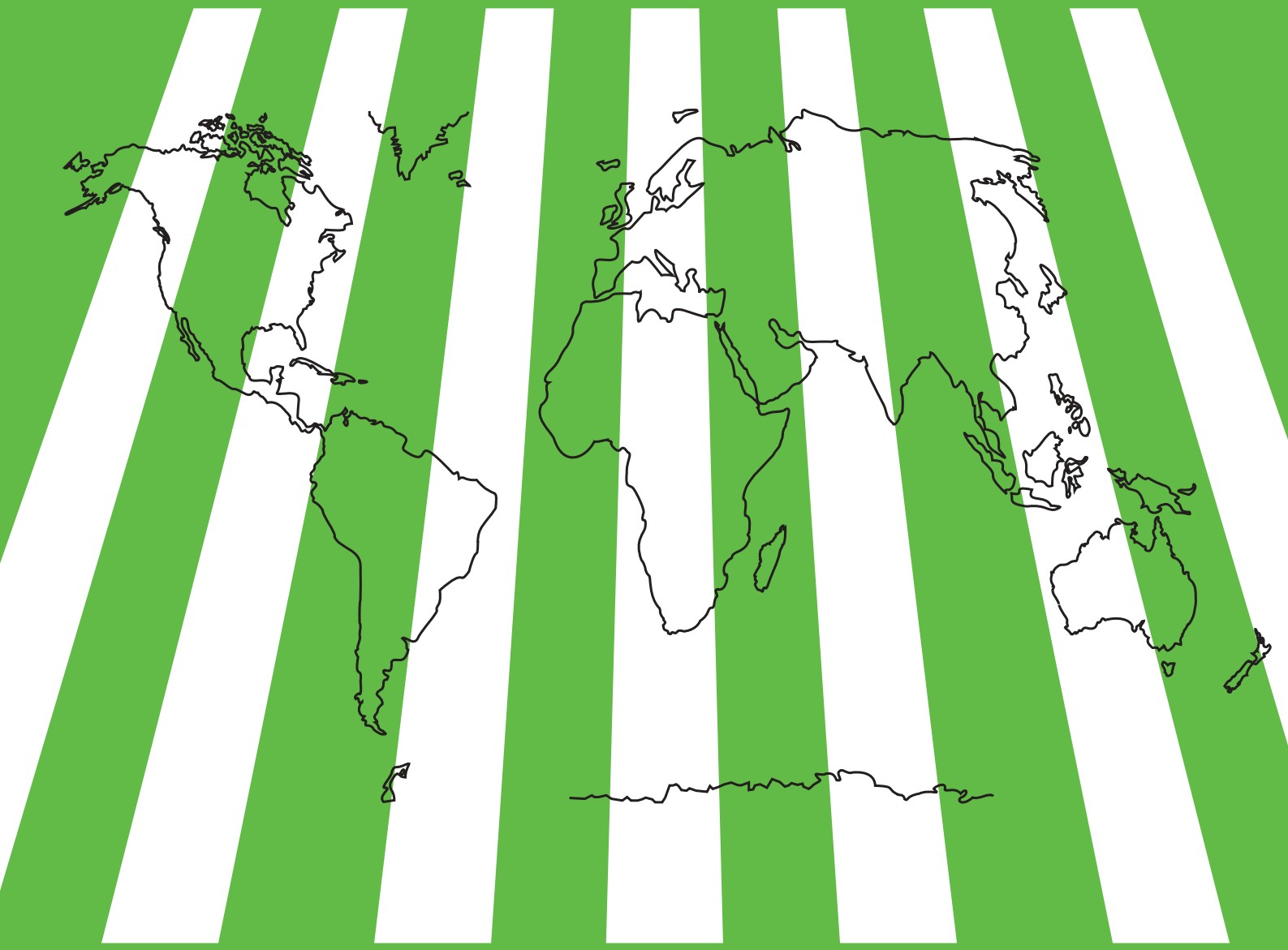
Lux Mundi

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Sept./Dec. 2003



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

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by Rev. R. ter Beek



Editorial

Friday 12th December has become a special day in Dutch church history. On that day the synods of the Dutch Reformed Church (Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk), the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland) and the Evangelical Lutheran Church (Evangelisch-Lutherse Kerk) decided to become the Protestant Church in the Netherlands (Protestantse Kerk in Nederland). It was agreed that a majority consisted of a minimal of two thirds of the vote in each synod. This majority was abundant for the Reformed and the Lutherans; the Dutch Reformed scraped through with two votes. The news made headlines in all newspapers and was on television.

The decision will become reality on May 1st 2004. Then the merger will become a fact. But this unity is not built upon the foundation of the truth. There are also, thus, Dutch Reformed congregations who have decided not to join. These are churches that want to remain faithful to the reformed confessions and to the church which was formed under the reformed confessions in the Netherlands. There are also Reformed Churches which are in doubt. One reformed church has already joined the Dutch Reformed Churches (Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken). It is not difficult to imagine that this merger will have an effect on the map of Reformed Holland. Only, nobody can say which effect.

The Protestant Church in the Netherlands (PKN) has 2,500,000 members on paper. I do not know how many of these can actually be considered as believers and their children. But God knows His own among them. On Sunday 11th December, prayer was offered for them in the Reformed Churches (Liberated). God was asked to remember his people and their children in the merged churches. He was asked to bring together those who belong together, churches and believers. We want to ask sister churches in the world to multiply those prayers. What profit it would be, if through all the moves, the declared reformed witness in the Netherlands would be strengthened!

Meanwhile, a split is emerging in the Reformed Churches (Liberated) in the Netherlands. You can read about it in the review article, "A new Liberation?'. Regardless of numbers, the damage to God's name is great and nobody can deny this. True believers have been unable to stay together. There was a power at work which was stronger than the joint faith.

The request made to God for unity of reformed believers is an appeal for His honour and might, but at the background of a struggle for reformed unity, there is also shame, there is disgrace because of unnecessary disharmony. The prayer for unity also knows humiliation. Restoration of unity is also repentance from error of ways and recovery of preparedness to follow Jesus Christ together. This is service to the honour of God's name.

'Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name - the name you gave me - so that they may be one as we are one', words prayed by the Lord Jesus (John 17:11), and: 'sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth (verse 17). My wish is that you all may be safe in the sanctifying power of God's name so that 2004 may become a year of unity and not of discord.

by Jan Smelik



Perspectives on Worship, Law and Faith: The Old Testament speaks today

Students, training to become Ministers in the Free Reformed Churches in Australia and in the Reformed Churches of New Zealand, study at the Theological College of the Reformed Churches in Hamilton, Ontario (Canada). In order to bring the work at the Canadian Theological College a bit closer to these churches, Dr. C. van Dam, Professor of Old Testament in this college, visited the Reformed churches in Australia and New Zealand in the summer of 1999. During his stay, Van Dam gave lectures in various churches, the contents of which, he published in *Perspectives on Worship, Law and Faith: The Old Testament speaks today.*

The 111 page brochure contains four lectures: 1. What is worship? 2. Clean and Unclean; 3. Where is the Old Testament Deacon? and 4. Faith and Reason. The main line throughout the first three lectures is Van Dam's desire to prove that the Old Testament law is still relevant today. He wants to show something of *"the truth and substance of the gospel that is embedded in the Old Testament laws and to help sensitise us to the fact that the New Testament gospel has its basis in the Old Covenant. Neglect of the Old Testament message is of great detriment to understanding the glory, depth and perspective of the New"* (Preface). For many readers this will be logical, since the close harmony between the Old and New Testament has always been a fixed Reformed standpoint. You

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Baptism in the Reformed Church of SW Amsterdam

would expect that this perspective would soak through into a broad variety of other subjects in the Reformed world. Alas, this is not always the case. I see this, for example, more often in the discussion within the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands on the subject of the worship service in all her facets. (Van Dam's first lecture was about the meaning of the Old Testament for the Reformed worship service and in what follows, I will restrict myself to this lecture).

I notice that in liturgical studies, the Old Testament is often referred to very little or not at all. Sometimes question marks are even placed by brothers and sisters at the relevance of the Old Testament for the New Testament worship service. Generally speaking, it is the New Testament which is referred to, to see what has been said and decided in regard to the worship services. In this, the New Testament is also used selectively. For example, the fact that the New Testament contains few practical or concrete directions for the content of a Christian worship service, is a very popular one. The emphasis is strongly that the Christian church has freedom to organise the worship services according to own insight. 1 Corinthians 14 is frequently referred to in discussions. On the basis of this text, some plead the case that ordinary church members (non-officers) should and/or must offer their gifts in the services for the good of the church.

As true and useful as such New Testament ideas are, it is not enough to use only these points from the New Testament to form the Biblical basis of a Reformed standpoint of the church service. Van Dam's lecture shows how important and self evident it is to be instructed from the Old Testament, also when talking about "worship". Van Dam describes "worship" as *"an attitude and activity of homage, service, and praise directed to God in response to his revelation of himself in Christ and his ongoing work in our lives by his Word and Spirit"*. (p15).

As far as the worship service is concerned, the Old Testament gives many concrete directives. It is right, as is often pointed out, that many of these stipulations were fulfilled at Christ's coming and are no longer valid. But even so, "the truth and the content" remain. (Belgic Confession. Art 25) In other words: as Christian church we are bound to look for the lasting meaning of all those Old Testament liturgical directives.
While we search for those, it is, I think, important to establish that the Scriptures (Old and New Testament) do not or hardly ever offer concrete and practical instructions for the current liturgical practice. There is, indeed, much freedom, or better: we have a great responsibility of our own.
Much more relevant for our reflection about church services and their concrete furnishing are the more elemental questions like "who is God(for us)?" and "who are we before God?" Van Dam's lecture also showed this. In this context I can only indicate a few of his main themes but hopefully this is enough stimulation for readers to go in search of the lectures themselves.
The writer does not build his case around liturgical orders and practices in the Scriptures, but he begins his lecture by looking at two characteristics of God. There could indeed be more characteristics which could be mentioned, but van Dam bases his standpoint on the fact that God is "holy" and "sovereign". These characteristics must decide the direction for the way in which He is served by His people. Van Dam emphasises the great distance which exists between God and man, the Holy One and the sinner, the Pure and the unclean, the Almighty and the helpless. God has revealed Himself as the Holy and Almighty One, as the One who, in Jesus Christ, has come to us to purify us and make us holy.

This, in Van Dam's judgement, should characterise the meetings of the Christian church. Just as God chose a holy place for Himself in the Old Testament (tabernacle, temple) so should the New Testament church realise that she is now God's holy house. The church is *"that consecrated and holy place, where public worship takes place"* (p18). We should be constantly aware that we are drawing near to the face of the holy, sovereign God.

Dr. Van Dam makes clear in various places throughout his lecture, what, according to him, the Biblical data means for a Reformed view of worship. Especially this aspect of the lecture is interesting. Especially in the paragraph *"why and how do we worship"*, Van Dam advances a number of theories that radically contradict a mentality that can be found here and there, at least in the Netherlands, also within the Reformed world.
He states that the reason why we have worship services should not be sought in ourselves: *"We do not worship for ourselves, because it is good for us. It is, of course, profitable for us, but that is not the reason for worship"* (p22). Our needs and desires must not be central but rather the praising, thanking and worshipping of God. A church service is ultimately, not about what we can get out of it, but about what we *give* and *offer* to God. It is, I think, worthwhile to realise this in a time in which man and his (religious) desires stand so often at the centre of attention.
In our times, wherein the missionary task of the church receives so much emphasis, regular and strong pleas are made for church services which are especially understandable and attractive for "outsiders" (non-church members or unbelievers). Within this context, it is intriguing that Van Dam states that we do not worship in order to evangelise: *"Worship must never cater to the needs of the unregenerate so he feels comfortable, for the unregenerate's greatest need is to be confronted by the awesome holiness and greatness of God"* (p23).
This appears to me personally, to be a good, defendable Biblical standpoint, but I know that Van Dam's view will certainly not be accepted by everyone in the Reformed Churches (Liberated) and other Reformed churches in The Netherlands.
In any case, the lecture stimulates further thought and discussion. Something which is not disputable is that in our search for a Biblically responsible view of the worship service, we are addressed not only by the New Testament but also by the Old Testament.

by Rev. H.D. Rietveld

The Christelijke Gereformeerde Churches and their contact with Israel

At the last International Conference of Reformed Churches, 2001 in Philadelphia (USA), Rev. John Ross of Christian Witness to Israel, gave a talk about the proclamation of the gospel to the Jewish people. During the discussion, Prof. Dr. J.W. Maris directed attention to the peculiar history that the Christelijke Gereformeerde Churches in the Netherlands have had in this. This contribution is to inform you of just that.

Short historical survey

In the *Christelijke Gereformeerde* Churches clear interest in Israel came into the picture as late as 1931. In those days the Synod created new Deputies for Mission to the Jews, as it was officially called. Typical for the standpoint regarding Israel in this time, for example, is a clause taken from a brief in circulation from these deputies which spoke of 'the Jew, who still walks around under the awful judgement, proclaimed over him and his seed'.

In 1939, an own paper appeared, *Malak Sjalom* (literally: Messenger of Peace). The first sentences in the very first edition indicated the intention: 'the Messenger of Peace. That is what this paper wants to be. And especially for you, son and daughter of Israel. Because in this paper we are addressing you, sons and daughters of Abraham, to bring you a message, a message of peace.' It was sent to all known Jewish addresses. After three years, in the middle of the German occupation, the publication of this quarterly paper had to be abandoned. Nothing is known about any response…

After the war, there was uncertainty about the way ahead. People realised that things could not just be picked up as before. Too much had happened for that. Moreover another thing happened, something spectacular: the establishment of the state of Israel, which for Jews, meant a solid contribution to their identity and, *among Christians,* revived expectations concerning God's dealings with His people at the end of the times. Theologically and practically, this gave cause to reconsider standpoints.

