

# LuxMundi | 25

N<sup>o</sup> 2 June 2006

Published quarterly by the Committee  
on Relations with Churches Abroad  
of the Reformed Churches in The  
Netherlands



# LuxMundi 25

No 2 June 2006

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Published quarterly by the Committee  
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The Netherlands  
Volume 25 - No. 1  
March 2006

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Adm. Lux Mundi

Subscriptions in The Netherlands:

€ 17,50 for one year

# Editorial

R. ter Beek

In the Netherlands, every March we have 'Book Week'. Much media attention is given to literature. A famous author is asked to write a small book of which almost one million copies are printed. The bookshops give it to customers who spend above a certain amount on books. The Christian booksellers can never be certain of the ethical standard of this book, thus they make sure they have their own alternative book which they can give away instead of, or alongside the free book.



It is also customary here, to perform the Bach's St. Matthew's Passion in churches and concert halls in the weeks prior to Good Friday and Easter. Many people attend this cultural happening. The original German text is sung. This year, Book Week turned out to be in the Easter week. Because of the theme of this Book Week - the interaction between music and literature, the Passion also made the news. Pop singer and poet Jan Rot completed a modern (and liberal) Dutch version of Picander's Passion text after five years of hard work. It was performed by the highly qualified Residentie Orchestra and sung by renowned singers to the original Bach music. The double cd with the recording of this produced this pop artist his first number one in the Dutch charts.

Much has been said and written about this, also in the Christian press. It also fits somewhere between the *New Bible Translation* and the film *The Passion of Christ*. There is also much which could be said theologically speaking. My interest, however, is that the story of the suffering of Christ was made accessible for the Dutch public through the understandable and sometimes also raw texts. First it was beautiful music and now it turned out to be a story set to music. Everybody understood what it was about. Via the texts, thousands of people suddenly stared straight into the heart of the Gospel without intending to.

How much of God's Word hovers in this way through our literature and throughout our culture? How many composers, poets, directors, actors, writers, believers or unbelievers, work so that people cannot say – but I knew nothing? If you hold Word and Spirit close together – still a characteristic of Reformed thinking – then the Spirit is never far away when the Scriptures are read, sung, acted, portrayed, translated, listened to, recited. Indeed, the one who twisted words from the very beginning will also be there, but can he resist the Spirit if He wants to use the Word to convince the world of sin

and of unrighteousness (Joh.16:8) or to reveal sin, to praise Jesus Christ, to point a searching heart in the right direction? Where the Word is, the Spirit has material with which to work. Who brought the unchurched Jan Rot to make this work? Who led the prestigious Deutsche Grammophon to bring this cd out?

I cannot help thinking about our old editor Prof. Ohmann and the text which was spoken on at his funeral, Psalm 97 : 11. We live in God's world. However dark it may be, He can let people be bathed in His light at any moment. Certainly if, as small and weak people they stand in need of that, camping as they do between mountains of disbelief. For this reason it does a righteous man good to see Jan Rot struggling for five years with pious songs and Bible texts, and thousands of Dutch people being quiet for two and a half hours while they listen to the passion of Christ according to Bach and Rot, pop-language to classical music. He sees a cluster of light and he rejoices in His God. Because, wrote Prof Ohmann once about Numbers 22-24, the appearance of soothsayer Balaam: God may reject and judge the world for its unbelief, if it pleases Him He can take control of it for the service of His counsel. 'This makes even more special the great wonder, that now *God's Spirit* just takes over a heathen authority on divination in *such* a way. The Holy Spirit is able to bring even a divination expert, a sooth sayer who directly serves the great enemy, into holy ecstasy'. Given the words Balaam chooses, the poet in him awakes. God uses not only the power of speech and the vocal chords of Balaam to check mate king Balak of Moab, He opens his mind's eye and his poetic vein as well.

Jan Rot once sang a Dutch version of *Angie* of Rolling Stones renown. I think he had to go to the limits of his talents for the Gospel of Matthew, Picander's texts and especially Bach's music. What an exertion! A church which tries to fit into the culture which surrounds her, gives the impression that this culture is superior, so says Steve Bruce (not the footballer but the religious sociologist). What message does a pop artist give who uses everything within him to write the text for the music of a Bach Passion? ■

# Being a Missionary Church

## *God, the Church, and the World*

In 2002 DTEG\* were given the task of serving the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands by formulating a reformed vision on what it means to be a missionary church. In their report DTEG noted two areas of tension, firstly between the starting situation and the final goal of the church and, secondly, between the biblical standard and reality. The poles of tension are often miles apart. In order to bring them together a clear vision is necessary, as well as prayer for guidance by the Holy Spirit. God wants to use churches and believers in fulfilling his plan to make the gospel known to all men.



### **“For God so loved the world...”**

#### **An eye for the world: biblical foundations**

Throughout the entire history of redemption, from the beginning of the Old Testament till the New Testament period, God has approached the world with love. God’s plan of salvation is meant for all peoples and all nations. God’s covenant with Abraham and Israel is the way by which He comes to the world and seeks the nations. After Easter and Pentecost God’s kingdom spreads into the whole world. From heaven the Lord Jesus mobilizes the believers through the outpouring of his Holy Spirit, so that they go out, speak and witness of Christ’s death and resurrection. Evangelism, therefore, belongs to the essence of the church of Christ. *There is no sharing in Christ without sharing in his mission.* As Risen Lord, Christ is also the centre of this mission. This focus on Christ has a number of important consequences for the missionary church, which are briefly mentioned in the report presented to Synod.

### **“Jesus is Lord”**

#### **An eye for the Kingdom of God**

The church of Christ plays a vital role in recognizing and establishing God’s Kingdom in the entire world. The Old Testament declares that all nations will recognise God’s lordship one day. In the New Testament it becomes

clear that the kingdom of heaven has drawn near. Through his resurrection and ascension, Jesus shows that He really is King and rules the earth.

The following can be said about this kingdom of God:

- a. God’s kingship is universal, in that his *kingdom* is there where people recognize Jesus as Lord.
- b. There is a difference between the *reality* of God’s kingdom and its realization.
- c. God’s kingdom in this world is *dynamic* in nature.
- d. Christians are the citizens of this kingdom and therefore live with a new perspective and display the fruits of the Spirit.

The church is not identical with the kingdom of God, but it is the place where Jesus is confessed and recognised as Lord. In this way the church is message and messenger at the same time. She bears witness to the kingdom.

### **“To the ends of the earth”**

#### **An eye for the history and the form of the church**

In the first centuries after the outpouring of the Spirit, Christianity spread across Asia, Africa and Europe. Christians were missionary in their way of thinking, speaking and behaving. When in 313 Constantine the Great was converted to Christianity, the church became a state church. Everybody became a Christian. This continued after the Reformation in the 16th century, as the government of every country decided which church was the most privileged.

The result of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, with their rationalism and individualism, was that more and more people began to break away from the truth of the Bible. Since the Second World War, the church in Western Europe has finally disappeared from public life. Morals and culture, as well as the national laws, are no longer directly influenced by the norms and values of Christianity.

#### **About the author:**

Rev. L. Ernst Leefink (\*1964) has been the minister of the Reformed Church of Assen-Peelo since October 2005 - his third post - and was a member of the General Synod of Amersfoort-Centrum 2005. This Synod re-appointed him as DTEG deputy (cf. [www.missionair.nl](http://www.missionair.nl)).

In The Netherlands churches and believers have reacted differently to the changed context in culture and society.

In the 1950's, mainly in the Dutch Reformed Church, the model of a 'Christ confessing people's church' evolved. According to this model, the church is called to speak prophetically to government and society with the aim of 'rechristianizing society. Although the intention was sympathetic, this model failed because of secularisation: too many people were already too long alienated from the church and the Christian faith.

In the 1960's the model of 'the church for others' won attention. According to this view, God is not primarily interested in the church but in the world. The church is present in society and in the wider world to fight for human rights and justice.

Although the good in this has to be appreciated, actual practice shows that the proclamation of God's salvation turns into humanitarianism and welfare.

The 1970's and 80's saw another model of the church emerging: that of the 'witnessing community'. From a living relationship with Jesus Christ believers are witnesses in word and deed. This more evangelical angle is to be welcomed, but it does raise the question if there is enough balance between sanctification and justification and between the realities of triumphant faith and the cross.

### **"In the world, but not of the world"**

#### **An eye for the presence of the church in today's world**

This chapter of the report begins with a description of trends in Dutch society. In 1999 37% of the population still consider themselves Christian, 32% have never belonged to a church and 31% characterize themselves as having left the church.

The Netherlands have become a mission field, even though there are large regional differences. In addition, the influence of postmodernism on culture and society is huge.

In this changing society, the Reformed Churches (liberated) also developed. The so-called 'ongoing reformation' played a dominant role from the years after 1945 until the mid eighties of the last century. There was also a strong desire to equip people spiritually to become instruments through which Christ's love could reach the world that was alienated from God. From the nineties onwards, partially because of the devastating results of secularisation, the GKV gradually began to work more together with other Christians. The reformed foundations and character were maintained in this.

The increasing secularisation resulted in the GKV becoming more aware of their evangelistic task. In 1975 the General Synod of Kampen pronounced: "It is

inherent to the nature of the church of Christ and the gospel which has been entrusted to her, to seek those who have become strangers to God and to his service." In 1978 this was fixed in the revised church order: 'Evangelism should aim for people to join the church of Christ through profession of faith.' 1975 Synod also stated that the congregation as a whole is called to be involved in evangelism, under the supervision of the consistory.

However, thirty years after the Kampen 1975 guidelines, we have to conclude that evangelism is not one of the top priorities of the churches. Most church members are not really involved in evangelism. One of the possible reasons for this is the fact that evangelistic instruction was often directed at individual and highly motivated church members and not at the development of a congregation-wide missionary strategy. Also, until recently there was little co-operation with other orthodox reformed churches and organizations. Finally, people were (and still are) insufficiently aware of the marginal position into which all churches have fallen after years of increasing secularisation.

All this has consequences for the proclamation and the up-building of the church. In a drastically changed landscape there are chances for the Christian church if she seeks her strength in openness and new forms of community. For this reason DTEG want to work on the following goals in the coming years:

### **Building stones for the missionary church**

#### **An eye for practical evangelistic training**

The DTEG report mentions the following areas to which attention must be paid in the coming years;

- a - preaching and teaching;
- b - worship service;
- c - church planning;
- d - discipleship training;
- e - church planting

\*Within the Reformed Churches (liberated) in The Netherlands there are three groups of deputies who occupy themselves with different aspects of evangelism. The first group are the Deputies for Equipping Evangelizing Churches (DTEG). As the name suggests, they equip local churches and church members. Their office, the national 'Centre for Evangelism', is housed in Zwolle. Secondly, there are Deputies Extra Support for Evangelising (ASE), who especially co-ordinate the financial support for various evangelistic projects in the Netherlands and Belgium. The third group are called Deputies for Ecumenical Assistance, Missionary Work and Training (ZH&T). They are the result of the merger that took place in 2003 between the regional missionary deputies, the mission aid organisation 'De Verre Naasten' and the theological training institute IRTT. These three groups of deputies each presented their visions to the General Synod of Amersfoort-Centrum 2005. In this article I will briefly summarize these visions.

## Evangelism and Church Planting

In 2002 the General Synod decided to support the 'Amstel Project' generously: an initiative to set up two new churches in the Amsterdam area clearly separate from a local church. At the same time, the synod wanted a deeper study into the motives of this new way of evangelizing. For this reason, ASE were given the task "to formulate a vision on evangelism and church planting in the Netherlands."

