NED GEREF
TEOLOGIESE
TYDSKRIF

CHRISTELIKE LEKTUURFONDS

Christelike Lektuurfonds is gestig met die doel om die evangelie van Jesus Christus deur middel van Christelike leesstof in Afrika-tale, sowel as Afrikaans en Engels, te versprei. CLF is self verantwoordelik vir die befondsing van publikasies en dienste. CLF stel pamflette en bedieningsmateriaal in verskeie tale vir bediening in en van gemeentes van die NGK-familie beskikbaar. Die inhoud en fokus van die literatuur het 'n missionêr-diakonale gerigtheid en wil diens lewer in die koninkryk van God.

Bedryfshoof: Christelle Vorster – Christelle@clf.co.za
Bestellings: Esther van Biljon – order@clf.co.za

Kontakbesonderhede:
Christelike Lektuurfonds
Privaatsak X19 Wellington 7654
(021) 873 6964
(021) 864 3678
info@clf.co.za
www.clf.co.za

Bosman, HL
Universiteit Stellenbosch

Die Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis / *Confessio Belgica* en die Bybel in 1561[1]

ABSTRACT

The Belgic Confession and the Bible in 1561

As part of the celebration of the *Confessio Belgica* (450 years after it was written) this contribution focuses on the hermeneutical frame presupposed by and interpretation of the Bible in the confession. It is clear that Guido de Bres (main author of the confession) was well read and was able to formulate the confession in such a way that it resonated with the protestant communities of faith in the southern Netherlands – what initially was intended as a polemical attempt to distantiate themselves from the Anabaptists soon became accepted a confession of faith. The *Confessio Belgica* does not quote directly from Scripture but refers to biblical verses and phrases by means of free association. The use of Scripture in the *Confessio Belgica* is pre-critical because the literal sense of the Bible is paramount and it does not reflect self critically in terms of its own presuppositions – this does not imply that the confession is intellectually suspect or deficient! The question is also posed whether the *Confessio Belgica* can continue to be understood as a "repetition of Sacred Scripture" or must it be held accountable for the way in which it interpreted Scripture in the sixteenth century to maintain relevance in the twenty-first century?

1. INLEIDING

Die vraag na die samehang tussen die "Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis" (NGB) en die Bybel kan op verskillende maniere geïnterpreteer word. In hierdie artikel val die klem op die verstaan van die Bybel ten tye van die opstel van die NGB en word dit aan die leser oorgelaat om na te dink oor watter bydrae die NGB lewer tot die eietydse nadenke oor Skrifinterpretasie en geloofsgemeenskappe se voortdurende uitdaging om toepaslike artikulerings van hulle geloofsoortuiging te genereer.[2]

Na 450 jaar vorm die NGB steeds 'n betekenisvolle deel van die belydenisgrondslag van talle denominasies met 'n Gereformeerde grondslag.[3] Eietydse nadenke oor die betekenis van die

---

1 Die artikel is gebaseer op 'n openbare lesing tydens die amptelike herdenking in die Fakulteit Teologie, Stellenbosch, van die 450 jarige bestaan van die *Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis,* op 22 November 2011. Die viering was in die vorm van 'n openbare simposium, waartydens prof. Dirkie Smit en prof. Robert Vosloo ook voordragte gelewer het. Die openbare voordrag is gedeeltelik aangepas in die lig van Emile Braekman en Erik de Boer (reds), *Guido de Bres. Zijn leven, zijn belijden,* Utrecht, Uitgeverij Kok, 2011 se herdenkingsbundel wat eers na die openbare simposium toeganklik was. Daarbenewens is voetnotas met verwysings bygevoeg ter wille van akademiese gebruik deur lesers. In die titel word daar na die "Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis" sowel as die *Confessio Belgica* verwys omdat laasgenoemde veral in vakliteratuur buite Nederland en Suid-Afrika gebruik word.

2 Die vraag na die eietydse belang van die NGB word meer deur die bydrae van prof. Dirkie Smit, "Die Teologiese Inhoud van die *Confessio Belgica* vandag" aangespreek.

3 In die Suid-Afrikaanse gereformeerde konteks publiseer JA Heyns in 1992, *Inleiding tot die Dogmatiek*

betrokke belydenis sal baat vind by 'n studie oor die Bybelinterpretasie wat ten grondslag van die Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis lê omdat dit interpreteerders in die 21ste eeu bewus maak van die hermeneutiese konteks waarbinne die NGB ontstaan het.[4]

Daar word eers gelet op die hermeneutiese agtergrond van die Skrifgebruik in die Geloofsbelydenis, met spesifieke klem op die invloed van Johannes Calvyn en die Franse Geloofsbelydenis (*Confessio Gallicana*) van 1559.[5] Daarna word ondersoek ingestel na die verwysing na die Bybel in die Belydenis – veral die bespreking van die oorsprong, gesag en duidelikheid van die Skrif in artikels 2-7. In 'n vorige studie van die Skrifgebruik in die NGB is ook nagegaan hoe die verwysing na Bybeltekste gebruik was om bepaalde aspekte van die Belydenis in Artikels 8-37 te motiveer.[6]

2. HERMENEUTIESE AGTERGROND VAN DIE NEDERLANDSE GELOOFSBELYDENIS (NGB)

Wie was die opsteller van die NGB, Guido De Bres, en watter invloede was bepalend vir sy hermeneutiek wat ten grondslag van sy Skrifgebruik lê?[7] Opsommend kan daar op die volgende aspekte van sy lewensloop gelet word wat waarskynlik sy manier van Bybelinterpretasie beïnvloed het:

De Bres is waarskynlik in 1522 in die suidelike Nederlande (vandag België) in Bergen (Mons) gebore en kom voor 1547 tot bekering. Daar word gespekuleer dat De Bres aanvanklik as "glas-in-loodschilder" sy brood verdien het en dat hierdie ambag 'n goeie kennis van die Bybel veronderstel het.[8] Hierdie persoonlike Bybelstudie sou dan aanleiding tot sy bekering op 'n volwasse ouderdom kon gegee het.[9]

Kort na sy bekering tot die Protestantisme vlug De Bres na Engeland uit vrees vir moontlike

---

aan die hand van die Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis, Pretoria: NGKB. Prof. Heyns stel dit onmwonde in die Voorwoord dat die NGB nog steeds 'n "rigtinggewende belydenisgeskrif van ons kerk" is. Die vraag tot watter mate die NGB steeds dieselfde rigtinggewing in die 21ste eeu bied, word deur die ander bydraes van Proff Smit en Vosloo in hierdie uitgawe aangespreek.

4 Die opmerking probeer nie eietydse lesers van die NGB vervreem nie maar poog wel om 'n historiese en teologiese bewussyn te kweek om die belydenisskrif binne die konteks van sestiende eeuse Skrifverstaan te begryp wanneer nagedink word oor hoe die NGB vir vandag relevant is.

5 SA Strauss, "Die Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis," in FM Gaum *et al* (reds), *Christelike Kernensiklopedie.* Wellington: LuxVerbi BM, 789.

6 HL Bosman et al, *Die Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis – Ontstaan, Skrifgebruik en Gebruik.* Pretoria: UNISA, 1987. Die navorsingsprojek het voortgevloei uit die behoefte om teologiese navorsing meer interdissiplinêr te bedryf en om 'n bydrae te lewer tot die besinning rondom belydenisskrifte in kerke wat op gereformeerde teologiese grondslag berus. Naas die bespreking van die dogmahistoriese, kerklike en politieke omstandighede waarbinne die NGB ontstaan het, is daar ook spesifieke aandag verleen aan Skrifuitleg in die sestiende eeu en 'n gepaardgaande bespreking van hoe die Ou en Nuwe Testament deur die NGB gebruik is om dogmatiese leerstellinge te verduidelik en te motiveer.

7 In die suidelike Nederlande het persoonsname dikwels 'n Nederlandse en Franse vorm gehad en daarom was Guido De Bres ook as Guy de Bray bekend. GP van Itterzon, "Bres, Guido De (Guy de Bray)," in D Nauta, *Biografisch Lexicon voor de Geschiedenis van het Nederlandse Protestantisme* Deel 2. Kampen: JH Kok, 1983, 97-100. Terselfdertyd moet ook kennis geneem word dat plekname in die suidelike Nederlande dikwels 'n Nederlandse (Vlaamse) en Franse (Waalse) vorm gehad het: bv Rijsel (Lille) en Doornik (Tournai).

8 In samelewings met min geletterdheid was die gebrandskilderde glasvensters in Middeleeuse kerke en katedrale die prenteboeke wat die Bybel vir swak geletterde gemeentelede geïllustreer het. Guido se vader, Jean De Bres, was ook 'n glasskilder gewees en dit was nie ongewoon dat 'n seun dieselfde ambag as sy vader beoefen het nie.

9 E Braekman, "De Jeugd van een Bergenaar," in Emile Braekman en Erik de Boer (reds), *Guido de Bres. Zijn leven, zijn belijden,* Utrecht, Uitgeverij Kok, 2011, 34 – 51.

vervolging. Vanaf 1548-1552 kry hy as deel van sy teologiese opleiding in London ook lesings in Hebreeus en Grieks wat sy studie van die Ou en Nuwe Testament verdiep.[10] Hierdie opleiding geskied aan die Instituut vir Profesie waar die Waalse (Franssprekende) studente weekliks 'n Bybelboek behandel het en deur Galterus Deloenus oor die Hebreeuse teks van die Ou Testament en Johannes a Lasco oor die Griekse teks van die Nuwe Testament onderrig is.[11]

Na vier jaar in London keer De Bres terug na die Nederlande en vanaf 1552 tot 1556 tree hy as predikant in die suidelike Nederlande op met besondere sukses in die gemeente van Rijsel (Lille) wat voorheen deur Lutherane bearbei was.[12] Dit is gedurende hierdie tydperk dat De Bres sy eerste boek in 1555, *Le Baston de la Foy chrestienne* ("Die stok / wapen van die Christelike geloof") publiseer waarin hy klem daarop lê dat die Bybel die enigste bron van alle wysheid is en nie die kerklike leertradisie nie.[13] Hierdie boek was in reaksie op Nicole Grenier se *Le bouclier de la foy* ("Die skild van die geloof") wat bestaan het uit 'n apologie teen die Kerkhervormers met aanhalings vanuit die Bybel en die Vroeë Kerkvaders ter ondersteuning vir die Rooms Katolieke dogma.[14]

Gedurende die tydperk 1556-1558 ondergaan De Bres verdere teologiese opleiding in Duitsland (Frankfurt) asook in Switserland (vermoedelik onder andere onder Theodore Beza in Lausanne en Johannes Calvyn in Geneve).[15] Sommige kerkhistorici is versigtig om ongenuanseerd 'n sterk Calvinistiese invloed op De Bres te veronderstel aangesien daar weinig persoonlike kontak met Calvyn was. Hoewel daar geen gedokumenteerde bewyse daarvoor is nie, word vermoed dat De Bres klasse en preke van Calvyn bygewoon het en dat daar minstens een brief van Calvyn in sy boekery gevind is.[16] De Bres was dus Calvinisties sonder om 'n slaafse navolger en naprater van Johannes Calvyn te gewees het – daarvoor was hy te belese en was sy kennis van die Kerkvaders en talle ander Hervormers te omvangryk.

Die indirekte invloed van Calvyn op De Bres word gevind in die belangrike rol wat die Franse Geloofsbelydenis (1559) op die *Confessio Belgica* gehad het en waarvan Calvyn ook een van die opstellers was. Daar is 'n ooglopende ooreekoms tussen die voorblaaie van die *Confessio Gallicana* en die *Confessio Belgica* met bykans dieselfde bewoording en aangehaalde teksgedeelte (1 Pet

10 K Exalto 1987. *In het Rechte Spoor. Inleiding tot de Nederlandse Geloofsbelijdenis.* Kampen: Kok, 13 beskryf hoe Engeland in die regeringstyd van Edward VI 'n toevlugsoord vir Hervormingsgesindes was en dat De Bres hom by die Franssprekende deel van die Nederlandse vlugtelingsgemeente in London aangesluit het.

11 E Braekman 2011, "Het Toevluchtsoord in London," in Emile Braekman en Erik de Boer (reds), *Guido de Bres. Zijn leven, zijn belijden,* Utrecht: Kok, 52 – 62.

12 JL Oosthuizen, "Guido Des Bres," in FM Gaum et al (reds), *Christelike Kernensiklopedie.* Wellington: Lux VerbiBM, 209-210.

13 E Braekman 2011, "Predikantswerk in Rijsel," in Emile Braekman en Erik de Boer (reds), *Guido de Bres. Zijn leven, zijn belijden,* Utrecht, Uitgeverij Kok, 75-89 wys ook uit dat Des Bres se eerste publikasie aan die gemeente van Rijsel opgedra was.

14 Exalto, *In het Rechte Spoor*, 17 dui aan dat Des Bres se eerste publikasie juis probeer het om met behulp van aanhalings vanuit die kerkvaders soos Augustinus en die Bybel die Roomse aantygings teen die Protestantisme te weerlê.

15 Begrippe soos "Duitsland" en "Switserland" word hier ietwat anachronisties gebruik omdat die Europese geopolitieke konteks van die sestiende eeu in talle opsigte beduidend van die 21ste eeu verskil.

16 NH Gootjes 2007, *The Belgic Confession. Its History and Sources.* Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 62 omskryf versigtig die moontlike invloed van Calvyn op De Bres: " Guido de Bres read at least one book written by Calvin, owned at least one book by him, and exchanged at least one letter with him. He may have met him in Strassbourg, and more likely in Geneva. But classifying de Bres exclusively as a student of Calvin does not reflect the actual situation. He was in contact with more Reformed theologians, and he owned books written by a variety of theologians including some outside of the strictly Calvinistic tradition."

3:15). Rohls is van mening dat die Franse Geloofsbelydenis "intensifies Biblicism in the sense of a formal scriptural principle" en in dieselfde verband verwys hy na die NGB as 'n belydenis waarin "the biblicistic scriptural principle took an even more intensified form."[17] Die Franse Belydenis verwys na 'n dubbele openbaring (Skepping en Skrif), terwyl die NGB verwys na 'n dubbele kennis van God deur sy werke (skepping) en woorde (Skrif). Volgens die Franse Geloofsbelydenis word die spesiale of besondere openbaring onderskei van die algemene openbaring na aanleiding van meer helderheid oor wat openbaar word. In die NGB word die besondere openbaring in die Skrif nie net as helderder as die algemene openbaring beskou nie, maar ook as 'n voller of meer omvattende openbaring.[18]. Hoewel die *Confessio Gallica* na die Apokriewe boeke as "nuttig" verwys, lys die *Confessio Belgica* hierdie boeke en laat dit die Kerk toe om te gebruik in soverre dit in ooreenstemming met die Kanonieke boeke is.[19]

Tydens die nag van 1 en 2 November 1561 word 'n pakkie oor die vestingmuur van die kasteel van Doornik (Tournai) gegooi. Die inhoud van die pakkie was 'n brief aan die owerheid (kommissarisse van die landvoogdes) en 'n geloofsbelydenis wat in die opskrif aanspraak gemaak het dat dit met die instemming van Nederlandse gelowiges gemaak word.[20] Die aanvanklike bedoeling van die opstelling van die NGB in 1561 was dat dit in samehang met die begeleidende brief 'n verontskuldiging teenoor die Spaanse besetters van die Nederlande behels het dat die Calviniste nie met die onstuimige Wederdopers verwar moet word nie. Gou het die helder formulering van die belydenis aanklank by die Nederlandse Protestante gehad en is dit by daaropvolgende sinodes met geringe wysigings aanvaar.

Dit is moeilik om met enige mate van noukeurigheid De Bres se teologiese verwysingsraamwerk te rekonstrueer in terme waarvan die NGB opgestel is.[21] Die kerklike kommissarisse wat na die bekendmaking van die NGB ondersoek na De Bres ingestel het, ontdek in Januarie 1562 De Bres se biblioteek met die boeke wat hy na alle waarskynlikheid tydens die formulering van die NGB benut het. Sommige van die belangrikste skrywers van wie boeke in die De Bres versameling gevind is, is: Bucer, Bullinger, Calvyn, Luther, Melanchton, Oecolampadius en Zwingli.[22] Watter hervormer het die sterkste invloed op de Bres en die NGB uitgeoefen? Sybrand Strauss het onlangs die Calvinistiese invloed opnuut beklemtoon omdat hy duidelike ooreenkomste tussen die NGB se struktuur en teologiese argumentasie en die *Institusie* van Calvyn bespeur: (a) die Trinitariese indeling aan die hand van die werk van die Vader, Seun en Heilige Gees; (b) die sogenaamde openbaringshistoriese ontplooing binne die Bybel vanaf die skepping en sondeval in Genesis, deur die verlossing in die Evangelies tot die laaste oordeel in Openbaring.[23]

---

17 J Rohls 1998. *Reformed Confessions. Theology from Zurich to Barmen* (Columbia Series in Reformed Theology). Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 17.

18 Rohls, *Reformed Confessions,* 32 tref 'n belangrike onderskeid tussen die Franse Geloofsbelydenis en die NGB se Skrifbeskouing: "For the French Confession, special revelation is distinguished from general revelation solely by the former's greater degree of clarity (*clairment*)… By contrast, the Belgic Confession characterizes the special knowledge of God not only as clearer (*plus manifestement*), but also as fuller (*pleinement*)…

19 Meer aandag vir die Skrifgebruik van die NGB word in die derde deel van die artikel gevind.

20 L Doekes 1975. *Credo. Handboek voor de Gereformeerde Symboliek.* Amsterdam: Ton Bolland, 55 is versigtig om nie te aanvaar dat De Bres self die pakkie oor die kasteelmuur gegooi het nie ("heeft de Bres een exemplar van de belijdenis met een begeleidend schrijven over die buitemuur van het kasteel in Doornik geworpen of laten werpen").

21 Dit is buitendien nie altyd duidelik watter dele van die NGB deur De Bres geskryf is en watter dele of sinsnedes die resultaat van latere sinodale redaksies is nie.

22 Gootjes, *Belgic Confession,* 18-19: "The library also contained papers with notes in French and Latin. The committee noted that the handwriting was familiar to that of the letter thrown into the castle… This provided convincing proof that the letter had been written by Guido de Bres."

23 SA Strauss 2008. "Die Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis," in FM Gaum et al (reds), *Christelike*

In 1565 verskyn De Bres se omvattendste publikasie, *La racine, source et fondement des Anabaptistes* ("Die wortel, oorsprong en grondslag van die Wederdopers"), waarin veral die Hervorming se verbondsleer verduidelik word. Hierdie laaste boek van de Bres beslaan 920 bladsye en is opgedra "Aan die Kerk van onze Heere Jezus Christus, die verstrooid is in de lage landen."[24]

Tydens 'n sinode in Antwerpen (1566) word die NGB met enkele veranderings aan die teksverwysings as belydenis aanvaar. Hierna is die NGB in Duits en Latyn vertaal en eers in 1581 gelas die Sinode van Middelburg dat 'n Nederlandse vertaling van die *Confessio Belgica* gemaak word.[25]

Na 'n kort verblyf in Antwerpen verskuif De Bres later in 1566 na Valenciennes waar hy 'n effektiewe bediening in samewerking met Peregrin de la Grange van stapel stuur.[26] Na 'n beleg van enkele maande word Valenciennes deur die Spanjaarde verower en de Bres word in die gevangenis geplaas terwyl die aanklagte teen hom ondersoek is. Guido de Bres word in 1567 deur die Inkwisisie skuldig bevind en op 31 Mei in die openbaar voor 'n groot skare aan 'n galg opgehang.[27]

Samevattend: Die NGB was vanuit die staanspoor as 'n Calvinistiese belydenis bestempel en daarom het selfs die kerklike kommissarisse, wat aan die einde van 1561 moes ondersoek instel na die naamlose NGB, bevind dat dit "vol van die soort foute en perverse leerstellinge van Calvyn" is.[28] Die keuse om die NGB primêr binne 'n Calvinistiese verwysingsraamwerk te verstaan is tiperend van talle bestaande verklarings van die NGB wat dit teen die agtergrond van Calvyn se teologie probeer verduidelik.[29] In die hieropvolgende bespreking van die Skrifgebruik van die NGB sal gepoog word om te midde van die onmiskenbare sterk invloed van Calvyn ook aan te dui dat die NGB meer as net 'n blote herhaling van die ietwat ouer Franse Belydenis was en dat dit as die produk van 'n belese teoloog, Guido de Bres, verstaan moet word.

3. SKRIFGEBRUIK IN DIE NEDERLANDSE GELOOFSBELYDENIS (NGB)

Op die voorblad van die 1561 uitgawe van die NGB staan daar die volgende (vertaal uit Frans):

Kernensiklopedie. Wellington: Lux Verbi BM, 789.

24 E Braekman 2011, "Wortel, Oorsprong en fundament van de Wederdopers," in Emile Braekman en Erik de Boer (reds), *Guido de Bres. Zijn leven, zijn belijden,* Utrecht, Uitgeverij Kok, 199 – 207. Dit is belangrik om op te let dat "Wederdopers" as 'n versamelnaam gebruik word vir "alle 'protestanten' die niet behoorden tot een geïnstitueerde kerk…" (p. 200).

25 PJS De Klerk 1954. *Gereformeerde Simboliek.* Pretoria: Van Schaik, 49 bied 'n verhelderende opsomming van hoe die Sinode van Veere op 'n Franse en Nederlandse weergawe naas mekaar besluit het en dat "hierdie edisie op die Dordse Sinode gebruik is" – in weerwil van die druk van die Remonstrante.

26 Doekes, *Credo,* 56-57.

27 E Braekman 2011, "Laaste bediening in Valenciennes," in Emile Braekman en Erik de Boer (reds), *Guido de Bres. Zijn leven, zijn belijden*, Utrecht, Uitgeverij Kok, 249 – 289; E Braekman 2011, "Het 'gelukkige' einde van een martelaar," in Emile Braekman en Erik de Boer (reds), *Guido de Bres. Zijn leven, zijn belijden,* Utrecht, Uitgeverij Kok, 310 – 329. Meer inligting oor die martelaarsdood van de Bres kan gevind word in Jean Crespin, *Histoire des martyrs,* 1570.

28 Gootjes, *Belgic Confession,* 59: "When the commissioners in Doornik found a copy, they reported that it was 'full of all kind of errors and perverse doctrine of Calvin."

29 'n Sterk samehang tussen die NGB en Calvyn word oa deur die volgende twee skrywers veronderstel: ADR Polman 1948-53. *Onze Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis Volumes I – IV.* Franeker: Wever; C Vonk 1955-56, *De voorzeide leer: De Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis I en II.* Barendrecht: Drukkerij Barendrecht.

Geloofsbelydenis

gemaak met die gemeenskaplike ooreenkoms van
gelowiges in die Nederlande, wie begerig was om
te leef ooreenkomstig die suiwerheid van die
evangelie van ons Here Jesus Christus.

Daarop volg 'n drukkersmerk met die aanhaling van 1 Petrus 3:15 ("Wees altyd gereed om 'n antwoord te gee aan elkeen wat van julle 'n verduideliking vra oor die hoop in julle lewe"), maar met geen aanduiding van wie die drukker was nie. Op die drukkersmerk word daar 'n ouerige manspersoon afgebeeld wat tussen ruïnes onder wolke staan waarop die Godsnaam *Jahweh* in Hebreeus geskryf staan. Rondom die drukkersmerk staan daar in Latyn geskryf "Alle dinge word oud maar die Here bly altyd dieselfde".[30]

Volgens Gootjes word dieselfde drukkersmerk op twee ander publikasies in 1561 gevind: die eerste publikasie behels 'n Franse Psalter van Clemence Marot en Theodore Beza asook die Franse Belydenis (1559); die tweede publikasie bestaan uit die vierde uitgawe van Beza se belydenis.[31]

In die NGB se 37 artikels word daar in die eerste elf artikels gefokus op die Triniteit en op die Bybel as een van die middele (naas die Skepping) waardeur die Drie-Eenheid geken kan word. Kortliks verwys die NGB soos volg na verskillende aspekte van die Skrif:

• Artikel 2: Die middele waardeur ons God ken – "Tweedens maak Hy Hom deur sy heilige en Goddelike Woord nog duideliker en meer volkome aan ons bekend en wel soveel as wat vir ons in hierdie lewe tot sy eer nodig is en tot die saligheid van hulle wat aan Hom behoort."[32]

Volgens Scheffler word Romeine 1:20 aangehaal om die openbaring van God in die natuur te beklemtoon.[33] In teenstelling met die hooftema in 1:18-23 wat fokus op die toorn van God wat geen mens kan ontkom nie, gaan dit in Artikel 2 om die openbaringsmiddele. Wat Paulus as 'n ondersteunende argument gebruik ('n mens kan vanuit die natuur aflei dat God daar is) word die hoofargument by die NGB. Die begrip "woord" is van besondere belang vir die NGB aangesien selfs die natuur as 'n "boek" beskou word waarin God geopenbaar kan word.

• Artikel 3: Die geskrewe Woord van God – "Ons bely dat hierdie Woord van God nie deur die wil van 'n mens gestuur of voortgebring is nie, maar die heilige mense van God het dit, deur die Heilige Gees gedrywe, gespreek, soos die heilige Petrus sê (2 Pet 1:21). Daarna

---

30 JN Bakhuizen van den Brink 1976. *De Nederlandse Belijdenisgeschriften. In authentieke teksten met inleiding en tekstvergelijkeningen* Tweede Druk. Amsterdam: Ton Bolland, p VIII

31 Gootjes, *Belgic Confession,* 20. Bakhuizen van den Brink, *De Nederlandse Belijdenisgeschriften,* 11-12 het die drukker van die aanvanklike uitgawe van die NGB as Abel Clemence van Rouen geïdentifiseer.

32 Gootjes, *Belgic Confession,* 154 verduidelik hoe die Sinode van Dordt die uitdrukking "nog duideliker en meer volkome" in die lig van vrae deur die Remonstrante herformuleer het: "the Synod of Dort decided to change the formulation to "more clearly and fully" in the Dutch text. This change shows awareness of the fact that general and special revelation not only differs in clarity, but that special revelation also goes beyond general revelation."

33 EH Scheffler 1987. "Die gebruik van die Nuwe Testament in die Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis," in HL Bosman *et al, Die Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis – Ontstaan, Skrifgebruik en Gebruik.* Pretoria: UNISA, 71.

het God deur sy besondere sorg vir ons en ons saligheid, sy dienaars, die profete en apostels, beveel om sy geopenbaarde Woord op skrif fe stel en Hy het self met sy vinger die twee tafels van die wet geskrywe.[34] Daarom noem ons sulke geskrifte die heilige en Goddelike Skrif."[35]

Hier word 2 Petrus 1:21 aangehaal (in samehang met die Dekaloog) om aan te toon dat die versameling van boeke (wat mettertyd in artikel 4 gespesifiseer word) die "heilige and Goddelike Skrif" is. In 2 Petrus 1:21 word daar nie na die "Woord van God" verwys nie, maar wel na "geen profesie" nie (waarskynlik verwys die teks nie na die Skrif as geheel nie, maar wel na die profetiese onderdele daarvan – vermoedelik van die Septuaginta en nie na ander dele van die Ou Testament.[36]

- Artikel 4: Die kanonieke boeke van die Heilige Skrif – "Ons vat die heilige Skrif in twee dele saam: die Ou en Nuwe Testament. Dit is die kanonieke boeke waarteen niks ingebring kan word nie. Hulle getal in die kerk van God is soos volg: Die boeke van die Ou Testament, naamlik die vyf boeke van Moses … die Psalms van Dawid; drie boeke van Salomo … die veertien briewe van die apostel Paulus …"[37]

Dit is belangrik om in gedagte te hou dat die NGB 'n polemiese snykant gehad het wat na aanleiding van leerstellige verskille in die sestiende eeu verstaan moet word. Die NGB se klem op die Ou en Nuwe Testament waarteen "niks ingebring kan word nie" hou verband met die sestiende eeuse Anabaptiste of Wederdopers wat dikwels die Ou Testament gering geskat het. In teenstelling met die Rooms-Katolieke se insluiting van die apokriewe boeke by die kanonieke boeke, word die apokriewe boeke later in Artikel 6 afsonderlik gelys. Die veralgemenende verwysings na Moses as die skrywer van Pentateug, Dawid van die Psalms en Salomo van Spreuke het in Suid-Afrika weerklank in die Du Plessis-saak gevind as kenmerke van gereformeerde regsinnigheid.[38]

- Artikel 5: Die gesag van die Heilige Skrif – "Ons aanvaar al hierdie boeke, en hulle alleen, as heilig en kanoniek om ons geloof daarna te rig, daarop te grond en daarmee te bevestig. Ons glo ook sonder twyfel alles wat daarin vervat is, nie juis omdat die kerk hulle aanvaar en as sodanig beskou nie, maar veral omdat die Heilige Gees in ons hart getuig dat hulle van God is. Hulle het ook die bewys daarvan in hulleself, aangesien selfs die blindes kan tas dat die dinge wat daarin voorspel is, plaasvind."[39]

---

34 Gootjes, *The Belgic Confession,* 171 stel vas dat die Franse weergawe van die belydenis die begrip "orakels" of "godsprake" gebruik, terwyl die Nederlandse / Afrikaanse uitgawe dit "geopenbaarde Woord" vertaal.

35 Gootjes, *The Belgic Confession,* 66 toon aan dat artikels 3 en 6, in vergelyking met die Franse Geloofsbelydenis, nuut toegevoeg is ten einde 'n meer uitgebreide formulering van die leerstelling oor die Heilige Skrif te bewerkstellig – die uitbreiding dui waarskynlik op groter klem op die aard en gesag van die Bybel.

36 Scheffler, Nuwe Testament in die Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis, 71-72.

37 Gootjes, *The Belgic Confession,* 68-69 maak die interessante opmerking dat die verwysing na veertien briewe van Paulus daarop dui dat die opstellers van die NGB Pauliniese outeurskap vir die Brief aan die Hebreërs veronderstel het. Dit was een van die min aspekte waar Calvyn van die NGB verskil het aangesien hy nie Pauliniese outeurskap vir die Hebreërboek aanvaar het nie – 'n aanduiding van Calvyn se goeie eksegese!

38 HL Bosman 1987. "Die gebruik van die Ou Testament in die Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis," in HL Bosman *et al, Die Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis – Ontstaan, Skrifgebruik en Gebruik.* Pretoria: UNISA, 55.

39 Gootjes, *The Belgic Confession,* 122 bespreek hoe die aanvanklike belydenis net twee funksies mbt die

Hoewel daar geen uitdruklike aanhaling vanuit die Skrif gemaak word nie, word die taal van Romeine 8:16 gebruik wanneer aangevoer word dat die Heilige Gees in ons harte getuig dat die kanonieke boeke van God is. Hier spreek die NGB direk tot die wêreld van die leser nou en word daar weinig ag geslaan op historiese agtergrond of konteks van die Bybel toe.[40]

- Artikel 6: Onderskeid tussen die kanonieke en apokriewe boeke – "Ons onderskei hierdie heilige boeke van die apokriewe boeke: die derde en vierde boek van Esra; die boek van Tobias, Judit, die Wysheid, Jesus Sirag, Barug, die byvoegsel by die geskiedenis van Ester, die Gebed van die Drie Manne in die Vuur, die Geskiedenis van Susanna, die Beeld van Bel en van die Draak, die gebed van Manasse en die twee boeke van die Makkabeërs. Die kerk mag hierdie boeke lees en daar lering uit trek vir sover hulle met die kanonieke boeke ooreenstem ... Hulle mag nie in die minste aan die gesag van die ander, die heilige boeke, afbreuk doen nie."

Die onderskeid wat die NGB tussen die kanonieke boeke as "heilige boeke" en apokriewe boeke tref, is in reaksie op die Rooms-Katolieke tydens die Konsilie van Trent (1546) besluit om kanonieke gesag aan sommige apokriewe boeke toe te ken. Geen Nuwe-Testamentiese apokriewe word in die NGB se lys genoem nie en dit kan verklaar word teen die agtergrond van relatiewe gewildheid van die Ou-Testamentiese apokriewe en dat dit in die Bybel van die Vroeë Kerk (die Septuaginta / Griekse vertaling) opgeneem was. Hoewel die NGB nog die moontlikheid ooplaat dat die Apokriewe tydens die erediens gelees word, het die die Sinode van Dordt (1618-19) aanbeveel dat dit net deur lidmate gelees kan word.[41]

- Artikel 7: Die volkomendheid van die heilige Skrif – "Ons glo dat hierdie heilige Skrif die wil van God volkome bevat en dat alles wat die mens vir sy saligheid moet glo, daarin voldoende geleer word. Aangesien die hele wyse waarop God deur ons gedien moet word, daarin breedvoerig beskrywe is, mag ook niemand, selfs nie die apostels nie, ander leer as wat ons reeds deur die Heilige Gees geleer word nie – ja, al was dit ook 'n engel uit die hemel, soos die apostel Paulus sê (Gal 1:8).[42] En aangesien dit verbode is om iets by die Woord van God by te voeg of daarvan weg te laat (Deut 12:32), blyk dit duidelik dat die leer daarvan heeltemal volmaak en in alle opsigte volkome is."

Die NGB veronderstel dat 'n verbod om iets tot die Bybel by te voeg of daarvan weg te laat impliseer dat die Skrif volmaak en volkome is en dat Deuteronomium 12:32 as motivering vir so 'n standpunt gebruik kan word. Deuteronomium 12 behels egter 'n reeks voorskrifte wat verband hou met die sentrale heiligdom in Jerusalem waaraan die volk gehoorsaam moet wees en die sogenaamde kanoniese formule, "jy mag daar niks byvoeg en daar niks van weglaat nie" verwys na die voorskrifte met betrekking tot die sentrale heiligdom en nie na die Ou Testament of die Bybel as geheel nie. Die kanoniese formule stem ooreen met 'n ou Nabye Oosterse

---

Skrif noem (om die geloof te rig en te begrond) en dat die derde funksie "om die geloof te bevestig" eers deur die hersiening in 1566 bygevoeg is. Tydens die 1566 hersiening is die slotfrase wat na "die blindes" verwys ook bygevoeg.

40 Scheffler, Nuwe Testament in die Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis, 72-73.

41 Bosman, Ou Testament in die Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis, 55-56. Die Apokriewe was nooit verlore nie (soos advertensies onlangs in Suid-Afrika beweer het), dit het wel binne gereformeerde kringe in onbruik verval!

42 Gootjes, *The Belgic Confession,* 123 het vasgestel dat die oorspronklike Franse weergawe van die NGB na "'n engel uit die paradys" verwys het (tiperend van 'n vrye manier van aanhaling) en dat die 1566 hersiening dit verander het na "'n engel uit die hemel" wat meer met die aangehaalde Gal 1:8 ooreenstem.

oortuiging dat regsbepalings onveranderlik is en dit kom in Assiriese, Babiloniese en selfs Egiptiese regskodekse voor.[43] Die NGB veralgemeen dus die toepaslikheid van die kanoniese formule wat in die Ou Testament as deel van uiteenlopende vermanings gebruik word en maak dit op die volkomendheid van die Bybel as geheel van toepassing.

Galasiërs 1:8 word aangehaal en op die Skrif as geheel van toepassing gemaak. Paulus verwys egter in Galasiërs 1:8-11 na die evangelie soos deur hom verkondig en nie na die heilige Skrif as geheel nie. "Hierdie evangelie van Paulus het die 'genade van Christus' (Gal 1:6) as inhoud en nie die leer oor die volkomendheid en eksklusiwiteit van die Skrif nie".[44]

Dit is veelseggend dat die NGB klem daarop lê dat God die Dekaloog met sy eie vinger geskryf het en dit verleen momentum aan die siening dat God self die outeur van die kanonieke boeke was en dat die waarheid van die Bybel ten diepste in God self gesetel is.[45]

4. SLOT

Die voorafgaande bespreking van die NGB se gebruik van die Ou Testament kan aan die hand van die volgende kenmerke opgesom word:[46]

1. Die NGB se verwysings na die Ou Testament fokus nie op spesifieke boeke of teologiese tradisies nie (5 aanhalings vanuit Pentateug; 4 vanuit die Psalms asook 4 vanuit die Profete. Opvallend geen verwysing na wysheidstradisie nie).
2. Die NGB verwys op 'n vry en fragmentariese aard na die Ou Testament. Hoewel dit gewoonlik teksgewys plaasvind was daar ten tye van die opstelling van die NGB nog nie 'n finale vorm van versindeling nie en het daar nie 'n tradisie bestaan waarvolgens tekste woordliks aangehaal moet word nie..
3. Die NGB maak op 'n voorkritiese manier van die Ou Testament gebruik – dit beteken geensins dat die opstellers van die NGB onkrities of intellektueel minderwaardig was nie. Voorkritiese eienskappe van die NGB kan wel gevind word in die gebrek aan enige erkenning dat die NGB met Skrifaanhalings of –verwysings noodwendig die Skrif (her) interpreteer en nie bloot die "Skrifwaarhede" herhaal nie.
4. Die NGB skenk weinig aandag aan die Ou Testament se oorspronklike literêre en historiese kontekste. Dikwels word die Ou-Testamentiese aanhalings deur middel van 'n proses van veralgemening binne 'n vooropgestelde leerstellige oortuiging ingepas, sonder genoegsame inagneming van die aanhaling se aanvanklike literêre en historiese konteks.
5. Die NGB se verstaan van die Ou Testament word veral deur sestiende-eeuse gereformeerde teologie beïnvloed. Hierdie invloed kan gesien word in die belangrike rol wat die vroeë Kerkvaders op die Reformasie se eksegese gespeel het; die klem op die Nuwe-Testamentiese verstaan van die Ou Testament met die gepaardgaande Christologiese en tipologiese verstaan van die Ou Testament.

---

43 Bosman, Ou Testament en Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis, 56-57 voer aan dat die NGB se sterk klem op die Skrif gesien moet word teen die agtergrond van die deurlopende polemiek teen die Rooms-Katolieke se waardering vir die kerklike tradisie.
44 Scheffler, Nuwe Testament in die Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis, 73.
45 Rohls, *Reformed Confessions,* 37 dui op belangrike implikasies wanneer hy argumenteer: "The ante is raised, with the thesis of the divine inspiration of scripture turning in the thesis of God's authorship."
46 Bosman, Ou Testament en Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis, 66-67.

Daar kan ook in breë trekke na die NGB se gebruik van die Nuwe Testament gekyk word:[47]

6. Die NGB haal dikwels vanuit die briefliteratuur van die Nuwe Testament aan (veral die Hebreërbrief), met weinig aandag vir die Evangelies en Handelinge.
7. Skrifaanhalings bestaan uit frases en fragmente en nie uit verse of perikope in die Nuwe Testament nie.[48] Die NGB se Skrifgebruik vertoon trekke van ooreenkoms met die "*dicta probantia*" metode van aanhaling wat mettertyd deur die Ortodoksie gebruik was.
8. Die onmiddelike leerstellig kontekste van die NGB (apologie tov Rooms-Katolieke Kerk en die Anabaptiste) is van bepalende belang vir die Skrifgebruik van die Belydenis en die aanvanklike historiese konteks van die aangehaalde Skrifgedeeltes is van mindere belang.

Die Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis is steeds 'n klassieke gereformeerde geloofsbelydenis en is veel meer as 'n teologiese "fossiel" waarin die oorblyfsels van eeue oue hermeneutiese voorveronderstellings behoue gebly het.[49] Ten slotte wil ek die hoop uitspreek dat die herdenking van die 450ste jaar van die NGB 'n bydrae sal lewer om hernude waardering vir die teologiese waarde daarvan te ontwikkel – dat die NGB inderdaad "n staf is om mee te gaan" en nie bloot "'n stok is om mee te slaan" tydens verskille van leerstellige menings nie![50]

---

47 Scheffler, Nuwe Testament in die Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis, 85-97.

48 Die drukker Robert Stephanus het eers in 1551 van die huidige versindeling gebruik gemaak.

49 E de Boer 2011, "Woord vooraf," in Emile Braekman en Erik de Boer (reds), *Guido de Bres. Zijn leven, zijn belijden,* Utrecht, Uitgeverij Kok, 7 stel dit soos volg: "In 2011 staan we er in Nederland bij stil dat het 450 jaar geleden is dat de Nederlandse belijdenis geschreven is, en tegelijk staan we dus stil bij de man die een kerntekst van het christelijk geloof schreef die na viereenhalve eeu klassiek is te noemen."

50 Rohls, *Reformed Confessions,* xvi – xvii: Die leerstellige verwysingsraamwerk waarbinne die Skrif geïnterpreteer word, is veral van deurslaggewende belang. Na 450 jaar is daar nog steeds 'n spanning tussen 'n meer meganiese verstaan van die inspirasie van die Skrif (springlewendig in onlangse voorbeelde van biblisisme en fundamentalisme) en 'n meer dinamiese verstaan van openbaring as 'n interaktiewe proses waartydens die Bybel deur die geloofsgemeenskap binne die raamwerk van geloofsbelydenisse (soos die NGB) geïnterpreteer word.

Botma, Gabriël J
Chair: Journalism Department; Publisher: Global Media Journal –
African Edition
Stellenbosch University

Public media and public theology: At loggerheads or partners in complexity?[1]

ABSTRACT

Media criticism, both from inside the journalism and media studies fraternity and outside, such as theology, often depart from reductionist normative functionalist and critical political economy perspectives. Examples from the former perspective include complaints from theologians that the media set the agenda, also relating to matters of religion, and that the content the media provide does not contribute to a healthy, moral and peaceful society. Media researchers who adopt critical perspectives often argue in turn that the media are tied to elite capitalist interests and values and contribute to the marginalisation and suppression of the disenfranchised in the deeply unequal post-apartheid South African society.

Arguing that these and other normative approaches fail to come to grips with the complexity of the media in a postmodern society, this article firstly provides an overview of the field of communication and media studies. Secondly the field of public theology is addressed as an example of an approach in theology that has seemingly tried to narrow the gap between modern and postmodern conceptions of knowledge and research. Thirdly the article outlines complexity theory, as it was proposed by Paul Cilliers in *Complexity and postmodernism* (1998), as an approach to media research that is able to avoid the pitfalls of traditional normative approaches.

In sum the article argues that complexity theory does not preclude a ethical stance towards the role of journalists and the media in society, but that it enables research to deal with uncertainty and the so-called "end of meta-narratives", including Christianity, without succumbing to total relativism.

INTRODUCTION

According to a headline on page 10 in the Afrikaans Sunday newspaper *Rapport* of 19 February 2012, the NG Kerk (Afrikaans for "Dutch Reformed Church") has lost 20 000 members in the last year, and about 10 000 in the year before that, apparently due to the "rapid secularization of urban Afrikaans speakers". By the way, no less than 320 reactions from readers to that single report were posted on the internet-website *of Rapport* before the item was closed for comment (see http://www.rapport.co.za/Suid-Afrika/Nuus/NGK-lidmate-20-000-minder-in-een-jaar-20120218). Many of the comments related to reasons for leaving the church and various arguments and counter-arguments were expressed – in an often robust manner – to say the least.

But the church is arguably not the only public institution under pressure, and although you might not read about it in the public media all that often, journalism itself is deemed to be in a serious crisis. Many newspapers are rapidly losing circulation and advertising income and especially in the Western World a great number have closed down or reduced staff in an effort

to survive. Serious scholars are already predicting the demise of the professional journalist, to be replaced entirely by the citizen journalist and "User-Generated-Newslike-Content" (Hirst, 2011) in cyberspace.

Will the journalist and the "Dominee" (Afrikaans for reverend) end up begging for food on the same street corner? And on that corner, besides arguing about the formulation, tone and spelling of the beggar's note, what will they say to each other? I leave the contribution of the Dominee to your own imaginations, but for the journalist, I am prepared to act as conduit, all be it on my own terms. As independent researcher of the profession, I will try to steer away from the often reductionist discourse of journalism by using academic jargon and including ample quotations from media studies scriptures in my argument – something I am sure the Dominee will relate to.

The theme we deal with here is analytical perspectives on the relationship between public theology and public media. The reason why the relationship is questioned in the title of this article refers to the unease, even outright hostility, that often exists between the parties.

I can imagine that it must be frustrating for theologians to try and spread the Gospel through the public media. If truth be told, many Christians must be angry that their good name and image are often tarnished by the so-called news values of the public media which result in stories of conflict and scandal to be preferred to "good" or substantive news. Some theologians might also feel that the media are only interested in "celebrities", even in matters of religion, while the rank and file must watch from the side-lines. Furthermore, some social commentators and theologians often take the media to task for content that is regarded as immoral and harmful to their sensibilities, believes or children (see Biernatzki, 2003;Van Rooyen, 2008).

Although the response from journalism practice to complaints from readers, including church goers, is often rather dismissive, aggrieved theologians might find it reassuring that they have strong allies in the journalism and media studies research community. Many media researchers consistently argue that the public media is a undemocratic, inaccessible, sensationalist, commercialised and unethical. Journalism educators, including myself, therefore work hard to instil in their students a sense of civic and ethical responsibility, empathy for the marginalised and disenfranchised and a commitment to make the world a better place.

Thus, the first point to register here is that there exists a noticeable gap between journalism theory and practice, particularly in relation to questions of the ethical conduct of many practitioners.

But before I turn to the substance of media criticism originating from media scholars themselves, a very brief overview of the theoretical field of communication studies must be provided. This will indicate not only the high level of complexity in the field, but how it is often reduced for practical and strategic reasons.

THEORETICAL OVERVIEW

Journalism and media studies is situated within a broad communication studies framework, which includes sub-fields such as inter-personal and inter-cultural communication, political communication, public relations and advertising, amongst others (DeFleur & Dennis, 1994). Even if we narrow the field down to mass communication alone, the scope of paradigms, approaches, theories, models etc. is still too wide to attempt a summation here. But at the risk of oversimplification, two kinds of theories can be distinguished: objectivist and interpretative (Griffin, 2000).

Objectivist theories search for the Truth (with a capitol "T") and try to approach objectivity; they are reductionist, deal with cause and effect (by controlling variables); value explanation

and predictability; require validation and experimentation; and use quantitative methods (ibid.). Interpretative theories, on the other hand, search for different truths; recognise subjectivity and search for multiple meaning within texts (ibid.). They value complexity, understanding and emancipation, and use qualitative methods (ibid.).

Craig (1999) identifies seven communication research traditions – listed here in descending order of objectivity (i.e. becoming more interpretative). First is the socio-psychological tradition, one of the oldest in mass communication, that is interested in cause and effect research, for instance about the harmful effects of violent content on television on children. Second is the cybernetic tradition that had the telephone as inspiration for its theorizing. The well-known Shannon/Weaver-model of linear communication (Shannon & Weaver, 1949) belongs to this tradition. Third we have the rhetorical tradition, which dates back to Ancient Greece and deals with public persuasion. Fourthly there is the semiotic tradition, in which language is theorized as a sign system. The socio-cultural tradition is fifth on the list, and argues that social reality is a construction through language. Sixth is the critical tradition with its critique of capitalism and power; and seventh and last we have the phenomenological tradition, the most interpretative, in which experience is valued above all else and theory develops from the ground upwards.

Roughly corresponding to the split between objectivist and interpretative theories, media studies historically developed along two branches – a positivistic and a critical paradigm respectively (Du Plooy, 1995). Within each branch, but also independent and adjacent to them, a variety of approaches and theories developed, often by incorporating ideas and methods from other disciplines, from philosophy and psychology to linguistics, literature studies and sociology. Examples include technological determinism, information society theory, poststructuralist/ postmodern, postcolonial and Afro centric approaches and normative theories (Fourie, 2007).

Within these reduced paradigms two popular theories, namely normative functionalism, part of the positivist tradition, and critical political economy, a critical theory variant, are often operational. Normative functionalism presumes that the media should contribute to social cohesion, development and well-being by performing its assigned functions well – such as providing constructive information, education and entertainment, as well as allowing media access to different social actors and groups in order to achieve "pluralism" and strengthen democracy (Fourie, 2007). On the other hand critical theories of political economy argue that the mainstream capitalist media are inevitably tied to elite power and interests and will therefore work against the emancipation of the marginalised and disenfranchised in society (ibid.).

As I tried to indicate above, there are numerous interesting developments ongoing between the somewhat dated signposts of functionalism and (certain variations of) critical theory. Particularly noticeable are certain critical-cultural approaches that have incorporated post-structural theories as for example, by Foucault and others on the links between discourse, power and knowledge (Foucault, 1990). Valuable influences from sociology include the field theory of Bourdieu, which produces important insights regarding the place of media as a structured field of cultural production related to other fields of power and influence in society (Bourdieu, 1989).

However, despite these many divergent views in media studies, public debates on the performance of journalists and the media in general often still centres on rather dated and reductionist conceptions of the role of the media in society. This is rather difficult to understand, especially in light of so many profound changes in the media and journalism around us for at least the last decade and more.

CITIZEN JOURNALISM

With the rise of the internet and forms of new and social media this so-called bottom-up approach

to journalism has gripped the imagination of many critics of industrial mainstream journalism. The title of a recent book by Dan Gillmor (2004), *We the media,* captures this idea. Especially in the last decade the perceived boundary between the mass media and mass audiences has broken down considerably, to the extent that commentators like Gillmor now talk of "the people formerly known as the audience".

Also for the church, it is now possible to publish itself in the public domain to a far greater extent that was ever possible. In other words, access is no longer under the exclusive control of the so-called gate-keepers of the public media. The role, activities and performance of members of the NG Kerk on the internet and social media, including Facebook, are for instance currently the focus of post-graduate research at the journalism department of Stellenbosch University. Traditional print outlets of the church, such as the *Kerkbode* and some academic journals, have established an online presence.

So, the question could be raised why a relationship with the public media is still deemed important for the church and theology? Is it because of traditional perceptions that mainstream Afrikaans newspapers like *Die Burger, Beeld,* and *Volksblad (*for decades close allies of the ruling National Party and NG Kerk during apartheid) are important, or is there a coherent current strategy at work in the engagement between theology and the public media?

Just as many media researchers have yet to wake up to the idea that journalism in the new media is now taking place more and more as an expression of popular rather than elite culture, Christians will find it ever more difficult to influence and determine the nature and content of discourses in the public domain. In the past, influence over the editor of one of the prominent Afrikaans newspapers meant a measure of control over the level of the public debate in many centres of power and sections of society at large, but those days are long gone.

I am not denying that many people still watch SABC-TV and read many newspapers and magazines, but the fact of the matter is that the balance of power in the relationship between the media and audiences has shifted irrevocably. For the audience in general this trend could be empowering, for it is now possible to make your voice heard almost immediately in response to journalistic and other forms of media production. Particular segments of an audience, such as Christian theologians, now have the ability to promote their cause, albeit in growing segmented niche-market conditions. The problem with this type of publication is that it can become insular – in other words it is the online-version of preaching to the converted.

But, on the other hand, more traditional forms of "top-down" mass media established their own patterns of in- and exclusivity, with arguably much less options for popular choice and counter-expression. One such form of counter-expression in and through the media originates from public theology.

PUBLIC THEOLOGY AND MEDIA CRITICISM

My remarks up to now have been directed at Christian theology and the media in general, but of course theology is no less a complex and diverse field than media studies. The aim is not to engage in an in-depth theological debate (which falls outside me area of expertise), but even a cursory glance reveals that public theology is concerned with "how the Christian faith addresses matters in society at large" (Pearson, n.d). He continues (ibid.):

> Public theology assumes that it is relevant for all humanity, not just Christians. It should be conceived from a perspective that recognises both the marginal location of the Christian faith in a post-Christendom world, and the value of other disciplines... . Public theology is located as one voice among many in the marketplace of ideas... .Unlike other types of

theology, it does not seek to "convert", but is concerned with the well-being of society.

Commentators who try to explain the transition from modernity to post modernity often refer to the work of Jean-Francois Lyotard in *The postmodern condition: A report on knowledge* (1984). According to a generally accepted interpretation, Lyotard argues that modernist "meta-narratives", including those of Christianity, have been surpassed and marginalised in a complex postmodern society. If the quotation from Pearson above is interpreted correctly, then some versions of public theology represent an effort to narrow the gap between modernist and post-modernist positions in theology.

In fact, current academic discourses in public theology (see Caputo, 2007; Beyers Naude Centre for Public Theology-website, n.d.) have seemingly incorporated postmodern philosophical influences already. When reading academic literature I often get the feeling that we are all recycling the same ideas – often just by using some alternative definitions and terms. Given the discursive and structural interconnectedness of the academy and the inclusiveness of discourse, it could hardly be different, at least that is what postmodernist scholars like Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu would argue.

Then again, we must also guard against (too much) cynicism – that deadly vice that journalists often fall prey to. Especially with the inspiring examples of Christians like Beyers Naudé and Desmond Tutu looming large in public theology, one is quickly overwhelmed by shame when you embrace the passivity of the arm chair. Who in his or her right mind can feel satisfied with the state of humanity and our influence on our environment – near and far? I suppose it is testament to the scale of our problems and challenges that some fall to praying and others to swearing.

In media studies those on the praying side include media ethicists, who argue that better ethical standards and performance by journalists will improve not only their media output, but society in general. Their sentiments will arguably be compatible with those of some public theologians who, amongst many other issues, seem concerned with the role and performance of the public media.

At least three levels of approach to public media from public theology seem obvious. Firstly, public theology would arguably approach the media in order to spread the gospel (with a small g if not a big one). Secondly, and related to that, because public theology is interested in the "world's agenda" and wants to improve society on a practical level, it would be important to take part in discursive struggles in the public media. Thirdly, on moral and ethical grounds some public theologians might also be interested in improving the quality of media content available to the public.

Based on my very limited knowledge of public theology, I would argue that media criticism from that quarters probably still centres on relatively traditional normative functionalist and critical elements. The fact that both functionalism and critical theory work towards a utopian society will arguably appeal to public theologians who have transferred Christian visions of heaven to an earthly paradise. But the question arises whether traditional normative media paradigms can adequately describe the dynamic and complex media environment of the 21st century? The crux of the argument here is that a clear break with modernist meta-narratives of rational progress and universal ethics is vital in this regard, and the challenge then is to find a way of describing the media in all its complexity from a postmodern perspective.

In this respect public theology has seemingly already taken a first step – to break with narrow dogmatic interpretations of founding meta-narratives, but this leads to the crucial next question: Are both media ethicists and public theologians ready to view society, including the media, as a complex phenomenon that is impossible to describe, understand, explain, predict, control or reform (as a positivistic conception of theory and research would have it – see Fourie, 2007).

COMPLEXITY AND POSTMODERNISM

The framework below is taken directly from Cilliers (2005:257), where he outlines the characteristics of a "critical understanding of complexity", which he distinguishes from a "more strictly mathematical and computational" (positivist) view:

1. Complex systems (like the media – GJB) are open systems.
2. The operate under conditions not at equilibrium.
3. Complex systems consists of many components. The components themselves are often simple (or can be treated as such).
4. The output of components is a function of their inputs. At least some of these functions must be non-linear.
5. The state of the system is determined by the values of the inputs and outputs.
6. Interactions are defined by actual input-output relations and they are dynamic (the strength of the interactions change over time).
7. Components on average interact with many others. There are often multiple routes possible between components, mediated in different ways.
8. Some sequences will of interaction will provide feedback routes, whether long or short.Complex systems display behaviour that results from the interaction between components and not from the characteristics inherent to the components themselves. This is sometimes called emergence.
9. Asymmetrical structure (temporal, spatial and functional organisation) is developed maintained and adapted in complex systems through internal dynamic processes. Structure is maintained even though the components themselves are exchanged or renewed.
10. Complex systems display behaviour over a divergent range of timescales. This is necessary in order for the system to cope with its environment. It must adapt to changes in the environment quickly, but it can only sustain itself if at least part of the system changes at a slower rate than changes in the environment. This part can be seen as the "memory" of the system.
11. More than one description of a complex system is possible. Different descriptions will decompose the system in different ways. Different descriptions may also have different degrees of complexity.

According to Cilliers (2005: 258) the implications of these characteristics provide the following three insights: 1) "…Complex behaviour is possible when the behaviour of a system is constrained … but a fully constrained system has no capacity for complex behaviour either… 2) Since different descriptions of a complex system decompose the system in different ways, the knowledge gained by any description is always relative to the perspective from which the description was made... Although there is no a priori procedure for deciding which description is correct, some descriptions will deliver more interesting results than others. 3) In describing the macro-behaviour (or emergent behaviour) of the system, not all the micro-features can be taken into account. The description is a reduction of complexity. Nevertheless, micro-behaviour is not the result of anything else but the micro-activities of the system...".

In his book *Complexity & Postmodernism* Cilliers (1998:3-5, 6-7) first presented a similar list of characteristics of complex systems – according to Brand (2011) the "ten commandments of complexity[2]" - and also provided an example of a practical application (to describe economic systems) which I have re-adapted to the media here. Thus, following Cilliers (1998:6-7) closely

by replacing "economy" with "media", the following picture emerges:

In the media a large amount of elements are connected and that individuals and institutions interact through various forms of communication on different levels. These relationships change continually. A media element interacts with a large number of the other elements, including formal and informal, institutional and private.

The interactions are non-linear and small causes can have large results and vice versa, for instance, a short news item or comment can have a profound influence on other elements in the system. Media elements normally interact with those around them (but this does not preclude wide-ranging influence, look at for instance the international reach of the Reitz-4 video-saga - GJB).

The activity of a media element creates feedback loops which may eventually reflect back on themselves. A media item may have positive and/or negative feedback to journalists and audiences. The media system is open – it is virtually impossible to draw its borders. It is continuously influenced by political, economic, social and cultural systems. The scope of the media system is usually determined by the description of the system and is thus often influenced by the position of the observer. This process is called framing.

Since the media system is driven by various dynamics, including supply and demand, it can never be in a state of equilibrium, although stages of relative stability develop. Media systems are greatly influenced by their history. Any analysis that ignores the dimension of time is incomplete. A media element can only act on available (local) information. It does not know what all the other elements in the system are doing.

IMPLICATIONS FOR MEDIA RESEARCH

In it is of vital importance that media system is open and that the act of drawing its borders has "political" implications. The selection of any particular aspect of the media – and the distance established between the researcher and the object of research - will influence the framing of the system and the research findings.

For instance, it is only when one draws an arbitrary boundary around "professional" or "industrial" journalism today, as Hirst (2011) proposes, that the question: "can journalism survive the Internet?" becomes salient. The fact is that the relationship between supply and demand in the media system is changing and therefore news outlets, particularly newspapers, are under threat. Their previous commercial models are failing, while a new model has not yet surfaced. Daily newspapers in South Africa have lost about 90 000 buyers over the past year, according to the latest quarterly data from the Audit Bureau of Circulation (http://business.iafrica.com/news/780944.html). Some observers view this as a crisis, because of the perceived link between traditional journalism and democracy.

Shifts in the media system have also affected discursive struggles amongst media theorists. Since the introduction of new and social media, the difficulty for media scholars to define what constitutes "journalism" in the 21st century has only increased. Professional journalism as we know it arose only in the late 19th and early 20th century as a result of various economic, political, cultural and social factors. Some commentators link the emergence of professional journalism to the high point of modernism in art and literature (Miller, 2012). Certainly, the ethos of professional journalism is tied to Enlightenment ideals of progress, rationality and scientific objectivity. A view from complexity indicates that professional journalism cannot be regarded, protected or saved in isolation from the media in general or the processes and pressures in society and the world at large.

Are lamenters of the perceived demise of professional journalism, such as Hirst (2011), really

saying that recent technological development which have placed more media in the hands of more people – and have given rise to the unprecedented exchange of information across existing boundaries – is bad for democracy? Or is it more a case of dislike for the things that people are saying, and the way that they are saying it? I realise that freedom of expression also contains limits and responsibilities within itself, but it is noticeable that many professed saviours, liberators and emancipators of the people often display elitist tendencies as soon as the people get a voice and use it. From the perspective of complexity theory, however, it is important to note that some conceptions of journalism may be under threat, but that the media are adapting and dynamically self-organising.

I am not saying that we are all victims of the "system", that the media is a "mirror" to society and that we should excuse immoral or unethical conduct by media practitioners on the grounds that they are "just messengers". But critics must also ask themselves why they often isolate particular elements or agents for analysis, while others are disregarded and ignored. I argue that a critical interrogation of these processes of in- and exclusion will unearth the dynamics of power and prejudice.

A view from complexity mean that we cannot view particular aspects of the media, such as (news) journalism, in normative functionalist isolation, as a cog in a wheel without a particular history and trajectory. This does not mean that all critical scholars, of whom many embrace historical materialism, always incorporate historical factors fruitfully into media analysis. Too much media criticism is posed against the backdrop of a mythical "Golden Age" of morality, ethics, fairness, and responsibility.

It is not theologians alone who employ this discursive strategy – at least they have powerful creation and salvation myths to refer to. Even without such obvious devises, many a media analyst build an oeuvre on the undisclosed departure point that the media of the not to distant future were undoubtedly of nobler persuasion and higher standard than current incarnations. Most disturbing is that no amount of counter-evidence from thorough historical analysis can shake the foundations of Golden Age-believers.

Much current criticism of new technology and social media, for instance, can be traced back to technological pessimism which date back decades and centuries. Listen to this quote by Henry David Thoreau in 1854:

> We are in great haste to construct a magnetic telegraph from Maine to Texas; but Maine and Texas, it may be, have nothing important to communicate…We are eager to tunnel under the Atlantic and bring the old world some weeks nearer to the new; but perchance the first news that will leak through into the broad flapping American ear will be that Princess Adelaide has the whooping cough.

Replace "telegraph" with "internet" and it becomes clear that this sentiment is still prevalent today. But the question is whether this type of cultural and technological conservatism – albeit entertaining – provides much insight into the dynamics of a ever changing complex society.

On the other hand, I am also not making a case from technological and scientific optimism of the kind documented in Noble (1998: 52), to the effect that scientific knowledge will allow humans to "stretch the deplorable narrow limits of man's dominion over the universe to their promised bounds" and attain a "true vision of the footsteps of the Creator imprinted on his creatures". Clearly, this is a new kind of dogma which contributes little to our insight into the complex relationship between humans and technology.

On this front a rather more constructive engagement is that of Braden Allenby and Daniel Sarewitz in *The techno-human condition* (2011:12). They state:

The essence of our response? Stop trying to think our way out of what is too complex to be adequately understood, and seek the sources of rationality and ethical action in our uncertainty and ignorance about most things, rather in our knowledge about and control over just a few things. Add to that – or derive from that – a degree of psychological and institutional flexibility that acknowledges and dignifies our ignorance and limits. Rehabilitate humility.

Currently much energy is often wasted by the media pot and theological kettle calling each other black, while a view from complexity would suggest that the nature and state of society in totality is simply beyond our understanding and control. This does not mean that we should throw in the towel, but it could be the beginning of the end of simplistic binary thinking about good and bad and efforts to point fingers and shift the blame. But we should realise the boundaries of our abilities and knowledge and accept that uncertainty and humility should be part of our approach as researchers.

However, as Cillliers (2005:259) postulates, this modest view from complexity does not necessarily imply a "weak one that should no longer be taken seriously". A view from complexity does not necessarily vagueness, Cilliers (2005) argues. He continues that "the fact that our knowledge is limited is not a disaster, it is a condition for knowledge (p.263). Limits enable knowledge" (2005:263). Or, as Cilliers (2002:83) elaborated elsewhere:

To keep on confronting these limits is what science – and life – is all about. Nevertheless they will remain limits in the sense that we cannot say what it is that eludes us. We cannot calculate what it is that escapes our grasp.

Neither does an acceptance of complexity necessarily implies a nihilistic or relativistic position. Cilliers (1998) argues that a postmodern ethics based on uncertainty does not necessarily mean total relativity or "anything goes". Cilliers (1998:136) refers to Lyotard's claim that "his analysis of the postmodern condition provides us with 'the outline of a politics that would respect both the desire for justice and the desire for the unknown'". Cilliers (2002:83) states:

What we need, therefore, are ways of dealing with that which we cannot calculate, of coping with our ignorance. There is a name for this. It is called 'ethics' and no amount of complexity theory will allow us to escape it.

Because we cannot have "perfect knowledge of complex systems…we have to reduce that complexity; we have to make *choices"* (Cilliers, 2005:264; original emphasis). Normative issues and ethical consideration, Cilliers argue, are therefore "intertwined with our very understanding of complexity" and are "not to be entertained as something supplementing our dealings with social systems" (ibid.).

Thus, in refuting the common charge against postmodernism that it precludes an ethical position, Cilliers (1998: 139) argues that "to fall back on universal principles is to deny the complexity of the social system we live in and can never be just". On the other hand "a practical theory of justice" would entail that "it becomes the responsibility of every player in any discursive practice to know the rules of the language game involved (ibid.:137). With reference to Lyotard, Cilliers continues (ibid.):

The rules are local, i.e. 'limited in time and space'... In following the rules one has to assume

responsibility both for the rules themselves and for the effects of that specific practice. The responsibility cannot be shifted to any guiding principles or institutions – whether they be the State, Church or the Club.

On the other hand, because each element in the system is ignorant of the behaviour of the system as a whole, it is also difficult to assign individual blame. As Cilliers (1998:5) states:

> When we look at the behaviour of a complex system as a whole, our focus shifts from the individual element in the system to the complex structure of the system. The complexity emerges as a result of the patterns of interaction between the elements.

We are thus at the limits of a more traditional conceptions of an ethical positioning towards media conduct and performance. On the one hand we seemingly cannot refer to universal principals and institutions, while it also becomes difficult to assign blame to individuals. Simply to blame the "system" is pointless. Where then should critics and researchers of the media look for direction in future? The short answer is that complexity theory provides a fruitful starting point, precisely because it does not claim to be a complete recipe for finding certain answers.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This article is not a call for media workers to be exempted from their individual and collective responsibilities. But a view from complexity suggests that we must base our norms and values in our limited and local knowledge of the past and present, and accept the law of unintended consequences as far as planning for the future is concerned. From this perspective any need to compare current media performance against that of the "good old days", or any other non-existent or unreachable goal or norm, will disappear.

I therefore argue that we must take serious the notion that elements in a complex system cannot comprehend the totality of the system. One of the implications of this insight is that we must include as much "local" factors in our media research as possible. Media scholars and critics, including public theologians, who want to approach a description of complexity must therefore shy away from reductionist and essentialist normative and objectivist theories and do "rich" contextual research.

For both media researchers and public theologians who have already shifted their normative expectations from "Truth" to limited perspectives on contextual "truths", the next challenge may be even greater. I am referring to the divide between theoretical conceptions of ethical journalism and institutionalised practice, despite numerous efforts to bridge the gap over many decades (see for example Black, Steele & Barney, 1995; Kieran, 1998; Keeble, 2001; Day, 2000; Retief, 2002).

Perhaps part of the problem to understand frequent "ethical lapses" in the media relates to efforts to apply ethics as a separate body of knowledge to the media as an independent system. A view from complexity suggests that ethical behaviour amongst journalists might be an (unintended) emergent property of the media, and part of the society in which they are situated. Debates about whether the media and journalists act ethically or not are thus not to be reduced to linear cause and effect arguments or case studies about scapegoats.

In the case of the relationship between public theology and public media it is thus the actual, existing interplay of complex local and dynamic interactions between numerous stakeholders, institutions and role players that will influence ethical outcomes, rather than any theoretical positioning of meta-narratives and paradigms. As part of the latter I include consecrated founding texts and ethical codes.

REFERENCES

Allenby, B & Sarewitz, D. 2011. *The techno-human condition.* Cambridge: MIT Press.

Beyers Naude Centre for Public Theology. n.d. Website at http://academic.sun.ac.za/tsv/centres/beyers_naude_sentrum/materiaal/bnc_backgroundfinal.htm Accessed on 14/05/2012.

Biernatzki, W.E. 2003. Mass media versus religion. *Journal of the Asian Research Center for Religion and Social Communication,*1(2):1-4.

Black, J., Steele, B. & Barney, R. 1995. *Doing ethics in journalism: A handbook with case studies.* Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Bourdieu, P. 1989. *Opstellen over smaak, habitus en het veldbegrip.* (Trans. Dick Pels.) Amsterdam: Van Gennep.

Brand, G. 2011. Die komplekse mistiek van Marais en Cilliers. At http://moja.chmurka.pl/die-komplekse-mistiek-van-marais-en-cilliers Accessed on 27 February 2012.

Caputo, J. D. *What would Jesus deconstruct?: The Good News of Postmodernity for the Church.* Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007.

Cilliers, P. 2005. Complexity, deconstruction and relativism. *Theory, Culture & Society,* 22(5):255-267.

Cilliers, P. 2002. Why we cannot know complex things completely. *Emergence,* 4(1/2):77-84.

Cilliers, P. 1998. *Complexity & postmodernism: Understanding complex systems.* London & New York: Routledge.

Craig, R. T. 1999. Communication theory as a field. *Communication Theory,* 9(2), 199-161.

Day, L.A. 2000. *Ethics in media communications: Cases and controversies.* Belmont: Wadsworth.

DeFleur, M. & Dennis, E.E. 1994. *Understanding mass communication* (5th ed.). Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.

De Villers, J. 2012. NGK-lidmate 20 000 minder in een jaar. *Rapport,* 19 February, p.10.

Du Plooy, G.M. (Ed.) 1995. *Introduction to communication.* Kenwyn: Juta.

Foucault, M. 1990. *Politics, philosophy, culture: Interviews and other writings, 1977-1984.* (Trans. Alan Sheridan). Lawrence D. Kritzman (Ed.). London: Routledge.

Fourie, P.J. 2007. *Media history, media & society.* Cape Town: Juta.

Gillmore, D. 2004. *We the media: Grassroots journalism by the people for the people.* Sebastopol: O'Reilly Media.

Griffin, E. 2000. *A first look at communication theory, 4th ed.* Boston: McGraw Hill.

Hirst, T. 2011. *News 2.0: Can journalism survive the internet?* Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin.

Keeble, R. 2001. *Ethics for journalists.* London & New York: Routledge.

Kieran, M. 1998. *Media ethics.* London & New York: Routledge.

Lyotard, J-F. 1984. *The postmodern condition: A report on knowledge.* Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Miller, J. 2012. Mainstream journalism as anti-vernacular modernism. *Journalism Studies,* 13(1):1-18.

Noble, D. 1998. *The religion of technology: The divinity of man and the spirit of invention.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf

Pearson, C. n.d. *What is public theology?* At http://www.google.co.za/url?q=http://www.csu.edu.au/faculty/arts/theology/pact. Accessed on 27 February 2012.03.01

Rapport website at http://www.rapport.co.za/Suid-Afrika/Nuus/NGK-lidmate-20-000-minder-in-een-jaar-20120218 Accessed on 1 March 2012.

Retief, J. 2002. *Media ethics: An introduction to responsible journalism.* Cape Town: Oxford University Press.

Shannon, C.E. & Weaver, W. 1949. *The mathematical theory of communication.* Chigaco: Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois.

Thoreau, H.D.1995 (orig. 1854). *Walden.* London: J.M. Dent.

Van Rooyen, L. 2008. Moraliteit in Suid-Afrika: Entropiese, antropiese en ektropiese pylers. 9th W. A. Landman remembrance lecture of the ATKV-branch, Centurion. 29 May. At http://www.landmanwa.co.za/rooyen_01.htm. Accessed on 11 May 2012.

(Endnotes)

1   The first draft of this article was titled "Against the grain: An argument for complexity in media analysis" and was presented at a symposium with the theme "Public theology and public media? Analytical

perspectives", organised by the Beyers Naudé Centre for Public Theology and the Discipline Group of Systematic Theology and Ecclesiology at Stellenbosch University on 1 March 2012. I am grateful to the anonymous reviewers who suggested improvements, including a proposal to change the original title to reflect the central argument better. The current title represents my effort in that direction.

2 Although Cilliers' (1998) originally listed 10 characteristics of complexity, the list was extended to 12 in Cilliers (2005).

KEY WORDS
Public media
public theology
ethics
journalism
complexity theory

TREFWOORDE
Publieke media
publieke teologie
etiek
joernalistiek
kompleksiteitsteorie

Dr Gabriel J. Botma
Chair: Journalism Department / Voorsitter: Departement Joernalistiek
Publisher / Uitgewer: Global Media Journal - African Edition
http://globalmedia.journals.ac.za
Stellenbosch University
26 Crozier Street
Private Bag X1
Matieland 7602
South Africa
+27 (0) 21 808 3487 (w)
+27 (0) 21 808 4965 (fax)
+27 (0) 72 215 1201 (c)
gbotma@sun.ac.za

Breed, Gert & De Wet, Friedrich W
North-West University (Potchefstroom)

Entrance into the covenantal space as point of departure for the liturgical act of living the baptismal life in this world

ABSTRACT

In an effort to rediscover the sacramental sphere in Reformed context the authors attempt to take first steps in describing anew the element of efficacy (pertaining identity-forming and transformative power) as it is envisaged in the Reformed tradition's view on the sacraments. The sense in which receiving the sacrament of Holy Baptism culminates in a baptismal life -defining the Christian identity and connecting Christians in new, transformative ways to the world they inhabit- should be considered in this quest for rediscovery of the sacramental sphere. An initial theological thesis on entering covenantal space as possible point of departure for the liturgical act of living the baptismal life in this world on daily basis is proposed. As key moment in this thesis, the integral role of a spirituality of anticipation is proposed- a spirituality that expresses itself in the sursum corda- act of entering the transcendental reality of the covenantal space where God is present, visualising and partaking (through faith) in God's vision for the newness of our lives and returning to this imminent reality bearing witness to the ultimate renewal of the whole creation. In the latter part of the paper the authors employ their theological thesis on entering the covenantal space in formulating praxis theoretical indicators for educating baptised members of the body of Christ in sacramental literacy regarding the enduring identity-forming and transformative power of their baptismal life.

1. RESEARCH PROBLEM

It seems difficult for Christians (at least in Reformed context) to make a connection between the historical event of their baptism (usually administered to them when they were infants) and a clear and well- developed vision on the ongoing efficacy and identity-shaping power of their "being- baptized" in daily life. The event of baptism –then- remains a vague memory from the remote ceremonial past, unable to shape the daily actions of the Christian into a baptismal life. White (1999:140) reasons that a major impediment to a richer sacramental life still seems to be the reluctance to see sacraments as present acts of God rather than mere human memories of God's acts in the past. It is difficult for many Protestants to conceive of sacraments as God's self-giving. Therefore little sense of sacramental efficacy survives among many Protestants. For Wainwright (1978:37) the moves introduced by Protestant reform (that amount to pruning the ceremonial and multiplication of explanatory words and doctrinal instruction) paid a price in the loss of the sacramental dimension and in the growth of didacticism. In his work *The Protestant Era (1948)* Paul Tillich reminds us that a rediscovery of the sacramental sphere is needed for Protestantism to come to its full realization. This would involve the realization that natural objects can become bearers of transcendent power and meaning by being brought into the context of the history of salvation.

The need for "a rediscovery of the sacramental sphere" is emphasised from various angles in recent Protestant thinking. For White (1999:141) careless and unthinking practice and a lack

of teaching the meaning of sacraments has left a generation sacramentally illiterate. Dircksen (2010:373) -working with perspectives from the human science, anthropology- bemoans the praxis in which the sacrament of baptism is too easily associated only with the category of ceremony. The identity-forming and transformative power of ritual (like it is acted out in rites of passage) is -according to Dircksen- under-utilized in the sacramental sphere. She proposes that a religious leader should become a ritual leader in the initiation process of young congregants in order to prevent them from falling into chronic liminality. Van der Merwe (2009:130) considers the phenomenon that a substantial number of Christians in Reformed contexts feel the need to undergo the so- called baptism of faith as a second form of baptism- and in the process undercutting any sense of the activity of God in the previous baptism. This phenomenon challenges religious leaders to reconsider the element of active participation in and ongoing significance of the sacrament of baptism. This element of active participation – according to Van der Merwe- challenge leaders to educate members in how we can grow in our identity as baptised people and to identify what elements regarding frame of mind, attitude and disciplines of faith are representative of the baptismal life.

As far as we- the authors of this article are concerned- the quest for rediscovery of the sacramental sphere in Reformed context can be aided to a large extent by asking what ought to happen in order for the following vision of Batchelder (2006:11) to be realized: "Baptism is a life we must grow into, walking a path of ongoing formation. This path involves a process of living into and living out a new identity as a graced member of Christ's corporate body. Being baptized connects us in new ways to the world we inhabit and transforms these relationships so they possess a new character and ethical imperative."

In this paper we explore the practical theological implications of the action-fields and the senses of liturgical space contained in above mentioned vision by:

• Attempting to take first steps in rediscovering the element of efficacy (especially pertaining identity-forming and transforming power) envisaged in the Reformed tradition's criteria for defining sacraments (specifically the sacrament of Holy Baptism);
• Proposing an initial theological thesis on entering covenantal space as possible point of departure for living the baptismal life in this world on daily basis;
• Formulating initial praxis theoretical indicators for educating baptised members of the body of Christ in sacramental literacy regarding the enduring identity-forming and transformative power of their baptismal life as it is anchored in and energized by constant entry into the covenantal space.

2. REDISCOVERING THE ELEMENT OF EFFICACY IN THE REFORMED TRADITION`S VISION ON THE SACRAMENTS (SPECIFICALLY PERTAINING THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY BAPTISM)

By sacramentality -according to White (1999:13)- is meant the concept that the outward and visible can convey the inward and spiritual. Physical matters and actions then can become transparent vehicles of divine activity and presence. It is important to note that in this definition of sacramentality -as we interpret it- the focus is not exclusively on the aspect of matter or stagnant, isolated association (for example the symbolic meaning of water in itself reduced to a bare sign mechanically administered) but also encompasses the idea of ongoing, life-changing action (lasting identity-forming and action-inducing effects implicated by being baptised and the durative relationship dynamic between divine actions and human actions). By emphasizing the element of ongoing action a key notion in the Reformed view on the efficacy of sacraments is

affirmed in that it is made clear that the physical elements have no automatic force in themselves, but that Christ and the Spirit work through them to apply salvation (Lusk, 2004:71)

Calvin's defined a sacrament as "an outward sign by which the Lord seals on our consciences the promises of his good will toward us in order to sustain the weakness of our faith; and we in turn attest our piety toward him in the presence of the Lord and of his angels and before men" (*Institutes of the Christian Religion,* IV.14.1). Underlying this view on the sacraments is a covenantal theology that stresses a relationship of trust and lasting commitment between the graceful God and his people. From this perspective sacraments are viewed not only as signs and symbols but as *seals* of the covenant. In other words the sacraments do not merely serve as signs to remind the believer that there is a covenant. Nor do they merely symbolically portray something about the covenant. Instead as a "seal" the sacrament *does something* when one receives it (Lane, 2008:177). It fills the believer with confidence and living hope regarding the fulfilment of God` promises. Calvin repeatedly insisted that the grace objectively *offered* in the sacrament must be subjectively *received* by faith. This dialectic of offer and reception is according to Evans (2005:78) foundational for a proper understanding of Calvin's doctrine of the sacraments in general and is perhaps the most important element distinguishing Calvin's approach to baptismal efficacy from that of Rome. In drawing the lines of this distinction it should be noted that a particular current of Catholic sacramental theology is implicated, namely the onto-theological model. This model insists on the objective efficacy of the sacraments and should be distinguished from other lines of thinking in Catholic sacramental theology like the Vatican II model. Vatican II attempts to harmonize the traditional current, which considers the sacraments "means," and the newer, which insists on their function as expressive signs (Chauvet, 1995: 411, 415).