Rev. W. Kremer, later professor in Apeldoorn, had earlier pointed to 'the very special questions and difficulties, that combine together with this work'. He pleaded for the appointment of 'a young minister, who has to specialise in the mission to the Jews, so that he can speak soundly'. But there was also opposition: people who wanted suspension or at least serious limitations of the work, considering the limited manpower which the churches had for that aim. This opinion can still be heard, all the more because until now no spectacular conversions amongst Jews have taken place and because the efficient use of church finances is taken seriously.

About the author:

Rev. H.D. Rietveld (1947) is minister of the Christelijke Gereformeerde Church in Nijkerk, his third congregation. He is a deputy for Church and Israel (second clerk) and editor of Vrede over Israël. See www.kerkenisrael.nl*

The pioneer: M. Boertien

M. Boertien became the first Christian Reformed 'minister with actual work in Israel', as the Synod of 1953 called it. He was connected with the *Jerusalem Kirche* in Hamburg, Germany, a congregation which came into existence in the 19th century, thanks to canvassing amongst Jews done by the Irish Presbyterian Church. It was Boertien's task to forge contacts between the badly damaged Jewish community and the church, as information and reception centre.

In the years 1954 and 1955, the news of this Israel work appeared in a few supplements to the mission magazine of our churches. But in October 1955, a new own magazine emerged: *Vrede onder Israël* (Peace amongst Israel).

In 1960, Rev. Boertien went to Israel and was based in Jerusalem. There, he became secretary of the United Christian Council in Israel. Various protestant churches and missionary organisations worked together in this UCCI, in order to, officially worded, 'strengthen the Christian witness in Israel and to strive for greater strength and unity in the native church'. Boertien also had a hand in the founding of the Ecumenical Theological Research Fraternity where lively meetings between Jews and Christians still take place. From this fraternity, Boertien stimulated the Student Christian Forum, where lectures are held to familiarize students and other interested parties with the relationships between the churches in Israel and their contacts with Jews. Also thanks to his initiative, the Jerusalem Rainbow Group came into existence, a platform for Jewish and Christian academics who have to deal with inter-religious relations, in their fields of study. The study of Tenach (Old Testament) and the New Testament, are still central in this group.

Working in Israel

Boertien repatriated in September 1967 and accepted a chair at the University of Amsterdam. The Israel position was filled by Rev. W. van Dijk. Unfortunately he had to go back in 1969, after just over a year. After four years of vacancy, Rev. J.C.L. Boertjens came to Israel. He was based in Tel Aviv (1973-1981). On the basis of Boertjens' experience, the following was reported to the synod:

1. that the resistance of the Jewish people to the church had not disappeared in one generation;



Jerusalem, as seen from the Mount of Olives. The Dome of the Rock, built on Mount Moriah dominates the view. The closed up Golden Port in the Old City Wall. Photo Tjerk S. de Vries

2. that attention must also be given to the native Christians;
3. that pastoral care was necessary for those volunteers working all over the country amongst the Israeli population.

Rev P. op den Velde wrote the following about the difficulties that the Israel worker faced in practice, in contrast to the expectations of those back at home: 'Sometimes they contemptuously comment: they are in Israel to study (instead of evangelizing in the streets or spreading tracts, HDR). But, I would like to ask them: do you know other ways to get to know the spiritual life of Israel? There is simply no other way. Our workers will have to go that way, however much effort that costs, so that they can speak about the Word of God that teaches salvation, with Israel and to Israel, and really know what they are talking about!'

From 1985 till 1995 Rev. H.M. van der Vegt took Rev. Boertjens place. He worked for ten years in Jerusalem. His successor was Rev. C.J. van den Boogert, also based in Jerusalem (1995-2000). Both ministers worked at (inter)church and personal levels.

Co-operation at home

In the Netherlands, a new development emerged. On the 1st March 2002, co-operation with the Centre for Israel Studies began. In this C.I.S., the Reformed Mission League (Gereformeerde Zendingsbond) of the *Nederlandse Hervormde* Church, the Christian College in Ede (especially the Institute for Congregation-building and Theology) and the Deputies Church and Israel of the *Christelijke Gereformeerde* Churches, all work together. The tasks they intend to fulfil include:

* informing the churches and church members by means of literature, conferences, seminars;
* making contacts with Jews who confess Jesus as Messiah
* arranging meetings between Jews and Christians
* recruitment and assistance of a theologian based in Israel.

This last mentioned aspect resulted in the sending of Rev. C.J. Rodenburg, who was called as minister for special tasks by the *Nederlandse Hervormde* Synod. He was ordained on the 5th October 2003 as Israel consultant.

In summary, the work done by the *Christelijke Gereformeerde* churches in Israel has concentrated on:

– making contacts between Jews and Christians;
– making contacts with Jews and Jewish institutions;
– making contacts with Christians and Christian institutions;
– pastoral work amongst volunteers, also with a view to advising them in their daily contacts with Jews;
– making contacts with congregations of Messianic or Christian Jews, in order to, amongst other things, help them in their theological reflection on their Jewish heritage and on their relationship to the worldwide gentile church.

It is clear that the practicalities of the work are highly coloured by the personal interests and disposition of the

workers, and by local developments as well.
The deputies bear responsibility for the guidance of our worker in Israel. They have to fill that post when vacant. Once a year we hold a weekend in order to reflect together with the Israel worker on a certain theme. Alongside this, we have the job of informing our church members. We publish the bimonthly magazine *Vrede over Israël* (Peace over Israel). In this, all sorts of theological and reflective, historical, cultural or current issues are discussed which have to do with Israel and the relationship between the Church and Israel. Every year, around the 'Israel Sunday', an envelope is sent to all ministers containing brochures or articles focussing on subjects pertaining to Israel. We also organise seminars in Israel for theologians and church members interested in theology.

Reflection

In 1953, the Synod thought that the name of our deputyship 'Mission to the Jews' had become a loaded title. As God's covenant people, Israel cannot be included in with the gentiles who have no notion of the God of the Bible. It was decided to change the name to deputyship for 'proclaiming the Gospel among Israel'. Although this cannot be found in the Acts of Synod, the conviction that the church can not give up the New Testament witness concerning Jesus as the Messiah of, and for Israel, will certainly have played a role in that. The discussions leading to this change of name, revealed the differences in vision regarding Israel, which exist in our churches both then and now. At the request of the deputies, the General Synod of 2001 decided to summarise all their functions under the name 'Deputyship Church and Israel'.
Generally speaking, our churches have moved away from the replacement thought, thus, that the church has completely taken the place of Israel as God's people and that the present Israel is not in the picture. Many have a sympathy for Israel which varies from interest for what happens in the meeting between Church and Israel, to a vivid expectation of the end of the times for Israel, and, consequently, a strong involvement with this people.
The real thought process about what contact with the Jews involves and what it sets in motion, began in our churches when the first Israel worker was sent out, in the fifties and sixties, back in the last century. Prof Kremer spoke at that time about the necessity of a minister who can speak expertly, addressing the Jewish people. He has to speak soundly in relation to:

* the witness of the Scriptures which are also entrusted to Israel
* the present people of Israel and its own tradition, which is important to understand the way Israel sees itself
* the worldwide gentile church.

A way between

This means that we reject the replacement theology and see the olive tree model of Romans 11 as the Biblical directive. We have understood more of God's own dealings with His people: He has never revoked the covenant with them. This creates more of a humility on our side. Practice teaches us that aggressive evangelism arouses aversion amongst Jews. The aftermath of the heavily loaded negative relationship between church and synagogue throughout history can still be felt. The fundamental meeting of Church and Israel is a process, which, given these centuries, has really only just begun and requires much patience, mutual understanding and trust. If this meeting leads to the joint reading of the Scriptures, we hope and pray that the Holy Spirit will make clear what the church can learn from Israel and what He, as the Spirit of Christ in the same Scriptures, has to say to Israel. As community of believers in the Christ of Scriptures, the Church can never deny her witness to her Lord and Saviour.
As deputies, we are searching for a way between the replacement theology, which we have rejected because there is no place for the actual Israel in it, and the Two Way Theology, the model which offers both church and synagogue its own way to God's salvation. But we also have reserves with regard to some patterns of eschatological expectation which suggest that the exact position of Israel at the end of the times can be indicated. Simultaneously, we want to listen to voices from the Reformation, the Second Reformation and the European Réveil.
In this, we realise that God has His own plans for the church and for Israel, ways higher than ours. In fact, we have to do with the inscrutable and unsearchable ways of God; a depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God, that we, along with Paul, can only worship. We remain in line with Romans 9-11 when, with the apostle, we pray for the conversion of Israel and when, as Church, in this case, the *Christelijke Gereformeerde* Churches, we can offer a small contribution to the meeting of Church and Israel, together with other churches and Israel organisations.

by Rev. R. ter Beek



A new Liberation? Reactions to the recent Secession from the Reformed Churches (Liberated) in the Netherlands

The Liberation ('Vrijmaking') took place in 1944. On August 11th 1944 the Liberation meeting was held in The Hague. Rev. Herman Knoop was chairman and Prof. Klaas Schilder (at that moment dismissed by the Synod of Utrecht as professor and minister) read there an 'Act of Liberation and Return'. Many churches and believers left the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands at that moment in order to carry on as Reformed Churches. For clarity sake, these churches add '(liberated)' to their name.

In September 2003 there were separations in the church of Berkel and Rodenrijs and in the neighbouring church of Bergschenhoek. Those involved have formed one new congregation which meets together in Berkel. Others, families in Venlo, Veenendaal, Dalfsen, Zwolle and Zwijndrecht, have also begun to hold their own meetings. After submission of an 'Act of Liberation and Return', church members have gone their own way.
National liberation meetings were held in Zwolle on the 20th September and 11th October. There Dr. P. van Gurp called the situation 'much more serious than in 1944'. Words such as these, amongst others, have aroused much criticism in the Reformed press. This article deals with two reactions which fiercely protest at the comparison of this split with the Liberation in 1944.

Liberation or not?

Professor J. Kamphuis, retired professor of dogmatics at the Theological University in Kampen, directs our attention to 'misleading use of words'. The terms being used are the same - 'liberation' and 'return' - but what is now being presented as a liberation, is the very opposite of the Liberation in 1944.
In the *Nederlands Dagblad* of 19th September, 2003, Prof. Kamphuis explains as follows:
"What was it about on the 11th August 1944? What was Prof. Schilder's concern?
Obligatory commitment to doctrinal standpoints which went further than our mutual confessions and set themselves above the Scriptures, were rejected. Especially the statement about the children of believers, who, by virtue of God's promises, could be seen 'as those born again and sanctified in Christ' until the opposite became apparent.
We had to accept a theological opinion, advocated especially by A. Kuyper and his followers, as though it were a godly truth. If not, then the synod took hard action which violated the right of the churches. An emphatic refusal greeted this demand that ministers of the Word subscribe to more than Scripture and the confessions. We did not refuse to live together in one church with brothers who were in various respects 'Kuyperian' in their thinking, but there was a definite no to a church which wanted to swear her office bearers to a theological opinion: liberation from this!

Prof. K. Schilder read the Act of Liberation and Return. Within the reformed church community of that time, he was a formidable critic of opinions and standpoints offered



Dr. P. van Gurp (82)
is the only minister who has disassociated himself from the Reformed Church (Liberated). He preaches in services of separated brothers and sisters.

About the author:
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by A. Kuyper and his pupils. In his way, he stood up for the reformers' convictions with regard to God's covenant, the baptism of believers' children, the nature of the promises of the gospel sealed in baptism, the necessity and character of self-examination before God's countenance. He was a formidable polemic, but one thing he never did. In these discussions, he never showed his fellow churchmen the door. He coveted a continuing discussion in all honesty and openness. He also had his faults, but making the church a club of people who all think the same, was not one of them. When, in 1936, the General Synod of Amsterdam put the 'differences of opinion' on the agenda, it was a black day for him. (Nevertheless, he did not refuse his appointment as deputy to test the 'current opinions', RtB). His work as deputy, together with prof. D.H.Th. Vollenhoven, was on all points focussed on keeping the peace and to guard the churches from making hasty 'doctrinal statements', through which the churches would become a sect. Schilder always maintained this line.
When the Netherlands was occupied by the Germans in May 1940, and Schilder felt called upon to combat the Nazism, the idolization of 'race, blood and territory', he summoned at the same time, in the first article he wrote for *De Reformatie* while in occupied territory: 'bury all the subject matter as soon as possible', and by that he meant the treatment of the differences of opinion.

Superscriptural binding

Let us then look at the broad, ecclesiastical way in which prof. Schilder substantiated that journalistic advice: 'whether or not there are, here and there, statements to be found, which could be seen as incorrect? Nobody doubts it. But for my part, I do not doubt for one second that these can be found on *both sides.* Nothing would be more unfair than to make a critical gesture in one direction but not in the other (…) Experts know, that one person's slip of the pen can always be balanced up by at least one just as problematical slip from somebody on the other side (…) In times of need we need harmony more than ever. True harmony can only be achieved in connection with truth and righteousness. She can, as we see it, be served in this instance by closing the subject. That which has been wrongly said here and there, will consume itself.'
This advice was not followed. Worse still: Prof. Schilder was the first victim of this unwillingness: it was insisted that he accepted a doctrinal statement, for which, today, nobody would stick his neck out.
And when we - by grace - refused to submit to this confession of the moment, for us it was about rightful peace and true liberty in the churches of Christ. Also after the Liberation of 1944, Prof. Schilder maintained this standpoint at home and abroad. When, after the war, emigration especially to the United States became popular, and reformed immigrants from the Netherlands tried to join the Protestant Reformed Church, where Prof. H. Hoeksema had much influence, their welcome there depended on whether or not they were at one with Prof. Hoeksema's theological opinions. Before the war, Schilder had done much on behalf of Hoeksema, but now he did everything in his power to guide these churches in a broad ecclesiastical direction. It did not work. Finally he wrote his great objection down in a booklet: *Boven Schriftuurlijke binding - een nieuw gevaar*[1]. The line has continued!

