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## The ambiguity of Johan Heyns: Sitting at Bavinck's left or right hand?

### ABSTRACT

Following some biographic introductory comments, the argument of this contribution proceeds in two steps. First, the distinction between Herman Bavinck's left and right hand is clarified, amongst others with reference to the distinction between *fides qua* and *fides quae*, and illustrated with examples from the subsequent reformed tradition. Second, an analysis of Heyns' own related theological choices is offered on this basis.

### INTRODUCTION

This contribution emerges from personal considerations that call for clarification. In 2008 I worked at the Centre of Theological Inquiry in Princeton on a project on Abraham Kuyper's understanding of the relationship between creation and salvation. In the process I grappled with the reception of Kuyper in South Africa and the stark contrast between the followers of Kuyper and the followers of Karl Barth in reformed circles amidst the struggle against apartheid and apartheid theology at least up to 1990. Despite the disastrous reception of Kuyper in South Africa, my intuition was that his understanding of the relationship between creation and salvation is more attractive for ecological theology than that of Barth (see Conradie 2011).

In the process of reading Kuyper's rather journalistic contributions to theology I rediscovered Herman Bavinck's far more sophisticated writings. I was deeply impressed. However, the Bavinck that I discovered for myself, the one of *The Philosophy of Revelation* (1909), the one who wrote so eloquently about nature and grace (see Veenhof 2006) was not quite the Bavinck that I knew from my formative training at Stellenbosch. I then remembered a comment that I once heard from Willie Jonker, namely that he regarded his own approach to reformed theology as very much in line with the theology of Kuyper and Bavinck. I also knew that Jonker was of course deeply influenced by Barth. However, on the relationship between creation and salvation the positions of Bavinck and Barth are hardly compatible. This intrigued me. Since Jonker was a student of GC Berkouwer who surely influenced his reading of both Bavinck and Barth, I realised I had to go back to Berkouwer's assessment of Barth and discovered that he remained very critical of Barth on this point, also in his *The Triumph of Grace in the Theology of Karl Barth* (see Berkouwer 1956, also Conradie 2011:96-98).

In subsequent work on theological reflections on creation and salvation in the South African context, with specific reference to the town of Stellenbosch, I also read the appropriate sections of Johan Heyns' *Dogmatiek* (1978:101-103).<sup>2</sup> It was clear to me that this was nothing but a defence of Bavinck's approach explicitly distancing himself from Barth on this point. I therefore recognised that in my appreciation of Bavinck I was also aligning myself more closely

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<sup>2</sup> For a discussion, see Conradie, & Pauw 2011.

with Heyns than what I may have thought. This made me uneasy for I also read Ntoane's (1983) critical assessment of Heyns' form of Calvinism.<sup>3</sup> I knew that at least the early Heyns was deeply influenced by the philosophy of Dooyeweerd – a scholar often quoted in circles that defended apartheid theology. Moreover, Heyns studied under HG Stoker whose notion of creation ordinances was widely used in legitimising apartheid. These considerations obliged me to investigate Heyns' approach in more detail. What are the similarities and differences in the ways Heyns and Jonker read Bavinck? I need to admit here that I was never attracted to Heyns' theology. I found his style of writing arid and uninteresting since he seemed (at least to me as a student) to have more answers than questions. For that reason it came as a bit of a shock to me to discover more similarities in terms of thematic interests and positions adopted than I expected.<sup>4</sup> I also need to acknowledge that I never met Heyns in person and never attended conferences or lectures that he addressed, except for a session (on the document *Church and Society*) of the 1986 General Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church that I attended and which Heyns chaired. In what follows below I may therefore have missed aspects of his life and work that others would immediately recognise.

In this contribution I wish to offer a distinction that may help to assess Heyns' position, namely between sitting at Bavinck's left hand and sitting at his right hand. In the next section I will clarify this distinction in terms of an emphasis on either the content or the experience of Christian faith. I will then raise the question how Heyns' position in this regard may be interpreted.

## BAVINCK'S RIGHT AND LEFT HANDS

The distinction between Bavinck's left and right hand is best associated with the famous distinction between *fides quae creditur* and *fides qua creditur*. Of course, any reformed theologian would insist that *what* one believes is inseparable from *that* one believes it. Nevertheless, the one is all too often emphasised more than the other. My suggestion is that an (Christological?) emphasis on *fides quae* would place one towards Bavinck's right hand while a (Pneumatological?) emphasis on *fides qua* would place one towards Bavinck's left hand. This distinction is clearly tenuous and calls for further clarification, also because it is influenced by a host of other theological, social and political considerations. It is tempting to make connections with the left and right in terms of political economy or with the kingdom of God's left hand and of his right hand, but I will not seek to develop such a correlation here. I will merely hint as possible leads for further reflection.

What is at stake is the relationship between the reformed orthodoxy of the 17th to the 19th centuries and the reinterpretation of the reformed tradition in the neo-Calvinism of Kuyper, Bavinck and their followers. In the reformed orthodoxy that Bavinck inherited the emphasis was clearly on the cognitive content of the Christian faith. The fresh insights of Calvin's reformation had to be defended against the counter-reformation, the Lutheran reformation and the radical reformation. There was an obvious need to clarify the cognitive content of these insights. This was done in the form of propositional truth claims through a return to

<sup>3</sup> Ntoane argues that there are significant differences between Calvin and the theological approaches of FJM Potgieter and JA Heyns, especially in terms of the way in which the created order is introduced. In this way he embraces Calvin's theology as an instrument for the struggle for black liberation, but distances himself from the "Calvinism" which he finds in Potgieter, Heyns and others.

<sup>4</sup> One example is Heyns' (1966, 1969, 1972) early interest in the issue of secularisation. I was not really influenced by these books but certainly grappled with the same issues in my student years. Another example is the interest in intellectual problems around the immortality of the soul (Heyns 1959).

a form of scholasticism by employing Aristotelian categories.<sup>5</sup> This one-sided emphasis on cognitive content almost necessarily prompted the responses of romanticism, pietism and the so-called ethical direction in Dutch theology.

Bavinck's way of steering between these influences was shaped by three significant insights.<sup>6</sup> Firstly, the impact of the historical awareness of the 19th century on Bavinck and Kuyper is undeniable. While they had reservations about social revolution and evolutionism as a worldview, both recognised the challenge posed by historicity: the Christian faith cannot merely be formulated in abiding propositional truth claims. A recognition of historical change and thus of contextual considerations is both necessary and legitimate, if the God of Christianity is indeed a God of history.<sup>7</sup> Bavinck and to some extent Kuyper did not deny biological evolution either.<sup>8</sup> Secondly, this prompted, at least in embryo form, a hermeneutical awareness. How should the Christian faith be reinterpreted in changing circumstances? How should a literal interpretation of the Bible be assessed? This prompted the famous suggestion of an "organic" rather than a "mechanic" notion of the inspiration of Scripture (Bavinck 2003: 387-448). Thirdly, one may say that the central insight of Kuyper and Bavinck was to clarify the kind of knowledge that "saving faith" entails.<sup>9</sup> Bavinck (2003:613) observes that orthodoxy ended up in rationalism on the one hand and pietism on the other: "Doctrine and life increasingly distanced themselves from each other. Head and heart vied for priority." By returning to Calvin he was able to recognise that such knowledge is best understood as analogous to knowledge of a person, namely God in Jesus Christ, and not merely as propositional statements and intellectual assent to such statements.<sup>10</sup> Of course knowledge of a person has some cognitive content otherwise it would be empty. It entails both knowledge (*cognitio*) and trust (*fiducia*) as the work of the Spirit in us. For Bavinck, there is no necessary tension between faith, knowledge, science and rationality (or between nature and grace). Faith entails knowledge and comprehension, but yields in the end wonder, admiration and adoration (Bavinck 2003:619, 621).<sup>11</sup> Such personal knowledge is also dynamic. It has to be

5 Admittedly, Bavinck was still deeply influenced by the neo-Thomistic notions ideas, substance and attributes. For a discussion, see Bremmer (1996:313-343).

6 The most detailed discussion in this regard may be found in the doctoral dissertations by Bremmer (1968), Veenhof (1968) and Van Keulen (2003).

7 Bremmer (1968:316) suggests that Bavinck was one of the first reformed theologians that recognised the significance of the history of revelation in the light of the historical consciousness that emerged in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Bavinck interpreted God's special revelation soteriologically by focusing on how God engaged with humanity in order to renew the entire cosmos.

8 In a long essay on evolution Kuyper (in Bratt 1998:403-440) focuses on the philosophical assumptions of evolution as an approach to science and as a worldview ("evolutionism" one may suggest). His argument seems to be that evolutionary theories have failed to see the proper coherence, the systematic unity of things and have offered a rival view of the origin, coherence and destiny of the world. However, he did not reject the scientific data collected by evolutionary scientists out of hand and was not necessarily opposed to the idea that one species may have evolved from another. Unlike some of his neo-Calvinist followers, Kuyper's understanding of God's work of creation remained dynamic, prone to historical progression and organic growth through "development" along the line of God's ordinances.

9 Bavinck (2003:497-622) discusses this with considerable erudition in his *Reformed Dogmatics* in critical altercation with Scholasticism and liberal theology after Schleiermacher.

10 Bavinck (2003:573) says: "This much is certain: faith in Reformation theology was not a matter of knowing a number of doctrinal truths but consisted in the soul's union with the person of Christ according to the Scriptures and with Scripture as the word of Christ." See also the discussion in Rossouw (1963:157-158).

11 For a discussion of this doxological element in the knowledge that faith involves, see also Rossouw (1973).

refreshed on a daily basis, in the case of knowledge of God through reading the Bible and through prayer. It has to be every morning new.<sup>12</sup>

These three insights signalled a move away from reformed orthodoxy, albeit that this shift remained tentative and not always clear, for example as far as a hermeneutical awareness is concerned. Bavinck never really broke with a somewhat literal reading of the Bible, one may say especially in his protology and eschatology. Here one continues to wonder how the last decade of his life should be interpreted.<sup>13</sup> Why did he shift his attention towards ethics and the social sciences? He was evidently uneasy about the plausibility of his own approach, but what was he concerned about? My guess is that this had everything to do with his biblical hermeneutics.<sup>14</sup> An interesting anecdote is that his widow apparently joined the breakaway church of Geelkerken in 1924, following the controversy over whether the snake really spoke in the Garden of Eden. Either way, Bavinck's unease and timidity remains the subject of much conjecture. In a telling booklet based on archival material Kees van der Kooi and others express the wish that Bavinck would for once convey his true colours.<sup>15</sup>

My observation is that this tentative shift away from reformed orthodoxy, signalled by the term "neo-Calvinism", remained open for interpretation after Bavinck's death. In the 1920s and 1930s this allowed for the predominance of those sitting on Bavinck's right hand. This is signalled by the so-called apologetic approach to theology of Valentijn Hepp, Bavinck's successor in the systematic theology chair at the Free University in Amsterdam. Hepp (1921) wrote a significant early biography on Bavinck. It should also be noted that Hepp influenced F. J. M. Potgieter who studied under him and used his material in teaching theology to students at Stellenbosch University.<sup>16</sup> More significant is the school of philosophy associated with Herman Dooyeweerd and D. Th. Vollenhoven. Here one finds an attempt to operationalise the core insights of Kuiper and Bavinck on the transformative influence of Christianity in society.

<sup>12</sup> Admittedly, this insight came to fuller fruition only later, namely in Berkouwer's theology (see below).

In fact, Berkouwer resisted the notion that Kuiper and Bavinck, and before them Calvin had captured the meaning of Scripture. He draws on Bavinck to insist that the Christian confession is not to be reduced to a deadly orthodoxy. Berkouwer argues that dogmatics cannot be developed towards a system of truths in any objectifying or rationalist way, precisely since it is born from knowledge of God *coram deo*. Jonker suggests that Berkouwer's entire theology may be regarded as an attempt move away from such scholastic elements in the reformed tradition in which he stood. He also moved away from Bavinck's recognition of the possibility of natural theology. See especially Jonker (1973:91, 93, 101, 103).

<sup>13</sup> After completing a second edition of his Reformed Dogmatics (only adding some new literature to the first edition) in 1911, Bavinck did very little further work in dogmatics. He also sold a collection of his books in dogmatics, especially from the period of the reformed orthodoxy. He added in a comment to Hepp "I am not working on that any longer". See Bremmer (1966:249).

<sup>14</sup> According to Bremmer (1966: 263-266), Bavinck discussed matters relating the inspiration and authority of Scripture with students and participated in discussion on that at the synod of Leeuwarden in 1920.

<sup>15</sup> The shift in Bavinck's theology in the last decade or so of his life forms the subject of much interest. As Berkhof (1989:114, 133) observes, Bavinck probably recognised that modernity required a much more vigorous renewal of theology, even compared, perhaps, to what his own approach allowed. In particular, the issues arising from the historical-critical reading of Scripture required a different approach. Was he sensing that his own direction is heading towards a dead end (as Berkhof wonders)? Was he struggling to shake off the burden of reformed Scholasticism and its emphasis on faith as intellectual assent? The test case may well be Bavinck's views on the authority of Scripture, since some of his former students began to question a quasi-literal reading of Scripture. An interesting account of this is given in a booklet entitled "If only Bavinck would reveal his true colours" (Harinck, Van der Kooi & Vree 1994). For a detailed discussion, see Van Keulen (2003:68-225).

<sup>16</sup> This information is based on oral communication from Prof Vincent Brummer and Dr Murray Coetzee, students at Stellenbosch in the 1950s and 1970s respectively.

The Christian faith does not allow separation from society; Christ's reign had to be established in every square inch of society. Dooyeweerd's writings tend to become more a-historical than that of his predecessors. The attempt is to formulate, rather precisely, a number of abiding principles for the structuring of society. Dooyeweerd (1935–1936) described these principles in terms of his "wysbegeerte van de wetsidee" (ideas of law), while H. G. Stoker developed this into a philosophy of the "skeppingsidee" (creational ideas). Stoker's concepts provided the intellectual tools employed in apartheid theology to introduce race as one of the so-called "orders of creation" that God intended from the beginning. The diversity of races therefore had to be maintained, if necessary through law and order.<sup>17</sup>

One may argue that G. C. Berkouwer positioned himself more to the left of Bavinck than to the right on this point. In his books on faith and justification (1954), and faith and sanctification (1952), especially, he introduced the notion of correlation to indicate the tension between what Christ has accomplished and the work of the Holy Spirit in and through us. He thus recognised the need for an appropriation of salvation through a life of faith. This implies a thoroughly hermeneutical notion of doing theology. He interpreted that in existentialist categories<sup>18</sup> but resisted the more radical emphasis of Bultmann and others on faith as human self-actualisation. For Berkouwer, the focus remained on what is being appropriated (*fides quae*), namely salvation in Christ. With his notion (not method) of correlation he resisted both the objectifying tendency that he found in protestant scholasticism<sup>19</sup> and the subjectifying tendency in liberal theology since Schleiermacher (according to Jonker 1973:105). One may therefore say that Bavinck's incipient historical and hermeneutical awareness comes to fuller fruition in Berkouwer's theology, but then a form of hermeneutics following the axiom of *Sacra Scriptura sui ipsius interpres* (Jonker 1973:106). It may be noted in passing that Berkouwer was apparently an early critic of apartheid policies in South Africa.

Berkouwer's position may be clarified in terms of his many conversations with the theology of Karl Barth. In the context of the heated discussions between neo-Calvinists and Barthians in the Netherlands, Berkouwer's early review of Barth's theology in *Geloof en Openbaring in de Nieuwere Duitse Theologie* (1932) is quite interesting. Here he argues that Barth's radical emphasis on the subjectivity of God and his rejection of any form of continuity between God and humanity leads to the affirmation that God can only be known by Godself. Berkouwer (1932:212) wonders whether Barth can account for the impact of salvation on God's own creation. Does any focus on that which is creaturely necessarily jeopardise the sovereignty of God? There is a need, he says, for a correlation between revelation and faith in which faith is not seen as something that leaves the created reality untouched. Berkouwer criticises Barth's actualistic understanding of faith on the basis of his conviction that faith is to be understood within the tension between creation and re-creation. For Berkouwer creation may be distinguished from God, has an integrity of its own, and yet remains dependent on God.

<sup>17</sup> For a discussion of Stoker's role in the development of apartheid theology, see Coetzee (2011:179-195).

<sup>18</sup> See the discussion by Jonker (1973:107-109). Berkouwer was criticised (e.g. by Berkhof) for reducing the cosmic and societal scope of the gospel to the salvation of the individual and describing that in pietist and existentialist terminology. Jonker defends Berkouwer on this point, notes that the crucial role of faith also as far as the cosmic scope of God's work is concerned, but acknowledges that Berkouwer at times left room for a misinterpretation of his position. He questions the clarity of Berkouwer's notion of reason, verification and empirical data.

<sup>19</sup> In the first paragraph of a contribution to a Festschrift for Berkouwer, Jonker (1973:86) notes as features of Berkouwer's theology his existential, non-speculative and biblically orientated dogmatics. He adds that this approach enabled Berkouwer to resist the threats of scholasticism in the ecclesial context where he was situated, in my terminology the neo-Calvinists sitting on Bavinck's right hand.

God's revelation touches creation in the form of faith. The underlying problem, Berkouwer argues, is Barth's emphasis on act instead of being. He asks whether one can still speak of the real existence of creation (*creatura*) or whether this would necessarily jeopardise an actualistic understanding of God's work (Berkouwer 1932:212, also Brinkman 1983:35-42). Brinkman (1983:66) captures Berkouwer's early critique of Barth in this way: "According to Berkouwer, for Barth there could be no possibility that God's grace would transform the relationships that were created. Grace does not actually restore life but stands outside of it. Faith remains alien to life" (my translation). Here Berkouwer is clearly in continuity with Kuyper and Bavinck, his neo-Calvinist teachers, yet his engagement with Barth's actualistic approach position himself on Bavinck's left rather than his right. Barth himself was at times appreciate of Bavinck, for example on God's incomprehensibility (see Barth 1957:186), but was no follower and therefore cannot be positioned on Bavinck left but certainly also not on his right.

One may observe that Van Ruler's position is in this respect very close to that of Berkouwer. There can be little doubt that his creation-centred theology follows and remains closely aligned to that of Bavinck and entailed an eschatological radicalisation of Bavinck notion of re-creation.<sup>20</sup> He developed a more independent pneumatology and could on this basis recognise the need for an appropriation of salvation in church and society. Where Berkouwer used the notion of "correlation", Van Ruler (see 2011:445-446, Van Keulen 2010) proposed the concept of a "theonomous reciprocity". His emphasis on history is certainly more strongly developed than that of Bavinck. Curiously, Van Ruler showed considerably appreciation for reformed orthodoxy and took comments on the underlying scholasticism of his thought as a compliment.<sup>21</sup> Van Ruler wrote a lot about politics, also on the concept of justice (see 1978:159-173), but his own political views (proposing a form of meritocracy) should be regarded as being on the right rather than the left of the spectrum.

In the Dutch context I would say that Kuitert may be sitting far to the left of Bavinck, while still standing in the same tradition. This may be difficult to demonstrate given diachronic developments in Kuitert's oeuvre. In his early work Kuitert (1966, 1974, 1977) wrote extensively on the reality of faith (with an emphasis on *fides qua*) but not in pietistic or existentialist terms. In his later work he is quite far removed from reformed orthodoxy in the sense that there is little emphasis on a more or less orthodox notion of *fides quae*.<sup>22</sup>

In the South African context one may argue that a new generation of theologians who studied at the Free University in the 1950s and 1960s intuitively recognised that apartheid theology involved a return to "the old paths" of reformed orthodoxy, thus sitting on Bavinck's right hand.<sup>23</sup> Apartheid theology could therefore only be resisted through a new methodological orientation. Here I would mention the contributions of Jaap Durand who recognised the

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20 Dirk van Keulen (the editor of Van Ruler's *Verzameld Werk*) puts this strongly: "In my view, the main line of Van Ruler's theology can be read as a radicalised reception of Bavinck's central thought that 'grace does not abolish nature, but affirms and restores it'." See Van Keulen (2011:206).

21 Van Ruler was highly appreciative of reformed orthodoxy and even regarded it as the "ripest form of theology", one that "truly investigates questions with finesse". See Berkouwer & Van der Woude 1969:17). Nevertheless, he integrated the insights of reformed orthodoxy and reformed pietism (*Nadere Reformatie*) with extensive writings on *bevindelijkheid* and his notion of "theonomous reciprocity".

22 This is signalled especially by Kuitert (1992). Bavinck certainly dealt with the same kind of issues but would not have given such a title to a book.

23 This is evident from the struggle of the "Oupajane" (going back to the old paths) against Professor Johannes du Plessis. For a recent discussion, see Coetzee (2011:168-179).

historicity of theological reflection with increasing clarity,<sup>24</sup> of Willie Jonker who developed a more hermeneutical form of theology as listening to the living Word of God through scriptural exegesis,<sup>25</sup> and of Hennie Rossouw who recognised the need to clarify the philosophical assumptions of theological hermeneutics (see already 1963). How, then, did Johan Heyns position himself in this context? What was the influence of Berkouwer (under whom Heyns did his first doctorate) on Heyns' reception of Bavinck?

## WHERE DID JOHAN HEYNS SIT?

Throughout his extensive oeuvre it is obvious that Heyns regarded himself as following in the footsteps of Herman Bavinck. He affirms Bavinck's position on grace restoring nature. Salvation as re-creation affirms God's work in creation.<sup>26</sup> His theology may be regarded as an attempt to translate the central insights of Bavinck into a theology of the kingdom of God – which suggests a more eschatological orientation to his theology compared to that of Bavinck. God's work in history moves from proton to eschaton in order to reach the destiny of creation, namely the reign of God. This emphasis on God's reign in Heyns' theology is beyond dispute (see Heyns s.a. 66-68, 74, 1994; Van der Watt 1988:3). It is also clear that he sought, with Bavinck, to keep together faith and reason, general and special revelation,<sup>27</sup> science and theology, creation and salvation. Like Bavinck, he did so in conversation with views in philosophy and the various sciences. The more pertinent question is to what extent he remained true to his training in neo-Calvinist philosophy in his formative years (he did his first degree at Potchefstroom and obtained a second doctorate in philosophy under HG Stoker<sup>28</sup>). On which side of Bavinck did Heyns position himself?<sup>29</sup>

The best way of identifying the influence of neo-Calvinist philosophy may be through his contributions to a volume entitled *Op Weg met die Teologie* (1974), which he co-authored with Willie Jonker. In an intriguing introductory note the two authors (1974:11) indicate that they trust that the similarities between their positions would be so evident than the smaller differences between them that may be there would not bother the reader.<sup>30</sup> Of course, such

24 For a detailed analysis of Durand's writings, see especially Smit (2009:131-167).

25 One example is Jonker's *Die Woord as Opdrag* (1976) where his underlying approach becomes evident. Theology entails listening to the Word of God through exegesis and through the illumination of the Holy Spirit. Preaching expresses this Word anew ("naspreke").

26 In his *Dogmatiek* Heyns (1978:103) offers a critique of the direction introduced by Barth, namely where creation is regarded as the external basis for the covenant and where God created with a view to the incarnation of the Son. He does so by reiterating Bavinck's notion of grace restoring nature. Without the historical order of creation and salvation the meaning of both would be lost.

27 On the distinction between special and general revelation (in nature, history and human conscience), Heyns stays very close to Bavinck. See Heyns & Jonker (1974:154f). He does engage in polemics with Barth on this point and argues that Barth's denial of general revelation would lead to the isolation of theology from other disciplines and to a complete secular approach to science (p. 156-157). However Heyns also criticises any form of natural theology for an independent interest in general revelation. He insists that general revelation should be understood in terms of special revelation (p. 159). See also Heyns (1978:7-11).

28 In a biographic essay included in a Festschrift for Heyns, PB van der Watt (1988:2) observes that some would say that no one had a greater influence on Heyns than this Calvinist thinker.

29 One may also explore a related question, namely on the way in which Heyns responded to Karl Barth's theology. He wrote his first dissertation on Barth's anthropology (see 1964) and wrote several further articles on Barth. The diverging ways in which Jonker and Heyns interpreted Barth may be a theme worth exploring in a doctoral dissertation!

30 In an excellent article 20 years later Jonker (1994) offers a critical appraisal of Heyns' theology of the

a comment raises one's curiosity and would tend to have the opposite effect than the one intended. Was Heyns perhaps sitting at Bavinck's right hand and Jonker at Bavinck's left hand?

The first chapter of this volume, written by Heyns, offers a philosophy of science that would be congenial to theological reflection on the revelation of God. This Heyns finds in the school of reformed philosophy associated with Dooyeweerd and others. It is interesting to note several positive references to Stoker and the many inclusions of Stoker's works in the lists of literature provided at the end of each section.<sup>31</sup>

In a telling section on the sources of science he offers a small dogmatics in five steps: a) God and cosmos has to be distinguished and nothing in the cosmos may be absolutised; b) God is the Creator of everything in the cosmos and also the diversity in the cosmos (an emphasis typical of apartheid theology); c) God embedded cosmic laws in the created order that may be studied by the sciences; d) Sin has entered creation, also affecting nature; e) Through God's general grace the destructive impact of sin is curtailed, thus making room for God's special grace, God's work of re-creation (in Heyns & Jonker 1974:33-35). The continuity with Bavinck, Dooyeweerd and Stoker is evident. The ease with which Heyns seems to know what God created, as indicated in the second step, may be noted. Although the impact of sin is recognised, it is taken for granted that one can study the laws of nature (alongside Scripture) and the diversity in the world as God-given and indeed as God's creation. There seems to be little recognition of cosmic, biological or human evolution. Evolutionism is explicitly denied on the basis of step one, namely the absolutising of the process of evolution.<sup>32</sup>

In the second chapter Heyns explores various aspects of theology as science.<sup>33</sup> He distinguishes between pre-theological reflection on a life of faith and theology as a more disciplined, systematic and indeed scientific reflection on the cognitive content of faith. He refers to the distinction between *fides quae* and *fides qua* and suggests that the emphasis in a life of faith is on *fides qua* while the emphasis in theological reflection is on *fides quae*. The theologian seeks to understand what it is that is believed (*fides quae*) in order to come to a deeper faith (Heyns & Jonker 1974:130, Heyns 1978:13). Theology offers systematic responses to the Word of God by him (Heyns uses only male pronouns) who has been addressed by God (Heyns & Jonker 1974:130). It is clear that Heyns does not want to separate theological reflection from pre-theological reflection. Theological reflection participates in the motto *credo ut intelligam*. Faith is a necessary precondition for theology in order to recognise God's revelation as revelation

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kingdom of God where his appreciation for Heyns is evident, but also the significant differences between them. These differences are related to the influence of Stoker on Heyns and more specifically his theology of restoration. The kingdom of God is indeed understood as God's destiny for creation which is realised through obedience to God's law. However, this is understood in terms of the restoration of God's will for creation – which, for Heyns, may be understood in terms of Stoker's category of "skeppingsidees". Stoker's categories thus restrains Heyns' understanding of God's will, allows for a strong emphasis on God's general revelation in nature and history (providence) and inhibits (but does not mute) his prophetic critique against the status quo in church and society during the 1960s and 1970s.

31 Heyns describes Stoker as doing ground breaking work in the field of philosophy of science (in Heyns & Jonker 1974:18, 51-58). It is interesting to note that there are also numerous references to Hennie Rossouw's dissertation, *Klaarheid en Interpretasie* (1963).

32 In a document on evolution Heyns (no date) distinguishes between evolution as theory (based on natural selection) and evolutionism as an extrapolation of the theory towards a comprehensive worldview. He argues against both, namely on the basis of insufficient evidence for the theory and on the basis of the atheist assumptions of the worldview. Of course this does not imply that Heyns denied the evolution of species as a fact of history.

33 For a critical discussion, see Wethmar (1994).

(Heyns & Jonker 1974:182). For Heyns (1992:14-15) faith is indeed a form of knowledge, namely knowledge of God embedded in a personal relationship governed by prayer, although he is quick to add that it is, more precisely knowledge of God's revelation since we do not have direct access to God (Heyns & Jonker 1974:150-163). He then adds that Christians are not called to believe in their faith, but in the content of their faith. The focus of theology is not on the fact that people believe but on what they believe (Heyns & Jonker 1974:184-185). One is left with the impression that Heyns formally acknowledges the distinction between *fides qua* and *fides quae* but that his main emphasis is on the *fides quae*.<sup>34</sup> This allows him to also emphasise that theological reflection is theoretical and systematising, critical and verifying (see Heyns & Jonker 1974:131, also Heyns 1992:26-30). He boldly offers a definition of theology: "Theology is the scientific, time-bound response to God's revelation of Himself and His direct relationship with the cosmos" (in Heyns & Jonker 1974:137, my translation).

It would therefore be unfair to suggest that Heyns returns to a form of reformed orthodoxy. He emphasises the dynamic nature of theological reflection – as an obedient response to an ongoing process of listening to God's Word. He recognises the contextuality of theological reflection and the inevitability of historical changes in the content of theological responses (see Heyns & Jonker 1974:132-133, 148-149).<sup>35</sup> A response to the message of God's revelation has to be formulated anew in changing cultural and historical situations by studying the dynamics of a particular context. It is therefore time-bound as a response in and for a particular time (in Heyns & Jonker 1974:218-228). In many of his publications Heyns develops this in terms of a theology of obedience to God's will. God rules (*regeer*) and humans respond (*reageer*) (see Heyns 1973:81). Heyns also recognises that this obedient response involves a Christianising of culture, a sense of responsibility towards science and an engagement with that which is natural in order to establish signs of the coming reign of God on earth. This not only entails a correlation between revelation and faith (as Berkouwer maintained), but also an analysis of the contemporary situation (Heyns 1973:75). He recognises that such a notion of contemporary theology implies the problem of continuity: How can theology be contemporary and remain theology? How can theology remain theology and be contemporary? Heyns answers this question through a theology of obedience to God's will.

How God's will is to be determined requires further clarification (see below) but at least it is clear that the categories of "response" and "obedience" does not imply a mere return to reformed orthodoxy. Theology is the fallible work of humans, dynamic, provisional, fragmentary and historical (see Heyns & Jonker 1974:135, 186; Heyns 1973:81). Obedience is not only opposed to disobedience but also to a mere repetition of previous forms of obedience (Heyns 1973:82). Nevertheless, Heyns places considerable emphasis on the need for systematic reflection and on the scientific nature of the discipline in order to yield knowledge and insight that would be verified, valid and reliable. Heyns concludes:

It is faith in the heart of a theologian that makes theology possible and keeps it alive, but it is faith in its directedness to revelation that ensures the direction of theology and that guarantees its identity (in Heyns & Jonker 1974:186).

<sup>34</sup> Nevertheless, Heyns (in Heyns & Jonker 1974:185) can write eloquently about faith as the only access to the object of theological studies, namely the revelation of God: "Faith is our yes in response to God's Word, our amen to His promises, our yielding to His love, our reaction, through the work of the Holy Spirit, to His act of grace in Jesus Christ" (my translation).

<sup>35</sup> Jonker (1994:15-16) suggests that Heyns' emphasis on the categories of "response" and "obedience" is in line with Berkouwer's notion of correlation and ensures the dynamic nature and ethical appeal of his theology.

On the basis of the observations above I would suggest that the approach that Heyns followed on the relation between *fides qua* and *fides quae* would position him neither on Bavinck's left or right. If anything, there is a stronger emphasis in Heyns on the historical situatedness of theological reflection and on the hermeneutic task of theology than in Bavinck. In a Festschrift for Jonker, Heyns (1989:5-6) emphasises that theology offers a verbal response to God's Word, that symbolic language is required for this response and that this response is situated in a particular context.<sup>36</sup> Compared with Jonker there is in Heyns' writings neither more nor less emphasis on doctrine or on the binding of theology to ecclesial confessions,<sup>37</sup> although there is certainly more of an emphasis on identifying underlying doctrinal systems (Heyns 1992:33-34). Heyns warns against building elaborate doctrinal systems but suggest that the task of dogmatics may include highlighting underlying systems and emerging patterns in God's revelation. Admittedly, there is a tendency in his work and in his style of writing to engage in multiple, almost scholastic distinctions and to emphasise the scientific nature of theological reflection. He is in search of intellectual clarity and not only confessional fidelity. This is balanced by his critical engagement with the challenges of his time with specific reference to secularisation that he already addressed in the 1960s and apartheid in South Africa in the 1970s and 1980s (see below). Although he takes up such challenges, he tends to follow an apologetic approach by defending the reformed theology that he learned from Bavinck.

Given the theological tradition in which Heyns stands and his professional engagement in academic excellence, the emphasis that Heyns placed on theology as a disciplined and systematic form of inquiry (he would say theology as a science) cannot be faulted. However, the particular set of conceptual categories that he employed in his views on science and philosophy in relation to theology seems to have restrained his theology. Indeed, he remained true to his formative training in the philosophy of Dooyeweerd, Vollenhoven and Stoker. While he evidently read works by scholars engaging in the "new hermeneutics" (of Bultmann, Ebeling and Fuchs), he rarely employs the analytic tools of hermeneutical philosophy and indeed warns against the tendency to absolve theology into hermeneutics (see Heyns s.a.:65).

One may argue that Heyns addressed historic challenges through a set of rather a-historic conceptual tools. The philosophy of science that he employed did not enable him to recognise the significance of what may now be described as "the story of the universe" in which the so-called "laws of nature" are themselves telling a story rather than an order that God inscribed in nature "in the beginning". Although Heyns is fully aware of the dangers of natural theology and recognises the impact of sin, he too readily identifies God's creation with nature as we know it. While apartheid theology emphasised that God's work of re-creation is aimed at restoring the order (creation ordinances) that God established in the beginning and that was disturbed by sin (imposing unity on God-given diversity), Heyns recognised the eschatological significance of re-creation through his use of the category of the kingdom of God. Nevertheless, he tends to understand the reign of God in terms of the restoration of God's foundational plan for creation. Heyns (1994:9) says: "The laws that God himself as Creator and Provider laid down in the creaturely reality, must be discovered, formulated and obeyed by humans through their cultural engagement" (my translation). He does not speak of creation ordinances but

36 I must admit that Heyns' style of making conceptual distinctions still leaves me confused as to how he sees the task of dogmatics. Is the task of dogmatics a heuristic one, namely to capture the biblical message and to express this message systematically in and for a particular context (see Heyns 1989:9)? Or is its task to reflect critically on the response of the church to that message in terms of the confessions of the church and its attempts to capture the content of the faith in doctrinal formulas or guidelines (1989:8). Or is it perhaps to offer such response constructively?

37 See the section by Jonker on ecclesial confessions in Heyns & Jonker (1974:200-217).

nevertheless suggests that these “societal associations” (sameleingsverbande) are based on the basic plan (grondplan) that the Creator embedded in creation. This plan has normative status. Moreover, this plan precedes the act of creation. The epistemological problem as to how such a plan can be known given the impact of sin and cosmic and biological evolution is simply not addressed.

The underlying problem, as recognised by Willie Jonker, Heyns’s lifelong friend and colleague, is that this allegiance to Stoker’s categories curtails the critical edge of Heyns’s position. According to Jonker, Heyns’s theology is descriptive, offers a cosmological vision and tends to become a *theologia gloriae* (perhaps against Heyns’s intentions) that does not taken the broken and demonic reality (in South Africa) seriously enough. There are always already revealed answers available to every problem in society. Jonker (1994:19-20) refers to the critique of Noordmans on the cultural theology of Schilder and other neo-Calvinists that departs from creation and culture and then adds:

The emphasis is thus not on sin and guilt, but on the restoration of creation and the development of culture. The actual salvific events witnessed in Scripture are then regarded as a means to the goal of allowing the powers embedded in creation, that were repressed through sin, to awaken and to develop according to their original createdness. Thus the focus is shifted from the cross to creation. This can easily lead to a situation where a cultural-philosophical vision replaces the gospel or redemption. This critique does not necessarily apply to Heyns. However, his departure from [the category of] creation does lead to an under-emphasis on the abyss of sin and evil in the light of the sunny, clear and positive vision that he treasures.

## CONCLUSION

On the basis of the preceding observations, I may offer two concluding statements:

Firstly, one cannot easily position Heyns on either Bavinck’s left or right hand as far as a movement away from reformed orthodoxy is concerned. Compared to South African colleagues such as Willie Jonker, Heyns certainly places more emphasis on the systematic ordering of theological themes and more readily engages in scholastic distinctions on a host of issues. His style of writing is one of offering an apology for a particular reformed understanding of the Christian faith in response to contemporary challenges (including that of secularism). For every theological question he seems to have a ready answer.

Secondly, Heyns often uses neo-Calvinistic categories derived from Dooyeweerd and Stoker in his philosophy of science and in his social analysis, although he does not draw on the notion of creation ordinances all that much. This seems to restrain the way he utilises the theological categories that he derives from Bavinck (grace restoring nature) and also his notion of what restorative justice entails. Moreover it inhibits his contextual analysis.

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#### KEY WORDS

Johan Heyns  
Herman Bavinck  
GC Berkouwer  
Willie Jonker  
Fides qua  
Fides quae

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## The contest for reformed identity in South Africa during the church struggle against apartheid

### ABSTRACT

In this essay I examine the way in which reformed identity became a site of struggle in South Africa amongst churches with a reformed ethos during the years following the Cottesloe Conference in 1960, and remained so until the ending of apartheid. The essay is divided into three parts roughly corresponding to the three decades between 1960 and 1990. In the first part the focus is largely on the NGK as it was perceived both from the outside and within its own ranks. In the second part the focus is on the emergence of an alternative, more ecumenical reformed identity which challenged the hegemony of the NGK as representative of the reformed tradition. In the third part the focus is on how this alternative reformed identity consolidated its character and at the same time was increasingly acknowledged within sections of the NGK preparing the way for the changes that would happen in South Africa after 1994.

In the 1960's the acronym DRC in the English press, on the radio, or in conversation meant only one thing: the Dutch Reformed Church. Today, when you read or hear about the DRC in the media it inevitably refers to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This remarkable change in the meaning of an acronym is not only indicative of a major shift in public interest in church affairs in South Africa, but also of the change in status of the Dutch Reformed Church within our ecclesiastical, social and political landscape.

This symbolic indicator of the changing public location of the DRC does not necessarily convey the same message within its own constituency, where the acronym NGK obviously looks and sounds different and might even represent something different to that conveyed by DRC. Within its own ranks certainly the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk has not been replaced by the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Internally, it remains the church of generations of devout members with deep family connections stretching back to the seventeenth century, a reformed church that has made a unique and remarkable contribution to the development of South Africa in many fields of endeavour. It is the church that has given, and continues to give many people their identity as Christians and as members of the wider community, as well as in the now growing Afrikaner diaspora from London to Perth in Australia.

In a rapidly changing South Africa where identities are continually being contested, the NGK is one significant source of identity, and therefore its own identity is a matter of both concern and contestation. There is, as a result, considerable unease about the legacy of the apartheid years and how to understand and appropriate the now more fluid identity that has emerged. But my focus is not on this new emerging identity that is currently being contested; it is on the identity that was formed and contested during the apartheid era, though the two are

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connected and will be so for the foreseeable future. For there is a dark shadow side to the persona of the NGK that derives from its fostering and legitimating apartheid, and its collusion with political power in doing so. And it is this shadow side which came to dominate its identity during the period we have under review.

## PERCEPTIONS OF THE NGK DURING THE 1960'S

My focus during this period is specifically on the NGK rather than the other Afrikaans Reformed Churches (for example, the Gereformeerde, Hervormde, or the Christelike Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika<sup>2</sup>) or the English-speaking churches of reformed character (Presbyterian and Congregational), simply because of its dominant role within South Africa at the time. The NGK Mission Churches were then also very much the foster children of the NGK without their own distinct identity.

Some of what follows may be regarded as part of oral history because I was personally involved in part of what I describe and analyze, and as such is dependent on the vagaries of memory.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, not being a member of the NGK I can only do so as an outsider. But I also write as someone who during that period was already a trained theologian and a minister in a denomination which was Reformed in origin and ethos, and therefore able to gain a perspective that was theologically critically informed. I was also someone who had a particular interest in the NGK and the theological struggles taking place within it, and also because during the church struggle against apartheid it was necessary to "know the enemy!" I say that with tongue in cheek, but the truth is most people in the English-speaking churches had little real knowledge of the NGK apart from hearsay or press reports. And, of course, in "getting to know the enemy" I also got to make many friends as well, some of whom are now celebrated and respected as the leaven in the NGK during what many would regard today as its darkest hour.

In my book *Liberating Reformed Theology*, I spoke of an "alternative Calvinism" that had existed in South Africa as a result of the labours of the missionaries of the Church of Scotland and London Missionary Society and American Board Mission. Both the latter two, comprised largely of missionaries from the Congregational Churches in Great Britain or the United States, helped prepare the way for the eventual formation of the United Congregational Church of which I am a minister (de Gruchy 1991). Going well back into the nineteenth century there was interaction and co-operation between the Presbyterians, Congregationalists and sections of the NGK based on a similar identity. This was especially the case on what was then referred to as the mission field as can be seen in the pages of G.B.A Gerdener's *Recent Developments in the South African Mission Field* published in 1958. (Gerdener 1958) In addition, during the period up to Cottesloe in the twentieth century, there was also frequent interaction at the various missionary and ecumenical conferences that were convened either by the NGK or the

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2 The CGK was founded in 1944 as a break from the NGK led by Dr DJJ de Vos, previously known as the Nuwe Protestantse Kerk in Afrika. A schism in that church in 1949 led one group under Vos eventually to choose the name CRK 1983. The Nuwe Protestantse Kerk in Afrika changed its name in 1986 to the Evangelies- Gereformeerde Kerk.

3 The scientific merits of personal oral history may be challenged and rejected as too subjective or anecdotal for a scholarly article. Yet it is now increasingly acknowledged that this in itself does not necessarily detract from its academic value. I acknowledge that my memory might not always be exact, that is the nature of oral history telling. But I wrote regular reports on my activities for the SACC as well as a variety of articles along with correspondence that can verify what I write today.

Christian Council of South Africa (forerunner of the SACC) to discuss socio-political and racial issues. Speaking more personally, I had contact with NGK students during my own student years, and most memorably was invited to attend the celebration of the centenary of the Kweekskool here in Stellenbosch in 1959. In the years that followed as a minister in Durban my own congregation co-operated with that of the local NGK (Durban-Wes) in a number of ways, and the same was true of other congregations elsewhere.

But it must be said that this contact between the NGK and the English-speaking reformed churches was a largely white and sometimes a coloured affair, and often difficult and uncomfortable. By and large black members within the Presbyterian and Congregational Churches had no real desire to be in any contact. For them, the NGK was simply part of the problem in South Africa. Keep in mind that much of the early leadership of the African National Congress came from the mission churches of the English-speaking churches, including the Congregational, amongst them John Dube and Albert Luthuli, and that many of them were trained at Adams College in Kwa-Zulu Natal. There was also, I must add, a strong feeling in some black congregations that the NGK missionaries were intent on proselytizing their ministers and members with promises of certain benefits – obtaining marriage licenses, a better salary, and so forth.

There were undoubtedly theological and confessional differences between the large and dominant NGK and the much smaller Congregational Church. Most of the leading white Congregational ministers in the first half of the twentieth century were theologically liberal and products of British Nonconformity and the Free Church tradition and, as such, found the DRC far too dogmatically Calvinist (Briggs 1970; S. de Gruchy 1999). But in any case after 1948 Congregationalists did not want to identify themselves as reformed as they might do today not just for theological reasons, but much more because they did not want to be associated with the NGK's support for apartheid or its political status. Although the predominantly white Presbyterian Church of South Africa was historically and theologically more closely related to the NGK, I suspect they also avoided the label Reformed as part of their public and ecumenical identity for the same reason. With respect to the two dominant Presbyterian mission churches, the (formerly Tsonga) Evangelical Presbyterian Church and the (formerly Bantu) Reformed Presbyterian Church, there were undoubtedly differences amongst them, with the Evangelical Church identifying with the Swiss Reformed and the Reformed Presbyterian with the Church of Scotland.

Douglas Bax, a minister of the PCSA, who was one of the most outspoken theological opponents of apartheid, provided a trenchant theological critique on the NGK's support for apartheid in a booklet published by the PCSA in 1979, basing his case not only on the Bible but also on Calvin and the Reformers (Bax 1979). On another occasion he boldly asserted that the NGK had lost its Reformed character and had become authoritarian and hierarchical like the Roman Catholic Church. But as far as the NGK leaders of the time were concerned, we were all liberal, not Reformed, and so theologically suspect. In short, we too had an identity crisis arising out of our antithetical relationship to the NGK – being Reformed, and yet not wanting to be identified as such in public.

Relationships between the NGK and these two English-speaking Reformed Churches (UCCSA and PCSA) reached a watershed in the aftermath of the Cottesloe Consultation in 1960. Increasingly from then on there was a growing sense of alienation from the NGK, and an emerging solidarity and common identity amongst the so-called English-speaking Churches

within the Council of Churches (de Gruchy 2004:51-143). Instead of asserting their reformed identity they now more consciously identified themselves as part of the so-called English-speaking ecumenical Church finding much more in common with the Anglicans, Methodists and Roman Catholics. The die had been cast for the Church Struggle in South Africa that began, ironically, within the NGK itself when Dr. Beyers Naudé established the Christian Institute in 1963 (Villa-Vicencio et. al. 1958). Naudé's dismissal from the NGK was, for the English-speaking churches, a symbol of all that was wrong with the NGK and a sign of hope amongst some Congregationalists and Presbyterians for renegotiating their Reformed identity. In fact, Naudé's expulsion from the NGK eventually contributed to our rediscovery and affirmation of our Reformed identity, though that did not happen for another decade.

For the moment, some of us within the English-speaking churches identified with the CI, not because it was specifically Reformed in character but because Naudé's vision was the formation of a Confessing Church Movement in South Africa similar to that which had emerged in Nazi Germany. Even so, his main target group was the membership of the NGK, and when I joined the CI in 1964, its staff was mainly comprised of disenchanted NGK ministers. But as Naudé's efforts to gather NGK members into the CI were strongly opposed by the NGK, his main support base changed to people from other Churches, most of whom were also disenchanted with the lack of real opposition to apartheid within the leadership of their own Churches. When I went to work for the SACC in 1968, which was located within the same office block as the CI in Braamfontein, Johannesburg, the CI was thus much more ecumenical in character. Of course, Naudé himself remained a Reformed Christian and theologian and found a home in the black NGK in Africa, and had growing contact with sections of the NG Sendingkerk, the significance of which I will discuss in the next section.

Nonetheless, the CI was for much of the period a largely white organization. This only really changed after the emergence of the Black Consciousness Movement in the late nineteen-sixties when Naudé identified himself with Steve Biko and gave his support to Black Theology and eventually to the leaders of the Soweto uprising (de Gruchy 2004:144-183). That commitment contributed largely to both his banning and that of the CI in 1976. But these events also had a decisive and now irrevocable effect on the English-speaking churches and more broadly the ecumenical church, that is, those churches identified with the SACC (Goba 1973:65-73). And this was not least the case within the Congregational and Presbyterian Churches. There were, however, few if any voices in the NGK or its so-called daughter mission churches that were to be heard in the circles of Black Theology at that time. But their time was coming, and coming soon.

## ECUMENICAL, BLACK AND REFORMED

If Cottesloe was the watershed event at the beginning of the nineteen-sixties in shaping relations between the NGK and the member Churches of the SACC, of which the Congregational and Presbyterian Churches were active participants, the World Council of Churches' Programme to Combat Racism was the event that heralded in the nineteen-seventies, raising the tensions to boiling point between the Government and the SACC member churches, and between the English-speaking churches and the NGK.

One of my responsibilities as a staff member of the SACC was to be, what I can only describe as "the messenger boy" in communicating with the leadership of the NGK at that time. Two experiences immediately come to mind. The first was when I was sent to meet Dr. Gericke,

then Rector of Stellenbosch University but also a member of the NGK Moderature, to try and arrange a meeting between him and Bishop Bill Burnett, who was General Secretary of the SACC. The second was when I accompanied Dr. Eugene Carson Black, General Secretary of the WCC, to Cape Town to meet Dr. Koot Vorster and Dr. Gericke to discuss relations between the NGK and the WCC. This was before the Programme to Combat Racism (PCR) was launched (de Gruchy 2004:123-134). But, though the launch was imminent, nothing was said about it at the meeting, a fact which soured relationships even more afterwards. Be that as it may, what I recall vividly from those encounters was that if its current leadership was anything to go by, the NGK was not about to change its views either on apartheid or ecumenism. Its anti ecumenical, anti-liberal identity was rock solid, or so it seemed in the fortress like NGK Sinode-saal offices in Orange Street.

But those experiences stand in stark contrast to other experiences. In 1971 I completed my doctoral dissertation at UNISA where, amongst other dissident NGK theologians, I came to know Professor Ben Marais. I also joined two theological societies, both of which were dominated by Dutch Reformed theologians: *Die Dogmatologiese Werkgemeenskap*, in which Johan Heyns was the most prominent theologian, and the Missiological Society, led by David Bosch. I was one of a handful of English-speaking theologians involved in these societies, and regularly attended meetings mainly in Pretoria, but also on occasion in Potchefstroom where I confessed, probably for the first time, that I too was a Calvinist, but of a different variety. On some occasions I was even invited to present papers. My experiences were far from negative. I also gained much greater insight into what was happening within the NGK than if I had only been looking in from the outside. At the very least, this was a different Reformed world in many ways to what I had encountered in Cape Town in the offices of the NGK located in the Sinode Saal.

There was nothing radical about these organizations, but at least there was a willingness to discuss issues, especially within the Missiological Society, where I began to detect a growing ferment talking place amongst some NGK theologians that could not be ignored within the NGK more widely. (Bosch 1985:61-73) When I moved to Cape Town and UCT I immediately made contact with the *Dogmatologiese Werkgemeenskap* that met in Stellenbosch and came to know Willie Jonker and others who were increasingly concerned about apartheid. I also came to know Jaap Durand and Bernard Lategan, whose friendship over the years ever since has been so enriching for me. But these were minority voices within the NGK and its so-called "daughter churches", though their influence amongst the generations of theological students they taught, both in the NGK and the Sendingkerk, was increasingly significant. There was still a long way to go as the incident I will now tell indicates.

In 1980 the Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian and the UCCSA synods resolved to ask the government to scrap the Mixed Marriages Act and the Immorality Act. As President of the UCCSA at the time, I joined the Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town, the Methodist President, and the Presbyterian Moderator in seeking and being granted an interview with President P.W. Botha. The meeting, held in the Cabinet Room adjacent Parliament, was attended also by several Cabinet ministers and Departmental officials. Botha told us that he wanted to hear what we had to say, but that first he wanted to remind us about some facts of South African history. This he did, his peculiarly potted version of history ended with some comments that took us all by surprise. He said that he actually agreed that the Mixed Marriages and Immorality Acts should be scrapped and he was willing to do that. But the biggest obstacle facing him was that he did not have the support of his church, the NGK, to do so. So he challenged us. If

we could persuade the NGK to change its attitude, he would repeal those bits of legislation. We asked him if he would allow us to inform the NGK about what he had said and he gave us permission to do so. This led to some discussion with the NGK leadership, and it might have contributed to the scrapping of those pieces of legislation in due course. But the point of my story is simply this: even if the government wanted to change, it needed the support of the NGK to do so. But the NGK was not yet ready to support any move away from apartheid even though the pressure within its ranks was beginning to mount.

How far the NGK still had to go became apparent to me when I attended a session of the NGK General Synod held in Cape Town to discuss the Report *Ras, Volk en Nasie*. Although there were a growing number of dissident voices trying to go further than the recommendations of the Report, they were overwhelmed by the majority whose commitment to the status quo was palpable. Nonetheless pressure was beginning to mount, both within the wider Reformed ecumenical world, and within the NGK itself. During the latter part of the seventies and the early eighties, several conferences were held, some initiated by the NGK, others by the Reformed Ecumenical Synod, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches or the SACC to debate the issues. But there was little shifting of positions, only a growing defensiveness and insistence that apartheid had been misunderstood and badly implemented. But this neither satisfied those of us who were at these conferences, or a growing number of NGK theologians who had become frustrated at the unwillingness of their Church to change direction. This can be seen, inter alia, in the many publications that now began to appear, such as *Storm-Kompas* (Nico Smith et. al. 1981), and then perhaps most significantly in the "Open Letter" ("Ope Brief") to the NGK published in (Bosch et. al, 1982). The voice of Beyers Naudé, which had long been silenced, was being heard again, and the church struggle against apartheid, profoundly affected by the impact of the black renaissance sparked off by the Black Consciousness Movement, was being raised to a new level within the SACC under the leadership of Bishop Desmond Tutu and more widely within its member churches.

At the same time, a different, more vibrant and demanding drum was beating within the NGK mission churches. A new generation of theologians and ministers was beginning to take a leading role within ecumenical circles, seeking also to express their Reformed theology and identity in a way that embodied the insights of Black Theology. The key figure and catalyst in this new initiative was Allan Boesak whose book *Farewell to Innocence* had been published in 1976 shortly after his return to South Africa from his studies in the Netherlands (Boesak 1976).

*Farewell to Innocence* was seminal, but it was not specifically reformed in orientation. The majority of references in its pages are to Martin Luther King jnr., to James Cone, Manas Buthelezi, there is no reference at all to John Calvin, only some scattered references to contemporary Dutch theologians of the reformed tradition. Compare that with Boesak's next publication *Black and Reformed* that was published in 1984, with the subtitle "Apartheid, Liberation and the Reformed Tradition" (Boesak 1984). This comprised a number of lectures which Boesak had given during the preceding years from 1976 onwards, including that which gives the book its title. This was a lecture that he gave in 1981 at the first conference of the Alliance of Black Reformed Christians in Southern Africa (ABRECSA) which he had initiated. In his lecture Boesak explored both the contradictions in the Reformed tradition as experienced in South Africa and the promise and challenge of the tradition in the struggle against apartheid. Boesak did not arrive at this position unaided. He could draw on the teaching he had received in the theological faculty at UWC which provided an alternative reading of Calvinism, and he was also in touch with the wider literature in Reformed theology which was very different to

that maintained within the NGK, and which was strongly anti-apartheid in its contemporary expressions. But Boesak had the gift of giving expression to this Reformed legacy in a way that struck a decisive cord within the NG Sendingkerk.

ABRECSA also attracted a great deal of attention from black ministers and theologians in the other reformed churches, like the Presbyterian and my own, several of whom were there at that first meeting (de Gruchy 1983:161-168). Now all of a sudden, to be black and Reformed was not an oxymoron but a badge of honour. This Reformed ecumenical organization was paralleled in the NGK mission churches by *Die Belydende Kring* which was flexing its muscles within the NGK family of churches. By this time these mission churches had all obtained a new identity as reformed churches in their own right, no longer in a state of dependency on the mother NGK. In addition, a new generation of ministers trained at UWC was beginning to make their presence felt well beyond their own ranks. The way was being prepared for the Belhar Confession which was adopted in 1982 (Cloete, et. al. 1984). The reformed label was being wrenched from being monopolized by the NGK, and was rapidly becoming an identity that black ministers and theologians in the UCCSA and Presbyterians Churches were also happy to embrace. This was reinforced by the fact that in the United Kingdom the Congregational and Presbyterians Churches had united to become the United Reformed Church in England and Wales.

In reflecting back on this process mention must also be made of the important role in this process by the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC). WARC by this stage had become the world ecumenical body bringing together both Presbyterian and Congregational Churches from across the world. WARC was very supportive of the struggle against apartheid and especially of the role that black Reformed ministers, theologians and churches were playing. It was at a meeting of the General Council WARC in Ottawa in 1982 that apartheid was rejected as a heresy, (de Gruchy 1983:168-173) and Allan Boesak was elected President. The NGK was now virtually isolated, and even under growing opposition within the ranks of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod of which it had been a very influential member in past years. A new image of what it meant to be Reformed had emerged in South Africa fulfilling Beyers Naudé's original vision when he formed the CI twenty years previously. We were now proud to be Reformed.

## TOWARDS A REFORMED PROPHETIC IDENTITY

If Cottesloe was the watershed event that shaped the nineteen sixties, and the rise of the Black Conscious Movement and the PRC did the same for the nineteen seventies and into the 1980's, then the States of Emergency declared in 1985-6 was the catalyst for what turned out to be both the final push in the struggle against apartheid and, alongside that, in the Church Struggle, both of which were part of the same movement. This was symbolized and given practical effect by the joint leadership of Desmond Tutu and Allan Boesak, notably in the formation of the United Democratic Front. Theologically, this was also the moment of truth that led to the Belhar Confession and the *Kairos Document*, the first Reformed in character and the second more ecumenical but also the expression of a new way of doing "prophetic theology" in South Africa which continues to be developed. Both documents are uniquely South African and in some ways complement each other.

The rejection of the theological justification of apartheid as a heresy in the Belhar Confession was affirmed not only by the NG Sendingkerk, but also by both the Presbyterian and Congregational Churches (de Gruchy 1983:168). In fact, I would argue that Belhar represents

a “church prophetic theology” in the contrast to a perceived “church theology” of cheap reconciliation advocated by some churches which, together with the “state theology” of the NGK was rejected by the *Kairos Document* (Kairos 1986). In many ways the Belhar Declaration snatched the carpet from under the feet the NGK just as the *Kairos Document* challenged the failure of other churches to actively engage in the struggle against apartheid. But whereas previously, the NGK had regarded itself as the custodian of the true reformed faith, now it was being accused not just of supporting injustice, but also of having become heretical in the process. Suddenly, the true reformed faith was being upheld outside the NGK and in opposition to the NGK. Of course, there were also those within the NGK who affirmed the Belhar Confession already at that time, but the official church was certainly alarmed by this development.

Yet things were rapidly moving beyond Belhar, and the *Kairos Document* was clear evidence that this was so. I recall well how on the day that the *Kairos Document* was made public in 1986 that I received a phone call from Willie Jonker, a leading NGK theologian in Stellenbosch and a good friend, who supported the Belhar Confession but was deeply upset that I had endorsed the *Kairos Document*. This, he felt, was moving beyond where a good reformed theologian should venture. I appreciated his call just as I respected his theology and his opposition to apartheid. Yes, the *Kairos Document* was not Reformed in its orientation, but it was indicative of a new theological development that was responding to the critical situation in the country at the time. (de Gruchy 1990:1-18) Now the issue was no longer whether you were reformed or not, but whether you were willing as a Christian to participate in the struggle against apartheid in order to bring it to an end. The slogan “black and reformed” had been superseded by a non-racial Kairos Theology of non-violent resistance to apartheid, and to a costly reconciliation that could only be achieved through restoring justice.

What had happened to Beyers Naudé and the CI in the 1970's with his turn towards supporting Biko and Black Consciousness in the struggle against apartheid irrespective of whether that was Reformed or not, was recurring. But this time the writing was on the wall for apartheid, even though we did not fully recognise that at the time. There was no longer much point in trying to convince the NGK of its errors and its departure from the Reformed tradition. Those days were numbered, as were the days of its ecclesiastical hegemony. A new day was being born, though through much travail and suffering. The full recovery of Reformed theology, and a new Reformed identity and sense of unity, had to wait until that day. That day has come, but the task of journeying together along that road has only begun. How the churches of the Reformed tradition express their identity both separately and hopefully much more in tandem with each other will determine the future of being Reformed in South Africa in the twenty-first century.

To return to the change in signification of the acronym DRC with which I began, let me add a footnote to my essay. Many within the ecumenical church in South Africa, which now includes the NGK, have been bothered by the lack of its prophetic witness in the public arena since 1994. There are many reasons for this lack, some real and some only perceived, I suggest, because of a lack of media interest. The rebirth of the Kairos “prophetic theology” movement in recent times is indicative that there is now a concerted ecumenical attempt to overcome this silence both in South Africa and, through its influence, globally. This is not an “anti-government” or “anti-ANC” movement. In fact, it is largely comprised of individuals who were engaged in the church struggle against apartheid in solidarity with the liberation movements. It is my contention that the future of the reformed churches in South Africa as a collective will

be determined by the extent to which they participate in this prophetic task as something inherent to their identity as Reformed Churches. But it is of great importance that they do so not simply through individuals as in the Kairos Movement, but as churches. In this way they will be true to the legacy of the Belhar Confession and the *Kairos Document* in providing a genuinely “church” and a truly “prophetic” theology and witness, a liberating reformed witness.

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## KEY WORDS

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## Remembering Cottesloe: Delegates to the Cottesloe consultation tell their stories

### ABSTRACT

The Cottesloe consultation (December 1960) was a watershed moment in the life of the church in South Africa, especially in the life of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC). The eight South African member churches of the World Council of Churches were called together to reflect on the churches' role during the emergency in the aftermath of the Sharpeville massacre earlier that year. In the article the author looks at the consultation through the eyes of the delegates, allowing them to tell their stories about the proceedings – and about the many crises that followed in the wake of the consultation. Cottesloe's message was strongly critical of apartheid and the fact that the DRC delegates aligned themselves with the message, was unacceptable to many. In the last section of the article the “bitter fruits of Cottesloe” are discussed. Finally the question is asked: Has the ghost of Cottesloe been put to rest?

### 1. DYNAMITE!

“Do you realize that this statement contains dynamite?”, a journalist at the press conference at the conclusion of the Cottesloe consultation asked Dr W. A. Visser 't Hooft, general secretary of the World Council of Churches (WCC).<sup>2</sup> How true his observation was, and just how strong the explosion was that was to follow in the next days, neither of them, probably, would have foreseen. In itself the Cottesloe Resolutions were not that remarkable. “Not a very striking document”, Visser 't Hooft observed in his report to the WCC. Dr Franklin Clark Fry who chaired the consultation added in his report: “While many statements it contained might seem commonplace outside South Africa, they were in fact very significant and far-reaching within the South African scene”.<sup>3</sup>

Far-reaching indeed! For years to come the name Cottesloe would reverberate across the country, in churches and at synodical meetings, in countless statements and articles in the media, in debates in Parliament, in secret meetings of the Afrikaner Broederbond, around dinner tables. The delegates to the consultation were lauded in some quarters, vilified in others.

### 2. EVENTS LEADING TO THE COTTESLOE CONSULTATION

Why was the consultation held? What were the reasons for calling the churches to the Cottesloe Residence on the campus of the University of the Witwatersrand? The year 1960 will be remembered for a series of dramatic and disturbing events. The notorious Clause 29 (c) of the Native Laws Amendment Bill, promulgated by Parliament three years earlier, had

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<sup>1</sup> Emeritus Professor, Faculty of Theology, University of Pretoria.

<sup>2</sup> Lückhoff, A. H. 1978. *Cottesloe*. Cape Town: Tafelberg, 153.

<sup>3</sup> Lückhoff, *Cottesloe*, 153.

created havoc in church circles. The act made it virtually impossible for black Christians to join in services of worship in so-called white areas. A wide outcry from the church community followed. Even the DRC was perturbed by the new act, and did not mind saying so.

And then, on the fateful day of March 21, 1960, police in the Sharpeville township, south of Johannesburg, opened fire on a large number of blacks who were protesting against the carrying of the hated pass books that humiliated them and complicated their lives. After half a minute of shooting, 69 protesters, most of whom were women, were killed; 186 were wounded. Accounts on the events of the day differ. According to the findings of Justice Wessels who chaired the judicial inquiry after the event, 10 000 protesters converged on the police station, endangering the lives of the police. The leadership of the Pan African Congress who sponsored the protest differed. It was a peaceful protest, they said. The only violence that was perpetrated, was by the police. Many of the victims, they added, were shot in the back.<sup>4</sup>

Weeks later, at the annual Rand Easter Show in Johannesburg, an assassin wounded the Prime Minister of the country, Dr Hendrik Verwoerd. A state of emergency was declared and in the weeks following, a large number of blacks were arrested, many of them taken to prison or banned.

A public outcry followed, in South Africa as well as abroad. What was happening in the country? What is the Christian community doing to curtail the violence and the injustice? many asked. In Geneva, at the offices of the WCC, Visser 't Hooft was mandated to approach the eight member churches of the ecumenical body in South Africa with a proposal to facilitate a meeting to discuss these events and to decide on the role of the churches in this regard. Dr Robert Bilheimer was sent on a series of visits to South Africa to test the waters, and if possible, to organize a consultation.

It was a difficult and painstaking process. In his comprehensive book *Cottesloe*, Abraham Lückhoff devoted a whole chapter on the preparations for the Cottesloe consultation. There was a hesitation among some church leaders to involve themselves and their churches in the process. Tension between the Anglican Church and the DRC threatened to scuttle the WCC initiative. The Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town, Dr Joost de Blank, angered the DRC – and frustrated the WCC officials in Geneva – by his continued insistence that the DRC should first change its stance on apartheid before his church would sit around the table with the DRC leadership. In a letter to Visser 't Hooft he did not mince his words: “The future of Christianity in this country demands our complete dissociation from the Dutch Reformed attitude ... Either they must be expelled or we shall be compelled to withdraw”<sup>5</sup> In the end, Billheimer and Visser 't Hooft, with the help of the Anglican leadership in England, prevailed upon the archbishop to change his stance. All eight member churches in South Africa agreed to a consultation, to be held in Johannesburg, under the supervision of the WCC.

### 3. THE COTTESLOE CONSULTATION, 7-14 DECEMBER 1960

The delegations from the member churches, meeting in the Cottesloe residence on the Wits Campus, came well prepared. In the months leading to the consultation all of them were asked to prepare memoranda revolving around five themes: their evaluation of the

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4 De Gruchy, John W. 1982: *The Church Struggle in South Africa* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition). Cape Town: David Philip, 63.

5 Lückhoff, *Cottesloe*, 19; De Gruchy, *Church Struggle*, 63.

current situation in South Africa, the Christian interpretation of the gospel in terms of race relations; the interpretation of recent history from a Christian perspective; the impact of the state of emergency in South Africa; and the Church's witness in terms of justice, mission and ecumenical co-operation.<sup>6</sup>

On the 7th of December Dr Franklin Fry welcomed the eighty delegates to the meeting, ten from each church: the Bantu Presbyterian Church, the Presbyterian Church in SA, the Anglican Church (Church of the Province of S A ), the Congregational Union, the Methodist Church, the Dutch Reformed Churches from the Cape and Transvaal, and the Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika. Apart from Fry, Bilheimer and Visser 't Hooft, a number of WCC officials attended the consultation: Bishop Lakdasa de Mel from Ceylon (Sri Lanka), Mr Charles Coolidge Parlin from the USA, Dr Wilhelm Niesel from Germany, and Sir Francis Ibiyam from Nigeria. The Cape DRC's delegation was headed by Dr A. J. van der Merwe, and included five theological professors. The Transvaal delegation, headed by the Rev A. M. Meiring, also included two professors in Theology, as well as the Rev S. S. Tema and Rev J. Selamolela. All in all 18 black delegates participated in the proceedings, among them Bishop Alpheus Zulu and Professor Z. K. Matthews. Among the lay delegates were the author Alan Paton and Professor Monica Wilson, the only woman at the consultation.

Dr Fry's opening address, according to Visser 't Hooft, was "a masterpiece". He acknowledged the concern of the Afrikaans churches that they, once again, would find themselves in the dock. He however made it very clear: "Is there going to be pressure? If you mean against your own conviction, the answer is no ... If, however, pressure means the pressure of God's Word, the answer is yes, this pressure is equal upon us all"<sup>7</sup>

The delegations were divided into four groups of twenty each, to discuss the memoranda prepared by the churches. On Day Three a crisis loomed. Although all the delegates had previously agreed that the discussions would be in camera and that no delegate would individually speak to the press, the Afrikaans newspaper *Die Transvaler* that morning reported that some Afrikaans church leaders had voiced their concern about the value of the meeting. They were disappointed by the very critical sentiments of some of the delegates during the discussions. Dr Fry was deeply disturbed and wanted to know who were responsible for the leak. Nobody confessed and the editor of *Die Transvaler* refused to name his source.

Beyers Naude recalled the incident:

"The general suspicion was that Prof S P Engelbrecht from the Hervormde Kerk was responsible for the leak. The other newspapers threatened to break their own promise not to publish inside information on the Cottesloe consultation, but did in the end agree to keep their silence on condition that they would receive a press release at the end of the consultation."<sup>8</sup>

This was a sad turn of events, oom Bey added. If the leak in *Die Transvaler* had not occurred,

6 Crafford D. and Gous G. 1993: *Een Liggaam – Baie Lede*. (One Body – Many Members) Pretoria: Verba Vitae, 91-92; cf Du Toit, Flip (et al) 2002: *Moeisame pad na Vernuwing. Die N G Kerk se pad van isolasie en die soeke na 'n nuwe relevansie* (The Difficult Road to Renewal. The DRC's Road away from isolation and in search of a new relevance). Bloemfontein: Barnabas, 54ff.

7 Lückhoff, *Cottesloe*, 75.

8 Naudé, Beyers 1995. *My Land van Hoop* (My Country of Hope) Cape Town: Human and Rousseau, 51. My translation.

a public statement at the end of the meeting would not have been necessary. The member churches would have had the opportunity to take the resolutions to their own constituencies in their own time – and Cottesloe would have been spared the explosion in the public arena in the aftermath of the consultation.<sup>9</sup>

It is understandable that, initially, some tension existed among the delegates. To learn to understand one another and to trust one another, took some time. Visser't Hooft remembered:

“Afrikaner en Engelssprekende, blank en swart, draaien om elkaar heen en beloeren elkaar. Maar weldra komen er persoonlijke contacten tussen mense van verskillende afkomst. De Bijbelstudie, de humor van een Lakdasa de Mel, of een Franklik Fry, het saamen eten (alleen die Hervormde Kerk zaten altijd alleen aan een tafeltje apart) droegen by tot ontdooiing. En ten slotte was er een echte verbroedering. Mense, die niet geneigd waren sentimenteel te worden, waren diep onder de indruk. We hadden het gevoel dat er iets groots gebeurd was.”<sup>10</sup>

Speaking of the humour of Franklik Fry. Rev Meiring in later years loved to quote the words of the chairperson who, on a very hot December day, during the afternoon session, remarked: “Brothers, I always thought that we are members of the Church Militant. I stand corrected. It seems to me that we, rather, belong to the Church Dormant!”

When the time came for drafting and accepting resolutions, it was agreed that those issues and viewpoints that were acceptable to the majority of delegates would be tabled. Proposals that received 80 per cent of the vote, would be included in the final report. The delegations of the DRC (Cape Synod as well as Transvaal Synod) were at the centre of things. Not so the Hervormde Kerk, whose delegates at the end rejected the final statement out of hand. The DRC delegates were virtually unanimous in supporting the Cottesloe statement. One reason for this, De Gruchy noted, was that the final statement was largely based on the preparatory documents that the DRC brought with them to the consultation.

The Cottesloe Statement did contain dynamite. Reading through the three subsections today, one tends to recall Dr Fry’s observation that in many parts of the world – also in South Africa in the 21st century – there is little to raise the eyebrow. But in apartheid South Africa, in the 1960s, this was explosive stuff!

- We recognise that all racial groups who permanently inhabit our country are a part of our total population, and we regard them as indigenous. Members of all of these groups have an equal right to make their contributions towards the enrichment of the life of their country and to share in the ensuing responsibilities, regards and privileges.
- The body of Christ is unity and within the unity the natural diversity among men is not annulled but sanctified. No-one that believes in Jesus Christ may be excluded from any church on the grounds of his colour or race.

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<sup>9</sup> Naudé, *My Land van Hoop*, 51.

<sup>10</sup> Translation: Afrikaner and English, black and white, walked circles around one another, carefully watching each other. But soon personal contacts between people from different backgrounds grew. The Bible studies, the humour on one Lakdasa de Mel or one Franklin Fry, the eating together (only the delegates from the Hervormde Kerk preferred to sit alone at their own little table), helped us to thaw towards one another. At the end we really became brothers. People who usually are not sentimental, were deeply touched. We had the feeling that something very special was taking place. Lückhoff, *Cottesloe*, 95.

- There are no Scriptural grounds for the prohibition of mixed marriages.
- We call attention, once again, to the disintegrating effects of migrant labour on African life.
- It is our conviction that the right to own land wherever he is domiciled, and to participate in the government of his country, is part of the dignity of the adult man.
- It is our conviction that there can be no objection in principle to the direct representation of Coloured people in Parliament.<sup>11</sup>

Before attending to the reaction to the Cottesloe Statement, Dr Frans Geldenhuys reminds us in his memoirs of a remarkable incident at the consultation, that unfortunately did not receive the attention it merited:

“Some of us will remember the harsh and unfriendly way in which Dr Joost de Blank, archbishop of the Church of the Province, used to speak about the DRC. At Cottesloe we had the opportunity to look one another straight in the eye. On the last day, at the plenary session, De Blank rose from his seat, indicating that he has something on his heart. He wanted to apologize to his brothers and colleagues from the Dutch Reformed Church for what he in the past had said about them. Having had the opportunity to spend a week with them as fellow Christians he realized that he was wrong in judging them. It did not mean that he necessarily agreed with all of their viewpoints, but he wanted to say how sorry he was for condemning them.”<sup>12</sup>

De Blank’s statement made a huge impact on the delegates. Wilhem Niesel, one of the ecumenical officials, referred to it as “Das Schönste, was am Ende der Konferetz geschah.”<sup>13</sup> Geldenhuys opined: “I am still sorry that the press did not give proper attention to this, but rather concentrated on the ‘dangerous’ resolutions of the consultation.”<sup>14</sup>

Beyers Naudé recalled the same incident but added a rider: Some critics of Cottesloe did indeed take note of De Blank’s gesture, but interpreted it differently, with serious suspicion. It just showed how De Blank took the Afrikaans churchmen for a ride!<sup>15</sup>

#### 4. THE BITTER FRUITS OF COTTESLOE

In his autobiography, *My Land van Hoop*, Beyers Naudé devoted a whole chapter to “die bitter nasleep van Cottesloe” (the bitter fruits of Cottesloe). Abraham Lückhoff needed three chapters in his book to cover the reaction to the consultation. Frans Geldenhuys, as well as Willie Jonker (who was in Holland at the time of Cottesloe, but who attended the Transvaal Synod some months later), provide us with vivid descriptions of the aftermath of Cottesloe as well.

Already at the consultation the DRC delegates had a premonition of what was to come. After the final session Dr A J van der Merwe, moderator of the Cape Synod, called the DRC delegates together: “Brothers, it is necessary that we acknowledge the serious implications of these

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11 *Cottesloe Consultation* 1960. Geneva: WCC, 73-75.

12 Geldenhuys, F E o’Brien 1982: *In die Stroomversnellings*. Cape Town: Tafelberg, 51. My translation.

13 Translation: The very best that happened at the end of the conference. Strassberger, Elfriede 1974.

*Ecumenism in South Africa 1936-1960*. Johannesburg: SACC, 229.

14 Geldenhuys, *Stroomversnellings*, 51. My translation.

15 Naudé, *My Land van Hoop*, 50.

resolutions for us.” Rev Bertie Brink from the Transvaal Synod warned: “We need to prepare ourselves for tempestuous times”.<sup>16</sup>

The reaction against Cottesloe was swift and vehement. Two days after the conclusion the Hervormde delegation announced over the radio that they had distanced themselves from the Cottesloe Statement. They had not trusted the process from the beginning, and would have no part in the resolutions – even though some of their delegates had voted in favour of some of the resolutions during the discussions.

Commentary in the English press was mostly favourable, but the two Afrikaans newspapers in the Transvaal, *Die Transvaler* and *Die Vaderland*, blasted both the Cottesloe Statement and the delegates, especially the DRC delegation. In Cape Town, the editor of *Die Burger* was far more sympathetic in his commentary. The time had come for Afrikaners to take a long hard look at race relations, he wrote. Cottesloe challenges us all to re-examine our thinking. Dr A P Treurnicht, editor of *Die Kerkbode*, the official newspaper of the DRC, joined the fray, condemning Cottesloe as an “unacceptable coup d’état”.<sup>17</sup>

And then the Prime Minister of South Africa spoke.

In his New Year Message (January 1, 1961) Dr Verwoerd did not mince his words, effectively destroying any positive contribution that Cottesloe might have had offered to the solution of South Africa’s problems. Cottesloe, he said, was a reprehensible effort by foreigners to meddle in South African affairs. The WCC will never have a lasting impact on the way we think and act in South Africa. He added: “In fact, the Churches have not spoken yet. The voice of the Church still needs to be heard. That will happen when the synods speak, where both predikante and lay people will have their say”.<sup>18</sup>

In the English speaking churches the reaction was mild. There was nothing in the resolutions, John de Gruchy noted, that was new or unacceptable. If anything they did not go far enough.<sup>19</sup> But what would the DRC do? That was the question.

In the Transvaal DRC a storm was raging. Church councils and presbyteries voiced their strong protest against Cottesloe. The Afrikaner Broederbond and other cultural organisations sent angry letters and admonitions to their members to be on the watch against the enemy within. In Heidelberg, Transvaal, the local dominee, the Rev Meiring, had a hard time explaining himself. The fact that Dr Verwoerd served as the Member of Parliament for the town did not make it easier! Visser ‘t Hooft must have taken note of this. He wrote in a personal letter to Meiring: “Ik behoef u niet te zeggen hoe zeer my gedachten en gebeden in deze weken naar Zuid-Afrika gaan en in bijzonder naar degenen, die in het centrum van de geestelijke strijd staan”.<sup>20</sup>

In March 1961 an extraordinary meeting of the synodical commission of the DRC was called to discuss the Cottesloe issue. In April the Transvaal synod was due to meet, and a strategy for dealing with Cottesloe had to be devised. An ad hoc-commission was appointed to

16 Naudé, *My Land van Hoop*, 53.

17 Naudé, *My Land van Hoop*, 55.

18 Lückhoff, *Cottesloe*, 116; Naudé, *My Land van Hoop*, 56; De Gruchy, *Church Struggle*, 67.

19 De Gruchy, *Church Struggle*, 67.

20 *Meiring Archive*. The author’s private collection of the papers of Rev A M Meiring. Translation: I need not tell you how much my thoughts and prayers are reaching out to South Africa, especially to those who find themselves in the centre of the spiritual battle.

decide upon the merits of the Cottesloe Consultation as well as to inform synod on the DRC's continued membership of the WCC.

When synod convened on April 5, 1961, tension was in the air. The election of office bearers right at the beginning would indicate the way the wind was blowing – everyone in the hall knew that. Will the old moderation, all of them Cottesloe delegates, be re-elected or replaced? A M Meiring was, against the expectations of many, re-elected *moderator*, but with a meagre majority of 9 votes, against A J V Burger, an outspoken Cottesloe critic. Beyers Naude lost the election as *assessor* with a 450 against 280 votes against Burger. Frans Geldenhuys who for many years admirably served synod as *actuaris*, lost against Willie Jonker, with exactly the same vote count. Jonker who had just returned from study leave in Holland, wrote about his total shock at his election. The people don't know me, he thought. I agree with Cottesloe! During the course of the debates he left synod no doubt about that, to the extent that someone was overheard saying in the foyer: We have replaced Satan with Beelzebub!<sup>21</sup>

For a full two and a half days Cottesloe was on the agenda. The delegates to the consultation were asked to sit on the podium facing the seven hundred pastors and elders in the hall, and to explain their actions and their resolutions. At the end a proposal to reject the Cottesloe resolutions was adopted by a vast majority. A second proposal to sever the DRC's ties with the WCC was adopted with even a larger majority.

Seven months later, when the Cape Synod of the DRC convened (4 November 1961), some measure of calm had returned. The Cottesloe delegates, A J van der Merwe en W A Landman, were re-elected as moderator and scribe. But in deciding on the Cottesloe statement the dominees and elders at the Cape synod were as strong in their convictions as the Transvaal synod. Cottesloe had to be rejected, and the Church's membership of the WCC terminated.

And the black members of the DRC's delegation? Were they more successful in communicating Cottesloe to their people? One of them, Bilheimer wrote in one of his reports to the WCC, answered the question laconically: When the white church had spoken, there was very little left for the black church to say. Their synod had taken no action on Cottesloe, because the Mother Church has laid down the line.<sup>22</sup>

Looking back, what were the fruits of the Cottesloe experience, the "bitter fruits" according to Beyers Naudé. Reading the reports and the testimonies of the "Cottesloe heroes" (as Bilheimer called them), as well as taking note of the views of more recent researchers and authors, it seems to me that at least four bitter fruits need to be mentioned.

#### 4.1 Thinking about apartheid: dogmatics replaced ethics

In preparation for Cottesloe, Dr J Alex van Wyk from the DRC Theological School, Turfloop, wrote to Visser 't Hooft explaining the different thought patterns concerning race relations in the DRC. It's all about the central principle, he said. For many ministers the principle is quite simple: Apartheid is divinely ordained. God had created different nations and different races and they should be kept apart. Integration is against God's will. A second group in the church,

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<sup>21</sup> Jonker, Willie 1998. *Selfs die kerk kan verander* (Even the church can change). Cape Town: Tafelberg, 47.

<sup>22</sup> Luckhoff, *Cottesloe*, 152.

a minority group, sees the differences between nations and races as incidental and as relative. Integration is a distinct possibility.<sup>23</sup>

Years later, in his evaluation of apartheid thinking in the DRC, Johan Kinghorn restated Van Wyk's opinion. Referring to the memorandum prepared by the Cape Synod for the Cottesloe Consultation, the Cape Synod, according to Kinghorn, did argue for apartheid, or separate development. But it was quite clear that apartheid was not regarded as an eternal principle, applicable to all times and in all places. It was an ideal, not a principle. Other possibilities for regulating race relations may, and should, be studied and even taken seriously, the report maintained. Alternative political solutions may be contemplated. Integration may be regarded a viable alternative to separate development. Apartheid, the memorandum stated, was a policy, a medium, nothing more.

Johan Kinghorn explains the issue as follows: In the Cape memorandum, as well as in our evaluation of the Cottesloe Statement, we are confronted by a basic choice: should apartheid be seen as an ethical or a dogmatic (doctrinal) issue? Is the "theology of apartheid" an example of ethical or dogmatic thinking? If the choice is ethics, the implication is that apartheid is to be regarded as a very practical human issue. You may decide to take it or to leave it. If the choice is for dogmatics, the choice is for a divinely ordained socio-political solution. Apartheid, then, is to be regarded as the only key in our hand. God wills us to separate nations and races, to live apart. The rejection of Cottesloe, Kinghorn concluded, indicates the DRC's choice: dogmatics in stead of ethics. The theology of apartheid that was developed over many years since the time of J D du Toit (Totius) in the 1940s, and by A B du Preez, F J M Potgieter and A P Treurnicht in the 1950s, had won the day.<sup>24</sup>

#### 4.2 Critical thinking became increasingly difficult

Both Naudé and Geldenhuys lamented the fact that in the wake of Cottesloe, critical thinking in the ranks of the DRC became more and more difficult. The barrage of criticism that confronted the Cottesloe delegates, the way in which men and women who dared to think differently, were side-lined, sometimes ostracized, and declared to be unpatriotic, even un-Christian, deterred many to think, and speak, and stand for themselves. Bilheimer picked this up when he visited South Africa in the aftermath of Cottesloe. Some do dare to stand behind the Cottesloe delegates, but they do so in private. They do write letters to newspapers, but usually under pseudonyms. Bilheimer had great admiration for the Cottesloe delegates who weathered the storm, who remained true to their convictions. "These are men who show forth the joy of a new obedience. Their faces are alight, their spirits are buoyant. I have no hesitation in saying that this little group of DRC men is engaged in one of the most decisive struggles of the spirit and the Church that we are privileged to witness. Their verdict is: We shall lose a battle or two, but we shall not lose the war."<sup>25</sup>

For Beyers Naudé the road after Cottesloe led to leaving the ministry of the DRC. He founded the Christian Institute and edited the CI's magazine *Pro Veritate*. For many he became a human beacon of hope, daring to stand for truth and justice and for reconciliation, but at a considerable cost to himself and his family. In the end it led to his banning by the state. But he

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23 Lückhoff, *Cottesloe*, 69).

24 Kinghorn, Johan (et al) 1986. *Die N G Kerk en Apartheid* (The DRC and Apartheid). Johannesburg: Macmillan, 118.

25 Lückhoff, *Cottesloe*, 152.

never lost hope, and tried to maintain ties with his colleagues in the church, endeavouring to explain himself to them, encouraging them and challenging them to stand up for what is right and just<sup>26</sup>. In a very poignant personal letter to Rev A M Meiring (June 24, 1962) Naudé wrote:<sup>27</sup>

"Liewe Arnold,

Hartlik en innig dank vir jou antwoord van 28 Mei insake my telegram oor die Sabotasie-wetsontwerp. Ek is dankbaar vir wat jy probeer doen én reggekry het en dit spyt my dat daar van die ander broers is wat blykbaar die opregte bedoelinge van my versoek bevestig.

Die hele aangeleentheid van ons getuienis as Christene teenoor Kerk en owerheid het my die afgelope tyd baie besig gehou. Ek weet dat sommige mede-broers in die bediening asook baie lidmate my siening en optrede skerp kritiseer, ook deur my deelname aan Pro Veritate. In die lig van vroeëre gesprekke wat ons gehad het wil ek hier persoonlik teenoor jou getuig dat ek oortuig is daarvan dat ons as Christene ons diepste oortuiginge in 'n tyd soos hierdie nie moet verswyg nie, maar juis moet uitspreek. In 'n preek gelewer 27 Mei (waarvan ek 'n afskrif aan jou stuur) het ek gesoek om aan die gemeente dit te doen. Hoe dit ookal misverstaan mag word deur sommige, is ek oortuig dat dit nodig is as ons N G Kerk sy profetiese getuienis nie heeltemal kragteloos wil laat word nie.

Miskien stem jy nie saam met my en my siening oor ons optrede en boodskap in hierdie tyd nie. Dit verwag ek ook nie, solank ek weet dat jy en 'n paar ander broers met wie ek baie dinge uit my eie lewe gedeel het, weet dat my uitsprake en optrede nie gemotiveer word deur sondige oorgevoeligheid of selfbejammering of gekrenkte trots nie, maar dat hulle gebore is uit 'n eerlike en opregte soeke na die waarheid in Christus.

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26 Pauw, J C 2005: "The Life and Legacy of Beyers Naudé" in Hansen, L D 2005: *The Legacy of Beyers Naudé*. Beyers Naudé Centre Series on Public Theology. Stellenbosch: Sun Press, 13ff.

27 *Meiring Archive*. Translation: Dear Arnold, I want to thank you, cordially and sincerely, for your answer of the 28<sup>th</sup> of May concerning my telegram *re* the Sabbotage bill. I am grateful for what you are trying to do, and succeed in doing, and it saddens me that some of the other brothers seemingly question the motives behind my request.

The whole issue of our Christian witness towards the State has been occupying my mind to a great extent. I know that some of our fellow brothers in the ministry as well as congregants harshly criticize my views, as well as my work with *Pro Veritate*. In the light of our discussions in the past, I want to testify to you personally that I am convinced that we as Christians should not refrain from voicing our deepest convictions, but that we indeed are under the obligation to speak out. In a sermon to my congregation on the 27<sup>th</sup> of May (see the attached copy) I attempted to do that. Even if some do misunderstand my actions, I remain convinced that we need to take care that the DRC does not emasculate its prophetic witness.

It may be that you are not in agreement with me or my views concerning our actions and our message in times like these. I do not expect that, as long as I know that you, and some of the other brothers with whom I have shared so many of my life experiences, know that my statements and actions are not motivated by a sinful hypersensitivity or a hurt pride, but that they are born from an honest and sincere search for the truth in Christ.

My aim is not to elicit an answer from you, I merely wanted you to know that I am acting and testifying as a Christian, without causing you, as moderator, or my fellow brothers, embarrassment.

With cordial wishes and greetings,

Your brother in Him,

Bey.

My bedoeling is nie om 'n antwoord uit te lok nie – ek wou maar net hê dat jy weet dat ek as Christen probeer handel en getuig, sonder om daardeur jou as moderator of as medebroer in verleentheid te probeer bring.

Hartlike seënwense en groete,

Jou broer in Hom,

Bey.

#### 4.3 The Dutch Reformed Church became increasingly isolated

A third bitter fruit of the Cottesloe saga is the fact that the DRC, after severing its ties with the WCC, became increasingly isolated. Earlier in the 20<sup>th</sup> century the church was an enthusiastic member of the ecumenical community, playing its part in international ecumenical discussions and actions. A number of DRC theologians and church leaders found themselves in leadership positions, in the ranks of the World Council of Churches as well as other ecumenical organisations. After the events of 1960 and 1961 all of this changed. In what may be the last interview that Beyers Naudé, when he was already very frail in bed, allowed (Mike Heaney, 10 March 2001), he again referred to the fact that, in the DRC, there was “'n huiwering en 'n terughouding op die ekumeniese toneel” (a hesitation and reticence on the ecumenical scene). He explained how the South African government was partially responsible for this:

“Na Cottesloe was die deure in Suid-Afrika in sekere sin vir die WRK gesluit. Die regering self het alles in hul vermoë gedoen dat daar geen wesenlike kontak sou wees tussen die WRK en die Suid-Afrikaanse kerke nie. Persone soos John Vorster in sy uitsprake, sowel as die rol van Koos Geriecke, het hierdie geslotenheid help bevorder om alle moontlike krane tussen die WRK en die Suid-Afrikaanse kerke toe te draai. Daardie krane het hulle baie goed toegedraai. Baie min water het uit daardie krane gedrup. Aan die ander kant was daar talle predikante wat ten spyte van al hierdie dinge hulle belangstelling in die ekumeniese visie verdiep het.”<sup>28</sup>

It took a full fourteen years for the DRC to re-evaluate its ecumenical ties to the outside world, by establishing an Ecumenical Office in Pretoria. Frans Geldenhuys who was appointed the first director of the office in 1974 lamented the years of isolation. After leaving the WCC, he said, the DRC found itself in a theological vacuum. Ecumenical contacts on a smaller scale did continue. The DRC was still accepted in the ranks of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod (Council) and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, but through the years these relations, too, would be strained to the limit.

Within South Africa, the same would happen. The DRC who used to play a major role in establishing ecumenical relations among the South African churches, was left – or left itself

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28 Heaney, M. J. 2004: *Beyers Naudé as ekumeniese baanbreker in Suid-Afrika, 1960-1994*. (Beyers Naudé as ecumenical trailblazer in South Africa), Ph. D. Thesis, University of Pretoria, 349. Translation: After Cottesloe, in a matter of speaking, the doors in South Africa were closed on the WCC. The South African government tried its best to forestall any meaningful contact between the WCC and the South African churches. Individuals like John Vorster (premier) and Koos Geriecke (prominent DRC leader) promoted this isolation by closing all the taps of contact. They closed the taps well. Very little water passed through the taps. But, on the other hand, there were a number of ministers who, in spite of all this, maintained a deep interest in the ecumenical vision.

– out in the cold. When the Christian Council of South Africa developed into the South African Council of Churches, the DRC was absent. Relationships on a smaller scale with more conservative evangelical groups were continued, bilateral discussions with some churches did take place from time to time, but by and large the DRC chose to journey alone. Beyers Naudé tried to remedy this by establishing the Christian Institute, but interest in DRC for joining the Institute was very low indeed. Worse than that, Naudé and his institute became the targets of heavy opposition. Within the DRC Family the DRC's actions in the aftermath of Cottesloe, especially the views that were expressed and the theology of apartheid that increasingly became imbedded in DRC thinking, left an indelible mark, often bedevilling relations even further.

#### 4.4 In the ecumenical world attitudes towards the DRC and South Africa hardened.

The disappointment in ecumenical circles with the reaction of the Afrikaans Churches to the Cottesloe initiative, had another effect. In the international world-wide ecumenical community attitudes towards the South African situation as well as the stance of the Afrikaans Churches, hardened. The time for talking, for conducting conferences, for a soft approach, had come to an end. In WCC circles the argument was made for action, for a harder approach. The story of the development of the increasingly active participation of the WCC in the struggle against apartheid, of the many initiatives in this regard – inter alia the Program to Combat Racism – as told in the WCC publication *A Long Struggle. The Involvement of the WCC in South Africa*<sup>29</sup> provides fascinating reading.

### 5. CONCLUSION: HAS THE GHOST OF COTTESLOE BEEN PUT TO REST?

How are we to assess the significance of Cottesloe? John de Gruchy provided an answer by quoting W A de Klerk, the prominent Afrikaner novelist and thinker, as well as W A Visser 't Hooft.<sup>30</sup>

De Klerk wrote quite dramatically:

“The ghost of Cottesloe would return to haunt the Afrikaner's wayward theologizing. There was evidence that, in spite of the silencing, recantation, bowing of heads and deep cogitation, something remained”. For years to come the Afrikaans churches would have to grapple with the issues that Cottesloe put on the table.”

Visser 't Hooft's response summed up the feelings of many outside the DRC who were disappointed by the official DRC rejection of Cottesloe:

“The fact remains that this witness and the attitudes that the World Council has taken with regard to race relations has encouraged many, particularly among the non-White Christians, who had begun to feel hopeless about the role of the Christian church. And it should be remembered in the churches of the World Council that not only in the present member churches in South Africa, but also in the churches which have left us, there are many men and women who are deeply conscious of belonging to the world community, gathered by the same Lord, whose task is to make the transcendent power of Christ

29 Webb, Pauline (ed) 1994. *A Long Struggle. Involvement of the WCC in South Africa*. Geneva: WCC.

30 De Gruchy, Struggle, 1982: 68, cf Vosloo, Robert 2011. The Dutch Reformed Church, Beyers Naudé and the ghost of Cottesloe. *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, May 2011(73/11), 1-17.

tangible and visible in deeds of justice and fellowship through which the estrangement of races can and must be overcome.”<sup>31</sup>

Has that happened? Is the ghost of Cottesloe at long last put to rest? Were the Reformed Churches, the DRC in particular, in South Africa in the decades that followed able to redeem themselves? Were the men and women who followed in the footsteps of the heroes of Cottesloe able to make a real difference, to stand up for truth and justice and fellowship?

Looking back, six decades down the line, things indeed have changed. The old apartheid South Africa had become the New South Africa (1994). In the DRC there was a change of heart as well – but it took many years and as many agonizing struggles to arrive at the point where the church in all sincerity was able to take leave of apartheid. The DRC General Synod, in the same year (1994), declared the theology of apartheid to be a sin and a heresy, confessing its guilt towards God and towards fellow South Africans for the pain and the suffering the Church has caused to so many over the years. At the same session of synod a similar apology was extended to the prophets within the fold who were treated shoddily by the DRC, but who courageously persevered in their efforts to call the church to reconsider its stance and to change its views on both the theology as well as the practise of apartheid, and to move towards restoring the unity in the DRC family. It was moving moment when Beyers Naudé, the only survivor among the “heroes of Cottesloe” was given a standing ovation on the last day of synod. “Oom Bey”, the moderator Rev Freek Swanepoel said. “You had it right, all these years. We thank the Lord God for your witness”.<sup>32</sup>

And yet, the DRC still has a long way to go. Within the ecumenical community, the DRC has been accepted again. The different statements made by the church on racism and apartheid have been acknowledged with understanding and words of encouragement. But, this we need to realize, erasing apartheid from the church’s statements is one thing. Erasing racism and prejudice from the hearts and minds of men and women who grew up and for many years lived in an apartheid society, quite another. In spite of progress made on many levels, and in spite of the church’s commitment to contribute in the struggle against injustice and inequality in South Africa, the DRC family itself continue to be a divided community. Unity talks are proceeding at a painfully slow pace.

At the same Synod of 1994 the newly inaugurated president Nelson Mandela paid a surprise visit. He addressed the delegates in Afrikaans, not mincing his words about the atrocities of the past, and the involvement of the DRC in this regard: “I am not saying this in order to rub salt into your wounds, because I am aware of the long struggle within the Dutch Reformed Church to eventually reject apartheid. I am conscious of the agonizing of many of the church members along the way”. Then he added that the real test, the acid test, of whether the DRC had really taken leave of apartheid would be passed the day the DRC family - which had become separated more than a century ago because of racial prejudice - became *one* again. May that happen soon!<sup>33</sup>

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31 De Gruchy, *Struggle*, 68.

32 Du Toit, *Moeisame Pad*, 116f

33 *Acts, DRC General Synod 1994*: 536, my translation; cf Gaum, F. M. 1997: *Die Verhaal van die N G Kerk se Reis met met Apartheid* (The story of the DRC’s journey with Apartheid). Wellington: Hugenote-Uitgewers, 62f; and Meiring, Piet 2004: *The Dutch Reformed Church Family in South Africa. Lessons Learned on the Way to Unification*. In Best, Thomas (ed) 2004: *With a Demonstration of the Spirit and of Power*. Geneva: WCC, 130.

May the Lord grant that the DRC pass the acid test in the near future. Then, at last, the ghost of Cottesloe may be put to rest.

**KEY WORDS**

Apartheid  
Cottesloe Consultation  
Ecumenical relations  
Dutch Reformed Church  
Sharpeville Massacre  
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**TREFWOORDE**

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## The rocky road travelled by the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa towards church unity: from Tshilidzini to Pretoria, 1971 to 1991<sup>2</sup>

### ABSTRACT

This review of the rocky road travelled by the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (DRCA) towards church unity consists of five parts. First, the historical background to the DRCA is briefly traced. Second, the author investigates the various decisions of the general synod of the DRCA regarding church unification from Tshilidzini in 1971 to Pretoria in 1991. Third, decisions of the general synod of the then DRCA on the fourth confession are considered. Fourth, the decision of the general synod regarding the Belhar Confession prior to 14 April 1994 and the unity talks among the then Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) members and their impact on unity are discussed. Fifth, the final decisions of the then DRCA regarding church unification with the Dutch Reformed Mission Church (DRMC) as the result of the delay on the part of the DRC are investigated.

### INTRODUCTION

#### The background

As we trace the rocky road travelled by the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (DRCA) towards unity, it is appropriate that we begin with a consideration of racial segregation in the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) and why the need to unite the DRC family arose. Saayman (2007) reports that, the synod of 1834 dealt with two issues of direct importance to inter-racial worship, especially at Holy Communion. The synod pronounced unequivocally that nobody should be excluded from worship on the ground of race alone. It further stated that 'heathen' (non-white) members, baptised and catechised by ordained missionaries, would be considered full members of the local DRC. It is recorded that the real reason for this was that some congregations were increasingly unwilling to allow the administration of Holy Communion in an inter-racial setting, and so the question was submitted in order to get a clear injunction from synod whether or not such racial exclusivity was unacceptable (Dreyer, 1936; Saayman, 2007). Tingle (1992:12) indicates that division along racial lines in the DRC dates back to 1857, when it was decided that, although not desirable or scriptural, owing to the weakness of some (whites) it was permissible to hold separate services for white and black people. Furthermore, some smaller white members of the DRC family became established on the basis of doctrinal differences.

The DRC simply continued to ignore the theological injunction and continued with racial

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segregation in ministry and mission in many congregations. From 1857, therefore, the DRC was a church divided along racial lines. A brief historical background of the DRCA in order to investigate historical events that contributed to make the road to church unity a rocky one should prove instructive. The decisions of a number of general synods regarding church unity will be investigated and evaluated. Moreover, debate about the formulation and adoption of the fourth confession of faith of the African church will be highlighted. In this article we will journey together to remember how the DRCA struggled to find a possible way to church unity and her efforts to confess anew that Jesus is Lord within one united body of Christ. The major obstacles to church unity, and the drafting and adoption of the fourth confession of faith will be highlighted. These obstacles include paternalistic cooperation between the DRC and DRCA; the federal council of the DRC family; white missionaries who occupied leadership positions in the DRCA; socio-economic factors; the discussion forum regarding church unity; and the perception of black ministers of their own inferiority.

### **Aims of the study**

This article has five aims. The first is to briefly trace the historical background of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA) as it developed from the DRC into the DRCA and Dutch Reformed Mission Church in South Africa (DRMC). The second aim is to investigate and evaluate decisions of the general synod of the then DRCA regarding church unity from Tshilidzini in Venda in 1971 to Hatfield in Pretoria in 1991. The third aim is to illustrate the attempts of the DRCA to decide on the formulation and adoption of the fourth confession of faith for the African church. The fourth is to consider decisions of the general synod about the Belhar Confession prior to 14 April 1994 and the unity talks among then DRCA members and their impact on unity.

## **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO THE DRCA**

In 1652 the Dutch established a settlement in the Cape, and introduced reformed theology. Up until 1857 people of mixed decent as well as people of African heritage were accepted as fully fledged members of the DRC in South Africa. On 29 April 1829 the DRC synod dealt with an enquiry by the Somerset West congregation regarding separate facilities and services for congregants of mixed decent. At the infamous synod of the DRC in South Africa in 1857, approval was given for separate services for 'coloured' members of the church. This decision led to the division of Christians on the basis of colour at the table of the Lord as a matter of practice and policy, and was phrased as follows according to Thomas (2002:63):

The Synod considers it desirable and according to the Holy Scripture that our heathen members (non-whites) be accepted and initiated into our congregations wherever it is possible; but where this measure, as a result of the weakness of some, would stand in the way of promoting the work of Christ among the heathen people, then congregations set up among the heathen, or still to be set up, should enjoy their Christian privileges in a separate building or institution.

Thomas (2002:63) explains that in South Africa the DRMC had been established for coloured people by 1881; its purpose was not the same as that of the mission societies involved in church planting, but was rather to entrench racial segregation. The DRC saw the Mission Church not so much as a church moving towards autonomy, but rather as a coloured department of the mother church. The establishment of the DRCA was the outcome of mission work among the

African population undertaken by the various synods of the DRC. At first, African converts were simply added to the DRMC. In time, separate churches and synods for African converts were established. The first to be created was the synod of the Orange Free State in 1910. Similar synods were created in the Transvaal in 1932, the Cape Province in 1951 and Natal in 1952. The separation between these synods came to an end in 1963, when the DRCA was formed. Eventually, in 1968, the Reformed Church in Africa (for Indians) came into being (Thomas, 2002:194; Meiring, 2004:120).

The DRCA, based on racial segregationist principles, has the same structure, doctrine, traditions, and customs as the mother church, which retains extensive control over it by supplying 80% of its budget. Its clergy may not serve white congregations and intercommunion between the two churches, even as a symbol of ecumenical unity, is prohibited. White ministers were trained specifically to serve the black congregations, and these ministers were to be watchdogs of the DRC in its mission churches, and decision-makers on behalf of the mission church.

From its inception the DRCA enjoyed no independence or autonomy as a church. It was stated in article 4 of the church order of 1932 of the DRCA, which was handed over to the black church, that white ministers must be members of the moderation of the synod of the black church, and that the DRC must have representatives at all levels of the black church, in other words, at synod, presbytery and church council level. This arrangement was very disturbing to many theologians and ministers of the Word within the DRCA and DRMC. The disunity in the DRC family was questioned, and the need to become what the church originally was, one church, was expressed. Believers from the black church wanted to be accepted as believers in Jesus Christ, and not constantly to be classified as black or coloured or Asian Christians. The DRCA therefore called for church unity in its different synods.

## CHURCH UNITY TALKS IN DIFFERENT SYNODS OF THE DRCA

The DRCA, in its synods, viewed church unity as a gift, obligation and scriptural imperative. For the DRCA, the church is the body of Jesus Christ on earth – not many bodies, but one united body; this truth is vividly described in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians 1:12–31, where he compares the church to the human body, explaining that this body is a single, integrated, living organism whose every part supports, strengthens and intimately cooperates with every other part. There is no division or conflict in such a body; there is always the spontaneous mutual support which different organs give to one another. It is true that the limbs fulfil different offices and responsibilities, but all are servants of one another and cooperate closely in order to promote proper and successful functioning.

The DRCA felt the unity emphasised by Paul in this passage to be always central and crucial; although diversity is a reality which the church acknowledges and respects, it is always secondary. The DRCA in its synods was influenced by this passage and others dealing with church unity. They engaged in debates about the road to church unity. In the first place, the DRCA needed a compass to give it direction. It needed a confession of faith to express its stance amidst racial segregation, injustice and division in the church. There are therefore indications that the DRCA tabled the issue of the fourth confession of faith in the synods of Tshilidzini, Umgababa, Barkly West, Umtata, Cape Town and Pretoria.

### The general synod of Tshilidzini in 1971

Discussions about race relations within the ecumenical movement were held as early as

1946. From 1958 on, the agenda of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod (RES) declared there was no scriptural evidence either for or against mixed-race marriages. In 1968, the RES took the additional step of saying that Church and state may not prohibit mixed-race marriages. In 1968, the RES declared that the unity of the body of Christ should come to expression in common worship, including the administration and taking of Holy Communion, among Christians regardless of race. The RES also held a series of consultations with South Africans. The RES declaration and consultation in South Africa sparked a debate within the DRCA, the end result of which was the drafting of an African confession of faith encapsulating the standpoint of the African church. The matter was referred to the Federal Council of Dutch Reformed Churches for advice and reported to the general synod (Luke & Van Houten, 1997).

Based on decision 11.2, the general synod of Tshilidzini stated the synod's acceptance of the recommendation of the federal council of the DRC that there should be no changes in creeds without consultation with the other member churches. This decision indicates that a proposal was tabled before the synod to discuss the possibility of an additional confession of faith. The federal council of the DRC was an obstacle to progress in that regard (NGKA Akta, 1971). Thomas (2002:63) reminds us that the federal council was established by the DRC in the 1940s, with no single, multiracial body to express the unity of the church. While the motives for establishing 'daughter churches' were initially based on racial considerations, they were later justified in terms of the three formulas which were, of course, also applied to the black churches founded by the DRC outside South Africa. The emphasis was on the salvation of individuals rather than on the salvation of whole peoples. In the light of the intention behind the establishment of the federal council, it was clear that it would not support any movement towards the establishment of a multiracial body to express church unity.

The influence of the leadership of the synod at that time should not be underestimated. The synod was led and advised by members of the DRC as per the church order of 1932. The influential positions of moderator and actuary were occupied by white missionaries, who were white South Africans who supported the order of the day. Thomas (2002:195) explains that white ministers in the DRCA had an influential voice:

There were also strong pragmatic factors which might have made it sympathetic to apartheid. Although legally autonomous, it was still extremely dependent on the NGK for financial subsidies, while the white missionaries of the 'mother church' working in the NGKA not only exercised a powerful influence within it, but remained members of, and responsible to, the white church rather than to the NGKA itself.

These missionaries remained loyal to the DRC and its apartheid policy. In consequence, the DRCA delayed implementing the decision of the synod on church unity.

It was the Afrikaans churches which in principle accepted that their white and black members should be segregated. Thomas (2002) states:

However, in terms of wealth and power it easily matched the resources of even the largest churches of the Ecumenical Bloc, particularly because after 1948 the members of successive apartheid-supporting Nationalist governments, practically without exception, were members of these churches. The close collusion between church and state was reinforced by the fact that the leading members of both the Nationalist government and the Dutch Reformed Churches belonged to the secret society known as the Afrikaner Broederbond, or the 'Band of Afrikaner Brothers'. That body was widely and popularly

believed to be the *eminence grise* guiding the policies and particularly the apartheid policies of the Nationalist government.

It was mainly as a result of the influence of the Afrikaans churches that the policy of apartheid or segregation between white and blacks in schools came to be accepted. Nevertheless, the very same white ministers in the DRCA subsequently supported a single, non-racial, united church in South Africa (Saayman, 2007).

### **The general synod of Worcester of 1975**

Traditionally, the DRCA was led by white missionaries as per the church order of 1932. The Worcester synod witnessed a turning point in terms of the leadership of the church. In this historical synod the first black moderator (the Rev ETS Buti) and first black scribe (SPE Buti) were elected, granting hope for sound debate on church unity arising from a change of leadership. This synod took a decision about church unity (NGKA Akta, 1975). Decision 1.2.6. can be summed up as follows: the general synod wished to unite with the Indian Reformed Church, Dutch Reformed Mission Church and Dutch Reformed Church in order to form one church, and instructed the synodical commission to meet with these churches to discuss the possibilities of church unity.

The role played by the white missionaries in the DRCA and the operational structure of the DRCA should not be overlooked. The powerful influence of the missionaries and congregational subsidies from the DRC affected the implementation of the decision. This decision became a threat to the DRC, because it viewed racial segregation as a means of protection from the other nations:

Racial separation was only widely accepted in the church in the early twentieth century, as many Afrikaners came to believe that their own survival as a community was threatened, and as the belief in racial separation was gaining acceptance among white South Africans in general. Social and spiritual survival became intertwined in church philosophy, influenced in part by the early twentieth-century persecution of the Afrikaners by the British (see British Imperialism and the Afrikaners, ch. 1). Church leaders refused to condemn Afrikaner rebellions against the British, and their followers gained strength by attributing divine origins to their struggle for survival. Reasons for church division were and are still deeply rooted in the South African social, political, cultural, personal and economic situation. One can therefore deduce that it was impossible for members of the DRC who were serving as ministers in the DRCA to support the decision of the general synod. The church is divided along the lines of class, economic disparity and material interests, and the poverty of the vast majority of black Christians compared with the relative affluence of their white counterparts is likely to be the most serious stumbling block to the expression of unity.

This decision had subsidy implications and was very difficult to implement: most of the black DRCA ministers would not insist on this decision because it might have resulted in a reduction in the subsidy from the white DRC, which supported a racially separated church and society. The new black leadership led the synod in taking the initiative towards achieving church unity, but the initiative did not progress as expected. The conservatives within the leadership and white advisors from the DRC diverted the process towards consultations and discussion forums.

## The general synod of Umgababa of 1979

During this synod the formulation of the fourth confession of faith was tabled and discussed intensively. According to the Acta of the synod of Umgababa of 1979, the synod tabled the point on the fourth confession of faith for all churches that were working together with the DRCA (decision 14.4 of the Umgababa synod). The debate on the formulation of the confession of faith was a point of departure for discussion on church unity in the context of the DRC family. With regard to decision 14.4.1.3, the synod decided that some issues remained unresolved within the DRCA, and the general synod did not take a decision on those issues. The synod instructed its commission on Bible study and confessions to formulate the draft of the fourth confession of faith as a statement of faith of the African church. This synod implemented the decision of the synod of Ottawa of 1978 on racism (and thus apartheid), where the reformed churches called for a *status confessionis*<sup>3</sup> on the situation in South Africa. A *status confessionis* requires Christians to confess anew during times of heresy and false proclamation of the gospel. At such times the church needs to create a symbol as part of the confession of the church, where the church declares itself in the present so that the false teachings may be known and corrected. This synod therefore debated the possibility of formulating the fourth confession of faith as a means of achieving reconciliation, justice and unity (NGKA Akta 1979).

Furthermore, the synod decided on church unity for all members of the DRC family (NGKA Akta 1979). The synod instructed its General Synod Commission (GSC) to open negotiation for such unity with other members of the family; however, the GSC was required to take into account decision 1.2.6 of Worcester 1975 and was to report to the next general synod meeting. The tone of decision 14.4.1.3 reflected the character of the leadership in that synod: one of the black conservative members from the Umgababa leadership (the Rev MJ Lebone) was at that time the moderator; the actuary (the Rev NW Basson) was also a conservative member, with the scribe (Dr SPE Buti) being a radical member and the assessor (EM Mataboge) a moderate. Along the road to church unity leadership has made a significant contribution to either fast tracking or delaying the process. This synod used referral as a technique to delay the process; the next synod was to give feedback on the development of church unity (NGKA Akta 1979).

## The general synod of Barkly West of 1983

The synod of Umgababa of 1979 had instructed the GSC to enter into negotiation with other members of the DRC family about church unity, and the report of the GSC on church unity was to be considered by the synod of Barkly West of 1983. This section will focus on the decisions of this synod regarding church unity.

The synod of Barkly West took a firm stand on church unity in decision 1.2.1. The decision was taken that church unity is an obligation that the church is required to meet, and that the church is to proclaim this unity wherever it proclaims the gospel. In the very same synod thorough preparations were made for church unity in terms of theological training for ministers. An interesting element of these preparations was the change in the DRCA theological training

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<sup>3</sup> Literally, *status confessionis* means a situation of confessing – a situation in which the confession of Jesus Christ is at stake. As stated in the Ottawa resolution of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches with regard to white Reformed Afrikaner Churches in South Africa, declaring that a situation constitutes a *status confessionis* means “that we regard this as an issue on which it is not possible to differ without seriously jeopardizing the integrity of our common confession.”

curriculum to match that of the DRC, through the addition of the Bachelor of Arts (with Greek 1 and 2 and Hebrew 1 and 2) and Bachelor of Divinity (master's equivalent). The aim of the change in curriculum was to equip future black ministers who would be participating in the ministry of the united church. This decision was then referred to the order commission for further research on the possibility of church unity and negotiation with other DRC family members on the matter. The order commission was then required to report to the GSC. The moderation of the DRCA endeavoured to fulfil this mandate, and as a result, discussions were held with DRC family members (NGKA Akta 1983).

After the synod of Berkley-West there were discussions amongst the moderatures, executive committees and representatives of DRC family members. The composition of the discussion group members was as follows:

- DRC members: the Revv JE Potgieter, GSJ Möller and DJ Viljoen, and Doctors DCG Fourie and P Rossouw
- DRCM members: the Rev Mentor and Dr AJC Erwee
- DRCA members: the Revv MJ Lebone, EM Mataboge, NW Basson and Dr MS Pitikoe
- RCA members: No representative (NGKA Akta, 1987).

Of the ministers, 54% were white, 18% were coloured and 28% were black. One can deduce that on the basis of numbers, the white ministers would have dominated the group in terms of votes and the opportunity to speak. Thomas (2002:195) argues that although the DRCA was legally autonomous, it remained heavily dependent on the DRC for financial subsidies, while the white missionaries of the mother church working in the DRCA not only exercised a powerful influence within it, but remained members of, and responsible and accountable to the DRC rather than to the DRCA itself. Naturally the racism and division in the church benefited the white community. The financial culture of the time also determined the words and actions of black ministers in the DRCA, with the three conservative black ministers being affluent compared with those who were vocal on church unity.

According to the agenda of the general synod of the DRCA of 1987, the discussion group did not deal with the *status confessionis* or church unity, the purpose of the meeting being to placate the black church. The agenda for the March 1985 meeting between the executives of the DRC and the DRCA is revealing: the migration of labourers (people moving from the Bantustans to white cities), DRC subsidies to the DRCA ministers, and government social grants to black people. This meeting took place at the height of the apartheid struggle, when many black people lost their lives, but this was not raised as a topic. The DRC told the executive committee of the DRCA that the church's role in the country was joint prayer for all the people, but no engagement in politics (NGKA Akta 1987). During the discussion the point was expressed that if things are right in the church, they will automatically be right in society. It was emphasised that delegates had come together to support one another, which is why it was important to be open and honest with one another, and in Christ to accept and listen to one another. The meeting emphasised prayers and an apolitical stance, while nevertheless facing the issues of the day. This discussion session did not extend to church unity as per the synod decision or the mandate to the order commission (NGKA Akta, 1987).

In that the decision register of 1987 (Akta 1987), the chairperson reported on the March 1985 meeting between the DRC and the DRCA, convened by the DRC, during which church unity

was discussed. In their response to the DRC's position that it believed the Church of Jesus Christ to be one, without different visible forms (implying it is invisible), the Rev Lebone's leadership stated that they too were still considering the matter of church unity, which implied that they concurred with the DRC's stance on the church's invisible unity. Thus, by not taking a stand on the matter, the DRCA missed an opportunity to state its position regarding church unity before the DRC. Instead, the DRCA leadership played into the hands of the DRC, frustrating visible and structural unity, by pleading that the leaders too had not taken any decision on such unity (Kgatla, 2011).

### **The general synod of Umtata of 1987**

The general synod of Barkly West had already taken a firm stand on church unity, and the GSC was required to report to the general synod of Umtata on progress made in this regard. Based on point 2.6.1.2 of the agenda of the Umtata synod, the GSC referred the decision on church unity to the permanent law commission for the necessary attention and advice to the synod. The permanent law commission responded as follows: "The synod refers the decision of 1983 on church unity, that is, decision 1.2.1 on pages 344 to 347 of the Acta, together with all decisions that the synod will take during the meeting of 1987, to the executive committee as the stand point of our church."<sup>4</sup> The matter that was referred to the GSC was also referred to the law commission, and the law commission referred it to the executive committee – a time-consuming process. Important to note is who among the members of the law commission referred the matter, and the ratio of white to black members of the commission: there were eight members of the commission in all, of whom five were white and three black. The report was finalised by two white members of the law commission, namely the Revv NW Basson and SO Skeen; in consequence, one should not take the report entirely at face value.

The synod then reiterated the position it took in Barkly West in 1983, and emphasised the importance of the decision taken there. In decisions 18.9.1 to 18.9.4 the synod emphasised the powers of the general synod in connection with decision 22 of the Bloemfontein synod. In decision 1.2.3.1 in connection with the unity of the members of the DRC, the DRCA stated that it did not support church division in the public life of the church. Therefore the synod reemphasised decisions 1.2.1.3.2.1 to 1.2.1.3.2.5 taken at Barkly West:

- Church unity is an obligation. The church is under obligation to proclaim this unity and to emphasise it wherever it goes.
- The diversity of spiritual gifts within the church (diversity within unity) was emphasised.
- The broader unity of the church was emphasised and it was stated that services should be open to all who wish to pray God in truth.
- The church exists through its members and it needs to model the truth and unity of Christ, which surpass human nationality and race.
- For the above to be fulfilled, the members of the DRC family choose the way of negotiation. If this way does not materialise, the church will be free to use the best way that will be suitable for the church (NGKA Akta, 1987).

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<sup>4</sup> Die Regskommissie wil graag die volgende aanbeveling aan die sinode voorlê: Die sinode stuur die besluite wat hy in 1983 oor kerkeenheid geneem het, d.w.s. Besluit 1.2.1 op bld 344 tot 347 van die Akta, sowel as enige besluite wat hy tydens die vergadering van 1987 mag neem, na die Uitvoerende Komitee as die standpunt van ons Kerk.

The general synod in Umtata took a firm stance to strengthen the decisions taken at Worcester, Umgababa and Barkly West, directing the synod to embrace church unity in a real sense of the word. The identity of the leaders at this time is important. The church was then in the hands of great thinkers, critical ministers of religion and theologians of the moment such as Dr SPE Buti (moderator), Rev MM Maphoto (assessor), Dr NJ Smith (actuary) and Dr MS Pitikoe (scribe). These were men of God who guided church unity talks to the point of the establishment of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa following the 1991 general synod of Pretoria (NGKA Akta, 1987).

### **The general synod of Pretoria of 1991**

Prior to the general synod of Pretoria of 1991 there had been an extraordinary general synod sitting of the DRCA in October 1990 in Cape Town to discuss the implementation of the decisions of the DRCA over many years. In that synod a final decision was taken that the two churches, the DRCA and DRMC, would continue with the process of unification that would lead to unity between these two churches. The decision was final. The general synod of Pretoria in 1991 was given the task of implementing the decisions of the previous synods on church unity (NGKA Akta, 1991).

The synod of Pretoria took a different decision based on decision 1.2.1.3.2.5 of Barkly West, namely that the DRCA should choose the way of negotiation; if this proved unsuccessful, and the church was free to adopt the path it deemed best. In this synod the church approved the dissolution of church structures so as to be able to unite with the DRMC. The synod took the important decision to dissolve the general synod, regional synods and presbyteries. The legal existence of congregations continued. Based on the history of the DRCA, the church then existed as it had done between 1881 and 1963, in the form of congregations, before uniting on 7 May 1963 to constitute a single black general synod.

## **THE DECISIONS OF THE DRCA IN RELATION TO THE FOURTH CONFESSION OF FAITH FOR THE AFRICAN CHURCH**

According to the agendas and the Acta of the DRCA for the period that falls within the scope of this article, there is evidence of efforts by the DRCA to formulate the fourth confession of faith for the African church. The Belhar Confession of 1982 was supposed to be a solution to the protracted attempts of the DRCA to formulate the fourth African confession of faith. In the subsequent synods of the DRCA, namely Tshilidzini 1971, Umgababa 1979, Umtata 1987, Cape Town of 1990 (extraordinary synod) and finally Pretoria, Hatfield 1991, there had been discussions and debates concerning the formulation and adoption of the fourth confession of faith. These decisions are briefly highlighted below.

At the synod of Tshilidzini of 1971, decision 11.2 related to the fourth confession of faith. The synod accepted the recommendation of the Federal Council of Dutch Reformed Churches that there must be no changes in confessions of faith without consultation with all members. This decision suggests that changes in the confessions of the church had been considered. The federal council of the DRC family advised the synod that all members of the council should be consulted on this matter. In essence, the federal council was not in favour of changes to the confession, and were buying time by referring the matter to all members of the federal council of the DRC family.

The fourth confession appears again on the agenda of the synod of Umgababa of 1979, where it was the subject of decision 14.4. The synod hesitated to act any further in this regard, considering that certain matters remained unresolved within the DRCA alone. However, the synod then instructed its commission on Bible study and confessions to begin drafting the fourth confession, with due emphasis on the African church's faith (NGKA Akta, 1979). In the agenda and the Acta of Barkly West of 1983 there is no indication that the commission had formulated the draft of the fourth confession of faith. We need to remember that the draft of the Belhar Confession was a year old and awaiting acceptance by the synod of the DRMC.

The synod of Umtata of 1987 made the Belhar Confession, which was accepted by the DRMC as their fourth confession, the subject of its decision 14.5. The DRCA referred the Belhar Confession to its commission for Bible study and confession for study and evaluation. Specific aspects to be considered were:

- the importance of the acceptance of the Belhar Confession by the DRCA
- how the acceptance of the Belhar Confession would contribute to church unity, and whether it would either promote or disrupt the unity process

The commission was required to make its findings available to the federal council of the DRC during the recess and make recommendations to the next synod.

The DRCA regional synod first discussed the Belhar Confession, the fourth confession adopted by the DRMC synod, in 1986. A vote was taken: 182 voted for, and 11 voted against, with one abstaining. During the meeting, some individual black ministers received threats via telephone from the DRC, warning them that they would lose their subsidies if they voted for the adoption of the Belhar Confession. Indeed, some of these threats were carried out later, when the DRC placed the stipend of a number of ministers on a sliding scale (*glyskaal*). The DRC was strongly opposed to the DRCA acceptance of the Belhar Confession, and was prepared to do everything in its power to frustrate the process. However, the theological insights and influence of the DRMC did not take root in the DRCA without resistance. The moderator (chairperson) of the synod, the Rev Lebone, who later led a splinter group that remains resistant to URCSA unity, objected from the chair. His stance was also evident in his moderator's report to the DRCA general synod held in Umtata in 1987 (Kgatla, 2011).

The synod of Pretoria, Hatfield discussed the report of Umtata 1987 on acceptance of the Belhar confession of faith. The synod of Pretoria, Hatfield of 1991 favoured implementation over talking, and did everything in its power to ensure the acceptance of the Belhar confession of faith. The Belhar Confession was accepted by the synod as the fourth confession of faith of the DRCA on the strength of a large majority vote. The acceptance of the Belhar Confession by this synod was a clear indication that the DRCA was now in a position to work towards reconciliation, justice, and ultimately church unity. The road travelled by the DRCA to reach this outcome was not an easy one, and involved overcoming the following hurdles:

- psychological factors (internalised superiority and internalised inferiority)
- leadership of the church (the right person in the right position at the right time)
- quality of theological training (inferior theological training led to a lack of critical thinking)
- missionaries (inferior white ministers trained to minister only to black congregations)

feared that they would not match up to their brothers from the DRC and that they would never rise to leadership positions); as ambassadors sent by the DRC to serve the ideological interests of that church in the DRCA, they delayed the process

- economic factors, specifically, dependency on the DRCA (as a result of which the DRC placed the stipend of a number of ministers on a sliding scale)
- the federal council of the DRC
- discussions with the DRC when serious decisions were to be taken

These hurdles made a significant contribution in delaying the process of achieving church unity. It is sad to note that the same mentality prevails today within some of the member churches of the DRC family. It is therefore important to take note of such strategies when engaging in talks about the adoption of the Belhar Confession and church reunification.

## CONCLUSION

This article has offered some historical background to the URCSA. In it I investigated various decisions of the general synods of the then DRCA from Tshilidzini in Venda in 1971 to Pretoria, Hatfield in 1991 regarding church unification. The research undertaken revealed significant efforts made by the DRCA to establish the United Reformed Church until it dissolved itself in preparation to uniting with the DRMC. It was also found that this church travelled a long way in an attempt to draft the fourth confession of faith up to the point where it received a gift from God in the form of the Belhar Confession, accepted at the synod of Pretoria of 1991. The acceptance of the Belhar Confession was a clear indication that the DRCA was committed to reconciliation, justice and church unity. This article takes cognizance of the struggle of the then DRCA to achieve reconciliation, justice and church unity among the DRC family members.

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## Reformed Churches struggle for justice: Lessons learnt from their submissions before the TRC

### ABSTRACT

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) arranged a special hearing for all faith communities in relation to their contribution to human rights violations under apartheid. This forced different faith groupings and Christian denominations to recollect their role in the struggle for justice in South Africa. Two prominent Reformed Churches made submissions to the TRC on how they have dealt with the history of apartheid in relation to the struggle for justice. Their submissions were made up of different themes as they reflected on their role in the struggle for justice within South Africa's apartheid's past (within the time frame 1960 to 1990). This contribution aims to highlight and discuss some of the most prominent themes in the struggle for justice from the two Reformed Churches as they reflected on the apartheid past and to identify some lessons from among these themes that the church community can use in order to empower the church to redeem the past and contribute to healing and reconciliation in the present and future.

"But our future must be founded on the truth of the past. The Word of God teaches us that the truth makes us free!" Jan Marais (submission of the presbytery of the DRC Stellenbosch in Paarl).

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)<sup>2</sup> received submissions from different faith groupings and Christian denominations in reaction to a call from the TRC for a special hearing for all faith communities in relation to human rights violations under apartheid. This contribution will specifically focus on how the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC)<sup>3</sup> and the Uniting Reformed Church in South Africa (URCSA)<sup>4</sup> have dealt with the history of apartheid in their submissions before the TRC.

In relation to their struggle for justice, "remembrance" and "memory"<sup>5</sup> are key elements for both victims and perpetrators within the two churches. Given their vast different backgrounds and experiences of the traumatic past and the way these formed their own identities, it is obligatory for healing and reconciliation that they remember the past and share it in public with each other. Suppressed and forgotten truth is part of the inclusive truth<sup>6</sup> which must be uncovered if a polarised society is to be united in the healing process and form a communal identity.

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2 The TRC was officially established and maintained by Parliament in July 1995 with the task to find the truth of what happened in South Africa between the 1<sup>st</sup> of March 1960 and the 5<sup>th</sup> of December 1993.

3 The General Synod, a regional synod and a presbytery of the DRC made official submissions to the TRC.

4 URCSA, as well as the Messina URCSA congregation also submitted official submissions to the TRC.

5 See the article by Prof F. Deist, in *Die Kerkbode*, 8/9 September 1996, p 5.

6 Also see Villa-Vicencio (1995:114).

How we understand truth is essential to how we are able to make our past redemptive. This was emphasised by Archbishop emeritus Desmond Tutu when he stated, "There can be no healing without truth" (TRC Report of South Africa, vol. 4. 1998:115). The TRC argued vigorously that truth should also be understood as healing and restorative truth over and against a factual and objective understanding of truth. This supports the movement towards a more comprehensive understanding of truth, namely: relational, personal, subjective and narrative understanding of truth.

The aim of this contribution is firstly to highlight and discuss some of the most prominent themes in the struggle for justice from the two Reformed Churches as they reflected on the apartheid past (within the time frame of 1960 to 1990) in their submissions before the TRC. Secondly, the aim is to make a constructive contribution toward dealing with the past and contributing to healing and reconciliation by identifying some lessons learnt from the themes discussed. The goal of these lessons is to empower the church to redeem the past, live in the present and move towards the future.

## 2. PROMINENT THEMES IN THE SUBMISSIONS

### 2.1 Submission before the TRC?

The DRC was very hesitant about making a submission before the TRC. Leading up to the inception of the TRC and thereafter the Afrikaans media was prominent in spreading negative rhetoric<sup>7</sup> regarding the TRC. It referred to the TRC as a witch-hunt<sup>8</sup> and a one-sided process where the Afrikaner will be placed in the dock.<sup>9</sup> The effect of this negative rhetoric created scepticism and mistrust among the Afrikaans community towards dealing with the apartheid past and in particular the work of the TRC.<sup>10</sup>

The DRC did nonetheless take thorough cognisance of the aim and work of the TRC.<sup>11</sup> It made a conscious decision to support the work of the TRC with prayer as early as the end of 1995 and specifically requested the TRC to act fairly to all sides (Meiring 1999:20). Meiring,<sup>12</sup> as a member of the TRC and member of the DRC, urged the DRC to participate in the TRC process by giving its support, pastorally caring for the victims and perpetrators (and their families) and to pray for the Commission. He also assured them that it will be an opportunity for witness if the DRC could submit a report that will not only explain their role during the last three decades but will help future generations to understand how the church felt about apartheid, why they did what they did and what they failed to do.<sup>13</sup> The call by Meiring to participate in

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7 See Meiring (1999:96 - 97).