Calvin proceeds to explain that the sacraments properly fulfil their office when the Spirit, that inward teacher, comes to them, by whose power alone hearts are penetrated and affections moved and our souls opened for the sacraments to enter in. If the Spirit is lacking, the sacraments can accomplish nothing more in our minds than the splendour of the sun shining on blind eyes, or a voice sounding in deaf ears. The traditional Reformed confessions and catechisms make it clear that the sacramental elements do not operate on their own. The efficacious operation at work in the sacraments depends upon the Holy Spirit, who operates through the sacraments as He does through the Word. This according to Bromiley (1999:405) is a crucial point in Reformation teaching (cf. Geneva Catechism (1545) 2.84; Gallican Confession XXXIV; Belgic Confession XXXIII; Second Helvetic Confession XIX).

In shifting the focus of the discussion to the element of efficacy in the sacrament of Holy Baptism, an overview of the New Testament perspectives on baptism should be considered culminating in a brief analysis of how efficacious working imbedded in these perspectives are interpreted and confessed in the traditional Reformed confessions, baptismal formularies and catechisms.

According to White (1999:53) the chief New Testament metaphors for baptism are five (frequently overlapping and always complimenting each other):

• Forgiveness of sin (Acts 2:38; 1 Corinthians 6:11)
• Union to Christ (especially in his death and resurrection) (Romans 6:3; Colossians 2:12)
• Incorporation into the church (1 Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 3:27-28)
• Reception of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38)
• New birth or regeneration (John 3:5; Titus 3:5)

Atkins (2004:48) summarizes the implications of these metaphors for baptism as follows: God is

the one who at our baptism takes the initiative and declares that we are:

• Children of God,
• Called by name,
• Members of the whole Christian community.

And therefore,

• Sealed as prophets, priests and kings,
• United in Christ,
• Gifted with the Spirit,
• Raised to new life.

It is clear from the action fields imbedded in these New Testament perspectives that baptism is essentially something which God does and to which we respond, rather than our action to which God is gracious enough to respond. We are who we are because God has loved us, chosen us, adopted us, anointed us to be his own. Through baptism, a Christian first and finally learns who he or she is. It is the rite of identity (Willimon, 1980:27, 28). The efficacious working of the baptism (when viewed for the action fields present in the covenant environment) consists of God working in us, the members of the Christian community, through his Spirit a sense of our new identity in Christ and the will to live the new life He has given us.

The efficacious element imbedded in these perspectives are interpreted and confessed in the traditional Reformed confessions, baptismal formularies and catechisms along the following lines:

• By baptism we are received into the church of God (Gallican Confession XXXIV). Being marked as a Christian comprises embracing the new Christian identity and acting out the Christian ministry of prophet, priest and king we are consecrated unto. Baptism is a sign of our profession (Anglican Thirty-Nine Articles XXVII). Baptism -once received- does continue all one's life, and is a perpetual sealing of our adoption (Second Helvetic Confession, XX).
• Baptism, like circumcision, is a covenant sign. It is a "sign and seal of the covenant of grace" (Westminster Confession XXVIII, 1). It operates in the action field of God's effective grace through the forgiving and cleansing working of the blood of Christ ministered by the Holy Spirit and God's faithful promise to fulfil what He has started in us (Heidelberg Catechism Qu. 74). The covenant idea found in the classical baptismal formulary of the Reformed tradition as developed by Olevianus and Ursinus and formulated in the church order of Paltz (1563), does not reflect an abstract idea. What is evident in this formular is the notion that God's acts in Christ are very real. These acts from God are radical and total and call for a radical and total commitment (van`t Spijker, 1980:11).
• What should also be noted in the text of the above mentioned formular is that activity of triune God is not spoken of in past tense. The Father seals to us by baptism that He establishes an eternal covenant, and wants to provide for us and protect us against evil or let evil work to our own good; The Son seals to us that He washed us with his blood (inaugurating us into his death and resurrection) with the result that we are saved from sin and reckoned justified before God; The Spirit seals that He wants to live in us and sanctify us to become members of Christ and wants to let us partake in the riches that we have in Christ, consisting of the cleansing of sin and daily renewal of life, until we will be

established in eternal life without blemish. The continuous, all- encompassing activity of God is answered by covenant activity by us that speaks of constant and daily commitment (loving God with whole heart and soul), striving against enemies, and living a life of godliness. And when we fall in sin due to our weakness, we can focus on baptism as a seal (undoubting witness) that we have an eternal covenant with God (van`t Spijker, 1980:24). These actions imply that sacramentality does not have to do with liturgical events that only from time to time trigger memory, but supposes a constant consciousness of being in a personal relationship with God.

- Baptism is a bath of regeneration that the Lord offers to his elect pointing very powerfully to the believers` dying with Christ and rising again with him. (First Helvetic Confession, XXI; Heidelberg Catechism Qu. 72). By it the elect of God are consecrated unto God (Second Helvetic Confession II, XX). Regeneration means both putting on us the new man, and putting off the old man with his deeds (Geneva Catechism (1545) 2.86; 2.87; Belgic Confession XXXIV). Here the ethical thrust of baptism is clearly seen. Baptism is not a single event. It works itself out in total renewal (Second Helvetic Confession II, XX).

- Baptism simultaneously sets a person apart and incorporates him or her in a community, the new community of the Church, united in Christ (Heidelberg Catechism Qu 74). The sacraments are thus about salvation, not as a gift turned in on itself, but as something that reaches much further than the well- being of the individual believer. The communal baptismal life aim toward the liberation of mankind united under one Head, Christ (cf. Lukken, 2005:386; Spierling, 2005:4).

- Baptism is not efficacious simply by being administered. It is asked whether "the water is a washing of the soul". The answer is "by no means" (Geneva Catechism (1545) 2.86). Only the blood of Christ can wash the soul. In order that it may do this by way of baptism, a first prerequisite is faith. Baptism is the sacrament of faith (Gallican Confession XXXV; Geneva Catechism (1545) 2.87; Anglican Thirty-Nine Articles XXV). The right use of baptism consists in faith and repentance (Geneva Catechism (1545) 2.87). (Bromiley, 1999:406- 411)

Rediscovering the element of efficacy in the Reformed tradition's vision on the sacraments (specifically pertaining the sacrament of Holy Baptism) -in our view- amounts to relocating the working of the sacrament to the action fields at work in the covenant of grace. Liturgical acts aimed at activating the efficaciousness of the sacraments –then- do not only comprise of special (and isolated) events like special baptism services (allowing every Christian present to call to mind their own baptism and what God did then and does now for God's children or encouraging the congregation to return to the symbolic place of their baptism to sprinkle themselves again with water (cf. Atkins, 2004:50). Liturgical acts -and this is to our mind the heart of rediscovering the element of efficacy in the Reformed vision on the sacrament- should in the context of the covenant of grace bring members of the Christian community in continuous strengthening, regenerating and focusing contact with the Author of their identity and the newness of their life in a world that is destined to be renewed by the One that says: "See! I make all things new." (Revelation 21:5)

In the next section of our paper we propose an initial theological thesis on entering covenantal space as a possible point of departure for the liturgical act of living the baptismal life in this world.

3. AN INITIAL THEOLOGICAL THESIS ON ENTERING COVENANTAL SPACE AS POSSIBLE POINT OF DEPARTURE FOR THE LITURGICAL ACT OF LIVING THE BAPTISMAL LIFE IN THIS WORLD

Taking the cue from the spatial theories of scholars like Henri Lefebvre and Edward Soja, Cilliers (2008:2) distinguishes between at least three possibilities in describing the concept of space: "Firstspace" – which can be chartered and indicated geographically; "Secondspace", which indicates imagined space (concepts, ideas on how space is or should be); "Thirdspace", i.e. lived or existential space, which indicates the immediate, real surroundings in which people find themselves every day (cf. Berquist, 2008:41). In order to facilitate the liturgical understanding and function of space, Cilliers (2008:3) ventures to identify a further distinction: "Fourthspace", which links to "Secondspace" (imagined space), but also transcends it. "Fourthspace" could be called anticipated space, in the sense of an *anticipatory prolepsis of transcendent realities,* in such a manner that not only imagined space is viewed from a distance, but rather that the viewer *already partakes* in the object of prolepsis. The transcendent reality enters the viewer's immanent reality, but never to the degree where the transcendent reality can be grabbed and controlled; rather the viewer takes hold of it through faith. To understand (and enter) this form of space one needs a distinctive form of spirituality, and therefore "Fourthspace" could also be called a *spiritual space, calling for a spirituality of anticipation.*

What Cilliers calls *a spirituality of anticipation* is representative of a key moment in our thesis pertaining to the liturgical act of living the baptismal life in this world. In our view a spirituality of anticipation essentially has to do with the *sursum corda* – act of entering the transcendental reality of the covenantal space where God is present, visualising and partaking (through faith) in God's vision for the newness of our lives and the ultimate renewal of the whole creation. But the act also entails returning to the immanent reality of this world radiating the living contact with God (cf. 2 Corinthians 3:18) and anticipating/ bearing witness of something better foreseen for this world than the brokenness and polluting and disintegrating powers still at work in the world in its current state (cf. Romans 8:21).

In exploring Biblical conceptualization regarding covenantal space and to illustrate what the liturgical act of entering the covenantal space entails, a brief reference can be made to two images: *entering the Promised Land and entering the sanctuary.*

Entering the covenantal space of the Promised Land
Part of the covenant promise described in the Old Testament deals with the very concrete promise of land: Israel being led out of land of slavery into land where life can flourish under God's reign. The view that the new covenant, in contrast to the covenant with Abraham, is essentially spiritual and therefore not concerned with something as material as the word "land" suggests, can- in our view- seriously impede the contemporary believer in seeing the relevance of his/ her Christian faith for living the baptismal life in this world. Inherent to this belief can be the idea that for something to be spiritual, it must be non-material. But for many this means it is less than real, because reality consists of what can be touched- substantial matter that occupies space (Armerding, 2000:220). We concur with Armerding (2000:223) that Protestants have little theology of land and sometimes little theology of creation in general. Entering covenantal space (fourth space) entails the anticipatory act of entering a heavenly country (According to the writer of Hebrews, Abraham and the patriarchs longed for a better country- a heavenly one' (11:16)). But entrance into the heavenly country does not implicate spiritualizing estrangement from this world. The proleptic act of tasting the first fruits of God promised new life and seeing proof of God's grace in our regenerated nature, causes us to return to and live in this world with the living hope of the promised renewal of the whole creation and with renewed focus to bear prophetic witness to this imminent liberation of creation.

Entering the covenantal space of the sanctuary
The sanctuary is a central Biblical concept for signifying living contact with God in a reconciled and

sanctified space. Factors that caused tension and estrangement in the relationship (ungodliness of man and covenant unfaithfulness) are reconciled so that atonement can take place and man can draw near to God. Only because the tabernacle of the wilderness was constructed precisely "according to the pattern" shown to Moses on the mount could a worship pattern provide insight into the realities of a proper approach to God under the provisions of the new covenant (Hebrews 8:5). Instead of moving toward a worship centre localized in modern-day Jerusalem, the new-covenant believer joins with the angels to worship at the "heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God" (12:22; cf. Robertson, 2000:122). They draw near and enter the heavenly sanctuary on the new and living way opened up by Jesus Christ with a sincere heart and in full assurance of faith (Hebrews 10:19-25). Yet again the daily sacramental act of entering this sanctified space filled with the confidence flowing from God's covenantal faithfulness that through the cleansing and regenerating acts of Jesus nothing can separate us from Him, does not estrange/isolate us from this world we live in. It fills us with joy and anticipation to see that the reconciled life with God and the integrity and joy it brings to us, will extend to whole of creation when every space will be filled with his presence and glory. So that He may be all in all (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:28).

It is very challenging to develop a theory for educating the Christian community partaking in the blessing of the sacrament of Holy Baptism that culminates in constantly realizing and living out the sacramental implications of their baptism. It is especially challenging when the thesis worked with, does not only take concrete, easily associable elements (like for instance the symbolic meaning of water and concrete rituals performed during worship services) into account. Our thesis especially focuses on anticipatory acts of faith. These acts- when not explained carefully and thoughtfully- can very easily be relegated to the category of abstract and it can therefore become very difficult to associate these acts with the reality of life in this material world. In the next section we attempt to take up this challenge in formulating initial praxis theoretical indicators for educating baptised members of the body of Christ in sacramental literacy regarding the enduring identity-forming and transformative power of their baptismal life as it is anchored in and energized by constant entry into the covenantal space.

4. FORMULATING INITIAL PRAXIS THEOLOGICAL INDICATORS FOR EDUCATING BAPTISED MEMBERS OF THE BODY OF CHRIST IN SACRAMENTAL LITERACY REGARDING THEIR BAPTISMAL LIFE

Nobody can answer to God's promises sealed in baptism without the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. Infant baptism presupposes the working of the Spirit through the education of parents and teachers in the life of the baptised person. Jesus in His command to His disciples connected baptism and teaching inseparably (Matthew 28:19-20).

The question we attempt to answer in this section deals with how the church -through its teaching and actions- can be the best instrument in the hands of the Holy Spirit to lead the baptised to live in a covenantal relationship with God and his people so that they can experience the identity-forming and transformative power that is signified, sealed and promised in their baptism.

In order to guide a person in the art of living abundantly out of the promises of his/her baptism within the intimate space of the covenant, the essence of that space should be known. By answering the question about the essence of the covenantal space we will also be able to answer the question mentioned in the previous paragraph. When you know what the covenantal space is (that is: what you receive in this space and what you ought to do and be because you are in this particular space), you will be able to address the question regarding educating the people of God to live in this space.

4.1 Entering into the covenantal space is entering into a space that you are already imbedded in

God created the covenantal space. God made the covenant with Abraham and through Christ with every believer and their children (Galatians 3; Chapel, 2003:11). Christ made the creation of this space possible with His atoning work. The Holy Spirit creates a new space, a new life, inside man which will make it possible for that person to live with joy in the covenantal space.

Infants of believing parents –as we see it- were already part of the covenant from the moment of conception. All the promises of the covenant are theirs (Wilson, 2003:293). They are in a covenant relationship with God. The child has no choice in it. There is no escape from this disposition for the rest of his life. Baptism seals this relationship with the sign of water. This can be compared to a child born to certain parents. The child can feel at home in the space shared with the parents. He is not treated as if he does not belong there. Covenantal space is not an unfamiliar country that must still be conquered. It is also not a space that can be put behind you as if you never partook in it. Once God has made his covenant with you, it is a lifelong covenant from His side. All a child of the covenant can do is to accept or reject God's attentions and promises. But the promises of God cannot be made undone (Brueggemann, 2001:83).

Brueggemann (1999:1-17) speaks of God as the "other" in man's life. "This "other", he says, "is a endlessly inscrutable mystery and endlessly problematic to us, for we can neither escape from that other, nor are we able to seduce, capture, or possess that other who always stands from and over against us." (1999:1) Baptism is a token and seal that this "other" has chosen you to be part of his covenant. It is a token of the lengths he went to, to make it possible for you to live in the closest, covenantal, relationship with Him and his people. With this comes his demand that you should give your whole life to Him. In this a baptised child has no choice. He/she is in this covenantal space. The psalmist was stricken by this fact when he wrote these words:

> LORD, you have examined me and you know me. Where can I go from your Spirit, or where can I flee from your presence. I ascend to heaven, you are there; If I make my bed in sheol, you are there. (Ps 139:1,7,8)

For the baptised to experience the identity-forming and transformative power, that is possible in this space, he must know this God to whom he is connected by the covenant. Heitink (2008:299) says: "Godskennis is een wijze van kennen die opkomt uit een zich gekend weten" (Freely translated in English: The knowledge of God flows from the knowledge that you are known.) This way of knowing asks from you to open yourself to the transcendental reality that exists imperceptible behind our reality, so that it can sometimes, for a moment, be experienced as a perception of being known.

Dean (2010) discusses the results of National Study of Youth and Religion in America. The results show that the churches under scrutiny in the survey taught their youth a feel good therapeutic gospel that doesn't ask anything of the individual. These young people say they don't have a problem with the gospel and God, but it is also clear out of the survey that they don't feel much for God and they don't know much about Him. People can be indifferent to God only because the church let them be.

The church must teach a God that cannot be escaped; A God that comes to you in your baptism with His love and His promises. You have to either reject Him or love Him but you can't ignore Him. Van der Merwe (2009:136) calls baptism a drowning of the child, because baptism calls for dying in yourself to be resurrected by the Spirit in Jesus Christ (Galatians 2:20).

The church must teach Jesus Christ as the One on whom you either build your life or find him to be a stumbling block and a stone that crushes you. The church must teach and live in such a

way, that nobody can stay indifferent. The uncompromised message to the baptised must be: "you are in the covenant space by the grace of God, live in that space with your whole heart, mind and strength". It must be impossible for an onlooker to be in the presence of God's people, and in the process not meeting God or seeing the fear of the Lord in their lives. Everything the church does must be a proclamation of God as He makes Himself known in Scripture and the covenant (Robbins, 1990:121).

> Maybe that was what Paul had in mind when he wrote to Timothy:
> In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and because he is coming to rule as King, I solemnly urge you to preach the message, to insist upon proclaiming it (whether the time is right or not), to convince, reproach, and encourage, as you teach with all patience (2Timothy 4:1,2).

The second aspect of covenant space that is important for the church to help the baptised in unlocking and sustaining the identity-forming and transformative power of their baptism is to know and experience that:

4.2 Covenantal space is a familial space

When God made the covenant with Abraham, he said that he will be a God to him and his children. From the start this covenant has been closely associated with the household of parents including their siblings and descendants. God even commanded Abraham to circumcise his whole household (Genesis 17:12). Chapel (2003:13) calls this incorporation into the covenantal status of the parent, the representative principle: "The representative principle also explains why, in the New Testament, the apostle Paul could still say that children of a believing parent, - even one who is married to a non-believer- are "holy" before God (1 Corinthians 7:14)." God gives His covenant promises to every believer and when that believer has children those particular children are partakers of the covenant. God pledges all the blessings of the covenant to the believer and his children when the condition of faith is met. Furthermore everyone that partakes in the covenant is also part of God's holy nation.

This implies that the education of the Christian community is a family business. In order to partake in the blessing of the sacrament of Holy Baptism in a way that culminates in constantly realizing and living out the sacramental implications of your baptism, you have to be part of God's people (Heitink, 2008:158).

What the covenant blessings amount to and how the member of the Christian community can experience these blessings as a reality in his/her life, are best taught and learned in the loving relationship of a family and in the community of saints.

As an example, it can be stated the relationship of a new born baby with his mother, proves to be all important for the development of his relationship to God. If the baby experience unconditional love from his mother, knowing that she is there for him when he needs her, it will be easier for him to believe in an almighty God who is his Shepherd (Montanaro, 1994:17-25). If he also learns to respect and obey his parents -even if he doesn't understand the logic behind their decisions-, it will prepare him to serve the God of the covenant who asked from Abraham to sacrifice his son. If he learns to respect his parents but at the same time has the freedom to talk to them about his pain and his need he will be able to, while he fears the Lord, draw near to Him with boldness (Hebrews 10:19-25). If he learns that his parents won't except bad behaviour but that they will forgive him, he will more likely be able to understand God's forgiveness in Jesus Christ and God's demand to be holy as He is holy (Brueggeman,1999:3-6). If he learns to serve other, seeing his parents serve others, it is a preparation for him to be able to give himself as an

offering to God (Romans 12:1). Strommen & Hardel (2000:85) say that values are communicated most powerfully by parents. The power of a peer group's influence "emerges as dominant only when the relationship of love with parents is vastly diminished".

What we are saying is that the Holy Spirit can use healthy covenant family relationships to prepare a child for his relationship with God.

A church that wants to live out of the covenantal relationship -as it is sealed in baptism- has to incorporate a ministry that promotes healthy families. Families must actively be guided in areas like the following: Parental harmony, effective communication, wise parental control, parental nurturing (Strommen & Hardel, 2000:37-71).

The same is true for the relationships in the congregation. The congregation must be a family. Strommen & Hardel (2000:158) list eight factors that make congregations a family: A hospitable climate, inspirational worship, a caring environment, a thinking climate, families who help families, an emphasis on prayer, intergenerational service efforts and a sense of mission. A congregation who sets its target to be a family in this way will make constant entrance into the covenantal space a natural part of their baptismal life. If this is done in obedience to God, both those who are on the receiving side and those who are ministering to them will be connected to God's purpose with His covenant. This will bring hope to both sides and the anticipation of the work of the Holy Spirit in all of them.

The church must know what it is, namely the covenant family of God, the church must do what it is, and the church must organise what it does. In this way, entering the covenantal space must be communicated as being part of the baptismal life of the church and not as if it amounts to a sporadic event. Pickard (2009:6) formulates this fact as follows: "The people of God do not decide of their own accord to operate in a collaborative manner. The ecclesia is, by virtue of being the body of Christ, a collaborative entity. … As a result when the Church acts in a collaborative manner it actualises its own deepest reality"

4.3 Covenantal space is a charismatic and diaconal space

When God made the covenant with Abraham He communicated the essence of the gospel to him when he said "Through you all nations will be blessed" (Galatians 3:8). This blessing to the nations culminated in Jesus Christ and his sending of the Holy Spirit. When Jesus ascended to heaven as king he gave gifts to his Church so that they could be a blessing to the nations (Ephesians 4:7, 8). Each believer received a gift by God's grace and as good servant- managers of God's grace they must serve others with their gifts (1 Peter 4:10). Jesus gave certain focused gifts to equip members of the congregation for their service in his kingdom (Ephesians 4:11-13).

Equipping every member for a special task must be a priority in the congregation. The structure of the congregation's ministry has to make it possible for every member to use his or her gift. In this way the congregation will spread the love and grace of God according to their baptismal calling.

This also defines the congregation as a missional body. Jesus who came to fulfil the covenant, also came to seek and to find those who are lost. The task of the congregation is to find the proverbial sheep that belong to the herd that Jesus purchased for his Father (John 10).

A Spirit-filled congregation, orientated towards service, can expect to experience the mighty deeds of God in the covenantal space of which their baptism give testimony.

4.4 Covenantal space is a space of growth

The members of the body of Christ can only grow to full maturity by being equipped for their ministry and by ministering to each other and the people outside the congregation (Ephesians 4:7-16). The covenant people of God have received all that are necessary for them to live and to

serve God, therefore they must do everything to grow in their faith so that they can live joyously in the kingdom of Christ (2 Peter 1:3-11). Because the covenant people were regenerated by the Word of God, they must grow in their love for each other (1Peter 1:22-23). In Hebrews 6:1-12 the congregation is warned that somebody who in many ways receives the grace of God but doesn't respond by producing fruit, becomes worthless and will be judged by God.

Jesus said that those who hear the Word of God and don't respond to it, will lose the little that they have. But they that receive the Word, keep it in their hearts and serve God with their lives, will accumulate more and more knowledge (Luke 8:18). You can only experience God's covenantal gifts when you grow constantly in your knowledge, your love and your ministry to God and men.

Brueggemann (2001:83) says that in Deuteronomy 6:4 ("Hear Israel YHWH is one"), the addressed group is "always being formed, re-identified, and reconstituted as the Israel of God, for Israel becomes Israel through hearing". The imperative "hear" is fundamental to a covenantal understanding of this people of God. In his second letter Peter says the same thing: "And so I will always remind you of these matters, even though you already know them and are firmly grounded in the truth you have received" (2 Peter 1:12). The congregation can only live in covenantal space by hearing the truths of God over and over again. If the Word of God is constantly applied to the lives of the congregation members in sermons and by means of teaching the sound doctrine, they will be firmly grounded in the truth. If they continuously meet the God of the covenant, they won't forget their identity.

A congregation should have various opportunities to grow in their knowledge of God as He is revealed in his Word. By the teaching ministry they must consciously be led into the covenantal understanding of the space they find themselves in at that moment of their lives.

4.5 Covenantal space is representative of unfinished business

In this life there will always be something incomplete concerning our relationship with God and each other. Entering and re-entering the covenant space, understanding and trying to fully understand, enjoying and grieving the consequences of being in the covenant space, will always be part of our life with God on this earth. Paul says he finds in himself the desire to do good, but he is still sinning (Romans 7:21-23), and despite all his knowledge of Christ he is still stretching out to take hold of this knowledge (Philippians 3:10-12).

Covenant people are always looking forward to the second advent of Jesus Christ. This process of entering and re-entering the covenant space – the space that the believer always sensed that he/she belongs to- will be consummated on that day. On that day we will fully experience the grace of God that He intended for us in his covenant.

A South African poet renowned for his role in the first Afrikaans Bible translation, JD Du Toit (Totius), once said "Die wêreld is ons woning nie", (Free English translation: "The world is our home not"). Our baptism seals the fact that we have another home with our Father in heaven. Entering the covenantal space in this life and enjoying the presence of our Lord, will always awaken the anticipation for another day when we will enjoy this privilege in a much deeper sense and will also make us expect the day of eternal perfection.

4.6 Covenantal space is a space of celebration

Out of the preceding discussion it is clear that entering covenantal space is a matter of remembrance, a matter of living out that remembrance and a matter of making the consequences of that remembrance a reality in your life. Remembrance and living out of remembrance, create experiences that confirms the truth of the covenantal promises and that in their part creates anticipation of more to come.

Covenantal space is a space that should be remembered by celebration. God gave Israel various feasts to celebrate the covenant relationship. Pious Jews tried to get to Jerusalem at least for the annual festivals of Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles, in accordance with the Law (Exodus 23:17; Beckwith, 1978:42). In the new covenant the two sacraments of the Holy Communion and Holy Baptism were instituted by Christ. But there are more opportunities to celebrate Gods faithful covenantal acts and -in the process- being reminded of the rejuvenatory newness of life that flows from God's redemptive acts. A congregation can celebrate significant redemptive historical events like the birth, death and resurrection of Christ, ascension and Pentecost and use the liturgical acts involved in commemorating these events as opportunity to bring the covenantal relationship between them and God into remembrance. A family can celebrate each member's date of baptism year after year calling into memory all that their baptism entails. Also when a member comes to the point of confession of his/ her Christian faith in the midst of the congregation, it can be a cause for the celebration of the newness of life that flourishes in the covenantal space.

5. SUMMARIZING REMARKS

In taking first steps with the eye on rediscovering the elements of efficacy envisaged in the Reformed tradition's criteria for defining the sacramental sphere of Holy Baptism, we focused in this paper on the idea of lasting, identity-forming and action-inducing effects implicated by being baptised and the durative relationship dynamic between divine actions and human actions in this particular liturgical action field.

In attempting to give shape to above mentioned focus, we proposed an initial theological thesis on entering covenantal space as possible point of departure for living the baptismal life in this world on daily basis. In our thesis the sacramental sphere (particularly the element of efficacy at work in this sphere) is located in the context of the covenant of grace, bringing members of the Christian community in continuous strengthening, regenerating and focusing contact with the Author of their identity and the newness of their life in a world that is destined to be renewed. As key moment in our thesis pertaining to the liturgical act of living the baptismal life in this world, we proposed the integral role of a spirituality of anticipation, that expresses itself in the *sursum corda-* act of entering the transcendental reality of the covenantal space where God is present, visualising and partaking (through faith) in God's vision for the newness of our lives and returning to this imminent reality bearing witness to the ultimate renewal of the whole creation.

In attempting to develop initial practice theoretical indicators for educating the Christian community regarding the liturgical act of constantly realizing and living out the sacramental implications of their baptism by entering the covenantal space, we identified the following indicators:

- Accompanying the Christian community in the liturgical act of entering the covenantal space, entails defining and embracing this space as a space that you belong to and are already partaking in through the grace of God. It is not an alien space that awakens a perception of not belonging to.
- What the covenant blessings entail and how the member of the Christian community can make these blessings a reality in his/her life, is best taught and learned in the loving relationship of a family and in the community of saints.
- A congregation's ministry should be structured in a way that enables every member to use his or her gift in bearing witness to the newness of life received through the grace of

God in his presence. In this way the congregation will spread the love and grace of God according to their baptismal calling.

- The reality of God's covenantal gifts can only be experienced when a member of the Christian community is equipped to grow constantly in his/her knowledge, love and ministry to God and men. Baptismal identity and transformation into newness of life should constantly be invigorated by enduring spiritual discipline that stimulates growth according to the fullness of Christ

- Covenant people should constantly be reminded to anticipate the second advent of Jesus Christ. The process of entering and re-entering the covenant space – the space that the believer always sensed that he/she belongs to- will energize the baptised person's calling by anticipating its consummation on the day of Jesus' return.

- Members of the Christian community should be enabled to remember the rejuvenatory nature of the covenantal relationship by celebrating key redemptive events in the establishment and renewal of this relationship commemorated in key events of the Christian calendar like Advent, Easter and Pentecost.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Amerding, C.E. 2000. *Stewardship of the land: a Christian mandate* (*In* P. Johnston & P. Walker, *eds*. The land of promise- Biblical, theological and contemporary perspectives. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, p. 215-231).

Atkins, P. 2004. Memory and liturgy- The place of memory in the composition and practice of liturgy. Aldershot: Ashgate.

Batchelder, D.B. 2006. Living wet: baptismal remembrance and life at the edge of dawn. *Liturgy,* 21 (4): 11-17.

Beckwith, R.T. 1978. The Jewish background to Christian worship. (*In* C. Jones, G. Wainwright & E. Yarnold, *eds*., *The study of Liturgy.* London: SPCK, p.39-51).

Berquist, J.L. 2008. Spaces of Jerusalem. (*In* J. L. Berquist and C. V. Camp, *eds*., *Constructions of space II – The biblical city and other imagined spaces.* New York: T&T Clark, p.4-52).

Bromiley, G.W. 1999. *Baptism in the Reformed Confessions and Catechisms. (In* S. E. Porter and A. R. Cross, *eds.* Baptism, the New Testament and the Church – Historical and contemporary studies in honour of R.E.O. White (Journal for the Study of the New Testament supplement series 171). Sheffield Academic Press: Sheffield, p. 402-418)*.*

Brueggemann, W. 2001. *Deuteronomy. Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries.* Nashville: Abingdon press.

Calvin, J. 1960*. Institutes of the Christian Religion,* ed. J. T. McNeill, trans. F. L. Battles. Philadelphia: Westminster Press.

Chapel, B. 2003. A Pastoral overview of infant Baptism. (*In* G. Strawbridge, *ed*. The case for covenantal *infant baptism.* Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, p.9-29).

Chauvet, L-M. 1995. *Symbol and sacrament: a sacramental reinterpretation of Christian existence.* Collegeville: The Liturgical Press.

Cilliers, J. 2008. In die omtrek van die Gees: `n besinning oor die ruimtelikheid van liturgie. *Praktiese Teologie in Suid-Afrika,* 23(2): 1-22. [In the radius of the Spirit: Considering the spatiality of liturgy. *Practical Theology in South-Africa*, 23(2): 1-22.]

Dean, K.C. 2010. *Almost Christian: what the faith of our teenagers is telling the American church.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Dircksen, M.R. 2010. Die doop, geloofsbelydenis en nagmaal: ware inisiasie of seremonie? *Ekklesiastikos Pharos,* 92: 368-376. [Baptism, confession of faith and Eucharist: true initiation or ceremony? *Ekklesiastikos Pharos*, 92: 368-376).]

Evans, W.B. 2005. "Really exhibited and conferred. In his appointed time": Baptism and the new Reformed sacramentalism. *Presbyterion* 31(2): 72-88.

Heitink, G. 2008. *Een kerk met karakter. Tijd voor heroriëntatie.* Kampen: Kok.

Lane, D.C. 2008. Some difficulties in covenant theology's view of baptism as a "seal". *Blbllotheca Sacra,*

165: 164-77.

Lukken, G. 2005. *Rituals in abundance – Critical reflections on the place, form and identity of Christian ritual in our culture.* Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters.

Lusk, R. 2004. Paedobaptism and Baptismal Efficacy: Historic Trends and Current Controversies, (*In* S. Wilkins and D. Garner, *eds*., *The Federal Vision.* Monroe: Athanasius Press, p. 71-125).

Montanaro, S.Q. 1994. Helping the Child. (*In* S. Calvaletti, P. Coulter, G. Gobbi & S.Q. Montanaro, *eds*., *The Good Shepherd and the Child: A Joyful Journey.* Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, p. 17-26).

Pickard, S. 2009.*Theological foundations for collaborative ministry.* Burlington: Ashgate.

Robertson, O.P. 2000. A new-covenant perspective on the land. (*In* P. Johnston & P. Walker, *eds*. *The land of promise – Biblical, theological and contemporary perspectives.* Downers Grove: InterVarsity. p. 121-141).

Robbins, D. 1990. *A youth worker's guide to discipling teenagers. The ministry of nurture.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

Spierling, K.E. 2005. *Infant baptism in Reformation Geneva – The shaping of a community,* 1536-1546. Aldershot: Ashgate.

Strommen M.P. 2000. *Passing on the faith: a radical new model for youth and family ministry.* Winona: Saint Mary's Press.

Tillich, P. 1948. *The Protestant era* (Translated and with a concluding essay by James Luther Adams).

Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Van der Merwe, J. 2009. Ontdek die doop en geloofsbevestiging. (*In* C. Wepener and J. van der Merwe, *eds*., *Ontdekkings in die erediens.* Wellington: Lux Verbi.BM, p.129-145). [Discover baptism and confirmation of faith. (In C. Wepener and J. van der Merwe, *eds*., Discoveries in the worship service. Wellington: Lux Verbi.BM, p.129-145).]

Van `t Spijker, W. 1980*. Zijn verbond en woorden – Over doop, belijdenis en avondmaal volgens de klassieke formulieren.* Goudriaan: De Groot Uitgeverij.

Wainwright, G. 1978. The periods of liturgical history. (*In* C. Jones, G. Wainwright & E. Yarnold, *eds*., *The study of Liturgy.* London: SPCK, p.33-38).

Willimon, W.H. 1980. *Remember who you are: Baptism, a model for Christian life.* Nashville: The Upper Room.

White, J.F. 1999. *The sacraments in Protestant practice and faith.* Nashville: Abingdon.

Wilson, D. 2003. Baptism and children: their place in the Old and New Testaments. (*In* G. Strawbridge, ed., *The case for covenantal infant baptism.* Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, p.286-310).

KEY WORDS
Liturgy
(Covenantal) space
Sacramental
Baptism
(Christian) Education

TREFWOORDE
Liturgie
(Verbonds)ruimte
Sakramenteel
Doop
(Christelike) Opvoeding

Prof. G Breed
Skool vir Kerkwetenskappe
Fakulteit Teologie
Noordwes Universiteit
Potchefstroom-kampus
Privaatsak X6001
Potchefstroom
2520
Tel: 018-2991029
e-pos: gert.breed@nwu.ac.za

Prof. FW De Wet
Skool vir Kerkwetenskappe
Fakulteit Teologie
Noordwes Universiteit
Potchefstroom-kampus
Privaatsak X6001
Potchefstroom
2520
Tel: 018-2991591
e-pos: fritz.dewet@nwu.ac.za

Brits, Hans J
Vaal University of Technology

Preaching as a means to deconstruct the existence of apartheid discourses within the post-apartheid reformed tradition

ABSTRACT

Critical discourse analysis is a discourse analytical research that studies the way social power are reproduced and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context. Racism and discrimination are discourses that have been a global problem since time immemorial. Australia, America, the United Kingdom and many countries in Europe have been considered much attuned to racism. Australia and North America's history have similarities with regard to the fact that they were inhabited by a group of 'foreign conquerors'. This set the pace of racism, distinguishing the conquerors as superior to the inferior conquered ones. Racism is not something outside of the individual or group but an internalised frame of reference. It has also, like social, political and religious ideas, systems of ideas shared by a social group. Since the early years of the South African history, the relationship between the black inhabitants and the white settlers (the rulers i.e. English, Dutch and later Afrikaans speaking people) has been characterised with white superiority and dominance over blacks. This class domination takes the form of "hegemony".

The author views discourse as a phenomenon that influences people's thoughts and acts by constituting what should be regarded as 'meaningful' and 'what should be ruled out'. Discourses create social knowledge in the minds of peoples and their way of interpretation of the world. In other words, discourses give meaning to the narratives that people live. Action is controlled by our minds. This article wishes to investigate the role of prominent people such as theologians in the reformed tradition in controlling the minds and actions of their members during apartheid and how preaching in a post apartheid era can contribute to eradicate existing apartheid discourse. Deconstruction is a "form of cultural, philosophical, social and textual critique designed to keep forms of discourse such as preaching from repressing otherness" (McClure 2007:19). Negative discourses that exist within a post-apartheid community in South Africa can be deconstructed in order to create positive narratives. This article reflects on preaching as a mechanism to deconstruct the existence of apartheid discourses in a post-apartheid dispensation.

'There are, in fact, white people who are racist and who are not naturally hateful but who have been captured by the customs, thinking and mores of the society in which they live' (Gordon 1997:137).

1. INTRODUCTION

Evidence of racism in the post-apartheid South Africa is a reality, this reminds of Joseph Brandt's statement that "while some gains resulted from the civil rights era… much is unquestionably worse" (McClure 2007:61). This article associates racism with discourse. The major work of discourse analysis is to look at a phenomenon such as racism as a complex system of social

and political inequality that is reproduced by discourse in general and by "elite discourse" in particular (Van Dijk 2001:362). The concept 'discourse' provides a language for talking about a topic at a particular historical moment (Hall 1992:291). Discourse in this article refers to communicative events in oral as well as written form, as well as unwritten and unspoken ways of looking at "reality". This includes preaching, and for the purpose of this article, preaching to members of the Reformed traditions in a post-apartheid dispensation. Other forms of discourse are, e.g. professional discourse, bureaucratic discourse, medical discourse, educational and scholarly discourse, etc. (Van Dijk 2001:362). Discourse is regarding as the 'broad patterns of statements', which can be depicted in the communication of prominent members of society.

The ruling National Party of the apartheid era developed and implemented a political policy that was underpinned by an ideology based on racial differentiation. This ideology concurs with the dominant narratives of the Afrikaner as "His people". The 'dominant narratives' of the Afrikaner were underpinned by nationalistic ideals for the 'self'. These narratives created truth and meaning for the Afrikaner. Characteristic of dominant narratives are that they create truth and meaning within a cultural and social relational context. The discourse of the Afrikaner politicians, theologians and prominent members of society expressed during the apartheid years, created meanings which were stereotypical through their discursive themes. They succeeded in their discourses through literature and other forms of influential public communication, including preaching, to convince the Afrikaner that the values and beliefs of the whites were superior to those of all other races.

According to Van Dijk (2001:354), language users are social actors that have "personal and social cognition" which influence interaction and discourse of their individual members, whereas shared social representations govern the collective actions of a group. Goldberg (2002:59) stated that racists intend to exclude the racial 'others' with the goal in mind of domination or subjugation; of maximising profit by maintaining cheap labour force, by reserving jobs for members of what they take to be their own, etc. Boesak, as someone on the receiving end of racism during the apartheid era, stated that 'racism has brought dehumanisation, has undermined Black personhood, destroyed the human-beingness of those who are called to be children of God…their Blackness…calls forth such hatred' (Boesak 1984:113). Racism in South Africa can be regarded as a form of institutionalised domination by means of social, political and economic structures. It can also be regarded as a system of superiority based on colour, implemented by the National Party when the 'Afrikaners' came to power in 1948.

Racism is a complex phenomenon which should be regarded as an internalised frame of reference (De Wet 2001:99). For the purpose of this article it is important to note that racism is a discourse that directs the way people think about themselves (the 'self') and how they regard other races (the 'others'). During apartheid the major Reformed Churches and church leaders in South Africa, legitimised the apartheid government's ideology of apartheid by means of an apartheid theology. The apartheid ideology was underpinned by the Afrikaner's internalised frame of reference. The author is of the opinion that the latter was to a great extent contaminated by dominant narratives of the Afrikaner with regard to the 'others' and the impact of what Van Dijk called "social power" in terms of "control" (Van Dijk 2001:354). Prominent Afrikaner leaders in society (e.g. politicians and theologians) played a major role in keeping racism alive during the apartheid years. The discourse of the theologians during the apartheid years, contributed in a certain sense to legitimise the wrongs of the past. Public statements and sermons influenced the Afrikaner to inform their dominant stories and to rationalise the wrongs of an ideology and theology that exclude the racial 'others'. This concurs with the statement of Van Dijk (1997) and De Wet (2001) that people acquire mental models, social knowledge, attitudes and ideologies, which control their actions and dialogues with and about other racial

groups by means of communication. The apartheid ideology and theology concur during the apartheid years with the majority of Afrikaners of what they regarded as 'acceptable thinking'. This is because it was on par with their internalised frame of reference which was kept alive by means of their dialogues with and about other racial groups which reminds of Van Dijk's (2001:354) statement on social acts of individuals that are constituent parts of group actions such as legislation or the reproduction of racism. This concurs also with the statement of De Wet (2001:99) that racism as an internalised frame of reference which has an impact on peoples' behaviour and their actions or deeds.

Racism served during apartheid to divide the South African population by means of the ruling party's ability to exercise their power to control. This reminds of Foucault's concept of bio power as a controlling mechanism of government with regard to processes which were exercised upon a mass of people (Guzylak-Shergold 2009:6). A fact is that racism is not natural or innate, but should rather be viewed as a result of the contamination of people by means of discourse. This article wishes to emphasise the role of discourse by especially those who control the minds and actions of others (Van Dijk 2001:355) as a means to express meanings, to influence people in producing racism and to influence them in such a way that it has an impact on their actions.

According to McClure (2007:19) deconstruction can refer to a variety of phenomena. McClure states that the concept deconstruction "can refer to a particular way the Bible is used in preaching" (McClure 2007:19). The argument in this article is that if Van Dijk's (2001:356) statement is true that the "elite" members and leaders of powerful social groups have control over types of discourse, the preacher in a post-apartheid context can contribute by means of preaching deconstructing the traces of racism. In other words, negative discourses, such as apartheid, can be deconstructed by utilising the text in preaching in order to create positive narratives. Therefore, preaching in the reformed tradition in South Africa, could be a mechanism of deconstructing the existence of traces of apartheid discourses which still exists in a post apartheid dispensation. The following section is a brief discussion on how discourse is involved in dominance and the production of social inequality with reference to the apartheid history in South Africa.

2. DISCOURSE AND HISTORY

The notion of discourse can be defined from a linguistic point of view as 'passages of connected writing or speech' (Hall 2004:346). An example in this regard is the discourse of the Afrikaner with regard to blacks which influenced to a great extent the way they perceived the 'others'. Foucault (Mautner 2000:204) describes the notion of discursive formation as a situation where the same discourse or state of knowledge appears as forms of conduct. Racism as a discourse and state of knowledge (white superiority) during the apartheid history of South Africa, leads to conducts that were condemned by many citizens of the country and the world.

Since the 18th century, the Cape Colony in South Africa was dominated by its white inhabitants who were determined to protect the barriers between whites and blacks. Differentiation on the basis of race in the 18th century Cape did not originate on the colonial frontier, but was deeply embedded in the white society long before the existence of a recognisable frontier. The notion to view blacks as the inferior race of the 'dark continent' and the white race as superior to the blacks is not unique to South Africa. This 'myth' is on par with the discourse of the white inhabitants of Europe since the 1800s (Salemink 1997). As early as 600 AD, Pope Gregory 1 taught that all men are equal in nature before God but that a hidden dispensation of providence produced a hierarchy of merit and rulership, his doctrine states that as a result of sin, different classes of men have been produced and these classes are ordained by divine justice. Foutz (2000:3) argues

that this 'division of mankind into a hierarchy of rulership' led to a papal sanction for racism.

According to Foucault, discourse, knowledge and truth are concepts that are 'historicised', i.e. things are only true within the context of an identifiable period in history (Hall 2004:347). This is also evident in the work of Salemink (1997), *'De Afrikaanse Mythe'.* This work describes the discourse of the European Catholic Church and its perception of blacks between 1867 and 1968. With reference to the discursive themes used in the Dutch Catholic Church's journals during the above-mentioned period, the black inhabitants of Africa were viewed as cannibals, as diabolical heathens, naïve children ('goedlachs kind'), the souls of Africa, holy heathens, the original culture, etc. Therefore history creates knowledge and truth relevant to a specific historical context. This knowledge may differ drastically from a specific period in history to a next. This reminds of Foucault's point of view that discourse, knowledge and truth are 'historicised' concepts. The following section reminds of Teun van Dijk's (2001:362) statement that racism is a complex system of social and political inequality that is reproduced by discourse in general and by elite discourses in particular.

3. THE DOMINANT NARRATIVES OF THE AFRIKANER DURING APARTHEID

The pre-First World War viewpoint of the Christians of the Dutch Catholic Church ranges from viewing themselves as people with a 'holy responsibility' and bearers of the 'light of the Christian civilisation' to Africa and the inhabitants of this 'dark continent' (Salemink 1997:27-28). This discourse of the Dutch Europeans concurs with the perception of the Afrikaner with regard to its role at the Southern tip of dark Africa prior to, as well as during, apartheid. This perspective reminds of the statement of Saint Isidore of Seville (ca.560-636) that there were people whom God regarded as unfit for freedom and therefore mercifully placed under slavery, the slaveholder has therefore a Divine calling (Foutz 2000:3). This 'truth' was what Rohman (2000:363) referred to as culturally determined constructions or concepts that are constructed through social interactions. It is also on par with the statement of Freedman and Combs with regard to the notion of 'narratives'. According to Freedman and Combs, narratives are constructed within cultural and social relational contexts, which form the basis of the development of truth and meaning (Freedman & Combs 1996:31, 32). It is this 'meaning' and knowledge which stems from the Afrikaner's narratives or discourse that determined their conduct during the apartheid history.

A dominant narrative of the Afrikaner that determined their actions during the early years of apartheid is the Afrikaner's identification with the Old Testament's Israelites, as the people of the covenant and therefore 'His Chosen People'. This reminds of the common conviction of the American colonists that they possessed the calling of 'God's Chosen People' (Foutz 2000:5). Influential public discourse in South Africa in this regard constituted to a great extent what was regarded by the Afrikaner as meaningful and acceptable thinking. The author is of the opinion that the discourse and identification of the Afrikaner with the Old Testament people of the covenant may even be regarded as a reason why it was acceptable for some of the Afrikaners to allow forms of slavery in the early 1800s (Smith 1947:137-138). The American colonists of the South were of the opinion that by means of slavery the Africans' otherwise 'evil disposition' was both controlled and corrected, the notion of slavery was therefore regarded as a moral and caring practice (Foutz 2000:5). The tribes in Natal, according to Smith's biography of Daniël Lindley (Smith 1947), were sometimes found guilty of stealing the cattle of the cattle farmers in Natal, followed by so-called punitive expeditions by Boer commandos against them. During these expeditions, many orphans of blacks that were killed during these expeditions were captured and resettled as 'workers' on the Natal farms.

The author is of the opinion that this was to many Afrikaner Christians an acceptable practice during the early 1800s because it was on par with the identification of the Afrikaner with the Old Testament Israelites and their tradition of slavery. It served also a purpose in addressing the labour needs of the farmers during those years. This discourse and acceptable truth for the Afrikaner were constructed within a specific historical context. This concurs with the statement of Hall (2004:347) that things are only true within the context of an identifiable period in history. The entire idea of kidnapping children in order to invest in a future labour market may be an unacceptable practice amongst the majority of Christian Afrikaners today, because of the fact that discourse and 'truth' are concepts that are historicized.

4. THE AFRIKANER AS HIS CHOSEN PEOPLE

Perkins (2004:236) states that there can be no doubt that one of the most prominent aspects of the Christian narrative 'and one which has provided an excuse for the exclusion of the Jews, has been its association with the idea and mythology of nationalism, in particular, the claim that a nation has replaced the Jews as the Chosen People under the new Covenant of Christianity'. As already mentioned, a dominant narrative of the Afrikaner was (and in a certain sense is still) its identification with the Old Testament's Israelites as 'God's chosen people'. The quality of the relationship between many Afrikaners (those that regard a group of 'the Voortrekkers' at the Battle of Blood River as representative of the Afrikaner) and God grew deeper after the vow that was formulated on the eve of the battle. The victory of the Voortrekkers at Blood River was according to them a supernatural sign from God that he accepted and legitimised their idea of being his people. They therefore regarded the Afrikaners as a nation ('volk') that has a mandate and responsibility to play a specific role as Christians on the southern tip of Africa. To play that role demands from them to collectively remain united (and racially 'pure'), a belief that concurs with God's expectations of the Old Testament Israelites.

An example of a racist discourse as a product of socio-discursive praxis that emphasises the narrative of the Afrikaner as a nation that should stay 'racially pure' like the people of the covenant of the Old Testament is evident in the remarks of a prominent Afrikaner, Prof. G. Cronjé during the 1940s (Cronjé 1947:75). According to Cronjé the Afrikaner developed what he called an 'instinct' during the course of the South African history not to give preferentiality to mixed marriages. It was discourses like this that influenced the Afrikaner's thoughts and the way they talked, reasoned and conducted themselves during the apartheid years. One of the missions of the white Afrikaner was therefore a constant battle to protect the 'white' race from extinction. Therefore Cronjé cautioned the white Afrikaners to refrain from miscegenation and warned the whites in South Africa of the dangers of the infiltration ('insypeling') of non-white blood and the dire consequences of such 'misdeeds' to the future of the white race (Cronjé 1947:82). This is one example of discourse that developed in the Afrikaner culture to what Zimmerman and Dickerson (1994:223) regarded as a 'dominant narrative'.

5. THE IMPACT OF DISCOURSE: THE LEGITIMISATION OF THE APARTHEID IDEOLOGY

As already mentioned, the role of theologians in the legitimisation of apartheid ideology with an apartheid theology should never be underestimated. The Afrikaner accepted these influential discourses as 'objective truths', because prominent theologians claimed publicly that the apartheid ideology was on a par with the message of the Bible. Only a small number of theologians within the reformed tradition, such as Prof. B.B. Keet strongly disagreed with, and were opposed to the hermeneutics of apartheid theologians (Brits 2006:42). Despite the efforts

of a minority group of theologians and Afrikaners who rejected the apartheid ideology, the majority of Afrikaners accepted the dominant 'truth'. Weingarten (1995:9) stated that it is difficult to depart from discourse that has developed within a culture to the status of a 'dominant story'. This state of affairs also illustrates that reality and truth are culturally determined constructions. This explains how dominant stories influenced the majority of Afrikaners' thoughts by directing how they (the politicians, theologians and prominent leaders) talked and reasoned with regard to issues that concur with their internalized frame of reference.

The majority of Afrikaner theologians during apartheid expressed some degree of racialising within their discourses. The majority of them were influenced by the views of Abraham Kuyper who was a Dutch politician, journalist, statesman and theologian. He was the Prime Minister of the Netherlands between 1901 - 1905. Ministers and religious icons of the Reformed Church such as S du Toit and JD du Toit ('Totius'), and prominent theologians of the Dutch Reformed Church such as William Nicol and E.P. Groenewald (Cronjé 1947) can be viewed as scholars who were inspired by Kuyper's views and the discourse of the 'neo-Calvinist' (Brits 2000) or 'Kuyperian Calvinism' (Jonker 1989:26). Kuyper developed his theology against the background of French and German imperialism. In his work *'Antirevolutionaire Staatkunde'* (Kuyper 1916: 494), God's diversification in creation is emphasised. This discourse formed the basis of the justification of apartheid as acceptable truth and the creation of an apartheid theology.

The discursive themes in the work of Kuyper's *'Het Calvinisme'* (1898:28), presented the white race ('the self') positively while he perceived the black race ('the others') invariably negatively. This concurs with Van Dijk's (1993) statement that self-glorification in comparison with the 'others' is not unfamiliar with regard to acts of racism. As already mentioned, a feature of racism is the notion that hierarchies exist among humans – there is a clear distinction between the superior 'self' and the inferior 'other'. As an example, Kuyper explains the history of the 'blessed' families/tribe of Shem and Yaphet (not mentioning the blood of Ham - only that Ham did not receive the 'prophetical blessing'). This reminds of the theory that Noah's sons represented the three 'pigmentations' of humanity (Goldenberg 2003:145) i.e. Shem (the ruddy races – Shem the Akkadian *samu* – 'red'), Japhet (Heb. *yaphet*) and Ham (dark races). This concurs with the viewpoint of the early white inhabitants of North America, they argue that the three sons of Noah were the progenitors of the Black, Red and White races respectively (Foutz 2000:6). According to Goldenberg (2003:146), not one of these etymological suggestions is acceptable. JD du Toit (Totius), son of S. du Toit - a Reformed Church theologian who was, like his father, under the influence of Kuyper's views (Brits 2006; Kinghorn 1986) - refers to the savageness ('barbaarsheid') of Africa as a result of the curse of the tribe of Ham (Du Toit 1955:4). This is an attempt to claim that whereas Ham was cursed, people of colour are cursed. This claim utilises descriptive as well as prescriptive hermeneutics, drawing its claim directly from the historic narrative. These remarks can be regarded as a justification of a speaker or writer's prejudice.

Du Toit delivered a paper on Genesis one during a Congress of the Nation held in Bloemfontein in 1944, referring to God as the 'Skeidingsmaker' or 'Divider'. He collaborated with other theologians during the congress to justify apartheid ideas as norms that are in line with Scripture. These arguments were based on superficial hermeneutics (Kinghorn 1986:179) and are good examples of a discourse of justification. Such ideas were eventually institutionalised by the apartheid government (Amstutz 1995:6). Kuyper (1898:30) states that Calvinism kept to the 'set condition with regard to the mixing of the blood of nations'. These influential public discourses of elites and institutes such as the Reformed Churches influenced the Afrikaner theologians even prior to the apartheid regime in order to legitimise the ideology of separation by means of the establishment of an apartheid theology (Brits 2006; Du Toit 1944; Du Toit & Du Toit 1955; Scholtz 1968; Cronjè 1947, and others). The 'absolute truths' (Du Toit 2000:57)

discussed above formed the public discourse (oral and written forms) that dictated the way the majority of Afrikaners thought and acted. This is evident in the Dutch Reformed Church's missionary policy of 1935 (Loubser 1986:6; Pieterse 2000:8) which acknowledges the diversity of colour, culture and language groups, as well as numerous events such as the Volkskongres (Congress of the Nation) that was held in Johannesburg in 1947 (Cronjé 1947), the one in Bloemfontein (Amstutz 1995:6), the direction that Calvinistic preaching took (Fourie 1935: 262), and public statements by renowned leaders of the Reformed Church (Brits 2006; Du Toit 1954).

Social differentiation and spiritual and cultural segregation (exclusive nationalism) were officially acknowledged by the church, 'to the benefit of both sections' (Loubser 1988:14). According to Boesak (1984:111), 'racism became an essential part of an historical process of cultural, economic, political and psychological domination, and continues to manifest itself in all these areas'. The official mouthpiece of the Dutch Reformed Church, the *Kerkbode,* mentioned in 1948 that the church has always worked purposefully for the separation of races. In this regard, apartheid can rightfully be called a church policy (Boesak 1984:111). The question that Foutz (2000:8) asked with regard to the role of Western theology in the development of slavery is applicable : how could the church justify the duality '...to hold notions of God, Christ and salvation in the one hand while aggressively promoting and practicing oppression with the other.'

6. PREACHING AND THE DECONSTRUCTION OF APARTHEID DISCOURSES

Contextualising is a prerequisite for preaching in a post-apartheid context, the preacher should be aware and should take cognisance of the discourses that influence the way in which the hearer constructs his/her reality, knowledge and narratives (Brits 2009). Morrissey (1999) argued that the sermon as a discourse manifesting both socio-historical embeddedness and textuality, it is also an "event". Garner (2007:46) qualifies this concept by referring to the sermon as a communicative event i.e. it consisted of language used by a person (the preacher) in an attempt to affect the beliefs and behaviour of other people (the hearers) in a particular socio-historic setting. It should be gospel-oriented communicative acts that constitutes the coming of God in his Word to human beings in their world through the communicative acts of human intermediaries with a view to spread and maintain Christian religious praxis (Pieterse, 1990:223). The discourse of the pulpit in a post-apartheid context should contrast with or draw upon contemporary discourses on existing racial issues.

Deconstruction as cultural, philosophical, social and textual critique, can keep forms of discourse such as preaching from repressing otherness (McClure 2007:19). Preaching can be utilised as communicative event to deconstruct these discourses. The history of racial South Africa proofs how public discourse was utilised as a mechanism to produce "objective truths". Preachers in the post-apartheid reformed tradition in South Africa should commit themselves to re-create society along biblical lines. By means of deconstruction, the excluded "other" is in fact present between the lines or in the margins of texts, cultures and societies (McClure 2007:19). Preachers should be able to listen to the text and it's "voice" and allows it to assert its point of view, to ask the right questions as an active participant in the hermeneutical process in order to bring out "the truth".

This is what the Scottish Reformers did during the Reformation, they re-constructed the nation, "spiritually, socially and economically by inculcating Gods Word into all from the lowliest to the sovereign" (Garner 2009:50). The preacher should guide the hearer with regard to his/her usage of language (e.g. the metaphor in preaching), his/her theological and hermeneutic assumptions, to deconstruct evidence of racism, to avoid using the text to reinforce social power of one ethnical group over another. This guidance requires an approach that enables

a preacher to inform his/her hearers of the "true doctrine" and the truths of the text. The preacher should guide the hearers by providing hermeneutic exposition of the text and from a New Homiletic point of view, to provide according to Vos (2005:297) "a lens through which the homiletician looks at life". The hearer should be guided "to be able to rediscover the tragedy of his/her own life in the sermon, not only cognitively, but also in an affective and participatory sense" (Vos 2005:297). The preacher can guide the hearer to depart from existing dominant racial narratives by means of participation in the making of the sermon and to implement the practical applications of the text as a homiletician by showing them how to act accordingly. The preacher should also listen to and learn more from people of colour in South Africa, the preacher should utilise this knowledge in developing sermons that "take up matters of race and ethnicity in the pulpit" (McClure 2007:61). The deconstructive eye and ear of the preacher and the hearer should uncover the traces and power of forces such as vested interests, self-promotion, exclusion and exploitation. Deconstruction will help the preacher and his congregation to observe and recognise "more clearly how behaviours, assumptions, uses of language, text, values, social practices and other matters benefit some individuals, groups and systems and how often it disbenefit others" (McClure 2007:69).

7. CONCLUSION

This article emphasises how the notion of racism is associated with discourse. The article shows how public and elite discourse played a vital role in the development of an apartheid ideology and the legitimisation of an apartheid theology. It demonstrates how the Afrikaner's dominant stories influenced the Afrikaner's public discourses during apartheid. It emphasises how the interpreter (e.g. preacher, prominent leader) of a text utilises his/her present knowledge as a source of prejudices and distortions that cause for misunderstanding of a text's meaning. It shows that discourse is more than simply oral or written forms of communication, but rather a powerful mechanism that can produce racism and the way the 'self' regards the 'others'. The power of public discourses as mechanisms to produce 'objective truths' may promote the self-presentation in society at a cost to the 'others', as it happened during the apartheid years. In spite of the new political dispensation, the social and political transformation that took place since 1994, racism still forms part of the South African social fabric (De Wet 2001: 98). The mass media play a fundamental role in this reproduction of racism by utilising stereotypical themes in their discourse such as crime, immigration, cultural differences and cultural deviance such as 'backward' habits and racial tensions (De Wet 2001:99), which emphasises the power of (media) discourse (Van Dijk 2001:359).

The Reformed Churches should be sensitive and aware of the dominant discourses of the day and find effective ways to counteract any dominant discourses that keep racism within a post-apartheid South Africa alive. It should ask questions such as: What is the role of the traditional Reformed Churches in eradicating racism? Are we aware of the dominant stories of the post-apartheid Afrikaner and what is the role of the church in creating new stories that counteract racism? What is the truth that we preach today within the context of our dominant stories? How do we motivate today's believers that have their own internalised frame of reference to become more and more non-racial? How can we utilise preaching in our congregations in order to direct the opinion of our church members about themselves as a racial group and that of the 'others'? The church should therefore ask new questions with regard to issues such as race and gender, it should find new ways in the post-apartheid reformed church to move away and to replace its narrow nationalistic ideals and dominant discourses.

It should utilise mechanisms such as preaching and written communication to create a new

dominant discourse in a new dispensation which will eradicate a tendency of continuously falling back on issues of ethnicity and gender. According to Van Dijk (2001:356) the leaders or "elites" of social groups and institutions have access to and control over types of public discourse. Professors control scholarly discourse, journalists control media discourse, teachers control educational discourse, etc. The reformed preacher in a post-apartheid era has therefore a major role to play as a leader that has control over the topics of his/her sermons and by influencing theological discourse.

The preacher and his congregation, as members of a new democratic South Africa, should ask themselves, what are the discourses, the acceptable truths, that underpin our perceptions and that determine our actions with regard to the 'others'? This not only a relevant question for the Afrikaner (reformed) churches but also for the black Christian churches, for the politicians of the day, for all members of the so-called 'rainbow nation' that regard themselves as collaborators in establishing internalised frames of reference that are conducive to the making of a new non-sexist and non-racist nation. Preaching can help to deconstruct the creation and the existence of negative discourses and to replace them with discourses that are on par with a sound and healthy horizontal and vertical relationship as advocated by the Epistle of James. According to Swanepoel (2003:150) deconstruction is a mechanism to empower people with "new voices". The reformed church should, by means of deconstruction in preaching, enable the new voices to "better conceive, articulate and organize its response to Christ's command that we love our neighbours as ourselves" (McKee 1989:8).

REFERENCES

Amstutz, Marc, R. 1995. Religion and politics in South Africa: Christian churches during the apartheid era. < http://www.jubileenow.com/papers/safricapap.html> (September 7, 2005].

Brits, Hans, J. 2009. 'n Postmoderne beskouing oor die teologiese legitimiteit van apartheid met verwysing na die veertigerjare van die vorige eeu. *NGTT* 42:1 & 2, 40-49.

Boesak, Allan. 1984. *Black and reformed: Apartheid, liberation and the Calvinist tradition.* Johannesburg: Skotaville.

Cronjé, Geoffrey. 1947. *Regverdige rasse-apartheid.* Stellenbosch: CSV.

Du Toit, Ben. 2000. *God? Geloof in 'n postmoderne tyd.* Bloemfontein: CLF.

Du Toit, Jacob. D. 1955. Die godsdienstige grondslag van ons rassebeleid in *Die Afrikaanse rassebeleid en die Skrif.* Edited by Jacob, D, du Toit and Stephanus du Toit.eds. Potchefstroom: Pro Rege.

De Wet, Corene. 2001. A media discourse analysis of racism in South African Schools. <http://iej.cjb.net> (August 10, 2010).

Fourie, Hermanus.C.M. 1935. Ons houding teenoor die naturel. Pages 256-263 in *Koers in die krisis.* Edited by Stoker, Hendrik.G. & Frederick.J.M. Potgieter. Stellenbosch: Pro Ecclesia.

Foutz, Scott. 2000. Theology of slavery: Western theology's role in the development and propagation of slavery. *Quodlibet.* 2/1, 1-11.<http://www.quodlibet.net/articles/foutz-slavery.shtml > (January 27, 2011)

Freedman, John and Combs, G.1996. *Narrative therapy: the social construction of preferred realities.* New York: Norton.

Goldberg, David. 2002. *The racial state.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Goldenberg, David.M.2003. *The curse of Ham.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Gordon-Reed, Annette. 1997. *Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings: an American controversy.* Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia.

Guzyvlak-Shergold, Mark. 2009, Biopower and apartheid: the role of gold mining in South Africa's political economy. <http://markguzylakshergold.com>. (August 12, 2010).

Hall, Stuart. 1992. The west and the rest. In *Formation of modernity.* Edited by Hall, Stewart & Gieben, B. Cambridge: Open University.

Hall, Stuart. 2004. Foucault and discours. In *Social research methods.* Edited by Seale, Charles. London: Routledge.

Jonker, Willem.D. 1989. *Selfs die kerk kan verander.* Kaapstad: Tafelberg.

Kinghorn, Johann. 1986. *Die NG Kerk en apartheid.* Johannesburg: Macmillan.

Kuyper, Abraham. 1989. *Het Calvinisme.* Kampen: Kok.

Kuyper, Abraham. 1916. Antirevolutionaire Staatkunde: met nadere toelichting op ons program door Dr. A. Kuyper. Kampen: Kok.

Loubser, Johannes. A. 1987. *The apartheid Bible.* Cape Town: Maskew Miller Longman.

Mautner, Thomas.2002. *The Penguin dictionary of philosophy.* London: Penguin.

McClure, John, S. 2007. *Preaching Words.* Louisville: John Knox.

McKey, Elsie, Anne. 1989. The love office. *The Reformed Journal.* 39(11):7-9.

Perkins, Mary.A. 2004. *Christendom and European identity: the legacy of a grand narrative.* New York: Walter de Gruyter.

Pieterse, Hendrik.J.C. [s.a.] *Ons ware profeet: die Christelike denke van Beyers Naudé,* (the author has a copy of the manuscript).

Rohmann, Chris. 2000. *The dictionary of important ideas and thinkers.* London: Hutchinson.

Salemink, Theo. A. M. 1997*. De Afrikaanse mythe.* Kampen: Kok.

Scholtz, Gert.D. 1968. *Die proses van gelykmaking.* Johannesburg: Voortrekker.

Shein, Avital. 2004. *A Foucauldian explanation of racism beyond Foucault's: Government and Politics.* College Park: University of Maryland.

Smith, Edwin.W. 1947. *Die lewe en tye van Daniël Lindley.* Stellenbosch: NG Kerk.

Van Dijk, Teun. A. 1993. Analyzing racism through discourse analysis. Pages 92 – 134 in *Race and ethnicity in research methods.* Edited by Stanfield, John.H. & Dennis, R.M. London: Sage.

Van Dijk, Teun. A. 1997. Political discourse and racism : describing others in Western Parliaments. Pages 3-64 in *The language and politics of exclusion.* Edited by Riggins, Stephen. H. London: Sage.

Van Dijk, Teun. A. 2001. Critical discourse analysis. Pages 352-371 in *Handbook of discourse analysis.* Edited by Tannen, Deborah; Schiffrin, Deborah and Hamilton, Heidi. Oxford: Blackwell.

Weingarten, Kathy. 1995. Radical listening: challenging cultural beliefs for and about mothers. Pages 7-22 in *Cultural resistance: challenging beliefs about men, women, and therapy.* Edited by Kathy Weingarten. New York: Harrington Park Press.

Zimmerman, Jeff, L and Dickerson, Victoria. 1994. *Using a narrative metaphor: implications for therapy and clinical practice.* New York: Guildford.

KEY WORDS
Discourse
Racism
Apartheid ideology and theology
Deconstruct
Preaching

TREFWOORDE
Diskoers
Rassisme
Apartheidsideologie en teologie
Dekonstruksie
Prediking

Cilliers, Johan
Universiteit Stellenbosch

Die optiek van homiletiek: Prediking as om-raming van perspektief[1]

ABSTRACT

The optics of homiletics: Preaching as reframing of perspective

This article explores the notion of preaching as a form of perception, in particular as pertaining to viewing life through the lenses of Scriptures. The aesthetical concept of "reframing" is utilised to argue that preaching as perception intends behavioral change of a second order (as opposed to first order, i.e. superficial change). Three aesthetical examples are introduced to illustrate this art of reframing, namely works by Duchamp, Zapiro, and Grünewald. The conclusion is that reframing offers a unique option to preach the foolishness of the gospel, in contrast to the wisdom of the world.

1. INLEIDING: DIE KUNS VAN KYK

Prediking handel – onder andere – oor waarneming; om iets te sê nadat jy iets gesien het; om visie te verwoord. Talle homilete het al op hierdie verband tussen prediking en waarneming gewys. My Switserse mentor en *Doktorvater*, Rudolf Bohren, het byvoorbeeld nooit moeg geword om te sê dat predikers nie net die ene ore moet wees nie, veral nie net die ene mond nie, maar eerder die ene oë.[2] My Suid-Afrikaanse mentor en *Doktorvater,* Bethel Müller, het my ook geleer dat ons die lewe in die spieël ("looking glass") van die bybelse teks moet bly aanskou – as't ware 'n homiletiese weergawe van *Alice in Wonderland.*[3]

Homiletiek sonder optiek is ondenkbaar: Om te preek is om te sien – en om ander te nooi om te sien.[4] Dit vereis 'n wending in ons waarneming, 'n wedergeboorte van die sintuie, en, in die besonder, 'n bekering van die oë.[5] In hierdie sin is dit analoog aan geloof, naamlik om die

---

1 Intree-rede, gelewer op 21 Februarie 2012, by die Fakulteit Teologie, Universiteit van Stellenbosch.

2 Volgens Bohren is ons sintuie in werklikheid nouer verbind as wat ons dink: Ons 'sien' byvoorbeeld ook met ons ore, en ons 'hoor' met ons oë. Oor hierdie interaksie van die sintuie, hierdie "engen Verknüpfung von Hören und Sehen", skryf hy soos volg: "Was ich höre, stelle ich mir vor, und das heisst doch, dass ich auch mit den Augen höre." [Rudolf Bohren, *Predigtlehre* (München: Kaiser, 1980), 268.]

3 Bethel Müller skryf soos volg: "Naturally, all biblical texts are lenses through which we can look at the world, especially imaginatively, at the future. After all, the imagination is the ability to see, to see better, to see further, to see differently, to see the Invisible … Texts are adventures (with Alice!) 'in wonderland' … A hermeneutic of amazement is a hermeneutic that looks into, and then through, the multidimensional lenses of the text, thereby opening creative new interpretations of the text." [Bethel Müller, "Liturgical and homiletical revisioning to generate hope for a just society", *Divine Justice – Human Justice,* reds J.S. Dreyer & J.A. van der Ven (Pretoria: RGN, 2002), 209.]

4 Tom Long, die Amerikaanse praktiese teoloog, praat van 'n *dubbelvisie:* om terug te kyk deur die lens van die teks sowel as om deur dieselfde lens vorentoe, na die gemeente toe, te kyk, en as ooggetuie van die groot dade van God op te tree. [Thomas G. Long, *The Witness of Preaching,* 2de uitg (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 18–51; vgl ook Johan Cilliers, *The Living voice of the Gospel. Revisiting the basic principles of preaching* (Stellenbosch: Sun Press, 2004), 64.]

5 In Rudolf Bohren se woorde: "Wir brauchen … eine Wende der Wahrnehmung, und diese Wende muss

Onsienlike te sien, of, in die woorde van Martin Luther, om dit te sien wat jy nié sien nie en dit nie te sien nie wat jy wél sien.[6] Geloof – prediking – is om dieper te kyk en verder te sien; om in-sig te verkry; om ver-gesigte te ontvang.

Prediking handel oor die vorming (én her-vorming) of ver-skuiwing van perspektief.[7] In sy massiewe werk *Homiletic* steun David Buttrick sterk op die kernplek wat persepsie en perspektief in prediking inneem, en gebruik hy die metafore van die lens van die kamera en die rame van 'n rolprent.[8] Vir hom beteken prediking die kuns om fyn waar te neem wat binne 'n bepaalde raam is, maar ook om op 'n estetiese en tydige manier na die volgende raam aan te beweeg. Prediking is nie die stolling van perspektief nie, maar die vloei van visie; nie 'n verklaring van ewige "standpunte" nie, maar rigtingwysers op 'n weg.[9]

'n Mens sou kon sê die kuns van prediking is onder andere om tekens van transendensie te gewaar; om selfs in die sogenaamde kleiner dinge van die lewe openbarings van 'n dieper dimensie te beleef.[10] Niemand verwoord dít beter as Paivio nie as hy namens alle waarnemers

---

eine Wiedergeburt sein." [Rudolf Bohren, *Vom Heiligen Geist. 5 Betrachtungen* (München: Kaiser, 1981), 73.]

6 In sy kommentaar op Hebreërs 11:27 sê Luther: "Haec enim est fidei natura … videre, quod non videt, et non videre quod videt." [Martin Luther, *Weimarer Ausgabe (WA)* (Weimar: Hermann Böhlau, 1883), 57/3, 188.]

7 Charles Campbell & Stan Saunders, *The Word on the Street. Performing the Scriptures in the Urban Context* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2000), 30.

8 David Buttrick, *Homiletic: Moves and Structures* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1987).

9 Stanley Hauerwas sê in verband met die liturgie: "In worship, we are busy looking in the right direction." [S. Hauerwas en W.H. Willimon, *Resident Aliens* (Nashville Abingdon, 1989), 95.]

10 [Birgit Weyel, "Predigt und Alltagskunst. Wilhelm Genazino und der poetische Blick auf das Leben", Religion – Ästhetik – Medien, Band 2, *Ästhetik und Religion. Interdisziplinäre Beiträge zur Identität und Differenz von ästhetischer und religiöser Erfahrung,* reds Gräb, W.; Hermann, J.; Kulbarsch, L.; Metelmann, J. & Weyel, B. (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2007), 209–211; Peter Berger, *Redeeming Laughter. The Comic Dimension of Human Experience* (Berlyn/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1997), 205.] Die begrip 'sien' word uiteraard in 'n verskeidenheid nuanses in die Bybel gebruik, en is in die loop van die kerkgeskiedenis ook op verskillende maniere vertolk. In die Skrif neem dit soms die vorm van 'n visioen aan met 'n gepaardgaande ekstatiese toestand, in die besonder by die Ou-Testamentiese profete (vgl Jes 1, Eseg 12, ens). Dit lei egter altyd, ook in die Nuwe Testament, tot 'n nuwe openbaring van die waarheid (onderstreep deur 'n hoor van 'onhoorbare' woorde) en 'n nuwe bewuswording van God se teenwoordigheid (vgl Hand 9 en 16). Die onderskeid tussen hierdie visioene en drome is vloeibaar, en dit handel gewoonlik oor onmiddellike situasies (vgl Hand 12) sowel as die vooruitsig op dit wat dalk nog ver in die toekoms lê, dog aan die kom is (vgl veral Daniël en Openbaring). In die Evangelies verkry dit uiteraard ook die betekenis van die dissipels se biologiese *sien* van Jesus gedurende sy aardse optrede sowel as ná sy opstanding. In talle van die verskyningsverhale word berig: "Ek het die Here gesien!" (Joh 20:18). Veral Johannes span die begrip 'sien' doelbewus in die opbou van sy evangelie in, en meestal dubbelsinnig: Daar is meer te sien as wat jy met die eerste oogopslag kan waarneem; meer as net byvoorbeeld brood of water of lig. Alles het 'n dieper dimensie en betekenis. In feitlik elke hoofstuk van sy evangelie toon Johannes dat *kyk* nie altyd *sien* is nie. Daarom kan jou manier van 'sien' vir jou óf verlossing óf oordeel beteken (vgl 9:35–41). Dít geld veral die manier waarop jy na Jesus kyk. Op die oog af lyk Jesus van Nasaret soos 'n gewone mens. Maar kyk weer! Die dissipels het Hom met hulle (biologiese) oë gesien, en tog méér gesien. Hulle het sy heerlikheid gesien; die heerlikheid wat Hy, as die enigste Seun van die Vader, het – vol genade en waarheid (1:14; vgl ook 1 Joh 1:1–4). Hulle het sy 'onheerlike heerlikheid' gesien. Veral in laasgenoemde sin gebruik ek die begrip 'sien' as 'n 'sien-teen-die-oënskynlike-in'; as 'n sien, al sien jy die teendeel; as 'n sien van God in die paradoksale; as 'n oortuiging van die dinge wat ons nie (nou met ons biologiese oë) kan sien nie (Heb 11:1). Dit is uiteraard ook iets anders as 'n mistieke vereniging met God, soos wat dikwels in die mistisisme beweer word. Dit handel hier eerder oor God wat op 'n unieke wyse geopenbaar word sodat ons tot 'n nuwe siening kom van ons plek voor God sowel as tussen ons medemense. Dit sluit nie die (geloofs)ervaring, waarvan die Bybel óók

verklaar: "But please, let me have plenty of detail. That's what counts in our business, tiny little details, like you had a broken shoelace on your left shoe, or a fly settled on the rim of your glass at lunch, or the man you were talking to had a broken front tooth."[11] Ons eie digter Sheila Cussons stel dit só: "Of dit nou 'n sublieme ding is of 'n plassie melk wat op die tafel lê, dit kan vir jou 'n beeld wees van iets wat baie ingewikkelder is."[12]

Die Hervormer Johannes Calvyn het dikwels na geloofskennis as 'n wyse van waarneming verwys. Vir hom was dit méér as 'n oppervlakkige bewussyn van die toedrag van sake om jou heen, maar eerder 'n aandagtige waarneming van die lewe (hy het die Franse woord *l'entendement* gebruik).[13] In hierdie verband was Calvyn, in navolging van die apostel Paulus,[14] lief om die metafoor van die spieël te gebruik.[15] Vir Calvyn het dít 'n gewaarwording van God gesuggereer wat, hoe indirek en vaag ook al, andersins onbekend sou gebly het – 'n gewaarwording wat, soos 'n spieël in direkte sonlig, dikwels kan skok, die aandag kan aangryp en verwondering kan verwek.[16]

Uit 'n homiletiese perspektief sou 'n mens kon sê dat die prediker 'n spieël ophou wat ons daaraan herinner dat God inderdaad in hierdie wêreld gesien *kan* word, hoewel op indirekte en dikwels skokkende wyses – selfs al ís dit in die weerkaatsing van 'n dowwe spieël.[17] Predikers staan op die drumpel tussen die "ou wêreld" en God se nuwe skepping, en help ons om laasgenoemde reeds binne eersgenoemde waar te neem. Charles Campbell, die hooggeagte Amerikaanse homileet, praat van 'n *bifokale* visie wat nie alleen die magte van die ou wêreld raaksien nie, maar veral die tekens van die nuwe te midde van die oue.[18]

---

vol is, uit nie: die 'nie-sien-nie' van God; die worsteling met God se swye en afwesigheid; die versugting: "My God, my God, waarom het U my verlaat?" (Psalm 22:2; Hab 1:13; Psalm 42:2; Mark 15:34, ens). Gelowiges gaan óók soms deur 'n woestyn- en winterervaring, wanneer alles om en in hulle die goeie nuus van die Immanuel, van God by ons, geheel en al weerspreek. Gedurende sulke tydperke – nie alleen in individuele gelowiges se lewens nie, maar ook in die geskiedenis van die kerk of 'n spesifieke kerk – ervaar hulle dat God ver weg staan; dat God sy volk vergeet het en anderpad kyk (vgl Psalm 13:1–3), of nog erger, ervaar hulle dat dit die Here sélf is wat hulle in die ellende gestort het (vgl die refrein 'U het ... U laat ... U verstoot ... U toorn rus op my' in byvoorbeeld Psalm 88). Presies daarom word dit 'n geloofsvisie genoem, en word dit nie in 'n oppervlakkige of simplistiese sin bedoel nie.