The ASE report is divided as follows:

### 1. Evangelism and mission

Mission and evangelism have always been two separate territories. Is it necessary to review this distinction in view of the changed circumstances?

There was a time when 'mission' meant that missionaries were sent out to distant countries in order to spread the gospel, to baptize those who came to faith and to set up independent churches in the mission field. Various churches worked together in supporting this missionary work. Church members were motivated to show interest and pray for the missionaries.

The word 'evangelism' meant evangelizing people in your own area in order to win people for God and Christ. This was primarily a task of the church members themselves. The consistory stimulated this. Each church had its own evangelistic outreach activities.

Over the last decades, the situation has changed. Many foreigners have immigrated to the Netherlands and the country has been secularized. Mission and evangelism have moved closer together. This development was noted by the Synod of Leusden in 1999. They knew that the Kampen Synod 1975 had made important statements about the character and nature of evangelism. In close conjunction with this, the Synod of 1999 stated: "It is inherent to the nature of Christ's church to also seek those *outside of her own culture and language* (my italics, L.E.L.) who have been alienated from God and his service." The aim of missionary work is that churches of Christ be planted so that they can have a well-ordered reformed church life of their own.

The General Synod of Leusden saw the difference between mission and evangelism mainly as a question of a

difference in target group. Mission is aimed at people 'outside our own language and culture', whereas evangelism is directed especially at people within our own language and culture. ASE Deputies also see a difference in the ultimate organisational goal of a missionary project. In evangelism, the existing fellowship of churches is expanded, while in mission the aim is to establish such a fellowship. ASE agree to the formulation by ZH&T, but want hold on to the distinction made by Leusden 1999: "*Evangelism is missionary work within the area of Dutch language and culture and is directed at the expansion of churches or church planting, always with a view to joining the existing fellowship of churches.*" (my italics, LEL).

Furthermore, ASE deputies believe that the guidelines of Kampen Synod 1975 must be altered according to the current circumstances of increasing secularisation, so that also evangelism with missionary characteristics fits in completely. This means concretely, that the church order should provide for evangelists and church planters who also have responsibilities as church officers.

### 2. Evangelism and church planting

Since 2002 the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands have given national support to the so-called 'Amstel Project'. The two ministers who have been called to this work, do not call themselves 'evangelism ministers' but *missionary church planters*. As commissioned by the previous synod, ASE deputies have studied the question of whether this development fits into the Kampen guidelines 1975.

ASE deputies have concluded that the term 'church planting' in current usage is unavoidably linked with the views on church planting held by Tim Keller and his fellow-workers in New York. According to

Keller's concept, it is better to plant new churches for new believers without the traditional baggage of existing churches. Newcomers will spiritually mature better in this way and old churches will ultimately be revitalized.

ASE Deputies see a number of advantages in this method:

- *right from the start the church and the community are at the centre of attention*
- *a young, new church often bubbles over with spiritual joy and energy*
- *there is a desire to reach groups in society that will not easily join a traditional church.*

ASE nevertheless placed a few question marks and sees two pitfalls regarding this church planting concept, which need to be taken seriously. First of all, the high and almost naive expectation that people can have of this method. Secondly, the danger of such a strong adaptation to the target group that the bond with the mother church and the fellowship of churches is weakened.

Next, the ASE report pays attention to the role of tradition, structures and culture. Certainly in the initial phase of evangelism and church formation, there must be room for the cultural identity of new churches. After a period of time the new churches and existing fellowship of churches should increasingly grow towards each other.

### 3. Evangelism and the fellowship of churches

Within the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, missionary projects are almost always corporately supported and financed. Since 1990 evangelistic projects have been financed jointly via a complex method of capitation if the costs are too high for a congregation. Now that there are an increasing number of national projects, the request for policy and finance is becoming more urgent. ASE Deputies chose not to centralize all evangelization projects as happened with missionary work. There should not be a general policy for evangelistic work. However, ASE does want to organize the training of evangelists, church planters and other workers centrally

via the existing training institutions. Further, ASE believe it is wise to declare a new planted church as independent after a lapse of time. Supplementary financial support can then be given via art. 11 of the Church Order ('churches in need'). ASE also plead for setting up new projects

on a small scale and urge not to fill blank spaces rashly with grand and detailed plans. Because evangelism is a task of all church members, it is good to start from the existing church. A special worker can be appointed, for example a missionary church worker.

aligning these visions and the extent to which they can be integrated. The working group will also sketch out what this means in practice: communication, co-operation or rearrangement of work. The results of these explorations will be presented to the next synod in a written report.

*...in 1975 the General Synod of Kampen... Facing the university city of Kampen*  
(photo P.G.B. de Vries)



## **Vision on Missionary and Church Work**

**Finally we take a look at the report presented by the last group of missionary deputies: Deputies for Ecumenical Assistance, Missionary Work and Training (ZH&T). The missionary and church work of ZH&T abroad is divided into three parts:**

1. Church planting or supporting local churches in the proclamation of the gospel
2. Supporting the reformed theological education and training of ministers
3. Supporting the church planting work in various countries.

By the last General Synod ZH&T deputies were assigned the task of making an integral policy plan. This resulted in a document entitled "General Policy for Mission and Ecumenical Support".

In the chapter about vision ZH&T deputies first of all refer to the starting points for mission and ecumenical help as layed down by the Synod of Leusden 1999. This Synod characterized missionary work as a calling of the local churches, which involves 'proclamation of the Word' as well as 'Christian charity'.

There is a difference between church planting in areas where the gospel has not yet been heard or where there are no orthodox churches, or co-operation with and support of local independent churches and denominations.

In the first instance, church planting is

the aim. ZH&T defines this as follows: 'proclamation of the gospel in word and deed to non-Christians, outside our own language and culture, with the aim of instituting a new church and establishing a fellowship of churches'.

In the second instance, missionary work can be characterized as ecumenical co-operation. The definition is then as follows: 'activities which support an independent church or Christian institution'.

Deputies add that in this case, mission is also work 'outside our own language and culture' and that the co-operation falls within the ecumenical contacts of the Reformed Churches (liberated).

The overlaps with evangelism are not mentioned in the ZH&T report.

### **Some main lines combined**

The General Synod of the Reformed Churches (liberated) of Amersfoort-Centrum 2005 commissioned the three groups of deputies mentioned above (and some other) to form a working group which will explore the possibility of

Having reread the three vision reports, I believe two main lines can be noted.

1. The first one is that DTEG conclude that the Kampen-1975 guidelines for evangelism have had too little impact. Members of the reformed churches still show little evangelistic zeal, although according to the guidelines the responsibility for this is clearly theirs.
2. ASE believe that the Kampen-1975 evangelism guidelines have to be altered in view of the continuing secularisation. The Netherlands have become a mission field again. That is why evangelism and church planting should be facilitated in areas where there are hardly any churches left. This calls for evangelists and church planters with the authority of office bearers.

I think that these two main lines are not in contradiction with each other. In view of DTEG's assignment, which is to equip evangelizing churches, it is understandable that the Kampen-1975 guidelines for evangelism should not be altered immediately. It is better for that which was so beautifully described on paper to have its impact in practice first! At the same time (in view of their assignment to formulate a reformed vision on church planting) ASE stress that the Kampen-1975 evangelism guidelines are not suitable for the new mission fields in the Netherlands, i.e. in those areas where hardly any orthodox Christians and churches are to be found. This calls for a different approach.

Perhaps the distinctions that ZH&T make as far as missionary work is concerned, can also be applied to evangelism in the Dutch situation. That is: church planting in areas where the gospel is no longer found, and supporting the local church to fulfil its function of salt and light in society. ■

# The New Dutch Bible and the International Reformed Community

It was reported in a recent issue of this magazine that the Reformed Churches (Liberated) in the Netherlands have adopted a new translation of the Bible<sup>1</sup>. The last major Dutch rendition had appeared in 1951; after fifty years of service, it was becoming obsolete. At the 1990 Synod it was decided to encourage the Dutch Bible Society (NBG), which had initiated the inter-confessional project, to produce a version that reflects the fact that for centuries the translated Bible has functioned within a confessional denomination.



In the years preceding publication, the team of translators formulated and enacted clear theories of translation, and involved both the general public and experts. While remaining faithful to the source text, the new Dutch Bible was to be understood easily by modern readers. Generally speaking, both experts in the language and general users judge the new translation up-to-date and highly readable.

The publication of a new Dutch Bible may not seem relevant to English-speaking Reformed and Presbyterian believers, but it is important for several reasons. Since the translation of Scripture is bound up closely with the interpretation and application of it, the new edition should interest all those who enjoy ecclesiastical fellowship with Dutch-speaking Reformed churches. The translated Bible is accepted as the only rule of faith; it is the final arbiter in discussions of doctrine and practice.

The new Dutch version is relevant to non-Dutch readers also because it reflects trends in translation that are world-wide. Those who will employ the next generation of the Bible in another language will wish to know how current theories of translation are practiced in this edition. While different languages possess different mechanisms of translation, the

theories are global; future English editions will advance or react to the translation theories that are effected in the new Dutch Bible.

Even a brief consideration of the new Dutch Bible reveals that there are striking differences between it and English Bibles popular throughout the international Reformed community. Not only the neo-conservative New King James Version (NKJV) and English Standard Version (ESV), but also the New International Version (NIV) differs with the NBV in several premises. It is the purpose of this article to summarize the most important differences in the principles of the Dutch translation and the cited English ones, and to illustrate them by means of examples that can be grasped by a reader not trained in the ancient languages or theories of translation.

## Features of the Language

One current theory evident in the Dutch translation is to distinguish features of language from features of text. Features of *language* are characteristics peculiar to a language, whether it be French, Korean, or ancient Greek. Think of the double negatives in Afrikaans, for example. If the translation repeats the peculiarities of the language in which a text is composed, it produces nonsense, or at least it appears awkward or foreign. The awkward quality, however, does not occur in the original, and so the translation fails.

A simple illustration may suffice to demonstrate how features of language recur in translation. To express the highest (superlative) degree, Hebrew commonly repeats a word: "Holy of Holies" (Ex.26:33). The meaning of this expression may not be clear to an English speaker who is unaware of this Hebrew idiom; "the most holy place" clearly conveys the meaning, though not the exact words. According to the theory behind the new Dutch Bible, the reader should not have to stumble over such Hebraisms, or require an explanatory footnote. After all, the peculiarities are merely characteristics of the *language* in which the source-text was written. Unlike a word-for-word translation, the NBV does not replicate the language in which the original document was penned.

### About the author:

Dr. Riemer A. Faber (\*1961) is professor of Classical Studies at the University of Waterloo, in Ontario, Canada. He has published articles on the interpretation of Greek and Latin literature, New Testament philology, and Reformation History. Current research projects include the translation and interpretation of Scripture in the Sixteenth Century, in particular Reformation-era commentaries upon the Letters to the Galatians and Corinthians. Homepage: <http://www.arts.uwaterloo.ca/CLASS/faberhm.htm>.



### Features of the Text

Features of the *text* are words, phrases, and stylistic elements that are unusual or remarkable even in the original language. For example, a love-poet may employ words, phrases and elements of style that are not used every day: “your eyes are doves ... your hair is like a flock of goats” (Song of Songs 4:1). The poet uses striking comparisons to express his emotions. By contrast, the historian begins his Gospel in the deliberate manner of Greek history-writing: “inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished by us....” (Luke 1:1, RSV).