8 See Meiring (1999:61).

9 See Meiring (1999:96).

10 See F.M. Gaum in *Die Kerkbode*, 2 February 1996, p. 6; and F.M. Gaum in *Die Kerkbode*, 1 March 1996, p. 6.

11 Also see F.M. Gaum in *Die Kerkbode*, 1 March 1996, p. 1; F.M. Gaum in *Die Kerkbode*, 29 March 1996, p. 4; Brand, D, in *Die Kerkbode*, 2 February 1996, p. 6; Janse van Rensburg, J A, in *Die Kerkbode*, 14/15 June 1996, p 13; Swanepoel, Freek, in *Die Kerkbode*, 16 August 1996, p. 6; Koornhof, H in *Die Kerkbode*, 16 August 1996, p 14; F.M. Gaum in *Die Kerkbode*, 6 September 1996, p. 6; Prof Sas Strauss, in *Die Kerkbode*, 11 December 1996, p 4 and Dr DD Roslee, 18 July 1997, p. 6.

12 See F.M. Gaum in *Die Kerkbode*, 13/14 September 1996, p. 6.

13 See F.M. Gaum in *Die Kerkbode*, 13/14 September 1996, p. 6.

the TRC process was supported by the then Moderator of the DRC, Rev. Freek Swanepoel<sup>14</sup> as well as the decision by the DRC in the Eastern Cape to call on its members to testify before the TRC (Meiring 1999:86).

The submission by the DRC Presbytery of Stellenbosch at the TRC hearing in Paarl<sup>15</sup> was indeed a response to the call from Meiring as well as a prophetic and significant step by any religious organisation, especially the DRC to start dealing with their role in the apartheid past.<sup>16</sup> The public and the commissioners present were all touched by the submission but soon it was clear that not everybody within the DRC was as excited as they were.<sup>17</sup> In an editorial in *Die Kerkbode*<sup>18</sup> the editor stated in no uncertain terms, that the Presbytery of Stellenbosch has placed the General synod of the DRC in a very difficult situation and that their submission only indicated the role of the DRC in the dark part of our history.

In spite of this criticism the Western and Southern Cape Synod of the DRC continued to become the only regional synod of the DRC to submit a report<sup>19</sup> to the TRC at its extraordinary synodal meeting held on the 7<sup>th</sup> to the 9<sup>th</sup> of October 1997. It is however commendable that the Northern Transvaal Synod, although deciding against submitting a report to the TRC, missed the opportunity by a mere 18 votes out of the 400 present.<sup>20</sup>

The General Synodal Commission (GSC) initially decided by a majority of three votes not to submit an official confession before the TRC (Meiring, 1999:95).<sup>21</sup> Instead of an official submission the GSC requested Dr Frits Gaum to compile a document (Journey with Apartheid) to explain the journey of the DRC with Apartheid to its congregants and others who may be interested. The TRC could then have access to the document from the church regarding their journey with Apartheid that they could reflect on if they preferred to do so. Fortunately, after the DRC was invited to a special hearing for all the religious communities in East London, on the 14<sup>th</sup> of November 1997, the GSC decided to send its Moderator to make a submission before the TRC. Even though the entire DRC was not in agreement that the moderator should do a submission on behalf of the DRC it was still seen as a significant moment by many people in and outside of the church.<sup>22</sup>

There was no hesitancy from the URCSA to submit a submission to the TRC. Their goal was to provide the TRC with a clear reflection of their understanding of being church under Apartheid.<sup>23</sup> In their own words: “The historical and contemporary self-understanding of the church, as portrayed in this slogan (“The Church – Site of Struggle”), is that the church as one of the institutions in society did not remain unaffected by the all-encompassing influence of apartheid” (URCSA submission 1997:4).

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14 See Prof P Meiring, in *Die Kerkbode*, 2 August 1996, p 1 and Dr Hannes Koornhof, in *Die Kerkbode*, 16 August 1996, p. 22.

15 TRC hearing in Paarl was from the 14<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> of October 1996.

16 The submission was done by Prof Bethel Muller and Rev Jan Marais on behalf of the Presbytery of Stellenbosch DRC.

17 See the letter by Dr G Griesel, in *Die Kerkbode*, 6 December 1996, p. 6.

18 See F.M. Gaum in *Die Kerkbode*, 18 October 1996, p 1.

19 See the submission of the Western and Southern Cape Synod of the DRC on the 20<sup>th</sup> of October 1997.

20 See F.M. Gaum in *Die Kerkbode*, 3 October 1997, p. 9.

21 Those in support, see F.M. Gaum in *Die Kerkbode*, 1 August 1997, p. 7. And those saddened by the decision see F.M. Gaum in *Die Kerkbode*, 15 August 1997, p. 7.

22 See F.M. Gaum in *Die Kerkbode*, 21 November 1997, p. 1 & Meiring 1999:265-285.

23 See Meiring 1999:279 -280.

## 2.2 Support of Apartheid

From the outset the DRC provided theological and Biblical sanction for political praxis of apartheid, even though some of its theologians argued to the contrary (General Synodal Commission, *Journey with Apartheid*, 1997:15, 4.4.3). The church continued to play an active role in supporting and promoting<sup>24</sup> apartheid on practical or cultural grounds. As stated in the *Journey with Apartheid* (1997:7, 2.5), the DRC urged the government to implement the policy of apartheid and therefore many of the laws were instituted with the approval of the church. This is an evident example of the entwined relationship between the DRC and the white Afrikaner community. The DRC is sometimes referred to as the “National Party at prayer”. The result of this intertwined relationship is that there can hardly be space for anybody else: “It was on account of its profound and justifiable identification with the destiny of the people whom it served in the first instance – the Afrikaners – that the Dutch Reformed Church often tended to put the interests of its people above those of other people” (*Journey with Apartheid*, 1997:36, 9.9).

The DRC actively supported the military offence against the enemies of the state in order to endorse the policies of Apartheid. According to the TRC Report of South Africa (vol. 4. 1998:66), many state operatives claimed to have found positive support in DRC teachings and received the church’s “blessings” (for) their weapons of terror. When Rev Neels Du Plooy, a military chaplain, testified before the TRC and called the deeds of the apartheid government the “apartheid war” he was rebuked by the editor of *Die Kerkbode* in an editorial that affirmed the real danger of communism.<sup>25</sup> As indicated in the response by the editor of *Die Kerkbode*, it is evident that the DRC too often not only accepted state propaganda regarding the ‘Communist onslaught’, but gave credence to it in justifying its support for government policy and the ‘total war’ strategy against liberation forces (General Synodal Commission, *Journey with Apartheid*, 1997:30, 7.1-7.2 & 9.2.1). Indeed, on its own admission, the DRC became a paid servant of the state’s propaganda arm, the Department of Information (*Journey with Apartheid*, 1997:15, 4.6.1). In this regard it is safe to say that for members of the DRC and URCSA the participation of chaplains reinforced the acceptance of the apartheid cause in their minds and often demonised their opponents (TRC Report of South Africa, vol. 4. 1998:67).

Initially the URCSA was in support of apartheid, mainly due to being part of the larger DRC church family, and, as indicated earlier, being dominated for many years by conservative white missionaries. This virtually placed the church in a position where they had no choice but to accept the theology which legitimised apartheid and to remain silent about the ways the apartheid policy was implemented. This reality and the Calvinistic theology as it was preached formed the mentality of the church and its members, making them compliant to this policy and critical of those who sought to take an anti-apartheid position. The URCSA confesses that it failed to live up to its faith convictions, that it found it difficult to implement its decisions against apartheid in practical action, and in many cases watered them down, that it did not give the necessary support to young people and those who suffered or to organisations engaged in the struggle against apartheid (URCSA submission to the TRC, 1997:10). Indeed, it states that the “absence of decisions and actions represent a blatant omission and silent approval of the conditions and main cause of human rights violations” (URCSA submission to the TRC, 1997:6 & 9).

<sup>24</sup> See TRC Report of South Africa, vol. 4. 1998:66.

<sup>25</sup> See F.M. Gaum in *Die Kerkbode*, 1 August 1997, p. 6.

### 2.3 Opposition to Apartheid

Faith communities across the board spoke of opposing apartheid, although the language and practices through which they expressed this opposition differed widely (TRC Report of South Africa, vol. 4. 1998:79). There were continuous voices and publications from within the DRC that challenged its support of apartheid, such as the DRC theologians attending the Cottesloe Church Conference;<sup>26</sup> that of Dr Beyers Naude, the journal *Pro Veritate*, Prof Nico Smith; the “Ope Brief” (open letter) supported by 123 ministers in 1982;<sup>27</sup> Prof Jonker’s confession at the Rustenburg conference, and many others. Instead of listening to these voices and publications, the church (national and local) chose to ignore them and rather slanted and libelled them.<sup>28</sup> Some were even personally victimised.

Given the extent of the intertwined relationship with the government of the time, the DRC decided to follow the route of confidential discussions with members of the government concerning issues such as “detention without trial, and to request that the policies be applied with compassion and humanity” (General Synodal Commission, *Journey with Apartheid*, 1997:4.21; TRC Report of South Africa, vol. 4. 1998:80). At best, the DRC did at times request the authorities to implement the policy fairly, though on its own admission the request was seldom made forcefully or consequently monitored. It was, in fact, just too theoretical, “The church did not take enough trouble to establish whether, in practice, this policy complied at all with the stated norms of love and righteousness” (General Synodal Commission, *Journey with Apartheid*, 1997:9.5 & 9.15, 4.21). The only real opposition to government legislation mentioned in the DRC submission had to do with the so called “church clause” of the Native Laws Amendment Act of 1957 (*Journey with Apartheid*, 1997:2.5.4).

The Cottesloe Church Conference<sup>29</sup> was indeed a turning point in the history of apartheid. The DRC participated in the conference by means of the then Transvaal DRC and the Cape DRC being members of the World Council of Churches. The resolutions accepted at the conference caused sharp criticism within the church and government circles. This reaction was based on resolutions that directly opposed laws of government that were supported by the church, such as those covering mixed marriages, job reservations, land tenure and co-determination, and the political status of the so called coloureds. Not only did the strong figures within the DRC such as Dr A. P. Treurnicht and Dr J. D. Vorster react heavily but also the then Prime Minister Dr H. F. Verwoerd was outspoken in this regard (General Synodal Commission, *Journey with Apartheid*, 1997:10 - 11). The result of this reaction by the then Prime Minister was that it set a precedent for state interference, not simply in the affairs of the DRC (with which it already enjoyed a special relationship), but in those of the ecumenical churches (TRC Report of South Africa, vol. 4. 1998:81).

The DRC far too easily surrendered to pressure from the government. Based on this relationship it is safe to state that the DRC failed to provide any significant guidance to its membership on the biblical demand for justice in society (General Synodal Commission, *Journey with*

26 See General Synodal Commission, *Journey with Apartheid*, 1997, 15 -16.

27 See the TRC Report of South Africa, vol. 4. 1998:82.

28 The DRC Synod chose to react strongly against the voices in *Pro Veritate*. See Algemene Sinodale Kommissie, *Reis met Apartheid*, 1997, p. 21.

29 This was a conference that was organised by the initiative of the World Council of Churches in direct reaction to the Sharpeville riots in March 1960 where 60 people were killed (General Synodal Commission, *Journey with Apartheid*, 1997, p.9).

Apartheid, 1997:36). Rather than critically examine the actual implementation of apartheid, it preferred not to know the details of what was happening as a result of such policies as the Group Areas Act (a policy supported by the DRC) or in security police actions – even though much of it was perpetrated by its own members (Journey with Apartheid, 1997:38, 9.22 & 24). The DRC failed to maintain the desirable critical distance in relation to the government as it was expected from a prophetic church and therefore failed dismally in their opposition to Apartheid.

From the end of the 1970's, the URCSA became increasingly critical of apartheid.<sup>30</sup> This became evident with the emergence of indigenous leadership within the church, with the breaking of the influence of the white missionaries and with the growth to a mature theology against oppression did one detect greater clarity and urgency in the criticism of this policy (Homeland policy (migratory labour) and the Group Areas Act) on synod level ((URCSA submission to the TRC, 1997:6). In 1982 the synod of the then Dutch Reformed Mission Church declared that its resolution of 1978 implied that it had no choice “but, with the deepest regret to accuse the Dutch Reformed Church of theological heresy and idolatry in the light of (the Dutch Reformed Church’s) theologically formulated stance and implementation thereof in practice” (Journey with Apartheid, 1997:17). The apartheid situation in South Africa and the stance of the DRC on it, declared the Synod of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church, created a *status confessionis*. This decision was in line with the resolution adopted by the World Alliance of Reformed Churches earlier that same year when it suspended the membership of the Dutch Reformed Church (Journey with Apartheid, 1997:17).<sup>31</sup> The aspects that gave impetus to the URCSA’s opposition to apartheid was the leadership and role of Dr Allen Boesak;<sup>32</sup> the Confession of Belhar<sup>33</sup> with its clear statement: “Therefore, we reject ideology which would legitimate forms of injustice and any doctrine which is unwilling to resist such an ideology in the name of the gospel” (URCSA submission to the TRC, 1997:13); and support for the Kairos Document<sup>34</sup> with its clear criticism of State and Church Theology and an exposition of a Prophetic Theology (URCSA submission to the TRC, 1997:13-14).

## 2.4 Victims and perpetrators of Apartheid

It is fair to say that there were victims and perpetrators on both sides of the apartheid spectrum and that one person can be a victim and a perpetrator at the same time. Although, given the extent and impact of the apartheid policy on the churches discussed in this article, it is safe to conclude that the victims<sup>35</sup> of apartheid were mainly the Black and Coloured members of URCSA.<sup>36</sup> The general URCSA submission and that of the URCSA Messina congregation both indicated in no uncertain terms what the impact of the apartheid policy was on its members. The impact was not limited to a structural level but was also evident on an economical, physical, psychological, and spiritual level.

To illustrate the devastating impact of apartheid on their members they named some key

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30 See URCSA submission to the TRC, 1997, pp. 18-19.

31 See URCSA submission to the TRC (1997:12 -19) for other actions that was taken by the church and documented in the submission.

32 See URCSA submission to the TRC, 1997, p. 12.

33 See the TRC Report of South Africa, vol. 4. 1998:83.

34 See the TRC Report of South Africa, vol. 4. 1998:82.

35 See Thesnaar 2011:32.

36 See TRC Report of South Africa, vol. 4. 1998:75.

issues in their submissions: Separate churches due to colour of skin; black and white ministers who supported the struggle for liberation were often the target of the security forces; group areas act; forced removals; members resettled in different places; lost property (schools and churches)<sup>37</sup> that had to be rebuilt in other areas with all the costs involved; detained without trial; arrested; tortured; persecuted; subsidies withdrawn; racism; migrant labour; poor education;<sup>38</sup> destructions of home and family life; structural and emotional violence; prohibition of mixed marriages; caught up in the ‘holy war’ against communism; polarisation; indescribable suffering; victims of bombings;<sup>39</sup> grieved materially, psychologically and physically<sup>40</sup> (URCSA submission, 1997:20 - 21).

Perpetrators<sup>41</sup> of the victims of apartheid, given the focus of this article were mainly the members of the DRC. Perpetrators cannot be limited to only those who actively violated the human rights of others but also include those who were bystanders who said or did nothing, and those who were beneficiaries from the apartheid system, either economically, politically, physically, socially or in religious respect.

## 2.5 Confession of guilt

Confession of guilt<sup>42</sup> was another of the central themes in the submissions and yet the most contentious of the themes. In the general and theological discussions leading up to the TRC and during the time of the TRC it became evident that there were within the DRC vast theological differences and opinions regarding the understanding of confession.

Firstly, there were those who blatantly believed that there wasn’t any wrongdoing in what they did during the time of apartheid. Everything they were involved in could be justified and therefore confession of guilt was totally unnecessary.<sup>43</sup>

Secondly, there are those who argued strongly that confession of guilt is only done before God and it is only God that can forgive our sins.<sup>44</sup> There was therefore no room for a confession before a godless government creation that paid huge salaries for their commissioners while others were suffering (Meiring, 1999:95).<sup>45</sup> They also seriously questioned why only the white community needed to confess and not those who were against apartheid, given the fact that so many white people were the victims of murders, rapes, etc. on a daily basis.

There are thirdly, those who argued that confession is an important part of the Christian doctrine and that Christians only need to individually confess before God and in doing so will be immediately forgiven. They therefore argued that they only needed to confess once for what they have done, on a specific place, at a specific time and ask for forgiveness and then it would be concluded. For them, continuous and repeated confessions<sup>46</sup> as well as collective confessions on behalf of others<sup>47</sup> are not part of the Christian doctrine.

37 See TRC Report of South Africa, vol. 4. 1998:76-77.

38 See TRC Report of South Africa, vol. 4. 1998:76.

39 See TRC Report of South Africa, vol. 4. 1998:76.

40 See URCSA Messina congregation report to the TRC, 1997, p. 1.

41 See Thesnaar 2011:33.

42 See Jaspers (1946:32) & Meiring (1999:62).

43 See Pollefeyt (1996:178) & Muller, in *Die Kerkbode*, 1 August 1997, p. 12.

44 See the letter from Bennie Bekker, in *Die Kerkbode*, 14 June 1996, p. 11.

45 See the letter from Dr G Griesel, in *Die Kerkbode*, 6 December 1996, p. 6.

46 See the letter from Prof Ben Engelbrecht, in *Die Kerkbode*, 1 August 1996, p. 10.

47 See the letter by Dr G Griesel, in *Die Kerkbode*, 6 December 1996, p. 6.

Fourthly, there are those who were of the conviction that confession of guilt should be dealt with within the church structures, and not in public before a government commission.<sup>48</sup> The original decision by the DRC not to do a submission before the TRC but rather to compile a document (in the form of a testimony and a confession) to inform its members, ministers, synods and all other interested parties on their journey with apartheid could be seen as an example of this understanding.

Lastly, there were those who were of the conviction that the church and its members<sup>49</sup> should confess publicly before the victims and before the TRC (as a continuous confession process,<sup>50</sup> individually and collectively) to contribute to the healing of the nation.<sup>51</sup> The confession by Prof Willie Jonker at the Rustenburg conference as well as the confessions by the DRC before the TRC<sup>52</sup> could be seen as examples of an active and public contribution on the journey towards healing the nation (*Journey with Apartheid*, 1997:25, 5.6.1). They profoundly responded to the challenge from Dr Beyers Naudé to motivate fellow church people to face the mirror and confess to the TRC. He said, “We, who were supposed to be the conscience of the nation, didn’t succeed in preventing the most serious forms of abuse of the human conscience” (Meiring 1999:157).

The URCSA set an incredible example in terms of how it approached the central issue of confession. Keeping in mind that the URCSA is a predominantly black church and that it eventually became a leading critic of apartheid, its “confession of guilt and plea for forgiveness” which is part of its submission (URCSA submission to the TRC, 1997:11) is particularly poignant<sup>53</sup> – certainly going much further than the DRC which gave its unqualified support to apartheid.

## 2.6 Reconciliation and nation building

From the submission by the two churches to the TRC it is evident that both made firm commitments to reconciliation and nation building of which very little materialized. The DRC moved into the role of reconciler and nation builder in a much quicker way that it would acknowledge the guilt of apartheid. The 1994 synod was dubbed the synod of reconciliation. This was mainly due to the visit by the then president, Nelson Mandela, and the confession as to the way Dr Beyers Naudé and Prof Ben Marais, and many others were treated in the past. This synod committed itself to bring about a radical improvement in the living conditions and future opportunities of people in South Africa who have been deprived of so much for so many years, and to make a meaningful contribution to reconstruction and development (*Journey with Apartheid*, 1997:29, 6.1.4 & 6.1.7). It also accepted a resolution on the unity of the family of Dutch Reformed Churches which also bore the stamp of reconciliation.

The DRC also expressed a willingness and commitment to the ministry of reconciliation in South Africa. This includes striving actively “for the elimination of injustice at all levels and in all corners of society” (*Journey with Apartheid*, 10.3, 1-2), and contributing to the “combating

48 Also see Dr W Dreyer, in *Die Kerkbode*, 11 May 1996, p. 7.

49 See Rev Dirk Viljoen, in *Die Kerkbode*, 4 July 1997, p. 7.

50 See Prof J Müller, in *Die Kerkbode*, 6 September 1996, p. 3.

51 See the story of confession and forgiveness where a DRC minister, Rev Charl Coetzee played a key role to bring the perpetrator Eric Taylor, a DRC member, and the victims, the Goniwe family, together so that he could confess to them. After the confession they forgave him for what he did (see Meiring 1999:123 - 127). In this regard see the *Journey with Apartheid* (1997:24, 5.1.4).

52 See the submission by the presbytery of the DRC Stellenbosch, 1996, p. 1.

53 See Meiring (1999:235-236).

of poverty and illiteracy” (Journey with Apartheid, 10.3.3). Its remarkable ministry in the area of social welfare, as documented in its submission, is an indication of its potential capacity to make an important contribution in this regard (Journey with Apartheid, 8.1.1-10). The DRC also acknowledged that confession of guilt inevitably leads to restitution – the putting right of the wrong that was done. The church already began to attend to that with some of its resolutions at the General Synod of 1990. This will continue in future (Journey with Apartheid, 1997:25).<sup>54</sup>

In terms of assisting its own members who actively participated in the war on the road to healing the moderator of the Eastern Cape synod, Rev Pierre Jordaan, indicated that they have developed a plan to assist their members through this difficult time of uncertainty and pain.<sup>55</sup> This was the first, and I dare say the only, plan by a synodal commission and by the DRC as a whole to assist the soldiers and their families to deal with the spiritual, emotional and psychological scars and the trauma of the human rights abuses in a constructive way<sup>56</sup> in order to build a new nation.

The URCSA also provided several significant suggestions concerning the possible role of the church in contributing to reconciliation in South Africa (URCSA submission to the TRC, 1997:21-23).<sup>57</sup> These include pastoral counselling of human rights victims, enabling perpetrators of crimes to confess their guilt and seek reconciliation, the preparation of reconciliation liturgies and the holding of services of reconciliation, the erection of appropriate memorials, implementing a “process of collective visioning”, and the holding of an annual national week of reconciliation.

### 3. REDEEMING THE PAST TO LIVE IN THE PRESENT AND MOVE TO THE FUTURE

Otto Frank, father of Anne Frank, in reflection on the tragic narrative of the journey of his family said years later: “We cannot change what happened anymore. The only thing we can do is to learn from the past and to realize what discrimination and persecution of innocent people means. I believe that it’s everyone’s responsibility to fight prejudice” (Anne Frank Museum, 2012). With this insightful thought in mind there are some lessons to be learned from the way the churches dealt with the apartheid past that should be utilised as guidelines to ensure that all churches take the responsibility to fight injustice.

#### 3.1 Engage with the past

For church denominations, who had theologically supported the ideology of apartheid to eventually decide to confess and make a submission before the TRC on their role in the past 30 years is, at best, a complex, uncertain and challenging process! It is quite simple to judge and criticise the Reformed Churches in support of apartheid and to shame<sup>58</sup> the perpetrators of apartheid within these churches. For the URCSA, a victim of apartheid, it can be as difficult to make a submission because there was always the risk to be exposed to further trauma.

However it must be emphasised that remembrance is a central part of dealing with the

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54 See the article by Rev Freek Swanepoel in *Die Kerkbode*, 16 May 1997, p. 6 & the submission of the Stellenbosch presbytery of the DRC to the TRC, 1996, p. 1.

55 See F.M. Gaum in *Die Kerkbode*, 1 November 1996, p. 16.

56 See Meiring (1999: 112-115) and Kok, D in *Die Burger*, 25 October 2000, p. 13.

57 Also see the article by Rev Daniel Kuys, in *Die Kerkbode*, 12/13 September 1997, p. 5.

58 See Thesnaar 2007:150 - 167.

past, living in the present with hope for the future. The scars of the apartheid past affect our memories. Therefore we need to be aware of the danger of destructive living memories. All South Africans share a wounded memory. In this regard sensitivity and understanding is needed towards members of both churches as they enter into a process of reconciliation and healing.

### **3.2 Face the truth**

In terms of facing the past truth should be understood in a more comprehensive way than was customary. This entails a relational, personal, subjective and narrative understanding as well as a healing and transformative<sup>59</sup> understanding of truth over and against mere “factual and objective” understanding of truth. To understand truth in this way will assist both perpetrators and victims in telling and listening to their own and others’ stories regarding the past.

Did the DRC always tell the truth? Could the churches be trusted? In terms of these questions the integrity of the church should always be beyond suspicion and therefore the fact that the church had received money from the state to support its goals should be acknowledged and never be repeated.

The DRC acknowledged that the synods concentrated too much on the theory of apartheid in the light of the Bible and too little on how this policy was implemented on the ground level and the effect these actions had on the people of South Africa.<sup>60</sup> There is a real need for the churches to give account in an honest and comprehensive way on how apartheid was implemented within their local, regional and broader communities and the effect it had on their fellow South Africans.

### **3.3 Confession**

In a process of reconciliation there should be space for an individual, collective and repetitive understanding of confession. Therefore space should be created for individuals, groups, congregations, presbyteries, regional and general church bodies to confess their role in the past injustices of South Africa.

### **3.4 Embody justice**

Confession should always be accompanied by remorse and followed by reparation, restitution and transformative justice. The church should embody justice by leading the way to eliminate all forms of injustices, actively combating of poverty, engaging with relevant role players to transform education, combat illiteracy, redistribute wealth, land reform, etc. Added to embodying justice is the churches commitment to the recommendations made by the TRC in terms of justice and reconciliation (*Report of the TRC*, Vol. 5 1998:316vv).

### **3.5 Reconstruct reformed identity**

To face the truth of the past is not only a political and ideological struggle but also a deeply theological struggle. To deconstruct your own theology and in many cases your own identity and reconstruct a new understanding of God, theology and identity is a painful process. It is in essence about reconstructing reformed identity. However, it could be a profoundly beneficent process if facilitated properly.

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<sup>59</sup> See the TRC Report of South Africa, vol. 4. 1998:114.

<sup>60</sup> See the DRC’s *Journey with Apartheid* (1997).

### **3.6 Church leadership and communication**

Leadership is a key element in any process of oppression as well as in processes of change, transformation and uncertainty. It can either guide the church (perpetrators and victims) through the past into the present with a responsible process or it can keep the church stuck in the destructive past. Therefore, thorough communication by the church leadership on dealing with the past will largely avoid a traumatic nation to become further traumatised. This can limit the effect of destructive media campaigns that have the ability to derail any process and make people sceptical.

In their submissions, faith communities commonly confessed not only to a failure to speak, but also to a failure to act. Many communities that were in principle either in support of or opposed to apartheid found it difficult to translate strong resolutions into practical action. In the nature of institutional politics, resolutions were watered down by the time they were actually passed. This calls for faith communities to improve their operational structures.

### **3.7 Church should be a prophetic voice for reconciliation**

The churches should not be so exclusive in their theology and structures that there is little room for prophetic voices. Churches should learn to listen to the prophetic voices within and outside its own ecclesiastical bounds rather than to silence and ostracise them. In relation to this the church need to keep its promises if it wants to be taken seriously as a meaningful contributor to the reconciliation process. Very little if any of the commitments made by both Reformed Churches' towards reconciling and building the nation were honoured to date.

It is the church's responsibility to pastorally care for the victims as well as perpetrators and assist them on their journey towards healing and wholeness. In this sense the church can contribute to the process of healing and reconciliation by creating safe spaces where healing as transformative truth can help people deal with the past.

## **4. CONCLUSION**

Almost 15 years after the TRC process has been concluded Professor Russel Botman,<sup>61</sup> the vice-chancellor of Stellenbosch University, pose very significant questions: "Has the dream of reconciliation, former president Nelson Mandela cherished for South Africa, lay in pieces? Has the ideal of nation building yielded under the pressure of prejudice, racial hate and separation?" He raised these questions after two recent incidents exposed the deep racial divide in South Africa today. What is more alarming is that this divide is also still prevalent in the so-called post 1994 generation. What we need, says Professor Botman, is a definite NO to the principle of apartheid, as well as a NO to the destructive practices of the past that are still in operation today. The key, he says, is that this message must be carried on to the youth of today and tomorrow to ensure that this destructive way to deal with the past is finally and completely abolished.

These comments are indeed an accusation to the churches who claim that they have committed themselves, in 1997, to reconciliation, nation building, restitution, development and healing. This does raise critical questions in terms of the church community's ability to claim to be the carrier of such a message to the perpetrators and victims of apartheid but

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61 See Botman, in *Die Burger*; 2012:2.

also to children and youth of today and tomorrow. The lessons learnt from the themes of the submissions by these churches to the TRC confirm that the churches are eager to commit itself to the process of reconciliation on a general level but lack the capacity to facilitate this commitment through the structures of the church so that it can be practiced by the local church community within the local context.

For churches to become trusted role players in the reconciliation process it will need to take stern cognisance of the lessons learnt from the submission to the TRC. Churches need not only to believe that they can contribute to the process of healing and reconciliation but they need to facilitate and practice that belief by creating safe spaces, on a national and local level where people can deal with the past.

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**KEY WORDS**

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**TREFWOORDE**

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## Troublemaker in Israel: Nico Smith and the struggle for justice in apartheid South Africa

### ABSTRACT

The author identifies Nico Smith (one-time Professor in Missiology at the University of Stellenbosch and well known Uniting Reformed Church leader) as “troublemaker in Israel” in the fashion of the prophet Elijah. He grew up in an orthodox Afrikaner home in the early twentieth century, studied Theology at the University of Pretoria, and became a leading figure in Dutch Reformed Mission circles. In the 1960s he was appointed at the “Kweekskool” in Stellenbosch and his perspective began to change. He became a fierce critic of the race policy in the DRC, accepted a call to a black Dutch Reformed Church in Africa congregation in Mamelodi (outside Pretoria), and played a prominent role in the church unity process. The author singles out Smith’s involvement with the organization *Koinonia* (which he founded) and his time living in Mamelodi as significant contributions in the struggle for justice.

### INTRODUCTION

During the Cold War era (±1946-1990) the main entry point between West and East Berlin at the Brandenburg Gate was named “Checkpoint Charlie”. It gained great recognition, because in a very real sense this was the physical boundary signifying the divisions between the capitalist West (North America and Western Europe, bound together in NATO- the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) and the communist East (Russia and its Eastern European allies, bound together in the Warsaw Treaty). Nico Smith once had the privilege during the years of the Cold War to enter East Berlin at this famous checkpoint. Many things obviously caught his attention, but there was one sight that remained with him for the rest of his life. On a plaque on the western side was a quote from the Latin author, Titus Livius (Smith 2010:14). It stated (and I paraphrase more or less in Nico’s words), “There are events and occurrences in history which are so incomprehensible that all we as human beings can do is to record them, and leave judgment to future generations”. The reason why this struck Nico so forcefully, is that he was convinced that this clearly described his task as a protagonist in the struggle for justice in the then apartheid SA. It was not in Nico’s character to silently record events, though<sup>1</sup> – he became an activist through and through, so he was intensely involved in this struggle since around 1974. It is for this reason that I wish to characterise his involvement in the struggle for justice as being a troublemaker in Israel.<sup>2</sup>

In this paper I wish to provide nothing more than a preliminary stock-taking of Smith’s

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1 This is probably one reason why he did not write and publish much – his was an oral, narrative witness.

This article therefore is based on oral discussions, a couple of journal articles, and my biography of Nico Smith. Two books authored by him were published posthumously (see the Bibliography).

2 *Die beroerder Israels: ‘n biografiese waardering van Nico Smith* (Troublemaker in Israel: a biographical appreciation of Nico Smith) is the title of my biography of Smith (Pretoria: Publiseif, 2009). It obviously refers to the characterisation ascribed to Elijah, the Old Testament prophet, which I find a useful metaphor to describe Nico’s involvement in the struggle in SA. I argue that he considered himself as a prophetic disturber of the *status quo*, and that his actions confirmed this.

contribution. In a contribution to the *festchrift* published on Nico's sixtieth birthday, Dirkie Smit (1990:110) stated that his generation of students (in the early 1970s) regarded Nico Smith as "different". They were not quite sure what constituted the difference, but in later years he realised that Smith was in his own way a "narrative theologian".<sup>3</sup> I am therefore also going to use a narrative approach in describing and analysing his contribution the struggle for justice in apartheid South Africa. I agree with Dirkie Smit that this is a better way to understand what Nico Smith was trying to do, as he (Smith) himself trusted in the power of narratives to bring about change (:113). Indeed, Smit argued that both the powerful influence Nico Smith exerted (on students and others), as well as the strong reactions his conduct evoked, probably were a result of the fact that Nico told stories in such a way that events and realities which seemed to be completely normal in everyday life in SA which evoked a completely new perspective on what was generally considered to be "normal" (:113).

The way in which he managed to make things which appeared normal to us seem to be incredible, incomprehensible, totally impossible, even ridiculous, was exactly what started us thinking, or which irritated and angered people. (Smit 1990:113; my translation).

It is for this reason that I opt for a narrative approach in recalling Nico Smith's important contribution to the struggle for justice in apartheid SA in (especially) the 1980s and 1990s. I wish to recall and retell events and influences in his life under three headings: the family background against which his involvement unfolded; the importance of Christians "breaking bread together"; and the story of a white "NG dominee" (Dutch Reformed minister) and his loving and supportive wife going to live in a black township during the hectic 1980s in SA. Then I wish to conclude by drawing some preliminary implications of this story for white South Africans (especially Afrikaans-speaking members of the Dutch Reformed Church [DRC]) in the struggle for justice, in apartheid South Africa *as well as* in democratic South Africa.

## FAMILY BACKGROUND: PIETISM AND AFRIKANER NATIONALISM

It is difficult to establish who was responsible for the birth and development of apartheid as state policy in SA between 1948-1994, the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) or the National Party (Saayman 2007:69-72). So it is difficult to decide what came first in Nico's family heritage: DRC pietism or Afrikaner nationalism. Perhaps it is best to state that the two lived in a comfortable and mutually advantageous symbiotic relationship and not to attempt to decide which came first. Nico's father was born and bred in Graaff-Reinet, where two remarkable DRC ministers had left an indelible mark on the white community. The first (in the 19<sup>th</sup> century) was Dr Andrew Murray jr., and the second (early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century) was Ds J Naudé, father of the well known Dr Beyers Naudé. Andrew Murray jr is the fountainhead of a pietistic trend in the DRC, characterised by Jaap Durand as "Andrew Murray pietism" (Durand 1985:43-44) and left a lasting impression on the white DRC, as well as on many English-speaking white Christians. Ds Naudé was intimately bound with his parishioners, and served throughout the South African War (1899-1902) as chaplain<sup>4</sup> to the commando of the well known Boer general, C.F. Beyers.<sup>5</sup>

3 I broadly agree with Smit (1990:110) in his definition of narrative theology as "the opposite pole over against rational, logical, timeless, abstract essential ('prinsipiële') thinking" (my translation).

4 One has to remember that not all Cape Afrikaners were in favour of the Boers in the war – many felt that the war was unnecessary (Saayman 2007:53) and Cape citizens who supported the war were considered to be traitors by the colonial government. So the mere fact of his involvement says a lot about Ds Naudé's nationalism.

5 This is where Beyers Naudé's name come from – he was called Christiaan Frederick Beyers Naudé in

He was also one of the founding members of the Afrikaner Broederbond (AB) in 1918 (Smith 2009:1-22). Nico's father experienced a call to become a DRC minister himself, and for this reason started studying at Stellenbosch University. As a result of financial problems he had to discontinue his studies and ended up becoming a teacher instead (Saayman 2009:14). Nico ascribes his own piety and religious commitment to the influence and example of his father, whom he characterises as a "Murray pietist" (:15).

His mother was also a very committed Christian, but Nico does not ascribe his religious experience in terms of his mother's example. What he received from her was rather a personal experience of the history of the very real and tragic experience of Afrikaner suffering as a result of the South African War. Her family was quite well off, and her father owned two farms in the Boshoff district of the Free State. Her father obviously joined the commandos in the field, and his wife and two daughters ended up in a concentration camp. The mother died there, and after the war her father had to collect the two young girls from the camp and make a new beginning on his utterly destroyed farms. This was obviously a cause for many traumatic experiences for Nico's mother, and she remained bitter about the loss throughout her life (Smith 2009:38-39). She was a firm believer that the "Boerevolk" (Boer nation) would one day get their land back which had so brutally and unjustly been taken from them by the "Kakies".<sup>6</sup> So Nico grew up in a very pious household, where a strong pietistic Christian belief was one of the articles of faith (as it were), while another was the nationalistic (eschatological) expectation of the recovery of their rightful heritage. Whereas Nico considers his father to have had the strongest influence on him in terms of faith commitment, he was very clear that it was his mother's more extreme version of Afrikaner nationalism which formed his own national consciousness (:45).

Nico's experiences of the entanglement of religious and national commitment are not really in any way unique for an Afrikaner child of the 1930s-1940s. This was why he could join a majority of University of Pretoria (UP) students in a victory march on 31 May 1948 to celebrate the National Party (NP) victory in the all-white elections. By that time he was a theological student at UP, and he describes the tremendous joy among the students, also among the theological students.<sup>7</sup> One therefore has to conclude that there was nothing in his heritage or background which set him apart as someone who would later in life become deeply involved in the struggle *against* apartheid in SA. On the contrary, Nico is convinced that it is his mother's rather extreme version of Afrikaner nationalism which prepared the way for him to become a firm supporter of Afrikaner nationalism, going so far as to become a member of the AB himself (Smith 2009:37). So Nico's family heritage and his experiences of growing up as an Afrikaner boy in a rural community (his father taught at farm schools in the Free State) rather paved the way for him to become a "pillar of the Afrikaner community": pioneer missionary in Vendaland,<sup>8</sup> Mission Secretary of the DRC Northern Transvaal, member of the elite Afrikaner Broederbond, Professor of Missiology at the academic heartland of the Afrikaners and the DRC, the theological faculty of the University of Stellenbosch. It is indeed difficult to explain

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honour of the famous Boer general.

6 A derogatory Afrikaans description of British soldiers, based on the colour (khaki) of their uniforms.

7 He mentions by name the enthusiastic participation of (among others) three students, Dirk Oosthuizen, David Bosch and Carel Boshoff, who were destined to become prominent DRC "dominees" (Smith 2009:35; Saayman 2009:34).

8 Smith was one of the pioneer DRC missionaries who started new mission stations as a result of the influence exerted by the Tomlinson Report of 1954 (cf Saayman 2007:69-78). His pioneering effort in Vendaland caught the attention of many DRC members and served to inspire mission enthusiasm (cf. Hofmeyr 1990).

how someone with such religious and political credentials could one day be characterised as “troublemaker in Israel”. I will come back to this point later on.

## BREAKING BREAD TOGETHER: THE STORY OF KOINONIA

In Nico Smith’s biography I remarked that Koinonia probably grabbed the attention of the church-going South African public, especially the white public, more than any other para-church or social organisation that he was involved with (Saayman 2009:186). The story of Koinonia still must be fully told and analysed, but at the time it caught the attention and soon grew rapidly not only in Pretoria but also in other parts of the country<sup>9</sup>. Eventually it could arrange national gatherings which received much media publicity. Since the whole movement was based on the very simple human event of having a meal together, this public attention seems out of proportion. It becomes even stranger when one takes into account that Koinonia eventually came to be seen as a threat to the maintenance of the established order, which resulted in an assassination attempt on its full-time organiser, Ivor Jenkins (:121-125; Pauw 1997:138-141). In terms of the struggle against injustice and for justice under the old regime, one has to conclude that Koinonia was doing something right if it attracted the attention even of the Vlakplaas assassins.

The story becomes even more intriguing when one considers the origins of the idea of white and black (Dutch Reformed) Christians “breaking bread together”. The origins can be found in an event which took place soon after Smith had started his pioneer mission in Vendaland (cf. Saayman 2009:59-60). The most significant Protestant mission in Venda was that of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. The missionary in charge, Rev Fobbe, invited Nico to a gathering of Lutheran mission workers (black and white). The meeting would include lunch, and to Smith’s dismay he found that all the workers, black and white, would sit down for lunch together. This went totally against his grain as nationalistic Afrikaner. Mrs Fobbe was aware of his unease, though, and set a place for him to have his lunch separately in Rev Fobbe’s study. So there Nico sat, in splendid isolation, quite convinced that he was “doing the right thing”. Nico experienced this event as so disturbing that he wrote a letter to “Die Kerkbode”, attacking foreign missionaries who treated Afrikaner Christian customs with disdain in their urge to propagate racial integration.<sup>10</sup> Soon afterwards Rev and Mrs Fobbe were deported from SA, and Nico later found out that the information which was used to justify their deportation was provided by another DRC missionary. This event later placed a heavy burden on Nico’s conscience, and it is quite clear that his idea to bring about reconciliation between black and white DRC members by having them share meals in each others’ homes, had its origin in his unhappy memories of what he considered to be a failure in his Christian conviction. I will argue this point further in my conclusions.

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<sup>9</sup> In today’s SA many people probably wonder why such a simple act as having a meal together could generate so much attention. At the time Koinonia was started, black people still needed permits to enter white suburbs on a regular basis, and whites needed permission from officials from Bantu Affairs to enter a black township. For white and black to share a meal at a restaurant or hotel, one had to get official permission beforehand, and also find a restaurant willing to accommodate “inter-racial” social gatherings. What seems of very little importance today, was actually quite radical in the contemporary context.

<sup>10</sup> Dr AP Treurnicht, who was then editor of “Die Kerkbode”, placed the letter and then wrote a note of thanks to Nico, congratulating him for his strong defence of Afrikaner customs and racial segregation.

## GOING TO LIVE IN A LOCATION: THE TIME IN MAMELODI<sup>11</sup>

When Nico and Mrs Smith went to live in Mamelodi in 1986 (a black township east of Pretoria, where he served as a congregational minister in the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa – DRCA – at the time) very, very few whites lived in black townships. Those few who did were mainly Roman Catholic priests and sisters who worked there in parishes. The Smiths took the decision to move to live in Mamelodi as a result of a talk of the well known Roman Catholic spiritual and academic, Henry Nouwen.<sup>12</sup> They interpreted this drastic decision as a positive response from their side to the voice of the Holy Spirit calling them to solidarity with their parishioners (Saayman 2009:190-192). What makes their decision to make this move in 1985-1986 even more remarkable is the reality that the liberation struggle had entered its final, fiery and bloody phase in 1985 with the declaration of a successive set of states of emergency by the Botha regime. The conscripts of the SA Defence Force were no longer deployed only “on the border” (wherever that might have been), but right here in urban SA, in the townships, also in Mamelodi. There were violent clashes of one kind or the other nearly on a daily basis, and the general opinion among most white South Africans was probably that the Smiths were mad to move into a township at that specific time. I think that one is justified to claim that a general perception among whites at the time was that they were either pathological trouble seekers or weaklings seeking the favour of black radicals (:195).

What is especially notable, though, is that in these totally unsettled circumstances Nico won the trust of a majority of Mamelodi’s residents (Smith 2010). Such an outcome was everything but self-evident, as many radical black residents regarded his move to Mamelodi with great distrust (cf. Saayman 2009:120). Revenge against those who were distrusted as agents of the hated regime was swift and brutal, often by way of the brutal and inhuman “necklace” method (an old tire soaked in petrol and forced over the head and shoulders of the victim before being set alight). Proof of the degree of trust that Nico enjoyed in the black community is actually that he was able to stop a process of “necklacing” after the tire had already been thrust over the victim’s head. Anybody with any awareness of the degree of anger and hatred alive in the urban black townships of Gauteng in those years will know that for a white man to step into such a situation was as close to suicidal as can be. Because he had won the confidence of even the radical black youth through his sincerity and commitment to their humanity, Nico could do it and survive (:127-128; as far as I know, he was the only white man who ever did this. Leading black struggle icons such as Bishop Tutu and Dr Boesak also did it on a few occasions).

So far I have told only three segments of Nico Smith’s very complicated life story. I have done so while I am of the opinion that they are most relevant in a process of remembering the struggle for justice between 1960 and 1990. If one now analyses these parts in order to remember the struggle for justice, what implications can one possibly draw? I would like to indicate the following, based on the discrete parts, but as if weaving continuous strands throughout Nico’s life story. In the process I also highlight some personal differences with Nico’s approach. I raise them here, as part of my general evaluation, for a specific reason. Hope would be that we do not simply remember them in order to highlight the contribution of a few white DR

11 In the pre-1994 dispensation black townships outside white towns and cities were called “locations”.

Racial separation was very strictly observed, especially at night. Late in the 20<sup>th</sup> century there was still a general curfew in place which stipulated that all black people without the necessary permits had to leave white residential areas before 9:00 pm every night. In small rural towns a bell was actually rung at the market place to announce the curfew.

12 The circumstances are set out in Saayman 2009:115-121; Smith 2002:15-17.

members to the struggle, but also to inspire and empower present day members of the DRC to be involved with the struggle for justice which is an ongoing concern even in a present-day South Africa.

## IMPLICATIONS

### 1. Pietistic background

As indicated above, Smith came from a decidedly pietistic background, called the “[Andrew] Murray evangelical and pietist tradition” in the DRC by Durand (1985:43-44). It is generally known that pietists<sup>13</sup> were mainly concerned with evangelization, understood as “winning souls for the Lamb” (Von Zinzendorf). Because of this preoccupation pietists are often regarded as strongly apolitical, preferring not to become too involved with “worldly” matters.<sup>14</sup> Yet I have argued elsewhere (Saayman 1996) that a group of DRC missionaries who can be broadly characterised as pietists in SA developed a different approach (cf. also Durand 1985). The evangelistic zeal which characterised pietism in general brought these South African missionaries uncomfortably close to “their [black] people” in the oppressive racist context of SA. In general the racist South African society was carefully constructed to separate the “white world” from the “black world”, so that the majority of white South Africans were indeed ignorant of what was going on in everyday black life in the “locations” and mining compounds (Saayman 1996:208). The reality that pietist missionaries entered the hidden “black world” brought along the possibility of growth in human understanding, which was a crucial precondition for awareness (conscientisation) of the structural injustices which constituted racist SA. The pietist evangelistic ministry among black South Africans thus brought these white missionaries face to face with the horrors of apartheid, often perpetrated by committed white Christians (:208-209). And it was also their pietist concern for their “charges” which awakened in them the awareness that this situation could not be justified in God’s name (as the apartheid policy was – cf. Saayman 2007: 69-72). So in a paradoxical way their pietistic convictions (apolitical in nature) prepared the way for sociopolitical involvement in searching for justice. I would therefore argue that Nico Smith’s pietistic background and upbringing played an important role in any account of his contribution in the struggle for justice. It may be necessary, therefore, that we re-evaluate our theological classifications such as “liberal”, “pietist”, etc. (cf. Saayman 1996). It is quite possible that a well-considered pietist faith approach to social involvement may be very helpful in facing problems such as senseless violence, corruption and decay of social institutions in SA today.

### 2. Koinonia and the stay in Mamelodi

It is possible to argue that Nico and Ellen Smith attempted to erect road signs on the way for white South Africans to find a new inclusive African identity. In his foreword for the *feestschrift* presented to them on the occasion of Smith’s sixtieth birthday in 1990, Beyers Naudé (1990:9; my translation) stated: “...the witness of Nico Smith and Ellen Faul will remain to exist as a symbol of a new vision, a new brother- and sisterhood, a new society built on the

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13 I am referring here specifically to the Continental European (especially German) pietist tradition – cf. Saayman 1996. This tradition differs in important respects from contemporary Evangelicals, who can also be called pietists.

14 This was indeed the case in later Moravian tradition, which held that “where the execution of the spiritual mission had become impossible because of sociopolitical impediments, it was better that missionaries withdraw rather than become involved in ‘worldly’ matters” (Saayman 1996:206).

acknowledgement and acceptance of the image of God in each South African with whom we coexist from day to day while we enter into a new South Africa". I would argue that one can find evidence of this attempt to bring about a new community especially in the idea and formation of Koinonia, and in their stay in Mamelodi. In both these instances they were attempting to bring into being new ways of being together for black and white South Africans, living an example of being human together in SA (Saayman 2011). For today's generation I guess it may sound very strange, if not quite incomprehensible, that such a simple act as having a meal together can even be counted as a worthwhile way of contesting racial injustice in SA. One has to develop an awareness and understanding of how successfully apartheid had succeeded in separating South Africans into a white and a black world in the same country in order to understand this. So the simple idea of white people sharing a meal with black acquaintances was practically unthinkable in the early 1980s, and indeed illegal in restaurants, hotels and other public places of entertainment. So in the contemporary context it was actually quite a radical idea. Yet it was based on a simple, everyday human event. I think Nico and Ellen's lives teach us that it is important to remember that injustice can also be opposed through very simple human actions, *learning to be human together in everyday life*. The simple gesture (like sharing a meal) in order to acknowledge the "other's" humanity, is sometimes worth more than radical violent resistance. It is also important to keep in mind that extreme poverty continues to exist next to great wealth in SA. The simple human and Christian action of "breaking bread together" between rich and poor, privileged and underprivileged is therefore as important as in the 1980s.

The move to Mamelodi was of a different order.<sup>15</sup> The apartheid regime used the introduction of the Group Areas Act in the 1950s in order to declare any interracial living areas illegal, and so to clear up all "black spots" in white areas (where black, white and brown often lived peacefully together). By the 1980s this had been successfully completed, and races lived apart in their "own" areas.<sup>16</sup> Basically the only white residents in urban black townships were Roman Catholic missionaries who received special dispensation to stay in the areas where they were ministering. So the idea of moving to Mamelodi was not based on a simple everyday human custom. And the fact that it happened in the mid-1980s, when the resistance against apartheid reached a high point in the Gauteng and Vaal townships, with bombings, necklacing and murders nearly a daily occurrence, made it even more radical. Yet the Smiths decided to go as a result of their understanding of solidarity with their fellow Christians among whom they were ministering (Saayman 2009:115-117). Eventually this move proved so important that Nico could write a book (Smith 2010) to explain that this brought about a complete change to his theology (understanding of God). It was so important that Nico could articulate this change as "the death of the god of my fathers". The full extent of the impact of this unexpected move by a "boer", a previous member of the AB, a respected professor at the prestigious University of Stellenbosch, became clearer in the tributes paid to Nico and Ellen at his official burial in 2010 from the Bosman street DRC building (an Afrikaner historical monument).<sup>17</sup> Speaker after speaker representing black communities, including the Mayor of Tshwane, mentioned

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15 The full story of Nico and Ellen's time in Mamelodi is told in a book which he completed before his death, but was published posthumously (Smith 2010).

16 The effect of this Afrikaner custom and government policy was so pervasive that it was prevalent even on DRC mission stations in independent African countries such as Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe (personal observation of the author).

17 This historical church building in the heart of Pretoria/Tshwane is today the house of worship of the Uniting Reformed Church in SA's congregation of Melodi ya Tshwane (a congregation which Nico cofounded) – Saayman 2010.

their time in Mamelodi as definitive for the appreciation they expressed for Nico and Ellen. So whereas Koinonia was structured around an unspectacular, everyday occurrence, the time in Mamelodi was spectacular and eye-catching. So Nico's life history also reminds us that sometimes the achievement of justice-righteousness is so important that we have to risk undertaking something truly remarkable and extraordinary, threatening and uncomfortable. There are times when we can do nothing else but to go outside the camp to join Jesus in his humiliation and rejection by his own people in our search for justice (Heb 13:13).

## CONCLUSION

I think it is clear that Nico Smith (together with Ellen) made a significant contribution to the struggle for justice in apartheid SA between 1980 and 1990. In what I have presented above, I tried to indicate what I consider to be important contributions. In our struggle for justice, it is, however, also important to remember that we are fallible human beings. I do not want to leave the impression that his contribution was faultless – there were dimensions which invite criticism. This is so because even in our struggle for the great virtue of justice we can make mistakes. If we wish to remember Nico, it is important to remember that he also was mistaken in some instances. In concluding my paper, I wish to briefly point out two areas where I think he was mistaken. Nico very often expressed his expectation that the injustice in SA could only end in an apocalyptic conflagration – what he called a “catharsis of bloodletting” (Saayman 2009:195-197). I differed from him in this expectation, and the so-called “little miracle” of the 1994 settlement seems to have proved him wrong. Let us hope, and also work for justice, so that this catharsis does not explode unexpectedly in future. The second issue where I think Nico was mistaken was in the way he generally attempted to convince Afrikaners of the evil of their support for an unjust racist dispensation, especially in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In my opinion he decided to try and shock them into awareness of their complicity by sometimes using intemperate language in his public comments. In a sense this was understandable, as Nico felt that Afrikaners (especially members of the DRC) had become deaf and blind in their support of an unjust ideology. Personally I do not think this is the best way to go about convincing people of the errors of their ways.

Still, on balance, I have to conclude that Nico Smith made an important and lasting contribution to the struggle for justice in SA pre-1994. I have to concur with Beyers Naudé that he and Ellen left a lasting legacy for us all to treasure.

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#### KEY WORDS

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## Dealing with interwoven memories and histories: some perspectives in conversation with William Kentridge's *History of the Main Complaint*

### ABSTRACT

The article discusses the notion of memory and history as interwoven phenomena. It was originally presented towards the end of a conference on “The Reformed Churches and the struggle for Justice in South Africa: Remembering 1960-1990.” The article highlights certain characteristics of the project in order to situate it within a broader project of memory-work. It then continues to discuss an artwork of William Kentridge, *History of the Main Complaint*, to illuminate various levels on which memory and history as interwoven phenomena might be understood. Finally, memory and history are discussed as being interwoven phenomena with regards to its crushing or curing abilities, temporality, topics it deals with, and those who remember.

### INTRODUCTION

In his anecdotal reflection on the political transition in South Africa, *The Other Side of History* (2006), Frederik van Zyl Slabbert remarks: “One thing the ‘old’ and the ‘new’ South Africa have in common is a passion for inventing history. History is not seen as a dispassionate inquiry into what happened, but rather as a part of political mobilisation promoting some form of collective self-interest” (Slabbert, 2006:15). This remark, repeated in his conclusion, frames Slabbert’s sketch of the events that gave rise and led to South Africa’s political transition. In his account he does not claim to know or tell the *whole* or the *real* story. Rather, his explanation of events and his need to share it rests on his assertion that “significant parts of what has been, or is being invented” (15) are not the way he remembers certain events.<sup>1</sup> Slabbert’s book makes no claim to be conclusive, but it makes an important contribution to the ways South Africa’s past is remembered.

Slabbert’s anecdote and the topics discussed in it are a good example of the character of “memory work”<sup>2</sup> in South Africa: it is a work in progress; it is a testimony, in some instances an eyewitness report; it forms a part of the body of memory on important events in the history of South Africa. It highlights many of the important attributes of memory: memory is an active rather than a passive process. It is something that someone does. Memories are made

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1 One is reminded of Margaret Macmillan words: “[memory] is a tricky business... We mistakenly think that memories are like carvings in stone; once done, they do not change. Nothing can be further from the truth. Memory is not only selective; it is malleable” (2009: 45).

2 “Memory work” is a term used by John Gillis in ‘Memory and identity: The history of a relationship’, in J.R. Gillis (ed.) *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1994). He states that “memory work is, like any other kind of physical or mental labour, embedded in complex class, gender and power relations that determine what is remembered (or forgotten), by whom, and for what end” (3).

by memory-agents<sup>3</sup> (of which Kodak is only one) – those who do the work of remembering. These agents do not live or remember in a vacuum, but in political spaces. Mieke Bal says it well in the introduction to *Acts of Memory* (1999): our memories are “the product of collective agency rather than the result of psychic or historical accident” (1999: vii). Memory - what we remember and what we make of those remembrances – “is not merely something of which you happen to be a bearer, but something that you actually *perform*” (vii).

What does it mean to engage in memory work? How does taking memory seriously contribute to historical projects like the one embarked on during the said conference? On the one hand, it implies that we acknowledge the phenomenon of memory as a real and an important one. The relationship between memory and history is notorious for its difficulty to acknowledge one another as partners in knowing the past. However, Paul Ricoeur seems to have put this straight: “To put it bluntly, we have nothing better than memory to signify that something has taken place, has occurred, has happened *before* we declare that we remember it” (Ricoeur, 2004: 21).<sup>4</sup> Memory is our only access to the past. Ricoeur’s starting point is that memory is capability – we can remember. On the other hand, however, our memories are also of a transient and delicate nature: open to abuse.<sup>5</sup> As Andreas Huyssen puts it: “Human memory may well be an anthropological given, but closely tied as it is to the ways a culture constructs and lives its temporality, the forms memory will take are invariably contingent and subject to change” (Huyssen, 1995: 2).

Slabbert’s remark about myth-making alludes to this transient, delicate nature of memory. Contributions to the body of memory are seldom without politics: they serve an agenda; they are connected to identities and ideologies.<sup>6</sup> As stated in the introduction of the book, *Negotiating the past: The making of memory in South Africa* (1998), “the debate about the processes of memory, and about how memory is created and inscribed” (Nuttal & Coetzee, 1998: 1) in post-apartheid South Africa is an on-going one. This means that we should be very aware of the fact that “we are as yet unable to judge which memories and way of remembering will come to dominate in South Africa in the future” (1). When we remember those days of the late 80’s and early 90’s in which South Africa’s future was negotiated (and of which Slabbert tells in his book), we ought to keep in mind that futures are not settled by a select political few. The negotiations continue, the role-players are innumerable, and the politics thereof are as complicated as ever as we struggle to find some form of consensus on the past and hope of figuring out a way forward. The challenge of memory work in South Africa is therefore

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3 Herman Paul refers to the agents of memory as “memory managers”. See for example his article, “Religious Discourse Communities. Confessional Differentiation in Nineteenth-Century Dutch Protestantism.”

4 Earlier in the same chapter Ricoeur writes: “And yet, we have nothing better than memory to guarantee that something has taken place before we call to mind a memory of it. Historiography itself, let us already say, will not succeed in setting aside the continually derided and continually reasserted conviction that the final referent of memory remains the past, whatever the pastness of the past may signify” (Ricoeur, 2004: 7).”

5 Ricoeur also deals with this characteristic of memory extensively. See *Memory, History, Forgetting* pp. 56-92.

6 See Vosloo’s contribution in this regard: Vosloo, Robert R. 2013. Remembering the role of the Reformed churches in the struggle for justice in South Africa (1960-1990): some remarks on the promise and pitfalls of memory and historiography in *NGTT Deel 54, Sep/Des 2013* (<http://ngtt.journals.ac.za>). He explicates the relationship between memory and identity, memory and trauma, and, in a less direct way, memory and power.

also to come to grips with that past that is also ours.<sup>7</sup> Although it may sound contradictory, acknowledging a past as conflicted as that of South Africa's as ours, asks of citizens to take some distance from themselves – indeed, to (re)claim their identities by (also) remembering others.

Another example of memory work in South Africa is a conference held by the University of Stellenbosch in May 2012 with the title, "The Reformed Churches and the struggle for Justice in South Africa: Remembering 1960-1990."<sup>8</sup> During this conference, too, various participants grappled through and with their memories knowing that their own memories are inevitably met by the complexities of class, gender, power, and, especially, with the complexity of race. The conference, as an event with discussions between diverse groups of people, is an example of the process of negotiating the past and the way that remembering takes place in South Africa. Despite the attempts made to be inclusive and truthful during the event and even in planning it, it was not possible to tell the *whole* or the *real* story. However, the stories that were told do not only provide us with insight about the past. The way the past is understood and the meaning that is made out of this past, reveals a lot about the present, and possibly also the future that is hoped for.

Furthermore, this very act of remembering also served as an inscription of memory.<sup>9</sup> A significant number of the conference-goers were people born in the late eighties and early nineties. Their memory of the reformed churches in South Africa and the struggle for justice between 1960 and 1990 is not a first-hand memory, but one being handed on to them. The memories that are passed on to a next generation necessarily influence the way they come to know the past, the way they make sense of themselves in the present, and shape the future they imagine.

That being said, memory activities ask to be scrutinised. Despite the dynamic, transient and malleable nature of memory, it has the responsibility to be truthful to the past. Philip Gardner gives an exemplary formulation of the dialectic between memory and truth:

"Under the attention of an open and honest interpreter, the past is never defenceless or helpless, for though the product of the historian's work always speaks to the significance of the past, it remains ever true that... 'the constitutive principle in doing history is pastness'. It is precisely because historians rigorously recognise the constitutive principle

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<sup>7</sup> See in this regard Vosloo's article *Reconfiguring Ecclesial identity: in conversation with Paul Ricoeur*.

Under the heading "memory, history and identity" he stresses the point that "good history helps us to see that the past is *our* past." He draws on, what is known to be, Ricoeur's methodology of the "long route" – a method that welcomes hermeneutical detours that often runs through others. Ricoeur would argue that one can only know the self through others, a knowledge that also includes seeing the *self* as *other* (Cf Ricoeur's *Oneself as Another*).

<sup>8</sup> The proceedings of this conference will soon be published by SUN media as *Reformed Churches in South Africa and the Struggle for Justice: Remembering 1960-1990* (Eds. Mary-Anne Plaatjies-Van Huffel; Robert Vosloo) This article was originally presented as a paper during the concluding session of the conference.

<sup>9</sup> "Memory and inscription" is the topic of some of the earliest intellectual discourses on memory, for example Plato's description of memory in the *Theaetetus* and his *Phaedrus* and Aristotle's *De memoriae et reminiscenciae* (*Of Memory and Recollection*). These foundational texts stress the inextricable connection between memory and the ways in which memory is inscribed or recorded. In both Ricoeur's *Memory, History and Forgetting* (2004) and Anne Whitehead's *Memory* (2009) detailed discussions of these texts are provided.

of pastness that the location of historical dialogue as logically operating only 'in the historian's own mind' does not amount to the kind of inevitable methodological defeat frequently announced by postmodernist scholarship" (Gardner, 2010: 67).

What can we possibly do to escape, or at least attempt to steer away from, the accusation of myth-making, of passionately inventing history for the sake of some form of (collective) self-interest? And if this is perhaps unavoidable, what do we need to keep in mind in order to be responsible in our invention of history and, with it, identities for the future?

One of the first things to be mindful of in our projects of memory work is suggested in the title of this paper: memories and histories are interwoven. The last session of the said conference was a panel reflection on exactly this question "How to deal with our interwoven memories and histories"? Therefore, in the remainder of this article I firstly discuss interwoven memories at the hand of an artwork of the South African artist, William Kentridge, in order to illustrate some aspects of the character of memories and our representation thereof. Then I make some suggestions of what we ought to keep in mind regarding interwoven memories and histories when we engage in memory work.

## MEMORY: CRUSHER OR CURER?

In 1996 the South African artist, William Kentridge, produced a short film that brilliantly portrays the intricacy and ambiguity of memory: *History of the Main Complaint*. Through various strategies the film probes the question: does memory crush or does it cure?

In their article, "History as the main complaint: William Kentridge and the making of post-apartheid South Africa", Dubow and Rosengarten accurately describe the main narrative of the film. A full citation thereof fits our discussion:

"Soho Eckstein, Kentridge's allegorical figure of rapacious mining capital, lies dressed in a suit and tie in a hospital bed. He wears a respiratory mask, his eyes are closed, his body rasps for breath. X-ray images, MRI scan and heart monitor report on his interior: the patient's broken pelvis, vertebrae, bruised organs, intestines. Against the doleful strains of a Monteverdi madrigal erupts another soundtrack: the insistent beep of medical technology, the dull syncopations of a typewriter, telephone, ticker-tape machine – the accoutrements of Soho's life as an industrial empire builder – and the sizzle of electrical contact. A physician and his retinue of consultants prognosticate around the body. On the sonar screen, doubling as a car windscreen, Soho's insides metamorphose into a landscape. The scene cuts to Soho driving, his eyes reflected in the car's rear-view mirror, the road in front flanked by an avenue of pylons and thickening trees sketching the deep V perspective of spatial progression.

But at the same time that we are propelled forward, the unfolding scene rushes towards us as memory. The transaction of past and present, of retrospection and return, is abruptly interrupted. Forks of high-voltage current crack across the screen; they course through a Sunday roast, become electrodes that wrap around a toe that itself mutates into penis and testicles. Then a body abandoned on the roadside. This is the first of a series of anonymous figures injured, beaten to the ground by rifle butts, kicked about the torso.

The assaults are registered internally as red crosses on Soho's body scan. Windscreen wipers/ medical scanner dial move repeatedly back and forth to eradicate the marks. Suddenly, a

figure charges out of the darkness, hurtles into view, is momentarily held in the beam of the car headlights. The impact is brutal: the face is crushed, the windscreen shatters. Soho awakens to the crash. The collision is as much a matter of temporalities as it is of objects, bodies, images” (Dubow & Rosengarten, 2004: 673, 678).<sup>10</sup>

Speaking about his own film, Kentridge remarked: “Here’s a person who’s in a coma because of the weight of what he sees. The question is, is it going to kill him?” (Cited in Dubow & Rosengarten, 671). How this question, and the film itself, is relevant to our project is clear if we take into account the context in which Kentridge was commissioned to make this film. The film was a part of the “Faultlines” exhibition held in Cape Town in the winter of 1996 – the high season of truth and reconciliation in South Africa. This suggests that “the film, like the exhibition as a whole, was intended to address the issues of memory, truth and reconciliation” (Godby in Nuttal and Coetzee, 1998: 100) and it provides valuable insight with regards to memory and history as interwoven phenomena.

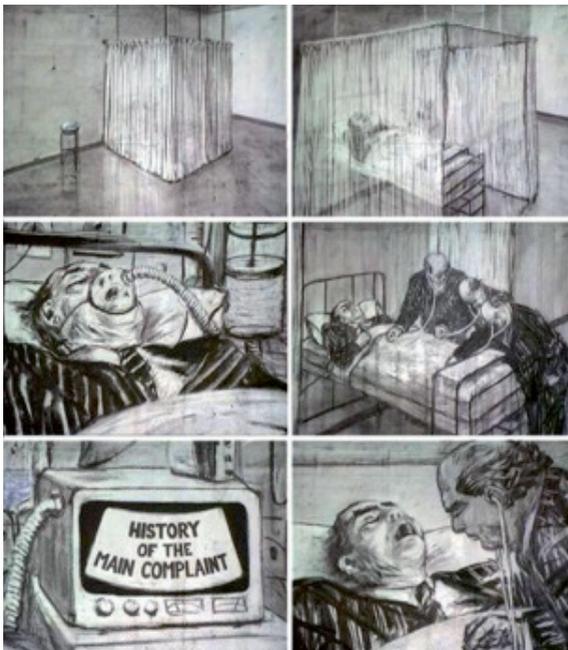


Figure 1: William Kentridge, drawings from *History of the Main Complaint* (1996)

The film is one of a series of nine animated short films that Kentridge made between 1989 and 2003 in which his expressionist lineage is clearly seen. The form of the film alludes to its content. In *History of the Main Complaint*, as with the entire series, he makes use of a technique that would become a feature of his work: the film itself is a series of successive charcoal drawings that is always made on the same sheet of paper – draw, erase and redraw. This is contrary to the traditional animation technique in which each movement is drawn on a separate sheet of paper. In this way what the viewer perceives and that which is presented

<sup>10</sup> For another description of the film, see Godby in Nuttal & Coetzee, 1998: 100-105.

as film is in actual fact a series of still images photographed successively. Equally significant is the fact that each image keeps the traces of the previous drawings - a technique described by Kentridge as "stone-age". The result, as Lilian Tone describes in an exhibition brochure, is a "projected charcoal drawing where the line unfolds mysteriously on the screen, with a will of its own..." There is nothing predictable about it: as she states earlier in the brochure, the "allure of Kentridge's animations lies in their unequivocal reliance on the continuing present, in the uncanny sense of artistic creation and audience reception happening at once".

In the film Soho Eckstein's body is the vehicle of memory and "is made to carry within itself the trauma of recent history" (Godby in Nuttal & Coetzee, 1998: 100).



Figure 2: William Kentridge, screenshot from *History of the Main Complaint* (1996)

The viewers are drawn into an intricate interplay between past and present: we are confronted with the comatose Soho, we see inside his injured body, we witness his flashbacks. This gives us insight into the state that he is in, but the state is not static. We are not left with the image of a comatose body, but in the film we see a revival to his past (Dubow and Rosengarten, 2004: 688). However, neither the images of the present nor those of the past are free of fright. Kentridge's character, and with him the viewers, are confronted "not only by his own near-death in the crash, but also his own survival as crisis" (Dubow and Rosengarten, 2004: 688). Will his revival to the past cure him or crush him? Will he be able to live on in the face of his own survival and revival?

## INTERWOVEN MEMORIES UNTANGLED

*History of the Main Complaint* is an artwork to be dealt with again and again. Without trying to give an encompassing interpretation thereof, I proceed to make a few remarks about dealing with interwoven memories in conversation with this film. The aim is to untangle the idea of interwoven memories and histories in order to provide a few possible markers with which to engage critically in our own recurrent remembering of the past.

By asking whether memories crush or cure, we have already touched on the first level at which

memories and histories are intertwined. Remembering is not an unambiguous activity or occurrence. It carries the possibility of different outcomes in itself.

Speaking about Elie Wiesel's work, *From the Kingdom of Memory: Reminiscences*, Miroslav Volf refers to "the saving power of remembering suffered wrongs" (Volf, 2006: 19). The importance and necessity of remembering and even the ethical duty to remember are widely discussed. South Africa and its churches are in need of memory, as this conference and our participation in it have underscored. However, as Volf later states, our memories of wrongs suffered are also intertwined with other memories. "We recall many other kinds of things – stories from our childhood, adolescent dreams and disappointments, successes and failures in our work, the history of our ancestors or ethnic group, religious instruction, and more" (2006: 20).

Are we, when dealing with our conflicted, violent and unjust past, allowing enough room for memories that differ in their character? Is the outcome of our memory work predetermined, or are we open to what it may confront us with, and ask of us? Are we willing to allow the memories of pain, humiliation, discrimination, violence, and injustice to exist along with happy and fond memories? Do we need all these memories in order to survive our past and overcome the crisis of our survival?<sup>11</sup> Do we need some more than others? Are we willing to make room for the fact that fond memories and hurtful memories live with each other, next to other, inside each other? Furthermore, are all emotions stirred through memory equally legitimate, or are there those that should rather not be felt, let alone mentioned? Are we ready and capable to deal with the fact that our memories are conflicted and in conflict, and that they may continue to arise conflict between people?

To repeat the question stated above: does memory only cure, or does it also crush? Or as Volf says it, is memory a shield or is it a sword?

Secondly, memory and history are intertwined with regards to temporality. Although our memories deal with the past, we recall them in the present, and the present is different from the past. Therefore we have to be aware of the fact that the past is past, and that our memories of the past are not the same thing as the past itself. Our memories live in the now and are often also shaped and changed by the present. Once the past gains a voice in the present through memories, it changes. As Miroslav Volf states, "when we remember the past, it is not only past; it breaks into the present and gains a new lease on life" (Volf, 2006: 21). Therefore, as Van Zyl Slabbert was quoted earlier, the history we invent is often somewhat different than what the past really was. Speaking about the past simultaneously includes different temporalities. It is impossible to predict, and perhaps not desirable to prescribe, the outcome of when these different temporalities meet. This meeting point of temporalities is strikingly portrayed by Kentridge when the wrist watch that the crash victim wears explodes due to the impact of the crash. This is also the point at which Soho Eckstein awakes from his coma. Dubow and Rosengarten give a striking analysis of these scenes:

"It should be remembered that when Soho drives into the landscape, he does not merely cover space; he is immersed in the densities of time. Likewise, when the anonymous figure hurtles into the car windscreen, it emerges not from surrounding space but from the thickets of an occluded time. It is, in other words, by means of an accident of

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<sup>11</sup> The ways in which remembering and forgetting are interwoven phenomena is a very important and widely discussed topic that will not be addressed here. See Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, Weinrich, *Lethé: The art and critique of forgetting*, Volf, *The End of Memory*.

discordant temporalities that Soho is resuscitated to the present: a re-animation that depends less on the mnemonic apprehension of a previous event than on the instant of living an unmediated relation with it. Indeed, in a graphic exemplification of this point, the image of Soho crashing into consciousness hinges on another image that immediately precedes it: on his arm the crash victim wears a wrist watch which explodes on impact" (Dubow and Rosengarten, 2004: 681).

In this sense, too, the interwoven temporalities of memory ask the question of crushing or curing. Who knows what will happen when the past meets us in the present through memory? Who knows whether we will survive the impact, whether it will shock us from a coma, cure us from the illnesses that time has made us suffer; whether it will crush us to the ground, or enliven us to a future of possibilities as we regain consciousness through our encounter with the past?

We also need to reckon with the future when we speak about the interwoven temporalities of memory and history. Bernard Lategan deals with the question of the future in history when he discusses T.N. Hanekom's work, *Die liberale rigting in Suid-Afrika: 'n kerkhistoriese studie*. In his discussion he asks *how* Hanekom typifies the "liberal movement" as a historian, and *what impact* this has on a next generation of theologians and their ability to answer the questions posed in their time (Lategan, 2003:104). From this historical inquiry Lategan concludes that our perception of the past has a decisive influence on our ability to think about the future (109). Therefore memory and history are also interwoven at a third temporal level: in relation to the future. Soho's regaining of his consciousness may therefore also be "understood as an enlivening to history, or, more strongly, an enlivening by history" (Dubow and Rosengarten, 2004: 673). The fact that we are temporal beings, the fact that our existence in and through time is inseparable from our being, provides us with a future.

Thirdly, memory and history are interwoven with to the topics they address. In our conference we dealt with the issue of justice and Reformed churches in South Africa between 1960 and 1990. Impossible as it may sound, these markers are not inherent to South Africa's past in itself. By using these concepts as markers in our memory work we put a specific frame around a specific period and link it to a specific geographical area. We look at 1960 to 1990 in South Africa as a site of struggle for justice where churches were present. When doing so, we identify with and contribute to numerous other similar projects of sense-making. We necessarily come to specific types of conclusions – not suspicious in themselves, but certainly not self-evident (even though they might seem so). If we take into account that we did this 22 years after 1990, in a context known as the outcome of this struggle but yet riddled with injustices, we may be tempted to ask what struggle towards what justice we have in mind with a topic like this. Periods from our past becomes entangled with concepts used to describe and define them. The question will be how this contributes to the way in which we make sense of the present.

Related to this is the tricky issue of periodization that Robert Vosloo (2013) referred to in his opening address when he commented on the period under discussion. This serves as a necessary reminder to remain watchful of the tendency to analyse and interpret in terms of "pre-" and "post-eras" as if our history-making has the ability to move towards fulfilment and closure. If anything, memory and history should assist us in sharpening our questions and recognising the way in which the past and its injustices remain present. In dealing with interwoven memories we can therefore do well to steer away from overtly normative claims concerning the past.

Fourthly and finally memories and histories are interwoven because we do not remember alone. This ought to be understood on, at least, two levels. On the one hand our identities are tightly tied to our memories. “We are much of what we remember about ourselves,” writes Volf (2006:24). Stuart Hall puts it even more directly: “Identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves in, the narratives of the past” (Hall quoted in Huyssen, 1995:1). On the other hand, identity is not merely a self-construction but also something that develops in relation to others. Therefore “in the way others perceive us, we are what others remember about us” (Volf, 2006:24). This emphasises the fact that we do not remember alone, and that our identities are therefore formed by the groups to which we belong.<sup>12</sup> Our own memories are embedded in a world peopled by others “who collectively contribute to the construction of memory and help determine the importance that the past hold for an individual in the present” (Prager quoted in Kirk, 2005:4). In South Africa in particular this dialectic is not unproblematic. Our divided past widens the gap between the way we remember ourselves and the way others remember us, and also with regard to the different aspects of the past that we actually have memories of. If it is therefore at all our aim to narrow the divide that the past has left between us, we need to remember ourselves but also allow others to remember us, and complete the gaps in our own memories. We are challenged to allow, what Eviater Zerubavel calls, “the existential fusion of our own personal biography with the history of the groups or communities to which we belong” (Zerubavel quoted in Kirk, 2005:4). Of course, given the South African past, this implies belonging to groups to which our ancestors did not regard themselves part of. In this way the still images of our memory comes to life, taking on new shapes, leaving different shadows, to form a dynamic history – memories that move and tell a multi-faceted story of which we become more and more a part.

## CONCLUSION

Reflecting on memory work is an important part of remembering our South African past. Creating a just, free and reconciled society today is dependent on the versions of the past that we create – on *how* we remember. To keep the balance between *a commitment to the truth of the past* and the reality of the *representational character of memory* is not an easy task, as the discussion on interwovenness in this article shows. Philip Gardner aptly keeps these two things together when he says that “historical accounts always carry the status of interpretation of real past events, rather than straightforward factual representations of them. In other words, historical accounts are recognised as not solely or directly the product of such events, but also of the agency and the imagination of the historian operating in his or her own distinctive historical, political and personal contexts” (2010:5). In his recent biography of the South African writer, JM Coetzee, Kannemeyer quotes a passage from Coetzee’s inaugural lecture as a professor of the University of Cape Town in 1984 with the title “Truth in Autobiography” that expresses the same sentiment poetically:

“Telling the story of your life [...] is not only a matter of representing the past[,] but also a matter of representing the present in which you wrestle to explain to yourself what it was that *really* happened that day, beneath the surface (so to speak), and write down an explanation which may be full of gaps and evasions but at least gives a representation of the motion of your mind as you try to understand yourself. Indeed, the lies and evasions may be more interesting than the visit itself” (Kannemeyer, 2012:465)

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<sup>12</sup> It was the French sociologist, Maurice Halbwachs, who first theorised the notion of “collective memory” in the early twentieth century. See Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory* and *On Collective Memory*.

We learn much from our memories – not only things about the past, but also about the pain, hope, confusion, acquiescence, grudges, forgiveness and newly found meaning of the present, and the expectation of a future. In this paper the influential role of those who remember has been unpacked; on the one hand to sensitise regarding the complexity of history and memory based on its interwovenness, and on the other hand to incite this dynamic interplay called history. The struggle for and wonder of memory continues.

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## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Kentridge, Williams (1996). From "9 Drawings for Projection (1989-2003): History of the Main Complaint." Photo by John Hodgkiss.

Image obtained from <http://www.pbs.org/art21/images/william-kentridge/from-9-drawings-for-projection-1989-2003-history-of-the-main-complaint-1996> [Accessed 27 November 2013]

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**KEY WORDS**

Memory  
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Remembering  
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**TREFWOORDE**

Herinnering  
Geskiedenis  
Verweefde herinneringe  
Onthou  
Gereformeerde kerke

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## The church as alternative community and the struggle for liberation in the work of David Bosch

### ABSTRACT

The church as alternative community remains a key aspect in understanding the work of David Bosch, while some of the most important critique of his work emerged from liberation theology. By exploring Bosch's use of the relationship between Jesus and the Zealots in his reflection on the alternative community, the article will argue that Bosch not only sees his own work as standing close to that of liberation theologians, but also that Bosch worked with a very narrow interpretation of liberation theology. Also under discussion are some aspects of what Bosch believed the role of this alternative community should have been amidst apartheid, while the lack of concrete analysis for how this might contribute to the liberation of people is emphasized.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

When remembering Reformed theology and the struggle against apartheid, little justification for revisiting the work of David Bosch seems necessary. In Bosch's own words, apartheid was "nothing but a heresy" (Bosch 1983a), and his choice to turn down various attractive posts internationally because of his personal commitment to the struggle against apartheid is well-known (Kritzinger & Saayman 2011: 142-143).

The notion of the church as "alternative community" was a central theme in the work of Bosch and was also directly related to his own response to apartheid. This was what he chose to reflect upon when the *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* asked him to write an article on how his own theology had developed during the decade between 1972 and 1982 (Bosch 1982a). The centrality of this notion in his work has long been recognized, and continues to be reflected upon in recent publications (Bekele, 2011; Kritzinger & Saayman 2011; Reppenhagen & Guder 2011; Saayman 2011; Van Wyngaard 2011). However, the choice to remember and reflect on the alternative community in the work of David Bosch perhaps also illustrates the growing interest in seeing the church as a counter-cultural or alternative community (Reppenhagen & Guder, 2011: 550-551).

Central to attempts at remembering David Bosch in relation to the struggle for justice in South Africa is the debate concerning his response to liberation theology. While this can be seen in the response to the work of Bosch preceding the publication of *Transforming mission* (Balcomb 1989; Nicol 1990), it is still evident in recent contributions (Botha 2011; Conradie 2011; Kritzinger & Saayman 2011), and is of particular interest in this article. This relates directly to his reflection on the church as alternative community (Reppenhagen and Guder 2011:540).

I will provide an introduction to Bosch's understanding of the church as alternative community by exploring one key analogy in his thinking on the topic, namely the relation between Jesus and the Zealots. This analogy will be used to discuss the relationship between

Bosch's alternative community and liberation theology, emphasizing both Bosch's affinity to and distance from liberation theology. Lastly, some key aspects of the church as alternative community will be explored in considering whether the alternative community can effect social change.

## 2. JESUS AND THE ZEALOTS

The alternative community is a multifaceted notion in Bosch's writings. While it is clearly influenced and formed by his appreciation of the Mennonites, and in particular John Howard Yoder (Kritzinger & Saayman 2011: 77), he simultaneously attempts to describe the alternative community in ways that are in line with Reformed (1979: 222-226) and Catholic theology (Bosch 1991b:373-376). While some of the metaphors Bosch uses clearly reflect his Anabaptist connection (such as that of the church as *antibody*), other metaphors attempt to sketch a more ecumenical interpretation of the church as alternative community (such as the church as the *new community*).

The argument that Bosch possibly repeats most often when describing the church as alternative community, concerns four models he identifies in the various groups around Jesus. It is an argument which in both its structure and content is borrowed from Yoder (1972: 18-31), yet at key points also seems to draw from Cullmann (1970), as will be pointed out below. In a typical form of this argument, Bosch (1975; 1977a; 1981; 1982b) identifies four Jewish groups in the time of Jesus that approached the current social reality in various ways. He describes all of these as simultaneously political and religious. Furthermore, he broadly states that these are the same options available to us today, and sometimes draws links between these groups and the options from which the church can choose today. Mostly these are broad references to various theological traditions, but sometimes he is quite specific about how he identifies these groups within the South African context.

The first option available to Jesus is that of the Sadducees. They followed a theology of the status quo, accepting the Roman rule. It was a form of political realism; they knew that the Roman rule could not be overthrown. But such realism easily developed into maintaining the status quo.

The second option is that of the Pharisees, who despised the Sadducees because of their involvement with politics. Bosch regularly describes them as the pietists of their day. They busied themselves with that which was purely religious, the classification of the whole of life into what was clean and unclean. This option advocates a purely religious ministry that steers clear of politics.

The third option is that of the Essenes who withdrew from public life to seclude themselves within a faithful community, waiting for the final judgment of God. Theirs is a theology of the ghetto, a theology of asceticism.

Perhaps a short interlude is appropriate before continuing to the fourth group. Bosch describes the pietism of the churches in South Africa as contributing to the problem of apartheid: The evangelical churches and African Independent churches who teach that governmental authority is from God, and white churches excluding socio-political demands from their faith (1987:10-11). The Dutch Reformed church could simultaneously be described as a classic example of a theology of the status quo while also reflecting a strong pietist identity (1983b:1-

2). I want to spend more time on the fourth group, which I believe can help in illuminating the tension within Bosch's own struggle for justice, as well as reintroduce an important tension in the remembrance of Bosch today.

The fourth group he identifies is that of the Zealots,<sup>1</sup> an underground political movement, directly opposed to the Sadducees. They answered the Roman force with force; they were the freedom fighters of the day. They represented a theology of revolution, and identified the reign of God with institutional reform. Bosch often reminds that Jesus was closer to this group than to the other three (Bosch 1975:4; 1981:7; 1982b:7), an aspect not reflected upon in summaries of how Bosch used this argument (see Ahonen 2003:106; Bekele 2011:304-306). In his argument he then presents Jesus as an alternative also in relation to the Zealots, but the emphasis on the relatedness between Jesus and the Zealots in the work of Bosch deserves attention. Both Cullmann and Yoder emphasize the similarities between Jesus and the Zealots, and by pointing out the differences use this to clarify how Jesus responded to particular political questions.

Yoder's Jesus calls for a radical transformation of society, but argues that the pacifist position is the only true way to bring about this transformation. He stresses that in its essence Jesus' difference with the Zealots not only concerns their instrument of bringing about change, but that the new order brought about by the sword is not the new peoplehood of God. What Jesus seeks is a more radical liberation than what the Zealots were seeking, one which breaks with the cycle of violence (Yoder 1972:23-24; Bosch 1982:5). In a slightly different way Cullmann formulates the difference between Jesus and the Zealots as a difference of both method and goal (Cullmann 1970:44). The difference in method concerns primarily the use of violence (1970: 49), while he understands the Kingdom of God to be something different from political transformation, and the goal of the Zealots to be one of Jesus' temptations which he needed to resist (1970: 38-39).

Bosch's reflection on Jesus and the Zealots is continued from the work of Yoder, thus emphasizing that engaging in a forced change of society does not inaugurate something new (Bosch 1975b:5), while placing particular emphasis on the two aspects of critique which Cullmann presents: that the Zealots and those who adopt this position seek "mere change of government" (Bosch 1978:100) and that the way of Jesus rejects the use of force (Bosch 1975a:6).

So how does Bosch connect the option of the Zealots to the context of apartheid? He describes the Zealots as representing those who advocate a "theology of the revolution" (1982b:7) and makes a direct connection between the Zealots and liberation theology by stating that a theology of liberation mistakenly identifies Jesus completely with the Zealots (1975b:6).<sup>2</sup> Perhaps Bosch's most explicit connection between the Zealots and apartheid is in a talk given to students of the University of South Africa. In response to a question posed by the students, "Who would Jesus vote for?", he reminds them that black ANC members are, at least formally,

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<sup>1</sup> Although Bosch (1975:4) recognizes that this group did not necessarily exist as an organized political group in the time of Jesus, he nonetheless continues to refer to them in his reflection. The question on historicity is not of concern in this article, but rather how this group impacted his reflection on Jesus and the church within the context of apartheid.

<sup>2</sup> While Cullmann refrains from drawing lines between his analysis of Jesus and the Zealots and the contemporary situation (Cullmann 1970:52), he similarly refers to those who wish to make Jesus as Zealotist revolutionary (:34).

closer to the position of Jesus than any of them, and that Black Theology identifies with the call for liberation in Luke 4 (Bosch 1981:2). He then draws a direct parallel between the ANC and the Zealots, saying “As die ANC in die meer onlangse verlede toenemend tot geweld oorgegaan het, dan redeneer hulle presies net soos die Selote van die eerste Christelike eeu”<sup>3</sup> (Bosch 1981:10).

The constant reminder that the Zealots were those to whom Jesus stood closer than the other options might provide an analogy for how Bosch may have regarded his own stance in relation to that of the many close friends who identified with liberation theology. On a less personal level, we should, as will be discussed below, regard this as an analogy - albeit it an unfortunate one at times - for the relationship between the alternative community and liberation theology. The analogy points to Bosch identifying himself more with those who actively opposed the oppressive forces - the Apartheid government - than with the other options Bosch perceived to be available, such as withdrawing from society or attempting to collaborate with an unjust system. Yet he could not condone violence, was wary that liberation was being reduced to political change, and ultimately did not believe that the use of force will ever bring about a truly new order.

### 3. THE ALTERNATIVE COMMUNITY AND LIBERATION THEOLOGY

Balcomb (1989, 1990) used Bosch as an example in his analyses of Third Way theologies in South Africa. But the brush Balcomb used to paint the landscape in that late hour of apartheid was a broad one. Third way theologies include “liberals” (1990:40-41), Nico Smith (1990:44-45) and Hermann Giliomee (1989:44). The strong pacifist commitment of Bosch and Yoder, a broad rejection of violence, including in particular the violence of the status quo ((Bosch 1991b:441), need not be a defining characteristic of Third Way approaches in the way Balcomb portrays them; on the contrary, Third Way approaches are suspected of being easily co-opted by the state and keeping the status quo in place.

In Balcomb’s description of Bosch the emphasis rests on being an alternative on both the church as merely another social agency and the church’s withdrawal from society, but incorrectly portray Bosch as an example of reinforcing the middle-ground power concerns. Nicol therefore revised Balcomb’s interpretation, pointing out Bosch’s constant opposition to apartheid, and stating that his position can better be described as “somewhere between a third way and a clear stand against oppression” (Nicol 1990:96). In a similar way yet with the benefit of hindsight Kritzinger & Saayman (2011:186-189), in dialogue with Balcomb’s analyses, describe Bosch’s approach as indeed prophetic – clearly opposed to the oppression happening in South Africa – although choosing a different approach than liberation theologies.

The relationship between Jesus and the Zealots as described by Bosch and this description as an analogy for his own stance toward liberation theologies, can also be seen in how he responded to the Kairos document. While the Zealots are not explicitly mentioned, the form of his argument continues from his reflection on the Zealots. Although he chose not to sign the Kairos Document, he later wrote: “Since it was first published I have, however, begun to have second thoughts about the matter. I still have not signed it but I am today closer to it than I’ve been before.” (Bosch 1987:15)

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<sup>3</sup> “When the ANC, in their more recent past, increasingly turned to violence, then they are arguing exactly like the Zealots from the first Christian century”

His reasons for not signing Kairos follow his reflections on the relationship between Jesus and the Zealots, and reveal the unfortunate equation of liberation theology with his image of the Zealots. Firstly, he considered Kairos to offer no other form of salvation than political liberation. Although his explicit question was concerned with what would happen if this liberation did not come, he had often in the past indicated that even if a particular revolutionary group would be able to successfully undermine the status quo, the church cannot commit itself without reserve to such a revolution either. Secondly, he considered the Kairos document to have a tacit support for revolutionary violence, or at least that it suggested that responding with violence to violence is inevitable (Bosch 1987:15). His problems with the Kairos document are therefore similar to the difference between Jesus and the Zealots which he adopted from Yoder and Cullmann in the 1970's, focusing on what he interpreted as Kairos's exclusive emphasis on political liberation and the legitimization of violence.

Kritzinger and Saayman (2011:100-101) argue that Bosch misunderstood the intention of the Kairos signatories, and that he had misread the situation in South Africa. The intention was not to support violence, but rather to highlight the importance of finding a solution without delay. And history has proven that political change was indeed closer than many expected at that time. But underlying this misunderstanding there is a deeper question concerning the interpretation of liberation theology. For Bosch, liberation theology is seen as single-mindedly concerned with political liberation. In this way the analogy of Jesus and the Zealots becomes an unfortunate one, reducing liberation theology to a narrow theology exclusively accompanying movements for political liberation which seek governmental change, even if this should require revolutionary violence. He consistently critiques liberation theology by looking through this lens.

The essence of Bosch's (1991b:429-430) interpretation of liberation theology seems to be captured in his view of Nolan as a liberation theologian who makes a very direct connection between the political struggle in South Africa and the work of God, anticipating a utopian future introduced by the struggle. While in *Transforming Mission* he sketches positive (from his point of view) developments in liberation theology, where the utopianism starts to disappear and the church is more central, this contrast again confirms his interpretation of the initial phases of liberation theology. Furthermore, it should be noted that while he recognizes South African liberation theology which is committed to nonviolence, his more positive interpretation of integral liberation is exclusively focussed on Latin American liberation theology (Bosch 1991b:442-447).

While much has been said about the relationship between Bosch and liberation theology over the past decades, the image of Jesus and the Zealots might help further illuminate where Bosch would have seen himself in the struggle against apartheid. Bosch's later vision for the church under apartheid provides an important perspective. He describes the task of the church as "to find a way of resolutely showing solidarity with the poor and the oppressed while at the same time preaching and practising a transcendent love. Unless it follows this course, the spectre of violence and ruin and hatred will always be with us, both now and after liberation" (Bosch 1987:16). This short statement closely reflects his use of Yoder sketched above:

- emphasizing that political liberation might not bring about true liberation, since we will continue in violence
- describing the love of enemies as central in overcoming the cycle of violence

- placing the relationship with the poor and oppressed central to his approach.

It can perhaps best be described by saying that he saw the alternative community standing close to the liberation movements, agreeing with them that the church has a particular calling to stand up against oppression, yet holding to the belief that this is best done by becoming an alternative community.

Yet in a posthumously published essay he states that:

“I would therefore suggest that, in spite of very real differences between the reformist, liberationist and anabaptist models, they are closer to each other than may appear at first glance. And it is gratifying to note that more and more scholars are detecting the fundamental affinity between them” (Bosch 1993:94).

But whereas he constantly sought to emphasize the similarities between Reformed and Anabaptist ecclesiology, and right after this statement refer to De Gruchy as an example of an attempt at seeking out the affinity between Reformed and Liberation theology, he fails to clearly point out the overlap between liberation theology and the alternative community. As Conradie (2011:93) points out, Bosch fails to expand on the relationship between reconciliation (which is the main soteriological element he associates with the church as alternative community) and liberation. In following Yoder he emphasizes that the reconciled community is the only way towards true liberation, but Bosch consistently fails to provide a concrete analysis concerning how this theological vision of a reconciled community would have an effect on the actual sociological liberation of people. This absence seems to be one of the key problems with Bosch’s suggestion.

Elements for a dialogue between the church as alternative community and liberation theology, between Bosch’s emphasis on reconciliation and the call for liberation, are indeed visible in his work, although never explored by Bosch. Bosch’s consistent exposition of Luke 4 as a text which reveals the alternative which Jesus inaugurated (1977:13-15; 1991b:108-113), together with his recognition that this text is also at the heart of the liberation theologies (1981:2; 1984:3) might open up such a dialogue. This is again found when he states that the Bible should be read as an establishment-critical document (1984:3), again explicitly positioning himself closer to those who opposed the status quo than those who sought to maintain it. Saayman (2011:14) also shows the possible affinity when extending Bosch’s logic of the church as alternative community to coincide with what a prophetic theology in the tradition of the Kairos Document would look like today.

We may remember Bosch as one who criticised liberation theology either in order to point out perceived limitations in his approach (an important aspect of critical engagement with his work, which has led to a deeper understanding of some of the pitfalls in his approach), or to justify our own rejection of liberation theology. In a world where liberation theology continues to be a contested notion, and theologies drawing on the work of Bosch often reveal either ignorance or a disregard for the continued importance of liberation theologies,<sup>4</sup> there

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<sup>4</sup> See for example the scant reflection on liberation theologies in Van Gelder & Zscheile (2011) overview of missional theology as well as Storrar’s (2011) use of Bosch to define his approach to public theology, while limiting liberation theology largely to a context which precede a modern democracy. This can perhaps also be seen in the context of continued Dutch Reformed Church reflection on its role in South Africa, where the work of Bosch has become an important influence, yet liberation theology often continues to be ignored or rejected.

is danger in a one-sided recollection of Bosch's critique on liberation theology, while ignoring the fact that he shared some basic concerns with liberation theology amidst apartheid. In as far as Bosch is used to relegate liberation theology to a distant past we need to accentuate the constant undercurrent in his work in which he acknowledges an overlap between Jesus and the struggle for liberation, to the extent that he would remind a group of Afrikaans students in 1981 that there is a closer connection between Jesus and the ANC, than between any of them and Jesus.

However, this aspect alone would paint a distorted picture of Bosch's view, as if the alternative community is defined purely by what it is not. The last section therefore briefly looks at how Bosch then envisioned the church as alternative community under apartheid.

#### 4. THE LIFE OF THE ALTERNATIVE COMMUNITY

Amidst the context of apartheid, the alternative community would be marked by radically transformed membership rules where the distinctions between "in-group" and "out-group" no longer matter (1977a:11-12), and where compassion, also towards our enemies, guides all our actions (1977a:26).

He emphasises that the church should focus on doing that which no other institution or group can do, and that this must be visibly distinguishable in the life of the church. One of these unique elements of the church is that she can pray for the world. But in order for the church to become an intercessor for the world, she needs to become that which she is praying for (Bosch 1975a:5). Similarly, when the church seeks to speak to society with a prophetic voice - whether in a process of nation-building or liberation - she needs to tangibly reflect the new community in her life and structures, otherwise it will be of no effect (Bosch 1978:100-101). It would be a mistake to reduce Bosch's alternative community to a church exclusively living a silent alternative (although this is to be preferred if the use of force is the only other option), but in his whole approach there can be no formative influence on society without a church which already lives from the values to which it calls society, thus a church as an alternative community which engages society.

Where do we find this alternative community under apartheid? Kritzinger and Saayman (2011:91) states that Bosch found it difficult to identify any such church groups in South Africa, and he himself states that no denomination will ever be such an alternative community (Seitz 1977:11). But at least one incident might reveal his imagination of the alternative community, a moment which kept alive his vision of the church as an alternative community under apartheid.

The PACLA<sup>5</sup> experience left a deep mark in Bosch's imagination of how the church as an alternative community might contribute to change in South Africa. He drew on this example of black and white participants experiencing deep reconciliation at PACLA to motivate a similar event in South Africa (which later became SACL), with the expressed hope that such an event would spark widespread reconciliation (Bosch 1977b:5-8). But what he implied by reconciliation within such an alternative community needs some clarification in our contemporary context where "reconciliation" has become such a widespread notion in South Africa, and perhaps also in his own context, where he later admitted that reconciliation was

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<sup>5</sup> PACLA (Pan African Christian Leadership Assembly) was a gathering of African church leaders held in Nairobi, Kenya from 9-19 December 1976.

at times used to merely subdue people (Bosch 1987:15). To quote from his own contribution at PACLA:

“...reconciliation is no cheap matter. It does not come about by simply papering over deep seated differences. Reconciliation presupposes confrontation. Without that we do not get reconciliation, but merely a temporary glossing over of differences. The running sores of society cannot be healed with the use of sticking plaster. Reconciliation presupposes an operation, a cutting to the very bone, without anaesthetic. The infection is not just on the surface. The abscess of hate and mistrust and fear, between black and white, between nation and nation, between rich and poor, has to be slashed open.”  
(1978:101)

When speaking to the exiled ANC he reminded them that the settlement which might come in South Africa - and which in the end did come - would be fragile for years to come and would only be kept alive by means of many compromises (Bosch 1991a:17). At the same time he reminded the Dutch Reformed Church that repentance calls for restitution (Bosch 1991a:13). It would be a painful process for all involved. Real communication and costly reconciliation (Bosch 1977b:5) are the marks of the alternative community, and his choice to emphasize these aspects cannot be disconnected from the context of apartheid amidst which they emerged.

Finally we need to turn to the question constantly directed to Bosch: would the new community with new membership rules and a life of compassion, the community where real communication and costly reconciliation are core values and where they are visibly expressed, be able to bring about justice in society? Bosch provides two answers to this:

The first is that for him this is the wrong question. The church “is called to be faithful, not effective” (Bosch 1975a:6). His vision was not for a silent church, indeed the church should be a prophetic voice in society (Bosch 1975a:6), it should evaluate governments as good or bad (Bosch 1978:99) and its members should actively take part in practical politics (Bosch 1975a:7-8). But rather than lose its distinct nature as an inclusive and compassionate community, the church should revert to silence, challenging the status quo by its life together if no other option existed. As he told representatives of the civic community in Pietermaritzburg, “let us not lose heart when the world remains very much the same. The challenge to us is to remain faithful to the guiding principles of the “alternative community”, irrespective of the outcome.” (Bosch 1975a:8)

Secondly, the church should not overestimate its role. It becomes redundant and irrelevant when repeating that which other institutions and groups can do (Bosch 1975:3; 1979:224) and often tends to exceed its level of competence when announcing how the world must look (Bosch 1991b:387). Furthermore, it is not the church’s task to inaugurate utopia in history (Bosch 1991b:509). The task of the church is therefore limited to that which flows from the life of the alternative community while recognizing that the work of God is much broader than the church (Bosch 1982c:142)

In these answers we are again without a concrete analysis of how the alternative community will bring about social change. Bosch refrains from providing such a concrete analysis, rather leaving it to the local church to discern what being an alternative should be. In exploring this, a deeper dialogue on how the church as an alternative community might become a liberating community in its various contexts remains important. We need to continuously break the silence between the church as alternative community and liberation theology.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Perhaps the choice to reflect on the relationship between Jesus and the Zealots, between Bosch and liberation theology, is born out of my own critical struggle with the collective memory of my own community. Within the Dutch Reformed Church Bosch will remain (or is that rather “became”?) an important voice. But it is too easy to call Bosch “one of us”, appreciating his critique on revolutionary violence, while tacitly supporting the violence of the status quo, whether that is police brutality and the excessive use of force or the violence of economic exclusion. It is too easy to repeat the call for reconciliation, while remaining silent about his insistence on restitution and the cost of reconciliation.

While the tension between Bosch and liberation theology has often been reflected upon by those in the tradition of South African liberation theology, there is at times a fading memory of the way in which Bosch seems to have experienced himself as standing alongside liberation theology and liberation movements, seen in his analogy of Jesus and the Zealots.

And so I sought to remember the relation between Jesus and the Zealots; not only as a reminder that for Bosch political liberation can never inaugurate utopia and that the churches can never commit itself to any political organization without reservation, but more importantly in this case, as a reminder that for Bosch Jesus might have been closer to the freedom fighters than those of us in today’s white Afrikaans Reformed churches may be comfortable with. While we like to remember Bosch’s emphasis on unity, we are hesitant to insist that repentance calls for restitution. In such a one-sided interpretation David Bosch runs the danger of being reinterpreted as a “safe” theologian, envisioning an alternative community which can continue without a slashing open of “the abscess of hate and mistrust and fear”.

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## KEY WORDS

David Bosch  
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## TREFWOORDE

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## Remembering the role of the Reformed Churches in the struggle for justice in South Africa (1960-1990): some remarks on the promise and pitfalls of memory and historiography<sup>1</sup>

### ABSTRACT

The period 1960-1990 represents a dramatic – and also traumatic – period in South African church and theological history. The story of the Reformed churches during this period is inextricably interwoven with the theological support of the ideology of apartheid *as well as* the story of the theological struggle against the injustices of apartheid. With this in mind this essay addresses the question: “How should we remember the role of the Reformed churches in South Africa in the struggle for justice between 1960 and 1990?” The essay attends to various aspects of this question, offering some clarification and qualification in the process. The article argues, in addition, that an engagement with the role of the Reformed churches in South Africa in the struggle for justice requires an awareness of the promise as well as the pitfalls associated with the attempt to remember and to represent the past.

### INTRODUCTION

In this essay, I offer some remarks on the question: “How should we remember the role of the Reformed churches in South Africa in the struggle for justice between 1960 and 1990?” The various sections of this essay address different segments of this broad question. Firstly, I attend to the last part of the question, with its reference to the period 1960-1990. Then in a somewhat longer section, I make a few remarks about the conceptually rich notion of “remembering”, followed by some brief observations about the equivocal phrases “the Reformed churches in South Africa” and “the struggle for justice” respectively. I conclude by underlining the importance of the question: “How should we remember?”

### REMEMBERING 1960 – 1990

Both 1960 and 1990 are dates associated with dramatic events in South Africa, and as such they serve as important historical markers. In 1960, the Sharpeville massacre took place – an event that sent shock waves through the country and also caused an international outcry.<sup>2</sup> And in 1990, the State President at the time, F.W. de Klerk, gave his famous speech in which he unbanned several political parties, including the ANC, and announced the release of some political prisoners, most prominently Nelson Mandela, thus ushering in a period of transition

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1 A slightly longer version of this paper was read as the opening address at the conference “The Reformed Churches and the Struggle for Justice in South Africa: Remembering 1960-1990”, 14-16 May 2012.

2 See Lodge, T. 2011. *Sharpeville: An Apartheid Massacre and Its Consequences*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

which led to the first democratic elections in 1994.<sup>3</sup> In South African church history, too, 1960 and 1990 serve as important historical markers. In 1960, an important and controversial ecumenical consultation took place at Cottesloe Residence (in Johannesburg), and in 1990 another eventful consultation was held near Rustenburg. The decades between 1960 and 1990 were, without doubt, a dramatic and also traumatic period in South African church history as churches, ecumenical bodies, church leaders and theologians responded in their different ways to the realities of apartheid South Africa. One can argue that these various responses not only signalled a struggle to justify or critique apartheid, but also reflected a struggle or contest for Reformed identity.

On the one hand, it is therefore quite easy to make a good case for attending to the period between 1960 and 1990. On the other hand, we should also note, as historians and church historians often remind us, that periodisation is a tricky matter. It is, for instance, impossible to speak of Sharpeville and Cottesloe without speaking of the “volkskongresse” (national congresses, or congresses of the *volk*), protest campaigns and ecumenical conferences of the 1950s. In the process, it is not easy to resist the temptation to go further and further back into history, since events preceding 1960 cast an illuminating light on the decades which followed. In a similar way, one can also ask: Why stop at 1990 and not, say, at 1994? Although there are some good reasons for the focus on 1960-1990, demarcations such as these are in some way also arbitrary and therefore not to be cast in stone. The pre-1960 and post-1990 periods in South African (Reformed) church history also invite and necessitate thorough further reflection.

There is another reason which should prompt at least some hesitation on our part as we venture to describe and to interpret the role of the Reformed churches in South Africa between 1960 and 1990. In 2012, I attended a thought-provoking talk in Pretoria (in a café just across Church Square) by Charles van Onselen, one of South Africa’s foremost historians, who is well known for highly acclaimed works such as *The Seed is Mine: The Life of Kas Maine, a South African Sharecropper 1894-1985* (published in 1997) and, more recently, *Irish Banditry in Southern Africa: 1880-1889* (published in 2010). In his talk, Van Onselen spoke on what he called his “house rules” for doing history in South Africa. One of these house rules stated, or at least that is how I remember it: “Do not study anything after 1945, since this will be ‘a version of journalism.’” We should keep this remark in mind, since there is indeed much to say for the argument that good historiography requires at least some chronological – and perhaps also emotional – distance. In many ways, we are still too close to the period, and later generations of historians and theologians will be able to see things which are obstructed from our view now. This said, one can also argue – again with good reasons – that a certain closeness to, and even participation in, events (with the accompanying vivid memories and eyewitness experiences) can also generate valuable historiographical documents. Perhaps one may say that both distance and participation have something to offer for responsible historiography, and that one can benefit from both (relative) historical distance and participatory memory.

## REMEMBERING 1960 – 1990

If one attends to the questions related to the role which Reformed churches played in the struggle for justice in South(ern) Africa between 1960 and 1990, one is fortunate to have

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<sup>3</sup> For a publication with a chapter on 2 February 1990, see Esterhuysen, W. 2012. *Endgame: Secret Talks and the End of Apartheid*. Cape Town: Tafelberg, especially 243-255.

access to many people who still have vivid memories of this period; some of them even played an active and leading role in this history. These memories are an important resource for a historical engagement with the period. History, one can argue, is inextricably tied to memory. Memory is rightly described as the womb or the matrix of history. It is, as the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur noted in his monumental work *Memory, History, Forgetting*, the soil in which historiography is rooted.<sup>4</sup> We should therefore affirm the close link between memory and history, albeit that we should also acknowledge that both memory and history are fluid conceptual categories with multiple senses and complex genealogies.<sup>5</sup>

Throughout the ages, people have marvelled at our capacity to remember things, as Augustine famously did in Book X of his *Confessions*,<sup>6</sup> and we also have fascinating descriptions of how the “art of memory” has functioned from, for instance, the time of the ancient Greeks until the Renaissance (as captivately chronicled by Francis Yates).<sup>7</sup> Together with the remarkable capabilities associated with memory, however, we should also register what can be called the vulnerability of memory. We not only experience – often to our surprise – how certain memories suddenly appear in our minds as from nowhere, or that we are able to share recollections from the past, but we are often perplexed and frustrated by our inability to summon memories from their seemingly deep hiding places. Furthermore, for many complex reasons, we remember selectively and we are often downright mistaken in our recollection of events. Something of this is illustrated in the introduction to Karl Sabbagh’s book *Remembering our Childhood: How Memory Betrays Us* (2009):

“When I was a child, my mother would recite one of her favourite poems. I remember it like this:

Three ducks on a pond,

And the green grass beyond.

What a thing to remember for years.

To remember with tears.

Recently, I was looking for a commonplace book which I found in a second-hand bookshop. It was handwritten, and there was a poem or passage for each day. On the page for 19 April was written:

Four ducks on a pond,

A grass bank beyond,

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4 Ricoeur, P. 2004. *Memory, History, Forgetting*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 69.

5 For a reflection on the dialectical relationship between memory and history, see Vosloo, R. R. 2012. *Memory, History, and Justice: In Search of Conceptual Clarity*, *NGTT* 53, (Supplement 3), 215-227.

6 Saint Augustine 1997. *The Confessions*. Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 237-283. Augustine writes, for instance, about the “vast mansions of memory, where are treasured innumerable images” (1997, 244), as well as about the ability of memory to bring things to the surface when they are summoned: “The huge repository of the memory, with its secret and unimaginable caverns, welcomes and keeps all these things, to be recalled and brought out for use when needed” (1997, 245). Therefore, Augustine marvels: “This faculty of memory is a great one, O my God, exceedingly great, a vast, infinite recess. Who can plumb its depth?” (1997, 246).

7 Yates, F. A. 1992. *The Art of Memory*. London: Pimlico.

A blue sky of spring,

White clouds on the wing:

What a little thing

To remember for years,

To remember with tears!

Not three ducks, four. Not green grass but a green bank. And two or three extra lines ...  
This experience raised in a small way the pitfalls of memory.<sup>8</sup>

Many of us will be able to evoke incidents similar to Sabbagh's example, and much can indeed be said about the pitfalls and problems of memory. Our memory often fails us. Even a committed advocate for memory such as Yosef Yerushalmi writes at the start of his justly acclaimed book *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory*: "Memory is always problematic, usually deceptive, sometimes treacherous ... We ourselves are periodically aware that memory is among the most fragile and capricious of our faculties."<sup>9</sup> Yerushalmi's remark reminds us that we should not sing unqualified songs of praise to memory, but that we should also be attentive to the vulnerability and possible abuses of memory. Thus, when we seek to remember the role of the Reformed churches in South Africa in the struggle for justice between 1960 and 1990, we should also be mindful of the deficiencies and vulnerability of memory. Let me make two brief comments in this regard.

A first comment or set of comments concerns the close relationship between memory and identity. What and how we remember does not merely say something about the past, but it also reveals much about the one who remembers, about who she or he is or wants to be (as well as about the identity of the communities which shape them). The use (and abuse) of memory therefore forms an integral part of our quest or demand for identity constructions, often vis-à-vis others whom we experience as a threat. The fact that memory and identity are so inextricably intertwined raises some important questions for responsible historiography as well: Why are we remembering certain figures and events from the past and others not? Why are we choosing a specific narrative form to represent the past? What are the power configurations which possibly influence our historical recollections? Why were certain events from the past celebrated and commemorated? Why were some rituals and practices perceived as meaningful? Why were the lives, work and legacies of theologians such as John Calvin, Abraham Kuyper, Karl Barth, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Gustavo Guitérrez and James Cone (to name a few theologians who exerted a strong influence) remembered and represented during this period, often in conflicting ways? More critical questions can be added, following from this emphasis on the close relationship between identity, memory and the representation of the past, but suffice it to say that together with the emphasis on the positive power of memory for the construction of personal and collective identity, as well as for group mobilisation, we should also guard against its ideological capacity. And along with the way in which the acknowledgement of the close link between memory and identity invites a hermeneutic of

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8 Sabbagh, K. 2009. *Remembering our Childhood: How Memory Betrays Us*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1.

9 Yerushalmi, Y. H. 1982. *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 5.

suspicion regarding our own acts of remembering and representation, it can also contribute important insights towards a deeper understanding of the identity of Reformed churches between 1960 and 1990.

A second remark that I would like to highlight concerns the relationship between memory and trauma. Traumatic events previously experienced can create wounds or scars which influence our willingness and ability to engage with the past. In lives and communities scarred by violence and injustice, wounded memory (also on a symbolic level in our collective memory) is something that needs to be worked through, something in need of healing.<sup>10</sup> Some Reformed Christians and churches have entered into spaces which facilitate these processes, while others have shied away from them. In whatever way we engage with our painful past, the fact remains that the reality of blocked or wounded memory should be acknowledged. Given this reality, it is not surprising that the emphasis on memory is often combined – also in the discourse on the role of Reformed churches and our apartheid past – with references to important ethical and theological categories such as “confession of guilt”, “forgiveness”, “reconciliation” and “restitution”. Attempts at historical representation of the past via memory do not occur in an ethical, political or theological vacuum, and we should be sensitive to the way in which this reality enriches but also often disrupts our discourse and practice.

Much more can be said about the use and abuse of memory, but even these two brief and general remarks give us a sense of the fact that memory is at once fragile and powerful. This ambivalent potential of memory – also for contexts such as South Africa, which are associated with the public legitimisation and critique of historical injustice – should be noted; for, as W. James Booth perceptively observes in his book *Communities of Memory: On Witness, Identity, and Justice*: “Memory has fuelled merciless violent strife, and it has been at the core of reconciliation and reconstruction. It has been used to justify great crimes, and yet it is central to the pursuit of justice.”<sup>11</sup>

We should therefore acknowledge both the capability and vulnerability of memory in our attempts at representing the past responsibly. Oral history projects play (and can further play) an important role to preserve some traces of the past through the recording and interpretation of narratives and testimonies. Here lies a huge challenge and opportunity for church historical research. In the process, we should certainly be aware of the limitations of memory, since our memories often betray us, but this does not take away the ability of memory to portray what is

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10 For some important perspectives engaging South African contexts, see the essays by an interdisciplinary team of scholars collected in Gobodo-Madikizela, P. and Van der Merwe, C. 2009. *Memory, Narrative and Forgiveness: Perspectives on the Unfinished Journeys of the Past*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing. As the “Preface” notes, this collection “explores the relation between trauma and memory, and the complex, interconnected issues of trauma and narrative (testimonial and literary). It examines transgenerational trauma, memory as the basis for dialogue and reconciliation in divided societies, memorialisation and the changing role of memory in the aftermath of mass trauma, mourning and the potential of forgiveness to heal the enduring effects of mass trauma” (xi). For a valuable earlier collection of essays which includes some theological and ethical perspectives, see Botman, H. R. and Petersen, R. M. (eds) 1996. *To Remember and to Heal: Theological and Psychological Reflections on Truth and Reconciliation*. Cape Town: Human & Rousseau. On the relationship between trauma, memory and historical representation, see also LaCapra, D. 2001. *Writing History, Writing Trauma*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, as well as Assmann, A. 2006. *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit: Erinnerungskultur und Geschichtspolitik*. Munich: C. H. Beck, 93-98.

11 Booth, W. J. 2006. *Communities of Memory: On Witness, Identity, and Justice*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, ix.

significant and meaningful. Hence we should not let the deficiencies of memory deter us from celebrating the remarkable capabilities of memory to represent the past as well as to sustain identity. Earlier, I referred to the book by Karl Sabbagh, which opens with the way in which a document corrected his childhood memory. Notwithstanding this emphasis, he closes his book by saying:

“But regardless of the accuracy or inaccuracy of memory, it is clear that our memories are much more intertwined with our identities than had previously been thought ... we sculpt our memories to fit within the outline of who we are, or just as often, who we would like to be. It wasn't the number of ducks on the pond or whether they were on the green grass or the green bank that mattered, but that I had a mother who recited the poem to me while I sat on her knee.”<sup>12</sup>

The ability of memory to represent things from the past which are significant should thus also be acknowledged, as well as – I can add – the way in which memories are carried by ritual and performances.

But our emphasis on the importance of memory (and the concomitant need for oral history projects) should also be combined with an emphasis on the importance of written documents and other artefacts which preserve traces of the past. These sources also provide an important window into the past and can have a valuable critical and corrective function, given some of the limitations of memory.<sup>13</sup> It can easily happen in our representation of the past that we work with generalisations and stereotypes which are then also transmitted uncritically as a result of ignorance or careless engagement with sources. The emphasis on the need to consult primary sources and to do thorough archival research should therefore be maintained. The quality of church historical research depends largely on the documents which are preserved and archived. We shall be much poorer if we do not preserve or consult primary documents with the necessary archival knowledge and passion. Often, our work with primary sources challenges many of our preconceived ideas and helps us to speak in a more nuanced way about the past.

Along with the emphasis on the importance of primary sources, however, we should remain vigilant against the fallacy that we can move from the sources to (literary) historical representation without interpretation. Access to archives and primary sources does not absolve us from the task of *interpreting* the sources and placing them within meaningful interpretive frameworks and narrative configurations. This implies that, in our engagement with our (Reformed) past, we should not separate the emphasis on the importance of primary sources from hermeneutical concerns. One point of critique against Reformed historiography in the past has been that it lacked the necessary hermeneutical sensibility.<sup>14</sup>

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12 Sabbagh, *Remembering our Childhood*, 194.

13 The following remark by Alan Megill in his important work *Historical Knowledge, Historical Error: A Contemporary Guide to Practice*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007, comes to mind in this regard: “When history becomes simply what people remember or commemorate, this amounts to a reduction of history to the present thought and action. Memory tells us as much about the present consciousness of the rememberer as it does about the past. Memory is an image of the past constructed by a subjectivity in the present. It is thus itself subjective; it may be irrational, inconsistent, deceptive and self-serving. It has long been clear that, without independent corroboration, memory cannot serve as a reliable marker of the historical past” (2007, 35).

14 See, for instance, Lategan, B. C. 2002. Nuwere ontwikkelinge op die gebied van die geskiedskrywing – ’n geleentheid vir herbesinning na 350 jaar van gereformeerdeheid (Newer developments in the field of

## REMEMBERING THE ROLE OF THE REFORMED CHURCHES IN SOUTH AFRICA

Given the question: “How should we remember the role of the Reformed churches in South Africa in the struggle for justice between 1960 and 1990?”, some remarks on the phrase “the Reformed churches in South Africa” are also called for. To speak of the Reformed churches in South (or Southern) Africa, and more specifically their role in the South African socio-political landscape in the past, is certainly a tricky matter. At the start we should note that the idea of “South Africa” is not an unproblematic construct, and some historians have rightly warned against a too narrow focus on geographical borders when discussing historical events. In addition, we should keep reminding ourselves that something like the Reformed church in South Africa does not exist; we only have different – albeit interconnected – Reformed churches with their own histories and legacies, their own social contexts, practices and also dominant languages. Regarding Reformed theology in South Africa, we can also not speak of one homogeneous Reformed story, but should rather speak – as Dirkie Smit has argued convincingly in a series of important articles – of “a story of many stories.”<sup>15</sup> Yet we should also recognise the fact that notwithstanding the reality of perceived or real isolation, our histories are in many ways entangled with one another. This suggests that we can understand our own complex histories better in conversation with others and through an openness to each other’s histories. Moreover, we should also remember in the process that we are ourselves “othered” in the histories of others. An understanding of the interwovenness of our memories and histories therefore requires that we resist the temptation to think in isolation about what we regard as *our* past and *our* history. Therefore hospitality is also a virtue which is valuable in our attempt to deal with the past in a responsible way. The plea for a methodology of shared historiography also needs to be sensitive to the fragile nature of such an undertaking. We need to be aware of how what we view as founding moments, turning points or events worthy of celebration, may represent a low point, indeed a wound or a scar, in the memory of another.<sup>16</sup>

And we should also remind ourselves that the story of the Reformed churches’ role in the struggle for justice is not to be limited to intra- and interdenominational discourses, but that this “story of many stories” cannot be told without incorporating the role of ecumenical encounters and the role of the ecumenical movement. The story of the Reformed churches also invites comparisons with other contexts in which churches grappled with questions of reconciliation and justice.

When we speak about the role of the Reformed churches in the struggle for justice, one should consider official theological documents, declarations and church orders. The role of the institutional churches should not be neglected, and the role of church leaders and pastors

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historiography – an opportunity for reconsideration after 350 years of being reformed). In Coertzen, P. (ed.), *350 Jaar Gereformeerde/350 Years Reformed 1652-2002*. Bloemfontein: CLF, 269-276.

15 Cf. Smit, D. J. 1992. Reformed Theology in South Africa: A Story of Many Stories, *Acta Theologica* 12, (No. 1), 88-110; as well as Smit, D. J. 2004. On Adventures and Misfortunes: More Stories about Reformed Theology in South Africa. In Harinck, G. and Van Keulen, D. (eds), *Vicissitudes of Reformed Theology in the Twentieth Century* (Studies in Reformed Theology, Vol. 9). Zoetermeer: Meinema, 208-235. Compare also Smit, D. J. 2008. What does it mean to live in South Africa and to be Reformed?. *Reformed World* 58, (No. 4), 263-283. These three articles can also be found in Smit, D. J. 2009. *Essays on Being Reformed: Collected Essays 3* (edited by Robert R. Vosloo). Stellenbosch: Sun Press, 201-258.

16 As Paul Ricoeur remarked: “What we celebrate under the heading of founding events are, essentially, violent acts legitimated after the fact by a precarious state of right ... The same events are thus found to signify glory for some, humiliation for others.” See Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, 82.

should be kept alive in our memory. However, we should also note that a strong current in recent church historical work emphasises what is often referred to as “people’s history” or “a history from below.”<sup>17</sup> Such an approach suggests that we do not view the church first and foremost as a hierarchical-institutional-bureaucratic corporation, but rather focus on the religious lives and pious practices of the laity and the ordinary faithful. An engagement with the role of the Reformed churches in the struggle for justice between 1960 and 1990 should be mindful of this important emphasis.

It is certainly true that we cannot tell the story of the Reformed churches without reference to pivotal figures. While it is certainly important to remember these key figures, we should also ask whether we do not need a stronger sensitivity for the important role played by the voiceless or the ordinary faithful.<sup>18</sup> The story of the Reformed churches (as a “story of many stories”) in South Africa is also a story of many forgotten stories, many untold stories, many stories yet to be told.

## THE REFORMED CHURCHES AND THE STRUGGLE FOR JUSTICE

The legacy of Reformed churches in South Africa is in many ways ambivalent. On the one hand, apartheid was justified on biblical grounds and its logic became deeply entrenched in the process, often conflating Reformed identity with Afrikaner identity. On the other hand, there were also important counter-voices which drew on the Bible and the Reformed tradition to critique apartheid in what was experienced as a struggle for human dignity and justice. The role of the Reformed churches therefore forms an interesting part of “the church struggle in South Africa” (to use the title of John de Gruchy’s influential book), and like the broader history of the church struggle it invites continual re-engagement. I have already mentioned the close link between memory and identity, and this means, among other things, that the memory of past struggles for justice has an important bearing on our present struggles. In the foreword to *The Church Struggle in South Africa*, Desmond Tutu provides a helpful comment in this regard:

“The struggle of the Church in South Africa was fundamentally how to bring about a more just society ... Although apartheid as a system and ideology is now happily buried, we still live with its legacy, and we also face new problems that have to be addressed, not least the HIV/AIDS pandemic. We still have to keep a watchful eye on those in power even though we celebrate and affirm all that has now been achieved by our new government.

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17 An interesting project in this regard is the seven-volume series *A People’s History of Christianity* (with Denis Janz as general editor). The seven volumes in this series, all published by Fortress Press (Minneapolis), are: Horsley, R. (ed.), *Christian Origins* (2005); Burrus, V. (ed.), *Late Ancient Christianity* (2005); Krueger, D. (ed.), *Byzantine Christianity* (2006); Bornstein, D. E. (ed.), *Medieval Christianity* (2009); Matheson, P. (ed.), *Reformation Christianity* (2007); Porterfield, A. (ed.), *Modern Christianity to 1900* (2007); Bednarowski, M. F. (ed.), *Twentieth Century Global Christianity* (2008).

18 In an important postscript to the third edition of John de Gruchy’s *The Church Struggle in South Africa*, which locates this book in the wider historiography of the church in South Africa, Steve de Gruchy refers to the thousands of micro-narratives which make up the story of the church struggle, including “the ambiguities of those caught in the middle, the voices of the silent and silenced (such as women and the rural poor), the contribution of the laity – those who really are the ‘church’ – the failure of witness, the incredible sacrifices of ordinary people, the personality clashes, the financial and sexual scandals, the acts of compassion and integrity, the textures and sights and sounds that are uppermost in the minds of those who happened ‘to be there’.” See De Gruchy, J. and De Gruchy, S. 2004, *The Church Struggle in South Africa: Twenty-fifth Anniversary Edition*. London: SCM Press, xxix.

So the church struggle continues, even though in a new way and moment in history.”<sup>19</sup>

And in the last chapter of the same book, Steve de Gruchy writes about the shift from one church struggle to many church struggles, and in the process he points out “four significant and interlocking challenges that have emerged for the church in South Africa at the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century: the livelihoods of the poor; human sexuality and gender justice; the impact of pluralism; and the effects of globalization.”<sup>20</sup> As we face new struggles, important lessons can indeed be learned from attending to past struggles.

## HOW SHOULD WE REMEMBER THE PAST?

In the last part of this article, I want to remind us that it is not only important to ask: “What should we remember?”, but also to ask the related question: “How should we remember the past?” In this regard, we could pause for a moment and first entertain the question: Should we remember the past? And if so: Why should we remember 1960-1990? Is it not better to forget this painful part of our history, also of our Reformed history, and rather concentrate on the present and our future? Is part of our problem not that there is too much memory? And does our age not require that we emphasise less the art of memory (*ars memoriae*) and cultivate more the art of forgetting (*ars oblivionis*)?<sup>21</sup> One can even ask whether we are not suffering from a type of “apartheid fatigue” in our discourse, also in our church and theological discourse. One should also consider the fact that much in our consumer culture as well as in some identity discourses contributes to a dangerous culture of historical amnesia or harmful selective memory. So the problem might be not that there is too much memory, but too much memory of the wrong sort. Therefore, the language celebrating “forgetting” is only responsible at the other side of a critique of forgetting, after one has done the necessary work of memory and mourning, and within the context of an emphasis on remembering the past justly and responsibly. In addition, we should remind ourselves that certain forms of obligated memory can put the past in a straitjacket by providing mono-causal explanations of events. Perhaps part of the challenge for Reformed memory and historiography will be to continually look at the past with new questions and through new lenses, since yesterday can still surprise us.

How should we remember the role of the Reformed churches in the struggle for justice between 1960-1990? This question poses a challenge to us. Much needs to be said in this regard, but I want to conclude with a remark on the importance of what some scholars have called “future-orientated memory.”<sup>22</sup> When we remember the past, we should also emphasise the strangeness and mystery of the past. As L. P. Hartley rightly noted in the opening lines of his novel *The Go-Between*: “The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there.”<sup>23</sup> Yet we should not equate history and fiction, hence the need to engage with the reality of

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19 De Gruchy and De Gruchy, *The Church Struggle in South Africa*, ix-x.

20 De Gruchy and De Gruchy, *The Church Struggle in South Africa*, 229.

21 For a wonderful history of forgetting, see Weinrich, H. 1997. *Lethe: Kunst und Kritik des Vergessen*.

Munich: C. H. Beck. This book has also been published in English. See Weinrich, H. 2004. *Lethe: The Art and Critique of Forgetting*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

22 On this idea of “future-orientated memory” see the introduction to Diawara, M., Lategan, B. and Rösen, J. 2010. *Historical Memory in Africa: Dealing with the past, reaching for the future in an intercultural context*. New York: Berghahn Books. This book is the result of a research project jointly sponsored by the Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Studies (STIAS) and the Kulturwissenschaftliches Institut Nordrhein-Westfalen (KWI) under the title “Dealing with the Past, Reaching for the Future.”

23 Hartley, L P 1953. *The Go-Between*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 7.

our historical past in a responsible way, doing as much justice to the past in all its messiness as possible. But I think we should also affirm that we are not merely interested in the past for antiquarian purposes, but also because we have certain present concerns and future hopes. Therefore we are also challenged to ask ourselves: "With what future in mind are we remembering the past?" Do we have a hopeful vision of a just and shared future as Reformed churches and are our memories orientated towards this future? Perhaps we should also remember words from Chapter 5 of Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass*, where the Queen remarks: "It is a poor sort of memory that only works backwards."<sup>24</sup>

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## KEY WORDS

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<sup>24</sup> Quoted as one of the epigraphs in Wood, H. H. and Byatt, A. S. 2008, *Memory: An Anthology*. London: Chatto and Windus.

**TREFWOORDE**

Herinnering  
Gereformeerde kerke  
Kerkstryd  
Apartheid  
Suid-Afrika  
Geregtigheid

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### Criminality, judgement and eschatology

The so called *emancipation of the victim* of crime in the last decades - socially, in criminal proceedings, and also our theoretical reflection raises the question whether, morally speaking, our views on criminality have changed. Is this perhaps indicative of a broader cultural shift in perspectives, a reframing of the position of the victim and the perpetrator? The approach of the Dutch victimologist Jan van Dijk seems to mirror a social and political trend towards a post-Christian way of dealing with criminality. But his approach is perhaps somewhat too contemporary, as I will argue, for he fails to take into account the shadow sides of a culture which affords the victim such a central place.

