig [2014])*; C. Miriano, *Sposala e muori per lei (Trouw en sterf voor haar. Echte mannen voor vrouwen zonder angst [2014])*; P. Franciscus, *De kracht van het gezin (2016)*; F.A.M. Alting von Geusau, A. J.F. Alting von Geusau-Houben, *Gezin, word wat je bent!* (2018).

⁴⁵ H. Mongin, *Louis et Zélie Martin (Louis en Zélie Martin. Heiligheid in het dagelijkse leven [2017, 2018])*; A. Vázquez, *Tomás Alvira y Paquita Domínguez (Een gelukkig huwelijk [2019])*.

⁴⁶ AA.VV., *Mijn eigen gebedenboekje (2017, 2018)*.

⁴⁷ J. Evert, C. Stefanick, *Raising Pure Teens (Opvoeden zonder kleerscheuren [2015])*; A. Léonard, *Ton corps pour aimer (Je lichaam om liefde hebben [2016])*; C. Evert, *Pure Womanhood (2016)*; J. Evert, *Theology of His / Her Body (Gods plan met je lichaam [m]. Ontdek de kracht en de opdracht van je mannelijkheid / Gods plan met je lichaam [v]. Ontdek de schoonheid en het mysterie van je vrouwelijkheid [2016, 22018])*; E. Raith-Paula, *Was ist los in meinem Körper? (Wat gebeurt er in mijn lichaam? [2017])*; J. Bishop, *The Princess and the Kiss / The Squire and the Scroll (De prinses en de kus / De schildknaap en de boekrol [2019])*; M. and R. Büchsenmeister, *Stark, Selbstbewusst, Aufgeklärt (Sterk, zelfbewust, voorgelicht [2020])*.

including books for children⁴⁸ and youth⁴⁹ with a clear, Catholic anthropology.

The foundation of Betsaida also brought some unexpected and quite joyful effects. The publishing house became the channel for the cooperation of different religious movements that now make use of its services to get their members more acquainted with their proper history and spirituality. There are mutually esteemed cooperations with e.g. the publishing houses De Boog and Carmelitana, with the Centro Aletti in Rome, the Emmanuel Community, Comunione e Liberazione, Pro Sanctitate, the Katholiek Alpha Centrum, Samuel Advies and the Centrum voor Parochiespiritualiteit.

Moreover, the mere fact that there exists a channel again to bring Catholic products to the public market unleashed a sudden creativity that has had a remarkable and even awarded success.⁵⁰ Against this background, Betsaida considers it also as its mission to stimulate young talent in proclaiming the beauty of the Creator and of the life and faith that He gives us.⁵¹

⁴⁸ *Theo Benjamin (Het katholieke geloof ontdekken*, ed. V. Dudro, I. Galmiche [2016, 22018]). Besides the already mentioned project on Pope saint John Paul II, there are e.g. books and CD's with the international, catechetical musical group *KISI - God's Singing Kids* and movies for children on the apparitions in Fatima: *The Day the Sun Danced (De dag waarop de zon danste. Het waargebeurde verhaal van Fatima [1-2-32017])* and on the mystery of the Eucharist (*The greatest miracle [2019]*).

⁴⁹ H. van Stockum, *The Winged Watchman (De gevleugelde wachter [2017])*; E.M. Jewett, *Big John's Secret (Het geheim van Big John [2018])*; for teenagers: P. Verbeiren, *Meneer, hoe komt het dat u altijd zo gelukkig bent? (1-2-32018, 42019)*. Our e-books are also primarily intended for this public.

⁵⁰ Betsaida received the First Price – Gabriël-Award 2015 of the Centre Religieux d'Information et d'Analyse de la Bande Dessinée (CRIABD)/Kathostrip for the religious comics of D. Bar, L.-B. Koch, G. Lehideux, *Johannes Paulus II. Karol Wojtyła 1: Van Krakau naar Rome; 2: Onvermoebare pilgrim* (with Monastic 2014). The short film *Come and See (2017)* was awarded with the Third Price in the category 'amateur movies' on the XXXII Międzynarodowy Katolicki Festiwal Filmów i Multimediów / 32nd International Catholic Film and Multimedia Festival KSF Niepokalana 2017 and with the First Price in the category 'Shortfilms' on the *Mirabile Dictu - International Catholic Film Festival 2017* in the Vatican.

⁵¹ Apart from the awarded short film *Come and See*, Betsaida published work from beginning artists like A. Junker, J. Galloy, *De kleine Juliana en het brood van leven (2015, 22018)* and the book from E. van Broeckhoven, *Mijn moeder. Dementie bracht ons genezing (2018)*, a testimony how dementia brought inner healing in a relationship between mother and daughter.