Restraint of conscience

This is how we understood and received the Liberation of 1944 and following. Once more there is a call to 'liberation' but this use of words is essentially misleading, since what is happening now is the opposite of '1944'. There are concerns about certain remarks and opinions, with regard to, for example, the observance of the Sunday. These things are not being discussed in peace and quiet. No, ecclesiastical sentences *must* be given.
Anyone who knows anything about the history of the church will know that these judgements would also condemn predecessors such as Martin Luther of Wittenberg (see his *Larger Catechism*) and John Calvin (see his Institutes and his various *Catechisms*). Now this is not about if, in this case, there is not more to be said about the Sunday and her observance than what we find in the works of these two reformers. Nor is it about whether or not a few critical questions ought to be fired in their direction. But on 31st October, I like to remember these both reformers with a clear conscience and with gratitude, and without regretting their subsequent banishment from the church.
It is misleading to use the term 'liberation' for something which is *opposite* to that of '1944'.
At that time it was about restraint of our conscience beyond the Scriptures and beyond the confession. This time it is about a restraint of conscience which has much to do with an extreme Puritanism, but which commits the church beyond the Scriptures and beyond the accepted confessions and in so doing distances us from our reformed past and from the unity given to us by Christ, which we may receive at the Lord's Holy Table.
To keep this unity, it is necessary to avoid misleading use of terms. And: 'commitment beyond the Scriptures' *remains* a serious threat."

The Peace broken

Rev. J.W. van der Jagt, minister in Dalfsen and deputy trustee at the Theological University, concludes similarly, one day later, as follows *(Nederlands Dagblad* 20th September): 'the parallel with the Liberation of 1944 is not right; the liberation is turned upside down in this way'.
Prior to this he sketches the situation which preceded 1944: 'Before 1942, there were two standpoints about baptism within the churches. A. Kuyper's standpoint was called "less right" by the Synod of 1905. It was not condemned sharply, but gently corrected. This is known as the pacification formula. It was a compromise, with which the churches lived for a number of decades. In 1942 the disaster happened, that the synod broke the compromise. Kuyper's standpoint was declared to have binding force as the one and only biblical doctrine. No other doctrine could be taught. The peace was broken in this way.'



‘Nieuwe vrijgemaakten’ hebben nu 300 leden

De gemeente in Zwolle: toen nog in de Waalse kerk en inmiddels vergaderend in ontmoetingscentrum Het Anker.

De ‘nieuwe vrijmaking’ in cijfers

Rev. Van der Jagt carries on to point out three essential differences between then and now:
The first difference: ‘The Synod of Zuidhorn declared no standpoint with regard to the relationship between the fourth commandment and the Sunday binding. There was no obligatory commitment to any error. The second difference is that now the objectors have declared their standpoint with regard to Sundays and the fourth commandment to be the only legal and acceptable view. Others might see things differently, but have been given no room to explain it. They are the ones therefore, who break the peace in the churches now.

A new Yoke

The third difference has to do with the doctrine accepted in the churches. The 2003 ‘Act of Liberation and Return’ claims that Zuidhorn made heresy legal “as though there is no longer a command from the Lord to rest on His day”. But what is really the case? Objectors wanted to condemn the opinion that the Sunday was a human ordinance. No regard was taken for the long existing viewpoint that says that the Sunday exists because of a human decision, taken by the church or the emperor. This never denied the commandment to rest. The Heidelberg Catechism applies the fourth commandment to the meetings of the congregation. This has been adopted as doctrine in the Reformed Churches for centuries. This doctrine has not been affected by the challenged decisions. On the contrary.
The Synod of Leusden said that the sermon which led to this whole question, brought insufficiently forward that Lord’s Day 38 is about a commandment of God to attend the services for worship. More than that, “Zuidhorn” called it a misunderstanding to say that the fourth commandment is no longer valid. Moreover, a deputyship was appointed to consider the Sunday rest in the light of the fourth commandment. The objectors do not wait for this work to be completed. It appears that they want to bind the churches to their standpoint about the founding of the Sunday in the fourth commandment, beyond the adopted doctrine. They do what in 1944 the synod did.
Today’s action is not a liberation à la 1944. This turns the liberation upside down. At that time, the churches were freed from a yoke. Today a new yoke is laid upon the people.”

The wide Boundaries of the Scriptures

In both reactions we hear something which may be called characteristic of the Reformed Churches (liberated) in the Netherlands: liberation or secession from churches which allow less room than the Scriptures do or decide matters that the Reformed confessions leave open, is the other side of return to the whole Scripture. Within the boundaries of the Scriptures there is the catholic room to differ about elements where they give no decisive position. God’s word is far above all the words of man. Obedience to God’s Word sets our conscience free.

[1]. Translation of the title: Commitment beyond the Scriptures - a new Threat. Originally published in the reformed weekly De Reformatie 25 (1949/1950) 403-404, 410-411 and 26 (1950/1951) 44, 50-52. In this brochure (series: Woord en Wereld, No.10-12) Prof. Schilder comments the (translated) Declaration of Principles.

Website of the separated churches:
http://www.gereformeerd.info

by G. Kwakkel



Prophecy1

What does the Bible say about prophets and prophecy? This fundamental question is constantly recurring in all sorts of talks and discussions.

Prediction of the future?

In everyday language, a prophet is somebody who foretells the course of nature or predicts future events, or, he pretends he can do that. The supernatural gifts of such a prophet are often treated with a dose of scepticism. The same is true of prophets who fulfil roles in various other religions, such as Mohammed in the Islam religion. By 'prophet', Christians also generally think of a person who makes statements about the future. For them, prophecy is a special gift of the Spirit. Behind true prophecy lies revelation from God.

In the Old Testament 'prophet' is usually the translation of the Hebrew word *navi.* Alongside this, other terms are used, translated as 'seer' (see esp. 1 Sam. 9:9) or 'man of God'. Our word 'prophet' is derived from the Greek word *prophetes,* the Septuagint translation of navi. The ancient Greeks used prophetes to describe somebody who passed on the words of a god to people. He was distinct from the sooth-sayer. His words did not have to refer to the future. The same word is used in the New Testament for prophets who arose in the New Testament congregations.
The word 'prophecy' can refer as much to the appearance of the prophet as to the message itself. It is a word used regularly in the New Testament. In the Old Testament the message of the prophets was spoken of in terms such as 'word of the Lord' and 'vision' and 'oracle'.

Messenger from God

In Judges 6:7-10, the Lord sends an otherwise unknown prophet to the Israelites. The prophet begins with the words 'thus says the Lord'. This formula is often used with prophetic speeches. The same expression is used by messengers, when they passed on the words they were to say, to the one to whom they were sent (see e.g. Gen. 32:4; Numb. 22:16; 1 Kings 20:2f). From this we can see that prophets were messengers who took the words of God to people (cf. in this connection also Ex. 7:1f: because Aaron speaks for Moses, he is called Moses' prophet!).
In his address, the prophet of Judges 6 points to God's past deeds and commands and to Israel's refusal to listen to God. He does not utter one single word about the future.

Court adviser

When King David wants to build a temple, he first unfolds his plan to the prophet, Nathan. Nathan shows his agreement, but in the night the Lord lets him know that He does not agree. The Lord Himself would build a royal house for David. After David's death, his son could build the temple (2 Sam. 7). Nathan seems to have functioned as a sort of court adviser to David. He was a prophet, but did not directly know what the will of the Lord was. In the night, he discovers this, when the Lord reveals it to him. How that actually took place, is not recorded. We only read, as so often, that the word of the Lord came to Nathan (verse 4).
Nathan must address David critically, in the name of the Lord, about his plans to build a temple (verses 5-7). Alongside this, David received promises with regard to the future, both short and long term (resp. verses 9-15 and verse 16). These promises were not a blueprint, which is always realised without alteration. Contrary to verse 10, Israel was, later, indeed alarmed and oppressed by enemies. It appears that the promise was conditional, although this was not specifically stated. God's promise of continuing faithfulness to David's son (verse 15) was not conditional. There would be no end to David's kingdom. Later it would become obvious that this promise would be realised in the kingship of David's descendant, Jesus Christ.

Member of a group

In 1 Kings 22, king Ahab appears to have 400 prophets at his disposal. They are described as being Ahab's own prophets (see verses 22f). It is possible that they were his official servants and were kept by him, just as Ahab's wife, Jezebel, provided for 850 prophets of Baal and Asherah (1 Kings 18:19). In this way they were more closely associated with Ahab's court than Nathan was with David's.
At the same time we see a school of prophets around Elijah and Elisha. Of what their activities actually consisted, is not completely clear. In any case, they did not serve at the king's court. They seem to have resisted Ahab's religious politics just as Elijah and Elisha did.
Just as little can be said about the group of prophets in 1 Samuel 10:5-13 and 19:18-24. The Spirit of the Lord came upon them and they 'prophesied'. When the same happened to Saul, he took off his clothes and lay naked on the ground all night (1 Sam. 19:24). You will find no trace of this sort of ecstatic behaviour in Nathan.

About the author:
*Dr. Gert Kwakkel (*1959) has been professor of Old Testament subjects at the Theological University of the Reformed Churches (liberated) in the Netherlands since 1993. He graduated from the State University in Groningen with a study about the Psalms of innocence: 'According to My Righteousness.' Upright Behaviour as Grounds for Deliverance in Psalms 7, 17, 18, 26, and 44 (Leiden: Brill, 2003).*

Not a profession

One notable passage is Amos 7:10-17, which records the confrontation between Amos and Amaziah, priest of Bethel. Just like Elijah, Amos attacks the politics of the king of Israel and has absolutely no connection with the court. Appealing to the kingly character of the holy place in Bethel, Amaziah forbids Amos to work as a prophet. Amos replies, that he was not a prophet, he was a breeder of sheep and tended sycamore fruit, but the Lord had given him a charge to prophecy against Israel.

It would not have been Amos' intention to distance himself from all the other prophets like Nathan and Elijah (see Am. 2:11f; 3:7f). He responded to Amaziah's advice that he should go and try and prophesy in Judah to earn his keep (verse 12). In response to this, Amos says that prophesying was not his job. The only reason why he prophesied was because the Lord had sent him.

One against the rest

The same was true of Jeremiah. He would have had no problem with being called a prophet, for the Lord had, in so many words, appointed him to be one. He did resist the appointment as a prophet on the grounds that he was too young to be a speaker (Jer. 1:5). Nevertheless, he functioned as prophet for many years. God's command was too mighty for him and he valued God's word too much (cf. Jer. 15:16; 20:9).

The story of Jeremiah's call reveals what was essential for his work as prophet. The Lord Himself would put words in his mouth (1:9). He must proclaim these words and not only to God's people (Judah) but also to other peoples (see 1:5,9). According to Jeremiah 1:13-16, those words would chiefly be about the coming of God's judgement, because of Israel's service of other gods. In the course of the book of Jeremiah, it becomes clear that judgement is unavoidable. In 18:7-10, there is a reference to the conditional character of prophetic pronouncements. Should repentance occur, the Lord could put a stop to the predicted judgement. But the inhabitants of Jerusalem cannot satisfy themselves with that. They had refused to listen to the prophets for so long, that their cities and their land shall now really be destroyed (see Jer.25:1-11; 35:12-17). Jeremiah does hear on various occasions that he may no longer pray for his people (see 7:16; 11:14; 14:11), while people expected that prophets interceded for others (see for instance Gen. 20:7; 2 Kings 19:2-4; Jer. 21:2; 42:2-4).

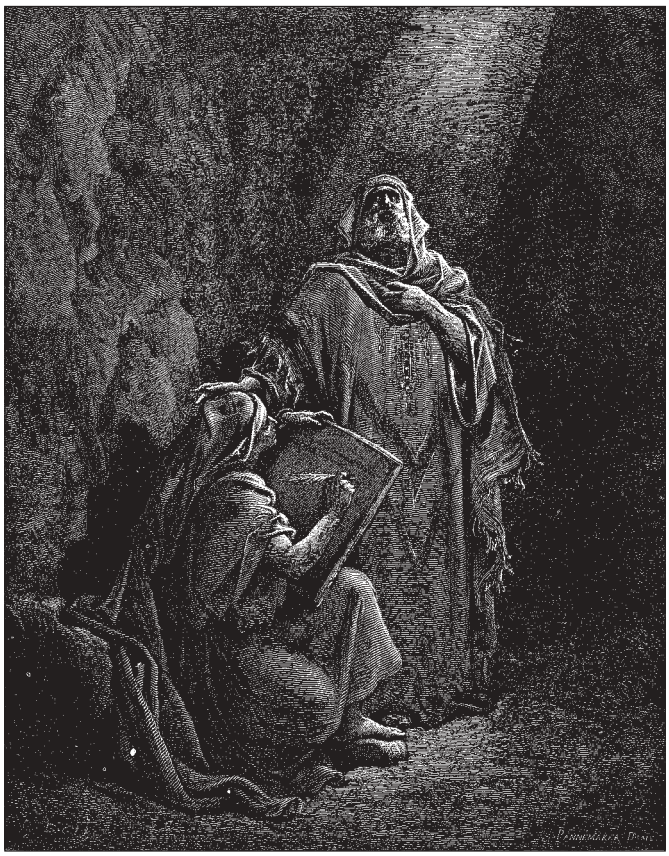
From the start, Jeremiah knew that he could expect resistance (Jer 1:18f). Amongst Jeremiah's opponents were a substantial number of prophets. They did not accept Jeremiah's prophecy about the destruction of the temple and the city of Jerusalem and painted a peaceful future for their fellow citizens (Jer. 6:13f; 26:7-11). They were false prophets. According to Jeremiah 23:18-22, these were people who pretended to be prophets, but who lied. Unlike true prophets, these were not inaugurated in the secrets of God's heavenly counsel. The Lord had not sent them and had not spoken to them.