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

One of the most striking developments in international criminal law during past few decades has been the so-called *emancipation of the victim* of crime – socially, in criminal proceedings, and also in our theoretical reflection. Some legal scholars even call this emancipation “the most important development in criminal law after World War II”.<sup>1</sup> In the Netherlands these developments are already making themselves felt politically, as the current and the preceding cabinet has explicitly established greater care and attention to victims and their rights as a key policy objective. Stricter treatment of perpetrators and a more sober approach to detention appear to be the related outcomes.<sup>2</sup>

Apart from raising all kinds of juridical issues, this also raises the question of whether, morally speaking, our views on criminality have changed. Is this perhaps indicative of a broader cultural shift in perspective, a recontextualization of the victim and the perpetrator? Here it would perhaps be useful to turn to the very new science of victimology, and specifically to one of its most prominent and internationally recognized representatives, the Dutch Professor Jan van Dijk. In 2008 this empirically orientated scientist ventured into publishing a cultural-historical essay on victimhood; in addition a few of his other texts clearly reveal an interest in aspects of cultural philosophy, religious studies and theology.<sup>3</sup> His approach seems to mirror a social and political trend towards what I would like to call a post-Christian way of dealing with criminality.

First I will present an overview of van Dijk’s most important thesis (2). In view of this trend, van Dijk’s text *Slachtoffers als zondebokken* (*The Victim as Scapegoat*) written in 2008 is a polemical,

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1 Hans Boutellier, *Solidariteit en slachtofferschap*, Nijmegen: Sun, 1993, 101.

2 Simone van der Zee provides numerous examples in this regard in her book *Het staatshotel. De bajes, stortplaats van de samenleving*, Breda: De Geus, 2012, 26-27.

3 Jan van Dijk, *Slachtoffers als zondebokken. Over de dubbelhartige bejegening van gedupeerden van misdrijven in de westerse cultuur*, Apeldoorn- Antwerpen: Maklu, 2008. Regrettably the publication is marred by numerous language errors and omissions. The text for instance frequently refers to authors not included in the list of sources; examples are the relevant titles for Markus, Schilder, Foqué and the omission of t’ Hart, Groenhuijsen and Gross; id., “Free the victim: a critique of the western conception of victimhood”, in: *International Review of Victimology*, Vol. 16/1, 2009, 1-33.

but also very contemporary text. His essay does not belong to the genre of *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*, to name one of the titles of an author van Dijk clearly admires, Friedrich Nietzsche.<sup>4</sup> Van Dijk's approach is perhaps somewhat too well-adapted to our era, as I will argue, for he fails to take into account the shadow sides of a culture which affords the victim such a central place (3).

I see the truly un-contemporary and critical thrust of Van Dijk's cultural-philosophical observations concerning the status of the victim in our culture located in another aspect, one which remains marginal in van Dijk himself, but which I will attempt to strengthen(4).

## 2. THE SACRIFICING VICTIM

*The victim as scapegoat* is van Dijk's polemical response to other members of his discipline, and a call to critical self-examination. Van Dijk is critical of certain arguments around *restorative justice*, but he is above all interested in digging deeper, in addressing the "dominant image of the victim in Western culture", or more precisely: Christian culture.<sup>5</sup> As long as victimology fails to critically question its own ideological and theological underpinnings, says van Dijk, it is bound to reproduce the currently dominant image of the victim, consequentially relegating a "victim friendly pursuit of criminal law"<sup>6</sup> to nothing but a pious wish. He ends his essay with a paragraph on the "coming emancipation of the victim".

I take my point of departure from a text van Dijk published in 2009 in an international journal of victimology, essentially an elaboration of his inaugural lecture, an article strikingly titled *Free the victim*.<sup>7</sup> Most of the themes from his earlier essay recur here. To start off with, van Dijk discovers that most Western languages, but also some others such as Hebrew and Arabic, reflect a clear etymological link between someone who has suffered from crime or the actions of others and the idea of sacrifice. The Dutch word "slachtoffer" is a good example: an object has been "slaughtered" ("slachten") by means of "sacrifice" ("offer"). This link is somewhat puzzling, not in the least because "slachtoffer" almost seems to attribute the perpetrator with a higher mission: the bringer of a sacrifice. In European languages, use of the Latin word *victima*<sup>8</sup> in relation to human beings (specifically Christ) dates to the Reformation. Thus, in order to reconcile us with the Father, we read in Calvin, "God made Christ to *victima*".<sup>9</sup> Only from the late eighteenth century onwards would the term become applied to other human beings, for instance to those who had been hit by a natural catastrophe. Today we use the word "victim" irrespective of whether nature or man is to blame – which raises some critical questions, for this erases the difference between natural events and acts of injustice, between accident and act of aggression.<sup>10</sup>

However, as mentioned above, van Dijk's hypothesis specifically relates to the Christian

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4 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen I-IV*, in F. Nietzsche, *Sämtliche Werke. Kritische Studienausgabe* in 15 Bänden, (Hrsg. G. Colli & M. Montinari, München: Walter de Gruyter, 1980.

5 Van Dijk, *Slachtoffers en zondebokken*, o.c.131.

6 Van Dijk, *Slachtoffers en Zondebokken*, o.c.,

7 Jan van Dijk, "Free the victim: a critique of the western conception of victimhood", in: *International Review of Victimology*, Vol. 16/1, 2009, 1-33.

8 The Latin word *victima*: sacrificial animal, sacrifice.

9 Van Dijk, "Free the Victim", o.c. 4; *Slachtoffers als zondebokken*, o.c., 83.

10 Alain Finkielkraut, *L'Humanité perdue. Essai sur le XXe siècle*, Paris: Seuil, Chapitre Cinquième, "La réparation humanitaire, 117-136.

conceptual universe. The expansion of the term victim (“victima”) during the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries - from exclusively referring to Christ, to including suffering humanity in general - van Dijk suspects, was an outcome of the fact that people now recognized the sufferings of their fellow human beings in those of Christ.<sup>11</sup> From the Renaissance onward, and especially since the Enlightenment, this development assumed a certain humanization of the Christ figure.<sup>12</sup> This was accompanied by a whole series of precisely determined religious-cultural meanings and moral connotations which now became attached to the concept of the victim in the popular pious imagination: of deep and innocent suffering, quietly endured by a humbled person whose heart is open to forgiveness, who harbours no vengeful thoughts, refrains from acts of private revenge, etc. The Icelandic word for victim is *Fömrarlamb*, sacrificial lamb, which shows a clear connotation with the lamb of God, the *Agnus Dei*.

Van Dijk goes even a step further: the modern treatment of crime victims turns them into scapegoats, just as Christ was made a scapegoat in his time. The scapegoat, as we may recall from the French philosopher René Girard’s well-known definition, absorbs the social tensions within a community, and purges the community by being driven out.<sup>13</sup> Ideally, the scapegoat should admit his/her guilt, and agree to his/her banishment. Girard dates such reflexive *insight* into the scapegoat mechanism to the seventeenth century, especially to the work of William Shakespeare.

However, according to van Dijk’s central allegation, this scapegoat mechanism continues to exist in our modern criminal law system. In order to restore a peace which had been disturbed by the *perpetrator*, the victim is asked to sacrifice his/her right to revenge – a right which could still be freely exercised into late medieval times in Europe, and even later, as attested to by the existence of numerous outlaw refuges late into the 19th century in countries like the USA and Russia. Hence the scandal of the “two-faced treatment of crime victims in Western culture” (the subtitle of van Dijk’s *Victims as Scapegoats*): on the one hand a recognition of their deep and innocent suffering, on the other, an almost inflexible expectation that they would willingly relinquish their right to revenge. The word “slacht-offer” should therefore be understood literally: the victim of crime suffers the crime (slachting) *and* sacrifices his or her right to private revenge (offer).

Without a doubt, van Dijk is correct on one important point : both Christianity and modern criminal justice requires the victim to refrain from private exercises of revenge, even while recognizing vengeance in its civilized or moderated form of retribution,<sup>14</sup> handed down by a judge, as a legitimate objective of punishment.

### 3. THE EMANCIPATION OF THE VICTIM AFTER THE “DEATH OF GOD”

But van Dijk’s thesis concerning the victim as scapegoat is also in need of some correction,

11 Van Dijk, “Free the Victim”, o.c., 4; *Slachtoffers als zondebokken*, o.c., 84 e.v.

12 Van Dijk, “Free the Victim”, o.c. 5; *Slachtoffers als zondebokken*, o.c. 84.

13 See René Girard, *Le bouc émissaire*, Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1982.

14 See H.F.M. Crombach, “Over wraak. Resultaten van een empirisch onderzoek”, in: *Justitiële verkenningen*, Jrg. 29, nr. 5, 2003, 56-72; 59: “The wrath is mine, the God of the Old Testament states. (...) Leave it to us, the servers of the Law add to this.” And J.M.C. Vos, “Het vragende slachtoffer en de wrekende staat. De functie van wrok in een moderne rechtsstaat”, in: *Justitiële verkenningen*, Jrg. 29, nr. 5, 2003, 31-45.

for he almost completely ignores the fact that the requisite self-control and asceticism of the Christian victim were embedded within an eschatological perspective, and this already in the New Testament and in patristic theological reflection.

The internal logic of the Christian way of dealing with anger and rage, of Christian “anger management”, was reconstructed by Peter Sloterdijk – not a philosopher one suspects of Christian predispositions – in his book *Rage and Time* (2006) as follows: Christianity demands that we relinquish rage and revenge in this life, in the name of a strict, respect-commanding afterlife when, at the end of time, God in his capacity as divine judge will avenge the sum of earthly injustice.<sup>15</sup> This has been the Christian – and before that, Jewish – solution to a weighty and perennial problem, namely restitution and the punishment of injustice; of how to prevent perpetrators from getting away unpunished, or worse – as so often happens in history – from triumphing. At one point in his essay van Dijk himself clearly seems to know the answer, namely when he writes that in the New Testament “vengeance is reserved unto the Lord”.<sup>16</sup> This he however subsequently ignores, probably because at the very least it nuances and puts in perspective his thesis with regard to the victim’s “sacrifice”. For, if Sloterdijk’s reconstruction of a tradition which entailed the “accumulation of the treasure of rage in God” is correct, then the Christian conception of rage and revenge – especially when it is in reaction to deeds of injustice – *does not* imply simply forgiving and forgetting. Much rather, it is based on the firm *trust* that God the judge will eventually right all injustice, and on the political-pragmatic insight that it may be more prudent to leave judgment up to a third party (besides the victim and the perpetrator) *at the end of the day*. This explains the importance of the theme of God’s wrath, the *Dies Irae* and the Last Judgement – both in theology and political thinking.<sup>17</sup>

Thus the modern prohibition on private justice may at least in part be understood as a secular continuation of the Christian idea of a “last” judgement by a “third”, impartial authority. Again, this figure commands respect and trust – in this case in the secular judge, as embodiment of impartiality, in his might, and in his justice. Against the background of this Christian linking of rage to eternity, it is of great importance to see what a *crisis* of this model would mean for both victims and perpetrators – and here we should think not just of individual injustice, but also social injustice, for instance boundless poverty, rampant socio-economic inequality, widespread political disempowerment. By crisis I mean secularization, in the sense of losing collective faith in a restorative divine judge in the Hereafter – in other words, the collapse of a certain horizon of meaning, an event which Friedrich Nietzsche termed the “death of God”.

Sloterdijk, who dates this crisis of the Christian model back to the second half of the nineteenth century, is very clear on its implications. From now on, wrath would seek new associations, now within earthly time, within history and concrete political subjects.<sup>18</sup> These political subjects now turn to creating their own vocabularies of wrath, and Sloterdijk, in jargon borrowed from the financial world, here talks of “agencies” and “banks” which collect,

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15 Peter Sloterdijk, *Zorn und Zeit. Politisch-psychologischer Versuch*, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2006, especially 2, “Der zornige Gott: Der Weg der Erfindung der metaphysischen Rachebank”, 113-171; English translation id, *Rage and Time A psychopolitical Investigation*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2010. In this regard, also see my inaugural lecture, Th.W.A. de Wit, *Dies Irae. De secularisatie van het Laatste Oordeel*, Tilburg: Universiteit van Tilburg, 2010, 20 ff.

16 Van Dijk, *Slachtoffers als zondebokken*, 96.

17 With regard to the relevance of the Last Judgement in modern politics, see: de Wit, *Dies Irae*, o.c., 7-10.

18 Peter Sloterdijk, *Rage and Time*, o.c., 43; 69. In this regard, refer to my inaugural lecture, Th.W.A. de Wit, *Dies Irae. De secularisatie van het Laatste Oordeel*, Tilburg: Universiteit van Tilburg, 2010, 20 ff.

control, and subsequently process wrath into large political projects, such as social upheavals and revolutions. Political movements after 1850 transformed anger over poverty, humiliation and powerlessness into pride and hope, but at the same time also into effective revenge. We should also date the emergence of modern terrorism, for instance the Russian anarchists at the close of the nineteenth century, to this time.

Within this new constellation – one which is, in Europe at any rate, far more apparent nowadays than during the nineteenth century and even a large part of the twentieth – van Dijk's liberation or emancipation of the victim is in fact an obvious outcome. In this sense, his plea for an "uprising of victims"<sup>19</sup> is firmly in step with the prevailing *Zeitgeist*. Perhaps certain therapists in the seventies who advised to jilted spouses - to "therapeutically" vent their anger by chucking a stone through their ex's window - was already a sign. On a psychological level the taboo on revenge had started tottering; rage began to acquire civil rights. Nowadays we are likely to think of vengeful feelings as at the very least emotionally understandable and legitimate responses to crime – especially in situations where we have been the victim.

In his work van Dijk provides a narrative analysis of the voices of a number of contemporary victims (particularly victims of kidnappers), as expressed in their various recent autobiographical accounts. These include the accounts of the Austrian girl Natascha Kampusch (abducted by a paedophile as a ten year old in 1998, and kept in a cellar for 8 years); of Sabine Dardenne (one of two survivors of the infamous Belgian paedophile serial killer Marc Dutroux); and Arjan Erkel (a Dutch medical aid worker, held by ransom seeking gunmen in Dagestan from 2002 to 2004). Van Dijk shows that the expectation that victims would conform to a specific social role remains powerful, while many victims are starting to rebel against this role.

The specific role is, according to van Dijk, derived from a moralistic version of the Christian view of the victim - in other words: a passive, helpless, dependent, innocent figure who does not talk much, and is willing to forgive – a victim who, in his diagnosis, is still "in the shadow of Christ".<sup>20</sup> His examples describe at length how the relevant victims were met by negative, even aggressive public reactions when they refused to stick to their roles - by for instance refusing psychiatric help, becoming an activist, or continuing to make statements at odds with the media's own political agendas. Van Dijk calls this "secondary victimization" – the victim further victimized by social expectations and the media. In some cases, non-conforming victims may even become transformed into perpetrators. As Susan Jacoby – author of *Wild Justice*, an important book on the history of revenge, in which she pleads for the freer expression of the victim's feelings of rage and revenge – puts it: "We prefer to avert our eyes from those who persist in reminding us of the wrongs they have suffered (. . .) Such people are disturbers of the peace; we wish they would take their memory away to a church, a cemetery, a psychiatrist's office."<sup>21</sup> Indeed, when rage and revenge are no longer being canalized through the church or a doctor, the need arises for new vengeful authorities or for new forms within which to contain these feelings.

Allow me to summarize: van Dijk's central point is that the so-called "victim" represents a social and cultural construct with "religious associations", attached to certain social role expectations, which are currently being increasingly shunned by victims. He therefore makes a plea for

19 Thus the title of the ninth chapter of *Slachtoffers als zondebokken*, o.c., 119-127.

20 Van Dijk, *Slachtoffers als zondebokken*, o.c., 85.

21 Van Dijk, "Free the Victim", o.c., 13. S. Jacoby, *Wild Justice. The Evolution of Revenge*, New York: Harper & Row, 1983.

*victim empowerment* and for strengthening the position of the victim in criminal proceedings. Against this background, he is sceptical of restorative spiritual care and counselling, at any rate in as far as these are based on the same expectation with regard to the victim, namely a willingness towards reconciliation and forgiveness. To many Christian church leaders, van Dijk writes polemically, “preaching forgiveness has become the moral kneejerk response as soon as the issue of serious criminal victimization pops up”<sup>22</sup>

I suspect that a victim-orientated approach such as van Dijk’s is instructive for churches and those who are engaged in “restorative” work with both (ex)convicts and victims, for it should remind them that these are not equal parties, and that their work should be “victim sensitive”<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, reconciliation and forgiveness cannot be predetermined conditions or expectations – they are a kind of “miracles”, as the Dutch theologian Paul Oskamp rightly reminds us.<sup>24</sup>

Van Dijk’s thesis concerning the victim as the “Cinderella of criminal justice”<sup>25</sup> incidentally also casts some light on the Catholic Church’s response to the current worldwide paedophile-priest scandal. By virtually denying the interests – and in many cases even the existence – of the victims, it not only showed an impulse to first of all close in around its ranks, but it also testifies to the long-lasting cultivation of an expectation that the victim has but one task, namely to forgive and forget – preferably in silence. Finally this raises serious questions with regard to Christianity and Catholicism’s tradition of *dolorism*, their religious promotion and glorification of pain and suffering.<sup>26</sup> On all of these points I think van Dijk merits support, and also closer (self-)examination from churches, theologians and supporters of *restorative justice*.

#### 4. THE SHADOW SIDE OF A VICTIM CULTURE

Yet a cultural-philosophical plea for the emancipation of the victim also has serious shadow sides – which would make me somewhat of a reluctant guest at the party (probably to be sponsored by governments in countries like the Netherlands) planned in honour of the victim’s emancipation. I will mention three of these shadow sides.

In the *first* place emancipation and greater social recognition of victimhood could well result in the title of victim gaining social and political credit, even becoming desirable, as the credit could potentially be cashed in to lucrative effect. The essayist Ian Buruma, a keen observer of the *Zeitgeist*, at the turn of the 1990’s established a worldwide upward revaluation of victimhood. His essay on “the Joys and Perils of Victimhood” this half-Jewish author tells us, was born by the regular visits of Israeli school groups to Auschwitz and other Nazi extermination camps, in which the lesson is brought home that the state of Israel was founded on the “ashes of the Holocaust”<sup>27</sup> Not only are we witnessing a proliferation of Holocaust memorials and museums, but also that other marginalized communities and minorities are following the

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22 Van Dijk, *Slachtoffers als zondebokken*, o.c. 123.

23 Van Dijk, o.c., 23.

24 Paul Oskamp, *Overleven achter steen en staal. Vieringen en geloofsbelevingen in de bajes onderzocht*, Zoetermeer: Meinema, 2004, 89 e.v.

25 Van Dijk, *Slachtoffers als zondebokken*, o.c., 108.

26 See Jean-Luc Nancy, “La douleur existe, elle est injustifiable”, in: *Revue d’éthique et de théologie morale*, no 195, Dec. 1995, 91-96.

27 Ian Buruma, “The Joys and Perils of Victimhood”, in: *The New York Review of Books*, April 8, 1999, 4-9; 4.

Jewish example of forging a collective identity on past injustice. We could almost talk of an "Olympics of suffering" which includes historically marginalized communities, minorities and even entire nations. Victimhood, Buruma suspects, has become "a way of asserting ourselves, of telling the world who we are".<sup>28</sup> In our world, a "disenchanted world of broken-down ideologies, religions, and national and cultural borderlines", one which offers very few opportunities of experiencing a common identity, the rewards of public, ritual and sometimes even financial recognition of victimhood could indeed be very attractive.<sup>29</sup>

Also the multiculturalist so called "politics of identity" (Charles Taylor) is sometimes characterized by this aspect. Even ultra liberals agree that whoever can show to have been the victim of historical injustice or neglect (such as *native Americans*, and of course most of the inhabitants of the former *apartheid* state in South Africa), should be entitled to compensation in various forms.<sup>30</sup> And – another example - in his book on the current social issue, the French philosopher Pierre Rosanvallon shows that within lacking or disintegrating welfare states, claims of historical victimhood are able to substitute for welfare state provisions. Provided of course that a guilty party could be fingered.<sup>31</sup> "Everyone wants to be a victim", the dissident feminist Lynda Gordon already remarked a few decades ago in order to explain the paradox that, in the words of Buruma, "the more emancipated women become, the more some extreme feminists begin to define themselves as helpless victims of men".<sup>32</sup>

In his essay, Buruma calls Princess Diana the "perfect embodiment of our obsession with victimhood." Not only did she identify herself – often in a sympathetic manner – with victims by touching AIDS patients here and hugging homeless people there; she herself was seen as a suffering victim – of male chauvinism, royal snobbery, the media, British high society, etc."<sup>33</sup> Her tragic death briefly united the world for a moment – in suffering, for anyone who had ever felt *wronged by others* could identify with her.

Thus the "emancipation of the victim" gained a broader cultural meaning and significance that is not without "peril" because it often rests on blaming another party. Furthermore, one should not be surprised that criminals and perpetrators have also learnt to best cast themselves in the victim role.

"The hooligan has become a howligan", the Dutch columnist Jan Kuitenbrouwer recently established when, after having been arbitrarily attacked by a group of drunk youths, he found himself turning up at the police station well after his attackers had done so – posing as *his* victims. "It has become a race to the charge office", he was left to conclude with the necessary gallows' humour.

The *second* shadow side: the attraction of victimhood becomes more dubious and dangerous

28 Buruma, o.c., 6.

29 Buruma, o.c., 6.

30 Michael Sandel, *Justice. What's the right thing to do?*, London/New York: Allan Lane, 2009, gives Robert Nozick as an example, 63: "If it can be shown that those who have landed on top are the beneficiaries of past injustice – such as enslavement of African Americans or the expropriations of Native Americans – then, according to Nozick, a case can be made for remedying the injustice through taxation, reparations, or other means."

31 Pierre Rosanvallon, *La nouvelle question sociale. Repenser l'état providence*, Paris: Seuil, 1995, "La tentation de la victimisation sociale", 64-69; 65.

32 Buruma, o.c., 6.

33 Buruma, o.c., 8.

when we look at it in the context of another striking aspect of postmodern liberal culture, namely *subjectivism*. This is also mentioned briefly in Buruma's essay. Indeed, when historical truth is no longer a matter of painstakingly digging up facts and reconstructing potential inter-connections, but rather merely socio-political "construct", conditions become favourable for an emotionally *experienced* conception of history. "Respect" for others and being other, key elements of childhood education and training in pluralistic societies, then first of all comes to mean respect, not for the truth but for another person's *experience* of truth, especially when the experiences in question are those of a victim. And in an era which has had enough of ideological strife, solidarity is found in sympathizing with the emotionally communicated (bad) experiences of others, for only those experiences are authentic.<sup>34</sup> Critical questions concerning factual backing or inconsistencies with regard to such accounts are now quickly perceived as annoying and undesirable. When it comes to feelings, and especially those of personal injustice, rational debate is very difficult. Especially feelings of grief and suffering are, different to what for example Rousseau thought,<sup>35</sup> not so much the real common denominator amongst people, but rather often the driving wedge between them.

Thus, it seems that the jettisoned divine and patriarchal authorities have made place for an authority at least as absolute: our emotional impulses and collective self pity. Within a democracy then, victim culture is bound to find expression in victim politics. Thus in the Netherlands a medium-sized political party like the PVV of the populist politician Geert Wilders has felt itself to be the national victim to an almost endless list of bad guys: Moroccans and Muslims, multiculturalists and cultural relativists, Greeks and Poles, the Italian or Spanish mafia, the "garlic- countries" in general, the bureaucrats in Brussels, etc. Under these circumstances we should perhaps heed the warning of the Flemish jurist Rik Torfs, namely that in an era of the emancipation of the victim, it is imprudent to tie the fate of the perpetrator to the victim's state of emotional evolution. Otherwise, writes Torfs, we run a significant risk of "finding ourselves with a revanchist and populist tainted criminal justice system"<sup>36</sup>

With this we have arrived at the *third* shadow side of a victim culture. The question is obvious: does an emancipation of the victim also lead to an emancipation of the thirst for revenge? Van Dijk also raises this question, and provides an answer which may at the very least be called balanced. On the one hand he energetically crosses swords with those keeping alive the "ghost image", the "myth" of the revenge-crazed victim in order to thwart expansion of the victim's rights at every turn. This ghost image is not corroborated by any empirical research into the true feelings of victims, even though he does admit that campaigns for tougher sentences and reintroducing the death penalty are sometimes conducted in the names of victims.<sup>37</sup> On the other hand, he talks of the natural and justified "anger and indignation" of victims, and of revenge-taking behaviour as a "universal characteristic", biologically rooted in all higher animals. In higher animals this capacity is greatly ritualized, and hence contained; in humans, due to our mimetic desire and the use of weapons, it is however potentially boundless, van Dijk admits. Here I would like to recall Hegel's famous statement that the "weapon is the

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34 This is the main thesis of the book of Hans Boutellier mentioned in FN 1.

35 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile ou De l'éducation*, Paris: Garnier, 2961, 260. Also see Th.W.A. de Wit , "Gevoel zonder grenzen. Een onsentimentele inleiding", in: Th.W.A. de Wit (red.), *Gevoel zonder grenzen. Authentiek leven, medelijden en sentimentaliteit*, Kampen: Gooi en Sticht, 2000, 7-32.

36 Rik Torfs, "Tussen recht en moraal", in: Erik Borgman, Rik Torfs e.a., *Grensoverschrijdingen geduid. Over seksueel misbruik in katholieke instellingen*, Nijmegen: Valkhof Pers, 2011, 34-47; 36.

37 Van Dijk, *Slachtoffers als zondebokken*, o.c., especially 135 ff.

essence of the warrior"<sup>38</sup> making this third shadow side something to ponder in our nuclear age, where we continue to live under the looming shadow of measureless "mass retaliation".

The picture is therefore rather complex: while there are no reasons to "demonize" (van Dijk) victims on the basis of what we assume to be their thirst for revenge, we must admit that René Girard's subject of mimetic desire shows a clear inclination towards boundless revenge. Even a terrorist organization like Al Qaida has recently been analyzed as a hyper-modern authority of vengeance, rather than the archaic medieval vestige some continue to claim it is.<sup>39</sup>

## 5. THE CRITICAL INSIGHT: IDENTIFYING SELF DELUSIONAL ATTITUDES WITH REGARD TO VICTIMS AND PERPETRATORS

In my opinion, the most fertile critical insight to be derived from van Dijk's cultural-philosophical observations and reflections is given in the following hypothesis. A number of times he articulates the suspicion that the impulse towards secondary victimization, of *blaming the victim*, may be rooted in a desire to "reassure ourselves that we are living in a just world".<sup>40</sup>

Secondary victimization becomes a sort of defence mechanism which enables us to keep alive the naïve faith that "good things happen to good people, and only bad people get punished".<sup>41</sup> This is the optimistic belief in the harmonious fruits of my *reciprocal* actions; that social mechanism which the philosopher of law Dorien Pessers not so long ago identified as the social basis for the rule of law.<sup>42</sup> Precisely because victims "confront us with our own vulnerability", van Dijk writes in an opinion piece co-authored by Marc Groenhuijzen, "we are fond of convincing ourselves that such tragedies only befall those who have somehow asked for it."<sup>43</sup> Here the ideology of progress, of achievable social harmony – variously courted and jilted by both the political left and right over the past half a century – appears to be alive and well.

Here I would just like to add that the self-delusion van Dijk speaks of is just as present in a certain social attitude with regard to the *perpetrators* of crime, and to the political exploitation of this attitude. As long as society can be divided into hard working law abiding citizens on the one hand, and criminals and villains on the other, we may continue to live in a neatly contained world. All we then need to do is to incarcerate the second category in "ragtag towns" – as prisons were referred to by the Dutch prime minister not so long ago – so that we can at long last be amongst ourselves. I see it as a critical task of both victimology and of Christian theology to dismantle this populist fairy tale.

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38 Quoted in Carl Schmitt, *Theorie des Partisanen*, Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1963, 95. The quote reads in full: "Hobbes sagt: der Mensch ist andern Menschen, von denen er sich gefährdet glaubt, um ebensoviele gefährlicher als jenes Tier, wie die Waffen des Menschen gefährlicher sind als die sogenannten natürlichen Waffen des Tieres, zum Beispiel: Zähne, Pranken, Hörner oder Gift. Und der Deutsche Philosoph Hegel fügt hinzu: die Waffen sind das Wesen der Kämpfer selbst."

39 Marcel Henaff, "Terror und Rache. Politische Gewalt, Gegenseitigkeit, Gerechtigkeit – Zehn Jahre danach", in: *Lettre International* 94, 2011, 11-23.

40 In this regard, see Thomas Macho, *Das Leben ist ungerecht*, Salzburg: Residenz Verlag, 2010.

41 Van Dijk, "Free the victim", o.c., 13; *Slachtoffers als zondebokken*. o.c., 23; 111.

42 Dorien Pessers, *De rechtsstaat voor beginners*, Amsterdam: Balans, especially 12-30.

43 Van Dijk & Groenhuijzen, "Natascha Kampusch: het slachtoffer heeft het gedaan", *Het Parool* 22-09-2006, republished in Van Dijk, *Slachtoffers als zondebokken*, o.c., 23.

In contrast, the following insight is far more radical. The argument frequently raised in favour of stricter sentences for perpetrators and greater sensitivity towards victims typically runs: “he got a lousy eight years for killing, but we who are left behind are affected for life”. That is indeed the bitter truth, which however cannot be erased by whatever punishment is meted out. In the final instance, society is “powerless against violence.”<sup>44</sup> Van Dijk’s thesis on the emancipation of the “victim in revolt” may just as well be turned on its head: why has victimhood precisely now become so unbearable that we are forever on the lookout for new perpetrators, villains and other bad guys? It may well be that our ancestors, helped by the religious idea of the “last judgment” by a non-human agency, were better equipped to live with the bitter truth of this impotence than we are.

Victimology is able to provide a basis for the insight that violence and crime will continue to haunt us, because, like van Dijk, it is interested in the “social labelling” of both victims and perpetrators.<sup>45</sup> As is Christian theology, for it knows that our history is a tangle of weeds and fruiting plants, and that history is not her own judge.<sup>46</sup>

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44 See Bas Heijne, “Levenslang”, in: *NRC-Handelsblad* (17/18-12-2011), 2.

45 Van Dijk, *Slachtoffers als zondebokken*, o.c., 147-152, Ch. 12, “Sociale etikettering: een nieuwe richting”.

46 This is the famous thesis regarding the “eschatological reserve” with regard to the fruits of history. See J.B.Metz, *Glaube in Geschichte und Gesellschaft*. Mainz, 1977; and David Ferguson, “Eschatology”, in: Colin Gunton (ed.), *Cambridge Companion to Christian Doctrine*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, 226-244; 236.

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#### **KEY WORDS**

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#### **SLEUTELWOORDE**

Slagoffer,  
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## Teses oor geskiedenis? – Oor onreg, oordeel en eskatologie<sup>1</sup>

### ABSTRACT

The paper is an annotated version of an originally oral contribution during an international and inter-disciplinary consultation on “Injustice, Judgment and Eschatology” hosted in the Theology Faculty of Stellenbosch University on August 3, 2012. It revisits the life and work of Walter Benjamin, the Jewish philosopher and author from Berlin who combined these three notions in a remarkable way and with lasting impact in literary, artistic, cultural and philosophical circles, until today. The essay serves as reminder of Benjamin’s last writing before his death in 1940, namely the influential eighteen theses on history. It briefly illustrates how challenging, influential and inspiring these aphoristic theses have been and still remain, precisely by linking these three notions of injustice, judgment and eschatology in complex ways. It particularly points to the ninth thesis, interpreting Paul Klee’s *Angelus Novus* as the angel of history. The essay is deliberately also written in the form of eighteen brief theses, as formal reminder of Benjamin’s remarkable and incomparable style.

1. In Suid-Afrikaanse swart teologiese kringe is noue verbande gelê tussen ervaring van onreg, verwagtinge van oordeel en eskatologiese voorstelling. Een invloedryke voorbeeld van dié denkfiguur was Allan Boesak. Sowel met beroep op die Gereformeerde tradisie – byvoorbeeld in sy appèl op die Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis<sup>2</sup> – as met beroep op Bybelse dokumente – byvoorbeeld in sy uitleg van die boek *Openbaring*<sup>3</sup> – het hy dié verbande retories sterk beklemtoon. Die hoop van dié wat in die geskiedenis onder onreg ly is dat hulle saak in die eindoordeel as regverdig verklaar sal word, was die wyd verbreide, troosvolle oortuiging in dié geleedere.

2. In Gereformeerde kringe is meermale tydens die 20ste eeu gesê dat die eskatologie van die Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis – volgens sommige beperk tot artikel 37, wat selfs die indruk kan skep van ‘n nagedagte – onder-ontwikkeld is in die lig van die sentrale rol van die eskatologiese hoop in die Nuwe Testament. Meermale is selfs bygevoeg dat dit wenslik sou kon wees om die inhoud van die Geloofsbelydenis aan te vul met nuwere eksegetiese insigte in die rol van apokaliptiese en eskatologiese voorstellinge.

3. Dis egter eweneens moontlik om te argumenteer dat die Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis slegs gelees en begryp behoort te word in die lig van die oorspronklike Begeleidende Brief. Dié destydse verduideliking van die agtergrond laat egter geen twyfel oor die fundamentele rol van eskatologiese oortuigings in die gees agter en motivering vir die destydse daad van belydenis nie. Ook in dié Brief word die temas van onregverdige lyding, hoopvolle vertroue

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1 Hierdie toespraak is op uitnodiging van Gerrit Brand gelewer tydens ‘n Internasionale en Inter-dissiplinêre Seminaar wat hy in die Fakulteit Teologie, Stellenbosch gereël het, op Vrydag 3 Augustus 2012. Dit het gehandel oor “Onreg, Oordeel en Eskatologie,” en verdere sprekers het onder andere professore Theo de Witt (Tilburg, Nederland) en Günter Thomas (Bochum, Duitsland) ingesluit.

2 sien byvoorbeeld Boesak, Allan *Black and Reformed. Apartheid, Liberation, and the Calvinist Tradition* (ed. Leonard Sweetman).

3 sien byvoorbeeld Boesak, Allan, *Comfort and Protest. The Apocalypse of John from a South African Perspective*.

op 'n regverdige oordeel – indien nie nou nie, dan later – en daarom troosvolle eskatologiese verwagtinge ten nouste verweef.<sup>4</sup>

4. Daar kan wel op aksentverskille gewys word tussen die onderskeie logikas van die 20ste eeuse swart teologie in Suid-Afrika en die 16e eeuse lewensgevoel van die *Confessio Belgica*. Sommige sou trouens oordeel dat dit om meer as aksentverskille handel. Daar onder tel byvoorbeeld dat Boesak 'n geweldlose politieke stryd en verset deur die slagoffers wil regverdig terwyl De Brés eerder enige politieke motiewe wil ontken en vasberade bereidheid tot lyding wil motiveer.<sup>5</sup> Ondanks hierdie verskille – hetsy van beklemtoning of van inhoud – is dit steeds opvallend dat en hóé temas van onreg, oordeel en eskatologie hier in 'n gemeenskaplike logika verbind word.

5. Trouens, dieselfde tipe logika is te vinde by vele 20ste eeuse Protestantse denkers, alhoewel dikwels in diepe konflik met alternatiewe logikas – soos wat talle studies van en oorsigte oor resente Protestantse eskatologie, spesifiek ook opvattinge aangaande onreg, oordeel, die Laaste Oordeel en God as Regter toon.<sup>6</sup> Vir sommige is die eskatologie nie denkbaar met enige vorm van oordeel nie, omdat dit volgens hulle gevoel op onreg sou neerkom, vir sommige is die eskatologie nie denkbaar sonder enige oordeel nie, omdat dit volgens hulle geen bevredigende omgang met onreg sou inhou nie.

6. Onder vele bekende voorbeelde van dié logika bied Bram van de Beek se *God doet recht* 'n onlangse konsekwente en radikale illustrasie. Ook by hom wortel dié innige verbande in 'n lewensgevoel waarin die lyding onder onreg en geweld in die geskiedenis ten hemele roep.<sup>7</sup>

7. Alhoewel veel meer temas ook aangetoon sou kon word wat in dié soort lewensgevoel aanwesig is, is dit duidelik dat ten minste *ses temas* feitlik sonder uitsondering 'n rol speel. Alhoewel die diskoerse oor al ses temas uiteenlopend verloop, is dit naamlik opvallend hoe dikwels dié temas ter sprake kom wanneer oor die verbande van onreg, oordeel en eskatologie nagedink word. In byna willekeurige volgorde is dié ses temas dié van 1) die duiding van die geskiedenis, 2) die omgang met lyding, 3) die verskynsel van geweld, 4) die funksie van herinnering, 5) die aard van etiek en 6) die rol van teologie.

8. 'n Paradigmatiese voorbeeld van 'n denker wat met dié temas geworstel het is Walter Benjamin.<sup>8</sup> Dit verwonder gevolglik ook nie dat sy werk so dikwels aangehaal word in

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4 Sien veral Artikel 37 van die Nederlandse Geloofsbelijdenis, maar ook die begeleidende brief gerig aan Koning Philips II van Spanje; vir die oorspronklike teks van laasgenoemde, sien Bakhuizen van den Brink, *De Nederlandse Belijdenisschriften*, 62-69.

5 Vir bespreking van die onderskeie strekkings, sien Smit, "The *Confessio Belgica* as Liberating Truth Today?," in P J Tomson *et al.* (eds.), *The Belgic Confession at 450*, 77-88.

6 Vir enkele voorbeelde, sien onder andere De Kruijf, G G, "Give place unto wrath," in *Christian Faith and Violence*, eds. Van Keulen, D & Brinkman, M E, 115-129, asook die omvattende oorsigte in die proefskrifte van Etzelmueller, G, ... *zu richten die Lebendigen und die Toten* en Thomas, G, *Neue Schöpfung*. Sien ook die professorale intreerede van Theo de Wit, met uitvoerige literatuur. Hy verwys onder andere na die invloedryke gedagte van Hegel, oorgeneem van Schiller, aangaande die *Weltgeschichte als Weltgericht*, wat ook dikwels in die literatuur as agtergrond funksioneer.

7 Van de Beek, *God doet recht. Eschatologie als christologie*.

8 Benjamin is in 1892 in Berlyn gebore en het in September 1940, op vlug na die VSA, in die Spaanse Pireneë sy hand aan sy eie lewe geslaan toe dit duidelik geword het dat hy na Frankryk gedeporteer sou word, terug na Nazi-besetting. Hy was 'n kritikus – van kuns, argitektuur, letterkunde, historiese produkte, stede, tegnologie, die openbare media, filosofie – en het produktief en omvangryk geskryf, in

hedendaagse diskoerse rondom hierdie ses temas en rondom hulle onderlinge verbande nie. Alhoewel motiewe uit sy hele lewe en werk die diskoerse stempel, speel veral sy “Theses on the Concept of History” – sy heel laaste geskrif voor hy sy lewe sou beëindig – ‘n beslissende rol in vele van hierdie diskoerse en by vele van die leidende figure in hedendaagse debatte oor dié ses temas.<sup>9</sup> Ter wille van die gesprek word kortliks herinner aan enkele – uiteraard uiteenlopende – maniere waarop dié teses benut word in diskoerse rondom dié ses temas.

9. Uit persoonlike briewe is duidelik hoe belangrik hierdie teses vir Benjamin self was en hoe sentraal in sy eie denke. Hy verwoord daar uiteindelik gedagtes waarmee hy twintig jaar geloop het maar wat hy ook vir homself weggesteek het, skryf hy aan vriende.<sup>10</sup> Dis ‘n eerste poging om die metode te beskryf wat hy reeds in sentrale stukke gevolg het maar wat voortaan die basis van sy werk gaan wees, sê hy.<sup>11</sup> Die teses is te kompleks om te kan sistematiseer en saamvat. Talryke uiteenlopende studies – oor die onmiddellike biografiese aanleidings, oor die breër tyd-historiese agtergronde, oor die eintlike skopus van die argument, oor die legitieme uitleg-tradisie – getuig van die ingewikkelde en omstrede aard van die dokument én van sy invloedryke werkingsgeskiedenis.<sup>12</sup>

10. Veral die allegoriese negende tese sou sedertdien baie aangryp.<sup>13</sup> Hy beskryf ‘n skildery

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vele uiteenlopende genres. Sy werk was aanvanklik lank nie in Engels beskikbaar en gevolglik bekend in Engels-sprekende lande nie, maar in die laaste dekades het dié situasie ook verander. Daar word toenemend van en oor Benjamin gepubliseer. Daarbenewens was sy direkte en persoonlike invloed op vele van sy tydgenote, geesgenote en persoonlike vriende diepgaande en merkwaardig, en vele van dié figure het self baie bekend en invloedryk geword. Vir ‘n baie eenvoudige en populêre inleiding tot sy lewe en werk, sien byvoorbeeld Caygill, Howard, Coles, Alex & Klimowski, Andrzej, *Introducing Walter Benjamin*, waarin goeie inleidende literatuur vermeld word, asook die bronne wat hierna in verdere voetnote gebruik word. Van besondere belang is die omvattende biografie van Brodersen (met ‘n lang afsluitende hoofstuk oor “Sad Existence: Benjamin in Exile,” 201-264, waarin die jare ter sprake kom waartydens sy teses oor die geskiedenis ontstaan). Vir ‘n inleiding spesifiek tot sy geskrifte, sien sy navorger Theodor Adorno se informatiewe “Introduction to Benjamin’s *Schriften*.”

9 Die teses is waarskynlik voltooi in die lente van 1940. Hy wou dit self nie publiseer nie, ook omdat dit so diep persoonlik was en waarskynlik so omstrede sou wees, selfs by sy naaste geesgenote. Hy het dit eers in manuskrip vorm aan vriende soos die Adornos gestuur, met briewe en persoonlike kommentaar daarby. Selfs met vriende, soos Horkheimer, het ‘n hewige meningswisseling daaroor ontstaan. Die tesis is eers nadoods, byna ‘n dekade later, vir die eerste keer gepubliseer, in *Neue Rundschau*, 61/3, 1950. Die regte titel van die teses is omstrede en dit word dikwels verskillend aangedui en ook uiteenlopend vertaal. Volgens navorsers soos Peukert is die oorspronklike opskrif wat Benjamin self gebruik het “Über den Begriff der Geschichte.” Dit staan egter meesal bekend as “Geschichtsphilosophische Thesen.” In die bundel opstelle *Illuminations* word dit “Theses on the Philosophy of History” genoem, maar dikwels staan dit ook bekend as “On the Concept of History.”

10 In ‘n brief aan Gretel Adorno, van waarskynlik laat April of vroeg Mei 1940, wat die manuskrip vergesel het, plaas hy nadruklik hierdie teses in die konteks van sy hele lewenswerk en sê: “The war and the constellation that brought it about led me to take down a few thoughts that I can say that I have kept with me, indeed kept from myself, for nigh on twenty years” (my kursivering), sien aangehaal en bespreek by Steiner, “The concept of history,” in *Walter Benjamin*, 166 en verder.

11 In dieselfde brief aan Gretel Adorno merk hy op dat veral die 17e tese bondige inligting verskaf oor die metodologie van sy vroeëre werk, sien by Steiner, *Walter Benjamin*, 166.

12 Vir ‘n informatiewe inleiding tot die agtergrond van die teses, asook ‘n bondige oorsig oor die inhoud, sien byvoorbeeld Steiner, *Walter Benjamin*, 165-173.

13 Tese nege begin met ‘n vers van Scholem, en gaan dan oor na meditatiewe opmerkings oor Klee se skildery. Die volle tese nege lui: “My wing is ready for flight/I would like to turn back/If I stayed timeless time/I would have little luck. – *Gerhard Scholem, Angelic Greetings*. There is a painting by Klee called Angelus Novus. An angel is depicted there who looks as though he were about to distance himself from

van Paul Klee in sy besit, oor baie jare heen sy mees geliefde besitting, waaroor hy dikwels geskryf het (vanuit vele perspektiewe) en waarin hy sy eie lewe en identiteit gevind het. Dis een van Klee se sketse van engele, met die titel *Angelus Novus*.<sup>14</sup> In hierdie tesse gee hy egter 'n nuwe duiding aan die skildery. Die engel lyk asof hy rugwaarts weg beweeg van iets waarna hy intens staar, sê Benjamin. Sy oë is gesper, sy mond oop, sy vlerke gesprei. Dis hoe 'n mens jou die engel van die geskiedenis voorstel, merk hy op, en gee daarmee die sleutel tot sy uitleg van die prent. Die engel se gesig is terug gedraai na die verlede. Waar ons egter 'n setting van gebeure waarneem, sien die engel slegs 'n enkele katastrofe wat steeds al meer puin op puin stapel en dit voor die voete van die engel laat ophoop. Die engel sou graag langer wou bly, om die dode op te wek en heel te maak wat gebroke is, maar 'n stormwind uit die paradys waai met soveel geweld teen die vlerke van die engel dat dié hulle nie langer kan toegemaak kry nie. Die storm blaas die engel, wat nie by magte is om weerstand te bied nie, al meer in die toekoms in waarheen sy rug gekeer is, terwyl die puinhoop van afval voor hom hemelhoog groei. Hierdie storm, eindig Benjamin, is wat ons vooruitgang noem.

11. Wat bedoel ons met (die konsep, die begrip) "geskiedenis"?, is die basiese vraag agter die tesses. Hoe ag ons geskiedenis hoegenaamd moontlik, wat regverdig dat ons hoegenaamd van geskiedenis kan praat? In sy soeke na antwoorde op hierdie vrae stuur hy doelbewus tussen pole deur. Hy verwerp uitdruklik 'n bloot historistiese benadering, waarvolgens tyd leeg is en alles wat gebeur ewe belangrik is eenvoudig omdat dit plaasvind. Dis nog nie geskiedenis nie. Aan die ander kant verwerp hy ewe nadruklik alle ideologieë van vooruitgang, wat hy ook met skerp kritiek herken by die linkse politiek van sy dag.<sup>15</sup> Dis in sy worsteling om 'n ander konsep van geskiedenis te verwoord dat die ses temas op so 'n merkwaardige wyse in mekaar verweef word sodat die debatte daaromheen steeds voortduur – en dis eweneens die motief agter die denke van vele wat hulle met dié temas besig hou. In 'n sin was die tesses sy reaksie

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something which he is staring at. His eyes are opened wide, his mouth stands open and his wings are outstretched. The Angel of History must look just so. His face is turned towards the past. Where we see the appearance of a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe, which unceasingly piles rubble on top of rubble and hurls it before his feet. He would like to pause for a moment so fair, to awaken the dead and to piece together what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from paradise, it has caught itself up in his wings and is so strong that the Angel can no longer close them. The storm drives him irresistibly into the future, to which his back is turned, while the rubble-heap before him grows sky-high. That which we call progress, is *this* storm," *Illuminations*, 257-228.

14 Daar bestaan 'n byna onoorstigtelike literatuur oor Benjamin se omgang met hierdie skildery en spesifiek ook vir sy sieninge van die engel. Vir 'n hoogs informatiewe inleiding van iemand wat waarskynlik die mees persoonlike en intieme kennis hiervan gedra het, sien die opstel van Gershom Scholem, "Walter Benjamin and his Angel," byvoorbeeld in die versameling van Gary Smith (ed), *On Walter Benjamin*, 51-89. Scholem verdedig die teologiese, of liever mistieke uitleg van Benjamin se tesses, teenoor diegene, veral uit Marxistiese geleedere, wat daaraan aanstoot geneem het en dit graag sou wou negeer as onbelangrik. Scholem vertel hier die verhaal van Benjamin se eie geskiedenis met die betrokke skildery, waar hy dit gekry het, waar hy dit deur die jare gehou het, hoe hy dit in vroeëre geskifte uitgelê het, tot by die laaste maande van sy lewe en die verwysing daarna in die *Theses*. Benjamin het die skildery beskou as sy mees kosbare besitting. Kort voor die einde het hy trouens navraag gedoen oor wat hy daarvoor sou kon kry in New York, indien hy dalk tot daar sou kon vlug en dit sou kon saambring, as een van min van sy besittings. Scholem eindig met die oordeel: "If one may speak of Walter Benjamin's genius, then it was concentrated in this angel," 86.

15 Sien byvoorbeeld die opstel van Stéphane Mosès, "Angel of History," in Mosès se gelyknamige bundel, *The Angel of History. Rosenzweig, Benjamin, Scholem*, 101-128. Dié betrokke opstel is die derde in 'n afdeling wat handel oor drie modelle van die geskiedenis volgens Benjamin, 65-128. Ook die bekende Hessel gebruik die afbeelding van Klee se skildery en 'n verwysing na en gedeeltelike aanhaling van die negende tesse voor in sy opspraakwekkende lesing, *Empört euch*.

op 'n debat met Horkheimer oor die afgeslotenheid van die geskiedenis. Horkheimer het Benjamin se siening van geskiedenis as teologie beskryf en in die teses antwoord Benjamin doelbewus op dié kritiek – 'n debat wat al beskryf is as "eine der theologisch bedeutsamsten Auseinandersetzungen unseres Jahrhunderts."<sup>16</sup>

12. Ons omgang met die geskiedenis word bemoeilik deur die realiteit van *lyding*. Enigeen wat ní bloot historisties wil konstateer wat alles gebeur nie, maar wat ook vra na oriëntasie, insig, betekenis, beoordeling, duiding, verstaan van wat gebeur, wat vra na perspektief op verlede, hede óf toekoms, word uitgedaag deur die werklikheid van konkrete lyding, om "na te dink in donker tye."<sup>17</sup> Dis lyding wat hom laat glo dat die verlede nie net bloot verby en afgeslote kan wees nie. Dié historiese lyding – die rommel wat opstapel voor die engel – is vir hom sowel persoonlik (en dus antropologies en biografies) as sosiaal (en dus polities) van aard en die antwoorde op dié vrae is dus sowel biografies as polities van aard. Sowel meer persoonlike as meer politieke diskoerse beroep hulle gevolglik sedertdien op sy beskouinge.

13. Wat die historiese lyding besonder kompleks maak is die feit dat dit dikwels met *onreg*, magsmisbruik en geweld saamhang. Dit gaan om die lyding van slagoffers – slagoffers van die geskiedenis, van onderdrukking, uitsluiting, geweld in vele vorme, om dood en doding in vele gestaltes. Weer eens sou dié patos 'n merkwaardige werkingsgeskiedenis tot gevolg hê, wat self 'n verskeidenheid van temas na vore sou roep. Benjamin self het 'n baie invloedryke opstel oor "Critique of Violence" geskryf, wat tot vandag by vele denkers 'n sleutelrol speel,<sup>18</sup> byvoorbeeld van Hannah Arendt tot Judith Butler,<sup>19</sup> asook in die striemende polemiek tussen Slavoj Žižek en Simon Critchley.<sup>20</sup> Omdat Benjamin ook die (verskillende funksies van die) reg as vorme van geweld uitlê, vind debatte oor die noodtoestand en die setel van soewereiniteit (soos rondom Carl Schmitt)<sup>21</sup>, oor skuld en plaasvervangende lyding en sterwe (soos rondom Giorgio Agamben)<sup>22</sup> en oor politieke anargie (te veel name om te noem)<sup>23</sup> eweneens meermale plaas met bewuste beroep op Benjamin.

14. Die vrae na die duiding van die geskiedenis (verlede, hede en toekoms) en na die plek van werklike lyding daar binne (individueel en sosiaal), meermale die lyding van slagoffers (van

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16 Hierdie aanhaling is van Helmut Peukert, uit sy uitvoerige en verhelderende weergawe van hierdie briefwisseling tussen Benjamin en Horkheimer, in *Wissenschaftstheorie – Handlungstheorie – fundamentale Theologie*, 305-310, met die betrokke uitspraak op 305. Vir dié debat, sien byvoorbeeld ook Forrester, *Christian Justice and Public Policy*, 188e.v.

17 Benjamin het meermale die motief van "thinking in dark times" gebruik. In 'n brief aan Scholem skryf hy byvoorbeeld aangaande sy heel laaste twee opstelle wat tydens sy lewe nog gepubliseer is "Every line we succeed in publishing today – no matter how uncertain the future to which we entrust it – is a victory wrenched from the powers of darkness," by Steiner, *Walter Benjamin*, 165. Hannah Arendt wy dan ook 'n groot deel van haar huldiging aan Benjamin aan "the dark times," "Introduction," 19-38, wat nog meer betekenisvol is omdat haar eie werk juis ook dikwels as "thinking in dark times" tipeer sou word.

18 Benjamin, "Critique of Violence," in *Reflections. Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, 277-300.

19 Sien byvoorbeeld Arendt, *On Violence* en Butler, "Critique, Coercion and Sacred Life in Benjamin's 'Critique of Violence'."

20 Sien byvoorbeeld Critchley, *Faith of the Faithless*, 207-246 (met uitvoerige literatuur).

21 Die agste tesse van Benjamin is byvoorbeeld 'n duidelike sinspeling op Schmitt se teorieë rondom die noodtoestand as konstituering van die politiek, byvoorbeeld in sy *Political Theology. Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*.

22 Agamben, *Homo Sacer*.

23 Sien byvoorbeeld Critchley, *The Faith of the Faithless*, 103-154.

geweld, magsmisbruik en onreg, óók onreg in die gestaltes van reg), het dikwels, indien nie altyd nie, ook 'n *etiese* dimensie. Mense dink na oor 'n filosofie van die geskiedenis omdat hulle wil weet hoe om te lewe, wat om te doen, wie om te wees, hoe om te reageer op wat gebeur en op wat gebeur het, hoe hulle betrokke behoort te wees by wat nog gaan gebeur, wat dit beteken om verantwoordelik te lewe. Vrae van verstaan – van sin, betekenis, duiding – blyk ongenoegsaam as dit gaan om die geskiedenis, en juis om die konkrete lyding van slagoffers. Ook onreg en geweld daag uit tot handeling, tot etiek, maar hóé? – die sleutel-konflik tussen Critchley en Zizek.

15. Omdat ook etiek uiteindelik magteloos staan en net kan toesien hoe die puinhoop groei – nie eens die engel kan iets daaraan doen nie – argumenteer Benjamin dat die geskiedenis, die lydendes en die slagoffers (ten minste) nie vergeet durf word nie. Dit sou die allerergste wees. *Onthou* is nodig om hulle (ten minste) teenwoordig te hou, herinnering, *Eingedenken*.<sup>24</sup> Weer eens sou talle hom hierin navolg – teoloë soos Metz, maar ook ander.<sup>25</sup> Invloedryk was byvoorbeeld die opvoedkundige Helmut Peukert se begrip “anamnetiese solidariteit” wat (in aansluiting by Benjamin) dáár begin waar die aporie duidelik word dat etiek, selfs die universele kommunikasie-gemeenskap van die diskoersetiek, nie by magte is om die slagoffers van die verlede in te sluit nie.<sup>26</sup> Wanneer sowel verstaan as handeling tekort skiet bly herinnering as enigste weg. As dit vir vele onherroeplik te laat is vir geluk, word verlossing die enigste hoop<sup>27</sup> – nóg 'n tema met wye nawerking. In dié verband word diskoerse oor Paulus, Marcion en Gnostiek gevolglik vandag opnuut weer relevant en boeiend.<sup>28</sup>

16. Presies daar word Benjamin se teses duidelik *teologie* – soos Horkheimer (en vele ander) hom verwyt en hy self herhaaldelik en konsekwent openlik erken. Die eerste tese gebruik byvoorbeeld die beeld van die Turkse marionet met die skaakmasjien wat altyd wen – maar net omdat daar 'n gebrekklike dwerg onder die tafel wegkruip wat baie goed speel en ongesiens die skuiwe maak. Historiese materialisme – die pop – wat wel historiese lyding en die konkrete slagoffers ernstig wil neem sal hulle stryd met die geskiedenis slegs kan wen indien hulle heimlik van die dienste van die teologie gebruik maak – maar dié is vandag, sê hy, klein en onaansienlik en durf nie in die openbaar gesien word nie.<sup>29</sup> Sommige – ook vele onder sy geesgenote – was destyds en sedertdien hoogs ontsteld oor en krities jeens

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24 Benjamin self formuleer, “Das Korrektiv dieser Gedankengänge liegt in die Überlegung, daß die Geschichte nicht allein eine Wissenschaft, sondern nicht minder eine Form des Eingedenkens ist. Was die Wissenschaft ‘festgestellt’ hat, kann das Eingedenken modifizieren. Das Eingedenken kann das Unabgeschlossene (das Glück) zu einem Abgeschlossenen und das Abgeschlossenen (das Leid) zu einem Unabgeschlossenen machen. Das ist Theologie; aber im Eingedenken machen wir eine Erfahrung, die uns verbietet, die Geschichte grundsätzlich atheologisch zu begreifen, so wenig wir sie in unmittelbarer theologischen Begriffen zu schreiben versuchen dürfen,” aangehaal by Peukert, *Wissenschaftstheorie – Handlungstheorie – fundamentale Theologie*, 307.

25 Vir Metz, sien byvoorbeeld sy *Faith in History and Society*, veral 184-204 (benewens vele ander werke sowel van hom en oor hom, waarin “herinnering” 'n sleutel motief vorm).

26 Anamnetiese solidariteit speel 'n sleutelrol in Peukert se argument in *Wissenschaftstheorie – Handlungstheorie – fundamentale Theologie*, sien veral 300 en verder. Sien daaroor die skripsie van Hans Müller, *Deurwinterde Solidariteit*.

27 Sien byvoorbeeld Agamben, *Potentialities*, 138-159.

28 Sien byvoorbeeld Critchley, *The Faith of the Faithless*, 103-154.

29 'n Afdruk van dié uitbeelding uit die tyd van Benjamin word byvoorbeeld voor in Pangritz se *Vom Kleiner- und Unsichtbarwerden der Theologie*, gebruik. Hy behandel in dié proefskrif onder andere ook die “implisiete teologie” van Benjamin.

dié teologiese perspektiewe.<sup>30</sup> Teenoor Benjamin se kritici sou sy jarelange vriend Gershom Scholem onvermoed argumenteer dat Joodse mistiek die enigste agtergrond is waarteen hy verstaan kan word.<sup>31</sup> Ander sou – tereg – daarop wys dat hy nie normale teologie beoefen nie, maar profane teologie, sekulêre teologie – maar wat beteken dit presies?, vra vele.<sup>32</sup>

17. In dié verband word klassieke teologiese temas soos die Messias en Messiaanse beloftes en verwagtinge,<sup>33</sup> die eskatologie en apokaliptiek,<sup>34</sup> mistiek,<sup>35</sup> bekering,<sup>36</sup> die plek van die wet,<sup>37</sup> verlossing,<sup>38</sup> die bose,<sup>39</sup> die Antichris,<sup>40</sup> oordeel en die Laaste Oordeel,<sup>41</sup> die aard van hoop,<sup>42</sup> die eindtyd en ander tradisioneel teologiese temas soos die kruis en opstanding, almal opnuut van sentrale belang – reeds in sy teses, soos trouens ook in sy oeuvre, veral van sy latere werk, maar daarby ook in die werkingsgeskiedenis sedertdien, tot vandag. Besonder belangrik vir sy eie oortuigings is byvoorbeeld die kort maar kragtige “Theologico-Political Fragment.”<sup>43</sup> Verhelderend vir die eskatologiese stemming wat ook uit Benjamin se werk straal is Jakob Taubes se *Occidental Eschatology*, tesame met sy ander werk oor Benjamin.<sup>44</sup> Vele in dié diskoerse beklemtoon vandag – soos Benjamin, alhoewel op uiteenlopende maniere – dat geloof (soms selfs teologie, soms selfs nadruklik elemente van die Christelike boodskap, al word dit profaan of sekulêr gedui) meer fundamenteel aanwesig is, ook by sekulêre, selfs ongelowige en ateïstiese mense en verborge agter hedendaagse sekulêre politiek, as wat

30 ‘n Enkele maar interessante voorbeeld is Habermas, wat in vroeëre reaksies op Benjamin se werk duidelik negatief staan teenoor sy teologiese belangstellings en oortuigings.

31 Sien byvoorbeeld die opstel oor Benjamin en sy engel, “Walter Benjamin and His Angel,” 51-89.

32 Só Helmut Peukert, *Wissenschaftstheorie – Handlungstheorie – fundamentale Theologie*, 310: “Zu der Verweigerung Benjamins, die Vergangenheit für abgeschlossen zu erklären, hatte Horkheimer geschrieben: ‘Letzten Endes ist Ihre Aussage theologisch.’ Welche Art von Theologie kann das aber sein?”

33 Sien byvoorbeeld Fenves, *The Messianic Reduction. Walter Benjamin and the Shape of Time*.

34 Sien byvoorbeeld Zizek, *Living in the End Times*.

35 Sien byvoorbeeld Critchley, *The Faith of the Faithless*, 103 ev.

36 Sien byvoorbeeld Critchley, *Infinitely Demanding*, oor die noodsaak aan roeping en toewyding te midde van leegheid en nihilism.

37 Sien byvoorbeeld Critchley, *The Faith of the Faithless*, asook Agamben, *Potentialities*, 160-174.

38 Sien byvoorbeeld Agamben, *Potentialities*, 138-159.

39 Sien byvoorbeeld Eagleton, *On Evil*.

40 Sien byvoorbeeld Critchley, *The Faith of the Faithless*, 174 ev.

41 Sien byvoorbeeld die debat tussen Horkheimer en Benjamin by Peukert, *Wissenschaftstheorie – Handlungstheorie – fundamentale Theologie*, 305 ev. Dit is die diepste punt van verskil. Horkheimer meen die onreg wat in die geskiedenis plaasgevind het is verby, niks kan daaraan verander nie. “Das vergangene Unrecht ist geschehen und abgeschlossen. Die Erschlagenen sind wirklich erschlagen ... Was den Menschen, die untergegangen sind, geschehen ist, heilt keine Zukunft mehr ... und die Vorstellung des Jüngsten Gerichts, in welche die unendliche Sehnsucht von Bedrückten und Sterbenden eingegangen ist, bildet nur einen Überrest des primitive Denkens, das die wichtige Rolle des Menschen in der Naturgeschichte erkennt und das Universum vermenschlicht,” 305-306. Benjamin is diep bewus van die erns van hierdie problematiek, maar verskil hier van Horkheimer, en gebruik die teses om sy siening juis meer doelbewus en duidelik te verwoord.

42 Sien byvoorbeeld uitvoerig Taubes, *Occidental eschatology*. Adorno, in sy “Introduction to Benjamin’s Schriften,” merk op: “In Benjamin’s work hope truly appears only where there is danger,” 12

43 Benjamin, “Theologico-Political Fragment,” in *Reflections. Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, 312-313.

44 Sien Taubes se proefskrif, *Occidental Eschatology*, wat sou lei tot intense gesprek met byvoorbeeld Carl Schmitt, maar wat eers dekades later in Engels vertaal is, asook sy lesings in Heidelberg, postuum gepubliseer, *The Political Theology of Paul*; vir die problematiek, sien ook die invloedryke werk van Löwith, *Meaning in History*, waarin trouens na die vroeë proefskrif van Taubes verwys word.

meesal bewus erken word. Dit geld byvoorbeeld van Zizek, saam met Boris Gunjevic, in *God in Pain. Inversions of Apocalypse*,<sup>45</sup> van Critchley in sy *Faith of the Faithless. Experiments in Political Theology*,<sup>46</sup> van Agamben in sy *The Church and the Kingdom*.<sup>47</sup> Zizek open sy *The Puppet and the Dwarf. The Perverse Core of Christianity* met Benjamin se eerste tese.<sup>48</sup> In sy *Jesus Christ. Terry Eagleton presents the Gospels* sê Eagleton dat Benjamin Jesus ten beste verstaan het, beter as meeste.<sup>49</sup>

18. Gegee sy kenmerkende styl van denke, in fragmente en brokstukke en doelbewus nie in sisteme en argumente nie, is dit onmoontlik om Benjamin se eie siening van die logika van onreg, oordeel en eskatologie te orden tot een samehangende standpunt. Hy wou eerder ander uitdaag om te fokus op detail, op spesifieke vrae, op konkrete temas.<sup>50</sup> In sy nawerking het presies dit dan ook gebeur en daarom roep die herinnering aan hom 'n veelvoud van nuwe vrae op wat lei tot vele diskoerse. Tog kan die onderlinge verbande tussen dié diskoerse nie ontken word nie. Telkens roep een van die temas weer onvermydelik 'n ander na vore. Die ooreenkomste tussen dié diskoerse en die Gereformeerde sienings is daarby opvallend en merkwaardig. Vele argument van Benjamin, Taubes, Agamben en Critchley klink presies soos Van de Beek – tot by Agamben oor die kerk as pelgrims.<sup>51</sup>

## WERKE GERAADPLEEG

Adornos, TW 1991. "Introduction to Benjamin's *Schriften* (1955)," in Smith, *On Walter Benjamin*, 2-17.

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45 Sien byvoorbeeld Zizek se openingswoorde (en verdere argument) in Zizek en Gunjevic, *God in Pain. Inversions of Apocalypse*: "If, once upon a time, we publicly pretended to believe while privately we were skeptics or even engaged in obscene mocking of our public beliefs, today we publicly tend to profess our skeptical, hedonistic, relaxed attitude while privately we remain haunted by beliefs and severe prohibitions," 7, 27.

46 Daar is nie net tematiесе ooreenstemming nie, maar Critchley werk inderdaad uitvoerig met Benjamin self in sy *Faith of the Faithless. Experiments in Political Theology*, byna as 'n deurlopende gespreksgenoot.

47 Agamben, *The Church and the Kingdom*. Die boek eindig met 'n verwysing na die engel van Klee en Benjamin se negende tese. Ook in Agamben, *Potentialities*, word etlike van sy opstelle aan Benjamin gewy, onder andere aan sy verstaan van die geskiedenis.

48 Zizek, *The Puppet and the Dwarf. The Perverse Core of Christianity*.

49 Eagleton, *Terry Eagleton presents Jesus Christ*, xii: "The crucifixion proclaims that the truth of human history is a tortured political criminal. It is a message profoundly unacceptable to those sunk in dewy-eyed delusion (idealists, progressivists, liberals, reformers, Yea-sayers, modernizers, socialist humanists and the like), though one perfectly understood by a Jew like Walter Benjamin. Only if you can gaze on this frightful image without being turned to stone, accepting it as absolutely the last word, is there a slim chance that it might not be. This chance is known to Christian faith as the resurrection. To acknowledge this thing of darkness as one's own, discerning in this monstrous image a reflection of oneself and one's historical condition, is the revolutionary act which the Gospels know as *metanoia*, or conversion. Christianity is thus considerably more pessimistic than secular humanism, as well as immeasurably more optimistic."

50 Sy denk- en skryfstyl was dikwels fragmentaries, opgemaak uit losse aforismes en teses. Sy grootste ambisie, volgens Hannah Arendt, was om 'n werk te skryf wat volledig net uit aanhalings sou bestaan, Arendt, "Introduction," 4. Vir die doelbewus fragmentariese aard van sy denke, skrywe en ook van sy lewe, sien Adorno, "Introduction to Benjamin's *Schriften*," 6 ev.

51 Sien Agamben se preek in die vorm van 'n tipies Nuwe Testamentiese brief, vanuit die gemeente in die verstrooiing in Rome na die gemeente in die verstrooiing in Parys, in sy *The Church and the Kingdom*. Ook in Theo de Wit se intreerede oor die *Dies Irae. De Secularisering van het Laatste Oordeel* herken 'n mens vele van dié temas en trouens ook van hierdie figure en bronne.

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## DF Malan en die Hoër Kritiek

### ABSTRACT

The primary aim of this paper is to bring to light an important unpublished paper from 1910 by Dr DF Malan on the so-called Higher Criticism. My paper throws light on Malan's own theological position as pupil of the Dutch Ethical theologian JJP Valeton. In the first part of my paper I try to explain the issues concerning Higher Criticism and to recount the context in which the paper was written. The second part of my paper contains the original (Dutch) text of Malan's paper. The final part consists of an annotated bibliography of the debate about Higher Criticism in the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa during the first three decades of the 20th century. This serves to situate Malan's position within the context of the Dutch Reformed Church.

### 1. INLEIDING

Dr DF Malan staan bekend as staatsman, politikus en eerste minister van Suid-Afrika. Voor hy tot die politiek toetree het, was hy predikant van die NG Kerk in Montagu en Graaff-Reinet. Hoewel sy politieke opvattinge algemeen bekend is, is die teologiese oortuigings wat hy as predikant gehuldig het vandag taamlik onbekend. In die DF Malan-versameling in die Stellenbosse universiteitsbiblioteek het ek 'n besondere manuskrip gevind wat interessant lig hier op werp. Hierdie handgeskrewe manuskrip is die teks van 'n voordrag oor die sogenaamde "Hoër Kritiek" wat hy in 1910 in Montagu by 'n simposium vir predikante gehou het. Die Hoër Kritiek was een van die mees omstrede teologiese temas in daardie tyd en Malan het dieselfde progressiewe standpunt daarvoor verdedig as wat twintig jaar later die aanleiding sou wees dat Johannes Du Plessis sy professoraat aan die Kweekskool op Stellenbosch kwyt sou wees. Sover ek weet is hierdie voordrag van Malan nooit gepubliseer nie en dit lyk my van belang om dit hier bekend te stel. Voor ek die teks van sy voordrag weergee, is dit miskien nuttig om die agtergrond daarvan toe te lig: Wat was die "Hoër Kritiek" en waarom was dit so omstrede? Wat was die belangrikste standpunte wat in die debat daarvoor 'n rol gespeel het en wat was die inspirasiebron(ne) waarby Malan hom aangesluit het? Wat was die aanleiding tot die simposium in Montagu waar Malan hierdie voordrag gehou het?

Streng gesproke is die Hoër Kritiek nie 'n teologiese standpunt nie, maar 'n belangrike vakgebied in die teologie. Dit word gewoonlik onderskei van die Laer Kritiek of tekskritiek wat die teks van die Bybel analiseer. Deur 'n vergelyking tussen die verskillende ou manuskripte van die Bybel, probeer die Laer Kritiek om oorskryffoute en latere toevoegings op te spoor en sover moontlik die oudste "oerteks" van die Bybel te rekonstrueer. Die Hoër Kritiek of literêr-historiese kritiek bestudeer ook die teks van die Bybel en probeer om enersyds die outeurskap en datering van die verskillende Bybelboeke vas te stel en die bronne te onderskei waaruit die Bybelskrywers geput het. Andersyds probeer dit ook om die verskillende literêre genres van die Bybelboeke te onderskei.

Die Hoër Kritiek het veral tot bloei gekom aan die begin van die 19de eeu toe die teologie in Europa (en ook in Nederland) in die ban was van die rasionalisme van die Verligting. Die

sogenaamde moderniste in die teologie het die geloof in 'n bonatuurlike werklikheid as irrasioneel verwerp. Daar is geen God wat bo die natuur uitgaan nie en daarom van buite af met wonderdade in die gang van sake in die natuur kan ingryp nie. Ook is daar nie so iets soos 'n goddelike openbaring van buite die natuur nie. Volgens die Tübinger skool in die teologie (FC Bauer (1792-1860) en DF Strauss (1808-1874) is die Bybel daarom ook nie die "Woord van God" in die sin van 'n openbaring van 'n bonatuurlike God nie. Dit is 'n gewone menslike boek wat bestudeer moet word op dieselfde manier as alle ander menslike boeke. As sodanig word dit gekenmerk deur al die gewone swakhede en foute wat aan menslike geskifte kleef. Dit is vol teenstrydighede en onwaarskynlikhede en kan daarom nie Goddelike gesag besit nie. Bauer het die histories-kritiese metode ontwikkel om die historiese ontstaan en die outeurskap van die verskillende Bybelboeke te verklaar en Strauss het uitgangspunt gehandhaaf dat die grootste deel van die Bybelse geskiedenis mitologie is.

In die loop van die 19de eeu is die histories-kritiese metode van Bauer en Strauss verder ontwikkel en verfyn en het dit 'n bepalende rol begin speel in die werk van Bybelwetenskaplikes. In die 1870's het hierdie soort ondersoek gelei tot die sogenaamde "vier bronne hipotese" van KH Graf en Julius Wellhausen in Duitsland, en Abraham Kuenen in Leiden oor die ontstaan van die Pentateug. Volgens hierdie hipotese is die Pentateug in sy finale vorm deur een of meer redakteurs saamgestel uit vier ouer dokumente: die *Jahwis* wat geskryf is in Juda in die tyd van Dawid en Salomo, die *Elohis* wat ongeveer in 850 vC geskryf is in die noordelike ryk van Israel, die *Deuteronomis* wat as reeks wette saamval met die wetboek wat in 620 vC gelei het tot die hervorming van Josia (2 Kon 22-23), en ten slotte die *Priesterkodeks* wat geskryf is in of kort na die Babiloniese ballingskap. Gewoonlik word hierdie vier bronne kort aangedui as J, E, D, en P. Hierdie hipotese het aangesluit by die werk van Jean Astruc (1684-1766), 'n professor in die medisyne in Montpellier in Frankryk, wat probeer het om die bronne te onderskei waarvan Moses gebruik sou gemaak het toe hy die Pentateug geskryf het. Wellhausen-hulle gaan egter verder en verwerp die tradisionele opvatting dat Moses die Pentateug geskryf het. Die vier bronne waaruit dit ontstaan het, is van 'n baie latere datum. Die finale samestelling daarvan is van na die ballingskap. Hierdie rekonstruksie van die ontstaansgeskiedenis van die Bybel het verregeende implikasies vir die manier waarop die vroeë geskiedenis van Israel verstaan word. Die Bybelse voorstelling van hierdie geskiedenis is onbetroubaar en die Bybel is daarom nie gesaghebbend as bron van kennis oor die geskiedenis van Israel nie.

Ortodokse gelowiges in die kerk en in die teologie het hulle sterk verset teen die teorieë van die modernistiese kritici en veral teen hulle ontkenning van die bonatuurlike werklikheid. Vir die ortodokse gelowiges was die Bybel die onfeilbare Woord van God waarin God Hom aan ons openbaar, terwyl die moderniste beweer het dat die Bybel nie 'n onfeilbare goddelike boek is nie maar 'n feilbare menslike boek en daarom onderworpe aan al die foute en onwaarskynlikhede wat eie is aan menslike boeke. Die vraag is egter in watter sin die Bybel die "Woord van God" is? Op hierdie vraag het ortodokse teoloë verskillende antwoorde gegee.

Vir sommige teoloë is die Bybel die Woord van God omdat dit die bron van Goddelike openbaring is, in die sin dat dit *onfeilbare kennis* aan ons meedeel. Om hierdie rede bevat die Bybel van Genesis 1 tot Openbaring 22, in teenstelling met wat die moderniste beweer, onfeilbare inligting nie alleen oor God nie, maar ook oor die geskiedenis, die kronologie, die kosmologie, ensovoorts. Hierdie opvatting oor die Bybel is tiperend vir alle vorme van fundamentalisme. Dikwels neem dit die vorm aan van die teorie wat in Amerika "plenary inspiration" genoem word. Volgens hierdie teorie is die Bybel in al sy dele geïnspireer om ons feillose ("inerrant") kennis mee te deel. Hierdie inspirasie geld egter vir die oorspronklike teks

van die geïnspireerde Bybelskrywers (die “oerteks”). Dit laat die moontlikheid oop dat daar in die loop van tyd foute en teenstrydighede ingesluip het in die proses waarin die oerteks keer op keer oorgeskryf is. Daarom was tekskritiek (“Laer Kritiek”) van groot belang omdat dit in daardie tyd probeer om die onfeilbare oerteks te rekonstrueer. In Nederland was dit veral Abraham Kuyper wat hierdie inspirasieteorie verdedig het.

Vir ander teoloë is geloof egter nie die aanvaarding van onfeilbare waarhede nie, maar ‘n intieme persoonlike verhouding met God. Vir hulle geld die uitspraak van GK Chesterton oor Fransiskus van Assisi: “For this great mystic, his religion was not a thing like a theory but a thing like a love-affair.”<sup>1</sup> In Nederland was dit veral die sogenaamde Etiese Rigting in die teologie wat hierdie opvatting oor die geloof verdedig het. Geloof was vir hulle eksistensiële of “eties” en nie intellektueel of verstandelik nie. Hulle het hulle hierin aangesluit by die piëtistiese spiritualiteit van die Réveil wat ook die inspirasiebron was vir John en Andrew Murray en Nicolaas Hofmeyr toe hulle in Utrecht teologie gestudeer het. Vanuit hierdie perspektief is die Bybel die onfeilbare Woord van God omdat God in die Bybel sy heilsboodskap aan ons verkondig en so met ons as sy kinders ‘n persoonlike verhouding aangaan waarin ons ons heil kan vind. Die Bybel is in al sy dele onfeilbaar geïnspireer *vir sy doel*, en sy doel is (in die woorde van Johannes Du Plessis) om ons die weg tot saligheid te wys en nie om ons inligting te gee oor die geskiedenis, die kronologie, die natuurkunde, die sterrekunde of oor die ontstaan van die wêreld nie.

Die Etiese teoloë was van mening dat, net soos Jesus sowel ‘n goddelike as ‘n menslike natuur gehad het, die Bybel ook sowel ‘n goddelike as ‘n menslike boek is. Dit is ‘n goddelike heilsboodskap wat God self deur middel van die feilbare en tydgebonden werk van menslike skrywers aan ons verkondig. Die menslikheid van die middel ondergrawe egter nie die betroubaarheid en die goddelike onfeilbaarheid van die boodskap nie. Die Etiese teoloog JJP Valeton lê hierdie punt uit met die volgende vergelyking: “Sal ‘n mens ‘n gids wat ons na die bergtop lei nie betroubaar ag nie omdat daar ‘n knoop van sy jas af is, of omdat hy ‘n vreemde woord nie goed kan uitspreek nie, of omdat hy een of ander taal nie verstaan nie? Wat het dit te maak met dit waarin en waarom en waartoe ‘n mens hom vertrou?”<sup>2</sup>

Vanuit hierdie perspektief kon die Etiese teoloë die goeie reg van histories-kritiese ondersoek van die menslike kant van die Bybel ten volle erken, ook al was hulle sterk afwysend van die kritici se verwerping van die goddelikheid van die Bybelse heilsboodskap. Sodra die kritici die Goddelike boodskap aantas, het die Etiese teoloë hulle beveg. Die resultate van histories-kritiese ondersoek van die menslike vorm van die Bybel het hulle egter op *wetenskaplike* gronde beoordeel. Die probleem is nou dat die histories-kritiese analise van die Bybel as mensewerk nie ‘n “harde” wetenskap is nie. Die konklusies waartoe dit kom is daarom selde “onomstootlik.” Dikwels lewer sulke analises alleen maar minder of meer aanneemlike hipoteses op. Baie Etiese teoloë (soos die vaders van die Etiese Rigting, Daniël Chantepie de la Saussaye en JH Gunning jr) en ook geesverwante van hulle (soos Herman Bavinck in Amsterdam en JI Marais op Stellenbosch) was skepties oor baie van die resultate van die historiese kritiek. Dit was vir hulle dikwels veels te spekulatief. Hulle kritiek was egter primêr wetenskaplik en nie religieus nie. Ander Etiese teoloë (veral die s.g. “jonger” etici soos JJP Valeton in Utrecht) was egter meer bereid om die aanneemlikheid van baie van hierdie resultate te erken.

Dr DF Malan het in 1905 in Utrecht gepromoveer op ‘n filosofiese proefskrif oor die Idealisme

1 G.K. Chesterton: *St. Francis of Assisi* (Garden City NY 1957), 16.

2 Bob Becking (red.), *J.J.P. Valeton jr. als Mens en as Theoloog* (Utrecht 2012), 54.

van George Berkeley. Sy promotor was die Calvinis Hugo Visscher, maar sy inspirasiebron was Valetton by wie hy as student in Utrecht ingewoon het. Net soos Valetton het hy teenoor die modernistiese kritici die goddelike heilsboodskap van die Bybel verdedig terwyl hy oop was vir die resultate van die historiese kritiek in soverre dit nie die heilsboodskap ondergrawe nie. Dit blyk duidelik uit sy voordrag by die Montagu-simposium.

Die Montagu-simposium was een van 'n reeks van drie vir predikante wat in mindere of meerdere mate simpatiek gestaan het teenoor die Etiese teologie. Die eerste was in Oos-Londen in 1909, die tweede in Montagu in 1910 en die derde in Tulbagh in 1911. Vir 1912 was daar 'n vierde simposium in George beplan maar dit is nie duidelik of dit ooit plaasgevind het nie. Die meeste van die referate by hierdie simposia het gehandel oor teologies omstrede onderwerpe uit daardie tyd. In die verslag van die eerste simposium in die *Gereformeerde Maandblad* verklaar die organiseerders: "Ons wil soveel moontlik op die hoogte van sake bly – nie net op teologiese gebied nie. Dit sal voorwaar 'n treurige dag vir ons kerk wees as die leke meer verlig is as die geestelike leidsmanne."<sup>3</sup> Die meeste van die referente het probeer om soos die Etiese teoloë in Nederland die spiritualiteit van die Réveil te kombineer met 'n kritiese openheid vir die nuutste wetenskaplike ontwikkelinge. Hulle wou sien hoe ver hulle die nuwe ontwikkelinge kon aanvaar sonder dat hulle daarmee die Réveil-spiritualiteit ondergrawe. Veral die simposium in Montagu in 1910 het baie aandag getrek. Vyftien predikante het aan die Montagu-simposium deelgeneem. Met uitsondering miskien van die referaat van ds GJ du Plessis oor die Grieks van die Nuwe Testament, het al die referate oor teologies omstrede onderwerpe uit daardie tyd gehandel: dr DF Malan oor die Hoër Kritiek, ds NJ Brümmer van Drieankerbaai oor die Pragmatisme, ds HP van der Merwe van Robertson oor die evolusieteorie, en ds J du Plessis, redakteur van die *Kerkbode*, oor die inspirasieleer.<sup>4</sup>

Hierdie strewende om die geloof en die bevindinge van die moderne wetenskap met mekaar te probeer versoen, het egter nie algemeen byval gevind nie en is met agterdog bejeën in die meer behoudende kringe in die kerk. So was die Montagu-simposium die aanleiding tot 'n lewendige polemie, onder andere in *De Kerkbode*. Onder die skuilnaam "Lidmaat" het iemand byvoorbeeld geskryf: "Verlede jaar was daar 'n teologiese simposium in Oos-Londen; vanjaar is daar weer een in Montagu. Dit is die dun end van die wig wat, vrees ek, die kerk in twee sal skeur. Hoe die bespreking van sulke onderwerpe Gods Koninkryk kan bevorder, sien ek nie in nie."<sup>5</sup>

In sy redaksionele "Kroniek" in die *Gereformeerde Maandblad* het prof JI Marais as kommentaar hierop geskryf: "Wat ons betref, ons juig hierdie 'simposium' toe en ons is dankbaar dat ons jong predikante die tyd vind en maak om met mekaar die vraagstukke te bespreek waarvan die wêreld tans so vol is. Kon "Lidmaat" die briewe sien wat ek soms ontvang van ernstige jong mense wat raad vra omdat hulle met die 'moderne' kwessies in die war geraak het en van my lig en leiding wil ontvang! En voorwaar, manne soos ds Du Plessis, dr Malan, ds Brümmer en ds MacGregor het die vertrouwe van ons almal: moet ons dan so bang wees vir 'skeuring' omdat hulle hulle met mekaar oor hierdie kwessies onderhou? ... Indien die jong broeders ons hulle stukke ter plaatsing [in die *Gereformeerde Maandblad*] wil toevertrou, sal ons dit graag in ons kolomme opneem, ook al is hulle beskouinge moontlik nie dié van ons nie."<sup>6</sup>

3 *Gereformeerde Maandblad* (Junie 1909), 93-94.

4 Ds. J. Du Plessis het 'n uitgebreide verslag van hierdie simposium geskryf: 'Het Theologisch Symposium te Montagu' in *De Kerkbode* (5 Mei 1910), 212-214.

5 *De Kerkbode* (24 Februarie 1910), 94.

6 *Gereformeerde Maandblad* (Maart 1910), 37.

As redakteur van *De Kerkbode* het ook Du Plessis hom by hierdie woorde van Marais aangesluit: "Ons moet nie uit die oog verloor nie dat ons predikante ... 'n sterk borswering behoort te wees teen alle ongeloof en dwaalleer. Dit kan hulle alleen wees indien hulle hulle op die hoogte hou van wat die hedendaagse dwaling verkondig, die sterke en swakke punte daarvan ondersoek en hulle wapen met die beste middele en argumente om dit die hoof te bied."<sup>7</sup> Nie almal was egter gerusgestel deur hierdie woorde nie. In 'n volgende brief vra Lidmaat: "Wat sal die waarde van ons godsdiens wees as die sielsverliggende lig van Gods Woord vervang word deur die verstand verliggende lig van die Hoër Kritiek?"<sup>8</sup> So ook vra "Ouderling" om die versekering dat 'die lede van sulke vergaderings sal verklaar dat hulle glo in die skeppingsverhaal van die boek Genesis ... en dat die eerste vyf boeke van die Bybel van die Godsman Moses afkomstig is."<sup>9</sup> Na aanleiding van Du Plessis se verslag van die Montagu simposium skryf JNP de Villiers 'n paar maande later: "Daar vind ons onder andere ... die Bybelverhaal van Jona ... voorgestel meer as allegorie dan as ware geskiedenis. ... Die Mond van die Waarheid het egter self die geskiedenis van Jona aangehaal as daadsaak, en wel in verband met sy eie dood wat Hy voorspel het, en dit is vir my altans genoeg."<sup>10</sup>

Dit is duidelik dat Malan se opvattinge oor die Hoër Kritiek in daardie dae nie onomstrede was nie. Dit is daarom miskien begryplik dat hy liever nie ingegaan het op JI Marais se uitnodiging om sy referaat in die *Gereformeerde Maandblad* te publiseer nie. Teen hierdie agtergrond is die voordrag van Malan 'n dokument wat die moeite werd is om vandag weer onder die aandag te bring.

## 2. DIE NEDERLANDSE TEKS VAN MALAN SE VOORDRAG

Voor den geloovigen Christen die volkomen recht wil laten wedervaren aan de eischen beide van zijn hart en zijn verstand, die zijn Bijbel liefheeft en waardeert als het zekere en levende Woord van God en tegelijk het goed recht en den ernst wil erkennen van een vrij wetenschappelijk onderzoek, is er in onzen tijd geene theologische beweging die met zooveel ongerustheid gadeslagelagen wordt als de z.g. Hoogere Kritiek. Het valt niet te ontkennen dat vóór de dagen van Graf en Wellhausen en Kuenen de wetenschappelijk gevormde geloovige over het algemeen met eene verzekerdheid kon spreken en dat al zijne uitingen eene positieve klank hadden die sedert dien tijd voor een deel verloren gegaan is. Immers zijn Bijbel bezat hij toen nog ongeschonden. En daarmede gevoelde hij zich in staat om alle stroomingen op godsdienstig en zedelijk gebied te beheerschen. Tegen alle twijfel van binnen en alle vijandschap van buiten kon hij laten gelden de volle kracht en de doodelijke scherpte van het zwaard des Geestes. Indien hij nu echter toegeven moet dat de Hoogere Kritiek streng wetenschappelijk is in hare methode en wat de hoofdzaken betreft zeker is van hare resultaten, dan kan het ons niet verwonderen dat hij zijn zelfvertrouwen verliest en gedwongen wordt tot de deemoedige houding van iemand die in het heetste van den strijd zich van zijne onmistbaarste wapen beroofd ziet, of anders tot de heftigheid geboren uit het gevoel dat hij zijn laatste schans verdedigd. Volgens velen moet de orthodoxie de Hoogere Kritiek met kracht en met succes bestrijden of anders zelve ondergaan.

De eeuw waarin wij leven is bij uitstek practisch en vertoont daarom reeds eene sterke neiging om het dogma als nonessentieel op den achtergrond te dwingen. Bovendien kan het

7 *De Kerkbode* (7 April 1910), 166.

8 *De Kerkbode* (17 Maart 1910), 130.

9 *De Kerkbode* (17 Maart 1910), 129.

10 *De Kerkbode* (24 November 1910), 351.

niet ontkend worden dat het agnosticisme invloed uitgeoefend heeft ook in kringen waar men het in beginsel verwerpt. Onze eeuw is zich bewust geworden, zoals geen ander van de onmacht van het menselijk denken tegenover de eeuwige waarheid. Zij is derhalve allerminst geneigd grenzen te trekken, de waarheid streng te formuleeren, het dogma te verdedigen of te reconstrueeren. Tegenover deze trage twijfelzucht, deze ziekelijke voorliefde voor het onbestemde, heeft de Christen-theoloog steeds met nadruk te getuigen: er is eene absolute en eeuwige waarheid, waarvan God de waarborg is, eene absolute waarheid die het fundament en de verzekering is van alle kennis: kenbaar en wat meer zegt, *bij benadering* door ons gekend en geformuleerd. Er is eene orthodoxie, die zich rechtvaardigen laat.

Maar aan den anderen kant mag de Christen-theoloog ook nooit uit het oog verliezen het feit dat al onze kennis slechts is eene kennis *bij benadering*. Het apostolisch woord is waar: 'Nu kennen wij ten deele.' En hierop dient, waar de orthodoxie zich geroepen acht zichzelf te verdedigen, met evenveel nadruk gewezen te worden. De orthodoxie moet iedere nieuwe strooming streng onpartijdig beoordeelen en altijd bereid zijn, zonder prijsgeving van het levend geloof waaraan zij uitdrukking geeft, zichzelf bij meerder licht te *wijzigen*. Want de orthodoxie is niet identisch met het geloof. Zij is slechts de vorm waarin het levend geloof zich openbaart. En het is wel mogelijk dat men eene bepaalde vorm te lang kan behouden en verdedigen ten kosten van het levend geloof. De albaster flesch moet men soms beschermen tegen de ruwe hand des ongeloofs die de inhoud niet wil, maar om de kamer te vervullen met de geur der zalf, om eene nieuwe wereld met nieuw licht door wetenschap ontstoken voor het geloof te winnen en te behouden, is het somtijds noodig om de albaster flesch te verbreken. Te midden van veranderende meeningen op allerlei gebied moet er ook in de orthodoxie beweging zijn zoo zij niet zal versteenen en beschouwd zal worden als alleen van antiquarisch belang. Het levend geloof moet in de loop der eeuwen telkens overgeplant worden op den bodem van nieuwe omstandigheden en indien het vrijgelaten wordt, gekoesterd door het licht van eene steeds groeiende wetenschap, om nieuwe vormen aan te nemen, zal het blijven wat het tot hiertoe geweest is: een kracht Gods tot zaligheid. De les die de eerste Christelijke kerk leeren moest was dat bij alle verschil van ambt en bediening één en dezelfde Geest door allen in de gemeente kan werkzaam zijn. De les die de Kerk van de 20ste eeuw bezig is te leren is dat dezelfde Geest, die de orthodoxie van de eene tijd vormt, diezelfde orthodoxie ook als haar tijd vervuld is ook wederom *verbreekt* om haar in een nieuwe naar de tijdsomstandigheden ingerichten vorm te herstellen. Voor den Christen die weet van een oude en een nieuwe bedeeling, van oude en nieuwe lederzakken door dezelfde heer des huizes gebruikt, van den Paulinischen strijd tegen eenen al te strakke en te lang verdedigde Joodsche orthodoxie, kan de waarheid hier uitgesproken niet vreemd zijn.

De ware Christelijke orthodoxie die de uitdrukking is van een levend geloof door den Geest Gods gewerkt, kan daarom niet eene onveranderlijke en onbuigbare zijn. Zij moet zijn eene voortgaande zichzelf steeds reconstruerende, maar immer in hoofdzaak zichzelf gelijkblijvende dogmatische arbeid. Zij moet zijn eene voortgaande Christianisering van alle levensverhoudingen ook op intellectueel gebied. Maar dat kan (zijn) het prijsgeven van haar uitwendige gestalte wetende dat haar inwendige levensbeginsel door geen graf kan worden gehouden. Niet alleen in de onveranderlijkheid van haar wezen maar ook in de veranderlijkheid van haar vorm moet de ware orthodoxie eene bevestiging zijn van de waarheid: Dit is de overwinning, die de wereld overwint, namelijk ons geloof.

De Christen-theoloog moet daarom rekening houden met de mogelijkheid, dat hij aan zijn tegenstander zal moeten toegeven, en dat om des geloofs wille, wat tevoren door de

orthodoxie verdedigd is geworden; dat in den strijd om het geloof men gebruik zou kunnen en moeten maken, tot versterking van zijn eigen schansen, van menige steen waarachter de vijand zich lang verdedigd had.

De vraag moet in onzen tijd in alle ernst worden gedaan of de resultaten van de Hoogere Kritiek noodzakelijkerwijze opgevat moeten worden als strijdig met het geloof in den Bijbel als Gods Woord, m.a.w. of de theoloog die na een onpartijdig oordeel over de aangevoerde gronden meent dat hij de uitspraak der Nieuwere Kritiek accepteren moet over de herkomst, tijd van ontstaan en samenstelling van zekere Bijbelboeken en de historiciteit van zekere verhalen, niet evengoed en wellicht met nog meer recht kan geloven in de werkelijke openbaring Gods, waarvan de Bijbel een getrouwe getuige en geloofbare beschrijving is. Het komt mij voor dat waar deze vraag omtrent de vereenigbaarheid van geloof en kritiek aan de orde gesteld wordt, men daarop in steeds ruimere kring een beslist en bevestigend antwoord geeft. Velen aan wier goede trouw niet getwijfeld kan worden, beschouwen de resultaten van de Hoogere Kritiek niet alleen binnen zekere perken ten volle gerechtvaardigd maar zelfs van groote apologetische waarde.

Kan het zijn dat de Hoogere Kritiek dezelfde geschiedenis doorloopt als de z.g. Lagere (Kritiek)? Immers ook toen deze volhield dat er geen geringe mate van twijfel bestond omtrent tal van lezingen en dat de taal van het Nieuwe Testament verre van klassiek was, werd zij door de orthodoxie van die dagen als hoogstgevaarlijk aangezien en oordeelde men dat een Grieksch dat niet aan al de eischen der taalkunde beantwoordde of een oorkonde van welker zuiverheid men geen zekerheid kan hebben, onmogelijk het voertuig kon zijn van Gods waarheid en het orgaan des Heiligen Geestes. Vandaag ontkent men algemeen wat men ervoor ontkent moest hebben. Maar wie oordeelt vandaag dat wij bij de erkenning der waarheid iets verloren hebben? Wie gevoelt vandaag nog dat de goddelijke oorsprong van den Bijbel staat of valt met de volkomen conseqwente maar onhoudbare stelling van de Helvetische Confessie, dat ook de Massoretische vocaal punten geïnspireerd zijn. Zou niet ook de resultaten van de Hoogere Kritiek, indien ons onpartijdig oordeel tot de erkenning daarvan dwingt, bij alle wijziging in onze begrippen toch dienstbaar gemaakt kunnen worden, zoals de oorspronkelijke bedoeling van Astruc was, tot den verdediging van onzen ouden Bijbel als het Woord van God dat leeft en blijft tot in der eeuwigheid?

Ten einde de strekking en de resultaten van de Hoogere Kritiek recht te kunnen beoordeelen moet men volkomen vrij zijn van alle vooringenomenheid hetzij ten gunste ervan of ertegen. De invloed die het hebben kan op onze tegenwoordige formuleering van een of ander leerstuk moet eene zaak blijven van latere overweging. God is, om de woorden van Franz Delitzsch te gebruiken, de God der waarheid. En onderwerping aan de waarheid, ook waar wij onze traditionele beschouwingen moeten prijsgeven, is onze heilige plicht, een bestanddeel van de vreeze Gods. Met betrekking tot de Hoogere Kritiek heerst er volgens onze meening veel misverstand, dat eene juiste beoordeeling in den weg staat.

Allereerst is de opvatting niet gerechtvaardigd dat de Kritiek alleen of zelfs hoofdzakelijk destructief is. Zij breekt weliswaar menige traditionele beschouwing af omtrent den aard en het ontstaan van sommige Bijbelboeken, zij verklaart in sommige gevallen voor ongenoegzaam de gronden waarop men zekere verhalen als historie opvat. Maar daartegenover staat de verheffing van vele andere gebeurtenissen, waarvan de Bijbel spreekt, boven alle redelijke twijfel. In het algemeen gesproken geeft de Kritiek ons als resultaat eene goed samenhangende reconstructie van Israels politieke en godsdienstige geschiedenis.

Ten tweede is het onjuist om deze kritische reconstructie te bestempelen als niets anders dan de vrucht, die eene geliefkoosde theorie en bij name de evolutieeler gedragen heeft op den bodem van de theologisch wetenschap. Indien de evolutieeler ook al eenige invloed mag gehad hebben op sommige latere ontwikkelingen, met bedenke dat de Kritiek ouder is dan de evolutieeler en dat het verband tusschen beide lang niet zoo duidelijk aangetoond kan worden als bijvoorbeeld dat tusschen de Tübingsche theologie en de Hegeliaansche wijsbegeerte. De Hoogere Kritiek wil bij voorkeur de literarische genoemd worden. De gronden, die zij aanvoert berusten niet op de waarheid van een of ander systeem maar zijn ontleend aan den Bijbel zelf. Zij is niet eene op zichzelf staande wetenschap met haar eigen maatstaf en regels maar een onderdeel, eene bijzondere toepassing op den inhoud des Bijbels, van de erkende algemeene canones der literarische kritiek.

Ten derde dient erop gewezen te worden dat de Hoogere Kritiek als zodanig niets uit te staan heeft met de ontkenning van het wonder of van de mogelijkheid eener bijzondere Godsopenbaring. Onder de groote meerderheid van godgeleerden die eene bijzondere studie van het Oude Testament gemaakt hebben en de resultaten der Kritiek accepteerden kan men wellicht een veel grooter getal geloovigen dan ongeloovigen aanwijzen. De antithese tusschen geloof en ongeloof is niet identisch met die tusschen kritiek en anti-kritiek. Het ongeloof kan en zal trachten om van de Kritiek een ruim gebruik te maken, zoals het trouwens ook doet met de traditioneele beschouwing, maar zelf is het op ander bodem ontstaan en zal het er geweest zijn of er een Kritiek was of niet. Hieruit volgt natuurlijk dat hoeveel hunne beschouwingen ook overigens overeen mogen komen, dezelfde diepgaande tegenstelling van beginselen gevonden wordt tusschen geloovige en ongeloovige critici als tusschen geloovige en ongeloovige traditionalisten.

Wij zouden dit met vele citaten kunnen staven. Met de volgende echter van Prof. Valetton, waar een geloovige criticus aan het woord is, kunnen wij volstaan: 'Hierin ligt voor een groot gedeelte het verschil tusschen Prof. Kuenen en degenen, met wie ik mij in overtuiging verbonden gevoel. Wat Prof. Kuenen schrijft over de ontwikkeling van den uitwendigen Israëlitischen godsdienst is ook naar onze overtuiging voor een groot deel volkomen waar. Hij is in dit opzicht ook voor ons een zeer gewaardeerd leidsman en leermeester. Maar daarbij blijft het ook. Wat naar mijne overtuiging aan zijne, d.i. de moderne richting bij de beschouwing van Israëls godsdienst ontbreekt is juist wat ik noemde de eenheid van dat alles en daarmee het wezen, de eigenlijke kern van het Israelitisme.' En verder: 'Hierin ligt dan ook de fout. Israëls godsdienst is iets anders dan "een godsdienst." Hij is "godsdienst." Wat dat zeggen wil? Dit, dat aan Israëls godsdienst in bijzondere en toenemende mate openbaring van God ten grondslag ligt, en ten gevolge daarvan, dat er in Israëls godsdienst in bijzondere en in toenemende mate is gemeenschap met God, gemeenschap, persoonlijke d.i. levende, werkelijke gemeenschap met God. Daarin ligt wat men gewoonlijk en terecht noemt het openbaringskarakter van Israëls godsdienst. Waarin bestaat dit? Hierin, dat God zich aan Israel bekend gemaakt heeft ... God heeft gesproken en gezegt: hier ben Ik en zo ben Ik. ... en daarop berust Israëls godsdienst, daarin ligt zijne eenheid en zijne vastheid en zijne eeuwigheid.'

De resultaten van de Hoogere Kritiek kunnen wij samenvatten onder drie hoofden: (a) de bewering dat de Hexateug geen eenheid is maar eene samenstelling van verschillende oorkonden; (b) de verklaring dat er geen genoegzaam bewijs voorhanden is om zekere verhalen, zoals bv. dat van het boek Jona, als historisch te beschouwen en (c) de reconstructie van de geschiedenis van Israëls godsdienst als eene opeenvolging van het Mozaisme, het Profetisme en het Judaïsme, drie verschillende en toch aaneensluitende ontwikkelingsgangen,

ieder uitgaande van of samenhangende met een gebeurtenis diep ingrijpende in het volksleven, namelijk de uittocht uit Egypte, de bedreiging van het nationaal bestaan door de groot mogendheden van Assyrië en Babylonië en de Babylonische ballingschap.

Om de gronden na te gaan en te beoordeelen waarop men tot deze conclusies gekomen is, is natuurlijk binnen dit kort bestek onmogelijk. Het is ons alleen te doen om aan te toonen dat zij, indien aangenomen, in geen enkel opzicht de vernietiging veronderstellen van ons geloof in de geschiedkundige godsopenbaring aan en door Israel, of de waarde verminderen die wij aan den Bijbel als Gods Woord hechten.

Wat de samengesteldheid van zekere boeken betreft, is het moeilijk te verstaan wat wij zouden verliezen indien wij dit aan de critici moeten toegeven. Immers de Schrift zelve erkent het gebruik van bronnen, zoals het boek Jashan (2 Samuel 1:18), het boek van de oorlogen des Heeren (Numeri 21:14), de woorden van Nathan, de profetie van Ahia, de gezichten van Jedi (2 Kronieken 9:29), de historie van den profeet Iddo (2 Kronieken 13:22), enz. Waarom zou de Heilige Geest geen gebruik kunnen maken van materiaal dat reeds voorhanden is en van den historischen zin evengoed als van de taalkennis van zijne werktuigen? Het dooreenvlechten van verschillende verhalen zoals van de Jahvist en de Elohist behoeft evenmin een onoverkomelijk bezwaar tegen het gezag en de waarde der Schrift te zijn.

Men bedenke dat de geschiedschrijvers van het Oosten zich andere idealen in hun werk voorstelden dan de historieschrijvers der 20ste eeuw in het Westen, dat waar wij geen bezwaar hebben, in onze hartstocht voor logische eenheid, om een deel van het voorhanden zijnde materiaal ongebruikt te laten, zij zo veel als mogelijk was, alles trachtten te bewaren en daarvoor een plaats in het samengesteld verhaal te verzekeren. Het ligt voor de hand dat zulk eene samenstelling voor de latere geschiedschrijver niet minder maar meer waarde bezit dan indien het Westersch gebruik gevolgd werd. Het heeft de waarde van evenzoovele onafhankelijke getuigen als er bestanddeelen in het vereenigd verhaal te onderscheiden zijn.

Dat er verschillende tradities die later op schrift gebracht zijn in Israel konden zijn, is licht te begrijpen als men bedenkt, dat er voor honderden van jaren twee koninkrijken bestonden, ieder met een eigen nationaal leven. Dat de bronnen vereenigd konden worden en zoo moeilijk weer van elkander te onderscheiden zijn, getuigt zeker van de groote onvereenkomst die er tusschen beide bestond. Dat geschiedschrijvers in dit dooreenvlechten van de letterlijke bewoording van verschillende bronnen geen bezwaar zagen, zien wij ook in het Nieuwe Testament waar Lukas in zijn voorrede het gebruik van bronnen erkent en dan verder de bewoording van ten minste één daarvan zoo nauwkeurig volgt met terzijdestelling van zijn eigen taal en stijl dat zijn evangelie voor een groot deel letterlijk overeenkomt met de andere synoptici. Dat er behoefte gevoeld werd om verschillende verhalen te vereenigen behoeft ons evenmin te verwonderen als wij bedenken dat pogingen om onze vier evangeliën in een te smelten in de oude Christelijke Kerk niet ongewoon waren en dat de Diatessaron van Tatianus in Syrië voor een tijd werkelijk de plaats van de vier bronnen innam.

Wat voor den geloovigen theoloog echter meer bedenkelijk voorkomt dan de samengesteldheid van sommige deelen van het Oude Testament, is de twijfel die de Hoogere Critiek gewekt heeft aan de historiciteit van sommige personen en gebeurtenissen. Eene erkenning hier valt hem te meer moeilijk, neen schijnt zelfs een onmogelijkheid te zijn, wanneer hij bedenkt dat ze door het Nieuwe Testament als historisch verondersteld worden en blijkbaar door Jezus zelf als zodanig worden erkend. Twijfel hier schijnt hem gelijk te staan met ontrouw aan den Heiland.

Hierop zou men echter kunnen antwoorden dat waar de historiciteit in twijfel getrokken wordt, zulks door geloovige critici althans niet gedaan wordt om het wonder te elimineeren, maar op literarische gronden, d.i. omdat men oordeelt dat het verhaal tot eene literarische vorm behoort waar de historiciteit van den inhoud niet *bedoeld* wordt of althans niet een zaak is van bijzonder belang. M.a.w. waar critici tot de gevolgtrekking komen dat een verhaal onhistorisch is, daar doen zij dat op grond van de meening, waartoe het verhaal zelf recht geeft, dat zoals in het boek Job een historisch agtergrond door den schrijver vrij bewerkt en uitgebreid is, of zoals in het boek Jona van eene allegorie gebruik gemaakt wordt ten einde de draagster te zijn van eene groote en somtijds nieuwe door God geopenbaarde waarheid. Het is de schrijver in zulke gevallen niet te doen om de geschiedenis maar om de leering. En terwille van de leering maakt hij gebruik niet alleen van de literarische vormen, die wij in den Bijbel erkennen, geschiedenis, poëzie, wet, profetie en spreuk, maar ook van allegorie, legende en zelfs mythe. Gesteld nu dat wij het onhistorisch karakter van sommige personen en verhalen moeten toegeven, zou dan noodzakelijkerwijze daarmede ook de goddelijke oorsprong en autoriteit ontkend zijn? Als de Hoogere Kritiek ons overtuigd dat er tal van bezwaren tegen de historiciteit van het boek Jona bestaat, b.v. in de plotselinge bekeering van Nineveh tot de God van Israel waarvan ons verder niets bekend is; maar ook dat volgens een in den Bijbel bekende beeldspraak de walvisch de Assyrische grootmacht voorstelt, die Israel bij de ballingschap inslokte en dat Jona Israel voorstelt, die aan zijne roeping voor de volken ontrouw was; dat verder het boek de aanschouwelijke, maar juist daarom zoo krachtige Oud Testamentische prediking is van het: Alzo lief had God den wereld; moet daarom, zoo vragen wij, ons geloof in het boek als de drager ener godsopenbaring vervallen, omdat wij niet iedere bijzonderheid opvatten als werkelijk zoo gebeurd? Wij geloven het niet. Het boek is waar en blijft eeuwig waar, ook al moet het historisch karakter daarvan ontkend worden, evenals het verhaal van de barmhartige Samaritaan en evenals Bunyans Pelgrimsreizen, hoewel onhistorisch, toch waar is.

Wij mogen het vreemd vinden dat de Heilige Geest zich van een legende of eene mythe of eene allegorie zou bedienen, maar onmogelijk is, het zeker niet. Ook deze literarische vormen konden ingesloten zijn zonder afbreuk te doen aan de waarheid Gods, toen God voortijds vele malen en op *velerlei wijze* tot de vaders sprak.

Kan het zijn dat de kinderen der 20ste eeuw een bezwaar zien in het religieuze gebruik van het onhistorische omdat zij een overdreven waarde hechten aan het *feit* en misschien te weinig aan de *waarheid*? Kan het zijn dat wij de godsopenbaring nog te veel opvatten als de bekendmaking van eene reeks van geschiedkundige feiten en te weinig als godsdienstige en zedelijke waarheid die zich in den geschiedenis maar ook op andere wijze inkleedt? Indien wij leeren om aan geschiedkundige feiten hun rechte plaats toe te kennen, om ze, om mij sterk uit te drukken, te beschouwen als adiafophora, dan zullen (wij) ook met minder angstvalligheid aan het feit vasthouden ten kosten somtijds van de waarheid. Het woord Gods is naar onze overtuiging overal daar waar wij waarheid aantreffen die onze godsdienstige en zedelijke natuur bevredigt ook al komt die waarheid tot ons in een allegorisch kleed of gedragen door een minder juist beschreven geschiedenis. En juist aan zulke waarheid ontbreekt het nergens in onzen Bijbel. Indien het ons gelukt om den ernstigen onderzoeker dit te laten gevoelen en zien, dan zal hij aan God en aan Zijn woord vasthouden, ook al botst ook tegen het geocentrisch standpunt van den Bijbe zijne gansche Copernicaansche astronomie, en tegen de bijzonderheden van het scheppingsverhaal het gansche gewicht van zijne geologische en zoölogische wetenschap. Van de Schrift zal hij dan zeggen, zoals Petrus eens zeide van Hem van wie zij getuigd: Tot wien zullen wij heengaan? Gij hebt de woorden des eeuwigen levens.

### 3. GEANNOTEEERDE LITERATUURLYS

1) Elders het ek die hele debat oor die Hoër Kritiek in die NG Kerk breedvoerig beskryf en krities geanaliseer. Sien my *Vroom of Regsinnig? Teologie in die N.G. Kerk* (Wellington: Bybel-Media 2013), veral hoofstukke 9-12. Sien ook Ferdinand Deist, *Ervaring, Rede en Metode in Skrifuitleg* (Pretoria, Raad vir Geesteswetenskaplike Navorsing 1994). Dit sal te veel wees om hierdie analise hier oor te doen. Tog kan dit nuttig wees om in 'n geannoteerde literatuurlys die belangrikste bydraes tot die debat op te som. Dit sal help om die lesing van Malan in die Suid-Afrikaanse konteks te plaas.

2) Die belangrikste bydraes tot die debat oor die Hoër Kritiek wat uitgeloop het op die Du Plessis saak in die twintiger jare van die vorige eeu, was die volgende:

Professor J.I. Marais het 'n aantal interessante stukke oor die Hoër Kritiek geskryf in *Gereformeerde Maandblad* waarvan hy die redakteur was. Marais was die mees belese onder die professore van die Kweekskool. Oor die algemeen het hy 'n behoudende standpunt verdedig, maar hy was wel oop vir wetenskaplike ontwikkelinge van die tyd. Net soos Malan en Du Plessis het hy die goeie reg van die literêr-historiese kritiek erken, maar hy was baie meer skepties oor die wetenskaplikheid van die resultate daarvan. Sy belangrikste bydraes was die volgende:

J.I. Marais: "De buitensporige eischen der Hoogere Critiek", *Gereformeerde Maandblad* Augustus 1906, 122-124

J.I. Marais, "De modern critiek", *Gereformeerde Maandblad*, Februarie 1907, 29-32.

J.I. Marais, "De Hoogere Critiek I", *Gereformeerde Maandblad*, Junie 1910, 88-91.

J.I. Marais, "De Hoogere Critiek II", *Gereformeerde Maandblad*, Julie 1910, 105-107.

J.I. Marais, "De Hoogere Critiek III", *Gereformeerde Maandblad*, Augustus 1910, 124-126.

J.I. Marais, "Kroniek", *Gereformeerde Maandblad*, Februarie 1911, 17-20.

Soos ons gesien het, gaan Malan in sy lesing onder andere in op die vraag of die boek Jona as geskiedskrywing of as allegorie beskou moet word. Soos ons hieronder sal sien, het hierdie vraag ook in die Du Plessis-stryd 'n rol gespeel. Aan hierdie vraagstuk het Marais reeds in 1913 twee stukke gewy:

J.I. Marais, "Het boek Jona I", *Gereformeerde Maandblad*, Oktober 1913, 160.

J.I. Marais, "Het boek Jona II", *Gereformeerde Maandblad*, November 1913, 165-166.

Daar was ook 'n derde stuk beloof maar ek kon dit nie vind nie.

1. In 1910-1911 was daar 'n interessante debat in *Gereformeerde Maandblad* tussen ds DJ Pienaar van Tarkastad en professor CFJ Muller van die Kweekskool. Pienaar het dieselfde soort standpunt as Malan en Du Plessis verdedig terwyl Muller 'n meer behoudende standpunt as Marais verdedig het. Sy standpunt het in baie opsigte ooreengekom met die standpunt van Abraham Kuyper:

C.F.J. Muller, "De Hoogere Critiek", *Gereformeerde Maandblad*, November 1910, 157-160.

D.J. Pienaar, "De Hoogere Kritiek", *Gereformeerd Maandblad*, Januarie 1911, 13-15.

C.F.J. Muller, "Antwoord aan Ds D.J. Pienaar I", *Gereformeerd Maandblad*, Februarie 1911, 28-32.

C.F.J. Muller, "Antwoord op Ds. D.J. Pienaar II", *Gereformeerd Maandblad*, Maart 1911, 41-45.

D.J. Pienaar, "Antwoord aan Prof. Muller", *Gereformeerd Maandblad*, Maart 1911, 45-48.

C.F.J. Muller, "Antwoord aan Ds. D.J. Pienaar III", *Gereformeerd Maandblad*, April 1911, 57-63.

C.F.J. Muller, "Antwoord aan Ds. D.J. Pienaar IV", *Gereformeerd Maandblad*, Mei 1911, 73-77.

2. Tot hiertoe het die debat in die NG Kerk oor die Hoër Kritiek relatief rustig en tolerant verloop. Hoewel die menings duidelik uiteengeloop het, is niemand verketter nie en was daar nie met leertugmaatreëls gedreig nie. Toe Du Plessis egter twaalf jaar later die debat oor die Hoër Kritiek weer aangeroer het in sy blad *Het Zoeklicht*, het die atmosfeer in die NG Kerk sterk verander (Sien hoofstukke 11-12 van my *Vroom of Regsinnig? Teologie in die N.G. Kerk*). Hierdie keer was die debat baie grimmiger en minder tolerant, en het dit uiteindelik uitgeloop op die ontslag van Du Plessis as professor aan die Kweekskool.

Dit het begin met 'n debat oor die historisiteit van die boek Jona in *Het Zoeklicht* van 1923. Hierin het iemand met die skuilnaam "Interlocutor" die standpunt verdedig dat die hele boek Jona 'n allegorie is. Professor EE van Rooyen het daarteenoor die historisiteit van die boek verdedig, en Du Plessis het 'n tussen-positie ingeneem: die hele boek is histories behalwe vir die deel oor die groot vis, wat 'n allegorie is. Aansluitend by hierdie debat het dr DR Snyman in 1926 sy blad *Die Ou Paaie* probeer om die feitlike moontlikheid van die vis episode aanneemlik te maak:

J du Plessis, "Wat was het teken van Jona"? *Het Zoeklicht*, Julie 1923. 213-217.

E.E. van Rooyen, "Het teken van Jona", *Het Zoeklicht*, Augustus 1923, 245-249.

Interlocutor, "Het Jona verhaal: Historie of allegorie?" *Het Zoeklicht*, September 1923.

E.E. van Rooyen, "Het teken van Jona" nogeens' *Het Zoeklicht*, Oktober 1923, 317-320.

Interlocutor, "Het teken van Jona", *Het Zoeklicht*, November 1923, 344-346.

D.R. Snyman, "Die wonder van Jona", *Die Ou Paaie*, Julie 1926, 31-32.

3. Die debat het egter gou uitgekring tot 'n aantal verwante vraagstukke naas die Hoër Kritiek: die inspirasieleer, die kenosisleer, die noodsaak van teologiese vernuwing en die status van belydenisgeskrifte. Snyman se blad *Die Ou Paaie* is doelbewus begin om die standpunte van Du Plessis en sy medestanders oor hierdie vraagstukke te bestry.

Oor die Hoër Kritiek self het Du Plessis sy eie standpunt uiteengesit en verdedig in vier artikels in *Het Zoeklicht*:

J. du Plessis, "Wat de Hogere Kritiek is en leert", *Het Zoeklicht*, Julie 1927, 200-202.

J. du Plessis, "Wat de Hogere Kritiek is en leert", *Het Zoeklicht*, Augustus 1927, 250-255.

J. du Plessis, "Wat de Hogere Kritiek is en leert", *Het Zoeklicht*, September 1927, 274-279.

J. du Plessis, "Wat de Hogere Kritiek is en leert", *Het Zoeklicht*, Oktober 1927, 305-314.

4. Professor EE van Rooyen het in vier artikels in *Die Ou Paaie* fel gereageer op Du Plessis:

E.E. van Rooyen, "Propaganda vir die Hoër Kritiek in die NG Kerk I", *Die Ou Paaie*, Oktober 1927, 69-72.

E.E. van Rooyen, "Propaganda vir die Hoër Kritiek in die NG Kerk II", *Die Ou Paaie*, Desember 1927, 109-111.

E.E. van Rooyen, "Propaganda vir die Hoër Kritiek in die NG Kerk III", *Die Ou Paaie*, Februarie 1928, 140-144.

E.E. van Rooyen, "Propaganda vir die Hoër Kritiek in die N.G. Kerk IV", *Die Ou Paaie*, April 1928, 201-208.

Van hier af het die debat ontaard in 'n grimmige polemiekie wat uiteindelik geëindig het in die ontslag van du Plessis uit die Kweekskool. Hoewel die meerderheid in die sinode hulle teen Du Plessis gekeer het, het hy ook baie enersdenkendes en simpatiseerders in die kerk en in die samelewing gehad. Onder hulle was dr DF Malan. Na sy skorsing deur die sinode van 1930 het Du Plessis baie steun ontvang. Hieronder was 'n telegram van dr DF Malan wat toe minister van onderwys was: "Ek vereenselwig my van harte met gister se spontane en betekenisvolle betuiging van simpatie en bewondering van die kant van jong Suid-Afrika: verseker u van my hartelike ondersteuning in u getroue en moedige stryd vir gewetensvryheid binne die perke van ons geloof en belydenis" (*Het Zoeklicht*, 15 Maart 1930, 72).

#### TREFWOORDE

DF Malan  
Hoër Kritiek  
Literêr-historiese metode  
NG Kerk teologie  
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## The social impact of religious communities: the case of the Huguenots in South Africa<sup>2</sup>

### ABSTRACT

This paper takes a brief look at the history of the Huguenots in South Africa as an example of the social impact of religious communities. Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner's theory of liminality is utilised to structure the paper as a discussion of three phases of history, namely separation, liminality, and aggregation. The paper concludes with some remarks concerning the relationship between power and religion.

### 1. THE HUGUENOTS: A CASE STUDY IN LIMINALITY

How should we evaluate the social impact of the Huguenots as a religious community in South Africa? Their history could obviously be described from a variety of angles, using different research methodologies. Whatever route one follows, a *responsible, hermeneutical dialogue* with the past is of pivotal importance, as we often tend to apply a reduced form of remembrance, a selective memory, if not a total amnesia.<sup>3</sup> On the one hand, we should acknowledge the vulnerability and weakness of our acts of memory; on the other hand we should also embrace the potential of memory to interpret the past in a hermeneutically responsible manner.<sup>4</sup> Memory is an important link to the past. But memory can also be abused in various ways, for instance, on a pathological and therapeutic level, on a practical level (especially in terms of finding and defending our identity), and on an ethical-political level.<sup>5</sup>

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2 Paper delivered at the Summer School in Berlin, Humboldt University, 31<sup>st</sup> May to 4<sup>th</sup> June 2012, on the theme: *The social impact of religious communities*.

3 An interesting example of this search for a responsible hermeneutical dialogue with the past can be seen in the discourse between Pieter Coertzen and Philip Denis, both eminent historians. Denis has made the claim that the historical picture that has been painted of the Huguenots might represent a myth, invented to strengthen the identity of the Afrikaner, especially after the dawn of democracy in 1994 and the loss of political power by the Afrikaner. He states: "South Africa has now entered another era. The Afrikaner people, who developed the Huguenot myth as a way to strengthening their identity, have lost their leading position in the government of the country. This new situation creates the conditions for a more critical appraisal of the role of the Huguenots in South African history." Philip Denis, *The Cape Huguenots and their Legacy in Apartheid South Africa*. In: Bertrand Van Ruymbeke and Randy J Sparks eds., *Memory and Identity. The Huguenots in France and the Atlantic Diaspora* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), 303. Denis strongly suggests that the Huguenots were in fact not welcome at the Cape, and did not readily fit into the structures of power of the day, to which Coertzen responds by quoting several documents wherein the Huguenots (or at least some of their leaders) express their thankfulness for being able to exist and express their religious freedom in their new homeland. Cf Pieter Coertzen, *The Huguenots of South Africa in documents and commemoration. Nederduitse Gereformeerde Teologiese Tydskrif* Deel 52, Nommers 3&4, September & Desember 2011, 301-324.

4 Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, history, forgetting* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 21.

5 Robert Vosloo, *Reconfiguring ecclesial identity: In conversation with Paul Ricoeur. Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae. Journal of the Church History Society of Southern Africa*. 2007, 32 (1). 273-293.

In this paper, I have opted to utilise the concept of *liminality* as a lens through which to view this fascinating part of history. This term was coined in 1909 by Arnold van Gennep, when he used the term *limen* (threshold, outlines, margins) in describing human rituals marking the passage from one life phase to another. Van Gennep distinguished a threefold pattern of rites of passage, namely preliminal, liminal and postliminal stages functioning respectively as separation from, transition to, and incorporation into a social or cultural group. The liminal phases in particular, he noted, are “transitional periods which sometimes acquire a certain autonomy” and which are therefore to a certain degree characterised by uncertainty and instability.<sup>6</sup> But this unstable, transitional, liminal phase is critical for the regeneration accomplished in the social world through rites of passage, particularly those of death and rebirth.<sup>7</sup>

Since Van Gennep several other authors have made use of the concept.<sup>8</sup> Most prominent among these is Victor Turner, who sixty years later also distinguished between the stages of separation, liminality, and aggregation. Turner extended the liminal phase in his *The Ritual Process* (1969), distinguishing two forms of “human interrelatedness”, namely liminality and “the status system”, which exist in a tension characterized by a long list of opposing terms, e.g. transition/state, homogeneity/heterogeneity, absence of property/property, heteronomy/degrees of autonomy, humility/just pride of position, and nakedness or uniform clothing/distinctions in clothing.<sup>9</sup> In the liminal stage an alternative form of human interrelatedness can come into existence. To describe this, Turner made use of the religious image of “pilgrimage,” which is essentially anti-structure and anti-status quo, but ultimately culminates in the formation of a new community. Turner describes this community with the Latin word *communitas* – which can in turn become a new structure or new status quo that may eventually need to be deconstructed.<sup>10</sup>

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6 Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, Transl. MB Vizedom and GL Caffee (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960), 192f.

7 Van Gennep originally understood liminality in terms of regeneration, viewing “‘regeneration’ as a law of life and of the universe: the energy which is found in any system gradually becomes spent and must be renewed at intervals... this regeneration is accomplished in the social world by the rites of passage given expression in the rites of death and rebirth.” Further characteristics of this in a sense autonomous phase are the engagement and the novitiate. Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, viii.

8 Paul Tournier refers to liminality as being *en route*: having left your home but not yet having arrived at your destination. Paul Tournier, *A Place for You* (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), 163. It is the experience of being *in limbo*, like the time spent high above the clouds in an airplane, between take-off and landing. Eugene Peterson uses the striking metaphor of a trapeze artist swirling through space, *in transit* through mid-air, having been released from the arms of fellow trapeze artists and expecting to be caught in the firm and faithful grip of those waiting. Eugene Peterson, *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction: Discipleship in an Instant Society* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2000), 20.

9 Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-structure* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1969), 33f.

10 V. Turner, and E. Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture: Anthropological Perspectives* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978), 64 f. As two pertinent examples Turner refers to the early Franciscan order, and the *communitates* of artists, jesters, and prophets. According to Turner, these forms of *communitates* normally function on the margins of society, challenging structures of power related to law, property, status, and position. Liminal *communitates* in their symbols and beliefs refer to the marginal. Yet they are paradoxically also related to the structures of the status system, as can be clearly seen, for instance, in the court jester, who is simultaneously an insider and an outsider at the court. Turner and Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture*, 108. Cf. also J.H. Cilliers, “Worshipping in the ‘In-Between’ Times of Transition: Reflections on the Liminality of Liturgy,” in *A Faithful Witness: Essays in Honour of Malan Nel* (Wellington: Bybel Media, 2009), 167–79.

It is fascinating to note that the same basic movements alluded to by Turner, namely separation, liminality, and aggregation, can be seen in a dramatic mural depiction (9 meters long; 1.8 meters high) erected on 6<sup>th</sup> May 1942 on the wall of the Town Library in Stellenbosch in remembrance of the Huguenots. On the left, the history of the persecution; in the centre, the journey to South Africa by boat; and on the right, the establishment of a new order can be discerned. Obviously these three movements – we could also call them diaspora, liminality, and new order – are historically intertwined.



## 2. THE HUGUENOTS: A PEOPLE IN DIASPORA

The first stage that Turner refers to is that of being separated from the status quo – as can be seen on the left side of the wall of remembrance. On the far left a hooded figure holding a cross (representative of religious and ecclesial power) points the refugees away from their homeland. Next to him stands a soldier, with sword ready to be drawn (representative of the political power). Clearly the two powers are in collaboration here – threatening and persecuting the “others”, i.e. those who do not fit into the “own” religious system. The refugees back away – a woman holds up her hand in defence, sheltering a young child at her feet. Other figures flee, one woman holding a baby, a boy urging his dog along. In the background, soldiers stand watching this process of exile.

Even a brief look<sup>11</sup> at the bloody history of the Huguenots clearly illustrates this phase of separation. They were truly a *people in diaspora* for many decades and centuries, also before they came to South Africa. It is in fact hardly possible to understand the Huguenots of South Africa without also understanding their historical European background, and specifically the era of the Reformation. One of the outcomes of the Reformation was that a large number of Reformed congregations sprang up in France, especially after 1555, with further growth after 1559 when the first synod was formed. The influence of the work of Luther and in particular Calvin was evident in France at the time.<sup>12</sup> The Name “Huguenot” was given to the French Reformed Church around 1560, although the meaning of the name is not quite clear. Some scholars believe that it is derived from the Swiss-German name “Eidgenossen” (i.e. partners in oath) – which became “Huguenot” in French, while others relate the name to a derogatory description indicating a group of people who were raucous and disruptive.<sup>13</sup>

11 Condensed from Pieter Coertzen’s standard work on the Huguenots, *Die Hugenote van Suid-Afrika 1688-1988* (Kaapstad: Tafelberg, 1988), 3-71.

12 Calvin had to flee France in 1534, but afterwards transformed a rather fragmented religious movement into a structured and confessional church.

13 For a detailed discussion of the origins of the name, cf. Coertzen, *Die Hugenote*, 16-17.

Whatever the case, the Huguenots consolidated into a political power by 1560 after some of the aristocrats in France became Protestants. This in turn led to the religious wars of 1562-1598. The infamous murders during “Bartholomew Night” were a bloody episode from these years of conflict between Roman Catholics and Huguenots.

In 1589 a Huguenot, Henry of Navarre, became King of France – but he converted to Roman Catholicism in 1593. On 13 April 1598 King Henry proclaimed the Edict of Nantes, granting religious freedom, and this led to some years of seemingly peaceful co-existence between Catholics and Huguenots in France. This however, did not last long, as King Henry was assassinated on 14<sup>th</sup> May 1610, after which the privileges of the Huguenots were subsequently eroded. In 1661 King Louis XIV became king and eventually recalled the Edict of Nantes, resulting in the persecution of the Huguenots – once again.

About 200 000 of the 2 million Huguenots in France fled from their home country. Some of those remaining became Catholics, but many joined the underground “Church of the Wilderness” (l’Église du Désert). About 70 000 Huguenots fled to the Netherlands. The Dutch East India Company (DEIK) saw the opportunity and recruited some Huguenots to go to South Africa, where a post was established to provide fresh food for ships passing on their way to India. Between 1688 and 1690 about 180 Huguenots were transported to the Cape by ship – a rather perilous enterprise at the time, often resulting in several deaths *en route* due to storms, pirates, or malnutrition. Other ships followed, so that a total of about 250 Huguenots ultimately reached the Cape of Good Hope. Of these early refugees, some returned to Europe, but the majority stayed and became part of the history of the continent of Africa.<sup>14</sup>

### 3. THE HUGUENOTS: IN A STATE OF LIMINALITY

The wall of remembrance depicts the second phase of the Huguenot’s history in a striking manner, placing a ship in the centre – a symbol of being *en route*, of not having reached your destination, in short: of *liminality*. The ship sails on tempestuous waves, indicative of danger and chaos. But situated at the foot of this panel one can also see the symbols of that which the Huguenots brought with them, as an aesthetic depiction of their ultimate contribution to the South African society – a musical instrument, books (including the Bible), a bunch of grapes (symbolising their expertise in viticulture), two vases filled with corn and wine.