3. Perspectives for the future

By the apostolate of the book, Betsaida wants to contribute to a new Christianising of the secularised Dutch culture. We consider this mission not so much as a re-evangelisation of the country, but specifically as a New Evangelisation.⁵² The challenge of this missionary adventure is huge. At the same time, there remain some pitfalls for the young publishing house, too. The mechanisms that in the past led to deconfessionalisation did not lose their threatening power. Some decades ago, the fusion of institutions – usually out of financial reasons or to obtain more business impact – was a genuine stairway down to de-pillarization, urging organisations to renounce to their former confessional identity.⁵³ Out of this historical awareness, the board of Betsaida is not inclined to merge with other confessional publishing houses, that emanated from pillarization and that together with the pillars often became the mouthpieces of a largely secularised theology. Some members of the hierarchy would prefer us to do so, remaining attached as they are to the remnants of the Catholic pillar, even when these are to a large extent hollowed out by secularisation. It is to be expected, however, that by doing so, Betsaida might also share the final fate of the pillars and of the institutions that were part of it.

The pressure that is exercised on Betsaida to cooperate with pillarized institutions shows how the inverse functioning of the pillar obstructs new initiatives, especially in the fields of education and media.⁵⁴ At the same time, however, it also illustrates that the existence of companies

⁵² Cf. John Paul II, *Speech to the Assembly of CELAM in Port-au-Prince, Haiti* (March 9th, 1983); John Paul II, *Homily during the Holy Mass in 'Mattos Neto' Park of Salto, Uruguay* (May 9th, 1988).

⁵³ See T. Duffhues, A. Felling, J. Roes, *Bewegende patronen*, op. cit., p. 272 ff.; vgl. W. Goddijn, J. Jacobs, G. van Tillo, *Tot vrijheid geroepen*, op. cit., p. 351.

⁵⁴ The initiative of Piet Derksen to found a new and genuinely Catholic broadcasting company RKO in 1987 received a negative advice from the Dutch bishops because it might bring rivalry to the secularised Catholic broadcasting company KRO and allegedly would contribute to polarisation, see T. Crijnen, *Kardinaal Ad Simonis, kerkleider in de branding. Een biografie*, Nijmegen 2014, p. 407; see in this context also Coleman's observation of internal authoritarianism as a disadvantage of pillarization (J.A. Coleman, *Evolution*, op. cit., p. 78).

outside the former pillars can bring a healthy competitiveness and a challenge to the conventional structures to engage in a renewal of identity.

Finally, the greatest perils for Betsaida come from within. Cooperation with other institutions for improper reasons (e.g. merely economic growth or other business interests at the costs of the original identity) would jeopardize the vocation of the publishing house. In a similar way, Betsaida would be affected in its prophetic mission by starting to serve theological re-interpretations that try to justify the vices and delusions of the day. Surrendering to church-political and academic cultures that are more oriented on consent than on content would have the same consequence.⁵⁵

Perhaps the most dangerous threat of all would be the desire to belong to acclaimed social circles and to become part of the establishment. Trendiness and *Salonfähigkeit* are viruses that would strike Betsaida's viability from within.⁵⁶ It is the old temptation of being professionals in human wisdom at the expense of affinity with the wisdom of God. The scandal of the Incarnation that was experienced by the first generations of Christians in the sign of the Cross takes in our days rather the shape of the doctrine and institutions of the Church. Through its weaknesses and in the confinement of its historical and contextual conditions and structures, the Church mediates the healing strength of God, revealed in the Lord on the Cross, 'to the Jews an obstacle they cannot get over, to the gentiles foolishness, but to those who have been called, whether they are Jews or Greeks, a Christ who is both the power of God and the wisdom of God' (1 Cor 1:23-24). The only way to be of an authentic service to the New Evangelisation and to remedy Catholicism's drifting off into the direction of a polite, enlightened, bourgeois belief

⁵⁵ E. Simons, L. Winkeler, *Verraad der clercken*, op. cit., p. 234 also relate the role of academics as opinion makers in the process of de-pillarization to their undogmatic ways of thinking and the principle of verifiability.

⁵⁶ See also the notion of the 'Entweltlichung of the Church' by Pope Benedict XVI, *Address During the Meeting with Catholics Engaged in the Life of the Church and Society (Apostolic Journey to Germany)*, Concert Hall, Freiburg im Breisgau (September, 25th, 2011).

in prosperity⁵⁷ is by returning to the authentic proclamation of the Word of God as Christ crucified. In this, Betsaida wants to render humble service.

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⁵⁷ See J. Bots, *Katholicisme*, p. 71; cf. op. cit., p. 23.

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