It could not have been easy for the people in Jerusalem to know who really was a prophet from the Lord. This can be evidenced in the confrontation between Jeremiah and Hananiah in Jeremiah 28. Hananiah's message that the Babylonian threat would end within two years, was the opposite of Jeremiah's. But he too, used the formula: 'thus says the Lord' (verse 11). Jeremiah is not able to show directly and conclusively that he is the true, and Hananiah the false prophet. He can only argue that his prophecy of disaster is consistent with that of the prophets of old. He then departs and has to wait for a new word from the Lord (cf. Jer 42:7 also).

The way in which Jeremiah received that word, is not recorded. In Numbers 12:6 the Lord says that he makes Himself known to the prophets in dreams and visions. The vision as way of revelation, played a large role in, amongst others, Ezekiel and Zachariah. In Ezekiel, the Spirit is often named in this connection. He it is, who lifts the prophet up and transposes him (see Ezek. 3:12-14; 8:3; 11:1,24). False prophets too, claimed to have dreams and visions (cf. Jer. 23:25,27,32; Ezek. 13:7). As far as that is concerned, the word of the one stood alongside the contrary word of the other. Only time would tell whose word was true and thus who really had spoken the Word of God (cf. Deut. 18:21f; Jer. 28:9,15-17). Until that time, the people could do nothing other than compare the messages of the prophets with those of earlier revelations (eg. on the point of sinful people being called to repentance or not; cf. Jer. 23:22).

Heralding of Christ

On the threshold of the New Testament period, the priest Zachariah is filled with the Holy Spirit and begins to prophesy (Luke 1:67). This involves first, that he praises God for the



Baruch writes down Jeremiah's prophecies.

salvation He is bringing to His people through the birth of John and the approaching birth of Mary's child (verses 68-75). This salvation was heralded by the Old Testament prophets, or better, by the Lord Himself, since He it was, who spoke through the mouths of the prophets (verse 70).
Further, Zachariah reveals what is lined up for his son, John, in the near future. John himself will be a prophet. He will prepare the way for the coming of the Lord and bring the knowledge of salvation to God's people (verses 76-79). John did this by telling people that God's judgement was knocking at the door and he called them to repentance (Matt. 14:5; Mark 11:32; Luke 20:6). Many recognised that he was a prophet (Matt. 14:5; Mark 11:32; Luke 20:6). Jesus Himself testified that John was more than a prophet; He was 'Elijah, who was to come' (Matt. 11:14; cf. also 17:10-13; Mal. 4:5). Zachariah's conviction that the Old Testament prophets had spoken about the coming and the work of Jesus Christ is characteristic of the whole of the New Testament. Jesus himself, showed the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, that according to the prophets, the Messiah could only enter into glory by suffering. He went on to explain what Moses and all the prophets had said in relation to Himself (Luke 24:25-27). In this, the word 'prophets' indicates a number of the Old Testament books (cf. also Matt. 5:17; 22:40; Luke 16:29; Acts 13:15). Time and time again, Matthew points to the fulfilling of prophecy in what Jesus does and in what happens to Him (e.g. Matt. 2:14-17, 23; 21:4f). According to Peter, the prophets spoke about the grace that was to come to the New Testament church. They tried to find out, which time was indicated by the words which they spoke. The Spirit of Christ spoke through them and witnessed beforehand to what would happen to Christ (1Pet. 1:10-12; for the role of the Spirit in prophecy cf. 2 Pet. 1:21 also).

The prophet

After Jesus, with the help of five loaves and two fishes, had fed thousands of people, they said: "Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world" (John 6:14). It appears that they expected a special prophet at the end of the times. Some thought, that in Jesus, one of the old prophets was raised again (Luke 9:8,19). Others saw Him as a prophet in a more general sense (see e.g. Matt. 21:46; Mark 6:15). In this, His miracles played just as large a role as his preaching (see Luke 7:11-17; 24:19).
Jesus referred to Himself only implicitly as a prophet (Matt. 13:57; Luke 4:24; 13:33). Various characteristics of the prophets are clearly relevant to Him, such as the anointing with God's Spirit and the proclamation of words of God, also about the future (see e.g. Luke 3:22; 4:18f; Matt. 24). In Acts 3:22f, Peter quotes Moses' promise in Deuteronomy 18, that the Lord would raise up a prophet, to whom the people must either listen, or be punished by being sentenced to death. According to the usual interpretation of this passage, Peter wants to say that Jesus is this promised prophet.

Gift of the Spirit

Not only the Old Testament prophets, but also John the Baptist and Jesus Christ were able to prophesy through the Spirit. Also members of the New Testament church, men and women, shared in the special gift of prophecy (see e.g.



The prophet Ezekiel.



The prophet Daniel in Babel.

Acts 13:1; 21:9; Rom. 12:6f; 1Cor. 12:8-10; Eph. 4:11). Paul writes in detail about this gift in 1 Corinthians 14. He contrasts prophecy with speaking in tongues. In contrast to prophecy, tongues are not intelligible without explanation. For this reason, the church can be built up, disciplined and encouraged through prophecy but not through speaking in tongues (verses 2-5). Through prophecy it becomes obvious what lives in an unbeliever and through it he can be brought to worship God (verses 24f). During the meetings of the church, different prophets can be present at the same time. If prophets are present, they are not above criticism, the others must judge their words. A prophet can suddenly receive a revelation. Should that be so, the one who is talking at that moment must wait and give priority to the new revelation (verses 29-33).

It is not possible to ascertain from Paul's words, whether or not the prophets in Corinth also spoke about the future. There were such prophets in the New Testament congregations. Agabus was one such prophet (Acts 11:27f; 21:10f), but also John on Patmos (see e.g. Rev. 1:3; 10:11; 22:7,9). On the other hand, there is also a 'prophesying' which does not refer to refer to the future. In his speech at Pentecost, Peter cites the prophet Joel: 'Your sons and your daughters will prophesy' (Acts 2:17). This, according to Peter, is what happened at that very moment (verse 16). At that moment, however, there were no disclosures about the future. They spoke in all sorts of languages about the great deeds God had done (verses 4-11). Evidently, this was enough for Peter to speak about the fulfilment of Joel's prophecy.

Is Paul referring to a spiritual gift of a permanent character in 1 Corinthians 14? Christians differ on this point. They do agree that Moses' wish: 'I wish that all the Lord's people were prophets' (Numb. 11:29), is fulfilled in the New Testament times. Prophecy is a lasting gift in the New Testament church, in any case as far as prophecy about God's great deeds is concerned (cf. Acts 2). But is this also true of the receiving of direct revelations such as in 1 Corinthians 14?

Paul says that this form of prophecy will one day no longer play a role (1 Cor. 13:8), but nowhere does he specifically say when that will actually be. He says that the Corinthian believers should be eager to prophesy (1 Cor. 14:1; cf. also 1 Thess. 5:20 'do not treat prophesies with contempt'). On the other hand, the New Testament prophets, together with the apostles, are called the foundation of the church (Eph. 2:20; cf. also 3:5; 4:11). As such, they stand at the beginning of the New Testament church. In Jesus Christ, God has spoken as never before (Heb. 1:1). The apostles have witnessed to this. The result can be found in the New Testament. If prophetic revelations still take place in the New Testament church, they will always have to be judged in the light of the apostolic writings in the New Testament.

Mouthpieces for God

Much prophecy in the Bible has to do with the future. The New Testament demonstrates, that the Old Testament prophets spoke about the future work of Jesus Christ. It is therefore understandable that 'prophecy' is often referred to as 'speaking about the future'.

Nevertheless, in both Old and New Testaments, 'prophecy' seems to have a wider meaning. Essential for the real prophet of God was, that God had spoken to him and that he passed those words on. They were, thus, God's mouthpieces here on earth. People could also pose as messengers from God. Moreover, there were prophets from other gods. True and false could not easily be distinguished from each other. Decisions about that were closely bound to one's own belief.

1. This is a somewhat shortened version of an article in the *Dutch Woordenboek voor bijbellezers* (Eds. Ab Noordegraaf, Stefan Paas and Arie Zwiep) that will be published in 2004 by Boekencentrum, Zoetermeer, the Netherlands; ISBN 90 239 1204 7. The *Lux Mundi* editorial committee has translated it from a pre-publication in *De Reformatie* 78 (2002/2003) 860-863. Copying of this article is not permitted.

Dr. Gert Kwakkel (*1959) has been professor of Old Testament subjects at the Theological University of the Reformed Churches (liberated) in the Netherlands since 1993. He graduated from the State University in Groningen with a study about the Psalms of innocence: *'According to My Righteousness.' Upright Behaviour as Grounds for Deliverance in Psalms 7, 17, 18, 26, and 44* (Leiden: Brill, 2003).

Illustrations: Gustave Dore



The prophet Amos.

by Peter Wierenga

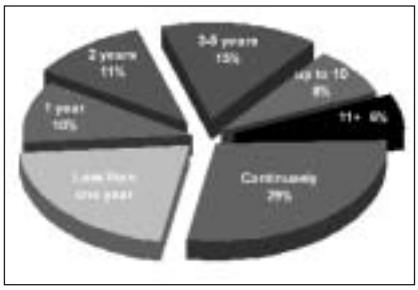


Faith is a journey

In this article, I would like to say something about the background to the Emmaus Project and the materials which have been translated and developed for it. These materials are meant for use in Bible study with people who want to know more about the Bible and the Christian faith (seekers) and for people, who, as groups of Christians, want to do more with the Bible.
The basis of the material is research which has been done amongst new members in English churches. This research contains much information about the reasons people have for joining a church and about the effect of courses for new members.

On the way

In the Bible, a number of images can be found which represent coming to faith and believing: the parent child image, a building, the growth of a plant in a field, or a journey.
The people who were in darkness have seen a great light....Those who walk in the way of the Lord..., Adam walked with God..., God is with us... There are any number of examples and Bible texts which illustrate this image.



Coming to faith is a long process for most people, and then we are only talking about the time. Figures from the UK and the Netherlands (see the round graph) show the following. Most people take an average of 4 years from the first acquaintance with the faith to making a choice. And not everybody chooses positively. One's partner, friend, parent or child, or minister have a great influence on this decision and the length of the process. Almost 70% of the people come to faith through a Christian friend. You could say, people do not make the journey alone, but together with other people.

MAIN REASONS Relationship	women	men
Partner	5 %	22 %
Children	13 %	3 %
Parents	6 %	6 %
Christian friends	24 %	15 %
Christian/ not church officer	4 %	4 %
Minister	17 %	18 %
Total	69 %	68 %

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In this table [1]), this becomes clearly visible, and when you work out further why this person, this relationship, was so important, then what emerges is that this has to do with the attitude of one person, an attitude that becomes more visible in a long lasting relationship. The behaviour and words of a friend, partner or minister often reveal the depth of the relationship of that person with God. One's trust in God, one's resting in God, one's patience, how peaceable one is, one's willingness to serve, one's hospitality - all these things can be found in Galatians 5 as fruits of the Spirit.
For this reason someone like Prof. De Ruiter (Professor of Practical Theology at the Theological University of the Liberated Reformed Churches in Kampen) can write: “God sends people so that He Himself can come close to people. That is the miracle of the Spirit.” [2])
This is the background to the Emmaus Project: people come to faith through other people. And in this process, Bible study and learning about the Christian faith have an important role. It is good to first go back to the Bible for a basic perspective.

Emmaus as training ground

In Luke 24 we see Jesus, who has just risen from the grave, on the road with two disciples. At that moment He is not witnessing to His resurrection, nor to his faith. He is listening. And asking questions.
He is very direct, calling a spade a spade, and he proceeds to explain the Scriptures. He walks along with these people and thinks along with them. “Jesus acted as if he were going farther”, we read in this passage (Luke 24:28). This moment is important, because it lets us see that God gives people a real choice. “Are you going to invite me to journey with you, to eat with you, or are you going to let me travel further?” God speaks, but he begins by listening.
For this reason, the idea of Bible study in groups is always behind all beginners' groups such as the Alpha course and Emmaus. These are small groups because there relationships can be built up and developed; there, trust can grow, there, people can share their ideas and experience. It is a place where the Holy Spirit shows Himself able and willing to work.

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Thinking in small steps

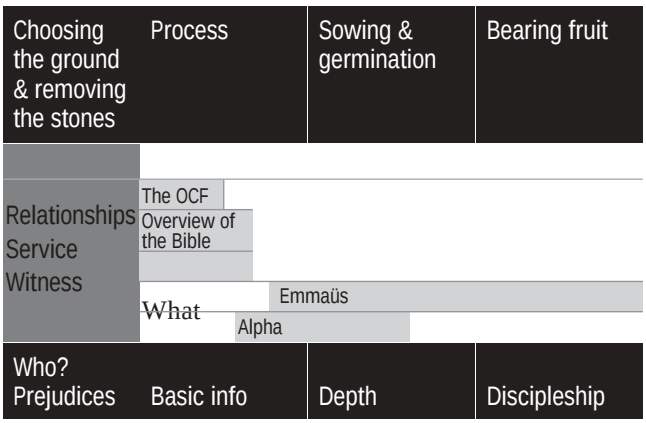
In the Emmaus Project, we think and work on the basis of a number of steps, which are called phases. The material is divided between these phases

- phase 1: CONTACT,
- phase 2: NURTURE and
- phase 3: GROWTH

The vision behind Emmaus describes two other parts:

- phase 0: removing prejudices
- having vision: thinking in a missionary way in terms of trajectories (this is actually the background to the phases)

If you were to place the current inter-church Bible study materials next to each other, you would see the following phases 0,1,2, and 3.