This phase of transition did not end when the Huguenots set foot in the Cape; in fact, they were *in limbo* for many years to come. It is significant that the Huguenots – who, based on their religious convictions, opposed those in power in their home country – also clashed with the powers in government very shortly after arriving at the Cape. The same spirit of liberty that drove them to confront the authorities in Europe seemed to prevail in their new surroundings. In one of the discussions of the Political Council in the Cape, Simon van der Stel, who was Governor at the time, referred to the “Francoisen impertinentën” (French impertinence) and “comploterie” (intrigues). On a plaque in the Huguenot Museum in Franschoek the refugees

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<sup>14</sup> The author of this paper is also a descendant of the Huguenots. His surname, Cilliers, is a French word that literally means “keeper of the vineyard,” or “maker of wine”. He is the tenth generation after the first Cilliers couple arrived on the ship *Reijgersdaal* at the Cape in 1700 (Josué and Elizabeth—they were, obviously, winemakers). One of his forefathers, Sarel Cilliers (the fifth generation after Josué and Elizabeth), played a major role in the so-called Battle of Blood River, and was seen as an important spiritual leader of the Voortrekkers who journeyed inland toward the northern borders of what is now South Africa.

are described as a “wilful and rebellious people”! The tension ran so high that the Dutch Government became reluctant to accept more French refugees at the Cape.<sup>15</sup> The Dutch Government even distrusted and resisted the French petition to form their own congregation, suspecting that they would join arms with the French if they ever attacked the Cape!<sup>16</sup>

Perhaps these tensions can best be illustrated by two incidents. When Joshué and Elizabeth Cilliers,<sup>17</sup> arrived at the Cape in 1700, Willem Adriaan van der Stel, Governor at the time, and many of the influential officials of the Dutch East India Company owned and farmed their own farms – not only in contravention of the policies of the DEIC, but also putting many other, poorer farmers out of business. In 1706 a petition was drafted that described, *inter alia*, incidents of bribery, coercion and corruption perpetrated by Van der Stel and several of his officials. Those in power reacted swiftly and in turn drew up a letter that stated that everybody was satisfied with the government’s administration, and that Van der Stel himself had an impeccable and honest character – a laudation that was to be signed by all citizens! People, who refused to sign, were threatened with eviction from their land. Although some, perhaps even the majority, did sign this document out of fear of losing their land, the outcome was that Willem Adriaan van der Stel was re-called from his post and had to return to the Netherlands.

The second incident concerns an interesting, if not infamous character called Estienne Barbier. He originally hailed from Orleans (where the Cilliers’ couple also came from), and was captured and incarcerated by the Dutch Government because he accused an officer of corruption. Barbier has been described as “... a social bandit... someone who does something which is regarded as criminal by the State or the local rulers, but who is not considered to be a criminal, or to have acted against local conventions, by the population. He is protected by the people, though he is frequently a lone wolf living on the margins of society.”<sup>18</sup>

For many, Barbier became a type of Robin Hood, fighting for the rights of the marginalised and oppressed people, a freedom fighter in his own right. Barbier managed to escape from prison (the famous “Kasteel” – Castle – still to be seen in Cape Town today), and found refuge on the farm of the widow Elizabeth Cilliers. He was however captured after some months, and suffered a particularly cruel punishment: he was crucified next to a busy road, and then dismembered and his body parts displayed in various public places.

Clearly the Huguenots did not readily “fit in” with the status quo in the Cape, at least not initially. Their strong religious convictions undoubtedly played a part in this, and had a clear, and sometimes dramatic, social impact. It is interesting to note that some parallels have been drawn between the Huguenots and the slaves in the Cape – “they had been both aliens and uprooted people in a foreign land.”<sup>19</sup> It is a known fact that many persecuted Huguenots were forced to serve as galley-slaves on ships, and that both the Huguenots and the slaves were brought to the Cape to serve the general economic goals and policies of the Dutch East India

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15 Pieter Coertzen, *The Huguenots: Origins, settlements and Influence. The story of a Refugee People*. Proceedings of the 3<sup>rd</sup> International Huguenot Conference September 2002. Bulletin 39, Huguenot Society of South Africa. 7-24.

16 C. Graham Botha, *The French Refugees at the Cape* (Cape Town: Struik, 1970), 40.

17 The progenitors of the author of this article.

18 Penn, quoted in CN van der Merwe, Die “waarheid” omtrent Estenne Barbier. In *Rondom Roy – Studies opgedra aan Roy H Pheiffer*, Reds CN van der Merwe e.a. (Universiteit van Kaapstad: Kaapstad, 1994), 91.

19 Hannes Adonis, *The French Huguenots and the slaves*. Proceedings of the 3<sup>rd</sup> International Huguenot Conference September 2002. Bulletin 39, Huguenot Society of South Africa. 24.

Company. Fresh food had to be produced for passing ships, and for this the expertise of the Huguenots proved to be valuable. As a matter of fact, it was a prerequisite for Huguenots to come to the Cape – they had to be farmers (including those experienced in cultivating grapes) or carpenters.

The Huguenots were not allowed to bring any possessions with them, and although land was allocated to them for farming, they actually only became “legal” land owners after many years of farming on these lands.<sup>20</sup> If they chose to return to Europe after 5 years they were not permitted to take any possessions besides that which they had on their person back with them. They then also had to pay the standard fair for the journey back home!

The Huguenots were never – at least as a group – in any official positions of power. The Dutch ruled the Cape from 1652; The British from 1806 (with some interesting switches in-between); South Africa became a Union in 1910; the National Party came into power in 1948; South Africa became a Republic in 1961; and the first democratic government was elected in 1994. But the Huguenots did have a significant influence on at least a section of the South African society – initially as refugees, and later as part of the new order.

#### 4. THE HUGUENOTS: BEGINNINGS OF A NEW ORDER

The third panel on the wall of remembrance depicts a group of people that have formed a new community and have stabilized in their new environment. In contrast to the fear and panic of the flight on the left panel, this panel exudes an atmosphere of peace and security. The soldiers in the background have taken off their hats – one actually seems to be waving with it. A man sits in the centre, reading from the Bible to those gathered around him, openly practising the freedom of religion for which the Huguenots left their country. Others sit at his feet, listening attentively, praying. The boy with his dog is here again, but the body of the dog is relaxed, at home. While the figures on the left panel are in flight mode, those on the right are in dialogue, expressing the new community that has been formed.

The social impact of the Huguenots as a religious community in South Africa should not be underestimated – although they formed a minority group within the colonial body of the time.<sup>21</sup> The list of their contributions is quite impressive. They brought their distinct Calvinist spirituality with them – so much so that it has been said that the legacy of Calvin was nowhere kept alive so vibrantly as in South Africa, especially in its emphasis on freedom of religion – and perhaps because Calvin understood the plight of being a refugee existentially.<sup>22</sup> Ironically enough, although the French language was denied its place by the Dutch Government, and French was no longer used in the schools and churches after the third generation, the Huguenots played a significant role in the later “Taalbeweging”, i.e. the campaign to promote Afrikaans as language, with SJ du Toit, a Huguenot descendant, playing a pivotal role in this regard. The first minister of the French, Pierre Simond, re-rhymed the psalms for usage in worship services – contributing to the church musical culture of today. The French had an impact on education and the building of schools, with the Huguenot College in Wellington still existing today as reminder of that heritage. Although it is a debatable point to what extent the

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20 Sometimes it took up to 30 years to legalize ownership. Some French farmers received ownership only *post mortem*! Cf. Coertzen, *Die Hugenote*, 89.

21 Totalling about 12% of that population (although some scholars estimate this to be up to 23%), with the Dutch about 41%, the Germans 37%, and between 4% and 5% other nationalities. Cf. Coertzen, *Die Hugenote*, 145.

22 Cf. Coertzen, *Die Hugenote*, 143-152.

French influence can be detected in the architecture of those and later times, many buildings, churches, schools, roads and even a tunnel bear the name Huguenot.

Perhaps one can speak in general of the *aesthetical spirit of the Huguenots* having an impact on culture. Although the French did not build permanent dwellings during the early years (as they were not sure whether they would or could in fact stay in South Africa), their aesthetical influence filtered through in later architecture, some forms of which can be described as a re-interpretation of symbols and traditions. A case in point could be the so-called Cape Baroque style of architecture, in which one can detect both integration and transformation of the classic Baroque style. In these buildings (for instance in the Dutch Reformed “Moederkerk” or Mother Church in Stellenbosch) one sees Baroque stripped of its romanticised excesses to form a simplified version that reflects the harsh realities of Africa. Many examples of this re-interpreted Baroque style can still be found, especially in the Cape region.

Although the French influence on the Cape Baroque style of architecture cannot be proven directly, there is no doubt that the Huguenots made a major contribution to the development of the wine industry in South Africa! Some of the best and most famous wine farms still bear French names like *La Dauphiné, La Provence, Bourgogne, L’Arc de Orleans, Le Plessis Marle, Laborie, Languedoc, Non Pareille, Fleurbaix,, Montpellier*, etc. The French flair of the spirit of the Huguenots cannot be denied here – even the way in which the geographical space was used to place the buildings and cultivate the land in relation to the surrounding mountains was intended to compliment the milieu as a type of iconic unity.<sup>23</sup> The farm *Boschendal*<sup>24</sup> is a prime example of this French finesse that placed the art of wine-making within a new culture, and the cultivating of the farms within a new understanding of space and style. While the Dutch East India Company saw wine-making solely in terms of a market-driven and utilitarian perspective, the French brought flair and finesse, changing wine-making into an aesthetical art.

The descendants of the Huguenots have indeed played a varied and often pivotal role in South African history. In recent history, they seemed to operate in almost all spheres of life – and often in stark opposition to one another. Amongst these names you will find, for instance, that of DF Malan (the “grandfather” of apartheid), but also of Beyers Naudé (the religious leader well known for his opposition to apartheid). You will stumble upon names like that of Charlize Theron (South African born actress, and Oscar winner), of FW de Klerk (former president of South Africa), and of Sarel Cilliers (religious leader of the Voortrekkers). And so the list goes on.

Perhaps the identity of the Huguenots as a new *communitas* can best be described in the words inscribed at the Huguenot Monument in Franschoek:

“With its simplicity and graceful lines the monument has French historical character. The figure of a woman with a bible in her right hand and a broken chain in her left hand personifies the spirit of religious freedom. The French lily (fleur-de-lis) on her dress is a sign of her nobility of character and spirit. She throws off the cloak of oppression to stand in freedom of spirit above the earth. Her eyes are fixed on a vision of the great things to come. At the depicted southern tip of Africa, to which the Huguenots came in small and

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<sup>23</sup> The farms buildings are always placed so they have maximum views of the surrounding mountains, and are approached by impressive driveways flanked with rows of tree – creating expectancy as one approaches the farm building.

<sup>24</sup> Originally a Dutch named farm, but later allocated to French farmers.

unsteady ships, appears the symbols of their religion – the Bible; art and culture – a harp; agriculture and viticulture – an ear of wheat and vine – and industry – a spinning wheel. The three impeccable arches symbolize the Trinity. Above them shines the sun of justice and above that is the cross as the symbol of the Christian religion. In the pool with its reflection and in the colonnade in the background is found the spiritual bliss and peace of mind won after much struggle and turbulence.”<sup>25</sup>

It is clear that the Huguenots became a stable community after the phase of liminality. Eventually, they were fully integrated into the colonial set-up in South Africa. We have already noted that, according to the theory of Turner, a new *communitas* that is formed often needs to be deconstructed again. This is also true of the “new order” of which the Huguenots became a part. Although they were originally a people in diaspora, used by the Dutch East India Company for its own economic purposes, they eventually became part of the drive to colonialize South Africa – a drive that reached its pinnacle in 1948 with the political ascension of the Afrikaner National Party. It is interesting to note the date on which the Huguenot Monument in Franschoek was inaugurated – 1948, exactly the same year that the National Party came into power<sup>26</sup> Perhaps there is some irony here, some paradox: the Huguenot spirit of freedom on the one hand, and the assimilation into political structures of power on the other. Somehow, it seems that the wheel had turned full cycle. Those who had fled from the misuse of (religious) power again became part and parcel of the misuse of power. Let me illustrate this point with the help of another historical example, namely that of Sarel Cilliers.

Sarel Cilliers was the undisputed religious leader of the Voortrekkers, as well as the driving force behind the so-called Covenant that was made between the Voortrekkers and God after a victorious battle against the Zulus. Part of the Covenant was the promise to celebrate the day of this victory for generations to come, as if it was a Sabbath. Thus the Day of the Covenant became a religious festival upheld by a section of the Afrikaner people – before being changed after 1994 into a public holiday known as The day of Reconciliation (16 December).

Cilliers was described as a man with strong religious convictions, a pious character – and somewhat fearsome. He regularly preached fire and brimstone to those who dared to partake in dance parties and he passionately detested any new form of fashion.<sup>27</sup>

In his journals, Sarel Cilliers often thanked God for military victories, for instance against Mzilikazi in 1837.<sup>28</sup> He writes: “We were driven by perils to undertake a campaign with 107 men against the mighty enemy and our God gave them into our hands so that we greatly defeated them and took 6000 cattle from them and not one of us was lost.”<sup>29</sup> And again, eight months later, after another clash with the warriors of Mzilikazi: “On this day the Lord our God has again given them into our hands... so that we brought them into submission and more than 3000 of them fell in battle and they left their land and what was theirs became ours.”<sup>30</sup>

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25 Also quoted in Coertzen, *The Huguenots: Origins*, 22.

26 The discourse between Coertzen and Denis again becomes relevant here. Cf. footnote 3 at the beginning of this article.

27 Cf. Karel Schoeman, *Die wêreld van Susanna Smit 1799-1863* (Kaapstad: Human & Rousseau, 1995), 120.

28 Mzilikazi was a famous indigenous warrior of the time.

29 Quoted from AJ Kannemeyer, *Hugenate-Familieboek* (Kaapstad: Struik, 1940), 32. Translation mine.

30 Quoted from Kannemeyer, *Hugenate-Familieboek*, 32-33. Translation mine.

This is the painful irony, the inexplicable paradox: a descendant of the Huguenots who were driven out of their homeland in the name of God, in turn became part of a system that repeated history: again driving the “other” away, marginalising, exploiting them - in the name of God. Obviously one should, also in this instance, take the warning of a responsible, hermeneutical dialogue with the past seriously. It is always a risky enterprise to interpret the past, even, and perhaps especially with the hindsight of retrospection. History is more nuanced, contextual, and multi-layered than we normally tend to suspect. Mzilikazi was, for instance, not innocent in the unfolding of these clashes between Voortrekkers and indigenous people. His name, roughly translated, means something like “path of blood”. He was infamous for the slaughtering of many smaller tribes in his own quests for power.<sup>31</sup> But this seems to be the inescapable “lesson” that this part of history teaches us – the frightening link between religion and power.

## 5. RETROSPECTION: RELIGION AND POWER

It is clear from this history that power always seems to play a fundamental role in religion. Power, however, can be a vague and complex concept, making it virtually impossible to find two thinkers who agree about its nature.<sup>32</sup> Power can be described from political, social, military, ideological, cultural, theological, and numerous other perspectives. It can be portrayed as conceptual, behavioral, and relational control. Although power can be understood as occasional and discretionary, contemporary thinkers have drawn attention to the ubiquitous nature of power—the fact that power is omnipresent and its operation inevitable.<sup>33</sup>

Power as such need not be evil or destructive. As a matter of fact, it can simply be described as a “communication of efficacy,”<sup>34</sup> or perhaps as *adiaphoron* (neutral reality). Power can be used for good (e.g., the doctor’s “power to heal”) or evil. Power itself is neutral and formal, almost indifferent. However, it seldom remains indifferent. It becomes good and necessary, but also bad, excessive, or abusive, through the objects applying it or to which it is applied.<sup>35</sup>

The church, and perhaps especially the church, also suffers from a tendency to fall prey to ideologies of power, which have been described as *kyriarchy* – “the multiple and complex systemic grading of dominations, subordinations, and power arrangements.”<sup>36</sup> The church, as representative of the power of God, often tends to mistake itself (its structures, officials, theology) as the final form of knowledge, if not God as such. It often positions itself in a dominating and controlling position within the networks and gradations of those who have power and those deemed to be without power. It often marginalizes, instead of siding with the marginalized.<sup>37</sup>

31 It is not possible to do justice to this history within the limitations of this article. For an overview, cf.

Peter Becker, *Path of Blood. Rise and Conquests of Mzilikazi*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (London: Penquin Books, 1979).

32 Kyle A. Pasewark, *A Theology of Power: Being Beyond Domination* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 1.

33 Cf. Pasewark, *A Theology of Power*, 1.

34 Pasewark, *A Theology of Power*, 5.

35 Pasewark, *A Theology of Power*, 3.

36 Flora A. Keshgegian, *Redeeming Memories: A Theology of Healing and Transformation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2000), 27.

37 On the other hand, preaching against these powers is nothing new in South Africa – think of people like Desmond Tutu, Beyers Naudé, and Allan Boesak, whose sermons have been well documented for generations to come. Their sermons were described as *subversive* by those in power. Through the power of their preaching, the complacency of the status quo was challenged; the powers that dehumanized South Africans, as well as those powers that were “institutionalized” and for many seemed “in order,” whether they were political, social or religious, were unmasked and dismantled. Cf. Hendrik J. C. Pieterse, ed.,

Religion can be a powerful force – whether constructive or destructive. Without a doubt the *God-images* that underline religion are of importance here. The question is whether certain God-images strengthen the habitus of imperialism, and consequently fall prey to nationalistic, ethnic, or religious justifications of power and the chilling suggestion, if not blatant proposition, that those in power have God on their side.<sup>38</sup>

But God does not side with the mighty.<sup>39</sup> God's strange might does not exclude those on the margins of power, but rather includes them; does not stretch out a threatening hand that drives away – as on the left side of the wall of remembrance – but rather embraces and forms community – as on the right side of the wall of remembrance. One is reminded of the words of Miroslav Volf, who proposes the idea of embrace as a theological response to the problem of exclusion. He argues that “exclusion” of people who are alien or different is among the most intractable problems in the world today. He writes, “It may not be too much to claim that the future of our world will depend on how we deal with identity and difference. The issue is urgent. The ghettos and battlefields throughout the world – in the living rooms, in inner cities, or on the mountain ranges – testify indisputably to its importance.”<sup>40</sup>

To change the hand that drives away into hands that embrace – hopefully religion can help to shape, perhaps even save, the future of our societies in *this* way. And perhaps this is the important lesson to be learned from the early Huguenots. They were never in official positions of power, but had a different type of “power”, with an undeniable influence on South African society – the *power of the aesthetics of the Huguenot spirit*.

Aesthetics is, *inter alia*, about healing, one could say about the integration of life. But that can also be said about religion, as a matter of fact, the original meaning of the concept “religion” has been traced back to the linguistic roots of *ligature*, which basically means a *tying together of significances*.<sup>41</sup> Herein lies the “power” of religion: it does not scatter, but rather gathers; does not chase away, but rather calls together, ties together – in order to form a new and integrated significance. Perhaps the Huguenots helped us with this: showing us how to become *connoisseurs of life* – wherein lies the power of their religion.

This notion of being a connoisseur of life should however not be understood in an elitist manner. It rather resonates with a current trend in Practical Theology that speaks about “gelebte Religion” (lived religion).<sup>42</sup> Religion that is lived is spread out across the entirety of

*Desmond Tutu's Message: A Qualitative Analysis* (Kampen: Kok; Weinheim: Deutscher Studien, 1995); Allan Boesak, *Die Vinger van God: Preke oor Geloof en die Politiek* (Johannesburg: Ravan, 1979); Len Hansen, ed., *The Legacy of Beyers Naude* (Stellenbosch: Sun Press, 2005), to name but a few sources.

38 Cf. the discussion in L. Susan Bond, *Trouble with Jesus: Women, Christology, and Preaching* (St Louis: Chalice, 1999), 131; also Günther Schiwy, *Abschied vom allmächtigen Gott*, (München: Kösel, 1995), 61.

39 One is reminded of President Zuma's recent claims that God is on the side of the ANC, being there since its conception, and that the ANC will rule until “Jesus comes again”. Does this not represent a God-image of “being on our side”? A God that can be “called in” to legitimize the search for and stabilization of power?

40 Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion & Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 57f.

41 Daniël Louw, *Cura Vitae. Illness and the healing of life in pastoral care and counselling. A Guide for Caregivers* (Wellington: Lux Verbi.BM, 2008), 49.

42 Cf. Martina Kumlehn, “Praktische Theologie als Lebenswissenschaft?” In *Lebenswissenschaft Praktische Theologie?* Ed. Thomas Kie, Martina Kumlehn, Ralph Kunz, Thomas Schlag (Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2011), 1-10.

life; it holds all the creases and folds of our existence in view. It therefore entails (aesthetic) processes such as observation, interpretation, anticipation, and also transformation of life – but never in a manner that enforces or excludes by means of power.<sup>43</sup> Perhaps the contribution of the Huguenots could indeed be described as such: *aesthetic connoisseurs of life, living their religion*.

**KEYWORDS**

Religious communities

liminality

Huguenots

society

power

**SLEUTELWOORDE**

Godsdienstige gemeenskappe

liminaliteit

Hugenote

samelewing

mag

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<sup>43</sup> Cf. Johan Cilliers, *Dancing with Deity: Re-imagining the Beauty of Worship* (Wellington: Bybel-Media, 2012), 132ff. Also Johan Cilliers, *Fides quaerens societatem: Praktiese Teologie op soek na sosiale vergestaltung*. *Tydskrif vir Geesteswetenskappe* (2009), 49/4:624-638.

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## Eertydse Nederduitse Gereformeerde teologiese denkstrome ten grondslag van Beyers Naudé se kritiek op apartheid

### ABSTRACT

#### Former underlying Dutch Reformed theological currents laid the foundations for Beyers Naudé's critique of apartheid

South African neo-Calvinism, from which apartheid theology developed, was not the only theological current in the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) since the establishment of the Church's Theological Seminary at Stellenbosch (1858). The Utrecht theological current and Scottish Evangelical Pietism also remained dominant in the Seminary until the 1930s and it represented a *critical-realistic* hermeneutic different from to South African neo-Calvinism. With a mission consciousness characterized by a respect for both spiritual and physically needs of people, Scottish Evangelical Pietism (which merged with the Utrecht current), was known for its premise that all people, despite their outward appearances, are equal. Despite pressure from the neo-Calvinists, this other current survived as a minority group (sometimes limited to a few individuals).

Beyers Naudé was part of a younger group of supporters of the Utrecht theological current and Scottish Evangelical pietism in the DRC, gaining insights that enabled him to transcend a worldly narrow-mindedness and exclusionary thought patterns to include all people regardless of colour or 'race' in his social analysis. These insights were strengthened by his father and the DRC and the Afrikaner community in general's role establishing moral values of reconciliation, compassion benevolence and justice in him. According to this study, Utrecht and Scottish Evangelical Pietism, as well as the above mentioned moral values, would together play a decisive role in shaping the life and work of Beyers Naudé and would enable him to criticise apartheid later in life.

### INLEIDING

In hierdie artikel word gefokus op die rol wat bepaalde teologiese denkstrome<sup>1</sup> binne die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk (NGK) in die ontwikkeling van die lewe en werk van Christiaan Frederick Beyers Naudé (1915-2004) gespeel het, spesifiek met betrekking tot sy kritiek op apartheidsteologie. Eerstens word h kort oorsig oor die teologiese denkstrome binne die NGK vanaf die middel 19de tot die laat 20ste eeu gegee, veral op dié wat bepalend was vir Naudé se teologiese ontwikkeling. Tweedens word die voortgaande invloed wat hierdie spesifieke denkstrome binne die NGK, te midde van die druk wat ondersteuners van die ander strome

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<sup>1</sup> Onder teologiese denkstrome word die spesifieke buitelandse teologiese tradisies soos dit in die Ned. Geref. Kerk geïnterpreteer is en 'n bepalende invloed op die teologie van dié Kerk gehad het, verstaan.

daarop geplaas het, bespreek. Derdens val die soeklig op die neerslag wat hierdie spesifieke denkstrome in Naudé se apartheidskritiek gevind het.

## BELANGRIKE 20STE EEUSE TEOLOGIESE DENKSTROME IN DIE NGK

Navorsing oor die oorsprong, resepsie en vermenging van bepaalde internasionale (Westerse) teologiese tradisies binne die NGK is reeds deur navorsers soos Botha (1984), Coetzee (2010), Deist (1994) en ander gedoen. Die resultate van hierdie ondersoeke word in hierdie artikel benut om aan te toon in watter mate spesifieke denkstrome h invloed op die lewe en werk van Beyers Naudé gehad het.<sup>2</sup>

Navorsers is dit meestal eens dat daar ses prominente teologiese denkstrome vanaf die middel 19de tot die laat 20ste eeu binne die NGK geïdentifiseer kan word en dat elk op h besondere wyse h bydrae tot die teologiese ontwikkeling binne die NGK gelewer het. Die volgende teologiese denkstrome word in die algemeen onderskei: a) die Utrechtse stroom, b) Skotse Evangeliese-piëtisme, c) Princetonse fundamentalisme, d) Amsterdamse neo-Calvinisme, e) die Romantiese Volksbegrip en f) die Sendingkunde van Warneck.<sup>3</sup>

In hierdie artikel word slegs aandag gegee aan die eerste twee teologiese denkstrome, naamlik die Utrechtse en die Skotse Evangeliese-piëtisme.<sup>4</sup> Aangesien, soos sal blyk uit die bespreking wat volg, juis hierdie strome h bepalende invloed gehad het op Beyers Naudé.

### Die Utrechtse tradisie

Die Utrechtse teologiese tradisie, soos deur J.J. van Oosterzee en J.I. Doedes verwoord (sien hieronder), het in die middel 19de eeu h oorheersende invloed op die teologiese opleiding in die NGK gehad. Hierdie tradisie is kort na die stigting van die Kweekskool op Stellenbosch (1858) geresepteer en was die eerste identifiseerbare teologiese stroom aan dié inrigting. Navorsing toon dat hierdie stroom die eerste sewentig jaar ná die stigting van die Kweekskool inderdaad die dominante teologiese denkstroom daarin was (vgl. Coetzee, 2010:128).<sup>5</sup> Dat die NGK h keuse vir die regsinnige<sup>6</sup> Utrechtse siening gemaak het (sien onder), blyk veral uit die aanstelling van beide di. John Murray en NJ Hofmeijr as eerste professore aan die Stellenbosch kweekskool (Deist, 1994:7). Beide hierdie professore was afkomstig van die *regsinnige* stroom in Utrecht (Deist, 1994:6). Hierdie keuse was ook h aanduiding dat die Afgeskeie Gereformeerde Kerk van Abraham Kuyper en die Doleansie op hierdie stadium nie voorkeur in die denke binne die Ned. Geref. Kerk geniet het nie (Coetzee, 2010:128).

<sup>2</sup> sien, onder andere, Deist 1994.

<sup>3</sup> Later het c,d,e en f in een gevloei om h enkele stroom te vorm, bekend as Suid-Afrikaanse neo-Calvinisme en nog later as apartheidsteologie (sien volledige bespreking in Deist, 1986:54ev en Coetzee, 2010:168ev). sien ook Vosloo se bespreking van die begrip “Afrikaner neo-Calvinisme” (2009:221ev en 2010:278ev).

<sup>4</sup> Vir meer in diepte ondersoek sien, onder andere, Deist 1994.

<sup>5</sup> Daar was ook h merkbare invloed van die Skotse Gereformeerde Kerk, die Ortodoksie en die modernisme tot die middel 1920s (Coetzee, 2010:128).

<sup>6</sup> In Vincent Brummer se boek *Vroom of Regsinnig* (wat nog nie verskyn het toe hierdie artikel geskryf is nie) maak hy h indringende analise van die onderskeid tussen, wat hy noem die konfessionaliste en mistici in die NGK. Brummer ondersoek hierdie twee “tendense” aan die hand van twee teologiese kontroverse in die NGK naamlik: Die stryd teen die “Moderne Rigting” in die 1860’s en die stryd rondom prof. Johannes du Plessis in die 1920’s. Hierdie werk van Brummer sal beslis perspektiewe open wat nog nie in hierdie artikel ter sprake kom nie.

Sowel die stigting van die Kweekskool op Stellenbosch as die beroeping van die regsinnige Murray en Hofmeijr kan na die stryd wat gedurende hierdie tyd tussen die *regsinnige* en *moderne* rigtings in die kerke in Nederland en in 'n mindere mate in kerklike geleedere in Suid-Afrika gewoed het, teruggevoer word (Deist, 1994:1).

Die NGK wou seker maak dat hulle teologiese studente nie aan die denke en invloed van die moderniste blootgestel word nie.<sup>7</sup> Hierdie weerstand is veral ontlok vanweë die beskouing in die kerk dat die moderniste se geslote wêreldbeeld- 'n wêreldbeeld wat beide die Bybel se transendente boodskap, asook die vleeswording van God, en daarmee die belydenis oor Christus, in gedrang gebring het. Voorts het dit 'n vraagteken agter die tradisionele kerklike konsepte en belydenis geplaas.<sup>8</sup> Die modernis, vir wie die natuurwetenskaplike beginsels vir wetenskapsbeoefening ook vir die beoefening van die geesteswetenskappe gegeld het, het die denke van die verligting aangehang.

Anders as die moderniste het die regsinniges (soos Hofmeijr en Murray) 'n bonatuurlike wêreld as 'n gegewe aanvaar:

“Hulle het aanvaar: (a) dat God onafhanklik van die wêreld bestaan, (b) dat God Homself geopenbaar het, (c) dat daardie openbaring in die Skrif (wat God self tot stand gebring het) neerslag gevind het en (d) dat die hoofinhoud van die Bybel (aangaande die verlorenheid van die mens en sy redding), soos uiteengesit in die Gereformeerde Belydenisskrifte, realistiese verwysingswaarde het” (Deist, 1994:6).

Vir Hofmeijr, byvoorbeeld, het dit oor meer as die rasonele gegaan, want die teoloog moes die kerklike belydenis en die Skrif as kenbron ernstig opneem. Dit is voorts belangrik om daarop te let dat die inhoud wat hy aan die term “ortodoks” gegee het, van die inhoud wat later deur die Oupajane<sup>9</sup> daaraan gegee is, verskil het. Hofmeijr en Murray was eerder deel van 'n ‘verdraagsame’ ortodoksie (Deist, 1994:3) wat die ‘hoofwaarhede’ van die Christelike geloof aanvaar het. Binne die afbakening van hierdie grenslyne was daar selfs ruimte vir die toepassing van liberale navorsingstegnieke. Hierdie definisie van ‘ortodoksie’ met die gepaardgaande ‘verdraagsaamheid’ was deel van die tradisie van die NGK van hierdie tydperk (Deist, 1994:3). Dit is belangrik dat daar 'n duidelike onderskeid getref word tussen die Utrechtse stroom se verstaan van hierdie begrippe en die inhoud wat die Suid-Afrikaanse neo-Calvinisme later daaraan gegee het.<sup>10</sup>

Die invloed van die Utrechtse tradisie blyk veral uit 'n analise van die werke van Oosterzee en Doedes, beide hoogleraars in die teologie aan die Universiteit van Utrecht en lede van die Hervormde Kerk in Nederland gedurende die middel 19de eeu. Die dogmatiese werk van Van Oosterzee, *Christeljk Dogmatiek* (1876), en die hermeneutiek van Doedes, *Hermeneutiek voor de Schriften des Nieuwen Verbonds* (1878), het 'n bepalende rol in die onderrig wat beide Hofmeijr en Murray aan die kweekskool op Stellenbosch gebied het, gespeel.

7 Dr. A.N.E. Changuion het eger beswaar gemaak teen hierdie standpunt. Volgens hom sal so 'n standpunt die vryheid van die kerk in gedrang bring en aanleiding gee tot die dwaling van konserwatisme wat die waarheid sal inhêër en so sal die vryheid van teologiese studente in gedrang kom (sien Hofmeijr, Neethling en Brink soos aangehaal in Deist, 1994:367).

8 Volgens Deist het Murray en Hofmeijr die konsekwensies daarvan duidelik ingesien (sien Deist, 1994:6).

9 Die Oupajane was die predikante en professore wat die naam gekry het na aanleiding van die teologiese tydskrif van Ned Geref Kerk, Die Oude Paaie en word ook deur navorsers beskou as die grondleggers van die Suid-Afrikaanse neo-Calvinisme en apartheidsteologie (sien Deist, 1994:104ev).

10 sien Deist se aanhaling van Schimscheimer en Lion Cachet in dié verband (Deist 1994:369ev).

Hierdie denkstroom, waarvan Van Oosterzee en Doedes deel was, het in die stryd tussen die moderniste en die regsinniges in die 19de eeu in Nederland beslag gekry. Gedurende die middel 19de eeu is hulle aan verskeie teologiese strome blootgestel wat gewissel het van erg konserwatiewe ortodoksie tot die liberale stroom van die moderniste in Nederland (Beets, 1923:372). Daar was, in die eerste plek, die "Gereformeerde Bondsmannen" wat bekend was vir hulle streng ortodokse teologie. Tweedens was daar 'n stroom wat die kerklike belydenisskrifte streng gehandhaaf het en bekend gestaan het as die kofessioneles.<sup>11</sup> Derdens was daar die sogenaamde *krities-realistiese* stroom, wat met enkele voorbehoude die belydenisskrifte aanvaar het, en daarmee saam op krities-regsinne wyse, die modernisme. Hierdie stroom was afkomstig was van die Réveil-beweging tydens die opwekking in Genève.<sup>12</sup>

Hierdie stroom het die klem op persoonlike geloof en persoonlike saligheid asook op barmhartigheid met 'n diep besef van sonde en genade laat val. Vir hulle het dit oor die Christelike gewete gegaan wat bepaalend was vir "onverbiddele" sedelike eise, want as Christus die inhoud van ons gewete word, is ons gewete waarlik bevry. Hierdie beweging het egter nie met die politiek ingemeng nie. Vierdens was daar die modernistiese denkrigting wat hulle tuisgevind het in die modernisme van J.H. Scholten, 'n dissipel van C.W. Obzooomer, 'n wysgeer van Utrecht. Obzooomer het die natuurwetenskaplike metodiek vir die teologie aangelê en alle resultate wat in stryd was met die natuurwetenskap verwerp (Berkhof, 1967:271).

Beets, in sy tipering van die verskillende strome van denke in Nederland tydens die 19de eeu, plaas Doedes en Van Oosterzee binne die gematigde kofessionele en regs-etiese rigting en beklemtoon dat hulle "...beslis nie onder die 'Gereformeerde Bondsmannen' tuishoort nie (in Beets, 1923:372). Berkhof beskryf in sy tipering vir Doedes en Van Oosterzee as lede van die apologetiese skool van denke wat nie toegegee het aan die Supranaturaliste nie, maar wel met 'n *krities-realistiese* uitgangspunt gewerk het (Berkhof & De Jong 1967:272ev).<sup>13</sup>

Hierdie spesifieke Utrechtse teologiese tradisie was die stroom waarmee Hofmeijer en Murray geïdentifiseer het en wat bepaalend was vir hulle basiese uitgangspunte in die beoefening van hulle teologie (Coetzee, 2010:131).

Die kosmologie waarmee hulle (Murray en Hofmeijer) gewerk het, het die transendente werklikheid aanvaar met "die realistiese verwysingsgehalte van teologiese uitsprake aangaande die persoonlike bestaan van God en van sy openbaring wat in die Skrif te vinde is en wat in breë trekke deur die kerklike belydenis verwoord word" (sien Deist, 1994:25). Voorts toon Deist (1994:25ev) dat dié stroom, wat vir die eerste sewentig jaar teologiese opleiding op Stellenbosch domineer het, deur 'n *krities-realistiese* (selfs naïef-realistiese) kenteorie met 'n Romantiese hermeneutiek gekenmerk word.

Ten slotte, om hierdie denkstroom beter te verstaan is dit belangrik om die begrip *krities-realisties* meer volledig uit te pak. Volgens Deist moet die realisme wat hier ter sprake is, met 'n kritiese ingesteldheid van die ondersoeker gekenter word.

Voorts meen Deist hoewel sy vertrekpunt dié van 'n (teologiese) realis is, mag die denksisteem

11 Kuyper het homself tuis gevind binne hierdie stroom (sien Hofmeyr 1923:358)

12 Berkhof bied 'n volledige bespreek van hierdie stroom (Berkhof 1967:269ev)

13 Teenoor die moderne kritiek wil hulle "de betroubaarheid der evangelieverhalen wetenskapplijk aantonen en met redelijke argumenten de waarheid van het christendom verdedigen" (sien Berkhof, 1967:274).

wat vanuit hierdie basiese aanname ontwikkel word, nie onkrities gelykgestel word met die wêreld van God of onkrities opgebou word nie (1994:25).

Deist toon ook aan dat die eksegeet die Bybelskrywers se “gedagtes” goed moet oordink en beskryf, terwyl die “historiese kritiek” en die Christelike dogmatiek daardie gegewens krities evalueer en sistematies uitbou (1994:25). Die resultaat kan nie absoluut beskou word nie omdat die resultaat voorlopig, asook onderhewig aan verandering is. Daar was dus in hierdie stroom van denke (NGK) ruimte vir ’n rasionele metode van Skrifuitleg en ’n kritiese beoordeling van die resultate.

Die skrywers van die Bybel is nie as bonatuurlike wesens beskou nie, maar as gewone mense wat die instrument is waardeur die openbaring van God gegee word. Vanweë hierdie *menslike* aard van die openbaring moet daar krities met die teks omgegaan word. Die uitgangspunt van hierdie benadering is dat daar slegs sprake van “inspirasie” is ten opsigte van die “godsdiensstig-sedelike” verkondiging van die Skrif, en geld dit nie vir die historiese of natuurkundige korrektheid van die Skrif nie.

Die krities-realistiese basis van dié rigting blyk volgens Deist ook uit:

“die waarde wat dit heg aan die *historisiteit* van die verhaalde openbaring sonder om uit die historisiteit van die openbaring terug te konkludeer tot die *geskiedkundige korrektheid* van die openbaring, sodat daar ruimte is vir die vrye gebruik van die historiese kritiek. Die raamwerk waarbinne die historiese kritiek beoefen word, moet egter onbevang wees, dit wil sê dit mag die intervensie van die bonatuurlike in die natuurlike nóg a priorie in elke geval erken, nóg a priorie vir alle gevalle ontken (1994:26).<sup>14</sup>

Coetzee (2010:133ev.) toon aan dat die keuse vir die Utrechtse tradisie deur die leermeesters van die N G-predikante, as die basis gedien het waarop ’n deurdagte kritiek kon funksioneer. Dit het die NGK tydens hierdie tydperk gevrywaar teen ortodokse dogmas wat swaarder gewoog het as die Skrif.

### Die Skotse Evangeliese piëtisme

Tweedens het Skotse piëtisme (tesame met die Utrechtse stroom) in die beginjare van die Teologiese Seminarium op Stellenbosch ’n belangrike invloed op die denke binne die NGK gehad. Dit is egter belangrik om te let op die ooreenkomste en verskille tussen Skotse piëtisme, wat binne die NGK gefunksioneer het en ander vorme van piëtisme. Daar bestaan ’n algemene beeld van piëtisme as ’n persoonlike vroomheid met besondere klem op persoonlike bekering en persoonlike beleving van die geloof wat uitloop op die vrug van die Gees. Voorts word piëtisme in hierdie siening gekenmerk deur herlewingsdienste, ’n vroom gebedslewe en die oortuiging dat die kerk geroepe is om aan die ‘siel’ van die mens aandag te gee. As die kerk egter betrokke raak by die sosiale lewe van die mens word dit as “social gospel” beskou en hierdie vermyding van die sosiale lewe gee aanleiding tot wêreldvermyding en die Evangelie en geloof wat teenoor mekaar te staan kom. Hierdie vorm van piëtisme het inderdaad ook dikwels in die NGK voorgekom (Coetzee, 2010:133).

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<sup>14</sup> Terwille van die kontrastering van hierdie teologiese metodiek met dié van die neo-Calvinistiese stroom van denke, soos dit later by die “Oupajaane” gefunksioneer het in hulle verkettering van Du Plessis, word hierdie formulering woordeliks gegee (sien Deist, 1994:26).

As gevolg van h besondere sendingbewussyn binne die Skotse piëtisme (en die NGK) het hierdie vorm van piëtisme egter dikwels h kentering ondergaan in die NGK. Hierdie besondere sendingbewussyn is gekenmerk deur h humane karakter wat op menslike behoeftes, beide geestelik en fisiek, klem gelê het. Hierdie tipe piëtisme is, anders as meeste ander piëtisme deur hulle uitgangspunt dat alle mense, ten spyte van hulle uiterlike voorkoms, gelykwaardig is, gekenmerk. Die uitgangspunt is dat die Evangelie

“aan *alle* mense [gerig word]; daar is slegs een evangelie; enigeen kan dit (potensieel) aanvaar; die Evangelie raak die wese van die mens aan (dit lei tot wedergeboorte!); hierdie wese is *innerlik* en *geestelik* – dit is die korte dogmatiek van die mensdom se prinsipiële gelykwaardigheid” (Kinghorn, 1986:69).

Hierdie uitsonderlike vorm van piëtisme het via die Skotse predikante, met hulle besondere tipe Calvinisme, na Suid-Afrika gekom. Verskeie navorsers het reeds aangetoon dat hierdie stroom, onder aanvoering van Andrew Murray, binne die teologiese denke van die NGK neerslag gevind het (vgl. Botha, 1982:19ev; de Gruchy, 1991:21ev; Moody, 1975:57ev en Van Wyk, 1978:17). John Murray (broer van die bekende Andrew Murray), een van die eerste professore aan die Teologiese Kweekskool op Stellenbosch, het ook uit die aard van sy afkoms sterk bande met hierdie stroom gehad.

Benewens die vermelde eienskappe van die Skotse piëtisme word dit ook deur puriteinse invloed gekenmerk. Die ondersteuners van hierdie stroom laat val die klem op verinnerliking, heiligingseise ten opsigte van die persoonlike lewe, heiligheid binne die familie, Sabbatsonderhouding en toewyding aan die kerk. Dit is egter opvallend dat dié stroom h etiese vakuum laat ten opsigte van h sosiale etiek.

Onder die leierskap van, onder andere, die Murray's het hierdie stroom h eiesoortige standpunt in verband met etiek en politiek gehad. Hiervolgens moet hierdie twee terreine uitmekaar gehou word en die kerk moet nie met die politiek inmeng nie. Die kerk het egter h roeping om hulle lidmate, ook dié wat in die politiek betrokke is, geestelik toe te rus met die beginsels van liefde en broederskap. Volgens Du Plessis moes hulle as gelowiges weer ander help om die belangrike beginsels van die Bybel toe te pas omdat hierdie beginsels op elke terrein gegeld het (Du Plessis, 1920:443). Die kerk moes egter nie betrokke raak by die politiek nie. In hierdie verband toon A.J. Botha aan hoe Andrew Murray op D.F. Malan se uitspraak ná die rebellie van 1915 oor die kerk se betrokkenheid by volk en politiek, gereageer het. Malan het h direkte betrokkenheid voorgestaan, terwyl Murray oortuig was dat die kerk h geestelike liggaam is wat moet omsien na die behoeftes van gelowiges uit alle volke (Botha, 1984:397). Alhoewel Murray nie h voorstander van Afrikanervolksteologie was nie, het hy meegeleef met die lief en leed van die volk en het hy h gesonde ontwikkeling van die Afrikanervolk aangemoedig.<sup>15</sup>

Die Skotse evangeliese piëtistiese stroom het wel later as die Utrechtse stroom (ongeveer vanaf die laat 19de eeu) h invloed op die NGK gehad. Daar bestaan egter geen twyfel dat hierdie stroom tesame met die Utrechtse stroom tot aan die begin van die 1930's hulle

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<sup>15</sup> Dit is opvallend dat Du Plessis hierdie kenmerke van Murray (h aanhanger van hierdie stroom) waar geneem het as hy daarop wys dat hy “allereerst en allermeeft een dienstknecht van Jezus Christus, die zich hart en ziel gaf aan geestelike arbeid in het belang van de kudde aan zijn zorg toevertrouwd. Doch het was onmogelijk voor iemand die zo geheel meeleeftde met het volk waaronder hij arbeidde, om onverschillig te blijven ten opzichte van hun maatschappelijke en nationale ontwikkeling”. (sien Du Plessis, 1920:15, 343 en 431).

stempel op die NGK afgedruk het nie, veral via opleiding aan die Teologiese Kweekskool op Stellenbosch. Hierdie twee strome se invloed is egter veral vanaf die laat 1920's teengewerk deur die opkomende Amsterdam-Princetonse stroom (sien Coetzee, 2010:161ev). Saam met navorsers soos Botha (1986) en Kinghorn (1986:58) moet die standpunt dat die puriteinse en piëtistiese kant van hierdie stroom 'n bepalende rol gespeel het in die ontwikkeling van apartheidsteologie, afgewys word.

### **Spore van die Utrechtse en Skotse evangeliese piëtisme in die NG Kerk**

Vervolgens word kortliks gelet op die nalatenskap van enkele hooffigure in die NGK wat deur die Utrechtse- en Skotse Evangeliese piëtisme beïnvloed is en 'n voortgaande rol in die bevordering van hierdie stroom gespeel het. Dit is opvallend dat teoloë binne die NGK, wat kritiek op die Suid-Afrikaanse neo-Calvinisme (veral die apartheidsteoloë) gelewer het se lewens en werke hoofsaaklik deur die Utrechtse en Skotse Evangeliese piëtisme beïnvloed is (sien Botha, 1984 en Coetzee 2010). Hoewel hierdie stroom na die 1930's minder invloed gehad het as die Suid-Afrikaanse neo-Calvinisme, is dit lewend gehou in moeilike tye en selfs geherinterpreteer na mate die konteks verander het.

#### ***Johannes du Plessis (1868–1935)***

Johannes du Plessis was gedurende die vroeë-20ste eeu professor in die Nuwe Testament en Sendingkunde aan die Teologiese Kweekskool op Stellenbosch (sien Erasmus, 2009). Gedurende sy loopbaan as professor het daar 'n geleidelike samesmelting (1920 en vroeë 1930's) tussen die Princetonse en Amsterdamse fundamentalisme plaasgevind. Hierdie twee tradisies het onder andere aanklank by mekaar gevind as gevolg van hulle gemeenskaplike Skrifbeskouing (Coetzee, 2010:162). Beide het met 'n meganies-organiese Skrifbeskouing en interpretasie gewerk wat teen 1930 reeds 'n fundamentalistiese skool van denke in die NGK gevestig het. Die Oupajane was die grondleggers en ondersteuners van hierdie stroom wat een van die fases in die ontwikkeling van die Suid-Afrikaanse neo-Calvinisme was.<sup>16</sup> Hierdie stroom het die volgelinge van die Utrechtse en Skotse Evangeliese piëtisme (veral hulle Skrifbeskouing) skerp geopioneer.

Dit was vanuit hierdie geldere dat die verkettering van Johannes du Plessis<sup>17</sup> begin het en tot die einde van sy loopbaan as professor aanleiding gegee het. Die klag teen Du Plessis het voortgespruit uit sy krities-realistiese hermeneutiek. Die klag het meer direk gehandel oor sy inspirasieleer, sekere aspekte van sy Christologie en sy gebruik van sekere resultate van die histories-kritiese benadering tot die Skrif. Dit was juis die opskorting van die kritiese Skrifstudie van Du Plessis wat ruimte geskep het vir die aanhangers van die ontwikkelende Amsterdamse konserwatiewe-konfessionele stroom, tesame met die Princetonse fundamentalisme,<sup>18</sup> wat vanaf die 1930s 'n dominante posisies binne die Ned. Geref. Kerk gekry het.<sup>19</sup>

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16 Hierdie Skrifbeskouing is opvallend in artikels in Die Oude Paaie wat die teologiese tydskrif van die Oupajane was (Deist, 1994:78).

17 Du Plessis was die redakteur van *Het Zoeklicht* 'n teologiese tydskrif van die Teologiese Seminarium op Stellenbosch waarin ondersteuners van die Utrechtse stroom meestal hulle artikels geplaas het.

18 Wat ook 'n bepalende rol gespeel het in die ontwikkeling van die Suid-Afrikaanse neo-Calvinisme en apartheidsteologie.

19 Kinghorn (1986:54ev) toon aan dat hierdie opskorting van Du Plessis se krities-realistiese denke 'n hermeneutiese vakuum in die Kerk tot gevolg gehad het. Dit het 'n verlies aan insig in die nuwere hermeneutiek van Europa tot gevolg gehad wat ernstige eksegetiese en hermeneutiese gebreke tot gevolg gehad het in die Ned. Geref. Kerk (sien Kinghorn, 1986:55ev).

Alhoewel Du Plessis bepaalde teologiese keuses binne die konteks van sy tyd gemaak het, toon Deist aan dat sy denke nie noemenswaardig van die tradisionele Utrechtse stroom afgewyk het nie (sien Deist, 1994:64ev). Dit blyk ook duidelik dat die filosofiese onderbou van Du Plessis en sy opvolgers getrou gebly het aan die werke van Doedes en Van Oosterzee, soos onder andere verwerk deur Hofmeijr (sien Coetzee, 2010:169).

### ***Barend Jacobus (Ben) Marais (1909-1999)***

Na Marais sy teologiese opleiding aan die Teologiese Kweekskool op Stellenbosch voltooi het, betree hy die bediening in die NGK in 1937. Hy word in 1953 beroep as hoogleraar in die Departement Geskiedenis van die Christendom aan die Fakulteit Teologie van die Universiteit van Pretoria. Marais het vroeg in sy bediening in die ekumene betrokke geraak (1938). Dit is opvallend dat die meeste van sy medestudente hulle heil by die ontwikkelende Suid-Afrikaanse neo-Calvinisme gesoek het en hulle by die Oupajane geskaar het (sien Coetzee, 2010:333). Anders as sy medestudente het Marais 'n besondere band met B.B. Keet (sien onder), wie homself binne die Utrechtse stroom tuis gevind het, gehad.

Voorts blyk dit uit navorsing van Meiring (1979:79ev), dat Marais nie net blootgestel is aan Du Plessis nie, maar inderdaad diep onder die indruk van Du Plessis se lewe en werke gekom het. Terwyl die ondersteuners van die Suid-Afrikaanse neo-Calvinisme (met hulle apartheidsteologie) in 'n hermeneutiese vakuum verval het<sup>20</sup> (sien bo) blyk dit juis uit die werke van Marais dat hy 'n historiese en hermeneutiese bewussyn gehad het (Coetzee, 2010:559ev en 576ev). Gedurende hierdie tydperk is daar 'n demper op enige kritiese denke binne die NGK geplaas. Enige kritiese Skrifondersoek of debat in dié Kerk is verbied en as modernisties geëtiketteer. Marais het egter hierdie denkraamwerk bevraagteken (2010:559). Marais se artikels in kerklike tydskrifte gedurende die 1940s wys dat hy vanuit 'n ander raamwerk as die Suid-Afrikaanse neo-Calvinisme na die Skriftekste gekyk het. Marais se reaksie teen die a-historiese beginsels en gebrek aan 'n hermeneutiese bewussyn van die apartheidsteoloë is grootliks deur sy identifisering met die krities-realistiese hermeneutiek van die Utrechtse teologiese stroom bepaal.

Uit Coetzee se volledige analise van Marais se doktorsale tesis met die titel *Die Christelike Broederskapsleer: Sy agtergrond en toepassing in die vroeë kerk*, kan beide die krities-realistiese hermeneutiek en die evangeliese kenmerke van die Utrechtse en Skotse evangeliese stroom geïdentifiseer word (sien Coetzee, 2010:357ev). Voorts is die ooreenkomstige tussen Marais se mensbeskouing en die van die Utrechtse stroom ook opvallend, naamlik dat die mens, ongeag nasionaliteit, ras, stand of geslag, gelykwaardig is en daarom 'n inherente gelykwaardigheid en gemeenskaplikheid handhaaf (vgl. Marais, 1946:120). Na 'n uitgebreide bespreking kom Marais tot die gevolgtrekking dat die aard van God en die waarde van die mens bepalend is vir al die beginsels van dié broederskap. Ten slotte word die kontinuïteit van die Utrechtse en Skotse evangeliese stroom ook waargeneem in die spiritualiteit wat in hierdie en ander werke van Marais opvallend is.

### ***Barend Bartholomeus (BB) Keet (1885 - 1974)***

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<sup>20</sup> Voortaan sou daar 'n ernstige stryd wees tussen die sogenaamde regsinnige rigting van die konserwatiewe konnafeonele denke, ook bekend as die Kuyperiaanse rigting (wat 'n bepalende rol gespeel het in die ontwikkeling van die Suid-Afrikaanse neo-Calvinisme) en die sogenaamde modernistiese (of liberale) rigting afkomstig van die Utrechtse en Skotse evangeliese stroom (sien Coetzee, 2010:551).

Keet was h professor aan die Kweekskool op Stellenbosch (1920 tot 1959). Hy het homself met die Utrechtse en Skotse evangeliese stroom geïdentifiseer en vind hom tuis binne die gelede van Du Plessis. Keet se keuse vir hierdie stroom blyk vroeg reeds uit sy krities-realistiese hermeneutiek<sup>21</sup> soos hy dit verwoord het toe hy in die laat 1930's die "hermeneutiese vakuum" intuïtief aangevoel het en na die gereformeerde ortodoksie as h starre beweging verwys het (sien Deist, 1994:279). Hiermee het Keet daarin geslaag om die gebrek aan h historiese en hermeneutiese bewussyn by die Suid-Afrikaanse neo-Calvinisme te identifiseer. Dit kon hy slegs vanuit sy krities-realistiese hermeneutiek doen, soos hy dit (veral vanweë h skerp intellek) van die Utrechtse stroom van denke geërf het. Hierdie insig blyk ook uit die kritiek wat hy op Groenewald (h ondersteuner van die apartheidsteologie) se eksegetiese metode in artikels in Die Kerkbode gelewer het (sien Die Kerkbode, 30 November 1949, 64:22,1004-1005; 7 Desember 1949,64:23, 1046-1048 en 14 Desember 1949, 64:24, 1086-1097).

Keet se hermeneutiek blyk ook uit sy pleidooi dat die Skrif *sonder* voorveronderstellings gelees moet word sodat die praktyk eerder aangepas sal word by die beginsels van die Skrif, "... want dit is nie die Skrif wat na die praktyk gebring moet word nie." (Keet, 7 Desember 1949, 64:23, 1047).

Uit verskeie artikels is dit ook duidelik dat hy, in ooreenstemming met die hermeneutiek van die Utrechtse stroom en anders as die Suid-Afrikaanse neo-Calviniste, kritiek op die gevaar van natuurlike teologie gelewer het. Hy distansieer homself van die metode van interpretasie wat by vermelde stroom gevind word (sien Keet, 1955).<sup>22</sup> Hy verwoord dus telkens sy ernstige kritiek teen die tipe Skrifuitleg wat deur die neo-Calvinisme in Suid-Afrika toegepas word. Voorts bevraagteken Keet die metode van Skrifuitleg waarmee apartheid geregverdig is en toon hy aan dat hierdie tipe uitleg die huidige lewenshouding uit die Skrif regverdig. Volgens Keet (1955:16-17) moet die uitleg eerder ons lewenshouding toets om te sien of dit die toets van die Skrif kan deurstaan.

Die invloed wat die puriteinse vroomheid op die denke van Keet gehad het blyk veral uit sy publikasies soos *Sedelike Vraagstukke* (1945). In hierdie werk van Keet laat hy, soos die Skotse Evangeliese piëtisme, die klem op heiligingseise ten opsigte van die persoonlike lewe, heiligheid binne die familie, Sabbatsonderhouding en toewyding aan die kerk val.

## ‘N GROEIENDE STROOM VAN BELANGSTELLING IN DIE HERMENEUTIEK

Soos bo aangedui was dit h beperkte groep teoloë en predikante wat vanaf die 1930's binne die Ned. Geref. Kerk met h *krities-realistiese* hermeneutiek gewerk het en hulle tuis gevind het binne die Utrechtse en Skotse Evangeliese stroom. Die hermeneutiese vakuum wat deur die toedoen van die Oupajane en die Suid-Afrikaanse neo-Calvinisme ontstaan het, het egter sedert die 1960's toenemend onder druk gekom. Hierdie druk kan toegeskryf word aan h kentering wat die ontluiking van h historiese en hermeneutiese bewussyn binne teologiese gelede in die NGK -familie gedurende die 1960's tot gevolg gehad het (sien Coetzee, 2010:566ev). Terwyl die groep wat hulleself vanaf die 1930's binne die Utrechtse en Skotse Evangeliese stroom tuisgevind het later op h meer intuïtiewe wyse met h krities-realistiese hermeneutiek gewerk het, is dit opvallend dat hierdie ontwakings van die 1960's weer meer wetenskaplik van aard was.

21 Soos Hofmeijer, die hermeneutiek van Doedes en Van Oosterzee verwerk het in Suid-Afrika.

22 Hierdie reaksie van Keet word deurgaans in sy werk Suid-Afrikaan- Waarheen? (1955) aangetref.

Die fundamente vir hierdie teologies hermeneutiese ontwaking is gedurende die 1960's deur Professore Jaap Durand, Willie Jonker en Hennie W. Rossouw, wat as tydgenote akademiese werke oor die hermeneutiek gepubliseer het, gelê.<sup>23</sup> Hierdie groep teoloë het vanaf die 1970's aangegroei tot 'n stroom wat daarin geslaag het om toenemende druk te plaas op die Suid-Afrikaanse neo-Calvinisme se poging om met die hermeneutiese vakuum binne die NGK-familie te volhard.<sup>24</sup> Voorts toon navorsing dat die mees begronde teologiese kritiek teen apartheid (vanaf die 1960's binne die NGK-familie) juis van hierdie teoloë afkomstig was (sien Coetzee, 2010:566).

Vir hierdie bydrae is dit van besondere belang dat 'n historiese en (*krities-realistiese*) hermeneutiese bewussyn, soortgelyk aan dié van die Utrechtse en Skotse Evangeliese stroom inderdaad herleef het. Dit is ook opvallend hoe hierdie ontwaking 'n bepalende rol gespeel het in die kritiek wat uit NGK-familie geledere op die teologiese regverdiging van apartheid gelewer is.

## DIE INVLOED VAN DIE UTRECHTSE EN SKOTSE EVANGELIESE PIËTISME OP DIE LEWE EN WERK VAN BEYERS NAUDÉ

Beyers Naudé, die vierde kind van dominee Jozua Francois en mevrou Naudé, is op 10 Mei 1915 in die pastorie van die NG Gemeente Roodepoort, in die destydse Transvaal, gebore. Gedurende sy kinderjare word hy eerstens gevorm deur sy vader wat alombekend was as vroom ondersteuner van die NGK; toegewyd aan die evangelie, met 'n passie om dit te verkondig; 'n stryder vir Afrikaner nasionalisme en 'n besondere sin vir geregtigheid (sien Ryan, 2005:5). Hierdie godsdienstige, kulturele, nasionale en morele waardes word vir Naudé in die kerk en die opvoedkundige instansies van die Afrikaner bevestig en versterk (sien Villa-Vicencio, 1985:5ev).

Oor die invloed wat die NGK en die Afrikanergemeenskap, wat in sy kinderdae in armoede gedompel was, oor die algemeen op die vorming van sy sosiale gewete gehad het sê Naudé in 'n onderhoud met Randall:

“Through that [poor whites] experience my social consciousness was formed: of hunger, of poverty, of people in situations of dire distress, of helplessness of people who experience forces or events over which they were powerless, either to control or to direct; this left a very deep impression on my mind” (in onderhoud met Randall, 1982).

Voorts beklemtoon Naudé dat hy oortuig was dat die Afrikaner se bevrydingstryd teen die Britse onderdrukking<sup>25</sup> 'n regverdige morele stryd was (Villa-Vicencio, 1985:5).

Aanvanklik het Naudé hierdie morele beginsels en stryd om geregtigheid binne die sentiment van die pastorale besorgdheid oor die verontregte Afrikaner geplaas. Tydens sy bediening gedurende die vroeë 1940s in die NG Gemeente Loxton in die Karoo, word hy egter met die haglike omstandighede in die verarmde “bruin” buurt in die dorp gekonfronteer. Hierdie was waarskynlik die eerste tekens van Naudé se vermoë om sy morele oortuiginge wyer as die

23 Hierdie ontwikkeling en publikasies is deur Coetzee gedokumenteer (sien Coetzee, 2010:567ev).

24 Hier kan veral gelet word op die bydraes van Bosch 1972, Lategan 1973, Deist 1975, Smit 1987 en vele ander (sien Coetzee, 2010:569 ev).

25 Wat gekenmerk is deur konsentrasiekampe vir Afrikanervroue en kinders, die sosio-ekonomiese gevolge van die verskroeiende-aarde-beleid en die Suid-Afrikaanse oorloë in die algemeen.

grense van 'n eksklusiewe Afrikanergemeenskap te interpreteer. Gedurende hierdie tydperk het hy homself afge vra hoe daar regverdiging gevind kan word vir dit wat hy hier ervaar en of die witmense, swartmense regverdig behandel (sien Ryan, 2005:33). Hierdie insigte en oortuiginge van Naudé, wat tydens sy vormingsjare beslag gekry het, was inderdaad later die fundamente wat in sy eties-teologiese denke vasgelê was en wat hom in staat gestel het om kritiek te lewer op die ongeregtigheid van apartheid asook die sosiale gevolge daarvan. Hierdie onderliggende bewussyn het egter mettertyd tot 'n bewustelike oortuiging versterk toe Naudé se Afrikaner-groepsbelang gedurende die laat 1950's en begin 1960's deurbreek is (sien Pauw, 2005:11).

Dit was die vasgelegde morele beginsels van versoening, barmhartigheid en geregtigheid, tesame met sy vermoë om 'n sosiale analise te maak (wat Afrikaner-groepsbelange deurbreek het deur al die bevolkingsgroepe van Suid-Afrika in te sluit), wat indringende verskuiwings in sy denke gebring het. Hierdie insigte moet egter ook met Naudé se blootstelling aan die gevolge van apartheid verbind word wat hom tot in sy diepste wese geskud het (sien Naudé en Solle, 1985:6ev).<sup>26</sup>

Die fundamente vir hierdie insigte en verskuiwing in denke en oortuiginge by Naudé was dus, ondanks die apartheidsteologie wat dominant in die NGK was, die resultaat van denke en oortuiginge wat hy, enersyds, verwerf het uit ervarings terwyl hy predikant van die NGK was.

Vervolgens word ondersoek ingestel na die vraag of en hoe die Utrechtse en Skotse Evangeliese Piëtisme as teologiese denkstroom binne NGK geleedere 'n invloed op Naudé gehad en hom later in staat gestel het om kritiek op apartheid en die teologie van apartheid te lewer.

Alhoewel Naudé die nodige intellektuele vermoë gehad het<sup>27</sup> om as teologiese student te presteer was hy nie 'n 'ywerige' student nie. Hy skryf die gebrek aan belangstelling by hom toe aan die meeste van sy leermeesters se gebrek aan teologiese en intellektuele vermoëns (sien Naudé, 1995:28).

Naudé het 'n besondere belangstelling in die kerklike stryd gehad wat tussen prof. Du Plessis (met *Die Soeklig* as mondstuk) aan die eenkant en die Oupajane (met *De Oude Paaie* as mondstuk) aan die anderkant, in die kweekskool te Stellenbosch gewoed het. Hy het die saak waaroor dit gegaan het probeer beoordeel deur die vermelde teologiese tydskrifte noukeurig te lees en hy het as student vir Du Plessis goed leer ken. Alhoewel hy die stryd waaroor dit gegaan het nie ten volle verstaan het nie, was hy ontsteld oor die wyse waarop die NG kerkleiers Du Plessis behandel het (Villa-Vicencio, 1985:6). Naudé vertel self hoe hierdie gebeure die vrye en kritiese denke en openhartige debatte binne die Ned. Geref. Kerk aan bande gelê het (Naudé, 1995:24). Uit die gesprekke wat Naudé met Du Plessis gehad het kon hy aflei dat dit in dié stryd onder andere gegaan het oor Du Plessis se benadering tot die Skrif. Naudé het dit vreemd gevind omdat hy oortuig was dat Du Plessis homself nie skuldig gemaak het aan die aantasting van die Skrifgesag nie maar juis gepoog het om 'n deeglike analise van die oorspronklike Griekse teks van die Nuwe Testament te maak. Volgens Naudé (1995:25) was hy aan die eenkant beïndruk met Du Plessis se bekwaamheid as sendingwetenskaplike en aan die anderkant besorg oor die NGK se gebrekkige insig in en hantering van hulle sendingroeping.

<sup>26</sup> Hierdie blootstelling het plaasgevind toe 'n aantal sendelinge, wat hy vroeër as studente bedien het, hom fisies blootgestel het aan die gevolge van apartheid (Ryan, 1990:47).

<sup>27</sup> Naudé se intellektuele vermoë blyk onder andere uit die M.A. in Afrikaans-Nederlands wat hy onder D.F Malherbe gedoen het voor hy met sy teologiese studies begin het (sien Pauw, 2005:9).

Naudé het groot waardering gehad vir die teologiese en intellektuele vermoë van Keet en Du Plessis en homself tuisgevind in die teologie wat hulle bedryf het. Naudé het na hulle verwys as die diepsinnigste denkers van sy tyd binne die NGK en beklemtoon dat hulle 'n blywende indruk op hom gemaak het (sien Pauw, 2005:9). Dit is opvallend dat beide hierdie twee hoogleraars se teologiese denke, soos genoem, deur die Utrechtse en Skotse Evangeliese stroom bepaal is. Alhoewel Naudé dus nie veel aandag aan sy eie teologiese studies gegee het nie het hy homself binne hierdie teologiese denkstroom tuisgevind.

Die besondere teologiese band tussen Naudé en Keet blyk ook later uit Naudé se vrymoedigheid om, as direkteur van die Christelike Instituut, sy denke rondom die kritiek op die NGK se Skriftuurlike regverdiging van apartheid met hom te bespreek (Naudé, 1995:28). Naudé se keuse vir die teologiese denkstroom waarbinne Keet hom tuis gevind het blyk ook uit sy waardering vir die boek *Suid-Afrika: waarheen?* wat Keet in 1955 gepubliseer het. Naudé was beïndruk met Keet se Skrifbeskouing en -hantering, veral oor sy Skrifinterpretasie in die kritiek wat hy op die Skriftuurlike regverdiging van apartheid gelewer het (sien Durand, 1985:47). Vir Naudé, wat gedurende die middel 1950's sy gebrek aan teologiese kennis besef het en besig was met selfstudie (sien Ryan, 2005:37), het hierdie boek 'n belangrike rol in die bevordering van die verskuiwing in sy teologiese denke gespeel (Durand, 1985:47).

Naudé het hom dus tydens sy teologiese opleiding, maar veral later binne dieselfde teologiese denkstroom as Keet tuis gevind.

Naudé maak self melding van die invloed wat die teologiese denke van prof. Ben Marais op hom gehad het en dat hy hom kon identifiseer met die teologie in Marais se boek *Die Kleur-krisis en die Weste* wat in 1952 verskyn het (sien Walshe, 1983:27). Naudé wat reeds 'n tuiste binne die Utrechtse en Skotse Evangeliese Piëtisme gevind het, het hierdie teologiese sentimente bevestig toe hy, volgens Bosch (1985:68), homself gedurende die middel 1950's spoedig met 'n groep Afrikanerteoloë geïdentifiseer het wat daarvoor bekend geraak het dat hulle binne dieselfde denkstroom tuishoort. Durand maak ook melding van hierdie stroom, met voorlopers soos Du Plessis, BB Keet, Ben Marais en ander, en toon aan dat hulle 'n besondere historiese en sosiale bewussyn gehad het. Voorts toon Durand aan dat hierdie groep, waarbinne Naudé hom tuisgevind het, erns gemaak het met die sosiale en politieke implikasies van die Evangelie. Dit het hulle in staat gestel om raak te sien dat die Evangelie die klein selfgesentreerde wêreldjie van eiebelang transendeer en elke mens insluit (Durand, 1985:43, 49).

Die voortgaande historiese en hermeneutiese bewussyn wat op 'n intuitiewe wyse in die denke van Naudé gefunksioneer het en afkomstig was van die Utrechtse en Skotse Evangeliese Piëtisme binne die NGK, by wie dit tot die 1930's gefunksioneer het en later herleef het (sien bo), bevestig die invloed wat hierdie denkstroom op Naudé gehad het 28. Die invloed wat die Skrifbeskouing van die Utrechtse stroom, afkomstig van Doedes en Van Oosterzee (sien bo), op Naudé gehad het, blyk ook uit sy gebruik van Bybelse gegewens. Hierdie invloed op die Skrifbeskouing van Naudé word volledig deur Coetzee (2010:592ev) bespreek. Hierdie Skrifgebruik blyk veral uit verskeie van sy preke soos: oor 1 Kor. 2:2 op 27 Mei 1962, Hand.5:17-42 en Jer. 23:9-32 in die Ned. Geref. Gemeente Aasvoëlkop (sien Coetzee, Hansen en Vosloo, 2013:159ev).

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28 Die invloed van hierdie bewussyn wat deurgaans in die lewe en werke van BN opvallend was, word volledig deur Coetzee bespreek (sien Ryan, 1990:68).

Die invloed wat die Utrechtse en Skotse Evangeliese Piëtisme as verteenwoordiger van 'n bepaalde teologiese tradisie en retoriese konteks in die lewe en werke van Naudé gespeel het blyk duidelik uit die volledige bespreking wat Coetzee aan hierdie onderwerp wy (sien Coetzee, 2010:595ev).

Laastens kan daar ook melding gemaak word van die invloed van die Skotse Evangeliese Piëtisme (met die sendinginvloed) op die tipe spirituele en puriteinse vroomheid wat deurgaans in die preke van Naudé deurslag vind.<sup>29</sup>

## TEN SLOTTE

In die lig van die voorafgaande is dit duidelik dat daar meer as een teologiese stroom binne Ned. Geref. Kerkgeledere was. Die teologie binne die NGK was nie net tot die Suid-Afrikaanse neo-Calvinisme, met die gevolglike apartheidsteologie, beperk nie. Die *krities-realistiese* hermeneutiek, afkomstig van die twee Utrechtse teoloë: Doedes en Van Oosterzee, het die eerste sewentig jaar ná die stigting van die Kweekskool op Stellenbosch (1858) die teologiese toneel binne die Ned. Geref. Kerkgeledere oorheers. Soos aangedui het hierdie *krities-realistiese* hermeneutiek 'n Skrifbeskouing gevestig wat anders was as dié van die Suid-Afrikaanse neo-Calvinisme. Hier is ook aangetoon dat die Skotse Evangeliese Piëtisme, wat gedurende hierdie tydperk met die Utrechtse stroom saamgesmelt het, 'n ander spiritualiteit en mensbeskouing gevestig het as wat later in die Suid-Afrikaanse neo-Calvinisme gefunksioneer het.

Alhoewel die Suid-Afrikaanse neo-Calvinisme vanaf die 1930's binne Ned. Geref. Kerkgeledere oorheers het, het die Utrechtse en Skotse Evangeliese Piëtisme oorleef. Voorts is aangetoon dat die Utrechtse en Skotse Evangeliese Piëtisme as minderheidsgroep (soms net enkele individue) bly voortbestaan het en 'n bepalende rol in die vorming van die lewe en werke van Naudé gespeel het. Dit kan daarom as een van die belangrike en bepalende invloede beskou word wat hom in staat gestel het om kritiek teen apartheid te lewer.

Hier is ook aangetoon dat Naudé se vader, die NGK en die Afrikaner gemeenskap in die algemeen 'n bepalende invloed op die ontwikkeling van Naudé se morele waardes van versoening, barmhartigheid en geregtigheid gehad het. Later het Naudé (as deel van 'n jonger groep in die NGK wat verteenwoordigend was van Utrechtse en Skotse Evangeliese piëtisme) die insig verwerf wat volgens Durand hom in staat gestel het om die selfgesentreerde wêreldjie van eiebelang te transendeer en om elke mens, ongeag kleur of "ras" in te sluit in sy sosiale analise (1984:49). Dit was juis hierdie gevestigde morele waardes wat hom toe in staat gestel het om kritiek te lewer op die morele ongeregteerdheid van apartheid.

Dit laat geen twyfel nie dat die teologiese denkstroom en morele waardes wat 'n bepalende rol in die vorming van die lewe en werke van Naudé gespeel het, reeds binne Ned. Geref. Kerkgeledere gevestig was.

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<sup>29</sup> Hierdie invloed blyk veral uit die preke wat opgeneem is in die publikasie van Coetzee, Hansen en Vosloo (sien Coetzee 2013).

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#### **TREFWOORDE**

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Kritiek teen apartheid  
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## Religion in the public sphere of a pluralistic society

### The South African attempt

### A Reformed perspective

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

The debate about the place and role of religion in a pluralistic society is and remains very acute in many countries around the world. The question can also be formulated by asking how different worldviews and life experiences can live, interact and dialogue in the same public sphere. To try to answer the question two concepts need closer attention, that of the “public sphere” and that of “religion”. The role that a Charter of Religious Rights and Freedoms can play to help a variety of religions to live in the same public sphere is presented and discussed as a possible answer for the South African Society and perhaps also for other societies although they will have to develop a charter of religious rights and freedoms that meets their specific context and requirements.

#### 2. PUBLIC SPHERE AND RELIGION

According to Nick Crossley and John Michael Roberts, the concept of ‘public sphere’, ‘public opinion’ and the ‘public use of reason’ have a long and complex genealogy. In recent years Jürgen Habermas’ work on *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* has set the agenda for much of the debate on this issue (Crossley & Roberts 2004:1). For Habermas traces of a new social order began to take shape with the emergence of early finance and trade capitalism. The public sphere as a new social space distinct from the state, economy, and the family, in which individuals could engage each other as private citizens deliberating about the common good (Mendieta & Vanantwerpen 2011:2), began to develop during the eighteenth century. It became known as the so called bourgeois public sphere, a “sphere of private people come together as a public; they soon claimed the public sphere regulated from above against the public authorities themselves, to engage them in a debate over the general rules governing relations in the basically privatized but publicly relevant sphere of commodity exchange and social labour. The medium of this political confrontation was peculiar and without historical precedent: people’s public use of their reason.” (J.Habermas 1991:27). Soon this public sphere explicitly assumed political functions in the tension-charged field of state-society relations. This meant that the control of the public sphere was wrested away by the critical reasoning of private persons on political issues (J.Habermas 1991:29). The public sphere was a sphere of reason giving “a realm in which reasons were forwarded and debated accepted or rejected”. Nominally the public sphere was an indefinitely open space in which all reasons could be accepted that could meet the assent of all participants. In this way, while the state monopolized coercion, the public sphere became the social space in which all force was transformed into the coercion of rational deliberation – what Habermas would later develop as the “unforced force” of the better argument (Mendieta & Vanantwerpen 2011:3).

Habermas was criticized for paying too little attention to religion in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. In his 2008 publication *Between Naturalism and Religion: Philosophical Essays* he acknowledges that “Two countervailing trends mark the intellectual tenor of the age – the spread of naturalistic worldviews and the growing political influence of religious orthodoxies” (Habermas 2008:1). He sees the two conflicting trends as rooted in opposed traditions. “Hard” forms of naturalism are implications of the Enlightenment’s uncritical faith in science while the political reawakening of religious consciousness is a break with the liberal assumptions of the Enlightenment. The conflict is not just a clash at the level of academic controversies it is also a clash of powerful political forces both within civil society of the leading Western nations and at the international level in the encounter between the major world religions and the dominant global cultures (Habermas 2008:2; see also Huntington 1993:22). He concedes “ - that the major world religions belong to the history of reason itself. Post-metaphysical thinking misunderstands itself if it fails to include the religious traditions alongside metaphysics in its own genealogy.” (Habermas 2008, 6). “Even today, religious traditions perform the function of articulating an awareness of what is lacking or absent. They keep alive a sensitivity to failure and suffering. They rescue from oblivion the dimensions of our social and personal relations in which advances in cultural and social rationalization have caused utter devastation. Who is to say that they do not contain encoded semantic potentialities that could provide inspiration if only their message were translated into rational discourse and their profane truth contents were set free?” (Habermas 2008:6). In his essay *The Political* (2011) he agrees with Schmidt and Lefort that the sovereign power of the king has been dissolved, disembodied and dispersed leaving behind an “empty place”. But in the course of its democratic transformation “the political” has not completely lost its association with religion. In democratic discourse secular and religious citizens stand in a complementary relation. Both are involved in an interaction that is constitutive for a democratic process springing from the soil of civil society and developing through the informal communication networks of the public sphere.” (Habermas 2011:27)

Silvio Ferrari is of the opinion that in the debate on religion in the public sphere too little attention has been given to the contribution that religions have given, either conceptually or practically, to the formation of the public space, the way they conceive it and the inputs they can offer to restructuring it in terms that are appropriate to contemporary society. For him, “this gap needs to be filled because any proposal for the re-organization of the public space implies the knowledge of how this matter is conceived (also) by the different religions that inhabit it.” (Ferrari 2011:1). After having posed the necessity of the contribution of religion for the reorganizing of the public space, Ferrari poses the critical question whether the current European notion of the public space is not indebted to the concept of public space implicit in the Christian religion, “that has played a dominant role in Europe since when this geo-political category came into existence.” (Ferrari 2011:1). From a Reformed point of view this is indeed a very important question.

This article is about *Reformed Perspectives on Religion and the Formation of the Public Space*. In order to explain the contribution of a Reformed perspective in this regard attention will be paid to a Reformed understanding of the Kingdom of God, Religion and Freedom of Religion, Principled Structural and Religious Plurality and the task of the State, to conclude with a paragraph “From the History of Church and State Relations” turning to the South African attempt to help religions and society to form a public space in which a plurality of religions can live together in peace. Some concluding remarks will be made at the end.

### 3. THE KINGDOM OF GOD

From a Reformed perspective the Kingdom of God forms the primary context for the whole of creation, individual and society, religion and state. The Dutch theologian, Herman Ridderbos (Ridderbos 1978:1), calls the Kingdom of God the most theocentric concept that Scripture offers for our understanding of the creation, humanity, the world and current and future times. God's Kingdom and the Lord Jesus Christ's royal sovereignty comprise the whole of creation. Where Christ's kingship is recognized, something of the Kingdom becomes visible; individuals are liberated, and the entire pattern of their lives is transformed (Ridderbos 1960:303). Every part of creation forms part of God's Kingdom and, although a specific individual, society or state often does not acknowledge God's sovereignty, it nevertheless, according to a reformed perspective, is and remains a part of the kingdom of God.

One of the biggest legacies of John Calvin, the Reformed theologian in Geneva, is that he succeeded in bridging the gap between the so called spiritual and temporal jurisdictions, the so called Kingdom of God vs. the Kingdom of darkness. Although he himself could not succeed in implementing this legacy in everyday life in Geneva he supplied the theological framework which reformed theology can offer today as a means to help to organise the public sphere.

In the first edition of the *Institutes* (1536) Calvin wrote "There is a twofold government in man: one aspect is spiritual, whereby the conscience is instructed in piety and in reverencing God; the second is political whereby man is educated for the duties of humanity and civil life that must be maintained among men. These are usually called the "spiritual" and the "temporal" jurisdictions (not improper terms) by which is meant that the former sort of government pertains to the life of the soul while the latter has to do with the concerns of present life. The one we may call the spiritual kingdom, the other the political kingdom. There are in man, so to speak, two worlds, over which different kings and different laws have authority" (*Institutes* 1536:524).

In these formulations one can hear Martin Luther's teaching on the two kingdoms and also Augustine's teaching on the City of God in contrast to the city of man (Greenawalt 2008:116-117). These views also form the deepest foundations of what was later used by the Enlightenment to refer religion to the private sphere of life and eventually establish a wall of separation between the state and religion.

In his later writings law and order became the categories that Calvin used to define the functions and interrelationships of moral, political and ecclesiastical laws and structures within both the heavenly and earthly kingdoms. In the 1559 edition of the *Institutes* Calvin in effect superimposed his own variant of the two swords theory of the Roman Catholic Church on the Lutheran two kingdoms theory. For Calvin it was God who governed both the earthly as well as the heavenly kingdom through His moral law. This meant that the church had a legal role in the governance of the earthly kingdom and the state had a moral role in the governance of the heavenly kingdom. For him there was now only the one kingdom of God. Obedience to church officials and church law was a spiritual and a moral duty just as obedience to political officials and political laws was a civic and spiritual duty (*Institutes*, 1559:4.20.4.1-4); Witte 2008:58).

By 1559 the moral law was for Calvin moral commandments engraved on the conscience of humankind, repeated in Scripture and summarized in the Decalogue (*Institutes*, 1559,2.8.1). It is the norms created and communicated by God for the governance of humanity, for the right

ordering of individual and social lives. The Decalogue is the fullest expression of this moral law (*Institutes*, 1559, 2.7.1; 2.8.1; 4.20.15).

The view that God's moral law governs both the heavenly and the earthly kingdom had far reaching implications for both church and state. Both were now seen as legal entities each with its own forms of organization and order, its own norms of discipline and rule. Each was called to play a distinct role in the enforcement of Godly government and discipline in the community (Witte 2007:63). It also has profound implications for the way in which Reformed believers see society and the public space. With some Reformed thinkers exactly this idea of God's moral law governing both the heavenly and earthly kingdom led to what is discussed under point 5 of this article as *principled structural and religious plurality*. This implies that in the Reformed view the whole diversity of organizational competencies such as family life, schooling, art, science, politics, labour, economics, church/religion and the state etc. are all part of the kingdom of God and as such fall under the moral law of God. This view also implies that the religious or confessional plurality falls within the ambit of the kingdom of God and can as such legitimately claim a place in the public sphere. This is not a statement about the truth of a religion but about the principled place of all religions in the public place. This view on the moral law of God and its implication for the plurality in society as well as confessional or religious pluralism has its roots in the Calvinistic reformation of the sixteenth century and is a contribution that Reformed religion can offer to the current debate on religion in the public space of pluralistic societies.

#### 4. RELIGION AND FREEDOM OF RELIGION

It can be said that most religions have systems of organization, certain structures of leadership, requirements for membership, structures for the functioning of their lay members, regular meetings where they venerate a deity and pray. They have holy places and holy documents which guide them in their life. Their practices can include sermons, commemorations, sacrifices, festivals, feasts, initiation ceremonies, funerary and matrimonial services, requirements for meditation, music, art and dance. Some religions place a very strong emphasis on belief while for others practice of the religion is very important. In some religions the subjective experience of the religious individuals is very important while in other religions the activities of the religious community are more important. Some religions see their views to be universal, believing their laws and cosmology to be binding for everyone while other religions are more focused on the practice of a closely defined or localized group. Some religions are closely associated with public institutions such as education, hospitals, family life, government and political hierarchies while other religions are more withdrawn from the public space. Religion is also seen to help people to deal with problems of human life by providing a set of ideas about how and why the world is put together, to help people through anxieties and misfortunes (Monaghan, John and Just, Peter; 2000, pp124). All of the above can be seen in the practices of different religions as well as in their official documents like their confessions of faith, their constitutions and documents of order and for instance also in their requirements for membership as well as in their requirements for leaders and office bearers.

Religion can also be described as something individual and communal, internal and external, private and public, permanent and transient (Witte 1996:xxiv). Although it is often difficult to give a definition of what religion entails the following guidelines regarding religion can be very helpful in determining what a religion is and whether it can claim certain rights or in certain aspects limit the rights of their members.

Seen from a *functional* point of view religion can be described as all beliefs and actions that concern the ultimate origin, meaning and purpose of life and existence. In this sense religion embraces the responses of the human heart, soul, mind, conscience, intuition, and reason to revelation, to transcendent values, to what Rudolph Otto calls the "idea of the holy".

When this functional dimension of religion is translated into an *institutional* dimension religion would entail *a creed, a cult, a code of conduct and a confessional community*. A *creed* defines the accepted cadre of beliefs and values concerning the ultimate origin, meaning and purpose of life. A *cult* defines the appropriate rituals, liturgies, and patterns of worship and devotion that give expression to the beliefs.<sup>1</sup> The *code of conduct* defines the appropriate individual and social habits of those who profess the creed and practice the cult. A *confessional community* defines the group of individuals, who embrace and live out the creed, cult, and code of conduct, both on their own and with fellow believers (Witte 1996:xxv).

There are a variety viewpoints on what freedom of religion entails (Vermeulen & Kanne 2004:76-77; Sap 2004:114-117; Blei 2003:2-3 and Van Drimmelen sa:199). International documents and declarations like the 1948 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* describes religious freedom as follows: "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship, and observance." (Van der Vyver 1996: Religious Perspectives, xxiv). This broad definition of religious freedom often has as a result that individual states and individual claimants define the boundaries of what freedom of religion entails. It is therefore necessary that a more precise description of what freedom of religion entails be given.

Firstly certain conditions must exist before there can be any real claim to religious freedom either by a country or any claimant. These conditions entail freedom of conscience; the right to the free exercise of religion; the recognition of religious pluralism; religious equality; the separation of church and state and the disestablishment of religion by the state (Witte 2000:37). Since 1994 these conditions exist in South Africa and are guaranteed by the Constitution so that it can be said that the possibility for real freedom of religion exists in SA.

Witte also points out that freedom of religion has both an *individual* as well as an *associational* character. Individuals have the right to formulate, deny, or change their religious beliefs and to act, speak, write and associate with others in accordance with them. "But religious associations too have rights to function in expression of their founding religious beliefs and values. Thus churches, temples and mosques have rights to organize, assemble, worship, and enforce certain religious laws. Parents and families have rights to rear, educate, and discipline children in expression of their religious convictions. Religious publishers and suppliers have rights to produce the particular products needed for their religious cultus. Religious schools have rights to educate and discipline children in accordance with the basic norms and habits of their religious traditions." (Witte 1996:xxvi).

Religious rights can be *asserted* against both state officials and other individuals or associations. The assertions of such a right will be governed either by public or private law. When rights are asserted against other individuals of the same religious community both the private law of the state and the internal law of the religious community may govern. A strong case can be

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<sup>1</sup> "Cult" can also refer to certain religious or secular movements where the cult leader(s) seek to control their followers through the use of manipulative techniques. This meaning of "cult" is not implied above.

made for the preference of the internal law of the religious community if it can be shown that it stands on firm faith convictions although the respective jurisdictions of secular and religious law in these disputes have been subject of perennial legal and theological controversy (Witte 1996:xxvi-xxvii).

Religious rights can also be both *protective* and *affirmative*. They provide religious individuals and institutions with *freedom from* improper intrusions and prohibitions by government officials or by other citizens and groups on religious beliefs and actions. They also provide religious individuals and institutions *freedom to* engage in religious conduct, and to procure the means for such engagement. Witte calls this the *liberty* and *entitlement* dimensions of religious rights (Witte 1996:xxvii).

The *liberty dimension* of religious rights requires that the state accommodate the religious beliefs and practices of individuals and associations and exempt them from generally applicable laws and policies which compel them to act, or to forgo action, in violation of their religious convictions. This can mean that religious believers can be granted the right to conscientious objection from participation in war and the military or immunities from oath swearing, from work on holy days, from payment of taxes, or from participation in civic ceremonies and activities that they find religiously odious. Religious organizations can be exempted from property and income taxation, from zoning and landmark regulations, or from state prohibitions on religious, gender, cultural, or other discrimination (Witte 1996:xvii-xviii). It is necessary that religions give proof of the fact that it is in accordance with their religious identity to claim the mentioned liberties and with that the limitation of certain rights/liberties of their members such as for instance to limit the right of members for legal representation in the case of disciplinary inquiries.

The *entitlement dimension* of religious rights requires that individuals be allowed to exercise their religious beliefs privately and that groups be allowed to engage in private or collective worship. More fully understood religious entitlements embrace an individual's ability and means to engage in religious assembly, speech, and worship, to observe religious laws and rituals, to pay religious taxes, to participate in religious pilgrimages, to gain access to places of religious importance to them, like the graves of ancestors and the like (Witte 1996:xviii). For religious groups it means their right to promulgate and enforce internal religious laws of order, organization, and orthodoxy, to train, select and discipline religious officials, to establish and maintain institutions of worship, charity, and education, to acquire, use, and dispose of property and literature used in worship and rituals, to communicate with co-believers and proselytes, and many other affirmative acts in manifestation of beliefs of the institution (Witte 1996:xxviii).

Freedom of religion gives churches and other religious institutions the liberty to determine their own internal order in accordance with their faith identity.

These viewpoints from a reformed perspective can have a huge impact on the inhabiting of a public sphere by religions, especially if it is kept in mind that all the religions in the public sphere can claim all of the rights that are associated with freedom of religions and also that they are all equal before the law.

## 5. PRINCIPLED STRUCTURAL AND RELIGIOUS PLURALITY AND TASK OF THE STATE

In his work on *Ethics* Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote: "In its unity which embraces the whole of human life and in its undivided claim to man and to the world through the reconciling love of God, God's commandment, revealed in Jesus Christ, confronts us concretely in four different forms which it alone unites: the Church, marriage and the family, culture and government. The commandment of God is not to be found where there are historical forces, powerful ideas and convincing perceptions. It is to be found where there are the divine mandates which are founded upon the revelation of Christ." (Bonhoeffer, 1955, 252 & 253). This is a very important insight from Bonhoeffer that the divine mandates are founded upon the revelation of Christ and that the plurality of mandates come from the revelation. It means that the plurality of social and religious structures do not stem from certain historical developments or from natural law, they stem from the revelation of Christ and find expression in the way man accepts the mandate of that revelation. In their book *Society, State, & Schools. A Case for Structural and Confessional Pluralism* Rockne McCarthy and his co-writers link on to the viewpoint of Bonhoeffer to argue that there is a rich diversity or a plurality of cultural tasks, sets of human relationships and spheres of social action which must be taken into account (McCarthy et al 1982:32). According to them there are two kinds of distinct but also closely related kinds of pluralism in any politically organized society: structural and confessional pluralism. The American scholar Jim Skillen also writes about principled structural and confessional pluralism and brings forward the following very useful insights.

Firstly there is a structural pluralism – a diversity of organizational competencies and social responsibilities such as family life, schooling, art, science, politics, sports to mention but a few (Skillen 1994:83). The Constitution of a country marks off the tasks and limits of a government and is a recognition that government has its own distinct responsibilities and is not omnicompetent. Other social structures have their own moral integrity and competence. "As society differentiates into an ever more complex array of social structures, government's task of securing justice entails recognition and protection of that "structural pluralism" as part of its legal integration of the whole society. Justice for the commonwealth requires just treatment not only of persons as citizens but also of all non-governmental institutions and relationships through which people constitute their lives. A just political order is a complex institutional community characterized, in part, by its establishment of structural pluralism." (Skillen 1994:84)

The second kind of pluralism that needs to be recognized in any politically organized society is confessional pluralism. No government is competent to decide on behalf of its citizens what their religious obligations and orientations may be. The just treatment of every citizen requires that government must fairly and equally protect a variety of religions within its sphere of competence. This does not presume that every religion is equally correct or true. It does mean that governments' competence to establish a public justice coupled with its incompetence to define and enforce religious orthodoxy leads to the civic-moral conclusion that there should be fair and equitable confessional pluralism (Skillen 1994:84).

Religions express themselves through the structural diversity in society. "But the different confessional ways in which people engage in social life do not obliterate the structural diversity. The principal of confessional pluralism must be protected hand in hand with the principle of structural pluralism" (Skillen 1994:84).

A good and just public law is one that leaves the determination of religious convictions in the

hands of the communities and institutions that hold and nurture them (Skillen 1994:72-73). Skillen claims that the presupposition for this argument is the distinction between political and ecclesiastical jurisdiction of authority – it could also be called political and religious jurisdiction of authority. There is both a public legal competency and various theological / ecclesiastical competencies. This means that it is not the task of political or state authorities to pass laws that God should be honoured and in which way He should be honoured, or for that matter how religious bodies should conduct their disciplinary hearings. Every opinion and every conviction does not automatically fall under the jurisdiction of the government. Out of respect for God's true omnipotence, the government of a political community should not even try to exercise omni-competent authority. Government ought to acknowledge that it would perpetrate injustice within its jurisdiction if it tried to compel the conscience of its citizens in all respects. Any government ought to honour God by keeping with its own moral responsibility before God which is to uphold public justice for all citizens by protecting their consciences and the jurisdictional independence of institutions like churches and religions so that all citizens and communities of faith will be able to fulfil their confessional and institutional responsibilities. Following from this it can also be said that moral arguments to honour God within nongovernmental realms of responsibility should be conducted without appeal to political or legal power to compel the conscience of others. Just as the government should not interfere with religious convictions and the jurisdictional competence of religious bodies, religious bodies should also not seek governmental power to force fellow citizens of the state but not members of their religion to heed the theological and ecclesiastical or religious conclusions of a specific religion. A Government must fulfil its task of governing through good and just laws that heed the principled plurality of communities and institutions in society (Skillen 1994:72-73).

The recognition of principled pluralism does not suggest that government has nothing to enforce with regard to religious communities and institutions in society or that government itself holds no God-ordained responsibilities of its own. But, for good government to do justice it must respect its own God-given limits and the consciences (including all the diverse confessional and other religious communities) of its citizens (Skillen 1994:73). "Theological truths - including truths about God and human nature that can provide wisdom for public affairs – matters a great deal to a polity." (Skillen 1994:73). But the morally responsible way for public authorities, and may we also say for citizens, to deal with these matters, is to act with even-handed vigilance to protect the independent exercise of religious freedom in the common public square.(Skillen 1994:73). Political authority ought to be committed to the protection of the religious life of its citizens, all of its citizens. Government should never be neutral between religious freedom and religious persecution, between fair treatment of all religions and the special privileging of one religion (Skillen 1994:73). The jurisdictional competence of the state for the exercise of a particular kind of responsibility that is properly differentiated from the responsibilities of non-governmental institutions and communities can be argued as a matter of moral principle (Skillen 1994:72).

## 6. FROM THE HISTORY OF CHURCH AND STATE RELATIONS

A short overview of the history of the relationship between church and state, also as it played out in South Africa before 1994, is another contribution that can be made from a Reformed point of view to help the structuring of a public space where a plurality of religions within the same state, meet each other on a daily basis. Historical developments also pose a question as to what model of church (religion) and state is/was at play when it is said that the current view

of the public place in Europe was largely influenced by Christianity. Perhaps the public space is begging to be approached with a new paradigm to facilitate its structuring.

## 6.1 The relationship between church and state from Constantine until 1075

In 312 Emperor Constantine was converted to Christianity (Van der Wiel 2006:34) and in 380 Trinitarian Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire. This ultimately fused Roman and Christian laws and beliefs. This would have a big influence on the relationship between church and state. The Roman Empire was seen as the universal body of Christ on earth embracing all persons and things. The emperor was viewed as both pope and king reigning supreme in both spiritual and temporal matters (Van der Wiel 2006:35). Roman law was seen as the pristine instrument/outcome of natural law and Christian morality. This new relationship between Empire and Christianity not only allowed the church to fundamentally influence Roman law with some of its most basic teachings but also brought about that those teachings were enforced throughout much of the Empire (Van der Wiel 2006:35), often brutally, against heretics like the Arians, the Apollonarians and the Manichaens. In the *Codex Justiniani* (438), the *Corpus Iuris Civiles* (529-534), Christian teachings on the Trinity, the sacraments, holy days, the Sabbath, sexual ethics, charity, education etc. were copiously defined and regulated by Roman law. The law of the Empire also granted all kinds of immunities, exemptions and subsidies for Christian ministers, missionaries and monastics which were very favourable for them and helped to extend the church's reach to the farthest corners of the Empire (Witte 2008:7-8).

This legal establishment of Christianity helped its expansion and the survival of the influence of Canon law for centuries to come. At the same time it also subordinated the church to imperial rule. Christianity was now the new cult of Rome presided over by the emperor. Christian clergy were in effect the pontiffs of the Christian imperial cult and ultimately subordinate to imperial authority. Church property was the new public property subject to both public protection and control. The emperors and their delegates convoked many church councils and synods, disciplined and removed the high clergy; administered many of the church's parishes, monasteries, and charities and legally controlled the acquisition, maintenance, and disposition of much church property.

Already in the fourth century there were church fathers like Ambrosias (339-397) and Augustine (354-430) and Popes like Gelasius (492-496) and Gregory the Great (540-604) who were of opinion that the Church had a supremacy over the state. With reference to Luke 22:38 – the two swords – they insisted on the two powers, a worldly and a spiritual power, that governed autonomously and independent from each other over the affairs of Christianity. The spiritual power was however more dominant because eventually all kings will be answerable to God (Witte 2008:8-9; Van der Wiel 2006:35-38).

The Roman imperial understanding of the relationship between church and state was largely continued in the West after the fall of Rome to various Germanic tribes in the fifth century. Before their conversion many of the pagan Germanic rulers were seen as divine, being both the cult and military leaders of their people. After their conversion to Christianity they lost their divinity but continued as sacral rulers of the Christian churches in their territories. Christianity was an important source for their authority in their effort to extend their rule over the plurality of peoples under their regime. Christian clergy not only supported the Germanic Christian

kings in their suppression of pagan tribal religion but many of them also saw leaders like the Frankish Emperor Charlemagne (768-814) and the Anglo-Saxon King Alfred as their spiritual leaders. The Christian Germanic rulers from their side supported the clergy in their struggle against heresy, gave them military protection, political patronage and material support just like the Roman emperors before them. Feudal lords in these Germanic domains patronized the church by donating lands and properties for the use of the church in exchange for the power to appoint and control priests, abbots and abbesses who used and controlled the properties (Witte 2008:9).

## 6.2 The Papal Reformation of 1075

The reformation of the Roman Catholic Church between 1050 and 1150 AD, also called the Papal Revolution (Berman 1999:85ff), changed the relationship between the church and state as it existed since the time of Constantine from a Constantinian or Caesero-papal relationship to a theocratic relationship. On the relationship before the eleventh century Berman writes "Prior to the late eleventh century, the clergy of Western Christendom - bishops, priests, and monks - were as a rule, much more under the authority of emperors, kings, leading feudal lords than of popes." (Berman 1999:88). Before 1075 it was the worldly rulers who owned churches and church land, they appointed and dismissed church officials, they called and controlled church councils, they promulgated church laws; they appointed church officials in worldly councils.

In a revolutionary manifesto known as *Papal Prescriptions (Dictatus Papae)* (1075), Pope Gregory VII declared, amongst other things, in 27 articles that the Church of Rome was instituted by Christ; that only the bishop of Rome was universal, and that emperors and kings had no authority over the church. Only the Pope had the authority to install and dismiss bishops; only the Pope could call and control church councils, install and administrate abbeys and bishoprics. Only the Pope could make new laws according to the need of the time. Papal courts were courts for the whole of the Western Christendom and believers could approach them on any issue that had a spiritual implication – and all issues did have a spiritual side (Berman 1999:95-96). With this papal manifesto the so called Constantinian or Caesero-papal paradigm for the relationship between church and state was turned over in favour of a theocratic paradigm in which the Pope had absolute power. Apart from the total control which it exercised over individuals, society and the church the Roman Catholic Church also controlled the limited rights of orthodox Christians, Jews, Muslims and heretics within Western Christianity (Witte 2000:11-12). The Pope even had the power to dispose of kings while all princes had to kiss his feet. (Berman 1999:96; Witte 2000:11-12). It was indeed a revolutionary turnover from a position of control by the Caesar to one of Papal or theocratic control by the Roman Catholic Church.

All these control measures and many more eventually found their way into the *Corpus Iuris Canonici* – the Canon law books of the Roman Catholic Church which subjected rulers and citizens, laity and clergy, inhabitants and strangers to the authority of the Roman Catholic Church. Berman is of the opinion that the Roman Catholic Church was in fact the first modern Western State that wanted to rule over all other states with its theocratic authority (Berman 1999:113). It was against this Church with its theocracy and the resulting suppression of central truths from the Bible that the reformation of the sixteenth century took place.

## 6.3 The Reformation and the relationship between church and state

When the Reformation of the sixteenth century took place under the leadership of people like

Martin Luther and John Calvin much of the theological content of the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church was translated into a new paradigm of salvation through faith in Christ alone. However, when it came to the important issue of the relationship between church and state we find that the Reformers did not formulate profound new insights. They simply went back to the old paradigm of the relation between church and state that existed since the time of Constantine. This meant that they saw it as the duty of the state to protect the church and its teachings, even with the power of the sword thereby, at the same time, granting the worldly authorities the power to control the church. This teaching can clearly be seen in article 36 of the *Confessio Belgica* (1561), a very important Reformed confession from the sixteenth century, also known as the Dutch Confession of faith. Article 36 reads with regard to the authorities that God has placed the sword in the hands of the government to punish evil people and protect the good (Romans 13:4). It then continues: "And the government's task is not limited to caring for and watching over the public domain but extends also to upholding the sacred ministry, with a view to removing and destroying all idolatry and false worship of the Antichrist; to promoting the kingdom of Jesus Christ; and to furthering the preaching of the gospel everywhere; to the end that God may be honoured and served by everyone, as he requires in his Word." With regard to the duty of the subjects, which is of course also the church, we read the following: "Moreover everyone, regardless of status, condition, or rank, must be subject to the government, and pay taxes, and hold its representatives in honour and respect, obey them in all things that are not in conflict with God's Word praying for them that the Lord may be willing to lead them in all their ways and "that we may live a peaceful and quiet life in all piety and decency (1 Timothy 2:2)." (Confessio Belgica 156: article 36).

It is also not to say that the theocratic rule by the Roman Catholic Church since 1075 was simply accepted by the different rulers in the West (Berkhof 1975:186). There is much historical evidence to the contrary. After the Council of Basel (1431) the National States asserted their guardianship over the church. In England there was a national church already since the fourteenth century - which became the Anglican State Church in 1531 under the rule of Henry VIII. In 1478 the Inquisition in Spain was taken over by the state while in Germany the different national rulers had much authority in the different provinces – an approach that was asserted with the peace of Augsburg in 1555 (Berkhof, 1975:115,160). In Geneva Calvin did try to bring in greater freedom for the church from the worldly authorities but even there the political authorities insisted on their position of authority over the church – we find proof of this in article 165 in both the Church Orders of 1541 and 1561 (*Ordonnances Ecclésiastiques* 1541, 1559 art 165). In the Netherlands we also find that after many years of fighting and bloodshed the Reformed Church became the privileged church, protected by, but in fact also subjected to, the political rulers.

This was also the case in South Africa where a situation of Constantinianism in a stricter or lesser sense endured from 1652 to 1994, from 1652 to 1795 under the Dutch and from 1806 to 1910 under the English. After 1910 came the Union of South Africa, a period in which different governments through political agendas to a large extent continued the Constantinian model of Church State relations. In 1996 South Africa got a new Constitution in which, for the very first time, freedom of religion was guaranteed (Constitution art. 15). Even more importantly article 234 of the Constitution provides that parliament can accept separate Bills of Rights in order to enhance democracy.

## 7. THE SOUTH AFRICAN ATTEMPT

The new South African Constitution of 1996 brought about what can be called a paradigm change for the whole of South Africa. It was a Constitution for every citizen of the country, with a Charter of rights as chapter 2 of the Constitution. For the first time all religions in South Africa were guaranteed freedom of religion (Constitution 1996, art 15).

South Africa is indeed a country of pluralities. The total population of about 50 million is made up of 80% black people, 9.1% whites, 8.9% brown people and 2.5% Indians. The plurality of cultures within the different cultural groups is reflected in the fact of eleven official languages which are here below reflected in the percentage of speakers of each language in comparison with the total population. The languages with their percentage of speakers are isiZulu 23.8%; isiXhosa 17.6%, Afrikaans 13.3%, Sepedi 9.4%, Setswana 8.2%, English 8.2%, Sesotho 7.9%, Xitsonga 4.4%, Siswati 2.7%, Tshivenda 2.3%, isiNdebele 1.6%, Other 0.5%.

As far as religion is concerned 79.8% of the population profess that they are followers of a form of Christianity. Of this 79.8% of Christians, Reformed churches make up 7.2%, Anglicans 3.8%, Methodists 7.4%, Lutherans 2.5%, Presbyterians 1.9%, Congregational churches 1.4%, Roman Catholics 8.9%, Pentecostal churches 7.3%, other churches 12%. African Independent Churches have a membership of 40.8% of the total Christian population. Apart from Christian followers in SA there are also 0.2% followers of the Jewish religion, 1.1% Islam followers, 1.3% Hindu followers, and 0.1% Buddhist believers. There is also a large segment of African Traditional Religion in SA. It is estimated that 12% of the total of African Traditional Religion followers are in SA (SouthAfrica.info. The Official Gateway. [http://www.southafrica.info/pls/procs/iac.page?p\\_tl=2779&p\\_t27372&p\\_t3=0&p\\_t:13/4/2011](http://www.southafrica.info/pls/procs/iac.page?p_tl=2779&p_t27372&p_t3=0&p_t:13/4/2011); South African Christian Handbook 2007-2008:69,74.)

Not only is there a plurality of cultures as is shown by the fact that the country has eleven official languages, there is also a plurality of religions which all claim their legitimate share of the public space.

Very soon after 1996 the question was asked what the implications of article 15 are for the religions of the land as well as for the whole of society. These questions led to the formulation of a *South African Charter of Religious Rights and Freedoms*. Already in 1990 Judge Albie Sachs wrote *“Ideally in South Africa, all religious organizations and persons concerned with the study of religion would get together and draft a charter of religious rights and responsibilities - it would be up to the participants themselves to define what they consider to be their fundamental rights.”* (Sachs 1990:46-47).

Without being aware of what Judge Sachs had written, a *South African Charter of Religious Rights and Freedoms* was drafted over a period of several years by a Continuation Committee of academics, religious leaders, government commissioners and international legal experts in consultation with all the major religions in South Africa, human rights groups and media bodies. The Charter was publically endorsed at a ceremony on 21 October 2010 in the presence of the Honourable Mr Dikgang Moseneke, Deputy Chief Justice of South Africa. At that occasion 91 leaders representing religious, academic, legal, human rights and media organizations in South Africa as well as international advisors endorsed the Charter. The signatories included the representatives of the Jewish Religion, 24 Christian denominations, the Muslim Judicial Council, The Ismaeli Community, The Jami'atul 'Ulama (The Council of

Muslim Theologians), the Hindu Faith (The Arya Samay SA, The Hindu Co-ordinating Council, the Sri Sathya Sai Baba Council, the Tamil Federation), The National Spiritual Council of the Baha'is of South Africa, African Traditional Religion, African Independent Churches, The National Commission for Culture, Language and Religion, Women's organizations, Youth Movements, The Education Desk of the Dutch Reformed Church, The Griqua National Council, The Griqua Independent Church, The Commission for Religious Freedom of the Evangelical Alliance of South Africa, the Evangelical Alliance of Southern Africa, Trans World Radio, Media Production Houses, The Christian Network, the Jesuit Institute, The Elected School of Amadlosi and the Interdenominational Ministries.

The total of practising religious believers represented by the signatories is estimated to be approximately 10.5 million of the total South African population.

The Charter defines the freedoms, rights, responsibilities and relationship between the state of South Africa and her citizens of religious belief. The Bill of Rights in the Constitution recognizes that everyone has the right to freedom of religion while article 234 of the Constitution makes allowance for charters of rights to be drawn up by civil organizations which may then be enacted by parliament. The Charter of Religious Rights and Freedoms is the first such charter to be developed in South Africa. Apart from addressing the freedoms and rights of religion over and against the state the Charter is also very useful for organizing the relationship between the different religions of the land. It helps them to understand that the charter is not trying to bring about one religion in the country, or that each religion can be seen as one of many routes that can be followed. The charter defines the rights and freedoms that each religion in the country can claim while working together with other religions in the public sphere for the common good of the country. The Charter is also a very useful tool for religions to determine their own identity in terms of the rights and freedoms that they can legitimately claim. If religions do not use this tool they will find that their rights and freedoms will be determined by the courts of the country. Even if parliament does not enact the Charter religions can always make it part of their own body of rules and regulations which will have to be taken into account by the courts.

The Charter consists of a preamble of 8 articles which expresses the needs for a charter. This is then followed by the 12 articles with sub-divisions of the Charter itself in which the religious rights and freedoms of religious people and communities in South Africa are stated. The Charter expresses what freedom of religion means to those of religious beliefs and of religious organizations within a South African context, as well as the daily rights, responsibilities and freedoms that are associated with this right. These include:

- The right to gather to observe religious belief.
- Freedom of expression regarding religion.
- The right of citizens to make choices according to their convictions.
- The right of citizens to change their faith.
- The right of persons to be educated in their faith.
- The right of citizens to educate their children in accordance with their philosophical and religious convictions.
- The right to refuse to perform certain duties or assist in activities that violate their religious belief.

Currently the Charter is available in Afrikaans, English, Zulu, Xhosa, Sotho, Tswana and also in German.

After the public endorsement of the Charter a *South African Council for the Promotion and Protection of Religious Rights and Freedoms* was established to oversee the process of the Charter being formally enacted into South African law. The passing of the Charter into law will mean that every religious believer and organization will have legal impartiality and protection to practice all elements of religious belief under the Constitution.

Currently the Council for the Promotion and Protection of Religious Rights and Freedoms is engaging with various financial, academic and cultural bodies in society as well as with various trade and labour unions for their support in taking the Charter to Parliament. Eventually political parties will also be engaged to inform them about the Charter and the effort to have it enacted by Parliament.

## 8. CONCLUSION

From a Reformed perspective it can be said that both the reality of plurality as well as the public sphere are part of the mandates given to man by Christ in his Word. As such it is also part of the kingdom of God and humans will be responsible to Christ for the way in which the mandate was implemented and used. That both these concepts and realities have become very important in our time can be attributed to democracy and the development of human rights.

The Reformed view of the kingdom of God and of principled pluralism offers a framework to understand and accept a public sphere and also to understand that people and organizations take part in a public sphere in an equal and free manner. The existence of a public sphere need not threaten any private religious person or religious institution. To the contrary it is very important for religions to participate in the debates of the public sphere. As we have heard from Habermas religions have a very important contribution to make for the sake of the common good.

Ferrari asked the question whether the view of the public space, especially in Europe, is not too much indebted to the notion of a public space implicit in the Christian religion – this is a very important question. In South Africa it can be historically proven that a specific Christian concept of the public space determined the historical development of the country from 1652 to 1994. But it can also be proven that the specific concept of the public space was determined by a very old concept of the relationship between church and state – the so called Constantinian model. In this model the state protects the church and for that matter the Christian religion as well, as well as all other religions within the ambit of its authority, while at the same time the state also controls a specific protected religion as well as all other religions, for its own benefit.

The development of Habermas' "naturalistic worldviews" and the revitalization of religious communities and traditions and their politicization, together with the expansion of the basic human right of religious freedom, is putting a very serious challenge to the old Constantinian model regarding the place of Christianity in society but not really allowing other religions into that space.

In South Africa the fortunate situation came up that the public space had to be defined and

reorganized when a new Constitution with the guarantee of freedom of religion was accepted in 1994 – not that it is a task yet finished. This gave the religions in the country the opportunity to come together and formulate a Charter of Religious Rights and Freedoms as a guideline for every religious person, every religious organization and also for the state to chart their way through the public space of South Africa.

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## Research into curriculum development at ten theological institutions of reformed tradition in sub-Saharan Africa linked to NetACT

### ABSTRACT

Between 2006 and 2013 an empirical study of the curriculum development (CD) of ten NetACT<sup>2</sup> theological institutions of Reformed tradition in sub-Sahara Africa was done. The researchers visited all the campuses and did curriculum development workshops (CDW) with the institutions. Questionnaires addressing worldview, value systems, missional direction, contextualisation and educational principles were used to get basic information. The research found positive learning environments on the campuses with dedicated lecturers and students. The curricula reflect that sufficient attention is given to modernism, secularism, urban and rural evangelism while a deliberate attempt is made to improve the analytical thinking skills of the students. HIV and AIDS courses are found on every campus and there is a new awareness of the importance of Community Development. However, the research also found that the curricula do not reflect emphasis on issues like poverty and children ministry. The majority of the institutions admit to discrimination against women. Nearly all institutions used curricula copied and adapted from Western institutions and added new material on an ad-hoc basis. In many cases there are no written outcomes for modules, no assessment plan and in general a lack of quality control. The success stories of the NetACT curriculum workshops are told and useful recommendations are made for the improvement of curricula.

### 1. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE FOR THE RESEARCH

NetACT formulated its mission and goals in 2001 in Lusaka (AGM Minutes 2001).<sup>3</sup> From the very beginning curriculum development and the need for high academic standards played an important part in the discussions. NetACT's first curriculum committee meeting took place in Stellenbosch on 5 and 6 Dec 2002 (NetACT Curriculum Meeting Minutes 2002). Important direction-finding decisions were taken concerning curriculum development and academic quality. The term "curriculum" was taken to refer to more than a mere list of academic courses and knowledge. It should lead to a profound change in the learner. The committee set as its goal to contribute to the upgrading of the quality of theological education of the various

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2 NetACT is the Network for African Congregational Theology, founded in 2000-2001 and presently constituted by 15 theological institutions of the Reformed and Presbyterian tradition. <http://academic.sun.ac.za/teologie/netact.html> Assessed 31 Jan 2012.

3 NetACT's AGM Minutes, Mission and Goals, Constitution etc can be consulted and downloaded from their website <http://academic.sun.ac.za/teologie/netact.html> Assessed 31 Jan 2012.

schools with the ideal to establish 'Centres of Theological Excellence' in every Southern African country. It was also decided to offer workshops on curriculum theory and teaching methods. Under the guidance of prof. AE Carl, an educationist facilitator and author (Carl 2002, 2012), empowerment of lecturers played an important role right from the start (NetACT First Curriculum Meeting Minutes, 2002:1.2). These decisions were taken within the framework of NetACT's mission statement and goals and formed the bases for the empirical research into the curricula of ten NetACT affiliated institutions.

## NETACT'S MISSION AND CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

In August 2005 at Vila Ulónguè in North-West Mozambique the following key items were identified as being part of NetACT's mission:

- The Reformed tradition;
- The upgrading of academic standards and institutional capacity building;
- A holistic and contextualised theological development;
- The training of well qualified leaders as people with integrity.

The ideal was to promote servanthood leadership and leaders with compassion. (NetACT Minutes Vila Ulónguè August, 2005, NB 122, NB 123). The ideal of missional congregations was also stressed (Decision NB131).

At the 2005 meeting Kruger du Preez was approached by NetACT to do an empirical study of the curricula of the NetACT institutions. He was asked to suggest a curriculum development framework for the network where the above mentioned broad definition of curriculum and the mission statement of the network should be adhered to. The framework should be comprehensive and to a certain degree detailed and should contain, inter alia, values, didactic principles and guidelines for the evaluation of subjects (also according to Marsh 2009:38).

This article is based on research amongst the following ten NetACT institutions done between 2006 and 2013:

1. African Bible College (ABC, Lilongwe, Malawi),
2. HEFSIBA – Instituto Superior Cristão (Mozambique),
3. Instituto Superior Emanuel Unido (ISEU, Huambo, Angola),
4. Instituto Superior de Teologia Evangélica no Lubango (ISTEL, Lubango, Angola),
5. Josophat Mwale Theological Institute (JMTI, Nkhoma, Malawi),
6. Justo Mwale Theological University College (JMTUC, Lusaka, Zambia),
7. Murray Theological College (MThC, Morgenster, Zimbabwe),
8. Namibia Evangelical Theological Seminary (NETS, Windhoek, Namibia),
9. Reformed Institute for Theological Training (RITT, Eldoret, Kenya);
10. Zomba Theological College (ZTC, Zomba, Malawi).

The University of Stellenbosch's Faculty of Theology in South Africa also forms part of NetACT, but was not considered for the final research as they turned out to be quite different from the other institutions as far as, inter alia, their position as part of a secular University, their advanced infrastructure, their extensive library and their emphasis on research are concerned. At the workshops where they participated and from the questionnaires that their delegation completed, it was clear that they often represented a different point of view compared to the other NetACT institutions. The researcher also took into consideration that the Faculties of Theology in South Africa undergo rigorous HEQC accreditation processes. The ideal of the NetACT institutions is that their diplomas and degrees will be accredited by the South African Universities and the HEQC. With this in mind, the researcher thought not to incorporate them in the research as it will lead to a distorted general picture of what is going on in the majority of the NetACT institutions.

*The variance within the test sample that is being studied has an influence on the test sample error. The smaller the variance within groups, the bigger is the chance that the specific test sample statistics will not differ substantially from the parametric data; in other words, the chances of a test sample error will be less (Smit, 1983:180. KdP translation).*

### 3. GOAL OF THE RESEARCH

The goal of the research was:

*To empower staff to develop a curriculum framework in which all the theological institutions of NetACT will be able to develop their own relevant curricula that will be integrative, normative, missional and contextual and that will enhance high academic standards and lead to spiritual maturity.*

This goal necessitated an empirical study in order to describe the state of affairs at the different institutions. The question that guided the research was to ascertain to what extent curricula were Reformed, integrative and normative, missional and contextual. The last part of the research was then directed towards the evaluation of general educational principles that should eventually lead to a respectable academic standards and spiritual maturity.

### 4. METHODOLOGY

The theological-methodological framework of the research is described in NetACT's first publication (Hendriks 2004:19-34). The research is done as Practical Theology but reflects aspects of Systematic Theology and Missiology. Curriculum development is a discipline linked to education and as such the work reflects an interdisciplinary study between theology and education. General educational principles for curriculum development were applied in the designing of the questionnaires.

#### 4.1 Workshops and Questionnaires

The Executive Committee of NetACT organised curriculum development workshops at strategic places in southern Africa thereby enabling the ten theological institutions to attend.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> The programs, content and in some cases even the evaluations of these workshops are available on the NetACT website <http://academic.sun.ac.za/teologie/netact.html>. In many cases representatives from other seminaries also attended the workshops, especially the two held in Angola and at one of the workshops

The researcher was asked to be the main facilitator of these workshops and used questionnaires as well as guided group discussions to obtain more information and views from the delegates of the institutions.

Many of the questions were open-ended requesting the views of staff and church delegates on issues. As such most of the work was qualitative in nature.

The questionnaires covered subjects like: worldview, doctrine, missional orientation, contextualisation, administrative policy & practice, leadership functions, syllabus content, lecturer's effectiveness, professional development, teaching resources, facilities, and services offered. The questions provided information about the reality, the problems and the perceptions of the parties involved. The eventual goal was to empower them to redesign their curricula according to the norms and goals set by their institutions. The results of the answers to the questionnaires together with literature provided to institutions, analyses of their documents and personal guidance eventually led to the processes through which curricula were contextualized at the institutions. It is an on-going process.

#### 4.2 Working in teams

The researcher, normally accompanied by Prof Hendriks, Executive Director of NetACT and Prof Carl (vice-dean Faculty of Education, Stellenbosch University), as well as knowledgeable people in the field, visited the different campuses of the institutions. We worked in teams. NetACT got hold of different specialists to assist the researcher in presenting the workshops. Amongst them were:

- Dr Douwe Visser, Theological Secretary of the World Communion of Reformed Churches taught on *A Reformed curriculum*;
- Prof Nico Koopman, Dean Faculty of Theology, Stellenbosch University, on *The curriculum should address the needs of the Church*;
- Prof Jurgens Hendriks on *Missional curricula and the influence of globalisation*;
- Prof Arend Carl on *Different elements of curriculum development*;
- Prof Dr Hendrik Bosman (Stellenbosch University) on *Curriculum development principles and the Old Testament*;
- Antoinette du Preez (HEFSIBA ICHE) on *Curriculum development and the need of good administration*;
- Dr Joe Simfukwe from ACTEA, Zambia and Dr Stephany Black from ACTEA, Kenya on *ACTEA and accreditation requirements*;
- Dr Manie Taute from Portugal (IBP) on *Analytical thinking and advanced theological studies*;
- Reverend Basilius Kasera from NETS, Windhoek, Namibia on *The accreditation process in Namibia* and
- Prof. Dr. Elna Mounton (Stellenbosch University) on *Women in the academic field*.

The essence of the research and eventual transformation of the institutions took place at these

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held in Nigeria. It is clear that there is a dire need for this kind of workshop all over Africa.

workshops. The fact that the work was done in teams and in a spirit of cooperation in a sharing mode (not a “telling” one), made all the difference.

### 4.3 Visits to different countries

The Zambia visits took place during the Lusaka NetACT Annual General Meeting in August 2007 and during a personal visit by the researcher to Justo Mwale Theological University College in December 2010. South Africa and especially the campus of the Theological Faculty of the Stellenbosch University were often visited and the curriculum development workshop (from now on CDW) outside Stellenbosch on the 28<sup>th</sup> June 2009 was facilitated by the researcher and Prof Hendrik Bosman. At this occasion questionnaires were distributed and completed by participants from all the attending NetACT institutions.

During the extensive Angola journeys in 2004 and 2010, ISTEEL and ISEU were visited. A CDW was held on the campus of ISTEEL at Lubango from 25 -28 January 2011 and on 21 – 24 January 2013 at Caluequembe. On the way to Angola (2010) the researchers visited NETS in Windhoek, Namibia and had in depth discussions with the Academic Dean (Rev Simon Gilham) who took the lead and implemented a very thorough CDW process after which NETS were the first tertiary institution in Namibia to receive accreditation from their national Department of Education.

Vila Ulónguè Mozambique, where the researcher resides, is only 40 km from the Malawian border. Three of the selected institutions are in Malawi. As a result the researcher paid regular visits to ABC in Lilongwe, Zomba Theological College and Josaphat Mwale Theological Institute at Nkhoma. A fully fledged CDW took place on the campus of ABC in Lilongwe, Malawi from 13 –17 January 2011 with representatives of all the NetACT institutions under discussion present.

A curriculum development workshop was held at Morgenster in Zimbabwe from 13 – 17 March 2010 for the sole purpose of helping Murray Theological College (MThC). As with the majority of workshops, the researcher was assisted by his wife Antoinette du Preez who is qualified and experienced in the field of administration. From 16 – 20 August 2010, the RITT (Reformed Institute for Theological Training) campus outside Eldoret in Kenya was visited and a CDW held for the lecturers, personnel and alumni of the institution. The MThC and RITT CDWs were the most satisfying and effective. One could focus on their particular needs. (See in this regard No.7: The positive impact of the CD workshops).

### 4.4 Evaluating the CD orientation

The first presentation at CDWs was on the different curriculum orientations that an institution could follow. Institutions were asked to evaluate themselves. Were Traditional/ Technical, Deliberate/Progressive or Constructivist in orientation.<sup>5</sup> Where would they like to be?

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<sup>5</sup> The definitions of the orientations are:

1. Traditional orientation: Schools need to return to basic education and high standards – back to the essentials. Schools must systematically teach basic knowledge and not be afraid to stress hard work and discipline. Knowledge consists of facts, concepts and skills that must be mastered through memorization and drill. Knowledge is generally regarded as an objective, impersonal, many times value-free commodity to be grasped. Outcomes are very specific. Lecturers are the technicians whose task is solely to follow the step-by-step instructions in their manuals
2. Progressive orientation: Emphasis is here on a relevant curriculum content. The progressivists see knowledge as more than a product that has to be mastered. Students, they believe, must interact with the world around them and interpret it. Questions that progressivists ask are: What should be the overall aims of education? How can education help humanity achieve a just and compassionate society? What is the

This turned out to be a very valuable exercise. It delineated the different educational orientations of the NetACT institutions and it served as a good starting point for the delegates to know the researcher's definition of curriculum development. It also motivated them to complete the questionnaires.

To eventually help the institutions to develop a relevant curriculum framework one needs to have a good understanding of the specific context of every institution and the existing curricula and curriculum development practices. The questionnaires helped in this regard.

## **4.5 The questionnaires**

### **4.5.1 The distribution of the questionnaires**

Some of the curriculum development workshops were conducted at the annual meetings of NetACT. As such it provided an opportunity to do the research when all the institutions were present. The researcher was involved with NetACT from the beginning which created trust. Even so, it was stated that the data and personal comments gathered will be handled with discretion and confidentiality and that the names of the institutions will not be directly linked to the published comments except with their permission.

### **4.5.2 The different questionnaires**

Of importance were especially the first and fourth questionnaires:

**The first questionnaire** was called the Value Questionnaire and was distributed between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> August, 2006 in Windhoek, Namibia during a Annual General Meeting (AGM) of NetACT. Values of the International Council of Accrediting Agencies for Evangelical Theological Education (ICAA) in their "Manifesto" were taken as a point of departure and delegates were asked to evaluate their institution on the following: Worldview; Missional Orientation; Cultural Appropriateness; Attentiveness to the church; Theological Grounding; Holistic Curricularising; Spiritual Formation; Service Orientation; Creativity in Teaching and Assessment.

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right (moral) thing to do? They consider curriculum just to be a general guide. They see human beings as important subjects rather than mere objects. Rather than "mastering" knowledge, students establish meaning for their lives through understanding and interpretation. Curriculum involves interaction between teachers and learners, between learners and learners and between learners and curriculum content. The focus of teaching is more the making of meaning through learning than the transmission of concepts and skills.

The basic consumption is that no one has all the truth. Human nature and human learning are seen as complex. Curriculum documents are only seen as general guides. Lecturers use their professional and considered judgement in determining what is best for a particular situation. As in the case of Paul Freire, progressivists oppose "banking education" and "narration sickness" by which teachers deposit information into the passive minds of their pupils. Students should not only be active participants, but in doing so should develop a critical consciousness.

3. The Constructivist orientation: The Constructivist orientation goes even further than the Deliberative/ Progressive orientation and through social and environmental interactions, students progressively build up and restructure their own views and schemes of the world around them and try to make sense of it all. Here one will typically get a lecturer entering a classroom without a list of objectives or content but with one or two potentially big ideas or problems which the students have to investigate. Students should not only be active participants, but in doing so, should develop a critical consciousness according to them (Du Preez 2013:45-46).

**The fourth questionnaire**, known as the Curriculum Checklist Questionnaire, was the most extensive one (205 questions). This questionnaire was contextualised from the Checklist Questionnaire of Tanner & Tanner (2007). This Questionnaire was first distributed at the Stellenbosch CDW on the 28<sup>th</sup> July, 2009. Then followed the Murray Theological College CDW at Morgenster, Zimbabwe from the 28<sup>th</sup> March to the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2010. Some questionnaires were distributed in Lubango at the ISTELEL campus in Angola on the 27<sup>th</sup> June 2010. This questionnaire was distributed at the RITT CDW at Eldoret, Kenya from 16 – 20 August 2010 and then followed the Lilongwe CDW at the ABC campus in Malawi from 13 – 17 January 2011. The Lubango CDW at the ISTELEL campus in Angola lasted from 25 – 28 January 2011 where the questionnaire was distributed in the Portuguese language. The last time the Questionnaire was distributed was at the Caluquembe CDW in Angola which lasted from the 21 – 24 January 2013.

The Questions were categorised under the following subsections: philosophy and doctrine; administrative policy and practice; curriculum renewal; climate for curriculum renewal; leadership roles and functions; lecture effectiveness and classroom climate; curriculum development; professional development; teaching-learning resources; facilities and services. Under the subdivision: philosophy and doctrine, questions were asked to establish the worldview and doctrine, the missional direction, the inclusiveness, the human rights, the involvement in ecology issues and the community involvement of the institutions. Questions were also asked about the spiritual lives of the students.

With every questionnaire participants were given the liberty to write comments. These comments revealed a great deal about the situation at the different theological institutions and were incorporated in the conclusions below.

The results of questionnaires, especially questionnaires 1 and 4, will now be attended to. The idea is to display the results in a narrative way with some critical remarks and evaluation.

## 5 RESULTS AND CRITICAL REMARKS DERIVED FROM THE QUESTIONNAIRES

The results are divided into four sections; the results that deal with the basic theology that operates on the campuses, the missional focus of the curriculum, the degree of contextualisation and in the last instance a reflection on the extent of compliance with the current educational principles.

### 5.1 Results referring to the theological approach and worldview

The NetACT institutions, to a high degree, pride themselves in being Reformed but agree that they should think more thoroughly about the theological foundations of their curricula. It is indeed of concern for the researcher that there is not always a deliberate theological framework in which to develop curricula. He proposes a reformational, African, missional framework for curriculum development for the NetACT affiliated institutions. The Angolan institutions do not use the term Reformed to describe their theology and feel more comfortable with a “Kingdom orientated” theology. According to the general evaluation of all the institutions the curricula should model and promote much more effectively a holistic biblical pattern of thought; that is a more comprehensive, Reformed based worldview. They are in agreement that salvation in Christ should transform or renew the whole of creation and indicated that this principle is to a certain degree reflected in their curricula. In line with a Reformed worldview the institutions agree that life should not be divided into a sacred and secular realm and that this dualism has a negative result on public life.