11 A. Paivio & D. Foth, "Imaginal and verbal mediation and noun concreteness in paired-associate learning: The illusive interaction", *Journal of verbal learning and verbal behavior,* 9 (1971):442.

12 Sheila Cussons in 'n onderhoud met *Volksblad*, 21 Augustus 1979.

13 [Gerrit W. Neven, "De Kwintessens van Calvijn", *Het calvinistisch ongemak: Calvijn als erflater en provocator van het Nederlandse protestantisme,* reds Rinse Reeling Brouwer, Bert de Leede & Klaas Spronk (Kampen: Kok, 2009), 80.] Die Franse woord *l'entendement* sou ook met 'begrip', 'intelligensie', 'onderskeiding', 'waardering' en 'oordeel' vertaal kon word.

14 1 Korintiërs 13:12.

15 Die metafoor van die spieël was natuurlik bekend en geliefd by filosowe en outeurs van daardie tyd – in aansluiting by Paulus se gebruik daarvan om die voorlopigheid van ons kennis in hierdie bedeling te kenne te gee (1 Korintiërs 13:12). Antieke spieëls het geopenbaar dog tegelykertyd verberg; dit kon slegs 'n dowwe beeld van die werklikheid bied.

16 [Neven, "De Kwintessens van Calvijn," 80, 81.] Volgens Calvyn kon die metafoor van die spieël aan bepaalde plekke, feite, ervarings en gebeurtenisse gekoppel word wat as spieëls van God funksioneer en ons nooi om 'n blik op God se handelinge te kry, al is dit indirek en onvolledig. Vir Calvyn verteenwoordig die spieël dus die palet van aardse media waardeur die veelkleurige kennis van God weerspieël kan word, om só ons geloof te skep en te voed. [Vgl ook Cornelius van der Kooi, *Als in een Spiegel. God kennen volgens Calvijn en Barth* (Kampen: Kok, 2002), 22, 23.]

17 1 Korintiërs 13:12.

18 Charles Campbell & Johan Cilliers, *Preaching Fools. The Gospel as a Rhetoric of Folly* (Baylor University Press, binnekort gepubliseer), g.b.

Aan die een kant hou predikers 'n spieël op wat die "ou wêreld" onwrikbaar en eerlik ontmasker – 'n aktiwiteit wat hulle nie altyd en oral geliefd maak nie. Tog eindig die prediker se taak nie hier nie, anders sou hierdie siening van die lewe maar tragies wees. Daarom hou die prediker aan die ander kant ook 'n spieël op wat 'n alternatiewe werklikheid, naamlik God se nuwe skepping, weerkaats op maniere wat – getrou aan die aard van spieëls – dikwels ons 'normale' opvattings omkeer. Op hierdie wyse, met dowwe spieëls in die hand, verskerp predikers ons bifokale visie, wat ons in staat stel om die dagbreek van die nuwe skepping te midde van die donkerte van die oue raak te sien.[19]

Dit is belangrik om te verstaan dat ons beskouinge van God, en daarom ook van die lewe, maklik beperk en ingeperk word. Ons word dikwels verblind, of raak ten minste kortsigtig. Ons moet ons Godsbeelde voortdurend her-oorweeg om dit te kan her-sien. Dít geld nie alleen op 'n individuele vlak nie, maar ook wat ons geneigdheid tot gedeelde blindheid en groepsmiopie betref. 'n Pynlike herinnering hieraan is die ideologie van apartheid, wat byvoorbeeld uitgeblink het in gestruktureerde kortsigtigheid, dalk selfs gestruktureerde blindheid – en sommige sektore van die kerk se gevolglike georganiseerde en gestruktureerde onboetvaardigheid.[20] Alles is in swart en wit gesien.[21]

Prediking kan 'n belangrike rol speel om kleur aan ons perspektief te gee; om ongekende panoramas voor ons oop te breek; om reenboë voor ons oë te verf. Hierdie kuns van kyk, oftewel her-siening van realiteit, sou ook die *om-raming* ("reframing") van perspektief genoem kon word. 'Om-raming' impliseer dat die bestaande – die oue en die verlede – telkens her-oorweeg moet word, soos wat die voorvoegsel "om-" (of "re-" in "reframing") aandui. My gekose vertaling[22] van "reframing", naamlik "*om*-raming", het 'n meervlakkige betekenis: nie alleen 'n *om*sluiting van gegewe realiteite of feite (fisies óf metafories) nie, maar ook 'n *om*keer om die oue en verlede

---

19 Campbell & Cilliers, *Preaching Fools,* g.b.

20 Die raamwerk waarin die realiteit (God en mense) geplaas en gesien is, was die van 'n enklavementaliteit. [Vgl Johan Cilliers & Ian Nell, '"Within the enclave": Profiling South African social and religious developments since 1994', *Verbum et Ecclesia* 32/1 (2011):1–7.] Mense is geïndoktrineer (struktureel verblind) om nie verder as hulle eie (nasionalistiese, kulturele, religieuse en veral etniese) horisonne te sien nie. Die raam wat deur hierdie ideologie gevorm is, het die enige uitsig op alternatiewe versper – die enigste visie wat 'ons' van 'hulle' kon hê, was die van 'ons' teenoor die 'vyand'. Identiteit ('ons') is op grond van etniese kategorieë gevorm. [Johan Cilliers, *God for us? An analysis and evaluation of Dutch Reformed preaching during the Apartheid* years (Stellenbosch: Sun Press, 2006), 63–76.]

21 Mary Douglas skryf soos volg oor 'swart en wit': "Seeing things in black and white is definitely a limitation. When you miss the colour, you miss the nuance, the 3D effect is softened, and facial expression is less vivid. We know this from black and white photography and old black and white cinema. I am using this title to talk about certain forms of social organisation that promote anger. This limited vision divides the world into two kinds: on one side ourselves, our fellow members, our friends; and on the other side, all the rest, outsiders. In the extreme case, insiders are saints and outsiders shunned as sinners. Inside is white; outside is black. In extreme cases it makes a world of saints and sinners. A wall of virtue keeps the two apart, the saints refuse to have anything to do with the outsiders. There can be no negotiation and the word 'compromise' means betrayal." [Mary Douglas, "Seeing Everything in Black and White", toegang bekom op 24 Augustus 2011, http://projects.chass.utoronto.ca/semiotics/cyber/douglas2.pdf, p 2.]

22 Dit is geen maklike taak om "reframing" in Afrikaans te vertaal nie. Ek het verskeie moontlikhede oorweeg: 'her-raming', 'her-belyning', 're-visionering', 'her-siening', 'om-duiding' (van die Duitse *Umdeutung*), 'her-kadering' (Nederlands), ensovoorts. Uiteindelik het ek op 'om-raming' besluit, aangesien die konsep van 'raam' daarin behoue bly, maar die dinamiek van die verandering van die bestaande tog ook ingevoer word met die voorvoegsel 'om-' (soos in *om*-digting). Om hierdie dinamiek te beklemtoon gebruik ek ook deurgaans die koppelteken.

te her-oorweeg sowel as 'n *om*keer na die onverwagse en bevrydende, 'n verandering, 'n nuwe skepping. Dit is inderdaad 'n óm-raming of, in teologiese taal, méér as 'n blote repetisie (*repetitio*) van byvoorbeeld 'n ekklesiale tradisie of 'n blote imitasie (*imitatio*) van bybelse waarhede; dit is eerder verandering wat nuwe 'werklikhede' skep. Dit is terselfdertyd *re* én *creatio* – in die sterkste sin van albei begrippe.[23] Dit is daadwerklike *verandering,* maar van die *bestaande.*

Die teorie van om-raming is oorspronklik in die konteks van 'n filosofies gegronde teorie van verandering ontwikkel, wat gevolglik deur sielkundiges en neurologieseveranderingsteoretici aangepas is.[24] Een van die oogmerke van om-raming was "to create new alternative behaviors".[25] Om-raming verander betekenis, en veranderde betekenis lei tot veranderde gedragspatrone.[26] Donald Capps, wat die konsep van om-raming in teologiese verband bekend gestel het, onderskei tussen eerste-orde-verandering en tweede-orde-verandering, en wys daarop dat eersgenoemde in 'n gegewe stelsel plaasvind (hoewel die stelsel as sodanig onveranderd bly), terwyl laasgenoemde die stelsel self transformeer.[27] Eerste-orde-verandering behels 'meer van dieselfde', en bied oplossings wat sélf die probleem word of ten minste daartoe bydra.[28] Dit is inderdaad die *repetisie* van dit wat bekend is in 'n stelsel; moontlik selfs indrukwekkende of sensasionele repetisie, maar steeds bloot *repetisie.*[29]

Daarenteen dui tweede-orde-verandering op fundamentele transformasie, hoewel dit normaalweg nie spontaan plaasvind nie, aangesien die raam waarin ons leef, heg geweef is. Hierdie raam verander nie maklik nie en kan jou gevange hou; trouens, dit is feitlik onmoontlik om daaruit te ontsnap.[30] Vir hierdie verandering van perspektief, of verwisseling van raam, benodig

---

23 Dit is interessant om daarop te let dat iemand soos Jürgen Moltmann die voorvoegsel 'her-' of 're-' as ironies, selfs negatief, beskou. [Jürgen Moltmann, *Geloof in de toekomst* (Utrecht: Ambo, 1969), 32–33.] Volgens hom dui bewegings soos die *re*naissance en die *re*formasie, sowel as konsepte soos *re*volusie, *her*lewing, *her*nuwing en *re*storasie, alles op 'n hunkering na 'n (goue) verlede, wat op sigself 'n sikliese begrip van die geskiedenis veronderstel. Dit verteenwoordig verandering terwyl jy 'agtertoe droom'. Hý verkies om van die volledig nuwe realiteit (*novum*) eerder as die oue ('her-' of 're-') te praat. Dít laat ontstaan die vraag: Moet ons nie eerder van *pro*volusie, ensovoorts, en in hierdie sin dan ook van '*pro*-raming', praat nie? Ek meen dat ons nie noodwendig tussen 're-' en 'pro-' hoef te kies nie: Albei maak deel uit van die dinamiek van om-raming, soos wat dit in hierdie rede verstaan word. Die voorvoegsel 'om-' sluit sowel 're-' as 'pro-' in. Dít beteken egter dat 're-' (of 'her-') nie op eerste-orde-, oftewel oppervlakkige, verandering mag of kan dui nie.

24 Donald Capps, *Reframing. A new method in Pastoral Care* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 3; vgl ook P. Watzlawick, J.H. Weakland & R. Fisch, *Change. Principles of Problem Formation and Problem Solution* (New York/Londen: WW Norton, 1974), 1–12.

25 R. Bandler & J. Grinder, *Frogs into Princes. Neuro Linguistic Programming*, red J.O. Stevens (Moab, Utah: Real People Press, 1979), 160.

26 Capps, *Reframing,* 10.

27 Capps, *Reframing,* 12.

28 Watzlawick et al, *Change,* 31.

29 Eerste-orde-verandering sou metafories beskryf kon word as gebeure *binne* 'n droom – die struktuur of ruimte waarin die droom afspeel, bly die droom self. Tweede-orde-verandering, daarenteen, vind plaas wanneer die dromer in 'n *andersoortige* bewussynstoestand, 'n *andersoortige* struktuur en ruimte, wakker word. Dit verteenwoordig 'n verskuiwing in benadering waarin handeling nou op die voorgestelde metode van verandering konsentreer, voordat die probleem self aandag kry. [Watzlawick et al, *Change,* 11.] Capps beskryf dit só: "Reframing challenges the assumption that the solution being employed *is* the solution, or *would be* the solution if only it could be performed better." [Capps, *Reframing,* 18.]

30 Tweede-orde-verandering gebeur nie normaalweg vanself nie. Dit is eerder "… introduced from the outside and therefore ... not something familiar or something understandable in terms of the vicissitudes of first-order change, hence its puzzling, seemingly capricious nature". [Watzlawick et al, *Change,* 24.] Eerste-orde-verandering kom as die normale ("common-sense") verloop van sake voor, terwyl tweede-

'n mens die kuns van om-raming, naamlik "to change the conceptual and/or emotional setting or viewpoint in relation to which a situation is experienced and to place it in another frame which fits the 'facts' of the same concrete situation equally well or even better, and thereby changes its entire meaning".[31] Soos ek die konsep verstaan, beteken dit 'n *teologiese hersamestelling van die bestaande* sodat iets eiesoortig en nuut gebore word, maar nooit sonder die bestaande nie. Dit behels byvoorbeeld die kuns om dieselfde dinge op (soms totaal) verskillende maniere te doen en te sê; om deur middel van jukstaposisie die bestaande te gebruik om die nuwe te sê en te doen.[32]

Die raam – of paradigma – waardeur realiteit beskou word, is inderdaad van kardinale belang. Ons sou selfs kon aanvaar dat hierdie raam betekenis (of die kyker se begrip daarvan) bemiddel. Dit kan gevolglik ook die teologie (of gebrek daaraan) agter 'n kerk en 'n prediker se wyses van waarneming blootlê. Die raam wek én repliseer die struktuur van die teologie waaruit dit gebore is, en openbaar sodoende ook die basiese antropologie ten grondslag daaraan. In 'n neutedop: Die raam waardeur en waarin ons die realiteit aanskou, openbaar én vorm ons beelde van God en die mensdom. Prediking het alles te make met hierdie raming, en om-raming, van ons perspektiewe.

2. OM-RAMING IN DIE PERSPEKTIEWE VAN DWAASHEID EN WYSHEID

Daar bestaan uiteraard baie beelde en beskouinge van God. God het baie gesigte.[33] Ek is oortuig dat die voorveronderstelling waarop al hierdie veelvoudige beelde en perspektiewe berus, na die konsep *paradoks,* oftewel God se teenwoordigheid in hierdie wêreld en sy *sub contrario*-openbaring (openbaring in teenstellings), teruggevoer kan word. Hendrikus Berkhof stel dit só: "He can be present in his world only as a stranger, the suffering servant, the crucified one. The concept of paradox is suitable here: God is present contrary to (*para*) the appearance (*doxa*) of the opposite."[34] Hierdie uitgangspunt is deurslaggewend vir die basiese struktuur van prediking, en is na my mening die *leitmotiv* van alle prediking wat die om-raming van perspektief beoog.

Dikwels, indien nie altyd nie, vind ons God se teenwoordigheid in hierdie wêreld – die 'tekens

---

orde-verandering dikwels vreemd, onverwags en paradoksaal blyk te wees. Daarom word tweede-orde-verandering dikwels deur toestande van verwarring, skok en onsekerheid – 'n soort niemandsland (liminaliteit) – voorafgegaan.

31 [Capps, *Reframing*, 12; Watzlawick et al, *Change*, 95.] Bandler en Grinder – die eerste wetenskaplikes wat die konsep van om-raming aan hulle teorie van 'neurolinguistiese programmering' gekoppel het – bied 'n uitgebreide omskrywing van om-raming. Hulle oorspronklike omskrywing van die konsep is veral nuttig: "Reframing is a specific way of contacting the portion or part – for lack of a better word – of the person that is causing a certain behavior to occur, or that is preventing a certain other behavior from occurring. We do this so that we can find out what the secondary gain of the behavior is, and take care of that as an integral part of the process of inducing a change in that area of behavior … Reframing is a way of getting to say 'Hey, how else can I do this?' In a way it's the ultimate criticism of a human being, saying 'Stop and think about your behavior, and think about it in the following way: Do something new; what you're doing doesn't work! Tell yourself a story, and then come up with three other ways of telling the story, and suddenly you have differences in your behavior." [Bandler & Grinder, *Frogs into Princes*, 138, 183.]

32 G.W. Lathrop, *Holy Things. A Liturgical Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 33.

33 Jaap Durand, *The Many faces of God: Highways and byways on the route towards an orthodox image of God in the history of Christianity from the first to the seventeenth century* (Stellenbosch: Sun Press, 2007), 4.

34 Hendrikus Berkhof, *Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 54.

van transendensie' en openbarings van 'n dieper dimensie, selfs in die sogenaamde kleiner dinge van die lewe – verrassend en selfs skokkend: Dit weerspreek ons begrippe en beelde van wie God is of behoort te wees.[35] Selfs vanaf die begin het die boodskap van die evangelie ons verwagtings weerspreek. Trouens, baie mense het gereken – en reken steeds – dat so 'n vreemde evangelie, waarin die weerloosheid van die kruis eerder as 'n konvensionele, magtige God die kern uitmaak, inderdaad as absurd en belaglik beskryf sou kon word, en gevolglik vir baie 'n struikelblok en irritasie kon wees.[36]

Talle homilete het al die oorsprong van Paulus se beskrywing van die dwaasheid van prediking na sy briewe aan die Korintiërs teruggevoer, byvoorbeeld wanneer hy verklaar: "Want die boodskap van die kruis is wel dwaasheid vir dié wat verlore gaan, maar vir ons wat gered word, is dit die krag van God … Daarom het God besluit om dié wat glo deur *die dwaasheid van die prediking* te red."[37] Ook later sê Paulus in dieselfde trant: "Ons het 'n skouspel geword vir die wêreld, vir engele sowel as vir mense … *Ons is dwaas ter wille van Christus …"*[38]

Met sulke uitsprake dekonstrueer (om-raam) Paulus in werklikheid sommige basiese begrippe van sy tyd, veral wat (God se) krag en wysheid betref. Terwyl die Jode na tekens gesoek het – wat in húlle tradisie dikwels 'n direkte en helder openbaring van God, of die handeling van magtige mense wat wonders kon doen en tekens optower, beteken het – het die Grieke gehunker na wysheid, oftewel die mag om te kan onderskei en sonder huiwering die koers na die toekoms aan te dui. Griekse wysheid het uit die filosofiese en teoretiese besinning oor die oorsprong en bestemming van die mensdom gespruit. Dit het die vermoë behels om die sigbare en onsigbare invloede op die lewe, geskiedenis en samelewing te verklaar. Wysheid is verstaan as 'n vorm van mag; in sekere sin was kennis gelykstaande aan mag.[39]

Die kruis, daarenteen, handel oor 'n vreemde vorm van magteloosheid wat Jode sowel as Grieke as dwaasheid sou beskou. Dít is die eintlike skandaal (*skandalon*) van die kruis: Christus, die Gekruisigde, is die radikaal 'swak' Een, en die wat Hom volg, moet en sal gevolglik ook swak wees – ten minste in die oë van diegene wat mag en wysheid najaag.[40] Nie die teologiese,

---

35 Weyel, "Predigt und Alltagskunst", 209–211; Berger, *Redeeming Laughter,* 205.
36 Cilliers, *The Living voice of the Gospel,* 3–4.
37 1 Korintiërs 1:18,21. Vgl byvoorbeeld Albrecht Grözinger, *Homiletik. Lehrbuch Praktische Theologie. Band* 2 (München: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2008), 96; Cilliers, *The Living voice of the Gospel,* 3–5.
38 1 Korintiërs 4:9–10.
39 J. Goetzmann, "Wisdom, Folly, Philosophy", *Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, vol 3, red C. Brown (Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1978), 1023–1026.
40 Dit is heel duidelik dat die deurslaggewende oriënterende én re-oriënterende liturgiese beginsel van die vroeë Christene die Christusgebeure was, wat in die opstanding van Christus 'n hoogtepunt bereik. Elna Mouton oordeel soos volg hieroor: "… [I]t is particularly in the radical and overwhelming experience of the resurrection power of Jesus as the crucified messiah that the origins of Christianity and the New Testament writings have to be sought." [Elna Mouton, "Transmitting Hope in the New Testament", *Preaching as a Language of Hope. Studia Homiletica 6*, reds Cas Vos, Lucy L. Hogan & Johan H. Cilliers (Pretoria: Protea Boekhuis, 2007), 75.] Vanweë die paradoks van die opstanding ('n gekruisigde wat her-leef), was die behoefte aan her-vertolking dringend, en het die aanbiddingsgeleenthede van die eerste Christene by uitstek ruimtes vir hierdie her-vertolking, her-toepassing en her-samestelling van die bestaande simbole en tradisies geword. Her-vertolking was so dringend nodig, aangesien Paulus 'n Gekruisigde verkondig het te midde van 'n kultuur wat op wysheid, eer en mag gegrond was. Teologies beskou, was dit ondenkbaar dat die Messias gekruisig kon word. Filosofies beskou, was dit onvoorstelbaar dat die goddelike met 'n liggaam aan die kruis kon hang. Polities beskou, was dit onaanvaarbaar dat die Messias Israel kon bevry met dieselfde mag wat Hom gekruisig het. Kultureel beskou, was dit onmoontlik dat een wat vervloek was aan 'n kruis, as die Christus geëer kon word. Messias-Kruis. Dít was onversoenbare realiteite. Vir 'n verdere bespreking hiervan, vergelyk Martin Hengel, *Crucifixion: In the Ancient World and the Folly of the Message of the Cross*, vert John Bowden (Philadelphia: Fortress,

filosofiese, politieke óf kulturele verbeelding kon hom in Paulus se tyd so iets voorstel nie. Dit was 'n skokkende, godslasterlike paradoks.[41] Kortom, dit was dwaasheid. Trouens, volgens sommige uitleggers is die vertaling 'dwaasheid' nog te mak. Dit was in werklikheid 'malligheid'.[42] Sommige het die malligheid van die kruis self al 'n kru en vulgêre grap genoem; 'n makabere vorm van galgehumor.[43] Ander noem dit 'n vorm van parodiese verheerliking; die kruis is inderdaad ontwerp "to mimic, parody, and puncture the pretensions of insubordinate transgressors by displaying a deliberately horrible mirror of their self-elevation".[44]

Die dwaasheid van die kruis beteken nie dat dit onverstaanbaar is of 'n prysgawe van intellektuele besinning (*sacrificium intellectus*) vereis of voorveronderstel nie. Dit is eerder 'n andersoortige, omgekeerde en om-raamde vorm van mag en wysheid. Die dwaasheid van God (*to mōron tou theou*) dui op die wyse waarop God in Christus geopenbaar is – as magteloos. Daarom praat Paulus ook dikwels van die volgelinge van Christus aan die hand van paradokse: 'Ons moet dwaas word om wys te wees, en wanneer ons swak is, is ons sterk.'[45] Dít is inderdaad die kenmerke van die prediker as dwaas; as moroon vir Christus: dwaasheid en magteloosheid – wat in werklikheid op wysheid en mag van 'n andersoortige, paradoksale orde dui.[46]

Hierdie radikale dekonstruksie en om-raming van mag en wysheid het fundamentele implikasies op 'n verskeidenheid vlakke. Van spesifieke belang vir ons is die impak wat dit op *prediking* het. Prediking veronderstel (en bemiddel) bepaalde *Godsbeelde.* Tog kan prediking ook beswaarlik verstaan word sonder sy verband met die *kerk,* en moet die kerk ook nie van haar verbande met die *samelewing* losgedink word nie. Die voorveronderstelling hier is dat prediking, as handeling wat in die lewe van die kerk veranker is, 'n transformerende impak op die samelewing kan hê in die sin dat dit tot die konstruksie, of dekonstruksie, van sekere Godsbeelde meewerk. Ongelukkig kan dit egter ook, soos in die era van apartheid, bepaalde Godsbeelde vestig.

Die radikale dekonstruksie en om-raming wat Paulus voorstaan, het deurslaggewende teologiese, homiletiese, ekklesiologiese en sosiale gevolge – veral wat ons begrip van die konsep 'mag' betref. Prediking, synde die *dwaasheid van omgekeerde mag,* kan instrumenteel wees vir 'n kerk wat bestaande Godsbeelde so wil dekonstrueer en om-raam dat dit nuwe betekenis kan oordra in 'n samelewing wat hom *in transito* bevind – 'n samelewing wat mag dikwels misverstaan en misbruik.[47]

1977), 1–10.

41 L.L. Welborn, *Paul, the Fool of Christ: A Study of 1 Corinthians 1–4 in the Comic-Philosophic Tradition,* Early Christianity in Context (Londen: T&T Clark, 2005), 23.

42 Hengel, *Crucifixion,* 1–10.

43 Welborn, *Fool of Christ,* 2.

44 Joel Marcus, "Crucifixion as Parodic Exaltation", *Journal of Biblical Literature* 125, nr 1 (2006): 78.

45 1 Korintiërs 3:18; 2 Korintiërs 12:10; Goetzmann, "Wisdom, Folly, Philosophy", 1026.

46 Die Griekse term *mōria* waarvan die woord 'moroon' afgelei is, is 'n sterker uitdrukking as bloot 'dwaasheid'. *Mōria* dui op die houding en handelinge van 'n bepaalde sosiale tipe, naamlik die laer klas, wat glo swak en ontoereikende intellek geopenbaar het, dikwels gekombineer met groteske liggaamlike gebreke. [Vgl Welborn, *Fool of Christ,* 1–2.]

47 Dit bly 'n hartseer feit van die geskiedenis dat die kerk, en miskien veral die kerk, ook ly aan 'n neiging om die slagoffer van magsideologieë te word wat Keshgegian as *kyriarchy* beskryf ("which means the multiple and complex systemic grading of dominations, subordinations, and power arrangements"). [Flora Keshgegian, *Redeeming Memories. A Theology of Healing and Transformation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000), 27.] Die kerk, wat oor die 'mag' van God nadink, sien homself (sy strukture, ampte, teologie) dikwels as die draer van finale en onaanvegbare kennis, indien nie as God self nie. Die kerk plaas homself dikwels in 'n dominerende en beherende posisie in die netwerk en graderings van hulle wat mag het, teenoor diegene wat as magteloos gereken word. Dikwels marginaliseer die kerk mense eerder as om vir die gemarginaliseerdes op te kom. Die dwaasheid van die evangelie gee ons grootliks aanstoot,

3. OM-RAMING: IN GESPREK MET 'N (OËNSKYNLIK VREEMDE) VENNOOT

Soos prediking, handel ook kuns oor waarneming, en dra dit – weliswaar op eiesoortige wyse – iets oor nadat iets gesien is; dit verbeeld visie. Indien dit goed is, handel kuns ook, miskien hoofsaaklik, oor *om-raming.* Dit bied nuwe insigte in die realiteit; 'n nuwe begrip van dinge. Kuns daag dikwels ons konvensionele perspektiewe uit en skok dikwels die status quo van ons individuele en sosiale blindheid. Dit laat ons wéér kyk of ons gesigspunt (die koördinate van waar ons waarneem) verander. Dit bevraagteken die geldigheid van die spieëls wat ons gebruik om die lewe waar te neem.

"Om-raming" is daarom nie iets vreemds in die kunswêreld nie. Miskien sou om-raming selfs 'n 'sagte' of nie-opdringerige kuns eerder as 'n wetenskap genoem kon word – hoewel dit uiteraard nie onwetenskaplik van aard is nie.[48] Trouens, ons sou kon sê dat om-raming oorwegend 'n estetiese konsep is: Dit is nie toevallig dat kunswerke normaalweg *geraam word* en, soos ons sal toon, inderdaad ook soms *om-raming bewerkstellig* nie. Dit wil in elk geval voorkom of (goeie) kuns altyd die lewe, of bepaalde dimensies daarvan, om-raam.[49]

Ons skenk nou aandag aan drie voorbeelde van estetiese om-raming. Die konsep van om-raming kan op 'n ryke verskeidenheid maniere vertolk word – daarom kan die volgende voorbeelde slegs as aptytwekkers dien. Dit is belangrik om daarop te let dat hoewel hierdie voorbeelde verskillende nuanses van om-raming verteenwoordig, dit ook oorvleul in die sin dat dit die objekte waaroor dit handel, transformeer, dog nie as sodanig verwerp nie. Dit bly *re-creatio;* bestaande materiaal wat 'om-raam' word. Hier volg die eerste voorbeeld:

3.1 Om-raming as her-benoeming

Marcel Duchamp se beroemde (of berugte!) kunswerk getiteld *Fountain* (1917) sou hier as

---

veral as ons gewoond geraak het aan uitdrukkings soos die almag, alomteenwoordigheid en alwetendheid van God. Miskien is sulke konsepte, of ten minste ons begrip daarvan, inderdaad steeds ouderwetse invloede van manlike fantasieë oor mag, of die oorblyfsels van 'n filosofiese konstruk wat 'n metafisiese God geskep het wat gesteriliseer is teen al wat menslik en daarom kwesbaar is. [Vgl Günther Schiwy, *Abschied vom allmächtigen Gott* (München: Kösel, 1995), 19,48.]

48 Vgl Watzlawick et al, *Change*, 92.

49 Daar is al dikwels op die fundamentele strukturele ooreenkomste tussen kuns en teologie, en in die besonder tussen liturgie en prediking, gewys. Vir 'n bespreking hiervan, sien Johan Cilliers, *Binne die kring-dans van die kuns. Die betekenis van estetika vir die gereformeerde liturgie* (Stellenbosch: Sun Press, 2007), 55–78. Liturgie en prediking is, of kán wees, die openbaring van 'n geloof op soek na beelde (*fides quaerens imaginem*), oftewel 'n verbeeldingryke teologie. Hierdie gestaltes van teologie sou inderdaad 'verbeeldingryke ontsyfering' of *Sinndeutung* genoem kon word. [Vgl Wilhelm Gräb, *Religion als Deutung des Lebens. Perspektiven einer Praktischen Theologie gelebter Religion* (München: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2006), 29; Wilhelm Gräb, *Sinnfragen. Transformationen des Religiösen in der modernen Kultur* (München: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2006), 205.] Hierdie handeling van *duiding en om-duiding van betekenis* word ook soms estetiese rede of estetiese hermeneutiek genoem. [Vgl Johan Cilliers, "The Beauty of Imagined Meaning: Profiling Practical-Theological Aesthetics", *Praktiese Teologie in Suid-Afrika,* 24/1 (2009):32–47; Daniël Louw, "Creative hope and imagination in a Practical Theology of aesthetic (artistic) reason", *Creativity, imagination and criticism: the expressive dimension in Practical Theology,* 4de Internasionale Akademiese van Praktiese Teologie, Quebecse Internasionale Konferensie, Kanada, 14–20 Mei 1999, reds Paul Ballard & Pam Couture (Cardiff: Cardiff Academic Press, 2002), 91–104; S. van Erp, "Fides quaerens imaginem. Esthetica als fundamentele teologie: geloof op zoek naar beelden", *Tijdschrift voor Theologie,* 43 (2003):15–39.] In sekere sin handel om-raming fundamenteel oor hierdie estetiese (verbeeldingryke) her-skepping van betekenis. Wanneer ons dus oor die konsep van prediking as om-raming nadink, is dit toepaslik dat ons van die estetiese dimensie van om-raming kennis neem.

voorbeeld kon dien.[50] Die werk bestaan bloot uit 'n porselein-urinaal wat uit sy gebruiklike konteks gehaal en na 'n nuwe, ongewone een, naamlik 'n kunsgalery, verplaas is. Duchamp, onder die skuilnaam "R. Mutt", het *Fountain* as 'n soort grap, maar ook as kritiek op van die basiese konvensies van (avant-garde-)kuns ingeskryf. Die organiseerders van die uitstalling was woedend: Was die kunstenaar besig om moderne kuns aan 'n toilet gelyk te stel? *Fountain* is haastig uit die uitstalling verwyder en het daarna geheimsinnig 'verdwyn'. Dit was eenvoudig te skandalig vir die kunswêreld van daardie tyd.

Met hierdie kunswerk het Duchamp die konsep van *dit-wat-klaar-gemaak-is* ("ready-made"), oftewel *dit-wat-gevind-is* ("found object"), aan die kunswêreld bekend gestel, en daardeur die tradisionele voorveronderstellinge van dit wat kuns is of behoort te wees op tipies Dadaïstiese wyse uitgedaag.[51] Dit is belangrik om daarop te let dat Duchamp *nie die vorm van die kunsobjek verander* het nie, behalwe om 'n datum en fiktiewe naam op die kant aan te bring en, heel veelseggend, die objek om te draai – soos sekere spieëlbeelde sou doen. Duchamp het wél die kunsobjek uit sy tradisionele plasing (of raam) gehaal en in 'n nuwe raam geplaas, en dit, weereens veelseggend, 'n nuwe naam gegee. Die urinaal het nou 'n fontein geword. Deur hierdie handeling van om-raming, wat her-benoeming insluit, kry die objek 'n nuwe identiteit. Dit word 'n nuwe 'realiteit'.

Duchamp het hom verweer teen aanklagtes dat die kunswerk bloot plagiaat of 'n eenvoudige stuk loodgieterswerk was. Volgens hom was die vraag nie of "Mr Mutt" die fontein met sy eie hande geskep het of nie; wat belangrik was, was dat Duchamp hierdie objek *gekies* het; dat hy dit as 'n gewone voorwerp uit die lewe geneem en dit so geplaas het dat sy gewone betekenis onder die nuwe titel en gesigspunt verdwyn en dit só 'n nuwe betekenis ontvang het.

Hierdie kunswerk is 'n voorbeeld daarvan dat niks op sigself 'realiteit' is nie, en dat alles hoogstens as *adioforon* beskryf sou kon word (iets sonder waarde as sodanig, totdat dit – weliswaar binne, en daarom gebonde aan, die evalueerder se eie sielkundige, kulturele en sosiale raamwerke – beoordeel word). Dít is onder andere wat die Dadaïsme wou bereik: om die kunswêreld met sy vaste oortuigings oor die (uitbeelding van die) realiteit uit te daag.[52] Die

---

50 Bron: www.installationart.net

51 Vgl B.C.V. Adam & S.S. Cleave, *The Art Book* (Londen: Phaidon, 1996), 142.

52 'n Mens sou kon aanvoer dat die om-raming wat die Dadaïsme bepleit, uit drie fases bestaan. Die eerste is die posisie van status quo (*stasis*); die tweede die bevraagtekening hiervan, of vervreemding van dit wat ons gedink het ons weet (*anti-stasis*), en die derde die moontlikheid van her-evaluasie en uiteindelike her-samestelling van die oorspronklike posisie, met ander woorde 'n nuwe posisie wat die oorspronklike oortref (*meta-stasis;* vgl Adam & Cleave, *The Art Book,* 506). Ek propageer nie hier dat alle predikers

Dadaïsme het teen die snobisme en tradisionalisme van die kunswêreld geprotesteer, en teen 'n narkotiese beswyming binne estetika gewaarsku. As sodanig was dit 'n tipe anti-kuns, ter wille van kuns.[53]

Duchamp se kunswerk toon dat her-benoeming inderdaad (nuwe) realiteit kan *skep.* In hierdie geval kry 'n urinaal 'n nuwe naam, en 'word' dit 'n fontein! Sou 'n mens kon waag om te sê dat dit die manier kon beïnvloed waarop kykers in die toekoms na sowel urinale as fonteine sou kyk en dit sou beoordeel?

Een van die maniere waarop om-raming deur middel van her-benoeming sou kon plaasvind, is uiteraard met behulp van *taal* – 'n modus van om-raming wat van vanselfsprekende belang vir die prediking is. Die prediking handel oor die *verwoording* van 'n visioen, maar ook om die skep van 'n visioen deur middel van woorde. Nie alleen skep die visioen die woorde nie; die woorde skep ook die visioen. Prediking is daarom nie net om iets te sê nadat jy iets (Iemand) gesien het nie; dis ook om iets te sien nadat jy iets gesê het. Trouens, in die prediking handel dit oor 'n *samespel van oë en ore,* indien nie ál die sintuie nie.[54]

Maar, sou ons kon vra, waar vind 'n mens sulke visioenêre en visioenerende woorde vir die prediking? Ek het reeds daarop gewys dat prediking onder andere met die onderskeiding van tekens van transendensie in die alledaagse lewe te make het. Dít beteken aan die een kant dat predikers sensitief vir, en waarnemers van, die lewe moet wees. Predikers moet die religieuse dimensies van mense se ervarings in tyd en ruimte kan onderskei.[55] Ervarings, ook die van 'n religieuse aard, word in tyd en ruimte opgedoen. Tog is die tyd en ruimte waarin hierdie ervarings voorkom, altyd bepaalde tye en bepaalde ruimtes.[56] Dít impliseer dat predikers in die spesifieke tye en ruimtes van diegene vir wie hulle wil preek, sal moet vertoef en selfs woon indien hulle by

---

Dadaïste moet word nie. Uiteraard was daar ook gebreke en vergrype in hierdie beweging. Dit was oënskynlik sterk op die gebied van *anti-stasis,* sonder om regtig 'n *meta-stasis,* of ten minste 'n embrionale vorm daarvan, te bied. Tog het die Dadaïste, meer as enigiemand anders van hulle tyd, die konsep van om-raming verstaan. In hierdie sin is hulle waardevolle homiletiese vennote.

53 Bohren, *Predigtlehre,* 60.

54 Sien in hierdie verband die opmerkings van Ola Sigurdson: "As we all know, in the Christian church, different senses have been regarded as the theologically most noble sense during different historical periods: vision in Orthodox Christianity, audition in Protestantism. But this hierarchy needs to be critically studied, since one could suspect that some of the theoretical accounts might be quite different from the established practices in the same historical period. But this is not the only reason for a theology of the senses. As theology often has realized in passing, our senses are ways of relating towards each other and towards God, and as there are different manners of looking, listening, touching and so on, there is need of a more systematic investigation into the theological and/or philosophical implications of the different way of sensing." [Ola Sigurdson, "How to Speak of the Body? Embodiment between Phenomenology and Theology", *Studia Theologica: Nordic Journal of Theology,* 62, nr 1 (2008):41.]

55 Ten einde taal van ervaring te vind, moet die prediker na die (ervarings van) die gemeente luister. Sedert die sewentigerjare het die homiletiek sterk na 'n 'hoordervriendelike' benadering beweeg, met mense soos Fred Craddock wat 'n induktiewe metode voorgestaan het wat die ervarings van die gemeente so probeer ontsluit dat die prediking inderdaad vir hulle sin het. [Fred B. Craddock, *As One without Authority* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971), 25.] Ernst Lange het gepraat van die 'homiletiese situasie', waarin die hoorder in werklikheid die tema van die preek moet word indien prediking 'n werklike verskil wil maak. [Ernst Lange, *Predigen als Beruf* (Stuttgart: Kreuz Verlag, 1976), 34.] Sedert Craddock en Lange het baie homilete (soos Lowry, Buttrick, Hilkert en ander) 'n vorm van prediking bepleit wat by die hoorder se ervarings van die werklike lewe aansluit. [Eugene Lowry, 1980. *The homiletical plot: The sermon as narrative art form* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1980), 76; Buttrick, *Homiletic,* 294; M.C. Hilkert, *Naming Grace. Preaching and the sacramental Imagination* (New York: Continuum, 1998), 55.]

56 Albrecht Grözinger, "The Way of Experience. Preaching as Shaping Experience in a World of Conflict", *Studia Homiletica 5,* reds A. Grözinger & K.H. Soon (Singapoer: Gospel Works, 2005), 1.

die spesifieke (religieuse) ervarings van hierdie mense wil aansluiting vind.

In die taal van Duchamp en die Dadaïste: Predikers sal voortdurend moet rekening hou met *dit-wat-klaar-gemaak-is* ("ready-made"), oftewel *dit-wat-gevind-is* ("found objects"); hulle sal die *lewe* voortdurend moet her-oorweeg. Hier eindig dit egter nie: Predikers is geroepe om hierdie alledaagse ervarings juis as religieuse ervarings te onderskei, en dit as sodanig vir die hoorders van hulle preke uit te lê. Die prediker se taak behels onder andere om sulke ervarings so te om-raam dat mense hierdie skynbaar alledaagse ervarings inderdaad as ervarings gelaai met 'n dieper betekenis kan herken. Ervarings moet her-benoem word, en daarvoor benodig predikers die taal van ervaring.[57] 'n Belangrike manier om ervaring te her-benoem is om jou eie ervaring met ander te deel – dit verhoed ook dat predikers abstrak en lewensvreemd praat. Inteendeel, een van 'n prediker se take is om voortdurend woorde te soek wat ervarings beskryf wat die lewe beskryf. Dít is trouens 'n onvermydelike en voortgaande homiletiese proses: om toepaslike taal van ervaring te vind, maar ook te skep. In 'n neutedop: Ervaringstaal kan as instrument dien vir die om-raming van perspektief.[58]

Maar ook hiér eindig die taak van die prediking nie. Teologies beskou, beteken prediking méér as net 'n aansluiting by, of selfs opklaring van, ervarings. Die klem op die hoorder – wat Bohren noem 'homiletiek se geliefde kind wat uit 'n massiewe aanpassing by die samelewing gebore is' – mag nie eksklusief word nie.[59] Ervarings kan ook verkeerd, selfs destruktief, wees. Dit moet dus vertolk, maar dikwels ook gerig en, inderdaad, getransformeer word. In Duchamp se taal: Die prentjie moet omgedraai en her-benoem word.

Hiervoor benodig die prediker 'n spesifieke perspektief; 'n spesifieke raam, lens of spieël waarin en waardeur die lewe aanskou kan word, naamlik die van die Skrif. Wanneer lewenservarings deur hierdie lens bekyk word, word alternatiewe sigbaar: Dit wat ons gedink het wysheid is, kan in werklikheid dwaas blyk te wees, en andersom. Dit wat vir ons menslike oog onsigbaar was, kom deur hierdie lens duidelik in beeld. Deur hierdie lens leer ons "to picture, portray, receive and practice the world in ways other than it appears to be at first glance when seen through a dominant, habitual, unexamined lens".[60]

Calvyn het nie om dowe neute die lens waardeur ons moet kyk die *bril van die Skrif* genoem nie.[61] Garret Green skryf na aanleiding van Calvyn se insig in (en deur) die Skrif soos volg: "… [T] he scriptures are not something we look *at* but rather look *through,* lenses that refocus what we see into an intelligible pattern."[62] Hy gaan voort: "[I]ts images permit us to see a dimension of depth in the world that is not otherwise apparent."[63]

---

57 Grözinger, "The Way of Experience", 2.

58 Hierdie om-raming van perspektief word aangrypend uitgebeeld in die klassieke *To Kill a Mockingbird* deur Harper Lee, waarin die leser die wêreld deur die helder, kinderlike oë van die klein protagonis, Scout, aanskou. In die slottoneel kyk sy met nuwe oë na die bekende buurt waarin sy grootgeword het. Skielik 'sien' sy die dorp in seisoenale flitse, met beelde van die somer, herfs, winter en lente wat mekaar voor haar geestesoog opvolg soos die raampies in 'n film. In die kernsin van die boek verklaar sy: "I turned to go home. Streetlights winked down the street all the way to town. I had never seen our neighborhood from this angle." [Harper Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Londen: Heinemann Educational, 1960), 285.]

59 Bohren, *Predigtlehre*, 444.

60 Walter Brueggemann, *The Bible and Postmodern Imagination – texts under negotiation* (Londen: SCM Press, 1993), 13.

61 Johannes Calvyn, *Institutes of the Christian Religion,* red John T. McNeill, vert Ford Lewis Battles, 2 vols, Library of Christian Classics (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 1,6:1.

62 Garret Green, *Imagining God: Theology and the Religious Imagination* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989), 107.

63 Green, *Imagining God,* 107.

Deur die bril van die Skrif word die werklikheid om-raam en her-benoem. Daar is baie voorbeelde van her-benoeming in die Skrif self. Dit begin al met die Genesisverhaal, waar die skepping (son, maan, sterre) name kry en só as God se eiendom – en nie die van die gode nie – her-benoem word. Sodoende word die werklikheid as Gód se werklikheid 'geskep'. Selfs mense ontvang die gawe om die diere te her-benoem en op dié wyse werklikheid in die kosmos te 'skep'.[64] Uiteindelik word ook óns deur die Christusgebeure her-benoem: Ons word nou *Christene* genoem.[65] 'n Mens sou kon sê ons lewe word op sy kop gedraai deur die om-raming en her-benaming van ons identiteit.

Prediking wat die werklikheid op 'n soortgelyke wyse as werklikheid *coram deo* her-benoem, kan inderdaad, soos wat Bohren ook aangevoer het, *Namenrede* genoem word.[66] 'Naam-rede' impliseer die spreek oor die Naam (of Name) van God, of eerder die uit-spreek (onderskeiding) van God se veelkleurige teenwoordigheid in ál die sfere van ons werklikheid – van die stukkende skoenveter aan jou linkerskoen tot die plassie melk op die tafel voor jou.

Dít bring ons by die tweede voorbeeld van estetiese om-raming.

3.2 Om-raming as her-samestelling ("re-configuration")

Soms moet die wyse waarop om-raming wêrelde op hul kop staanmaak, 'n radikaler, moontlik selfs aanstootlike en steurende vorm aanneem.[67] Soms is die raam waarin ons geset is so stewig in sement gegiet dat drastiese maatreëls vir her-samestelling nodig is. Daarom, wanneer ons van 'n *her*-oorweging van die realiteit (*dit-wat-klaar-gemaak-is;* "ready-made") praat, moet ons opnuut onderstreep: Dit beteken nie 'méér van dieselfde' of 'n geromantiseerde her-besoek of her-innering aan die verlede nie. Om-raming is nie gelykstaande aan blote her-haling of her-kouing nie. Inteendeel, om-raming impliseer dinamiese prosesse soos her-benoeming ("relabelling"), her-siening, her-belyning en her-verbeelding.[68] In plaas van 'méér van dieselfde', behels dit alternatiewe, selfs paradokse, wat die bestaande uitdaag om nuwe betekenis te verkry, en sodoende verandering in gedragspatrone te bewerkstellig.[69]

---

64 Vgl Genesis 2:18–19.

65 Vgl Handelinge 11:26. In die teorie van verandering is hierdie bevestiging van die ander se (nuwe) waarde, oftewel toegestane waardigheid, bekend as die "Bellac Ploy". Hier impliseer verandering nie net *bevestiging* nie, maar inderdaad ook *skepping* van waardigheid. [Vgl Watzlawick et al, *Change,* 131–133.]

66 Vgl Bohren, *Predigtlehre,* 89–108.

67 Volgens sommige eksponente van die teorie van verandering is dit slegs moontlik om om-raming, en daarom tweede-orde-verandering, deur 'n onderbreking van 'buite' te bewerkstellig. [Vgl Watzlawick et al, *Change,* 92.] Sommige teoretici soos Bandler en Grinder neem as uitgangspunt mense se inherente vermoë om self hulle denke te verander. [Bandler & Grinder, *Frogs into Princes,* 138,183.] Teologies beskou, verkies ek die oortuiging dat 'n verandering in denke (of die raam waardeur ons sien) slegs van buite aangevoer kan word. Paradigmas (basiese strukture) kan slegs deur, en met, die 'ander' verander word. Teologies beskou, kom Christus (die 'Ander') altyd saam met die 'ander' na ons toe. 'n Heel tersaaklike voorbeeld van 'om-raming deur die Ander en daarom die ander' is te vinde in Petrus se visioen waarin selfs die 'onheilige diere' deur die Christusgebeure geheilig word (vgl Handelinge 10:1–48). Petrus se paradigma (raam) word om-raam deur die ander, maar eintlik deur die Ander – en het ware gedragsverandering tot gevolg. Dít is inderdaad tweede-orde-verandering van 'buite'.

68 Vgl Capps, *Reframing,* 4.

69 'n Klassieke bybelse voorbeeld hiervan is die manier waarop koning Salomo die situasie om-raam wanneer twee vroue hom met die dilemma van 'n dooie baba nader (1 Konings 3:16–27). Sy drastiese opdrag, naamlik dat die suigeling in twee gesny moet word, voeg heel ironies nuwe betekenis toe aan die lewe (en toekoms) van die kind, en lei tot 'n dramatiese houdingsverandering by albei vroue. Die Bybel is in werklikheid vol voorvalle wat as om-raming beskryf sou kon word, soos in die gelykenisse wat Jesus vertel en die manier waarop Hy die Torah in die Bergpreek uitlê (vgl Matteus 5–7). Hierdie

Om-raming is nie 'n onskadelike gebeurtenis nie. Dit kan in werklikheid ontwrigtend en ontstellend wees. Niemand verstaan dít beter as die bekroonde, internasionaal bekende Suid-Afrikaanse spotprenttekenaar Zapiro nie. Hy noem sy spesifieke genre van om-raming dan ook met reg "offensive cartooning".[70]

Zapiro daag al baie jare lank die politieke (en ander) magte in Suid-Afrika uit, en het 'n belangrike en unieke rol gespeel om die ware aard van apartheid deur middel van sy dikwels skokkende spotprente te ontmasker.[71] Ironies genoeg het president Jacob Zuma Zapiro in die era ná apartheid aangekla vanweë spotprente wat hom (Zuma) kritiseer.[72] In een van sy spotprente gebruik Zapiro die metafoor van 'n laer om 'n reaksie op 'n waargenome bedreiging uit te beeld. Dít doen hy teen die agtergrond van kritiek wat die regerende party in Suid-Afrika, die African National Congress (ANC), hom op die hals gehaal het vanweë vermeende korrupsie in die nou reeds berugte wapentransaksie met Duitse en Britse maatskappye. In daardie stadium het die ANC ál hierdie aantygings verwerp en hom teen die instel van 'n onafhanklike geregtelike ondersoek versit.[73] Met die volgende spotprent parodieer Zapiro die regering se 'laertrekkery' teen die aantygings oor die wapenskandaal.[74]

In hierdie spotprent vergelyk Zapiro die optrede van die ANC-regering met die van die Voortrekkers by Bloedrivier. Hier word die kring egter nie deur ossewaens gevorm nie, maar deur motors.[75] Die snydende ironie is onmiskenbaar: Zapiro suggereer dat die vryheidsbeweging wat geveg het teen dit wat die Voortrekkerlaer vir hulle gesimboliseer het, nou presies dieselfde doen vandat hulle die regerende mag is. Dit is moeilik om jou 'n skerper vorm van kritiek voor te stel. Zapiro *dupliseer* in werklikheid die basiese struktuur van die oorspronklike, maar doen dit op so 'n wyse dat dit terselfdertyd 'n radikale *her-samestelling* ondergaan.

Dít is om-raming op sy beste!

Uit 'n homiletiese perspektief is dit belangrik om te verstaan dat die Bybel ook vol beelde en taal is wat die werklikheid om-raam – dikwels ook op ontwrigtende en ontstellende wyses. Bybelse tekste dien as lense, spieëls en brille wat beskouinge van die baie gesigte en dade van God bied – beskouinge wat egter nie altyd inpas by ons sieninge en verwagtings van wie God is of behoort te wees nie. Die Bybel is nie 'n onskadelike boek wat die verburgerliking van die

---

voorvalle van om-raming impliseer ingrypende her-samestellings in plaas van 'n kosmetiese, eerste-orde-herrangskikking van waarhede.

70 Sy eie beskrywing van sy werk is veelseggend: "In my work I simply ask: *what if?* During the apartheid era, cartoonists kept on using methods like hyperbole, parody, [revealing of] stereotypes, ridiculing, etc., to ask the question: *what if* things could be different? *What if* we tried an alternative? In the process they contributed to the education and mobilization of the public, but also aided them in making sense of changing realities as well as the challenges of transition. And this *what if?* should not, in fact dare not, fall silent in post-apartheid South Africa." ["Defending the Jester's Space: Pushing the Limits of Political Cartooning"-simposium. Aangehaal uit woordelikse notas deur Johan Cilliers.]

71 As 'n anti-apartheidsaktivis het hy in die tagtigerjare plakkate en pamflette vir die United Democratic Front (UDF) ontwerp, en is ook verskeie kere in hegtenis geneem.

72 ["Political Cartoons from South Africa", *The World,* 13 Januarie 2011, toegang bekom op 31 Julie 2011, http://www.theworld.org/2011/01/political-cartoons-from-south-africa/.] In hierdie artikel vergelyk Zapiro sy rol as politieke spotprentkunstenaar met die van 'n hofnar met "the kind of license to really be irreverent, to bite".

73 President Zuma het eers onlangs (in September 2011) 'n onafhanklike geregtelike ondersoek ingestel – lank nadat die spotprent gepubliseer is.

74 [Jonathan Shapiro (Zapiro), "Then and Now", *Richard Hainebach, Zapiro Rights, for Jonathan Shapiro.*] Die prent is oorspronklik op 19 April 2001 in die *Mail & Guardian* gepubliseer. [Aangehaal uit Campbell & Cilliers, *Preaching Fools,* hfst 6, g.b.]

75 Volgens gerugte sou heelwat hooggeplaaste ANC-amptenare en ministers finansiële 'voordeel' uit die transaksie getrek het en óf luukse motors koop óf sulke motors as 'geskenke' ontvang.
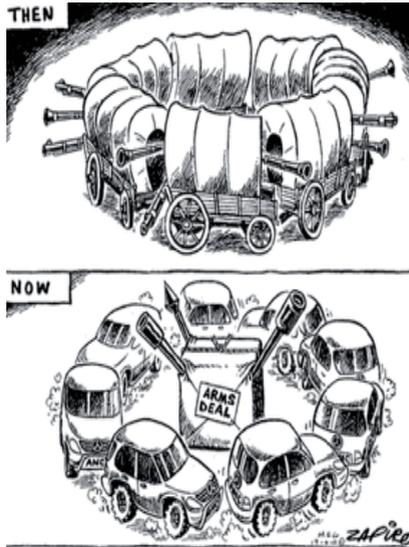
samelewing netjies dien nie; dit is eerder 'n boek wat die fundamentele om-raming van ons perspektiewe tot gevolg het. Dít gebeur dikwels volgens 'n bepaalde patroon.

Eerstens is daar 'n moment van *oriëntasie,* waarin jy iets bekends, iets *wat-klaar-gemaak-is* ("ready-made"), in die beeld herken. Dan volg die fase van *disoriëntasie* (nie noodwendig opeenvolgend nie; meestal gelyktydig), waarin die beeld jou begrip van die werklikheid bevraagteken en sodoende versteur en omvergooi. Dít is hoe baie bybelse beelde en taalstrukture werk: 'n Bekende metafoor word byvoorbeeld skielik vreemd en uitdagend, en werk skielik ondergrawend in op die status quo – soos 'n stukkie suurdeeg wat tot 'n onstuitbare koninkryk uitrys.[76] Bybelse beelde is inderdaad dikwels kontrabeelde; beelde wat ons verbeelding so skok, so 'n "imaginative shock" toedien, dat dit vir ons die ongelyksoortige dog bevrydende 'soos' van die koninkryk word.[77]

Hierdie skok is inderdaad bevrydend, want ná die disoriëntasie volg gewoonlik die oomblik van *re-oriëntasie.* Nou ontsluit die beeld vooruitsigte van nuwe moontlikhede en nuwe wêrelde vir ons; dit funksioneer as 'n wêreldskeppende mag. Baie van die taalstrukture van die Bybel openbaar hierdie patroon, byvoorbeeld in die gebruik van parodie, paradoks, ironie, metafoor, indirekte verhale, spot, ensovoorts – alles taalvorme wat ons realiteite op een of ander wyse ondersteboe draai en op die kop van sogenaamde logika dans.[78] Bybelse tekste funksioneer dikwels as kontragetuienisse teen, of kruisverhore van, ons 'ononderhandelbare' kernoortuigings. Dikwels openbaar dit sye of beelde van God wat beswaarlik by ons konvensionele teologiese en homiletiese taal inpas. Die kuns van prediking as om-raming sluit nie alleen die gebruik van die taal van alledaagse ervaring in nie, maar ook die verwoording van hierdie vreemde taal van die Bybel as *verbum alienum.* Trouens, die dialoog of taalspel tussen hierdie twee vorme van diskoers is wat ons *prediking* sou kon noem.

---

76 Matteus 13:33.

77 E.R. Riegert, *Imaginative Shock. Preaching and Metaphor* (Burlington: Trinity Press, 1990), 72–74; Brueggemann, *The Bible and Postmodern Imagination,* 15.

78 'n Uitgebreide beskrywing van die gebruik van hierdie taalstrukture in die prediking is nie binne die beperkinge van hierdie rede moontlik nie. Sien hiervoor Campbell & Cilliers, *Preaching Fools,* hfst 8.

Soos egter reeds gesuggereer is, beoog hierdie taal van die prediking nie om te ontwrig en te ontstel bloot ter wille van ontwrigting en ontsteltenis nie. Dit wil eerder re-oriëntasie bewerkstellig. Sodanige re-oriëntasie word ook deur her-verbeelding meegebring, wat die derde voorbeeld van estetiese om-raming uitmaak.

3.3 Om-raming as her-verbeelding

Prediking is al die kuns van her-verbeelding genoem.[79] Om-raming sluit her-verbeelding in. 'n Besonder treffende voorbeeld hiervan – trouens, een van die mees klassieke vorme van om-raming – is in die tyd van die Reformasie te vinde. Daar sou inderdaad gesê kon word dat die Reformasie nie alleen die herontdekking van die Woord van die evangelie behels het nie, maar ook van die belang van verbeelding, en her-verbeelding.[80]

Martin Luther het waarskynlik saam met ander die atmosfeer help skep (of was dit andersom?) vir 'n aantal Noord-Duitse kunstenaars om rigtinggewende werke op die breuklyn tussen die Gotiese en Renaissance-eras te skep – byvoorbeeld Lucas Cranach, Albrecht Dürer, en veral Matthias Grünewald (1470–1528), wat aan ons een van die aangrypendste werke uit die Reformatoriese tydperk nagelaat het. Sy beroemde uitbeelding van Christus se kruisiging,[81] wat voltooi is twee jaar nadat Luther sy stellinge aan die kerkdeur in Wittenberg vasgespyker het, verteenwoordig 'n dramatiese paradigmaskuif waarin Christus nie meer deur 'n sentimentele stralekrans omring word nie; sy lyding word nie meer estetes versag nie – inteendeel. Hier sien ons nie meer die atletiese en heroïese Christus van die Renaissance nie, maar 'n liggaam wat die uiterste verminking en vernedering van 'n mens deur ander mense versinnebeeld. Die hele beeld word her-verbeel(d) – weg van 'n rustige, kalm toneel na die kru realiteit van die kruis.
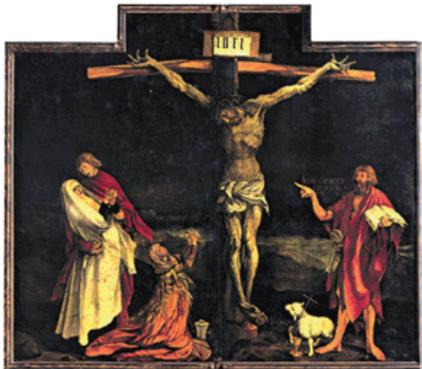
In hierdie uitbeelding is die doringkroon en Christus se hare ineengestrengel, ineengevleg – want in hierdie oomblik ís Christus sy lyding. Gebroke. Vermink. Godverlate. Só hang Hy daar. Sy arms

---

79 W. Brueggemann, "Preaching as re-imagination", *Theology Today,* 52 (1995):313–329.

80 Beelde kan ons, volgens Luther, veral aan die unieke realiteit van Golgota herinner. Daardeur word die kruis as 't ware telkens voor die geestesoog geroep. 'n Uitbeelding van die gekruisigde Christus (crucifix) kan "zum ansehen, zum zeugnis, zum gedechtnis, zum zeichen" wees. [A-M Wachters-van der Grinten, *Gij zult u geen gesneden beeld maken… Het beeldverbod in jodendom, christendom en islam* (Kampen: Kok, 1996), 129.] As 'n mens die Naam 'Christus' hoor, sê Luther, sien jy 'n gekruisigde mens soos wat jy jou eie gesig in die water weerspieël sien: "Warum sollts sunde sein, wenn ichs inn augen habe?" Hoewel beelde dus nie vanuit 'n religieuse oogpunt *noodsaaklik* is nie, is dit tog *nuttig* as tekens van herinnering en hoop. [Martin Luther, *Invokavitpredigten* 1522, *Weimarer Ausgabe* (WA) (Weimar: Hermann Böhlau, 1883), 10,3,26.]

81 Bron: www.ibiblio.org

is buite verhouding lank uitgerek. Sy hande is verwring, asof in 'n fisiese kreet wat tegelykertyd lyk (klink) na 'n desperate klag teenoor, maar ook 'n volledige oorgawe aan, God. Sy voete is onherkenbaar vermink, en beeld die Gotiek se siening van lyding en sterflikheid in die uiterste vorm uit. Die Gekruisigde se lippe is pers, soos die van 'n versmoorde. Die makabere liggaam hang vooroorgeboë, onder die swaar gewig van die sonde, dermate dat selfs die houtkruis buig. Sy liggaam is blougrys en opgeswel, en toon die afgryslike tekens van die geseling en lyding aan die kruis. Die diep agtergrondkleure staan in skrille teenstelling met die figure op die voorgrond – 'n kenmerkende gebruik van lig en donker, 'n tegniek wat as *chiaroscuro* bekend is.[82]

Links op die skildery, op haar knieë, wring Maria Magdalena haar hande in gebed saam. By haar staan 'n kruik met welriekende olie. Maria, die moeder van Jesus, deins weg van die grusame liggaam en die afgryslikheid van die dood, en word ondersteun deur die dissipel Johannes – nóg 'n veelbetekenende her-verbeelding weg van die tradisionele kalmte van 'n moeder-van-God-uitbeelding. Aan die regterkant staan Johannes die Doper met 'n opvallende lang wysvinger en verklaar: Daar is die Lam van God wat die sonde van die wêreld wegneem. Voor hom staan 'n lammetjie met 'n kruis en 'n Nagmaalsbeker by sy voete – simbool van die oorwinning van dié Lam; die paradoks van alle paradokse.

Wat hierdie klassieke werk nóg indrukwekkender maak, is dat dit geskilder is om in 'n kloosterhospitaal in Isenheim te hang – 'n hospitaal wat in velsiektes soos ergotisme (kriebelsiekte) gespesialiseer het.[83] Die detail op die Gekruisigde se vel sou in hierdie konteks 'n onmiskenbare vereenselwiging, en dus troos, kon bewerkstellig.[84] Deur hierdie vreemde, *anti-estetiese estetika* word die evangelie bemiddel.[85] Inderdaad die paradoks van alle paradokse!

Dit is bekend dat 'n afdruk van hierdie skildery van Grünewald vir meer as 50 jaar bo niemand anders nie as Karl Barth se lessenaar gehang het, en dat hy meer as 50 keer in van sy vernaamste geskrifte daarna verwys het. Hy noem dit selfs 'n 'visuele hulpmiddel' vir sy lewenswerk.[86] Wat die Doper se prominente wysvinger betref, verklaar Barth: "Could anyone point away from himself more impressively and completely?"[87] Dit is inderdaad 'n uitbeelding van wat Stanley Hauerwas noem "looking in the right direction"![88]

Hierdie meesterstuk verteenwoordig 'n vorm van her-verbeelding van die evangelie – teen die sentimentalistiese stroom van sy tyd in – wat sedertdien vir vele waarnemers daarvan betekenis her-skep en gedragspatrone verander het. As sodanig, illustreer dit ook die kerntaak van die prediking, naamlik die *voortdurende her-verbeelding van die evangelie teenoor gangbare beelde van Christus.*

4. GEVOLGTREKKING

Hoewel prediking as om-raming dikwels ontwrigtend en ontstellend, selfs vreemd, onverwags

---

82 Vir meer voorbeelde, sien Johan Cilliers, *Dancing with Deity. Re-imagining the Beauty of Worship* (Wellington: Bybelmedia, binnekort gepubliseer), g.b.

83 Dié kunswerk word tans in Colmar bewaar.

84 Andrée Hayum, *The Isenheim Altarpiece: God's Medicine and the Painter's Vision* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 27–28.

85 'n Mens sou inderdaad kon sê dat die Reformasie, en Luther in die besonder, saam met die skilders van die Italiaanse Renaissance 'n groot aandeel gehad het aan die *de-sakralisering van beelde,* en die moontlikheid om beelde as nuttig te verstaan en te gebruik. Die teologiese kritiek van die Wittenbergse Reformasie was gemik teen beelde wat *idole* geword het, nie beelde wat as *simbole* benut sou kon word nie.

86 Jürgen Fangmeier & Heinrich Stoevesandt, *Karl Barth Letters 1961–1968* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 315.

87 Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics,* I/1, vert B.W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975), 112.

88 Hauerwas & Willimon, *Resident Aliens,* 95.

en paradoksaal kan wees, bly dit 'n 'sagte', nie-opdringerige kuns. Om-raming is nie bedoel om verandering as 'n tipe vyandige oorname deur middel van dwang of manipulasie te bewerkstellig nie. Homiletiese om-raming dwing nie normaalweg die tekens van God se immanensie op mense af nie. God se voetstappe (*vestigia dei*) in die wêreld is immers nie die dreunende voetstappe van 'n reus nie. Inteendeel, dit kan maklik misgekyk en nie gehoor word nie. Homiletiese om-raming help ons om hierdie voetstappe te hoor en hierdie tekens te sien, en wys ons op God se (brose, gekruisigde) teenwoordigheid in die rame van ons realiteite – soos Johannes die Doper se wysvinger.[89]

Hierdie soort prediking is uiteraard 'n ernstige saak wat dikwels 'n uitvloeisel van, maar ook 'n oproep tot, klag is. Tog is klag en lag twee sye van dieselfde munt; albei maak deel uit van 'dwase' prediking wat wysheid op sy kop staanmaak.[90] Eweneens is om-raming, synde "the very lifeblood of wise-fool ministry", dikwels speels en humoristies, met 'n gepaardgaande bevrydende gelag.[91] Dit vereis die humor van hoop. In die woorde van Donald Capps: "Lightness of touch and the releasing power of laughter are essential to the art of reframing. Otherwise, the art degenerates into a weapon which manipulates and mocks the very ones it means to help, and dehumanizes those who use it. Reframing is not for angry prophets, but for prophets who know the releasing power of laughter. Reframing is for prophets who are wise enough to know that God can get along perfectly well without them, and fool enough to believe that God would never try to go it alone."[92]

Prediking as om-raming neem waar en her-benoem; dit ontwrig en ontstel. Dit wys egter ook na nuwe realiteite en nuwe moontlikhede heen. Dit daag ons gevestigde beelde van God voortdurend uit; herinner ons daaraan dat ons ervarings van God, ons teologieë en prediking oor God, bloot 'n begin is, en dat ons diepste dogmas en fynste formulerings net 'n gestotter en gestamel is oor die onpeilbare geheim wat *God* is. Dit help ons om in en deur die om-raming-spieël van die bybelse teks te bly kyk, wel wetende dat God se openbaring gelyktydig God se verberging is, en God se verberging gelyktydig sy openbaring.[93] Dit herinner ons daaraan dat ons rame nie staalstrukture is nie, maar penstrepe en kwashale.

Johan Cilliers
Vakdissipline Praktiese Teologie en Missiologie
Universiteit van Stellenbosch
jcilliers@sun.ac.za

89 Dít is wat Josef doen met sy beskrywing van die gebeure wat hom uit sy vaderhuis na Egipte weggevoer het. Hy verklaar soos volg aan sy broers nadat hy met hulle herenig is: "Ek is julle broer Josef. Julle het my verkoop, en ek is Egipte toe gebring. Maar julle moet nou nie sleg voel of bang wees omdat julle my verkoop het nie, want God het my voor julle uit gestuur om lewens te red." Om-raming is hier te sien in die merkwaardige teologiese her-vertolking en her-benoeming van die gebeure: "… want God het …" [Genesis 45:4,5]

90 Vgl hfst 6 van Campbell & Cilliers, *Preaching Fools.*

91 Capps, Reframing, 169; Alastair Campbell, *Rediscovering Pastoral Care* (Londen: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1986), 47–64.

92 Capps, *Reframing*, 180.

93 Vgl 1 Korintiërs 13:12.

Cloete, Anita
Stellenbosch University

Spiritual formation as focus of Youth Ministry

ABSTRACT

The article pays attention to spiritual formation as a vital focus in youth ministry. Spiritual formation will be described as a contextual process of meaning making and integration of what we believe into how we live our lives. The individualistic nature of especially postmodern spirituality gets attention. Lastly the article will focus on the connection between identity formation and spiritual formation, as well as the community orientated focus of Christian spirituality, which makes it so valuable for youth ministry today.

ABSTRAK

Die artikel skenk aandag aan geestelike vorming as 'n noodsaaklike fokus in jeugbediening. Geestelike vorming sal beskryf word as 'n kontekstuele proses van sinmaking en integrasie van wat ons glo in hoe ons leef. Die individualistiese aard van veral postmoderne spiritualiteit geniet aandag. Laastens fokus die artikel op die verbintenis tussen identiteitsvorming en geestelike vorming asook die gemeenskap georienteerde fokus van Christelike spiritualiteit wat dit so waardevol maak vir jeugbediening vandag.

1. INTRODUCTION

The article focuses on the renewed interest in spirituality today and its value for youth ministry. The concept of Christian spirituality is described as a process of spiritual formation. A description is asserted of the postmodern subjective, individualistic view of spirituality and the challenges it poses to Christian spiritual formation, which is understood to be community orientated. It is argued here that the connection between identity formation and spiritual formation, as well as the community seeking character of Christian spiritual formation, is vital for youth ministry today.

2. WHAT IS SPIRITUALITY?

Today there is a renewed interest in spirituality from different platforms and contexts, to the point that it is referred to by some as a new buzzword (Kourie & Ruthenberg 2008:80). One of the characteristics of postmodernism is the need for spiritual experience. Therefore spirituality has become a much-discussed topic under laity and seminary students (Schneiders 1990:17) and is even regarded as a new academic discipline (Schneiders 1990:24). Grenz (2002:87) describes it as follows: "[S]pirituality which seems to have been banned from vocabularies of the people living in a scientific culture, is now not only common parlance but even fashionable. This is the case even among those who eschew organized religion". Despite the fact that the term spirituality is widely used and referred to, there is no conceptual clarity or consensus on what the term means. At the same time it does not mean that there are no indicators developed in academic writing, specifically to describe and define what spirituality could mean. I would like

to mention a few of these in order to have some conceptual understanding of the term as one of the key concepts in this article. Spirituality refers to lived experiences which do not have to be religious experiences, in other words the term "no longer refer exclusively or even primarily to prayer and spiritual exercise, much less to an elite state or superior practice of Christianity" (Schneiders 1990:18).Two basic approaches in defining spirituality could be distinguished, namely the dogmatic position and the anthropologic position. The first approach equates spirituality with the Christian life and the latter engages anthropological questions (Schneiders 1990:21). Christian spirituality could be seen as a very specific and even narrow way of defining spirituality whereas the anthropological view could be regarded as too broad and therefore vague, but could offer the opportunity of creating interreligious and cross-denominational dialogue (Hanson 1990:23). Another valuable distinction in trying to establish a conceptual framework for spirituality is to indicate the difference between spirituality as an academic discipline and a theology of spirituality. Spiritual theology is derived from the more dogmatic and prescriptive position with regards to spirituality already mentioned. Spirituality as an academic discipline functions in partnership and mutuality with theology (Kourie & Ruthenberg 2008:80). Schneiders (1990:23) defines spirituality as "the experience of consciously striving to integrate one's life in terms not of isolation and self-absorption but of self-transcendence toward the ultimate value one perceives". In this formulation she tries to exclude orientating one's life in dysfunctional ways and include potentially any spirituality, religious or secular, Christian or non- Christian. Although this definition attempts to be inclusive, there is not such a thing as 'generic spirituality' as spirituality as lived experience is always lived within a specific context and value system. Up till now I tried to give some conceptual clarification with regards to spirituality and opt to work in this article with the concept of Christian spirituality. I would like to employ the concept of Christian spirituality as distinct area of spirituality in an inclusive way, but stay mindful of its limitation and will therefore give a more detailed discussion thereof in the next section.

3. CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY AND SPIRITUAL FORMATION

Christian spirituality includes reference to tradition and is related to theological themes. Furthermore Christian spirituality does not refer to some other kind of life, but is about the whole of human life (Sheldrake 2000:39-40). According to Wilhoit (2008:23) "Christian spiritual formation refers to the intentional communal process in growing in our relationship with God and becoming conformed to Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit". This definition emphasizes the intentional process and distinguishes Christian spirituality from spirituality in general. In line with this definition I would like to utilize the concept spiritual formation, describing Christian spirituality as ongoing process, something that is holistic and never static. According to Makue-Olwendo (2009:113) "[S]piritual formation has to do with the intentional focus on the development of the inner being, on forming and edifying relationships, and on engaging in spiritual experiences with the intention to deepen one's faith in God". Dallas Willard (2002:22) defines it as a "Spirit–driven process of forming the inner world of the human self in such way that it becomes like the inner being of Christ himself". Barton (2009:28) echoes the same understanding of spiritual formation when she describes it as "an organic process that goes far beyond mere behavioural tweaks to deep fundamental changes at the very core of our being".

These definitions of spiritual formation describes Christian spiritual formation as a process through which human beings becomes more and more like Jesus in their way of living through the work of the Holy Spirit. Spiritual formation is therefore seen in this article as describing the process of Christian spirituality. Christian spiritual formation is also connected to the concept

of faith formation as the process of Christian spiritual formation refers to the integration of what we believe in all areas of our lives. Therefore Christian spiritual formation is not a self-help project but is grounded in the grace of God through Jesus Christ from whom we received faith as gift and which is not an achievement. Brümmer (2010:1) also argues that faith is a lens through which Christians view and interpret life as we understand the meaning of our lives and the world in light of our faith. Faith is thus understood as interpretation and therefore hermeneutical. Spirituality he describe as a "form of training in religious experience" through which "we are *trained* to see our lives and experience of the world with the eyes of faith"(Brümmer 2010:2). In this description there is a clear connection between Christian spirituality and faith which is not only a way of seeing but also of living, as *what* and *whom* and *how* we see through the eyes of faith transform us accordingly.

4. SPIRITUAL FORMATION IN A POSTMODERN CONTEXT

Spiritual formation is shaped and affected by contextual and cultural changes. Postmodernity refers to such a profound change, accompanied by ambivalence and ambiguity (Engeland 2006:55). Postmodern consciousness entails an awareness of the fragileness of humankind, the relativity of knowledge and capability of humankind to create and destroy at the same time. This situation of ambivalence and ambiguity demands more than what the entertainment and consumer culture can offer and therefore shapes the spiritual quest today. As mentioned earlier the intensity with regards to spirituality is because of the fact that people today search seriously for a living and vital relationship with God because they feel empty (Rice 1991:21). According to Sheldrake (1991:11) "postmodernity allows Christianity to be itself in a way modernity never could". Howard (2009:14) describes the challenges of postmodernity as the crisis of meaning, a time of uncertainty and re-definition regarding the frameworks within which we understand and live our lives. The quest for meaning is thus one of the central themes in the postmodern context. According to Howard (2009:15) meaning has to do with how things fit together. He explains meaning as the interplay between our perspectives on the nature of things in general, our fundamental values, the social system that surrounds us and the particulars of the life we are living. The interplay of these various factors creates a sense of stability. In a crisis of meaning this stability is not there and we do not know how things fit together. In times when people are looking for meaning they tend to focus on the mystery, otherness or transcendence of God more than what they know about him, find comfort in experience rather than in knowledge. Bramer (2007:356) describes this shift as follows: "Society has been in a reactive shift from modernism with its privileging of rationalism and objectivism to postmodernism with its greater emphasis on subjectivity, connectivity, and the role of subconscious. Historically, Christian education has been embedded in modernism while spiritual formation seems more in tune with postmodernism".

Spiritual validity and authenticity for the postmodern spiritual seeker are measured by standards of subjectivity and not doctrinal formulations (England 2006:60). It means that individuals want to be free to choose elements of spiritual traditions that are experienced as relevant. Wright (2006:15) confirms that this understanding of spirituality correlates with the postmodernist view that advocates for individuals to have the freedom to follow their own spiritual desires and mould themselves into the people they want or wish to be. According to this view spirituality is not understood in relation to some transcendent or universal essence, but in terms of the concrete existence of the individual. This kind of spiritual identity could be described as moving away from a theological understanding to a humanistic view of spirituality. Therefore we cannot assume that youth will just join the dogmatic positions Christian churches used to have on life issues. Youth are more informed about different religious traditions and life

in general from a very early stage of life because of the technological and information era we live in. For the purpose of this article it is important to point out the complications of such an individualistic view of spirituality. As Wright (2006:18) puts it: "[S]o long as spiritual identity is understood in terms of the subjectivity of personal inner-space and juxtaposed with the radical notion of freedom as emancipation from all forms of constraint, then the thesis that spiritual identity is necessarily bound up with question of ultimate truth will inevitably encounter opposition". What is however evident is that spiritual formation does not happen in a vacuum but is formed through "...various traditions, communities, language systems, narratives, world-views through which we seek to arrive at a better understanding of ourselves and the world that we indwell" (Wright 2006:19). This implies that spiritual formation is relational in nature. This leads Wright (2006:21) to the understanding of spirituality as the development of relationships of the individual, within community and in tradition.