What emerges as important?

- Relationships between people
- Being a church in a good and visible way
- Diaconal and other missionary activities

All these things contribute to removing prejudices. And relationships are especially crucial in this.

When people (in phase 0) have become interested in the Christian faith themselves, or in any case, so interested in somebody else that they want to go along with him to a course, then you land in phase 1. In this phase information about the Christian faith is offered. In the Netherlands, two sets of materials are especially suitable for this phase: an orientation course on the Christian faith and a course offered by the Dutch Bible society (NBG), an overview of the Bible. People who want to know more can then progress via a number of other routes.

As congregation, you would have to look for those routes which are also relationship orientated, and which offer a way into the church (phase 2). Two courses, Alpha and Emmaus, offer this.

From seeker to disciple

Faith comes to most people slowly. People want to think a good deal, without being directed or pushed. It is important to offer them this space, as though it was the road to Emmaus, and to let Jesus come by, as it were. Precisely this creating space for the freedom to choose, respecting the other person's full responsibility, is a way of operating which we have to appropriate for ourselves. This involves appropriating it in a way which is relevant to our own youth and to our own members. No matter how much you want to take the people along with you, and hold on to them, God treats us and the people we are trying to reach as fully responsible human beings. Therefore we must always seek to give the person we are trying to reach a maximum of space.

It is important, furthermore, to always be available to continue to help the seeking person on the long term. The Emmaus method is in this respect quite unique. The complete package contains Bible study material for three years (a meeting every week). The material does not make any sharp distinction between believers or non-believers. The first book, Nurture, is written for non-Christians. The Growth books can be used by Christians but are also perfectly suitable for combined groups of Christians and non-Christians.

Jesus said to Nicodemus that you must be born of water and of Spirit, in a moment of renewal and in a continuing process. And Peter also said that you can build upon your faith. In fact, he actually commands this, and for this reason the Emmaus course is directed at discipleship. (Phase 3) Growth does not stop the minute you come to faith or become a church member. Growth begins once you come to faith. Is it not for this reason that someone who comes to faith should first be baptised and then learn to keep the commandments?

The roles of the Christian

Thinking on the basis of the already mentioned phases, a Christian can take on a number of roles:

* pointing the way - in the contact phase
* a travel guide - along the way
* a fellow traveller - throughout the phases

The structures in the church (church councils, evangelism and church strengthening committees, and all others) should work from a clear vision: a cohesive and well directed whole, out of which the work in the church around discipleship and becoming a member finds it place.

What comes to mind?

* preparation
* encouragement to develop relationships outside the church
* organising activities which people can directly take part in
* organising Bible study and seeker meetings
* giving church services a form so that newcomers to the faith understand and feel spoken to, as much as by culture, language, music, as by content.

The gospel, the good news, is meant for all people. The Emmaus travellers knew that— they had to let it be known, immediately!

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www.emmauscursus.nl

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[1]) *figures taken from 'Finding Faith Today', Johan Finney*

[2]) *Prof C.J. de Ruiter, door de Geest bewogen.*

by Menno van Hulst



Technical co-operation, in past, present and future

De Verre Naasten (literally - the Far away Neighbours), Institute for Mission, Ecumenical Assistance and Training of the Reformed Churches (Liberated) in the Netherlands, existed for 25 years in December 2003. On September 13th, a reunion was organised for workers and ex-workers, (ex)missionaries and (ex)directors. General manager of the organisation, br. Menno van Hulst, spoke on that occasion about: technical co-operation in past, present and future.

In 1987, my wife and I were working in Honduras, when a film crew from the EO (Evangelical Channel) came visiting. I was an agricultural scientist working as head of the Department for Agriculture of a christian development organisation. My main activity was cocoa, and next to that research into the adaptation of water buffalos in the Mid American swamps. I understood nothing of animals but there was a good project manager who did. Anyway, we went filming, cocoa and water buffalos. First there had to be a shot of me explaining to a brown project manager how you put a harness on a water buffalo. I first had to ask him how to do that, and after that with the camera rolling, I gave him the instructions.
This is the image that the media offer, and we have probably contributed to that in our publications. The white know-all who can do everything shows the coloured fellow how it should be.



Going back to the very beginning of missionary work by the Reformed Churches (Liberated) in Papua (then Dutch New Guinea) : medical help (1958).

About the author:
Menno van Hulst (45) is a trained agronomist. He worked for development projects in Honduras and Zaire. Nowadays he is the general manager of De Verre Naasten, Institute for Mission, Ecumenical assistance and Training of the Reformed Churches (liberated) in the Netherlands.

This is the classic image of development assistance. Just as the classic image of the mission is that the white minister goes to a warm land to tell the ignorant about the Lord Jesus. This image is incorrect, at least incomplete, primarily, because the white man does not know everything. He learns much himself. And secondly, because technical co-operation is just one small part of a bigger whole in mission and development work. Financial assistance, consultancy and training are other important aspects. But still the sending out of personnel is such an important and image creating aspect, that it is worth thinking about it. This 25 year jubilee is a good opportunity to take a step back and see how this co-operation gained stature in the past, how it has evolved to the current form. And most interesting of all, but also the most risky, is to philosophise about its future. What role will those sent out in the future have to fill? Will they even be sent out?

One small word about terms. The terms personnel assistance, also called technical assistance are often used interchangeably. I have chosen for the term technical co-operation, considering that this emphasises the reciprocal relationship more.

In the last 50 years, there has been a constant debate about technical co-operation, also in non- Christian assistance. It is good to look at how far the debate has come. We, in Christian organisations like De Verre Naasten, can measure ourselves on that and learn from the developments and experiences of secular organisations without following the developments slavishly, and certainly not if there is a question of mode trends.
After that we want to look at developments within our own area. This I define as 'mission and ecumenical assistance within the Reformed Churches (Liberated)'. Finally, we will look to the future.

1. Development within the secular project assistance
a. History

Historical writers of development co-operation start usually after WW 2. Missionaries and colonial workers were precursors of the development workers.
After WW2, Europe was reconstructed, whereby the Marshall plan, with much financial help, performed financial wonders.



A Dutch nurse teaching Papuan nursing assistants. Many have difficulty judging dosage. Halves and quarters are being shown.



East and West meet: nurse Simone de Vries conversing with a Papuan.

President Truman, in point 4 of his Inaugural speech of 1949, gave the green light for applying this method to 'underdeveloped countries'.
People believed in the modernisation theory. Through the passing on of knowledge and technology, building up of capital and establishing of an infrastructure, a linear development process would start up and the countries behind on development would catch up.
On the technical co-operation front, colonial officers were often used whom, after decolonisation, returned to their former colonies as advisers.

In the sixties in America, the renowned Peace Corps was set up and later in the Netherlands, the SNV (Foundation for Dutch Volunteers).
Sending volunteers for a task became popular, also with private organisations. Often for a minimal wage, agricultural experts struggled with unruly ground, nurses injected brown behinds on a large scale, and white teachers taught in high schools full of black pupils.
The American PC had a strong political leaning. It was in the years that the Cold War was at its 'hottest'. The PC volunteers had to show how good America was. A reaction was inevitable and this came in the seventies. If the volunteers do good work for a time, everybody thinks, great, but when they go, nothing has really changed. The "trickling down" of given insights and skills to the rest of society, did not seem to work or work enough. Contrary to the expectations of President Truman's generation, the poor become poorer and the rich, richer. The new insight is that development works only from inside out and from underneath. And so the participating approach grew. The poor and helpless were to develop themselves and take maximum part in the processes to do with themselves. Development workers were not to fill up vacancies which local workers could fill. They were too pass on knowledge and skills to their so called 'counterparts' so that they could set to work themselves as soon as possible. In the health sector, attention moved from the curative to the preventative. Instead of injections, health education via village or district wide health committees.

In the eighties and nineties, neo-liberalism raised its head. With irritation, it was noted that the new states of the 'Third World' as they were then called, were making a political and financial chaos. Under the leadership of the IMF, SAP's (Structural Adaptation Programmes) were to ensure healthier government finances in the poor countries bent under the weight of relatively huge debts. This involved a large scale privatisation of the social work services. The withdrawal of the state from health and education.

A similar process in the Netherlands lead to half hour delays in train services, closure of bus lines in non profit making areas, and the threat of power shortages in dry summers. In Africa this led to a series of blossoming and high quality clinics for the rich and exclusion of health care for the poor. It led to excellent quality private schools and abysmal state schools, where teachers spent more time striking because their salaries were not paid out, than teaching. A gap came into being, into which the private development organisations sprung again. Somehow or other the basic provisions had to be maintained.
Development helpers did do less themselves. And there was a better educated group of local skilled people present. These often miss the facilities and the institutions needed to work effectively, not to mention efficient work methods. For this reason, "institutional strengthening" is more and more the aim of project co-operation.
The key phrase in Development Co-operation at the start of the 21st century is "capacity building". The capacity of the individual, institutions, and governments at all levels must be improved in order to make a lasting development process possible.

b. Criticism

And so ends the historical sketch of project help. Noticeable is that the development worker, during many years, had an untouchable positive image. In the nineties this crumbled significantly and much criticism was expressed. The previous minister of Development Co-operation, Mrs Herfkens contributed much to the debate, which resulted in the



An Indonesian teacher instructing future midwives.



Field visit at a health development programme in Central India.

closure of the Ministerial Head Department Project International Co-operation. What criticism was directed at the development worker? (Hoebink en van der Velden 2001)

1. Failure of transfer of knowledge and training
   Although the passing on of knowledge and training in skills is at the top of the list in job descriptions, the practice - how much time is actually devoted to this, seems to be disappointing.
   Also, it can be that your counterpart has just been trained and understands how things work and then leaves to join another organisation where he can earn more.
2. Failure of the expert-counterpart system.
   The expert directs himself more to getting the job finished, than on the training. He is often an expert in a certain area but not in training and giving advice. The counterpart can find himself in an unfortunate position with the expert constantly breathing down his neck.
3. The expatriates can force locals from the labour market.
4. The costs of the expatriates are not understood by local organisations and thus not taken into account. Sometimes the additional advantages of the expert are found better than the expert himself.
5. Not cost effective. The expatriates are expensive.
   Characterised as “lords of poverty”.

These are the specific criticisms of project help. And then I have made no mention of this sort of general criticism, not that it helps - a drop in the ocean: big brother rubbish; let the market do her work.

C. Trends

Partly in response to these criticisms, new developments emerged: (van der Velden and Zwiers, 1997)

- the expert-counterpart model, that is to say: one expatriate with one local counterpart is, for the most part, over.
- Where necessary, “gap filling without shame” (Berg, 1993) or, filling of vacancies is allowed if really necessary. There is no agreement about this.
  This is still an untouchable subject for the PSO.
- Hiring of local personnel. There are more serious attempts made at filling the position locally.
- South-South exchange: the Indian expert in Mozambique is cheaper than a Dutch one. If the employment takes place within lands which are culturally similar, contra-productive cultural shocks can be avoided.
- Twinning. Comparable social institutions in various lands are brought into contact with each other and help each other, often reciprocally. Councils, unions, theatrical companies, universities, etc.
- Short term placements. Need remains for high quality technical or manufacturing input from non-local, available personnel.
  Short expert missions of a few weeks or months replace long term placement.
- More working of the market. Global ideologists see the world as one great big market. Let the market do her work, also in movements of labour.
  If a poor land prefers to have an expensive Dutchman rather than a cheap Brazilian, then let her hire him.

2. Developments within mission and giving of assistance, related to project co-operation.

Giving heed to the mission mandates, that our Lord has given to us, and out of a Christian attitude of love, charity and righteousness, in the last 50 years, many expatriates have been sent out to other parts of the world.

How have the developments been in mission work in the predecessors of the DVN and in the DVN itself? I want to focus on two aspects. The tasks and the position of those sent. Both have changed dramatically.

a. Change of task

I think that the historical sketch of the secular Dev. co-operation will have shown much that is familiar to the developments which have taken place in DVN and mission work.

We have begun, to send people who actually roll their sleeves up: white teachers in the classroom, Dutch nurses who see patients, a Dutch social worker who visits families in Curacao,

an agricultural expert who sets up the test fields, and of course, the missionary who goes from door to door himself, to show who Jesus is, who baptises and plants a church.
The changes have emerged, possibly later than was the general trend in the secular help world. In the medical sector this was from curative to preventative, from do-it-your-self to teaching; from teaching to the organisation of education; from organisation of education to facilitating education.
The missionary has become a church nurturer. He no longer baptises himself, or if he does, he does not decide whether or not to baptise; he teaches about baptism; and teaching becomes giving advice; and giving advice becomes facilitating.
The administrator has become more a capacity builder in the field of administration. The next step is that of a financial advisor who visits once a year, on an expert mission.