It is indeed worrying that the majority of the institutions accept publically the status quo of the political life and decisions of the Governments in sub-Saharan Africa out of fear to be marginalised. The researcher witnessed how a Government was referred to as “our beloved Government” by the principal of a NetACT institution when the Government officials were present, whilst the same principal is rather critical of the governing political party. In Angola the delegates to a workshop openly said that they cannot afford to question decisions of the Government and do not have the courage to do so in public. Democratic principles are held in high regard according to the questionnaires, but there is an admittance that justice and human rights are not sufficiently emphasized in curricula which result, as indicated, that the student’s public and prophetic voices are not heard in their societies as it should when they became spiritual leaders.

There is a healthy emphasis on the spiritual growth of the students and they are encouraged to participate in all the spiritual activities offered on campus and in the church. Spiritual maturity, however, is not the point of departure and main end of the curricula. The researcher proposes a framework where the whole curriculum is written with spiritual, emotional and intellectual maturity as the main goal.

The Biblical principle of caring for the marginalised and the poor is adhering to but just to a certain limited extend. An inclusive approach towards disadvantaged students and HIV and Aids infected people is prominent but the same cannot be said about women and gay people. Some theological institutions still do not allow women to study theology, one of the reasons being that the main supporting churches do not allow women as pastors. On the other hand, it is encouraging to find some of the most prophetic voices for women rights in sub-Saharan Africa coming from some of the lecturers of NetACT affiliated institutions. The most extreme negative results from all the questionnaires were in relationship to gay and lesbian rights and their acceptance in the church. It is clear that a theology of inclusion is not applicable as far as gays and lesbians are concerned. The researcher proposes an inclusive, theological approach to form the foundation of the whole curriculum and more informed debates/workshops on these sensitive issues which may curb the exclusive, judgmental prevailing approach.

Quite alarming is the fact that poverty is not part and parcel of the core curricula of the institutions. The researcher finds this strange given the extreme poor countries and societies in which the majority of the NetACT institutions find themselves. Church leaders will not be able to contribute towards the economical upliftment of their countries and towards community development if the biblical position towards the poor, the causes of poverty, the ethic of work and wealth distribution etc. is not being studied scientifically.

Although the institutions are in favour of a servanthood ethos in leadership training, they admit that there is no deliberate effort to make it a central part of the training. It is therefore not strange that “abusas,” the word used for pastors in the Chewa language and used in Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia, as well as synodical committee members, General Secretaries etc. are often seen as little kings following an autocratic leadership style.

The vision and mission statement of the NetACT institutions are indicated as a point of departure for curriculum development but is surprisingly not well known by the leadership. Attention should be given to the writing of a vision and mission statement that reflects the ethos of the institutions and of which lecturers should take ownership. This should then indeed serve as a guiding line when writing curricula.

## **5.2 Results referring to a missional approach**

Although the NetACT institutions are in favour of a holistic missional approach as an integral part of their curricula, they admit that their curricula cannot be described as missional orientated. This becomes *inter alia* clear when one discovers the little attention that unreached people groups are getting in the curricula. On the campuses little is done to use the facilities to reach the surrounding community. The practical work of the students is directed towards outreaches within congregations, is receiving the due attention and is well monitored.

It is heartening to see that the study of traditional religions in Africa and the planting of new churches or congregations are high up on the priority list of the institutions. The prominence of Community Development in nearly all the institutions reveals a commitment to be involved in community affairs. The researcher questions though the practical and contextual content of some of these materials.

The ideal is that a deliberate effort should be made to write the curriculum of every subject with a missional focus in mind.

## **5.3 Results referring to the process of contextualisation**

The fact that, with one exception, NetACT institutions admit that their curricula are copies of Western orientated theological institutions makes contextualisation more complex and more challenging. The adoption and implementation of pre-packaged, segmented, instructional programs are popular and as such are not contextualised. Deliberate efforts are though made to contextualise material in the classrooms. Although contextualisation is very high on the priority list of the institutions, the curricula and study material are not sufficiently contextualised. The inclusion of rural and urban evangelism in curricula reveals a deliberate effort towards contextualization.

Institutions, when designing their curricula, do not always take the ministerial needs of their churches into account. One should think that the basic point of departure should be to consult the churches about their pastoral needs before one decides on a curriculum and the content of books. This is apparently not always the case and should get serious attention. One suggestion is for students to distribute questionnaires during their practical work to church elders and church members to establish the real needs of which the curricula should take close notice.

In line with a more field orientated approach students get enough time to converse in groups in class situations and the teaching of diverse preaching styles reveal a deliberate effort to be relevant and contextual.

Nearly all the students are receiving their training in their second or even third language of choice. The researcher proposes that one should try to at least compile a dictionary with the theological vocabulary in all the indigenous languages of the students to contribute to the contextualisation of theology.

It is a worrying aspect that youth and especially children ministry is lacking in some curricula and in others it forms a small section of Practical Theology. It seems as if the institutions in general do not have a vision for children ministry and do not see the wonderful future of the church with dedicated and enthusiastic children and youth. There are exceptions. At one institution students are doing two years of practical work amongst the children and accompany the children on evangelistic campaigns in the villages.

## 5.4 Results referring to the educational principles and practices

Nine of the institutions regard themselves as still traditional in their general orientation but with a desire to move towards a progressive educational system. Since the start of the curriculum workshops there is a notable effort at some institutions to be more progressive in their orientation.

There is a desire to motivate students towards independent thinking. It is reported that lectures have generally advanced from just giving information to the phase of facilitating ideas. The awareness of teaching to improve the analytical and critical abilities of the students is a welcoming trend. This is done by utilising open answer questions, as well as class and group discussions, assignments and guest lecturers. Although the institutions are all in favour of the principle of developing higher thinking skills, only a few are deliberately designing their test and exam questions accordingly. Only one institution uses the taxonomy of Bloom (1956) or the revision (Anderson, et al. 2000) as a basis for assessment and setting questions. The latter taxonomy was being promoted at all the workshops facilitated by the authors of this article.

The lecturers are of the opinion that their post-graduate theological studies at universities in other countries, especially at the University of Stellenbosch, the University of the Free State and the Northwest University, encourage them to think more analytically and it is reflected in their lectures.

Curriculum designers at NetACT institutions often meet with resistance when curriculum changes are proposed and additional subjects and content are therefore often included on an ad-hoc basis without the necessary thinking processes. Lecturers do take ownership of the content of the subjects that they are lecturing, that is according to questionnaires, but are not involved in the curriculum development processes and the choice of content which is a stumbling block in the empowerment process of the lecturers.

The institutions regard strategic flexibility of their curricula as important and the majority of the respondents are in favour of curricula to nurture church leaders for various roles. There is, however, agreement that the current curricula do not cater for this need.

In only five of the ten NetACT institutions under survey outcomes have been written for modules. It is clear that this need urgent attention also to promote analytical and critical thinking. In the majority of countries lecturers are complaining about the lack of analytical thinking and the ability of first year students to analyse material. This is mostly due to a 'parrotting' system in secondary schools.

There are by far not enough books nor up-to-date journals in the libraries of all the NetACT institutions. This is especially due to a lack of funds and hinders the whole process of accreditation at, for example an institution like ACTEA (Accrediting Council for Theological Education in Africa). ACTEA expect at least 5% of the income of an institution to go to the buying of new books and theological journals. As far as the researcher could establish it is not happening at the NetACT institutions and should become the ideal. Internet access for students remains a big problem in the majority of the NetACT institutions and prevents thorough scientific research.

It is clear to the researcher that quality control and continuous assessment need much more

attention at the NetACT institutions. An Internal Quality Evaluation Committee is suggested to help in this regard. Old students and other educational external experts could also form part of this body. In four of the institutions no official evaluation of lecturers is done. Some institutions leave it to the Academic Dean to do the evaluation while, in rare cases, students are asked for their opinion of the lecturers and their classes. In general, the NetACT institutions were unable to present deliberate assessment policies. Continuous assessment is receiving attention, although not nearly enough.

Lecturers confess to a lack of creativity and variety in their teaching methods. Little is being done to provide in-service training in this regard. A two hour session on one Saturday per month is suggested to bring lecturers up to date with the newest administration policies and pedagogical principles also regarding curriculum development. This is especially useful to temporary lecturers that often feel themselves on the periphery of decision making as far as curriculum matters are concerned. Lecturers are complaining that no orderly planned induction orientation of new lecturers is taking place at NetACT institutions.

The lack of research by lecturers outside that of their formal studies at universities has been proven by the results. Some lecturers are just lecturing on material in the manuals without any further research or wider knowledge of the study material.

It is evident through the questionnaires but also the personal observation by the researcher that there exist good relations between lecturers and students and this contributes to a productive learning environment. Students uphold high moral values and are eager to learn. Lecturers generally teach with enthusiasm and are role models. Principals are generally positively evaluated by the lecturers. They are involved and supportive of curriculum development. The NetACT goal to involve the professional staff and church leadership more in curriculum development is promising.

According also to the research done by Hendriks et al (2012:27), the ratio of lecturers to students at NetACT theological institutions are 1:8. This is a very healthy educational ratio but the question of financial sustainability is another perspective that needs consideration. The researcher recommends the establishing of other faculties to make the institutions viable. At NetACT institutions where this is the case, like HEFSIBA in Mozambique where the researcher is lecturing, the Faculty of Psychology and the Faculty of Management and Economics do not only provide good income but serves also as vehicles of Christian witness to the community.

Good academic administration is not always getting the attention that it deserves as is for example clear that job descriptions are not in place at all the institutions. There was an improvement in the quality of official documents of the institutions also due to NetACT workshops that addressed this issue. There is, however, room for improvement at some institutions concerning their annual calendars, student and lecturer guides, curricula content publications etc.

## 5.5 A general evaluation of the results

Theron (2012) quotes Du Preez about the kind of curriculum that should be envisaged for theological institutions:

*It should be value-driven according to Reformed principles; it should reflect a holistic and integrated, but also inclusive approach; it should be written according to outcome-based*

*principles where the affective outcome should be prominent; it should be missional in nature and contextualised within the Sub-Saharan African context; and it should comply with high academic standards with emphasis on the enhancement and development of higher thinking skills.*

Reflecting in general on the results and critical remarks derived from the questionnaires, one could conclude that the curricula of the NetACT affiliated institutes in general comply with the requirements of being value-driven according to Reformed principles. There is, however, a lack of a well-thought through holistic and integrated curriculum at some institutions which lead to a fragmented curriculum and an *add-on* tendency with ad hoc decisions about curricula. If cognitive, emotional and spiritual maturity is seen as the main goal one can overcome part of this problem. There is room for improvement as far as inclusive thinking is concerned. The lack of this approach sometimes lead to decisions taken in a rather legalistic and fundamentalistic way where women, children and homosexual people often turn out to be the victims. Few institutions adhere to the good practice of writing outcomes for every module and where it is done the affective outcomes are neglected. Although it is evident that the churches that send their members to study for becoming pastors are quite missional by nature, the researchers are of the opinion that not all the modules are written with a missional scope in mind. Often it is left to a discipline like missiology to address the need for a missional approach.

There is a genuine desire and attempt at all the NetACT institutions to be contextual within the sub-Saharan African environment. The problem is that it is often left to the initiative of the lecturers in the classrooms to contextualise the material. More serious attempts should be made to make use of already contextualised material. It is startling to observe that obvious things like children and youth as well as poverty, are not by far getting the attention it deserves in the curricula.

Taking into account that in many countries where NetACT institutions are located, the parrot system of teaching was followed, it is rewarding to see the level of abstract thinking of some of the senior students at the majority of institutions. A lot more can be done to stimulate higher thinking skills by making use of more comprehension type of questions in the classes and in the tests and exams. The researchers are of the opinion that Bloom's taxonomy, as also taught at the different curriculum development (CD) workshops, when used effectively, can make a positive contribution in the development of more analytical thinking.

## 6. THE POSITIVE IMPACT OF THE CD WORKSHOPS

Evidence of the positive impact of the workshop was, inter alia, given by Rev. Henry Murray the Principal of Murray Theological College at Morgenster in Zimbabwe. At the NetACT Curriculum Development Workshop on the ABC campus in Lilongwe, Malawi on the 14<sup>th</sup> January 2011 in a report with the title: *The changes that the NetACT curriculum workshop brought to Murray Theological College (MThC)*, he elaborated on the drastic changes that took place at their institution in a short period of time after the CDW. An Academic Committee was formed and an Academic Dean appointed, job descriptions for the Principal, vice-Principal and Academic Dean came in place, as well as for administrative staff. A credit system and coding of subjects was invented. An assessment system for lecturers as well as for students was launched. A professional Study Guide and Prospectus was published. The Academic Committee is evaluating now the contents of each subject on an ongoing basis and committees were formed for each aspect of curriculum.

In his conclusion statement Murray appealed to the other NetACT institutions:

*Go for it! CD will change and improve your institution. Be willing to change and be changed. It will take much time and energy, you will have to adapt, but you will grow. CD is like conversion; not a once-off but a continuous process.*

Although the empirical study was done amongst ten theological institutions linked to the NetACT, the researchers are of the opinion that the findings should be applicable to many church owned theological schools in sub-Saharan Africa. Curriculum development is indeed a challenge all over our continent.

## 7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations need to be considered by NetAct and theological schools: It is recommended that:

1. curricula are developed and written from a value-missional-contextual approach;
2. use is made of Bloom's taxonomy in order to enhance the development of higher thinking skills in their students
3. internal Quality Control committees are formed and established;
4. accreditation with their Educational Departments, as well as with other organisations like ACTEA is sought and to use ACTEA's self-evaluation guide in the process;
5. regular workshops on curriculum development is held;
6. lecturers are motivated to do quality research through "Communities of Practice." and that Wenger's (2000: 230-232) social theory of learning in 'communities of practice' is consulted in this regard. A research community could be a research team or a group of colleagues who work together within a research unit or it can be a group of researchers from different institutions and different countries.
7. Institutes of Christian Higher Education are established within current theological training institutions as it can have a positive impact on the society as a whole and help the institution to be financially more independent.

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## KEY WORDS

NetACT

ACTEA

curriculum development workshops

curriculum framework

worldview and values

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contextualization

traditional, progressive and constructivist orientations

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## The contribution of the pioneer missionary, Reverend AJ Rousseau – 1925 to 1940 to the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) mission in Sekhukhuneland<sup>1</sup>

### ABSTRACT

In this article the story of the pioneer missionary in Sekhukhuneland, Rev Abraham Rousseau is told. He was a missionary of the Dutch Reformed Church in Sekhukhuneland from 1926 to 1940. This story deals with the preparation stage of Rousseau's work, the building of a parsonage, school, hostel, a small hospital and accommodation for the staff, and the expansion of the mission work as far as possible into Sekhukhuneland. Soon 21 outposts, including schools were established. Attention is given to the black evangelists who were the mission's fore-front workers. Attention is given to the relation between the white and black mission workers in the historical phase in which Rousseau played a role, and how these relations developed in later phases.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Towards the end of the 20th century, David J Bosch (1991:7) stated "...we require a new vision to break out of the present stalemate toward a different kind of missionary involvement." He added that this did not mean that we have to jettison everything generations of Christians have done before us, that it would indeed be "... neither possible nor proper to attempt a revised definition of mission without taking a thorough look at the vicissitudes of missions and the missionary idea during the past twenty centuries of Christian church history" (p8).

At the beginning of the 21st century, efforts that were undertaken in the 20th century to overcome the prevailing dualisms between different aspects of the life, work and faith has started to gather momentum. The term "integral mission" that is used by the Lausanne movement can be seen as part of this movement to understand the unity of the mission of the church: "The concept of 'integral mission' assisted the Lausanne movement to progress to a more comprehensive understanding of mission. 'Integral mission means discerning, proclaiming, and living out the Biblical truth that the gospel is God's good news, through the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ, for individual persons, and for society, and for creation. All three are broken and suffering because of sin; all three are included in the redeeming love and mission of God; all three must be part of the comprehensive mission of Gods people'" (Lausanne III 2011:13) (Niemandt 2011:60).

In this article attention is given to the work of one missionary, Rev Abraham Rousseau. He was a missionary of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) in Sekhukhuneland from 1926 to 1940. An

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<sup>1</sup> This article is based on a PhD thesis, *History of the DRC mission in Sekhukhuneland and Church development 1875 – 1994*, that the writer completed at the Faculty of Theology, University of Pretoria, with dr AS van Niekerk of the Department Science of Religion and Missiology as study leader.

effort is made, in the words of Bosch, "... to take a thorough look at the vicissitudes of missions and the missionary idea" of that time, as it finds expression in the work of a pioneer of the Dutch Reformed Church's mission in the area where the author of this article has served as a missionary from 1977. It is an effort by the author to understand his own living world better.

Attention will be given to the way in which the work of Rousseau was remembered and interpreted about half a century later in the congregation.

The work of Rousseau will be seen in the context of its time, and attention will be given to the way that the approach to mission has changed subsequently, with reference to the concept of "integral mission."

Lastly, the question will be asked what we can learn from his legacy in our search for an appropriate vision for mission in our times.

## 2. THE CONTEXT IN WHICH ROUSSEAU WORKED

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) experienced a strong missionary movement that focused mostly on Southern Africa; there was a gradual increase of activities, a climax in the sixties and a dramatic decline since the seventies, as can be seen in the closing down of many missionary structures (van Niekerk 1997:408). Saayman (2007) divides the Dutch Reformed Mission into four waves: the early First Wave (1779 – 1834); the Second Wave (1867-1939) in which the church started to focus its mission on areas outside the then Cape Colony; the Third Wave (1954 – 1976) in which the mission of the church had to cross the borders between the white and black communities in the apartheid era, and the Fourth Wave, that started in 1990, where the church is searching for a way forward, and where it became popular to send missionaries to far away countries. Rousseau clearly stood within the Second Wave, and can be seen as a pioneer of the church's mission.

Rousseau served in the army of the "Zuid Afrikaanse Republiek" (the Republic of the Transvaal) during the Anglo-Boer War of 1899 – 1902. During the war he became gravely ill. He prayed to God to be healed and took an oath that if he was healed, he would return to the Pedi people of Sekhukhuneland as a missionary.

Rousseau was a good example of the way in which the missionary movement of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the DRC originated in the Anglo-Boer War, which played a prominent role in the Second Wave (Saayman 2007:57-62). The war led to a spiritual awakening in the church which found expression in a dedication to mission. According to Crafford (2982:144), many souls were led to introspection and repentance in the commandos and in the concentration- and prisoner of war camps that they saw as punishment of God. As the dedication to mission continued to grow deep into the second half of the century, it went through various phases and took on different forms. Kaboet, son of Rousseau, mentioned in a tape recording made by the author in 1977 that Rousseau stayed on the farm Eensgevonden near Nebo, together with other desolate farmers who were established in the area by the government after the Anglo-Boer War.

He left the farm to study theology at Wellington and was subsequently sent by the DRC to Nyasaland, now Malawi, where he worked for the next 15 years. In 1925 he responded positively to a call from the "Transvaalse Vroue Sendingvereniging" to start mission work in the area. After he had returned as missionary to the area, he initially lived on his own farm, Eensgevonden. His brother, Frikkie Rousseau, who owned the neighbouring farm, Weltevreden, now called

Kgarathuthu, was already staying there before Rousseau was called. This whole area was called Zoetvelden.

The historian Herman Giliomee wrote that, in the 1920's, Professor Johannes du Plessis supplied the framework for the idea that the DRC was in essence a missionary church with a broad social responsibility. This was before the rise of Afrikaner nationalism in the 1930's that led the DRC into political byways. The practice of separated churches, schools, and so on had existed long before that, but the term apartheid in its modern meaning first appeared in print in 1929, in a paper read by JC du Plessis (not Johannes du Plessis) at a mission conference of the DR Church of the Free State (see also Saayman 2007: 70). Until then, none of the DRC leaders propagated that the practice of separate schools and congregations be extended into separate political institutions. Johannes du Plessis, who is seen by Giliomee as the most authoritative voice in missions at the time, used every opportunity to oppose discrimination based on nationalism (Giliomee 2004:405, 408, 209).

Rousseau's work can well be described as missionary work with a broad social responsibility. He built churches, schools and a hospital. He continued the practice of his time of having separate schools for white and black children, but there is little evidence that he saw that in terms of political ideology, although nationally, Afrikaner nationalism was already growing. Neither did he get involved in strong opposition to racial discrimination, as Johannes du Plessis did.

### 3. THE PREPARATION FOR MISSION WORK IN SEKHUKHUNELAND

The foreign mission work of the DRC of the Cape Synod was handed over to the 'Nederduitsch Hervormede of Gereformeerde Kerk van Suid-Afrika' in 1932. The first mission secretary was Rev D Theron (Keet 1942:197). The emerging movement received a strong impetus with the heightened involvement of the work of the 'Transvaal Vroue Sendingvereniging' in 1926.

In 1916 Rev A P Burger, who had a passion for Sekhukhuneland, together with Rev JHM Stofberg, requested the TVSV to send a missionary or evangelist to Secoecoens Mountain. The Executive Committee of the TVSV replied as follows:

*The Committee decided to request the TVSV (Transvaal Women's Mission Association) congress to maintain the salary of a missionary for Secoecoens Mountain, provided that the missionary should stay at the mountain with the people and that he must be able to speak their language – (author's own translation).*

Mrs HS Bosman, who was the chairperson of the congress, mentioned that it was interesting how the Bapedi people desired the white man's church, notwithstanding the fact that their chief was involved in a fearless battle with the ZAR government. The proposal of the committee was approved with a recommendation for a special collection (Louw 1972:14).

Mrs Bosman referred to the continuous tensions between chief Sekhukhune and the government. The DRC mission did not get involved in these conflicts, but developed good relations with several other chiefs, as well as with the government.

In 1923 the Portuguese government closed all mission stations in Portuguese East Africa. The same year Rev D Theron, the Mission Secretary of the DRC at that time, suggested that the Lord wanted them to concentrate on the thousands of indigenous people in their own country. He asked the ladies of the TVSV to take full responsibility for the mission in Sekhukhuneland.

In 1923 the congress decided to establish a mission station at Nebo. Nebo is in Sekhukhuneland, and there were police and magistrate's offices. It was thought to be the ideal place for a mission station. At the next congress in Heidelberg, in 1924, the mission secretary reported that everything was in place and that the station would be erected under the auspices of the TVSV as soon as a missionary was available (Louw 1972:15).

#### 4. REVEREND AND MRS AJ ROUSSEAU WERE CALLED TO SEKHUKHUNELAND

With the reports tabled before them, the TVSV decided to call a full-time missionary to Sekhukhuneland. A call was made to Rev and Mrs AJ Rousseau, missionaries in Nyasaland (Malawi) in 1925. The Rousseau's however, did not accept this calling.

Not long after this, the Rousseau's received a second call, and this time they seriously considered accepting. A nephew of Rousseau reminded him of a promise he had made to God during the Anglo-Boer War that he would enter the ministry and serve God in Sekhukhuneland, if he was healed from his illness. He accepted this call in 1925. He was inaugurated on 21 February 1926 at Ermelo as the first missionary of the TVSV in Sekhukhuneland (Crafford 1982:536).

According to Rousseau's son Kaboet, his father immediately erected a school for the children of the farm workers when he arrived at Eensgevonden in 1925. The Rousseau children attended school on the adjacent farm, Weltevreden. The school was built with soil and is still there.

The Nchabeleng brothers wrote as follows:

*His children went to school at Weltevreden. At that time it was a school for white children only. Their children were Hellen, Kaboet, Joubert and Charlotte, two boys and two girls. They all studied Sepedi. Kaboet became director at the Lebowa Department of Education, Joubert became secretary for Bantu Education and Charlotte became a lecturer at the Setotolwane Teacher's Training College, and also taught at the Secondary School of Setotolwane. Since her marriage, Helen went to the white areas, and we do not know what happened to her. We heard that she also had a leadership post somewhere - (author's own translation).*

#### 5. REPORTS TO THE TVSV

At a presbytery meeting in Lydenburg, Rev GD Worst of Lydenburg pleaded that the new missionary, Rev Rousseau, should start his mission station at Maandagshoek, in the east, while Rev AP Burger of Middelburg pleaded for the western side of the Leolo Mountains. The presbytery's decision was to send the four missionaries in their service, Rev Bruwer, Rev van Schalkwyk, Rev Rousseau and Rev Maritz, to investigate the area in order to make a recommendation. They travelled by car to Rousseau's brother at Zoetvelden, from where they proceeded by ox-wagon. This story is told by Rev Maritz in his biography (1977:16). From Zoetvelden they undertook an extensive tour of the Leolo Mountain and the lower Olifants River to find a suitable location for a mission station. They recommended Mooiplaats, on the western side of the Leolo mountains on the Olifants River near Apel.

Rousseau reported in person to the delegates at a congress of the TVSV at Ermelo, held from 4 to 6 December 1926. He stated that the following denominations were also working in Sekhukhuneland: Lutheran, Wesleyan, Episcopal, Bapedi-Lutheran and the Ethiopian churches. He mentioned that some evangelists of the DRC had been working in the area for the past 20 years and reported that the Synodical Mission Commission had obtained a piece of land at Garatau near Maandagshoek with a view to starting a mission station.

However, he decided not to use this property for a mission station, because Maandagshoek was in the eastern half, near Lydenburg. Secondly, the soil consisted of peat, which was not suitable for building. Close by was a large location where the Platinum Mine workers stayed at Maandagshoek. Rousseau mentioned the names of evangelist Johannes and McDonald Chitja, who were helping him at Garatau, Hoepakranz and Mankopaan (Louw 1972:16).

At the second Congress in 1927 Rousseau reported about his work at Garatau, Hoepakranz, Mankopaan, Eensgevonden, Zoetvelden, Korenkopjes and Masetleng.

In 1928 the TVSV bought Mooiplaats for £2 000 (TVSB Ligpunte: 1975:19). In 1928 the Rousseau family moved from the farm Eensgevonden to Strydkraal B, which was closer to Mooiplaats, where he was still busy erecting the Burger mission station. Shortly afterwards, in 1929, they settled at the new mission station at Mooiplaats. The mission station was named Burger after Rev and Mrs A P Burger of Middelburg. The TVSV provided staff members to help the missionary with his ministry. The Nchabeleng brothers wrote:

*Moruti Rousseau was a clever man and far-sighted. He was a short man but he walked fast like a man jumping. For this reason he was nicknamed 'Mpurankane', which means – 'he walks fast like one who is jumping' (author's own translation).<sup>2</sup>*

Rousseau informed the Congress that he received no support from the European farmers in the area. He was also concerned about the low number of conversions: only six non-believers had been allowed to become members and be baptized. The old mother of the chief at Masetleng also became a Christian. He mentioned that the Roman Catholic Church<sup>3</sup> purchased 1 600 morgen for £5 000 ten miles away from the Anglicans. Immediately the Roman Catholics formed a working relationship with a medical doctor, as well as with teachers, nurses, agricultural workers and technical people. The DRC had none of these skilled workers and urged the congress to consider all options (Louw 1972:17).

## 6. THE PIONEERING PHASE OF MISSION WORK - BURGER MISSION STATION AT MOOIPLAATS

In 1929 the mission station Burger, named after Rev and Mrs A P Burger of the DRC Middelburg, was officially opened. The parsonage, a small church and a small hospital were in operation. Fruit trees were planted and a vegetable garden was established. The opening of the mission station was attended by several chiefs, church members and various guests. Major Hunt, the Native Commissioner, also wished them well. Rev Olivier and Rev Endemann took part as visiting missionaries. Since he was able to speak Northern Sotho, Rev Olivier took the lead. On Sunday morning he conducted a small service where Holy Communion was served to twelve European and six African believers (Louw 1972:17).

Rev and Mrs Rousseau, their four children, Sister Pietersen and Mr Schraader formed the official staff of Burger Mission Station. In 1929 Miss Bettie Schutte joined them as teacher. During 1930 to 1931 the following staff was added: Mr and Mrs Swart, as well as another teacher, Miss

<sup>2</sup> The ZAR had farms allocated for white farmers but black people could buy any farm. In this case, the farm Mooiplaats was chosen for a mission station under the administration of the Native Commissioner.

<sup>3</sup> The RCC mission station was called St Ritas' and the Anglican mission station was called Jane Furse.

Fully equipped mission hospitals were run here for many years which later became government hospitals.

Retha van der Merwe. A house was built for the evangelist and a corrugated building served as the girls' hostel and nurses' home.

## 7. THE BURGER MISSION SCHOOL

There were 52 day children, while 22 adults attended the evening school at Burger. The school had a total of 57 pupils in 1932, but more than half of them were non-believers. Of the pupils 40% were baptized in other churches and only 10% belonged to the DRC. At the school, a Christian Youth movement was organized, which was attended by everyone, even the non-believers.

The Nchabeleng brothers wrote as follows:

*Mr C N Phatudi was headmaster of this school until 1936. Hereafter he went to Marishane. This mission school went to Std 6 (VI) in reading, learning, singing and athletic practices. Schools which were linked were Mphahlele, Zebediela, Mohlatletse, Mothopong, Mafafe and Maandagshoek. From these schools came chief Stephen Phasha, chief Motodi Sekhukhune and Mr Salthiel Nchabeleng. Mr CN Phatudi married the daughter of Evangelist Mokwena, Miss Alice Mokwena. Mr ID Kgokolo of Mphahlele became principal of the mission school of Burger and after that he returned to Mphahlele to become the principal of the Community School of Mmutle - (author's own translation).*

Mr CN (Cedric) Phatudi, who later became the prime minister of the homeland Lebowa, and his brother E M (Edward), who later became the moderator of the General Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa, were sons of chief Mmutle III, also known as chief Phatudi III, the chief of Mphahlele.

Rousseau started a bursary fund for further training of children as teachers. He also started to make bricks in order to build a secondary school but this plan did not succeed. Eventually the bricks were taken to chief Sekhukhune where the Sekhukhune Secondary School was later erected. He also undertook to move all the children of Mothopong from the Berlin Mission to the Burger Mission; they came with their own food, plates and blankets. Many were motivated when they completed Std VI and he enabled them to study further at Stofberg Gedenkskool as teachers. One of them was Elder Motodi Salthiel Nchabeleng, who after Stofberg went to Lovedale to complete his studies. Others who followed him were Noah Nkgape Mashoene and Gad Mashupje Sekhukhune. Many followed their example like Mashabagole Benjamin Sekhukhune, Maria Ramaipadi, Virginia Maila, Mathulwe Silas Maila, Shadrack Mashoene, Joël Makantane Tsebane, Letsoalo Abram Nchabeleng, Rosina Mashoena, Reshoketšwe Mashoene, Esther Nchabeleng, Tryphosa Nchabeleng, Richard Moroaswi, Lazarus Ramaipadi, Enos Ramaipadi who became a minister and his brother an evangelist. Their sister married a Methodist minister. The Nchabeleng brothers report:

*This initiative also later extended to Phaahla where Rebone Seloma and Ephraim Seloma became teachers and Phaahla-Mohlaka and Mogaladi became evangelists. Teachers like Dina Mashoene started a school at Phaahla and India and Magdalene Mashoene started a school at Strydkraal under the supervision of the church. She attended Stofberg in 1940 where they trained teachers, evangelists and ministers - (author's own translation).*

## 8. BURGER CONGREGATION WAS REGISTERED IN FEBRUARY 1932

Rousseau built a small hospital, a school and a parsonage at Strydkraal A. This became the mission station Burger.

The work developed sufficiently for a congregation, named Burger, to be registered in February 1932. This development allowed Rousseau and an elder to attend the first Mission Synod in March 1932 in Johannesburg as delegates (Louw 1972:19). They represented 120 members of the DRC Burger congregation. The December 1935 statistics were as follows: 175 members; 525 souls and 509 pupils in day schools (TVSV Congress 135:40).

## 9. MEDICAL MISSION

Sister van Schalkwyk was in charge of the hospital. From June to October 1932 a total of 1 219 patients were treated: 784 children under the age of 12; 298 women and 137 men. Most of the patients suffered from whooping cough, influenza, colds and other ailments, including malaria. The medical work was important in establishing good relationships with the community. The first medical doctor arrived in August 1934, but only stayed for three months. He was Dr Olden, a retired doctor who had earlier served as governor of the Seychelles (Kaboet Rousseau: tape-recording 1977). In 1935 Sister van Schalkwyk got married and was replaced by Sister Robbertze, who was very keen that a medical doctor should be appointed, but this only happened in 1938 with the appointment of Dr Le Roux.

Miss Maggie Mare became matron of the girl's hostel and Mr Gerrie Jansen started as a male nurse, assisting Dr Le Roux. Miss Maggie got married to Rev Conradie and Dr and Mrs Le Roux left. This was a serious blow to mission work in Sekhukhuneland. They were, however, replaced by Miss Wasserman and Miss van Rensburg as mission workers and Mr AD Fourie, a master builder, who renovated the buildings at the mission station. In February 1941 Miss Welham joined them as school principal, but left shortly afterwards to further her studies. Miss Wasserman joined the Sudan Mission (Louw 1972:20).

## 10. EVANGELISTS WHO WORKED WITH ROUSSEAU

WTN Hanekom wrote in 1976 that the writing of DRC history focused mainly on the European culture group. He criticized this narrow focus on one's own church<sup>4</sup> (Crafford 1986:31). In a separate article I hope to bring some recognition to the story of the black pioneers. The names of the evangelists and the outposts where they were stationed are known. Their work is synonymous with the work of the missionaries in the pioneering missionary phase.

When Rousseau accepted the call to become the first missionary in Sekhukhuneland in 1925, some evangelists had already been working there for 20 years. From the mission station, Burger, he coordinated several mission schools and churches at the outposts. It was before the term "partnership in mission" was generally used in mission circles, but there was an element of partnership in the way Rousseau worked with the teachers and evangelists. Although personal details of these early pioneers are not available, their names should however be remembered. Together with the medical staff, these people were the friends of the missionaries. They were their co-workers and co-pioneers.

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<sup>4</sup> Hanekom's words as quoted by Crafford "…kerkisties, ingestel op die eie (blanke) kultuurgroep en daarom eties en geografies ingeperk tot die geskiedskrywing van die eie kerk"

The evangelists who worked with him were: McDonald Chitja at Garatau, Aäron Moraka at Gembokspruit, Silas Mohoje at Eensgevonden, Isak Khopochane at Buffelsfontein, Edward Mafanyolle at Gaataan, Alfonso Mokoena at Mankopaan and Willard Sefara and his wife at Mphahlele (Louw 1972:18).

There were about 21 outposts, many with schools. Outposts where no evangelists were posted included Hoepakranz in the village of Ngowe, which was situated on top of the Leolo Mountains, a climb of 3½ hours on foot. The village consisted of a group of fugitive Swazis who founded a place to stay here.

Korenkopjes is a farm situated about 10 kilometres from Eensgevonden. (Unfortunately this outpost, like many others, ceased to exist after Rousseau left. It was revived again in 1985 under the ministry of the Matlala mission Jordaan 2006:23).

Other outposts were Masetleng, Seseseo (1½ miles from the station) and Leswatsi (also called India; Leswatsi was the tribal chief. A small church was erected here, which were used for both services on Sundays and as a school during the week).

These outposts can be seen as testimony that Rev and Mrs AP Burger's dream was fulfilled. This couple of the DRC congregation of Middelburg had a keen interest in mission work, especially in Sekhukhuneland. Mrs Janie Burger, wife of Rev Burger was also one of the pioneers of the TVSV which was established in 1905. She saw this dream fulfilled in the calling of the first missionary and the erecting of the first mission station.

These outposts were established in the pioneering phase of the work. It can also be called the institutional phase: mission work included building a church, a hospital and a school. Other churches also followed the same approach.

The present generation knows very little of the pioneering phase. However, when you talk to the younger generation of the families who were members of these churches and attended these schools, they proudly state that they are now of the third or fourth generation of Christians.

The institutional method of mission work has since been discontinued and has been replaced by an approach that focuses on small congregations or wards. Each is functioning with a church council and women and youth leaders. These small congregations are visited by a minister who has a program for Holy Communion for each of these wards.

In the next section of this article we will see how the Rousseau's son, Kaboet paid tribute to his parents.

## 11. KABOET ROUSSEAU ABOUT HIS FATHER AND MOTHER

The author taped an interview with Kaboet, the son of Rousseau, in 1977. He said:

*My father started schools at most of the outposts. There were schools in those days, but many of those schools have disappeared. The teachers held services every Sunday. I do not know how my father coped, but at one stage he was working while also holding services at about 60 different places. Most of the places were farms belonging to European farmers, but have since become trust areas. Evangelist Mokoena's wife, Maria, together with my mother, visited many*

*posts and did a great job. Maria had a good relationship with Dora Mshane, the daughter of Kgoši Sekhukhune. She was a believer who openly confessed her salvation in Christ. My father was very disappointed when Dr Le Roux left. The medical work was very important to him. He himself and my mother were very sick with malaria. With the aid of Kgoši Mmutle of Mphahlele the Grootshoek medical mission work at Zebediela, was chosen for further development. Situated on the Olifants River, Burger was a very unhealthy place. This was the reason why the mission station was moved to Maandagshoek - (author's own translation).*

Kaboet also talked about the small house they occupied at Strydkraal when the family moved from Eensgevonden, and before they settled at Mooiplaats. They did not attend school at Weltevreden anymore, but attended a school at Strydkraal. Kaboet said in the tape recording in 1977 that he and C N Phatudi (a son of the tribal chief at Mphahlele) completed Std VI together. It is not clear what is meant exactly by "together." We know that they wrote Std VI in the same year and that they were good friends. This is, in any case, an indication of a good relationship between the missionaries and their congregations. Strydkraal is only five kilometres from Mooiplaats. The farms around Strydkraal were bought for the Trust and a beautiful church was built here for the congregation. It was opened in 1953 and he and his mother had the privilege to be present at the opening of this mission church.

Another incident was told by Rev Pierre Joubert, missionary of Seleka congregation when he was scribe for the Presbytery of Kranspoort (probably between 1938 and 1940):

*I remember very well the day when I visited Rev and Mrs Rousseau at their mission station at the Olifants River. It was very hot that day and they could not offer me any cool drinking water. Their old refrigerator was out of order for weeks already. I was able to repair it for them and that is why I always remembered them"<sup>5</sup> (TVSB Ligpunte 1975:31) - (author's own translation).*

## 12. THE RETIREMENT OF ROUSSEAU AND THE INAUGURATION OF REV MJ LOUW AND REV EM PHATUDI

On 27 October 1940 Rousseau retired due to ill health. He accepted a call to Stofberg Theological School in the same year. He died in 1943 (Louw 1955:71). The heritage of Rousseau can be seen in the people who were inspired by him to serve in various occupations. The Nchabeleng brothers provided a list of 15 teachers and the places where they had worked, as evidence of the inspiration that came from Rousseau. All of them helped at the church.

The missionary post remained vacant until the arrival of Rev L van der Merwe in November 1941. He immediately started to attend to the spiritual needs and upliftment of the people. Assisted by Mrs Van der Merwe, Gerrie Jansen and a theological student, Edward Phatudi, he held refresher courses for all the school teachers at a winter camp. Rev van der Merwe only stayed for 13 months, but during that time he succeeded in organizing the congregations, completing the new church building at Mphahlele and registering several schools. Unfortunately he became ill and had to return to Belfast in 1943 (TVSB Ligpunte 1975:19).

The Burger mission station terminated in 1944 and a new phase of mission was started at Maandagshoek (Garatau) by Rev JM Louw and Rev EM Phatudi. The inauguration of Rev Louw

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<sup>5</sup> I wrote to the Government of Lebowa in 1977, requesting them to consider transferring Burger back to the church, but this was refused because the parsonage served as a clinic. It was taken over by the army when the new clinic was ready at Strydkraal. Afterwards the buildings were left to deteriorate – author.

and Rev Phatudi marked the beginning of the next phase in the mission history of this area, in the sense that Rev Phatudi was a minister on equal footing with Rev Louw. They served different parts of the congregation.

At Maandagshoek a mission hospital was built. New private mission schools were started and the number of evangelists increased to serve the outposts all over Sekhukhuneland. More mission stations, mission hospitals and congregations were established from 1946 (Klipspruit) to 1956 (Goedvertrouwen, the last to be erected). This prepared the way for a partnership on equal footing, when the DRC Mission Church (1932 to 1963), became independent as the “Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Afrika” (Dutch Reformed Church in Africa) in 1963.

The Nchabeleng brothers remember the inauguration as follows:

*The new ministers, MJ Louw and EM Phatudi were inaugurated at Mphahlele and the ceremony was also attended by chief Phatudi. This happened on 27 March 1943. At the inauguration they sang hymns 295 and 388 from the hymn book of Sion. E M Phatudi was the first black minister in the Dutch Mission Church to take office together with a white minister. Rev Phatudi initially stayed in the hostel at Burger Mission. My brother, SM Nchabeleng, who was a teacher at Mohlaletse, stayed at Mothopong and helped the new minister – (author's own translation).*

### 13. LOOKING BACK ON THE WORK OF ROUSSEAU: WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM HIS WORK?

The foundation of the pioneering phase of mission work in Sekhukhuneland was laid by the lay-preachers and those who were converted to Christianity in the Cape Colony or Natal, as well as, for example, Christian mine workers like those at Garatau and the workers of the Zebediela Orange Farm. These workers were from Nyasaland (Malawi) where the DRC Foreign Mission of the Cape already had mission stations going.

The story of Rousseau and his work shows that these believers laid the foundation for the further development of the mission church. They continued to work with Rousseau as his co-workers as co-pioneers: the evangelists, school teachers, hospital staff and other personnel.

Although this was not a partnership on an equal footing, it was however a phase in which such partnership was prepared for. It was not equal in terms of authority, but it was a time where some partners, at least, had mutual respect for each other. They prepared the second phase of mission expansion in Sekhukhuneland.

Can the work of the first phase be described as “integral mission?” The answer is yes, and no. It was integral in the sense that the work was not restricted to the church and a spirituality that is isolated from daily life: churches were built together with schools and hospitals. The different “mainline” churches responded to the needs that they saw, such as sickness and illiteracy, with the resources they had, such as modern health care and education. The children of this era who became teachers later often became active leaders in their congregations too. The pioneers also tried to maintain good relations with the traditional leaders as well as the white government. It appeared later, however, that the pioneering phase was not integral enough. In later years it appeared that the relation between Christian mission and modern Western culture, on the one hand, and traditional African culture, on the other hand, was not as simple

as the pioneers seemed to deal with it, namely to merely align mission with modern Western culture. The schools and hospitals were not permanent features of the church's mission, and new ways have had to be found to be relevant to changing contexts. The relation between mission and the different political forces also became very complex later.

In later years, the partnership between white and black ministers, on equal footing, started to function when the structures of the congregations were designed in such a way that there was a movement away from a hierarchical structure. This structure with the white minister at the top changed to a structure where white and black ministers were on an equal level of authority. The white minister often remained for a period the contact person of the sending body. Through him the funds for the support of his co-workers and many projects like the building of new churches and the maintenance of buildings and other subsidies were channelled. He was responsible for giving a yearly report to the "Plaaslike Sending kommissie" (Local Mission Commission).

The same happened in the congregations of the Presbytery of Burger: they were structured to give white and black ministers equal positions after 1965. Some evangelist posts were replaced by a black minister's post and gradually, after the approval of the phasing out of the evangelists by the General Synod of the (black) Dutch Reformed Church in Africa at Umgababa 1979, evangelists became either ministers or retired. This phase did not last long however: white minister's posts were terminated one after the other from the 1980's onward, and with that also most of the financial support of the DRC. It was the end of Wave Three (Saayman) and the whole mission era of the DRC of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In each phase of mission, the relationships between role players hanged. Willem Saayman named his overview of the Dutch Reformed Mission in South Africa *Being missionary, being human*. This title shows that the missionaries were ordinary human beings with an extraordinary calling. That was also the case with Rev and Mrs Rousseau. They were children of their time. But they were also missionaries, and as such helped to transform their time and prepare for a new phase in mission, where white and black ministers could work on an equal footing.

Partnership in modern times has changed again. The mission responded to the need of the pioneering phase and provided schools and hospitals. The government followed, and now provides health care and education. New challenges are presented to the church: to help combat poverty and care for orphans of HIV and Aids victims, to search for a sustainable life style, to relate to different religions and ideologies, to find synergy between all these activities. New structures are needed to do so effectively, and these structures are not readily available, as the schools and hospitals were. The challenge is now to develop the necessary structures, if possible, to better serve the emerging vision of the church's mission in our time.

Saayman (2007:139) has formulated it well: he "believe(s) that the next step in the spiritual and missionary journey on which the missionary God wishes to lead the DRC is most probably for them to 'become at ease with daily life and with all that belongs to the human condition' in Africa in the 21<sup>st</sup> century – and remain to be present to those in need.'That may be the climax of being missionary while being human in Africa."

I can conclude that the pioneer lay-preachers, evangelists and missionaries of the DRC in the pioneering phase, laid the foundation how to co-operate and be a partner in the great commission in the post-20<sup>th</sup> century.

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### Abbreviations:

DRC: Dutch Reformed Church (*Nederduits-Gereformeerde Kerk*).

TVSV: *Transvaal Vroue Sendingvereniging* (Transvaal Women's Mission Association).

### KEY WORDS

South African mission history,  
partnership in mission,  
integral approach in mission,  
pioneers in mission,  
medical mission,  
mission and education

### Trefwoorde

Suid-Afrikaanse sendinggeskiedenis,  
sending in vennootskap,  
integrale benadering in sending,  
sendingpioniers,  
mediese sending,  
sending en onderwys.

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## Ubi caritas est vera, deus ibi est... The Lord's Prayer – God's present future

### ABSTRACT

The article is the second in a series examining the Lord's Prayer with a view to constructing a sermon on the prayer. In the first article the origin and setting of the prayer, as well as the address and the you-petitions of the prayer were examined. In this article the we-petitions and the doxology are explored. In a third article these insights come together in the construction of a concept sermon and liturgy, incorporating material from ecumenical resources. In the you-petitions the eschatological dimension dominates, whereas the ethical dimension comes more into focus in the we-petitions. It is argued that the biggest challenge in constructing a sermon and liturgy on the Lord's Prayer is to keep the fundamental dependency and unity of the eschatological and the ethical dimensions together.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Wieder vertrauen wir uns an mit gefalteten Händen, ein Zeichen dafür, dass wir uns in Gottes Willen gefangen geben, freiwillig. Beten heißt, sich anvertrauen... (Käßmann 2013:189)

Praying means entrusting yourself, subjecting yourself, giving yourself over to God's will. A certain body language is appropriate as a sign showing one's subjugation. Praying is therefore often done kneeling, with head bowed, eyes closed – and hands folded (see Käßmann above). Believers rise from their prayers often feeling comforted, assured and renewed: their praying has already done something to them and something for them. They also hope and believe that more will come from their prayers – that it will work for themselves and for the people they have prayed for. They trust God to listen and to act. This is however, exactly where a problem often lies: that people entrust themselves, their hopes, their fears and their expectations to God and then go on with hands folded (and eyes closed!) The responsibility now lies with God. God needs to bring about change. God needs to do the work. The responsibility is not theirs...

The Lord's Prayer often functions in the same way. As Luther already had indicated, it has become the prayer most often misused (in Kloppers 2013, Jung 2011). Prayed in churches over the world, it sometimes takes on almost ritualistic meaning and could function as a kind of mantra, making people feel comforted and safe, but also blurring the view of their own responsibility. New perspectives on the meaning of the prayer and a renewed sense of the responsibilities and challenges that also flow from praying the Lord's Prayer, should constantly be brought to the fore. A sermon is an appropriate vehicle for bringing about such a new consciousness. It is, however, no easy task to remind people of their own responsibility, without being accused of 'preaching politics' instead of 'proclaiming the Word of God'.

## 2. "WORD OF GOD" OR "PREACHING POLITICS" – ESCHATOLOGICAL OR ETHICAL?

In this article on the we-petitions and the Doxology, views from different milieus are discussed and presented as possibilities for the preacher, to engage with critically in the process of constructing a liturgy and sermon on the Lord's Prayer. The challenge for the preacher is to speak and act in such a way that those hearing, reading and praying the Lord's Prayer today, are challenged anew. The challenges discussed in this article are essential: reconciliation among people, forgiveness, justice and the fair distribution of the earth's resources. Some of these themes are emphasized especially by the American Jesuit, Dominic Crossan, in his book on the Lord's Prayer (2010). Controversial in many instances, his views of a present eschaton often cause difficulties, but these views do need serious consideration – even if they are not accepted one-sidedly. In this article his views are discussed and related to the views of other scholars. Differences, but also agreement where one might not have expected correspondence or agreement, come to the fore.

Crossan (2011) calls the Lord's Prayer a "revolutionary manifesto" and a "hymn of hope". He reads the prayer against the backdrop of the prophets, the psalms of justice, the issues of the Sabbath and Jubilee, the life-world and social context of Jesus and his disciples, and relates it to the socio-political influence of the Roman rulers in Jesus' day. From this he gives an extensive and compelling analysis of the Lord's Prayer as policy, as "manifesto" for the concept of *distributive* justice<sup>1</sup> within the vision of a well-run household. In this household God as the "Householder of the world" runs everything *in co-operation* with God's people. This is done with a view for all on earth to be justly administered and distributed fairly.

Change is demanded "here below" so that all God's people have a fair, equitable and just proportion of God's world (Crossan 2010:2-3). In this sense the prayer is *revolutionary*. It presumes and proclaims the radical vision of justice that is the core of Israel's biblical tradition. It also reflects the radical vision of justice that was preached and lived by Jesus Christ – and for which he had died. Crossan argues that from the life and preaching of Jesus, justice can be seen as the body of love and love as the soul of justice (Crossan 2010:189).

Reading each petition from and against the historical background of the religious, social and political setting, and interpreting it literally, as Crossan does, indicates many possibilities – and difficulties for the preacher. Others, such as the German theologian Gerhard Ebeling (1966), work mostly from the textual indicators, or indicators given by the language. Ebeling interprets the text more metaphorically, emphasizing the proclamation, the preaching of the text as the "Word of God".<sup>2</sup> Both approaches provide provocative possibilities for new and transformative interpretations.

From the biblical and social indicators, Crossan and others see a realised eschaton, while scholars such as Jeremias (1966) Luomanen (1998) and Wilckens (2002) work from the paradigm of a future eschaton. Could the preacher make a final choice? It is argued that the challenge in constructing a sermon and liturgy on the Lord's Prayer is to keep the fundamental dependency and unity of the eschatological and the ethical dimension together, and at the same time retaining the dimension of prayer through the church service.

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1 Over against *retributive* justice – the prime meaning now attributed to "justice" (Crossan 2010:2).

2 Some may regard Crossan and Ebeling as adversaries in their views, but it is interesting to note that the depiction "revolutionary" for the Lord's Prayer comes from Ebeling already (1966:83).

## 3. THE LORD'S PRAYER IN MATTHEW 6:11-13

### 3.1 The three we-petitions

The three we-petitions comprise of the petition for bread, for forgiveness (linked with the concurring sentence about human forgiveness) and the two-part closing petition about temptation and evil. In the you-petitions the eschatological dimension dominates and in the we-petitions the ethical dimension. The closing formula of the three you-petitions (on earth, as in heaven) refers materially to the you-petitions, but also functions as a hinge, directing the focus back and at the same time forwards, to the we-petitions, thus including heaven and earth (Schwier 2005:894).

#### 3.1.1 The first we-petition: Give us today our daily bread (Matthew 6:11)

The first of the three we-prayers concerns daily bread. The meaning of the adjective *epiousios*, is obscure. It is normally translated as daily, but many other possible translations are possible (see Ayo 1992:249 for interesting examples of translation). According to Luz (2002:452) it could mean “give us today our bread for tomorrow”, referring to the situation of the day worker praying for the possibility to survive. Some read it as “for tomorrow” and see “bread” in a metaphorical sense as referring to spiritual bread, and “tomorrow” as the second coming, therefore in an eschatological sense. It could be seen as both eschatological and everyday. Lohse, for example, views the petition as eschatological (as “bread for tomorrow”) but makes it clear that the eschatological view does not mean a spiritual overwriting of the food necessary for life. It rather opens a sharp view on the requirements of the “here and now” in saying that the content of the prayer for “tomorrow’s bread” is bound to the immediate presence through the “today” (Lohse 2010:65).

Martin Luther in his *Small Catechism* argued that “our daily bread” includes everything that belongs to the needs of the body and our lives, such as food, drink, clothes, shoes, house, farm, field, livestock, money, goods, a devout spouse, pious children, dutiful servants, pious and faithful magistrates, good government, good weather, peace, health, discipline, honour, good friends, loyal neighbours, and the like. “God gives the daily bread, even without our prayer, to all evil people; but we pray in this petition that He would lead us to realise it, that we receive our daily bread with thanksgiving” (Luther in *Evangelisches Gesangbuch* 1995:883.3, my translation).

Ebeling (1966:86-96) takes the prayer for daily bread to indicate our dependence on bread, our dependence on God, and our dependence on other people. He argues that it is not without reason that we pray *give us today our daily bread*. It has to be in the plural, he argues, because eating is an act of fellowship. Through our daily bread and our dependence on it, through the receiving and enjoying of our daily bread and the handing of it to each other, fellowship is supremely constituted. He stresses that the dependence on others is not a burden, adding in a poignant way: “It is a blessing of which for the most part we do not become aware until no one takes any interest in us and we have to eat our bread, day in, day out, alone” (Ebeling 1966:93).

For Crossan (2011) the bread petition implies hard-core confrontation. Jesus lived in a land occupied by Rome and the occupiers laid claim to the food produced by the land. Those who opposed Jesus knew that his visionary program involved those who owned the earth, the land, the lake – that is God or Rome. Departing from the multiplication stories about loaves

and fish in the gospel of Mark as miracles in parable,<sup>3</sup> Crossan (2011:126-130) follows the sequence of *take, bless, break and give*, and argues that these “distribution stories” mean that there is more than enough food present upon our earth when it passes through the hand of divine justice – when food is seen as God’s consecrated gift. For him the present kingdom of God is the equitable distribution of our earth.

What happens before the resurrection continues after it. The story told in John 21 where the disciples caught a huge amount of fish at the Sea of Tiberias would be an indication that Jesus, and not Herodes Antipas, is in control of the lake. It refers to Galilee’s lake as a microcosm of God’s world, about who owns it, controls it, distributes it (Crossan 2010:130-133). From the narrative about the two people in Emmaus (Luke 24) who shared their meal with a stranger, and who recognised him as the Christ when he took bread, *blessed* and *broke* it, and gave it to them, Crossan (2011:133-134) argues that distribution is by sharing even with – or especially with – the random stranger. Only then is Jesus present in the Christian community.

Crossan (2011:135) further refers to the story that continues or even consummates the preceding ones: the story in Mark about the “Passover meal” where Jesus *took, blessed, broke and gave* the bread and the wine, and argues that the standard sequence of those four verbs draws our attention to the fact that bread and fish has now become bread and wine. This sequence of bread and wine allows the equation of bread with the body and wine with the blood of Jesus:

The Eucharistic meal recalls that Jesus not only lived for the just distribution of food and drink, but died for insisting on the same thing. ... Rome did not crucify people for those proposals. Jesus was insisting that the world and its food – summarized as bread and wine – belonged to God and not to Rome. For that he died violently on a cross – so that ‘bread and wine’ led to ‘body and blood’. It follows, therefore, that Christians participating in the Lord’s Supper are collaborating with the justice of God as revealed in the life and death of Christ (Crossan 2010:135).

Crossan summarises the petition as saying that when we read or hear, “Give us this day our daily bread”, the simple word “bread” carries with it connotations of all those share-meals with Jesus during his life, before his death, and after his resurrection. It contains the multiplication meal, the lakeside meal, the Emmaus meal, and the Eucharistic meal. “It is the daily bread of daily justice along with the daily danger of challenging daily injustice” (Crossan 2010:137-138).

Lohse (2010:66) stresses that for Jesus the rule of God and his justice stood in the first place. Jesus was no enthusiastic “Schwärmer” who promoted unconcern – he rather set the priorities new in the lives of people. In the light of this orientation the everyday and the formation of life therein receives its place. Lohse argues that praying people who move their hands diligently (in beautiful contrast to the remarks in the first paragraph!) are carried by the conviction that all doesn’t depend on their actions, but that they could expect from God the gift of a fulfilled life. Schneider-Harpprecht (2013:177) regards the petition as an exercise in trusting God, the father, and also an exercise in justice (*Einübung in die Gerechtigkeit*), because an ethical call flows from this petition: when I pray for my daily bread, I should remember that my neighbour should also receive this bread, because everybody has the right to it (Schneider-Harpprecht 2013:177). According to Crossan (2010:22) prayer to the God of justice “above” empowers one to divine justice “here below”.

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3 Crossan (2011:56) uses parable as a story that is not given as history, but is asserted as challenge.

Theißen (2012:189) argues that when we pray this prayer today, we pray for more than simply surviving hunger – we also pray for a life without fear of starvation on the following day. The prayer has a political accent indeed: in the face of starvation worldwide and the global exploitation of the life resources to the detriment of the next generation, our guilt for exceeding the next day by far, becomes clear. The need in the world also emphasises the need for the action of the praying individual and the praying church: the prayer for bread and *bread for the world* belongs together unbroken (Schwier 2013:241).

### 3.1.2 *The second we-petition: And forgive us our debts,<sup>4</sup> as we forgive our debtors*

“There cannot be any true prayer, unless it is offered in a forgiving spirit.”  
(Origen, in *On Prayer* 8.1, collected in *Ancient Christian Writers* 19, Ayo 1992:253)

The second we-petition is connected by “and” to the first we-petition. The one is as necessary as the other: our daily bread and forgiving our debtors. “Debt” often are taken metaphorically as sins, asking God to forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us, but Crossan insists that it also means literally that enough food for today must involve no debt for tomorrow. Reading through the lens of various Old Testament texts and their contexts, he concludes that these examples spelled out in precise detail how *literal* debts were to be forgiven (Crossan 2010:140, 145-154). For God to forgive us our literal debts, however, we must owe God literal debt. Crossan gives a compelling “invoice”:

We owe it to God to run God’s world responsibly. We owe the divine Householder the conservation of the world house; we owe the divine Homemaker the consecration of the earth home. We owe God adequate care of all God’s creation. We owe God collaboration in hallowing God’s name, in establishing God’s kingdom, and in doing God’s will ‘as in heaven so also on earth.’ We owe it to God to cease focussing on heaven, especially in order to avoid focussing on earth. We owe it to God to ensure that there is enough food and not too much debt in God’s well-run household” (Crossan 2010:155).

Working through various views of the gospel writers on sin and debts (Crossan 2010:143-162), he concludes that debts was originally intended quite literally, but he comes to the conclusion that in its present format, it is advisable to read Matthew’s text as including both debt and sin. It also is not to be read as a comparison – as God forgives, so we also must forgive – but as a condition: “God will forgive, only if we forgive” (Crossan 2010:160). This condition is explicitly stated in the verses following the Lord’s Prayer: For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive you your sins (Matthew 6:14-15). Matthew (in 18:21-35) also connects this petition with the parable of the king’s servant who is let off his debt and then goes straight off and puts another servant in prison because he owes him a small amount of money. In this parable, forgiveness from the king is conditional on the servant’s forgiveness of a small debt owed to him. The second part of the petition can be seen as a reminder of being forgiven (*Selbsterinnerung* – Jeremias 1966:168). Those who live from God’s forgiveness are compelled “seinerseits nun Vergebung weiterzureichen” (Cullman 1994:76). It goes without the possibility of a human *claim* to forgiveness (Schwier 2005:895).

Simone Weil (1951:222-224, in Ayo 1992:165-166) argues in the same vein that we should not think that we have rights over the future, given by the past. We think however that we have a

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4 In some versions the term *debts* is used, in others the term *trespasses*, while others use the term *sins*.

right to compensation for every effort whatever its nature. The “effort of doing good” makes us expect the right to the gratitude of the person we have helped. When suffering from some offence, we expect the punishment or apologies of the offender. Because we expect this, we think we have a *right* to it: “In every claim we think we possess there is the idea of an imaginary claim of the past on the future. That is the claim we have to renounce. We cannot hold onto the past without retaining our own crimes.” Keeping track of sin, and keeping guilt alive, destroys the possibility of fellowship. It destroys the future. We must be able to forgive wholeheartedly. To be able to forgive our debtors in full and to let go in full, means that we are prepared for the future.

Schwier (2013:241) quotes the sixth stanza of Luther’s *Vaterunserlied*: “All unsre Schuld vergib uns, Herr, dass sie uns nicht betrübe mehr, wie wir auch unsern Schuldigern ihr Schuld und Fehl vergeben gern...”<sup>5</sup> (*Evangelisches Gesangbuch* 344:6) and refers to the rhyme between *vergeben* and *Schuldigern*. From the two concepts “meeting” through the rhyme he deduces that we should meet our debtors, those who owe us, those who stand in guilt before us. It is about meeting one another, about reconciliation – and reconciliation depends on forgiveness. Real freedom is to be able to give forgiveness *and* to receive forgiveness. Forgiveness in the literal sense of the verb is to let go, leave behind, release from captivity. “Forgiveness is the verdict of acquittal, liberation by word. ... What human existence needs most of all is the word that acquits” (Ebeling 1966:107, see also Weingardt 2003).

Forgiveness is more than letting go of the past. It is also a vital step on the road to reconciliation. Forgiveness is about truly meeting each other, about the restoring of relationships, rebuilding good faith, creating freedom, making space, opening up the future, giving hope, realising the truth – about living the true liberating love of God. Where love is true, where there is true love, there God is present – *Ubi caritas est vera, deus ibi est...*<sup>6</sup>

### 3.1.3 *Third we-petition: And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil*’ (Matthew 6:13)

In different contexts the Greek *peirasmos* can mean temptation, testing, trial, experiment. Jeremias (1996:170) understands it eschatologically as referring to the big temptation at the end of times when the secrets of evil will finally be revealed, but Schwier (2013:241) argues against such a view and emphasises that it rather refers to the current trials of need, illness and persecution in our everyday lives. It could also be about bringing others into temptation.

From the presence and actions of the Roman legions in Israel and surroundings in Jesus’ time, Crossan (2011:163-168) argues that the petition “lead us not into temptation” refers very specifically to the temptation to answer violence with violence: “it asks God to deliver us from that evil action or evil one.” With reference to the test/trial/temptation of Jesus in the wilderness, Crossan shows how, in Matthew’s sequence, the three temptations – turning stones

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5 Forgive our sins, Lord, we implore, remove from us their burden sore, as we their trespasses forgive who by offenses us do grieve. Thus let us dwell in charity and serve our brother willingly. (Composite translation of verse 6 of Luther’s hymn, *Vater unser im Himmelreich*.)

6 The original form of the medieval hymn now known as *Ubi caritas, et amor*. With appreciation for the reference from Pater Rhabanus Erbacher (Münsterschwarzach) at Kloster Kirchberg, Germany, March 2013 and email dated 27 August 2013. Note also in the English translation of verse 6 of Luther’s *Vater unser* (footnote 5): Thus let us dwell in *charity*...

7 Other translations include: but deliver us from the evil one/ Save us from the time of trial.

into bread, descending from the pinnacle of the Temple and gaining all the kingdoms of the world – progress from *personal and individual*, through *corporate and communal*, to *structural and systemic* temptation (Crossan 2010:170). The last and climactic temptation concerns violence done for the name, kingdom, and will of God on earth. “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil’ is about avoiding violence even or especially when undertaken to hallow God’s name, to establish God’s kingdom, and thereby to fulfil God’s will as in heaven so on earth” (Crossan 2010:168).

The warning that evil could be done, even when people have good intentions, is in accordance with the view in the *Heidelberg Catechism*, where the consequences of human action are summarised as having the possibility to bring about the hallowing or blaspheming of God’s name. The importance is stressed *first* to know God rightly: “*Hallowed be thy name*; that is, grant us, first, rightly to know thee, and to sanctify, glorify and praise thee, in all thy works, in which thy power, wisdom, goodness, justice, mercy and truth, are clearly displayed; and further also, that we may so order and direct our whole lives, our thoughts, words and actions, that thy name may never be blasphemed, but rather honoured and praised on our account” (Question 122, in EG 1995).

### **3.2. Doxology: For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever (Matthew 6:13)**

According to Aune (2010:299) and Aland & Aland (1998:306) the doxology is not present in the oldest manuscripts and also is not a part of the original text of Matthew. It is however a Jewish custom to end a prayer with a doxology to give the honour to God and probably was the custom also in the early church – even if a specific wording wasn’t set. It could be accepted that the people praying could give God the honour in their own wording (Lohse 2010:88-89). A two-part doxology is found in the Didache 8.2 (Schwier 2005:893). It indicates the first known *use* of the doxology in the liturgy. Many modern translations omit the doxology. Most Latin Rite Roman Catholics, as well as some Lutherans do not use the doxology when reciting the Lord’s Prayer in the liturgy. The Anglican Book of Common Prayer sometimes gives the Lord’s Prayer with the doxology, sometimes without. Most Protestants, however, use the doxology in the liturgy to conclude the prayer. The doxology concludes the petitions with the aspect of praise. It creates a frame and it connects the eschatological with the present orientation (Schwier 2005:895). What is said in the petitions comes again to the fore in the doxology. Lohse (2010:91) shows how the doxology is linked with the various petitions:

“Yours is the kingdom” refers to the second petition – that is: “Your Kingdom come” which means the coming reign of God. God’s reign, which is already present, is given back to God in the words of Jesus.

“...the power” refers to the petition that God’s will be done on earth as in heaven.

“...the glory” refers to the beginning of the prayer where the honouring of God’s name is given the first place.

The doxology ends with: “for ever and ever”. It refers to God’s eternity that is distinct from all temporal limitations to which our earthly existence is subjected.

In German versions the plural *Ewigkeiten* or *von Ewigkeit zu Ewigkeit* is sometimes used. For Lohse (2010:91) it is an indication of the fullness or the full sound of the expression

(*voltönender Ausdruck*). The endless fullness is named in plural (Ewigkeiten), which shows how the succession of ages follows one another and in their fullness are oriented towards God's eternity. At the end a powerful "Amen" is said: it is true and indisputably valid. It also shows us how we should pray: ending in praising God with hearts full of gratefulness.

#### 4. PRAYER AND PRAYING THE LORD'S PRAYER

With regard to the types of prayer in the Bible, Crossan shows that in the Psalms we find the speaking to God, where the two major categories are distinguished as Psalms of Request (some positive: *for us* and some negative: *against* them) and Psalms of Gratitude (reflected in *praise* and *thanksgiving*). The speaking *for* God is found in the Prophets. It includes the negative view of ritual prayer over and against the demand for justice and righteousness. He places the prophetic assertion of justice *against* prayer into a dynamic and organic unity of *justice-and-prayer* or *prayer-and-justice*. He emphasises that meditation and action or ritual prayer and distributive justice can be distinguished, but not separated – like two sides of a coin that exist only as a unity (Crossan 2010:10-21). The prayer can only be prayed by the Holy Spirit already within us. Crossan (2011:26-28) argues that to obtain the Spirit is a process of maturity – and maturity in prayer means working more and more *from* prayers of request (complaint or petition), *through* prayers of gratitude (thanksgiving or praise), and *on to* prayers of empowerment (participation or collaboration) with a God who is absolutely transcendent and immanent at the same time.

The German poet and Nobel prize winner, Hermann Hesse (1945/1976, in Michels 1976:90) emphasizes that for whom God is not an idol and who won't use prayer as a magic formula, but who experience it as the deepest concentration of all inner powers which bring about the strong will to do good, to do the best as the only necessity – that he will get strength from the prayers, because they forced him to test his own heart, to fight against idleness<sup>8</sup> and to forget his own small interests for the general good. In the Lord's Prayer the whole proclamation of Jesus is given in compact and concentrated form (Tertullianus in KKK 1993:2761; Jeremias 1966:161).<sup>9</sup> Therefore the prayer should indeed not be understood as a formula, but that it names the most important themes as orientation for our prayers.

Referring to the various theories on the origin of the prayer, Lohse (2010:92) and Ayo (1992:9) argues that even if Jesus had not composed or used the Lord's Prayer as we know it today, we have in these words the mind and heart of Jesus, and the direction for how we are to pray. When the origins of the prayer are considered – that it is rooted in the rich prayer tradition of Israel, then another aspect comes to mind: whether it would not be possible that Jews could also take part in this prayer (Lohse 2010:102-103; see also Brocke, Petuchowski, Stolz 1974). It should form part of the understanding and practice of Christian praying that the content of the main prayer of the Christian church connects the church with Israel – and even other confessions.<sup>10</sup> Christian praying should then also be such a practice as to give people space, inviting them to hear and become part of the meaning of the Lord's Prayer which bridges time, space and confessions (Schwier 2005:896; 2013:242). The prayer is described as a prayer from the *heart of Judaism* on the lips of *Christianity*, for the *conscience of the world* (Crossan 2010:2).

8 Note again the first paragraph of the article!

9 See also Haacker (2010) for a discussion of the Lord's Prayer in view of the full proclamation of Jesus.

10 As shown in the first article (Kloppers 2013), it already seems to function as an inter-confessional prayer at some occasions – it was prayed together by Muslims and Christians for example in a worship service on 17 June 2012 in Kamp-Lintfort, Germany.

Could it become more? Perhaps it could become the prayer on the lips of all the world for the whole of creation.

## 5. CONCLUSION : HOMILETICAL AND LITURGICAL INDICATORS

...the text actually makes preaching difficult for us by obliging us to say not what we like but which is necessary... (Ebeling 1966:46)

The Lord's Prayer, in its simplicity, unites the enormity of God's coming and the most human and "everydayish" into a harmony (Dutch Catechism, Utrecht 1966, in Lohse 2010:120). As shown, however, the prayer could be read from various angles. Should one stress the immediacy, the here and now, or depend on the future? Should one work from the paradigm of a realised eschaton such as Crossan, or depend on the paradigm of a future eschaton? Or should one rather choose for the paradigm that both views should co-exist in an "insoluble interdependence" (Schwier 2005:896)? For Ebeling the prayer is directed towards the end, when the contradictions will be cleared, when the work and command of Christ is fulfilled, when that which in the present still divides as Christ and as God, will become the undivided reign of God ... Therefore everything aims only at the praise of God: "alles zielt also allein auf die Doxa Gottes ab" (Ebeling 1979 II:332). However, for Ebeling (1966:53) praying as response to God's word and God's work is also *participation* in the work of God, in the redemption of the world, in the process in which God's creation becomes true creation and we become true people. Ebeling therefore also emphasizes the importance of a realised eschaton, but his approach is more metaphorical, more poetical, and maybe more balanced than that of Crossan. Could it be that various approaches speak to various people – that one person would hear a Crossan and the other an Ebeling? And that in the same way one wouldn't hear Crossan and the other wouldn't hear Ebeling? Crossan calls the prayer a "revolutionary manifesto and a hymn of hope". Maybe this is exactly where the difference lies: that one person would hear a direct appeal in a hymn, in a poem, in a metaphor, and the other would hear it in the word spoken in a revolutionary way.

The challenge for the preacher would be to find a balance between views, in approach, and in presentation, in order to accommodate various viewpoints, various types of people and various personalities. The preacher also needs to decide carefully which approach to follow for each situation or context of preaching. In constructing a new encompassing text of sermon and prayer and liturgy, the format of the original Biblical text should also be honoured. All aspects of content and form should also be borne in mind. Crossan argues quite poetically himself: "Where the *content* of the Lord's Prayer is deeply embedded in the biblical tradition of justice, so its *form* is deeply embedded in the biblical tradition of poetry – all which indicates that a careful mind and a poetic soul gave us the present version of the Lord's Prayer in Matthew's gospel" (Crossan 2010:4, 47-49).

Creating a sermon and liturgy from these readings will be discussed with a view to convey the essential meaning and challenge of the Lord's Prayer within a new context. The Lord's Prayer and the individual petitions it contains, provides the opportunity to address the most pressing issues within the South African context – issues of distributive justice such as poverty, ownership, land reforms, basic 'daily bread'; forgiveness within the frame of not retaining past crimes (Weil), but also remembering in order not to make the same mistakes again; unearthing unsolved histories and addressing remaining pains and fears; reconciliation among people within the frame of broken fellowships; fostering human rights, where crime

against the people God created is rife; actively working towards the healing of people within an AIDS-ridden society; campaigning for the healing of the earth in a country where the earth is destroyed by limitless mining activities; addressing issues of power and corruption. It will be argued that through the sermon and by creatively incorporating poetic and hymnic material into the liturgy, space could be opened up so people could speak to God in various ways, *hear* what God says in various ways – and be changed. The biggest challenge for the preacher remains indeed: to “speak” in such a way that people would hear and pray differently; hear, and act with new vitality; hear, and be opened up for God’s future – God’s future which is already present<sup>11</sup>: *Ubi caritas est vera, deus ibi est...*

In Christ we learn to love and care and spread his truth abroad;  
and in his Name we lift our prayer:  
“Your kingdom come, O Lord.”

Timothy Dudley-Smith ©  
(We bring you, Lord, our prayer and praise, verse 6)

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<sup>11</sup> The reign of God is eternal presence in heaven. In the liturgy God’s reign is praised as presence, while at the same time we pray for the coming of God’s reign (Schwier 2005:894, my translation).

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#### KEY WORDS

The Lord's Prayer  
Daily bread  
Deliver us from evil  
Kingdom

#### TREFWOORDE

Ons Vader  
Daaglikse brood  
Verlos van die bose  
Koninkryk

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## Divine Presence, then the covenants: An essay on narrative and theological precedence (Part two)

### ABSTRACT

This essay examines the covenants with Noah, Abraham, at Sinai, and with David as they appear in their narrative sequence and contexts to show that they either secure the divine presence for the sake of humanity or God's people (Noah, Abraham [Gen. 15]), David), or secure the pledge of God's people to live in accordance with divine instruction in the divine presence (Abraham [Gen. 17], Sinai). The essay concludes that the theological theme of divine presence precedes that of the covenants.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Part one of this essay argued that divine presence, not covenant, is basic to the divine-human relationship (Leder 2012b), and that letting Scripture interpret Scripture according to the analogy of faith does not obviate an antecedent synchronic reading of the text on its own terms.<sup>1</sup>This essay considers a defined set of covenants as they appear in their narrative sequence and focuses especially on their contribution to the narrative depiction of God's response to the problem of humanity's exile from divine presence, and on the narratively depicted response of Adam and Eve's and, subsequently, Abraham and Sarah's descendants.

### 2. THE APPROACH TO READING THE COVENANTS IN GENESIS-KINGS

This essay limits its discussion about the role and meaning of covenants to those depictions of covenant making events found in Genesis-Kings (GK), and then only to those of the suzerain-vassal type<sup>2</sup>: the covenants with Noah, Abraham,<sup>3</sup> Israel at Sinai, and David. Furthermore, although GK's depiction of covenanting events employs elements recognizably belonging to the genre of ancient Near Eastern treaties or covenants, nowhere does the narrative present

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1 "On its own terms" refers to the narrative as it develops its representation of the depicted events. Bolt (2007:180-181) charges Stek with biblicism, by which he means the reading of Scripture outside of the analogy of Scripture as used within a particular theological construction of federal theology. But, do we read Scripture to confirm an already developed system of theology (Prov. 27:17)? "Het hart van de gereformeerde dogmatiek is het Schriftbewijs; maar *wil de dogmatiek niet aan het biblicisme ten slachtoffer vallen, dan zal ze er toch rekening mee moeten houden dat het altijd de geïnterpreteerde Schrift is, die zij als *norma normans* gebruikt. Tussen de dogmatiek en de bijbel zit altijd de interpretatie, wat maar niet een zaak van methodiek maar van hermeneutiek is"*

2 Parity treaties, such as marriage, do not shape Israel's self-understanding of the covenant relationship. Hosea's marriage metaphor depicts the suzerain-vassal relationship between the Lord and Israel. Human marriages are not suzerain-vassal type covenants, although some may function that way. As a covenant, marriage belongs to the category of parity treaties. Using the marriage metaphor to link the Noah covenant with Adam and Eve as depicted in Gen. 2:18-25 for purposes of arguing covenant continuity, as does Bartholomew (1995:19-21), is category confusion.

3 For simplicity's sake, the term "Abraham," and later "Sarah," is also used for all references to this character before Gen. 17.

the audience with an ancient Near Eastern legal document as such.<sup>4</sup> Rather, those elements are subordinated to the narrative depiction of the treaty-making event.<sup>5</sup> Where oath swearing is part of the depictions of the covenants under review, such swearing is also crucial to the narrative occasion as heard by subsequent audiences. Oath ceremonies of one kind or another are clearly present in all the covenants within our scope, except that with David.<sup>6</sup> Kalluteevill writes:

“Biblical texts inform us (*sic*) the normal situations when two parties enter into a covenant relationship: There are frictions or desires between persons or groups somehow apart (e.g., remote family, alienated family, citizens, etc, as well as strangers). There are often negotiations, a decision, a (mutual) sign of assent, and documentation ... . *Covenant generally implies oath.*” (Kalluteevill 1982:5. Emphasis added).

The formalizing oath of post-lapsarian<sup>7</sup> covenants not only legally secures the relationship God constituted between himself and humanity at creation, it also secures the constitutive relationship or a subsequent word in the development of that relationship when it is threatened in some way. That is to say, this essay responds to the question: Why does the GK narrative depict a covenant at this or that particular point in its description of the relationship between the deity and humanity?

Stek applies to the suzerain-vassal treaties in GK what Kalluveitill suggests is the case with parity covenants: they occur in the narrative’s depiction of friction, a problem the covenant event addresses and presumably solves with a pledged promise, an oath. This is undeniably the case for the Noah and Abraham covenants,<sup>8</sup> as Stek cogently argues (1994:35-36), and also the Sinai and David covenants, as we will see below.

In what follows I will argue that each of these covenants occurs in the narrative context of the divine presence, that in each case the covenant addresses a problem in the divine-human relationship, and that the covenant depicted in this context secures the threatened relationship. I will consider these covenant-making depictions in their narrative sequence and

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4 Deuteronomy comes close to having all the elements, but these are combined with Mosaic speeches (Miller 1990:10-16). Kline’s view of the canon as a covenant type document, proceeds from the theological values of treaty elements. In addition, arguing that Genesis and the first part of Exodus “assume the character of an historical prologue” (Kline 1972:53) ignores the received shape of Genesis and Exodus and the manner in which these books uniquely contribute to the solution of the narrative problem: humanity’s exile from the divine presence.

5 Thus, Ex. 19:4 functions like an historical prologue in that it evokes the Egypt and the desert experiences which set the narrative context for the Sinai covenant. For discussions of extant treaties, see McCarthy (1963); Kalluteevill (1982); Weinfeld (1970).

6 The word for covenant (ברית), absent from 2 Sam. 7, is used in 2 Sam. 23:5. The speech declaring this covenant displays similarities to a treaty, according to Kalluveitill (1982: 181).

7 In this essay the term “post-lapsarian” modifies textual referents, such as covenants, depicted as occurring after God’s expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden.

8 Bartholomew’s argument (1995:20-21) that the marriage covenant undermines Stek’s position on covenant as an instrument for exceptional situations is itself problematic. Even though the marriage oath is not made in the context of an immediate threat, it anticipates potential threats that may invade the relationship in a world where a human word is often broken; in the post-lapsarian world people are by nature unreliable. Moreover, the marriage vow serves to legalize an already existing relationship, a legality which plays into a society’s rules for breaking up a marriage in a way it determines to be just. In any case, it is not a matter of whether covenants do so *simpliciter*; but whether this is the case in GK’s depiction of the Lord’s covenanting.

shape. That is, narrative organization rather than the collation of texts assumed to belong to a particular locus, the method of federal theology,<sup>9</sup> is the basis for my reading of the text.

### 3. READING THE COVENANTS FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE DIVINE PRESENCE

The opening narrative interest of Genesis, cast in priestly terms as part of the dominant aspect of the metaphor of divine presence fundamental to the divine human relationship, depicts the creation as a sanctuary in which God constituted humanity as a priestly community totally dependent upon compliance to divine instruction for life to be considered “good” in that presence (Leder 2012b:182, 185). The instruction-compliance sequence in the Garden, which forbids eating from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, evokes this relationship and suggests that as God is holy, so are those who abide in his Garden presence. In that divinely created and provisioned place it is now up to Adam and Eve to work out the holiness, theirs by virtue of God’s placing them in his near presence, by complying with divine instruction.

Historical critical studies do not consider Genesis 2:4 – 3:24 to be priestly material. Nevertheless, audiences familiar with Leviticus would hear formal and material echoes of its instructions. Frequent repetition of the verb “to eat” before and after disobedience (Gen. 2:16, 17; 3:1, 2, 3, 5, 6<sup>3</sup>, 11<sup>2</sup>, 12, 13, 14, 17<sup>3</sup>, 18, 19, 22) evokes memory of the food laws central to clean living in the desert presence of the Lord. Failure to comply with food instructions in this presence would occasion a little death: eating forbidden food contaminates, leaving the offender unclean until evening (Lev. 11:25, 28, 31). Uncleanness that follows upon other failures to comply leads to expulsion from the camp; reentry depends upon completing the cleansing rituals (Lev. 13:45-46; 14:3-32). These instructions require Israel to separate itself from “things that make them unclean, so they will not die in their uncleanness for defiling my dwelling place, which is among them” (Lev. 15:31). Certain kinds of uncleanness require death (Lev. 20:9-16).

Audiences familiar with Leviticus would hear echoes of these requirements in the instruction-compliance sequence of Genesis 2:17. They would recognize the priestly character of God’s Garden instruction, that expulsion from fellowship with God is deadly, and that dying in an unclean state is the future of all who transgress the Garden prohibition: “The day you eat thereof you shall surely die.” This intra-textual<sup>10</sup> reading suggests that Adam and Eve failed to comply with a priestly regulation—not a covenant<sup>11</sup>—constitutive of their being by virtue of their creation and location in the deity’s intimate presence, and that uncleanness, not guilt, forced them to hide from God on his walking through the Garden (3:8).<sup>12</sup> Expelled from the Garden, Adam and Eve die in their uncleanness, as will all their descendants (cf. מלפני in Jonah 1:32, 10), unless there is a cleansing that opens the way back into the divine presence. The subsequent GK narrative addresses the question: Since the way back into God’s Garden presence is barred by the cherubim, what can overcome the deadly disruption between God and humanity?

9 On the post-Reformation topical method see Muller (2007:19, 21-22). The biblical theological method underlying this approach is discussed more fully in the third and final part of this essay (forthcoming).

10 Inter-textual and intra-textual repetition are forms of hidden textual meaning. Intra-textual allusions to the Primary History are crucial to understanding Esther. See Leder (2012a) and Grossman (2011:5-25).

11 The covenant of Sinai binds a community to God; the priestly instructions of Leviticus apply to the mode of cult and conduct in the camp (= Garden) indwelt by the deity, at the end of Exodus. Strictly speaking, the covenant making event ends in Ex. 24. The subsequent tabernacle instructions are not covenant stipulations, but temple or palace building instructions that provide for the indwelling of the deity.

12 On defilement and hiding, see Hutton (1994:151-160), Nelson (1993:17-38; 83-110), and Gorman (1997:5-7).

As depicted in Genesis 3:1 – 11:26, post-lapsarian humanity has no satisfactory answer to the problems it is suffering. Good things are countered by bad (Gen 4:19-22; 4:23-24), death puts an end to every new beginning (Gen. 5:5, 8, 11, 14, 17, 20, 26, 31), and divinely placed curses permeate creation's divinely rooted fecundity (Gen. 1:28; 3:14, 17; 4:11; 5:29; 9:25). Nothing escapes the consequences of defilement. Human wickedness and violence beget universal death (Gen 6-8), the ultimate uncleanness (Lev. 11:32-40; 21:1-4, 10-12; cf. Mark 5:37-42; Lev. 22:4). All living things in the post-lapsarian world suffer divine judgement; only those who find themselves in the consecrated space designed by the Lord, and built in perfect, priestly, compliance by Noah, escape death. In this barren pre-diluvian world God promises a covenant with Noah and all living things.<sup>13</sup>

### 3.1 The covenant with Noah: Divine rescue from divine destruction in God's presence (Gen. 6:18; 9:8-17)

The first covenant GK depicts, promised in Genesis 6:18 and formalized in Genesis 9:8-17, is with Noah. Its occasion is God's determination to destroy (מחוקה, 6:7) humanity and all living things because humanity's wickedness and corruption has filled the earth with violence,<sup>14</sup> in God's presence ( וירא יהוה , 6:5, 12; בעניי יהוה , 6:8). God mitigates the decision to destroy all living things by promising to establish a covenant with an exceptionally righteous descendant of Adam, Noah. Before the covenant is ratified, God instructs Noah in the building of a rescue craft.

The verb “to establish” (קום)—“used of ratifying pre-existing ‘words’ (Deut 9:5), ‘promises’ (2 Sam. 7:25), ‘threat’ (Jer. 30:24), ‘oaths’ (Gen. 26:3), ‘vows’ (Num. 30:14), as well as ‘covenants,’”<sup>15</sup> – is sometimes taken to mean that the Noah covenant, as depicted in Genesis 9, is “a renewal of God's creation purposes as set out in Genesis 1. Noah is pictured as a second Adam,”<sup>16</sup> whom God constituted in a creation covenant. However, affirming that קום refers to an antecedent “word,” “promise,” or “covenant,” relationship, does not require that this antecedent reality be a covenant effectuated in the Garden.

How does Genesis 1:1 – 9:25 depict the antecedent reality that shapes the relationship between God and created humanity before God establishes a covenant with Noah? The emphasis in Genesis 1:1-2:3 is on creation as a sanctuary; Genesis 2:4-25 depicts earthly humanity receiving instructions to live in harmony with this divinely declared order. Conformity to such an order yields righteousness.<sup>17</sup> Thus, Adam and Eve, constituted as divine image bearers,

13 Stek reasons that this and the other covenants are extra-ordinary, not exceptional (Bartholomew 1995), because royal figures do not ordinarily make covenants with peoples or nations, that covenant is not co-extensive with kingdom-kingship. That the narrative introduces a covenant of grant illustrates its extraordinary nature: Noah found grace (Gen. 6:8). Covenant, therefore, is not a necessary aspect of the divine human relationship, but a divinely introduced instrument of mitigation in the context of the Lord's declared intention to destroy all flesh (Gen. 6:5-8).

14 “Filling the earth” in Gen. 6:11, 13 conforms to the Lord's blessing of Gen. 1:28, except that the compliance is violent (חמס).

15 Wenham (1987:175), McEvenue (1971:74).

16 Bartholomew (1995:17-18) in a favorable review of Dumbrell's position (1984); Stek (1994:23, 23 note 42) disagrees with Dumbrell, pointing out that “most Reformed theologians have for good reasons shied away from this (i.e., using the distinction between קום ברית and כרת ברית)”. See also Barr (1973:27-29) on the idiomaticity of ברית paired with כרת, קום, נתן, עבר, and בוא. Both Neuhaus (2007) and Wielenga (1997), though they argue for Scriptural clarity, appear to accept uncritically the construct of an Adamic covenant.

17 “Geschichte wird verstanden als Vollzug von Schöpfung und Herstellung von Schöpfungsordnung”

relate to God as priests to a deity, by creation (1:26), blessing (1:28), and instruction (2:15-17). Formally similar to instructions found elsewhere in the Pentateuch, the instruction in Genesis 2:16 in concert with the verb “to eat,” evoke Israel’s priestly tasks in God’s desert presence. The verbs “to serve” and “to guard” commonly describe religious duties, particularly levitical duties (Wenham 1987:67). That these verbs also express human work in garden presence of God supports the reading that the relationship established between God and humanity is sacred and priestly, requiring the labor of keeping the Garden space clean. In the midst of humanity’s defilement of the created order – “and God saw that (הנה) the earth was corrupt” (6:12) in contrast with “and God saw that (הנה) what he had made was very good” (1:31) – Genesis 6:8 depicts Noah as exercising a priestly righteousness: “but in God’s eyes Noah was righteous.” Divine approval indicates Noah conformed to God’s will with respect to the nature of the relationship antecedent to the covenant God promised Noah. This relationship is characterized by instruction-compliance, confirmed for the audience by the depiction of Noah’s compliance with divine instruction (6:22).

This created relationship obtains in Noah’s day as an irresistible moral order. Nevertheless, Adam and Eve’s descendants now relate to God as defiled and defiling priests on the earthly plane of the heaven-and-earth sanctuary. The transgression of boundaries depicted in Genesis 6:1-4 is typical of a priestly theology of defilement (Nelson 1993:20-21; 36-38). Humanity’s continuing and increasing defilement of God’s presence is the narrative occasion for the flood, for the instruction for the vehicle of rescue, and for the covenant with Noah and all living things. Human defilement of God’s presence continues after the flood and the covenant made with Noah and all living things, as indicated by the episode of Noah’s nakedness (Wenham 1987:1999).

Repetition of the blessing of Genesis 1:28 in Genesis 9:1 and 7 indicates continuity of the priestly reality brought into being in God’s presence. It is this antecedent reality and relationship which the covenant with Noah secures (cf. the verb מִוֶּקֶם) in two ways. First, God makes an oath never to judge the world with water again because he himself (cf. Heb. 6:13) had cleansed the world. In a world of capricious deities, whose wills are anything but clear, questions arise: Will God flood the earth again? How will we know? A royal grant type of covenant provides reassuring answers: The deity swears by himself using a terrible blood oath; a stronger vow cannot be found. The rainbow reminds Noah’s descendants of God’s pledge and power (Van Wolde 2011:385-389; 2013:124-149). Noah and all living things are assured that cosmic disorder will not come from God. By means of this covenant, then, God himself secures the continuity of the creation and of all living things in his presence.

Locating the establishment of the covenant with Noah after the repetition of the creation instruction links it to God’s original creation purposes and indicates that the relationship constituted between God and humanity obtains. The clauses of the blessing in Genesis 9:1-7, however, are separated by descriptions of a new reality within the creation: animal fear of humanity and blood vengeance.

From this point on all living things, though still in a world suffering the consequences of humanity’s defilement, are secure in God’s covenanted presence because God has sworn by himself, a security not present in the pre-diluvian, post-lapsarian world. God’s non-redemptive favor secures the old and now cleansed world against the recurrence of a divine dissolution of the creation into its elemental parts; it continues to enjoy the original blessing in the presence

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Schmid (1974:16-18).

of God. By covenant the creation's abundant fertility and humanity's cultural prowess are secured; and God has sworn not to be the author of disorder. But the water judgment only underscores humanity's wickedness for it persists in its desire to be like God (Gen. 11:1-9). Death also persists after the flood (Gen. 9:28; 11:28, 32) and even touches Israel's matriarch (Gen. 11:30); the flood has not cleansed the human heart (Gen. 6:5). The narrative turns to a greater than Noah to depict God's dealings with the threat that remains.

### **3.2 The covenants with Abraham: secure blessing/growth in God's presence (Gen. 15; 17)**

The argument that Noah is a second Adam, and therefore represents continuity of a putative covenant with Adam (Bartholomew 1994:17), is true only in a limited sense. Like Adam, Noah is a righteous man who stands at the beginning of a new world, but now one with greater awareness of dangers; like Adam's, Noah's descendants fill the earth with wickedness (Gen. 8:21) and imperial violence (Gen. 10:8-12); and, like Adam, the defilement of God's presence in the garden continues with Noah and his descendants (Gen. 11:1-9). But Noah, whose post-diluvian world is not fundamentally different from Adam's pre-diluvian world, takes the world no closer to God than the post-lapsarian Adam could have: he and his descendants remain in a defiled and defiling world. Noah's world enjoys the fertility and cultural potential which Adam's did (Gen. 9:20; 10:1 – 11:26); it cannot escape the death sentence pronounced in Eden.

Noah is not a second Adam, however, because Adam is not alone in his role: the opening chapters of Genesis speak about humanity as male and female. Earthly response to divine instruction begins with a human pair, Adam and Eve, fecund by divine blessing and sufficiently instructed to manage the earth in God's presence. Their failure to comply brings death into the world, a death Noah could not overcome, and only temporarily survive by heeding divine instruction, for in the pre- and post-diluvian world of Adam and Eve and their descendants death regularly follows upon birth (Gen. 5:3-31; 9:29; 11:27-32). This conjoining of birth and death is uniquely embodied in Sarah, Abraham's wife. Unlike the first mother of all living, she is barren (Gen. 11:30) when she and Abraham abandon the defiled and defiling world of Noah in compliance with divine instruction (Gen. 12:1, 4). Redemption of old world humanity does not begin with Noah but with an Abraham who has no vineyard to cultivate (cf. Luke 9:58; Rom. 4:13), and a Sarah whose barrenness, shameful in old world society, would be healed by God and turn her, and her daughters, into the mother of all truly living. The world shaped by Adam and Eve continues to enjoy life engendered by God's blessing, but it cannot escape death. In a sense, Sarah's barrenness is emblematic of that world: its fecundity inevitably ends in death. Contours of a future emerge at the beginning of the Abraham and Sarah narrative: instructions which promise blessings in a world suffering the curse,<sup>18</sup> and a place to live unencumbered in the presence of God (Gen. 12:1-3). Abraham and Sarah are the second Adam and Eve.

The promise of land and a distinct form of divine self-disclosure are intertwined throughout the subsequent narrative, to be separated only at the end of GK when Israel and Judah are exiled from the divine presence in the land (Jerusalem). The land theme is enunciated in the divine speech: "Go (לך) to the land ...," but not without linking it proleptically to divine self-disclosure in the land "which I will show (ראה) you" (cf. "and the Lord appeared ... to the Lord who had appeared to him" [ראה, 12:7]), in connection with Abraham's building an altar after he arrives in the land. This divine self-disclosure at Bethel is the first of several such appearances

18 The root for blessing, בָּרַךְ, is used five times in Gen. 12:1-3; the root for curse, אָרַר, is used five times in Gen. 3:15, 17; 4:11; 5:29; 9:25.

to the patriarchs<sup>19</sup> at altars built to commemorate the Lord's elusive presence.<sup>20</sup> Divine self-closures frame the patriarchal narratives and the patriarchs' itinerancy in a land not yet theirs; they also set the context within which the audience hears about the covenants with Abraham.

The divine intention to create a new future through Abraham and Sarah remains unchallenged in Abraham's contact with nations (12:10-20; 14) and in the land that looks like the Garden of Eden (Gen. 13, esp. v. 10), until the narrative introduces an obstacle evocative of the fundamental narrative problem of the Pentateuch: death in exile from the Garden presence. Abraham and Sarah's old age evoke the divine curse that condemns all the descendants of Adam and Eve to death.<sup>21</sup> Abraham defines the problem concretely: "O Lord God, what can you give me, I am 'walking according to your instructions childless'" (15:2). The phrase, "walking according to your instructions" translates the present participle הֵלֵךְ, which in turn recalls the imperative לֵךְ (12:1) which itself introduces the volitional sequence of the primary instruction. Abraham's "continued walking" (הֵלֵךְ, present participle) in 15:2 is not a scattered wandering like that of the nations, but an intentional trek in continuity with Abraham's first response to the Lord instruction to go (לֵךְ): וַיֵּלֶךְ (12:4).<sup>22</sup> Abraham's complaint is clear: "I am compliant. What is the state of the deity's expressed intention, now, at this time?" Because the audience knows Abraham and Sarah are old (Gen. 12:4; 16:16; 17:1), the reference to an heir evokes imminent death – the way of the old world – an obstacle Abraham cannot overcome. JPS translates the phrase, "seeing that I shall die childless."

By juxtaposing Abraham's demonstrated compliance to the deity's apparent failure to comply with the intentions expressed in 12:1-3 and 7, Genesis 15 defines the problem and then depicts the covenant which solves the problem. After Abraham trustingly responds to God's new word concerning the future (הַאֲמִינִן, 15:6<sup>23</sup>), the narrative moves on to describe a ritual which approximates the self-maledictory aspect of a suzerain vassal covenant, more specifically, of a royal grant. By it God swears that Abraham's descendants (זֶרַע, 15:5, 13, 18) will inherit the land, thereby securing Abraham's promised future in his presence. That this is a promised future in God's presence becomes clear as the narrative develops a second obstacle.

Where Genesis 15 defines the narrative problem in terms of Abraham's compliance and old age, Genesis 16 addresses the problem of Sarah's barrenness. Unlike her husband, Sarah does not complain to God. Rather, she employs the available cultural resources, a surrogate, to overcome the obstacle, and involves Abraham in "solving" the problem, thereby evoking Eve's offering Adam the fruit from the forbidden tree.<sup>24</sup> The complications of Sarah's actions

19 Abraham: רָאָה, Gen. 15:17; 22:14 (Ni); Abraham subject 22:4, 8, 13 (focusing on progeny, זֶרַע), builds an altar, 22:8; Jacob at Bethel: רָאָה, Gen. 35:1, 7 (and זֶרַע); 46:2; Jacob subject, 28:12 (and זֶרַע).

20 Terrien (1978). These appearances converge at Sinai with the indwelling of the presence in the tabernacle and subsequently in Zion and Solomon's temple. Newing (1985:7, 10) argues that Ex. 33, which focuses on the divine presence, is at the center of a chiasm of the Pentateuch and 1 Kings 6-8 as the center of a chiasm of Joshua-Kings.

21 The regular notations about Abraham's age reminds the reader of this fundamental problem facing Abraham's way with God.

22 The verb הֵלֵךְ describes God (3:8), Enoch (5:24), Noah (6:9), and appears again in 17:1.

23 See Kline (1968).

24 Berg (1982:10), cited by Wenham (1994:8), writes: "The actors correspond: in Gen. 16:3 the woman takes the initiative as she does in 3:6b. The recipient in both texts is the man, in Gen. 16:3 the husband, in Gen. 3:6b the man for whom the woman was created as a partner. In both stories the man reacts appropriately to the woman's action. In 3:6b he eats the proffered fruit; in 16:4a he goes in to the offered Hagar. The means (of sin), the fruit/Hagar, is accepted by the man. The sequence of events is similar

include Hagar's refusal to see Ishmael as Sarah's child,<sup>25</sup> but Abraham sides with Sarah against the Egyptian. Egypt and what she represents, is not part of Genesis' solution to humanity's problem.<sup>26</sup>

Sarah's attempt to overcome her barrenness (=death) forms the narrative occasion for God's securing the promise by means of another covenant. In his appearance (ראה) to Abraham God instructs him to "walk in my presence and be blameless" (התהלך לפני והיה תמים) (Gen. 17:1; cf. תמים in 6:9) in which התהלך recalls the הלך of Genesis 15:2 and Abraham's concern for an heir (עיריר) (ואנכי הלך). This evocation of Genesis 15, as expressed by הלך, now heard in the context of Sarah's attempt to procure an heir, is followed by two simple waw + cohortative constructions that follow on the imperative התהלך and the imperative והיה תמים: ואתנה + ואתנה. This reads: "Walk before me and be blameless, [then it is my intention that] I will make my covenant between me and you, and (that) I will make you very great in number."<sup>27</sup> The verb of appearance (ראה) in this text recalls Abraham's unique way in God's presence (cf. Gen. 12:7) and reinforces the instruction to "walk in my presence." The covenant offer makes clear that, by binding himself to God as a vassal to a suzerain, Abraham and his descendants are committed by self-maledictory oath to God's way and time of fulfilling the promise of an heir.

Genesis 15 and 17 address the concern for Abraham and Sarah's promised heir with a view to instructing their audience that they – Abraham and Sarah's descendants – are bound to God's ways as vassals and that God has bound himself to them as a beneficent suzerain. These covenants not only secure the instructions of Genesis 12:1-3 in God's presence, but also the fulfillment of its promised future.

### 3.3 The Covenant at Sinai (Ex. 19-24)

Israel's promised future is realized in part in Joseph's wise administration of Egypt's fertility such that all the nations of the earth (cf. Gen. 12:3) come to Egypt to escape death by famine. In this way Joseph's righteous handling of affairs recalls humanity's rescue in righteous Noah's ark. In both cases, however, the rescue is temporary: death continues to ravage post-diluvian humanity and in Egypt a new Pharaoh, ignoring Joseph's rescue from death by universal famine

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in both cases: the woman takes something and gives it to her husband, who accepts it. This leads to the conclusion. By employing quite similar formulations and an identical sequence of events for Gen. 3:6b and 16:3-4a, the author makes it clear that for him both narratives describe comparable events, that they are both accounts of a fall." This reading supports the pairing of Adam/Eve and Abraham/Sarah as first parents, of the human race and the holy race (זרע הקודש), Ezra 9:2) respectively. Theologically, this means that Abraham's spiritual descendants fell "in Abraham" as they did "in Adam," and that the temptation that led to that fall is not the desire to be like God, but to be like the nations in their way of solving humanity's problem: the cultural resources and practices. Hagar's Egyptian identity evokes the role of Egypt in Genesis and Exodus: both a help and a hindrance to God's way with Abraham among the nations. This also supports the parallel between Adam-Eve and Abraham-Sarah.

25 "Hagar conceived, but she did not think of disowning the blessing of her womb in favor of Sarah." Von Rad (1970:191).

26 Abraham's ambivalent actions with respect to Pharaoh (Gen. 12:10-20) and Hagar (16:1-6), anticipates that of his descendants in the desert (Ex. 16:3; Num. 14:2; 21:5). The narrative depiction of Abraham's siding with Sarah against Hagar the Egyptian confronts the reader with the proper attitude to Egypt, i.e., the nations: it may be helpful, as it was in the time of Joseph, but it has no "share or claim or stake in [the building of] Jerusalem" (Neh. 2:20 JPS [Haronite, Ammonite, Arab]; cf. Ezra 4:3 [the enemies of Judah and Israel]). Ezra 9:1 expands the traditional list of seven nations to include Egypt and other nations.

27 The cohortative after the two imperatives expresses intended result. W&O 33.6 (#3)

and threatened by Israel's enormous fecundity, develops measures to strangle Israel's future. Enormous growth in Egypt signals the fulfillment of God's word to Abraham (Gen. 15) and, by using the vocabulary of the blessing (Ex. 1:7; cf. 1:28), the fulfillment of that foundational word among the descendants of Abraham and Sarah. God's blessing of Israel in Egypt becomes the occasion of a threat to Israel's existence, for if universal death by famine has been avoided under divine guidance, a new Pharaoh is unwilling to acknowledge God's care of all nations (Ex. 1:8); he fears Israel's fertility (Ex. 1:8-9) and attempts to counter Israel's blessed future.

Egypt threatens Israel's future in two ways. First, Pharaoh impresses God's altar builders, God's vassals by Abrahamic covenants, to serve the Egyptian ship of state by forcing them to build the store cities of Pithom and Rameses. When this enforced vassalage only increases Israel's fertility, a second policy requires that all male Israelite new-born be drowned in the Nile. Thus Israel's future human progenitors could not engender the promised seed; the Israelite women would be absorbed into Egyptian society to bear fruit from alien seed. This policy is intensified when the midwives rescue the new-born males, and Pharaoh commands his own people to commit full-blown genocide. Israel's seed would be devoured by the nations (בלע, Jer. 51:34; Lam. 2:5, 16; Ezek. 36:3; Hos. 8:8). But one of those threatened Israelite children survived this watery death in an ark, Moses (2:3, 5 [תבה]; Gen. 6:-8:19). He would rescue Israel from death in Egypt for God remembered his covenants with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Ex. 2:23-25). The swallower would be swallowed (Ex. 7:12; 15:12; Jer. 30:16), and Moses would lead Israel to Sinai where they would serve the Lord (Ex. 3:12, עבד) and not Pharaoh, and receive instructions to build their Redeemer's earthly throne-room.

The rescue begins with an 80 year old Moses finding himself in God's fiery presence (ראה, 7x in 3:1-7) at the mountain to which he will lead Israel (3:12 [ההר הזה]; 19:2 [נגד ההר]). Moses requests that Israel be allowed "to serve" (עבד: 7:16; 8:1 [7:20 MT]; 8:20 [8:16 MT]; 9:1, 13; 10:3, 17, 27)<sup>28</sup> in the desert, that is, to demonstrate their vassal fealty to their covenant God. Only after ten mighty works does Pharaoh say: לכו, עבדו (Ex. 12:31; cf. 10:24). Thus, where before Israel was depicted as Pharaoh's enforced vassals (Ex. 1:13-14, 5x; 2:23 twice), or as acknowledging their vassal status (three times עבדיך by the Hebrew foremen, Ex. 5:15, 16), the plagues – the response of the God of the covenants with Abraham (2:24-25; 3:6-10; 6:6-8) – points to Israel's true covenant Overlord. And, as the waters judged the world for its corruption in the days of Noah, so the Sea swallowed Pharaoh/Egypt for its arrogant attempt to subvert the future God secured for Israel through his covenants with Abraham. Under his watchful presence (13:21-22; 14:19-20, 24) Israel was led through the Sea on dry ground, into the desert.

But oppression took its toll. When still in Egypt, Israel had refused Moses' leadership because of Egypt's cruel bondage (עבודה קשה, 6:9). Now, during the escape fear of Pharaoh's pursuit disclosed a preference for Egyptian bondage over what the desert might offer (Ex. 14:11-12). In the desert they pined for Egypt's sustenance, suggesting death in Egypt would have been better (Ex. 16:3). This is not a covenant people emulating Abraham's trust (האמין, Gen. 15:6; and see its appearances in Ex. 4:1, 5, 8, 9; 14:31; 19:9) in God. The impact of and rescue from Egyptian bondage and the challenge to be faithful to their rescuer in the desert, is the background against which the Sinai covenant is depicted.

As a covenant people Abraham's descendants lived in relative safety among the nations in

<sup>28</sup> The translation "to worship" as often in NIV, fails to communicate the notion of the vassal status, that the act of "worship" is a matter of affirming that vassal status. Of the approximately 97 occurrences of the עבד/עבדה complex, 67 occur in Ex. 1-14, and of these the verb עבד and the noun עבד 33 x in Ex. 7:8-11:10.

Canaan. The nations' attempts at harming this covenant family were few and rebuffed by the Lord (Gen. 12:10; 20; 26:7-11); the major obstacles arose from within the family: Sarah and Rebekah's barrenness, Jacob's deceit and its consequences, the affair of Dinah and Shechem. Such internal dangers will persist until the exile. The covenant people that the Lord rescued from Egyptian bondage, however, is unlike anything its ancestors in Genesis experience: it is Sarah disappearing into Pharaoh's or Abimelech's harem writ large. And, as the language of Israel's foremen and Israel's "commitment" to Egypt and Israel's desert move to Sinai demonstrate, Israel's covenant loyalty is anything but clear. The Sinai covenant secures Israel's loyalty as the Lord's, not Pharaoh's, vassal people. While in one sense it affirms the covenants with the patriarchs, the Sinai covenant is unique in that it administers relationship between God and his people, not only in terms of the promise of Genesis 12:1-3 as do the Abrahamic covenants, but also and especially in response to the threat of the nations to annihilate the promised seed. For that reason the Sinai instruction includes an extensive prohibition against serving the "other gods" of the nations (עֲבַד, Ex. 23:20-33).

The Sinai event also depicts the beginning of the solution to the narrative problem defined in Genesis 2-3: exile from the presence of God for failure to comply with instructions. Having heard God's offer of covenant (19:5) in the context of God's mighty acts in Egypt and the desert (19:4), Israel swears a blood oath to obey and do everything the Lord commands (24:3, 7; 19:8), but only after experiencing God's dangerous presence (Ex. 19:16-19; 20:18-19; 24:17), a danger greater than the threat of Pharaoh. The remainder of Exodus depicts the instructions for and building of the tabernacle, interrupted by Israel's disloyalty with the golden calf, after which God indwells the tabernacle (Ex. 40:34-38). Only then does Israel find itself in the close presence of God, much like Adam and Eve in the Garden. The tabernacle section of Exodus addresses the narrative problem enunciated in Genesis, exile from the divine presence, not the covenant section.

The rest of GK depicts Israel's compliance or non-compliance in God's tabernacle and temple presence, measured not only by the blood-sworn covenant stipulations, but also by the subsequent tabernacle and levitical instructions (2 Sam. 6:6-7; cf. Ex. 25:26-27; Num. 1:50-51; Lev. 10:1-3), all of which are given from Sinai and later the tent of meeting in Israel's midst (Lev. 1:1; 7:38-39). Renewals of the Sinai covenant occur time and again to remind Israel of its loyalty (Josh. 8 and 24; 1 Sam. 12; cf. Neh. 9). Both people (Judges) and their leadership (Kings) fail. Good Josiah's repentant compliance with Mosaic instruction is not enough to cover Ahab's and Manasseh's idolatries (1 Kings 16:29-33; 2 Kings 21:1-16, esp. 13) and the defilement of the temple with the result that God removes Israel (2 Kings 17:18, 23) and Judah from his presence (2 Kings 23:26; 24:3, 20), as he did with Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:23). Defilement of God's presence is Israel's apostasy. But the narrative does not end on this sorry note. Rather, it reminds its audience that its exiled king was raised to sit at the conqueror's table (2 Kings 25:27-30). And Jehoiachin was a son of David (2 Sam. 7:12, 16).

### **3.4 The covenant with David (2 Sam. 7)**

The Davidic covenant belongs to the Lord's administration of the Sinai covenant in the Promised Land, specifically in the development of Israel's leadership through kingship as it focuses on David's house, in order to secure his people's life in his presence. The covenant pledge is partially realized when David's son Solomon builds the temple and the Lord indwells the temple after the priests bring the ark of the covenant into the Holy of Holies. On that occasion Solomon declares that God has brought his people into the rest and fullness of the

promises given through Moses (1 Kings 8:56). The subsequent history of the Davidic kings and the temple ends in the latter's utter destruction. Nevertheless, the temple ruins reinforce the narrative (cf. Josh. 6:27; 1 Kings 16:34):

“als Ruine ist das Jerusalemer Heiligtum aber nicht obsolet geworden, es erwies sich vielmehr als “das integrierende Element, das es den exilierten, den nach Ägypten geflüchteten und den im Lande verbliebenen Judäern ermöglicht, ihre religiöse Identität zu bewahren.“ Auf diese Tempelruine richteten sich die Gebete des Volkes, aber auch die theologischen Reflexionen eines Ezechiel oder der Deuteronomisten aus.”<sup>29</sup>

But how can God dwell in the ruins? What of God's presence with his people (Ezek. 1)? The covenant with David, only hinted at with the survival of Jehoiachin (Von Rad 1966a), reminds the exiles of the Lord's oath to provide a trustworthy king to lead his people, among whom he would come to rest. Hope and life in the divine presence coincide in God's covenant with David because with that covenant God binds himself to secure a trustworthy Davidic leadership for his people, and, through this pledged leadership, secures the divine presence in the midst of his people, a presence depicted by the ark of the covenant.

### **3.4.1 The ark, divine presence in the land: from triumphant entrance to humiliating exile**

The ark begins its journey to Jerusalem at the foot of Sinai as the throne of God in the midst of Israel (Num. 10:33-36), a people fully instructed by and committed to the Lord's victory march to the Promised Land by self-maledictory oath (Ex. 24:3-8). It will come to rest after the Lord has defeated all his people's enemies through David (2 Sam. 8; cf. Josh 21:44; 2 Sam. 7:11), at the temple of Jerusalem.<sup>30</sup> David's role in bringing the ark to Jerusalem from its exile (2 Sam. 6; cf. 1 Sam. 7:2) sets the stage for the covenant in 2 Samuel 7.<sup>31</sup>

The ark's journey begins with the fear it evokes among the nations (Josh. 2:8-11; 5:1; cf. Ex. 15:14-16; 1 Sam. 4:6-9), continues with a triumphant crossing of the Jordan and total destruction of Jericho by the Lord of all the earth (Josh 3:11, 13; 6:6-21). Divine instruction from the place where the Lord dwells, the ark, directs the campaign to complete the conquest and manage the distribution of the inheritance (Josh. 7:6, 23; 8:33; 18:1, 8, 10; 19:51; Jud. 20:27-28). Failure to do so (Josh. 9:14; cf. 22:19) hampers the campaign. After a time of almost ceasing to be, the word of the Lord came to Israel again through Samuel, who slept “where the ark of the Lord was” (1 Sam. 3:3; 3:21), but the ark is taken into exile by the Philistines (1 Sam. 4:11, *Ni*) when Israel takes it into battle without divine permission. Although the Philistines bring it back to the land, the ark remains at the edges of Israel's existence (1 Sam. 7:2); Samuel, and subsequently other prophets, is the only connection between God and Israel. The ark remains in limbo until David brings it to Jerusalem. Juxtaposed to this event is David's desire to build a house for the ark, and God's pledge to build David a royal house instead (2 Sam. 7). God's covenant with David secures the kingship and through it the place where the ark of the Lord of all the earth will have its resting place; until the destruction of the temple when all its appurtenances go into exile (2 Kings 25:13-15; cf. Ezra 1:7; Dan. 1:2), and the ark of the covenant is no more.

29 Janowski (1987:190-191), citing Otto Weippert.

30 Like Noah's ark (תבה) at the end of its journey, the ark of the covenant (ארון) rests at the end of its journey (Gen. 8:4 [גורן]; 1 Kings 8:6-8, 56 [גורן]; cf. Num. 10:33, 36 [גורן]). On the ark, see von Rad (1966b).

31 God's pledged promise in 2 Sam. 7 is called a covenant in 2 Sam. 23:5 and Pss. 89:3 and 132:11-12.

### 3.4.2 *The covenant with David and the presence of God*

The entry of the ark into Jerusalem, escorted by the Lord's warrior chief, as the end of the Lord's long victory march begun on Passover night, illuminates David's desire to build a house for the ark. The construction of the tabernacle in Exodus properly memorialized the Lord's victory over Egypt (Ex. 29:43-46; 2 Sam. 7:6), why not build a memorial at what appears to be the end of the journey that began Passover night?

Having defeated the Philistines decisively (2 Sam. 5:17-25) and having received rest from his enemies all around (2 Sam. 7:1) it is only proper for David to attribute this victory to the Great King who had given David these victories (2 Sam. 5:19, 23, 25; 8:14b).<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, the Lord had already blessed the houses of Obed-Edom, Israel, and David (בית). The next logical step is to build a palace (בית) to house the divine presence (לפני יהוה) in 6:5, 14, 16, 17, 21 and לפני ארון in 6:4). The prophet Nathan agrees; the Lord does not (2 Sam. 7:3, 4-17). Instead, by royal grant covenant for David's righteous deeds (2 Sam. 8:15) the Lord pledges to secure David's house (בית), a house involved in building and maintaining God's house: Solomon and Josiah; a house that survives the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple (2 Kings 25:27-30, Jehoiachin); a house that would be involved in the building of the second temple (Haggai 2, Zerubbabel, grandson of Jehoiachin), when the ark was no more. Although built by a scion of David's house, that temple would not be the seat of God's indwelling. It would be the task of the seed of Abraham and David to secure the divine presence in a house (תיב) built with living stones (ναος, John 1:14; 2:19-21; Matt. 1:12-16, 23; 2 Cor. 6:16-18; 1 Peter 2:4-10).

## 4. CONCLUSION

This essay has examined the covenants with Noah, Abraham, at Sinai, and with David to show that, as they appear in their narrative sequence and contexts, they either secure the divine presence for the sake of humanity or God's people (Noah, Abraham [Gen. 15]), David), or secure the pledge of God's people to live in accordance with divine instruction in the divine presence (Abraham [Gen. 17], Sinai). This supports the argument that the theological theme of divine presence precedes that of the covenants. The third and final part of this essay will reflect will reflect on the narrative and consequent theological precedence of the theme of divine presence over that of covenant.

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<sup>32</sup> See Leder (2010:43-53) on memorializing military victories in ANE.

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## KEY WORDS

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## TREFWOORDE

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## Theopoiesis and the aesthetics of human dignity: towards a pneumatological approach

### ABSTRACT

The discourse on human dignity is most of the times determined by ethics and dogmatic issues. It is often the case that the paradigm of democratisation dictates processes of conceptualisation. The article operates from the hypothesis that aesthetics is more fundamental than ethics. Human dignity is a relational category determined by habitus and the eschatological status of our being qualities. In a pastoral theological approach one should shift from the democratic paradigm to the pneumatological paradigm. In this regard the theology of A. A. Van Ruler becomes most appropriate. Theopoiesis points to a kind of theological aesthetics within the realm of anthropology. The basic assumption of the article is that more fundamental than the moral question whether man is good or bad is the aesthetic question: the value and purpose of our being human; i.e. the human being as beauty (the dignity of human beings) or human beings as beast (the ugliness of human beings)? Human dignity is fundamentally an aesthetic category.

Hamlet (Shakespeare, Hamlet, Act iv, Scene III, p. 970) articulated the anthropological question regarding the quintessence of our being human as follows:

“What is a man,

If his chief good and market of his time

He but to sleep and feed? A beast no more.”

### THE CASE OF HAPPY SINDANE: A RHINO WITHOUT A HORN<sup>1</sup>

Happy Sindane was born to a white father and a Xhosa mother in 1984. Very little is known about his father, Henry Nick (German), who was his late mother’s employer.

Sindane was thrown into the spotlight in 2003 when he claimed to be a white boy who had been kidnapped by black people. In 2003 he walked into a police station and told the bemused cops that he was a sixteen year old white boy who had been kidnapped and then raised by a black family. His quest was quite simple: he wanted to find his true family, to be returned to them, to reclaim his rightful childhood which was stolen from him. It was found by court that Happy’s claim was a kind of “lie” in order to find identity. It was described by the magistrate as an “unintentional lie”, a kind of provisional truth that was emotionally and psychically necessary, even though it might not been factual. This “unintentional lie” masked a child’s refusal to accept his father’s absolute rejection and his mother’s disappearance. The lie was a kind of survival strategy in his desperate attempt to gain identity.

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<sup>1</sup> Case compiled by researcher from different reports on television and in media at the time of his death.

After DNA tests, he was identified as Abbey Mzayiya, the son of a domestic worker, but chose to use the name Happy Sindane.

Sindane's body was found in a ditch early on Monday morning the 1<sup>st</sup> of April 2013, less than 2 kilometres from his home. A passer-by found his battered body lying on a rocky, litter-strewn piece of veldt in Tweefontein, Mpumalanga. He had been stoned to death. There had been an altercation over a bottle of brandy at the JZee tavern where the dead man had been drinking. An empty bottle was found near the corpse.

A 58-year old man was arrested in connection with Sindane's murder. Sindane and the accused reportedly had a fight in a tavern over a bottle of brandy the night before he died.

During the court case it was pointed out that he grew up to be a 29-year old man but without challenges. He experienced no hugs and grew up like a rhino without a horn. He had no identity and if you remove a person's identity you take away their respect and dignity. The point is that bad things happened to Sindane in his short life and although he was a troubled boy, he did not deserve to die the way he had because killing Happy was like "killing an ant".

Sindane's biological siblings, the Mzaiyias of Diepsloot in Johannesburg, who requested to have him buried, next to his mother in the Eastern Cape, did not attend the funeral because they were not consulted about funeral arrangements.

At his funeral Sindane's grandmother Johanna Masombuka covered his coffin with a large blanket, a ritual performed in Ndebele culture. Magistrate Marthinus Kruger who presided over Sindane's custody matter in 2004, conducted the service, reading from Psalm 23.

The previous case study, clearly underlines the fact that human dignity is fundamentally a relational and aesthetic category. Human rights as such cannot guarantee human dignity.

Due to a lack of acknowledgement within the dynamics of human relationships, the public system and social networking, the life of Happy Sindane was "ugly": a rhino without a horn. In his quest for acceptance and dignity, he was forced into an "unintentional lie" in order to create the artificiality of a "provisional truth".

## HUMAN RIGHTS = HUMAN DIGNITY?

Within the human rights discourse it is often extremely difficult to differentiate between human rights and human dignity.<sup>2</sup> The discourse has become 'slippery'. Human dignity has even become an in-between issue: between sanctity and depravity (Witte Jr.2003 119-137); between man as beast and man as an angel (merely divine) (Meilaender 2009).

The debate on human rights focuses mostly on moral and democratic issues within the framework of personal, social and political ethics. Moltmann (1984) distinguishes between human rights<sup>3</sup> as the quest for freedom, justice and equality, while dignity refers to how these

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<sup>2</sup> "The Reformed *Theological Basis* grounds human rights in human dignity and human dignity in humanity's being an image of God, and the being an image of God in God's right to human beings" (Moltmann 1984:12). Kraynak (2003:81-118) devotes a whole article on the imago Dei in order to explain the connection between human dignity and the notion 'Made in the Image of God'.

<sup>3</sup> Rawls (2003:197-198) identifies two principles of justice. 1. Each person has an equal right to the most extensive scheme of equal basic liberties compatible with a similar scheme of liberties for all. 2. Social

issues impact on the quality of life of the individual, the unique and particular person. "Human rights are plural, but human dignity exists only in the singular ... The dignity of humanity is the only indivisible, inalienable, and shared quality of the human being" (1984:9).

According to Huber (1996:114), ideas of human dignity and human rights have been shaped by a long historical development. Within early European tradition, the quest for human dignity was closely connected to the rank and status of particular persons in society. The concept dignity (*dignitas*) is therefore a social category related to that of honour (*honor*) (Huber 1996:115). The turn toward the human being as the centrum of the whole of cosmos was fed inter alia by the renaissance and the humanism of the Enlightenment. Due to the Kantian influence (human beings as autonomous rational beings), as well as the impact of the Enlightenment and processes of secularization, the notion of human autonomy put an "anthropocentric" worldview in the centre of the human dignity discourse.

Within an anthropocentric worldview, "dignity" has increasingly meant the worth of being human. "*Dignitas* became closely associated with *humanitas* as to be construed as a synonym. To be able to say what dignity is would be to describe the fundamental meaning of being human." (Meeks 1984:ix). Dignity presupposes the following: to behave in a humane way and to be human.<sup>4</sup> "For this reason, dignity has become the key concept in the worldwide struggle for human rights." (Meeks 1984:ix).

Initially European humanism linked the notion of human dignity to the Christian concept of humans created in the image of God. Human beings became the microcosm of God, containing in them a multitude of choices. One can therefore say that the "modern age, which began with humanism, is characterized by the conviction that human dignity is anchored in the self, namely in one's rational talents" (Huber 1996:117). It was when the recognition of equal dignity of all human beings were incorporated within the politics of democratization and institutionalized by international law that the shift from dignity to human rights became a focal point for the discourse on the value and worth of human beings. The reason perhaps is that human dignity, however, requires human rights for its embodiment, protection, and full flowering (Meeks 1984:xi). One must therefore admit that without human rights, human dignity becomes a fleeting idea without concrete and contextual meaning.

In his book *On Human Dignity*, Jürgen Moltmann (1984:31) connects human rights and human dignity as if the two concepts are exchangeable. "Through the service of reconciliation, human dignity and right are restored in this inhuman world." However, the important question in the human rights debate is whether human dignity and human rights could be used as interchangeable concepts. Hence, the attempts to differentiate between the two concepts in order to understand better their interconnectedness. "Human rights spring from human dignity and not vice versa" (Meeks 1984:xi).

Within the theological discourse on human rights, the anthropological question regarding human dignity and human rights, evolve mostly around the hermeneutics of the *imago Dei*.

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and economic inequalities are to meet two conditions: they must be (a) to the greatest expect benefit of the least advantaged and (b) attached to offices and the positions open to all under conditions of fair opportunity.

4 For Rombach (1987:379) dignity then describes the humane human being (*Der menschliche Mensch*); the human being shaped by the social processes of identity and meaningful space (*Idemität* = a spiritual networking of meaning as the whole which gives significance to every particular part).

According to Kraynak (2003:90), the problem with the notion of the *imago Dei*<sup>5</sup> resides, in the fundamental difference between the biblical and the contemporary understanding of human dignity. “In the biblical view, dignity is hierarchical and comparative, in the modern, it is democratic and absolute” (Kraynak 2003:90). A further problem surfaces when the Biblical construct of the *imago Dei* does not refer so much to inherent ontological dignity, but to qualitative representation within the dynamics of relationships. As Kraynak (2003:91) pointed out: human dignity is a relational category, “it is also something to be won or lost, merited or forfeited, augmented or diminished”.

Within the tradition of Plato, Aristotle and Kant, dignity could be related to intelligibility.<sup>6</sup> It then resides in the human *nous* or mind. Eventually dignity and rights become qualities of radical autonomy. “But the Imago Dei has now been given a new twist, which includes the ethical imperative to affirm the rights and dignity of the self-defining person” (Kraynak 2003:112).

Meilaender (2009:8) distinguishes between two concepts of dignity: human and personal. Human dignity then has to do with the powers and the limits characteristic of our species – a species marked by the integrated functioning of body and spirit. Personal dignity refers to the individual person whose dignity calls for our respect whatever his/her powers and limits may be. Although human dignity refers to many layers of meaning, Meilaender (2009:89) points to equal respect as a principle and theoretical basis for human dignity. Human dignity is also connected to the notion of virtue (Meilaender 1984).

Albeit, one should agree with Meeks (in Moltmann 1984:ix) that ‘dignity’ is a difficult word to define. It is often used as an exchangeable concept for human rights. “For this reason, dignity has become the key concept in the worldwide struggle for human rights” (Meeks in Moltmann 1984:ix), a struggle embedded in different cultural contexts and deep ideological disagreements over human rights. The further problem is that dignity defined in many different ways immediately entails a counter-definition of others as inhuman, not possessing dignity.

What then is ‘human’ in human dignity and human rights? Especially, if one takes Hobbes’ notion about the wolf in human nature seriously: *homo homini lupus* (Negt 2003:31).

In the debate on a theological approach to anthropology, theologians very aptly point out the notion of human sin and the connection between the *corruptio totalis*<sup>7</sup> and human fallibility. In many cases the reason why Christian spirituality was hesitant to be engaged in the debate on human dignity and human rights, was the use of the notion of the fall as starting point for a theological anthropology. For example, the anthropological notion of creation and the ‘image of God’ stir up the debate on the doctrine of sin. Hence, the shift in many “enlightened”

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5 “In reflecting on the Christian view of human dignity, scholars commonly begin with the biblical references to the *Imago Dei* – to the image of God in man. For example, Reinhold Niebuhr argues in *The Nature and Destiny of Man* that the human quality most reflective of the divine nature is “self-transcendence”: the capacity to rise above our natural selves and freely construct a world of higher meanings”. Kraynak 2003:83.

6 “On one common reading, “dignity” refers to a basic faculty; it denotes the bare capacity for intelligent free choice shared equally by all non-damaged persons. One’s rational freedom may be misused, but the simple possession of it is the ground of respect” (Jackson 2003:143).

7 See the impact of St Augustine in this regard. Human beings are robbed from their super human gifts or dignity due to a *peccatum originale*. Sin robbed human beings from their original freedom. See Rebel 1981; 171-174.

theological circles on human rights to withdraw of the doctrine of original sin in order to describe a theological anthropology beyond the categories of the fall. "The more uninhibited and optimistic the talk was regarding the dignity and abilities of humans, the greater was the need to relativise and secularize the doctrine of original sin. The doctrine appears – in the form of insight into the finiteness and fallibility of humans – merely as a limiting condition of human self-realization, no longer a description of the very essence of humans" (Huber 1996:120).

In systematic theology human dignity is mostly viewed as an ethical issue and not as an aesthetics issue. For example, W Huber (1996:xvi) links human dignity and human rights to an "ethics of human dignity": "Human dignity is a packed-up ethical argument. Its lofty status can be recognized from the way in which it is written into the texts of constitutions" (Ammicht-Quinn 2003:39).

My argument is that human beings should be assessed in the first place within aesthetic categories and not from the perspective of ethical categories (morality and sinfulness). Theological ethics emanates from theological aesthetics.<sup>9</sup>

Ethos refers to virtue and attitude, conduct and *habitus*,<sup>10</sup> the essential make up and characteristics of something (human identity). Ethos refers to the aesthetics of identity and dignity. In this case identity represents the unique personal, individual characteristics of a human being (our calling and vocation), while dignity reflects personal self-value and self-image as related to meaning and worth.

Aesthetics without ethics is not possible. While ethos is connected to the aesthetics of value and meaning, ethics represents the normative framework of life; it gives direction to ethos and represents the imperative within the indicative of aesthetics. Ethics represents the normative framework for meaningful living. However, being (*Dasein*) and the mode of human existence (*So-sein*) are in a spiritual approach to anthropology more fundamental than doing.

A theological aesthetics reckons with two important categories: *doxa* and *charisma*. Within a Christian spiritual approach dignity should be linked to habitus as a reflection of the glory of God. "Glory (*doxa*) is the closest word to dignity in the New Testament" (Kraynak 2003:93).

Dignity is not a value inherent to the person (Hobbes<sup>11</sup> in Negt 2003:30); dignity is a relational category. "So dignity is not an attribute peculiar to persons and their singularity; it is a relationship, or rather manifests itself in the gesture by which we relate to others to consider

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8 "In this book I hope to clarify what an ethics of human dignity can contribute to this debate, in particular the potential within Jewish and Christian traditions for an adequate approach to this topic." Huber 1996:xvi.

