

Met de doorbraakbeweging en de plannen voor radicale verandering in Hervormde Kerk na 1945 leek het personalisme ‘plotsklaps (..) genesteld in het hart van de gedachtenvorming en organisatieontwikkeling in het Nederlandse politieke en religieuze landschap’ (p. 60). Dit noopte echter tot herbezinning op de rol van de Arbeidersgemeenschap, zeker toen zowel de ‘grondige herkerstening’ als de doorbraak via de PvdA uitbleven (p. 65). Bakens werden verzet: voortaan zou de Arbeidersgemeenschap het personalistisch ideaal van ‘vorming van de totale mens’ zelf uitdragen via cursussen voor eigen leden en specifieke beroepsgroepen, vakbondsbestuurders, PvdA’ers, en andere doelgroepen (p. 69). Subsidiëring van dit werk vereiste professionalisering en afstand tot de PvdA (p. 76). Vervolgens zetten algemene secularisering en radicalisering binnen de PvdA de eigen boodschap van de Arbeidersgemeenschap verder onder druk (p. 83). En toen in de jaren tachtig de roep om een meer ideologische rol weer toenam waren er eerst de nodige organisatorische hindernissen te overwinnen (p. 90-92). Pas eind jaren negentig ontstond er binnen de Arbeidersgemeenschap weer ruimte voor eigen gedachten over ‘zingeving’, aldus Van den Bos. Toen leek de invulling die Banning daaraan had gegeven ‘voltooid verleden tijd’ (p. 102). Het laatste hoofdstuk, dat hier verder buiten beschouwing blijft, suggereert echter dat Bannings zoektocht naar ‘gemeenschap’ mogelijk weer een vervolg krijgt.

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Bas van Bavel, Daniel R. Curtis, Jessica Dijkman, Matthew Hannaford, Maïka de Keyzer, Eline van Onacker, Tim Soens, *Disasters and History. The Vulnerability and Resilience of Past Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020). 231 p. ISBN 9781108477178.

DOI: 10.52024/tseg10835

The publication of *Disasters and History. The Vulnerability and Resilience of Past Societies* could not have been more timely. The current COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted our society in multiple ways and confronts governments, institutions, and people with major challenges. The long-term consequences of this recent disaster are still unknown, but the co-authors of this volume convincingly argue that a historical perspective can contribute to a deeper understanding of the causes of

resilience and vulnerability in societies in the face of hazards and risks. They argue that history may be used as a 'laboratory' to distinguish general patterns and trajectories that occur in distinct societal circumstances, as well as provide assessments that may inform policy.

The book provides an excellent overview of the key concepts, classifications, methodologies, and sources used in the field of historical disaster studies. It covers different types of disasters (droughts, famines, earthquakes, floods, epidemics) in various eras across Europe and beyond. It also pays attention to disaster preconditions and vulnerabilities, disaster responses, and short- and long-term effects of disasters. Throughout the work the authors make use of a wide range of well-investigated cases, such as the Black Death of 1348 in Europe and the Lisbon earthquake of 1755, to illustrate how past societies dealt with crisis and how they managed to bounce back. As such, the book may serve as a compendium for scholars working in the field of disaster studies or history.

One of the strengths of *Disasters and History* is that readers are constantly reminded of the pitfalls inherent in using abstract concepts such as 'resilience' and 'vulnerability'. Mortality rates or economic figures tell only part of the story. It often happens that disasters do not kill but have a long-lasting disruptive effect on societies and institutions, or that they ruin ecosystems. What's more, there is often a social profile to the victims. For example, the mortality rate was much higher among the poor than the well-to-do during the cholera epidemics of the nineteenth century. Famines are a case in point as well: their consequences vary according to wealth and gender, and these effects tend to diverge in urban and rural environments. In other words: numbers always need to be contextualized, and disasters rarely function as great equalizers.

Another strong asset of the book is its broad approach. It contains valuable sections about the societal impact of top-down and bottom-up responses to disasters, as well as the short-term and long-term effects. A recurring pattern in times of crisis is the emergence of fear, scapegoating, blame, and social unrest. The Black Death of 1347-1352 led to the violent persecution of Jewish families throughout Europe. In court records and ego-documents causal links can be found between severe climate conditions and witch hunts in the sixteenth century. In nineteenth-century sub-Saharan Africa the 'rainmakers' were blamed for periods of drought.

The authors of *Disasters and History* argue that 'the cultural turn' in disaster history has led to an increased interest in the above-mentioned themes. It is therefore a missed opportunity that they have not used

the potential of cultural approaches in their work. They use 'culture' in a rather narrow sense, referring only to religious practices or scape-goating, but culture includes so much more. In the past two decades cultural historians such as Gerrit Jasper Schenk and Monica Juneja have persuasively shown that disasters are as much cultural phenomena as natural events, and that the omnipresence of cultural discourses, spread through a wide variety of media, is key to understanding the societal impact of disasters. The Lisbon earthquake was a milestone in European history only because of the cultural aftershocks in science, philosophy, literature, and religious beliefs, which were brought about by a wide range of media. Relief campaigns became successful due to the spread of thousands of sermons, pamphlets, poems, and newspaper articles. To understand how past hazards and disasters become inscribed in the cultural memory of a region or nation, profound study of the cultural repertoire is indispensable. In short, culture is as much a part of the historical 'laboratory' as are socioeconomic data.

Nevertheless, this book is an important, well-written, and inspiring contribution to the field of disaster studies. It is the first of its kind, not to mention unique in its historical breadth. It demonstrates how disasters operate as 'historical protagonists', causing societal reforms, as well as political and demographic changes. What's more, it successfully bridges the gap between history and the present, in addition to theory and practice, by showing how history can make both a theoretical and practical contribution to current challenges. It is an admirable, ground-breaking achievement, which will benefit a wide range of scholars in the field of disaster studies.

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Marjoleine Kars, *Blood on the River. A Chronicle of Mutiny and Freedom on the Wild Coast* (New York: The New Press, 2020). 384 p. ISBN 9781620974599.

DOI: 10.52024/tseg10836

Het verzet van slaafgemaakten tegen repressieve koloniale regimes heeft de laatste jaren steeds meer aandacht gekregen. Hoewel het kleinere en meer alledaagse verzet langzaamaan beter in beeld komt, ligt de focus nog veelal op marronage en grotere slavenopstanden, zo-