The more humanistic, subjective and individualistic view of spirituality however brings particular challenges to Christian spiritual formation as Engeland (2006:62) points out, namely "to develop the capacity for *listening awareness and respect* as well as *critical discernment* in context dialogical communities". England (2006:61) proposes that we need to keep the questions of human nature and identity alive in this postmodern context, where so much change is taking place which places identity formation and spiritual formation under stress. He eloquently describes the postmodern seeker as *wanderer* on a *journey, characterized* by *perpetual departure,* which is at home anywhere and nowhere. Grenz (2002:87-93) sees the challenges to a Christian understanding of spiritual formation as follows: a revisiting of what is understood as Christian spirituality and what can form the central point of conversation between Christian theology and its seemingly secular counterpart? Although it seems that the post-modern spiritual seeker (wanderer) differs from the classical Christian pilgrim both are human beings marked by desire and existential uneasiness (England 2006:62). It is in this postmodern context where youth ministry can focus on spiritual formation as an important element. Youth ministry asks for contextual sensitivity almost more than any other kind of ministry. With contextual sensitivity I mean, having knowledge about the local and global context and how it affects human life in the broadest sense of the word and the development stage of the specific target group of ministry. For the purpose of this article it is necessary to outline in the next section why spiritual formation is vital for Youth ministry today.

5. WHY SHOULD SPIRITUAL FORMATION BE CENTRAL TO YOUTH MINISTRY?

Since the establishment of youth as a social category it has been mostly perceived with ambivalence and is most times described as problematic and a group that is in need of intervention (Cloete 2012:2) This becomes even more a case in point as youth culture starts to emerge, a culture in which the youth live their lives differently from how their parents, or the adult culture they were born into, did. Youth culture here refers to a way of living by the youth; in other words their lifestyle, how they talk, dress and the values behind this lifestyle (Cloete 2012:2). As Tapscott cited by Gushiken (2010:3190) explains: "Adolescents are often viewed as immature, lacking focus and direction. This gives concern and condescension on part of parents and teachers that lead to educational approaches that attempt to survive or solve the adolescent's experience, rather than embrace it... ". Meyers (2012:2) argues that this negative construct of adolescence, namely "the assumption that it [is] primarily a period of life defined by narcissism, storm and stress, moratorium and consumption" is one of the main sources of suffering by adolescence. This narrow view of adolescence also influences youth ministry and can easily lead to a shallow theological appreciation, instead of a view of youth as spiritual beings

with capabilities and dignity. Dallas Willard (1998:79) indicates that spirituality is "something we cannot escape, regardless of how we think and feel about it. It is our nature and our destiny". We all are spiritual beings – also adolescents. Therefore, spiritual formation is not some kind of trick, tool or strategy that can be employed in youth ministry, but is an integral part of our human existence. Spiritual formation is a process that we should be aware of in youth ministry, not as something that we can accomplish through the ministry, but of which we are a part of and in service of. Spiritual formation gives an opportunity to youth ministry to nurture youth in their distinct developmental phase, as will become clearer in the last part of the article, and in doing so treat them with dignity. In the last section of this article I would outline 2 foci of spiritual formation that makes it so valuable for youth ministry.

6. SPIRITUAL FORMATION'S FOCUS ON INTEGRATION AND IDENTITY FORMATION

Adolescence is described from a psychological perspective as the period where the development task is that of identity formation. According to Engeland (2006:53) there are significant areas of overlap and common challenges between the spiritual quest and personal identity formation, because "the process of working out a personal identity inevitably implies interaction with core issues of spirituality". These connections he describes as the process of the social culture and the existential web. Engeland (2006:54) summarizes the connections between spiritual formation and identity formation as follows: "[B]oth are dependent on *relational interactions* on a personal level; both are embedded in social *processes and culture traditions* and both are in continuous dialogue with the *language* and *symbolic universes* that a given culture offers for the project of self-interpretation and life integration." Gushiken shares this view that identity formation is primarily an internal pursuit for the meaning of life and thus a spiritual endeavour: "The adolescent phase involves a wrestling with personal ideology as youth strive to arrange their beliefs into a cohesive and consistent whole. This pursuit for identity is natural and necessary and often times involves a spiritual pursuit" (2010:319-320). Identity formation is therefore not just about learning to be an adult or life skills, but about fundamental and existential questions concerning life and the meaning thereof. Mcfarlane (2009:40) shares the same line of thought on identity formation "as an essential part of discovering who God is". Most young people do not get to an integrated and Christ-centred view of themselves because of the lack of opportunity and nurturing context to assist them in this task. Malan Nel (2001:147), in describing the agogical principle of Scripture, echoes the same understanding, namely that identity formation and faith formation (here referred to as spiritual formation) are interrelated processes and result in *becoming* (underscoring the process) who we already are in Christ. Gushiken (2010:323), using the theory of Loder (1998), confirms that identity formation needs a spiritual foundation in order to discover who you are (identity) in the face of God (who God is). Spiritual formation and identity formation are thus not seen as identical processes, nor opposing or competing processes, but rather as interrelated and complementary (Engeland 2006:59). Youth ministry sometimes neglects this connection and tries to focus on the spiritual without recognizing how these two processes are interrelated. Youth ministry could help to focus on real life issues and experiences of teenagers and not only on cognitive processes of knowing or behavioural changes, by creating spaces where teenagers can discover themselves in the face of God.

7. SPIRITUAL FORMATION IS COMMUNITY-ORIENTED AND INTERGENERATIONAL

It was outlined earlier that the postmodern seeker seems to be focused on a more subjective, individualistic spirituality. Christian spiritual formation, however, is an active process whereby

the individual is involved in his/her own development, while taking place together with other human beings, in other words as much as it is an individual journey it is simultaneously always with the other. As Dykstra (2005:39) puts it: "Faith and the life of faith are communal before they are individual". According to Grenz (2002:95) "[t]he claim that spirituality is a communal project is endemic to merely all Christian traditions". In the light of the communal nature of Christian spirituality, I would argue that involvement in communities of faith is crucial in the process of personal identity formation and spiritual formation as two complementary processes in specifically the life of the adolescent. This correlates with the understanding of Christian spirituality as communal and therefore intergenerational. When we meet the other we discover ourselves as well as God. Then we are in a better position to figure out where we fit into life and what contributions we can make to the greater good of creation of which we are part.

Generational fragmentation is very common today, especially within the church. According to Glassford & Barger-Elliot (2011:365) generational fragmentation manifests itself on two levels in the church namely, first in the form of age-specific ministry (where age groups are separated), and secondly, on a spiritual level (where people on different levels of spiritual development are separated). These two forms of fragmentation are interrelated as both have to do with the separation of younger and older people. As mentioned earlier the postmodern view of spirituality is individualistic and thus not geared towards community. Glassford & Barger-Elliot (2011:366) put it as follows: "[P]ostmodernism has fuelled a shift in emphasis from the needs of the community to the primacy of the individual". In this view the church is viewed as a voluntary organization which has to meet the individual's needs, otherwise there is no commitment of the individual. In such a context generational fragmentation is inevitable. Youth ministry could even be seen as one of the ministries that particularly creates generational fragmentation in churches, because of its age specific ministry. Although there were certain positives with regards to age specific ministry, the downside is more severe as it divides people in the church where there should be unity in/amidst diversity. This also fosters the assumption that one generation is so different from the other that it is impossible to be together (Glassford & Barger-Elliot (2011:366). I would suggest that youth ministry should create spaces of dialogue and intergenerational contact that counter this individualistic approach and foster Christian spiritual formation which is community oriented. If youth ministry really wants to be of value to the youth it must understand the value of community across generational lines. Westerhoff (1976:53) states: "[T]rue community necessitates the presence and interaction of three generations." He describes the third generation as the generation of memory, the second as the generation of the present, and the first as the generation of vision. All three generations are needed in the community of faith. In order to live as a believer, contact with others longer on the road of spiritual formation is not optional, but critical. As Glassford & Barger-Elliot (2011:376) remarks: "Faith formation is not an accident". It will not happen along the way, youth needs to be among believers to "catch" (see and experience) what it is to live as believer in your everyday life, not only in church. The community of faith could be a primary context where youth learn to live within a community and discover themselves and God through belonging. Spiritual formation where community is central helps and guides youth with regards to real life issues and focuses on the presence of God in the ambiguous messiness and beauty of everyday life. It is as being part of the community of believers that youth are given an opportunity to become familiar with the Christian narrative through which they can interpret their own story and see it from a different perspective by the grace of God for which the community of faith exists.

8. CONCLUSION

From literature it seems evident that there is a great interest in spirituality today. This does not

necessarily mean Christian spirituality as the expression "secular spirituality" (Grenz 2002:92) is also used in the discourse on spirituality. Though the main argument of the article is that identity formation – as primarily a developmental task of adolescence – is also a spiritual process, it also became clear, as Grenz (2002:92) indicates, that the postmodern context is marked by identity chaos which causes all people, not only teenagers, to seek personal integration. The challenges posed by the postmodern subjective and individualistic spirituality – especially to Christian understanding of spirituality – are also noteworthy. The focus on spirituality today could help us to appreciate our humanness in new ways as it does not only refer to certain knowledge about a higher power, but in the case of Christian spirituality rather focuses on our experience of life as humans before God. It could potentially counter fragmentation and foster personal integration, especially in teenagers today.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Barton, R.H., 2009. It begins with You! How the spiritual formation of the Pastor Effects the spiritual formation of the congregation. *Common Ground Journal.* v7:26-36.

Bramer, P. D. G., 2007. Christian Formation: Tweaking the Paradigm. *Christian Education Journal CEJ,* Series 3, Vol.4 (2):352-363.

Brümmer, V., 2010. Spirituality and the Hermeneutics of Faith. *HTS.* Vol. 66 (1): 1-5.

Cloete, A., 2012. Youth culture, media and sexuality: What could faith communities contribute? *HTS.* Vol. 68 (2): 1-6.

Dykstra, C., 2005. 2nd edition. *Growing in the Life of Faith: Education and Christian Practices.* Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press.

England, L. G., 2006., The Search for Identity and Authentic Spirituality in a Post-modern Context. In Tirri, K. 2006. *Religion Spirituality and Identity.* Oxford: Peter Lang.

Glassford, D., & Barger-Elliot, L., 2011. Towards Intergenerational Ministry in a Post- Christian Era. *Christian Education Journal CEJ.* Series 3, Vol.8 (2):364-378.

Grenz, S. J., 2002. Christian spirituality and the quest for identity: towards a spiritual-theological understanding of life in Christ. *Baptist History and Heritage* 37.2:87-103.

Gushiken, K. M., 2010. Nurturing Spiritual Identity Formation in Youth Curriculum from the Theological-Psychological Approach of James Loder. *Christian Education Journal CEJ.* Series 3, Vol.7, (2) 319-333.

Hansen, B. C., (ed) 1990. *Modern Christian Spirituality: Methodological and Historical Essays.* Georgia: Scholars Press.

Howard, E, B., 2009. Spiritual Formation and the Meaning of Life. *Common Ground Journal.* v7:14-25.

Junkin, M. F., 2009. An Active Approach to Spiritual Formation: Encountering, Experiencing and Extended God. *Common Ground Journal,* v7: 85-96

Kourie, C. & Ruthenburgh, *Contemporary Christian Spirituality: An "Encompassing Field".* In De Villiers, P.G.R; Kourie, C.E.T & Lombaard,C (ed). 2008. The spirit that empowers: Perspectives on spirituality. *Acta Theologica,* Supplement 11: 76-93.

Loder, J.E, (1998). *The logic of the spirit.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Macfarlane, C., 2009. Adolescent Spiritual formation: Creating Space for God to Speak. *Common Ground Journal (CEJ).* v7: 37-47.

Makau- Olwendo, A., 2009. Influencing the Laity's Theologizing for Spiritual empowerment: An African Perspective. *Common Ground Journal,* v 7:113-126.

Meyers, J., 2011. Ten Theses on Youth and the Church. Dialog, 50:110-111.doi:10.1111/j.1540-6385.2011.00593.x, visited on 19/4/2012.

Nel, M., 2000. *Youth Ministry: An inclusive congregational approach.* Pretoria: Kitskopie.

Niemi, H., 2006., *Identity formation and Religion Education.* In Tirri, K. 2006. *Religion Spirituality and Identity.* Oxford: Peter Lang.

Rice, H. L., 1991. *Reformed Spirituality: An Introduction for believers.* Kentucky: John Knox Press.

Sheldrake, P. 2000. What is Spirituality? In Collins, K. 2000. *Exploring Christian Spirituality: An Ecumenical Reader. G*rand Rapids:Baker Books.

Sheldrake, P., 1991. *Spirituality and Theology: Christian Living and the Doctrine of God.* London: Longman

and Todd Ltd.

Westerhoff, J. H., 1976. *Will our children have faith?* New York: The Seabury Press.

Willard, D., 1998. *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering our hidden life in God.* New York: Harper San Francisco.

Willard, D., 2002. *Renovation of the heart: Putting on the character of Christ.* Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress.

Wilhoit. J. 2008. *Spiritual Formation as if the Church mattered: Growing in Christ through Community.* Michigan: Baker Academic.

Wright, A., 2006., Spiritual identity and the pursuit of truth. In Tirri, K. 2006. *Religion Spirituality and Identity.* Oxford: Peter Lang.

KEY WORDS
Spirituality
spiritual formation
intergenerational
identity formation
youth ministry

TREFWOORDE
Spiritualiteit
spirituele vorming
intergenerasioneel
identitietsvorming
jeugbediening

acloete@sun.ac.za
021-8082614

Coertzen, P
Stellenbosch University

Dordt and South Africa. The nature and challenges for Reformed Church polity in South Africa

ABSTRACT

Under the title *Dordt and South Africa – the nature and challenges for Reformed Church Polity in South Africa* this presentation starts by sketching the context in which the Church Order of Dordt was drawn up and what the role and meaning of the Church order was for the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. Secondly attention is paid to the role of the Church Order of Dordt in the history of South Africa – given it's context and meaning in the Netherlands. Given the background of the first two parts the presentation then goes on to identify new developments and challenges for Reformed Church Polity in South Africa such as the effect of the new SA Constitution that was accepted in 1994/1996; and the effect of guaranteed freedom of religion on matters like the debate between religions; the identity of the church and church unity.

1. THE CHURCH ORDER OF DORDT (1619) IN CONTEXT AND MEANING

1.1 The context of church and state relations

 The fourth national Synod in the Netherlands was held in 1586 in the Hague under difficult military and political conditions. The war against Spain wasn't going too well and in 1584 Prince William of Orange was assassinated. It became clear that the States-General could not contain the situation. They consulted first with Henry III of France and then with Queen Elizabeth I of England to take over the sovereignty in the Netherlands. Both refused but Elizabeth sent Robert Dudley, the Earl of Leicester together with 5000 troops to the Netherlands. According to Williston Walker his rule was a failure and he returned to England in 1587 (Walker 1970:386).

Leicester however, did support the Reformed Church in its quest for greater independency form the authorities (De Jong 1972:168) and he clearly realised that a well ordered church was necessary to cope with a variety of viewpoints that threatened to tear the church apart. It was on his instruction that a National Synod met in the Hague from 20 June to 1 August 1586 after putting pressure on various provincial states to support the calling of a national synod (Pont 1981:158-159).

After the departure of the Earl of Leicester from the Netherlands in 1587 the relationship between state and church in the Netherlands got worse. In Holland the rulers were viewed as wanting to rule over the church while the rulers were wary that the church wanted to much of a say in political matters. By the end of 1589 the rulers in Utrecht for instance put off all reformed ministers and decided that in future they would only call "peace loving ministers". In the rural areas of Utrecht the owner of the church had the right to take the name of a minister of his choice to the authorities for approval while in the cities it was seen as the right of the magistrate to appoint a minister. No classes were established and no provincial synod could be held (De Jong 1972:183-174) and the authorities were bent on keeping church discipline in hand (Bakhuizen van den Brink 1967:276). What in fact was happening was that the system of church-state relations dating from the times of Constantine was being re-established in the Netherlands

– the state protected the church but at the same time also controlled the church.

Between 1586 and 1619 society in the Netherlands became more and more divided between the strict Calvinists ("preciezen" also called "kerkelijken") who stood for a strict interpretation of the Confession and who was against the interference of the state in the matters of the church; and the more tolerant "rekkelijken" also called the "politieken" who was afraid of confessional coercion from the side of the church and wished the protection of the authorities against such a possibility (Bakhuizen van den Brink 1967:276) Casper Coolhaes (1534-1615) was a supporter of these views. He was put off as minister in Leiden for choosing sides with the authorities and because of his heterodox views. In society itself various humanistic traditions dating from Erasmus of Rotterdam could be found and Anabaptism was wide spread. All of this manifested itself in an emphasis on the more practical aspects of religion, a disinclination towards sharp creedal definitions and a more tolerant attitude which can for example be found in the ideas of Dirck Coornhert (1522-1590). These ideas came to their fullest expression in the work of Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609) and his followers. Regarding predestination Arminius accentuated the responsibility and free will of man. God chooses a person out of grace for the sake of Christ but in this He takes into account the faith of the person which He foresaw (Documenta Reformatoria 1960:277-280).

A conflict between Arminius and his Calvinist colleague, at the university of Leyden, Franz Gomarus sprang up over the doctrine of predestination (Williston Walker 1970:399). Gomarus maintained that God had decided from eternity whom to elect and whom to reject according to His will. Even the faith through which a person is saved is a free gift of God's grace for the elect (Documenta Reformatoria 1960:287-288). Soon the colleagues were in a bitter conflict which affected not only the country but also the international reformed world. At this time both parties insisted on a general/national Synod to solve the matter. Gomarus and his followers wanted a decision from synod in their favour while the followers of Arminius saw a synod as a place where a conference could be held about the confession and which could lead to a revision of the confession.

After the death of Arminius in 1609 Johannes Uytenbogaert (1557-1644) and Simon Episcopius (1583-1643) became the leaders of the Arminians. The "Arminian"-views were systematized, opposing the emphasis on minutiae of doctrine and viewing Christianity primarily as a force for moral transformation.

In 1610 at the insistence of the eminent Dutch statesman form the states of Holland and a supporter of religious tolerance, Johan van Oldenbarneveldt (1547-1619), Uytenbogaert, Episcopius and 41 of their sympathizers drew up a statement of their faith called the "Remonstrance" (Declaration) for which the party gained the name "Remonstrants". Van Oldenbarneveldt did not deem a national synod necessary and was of opinion that the matter could be settled in the province of Holland. The Remonstrance was directed to the states of Holland (Nauta 1949:52). The document was a summary of Arminius's views, a plea for a revision of the confession of faith and the catechism and also an expression of their view that the states had the highest authority over ecclesiastical matters (Documenta Reformatoria 1960:290-293). Uytenbogaert also stated his opinion in a separate publication that the government stood higher than all ecclesiastical gatherings and as such should have the final say in ecclesiastical matters (Blei 2006:30).

The Calvinistic opposition under the leadership of people like Petrus Plancius in Amsterdam, Festus Hommius in Leiden and Sybrandus Lubertus, a professor in Franeker issued a Contra-Remonstrance on 11 March 1611 in which they opposed the views of the Remonstrants, rejected talk of a review of the confession and advocated the independence the church to decide for itself on matters of dogma and doctrine. They recognized the authority of the government regarding

exterior matters but denied that it had the authority to express itself in ecclesiastical differences regarding doctrine (Documenta Reformatoria 1960:293-300; Bakhuizen van den Brink 1967:277; Nauta 1947:53).

In more than one city the authorities who favoured the Remonstrants and made it very difficult for the Contra-Remonstrants. In the States of Holland provincial synods were prohibited since 1608 (Nauta 1947:53-54). On 23 July 1617 Prince Maurits openly attended a worship service of Contra Remonstrants in the Hague thereby showing his support for them (Nauta 1947:54). The conflict soon affected the whole of the Netherlands as it took on political dimensions with sharp differences between Prince Maurits of Orange who sided with the Calvinists and Johan van Oldenbarneveldt and Hugo Grotius who sided with the Arminians. In political terms Prince Maurits sided with the so called "national party" while Oldenbarneveldt and Grotius were the leaders of the "states rights" party which also included wealthy merchants. At that point in time the "national party" still wanted a National Synod to decide the controversy while Oldenbarneveldt and the provinces of Holland (excluding Amsterdam) and Utrecht held that each province should decide it's own religious affairs. In 1617 the states of Holland declared themselves against a National Synod through the so called "Scherpe Resolutie" and took steps to maintain order in the cities through the employment of city troops (Bakhuizen van den Brink 1967:278). Realising the danger of this for the Union Prince Maurits obtained the support of the States General and through a *coup d'état* in July 1618, overthrew the "states rights" party. Oldenbarneveldt was beheaded on May 13 1619, and Grotius condemned to life imprisonment in Loevestein, he escaped in 1621. The way was now open for the "States–General" to call the National Synod of Dordt of 1618-1619. The Contra Remonstrants were assured of victory at the synod, but in the end it meant that in future the holding of a national synod would also be subject to permission from the authorities and that permission would not be granted so that the development of the reformed Church in the Netherlands was also severely hampered. In July 1619 the States-General approved the Canons of Dordt . The government then also co-operated in the execution of disciplinary measures against the preachers of the Remonstant party who refused to resign as ministers. Those to whom the measures applied were banished from the country (Blei 2006:33). After the death of Prince Maurits in 1625 they returned and established themselves in 1634 in Amsterdam in an own theological seminary with Episcopius as professor (Nauta 1947:56). They did not receive official recognition until 1795 (Williston Walker 1970:400; Bakhuizen van den Brink 1967:278).

1.2 The ecclesiastical context of the Church Order of Dordt

To bring the various dispersed Dutch churches together in the sixteenth century, the Convent of Wezel was organised in 1568. This meeting was, what one can call a discussion forum between refugee Dutch ministers and elders from various places in Europe and England. At this meeting they formulated, according to the Ordonnaces Ecclésiastiques of Genève, certain stipulations for a Calvinistic church order (Bakhuizen van den Brink & Dankbaar 1967:273). The Convent of Wezel was followed by the first National Synod of the Netherlands in Emden (1571) with its church order – which in fact founded the Dutch Reformed Church, ready to enter the Netherlands as soon as that country was free from Spanish oppression. The character of that church is seen by some as clearly *Calvinistic.* others characterize it as *Presbyterian - anti-hierarchical* (Bakhuizen van den Brink & Dankbaar, 1967:273), while Leo Koffeman see it as Presbyterian-Synodical (Koffeman, 2009:71) meaning that the responsibility for leadership in the church rests with the church councils - the local churches are the presbyterium while the broader meetings are the expression of the Synodical character of this form of church government. The theology behind this form of church government is according to Koffeman the collegial exercise of authority

by the offices in the church (Koffeman 2009:72). The very first article of Emden is extremely important if we want to understand the reformed character of reformed church government and eventually the nature of the Church of Dordt . The way it is put in the church order it reads: "No church shall lord over another church; no minister of the word over another minister, no elder over another elder neither any deacon over another and everyone will be on guard for any suspicion and longing to lord." On the face of it the article forbids any lording of churches or offices over each other but behind this wording lies the most fundamental principle of the reformation namely that Jesus Christ is the only Lord and Head of the Church and none other. It is the insights of a John Calvin and the wording of the Dutch Confession article 30 – "We believe that true church ought to governed according to the spiritual order that our Lord taught us in his Word" – that lie behind this wording (Documenta Reformatoria 1960:192; Calvin 1559:Chapter 3, 1, 1317 Simpson; Dutch Confession of Faith art 30; Jonker 1965:12; Pont 1981:110). The Church Order of Emden also required from ministers to subscribe to either the Dutch or the French confession of faith while the either the Genevan or Heidelberg Catechism could be used for teaching purposes.

The National Synod of Dordtrecht (1618-1619) held in the city of Dordrecht was called together on the request of the States General. It took place in the Kloveniersdoelen (De Jong 1972:189) in two phases. The first phase was from 13 November 1618 until 5/9 May 1619 (Walker 1970:400). while the second phase started on 13 May 1619 and ended on 29 May of the same year. In total the Synod comprised of 180 sessions.(Pont 1981:168). For the first phase the states invited 23 theologians as representatives from England, Scotland, Nassau, Wetterau, the Palatine, Hesse, Bremen, Genève and Switzerland (Berkhof 1975:205) Representatives from the French Church were also invited to attend but were refused permission by the French authorities. The government was represented by no less that eighteen Political Commissioners. Also present in the Synod were 5 Dutch theologians, 37 ministers and 19 elders, amongst ministers and elders there were three Remonstrants. The chairperson of synod was Johannes Bogerman and the scribe Festus Hommius (Berkhof 1975:205). On 6 December a group of Remonstrant theologians were summoned to appear before Synod, in synod they were joined by the three representatives who were already in Synod. When the Remonstrants questioned the procedure and legitimacy of the synod they were sent away by Bogerman on 14 January 1619. A few days later this procedure was approved by governmental decree. The three Remonstrants in Synod also left in solidarity with their fellow party members (Blei 2006:31; Bakhuizen van den Brink 1967:278; Berkhof 1975:203). On 6 May 1619 the Canons (Doctrinal Rules) of Dordt were announced – this became the third confessional formula of the Reformed Church in the Netherlands next to the Dutch Confession of Faith (1561) (Confessio Belgica) and the Heidelberg Catechism (1563). In five chapters the Canons considers "divine election and rejection", "the death of Christ and salvation through Him", human depravity; conversion to God" and the perseverance of the saints."(Blei 2006:32).

In the second phase of the synod attention was given to matters like the Church Order and also the translation of the Bible . As far as the Church Order is concerned it came to a revision of the Church Order of Middelburgh (1586). In broad lines the Church Order remained unchanged and the typical reformed characteristics which was already present at the synod Emden was still there - the offices in the church, the task and authority of ecclesiastical assemblies at the various levels; confessional matters; the administration of the sacraments and Sunday worship and oversight and discipline in doctrine and way of life of church members and office bearers. The Church Order concludes with the prescription with which the Church Order of Emden had begun: "No church shall have any authority over other churches, no minister over other ministers, no elder or deacon over other elders or deacons (art 84) and article 30 on the functions of the

various levels of assemblies had already been formulated by the Synod of Dordrecht in 1578 (Blei 2006:33).

Nauta remarks that at Dordrecht the Contra-Remonstrants gained a convincing victory over the Remonstrants but on one point they could not score and that was on the authority of the state over Church matters (Nauta 1947:57). In the calling of a minister it was determined that a consultation with the local Christian government would be required. And after the choice had been made, subsequent approval had to be had not only from the members of the congregation but in the first instance form the same government (art 4). The government also obtained the right to have one or two of its representatives in the church council "to listen and to share in the deliberations of matters in the agenda" (art 37). The Governmental representatives of course had to be members of the congregation. A new article in the Church Order was article 28 which dealt with the relation of the church to the government. In the first part of article 28 it was stated that it was the office of a Christian government to advance and protect the ministry of the church. In the second part of the article a new emphasis is brought into a Reformed Church Order. The vocation of the church toward the government is described as consisting of two matters: firstly it was the duty of all ministers, elders and deacons to zealously and faithfully inculcate on the entire congregation the obedience, love and honour that they owe to magistrates (rulers). Secondly the ministers, elders and deacons by becoming respect (and correspondence) had to seek to waken and maintain the favour of the government toward the churches so that all hind-thoughts and mistrust could be avoided and concord be maintained for the wellbeing of the churches (article 28). (Blei 2006:33-36).

1.3 Preliminary Conclusion

Both with regard to the political and ecclesiastical situation in the Netherlands we find that the relationship between church and state played an exceptional role.

During the first part of the Synod of Dordt 1618-1619 when doctrinal matters were on the table it was the political situation that made it possible for the synod to be called, the Estates General invited the international representatives; they ratified the decisions of synod and they took disciplinary measures against the Remonstrants.

We have also seen to what extent the church was willing to write measures into the Church Order of Dordt that gave the state a very strong control over the church. It was in fact so strong that after Dordt 1618/1619 it was not possible for the Reformed Church to meet again in a national Synod.

2. THE CHURCH ORDER OF DORDT IN SOUTH AFRICA

2.1 Under the VOC (DEIC) 1652–1795

On 22 August 1650 the Dutch East Indian Company (DEIC) decided that for the sake of greater security and refreshments for their ships they would start a settlement at the Cape of Good Hope. (Vorster 1956:11). The Charter awarded to the DEIC on 22 December 1622 by the Estates General gave them full sovereignty with regard to navigation, trade and warfare in the areas to which they expanded but also obliged them to conserve the "public faith" (Vorster 1956:11). In practice this meant that DEIC or the Lords XVII also had full control over church matters in the places where they traded. Before describing what this meant in practice the question about a church order needs attention.

The Church order of Van Diemen was accepted in 1643 for The East Indies. It was done by Van Diemen without any consultation with the fatherland. The Church Order determined that for nearly any action by the churches the permission of the government was necessary, even for

the election of elders. The church in East India was completely controlled by the government. (Boetzelaar van Dubbeldam 1906:139) and thereby effectively lost its freedom. Vorster makes a very strong case that the Church Order of Van Diemen was never used at the Cape of Good Hope and that it was rather the Church Order of Dordt (1619) that guided the life of the church at the Cape. In 1710 a visiting minister, J Martens suggested in a meeting with the Governor and the Rev d'Ailly that the Church Order of Batavia could very well be used at the Cape since it was the nearest, at least until further clarity was obtained (Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen II:610). To this consideration the Rev d'Ailly responded "The Church Order can easily be found in the Acts and Post-acts of the Synod of Dordt – in exceptional cases they could however consult with the foreign brothers." (Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen II:612). Upon this the Political Council at the Cape decided on 10 March 1710 to ask the Lords XVII which Church Order must be used at the Cape – the one of the Fatherland or the one of Batavia (Van Diemen). On 30 March 1710 a letter was written to the Lords XVII, on 8 October 1710 they recognised receipt of the letter. They postponed their answer and eventually never gave an answer. From the questions asked and the information given it is clear that the church at the Cape was satisfied to keep to the church order of Dordt and that they did not really need anything else (Vorster 1956:83). It must however be clearly understood that the Church Order of Dordt was never officially accepted as a church order for the church at the Cape; the position was very similar to the situation in the Netherlands. Apart from the above mentioned request there are also other indications in the life of the Church at the Cape that they followed the Church Order of Dordt even if that Church Order was not accepted by Estates General and the different Provinces in the Netherlands and also was not applicable in all the synodical areas (Bakhuizen van den brink 1967:278). It is clear that the articles of Dordt were followed at the Cape with regard to preaching from the Catechism; house visitation before Holy Communion; the subscription of teachers to the Confessions of Faith. When in 1743 there was the attempt to introduce a combined meeting of the different church councils at the Cape it was the Church Order of Dordt that guided the meetings from 1745 to 1759 (Van der Watt 1976:43-44).

However, in spite of all of these indications that the church at the Cape took the Church Order of Dordt into account, the fact remains that it was never officially accepted at the Cape and the church was subjected to the rule of the DEIC in and through the Political Council. The DEIC protected the reformed religion in the areas where they worked but they also clearly controlled the reformed church, just as the authorities in the Netherlands both protected and controlled the Reformed Church.

Jan Riebeeck, as an official of the Dutch East Company, together with about two hundred Company employees, landed at the Cape to start a refreshment post for the fleets of the Company that passed the Cape on their way to and back from the east Hanekom 1965:290). Jan van Riebeeck was a member of the Reformed Church in the Netherlands and the Company which he served had it as a condition in their second Charter of 1622 that it was policy of the Company to advance the Reformed religion amongst the peoples of the countries where they did business.

Fact is that from 1652-1795 the responsibility for religion and the spiritual care for the people at the Cape resided with the Political Council under the leadership of the Commander (Vorster 1956:38). The DEIC appointed sick comforters and ministers in the various places. The ministers appointed by the DEIC were not in the first place ministers of the reformed church but officials of the Company who had a rank equal to that of a vice-merchant. The churches in the Netherlands also had no rights which they could claim with regard to ministers and sick comforters in the service of the DEIC (Boetzelaar van Dubbeldam 1906:119), they were subject to officials in the company who had a higher rank than they. The Commanders assumed the right to give

sick comforters the right to administer baptism; they appointed and also dismissed ministers; ministers and sick comforters could receive no other instruction from classes in the Netherlands than those approved by the Lords XVII, in any civil case they were subject to the authorities of the Company both on sea an on land; at any time the Lords XVII could recall them without giving reasons; they were allowed correspondence with a classes involved in a matter but the classis could only be consulted in an advisory capacity.

In 1689 the Political Council refused the request of the French refugees to install their own Church Council in Drakenstein (Resolutie Pol. Raad 28 Nov 1689). When the local churches installed a combined meeting between them they had in mind a structure equal to a classis . When they informed the classis of Amsterdam of their achievement they received praise and blessings from there. The classis of Amsterdam did however advise them not to call the combined meeting a classis but rather a "coetus" or a "convention" – the reason being that they could not perform all the duties of a classis such as the examination of candidates and ministers for the ministry or the appointment and instalment of ministers. In answer to this the churches at the Cape decided to call their meeting a Combined Meeting. In practice it performed the duties of a classis. In constituting the meeting they followed the prescriptions of the Church Order of Dordt and on their agenda they treated all the matters that usually came on the agenda of a classis meeting. The combined meeting also decided to draw up bylaws for church visitation. In 1759 the combined meeting was suddenly prohibited by the Political Council at the Cape. The reasons they gave was that the costs for the meeting was to high and that the meeting did not answer to its purpose (Van der Watt 1976:38). It was clearly an attempt by the Political Council to keep the church in a state of subordinance. This decision had a serious impact on the development of the church in South Africa. .

About the situation in the eighteenth century McCall Theal, as quoted by Vorster, writes: "The Church was in one sense merely an engine of the State, and was always and in every sense subordinate to the Council of Polity" (Vorster 1956:39). Apart from the matters mentioned above, many more examples of the Council of Polity controlling ecclesiastical matters can be added (Vorster 1956:39-43).

All of the above attests to the fact that between the years 1652-1795 the Political Council at the Cape had a typically Constantinian approach towards the church in South Africa: one of not merely protecting the church but also controlling it, just as it was the case in the Netherlands.

2.2 After 1795

After 1795 the rule of the DEIC at the Cape came to an end it was followed by the first British occupation from 1795-1803; after that the Batavian rule under Governor de Mist and from 1806 the English colonial rule. Under all these rulers the same approach with regard to the church was followed – they protected the church but they also controlled the church – many examples can be quoted.

2.3 The Synod of 1824

The decision of the Political Council in 1759 to stop the meetings of the Combined Meeting of churches clearly hampered the normal development of church at the Cape because it was only in 1824 that the church got permission from the then English authorities to hold a synod. In 1822 the three ministers of the church in Cape Town, Abraham Faure, Berrange and Von Manger wrote a letter to the governor asking his permission to call a meeting of a Synod or a General Meeting in terms of Church Order drawn up by De Mist (1804) article 46. As reasons they mentioned that Church Councils and Synods are the ways through which Presbyterian Churches are governed; it would help to overcome differences; advance religious education

and promote unity amongst the different ministers. Since the loss and support of the classes and synods in the Netherlands the ministers are more or less left to themselves and church councils have no "higher" body which they can join. Also the numbers of the Dutch Reformed Church were growing and more and more religious bodies, previously unknown were making their appearance and that could disrupt the existing order. Permission was granted and the first synod of the Dutch Reformed Church met on 2 November 1824. In the drawing up of articles for the management of the church the meeting took as basis the *Algemene Reglement* of the Hervormde Kerk in the Netherlands but when the Praeses and Scribe wrote to the governor after the meeting they requested that the General Church Order of the National Synod of Dordrecht also be printed by the government press "being a fundamental piece of all our regulations to which each of us is held" ("als zijnde een fundamenteel stuk van alle de Regulatiën onzer Kerk, waaraan elk onzer gehouden is" (Moorrees 1937:554). So it is clear that in 1824 the Church Order of Dordt still played an important role in the mind of those gathered at the synod of 1824.

2.4 Ordinance 7 of 1843
In 1843 the Church Ordinance of De Mist was replaced by the Ordinance no 7 of 1843. This Ordinance apparently made the church more free from control by the government such as that Political Commissioners no longer took a seat in church meetings, and the church received the power to regulate it's own internal affairs. The Ordinance was presented under the heading of "The Separation of Church and State Petition". Yet in practice the church remained subject to government in as far as the government controlled the church through the so called power of the purse and the privilege of presenting ministers to congregations. Furthermore the Ordinance restricted the church with regard to its faith character, its organization, it's competence and its geographical limits (Kleynhans 1973:80-84). It was generally accepted that Ordinance nr 7 of 1843 severely restricted the freedom of the church (Van der Watt 1980:44 – 46).

The Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa (The Cape Province) eventually decided on 21 October 1957 to ask the Government to revoke Ordinance nr 7 of 1843. "The Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa declares and confirms its historical view that this Church as a organized body had an independent existence in own competence even though always subjected to the articles of law applicable to the church. Since the existence of the church is not dependent on the articles of law, Synod, given the legal advice which was obtained, mandates the Moderature to approach the authorities to revoke Ordinance nr 7 of 1843" (Kleynhans 1973:95)

2.5 11 February 1859
The Reformed Churches in South Africa (Die Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika) was established on 11 February 1859 in Rustenburg in the then Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek. Their confessional base was and still is, the three Formulas of Unity while the Church Order of Dordt, as amended for South African conditions, was accepted as Church Order (Vorster 2008: 383; Vorster 1999:2-9). This remains the position up until today.

2.6 1948
In 1948 the Nationalist Party came into power and very soon started to enforce its policy of apartheid on the whole of the country, including the churches. It cannot be said that there was no tolerance of different faith convictions in the country or that churches did not have the freedom to for instance determine their own church orders but all along the government was controlling the churches through its policies. Sadly it must be said that in many cases Afrikaans speaking churches not only subscribed to the policies of the government but also encouraged them.

2.7 Even if there was more freedom for churches the Constantinian approach of protect and control remained the main characteristic of church-state relations.

2.8 Nov-Des 1959

On May 1959 the Council of Dutch Reformed Churches meeting in Bloemfontein accepted a concept church order for the government of the Dutch Reformed Church. Willie Jonker comments that this concept church order would not only serve as a basis for the organic unification of the Dutch Reformed Churches in the different provinces of the country but that it would also serve as a strengthening and establishment of the reformed character of the Church (Jonker 1959:795), enabling the church to be governed by the Word of God through its church order. He then continues to point out that it was the explicit intention of the drafting commission to link as close as possible to the Church Order of Dordt. He writes "The Church Order of Dordt is without doubt the best and purest historical formulation and summary of the Scriptural principles on which Reformed Church government rests in spite of a few articles which could be formulated in another way, due to the changes in time." (Jonker 1959:796). He continues by saying that the Dutch Reformed Church, in spite of not having the Church Order of Dordt as a document never lost the spirit and main principles of the Church Order of Dordt (Jonker 1959:796). The new concept church order that was approved of, tried to stay as closely as possible to Dordt in its different chapters and sometimes even in the way in which articles are formulated (Jonker 1959:796). It must of course also be kept in mind that the new Church Order of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (1957-1959) also had a big influence on the new Church Order of the Dutch Reformed Church. Nevertheless is can be said that the Church Order of Dordt with its reformed principles formed and still forms the foundation of the Church Order of the Dutch Reformed Church. Jonker mentions a few points where he thought that the Church Order of the Dutch Reformed Church could still be brought closer to the principles Dordt – one being that there should not be a permanent moderature after the meeting of synod (Jonker 1959{835). It is interesting that at the meeting of the General Synod in October 2011 exactly this change was approved of in the Church Order which shows that the Dutch Reformed Church is continuously looking at its Church order to bring it in line with the Reformed principles of church government.

3. NEW DEVELOPMENTS SOUTH AFRICA

In 1994/1996 a new Constitution for South Africa was approved of. With the new Constitution a new era for Church State relations in SA started – actually not only new church-state relations but new relations between the state and religions as well as between religion and religion. In the Constitution religion (churches is dealt with in article 9(3) (Constitution 1996 art 9(3) where it is stated there can be no discrimination against a person on grounds of religion; article 31 which says that a person belonging to a religious community has the right to enjoy and practice their religion, form, join and maintain religious associations and other organs of society (Constitution 1996:art 31). Article 185 provides for a Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities (Constitution,1996:art 185). Very important for religions in SA is article 15 of the Constitution which states (1) "Everyone has the right to freedom of conscience, religion, thought, belief and opinion." (2) "religious observances may be conducted at state aided-institutions, provided that (a) those observances follow the rules made by the appropriate public authorities; (b) they are conducted on an equitable basis and (c) attendance is free and voluntary. The third part of article 15 allows for marriages in South Africa to be concluded under any tradition, or a system of religious, personal or family law. (Constitution 1996:art 15). Also important for religions is the fact that article 7 (2) of the

Constitution reads that "The state must respect, protect, promote and fulfil the rights in the Bill of Rights (Constitution 1996:art 7(2)). All of these are very strong securities and opportunities for religions in South Africa since 1994/1996. Added to all of this there is also art 234 of the Constitution which, for the deepening of the culture of democracy, allows for Parliament to adopt Charters of Rights consistent with the provisions of the Constitution. Religions in SA took up this challenge and in the past few years developed a *South African Charter of Religious Rights and Freedoms* which they endorsed and now are in the process of taking the Charter to Parliament. The Dutch Reformed Church has already decided to make the Charter part of their official documentation and that it be taken up in the Church Order Book of the Church (Agenda General Synod 2011:286).

Freedom of religion implies the right of religions to the free exercise of the religion; the right for a plurality of religions to exist in one country; the equality of all religions under the Constitution and before the laws of the land; the separation of religion and the state and the disestablishment of religion by the state (Witte, Religion and the American Constitutional Experiment, 37). For a religion as such, be it a church or whatever other religion, freedom of religion entails institutionally that it has a right to: (i) to a creed/creeds, which defines the accepted cadre of beliefs and values concerning the ultimate origin, meaning, and purpose of life; (ii) a cult, which defines the appropriate rituals, liturgies and patterns of worship and devotion that give expression to the beliefs; (iii) a code of conduct, one can also call it a church order in the case of churches, which defines the appropriate individual and social habits of those who profess the creed and practice the cult and lastly (iv) the right to be a confessional community which defines the group/individuals who embrace and live out the creed, the cult and the code of conduct both on their own and with fellow believers. (Witte xxv).

4. IN CONCLUSION

From 1652–1994, actually one can say from 1578, the state authorities always had a say in the affairs of reformed churches. It was a typical Constantine situation of the state protecting churches but at the same time also controlling them.

The new situation in South Africa for religions brings about most definite freedoms not only for churches but for all religions at the same time it also brings certain obligations. It is of little avail if religions have constitutional guarantees of freedom of religion and a *Charter of Religious Rights and Freedoms* which spells out what the religious rights are that religions can claim but religions themselves do nothing to appropriate those rights. If religions do not claim and use the religious space provided to them in the Constitution and the *Charter of Religious Rights and Freedoms* the consequence will be that any right that they claim will be adjudicated in terms of the laws of the land. A Religion for instance cannot limit the rights of employees in terms of labour relations if its own order does give proof that freedom of religion in terms of labour relations has not been appropriated by the religion in its rules. A Religion can also not claim special rights with regard to disciplinary hearings and limit for instance the rights of accused with regard to legal representation if it does not show proof that it has used the right to freedom of religion to make sure that its disciplinary hearings are done in accordance with its faith identity. All of this makes it very important for churches and religions to make very sure that their church order or rules of order are in conform it to their faith identity. That is what the Church Order of Dordt wanted to do with regard to the life of reformed churches – unfortunately the relationship between state and church did not always allow for that. Freedom of religion in a Constitutional state creates the opportunity for churches and other religions to create their own order as long as it can be shown that the order is based in the faith identity of the church or religion

and that the limitation of the rights of members are also in conformity with the church's faith identity. Specifically for the Dutch Reformed Church there is now the guaranteed freedom to lay down their rules for matters such as church unification, labour relations, disciplinary actions, theological training etc., as a matter of fact for the whole life of the Church.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bakhuizen van den Brink, J N & Dankbaar W F, 1976. *Handboek der Kerkgescjiedenis Deel III, (Reformatie en Contra Reformatie).* Bert Bakker, Daamen N.V.:Den Haag.

Bakhuizen van den Brink e.a.(red), 1960. *Documenta Reformatoria Dl 1. Teksten uit de Geschiedenis van Kerk en Theologie in de Nederlanden sedert de Hervorming.* J.H. Kok: Kampen

Berkhof,H & Otto J de Jong, 1975. Geschiedenis der Kerk (negende Druk), C F Callenbach, B.V.: Nijkerk.

Blei, K, 2006. *The Netherlands Reformed Church 1571-2005.* (Translated by Allan J. Jansen). William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids,MI/Cambridge: U.K.

Boetzelaar van Dubbeldam, C W Th Baron van, 1906. *De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland en de Zending in de dagen der Oost-Indische Compagnie.* P den Boer: Utrecht.

Calvyn, J.1559, *Institusie van die Christelike Godsdiens.* (Vertaal deur H. W. Simpson,1991. Nasionale Media, Potchefstroom

Coertzen,P,2007. Freedom of Religion – then and now. In: *NGTT. Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996,* Act 108 of 1996

De Jong, Otto, 1972. *Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis.* G F Callenbach N.V.:Nijkerk.

Jonker, W.D. 1959. *Die Nuwe Kerkorde dl I,II &III.* In: Die Kerkbode, 18 November 1959, p759 – 796 & 800; Die Kerkbode 25 November 1959, p 835-837; Die Kerkbode, 2 Desember 1959, p 870- 871 & 883.

Jonker, W.D.,1965. *Om die Regering van Christus in Sy Kerk.* Mededelings van die Universiteit van Suid-Afrika, Pretoria.

Koffeman,Leo J, 2009. *Het Goed Recht van de Kerk. Een theologisch inleiding op het kerkrecht.* Kok: Kampen

Moorrees, A, 1937. *Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika 1652–1873.* S.A. Bybelvereniging: Kaapstad.

Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis, 1988. In: *Handboek vir die Erediens van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk.* N G Kerk-Uitgewers: Kaapstad.

Potgieter, F J M,1952. Ons Kerk in Kaapland. In: Hanekom T N (Red), *Ons NG Kerk.* NG Kerk-Uitgewers: Kaapstad*.*

Pont, A D, 1981*. Die Historiese Agtergronde van ons Kerklike Reg,* deel 1,. HAUM: Pretoria, Kaapstad.

Spoelstra, C, 1907. *Bouwstoffen voor de Geschiedenis der Nederduitsche-Gereformeerde Kerken in Zuid-Afrika. Deel II.* Hollansch-Afrikaansche Uitgevers-Maatschappij.

Van der Watt, P B. *Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk 1652-1824.* NG Kerkboekhandel: Pretoria.

Vorster, J D, 1956. *Die Kerkregtelike Ontwikkeling van die Kaapse Kerk onder die Kompanjie 1652–1792.* Pro Rege-Pers Beperk: Potchefstroom.

Vorster, J. M. 2003. *An Introduction to Reformed Church Polity.* Potchefstroom Theological Publications: Potchefstroom.

Vorster, J M., 2008. Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika (GKSA). In: Gaum F; Boesak, A & Botha W (Reds), 2008: *Christelike Kern-Ensiklopedie.* Lux Verbi.BM & Bybelkor: Wellington

Walker, Williston,1970. *A History of the Christian Church.* T.& T. Clark: Edinburgh

Wegener, G S, 1965. *Die Lewende Kerk.* (Afrikaanse uitgawe geredigeer en aangevul deur T N Hanekom.). Human & Rousseau: Kaapstad, Pretoria.

Witte, J, 1996. "Introduction", In: John Witte & Johan D van der Vyver, *Religious Human Rights in Global Perspective. Religious Perspectives.* Marthinus Nijhoff Publishers: The Hague:

Witte, J, 2000. *Religion and the American Constitutional Experiment.* Boulder: Westview.

TREFWOORDE
Kerkorde van Dordt
Sinode van Dordt
Kerk en Staat

Handves van Godsdiensregte en-vryhede
Kerkorde van die NG Kerk

KEY WORDS
Church Order of Dordt
Synod of Dordt
Church and State
Charter of Religious Rights and Freedoms
Church Order of the Dutch Reformed Church

Coetzee, Murray H - Universiteit van Stellenbosch
& Conradie, Ernst M - Universiteit van Wes-Kaapland

Dominante teologiese sleutels in die Ned Geref Kerk na 1974

ABSTRACT

Dominant theological keys in the Dutch Reformed Church after 1974

This article [follows upon a] forms a sequel to a previous contribution in which the points of divergence between apartheid theology and the critical voices of Ben Marais and Beyers Naudé within the Dutch Reformed Church were analysed, especially with reference to the different "theological keys" employed up to the publication of *Human Relations and the South African scene in the light of Scripture* (1974). This contribution offers hypotheses for further research on subsequent developments within the Dutch Reformed Church. Three questions are addressed: 1) What happened to the dominant theological keys employed in apartheid theology after 1974? 2) Which theological keys became dominant in the Dutch Reformed Church after 1974 and again after 1994? 3) How can the theological points of divergence within the Dutch Reformed Church be understood after 1974 and especially after 1994? Some concluding comments are offered on the significance of such hypotheses for ecumenical relations, especially within the family of Dutch Reformed churches.

INLEIDING

In 'n voorafgaande bydrae is ses punte van verdeling tussen apartheidsteologie en die kritiese stem daarteen binne die Ned Geref Kerk self met behulp van hermeneutiese analitiese gereedskap geïdentifiseer. Daar is veral gewys op die rol wat uiteenlopende "teologiese sleutels"[1] in die verband speel. Apartheidsteologie het gebruik gemaak van teologiese sleutels soos "selfbeskikking", "bevryding", "skeiding" op grond van "voogdyskap" en "isolasie". Hierteenoor

---

[1] Teologiese oftewel dogmatiese sleutels is konsepte wat benut word om 'n punt van vergelyking tussen die Christelike evangelie (oftewel die Bybel / die Christelike geloof / die Christelike tradisie) en die eietydse konteks te vind op grond waarvan die betekenis van die evangelie vir vandag ontgin kan word. Hierdie teologiese sleutels berus op die dominante geloofsoortuigings, waardes, gebruike en gewoontes van geloofsgemeenskappe en tradisies. Hulle word soms eksplisiet geartikuleer maar funksioneer dikwels eerder implisiet en onbewustelik en word dan as vanselfsprekend aanvaar. Binne die Christelike tradisie is hierdie teologiese sleutels tipies van 'n soteriologiese aard maar berus nie noodwendig op kerklike dogmas of amptelike standpunte nie. Hulle verbeeld die wyse waarop hele kerklike en teologiese tradisies oor eeue heen die evangelie vertolk en die Christelike geloof verstaan en uitleef. In hierdie sin is hulle operasionele konsepte. Die vraag is nie hoe hulle behoort te funksioneer nie (wat die "regte" teologiese standpunt is nie), maar hoe hulle sosiologies gesproke wel funksioneer. Hulle word nie noodwendig aan die Bybel of die eietydse konteks ontleen nie, maar word gekonstrueer om 'n brug te bou tussen teks en konteks. Hulle het 'n drieledige funksie ten opsigte van teologiese interpretasie, naamlik om die betekenis van die Bybel en die Christelike tradisie as 'n geheel te verwoord, om die problematiek in die kontemporêre konteks as 'n geheel te beskryf en om 'n verbinding tussen die teks en die kontemporêre konteks te vind. Sodanige teologiese konstruksies identifiseer nie net bepaalde ooreenkomste nie, maar konstrueer dit kreatief (idem-facio = eenders *maak*). Die vraag wat hier aan die orde gestel word, raak die dominante teologiese sleutels binne 'n bepaalde konteks.

is die kritiese stem gekenmerk deur teologiese sleutels soos "broederskap" (Ben Marais), "versoening", "geregtigheid" en "bevryding" (Beyers Naudé).

In hierdie bydrae word die interne logika van hierdie analise verder gevoer op grond van drie verdere vrae. Eerstens: wat het na 1974 (met die aanvaarding van die rapport *Ras, Volk en Nasie en Volkereverhoudinge in die lig van die Skrif* tydens die Algemene Sinode van die Ned Geref Kerk in Oktober 1974) geword van die teologiese sleutels wat apartheidsteologie gekenmerk het? Het hierdie sleutels verdwyn of kom hulle steeds na vore, miskien in ander gedaantes? Tweedens: Watter teologiese sleutels het na 1974 wel dominant in die Ned Geref Kerk geword? Watter teologiese sleutels het na 1994 na vore getree? Derdens: Waar lê die diepste punte van verdeling binne die Ned Geref Kerk self na 1974 en veral na 1994? Indien die Belydenis van Belhar die punte van verdeling tussen apartheidsteologie en die kritiese stemme daarteen die helderste verwoord het (met verwysing na die temas van eenheid, versoening en geregtigheid), kan hierdie temas steeds benut word om teologiese verskille binne die Ned Geref Kerk te identifiseer? Werp die antwoord op hierdie vraag enigsins lig op die debat binne die Ned Geref Kerk rondom die aanvaarding van Belhar as 'n belydenisskrif?

Al drie hierdie vrae verg empiriese navorsing ten einde vas te stel watter teologiese sleutels funksioneer, waar dit funksioneer, hoe dit funksioneer en watter van hierdie sleutels werklik dominant is. Die vraag is met ander woorde nie soseer wat 'n toepaslike en toereikende teologiese posisie ten opsigte van sosiale vraagstukke is nie, maar watter teologiese sleutels sosiologies gesproke wel binne 'n bepaalde konteks funksioneer. Dit gaan nie oor hoe hierdie sleutels ten beste verstaan behoort te word of hoe hulle deur gesaghebbendes verwoord word nie, maar hoe hulle in werklikheid, ten goede of ten kwade, verstaan word in bepaalde kringe.

Indien die bekende analise van ses manifestasies van die kerk (as aanbiddingsgemeenskap, plaaslike gemeente, denominasie, ekumeniese verband, Christelike organisasies of as lidmate) in gedagte gehou word, sou dit byvoorbeeld moontlik wees om die funksionering van hierdie sleutels na te gaan met verwysing na preke, kerkraadsbesluite, sinode-besluite, inter-kerklike vergaderings (bv tussen die Ned Geref Kerk en die Verenigende Gereformeerde Kerk van Suidelike Afrika), parakerklike organisasies en die ervarings, houdings en standpunte van lidmate van die Ned Geref Kerk. Dit sou ook moontlik wees om na te gaan hoe sulke teologiese sleutels funksioneer in briewe aan koerante, kerklike tydskrifte, teologiese debatte en publikasies van predikante en leidende teoloë. Dit alles sou heel uitgebreide navorsing verg en kan uiteraard nie hier aangepak word nie. Die opgawe hier kan eerder verstaan word as 'n poging om veralgemenend breë tendense te artikuleer en te beskryf op grond van die beskikbare literatuur en spesifiek vanuit 'n Wes-Kaapse konteks, met inagneming daarvan dat daar bes moontlik verskille binne die onderskeie sinodes van die Ned Geref kerk kan voorkom. Hierdie tendensie kan dien as voorlopige hipoteses (of "soekontwerpe") vir verdere empiriese navorsing, maar berus nie self op sodanige navorsing nie. Dit word hier as 't ware vanaf die buiterand van die Ned Geref Kerk aangebied om debat daarbinne te stimuleer en om moontlikhede vir verdere navorsing te suggereer. Soortgelyke navorsing sou uiteraard ook met betrekking tot die VGK en ander kerke gedoen kon word.

DIE BLYWENDE VOETSPORE VAN APARTHEIDSTEOLOGIE NA 1974

a) Die teologiese sleutel van "selfbeskikking" (en daarmee saam "roeping"), wat dominant was tydens die opkoms van apartheidsteologie (ten minste tot 1948) het begin verdwyn namate Afrikaners vanweë politieke mag en ekonomiese selfbeskikking hulle voortbestaan verseker het. Dit het nie werklik ná 1994 teruggekeer nie, behalwe dat dit nog bly voortleef onder 'n klein minderheidsgroep en op 'n beperkte terrein. Die reste van hierdie sleutel kom waarskynlik die

duidelikste na vore by Volkstaat-entoesiaste en taalstryders, maar dit word nie meer godsdienstig tot uitdrukking gebring nie.

Dat die drang na selfbeskikking egter bly voortleef, blyk uit 'n onlangse artikel van Allan Boesak in *Die Burger*. Hy analiseer die reaksie van die Afrikaner ten opsigte van die gebrek (onder andere) aan dienslewering deur die "regerende swart establishment". Hy meen dat daar weer eens 'n "Afrikaner-etniese mobilisering" ter wille van selfbeskikking geïdentifiseer kan word. Boesak het nie besware dat daar opstand is teen hierdie gebreke en wandade nie, maar wel teen die wyse waarop Afrikaners reageer. Hy beskryf hierdie reaksie as 'n nuwe aktivisme onder Afrikaners waardeur hulle hulleself nog eens afskei van die swart deel van die Suid-Afrikaanse bevolking. Die huidige owerhede se dienslewering mag onaanvaarbaar wees, maar die probleme word nie gesamentlik aangepak nie, maar op hulle eie, ter wille van selfbelang en met 'n eiesoortige agenda (Boesak, 2010: 5).

b) Die oorheersende rol wat die idee van "bevryding" gespeel het gedurende die 1930's en 1940's – toe die Afrikaners hulleself beskou het as die onderdruktes en gemarginaliseerdes – het ook getaan. Namate die beweegredes vir hierdie sleutel – naamlik die ervaring van onderdrukking onder Britse imperialisme, die bedreiging wat die getalle-oormag van die "naturelle" ingehou het, asook die sosio-ekonomiese en kultuur-politieke krisis – ná 1948 vervaag en verdwyn het, het hierdie soeke na bevryding afgeneem. Die drang na bevryding het eerder ander vorme aangeneem, naamlik in die stryd teen die "totale aanslag" en in die aandrang op "staatsekuriteit" (sien hier onder).

Ná 1994 kon "bevryding" as 'n politieke ideaal nie langer as 'n dominante teologiese sleutel in die Ned Geref Kerk funksioneer nie. Dit leef nietemin voort in die wyse waarop Afrikaners reageer op die omvang van huisbraak, verkragting, gewapende roof, motorkapings en plaasmoorde. Hiermee verskuif die klem egter na 'n sosiale vorm van bevryding, naamlik in terme van die beskerming van die lewe en besittings van families. Dit kom ook tot uitdrukking in die psigologiese drang daarna om te ontsnap aan die reële bedreiging, asook die gevoel van voortdurend bedreigdheid. Bevryding beteken in só 'n konteks daarom dikwels emigrasie.

c) Die begrippe "segregasie" en later skeiding het ná 1948 al hoe meer as die dominante teologiese sleutel in die Ned Geref Kerk gefunksioneer. Dit het gebeur namate die apartheidswette stelselmatig geïmplementeer is (Coetzee 2011: 98ev). Dit het amptelik 'n hoogtepunt bereik toe apartheid dogmaties gelegitimeer en Skriftuurlik geregverdig is in *Ras, volk en nasie en volkereverhoudinge in die lig van die Skrif* (1974). Dit was egter veel meer as 'n beleidsdokument. Dit het die basis gevorm vir die wyse waarop apartheid as 'n pseudo-evangelie en kwasi-soteriologie gefunksioneer het, naamlik deur skeiding te bring op elke terrein van die samelewing – polities (in terme van rasse-klassifikasie en tuislande), ekonomies (in terme van instromingsbeheer en grensnywerhede), sosiaal (in terme van groepsgebiede en rasse-klassifikasie), kultureel (in terme van die verbod op gemengde huwelike) en kerklik (in terme van afsonderlike kerke vir verskillende rasse).

Terugskouend is dit egter duidelik dat ekonomiese skeiding nooit werklik haalbaar was nie aangesien goedkoop arbeid nodig was en is vir die ontwikkelende Suid-Afrikaanse ekonomie. Namate Afrikaners verstedelik geraak het, het die insig toenemend posgevat dat ekonomiese skeiding op die lang duur onhaalbaar en onwenslik is. Gegee die geïntegreerde aard van die Suid-Afrikaanse ekonomie het die politieke model van skeiding (van Verwoerd en andere) reeds teen 1976 in 'n doodloopstraat beland. Sosiale skeiding het steeds op talle terreine bly voortbestaan, maar het teen 1990 met die afskaffing van die Groepsgebiedewette en die integrering van skole en sport ook begin taan. Kulturele skeiding het bly voortleef by Afrikaners wat hulle sogenaamde Westerse lewenswyse en "beskaafde standaarde" [sic!] vertroetel het.[2] Hierdie model van

---

2 Die Ned Geref Kerk het amptelik weinig hieroor gesê of gedoen om lidmate wat geveg het of wat seuns

skeiding kom tans die beste na vore in die vorm van sekuriteitskomplekse met omheinings en wagte om die veiligheid van inwoners te verskans – ook om hulle, ten minste wat hulle woongebiede betref, van die wêreld daar buite te isoleer. Kerklike skeiding is in teorie opgehef aangesien ras nie meer 'n oorweging vir lidmaatskap is nie. Strukturele kerkeenheid binne die Ned Geref Kerk-familie bly egter knaend ontwykend. Ten spyte van verskeie sinodale besluite sedert die laat 1980's word vordering in die verband steeds deur nuwe probleme in die wiele gery. Inderdaad, Sondag om 10h00 steeds die uur van die week waar skeiding op grond van ras die duidelikste in die Suid-Afrikaanse samelewing gesien kan word (sien Van der Borght 2009).

d) Die oortuiging "in isolasie lê ons behoud", versinnebeeld deur die motief van die "laer" en in 'n "laertrekmentaliteit", het 'n hoogtepunt bereik tydens Verwoerd se breuk met die Statebond, die Republiekwording in 1961 en, op ekumeniese terrein, die Cottesloe-beraad. Hierdie radikalisering van die motief van "skeiding" was teen die 1980's egter nie meer haalbaar nie. Die rol wat hierdie sleutel gespeel het binne die Ned Geref Kerk en in Afrikaner-geledere, is mettertyd doodgesmoor vanweë faktore soos verstedeliking, die rol van televisie, informasie tegnologie, kulturele globalisering en die moontlikheid wat Afrikaners ná 1990 (met die beëindiging van die kulturele boikot) gehad het om vrylik kontak met hulle eweknieë in Westerse lande te maak. Binne só 'n konteks is self-isolasie net nie meer so aantreklik nie – behalwe in die vorm van omheinde sekuriteitskomplekse en miskien ook Christelike privaatskole.

DOMINANTE TEOLOGIESE SLEUTELS NA 1974 EN NA 1994

Op grond van hierdie waarnemings is dit duidelik dat die teologiese sleutels wat teen 1974 dominant was binne die Ned Geref Kerk, daarna nie meer dieselfde invloed uitgeoefen het nie of van gedaante verander het. Die vraag is daarom: watter teologiese sleutels het dan wel 'n dominante rol binne die Ned Geref Kerk ná 1974 begin speel? In die bespreking hier onder sal 'n aantal sodanige sleutels geïdentifiseer en kortliks bespreek word.

Staatsekuriteit
Die drang na politieke bevryding het in die 1970's 'n nuwe gestalte aangeneem, naamlik in die vorm van die handhawing van politieke mag teen bedreigings van binne en van buite. Onder BJ Vorster se bewind is die begrip "totale aanslag" gebruik om die bedreiging van kommunisme in Suider-Afrika te beskryf. Dit is versterk deur die angs wat gewek is vir die sogenaamde "totale aanslag", oftewel die gevaar van kommunisme, en die proses van dekolonialisering in Zimbabwe, Namibië, Angola en Mosambiek. Dit was relatief maklik om te wys op die invloed van Rusland, China en Kuba in die bevrydingsbewegings in hierdie lande. Afrikaners is daarom opgeroep om weerstand te bied teen hierdie "totale aanslag" en seker te maak dat Suid-Afrika nie ook 'n "slagoffer" daarvan word nie. Die oorlog op die grens van Namibië en Angola was die belangrikste vorm wat hierdie weerstand aangeneem het. Die Ned Geref Kerk het die beskerming van die landsgrense en die offensiewe wat daarmee gepaard gegaan het, oorweldigend gesteun omdat lidmate se kinders wat vir militêre diensplig opgeroep is, hierby betrokke was.

Die politieke weerstand teen apartheid binnelands kon gerieflik binne hierdie konteks geïnterpreteer word. Dit is tussen 1976 en 1988 telkens bevestig as gevolg van die Soweto-onluste en die noodtoestande wat herhaaldelik in die 1970's en 1980's afgekondig is. Die "bevryding" wat politieke mag ná 1948 gebring het, moes daarom gehandhaaf en gewaarborg word te midde van hierdie bedreigings. Die weerstand teen apartheid het aanleiding gegee tot 'n reeks politieke hervormings in die 1970's en 1980's, waarvan die ontwerp en implementering

---

in die oorlog verloor het, te help om te verstaan wat gebeur het. Sien onder andere die reaksie van Chris Louw (Louw 2001: 7ev) in sy ope brief aan Willem de Klerk met die titel "Boetman is die bliksem in".

van die driekamerstelsel (1983) die belangrikste was. Hierdie proses het gelei tot hernieude verset, wat tot 'n spiraal van geweld aanleiding gegee het. Die noodtoestande wat tussen 1976 en 1988 afgekondig is, was inderdaad die uitstaande kenmerk van hierdie periode.

Die onderdrukking van politieke weerstand teen apartheid het uitgemond in 'n omvattende staatsekuriteitstelsel wat aan die stemgeregtigde publiek voorgehou is as noodsaaklik ter wille van wet en orde en die handhawing van ekonomiese en kulturele belange. Binne hierdie stelsel is vermeende aktiviste soms gekoöpteer om deel van die sekuriteitsnetwerk te word. Dit het gelei tot groot konflik in swart woongebiede ten einde informante en vigilantes te ontmasker. Die berugte "necklace"-moorde was 'n simptoom van hierdie interne konflik.

Hierdie stelsel is geïnternaliseer in wat as 'n "ideologie van staatsekuriteit" beskryf kan word. Volgens hierdie ideologie vorm die handhawing van die staat (die grondwet, die regering, die jurisdiksie van die howe, die toepassing van wet en orde) die noodsaaklike voorwaarde vir ekonomiese en sosiale welsyn. Juis omdat die staat van buite en van binne "bedreig" is, is die rol van die instansies wat die "sekuriteit" van die staat beskerm, as van kardinale belang geag – soveel so dat alle ander oorwegings hieraan ondergeskik gestel is. Meer spesifiek is die rol van die staatsveiligheidstelsel (bestaande uit die Staatsveiligheidsraad en 'n uitgebreide netwerk van plaaslike afdelings), nasionale intelligensie en die veiligheidspolisie beklemtoon.

Hierdie ideologie het inslag gevind op grond van die oortuiging dat hierdie instansies oor inligting beskik wat daarop dui dat die veiligheid van die staat wesenlik bedreig word; dat hierdie inligting uitermate sensitief is en nie aan die breër publiek beskikbaar gestel kan word nie; dat hierdie bedreiging talle maatreëls noodsaak; en dat die nodige mag, jurisdiksie en middele toegeken moet word aan die instansies wat hierdie maatreëls moet toepas. In eenvoudige taal: "Gewone mense weet nie in hoeverre die staat bedreig word nie, hulle hóéf ook nie te weet nie en dit sou trouens gevaarlik wees om te weet. Daar is wel mense wat van die volle gevaar bewus is, oor uitgebreide inligting daaroor beskik en daarvoor verantwoordelikheid dra. Hierdie agente kan vertrou word om na die belange van die breë publiek om te sien." Die ideologiese aard van hierdie denkpatroon blyk daaruit dat hierdie vertroue gelegitimeer is sonder dat dit op inligting berus het wat in openbare debat krities ondersoek kon word.

In hierdie tydperk het die Ned Geref Kerk die beleid van die Nasionale Party regering steeds bly ondersteun. Hulle het die reg van die owerheid om talle drakoniese maatreëls af te kondig en af te dwing ondersteun en enige kritiek, veral vanuit eie geledere, skerp veroordeel. Dit is opvallend dat kritiek teen apartheid (veral as 'n staatkundige beleid) teen die middel-1980's reeds wydverspreid binne die Ned Geref Kerk voorgekom het. Die bestaande apartheidswette, of ten minste die toepassing daarvan, is meermale gekritiseer. In 'n verstedelikte konteks het weinig mense nog geglo in apartheid as 'n staatkundige bestel. Nietemin was daar steeds oorweldigende steun vir die handhawing van politieke mag en veral vir die handhawing van staatsekuriteit teen vermeende en werklike bedreigings van binne en van buite. Die Ned Geref Kerk het ook op godsdienstige en pastorale vlak 'n bydrae tot die stryd van die militêre en beskermingsdienste gelewer deur 'n uitgebreide stelsel van kapelaansdienste.

Lidmate van die Ned Geref Kerk het hulle gevoel van sekuriteit gebou op die handhawing van die bestaande ekonomiese en sosiale orde, al was die politieke orde voortdurend in dispuut. Hulle het inderwaarheid hulle vertroue daarop geplaas. Binne hierdie konteks is die ideologie van staatsekuriteit teologies gerugsteun en gehandhaaf. Dit is nie soseer gedoen met 'n beroep op "wet en orde" nie, behalwe waar nodig. Die klem het eerder geval op 'n goed geordende samelewing en op "rus en vrede" te midde van eskalerende binnelandse geweld en media berigte van bomaanvalle. Binne die kerk self is dit verwoord in 'n aandrang op dit wat "gepas en ordelik" is. Enige vorm van kritiek is meermale gesmoor met 'n beroep op die kerk-ordelike weg.

Die ideologie van staatsekuriteit het om verstaanbare redes stemme van kritiek vanuit

ekumeniese geledere ontlok.[3] Die bydraes van teoloë soos Albert Nolan (sien 1987: 209ev), Lois Law (1987: 281ev); Desmond Tutu (1987: 71ev); Jaap Durand[4] en Charles Villa-Vicencio (1987: 233ev) kan in hierdie verband genoem word. Dit was egter opvallend dat hierdie stemme van kritiek baie minder uitgesproke was. Dit is sekerlik verstaanbaar, gegee die wyse waarop die staatsveiligheidstelsel op enige vorm van kritiek gereageer het. Binne die geledere van die Ned Geref Kerk het bloedweinig mense raakgesien in watter mate hier 'n verskuiwing in die dominante teologiese sleutel na vore getree het. Diegene wat teen die middel-1980's reeds teen apartheid gekant was (omdat dit toe alreeds relatief maklik was), het nie noodwendig hierdie ideologiese verskuiwing uitgewys nie. Dit was alleen diegene wat ekumeniese kontakte behou het, wat enigsins sensitief hiervoor was.[5]

Ben Marais (NGK), wat dikwels as enkeling sy kritiese stem laat hoor het teen apartheid, het hierdie verskuiwing waarskynlik nie raakgesien nie en homself gedistansieer van die kritiek wat Beyers Naudé (NGKA) uitgespreek het (Maritz, 2003: 156ev). Naudé, wat noue bande met die SARK behou het, was een van diegene wat dit duidelik raakgesien en inderdaad kritiek daarop gelewer het, maar dan nie meer van binne die Ned Geref Kerk nie. Dit kan veral waargeneem word in sy nadenke en gevolgtrekking rondom die gelowige se standpunt oor geweld (Coetzee 2011: 510ev) – toe hy tot die gevolgtrekking gekom het dat dit as 'n "uiterste maatreël" geregverdig kan word. Hierdie kritiek blyk ook uit sy standpunt teen diensplig (by Hammanskraal in 1974) en die kritiek wat hy gelewer het oor die eensydige rol van kapelane (Coetzee 2011: 518).

Hierdie stemme van kritiek teen staatsveiligheid as teologiese sleutel het die duidelikste tot uitdrukking gekom in die kritiek teen "staatsteologie" in die Kairos-dokument (1985). In hierdie dokument word 'n analise gemaak van die verskillende teologieë wat 'n bepalende rol gespeel het in Suid-Afrika gedurende hierdie tydperk. Die eerste sodanige teologie word getipeer as "staatsteologie" ("state theology"). Uit die analise van staatsteologie is die heersende teologie van die Ned Geref Kerk aan die kaak gestel as synde lojaal aan die ideologie van staatsveiligheid.

Die uniekheid van die kerk

Die "uniekheid van die kerk" is 'n teologiese sleutel wat sedert die middel 1970's prominensie in die Ned Geref Kerk begin geniet het. Hierdie beklemtoning kan veral toegeskryf word aan die stryd om 'n gereformeerde identiteit vir die Ned Geref Kerk te vestig (Naudé 2004: 32 ev). Dit kom na vore in die werke van teoloë soos Johan Heyns (1977), Willie Jonker[6], Piet Meiring en Henry Lederle (sien 1979) en Flip Theron (1978). Hulle was van mening dat 'n verandering in die kerk ook 'n invloed op die res van die Suid-Afrikaanse samelewing sal hê (De Gruchy 1979: 70).

In hierdie tydperk was die vraag of 'n toepaslike ekklesiologiese vertrekpunt in die skepping of in die herskepping gevind moet word. Heyns het 'n vertrekpunt gevind by Stoker se skeppingsidee wat 'n teologie van die koninkryk vooropgestel het, terwyl Jonker erken het dat hy voortdurend gestry het teen die Ned Geref Kerk se volkskerk denke, wat syns insiens die identiteit van die kerk as kerk van Christus bedreig het (Jonker 1991: 121). Volgens Jonker is die kerk nie net nog 'n

---

3 Elphick en Davenport (1997: 168) wys daarop dat die fokus van die stryd teen apartheid in hierdie tydperk verskuif het: "The escalating protest against the goverment's proposed 'tricameral' constitution in 1983 overtook the 'apartheid is a heresy' debate. The church struggle now focused specifically on the struggle for the liberation of South Africa."

4 Sien onder andere Durand 1987a: 117-125; 1987c: 131-140; 1987, 1987: 31-50; 1988: 121-138.

5 Die SARK het die staat inderwaarheid verklaar tot "a tyrannic regime" (sien Elphick en Davenport 1997: 168).

6 Sien Jonker & Theron, *Vreemde Gemeenskap* (1979), waar die klem val op die lidmate van die kerk as "Bywoners en vreemdelinge"; "Die gemeenskap van die heiliges"; "In die wêreld – nie van die wêreld nie" en "God se Herskepping". Van Wyk (1989: 74ev) toon aan dat die ekklesiologie Jonker se totale teologie gestempel het.

samelewingsverband soos volk en staat nie. In Christus, as Sy liggaam, is die kerk uniek (Jonker 1977: 4-13). Vir Theron is die kerk 'n teken van die eschaton waar "inkarnasie", en nie die "nasie" nie, die bloed van Christus meer as die bloed wat in ons are vloei, die "Heilige Gees" en nie die "gees van kultuur" nie, die nuwe "volk" van God bepaal (Theron 1988: 170). Die klem op die uniekheid van die kerk was duidelik 'n vorm van weerstand teen apartheidsteologie waar die kerk by analises van die samelewing aangepas en ingepas is. Dit verteenwoordig 'n skuif vanaf skeppingsteologie na soteriologie en ekklesiologie ten einde apartheidsteologie fundamenteel te ontmasker.

Hierdie klem op die uniekheid van die kerk kan deels toegeskryf word aan die invloed wat Karl Barth op die ekklesiologiese denke in die Ned Geref Kerk begin uitoefen het.[7] In Jonker se teologie blyk dit duidelik dat hy inderdaad meer aandag gegee het aan die kerk as aan die wêreld buite die kerk. Vir hom was die uniekheid van die kerk van wesenlike belang. Hierdie gesprek oor die uniekheid van die kerk het diepgang verleen aan die stryd teen apartheidsdenke in die Ned Geref Kerk. Die kerklike wortels van apartheid is hier ingesien en aangespreek met behulp van 'n waardering vir die eskatologiese karakter van die kerk.

Die ekklesiosentriese wending waarbinne die klem op die uniekheid van die kerk kon val, het weliswaar ook kritiek uitgelok. Hierdie kritiek het saamgehang met die vraag na die toepaslike verhouding tussen die kerk, die staat en die burgerlike gemeenskap. Indien die vreemdheid van die kerk eensydig beklemtoon word, roep dit die vraag op hoe die kerk se verhouding tot die samelewing verstaan moet word. Hoe kan 'n mens steeds teologies oor die samelewing self bly dink? Dit is daarom nie verbasend nie dat die Ned Geref Kerk teen die laat-1980's opnuut oor hierdie vraag moes besin, naamlik in die verskillende weergawes van die beleidstuk *Kerk en samelewing* (1986, 1990).

Die spanning in die verband kom miskien die duidelikste na vore in 'n gesprek tussen David Bosch en Flip Theron in die bundel *Perspektief op die Ope Brief* (1982). Bosch vra of Theron nie die vreemdheid van die kerk eensydig beklemtoon nie. Hy meen dat Theron se verstaan van die "vreemdheid" van die kerk daartoe aanleiding gee dat die kerk gesien word as losstaande van die samelewing. Gevolglik kan die kerk weinig of geen direkte invloed op die samelewing uitoefen nie. Hy meen dat só 'n aksent die gevaar loop om dosetiese trekke te ontwikkel (sien Theron 1982: 123-133 en Bosch 1982: 134-142 se reaksie daarop). Volgens Bosch skuil 'n wesenlike gevaar in hierdie beskouing van die kerk omdat "mense nou alte maklik die samelewing aan sy eie wetmatigheid gaan prysgee ... Die samelewing, die politiek, word outonoom. Dáár heers ander norme en waardes – dié van die kerk is immers té vreemd, ver weg en onimplimenteerbaar" (Bosch 1982: 139). Volgens Bosch hou hierdie eensydige standpunt die gevaar in dat die kerk "volledig religieus" verstaan word en gevolglik selfs kultiese trekke vertoon.