These differences in vocabulary, tone, and other elements of style are due to the fact that the authors wrote in different kinds, or genres, of literature. Every genre of literature is defined by certain characteristics of text, and these characteristics should be evident in translation also. The book of Proverbs is wisdom-literature; the second Letter of Peter reads like a rhetorical testament. More than earlier versions, the new Dutch Bible reflects the generic features of the various original compositions.

The translation of the book of Esther, to use another example, reflects the strange vocabulary of the original. Written like a novel, Esther includes many Persian loan-words that convey the local colour of Susa, the Persian capital. In 1:6 the luxury of the draperies is expressed by the ‘expensive’, foreign word, “byssus” (a very fine “cord of white linen”, NIV). The Dutch translation maintains this word, which is explained in a word-list at the back of the book. Not only the diction of a particular book or passage, but also its structure is revealed in the translation. For the same reason the translation adheres less to the customary divisions of passages; rather, it duplicates the verbal markers of beginning, middle and end in order to reveal the coherence in the original account. These are no doubt advancements in Bible translation, for they convey more accurately the structure and tone of the original document.

For translators who prefer fidelity to the source text over that of the source language the challenge is to determine when an author uses features of the language to express a special meaning or tone. Composing a good literary text (whether it be poetry, epistle, or historiography) involves using the features of the language in order to communicate a unique meaning. In other words, the modern

translator must be sensitive to the characteristics of language and the way in which an author employs them precisely because the inspired author is using a feature of language intentionally. In my view, the new Dutch Bible has not always accounted fully for this role of the features of language.

### Not Necessarily Word-for-Word

Many English Bibles, including the recently published English Standard Version, aim to provide essentially literal translations, that is, word-for-word correspondences. Consequently, the form of the English sentence is determined by that in the original document. Unlike the ESV (and NKJV), the new Dutch Bible does not translate each and every word in the original text into a word in the target language. Indeed, not even a word that recurs in a passage is necessarily translated by the same word into Dutch. This practice reflects the current theory that it is not always accurate to translate a word with the same word time and again. Should the original word be used as a motif or recurring concept, it may be translated into Dutch by a different, nearly synonymous word. To put it differently, the new Dutch Bible does not strive for formal equivalence in the features of the language; instead it identifies the *function* of the words, rhythm, sentence-structure, etc., and seeks to reproduce that function in the target-language

### The Function of the Original Text

The NIV Bible read by many Reformed believers around the world is based on the translation theory known as dynamic equivalence. The first word in this phrase, “dynamic”, points to the theory’s emphasis on the impact or effect that a text has on the reader. The second word, “equivalence”, means that the impact or effect of the modern text should be the same as that of the Hebrew or Greek original on its first readers. Simply put, a dynamic-equivalent translation seeks to move the modern reader in the same way as the ancient reader was.

In recent years this dynamic-equivalent theory has lost favour, for two reasons. First, scholars have realized that it is very difficult to determine from the original text how the ancient Hebrew or Greek reader was affected; secondly, it is also nearly impossible to determine how a modern reader will react to a text in his language. To put it in other words, there are severe limitations to a translation method that relies too much on the social context in which a document is composed and read. Realizing this weakness, translators have

moved away from focusing on the relation between language and society to the text proper.

The new Dutch Bible is premised on the theory called “function-equivalent”, which places less stress on the response of the reader, and more on the purpose or intent of the original text. While I see the shift as promising, the emphasis on function produces challenges of its own. For when the translator views his task as rendering the *function* of the text in the translation, he may produce a result that goes beyond, or restricts, the meaning of a passage, phrase, or word.

### Translation as Explicit Interpretation

This brings us to another feature of current theory related to Biblical interpretation, namely, choosing a specific translation that permits one explanation. The goal of this approach is to make explicit in the target-language an element that may be merely implied in the source text. Since something is understood by the readers of the original text because their culture would have assumed it, the translation must make the thing explicit for the modern reader who lives in a different cultural setting. In other words, if the translation does not state clearly that which is assumed in the original, then some meaning is lost. A simple and beguiling example illustrates how this theory functions, and also how it may result in a free or overly-specific translation.

Joshua 7 records the sin of Achan and Israel’s violation of the covenant. When Achan’s sin is exposed and his admission given, the elders retrieve the devoted things and, the Hebrew states, “spread them out before Jahweh” (Joshua 7:23). The new Dutch translation interprets the words in a specific way and states that the devoted things were deposited “before the ark”. Relying on the context of the entire episode, the phrase harks back to verse 6 of chapter 7, in which is stated that Joshua, distraught with the defeat at Ai, fell “before the ark”. Now the covenantal emphasis effected by the symbol of the ark is a very attractive interpretation, but the original Hebrew text makes no mention, in verse 23, of “the ark”. The translators have made one plausible exegesis of the words “before Jahweh” more explicit by having the devoted things deposited *before the ark*; a graphic action, if only the original text had it so.

This example shows that the considerable challenge in this process is understanding what is implied (but not stated) by the original text,

and accurately rendering it in explicit terms in the modern language. This practice, while being a bold striving for clarity and directness in the target language, hides the fact that the meaning of the original word is not as certain as may appear from the new text. In fact, an author may employ purposeful ambiguity in expressions precisely in order to convey a range of meanings: the devoted things were placed before Jahweh, perhaps before the ark of His covenant. Especially when a theological point is at stake, such interpretative translation may amount to a suppression or exaggeration of a doctrinal point that may be abused in the churches’ teaching. In my view, then, the translator who over-explicates the original words by means of translation has assumed the task of the exegete.

### Inclusive Language

A characteristic of any language is that its vocabulary reflects social values, including male and female relations. In the Greco-Roman culture, words like “man” (*anthropos*) and “brothers” (*adelphoi*) did not necessarily exclude “woman” and “sisters”. Modern readers understand that while such terms reflect the social realities and biases of the time, they are employed often (though not always) by the biblical writers to mean people of both sexes. For example, when the original Greek states “any man”, it may mean “any one”.

When the Greek text states “brothers”, therefore, the new Dutch translation adds “and sisters” where appropriate, as in 1 Corinthians 1:10, 26 (etc.). In the Dutch text of Psalm 133:1 only the term “brothers” appears because the theme of unity is expressed by the example of the (male) priests. On occasion, however, the Dutch translation is awkward due to an over-emphasis on inclusive language. In 2 Peter 1:7 “brotherly love” appears as “love for the brothers and the sisters” (in Dutch) twice in one verse, so that more attention is drawn to the matter than the original text intends.

It should be noted also that translations used by most English-speaking Reformed and Presbyterian churches vary in the use of inclusive language. On the grounds of transparency to the original text, the NKJV and ESV retain the gender-specific terms - although the ESV repeatedly explains the inclusion of females in footnotes. The New International Version (NIV), which had appeared in 1978 with gender-specific language, has been available as gender-neutral since 2002.

Dr. R.A. Scholma was project manager of the Bible translation project as well as director of Translation (photo P.G.B. de Vries)



### The Prefaces to the Bible Books

The “Guidelines for Interconfessional Cooperation in Translating the Bible” (1993) state that the translation should not be burdened with ideological overtones, but convey the original text directly. They also state that outlines explaining the structure and major themes of each book may be used as prefaces. In my opinion, the new Dutch Bible errs when it provides prefaces that include ideas which conflict with what is stated in the Bible text that follows, thereby colouring the reading of that text with a notion opposed to Scripture itself. For example, while 2 Peter 1:1 states that the apostle Peter is the author, the introduction to this letter relates the alternative viewpoint that the authenticity of this book has been discounted. So too for Paul’s Letter to Titus (cf. 1:1), for which the view is presented that it was composed by an author only purporting to be Paul. The brief introductions thus may prejudice the reading of a book by stating (and not proving) claims to which a denomination that professes the inerrancy of Scripture does not adhere.

### Conclusion

This brief review of the principles and practices in the new Dutch Bible illustrates the close connection that exists between translation and interpretation. It also underscores the value of reflecting critically upon contemporary principles of translation and their influences through translated texts. One recent critical review of the new translation posed the question whether the principles behind the NBV

are compatible with those of the Reformed faith as expressed at the Synod of Dordt in 1618. In an era when biblical exegesis is undergoing considerable re-orientation, Reformed and Presbyterian churches world-wide must continue to advance biblical hermeneutics that are grounded in the Scriptures. For the harmony in the Reformed international community rests in the Bible. Closer collaboration between Reformed and Presbyterian churches in matters of exegesis and doctrine also will strengthen common enterprises, such as mission, by grounding them more firmly in the teachings of Scripture. Moreover, these federations should provide a united biblical and confessional perspective on the interpretation of Scripture that may benefit not only the international scholarly communities but also the world-wide Christian faith.

When a federation of churches adopts a new rendering of the Bible, it implicitly adopts the theories of translation and interpretation that come with it; the next generation of readers will be affected by the principles that are practiced in the modern edition. The adoption of the NBV by the Reformed Churches (Liberated) in the Netherlands offers an opportunity to believers in sister-churches (English, Korean, etc.) to re-evaluate the strengths and weaknesses in the principles and methods of the translated Bible they employ. Whatever the diversity that exists among Reformed and Presbyterian churches world-wide, the final judge in matters of doctrine and practice are not the words of man but the words of God, the Bible. Therefore we may derive comfort from the words of Isaiah 40 quoted in 1 Peter 1:24-25, “all men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field ... but the word of the Lord stands forever”. ■

#### Note:

1. *Lux Mundi* 24.2 (June 2005), p. 61. For a summary of the objectives, scope, and character of the translation see R.A. Scholma, “The New Dutch Bible Translation,” *Lux Mundi* 23.3/4 (September / November 2004), p. 48-51. Further English reading of the principles supporting the new translation includes K.F. de Blois, T. Mewe, “Functional Equivalence and the New Dutch Translation Project,” *The Bible Translator* 52.4 (October 2001), p. 430-440. At the time of writing, the most recent of the many Dutch reactions to the NBV is the theme-issue of *Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift* 59.4 (2005).

# Theologische Universiteit Kampen (GKv)

On March 16th, 2006, the Theological Seminary of the Reformed Churches (liberated) in the Netherlands in Kampen lost one of its retired professors, Prof. Heinrich Marinus Ohmann. He died at the age of 78. He followed his wife, Bertha Ohmann née Janssen, who had been called by the Lord on October 25th, 2005. Prof. Ohmann taught Old Testament Studies at the seminary from 1981 until 1993. Prior to that, he was Professor of Old Testament, Hebrew and related studies at the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches in Hamilton for about ten years. For more information about Ohmann's life and work, see the obituary elsewhere in this issue.

In the Spring of 2005, the seminary's education was assessed by an international evaluation committee. It took, however, more than a year before the official report of the committee, which had to assess all faculties of theology and religion in the Netherlands, was published. The committee checked the books which the students must study, the texts of written exams and a large number of Master's theses. It concluded that the level of the theological training offered by the seminary really meets the academic standards. It highly appreciated the way in which the seminary watches over the quality of its work and the system which has been developed to that end.

The committee also made a number of critical remarks. It said, for instance, that in these days, more time should be dedicated to the study of non-Christian religions. Furthermore, it indicated that some academic fields which are not covered by the classic curriculum of theology, such as psychology and sociology of religion, should be included in the programme. The way in which students are trained in academic skills, methodology, and cross-discipline research also has to be improved. The amelioration of the international outlook and orientation of the seminary was felt to be needed, too.

In the coming months, the seminary will decide which recommendations of the committee can be followed and which must be rejected, because, for instance, they conflict with our mission. One step forward has been made already, in that one of the professors, Dr. Barend Kamphuis, has been appointed to co-ordinate all aspects of the seminary's international relationships and service. In the main, the seminary is very thankful for the evaluation, as it shows that the quality of its theological training, when compared to that of other faculties in the country and

abroad, can stand the test very well. On the basis of this report, the seminary can confidently apply for its official accreditation for the next years.