9 For a discussion on a theological aesthetics, see Murphy 2008:5. Hans Urs von Balthasar founds his theological aesthetics on the insight that being has been overcome by the beauty of Christ. "For what von Balthasar asks us to accept is not simply that our (humanly) inspired experiences of Beauty resonate analogously with the divine Beauty (or, more precisely, that they are always already shaped by the resonance within them of the divine Beauty of the incarnation), but that there is a further analogy between our critical and scholarly reflections on these human experiences and the way in which we should be reflecting theologically on the Divine Beauty" (Pattison 2008:109-110).

10 In 1983 already, Edward Fairley advocated the understanding of practice in Practical Theology as *habitus*. *Theologia practica* is for him *habitus*: "Practice meant that aspect of the *habitus* or wisdom in which the divine object sets requirements of obedience and life (1983:27).

11 For Hobbes dignity is bound up with power and domination. See Negt 2003:30.

them human, just as human as we are, even if their appearance suggests non-humanity, indeed inhumanity” (Valadier 2003:55). I cannot ‘claim’ dignity, I *am* dignity. I dignify my life by means of the quality of *habitus* and informed responsible decision-making.



*Young Lovers* (Jong Minnaars) by Johannes Meintjies 1954. Photo: D. J. Louw. Permission: High School Molteno. In the embracement of the female and male, nudity becomes beautiful and both of the two human beings become dignified. The embracement makes them free from all gender categories. They are not anymore female and male, but two human beings transformed into a new identity within the aesthetic framework of love. The change is reflected in their *habitus* towards one another; their dignity regarding human embodiment and sexuality becomes a relational issue.

Dignity is in essence a spiritual category. It refers to meaning and the quality of life. As a spiritual category within the framework of a Christian reflection on anthropology, one cannot avoid the notion of grace and unconditional, sacrificial love (the eschatological qualification), as well as the notion of the fruit of the Spirit (*charisma*) (the pneumatological qualification). Hence, our assumption that human dignity and human rights reside as spiritual categories in the fact that dignity is enfleshed in human bodies due to the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit; human dignity is a matter of inhabitational theology.



Spiritual dignity (inhabitational dignity) as reflected in the male torso (Johannes Meintjies) as well in the bodies of the painting (*Ikaros*, Johannes Meintjies 1948). Photo: D. J. Louw. Permission: Molteno Highschool.

What it means to be truly human is closely connect to the fact that human beings live in the presence of God and are created in the image of God: "The image of God is human rights in all their relationships in life" (Moltmann 1984:23). "Thus in God's liberating and redeeming action the original destiny of human beings is both experienced and fulfilled. In the 'image of God' concept, the divine claim upon human beings is expressed" (Moltmann 1984:22).<sup>12</sup>

Our point of departure for a theological understanding of human dignity is not in the first place the creation paradigm but the re-creational paradigm of eschatological thinking. Human dignity is promised to human beings by "God's justifying grace" (Huber 1996:119).

Eschatology views human beings from the perspective of who we already are in Christ. Our identity is determined by salvation and grace. We are accepted unconditionally for who we are. It is not what we *do* that is fundamental for the quality of ethos, but who we *are*. The indicative of salvation determines the imperative, which emanates from the eschatological character of salvation.

"The imperative does not appeal to Christian's good will or ability, but recalls what they have already received in baptism: freedom and a new Lord" (Schrage 1988:176).

What is therefore required is not that we *do* something, but that we *be* something (some-*body*) (Schrage 1988:43). The crucial point is the transformation and *metanoia*<sup>13</sup> of the individual (transformation of stance, conduct and orientation, the *telos* of life) in terms of intention, motivation and goal. Thus Schrage's conclusion that *Jesus' ethics was an ethics of intention* (1988:43).

The salvific nature of the kingdom of God determines our ontological stance in both life and death. The character of the kingdom determines human conduct (Schrage 1988:37).

Ethics is a consequence of eschatology and not a precondition. In this way an eschatological approach undermines perfectionism and legalism. What is most needed is wisdom (*sapientia*) in order to beautify human life; the aesthetics of unconditional love. "Presence embodies grace" (Augsburger 1986:36).<sup>14</sup>

Within a pneumatological paradigm the human being is not assessed in terms of an *opportunistic approach*, which implies that all relationships are fine when they only embody God's presence through empathetic responses. In an opportunistic approach the focal point is merely individual need satisfaction and the maintenance of basic human rights.

Neither is humans assessed in terms of a *pessimistic approach*, which implies that human beings are merely sinners and doomed to failure.

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<sup>12</sup> Huber (1996:117) refers to the Italian humanism of the fifteenth century who built the notion of human dignity upon the concept of humans created in the image of God.

<sup>13</sup> *Metanoia* in the Greek is not to be understood in a purely intellectual sense. "It means not just a change of mind about something but also a change of attitude, of intention, of will, if not a total transformation of one's conduct and orientation" (Schrage 1988:41-42).

<sup>14</sup> Empathy as an emotional mode of incarnating the love of God becomes the norm for the quality of the pastoral intervention. "Pastoral counselling across culture is rooted in an incarnational theology that is truly present to others and a dialogical theology that is open to others in agape" (Augsburger 1986:36).

In a pneumatological approach human beings are assessed *realistically and relationally*. A *realistic approach* in spirituality means that as Christians we are already new beings in Christ. In Christ humans are endowed with the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 6:22-26). Human beings in Christ are “charismatic human beings”.<sup>15</sup> The reality of the fruit of the Spirit implies a pneumatological ontology: one is (eschatological speaking)<sup>16</sup> therefore love. From a pneumatological point of view, love – as in the case of all the fruit of the Spirit – is now a being function and aesthetic category. “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God?” (1 Cor. 6:19).

It was Aristotle who underlined the importance of virtues for purposeful actions. To this end he identified four basic virtues — prudence, justice, temperance and courage.

It is indeed true that Aristotle’s and Homer’s understanding of *arete* differs from that of the New Testament. The New Testament not only promotes virtues such as faith, hope and love, but views humility (the moral for slaves) as one of the corner-stones in the formation of a Christian character (MacIntyre; 1984:245). MacIntyre’s conclusion (1984:249) is of importance to the debate on the interplay of values and virtues. In both the New Testament’s and Aristotle’s comprehension, despite differences, virtue<sup>17</sup> has this in common: it empowers a person to attain that characteristic essential for attaining meaning and significance (*telos*).

It is a fact that the notion of relationality was often questioned as a reliable and valid approach. The critical point is then that human beings often act in relationships with enmity, hatred, anger and violence rather than with unconditional love. Our love is most of times conditional. The terse slogan that man is wolf to man (*homo homini lupus*) is from a sociological point of view indeed relevant. However, it will later be argued that from a pneumatological point of view, theology should revisit the slogan: “man is man to man” (*homo homini homo*); the term “human” then stands for the capability to have empathy, solidarity, and cooperation (in Huber 1996:118).

‘Identity’, as derived from the Latin *idem* indicating the same, conveys the idea of continuity. Identity presumes a continuity between the human I and behaviour, hence, the importance of congruency. Congruency happens when the self is a true reflection and portrayal of the conduct and experiences of the human I. Congruency is about remaining faithful to oneself, communicating authenticity and truth (Heitink 1977:69). It is about the question to what extent one’s belief system correlates with actions, lifestyles and behaviour.

The answer to the question: ‘Who am I?’ depends on the quality of the human reaction, and on the degree and quality of human responsibility. Our basic point of departure is therefore the core principle that qualifies ethos (attitude and aptitude) in human behaviour: *respondeo ergo sum*. In essence human dignity is a pastoral category and not merely a dogmatic formulation or moral issue within the framework of ethics; it resides in *habitus*.

One could say that humanity and humanness refer to the character of our human freedom, i.e.

15 Charisma is not a human potential. It points to the work of the Spirit. (Schrage 1988:179)

16 Ashley and O’Rourke (1994:196) also opt for the eschatological aspect of ethics: “This is why we have opted for a teleological, goal-directed, means-ends ethics”.

17 Kreeft (1986:192) implies that virtue is necessary for the survival of civilization, while religion is necessary for the survival of virtue. Without moral excellence, right living, goodness, purity, chastity and effectiveness, our civilization is on the road to decline. Civilization needs justice, wisdom, courage and temperance.

our ability to take responsibility for life and to make responsible decisions that will enhance the quality of life. It is indeed true that humanity cannot be separated from moral decision-making. Animals do not make moral choices. However, humanity and dignity entails more. It touches the quality of the “human soul” and the character of our “ego” and being functions...

Humanity refers to the fact that humans can say: “I”. Personhood indicates an ego with the potential of awareness (consciousness – subconsciousness). Within this ego there are several components: the cognitive component of the human mind and reflection; the affective component of emotions; the conative component of will power, the social component of relationships, the environmental dimension of culture, the ethical dimension of morals, virtues/vices, norms and values, the spiritual dimension of meaning and the corporeality of human embodiment.

To capture the gist of my argument, one can say that:

- Dignity (*dignitas*) within a social paradigm (still mostly hierarchical) points to role function, status, position and authority. In this regard acknowledgement (freed from prejudice, discrimination and stigmatisation) plays a decisive role. Dignity also points to different degrees and levels of need-satisfaction.
- Dignity (*dignitas*) within an ethical paradigm points to equality, justice and rights within the quest for liberation. Thus the important question about the quality of freedom and justice.
- Dignity (*dignitas*) within an aesthetic paradigm points to meaning, *telos* (purposefulness/destiny/significance) and intimacy: the basic quest to care for the *humanum*. As an aesthetic category dignity relates to care, nurture, comfort, empathy, interpathy, reconciliation and forgiveness. Dignity therefore presupposes to a large extent to the dimension of healing and human well-being. As a spiritual category, the aesthetics of dignity is dependent on the quality of intimacy; i.e. to be accepted unconditionally for who you are without the fear of rejection. Anxiety, the fear for rejection, isolation and existential loneliness, is the most basic threat to human dignity and human health. It is even more devastating than guilt and despair.

The previous outline pointed out several categories within what one can call the dynamic networking of human dignity. It has been argued that human rights cannot be separated from human dignity. At the same time, both dignity and rights are closely related to the identity of the people involved.

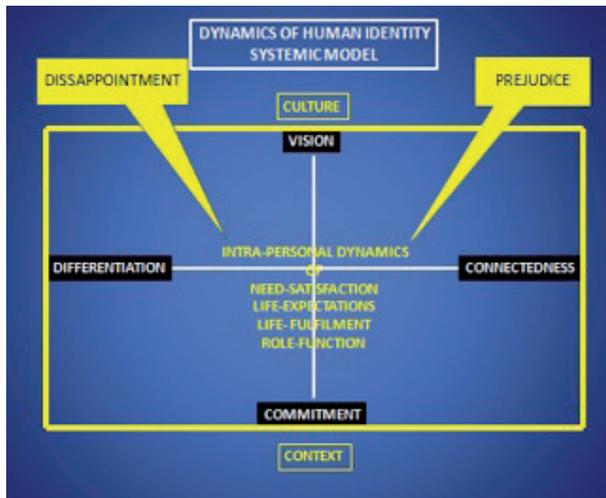
But how are all the components, regarding the complex networking of identity, dignity and rights, connected to one another and therefore interrelated?

## SEEING THE BIGGER PICTURE OF IDENTITY

In order to see the bigger picture of identity, one can say that identity oscillates between the level of individuality on the one hand (uniqueness) (differentiation: introspection and self-insight regarding personal strengths and weaknesses), and on the other hand a sense of interconnectedness and self-acceptance/self-confidence. Identity also presupposes a kind of autonomy and responsible decision-making in the light of visionary thinking (vision). At the same time it is embedded in sensitivity and wisdom, i.e. the capacity to discern what appropriate behaviour is about and what inappropriate behaviour is about. The quality of

one's sensitivity correlates with personal commitments and convictions; it describes one's passion in life.

The following diagram helps to see the unseen dynamics of human identity. It helps one to understand why disappointment (things did not work out as expected) and prejudice (exclusive perceptions that disqualifies the other and "marks" the other as less acceptable; it then fuels a downward spiral of destructive comparison and negative devaluation) can rob one from one's human dignity. Prejudice as a social construction easily leads to other components such as labelling, stereotyping, cognitive separation, destructive emotional reactions, status loss, stigmatisation and discrimination. In fact, prejudice is a kind of antipathy based on faulty and inflexible generalisations; it leads to exclusive marginalisation. Together with stigma, prejudice conveys a devalued social identity. A person who is stigmatised is a person whose social identity or membership in some social category, calls into question his or her full humanity. As in the case of Happy Sindane, the person is eventually devalued, spoiled or flawed in the eyes of others.



It is clear that both identity and dignity are closely related to both the quality of a human being's attitude (ethos) and moral awareness regarding what is right and what is wrong (ethics). The quality of decision-making, one's philosophy in life (commitments), one's personal capacity (gifts/charisma) and one's vocation and vision will play a fundamental role within the networking of human dignity and human identity.

Human dignity (care for the value of life) and identity (*habitus*: the respond-able and sensitive human I; ethos: a sacrificial stance in life) determine the quality of human rights (the normative framework of life within the communality of a spiritual humanism). In order to prevent human rights of becoming sheer political ideology or merely an abstract and even legalistic imperative within processes of democratization and liberation, human rights should be determined by human dignity. This emphasis on human dignity should rediscover the worth of our being human within the aesthetics of a suffering God.<sup>18</sup>

18 In a theological aesthetics, beauty should be connected to the pathos of the crucifixion. On Christ's

The praxis-question in anthropology should eventually reside in pneumatology and not predominantly in Christology. For this paradigmatic shift the theology of the Dutch theologian A. A. van Ruler is most relevant and should be revisited. Why? Within incarnation theology the human being is nothing (*homo peccator*) and God is everything (sacrificial grace): Christ is mediator. Christology is about redemption. In inhabitational theology, man, the human being, is becoming 'whole' (*homo aestheticus*) and therefore "everything" (*humanum*); human beings are not excluded in salvation (*heil, shalom*), but totally incorporated (Rebel 1981:209) because the *humanum* is now determined by *pneuma*.

## THEOPOIESIS: THE BEAUTY OF THE SPIRIT

In terms of pneumatology Van Ruler points to the category of *theopoiesis* (Rebel 1981:145). *Theopoiesis* means that the human will starts to correspond with the divine will according to the indwelling presence of the Spirit. The human person starts to become theonomous and therefore fully authentic and autonomous; i.e. it displays the charisma of the Spirit (the soulfulness of embodied humanism). Van Ruler (1968:12) calls our pneumatic identity: the capacity and ability that humans become "whole" and therefore merely "divine"; humans are in themselves *theo-logos* (*Ik ben theo-logos, Godzegger*). To build in any concurrency between God and human beings is pagan idolatry (Rebel 1981:99); pneumatology rather creates a theological osmosis (Van Ruler in Rebel 1981:85) between God and human beings. Sin is secondary, eschatological being is primary. In an Christological anthropology, the object of faith is salvation (*heil*= becoming whole); in a pneumatic anthropology, the object of salvation is the *humanum* (Rebel 1981:140).

The implication of this pneumatological understanding of the humanum is that human dignity is a spiritual and inclusive category. It includes the beauty of the human body. Spirituality without human embodiment becomes unreal; embodiment without spirituality is exposed to nausea and non-sense. The body can indeed be called the *eikōn* of the human soul.

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suffering see the remark of Garcia-Rivera (2008:177): "This *em-pathos*, mediated by their own distinct accounts through the beauty of the crucifix, in turn becomes, second, *syn-pathos* – a plea for divine sympathy with their own suffering".

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## KEY WORDS

The aesthetics of human dignity  
Human rights  
Human dignity  
Theological anthropology  
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Inhabitational theology

## TREFWOORDE

Die estetika van menswaardigheid  
Menseregte  
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## “Eccentric Existence”: David H Kelsey oor teosentriese menswaardigheid

### ABSTRACT

#### “Eccentric Existence”: David H Kelsey on theocentric human dignity

Discourses on human dignity presuppose specific anthropologies, that respond to the question as to what a human being is. David Kelsey’s recently published theological anthropology, *Eccentric Existence* (2009), provides a particular view on what it means to be human and, in turn, what the dignity of human beings entails. This article distinguishes between five perspectives and two discourses on human dignity, and proceeds to analyse Kelsey’s understanding of human dignity with a possible contribution to these discourses and perspectives in mind. It is argued that Kelsey’s work could identify with both the discourse on justice *and* the discourse on flourishing, and that Kelsey’s insistence that the dignity of human beings lie outside of themselves safeguards that dignity in the “eccentric existence” of human beings.

### 1. INLEIDING

Diskoerse oor menswaardigheid is pogings om antwoord te gee op die vraag: Op grond waarvan kan waardigheid aan mense toegeken word (Bayer, 2004:277)? Die implikasies van elke antwoord hierop is omstrede, soos veral gesien in huidige Duitse bio-etiese debatte oor die begin en einde van menslike lewe (cf. Eibach, 2008), waarin verskillende opvattinge oor menswaardigheid meer dikwels lei tot meningsverskille en konflik as tot konsensus en helderheid (Mitchell, 2009:43).

Elke antwoord op hierdie vraag veronderstel ’n bepaalde antropologie (Valadier, 2003:50), en daarom kan selfs ’n meer basiese vraag gevra word: Wat is ’n menslike wese?<sup>1</sup>

Ook teologiese antropologie sou telkens, op verskillende maniere, poog om hierdie vraag te beantwoord. Een so ’n blik op wat dit beteken om ’n mens te wees is David Kelsey se onlangs gepubliseerde boek, *Eccentric Existence* (2009), wat al beskryf word as die mees belangrike werk in Christelike teologiese antropologie om na vore te kom in etlike dekades (Westminster John Knox Press Radio interview with David Kelsey, 2009). Hierdie artikel tree in gesprek met Kelsey ten einde sy posisie rakende menswaardigheid en moontlike bydrae tot huidige

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<sup>1</sup> Regina Ammicht-Quinn (2003:36) benadruk juis hierdie punt wanneer sy die noue verband, in verskillende debatte en diskoerse, tussen vroeë oor menswaardigheid en veranderende beskouinge oor wat ’n menslike wese is uitwys: “There is much to suggest that becoming sensitive to questions of human dignity goes hand in hand with changes to the view of the human being and the anthropology which is dominant at the time. There are changes which make it necessary to put the questions ‘What defines the human being?’, ‘Who is a human being?’ once again... These changes in anthropology as changes in a picture of human beings which has hitherto been regarded as valid are as a rule prompted by geographical, political, social and religious confrontations.”

gesprekke en debatte oor menswaardigheid te evalueer.

## 2. DISKOERSE OOR MENSWAARDIGHEID

Ten einde Kelsey se siening en moontlike bydrae te verstaan behoort dit teen die agtergrond van bestaande invloedryke diskoerse oor menswaardigheid geplaas te word. Idees en argumente oor menswaardigheid en menseregte is gevorm deur lang historiese ontwikkelinge (Huber, 1996:114), maar hierdie artikel word beperk daartoe om vyf huidige perspektiewe of antwoorde op die vraag rondom wat waardigheid aan mense verleen, te onderskei: (1) status binne 'n bepaalde samelewing; (2) uniekheid van menslike wesens, in onderskeiding van nie-menslike wesens; (3) lewenskwaliteit en sosiale bruikbaarheid; (4) kognitiewe vermoëns (rasionaliteit, selfstandigheid, self-bewussyn); (5) verhoudings. Hierdie perspektiewe beskryf egter geensins alle reaksies op die vrae van wat waardigheid aan mense verleen, of wat 'n menslike wese is nie. Verder is hulle ook nie wedersyds eksklusief nie, en sou 'n kombinasie van perspektiewe telkens by denkers na vore kom.<sup>2</sup>

Wolfgang Huber onderskei tussen twee spesifieke perspektiewe op menswaardigheid in Europese tradisies. Die eerste verstaan van menswaardigheid het te make met die status van spesifieke persone in 'n samelewing – die konsep van 'waardigheid' (dignitas) sou hierin verbind wees met dié van "eër" (honor). Die antwoord op wat 'n menslike wese is, is daarom ten nouste verbonde aan die onbewustelike konsensus van 'n bepaalde samelewing, naamlik (onder)skeiding op grond van status. 'n Mens is wat ander mense sê 'n mens se waarde is.<sup>3</sup> Die tweede verstaan van menswaardigheid verwys na die inherente waarde wat menslike wesens onderskei van alle ander lewende wesens en lewensvorme, en verskaf 'n rede vir die spesiale posisie van mense binne die kosmos. In Huber se woorde: "In the former, the result is different rankings among people; in the latter, the result is the fundamental equality of all humans" (1996:115). Die antwoord op wat 'n menslike wese is, is gebaseer op 'n dualistiese verstaan van lewe, deurdat dit opgesluit lê in 'n (onder)skeiding tussen menslike wesens en nie-menslike wesens.<sup>4</sup>

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2 Eibach sien, byvoorbeeld, in die vierde bydrae, naamlik dat 'n menslike wese se waardigheid in hulle kognitiewe vermoëns gesetel is, 'n sterk invloed van Verligtingsdenke en moderniteit se beskouing van wat 'n mens is, en veral die bydrae van Immanuel Kant. Volgens Kant, wys Eibach uit, beskik 'n lewende wese oor waardigheid insoverre dit bepaal kan word volgens rede in vryheid en daarom volgens die aanspraak wat die algemene morele wet daarop plaas. Uiteindelik is dit egter afhanklik van elke mens self om persoonlik hulle eie waardigheid te realiseer (2008:62). Waardigheid is nie in die eerste plek 'n eienskap van individuele mense nie, maar 'n gedeelde eienskap van die mensdom. Inderdaad, individuele lede van die menslike spesie kan aanspraak maak op waardigheid omdat hulle deel in die algemene waardigheid van mensheid (2008:63). In Eibach se interpretasie van Kant, byvoorbeeld, is die vierde perspektief onlosmaaklik deel van die tweede perspektief, en word die uniekheid van menslike wesens selfs toegeskryf aan hulle kognitiewe vermoëns.

3 Mitchell (2009:45) noem hierdie die sosiale dimensie van menswaardigheid, wat gekenmerk word deur die menslike behoefte daarom dat persoonheid erken en bevestig word. Sy skryf dat hierdie behoefte aan wedersydse aanvaarding en goedkeuring so sterk is dat dit menslike lyding vererger wanneer dit ontken word.

4 In Christelike tradisies sou laasgenoemde van meet af die dominante verstaan van menswaardigheid wees – meer nog, soos Huber uitwys sou Joodse tradisies op hierdie punt aansluiting vind in die denke oor menslike wesens. Eersgenoemde, naamlik die onderskeiding tussen mense op grond van status – hetsy bepaal deur klas, amptelike posisies of pligte, talent, rykdom, geslag, of nasionaliteit – sou van sekondêre belang wees (1996:115).

Ulrich Eibach onderskei 'n derde prominente bydrae tot denke oor menswaardigheid, naamlik dat menswaardigheid gelyk is aan kwaliteit van lewe – met ander woorde, die positiewe of negatiewe waarde van menslike lewe. In gesprekvoering hieroor word menswaardigheid gelykgestel aan publieke of sosiale bruikbaarheid, sodat die idee van 'n lewe wat afbreuk doen aan menswaardigheid of 'n lewe wat nie werd is om gelewe te word nie toenemend in debatte vandag aandag geniet (2004:60-61). Wat 'n menslike wese is word dan geag as onlosmaaklik deel van wat so 'n menslike wese kan bydra binne die breër samelewing, of nie.

Oswald Bayer onderskei 'n vierde prominente bydrae tot denke oor menswaardigheid, naamlik dat menswaardigheid die produk van bepaalde kwaliteite is – soos selfstandigheid, rasionaliteit en selfbewussyn – waaroor mense beskik en wat hulle in staat stel om aan sekere aanvaarbare standaarde van optrede te voldoen (Bayer, 2004:277). Vir De Lange is veral hierdie 'n belangrike tradisie wat moderne kulture se sienings oor menswaardigheid beïnvloed het (2010:6). Die antwoord op wat 'n menslike wese is bou dus op 'n dualistiese antropologie, waarin 'n menslike wese die produk is van hulle kognitiewe vermoëns.

'n Vyfde belangrike bydrae tot opvattinge oor menswaardigheid is dat menswaardigheid gegrond is in verhoudings, en spesifiek dat die verhouding van God tot mens basies is tot die bestaan van menslike lewe. Lewe is daarom “being-in-relationships” (Eibach, 2008:73) omdat mense verhoudingswesens is – naamlik, dat verhoudings die voorwaarde is tot die moontlikheid om 'n self te word. Vir Eibach neem hierdie verstaan ontologiese prioriteit in wat wees-vir-jouself of selfstandigheid aanbetref. Menswaardigheid het te make met die kapasiteit om in afhanklikheid van ander te leef, asook om te sorg vir afhanklikes (Eibach, 2008:73). Die antwoord op wat 'n menslike wese is, is daarom ‘verhoudingswese’.

Verskillende benaderings tot en beskouing van menswaardigheid funksioneer egter nie outonoom nie, maar is gekoppel aan die verskillende diskoerse waar binne dit funksioneer.<sup>5</sup> Waardigheid word toenemend nié as abstrakte konsep<sup>6</sup> of as objektiewe essensie in 'n mens verstaan nie, maar as “the moral qualification of practices of social recognition” (De Lange, 2010:1). Frits de Lange argumenteer dat denke en argumente oor menswaardigheid aan spesifieke diskoerse<sup>7</sup> behoort – hy self volg Martha Nussbaum daarin om tussen twee dominante diskoerse te onderskei, naamlik die diskoers oor geregtigheid en die diskoers oor menslike floring (2010:3).

In die diskoers oor geregtigheid word daar gefokus op 'n gedeelde, algemene mensheid. In hierdie diskoers, wat die etiek van politiek oorheers, speel ervarings van ongeregtigheid 'n sleutelrol.<sup>8</sup> Dit is eers wanneer grense rakende die waardigheid van mense oorgesteek

5 Sommige skrywers sou selfs vanaf die veronderstelling uitgaan dat menswaardigheid 'n eie diskoers is, soos blyk uit die titel van 'n boek wat geredigeer is deur Regina Ammicht-Quinn, Maureen Junker-Kerry en Elsa Tamez: *The Discourse of Human Dignity* (2003).

6 Intendeel, “[t]he concept of dignity contains a complex set of interwoven, often implicit meanings in the history of modern morality” (De Lange, 2010:1).

7 Diskoerse vorm deel van dialogiese praktyke wat die produkte is van prosesse van langgaande sosiale interaksie. Diskoerse bestaan uit 'n stel betekenisse, metafore, verteenwoordigings, beelde, stories, uitsprake, verbale gebruike in kort, waardeur mense betekenis en struktuur gee aan hulle daaglikse realiteite (De Lange, 2010:1). Diskoerse is daarom “texts-in-action, with normative power... [through its] discursive power” (De Lange, 2010:1). Deur die oortuigingsmag en definieringsmag van hulle retoriek struktureer en skep diskoerse realiteite en ‘waarheid’ (De Lange, 2010:1).

8 “Only the experience of injustice moves the thinking of philosophers in the direction of a theory of justice, Paul Ricoeur writes” (De Lange, 2010:3).

is, deurdat menswaardigheid geweld aangedoen is, dat filosofiese teorieë en religieuse leerstellings eksplisiete betekenis en uitdrukking aan emosies van verontwaardiging gee. De Lange identifiseer “verontwaardiging” dan ook as die basiese emosie binne hierdie tipe diskoers, en die basiese houding hier binne as “respek”. Hierdie tipe diskoerse onderlê teorieë oor menseregte, en aanvaar dat menswaardigheid ‘n inherente kwaliteit van elke menslike wese is – permanent, universeel, absoluut (De Lange, 2010:3). Die Duitse debatte oor bio-etiek en mediese etiek het te make met juis hierdie diskoers oor menswaardigheid, en in die besonder met die vraag na wie en wat tot die kategorie “mens” behoort (De Lange, 2010:3; Eibach, 2008:58).

In die diskoers oor floring word daar gefokus op individualiteit. In hierdie diskoers, wat die etiek van die sorgstelsel oorheers, speel ervarings van ‘n tekort aan menslike geluk en self-aktualisering ‘n sleutelrol. Weer eens speel die emosie van “verontwaardiging” ‘n belangrike rol in die formulering van die kognitiewe posisie dat die betrokke individuele menslike wese moes floreer het en suksesvol moes gewees het (De Lange, 2010:4). Die basiese houding in hierdie diskoers is empatie, meelewing en sorg – geen aantygings word gemaak nie, maar besorgdheid word uitgespreek oor die lyding van ‘n spesifieke persoon (De Lange, 2010:5). Binne hierdie tipe diskoers word waardigheid nie inherent aan elke menslike wese toegesê nie – veeleer word menswaardigheid as voorwaardelik en tydelik aangebied. Waardigheid is spesifiek en vergelykbaar. Hoewel mense nie kan aanspraak maak op ‘n reg tot geluk nie, “verdien” hulle die realisering van hulle kapasiteite, wat hulle sou toelaat om die tipe lewe te leef waarin hulle waarde sou vind. In kort, hierdie diskoers – hetsy gesetel in menseregte-etiek of in die leerstelling van die *imago Dei* – voer aan dat elke menslike wese gebore is vir geluk. Die humanistiese tradisie sou, verder nog, selfs argumenteer dat die ware lot van mense goeie lewe is (De Lange, 2010:5).

Die twee diskoerse is ingebed in verskillende sosiale kontekste – vir De Lange oorheers die diskoers oor geregtigheid in die politieke en daarmee saam die publieke sfeer, terwyl die diskoers oor floring die wêreld van sorg en welsyn en daarmee saam die private sfeer oorheers (2010:5). Vir Martha Nussbaum is albei diskoerse, so verskillend as wat hulle funksioneer, gegrond in een en dieselfde morele ervaring – naamlik, die emosie van meelewing. Die emosie van meelewing vorm vir haar, verder, die brug tussen die twee diskoerse (De Lange, 2010:5).

Saam skets die vyf perspektiewe op wat waardigheid aan mense verleen en die twee diskoerse oor menswaardigheid ‘n prentjie van huidige gesprekvoering oor menswaardigheid. In Suid-Afrika is menswaardigheid ook ‘n belangrike onderwerp van gesprekvoering.<sup>9</sup> In

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9 Adrio König identifiseer vier mensbeskouings wat prominente rolle in die dinamika van diskoerse oor menswaardigheid in spesifiek Suid-Afrika speel.

Die eerste is wat hy noem “die mensbeskouing van Apartheid”, waarvolgens “die mensdom deur God ingedeel is in kollektiewe eenhede wat organies teen mekaar afgegrens is” (1993:11). Mense van verskillende rasse sou so wesenlik van mekaar verskil, lui hierdie interpretasie, dat sommige beter ontwikkel het as ander. Binne hierdie interpretasie sou die individualiteit van die mens opgeneem word in ‘n bepaalde groepsbeskouing – wat gesentreer is rondom ras, kultuur en taal – en sou die ‘nasie’ of ‘volk’ die belangrikste werklikheid word (1993:12).

Die tweede is wat hy noem ‘n “liberale mensebeskouing”, waarvolgens die gelykheid, vryheid en individualiteit van alle mense kern is (1993:19). Waar König se mensbeskouing van Apartheid mense hoofsaaklik in terme van hulle groepsidentiteit – aan watter volk of nasie hulle behoort – sou koppel, wil die mensbeskouing van liberalisme die individu se uniekheid en vryheid beklemtoon. Verskille tussen mense is sekondêr vir hierdie mensbeskouing, en elke persoon beskik oor dieselfde waardigheid en

Donald Katts se onlangse boek, *Op weg na 'n menswaardige samelewing* (2007), kom hierdie veral sterk na vore: "Hoe ons by 'n waardige, veilige en gelukkige samelewing vir onself en ons kinders uitkom, bly 'n ontsaglike uitdaging" (Katts, 2007:iii). Die belangrikheid van die Suid-Afrikaanse gesprek oor menswaardigheid is veral duidelik wanneer menseregte ter sprake kom.

### 3. MENSWAARDIGHEID EN MENSEREGTE

Argumente rondom die waardigheid van mense is ingebed in emosie, en daarom is gesprekke oor menswaardigheid nooit alleen 'n intellektuele oefening nie. Inteendeel, die kragtige emosies van verontwaardiging, woede en hoop het belangrike kognitiewe waarde vir Frits de Lange: "it provides us with knowledge about what's morally at stake" (De Lange, 2010:2).

Daarom, argumenteer hy, is die diskoers oor menseregte,<sup>10</sup> wat nou verbind is met die diskoers van menswaardigheid, nie gegrond in rasionaliteit nie, maar in emosie (De Lange, 2010:2).<sup>11</sup> Hy wys daarop dat menseregte nie op grond van rasonele argumente verdedig kan word nie, aangesien daar geen bewyse is vir hulle ontologiese realiteit nie. Tog behoort ons menseregte te respekteer en te verdedig, nie as gevolg van die oortuigingskrag van rasonele argumente nie, maar omdat hulle aanspraak maak op ons kapasiteit om in simpatie met ander se ervarings en realiteite – en met veral die lyding van ander – te identifiseer. De Lange volg Richard Rorty in sy argument rakende die skending van die waardigheid van ander: "The violation of their dignity also attacks our own self-respect and sense of personal value." Daarom staan die respek

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"behoort dieselfde basiese vryheid en regte te geniet ongeag van ras, kultuur, geslag of geloof" (König, 1993:19).

Die derde is wat König beskryf as "die tradisionele mensbeskouing van Afrika", waarin individuele menslike lewe terselfertyd gemeenskapslewe is én deel vorm van 'n groter eenheid van lewe en interafhanklikheid met ander lewendes wesens (1993:33). Die fokus binne so 'n mensbeskouing is op die gemeenskap (teenoor die volk of nasie van die mensbeskouing van Apartheid) en die samehörigheid en gemeenskaplikheid nie net met mensegroepe nie, maar ook binne die natuur.

Die laaste mensbeskouing wat König identifiseer is "die mensbeskouing van die bevrydingsteologie." Hy beskryf hierdie as hoofsaaklik reaksionêr (waar swart teologie, 'n vorm van bevrydingsteologie, gereageer het teen Apartheid) waarin die waardigheid van mense – "selfrespek en 'n besef van eie waarde... bevryding en selfbeskikking... 'n mens as iemand wat self besluit... die heiligheid en onaantasbaarheid van die lewe... die geskiedenis en die waarde wat daarin gevind kan word" (König, 1993:45) – voorop sou staan (König, 1993:43). Mense is wesens wat 'n onvervreembare reg op vryheid van onderdrukking en vryheid vir 'n waardige lewe het. In hierdie mensbeskouing, soos in die liberale mensbeskouing, staan die individu voorop; meer nog, in beide hierdie mensbeskouings word 'n oorwegend optimistiese beeld van menswees geskets (König, 1993:48). Trouens, König sou in 1993 reeds skryf dat 'n mensbeskouing wat tap uit bevrydingsteologie, saam met 'n sogenaamde liberale mensbeskouing, "in die komende jare waarskynlik die belangrikste kreatiewe mensbeskouings in 'n nuwe Suid-Afrika wees" (1993:43).

König se analise van mensbeskouings in Suid-Afrika beklemtoon opnuut dat die verstaan van wat 'n mens is bepaal hoe daar opgetree (behoort te) word teenoor mense, veral wanneer hulle andersheid binne groepe en gemeenskappe en samelewings verreken moet word.

10 Debatte oor menseregte deel gemeenskaplike grond, argumenteer Dalton (1999:33), in die Universele Verklaring van Menseregte wat deur die Verenigde Nasies se Algemene Vergadering aanvaar is op 10 Desember 1948: "Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world."

11 Hoewel ander, soos James Dalton (1999:33), weer illustreer dat diskoerse oor menseregte gewortel is in die politieke filosofieë van Aristoteles en Cicero, en tot uitdrukking sou kom in denkers soos John Milton en Jean Jacques Rousseau, wat daarop aanspraak maak dat daar universele standaarde en waardes is wat anderskei kan word deur rasonele wesens.

vir menseregte vir 'n implisiete toewyding aan gedeelde menslikheid (2010:2).<sup>12</sup>

Katts sluit by De Lange aan deur te argumenteer dat die ontwikkeling van menseregte 'n produk van teenreaksie was teen geweld en misdade teen mense gepleeg, en daarom voortvloei uit die diskoers van geregtigheid. Hy argumenteer vir die belangrikheid van die vestiging van "n kultuur van menseregte", omdat dit, saam met morele verantwoordelikheid onder 'n land se burgers en samewerking en vennootskappe tussen die verskillende instellings van 'n samelewing, oor die potensiaal beskik om tot 'n menswaardige samelewing by te dra (2007:163).

Suid-Afrika se Grondwet lys menswaardigheid as die eerste waarde waarin die demokratiese staat van die Republiek van Suid-Afrika gesetel is, gevolg deur gelykheid en menseregte en vryheid (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996:1243).<sup>13</sup> Katts verwys na die rol wat die apartheidsbeleid in Suid-Afrika gespeel het om rassiespanning te verhoog en politieke onrus aan te vuur. Veral beklemtoon hy die rol wat dié beleid gespeel het om afbreuk te doen aan die waardigheid van mense (2007:1). Die oorgang na politieke bevryding, waarin die waarde van menswaardigheid 'n kernrol gespeel het (soos duidelik in die verwysings na menswaardigheid in die Grondwet), het egter nog nie die aandag ontvang wat dit verg in die sosio-ekonomiese lewe van Suid-Afrikaners nie. Sandra Liebenberg, houer van die H. F. Oppenheimer Leerstoel in Menseregte by die Universiteit Stellenbosch, argumenteer dat die insluiting van sosio-ekonomiese regte in die Handves van Menseregte in die Grondwet sentraal is tot 'n getransformeerde Suid-Afrikaanse samelewing (2004:1). Sy argumenteer dat sosio-ekonomiese regte as menseregte waardeer word weens hulle bepaling van waarde mense in staat gestel word om te doen en te wees (2004:1). Daarom word beide individue en die samelewing verarm deur die kollektiewe mislukking om te verseker dat lewensomstandighede voldoende is om die waardigheid van mense as individuele en sosiale wesens te verseker (2004:2). Inderdaad, die Grondwet, en daarmee ook diskoerse oor die waarde van menswaardigheid in besprekings van menseregte, werk dikwels met die veronderstelling van die mens as verhoudingswese.<sup>14</sup>

#### 4. MENSWAARDIGHEID: INHERENTE WAARDE

Denke en gesprekke oor die inherente waardigheid van mense is, skryf De Lange (2010:1),

12 In sy boek *Violence* (1996) wys Wolfgang Huber op verskillende maniere waarop daar aan menswaardigheid afbreuk gedoen word – van die invloed van die media tot sport tot oorlog. Vir hom is "n bespreking van menswaardigheid verbind aan die insig dat die mens in die beeld van God geskape is: "Humans do not have control of themselves, but instead have received their value as a gift" (1996:41). Meer nog, wanneer mense soos God wil wees deur beheer van hulle lewe te probeer neem en die betekenis van hulle lewe wil probeer bepaal vervreem hulle, in sonde en skuld, van hulle lewensbestemminge. Dit is vir Huber op hierdie punt wat mense teen God, teen mede-wesens, en teen hulleself oortree. Die Christelike geloof hou egter vas daaraan dat God getrou is selfs teenoor menslike wesens wat hulle op verskillende maniere vervreem, en dat God hulle in versoening inbring deur genade (1996:41).

13 Inderdaad, "Die verhouding tussen menseregte en menswaardigheid word duidelik in die Grondwet van die Republiek van Suid-Afrika weerspieël" (Katts, 2007:42, voetnota 19).

14 'n Uitspraak van Regter Albie Sachs beklemtoon hierdie besonder duidelik: "While recognising the unique worth of each person, the Constitution does not presuppose that a holder of rights is an isolated, lonely and abstract figure possessing a disembodied and socially disconnected self. It acknowledges that people live in their bodies, their communities, their cultures, their places, and their times" (Liebenberg, 2004:2; voetnota 7).

diep gesetel in die Christelike en klassiek-humanistiese tradisie. In David Kelsey se bespreking van menswaardigheid tree hy juis in gesprek met hierdie tradisie; met wat hy as die dominante moderne konsep of verstaan van menswaardigheid in die Weste beskryf, naamlik dat 'n menslike wese se absolute, onvervreembare waarde ten doel<sup>15</sup> in haarself gesetel is, en nie as 'n middel tot arbitrêre gebruik deur ander nie (2009:396). As 'n doel opsigself is 'n menslike wese se waarde permanent, onvervreembaar, onverminderbaar, en onvervangbaar deurdat die waarde van 'n spesifieke mens nie gekwantifiseer kan word nie en niks vir die verlies daarvan kan kompenseer nie, sê hy. Immanuel Kant verskaf vir Kelsey die klassieke uitdrukking van hierdie verstaan van menswaardigheid,<sup>16</sup> deur die formulering van sy sogenaamde 'kategorieese imperatief': dat menslike wesens nie eenvoudig as 'n middel tot 'n doel verstaan behoort te word nie, maar ook as 'n doel in hulleself.<sup>17</sup> Die kategorieese imperatief impliseer daarom dat menslike wesens die waarde van menswees in mekaar moet handhaaf, moet bevorder en moet eer. Kant noem weerhouding wat op hierdie manier gehandhaaf word 'respek' (Kelsey, 2009:275). Meer nog, vir Kant behels die eer van 'n ander se inherente en absolute waarde bepaalde optrede wat menslike waarde verder bevorder. Kant noem hierdie bevordering 'liefde' (2009:275).

Teologiese tradisies maak op hierdie punt dikwels gebruik van die idee dat elke menslike wese geskep is na die beeld van God, en daarom 'n onvervreembare, absolute waarde het (De Lange, 2010:3; Dalton, 1999:32).<sup>18</sup> Tradisionele teologiese argumente koppel die waardigheid van mense aan die skeppingsleer of die kreatiewe aktiwiteit van God (Dalton, 1999:30-31), spesifiek daarin dat mense geskape is na die beeld van God (Ammicht-Quinn, 2003:40), en daarom is 'n bespreking van menswaardigheid ten nouste verbind aan die insig dat die mens na die beeld van God geskape is (Huber, 1996:41).

Binne David Kelsey se werk is die *imago Dei* egter afwesig in sy bespreking van menswaardigheid.<sup>19</sup> Kelsey argumenteer dat menslike wesens teosentries, as persone wat in verhouding staan met God, verstaan behoort te word. Waar Kelsey aandag skenk aan die tema van menswaardigheid begrond die onderliggende oortuiging dat mense (of, in Kelsey

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15 De Lange voeg by "óók": "So never treat others merely as a means to an end, but always *also* as an end in themselves (Immanuel Kant)" (2010:3; my beklemtoning).

16 Hy volg Steven Lukes (1973:45) hierin. Kelsey, in verwysing na Lukes, skryf "[h]e holds that its 'most impressive and systematic expression' is found in the writings of Immanuel Kant, for whom human beings exist as ends in themselves, and not merely as means for arbitrary use by others, and that human beings must therefore in all their actions, whether directed at themselves or to other rational beings, always be viewed at the same time as an end" (Kelsey, 2009:396).

17 Huber wys daarop dat die filosofie die verstaan van waardigheid as inherente waarde in sekulêre vorm aanvaar het deur dit binne die kategorieese imperatief te plaas (1996:41-42).

18 Die Suid-Afrikaanse Grondwet se artikel 10 sluit by so 'n verstaan van menswaardigheid – dat elke persoon oor inherente waarde beskik – aan, op grond waarvan hulle kan aanspraak maak op die reg dat hulle waardigheid gerespekteer en beskerm word (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996:1247).

19 Sien my bespreking van Kelsey se hantering van die *imago Dei* in die artikel "Imaging the Image of God" (nog ongepubliseerd). Mense beliggaam, vir Kelsey, nie direk self die beeld van God nie, maar is beelde van Jesus van Nasaret, die beeld van God. Mense, daarom, beeld nie self die drie-enige God af nie, maar is beelde van die beeld van God. Jesus is 'n sterflike lewende misterie wat die drie-enige lewende misterie afbeeld. Mense, as beelde van die beeld van God, is sterflike lewende misteries wat die beeld van die beeld van God afbeeld. Dáárom staan die misterie – die onverklaarbare, die onverduidelikbare, die onvoltooid, die onbegrypbare – vir Kelsey sentraal binne gesprekke oor menswaardigheid (Marais, 2012:11).

se woorde, menslike lewende persoonlike liggame) onvoorwaardelike en onmeetbare waarde en waardigheid het, net omdat God met hulle in verhouding tree, sy argumente (2009:378).

## 5. MENSWAARDIGHEID: EKSENTRIESE WAARDE

Menslike wesens se waarde is eksentries, argumenteer David Kelsey. Daarmee bedoel hy dat menslike wesens se inherente verantwoordbaarheid vir hulle respons tot God die teologiese basis verskaf waarop die unieke waardigheid van mense verstaan kan word. Aangesien geen mens in die plek van 'n ander tot God kan reageer nie, en geen mens verantwoordbaar vir 'n ander se respons tot God is nie, is mense geheel en al onvervangbaar (Kelsey, 2009:274 – 275). Tog vorm God wat in verhouding tree met mense deur hulle te skep die groter konteks van menslike respons tot God. Kelsey verstaan menswaardigheid teosentries: gevorm deur die implisiete erkenning dat God met mense in verhouding tree (2009:276). Daarom beskryf hy die waardigheid van mense as eksentries:<sup>20</sup> gegrond in die drie-enige God wat met menslike wesens in verhouding tree (Kelsey, 2009:275).<sup>21</sup>

Kelsey verstaan die teosentriese waardigheid van mense as inherent in die skepping van mense, wat hy beskryf as geboorte. Juis daarom is waardigheid vir hom nie 'n funksie van die kapasiteite en vaardighede en magte en kragte waaroor mense beskik en waardeur hulle gepas of ongepas op God reageer wat in verhouding met hulle tree om hulle te skep nie. Menslike wesens verskil wesenlik in die verskeidenheid van kapasiteite en vaardighede waaroor hulle beskik. Kelsey ontken nie dat mense, in sonde, daarin misluk om gepas tot God te reageer nie, maar argumenteer wel dat nie die beperkte kapasiteite van mense óf hulle mislukking om hierdie kapasiteite op gepaste wyse (in gepaste reaksie op God) uit te oefen die waardigheid van menslike wesens kan verminder of verarm nie. Aangesien menswaardigheid, binne hierdie verstaan, nie 'n produk of funksie is van die kapasiteite en vaardighede van mense nie, maar liewer inherent is in die gawe-karakter van die skepping, is die waardigheid van mense onvervreembaar van hulle menslike persoon (Kelsey, 2009:278).

Menslike skepsels se waardigheid is daarom nie vir Kelsey dieselfde as die goedheid van skepsels nie. Die geskape goedheid van mense is nie sinoniem met die waardigheid van mense nie. Geskape goedheid is God se waardering van mense deur plesier in mense te vind. Waardigheid is deel van mense deur hulle geboorte as mense, deur die verhouding met God waarbinne hulle hulleself bevind (deur God wat die inisiatief neem om hulle te skep in self-toewyding), en deur die verantwoordelikheid en verantwoordbaarheid van elke mens voor God vir die karakter van hulle response. Menswaardigheid, soos geskape goedheid, is dus eksentries (Kelsey, 2009:278).

20 Waarmee hy bedoel “*ex-centric, grounded and centered outside human creatures*” (Kelsey, 2009:275).

21 Reinhold Niebuhr se bespreking van die menslike natuur in sy *The Nature and Destiny of Man* maak ook hierdie punt: dat menslike wesens afhanklik is van God as skepsels van God, en dat menslike wesens daarom nie onafhanklik kan bestaan nie (Mitchell, 2009:40). Eileen Mitchell gebruik dan ook Niebuhr se insigte om haar bespreking van wat dit beteken om mens te wees binne 'n teologiese raamwerk te anker. Sy noem spesifiek dat dit 'n transendente basis vir menslike bestaan vestig: “The human creature *belongs* to God, for without God the creature cannot exist. This existence is a gift of God, an instance of profound grace. Such a grounding, in which humans are understood as creatures *coram Deo* (before God), is the first line of defense against the denial of the intrinsic value and worth of every human being. This ground also reinforces the notion of our interconnection not only to God but to one another and the rest of the created order” (2009:41).

Menslike persone se waardigheid is vir Kelsey ook nie dieselfde as menslike welwees nie. Indien menswaardigheid gegrond word in persoonlike menslike liggame se welwees beteken dit dat enige iets minder as die hoogste graad van welwees 'n vermindering van die waardigheid en waarde van mense is. Een reaksie hierop, wys Kelsey uit, is verwronge aktief-hoopvolle praktyke wat konstant uitgeoefen (moet) word om menslike welwees te vermeerder, te onderhou en te verseker (2009:570). Die verwarring van menswaardigheid met menslike welwees vind uitdrukking in onstabiele optimisme of eksklusiewe en self-beskerende pessimisme. Beide word gegrond in die evaluering van hulpbronne vir radikale transformasie wat beskikbaar gemaak word deur onmiddellike kontekste (2009:580-581). So 'n soort optimisme en so 'n soort pessimisme is onvoldoende omdat beide hulle hoop plaas op slegs die moontlikhede vir transformasie wat hulle kontekste kan bied, en nie op God se ingryping en inwerking in kontekste nie.

Kelsey sien egter liever 'n verbintenis van menswaardigheid met die glorie van menslike persone (waardeur hulle floreer, argumenteer hy). Die glorie van die waardigheid en waarde van mense is gesetel in God wat in verhouding met hulle tree deur hulle kreatief te seën en eskatologies te seën (2009:579).

## 6. MENSWAARDIGHEID: ABSOLUUT ÉN TEOSENTRIES?

Daar is, vir Kelsey, drie belangrike verskille tussen hierdie twee opvattinge van menswaardigheid – wat enersyds die inherente, absolute waarde en waardigheid van mense beklemtoon, en wat andersyds die eksentriese, teosentriese waarde en waardigheid van mense beklemtoon – wat almal te make het met die regverdiging daarvan om waardigheid aan mense toe te ken.

Die eerste verskil lê in die gronde waarop waardigheid aan mense toegeken word, beweer Kelsey. Die teosentriese konsep van menswaardigheid regverdig die toesegging van absolute waarde aan menslike wesens, argumenteer Kelsey, deur te argumenteer dat God met mense in verhouding tree deur hulle te skep en, daardeur, hulle tot 'n bepaalde roeping stem. Die dominante kulturele konsep van menswaardigheid regverdig die toesegging van absolute waarde aan menslike wesens deur te argumenteer dat die “mensdom” verskil van diere deur middel van twee kapasiteite waaroor hulle beskik: weens hulle self-gedetermineerdheid, en weens hulle kapasiteit om reëls te aanvaar wat erken word as bindend vir alle rasoniele wesens. Die probleem met die kulturele dominante verstaan van menswaardigheid in hierdie opsig lê vir Kelsey daarin dat die toesegging van menswaardigheid op te noue basis geskied en daarom sekere mense uitsluit uit die groepering van mense wat respek verdien as menslike wesens, soos byvoorbeeld babas en verstandelik gestremde persone. Waar die regverdiging vir die toesegging van respek lê in God wat in verhouding met menslike wesens tree, word alle aktuele, lewende, menslike persone (met hulle persoonlike liggame, vir Kelsey) ingesluit (2009:276-277).

Die tweede verskil lê in die plasing van waardigheid wat respek verdien, aldus Kelsey. By Kant word “menslikheid” as universele kwaliteit of eienskap geskei van alle konkrete, aktuele menslike “persone”, en geïdentifiseer met die onafhanklikheid van die rasoniele wil wat saamhang met morele wet, beweer Kelsey. Vir Kelsey is die belangrike punt hier dat hierdie kwaliteit 'n radikale kwalitatiewe diskontinuiteit tussen menslike wesens en alle diere aandui. Hier beweeg Kant, argumenteer Kelsey, so naby as wat hy sou kom aan 'n leerstelling van die *imago Dei*, wat hy waarskynlik identifiseer met 'n nie-fisiese eienskap van menslike wesens wat 'n deelname in die goddelike wese behels. Dit is vir Kant hierdie eienskap – en nie menslike

persone se spesifieke, enkelvoudige, konkrete “persoon” nie – wat menslike wesens se menslikheid uitmaak. Die plasing van die waardigheid wat respek verdien is daarom presies dieselfde in alle menslike wesens, naamlik ‘n nie-liggaamlike, goddelike eienskap. Na Kelsey se oordeel is dit by Kant die eienskap van menslikheid (op hierdie manier verstaan) wat respek verdien, teenoor spesifieke, enkelvoudige, konkrete persone wat respek verdien. Die probleem met die kulturele dominante verstaan van menswaardigheid in hierdie opsig lê vir Kelsey daarin dat die plasing van waardigheid nog ‘n konseptuele deur blyk te open na ‘n dualistiese antropologie deurdat dit geen konseptuele ruimte vir ‘n positiewe teologiese evaluering van menslike fisiese liggaamlikheid nie. Waar die plasing van die regverdiging vir respek-eisende waardigheid lê in God wat met lewende menslike persone in verhouding tree deur hulle te skep, word die waardigheid wat respek verdien geplaas in daardie aktuele, lewende menslike persoonlike liggame in hulle konkrete partikulariteite (volgens Kelsey, 2009:277).

Die derde verskil lê vir Kelsey in die histories-kulturele gesetelheid van die verstaan van waardigheid wat respek verdien. Kelsey verwys na die bekende kritiek teen Kant se verdediging van die konsep van die waardigheid van menslike wesens, wat sy poging om op bloot sekulêre gronde sy verstaan van menswaardigheid te verdedig kritiseer deur daarop te wys dat sy verstaan eerstens gesetel is in Joodse en Christelike geloofstradisies, en tweedens ‘n historiese tuiste het in Westerse kulture. Die probleem met hierdie kulturele dominante verstaan van menswaardigheid in hierdie opsig is dat dit nie deel is van (of dalk selfs oop is vir) ander kulture nie en dat die voorveronderstellings daarvan geensins intuïtief vanselfsprekend en universeel kan wees nie. Waar die gesetelheid van die regverdiging vir die respek vir die waardigheid van menslike wesens lê in God wat in verhouding tree met mense deur hulle te skep, (oordeel Kelsey) word die kritiek van die kultureel dominante konsep van menswaardigheid vermy deur die alternatiewe konsep wat Kelsey van die uitset af teosentries formuleer (2009:278).

Die gevaar van die kultureel dominante konsep van menswaardigheid, soos hier beskryf, lê veral vir Kelsey in hoe die dinamiek van respek en waardigheid uitspeel. Waar waardigheid aan menslike wesens opgelê word deur hulle te respekteer kan dit wat opgelê is ewe maklik onttrek word. Kelsey waarsku dat daar, onder sekere omstandighede, besluit sou kon word dat sekere groepe mense nie waardig is nie, of selfs, verder nog, ‘n bedreiging inhou vir die res van die mensdom – wat kan lei (en ook in die verlede gelei het) tot volksmoord<sup>22</sup> (2009:279).

Kelsey argumenteer vir die inherente waardigheid van menslike wesens, nie weens enige kapasiteite (waardigheid op grond van rasionaliteit) of ooreenkomste (waardigheid op grond van skepping na die beeld van God) of differensiasie (waardigheid op grond van nederlik wees) nie, maar op grond van eksentrisiteit – God tree in ‘n verhouding met mense op verskillende maniere. Juis omdat waardigheid nie afhanklik is van die subjektiewe evaluering van mense nie is waardigheid onvervreembaar, onvervangbaar en permanent.

‘n Objektiewe én ‘n subjektiewe verstaan van menswaardigheid is ter sprake by Kelsey.<sup>23</sup> Kelsey

22 Hierdie sou ook problematiese implikasies vir die aarde en haar ekologie kon inhou: “The theological idea undergirding Kelsey’s project, ‘God relating’, cannot accommodate a world view wherein a human world is built in a way that singularly affirms the inherent value and dignity – superiority, even – of human beings only. Existing eccentrically, outside of ourselves, is living on borrowed breath, living on borrowed time, and living by another’s death, which situates human beings as those-related-to-by-God with all living beings and all of life, including the earth and her ecology” (Marais, 2011:279).

23 Frits de Lange argumenteer vir beide ‘n subjektiewe én ‘n objektiewe verstaan van menswaardigheid. Waardigheid, voer hy aan, is ‘n oefening in herkenning, en behoort daarom beskou te word as beide ‘n

is uiters versigtig daarvoor dat waardigheid deur subjektiewe analises aan mense toegeken word, juis omdat dit ewe maklik ontsê kan word van sekere groeperinge mense. Daarom argumenteer Kelsey vir 'n meer objektiewe verstaan daarvan, wat die onaantasbaarheid en onverminderbaarheid van menswaardigheid vir hom verseker, hoewel hy nie die rol van die subjektiewe ontsê of teenstaan nie.

By Kelsey is dit egter liewer 'n vraag na orde – sy objektiewe verstaan van waardigheid kom vóór sy subjektiewe verstaan, maar sonder subjektiewe uitwerking van die objektiewe verstaan van menswaardigheid (naamlik, deur bepaalde positiewe en negatiewe optredes, soos onder die volgende afdeling bespreek) word 'n kernaspek van menslik gemeenskaplike lewe ontsê: die oortuiging (dat mense oor inherente waardigheid beskik) is onlosmaaklik deel van die optrede en verantwoordbaarheid van mense aan mekaar en voor God.

Tog skiet 'n objektiewe verstaan van menswaardigheid tekort sonder 'n subjektiewe beskouing, omdat waardigheid praktyke van erkenning en gepaste optrede teenoor mense op grond van hulle waardigheid vereis. 'n Subjektiewe verstaan van menswaardigheid skiet weer tekort sonder 'n objektiewe beskouing, om te verseker dat praktyke van erkenning en gepaste optrede teenoor mense op grond van hulle waardigheid verseker word, en nie oorgelaat word aan die willekeur van bepaalde ideologieë nie. Uiteindelik gaan dit vir Kelsey om sekere praktyke of optredes waardeur menswaardigheid erken word.

## 7. ERKENNING VAN MENSWAARDIGHEID

Die erkenning van menswaardigheid, verstaan soos wat Kelsey dit beskryf, behels twee breë tipes doelbewuste aksies of optredes: positief en negatief.

Positief verstaan, behels die respek vir die waardigheid van menslike persone dat aksie geneem word om die welwees van mense te koester. Dit behels dat die kapasiteite en vaardighede wat mense se verantwoordbare reaksie – teenoor hulle medemense wat hulle onmiddellike kontekste deel en teenoor God wat aan hulle lewende liggame gee – moontlik maak, gekweek word.

Negatief verstaan, behels die respek vir die waardigheid van menslike persone dat geweld teenoor mense vermy word. Dit behels dat aksies wat die kapasiteite vir verantwoordbare reaksie ondermyn en die waardigheid en onvervangbaarheid van enige menslike wese geweld aandoen teengestaan word. Daarmee saam behels laasgenoemde ook optrede om menslike wesens te beskerm van sulke geweld (Kelsey, 2009:279-280).

Vanuit Kelsey se teosentriese verstaan kan inderdaad teologies gepraat word van respek vir die waardigheid van menslike wesens, argumenteer hy. Vir hom is daar, as gevolg hiervan, bepaalde logiese eienskappe van 'n moraliteit van respek vir menslike wesens se waardigheid, naamlik dat respek (1) universeel is, (2) prakties is (deurdat dit 'n verskil in persone se optrede teenoor mekaar moet maak), (3) belangriker as enige ander belang is, en (4) objektief is. Dus, respek is nie die uitlewing van dit wat 'goed' is teenoor mense deur hulle te respekteer nie, maar liewer 'n erkenning van menswaardigheid wat waar is ongeag daarvan of menswaardigheid

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objektiewe persoonlike karaktereienskap én 'n subjektiewe “projeksie”. Die objektiwiteit van waardigheid behoort verdedig te word, maar hy maak 'n onderskeid in sy verstaan tussen waardigheid (wat aangetas kan word) en waardigheid-wat-erken-moet-word (wat nie weggenem kan word nie). Dit is alleenlik laasgenoemde wat vir hom 'n objektiewe gegewe is. Waardigheid behels egter ook 'n subjektiewe erkenning, waarsonder behoorlike optrede onmoontlik is (De Lange, 2010:6-7).

gerespekteer word of nie (Kelsey, 2009:278-279).<sup>24</sup> In Kelsey se woorde (2009:279):

The crucial theological point is this: by creating us in our having been born living human bodies, God sets us into a social institution in which we are, with neighbors, accountable to God for our reception for the gift of our creation and in which we are under obligation to acknowledge the claim our neighbors' dignity makes for respectful response to them. Appropriate response to God and respect for neighbor are distinguishable but inseparable in Christian reflection because they are both grounded in the logic of giving and receiving which is inherent in the story of the peculiar way the triune God goes about actively creating us.

Respek vir menswaardigheid<sup>25</sup> kan egter nie anders as om die gevestigde strukturele verskille tussen 'n mens se verhouding met 'n mens self en 'n mens se verhouding met ander in ag te neem nie (Kelsey, 2009:276). Kelsey dring daarop aan dat die kategoriese imperatief slegs kan impliseer (1) dat 'n mens haar eie morele volmaaktheid ontwikkel (aangesien geen mens morele volmaaktheid vir 'n ander kan ontwikkel nie) en (2) dat 'n mens die geluk van ander menslike wesens bevorder (aangesien die bevordering van eie geluk iets is wat 'n mens reeds begeer, en die bevordering van eie geluk daarom nie 'n morele plig kan wees nie). Dit is dan ook hierin waarin menslike uniekheid vir hom gesetel is. Hy wys daarop dat daar 'n duidelike oorvleueling is in die twee verstane van menswaardigheid, naamlik oorvleueling tussen die respek vir menslike wesens as doeleindes in hulleself en die imperatief van respek wat gevestigde strukturele verskille (tussen die verhouding met self, ander, en God) in ag neem (2009:276). Mense is uniek omdat hulle slegs op hulle eie goeie morele besluite kan neem maar ook slegs die geluk van ander kan bevorder. Hierdie vervat wat Kelsey bedoel met die morele verpligting teenoor ander mense wat 'n herkenning en erkenning van die waardigheid van ander mense behels. Mense behoort gerespekteer te word omdat hulle doeleindes in hulleself is, maar óók omdat hulle eie uniekheid herken word.

## 8. OPSOMMEND

Watter implikasies sou David Kelsey se denke oor menswaardigheid vir diskoerse oor menswaardigheid kon inhou?

David Kelsey se interaksie met wat hy as die kultureel dominante verstaan van menswaardigheid beskou beklemtoon twee belangrike bydraes wat sy interpretasie van menswaardigheid as teosentries (en daarom eksentries) kan lewer.

Die eerste is sy aandrag daarop dat die waardigheid van mense nie gekoppel word aan hulle eie kapasiteite of vaardighede of selfs rolle (wat kan aanleiding gee tot dualistiese antropologieë) nie, maar dat die waardigheid van mense die waardigheid van persone is – met hulle spesifieke kapasiteite en vaardighede, binne hulle spesifieke kontekste, binne hulle liggame en deur hulle hele persoon.

<sup>24</sup> Mitchell (2009:44) beskryf menswaardigheid as 'n 'gawe' wat aan menslike wesens gegee is met hulle skepping na die beeld van God. As gawe is dit daarom nie iets wat verdien kan word nie, het dit nie te make met wat menslike wesens doen of nie doen nie, en kan dit nie verwoes word nie. As God se gawe aan ons kan dit nie wegeneem word van ons deur ander nie.

<sup>25</sup> Kelsey volg Gene Outka (1986) daarin wanneer hy wys daarop dat huidige dominante verstane van menswaardigheid die konsep 'respek' inspan om tot 'n groot mate te dek wat Kant onderskeidelik as 'respek' en 'liefde' beskryf (2009:275).

Die tweede is dat die waardigheid van mense daarom nie voorwaardelik is nie – gekoppel aan bepaalde reaksies op God of medemens of self, of selfs aan sekere kapasiteite en kragte, nie – maar dat mense onvoorwaardelike, onvervreembare, onvervangbare waardigheid en waarde het alleen deur God wat met mense in verhouding tree (Kelsey, 2009:1022-1023). In sy woorde (2009:1022-1023):

[A] living body... is unsubstitutable in the concrete particularity of its personal identity, and personal in that it lays others under obligation to respect the unconditional dignity and worth it has solely by virtue of God's relating to it.

Kelsey se beskrywing van menswaardigheid is waarskynlik nie die produk van sy gekonsentreerde fokus en ontwikkeling van die idee in sy werk nie. Hy self erken dat sekere aspekte van sy werk, soos sy skrywe oor menswaardigheid, die potensiaal het om ontwikkel te word in 'n "fully-fledged theological ethics or moral theology" (2009:279). Dat die sentrale teologiese idee van God wat in verhouding tree met alles wat nie God is nie egter alternatiewe ontwikkelinge en denke oor menswaardigheid kan stimuleer blyk sy aanname te wees. Vir Kelsey behoort die waardigheid en waarde van mense, in al hulle misterie en kompleksiteit en (bio)diversiteit, verstaan te word as *eksentries*, gegrond en gesitueer in God wat in verhouding tree met alles wat nie God is nie. Eksentrisiteit, vir Kelsey, *bewaar* die waardigheid van alles waarmee God in verhouding tree deur die waarde en waardigheid nie in hulself te plaas nie, maar binne God wat met hulle in verhouding tree te grond.

Kelsey se hantering van menswaardigheid funksioneer met die verstaan van die mens as verhoudingswese, en spesifiek met die idee dat God wat in verhouding tree met menslike wesens die basis vorm van beide hulle algemene én spesifieke, individuele waardigheid as mense.<sup>26</sup> Inderdaad, om in verhouding te wees met God bedreig nie die integriteit van skepsels nie, maar gegrond en beskryf wie, wat en hoe menslike wesens werklik is (2009:828).

Uiteraard is 'n hantering van menswaardigheid in publieke en etiese gesprekvoering nie onproblematies nie.

Huber wys op skrywers soos Peter Singer, Norbert Hoerster en Dieter Dirnbecker wat geen gebruik vir die konsep 'menswaardigheid' insien nie, omdat, argumenteer hulle, dit alleen teen die religieuse agtergrond van die mens wat geskape is in die beeld van God verstaan kan word en sin kan maak. Hulle dring daarop aan dat so 'n religie-belaaide bydrae tot publieke moralisering en publieke etiese denke nie water sou kon hou in 'n pluralistiese (en daarom geloofsneutrale) samelewing nie (1996:42).

Waar die gebruik van die konsep "menswaardigheid" in publieke morele gesprekvoering wél ingespan word, wys teoloë, soos Maureen Junker-Kerry, op bepaalde gevare: om 'n veeldoelige argument sonder kriteria te word wat lukraak ingespan (kan) word (2003:57); om gekoop te word binne verbruikerskontekste wat aanspraak maak op bepaalde regte (2003:58); om die verskil tussen die transendente (dat mense geskape is in die beeld van God) en die empiriese (dat lyding en pyn teenoor menswaardigheid staan) te vervaag (2003:59).

Tog voer Kendall Soulen, Linda Woodhead en ander aan dat dit nodig geraak het om

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<sup>26</sup> Teenoor, argumentsonthalwe, opvattinge wat menswaardigheid as 'n refleksie van die glorie van die imago Dei beskou (soos Mitchell, 2009: 47) en wat dáárom argumenteer dat menswaardigheid onverwoesbaar is.

hedendaagse debat oor die waardigheid van menslike wesens te stimuleer, in die lig van die verskeie maniere waarop menswaardigheid bedreig word in hedendaagse kulture en samelewings. In *God and Human Dignity* (2006) verwys hulle na temas soos globalisasie, ewolusionêre teorieë, biotegnologie, dood, gestremdheid, politieke organisasie wat meewerk in wat hulle noem “the crisis that currently surrounds the very concept in human dignity, and the pressing questions concerning its ability to serve as a meaningful point of orientation for human thought and action” (Soulén & Woodhead, 2006:1). Een van die belangrikste sake wat aandag verdien in konseptualiserings oor menswaardigheid is daarom juis die gronde waarop waardigheid aan mense toegeken word.

Kelsey is nie tevrede daarmee om alleen absolute waarde aan persone toe te ken, as essensiële element in hulleself (soos wat De Lange se diskoers oor geregtigheid wil doen) óf ‘n oorkoepelende, veralgemenende plig om geluk en florerings op die menslike gemeenskap te plaas (soos wat De Lange se diskoers oor florerings wil doen), nie. Tog sou beide diskoerse met sy werk kon identifiseer. Vir Kelsey lê die onvoorwaardelike en onmeetbare waarde en waardigheid van mense in die volle kompleksiteit en rykheid van hul lewe oor tyd en onmiddellike kontekste heen, omdat hy menslike persone verstaan as konkrete, lewend menslike persoonlike liggame wat in verhouding staan met God (2009:379).

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## Ukubuyisa and Ukuhlanza: Reconciliation and the Washing of the Spears. The role of the faith communities in the quest for healing and reconciliation

### ABSTRACT

Taking his cue from the two Zulu words *Ukubuyisa* (to reconcile with the dead) and *Ukuhlanza* (the washing of the spears), the author discusses the role that the South African faith communities may play in the quest for healing and reconciliation. A number of prerequisites for reconciliation and peace-building exist, and must be addressed by the Christian churches as well as by the other faith communities in the country. Inviting the reader to page with him through the picture book of reconciliation, the author discusses some of these prerequisites, as well as the way in which different role players within the Christian, African Traditional, Hindu and Muslim communities, have attempted to deal with them in the recent past in South Africa.

### 1. RECONCILIATION IN THE ZULU TRADITION

Much has been said, and written, on the subject of reconciliation in South Africa in recent times. Since the appointment of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) seventeen years ago (1995), the issue of national healing has been on the agenda of virtually all South Africans, government, political parties, faith communities, non-governmental organisations, the media, academic institutions as well as the business community. It is therefore fitting that at the reopening and rededication of the Voortrekker Church and Museum in Pietermaritzburg (April 22, 2012), the need for healing and reconciliation should be on the table, once again. But what does reconciliation in South Africa at large - and especially between the Zulu people, Afrikaners and English in the narrower context of Kwazulu-Natal - entail? What are the prerequisites for forgiveness and healing? In this article, based on an address delivered at the ceremony in Pietermaritzburg, some answers to these questions are offered.

I would like to start my quest for answers by remembering two Zulu words: *ukubuyisa* and *ukuhlanza*. Two colleagues of mine, one a university professor in Pretoria, the other a pastor in a rural congregation in Kwazulu-Natal, acted as my teachers, helping me to understand the two concepts. Here is what I have learned from Professor Maake Masango from the Faculty of Theology, University of Pretoria, and from the Reverent Simon Kwesaba from the KwaDukuza Congregation (Uniting Reformed Church of Southern Africa), Stanger, Kwazulu-Natal.<sup>2</sup>

Imagine yourself in a Zulu village a hundred and fifty years ago, they said. Unrest is in the air. The villagers are anxiously awaiting the return of the warriors. A week earlier the chief and the

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<sup>2</sup> The interviews with Professor Masango and Reverent Kwesaba took place during April, 2012.

medicine man, the *inyanga*, sent them away to confront the enemy. "Stand up to the enemy", the chief said to them. "Be brave. The lives of your wives and children are at stake. Kill those who want to kill us!" The medicine man, after sprinkling water and *muti* on the young men, called upon the ancestors to protect them in battle.

And now the warriors are back, victorious, shouting and singing. But, strangely, the chief does not invite them back into the village. They have to sleep outside the wooden fence. They have blood on their hands and on their spears. They are ritually unclean. They are not allowed into the community before they have calmed down, before peace has been restored. The dead, those who had been killed in battle, had to be buried. That is what *ukubuyisa* is about: to restore peace, to reconcile with the dead, to come to term with the anguish and the pain of the bereaved. But a second ceremony is needed as well: *ukuhlanza*, the washing of the spears. The *inyanga* accompanies the warriors to water, where the blooded spears, the *asegais*, have to be cleansed. The meaning is evident: The young men's hearts and minds need cleansing. Their aggression has to be washed away. Peace must be restored before their wives and children may embrace them. *Ukubuyisana* is the call to the young warriors to return to one another, the living and the dead, and to come back to one another.

## 2. THE UNIVERSAL CRY FOR RECONCILIATION

To return to one another, is the universal plea that is raised in many communities in our world. The 20th century failed to be a harbinger of peace and justice, as many had hoped. The world we know at the beginning of the 21st century is rife with violence and injustice. Wars are being waged across the globe, violence and injustice, poverty and corruption, bad governance, are the order of the day. In many communities millions are haunted by the ghosts of the past. In South Africa in the 1990s there were high hopes for peace and reconciliation. The 1994 election was a great success. Nelson Mandela was inaugurated as the first president of the New Democratic South Africa. Mandela and Francois Pienaar together hoisted the Rugby World Cup in Ellis Park. Euphoria swept across the Rainbow Nation. We had it made!

But in recent years many of our hopes have been dashed. Change did not come as easily and as thoroughly as we had hoped. South Africa is still a deeply divided country. Prejudice, racism, violence corruption, endemic poverty, as well as injustice on many levels, bedevil our community. We need healing and reconciliation. If ever there was a time for *ukubuyisa*, for reconciling with the many that had died a violent death, and for *ukuhlanza*, for the washing of the spears, for healing in the community, it is now!

## 3. PREREQUISITES FOR RECONCILIATION

The TRC was a valiant effort in this regard. The Commission's lofty charge inspired many at the time:

To provide a historic bridge between the past of a deeply divided society characterized by strife, conflict, untold suffering and injustice, and a future founded on the recognition of human rights, democracy and peaceful co-existence for all, irrespective of colour, race, class, belief or sex.

The pursuit of national unity, the well-being of all citizens, of peace and reconciliation and the reconstruction of society.

The recognition of the need for understanding but not for vengeance, the need for reparation but not for retaliation, for *ubuntu* but not for victimization.<sup>3</sup>

But did the TRC, did the South African nation at large, succeed in doing that? I personally have come to the conclusion that we are, at best, only at the beginning of things. The journey has barely started. To publish a report is one thing, to break down centuries of misunderstanding and prejudice, quite another.

Reconciliation, I have come to realise, can be attained. During the TRC years we were frequently amazed by what - by the grace of God - had taken place. But reconciliation can never be taken for granted. It can never be organised. Microwave oven reconciliation does not last. What I also realised is that a number of prerequisites for reconciliation exist, and should be studied carefully.

Allow me to page with you through the photo album of reconciliation in South Africa, looking at a number of pictures from many parts of our country, in order to understand these prerequisites for peace-building and healing.

### 3.1. Reconciliation needs a clear definition

The first picture is of a meeting of the South African TRC in Cape Town, in January 1996. Around the table, a heated discussion among the commissioners was taking place.<sup>4</sup> Where, exactly, were we going? What was our goal? Archbishop Desmond Tutu and his colleagues were at loggerhead. How should they define “reconciliation”? At the one end of the table sat the lawyers, the jurists and the politicians who, with feet firmly planted on the ground, warned that one should not be too starry-eyed when reconciliation is on the agenda. When the dust settles in the streets, when the shooting stops, when people let go of one another’s throats, be grateful, they argued. That is enough. Declare it to be reconciliation! That is, in our context, often as far as one may expect to go. Desmond Tutu as well as the clergy who serve on the TRC, at the opposite end of the table, favoured a loftier definition. When they spoke about reconciliation, they clothed it in religious terminology. Tutu opened his Bible, quoting the apostle Paul: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation” (2 Cor 5:18, RSV).

Tutu unashamedly professed his conviction that only because God has reconciled us to Him by sacrificing his Son Jesus Christ on the cross, true and lasting reconciliation between humans became possible. The Arch kept reminding the Christian churches, all believers in all the different denominations in South Africa, of the huge responsibility we all share to become ministers of reconciliation, to act as healers in our fractured society.

In similar fashion, Tutu encouraged the spokespersons of other faith communities, Muslim, Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist, African Traditional Religion, to refer to the deepest sources of their religious traditions and beliefs, in helping to discover the true meaning of reconciliation.

From the side of *African tradition*, much may indeed be learned in terms of reconciliation, not only by revisiting the concepts of *ukubuyisa* and *ukuhlanza*, but especially that of *ubuntu*. In

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3 TRC Report 1996: *South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report (Volume 1)*. Cape Town: TRC, 55-57.

4 Meiring, Piet 1999: *Chronicle of the South African Truth Commission*. Vanderbijlpark: Carpe Diem, 129.

the TRC's mandate special mention was made of the term.<sup>5</sup> But what does ubuntu really entail? In which way does it contribute to the process of reconciliation? In the Zulu language the saying goes: *Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* (literally translated: "a person is a person through other persons").

Tutu explained the deep meaning of *ubuntu* as follows:<sup>6</sup>

We need other human beings for us to learn how to be human, for none of us comes fully formed into the world. We would not know how to talk, to walk, to think, to eat as human beings unless we learned how to do these things from other human beings. For us the solitary human being is a contradiction in terms.

Ubuntu is the essence of being human. It speaks of how my humanity is being caught up and bound up inextricably with yours. It says, not as Descartes did, "I think, therefore I am" but rather, "I am because I belong". I need other human beings in order to be human. The completely self-sufficient human being is subhuman. I can be me only if you are fully you. I am because we are, for we are made for togetherness, for family. We are made for complementarity. We are created for a delicate network of relationships, of interdependence with our fellow human beings, with the rest of creation.<sup>7</sup>

For Tutu it was clear: without a sense of *ubuntu*, reconciliation would be difficult. With it, people may reach out to one another, to embrace one another:

A person with *ubuntu* is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, based from a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are.<sup>8</sup>

In the current debate on the role of *ubuntu* in nation building and healing, many voices are joining in. Recently Judge Colin Lamont expanded on the definition of the word as well as on the role the concept may play in society as well as in jurisprudence in South Africa, during his ruling on the hate speech trial of Julius Malema.<sup>9</sup>

*Ubuntu* is recognised as being an important source of law within the context of strained or broken relationships amongst individuals or communities and as an aid for providing remedies which contribute towards more mutually acceptable remedies for the parties in such cases. *Ubuntu* is a concept which:

1. is to be contrasted with vengeance;
2. dictates that a high value be placed on the life of a human being;
3. is inextricably linked to the values of and which places a high premium on dignity, compassion, humaneness and respect for humanity of another;

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5 TRC Report (Vol 1), 55-57).

6 Tutu, Desmond 2011: *God Is Not a Christian*. New York: Harper Collins, 20f.

7 Tutu, *God is Not a Christian*, 22

8 Tutu, Desmond 1999: *No Future Without Forgiveness*. London: Rider, 7.

9 (*Afri-Forum and Others vs. Malema and Others*, Equity Court, Johannesburg, 2011, cf S A Legal Information Institute 23). See Google/Wikipedia link on the case.

4. dictates a shift from confrontation to mediation and conciliation;
5. dictates good attitudes and shared concern;
6. favours the re-establishment of harmony in the relationship between parties and that such harmony should restore the dignity of the plaintiff without ruining the defendant;
7. favours restorative rather than retributive justice;
8. operates in a direction favouring reconciliation rather than estrangement of disputants;
9. works towards sensitising a disputant or a defendant in litigation to the hurtful impact of his actions to the other party and towards changing such conduct rather than merely punishing the disputant;
10. promotes mutual understanding rather than punishment;
11. favours face-to-face encounters of disputants with a view to facilitating differences being resolved rather than conflict and victory for the most powerful;
12. favours civility and civilised dialogue premised on mutual tolerance.

But it is not only the African Traditional community that has a contribution to make. From the *Hindu* community in Kwazulu-Natal, where Mahatma Gandhi spent twenty one years of his life, much may be learned about principles and practices of *satyagraha* and non-violence. Addressing an International Dialogue on Religion and Reconciliation, in Holland (2002), Anthony da Silva stressed the surprising similarities among Christians and Hindus in their respective concepts of reconciliation, which may pave the way for a real dialogue and co-operation. While the very term reconciliation has a strong Western Christian religio-cultural rootedness, the Gandhian concepts of *satyagraha* and *ahimsa* refer to something remarkably akin. Da Silva pointed to four areas of convergence of Christian and Hindu views which may facilitate the Hindu-Christian dialogue:<sup>10</sup>

1. Nonviolence (*ahimsa*) and reconciliation are deeply rooted in God. They derive their dynamism and transforming power in the belief that the love of God demands that we repair broken human relationships, that we forgive or adhere to *ahimsa*.
2. Gandhi's *satyagraha* (truth force) is an Eastern articulation of reconciliation. "Truth force" sustains and drives nonviolent behaviours, which are expressions of forgiveness and reaching out to the other. Nonviolence is implied in forgiveness, since we cannot be violent and promote reconciliation at the same time.
3. Reconciliation through nonviolence has much in common with the four dimensions of forgiveness, namely, moral judgment, forbearance, empathy, and repairing of broken relationships.
4. Finally, the assumption of human interdependence that underlies *ahimsa* is also an important part of the reconciliation process that seeks to bring together the perpetrator, the victim, and the community through restorative justice.

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10 Da Silva 2002: Da Silva, Anthony 2002: Through Non-Violence to Truth: Gandhi's Vision of Reconciliation, in Helmick, Raymond (et al.) 2002: *Forgiveness and Reconciliation* Philadelphia/London: Templeton Foundation Press, 279.

The South African *Muslim* community has a role to play, as well. The different approaches to reconciliation between Christians and Muslims are often discussed: Christians opting for, in the eyes of many Muslims, a far too 'easy' approach. Christians tend to stress forgiveness and grace, while their Muslim counterparts call for justice and reparation before reconciliation may be considered. Addressing the TRC's special Faith Communities' Hearing (November 1996) Faried Essack however called upon Christians and Muslims, the leadership as well as the laity, to make every effort to reach out to one another, to enter into dialogue, to try and understand each other, to respect our different traditions and to allow one another our heartfelt convictions.

It will not be easy, one has to add. We come from a history where we often misunderstood one another, discriminated against one another, lived with caricatures of one another, marginalised one another, even blatantly opposed the other. The fact that both Islam and Christianity are missionary religions, claiming the divine command to spread their message to all people, can lead – and sometimes does lead – to confrontation. As Christians we may never excuse ourselves from the obligation to share our faith in Jesus Christ with all people, also with our Muslim neighbours in South Africa. But it must be done in a spirit of respect and love as well as with a willingness to listen to the other and to work together, wherever and whenever possible. It behoves us to take Essack's admonition seriously:<sup>11</sup>

Our challenge is thus to remind the others persistently of our presence and of the value of the religious heritage which we bring with us, but to do so in a manner that they would want to embrace us as partners in the reconstruction and reconciliation of our nation.

For future relationships in the country to be healthy, it is of extreme importance to take cognizance of the issues raised by die Muslim spokespersons at the TRC hearing. Christians and Muslims share South Africa with one another, as well as with adherents to the other religions. We have a common loyalty to our communities and to one another. South Africa, still trying to find its way on the new road of democracy and nation building, needs the goodwill and the effort of all its citizens in this regard.

In the final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation high hopes were expressed of the contribution that the different faith communities will be able to make in terms of establishing the truth and, especially, in terms of reconciliation. Numerous challenges were made, inter alia:<sup>12</sup>

1. for the different religious communities to seek ways to communicate with one another as a basis for eliminating religious conflict and promoting inter-religious understanding;
2. to seek ways to incorporate marginalized groups into their communities;
3. to promote a culture of tolerance and peaceful co-existence;
4. to inspire their members to work together in a peace corps to help communities in need;
5. to organise reconciliation ceremonies, creating liturgies to heal and to celebrate the
6. reconciliation that we do experience in the country;

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<sup>11</sup> Essack, Faried 2002: *An Islamic View of Conflict and Reconciliation in the South African Situation*, in Jerald D Gort (et al): *Religion, Conflict and Reconciliation*. Amsterdam-New York: Rodopi, 315f.

<sup>12</sup> *TRC Report (Vol 5)*, pp 316ff.

7. and, finally, to develop theologies designed to promote reconciliation and a true sense of community in the nation.

Is it possible that South Africans, coming from a history of prejudice and division and discrimination, may indeed provide the world with an alternative experience in inter-religious relationships? The South African process of Truth and Reconciliation was far from perfect, but it did provide some useful pointers that may inform the dialogue between Muslims, Hindus, African Traditionalists and Christians in years to come.

### 3.2. Reconciliation and truth go hand in hand

Central to the business of reconciliation and peace-making, is the quest for truth. The South African TRC, therefore, was mandated “to establish the truth in relation to past events as well as the motives for and circumstances in which gross violations of human rights have occurred, and to make the findings known in order to prevent repetition of such acts in future.”<sup>13</sup> When the Minister of Justice Dullah Omar introduced the TRC legislation to Parliament he exhorted all South Africans “to join in the search for truth without which there can be no genuine reconciliation.”<sup>14</sup> When political change came to South Africa, the issue and the wisdom of truth finding was widely debated. There were those who, with the best intentions, said: “Let us close the books, let us forgive and forget!” The response of many – Archbishop Tutu included – was: “No! We can never do that! We need to open the books, we need to deal with our past - horrible as it may be - before we close the books”. “We have to face the past”, Archbishop Desmond Tutu was fond of saying, “because if you don’t face the past, it may return”. Searching for truth can be painful and difficult, even hazardous. It can disrupt the journey towards reconciliation. But in the long run, it is the only way to go. Reconciliation is about uncovering the truth, not about amnesia.<sup>15</sup>

But the quest for truth is more than collecting facts and weighing findings. It has a deeper side to it. In the traditions of all religions, searching for the truth turns into a spiritual exercise. Finding truth goes far beyond establishing historical and legal facts. It has to do with understanding, accepting accountability, justice, restoring and maintaining the fragile relationship between human beings - as well as the quest to find the Ultimate Truth, God Himself. The search for truth needs to be handled with the greatest sensitivity. If that is not the case the nation may bleed to death. But if we succeed it may pave the way to a national catharsis, to peace and reconciliation, to the point where the truth in all reality sets one free.

This, indeed, is what happened during the Truth and Reconciliation Commission years. Many victims of gross human rights violations, 22 400 in total, approached the TRC. For many telling their stories and reliving the agonies of the past, was difficult. Emotions sometimes ran high and tears flowed freely, but in the vast majority of cases, testifying before the Commission proved to be a cathartic and a healing experience. The victims were edified and honoured by the process. At a hearing in Soweto an elderly gentleman remarked: “When I was tortured at John Vorster Square my tormentor sneered at me: ‘You can shout your lungs out. Nobody will ever hear you!’ Now, after all these years, people are hearing me!”<sup>16</sup> Many perpetrators

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<sup>13</sup> *TRC Report* 1:55

<sup>14</sup> Van Vught, William and Cloete, Daan 2000: *Race and reconciliation in South Africa*. Lanham: Lexington Books, 190

<sup>15</sup> Meiring, *Chronicle*, 128

<sup>16</sup> Van Vught, Cloete, *Reconciliation*, 190.

who appeared before the TRC had a similar experience. When they, after much anguish and embarrassment, unburdened themselves to the Amnesty Committee and when they made a full submission of all the relevant facts of their misdeeds - after the questioning and cross-questioning came to an end - it was as if a cloud lifted.

But it was not only the victims and the perpetrators that needed the truth-telling, the nation needed it as well – to listen to the truth, to be confronted by the truth, to be shamed by the truth, to struggle with the truth and finally to be liberated by the truth. The South African TRC was a public process. All the hearings were open to the nation and large audiences attended the events. The media had free access to all sessions of the Commission. Every day the newspapers carried TRC reports. Every night, after the eight o'clock news in a special TRC programme, the highlights of the day were shown. The nation had to know! The majority of South Africans entered into the spirit of the Truth and Reconciliation process. They wanted to come to grips with the past. Sadly, there were also those who did not want to know. Up till the end of the process, the TRC was dogged by some – especially from the white community – who were unwilling or unable to accept the truth and who described the TRC's work as a one-sided witch-hunt, designed to shame and embarrass one section of the community.

The process however, was not intended to stop when the TRC closed its doors. Truth telling had to go on. There are still millions of South Africans from all the communities in the land, who did not qualify to appear before the TRC but who also are in need of healing, who also need to be recognized and edified by having people listen to their stories. They need people to share their pain. In its Final Report the TRC urged the South African faith communities to continue with this process, to invite members of all walks of life - Black and White, perpetrators and victims alike - to meet one another and to talk to each other. The expectation was that the churches would host a large number of "mini TRCs", enabling hundreds of thousands of South Africans to start to talk – and to listen – to one another.

The need is still there, maybe even greater than before, for the faith communities to bring people together from the different parts of our fractured society to meet one another and to share with one another. Ellen Kuzwayo, a celebrated South African author wrote:<sup>17</sup>

Africa is a place of storytelling. We need more stories, never mind how painful the exercise may be. This is how we will learn to love one another. Stories help us to understand, to forgive and to see things through someone else's eyes.

### **3.3. Reconciliation and justice are two sides of a coin**

Justice and reconciliation are two sides of the same coin. For reconciliation to happen, there has to be a sense of justice being part and parcel of the process. Lasting reconciliation can only flourish in a society where justice is seen to be done. In South Africa this brings a number of issues to the fore: not only the issue of proper government reparation to the victims of human rights abuses to balance the generous granting of amnesty to perpetrators of the abuses, but also the wider issues involving every South African: unemployment, poverty, affirmative action, equal education, restitution, the redistribution of land, reparation tax, et cetera.

Justice, the pictures in our book tell us, has many faces that speak with many voices. Listen to some of them. Archbishop Tutu often made an important distinction between retributive

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<sup>17</sup> Quoted from Van Vught, Cloete, *Reconciliation*, 196.

justice and restorative justice. Retributive justice, he said, has as *raison d'être* the need to punish the perpetrator. But there is another kind of justice, restorative justice, whose chief purpose is not punitive but restorative, healing;<sup>18</sup>

It holds as central the essential humanity of the perpetrator of even the most gruesome atrocity, never giving up on anyone, believing in the essential goodness of all as created in the image of God, and believing that even the worst of us still remains a child of God with the potential to become better, someone to be salvaged, to be rehabilitated, not to be ostracised but ultimately to be reintegrated into the community. Restorative justice believes that an offence has caused a breach, has disturbed the social equilibrium, which must be restored, and the breach healed, in a process through which the offender and the victim can be reconciled and peace restored .

Tutu's plea for restorative justice was, however, not always accepted. Tutu himself vividly describes in his book *No Future Without Forgiveness* his experience when he, after visiting some of the horrendous genocide sites where almost a million Rwandese died at the hands of their compatriots (February-April 1994), was invited to address a rally in the Kigali stadium. He made a passionate plea for forgiveness and reconciliation, in spite of everything that happened in the past, arguing that without that there is no future for Rwanda and its people. Neither his audience nor the Rwandese government, were persuaded. Forgiveness, blanket amnesty in a society where there was for years no rule of law, no sense of justice, was impossible, they maintained. They liked the South African TRC process, especially the opportunity given to thousands of victims to tell their stories, but blanket amnesty to perpetrators, guilty of heinous deeds, was unacceptable. Tutu's plea that they needed to move from retributive justice to restorative justice, fell on deaf ears:<sup>19</sup>

The president of Rwanda responded to my sermon with considerable magnanimity. They were ready to forgive, he said, but even Jesus had declared that the devil could not be forgiven. I do not know where he found the basis for what he said, but he was expressing a view that found some resonance (among his people): that there were atrocities that were unforgivable.

Another aspect of justice was highlighted by Thabo Mbeki in his address to Parliament in May 1998. In his capacity as Deputy President of South Africa, he was invited to speak at the opening of Parliament in May 1998. In a speech that was widely reported in the media, he stressed the vital link between reconciliation and justice. To his way of thinking it was especially *economic justice* that was at stake. His definition of reconciliation was clear cut: the creation of a non-racial, non-sexist society, the healing of the divisions of the past, and the improvement of the quality of life of all citizens. To reach this, first and foremost, the issue of economic justice needs to be addressed:<sup>20</sup>

South Africa is a country of two nations. One of the nations is white and well off, and because of their background and their economic, physical, and educational

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18 Tutu: *God Is Not a Christian*, 42f

19 Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness*, 209

20 Boraine, Alex 2001: *A country unmasked*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 349

infrastructures, they are able to exercise their right to equal opportunity and the development opportunities that flow from the new Constitution. The second and larger nation of South Africa, is black and poor with the worst being affected women in rural areas, the black population in general, and the disabled. This nation lives under conditions of grossly underdeveloped economic, physical, educational, communication and other infrastructures.

Alex Boraine, deputy chairperson of the TRC, voiced yet another concern. The quest for reconciliation may in itself become *an instrument of oppression*. He often stressed that reconciliation must never be sought at the expense of social action, that it never should be used as an excuse for harbouring injustice. He liked to quote the Filipino poet J. Cabazares to make his point:<sup>21</sup>

Talk to us about reconciliation  
Only if you first experience  
The anger of our dying.  
Talk to us about reconciliation  
If your living is not the cause of our dying.  
Talk to us about reconciliation  
Only if your words are not products of your devious scheme  
To silence our struggle for freedom.  
Talk to us about reconciliation  
Only if your intention is not to enrich yourself  
More on your throne.  
Talk to us about reconciliation  
Only if you cease to appropriate all the symbols  
And meanings of our struggle.

To really stand for justice may be difficult, even hazardous. But is a price that needs to be paid. One has to identify with the victim, in order to be of service. A very poignant picture in our gallery is of Beyers Naudé, the Dutch Reformed Church minister who left his Afrikaans congregation to join in the struggle against apartheid, who was standing trial in Johannesburg. The defence advocate questioned him on his understanding of the concept of reconciliation. Beyers Naudé who was banned for his commitment to the anti-apartheid struggle faced the judge:<sup>22</sup>

No reconciliation is possible without justice, and whoever works for reconciliation must first determine the causes of injustice in the hearts and lives of those, of either the persons or groups, who feel themselves aggrieved. In order to determine the causes of the injustice a person must not only have the outward individual facts of the matter, but as a Christian you are called to identify yourself in heart and soul, to live in, to think in, and to feel in the heart, in the consciousness, the feelings of the person or the persons who feel themselves aggrieved. This is the grace that the new birth in Jesus Christ gives a person - every person who wishes to receive it.

Here, again, is a huge challenge to every denomination in the country, not only by standing for

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<sup>21</sup> Boraine, *A Country Unmasked*, 361.

<sup>22</sup> De Gruchy, John 1968. *Cry Justice!* London: Collins, 171.

justice and to make its prophetic voice against all forms of injustice heard in South Africa, but by getting its own house in order. The Confession of Belhar, on this point, calls all the churches to seriously reflect on their calling in this regard.<sup>23</sup>

We believe that God has revealed himself as the one who wishes to bring about justice and true peace among men; that in a world full of injustice and enmity he is in a special way the God of the destitute, the poor and the wronged and that he calls his church to follow him in this; that he brings justice to the oppressed and gives bread to the hungry; that he frees the prisoner and restores sight to the blind; that he supports the downtrodden, protects the stranger, helps orphans and widows and blocks the path of the ungodly; that for him pure and undefiled religion is to visit the orphans and the widows in their suffering; that he wishes to teach his people to do what is good and to seek the right;

that the church must therefore stand by people in any form of suffering and need, which implies, among other things, that the church must witness against and strive against any form of injustice, so that justice may roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream; that the church as the possession of God must stand where he stands, namely against injustice and with the wronged; that in following Christ the church must witness against all the powerful and privileged who selfishly seek their own interests and thus control and harm others.

### **3.4. Reconciliation needs an honest confession as well as a willingness to forgive**

Reconciliation, the washing of the spears, our picture gallery tells us, requires a deep, honest confession - and a willingness to forgive. The TRC Act did not require of perpetrators to make an open confession of their crimes, to publicly ask for forgiveness before amnesty was granted. Yet it has to be stated clearly that lasting reconciliation rests firmly upon the capacity of perpetrators, individuals as well as perpetrator communities, to honestly, deeply, recognize and confess their guilt towards God and their fellow human beings, towards individual victims as well as victim communities - and to humbly ask for forgiveness. And it equally rests upon the magnanimity and grace of the victims to reach out to them, to extend forgiveness.

A prime example of the latter, was Nelson Mandela who after suffering so much at the hands of the apartheid regime, returned from twenty seven years in captivity with one goal in mind - to liberate all South Africans, white and black alike. Let me remind you of the picture of Madiba walking through the prison gates. His words reverberated across the globe:<sup>24</sup>

It was during those long and lonely years that my hunger for the freedom of my own people became a hunger for the freedom of all people, white and black. I knew as well as I knew anything that the oppressor must be liberated just as surely as the oppressed. A man who takes away another man's freedom is a prisoner of hatred, he is locked behind the bars of prejudice and narrow-mindedness. I am not truly free if I take away someone else's freedom, just as surely I am not free when my freedom is taken away from me. The oppressed and the oppressor alike are robbed of their humanity. When I walked out of prison that was my mission, to liberate the oppressed and the oppressor.

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23 Uniting Reformed Church: The Confession of Belhar, Article 4.

24 Mandela, Nelson 1994: *Long walk to freedom*. London: Macdonald Purnell, 617.

Tutu who has become the symbol of reconciliation in South Africa, has written movingly on the issue of forgiveness. In his *No Future Without Forgiveness* he, against the backdrop of his Truth and Reconciliation Commission experience, reflected on the many aspects of forgiveness. Forgiveness is a risky business, Tutu explains. When one embarks on the business of asking for and giving forgiveness, you are making yourself vulnerable. Both parties may be spurned. The process may be derailed by the inability of victims to forgive, or by the insensitivity or arrogance of the perpetrators who do not want to be forgiven. But remember, the archbishop counsels, forgiveness and reconciliation are meant to be a risky and very costly exercise. Quoting the ultimate example of Jesus Christ, he writes: "True reconciliation is not cheap. It cost God the death of his only begotten Son."<sup>25</sup>

Tutu further discusses the misunderstanding that reconciliation asks for the glossing over of past mistakes and injustices, that reconciliation requires national amnesia. This is totally wrong: Forgiving and being reconciled are not about pretending that things are other than they are. It is not patting one another on the back and turning a blind eye to the wrong. True reconciliation exposes the awfulness, the abuse, the pain, the degradation, the truth. It could even sometimes make things worse. It is a risky undertaking, but in the end it is worth while, because in the end there will be real healing from having dealt with a real situation. Spurious reconciliation can bring only spurious healing.

Forgiveness, however, means abandoning your right to retribution, your right to pay back the perpetrator in his own coin. But is a loss, Tutu maintains, which liberates the victim.<sup>26</sup> A recent issue of the journal *Spirituality and Health* had on its front cover a picture of three US ex-servicemen standing in front of the Vietnam Memorial in Washington DC. One asks: "Have you forgiven those who held you prisoner of war?" "I will never forgive them," replies the other. His mate says: "Then it seems they still have you in prison, don't they?"

One of the most poignant pictures of healing and forgiveness, took place in KZN, when the former police officer Brian Mitchell who had been sent to prison for the massacre of Trust Feeds, asked the TRC to mediate between him and the families of the victims that were killed by his hand. Eight years earlier Mitchell, with two fellow policemen, attacked a house under the impression that a group of United Democratic Front officials, closely connected to the ANC, were meeting. They were wrong. The house was filled with men and women and children attending a vigil, the night before a funeral. When the policemen left eleven were killed, and a many more were wounded. At a meeting called together by the TRC Brian Mitchell humbly asked for forgiveness, committing himself to the community, to give something back to the bereaved. Jabuliswe Ngubane who had lost both her mother and her children in the attack, told a journalist: "It was not easy to forgive, but because he stepped forward to ask for forgiveness, I have no choice. I must forgive him"<sup>27</sup>

Some years later President Jacob Zuma, referred to the incident:

We must therefore commend Brian Mitchell, the former police captain for coming clean before the TRC Amnesty Committee, with regard to his role in this massacre. That courageous step has enabled this community to come to terms with their suffering and extend their forgiveness. The role Mr Mitchell is playing in the rebuilding of the

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<sup>25</sup> Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness*, 218.

<sup>26</sup> Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness*, 218.

<sup>27</sup> Meiring, *Chronicle*, 123.

community as well makes the story of Trust Feed incredibly unique. Only in South Africa can someone who caused so much pain, be openly accepted back into the community.<sup>28</sup>

If individuals need to ask for forgiveness, and are called upon to grant forgiveness, the same goes for communities. And it especially goes for the leaders of these communities. Professor Willie Jonker, at the Rustenburg Conference (1986), made an eloquent plea for forgiveness to his black fellow Christians on behalf of Afrikaners, especially those belonging to the Dutch Reformed Church, for the atrocities of apartheid. Some years later (1994) the General Synod of the DRC followed Jonker's statement with a public apology for the sin and heresy of apartheid, asking forgiveness from fellow South Africans for the pain and the agony caused by their support of apartheid. The DRC had its own spears to wash.

### 3.5 Reconciliation requires a firm commitment

Reconciliation, history teaches us, is not for the fainthearted. To act as a reconciler, a builder of bridges between opposing individuals as well as between communities, asks for a strong commitment, resilience, and nerves of steel. It is often a hard and thankless task. But, bridges are made to be trodden upon! Jesus Christ, the ultimate Reconciler put his life on line - and He expected of his disciples to follow his example. During the 1930s and 1940s the German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer repeatedly warned his fellow-Christians against the temptation of 'cheap grace', which is a mortal enemy to the gospel. 'Costly grace' should be the aim of all believers who, knowing and accepting their salvation as a free gift from God, offer themselves to Him, and to one another, as a living sacrifice. In our times and in our context, it seems to me, we are called to warn against a similar temptation, that of 'cheap reconciliation', reconciliation without cost, which too is a mortal enemy to the gospel of our Lord. We need to rediscover on a daily basis what 'costly reconciliation' entails, and dare to live according to our discovery.<sup>29</sup>

Another picture in our gallery is that of Bishop Mvume Dandala, best known for his outstanding work as a peacemaker during the years before the 1994 elections, when political violence on the East Rand between hostel dwellers who aligned themselves with the Inkhatha Freedom Party (IFP) and people living in the neighbouring township who favoured the ANC, was particularly intense. As a senior minister of the Central Methodist church in Johannesburg, he brokered more than 30 peace agreements in Johannesburg's inner city and in East Rand hostels. "He would actually go where angels and devils feared to tread," says Ishmael Mkhabela, executive director of the Interfaith Community Development Association (ICDA). For Gertrude Mzizi, currently an IFP MP in the Gauteng provincial legislature, Dandala was the only cleric accepted in the hostels:<sup>30</sup>

The South African Council of Churches (SACC) was regarded as a wing of the ANC. All members of the IFP were rejecting people aligned to the SACC because it was aligned to the ANC. He is the only one who ever came to us. He never feared us. He never asked for a police escort. He just came to us because we were human beings and he acknowledged our suffering and he was interested in peace. All the peace we have in Thokoza, Katlehong and Vosloorus is mainly attributable to him.

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<sup>28</sup> *Wikipedia*: link on Brian Mitchell, Trust Feed.

<sup>29</sup> Bonhoeffer, Dietrich 1960. *The Cost of Discipleship*. New York: Macmillan.

<sup>30</sup> *Wikipedia*: link on Bishop Mvume Dandala.

## 4. THE GOD OF SURPRISES

In South Africa, God was good to South Africa, providing us not only with leaders like Nelson Mandela, Desmond Tutu, Beyers Naudé and Mvume Dandala, but tens of thousands of women and men, some young, some old, who were willing to rise to the occasion. In many instances they had to pay a very costly price for being harbingers of peace, many of them, ordinary citizens who reached beyond themselves, to facilitate reconciliation in their communities. "It never ceases to astonish me", Tutu wrote in between Truth Commission hearings, "the magnanimity of many victims who suffered the most heinous violations, who reach out to embrace their tormentors with joy, willing to forgive and wanting to reconcile"<sup>31</sup>

Allow me to show a very personal last picture, a final reminder that *ukubuyisha* (reconciling with the dead) and *ukuhlanza*, the washing of the spears (reconciling with the living) do happen, taken from my own *Chronicle of the Truth Commission*:<sup>32</sup>

"One can see God's influence in what is happening tonight", Mcibisi Xundu, pastor and TRC committee member said, looking at Eric Taylor, former security police officer who had applied for amnesty for his part in the killing of the 'Cradock Four'. "It is God who has led you to take this step towards reconciliation".

A few weeks earlier a young DRC pastor Charl Coetzee approached me with a request. One of his parishioners, Eric Taylor, wanted to meet the family of Matthew Goniwe, the activist he had tortured and murdered. Mrs Goniwe, a strong critic of the TRC process, refused to come, but the rest of the family as well as the families of the rest of the Cradock Four travelled from Cradock to Port Elizabeth for the occasion. Suspicion and anger were in the air. The families of the victims had many questions, needed many answers. Taylor answered as best he could. At the end of a long evening he turned to the Goniwe family and to their colleagues: "I came to ask you to forgive me, if the Lord can give you the strength to do that".

The response was moving. One after another the family members came to the fore to shake Eric Taylor's hand and to assure him of their forgiveness. Many a cheek were wet with tears. The son of Goniwe walked up to the policeman. His right arm was in plaster, but with his left arm he embraced Eric Taylor. "It is true", he said, "you murdered my father. But we forgive you..."

When Charl Coetzee reported to me about the meeting, I immediately phoned Desmond Tutu in Cape Town. "I have heard the news", he commented. "Mrs Goniwe told me this morning that the next time she would be there!" When we concluded our conversation Tutu wanted us to pray: "O Lord, we thank You for being the God of surprises, for surprising us every day, for the miracles of reconciliation in our country..."

These, then, are some of the pictures of reconciliation from the South African book, the stories of *ukubuyisa* and *ukuhlanza* in South Africa. But many more images and stories of healing and forgiveness, are needed. In South Africa, eighteen years after the new democratic dispensation came into being, we are still struggling with seemingly insurmountable problems. In 1994, as noted above, we harboured high hopes for the Rainbow Nation, that reconciliation and peace-

<sup>31</sup> Meiring, Piet 2002: Unshackling the ghosts of the past, in *Missionalia* 30:1 (April 2002), 68.

<sup>32</sup> Meiring, *Chronicle*, 123f.

building, the eradication of poverty and injustice, development ensuring a better life for all, would be the order of the day. But for many, the colours of the rainbow have paled. Hunger, poverty, inequality, moral decay, corruption, political instability, labour unrest, poor service provision, human rights abuses, racism, xenophobia, HIV-Aids, continue to ravage our people. The Christian Churches and the other faith communities dare not stand apart. They bear a huge responsibility to become involved, to help rectify the situation, indicating an alternative way, to help turning swords into ploughshares.

But we may take heart. Circumstances *can* change. People *can* make a difference. Even the direst of circumstances may change. After presiding over many hearings where South African victims and perpetrators tabled their stories of cruelty and suffering, after helping prepare a report on a country torn apart by racism and prejudice - but also taking note of the role that many have played to bring peace, to foster reconciliation - the chairperson of the TRC could not but rejoice. His words serve as an exhortation to all. This, indeed, is what *ukhulanza* is about:<sup>33</sup>

We have been wounded but we are being healed. It is possible even with our past suffering, anguish, alienation and violence to become one people, reconciled, healed, caring, compassionate and ready to share as we put our past behind us to stride into the glorious future God holds before us as the Rainbow People of God.

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33 Meiring, *Chronicle*: 379.

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## Rituals and social capital in the book of Leviticus? An attempt at an interdisciplinary discussion

### ABSTRACT

The article is an attempt by an Old Testament scholar to engage with a debate taking place in practical theology. This debate is about the influence of religion and ritual on the formation of social capital. The author attempts to shed light on this debate by looking at the two halves of the book of Leviticus, the first half of which is dominated by ritual and the second half is characterised by a broader communal perspective.

### INTRODUCTION

In an essay on "Ritual and the generation of social capital in contexts of poverty" Cas Wepener and Johan Cilliers (2010:417) start their search for a definition of social capital as follows:

"Social capital can be defined in numerous ways. However, in most of these definitions it is noted that the dimension of 'bonding' (the set of horizontal associations between people, consisting of social networks and associated norms) must be complemented by a vertical component of 'bridging' (ties that transcend various social divides, such as religion, ethnicity and socio-economic status) in order to prevent the horizontal ties from becoming a basis for the pursuit of narrow and even sectarian interests."

The concepts of "bonding" and "bridging" seem to be part and parcel of the idea of social capital. In his book Rein Brouwer (2009:72-118), offers an overview of the development of the concept of "social capital" and definitions of "bonding", "bridging" and also "linking". Bonding and bridging apparently go back to Robert Putman, who started using them in 1995 (Brouwer 2009:72-76). Yet the objective of the essay by Wepener and Cilliers (2010:417-419) is to explore the relationship between certain rituals (or specifically liturgies) and the formation of social capital in a context of poverty. The problem they engage with seems to be part of a broader debate (within practical theology) on the role that religion, religious organisations and churches play in the creation of social capital.<sup>1</sup> Brouwer (2009:117) concludes that, in his view, religion does play a role in the generation of social capital and this is also what Wepener and Cilliers attempt to argue in the light of their specific case study.

Social capital is furthermore not something unique to practical theology, but as Bayat (2005:2) puts it "scholars of diverse backgrounds have researched it", especially scholars from sociology, political science and economics. In Bayat's (2005:3) attempt to define the concept of social capital he refers to definitions which include both values (like social trust) and a network established between people. Social capital is essentially "relational, not something owned by any individual but rather something shared in common." (Bayat 2005:3) Later Bayat (2005:4) provides a more specific definition of trust in which he defines trust as "the understanding that the person or member of the social group will act in a manner that is mutually beneficial..."

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<sup>1</sup> See Brouwer (2009:96-117) for an overview of the broader debate within practical theology.

What Bayat's definition has in common with that offered by Wepener and Cilliers above, is a focus on the relations between people and the networks created as a result of these relations. But why study these networks in the first place? At the start of his paper Bayat (2005:2) provides us with a reason for studying social capital:

Social capital holds out the promise of improving access to resources amongst and across different groups and people. So we are interested in social capital because we consider it a new way of thinking about how resources can be mobilized and distributed (and possibly more equitably distributed) within society.

It is thus fairly obvious why subjects like economy, sociology and political science would engage with this concept.<sup>2</sup> While it seems that within practical theology social capital is taken as a given, the main question debated is the role of ritual in the creation of social capital.

This article attempts to be part of this debate, but from the perspective of Biblical Criticism and specifically from the perspective of a particular Biblical book. The book in question is the book of Leviticus. This article is thus an attempt to generate some interdisciplinary debate. It may well be that Biblical Criticism has something to offer in a debate going on in practical theology. Alternatively, the debate in practical theology, might shed some light on the interpretation of a Biblical book. When reading the quote from Wepener and Cilliers above this author's initial response was that there is probably much more bonding going on in the book of Leviticus than bridging or linking; the book of Leviticus might be a good example of the dangers of lots of bonding at the cost of bridging, but this was the initial response and, as we shall see later, there might be another side to this coin.

One obviously faces plenty of problems when setting out on this interdisciplinary road. Indeed, one enters a methodological minefield. In general, the use of social theory in the study of the Bible or ancient Israelite society is a very fruitful but highly problematic field of study in Biblical Criticism.<sup>3</sup> To make things worse, the kind of studies in practical theology which are interested in this debate are usually based on "participating observation".<sup>4</sup> Whereas it is possible to describe what is happening in churches today, it is impossible to do this with the Bible and the societies that produced the Bible. The societies in which and for which the book of Leviticus was written no longer exists and we have no way of going back there. As Bergen (2005:4) puts it:

"The difficulty of using modern explanations for ancient rituals is compounded by the fact that we cannot study the society in which the ritual operates. All we have is the text of the Bible as a guide to the specifics of 'Israelite society'"

We only have texts and texts are not rituals which can be directly observed. Wright (2012:197) correctly points to the fact that:

"[I]t is clear that the written text is not a ritual *as a performance*. It is a written artefact that describes or, more particularly, prescribes a performance. Such a text contrasts with what most social scientists work with when they do ritual analysis. [*italics in original*]"

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2 See also Bayat (2005:3-4) on the criticism aimed at the construct of social capital. Some of the problems include "lack of definitional clarity", "measurement issues", "huge diversity of fields" using it etc.

3 See the very recent essays in Olyan (2012).

4 See Brouwer (2009:83), who argues that a "methodology is needed which allows us to be close to the experience of people" (my translation). Or see Wepener and Cilliers (2010:421), who describe and motivate how they did their field work, or Wepener and Barnard (2010).

Wright (2012:198) argues that despite all these pitfalls, scholars should still attempt to apply social theory to Biblical texts, but that this should entail a fair amount of being “forthright” about the limits of our analysis. It also means that sometimes only parts of a theory might be applicable; he then concludes (Wright 2012:199):

“In these cases, extracting or modulating aspects of theoretical approaches and application to Biblical ritual texts becomes more the study of a *literary motif* in the text than of real-world social phenomena. [my italics]”

We are thus applying social theories developed in today’s world to literary motifs in ancient texts. In the past two centuries Biblical critics have developed different methods of reading these texts. Some of these insights will be used below.

Apart from underlining the gap between our world and the Biblical world, Bergen (2005:5) also introduces us to another methodological problem, namely the problem of the definition of ritual. One is often tempted to agree with Wright (2001:8) that “one knows ritual when one sees it”<sup>5</sup> but this view is not really helpful. Some practical theologians<sup>6</sup> use a very specific definition of ritual, but many Biblical critics seem to side with Catherine Bell<sup>7</sup> for a more open definition away from “a strict or totalizing ‘theory’” (Bibb 2009:53). For Wright (2001:13) Bell points out the “contrast between ritualisation and normal activity” and this is important. One should also add that Biblical Criticism has through the years tended to use terms like ritual in a very general sense. In the classical documentary hypothesis it was always argued that one of the characteristics of the Priestly source (P) was its interest in “ritual observance” (Collins 2004:57) or “ritual phenomena” (Zenger 2008:158). This has to do with the fact that P focuses on the cult and the rituals needed to maintain this cult, but this has also helped the P source to not find itself “in the path of the cyclone that ravaged” (Ska 2006:146) the other sources of the classical documentary hypothesis. To use Bell’s concept of “ritualisation”, one could argue that the fact that “ritualisation” is so prevalent in the P source helped to distinguish it from other sources.<sup>8</sup> But first we need to engage with a fairly old problem in the interpretation history of Leviticus. After facing this problem we will explore the following question: *Could the concept of “social capital” as defined in practical theology be helpful in offering some new insight into the old problem we are about to address?*

## RITUAL AND ETHICS IN LEVITICUS

Leviticus is clearly a book divided into two halves. The second half of the book (Lev 17-26) has traditionally been called the Holiness Code (H),<sup>9</sup> and one of the important differences in the second half is that certain ethical and moral issues are addressed, issues which were

5 See also Bergen (2005:5) for similar comments.

6 See Wepener (2010:1), who argues that “rituals are often repeated, self-evident, symbolic actions, that are always interactive and corporeal, sometimes accompanied by texts and formulas, aimed at the transfer of values in the individual or the group, and of which the form and content are always culture, context and time bound, so that the involvement in the reality which is presented in the rituals remains dynamic.”

7 See Bell (1992:69-93), or see discussions by Wright (2001:8-13) and Bergen (2005:5-6). The most extensive discussion of Bell by a Biblical critic that I know of is Bibb (2009:52-69).

8 Even in current Pentateuch scholarship, after the demise of J and E, one still talks of P and non-P, as the recent book by Carr (2011) shows.

9 The term “Holiness Code” was coined in 1877 in an essay by A. Klostermann “Ezechiel und das Heiligkeitsgesetz”, later to be published in Klostermann (1893:385).

not raised in Leviticus 1-16. In the days of Wellhausen it was argued that the Holiness Code (H) was an older collection which had at some stage been incorporated into Leviticus, or in Wellhausen's terms added to the "Priestercodex".<sup>10</sup> In this scheme of things the moral issues addressed reflected something of an older religion still closely connected to agriculture (Trevaskis 2011:4).

Things have radically changed in the last few decades with more and more scholars agreeing that H was created later than Leviticus 1-16. There are two groups of scholars who support this view. On the one hand, there are (mostly) Jewish scholars who belong to what one could call the "Kaufman School"<sup>11</sup> of which Jacob Milgrom and Israel Knohl would probably be the foremost examples. For both Milgrom and Knohl H was produced by a Holiness School that consisted of priests, but who belonged to a later generation than those who produced the bulk of the earlier Priestly source (P). In Europe similar arguments are followed by scholars belonging to the "redactional critical"<sup>12</sup> school, of which Eckart Otto, Reinhard Achenbach and Christophe Nihan would be good examples. These two groups differ on the dating of these texts, but they agree on the chronological relationship between P and H. For all of them H was written after P.

One of the arguments<sup>13</sup> used to argue for the distinction between H and P is the fact that, whereas P is focused on the cult itself and the rituals aimed at maintaining the cult, H broadens its horizons to include what we might call "ethics". Bibb (2009:152) puts this as follows:

"The central movement [from P to H] ... is the shift from a narrow cultic focus to the larger communal setting."

What is meant by a "narrow cultic focus" and a "larger communal setting"? Or what is meant when one describes this as a move from "rituals" to "ethics"? The answer to these questions is fairly simple and a brief overview of the content of the book of Leviticus should make this clear.

Most<sup>14</sup> of the laws in Leviticus 1-16 are concerned with the cult and maintaining the cult. Leviticus 1-7 is about different kinds of offerings, which include the burnt offering (chapter 1), the grain offering (chapter 2), the offering of well-being (chapter 3), the purification offering (chapters 4 and 5), the reparation offering (chapter 5) and some more general instructions on sacrifices (chapters 6 and 7). Leviticus 1-7 is thus concerned with rituals which are aimed at maintaining the sacrificial cult. In terms of genre they are legal texts prescribing how certain rituals (sacrifices) should be executed. They are prescriptive and not descriptive, as Wright pointed out above. Leviticus 1-7 is followed by the first narrative in the book of Leviticus namely chapters 8-10. Chapters 8-9 describe how Aaron and his sons are ordained and this leads to the cultic climax at the end of Leviticus 9, when the glory of the Lord appears to all the people (verse 23). Eventually, fire comes from the Lord and consumes the burnt offering and the fat on the altar. The people are in awe, but then, in Leviticus 10 things take a turn for the worse, when the sons of Aaron die because they did something wrong. This narrative is thus

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10 See Wellhausen's comment quoted in Otto (1999:132).

11 By the "Kaufmann School" I refer to scholars who argue that the Priestly texts are pre-exilic. See Meyer (2010).

12 As described by Jeffrey Stackert (2009:195).

13 Especially used by Milgrom (2004:215-219) and Knohl (1995:175-180).

14 The following overview of Leviticus was presented in another article. See Meyer (2013:1-2).

describing certain sacrificial rituals, of which some actually went terribly wrong.<sup>15</sup> Few scholars would dispute that the acts prescribed and described in Leviticus 1-10 are indeed rituals, but we cannot really observe them – we can only read the texts.

Leviticus 11-15 is concerned with clean and unclean animals (chapter 11), female purification after childbirth (chapter 12) and then three chapters (13-15) on 'leprosy'<sup>16</sup> and bodily fluids follow. Chapter 11 is about correct eating, whereas chapters 12-15 tend to describe the procedures (rituals) to be followed by somebody who has become unclean because of the conditions described and wants to become clean again. Leviticus 16 is about the Day of Atonement and it also portrays sacrifices made to bring about reconciliation between YHWH and his people. These texts thus clearly focus on the cult and could be described, as Bibb (2009:152) did, as having a "narrow cultic focus". Apart from Leviticus 11, it should be clear that these texts also prescribe certain rituals. Yet even if Leviticus 11 is simply a list of what is allowed to be eaten and what not, it is clearly part and parcel of the rest of the text and concepts such as pure and impure dominate. We will return to this chapter later.

In the second half of Leviticus there is a movement away from this "narrow cultic focus" to broader issues. This movement is not really evident in Leviticus 17, which is usually regarded as the first chapter of the Holiness Code. Chapter 17 forbids profane slaughter and the eating of blood. This chapter is often regarded as a kind of hinge between the preceding half of Leviticus and the subsequent Holiness Code.<sup>17</sup> One community-related concern which now comes to the fore is the relation between the Israelite and the stranger (*gēr*). Strangers were also forbidden to carry out profane slaughter and they were not allowed to consume blood either. The strangers actually appeared for the first time in the previous chapter (Leviticus 16), where they are also forbidden to work on the seventh day of the tenth month. In the rest of the Holiness Code we find a clear communal focus in some texts, such as Leviticus 18 to 20 and also in 25. Chapters 18 and 20 are concerned with sexual taboos, but especially in an extended family context, whereas chapter 19 is a strange mix of various kinds of legal texts. Some texts are reminiscent of the more cultic texts in the first half of Leviticus interested in both sacrifices and purity issues, while others remind us of the Decalogue and still others have been described as promoting "social justice".<sup>18</sup>

It is especially the latter two categories, namely texts reminding us of the Decalogue and texts concerned with "social justice", which are described as more ethical. Balentine (1999:169) describes the laws of Leviticus 19 as "social ethics". Decalogue-like texts include Leviticus 19:3, 4, 11, 12, 16, 18 and 29.<sup>19</sup> Texts that are often described as addressing issues of "social justice" include especially 19:11-18, in which one finds commandments against keeping the day labourer's wages until morning, or putting a stumbling block in the way of a blind person, cursing the deaf and being partial in judgment. These laws are aimed at protecting the vulnerable in society, the kind of thing one finds in some of the Latter Prophets. One also finds laws protecting your neighbour from slander and from being hated by the addressees,

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15 Bibb (2009:111) talks of "ritual failure" in Leviticus 10.

16 This term is traditionally used, but it does not refer to Hansen's disease. When found on a human being, it is more a kind of skin disease and it can even be found in houses when it becomes a kind of mould.

17 See Meyer (2012:106-124).

18 See, for instance, Nihan (2007:461), who argues that verses 11-18 have "a strong thematic unity, since all the prohibitions deal in one sense or another with the issue of social justice."

19 The list is from Balentine (1999:169 n. 78), who took it from Kaiser (1994:1131). I am not entirely convinced that verses 18 and 29 have much to do with the Decalogue.

but instead addressees are commanded to love (verses 17-18) their neighbours as themselves, an injunction made famous by Jesus (Mark 12:31). Similar commands are again found in verses 33-34, which forbid the addressees to oppress the stranger and once again the addressees are asked to love the stranger as themselves.

This is what Bibb and others are referring to, namely the fact that the first half of Leviticus focuses on the cult, while in the second half of Leviticus the focus is indeed wider and includes texts discussing the relationship between Israelites and their fellow Israelites as well their relationship with strangers. One could describe this as a kind of “turn to the other” as long as one qualifies this as not meaning a “turn away from the cult”. The sanctuary and the rituals associated with maintaining it are still very much at the centre, but other broader perspectives are included. Collins (2004:151) puts it well:

“The code does not lessen the importance of ritual and purity regulations, but it puts them in perspective by alternating them with ethical commandments. Holiness is not only a matter of being separated from the nations. It also requires ethical behaviour toward one’s fellow human beings.”

One could illustrate the point further by looking at how the concept of holiness<sup>20</sup> is used in the Holiness Code compared to the first half of Leviticus. In the first half the term is applied only to the cult, its officials and paraphernalia,<sup>21</sup> but in the second half it is applied to ordinary people,<sup>22</sup> who are now asked to be holy themselves. Yet, it should be clear that there is a very obvious move in the second half of Leviticus away from a narrow cultic focus to a broader view of the community and the responsibility of community members to take care of each other, including strangers, the poor and other vulnerable people. One could describe that movement as a movement from ritual to ethics, and the question that has obviously kept Biblical critics busy is: why? Why does the book broaden its horizons from focusing on the cult and its rituals to include the behaviour of Israelites to one another and even to outsiders?

Before we look at how Biblical critics have engaged with this problem, one could ask whether this question should not be asked within the broader debate of the role played by religion in the creation of social capital. To put it rather crudely: *Could one not argue that the kind of community created by the rituals [or ritualisation] in Leviticus 1-16 inevitably becomes a society that cares for its own members and vulnerable people in their midst? It even takes care of outsiders like the strangers just mentioned! It would be fascinating to ask what kind of effect the “ritualisation” of society described in Leviticus 1-16 had on the society itself. Is Leviticus thus a good example of how rituals and cult create social capital?*

## RESPONSE BY BIBLICAL CRITICS

As we will see in a moment the short answer is: “No!” The movement in the book of Leviticus from cult to society is not an example of the creation of social capital. Let me explain: as already mentioned above, Biblical critics usually do not read the two halves of Leviticus as the product of the same society living in the same time period. We have already noted that Wellhausen initially thought that H was older and that the more ethical view of H deteriorated

20 See especially Wright (1999:351-364).

21 E.g. Leviticus 6:9-20; 8:10, 11, 12, 15 and 30.

22 See Leviticus 19:2; 20:7-8.

into the more ritualistic perspective of P in the first half of Leviticus.<sup>23</sup> We also mentioned that in current scholarship more and more scholars are arguing for the opposite chronological relationship, namely that H is later. I will briefly sum up the view of two Pentateuch scholars (already mentioned above) who offer two different arguments to account for the movement from ritual to ethics.

Israel Knohl (1995:204-215) is of the opinion that H was written by a generation of priests who lived after the priests who wrote the first half of Leviticus, or what he calls the Priestly Torah (PT). The earlier priests are described as esoteric and they produced the bulk of what was traditionally known as P. These priests were active somewhere during the tenth to the eighth century BCE. They, their writings and the way in which they ran the sanctuary were the object of prophetic critique, especially by some of the classic prophets such as Amos, Micah and Isaiah.<sup>24</sup> But then in response to this critique, a later priestly school called the Holiness School (HS) responded by creating H. In H the focus is broader than the cultic-centred PT, as we have seen above. The turn in Leviticus from ritual to ethics is thus the result of prophetic critique and the texts with more ethical content were produced by a later generation of priests. These priests were all from the same Judean background, but they succeeded each other. It is not as if the society which practised the rituals in the first half of Leviticus suddenly developed an ethical dimension. Knohl's main argument that both P and H should be pre-exilic has unfortunately been rejected<sup>25</sup> by most Pentateuch scholars, who still follow Wellhausen's older idea that Priestly texts are exilic/post-exilic.

Another example of a scholar who has offered an explanation for this ethical turn is Eckart Otto,<sup>26</sup> whose dating of these texts is more aligned to the traditional later dating of Priestly texts. For Otto the origins of H lie in the post-exilic society and it is part of the community's struggle for identity within the larger context of the Persian Empire. Initially the corpus of Judaism in this period was a Hexateuch (the Torah plus the book of Joshua) and at this stage identity was connected to the promised land. With the book of Joshua added, the promises of land in Genesis are fulfilled, promises which are left unfulfilled in our current Pentateuch. Later the book of Joshua was removed from the Hexateuch to form the Pentateuch to define identity rather in terms of living according to the Torah and not living in the land. This is where the Holiness Code comes in. When the book of Joshua was removed, these texts in the second half of Leviticus were added to the Priestly texts in the first half of Leviticus. The purpose of the Holiness Code was to consolidate and correct other older legal codes in the Pentateuch such as the Deuteronomic Code and the Covenant Code. In this model the ethical content in the second half of Leviticus is thus the result of engagements with other texts in the Pentateuch, which already had this more ethical content. It is also part of a broader movement of identity renegotiation in the Persian period in which identity was redefined as closely connected to living the Torah and not so much to land anymore.

This is a rather complicated theory of the origins of the Hexateuch/Pentateuch and although it differs a lot from Knohl's view, both hypotheses have certain characteristics in common. Both argue that the more ethical material is later than the more cultic material and the point is that the kinds of questions raised at the end of the previous section are simply foreign to the way that Biblical critics tend to read these texts. Few would read these two halves of

23 See, for instance, the discussion by Bibb (2009:146-148).

24 Knohl (1995:204-214) mentions texts such as Amos 5:25, Micah 3:9-12 and Isaiah 5:16.

25 See, for instance, the criticism by Nihan (2007:563).

26 This is a rather brief summary of an essay by Eckart Otto (2009:135-156).

Leviticus as created by the same society and it is simply not possible that there is some kind of linear movement from rituals to ethics, or if you will, from rituals to social capital. At this stage one should probably conclude that Biblical critics and practical theologians belong to two different academic worlds. But there are some concepts from the social capital debate which I do find helpful in reading Leviticus.