Hierdie klem op die uniekheid van die kerk is ook bevraagteken onder diegene wat in die 1980's reeds 'n vorm van publieke teologie beoefen het. In die Wes-Kaapse konteks (vanuit die geledere van die Ned Geref Kerk self) is die belangrikste voorbeelde hiervan miskien te vinde in die publikasies van die Sentrum vir Kontekstuele Hermeneutiek onder die leiding van Bernard Lategan (1984 en 1987) en Johann Kinghorn (1986, 1990 en 1997: 135ev). Hierin word die apartheidsdenke deurbreek deur die opsie vir 'n inklusiewe demokrasie te ondersoek. Dit is nietemin opvallend dat hierdie stemme steeds in daardie tyd in die Ned Geref Kerk

---

7 Dat Barth 'n invloed op teoloë soos Jonker en Theron gehad het, word deur Smit (2009: 275ev) beklemtoon. Oor die vraag of dit inderdaad hulle siening van die kerk beïnvloed het, loop die menings egter uiteen. Teoloë soos Durand (1985: 40 en 1988: 121-123) het aangetoon dat die gereformeerde ortodoksie in die Afrikaanssprekende kerke (1930-1960) beslis nie die kritiek van Barth ten opsigte van natuurlike teologie gehoor of ernstig opgeneem het nie. Selfs Heyns kon dit nie raaksien en waardeer nie (Jonker 1998: 133-134).

gemarginaliseer is en buite die amptelike teologiese instellings van die kerk (met name die Fakulteit Teologie aan die Universiteit van Stellenbosch) na vore gekom het.

Versoening

"Versoening" as toepaslike teologiese sleutel het ál skerper in die kollig gekom sedert die middel-1970's, veral via die destydse Ned Geref Sendingkerk (NGSK). In debatte binne die NGSK onder begeleiding van Jaap Durand is versoening ontgin as 'n teologiese sleutel vir kritiek teen apartheid. Dit het gelei tot die oortuiging dat apartheid berus op die aanname dat mense só verskillend is dat versoening en selfs samewerking in beginsel onmoontlik is. Skeiding op grond van ras is daarom gesien as die enigste alternatief om die vrede te bewaar. Dit dwarsboom die evangelie wat juis die versoening van alle mense in Christus beklemtoon (sien Botman 1996: 39-4, Coetzee 2011: 302ev). Hierdie debatte het gelei tot die afkondiging van 'n *status confessionis* en die opstel van die Konsepbelydenis tydens die Algemene sinode van die NGSK in September 1982. Versoening is een van die drie kerntemas wat in hierdie belydenis aan die orde gestel word.

Die National Initiative for Reconciliation (NIR) het rondom 1985 ook 'n belangrike rol gespeel in die beklemtoning van versoening. Die kompleksiteit van die tema van versoening en die implikasies daarvan binne die Suid-Afrikaanse konteks van daardie tyd is in verskillende byeenkomste van die NIR ondersoek. Dit was ook die tema van 'n belangrike publikasie van die NIR, naamlik *The Cost of Reconciliation* (1988) (Nürnberger & Tooke, 1988)*. Hierbenewens kan die belangwekkende konferensie van die Institute for Theological Research (by Unisa) onder die tema "Reconciliation and Construction: Creative Options for a Rapidly Changing South Africa" ook genoem word (Vorster 1986).

Die organisasie Koinonia onder leiding van Nico Smith het vanaf die middel-1980's tot die vroeë 1990's 'n belangrike rol gespeel rondom versoening – ook in die Ned Geref Kerk. Hierdie beweging het mense uit die wit samelewing blootgestel aan die gemarginaliseerde swart deel van die bevolking. Hiermee het hulle gepoog om die mites in verband met die swart samelewing, hulle leiers en verwagtings aan die orde te stel. In die proses het Koinonia die onderdrukkers gekonfronteer met die gevolge van apartheid en staatsekuriteit. Die impak van Koinonia self was waarskynlik klein, maar hierdie tipe blootstelling het toenemend plaasgevind en het versoening bevorder omdat dit die klimaat geskep het waarin verhoudinge oor verdelende grense heen gesmee kon word.

Dieselfde rigtinggewende teoloë wat 'n waardering vir die uniekheid van die kerk bepleit het, het tipies ook die rol van versoening beklemtoon. Versoening is beklemtoon teenoor die rol wat "skeiding" as dominante teologiese sleutel in die Ned Geref Kerk gespeel het (Coetzee 2011: 168ev). Daar kan 'n geleidelike verskuiwing in denke ná die verskyning van *RVN* (1974) in die Ned Geref Kerk waargeneem word. Terwyl institusionele eenheid in *RVN* bevraagteken word, het die 1986-uitgawe van *Kerk en Samelewing* (Kerk en Samelewing 1986: 14) onder die opskrif "Die Kerk as 'n versoende gemeenskap" ten minste die ruimte geskep vir gesprek en selfondersoek.

Dit was veral Jonker wat 'n bepalende rol gespeel het om nadenke oor die belang van versoening in die Ned Geref Kerk aan te wakker. Hy was uitgesproke oor die belang van sigbare en konkrete versoening. Dit is weerspieël in Jonker en Theron se publikasies, tydens kerklike byeenkomste en teologie-konferensies.[8] Hierdie invloed het mettertyd deurgewerk na hulle studente en verskeie predikante wat die betekenis daarvan in hulle bediening en veral in hulle prediking ondersoek het. Hoewel die aksent op versoening primêr gefokus het op versoening in Christus en op daardie basis versoening binne die kerk van Christus (waar skeiding op grond van

---

8 Sien onder andere "Die gemeenskap van die Heiliges" en "Die Kerk is bloedfamilie" (Jonker en Theron: 1979: 6ev en 14 ev).

ras afgewys is), was die implikasies daarvan vir versoening in die samelewing onvermydelik. Die vraag was alleen hoe hierdie "bediening van versoening" verstaan moet word. Kan dit ook alleen op grond van versoening in Christus geskied? Is enige ander vorm van "nasionale" versoening daarom oneintlik en oppervlakkig? Hoe kan die kerk op daardie basis iets meer sê oor die Suid-Afrikaanse samelewing?

Hierdie aksente het 'n bepalende rol gespeel in die beplanning en gebeure tydens die Kerkeberaad in Vereeniging in Maart 1989. Hierdie beraad (wat te midde van erge spanning plaasgevind het) kan inderdaad beskou word as deel van die gesprek rondom versoening tussen die Ned Geref Kerk en die res van die "familie". By hierdie geleentheid het die afvaardiging van die Ned Geref Kerk amptelik aangekondig dat die Ned Geref Kerk die sisteem van apartheid veroordeel en verwerp. Die afvaardiging van die Ned Geref Kerk het sonder enige voorbehoud erken dat die stelsel van apartheid sondig is en het hulle verbind tot die soeke na een, verenigde, nie-rassige gereformeerde kerk en 'n oop, nie-rassige, demokratiese gemeenskap ("The Saga of Vereeniging" 1989: 7).

Hierdie klem op versoening het 'n klimaat geskep wat die Rustenburgberaad (1990) moontlik gemaak het. Dit was 'n ekumeniese beraad waarby 230 kerkleiers van 40 kerke betrokke was.[9] Dit was as gevolg van sodanige worsteling met versoening dat aandag tydens die beraad gegee kon word aan 'n belydenis oor die onreg wat gepleeg is in die apartheidsera (Heaney 2004: 19). Dit was by hierdie ekumeniese beraad waar Willie Jonker namens homself, die Ned Geref Kerk en Afrikaners, skuld bely het. Dit het weliswaar gelei tot skerp kritiek vanuit regse Afrikanergeledere wat die Rustenburgberaad as 'n aanslag op die Afrikanerdom beskryf het (sien Louw Alberts, & Frank Chikane, 1991:92 en *Beeld,* 19 Augustus 1991).

Die dokument *Reis met Apartheid,* wat in 1997 opgestel en uitgegee is deur die Ned Geref Kerk (Gaum 1997), roep hierdie kerk – vanuit die geledere van hulle eie leierskap – op tot sigbare versoening.[10] Ten spyte van pogings om bepaalde praktyke soos die rol van die kapelaansdienste te rasionaliseer, dien dit ook as 'n voorbeeld van die invloed wat versoening op die leierskap van die Ned Geref Kerk gehad het.

Kritiek teen hierdie aandrang op versoening het weliswaar nie uitgebly nie. Volgens die opstellers van die Kairos Dokument (1985) het dit naamlik nie ver genoeg gegaan nie. In hierdie dokument word die aandrang op versoening as 'n verskuiwing van "staatsteologie" na "kerklike teologie" getipeer. Hierdie kritiek is veral teen Engelssprekende hoofstroomkerke gemik. Die teologiese veronderstellings van hierdie aandrang op versoening en vrede kom hier onder die loep. Hoewel die kerk hiermee die skyn van morele integriteit kon handhaaf, was dit alte maklik om nie daarmee saam die bestaande onreg te beswer en op toepaslike restitusie aan te dring nie.

Diegene wat versoening beklemtoon het, het hulleself hiervolgens wel gedistansieer van staatsteologie, maar onverbonde gebly aan die stryd van die onderdruktes en gemarginali-seerdes vir politieke seggenskap.[11] Swart teoloë soos Itumeleng Mosala (1987: 19ev) en Tinyiko Maluleke (1999: 103) het in hulle kritiek teen hierdie tipe versoening selfs verder gegaan as die Kairos Dokument. Volgens hulle is swart mense in Suid-Afrika eerstens vervreem van hulle

---

9 Hierdie beraad is onder andere bygewoon deur Naudé, as raadgewer van die Ned Geref Kerk in Afrika (sien Naudé 1995: 137); die interim-komitee van die Gereformeerde Ekumeniese Raad; afgevaardigdes van die Ned Geref Kerk-familie, naamlik die Ned Geref Kerk, die Ned Geref Sendingkerk, die Ned Geref Kerk in Afrika en die Reformed Church in Afrikca.

10 Hierdie dokument (sien Gaum 1997) is goedgekeur vir verspreiding deur die dagbestuur van die algemene sinodale kommissie waarop proff. PC Potgieter, P Coertzen, drs. FM Gaum, WJ Burger, WJ Botha, di. F Swanepoel, PS Strümpfer en LM Meyer gedien het.

11 Sien *The Kairos Document,* 1986: 10 en Schreiter (1992: 25), wat beklemtoon dat versoening nie moontlik is sonder bevryding nie.

basiese bestaansmiddele – naamlik, hulle land (grondgebied), vee en arbeid – en moet eers daarmee versoen word. Alleen op daardie basis kan die weg vir versoening met wit mense gebaan word.

Die kontras tussen die aandrang op versoening en die kritiese stemme daarteen het nêrens beter na vore gekom as in die verrigtinge van en die openbare debatte rondom die Waarheid-en-versoeningskommissie (WVK) nie. Hoewel die WVK (en veral die moontlikheid van amnestie vir polities-gemotiveerde skendings van menseregte) alleen verstaan kan word in die lig van die politieke skikking wat die eerste demokratiese verkiesing in 1994 voorafgegaan het, was dit klaarblyklik wel gemik op 'n vorm van nasionale versoening. Dit het die geleentheid gebied vir slagoffers van menseregteskendings om hulle verhale in die openbaar te vertel en daarmee saam aansoek te doen vir restitusie. Hierdie verhale het 'n vorm van katarsis moontlik gemaak waarin die konkrete interaksie tussen skuldiges en slagoffers telkens 'n simbool van versoening geword het te midde van die onderliggende spanning tussen die verskillende sektore in die Suid-Afrikaanse samelewing. Die kwytskelding van skuldiges en die gebrek aan toepaslike vorms van restitusie illustreer waarom hierdie klem op versoening soveel kritiek ontlok het.

Die ooglopende weerstand van die meerderheid lidmate en predikante binne Ned Geref Kerk om heelhartig by hierdie proses betrokke te raak, beklemtoon dat hulle nie die rol wat geregtigheid en restitusie in versoening speel, kon of wou verreken nie. Die analise van kerklike teologie in die Kairos Dokument bied waarskynlik steeds 'n akkurate beskrywing van die dominante denkpatrone in die Ned Geref Kerk rondom versoening.

Gemeentebou

Britz en Erasmus (1994: 74) toon aan dat "gemeentebou" reeds teen 1970 'n rol in die Ned Geref Kerk gespeel het. In die vroeë fase van gemeentebou-teologie is gefokus op spirituele vernuwing en op die nodige toerusting wat die individuele lidmaat bemagtig om uit te reik na andere in 'n program wat as 'n persoon-tot-persoon-aksie verstaan is. Die vernuwing wat met hierdie bewegings gepaard gegaan het, is aanvanklik opgevang in para-kerklike selgroepe. Hierdie groepe is soms beskou as 'n manifestasie van die kerk in eie reg waarin daar ruimte was vir gewone lidmate om tydens byeenkomste die leiding te neem. In die Wes-Kaap was daar 'n vrugbare grond vir hierdie soort aksente, gegewe die blywende invloed van piëtisme, die binnelandse sendingywer wat juis in die apartheidsera gefloreer het en die ekklesiosentriese wending in the dominante teologiese aksente sedert ongeveer 1980.

Die aantrekkingskrag van hierdie vorm van spirituele vernuwing het egter ook binne die konteks van hoofstroomkerke tot uiting gekom, naamlik in die vorm van gemeentebou. Hier het dit inderdaad gegaan oor die institusionalisering van hierdie vernuwingsbeweging. Die klem op gemeentebou het 'n era ingelui waarin voorstedelike makrogemeentes gevorm is, elkeen met 'n uitgebreide geboukompleks en aantreklike programme, om aan die behoeftes van lidmate in daardie konteks te voldoen. Binne hierdie gemeentes is 'n groot verskeidenheid bedieninge ontwikkel sodat lidmate se gawes tot hulle reg kon kom. Daar is wegbeweeg van die sogenaamde herder-kudde model waarin die rol van die predikant (en daarmee saam die funksies van prediking, huisbesoek en pastoraat) beklemtoon is. Die taak van leierskap is nou eerder verstaan in terme van die toerusting van lidmate ten einde hulle onderskeie bedieninge uit te oefen.

Hoewel hierdie aksent op die funksionering van die liggaam van Christus aantreklik is, het dit ironies genoeg gou gelei tot 'n beklemtoning van alternatiewe leierskapstyle en die wyse waarop makrogemeentes effektief bestuur kan word. Daar word tipies kers opgesteek by die korporatiewe wêreld waar nagedink word oor suksesvolle strategieë vir die bestuur van 'n organisasie. Leierskap word só geassosieer met visionering en die formulering van 'n toepaslike

missie. Hoewel beide hierdie begrippe aan die Joods-Christelike tradisie ontleen is, word dit hier ingeklee in taal ontleen aan die korporatiewe wêreld.

Die aansluiting by die etos van sukses in die korporatiewe wêreld, die invloed van die verbruikerskultuur onder lidmate in voorstedelike gemeentes en die opbloei van die welvaartsevangelie impliseer dat die aandrang op gemeentebou maklik daartoe kan lei dat godsdiens gekommersialiseer word. Kerke word só 'n verskaffer van godsdienstige produkte en dienste om die spirituele behoeftes van lidmate te bevredig. Gemeentes ding met mekaar op die markplein mee ten einde 'n groter "markaandeel" te verkry. Gemeentes praat só oor getalle, die mededinging vanuit Pinkster en ander kerke, finansiële volhoubaarheid en die behoud van 'n bepaalde invloedsfeer en die mag wat daarmee saamhang. Lidmate is eweneens daarop ingestel om 'n gemeente te vind waar hulle behoeftes inderdaad bevredig sal word, waar hulle liturgies kan tuis voel en waar hulle hul vorm van spiritualiteit tot uitdrukking kan bring (Conradie, 2009: 176ev).

Die mees ekstreme vorm van hierdie kommersialisering van godsdiens kan in die verkondiging van die welvaartsevangelie gesien word (sien Conradie, 2009). Hier word voorspoed verstaan as 'n teken van God se goedkeuring en seën. Vir diegene wat mildelik hulle bydraes maak, "draai God die sluise van die hemel oop". Voorts word dit gekenmerk deur die soeke na "godsdienstige opwinding" wat gebied word deur charismatiese sprekers en meevoerende aanbidding. Lidmate vloei gevolglik van een kerk na 'n ander op soek na godsdienstige bevrediging. Hierdie soort aksent word ook gevind in die konteks van gemeentes in die familie van Ned Geref Kerke, waar 'n legitimering van die "upward social mobility" van die laer-middelklas bespeur kan word.

Daar kan talle punte van kritiek teen hierdie aksent op gemeentebou ingebring word. Dikwels lei dit tot 'n gerigtheid na binne, na die opbou van gemeentes en die interne behoeftes van die gemeente. Dit word ook weerspieël in die finansiële besteding van makro-gemeentes. Die opvallende is dat die fokus op gemeentebou, anders as by die klem op die uniekheid van die kerk, gerieflik volgehou kan word in konteks waar skeiding op grond van ras en ekonomiese klas voortduur. Die gemeente bly 'n homogene groep in 'n voorstedelike konteks. Sondag om 10h00 bly "the most segregated hour". Dit is weliswaar nie noodwendig die geval nie, maar hierdie teologiese sleutel bied nie opsigself weerstand teen die isolasie wat apartheid gekenmerk het nie. Op die oog af word die isolasie wel deurbreek met behulp van internasionale netwerke, maar met 'n versigtig gekose teologiese strekking.

Hierdie na-binne gerigtheid word weliswaar ook bevraagteken binne kringe waar gemeentebou as dominante teologiese sleutel funksioneer. Dit gee weer aanleiding tot 'n aksent op sending en die ondersteuning van sendingwerk in ander dele van die wêreld (sien hieronder). Die na-binne gerigtheid word ook gekorrigeer en aangevul deur gemeentelike uitreik veldtogte in die plaaslike konteks. Dit gaan meermale gepaard met projekte rondom barmhartigheid, maatskaplike dienste en vorms van ontwikkeling. Dit is nietemin opvallend dat makro-gemeentes hierin telkens die leiding neem en tipies van die veronderstelling uitgaan dat hulle meer het om te gee aan ander as dit wat hulle van ander kan leer of ontvang. Juis daarom ly baie van hierdie soort projekte op die lang termyn skipbreuk of bly dit van 'n *ad hoc*-aard. Die ekonomiese, politieke en ekologiese komplikasies wat tipies is van die ekumeniese diskoers rondom "ontwikkeling", word selde verreken.

Dit is duidelik dat 'n bepaalde verdieping tans binne die Ned Geref Kerk plaasvind namate die aanvanklike visie vir gemeentebou met 'n breër teologiese visie verbind word (Nel 1986). Hierdie verdieping vind byvoorbeeld plaas binne die konteks van liturgiese vernuwing en nadenke oor die aard van "missionale" gemeentes. Dit maak dit moontlik om eensydige aksente te bevraagteken. In beide gevalle volg hierdie tendense die ekklesiosentriese wending soos hierbo aangedui.

Dit bly nietemin 'n vraag of die sterkpunt van gemeentebou as teologiese sleutel, naamlik die

ekklesiologiese konsentrasie wat daarin te vinde is, nie ook die swakpunt daarvan is nie. Net soos in die geval waar die uniekheid van die kerk beklemtoon word, roep die aksent op gemeentebou spoedig vrae op oor die verhouding tussen kerk en wêreld, die kerk en die burgerlike samelewing, asook kerk en staat. Die vraag is naamlik of hierdie aksent op gemeentebou vir lidmate 'n verantwoordbare etiek bied om hulle roeping in die samelewing – ook buite die strukture van die kerk om – te vervul. Bied hierdie teologiese sleutel die etiese gereedskap om na te dink oor ekonomiese, politieke en sosiale vraagstukke waarby Christene immers ook betrokke is? Help dit gereformeerde gelowiges om raak te sien dat die wêreld inderdaad God se wêreld is, dat God na die wêreld kyk met deernis en ontferming? Anders gestel: is die kerk 'n doel opsigself of is die kerk slegs een belangrike instrument in God se sending na die wêreld? Lewe 'n mens om kerk toe te gaan of gaan jy kerk toe om weer gebore te word ten einde te kan lewe?

Daar is egter nog meer op die spel. Die vraag is naamlik hoe hierdie spesifieke ekklesiologiese fokus verband hou met die temas van skepping en herskepping. Waar die Suid-Afrikaanse vorm van neo-Calvinisme 'n soteriologie en 'n ekklesiologie gestruktureer het op die basis van 'n bepaalde skeppingsteologie, is daar in kontekste waar "gemeentebou" as dominante teologiese sleutel funksioneer, die neiging om skeppingsteologie te marginaliseer. Dit beteken dat die vorming van die kerk, die kerk se bedieninge en sending nie meer ingebed word binne die spanning tussen skepping en herskepping nie.

Die oorheersing van gemeentebou as 'n dominante teologiese sleutel het verreikende gevolge. Dit kom veral tot uiting in die huidige onvermoë binne die Ned Geref Kerk om in die reine te kom met vraagstukke waar 'n bepaalde verstaan van God se skepping (as *creatura*) onvermydelik op die spel is: in gesprekke rondom geloof en wetenskap, in 'n verstaan van verskille rondom geslag en ras, in debatte rondom seksualiteit en met name homoseksualiteit, in die hantering van vraagstukke rondom HIV (is dit God se straf op sonde of bloot 'n siekte waarvan mense die onskuldige slagoffers geword het), saamwoon, in gesprekke rondom ekologiese vraagstukke en natuurrampe, en met betrekking tot die noodsaaklike dialoog met ander godsdienstige tradisies. Trouens die spanning tussen skepping en verlossing is ingebed in terminologie soos "swart bevryding", "die emansipasie van vroue", "die waardigheid en regte van mense" en pogings om "die planeet te red" – wat vrylik in publieke diskoers gebruik word. Al is hierdie begrippe ontleen aan die Joods-Christelike tradisie, is dit binne 'n ekklesiosentriese benadering moeilik om teologiese gereedskap te vind om oor hierdie vraagstukke na te dink. Dit lei daartoe dat hierdie onderwerpe óf vermy word óf dat lidmate hulle wend tot suiwer sekulêre argumente in die verband. Tipies bly die kerklike diskoers in dié verband ongenuanseerd en daarom blootgestel aan ongekorrigeerde vorms van biblisisme en fundamentalisme.

Meer nog: die gebrek aan 'n toereikende skeppingsteologie kan nie anders as om uiteindelik die geloofwaardigheid van die evangelie van verlossing in Christus te ondermyn nie (sien hieroor Conradie 2011, 2012). Immers, as dit nie meer duidelik is hoe God met die wêreld (en met wetenskaplike gegewens daaroor) verband hou nie, dan is dit ook nie duidelik hoe God in die wêreld werksaam kan wees nie. Hoe kan God dan nog die mens red? Waar daar wel ervarings van heling en verlossing plaasvind, is dit eweneens nie duidelik hoedat dit aan God toegeskryf kan word nie. In só 'n konteks kan die kerk nog wel 'n belangrike sosiale rol speel, maar is nie kwalitatief anders as enige ander sosiale organisasie nie. Selfs spiritualiteit vervlak tot die verkoop van godsdienstige ervarings – waarvoor daar nogal 'n groot mark bestaan. Dan speel dominees alte lekker kerk-kerk maar hoe dit met God te make het, is lank nie meer duidelik nie (Conradie 2006).

Sending

Gemeentebou het 'n belangrike rol gespeel in die ontwaking van 'n nuwe sendingywer waar

die klem op "sending na buite" val (Naudé, 2004: 36). Dat sending een van die dominante teologiese sleutels geword het, blyk veral uit die sogenaamde sending-ontwaking wat beskryf word as 'n derde golf in die Ned Geref Kerk se sendingvisie (Kritzinger 2004: 265). Alhoewel talle gemeentes 'n bydrae maak tot hierdie nuwe golf, is dit die makrogemeentes binne welvarende gemeenskappe wat in hierdie verband die leiding neem. Hier kan onder andere melding gemaak word van een van die gemeentes in Pretoria in 'n welvarende gemeenskap wat teen 2004 reeds 30 buitelandse sendelinge uitgestuur en onderhou het (Kritzinger 2004: 265). Hierdie beweging het weliswaar ook 'n visie vir barmhartigheid en ontwikkeling gestimuleer. Dit kan egter geïnterpreteer word as 'n vorm van buitelandse ontvlugting, omdat dit die aandag aflei van 'n moeiliker taak – naamlik die kerk se verantwoordelikheid om aandag te gee aan binnelandse konflik, politieke en ekonomiese vraagstukke en versoening met die res van die sogenaamde familie van Ned Geref Kerke (Kritzinger 2004: 265).

Teoloë in die Ned Geref Kerk soos Bosch, Saayman en JJ Kritzinger (2004: 265), wat 'n multi-dimensionele begrip van sending veronderstel, het hierdie klem op sending krities in oënskou geneem. Hulle het raakgesien dat hierdie beweging – ten spyte van die lof wat dit ontvang – iets weerspieël van 'n opvatting van voogdyskap (sien Coetzee, 2011: 61ev) – waar dit gaan oor 'n tipe barmhartigheid wat gekenmerk word deur 'n hoogmoed afkomstig van die *corpus Christianum* (Coetzee 2011: 13ev).

Klippies (JNJ) Kritzinger – 'n deeltydse leraar van die VGK – gee voorbeelde vanuit sy persoonlike ervaring van paternalisme en meerderwaardigheid komende van verteenwoordigers van hierdie beweging binne die Ned Geref Kerk. Kritzinger[12] toon eerstens aan dat daar steeds in die Ned Geref Kerk 'n gebrek is aan 'n "Afrikaan en Gereformeerde" identiteit. Dit kan veral waargeneem word in hierdie kerk se weerstand teen die Belhar-belydenis. Volgens hom is 'n tamheid te bespeur ten opsigte van inter-kulturele verhoudings en in die besonder met die VGK. Tweedens toon hy aan dat hulle begrip van die *missio Dei* 'n duidelike gebrek aan 'n trinitariese teologie vertoon. Derdens laat hy die lig val op die kenmerkende paternalisme binne die Ned Geref Kerk – soos dit weerspieël word in die besluit van die sinode van 1857 (sien Coetzee, 2011: 13ev) – wat volgens hom steeds bly voortleef.

'n Psigose van behoud

Verskeie faktore het aanleiding gegee tot wat as 'n "psigose van behoud" in die Ned Geref Kerk beskryf kan word. In hierdie verband kan eerstens melding gemaak word van die impak van sosiale en politieke transformasie en die traumatiese ervaring daarvan by talle lidmate. Hier kan gewys word op verskeie bedreigende uitvloeisels van hierdie transformasie. Dit sluit die volgende in: die beleid en praktyk van regstellende aksie, wat ekonomiese oorlewing bedreig; die verlies aan politieke seggenskap, met die gepaardgaande verlies aan mag; die kwesbaarheid van eksklusiewe en meerderwaardige sosiale en kulturele waardes; asook die traumatiese ervaring van misdaad, wat lewe en eiendom bedreig. Al hierdie faktore het Afrikaners opnuut na binne laat keer.

Die Ned Geref Kerk het vir talle Afrikaners die laaste bastion geword wat 'n veilige hawe kan bied. Dit is vir baie lidmate die plek waar, te midde van die aanslae van buite, hulle identiteit gewaarborg en hulle selfbehoud verseker word. Van der Borght meen dat hierdie kerk steeds die laaste bastion is wat die identiteit van die Afrikaner waarborg.[13] In dié verband wys Nicol (2004) daarop dat die etniese karakter van die Ned Geref Kerk ná 1990 bly voortleef, en selfs uitgebou

---

12 Sien Kritzinger (2004: 275-280) se volledige bespreking van die identiteit, triniteit en paternalisme binne die Ned Geref Kerk.

13 Van der Borght (2009: 13) laat hom soos volg hieroor : "One can fear that Sunday morning will continue to be the most segregated hour in South Africa as well as America for a long time coming."

word. Hy is van mening dat die aanvaarding van die Belhar-belydenis nie die strewe na eenheid sou kortwiek as dit nie vir hierdie psigose van behoud en bewaring was nie.

Die dominerende emosie van die Afrikaner is hiervolgens dat dit reeds pynlik genoeg is om 'n politieke eenheid met die res van die land te vorm waar "die swartes" "klaaglik misluk" in die bestuur van die land. Daarom weier hulle om die kerk ook prys te gee aan dieselfde "wanbestuur" (Nicol, 2004: 120). Hulle ervaring is boonop een van 'n "stryd om oorlewing" te midde van werklike bedreigings vir hulle persoon en eiendom. Die ironie is dat hierdie stryd om oorlewing óók binne 'n middelklas of hoër-middelklas konteks aanwesig is. Dit word aangewakker deur die emosionele eise van 'n kompeterende samelewing en die tempo van 'n verbruikerskultuur. Die newe-effekte van 'n verbruikerskultuur mond uit in 'n wye verskeidenheid persoonlike en gesinsprobleme (Conradie 2009:93-120) en lei tot talle klagtes rondom tyd, geld en stres.

In die breë weerspieël en bevestig die ampsdraers van die Ned Geref Kerk meestal hierdie sentimente. Teologies word dit verklank in temas soos "sorg", "rus", "troos" en "tuiste", maar nie soseer "oorlewing" nie. Die kerk bied so steeds 'n "veilige hawe" waar lidmate verstaan en pastoraal versorg word waar hulle in hul eie taal kan praat en hulleself kultureel kan uitdruk. Lidmate word begelei om met die eise van die lewe in die reine te kom, maar nie werklik met 'n veranderende samelewing nie. Die langtermyn gevolge van die ekonomiese bevoordeling wat apartheid gebring het, word gerieflik buite rekening gelaat in die lig van huidige ekonomiese kwellinge. Dit is opvallend dat hier sprake is van 'n oorvleueling met een van die teologiese sleutels wat tipies was van apartheidsdenke in die Ned Geref Kerk, naamlik dié van self-isolasie.

Daar kom wel kritiese stemme binne die Ned Geref Kerk na vore wat die wyse waarop hierdie teologiese sleutel in die kerk funksioneer, deeglik raaksien (sien Nicol, 2004:120, ook De Villiers, 2004: 233ev). Hulle toon aan dat hierdie teologiese sleutel heel tipies daartoe aanleiding gee dat die Ned Geref Kerk steeds nie die nodige begeleiding aan hulle lidmate bied om deel te word van die samelewing in die "nuwe Suid-Afrika" nie. Die gebrek aan entoesiasme vir kerkeenheid met die res van die "familie" en 'n daadwerklike betrokkenheid by die ekumene (veral op plaaslike vlak) is gevolge wat hieruit voortvloei (Kritzinger 2004: 273ev).

DIE DIEPSTE PUNTE VAN VERDELING BINNE DIE NED GEREF KERK NA 1974 EN NA 1994

Hierdie analise van dominante teologiese sleutels kan help om die diepste punte van verdeling in enige kerklike diskoers te peil. Teen 1974 was daar duidelike konflik tussen die sleutel van "skeiding" en isolasie aan die een kant en "broederskap" en "versoening" aan die ander kant. Teen 1985 kon die punte van verdeling in breë kerklike diskoers saamgevat word (in die analise van die Kairos Dokument) met die begrippe "staatsekuriteit", "versoening" en "bevryding". Binne die Ned Geref Kerk in die 1980's was die spanning eerder tussen ekklesiosentriese sleutels (waarin 'n teologiese klem op die uniekheid van die kerk óf op sosiologiese aspekte van gemeentebou moontlik was) en sleutels waarin die klem op die samelewing geval het (óf op staatsekuriteit, óf op die bediening van versoening, óf op kerklike dienswerk in die same-lewing. Hierdie spanning is uiteraard aanwesig in die twee weergawes van die dokument *Kerk en Samelewing* (1986, 1990). Met 'n bietjie oordrywing sou die dokument ook "Kerk óf Samelewing" genoem kon word. Die dokument weerspieël uiteenlopende teologiese opvattings van die posisie van die kerk in die samelewing (tussen neo-Calvinisme en neo-Ortodoksie) wat lei tot 'n sekere ambivalensie ten opsigte van kerklike eenheid. In die kerklike praktyk was die teologiese nadenke oor gemeentebou (met 'n heel ander teologiese onderbou) egter reeds in daardie tyd dominant.

Waar lê die diepste punte van verdeling binne die Ned Geref Kerk self na 1994? Dit is 'n moeilike vraag om te antwoord omdat die nodige historiese afstand om hierdie punte van

verdeling raak te sien nog nie daar is nie. Gegewe die pluralisering van teologiese uitgangs-
punte, benaderings en gespreksgenote sedert 1994 is dit beswaarlik moontlik om 'n oorkoe-
pelende oorsig te gee oor teologiese diskoers in die Ned Geref Kerk. Verskille tussen streke
en sinodes moet veral hier in ag geneem word. Daar kan orals punte van verdeling raakgesien
word, maar gegewe die pluralisering van teologiese uitgangspunte is dit te betwyfel of enige
netjiese tweedeling moontlik is. Op grond van die analise van dominante teologiese sleutels
is dit nietemin moontlik om enkele opmerkings hieroor te waag. Dit het belangrike implikasies
vir die posisie van die Ned Geref kerk binne die Ned Geref Kerk-familie en ook binne die breër
ekumeniese diskoers in Suid-Afrika.

In die dominante diskoers binne die Ned Geref Kerk is daar weinig oorblywende tekens
van die neo-Calvinistiese teologie wat benut is om apartheidsteologie te regverdig. Die reste
van apartheidsteologie word nietemin gekontinueer in wat hierbo die "psigose van behoud"
genoem is. Dit word egter gerugsteun, so sou 'n mens kon sê, deur enige beskikbare teologie wat
sigself daartoe leen (of daarvoor misbruik kan word) – vanaf Bonhoeffer se verstaan van lewe in
gemeenskap tot by welvaartsteologie. Die kriterium vir bruikbaarheid is of 'n bepaalde teologiese
ontwerp help om die sosiologiese veranderlikes van die plaaslike gemeente te verreken en die
institusionalisering daarvan te versterk. Hierdie soort teologiese ontwerp laat wel ruimte vir
dienswerk in die plaaslike konteks, vir sending na buite en in 'n mate vir profetiese stemme van
kritiek teenoor die staat, politieke partye en in die burgerlike gemeenskappe. Die klem val egter
nie op sosiale transformasie nie, maar op die nodige ruimte vir die kerk en vir lidmate om te kan
funksioneer binne 'n snel-veranderende en dikwels bedreigende samelewing. Hier is dus steeds
sprake van 'n vorm van ekklesiosentriese teologie.

Op grond hiervan sou 'n mens kon sê dat die diepste punte van verdeling tans saamhang
met enigiets wat die strukture wat daargestel word om die sosiale en godsdienstige "behoud"
van lidmate en gemeentes te verseker, fundamenteel kan bedreig. Dit gaan egter nie soseer
om bedreigings van buite af nie, maar om dinge wat die kohesie na binne kan bedreig. Die
behoud van gemeentes het immers alles te make met lidmaatgetalle. Dit geld van kwynende
plattelandse en middestad gemeentes. Dit geld egter ook van makro-gemeentes waar die
aantrekkingskrag van ander kerke en liturgiese style vinnig gevoel word. Die aantal lidmate het
uiteraard finansiële implikasies. Groot gemeentes het ook groot begrotings en verg effektiewe
bestuurstelsels. Binne só 'n konteks kan geen gemeente iets bekostig wat onnodig verdeling
mag bring nie. Verskille op grond van ras kan maklik geakkommodeer word, maar verskille op
grond van klas en kultuur is veel moeiliker om te hanteer. Hier is veral drie gevare ter sprake
wat die kohesie kan bedreig, naamlik kerklike gesprekke rondom geloof en wetenskap, rondom
homoseksualiteit en rondom sosiale geregtigheid, veral restitusie. In al drie gevalle word die
gedeelde veronderstellings waarbinne "behoud" gebied word, geproblematiseer. Die briewe in
die media hieroor gee oorgenoeg aanduidings hoe sensitief hierdie kwessies inderdaad is. Binne
'n ekklesiosentriese benadering kan dit nie eintlik bekostig word nie. Enige iemand wat hierdie
sake voorop stel, word gevra om liewer nie nou hierop aan te dring nie.

Dit is interessant om daarop te let dat al drie hierdie temas buite die skopus van 'n
ekklesiosentriese benadering val. Daar is wel 'n minderheid lidmate wat by hierdie soort
kwessies betrokke is. Daar vind egter binne die Ned Geref Kerk self steeds weinig teologiese
nadenke hieroor plaas. Dit bly steeds op die kantlyn. Dit bied 'n voorlopige aanduiding dat die
punte van verdeling juis hier gevind kan word.

In elke geval word teologiese nadenke oor die samelewing self gevra, nie net oor die kerk se
betrokkenheid by die samelewing nie. Die rol van die kerk as 'n instrument in God se werk in die
wêreld word algemeen aanvaar, maar die lokus van God se werk word verskillende beklemtoon:
óf primêr in die kerk en daardeur in die wêreld, óf primêr in die wêreld met gebruikmaking van

die institusionele kerk as instrument waar nodig. In antwoord op hierdie vraag word verskillende aspekte beklemtoon in neo-Calvinistiese en neo-Ortodokse geledere. Al speel hierdie teologiese denkrigtings na 1994 steeds minder van 'n rol, bly die onderliggende vraag na 'n toereikende verstaan van die verhouding tussen kerk en samelewing steeds relevant. Daaragter lê die vraag na 'n toereikende skeppingsteologie en veral die behoefte aan 'n toereikende verstaan van die verhouding tussen skepping en verlossing. Dit is nie net die Ned Geref Kerk wat hiermee worstel nie; die hele geskiedenis van die Christelike tradisie gee blyke daarvan (Conradie 2011, 2012). Dit is ook hierdie vraag wat in die analise wat hier aangebied word die deurslag gee.

GEVOLGTREKKING RONDOM GESPREKKE BINNE DIE NED GEREF KERK-FAMILIE

Indien hierdie analise van die situasie binne die Ned Geref Kerk self net naastenby in die kol is, het dit belangrike implikasies vir diskoers binne die Ned Geref Kerk-familie. Die teologiese debatte rondom die uniekheid en die eenheid van die kerk is grootliks uitgeklaar. Dit is selfs moontlik om te argumenteer dat daar genoegsame konsensus is rondom die drie sleutelpunte van die Belydenis van Belhar, naamlik kerklike eenheid, versoening (veral binne die kerk) en selfs rondom die noodsaak van sosiale geregtigheid. Dit is egter te betwyfel of prioriteit aan enige van hierdie motiewe vanuit die Ned Geref Kerk verleen word of selfs kan word gegewe die dominante teologiese sleutels. Die aandag van gemeentes en kerkleiers is meestal op ander, vir hulle meer dringende sake gefokus. Die dominante teologiese sleutels binne die VGK is selfs moeiliker om te peil, maar dieselfde vraag kan nietemin ook aan die VGK gestel word.

Hierdie situasie word vererger deur drie faktore. Eerstens is daar die oneweredigheid tussen die Ned Geref Kerk en die VGK in terme van lidmaatgetalle, eiendom, finansiële bates, vlakke van opvoeding onder lidmate en kerkleiers, organisatoriese strukture en so meer. Opsigself belemmer dit noodwendig pogings tot kerkeenheid. Dit word grootliks daardeur vererger dat die kerkleiers van die Ned Geref Kerk tipies net te gou die leiding neem in gesprekke rondom eenheid en versoening. Hulle is vinniger om probleme te artikuleer, voorstelle te maak, dinge te organiseer en om dit alles teologies te verwoord. Dit hang sekerlik saam met subtiele verskille in terme van klas en opvoeding maar ook met die blywende invloed van die verlede. Terselfdertyd, sonder kerklike eenheid tussen die Ned Geref Kerk en die VGK sal die legitimiteit van eersgenoemde altyd onder verdenking bly. Ironies genoeg, vorm eenheid met die VGK vir die Ned Geref Kerk die sleutel tot oorlewing op die lang termyn.

Tweedens is die herinnering aan die pynlike verlede nie afgehandel nie en bly dit steeds voortleef, veral binne die VGK. In elke nuwe gesprek bly dit heimlik op die agtergrond en kom onmiddellik na vore wanneer verteenwoordigers van die Ned Geref Kerk die leiding neem rondom versoening. Eenvoudig gestel: as jy jou skuld teenoor iemand bely moet jy ook lank genoeg stilbly en wag op die leiding van die een teenoor wie jy skuld bely het. Intussen verg die praktyk van samewerking egter besluite, finansies en organisasie, veral in 'n hoër middelklas omgewing. Juis daarom word sake verder vertroebel.

Derdens is versoening nie moontlik sonder geregtigheid en die gepaardgaande eis om restitusie nie. Gegewe die sosio-ekonomiese veranderinge in Suid-Afrika, die rol van regstellende aksie en die verskillende wyses waarop beleidsmaatreëls (bv in onderwys) verskillende sektore van die samelewing geraak het, bly sosio-ekonomiese geregtigheid egter tergend ontwykend. Omtrent elke definieerbare groep voel op die een of ander wyse te na gekom en bring hierdie belange na ekumeniese diskoers. Hoe langer strukturele kerklike eenheid sloer, hoe moeiliker sal dit word om die ongeregtigheid van die verlede aan te spreek omdat dit met ander faktore vervleg raak.

Dit is ten slotte ironies en tragies dat 'n welvaartsteologie die mees waarskynlike punt is waar

aanvaarding en herstel van verhoudinge moontlik is en waar die lidmate mekaar kan vind. Dit is trouens hier waar dié wat reeds het, ondersteun word, terwyl die "upward social mobility" onder dié wat hoop om dit te verkry, in dieselfde mate gelegitimeer word.

BIBLIOGRAFIE

Beeld, 1991/08/19.
Boesak, A 2010. "Wit mense toi-toi mos nie". *Die Burger* (in die By), 13 Maart, 5.
Bosch, DJ 1982. "The Church as alternative community". *Studiestuk no 170.* Instituut vir Reformatoriese Studies. Wetenskaplike bydraes van die PU vir CHO.
Bosch, DJ 1982. "In gesprek met dr. PF Theron". In Bosch, DJ (et al.) 1982. *Perspektief op die ope brief* 134-142. Kaapstad: Human en Rousseau.
Botman, HR 1996. "Narrative challenges in a situation of transition". In Botman, HR en Peterson, RM (eds): *To remember and to heal: theological and psychological reflections on truth and reconciliation,* 37-43. Cape Town: Human & Rousseau.
Britz, RM & Erasmus, LM 1994. "'n Oorsig van die ontwikkeling van 'n gemeentebouteologie in die Ned Geref Kerk 1970-1994". *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Teologiese Tydskrif,* September 35: 3, 374-388.
Coetzee, MH 2011. *Die "kritiese stem" teen apartheidsteologie in die Ned Geref Kerk (1905-1974).* 'n Analise van die bydraes van Ben Marais en Beyers Naudé. Doktorale proefskrif. Wellington: Bybel-Media.
Conradie, EM 2006. *Waar op dees aarde vind mens God? Op soek na 'n aardse spiritualiteit.* Wellington: Lux Verbi.BM.
Conradie, EM 2009. *Uitverkoop? In gesprek oor ... die verbruikerskultuur.* Wellington: Lux Verbi.
Conradie, EM (ed) 2011. *Creation and Salvation, Volume 1: A Mosaic of Essays on Selected Classic Christian Theologians.* Studies in Religion and the Environment, Vol. 5. Berlin: LIT Verlag.
Conradie, EM (ed) 2012. *Creation and Salvation: A Companion on Recent Theological Movements.* Studies in Religion and the Environment, Vol. 6. Berlin: LIT Verlag.
De Gruchy, JW 1979. *The Church struggle in South Africa.* CapeTown: David Philip.
De Villiers, 2004. "The influence of the Dutch Reformed Church on public policy during the late 80s and 90s". In Weisse, W & Anthonissen, C (eds): *Maintaining apartheid or promoting change? The role of the Dutch Reformed Church in a phase of increasing conflict in South Africa,* Religion and society Vol 5, 223-234. New York: Waxmann.
Durand, JJF 1985. "Afrikaner piety and dissent". In Villa-Vicencio, C & De Gruchy, JW (eds): *Resistance and hope. South African essays in honour of Beyers Naudé,* 39-51. Cape Town: David Philip.
Durand, JJF 1987. "Bevryding tot versoening". In *Teks binne konteks: Versamelde opstelle oor kerk en politiek,* in die reeks *Teks en konteks,* 88-90. Bellvile: Universiteit van Wes-Kaapland.
Durand, JJF 1987. "Die Suid-Afrikaanse spanningsveld van kerk en politiek". In *Teks binne konteks: Versamelde opstelle oor kerk en politiek,* in die reeks *Teks en konteks,* 131-140. Bellvile: Universiteit van Wes-Kaapland.
Durand, JJF 1987. Kairos – Swart kerke in verset". *Die Suid-Afrikaan,* September.
Durand, JJF 1988. "Church and state in South Africa. Karl Barth vs. Abraham Kuyper. In Villa-Vicencio, C (ed): *On reading Karl Barth in South Africa,* 121-138. Grand Rapids: Wm B Eerdmans
Elphick, R & Davenport, R (eds) 1997. *Chrisianity in South Africa a political, and cultural history.* Los Angeles: University of California Press.
Gaum, F 1997. *Reis met Apartheid: Die verhaal van die Ned Geref Kerk 1960 – 1994 'n getuienis en 'n belydenis.* Wellington: Hugenote-Uitgewers.
Heaney, MJ 2004. *Beyers Naudé, ekumeniese baanbreker in Suid-Afrika: 1960-1994.* Ongepubliseerde doktorale proefskrif. Fakulteit Teologie, Universiteit van Pretoria.
Heyns, J 1977. *Die Kerk.* Pretoria: NG Kerkboekhandel.
Heyns, J 1978. *Dogmatiek.* Pretoria: NG Kerkboekhandel.
Jonker, WD & Theron, PF 1981? *Vreemde gemeenskap.* Kaapstad: N.G. Kerkboekhandel.
Jonker, WD 1977. "What is theology"?: In *Church and theology in the Contemporary world,* 3-15. Reformed Ecumenical Synod.
Jonker, WD 1991. "Reaksie op Naudé en Furstenburg se bespreking van *Uit vrye guns alleen*". *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Teologiese Tydskrif,* Maart 32: 1, 119-123.

Jonker, WD 1998. *Selfs die kerk kan verander.* Kaapstad: Tafelberg.Jonker, WD & Theron, PF (reds) 1979. *Vreemde Gemeenskap: Preke rondom die tema: die kerk in die wêreld.* Pretoria: NG Kerkboekhandel.

Kinghorn, J (red) 1986. *Die NG Kerk en apartheid.* Johannesburg: Mac Millan.

Kinghorn, J 1990. 'n Tuiste vir almal: 'n Sosiaal-teologiese studie oor 'n gesamentlike demokrasie in Suid-Afrika. Kaapstad: Blackshaws.

Kinghorn, J 1997. "'Modernization and apartheid': The Africaner churches". In Elphick, R & Davenport, R (eds): *Christianity in South Africa a political, and cultural history,* 135-154. Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Kritzinger, JNJ 2004. "Riding a New Wave?: A new mission awakening in the Dutch Reformed Church". In Weisse, W & Anthonissen, C (eds): *Maintaining apartheid or promoting change? The role of the Dutch Reformed Church in a phase of increasing conflict in South Africa,* Religion and society Vol 5, 259-281. New Yark: Waxmann.

Lategan, BC 1984. "Current issues in the hermeneutical debate". *Neotestamentica,* 18, 1-17.

Lategan, BC, et al. 1987. *The option for an inclusive democracy.* Stellenbosch: Centre for Contextual Hermeneutics.

Lategan, BC 1984. "Current issues in the hermeneutical debate". *Neotestamentica,* 18, 1-17.

Lategan, BC, et al. 1987. *The option for an inclusive democracy.* Stellenbosch: Centre for Contextual Hermeneutics.

Law, L 1987. "Conscientious objection: The church against apartheid's violence". In Villa-Vicencio, C (ed): *Theology & Violence: The South African debate,* 281-297. Johannesburg: Skotaville.

Louw, C 2001. *Boetman en die swanesang van die verligtes.* Kaapstad: Human & Rousseau.

Maluleke, TS 1999. "The Truth and Reconciliation discourse: A black theological evaluation". In Cochrane, J, De Gruchy, JW & Martin, S 1999. *Facing the truth: South African faith communities and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission,* 103. Cape Town: David Philip.

Maritz, PJM 2003. Ben Marais (1909-1999): The influences on, and heritage of a South African prophet during two periods of transformation. Ongepubliseerde Doktorale proefskrif. Universiteit van Pretoria.

Meiring, P & Lederle, HI (reds) 1979. *Die eenheid van die kerk: opstelle/byeengebring deur Meiring en Lederle.* Kaapstad: Tafelberg.

Mosala, I 1987. "The meaning of reconciliation", *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* Julie, 59, 19-25.

Naudé, P 2004. "The DRC's role in the context of transition in South Africa. Main streams of academic research". In Weisse, W & Anthonissen, C (eds): *Maintaining apartheid or promoting change? The role of the Dutch Reformed Church in a phase of increasing conflict in South Africa,* Religion and society Vol 5, 31-51. New York: Waxmann.

Ned Geref Kerk, Algemene Sinode 1974. Ras, Volk en Nasie en Volkereverhoudinge in die Lig van die Skrif. Goedgekeur en aanvaar deur die Algemene Sinode van die Ned Geref Kerk, Oktober 1974. Kaapstad: NG Kerk-Uitgewers.

Ned Geref Kerk, Algemene Sinode. Hersieningskommissie. Kerk en Samelewing: 'n Getuienis van die Ned Geref Kerk, (1986). Bloemfontein: NG Sendingpers.

Ned Geref Kerk, Algemene Sinode. Kerk en Samelewing. 'n Getuienis van die Ned Geref Kerk, (1990). Bloemfontein: NG Sendingpers.

Nel, M 1986. *Teologiese perspektiewe op gemeentebou.* Pretoria: NG Kerkboekhandel.

Nicol, W 2004. "Accompanying the Flock: The development of the Dutch Reformed Church 1974-1990". In Weisse, W & Anthonissen, C (eds): *Maintaining apartheid or promoting change? The role of the Dutch Reformed Church in a phase of increasing conflict in South Africa,* Religion and society Vol 5, 115-121. New Yark: Waxmann.

Nolan, A 1987. "Conscientious objection: The church against apartheid's violence". In Villa-Vicencio, C (ed): *Theology & Violence: The South African debate,* 209-214. Johannesburg: Skotaville.

Nürnberger, K & Tooke, J (eds) 1988. *The cost of reconciliation: NIR Reader 1* (Cape Town: Methodist Publishing House.

Schreiter, R 1992b. *Reconciliation: Mission and ministry in a changing social order.* Maryknoll: Orbis Books.

Smit, DJ 2009. *Essays on being reformed: Collected essays.* Stellenbosch: Sun Press.

The Saga of Vereeniging 1989. Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (DCRA) Action. Ongepubliseer.

Theron, PF 1978. "Die Kerk as eskatologiese teken van eenheid" in *Die eenheid van die kerk.* Kaapstad: Tafelberg.

Theron, PF 1988. "Natuur en genade, kerk en volk". In Wethmar, CJ en Vos, CJA (reds). *'n Woord op sy tyd.* Feesbundel aangebied aan Prof. Johan Heyns 157-172. Pretoria: NG Kerkboekhandel.

Van der Borght, EAJG 2009. "Sunday morning the most segregated hour: On racial reconciliation as unfinished business for theology in South Africa and beyond". Inaugural lecture deliverd upon accepting the position of VU University Amsterdam Desmond Tutu chair.

Van Wyk, JH 1989. "WD Jonker as ekklesioloog". In Theron, PF & Kinghorn, J (eds): *Koninkryk, kerk en kosmos,* 74-86. Huldigingsbundel ter ere van Prof. WD Jonker. Bloemfontein: Pro Christo.

Villa-Vicencio, C (ed) 1987. *Theology & violence. The South African debate.* Johannesburg: Skotaville.

Vorster, WS (ed) 1986. "Reconciliation and construction: Creative options for a rapidly changing South Africa". Pretoria: Unisa.

TREFWOORDE

Gemeentebou
Isolasie
Ned Geref Kerk
Psigose van behoud
Sending
Staatsekuriteit
Versoening

KEY WORDS

Congregation building
Dutch Refromed Church
Isolation
Mission
Psychosis of Survival
Reconciliation
State Security

Contact details

Dr MH Coetzee (Murray)
Universiteit van Stellenbosch
Departement Sistematiese Teologie
 Privaatsak X17,
7535 BELLVILLE
E-posadres:
murraycoetzee@afrihost.co.za
Prof EM Conradie
Department Religie en Theologie,
Universiteit van die Weskaap,
Privaatsak X17,
7535 BELLVILLE.
E-posadres: emconradie@gmail.com

De Beer, PJP[1]

The Reformed Church in Africa's *Laudium Declaration.* A gift to the ecumenical community[2]

ABSTRACT

The author provides a brief overview of the history of the Reformed Church in Africa (RCA)**,** a church that is rooted in the South African Indian community, from its birth in 1968 till the present day. He then proceeds to discuss the content and the impact of the *Laudium Declaration,* which was adopted at the synod of the RCA in 1990. The declaration was widely welcomed in the RCA, defining the evangelical character of the church. The reaction of other churches in the Dutch Reformed Church Family to the Laudium Declaration is discussed, together with an appraisal of the role that the declaration may play in the current unification process in the Dutch Reformed Family in South Africa. The article ends with a heartfelt prayer that the declaration will be accepted as a gift from God not only by the Reformed churches in South Africa, but by the wider ecumenical community.

1. INTRODUCTION

In terms of the age of churches, the Reformed Church in Africa (RCA) is indeed a very young church, a relative latecomer on the South African scene. The first initiatives to reach out to the Indian/Muslim community by the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) in the Cape came when Dr G B A Gerdener was appointed missionary among the Muslims in Cape Town (1916). In Transvaal the work among the Hindu community was initiated by Miss E Hamman (later Mrs Kelber), in 1928.[3]

The first outreach efforts to the Indian community, decades earlier, originated from English speaking churches. This was on account of the fact that English was the first or second language of the Indian people in South Africa. After the planting of the RCA, all the congregations of the RCA accordingly became English speaking as well. Afrikaans speaking Christians, members of the sending church (the DRC), often found it difficult to reach out to an English speaking community. Nevertheless, considering the fact that the Indian people arrived as early as 1860 and following years in South Africa, one would have expected an earlier involvement of the Dutch Reformed Church in reaching out to the Indian Community with the Gospel.[4]

The Christians community among the Indian immigrants, according to Brain, constituted only 1.4% of the total of 152 184 immigrants. Most of these Christians were from Madras, brought

---

1 Emeritus Pastor, Reformed Church in Africa

2 The article is based on research for a Ph D thesis on *Church Planting in the South African Indian Community, with Reference to the Reformed Church in Africa,* accepted by the Faculty of Theology, University of Pretoria (2010), under the supervision of Professor P G J Meiring.

3 Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk (DRC) 1975: *Acta, Sinode van Suid-Transvaal*, 210. In the article reference is often made to the Dutch Reformed Church Family. The family of churches consists of the Dutch Reformed Church, the Uniting Reformed Church, the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa and the Reformed Church in Africa.

4 De Beer, *Church Planting*, 68ff.

to Natal to work in the sugar plantations. Continuous immigration over many years led to the establishment of a permanent Indian community in Natal.[5]

Why was the DRC a late comer with regards to outreach to the Indian people? Not only, as stated above, did the difficulty for Afrikaners to use English as language medium provide an impediment to the work. Above all, it was the policy of apartheid that constituted the most negative factor in this work. House visitation in the early years when young Afrikaners, coming from the privileged white community, reached out to the Indian people proved to be extremely difficult, as these visits often turned into political debates on account of the South African government's policy of separate development, or apartheid, at the time.[6]

In passing, it may be noted that the DRC *did* have a much earlier connection with Indian people in Ceylon when the Boer prisoners during the Anglo-Boer war (1899-1902) were moved to share the Gospel with them. Eventually Rev A J K de Klerk and later Rev S F Skeen were set aside to minister to the people of Colombo. They were supported by the Ceylon Assistance Missionary Society.[7] But this endeavour had little impact on the local scene.

The eventual establishment of the Indian Reformed Church (IRC), later renamed the Reformed Church in Africa (RCA), took place in the historic little church building in Raisethorpe, Pietermaritzburg. Representatives of the first four congregations, Pietermaritzburg (est. 1957), Durban South (est. 1965), Transvaal (est. 1965) and Cape Province (est. 1966) were present to assist the birth of the young churched.[8]

2. THE REFORMED CHURCH IN AFRICA TODAY: A SMALL YET VIBRANT CHURCH

Since the birth of the RCA in 1968, when the church comprised of only four congregations and 360 communicant members, the Church has grown to a denomination consisting of 12 congregations and 2 missions, Anashim (2000) and Clairwood (1989). The congregations are linked to three Presbyteries, i.e. KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng and Cape Province.[9]

Considering the political situation in South Africa and the scourge of apartheid, great difficulties faced those who reached out to the Muslims and Hindus. This was especially true of the Afrikaans speaking outreach workers who, as noted above, were perceived to be part and parcel of the government's policy of apartheid. In spite of the political issues, workers were overcome by the sincere hospitality of the homes they visited.

---

5 Brain, J B 1985. Indentured and Free Indians in the Economy of Colonial Natal, in *Enterprise and Exploitation in a Victorian Colony. Aspects of the Economic and Social History of Colonial Natal.* Edited by B Guest and J M Sellers. Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 243. Interesting accounts of the history of the Indian people in Natal may be found in Arkin, A J. Magyar K P. Pillay, G J (eds). 1989: *The Indian South Africans: A Contemporary Profile.* Owen Burgess Publishers. South Africa; Beyers, C J 1976: *Die Indiërvraagstuk in Natal, 1870-1910. Argiefjaarboek vir Suid-Afrikaanse Geskiedenis. 34ste Jaargang.* Deel II. Pretoria: Staatsdrukker; Bhana, S 1985: Indian Trade and Trader in colonial Natal, in *Enterprise and Exploitation in a Victorian Colony. Aspects of the Economic and Social History of Colonial Natal.* Edited by B Guest and J M Sellers. Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press; Calpin, G H. 1949: *Indians in South Africa.* Shutter and Shooter: Pietermaritzburg: and Diesel, A and Maxwell, P 1993: *Hinduism in Natal. A brief guide.* Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal.

6 Crafford, D 1982. *Aan God die Dank (1).* Pretoria: N G Kerkboekhandel: 443ff; cf. Gerdener, G B A

   1958. *Recent Development in the South African Mission Field.* Kaapstad: NG Kerk-Uitgewers, 1985.

7 Crafford, *Aan God die Dank,* 146-147.

8 De Beer, *Church Planting,* 116pp.

9 Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk 2010: *Jaarboek* Wellington: Bybel-Media, 265, 266.

The missionary endeavour of the young people was coloured by a strong evangelical drive. The first converts participated in outreach initiatives, often with remarkable results. This evangelical drive in turn strengthened the members of the young church and resulted in the church growing in leaps and bounds. This was particularly when they participated in campaigns that were regularly held in the early days.[10]

The minister-cum-evangelist formed a formidable team in the outreach work. The testimony of the evangelist usually broke the ice and served as an introduction to the white minister's message. The evangelist's ability to speak at least one of the Indian languages was a great help to reach those that could not understand English. In the early days they brought with them spiritual songs in the vernacular that richly moved and blessed the hearts of those who kept their mother tongue: Hindi, Tamil, Telegu or Gujerati.[11]

The Reformed Church in Africa, through the years, did not lose its missionary drive. The involvement of the membership in mission and evangelism is a given to all congregations. Living in a non-Christian environment makes it absolutely vital for churches and their membership to reach out in the area where they are placed.

In the RCA this ministry is perceived as the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to a people's group, the Indian people, yet not excluding black, coloured or white people living in the area. Tent campaigns were all along, but especially in the early days, the heart of the ministry. Preaching and evangelism went hand in hand. Visitation, outreach efforts, and campaigns were the training ground for members of the congregation to become effective witnesses in the community.

The training of the membership to become more effective witnesses in their community was regarded by most congregations as a *sine qua non.* Efforts were made to empower members to become fearless witnesses for Christ as well as deeply committed witnesses of their personal salvation. The importance of a vibrant prayer life was continuously emphasized.

The growth of the RCA, a rather late comer among the family of Dutch Reformed churches, was slower than the growth of the other members of the Dutch Reformed Family of churches. Hinduism and Islam in South Africa, as in the rest of the world, constitute a great challenge to mission. In comparison with the other members of the family of Dutch Reformed churches, the RCA is therefore a rather small church.

According to present statistics the 12 congregations of the RCA has a total membership of 362 Baptismal members and 506 Communicant members.[12]

Order of establishment of RCA Congregations and Missions 2010

Congregations:		
1. Pietermaritzburg	1957	(PMB)
2. Shalom	1965	(Chatsworth)
3. Emmanuel	1972	(Sydenham)
4. Charisma	1972	(Laudium)
5. Calvary	1974	(Malabar)
6. Moriah	1979	(Merebank)
7. Jeshurun	1981	(Phoenix)
8. Pearl	1988	(Kimberley)
9. Shanti	1988	(Palmridge)
10. Sunthosham	1989	(Rylands)
11. Jeshua	1990	(Lenasia)

10 De Beer, *Church Planting,* 128; cf. Pypers, D J, 1995. *Guidelines on Everyday Life: Reformed Church in Africa.* Bloemfontein: NG Sendingpers.

11 De Beer, *Church Planting,* 168.

12 N G Kerk 2010: *Jaarboek,* 266

12. Maranatha	1995	(Ottawa)
Missions:		
1. Clairwood Mission	1989	
2. Anashim Mission	2000	

Membership statistics of the RCA Congregations:[13]

	Congregation	Date Established	Place	Baptismal Members	Communicant Members
1	Pietermaritz-burg	1957	PMB	27	70
2	Shalom	1965	Chatsworth	30	145
3	Emmanuel	1972	Sydenham	39	77
4	Charisma	1972	Laudium	59	152
5	Calvary	1974	Malabar	44	103
6	Moriah	1979	Merebank	25	120
7	Jeshurun	1981	Phoenix	52	165
8	Pearl	1988	Kimberley	10	20
9	Shanti	1989	Palmridge	20	33
10	Sunthosham	1989	Rylands	24	50
11	Jeshua	1990	Lenasia	13	25
12	Maranatha	1995	Ottawa	19	46
	TOTAL			**362**	**506**

Mission statistics:[14]

	Missions (2010)	**Baptismal Members**	**Communicant Members**	**Adherents**
1	Clairwood - 1989	11	22	-
2	Anashim - 2000	3	7	30
	TOTAL	**14**	**29**	**30**

3. THE BIRTH OF THE LAUDIUM DECLARATION

The Synod of the RCA of (October, 1990) experienced serious tension among the delegates resulting from the Dutch Reformed Church's positive stance towards the policy of apartheid in South Africa. Already in 1982 when Rev. Manikkam, moderator of the RCA sided with his colleagues from the DRCA at a meeting of the World Alliance of Reformed in Ottawa (Canada) calling for a *status confessionis* in respect of apartheid, denouncing the DRC's defence of

---

13 N G Kerk 2010: *Jaarboek,* 265
14 N G Kerk 2010: *Jaarboek,* 266

apartheid, serious differences of opinion within the RCA emerged. By 1990 a number of ministers and elders - among them senior ministers Gerrie Lubbe and Klippies Kritzinger - felt that they could no longer be accomplices to apartheid, by accepting subsidies from the DRC. They would rather forgo their salaries and work as tentmakers, than be dependent upon the church that supported apartheid. For the RCA this situation was experienced as a moment of truth. There were strong differences of opinions among the ministers and elders. There were those who felt that the time has come for the RCA to take a strong stand against the policy of apartheid, to speak out clearly against the scourge of apartheid. Others felt that such a move must no be at the expense of the evangelical position of the RCA[15]

Rev Perold de Beer was of the conviction that together with the battle against apartheid, the evangelical voice which was typical of the RCA should not be compromised. Evangelism, the spreading of the gospel to those who did not know the Lord Jesus, was the RCA's first priority, the heart of the RCA. The acceptance of a political response to the policy of apartheid would move the RCA into becoming an activist church.

The tension that had begun to grow in the RCA between those who refused to accept the subsidy from the DRC and who wanted to make it clear that they are not willing to be linked with a church that supported apartheid, and those who were afraid that the church being drawn in a political argument will lose its evangelical zeal, had reached critical proportions. There was a real concern that the RCA's impact on and ministry to the Indian community would suffer.

When the afternoon session of the first day of Synod ended, Rev de Beer used the time to seek Gods face in prayer as he struggled with the impending theological understanding that may remove the RCA from its evangelical stance. De Beer was inspired by the *Lausanne Declaration* that a group of evangelical churches world-wide adopted,[16] and was convinced that this evangelical theological point of view would be the answer to the needs of the RCA. The *Laudium Declaration* was then tabled at Synod and unanimously adopted.[17]

The result of the adoption of the Laudium Declaration was significant. The Evangelical character of the Reformed Church in Africa was deeply strengthened in the hearts and minds of the members of the church. The church saw extensive growth in the years that followed. The unity of the RCA was greatly enhanced as congregations and members rallied around this declaration. Most of the members of the RCA are first generation believers who lived in the joy of their salvation. The Laudium Declaration strengthened their faith.

4. THE TEXT OF THE LAUDIUM DECLARATION

The text of the declaration reads as follows:[18]

> We affirm that the biblical Gospel is God's enduring message to our world, and we determine to defend, proclaim and embody it.

> We affirm our commitment to the primacy of Evangelism, of the preaching of the Gospel to every creature.

---

15 De Beer, *Church Planting,* 179pp.

16 Bosch, David. 1991: *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission.* New York: Orbis Books, 406ff.

17 De Beer, *Church Planting,* 188.

18 De Beer, *Church Planting,* 194ff.

We affirm that Evangelism is not an option but an imperative.

We affirm that religions and ideologies are not alternative paths to God, and there is no other name given among men whereby we can be saved but the name of Jesus.

We reject as derogatory to Christ and the Gospel every kind of syncretism and dialogue which implies that Christ speaks equally through other religions and ideologies. To proclaim Jesus as Saviour of the world is not to affirm that all men are either automatically or ultimately saved.

We affirm that the Holy Spirit's witness is indispensable to Evangelism and that without his supernatural work new birth and new life is not possible and all our endeavours fruitless.

We affirm that we who proclaim the Gospel must exemplify it in a life of holiness and love; otherwise our testimony loses its credibility.

We affirm the constant need for revival and determine to seek God's face constantly for revival in our own lives, in the life of the RCA, and in the church of South Africa at large.

We affirm that nothing commends the Gospel more eloquently than a transformed life and nothing brings it into disrepute so much as personal inconsistency. We determine to live worthy of the Gospel of life.

We affirm that the congregation of believers should turn itself outward to its community in evangelistic witness and compassionate service.

We affirm that God has committed the whole Gospel to the whole world and to every member the task of making Christ known throughout the world. We long to see all lay and ordained persons mobilised and trained for the task. We determine to proclaim the Gospel faithfully, urgently, passionately and sacrificially, until He comes.

We affirm that we must demonstrate God's love visibly by caring for those who are deprived of justice, dignity, food and shelter. Governments, religious bodies and nations will continue to be involved with social responsibilities but should the church fail in her mandate to preach the Gospel no other body will do so.

We affirm our God-given unity at the deepest level with all born-again blood-washed believers. We determine to foster such unity across all denominational barriers. In the immediate circle of our church we will foster structural unity with those who share the same confession provided that such structural unity will not stifle the evangelical witness of the Reformed Church in Africa.

We affirm that we who claim to be members of the Body of Christ must transcend within the church the barriers of race, gender and class. We affirm that racism within the church constitutes a denial of the Gospel and deterrent to evangelistic witness.

We affirm that the proclamation of God's kingdom of justice, peace and holiness demands

the denunciation of all injustice, oppression and immorality. We will not shrink from this prophetic witness.

We affirm the freedom in Christ of the church of Jesus Christ and refuse the alignment of the church to any ideology or current political trend, power or movement.

We affirm our solidarity with those who suffer for the Gospel and will seek to prepare ourselves for the same possibility.

We affirm the right of the believer to conscientious objection. In our demonstration and witness against evil we determine not to use carnal weapons but to act in the spirit of Christ and through spiritual warfare and constant prayer to enter into Christ's victory over the principalities and powers of evil.

5. BRIEF REMARKS ON THE CONTENT OF THE LAUDIUM DECLARATION

The Declaration was born from a resolution of the RCA in1986 to maintain her stand as an evangelical reformed church. In the ministry of the RCA we discovered that the RCA was in essence an evangelical church, yet on account of church politics it has moved towards a more activist position. The Laudium Declaration pronounces on the character of the RCA as an evangelical reformed church but also expresses the strong missionary character of this church. The intention of this declaration is to restate her position. The declaration clearly defines the character of the RCA.[19]

The Reformed Church in Africa sees itself as a missionary church, well placed within the Hindu and Muslim communities of South Africa. In her missionary outreach she endeavours to balance the different aspects of mission. The ministry of *kerugma,* of proclaiming the gospel wherever and whenever the situation makes it possible is of primal importance. But of equal importance is the ministry of *diakonia,* of reaching out to the everyday needs of people in all levels of society. The third ministry of *koinonia,* of planting the church and nurturing the members, building up of the communion of the saints is as necessary as the others. For the RCA mission in itself is an act of worship, it's *leitourgia.* By our obedience to Jesus' command and by participating in the *Missio Dei*, we glorify His Name. This is what the Laudium Declaration wants to state: from a warm evangelical heart a comprehensive mission flows.[20]

6. THE REACTION WITHIN THE RCA AND DRC FAMILY TO THE LAUDIUM DECLARATION

Immediately after the acceptance of the declaration, the RCA received positive responses from its own membership as well as from its sister churches in the DRC Family.

The response from congregations within the RCA in the months after the 1990 synod, was increasingly positive as they discovered the doctrinal and practical value of the declaration amidst a challenging environment. Living amidst a world of religions the Laudium Declaration provided congregations and ministers with clear guidance in terms of the primacy of evangelism; the indispensable work of the Holy Spirit and the absolute *sine qua non* of a transformed life. The

---

19 Sukdaven 1996: *Inclusive or Exclusive? A Missiological Analysis of congregations of the RCA.* Bloemfontein: University of the Free State, 40.

20 De Beer, *Church Planting,* 160pp; cf. Kritzinger, J J; Meiring, P G J; Saayman, W A 1994. *On Being Witnesses.* Johannesburg: Orion, 36ff.

members of the RCA realized that the unanimous reception by the Synod 1990 proved the deep-felt need of the church to strengthen her ministry in the world. This document has indeed given a new impetus to and a fresh understanding of the ministry to which God called the RCA. The Laudium Declaration did not solve all the problems of the RCA but provided the RCA with a new united purpose with reference to her calling and ministry. The Laudium Declaration also assisted Church Councils to call deacons, elders and ministers to their respective offices with reference to the conditions of the Laudium Declaration.

In the wider community of the DRC family, the acceptance of the Laudium Declaration by the RCA was equally noted. During the many meetings within the DRC family since 1990 to discuss church unification, mention was often made of the declaration, and of the impact that the declaration was bound to have within the unity process. The most comprehensive and appreciative response to the Laudium Declaration came from Dr J J Gerber, General Secretary of the DRC. In a recent letter (June 8, 2010) Gerber verbalised the DRC's views as follows:[21]

- The Laudium Declaration is not being valued to its fullest, because of the fact that it is not continuously tabled at meetings. An Afrikaans proverb says – if something is not well-known, it is also not well-loved.
- One of the most prominent anchors of the Laudium Declaration is the unashamedly testimony taken on *evangelism,* in that it advocates proclaiming the Gospel unashamedly, eagerly, in word and deed, and through every member of the entire community of believers. This would result of a clear view point upon the Work of the Holy Spirit and a call for revival and the transforming of lives. Maybe the other members of the DRC family of churches, should hear this call. I am often asked on this question – What would ministers of the Gospel reply if questioned about the number of people they led to Jesus from outside their congregations during the preceding year. Would it not perhaps be more viable to launch a gigantic ministry of evangelism instead of having numerous meetings on unification? Are we, as the family of DR Churches, still serious concerning Revival? A family in revival will look at one another in a different way.
- The view taken by the RCA, that structural unity should never harm her evangelical witness, deserves further deep-rooted, constructive discussion. We might end up with an excellent structure of unity at grass-roots level, without any evangelistic witness at all.
- I wholeheartedly support the view, that in the event of the Church failing in its evangelical calling, no other body will do it!
- The view regarding prophetic witness, social justice and relationship with government is crystal clear – it is more than of a declaration – it is a confession. The question that comes to mind is how would we all make the Laudium Declaration part of not only the Southern African, but also the wider ecumenical discussion? Furthermore, could the RCA not begin to embark on a road – with perhaps a few alterations – to turn the Laudium Declaration into a confession?

7. THE ROLE OF THE LAUDIUM DECLARATION IN THE REUNIFICATION PROCESS WITHIN THE DRC FAMILY

Returning to the role that the Laudium Declaration may play in the unification process the following needs to be stated. The RCA is a committed partner in the reunification process of the four Dutch Reformed Churches. It is obviously a long and often arduous process during which serious points of differences need to be negotiated or bridged.

---

21 Gerber, J J: *Letter from the General Secretary of the DRC,* June 8, 2010.

For the RCA, the smallest and youngest member of the DRC family, there is some apprehension that with church unity it may lose its character as encapsulated in the Laudium Declaration. On the other hand the RCA enjoys the Reformed heritage with the other members of the DRC Family, a heritage that deeply connects her to the reunification process. The RCA has a good relationship with the family of Dutch Reformed Churches, and has not received negative reactions to the Laudium Declaration from other members of the DRC family.[22]

The response from the ranks of the DRC, according to the interviews that were conducted (cf. the list of names of interviewees in the bibliography), ranges from positive to *very* positive. The evangelical character of the Laudium Declaration is seen as a contribution towards those issues that can really bring the churches together. If the Laudium Declaration succeeds it would be in the celebration of the spiritual realities upon which true believers can agree. From that re-connection we could then move forward to address the issues that divide us. We agree with Dr J J Gerber that the RCA should consider offering the Laudium Declaration (with some changes) to the other churches as a *confession* that they may consider adopting as well. It is our fervent hope that the goal of true unity of the family of DR Churches will in this way be served. The resultant impact of such an initiative may lead to the beginnings of true union of the family of DR Churches. It is indeed not the intention of the RCA to take any credit for such an initiative. Yet if in this way the family of DR churches could re-discover and celebrate their unity in Christ the churches may move towards effective union.

In our informal discussions with members of the family of DR churches, we have received positive to very positive reactions on the Laudium Declaration and of the role of the RCA in the unity talks. If such a venture could succeed, the RCA would be the proverbial small child that would lead us all. Every church, including the RCA, has their pre-conditions and fears on the way to reunification. We have to put these fears aside and move towards effective union so that we may confess and celebrate our unity in Christ and one another.

In the process the RCA should accept the responsibility to introduce the Laudium Declaration comprehensively to the family of the DR Churches. In an interview with Rev Arno Louw (Dutch Reformed Church in Africa, DRCA) it appears that the Laudium Declaration is not well known in the DRCA in Natal. This is quite ironic. Natal is, of all the provinces, the closest to the heartland of the RCA. The same is unfortunately true of many congregations in the DRC and URCSA who still need to study the Laudium Declaration, discussing the implications of the document for all of us.

If this is done properly, Dr Kobus Gerber of the DRC is of the opinion that the RCA is ideally positioned to play an important role in bringing the various members of the family of DR churches together, and to contribute to the process of reconciliation in the country.

According to Rev Victor Pillay of the RCA, the RCA with the Laudium Declaration in its hands, is already enthusiastically participating with the other churches in the DRC Family in the United Ministry of Service and Witness, the body that unites the missionary and charitable services of the churches. This in itself constitutes a step forward towards church union.

8. A GIFT TO THE CHURCHES IN SOUTH AFRICA

At the time when Synod of the RCA adopted the Laudium Declaration in 1990 in Pretoria, few realized what the influence of this document would be. For the RCA it presented an opportunity to rediscover and to understand its own mission. No one, however, expected how wide the impact of the Laudium Declaration would be not only on its own congregations but on the members of the family of D R Churches as well. Today we may truly see the declaration as a gift

---

22 De Beer, *Church Planting,* 207ff.

of God to all of us.

The Laudium Declaration truly sent the RCA on its course, helping a young, small, denomination to discover and maintain its identity. Twenty years later, at the 2010 synod of the RCA, the church once again stated its position and its character in the spirit of the Laudium Declaration:[23]

The Reformed Church In Africa (RCA) is firmly based on the Bible as the holy and infallible Word of God. The doctrine that the RCA confesses in accordance with the Word of God, is set out in the doctrinal standards as determined at the Synod of Dordrecht in 1618 - 1619, namely the Belgic Confession of Faith, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dort.

It is important to state categorically that the RCA accords the highest priority to the uncompromising adherence to the authority of Holy Scripture. We believe and confess that Holy Scripture is the complete revelation of God, authoritative for all time. Thus for us it is the sole yardstick by which all standpoints, attitudes and actions in the South African situation must be tested.

This means that consistent with our doctrinal standards, we need to study Scripture carefully and correctly, in order to determine what message and mandate come to us out of the Word and how we must apply it in any given situation.

We must constantly be on our guard that no other voice, however appealing or beguiling - be it that of a particular ideology, school of thought, political trend, tradition, personal bias, national sentiment, or whatever - speaks decisively to us above or alongside the truth of the Bible.

The Reformed Church in Africa may be the youngest and the smallest in the Family of Churches, but by the grace of God the RCA was allowed to present a gift to the Reformed churches in South Africa. It is our hope and prayer that, as the knowledge and the appreciation the declaration within the country grows the Laudium Declaration will be accepted a gift to the wider ecumenical community as well.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Arkin, A J. Magyar K P. Pillay, G J (eds). 1989. *The Indian South Africans: A Contemporary Profile.* Owen Burgess Publishers. South Africa.

Bhana, S 1985. Indian Trade and Trader in colonial Natal, in *Enterprise and Exploitation in a Victorian Colony. Aspects of the Economic and Social History of Colonial Natal.* Edited by B Guest and J M Sellers. Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press.