The evaluation of the education will be followed by an evaluation of the research, which is carried out in close cooperation with the seminary of the Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands in Apeldoorn. The Lord willing, a committee of three professors from Germany, South-Africa, and the United States, will fulfil this task in May and June.

Finally, two other events must be mentioned in short. First, the 151st anniversary of the seminary was celebrated on December 6th, 2005. On this occasion, Dr. Peter van de Kamp, assistant professor in Practical Theology, lectured on the relationship between vision and methods in pastoral care. Secondly, a two-day congress was organized, in which ministers, students, professors and other interested persons discussed the main elements of a reformed theological perspective on the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Elsewhere in this issue, the editors reflect more extensively on this congress.

G. Kwakkel

Rector of Kampen Theological Seminary of the GKv 2003-2006

## A European Conference of Reformed Churches and Missions

Four European member churches of the International Conference of Reformed Churches - the Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, the Free Church of Scotland, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of England and Wales, and the Reformed Churches (liberated) in the Netherlands - have taken the initiative to organise a conference for Reformed and Presbyterian Churches and Missions in Europe. They have formed an organising committee and the first plans have been made. The aims are to become better acquainted with one another, to encourage one another and to reach missionary agreement. The conference will be of three days duration and will be held in The Netherlands, probably in February 2007. The secretary of the organising committee is Rev. R. ter Beek, email: [beek.rter@freeler.nl](mailto:beek.rter@freeler.nl).

# Rick Warren's The Purpose Driven Life I: Characteristics of a Christian life

Many will have read it and have seen their faith encouraged by it: Rick Warren's best seller *The Purpose Driven Life*. Others have their objections to Warren's Purpose driven movement. In this article, I want to look at the way in which Warren describes Christian life in *The Purpose Driven Life*.



"Test all things, hold fast what is good", Paul tells us (1 Thess 5:21). I want to do both things. To "Test", and that will bring criticism with it, but I also want to hold fast to what is good in the book!

There are many good things in this book. Too many to mention. Two examples: "Understanding can wait, but obedience can't (...) in fact, you will never understand some commands until you obey them first. Obedience unlocks understanding" (72). A sentence to think about for a while and to talk about! A correct warning: "today many equate being emotionally moved by music as being moved by the Spirit, but these are not the same" (102).

## Use of the Bible

There is much which could be said about the use of the Bible in *The Purpose Driven Life*. Hundreds of Bible texts are scattered throughout the book, but the use of these texts has been criticised by many. And rightly so. If you check his use of the Bible, time and time again Warren uses texts to say something slightly different to what they were intended to say.

I mention one example, concerning God's purposes:

- "The Bible says, 'God's wisdom... goes deep into the interior of his purposes... It's not the latest message, but more like the oldest - what God determined as the way to bring out his best in us" (20). This claim is supported by a reference to 1 Corinthians 2:7: "But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory." Sharing in God's glory is surely not the same as 'bringing out the best in us'.

### About the author:

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- "You, LORD, give perfect peace to those who keep their purpose firm and put their trust in you" (32). By this reference, Warren says: See how the Bible supports my purpose driven life 'philosophy'. It is about Isaiah 26:3 "You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you". Is this the same 'keeping their purpose firm'? Or has Warren secretly smuggled this (his own) thought into it?

- Paul writes in Phil.3:13-15: "One thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus" (NIV). There you have it, says Warren, there you see an example of a man who has a *goal* in his life, a *purpose* to strive for. That is how the apostle Paul almost single-handedly spread Christianity throughout the Roman Empire. "His secret was a focused life... Paul said, 'Let's keep focused on that goal, those of us who want everything God has for us'" (32-33, with a quote from Phil. 3:15 in the *The Message* version). A subtle shift! For Paul, the goal for which he strove was the heavenly prize. Warren makes of this: the goal for which Paul strove was the spreading of the gospel through the Roman Empire. In that way Paul fits nicely into Warren's concept of the 'purpose-driven life'. I don't have room here to demonstrate this point more (you can check out my articles in *De Reformatie* for more evidence).

Now you could say: Warren's Bible use is not convincing, but his message is Biblical. The rest of this article looks at his message. I will discuss three characteristics of the way in which *Purpose Driven Life* describes Christian life.

## 1 'Experienced needs'

Rick Warren stands in the so called Church Growth Movement tradition, which came into being in the sixties of the last century in the United States. One characteristic of this movement is the desire to want to hone in on the needs people have. It is a sort of marketing technique: if you know which needs your potential customers have, then you play to that.

Rick Warren's *Purpose Driven Life* concept does so



Rick Warren

too. The five aims which he formulates are in fact, five *needs* which (according to him) people have. Warren's message is: look guys, the gospel (my message) is just what you need!

This appears to be clear when Warren talks about the church. "God's purposes for his church are identical to his five purposes for you." "He created the church to meet your five deepest needs: a purpose to live for, people to live with, principles to live by, a profession to live out, and power to live on. There is no other place on earth where you can find all five of these benefits in one place" (136). Warren uses this word 'benefits' more often (82, 143, 190): you will experience all sorts of benefits if you do what the gospel asks of you! This brings a very positive message: inviting, attractive. Come with us; you miss out if you ignore the gospel!

And is that not true?! Isn't the gospel, and God Himself, what people need? Yes, absolutely. "And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent" (John 17:3). The thing is, is this a need which people feel? "There is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God," says the Bible (Rom. 3:11, cf. Ps. 14). People can certainly feel as though something is missing, a certain emptiness in purpose and the like. And you must certainly try to use this as way to reach them. But that is not to say that people are ready and waiting to accept the gospel (if you show it to them in a attractive enough way). Why not? Because the *Cross of Christ* is not attractive to anybody. Christ's cross represents His death, and at the same time our sin and guilt before God.

People have needs and desires that they usually don't feel. And thus they have no desire for the One who fulfils their needs. Jesus said to the Pharisees and the scribes: "it is not the healthy who need

a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Luke 5:31-32). The problem is that, left to themselves, people do not want to know that they are sick!

## 2 Hold on to your life?

No Christian will deny that the Bible contains a positive message; it is *good* news! That does not take away the fact that following Jesus brings difficult aspects with it. When Jesus began to make clear to his disciples that he would have to suffer much (Matth. 16:21) he said to them: "if anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it" (Matth. 16:24-25) and "He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves Me let him follow Me and where I am, there my servant will also be" (John 12:25-26).

This side of the Christian life is hardly mentioned in *The Purpose Driven Life*. The emphasis lies elsewhere. Jesus' words about 'taking up your cross' and self-denial are made by Warren into: "Self-help is no help at all. Self-sacrifice is the way, my way, to finding yourself, your true self" (19). This self-sacrifice, is for example, that you help others (232). Christian life does not cost you yourself, on the contrary, it brings out the best in us (20, 177). That last word is supported by a reference to 1 Cor. 2:7: "we speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began" (20). Here 'our glory' is made one and the same as 'bringing out the best in us'. This example of irresponsible use of the Bible appears to be within the framework of an optimistic message: Christian life is a life of maximal self-development!

In a certain way you could say that a Christian life brings somebody to his goal. He or she becomes a person as God meant him or her to be. There is some recovery, and indeed man is better for it – in the double sense of the word. But the Bible makes clear that this is accompanied by 'demolition'. You can say 'yes' to the new nature in you, but simultaneously 'no' to the old nature which is still in you. And Christian life also knows trials and tribulations and suffering. Paul and Barnabas pointed out to the Christians that "we must, through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22).

'Discovering your true self' is profit for this life (a benefit, Warren would say), but Jesus talks about *losing* your life. Maybe you will never 'discover your true self'. Maybe by believing, you will lose much in your life. Relationships; work; self-development; yes, maybe even life itself. Faith does not only bring 'benefits' if you only look at this life. It has many disadvantages as well (seen from the perspective of this life). If you become a Christian, you often also have more problems (ask a Christian who does not live in the free western world).

### 3 Must

More than once it has been pointed out that according to Warren there are many *musts*. Take chapter 12 for example: 'Developing your friendship with God' (92-99). "You are as close to God as you choose to be" (92). In this first sentence of the chapter, Warren lays the responsibility directly at my feet. Can I bear it? Must I bear it? Four instructions follow; four 'I musts': I must choose to be honest with God; I must choose to obey God in faith; I must choose to value what God values; I must desire friendship with God more than anything else.

Warren wants to teach us to be a 'great Christian'. In order to be that I must join a house group, I must regularly check my spiritual health, I must record my spiritual advances in a diary and I must share what I learn with others. "These are four important activities for purpose driven living" (306).

Warren's book breathes an atmosphere of positive optimism. On the one side that attracts me, it stimulates. It creates desire in me: if only we could all be such Christians! On the other side: in my life as Christian (and that of many other sincere Christians) I also recognise other aspects. Victory, but also defeat. And thus in any case, struggle. Am I no good Christian? Or is Warren's description of Christian life one-sided?

In the second article, I would like to look at the common background of these three aspects of Warren's description of Christian life: the place of the cross in the life of the Christian. ■

■ This article is the first of two. This is the translation of a shortened version of three articles the author wrote for *De Reformatie*, a weekly magazine which appears within the Reformed Churches (Lib.) in The Netherlands, Vol. 81, Nos. 12-14 (can be viewed via [www.dereformatie.nl](http://www.dereformatie.nl)).

## PKN is to educate its own ministers



LUNTEREN, 7th April 2006. The Protestant Church in the Netherlands (PKN) is starting a university for the education of ministers. The faculties in Leiden and Utrecht are joining forces,

from 1st January 2007, with the Theological University in Kampen, the Evangelical-Lutheran Seminary (Utrecht) and the Theological Seminary Hydepark. The Synod has decided this.

The State Universities in Leiden and Utrecht will no longer be training ministers, the Protestant Church in the Netherlands (PKN) will be taking the task on board itself. The new university which will be called the Protestant Theological University (PThU), will house approx. 750 students.

This brings an end to the so called "duplex ordo", the joint responsibility of the national government as well as the church for the training of ministers. The churches decide now about the content, the government about the scholarly character. Students will follow the first three years of their theology study, the bachelor phase, in Leiden or Utrecht. The Master's study which follows this, through which students will pursue the minister's study, will come under the churches' responsibility, if the plans go ahead. Moreover, the study will take a year longer.

Mr. Marc Rutte (Minister of Education) has already approved the plans, as have the three universities involved. Rutte has made a budget of almost ten million euros available for the new university. He had already asked the churches last year, to offer plans for the future of the ministers' training.

According to a report from the Council of Supervision of scholarly theological education to the synod, a new university would bring attractive advantages with it. This sort of establishment must attract young people for the task of minister. In the coming years the Council expects an increasing shortage of ministers. Above all, an own university is cheaper and fits better in the bachelor/master structure in higher education.

The number of students following a ministers training has declined hugely in the last fifteen years. The church is afraid that this development shall continue if nothing is done. In 1999 the PKN disposed of three of the six courses: at the Free University, the University of Amsterdam and Groningen.

[Sources: [www.pkn.nl](http://www.pkn.nl); NRC 6 april 2006 / Guus Valk]

# A beautiful Sister

According to some, Nigeria is the most corrupt land in the world. Moslems are getting more and more of a grip on the government and the land. Nevertheless - Jesus Christ reigns! - a church of very committed Christians is growing, who want to spread the gospel in their land. Listening to the 1st stanza of 'The church's one foundation is Jesus Christ' in the Tiv language, the Reformed (lib.) Synod of Amersfoort Centre 2005, realised that they were welcoming a strong, beautiful, black sister in the two singing brothers present.