The tasks of the expats sent have unmistakeably changed. Higher demands are made of training levels and levels of experience. Didactic and agogic qualities are becoming more important. Those sent, cannot leave before they have followed a course in participating methodology and where possible, also a training in being a facilitator.
In short, there is a development from 'do-it-your-self', via 'organisation', 'training' and 'advising' to 'facilitating'. In other words, from rolling the sleeves up to commenting with folded arms.

b. Change of position

The tasks of those sent have changed, but the difference is even deeper. In the last 25 years there has been a deep shift, which can be characterised as from mission to giving assistance. The church planted by mission work has become a sister church and no longer a daughter. From the moment that the church becomes independent, she makes her own decisions, and is responsible for the consequences of those decisions. The same is true of independent Christian development organisations of whatever institutions in the south. She is sovereign in her own circle.
This means much for the position of the one sent there. If sent to an independent church, he must function within the structures of that church. There is, namely, a partnership developed between the Western church and the church in the South or East.

This all seems logical, but in practice, it is not so easy to work out. The expat has to take on another role. Someone who first worked as missionary in a church, does not change just like that into a church worker or a trainer in the same church, under the leadership of someone to whom he used to teach the catechism.
Something also has to change in the organisation which sent the man out. The receiving partner church must be involved in the making up of the profile, the recruitment and selection and the training. (Bowers, 1997).
We have to take our partners seriously. In this we are 25 or 30 years behind the larger ecumenical churches. Within the World Council much was necessary to make the western churches wake up. "Western churches, keep your missionaries and your funds" was the cry from Lusaka in 1974. The so called 'moratorium' debate was painful. (Jansen Schoonhoven, 1997) And we can learn from it and try not to make the same mistakes. Let us take partnership, or in church terms, sister churches, seriously. We see it, probably without realising it, often as a favour that African Churches can call us sister churches. But we should see it as a greater honour if an African church wants to call us a reliable partner.
Within a partnership, the missionaries play a special part, and it is not without reason that, within the training, this material receives much attention from the IRTT department of DVN.

3. Future

With this topic, we land effortlessly at the last section of this discourse. What could the future of technical co-operation in mission and ecumenical assistance be, within the Reformed Churches (Liberated) of the Netherlands.

a. The direction of mission work towards partnership will go on. Churches in the South and East want to have partners. In this, the expatriates will have to play their part. How else than by intense personal contact, can two churches so far apart, give any meaning to their sister and brotherhood?
b. Those sent, thus, are going to be filling more of a different role. One good example of this, and I expect more of this sort in the future, centres around Rev Piet Houtman, sent out to the Theological High school PTS in India. The Indian Churches complained that the PTS produces good ministers but do too little coaching and follow up courses. Can you help us in that? Surely the PTS teachers would be better doing that themselves? They know the language, culture and context better than anybody we could send from the Netherlands. But we don't have any time for that, was their answer. Now, then we will send you a PTS teacher to allow you to go out into the country more. And that is what will happen now. The expatriate will fill a teaching function in a completely Indian situation.



Women in DR Congo learn to read and write. Instructors learn via a train-the-trainer programme.

c. Next to this, I see more and more short term mission and expert missions taking place. A few weeks intensive training and advice, followed up by a few months work, without the westerner breathing down his neck; then a visit, in between, for coaching and follow up training. Then a time of no visitation and then evaluation and/or coaching.
d. I just asked how else, than through intense personal contact, can two churches so far away from each other, actually be brethren? For example, by an exchange of position, including exchange of house and salary. And when the Southeners come to the West, the emphasis must not be on receiving teaching, but giving it. We can learn so much from each other.
e. We always hold on to the principle: we do not seek work for people but people for the work. We respond to the demand. And still the offers are pressing. More and more, young people, with or without training, want to invest time in Christian aid and evangelism. And not only young people, either. Senior folk too, having worked all their lives, often in a commercial context, want to work for a number of years in a way which they see as closer to God's Kingdom. Often these church members find a place within Christian organisations which works more "supply directed". They would probably call that "gift centred". Without wanting to say that we should create a place for everyone who feels a call to go abroad, I do think that we should give more room, in the future, for these initiatives. Working journeys for young people, work experience, diaconal year, the placing of older people as volunteers, are all possibilities which fit better into increasing partnership.
f. Twinning is seen within the secular Development Co-operation as an effective form of project co-operation, twinning being the combination of two comparable social institutions in the North and South. But this is what we have been doing as churches in mission and giving assistance for years! And probably without knowing the word! Let us develop this concept further. In this way, a few years ago, a number of women from the Reformed Bible study League went to a women's conference in a Presbyterian Church in India. There are more such possibilities looming in the future. Student groups, small businesses, pro-life organisations, theological universities, teacher training institutes, all twin possibilities!

Dear brothers and sisters, De Verre Naasten exists for 25 years. People had been sent out before the existence of DVN. It is clear that if God keeps the way clear, there is still much room for technical co-operation in mission and ecumenical assistance work. Every person in unique. God wanted it that way. Because of this, sometimes tensions within a partnership, crop up, as do misunderstandings and arguments. But then, we can also be troubled together at the injustice in the world, amazed together at God's greatness, and His unbelievable grace, together along the way and in God's Kingdom.
Then we can talk about rolling up our sleeves as worker, folded arms as facilitator, hand in hand as partners. But most important is that we put our hands together and pray for God's presence, so that the Spirit will not be quenched.



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by Sue Wierenga



Youth churches

I can well imagine that not every reader of this paper has ever so much as heard of youth churches. And to be honest, they have grown up so quickly that this ignorance can easily be forgiven. Nevertheless, in the Netherlands in 2003, Youth Churches are more than a fact. At the time of writing there are already more than 50 spread throughout the land, the first having opened its doors in Zwolle back in May 2002. *God Fashion, Enter the Fish, Heartbeat* to name but a few. They are, according to Internet, "monthly meetings of youth groups from all sorts of church fellowships and their friends. They are meetings which have, above all, an evangelisation aim and character".

Criticism

Their emergence, primarily once a month on a Sunday evening, and often at the same time as standard church services, has provoked much critical reaction. When the youth church opened its doors in Amersfoort, the Church Council of Amersfoort East strongly advised its youth in a letter, to stay away. Its three reasons for doing so were fairly representative of much other criticism appearing in the ND and other Church Press: Youth churches were too much like an ordinary church, allowed too much room for satisfying the consumer tendencies of young people and, were only for the youth. Rev. Bas Luiten (Zwolle Centre) reacted similarly to this last point: "*The Son of God makes one body...He does not tear the generations apart...He makes them One...you cannot pull one group out of that body and let them meet together further down the road*". (ND 9th Jan 2003).

The accusation that youth churches were competition for the traditional churches was refuted by the organisation. The name church had been selected because they wanted young people to know that this was about the gospel. "*It was never meant to be a church in the Biblical sense of the word. After all, that is what you are 24 hours a day, 7 days a week*", Rev. Philip Troost, (Youth church initiator and Student Pastor of the Reformed Liberated Churches in Zwolle) (ND 25th Jan 2002). *We could have called it Powernite or something but that was misleading. And we opted for the Sunday because it is a fact - most young people go out on Saturday evenings and it was those people we wanted to reach.*

Need

The emergence of Youth Churches seems to indicate a deeper need amongst the youth of the church, a need felt nationally and identified by Troost, as much more than a desire for entertainment or a certain kind of experience.
Troost : "*Church youth have understood that they need to be by Christ but they want to find a real living bond with Him, which is relevant for the things with which they struggle from day to day. They are searching for real contact with God. The question is, whether the forms being used in 'normal' church services are adequate in order to come into contact with Jesus Christ.*"
(ND 4th Jan 2003)

About the author:
Sue Wierenga-Tucker (1968) graduated from the English department of the University of Wales College, Cardiff (1989). Having spent some years mastering the Dutch language, she is currently involved in various translation projects. She has been working with the Lux Mundi team, primarily as translator, since 2002.

Correct channel?

We saw what would happen, we would have to go through all of the church processes, never ending meetings, and then maybe a committee would be set up. ..we wanted to do something now".
(ND 25th Jan 2003)

Rev. Klaas de Vries(minister, Reformed Churches [Liberated], Alphen a/d Rijn) expressed appreciation of the enthusiasm and intention of the originators of the enterprise but saw things differently. "*In your role as example, don't resist the church, but show the way in loving the church as Christ loves her, like His bride. By all means set right those places where the church blocks the Spirit's flow, but do so where those blockages are - in the church and in yourself. Don't avoid them by digging an alternative channel next to the church*"
(Reformatie, 21st Dec 2002).

In a previous article (De Reformatie,14th December 2002) Rev. de Vries asked how great the need was amongst the youth or whether it was simply a question of church services not being to their taste? Were they suffering from the problem common to our western civilisation- that everything must be attractive, appealing and effortless? Mink de Vries, youth worker, mainstream Protestant church, put it another way- would it not be difficult for young people to go back to bread and water having had bread and jam (ND 15th August 2003). The flashing lights, drama, electric guitars and short addresses of the youth churches being the bread and jam.....

Message?

Could not other conclusions be drawn from the emergence of this new phenomenon than young people simply being in search of a good time?
Some alternatives follow:

- "*We just want to hear a good sermon*" offered one youngster in CV Koers, "(Aug 2002) Dramatic changes were not what she was looking for. Indeed, something which Philip Troost has always maintained, is that young people are not as superficial as that. Ron Becker, Youth for Christ worker, took it further: "*the questions young people have, are not being*

answered in a church service. (ND 18th Aug 2003).

It is interesting to evidence that the diagnosis of a problem moved effortlessly over into the finding of a solution.

In response to the more frequent cry that the youth churches were being fed on a one sided diet of experience and kicks and good feelings, Jan Wietsma said (ND Aug 2003, roughly summarised):

- *you can't only sing Ps 150, because Psalm 22 or 51 is just as real..it is the older people who should be teaching the youngsters that not every Sunday can be exciting. The Psalms show sometimes, intense wonder and at other times, intense abandonment.*

Another suggestion was communication:

- *We went with a group to Godfashion and we talked about it with the church council. It was a good evening....* (ND August 18th 2003)

Nevertheless, there is a problem:

- *As painful as it is, we have to see the shortcomings of the existing churches. There, young people do not feel as though they are being taken seriously.* Rev S van der Lugt, Missionary, Reformed Church, [Liberated] Rotterdam, (ND 28 augustus 2003).

Missionary aim

He went on to compare the youth church process with the separate services given for immigrants in Rotterdam: *"As far as church building is concerned, it is better not to separate the cultures but to take each culture seriously and give room to varying styles. Recognise that there is a world of difference between them and the adult church life style. Missionary aims are the only real ones for separation and young people DO take unbelieving friends along with them to the youth church.* (ND 28th Aug 2003)

Since the summer there certainly seems to be more constructive thought and activity on the ground. Call it inside evangelisation if you like, but with a view to those 'outside'. In Zuidhorn, 20th September, a conference for Christian youth took place, a recognition that young people need adults to help them to find God. *"Every youngster in the church should have a coach" P.de Groot active in youth work there "youth clubs(verenigingen) just don't work anymore..."*

New or renewed activity and investment in the youth can be detected in the churches in Amersfoort. I single Amersfoort and district out, for the simple reason that I happen to live there, but I can imagine that similar developments are taking shape nationally. Suddenly the youth is in the picture; there is an alertness. In Amersfoort East - youth services are being prepared four times a year, not only for, but also together with, the youth. In Amersfoort West, there is a church wide dedication to Youth Alpha. In Soest and Baarn, churches are now working together on a project(Odeon) aimed at reaching young people. Via this channel, 5 young people have already confessed their faith and been baptised.

Could it be that Rev. Troost's 'diversion' has begun to succeed in fulfilling its goal? : *"If, in ten years time, there are no more youth churches, that's fine by me. Just so long as the function which the Youth churches have - bringing young people in contact with Jesus, takes place in another way."* (ND 25 Jan 2003)



The youth church in Amersfoort called "Heartbeat", attracts more than a thousand visitors every month.
Photo: Rufus de Vries

Does the end justify the means? Personally, I see it as quite ironic that the challenge Rev.Troost threw out with the youth churches, is being taken up, in some instances, in the very ways that Rev K. de Vries suggested as more suitable ones, in one of their gritty, early exchanges. (De Reformatie, 21st December 2002). Would these steps ever have been taken, without the emergence of the youth church? However you answer that question, the challenge to traditional churches now, is to continue to get to grips with the problem areas which the youth churches have exposed. This might be tricky. Maybe the youth church organisers can also turn their attention to the arduous task of building the bridge back into the churches, so that those youth who were almost lost, can be returned, safely found, back into the fold. And preferably with their friends.

Map: Nederlands Dagblad
www.jeugdkerken.nl

De Reformatie, numbers 10, 11, 12 2002

CV Koers Aug 2002



Many young people remain enthusiastic visitors of the youth church.

by Kim Batteau



A visit to India

We felt the *sizzling summer heat* of India this past summer. We, BBK delegates Kim Batteau and Arjan Grashuis, were there in August of this year to bring official visits to our sister- and contact-churches in India. As well we were able to have talks with the leadership of Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Dehra Dun (PTS). It was an intensive and very satisfying trip. We thank the LORD for such opportunities to have such *spiritually warm* fellowship around the world with brothers and sisters in Christ!

The Reformed Presbyterian Church of northern India (RPCI)

Rev. Hiralal Solanki, pastor of the Delhi congregation, picked us up at the airport in Delhi. At midnight it was still 35 degrees Celsius! It was good to see a familiar face, Hiralal being a former student of Kim's when he gave guest lectures at PTS back in 1993. Hiralal accompanied us by train the following day up to Dehra Dun, where we met other ministers and elders of the RPCI.

The RPCI churches has churches in Delhi, Dehra Dun, Kanpur, and a few other places in northern India. The RPCI was formed by a fusion of the Bible Presbyterian Church and the Reformed Presbyterian Church. The American Reformed Presbyterian Church had missionaries in India starting in the 19th century. They had their church headquarters in Lahore (presently in Pakistan). The Bible Presbyterian Church was started in the 1930s in America. The two small churches in India fused in 1969, with the name Reformed Presbyterian Church of northern India.