Beyers, C J 1976. Die Indiërvraagstuk in Natal, 1870-1910. *Argiefjaarboek vir Suid-Afrikaanse Geskiedenis.* 34ste Jaargang. Deel II. Pretoria: Staatsdrukker.

Bosch, David. 1996. *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission.* New York: Orbis Books.

Brain, J B 1985. Indentured and Free Indians in the Economy of Colonial Natal, in *Enterprise and Exploitation in a Victorian Colony. Aspects of the Economic and Social History of Colonial Natal.* Edited by B Guest and J M Sellers. Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press.

Calpin, G H. 1949. *Indians in South Africa.* Shutter and Shooter, Pietermaritzburg.

Crafford, D. 1982. *Aan God die Dank (Deel 1) Die Geskiedenis van die Sending van die Ned. Geref. Kerk binne die Republiek van Suid-Afrika en enkele aangrensende Buurstate.* Pretoria: NG Kerkboekhandel Transvaal.

De Beer, P J P 2010: *Church Planting in the South African Indian Community. With special reference to the Reformed Church in Africa.,* Unpublished thesis, University of Pretoria (June 2010).

Diesel, A & Maxwell, P 1993. *Hinduism in Natal: A brief guide.* Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal.

Gerber, J J. 2010. *Letter from the General Secretary NGK.*

Gerdener, G B A 1958. *Recent Development in the South African Mission Field.* Kaapstad: NG Kerk-Uitgewers, 1985.

---

23 Quoted from the RCA's official web-sight, October 10, 2012.

Indian Reformed Church 1968: *Acta, First Synod of the Indian Reformed Church.* Pietermaritzburg: DRC Archive.

Kritzinger, J J; Meiring, P G J: Saayman, W A 1994. *On being Witnesses.* Johannesburg: Orion.

Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk 2010. *Jaarboek,* Wellington: Bybel-Media

Pypers, D J, 1995. *Guidelines on Everyday Life: Reformed Church in Africa.* Bloemfontein: NG Sendingpers.

Reformed Church in Africa 1986, 1990, 2010. *Acts of Synods.* Pietermaritzburg: DRC Archive.

Sukdaven 1996. *Inclusive or Exclusive? A Missiological Analysis of congregations of the RCA.* Bloemfontein: University of the Free State.

INTERVIEWS

Interviews were conducted with the following individuals:

Dr Kobus Gerber

Rev Arno Louw

Rev Koos Louw

Prof Piet Meiring

Ev Johan Naudé

Rev Victor Pillay

Rev Dawie Pypers

Rev Bennett Shunmugan

Rev Maniraj Sukdaven

Hendriks, H Jurgens[1]
Stellenbosch University

Networking theological education in Africa: the NetACT story[2]

ABSTRACT

This article, first, relates the story of the founding and growth of NetACT, a network of African theological schools. It furthermore shows how the member schools' desire be part of efforts to address issues related to HIV&AIDS on the African continent led them to focus, amongst other things, on curriculum development and gender equality. As a logical first step, a detailed questionnaire had to be completed by all member schools. Data collected in this way was statistically quantified in order to show the existence or not of unequal gender representation in the participating theological schools and the churches that are their clients. Finally, in light of the results of this research, the work done by NetACT is highlighted, as well as its positive outcome as experienced by the individual schools.

1. INTRODUCTION

The article tells the story of the Network for African Congregational Theology (NetACT).[3]. Within this story three events and subsequent streams of thought and action played a major role that were researched and is herewith described.

2. THREE STREAMS

Three events led to the formation of the Network for African Congregational Theology.

The first stream of NetACT's origins started with an "African Safari" in 1997, when three staff members of Stellenbosch University (SU) and one from the University of the Western Cape (UWC) visited 37 theological schools in Namibia, Malawi, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Zambia. Ever since the establishment of South Africa's first democratic dispensation in 1994, postgraduate students from churches founded through the missionary work of the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa started attending UWC and SU. Students from other Reformed churches soon joined them. The aim of the safari was – besides conducting oral examinations with registered SU and UWC students who resided in the countries where the schools are located – to get to know the theological schools and their contexts better, in a more personal way, to strengthen ties, to further ecumenical cooperation and to put an important question to these schools: What are

---

1 Jurgens Hendriks is Professor Emeritus in Practical Theology and Missiology at Stellenbosch University, South Africa. He is a founding member of NetACT and serves as the network's Executive Director. Email hjh@sun.ac.za

2 The article is based on the first and second chapters of a new book: Hendriks, H Jurgens; Mouton, Elna, Hansen, Len & Le Roux, Elisabet. 2012. *Men in the pulpit, women in the pew? Addressing gender inequality in Africa.* Stellenbosch: SunMedia.

3 In August 2011 at its Annual General Meeting the NetACT Board accepted the DCMA (Deaf Christian Ministry Africa) as its 13th member. This school started teaching deaf people to become ministers to deaf congregations in Africa. The school is situated in Worcester, South Africa. www.deafnet.co.za (Accessed 25 June 2012). The research reflected here was done when the member schools counted twelve.

the main challenges and problems that theology and theological institutions such as theirs face on our sub-continent? We were personally changed by this visit and so were our institutions.[4]

The source of the second stream, also in 1997, was in Amsterdam in the Netherlands, when the International Society for the Study of Reformed Communities met at the Free University for their triennial meeting. The Society studied the influence of secularisation on Reformed communities and a pretty negative scenario unfolded. The writer and our colleague, Prof. Russel Botman, represented the Reformed Church in South Africa and told the conference that the Society's research gave a pretty one-sided picture.[5] They then explained what was happening in southern Africa. They challenged the Society to listen to other voices than just those from the West. The outcome was that the Society's next meeting was held in Stellenbosch, South Africa in 2000. Ten of the 19 papers were from sub-Saharan Africa, that is from the countries visited during the 1997 Safari. They were presented by people we met on that Safari. This meeting between "North and South" left nobody untouched and eventually turned out to be much more than a typical scientific research-based event (Hendriks et al 2001). A lot of trust was built between the southern African contingent during the three years in which they worked on their papers and presented them. The papers had a remarkable impact on the academics of Europe and North America. This meant a lot to the southern contingent.

The third stream of our origins came from Karen, a suburb in Nairobi, Kenya 2-5 February 2000.[6] A consultation was organised by the Accrediting Council for Theological Education in Africa (ACTEA)[7] and the Nairobi Evangelical School of Theology (NEGST).[8] It was attended by 350 delegates from all parts of Africa and dealt with seminaries as theological institutions of higher education and their relationship with the church. "Serving the church: partnership in Africa" was the theme, and Prof. Tite Tienou, the previous president and dean of the Faculty of Theology in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, and currently professor in Missiology at the Trinity International University, Deerfield, Illinois, was the main speaker. The challenges, shortcomings and tensions in theological education in Africa were debated. The emphasis was on the importance of the church's financial support of seminaries and on the responsibility of seminaries to cooperate with the church in training future ministers.

In this atmosphere the representatives of Justo Mwale Theological College (Lusaka, Zambia), Zomba Theological College (Malawi), the Reformed Institute for Theological Training (Kenya) and Stellenbosch University met and decided to form NetACT. The following institutions were not present, but indicated their willingness to be part of such a network: Murray Theological College (Zimbabwe), Nifcott (Malawi) and Hefsiba (Mozambique).[9] The very first objective was to work

4   Cf. the unpublished 37-page report on this visit Conradie, Ernst, Hendriks, Jurgens, Louw, Daniël and Martin Pauw. 1997. Verslag van die Afrika-navorsingstoer van die Universiteit van Stllenbosch: Fakulteit Teologie en die Universiteit van Wes-Kaapland: Faulteit van Godsdiens en Teologie. 4 Junie-1 Julie 1997 (Report of the Africa research safari of Stellenbosch University Faculty of Theology and the University of the Western Cape: Faculty of Religion and Theology. 4 June-1 July 1997). This report can be accessed at the Stellenbosch University Theological Library.

5   The research revealed a pretty negative picture of trends in Reformed churches in the West with very little the growth of the Reformed Church in the South (Luidens et al 1998).

6   For a more detailed report, see: Hendriks, H. Jurgens. 2006. Multiplying Resources and Research in Africa – The NetACT Story. *Dutch Reformed Theological Journal* 47(3/4):489-505. Also available online at: http://academic.sun.ac.za/theology/netact/story2006.pdf [Accessed: 6 February, 6, 2012].

7   ACTEA. See online at: http://www.theoledafrica.org/ACTEA [Accessed: February, 9, 2012).

8   NEGST subsequently became the Africa International University – see online at: http://www.africainternational.edu/ [Accessed 9 February, 9, 2012).

9   NetACT: Minutes of the Constituting Meeting of NetACT, 2000. Online at: http://academic.sun.ac.za/theology/netact.html [Accessed: February, 6, 2012).

together to produce theological textbooks and to commence by writing *Studying congregations in Africa* (Hendriks 2004). The emphasis on "congregational theology" should be understood in the light of the Kenya conference's theme and with the conviction that nothing will change in Africa if change does not start on a congregational level.

NetACT's second meeting was in Lusaka, 18-25 April 2001. We put our dream in writing in the form of a mission, goals and a constitution, and we started working on our first book.[10]

3. WHAT MADE IT WORK?

The NetACT story highlights several principles that explain what makes such projects work. Adhering to and understanding these principles would be important for understanding the rationale and success of NetACT's later and still unfinished Gender Equality project.

The first of these principles is undoubtedly leadership and commitment. From 2001 to 2011 NetACT had two chairpersons, Dr Amon Kasambala and Dr Devison Banda. Both were from Justo Mwale Theological University College (JMTUC), an anchor institution that was committed to NetACT's goals. Stellenbosch University provided the necessary administrative infrastructure and the Executive Director, the present writer, kept the flow of communication alive. However, one can only fully realise the level of commitment if the names of the board members and staff members of the NetACT institutions themselves are scrutinised and one discovers how many staff members of these institutions undertook postgraduate studies and received doctoral degrees dealing with the very issues outlined in NetACT's goals. A movement got underway as leaders were intellectually empowered through studies and research to dream and to envisage a Reformed church and society informed by a sense of mission. In this quest the indispensable input that only women can contribute is to some extent still lacking.

The second principle is that of trust. In the beginning there was something like layers of trust. On the upper level everyone was friendly with typically African sense of hospitality, but on deeper levels there clearly was a "wait and see" attitude. Stellenbosch University with its apartheid legacy and abundant resources seemed an unequal partner that was not so much distrusted as "put on hold." This "elephant in the room" was fortunately expressly confronted ever since the second meeting in Lusaka (2001). Honest communication helped. Trust can only be built over time and through the development of deep and personal relationships. The HIV&AIDS programme that Christo and Liezl Greyling[11] presented to the whole Board and local church leaders in Lilongwe, Malawi in 2002 was a deeply spiritual experience that brought all together in a remarkable way. The testimony of a local CCAP pastor dying of AIDS forced all to face reality. It was the first time that a local pastor shared his status and the terrible journey of pain and spiritual suffering that he experienced. In the long run it was clear that all the institutions were benefiting and that Stellenbosch University did put its resources to benefit the NetACT. Personal friendship, getting to know one another's families and homes, working together on various projects, are the indispensable prerequisites for building trust.

The third point may not be a "principle" in the strict sense of the word but sustained funding remains a challenge and necessity for projects such as those undertaken by NetACT. By God's grace NetACT's path crossed with the Hartgerink family in the USA, particularly that of Dr Ron Hartgerink, a chemical engineer, whose father founded the Elmer E Hartgerink Trust. This Trust "paid our expenses" until 2006 and Dr Hartgerink with his business background as well as his knowledge of theological institutions (he was president of the Board of Western Theological

---

10 The NetACT website has all the minutes and reports of this and subsequent meetings as well as the network's mission, goals and constitution. http://academic.sun.ac.za/theology/netact.html.

11 Christo Greyling is Director, HIV and Infectious Diseases, World Vision International. Liezl is his wife.

Seminary in Michigan, USA) played an indispensable leadership role in establishing the network. So did people such as the well-known Dutch professor of the sociology of religion, Gerard Dekker. With Prof. Martin Pauw, missiologist from South Africa, they and others acted like father figures to get the network on track. Since 2006 NetACT has been challenged to become financially "independent." Thus the NetACT institutions established a network of funding agencies or partners that shared their vision and funded the network's endeavours. With NetACT's proven track record, this transition was less painful than originally envisaged – it actually led to the expansion of the network with associate members who wanted to join it in pursuing its goals.

The fourth principle is a share confession. The NetACT Board and the institutions they represent share a vocation. One "discovers" vocation in strange places! At one point while drinking Kenyan tea at Karen, Nairobi in April 2000 a deep conversation with the fellow pastors from the theological schools that later constituted NetACT the conversation stopped because all present realised they share the same vision. The shared conviction about the importance of local congregational leadership shared by men, women and the youth was the birth of a movement. All were convinced that it was the triune God who personally called them on a missional journey to be a missional church in Africa.

4. FROM HIV AND AIDS PROGRAMMES TO CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT TO GENDER EQUALITY

The NetACT focus on gender was the result of a journey of discernment. When the network met in Lusaka in April 2001 to formulate its mission statement, vision and constitution, the topic most discussed was that of HIV&AIDS.[12] A typical remark was "If we want to address the issue of HIV&AIDS effectively and faithfully, we will have to move from denial to telling the truths."[13] The network's first formulation of its identity read:[14]

> **NetACT** is the Network for African Congregational Theology, a network of theological institutions in the Presbyterian and Reformed tradition in Sub-Saharan Africa.
> **Congregational Theology** is theology as practised in the Christian congregation as the Body of Christ, discerning the will of God in the process of interpreting the Scriptures and its own specific context, empowering the congregation to address its multiple problems, challenges and sufferings, in sub-Saharan Africa manifest in the pandemic of HIV and AIDS, abuse of power, corruption and economic injustice (among others).
> **NetACT** aims at assisting the participating institutions to develop congregational theology and leadership. It seeks to achieve this aim through:

- contextually relevant training of congregational leadership
- upgrading of academic standards and institutional capacity building
- developing research programmes at the participating institutions
- developing continuous education programmes
- lecturer exchange between its participating institutions
- conferences and publications in the field of theology in Africa
- addressing the HIV and AIDS problem, especially by providing the theological, moral and spiritual undergirding to curb this pandemic.

---

12 NetACT Minutes 18-25 April 2001. The minutes of all the NetACT meetings to 9 February 2012 can be downloaded from http://academic.sun.ac.za/theology/netact.html.
13 NetACT Minutes 2000, 11.
14 NetACT Minutes 2000, 18-19.

Before the next NetACT meeting in Lilongwe Malawi 5-9 August 2002, the HIV and AIDS programme got underway with Rev. Christo Greyling[15] visiting the seminaries in Zimbabwe and Zambia in preparation for conducting their first HIV and AIDS programmes. A programme was developed and then taught at these schools. At the Board meeting in Malawi Greyling and his wife presented the programme to the Board and senior CCAP pastors. At this remarkable event those present were perplexed because they were not used to talking about sex, condoms and all there is to address in this "new world." As was mentioned above, the testimony of a local CCAP pastor, dying of AIDS, touched all present and not even the Greyling's research at two seminaries that disclosed that between 60% and 70% of the male theology students were sexually active shocked as much as this story. Dr Kasambala's leadership of NetACT at this time brought all closer together. During the meeting a prayer house in the Nkhoma congregation was visited where more than 200 orphans were taken care of by older people in that specific ward. These experiences changed the character of the fight against the AIDS pandemic from an academic pursuit to something very real.[16]

At all the NetACT institutions people were identified and trained to present HIV&AIDS programmes – unfortunately all our trained facilitators were offered better-paid jobs by governments or NGOs! From 2006 to 2009, a second module was developed and a book, *Our church has AIDS. Preaching about HIV and AIDS in Africa today,* (Mash et al. 2009) was published.[17]

At the 2006 Board meeting in Windhoek Rev. Janet Guyer,[18] regional AIDS consultant for Southern Africa for the Presbyterian Church (USA), facilitated a discussion, that led to a number of decisions being taken. Amongst other things, it became clear that we had to concentrate on curriculum development. The problem was that a "once-off" module on HIV&AIDS, often presented by part-time lecturers, did not lead to a change in attitudes and deeply-ingrained cultural assumptions. It was realised that curricula were not contextualised and as such did not address the issue holistically. As long as AIDS was seen as "someone else's responsibility to teach" and was addressed only in a specific module, deep cultural transformation would not take place.

The 2009 Board meeting coincided with the 150th anniversary celebrations of the Theological School at Stellenbosch. A three-day workshop on curriculum development was presented for Old and New Testament lecturers as well as for lecturers teaching HIV&AIDS modules. Those attending testified that this interactive workshop was probably the most constructive one NetACT ever ran. During this workshop, Stellenbosch New Testament scholar Prof' Elna Mouton tabled the following motion, which was unanimously accepted:[19]

> Every institution is to write a 10-12 page article on Gender Equality in its context. This should include consultation with women voices and should check existing research. Articles should be ready for agenda of 2010 AGM.

---

15 Read the remarkable testimony and story of Christo Greyling online at: http://www.redribbon.co.za/living-openly-profile.php?show=mymenu2&profileID=Christo-Greyling. Greyling is a senior World Vision employee dealing with HIV&AIDS; cf. http://www.worldvision.org/content.nsf/about/press-development-aids [Accessed: February, 9, 2012].

16 This led one of the local lecturers, Janet Brown, doing her doctoral degree on AIDS issues: Brown, Janet L. 2004. HIV/AIDS Alienation: Between Prejudice and Acceptance. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Stellenbosch University. Online at **http://scholar.sun.ac.za/handle/10019.1/5491** [Accessed: March, 16, 2012].

17 Read the HIV and AIDS report in the NetACT Adminstrative Report 2009, 19-20.

18 On Janet Guyer see online at: http://gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/missionconnections/guyer-janet/ [Accessed: February, 9, 2012]. NetACT Minutes 2006, 10-11.

19 NetACT Minutes 2009, 8.

Between 2009 and 2012 two initiatives gained considerable momentum. NetACT institutions realised the value of curriculum development. The Namibian Evangelical Theological Seminary (NETS) and Murray Theological College (MThC) took the lead and literally revised every aspect related to curricula in a process that involved both staff and board members of their schools. NETS was subsequently the first Namibian tertiary institution to receive national accreditation from the country's National Qualifications Agency. This inspired the rest of the NetACT family and Rev. Kruger du Preez –who was requested by NetACT to do a doctoral dissertation on the status of curriculum development in the network –to conduct workshops in Kenya, Malawi, Angola and Nigeria, attended by all NetACT seminaries in those countries as well as non-member institutions who requested participation.

At these workshops the conviction grew that the decision by the Board in 2009 to deal with gender equality was a wise one. However, because of the curriculum workshops NetACT lacked both the capacity and the funds to start addressing this challenge in 2010 already. It was at this stage that Stellenbosch University's HOPE in AFRICA initiative[20] offered to participate in NetACT's venture and to finance its 2011 meeting. Several partners also came forward to support the gender equality venture.

Thus far this essay has outlined NetACT's history and its journey of discernment, ending by highlighting the relationship between HIV&AIDS, the development of a holistic curriculum to address the AIDS issue and the importance of addressing gender equality. The logic behind this journey has been the realisation that very little in the African AIDS scenario will change if gender equality is not attained. In light of this, the 2011 and 2012 meetings of the NetACT Board were gender equality workshops, where the principals and/or Board members of the NetACT institutions attend accompanied by at least one woman staff member or church member. The goal of this exercise was to intellectually and theologically empower at least one woman from each constituency to be the standard bearer in that church and seminary with regard to gender issues. For this the wholehearted support of the principals and Board members was given. They are committed to securing the necessary backing to these women to pursue their research and writing.

5. METHODOLOGY

The background of the NetACT focus on addressing gender inequality in member institutions and their client churches, is the unfortunate fact of the reality of gender inequality in most of the twelve seminaries that form the NetACT network. This section relates the findings of an empirical study conducted among the seminaries that established this fact.

First, some remarks about the methodology followed to get the information. In March 2010 a letter was sent to the NetACT Board members explaining how the NetACT Executive planned the workshop to be held in August 2011. The letter stated:

> Each NetACT institution nominates two representatives, the principal/board member and a woman.[21] The principal or his representative has the responsibility to create the institutional initiative, support and supervision that are needed for the research that has to be done by the female representative. At the first workshop in August 2011 each institution

---

20 More about this can be found online at: http://www.sun.ac.za/university/Management/rektor/docs/ botman_talloires.pdf [Accessed: February, 9, 2012). A comment from the report: "Building the engaged university; moving beyond the ivory tower."

21 At the time (and until the present) no member institution had or has a women principal except SU where Prof Elna Mouton served as Dean.

will present a report/evaluation of the gender equality situation at their institution, church and society indicating to what extent their curriculum deals with it (a structured questionnaire accompanies this letter). Our first academic publication will be a compilation of these reports. At the first workshop we will have papers on our research topic. A call for papers accompanies this letter and we encourage you to submit a proposal. We hope to get leading (women) theologians to give papers. However, our main objective will be to jointly decide on how to structure the research on "Teaching Gender Equality in Africa".

Although all the institutions were represented at the workshop and all (except ISTEL[22] due to unforeseen circumstances) had a women representative present, the last questionnaires were only returned in February 2012. Three schools are in Portuguese-speaking countries and received and responded to their questionnaires in Portuguese. The following sections give an overview of the findings of the research.

6. FINDINGS

6.1 Gender representation in church offices and seminaries
The first table summarises the extent to which 25 Protestant/-Reformed churches that send their members to the 12 seminaries allow women to take up the offices of deacon, elder and pastor. The following remarks point to the trends in this table.
- All but the Reformed Church in Nigeria allow women to be **deacons**. As far as dates were provided, it seems that the first to do so was the Presbyterian Church in Zambia in 1897! Second was the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa (in Namibia), which did so in 1934, followed by the CCAP Livingstonia Synod in Malawi in 1936. The last church to allow women as deacons was the CCAP Nkhoma Synod in November 2009.
- The first church to allow women to be pastors was the Presbyterian Church in Zambia in 1919, followed by the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa (in Namibia), which did so in 1934.
- All but four churches allow women to be elders.
- Five of the 25 churches do not allow women to be pastors. Four of these churches were founded by Dutch Reformed missionaries from South Africa: CCAP Nkhoma Synod in Malawi, IRM in Mozambique, the RCEA in Kenya and the NKST (the Reformed Church in Nigeria).
- In two countries, Angola and South Africa, all the constituent churches allow women to take up all the offices.

The second table is a list that indicates the total number of pastors in the 25 churches as well as the number of women serving as pastors.
- The 25 churches have in total 5 835 pastors, of whom 274 are women.
- Thus 4.7% of the pastors in these churches are women.
- The number of members to a congregation differs considerably from church to church. The average membership of the about 1 600 South African DRC congregations is 1 000.[23] The CCAP Nkhoma synod has 171 pastors serving a membership of over one million people in 141 congregations (Msangaambe, 2011). The implication is that the average congregation has more than 7 000 members. In these congregations the pastor actually serves the

---

22 Abbreviations list at end of article.
23 See the *Jaarboek van die NG Kerke 2011.* (Yearbook of the DR Churches). Wellington: Tydskriftemaatskappy, 413.

prayer houses and the elders do most of the preaching and pastoral work.[24] Elders are seldom allowed to serve the sacraments, hence the minister travels every Sunday from one prayer house to another serving sacraments and confirming new members. The main church building or service sees the pastor in many of these "mega churches" only about four times in a year. In other countries congregations are much smaller. In Namibia the 44 DRC congregations have on average 481 members[25] and the Uniting Reformed Church far fewer. When this researcher visited Angola in 2004, shortly after the war, the secretaries of churches did not have any idea of the number of congregations and members. All they knew was that he church was growing at a rate that they could not keep track of. This is also true of Mozambique – that the church is growing is the only absolute certainty when it comes to statistics!

- Although this was not asked in the questionnaire, it is common knowledge that the number of women at church services and in membership total roughly 70% of the total membership.

The third table reflects the situation regarding staff.
- The 12 schools have a total of 116 full time lecturers of which 21 (18%) are women and 85 part time lecturers of which 19 (22%) are women.
- Three schools, JMTI, MThC and RTS, have no women on their staff.
- The question explicitly excluded women who were only teaching the wives of pastors, but were not allowed to teach theology students.

The fourth table looks at staff qualifications.
- 80% of full-time male lecturers have either a masters or a doctoral degree.
- 70% of full-time women lecturers have either a masters or a doctoral degree.
- The percentages for the male and women part-time lecturers are 53% and 26%.

NetACT institutions indeed did well. The percentages were certainly not this high 10 years ago. Additional research may easily establish how many of these degrees were awarded during the last ten years – and where they were rewarded.

Table five summarises the number of students.
- The 12 schools have 948 students in total, of whom 218 or 23% are women.
- The average number of BTh students per school is 79.
- At two schools, JMTI and RTS, there are no women students.
- ABC has the highest percentage of women students: 42%.
- The three schools with the highest number of theological students are ABC (267), RTS (200) and SU (143).

7. CONCLUSIONS

In light of the above data the challenge faced by the member institutions and the Gender Equality project of NetACT remains considerable. To summarise:
- The average number of students per full-time lecturer is just 8. From a financial point of

---

24 Taking Malawi as an example, one is reminded that very few people have any form of transport. Ministers walked, then got bicycles and now are "rich" if they have a motorbike. Very few have cars.
25 *Jaarboek,* 416 as well correspondence with their General Secretary, Rev. Clem Marais (clem@ngkn.org. na.).

view member schools are thus very expensive as student fees cannot cover the cost of the salaries of the lecturers.

- Women lecturers constitute only 20% of staff and women students only 23% of the student body.
- The number and percentage of women in the pulpit are still low, but, fortunately this is expected to increase. At present the 25 churches mentioned in the questionnaires have on average 4.7% women pastors. However since the percentage of women doing theological training is 23% of the total number of students. This indicates that their numbers and percentage will increase. Cultural changes are also taking place. The trend is clear if one looks at the dates that the churches accepted women in the church offices, one after the other (Table 1). The percentage of women pastors is thus set to increase.

The unanswered question is what the network should do with all the requests of similar institutions to join it. We do not have an easy answer. The NetACT Board is urgently debating the issue. We feel we need a bigger or wider platform in order to expand.

I want to conclude the essay by relating the following an incident that may serve as a metaphor for what NetACT wants to do, in general, but also with regard to its Gender Equality Project:

On a journey in a Toyota Hi-Ace mini-van from Limuru near Nairobi, Kenya, to Eldoret in the Kenyan highlands, delegates from NetACT were enjoying the scenery of the Rift Valley. Along the way they passed the refugee camps where displaced people were given shelter after the ethnic violence that followed Kenya's last election. It was a sad and moving sight, the rows and rows of tents, and seemingly irresolute people sitting around doing nothing, small children playing soccer with a ball made from plastic bags.

As we crossed the equator near a billboard that marks the symbolic boundary line between North and South a woman was weeding a crop of maize with a pick-axe. It was hard work. Suddenly a cell phone rang. The woman put the pick-axe down and from her apron produced the phone. While stretching her back, one arm in the air, the other holding the phone to her ear, she laughed out loud, greeted her conversation partner in a clear, warm, welcoming voice and talked away with gusto, her free arm waving around, part of the lively conversation. This is Africa, our continent: hard but fertile, poor but warm and welcoming. It is here that NetACT is called and guided by God to cross several boundaries on a journey to help churches to be missional churches in Africa.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Brown, Janet L. 2004. HIV/AIDS Alienation: Between Prejudice and Acceptance. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Stellenbosch University. Online at **http://scholar.sun.ac.za/handle/10019.1/5491** [Accessed: March, 16, 2012].

Hendriks H. Jurgens, Luidens Donald A., Nemeth Roger J., Smidt Corwin E. and Hijme C. Stoffels (eds.). 2001. *Reformed Encounters with Modernity: Perspectives from Three Continents.* Cape Town: Nasionale Pers.

Hendriks, H Jurgens. 2004. *Studying congregations in Africa.* Wellington: Lux-Verbi-BM.

Hendriks, H. Jurgens. 2006. Multiplying Resources and Research in Africa – The NetACT Story. *Dutch Reformed Theological Journal* 47(3/4):489-505.

Hendriks, H Jurgens; Mouton, Elna, Hansen, Len & Le Roux, Elisabet. 2012. *Men in the pulpit, women in the pew? Addressing gender inequality in Africa.* Stellenbosch: SunMedia.

Jaarboek van die NG Kerke 2011. (Yearbook of the DR Churches). Wellington: Tydskriftemaatskappy

Luidens, Donald, Hijme Stoffels and Corwin Smidt (eds). 1998. *Reformed Vitality: Continuity and Change in the Face of Modernity.* Lanhan: University Press of America.

Mash, Rachel, Cilliers, Johan, Griffiths, Keith, Chemorion, Edith and Archwells Katani (eds.). 2009. *Our Church has AIDS. Preaching about HIV & AIDS in Africa Today.* Stellenbosch: NetACT.

Msangaambe, Chata, E.J. 2011. Laity empowerment with regard to the missional task of the CCAP in Malawi. Unpublished DTh dissertation, Stellenbosch University. Online at: http://scholar.sun.ac.za/handle/ 10019.1/6750 [Accessed: March, 16, 2012].

KEY WORDS
NetACT
HIV and AIDS
Gender equality
statistics theological schools
staff qualifications

TREFWOORDE
NetACT
MIV en vigs
Gender gelykheid
statistiek van teologiese skole
personeel kwalifikasies.

ADDENDA: THE TABLES

Table 1: Gender and church offices

Question: Do the following churches in your country accept women to be called / serve as 1] pastors; 2] elders; 3] deacons? If known, mention dates allowed.

NETACT INSTITUTIONS & SUPPORTING CHURCHES	PASTORS	ELDERS	DEACONS
ABC: Lilongwe Malawi; JMTI: Nkhoma, Malawi; ZTC: Zomba, Malawi			
CCAP: Livingstonia Synod	Yes 2000	Yes 1936	Yes 1936
CCAP: Nkhoma Synod	No	Nov 2009	Nov 2009
CCAP: Blantyre Synod	2000	In 1980s	In 1980s
Hefsiba: Vila Ulongue, Mozambique			
IRM = Reformed Church in Mozambique	No	No	1990
ISEU: Huambo, Angola ; ISTEL: Lubango, Angola			
IERA: Reformed Church in Angola	Yes	Yes	Yes
Presbyterian Church	Yes	Yes	Yes
Methodist Church	Yes	Yes	Yes
Lutheran Church	Yes	Yes	Yes
JMTUC: Lusaka, Zambia			
CCAP Zambia Synod	2002	1918	1918
Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa	1919	1897	1897
Reformed Church in Zambia	1999	1999	1999
MThC: Masvingo, Zimbabwe			
Reformed Church of Zimbabwe	2004	1984	1984
NETS: Windhoek, Namibia			
United Congr Church of Southern Africa	1934	n.a.	1934
Evangelical Baptist Church	No	No	Yes always
Calvin Protestant Church	Yes	Yes	Yes
Uniting Reformed Church	1991	1986	1986
Dutch Reformed Church	1990	1990	1982
RITT: Eldoret, Kenya			
RCEA	No	No	Nov 1998
Presbyterian Church	Yes	Yes	Yes
RTS: Nigeria			
The Reformed Church	No	No	No
The Presbyterian Church	1981	1954	Yes
SU: South Africa			
Dutch Reformed Church	1990	1990	1982
Uniting Reformed Church	1982	1978	1978
Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa	1975	1975	1975
Anglican Church	1992	1992	1992
Moravian Church	Dec 1989	Yes	Yes

Table 2: MEN AND WOMEN SERVING AS PASTORS

Question: How many pastors are serving in congregations in the churches named below in your country? How many of them are female?

NETACT INSTITUTIONS & SUPPORTING CHURCHES	Number of pastors	Number who are women
ABC: Lilongwe Malawi; JMTI: Nkhoma, Malawi; ZTC: Zomba, Malawi		
Church of Central Africa Presbyterian: Livingstonia Synod	172	5
CCAP: Nkhoma Synod.	171	0
CCAP: Blantyre Synod	200	12

Hefsiba: Mozambique		
IRM = Reformed Church in Mozambique	90	0
ISEU: Huambo, Angola & ISTEL: Lubango, Angola		
IERA: Reformed Church in Angola	121	2
Presbyterian Church	145	4
Methodist Church	517	59
(?)	83	3
JMTUC: Lusaka, Zambia		
CCAP Zambia Synod	55	3
Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (Zambia)	32	3
Reformed Church in Zambia	113	10
MThC: Masvingo, Zimbabwe		
Reformed Church of Zimbabwe	62	5
NETS: Windhoek, Namibia		
Evangelical Baptist Church	37	0
Calvin Protestant Church	1	0
Uniting Reformed Church	18	1
United Congregational Church of Southern Africa	7	1
Dutch Reformed Church	52	0
RITT: Eldoret, Kenya		
RCEA	112	0
RTS: Nigeria		
Reformed Church	636	0
Presbyterian Church in Nigeria (Eastern Synod)	80	8
SU: South Africa		
Dutch Reformed Church	1602	70
Uniting Reformed Church	788	10
Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa	439	22
Anglican Church (The three Cape diocese only)	256	45
Moravian Church	48	11
TOTAL	**5835**	**274**

Table 3: Full-time and part-time lecturers

Question: How many of the following persons do you have at the seminary? [Do not count as lecturers women or pastors teaching pastors' wives how to do parish ministries. If these women lecture theology students studying to be evangelists or pastors, do count them in.]

NETACT INSTITUTIONS & SUPPORTING CHURCHES		MEN ON STAFF	WOMEN ON STAFF	STAFF TOTAL
ABC: Lilongwe Malawi	Full time	11	6	17
	Part time	8	3	11
Hefsiba: Mozambique	Full time	6	1	7
	Part time	7	2	9
ISEU: Huambo, Angola	Full time	5	0	5
	Part time	4	1	5
ISTEL: Lubango, Angola	Full time	4	3	7
	Part time	4	0	4
JMTI: Nkhoma, Malawi	Full time	5	0	5
	Part time	2	0	2
JMTUC: Lusaka, Zambia	Full time	8	1	9
	Part time	12	6	18
MThC: Masvingo, Zimbabwe	Full time	4	0	4
	Part time	2	0	2
NETS: Windhoek, Namibia	Full time	5	1	6
	Part time	9	3	12
RITT: Eldoret, Kenya	Full time	4	2	6
	Part time	2	1	3
RTS: Nigeria	Full time	20	0	20
	Part time	8	0	8
SU: South Africa	Full time	13	6	19
	Part time	4	1	5
ZTC: Zomba, Malawi	Full time	10	1	11
	Part time	4	2	6
TOTAL	Full time	**95**	**21**	**116**
	Part time	**66**	**19**	**85**
		161	**40**	**201**

Table 4: Staff qualifications

Question: How many lecturers have as their highest degree a master's and how many have as their highest degree a PhD / DTh? (The number after > is the total number of lecturers from previous section)

NETACT INSTITUTIONS & SUPPORTING CHURCHES		M + D > TOTAL MEN	M + D > TOTAL WOMEN	Total Staff
ABC: Lilongwe Malawi	Full time	7+4 >17	4 + 0 > 6	17
	Part time	1 + 1 > 8	1 + 0 > 3	11
Hefsiba: Mozambique	Full time	2 + 0 > 6	0 + 1 > 1	7
	Part time	1 + 0 > 7	0 + 0 > 2	9
ISEU: Huambo, Angola	Full time	3 + 0 > 5	0	5
	Part time	0 + 0 > 4	0 + 0 > 1	5
ISTEL: Lubango, Angola	Full time	3 + 1 > 4	3 + 0 > 3	7
	Part time	4 + 0 > 4	0	4
JMTI: Nkhoma, Malawi	Full time	3 + 0 > 5	0	5
	Part time	0 + 0 > 2	0	2
JMTUC: Lusaka, Zambia	Full time	0 + 8 > 8	1	9
	Part time	4 + 4 >12	0 + 0 > 6	18
MThC: Masvingo, Zimbabwe	Full time	1 + 1 > 4	0	4
	Part time	0 + 2 >2	0	2
NETS: Windhoek, Namibia	Full time	3 + 1 > 5	0 + 0 > 1	6
	Part time	1 + 3 > 9	2 + 1 > 3	12
RITT: Eldoret, Kenya	Full time	2 + 1 > 4	0 + 0 > 2	6
	Part time	0 + 0 > 2	0+ 0 > 2	3
RTS: Nigeria	Full time	12 +3 > 20	0	20
	Part time	3 + 5 > 8	0	8
SU: South Africa	Full time	0 + 13 > 13	1 + 4 > 6	19
	Part time	0 + 4 > 4	0 + 1 > 1	5
ZTC: Malawi	Full time	5 + 3 > 10	1 + 0 > 1	11
	Part time	1 + 1 > 6	0 + 0 > 2	6
TOTAL	Full time	**41+35 >95**	**9+5 >21**	**116**
	Part time	**15 +20 >66**	**3+2 >19**	**85**

Table 5: Number of students

Question: How many theology students do you have enrolled in your seminary?

NETACT INSTITU-TIONS & SUPPORT-ING CHURCHES	1 M	1 W	2 M	2 W	3 M	3 W	4 M	4 W	T M	T W	T ALL
ABC: LILONGWE MALAWI	44	37	41	28	36	38	34	9	155	112	267
HEFSIBA: MOZAM-BIQUE	6	1	9	0	5	0	3	0	23	1	24
ISEU: HUAMBO ANGOLA[26]	0	0	1	0	1	0	4	2	6	2	8
ISTEL: LUBANGO ANGOLA	9	1	7	2	5	4	10	1	31	8	39
JMTI: NKHOMA MALAWI[27]	8						8		16		16
JMTUC: LUSAKA ZAMBIA	6	3	10	2	18	1	11	2	45	8	53
MThC: MAS-VINGO ZIM	7	3	6	1	6	1	6	0	25	5	30
NETS: WIND-HOEK NAM	7	4	3	1	4	3	4	0	18	8	26
RITT: ELDORET KENYA	11	1	12	3	11	2	0	0	34	6	40
RTS: NIGERIA	61		34		60		45		200		200
SU: SOUTH-AFRICA[28]	31	15	23	17	16	8	18	10	88	50	143
ZTC: ZOMBA, MALAWI	23	4	22	2	23	5	21	7	89	18	107
TOTAL	**213**	**69**	**168**	**56**	**185**	**62**	**166**	**31**	**730**	**218**	**894**

26 ISEU experienced internal problems, which were sorted out during 2011. The school will quickly regain a strong and vibrant student population.

27 JMTI is the post-BTh ministry training school of the CCAP Nkhoma Synod, where the theological candidates who have completed their training at ZTC are prepared for ministry in the Nkhoma Synod. ZTC cannot house and train enough theological candidates for the CCAP Nkhoma Synod. JMTI has

previously and is now again using the ZTC curriculum to train first-year students, who will most probably do their subsequent BTh years at Nkhoma. The exams and degree are those of ZTC.

28 Stellenbosch University's Faculty of Theology focuses predominantly on postgraduate students and research. In 2011 it had about 500 students, of whom 352 (71%) were postgraduate students. 20% (71) of the postgraduate students we–re women. 51% (36) of the postgraduate women were White; 49% (35) were other than White. 60 of these postgraduate students are from other African countries (excluding South Africa). Those from South Africa total 234 and those from other continents 58.

Abbreviations

ABC: African Bible College (Lilongwe Malawi)
CCAP: Church of Central Africa Presbyterian
DRC: Dutch Reformed Church (South Africa)
Hefsiba: Hefsiba Christian Institute for Higher Education (Vila Ulongue, Mozambique)
IERA: Igreja Evangelica Reformada de Angola
IRM: Igreja Reformada em Mozambique (The Reformed Church in Mozambique)
ISEU: Instituto Superior Emanuel Unido (Huambo, Angola)
ISTEL: Instituto Superior de Teologia Evangelica no Lubango (Lubango, Angola)
JMTI: Josophat Mwale Theological Institute (Nkhoma, Malawi)
JMTUC: Justo Mwale Theological University College (Lusaka, Zambia)
MThC: Murray Theological College (Masvingo Zimbabwe)
NetACT: Network for African Congregational Theology
NETS: Namibia Evangelical Theological Seminary (Windhoek, Namibia)
NKST: Nongo Kristy Sundan Tiv (The Reformed Church among the Tiv in Nigeria)
RCEA: Reformed Church in East Africa (Kenya)
RCZ: Reformed Church in Zimbabwe
RITT: Reformed Institute for Theological Training (Eldoret, Kenya)
RTS: Reformed Theological Seminary (Mkar, Nigeria)
SPU: St. Paul's University
SU: Stellenbosch University (Stellenbosch, South Africa)
ZTC: Zomba Theological College (Zomba, Malawi)

(Footnotes)

1 ISEU experienced internal problems, which were sorted out during 2011. The school will quickly regain a strong and vibrant student population.

2 JMTI is the post-BTh ministry training school of the CCAP Nkhoma Synod, where the theological candidates who have completed their training at ZTC are prepared for ministry in the Nkhoma Synod. ZTC cannot house and train enough theological candidates for the CCAP Nkhoma Synod. JMTI has previously and is now again using the ZTC curriculum to train first-year students, who will most probably do their subsequent BTh years at Nkhoma. The exams and degree are those of ZTC.

3 Stellenbosch University's Faculty of Theology focuses predominantly on postgraduate students and research. In 2011 it had about 500 students, of whom 352 (71%) were postgraduate students. 20% (71) of the postgraduate students were women. 51% (36) of the postgraduate women were White; 49% (35) were other than White. 60 of these postgraduate students are from other African countries (excluding South Africa). Those from South Africa total 234 and those from other continents 58.

Hesselink, I John
Albertus C. Van Raalte, Professor of Systematic Theology, Western
Theological Seminary, Holland, Michigan.

Sovereign grace and human freedom

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Philip Schaaf, a distinguished church historian of a past generation, once called the debate about God's sovereignty and human freedom "the question of the ages." That may not be so for everyone, but with the church it remains a question that will not go away. What the late Albert Outler wrote in 1975 is amazingly relevant today.

'In our day when all the great traditions that have held the world together for centuries (however tenuously) are suddenly becoming frazzled and "inoperative"— the issue between human self-sufficiency and God's primacy is still the great dividing line in all our struggles for a theology of culture that is actually *theo*-logy and not some sort of religious *anthro*-pology writ large across a cosmic backdrop. All our most fashionable credos today (the new a-morality, the new secularism, the new emotionalism and "supernaturalisms"—ESP, psychokinesis, "transcendental meditation," TA, and others) are all fresh variations on the old themes of human autonomy: viz., the conviction that human beings can and must accept final responsibility for their own well-being and their collective destinies.'[1]

AUGUSTINE AND AQUINAS

It all began with Augustine's famous debate with Pelagius about the freedom of the will. That is, are sinners able to choose rightly without the assistance of God's grace? Augustine's analysis of the doctrine of grace was a turning point in the theology of the early church. The early church fathers generally taught that the reception of God's mercy and grace was to some extent dependent on an individual's response.[2] Augustine concluded that human merit plays no part in our salvation and that God's grace is utterly gratuitous. However, in his early writings Augustine conceded that to some extent humans must respond to God's gracious initiative by cooperating with God's grace.[3] However, once he was attacked by Pelagius, Augustine clarified his position concerning the bondage and freedom of the will. In *De spiritu et littera* (*The Spirit and the Letter*), written in 412, Augustine clarifies his views on sin, grace, and the freedom of the will in response to Pelagius's misuse of certain passages in Augustine's earlier writings. He came to see that a radical view of sin requires a radical view of grace and that our salvation from beginning to end is a work of God's grace. Key texts for him in his later writings were John 15:5; Romans 9:1 Corinthians 4:7; and Philippians 2:13.

'The effect of the Pelagian controversy was to sharpen the dilemma—either God's work *or* ours. That the dilemma is false, Augustine himself was able in his old age to recognize on occasion.'[4] This, as I will point out later, is what I believe any helpful and biblically balanced view of this issue must affirm, viz., that it is not a matter of either/or but rather both/and. Unfortunately, most of the later discussions of this issue have been so polemical that it appeared that one must magnify the sovereign grace of God (or election) at the expense of human responsibility and meaningful participation; or that in order to do justice to human freedom one must undercut

the radical work of God's grace in the process of salvation.

Augustine's solution to this problem has never won universal acceptance. The Roman Church of his time officially condemned the Pelagians, but it did not accept the corollary of Augustine's doctrine of grace, viz., predestination, nor his view that the will is unable to do what is good until freed by God's grace and the enabling work of the Spirit. A modified Augustinianism became the official position of the church after the Synod of Orange (529), which met exactly 100 years after Augustine's death. However, in the early medieval period his theology of sin and grace was already watered down. A key figure here is Pope Gregory (elected in 590) who had a long and influential reign. He ostensibly taught Augustinianism in a simplified form but his position was synergistic. That is, our salvation consists of a cooperation between God's grace and our free will, a position that was denounced by Luther in the sixteenth century. Eventually, in the late medieval period an "Augustinian synthesis" ended up with an unhappy compromise, viz., that "we ought to believe both the grace of God and the free will of man," neither without the other.[5] The problem is that it was never clarified as in what sense the sinful human will is free. Even the "angelic doctor," Thomas Aquinas, did not do much to clarify the situation. Prior to Aquinas something of a consensus had developed, viz., that the paradox of divine sovereignty and human free will can be resolved in terms of God's foreknowledge. That foreknowledge, in turn, was explained on the basis of there being no past, present, or future in God—only an eternal present. This includes even future contingencies. We only know them successively; God knows them simultaneously, according to Albertus, Aquinas's mentor.[6]

This doesn't really help very much. Aquinas, therefore, saw the necessity of moving beyond a simple appeal to God's eternity and foreknowledge. In regard to the question of the will Aquinas entertains various objections that the will is not free. He cites texts such as Romans 7:19, 9:16, and Philippians 2:13 to support this contention. But he replies: "Man has free will; otherwise counsels, exhortations, commands, prohibitions, rewards, and punishments would be in vain."[7] Peter Kreeft, the popular Roman Catholic scholar, makes the following observation concerning this passage: "Note how basic, practical, and commonsensical St. Thomas' first argument is. Note how he connects free will with reason."[8] I am not as enthusiastic about this "solution" because of the role reason plays here. Aquinas goes on to say, "Forasmuch as man is rational it is necessary that man have a free-will?"[9]

Fortunately, this is not the end of the matter. Although Aquinas seems to ignore the texts cited by his hypothetical objector, he does take note of Romans 7:19: "The good which I will I do not..." Aquinas then adds, "Those words of the Apostle are not to be taken as though man does not wish or does not run of his free-will, but because the free-will is not sufficient thereto *unless it be moved and helped by God*"[10] (emphasis mine). Thus, for Aquinas free will is not what it was for Pelagius or today's secular humanists, for though "free-will is the cause of its own movement," behind it is God who is the first cause, who moves both natural and voluntary."[11]

Kreeft again finds here a "simple and elegant" solution to "the thorny problem of reconciling human free will with divine causality"—Grace, he adds, in Aquinas "establishes nature rather than removing it."[12] Whether this represents an advance on Augustine is doubtful. The Protestant historian, William Cannon, is convinced that this is in fact not an advance but a retrogression, for in Aquinas "the radical dichotomy between nature and grace established by Augustine is really set aside by Aquinas. Redemption seems more a supplementation of creation, not its transformed restoration."[13] In any case, the argumentation is scholastic, rather than biblical, utilizing Aristotelian causality.

If that had settled the problem we would not have had the fierce debate between Luther and Erasmus concerning the bondage of the will in the sixteenth century. Erasmus, the Roman Catholic humanist, upon hearing that Luther had denied "free choice" (*liberum arbitrium,* often translated as "free will"), responded in 1524 with *A Diatribe or Discourse on the Freedom of the Will* [Choice]. The debate that followed was extremely acrimonious with Luther stating, "I wish the defenders of free choice would take warning at this point and realize that when they assert free choice they are denying Christ."[14] In this treatise Luther also affirms double predestination as strongly as Augustine or Calvin—an embarrassment to most later Lutherans.

Calvin's discussion of the bondage/freedom of the will issue doesn't go much beyond Augustine and Luther except that it is more nuanced. His position is stated forthrightly in the title of Chapter 2 (of Book II) of the *Institutes*: "Man Has Now Been Deprived of Freedom of Choice and Bound Over to Miserable Servitude."[15] The recurring question is whether unregenerate persons can be held responsible for either accepting or rejecting the gospel if their wills are incapable of any good. It is interesting that unlike Luther, Calvin does not discuss predestination in this context. That is taken up later in Book III of the *Institutes* in the context of faith.

In response to this question Calvin sounds very much like Augustine. "Because of the bondage of sin by which the will is bound," Calvin says,

> it cannot move toward good, much less apply itself thereto; for a movement of this sort is the beginning of conversion to God, which in Scripture is ascribed entirely to God's grace . . . Therefore, simply to will is of man; to will ill of a corrupt nature, to will well of grace.[16]

Calvin admits that this is "a hard saying" (apparently from Bernard of Clairvaux), but says that it shouldn't be a problem for those who understand the difference between necessity and compulsion. Augustine and Luther had made this distinction before him and Jonathan Edwards was to use it later in his major work, *The Freedom of the Will* (which, in Augustinian fashion, he denies). That is, to do something of necessity does not mean that we do it because of external, forced compulsion. He appeals to Philippians 1:6—"that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion on the day of Jesus Christ"—and explains that this denotes the conversion of the will where

> God begins his good work in us by arousing love and desire and zeal for righteousness in our hearts; or to speak more correctly, by bending, forming, and directing, our hearts to righteousness.[17]

How does God do this? By his grace and the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. "The will is not effaced." Rather, "it is created anew; not that the will now begins to exist, but that it is changed from an evil to a good will." And this is "wholly of God's doing . . . it is the work of grace above."[18] In short, *we* will as *God* wills in us. The clue is the gracious work of the Holy Spirit, who not only actuates our wills but continues to guide and assist them. On the basis of Ezekiel 36:26, which refers to our hearts of stone being transformed into hearts of flesh, Calvin concludes that "our conversion is the creation of a new spirit and a new heart"[19] by the Holy Spirit. This means that "the Lord by his Spirit directs, bends, and governs our heart and reigns in it as his own possession."[20]

Much the same approach is taken by the authors of two classic seventeenth century documents, the Canons of Dort (1618-19) and the Westminster Confession (1646). These confessions are often maligned as examples of seventeenth century scholastic orthodoxy. It is true that in the Westminster Confession in particular there is an emphasis on the decrees of God and the introduction of a covenant of works not found in Calvin. Yet, here too we do not have some kind of fatalistic determination but rather an acknowledgment that although our salvation is totally a matter of God's grace—a very biblical notion; see Romans 3:24 and Ephesians 2:8—it does not reduce us to automatons. Somehow God's grace and our response are coordinated through the mysterious working of the Spirit. Note how the Westminster Confession handles effectual calling in Chapter X:

1. All those whom God hath predestined unto life, and those only, he is pleased, in his appointed and accepted time, effectually to call by his Word and Spirit, out of that state of sin and death in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ: enlightening their minds, spiritually and savingly, to understand the things of God, taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them an heart of flesh; renewing their wills, and by his almighty power determining them to that which is good; and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ; yet so as they come most freely, being made willing by his grace.
2. This effectual call is of God's free and special grace alone, not from anything at all foreseen in man, who is altogether passive therein, until, being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit, he is thereby enabled to answer this call, and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it.[21]

The allusion to the predestined will be a stumbling block to some people, but they must then deal not only with the Westminster Confession but also with the Apostle Paul in Romans 8-11. The Canons of Dort, on the other hand, which contain an equally strong emphasis on election (and reprobation), do not mention predestination in their discussion of conversion. In articles 11 and 12 of the Third and Fourth Heads of Doctrine there are eloquent descriptions of how regeneration and conversion take place. Here there is no trace of the scholastic type of argumentation one finds in Aquinas or some seventeenth century theologians. Also, contrary to popular opinion, the Canons do not represent a radical departure from the doctrine of grace found in the sixteenth century Reformed Confessions. As the University of Stellenbosch theologian Dirkie Smit points out,

> The *Canons of Dordrecht* did not merely repeat the salvation by grace teachings of the *Confessio Belgica* and the *Heidelberg Catechism,* although it in no way wanted to contradict these two confessional documents, but found it imperative precisely to confess this same faith, if possible clearer than before and to articulate possible misunderstandings, confusion and mistaken opinions more clearly than before.[22]

Because of the general unfamiliarity of most people even within the Reformed tradition with the Canons, extensive quotations are appropriate.

> When God carries out this good pleasure in his chosen ones, or works true conversion in them, he not only sees to it that the gospel is proclaimed to them outwardly, and enlightens

their minds powerfully by the Holy Spirit so that they may rightly understand and discern the things of the Spirit of God, but, by the effective operation of the same regenerating Spirit, he also penetrates into the inmost being of man, opens the closed heart, softens the hard heart, and circumcises the heart that is uncircumcised. He infuses new qualities into the will, making the dead will alive, the evil one good, the unwilling one willing, and the stubborn one compliant; he activates and strengthens the will so that, like a good tree, it may be enabled to produce the fruits of good deeds (Article 11).[23]

Here the work of the Holy Spirit is prominent and is the presupposition of the next article which speaks of the miraculous nature of regeneration. Note again the reference to the will at the conclusion of the article.

And this is the regeneration, the new creation, the raising from the dead, and the making alive so clearly proclaimed in the Scriptures, which God works in us without our help. . . . it is an entirely supernatural work, one that is at the same time most powerful and most pleasing, a marvellous, hidden, and inexpressible work, which is not lesser than or inferior in power to that of creation or of raising the dead. . . . And then the will now renewed, is not only activated and motivated by God but in being activated by God is also itself active. For this reason, man himself, by that grace which he has received, is also rightly said to believe and repent (Article 12).

Article 13 is brief and speaks of the mysterious nature of this grace of God whereas Article 14 alludes to Philippians 2:13 and concludes that God "produces the will to believe and the act of believing also." One might conclude from these passages that the human will plays no role at all in one's salvation and is entirely passive. But article 16 tries to correct such a misunderstanding by affirming that

this divine grace of regeneration does not act in people as if they were blocks and stones; nor does it abolish the will and its properties or coerce a reluctant will by force, but spiritually revives, heals, reforms, and—in a manner at once pleasing and powerful—bends it back. As a result, a ready and sincere obedience of the Spirit now begins to prevail where before the rebellion and resistance of the flesh were completely dominant. It is in this that the true and spiritual restoration and freedom of our will consists.

I find this analysis more moving and persuasive than anything cited heretofore. From a Reformed perspective this may appear to settle the matter. God's sovereign grace by means of the mysterious working of the Holy Spirit not only brings about the miraculous experience of the new birth (regeneration) but also enables the believer to respond in repentance and faith. In short, "While God's grace does not bludgeon humanity into salvation – for that would not be love in action – at the same time, unless God takes the initiative and awakens faith in us, we cannot receive God's saving grace."[24] However, to Wesleyans and others not sympathetic to the Augustinian approach —developed and refined by Luther, Calvin, and later Calvinists — it may appear that the accent still falls too heavily on God and little credence is given to human freedom and responsibility. As a Reformed theologian I want to take seriously their concerns and, if possible, do justice to their objections.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

Here I find a passage of Jonathan Edwards, tucked away in one of his occasional writings, that

seeks to do justice to both sides of the question. Edwards is well known for his classic work on this issue, *The Freedom of the Will,*[25] in which he attacks not his contemporary, John Wesley, but various strains of American Arminianism, beginning with his own cousin Solomon Williams. *The Freedom of the Will,* however, is a difficult philosophical work and cannot even be summarized easily. One should rather turn to Edwards' sermons, the subject of many of them being "the doctrine of God's *absolute sovereignty* with regard to the salvation of sinners," a theme he pointed out, that was "more remarkably blessed than any other."[26]

It is in a later treatise, published posthumously, however, where Edwards takes a position that I find remarkably balanced and different from anything we have encountered before.

> In efficacious grace we are not merely passive, nor yet does God do some, and we do the rest. But God does all, and we do all. God produces all, and we act all. For that is what he produces, viz., our own acts. God is the only proper author and fountain; we only are the proper actors. We are, in different respects, wholly passive, and wholly active.

> In the Scriptures the same things are represented as from God and from us. God is said to convert, and men are said to convert and turn. God makes a new heart, and we are commanded to circumcise our own hearts; not merely because we must use the means in order to the effect, but the effect itself is our act and our duty. These things are agreeable to that text, "God worketh in you both to will and to do" (Phil. 2:13).[27]

What Edwards is saying here is that our salvation is not a 50-50 matter, that is, that God takes us so far and then it is up to us (the Arminian understanding), or a 100-0 matter, that is, that salvation is exclusively a result of God's sovereignty or election and we have no responsibility (the *perceived* Calvinist view). Rather, it is totally a result of God's sovereign grace, and yet we are totally involved. Here one must be careful with a popular passage, Philippians 2:12-13, of which Edwards quoted only the last half; for as New Testament scholars point out, verse 12—"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling"—does not mean that we are to earn our salvation by works. Rather, Paul is pointing out "how saved people live out their salvation in the context of the believing community and the world."[28] They—and we—"must 'work out' what God in his grace has 'worked in.' So divine sovereignty and human responsibility time and again meet each other in the life of the redeemed."[29]

SCRIPTURE AND EXPERIENCE

This is an important insight, for in Scripture it is not either/or, i.e., either God's sovereign grace or our individual efforts. It is both/and, i.e., wholly a matter of God's grace and our effort. In the Arminian-Calvinist conflicts too often the two have been pitted against each other.[30] But as the Apostle Paul testifies in reflecting on his own ministry, it is only by God's grace that we can do any good and yet we are totally responsible for our actions.

> For I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me has not been in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them—though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me (1 Corinthians 15:9-10; cf. Gal. 1:15 and Eph. 3:7-8).

Here the divine and human dimensions of salvation coalesce in such a way that the integrity of neither is compromised or sacrificed. For the Apostle Paul this coalescence of grace and effort,

divine sovereignty and human freedom were not perceived as paradoxical but as part and parcel of the same experience of faith. Note how the two are conjoined in his testimony in Galatians 2:20: "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

The Spirit is not mentioned here, but as noted earlier, this is a crucial factor in understanding how God's grace is at work in our lives. As we see in Paul's letter to the Romans, God's gracious activity in our salvation is highlighted in chapters 3-7 with few references to the Holy Spirit and then suddenly in Romans 8 our life in Christ is described almost exclusively in terms of the Spirit. For it is "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus [who] has set [us] free from the law of sin and death" (8:2). The new life we have in Christ is from beginning to end a gift of God's grace effected by the life-giving Spirit.

This coalescence of God's grace and human effort is frequently experienced by Christians. We make decisions, seeking for God's will through prayer and the counsel of fellow believers, but we are not always sure that the decision is according to God's will; and sometimes we make bad decisions. Yet in and through it all God's will is eventually done. We are not always aware of God's Spirit working in our lives but in retrospect we see how God led and guided us in ways that we couldn't have foreseen. Believers whose lives have been marked by frequent disappointments or great suffering may have more difficulty in appreciating this; and yet the testimony of countless saints of God is that even in the midst of suffering and loss they can still testify to the riches of God's amazing grace. With the Apostle Paul they can affirm with confidence, "We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28).

What I have been trying to say has been expressed eloquently in a hymn by an unknown writer:

> I sought the Lord, and afterward I knew
> he moved my soul to seek him, seeking me;
> it was not I that found, O Savior true;
> no, I was found of thee.
>
> Thou didst reach forth thy hand and mine enfold;
> I walked and sank not on the storm-vexed sea;
> 'twas not so much that love on thee took hold
> as thou, dear Lord, on me.[31]

(ENDNOTES)

1 *Theology in the Wesleyan Spirit* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1975), 15.
2 On this issue see Thomas F. Torrance's *The Doctrine of Grace in the Apostolic Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959). His conclusion: "Grace by its very nature, in the thought of the New Testament, must be the absolutely predominant factor in faith, else it is not grace. In the Apostolic Fathers it did not have that radical character . . . . what took absolute precedence [for them] was God's call to a new life in obedience to revealed truth," 133.
3 A key work here is Augustine's *De libero arbitrio* (On Free Will), consisting of three books, the first begun in 387, the last completed in 395.
4 John Burnaby. Introduction to The Spirit and the Letter in Augustine: Later Works, Library of Christian Classics, Vol. VIII (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1955), 192.
5 Cited in Jaroslav Pelikan, The Growth of Medieval Theology (600-1300), Vol. 3 in "The

Christian Tradition" (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 81.

6 Cited in Pelikan, op. cit., 273. The question of God's relation to time and eternity is currently under review. See, e.g., the symposium God and Time. Four View, by Paul Helm, Alan G. Padgett, William Lane Craig, and Nicholas Wolterstorff (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001).

7 Summa Theologica I.83.1, in the Summa of the Summa edition edited by Peter Kreeft (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990), 297.

8 Ibid., note 49.

9 Summa I.83.1; Kreeft 298.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.

12 Op. cit., 299, note 50.

13 History of Christianity in the Middle Ages (Nashville: Abingdon, 1960), 259.

14 The Bondage of the Will, in Luther and Erasmus: Free Will and Salvation, edited by E. Gordon Rupp and Philip S. Watson. Library of Christian Classics Vol. XVII (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969), 321.

15 All quotations from the Institutes are from the Library of Christian Classics edition, edited by John T. McNeill and translated by Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961).

16 Institutes II.3.5.

17 Institutes II.3.6.

18 Ibid. In this connection Calvin cites Ezekiel 36:26-7; 2 Corinthians 3:5; Philippians 2:13, and 1 Corinthians 12:6.

19 Institutes II.3.8.

20 Institutes II.3.10. Space limitations do not allow for a discussion of Calvin's major treatment of this subject: The Bondage and Liberation of the Will. A Defense of the Orthodox Doctrine of Human Choice Against Pighius. This has finally come out in an English translation by G. I. Davies, edited by A. N. S. Lane (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996).

21 The American Presbyterians, both north and south, at different points in their history felt that the Westminster Confession was lacking in its treatment of the Holy Spirit. Consequently, in 1903 a new chapter was added: "Of the Holy Spirit," which was inserted as Chapter IX in the PCUS version and Chapter XXIV in the UPUSA version. See The Book of Confessions published by the office of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church U.S.A., 1996.

22 "Confessing as gathering the fragments?" in Essays on Being Reformed. Collected Essays 3 (SUN MeDIA Stellenbosch, 2009), 301.

23 I am using the translation found in Ecumenical Creeds and Reformed Confessions (Grand Rapids: Board of Publications of the Christian Reformed Church, 1988).

24 John W. De Gruchy, John Calvin. Christian Humanist & Evangelical Reformer (Wellington, S.A.: Lux Verbi BM, 2009), 174.

25 The best edition of this classic is that edited by Paul Ramsey in the Yale University series (New Haven: Yale U. Press, 1957).

26 A Narrative of Surprising Conversions, in Select Works of Jonathan Edwards, Vol. I (London: Banner of Truth, 1965), 31.

27 Works of President Edwards Vol. II (reprint of the Worcester Edition), 580. Conrad Cherry quotes this passage and adds: "There is a necessary connection between divine grace and human act, but it is a question of moral not natural necessity. Rather than being an external force which moves man's faith as a lifeless object, grace is the divine gift which operates within the living, willing human subject," The Theology of Jonathan Edwards. A Reappraisal (Bloomington and

Indianapolis: Indiana U. Press, 1990), 195.

28 Gordon D. Fee, Paul's Letter to the Philippians (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 235.

29 Jac. J. Müller, The Epistles of Paul to the Philippians and to Philemon (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 91.

30 J. I. Packer, in his little classic, Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God (Chicago: Inter-Varsity Press, 1961), also seeks to do justice to both sides of this issue, although he, too, is a staunch Calvinist. As he points out, "God's sovereignty and man's responsibility are taught side by side in the same Bible, sometimes, indeed, in the same text." (He cites Luke 22:22 and Acts 2:23 as examples.) "God's sovereignty is a reality, and man's responsibility is a reality too" (22-3). However, where Packer prefers to speak of this question in terms of "antinomy," (24f.), I prefer to think of sovereign grace and human freedom as coalescing. This, it seems to me, is the message of Scripture which is often confirmed by human experience. Lest it seem un-Reformed to appeal to human experience (usually a Wesleyan approach), I would remind the reader that Calvin frequently speaks like this: "As Scripture teaches us . . . and is confirmed by human experience . . . ." See, e.g. Institutes I.10.2, I.13.14. As Willem Balke rightly notes, however, "Experience is never a priori, always a posteriore. Experientia is born of faith in the Word and experience afterward establishes the trustworthiness of the Word." "The Word of God and Experientia according to Calvin," in Calvinus Ecclesiae Doctor, hrsg. von W. H. Neuser (Kampen, the Netherlands: J. H. Kok B.V., 1980), 25. Moreover, I place more emphasis on the role of the Holy Spirit in regard to this matter than Packer.

31 Rejoice in the Lord, edited by Erik Routley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), #162.

Huggins, Jonathan
Stellenbosch University

NT Wright on justification: Faithfully embodying the reformed tradition of *semper reformanda*?

INTRODUCTION

This article seeks to examine N.T. Wright's theological contribution to the Reformed doctrine of Justification, with a view toward arguing that he is an important interpreter for and from the Reformed Tradition. An underlying question to be explored will concern what it means to stand faithfully and critically within the Reformed Theological Tradition. Given the Tradition's emphases upon "sola scriptura," and "semper reformanda," can we welcome the contributions and insights that Wright offers on the doctrine of justification? Or, must he be marginalized, at best, or anathematized, at worst, for failing to conform to the standard Reformed formulations found in our Confessions of faith? These questions are not easily answered because much controversy has surrounded Wright's statements concerning Justification – especially his denial, or re-defining, of the necessity of "Imputation," as historically understood within the Tradition. As we will see below, many Reformed thinkers have written against Wright's views of Justification, often viewing him as the latest manifestation of what is sometimes called the "New Perspective on Paul." This recent criticism has questioned Wright's theological orthodoxy and compelled him to clarify his position in the light of the Reformed Tradition. However, Wright claims to be a Reformed theologian in the sense that he has adopted the Reformers' *method,* even if not all of their *conclusions.* As we will see below, there are points of discontinuity with parts of the Reformed tradition in Wright's work. Yet, a close reading of his work also reveals many points of continuity, and thus may warrant the claim that Wright is working within the basic methodologies of the Reformed Tradition. If this is so, then Wright may be viewed as one who stands both faithfully (or, at least reliably) and critically within the Tradition – even as he proposes new interpretations of the New Testament and fresh articulations of Justification.

The 16th century was an important time period in the process of defining and clarifying Christian doctrine. Some have considered the theological conclusions of the Protestant Reformers (such as Phillip Melanchthon and John Calvin[1]) and their immediate heirs (i.e. the "Reformed Scholastics") to be binding on all later Reformed tradition. However, others think that the Reformers' *method* is more important to emulate than their particular conclusions. This latter groups seeks to beware of the Reformed Confessions becoming a sort of cognate authority alongside Scripture itself, and thus compromising the Reformation conviction of *sola scriptura.* These also tend to view the Reformed tradition as "living" and open to fresh articulation – while remaining essentially faithful to the theological tradition that has been passed down.

NT WRIGHT AS REFORMED THEOLOGIAN

NT Wright[2] considers himself a "Reformed Theologian" in the sense that he is committed to the Scriptures "alone" as that source wherein and whereby God exercises His authority.[3] Wright firmly holds to the theological method of the Reformers but does not always agree with their conclusions. He writes,

"Ever since I first read Luther and Calvin, particularly the latter, I determined that whether

or not I agreed with them in everything they said, their stated and practiced method would be mine too: to soak myself in the Bible, in the Hebrew and Aramaic Old Testament and the Greek New Testament, to get it into my bloodstream by every means possible, in the prayer and hope that I would be able to teach Scripture afresh to the church and the world. The greatest honour we can pay the Reformers is not to treat them as infallible—they would be horrified at that—but to do as they did."[4]

In line with that aim, Wright makes use of the vast amount of historical research available to scholars today. Such resources were not as available to previous generations of theologians. Thus, one would suppose that biblical scholars and theologians today can have a clearer understanding of the historical context of the Bible. Thus, Wright believes this will inevitably affect our articulation of doctrine. In his section on "Rules of Engagement" in the recent book on Justification, Wright states, "We need to understand doctrines, their statement, development, confutation, restatement and so on, within the multiple social, cultural, political, and of course ecclesial and theological setting of their time." Likewise, a more accurate understanding of the biblical world helps us understand the literary tools of the ancient world. This can give a reader an advantage in properly grasping of themes and issues that the biblical writers were addressing. According to Wright, this should give current scholars a deeper understanding the bible than one who had only the words of Scripture and the statements of their traditions. In other words, it is not enough to simply know a biblical author's words. One must also be able to make proper *inferences* – which are usually historically and culturally conditioned. As a New Testament Scholar, we see Wright's commitment to text and context before doctrinal formulation in the following,

> "we are bound to read the New Testament in its own first-century context... The more we know about first-century Judaism, about the Greco-Roman world of the day, about archaeology, the Dead Sea Scrolls and so on, the more, in principle, we can be on firm ground in anchoring exegesis that might otherwise remain speculative, and at the mercy of massively anachronistic exegesis, into the solid historical context where – if we believe in inspired Scripture in the first place – that inspiration occurred."[5]

And again, he writes, "We must read Scripture in its own way and through its own lenses, instead of imposing on it a framework of doctrine, however pastorally helpful it may appear, which is derived from somewhere else."[6]

Wright believes the Reformers were correct in much of their doctrinal formulation. However, they inevitably "under-understood" the text because they did not have adequate access to the world of the Bible. Instead, the Reformers formulated their doctrine in the fires of historical controversies far removed from the context of the bible itself. Therefore, Wright believes that historical research helps us do "sola scriptura" more faithfully than previous generations were capable of. And this should have a bearing on how we understand and articulate the Reformed Doctrine of Justification.

Before proceeding, some additional comment on Wright's self-understanding may be in order. He writes, "it may surprise you to learn that I still think of myself as a Reformed Theologian, retaining what seems to me the substance of Reformed theology while moving some of the labels around in obedience to Scripture—itself... a good Reformed sort of thing to do."[7] Again he says,

> "If I am *simul justus et peccator,* the church, not least the church as the Scripture-reading

community, must be *ecclesia catholica semper reformanda.* Like Calvin, we must claim the right to stand critically within a tradition. To deny either of these would be to take a large step toward precisely the kind of triumphalism against which the Reformers themselves would severely warn us."[8]

Here we see Wright appeal directly to the tradition of *semper reformanda.* He desires to stand within the Reformed tradition, but retain the right to be critical where he deems necessary.

Wright also asserts that when he began researching Paul in 1974, he made it his aim to study the text in line with his lifelong commitment to Scripture and to the *sola scriptura* principle. He says,

"I was conscious of thereby standing methodologically in the tradition of the Reformers, for whom exegesis was the lifeblood of the church and who believed that Scripture should stand over against all human traditions. I have not changed in this aim and method, nor do I intend to…I believe that Luther, Calvin, and many others would tell us to read Scripture afresh, with all the tools available to us—which is, after all, what they did—and to treat their own doctrinal conclusions as important but not as important as Scripture itself. This is what I have tried to do, and I believe I am honouring them thereby."[9]

Here we see something of Wright's methodology. He understands his work as a continuation of what Luther and Calvin began – a tradition that would always be subject to our clearest possible understandings of Scripture.

SEMPER REFORMANDA

Ecclesia semper reformanda est is one of the valued tenets of the Reformed Tradition. The phrase itself is thought to emerge from the Nadere Reformatie movement within the 17th century Dutch Reformed Church. The notion is referenced today by many in the global Reformed community. The idea is also sometimes used by those who seek to define and argue for a living Reformed Tradition.[10] The idea of "always reforming" (or "always *being* reformed") refers to the belief that the church must continually re-examine itself in the light of Scripture in order to remain faithful to the text in both doctrine and living.[11] The phrase may have first appeared in Jodocus van Lodenstein's, *Beschouwinge van Zion (Contemplation of Zion,* Amsterdam, 1674)[12], though the notion seems to have been in use before then, given the work of the Reformers in challenging Roman Catholic Doctrine by appealing to Scripture. The full phrase is "The Church is reformed and always (in need of) being reformed according to the Word of God." Michael Horton points out that the verb is passive here. The church is not "always reforming," but is "always being reformed" by the Spirit of God through the Word of God.[13]

Those in the Reformed Tradition have aimed to embody this attitude and approach in forming both doctrine and life. The Protestant Reformers wanted to reform the church and its teaching according to the Scriptures. And Evangelicals prize their connection to Scripture as an essential identity marker. They would claim to be the people of "*Sola Scriptura*." However, some have been over-confident in the finality of the Reformed Standards (such as the *Three Forms of Unity, The Augsburg Confession, and the Westminster Confession of Faith*), such that the historical context of these documents has been down-played or ignored. In fact, many equate the Standards with "the faith once and for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). Therefore, no more significant theological work needs to be done – at least not at the basic level of exegesis. Horton's comments here are revealing. He states,

"We must always be open to correction from our brothers and sisters in other churches who have interpreted the Bible differently. Nevertheless, Reformed churches belong to a particular Christian tradition with its own definitions of its faith and practice. We believe our confessions and catechisms faithfully represent the system of doctrine found in Holy Scripture. We believe that to be Reformed is not only to be biblical; to be biblical is to be Reformed."[14]

However, the last part of this assessment seems to nullify the first part. There is a double-claim to be both open to others and embodying true biblical doctrine at the same time. To be fair, he later states that "those of us in the confessional Reformed churches must also beware of forgetting that our doctrinal standards are subordinate to the Word of God."[15] N.T. Wright would readily agree and point out that this is exactly what he is doing, or attempting to do, through his own exegetical and theological work. The question is whether or not Wright is doing this as one who faithfully embodies the heart of the Reformed Tradition.

Horton wants to be careful that we do not make tradition infallible on the one hand. Yet on the other hand, he can state that "We don't need to move beyond the gains of the Reformation, but we do need further reformation (according to the Word of God). However, can these impulses co-exist? Can we codify the so-called "gains" of the Reformation as though they finally represent to us the authoritative interpretation of the text and also be open to any further reforming? It is unclear what needs further reformation. The question posed here is: Is there a place for scholarship, such as that reflected in the so-called "New Perspective on Paul," namely the form of which we find in Wright, in our ongoing need of reformation "according to the Word of God?"

THE DOCTRINE AND CONCEPT OF JUSTIFICATION

In discussing the doctrine of Justification, it is an important and helpful exercise to explore the history of the doctrine, with a focus upon the Reformed Tradition. This can enable us to offer informed reflections upon contemporary ecumenical opportunities and to consider the importance of new insights emerging from the so-called New Perspective on Paul. We must ask ourselves whether the Reformed Tradition is strengthened or threatened by the works of scholars like N.T. Wright. Another key question to be considered is whether the current debates on justification reveal a healthy living Reformed Tradition, or whether they reveal a static, defensive posturing that proves an underlying fragility. Surveying the history and noting the developments on this doctrine can help one track healthy continuities, which, in turn, can strengthen current dialogue, potentially reframing centuries-old dogma, but also potentially unifying once opposing churches within the one global "body" of Christ.

An essential resource is surveying the history of Justification is Alister McGrath's work, *Iustitia Dei.* Herein he makes an important point about the biblical "concept" of justification verses the historical "doctrine" of justification. He writes,

"The *concept of justification and the doctrine of justification* must be carefully distinguished. The *concept* of justification is one of many employed within the Old and New Testaments, particularly the Pauline corpus, to describe God's saving action toward his people. It cannot lay claim to exhaust, nor adequately characterize in itself, the richness of the biblical understanding of salvation in Christ."[16]

McGrath notes that the biblical concept of justification is not as all-encompassing as the later

Reformed doctrine became. He goes on to suggest that the doctrine, in historical articulation, went beyond the biblical origins in terms of its definition:

> "The *doctrine* of justification has come to develop a meaning quite independent of its biblical origins, and concerns *the means by which man's relationship to God is established.* The church has chosen to subsume its discussion of the reconciliation of man to God under the aegis of justification, thereby giving the concept an emphasis quite absent from the New Testament. The "doctrine of justification" has come to bear a meaning within dogmatic theology which is quite independent of its Pauline origins."[17]

This implies that quite early on the church began to deal with the concept of justification *in abstracto,* removing the ideas from their historical-theological contexts and applying the terms to the questions, struggles, and issues of their own times. For instance, one scholar has noted, "'The phrase [the imputation of Christ's righteousness] is not in Paul but its meaning is.' That is J.I. Packer, cautiously making the distinction between what Paul said and did not say and what Reformed theology, rightly in his view, can say in summarizing him."[18]

Further survey of the history of this doctrine goes beyond the scope of this paper. However, McGrath's important observation should be kept in mind as we think about forming and reforming theological traditions.

TRADITION

Closely connected to this study is the idea of *tradition* as a "living" reality. Jaroslav Pelikan has remarked, "Tradition is the living faith of the dead, traditionalism is the dead faith of the living."[19] F.F. Bruce, commenting on the 1963 Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order, recognizes the helpfulness of a theological tradition in passing on beliefs to succeeding generations, but he also notes, "experience shows that there is a form of tradition which fossilizes the past and betrays its heritage."[20] He also adds that "the essence of reformation is the bringing of *traditions* into closer conformity with *the Tradition,*"[21] the norm of which is Holy Scripture. Bruce believes that continuous reformation is necessary to prevent "fossilization" where, he notes, we may have otherwise had renewal. At the end of his book, *Tradition Old and New,* Bruce comments, "Let tradition and faith, church doctrine and church practice, canon and text, and the gospel narrative itself, be tested and validated by historical inquiry as far as such inquiry can take us: we shall be the gainers, not the losers."[22]

This insight can lead one to question whether the margins of Reformed orthodoxy are properly placed. Is it possible for the margins of doctrinal articulation, or "theological tradition," to be wide enough to include the findings and reflections of later scholars – namely, those who specialize in Biblical Studies and History? Or, is the tradition so solidified that any change in nuance or articulation is to be rejected as misguided, at best, or heretical, at worst? A final but significant question is; can these developments make Justification a unifying doctrine among all Christians – as it seems intended to be in Scripture – rather than the severely divisive doctrine it has been?