Rev. J.T. Orkuma, NKST-President, and Rev. Dr. M.K. Antiev, NKST-General Secretary, represented the Nongo u Kristu u Ken Sudan hen Tiv, The Church of Christ in the Sudan among the Tiv. In what follows they introduce the NKST:

The purpose of this article is to sketch the development stages in the life and times of the Church Mission of the NKST as it attempts to gather the flock of God to be both meaningful and eternal for itself and to others in daily life. Also in this profile, you will find the problems, prospects and missionary vision of the NKST Church and the need for you to be part of the spiritual and physical development efforts of the NKST as it attempts to move with the rising tide of modern times.

## Introduction

The history of the birth of the Church of Christ in Sudan among the Tiv, popularly called NKST, is a history of three major epochal developments: the precursory work of the Sudan United Mission (SUM) and later the Dutch Reformed Church Mission (DRCM); the continuity efforts of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA); and lastly, the autonomous indigenous persons that took charge of the Church from January, 9th 1957. It will not be out of place to dust off history briefly. The facts about the NKST are worth telling for they form an interesting chapter in the life of a Tiv Christian and show how far the church has advanced since its humble beginnings.

Sometime in the final lap of the 20th century, a team of spirited individuals met in Edinburgh in 1904 and established the Sudan United Mission (SUM). This Mission was an international and inter-denominational umbrella Union comprising churches in England, Scotland, Ireland, Canada, New Zealand and Norway. Encouraged by Dr. Karl Kumm, a South African version of SUM was formed and

it was this that visited Tivland on 17th April, 1911. This mission was prompted by forced conversion of natives of the Northern region. And so, their destination was the vast "greatest unevangelized territory in Africa".

The Tiv people were the largest of the "pagan" tribes in the central Sudan of the time and but for their prowess, they would have been overrun by Islam. The SUM found the Tiv an attractive people with an appreciable population and a single language and started work in earnest. Later, mounting tensions against the apartheid regime in South Africa made the DRCM disengage. In a gradual but steady disengagement, the whole of Tivland was finally handed over to the CRCNA.

Having trained Elders, Evangelists and Pastors (the first four - 4! - trained pastors finishing in 1956) the time and atmosphere was ripe for the young church to be given autonomy. A constitution was drafted in July, 1956 and subsequently adapted with few amendments. It was at this time too that the church was christened "Nongo u Kristu u ken Sudan hen Tiv (NKST), meaning the Church of Christ in the Sudan among the Tiv. The formal establishment of NKST took place at Mkar, January 9th, 1957. The NKST now has a national and continental outlook with converts among Fulanis, Kanuris and many others in Nigeria, Chad, Cameroun and more recently the Republic of Sudan. These three epochal developments have shaped the NKST of today.

## Standards of Faith

The Nongo u Kristu u Ken Sudan hen Tiv as a Reformed Church holds to the three forms of unity:

- The Heidelberg Catechism
- The Canons of Dordt
- The Belgic Confession

## Goals and objectives of NKST

The NKST vision and mission is to turn the body and souls of all people irrespective of their race to Christ and to provide greater wide-ranging services to humanity. In undertaking this onerous task, the NKST has set for itself certain goals and objects among which are:

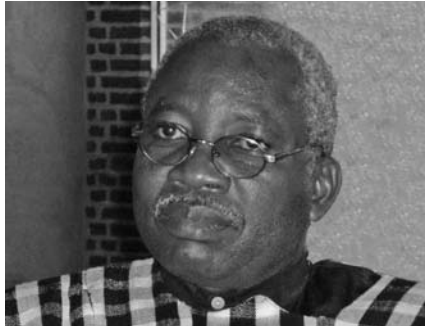
- To ensure that all people, irrespective of their tribe or race, are brought to the true knowledge of Christ as the only way of salvation.
- To dismantle all socio-cultural (even political or religious) barriers that threaten the effective spread of the gospel of Christ.

### About the author:

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Rev. Dr. Mbanongon.  
Kurugh Antiev, NKST-  
General Secretary  
(photo P.G.B. de Vries)



- To promote unity and foster a better understanding among Christian churches.
- To promote and improve on the standard of living and well-being of the people.
- To provide voluntary health, agricultural and educational services to the general public to better their lot and compliment efforts of the public sector.
- To undertake any appropriate action capable of serving God and Humanity.
- To collaborate, co-operate and liaise with government, non-governmental organizations and international bodies in pursuance of NKST Missions and vision.

### **Organizational structure**

The NKST Church is a Reformed Church with a decentralized decision making policy. The headquarters is at Mkar with the General Secretary as the Chief Executive. The Synod, which meets bi-annually, is the highest decision-making body and is headed by the President.

The NKST Synod has a seven member executive council made up of the President, the Vice - President, the General Secretary, Assistant General Secretary, and three other appointed members. The executive council has the mandate to deliberate over all issues affecting the activities and constitution of the NKST church and their subsidiary programme unit; and takes final decisions concerning all NKST activities. They are the highest decision making board of NKST.

### **Classes / Districts**

Classes are zones based on the geographical location of the churches. This is done for easier evangelism and administrative convenience. Their meetings are attended by delegates chosen from local churches found in the zone. They deliberate and attend to issues affecting the activities of the churches in the zone or that hinder the realization of NKST vision and Mission in their zone. Where such issues are beyond their jurisdiction, they make referrals to the NKST committee for further review. The classes are headed by the chairman secretary,

Asst. Secretary and other appointee delegates. At present, there are forty two (42) classes.

### **The local church committee**

Each local church must consist of no less than three hundred (300) communicant members. Its leadership is headed by the Rev. Pastor in charge and delegates from church members called Elders. They run their daily activities without hindrance but in line with the set goals and objectives of NKST. They also make referrals to their classes. Membership of NKST is open to people of all races. To become a communicant member he / she must attend catechism classes, confess and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Currently, the NKST has a total number of 229,620 communicant members.

Alongside the main purpose of evangelism and conversion of individuals to Jesus Christ, the NKST sets out to capture the essence of life and living of the people in such a way that the spiritual goals will tally with the physical yearnings of the general population. In this regard, NKST engages development efforts and programmes capable of training and affecting the mind and body of the individual. Thus the NKST concentrates on four to five basic areas of human and spiritual development in order to really be a reforming church: Evangelism, Health, Agriculture, Education and social services.

### **Evangelism**

The NKST has continued to train pastors and subsidiary spiritual personnel such as "Atese" (wife teacher) and others. The essence is to ensure sustainability and continuity. There is no gift greater than the word of God which a Christian can give to a new or potential convert. The Bible says: "For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any double edged sword; it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitude of the heart" (Heb. 4:12).

NKST evangelism encompasses the totality of the growth of the individual. In all NKST activities, members are made to feel that a child of God is someone who listens to the Lord, his personal Lord and Saviour. Evangelization also helps disabuse the minds of members towards unchristian ways and values. NKST evangelism includes youth and women ministries. Presently, NKST has 91,787 members of women fellowship ministry, 84,856 Sunday School (MIM) members, 66,347 choir members; 38,221 catechism students; 6,139 preaching centres; 14 major mission stations in many states of Nigerian including Abeokuta, Ilorin, Maiduguri, Jos, Kaduna, Lagos etc, and has trained

Fulani evangelists and Pastors from the Republic of Sudan to take over stations in their areas, 1671 evangelists (mbaivangeli); 284 consistories (iniongol kristu) and 485 pastors from a humble four pastors in the beginning in January, 1957.

The NKST in its vision and God-directed mandate also evangelizes outside the confines of NKST churches through organized crusades, field evangelism, film shows and such other activities. Through such added impetus by lay apostolates, (the duty of evangelism, the recitations of the Holy scriptures by Sunday school and catechism, and the formulation of liturgical songs) greater number of lives are touched. The cross-cultural activities of NKST have recorded tremendous success. NKST mission activity is opened in Abuja, Minna, Illorin, Calabar, Portharcourt, Keffi, Kafanchan and other parts of Nigeria, as well as in the Republic of Cameroun, Chad and most recently the Republic of Sudan where NKST has trained a Sudanese Pastor to take charge of the Mission activity there. NKST church has cut across cultural and ethnic boundaries.

### **Health**

The health sector is one of the main areas of concern of the NKST since inception. When people are healed their minds are touched and they remember the Lord Jesus clearly. In the NKST objectives, there is an inter-relatedness between spiritual healing and physical healing.

The NKST has, apart from the main Mkar Christian Hospital which has been a strong health force in the health sector so Benue State and beyond, also established hospitals at Zaki-Biam, Jato-Aka, Apir, Mbaakon, Saai, Anyiin, Adikpo. There is also the NKST Leprosy and Rehabilitation Hospital, Mkar. That's not all; there are one hundred and eleven (111) NKST Primary Health Clinics and Services. Also, with support from the Christoffel Blind Mission (CBM), NKST Eye Project has been carrying out surgical and eye treatment services in many states of Nigeria. The CBM also supports and runs the NKST Community-based Rehabilitation (CBR) programme called the Benue Leprosy and Rehabilitation Hospital, Mkar which caters for disabled persons. In view of the changing times and situations, the NKST has risen to the task by establishing the HIV/AIDS Department to cater for such patients and also create awareness geared towards prevention of the dreaded disease.

### **Agriculture**

The NKST also offers humanitarian services in the area of agriculture; people are taught the

techniques of improved farming; improved seed varieties are also introduced to help farmers generate better and greater yields thus improving their living standards. For farmers there is also the provision of chemicals, and demonstration visitations to farms, and vaccination of livestock. All these are carried out under the auspices of NKST Christian Agricultural Company (CAC) Nig. Limited.

### **Education**

NKST has equally made an indelible mark in the educational sector. The NKST drive of capturing both the spiritual and mental development of the individual is brought to the three leads of education primary, secondary and tertiary.

With a humble beginning of about sixty-two Primary Schools from 1965, NKST now has over five hundred Primary Schools, continuing in the task of moulding Christian Models for God and humanity. NKST has established over thirty four secondary schools, and the government appreciates NKST's complementary role. Not relenting, NKST also established the following tertiary institutions viz: Reformed Bible College (RBC) Harga; College of Health Technology, Mkar; School of Nursing and Midwifery, Mkar; Lens Gabrieles School of Medical Laboratory, Mkar; Reformed Theological Seminary, Mkar (RTS), Institute of Christian Management Studies, Mkar (ICMS) affiliated to Benue State University, Makurdi. Now, to cap it all, NKST, by God's blessing, has a private University of Mkar, Mkar (UMM).

### **NKST Vision**

NKST aspires to continue to serve God and Humanity in all capacities, with God's help. The University Mkar, Mkar (UMM) is established with a vision to produce a generation that will be God fearing and capable of making a worthwhile impact in teaching and research and generally in human aspirations.

The HIV/AIDS and the Relief Departments could also be expanded as God gives the strength. Meanwhile, we say a big thank you to God for all foresight and tremendous impact NKST has made on the lives of millions of people across cultures. We thank our friends from all over the world for their support. We praise God for this and state that all glory goes to Him alone.

NKST's call is like the Biblical Macedonia one "come over and help us". ■

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A.J. de Visser

# A new Practical Theology from Kampen

Dr. Kees de Ruijter, professor of Practical Theology at the Theological University of the Reformed Churches (liberated) in Kampen, has published a book with the title *Meewerken met God*. In this book he outlines his approach to Practical Theology which is, in important aspects, different from the approach of his predecessors.