## BONDING AND BRIDGING

I would side with those scholars (i.e. Otto and Nihan) who argue that P and H are results of the exilic/post-exilic time period and would thus tend to read the book of Leviticus (both P and H) within the context of the Persian Period. Many scholars<sup>27</sup> have argued that the community of the Second Temple Period was fairly conscious of the boundaries between them and the rest of humanity. This is often mentioned in debates about Leviticus 11 and the rules about eating.<sup>28</sup> For Israel, only certain animals were allowed to be eaten. If one leaves issues of the provenance of these laws aside,<sup>29</sup> the question is usually how these laws functioned in the Persian Period. Some, such as Nihan (2007:339), have argued:

*“As such, much more than for the legislation of Lev 12-15, the torah of Lev 11 sets apart those who practice it from the rest of humanity.”* [italics in original]

Right eating was thus not an innocent act, but something which helped to draw boundaries between Israel and the rest of humanity. Milgrom (1991:726)<sup>30</sup> also hints at this when he discusses the reasons why Christianity abolished the dietary laws of Leviticus 11. It was not only in order to “ease the process of converting the gentiles”, but it was also about abolishing criteria which set Israel “apart from the nations”. The early church thus abolished the boundaries which kept Jew and gentile apart. Could the laws of Leviticus 11 not be regarded as a kind of ritualised eating<sup>31</sup> which demarcated the boundaries between Israel and the rest and, in terms of social capital, amounts to a case of bonding? Thus we do find some kind of social capital.

Wepener (2010:1) defines bonding as “the ways in which groups or individuals bond amongst themselves thereby strengthening the group cohesion.” Yet, in the broader definition presented by Wepener and Cilliers above one also hears about the dangers of bonding in that it can become “a basis for the pursuit of narrow and even sectarian interests.” This is in

27 See Smith-Christopher (2002:137-162) and Gerstenberger (2005:378-382).

28 See the more extensive argument in Meyer (2011:142-158), especially the critical engagements with the contributions of Jacob Milgrom and Mary Douglas.

29 To my mind the best explanation offered for the origins of the eating laws was provided by Walter J. Houston (1993). His contribution is summed up as follows by Nihan (2007:330): “the dietary rules in Lev 11 and Deut 14 largely appear to correspond to the accepted dietary and sacrificial customs in a dominantly pastoralist economy such as that of pre-exilic Israel.”

30 As mentioned above, Milgrom would not read Leviticus as a post-exilic text, but regards the whole book (both P and H) as pre-exilic. See especially Milgrom (1999).

31 I am not sure that Bell would approve of the fact that I basically describe all eating by Jews in the Second Temple Period as an example of “ritualisation”. In her (Bell 1992:90-91) own discussion of “ritualisation of the meal” she argues that one needs a “different set of strategies to differentiate it from conventional eating”. Leviticus 11 is not about a feast which has a clear ritualised character, but it is about the fact that eating is not an innocent act, but an act whereby Second Temple Yehud differentiated themselves from other peoples in the Persian Empire. Bell (1992:90) often uses the concept of differentiation, but then applies it to an act which by means of ritualisation differentiates itself from a normal act. As she puts it (Bell 1992:90), “ritualisation is the production of this differentiation.” I am thus applying this act of differentiation not to the ritual act itself but to a group of people in the Persian Period.

line with traditional portrayals of the world view of P as indeed sectarian or exclusive, but it is usually understood within a Persian Period historical context where the survivors of the exile attempted to keep on surviving and maintain their identity in the midst of the broader Persian Empire.<sup>32</sup> It was with this in mind that I initially mentioned above that when I attempted to relate “social capital” to the book of Leviticus, my first response was to look for bonding over against something like bridging. Wepener (2010:1) defines bridging as “the ways in which groups or individuals can form relationships with people belonging to groups other than their own”, while linking is defined as referring “to the ways in which individuals and groups link with people or groups that are on a different societal level than themselves”. Thus Mbaya (2011), in his article on the Corinthian Church where he describes the *isitshisa* sacrifice, concludes:

“In other words, worship and meals enhance bonding social capital as the *isitshisa* [*burning of the heifer*] draws people into fellowship. Because generosity is extended to the blind and the needy, this dimension of networking is an example of linking capital.”

The *isitshisa* is a sacrifice reminiscent of the purification offering found in Leviticus 4-5 and is explicitly linked to the red cow ritual in Numbers 19.<sup>33</sup> The Corinthians perform this sacrifice once a year and on the day after the *isitshisa* blind people are brought by bus to the church and are then presented with “presents of money, clothes and food parcels” (Mbaya 2011:6). For Mbaya (2011:7) this amounts to “linking capital”<sup>34</sup> whereby blind people are integrated into society and this is the direct result of the ritual of the sacrifice.<sup>35</sup>

There might be some bridging going on in the book of Leviticus. It was already mentioned above that one community-related concern which enters the text of Leviticus in the second half is the issue of strangers (*gērim*), whom we find first in Leviticus 16, but who then frequently feature in H.<sup>36</sup> Albertz (2011:59) expresses the following view of the identity of the strangers in the Holiness Code:

“In my view, the *gērim* here are all those foreigners, who inhabited – shoulder to shoulder with the Judeans – the Persian province of Jehud in the first part of the 5th century, whose multi-ethnic character is known from other sources.”

The society of the post-exilic period was thus what we would call multicultural and the

32 See Smith-Christopher (2002:160-162).

33 For a more detailed description of this ritual compared to Numbers 19, see Wepener and Meyer (2012:298-318). Or see Mbaya’s (2011: 3-5) description.

34 I must say that I find the differences between bonding and linking rather vague, but that probably has to do with the fact that I am not a practical theologian. From the overview provided by Brouwer (2009:72-74) it also seems that Putman originally spoke only of bonding and bridging and that the third category of linking was later added by John Field. My argument above tends to treat bridging and linking as more or less synonymous. See also Bayat (2005:4-5) who defines the bridging network as being “characterized by generalised trust and charitable volunteering” whereas linking are about the “links between the political elite and the general public or between individuals from different social classes.” In terms of the definitions provided by Bayat, what Mbaya is describing above, is more a case of bridging than linking. Yet it should be clear how both are different from bonding. In the rest of the article I will simply talk of bridging.

35 His argument is slightly more complex than implied above. At some stage one of the church leaders is asked “What relevance has the *isitshisa* to the donations to the blind?” (Mbaya 2011:7) His answer indicates that sacrificing the heifer reminds the congregation members of sacrificing themselves for the sake of others.

36 Leviticus 16:29; 17:8, 10, 12, 13, 15; 18:26; 19:10, 33, 34; 20:2; 22:18; 23:22; 24:16, 22; 25:23, 35, 47.

Holiness Code attempts to address this historical reality. In Leviticus 16:29 the strangers are ordered not to work, just as they are ordered in Leviticus 17:10,12 not to consume blood, or as they are forbidden in 18:26 to transgress the sexual taboos described in Leviticus 18. Milgrom (2000:1499) has described these commandments as prohibitive, which means that their violation could “lead to the pollution of God’s sanctuary and land, which, in turn, results in God’s alienation and Israel’s exile.” Or, as Albertz (2011:60) puts it, the purpose of these laws is “to avert a new catastrophe from the Judean province.” The logic of these laws was thus to protect the addressees from losing the land. The strangers could also defile the land, which would result in its loss.

Yet the strangers themselves are also sometimes protected, as we have seen in Leviticus 19. In verse 10 some of the harvest is left for the poor and the strangers, and in verses 33 and 34 of the same chapter the addressees are commanded not to oppress strangers, but rather to treat them like fellow citizens. The addressees are then reminded that they themselves were previously strangers in Egypt. Is this command an example of bridging?<sup>37</sup> The addressees are invited to sympathise with these “other people” and to treat them as they would themselves. This sensitivity in the second half of Leviticus is closely related to the “ethical turn” described above which saw Leviticus move away from a narrow cultic focus to a more community-based ethics. But could one call this a kind of bridging, where the Judean society of the post-exilic period attempted to “form relationships with people belonging to groups other than their own”, as Wepener (2010:1) has put it? A very careful “yes” might be an appropriate response now.

Although Albertz (2011:61-67) thinks that the “Holiness legislators were not mainly interested in converting the resident aliens to Yahwism,” he still argues that, when one looks at how the treatment of the strangers developed from the Covenant Code, Deuteronomy, the Holiness Code and then in the “Late Priestly layers”,<sup>38</sup> this development might form the basis of the much later concept of proselytes. One could say that Albertz thus detects a fairly long process of opening up towards strangers, which is probably a kind of bridging. Still, this does not say anything about the possible relation between rituals and social capital, as some practical theologians (such as Mbaya above)<sup>39</sup> would have it. The development in attitudes towards the strangers in the Holiness Code was mostly the result of “a new social-economic and historical situation, which was largely unforeseen by the earlier legal collections.” (Nihan 2011:131) It is not as if the rituals in the first half of the book created a society which was eventually slightly more open towards strangers. It was probably more a case of adapting to new historical realities.

The lingering question at the end of this essay is whether the concept of “social capital” as used by practical theologians has helped us to gain a better understanding of the book of Leviticus or not?

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37 Or, even linking? Apart from the fact that I find the two concepts rather foggy, it would also depend on how one defines the strangers. Do they belong to a lower social order as Leviticus 19:33-34 and 23:22 would have us believe, or are they as rich as, or even more rich than the addressees themselves? The end of chapter 25 describes some strangers as very rich. Nihan (2011:131) argues that they might have been part of the Persian elite.

38 By “Late Priestly Layers”, Albertz (2011: 63-65) means the priestly texts in the book of Numbers, which are even later than H. In these texts “the path was paved in the direction of proselytes.” Albertz 2011:65

39 I am not saying that I do not find Mbaya’s argument in relation to his discussed case study convincing. In terms of the Corinthians and their sacrifices, he might be spot on. I am saying that that does not really help us to explain what is happening in the book of Leviticus.

## CONCLUSION

The answer to this question is probably “uncertain”. If what I have identified in the light of Leviticus 11 and the appearance of the stranger in the second half of Leviticus could indeed be described as bonding and bridging, it would only mean that we have used new name tags for phenomena already identified and described by many scholars working on Leviticus. Still, engaging with these concepts might sensitise Biblical critics to look at old texts with new eyes.

I have also shown above that a study of the book of Leviticus can only partially contribute to the broader debate (in practical theology) about the effect of ritual/religion on the formation of social capital. There is a clear link between rituals and bonding which is at least one component of social capital, although this is often regarded as dangerous in itself, when the other components are absent. I tried to show this by means of Leviticus 11. Even if a case might be made for bridging in the second half of Leviticus when the strangers enter the text, this has little to do with the rituals in the first half of Leviticus. The way in which Biblical critics usually explain the “turn to the other” in the second half of the book of Leviticus has to do with arguments about dating and historical contexts, and most are convinced that H is later than P and is thus not strictly speaking representative of the same society. The ethical turn in Leviticus is not a logical development from the ritual-dominated first half. The ethical turn is a response to a different historical context and a response to what we could call an inner-Biblical<sup>40</sup> discussion taking place between different legal codes in the Pentateuch (as Otto would have it), but probably also between traditions in the Pentateuch and traditions in Prophetic texts (as Knohl would have it).

There is thus social capital in Leviticus, both bonding and maybe even bridging, but only the former could be regarded as a result of rituals. The change to bridging was brought about by a changed historical context when the people of Yehud found themselves in a province of the much bigger Persian Empire. They now had to share this province with people who were different from them. In this light one wonders about the role of rituals and religion in changing societies. Priestly theology did not bring about change, but it did respond to a changing historical context. Initially in the time period shortly after the exile Priestly theology and its associated rituals helped the exiles to survive and maintain their identity which could be a case of bonding. The first half of Leviticus witnesses to that. Later the authors of H responded to a different historical context and created a different kind of social capital namely bridging. Priestly theology and associated rituals did not bring about this change, but it managed the change. Maybe this is what practical theologians should focus on in modern day contexts, namely how is social capital created in response to a changing world? What role does religion and its associated rituals play in managing the survival and adaptation of religious groups in a changing world?

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## Jonathan Edwards and the Heidelberg Catechism<sup>1</sup>

### ABSTRACT

As part of the ongoing effort to reappraise the influence and use of the Heidelberg Catechism in early America, an important tradition to consider is New England Puritanism, and an important figure in that tradition, Jonathan Edwards. Though it might be assumed that Edwards had no interaction with the “Palatine Catechism,” a closer look reveals that it was actually a part of the religious culture. This essay looks for the first time at Edwards’ exposure to the document and commentaries on it through colonial book-owning, and then focuses on two episodes in his life in which the Catechism played a role.

### INTRODUCTION

In this 450th anniversary year of the Heidelberg Catechism, many different lines of influence are being drawn that illustrate the Catechism’s formative role around the world. But there are some areas, and some figures, for which we might assume the Heidelberg Catechism had little if any relevance. One such region is colonial New England, chock full of mad dogs and Englishmen, creed-bucking Dissenters, ecstatic New Lights, and Separatists. And a pivotal figure from this region is Jonathan Edwards, the 18th-century colonial British theologian, philosopher, revivalist, and missionary, who never made a single reference to the Heidelberg Catechism.

However, some careful digging yields discoveries that, hopefully, are indicative of the nature of the Heidelberg Catechism’s background presence in Edwards and in his New England. While initial efforts have been made by others scholars to show the congruity of Edwards and the Heidelberg Catechism on theological issues such as conversion and the definition of faith,<sup>2</sup> here I will focus on episodes in Edwards’ life in which the Heidelberg Catechism came into play, both obliquely and directly.

### THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM IN EDWARDS’ BOOK WORLD

Not only did Edwards never cite the Heidelberg Catechism, but, so far as we know, he did not own a copy of it. Nor, for that matter, did he list any catechism or confession in his “Catalogue of Reading,” a list of more than 700 books he read and wanted to read.<sup>3</sup> The catechism and

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1 This paper was originally written, in shorter form, for the conference, “Profil und Wirkung des Heidelberger Katchismus,” held at Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg, 9-11 May 2013, and will be published, in a different version, in the conference proceedings.

2 See Johannes Lilik Susanto, “Jonathan Edwards and the Heidelberg Catechism,” M.A. thesis, Calvin Theological Seminary, 2005; and “Jonathan Edwards vs. John Calvin: Got Assurance?” on Beggars All: Reformation & Apologetics Blogspot ([beggarsallreformation.blogspot.com/2012/04/jonathan-edwards-vs-john-calvin-got.html](http://beggarsallreformation.blogspot.com/2012/04/jonathan-edwards-vs-john-calvin-got.html)), April 3, 2012.

3 Published in *Works of Jonathan Edwards Online* ([edwards.yale.edu](http://edwards.yale.edu); hereafter, WJEO) 26.

confession with which he was most familiar, the Westminster, was, he allowed, something he could subscribe to the “substance” of, though not every statement.<sup>4</sup> While he was an inheritor and defender of the Reformed and Puritan legacy, he was willing to experiment with it. As one of his disciples put it, Edwards “called no Man, Father. He thought and judged for himself, and was truly very much of an Original,” be it theologically or confessionally.<sup>5</sup>

However, the story does not end there, for he did have ready access to the Heidelberg Catechism. Edwards attended Yale College, and while its library at the time lacked a copy of the Heidelberg Catechism, it did have the three-volume Opera of Ursinus, possibly the edition published in Heidelberg in 1612, which of course would have included Zachary the Bear’s commentary.<sup>6</sup> To this Edwards would have had quick entrée as a student and later as tutor, when he organized the library. Harvard College library owned the Sparke and Seddon 1576 translation of the Heidelberg Catechism, as well as Ursinus’ *Doctrinae Christianae Compendium* (London, 1586) and his *Corpus Christianae Doctrinae, cum Explicationibus*, specifically the edition of David Pareus printed in Heidelberg in 1621.<sup>7</sup> Edwards made constant trips to Boston, and, as a part of the clerical elite, he availed himself of the collection whenever he could, as when he attended commencement, gave a lecture, or conducted business.

Members within his extended family, many of them ministers, also had impressive book collections given their frontier settings. For example, Cotton Mather, Edwards’ relative, owned a 1621 edition of the Pareus edition of Ursinus, and Edwards’ uncle, John Williams, pastor of Deerfield, Massachusetts, whose family was so devastated by the famous raid by French and Indians in 1704, owned a copy of *Catechesis Religionis Christianae*, a Latin translation of the German Heidelberg Catechism printed in 1563.<sup>8</sup> Most to the point here, however, is the library of Edwards’ grandfather, Solomon Stoddard. Among the considerable number of books he already owned as a student were *Catechesis Religionis Christianae quae in Ecclesiis Palatinatus Traditur* (Edinburgh, 1591) and *Explicationum Catechetarum . . . Editio Altera* (Cambridge, 1587), not to mention the London 1618 edition of the Judgement of the Synode Holden at Dort (no sign of the Belgic Confession, otherwise we could suspect Stoddard of being a closet Reformed).<sup>9</sup> Therefore Stoddard, under whom Edwards served for two years and then replaced as pastor of Northampton, Massachusetts, owned both a text of the Heidelberg Catechism and Ursinus’ explication of it. We know that, upon Stoddard’s death in 1729, these books stayed within reach for Edwards, either in the possession of his uncle John Stoddard, who lived in Northampton, or his uncle Anthony Stoddard, a minister in not-too-distant Woodbury, Connecticut. We see, therefore, that when we look beyond the simple lack of citations to the Heidelberg Catechism in Edwards’ reading lists, we find many points of potential contact. And this seems to have been the case with the generality of Edwards’ peers in the early New England intelligentsia as well.

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4 Edwards to John Erskine, Aug. 5, 1750 (A117), WJEO 16 .

5 Samuel Hopkins, *Life and Character of the Late Reverend Mr. Jonathan Edwards* (Boston, 1765), 41.

6 D. *Zacheriae Ursini theologi celeberrimi . . . Opera theologica . . .* 3 vols. (Heidelberg, 1612).

7 *Eighteenth-Century Catalogues of the Yale College Library*, ed. James E. Mooney (New Haven: Yale University, 2001), A27; *The Printed Catalogues of the Harvard College Library, 1723-1790*, ed. W.H. Bond and Hugh Amory (Boston: Colonial Society of Massachusetts, 1996), A92, 97.

8 Inventory of the Estate of Rev. John Williams, n.d. [c. 1729], photocopy, Jonathan Edwards Center, Yale Divinity School; Julius H. Tuttle, “The Libraries of the Mathers,” *American Antiquarian Society Proceedings* 20 (1909-10), 341.

9 Norman S. Fiering, “Solomon Stoddard’s Library at Harvard in 1664,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 20 (1972), 266.

## CHURCH GOVERNANCE AND THE LORD'S SUPPER: TWO CASES IN EDWARDS' LIFE

At two points in Edwards' career, the Heidelberg Catechism became a point of reference or appeal, directly or indirectly. These two episodes came, it should be noted, at crucial points in Edwards' increasingly combative and deteriorating relationship with his Northampton congregation. These appeals to the Heidelberg Catechism, or to the church communities that relied on the Heidelberg Catechism, came in the contexts, first, of Edwards' efforts to change church structure in order to implement more effective decision-making and discipline; and second, in the context of his attempt to alter the qualifications for admission to the sacraments of the church, a controversy that ended with his dismissal.<sup>10</sup>

### "JUDGING OF CAUSES": THE CHURCH COMMITTEE OF 1748

In June 1748, Edwards delivered a sermon series over four Sabbaths on Deuteronomy 1:13-18, in which Moses recounts how he took "wise men, and understanding," and set them up as judges over the tribes of Israel to "hear the causes between your brethren."<sup>11</sup> From this passage Edwards derived the Doctrine, "'Tis the mind of God, that not a mixed multitude, but only select persons of distinguished ability and integrity, are fit for the business of judging of causes." Here, seeming to overthrow the congregational tradition of governance by the fraternity, Edwards asserted that God "did not leave difficult judgments" to the congregation in common, because such a company was not fit for it. Rather, God directed that a few persons of "noted and distinguished [abilities]" be chosen to judge cases, because "he knew it was requisite." To force his argument, Edwards appealed in turn to Scripture, citing literally dozens of texts; to reason and the "nature of things"; and to experience, as in determining civil causes, where justice is "committed to certain persons."

This remarkable discourse, soon to be published for the first time, is a virtually unknown yet significant text in Edwards' personal journey into the nature and order of the church, as well as a key marker in the history of Congregationalism in America. Why did he broach this idea at this point? Let us step back a moment to review what was happening.

It had not always been so contentious in Northampton. Edwards and his church had become internationally famous in 1735 and the years following as the epicentre of the Connecticut Valley Awakening, as described in Edwards' trend-setting *A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God* (1737). Edwards had augmented his standing as a theologian of revival during the awakenings of the early 1740s and through his subsequent treatises. Pastor and congregation basked in each other's glory; these were halcyon days, marked by the promise of spiritual outpouring and the excitement of notoriety. But in their wake the revivals brought contention, schism, and extremism, which soured Edwards somewhat on certain aspects of the awakenings and on certain proponents of them. In turn, his Northampton congregation began to sour on *him*, as a series of incidents and issues gradually alienated flock and shepherd.

By 1748, therefore, Edwards was talking in his discourse on Deuteronomy 1 about "this dark day," referring to the waning of the Great Awakening. But he no doubt also had in mind the disruptive and worrisome course of King George's War (the name for the American version of

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10 For the background, see George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2003), 341-74.

11 Edwards, MS Sermon on Deut. 1:13-18 (June 1748), WJEO 66. All quotes below are taken and edited from this source.

the War of Austrian Succession), whose impact was felt at Northampton, where Indians had raided nearby hamlets and killed farmers in their fields, and Edwards' house was "forted in" and quartered with soldiers to protect against attack. Locally, too, a series of further portentous events included the death of Col. Stoddard, Edwards' chief confidante and ally; the burning of the town's courthouse; and, most dramatically, the tumultuous "Bad Book Case" of 1744, in which a group of young men were found to be reading and abusing young women with knowledge gained from an illicitly acquired illustrated midwives' manual. In this event, evidence for Edwards of the declining morals of young people, he publicly demanded that all the culprits be disciplined severely, but the church resented the high-handed manner in which he handled what they considered a "private matter," and voted only to have them give a rather pallid public confession – a mere slap on the wrist.<sup>12</sup>

The resentment between pastor and people festered. In early 1748, in what seems to have been the immediate impetus for Edwards' call for the formation of a church committee, a daughter of the congregation had illegitimate twins by the son of a local prominent family (close relatives of the pastor); Edwards went after the couple, trying to force them to marry, despite their parents' wish that they would not. In the end, the father's family provided the mother with a sum of money to help raise the child, with the church's tacit approval.<sup>13</sup>

By this point, Edwards' frustration with Congregational procedure was palpable; to his way of thinking, it had become disorderly, cumbersome, and confused. Even worse, as far as he was concerned, it enabled and condoned immorality. He searched for ways to adapt or change Congregational polity to make it more efficient – more conducive, it can be said, to getting the results he wanted. His later expression of frustration to a Scottish correspondent no doubt extended back at least to this time: "I have long been perfectly out of conceit with our unsettled, independent, confused way of church government in this land."<sup>14</sup> As a person who began and ended his career within Presbyterian contexts, first as a minister and then as president of the College of New Jersey, he was willing to cross ecclesiastical lines. Secretly, he was considering an exit from Northampton; one of his daughters, summarizing in a letter all of the contentions between her father and his congregation, admitted, "these things I am sensible have done much toward making my Father willing to leave his people if a Convenient Opportunity Present."<sup>15</sup>

In the discourse on Deuteronomy 1, Edwards' appeal to the community of Reformed churches that embraced the Heidelberg Catechism and related confessions appeared within a series of objections to his Doctrine, real and anticipated. One objection stated that creating a committee of select judges, a sort of oligarchy, was "a new thing." To this, Edwards responded:

'Tis no new thing in the church of God. This is the old way of talking. [It began with] Moses in the wilderness, [and] continued all along, in Christ's and the apostles' days.

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12 On the Bad Book Case, see Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life*, 292-302; Ava Chamberlain, "Bad Books and Bad Boys: The Transformation of Gender in Eighteenth-Century Northampton, Massachusetts," *New England Quarterly* LXXVI (June 2002), 179-203.

13 For documents relating to this case involving Elisha Hawley and Martha Root of Northampton, see WJEO 39; and also see Kathryn Kish Sklar, "Culture Versus Economics: A Case of Fornication in Northampton in the 1740s," *University of Michigan Papers in Women's Studies* (May 1978).

14 Edwards to John Erskine, Aug. 5, 1750 (A117) WJEO 16.

15 Sarah Edwards Jr. to Elihu Spencer, n.d. [c. Jan. 1748], WJEO 32, Letter C78.

Those that are looked upon as credible and authentic histories, do represent [that this was the way].

And it is at this day the way of the churches of Scotland, Holland, the other United Netherlands, Geneva, Switzerland, France, [and] almost all the Calvinist churches, ever since the Reformation.

And [it] is at this day the way of the dissenting churches in New York [and] New Jersey, [as in] in the famous Mr. Dickinson's church; [and in] Pennsylvania and Maryland, and of some churches in New England, or was so lately."

This was, for the most part, an appeal to the model of Reformed churches, some of which used the Heidelberg Catechism.

The allusion to the churches in New York and New Jersey is an important clue to understanding Edwards' aim. Churches in those colonies, and in Pennsylvania, represented a welter of confessions, including Dutch Reformed going back to New Netherland, French Huguenots, and German and Swedish Lutheran, Reformed, Pietist, and Anabaptist groups that had been immigrating to these areas for nearly a century. Of special note is Edwards' reference to the "famous" Jonathan Dickinson. Dickinson, who had died in 1747, was the Presbyterian pastor of Elizabethtown, New Jersey, and the first president of the College of New Jersey. He had been the most prominent participant in the "subscription controversy" of the 1720s, objecting to the requirement that ministerial candidates in the Synod of Philadelphia subscribe to the Westminster Confession. A renowned defender of Calvinism who acted as a liaison between colonial Presbyterian and Reformed churches, he had engaged in a long print debate against defenders of the Church of England (the nominally official church of New Jersey and the southern counties of New York), arguing the illegitimacy of episcopal government and ordination and the legitimacy of presbyters.

Edwards makes his reference to "Mr. Dickinson" without any framing, implying that his audience knew the controversies and Dickinson's positions and sources. And they probably did, because Dickinson the Presbyterian and Edwards the Congregationalist were acquainted. Perhaps the two had met as early as 1722 or 1723, when Edwards was a supply preacher for a small breakaway Presbyterian fellowship in Manhattan, but they certainly met when, following the Connecticut Valley Awakening in fall of 1735, Edwards had travelled around New York and New Jersey, where Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen, the German-born Dutch Reformed revivalist whom Edwards greatly admired (and cited in *A Faithful Narrative*),<sup>16</sup> had laboured in coordination with the Presbyterians William and Gilbert Tennent. Also, Edwards reportedly preached at this time in Dickinson's church.<sup>17</sup> During these periods, Edwards had direct exposure to Reformed and Presbyterian forms of church governance, perhaps with Dickinson himself as his guide. Furthermore, when Dickinson toured New England during the spring of 1742 in the aftermath of the split in the Philadelphia Synod caused by the revivals, he visited Northampton, where he stayed at Edwards' home; and we can be sure that Edwards would not have allowed him to leave without preaching to his congregation.

After a succession of Congregational ministers since its founding in the 1670s, the Elizabethtown

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<sup>16</sup> Edwards, *A Faithful Narrative*, in WJEO 4:156.

<sup>17</sup> Bryan F. Le Beau, *Jonathan Dickinson and the Formative Years of American Presbyterianism* (Lexington, Ky., Univ. Press of Kentucky, 1997), 213, n. 34.

church was first thoroughly converted to Presbyterian polity by Dickinson following his arrival in 1709.<sup>18</sup> The church's structure included a session, presumably made up of elected elders, which, aside from normal duties, functioned in addition as a "church court" with disciplinary powers.<sup>19</sup> Working off the models he had seen in the Presbyterian and Reformed churches, Edwards was calling for a Congregational version of a Presbyterian kirk session or a Reformed consistory. This was not unprecedented in New England; Connecticut, where Edwards was born, had had Presbyterian congregations since the 1660s, and Stoddard, in his *Doctrine of Instituted Churches* (1703), had advocated a national, more hierarchical ecclesiology. Still, the idea of a session or consistory ran counter to the New England churches, which by the turn of the eighteenth century had ended the practice of ruling elders, clung to fraternal rights as enunciated in the *Cambridge Platform* of 1648, and fought the concentration of authority, as seen in the appeals of advocates of "democracy" such as John Wise.<sup>20</sup> Edwards was pitting the Congregational Way against the Heidelberg Way, so to speak, and taking sides with the latter.

Despite the potential for uproar, Northampton had been used to deferring to the rather dictatorial Stoddard, so Edwards won the day, at least for the present. In July, a fifteen-man committee was appointed to oversee church "order and purity" and the "trial and judgment" of cases. In June 1749, a council met to deal with the young rake, and the following month he was excommunicated (apparently by direction of the super-committee). This was part of a more sustained campaign by Edwards to insure the purity of the church, to secure his vision of it as a place of harmony, order, and love. But the means he came to use towards that end became harsher and harsher. For example, no one had been excommunicated in Northampton for several decades, but in the space of a few years during and in the immediate aftermath of the Great Awakening, Edwards oversaw the excommunication of at least four people, and the public admonition of at least twice that many, tellingly, for "contempt of the authority of the church."<sup>21</sup>

## A NOT-SO-HUMBLE INQUIRY: QUALIFICATIONS FOR COMMUNION

If Edwards' appeal to Heidelberg via the Reformed churches of Europe and of the British North American "middle colonies" of New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania was at several removes in his Deuteronomy sermon, the next time references to the Palatine Catechism appear in his writings, they are absolutely explicit. His success in establishing a Congregational form of a consistory was short-lived, for in December 1748, a young man approached him and asked to be admitted into full membership. No one had done this for several years, and in the meantime Edwards had had a change of mind about the process for admitting applicants. Previously, he had been following Stoddard's procedure, which was that an eligible person who was of "non-scandalous behaviour" and could assent to a two-sentence form, promising to "take hold of the covenant," to subject him or herself to the government of the church and to

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18 Mary E. Alward, "Early History of the First Presbyterian Church of Elizabeth, N.J.," *Proceedings of the Union County Historical Society*, 2 (1923-24), 155.

19 Leonard Trinterud, *Forming of an American Tradition: A Re-examination of Colonial Presbyterianism* (Philadelphia, Westminster Press, 1949), 205-6.

20 John Wise (1652-1725), minister of Hatfield and Essex, Mass., was a strident defender of the autonomy of the churches and author of *The churches quarrel espoused* (Boston, 1713) and *A vindication of the government of New-England churches* (Boston, 1717).

21 See MS, Northampton Church Records, bk. I, Northampton (Mass.) First Churches; and Douglas A. Sweeney, "Jonathan Edwards and the Church," in *The Princeton Companion to Jonathan Edwards*, ed. Sang Hyun Lee (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2005), 167-89, esp. 183-84.

promote its welfare, could be admitted to the church and to the sacraments. From about 1744, however, Edwards had embarked on an intensive study of the Bible, and had decided that applicants should be able to profess, in their own words, that they sincerely hoped they were saved and that they desired to live a godly life. This was not, as is often thought, an effort to reinstitute a lengthy public testimony of spiritual experience, but rather a call to demonstrate to themselves and to the church that they were truly saints.

To challenge Stoddard in this manner, whom the people of Northampton regarded to be a “sort of deity,” as Edwards described their relationship, proved the last straw.<sup>22</sup> The church began a series of meetings in which they sought to compel Edwards to reaffirm Stoddard’s policies, or to begin the dismissal process. Edwards lobbied for an opportunity fully to explain his views, and, after much resistance, he did so, both in the lectern and in print, in a treatise entitled *An Humble Inquiry into the Rules of the Word of God, Concerning the Qualifications Requisite to a Complete Standing and Full Communion in the Visible Christian Church*, published in August 1749. Not surprisingly, Edwards noticed that very few of the townspeople attended the lectures or read the book.

The controversy that prompted and was codified in *An Humble Inquiry* arose from Northampton’s adoption of the Half-Way Covenant under Stoddard on the one hand and the formalizing effects of popular religion on the other. The churches of Massachusetts Bay had been founded on the premise that only “visible saints” would be admitted to the privileges of full church membership: access to the sacraments, the right to vote in church meetings, and the right to hold civil offices; under this system, only those who were full members could have their children baptized. The Half-Way Covenant had been implemented in the 1660s as a means of extending church membership privileges to those who were the children of merely baptized parents. In Northampton at least, this practice had led to a routinized process whereby those about to get married would “renew” their baptismal covenant or become full members for the sake of their communal standing and to entitle their children to the seals. This process had become for many void of much personal spiritual meaning, which Edwards found reprehensible. “The key in the situation in Northampton and in Edwards’ lifelong concern,” writes historian David D. Hall, “which deepened in the aftermath of the Great Awakening, was the difference between true and false spirituality. As his ministry rapidly deteriorated . . . Edwards came to think of most of his congregation as hypocrites.”<sup>23</sup> *An Humble Inquiry* therefore asserted that only those who “in profession, and in the eye of the church’s Christian judgment,” are “godly or gracious persons,” should “be admitted to the communion and privileges of members of the visible church of Christ in complete standing,” that is, to either baptism (as adults or on behalf of their children) or to the Lord’s Supper. Through the ensuing discussion – really an extended exercise in biblical exposition – Edwards sought to comprehend visible sainthood, evangelical hypocrisy, and the practices of the primitive church. He closed by considering no less than twenty anticipated objections to his view, dealing with passages of Scripture that have historically yielded multiple interpretations, and with the affiliation between certainty of faith and visibility of faith, the qualifications to the sacraments, and the nature of profession and requirements for adult baptism.

*An Humble Inquiry* is the only one of Edwards’ treatises to include an appendix by another author, another voice. For this, though Edwards read as widely as he could in church history, he

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<sup>22</sup> Edwards to Thomas Gillespie, July 1, 1751, WJEO 16, Letter A130.

<sup>23</sup> Hall, “Editor’s Introduction,” WJEO 12:84.

called on Thomas Foxcroft, colleague to Charles Chauncy at the First Church of Boston – an odd couple, given that Foxcroft was as pro-revival as Chauncy was anti-revival. Aside perhaps from Thomas Prince, New England’s respected though scatter-brained chronologer, Edwards could not have chosen a more recognized figure, regionally and beyond, because of his wide reading and network. He asked Foxcroft to provide an overview of other Protestant denominations in Europe and America on the issue of qualifications for church membership. Here, again, we see the importance of personal connection. Foxcroft, who came to be Edwards’ trusted literary agent in Boston, seeing his later treatises through the press, was a friend and ally of Dickinson. The two had begun corresponding in 1740, and had contributed publications to the same debates. Foxcroft had written the preface to one of Dickinson’s essays, and when Dickinson reached Boston in April 1742, he made sure to visit Foxcroft. Completing the circle, Foxcroft responded to Edwards’ request with a lengthy letter, dated June 1749, answering a series of questions relating to the controversy. Edwards included a condensed version of the letter as an appendix to his treatise,<sup>24</sup> seeking to widen the circle around a seemingly parochial, intramural argument of New England Congregationalism by including the European perspective and showing that his position was actually that of the Reformed and dissenting churches in Great Britain, on the Continent, and in neighbouring colonies.

In three of his answers, Foxcroft describes for Edwards the beliefs and practices of those who follow the Heidelberg Catechism. In the treatise, Edwards devoted an entire section to a consideration of I Corinthians 11:28, which suggests that he consulted Ursinus’ commentary, since Ursinus makes that very text central to his exposition on Question 81.<sup>25</sup> Hence, Edwards’ Question One for Foxcroft read: “What is the general opinion respecting that self-examination required in I Cor. 11:28, whether communicants are not here directed to examine themselves concerning the truth of grace, or their real godliness?”<sup>26</sup> The consensus on this, Foxcroft reported, was that all Reformed confessions worthy of the name held the importance of examining whether one had true faith or had committed an unrepentant offense before approaching the table. Continuing, Foxcroft set up the general practices of English, Scottish, Dutch, and German Protestants against Stoddard’s controversial view that the Lord’s Supper was a “converting ordinance”:

“Mr. Stoddard’s gloss on the text, who tells us [. . .] “that a man must come solemnly to that ordinance, examining what need he has of it,” is quite foreign from the current sense of Calvinist writers . . . I might easily confront it with numerous authorities. But the Palatine Catechism and that of the Westminster Assembly, with the common explanations and catechizings upon them, may be appealed to as *instar omnium*.”<sup>27</sup>

Interestingly, Foxcroft drew both Westminster and Heidelberg adherents under the umbrella of “Calvinist,” but this may have been Foxcroft’s strategy to convince New England readers, among whom “Calvinist” was the acceptable label over against “Arminian.”

The next question asked, “Whether it be the general opinion of those aforesaid, that some who know themselves to be unregenerate and under the reigning power of sin, ought

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24 Edwards to Thomas Foxcroft, May 12, 1749 WJEO 16, Letter A92, in which JE says that he intends shortly to “send an abstract of your former letter to be added to my book as an appendix.”

25 *The Commentary of Dr. Zacharius Ursinus, on the Heidelberg Catechism*, trans. G. W. Williard (Columbus, Ohio, 1852), 424-25.

26 Edwards, *Humble Inquiry*, WJEO 12:327.

27 Edwards, *Humble Inquiry*, WJEO 12:328.

notwithstanding, in such a state, to come to the Lord's Table?" This elicited from Foxcroft his most fulsome and explicit praise of the Heidelberg Catechism, as well as of Ursinus' and Peter de Witte's commentary, in support of restricting the table only to the visibly regenerate:

"Among the foreign Protestants, in Germany, France, etc., I shall name but two out of many instances before me. The Heidelberg or Palatine Catechism, which had the solemn approbation of the Synod of Dort, and was especially praised by the divines of Great Britain; which has been in a manner universally received and taught, formerly in Scotland and still all over Holland, and by reason of its excellency has been translated into no less than thirteen several languages; this is most express in claiming the Lord's Supper for a special privilege of such as have true faith and repentance; and forbidding it to hypocrites, as well as scandalous persons, declaring that none such ought to come. See the 81st and other questions and answers, with Ursin's Latin *Explications* and De Witte's English *Catechizings* thereon. Here, sir, indeed you have the judgment of a multitude in one."<sup>28</sup>

Question Four took up the issue of the requirements that adult persons should possess in order to receive baptism. As he was writing *An Humble Inquiry*, Edwards queried Foxcroft in a letter concerning admission to baptism in "in your Parts," that is, eastern Massachusetts.

"You say, you believe the generality of the churches and elderly ministers, your way hold to the first principles of New England in this matter: if you mean not only with respect to qualifications for the Lord's Supper, but also baptism, 'tis what I was by no means aware of, and quite otherwise than I supposed. I did suppose it to be the universal, and long-established custom of the country to admit to baptism on lower terms than to the Lord's Supper."

In other words, Edwards had operated on the assumption that virtually all of the Massachusetts churches observed the Half-Way Covenant, which Edwards identified with "Mr. Stoddard's principles." Furthermore, Edwards thought that "the ministers in New Jersey and Pennsylvania are many of them strict with regard to qualifications for the Lord's Supper; but I understand they are not so with regard to baptism; but do admit all, on owning the covenant, not under the notion of a profession of true godliness."<sup>29</sup>

But Foxcroft denied that this was the case with the Congregational churches of eastern Massachusetts and the Reformed and Presbyterian churches of New Jersey and Pennsylvania. This gave Edwards the freedom to pose in his treatise whether it was "the general opinion of Protestant churches and divines, in the case of adult persons, that the terms of admission to both sacraments are the same?" Foxcroft's reply was an unadulterated yes:

"That a credible profession of saving faith and repentance is necessary to baptism, in the case of the adult, I can show, by the authority of Claude's approved *Defense of the Reformation*, to be the general opinion of French Protestants; and by the Palatine Catechism, by the Leyden professors' Synopsis, etc., to be the prevailing judgment of the Reformed in Germany, Holland, and foreign parts."<sup>30</sup>

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28 Edwards, *Humble Inquiry*, WJEO 12:342.

29 Edwards to Thomas Foxcroft, May 24, 1749, WJEO 16, Letter A96.

30 Edwards, *Humble Inquiry*, WJEO 12:342.

Hereby, Foxcroft endorsed Edwards' effort to make qualifications for baptism as strict as that of entry to the Lord's Supper. Edwards argued that there was "one covenant," and therefore the requirements for adults to receive both baptism and the Lord's Supper were identical – a repudiation of the Half Way Covenant. And a vital ingredient of Edwards' argument came, via Foxcroft, from the Heidelberg Catechism and the model of those churches that adhered to it.

## CONCLUSION

While Edwards did apparently have knowledge of and exposure to the Catechism itself and to documents relating to it, such as Ursinus' commentary, his involvement with them was circumstantial, episodic, and mediated. For a select few in Edwards' circle the Heidelberg Catechism was a document with which they were readily conversant, but he perhaps was more representative in that the Heidelberg Catechism, while respected in 18th-century New England, was for him an ambient document, a source of appeal certainly, but not an everyday one.

Foxcroft's references in his appendix to *An Humble Inquiry* are affirming, but the question we might add is, To what extent did he accurately portray a "consensus" of Protestant churches on these issues? Whatever nuances may have been glossed over or misrepresented, Edwards, with the help of Dickinson, Foxcroft, and others, was willing to bring the authority of the international pan-protestant movement down upon his church, to show how isolated they were in their practices, and thereby convert them to his way of thinking. There was a strong Reformed presence in the nearby Hudson River Valley and beyond, to which Edwards had some exposure through his work, travel, and reading. Edwards' perspective as he ended his time at Northampton was increasingly inter-colonial and international, reflecting his growing involvement in the transatlantic evangelical network, while his congregation's perspective remained provincial and strictly hewed to "Mr. Stoddard's Way."<sup>31</sup> Edwards' efforts to get his parishioners and their local supporters to see beyond the parameters of a religious culture that was increasingly bound to the fashion of the mother country and to local tradition, to compare their practices with other churches in the broader Reformed tradition, failed. And he paid for it with his position, though by the end it was to him a relief.

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31 See Philip F. Gura, "Mr. Stoddard's Irreverent Way," *Early American Literature* 21 (Spring 1986), 29-43; and Gura, "Going Mr. Stoddard's Way: William Williams on Church Privileges, 1693," *William and Mary Quarterly* 45 (July 1988), 489-98.

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#### KEY WORDS

Edwards, Jonathan  
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Foxcroft, Thomas

#### TREFWOORDE

Edwards, Jonathan  
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Kerklidmaatskap  
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## Best practice for society in dealing with cults

### ABSTRACT

Freedom of religion has challenges of its own. One particular aspect that presents a challenge is the nature of religion in the sense that the actions and practices of religion are not prescribed or measured by human criteria except that it may not be against the law. Another aspect that cannot be underestimated is the susceptibility of people when it comes to religion. Both these aspects create opportunity for abuse in religion. When members of society become aware of religious groups that are believed to be exploitive for selfish aims it creates tension between society and these groups. With no recognisable, credible organisation to turn to for assistance society tends to take matters in their own hands that mostly result in an even more fragile situation. A solution is to set up an information centre that can provide information to the public. It is important to align the approach of the centre with workable practices in other parts of the world that have been dealing with this issue for many years. Practices in some European countries are investigated and the best practices suitable for South Africa are determined and suggested.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The inevitable right to freedom of religion afforded every world citizen is not an absolute right but applies within the wider context of human rights. Despite the purpose of human rights to ensure a harmonious functioning of society, the right to freedom of religion has also proven to be a right that can lead to tension in societies. The “cultic group” known as “Abanyakabera” in Rwanda, is a recent example of a religious group whose practices and beliefs have an impact on the harmonious functioning of society. As a result of their belief system, members of the group defy development policies and resist the national census claiming that it is better to obey God’s commands than to obey human beings’ (Bucyensenge 2012:1). Religious cults, as they are generally referred to, are believed to misrepresent themselves to their members and society. Such misrepresentations create suspicion about the true nature and intentions of these groups that in turn lead to tension between them and society. Ways must be found not only to address the tension but also to educate the general public about lesser known minority religions easily referred to as cults. A better understanding of these groups will ensure objectivity when it comes to determining if they are harmful or harmless and if they pose any threat. The objective of this article is to find a suitable approach and best practices for dealing with and informing society about cults believed to be exploitive to its members and in tension with the wider society. Information on the approaches of different organisations in Europe<sup>1</sup> that have dealt with these groups over decades will be presented to propose the way forward in South Africa.

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<sup>1</sup> The author has visited a number of Cult Information Centers in Europe in October 2012 to gather information.

## 2. DISTINGUISHING CULTS FROM MAINSTREAM RELIGION

Scholars are faced with a challenge regarding the criteria to be used when attempting to distinguish cults from mainstream religion. Scholars are unable to reach a consensus when looking for a suitable definition that clearly differentiates cults from mainstream religions.

### 2.1 Cults and new religious movements

Scholars from different disciplines including psychology, sociology, anthropology and theology have attempted to unearth the dynamics and practices of cults in an attempt to distinguish them from other religions. It soon became evident that defining these groups present a challenge based on their complexity and diversity. The different definitions presented for cults also portray traits of mainstream religions, which complicate a clear distinction between so-called main religions and cults.

The terms sect and cult are at times used interchangeably. In some European countries, including France, Belgium, Germany and Austria the term “*secte*” or “*sekten*” is used. Sect, in the contexts of these countries, designates a branch that has split off from an established religion and in this sense the word is not pejorative. However, sect is also used to refer to a group or organisation whose beliefs or behaviour are considered suspicious and harmful by the rest of society. It is further believed that leaders of these groups infringe on the individual liberties of the members in the group or mentally manipulate their followers and take ownership of their property. These leaders keep their members under control and pose a threat to the social order.

The terms church and sect have a long history in the writings of church historians. Max Weber deserves credit for the attachment of the terms to sociological concepts. The German theologian, Ernst Troeltsch altered Webers’ church-sect typology with the aim of distinguishing between three types of religious behaviour namely: church religion, sect religion and mysticism. The first two are identified with religious organisation and the third type a form of “anti-associational individualism” (Swatos & William 1998:90-91). In 1932 the American sociologist Becker developed two of the three types of Troeltsch into four types, namely “church religion” into “ecclesia” and “denomination and sect” into “sect and “cult”. The term cult referred to the “private and personal character of the adherents’ beliefs” and the unstructured nature of these organisations (Swatos 1998).

The term cult has since been developed by a number of theorists (Richardson 1993:348) from an umbrella term under which all “troublesome and idiosyncratic religious experiences of mystics and other religious deviants” (Richardson 1978:29) could be placed to a widely used popular term that refers to an unfamiliar group that is disliked or feared. The popular use of the term cult has unfortunately cluttered the neutral historical meaning used by sociology of religion to become a pejorative term (Richardson 1993:348). Other definitions of cult from different disciplines followed to describe entities not fitting the descriptions of church, sect and denomination well.

Sociologists initially arrived at an operational definition that describes cults as deviant groups, which exist in a state of tension with society that offer something new and radically different to their members. The tension with society is fed by the general belief that cults pose a threat to the harmonious functioning of society because of their misrepresentation to society and the exploitation of members (Stark & Bainbridge 1979:125). Apart from the tension with society

sociologists' definition developed and included the notion that cults are groups that "broke with tradition" and further also incorporated mystical and individual, or ecstatic experiences. Cults were studied concerning the change in organisational form, modes of social control and relations with social environment and surroundings. Richardson (1978:38) has developed an "oppositional" concept of cults according to which a cult is described in terms of its opposition to the dominant culture and religious traditions.

Melton (2004:83-84) added an interesting perspective of defining cults in relation to dominant religious traditions, which can be called a relational approach. Instead of studying cults as a group of religions that share particular attributes he proposes that new religions must be studied as a *set of religions* that are viewed as outsiders by the dominant religious tradition and by elements within the secular culture. Cults can therefore be described as a set of religions that do not enjoy legitimate acknowledgement in the religious and social culture of society. Based on the church-sect typology each religious tradition has a hierarchical structure, namely a dominant group – the church. The religious groups that have dissented within limits from the church are viewed as sects, but religious groups that have dissented beyond those limits that can no longer be considered as fellow believers are viewed as cults. In most countries that have a single religious tradition to which the majority of people belong the dominant religious community determines what religious group will be accommodated and which one will be opposed. All alternative or emergent groups may experience opposition and be labelled as "outsiders" or cults. In the West it is always some form of Christianity that dominates. New religions can be described as "those religious groups that have been found, from the perspective of the dominant religious community to be not just different, but unacceptably different" (Melton 2004:78-79). This also implies that the list of cults may differ from country to country depending on the dominant religious tradition.

From a psychological or mental health perspective cults are generally described as "a group or movement that to a significant degree (a) exhibits great or excessive devotion or dedication to leadership, or a group or movement (b) utilises unethical manipulative techniques to persuade, control and socialise members and systematically induces members to states of psychological dependency and isolation from former friends and family (c) is authoritarian in leadership and aggressive in proselytising" (West & Langone 1986:119-120; Robbins & Anthony 1982:283). The practices and techniques utilised by cults are viewed as dangerous and harmful not only to members but also to society as a result of the underlying psychological techniques used. The International Cultic Studies Association is a prominent organisation dealing with the effects of cultic groups. It supports the view of mental health practitioners, namely to deal with the effects cultic groups have on members and family of members rather than labelling groups as cult or non-cult (Langone 2011:1).

In a theological context the word cult is understood to be closely related to the word "sect" (*hairesis* in Greek) and means "a body of men following their own tenets", "a group with distinctive theories with an acknowledged founder" or "a strong, distinctive opinion of individual "parties" (sects) that operated in Judaism. Hairesis developed further and in the second century became a term to refer to a body of false beliefs (*Dictionary of Spiritual Terms* [Sa]:1). In a theological context the word cult is generally used in an apologetic sense to distinguish between "true beliefs" and "false belief" (Saliba 2003).

Unfortunately, despite the context in which the word cult is used it generally conveys a negative connotation. Saliba (2003) explains that the word cult has taken on diverse meanings

as a result of the negative connotations attached to the word and emphasised by the media, psychologists, lawyers and anti-cult groups. The term cult thus no longer conveys accurate and useful information.

The word “new religious movements” was introduced to address the controversy around the word cult. The term new religious movement (NRM) was originally coined by Eileen Barker (Hadden [Sa]). The aim with the term NRM, according to Barker, is not to indicate whether a movement is good or bad, or true or false, or genuine or fraudulent. The term is an umbrella term that includes a wider spectrum of groups namely, “alternative religions”, “nonconventional religions”, “cults” or “contemporary sects” (Barker 1989:4-5). Although the supporters of the term NRM believe that the term signifies a neutral connotation it still does not provide a clear definition to distinguish cults from mainstream religion and the other groups included in this category. Instead this wide description complicates a general definition as a result of the inclusion of the different groups that vary in beliefs, practices and dynamics. The term only seems to be helpful when used to refer in general to all groups outside mainstream religion.

When considering the variety of approaches in defining cult it is clear that different aspects are considered. From a theological perspective the lack of biblical orthodoxy considered as “truth” is a point of concern. However, this viewpoint does not fully deal with the impact of other particularities and practices of cults on members and society. The psychological approach focuses on the psychological methods or dynamics at work in cults through which they recruit and maintain their members. This approach places strong emphasis on addressing the harm caused by cults. However, it does not fully deal with the reciprocal interaction of cults and society and the consequential impact and influence they have on one another’s behaviour. Sociologists focus on the functioning of cults in society considering the reciprocal relationship between cults and society. However, they do not pay attention to the “truth” aspects as pointed out by the theological approach and take a relatively neutral stance on the negative effects cult practices may have on individuals (Garde 2006:45).

In light of the above and lacking consensus on a definition for cult, it is evident that the different definitions of cult cannot simply be used as a yardstick to distinguish between a cult and non-cult. In addition, it is difficult to demonstrate the abusiveness of environments behaviourally and according to scientific methodologies. A general classification of groups outside mainstream religion based on some of the aspects in the definition tends to give less weight to the role of individual differences in evaluating groups and over-generalises the entire group (Langone 2011:1). Although the definitions of cult are not suitable to classify groups as cults, they remain helpful in studying and understanding a phenomenon and its impact on people and society.

## **2.2 The phenomenon of cultism**

As was indicated above, the word cult was initially intended to make a distinction between certain deviant groups and mainstream religion, but changed over time. It became a pejorative word especially when attributes such as violence, abuse, control, illegal weapon transactions and exploitation were added that are used to classify groups as harmful and a threat to society. The situation was further agitated by the general referral to any group outside mainstream religion as a cult and lead to antagonism between society and these groups. Despite the fact that the use of the word cult is frowned upon especially from a human rights point of view, it does not mean that some groups are not guilty of exploiting members and may be harmful to

the harmonious function of society (Pretorius 2012). Another approach is needed to study and evaluate the practices and dynamics imbedded in cults without labelling groups.

Hughes (1993:354) proposed an approach through which the phenomenon of cultism should be studied. The word "cultism" is a suitable term to use to describe the beliefs, practices, dynamics and impact of cults without labelling particular groups. This approach is aimed at studying the cult phenomenon, in other words, to describe a specific mentality, particular dynamics and practices present in a group. This mentality and these dynamics are also not confined to specific groups – issues of cultism can be found anywhere even in one's own affiliations – and therefore addresses the accusations of being biased (Garde 2006:53).

Cultism is the belief in or the study of harmful practices and dynamics as a result of the abuse of authority. Tourish and Irving (1996) conceptualise cultism as a continuum: at the one end of the spectrum people are voluntary cooperating to work out their ideas and develop a shared sense of purpose. At the other end of the continuum people are manipulated and compelled to uncritically accept the theories and orders of leaders who are unchallenged, infallible and cannot be corrected.

The abuse of authority present in cults became evident in a clinical observation between psychotherapists and patients. It was found that psychotherapists through the misuse of psychotherapy may produce a mentality similar to that of cults. Psychotherapists may fail to maintain professional boundaries and instead of viewing their patients "idealisation" of them a result of their treatment, may use it to encourage submission, obedience and adoration, as in a cult. Although psychotherapy cult membership may be rare, a psychotherapy cult mentality is not. Patients became "true believers," with totalistic patterns of thought, increased dependence and paranoia. "Both therapist and patients became trapped in a closed system that encouraged mutual exploitation and corruption" (Temerlin & Temerlin 1982:131). The increased dependency and paranoia are demonstrated in a "desperate need for the reassurance offered by impregnable belief, reliance on instant friendships, and the idealisation of reference groups" (Tourish & Irving 1996:190).

Another important value embraced by cultism is separateness from the world necessitated by the belief that members are "specially chosen". This isolation from the world is of vital importance to the nature of a cult's continuance. Wilson (1959:10) points out that the aim of this separateness is to keep them "unspotted from the world". Two important principle types of mechanism are present to create separateness, namely *isolation* and *insulation*. *Isolation* can be consciously designed by the group dynamics and unconsciously accepted by the members, and can entail physical isolation like in a commune. It can also be social isolation. Although members are not physically isolated they are expected not to socialise with anybody outside their own group. *Insulation* consists of certain behavioural rules that are prescriptive to protect the values of the sect or cult when contact with outside influences does occur. Insulation may also be a "latent moral function based on revealed biblical scripture or the teachings of the group" (Wilson 1959:10-11).

The separateness of cults creates two aspects of tension. Firstly, internal tension is created when the demand for separateness and the other cult values are challenged by the command of all cults to evangelise. This means exposure of the cult member to the outside world that could lead to contamination and alienation. The admittance of new evangelised members into the cult that may not be completely socialised in terms of the cult prescriptions also pose

a threat to the smooth controlled functioning of the group. The second tension is an outward or external tension between the ideals of the cult and the ideals of the wider society and ultimately the state. The deviance in ideals can lead to tension and the hostility of the cult against the world. If less hostility is portrayed it suggests accommodation of the world values. Wilson (1959:12) identified the typical issues of tension between cults and wider society:

- disagreement between cults and society on what constitutes true knowledge
- refusal of cults to accept the legitimacy of the legal arrangement of society
- refusal to accept conventional sacred practices, including oath swearing
- non-compliance with political arrangements such as to salute national emblems, conscientious objection to military activities of state
- disproof of marital and family regulations imposed by the state
- objection to the medical policies of the state
- disregard of economical institutions
- refusal to register land ownership

For cults to continue, they need to develop means to deal with the tension in the wider society. Although the cult departs from the accepted moral rules of the wider society, conflict beyond a certain point does appear as a result of the cults' teachings, practices and dynamics that develop over time. At this stage the need arises to either adopt agencies to take care of the situation that may include making contact with worldly organisations or fighting its case in court (Wilson 1959:12). The most recent remedy readily utilised by cults is the claim that their right to freedom of religion and belief is infringed upon when they experience tension with society or the state.

Two aspects seem to be pertinent for cults to persist, namely to function separate from the world and to maintain their uniqueness in terms of their own values from those of the secular world. The more fully the cult views itself as a chosen people in possession of the truth, the more it will resist the process to become a denomination.

An important aspect that deserves attention is the tension between society and cults as a result of the belief that cults oppose and resist conventional rules aimed at ensuring harmonious functioning of society. Based on their particular belief that they are a chosen people submissive to another set of prescriptions that supersedes the earthly prescriptions, they are apathetic to worldly institutions of society or the state. This tension between cults and society is addressed in different ways in countries. Different approaches in dealing with cults are evident when evaluating the practices of organisations dealing with cults in Europe.

### 3. APPROACHES IN DEALING WITH CULTS IN SOME EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

Globally, governments have adopted different approaches towards religious groups guilty of practices that are believed to be harmful or in violation of the basic human rights of members and society. These approaches vary from actions to address violations and the trespassing of laws, as in France, to no official reactions, as in the United Kingdom and Denmark (Kropveld 2007:3-4). Interference by government in religious matters is complicated and limited by the very nature of the bill of rights. Legal intervention based on concrete evidence is more

challenging in the light of the underlying transcendental nature of religion that allows for a freedom immeasurable in concrete visible terms.

In Europe different organisations were established as a direct result of the killing of 932 members of the People's Temple in 1978, followed by killings of members of the Solar Temple in Switzerland and France in 1994. Reports were served before the European Parliament and resulted in the creation of governmental organisations in some European countries as well as nongovernmental organisations with the aim of dealing proactively with the possible threat of cults. A number of the approaches followed by some of these countries will now be discussed.

### **3.1 Miviludes – *Mission interministérielle de vigilance et de lutte contre les dérives sectaires* (Interministerial Mission for Monitoring and Combating Cultic Deviances) a French governmental organisation based in Paris, France**

France is a secular state and in a system of separation between state and religion there is no formal recognition of religious communities (Fautré [Sa]:1). No legal definition exists of what constitutes a cult or a religion in French law. This is partially the result of the fact that, in virtue of the Laïcité law (Laïcité also translates as secularity or secularism) of 1905, the concept is embraced of no religious involvement in government affairs and no involvement of government in religious affairs; thus, a separation of state and church (Rémond 1999). According to this law three principles apply: the neutrality of the state, the freedom of religious exercise and public powers related to the church. The French Constitution of 1958 states that the Republic does not recognise, pay any salary to or subsidise any religion (Fautré [Sa]:7). Since the French Revolution, France has refused to define or to limit the religious and spiritual phenomena, thereby avoiding the risk of infringing upon the absolute principle of freedom of belief (Machi 2010:2).

However, after the tragedy of the members of the People's Temple in 1978, the phenomenon of cults and sects was investigated seriously, and France legitimised the need for political initiative to address this issue. The first public report called "Cults in France: moral freedom of expression or manipulation of factors" was submitted to the prime minister in February 1983. The report describes a number of groups that posed a risk because of their political ideology and their financial empire maintained through the isolation of their members within a rigid structure. The first reports in France and Europe were used to consider preventative policy.

In 1984, the European Parliament pointed out the contradiction between "protection of the law and the right to believe and the concerns about the consequences of beliefs." The first parliamentary inquiry held in 1994 was repeated in 1995 to deal with the killing of members of the Order of the Solar Temple in Canada, Switzerland and France. In 1996 the report "Sects in France" was submitted. The Interministerial Observatory on Sects was established in 1996, followed by the Interministerial Mission to Fight against Sects (MILS) in 1998.

The second parliamentary inquiry was held in 1999 when the report entitled "Sects and money" was published. This report demonstrates the importance of money for sects. On 12 June 2001, the parliament passed the law called About Picard: The About Picard law aims at preventing harmful movements (not only sectarian movements) from infringing on human rights and fundamental freedoms of people. It protects people from psychological or physical influence applied through strong and repeated pressure to alter people's judgement in order to commit acts of abstinences that could have negative consequences for the person (Machi 2010).

This law is not without its critics and is criticised for the inconclusive definition of what constitutes a “dangerous cult” as well as for the expansive language which is so broad that any legal entity construed as engaging in psychological subjection could be banned. This legislative incentive to ban harmful cults was explained as a broad consensus; the necessary intention must be to protect individual liberties and fight for the right of each individual to freedom of religion (UDSBDHRL 2009).

The Interministerial Mission for Monitoring and Combating Cultic Deviance (Miviludes) was created in 2002 by the Raffarin government (Miviludes). For more than 25 years, the French government has strongly affirmed its will to protect the victims from deviant behaviour of sectarian movements. According to Machi (2010:1), secretary general of Miviludes, the French government developed its action against cults and combat organisations step by step, as a result of parliamentary reports through the involvement of successive prime ministers.

Miviludes is an interministerial governmental department under the auspices of the French prime minister. The view of the French government is that the impact of cults stretches across different spheres of life. The dynamics of cults can have an impact on young people and their development, therefore the department of education is involved. Child abuse and sexual abuse can be present in cults and the health of their followers can be in danger. Cults in many cases are involved in illegal financial transactions or other criminal activities such as illegal weapon transactions, drugs and different forms of abuse and can disrupt the social order of a community through acts of terrorism. Cults may also infringe on the basic human rights of their followers through their strict prescriptions. Thus, to ensure a holistic approach appropriate action awareness information pertaining to cults and their activities needs to be channelled to all ministerial departments including education, justice, police services, finance, health, social service, interior affairs and foreign affairs. Each department should be aware of the activities of cults, the impact they have on the different administrations and what intervention is required. In this regards Miviludes fulfils the role of receiving and disseminating information as well as distributing the information to the different ministries. Miviludes also receives feedback and coordinate actions that may be taken by the different ministries. Miviludes does not take any action but ensures that through the information obtained commissions are set up to investigate cult-related issues. Another important role of Miviludes is reciprocal information sharing in terms of media reporting in France (Barbureau 2012).

Miviludes receives information from nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) dealing with cults in France. One such important organisation is the *Union Nationale des Associations de Défense des Familles et de l'Individu* (UNADFI). This French anti-cult association (a public utility association) was founded in 1974 and is subsidised by the French government. The function of UNADFI is to gather and coordinate the *Associations de Défense des Familles et de l'Individu* (ADFI), that acquire information on the cult phenomenon to prevent possible harm and to assist victims.

Once a complaint or concern is received about a particular group that poses a danger, the specific police force responsible for the handling of aberrant behaviour by sectarian movements – *Cellule d'Assistance et d'Intervention en Matière de Dérives Sectaires* or Assistance and Intervention Unit for Sectarian Abuses (CAIMADES), will be called in order to determine the validity of the complaint or concern and to investigate. The special unit is made up of nine policemen. Another unit of the special police monitors internet activities to gather intelligence on cults.

Miviludes further conducts public information sessions to inform the general public about cults and their impact. Miviludes receives more than 2 500 requests and concerns about cults per year. Some of the information and cases are referred to other associations working with cults to provide advice and assistance (Barbureau 2012). Some recent legal or administrative advances have been made to the French government system for monitoring and combating sectarian deviations. Some recent developments at Miviludes include the creation of a legal regulation of the status of “psychotherapist” and a better legal framework for all professional training centres (Machi 2010:8).

### **3.2 Dialogue Ireland – Ireland**

Dialogue Ireland operating from Dublin in Ireland is an independent trust with the aim of promoting awareness and understanding of cultism in Ireland ([www.Dialogueireland.org](http://www.Dialogueireland.org)). Dialogue Ireland initially started in 2001 as an ecumenical body working with the churches in Ireland to promote awareness about cultist groups and to assist the victims and their families. However, since 2009 Dialogue Ireland has started to function as a human rights (non-sectarian, non-religious) organisation studying the influences and dynamics of cults. This phenomenon generally referred to as cultism cuts across different organisations, religious and non-religious. It can be as large as a country and as small as an individual.

The main function of Dialogue Ireland is to gather information about cultism and to make it available to the general public by means of posts on the Dialogue Ireland website. This information pertaining to cultist groups is shared in a multi-lateral manner creating a platform for dialogue about issues that may pose a danger to society (Garde 2012).

Dialogue Ireland follows a human rights approach in dealing with cultism. However, Garde (2012) stresses the importance of integrating the different approaches, including theological, mental health, sociological and legal approaches to determine the full reach of undue influence processes.

Literature on cultist groups, which is an essential source in the study of such groups, seems to be difficult to obtain seeing that cultist groups succeed in keeping it out of the public domain. To resolve this challenge Dialogue Ireland has through the years established an online library containing important literature on different cultist groups available to the general public. In addition, conferences and lectures are arranged to inform and discuss issues.

Another very important role Dialogue Ireland fulfils in the education of the public about cultism is its school education project scheduled for religious education classes. This project is aimed at final-year learners to inform them about cultism and the dangers it poses before they go to university.

Utilising the social media such as Facebook is another effective method in communicating important information about cultism but also to provide directions where more information and assistance can be obtained. Dialogue Ireland has established a good relationship with the media to ensure reciprocal exchange and verification of information on cultism.

As is the case with any organisation informing on dangers of cultist groups, Dialogue Ireland has also encountered legal threats assuming them to be involved in hate speech and libel (Garde 2012).

### **3.3 CIAOSN – Centre d’information et d’avis sur les organisations sectaires nuisibles (Centre for Information and Advice on Harmful Sectarian Organisations) – Brussels, Belgium**

In Belgium there is separation between church and state and freedom of religion. Some religions are legally recognised as religions based on certain criteria, such as membership, number of years of existence and loyalty to the constitution. Interestingly the term sect (interchanged with “cult”) in Belgium does not denote a negative connotation seeing that it is used to refer to religious groups in general. The term sect is used to refer to religions that have branched from established religions. Some religions that originated from the Christian tradition are in fact sects (cults) of Christianity. For example, Catholicism originated from the Christian tradition and is therefore a sect (cult) of Christianity. Other sects/cults of Christianity are Protestantism, Anglicanism and Presbyterianism. State-recognised religions receive a state subsidy. This subsidy is obtained through the income tax system (Fautré [Sa]:8). All other religious entities not recognised by law that function in Belgium such as Jehovah’s Witnesses, Unification Church of Christ (Moonies) and Scientology are also referred to as cults or sects. They are, however, further distinguished in cases where they are believed to be harmful or dangerous by the adjective “harmful” cults or “dangerous” cults.

CIAOSN is a Belgian federal centre that was established by act of law on 2 June 1998 as a result of inquiry recommendations about sects to parliament. The inquiry recommendations included a request for the establishment of an observatory for harmful sects in Belgium and the development of a policy to prevent and fight against the illegal practices of sects that pose a threat to society and minors. The centre also provides information to the public through the library that has reference books, encyclopaedias, magazines, and reports, folders of documentation, videos and CD-ROMS ([www.CIAOSN.be](http://www.CIAOSN.be)).

CIAOSN is a government organisation operating under the department of justice and funded through the state budget. The purpose of the centre is to protect the citizens of Belgium against harmful sectarian groups and their practices. CIAOSN is not a militant organisation but obtains as much information as possible on harmful sectarian groups to make this information available to society. The centre’s approach to possible events of sectarian groups that may be harmful is a careful analysis without unnecessary media coverage to reduce unnecessary panic. Information about sectarian groups is obtained from different sources and the facts of cases are put forward. In Mr Brasseur’s (2012) own words “we call a cat a cat and a not a dragon”. Citizens are thus kept informed about different harmful sects and can also get information on psychological and family support. The role of the church is important and viewed as an agent of public order (Brasseur 2012).

Files with facts about sectarian groups as well as references are maintained but no specific opinion about sectarian groups is expressed by the centre. All information is made available to the public and other governmental administrations to decide on future action if needed. Requests for more information pertaining to groups are received from the public daily and CIAOSN responds by providing as much information as possible on the groups enquired about. CIAOSN only exchanges open information and judicial information is not released. In cases where crimes are expected, the results of such investigations by the federal police special unit are handed to the state attorney for prosecution. The centre has good relationships with other organisations in Europe such as Miviludes and the federal office against harmful sects in Austria and Germany. Information is exchanged on a regular basis between these offices.

The centre maintains good relationships with NGOs dealing with harmful sectarian groups and believes that it fulfils an important role in two ways. Firstly, it receives information and is an important source of information. Secondly, it is in touch with developments in society. The centre views its relationship with the umbrella organisation in Europe (FECRIS) *Fédération Européenne des Centres de Recherche et d'Information sur le Sectarisme* (Federation of European Centres for Research and Information on Sectarism) as important. FECRIS arranges for meetings with the different organisation in Europe to share knowledge on this subject.

Belgium has a specific unit dealing with investigations into harmful sectarian groups known as “group dealing with sectarian organisations” that resort under the anti-terrorism branch of the federal police. All information on harmful sects is received at a central office from where it is referred to the specific group dealing with sects. The police service is involved in two ways:

1. Information gathering – this happens when information is received on groups that can be harmful or dangerous. Information gathering takes place based on specific criteria such as isolation of members from society, alienation from family members, the use of money and abuse of members to determine whether the group is dangerous.
2. If a complaint is received pertaining to criminal activities a criminal investigation follows. Emphasis is placed on the importance of gathering evidence to build a case (Lesciauskas 2012). Crimes associated with these groups include fraud, abuse, health, money laundering, tax evasion, sexual abuse and murder. The state security and the federal police in Belgium work closely together and completed investigations are referred to the state prosecutor.

The Belgian government implemented a law similar to the About Picard law in France on 26 November 2011. This law is known in Dutch as “Wet to wijziging en aanvulling van die strafwetboek ten einde het misbruik van de zwakke toestand van personen strafbaar te stellen, en de strafrechtelijke bescherming van kwetsbare personen tegen mishandeling uit te breiden” (Belgisch Staatsblad 2012).

### **3.4 Bundesstelle für Sektenfragen (Federal Centre for Sect Issues [FCSI]) – Austria**

Austria is a secular state and the Roman Catholic Church is the predominant religion. The Austrian government’s approach to the right to freedom of religion is clear when it states that individuals have the right to express themselves in their belief that gives higher meaning to their own lives. That having been said it does not mean that some beliefs on:

... the new “supermarket of religiosity” (which includes sects) should [not] be checked to see if it preserves the personal freedom of the individual, even if strident claims are made to the basic rights of freedom of opinion and freedom of religion. If that should not be the case, then this could have consequences for both society and for the individual. One can never rule out the risk of psychic dependency or being cut off from one’s own freedom. Freedom and self-determination are commodities which should not be given away thoughtlessly (Austria 1999:6).

Two interpretations of the term *sekten* (sect) are evident in Austria. Sect is used to describe religious groups that have split from known religious traditions and still maintain some form of contract with the original mother religion. Sect (also described as cult) is also used to refer to groups whether religious or non-religious that are believed to be harmful to its members and society.

In 1998 a Federal Centre for Sects Issues in Vienna was instituted by government with the purpose of gathering and supplying information to the public on harmful sects. The office has a library that provides information on sects. The information provided by this office is presented as a comparison between the teachings and practices of a specific group, obtained from documentation of the particular sect groups, and other views that will also indicate the impact of the teachings and practices of the group on a person's health and wellbeing. Empowered with the information the enquirer can make a decision. For example, some individual groups have a fundamentally different view of health and illness and have a predominantly critical assessment of traditional medicine, and encourage members to stop using traditional medicine or treatment. The alternative methods of treatment offered by these groups are without the appropriate medical training and can be problematic if they hinder the effective treatment of people. With regard to children and their development, teaching and practices in these groups can influence children from an early age in a certain direction that may cause problems in the formation and maintenance of a relationship with reality (Austria 1999:10-11).

Provision is also made in the curriculum of schools to provide 14-year-old and 17-year-old learners with information on all religions including sects/cults. Teachers and pupils are also invited to visit the Federal Centre for Sect Issues in an attempt to not only introduce them to the existence of such an office and the services it provides but also to stimulate the learners to critical thinking. All information gathered by this office is open and transparent (Müller 2012).

The Federal Centre for Sect Issues also provides the services of a psychotherapist for counselling and psychotherapy. No specific approach of exit counselling is followed; instead sect issues are placed into context by thorough investigation of the teachings and practices of the particular sect in question. No opinion is expressed and participation of members of a sect and family members are encouraged to create a mutual understanding. Counselling also follows the comparative approach of information sharing as described above enabling the persons to make informed choices (Neuberger 2012).

The Austrian police does not have a special unit to investigate cult-related issues like in Belgium – all criminal activities of cults are dealt with according to the legal system in Austria. In the few cases where cults were prosecuted no court ruling on cults were made in Austria – when it seems that cults will lose a case they settle out of court.

Müller (2012) indicates that providing information to the general public does not always produce the expected result. Providing information has a double-sided dynamic. On the one side members of the public not affected by cults display an ignorant and reluctant attitude towards cults believing only stupid people get involved in such groups. On the other hand cults react to such information as an infringement on their rights succeeding in making anyone cautious to provide information. Some sects may even obtain the sentiments of a human rights organisation to propagate their rights.

In Austria there are a number of NGOs dealing with cult issues that are in good standing with the Federal Centre for Sect Issues. *Verein zur Wahrung der geistigen Freiheit* founded in 1977 is one such society. It was established as a result of the increase of destructive cults in Austria from the early seventies and consists of concerned family members and experts with the aim of assisting people who fall prey to harmful sects and cults. The name of the society was changed to *Gesellschaft gegen Sekten- und Kultgefahren* (Society against the Dangers of Sects and Cults) in 1992. The society is areligious and apolitical, renders assistance to relatives

and former members and provides information to the public (Gesellschaft gegen Sekten- und Kultgefahren).

#### 4. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

The aforementioned actions by European countries were not without criticism. During her visit to France, the United Nations' Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion and Belief, Asma Jahangir, said that the French government's policy of distributing a list of sects had contributed to a climate of general suspicion and intolerance and infringement on the freedom of belief of those communities and individuals (E/CN.4/2006/5.Add.4 para. 109) In 1997, her predecessor said that beyond legal remedies to deal with criminal and illegal activities the state or community may not act as guardians of peoples' consciences nor encourage, impose or censure any religious belief or conviction (E/CN.4/1997/91, para 99). Although it is the intention of the bill of rights to ensure freedom of religion to all citizens, society still plays a vital role in being vigilant about any force or group that poses a threat to its harmonious function. It further has the responsibility to alert and even warn against these forces or groups to ensure that a society does not become the subject of such a disruptive force or group.

Visits to the different federal centres in Europe emphasised the following important aspects about cults or harmful sects:

- It is important to have a structure to deal with enquiries on religions, including other groups that could fit the classification of cults. If no structure is in place and limited or no information is available, members of the public will jump to their own conclusions which will increase the tension between society and these minority religions.
- The most suitable manner of dealing with enquiries is through an information centre that gathers information on religion in general, including so-called sects and cults, and makes this information available to the public.
- Information should be balanced and obtained from different sources. Information about a particular group should primarily be obtained from the documents or website of the particular group. Other sources that can be used are the media, ex-members of the specific group, academics that have done research on a particular group and other literary sources such as books and articles available on a particular group.
- The information should be provided in comparison to other realities in life to enable the public to consider the teachings of a particular group against other perspectives.
- Children and teenagers are the most vulnerable target groups and should be informed in school about religion as well as the different branches and development in religion, including sects and cults, that can be harmful and exploitive.
- The information centre should have a good relationship with the media for the exchange of information to ensure that the information is correct and does not lead to unnecessary sensation causing uneasiness in society.
- Assistance in the form of counselling should be available for those victims who need more specialised assistance and guidance.
- Government should also be informed of possible situations that can disrupt a community and need to be vigilant to act if needed to protect and ensure the wellbeing of society.

Although South Africa has not yet experienced a serious threat from cults, numerous media reports about cults necessitate the need to establish a structure to deal proactively with issues to prevent serious occurrences. South Africa needs to take note of the recommendations and ensure that the issue about cults are addressed in this structure to ensure unfair labelling of groups as cults which can lead to tension in society. Through a proper structure consolidated and accurate information can also be provided to the society and the media on harmful activities of groups. The ultimate goal of the aforementioned is to ensure that each group enjoys its right to freedom of religion but at the same time to keep society informed of possible dangers or harm that may be lurking disguised in the form of religion. At the same time it can also provide assistance to those in need.

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## TREFWOORDE

Kulte  
Sekte  
Informasie Sentrum vir kulte  
Gosdiensvryheid  
Kulte bewusmaking

## KEY WORDS

Cult  
Sect  
Information Cente on Cults  
Freedom of Religion  
Cult awareness

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## The Missional Church movement<sup>1</sup>

### ABSTRACT

At the beginning of the 21st century, many different voices have been drawing our attention to two realities that are shaping the future of Christianity: the centre of gravity for the Christian faith has shifted to the global South and to the East; and the church in Western societies has been pushed to the margins and is facing serious decline (Guder 1998, 1). Many are asking themselves, “what are the implications of these facts for the future of the church in western culture?” For many, the term “missional” has begun to capture the imagination of the church in the West. Rather than find “missional” as a new programmatic or methodological solution for the church today, something at the foundational level needs to be discerned, namely, “who we are and what we are for” (Guder 1998, 3). Discernment<sup>2</sup> of the church’s identity and vocation is a critical task facing us today. In the previous article, the Emergent Church movement was engaged in order to summarize its important contributions toward the recovery of a missional identity and vocation of the church in the West. In this article, the Missional Church movement as observed in the North American scenario will be engaged and its contributions toward the development of a missional identity and vocation for the church in the West will be summarized.

### 1. BRIEF HISTORY

The pioneering work of Lesslie Newbigin is absolutely essential to understanding the birth of the Missional Church movement, particularly the work he did in the latter part of his life as he took the tools and insights of a lifetime of missionary experience in India and applied them to the task of addressing the challenges facing the church in the West and calling the church in the West to a missionary encounter with our culture. This is not to ignore the important contributions of David Bosch, but focus will be given to Newbigin’s contribution to this movement given his role as the father-figure of this movement, particularly in its North American expression. Goheen provides a helpful summary of the significance of Lesslie Newbigin’s work, in five areas.

First, at the heart of all of Newbigin’s thinking and life was the gospel – and especially the event at the centre of the gospel, the cross of Jesus Christ. Newbigin sees the cross as the “clue” that he must follow if he is to make sense of the world and his life in it. He stresses two ways in which the gospel was foundational to the church: the gospel as public truth and the gospel as universal history. The biblical story locates truth in a story of God’s redemptive deeds and words in history, which culminate in Jesus Christ. In Jesus, the end and the meaning of

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1 The article is based on Chapter 4.3 of Sheridan’s doctoral dissertation (2012). H Jurgens Hendriks and Mike Goheen were the promoters.

2 Discernment is a foundational concept in the missional movement. It refers to faith seeking to discover the *missio Dei*. It is about trying to listen to God in and through Scripture and the past and present faith community and in obedience getting involved in the *missio Dei*.

cosmic history is revealed and accomplished.<sup>3</sup> Later in his career he realized the importance of understanding God as a Trinity and wrote *The open secret* (Newbigin 1963, 1995).

The second is what Goheen has called “the logic of mission” for Newbigin. If the gospel is true and tells us where history is going, then mission must follow. Jesus did not write a book, but rather he gathered, nurtured, and left behind a community that would make known the good news of the kingdom of God by embodying it in its life, expressing it in its deeds, and announcing it in its words. Mission flows out of the gospel.

Third, if the gospel is to be made known, the church must be one, Newbigin believes. He worked tirelessly toward the cause of unity of the church, because he believed strongly that mission and unity could not be separated. Listen to how Goheen summarizes the importance of this (2004, 4):

If the church is to make known the good news that at the end of history all things will be brought together under one head, even Christ, then as a preview it must embody this in its life. Its divided life is a scandal, equivalent to a temperance movement whose members are habitually drunk; in both, the life of the community contradicts their message. It is only when the unbelieving world sees evidence of a reconciled community that they will believe the message of the gospel.

Fourth, Newbigin offers significant insights in the ongoing struggle of the church to discern the relationship between the gospel and culture. Newbigin’s understanding of this was shaped by his experience of cross-cultural communication of the gospel in India. If he was to communicate the gospel in India, he would need to both use the language and cultural categories of his audience *and* challenge the religious commitments that were foundational to those forms. Newbigin began to see that this problem was not found just in India, nor was it limited to verbal communication of the gospel. Rather, all cultures are shaped by foundational religious commitments which in turn shape its institutions and forms. The more deeply one senses the contradiction between the gospel and the worldview of the culture, the more that the church will experience what Newbigin saw as a “painful tension” (1951, 51). How the church struggles to live within that tension is at the heart of the missionary encounter with the culture.

Fifth, Newbigin believes that the missionary encounter of the gospel with Western culture is the most urgent task facing the church in the West, and ought to be a priority task for missiology (Newbigin 1986, 3). In that encounter, Newbigin sees four essential tasks: the cultural task of engaging in a missiological analysis of culture; the theological task of recovering the gospel as public truth; the ecclesiological task of recovering the missionary understanding and practice of the church; and the epistemological task of unmasking the idolatry of reason and other philosophical assumptions reigning in Western culture (Goheen 2004, 7-8).

Within this broader horizon of Newbigin’s contribution, we can situate the particular contribution he made toward the development of a missional ecclesiology for the church in

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<sup>3</sup> The way Newbigin articulated the gospel is equally important: against the relativism of Western culture, Newbigin affirmed that the gospel is public truth – a truth that is true for all people. Against the fundamentalist belief that the gospel is a set of unchanging eternal propositional truths, Newbigin argued that the gospel is first and foremost events that form a story that reveals the meaning and goal of world history and thus provides the clue for understanding and living in the world (Goheen 2004, 2).

the West. Goheen has done extensive work in this area and has provided a helpful summary of Newbigin's missional ecclesiology that has so profoundly shaped the missional movement (see Goheen 2000).

Newbigin's influence led to the emergence of Gospel and Culture movements that began to explore the various implications of his work for the theology and practice of the church in the West. The Gospel and Our Culture Network (GOCN) in North America has significantly brought Newbigin's insights to bear on the missional movement. The GOCN is a movement within North America made up of theological educators, pastors, denominational leaders and administrators, and other local congregational leaders from a variety of confessional traditions, all devoted to the task of developing and encouraging a missionary encounter with North American culture. Similar movements were birthed in the U.K., South Africa, and Australia/New Zealand – again by practitioners and academics who are building on the insights of Newbigin and seeking to address the unique challenges of a missionary encounter with culture. The GOCN movement has been generated by both cultural and ecclesiastical shifts – culturally the shifts from modernity to postmodernity, and ecclesiastically the growing reality of decline of the church and cultural displacement to the fringes of society.

Goheen highlights two broader contexts within which we must understand the GOCN. The first is the World Council of Churches (WCC), particularly the International Missionary Council, and its work to flesh out the structures of a missionary ecclesiology. The GOCN has embraced the *missio Dei* framework developed within the WCC, in which the church seeks to situate its mission and understanding in terms of the central role it plays in the broader mission of God to restore the creation. After the secularizing of the *missio Dei* framework in the WCC and the relativizing of the church that came along with it, the GOCN is a renewed attempt to flesh out the structures of a missionary ecclesiology, specifically focused on a North American context (Goheen 2002, 480-481).

The second broader context of the GOCN is the loss of Christendom and the desire to rethink ecclesiology in light of that reality (Goheen 2002, 481). Guder describes the “functional” Christendom that has been operative in North America and is now crumbling:

Various churches contributed to the formation of a dominant culture that bore the deep imprint of Christian values, language, and expectations regarding moral behaviours. Other terms like “Christian culture” or “churched culture” might be used to describe this Christian influence on the shape of the broader culture (Guder 1998, 48).

This sort of cultural impact by the church in the West is crumbling, and the GOCN is seeking to re-think ecclesiology in light of these realities.

A key development for the Missional Church movement was the publication of *Missional Church* in 1998. Various leaders from the movement were brought together to begin bringing definition to the movement's ecclesiology, and to explicitly push beyond the methodological and model-driven answers of how the church responds to the reality of North America as a mission field. Instead of a methodological and pragmatic focus, *Missional Church* looked at something deeper; namely, a theological re-thinking about the nature of the church in light of the shift from a church-centred understanding of mission to a God-centred understanding of mission (*missio Dei*). *Missional Church* argues that mission lies at the very centre of the nature and identity of the church. It goes on to then identify 5 key elements in a missional ecclesiology: (1) missional ecclesiology is biblical and must be grounded in what the Bible

teaches; (2) missional ecclesiology is historical and must build on and take account of the historical developments and reflections on the church; (3) missional ecclesiology is contextual and will develop within particular cultural contexts and seek to be faithful and relevant within those contexts; (4) missional ecclesiology is eschatological which will drive the church to be dynamic in its movement toward the consummation of all things; and (5) missional ecclesiology must be practiced and therefore the missional understanding of the nature of the church must be translated into practice(s) (Guder 1998, 11-12).

As others have pointed out, the missional movement, in contrast to the emergent movement, has tended to take root among more established mainline and evangelical churches, looking at how these churches can make the shift to a missional posture and practices within their communities. There has also been more academic and scholarly effort in this movement than in the emergent movement.

## 2. KEY PRACTICES OF THIS MOVEMENT

Defining the key practices of the Missional Church movement can be difficult, due to the increasing diversity and unique emphases that are emerging within the movement. However, most who find themselves within the Missional Church movement would resonate with and find solid connection to the GOCN in North America.<sup>4</sup> Within the GOCN, a team was compiled to give expression to the common practices that were being found within churches that were resonating with the missional movement and seeking to transform their congregations into Missional Churches.

The following twelve practices are identified as key to Missional Churches:

1. Proclaiming the gospel story of God's salvation in a multitude of different ways;
2. Teaching all members to become disciples of Jesus, and expecting all to grow as disciples;
3. Treating the biblical story as normative in the church's life, and having it inform and shape all of the church's practices;
4. Understanding itself as living in contrast to the world as an alternative community because of its participation in the life, death, and resurrection of its Lord;
5. Discerning God's specific missional vocation for the entire community and for all of its members in its local place;
6. Becoming known for acts of self-sacrifice on behalf of one another, both in the church and in the local community;
7. Practicing reconciliation and moving beyond homogeneity toward a more heterogeneous community in its racial, ethnic, age, gender and socio-economic make-up;
8. Placing high value on mutual accountability and support for engagement in the mission;

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<sup>4</sup> For authors and leaders as diverse as Michael Frost, Alan Hirsch, Ed Stetzer, Mark Driscoll, and Dan Kimball, there is a shared starting point in their identification with the GOCN as a starting point for their missional practices and thinking.

9. Practicing hospitality that welcomes the stranger into the community and makes space for the “other”;
10. Celebrating, in the central act of worship, both God’s presence and God’s promised future;
11. Seeking vital public witness in its local place, and the transformation of public life, society, and communities; and
12. Recognizing itself as always an incomplete expression of the reign of God, and working toward more faithfully living life within the reign of God that has arrived in Jesus Christ (Barrett 2004, 159-172).<sup>5</sup>

### 3. KEY THEOLOGICAL EMPHASES

The theological emphases of the Missional Church movement can be summarized along four lines. The first is the understanding of mission as *missio Dei*. There is a commonly-held, theocentric understanding of mission, what Hendriks has termed a “theocentric reconceptualisation” of mission (2004, 25). Mission is first and foremost the mission of the Triune God to restore and renew the entire creation. The church finds its identity as the community of people God has chosen to participate in this creation-wide mission.

The second emphasis is on the gospel, understood primarily to be the good news of the coming of the reign of God. Out of this comes an understanding of the church that is oriented to and shaped by its place and task in the kingdom of God. As an agent of the kingdom of God, the church is called to advance the reign of God in all areas of life, seeking to bring God’s restorative rule to bear and reverse the effects of sin’s curse. The church is a people called by its very nature to be an extension and continuation of the kingdom mission of Jesus, called to represent the reign of God in its communal life together, called to function as a servant of the kingdom of God in the world, and called as the messenger of the kingdom of God proclaiming the good news and heralding the arrival of the kingdom of God in power.

The third missional emphasis is on the communal dimension of the church’s mission, following the lead of the GOCN. Reacting against the reduction of mission to the calling of individuals in culture, the GOCN has emphasized the church as a community called to embody the life of the kingdom of God *together*. As Newbigin puts it, the church is called to be a hermeneutic of the gospel in its local place, an inherently communal task that defines its mission and purpose.<sup>6</sup>

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5 The work of the team led by Barrett offers a broad summary of practices and empirical indicators that have been identified within churches seeking explicit identification with the Missional movement spawned by the GOCN. Other work has been done in seeking to capture “empirical indicators” of Missional Churches. Minatrea has developed his own unique list of nine practices after field research into churches that were seeking missional transformation (2004). Hirsch has come up with six key elements in what he describes as “missional DNA or mDNA” (2006). Stetzer and Putnam highlight best practices of Missional Churches in his *Breaking the Missional Code* (2006). And Driscoll outlines practices he learned in moving from Emergent to Missional in his *Confessions of a Reformission Rev* (2006).

6 Newbigin writes, “How is it possible that the gospel should be credible, that people should come to believe that the power which has the last word in human affairs is represented by a man hanging on a cross? I am suggesting that the only answer, the only hermeneutic of the gospel, is a congregation of men and women who believe it and live by it” (1989, 227).

A fourth missional emphasis is the tendency to see the church largely in terms of an alternative community or contrast society in its relationship with Western culture. Again, this emphasis finds its roots in the GOCN. Goheen argues that, at least in part, the anti-Christendom mentality within the GOCN has been responsible for this counter-cultural perspective on the church's calling in culture (2002, 485-487). The GOCN has seen modernity's Christendom produce a church that had accommodated itself to culture and become blinded to its idolatrous shifts, particularly individualism. Reacting to this, the GOCN and Missional Church movement have emphasized the calling of the church as an alternative community or, as Alan Roxburgh summarizes, "as a contrast society . . . formed around beliefs and practices, which continually school and form it in a way of life, which cannot be derived from the particular culture in which it is found" (2007, 8).

## 4. DIVERSE CONTRIBUTIONS

Within the growing Missional movement, there are unique and diverse contributions being made. Having highlighted the shared theological emphases, it remains to capture the spectrum of these diverse emphases and contributions which are beginning to shape the movement and missional conversation. There are six areas that can be distinguished.

### 4.1 Incarnational ministry

For some within the missional movement, "missional" has become closely identified with the call to "incarnational ministry." Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, both leaders of the missional movement in Australia, emphasize the importance for the Missional Church to practice ministry that is incarnational in its local communities. Both are, in fact, quite critical of the institutional church in the West, even contrasting at times the "missional" church with the "institutional" church (Frost and Hirsch 2003, xi). They see three distinctives in the missional movement: (1) an incarnational ecclesiology; (2) a messianic spirituality; and (3) apostolic leadership. As they explore an incarnational ecclesiology, they move from Christology (heavy emphasis on Christ's incarnation and the ministry practices of Jesus in the secular world) to missiology (having an incarnational presence in our cultural context and following the practices of Jesus) to ecclesiology (the nature, functions, and forms of the church in its practice and life) (2003, 16). Put simply, they take the incarnation of Christ as the theological starting point for their reflections on mission and ecclesiology.

Given this starting point, they draw out five important implications for incarnational ministry. First, the incarnation must guide our cultural expression; second, the incarnation calls us to identify deeply and closely with our local context and the people within it; third, the incarnation reminds us that an abiding presence in the local community is important; fourth, the incarnation gives us a sending impulse into our local communities that runs counter to the impulse or desire to extract people out of a community into a gathered church community – a centrifugal mission rather than a centripetal one; and fifth, the incarnation calls us to find culturally meaningful ways to understand Jesus and communicate about Jesus (Frost and Hirsch 2003, 35-40). Based on these implications, they look at various models for being incarnational in a local community. They emphasize the importance of the church's three key relationships in practicing incarnational ministry: communion with Christ, communion with one another, and commission to the world.

In his more recent contribution, *Exiles*, Michael Frost adds further nuance to this incarnational

emphasis by describing “missional practices” necessary for smaller missional communities that find themselves on the margins and fringes of culture, alienated from the institutional church, and living as exiles in a post-Christian world (Frost 2006, 3-8). Halter and Smay have made a similar contribution in *The Tangible Kingdom: Creating Incarnational Community*, where they call Christians in the West to a pre-institutional form of Christian community that seeks to recover the incarnational practices of Jesus and the pre-institutional church (2008, 51-56). Such incarnational communities would seek to form themselves around shared missional practices that move them out into the local community to leave behind the comfort of the institutional church, live among, listen to, and love unconditionally those in their local context. What is needed, they argue, is to allow “church” to emerge out of this missional and incarnational way of life, so that its practices, structures, and leadership are defined by this incarnational posture (2008, 38-41).

#### 4.2 Contextualization

A second contribution to the missional movement is in the all-important challenge of contextualizing the gospel in the cultural context of the West. Understanding the relationships between gospel, church, and culture is of primary significance in the missionary encounter (Hunsberger 1996, 8-9). Among scholarship on these relationships, two bear specific mention.

Ed Stetzer highlights the central importance of the Missional Church’s task of contextualizing the gospel in the local community. He sees the heart of the shift to a missional ecclesiology as the process of learning to “break the code” of the local cultural context in which the church finds itself. For Stetzer, breaking the code will only happen as the church learns to be deeply engaged with its local cultural context, and so becomes both faithful and relevant (2006, 89-107). Stetzer calls the church in North America to learn once again the missionary posture and make cultural engagement a primary task. He proposes a “missional matrix,” in which the local church’s work is grounded in biblical foundation, and Spirit-empowered in its application to the local place. This movement from foundation to application happens as the church begins to find the interactions between Christology, Missiology, and Ecclesiology, driven by three questions Stetzer insists the church answer: “Who is Jesus and what has he sent us to do? What forms and strategies should we use to most effectively expand the kingdom where we are sent? What expression of a New Testament church would be most appropriate in this context?” (Stetzer 2006, 54).

Along similar lines, Mark Driscoll is keen to equip the Missional Church movement to wrestle deeply with contextualization, re-thinking its evangelistic practices while avoiding syncretism with the cultural context of the West (see Driscoll 2004). He works to maintain theological orthodoxy while at the same time reshaping the church’s practice of mission and ministry. Driscoll was an early leader within the Emergent movement, who eventually left the movement due to his concerns about what he perceived to be its lack of theological orthodoxy.

While these and other contributions are helping the missional movement learn to engage the culture of the West with the gospel, this area is one that is in need of further thought. The movement has not historically given priority to the gospel-and-culture relationship, focusing instead on questions of ecclesiology. And what scholarship has emerged on contextualization needs to deepen and broaden. Methodologies for evangelism and effective witness to the gospel are extremely important, but the Missional Church movement – indeed the entire church in the West – needs a deeper awareness of the cultural story in which we find ourselves,

and the important questions and issues that arise when seeking to faithfully contextualize the gospel in our cultural context.

### 4.3 Biblical-theological orientation

A third major branch within the missional movement is the biblical-theological contributions to it. Historically, the contribution of the landmark *Missional Church* book was in large part to define the biblical and theological trajectories of the missional movement. What is needed now is ongoing biblical-theological reflection on the missional nature of the church, as well as engagement with the major confessional and theological traditions within Christianity that have shaped our various ecclesiologies.

Craig Van Gelder's *The Essence of the Church* is an important contribution to this end. Van Gelder offers the following summary definition: "The church, as the people of God in the world, is inherently a missionary church. It is to participate fully in the Son's redemptive work as the Spirit creates, leads, and teaches the church to live as the distinctive people of God" (2000, 31).

Van Gelder explores historical and theological developments both within missiology and ecclesiology and argues that a fully robust missional ecclesiology must draw from four important sources: biblical-theological perspectives on the church; historical and confessional perspectives on the church; contextual perspectives arising out of the study of contextualization within missiology; and perspectives on the churches' ongoing development and guidance by the Holy Spirit in its local community, along with ways of discerning this guidance.

Van Gelder offers an important contribution to our understanding of the mission of the church in light of the NT emphasis on the kingdom of God, drawing out the importance of focusing that mission on the redemptive reign of God to restore all of creation; the mission of God as Trinitarian; the mission of God as eschatological; and the church as missionary by its nature (Van Gelder 2000, 74-99). He then looks at four primary biblical images for the people of God and how they inform this missional understanding of the church: church as people of God, body of Christ, communion of saints, and creation of the Spirit. It is striking how these images are rooted in systematic theological reflections on ecclesiology (2000, 107-112). Finally, he rounds out his biblical-theological contribution to the nature of the church by recasting the four classical attributes of the church in a missional framework: the church as Holy, Catholic, One, and Apostolic (2000, 116-125). Van Gelder seeks to develop a model for the ministries and structures of the Missional Church that are rooted in and informed by these biblical-theological insights.

Significant work in this area is also being done by the growing movement of Allelon, under the leadership of Alan Roxburgh. Allelon is a hub of missional activity and movement within North America, the U.K., and Africa. What is striking in Roxburgh's work on Missional Church is that he re-imagines the biblical-theological starting point for the missional movement. He insists that God is the starting point of the missional conversation, not the church (Allelon 2008, 1-2). He argues that the whole missional movement in the West has been de-railed by the continued focus and emphasis on the church and about how to make the church work:

Whether within established traditions of the post-Reformation era or among newer, postmodern Emergent churches, the conversation remains colonized by an ecclesiocentric imagination. Without a return to an understanding of God as the subject there can be no

Missional Church, only churches using missional language to find new ways of making church work in a culture that has radically changed from the one in which Christianity was at the centre (Allelon 2008, 1-2).

Instead, Roxburgh draws our attention back on God with two basic questions: “Who is this God revealed to us in Jesus Christ?” and “What is this God up to in the world?” Building on a Trinitarian understanding of God – the Triune God existing in a community of self-giving love for the sake of the world – Roxburgh defines the core identity of the church as the communion of God that gives itself for the sake of the world (Allelon 2008, 2).

God’s missionary nature, argues Roxburgh, must be expressed in terms of the *missio Dei*. Missional Church is fundamentally a call to move from a church *with* a mission to become a church that *is* missional in all its life; it is a call from an ecclesiocentric to a God-centred community for the sake of the world. Roxburgh identifies several factors at work in both the UK and in North America that have made the church the primary centre of the missional conversation and have dissociated the missional language from the *missio Dei* and instead used it as a label to lay over programs, activities, and ministries designed to make the church work or look successful. At the heart of it is a loss of place in society and the assumption that the main issue is for the church in the West to diagnose the problem within the internal life of the church, remedy the problem with a specific set of programs, and then finish our missional work by clarifying the nature and purpose of the church. Roxburgh laments (Allelon 2008, 5),

The church was the problem and needed a method to fix itself. Behind this kind of assumption lies a deeper unspoken conviction: the church is the key issue that must be addressed; it is the central subject of all the questions about the mission of God in the world; get the church right and everything else will follow.

For Roxburgh, the work of the GOCN and publication of *Missional Church* only continued and solidified this focus of the missional conversation on issues of ecclesiology. By contrast, Roxburgh recasts the focus of the missional conversation along the following six lines:

1. We must restore God as the subject of the missional conversation. The church is not the focus or centre of a missional engagement with Western culture.
2. The primary locus of engagement is the gospel and culture relationship, with ecclesiology as a sub-set of that primary relationship.
3. Focus should be put on the development of a missional theology and praxis for engagement with the neighbourhoods and communities in which we live and work. The shape and purpose of the church emerges out of that theology and praxis.
4. We live in times of rapid, discontinuous change and therefore we must avoid the default processes and questions of the past.
5. In our present postmodern context, we must learn to ask different questions within different kinds of contexts.
6. The guiding principle for the nature and function of the church will be framed by Luke 10:1-12, where the set of questions shaping our listening and discernment are focused (Allelon 2008, 9-10).

Roxburgh argues that the questions arising from Luke 10 should shape the role of the church. As

we enter towns, villages, and neighbourhoods where we live and work, how might we discern what God is up to in these places? As we sit at the tables of others and enter their narratives, how might we hear the ways in which the gospel already intersects with their stories? As we dwell like this, becoming the stranger and taking the posture of being served, how will we listen and discern what God is doing? We allow the gospel to challenge our assumptions as we listen to the gospel in the context of the *other* we encounter in these ways. Finally, out of all these experiences, we then are in a position to ask the ecclesiological questions, which Roxburgh articulates in the following way:

What then will it mean to be the church in this place and among these people given what God is already doing here? Here, the shape of the church isn't already assumed but emerges from these interrelationships. This does not mean we must give up or let go of all the traditions that have shaped us to this point; they will be relativized and we will be challenged to make sense of them from within the contexts of neighbourhood (Allelon 2008, 10).

#### 4.4 Organizational change models and communal discernment

A fourth branch of contributions in the missional movement is the important work being done on organizational change models and methods for communal discernment of the church's missional vocation in its local place. Van Gelder makes more explicit connections between the nature of the church as missional and both purposes and strategies for ministry as well as discernment for engaging our changing cultural context. He gives focus both to the Spirit's role in creating the church, a perspective which nuances the nature of the church as missional; and the Spirit's role in shaping the ministry of the church, a perspective which clarifies the purpose and practices of the church (see Van Gelder 2007).

Patrick Keifert is another important leader in the missional movement's work in organizational change and communal discernment. Through extensive work as a church consultant, working through processes for missional transformation and change, Keifert has developed tools to equip churches in the West to find again their places in society. These new place must lead churches to renewed discovery of their particular visions and missional vocations in the local communities within which God has situated them. Keifert has developed processes and models for the necessary mentoring, partnership, learning, and planning that must take place in order to enable the transition into missional practices and engagement with the local context (see Keifert 2006).

#### 4.5 Missional leadership

The Missional Church movement has also engaged questions and issues of discipleship and leadership within the church. This concern for missional leadership and the uniqueness of what contributes toward a leader being equipped to lead a Missional Church has been highlighted by various people within the missional movement. Alan Roxburgh has made an important contribution on the process of developing missional leadership capacity for the local church (see Roxburgh 2005 and Roxburgh and Romanuk 2006). Frost and Hirsch developed the APEPT model for missional leadership, which has served as a practical tool for leadership assessment and development (2003, 169-171). Hirsch has further developed this APEPT model,<sup>7</sup> with

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<sup>7</sup> Frost and Hirsch use APEPT to refer to “five fold,” apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers.

particular emphasis on the apostolic gifting needed in the missional leader (2006, 149-177). Stetzer addresses this issue as well, highlighting the need for missional leadership which is able to lead communities in cultural exegesis so that they might break the cultural codes of their local places (see Stetzer 2006). The GOCN also gave early recognition to the importance of wrestling with the leadership models that have come along with the Christendom legacy, and how the Missional Church conversation can begin to shift our models for church leadership (Guder 1998, 183-220).

It has been primarily the contributions of Alan Roxburgh that have shaped the leadership efforts of the missional movement. Roxburgh has given detailed reflection on the uniqueness of missional leaders for missional communities. Among those contributions, the following can be highlighted. Roxburgh explores how the missional imagination must be cultivated among God's people by the leadership; models for missional change in making the transition into a missional understanding of the church; different images that will help shape the role of the leader in a missional community; the importance of coming to terms with the reality of rapid, discontinuous change in our present cultural context in the West and the unique challenges this change presents to leaders; and models for understanding the different phases and stages of change, with insights into the unique leadership challenges at each stage and phase. This area of missional leadership will continue to be cultivated and developed, given the importance of leadership in the local church and the role leaders must play in missional transformation.

#### 4.6 Missional practices and empirical indicators

A final branch or contribution in the missional movement is work that is being done to identify missional practices and empirical indicators. What sorts of signs should one begin to find in a church that has made the transformation into a missional community?

These practices and indicators are being identified on both corporate and personal levels. As noted above, the work edited by Lois Barrett was a significant contribution toward identifying essential corporate practices in Missional Churches. Minatrea developed his own research project and empirical indicators in *Shaped By God's Heart: The Passion and Practices of Missional Churches*. Alan Hirsch has argued for what he refers to as six missional DNA indicators that need to be activated again in the church in the West: the confession of Jesus as Lord; disciple making; missional-incarnational impulse; apostolic environment of leadership; organic systems of organization; and commitment to "communitas." Hirsch argues that these six corporate practices that are part of the missional DNA latent within every follower of Jesus and need activation by the Holy Spirit through the gifts of an apostolic missional leader (2006, 15-26).

But, perhaps most significant are Michael Frost's efforts to recover the original genius of Jesus' teaching and lifestyle example during his earthly ministry, as well as recover the missional practices of the early followers of Christ in the apostolic era. Frost is concerned to help Christians live in the tension of not being at home in the world nor in the contemporary church in the West. He is writing to a growing number of Christians in the West who are dissatisfied with current expressions of the church, trying to inspire among them a Christ-centred faith and lifestyle of "missional practices" (2006, 3-27). Frost confesses his own lack of hope for the

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They make the argument that "to each one grace has been given" and "he gave some to be" in Ephesians 4 applies the APEPT giftings to every believer.. every believer has one of the APEPT gifts.

future of the institutional church in the West, but sees hope in the death of Christendom – hope that Christians who resonate with the feeling of displacement both culturally and from the institutional church will rediscover these missional practices and over time develop like-minded Christ-followers, who together might begin the formation of alternative communities of people living out these practices together.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The Missional Church movement is growing in its breadth and diversity as it continues to work out the implications of what is involved in seeking missional transformation of the church in the West. The article focused on the influence of Lesslie Newbigin on the church in Northern America. It may be summarized as refocusing theology on the Trinity and the *missio Dei*. Newbigin's sensitivity for inter- or cross cultural communication and the importance of ecumenism helped to eventually unmask what became known as the Christendom paradigm. The church in the Western world started realizing its cultural captivity and reigning philosophical assumptions. This sparked a number of movements that revitalized the theology in the established mainline and evangelical churches. The missional church movement is a somewhat different movement if compared to the emergent church movement.

The article summarized the key practices and theological emphases of the missional movement and then highlighted six diverse contributions that spawned from the movement. Missional transformation will take place as the church recovers a missional identity and fleshes out the implications of that identity for all aspects of ecclesiastical life and practice. As the movement matures, it will need to continue to engage in the depth of biblical/theological reflection and cultural analysis that gave birth to this movement. Without this, there is a growing danger of the movement succumbing to a pragmatist desire to find some methodology or model that will lead to church renewal. Ongoing discernment within this movement is critical for the church in the West to renew its missional identity and vocation.

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#### KEY WORDS

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#### TREFWOORDE

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## What is in a name? Lessons learnt from the choice of name for the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa

### ABSTRACT

The establishment of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa in 1994 was pre-empted by conversation and debates about what the name of this new church should be. In the end the selected name of this church was deliberate in the sense that it gives an ecclesiological expression of the identity of this church. As such these synodical and congregational conversations about the name of the URCSA are of church historical worth not only for the mentioned church but for churches across the globe.

In the light of processing reunification within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches it is time to revisit this decision and choice of the name, URCSA, not only because of the obvious relevance of this conversation but because the ecclesial identities of the churches that form part of the unification discussions needs to be understood and studied on the road to structurally expressions a united identity.

In this article I point towards the reasoning behind the choice of name. Mention will be made of the theological significance of this name despite of various misinterpretations and uncertainties on a local congregational and perhaps also ecumenical level. As such this article attempts to influence the current church historical debate linked to the process of re-unification in the mentioned church family.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

After recent conversations with ministers and theologians of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA) and the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) about the name of the URCSA and the possible options for the name of the new *united*<sup>1</sup> church, I was prompted to think about and re-appreciate the name of the URCSA. As this article will point out, the relevance of this conversation and indeed a church historical study on the name URCSA and the ecclesial identity behind this name is timeously and needed as it will positively influence and stimulate ecclesiological debates and studies on church unification processes not only in South(-ern) Africa but also on a global level. The URCSA came about through the unification between the largest part of the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (DRCA) and the former Dutch Reformed Mission Church (DRMC) in 1994. The URCSA forms part of the so-called family of Dutch Reformed Churches.<sup>2</sup>

During our conversations it became clear that there are congregations who struggle to use the name Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa or even the abbreviation, URCSA. Members of various local congregations rather refer to themselves as congregants of the Dutch church

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1 Own Italics.

2 The term family of Dutch Reformed Churches is used to describe the historical relation between the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC), the DRCA, the URCSA and the Reformed Church in Africa (RCA). In some ecclesial circles the use of this term is contested but in the context of this article it is intended to express the interrelatedness between the abovementioned churches.

or the Sendingkerk or even the NG Kerk as a way of indicating to others in their communities to which church and/or congregation they belong.<sup>3</sup> This prompts her to question why the name (of the) URCSA is not used by her congregants? Is the name perhaps just not attractive enough and/or does it lack a strong symbolic feel? Is it due to these reasons that the particular congregants rarely make use of the name (of the) URCSA either in its abbreviated form or in full? In his historical study of the unification between the DRMC and the DRCA Loff adds to this discussion when he states that the rich meaning of the church name and the excitement of synod around it somehow did not filter through to local congregations and that variations of the name, URCSA, exist.<sup>4</sup> This shows to the possibility that, both on a historical level and in the current sense, the name URCSA might not have been used due to the fact that it was new or even because it is not historically linked to the identity of the church. Or even due to the fact that some members do not find an obvious link between their ecclesial experience and with the name URCSA.

Although it is uncertain whether the mentioned occurrences are unique or isolated to certain congregations and/or regions or whether the examples cited by Loff exists widely, I am of the opinion that it calls for both a rediscovery and a re-evaluation of the name (of the) URCSA. This is a valuable discussion in the light of the current process of church re-unification, albeit slow moving, between the churches within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches. A study on the name, URCSA, and its linked relevance to the mentioned process will as such form the central theme of this article.

What will be pointed out in this article is that the name of the URCSA came about as a deliberate attempt to express the theological identity of this church and as such was not just selected without thorough consideration. The name is thus a deep ecclesiological expression of the identity of the URCSA and as such has a deep-rooted theological relevance.

The following section is a short discussion of the different facets of the name URCSA and why this church decided on its particular name.

## 2. WHY THE NAME URCSA?

When the DRMC and the largest part of the DRCA decided that they cannot but unite the church structures of these churches, they had to decide on the name for this 'new' church. From a church historical perspective it seems that the first formal synodic discussion on the name of the 'new' church took place at the 1986 synod of the DRMC.<sup>5</sup> As noted in the acts of synod it is clear that the members of synod realised that a conversation on the name of the church had theological implications and as such the issue of the name was referred for further

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3 Own italics. The term Dutch has been used over decades by members of the DRCA. In the same sense members of the former DRMC has referred to themselves as congregants of the NG Kerk.

4 Chris Loff, *Bevryding tot Eenwording. Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Sendingkerk in Suid-Afrika 1881-1994*, 279.

5 From the 1986 DRMC acts of synod it is clear that, although it was not the first time that a name for the 'new' church was discussed it was the first formal and indepth discussion. See *Acta Synodi*, DRMC, 1986, 84. This can perhaps be connected to the fact that the process of unification was gathering strong momentum after a slow start from 1975-1982. The work of the Joint Commission for Dialogue for Church Unity between the DRMC and the DRCA in later used took forward, amongst others, a discussion on the name of the 'new' church.

consideration to an applicable commission of the DRMC.<sup>6</sup>

In this regard the well-known theologian of the URCSA, Nico Smith, notes the following:

“Oor die naam van die kerk wat tot stand sou kom, was daar gelukkig geen bepaalde sentimente aan ’n spesifieke naam gekoppel nie. Daar is besluit dat die gereformeerde karakter van die kerk aangedui moes word en dat dit nie ’n verenigde kerk sou wees nie, maar ’n ‘verenigende kerk’. Só sou uitdrukking gegee word aan die begeerte van die twee kerke wat reeds verenig was om ook die ander kerke van die NG Kerk-familie by die vereniging te betrek. Omdat die NG Kerk ook kerke in ander lande in Suider-Afrika tot stand gebring het, moes die naam ook uitdrukking gee aan die begeerte om die kerke in ander lande in Suider-Afrika by hierdie vereniging te betrek. Daarom is die naam die Verenigende Gereformeerde Kerk in Suider-Afrika (VGKSA) gekies.<sup>7</sup>

Smith’s interpretation of why the ‘new’ church decided on its name deeply expresses the URCSA sentiment and understanding of its ecclesiological identity as a church and as such the name is not just a name, but a deliberate attempt to show who the URCSA is and who it should be in relation to other churches and specifically to those churches within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches, as well as its context. Or, as the acts of the constituting synod of the URCSA states: ‘(D)ie voorgestelde naam van die Eenheidskerk is voorlopig en probeer uitdrukking gee aan die uiteindelijke doelwit wat nagestreef word.’<sup>8</sup> As such it is also clear that the parts of or the full name of the URCSA was seen as temporary and that it should change when the process of reunification reached its end. This should be taken into account in the current process and should specifically be remembered when discussion on the name of the *united* church starts.<sup>9</sup>

### 3. UNITING AND NOT UNITED?

As many historical studies of the former DRMC and the DRCA have pointed out, the establishment of the URCSA was an expression of a longing re-unification of these churches with all the churches within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches.<sup>10</sup> Historical synodical acts and other documents of the 1975 synod of the DRCA and the 1987 synod of the DRMC

6 “Die Hoogerwaardige Sinode besluit om, weens die wye implikasies van ’n naamsverandering van die NG Sendingkerk, die saak na die Leer en Studiekommissie te verwys vir deeglike studie met verslag aan die volgende sinode en dat gemeentes gevra word om hul insette by die kommissie te maak.” See *Acta Synodi*, DRMC, 1986, 903.

7 Nico Smith, *Mosaïek van Mense. Ontmoetings wat my denke en lewe radikaal verander het*. 303-304.

8 *Acta Synodi*, URCSA, 1994, 27.

9 Own italics.

10 For a good overview of the recent history of the DRMC and the DRCA and the road to unification see Daniëls, W.J. 1998. *Van Sendingkerk tot Verenigende Gereformeerde Kerk in Suider-Afrika* (1960-1997). Unpublished Master’s Thesis. Cape Town: University of the Western Cape; Loff, C.J.A. 1998. *Bevryding tot Eenwording. Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Sendingkerk in Suid-Afrika 1881-1994*. Published Doctoral Dissertation. Kampen: Theologische Universiteit van de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland; Adonis, J.C. 2002. ‘Bevryding tot Eenwording en Getuienis. Die Geskiedenis van die Verenigende Gereformeerde Kerk in Suider-Afrika’. In P. Coertzen (red.), *350 Years Reformed. 1652-2002*. Bloemfontein: CLF Uitgewers; Smit, D.J. 2002. ‘Bely en beliggzaam’. In P. Coertzen (red.), 2002, *350 Years Reformed. 1652-2002*. Bloemfontein: CLF Drukkers. 357-371; Van Rooi, L.B. 2007. ‘Bevry om te bely en te beliggzaam. ’n Ekklesiologiese besinning oor die Kerkorde van die VGKSA’. In the *Dutch Reformed Theological Journal (NGTT)*. 48 no. 3&4. Sept & Dec 2007. 799-810.

pointing towards the desire of these churches to reunite with the other churches within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches should be read against the backdrop of the theological rejection of apartheid as it found expression in the structures of the mentioned churches.<sup>11</sup>

“Ons konstituerende sinode het saam op ’n nuwe naam besluit, en dié naam getuig van die oortuigings wat sedertdien by ons leef. Ons naam sê ons is die Verenigende Gereformeerde Kerk in Suider-Afrika omdat ons weet dat die proses van kerkeenheid tussen ons nie klaar geloop is nie. Ons weet ook dit is maar die begin van ’n groter proses in ons gereformeerde familie en selfs verder. Die vereniging sal ook nie klaar wees voordat ons en die res van ons kerkfamilie sigbaar een geword het nie. Die amptelike VGKSA-embleem dra hierdie selfde getuienis. Die sirkel rondom die simbole in die kerk van ons embleem is nie geslote nie, juis omdat ons inklusief dink en nog nie almal sigbaar bymekaar is nie.”<sup>12</sup>

As mentioned in the previous section the constituting synod of the URCSA viewed the name of the ‘new’ church to give temporary expression of what this church wanted and should be.<sup>13</sup> It can be assumed that this rings specifically true for the word, *uniting*, in the name of the church and that the united church would bare the name, *united*.<sup>14</sup> Synod saw the process of reunification as something that had to be completed.<sup>15</sup> This was already clearly expressed by the 1986 joint declaration by the synods of the DRMC and the DRCA that states that this unity must come to realisation and that one institutional structure should be the outcome.<sup>16</sup>

As briefly mentioned in the previous section Chris Loff notes that, on a local or congregational level, the name, *uniting*, was perhaps not valued. He cites examples of congregations and official church documents that at a stage in the history of the URCSA made use of the word, *united*, and not *uniting* as part of the URCSA’s name.<sup>17</sup> Perhaps this shows towards an undervaluing of the significance of the use of the word uniting in the name of the URCSA.

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11 The theological importance of the mentioned synods on the road to church reunification cannot be underestimated. See the following sources for an overview of the mentioned synodical decisions as well as its theological impact see *Acta Synodi*. DRCA. 1975; *Acta Synodi*. DRMC. 1978. These synods denounced the theological justification of apartheid and as immediate effect called the DRCA and the DRMC to strive towards church re-unification with the DRC and the RCA. See also *The Bible and the relationships between races and people*. A report by die Dutch Reformed

Church in Africa. 1975. Bloemfontein: N.G. Sendingspers; Lebone, M. 2002. ‘Die totstandkoming van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Afrika: hoogtepunte en laagtepunte van die afgelope vyftig jaar’. In P. Coertzen (red.). 2002. *350 Years Reformed. 1652-2002*. 277-278; Pauw, J.C. 2007. *Anti-Apartheid Theology in the Dutch Reformed family of Churches*. Published doctoral dissertation. Amsterdam: Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam; Van Rooi, L.B. 2008. ‘To Obey or Disobey? The Relationship between Church and State during the days of Apartheid: Historical lessons from the activities of the Belydende Kring (1974-1990)’. In *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae*. July. 2008 Vol. XXXIV. No. 1. 173-179.

12 Johan Botha, Belhar – goeie nuus vir gister, vandag en more, In Johan Botha en Piet Naudé, *Goeie nuus om te bely. Die belydenis van Belhar en die pad van aanvaarding*, 77-78, 2010.

13 *Acta Synodi*, URCSA, 1994, 27.

14 Own italics.

15 “Daarmee word ook die deur vir nog meer kerke oopgehou.” *Acta Synodi*, URCSA, 1994, 27.

16 “Die twee afvaardigings verklaar dit as hul gemeenskaplike oortuiging dat die Bybelse leer oor die eenheid van die kerk en die gereformeerde opvatting oor die sigbare eenheid van die kerk gestalte móét vind in een enkele NG Kerkverband. Dit beteken dat die bestaande institute sal moet verenig in ’n enkele instituut, georganiseer volgens gereformeerde kerkreg en kerkverband.” See *Acta Synodi*, DRMC, 1986. 36.

17 Own italics. Loff, *Bevryding tor Eenwording*, 1998, 279.

Or perhaps this warns the church that its ecclesiology and specifically how it expresses this ecclesiology should be connected to and lived out through the experiences and practices in the local congregations.

#### 4. TIMEOUSLY AND REFORMED?

When reading through the synodical acts and other documents on discussions regarding the name of the 'new' church it is clear that Synod felt strongly that the reformed character of the URCSA should be expressed in its name. One almost gets the impression that the name of the 'new' church cannot but be called reformed.<sup>18</sup> Dirkie Smit shares this sentiment when he states:

“Toe die NG Kerk in Afrika en die NG Sendingkerk vroeg in 1994 verenig het tot die Verenigende Gereformeerde Kerk in Suider-Afrika, het die nuwe sinode, met oorweldigende entoesiasme, in 'n Verklaring van Voorneme, gesê dat hulle 'n kerk wil wees “gebou op die grondslag van die gereformeerde belydenis, tradisie en etos”. Talle sinodegangers het hulle blydskap daaroor uitgespreek. In verskillende toesprake is daarop klem gelê. In die wandelgange het baie lede gesê hoe belangrik dié duidelike keuse, ja, belydenis was.”<sup>19</sup>

In my view this shows towards the URCSA's understanding and valuing of its reformed heritage and that it deliberately wanted to link this heritage to its ecclesiology. The use of the word, reformed, in the name of the URCSA also shows towards a deliberate link with other reformed churches when read against the backdrop of this church's strive for unity, specifically with the other churches within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches. One could therefore ask what the effect would have been on the ongoing process of the URCSA if the word, reformed, was excluded from its name.

This being said it is not clear from synodical documents how the 'new' church interpreted its reformed character. The fact that the theological school of the URCSA was immediately asked to do a study on the reformed character of the church, shows towards the possibility that the 'new' church would start to understand and give fuller expression of its nature and identity.<sup>20</sup> And perhaps the URCSA and the other churches within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches should again ascertain what is understood with, and how it expresses the meaning of the term, *reformed*, in its ecclesiology and in the practices of local congregations.<sup>21</sup>

Of note is the fact that unlike the deliberate decision of Synod to keep the word *reformed*

18 “Dit spreek vanself dat die kerk ‘Gereformeerde’ genoem sal word.” See *Acta Synodi*, URCSA, 1994, 27.

19 Dirkie Smit, *Vraagtekens oor gereformeerde integriteit*. In WA Boesak en PJA Fourie, *Vraagtekens oor Gereformeerdeheid*, 1998, 18.

20 Smit, *Vraagtekens*. In Boesak en Fourie, *Vraagtekens oor Gereformeerdeheid*, 1998, 18. The quoted publication should be seen as one of the URCSA studies its reformed identity.

21 For a good overview of Dirkie Smit's discussions on the term *Reformed* see Fourie, W. 2011. ‘Can we still be Reformed? A tentative consideration of the Reformed tradition and South Africa's modernity’. In Koopman, N (et al). 2011. *Living Theology. Essays presented to Dirk J Smit on his sixtieth birthday*. Wellington: Bible Media. In 2001 Coenie Burger wrote a popular publication in the wake of what he and other Dutch Reformed theologians saw as an identity crisis in the DRC around its reformed identity. See Burger, C. 2001. *Ons weet aan wie ons behoort. Nuut gedink oor ons gereformeerde tradisie*. Wellington: Bible Media. Perhaps this suggests that it is indeed timeous for the Reformed tradition to continuously think about, study and evaluate its identity.

in the name of the URCSA it decided not to keep the Dutch<sup>22</sup> part of the name. The Dutch (Afrikaans: Nederduitse) in the name of the Dutch Reformed Church refers to the region where this church finds its roots and should be read as a synonym for The Netherlands or Holland.<sup>23</sup> In my view this is an indication that the church, although linked to its reformed heritage, would through its name express that it was and wanted to be fully part of the African context. Perhaps this decision can also be connected to a deliberate attempt by the DRMC and the DRCA to break away from a paternalistic relationship between these churches and the DRC as the so-called 'mother church'.<sup>24</sup> Or as Themba Nyatyowa states: '(T)he newly found unification brought an end to the DRCA and DRMC churches that were founded during the Apartheid (sic) regime. The terms, "Dutch Reformed Church in Africa" and "Dutch Reformed Mission Church", were something of the past'.<sup>25</sup> However this may be, the historical link through its reformed heritage with specifically the Dutch Reformed Church was not lost in the process albeit without the word Dutch in the name of the URCSA.

## 5. IN AND NOT OF?<sup>26</sup>

Any discussion on why the URCSA decided to be church *in* and not *of* Southern Africa should take into account the histories of the DRMC and the DRCA and here specifically their relation with the DRC as so-called 'mother church'. For the largest parts of their histories these churches struggled to reach a position of ecclesial autonomy due to a strong paternalistic grip from the DRC.<sup>27</sup> To this should be added the fact that mission activities of the DRC was partially based on the missional thinking of Gustav Warneck who placed emphasis on the wellbeing of a specific nation or volk.<sup>28</sup> It should be remembered that at a stage the various 'mission churches' were established for a specific cultural group and that membership was linked accordingly and as such the idea of separate churches for various nations was theologically justified.<sup>29</sup>

As the various "mission churches" started to intensify their strive towards reaching ecclesial autonomy in relation to the DRC, and as these churches developed their specific theological

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22 Own italics.

23 PB van der Watt, *Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk 1652-1905*, 1988, 11. According to Scholtz this term was only used in South Africa since 1842. See, GD Scholtz, *Die Geskiedenis van die Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk van Suid-Afrika. 1842-1885*, 1956, 11.

24 Of interest to note is that the term Dutch Reformed Mission Church or Dutch Reformed Church (referring to the DRMC) was used until as late as 1998 on a local congregational level. See Loff, *Bevryding tot Eenwording*, 1998, 279.

25 Themba Nyatyowa, *The unification process in the Family of Dutch Reformed Churches from 1975-1994: A critical evaluation*, 1999, 80.

26 Of interest to note is the fact that in the 1994 acts of synod of the URCSA no mention is made of the reasoning behind the selection of the word *in* and not *of*. See *Acta Synodi*, URCSA, 1994, 27.

27 For a good overview of the DRMC and DRCA struggle to reach ecclesial autonomy see Leslie van Rooi, *In Search of Ecclesial Autonomy. A church historical and church juridical study of developments in church polity in the Dutch Reformed Mission Church in South Africa (DRMC) and the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (DRCA) from 1881-1994*, 2010.

28 Van Rooi, *In Search of Ecclesial Autonomy*, 2010, 25-26.

29 Van Rooi, *In Search of Ecclesial Autonomy*, 2010, 29-37. In his discussion on pluriformity Willie Jonker shows to the planting of *volks* churches in various contexts internationally. He pleads for one church of Christ that knows about diversity and that this university calls for unity. See Willie Jonker. 'Die Sendingbepalinge van die Ned. Gereformeerde Kerk van Transvaal'. In *Kerk en Wêreld*. Nr 4. June 1962, 29. See also Jonker, WD. 1965. *Om die Regering van Christus in sy Kerk*. Pretoria: University of South Africa.

accents the idea of separate churches was rejected. The establishment of the URCSA and the ongoing process for reunification within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches should be understood in the light of this.

The theologically justifiable notion that ecclesial autonomy is found in the Lordship of Christ – that the church belongs to Christ – became a well-developed notion in the theology(-ies) of the DRMC and the DRCA and guided these churches in understanding and acknowledging their identities in Christ.<sup>30</sup> This notion of Christ's Lordship is not unique to the context of the family of Dutch Reformed Churches, but takes in a central place in reformed theology and specifically in ecclesiology and church polity. As such it should be read as part of the reformed identity of the URCSA.

The Lordship of Christ as a theological concept has a direct impact on how churches understand their identity and here specifically how they relate to one another and to their social contexts. Herein I believe lies the URCSA's decision to be church *in* and not church *of*. Although the URCSA finds itself in a specific context within Southern Africa it belongs to Christ and as such can only be a particular expression of Christ's church *in* a specific context. Just as the URCSA does not know of geographical boundaries it does not know of separation based on language cultural, national identity, etc. and as such this understanding of being church guides the URCSA to continue its strive toward a fuller unity – a unity that in the first instance calls for the re-unification of the churches within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches.<sup>31</sup>

The debate around the use of the words, *of* or *in*, in the name of the URCSA is not unique to this church. At least two other churches who have over the last couple of decades united in regions similar to the URCSA have also had this discussion with varying outcomes, namely the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa (UCCSA) and the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa.<sup>32</sup> From a reformed point of view this discussion should always be guided by an evaluation of the notion of the Lordship of Christ.

## 6. SOUTH AFRICA IN RELATION TO SOUTHERN AFRICA?

From the onset the URCSA wanted to express that it cannot define itself nor fully express its ecclesiology in terms of geographical borders. In fact, it does not know any borders and this should find expression in its ecclesiology both in terms of theory and practice. As discussed in the previous section this should be read against the backdrop of the reformed notion of Christ's Lordship and its impact on how the church relates to both national boundaries and its relatedness with other churches. Although the Church does not know any borders it still proclaims the word of God in a specific context. The URCSA decided to express its identity as a particular voice of the church of Christ within the context of Southern Africa and not only South Africa. With this the URCSA clearly expresses its understanding and theological

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30 Van Rooi, *In Search of Ecclesial Autonomy*, 2010. 250.

31 Jonker ridicules the notion of establishing identical parallel churches in the context of South Africa based on cultural differences. See Jonker, 'Die Sendingbepalinge', in *Kerk en Wêreld*, 1962, 30-32.