NT WRIGHT ON JUSTIFICATION

NT Wright had actually never published a book on the doctrine of Justification until recently.[23] His previous work touching the subject focused mainly on Paul's writings in the form of commentaries and books on Paul. Debates on justification within the Reformed community, mainly in the United

States, began to look to and respond to Wright's exegesis and his seemingly new and/or radical expositions of justification. This was especially the case with the publication of John Piper's 2007 book, *The Future of Justification: A Response to N.T. Wright.*[24]. And so, Wright eventually laid out his doctrine in semi-systematic fashion, with all the underlying exegesis presented in support, in 2009, with his *Justification: God's Plan & Paul's Vision.*

Although we cannot reproduce the whole argument here, we can summarize Wright's basic definitions of Justification, faith, righteousness, and imputation.[25] He defines "justification" as,

> "God's declaration, from his position as judge of all the world, that someone is in the right, despite universal sin. This declaration will be made on the last day on the basis of an entire life (Romans 2:1-16), but is brought forward into the present on the basis of Jesus' achievement, because sin has been dealt with through his cross (Romans 3:21-4:25); the means of this present justification is simply faith. This means, particularly, that Jews and Gentiles alike are full members of the family promised by God to Abraham."[26]

We note a couple of observations. Justification retains its forensic aspect – so important to the Reformed tradition. In the present, justification has an eschatological horizon that is appropriated by faith ("simply faith" = "*sola fide*"?). Justification also rest upon the work of Christ. It is Christocentric and addresses the problem of sin. But there is also a corporate, horizontal aspect to Justification – namely the inclusion of both Jews and Gentiles into God's one people. This is also a "covenantal" aspect. Justification addresses who belongs to the Covenant people: The "righteous" people. These various aspects are expounded upon throughout *Justification: God's Plan & Paul's Vision.*

In case one fears that this view will lead to some sort of "works righteousness," "Legalism" or Salvation by "works," Wright argues elsewhere (in commenting on Luke 17:1-10), "all we do, even the hard work we do for God, never for a moment puts God in our debt… all genuine service to God is done from gratitude, not to earn anything at all… we must constantly remind ourselves of the great truth: we can never put God in our debt."[27] Wright is often questioned at this point because he echoes the Pauline theme of final judgment according to works (Romans 2). But Wright insists that this is both a faithful reading of the New Testament and the result of a full understanding and belief in the work of the Holy Spirit (see Philippians 1:6). For his critics, this appears on the surface to draw *sola fide,* a definitive feature of Reformation theology, into question.

Wright's definition of "faith" draws both from the Gospels and the Pauline corpus. He does this intentionally because he believes that too much doctrinal assessment of the notion of "faith" has focused only on Paul (and perhaps James) while excluding Jesus' own use of the word. He writes,

> "Faith in the New Testament covers a wide area of human trust and trustworthiness, merging into love at one end of the scale and loyalty at the other. Within Jewish and Christian thinking faith in God also includes *belief,* accepting certain things as true about God, and what he has done in the world… For Jesus, 'faith' seems to mean 'recognizing that God is decisively at work to bring the kingdom through Jesus.' For Paul, 'faith' is both the specific belief that Jesus is Lord and that God raised him from the dead (Romans 10:9) and the response of grateful human love to sovereign divine love (Galatians 2:20). This faith is, for Paul, the solitary badge of membership in God's people in Christ, marking them out in a way that Torah, and the works it prescribes, can never do."[28]

In defining faith thus, Wright essentially ignores the medieval discussions and debates about the nature of "faith," and stays away from using the reformed term, "instrument." He also is not concerned to emphasize the passive/receptive nature of faith or limit it to "belief" or "trust" apart from loving, loyal action. He understands faith to be an active principle such that "faith" and faithfulness" have only the slightest thread between their meanings – if there is any difference at all. But note, Wright is still rejecting any notion of justification according to the works of Torah. The Jewish Law cannot be a basis for a Jew/Gentile Covenant People in Wright's thinking. Notice also that faith is directed primarily toward the *Lordship* of Jesus. This certainly includes Jesus' death and resurrection, but is not limited to those events. Those events establish his Lordship in an important sense. But Jesus as Lord is a present reality to be embraced, and not a historical fact to be affirmed. Thus, faith goes beyond affirming facts to living in relation to one who is presently reigning as the world's true king. This basic proclamation – the Jesus is Lord – is the summation of the gospel for Wright.

As for "righteousness," he writes that this word "denotes not so much the abstract idea of justice or virtue, as right standing and consequent right behaviour, within a community."[29] He notes that in both Hebrew and Greek the words "right," "righteous," "righteousness," "just," "justify," and "justification" all belong together linguistically and theologically. Wright explains how the Old Testament idea of righteousness comes from two merging settings – the lawcourt and the covenant. He writes, "To have 'righteousness' meant to belong to the covenant, the boundary marker of which was the Torah, and the hope of which was that God, in accordance with his own righteousness, would act in history to 'vindicate', to 'justify', his people (i.e. to show that they really were his people) by saving them from their enemies." He goes on, here and elsewhere, to show how "God's righteousness" refers not so much to his own moral virtue as to his "covenant faithfulness," that is, God's commitment to keep all his promises – certainly a righteous virtue in itself. But this is the basic meaning, according to Wright, in the minds of the Jewish people who read their scriptures and hoped in God. With regard to the people of God, the New Testament teaches that they do indeed have "righteousness." However, for Wright, this is not, strictly speaking, *God's own* righteousness. It refers to "the right standing of a member of the people of God. 'Righteousness' thus comes to mean, more or less, 'covenant membership', with all the overtones of appropriate behaviour."[30] Wright makes the case that this is essentially what Paul means by these concepts whenever he uses them in his writings. Therefore, Wright appears to avoid a common medieval confusing, or blending, of the words "righteousness" and "merit."

This naturally leads to the issue of "imputation." Wright says,
"What, then, about the 'imputed righteousness'? This is fine as it stands; God does indeed 'reckon righteous' those who believe. But this is not, for Paul, the righteousness either of God or of Christ except in a very specialized sense... Only two passages can be invoked in favour of imputed righteousness being that of God or Christ. The first proves too much, and the second not enough."[31]

He is referring to 1 Corinthians 1:30-31 and 2 Corinthians 5:21. In the first, Wright believes the main point is about wisdom, not justification. In the latter, Wright exegetes this passage as pertaining to the Apostolic vocation of representing and proclaiming God's covenant faithfulness found in "the gospel" concerning Jesus, the Christ.[32] He agrees that Romans 5:14-21 does indeed teach that there is a "reckoning of righteousness", but, again, this is not God's or Christ's own righteousness. It refers, rather, to "the fresh status of 'covenant member,' and/or 'justified sinner,' which is accredited to those who are "in Christ," who have heard the gospel and responded with

'the obedience of faith.'"[33] For Wright, imputation works more like this:

> "Paul's doctrine of what is true of those who are in the Messiah does the job, within his scheme of thought, that the traditional Protestant emphasis on the imputation of Christ's righteousness did within that scheme. In other words, that which imputed righteousness was trying to insist upon is, I think, fully taken care of in (for instance) Romans 6, where Paul declares that what is true of the Messiah is true of all his people. Jesus was vindicated by God as Messiah after his penal death; I am in the Messiah; therefore I, too, have died and been raised. According to Romans 6, when God looks at the baptized Christian, God sees him or her in Christ. But Paul does not say that God sees us clothed with the earned merits of Christ. That would be the wrong meaning of 'righteous' or 'righteousness.' He sees us within the *vindication* of Christ, that is, as having died with Christ and risen again with him. I suspect that it was the medieval overconcentration on righteousness, on *justitia,* that caused the Protestant Reformers to push for imputed righteousness to do the job they rightly saw was needed. But in my view, they have thereby distorted what Paul himself was saying."[34]

From this we can see that Wright thinks it more biblically faithful to think of the death and resurrection of Christ being "imputed" to believers than to think of any sort of "active obedience," law-keeping, or merit of Christ being imputed as a basis for justification. Again, he writes, "when we bring the doctrine of 'imputed righteousness' to Paul, we find that he achieves what that doctrine wants to achieve, but by a radically different route. In fact, he achieves more. To know that one has died and been raised is far, far more pastorally significant than to know that one has, vicariously, fulfilled the Torah."[35] To continue thinking along the lines of the confessional Reformed tradition, which makes the active obedience of Jesus (often equated with "Christ's righteousness") being imputed to believers the necessary basis of Justification, would seem to make Jesus the ultimate legalist and Judaism (or the Old Testament) really about law-keeping rather than grace and covenant.[36]

Wright re-emphasizes these points, providing important notes of clarity, in his recent book on Justification. There is, in fact, not really anything "new" in this work. Rather, he takes the same points he has made again and again in other places, such as those cited above, and puts them into a semi-systematic argument. Therein he not only provides a solid overview of the doctrine according to his reading of Paul, he also provides a long section on the exegetical basis for this articulation of justification – digging deeply into the relevant New Testament passages in Romans, Galatians, Philippians, Corinthians, and Ephesians. More than that, he shows how Paul's "gospel" – which includes justification – sees the entire biblical narrative finding it's fulfilment in the person and work of Jesus. One finds this work to be very clear, and the argument compelling. In it, as we have already seen, Wright stresses three key dimensions of the Pauline account of Justification: the *lawcourt, the covenant,* and *eschatology,* weaving them together in a way that he sees as biblically consistent, theologically faithful, and pastorally sufficient. He summarizes his overall view of Paul's doctrine of justification as follows;

> "Paul believed, in short, that what Israel had longed for God to do for it and for the world, God had done for Jesus, bringing him through death and into the life of the age to come. Eschatology: the new world had been inaugurated! Covenant: God's promises to Abraham had been fulfilled! Lawcourt: Jesus had been vindicated – and so all those who belonged to Jesus were vindicated as well! And these, for Paul, were not three, but one. Welcome to Paul's doctrine of justification, rooted in the single scriptural narrative as he read it,

reaching out to the waiting world."[37]

This overview gives us much to think about. We can see that Wright believes he is moving in a biblically faithful way. Therefore, his work should arguably be considered worthy of our consideration in our theological development – as a tradition that aims to embody the *semper reformanda* principle. As Wright states, "if the church is to be built up and nurtured in Scripture it must be *semper reformanda,* submitting all its traditions to the Word of God."[38]

At times it seems as if Wright finds it difficult to answer questions from those in the Reformed community, especially those who serve as pastors. There seems to be a struggle to answer questions wherein he thinks it necessary to disassemble certain presuppositions and theological constructs in order to reframe them in a more "biblical" way, and then to provide an answer that will make sense. He is often working from a different biblical or theological framework than his critics, such that direct answers are not always possible. This requires patience and a willing openness to follow his argument all the way through.

REFORMED RECEPTION OF WRIGHT

It is good and right that those representing the Reformed tradition should put Wright's claims to serious and sustained scrutiny. He does appear at odds with some long-held and established beliefs in the Reformed Tradition. And certainly not everyone in the Reformed community has agreed with Wright's exegesis or his articulation of Justification. One could look to the published results of the study committees formed by both the Presbyterian Church in America (2007) and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (2006) as two examples of whole church bodies considering and rejecting the claims of both the New Perspective on Paul (or "NPP) and N.T. Wright on Justification.[39] One can also find many articles critiquing either the New Perspective and/or N.T. Wright online.[40] Those who have questioned or attempted to refute the NPP or Wright have come from many denominational backgrounds, but mostly they are from within the Reformed tradition. Some of the most vocal critics have included: D.A. Carson, Mark Seifrid[41], Guy Prentiss Waters[42], Stephen Westerholm[43], Thomas Schreiner[44], Seyoon Kim[45], Ligon Duncan[46], Andrew Das[47], and John Piper[48]. There are many others, but these arguably represent the most influential scholarly detractors.[49]

Demonstrating the importance of Wright's work and the seriousness with which his critics have responded, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary hosted a panel discussion on "N.T. Wright and the Doctrine of Justification"[50] in the Fall of 2009. They claimed that Wright's view of justification was defective and unbiblical. However, there was no direct engagement with Wright's exegesis, only appeals to traditional beliefs. They suggested that if Wright was correct, then the very gospel itself was at stake. At one point, a commentator noted that Wright was "Biblicistic," such that if one wanted to disagree with him one would have to use the Bible to do so. This was the odd criticism of a Southern Baptist scholar, even though they are not known for having "confessional" commitments.

In similar fashion, the February 2010 edition of *Tabletalk*[51], put out by Ligonier Ministries, brought together a group of 13 Reformed theologians to write against small excerpts from Wright's writings.[52] The defensive posturing appeared radical enough to suggest a real threat to Reformed orthodoxy.

At the same time, not everyone connected to the Reformed Tradition has been so critical of Wright. Michael Bird, a "card carrying Calvinist who is committed to the Reformed tradition,"[53] has a special section in his work, The Saving Righteousness of God, where he addresses the controversy surrounding Wright. In it he makes an appeal to modern scholars to "affirm the

value of Wright as an interpreter from and for the reformed tradition."[54] He also seeks to "defend a generation of young scholars and pastors who remain appreciative of his work and wish to remain in dialogue with him."[55] Similarly, one of Evangelicalism's most esteemed theologians, J.I. Packer has said, "Brilliant Bishop Wright is one of God's best gifts to our decaying Western church" . And other scholars, such as Don Garlington, Kent Yinger, Douglas Campbell, Scot McKnight, Richard Hays, Kevin Vanhoozer and Bruce Longenecker[56] have supported and affirmed aspects of Wright's work on Justification. In all of this we see that issues are important and that the responses on both sides, whether agreeing or disagreeing with Wright, have been numerous.

CONCLUSIONS

Given the recent and historic debates on Justification, and the fact that no historic answer has caused these debates to end, it may not be unreasonable to suggest that Reformed churches call for more and better-informed communication on this topic (such as that demonstrated in 2010 at the Wheaton Theology Conference and the US national meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, both of which hosted Wright and conversed charitably with him and his views). Perhaps the debates are signal that the time is ripe for fresh articulations of these doctrines in light of our own times and informed by the contributions of more recent scholarship, worship, devotion, and critical thought. We should certainly never lose sight of the important doctrinal discoveries of the Reformed theological heritage, but we should also be open to fresh illumination from God's Holy Spirit at work in Christ's Church.

Some good ecumenical work has already been done on the doctrine of Justification. The 1999 *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*[57] from The Lutheran World Federation and The Roman Catholic Church is one important example. An important question is, however, can "Reformed" Christians continue the conversation, with winsome intelligence and patience? And can Wright's version of Justification – and his so-called "Fresh" perspective on Paul – be brought to the table for our fair consideration?

In light of what we have seen above, one can argue that a close reading of Wright's work warrants the claim that he can be viewed *within* the Reformed tradition. One can argue that Wright is faithfully embodying the Reformed notion of *semper reformanda* by calling the traditional dogmas into question, reframing the answers according to biblical exegesis, and maintaining the essential methodology of our Magisterial Reformers, imitating faithfully what they began – which was to go to the Bible and examine all doctrine in its light. Wright's argument is presented in a very clear and compelling manner, and we should not fail to take his work seriously, especially given his commitment to the principles outlined above. We have a responsibility to seriously engage his work with an openness that comes from our shared methodology, and let the conclusions fall where they may. Wright maintains some of the valued aspects of the Reformed doctrine despite the points of discontinuity. Justification is still regarded as a forensic declaration. It is still rooted in the work of Christ and regarded as a benefit of incorporation into Christ. He also affirms that those who are justified are so by faith and not by works of the Jewish Law. But he is more emphatic that the "law" addressed by Paul refers to the Jewish Law and not to morality in general. Wright also more clearly connects the biblical concept of with its historical context in asserting that justification addresses the Covenant community, both Jew and Gentile, and thus has an important horizontal dimension. Finally, Wright believes that the eschatological aspect of Justification has been overlooked and deemphasized in the Reformed Confessional tradition. By "eschatological" Wright means that justification has both a present and future aspect. They are not disconnected, however. Present justification is always by faith (this is the mark of those truly declared "righteous" by faith in Christ), but future justification

includes a consideration of one's works (or, obedience). Wright does not think this constitutes a double grounds for justification, but rather that the future judgment is essentially guaranteed by the internal presence of the Holy Spirit within believers. The works that are affirmed at the final judgment are produced by the Spirit. The future vindication is broad backwards, as it were, into the present to be enjoyed as if the verdict had already occurred. Wright believes a faithful exposition of the fullness of Scripture requires such a dynamic to be part of our doctrine of Justification. These points encourage Reformed theologians today to remain in dialogue with Wright about Justification and its related concepts. His commitment to the texts of Scripture, and much of the theological tradition, is a shared value that can help us continue to engage his work enthusiastically and optimistically.

As we have argued here, the Reformed Tradition is strong enough to welcome the insights of Wright into its theological prevue. As R.W.A. Letham has commented, "Reformed Theology is not, nor has (it ever) been, monolithic. It has possessed the creative vitality sufficient to encompass diversity within an over-all consensus."[58] In other words, the Tradition is dynamic and *living.* Just as the various Reformed Confessions show diversity in the articulation of some doctrines, the Tradition may be enriched by Wright's contributions in such a way as to encourage continual development – in light of Scripture. My hope is that Reformed Churches can appreciate, welcome, and intelligently dialogue with Wright, and thus demonstrate Letham's statement to be true. The other side of that hope is that this will prevent Reformed doctrine from becoming so solidified and authoritative as to prematurely determine "heretics," and push many faithful theologians out of the church. I seek to argue all of this is in effort to prevent the Reformed tradition from leaving one of its finest principles, *semper reformanda,* which can be a guiding light in the midst of the darkness of a rigid and dead traditionalism.

(ENDNOTES)

1 Calvinsim" is often used as a synonym for Reformed Theology because of John Calvin's influence in shaping the theology coming out of the Protestant Reformation. It should be noted, however, that the synonymity can be taken too far. Calvin is not the only source of all things "Reformed."

2 N.T. Wright (sometimes published as "Tom Wright") is a distinguished Professor of New Testament at St. Andrews University. He has taught New Testament studies at some of the world's most prestigious universities (Oxford and Cambridge). He also recently served as the Anglican Bishop of Durham for 7 years. He was once the Canon Theologian of Westminster Abbey. He is a noted scholar whose influence and readership literally span the globe.

3 See N.T. Wright, The Last Word: Scripture and the Authority of God- Getting beyond the Bible Wars, (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2005).

4 N.T. Wright, Justification: God's Plan & Paul's Vision, (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 2009), 22-23.

5 Wright, Justification, 46-47.

6 Ibid., 233.

7 N.T. Wright, "New Perspectives on Paul," in McCormack, Bruce L., ed, Justification in Perspective, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 263.

8 Ibid., 247-248.

9 Ibid., 244.

10 For instance, see Brian Gerrish, "Tradition in the Modern World: The Reformed Habit of Mind," in Toward the Future of Reformed Theology: Tasks, Topics, Traditions, eds. David Willis and Michael Welker, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 3-20, and Robert Vosloo, "Reforming

Tradition?" in the Journal of Theology for Southern Africa 139 (March 2010), 19.

11 For a short summary, from which this section draws, see "Ecclesia semper reformanda est" at http://www.tutorgig.info/es/semper+reformanda.

12 See Michael Bush, "Calvin and the Reformanda Sayings," in Herman J. Selderhuis, ed., Calvinus sacrarum literarum interpres: Papers of the International Congress on Calvin Research (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008) p. 286.

13 Michael Horton, "Semper Reformanda", Tabletalk Magazine. October 1, 2009. http://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/semper-reformanda/

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.

16 Alister McGrath, Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification from 1500 to the Present Day, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 1:2.

17 Ibid., 1:2-3.

18 Wright, Justification, 46. The Packer quotation is from his article "Justification," in the New Bible Dictionary, ed. J.D. Douglas, (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1962), 685.

19 Jaroslav Pelikan, The Vindication of Tradition (Yale University Press, 1984).

20 F.F. Bruce, Tradition: Old and New, 171. See also The Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order, ed. P.C. Rodger and L. Vischer (London, 1964).

21 Ibid, 172.

22 Ibid. 173.

23 N.T. Wright, Justification: God's Plan & Paul's Vision, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2009).

24 John Piper, The Future of Justification: A response to N.T. Wright, (Wheaton: Crossway, 2007).

25 For a thorough and full explanation of Wright's understanding of Justification, he lays it out in Justification, 80-108, which concludes Part One of his work. Part two extensively provides the exegetical basis of Part One.

26 Tom Wright, Paul for Everyone: Romans: Part One, (Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 169-170. See also Sinclair Ferguson, David F. Wright, and J.I. Packer, eds, New Dictionary of Theology, (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1988), 359-361.

27 Tom Wright, Luke For Everyone, (Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 204.

28 Ibid., 167.

29 Ibid., 591. See also NDT, 590-592. Wright also contributes the articles on "Jesus" and "Paul."

30 Ibid., 592.

31 N.T. Wright, "New Perspectives on Paul," in McCormack, Bruce L., ed, Justification in Perspective, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 252.

32 For Wright's discussion on these passages from the Corinthian correspondence, see Wright's comments in Justification: God's Plan & Paul's Vision, 153-166.

33 Wright, "New Perspectives on Paul," 253.

34 Ibid., 260-261. This view of participation in Christ has been called by Wright and others "incorporated righteousness." See Michael F. Bird, The Saving Righteousness of God: Studies on Paul, Justification and the New Perspective, Paternoster Biblical Monographs, (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2007).

35 Wright, Justification, 233. This statement occurs in the exegetical section of Romans. Before this he states "It is not the 'righteousness' of Jesus Christ which is 'reckoned' to the believer. It is his death and resurrection." 232-233.

36 For more on the nature of Second Temple Judaism and the relationship of grace, obedience,

and covenant, see E.P. Sanders, Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion, (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), especially 33-428. This work forced a re-evaluation of the kind of Judaism to which both Jesus and Paul were responding.

37 Wright, Justification, 101.

38 Ibid., 233.

39 For the PCA report see http://www.pcahistory.org/pca/07-fvreport.html. For the OPC report see http://www.opc.org/GA/justification.pdf .

40 See www.monergism.com/directory/link_category/New-Perspective-on-Paul/General-Essays-Critiquing-NPP. For a comprehensive list of works supporting and/or simply related to these issues, see www.thepaulpage.com.

41 See D.A. Carson, P.T. O'Brien and Mark A. Seifrid, Justification And Variegated Nomism, 2Vols (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001, 2004). See also Mark Husbands and Daniel J. Treier, eds., Justification: What's at Stake in the Current Debates (Leicester, England: Apollos, 2004), and Mark A. Seifrid, "The 'New Perspective on Paul' and its Problem," Them 25 (2000): 4-18.

42 See Guy Prentiss Waters, Justification and the New Perspectives On Paul: A Review And Response (Phillipsburg, NJ,: P&R Publishing, 2004).

43 See Stephen Westerholm, Perspectives Old and New on Paul: The "Lutheran" Paul and His Critics (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003).

44 See Thomas R. Schreiner, "Paul and Perfect Obedience to the Law: An Evaluation of the view of E. P. Sanders," WTJ 47 (1985): 245-78, and The Law and Its Fulfillment: A Pauline Theology of Law (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1993).

45 See Seyoon Kim, Paul and the New Perspective: Second Thoughts on the Origin of Paul's Gospel (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002).

46 See J. Ligon Duncan, Misunderstanding Paul? Responding to the New Perspectives (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005).

47 See A. Andrew Das, Paul, the law, and the Covenant (Peabody, MASS: Hendrickson Publishers, 2001).

48 See John Piper, Counted Righteous in Christ: Should We Abandon the Imputation of Christ's Righteousness? (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2002), and The Future of Justification: A Response to N.T. Wright (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007).

49 In North America and Great Britain, that is.

50 See http://www.sbts.edu/resources/chapel/chapel-fall-2009/panel-nt-wright-and-the-doctrine-of-justification-2/ . and see also http://news.sbts.edu/2009/09/04/wrights-view-of-justification-is-defective-and-unbiblical-sbts-panelists-say/ . The panel was positive toward Wright and his contributions to New Testament Scholarship in parts of their discussion. However, their criticism became rather acute as it progressed.

51 http://www.ligonier.org/blog/columns-tabletalk-magazine-february-2010/ and also http://www.ligonier.org/learn/keywords/nt-wright/

52 It is revealing of the depth of the perceived threat to orthodoxy which Wright represents that such a group of Reformed theologians would gather together to undermine the work of a single New Testament Scholar.

53 Michael Bird, The Saving Righteousness of God: Studies on Paul, Justification, and the New Perspective, (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2007), 183-184.

54 Ibid., 184.

55 Ibid.

56 See Don Garlington, In Defense of the New Perspective on Paul: Essays and Reviews, (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2005; Kent L. Yinger, Paul, Judaism, and Judgment According to

Deeds, SNTSMS 105. (Cambridge University Press, 1999); Douglas A. Campbell, The Quest for Paul's Gospel: A Suggested Strategy. JSNTSup 274, (London: T & T Clark, 2005); Scot Mc-Knight- see endorsement for N.T. Wright, Justification, 2009; Richard B Hays- see also endorsement for Wright, Justification, Kevin Vanhoozer, "Wrighting the Wrongs of the Reformation: The State of the Union with Christ in St. Paul and Protestant Soteriology," in Jesus, Paul, and the People of God: A Theological Dialogue with N.T. Wright, ed., Nicholas Perrin and Richard B. Hays, (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011); and Bruce W. Longenecker, The Triumph of Abraham's God: The Transformation of Identity in Galatians, (Nashville: Abingdon, 1998).
57 See the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification by the Lutheran World Federation and The Roman Catholic Church, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000).
58 R.W.A. Letham, "Reformed Theology," NDT, 570.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification by the Lutheran World Federation and The Roman Catholic Church, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000.

Bird, Michael, The Saving Righteousness of God: Studies on Paul, Justification, and the NewPerspective, Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2007.

Bruce, F.F. Tradition: Old and New, 171. See also The Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order, ed. P.C. Rodger and L. Vischer, London, 1964.

Bush, Michael, "Calvin and the Reformanda Sayings," in Herman J. Selderhuis, ed., Calvinus sacrarum literarum interpres: Papers of the International Congress on Calvin Research, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008.

Fesko, J.V. "The New Perspective on Paul: Calvin and N. T. Wright", Banner of Truth, 2003.

Horton, Michael, "Semper Reformanda", Tabletalk Magazine. October 1, 2009. http://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/semper-reformanda/

Letham, R.W.A. "Reformed Theology," in New Dictionary of Theology, ed. David F. Wright et al. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988, 570.

McGrath, Alister, Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification from 1500 to the Present Day, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.

Pelikan, Jaroslav, The Vindication of Tradition, Yale University Press, 1984.

Piper, John. Counted Righteous in Christ. Wheaton, Il: Crossway, 2002.

Piper, John The Future of Justification: A Response to N.T. Wright. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007.

Wright, N. T. What St. Paul Really Said, Oxford, 1997.

_____ .Justification: God's Plan & Paul's Vision. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009.

_____ Simply Christian: Why Christianity Makes Sense. HarperSanFrancisco, 2006.

_____ Evil and the Justice of God. IVP Academic. 2006.

_____ Paul: Fresh Perspectives. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005.

_____ The Last Word: Beyond the Bible Wars to a New Understanding of the Authority of Scripture. HarperOne, 2005.

_____ Jesus and the Victory of God. Christian Origins, vol. 2. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996.

_____ Following Jesus: Biblical Reflections on Discipleship. Eerdmans, 1997.

_____ The New Testament and the People of God. Christian Origins, vol. 1. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992.

_____ The Resurrection of the Son of God. Christian Origins, vol. 3. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003.

_____ The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology. Edinburgh: T&T Clark Fortress, 1991.

_____ The Letter to the Romans, in The New Interpreter's Bible, Vol X. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002.

_____ Paul for Everyone: Galatians and Thessalonians. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004.

_____ Paul for Everyone: Romans: Part One, Westminster John Knox Press, 2004.

_____ Luke For Everyone, Westminster John Knox Press, 2001.

Wright, N.T. "4QMMT and Paul: Justification, 'Works', and Eschatology," in History and Exegesis: New Testament Essays in Honor of Dr. E. Earle Ellis for His 80th Birthday, ed. Aang-won Son. New York and London: T&T Clark, 2006.

_____ "New Perspectives on Paul" in Justification in Perspective: Historical Developments and Contemporary Challenges, ed. Bruce L. McCormack. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006, 243-264.

_____ "On Becoming the Righteousness of God," in Pauline Theology, Volume II: 1 & 2 Corinthians, ed. David M. Hay. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993, 200-208.

_____ "Righteousness," in New Dictionary of Theology, ed. David F. Wright et al. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988, 590-592.

_____ "Justification." in New Dictionary of Theology, ed. David F. Wright et al. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988, 359-361.

_____ "The Shape of Justification" (2001), http://www.thepaulpage.com/Shape.html. "Ecclesia semper reformanda est," at http://www.tutorgig.info/es/semper+reformanda

KEY WORDS
Justification
Reformed
Tradition
Calvin
Edwards
Wright

Contact Details:

Rev. Jonathan Huggins
Chaplain and Pastor
Berry College
Mount Berry Church
jhuggins@berry.edu
706-378-2878- office
706-254-2556- mobile
Research Associate
University of Stellenbosch
Kant: 072 378 2878
Sel 072 254 2556\
E-posadres: jhuggins30@gmail.com

Kloppers, Elsabé
University of South Africa

People of God? Singing the Psalms as a reflection of identity – Perspectives from South Africa and Scotland

ABSTRACT

The hymns of churches could be the expression of the religious identities of churches, but they could also be symbols of cultural and national identities. In this article the singing of the psalms within certain Reformed churches in South Africa and in Scotland is addressed and related to each other with regard to issues of identity. An effort is made to bring to the fore underlying and often unrecognised cultural and nationalist influences, unacknowledged biases, and structures of power maintaining these symbols.

1. INTRODUCTION

According to the concept of 'lived religion', *gelebte Religion* (Dinter, Heimbrock, Söderblom 2007) the religiosity of individuals and groups now comes into sharper focus within the contexts of 'life-worlds', suggesting more attention to everyday life, perception, the senses, the body, and to biography and personal experience within the theological discussion. Invited to present a plenary paper at the 75th Anniversary Conference of the Hymn Society of Great Britain and Ireland (HSGBI) in July 2011, I decided to continue a narrative on national identity and the singing of hymns and psalms in the Afrikaans speaking Reformed Churches, presented in a plenary paper at the Biennial Conference of the *Internationale Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Hymnologie* (IAH) in Slovenia in 2001 (Kloppers in Kück and Kurzke 2003). Aspects of the first narrative could be related to experiences I had in singing the psalms in the Church of Scotland during 2010 and 2011. This article, presented from my own perspective of 'lived religion' and related to the experiences of 'lived religion' of other scholars in the field, is a slight re-working of the conference paper.

2. CHILDHOOD MEMORIES

My parents bought a piano when I was five. One of the first things I tried to play was Psalm 130, *Uit dieptes gans verlore van redding ver vandaan – waar hoop se laaste spore in wanhoop my vergaan …* Together with other psalms, this psalm was already entrenched in my memory when I was five: *Out of the depths I cry, o Lord. Help is far from me. I have lost hope. In the darkest of nights I call on you. Lord, hear my call…*

Why would a child of five love a psalm with such a sombre text? It was the melancholic folk tune to which it was sung that appealed to me. It was sung very slowly and very intensely, with each word accentuated. It was the emotions brought about by the psalm, but also about feeling part of a community: A child of five, being accepted by, being part of, and being at home in the community of believers. I was one of the believers and one with the believers, enclosed by the steadfast men in their church suits, hemmed in by the aunties with their hats – I with my wee hat with the frilled lace, passionately singing with them...

It was, however, not only about being part of the community of believers. It was also about

being part of a cultural group, part of the Afrikaans speaking community; not only about sharing the faith, but a collective history – a history of suffering, a history of pioneers and of an oppressed nation. What was the story of my history with which I grew up? I was a descendant of the French Huguenots, faithful people who fled from France 300 years ago because they were persecuted and who became one with the Dutch people in the Cape of Good Hope. A new nation, but then an oppressed people who had to flee because of British imperialism and the invasion of the Cape in the 19th century; brave people who set out on the Groot Trek (Great Trek) and moved northwards into wild and unknown country; pioneers leaving behind their farms and putting their lives to the mercy of ox wagons which could plunge from the mountains; 'well-meaning people' who encountered 'hostile people' inland who would fight against them, or would come to murder them at night... These certainly were people who knew what it was to put their trust in God. So they sang: *"O God van Jacob, deur U hand, word heel u volk gevoed..." O God of Jacob, by your hand your people are fed. From long ago, on sea (coming from Europe) and land, you have protected our fathers...*[1]

The psalms, especially, gave assurance and were sung with much fervour: *Die Heer sal opstaan tot die stryd...* The Lord will stand up to the struggle (Psalm 68, sung to the Genevan/ Strassburg tune from the 16th century). They saw themselves as making an exodus out of the land of the (British) oppressors and they drew a parallel between themselves and Israel making the exodus out of Egypt. As the psalms were the songs of the persecuted and oppressed people of Israel, singing the psalms was almost axiomatic. References to Zion, Judah and Jerusalem, and imagery of God's judgement over the heathen nations were applied directly, as if there was no difference between the time and situation of the psalms, and the time and situation of the people then singing them. Metrical psalmody was a defining part of their religious and cultural identity.

Coming to a wide and 'open' country, these people at last felt free from British rule. But gold was discovered in the Transvaal – and Britain struck again. Huge numbers of British troops were sent to the Transvaal. While the Boers were trying to fend them off in the *veld,* British troops swept the countryside and, adhering to a 'scorched earth' policy, systematically destroyed crops, poisoned wells, and burnt down farms and homesteads, some with antique family furniture and pianos in them. They interned women and children in concentration camps where 26 000 died in the worst of circumstances. I remember my grandfather, a sincere old man, crying – not able to tell what the troops did to his mother and sister, before they burnt down their farm.

It made a deep impression on me, hearing theses stories, so to speak, first hand.[2] So, when singing *Out of the depths* as a child, I was one of, and one with an oppressed people – ever struggling to get out of the depths, ever trying to get over our history, ever being threatened by new dangers, of which not the least was living as such a small minority of white people among such a majority of black people. But the Lord would protect us as he had protected our fathers. The Lord would defend us in the struggle... The psalms told us so.

3. A SHARED IDENTITY AND MYSTERIOUS LEVELS OF SOLIDARITY

At the Annual Conference of the Hymn Society of Great Britain and Ireland in 2006, the Archbishop

---

1 Sung to the Scottish tune FRENCH or DUNDEE.

2 In Memory, History, Forgetting (2006) Paul Ricoeur examines the reciprocal relationship between remembering and forgetting, showing how it affects both the perception of historical experience and the production of historical narrative, stating that it can be asked whether it is possible that history 'overly remembers' some events at the expense of others? It can be asked why major historical events such as the Holocaust occupy the forefront of the collective consciousness, while others such as the Armenian genocide, the McCarthy era, and France's role in North Africa stand distantly behind? Many people haven't even heard about the concentration camps of the Anglo-Boer war. Over time the Afrikaansspeaking people were also distinctly told not to get stuck in the past, but 'to forget'.

of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, an honorary member of the Society, said the following:

> Singing is about … reinforcing a shared identity more and more fully … We are acknowledging the bonds, and we are recreating or reinforcing the bonds between us that are not just a matter of flat, verbal description or encouragement ... [It is] the assemblage of bone and fat which is meaningful, which makes meanings and which communicates (Williams 2006:108).

> We are dealing with some quite mysterious and not very easily accessible levels of solidarity. [When singing] We are saying something about bodies, about the integrity of spirit and body. We are saying something about unity … something about unity as belonging too with that physical 'being together', testing out the tensions, resolving some of the discords, moving together into a pluriform, many layered, common action, which is what worship is (Williams 2006:114).

> … the corporate musical expression of God's people is a way of saying we are confident in who we are. We know that this is our imaginative territory. This is where we place our bodies together, and we show our bodily togetherness that is singing (Williams 2006:111).

'Bodily togetherness', the placing together of our bodies, is indeed what forms an essential part of my memories of hymn singing and singing the psalms: Being hemmed in by the women, enclosed by the men, standing among them, feeling accepted, and being at home in the community of believers. I remembered things such as the clothing – the suits of the men, the hats of the women, my own hat; the passion with which I sang, with which WE sang – experiencing togetherness; the integrity of spirit and body; the corporate musical expression of God's people; the assemblage of bone and fat; the making of meanings; the mysterious levels of solidarity; the reinforcing of the bonds; the feeling of a shared identity.

Donald Webster (1983:20-21) argues that the process of maturing of musical and theological tastes and preferences often begins much earlier in life than is generally recognised. A former Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, Dr Finlay Macdonald, portrays with nostalgia how he learned many psalm tunes from his Hebridean grandmother who would spend hours at the treadle sewing machine, which shared a room with the piano:

> Formal practise of scales and Clementi over, I became a holy juke-box. Granny would call out her favourite psalm tunes and I would duly oblige with renditions of 'Dunfermline', 'Huddersfield', 'Martyrs' and many more. ... Forty years earlier she had been a strong supporter of the suffragette movement and now had a new cause. Between the psalm tunes she would wax eloquent on the iniquities of the Church's policy of barring women from the ministry and the eldership, and remind her teenage grandson that 'Women were the first apostles of the resurrection.' Still today I think of the psalm tunes by name and number, as they appeared in the old split-page Psalter – 'Kilmarnock 75', 'French 61', 'Stroudwater 134' ". Macdonald 2004:75-76.

Rowan Williams describes the act of worship and the act of singing together as expression of being God's people, as a way of saying we know who we are. But he also calls it our *imaginative territory*.

When we experience our life stories, our identities as people of God, and our identities as part of a specific nation, we might indeed find ourselves more in imaginative territory than

factual ground. I gave an overview of the history of my people as I have heard it as a child, have experienced it, and have integrated it – calling it the 'story' of my history, and in so doing recognising the inescapability of being in imaginative territory. I have tried to show the link between my religious identity and my cultural identity, and the important part the singing of the psalms played in simultaneously forming my religious, as well as my cultural identity. The singing of the psalms (and other hymns) contributed to my sense of belonging – belonging not only to the community of faith, but also to the community of the Afrikaans-speaking people.

The psalms I refer to were metrical versions derived from the Dutch Calvinist tradition. As *the tradition* required, all 150 of the Biblical psalms were set to metre. And as *the tradition* required, every text had to be as near as possible to the original Hebrew – in content, in form and in length. Only about thirty of these metrical psalms were sung. Some were sung because of the tunes. Some were sung for religious reasons. And some were certainly sung for cultural and political reasons, although it was not recognised as such.

The publishing of the psalms in Afrikaans in 1937 was a cultural and political landmark in the history of the Afrikaans people – as was the first Bible in Afrikaans a few years earlier in 1933, and the first full Afrikaans hymnal in 1944. An elderly woman once told me how a cairn was built at an inaugural ceremony for the first Afrikaans Hymnal. They were all dressed in the clothes of the *Voortrekkers* – representing the time of the Great Trek when people made an exodus from the land of their oppressors. The new hymnal and the full Psalter in Afrikaans was a sign of an own, independent identity.

As a child I sang the psalms with much sincerity, believing that God was indeed listening to our passionate outpourings, indeed believing that we were singing only as expression of being God's people (in Rowan Williams' words)*,* and saying we know who we are 'as God's people'*,* and indeed believing that we were singing for religious reasons only. When I became a member of the Committee for a new versification of the psalms into Afrikaans, I came to realise how many reasons there are for singing the psalms, for versifying the psalms, for deciding on the policies for versifying, appointing the members for committees, choosing the poet(s) – not to mention the publishers. And I realised how often these reasons were very non-religious.

If I had thought that singing psalms and hymns was free of ideology, *only* promoting unity, acceptance, the 'sharing and strengthening of bonds' and our identity 'as the people of God', I then became aware of church politics, personal politics, processes of canonisation and legitimization, positions of power that wouldn't be questioned; traditionalist, nationalist, fundamentalist, sectarian views – in short, all powers of identity that could come into play. I learnt that the easiest answer was: 'According to the old (Afrikaans) Dutch Reformed tradition...' Which meant: Don't question, don't ask, don't criticise – and don't even think of alternatives. Full stop.

4. A NEW VERSIFICATION OF THE METRICAL PSALMS IN AFRIKAANS

At the Psalm Committee the main principle was that the full text of each psalm simply had to be 'reproduced' in its entirety into Afrikaans verse. All psalms had to be in the same metrical form and it would not be called a 'psalm' if a metaphor or image was amiss. Deviating from the text would mean deviating from 'the tradition.' Another requirement was 'singable' tunes for the newly versified psalms. Some people were dissatisfied that the full corpus of Genevan tunes would not be not retained: For them keeping the Genevan tunes as a whole would strengthen the signs of the *Calvinist Reformed* identity, marking a long tradition in which this identity has been formed.

If one of the prime requirements for a new versification was 'attractive and easy' tunes,

one could ask: How does one sing an imprecatory psalm to a *suitable* tune, not to speak of an attractive and easy tune? What I really want to argue is this: If so much of our religious and cultural identity is formed by what we sing, what kind of identity would I have had, had I really *sung* the imprecatory psalms from my childhood? After the concentration camps of the Anglo Boer war, I would have sung with my people to the British and their people: 'Happy is the one who seizes your infants and dashes them against the rocks' (Psalm 137).

It is true that we must be able to voice the full range of our emotions and that the psalms are a vehicle for it. As John Bell says in his Introduction to *Psalms of Patience, Protest and Praise* (1993): The psalms 'cover in theme and expression, the whole gamut of human experience. Exuberance, delight and unbridled joy are there. So also are questioning, curiosity and impatience. So also are agony, loneliness, and deep despair.' He speaks about 'complaining to Heaven when no-one on earth seems interested' (back cover). It is one thing, however, to sing songs of lament, complaining to God, questioning God, struggling with God, voicing one's protest – but another to *collectively* sing imprecatory psalms directed to someone else or against the people of a nation, however much one might feel injured, individually or collectively. As a child I already learnt that *we* should beg for mercy, confessing *our* wrongdoings, praying that God would change the hearts of the perpetrators – as well as ours…

I grew up with these principles – even if I was part of the history of my people and even if I had sung the psalms as a part of my people – which made it clear to me that some sections of the Psalter are unsuitable to be *sung* in Christian worship (see Kloppers 2000, 2002a and Patrick 1949:227). This view differed from the views held by many members of the Psalm Committee, who argued that there were and are times that these psalms are needed in the life of a 'volk'. Theological arguments were often met with answers regarding our cultural tradition, which made me realise that there was more to it than meets the eye (see also Kloppers 2002b).

A rigid view of 'the tradition' and what would be needed by 'the people' squashed hopes for a wider view on the psalms which would also provide for more variety such as chant, psalms from Iona, Taizé, etc. In trying to open up new possibilities I hoped to get away from an old and rigid Afrikaans *Calvinist Dutch Reformed* identity and to expand our identity to a richer, more encompassing ecumenical identity as *people of God*.

5. THE SCOTTISH TRADITION OF METRICAL PSALMS

There seems to be many similarities between the situation in the Afrikaans Dutch Reformed Churches and that of the Church of Scotland. Steeped in the legacy of Calvin, the tradition of metrical psalms in these churches played a vital role in contributing to the forming of a cultural, and probably also political, identity. Soon after I came to Scotland my colleague told me that I should have at least one metrical psalm in every service. As if there was no experience with a Committee for Psalms, I simply asked: "Why?" The answer was simple: "Singing the psalms is important to the people in Scotland and it is a tradition that should be honoured." Full stop. Again.

When in Scotland… you sing the psalms. There were times that I felt forced to leave out a good hymn that would go very well with my sermon and the rest of the service. The dynamics and feel of contextual relevancy that I worked to bring about were sometimes dampened by an archaic sounding psalm text. It reminded me of Canon Alan Luff (1992) saying that we, by *singing* the psalms in our present culture (as opposed to becoming aware of them through reading, meditation, etc.), may actually be distancing ourselves from their ethical and social appeal.

John Bell from the Iona Community, well-known hymnologist, hymn writer and convenor of the Committee for Church Hymnary 4 (CH4) laments the rigid power of *the tradition* which

demands to be obeyed without reflection or critique:

> As a child, the psalm was always the first singing in our congregation, for no other reason than that was what we had always done. The use of a psalm of lament or regret in association with the prayers of confession or intercession would have been unheard of. The totem had to be venerated in the opening song, and then we might sing texts which were more appropriate to the season, lectionary or reason for gathering. … My own perspective is that the priority of the psalms and the disdain of 'human' texts until the late 19th century were, to some extent, sectarian. It proved that Protestants were not Catholics. *The metrical psalms were a kind of badge of identity* (my emphasis). What they did not do was to provide the church with much of a Christology. And I wonder whether my denomination would have been less legalistic if it had supplemented its psalmody with something of a more Christ centric nature. (Email dated the 1ˢᵗ of July 2011)

I met a few people in the congregation in Scotland who loved the metrical psalms, but were opposed to the idea of responsorial forms, complaining that they were 'Roman Catholic' or 'Anglican'. They were also opposed to the cross as a symbol in the church, and the use of candles. Maybe this shows indeed that *metrical* psalms were/are in the sphere of things used 'to prove that Protestants were not Catholics' and that they could serve as a kind of 'badge of identity' as Bell describes it. This corresponds with the view of Professor Dick Watson, who argues that the psalms were indeed what distinguished Reformed worship from the worship of the Roman Catholic Church:

> At the Reformation itself, the psalms were seen to be of particular importance, not only as individual expressions of religious experience, or as divinely inspired, or as prefigurations of the New Testament, but as clear indicators of the great divide that existed between the children of God and their enemies. The interpretation of the Genevan church as the true successor of the children of Israel is one that is invited by the 'Argument' prefaced to the psalms in the Geneva Bible. (Watson 1999:44-45)

In a paper delivered in Halifax in 2003 and published as an Occasional Paper of the HSGBI in December 2011, Dr Graham Deans, a Minister in the Church of Scotland, argues that the metrical Psalter has exercised 'a mighty influence over the Scottish heart and mind for many generations. But in matters of liturgy, I think that it has to be recognised that, generally speaking, the Scots have not been innovators, but imitators' (Deans 2011:9). He also shows that metrical Psalmody cannot claim to be a Scottish invention, but that the Scots have appropriated it. The 1650 Psalter has been virtually canonised: 'It has resisted all attempts at modernisation and revision; and it is as though Scottish creative imagination and genius ceased at that date' (Deans 2011:18). Elsewhere he describes it even more strongly: 'It is arguable that the practice of versifying large sections of Scripture – particularly from the Psalter – helped to stifle theological development, to stunt spiritual growth, and to hamper the process of creative imagination' (Deans 1999:230)

Unfortunately the same can be said of the Afrikaans churches: In liturgical matters we haven't been innovators. In our hymnody and psalmody we used to be so conservative, our 'tradition' so heavily guarded and the processes of creative imagination so hampered, that almost all creativity regarding hymns and psalms was stifled. *Church Hymnary* 4 (2005) of the Church of Scotland reflects a much broader identity than that of the Afrikaans Psalter of 2001. It includes responsorial psalms, antiphons, psalms for reading, Taize settings, plainsong chant and Anglican Chant. It provides for the variety in the psalms I so wished for in the Afrikaans hymnal.

6. IDENTITY: CULTURAL AND POLITICAL MEMORY

The *identity of faith of the individual* as well as the *identity of the community of faith,* do not exist in themselves, but have a history called the collective memory (Assmann 1991:13-30). Identity is about the collective *political* and *cultural memory* embedded in a nation's psyche. A nation's historical narrative could also reside in music 'that negotiates the borders between myth and history, thus "memorializing the past" ' (Bohlman 2011:196).

Finlay Macdonald thought it was 'a nice touch when the Scottish Parliament, at its "reconvening" on 1 July 1999, chose to mark the occasion with the singing of the Old Hundreth – "All people that on earth do dwell, sing to the Lord with cheerful voice" ' (Macdonald 2004:76, see also *Being Scottish* 2002:159-161). Wouldn't the singing of a psalm at the opening of the Scottish parliament be an indicator of the psalms functioning as 'a kind of badge of identity'? Indeed even stronger, seeing that the text was by a Scottish author, William Kethe, and from the Scottish Psalter 1650 – therefore also 'memorializing the past'. It certainly would be a clear indication of how deeply a certain psalm had come to be embedded in the cultural memory of a nation.

Patrick (1949) argued that the psalms of the Psalter of 1650 are 'a precious part of the national religious inheritance' and an 'incomparable medium of the national Church's praise' and that they 'have been interwoven with our national history for full three hundred years.' He also lamented the fact that in his time already there were services in which no place was given to one of 'the national psalms' (Patrick 1949:227-230). Elsewhere his nationalist feelings sounded even stronger: '[I]n the portions that are most suitable for public worship there is a rugged strength, an elevation and dignity, which make those passages incomparable for congregational use. So long as there are Scots folk to sing them, those psalms, so interwoven with their history and interfused (sic) with their very blood, will always hold first place in their *national* worship-song' (Patrick [1927] 1947:106).

Not only words of psalms are important. Tunes and styles of performance also play an essential role. In the west of Scotland and especially on the Western Isles, the psalms are performed in a distinct way. The identity of Gaelic speakers is marked by the way they perform the psalms in Gaelic. How strongly tunes came to be embedded in the cultural memory of the Scots can be seen in the poem, The Cotter's Saturday Night, by Robert Burns (1759 – 1796), where the names of certain beloved psalm tunes are quoted as old acquaintances in the Scots' mind:

> They chant their artless notes, in simple guise,
> They tune their hearts, by far the noblest aim;
> Perhaps *Dundee's* wild-warbling measures rise.
> Or plaintive *Martyrs,* worthy of the name;
> Or noble *Elgin* beets the heavenward flame,
> The sweetest far of Scotia's holy lays.
> Compar'd with these, Italian trills are tame...

How deeply the psalms can be embedded in the cultural or political memory of a nation is also apparent from a story told at a service in Glasgow commemorating the 450th Anniversary of the Reformation in Scotland on the 31st of October 2010 (see also the Foreword to Deans 2011) according to which the new Scottish MP's, on their way to Westminster after a landslide election in 1922, got onto the train, accompanied by the singing of psalms by the people on the platform...

Identity is formed by a sense of self and by things shared with one another, and a strong sense of there being others or strangers from which one needs to distance oneself: 'Es gibt keine

Identität ohne Alterität, keine Identitätserfahrung ohne "Feindbild". Starke kollektive Identität entsteht durch starke Alteritäten' (Kurzke, in Kueck and Kurzke 2003:223). A well-known passage from the Declaration of Arbroath 1320[3], a declaration of Scottish independence, in the form of a letter to Pope John XXII, asking him to recognise Scotland's status as an independent, sovereign state, reveals strong anti-English feelings:

> ...for, as long as but a hundred of us remain alive, never will we on any conditions be brought under English rule. It is in truth, not for glory, nor riches, nor honours that we are fighting, but for freedom – for that alone, which no honest man gives up but with life itself. (From the website of the National Archives of Scotland)

It is a known fact that in the course of history the Scots often felt, and often still feel, that they are not recognised by the English.[4] At times they even felt oppressed by the English.5 Wouldn't it then be 'natural' for them to sing the psalms in their churches – if the Psalms 'after all had been the book of the persecuted church' (Watson 1999:502)? The psalms came to be a symbol through which their identity could be confirmed and strengthened.

One can easily see the similarities between the Scots feeling oppressed by the English, and the Afrikaans people seeing themselves not only as an oppressed people making an exodus from their British rulers, but later also as a small minority among a big majority of black people. Apart from the theological and liturgical meaning the singing of the psalms in both nations was used as a device to stabilize and protect the collective memory in periods of uncertainty. The psalms have played a role in the formation of the religious and cultural identities of both the Scots and the Afrikaans speaking people, assuring both nations of God's goodwill for his chosen people and protection from their enemies...

> ... The wicked and the persecutors of the children of God shall see howe the hand of God is ever against them...
> *Argument* to the psalms in the Geneva Bible (in Watson 1999:45)

7. CONCLUSION

Many of the views discussed in this article may now be outdated and outlived, but the narratives and arguments show that hymns and psalms not only form an essential part of the religious language and self-expression of churches and individual believers, but they form also an important part of the cultural identities and collective cultural memory of a nation. Critical reflection on the use of psalms, hymns and songs is necessary in order to recognise the own biases, underlying motives, and subconscious cultural, political and ideological influences playing a role in the processes of singing hymns and psalms.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Assmann, J 1991. Der zweidimensionale Mensch. Das Fest als Medium des kollektiven Gedächtnisses, in

---

3 The original copy of the Declaration is lost, but a copy survives among Scotland's state papers, held by the National Archives of Scotland in Edinburgh.
4 An interesting source, among other, more scholarly ones, is The Scots' Crisis of Confidence (2011) in which Carol Craig reveals the Scots' feelings of negativity and constant sense of being the underdog. Things done to the Scots in the course of history are often 'overtly forgotten'
5 Many people are also unaware of things that happened in the history of the Scots – maybe they too are 'overly forgotten'?

Assmann, J & Sundermeier, T, 13-30.

Bell, John 1993. *Psalms of Patience, Protest and Praise.* The Iona Community. Glasgow: Wild Goose Publications.

Bell, John 2011. Email, dated 1 July 2011.

Bohlman, PV 2011 (2nd ed). *Music, nationalism, and the making of the new Europe.* New York: Routledge

Church of Scotland and United Free Church of Scotland 2005 *Church Hymnary – Fourth Edition* Norwich: Canterbury Press.

Craig, C [2003] 2011 (2nd ed.). *The Scots' Crisis of Confidence.* Glasgow: Argyll Publishing.

Deans, G D S 2011. 'Race Shall Thy Works Praise Unto Race': the Development of Metrical Psalmody in Scotland. Occasional Paper, Third Series No 5 of the HSGBI.

Deans, G 2003. Metrical Psalmody in Scotland. Plenary Paper at the Joint Conference of the IAH, the Hymn Society in the United States and Canada, and the HSGBI, in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Deans, G 1999. Hymnody and belonging. Part 1: The Words of Hymnody, *The Bulletin 220* (HSGBI), 230-238.

Dinter A, Heimbrock HG & Söderblom K 2007. *Einführung in die empirische Theologie. Gelebte Religion erforschen.* Göttingen: Vandenhoeck.

Kloppers, E 2000. 'n Nuwe Psalmomdigting in Afrikaans: Uitgangspunte, beleid, probleme. *HTS Theological Studies* 56(1), 192–204.

Kloppers, E 2002a. 'n Perspektief op die nuwe Psalmomdigting – reaksie op 'n reaksie. *HTS Theological Studies* 58(1), 235 – 249.

Kloppers, E 2002b. *Die God is onse God...* Hymns, Hymnals and the National Identity of the Afrikaner – A Critical Assessment. *Religion and Theology* 9 / 3&4, 183–198*.*

Kück, C & Kurzke, H (Ed.) 2003. *Kirchenlied und nationale Identität.* Tübingen: Francke.

Kurzke, H. 2003. Kirchenlied und nationale Identität. Ergebnisse und Thesen, 223-224.

Liedboek van die Kerk. 2001. Kaapstad: NG Kerk-Uitgewers.

Luff, A 1992. "What do we do, when we *sing* the Psalms?" *Hymnology Annual* 2, 88-99.

Macdonald, F 2004. *Confidence in a changing Church.* Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press.

The National Archives of Scotland website: http://www.nas.gov.uk accessed 12 January 2012.

Patrick, M [1927] 1947 (revised ed). *The Story of the Church's Song.* Edinburgh: Church of Scotland Committee on Publications.

Patrick, M 1949. *Four Centuries of Scottish Psalmody.* London: Oxford University Press.

Psalms en Gesange 1944. Cape Town: Suid-Afrikaanse Bybelvereniging.

Ricoeur, P 2006. *Memory, History, Forgetting.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Watson, J R 1999. *The English Hymn. A Critical and Historical Study.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Webster, D 1983. *Our Hymn Tunes.* Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press.

Williams, R 2006. "What are we saying by singing?" *The Bulletin* 18:2 (October 2006), 103 -114.

KEY WORDS

psalms
hymns
identity
nationalism
collective cultural memory

CONTACT DETAILS

Dr. Elsabé Kloppers
Departement Filosofie, Praktiese- en Sistematiese
Teologie UNISA
Tel.: 012 429 6589
E-pos: kloppec@unisa.ac.za

Lebaka, Edward[1]
University of Pretoria

Thanksgiving songs in contemporary Pedi society

ABSTRACT

This article is the dissemination of an investigation of the Pedi tradition of Thanksgiving Songs that continued in spite of all cultural suppression. This article discusses the form, content and functions of Pedi Thanksgiving Songs as guided by the research questions and hypothesis of the study. Content is discussed with reference to African indigenous knowledge about what a 'human-musical product' entails in the African world view. It is a creative-artistic content informed by human, philosophical, artistic, spiritual, socio-contextual, and health perspectives indigenous to Africa. The particular Pedi Thanksgiving Song discussed here serves as an example and/or representation of the general African traditional perspective of musical practice and creativity. Specifically, the study attempts to establish the reality that music making is not restricted to organized sound only; it also includes a symbolic expression of a social and cultural organization, which reflects the values, the past and present ways of life of human beings.

A. INTRODUCTION

Christianization of African meta-religious/musical powers
Western influence has come to South Africa through the normal processes of cultural encounter with people of different cultures. Cultural change usually takes place over an extended period, but in Africa acculturation[2] is taking place at tremendous speed. The intervention of Christian missionaries in the Pedi community resulted in some Pedi people observing the hymns introduced by the missionaries and forgetting about their indigenous songs (Moila 1988:111ff; 152ff; 189ff). In some extreme cases, there has been total replacement of the Pedi Thanksgiving Songs with Christian hymns and gospel music[3]. The impact of such change is staggering and difficult to contemplate. How does one, for instance, fathom the effects of missionary prohibition of dance in a culture where dance is so prominent in the day to day being of the people – so integral to their behaviour - be it at work, play, recreation, devotion or creating art...? The missionaries avidly suppressed dancing in church, so that Africans were forced to stand still while singing the European hymns. Dancing had no place in European church worship and missionaries were imbued with Victorian era ideas of its 'sensuality' and 'sinfulness' (Smith 1987:6). As African people began to respond to the gospel, they were forced to abandon their ancient customs, rites, cultural identities, and even their names because all of these were regarded as "pagan".

---

1 Post Doctoral Research Fellow in Biblical and Religious Studies at the University of Pretoria with prof DJ Human.

2 Acculturation implies culture change through assimilation and hybridization, whereby 'culture A' invades 'culture B' through religion, music, language, dance, attire, etc.

3 Aleaz (2003:107) emphasizes that the Christian churches continue to manifest their colonial heritage today in different ways: in the style and functioning of their bureaucracy; in the shape of their worship; in the language and content of their theology; and in the way in which all these are tightly controlled by a central authority, European in its mentality, that allows little local autonomy and is insensitive to local needs.

In these crucial, initial encounters with the powerful Western missionaries, the African people were made to feel inferior. Their way of life was condemned as totally bad.

The attitude of these early missionaries showed an unwitting ignorance of the positive values of the African way of life. Their actions were an unwarranted attempt to control the social situation and an unfounded attack upon the fundamental institutions of the traditional African society. Without first trying to understand the significance of traditional rituals, missionaries condemned most rites of passage and social ceremonies as pagan, whether they were contrary to the teachings of the scriptures or not. In the eyes of the African people, the missionaries' attitude was one of total hostility toward traditional culture and religion. Countless customs and institutions of many tribes have come under the direct assault of the missionaries. In their fury to purge the society of all paganism and to avoid syncretism, early missionaries condemned not only "black" magic, sorcery, and witchcraft, but also the ageless practices in African traditional life without thorough examination, for example, the education and training, which is given during initiation, and is vital for the community's maintenance of self-understanding. The fundamental significance of initiation for the total African cultural life was not fully realized by most missionaries (Mugambi 2005:532). For some of the missionaries, the practices were considered to be unnecessary ordeals, causing great suffering to the adolescents.

When missionaries rejected tribal institutions, they created "cultural voids" within the society, since the functions served by the prohibited social customs were no longer fulfilled. Many indigenous forms of expression were *caused to be* bypassed, *as they were* regarded as childish, or ridiculed by missionaries. Because they did not understand the symbolic logic of the forms, they regarded them as a hindrance to progress. Nothing was offered to fill the vacuum which was left by the destruction of traditional customs.

Added to the government's neglect of developing indigenous music is the historical influence of Christian missionaries among the Pedi people. Missionaries saw drumming as woven into the fabric of pagan life, so they were determined to exorcise it. Despite the scarcity of instruments, Bapedi refused to forsake their musical traditions and an outstanding vocal musical culture evolved. Drums are among the limited number of musical instruments found in Limpopo Province, especially amongst the Pedi speaking people.

African music was regarded as not sufficiently artistic and spiritual by the missionaries. The majority of the people appear to have lost interest in their traditional music and musical instruments as a result of contact with modern civilisation and the influence of missionaries. Missionaries have taught them to regard their own musical traditions as inferior and to accept Western church music instead. Christian activities were brought into Africa together with the main colonial activities; both were closely linked, and they were of course, foreign.

The dilemma that arose in the Pedi community and which is still current to this day is how to strike a balance between the traditional and the modern; how to balance deep indigenous perspectives with regard to form, content, organization and performance of Pedi indigenous music, with new ones encountered in cultural imports from the West. The dilemma has given rise to three categories of protagonists: traditionalists, semi-traditionalists and modernists[4].

In view of the above scenario, it becomes necessary to address the relevance of Pedi Thanksgiving Songs in the modern context. Consequently, the study concerns itself with the major research question: Which peculiar structural elements constitute the form, theoretical content and performance of Pedi indigenous music? In order to obtain detailed data, the following subsidiary questions were formulated and considered: (a) How did the indigenous Pedi

---

4 While traditionalists advocate traditional organization and performance of Pedi indigenous music, semi-traditionalists mix the modern and the traditional, and modernists have done away with traditional music altogether.

practice of Thanksgiving survive; and (b) How did the indigenous Pedi practice of Thanksgiving relate to what the missionaries were proclaiming and doing in the church context?

Theoretical Framework

The study is based on the theory of aesthetic functionalism as proposed by Akuno (2005:160) which views the meaning of music as being rooted in the role music plays in the life of those who make it. Just as the author puts it, the functionalists attribute the meaning and value of a work of art to its relationship with the activities of the society. As a work of art, the value of Pedi Thanksgiving music is therefore judged from society's involvement with and in it; and consequently the role or function that it performs in that society's existence. Since this article seeks to establish the role of Pedi Thanksgiving Songs in the Pedi society, hence the applicability of the aesthetic functionalism theory. The data for this research was collected through oral interviews. Five performing groups were purposively sampled to provide the much needed information on Pedi Thanksgiving Songs.

This article theorizes that: a) In Africa music is used to invoke, venerate, appease and entertain the supernaturals and hence the supernaturals are concerned about which types of music are played, and their composition and performance practices; b) In Africa, music and the inspiration to compose it are also received from meta-musical i.e. metaphysical or spiritual sources; and c) There is no way the artistry of an African music composer can be totally separated from his spiritual background and experiences.

Finally, this article is a corollary to both the question and answer raised by DjeDje (2003:vii): What gives African music its power? In my view, it is critical to understand the nature, essence and underlying theoretical and humanistic principles of African music because this may explain why people are attracted to the music.

Pedi musical terminology and conceptualisation

Pedi traditional musicians do not think or speak about music in European's ways. Terminology is concrete and people-orientated, not abstract and by definitions. Music is an abstract idea, songs are something done by people. Participants learn by observation and imitation. There is little or no detailed teaching as in western music pedagogy. People learn to grasp things as a *Gestalt* - an experiential whole. Some traditional terms do relate fairly directly to European terms: *hlabelela,* to lead a song; *latela,* to follow a song. These terms directly refer to call-and-response technique. Furthermore, some traditional terms imply style elements. For example, the Pedi term *malopo* refers to the music of spirit possession. *Malopo* is a complex term, at root it describes the event of a spirit possession, where a healer will perform *malopo* songs. This word also refers to an affliction, as in the disease or problem that is troubling the patient. In addition, *malopo* is a genre of music that accompanies *malopo* events. The terms *mogobo* and *motholoane* are both Wisdom and Thanksgiving Songs. These songs are sung by men only. Women are not allowed to sing them. In the Pedi society like in many African societies there are musical types for children, for men, and for women. Where a musical type is meant or rather prescribed for men, women do not participate in its performance; neither do men participate in musical types for women. Words of songs refer to rules and customs which have to be kept at all cost. They contain a lot of wisdom in as far as virtues (which are related to ideal humanistic creativity, sensibilities and meanings), are concerned. They therefore, embody the African philosophy of life, achievement and identity. A lot of ideas may be borrowed from virtues/lessons and philosophies embedded in the cultural practices. Music, therefore, being held high among the African societies, plays a role of training and preparing the individuals to understand their societies and themselves better for the survival of the human race (Orawo 1998:142). Through the singing of *mogobo,*

motholoane and *malopo*[5] songs, in the Pedi culture the aim is to preserve and uphold traditional Pedi culture. In these songs repetition is a powerful, forceful, rhetorical and expressive device skilfully employed by the singers to hammer key words home, in order to implant dominant emotions in listeners' minds. Repetitions often appear in forms of chorus refrain or a frequent return of the narration to the principal idea at strategic intervals. However, there are some western musicological concepts which are very difficult or impossible to express directly in traditional Pedi. They are ideas such as intervals and scale, rhythm, and many others.

B. DISCUSSION AND OBSERVATIONS

Thanksgiving songs *(e.g. Kgoparara)*

Singing is by far the most prevalent mode of musical expression among the African people. Although genres of "instrumental music" exist, no such genre completely excludes song (Chernoff 1979:37; Oehrle & Emeka 2003:39). Many formal and informal activities are marked by singing, whether or not the occasion is designated a "musical occasion". Although there are certain amounts of private, solo singing, the *Pedi* people regard singing as essentially a group activity[6], an opportunity to express their "communal ethos".

In the *Pedi* culture social and ethical values are communicated through Thanksgiving Songs, while the content is largely dictated by current concerns and the way people approach them. It is important to take note of the fact those musical cultures and societies in Africa are guided by complex sets of moral and ethical values and beliefs which have evolved with time and are deeply embedded historically and culturally in the psyche of the African people, both collectively and individually. Values are lived (normatively), perceived (in ourselves and others) and exhibited (as in a way of living, dress, or music), (Mans 2005:16). *Pedi* Thanksgiving Songs provide opportunities for people to express their interpretations of society. The narrator holds the listeners' attention, adding another dimension to the story through singing, dancing and ritual intent – a symbolic one, thereby creating a deeply transformative event that is crucial to the well-being of the people.

Pedi music is highly syllabic, in that each syllable is often assigned to a tone, with little use of slur expressions involving only two or three pitches to colour sustained tones or movements in the melody. The use of these slur expressions are primarily applied to link syllables, either at the beginning or at the end of phrases. Pedi musicians consider the language flexible and therefore treat the text as such in the melodic craftsmanship. The basic philosophy behind the syllabic treatment is to allow constant flow of communication, since narratives require much use of words. In the following song, *Kgoparara,* the traditional healers are expressing their appreciation and thanksgiving to the ancestors. The use of call and response in the following song is seen as a performance style, non-comparable to the European verse form. It is more of a performance style than a structural form, because a solo performance of the same piece does not show incompleteness of any sort. It only shows the complementary phrasing of the song itself, which in a group performance may be presented in complementary call and response style for aesthetic and labour distribution purposes.

Text and translation
   1. Bo tate, go ja re jele
   Our forefathers, we have enjoyed the meals

---

5 In brief, the term *malopo* refers to an illness called *malopo* which can only be terminated by a ritual called *malopo,* accompanied by the *ngaka* (doctor) of *malopo.*
6 Among the Pedi people music also provides an opportunity for interpersonal relations.

2. E fela re nyaka nama
But we are still in need of the meat

3. Re tsoma ga go nona
We would appreciate if you give us enough meat full of fat

4. Ga gešu motse o agwa ke basadi
According to our culture, the household is built by women

5. Banna ba fedile
All men have passed away

6. Nka be e sa le botala
If it was long time ago

7. Nkabe ke bitšwa "Kgobadi" pholo ya mmala
I could be described as "Kgobadi" the coloured oxen

8. Mpiletšeng Tšhumu
Please call me "Tšhumu'.

9. Ramapantele se alafa batho
"Ramapantele", the traditional healer

10. Mpiletšeng "Tšhumu'
Please call me "Tšhumu"

11. Ramapantele, ngaka ya mošimanyana
"Ramapantele" the young traditional healer

12. Nkabe e sa le botala
If it was long time ago

13. Nkabe ke bitšwa mmate, mokane
I could be described as a friend indeed

The song was recorded by the author on a field trip at m*alopo* ritual held at *Dingwane* village, *Sekhukhune* area in the Limpopo Province in May 2003.

Music as community

Singing plays an important role in the Pedi life. Van der Hooft (1979:150) infers that to the people of Africa dancing and music making serve as a means by which they relax and enjoy themselves. In Africa dance and music are essential elements of life[7]. *Pedi* musicians perform prophetically by foretelling the future consequences of certain actions taken by men and women

---

7 Hammond (2004:105) maintains that music, which acts partly on a conscious and partly on an unconscious or emotive level, is therefore frequently a way to articulate those aspects of our character of which we are not consciously aware.

in the society during the past and present. In their foresight they investigate, evaluate, probe and foretell future events. In the *Pedi* culture there are fixtures at appropriate times of the year for religious festivals dedicated to the ancestors. There are also other annual religious rites of mass purgation, regeneration and thanksgiving.

Pedi communal musical performance is a clear expression of shared social characteristics and ideals, and hence is a setting for social formation. The application of musical thought as an integral part of culture confronts people with social reality. Through musical thought[8] they come to have a better understanding of their society, and even actively shape it.

Songs as expression of appreciation and thanksgiving prevail in *Pedi* society to this day. Appreciation is indeed an important part of the tribe's act in general. Music serves as an adjunct to religion, and is used for happy and sad occasions, for expressing ideals and emotions, and romantically, for describing scenery (Kofie 1994:99). In improvised verses and pre-composed songs, the *Pedi* single out those members of the community noteworthy for their accomplishments: *matona* (headmen) and other political figures and their descendants. They also include wealthy members of the community who are actively involved in the community development of the *Pedi* people. The *Pedi* society employs thanksgiving songs to rally warriors tuning up their morale, and generating public sentiments or moral support as well as pleasing their ancestors. At some festivals which have primary political orientation, thanksgiving songs are sung to celebrate and commemorate the founding of a community.

The Context of Performances

Many arguments about indigenous music approaches concern the need for and role of context. Sharing this view, Walker (1998:55) opines that in many cultures, music and its associated educational practices are seen as more integral to the total life style, not something extrinsic. In this song text singers who are traditional healers are communicating directly with their ancestors. The text and melody play complementary roles in the communication process. The singers make use of words that are sometimes suggestive of double or multiple meanings. These conceptual words often form the basis for the themes and sub-themes in the song.

The text falls into six clearly-defined sections: a) recognition of the deeds of ancestors (line 1); b) request and expressions of the singers' confidence in the ancestors (lines 2-3); c) tone of loneliness and frustration (lines 4-5); d) recognition of a traditional healer *'Tshumu'* who trained the singers to become traditional healers (lines 8-11); and f) imagery (lines 12-13).

The introductory statement (line 1) poetically announces the recognition of ancestors' deeds *'Bo tate, go ja re jele'* ('Our forefathers, we have enjoyed the meals'). The tone of the singers from line 2, *'e fela re nyaka nama'* ('but we are still in need of the meat') and line 3, *'re tsoma ya go nona, lekhura le kae'* ('We would appreciate if you give us enough meat full of fat') presents a dissatisfaction that the singers (traditional healers) are still in need of more meat full of fat. The message communicated to the ancestors by the singers is that they are thankful, but they would appreciate it if the ancestors could offer them some more meat. The belief that ancestors will respond positively includes a request as well as the singers' confidence in the ancestors.

In this song we observe the careful use of figurative words with powerful associative meaning. The text possesses variation in poetic expression. The singers make use of several figures of speech, forms of imagery, idioms, parables and proverbs that require contemplation – serious thinking that demands insider knowledge of the Pedi language to fully comprehend the meaning of the song. This is evinced in the fourth line which remarks that 'according to our culture, the household is built by women', and fifth line 'all men have passed away'. The tone

---

8 Musical thought not only promotes social cohesion, but communicates many messages through song texts and dance features (Kruger 1999:124).

in lines 4 and 5 reflects loneliness, despair and frustration because all men in the community have died. Taking melancholy of the lyrics into consideration, the focus in these two lines (4 and 5) is on relationships, the loss of men in the community and the frustration experienced by the bereaved families.

Most themes in this song are derived from the sense of realism rather than from idealism. Songs such as *'Kgoparara'* are normally composed as reactions or responses to the realities of life (e.g. inauguration of the chief) that unfold in the *Pedi* society from time to time. They therefore had to reflect things that had occurred, which the musicians/traditional healers had seen or heard. The song recognizes the traditional healer *'Tshumu'* (lines 8-11) who trained all the singers to become traditional healers. Because of the trust the singers (traditional healers) have in their mentor *('Tshumu'),* as a signal of respect they call him with his praise name *'Ramapantele',* (line 1). It is not clear why they are calling *'Tshumu'*. It is possible that they might be calling him with the sole purpose of thanking him for the good work he has done in training them to become traditional healers.

Music as expression

Thanksgiving Songs in the *Pedi* culture express sincere *thanks to the ancestors* after every achievement, whether it is a good harvest or a patient's full recovery, etc. However, songs such as *mogobo* and *motholoane* may be sung for celebrating victory after every achievement. Thanksgiving Songs are sung to thank, please and praise ancestors after having responded positively to the community's requests. Similar rituals take place in thanksgiving after harvest, a very festive occasion, especially if the harvest has been a good one (Bourdillon 1976:303). The thanksgiving ceremony includes feasting on the meat of oxen killed by the chief for the occasion. If the spirit guardians have failed to provide a good harvest the previous year, they are not so lavishly honoured and the celebrations cease.

Music is such a powerful medium in the *Pedi* society that even history and tradition are preserved in song. Oral tradition is the basic means of transmitting ideas to the next generation. The above observation is supported by Mugambi (1989:94) when he states that the African cultural and religious heritage was passed on orally from generation to generation and the wisdom of the ancestors was conserved, not in written books, but in songs and oral traditions.

The main findings of the current study are that:

1. The form and content of Pedi Thanksgiving Songs is characterized by musical creativity and practice achieved through "performance-composition", which according to Nzewi (1991; 1997 and 2003), is the art of musically marshalling, interpreting and aesthetically enriching the ongoing events as well as contingencies of a performance context. Taking this into consideration from a music educator's point of view, individual and group creativity centred around narration and enhanced with music (including singing and dancing) should be provided for in a music curriculum. The focus should be on talent nurturing along with fostering appreciation and preservation of cultural heritage.

2. Pedi Thanksgiving Songs are deeply rooted in myths, taboos and beliefs that form basic philosophical foundations of the Pedi cultural fabric and hence its context-utilitarian nature. Therefore, in order to appreciate the relevance of African music, teachers and students need to be cognizant of its cultural underpinnings.

3. The solo-and-response form is the basic structural feature of Pedi indigenous music. However, in actual performance it was observed that there is no strictly fixed framework of music and/or text as is the case in western music. The thematic developmental aspect of the music is based on spontaneity, extemporization and creativity. Consequently, it

is crucial for the Westerner to understand forms, structures and performance styles of African music. This dimension links the music to meaningful expression within a particular cultural setting.

4. The performance of Pedi Thanksgiving music, dance and drama complement each other in the process of communicating certain contextual messages. Therefore, music, dance and drama/theatre should be integrated under one umbrella in African arts and culture programmes. This is because the three units (in the context of African musical performance; theory and practice; and as expressed in the research on Pedi Thanksgiving music), form an integrated whole and cannot be split off from another.

With regard to the foregoing, this study supports the notion that African traditional music, as Nzewi (1997:11) puts it: "contains all materials that are needed in philosophy, theoretical content and principles of practices for culturally meaningful and independent modern music education of any disciplinary specialization at any level in Africa and perhaps elsewhere".

Survival of the indigenous Pedi practice of thanksgiving
Barrett (1968:89) indicates that the missionaries, as apologists of the faith, failed to relate the new faith to the old way of life. Barrett also says that this can be summarized as a failure in sensitivity. Early missionaries did not demonstrate a sensitive understanding of the society, religion, and psychology of the African people. Fullness of the biblical concepts of love, understanding and treating others as equals was not evident in missionaries' actions. Rather than allow the scriptures to guide in these matters, they formed opinions about the culture and proceeded to act upon them. As Barrett further notes: "In this failure missionaries were unfaithful to their own basic principle of appeal to scripture for guidance in situations new and old".

Cultural diffusion brought about by Christianity deterred the practice of Pedi traditional music. They did not recognize links between biblical faith and traditional society. In spite of the above detrimental factors, Pedi indigenous music (for example, Pedi Thanksgiving Songs) survived. This music survived because of the purpose it serves among the Pedi people at large. Pedi people use Thanksgiving Songs for ancestor veneration; for generating public sentiments or moral support; as well as to celebrate and commemorate the founding of a community. Alternatively, people who were not satisfied with the influence of Christianity on their culture formed African Independent Churches where their culture was better catered for. However, Pedi indigenous music did not survive in the whole of the Sekhukhune region. It survived mainly in and around remote areas where Pedi tradition is deeply rooted in ancestor veneration.

Furthermore, in spite of this culture climate, Pedi Thanksgiving Songs have proved to be a rigorous body of music embodying processes of social control that are worth preserving for the benefit of contemporary and future society. In the present state of world affairs, with change and destruction catapulting ahead, one senses the urgent need to step up action to preserve and ensure the continuation of our indigenous musical heritage in documentation and practice; cultural meaning may be lost as a result of current ongoing acculturation taking place in the organization and performance of Pedi indigenous music.