Speaking about predecessors, a name that is mentioned time and again in De Ruijter's book is the name of C. Trimp. Already in the prologue De Ruijter asserts that he is thankful for the inheritance which he received from his predecessor. At the same time he is quite critical of Trimp's approach.

It is not easy to give an adequate summary of De Ruijter's book. Although it deals with *Practical Theology*, and although the author tries to illustrate what he says with practical examples, it is essentially a *theoretical* exposition of the principles of the discipline. The level of abstraction is high. This probably has to do with the fact that De Ruijter aims to address two audiences at once: on the one hand members of his own churches, on the other hand colleagues at other universities in the Netherlands.

De Ruijter has written an important book in which he gives account of the approach that he is following. This is to be appreciated. Judging from reactions in Dutch magazines it is a controversial book as well. In this review I will try to give an impression of the book, and give my personal view on some of the issues.

## Diaconiology

First of all we should note that since De Ruijter became a professor in Kampen, the name of his department has been changed. Under his predecessors the discipline used to be called *diaconiology*, but during the 1990's that name was dropped and the name *practical theology* was introduced. To people in the English speaking world this may sound like a minor issue, but in the Reformed tradition in the Netherlands it is not. The name *diaconiology*, coined by Abraham Kuiper, represented an effort to introduce a normative

element into the practical disciplines. The name is derived from the Greek word *diakonia*, which means ministry. By using the name *diaconiology* a statement was made: when we study the ministries of the church, we do so in submission to the authority of Christ, and in obedience to biblical norms.

For the past hundred years the name 'diaconiology' has been used at reformed theological seminaries in the Netherlands (Kampen, Apeldoorn). 'Practical theology' was the name that was used at other institutions. Seen in this context, it is understandable that the change of name from 'diaconiology' to 'practical theology' caused quite a stir.

Personally, I find it hard to get excited about the issue of the name of the discipline. I am a professor of Diaconiology myself, but I have to admit that the word is a real tongue-twister and that its meaning is obscure to most people. The name 'practical theology' is much easier to understand, but it has its own problems (on which I will not elaborate now). It seems to me that there is no perfect name for this discipline. I can live with both names, 'diaconiology' and 'practical theology', as long as the content of the discipline is worked out along reformed lines.

This leads us to the central issue: De Ruijter does not just reject the *name* 'diaconiology'. He also has problems with the traditional diaconological *position*. De Ruijter follows the Dutch theologian Heitink in characterizing the diaconological approach as "normative-deductive". This qualification is not meant as a compliment.

De Ruijter believes that the traditional approach was too heavy on biblical norms and doctrinal viewpoints and too afraid of empirical research. It lacked relevancy for the practice of church work. It 'deduced' guidelines from the norms, without listening to the insights of empirical research or social sciences. Disciplines such as psychology and didactics were seen as *auxiliary* disciplines. They were not taken seriously, at least not seriously enough.

## Bi-polar approach

What is the solution then? De Ruijter believes that the auxiliary disciplines should be elevated to the same level as theology itself. Social sciences such as psychology should no longer be treated as 'ancillae'

### About the author:

Dr. A.J. de Visser (\* 1958) is Professor of Diaconiology and Church History at the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches in Hamilton, Canada.



(servants) of theology, but they should bring in their own perspectives without being dominated by theology. Again borrowing from Heitink, De Ruijter proposes a so-called “bi-polar model”. Practical theology should have a double perspective: a theological perspective and a social sciences-perspective. The cooperation and integration of theology and social sciences will produce a practical theology that is both normative and relevant.

Maybe it is helpful to give a practical example of what De Ruijter has in mind. On page 93 of his book he refers to research that was done in order to determine what role the person of the minister plays in the whole process of how people perceive a worship service or a sermon. By way of empirical research it was found that various processes take place simultaneously. There is a theological perspective (the content of the message) but also a socio-psychological perspective (the personality and the behaviour of the minister and other personal aspects). It is helpful to analyse the preaching-listening process from these various perspectives. When you analyze preaching only from a theological perspective, you are going to overlook something important.

But how can theology and social sciences be combined? De Ruijter proposes a model with various levels of reflection, ranging from a grassroots level where specific church activities are studied, to a meta-level where more foundational questions are discussed. It would take us too far to discuss this model in detail here.

One important issue should not remain unmentioned, however, and that is the issue of normativity. If theology cooperates with social sciences, and if they are on the same level, the question may be asked whether the biblical and doctrinal norm can still be guaranteed. De Ruijter raises this question himself, and he agrees that a conflict is possible. In such a case, he says, theology should critically examine its own position and see whether it should not learn from the perspective of the social sciences. But if that has been done, and if theology is convinced that its position is correct, the theological norm should have priority (p. 112).

### Evaluation

So far, I have tried to give an adequate summary of De Ruijter’s main viewpoints. How shall we evaluate his approach?

First of all, I appreciate De Ruijter’s attempt to bring in more empirical research. It has been a weak area in the diaconological tradition and I agree that there is room for improvement here.

Secondly, I appreciate De Ruijter’s desire to listen to the insights of the social sciences. The various subdisciplines of practical theology can benefit from listening to the input of psychology, didactics, communication science, etcetera. I believe that diaconology has always been willing to do so. From my time as a student in Kampen (in the 1980’s) I remember that we had courses in didactics (Hoekzema) and communication science (Trimp), to mention just a few examples.

Thirdly, I appreciate De Ruijter’s attempt to think through the relationship between theology and the social sciences. This is not an easy task, of course, and I am not sure if De Ruijter has found the solution. As impressive as his model of various levels of reflection appears to be, it struck me that he uses vague metaphors such as ‘cross-currents of knowledge’ (“kruising van kennisstromen”, p. 91) when he tries to pinpoint the relationship between theology and the social sciences.

The last point leads me to mentioning a few concerns that I have. In the first place I am concerned that practical theology may lose its theological character. De Ruijter does not want theology to “dominate” the social sciences. But what kind of discipline are we creating then? A hybrid form, something in between theology and the social sciences? And where is the starting point: in the norm (theology) or in the experience (social sciences)? I believe that theology should always be allowed to determine the content and the character of practical theology.



Prof. dr. C.J. de Ruijter

Andrew Purves, in evaluating the situation in North America, has concluded that for the last fifty or sixty years pastoral theology has been organized around a psychological interpretation of human experience and that it tends to begin its so-called theological reflection from there.<sup>2</sup> In other words, pastoral theology lost its theological character and became a modified form of psychology. We don't want to go there with reformed practical theology! It should remain a discipline that is clearly theological.

A second concern relates to the issue of normativity. I have no reason to suspect that De Ruijter intends to water down the normative aspect of practical theology. He asserts that in the case of conflict the theological norm should have priority. At the same time it needs to be noted that his definitions are a bit vague on this issue, especially when we compare his terminology to what was used in the past. In the diaconological tradition the object of the discipline used to be formulated in such a way that it reflected the normative aspect. An example: "In diaconology we study the ministries which Christ has instituted for the spreading of the gospel and the upbuilding of his church in the world" (C. Trimp).<sup>3</sup> Such a definition gives guidance. We do not just study what the church *is* doing, but also what it *should be* doing. And that is determined by the Lord Jesus Christ, through his Word and Spirit.

De Ruijter defines practical theology as the discipline that studies "the 'praxis' of the church" (in Dutch: "de handelingspraktijk van de kerk"). In other words, according to this definition we study "what the church is doing". There is no normative aspect in the definition. This is regrettable. If you want to honour the authority of biblical norms – and De Ruijter wants to do so – I would think that it had better be upfront about it.

## Critical

Finally, I would like to say that all along I struggled with the question whether it was really necessary for De Ruijter to be so critical of the diaconological tradition, distancing himself from respectable theologians such as Trimp and Velema in the process.

As I was preparing this review, I came across an old speech by Trimp, delivered here in Canada in the late 70's. In that speech, entitled 'Practical Theology?'<sup>4</sup> (note the question mark), Trimp warned against "empirical methods of praxis-analysis" and the corresponding danger of "atheism in methodology". In that same speech Trimp used Firet as an illustration of someone who had fallen prey to those dangers.

Now we see De Ruijter taking his cue from Firet (to a certain extent, at least), and we see him using Heitink's critical evaluation of the diaconological tradition. I think this is unfortunate and unnecessary. I believe that De Ruijter is too negative in his evaluation of the reformed diaconological tradition. He appears to be fighting against an extreme and exclusive kind of diaconology that ignores insights from the social sciences. But reformed diaconology, as much as it is normative, is not by definition 'deductive' in the sense of being exclusive and myopic.

I think it is regrettable that De Ruijter has distanced himself from the diaconological position. He could have used the foundations that have been laid in the past. There was enough room to continue to develop the discipline with his valuable insights, and to correct and improve where necessary.

In summary, I have no problem with my colleague in Kampen dropping the *name* diaconology, but I hope that he will return to the diaconological *position*. ■

## Notes

1 Kees de Ruijter, *Meewerken met God. Ontwerp van een gereformeerde Praktische Theologie ['Co-working with God. Draft of a Reformed Practical Theology']*. Kampen: Kok, 2005; paperback; 160 pages; ISBN 9043510920.

2 Andrew Purves, *Reconstructing Pastoral Theology*. A Christological Foundation. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004, p. xiv.

3. C. Trimp, *Inleiding in de ambtelijke vakken*, Kampen: Van den Berg, 1978, p. 21 (translated from the original Dutch).

4. C. Trimp, 'Practical Theology?', *Koinoonia*, Vol. 1 (1978), No. 1, pp. 20-29.

# A Month with Spirit

**In Lux Mundi we have reported a couple of times on the yearly conferences organised by the Gods Geest Werkt committee ('God's Spirit Works'), which has been operating within the Reformed Churches (liberated) since 2002. Their final conference was held on March 11th, 2006. This time the theme was: 'Lord, you are my goal'.**

**W**hile the Dutch spring remained cold and windy up until May, Reformed Holland experienced a burst of warm interest in the work of the Holy Spirit during the month of March. In the March issue of the Christian monthly *CV-Koers*, an interview with prof. Kees van der Kooi was published. He teaches dogmatics at the Free University and holds the chair on 'Theology of Charismatic Renewal' there, too. His newest book *Tegenwoordigheid van Geest* ('Presence of Spirit') will shortly appear in May. He was also one of the speakers at the congress the Theological University of the Reformed Churches (liberated) organised on March 17th-18th entitled *Levend water* ('Living water').

On March 30th the *Contactorgaan voor de Gereformeerde Gezindte* ('Contact body for people of reformed conviction') within which several Reformed churches meet - among them the Christian Reformed, the Reformed [lib.] and Netherlands Reformed Churches, organisations and persons) held a conference about *Gaven van de Geest - niet los verkrijgbaar* ('Gifts of the Spirit - not separately obtainable').

This agenda of events at least gives the impression that the whole question of the work of the Holy Spirit is becoming a broader issue in Dutch Reformed circles. However, while not all conferences will have had the same character, there was certainly interest! All three meetings were fully-booked. A reason for that enhanced interest could have been that at a conference on the same subject, organised by the *Christelijke Hogeschool Ede* in co-operation with the Christian monthly *CV-Koers* November 2005, two well known opinion makers publicly refused to join in. Prof. J.W. Maris of Apeldoorn and lecturer C.J. Haak of Kampen objected on the grounds that the programme for

the day was one-sidedly pro-charismatic. Via the *Nederlands Dagblad* they let it be known that they would be staying away as protest. Editor Wim Houtman wrote on March 2nd, that the temperature of the discussion around the subject of gifts of the Spirit can be rather hot.