The churches are growing, particularly through the "fellowships" (evangelistic posts). The expectation is that they will eventually be instituted as self-supporting churches. The evangelists who are working with the fellowships are graduates of PTS, and when the fellowships hopefully become churches, they can become their pastors. The work is expanding, for which they give thanks to the LORD, in spite of limited financial resources.

Another positive point is that the services of Covenant R.P. Church, held on the campus of PTS, are increasing, with more services for various ethnic groups such as the Nepalese. Six services are held on Sunday, the morning services in Hindi, plus four other, regional, languages of India and the afternoon service in English. A real sense of the world which is India gathering in one place to worship the LORD!

There are very encouraging plans to found a Fellowship of Presbyterian and Reformed Churches in India, which will have its first meeting this October 2-4, 2003. Next to a training session for elders, discussions will be held about greater cooperation between the various Reformed church bodies in India. We certainly hope that these plans will lead to the strengthening of the Reformed witness in India.

About the author:

John M. (Kim) Batteau (1946) was born in New York City, U.S.A. and grew up in Cambridge, Massachusetts. He came to faith in Jesus Christ as his Savior as a first-year student at Harvard University in 1964.

After receiving his B.A. in English from Harvard in 1968, he went to Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, starting in 1969 and graduating with an M.Div. in 1972.

After working for a few years for a computer company, he went to Europe in 1974 to continue his theological studies. He met his wife, Margreet Sonneveld, in The Netherlands in that year, they got married, and they stayed in The Netherlands.

In 1975 he started studying theology at the Free University of Amsterdam, transferring to the Theologische Universiteit in Kampen (Broederweg) in 1977, where he received his Drs. degree in 1979. He was ordained a minister in the Reformed Churches (Liberated) in that same year.

In 1980 he was sent by the Reformed Churches (Liberated) to South Korea to teach Dogmatics (Systematic Theology) at Presbyterian Theological Seminary, of the Presbyterian Church of Korea (Kosin), in Busan.

They returned to The Netherlands in 1988 and since then he has been the pastor of three local churches: Zaandam (1988-1993); Wageningen (1993-2001); and The Hague-Center/Scheveningen (2001-present). (kimbatteau@wanadoo.nl)

The social situation nationally remains tense. The nationalistic Hindu party, the BJP, heads the federal government. There are incidents whereby Christians are intimidated, persecuted, and even abused physically. In several states you have to get state permission to be baptized. This is a serious development. In Dehra Dun, there is relative freedom to preach publicly, but this is not true in Delhi. There, one must be more careful. Our brothers request prayer for the church, and also would appreciate political expression of support, from The Netherlands, with respect to religious freedom in India.

Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Dehra Dun

A few days later we had an official meeting with the faculty of PTS. Among those present were Dr. Mohan Chacko, principal, and Dr. Matthew Ebenezer, Vice President. We discussed, among other things, the sponsorship program for sister-church students coming from the Reformed Churches (Liberated) in The Netherlands. Prof. Chacko said that the sponsoring project is one of the best initiatives in the cooperation between the churches of India and The Netherlands. We were very happy to hear this positive evaluation, and are thankful that we in The Netherlands can



Rev. Abraham and staff of Alpha Children's Home, Bagalur, India. Sept. 2003.

support students and PTS in this way.

PTS has at the moment 79 students. At the moment there is an M.Div. program, for those who are graduates of 4 year college programs, and a B.Th. program, for those without a college background. Beside the regular faculty, there are other teachers at PTS who are involved part-time. Dr. Chacko said that this is of great help, but permanent faculty members are needed. They are looking forward to the coming of Rev. Piet and Saskia Houtman in September. Piet hopes to give lectures in systematic theology at PTS.

According to Dr. Chacko, help from The Netherlands for theological education is the best way of strengthening the Indian churches.

PTS is a lively and very hospitable place to visit. The new semester has begun, courses are being given, students are active in their studies and in church projects. The school has a clear role to play in India and surrounding countries in theological education and training pastors, evangelists and church workers in the Reformed Faith. Let's not forget PTS in our prayers!

The Free Church of Central India (FCCI)

After our visit to Dehra Dun we headed back to Delhi and then on, by plane and train, to the center of India, to Jabalpur in the state of Madya Pradesh. Rev. David John and his son John Andrew were waiting for us at the train station, and they then took us to the complex of church and apartments where they live and where we were to stay for a few days. We were thankful for the warm welcome, and we received garlands of flowers to wear as necklaces when we got to their home. Then you really feel like a V.I.P.!

The FCCI was founded first by Church of Scotland missionaries in the 19th century. The work was continued by Free Church of Scotland missionaries in the 20th century. The FCCI is now a sister-church of the Free Church of Scotland, with four congregations. Rev. John continues his year-long practice of preaching, via a loudspeaker system, every morning at 5 A.M. We are living witnesses to the fact that it is loud enough to get the attention of everybody in the neighborhood and far beyond! In the course of the years he has heard appreciative reactions to his preaching and he can continue it, in spite of the present tense situation around Christian evangelism in India. This kind of early morning preaching does fit into the cultural situation quite well, seeing as many Hindu temples have such early morning broadcasts to the neighborhood.

The dire poverty of many church members in Jabalpur has led to a vision of doing something concrete about it. The Session (church council) has formulated plans whereby a Vocational Training Center is to be set up for training, so that poor church members may learn a skill. The idea of this project is partly the result of Rev. John's attendance at the Asian regional mission meeting of ICRC at Pataya, Thailand, last February, at which the issue of economic development for the poor was discussed. At Pataya the phrase was used: "Don't give the poor fish to eat, but give them fishing hooks and help them learn to fish." It is hoped that a Training Center in Jabalpur will help poor church members to "fish". In our opinion, this is a project which deserves full support.

The FCCI will also be participating in the founding of the Fellowship of Presbyterian and Reformed Churches in India, which will have its first meeting this October. It was great to hear of these plans.

We had the opportunity to visit other local churches and Christian schools, in Lakhnadon and Chhapara. We also visited the Christian hospital at Lakhnadon. While there are real concerns about church life and how the schools are going, it was very encouraging to see how the LORD is blessing his people in the FCCI.

The South Indian Reformed Churches (SIRC)

We then headed on to the south of India, again by train and plane to Bangalore, and then by car to the town of Bagalur, an hour and a half's drive outside of Bangalore in the state of Tamil Nadu. We were happy to see Rev. Abraham and his charming wife, Lydia, when we arrived at the airport in Bangalore. We enjoyed the hospitality of their home in Bagalur, being welcomed, once again, by garlands of flowers. Travelers to friends in India inevitably become "flower children"!

Arjan headed back to The Netherlands after a few days, and I (Kim) stayed to give a seminar, an "Introduction to the Reformed Faith."

The first SIRC church to be established was that in Bagalur, founded by Rev. S. Abraham about 10 years ago. There are now three churches in the SIRC, the "mother church" in Bagalur, and "daughter churches" in Salem (to the south of Bagalur in Tamil Nadu) and Bangalore.

The SIRC also want to participate in the Fellowship of Presbyterian and Reformed Churches in India, which will have its first meeting this October. Rev. Abraham hopes to be present at the meeting. Once again we were encouraged to hear of these developments in the area of Reformed ecumenism. The Lord Jesus prayed for church unity in John 17 and we are called to seek the unity He prayed for.

Six months ago a "anti-conversion" law was enacted for the state Tamil Nadu, where Bagalur is located. This means

that one needs a special permit from the government to be baptized. One possible solution to the problem is to have baptism take place in nearby states (Karnataka, where Bangalore is located, or Andra Pradesh, to the north), where as yet there are no "anti-conversion" laws.

The danger of persecution and violence remains. Recently a sound-system was stolen from the compound at Bagalur by Hindu fanatics, but Rev. Abraham did not report this to the police, fearing reprisals. This indicates the very hostile atmosphere. Also recently, in a more serious case, an American Christian visitor to Bagalur, there to help spread Bibles, was seriously injured on the head by a metal pipe wielding Hindu fanatic (from the local RSS group, the organization for extreme Hindus).

The church at Bagalur, though cautious, wants to develop new strategies for evangelism. More personal, "friendship" evangelism will be needed. Br. Cruz goes regularly to villages in the area and has some good contacts.

I (Kim) had the opportunity of visiting the Salem church, which has two preaching points. The first is in the church building where during the week children of the area are given "day care" after school. About 70 children (all from a Hindu background) are enrolled. They come to the service on Sunday morning. The second service is in the house of br. S. Inbanathan, in the evening. After the service many who were attended came forward to be prayed for, concerning their special needs. I was very impressed by how the LORD is working here. The needs are very great, for the people who are coming are very poor. Perhaps a Vocational Training school, similar to the one being considered in Jabalpur, could be of value in Salem.

Seminar on Reformed Faith

One big area of concern for the SIRC is that church members grow in their understanding of the Reformed Faith. The seminar to be given by me was a first step in trying to help in this area. This seminar was held for three days nearby Salem on Yercaud mountain, a "hill station" where it is cooler (thankfully!).

About 16 were in attendance. They included elders from SIRC churches, but also others from other church groups. I spoke in English, which was translated into Tamil by Rev. Abraham. This went very smoothly. Although I was still a bit weak at the beginning, having had a severe stomach problem with fever, the LORD gave strength and by the end I was feeling much better.

In the seminar we focused on central beliefs of the Reformed Faith: belief in the Lord Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior; the 3 sola's of the Reformation (sola Scriptura, sola gratia, sola fide); the Canons of Dort and TULIP (total depravity; unconditional election; limited atonement; irresistible grace; perseverance of the saints). What kind of churches are Reformed churches? "We are Christ-centered, Bible-believing, confessional, covenantal churches." An exposition was given of L. Berkhof's introduction (chapter 1) to his A Summary of Christian Doctrine.

I experienced the seminar as going very well. Everybody was interested, there were a lot of good questions, and basic



Students from Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Dehra Dun, India. Aug. 2003. Visit from Kim Batteau and Arjan Grashuis.

Reformed doctrine was communicated so that everybody was excited about being Reformed. Truly a blessing of the LORD. One evening was spent on answering questions about infant baptism. Kim explained about the covenant and the covenant basis for baptism, and everyone found this very helpful.

We are thankful to the LORD for a fruitful and blessed visit to the SIRC. We were impressed by the development of church life. Weaknesses are certainly present, but people are coming to faith in Christ, and there is a clear desire to grow in faith and in the Reformed Faith.

Looking back

As Arjan and I look back on our trip we see so much to be thankful for in the church life of our Indian brothers and sisters. We look forward to continued communication and contact between the churches, growing together in faith. We will be in prayer for so many people and situations.
Hopefully, we'll be seeing Indian faces regularly here in The Netherlands. While our climate is cooler, we hope that we can extend just as much warm hospitality in Christ as we received during our Indian trip!
Here our some e-mail addresses if any readers would like to reach Indian brethren:

Rev. Solanki:	solankifamily2001@yahoo.com
Dr. Chacko or PTS:	ptsem@vsnl.com or ptsem@nde.usnl.net.in
Dr. Ebenezer or PTS:	ptsem@nde.vsnl.net.in or ebenezer@nde.vsnl.net.in
Rev. John:	john_andrewus@yahoo.com
Rev. Abraham:	alphacm@bgl.vsnl.net.in

by Jan-Matthijs van Leeuwen

Witness of christians in Africa

"The prime cause of poverty in Africa is not the lack of means, management and infrastructure. No, the most important factor is the traditional world view the Africans hold, which does not challenge them to change and responsible stewardship. The best thing you can do to fight poverty is therefore, to change the way the people think!" This bold statement came from Dr. Flips Buys of South Africa during the recent regional International Conference of Reformed Churches, but many were not in agreement. Serious criticism came from those present, during the discussion. How should the Western trade embargoes be viewed? Have centuries of exploitation in slave trade, colonialism and apartheid not played a large part in the current misery? Can you put something as enormous as poverty in Africa down to one cause? Even though Dr Buys did his best, his theory, in this form, was not accepted by the meeting.

The 'meeting' consisted of representatives from diverse reformed churches from diverse African countries - Togo, Benin, Congo, Zambia, and South Africa. The brothers from Eritrea and Kenya, who were also expected, unfortunately had to pull out at the last minute. Those invited from other countries had already said that they could not come. In this too, you feel that you are in the poorest continent in the world.