32 Own italics. For an overview of the histories of the mentioned churches see Roy Briggs and Joseph Wing. *The Harvest and the Hope. The Story of Congregationalism in Southern Africa*. 1970; Pieter Coertzen (ed). *350 Years Reformed*. 2002. It is interesting that the UCCSA and the UPCS decided to add the term Southern Africa to their name. It can be assumed that the rationale behind this decision is similar to that of the URCSA.

conviction that national ties should not keep Christians apart.<sup>33</sup>

In a real sense the URCSA in 1994 foresaw a future where its unity would be realised with churches in other parts of Southern Africa and as such this part of its name wanted to express this hope.<sup>34</sup> Or, as the acts of the 1994 synod states: '(T)en slotte word as aanduiding van plek nie van "Suid-Afrika" nie, maar van "Suider-Afrika" gepraat om daardeur te beklemtoon dat ons susterkerke in Suider-Afrika nie uitgesluit word by ons eenheidstrewen nie.'<sup>35</sup> In 1997 the Evangelical Reformed Church in Africa (ERCA), with its congregations in Namibia, united with the URCSA thus guiding the URCSA in striving towards further unity with the broader family of Dutch Reformed Churches – also with those (reformed) churches outside the geographical borders of South Africa.<sup>36</sup>

Of interest to note is the hesitation of the last synod of the former DRMC to make use of the generally used reformed term 'general synod' to give expression to the larger meeting of the 'new' church. This hesitation is directly linked to two reasons, namely the historic ecclesial structures of the DRMC and the DRCA and how it will impact on a church vision in the foreseeable future as well as the fact that the 'new' church will cross geographical boundaries.<sup>37</sup> From the synodical discussions at the time one can gather that the uncertainty came about because of the fact that the term 'general synod' in the international reformed world mostly referred to a national church or the bigger church within national borders. And as such this discussion was worthwhile to have.

## 7. IN CONCLUSION

Conversations and studies on the name of a church are very relevant in the context of reformed ecclesiology and church polity. As such vibrant debates around names are prevalent not only in the family of Dutch Reformed Churches, but also in other churches in South Africa e.g. the UCCSA and the UPCSA. To this can be added the Gereformeerde Kerke as the name of this church also gives particular ecclesiological expression of its identity.<sup>38</sup>

This also rings true for the URCSA. This article points towards a clear and deliberate decision on a name that expresses the identity, character and thus the ecclesiology of this church.

33 For a good overview of synodical conversation linked to national boundaries and the unity of the church in the 1986 period see Nyatyowa, *The unification process*, 1999, 52.

34 It should be remembered that the through direct and/or indirect mission work the Dutch Reformed Church had relations with a number of churches in Southern Africa as well as in other parts of the African continent. These include churches in countries like Malawi, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Kenya, Nigeria, Namibia, etc. Perhaps one of the most detailed overviews regarding the missional link between the Dutch Reformed Church and other Reformed churches in the mentioned countries see JM Cronje. *Aan God die Dank. Geskiedenis van Sending buite die Republiek van Suid-Afrika*. Deel 2. 1981.

35 *Acta Synodi*, URCSA, 1994, 27.

36 See JM Cronje. *Aan God die Dank. Geskiedenis van Sending buite die Republiek van Suid-Afrika*. Deel 2. 1981. 341-350; Daniels, WJ. 1998. *Van Sendingkerk tot Verenigende Gereformeerde Kerk in Suider-Afrika (1960-1997)*. Unpublished Master's Thesis. Bellville: University of the Western Cape.

37 "Die naam van die genoemde sinode is onseker, aangesien 'Algemene Sinode' nie gebruik kan word nie omdat daar vir die voorsienbare toekoms wel nog Algemene Sinodes van die betrokke kerke sal wees, en 'Nasionale Sinode' onpresies is vanweë die feit dat twee van die 'bestaande Sinodes' (Namibië en Midde-Afrika) buite die RSA se nasionale grense lê." See *Acta Synodi*, DRCMA, 1994, 41.

38 For an overview of the history of the Gereformeerde Kerke see Pieter Coertzen (ed). *350 Years Reformed*. 2002.

In my view the URCSA should continuously remind itself about its name and how it came about specifically when it comes to conversation and decisions linked to its ecclesiology and how it finds expression within its congregations and in formal church meetings. In the process of reunification between the churches within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches a conversation on the name of the new church must be influenced by a deep ecclesiological discussion on *who this united church will be*. For this to be possible the URCSA should continuously challenge itself to rediscover its identity and, as is the case with other churches, strive to root its ecclesial identity in the day-to-day actions of local congregations and in the lives of its congregants.

If this is so then perhaps Shakespeare's renowned words, 'What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet;' might not ring true for URCSA and the other churches in the family of Dutch Reformed Churches.<sup>39</sup>

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## TREFWOORDE

VGKSA  
 Gereformeerde  
 Kerkhereniging  
 Belhar  
 Familie van NG Kerke

Key Words  
 URCSA

39 See Shakespeare's famous play, *Romeo and Juliet* <https://scholarsbank.uoregon.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1794/837/romeo.pdf?sequence=1>

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## 'n Regsvergelykende blik op die diensverhouding van 'n predikant

### ABSTRACT

#### **The contract of employment and employment relationships of ministers: a comparative view**

For any party, including a minister, a contract of employment is necessary for purposes of establishing an employment relationship in order to be subject to the Labour Relations Act. If no such employment relationship exists, the court will have no jurisdiction to entertain a dispute in terms of Labour law. The right to freedom of religion, as contained in the Constitution, allow religious organisations and churches to give meaning to and to define the various positions in the church, including the position of minister according to their own religious views. With reference to some comparative views and the different views within the Dutch Reformed Church, Reformed Church and Anglican Church, there seems to be no general rule as to whether a Minister of Religion is an employee or not and different denominations have different teachings and ideologies. Each individual case will therefore be judged on its own merits and facts. This view is also in line with the approach taken in the Netherlands. The courts must therefore be sensitive to the *sui generis* nature of churches and should not impose specific legal or labour relationship onto churches if it is in conflict with their own religious views.

### 1. INLEIDING

Die ontslag of skorsing van 'n predikant kan dikwels ingrypende gevolge vir die betrokke inhou, meer so as vir 'n gewone kerkslid. Vir 'n predikant wat graag nog sy beroep wil beoefen en wat 'n moontlike skorsing of ontslag in die gesig staar, is dit nie so eenvoudig om by 'n ander kerk of selfs gemeente aan te sluit nie en dit hou dikwels ernstige finansiële implikasies vir die persoon in. Die reg op godsdiensvryheid, soos vervat in die Grondwet, gee geloofsinsettings die reg om hulself en voortspruitende ampte te definieer, óók die amp van predikant. Die toepassing en benadering in verskillende denominasies verskil en veral ten aansien van diensverhoudinge, volg verskillende kerke verskillende benaderings wat steeds gelyke beskerming geniet binne die reg op godsdiensvryheid. Alle wetgewing, reëls en regulasies is dus nie sonder meer eenvormig van toepassing op alle kerke en geloofsinsettings nie. Die regsverhouding tussen 'n predikant en sy gemeente is egter geen uitgemaakte saak nie en die standpunt van die hof is ook nie konsekwent nie.

Hierdie bespreking sal fokus op die diens van 'n predikant, die dienskontrak en die gevolglike vraag of dit as arbeidsregtelik aangemerkt kan word wat aan die hand van die bestaande arbeidswetgewing gereël moet word, en of dit 'n *sui generis*-verhouding is ingevolge die interne reg van die betrokke kerk of geloofsinstelling. Die regsposisie van die predikant sal

ondersoek word deur te fokus op die posisie in verskeie denominasies, aan die hand van voorbeelde. Die posisie in Nederland bied 'n interessante en baie relevante blik op die Suid-Afrikaanse posisie en gevolglik sal die posisie in Nederland ook krities bestudeer word.

## 2. VERSKILLENDE UITGANGSPUNTE TEN AANSIEN VAN DIE REGSVERHOUDING VAN 'N PREDIKANT

### 2.1 Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk (NG Kerk)

Reeds in 1976 met die toonaangewende saak van *Theron v Ring van Wellington van die NG Sendingkerk in Suid-Afrika*<sup>1</sup> beslis die hof by monde van Jansen AR dat die verhouding tussen die predikant en die kerkraad, binne die NG Sendingkerk, arbeidsregtelik van aard is "[...] aangesien dit duidelik is dat die appellant, as leraar, 'n dienskontrak aangegaan het, wat onderhewig aan die Kerkorde gelees moet word, en dat wesenlik sy eis daarop neerkom dat die bepalings van daardie kontrak afgedwing moet word".<sup>2</sup> Jansen AR maak dit duidelik dat die dienskontrak steeds onderhewig aan die Kerkorde gelees moet word.

Die saak van *Schreuder v Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk Wilgespruit & others*<sup>3</sup> is van groot belang vir die NG Kerk en dié se gepaardgaande siening van die predikantsverhouding binne die NG Kerk-gemeenskap. Ds. Schreuder is in 1996 as predikant ontslaan deur die NG Kerk Wilgespruit, ingevolge artikel 12 van die Kerkorde.<sup>4</sup> Hy voer aan dat hy onbillik ontslaan is ingevolge die Wet op Arbeidsverhoudinge.<sup>5</sup> Die hof het geen probleem gehad om die verhouding tussen die predikant en sy betrokke gemeente as 'n kontraktuele diensverhouding aan te merk nie.<sup>6</sup> Namens Schreuder is immers verklaar dat hy as predikant in diens van die kerkraad en die gemeente staan.<sup>7</sup> Die pligte van 'n predikant is uiteengesit in artikel 9 van die Kerkorde en is ook vervat as ampspligte in die betrokke beroepsbrief. Die hof beslis dat die beroepsbrief 'n dienskontrak tussen die predikant en die gemeente of kerkraad daarstel en beslis verder soos volg:

"In die lig van hierdie getuienis is ek oortuig dat die bedoeling van die beroepsbrief is om kontraktuele verpligtinge in die vorm van 'n dienskontrak te skep tussen die predikant en sy of haar gemeente."<sup>8</sup>

En verder:

"Dit is gevolglik duidelik dat die verhouding tussen 'n predikant en die betrokke gemeente of kerkverband 'n kontraktuele diensverhouding is."<sup>9</sup>

1 *Theron v Ring van Wellington van die NG Sendingkerk in Suid-Afrika* 1976 (2) SA 1 (A).

2 *Theron v Ring van Wellington* par 26D.

3 *Schreuder v Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk Wilgespruit & others* [1999] 7 BLLR 713 (AH).

4 "12.1 Indien 'n leraar nie sy gemeente verder tot stigting kan dien nie, mag die ring na ondersoek, waarin beide die kerkraad en die betrokke leraar aangehoor word, die band tussen leraar en gemeente losmaak indien daar, volgens die oordeel van die ring, billike voorsiening vir die leraar gemaak is.

12.2 Billike voorsiening word deur die ring in oorleg met die betrokke kerkraad of instansie en die betrokke leraar bepaal. 'n Uitbetaling van ses maande se lewensonderhoud en toelaes asook reëlings in verband met pensioendeckering vir hierdie periode word as voldoende beskou."

5 66 van 1995.

6 *Schreuder* par 25.

7 *Schreuder* par 15.

8 *Schreuder* par 20.

9 *Schreuder* par 25.

Die beslissing in *Schreuder* hou in dat in soverre dit die NG Kerk betref, die diens van 'n predikant aan die hand van die bestaande arbeidswetgewing sal moet geskied. Indien die NG Kerk sy standpunt betreffende diensverhoudinge duideliker gestel het en nie net aangetoon het dat die diensverhouding van 'n predikant inderdaad 'n kontrak is nie, maar ook een is wat onderhewig aan die bepalinge van die Kerkorde is, sou die hof dalk ander oorwegings sterker gestel het. Aangesien die kerk dit egter nie duidelik gestel het nie, het dit die hof weer eens geen keuse gelaat as om te bepaal dat die arbeidswetgewing gevolglik geld nie. Die Algemene Sinode van die NG Kerk het in die lig van die nuwe arbeidswetgewing die Kerkorde derhalwe hersien.<sup>10</sup> Volgens die NG Kerk is die arbeidswetgewing nie in stryd met die Bybel of enige bestaande besluite wat by die kerk as 'n geloofsinstelling pas nie (NG Kerk 2010:1). Die arbeidswetgewing plaas klem op die beginsel van billikheid wat die Skrifbeginsels onderskryf dat gelowiges op 'n billike wyse met mekaar omgaan en op 'n regverdige wyse met mekaar in 'n diensverhouding staan. Naas die Kerkorde, het die NG Kerk ook verskeie besluite geneem rakende die verhouding tussen werkgewer en werknemer. Hoewel die Kerkorde reflekteer dat die NG Kerk arbeidswetgewing in ag neem in sy interne verhoudinge, bly die formulering en toepassing daarvan steeds kerklik van aard.

Artikel 12.1 van die NG Kerkorde (2007) bepaal dat predikante vir die uitvoering van hulle amp of bediening deur 'n kerkvergadering (kerkraad, ring, sinode, Algemene Sinode) beroep en in diens gestel word. Artikel 12.2 maak dit egter duidelik dat 'n predikant, as geroepene van die Here deur Sy kerk, aan die Here én aan die betrokke kerkvergadering verantwoording verskuldig is. Die bewoording in die Kerkorde beklemtoon dus die kerklike aard van die diensverhouding en vermy die terme werkgewer en werknemer. Indiensneming en diensbeëindiging van die predikant geskied deur die betrokke kerkvergadering soos vasgestel deur die Kerkorde en ander geldende besluite (NG Kerk 2007: artikel 12.4). Werknemers, anders as predikante, se diensverhouding word per diensooreenkoms gereël (NG Kerk 2007: artikel 58.1). In die 2010-Bestuurshandleiding vir Diensverhoudinge in die NG Kerk (2010:261) word spesifieke reëlings getref ten aansien van griewe en dissipline in die kerk. Artikel 59-66 van die Kerkorde handel met kerklike dissipline wat betrekking het op 'n kerkraad se herderlike opsig en tug oor diegene wat aan sy sorg toevertrou is. Die dissiplinêre en griewe-optrede vervat in artikel 12 van die Kerkorde het weer betrekking op die diensverhouding tussen 'n kerkvergadering as werkgewer en die werknemers in sy diens. Die bestuursgids bevat 'n voorbeeld van 'n dissiplinêre prosedure in Hoofstuk 15, wat kerke in hulle onderskeie personeelbeleide kan opneem. Die kerk beklemtoon egter die feit dat hoewel hulle die Wet op Arbeidsverhoudinge toepas in hulle interne verhoudinge, die kerk steeds *sui generis* in sy funksionering en aard is en die toepassing van die wetgewing gevolglik in hierdie konteks gesien moet word. Die handleiding bepaal verder in hierdie opsig soos volg:

“Die Wet op Arbeidsverhoudinge en gevestigde bestuurspraktyke poog om billikheid en regverdigheid in die werkplek te vestig. Die Kerkorde bied die grondslag vir ordelikheid in die kerk (Artikel 2) en omskryf die andersheid van die kerk. In wese staan die twee prosesse nie in stryd nie en ondersteun eerder 'n gemeenskaplike doel. Daar is deur die 1998 Algemene Sinode gepoog om die Kerkorde nog meer en duideliker in lyn te bring met die toepaslike landswette (Artikel 12 en 58 tot 64 van Kerkorde).” (NG Kerk 2010: 261)

<sup>10</sup> Die volgende wetgewing het onder andere 'n belangrike rol gespeel in die wysigings: Die Grondwet van die Republiek van Suid-Afrika, 1996 (Spesifieke artikel 18 en 23); Die Wet op Arbeidsverhoudinge 66 van 1995, soos gewysig; Die Wet op Basiese Diensvoorwaardes 75 van 1997, soos gewysig; Die Wet op Gelyke Indiensneming 55 van 1998; Die Wet op Werkloosheidsversekering 30 van 1966; Die Wet op Vergoeding vir Beroepsbeserings- en Siektes 130 van 1993; Die Wet op Beroepsgesondheid en Veiligheid 85 van 1993; Die Wet op die Ontwikkeling van Vaardighede 97 van 1998.

Wat die diensooreenkoms en spesifiek die beroepsbrief betref, word predikante in die NG Kerk beroep ooreenkomstig artikel 7 van die Kerkorde. Die beroepsbrief soos vervat in besluit 7b.1 van die Kerkorde is die diensaanbod wat aan die hand van Kerkorde art. 9 (die diensopdrag) en na aanleiding van Kerkorde art. 13 (die diensvoordele van die beroepene) omskryf word en dien as raamwerk van die diensooreenkoms. Binne die NG Kerk word die beroepsbrief gesien as 'n dienskontrak, vergelykbaar met dié van byvoorbeeld 'n skriba, orrelis, skoonmaker of tuinier. Coertzen (1999:6) "is oortuig daarvan dat alle van hulle hul werk, net soos die dominee, as 'n roeping en diens aan die Here en sy gemeente sien". In die saak van *Wagenaar v United Reformed Church*<sup>11</sup> beslis die hof dat 'n beroepsbrief aan al die nodige vereistes voldoen om 'n diensooreenkoms daar te stel.

## 2.2 Die Gereformeerde Kerke

Binne die Gereformeerde Kerke van Suid-Afrika word die beroepsbrief egter nie gesien as 'n werksaanbod nie, maar bloot as 'n uitdrukking van bepaalde Artikels (4, 5 en spesifiek 11) van die Kerkorde wat op die roeping en versorging van sy bedienaars betrekking het.<sup>12</sup> Die bedoeling van die betrokke partye om 'n bepaalde regsverhouding te skep, veral dan 'n werkgewer/werknemer-verhouding of 'n bepaalde diensverhouding is van groot belang en is ook die toets wat deur die hof gebruik word. In *Church of the Province of Southern Africa (Diocese of Cape Town v CCMA)*<sup>13</sup> beslis die hof:

"The crucial question is whether, at the time the parties concluded the offer and acceptance, they intended to create a legally binding contractual relationship i.e. the mere fact of an offer and acceptance did not equate to a binding contractual relationship; the offer and acceptance had to be accompanied by the intention to create the contract." [Eie kursivering.]

Van Jaarsveld (2006:175) kritiseer egter die klem wat geplaas word op die "bedoeling" van die partye en volgens hom is dit slegs een van meerdere kriteria wat gebruik kan word. Hy beklemtoon die feit dat die bedoeling om 'n afdwingbare ooreenkoms te sluit nog nooit 'n primêre vereiste vir die bepaling van 'n diensverhouding was nie.

Volgens Smit en Du Plooy (2008:60) word die Heilige Skrif gesien en aanvaar as die belangrikste bron van die kerklike orde binne die Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika. Die Kerkorde gee uitvoering aan die Skrif deur die predikant se diens te reël. Gevolglik voer hulle aan dat by die reëling van predikante se diens, die Skrif dieselfde funksie vir die kerk vervul as wat die arbeidswetgewing vir die burgerlike gemeenskap beoog. Die belydenisskrifte is egter ook 'n belangrike bron van die Kerkorde en gee inhoud aan en verwoord die Skrifbeginsels. 'n Interpretasie van die Nederlandse Geloofsbelijdenis regverdig volgens hulle die gevolgtrekking dat predikante nie as werknemers van die kerkraad beskou kan word *nie* (Smit en Du Plooy 2008:61).<sup>14</sup>

11 *Wagenaar v United Reformed Church SA* [2005] 1 BALR 127 (KVBA) par 7.

12 Artikel 11 van die Kerkorde bepaal onder andere soos volg: "Die kerkraad wat die kerk verteenwoordig, is verplig om sy bedienaars van die Woord met behoorlike onderhoud te versorg en mag hulle nie die onderhoud weerhou of hulle uit hulle diens ontslaan sonder kennis en goedkeuring van die klassis met advies van die deputate van die partikuliere sinode nie."

13 *Church of the Province of Southern Africa (Diocese of Cape Town) v CCMA & others* [2001] 11 BLLR 1213 (AH) 1223 par 24.

14 Sien verder Kerkorde artikel 4 en 5.

“Die reëling van die Gereformeerde predikantsdiens blyk, volgens die selfdefiniëring van die Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika ’n interne kerklike aangeleentheid te wees, gegrond op godsdienstige bepalings en nie onderhewig aan die staat se arbeidswetgewing nie.” (Smit en Du Plooy 2008:61)

Die predikant se diens in Die Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika word nie deur die Kerkorde by wyse van ’n kontrak gereël nie, maar deur die interne reg van die kerk.<sup>15</sup> Artikel 1 van die Gereformeerde Kerkorde bepaal soos volg:

“Om goeie orde in die kerk van Christus te onderhou, is daarin nodig: die dienste, samekomste, toesig oor die leer, sakramente en seremonies en die kerklike tug, waaroor hierna agtereenvolgens gehandel word.”

Volgens Smit (2007:587) benadruk bogenoemde uitgangspunt die doel van die Gereformeerde Kerkorde, wat nie net die reëling vir instandhouding van die kerk bevat nie, maar ook die reëlings met betrekking tot die predikant se diens. Aangesien die predikantsdiens deel is van die orde van ’n hoër gesag met betrekking tot die instandhouding van sy kerk, word dit as ’n interne kerklike aangeleentheid beskou.<sup>16</sup>

### 2.3 Die Anglikaanse Kerk

Die siening in die Gereformeerde Kerk dat predikante nie as werknemers van die kerkraad beskou kan word nie, tref ons ook in ’n mate aan binne die Anglikaanse Kerk. Binne die Anglikaanse Kerk is die saak van *Church of the Province*<sup>17</sup> van belang. ’n Priester van die Anglikaanse Kerk is na ’n dissiplinêre verhoor op klagte van wangedrag geskors. Hy is ontnem van sy preekbevoegdheid en mag vir vyf jaar geen diens in die kerk verrig het nie. Hoewel hy sy status as priester behou het, sou hy geen vergoeding ontvang nie en voer hy aan dat sy skorsing op ’n ontslag neerkom. Die Kommissie vir Bemiddeling en Arbitrasie (KVBA) het ’n bevel gemaak waarvolgens die priester se ontslag deur die kerk as onbillik bestempel is. Die Anglikaanse Kerk van Kaapstad bring ’n aansoek vir die hersiening van die KVBA-beslissing en voer aan dat die kommissaris van die KVBA gefouteer het en dat daar geen diensverhouding bestaan tussen die priester en die Anglikaanse Kerk nie en dat die KVBA gevolglik geen jurisdiksie gehad het nie. In die Anglikaanse Kerk besluit die gemeente nie waar die betrokke priester diens sal doen nie, maar die biskop. Die priester word nie deur die gemeente beroep nie en die biskop is verantwoordelik vir die aanstelling en ontslag van die priester.<sup>18</sup> Die Anglikaanse Kerk voer aan dat:

“[...] a priest is not regarded as the servant of the Church: while the Church provides the framework for the priest’s work (through the constitution and canons), the priest is regarded as working for God, ie the relationship between the priest and the Church cannot be regarded as one of employment. The applicant simply, according to it, provided the sphere within which priests serve God arising out of their calling. It is for that reason, so applicant argued, that priests are said to be called of God and serving God and offering

<sup>15</sup> Sien verder Smit 2007: 586 ev.

<sup>16</sup> Sien verder Kerkorde artikel 16 en artikel 23.

<sup>17</sup> *Church of the Province of Southern Africa (Diocese of Cape Town) v CCMA & others* [2001] 11 BLLR 1213 (AH) 1227.

<sup>18</sup> *Church of the Province* 1215 par 7(iv) – “Matters relating to the appointment, removal and co-ordination of the clergy are a diocesan responsibility which is carried out by the Bishop (or Archbishop as in the present matter) of that diocese.”

their lives to God – this precludes the Anglican Church generally, and the applicant in particular, from speaking of employing priests.”<sup>19</sup>

Die hof kom tot die gevolgtrekking dat daar geen bedoeling tussen die partye was om ’n afdwingbare diensooreenkoms te sluit nie en bevind gevolglik dat:

“[...] a contract of employment is necessary for purposes of establishing an employment relationship and that there was no legally enforceable contract of employment between the applicant and the third respondent, the parties are not an employer and employee as defined by the LRA and consequently the first respondent has no jurisdiction to entertain the alleged dispute referred to it by the third respondent.”<sup>20</sup>

Van Jaarsveld (2006:175) kritiseer hierdie siening van die kerk en beskou dit selfs as “lagwekkend vir die kerk om aan te voer dat priesters nie dienare van die kerk is nie, maar slegs van God en dat die kerk slegs ’n priester se roeping fasiliteer deur die verskaffing van ’n raamwerk waarbinne hy God kan dien”.

## 2.4 Botsende sienings

In ’n 2005-beslissing van die KVBA in *Wagenaar v United Reformed Church*<sup>21</sup> is ’n predikant van ’n Pretoriase gemeente van die Verenigende Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika losgemaak van sy gemeente. Hy voer aan dat hy onbillik ontslaan is en steun op die *Schreuder*-beslissing. Die kerk ontken egter dat Wagenaar ’n werknemer ingevolge die Wet op Arbeidsverhoudinge was en dat sy losmaking van die gemeente nie beteken het dat hy nie meer deel van die kerk was nie. Die kerk steun op die benadering soos gevolg in die *Church of the Province*-beslissing. Na ’n interpretasie van die bepaalde feite van die saak en optrede deur die partye, bevind die hof dat die predikant wel in ’n kontraktuele verhouding met die kerk gestaan het. Gevolglik was Wagenaar ’n werknemer ingevolge die Wet op Arbeidsverhoudinge en die kommissaris bevind dat die losmaak van die band neerkom op ’n ontslag wat prosedureel en substantief onbillik is.

Die uitspraak in *Wagenaar* beklemtoon die onversoenbaarheid van bogenoemde twee beslissings, maar ook die belangrike bevestiging dat daar geen algemene reël in die Suid-Afrikaanse reg bestaan ten aansien van die diensverhouding van ’n predikant nie. Die hof beslis soos volg:

“It seems that there is no general rule in South Africa as to whether a Minister of Religion is an employee or not. Nor is there likely to be. Different denominations have different teachings and ideologies. In my view each case depends upon the facts.”<sup>22</sup>

Hierdie siening word ook bevestig in die uitspraak van *Macdonald v Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland*.<sup>23</sup> Allan Macdonald is in 2001 aangestel in sy amp as dominee van die Vrye Presbiteriaanse-gemeente Daviot, Tomatin en Stratherrick. Hy het geen geskrewe kontrak of diensverklaring ontvang nie en in 2006 publiseer hy ’n boek waarin hy sekere aspekte van

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19 *Church of the Province* 1217 par xiii.

20 *Church of the Province* 1217 par 40.

21 *Wagenaar v United Reformed Church SA* [2005] 1 BALR 127 (KVBA).

22 *Wagenaar* 139F.

23 *Macdonald v Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland* 2009 ET S/11071 (28 Mei 2009).

die kerk erg kritiseer.<sup>24</sup> Hy is versoek om verskoning aan te teken en na sy weiering, word hy geskors en uiteindelik in Mei 2008 ontslaan (Cranmer 2010:355). Macdonald het 'n eis vir onbillike ontslag ingedien by 'n indiensnemingstribunaal en die voortsittende beampte Regter MacKenzie bevind dat Macdonald *nie* 'n werknemer van die kerk was nie en gevolglik nie onbillik of andersins ontslaan kon word nie. Hy beslis soos volg:

“[...] Deacons, Elders and Ministers are ordained to their respective offices within the Free Presbyterian Church and each is an office-holder and that therefore the claimant is an office-holder by virtue of his ordination. His rights and duties are defined by the office he holds and not by any contract. He is not an employee of the respondent.”<sup>25</sup>

Op appèl bevestig die hof dat die bedoeling van die partye om 'n bepaalde regsverhouding te skep belangrik is, asook artikel 9 van die Europese Konvensie (godsdienst, geloof en oortuiging). Die hof bevestig verder dat die verhoorhof tereg aangevoer het dat wanneer bepaal moet word of daar die bedoeling was om 'n werkgewer/werknemer-verhouding te skep, die beginsels van die individuele kerk in ag geneem moet word. Die reg sal nie geredelik 'n regsverhouding op lede van 'n kerk afdwing as dit teenstrydig is met hulle geloof nie (Cranmer 2010: 356-357). Die hof kom tot die gevolgtrekking dat:

“[Judge MacKenzie’s] conclusion is consistent with recognition of the principle that, in the case of a church whose foundation and structure shows a belief that it is not appropriate, in the case of important offices including that of Minister, to set up a legal relationship that is subject to control by the Civil Magistrate.”<sup>26</sup>

'n Baie belangrike gevolgtrekking van die hof is die bevestiging dat daar geen algemene reël bestaan wat bepaal dat alle predikante werknemers is, of nie is nie. In *New Testament Church of God v Stewart*<sup>27</sup> kom die hof tot die gevolgtrekking dat Stewart wel 'n werknemer van die kerk is, maar maak dit duidelik dat sy gevolgtrekking nie 'n algemene bevinding bevat “that ministers of religion are employees” nie. “Employment tribunals should carefully analyse the particular facts, which will vary from church to church, and probably from religion to religion, before reaching a conclusion.” Die hof se beslissing in die Schreuder-saak is dan ook grootliks beïnvloed deur die NG Kerk se eie siening oor die aard van die predikantsverhouding binne die kerkgemeenskap en hoe dit geïnterpreteer en toegepas word in ooreenstemming met die bepaalde geloofsidentiteit van die NG Kerk. Die Anglikaanse Kerk se interpretasie en toepassing van die diensverhouding van 'n predikant/priester in ooreenstemming met hulle bepaalde geloofsidentiteit, het die hof egter tot ander insigte gebring in *Church of the Province*. Die Anglikaanse Kerk het getuienis aangebied wat die hof oortuig het van hulle siening en tradisie binne die kerkgemeenskap in terme waarvan predikante en priesters *nie* as werknemers beoordeel word *nie*.

In Nederland sien ons dieselfde tendens in terme waarvan die regsposisie van 'n predikant hoofsaaklik bepaal word aan die hand van die organisatoriese struktuur van die bepaalde kerkgenootskap waarbinne hy aktief is (Raven 2006:7). Die regsverhouding tussen 'n predikant en sy gemeente is egter geen uitgemaakte saak nie en die standpunt van die howe is ook nie

24 *Veritatem Eme* – Buy the Truth.

25 Macdonald par 81.

26 *Macdonald v Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland* [2010] UKEAT S/0034/09/BI op 42. (10 Februarie 2010). Beskikbaar by [http://www.bailii.org/uk/cases/UKEAT/2010/0034\\_09\\_1002.html](http://www.bailii.org/uk/cases/UKEAT/2010/0034_09_1002.html), 3 Oktober 2010.

27 *New Testament Church of God v Stewart* 2007 EWCA Civ 1004 op 55.

konsekwent nie. 'n Uitspraak van die Hoogste Hof in 2010<sup>28</sup> het ook geen noemenswaardige lig op die onderwerp gewerp nie en die debat is weer oop. Die posisie in Nederland bied 'n interessante en tog ook relevante blik op die Suid-Afrikaanse posisie en gevolglik sal die posisie in Nederland verder bestudeer word.

### 3. DIE POSISIE IN NEDERLAND

In Nederland, binne kerkgenootskappe in die presbiteriaal-sinodale stelsel,<sup>29</sup> verrig die predikant sy werksaamhede wat verband hou met die bediening van die Woord op grond van 'n ooreenkoms met die gemeente. Hierdie ooreenkoms, soos die posisie in die meeste Suid-Afrikaanse gemeentes, neem die vorm van 'n beroepsbrief aan waarin die pligte en verantwoordelikhede van die predikant uiteengesit word (Raven 2006:9). Gesien in die lig van artikel 2:2 BW,<sup>30</sup> wat bepaal dat 'n kerkgenootskap deur sy eie statuut bestuur word soverre dit nie in stryd met die wet is nie, beskou kerkgenootskappe die regsposisie tussen predikant en die gemeente as 'n verhouding *sui generis* (van eie aard). Die mening bestaan dan ook dat die voortspruitende ooreenkoms nie as arbeidsregtelik aangemerkt moet word nie, maar 'n ooreenkoms *sui generis* is (Raven 2006:10). Die vraag wat tereg na vore kom, is of en tot welke mate die siviele arbeidsreg tog op 'n kerkgenootskap van toepassing is. Artikel 7:610 van die Burgerlike Wetboek omskryf 'n arbeidsooreenkoms soos volg:

“De arbeidsovereenkomst is de overeenkomst waarbij de ene partij, de werknemer, zich verbindt in dienst van de andere partij, de werkgever, tegen loon gedurende zekere tijd arbeid te verrichten.”

Die element van “diens verrig aan 'n ander party” word dikwels gesien as die element van 'n gesagsverhouding wat in 'n ooreenkoms teenwoordig moet wees om as arbeidsregtelik aangemerkt te word. Die afwesigheid van 'n sogenaamde gesagsverhouding blyk dan ook dikwels die rede te wees waarom die regsverhouding tussen 'n predikant en sy gemeente *nie* as 'n arbeidsooreenkoms beskou word *nie*. Vergelyk byvoorbeeld Koopmans (1962:226-227):

“Bij predikanten van de Hervormde Kerk en ander Protestante kerkgenootschappen ontbreekt ieders gezagsverhouding.”

En verder:

“Het ontbreken van een arbeidsovereenkomst bij bezigheden van godsdienstige aard wortelt in ander omstandigheden, meestal in het ontbreken van een gezagsverhouding [...]” (Koopmans 1962:32 ev)

Hierdie siening word ook aangetref in van die vroeëre Nederlandse regspraak, waar die hof van die standpunt uitgaan dat die verhouding tussen predikant en gemeente deur die spesiale

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28 LJN, BK9957, Gerechtshof Arnhem, 104.001.028, beskikbaar op <http://rechtspraak.nl>.

29 Binne die sinodale stelsel tref ons 'n breër kerkverband aan, bestaande uit plaaslike gemeentes.

Gemeentes bestaan uit een of meer predikante, ouderlinge en diakens wat saam die kerkraad vorm en leiding gee aan die gemeente. In 'n breër verband word meerdere vergaderings of sinodale vergaderinge aangetref (bv die klassis, provinsiale kerkvergadering of landelike sinode.) Sien verder Van Drimmelen 2004:203-205.

30 2.Zij worden geregeerd door hun eigen statuut, voor zover dit niet in strijd is met de wet.

reëls van die betrokke kerk bepaal word.<sup>31</sup> In 'n later saak van die Hoge Raad<sup>32</sup> bevestig die hof die groeiende tendens van die howe om die bestaan van 'n arbeidsooreenkoms nie per se uit te sluit bloot vanweë die geestelike karakter van 'n predikant se werksverrigting nie. In die beslissing van die Hoge Raad is 'n imam uit sy amp ontslaan. Hy veg sy ontslag aan en dring aan op sy loon totdat die arbeidsooreenkoms regmatig beëindig is. Die moskee voer aan dat daar geen sprake van 'n arbeidsooreenkoms was nie. Die hof kom tot die gevolgtrekking dat hoewel daar geen gesagsverhouding (dus geen arbeidsooreenkoms) mag bestaan ten aansien van die godsdienstige aspekte van die bepaalde godsdienstige amp nie, dit nie noodwendig beteken dat daar geen sprake van 'n gesagsverhouding ten opsigte van ander aspekte (soos werktyd, verlof, ensovoorts) is nie. Hierdie algemene aspekte kan dus wel deel vorm van 'n wettige arbeidsooreenkoms (Raven 2006: 28-29). Hierdie tendens van die howe word ook waargeneem deur Oldenhuis (2004:178), veral in die konteks van pastorale medewerkers en predikante in die gesondheidsorg. Die CRVB beslis onder andere soos volg:

“De aanvaarding van goddelijk gezag behoeft de aanvaarding van menslijk gezag als waarvan sprake is bij een arbeidsovereenkomst niet uit te sluiten.”<sup>33</sup>

Dit word verder bevestig deur Rood (1997) in sy kommentaar by die saak van die Hoge Raad met betrekking tot die ontslag van 'n predikant van die Christelike Gereformeerde Kerk te 's-Hertogenbosch. Hy gaan van die standpunt uit dat die beginsel van vryheid van godsdiens en skeiding tussen kerk en staat nie in die weg hoef te staan van die toepassing van die arbeidsreg op die geestelike terrein nie. Ten spyte van hierdie tendens, lyk dit egter of die howe steeds steun en voorkeur verleen aan die standpunt van 'n kerkgenootskap as 'n *sui generis*-verhouding en die Nederlandse “Hoge Raad” bevestig hierdie standpunt soos volg:

“[...] uiterste terughoudendheid geboden is bij het toepasselijk verklaren van regelingen van materieel burgerlijke recht op de rechtsverhouding tussen verschillende organen en onderdelen van een kerkgenootschap.”<sup>34</sup>

Oldenhuis (2004:178) lig verder uit dat dit opmerklik is dat heelwat kerkgenootskappe, veral van die kleiner protestantse kerkgenootskappe, geen inhoud verleen aan die sogenaamde *sui generis*-karakter van die bepaalde kerkgenootskap in die Kerkorde, statuut of selfs beroepsbrief nie. Veral waar 'n kerkgenootskap van die standpunt uitgaan dat die verhouding tussen die kerkgenootskap en predikant nie 'n arbeidsooreenkoms daarstel nie, sou 'n mens verwag dat die betrokke kerkgenootskap die vermoënsregtelike en ander belangrike aspekte van die verhouding duidelik sal omskryf, wat steeds nie die geval is nie. Dit is juis hierdie onvermoë van kerkgenootskappe om inhoud en duidelikheid aan die interpretasie en toepassing van hul eie statuut en geloofsidentiteit te gee, wat veroorsaak dat dit in die hande van die howe gelaat word vir interpretasie. 'n Tendens wat duidelik waargeneem kan word in die Suid-Afrikaanse konteks in verskeie sake.

Die funksies van die predikant in die Christelike Gereformeerde Kerk in Nederland word byvoorbeeld uiteengesit in artikel 16.<sup>35</sup> Die meeste kerke in die Gereformeerde tradisie het

31 Sien Rechtbank Zwolle, 16 Maart 1966, NJ 1967, 178.

32 Hoge Raad, 17 Juni 1994, NJ 1994, 757.

33 CRVB 29 Junie 1977, RSV 1977, 309;313.

34 HR 14 Junie 1997, NJ 1992, 173 HJS, TVVS 1991, 297 en verder nt. MGR (ds. Kruis – Chr. Geref. Kerk 's-Hertogenbosch).

35 Artikel 16 – De Taak van de dienaren des Woords (Editie(s) 2007).

kerkordes met vergelykbare bepalings. Dit is duidelik dat daar ’n besondere band bestaan tussen die predikant en sy gemeente, wat ook blyk uit die opdrag of beroeping tot besondere arbeid (soos sending of gesondheidsorg) wat ons in artikel 6 aantref.<sup>36</sup> Dit geld egter nie net vir predikante nie. Binne die Gereformeerde tradisie verwys die term “kerklik werker” in die praktyk ook na pastorale werkers, evangeliste, kategete, jeug- of diakonale werkers, proponente, koster, administrateurs en selfs mede- of hulpleraars. Hierdie sogenaamde kerklike werkers word dan ook selde as ’n amp gesien en kwalifiseer eerder as ’n hulpdiens wat ondergeskik is aan die kerkraad (Post 2008:5). Dit kan dus self ’n orrelis, soos in mnr. Strydom se geval, of onderwysers in godsdienstige skole, insluit. Volgens Van der Ploeg het sommige kerke wel hulle sake “prima in orde” waarvan die Protestantse Kerk volgens hom ’n voorbeeld is. Hy is verder van mening dat:

“als de kerk tot in detail heeft geregeld wat er bijvoorbeeld moet gebeuren bij langdurige ziekte of arbeidsongeschiktheid, zou ik me als predikant geen zorgen maken over het ontbreken van een dienstverband.” (Sien Mouissie 2010)

Pel (1991:35) wys verder daarop dat die howe baie waarde heg aan die sogenaamde “beroepsbrief” vir interpretasie en dat dit gevolglik aan te beveel is dat dit kerkregtelik goed omskryf en uitgewerk word. Daar word algemeen aanvaar dat die regsreëls van toepassing binne die kerkreg en die arbeidsreg van verskillende orde is (sien Van der Ploeg 2004: 159 ev). Beteken dit noodwendig dat hierdie reëls met mekaar in konflik staan? Kan die kerkgenootskap op grond van sy gegewe vryheid in artikel 2:2 BW en die reg op vryheid van godsdien vrylik funksioneer buite die arbeidsreg? Bepaal artikel 2:2 BW nie immers dat die kerklike statuut moet buig voor die wet of algemene reg nie? Volgens Van der Ploeg (2004:170) vertoon die verhouding tussen predikant en die kerklike regs persoon ’n tweeledige karakter. Daar is die kerklike band met die kerklike regs persoon wat deur die kerklike statuut beheers word en daarnaas die arbeidsooreenkoms voortspruitend uit die Burgerlike Wetboek.<sup>37</sup>

By die ontslag van ’n predikant is die algemene siening dat die interne prosedure wat binne die bepaalde kerkgenootskap geld, toegepas moet word. Indien die interne prosedures nie gevolg is nie of die besluitneming in stryd met die redelikeheids- en billikeheidsnorme is, kan die besluit nietig verklaar of tersyde gestel word. Die burgerlike howe het egter in beginsel geen seggenskap in die regsaspekte van die bepaalde predikant- of priesterskap nie (Van der Ploeg 2004: 171-172). Een van die medewerkers van die Protestantse Kerk in Nederland, De Jong, argumenteer tereg soos volg:

“Het komt voor dat kerken bijna geen eigen regelingen hebben, en stellen dat een predikant geen dienstverband heeft. Dan kan een rechter toch besluiten het

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Tot de taak van de dienaren des Woords behoort dat zij in de gebeden en in de bediening des Woords en der sacramenten volharden, dat zij als goede herders zorg en verantwoordelijkheid dragen voor hun mede-amtsdragers, ouderlingen en diakenen, en voor de hele gemeente, tucht oefenen met de ouderlingen en zich ervoor inspannen dat alles betamelijk en in goede orde geschiedt.

36 Artikel 6 - Beroeping tot bijzondere arbeid.

Een dienaar des Woords zal een benoeming tot bijzondere arbeid zoals het geven van godsdienstonderwijs verbonden met pastorale arbeid aan protestants-christelijke scholen, geestelijke verzorging van militairen of varenden, in de gezondheidszorg, in penitentiaire inrichtingen en dergelijke alleen mogen aannemen wanneer hij verbonden blijft aan een gemeente. De verhouding waarin deze dienaar tot de betrokken gemeente staat, dient geregeld te worden onder goedkeuring van de classis.

37 Die Burgerlike Wetboek bevat onder andere bepalings rakende vakansie en verlof, gelyke behandeling, regte en verpligtinge van werkgewers en werknemers en so meer.

arbeidsrecht toe te passen, omdat het kerkrecht de predikant onvoldoende beschermt. Het arbeidsrecht is er op gericht 'zwakke' partijen – de werknemer – te beschermen." (Mouissie 2010)

Die beskerming van 'n predikant is dus van groot belang as dit kom by regsake, soos dit duidelik blyk in die saak van De Boer, wat hierna as voorbeeld bespreek sal word. In die saak van De Boer, soos gesien sal word, "vond het hof dat die reguleringe van die Christelike Gereformeerde Kerk in orde waren".<sup>38</sup> In hierdie saak is De Boer<sup>39</sup> deur die klassis van die Christelike Gereformeerde Kerk van Zeewolde as predikant geskors. Die voorsieningsregter in die "kort geding" oorweeg die belangrikheid van terughoudendheid in die betrokke geval, maar kom tot die gevolgtrekking dat die klassis, in hul skorsingsbesluit, basiese beginsels "van een behoorlijke rechtsgang zoals een genoegzame mate van hoor en wederverhoor" verontagsaam het en die skorsing word gevolglik tersyde gestel. Die regter beklemtoon die feit dat die konflik nie van 'n "leerstellige" aard was nie en so word die klem geplaas op die bepaalde prosedures wat gevolg is (sien Oldenhuis 2004: 181). Die regter het die skorsing van De Boer opgehef en bevind dat hy die geleentheid gebied moet word om sy gebruikelike werksaamhede en pligte te hervat. Die klassis van die betrokke gemeente het egter geweier om aan die vonnis uitvoering te gee. Die saak beland voor die "kanton Rechtbank" in Zwolle in 2005, waar die hof 'n belangrike uitspraak maak ten aansien van die aard en bestaan van 'n arbeidsooreenkoms. De Boer het aangevoer dat hy 'n arbeidsooreenkoms met die kerk gehad het en onredelik en onbillik ontslaan is.

Die hof moes in die afwesigheid van 'n geskrewe ooreenkoms beslis of die verhouding tussen De Boer en die Gemeente van Zeewolde en/of die klassis, aangemerkt kon word as 'n arbeidsooreenkoms, al dan nie. Die regter maak dit vanuit die staanspoor duidelik dat geen enkele kenmerk van die regsverhouding tussen die partye beslissend is nie, maar dat die "verskillende regsgevolge die partye aan hun verhouding hebben verbonden in een onderling verband moeten worden gezien".<sup>40</sup> Van die faktore wat die hof in ag geneem het, is die feit dat beide die gemeente en die klassis apart met regs persoonlikheid bekleed is. Hulle onderlinge regsverhouding sowel as die regsverhouding met De Boer is ook verder in die Kerkorde opgeneem en gereël.<sup>41</sup> Die hof is verder van mening dat die bepaalde skorsings- en ontslagprosedure wat die kerk gevolg het, nie 'n uitvloeisel van 'n meningsverskil oor *godsdienstige* sake soos byvoorbeeld die uitleg van die Bybel was nie, maar oor aangeleenthede wat betrekking gehad het op die omgang met gemeentelide en uitleg van die beroepsbrief of "traktement".<sup>42</sup> Die klassis het gevolglik ooreenkomsig die Kerkorde en prosedures daarin vervat, hulle bevoegdheids uitgeoefen om die nie-godsdienstige funksies van De Boer te beoordeel, te beïnvloed en te sanksioneer.<sup>43</sup>

Die hof beslis, met verwysing na die omskrywing van 'n arbeidsooreenkoms in artikel 7:610 BW, dat daar wel 'n arbeidsooreenkoms tussen De Boer en die Christelike Gereformeerde Kerk Zeewolde bestaan het en dat De Boer gevolglik onbillik en onredelik ontslaan is. Die saak gaan

38 sien die opmerking van De Jong in Mouissie 2010.

39 Rb. Zwolle 1 Februarie 2002, KG 70866/KG ZA 01-466.

40 LJN, AS6771, Sector kanton Rechtbank Zwolle, 217772 CV 03-9824 para 3.7. beskikbaar op <http://rechtspraak.nl>.

41 *Rechtbank Zwolle* par 3.8.

42 *Rechtbank Zwolle* par 3.13.

43 *Rechtbank Zwolle* par 3.14.

op hoër beroep na die Geregshof in Arnhem<sup>44</sup> en in teenstelling met die groot verwagting dat die hof eindelijk uitspraak sou lewer oor die vraag of 'n predikant 'n "gewone" werknemer is, al dan nie, kom daar geen uitspraak oor die "diensverband" van 'n predikant nie en blyk dit dat hierdie omstrede kwessie weer eens oop is vir diskussie. Die hof beslis dat De Boer eers die kerklike regsprosedures moes volg (van die klassis, na die "particulier" sinode, na die algemene sinode), alvorens hy die hof kon nader. Die hof beslis ook dat "de kerk heeft naar het oordeel van het hof geen fundamentele rechtsbeginselen geschonden".<sup>45</sup> Die hof maak geen melding van die kwessie rakende 'n arbeidsooreenkoms wat aan die orde was voor die regbank in Zwolle nie.

Raven, wat 'n doktorale verhandeling oor die regsverhouding tussen die predikant en sy gemeente geskryf het, spreek sy spyt hieroor uit want volgens hom sou "een uitspraak hierover [...] de kerken verder hebben geholpen in de discussie over hoe juridisch om te gaan met predikanten, en over hoe het arbeidsrecht zich verhoudt tot het eigen kerkrecht".<sup>46</sup> Die regsverhouding tussen 'n predikant en sy gemeente is geen uitgemaakte saak nie. Die Protestantse Kerk in Nederland kies byvoorbeeld teen so 'n "diensverband" wat die Gereformeerde Kerk reeds in 2007 gedoen het. Die nuwe Kerkorde van die Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt) bevat ook so 'n bepaling.<sup>47</sup> Die standpunt van die howe is ook geensins konsekwent nie en in hierdie verband voer een van die advokate tereg aan dat:

"De Hoge Raad bepaalde in de jaren negentig dat een predikant geen arbeids-overeenkomst heeft. Maar enkele jaren geleden oordeelde de Raad in de zaak van een imam dat er wel een diensverband was. Dat is tegenstrijdig. De uitspraak in de zaak-De Boer had hierin beeldbepalend kunnen worden." (Mouissie 2010)

Wat hou dit dus vir die toekoms in? Pel<sup>48</sup> stel voor dat kerke self die keuse moet maak tussen die toepassing van die kerkreg of arbeidsreg en dat:

"Discussies over of er en dienstverband is, komen altijd op het verkeerde moment, namelijk als er al ruzie is. Dat kan je beter voorkomen."

Kerke en predikante behoort behoorlik met mekaar te kommunikeer, te onderhandel en af te spreek oor die onderskeie regte en verpligtinge van beide partye en daarvolgens te handel. En aangesien die predikant in sy verhouding met die kerkgenootskap dikwels as die "swakkere party" gesien word, voer Oldenhuis (2004:179) aan dat beter beskerming vir die predikant gepas is. Die feit dat die verhouding tussen predikant en die kerkgenootskap nie as 'n arbeidsooreenkoms kwalifiseer nie, doen volgens hom geensins afbreuk aan die feit dat daar wel 'n vorm van vermoënsregtelike verhouding ter sprake is nie. Gevolglik sal die howe wel die beginsels van die dwingende reg toepas, waaronder die kontraktereg en deliktereg, of soos die gewoonte in die Suid-Afrikaanse reg is, die administratiefreg.

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44 LJN, BK9957, Gerechtshof Arnhem, 104.001.028, beskikbaar op <http://rechtspraak.nl>.

45 Sien <http://www.rechtspraak.nl/Gerechten/Gerechtshoven/Arnhem/Actualiteiten/Uitspraak+in+geschil+ussen+dominee+de+Boer+en+de+Christelijk+Gereformeerde+Kerk+te+Zeewolde+en+Clas.htm>.

46 Mouissie *Nederlands Dagblad*.

47 Sien die opmerkings van Pel in Mouissie 2010.

48 Sien die opmerkings van Pel in Mouissie 2010.

## 4. GEVOLGTREKING

Uit hierdie bespreking het dit geblyk dat die reg op godsdienstryheid soos vervat in die Grondwet kerke en ander geloofsinstellings toelaat om hulleself en voortspruitende ampte te definieer. Verskillende geloofsinstellings, kerke en denominasies word veroorloof om verskillende godsdiensige uitgangspunte te hê, ooreenkomstig hulle eie geloofsidentiteit. Die geloofsbeskouing en -praktyke van een kerk- of geloofsgemeenskap kan dus nie altyd as geldend vir 'n ander beskou word nie. Indien 'n dispuut egter ontstaan, rus die onus op die betrokke geloofsinstelling om getuienis aan te bied wat die hof sal oortuig van hulle siening, tradisie en geloofsidentiteit binne die kerkgemeenskap in terme waarvan predikante en priesters dalk nie as werknemers beoordeel behoort te word nie. Gevolglik maak die Grondwet dit ook duidelik dat enige uitsluitingsvereistes, optrede of kriteria van 'n geloofsinstelling nie summier toegelaat sal word nie, maar steeds aan die hand van die beperkingsbepaling en die proporsionaliteitstoets getoets sal word. Die hoewe behou die reg om hierdie sieninge en getuienis van geloofsgemeenskappe te toets. In die afwesigheid van sodanige formulering deur geloofsgemeenskappe, sal die hof inhoud aan die reg op godsdienstryheid gee deur middel van hofbeslissings op 'n *ad hoc*-basis soos die omstandighede dit vereis. Die hof behou ook die bevoegdheid om te toets of die bepaalde handeling van die geloofsgemeenskap wel toelaatbaar is en nie 'n oorskryding van algemene regsbeginsels daarstel nie.

Uit beide die Suid-Afrikaanse en Nederlandse kontekste blyk dit duidelik dat daar geen algemene reël bestaan dat predikante werknemers van die gemeente is, al dan nie, en gebonde is aan 'n dienskontrak nie. Verskillende denominasies het verskillende uitgangspunte en ideologieë. Gevolglik moet elke saak op sy eie meriete beoordeel word. Die hoewe moet dus sensitief wees vir die *sui generis*-aard van kerke en behoort nie geredelik 'n regsverhouding op lede van 'n kerk af te dwing as dit teenstrydig met hulle geloof is nie.

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#### **TREFWOORDE**

Diensverhouding  
Amp  
Predikant  
Dienskontrak  
Arbeidsreg  
Kerk  
Regsverhouding

#### **KEY WORDS**

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Employment relationship

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## Die Ope Brief na 30 jaar: Steeds 'n wekroep aan die NG Kerk

### ABSTRACT

#### The Open Letter after 30 years: Still relevant to the Dutch Reformed Church

The Open Letter to the Dutch Reformed Church was published on the 9th of June 1982. The Open Letter addressed serious problems in church and society with special regard to reconciliation, church unity and the prophetic calling of the church. It also proclaimed its solidarity with those who suffered in an unjust society. The reception of the Letter caused huge turmoil in the church but played an important role in motivating the church to revisit its policy on church and society. Three decades later, this article revisits the Letter and asks the question if, and then confirms that the Open Letter still has a relevant message to the Dutch Reformed Church. This is especially true with regards to a certain style of leadership, reconciliation, church unity, the prophetic calling of the church and solidarity with those who suffer in an unjust society. After thirty years, the message of the Open Letter is just as relevant and still challenges the Dutch Reformed Church as it did in the past.

### INLEIDING

Op 9 Junie 1982 is die Ope Brief aan die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in die Kerkbode gepubliseer (Die Kerkbode 9 Junie 1982:1). Alhoewel dit een van die minder bekende dokumente<sup>1</sup> uit die vroeë tagtiger jare van die vorige eeu is, het hierdie brief groot openbare reaksie uitgelok. Dit word bevestig deur die berigte wat in die openbare media verskyn het. Opskrifte soos: "Groot groep leraars reik ope brief uit oor kerk se roeping" (Die Kerkbode 9 Junie 1982:1), " 'n Brief wat pleit vir egte versoening" (Beeld 9 Junie 1982:1), "Brief kan deure vir NGK oophou" (Die Burger 10 Junie 1982:1) en " Kerk in beroering oor brief" (Beeld 9 Junie 1982:1) het die omstrede aard van die inhoud van die brief verklar. In die brief is ondermeer verklaar dat die kerk "altyd sal getuig dat geen samelewingsordening van die fundamentele onversoenbaarheid van mense en mensegroepe mag uitgaan en 'n samelewingsbestel op so 'n uitgangspunt mag baseer nie" (Bosch, König & Nicol 1982:15) Dit is ook duidelik gestel dat 'n bestel waarin onversoenbaarheid tot 'n samelewingsbeginsel verhef word en die verskillende dele van die bevolking van Suid Afrika van mekaar vervreem, onaanvaarbaar is. Die brief het voortgegaan om die verskillende apartheidswette te kritiseer en het dit duidelik te stel dat alle mense wat Suid Afrika as hulle vaderland beskou betrek moet word by die uitwerk van 'n nuwe samelewingsbestel (Gaum 1997:32). Die doel van hierdie artikel is om die boodskap van die Ope Brief na 30 jaar weer onder oë te neem en die vraag te vra of die brief wat soveel beroering veroorsaak het, nie dalk 'n stem is wat in die huidige Suid Afrikaanse konteks weer gehoor moet word nie. Ten einde hierdie vraag te beantwoord sal opnuut gekyk word na die aanloop tot en die ontstaan van die Ope Brief, die inhoud van die brief en die reaksie op

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<sup>1</sup> Die Hervormingsdaggetuienis wat in Oktober 1980 gepubliseer is en die Belharbelydenis van 1982 is van die meer bekende dokumente.

die Brief voordat daar tot 'n gevolgtrekking gekom sal word dat die boodskap van die brief inderdaad 30 jaar later in 'n post Apartheid Suid Afrika steeds 'n helder wekroep tot die kerk in Suid Afrika is.

## DIE ONTSTAAN EN DOEL VAN DIE OPE BRIEF

Ten einde die impak van die Ope Brief te verstaan, is dit belangrik om kortliks terug te blaai na die ontstaan van die Brief. Volgens Nicol en Lückhoff (1982:24,) twee van die ondertekenaars van die brief, het die debat rondom die beleidsdokument *Ras Volk en Nasie en volkereverhouding in die lig van die skrif*<sup>2</sup> nie-amptelike gesprek in die Ned Geref. Kerk gedurende die sewentiger jare gestimuleer. Die publikasie van die *Hervormingsdaggetuienis*<sup>3</sup> en die verskyning van twee boeke naamlik *In die Stroomversnellings*<sup>4</sup> in 1980 en *Stormkompas*<sup>5</sup> in 1981 het hierdie debat verder aangewakker. 'n Teologiese kongres het kort op die hakke van die belangwekkende publikasies in Januarie 1981 in Pretoria gevolg. Met die tema: Die kerk in die tagtiger jare" het die referate van dr P Rossouw en Proff HJC Pieterse en DJ Bosch wye publisiteit geniet (Lückhoff & Nicol 1982:25). Dit is duidelik dat die koor van stemme wat teen die Ned Geref. Kerk se rassebeleid opgegaan het, sterker en harder geword het. Die opstellers van die brief stel dit dan ook duidelik dat hierdie koor van stemme 'n groot invloed op hulle uitgeoefen het en dat die inhoud van die brief die kulminasie was van 'n groter stroom van denke wat binne die Ned Geref. Kerk teenwoordig was en wat nie in *Ras Volk en Nasie* tot sy reg gekom het nie (Lückhoff & Nicol 1982:25). 'n Verdere belangrike rede vir die brief was die ekumeniese bande van die Ned Geref. Kerk wat binnelands en buitelands as sorgwekkend getipeer is (Lückhoff & Nicol 1982:25). Die troebel vaarwater waarin die Ned Geref. Kerk met *Ras Volk en Nasie* beland het, kon nie langer geïgnoreer word nie.

Hierdie standpunt word verder ondersteun deur die doel van die brief soos wat dit deur prof DJ Bosch verwoord is. Hy het ondermeer gesê: " Dit is 'n oproep aan die kerk, in die naam van die Koning van die kerk om, op bepaalde punte, die kloof tussen die teologiese en sosiologiese gestaltes van die kerk te verklein. Die Ope Brief is dus nie 'n poging om oor elke aspek van die kerklike lewe standpunt in te neem nie. Dit gaan slegs oor sekere aspekte van kerk - wees wat in die oordeel van die ondertekenaars in hierdie bepaalde tydsgewrig dringend aandag moet kry"(Bosch 1982:35). Die skrywers het dit duidelik gestel dat die dokument nie 'n nuwe geloofsbelijdenis, verklaring of getuienis was nie, maar 'n brief wat aan 'n spesifieke adres gerig was en daarom 'n antwoord ver wag het. " 'n Brief beteken per definisie gesprek, aksie en reaksie. Dit is 'n diskussie bydrae en nie 'n finale dokument nie"(Bosch 1982:35).

## DIE INHOUD VAN DIE OPE BRIEF

Dat die Brief 'n uitnodiging tot gesprek was, word verder deur die inhoud daarvan onderskryf. Die brief het uit drie hoofde bestaan naamlik: Die versoening en die eenheid van die kerk, die profetiese roeping van die kerk en laastens is solidariteit betuig met die wat gely het onder

<sup>2</sup> Die dokument is in 1974 deur die Algemene Sinode van die Ned Geref. Kerk as beleidsdokument aanvaar.

<sup>3</sup> Die hervormingsdaggetuienis is deur agt teoloë van die Ned Geref. Kerk opgestel en op 5 November 1981 in die Kerkbode gepubliseer.

<sup>4</sup> Die werk is geskryf deur dr FE O' Brein Geldenhuys, uitredende hoof-uitvoerende amptenaar van die Ned Geref. Kerk

<sup>5</sup> Die bundel opstelle het verskyn onder die redaksie van prof NJ Smit en drs. FE O Brein Geldenhuys en PGJ Meiring.

die onregverdigde bestel van apartheid (Van der Merwe 1990: 278).

## Versoening en eenheid

Wat versoening aan betref het die brief soos volg gelui: “ Ons is oortuig dat die primêre taak van die kerk in ons land die bediening van versoening in Christus is”(Bosch, König & Nicol 1982:13). Dit is verder omskryf deur te beklemtoon dat dit die onvervreembare voorreg van die kerk is om die boodskap van versoening tussen God en mens uit te dra. Die brief het dit verder duidelik gestel dat: “dit eweneens die kerk se onvervreembare voorreg is om terselfdertyd die boodskap van versoening tussen mens en mens – selfs tussen hulle wat vroeër vyande was – uit te dra en te getuig dat Christus vir die gelowiges h einde aan alle menslike vyandskap gemaak het en ons tot een nuwe mensheid verenig’ het (Ef. 2:15,16)” (Bosch, König & Nicol 1982:14). Wat die eenheid van die kerk betref het die brief dit duidelik gestel: “ Ons bely dat die eenheid van die kerk h gawe en h opdrag van God is.” En verder: “ Die eenheid van die kerk maak ruimte vir verskeidenheid binne die kerk ten opsigte van taal en kultuur” maar dit dan ook duidelik gestel: “ Die eenheid behoort egter tot h ander orde as die verskeidenheid. Die eenheid is primêr, die verskeidenheid sekondêr. Die eenheid is normatief en word bely (Twaalf Artikels en Nicea), die verskeidenheid nie(Bosch, König & Nicol 1982:14). Die gevolge van hierdie prinsipiële standpunt vir die Suid Afrikaanse situasie is ook duidelik uitgespel deur te sê:

- Dat die kerk geen ander maatstaf vir lidmaatskap as die belydenis van die ware geloof in Christus mag aanlê nie.
- Dat die verskillende kerke binne die verband van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerke wat in elk geval dieselfde belydenis het en histories uit dieselfde kerk voortspruit, alles in werking behoort te stel om sigbare gestalte te gee aan die eenheid wat bely word.
- Dat lidmate oor en weer welkom behoort te wees in die verskillende kerke.
- Dat die lede van die een Liggaam van Christus mekaar as broers en susters sal aanvaar en nie mekaar se Christenskap sal betwyfel nie”(Bosch, König & Nicol 1982:14).

## Die Profetiese roeping van die kerk

Die Ope Brief het dit duidelik gestel dat die “kerk se roeping verder strek as die bediening van versoening binne die vier mure van die kerk”(Bosch, König & Nicol 1982:15) en verder: “ Versoening sluit h profetiese getuienis aan die hele samelewing in en daarom mag die kerk nie swyg oor verskynsels soos sedelike verval, gesinsontwrigting en diskriminasie nie. Die kerk het h grootse geleentheid om God se ‘ proeftuin’ in die wêreld te wees. Dit beteken dat God deur die wêreld iets wil toon van die eenheid, onderlinge liefde, vrede, begrip, mededeelsaamheid en geregtigheid wat Hy vir die hele samelewing bedoel” (Bosch, König & Nicol 1982:15).

Vir die konkrete situasie in Suid Afrika het dit volgens die brief ondermeer die volgende beteken:

- Dat die kerk sy profetiese getuienis met groot vrymoedigheid in die Suid Afrikaanse samelewing mag lewer.
- Dat h bestel waarin onversoenbaarheid tot h samelewingsbeginsel verhef word, en die verskillende dele van die bevolking van Suid Afrika van mekaar vervreem, onaanvaarbaar is.

- Dat die wette wat simbole van hierdie vervreemding geword het, onder meer die oor gemengde huwelike, rasseklassifikasie en groepsgebiede, nie skriftuurlik verdedig kan word nie.
- Dat geregtigheid, en nie bloot wet en orde nie, die rigtinggewende uitgangspunt in die reëling van die samelewing sal wees.
- Dat die gedwonge verskuiwing van mense, ontwrigting van huweliks- en gesinsbande vanweë trekarbeid, onderbesteding aan Swart onderwys, onvoldoende en swak behuising vir Swartmense en lae lone nie rym met die Bybelse eise van geregtigheid en menswaardigheid nie.
- Dat alle mense wat Suid Afrika as hulle vaderland beskou, betrek behoort te word by die uitwerk van 'n nuwe samelewingsbestel.
- Dat hierdie bestel gebou behoort te word op orde en vrede wat die vrug is van geregtigheid, wat beteken dat alle mense gelyke behandeling en geleenthede behoort te geniet" (Bosch, König & Nicol 1982:16).

## Solidariteit

Ten slotte het die skrywers van die Brief hulle: "diepe skuld voor God bely" omdat hulle self ook nie die eenheid van die kerk van Christus voldoende ervaar nie en aandadig was aan baie van die maatskaplike wantoestande wat hulle aangedui het. Hulle het verder die volgende verklaar dat:

- Hulle nog oor die kerk, nog oor die owerheid praat vanuit 'n gesindheid van selfverheffende kritiek maar dat hulle getuigenis spruit uit 'n diepe solidariteit met die kerk en 'n bewussyn van medeverantwoordelikheid ten opsigte van die samelewingsbestel.
- Hulle glo aan bekering, die vergewing van sondes, en 'n nuwe lewe in gehoorsaamheid aan God.
- Hulle het voorts die bede uitgespreek dat die brief daartoe sou meewerk dat die kerk van Christus in Suid Afrika 'n duideliker visie op sy roeping sou kry en dat die uitwerking van 'n nuwe samelewingsbestel in Suid Afrika bespoedig sou word. Die brief is afgesluit met die versekering dat hulle sou volhard in hulle voorbeding vir die kerk en die owerheid" (Bosch, König & Nicol 1982:16).

123 Gelegitimeerdes en predikante van die Ned Geref. Kerk het dit onderteken.<sup>6</sup> Nicol verduidelik dat persone individueel genader is om die brief te onderteken ten einde te voorkom dat die inhoud sou uitlek. Die opstellers van die brief was dit eens dat indien die inhoud vooraf sou uitlek dit die impak daarvan sou neutraliseer.<sup>7</sup>

## RESEPSIE VAN DIE OPE BRIEF

Die publikasie van die Ope Brief het wye positiewe en negatiewe reaksie ontlok. Dit was veral in die korrespondensiekolomme van die Kerkbode waar daar vir maande lank 'n pennestryd gevoer is. Hierdie resepsie toon dat die Ope Brief inderdaad 'n sensitiewe senupunt in die Ned Geref. Kerk aangeraak het.

6 Vir 'n volledige lys van die ondertekenaars sien Van der Merwe 1990:282-283.

7 Nicol, WD 2012 Persoonlike onderhou 18 Junie.

## Positiewe reaksie

Die eerste positiewe reaksie het op Donderdag 10 Junie in die dagblad *Beeld* verskyn. Een van die belangrike teoloë wat reageer het was prof WD Jonker. Hy het ondermeer gesê: "n saak soos die Ope Brief is belangrik vir ons verhouding met buitelandse kerke. 'Sulke tekens van besinning word in die buiteland waardeer. Maar nie net daar nie, ook deur ons jongkerke'" (*Beeld*, 10 Junie 1982:4) Prof JA Heyns, self n lid van die Breë Moderatuur het gevra dat: " gesprek oor die Ope Brief nie by kerkregtelike aspekte<sup>8</sup> vassteek nie maar sal deurdring na die vraag of die inhoud in ooreenstemming met die Skrif is" (*Beeld*, 10 Junie 1982:4). Dr Willem Landman, voormalige Direkteur van Inligting en dertig jaar lank skriba van die Kaapse Sinode was ook van mening dat die Ope Brief van die uiterste belang vir die Ned Geref. Kerk se binnelandse en buitelandse ekumeniese verhoudinge was. Hy het ondermeer sy blydskap uitgespreek dat sake soos die Groepsgebiedewet en die wet op Gemengde huwelike nou n belangrike besprekingspunt in die kerk geword het. "Die kerk moes verantwoording doen oor die sake en gewillig wees om te erken waar hy foute gemaak het. Hy moet n antwoord daarop teenoor homself en teenoor die ganse Christelike gemeenskap gee. Dit moet hy permanent doen, elke dag van sy lewe" het Landman gesê (*Beeld*, 10 Junie 1982:4). Uit die sogenaamde jongkerke het daar ook positiewe reaksie gekom. Ds. EM Mataboge, Assessor van die Algemene Sinode van die Ned Geref. Kerk in Afrika, was van mening dat die Ope Brief die jong kerke bemoedig het. Hy het gesê: "so sien ons dat daar tog mense in die NG Kerk is wat ook soos ons dink. Die briefmanne wys vir die wêreld dat die NG Kerk nie is soos wat baie mense dink hy is nie. Hy het verder gesê: "Ek het simpatie met die broers wat die brief geskryf het. Miskien dink hulle ook die moeder (NGK) vorder n bietjie stadig. Sommige mense van al die kerke in die familie begin moed verloor, want die dinge is al so baie gesê en elke keer word daar net weer gesê: 'Wag vir die sinode'" (*Beeld* 10 Junie 1982:4). Die Ligdraer, kerkblad van die Ned Geref. Sendingkerk het in sy redaksionele kolom soos volg reageer: " Die brief is n belydenis van n aantal gelegitimeerdes van die NGK wat ernstig met die Woord van God geworstel het oor die sake wat hulle aanroer en wat hulle oortuigings langs die weg van hulle kerkblad aan medebroers en susters bekend maak. Vir leraars en lidmate van die NG Sendingkerk is die Ope Brief n groot bemoediging. Dit laat hulle n kant van die NG Kerk sien wat hulle nie elke dag ervaar nie en wat die hoop op n beter dag weereens laat opvlam" (*Die Ligdraer* 16 Junie 1982: 151).

Dit was egter nie net teoloë en kerke wat reageer het nie. Die positiewe gesindheid van "gewone mense", selfs nie-lidmate teenoor die Ope Brief word weerspieël in n brief van n ene me JL Davies wat in die Kerkbode verskyn het. Sy het soos volg geskryf: " As Engelssprekende Suid Afrikaner wil ek baie graag my ondersteuning gee aan die 123 ondertekenaars. Dit was altyd my oortuiging dat die apartheidsbeleid strydig was met lewenswyse wat Jesus aanbeveel het. Soos ek die Skrif verstaan wil Hy hê dat ons alles in ons vermoë doen om almal in ons land vrywillig te laat leef, tuismaak, werk en speel met wie hulle wil. Ek dank God dat hy hierdie 123 mense Sy lig laat sien het en ek bid daagliks dat heelwat meer van my Afrikaner landgenote hierdie vertolking van die Skrif sal aanvaar" ( *Die Kerkbode* 11 Augustus 1982:13). Dr PG du Plessis, redakteur van Hoofstad, het in sy reaksie die bedoeling van die Ope Brief raak saamgevat deur te skryf: "As die kerk in sy openbare getuienis – wat sy reg is - geloofwaardig wil wees; as hy sy lidmate in leiersposisies die regte leiding wil gee; sal hy vir homself moet kan

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8 Een van die grootste punte van kritiek teen die Ope Brief was dat die opstellers nie die korrekte kerkregtelike weg gevolg het nie. Dit was die rede waarom dit deur die Breë moderatuur as "nie ontvanklik" afgewys is.

sê: 'dit het ek getoets aan die letter en die groot oorkoepelende gees van die Woord van God, en so moet ek getuig voor die wêreld oor die praktyk rondom my.' Hy het verder geskryf: " U word geroep tot debat ten aanhore van U lidmate wat soek na leiding. Verwerping, bevegting, woordspelery en boosverklaardery sal h ondiens wees aan elke lidmaat van die NG Kerk wat dit erns is met geloof en die toekoms van h Christelike volk" (Hoofstad 9 Junie 1982:8). In reaksie op du Plessis se reaksie het dr WD Nicol geskryf: "Hy het ons verstaan! Ons die ondertekenaars, sê dankie vir honderde ander dergelike reaksies waaruit ons agtergekom het dat daar meer mense is wat ons verstaan as wat ons gedink het"(Nicol 1982:89).

## Negatiewe reaksie

Alhoewel daar oorweldigende positiewe reaksie op die Ope Brief was, het negatiewe reaksie nie uitgebly nie. Dit is egter insiggewend dat die meerderheid van die kritiek teen die Ope Brief gehandel het oor die "kerklike weg"<sup>9</sup> wat nie gevolg is nie terwyl weinig oor die inhoud gesê is. Van die eerste reaksie het gekom van ds. JE Potgieter, die voorsitter van die Breë Moderatuur van die Algemene Sinode van die Ned Geref. Kerk. Hy het hom ten sterkste uitgespreek teen die metode wat gevolg is om die Brief wêreldkundig te maak deur te sê: Indien dit die prosedure word wat in die toekoms algemeen in die kerk gevolg gaan word, voorsien ek verwarring, h chaos en selfs skeuring. Dit is nie die korrekte manier van doen nie"(Beeld, 9 Junie 1982:1). Die Kerkbode het in sy kommentaar byna dieselfde mening gehuldig terwyl daar veral te velde getrek is teen die "uiters geheime wyse waarop naamtekeninge gewerf is"( Die Kerkbode 9 Junie 1982:5). Dit is duidelik dat daar veral kritiek teen die werkswyse was: Enersyds het dit gehandel oor die geheime wyse waarop die stemme gewerf is en andersyds oor die wyse waarop die brief gepubliseer is. Die algemene gevoel was dat die kerk nie so werk nie (Van der Merwe 1990:303). h Volgende punt van kritiek was die datum waarop die brief gepubliseer is. Die aanname is gemaak dat dit h duidelike poging was om die Algemene Sinode wat later in die jaar sou vergader te beïnvloed. Derdens is die eenheidstandpunt wat in die brief gestel is, gekritiseer deur te beklemtoon dat "geestelike eenheid "tog in die Suid-Afrikaanse konteks bestaan. Soos wat tyd verloop het, het die koor van kritiek teen die brief al groter geword.<sup>10</sup>

Hierdie negatiewe kritiek kon egter nie die oorweldigende stroom van positiewe kommentaar stop nie. Die positiewe impak van die Brief word bevestig deur h verdere brief wat op 21 Julie 1982 in die Kerkbode onder die opskrif: "Gekibbel oor prosedure is betreurenswaardig", verskyn het. In die brief het 'n volgende groep predikante:

- Hulle vereenselwig met dit wat in die brief staan
- Hulle aandaagheid aan die verskeurdheid in die samelewing bely
- Dit duidelik gestel dat die Skrif die enigste norm vir die kerk se boodskap en bestaan behoort te wees.
- Die Ope Brief as h dringende wêreld gekrop gesien wat "slegs tot verlies van eer vir die Koning

9 Die Ope Brief is teen die middel van Maart 1982 aan die voorsitter van die Breë Moderatuur en die hof-uitvoerende amptenaar oorhandig met die versoek: " dat Hulle ons adviseer oor hoe ons dit ten beste onder die aandag van die kerk kon bring en dat die moderatuur die Brief hanteer. Na raadpleging met lede van die Breë Moderatuur is het hulle eons egter meegedeel dat die brief kerkregtelik nie ontvanklik is nie by die Breë Moderatuur nie en dat hulle nie daarmee kon handel nie." Beeld, 9 Junie 1982 p. 1

10 Vgl. DD Roslee; " Metode is onkerkregtelik" Die Kerkbode, 30 Junie 1982 p. 6; ds. OSH Raubenheimer." Sinode beleid bly die beste" Die Kerkbode 30 Junie 1982 p6; Dr Attie van der Colf: " Nou speel julle vir die pawiljoen" Die Kerkbode ,7 Julie 1982 p. 9

van die kerk verontagsaam kon word.”

- Die feit betreur dat die diskussie wat die brief verdien nie op dreef kon kom vanweë ’n futiele gekibbel oor prosedure aangeleenthede.
- Alle suggesties wat die skrywers van die brief onder verdenking plaas, verwerp (Die Kerkbode 21 Julie 1982:7).

Uit die resepsie van die Ope Brief 30 jaar gelede, is dit duidelik dat die Brief ’n helder wekroep aan die Ned Geref. Kerk was. Die vraag wat vervolgens beantwoord moet word, is of dieselfde van die brief 30 jaar later gesê kan word. Na my mening is daar inderdaad ’n aantal belangrike sake wat steeds deur die Ope Brief op die agenda van die Ned Geref. Kerk geplaas word en wat die kerk uitdaag om daaraan aandag te gee.

## DIE OPE BRIEF 30 JAAR LATER

### Gesindheid van die opstellers

Die eerste belangrike uitdaging wat die Ope Brief tot die Ned Geref. Kerk rig, is die gesindheid waarmee kerklike leiers leiding gee. Dit word deur die gesindheid van die opstellers van die brief onderstreep. Die aanvanklike pogings deur twee van die skrywers, prof Adrio Koning en Dr Nico Smith was volgens dr Willem Nicol nie aanvaarbaar nie omdat dit te uitdagend en aggressief was. Dit was in sy woorde: “soos om met ’n stok op ’n bynes te gaan slaan.”<sup>11</sup> Dit was duidelik nie die bedoeling van die brief nie. Die uiteindelige formulering van die brief is deur Prof Dawid Bosch gedoen. In die woorde van Nicol was Bosch ’n realis met ’n begrip vir ander wat ’n fyn aanvoeling gehad het vir sy eie mense. “Hy was nie kwaad nie”<sup>12</sup> Hierdie priesterlike gesindheid waarmee hy geskryf het kom in die meegaande brief na vore. Daarin is dit duidelik gestel dat: “die dokument nie ’n nuwe geloofsbelofte, verklaring of getuigenis was nie, maar ’n brief wat aan ’n spesifieke adres gerig was en daarom ’n antwoord verwag het.”<sup>13</sup> Dit was bedoel om gesprek te stimuleer en niks meer nie.” Hierdie gesindheid van nederige diens en toewyding aan die Kerk is uiteindelik deur al die ondertekenaars onderskryf.<sup>14</sup> Dit is juis hierdie gesindheid wat dertigjaar later steeds ’n uitdaging aan die leierskap van die Ned Geref. Kerk rig. Prof Nelus Niemandt, moderator van die laaste Algemene Sinode<sup>15</sup> van die Ned Geref. Kerk verwoord dit in 2012-taal soos volg: “Ons ken almal die ou leierskapstyl waarteen geprotesteer word: sterk manne wat alleen praat en wat mense van ’n goeie saak moet oortuig. Dit gaan oor die sterk visie; oortuigingskrag om die goeie saak te verkoop; om mense te kry om hulleself te gee vir die saak. Die soort leier wat eintlik die laaste refrein van die ou volkslied so kon aanbied dat mense vanself na vore tree en sê – *ons sal lewe, ons sal sterwe, ons vir jou saak!*” Hy gaan dan voort deur te beklemtoon: “Effektiewe leierskap werk deesdae eerder met dialoog en spanne. Dink eerder aan manne en vroue wat sy-aan-sy saam soek en praat oor oplossings vir ’n probleem en wat sy-aan-sy lei. In hierdie benadering gaan dit eerder oor inklusiwiteit, ontdekking, innovasie en gesamentlike rentmeesterskap. Die leier loop nie alleen voor nie, maar is ’n medereisiger.”<sup>16</sup> Dit sal tot voordeel van dialoog binne die Ned Geref. Kerk en in sy verhoudings na buite wees as dieselfde gesindheid deur die kerk leiding weerspieël word.

11 Nicol WD 2012 Persoonlike onderhoud 18 Mei

12 Nicol WD 2012 Persoonlike onderhoud 18 Mei

13 Nicol WD 2012 Persoonlike onderhoud 18 Mei

14 Nicol WD 2012 Persoonlike onderhoud 18 Mei

15 Die Algemene Sinode het in Oktober 2011 vergader.

16 Niemandt 2012 [www.teo.co.za](http://www.teo.co.za)

## Versoening

Die eis van versoening is h tweede belangrike uitdaging aan die adres van die kerk. Die Ope Brief stel dit duidelik dat versoening die onvervreembare reg en taak van die kerk is. Die belangrikheid van hierdie standpunt word verder deur die Belharbelydenis beklemtoon wat dit soos volg stel: Ons glo dat God aan sy kerk die boodskap van versoening in en deur Jesus Christus toevertrou het; dat die kerk geroep is om die sout van die aarde en die lig van die wêreld te wees; dat die kerk salig genoem word omdat hulle vredemakers is; dat die kerk deur woord en daad getuies is van die nuwe hemel en die nuwe aarde waarop geregtigheid woon; dat God deur sy leweskeppende Woord en Gees die magte van sonde en dood, en daarom ook van onversoendheid en haat, bitterheid en vyandskap, oorwin het; dat God deur sy leweskeppende Woord en Gees sy volk in staat stel om te leef in 'n nuwe gehoorsaamheid wat ook in die samelewing en wêreld nuwe lewensmoontlikhede kan bring.<sup>17</sup> Dat Suid Afrika h land is waar daar h groterwordende behoefte aan versoening is, word deur uitsprake van verskillende politieke leiers bevestig. Die huidige president van Suid-Afrika, Jacob Zuma het tydens h toespraak op Versoeningsdag, 16 Desember 2011 onder meer gesê dat nasionale versoening krities is om 'n inklusiewe gemeenskap te bou. "Ons as regering is bewus dat dit 'n reis en nie 'n geleentheid een keer per jaar is nie. Versoening is 'n tweerigtingproses en alle gemeenskappe moet deelneem om die trane af te droog en wonde te heel."<sup>18</sup> Hierdie sentimente is deur ander politieke leiers ondersteun. Me. Patricia de Lille, OD-leier en burgemeester van Kaapstad, het gesê: "Dit is die taak van die volgende geslag om te verseker dat daar versoening in die land is" (*Die Burger*, 17 Desember 2011:1). Indien die Ned Geref. Kerk hierdie wekroep ernstig neem, kan die kerk in Dawid Bosch se woorde h onmisbare proeftuin word waar lidmate in h veilige ruimte versoening kan oefen om dit dan te waag om dit in die alledaagse lewe te gaan leef.

## Kerkeenheid

h Derde belangrike uitdaging is die wekroep tot kerkeenheid. Die Brief stel dit immers : "Ons bely dat eenheid h gawe en h opdrag van God is" (Bosch, König & Nicol 1982:14). Sedert 1982 het verskeie pogings tot kerkeenheid in die familie van Ned Geref. Kerke skipbreuk gelei.<sup>19</sup> Die onvoorwaardelike aanvaarding van die Belydenis van Belhar as vierde belydenisskrif deur die onderskeie kerke het hierin h groot rol gespeel. Dat die Ned Geref. kerk die erns van hierdie wekroep besef blyk uit die besluit van die Algemene Sinode van 2011. Die sinode het soos volg besluit: "Die Algemene Sinode besluit om die Belydenis van Belhar op kerkordelike wyse deel van die NG kerk se belydenisgrondslag te maak en dra dit aan die Moderamen op om die nodige kerkordelike prosesse hiervoor in werking te tel."<sup>20</sup> Een van die verdere belangrike besluite wat oor kerkeenheid geneem is, lui soos volg: "Die NG Kerk herbevestig sy ernstige en duidelike verbintenis tot die herstel van een kerkverband met die ander drie kerke van die Familie, nl. die VGKSA, die NGKA en die RCA. Hierdie verbintenis is gegrond in die oortuiging dat die Here dit van ons vra - ter wille van sy eer (Joh. 17:23) en ter wille van ons gesamentlike roeping (Ef. 4:4) en getuienis in Afrika – sodat die wêreld kan glo."<sup>21</sup> Die Ned Geref. Kerk het hom ook tydens die sinode opnuut verbind tot organiese kerkeenheid. Hierdie besluite is opgevolg met h brief wat deur die moderamen van die Ned Geref. Kerk aan die lidmate van die Ned

17 [www.ngkerk.org.za](http://www.ngkerk.org.za) [12 Julie 2012 09:00]

18 Uitgereik deur die kantoor van die President: 16 Desember 2011. [www.gov.za](http://www.gov.za) [27 Februarie 2012]

19 [www.ngk.org.za](http://www.ngk.org.za) [12 Julie 2012. 09:30]

20 [www.ngk.org.za](http://www.ngk.org.za) [12 Julie 2012. 09:30]

21 [www.ngk.org.za](http://www.ngk.org.za) [13 Julie 2012. 10:00]

Geref. Kerk gestuur is waarin ondermeer verduidelik is hoe die pad tot nou toe geloop het en hoe die proses vorentoe kan ontwikkel. In die brief word duidelik gestel dat h nuwe proses op dreef kom en voorbedding van al die lidmate word gevra.<sup>22</sup> Dit wil voorkom asof nuwe deure inderdaad so oopgegaan het wat die wekroep van die Ope Brief 30 jaar gelede inderdaad h moontlikheid maak.

### Profetiese roeping van die Kerk

h Vierde belangrike uitdaging is die profetiese roeping van die kerk. Alhoewel verskeie van die sake wat in die brief genoem waarteen die kerk hom in die verlede profeties moes uitspreek<sup>23</sup> na 1994 nie meer in h post apartheid Suid- Afrika<sup>24</sup> ter sake is nie, beklemtoon die brief tog die profetiese roeping van die kerk ten opsigte van diskriminasie, sedelike verval, geregtigheid en versoening. Dat hierdie saak van die profetiese roeping van die Kerk steeds belangrik is blyk uit die *Roepingsverklaring* van die Algemene Sinode van die Ned Geref. Kerk van 2011 wat soos volg lui: Die NG Kerk dank God dat ons in so h uitdagende tyd, binne h Suider-Afrikaanse konteks saam met ander kerke, God se kerk mag wees. Sy liefde en genade is sonder twyfel groot. Die NG Kerk besef, en het uit die geskiedenis geleer, dat ons net werklik kerk van God kan wees as ons onself prysgee en Hom volg. Die Drie-enige God stuur ons sy wêreld vol as getuies van sy liefde vir sy hele skepping. " Dit gaan dan ondermeer voort: " Daarom *bely* ons ons bestaan nie ter wille van onself nie, en weet ons dat ons die sout en lig vir die wêreld is. Ons is die suurdeeg wat die plig het om die tekstuur van ons samelewing te verander. Hierdie hoë roeping is nie vir ons h las nie, maar h vreugde. Ons is die jeugdige bruid van Christus wat by wyse van ons erediens, aksies en optredes die toekoms tegemoet dans deur die aantrek van die fyn linne van dade van geregtigheid.<sup>25</sup>In h Suid Afrikaanse samelewing waar korrupsie, geweld en misdaad hoogty vier , mag die kerk nie swyg nie. Die Bybelse eise soos treffend in die Belharbelydenis uitgespel word moet aangespreek word. Die Belharbelydenis verwoord dit soos volg: Ons glo dat God aan sy kerk die boodskap van versoening in en deur Jesus Christus toevertrou het; dat die kerk geroep is om die sout van die aarde en die lig van die wêreld te wees; dat die kerk salig genoem word omdat hulle vredemakers is; dat die kerk deur woord en daad getuies is van die nuwe hemel en die nuwe aarde waarop geregtigheid woon; dat God deur sy leweskeppende Woord en Gees die magte van sonde en dood, en daarom ook van onversoendheid en haat, bitterheid en vyandskap, oorwin het; dat God deur sy leweskeppende Woord en Gees sy volk in staat stel om te leef in 'n nuwe gehoorsaamheid wat ook in die samelewing en wêreld nuwe lewensmoontlikhede kan bring.<sup>26</sup>

### Kritiese Solidariteit

h Vyfde en laaste uitdaging wat die Ope Brief tot die Ned Geref. Kerk rig is om solidariteit te betoon met die wat ly en swaarkry. Du Rand is van mening dat die onherroeplike politieke situasie in die land die hoofrede is waarom baie lidmate die kerk se solidariteit verlang en die kerk beleef as die laaste oorblywende vesting van die Afrikanerdom (Du Rand 2002:19). Dit kan daartoe lei dat die Ned Geref. Kerk opnuut vasgevang word in die slaggat van h volkskerk.

<sup>22</sup> [www.ngk.org.za](http://www.ngk.org.za) [14 Julie 2012. 11:00]

<sup>23</sup> Die Wet teen rasgemengde huwelike, groepsgebiede en rasseklassifikasie tel onder die wette wat spesifiek deur die Ope Brief genoem word.

<sup>24</sup> Die eerste demokratiese verkiesing waaraan alle landsburgers kon deelneem het op 27 April 1994 plaasgevind.

<sup>25</sup> [www.ngk.org.za](http://www.ngk.org.za) [13 Julie 2012 09:00]

<sup>26</sup> Belydenis van Belhar [www.ngk.org.za](http://www.ngk.org.za) [13 Julie 2012 09:00]

Juis daarom beklemtoon Hofmeyr en Kruger (2011:120) dat hierdie solidariteit altyd kritiese solidariteit moet wees met die belewenisse van lidmate in die nuwe Suid Afrika en tipeer hulle dit ook as een van die boustene vir die toekoms van die Ned Geref. Kerk. De Villiers noem dit 'n inklusiewe transformasiebenadering wat in die Ned Geref. Kerk onderskraag moet word: "deur 'n omvattende spiritualiteit wat spruit uit 'n lewende ervaring van God se omvattende liefde en sorg vir sy skepping en sy besondere sorg vir weerlose en swak mense. In gebede moet nie net ons sonde in persoonlike verhoudinge bely word nie, maar ook ons sondige aandadigheid aan die nood van arm en siek mense, al is dit dan ook net vanweë ons onbetrokkenheid en versuim om iets aan hul nood te doen. Nie slegs die nood van lidmate in die gemeente wat ons ken, moet in die gebed tot God gebring word nie, maar ook die nood van die bedelaars by ons hekke, en die groot persentasie mense in ons land wat werkloos is en met MIV/VIGS geïnfecteer is. En die prediking moet nie net getuig van God se liefde en sorg vir elkeen van ons wat in die kerk sit nie, en van ons verantwoordelikheid om mekaar as gementelede by te staan nie, maar van God se liefde en sorg vir die wêreld en sy besondere sorg vir weerlose mense en ons verantwoordelikheid om op alle lewensterreine en teenoor alle mense, en in die besonder teenoor weerlose mense, maar ook teenoor diere en plante, om aan God se omvattende sorg in ons eie optrede gestalte te gee" (De Villiers 2008:369). As die Ned Geref. Kerk getrou wil wees aan sy roeping, sal hy hierdie uitdaging nie kan ontduik nie, maar sal dit omarm moet word met al die eise wat dit behels.

## SLOT

Die Ope Brief aan die Ned Geref. Kerk is op 9 Junie 1982 gepubliseer. Dit het groot reaksie ontlok omdat dit die kerk uitgedaag het om nuut te dink en nuut te doen in 'n tyd toe baie kerkleiers en lidmate krampagtig vasgeklou het aan die welbekende apartheidsbeleid<sup>27</sup> van die verlede. 30 Jaar later, weerklink die weskroep van die Ope Brief steeds hard en duidelik. Dit daag die leierskap van die Ned Geref. Kerk opnuut uit om in nederigheid te lei. Dit daag die kerk uit om dringend aandag te gee aan die saak van versoening in 'n land waar groter wordende polarisasie en rassespansing 'n daaglikse werklikheid is. Dit daag die kerk uit om kerkeenheid met nuwe erns na te streef en om sy profetiese roeping in Suid Afrika met nuwe ywer en toewyding te vervul. Laastens vra dit van die kerk om in kritiese solidariteit met sy lidmate saam op reis te wees die toekoms in. Na 30 jaar, sal dit die Ned Geref. Kerk loon om die Ope Brief weer met erns te lees, die weskroep weer 'n slag helder te hoor en om die uitdaging wat dit op die tafel plaas, opnuut te aanvaar.

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Koerante en dagblaai

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*Hoofstad*, 9 Junie 1982

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*Die Burger*, 10 Junie 1982

*Die Ligdraer*, 16 Junie 1982

*Die Kerkbode*, 21 Julie 1982

*Die Kerkbode*, 11 Augustus 1982

*Die Burger*, 17 Desember 2011

Webwerwe

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[www.ngk.org.za](http://www.ngk.org.za)

Persoonlike onderhoud:

Nicol, W 18 Mei 2012

## **TREFWOORDE**

Apartheid

Versoening

Profetiese roeping

Kritiese solidariteit

Kerkeenheid

Kontakbesonderhede

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## Toekomsverwagting en hoop by inwoners in die informele nedersettings rondom Bloemfontein<sup>1</sup>

### ABSTRACT

#### Expectations of the future and hope of residents of informal settlements near Bloemfontein

Is there any prospect of hope for the inhabitants of informal settlements? This question is asked concerning the inhabitants of informal settlements around Bloemfontein. An introductory section on the theological implications and Biblical aspects of hope is followed by the results of qualitative empirical research. Respondents replied in five ways. Some regarded the situation as without any hope (a) while others saw some hope if the government could become involved (b). Some saw the only hope in God changing the situation (c) while others believed that the church should be responsible for change (d) and, finally, some regarded it as the task of citizens of the country and the inhabitants of the informal settlements to take responsibility for change themselves (e). A theological perspective emphasizes individual hope in Christ as well as the renewal of society. The church has a definite task in achieving this.

### 1. INLEIDING

Daar is sterk aanduidings dat die positiewe toekomsverwagting en hoop wat deur die nuwe politieke bestel in Suid-Afrika meegebring is, nie gerealiseer het nie. Verwagtings is geskep wat nie nagekom is nie. Sekere positiewe ontwikkelings word oorskadu deur toenemende onrus. Is daar enige hoop vir inwoners van informele nedersettings rondom Bloemfontein? Is daar 'n verwagting dat daar 'n nuwe toekoms geskep en 'n nuwe beginsel neergelê kan word van waaruit hierdie mense, wat dikwels onder haglike omstandighede lewe, 'n positiewe pad kan betree? Hierdie vrae beteken dat indringend gekyk moet word na die toekomsverwagting van mense onder bedreigende omstandighede.

### 2. METODOLOGIE EN NAVORSINGSONTWERP

Die betekenis van 'n verwagting van hoop moet ontleed word. Om daarin te slaag, moet teologiese beginsels vanuit eksegetiese en hermeneutiese oorwegings neergelê word. 'n Deeglike literatuurstudie is dus nodig. Daarbenewens moet ondersoek ingestel word na verwagtinge van hoop in informele gemeenskappe in Mangaung, oos van Bloemfontein. 'n Kwalitatiewe ondersoek is in hierdie verband die beste moontlikheid. Ongeveer 100 persone is in die verband genader. Informele gebiede is besoek en met die sneeubal metode is persone

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<sup>1</sup> Hierdie artikel is gebaseer op navorsing wat deur die NNR van Suid-Afrika ondersteun is. Alle standpunte, gevolgtrekkings en voorstelle wat gemaak word, is die standpunt van die outeur en die NNR aanvaar geen verantwoordelikheid daarvoor nie. Die navorsing is ook ondersteun deur die UV-kluster: "New frontiers in poverty reduction and sustainable development."

genader. Om te verseker dat die onderhoude verteenwoordigend is, is daar telkens na nuwe gebiede gegaan.

Ten eerste moet daar ten opsigte van die aard van die omgewing waarin mense in die informele nedersettings rondom Bloemfontein in Mangaung woon, kennis geneem word van hagglike omstandighede. Ten spyte van pogings deur die Mangaung Metropolitaanse Munisipaliteit, wat in baie opsigte pogings aangewend het om die nodige strukture te verskaf, bly dit nog in baie opsigte gebrekkig. Infrastruktuur soos paaie, sanitasie, hospitale, skole en klinieke is in 'n groot mate afwesig. Die ongestruktureerde invloed van mense word vererger deur persone wat die situasie uitbuit en die ontwikkeling van gebiede bemoeilik. Sommige inwoners kom van plase of dorpe in die Vrystaat maar daar is ook invloed vanuit Lesotho en ander Afrika-lande. Spanning kom dan voor tussen die groepe, alhoewel xenofobiese aanvalle nie onlangs voorgekom het nie. Dikwels word sanitasie deur persone self by wyse van buite-toilette aangebring. Watervoorsiening is dikwels onvoldoende en soms ontoeganklik. Die huisvesting is baie karig en bestaan dikwels slegs uit enkele sinkplate wat gebruik word om huise op te rig. Die situasie word in baie opsigte vererger deur die feit dat baie van hierdie inwoners oor geen inkomste beskik nie, terwyl slegs enkele regeringspensioene ontvang. Die gevolg is dat die omstandighede in baie opsigte indringend aandag moet geniet.

In navorsing in hierdie gebiede is dikwels op die omstandighede klem gelê en hoedat die kerk dan uit hierdie omstandighede hulp en leiding sou kon verskaf om vir die mense aktiewe hulp en leiding te bied.

In hierdie artikel val die klem op die wyse waarop 'n toekomsverwachting geskep kan word en wat hierdie toekomsverwachting inhoud. Die navorsing sluit onderhoude oor die respondente se toekomsverwachting en wat die toekoms vir hulle in hierdie gebied inhoud, in. 'n Toekomsverwachting kan geskep word deur iemand se omstandighede te verander, maar ook deurdat mense nuut na hulle eie omstandighede kyk. Missiologies kan 'n besondere bydrae tot die skep van 'n toekomsverwachting gelewer word deur 'n Bybelse perspektief voor te hou.

### 3. TOEKOMSVERWAGTING

#### 3.1 'n Betekenisvolle toekomsverwachting

Die verwagting van 'n nuwe toekoms is deel van die menslike bestaan. Sonder hoop is dit nie moontlik om te lewe nie. Hoe hierdie toekomsverwachting en hoop ingevul word, is van groot belang. Verskillende perspektiewe kom na vore. Vorster (2011:13) argumenteer dat die bring van hoop Suid-Afrika voor groot uitdagings stel. Rassisme, seksisme, xenofobie en ander vorme van spanning kom steeds voor. Alle vorme van die miskennening van menslikheid moet teengewerk word. Dit beteken dat die kerk sigself inderdaad profeties teen alle bedreigings van hoop in die samelewing moet uitspreek: "Christians should be the custodians of the value of life by speaking up against all violations of human dignity - especially where this value is trampled upon through racist hate speech, violence against foreigners and dehumanization of women."

Hoop moet dus geskep word deur die menslike bestaan te vernuwe. MacMillen (2011:241) beklemtoon juis dat geloof, hoop en liefde saamhang en dat die liefde die hoop op hierdie wêreld rig. Deur die liefde verkry die menslike bestaan nuwe betekenis en hoop word geskep. Ook Lennan (2011:253) beklemtoon dat hoop 'n uitdaging is en dat die liefde van Christus ook

beteken dat hoop die werking van genade in ons lewe uitdra. Dit is inderdaad betekenisvol. Hoop moet met die liefde van Christus ingevul word anders word dit dikwels leeg en sonder inhoud; 'n blote verwagting van iets nuuts. Die hoop wat saamhang met die volle vernuwing wat Christus bring, sluit die huidige en toekomstige lewe in. Moltmann et al. (2004:15) wil die eskatologiese hoop nuut interpreteer en is van mening dat Jesus wat as regter kom juis die Een is wat volledige versoening met God bring sodat universele heil deurbreek, maar daar sal van hulle verskil moet word dat die versoening en hoop universalisme veronderstel. Hoop as universele heil sal egter ook in die huidige bestaan reeds die gemeenskap tot 'n lewe in hoop oproep. Wanneer die beslissing in Christus wat die hoop bepaal, nie ook as skeidende geregtigheid beskou word nie, verkry die hoop 'n verkeerde inhoud. Die begrip "teologie van hoop" word ook anders ingevul en Mashau (2008:31) wys op die betekenis wat 'n "teologie van hoop" kan inhou. Eerstens moet dit gevestig wees op die persoon en werk van Christus, omdat Hy Immanuel (God met ons) is wat Hom verneder het om in die menslike bestaan en leed te deel. Tweedens moet dit op die opstandingshoop van Jesus Christus gevestig wees. Die hoop op 'n beter toekoms is daarop gevestig. Derdens het die teologie van hoop betekenis vir die hier en nou. Die strydende kerk is op weg in hierdie wêreld, maar wil ook die nuwe heil bring met die verwagting op die toekoms waar alle verlossing sigbaar sal wees. Vierdens word die kerk opgeroep om by die wêreld betrokke te raak. Die stryd teen die boosheid en lyding in die wêreld moet aangeknoop word. Esterman (2003:112) wil juis die nood en ellende en angste van mense in die onontwikkelde wêreld met erns bejeën om sinvol oor hoop te praat (kyk ook Bockmuehl (2012:15). Holton (2010:81) sluit hierby aan deur aan te dui dat betrokkenheid in die ontvouing van God se beloftes van hoop in die wêreld van groot belang is. Die historiese hoop in Christus is egter essensieel (vgl. Ware (2009:137)).

Terwyl dit inderdaad waar is dat die teologie hoop moet beklemtoon, moet gewaak word teen 'n teologie waarin die betekenis van die dood van Christus aan die kruis misgekyk word. Die dood aan die kruis skep hoop maar veroordeel ook ongeloof en sonde. Die eskatologiese hoop wat weer deur die opstanding bevestig word is van beslissende betekenis. Hierdie hoop is egter die hoop in Christus. Dit moet aan die heil in Christus alleen verbind word.

Hoe kan hierdie hoop Bybels begrond word?

### **3.2 Bybelse begroning**

Die eskatologiese verwagting in die Bybel is ononderhandelbaar maar het ook betekenis vir die hier en die nou. Die toekoms is steeds 'n ingevulde toekoms wat betekenisvol deur God bepaal word. Die eskatologiese heil is egter reeds in God se ingrepe in die werklikheid sigbaar.

#### **3.2.1 Die toekoms in die Ou Testament**

Watter uitgangspunte moet neergelê word vir 'n nuwe toekomsverwagting en hoe moet hierdie toekomsverwagting bereik word? Indien 'n mens vanuit die Ou-Testamentiese perspektief vra wat die toekomsverwagting van mense moet wees en hoedat 'n verdere toekomsverwagting ontwikkel kan word, moet klem gelê word op die gedagte dat God in sy ingrepe in mense se lewensomstandighede die Een is wat elke nuwe toekoms skep. Nie alleen is Hy die God van die geskiedenis nie, maar Hy is ook die God van die toekoms. Hierdie God van die geskiedenis en die God van die toekoms word op velerlei wyses in die Ou Testament beskryf. God skep die nuwe toekomsverwagtinge.

Hoop en verwagtinge van die toekoms in die Ou Testament hang ten nouste met die verbond

en met die belofte van God saam. Aan die een kant is die verbond die grondslag waarop hoop en verwagting vir die toekoms gebou kan word. Die grondslag vir die verbond vind ons wanneer God vir Abraham sê: "Ek sal vir jou 'n God wees, en jy moet my kind of my volk wees" (Gen.12). Uit hierdie verhouding tussen God en Abraham spruit die belofte dat die nasies ook geseënd sal wees, want "[i]n hom sal al die geslagte van die wêreld geseën wees" (Gen 12 3). (vgl. Wenham 2002a:282), Sailhamer (1990:138) verduidelik dat die verbond juis op twee beloftes van God berus, naamlik dat God 'n oorvloedige nageslag sal gee, en ewige toewyding en seën. Hierdie verbondsverhouding beklemtoon ook 'n nuwe bevestiging van die beloftes van God. Die beloftes van God skep hoop en verwagting dat die toekoms in God se hande is en dat God die toekoms in vervulling sal laat gaan. Hierdie beloftes van God verseker God se volk, diegene wat aan God behoort, van 'n seënryke toekoms. Dit vind sy hoogtepunt in die Josef-geskiedenis wanneer God sy beloftes aan die volk vervul toe Hy gesorg het dat hulle deur Josef in Egipte bewaar is (vgl. Wenham (2002b:493). en Sailhamer (1990:266)).

Verder vind die beloftes vervulling in Moses se geskiedenis wanneer Moses deur God geroep word en God in Moses beloftes vervul wat Hy aan die volk gedoen het (Kaiser 1990:486). Die hoogtepunt van daardie vervulling vind eers plaas wanneer Josua die land inneem, maar dit beteken dat God ook op 'n besondere wyse met die volk was en dat Hy hulle ook van 'n toekoms verseker.

Hierdie toekomsverwagting wat vervul word wanneer die beloftes in vervulling gaan, hang saam met die verbond en die vervulling van die verbondsbeloftes wanneer die toekoms 'n werklikheid word.

Dit is veral Wright (2008:77-78) wat die besondere betekenis van die heil wat deur God in die uittog beklemtoon word verhelderend bespreek. Die God van die Bybel is die wonderbare Koning. Die heil van God is dus nie slegs geestelik en spiritueel nie, maar in die geskiedenis word dit konkreet en radikaal. Alle terreine van die lewe word geraak. God vernuwe die gemeenskap totaal op geestelike, ekonomiese, sosiale en politieke gebied. Hierdie heil het betekenis vir die hele gemeenskap.

Veral in Jesaja word dit baie sterk beklemtoon dat God die een is wat vir die volk wat in ballingskap, eintlik 'n volk sonder hoop met geen verwagting meer oor nie, verwagting en hoop kan skep. Hy doen dit deur vir hulle 'n nuwe toekoms te skep sodat hulle in die verwagting van wat God skep, vooruit kan beweeg in 'n rigting waarin hulle dan in 'n nuwe verhouding kan leef. Lessing (2011:134) maak 'n saak daarvoor uit dat Israel as die kneg van die Here ook die Kneg van die Here nodig het: "Just as Adam needed a second Adam, so the servant needs a second servant. Isaiah, then, gives us two servants; one who is blind because of idolatry and in need of rescue, the other whose eyes and ears are wide open so he can be the rescuer. After the righteous servant's vicarious satisfaction for the servant's sin of idolatry, as well as for the sins of all (53:11), Israel is forensically deemed righteous by Yahweh (54:17c). Forgiven and cleansed, the nation is then able to take up their servant role anew." Nuwe verwagting word telkemale geskep wanneer God heil en verlossing moontlik maak en dit vir hulle skep. Kaminsky et al. (2006:162) beklemtoon God se volledige soewereiniteit en majesteit in Deutero-Jesaja. In Jesaja vind die hoop natuurlik 'n besondere betekenis wanneer God die spesifieke aard van die verlossing en die seën beklemtoon. In Jesaja word die heil vir die volk verseker, asook 'n terugkeer uit die ballingskap waarvandaan hulle in heerlikheid sal terugkeer om die land in besit te neem. Verder verseker Jesaja hulle van die vervulling van die beloftes wanneer die hoop 'n nuwe gestalte verkry en wanneer dit alles plaasvind, sal die

beloftes van God ten volle in vervulling gaan. Die liedere oor die kneg van die Here in Jesaja bevestig dit op 'n baie unieke en besondere wyse. Hierdie heil wat God gee, hou hoop in vir die toekoms, onder andere in Jesaja 40:1-2 waar daar geskryf staan: "Die uitkoms is hier! Die uitkoms is hier! Dit, sê julle God, moet julle vir my volk sê. Bring vir Jerusalem die goeie tyding, sê vir hom sy swaarkry is verby, Hy het geboet vir sy sonde, hy het van die Here die volle straf ontvang vir al sy sondes." (vgl ook Grogan (1986:245-246)). Die Here bevestig hiermee dat daar hoop en 'n toekomsverwachting is en dat Hy die toekoms nuut kan skep.

In die profetiese literatuur kom dit telkemale voor dat daar te midde van die onheil en die oordeel van God telkemale ook heil en verlossing is. Die profetiese literatuur beklemtoon hierdie heil en verlossing sodat daar 'n toekomsverwachting is omdat God die een is wat die toekoms moontlik maak en 'n toekomsverwachting skep. So vind ons dit dan ook in 'n besondere sin in Daniël wanneer Daniël met sy skuldbelydenis voor God deur God verseker word van die toekoms wat God sal skep (Dan 9:20, vgl. Goldingay (2002:266).

Die Ou Testament beklemtoon dus op unieke wyse hoe God ingryp en heil skep sodat die hoop met volle inhoud gevul word. God skep die hoop soms uit totaal ellendige omstandighede sodat Hy geëer kan word. Die toekoms is volledig in sy hande.

### **3.2.2 Toekomsverwachting in die Nuwe Testament**

Heil en verlossing en hoop in die Ou Testament is baie konkreet. In die Nuwe Testament (NT) is dit ewe-eens konkreet maar dit sluit 'n toekomsverwachting van heil in die ewigheid in. Dit bly nie uit dat die belofte van God in vervulling sal gaan in die heil wat God skep nie. Nie alleen in die verwagting op die ewigheid want God verseker die volk en die gelowige ook van die teenswoordige heil Die NT bied beloftes oor die heil wat volledig in die toekoms in vervulling sal gaan, 'n verlossing wat werklik en absoluut sal wees. Die belofte van vervulling in die toekoms word egter ook gebind aan die teenswoordige heil wat reeds in die teenswoordige tyd na vore kom. Daarom word verskillende aspekte van die toekomsverwachting en die teenswoordige heil. God se heil word in die teenswoordige tyd geskenk, maar die verwagting op die toekomstige heil bly nie uit nie. Daarom word die vervulling en die verwagting van die heil in die toekoms verder in die teenswoordige tyd bevestig . Juis dit gee hoop vir mense vir nou en vir die lewe hierna.

Dit vind ons veral in die Johannes-evangelie waar dit baie duidelik gemaak word dat die heil in die teenswoordige tyd beklemtoon word. God beklemtoon baie uitdruklik reeds in Johannes 6 dat die heil teenswoordig is. (Joh 6:47). Dit is 'n sterk bevestiging van die heil wat in die teenswoordige tyd reeds 'n werklikheid is. Beasley-Murray (2002:97-98) beklemtoon dit juis: "All this suggests that the feeding miracle is understood as a celebration of the feast of the kingdom of God in the present, anticipating its continual celebration in the Church's worship and its ultimate fulfillment in the last day." Tenney (1981:77) sluit hierby aan "Again Jesus says, 'I am the bread of life' (cf. v. 35). Before, he linked this statement with the supplying of man's basic needs; hunger and thirst would be permanently alleviated. This time Jesus links the statement to life itself. When the Jews ate the heavenly bread ("manna") in the wilderness, their physical needs were met. However, they still died (v.49). But Jesus said that he 'is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die' (v.50)."

Dit word verder bevestig wanneer Jesus hierdie heil en verlossing aan sy persoon koppel en verseker dat Hy en die Vader een is en dat Hy in die eenheid met die Vader hierdie verlossing en heil kan gee wat tog vir die persoon in die tyd self betekenis het. Die versekering van die

heil in die tyd self word in Romeine ook verder beklemtoon wanneer Paulus oor die werking van die Heilige Gees skrywe, hoe die Gees en die skepping deur God bestuur word omdat God die Heilige Gees gee (vgl. Dunn (2002:493) Harrison (1976:93-94) skryf ook: "Before passing to the final ministry of the Spirit (vv. 26, 27) Paul lingers over the concept of future glory in relation to present suffering. His presentation may be seen as an expansion of what he had already written to the Corinthians (2 Cor 4:17). Weighed in the scales of true and lasting values, the sufferings endured in this life are light indeed, compared with the splendor of the life to come—a life undisturbed by anything hostile or hurtful. Scripture does not tell us much of what that glory will be, but it assures us that it will be."

Alhoewel die hoop en verwagting soms 'n uitgestelde hoop is, soos blyk uit Hebreërs 11 waar aangedui word hoe die gelowige mens deur die geloof aan God verbind is, hoe die heilsverwachting beklemtoon word, hoe die mens uitsien na die verlossing wat van God kom en die verlossing en sekerheid vir hom gee wat in vervulling gaan. Hierdie verlossing tree egter nie altyd hier en nou volledig in werking nie, maar hulle leef met verwagting dat die belofte dit in vervulling sal gaan. Hebreërs 11 verseker gelowiges van die heil wat vir hulle gegee is omdat hulle deur die geloof die toekomstige heil in die verte gesien het ( Lane 2002:394-395). Morris (1981:131-132) verduidelik ook: "The despised and ill-treated group of servants of God was of greater real worth than all the rest of humanity put together. Their description is rounded off with the reminder that they had no settled homes. They wandered in lonely places, and their shelters were "caves and holes in the ground" (i.e., underground caves). The heroes of the faith had no mansions; they cared for other things than their own comfort."

Dan natuurlik in Openbaring word die belofte van heil baie sterk beklemtoon. Dit is 'n heil wat ons in Christus se teenwoordigheid verkry wanneer Hy ons verseker van sy teenwoordigheid tussen die gemeentes, die sewe gemeentes waar Hy as Here teenwoordig is. Hy verseker sy verlossing en heil vir hulle, maar Hy verseker hulle ook dat hierdie heil en verlossing wat Hy aan hulle belowe ook in die toekoms ten volle na vore sal kom. Dit word verseker in Openbaring 7 waar die 144 000 mense met die naam van sy Vader op hulle voorkoppe staan. Aune (2002a:480) skryf: "It is clear that the 'innumerable multitude' (v 9), which suggests the fulfillment of the promise to Abraham, consists of the large number Christians who have died or suffered martyrdom during the period of eschatological tribulation, during the same period that the 144,000 have been divinely protected from defeat and death." Dit is die verlossing wat in Openbaring 19 belowe word wanneer daar vreugde in die hemel is en die bruilof van die Lam aanbreek en die stem van die troon van God gekom en gesê het: "Loof ons God as sy dienaar, die wat Hom vrees klein en groot en dan die lof wat aan God gebring word vir die groot bruilofsmaaltyd van die Lam verlossing van die heil wat kom" (vgl. Aune 2002b:1040 en Johnson 1981:571).

Die Nuwe Testament beklemtoon dat God in Jesus Christus die heil skep, nie alleen vir die toekoms nie, maar ook vir die teenswoordige tyd. Hierdie heil omvat die mens se volle bestaan en bring hoop onder die mees ongunstige omstandighede. Dit word radikaal aan die kruis en opstanding van Jesus Christus verbind en word deur Hom bemiddel. Die heil wat Hy gee word die inhoud van die ware hoop..

#### 4. GEMEENSAPPE SE VERWAGTING

Gedurende kwalitatiewe onderhoude wat tussen 2009 en 2013 met individue in informele behuisingsgebiede in Mangaung gevoer is, het dit duidelik geword dat daar by sommige

respondente nie meer 'n toekomsverwagting en hoop is nie. Onderhoude is in Sesotho of isiXhosa op band opgeneem en deur ds. T. Maile getranskribeer en vertaal. Toestemming vir onderhoude is telkemale verleen. Verskeie onderhoude wat op die sneeubal- en ander ongestruktureerde metodes gedoen is, maar telkens in ander informele gebiede, om die ondersoek so ruim as moontlik te maak. is in die tydperk met kerkleiers, lidmate en die algemene publiek (mense op straat) gevoer. Hierdie onderhoude is op kwalitatiewe navorsingswyse gevoer. Die struktuur wat gevolg is, was om vanuit vier ongestruktureerde platforms vrae te genereer om te bepaal hoe die beginsels van die evangelie in die informele gemeenskap gevestig kan word. Vanuit [A], die vraag na die lewensomstandighede van die gemeenskap, word beweeg na [B], die vrae aangaande die kerk se optrede in die gemeenskap om armoede en ander bedreigings teen te gaan, na [C], die vrae rondom die verwagte taak van die kerk in die gemeenskap om juis teen die bedreigings op te tree, na [D], 'n vraag (vrae) of daar 'n toekomsverwagting en hoop is en hoe dit bereik moet word. Die laaste vraag [D] is vir hierdie artikel van belang.

Vanuit die onderhoude was daar die volgende vyf hoofreaksies:

1. Daar is geen hoop op 'n beter toekoms nie, hoofsaaklik as gevolg van die sosio-politieke omstandighede. Hierdie reaksie kom algemeen voor onder sowel die algemene publiek as by kerkgangers voor sodat dit nie as die oortuiging van slegs die nie-kerklike publiek beskou kan word nie. Voorbeelde van response is die volgende:
  - Ek sien nie 'n toekoms nie.
  - Nee, daar is nie 'n toekoms nie, want 'n mens kry net vir een dag hulp. Wat van die ander dae?
  - Ek dink nie so nie, ons toekoms is gedoem.
  - Nee, daar is nie 'n toekoms nie, want ons het nie 'n raadslid nie en ons ken nie ons premier nie.
  - Ek is nie positief oor die land se toekoms nie.
  - Daar is geen toekoms nie.
2. Daar is hoop indien die regering of staatsinstellings ingryp. Dit kom voor by die algemene publiek en by kerkgangers wat daarop dui dat dit algemeen is. Voorbeelde hiervan is soos volg:
  - As die regering kan help om saam te baklei, sal alles regkom
  - Slegs met opvoeding, seminare, werksinkels om vaardighede te kry om armoede te verlig. Almal het geld nodig, dus moet hulle weet hoe om geld te maak.
  - As die regering die kerke kan begin erken.
  - As die regering projekte van stapel kan stuur, veral in landbou.
  - As die regering kerke van raad kan bedien, nie met geld nie as gevolg van die korrupsie.
  - Ek dink eenheid sal beter wees en as die regering die kerke kan help. Ons het werk nodig sodat ons vir ons gesinne kan voorsien. As die regering ons van werk of tenders kan voorsien.

- Hulle behoort instellings soos universiteite te vra wat in verskillende departement hieraan werk om mense op te lei sodat hulle vaardighede kan hê om ons land te help om armoede te verlig. Ons kerklidmate het seminare, werksinkels nodig om hulle toe te rus om hulle vaardighede vir die kerk te ontwikkel, veral by jong mense. Hulle kan navorsing oor hierdie epidemie doen.
  - 'n Mens weet dit kan verander, slegs as die kerk en staat kan saamwerk, soos onder apartheid. Ons lees in die geskiedenis dat die kerk die staat se eerste prioriteit was.
  - Ja, as die ryk mense kinders uit arm gesinne kan neem en hulle opvoed sodat daar in die toekoms minder armoede is.
  - Ek is baie positief oor die toekoms in hierdie area. As die regering net skole, kerke en ander belangrike fasiliteite kan bou wat mense die kans kan gee om hulle lewens te verander.
3. Daar is hoop op 'n beter toekoms maar slegs by God. Hy alleen kan hoop skep. Dit kom voor by kerkgangers wat die verwagting van hoop aan God bind. Nie-kerklike respondente sien dit anders. Die volgende is voorbeelde van hierdie siening:
- Ja, dinge kan inderdaad verander, maar net as ons saamwerk en God vra om in alles die leiding te neem.
  - Ek glo ons kan die toekoms verander, maar slegs as ons op God vertrou en Hom altyd nooi om die bron te wees van alles wat ons omring.
  - As God net hierdie area kan seën.
4. Die kerk kan deur betrokkenheid by die gemeenskap hoop skep, maar dan moet die klimaat vir die kerk geskep word om met byvoorbeeld aanvaarbare standplase die werk te verrig. Kerkleiers huldig hierdie standpunt en wel op die volgende wyse:
- Ja, slegs as die kerk en die lidmate liefde en barmhartigheid kan beoefen en saam projekte kan aanpak,
  - Ons wil hê die regering moet vir ons 'n standplaas gee waar ons 'n projek kan loods om te boer en groente te plant. Ons kan dan die groente verkoop en met die geld wat ons kry, kan ons die behoeftiges help.
  - As die jonges maar net wil kerk toe kom
  - Ja, daar is altyd 'n toekoms. Die kerk preek altyd die evangelie vir ons, maar ons wil nie na die boodskap luister nie.
  - Ek glo ons as Christene moet ons houding verander, dan sal God ophou om mense te straf.
  - Mense wat nie werk nie, het dalk iets soos masjinerie nodig sodat hulle klere kan maak en dit in die kerk verkoop. Omdat daar egter nie 'n kerk is nie, kan ons nie ons masjinerie kerk toe bring sodat mense kan werk nie. Ons moet eers 'n kerk kry sodat ons kan weet alles is veilig.
5. Indien verantwoordelikheid aanvaar word. Die volgende is voorbeelde:
- Ja, positief, dinge sal in die toekoms verander, maar net as ons kan opstaan en met

ons hande werk, met ons breine dink, kan ons saam met die kerk die situasie verander. Hoewel ons dit nie gaan klaarmaak nie, kan ons die situasie verander.

- Ja, want die meeste van ons is besig om die een of ander plannetjie te maak om ons eie mense hier te help.
- Ja, daar is 'n toekoms. Dit is in ons hande.
- As alle kinders kan sien dat opvoeding die sleutel tot 'n beter toekoms is.

## **Gevolgtrekking**

Alhoewel daar nie gekwantifiseer word in kwalitatiewe navorsing nie, het 'n beduidende aantal respondente (meer as 10%) aangetoon aan dat hulle geen hoop op die toekoms het nie. Dit blyk dat hulle wanhoop uit die sosio-polities-ekonomiese toestand in die informele gemeenskappe spruit. Hierdie groep verwag ook nie dat die kerk hoop kan bring nie. Die kerk sal juis hiervan moet kennis neem en sigself afvra hoe om in die gemeenskap vir alle mense bakens van hoop te kan word.

'n Besondere groot aantal (meer as 20%) is van mening dat die owerheid en instellings die situasie aansienlik kan verbeter, dikwels in samewerking met die kerk. 'n Profetiese stem vanuit die kerk sou die owerheid kon inspireer om meer betrokke te raak by die gemeenskap. Daar sal egter steeds 'n afstand tussen kerk en owerheid behou moet word.

Die transendente is in die gemeenskap steeds van besondere betekenis en dit is nie vreemd dat die verwagting leef dat God alleen deur sy ingrepe hoop kan skep nie. Die kerk sou inderdaad radikaal kon beklemtoon dat God die enigste een is wat werklik hoop kan skep.

Die kerk is steeds vir baie mense die gemeenskap wat inderdaad die nuwe toekoms kan skep. Onder haglike omstandighede bring die kerk nuwe verwagtinge by mense. Hierdie aspek sal ontwikkel en uitgebou moet word.

Dit is egter ook belangrik dat daar besef word dat gemeenskappe self ook verantwoordelikheid moet aanvaar. Die respondente wat hierdie aspek uitlig verleen inderdaad besondere betekenis aan die roeping om self ook by situasies betrokke te raak om nuwe hoop te skep.

## **5. VOORSTELLE VIR DIE SKEP VAN 'N TOEKOMSVERWAGTING**

Hoe het die verlossing wat bevestig word in die heil wat vas lê in die toekoms vir 'n persoon in 'n plakkerskamp betekenis? Op watter manier kan hierdie beloftes van God ook daar reeds in vervulling gaan? Is daar aspekte van die heil wat teenswoordig midde in daardie omstandighede ervaar en beleef kan word?

Dit is duidelik dat daar 'n brug geslaan sal moet word tussen die belofte van God binne die verbond en die bestaan van mense in die algemeen en hoe mense in die algemeen op hierdie hoop en verwagting kan staatmaak.

In die eerste plek is daar die persoonlike verhouding tot God waarin die hoop sekerheid verkry en 'n mens uit die krag van hoop kan lewe. Dit is alleen moontlik wanneer die persoon in 'n noue verhouding met God gebring word en ook in die teenwoordigheid van God kom. Die vraag wat egter onmiddellik gevra moet word, is of hierdie verwagting van 'n persoonlike

verbondsverhouding wat op 'n toekomsverwagting kan uitloop nie 'n tipiese voorbeeld van Christelike vermyding van die werklikheid is nie? 'n Sterk evangelisasie aksie sal dus in die gebiede geloods moet word, maar dit sal gevul moet word met wêreldbeskoulike inhoud sodat daar nie sprake van dualisme is waar die huidige lewe geskei word van die spirituele lewe nie. Kerkies in die informele gebiede moet mense aktief uitnooi na eredienste en aanbiddingsgeleenthede om 'n gemeenskap van hoop te vorm.

Dit is inderdaad van groot belang, want indien 'n persoonlike verhouding met God daartoe lei dat 'n mens jou aan die werklikheid onttrek en jy jou in 'n tipe geestelike kloosterbestaan bevind, word die betekenis en die ware aard van die hoop en toekomsverwagting van die Bybel meteens misgekyk. Die hoop en die toekomsverwagting van die Bybel hang saam met die sekerheid dat die heil en verlossing in Christus gevind kan word en dat hierdie heil en verlossing dit moontlik maak om dan met God te lewe en die toekoms tegemoet te gaan. Hierdie nuwe toekomsverwagting maak dit moontlik dat 'n mens ook verantwoordelikheid kan aanvaar.

Dit bring ons by die tweede aspek, die mens se verantwoordelike lewe voor God. Die mens word geroep tot 'n verantwoordelike lewe voor God. God gee die mens die taak en die verantwoordelikheid om in die werklikheid te leef.

Verantwoordelikheid hang ook met gemeenskapsverantwoordelikheid saam. Die individuele persoon in die informele behuisinggebiede kan dikwels nie verantwoordelikheid aanvaar vir infrastruktuur en ander sake wat negatief op die gemeenskap inwerk nie. Hulle moet hulp ontvang van mense wat hulle ondersteun en die gemeenskap moet saam hierdie verantwoordelikheid aanvaar. Kerke sal selfs tydelike strukture moet oprig om mense te bedien. Daar sal gepoog moet word om die strukture wettig op te rig. Vanuit hierdie strukture moet die gemeenskap bedien word met crèches, opleiding en selfs primêre mediese dienste. As voorbeeld van gemeenskapdiens sou kerke aksies kon loods soos skoonmaakaksies, padopvullings en hulp met watervoorsiening.

Munisipaliteite is onder druk om vir mense behuising en dienste te verskaf. Dit is in baie opsigte nie moontlik om almal tegemoet te kom en hierdie dienste vir almal te verskaf nie. Die gemeenskap moet ook self verantwoordelikheid aanvaar om daarby betrokke te raak. Die kerk kan hierin 'n besondere rol vervul, nie alleen deur die spreekbuis van die armes te wees nie maar ook deur die owerhede by te staan in die ontwikkeling van die gebiede.

Die derde aspek is die skep van 'n nuwe toekoms en 'n nuwe verwagting deurdat daar van buite hulp kom. Dit kan geskied deur NRO's of deur die kerk self wat in die gemeenskap God se beloftes in vervulling laat gaan deur ook vir die gemeenskap hoop te skep en hulle deur daardie hoop op 'n nuwe pad te plaas. Dit sou kon beteken dat mense ander mense op die mees basiese vlak versorg sodat hulle nie in wanhoop verkeer en geen hulp en geen bystand kan verkry nie. Kerke moet aksies saam met ander rolspelers bevorder om die omstandighede prakties te verbeter. As uitvloeisel van hierdie navorsing word 'n byeenkoms op 8 September 2013 gehou waar predikante en ander rolspelers geïnspireer word om (a) mense sonder hoop in die informele gebiede te identifiseer, (b) aksies te loods om die armes van basiese versorging te voorsien, (c) genootskappe te sluit om saam op te tree teen sake wat hoop vernietig, soos misdad en (d) gemeenskaplike verantwoordelikhede te bevorder.

Werkskepping sou inderdaad noodsaaklik wees indien groot gebiede onder werkloosheid gebuk gaan. Hierdie werkskepping moet uiteindelik daartoe lei dat mense ook gehelp word

met dit wat hulle wil doen sodat hulle dan inderdaad die gemeenskap verder kan opbou.

In die vierde plek sal 'n toekomsverwachting daartoe moet lei dat mense as burgers van die land hulle verantwoordelikheid nie alleen teenoor mekaar nie maar teenoor die land as sodanig nakom deur positiewe dinge tot opbou van die gemeenskap te doen.

Die uitdagings in die informele gebiede is ontsaglik groot. Daar is geweldige krisisse en hierdie krisisse kan alleen beantwoord word indien daar 'n diep Bybelse beginsel neergelê word dat God die een is wat die hoop skep. Terselfdertyd sal die gemeenskap ook verantwoordelikheid moet aanvaar en sal owerhede en ander belanghebbendes steeds direk betrokke moet wees by mense en ook insien hoedat hulle die mense te hulp kan kom en hulle op 'n nuwe pad kan plaas. Dit beteken dat gemeenskappe meer as ooit vantevore geïnspireer moet word om kennis te neem van die Bybelse uitgangspunte en van die wyse waarop die Bybel tog vir mense onder hulle omstandighede en die omstandighede waarin hulle lewe, riglyne kan verskaf en vir hulle op 'n nuwe pad kan plaas.

Vanuit die wonder van God se nuwe skepping, wat Hy in Jesus Christus moontlik maak, is dit moontlik om ook in die hier en die nou reeds vir sake van belang verantwoordelikheid te neem. 'n Makro-struktuur wat dit moontlik maak, is van groot belang. 'n Makrostruktuur waarin mense inderdaad ruimte kan vind, moet beklemtoon word. Mense moet inderdaad die ruimte gebied word om vanuit hierdie makrostruktuur steeds voort te gaan om hulleself te ontwikkel.

## 6. SLOT

Die verwagting van 'n nuwe toekoms is alleen moontlik wanneer daar vanuit die diepte van die evangeliese beginsel dat Christus die Verlosser is, gedink kan word oor die werklikheid waarbinne ons leef en wanneer daar vanuit hierdie verlossing 'n toekoms geskep kan word.

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