The title of the COGG-conference indicates the fear present in Reformed circles that there is a real heresy creeping subtly into the Reformed churches which panders to the new experience culture and sees the Spirit's work as supportive of my experience. Is this work of the Spirit all about what I experience, about what I can feel, about what the Spirit of God supposedly whispers in my ear? Or is there an actual realisation that the Holy Spirit is none other than the Spirit of God, seen in the fullest form in the person and work of Jesus Christ, poured out into the hearts of those who accept Jesus as Lord, at the day of Pentecost?

## Christ our goal

Aad Kamsteeg (retired editor of the *Nederlands Dagblad*), Rev. Gert Hutten (GKv Arnhem) and Rev. Dr. Jos Douma (GKv Haarlem) addressed the two thousand plus who filled the spacious halls in Zwolle on March 11th. The name of the organising group 'God's Spirit Works' might well have given rise to other expectations but discussion about gifts of the Spirit was not on the agenda here. The focus was entirely on the Lord Jesus and growth in the churches through focus on Him. Jos Douma: 'without complete orientation to the glory of Christ, the church will be nothing'. Gert Hutten: 'growth has everything to do with discipleship, about remaining a follower of Jesus (...). If I look at the church I have to be able to see Him (...). Jesus must increase, I must decrease.' It was not the sort of message which

could be discussed away nor theologised about. It was a message which required recognising one's small place before God and the necessary humility. Is this what I want, me becoming smaller? Me fading away into nothingness as I would pale into insignificance alongside a mighty waterfall? Food for thought indeed.

Meanwhile, the congress a week later at the TU in Kampen was advertised as follows ([www.tukampen.nl](http://www.tukampen.nl)): "At this moment in time, there is much attention being given to the work of the Spirit. This can enrich the church of Christ. We may expect great things from the Spirit of Christ. He ensures us we are born again, he teaches us to know Christ. In this way, God Himself is glorified. Christ takes possession of our lives. Only, the discussions which are taking place are inclining to one-sidedness. One person thinks that the 'special' gifts of the Spirit were only meant for the early church, another thinks that the church can expect these today. Discussions up until now have stranded too easily. Can we still reach each other? Is discussion being disrupted by unnecessary dilemmas?"

## Living water

This is the reason why the Theological University in Kampen (Broederweg) is organising the 'Living water' congress on 17th and 18th of March. The intention is to search for the Reformed roots in the theological consideration of the third person of the Trinity, together. The first lecture about the doctrine of the Spirit within the framework of the doctrine of God is to be given by Prof. Dr. C. van der Kooi. The second by Rev. Dr. E.A. de Boer (GKv Zeist) and Rev. Ph. Troost (student pastor Gereformeerde Hogeschool Zwolle) is directed at the issue of the dynamics of the Spirit in the created human reality".

A closer look at the awful umbrella term 'charismatic' would be equally helpful. So much which is good has become suspect by association with the extremes associated with this movement. Is this

really the Trojan horse or has fear of the horse become the real enemy? In this connection it is good to see, that promoters of the so called 'charismatic package' were present, active and in discussion, and not simply talked about. Alongside the more familiar topics, New Wine Netherlands Chairman Rev. Dick Westerkamp (NGK Houten) gave a workshop about speaking in tongues entitled 'Worship in the Spirit, Christ's rule recognised'. Rev. Gert Jan Brienen (CGK Hoofddorp) also with New Wine connections, addressed the subject of prophecy entitled, 'Speaking through the Spirit, Christ's name declared'. Rev. Ph Troost (GKv) dealt with the subject of ministry prayer – 'anointing by the Spirit, Christ's witness authorised', and Prof. Dr. M.J. Paul (Christelijke Hogeschool Ede / Evangelical Theological Faculty, Leuven) spoke on healing - 'recovery through the Spirit, Christ's message demonstrated'.

With this last workshop in mind, C.J. Haak's statement in the *Nederlands Dagblad* about anointing the sick with oil as spoken of in James as meaning "in those days a freshen up for people who lay in bed stinking. A spray of perfume, a wet face cloth, shaking the pillow up a bit", indicates that difference of opinion was inevitable. Yet, openness in discussion, without pointing fingers may even be more effective and beneficial for Reformed Holland than more dogmatic statements which try, yet again, to establish one's own right. The Spirit of God cannot be captured in statements. Fruits of the Spirit however, can be evidenced, in the way these issues are discussed.

In a review (*De Reformatie* Vol. 81, No. 29 [April 22, 2006], pp. 517-520) congress chairman Ad de Bruijne reflected that during the congress he noted the start of 'openness for the Spirit of Christ and unity with Christ Himself', and within that 'joint reformed convictions', 'substantial differences of opinion concerning charismatic manifestations', and 'challenging insights'.



*Drs. A.L.Th. de Bruijne* (photo P.G.B. de Vries)

He directs us to a number of characteristics of Reformed thinking about the work of the Holy Spirit, as 'joint reformed convictions':

1. You want to see the Spirit in the reality of the unity with the triune God. This does not tolerate thoughts of a second blessing for example, or a separate baptism with the Spirit which gives something extra above the reality of the fellowship with God.
2. You want to learn to recognise fellowship with God and experience that in the normal reality of everyday life. It is the Spirit who takes from the created reality the means by which he manifests Himself.
3. You keep Word and Spirit together, without identifying them with each other. All possible 'revelations' must be related to that once given Word. He who claims to have had a revelation of the Spirit, but is not open to its being tested against the Word and for its possible rejection, is already suspect.
4. You take account of the tension between 'already' and 'not yet'. The Spirit brings the fruit of the finished work of Christ into the life of today, but at the same time this is an 'advance'. We do not speak about the work of the Spirit as though we can leave the sin, the struggle, the suffering, the imperfection and the brokenness behind us.
5. You recognise God's sovereignty in the spreading out of His work. The Spirit does not let Himself be manipulated. You may

pray for the Spirit but God answers in His way in His time.

6. You do not set the individual up against the body. The Spirit of Christ is given to the church. He who separates himself from the church (because, for example, it is not far thinking enough yet), runs the risk of over-spiritual egocentricity. And a church may not suppress the working of the Spirit in one of its members.

De Bruijne also noted points of considerable difference, such as:

1. Is it only about the (re)discovery of intimacy with the Triune God in the present time? Or is it more a question of bringing prophecy, extreme unction and worship in tongues into a permanent reformed framework? No, say some, you cannot pick loose charismatic fruits without taking the frame of mind behind them along as well, including the unbiblical emphasise. Others: you can be biblically-charismatic renewed without falling into the heresies of all sorts of charismatic movements.
2. In the various workshops (mentioned above) there was a difference of opinion about modern prophecy, speaking in tongues, ministry prayer and, to a lesser extent, casting out of demons and sickness.

De Bruijne saw the following as promising for further thought:

1. the call made by Van der Kooi to clearly distinguish between the reality itself and the words, concepts and ways of thinking with which we talk about the reality. Pure thinking about the Spirit does not always mean that you also live by the Spirit. And: if you come across manifestations of the Spirit in people who think wrongly about the Spirit, this does not mean that those manifestations must be rejected.
2. the emphasis made by Van der Kooi and De Boer about the Word as living Word with which God addresses us today. The Scripture is the means to serve this reality.
3. The emphasis of the work of the Spirit

in man on the basis of Christ's humanity (De Boer). Jesus Himself is filled with the Spirit and we may share in His fullness. This gives room for the naming of the independent place of the Spirit and leaves the unity with Christ in place unimpaired.. The gifts of the Spirit serve Jesus' mission to the world, which he hands over to the church. Jesus and the church carry man and creation back to God in the strength of the Spirit.

4. Troost named the core of the work of the Spirit in man as the surrender to and the receptivity for Christ. In the war of liberation against 'death', 'law' and 'lies' the Spirit restores the unity with Christ and the human identity.

5. In the discussion, emphasis was placed upon the missionary calling of the church as the channel for the work of the Spirit. He equips the church between Whitsun / Pentecost and the return of Christ to proclaim the kingdom to the world in word and deed. This realisation can help you from falling into a sort of spiritual egoism. It can also raise the healthy question ; what do we ask of the Spirit for our life at the front?

### **Separately obtainable gifts?**

At the last of the three congresses held in Putten on the 31st March, Prof. Maris asked whether our spirituality is directed at the recovered relationship between God and mankind or deeper and higher dimensions of spiritual experiences? And why? Because the work of the Spirit after all, has everything to do with the recovery of the intimacy between fallen man and Holy God. That is not to say that the Christian must just believe and can forget any sort of spiritual experience but the question is important whether all spiritual experiences be traced back to this recovery. Believing means that we look for the most important *outside of ourself*, in Christ. Grace means, that God seeks us. The result is that Christ and God become the most important to us. The gifts of the Spirit are directed at Christ and to his body, the church. Paul, in Corinthians is clear enough on this issue, the focus is that the church be built up and not on what the individual experiences. Don't puff up, build up!

Prof. Maris asked for room to pose the question about baptism with the Spirit as second blessing (see 2 Cor.11:3-4,14): where is the exegetical foundation? And in the striving for the gifts of tongues and prophecy: what is the source? (see Mat.7:21-23): Is this of God or from darkness?

Dr. Henk Bakker, teacher at the Evangelical Theological Faculty in Ede, speaker at the same COGG congress, answered Maris' questions in at least one aspect, stating that he is concerned about the evangelical experience culture and sometimes boundless urge for that which is excessive and visible. That excessively visible is not typical of Jesus. Think more of mustard seed. Jesus Himself had nothing excessively visible. If the church is the visible continuation of Christ's body on earth then her first task is to listen to the gospels. There we learn that all the 'gifts' of Christ brought Him (first) to a cross and not to a throne.

Dr. Bakker also spotted another danger. Those who swear by the status quo look out! The thought that our *church* system is designed for the coming of God's Kingdom the sanctification of God's name and the doing of His will is just as heretical as Marcion! A church which is full of Christ should also be full of merciful structures, open to the gifts the Spirit grants the congregation by giving them to its members. It is necessary that also in reformed churches, Christians be allowed space to work with the gifts they have been given and not constantly be driven to a state where they lose courage as they collide with impenetrable and relentless house rules.

### **Now the fruits**

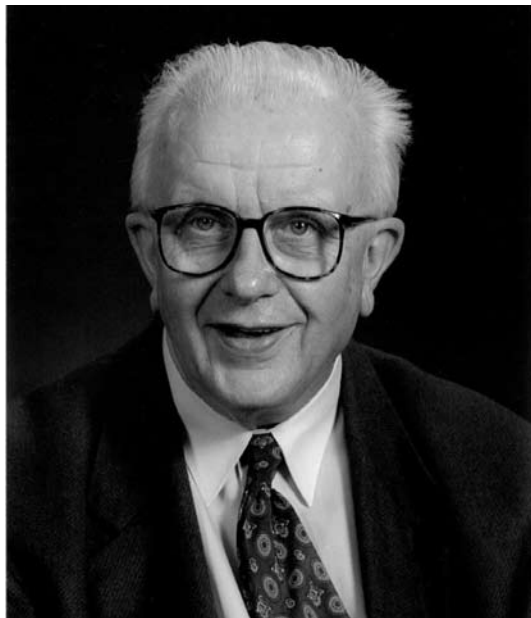
Three conferences, three different characters, one Spirit. Holland March, 2006. Amongst other things, what happened in March gave the God's Spirit Works Committee, the courage to bring an end to her work: "It has encouraged us that there are so many people who desire to go deeper. Many share the desire to discover more of God's Spirit." According

to the Newsletter the desire to have more attention paid to the work of the Spirit in the last four years is "more than fulfilled".