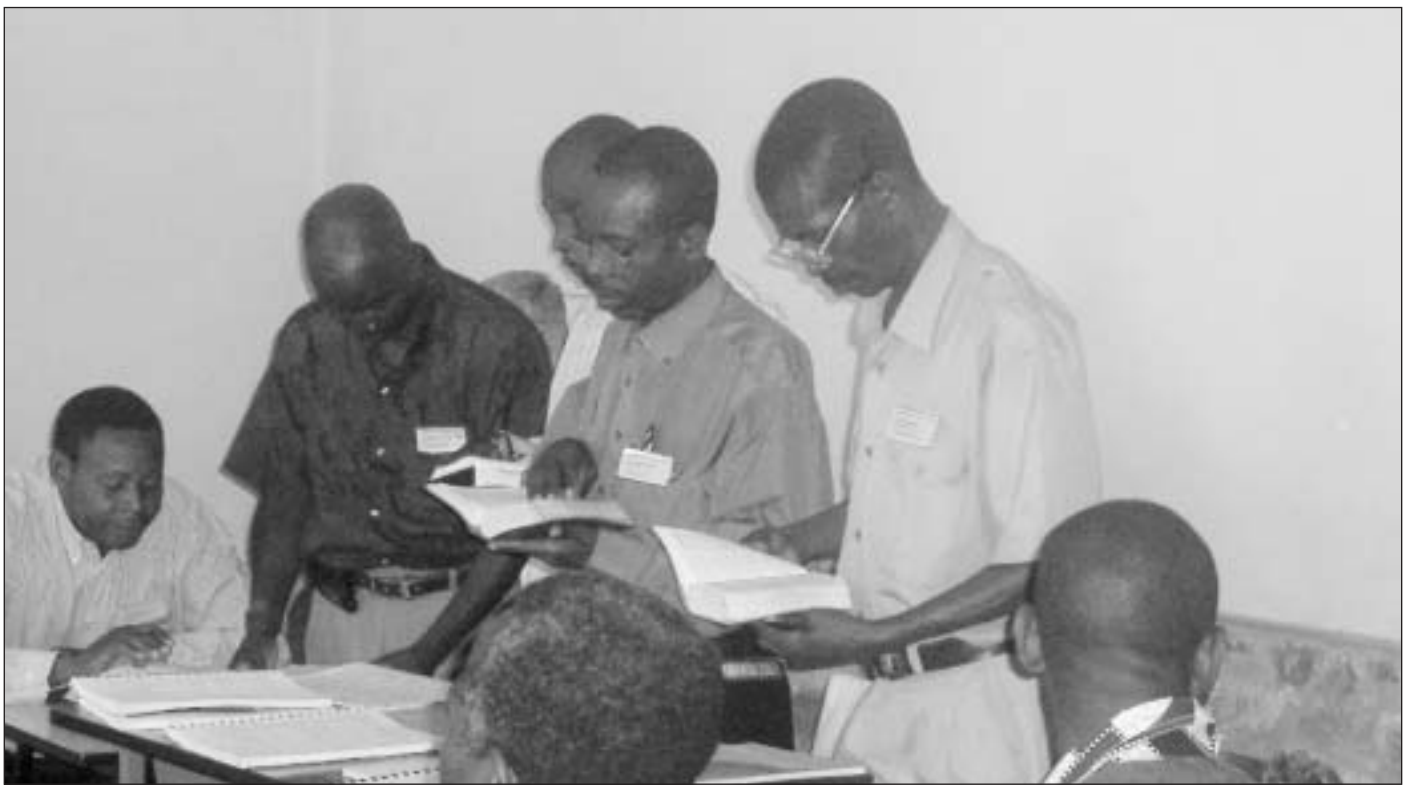
About the author:

Jan Matthijs van Leeuwen (1966) was sent out as teacher of missionaries by the Reformed Church (Liberated) of South Spakenburg (the Netherlands). As teacher he is linked to the Reformed Theological School of the reformed churches in DR Congo (ERCC Eglise Réformée Confessante au Congo). Rev van Leeuwen studied at the Theological University in Kampen and was a minister in Eemdijk (the Netherlands)

Witness

We talked about how you witness as a Christian in your own surroundings. Missiologist Kees Haak was stimulating: Look at Peter and John when they have to appear before the Sanhedrin having healed a man in Jesus' name. The apostles present Jesus to the Sanhedrin - "You must choose". Within the shortest possible time, the roles are reversed. The prosecutors become the defendants and the defendants, the prosecutors. And then, as though to make sure we did not miss the point, Dr. Haak turned into a true choreographer. "Here, you are Annas, you Caiaphas and you-Alexander. We need Peter and John of course, you can do that. Armed guards to lead them, that's a role for you."

Before they could protest, about 10 conference members were standing at the front of the hall playing at either Sanhedrin or apostle. Neither they, nor us, the spectators,



The 'Sanhedrin' in action.

have probably ever taken part in such a probing Bible study! "And then Peter, you say, 'Jesus , whom you have crucified'. Go on, point with your hand!'"

Adapting?

Does witnessing to Jesus in your own area also mean that that you have to adapt your message? Some speakers clearly thought so: the gospel has to reach people, has to speak to them, has to meet their questions and needs. For this reason it is so important, for example, to know the traditional African way of thinking.

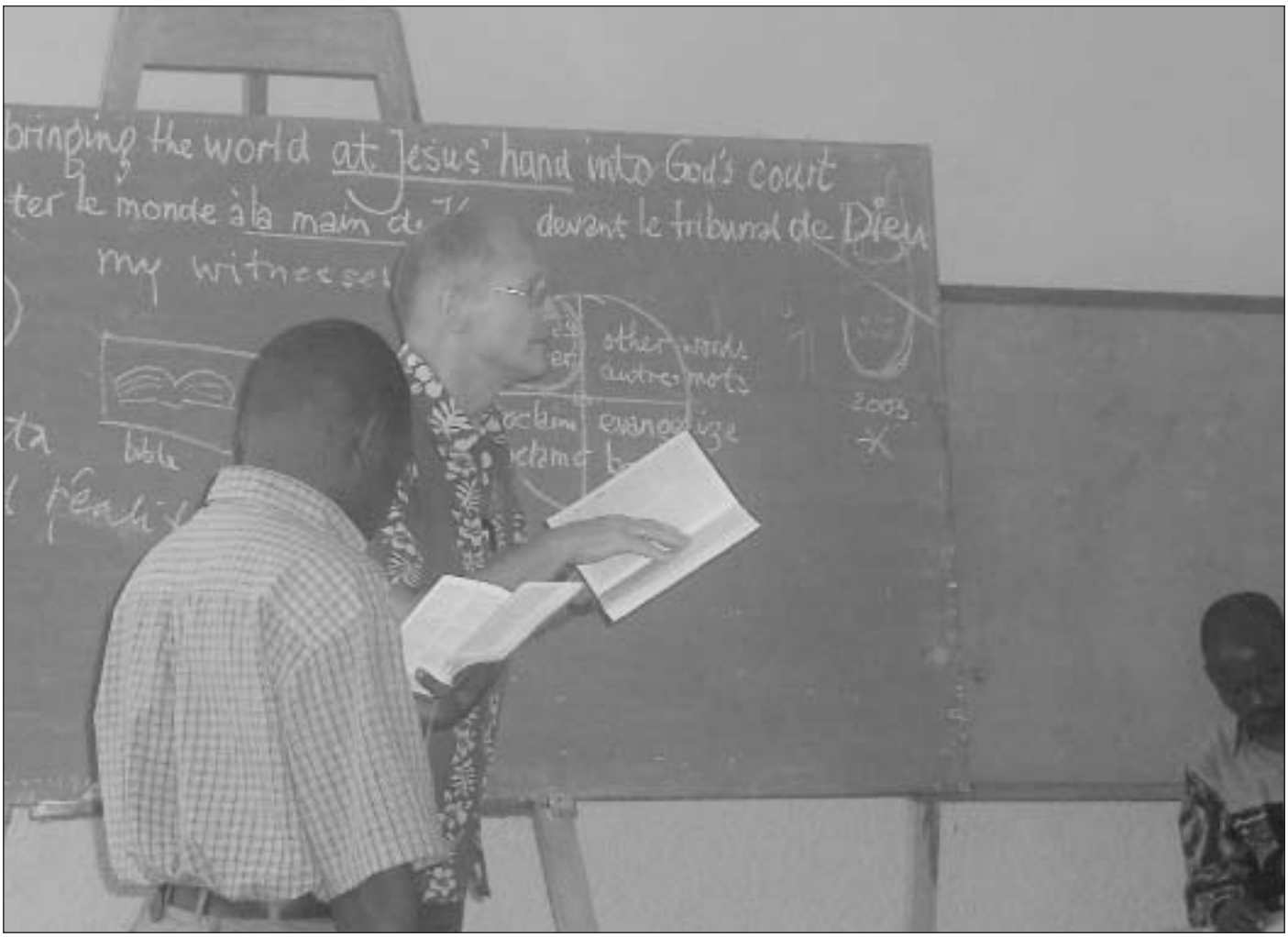
Dr Paul Mpindi was very outspoken on this point. Christianity has put down absolutely no roots in Africa. It is a superficial Christianity. The figures are impressive. According to some figures, 90% of the population of a land such as Congo and Ruanda is Christian but see what comes of that Christianity: corruption, racial hatred, violence, genocide. "If all these 95 per cent Christians lived like Christians, would we have such a massive aids problem today? The Christianity of the most Africans is but a veneer", according to Mpindi. And this is because missionaries have brought a "western" gospel with them, a gospel that went over their heads but did not touch their world.

Especially the African ministers in the company were touched. Can you categorise everything away as "Christians in name" or "a layer of varnish"? Has the Holy Spirit really not been working in Africa? They saw genuine faith in their churches, albeit with ups and downs, but still. Once again the conclusion was: don't be so certain.

Fellowship

Much was discussed, in two languages simultaneously, English and France. The multilingualism emphasised what we all experienced deeply. In spite of all the differences in race, culture, riches, education and background, we are all one in Christ. He calls us to witness, He also gives us to each other to be a hand and a foot for each other.

The official conclusions of the conference can be found on the DVN website :
www.deverrenaasten.nl



Kees Haak organises some role play.

In Memorian

Henk van Dijken

Henk stood out because of his modesty.
And yet he had a tremendous drive for the work of the Lord; for the church of the Lord.
In 1989, Henk finished his study of Middle Age English. He did not look for work immediately which was directly linked to this study. He first wanted to give a year of his time as a sort of diaconal year to churches overseas. His heart had been warmed by the fellowship in the Philippines.

One Sunday morning, Rev. Joy Vigno came to the church and spoke to the deacon, Gerrit van Dijken. Gerrit introduced him to his son Henk, who was also sitting in the church. After the service, conversations took place and one thing came from the other. The Lord led the one to the other.

Henk went to work with *De Verre Naasten* for one year in the Philippines and stayed on the island of Negros in Bacolod City. There he began to be amazed at the work of the Lord, for the enthusiasm of the Christians in the church of the Lord there.
During that time, his thoughts became more and more determined by his future task.
While in the Philippines, Henk had the idea of going to Kampen to study theology. The Lord blessed his plans and he was able to finish his study and make himself available for a call. Now we know that the Lord made short use of Henk's service here on earth. For us this is difficult to understand. "But", said Gea, a few days before Henk died, "how short was John the Baptists' work here on earth." "And the Lord Jezus himself?" "And Stephen?" we added.
Henk served the Lord of the church with all his heart.

Ben Bolt. 4th Dec. 2003



Henk van Dijken and Rev. Joy Vigno during a first meeting by the family Van Dijken in Utrecht



The Idea of Office
by K. Sietsma

Henry Vander Kam in Mid-America Journal of Theology*: The importance of this book is far greater than its small size . . . The author also deals with the office of all believers. He does so in the sense in which the Bible instructs us in this matter and as it was emphasized again by the reformers.*

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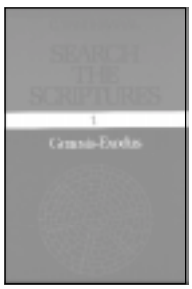


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Jelle Tuininga in Christian Renewal*: The sermons are easy to read and to understand. . . the book is recommended, and would make a welcome gift.*

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by C. Van der Waal

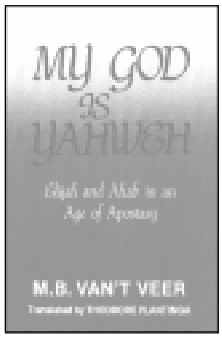


Why do we accept the Bible and reject the Koran, the Edda, and the holy books of India? The author has no other answer than: "The Bible itself claims to be the sole revelation of God. And faith accepts this claim." In this series the author invites us to compare Scripture with Scripture, to look for themes that appear in book after book, to understand the framework of the divine plan of salvation. The author wrote this series to be used in high schools as a guideline to how we should search the Scriptures.

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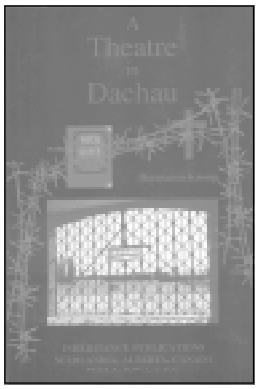
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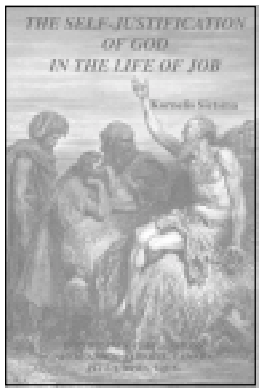


A Theatre in Dachau
by Hermanus Knoop

C. Bouwman in Una Sancta*: The book stood for years on the shelf of my parental home, somewhat formidable with its Dutch language and obscure title. It's now appeared in English, with an equally mysterious (and very accurate!) title:* A Theatre in Dachau. *I read it, and am sorry I did not read it in my youth. What a treasure of encouragement is tucked away in this gem of a book!*

Time: 1940-1944 Age: 14-99
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by Kornelis Sietsma



Christine Farenhorst in Christian Renewal*: This small volume comprises seven sermons, all written and preached by Rev. K. Sietsma almost sixty-five years ago. All seven take their texts from Job with the exception of one which deals with Lord's Day 10 of the Heidelberg Catechism.*

While reading these sermons both my husband and myself became convinced of the fact that Rev. Sietsma was a compassionate and caring shepherd. His concern for and knowledge of the sheep in his care is obvious. The message of the all-powerful providential hand of God, so necessary for our own time, is conveyed.

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Colour brings out in full relief
– by means of slanting beams –
the map of all the world.
Increasingly far-reaching is the Light!
Over the quarters It will claim
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must yield to it ultimately.

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until in the fulness of time
every one of the four winds of heaven
shall be filled with the glory of the Lamb.

Lux Mundi: Light shining upon this world.

This cover was made according to the design of J.P. Gootjes from Zwolle.