The discussion will certainly carry on, supported by new literature written on the topic. We think of *Geestrijk Leven* ('Spirited life'; Barneveld: Vuurbaak, 2006) a new publication offered by Reformed (liberated) and Christian Reformed authors whose insights into the gifts of the Spirit have developed. This book is a follow up to the best seller, *Meer dan genoeg. Het verlangen naar meer van de Geest* ('More than enough. The desire for more of the Spirit'; Barneveld: Vuurbaak, 2006; third impression). We think of *Gelukkig gereformeerd!* ('Happily Reformed!'; Barneveld: Vuurbaak, 2006) from Rev. Jasper Klapwijk, who has worked for many years as a missionary in Curacao, in which he explains that it is absolutely not necessary to apologise for your reformed convictions. We also think of *Christus ontvangen. Gereformeerd en charismatisch: leren van elkaar* ('To receive Christ. Reformed and Charismatic: learn from each other'; Kampen: Kok, 2006) written by Rev. Philip Troost. His attempt is probably the most bold of all, in putting onto paper the dissatisfaction experienced as good Reformed Christian in a church so strong in the Word but where the contact with God appears minimal. Rev. Troost questions: Do we really meet God in our hearts or has the Word taken up the place of Christ Himself? Are we just as extreme in our busyness with the externals (the Word the Word!) as the Charismatics are with internals (experience, experience!)? Just so long as the Word is declared! Is there also attention for the heart of the receiver and the person of the man preaching it? Has the reformed view of the work of the Spirit become too one-sided? Food for thought and hopefully food for a serious look at the course of the Reformed Churches (liberated) in the Netherlands AD 2006 as well. ■



# A final word Professor Heinrich Marinus Ohmann (1928-2006), in memoriam



after all, the world of his Creator. He was buried on March 22, 2006 in the cemetery of his last place of residence, Heerenveen.

What can dates and years tell of a faithful and warm-hearted believer? The text he wanted on his funeral card says more: John 11:25, where Jesus says, "He who believes in me will live, even though he dies". Professor Ohmann was a grateful servant of his Lord and Redeemer. It was for this reason that his life made those around him grateful to God. Koert van Bekkum, a former student, wrote of him: "His whole being formed an earthly reflection of the great involvement and lifelikeness of God – whom He loved and to whom He bowed the knee with great respect." Prof. Kwakkel, his successor in Kampen, spoke at the gathering at his funeral about Psalm 97, and especially verse 11. Professor Ohmann himself, once wrote about this Psalm: whatever may change in this world, God's throne is secure, being founded on righteousness. This is our guarantee that His justice, and His grace, have the final word" (*Lux Mundi* Vol. 4 [1985] No. 1). As a mark of respect to Professor Ohmann, and especially as thanks to God, the following is an anthology from all the 'In Memoriams' which have been written.

## ***"Light is shed upon the righteous and joy on the upright in heart". Psalm 97:11***

Professor Ohmann died in Groningen on March 16, 2006. He was born in Staphorst on 5th March 1928. His wife, Alberta Jansen died on October 25, 2005. He was a minister of the Reformed Churches of Zuidbroek (1956-1962) and Dokkum (1968-1971).

He was professor of Old Testament at the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches in Hamilton from 1971-1981 and at the Theological University of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands in Kampen between 1981 and 1993. Next to this, he was deputy for relations with the churches abroad between 1981 and 1990 and from 1993-1999. He was chief editor for the first nine years of this magazine. In his 26 editorials, he meditated often on the merciful light which falls on the lives of believers through the Lord Jesus Christ, even when He appears in history in order to do justice. Professor Ohmann did not need to make great journeys to delve deep into the history of nations and to wander through our fascinating world. He travelled the world by means of his books and texts to reach a sea of foreign peoples. He was at home there, it was

### **"A true language genius"**

Koert van Bekkum on Prof. Ohmann's arrival as student in Kampen: "In Kampen at the Reformed (liberated) Theological Faculty, people met a boy scarred by the death of his oldest brother Gerrit at the concentration camp Wöbbelin. At the same time he turned out to be a true genius with languages and someone who knew almost everything about the Hittites. Ohmann was extraordinarily fascinated by the way in which the Bible was embedded in old history and by the relationship between true faith and other, strange religions. As minister he walked new territory on the basis of these interests. In Hoek and Dokkum he graduated from the Universities of Gent and Groningen in Eastern languages and the Indian and Iranian languages and cultures.

Professor Gootjes of the Theological College in Hamilton got to know Professor Ohmann in South Korea: "The student body of the Kosin Seminary

in Pusan, Korea, where I taught, invited him to explain redemptive historical preaching. He accepted the challenge and taught in his own enthusiastic way. However, he did not make it easy on his Korean translator because of the long sentences he produced! Prof. Ohmann surprised us with his interest in the culture of Korea. When showing him the beauties of the country, we took him to visit one of the famous temples. He was mesmerized by a monk who was reading aloud from an old scroll in an unknown language. He wanted to know what was read and he was very disappointed when it became apparent that the monk did not know what he was reading and was simply pronouncing letters. Prof. Ohmann, with his love of languages, was ready for the new challenge to learn yet another language." Professor Kwakkel: "Not so long ago he moved an Iranian asylum seeker by addressing her from the pulpit in Farsi".

### The Old Testament Scholar

Prof. Kwakkel: "Ohmann's innate interest in historical reality also typified his study of the Old Testament. Writing about the relationship between the Old and New Testament he suggested 'that history is characteristic of God's revelation, is the specific

contribution of the Old Testament in the whole of Scripture' (*Oriëntatie in de theologie*, 2d edition, Barneveld; Vuurbaak, 1987, p. 25).

His inaugural oration in Kampen, on 2nd September 1981, was about the relationship between history and historiography in the revelation of God in the book Isaiah. He encouraged his students continually to place themselves in the historical reality in which the texts were written. He placed many dates, names of kings and other historical facts before them. You had to make a clear picture in your mind of what happened. At the very least you had to consult an atlas.

Ohmann's historical approach clearly had its influence in the way he handled the prophets. Nobody who has ever studied under Ohmann shall ever forget that prophecy is, first and foremost, 'a word spoken in its time'. These words formed the title of Ohmann's book about Isaiah 1-39 written in 1988. But, according to him, they were not only valid for the prophetic book which interested him most of all, that of Isaiah. "A word spoken in its time" was for him, the key to handling all prophetic books. First you had to analyse the original historical context of the prophetic word and find the meaning of the word in its time. This was necessary to resist millennialism in the church, with which he was confronted in his time in Canada. Ohmann fiercely resisted an approach wherein prophecy was applied to the distant future or our own time in an unhistorical way.

The conviction that prophecy is a word spoken in its time brought him to review his standpoint regarding the second part of Isaiah, chapters 44-46. These chapters address the time of the Babylonian exile, approximately 150 years after Isaiah's death. They can only have been spoken in their time. That means that they were not written down by Isaiah himself but by his disciples, although they are completely in the same spirit and use the material of their tutor (see *De Reformatie* Vol. 68, pp. 853-858 [Aug 7, 1993]).

Koert van Bekkum: "Ohmann stood in the Reformed (liberated) tradition of the redemptive historical Bible exegesis. He felt no need at all to change that. Nevertheless, he did offer another emphasis. The living reality in and behind the Bible intrigued him. He could tell enthusiastically about the wise women in the book of Samuel, the way the Bible speaks about man and animal, about the new creation in the prophecy of Isaiah and about the love songs in Song of Songs. Someone once said that that Ohmann's *Het Hooglied, De koning te rijk* (1988) was a moralistic

### A number of his publications

*Tellingen in de woestijn. Schetsen over het boek Numeri* [on Numbers], Bond van Mannenverenigingen op Gereformeerde Grondslag / Nederlandse Bond van Gereformeerde Jeugdverenigingen, 1983.  
*Godsdiensten van India. Geschiedenis en kritische beschouwing* [Religions of India. History and Assessment], Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1985.  
*Een woord gesproken op zijn tijd. Hoe lezen wij Jesaja 1-39* [on Isaiah 1-39], Franeker: Van Wijnen, [1988].  
*Het Hooglied. De koning te rijk* [on Song of Songs], Barneveld: De Vuurbaak [1988].  
*Wie kent uw toorn? Het Oude Testament over de toorn van God* [The Old Testament on the Wrath of God], Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1988.  
*Kronieken van het koninkrijk. 2 Kronieken 1 - 20* [on 2 Chronicles 1-20], Bond van Gereformeerde Bijbelstudieverenigingen, [1990].  
*Een levendige voorstelling. Verzamelde opstellen* [Collected studies], Kampen: Van den Berg, 1993.  
*Spreuken. Boek van de bijbel, spiegel van de werkelijkheid* [on Proverbs], Bedum: Woord en Wereld, 2001.

A bibliography of Prof. H.M. Ohmann until 1993, put together by K. van Bekkum, appeared in: R. ter Beek a.o. (Eds.), *Een sprekend begin. Opstellen aangeboden aan prof. drs. H.M. Ohmann bij zijn afscheid als hoogleraar...* [a valedictory collection of studies of friends and pupils], Kampen: Van den Berg, 1993, 221-226.



Many years ago  
 Prof. Ohmann gave guest  
 lectures in Eindhoven  
 about Boeddhisme, of  
 course with the map of  
 India next to him!  
 (photo P.G.B. de Vries)

book. This cannot be denied. Nonetheless, his candid explanation of Song of Songs, invited people to speak about sexuality without shame.

The same attention for living reality characterised his contribution in the loaded debate about the creation in Genesis 1.

Ohmann remained true to a creation in six days. But if, in their resistance to the theory of evolution, people gave the impression that God created heaven and earth with a click of his fingers, he was vehemently indignant. He did not recognise God in that. The God of the Old and New Testament gave Christ to the world to draw people of all cultures and religions from death. This God also gave Himself in the beginning in six days. Then he rested, and, so says the Bible book of Exodus, 'He created breath', as a worker who catches his breath after heavy work. This is what Ohmann emphasised. Who does not hear in this the heavy breathing of the speaker himself?"

#### Between brothers and sisters

Rev. J.W. van der Jagt: "In his work he applied

himself to the congregation and the proclamation of the gospel. As professor he was not interested in academics for the sake of academics. Not only because he, according to his own words, was not really interested in academics as such, but also because he saw that academic theology ought to serve the church".

Professor Kwakkel: "Almost everything he wrote, he wrote so that his brothers and sisters in Christ could read it. (...) In his sermons he wanted to teach the church as much as possible. In this, he did not make things easy for people. He filled in the rules of homiletics, the art of preaching, in his own way. But he knew how to touch peoples' hearts, especially because he spoke directly from his heart. You felt his deep respect for God and the simple faith as of a child. That was convincing.

Also in the way he wrote books, you could see this single-mindedness to serve his brothers and sisters with what he had been able to discover himself. He wrote outlines for the Men's Bible Study League (about Numbers and 2 Chronicles 1-20) and a series of articles in the magazine of the Calvinistic Youth League. He enjoyed the meetings of the men's Bible study group in Heerenveen.

Through his love for the church and his unaffected appearance, he won a place in the hearts of many. He enjoyed a great trust, which remained unshaken, even if he took unexpected routes."

From: In Memoriam: Koert van Bekkum, *Nederlands Dagblad*; G. Kwakkel, *De Reformatie*; N.H. Gootjes, *Clarion*; J.W. van der Jagt, *Nader bekeken*.



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John 8:12