Relationship between indigenous Pedi practice and Christian tradition of thanksgiving
In both Christian tradition of Thanksgiving and Indigenous Pedi practice the divisions of individual and communal thanksgiving are found. However, Old Testament psalms emphasize the individuals' response to God's acts in the presence of their religious community (e.g. Pss 22; 40; 41 and 118). Pedi Thanksgiving Songs on the other hand pronounce communal aspects (e.g. *kgoparara*). Responsorial devices are detectable in selected psalms as well as in Pedi

Thanksgiving Songs. Among Pedi people, particularly, during communal rites singing is often done in a responsorial manner between the leader and the participants. A marked distinction between both traditions is noted. Whereas psalmists direct all their thanksgiving to God, Pedi people on the contrary address their ancestors.

C. A SAD TREND

Having achieved the main objectives of this article, it is sad to note from observations that a significant amount of the original traditional stuff is no more to be found in the Pedi society and in some other African countries. This is because the traditional religious institutions and heritage that host the real traditional religious and musical practices are dying out due to influences of Western education, foreign religions and socio-economic problems. The few practitioners at 'home' are no more diligent in keeping the traditions. Due to socio-economic hardships, they have desacredized vital aspects of the legacies by taking some of the practices out of their original contexts in order to satisfy foreign inquirers and hence compromise their cultural heritage for monetary gains. Martey (2003:128-129) endorses this observation by stating that African liberation theology sets Africa's socio-economic and political struggle within a theological context. He further insists that it defines poverty in anthropological terms and draws attention to all structures – political, economic, ecclesial, religious – that dehumanize and impoverish the African created in the image of God.

Apart from theses and dissertations in African Universities and few local documentation projects, the development, promotion and documentation of traditional African religious and musical cultures are being carried out and sponsored by Euro-Americans, on their soil and for their use. There is a kind of injustice here. The West 'sold' Christianity to Africans and not only condemned but made them throw away their traditional religious and musical heritage, only for them to come back now to be demanding for what they had once made Africans throw away.

Religious and Music Education curricular in Africa, especially in South Africa is still largely Western oriented, thus putting traditional African religion and music at a disadvantage. Currently, the system therefore produces students that know little or nothing on their traditional religious and musical heritage and practices.

It is speculated that in the nearest future, the remnant and modified versions of real traditional African religious and musical practices would only be found in Western research institutions and among neo-traditional African performers (outside Africa) and among Africans in diasporas such as African Americans, Cubans, Brazilians and Caribbeans.

D. CONCLUSION AND CHALLENGES

Considering the aesthetic quality of compositions by African art composers and considering the meta-musical dimension and the message therein, it can be concluded that African art music can still be fully artistic while at the same time functional on a psycho-spiritually level. I think there is nothing wrong with this. We even need more of this now that there is increased need for what I have theorized as 'transformative musicality'.

Arising from the findings and the conclusion of this article, there is the need for Africans to keep, uphold and promote their meta-religious/musical heritage and refuse to sell it out in the face of intimidation, racial prejudice, discouragements and socio-economic hardship. This is because in developing their arts, their spiritual empowerment needs be strengthened. As a way of redeeming the loss and reviving the heritage, it is recommended that traditional African religions be taught as a subject in both primary and post-primary institutions. Scholars and

researchers in African music, African religions and African Studies in general, should also as a matter of urgency, undertake research and document the primitive nitty-gritty of the veneration of the supernaturals in the Ancient Africa.

The final challenge here is the need for Africans to redirect and remobilize their metaphysical forces and legacies to better their lives. Power used selfishly, i.e. 'diabolic spirituality' always lead to destruction of lives and properties, reduces corporate greatness and lead to perpetual backwardness, while positive use of power always fuel societal corporate strengths, greatness and prosperity. This is the greatest challenge of the time.

E. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

As expressed in this study, Pedi Thanksgiving music, being a traditional music, is difficult to be done away with. Therefore, the department of Arts and Culture in South Africa and by extension, in other African countries, should encourage preservation of traditionally/culturally loaded communicative/informative practices by documenting them in a scholarly manner, as exemplified in the present study, for future reference, posterity and sustainable humanistic developments. As Akuno (2005:74) puts it, "today's state and activities provide the grounding and roots for tomorrow's achievements, the strides of which are determined by the level of understanding of 'today' that we can reach".

A study should be done on the form and content of other traditional Pedi musical arts and practices such as: wedding music, funeral music and harvest music with a view to examine in detail, their theory and practice in the context of indigenous and/or contemporary African humanistic, creative, artistic and theoretical thoughts and practices. Moreover, and related to the former, aesthetics in Pedi verbal arts such as: proverbs, epic, lyrics, dictums and other poetic formations should be examined in relation to how they are musically theorized, and practised.

Since the study was limited to the Pedi community, and hence may not have adequately reflected features in other African communities, a comparative study based on the form and content of indigenous music of other African communities should be carried out. In this connection, it is also noteworthy that research on aesthetics of other African cultural and artistic practices inclined to human development spheres such as entertainment, leisure, spiritual, social, philosophical, historical and psychological matters could be followed through.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Akuno, E. A. 2005. "The role of research in Music Education". In *East African Journal of Music.* Issue No. 1:64-77.
Aleaz, K. P. 2003. Introducing theologies of religions. *Asia Journal of Theology 17(2),* 442-459.
Barrett, D. B. 1968. *Schism and Renewal in Africa.* Nairobi: Oxford.
Bourdillon, M. F. C. 1976. *The Shona Peoples: An Ethnography of the Contemporary Shona, with special reference to their religion.* Gwelo: Mambo Press.
Chernoff, J. M. 1979. *African Rhythm and African Sensibility: Aesthetics and Social Action in African Musical Idiom.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
DjeDje, J. C. 2003. 'Four Words', in Anri Herbst, Meki Nzewi & Kofi Agawu (eds.) *Musical Arts in Africa: Theory, Practice and Education.* Pretoria: Unisa Press.
Hammond, N. 2004. 'Singing South Africannes: the construction of identity among South African youth choirs'. In Anri Herbst & Hetta Potgieter (eds.) *Journal of the Musical Arts in Africa.* Volume 1, 103 – 115. Cape Town: University of cape Town.
Kofie, N. N. 1994. *Contemporary African Music in World Perspectives. Some Thoughts on Systematic Musicology and Acculturation.* Accra: Ghana University Press.
Kruger, J. 1999. 'Singing Psalms with owls: a Venda twentieth – century musical history'. *African Music,* 7

(4): 122 – 146.

Mans, M. 2005. 'Aesthetics and values as core determinants of musical identity formation'. In Anri Herbst (ed) *The Musical Arts in Africa.* Volume 2, 1-22. Cape Town: South African College Music.

Martey, E. 2003. *African Theology. Enculturation and Liberation.* Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books.

Moila, M. P. 1988. *Toward an Anthropologically Informed Theology: The Kingdom of God Theology, Christian Presence, and Conflict in Pedi society.* PhD thesis. (U.M.I. Dissertation Information service). Chicago: Lutheran School of Theology.

Mugambi, J. N. K. 1989. *African Heritage and contemporary Christianity.* Nairobi: Longman Kenya.

_____ 2005. 'Christianity and the African Cultural Heritage'. In Ogbu U. Kalu (ed). *African Christianity. An African story,* 516-541. Pretoria: University of Pretoria.

Nzewi, M. 1991. *Musical Practice and Creativity: An African Traditional Perspective.* Bayreuth: IWALEWA-Haus: University of Bayreuth.

_____, 1997. *African Music: Theoretical Content and Creative Continuum: The Culture Exponents Definitions.* Olderhausen, Germany: Institut fur Didaktik Popularer Musik.

_____, 2003. "Acquiring Knowledge of the Musical Arts in Traditional Society". In Anri Herbst, Meki Nzewi, Kofi Agawu (eds). *Musical Arts in Africa.* Pretoria: Unisa Press.

Oehrle, E and Emeka, L. 2003. 'Thought systems informing the musical arts'. In: Anri Herbst, Meki Nzewi and Kofi Agawu (eds). *Musical Arts in Africa: Theory, Practice and Education.* Pretoria: Unisa Press.

Orawo, C. N. 1998. 'Music education as a means of attaining insight in humanity'. In Caroline van Niekerk & S. Torta (eds). *23rd ISME Selected Conference Proceedings: abstracts of paper, workshops and demonstrations,* 142-148. Pretoria: Unisa press.

Van der Hooft, A. G. 1979. *Die Malopodans.* Amsterdam: Rodopi.

Walker, R. 1998. In Music Education "a hundred flowers blossom and a hundred schools of thought contend". Is this a Problem? *International Journal of Music Education,* Number 32, 53-59.

KEY WORDS
Thanksgiving
Songs
Pedi Society
Musical terminology
Christianization of African meta-religious powers
Indigenous Pedi practice

Author : Edward Lebaka
(Study leader: Dirk J Human)
Post-doctoral Fellow
Biblical and Religious Studies
Department of Old Testament Studies
University of Pretoria
Email: edwardlebaka@gmail.com
Dirk.human@up.ac.za

Louw, Daniël
Stellenbosch University

The aesthetics of 'manhood' within the paradigmatic framework of theopaschitic theology. From Brett Murray's painting 'The Spear' and the opened fly to the iconic view of 'The Anchor' and the spiritual art of male genitals

ABSTRACT

The Brett Murray painting of president Zuma with an opened fly probes into the realm of manhood. It reveals the so called 'masculinity crisis' in the gender discourse. From a practical theological point of view it poses the question whether one can exclude male genitals from a holistic anthropology that views corporeality and sexuality as essential elements of the 'human soul'. The following question is posed: To what extent can the theopaschitic paradigm and Christian iconic view on life contribute to the transformation of existing images on being male and masculinity? Can such a theological approach change existing paradigms determined by domination and patriarchal power? It is accepted that masculinities are products of social and cultural images. In this regard manhood is a social and cultural construct. The Brett Murray painting emphasizes the fact that the penis is still a phallic symbol and as a 'public' subjected to the gaze of social media. The public reactions on Brett Murray's 'The Spear' are scrutinized by a Christian spiritual hermeneutics. The objective of the article is to emphasize the role of aesthetics in the establishment of a poetic gaze on manhood. It is an attempt to transform thrusting manhood into 'compassionate intimacy'. It is argued that male genitals should be viewed as sacred and 'soulful' parts of human embodiment.

Brett Murray's painting of president Zuma, dressed in a suit, portrayed in the gesture of Lenin, with an opened fly and vivid manhood, stirred up a lot of reactions. The responses changes from laughing cynicism, to serious assessment, aesthetic evaluation, anger and even violent rejection. The point is, within processes of transformation, it reveals the "soul" of a very diverse South Africa. It unmasks perceptions on political power. The painting uncovered the veins of masculinities in our society. It points in the direction of the realities of violence and the abuse of power, as well as deep seated ideas (ideologies) regarding race, sex, sexuality, gender, masculinity, femininity and the human body. To a certain extent one can say that the painting of Brett Murray cut into the nerves of the political dilemma in South Africa.

On the 22nd of May 2012 a red cross was sprayed over Zuma's genitals. There was also an attempt to cover parts of the painting with black paint. Brett Murray's art of resistance met resistance of art due to the blindfolded gaze of political imperialism.

According to Philda Essop (2012: 2) the core of the reaction from the side of the South African Communist Party was that the painting is offensive, disgusting and sadistic. It puts all black people in a negative perspective and fuels anew racism. "Only animals walk naked not human beings" (Essop 2012: 2).

The depiction of the genitals of a president is seen as disrespectful to the status of the presidency; it is actually 'bad taste', vulgar and touches on the borders of immorality and pornography.

Reactions from within the ANC pointed out that the depiction of Zuma's genitals is a subtle attack on the dignity and cultural values of black people. Gwede Mantashe, the secretary general of the ANC, is of opinion that the painting polarizes South Africans and suggests that black people have no morals (Van Rooyen 2012: 5). With reference to the fact that he had extra marital relationships, some others are of opinion that the president deserves the current criticism of his private sexual lifestyle. The criticism is not so much about the culture of polygamy, but about the president's personal lifestyle and his view on personal 'manhood'. The point is that Zuma's sexual behaviour effects the perception of males regarding the function of a penis and the meaning of masculinity; it reveals what one can call the current crisis of masculinity[1].

MANHOOD AND THE CRISIS OF MASCULINITY AS A PRACTICAL THEOLOGICAL QUESTION

In Habermas' terms[2] (Van der Ven 2002:21), three normative questions should be posed in practical theology.

- The first is the *teleological question* relating to our personal and communitarian life: who are we, what do we consider good, what do we strive for, what do we value?
- The second is a *deontological question* relating to our responsibility to each and everybody and to humankind as a whole: what is just, what is right, what are our obligations?
- The third is the *pragmatic* or *utilistic question,* relating to effectiveness and efficiency: which action will produce the intended result?

If one can assume that practical theology deals inter alia with the praxis of God within the public realm of life, in order to minister to the networking of human relationships, male identity from a Christian spiritual perspective becomes a practical theological issue. In order to foster human dignity and to enhance the quality and meaning of life, the current discussion on the Zuma painting, points in the direction of the teleological question: who we are as males? It brings the deontological question into the gender discourse: what is our obligation as males if manhood is an essential element of our being human? We cannot avoid the question: which action and *habitus* can change existing paradigms on manhood mainly instigated by brute patriarchalism?

Horrocks[3] refers to the crisis of masculinity when he points out that males feel powerless in our contemporary society and are pressurized to con form to a kind of hegemonic masculinity[4]. (the athletic male body as a mark of power and moral superiority[5]). Under the pressure of the gender debate, and the demand to come in contact with their feminine side, men are becoming more and more uncertain of themselves (Mowrey 1996). They often escape in a very artificial mode of being. Even tend to behave more violently in their attempt to destroy their vulnerable

---

1 Without any doubt, within a global society and without a fixed role description, being a male has become extremely difficult. In terms of the gender discourse male violence and the abuse of power have become burning issues. Even for the church and communities of faith. "Some of the distortions about male violence come because of the church's confusion about power and sexuality (Poling 2003: 31).

2 On the implication of Habermas' perspectives on practical theology and theory formation, see De Roest 1998; on the normative perspectives of practical theology, 269-353.

3 R. Horrocks, *Masculinity in Crisis. Myths, Fantasies and Realities* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1994), p. 143. See also A. Clare, *On Men: Masculinity in Crisis* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2000).

4 According to T. Carrigan, (2004: 151-165) the differentiation of masculinities is psychological, but also institutional and an aspect of collective practice. Hegemonic masculinity is to impose a particular definition on other kinds of masculinity (154). On hegemonic masculinity see also N. Edley, M. Wetherall (1995: p. 129).

5 M.L. Stemmelet (1996: 95) calls the phenomenon of homosexuality a "gemixtepickle" including such prejudiced terms as faggots, dykes and fairies.

side and sensitivity. Within poor communities, due to unemployment and disrupted social structures, they become desperate.

The fact is that the male penis has become a public idol and a 'bone of contention'. Since ancient times the phallic symbol was an icon for manhood and stirred up a lot of reactions.

The painting depicts 'manhood' as a 'spear'. Manhood is then refers to virility, egoistic and self-satisfying male pride. Male sexuality is about powerful domination (Bourdieu 2001). Within the context of patriarchalism, manhood is closely related to the thrusting, penetrating event whereby women are subjugated to a kind of fascistic and even violent abuse of authority. The penis operates like a spear that can 'kill', destroy and afflict pain and suffering.

Murray's own explanation is that the painting is a parody on a Russian propaganda poster by Viktor Iwanof. The intention is to fool with political power and patriarchy (Van Rooyen 2012: 5).

The fact that Zuma is dressed in the clothes of Lenin, as well as his imperialistic posture representing powerful authority, needs the thorough attention of a theological anthropology. The debate in the social media focused mostly on the open fly. However, the main question should not so much be about the immorality of the painting, but on the morality of the person. To my mind the painting focuses on the qualitative question regarding ethos: What is hidden behind the clothes, i.e. the intention and attitude regarding masculinity? At stake in the quest for manhood is actually the significance of the male body (Driver 1996).

My contention is that 'the spear' refers to ethos and implies more than merely nakedness and genitals. The reference to the 'spear' is fundamentally an ethos (*habitus*) –question; i.e. a spiritual question; the question about the meaning and purposefulness of manhood.

SPIRITUAL HERMENEUTICS AND THE "SOCRATIC VIEW ON LIFE"

Socrates wanted to penetrate the physical world by means of the notion of the goodness, the inherent beauty that contributed to the fact that things are as they are. In spite of a scientific explanation, he opted for an aesthetic gaze. "He is looking for explanations in terms of some ultimate Goodness which forms everything, including us, and draws us to it by means of spiritual knowledge and desire. We must consider not the things which Anaxagoras and the scientists speak of, but the real, ultimate causes of Beauty, Goodness, Magnitude, and so on, which the good and beautiful things and the quantities of things on earth participate in and reflect" (O'Hear 2007: 108).

To see "goodness" and "beauty" one needs the iconic gaze of wisdom: what really counts in life and why is life valuable, even the penis of a male?

My basic assumption is: Life in itself is iconic –the whole of life, every aspect of our being human (including the genitals) is sacred and 'spiritual' and can be viewed as a piece of art. To live is to detect the artistic fibre of the whole of creation.

Actually, creation from the Latin *creare,* is an artistic endeavour and refers to the artistic challenge to rename the whole of creation; to discover or to decode its significance. At stake in the Genesis narrative, more than the factuality or 'history' of creation, is the fact that God created against the nothingness of darkness and chaos, some-"thing", namely life as it emanates from the living God. Over against the harshness and anxiety of darkness, life becomes beautiful, framed by covenantal grace. Creation is fundamentally about theological aesthetics: the value and beauty of life.

Life in its iconic form is an illustration of beauty. More fundamental than the quest for ethics, the moral discernment between right and wrong, are the quest for aesthetics, the recognition and awareness of *shalom* and beauty. To detect morality, one must first discover aesthetics.

Responsible decision-making is determined by iconic seeing[6]. Icons make morals transparent and norms hopeful suggestions for the transformation and healing of life.

An iconic view anticipates something new; it instils hope; it beautifies life; it inspires creative thinking; it encourages faithful vision[7]; it sanctifies corporeality; it fuels artistic imagination; it even criticizes and unmasks the immorality of destructive behaviour and deceitful intentions.

THE HUMAN BEING AS *HOMO AESTHETICUS*: THE TRUTH AND BEAUTY[8] OF THE ZUMA PAINTING

"Man is *homo festivus* and *fantasia homo"* (Cox 1969: 11). With reference to an iconic view one can add: man is essentially a *homo aestheticus*. The human being as *homo aestheticus* refers to visionary anticipation and artistic appreciation within the quest for meaning and the creative attempt to signify and decode the markings or signs of life (Eco 2004). Signs can be called the semiotics of the arts[9] (Hess-Lüttich, Rellstab 2010: 247); signs signify 'something". Whether the something is a concrete object or the product of impression or imagination, a piece of art refers in one way or another to an "idea" as related to context, form and content (Belton et al 2006: 11-13).

In 1992 Ellen Dissanyake wrote a book with the title: *Homo Aestheticus: Where Art comes from and Why.* Her basic assumption was that art can be regarded as a natural general proclivity that manifests itself in culturally learned specifics such as dances, songs, performances, visual display and poetic speech. Art makes life special because art making involves taking something out of its everyday and ordinary use context and making it somehow special – the ordinary becomes extraordinary.

Matzker Reiner (2008) relates aesthetics[10] to the act of mediation within the tension

---

6 In his book *Seeing Things,* Stephen Pattison sums up the predicament of people living in an age of what might be characterized as 'visual overload' or hyper-visuality: "we have so much, but see so little" (Pattison 2007: 1). We are living in a visual culture overloaded by images. Images rain upon us in all spheres of life. "With the extension of sight by microscopic, telescopic, electronic, digital and other means symbolized by instruments such as electron microscopes, scanners, cameras and photographs, we are all too aware of living in a world structures round sight and the visual" (Pattison 2007: 3).

Visioning within the critical rationalism and positivism of Western thinking has become arrogant. Pattison refers to this arrogance as the 'scopic regime of the arrogant eye' (2007: 19). In contemporary society there is a kind of 'ordinary blindness' that ignores the realm of vision. Sometimes we see, but we don't 'see' in seeing the unseen. For this kind of seeing, human beings should develop a more intimate relationship with images and artefacts.

7 On his definition of faith (seeing the invisible) Martin Luther once commented as follows: the characteristics of faith are to see what nobody sees, and not to see what everybody sees (Laubach 1967:241).

8 According to Thomas Aquinas integrity (*integritas*), harmony (*consonanta*) and clarity (*claritas*) can be described as the principles of beauty. They can also be interpreted as wholeness, proportion and luminosity (Skawran 2012: 3). The poetic question and the quest for beauty kindles quest for congruency between viewer and an object. Within this dynamics, aesthetics can be described as the attempt to move images and objects into the realm of imagination (Botha 2012: 5).

9 In the book *Wie Kunst die Welt erschuf Nigel* Spivey (2006: 14) asserts that art is not merely the ability to craft (*Handwerkliches Können*); not merely the endeavour to beautify. Art emerges from the dynamics between human's creative ability and imagination/fantasy. The explosion of creativity in art is a mode of signifying life (Spivey 2006: 24).

10 According to Jochen Schulte-Susse (2010: 758-778) aesthetics should be linked to theory on perspective (perspectivism). The theory of perspective is about the question how to resemble a three dimensional object on a two dimensional surface, or how to represent a three dimensional object via a material form

between subject (impression and interpretation) and object or the implicit idea as related to an object or something perceived and observed. To mediate is always a sign for something (2008:10). Mediation operates within the connections between form (*eidos;* essence, meaning) and matter (*hýle,* ontic dimension). The projection of what is observed and seen implies in the act of mediation and representation virtuosity: skill, competence and know-how; i.e. artistic proficiency.

The mediatory function of a medium is to communicate, to inform, to disclose, and to make something knowable. Aesthetics becomes an instrument (medium), an image[11] (means) about some-*thing* (content). It transcends its own limitations in the direction of signification. In this regard aesthetics symbolizes (from the Greek *symbálein* = to link to halves) and refers to meaning. (Matzker 2008:10). Aesthetics then expands the interpretation horizon of human beings; it creates a grammar of mediation. For Plato the mediation points in the direction of a copy of a kind of original image or existing idea. For Aristotle the mediation is in itself a process of signifying in the sense that it functions as a memory (*Anamnese*) to reality (Matzker 2008:11-12).

The Greek Polyclitus and the school of the Pythagoreans (In Hess-Lüttich, Rellstab 2010: 247) called a piece of art the attempt to express perfect interrelatedness of different components to one another; it wants to explain how the different parts are related to the whole. Art is therefore involved in the human attempt to express a kind of order (relationship) (truth) despite the chaotic appearances of threatening phenomena.

Art is a kind of *aletheia* (truth); literally to take off the lit from the steam cooker, to look deeper into the cooking pot. Truth indicates a kind of revelation – to peep deeper into the unseen. Truth decompresses and unmasks life; it saves life from artificiality (kitsch); it frees human beings from sloth. Truth brings about integrity and understanding; it is kind of existential understanding – an aesthetic hermeneutics even if the truth is 'ugly'.

With reference to the attempt in an aesthetic hermeneutics to deal with truth and to signify life, one can categorize the Brett Murray painting as an aesthetic event of truth. The painting is therefore 'beautiful'. It is actually an attempt to "free" manhood from the violent and ugly abuse of power in order to signify life and to depict the male body within the framework of aesthetics[12].

From the viewpoint of political power and the ANC organization, the depiction is immoral and vulgar. It should be removed and forbidden. It is an attack on the status of presidency. On the other hand, from the perspective of aesthetics, the painting unmasks immoral behaviour and is an endeavour to heal life and to free people from the abuse of power and violence. It is not vulgar, but "beautiful".

In his *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon,* Picasso reveals a kind of barbaric destructiveness that

---

or sculpture so that the representation and image of the object, the idea within the object, corresponds with the proportions of the immediacy of the act of seeing, feeling and experiencing. In terms of Jacob Boehm's theory on aesthetics, aesthetics links with the intention and value assessment of the subject in relationship with the viewed or observed object.

11 One can even say: imaging is an existential ingredient of life. It seems that at our center there is a "will to image"; an urge for creative imagination "that explains the apparent universality of art-making – of sensory and sensual creativity – in human history" (Stone 2003: 5). It is as if in an Augustine's sense, life is sacramental. To live is to create a work of art to the degree that it makes visible the invisible – "the unseeable and yet sensed, the unknowable and yet longed for: the mystery" (Stone 2003: 9).

Pablo Picasso once said: "God is nothing else than an artist. He imaged the giraffe, an elephant and the cat. Actually God does not have a style; He always invents something new" (Picasso 1988: 75; my translation).

12 According to Picasso: "The painter takes whatever it is and destroys it. At the same time he gives it another life" (In: Huffington 1988: 118).

horrified his friends and the art society: "…five horrifying women, prostitutes who repel rather than attract and whose faces are primitive masks that challenge not only society but humanity" (Huffington 1988: 93). Huffington therefore concludes that while Matisse pursued serenity in life, Picasso was a seismograph for the conflicts, turmoil, doubts and anxieties of his age. He was driven by all-consuming urge to challenge, to shock, to destroy and remake the world (Huffington 1988: 85)[13].

The beauty therefore of Brett Murray's painting resides in the fact that it reveals and makes apparent; even the ugliness of our being human. It puts the notion of manhood and the iconic value of the male genitals in the spotlight of a public debate with the question: What is the significance of a penis within the framework of human embodiment and the dynamics of human relationships? Should it destroy or should it display faithful intimacy? The fact is that besides his polygamous marriage (which is not the crucial issue in the discourse) children were procreated out of wedlock.

The painting actually deals with what can call an *aesthetic truth.* In the formation of the object (*Gestaltung*), the correlation between image (idea) and essence (*eidos*) (the transcendent *telos*) creates a kind of aesthetic truth (A. G Baumgarten in Matzker 2008: 44-45). Aesthetic truth is then a kind of authenticity and integrity in opposition to falseness and artificiality (*Kitsch*).

As an icon of human wholeness the painting opposes falseness and embodied *'Kitsch'*. In terms of an iconic view the depiction of the genitals within the framework of a clothed body, penetrates the realm of the whole of our being human. As an icon it points in the direction of the 'soulfulness of life'; it addresses the spiritual question whether the genitals are 'dirty', 'vulgar' and 'private', or 'beautiful', 'sacred' and 'public'.

TOWARDS THE AESTHETICS OF MANHOOD: THE MALE PENIS AS AN *EIKON* AND ANCHOR OF COMPASSIONATE INTIMACY

In Western Christian doctrine we have placed an enormous emphasis on justification and the notion of human beings as sinners. We have also placed an enormous emphasis on a human being as worker (Luther and Marx) and a human being as thinker (Aquinas, Descartes and orthodox doctrine). We sanctified the mind as the faculty of soulfulness excluded and deprived of any form of embodiment. Our celebrative and imaginative faculties have atrophied (Cox 1969: 11). One can even add: our aesthetic and imaginative faculties have mummified under the pressure of the sinfulness of embodiment. The body is dirty and the soul is pure.

The portrayal of the divine in terms of a human figure was therefore always a disputable issue. Michelangelo made a kind of "breakthrough" in the sense that he viewed the perfect human figure as a representation of God (divine embodiment) or Christ not as a "graven image" to be worshipped (idolatry) but as a depiction of the beauty of God (God's love) as reflected in the essence of the human soul. At the same time, the movement and proportions of the human body are always framed by torment and suffering.

---

13 In an interview in *Die Burger* (La Vita 2012: 13) the South African sculptor Dylan Lewis referred to this intra-psychic transcendence as an "inner wilderness". This inner wilderness is for him the human psyche in its wild freedom as exposed to the dark shadow side of our human existence. It refers to the inner quest for integration and self-acceptance. In his art he is challenged by that inner urge to destroy, the fear for evil and the attempt to transcend the wild inner shadows by artistic creativity. In a recent piece of sculpture ('Rooiplein' Matieland, Stellenbosch) with the title Male Trans-Figure I and II, the naked male image with an animal mask, points to the shadow side of being male. The mask functions as kind of image to fuel a confrontation with the inner reality of dark wilderness. The image of an animal mask helps him to reveal both an inner as well as an outer awareness of destruction. At the same time it reveals one's inner truth and becomes a vehicle to tame the inner self, the polarity between the wild animal and the dignified human being.

The meaning of the Last Judgment resides not in the naked bodies but "the shop wreck of entire tormented and suffering humanity…anxiously awaiting the fulfilment of the promise that in the presence of Christ the Judge and Redeemer the righteous will rise from the dead at the end of time" (Vecchi in: Paris 2009: 175).

From Socrates Michelangelo learned that the purpose of painting was to present the human soul, the life of human souls, as an expression of the very internal being of humans. According to Néret (2006: 32) Michelangelo was only interested in the people he painted due to the fact that perfect bodies were the carriers and containers of the idea of eternity.

K Schoeman in his book on Michelangelo Buonarroti (2009:555) refers to the fact that in his reflection on life and its purpose, it was all about the attempt how to bridge the gap between God and human beings by means of the aesthetics of beauty, the expression of love and the imaging of art. The beauty of the cosmic body within its imperfect earthly realm as well as the attempt to depict it in painting and sculpturing serve as a vehicle to glorify God.

For Michelangelo imaging in art is iconic because it is helping him to approach the perfect beauty of God (Schoeman 2009: 559). To capture human embodiment, to *see* a naked human body, is to capture the ensoulment of life and to see the aesthetics of God.

The naked human body: pornographic striptease or aesthetic embodiment of the human soul?
If one renders the human body as an icon of the human soul, the portrayal of the naked human body should be deprived from its association with pornography and promiscuity. Within an iconography of the human soul, nakedness reflects harmony and interconnectedness. Two breasts for a woman and one penis for a male depict perfect form and symmetry.

Within Greek art the naked human body and its perfect symmetry equals beauty and should be assessed as a piece of art. Spivey (2006: 75) refers to the canonization of human embodiment in art by Polyclitus. For Polykleitos the human body is from an aesthetic point of view perfect due to the tension between symmetry, balance and harmony. Within a poetic gaze the naked human body therefore reflects dynamics, balance and harmony not pornography.

Pornography is derived from two Greek words, *pornay* and *graphay* (Melton *et al.* 1989:68). *Pornay* is derived from *peraymi* which means "to sell," usually in reference to a slave or prostitute for hire. *Graphay* refers to that which is written, inscribed, or pictured. "Pornography" then literally means to picture or describe prostitutes, with the connotation of an unequal slave/master relationship.

Pornography is therefore not nakedness as such (see the statute of David by Michelangelo and the paintings in the Sistine Chapel), or explicit sexual pictures or portrayals of sexual acts, or erotic material, stimulating sexual excitement. The criterion cannot be sexual excitement or fantasy, because then any stimulation or visual impression related to sexual connotations and to sex will fall under the category of pornography.

Pornography refers very specifically to *sexual exploitation and the dehumanisation of sex* so that human beings are treated as things or commodities (Court 1990:929). Pornography points in the direction of the depiction or the description of the unequal misuse of power and violent sexuality (physical and psychological violence against others and oneself) promoting promiscuity. The genitals then become playful tools (the instrumentalisation of physiology) not intimate icons representing .

Brett Murray: not 'trouser painter' but 'soul painter'?
During Pius V's pontificate, the Congregation of the Council of Trent decided, on January 11th, 1564, to have the private parts cover. The most pornographic decision in the history of Christian

spirituality! Pope Paul IV therefore summoned the House of Carafa Daniele da Volterra to cover the genitals. The artist who did the covering was given the name "Braghettone" meaning "trouser painter"(Néret 2006:78).

The notion that embodied beauty as a soulful representation and image of the beauty of God should be rendered as a "postmodern step" to move from a dualistic anthropology, with its off spin the degradation of the naked human body to the realm of promiscuity and pornography, to an integral anthropology with its off spin the aesthetics of the naked human body.

The notion that the beauty of human corporality embodies the aesthetics of the human soul (Néret 2006:16); the human body as the anatomy of the human soul, should be rendered as a deconstruction of the pagan thinking in Christian anthropology that physicality and corporality is less spiritual and from a lower order than the transcendent position of an "immortal soul".

The advantage of the Michelangelonian transformation is the paradigm shift from the hedonistic perspective of promiscuity to the aesthetic perspective of beauty; from the performance of sexuality to the enjoyment of sexuality; from phallus to *eikon.* In fact the human body and the genitals are not designed to destroy and to ruin, but to heal and to beautify.

Manhood: fascinated by phallus[14]

Bordo (1999: 43) refers to the link between the phallic god Fascinus, worshipped by the Romans, and the *fascinum* attached to the worship of the phallus as a magical being. Phallus is the penis that takes one's breath away because of its majesty; projecting generic male superiority, the phallus is an idea and not merely a body part.

Phallus is related to male affirmation and libido. Monick(19987:9) sees in the phallic symbol[15] of the erect penis the archetypal masculinity and the fundamental mark of maleness; it represents subjective authority and powerful penetration. The penis is the source of a man's greatest vulnerability as well as his greatest feeling of power (Horrocks 1994: 16-20).

Within the culture of patriarchy the phallus[16] has been used as synecdoche for the whole representation of manhood. It could indeed be argued that the contemporary fascination with the male body has become phallic again. Derived from the Latin, *fascinum,* a phallic-shaped amulet, the emphasis is on control and youth. Phallicism indicates the bigness of the body and reduces manhood and masculinity to the area of the genitals.

The phallic symbol[17] is closely connected to procreation, (fertility) and erection. The display of the phallus leads in our culture to the consumerism of male sexuality (Kibby et al 2004: 214 227). The possession and display of a large penis has become a sign of masculinity in good working order. It leads to phallus mastery, as the concentration on the erect penis projects an image of the male body as a hard body. This image is reinforced by Viagra as the potency pill that works like a magic bullet as it can produce rampant erections. Masculinity becomes the erect male organ and is therefore connected to the impulse to control

---

14 At stake is the question whether the HIV & AIDS pandemic, with the emphasis on circumcision and condomising, is not reintroducing the powerful image of the erect male organ now in the disguise of a rubberised tool?

15 The phallic is the totalizing/singularizing, that-which-can-dominate, oversee; the male gaze is that of the possessor. W. G. Doty (1996: p. 299).

16 "The phallus, the prized male erection, is taken as the quintessential symbol of manliness and the idealized phallus is big, hard, and up." J. B. Nelson (1996: p. 315). Humans have also emphasised those qualities in the divine. God, too, must be "big, hard, and up": sovereign in power, righteous in judgment, and transcendent.

17 In religion the phallic symbol played an important part in cultic worship. Eilberg Schwartz (1994: p. 41. Schwartz refers to the Greek gods Poseidon, Apollo and Zeus, who were frequently sculpted in Greek art with their penises fully displayed. The divine phallus is also evident in ancient Near Eastern mythology.

Bordo (1999: 32-44) argues that in our culture the penis has come out of closet. Underwear advertisements exploit the impact of the phallic mythology of *Superman Masculinity* as a vital image in our culture: the cultural equation of penis = male; the "proud member" and "throbbing manhood". Non-erect, the penis suggests vulnerability and fragility. Viagra-erection projects male vitality, virility and potency.

This urge is symbolised by the connectedness between the male organ (penis)[18] and its function: penetration. The other is then the object to be penetrated and to be conquered. The act of penetration is closely related to an approach to persuade and to overwhelm. In this regard masculinity is linked to a hormonal state and the levels of testosterone in males. Some researchers link this approach to a tendency in males to be more aggressive than females.

Masculinity became narcissistic and self-referential. In the church this image is enforced by a God-image that is predominantly male and all-powerful.

Related to power and impression is the so-called macho male. It refers to strength, virility, masculinity and sex appeal (Mirandé 20046: 29).

The macho traits can either be positive (brave, courageous, altruistic, protective, androgynous) or negative (bravado, selfish, pretentious, boastful, abusive, chauvinistic).

Threat power is also closely related to patriarchy[19] and the cultural traditions of tribalism. Within the gender debate the paradigm of patriarchy[20] is related to a hierarchical understanding of human value and identity.

Male sexuality becomes the technique of "seizure". In the quest for performance, the body image plays a fundamental role. The media and cinema have reinforced this image. Through Hollywood the action film has played an enormous role in linking masculinity and sexuality to performance. For example, Stallone and Schwarzenegger, the muscular stars of the 1980s, projected the notion of manhood as "performing the masculine" (Tasker1993: 230-244).

The muscular male body (the Rambo image) functions as a powerful symbol of desire, "heroism as a costume" (Tasker1993: 242). The male body becomes a tissue with well-developed muscles. In this regard the media play a decisive role: "We are beginning to see human life as a lump of protein" (Panghorn 1985: 214).

The danger in these male gender symbols is their potential for engendering violence. The effect of the symbols on male sexual behaviour is that they feed aggressive behaviour, often expressed in violent actions. For example, in the case of rape and sexual abuse male dominance plays a decisive role. The alarming statement has even been made that the "male sex" requires injustice in order to exist.[21] Masculinity becomes roughness and toughness[22].

---

18 It is Haldeman's contention that touching of the penis and masturbation can, at least, serve to put men back in touch with themselves. The renewal of a man's relationship with his body is related to, and a part of a man's image of his sexuality. Men think of their penis as the definitive sign of their identity as men. S. Haldeman (1996: 111-115).

19 Nyokabi Kamau makes the important remark: patriarchy is ever-present. Every aspect of life is governed by deeply rooted patriarchal power structures and practices that express the strong entrenchment of male superiority and domination over women. N. Kamau (2009:. Vii).

20 It is the contention of many researchers on gender issues and on counselling males that caregivers should be able to understand the dynamics of patriarchy and its contradictory messages for men's lives and be able to help men sort out what is true and faithful for their lives in community. C. C. Neuger, J. N. Poling (Nashville: Abingdon (1997:. 32-45).

21 See in this regard L. Du Toit, (2003: 36-67). It is clear that rape refers to irresponsible male behaviour. It includes torture. "I came to the conclusion that rape is first and foremost an assertion of power through an act of supreme humiliation" (p.36). Rape is sexual terrorism (p. 49).

22 It is therefore quite understandable that Du Toit, *Rape Understood as Torture: What is the Responsibility of Men?* (2003: 64) concludes that men must refuse to be men in as far as the popular conception of

The previous exposition of how maleness is portrayed in the media and our culture of playboy and playgirl, should be viewed as the paradigmatic background for the aesthetic hermeneutics of the Zuma painting. If the painting addresses the naïve toughness of powerful playboys, the spiritual question, emanating from an iconic and poetic view of life, is: How can a Christian spiritual perspective on manhood contribute to a possible paradigm change from the instrumentalisation of the genitals to a possible sanctification of the genitals?

Aesthetic masculinity as embodied intimacy: the sanctification of the male genitals

From the perspective of a Christian spiritual approach the challenge put by the crisis of male identity and the Murray painting is the question whether the male body can become "ensouled embodiment"? Ensoulment is an attempt to integrate the spiritual dimension of our being human (Dalbey 1988) with our being in the flesh (*sarx*) and the physical reality of human embodiment (*sōma*).

Dunn (1998: 56) suggests that a better word in English for *soma* (body) is the alternative term "embodiment". In this sense *sōma* is a relational concept. It is integrated with psyche. According to Dunn (1998: 77) both terms (*psyche/nephesh and pneuma/ruach*) express an original identification of "breath" as life force which cannot be separated from embodiment. Together with *sarx* (which refers to our vulnerability/weakness and belonging to the world) and *sōma* (which denotes a concrete being in the world), *psyche* denotes the spiritual totality of our being human within the dynamics of relationships. The human body is actually a religious phenomenon; a sanctuary to display the vivid presence of God within relationships.

Within a Christian spirituality of embodiment, is it possible to embrace eros?[23] Can theology accommodate and even assimilate *eros*[24] – the dimension of sexual need, desire, passion and sensuality – and therefore translate bodyism into spiritual corporeality[25]?

Theopaschitic theology and the paradigmatic shift towards compassionate intimacy

It is my contention that *compassionate intimacy* can help the gender discourse to find the solution for the "healing" of the paradigmatic issue of masculinity not only on the level of *ethics* (gender equality, human dignity, human rights, ego integrity and authenticity), but also on the level of *aesthetics:* the beauty of embodiment and genital, erotic sensuality due to the fact that the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit: *pneumatological inhabitation.* In this regard the human genitals become sacred instruments of life. They are symbols of hope and, as 'anchors' of the human soul, spiritual instruments to establish human dignity. Within an iconic and poetic gaze they are not perverse instruments designed for promiscuity.

Compassionate intimacy implies a paradigm shift in theology. The switch is from categories in theology that emphasize the power of God in terms of 'threat power', to categories that portray God not in Ceasar-like imperialistic paradigms, but in theopaschitic categories of compassion

---

masculinity views this as enforcing one's will against opposition.

23 According to J. B. Nelson, (1996:.311-31), "real men" prize sex, but find *eros* foreign.

24 Nelson's plea is for an erotic transformation of men's bodies (1996: 313 -314). Men's bodies are not fated to be controlling, violent, radically individualised, and preoccupied with phallic values, racist, armored, mechanistic, or disconnected from close male friendship. Men's bodies can, indeed, become more fulfilling and life giving to themselves and to others.

25 The popular film industry and cinema function as a kind of production of myth. J. Hermann (2002²: 93). Because of its simulation of reality, Hollywood functions as a dream factory (*Traumfabrik*) trying to capture and hijack the fantasies of men and women (pp. 132-133) in their search for a sense of being at home. In this regard the concreteness of the human body and the "religion of love" are introduced as vehicles and instruments to convey happiness and meaning. For example, in the film Pretty Woman love is introduced as a mean to an end, i.e. to save (to heal) a prostitute from decadence and loneliness.

and vulnerability. Males should therefore start to identify not with patriarchal and hierarchical God-images, but with passionate God-images. In this regard, God as a compassionate Partner for Life can play a decisive role in the shift from powerful manhood into compassionate manhood.

The value of theopaschitic thinking (the notion of a suffering, vulnerable, weak and passionate God in terms of a *theologia crucis*) for the praxis of God, is the following: it proposes a shift from the substantial approach in theological reflection to the relational and encounter paradigm (Berkhof 1979: 32-33). The switch is then from the attempt of orthodoxy to uphold ecclesial triumphantilism (Hall 1993:100-101) and a theology of glory (*theologia gloriae*) and omnipotence (powerful force)[26], to a *theologia crucis*[27] of weakness, suffering and passion.

It is my contention that the *passio dei* is an exposition of the praxis concept of *ta splanchna.* The latter is related to the Hebrew root *rhm,* to have compassion. It is used in close connection to the root *hnn,* which means to be gracious. Together with *oiktirmos* and *hesed,* it expresses the being quality of God as connected to human vulnerability and suffering (H.-H. Esser 1976:598). The verb *splanchnizomai* is used to make the unbounded mercy of God visible; it displays a strange kind of divine Beauty. It describes a theological aesthetics. In a theological aesthetics, beauty should therefore be connected to the pathos of the crucifixion. "This em-*pathos,* mediated by their own distinct accounts through the beauty of the crucifix, in turn becomes, second, sym-pathos – a plea for divine sympathy with their own suffering" (Garcia-Rivera 2008: 177).

Ta splanchna[28] reveals God as a Presence, "a Companion, '*your* God' " (Hall 1993:147). In praxis-thinking it is not the task of the church to demonstrate that God must *be*, but to bear witness to God's being-there, being-with, and being- for the creature. In terms of D Hall (1993:155) the test of the church's God-talk at any point in time is it contextual authenticity, its praxis-thinking: does it illuminate God's being-with-us? We can add: does it portray God's being-with-us as *ta splanchna*[29]?

Splanchnizomai reveals the very character of God within the messianic involvement and engagement with human suffering. The theology of the entrails[30] reflects God's being quality, and can be called the ontology of God's beauty in suffering.

---

26 See in this regard the remark of Hall (1993:108): "Powerful people demand powerful deities – and get them!"; "Power – and precisely power understood in the usual sense – is of the essence of divinity shaped by empire" (1993:107).

27 "Greek epistemology could not take account of the surprise needed to recognize God on the cross …It did not envision suffering as a source of knowledge". Jon Sobrino in Hall 1993: note 8, p105.

28 It is interesting to note the cases where Christ responded to human suffering with the contraction of the entrails, expressing messianic compassion. For example the leper with his petition (Mk.1:41), the people like sheep without a shepherd (Mk. 6:34); Matt.9:36: the sight of the harassed and exhausted crowd; Matt. 20:34: two blind men who besought him; Lk. 7:13: the widow at Nain mourning her only son. In Lk. 15:11-32, the prodigal son, *splanchnizomai* expresses the strongest feeling of a merciful and loving reaction (verse 20). In the parable of the good Samaritan (Lk. 10:33) *splanchnizomai* expresses the attitude of complete willingness to use all means, time, strength, and life, for saving at the crucial moment (Esser 1976: 600).

29 In general Greek *to splanchnon* refers to the valuable parts, the heart, lung, liver, but also the spleen and the kidneys. During the sacrifice they are removed for the sacrificial meal. With reference to human *splanchna* refers to the human entrails, especially for the male sexual organs and the womb, as the site of the powers of conception and birth. Within metaphoric speech *ta splanchna* expresses pity, compassion and love. "The oldest form of the verb is *splanchneuō,* eat the entrails, prophesy from the entrails" (H.-H. Esser 1976:599). Within the messianic context of Christ's salvific mission, *ta splanchna* expresses compassion as an indication of Gods divine involvement with the human predicament of suffering.

30 Noteworthy is the fact that within these texts *ta splanchna* is connected to illness and health; dying and mourning; loss and grief; violence and injustice; burnt out and hunger, estrangement and remorse.

CONCLUSION

Compassionate intimacy should embody God's beauty in suffering as vulnerable co-suffering. This image should enhance humane authenticity. It should display compassionate friendship as well as the ethics of unconditional love. It is an attempt to emphasise and introduce images of the wounded healer, companionship, trustful partnership, mediator, colleague, and nurturer to male identity in order to merge male sexuality and the phallic male organ with the promotion of theopaschitic intimacy: compassionate and sacrificial love and grace.

Ethics without aesthetics leads to fanaticism, legalism and moralism. Between the either or of "white" and "black", life becomes a nightmare of principles.

Aesthetics without ethics leads to chaos and anarchy. Between the either or of beauty and ugliness, life becomes a labyrinth of multiple choices and options: the confusion of everything goes.

The interplay between aesthetics and ethics open ups the splendid and colourful kaleidoscope of meaning, as well as the dazzling spectrum of opportunities. But then, in terms of the question of the art of life, the aesthetics of being, beauty is more fundamental than morality. It is more fundamental not in terms of priority, but in terms of significance: the heuristic and artistic endeavour to decode and to detect the "design" of signs. Thus the significance of spiritual art and the importance of an iconic view on life.

Christian spirituality needs the artistic gaze of iconic viewing. As said: art makes life special because art making involves taking something out of its everyday and ordinary use context and making it somehow special – the ordinary becomes extraordinary. This is what the Brett Murray painting is doing.

An iconic view on the aesthetics of manhood should change the erotic gaze of 'The Spear' (thrusting penetration) eventually into the intimate gaze of 'The Anchor' (compassionate faithfulness). Manhood is then transformed from dominating 'thrust' into hopeful empowerment; it becomes an instrument for the fostering of human dignity (an anchor of hope) not for violent exploitation (a destructive spear).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Berkhof, H. 1979. *Christian Faith.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans
Bourdieu, P. 2001. *Masculine Domination.* Oxford: Polity.
Bordo, S. 1999. *The Male Body. A New Look at Men in Public and in Private.* New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux.
Botha, A. 2012. Beauty and Truth: An Aesthetic Appreciation of Paul Emsley's Art. In: A Botha, *Paul Emsley. US Woordfees/Wordfest Artist 2012. Retrospective Exhibition.* Stellenbosch: Sasol Art Gallery, pp. 5-9.
Carrigan, T *et al*. 2004. Toward a new Sociology of Masculinity. In: P. F. Murphy (ed.*) Feminism and Masculinities.* Oxford: University Press, 151-165.
Clare, A. 2000. *On Men: Masculinity in Crisis.* London: Chatto & Windus.
Court, J H. 1990. Pornography. In: R J Hunter (ed), *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling.* Nashville: Abingdon, 929-930.
Cox, H. *The Feast of Fools. A Theological Essay on Festivity and Fantasy.* New York: Harper & Row Publishers.
Dalbey,G.1988. *Healing the Masculine Soul.* Dallas/London: Ward Publising.
De Roest, H. 1998. *Communicative Identity. Habermas' Perspectives of Discourse as a Support for Practical Theology.* Kampen: Kok.
Dissanayake, E. 1992. *Homo Aestheticus: Where Art comes from and Why.* New York: Free Press.
Doty, W G. 1996. Baring the flesh: Aspects of Contemporary Male Iconography. In: B Krondorfer (ed.), *Men's Bodies, Men's Gods. Male Identities in a (Post-)Christian Culture.* New York/London: New York University Press, 267-308.

Driver, T F. 1996. Growing up Christian and Male. In: B Krondorfer (ed), *Men's Bodies, Men's Gods. Male Identities in a (Post-)Christian Culture.* New York/London: New York University Press, 43-65.

Du Toit, L. 2003. Rape Understood as Torture: What is the Responsibility of Men? In: E Conradie and L Clowes (Eds) *Rape. Rethinking male Responsibility.* Stellenbosch: EFSA, 36-67.

Dunn, D.G. 1998. *The Theology of Paul the Apostle.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Dworkin, S L. *et al.* 2004[6]. The Morality/Manhood Paradox: Masculinity, Sport, and the Media. In: M S Kimmel *et al.* (Eds), *Men's Lives.* Boston: Pearson: 507-521.

Eco, U. 2004. *On Beauty.* London: Secker & Warburg.

Edley, N. M. Wetherall, 1995. *Men in Perspective. Practice, Power and Identity.* London/New York: Prentice Hall.

Essop, P. 2012. Kunsskandaal. Woede oor roede kring uit. *Die Burger,* p.2.

Esser, H.-H. 1976. ioktirmos. In: C. Brown (ed.), *Dictionary of New Testament Theology.* Vol. 2. Exeter: Paternoster Press, p.598.

Esser, H.-H. 1976. Splanchna. In: C. Brown (ed.), *Dictionary of New Testament Theology.* Vol. 2. Exeter: Paternoster Press, pp.599-601.

Garcia-Rivera, A. 2008. On a New List of Aesthetics Categories. In: O. V. Bycgov, J. Fodor (eds.), *Theological Aesthetics after von Balthasar.* Aldershot: Ashgate, pp.169-183.

Haldeman, S. 1996. Briniging Good News to the body. Masturbation and Male Identity. In: B Krondorfer (ed), *Men's Bodies, Men's Gods. Male Identities in a (Post-)Christian Culture.* New York/London: New York University Press, 111-115.

Hall, D. 1993. *Professing the Faith. Christian Theology in a North American Context.* Minneapolis: Fortress Press.

Hess-Lüttich, W. B., D. Rellstab. 2010. Zeichen/Semiotik der Künste. In: Karlheinz Barck et al, *Äesthetische Grundbegriffe.* Band 7. Stuttgart/Weimar: Verlag J. B. Metzler, pp. 247-283.

Hermann, J. 2002[2]. *Sinnmachine Kino. Sinndeutung und Religion im populären Film.* Gütersloh: Chr. Kaiser/ Gütersloher Verlagshaus.

Horrocks, R. 1994. *Masculinity in Crisis. Myths, Fantasies and Realities.* New York: St Martin's Press.

Huffinton, A. S. 1988. *Picasso. Creator and Destroyer.* New York: Simon and Schuster.

Huyghe, R. 1981. Art Forms and Society. In: R Huyge (ed.) *Larousse Encyclopedia of Byzantine and Medieval Art. Art and Mankind.* London: Hamlyn.

Kamau,N. 2009. *AIDS, Sexuality, and Gender. Experiences of Women in Kenyan Universities.* Eldoret: Zapf Chancery.

Kibby, M *et al.* 2004. Displaying the Phallus: Masculinity and the Performance of Sexuality on the Internet. . In: P. F. Murphy (Ed). *Feminism and Masculinities.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 214-227.

Kimmel, M. S. 2004. Masculinity as Homophobia: Fear, Shame, and Silence in the Construction of Gender Identity. In: P. F. Murphy (Ed) *Feminism and Masculinities.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 182-199.

Krondorfer, B. 1996. Introduction. In: B Krondorfer (Ed), *Men's Bodies, Men's Gods. Male Identities in a (Post-)Christian Culture.* New York/London: New York University Press, 3-27.

La Vita, M. 2012. Die donker in ons almal. In: *Die Burger,* 20 April, p.13.

Laubach, F. 1967. *Der Brief an die Hebräer.* Wuppertal: Brockhaus Verlag.

Mirandé, A. 2004[6]. "Macho": Contemporary Conceptions. In: M S Kimmel *et al. Men's Lives.* Boston: Pearson, 28-39.

Mirsky, S. 1996. The Arguments for the Elimination of Masculinity. In: B Krondorfer (ed), *Men's Bodies, Men's Gods. Male Identities in a (Post-)Christian Culture.* New York/London: New York University Press, 27-43.

Monick, E. 1987. *Phallos. Sacred Image of the Masculine.* Toronto: Inner City Books.

Mowrey, M E. 1996. The Accomodating Other: Masculinity and the Construction of Feminine Identity. In: B. Boyd *et al.* all editors? (Eds.) *Redeeming men. Religion and Masculinities.* Louisville: Westminister John Knox Press, 118-129.

Murphy, P. F. 2004. *Feminism and Masculinities.* Oxford: University Press.

Nelson, J B. 1996. Epilogue. In: B Krondorfer (ed), *Men's Bodies, Men's Gods. Male Identities in a (Post-)Christian Culture.* New York/London: New York University Press, 311-319.Neuger, C C and J N Poling. Gender and Theology. In: C C Neuger and J N Poling (eds.), *The Care of Men.* Nashville: Abingdon, 32-45.

O'Hear, A. 2007. *The Great Books. From the Iliad and the Odyssey to Goethe's Faust: a Journey through 2,500 Years of the West's Classic Literature.* Cambridge: Icon Books.

Matzker, R. 2008. *Ästhetik der Medialität. Zur Vermittlung von künstlerischen Welten und ästhetischen Theorien.* Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Tascenbuch Verlag.

Melton, J G *et al.* 1989. *The Churches speak on Pornography.* Detroit: Gale Research Inc.

Néret, G. 2006. *Michelangelo 1475 – 1564.* Hong Kong: Taschen.

Panghorn, K. 1985. Family Violence and Women's Lib. In: F Baumli (Ed*), Men Freeing Men. Exploding the Myth of the Traditional Male.* Jersey City: New Atlantis Press, 213-215.

Pattison, S. 2007. *Seeing Things. Deepening Relations with Visual Artefacts.* London: SCM Press.

Paris, Y. 2009. *Michelangelo 1475-1564.* translated buy Sophie Leighton. Bath: Parragon.

Picasso, P. 1988. *Picasso. Über Kunst. Aus Gesprächen zwischen Picasso und seinen Freunden.* Ausgewählt von Daniel Keel. Mit sieben Zeichnungen des Meisters. Zürich: Diogenes Verlag AG Zürich.

Poling, J. N. *Understanding Male Violence. Pastoral Care Issues.* St. Louis: Chalice Press.

Schwartz, E. 1994. *God's Phallus and other Problems for Men and Monotheism.* Boston: Beacon.

Schoeman, K. 2009. *Titaan. Roman oor die lewe van Michelangelo Buonarroti.* Kaapstad: Human & Rousseau.

Schulte-Susse, J. 2010. *Perspektive/Perspektivismus.* In: Karlheinz Barck et al, *Ästhetische Grundbegriffe.* Band 7. Stuttgart/Weimar: Verlag J. B. Metzler, pp. 758-778.

Skwaran, K. M. 2012. Integritas, Consonanta e Claritas. Reflections on Selected Sculptures and "Drawings with Colour". In: *Willem Strydom.* Stellenbosch: Rupert Museum, pp.3-15.

Sommer, R. L. 1988. *Picasso.* London: Bison Books.

Stemmelet, M L. 1996. Empowerment: The Construction of Gay religious Identities. In: B Krondorfer (ed), *Men's Bodies, Men's Gods. Male Identities in a (Post-)Christian Culture.* New York/London: New York University Press, 94-107.

Stone,K. 2003. *Image and Spirit. Finding Meaning in Visual Art.* Minneapolis: Augsburg Books.

Tasker, T. 1993. Dumb Movies for dumb people. Masculinity, the Body, and the Voice in Contemporary Action Cinema. In: S Cohan and I R Hark (Eds.), *Screening the Male. Exploiting Masculinities in Hollywood Cinema.* London: Routledge, 230-244.

Van der Ven, J A. 2002. An Empirical or Normative Approach to Practical-Theological Research. In: *Journal of Empirical Theology,* Volume 15.2, 5-33.

Van Rooyen, K. 2012. *Voëls van eenderse vere?* In By,26 Mei, p.5.

Prof Daniël Louw
Faculty of Theology
171 DorpStreet
Stellenbosch 7600
South Africa
djl@sun.ac.za

Macallan, Brian & Hendriks, H Jurgens
Stellenbosch University

A post-foundational Practical Theology? The pastoral cycle and local theology[1]

ABSTRACT

The article argues that Practical Theology has moved from the uncertainty of simply being applied theology to a point where its methodology, here described as the pastoral cycle, has gained such confidence, that it is seen as the natural way of doing theology. This shift in confidence occurred because the inherent theological and epistemological fault lines in foundationalism are no longer obscure. The article defines foundationalism but then concentrate on describing the local and glocal dimensions of the pastoral cycle as well as the importance of doing it in an interdisciplinary way.

1. INTRODUCTION

Practical Theology has been in flux as a discipline for some time. What characterises the discipline at the present time? How has the discipline changed in the last few decades? This paper seeks to address this question from the standpoint of whether Practical Theology has moved beyond foundationalist assumptions. It will be argued that it has. This can be seen by the fact that it affirms the pastoral cycle in terms of its overarching method. It is at the same time starting from and moving to practice. The article will focus on the pastoral cycle, while at the same time looking at the local dimension of Practical Theology as part of its "first movement" within the pastoral cycle. Before exploring this we must give a brief definition and understanding of foundationalism.

2. FOUNDATIONALISM[2]

---

1 The article is based on Macallan's doctoral dissertation (2012). Hendriks was promoter & Dr Ian Nell co-promoter.

2 Although foundationalism will be explored later it is important to bring clarity to how this term is distinguished from anti, non and post foundationalism, as scholars use the terms differently and interchangeably. It is also important to show the relationship between post-modernism and foundationalism. Anti-foundationalism (Baronov 2005:139-140) is the critique of foundationalist assumptions connected with modernism, that like some aspects of post-modernism, leans towards a relativistic outlook. Non-foundationalism (Thiel 1994:2) is also a critique of foundationalist modernist assumptions, yet is not relativistic as much as it is a statement of what is "not philosophically tenable". Post-foundationalism accepts many of the criticisms of anti and non-foundationalism, but seeks to move "creatively" forward to some form of resolution of these philosophical dilemma's (Van Huyssteen 1997:4). Post-modernism is not dissimilar to the various categories of foundationalism just mentioned. It can lean towards a relativisitic outlook or have more positive and constructive overtones. Foundationalism, with its history in the pragmatic philosophers of the late nineteenth and early 20th centuries, predates post-modernism (Thiel 1994:6-7). They are however linked by their critique of modern enlightenment foundationalism and its quest for "unimpeachable foundations of knowledge" (Schrag 1992:23).

In many ways, we are all foundationalists in our attempt to root our knowledge in something more basic, or on various other presuppositions. Grenz and Franke (2001:29) note:

> In its broadest sense, foundationalism is merely the acknowledgment of the seemingly obvious observation that not all beliefs we hold (or assertions we formulate) are on the same level, but that some beliefs (or assertions) anchor others. Stated in the opposite manner, certain of our beliefs (or assertions) receive their support from other beliefs (or assertions) that are more "basic" or "foundational."

However, the foundationalist agenda goes further than this and hopes to ground our knowing on a basis that can provide us with certainty and deliver us from error. This basis is regarded as universal and context free and is available to any rational person (Grenz & Franke 2001:30). This approach can be either deductive or inductive, from innate ideas or the sensory world. Rene Descartes is viewed by many as the "father" of foundationalism in his attempt to establish a sure foundation for knowledge in that he

> [C]laimed to have established the foundations of knowledge by appeal to the mind's own experience of certainty. On this basis he began to construct anew the human knowledge edifice. Descartes was convinced that this epistemological program yields knowledge that is certain, culture-and tradition-free, universal, and reflective of a reality that exists outside the mind (this latter being a central feature of a position known as "metaphysical realism" or simply "realism") (Grenz & Franke 2001:30).

Descartes is central to the story, not only because of his influence, but because non-foundational critics see his thought as paradigmatic of foundationalism (Thiel 1994:3). Descartes believed knowledge could be free from doubt and error with simple and known truths on which knowledge could be based (Kung 1978:7).

Others, like John Locke (1632-1704), argued that sense experience is the foundation of knowledge, which is also known as empiricism (Grenz & Franke 2001:32). Hume (1711-1776), also part of the British empiricist tradition, "argued that sense experience and not ideas provides a grounding for philosophical inquiry" (Thiel 1994:5).

The Enlightenment foundationalist agenda has shaped both conservative and liberal approaches to theology. Grenz and Franke (2001:32-35) have shown that both sought to build their reflections on the assumptions of the foundations of either religious experience or an inerrant bible. This quest for certainty, regardless of foundations, had the impact of Practical Theology simply becoming an applied theology of the other theological disciplines. Sure foundations, sure knowledge, context free application. Has Practical Theology moved on from these forms of applied theology derived from the foundationalist modernistic project? It is our argument that its embrace of the pastoral cycle and its turn to the local context has indeed shifted it beyond foundationalism.

3. THE PASTORAL CYCLE

The pastoral cycle has taken on wide importance within Practical Theology. Ballard and Pritchard (2006:82-83) comment as follows:

> "The pastoral cycle has become widely used in Practical Theology, and there are a number of variations on the theme .... Such widespread acceptance clearly suggests that

the pastoral cycle should be at the heart of any contemporary perspective on Practical Theology."

The pastoral cycle has many roots but, in contemporary Practical Theology, it certainly has found its impetus from the influence of liberation theology (Ballard & Pritchard 2006:82).

Graham et al. (2005) place the pastoral cycle's roots, developed by liberation theology, in the Young Christian Workers' "see-judge-act" method. It was also in the work of Juan-Luis Segundo's *The liberation of theology* (1976), informed by Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutics, that the pastoral cycle was popularized (2005:188).

We noted that Ballard and Pritchard feel that the pastoral cycle has a wide acceptance within Practical Theology. It is no wonder then that Don Browning (1991:7), who developed a critical correlational model, in fact adheres in many ways to this pastoral cycle. A quote from him perhaps best affords us a definition of what we mean by the pastoral cycle:

> "The view I propose goes from practice to theory and back to practice. Or more accurately, it goes from present theory-laden practice to a retrieval of normative theory-laden practice to the creation of more critically held theory-laden practices."

This pastoral cycle is not dissimilar to the theological reflection that James and Evelyn Whitehead propose in their book, Method in ministry: *Theological reflection and Christian ministry,* published in 1995. They propose a three-step process similar to the see-judge-act, or the practice-theory-action process for which the pastoral cycle argues. The process that they propose is one of attending, asserting, and then pastoral response (Whitehead & Whitehead 1995:13). One attends to a specific experience or practice that is then brought into dialogue with the Christian tradition and culture where an assertion is made, which in turn leads to a pastoral response. Here, the term "pastoral concern," taken from the Whiteheads, has been used when discussing the first part of the pastoral cycle. The term "pastoral action," similar to the Whitehead's term "pastoral response," but borrowed from De Kock, has also been used. De Kock has developed a form of theological reflection in what is known as "open seminary." Here, he essentially works with, adapts, and actually fleshes out, the Whiteheads' methodology. He chooses to call the term "pastoral response" or rather "pastoral action." This is done intentionally to show that the pastoral cycle must not end in a theoretical proposal for action, but must go beyond that and move to an intervention, or action (de Kock 2011:9).

Poling's (2009:199) description of Practical Theology demonstrates this pastoral cycle whereby he advocates a "rhythm between practice-based reflection and systematic theological reflection. Practices stimulate theological reflection, and theological reflection shapes the development of practices".

So, what does it mean to begin one's theological reflection with a pastoral concern? It means that certain local and global factors ought to be taken into account. It also affirms the importance of experience as a source for theological reflection, as well as the value of social analysis or research. Some of these aspects will be discussed in this paper.

4. THE LOCAL DIMENSION OF PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

Essential to understanding the local nature of theology is to admit from the outset that an applied Practical Theology, a theology from above that is trans-historical and simply downloaded onto a local situation, is indeed a thing of the past, a foundationalist past. For, as Hendriks (2004:27) notes, "If Christianity really wants to engage the hearts and minds of believers, it must seriously

regard the context that shapes their lives and in which their communities are rooted." By arguing for the starting point of theology in the local, we reject "theological debate which proceeds as if abstracted from the total situation in which reflection takes place" (Bonino 1975:86). By arguing for the local nature of theology, we agree with Segundo (1976:13) that there is no "autonomous, impartial, academic theology floating free above the realm of human options and biases." Theology does not begin in the academy, but in reality, – in the experiences of "individuals and communities" (Cochrane, de Gruchy & Peterson (1991:17). It resists a form of abstract theology (Kretzschmar 1994:4)

This means that theological reflection must begin with the "stuff" of people's lives.

The word "praxis" is controversial. Bevans (2002:72) sees praxis as "action in reflection" and defines it in the following manner:

> It is reflected-upon action and acted-upon reflection – both rolled into one. Practitioners of the praxis model believe that in this concept of praxis they have found a new and profound way that, more than all others, is able to deal adequately with the experience of the past (Scripture and tradition) and the experience of the present (human experience, culture, social location, and social change).

Bevans (2002:71) rejects an understanding of praxis that equates it simply with practice. He notes its roots in Marxism, the Frankfurt school and Paulo Freire. For Bevans, it is rather a method and model of thinking. It seems that others would agree (Hendriks 2004:22; W. de Kock 2011:9). De Kock views praxis as the interaction and tension between theory and practice where true knowledge lies. Kim (2007:421) has noted the roots of praxis in Aristotle's thinking, where theory and practice are intertwined, and where praxis referred to "a purposeful and reflective action initiated through engagement in social situations." Clodovis Boff (1987:213) also argues for a tension between theory and practice. In fact, he argues that even though they are to be differentiated, it is artificial when one tries to separate the two. Yet, it seems that despite Boff (1987:210) speaking of praxis as "human activity to transform the world" (which includes a theoretical dimension), he still uses praxis in a "practical sense" as the starting point for theological reflection. In the following quote, Boff (1987:215) argues for praxis as holding primacy as a starting point for theology:

> It must first of all be acknowledged that praxis holds the primacy over theory. This primacy is of an analytical, not an ethical, character. It is not to be understood as one of mechanical causality, but precisely of dialectical causality. It defines how the one factor is the prime, material condition for the existence of the other. Praxis is de facto the comprehensive element of theory; as such it constitutes the space where theory is localized and defined, the space where it arises, develops, and comes to completion.

Although affirming the importance of the local for theological reflection, Boff cautions against equating the local situation as truth. This would perhaps again fall prey to foundationalist assumptions. Practical effectiveness, or a pragmatism that rejects theoretical reflection, is rejected. For Boff (1987:202), the local practice of something does not assign a "moral qualification" to it. He argues that taking local practice into account at the expense of theory is to the detriment of praxis itself (1987:198).

Here, we are perhaps getting ahead of ourselves. The point that is attempted is that the starting point of the pastoral cycle must begin with the practice of real life. It cannot start by taking abstract ideas and seek to work them out in local realities. A post-foundationalist approach

to Practical Theology must emphasize these local realities, as knowledge is contextual and fluid. Muller (2009:5) describes it thus:

> The postfoundationalist approach forces us to firstly listen to the stories of people in real life situations. It hasn't got the aim of merely describing a general context, but of confronting us with a specific and concrete situation. This approach, although also hermeneutical in nature, moves beyond mere hermeneutics. It is more reflexive and situationally embedded in epistemology and methodology.

Practical Theology must begin its dialectical process by listening to the "emerging questions" (de Kock 2011:8; Cronshaw 2011:6) that arise out of the daily cultural realities of human beings and the church. It takes seriously the current issues of the day (Chopp 1995:115). Praxis "prepares the agenda, the repertory of questions, that theology is to address" (Boff 1987:200).

We have realised that by arguing for the local nature of theology, we argue for a contextual theology, as against an applied theology based on foundationalist assumptions. Bevans (1992:9) points out the importance of contextual theology today. He notes the dissatisfaction and suspicion of the Third World toward First World Theology, which has overpowered them and forced them to deal with realities irrelevant to their daily lives. Along with the growing identity of local churches, the oppressive nature of the older approaches that neglected and, in fact, attacked legitimate cultural expressions, has also been rejected (1992:10).

Bevans (1992:12) also reminds us of the theological underpinnings of a local theology in the idea of the incarnation, as well as the affirmation of the sacramental nature of theology (where all of life is seen as a locus of God's presence and activity). The nature of divine revelation as present in believers' daily lives (1992:14), the catholicity of the church in championing the local, and the triune God's active, present and dynamic role in day-to-day realities, are all affirmed as important (1992:15).

The importance of contextualisation for theology is worked out in the pastoral cycle. Segundo (1976:9) describes this as the hermeneutical circle that begins with experienced reality – a real context. When discussing contextualisation, Bosch (1991:425) also refers to this dialectical relationship between theory and practice that has its roots in praxis, or experience.

However, Bosch (1991:427-428) cautions contextual theologians about viewing God as totally wrapped up in the historical process. Further dangers involve uncritical celebration of a variety of often exclusive theologies, which can often lead to absolutism. When taking these concerns into account, one must not allow the contextual and local realties to determine the truth of theology. What we are affirming here though, is that a theology that is divorced from local realities remains irrelevant and subject to potential ideological captivity and foundationalist assumptions. To realise God's presence in history and to begin with local issues means that we can begin the process of dialogue from the correct starting point. However, for a theologian to be local, he or she must identify, participate and give voice to the experience of the local situation out of which his or her theology arises.

5. EXPERIENCE AS SOURCE

Many are aware of John Wesley's quadrilateral, in which he posits four sources that need to be taken into account when conducting theological reflection. They are: experience, tradition, reason and Scripture. Grenz (1994:15) cautions against the use of experience as a source for theology and sees it rather as the medium through which sources are received. However, he does argue that just because it is not normative for theology, does not make it irrelevant

(Grenz 1994:17). In his elevation of culture as a source of theology, he might in fact be engaging with people's experience as a source, without knowing it. Again, we do not argue that one's experience is true, but again affirm that experience must be our starting point. James Cone (1990:23) is one who argues that black experience should be one's starting point when doing local and contextual theology. Chung Hyun Kyung, who attempts to delineate what an Asian women's theology should look like, elevates Asian women's experience as a starting point when beginning theological reflection. A quote from her best illustrates what we mean by experience as the starting point for theological reflection (Hyun 1990:22):

> Asian women's theology was born out of Asian women's tears and sighs and from their burning desire for liberation and wholeness. It is neither the logical consequence of academic debate of the university nor the pastoral conclusion of the institutional church. Asian women's theology has emerged from Asian women's cries and screams, from the extreme suffering of their everyday lives. They have shouted from pain when their own and their children's bodies collapsed from starvation, rape, and battering. Theological reflection has emerged as a response to women's suffering.

Someone's experience, or one's own personal experience, gives birth to the pastoral concern that begins the pastoral cycle for Practical Theology. Of necessity, this raises the question as to the location of the theologian or "theological reflector." Can Practical Theology be done without some form of engagement by the one doing the theological reflecting? Clodovis Boff gives three ways in which a theologian can be engaged with the theological process. Before doing this, however, he makes some presuppositional comments around the idea of "engagement" that must be taken into account when discussing experience as a starting point for theological reflection.

The truth is that one need not begin theological reflection from experience or the local to be "engaged" (Boff 1987:160). Indeed, by nature, everyone is engaged to some extent and all theologians "do theology in and from some determinate social locus" (1987:159). An engaged theology can be "traditionalist" or "progressive" and its content is usually defined according to one's ideological position (1987:161). There are also important distinctions and overlaps between practical engagement and theoretical engagement (1987:168). The three types of engagement that Boff lists with regard to local and experiential realities are as follows.

1. The specific contribution model. Here, engagement is done at a theoretical level where intellectual positions are taken on behalf of a group or individual's local experience (Boff 1987:168). However, pure theory can only have practical implications through practical participation. By this, Boff (1987:169) means that one ought to have certain channels and opportunities to engage with the experience and local reality that one seeks to represent.
2. The alternating moments model. This might be seen as a sort of dualism – the theoretical and practical moments coincide. In one moment, the theologian is reflecting; yet, in the other moment, he is participating in the actual lived experience of a group of which the reflection forms part (Boff 1987:170). It is not so much a dualism as it is, rather, a series of alternating movements of the one who is engaging (1987:170).
3. The incarnational model. Here, one does not so much identify with a specific group, and participate in that lived experience, as much as one actually is joined in the "general life condition and lot of the group in question" (Boff 1987:170). In certain circumstances, this sort of identification might make theological reflection difficult in terms of materials at one's disposal (1987:171).

These three models provide a picture of what sort of engagement is necessary for theological reflection that is local and takes into account experience as a starting point for theology. It is important that we realise that Practical Theology does not take place in a vacuum, and is somehow privy to some sort of theological and experiential neutrality. In what has been discussed, it might appear that a position has been taken that states that, unless someone is part of, or sympathetic to, a specific local context and experiential dynamic, they cannot do good theology. It might appear that, unless someone is bound within a specific pastoral concern, they are really unable to be truly concerned. Bevans (2002:21) says the following in this regard:

> A person can in several significant but limited ways contribute to the contextualisation of theology in a context that is not his or her own. But when a person does this, he or she must approach the host culture with both humility and honesty. He or she must have humility because he or she will always be on the margins of the society in which he or she has chosen to work.

What Bevans says of cultures applies equally to any specific pastoral concern that Practical Theology uses as a starting point. For this reason, Hendriks (2004:26) places such emphasis on the fact that the laity and believers ought to be "producers of theology." For this reason, the best form of theological reflection on the church and her practical engagement flows from those who are actually engaged in that church, the contextual dynamics, and lived experience of that community.

Here, the argument has been for the local nature of Practical Theology as it best illustrates a post-foundationalist approach to theological reflection. It is a Practical Theology that places high value on experience as a starting point and source for theological reflection, as against and applied theology based on foundationalist assumptions. It is a Practical Theology that seeks to take the local seriously by identifying or participating with the lived experience of a particular group or individual. At this point, it would be unwise not to bring the global nature of Practical Theology into the discussions. The local situation with the lived experience of that local group has, at the same time, a global influence to it. A simple analysis and understanding of the local might provide a skewed picture of what is happening, and even the possibility to bring about change might be thwarted. Financial markets and policies on different continents can have a vast and long lasting impact on the local situation in which one finds oneself. Ideological currents and economic instability can radically alter one's lived experience. In taking into account the local nature of theology, we must also take into account the global. This tension of analysis the researcher has chosen to call the "glocal" (local and global) nature of Practical Theology and theological reflection. With specific reference to Africa, Hendriks (2004:27) speaks of the global dimension of Practical Theology: "In doing theology in Africa, we must be realistic about our situation in Africa. Theology should study the global, social, economic, political megatrends and how they influence our continent. What are the national and local realities with which we should deal?"

6. THE GLOBAL NATURE OF PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

We have been focusing on Practical Theology's local nature, as well as the importance of experience as a starting point for theological reflection. Any analysis of one's local situation and its contextual realities must take into account global dynamics that are brought to bear upon one's situation. Bonino (1975:5) shows how Latin America has been at the mercy of outside factors from the very beginning of colonial times. The lust for wealth and power in Spain saw

the local people's culture destroyed and desecrated. Even later when independence was gained from Spain, the ruling classes connived with foreign banks, countries and institutions to bring about new levels of exploitation and an era of neo-colonialism (1975:16). Global factors, of which one has no control, affected people's local context and helped to define their experience and identity. Bonino (1975:31) shows how the capitalist form of production has had adverse effects on the dependent countries. Bonino was writing in the 1970s and could not have foreseen to what extent technology would add to the unfettered march of capitalism. This, certainly, is not an argument for any sort of communism or socialism, but merely points out what sociologists, such as Manuel Castells, have been showing us.

Castells (2004:1) points out that the world, in which we live, has become globalised to the extent that our whole social landscape has changed.

> Our world, and our lives, are being shaped by the conflicting trends of globalization and identity. The information technology revolution, and the restructuring of capitalism, have induced a new form of society, the network society.

Individuals, groups and regions that do not service the goals of this network society are simply ignored or "switched off" (Castells 2004:3). The intense and changing global world in which we live has resulted in massive insecurity for many.

> In a world of global flows of wealth, power, and images, the search for identity, collective and individual, ascribed or constructed, becomes the fundamental source of social meaning ... identity is becoming the main, and sometimes the only, source of meaning since in an historical period characterized by widespread destructuring of organisations, delegitimation of institutions, fading away of major social movements, and ephemeral cultural expressions (2004:3).

Globalisation is a fact. The reaction against globalisation, in the rise of national (not state) identities, is testament to this. Therefore, it is only logical that a Practical Theology that has experience as a starting point, and one seeking to be local, must at the same time give due attention to global factors. It must be a glocal Practical Theology. It must ask questions as to what economic, cultural, political and social realities in the rest of the world are impacting on one's local reality. Segundo says ((1976), this is part of the suspicion toward ideological superstructures arising out of one's experience that ought to be challenged. This could be worked out in a myriad of ways. The local clothing industry in the Cape could collapse due to the rising power of China. Inflation, with its impact on local households and their ability to feed themselves, has its roots in conflicts in the Middle East, monopolies and speculators.

Practical Theology certainly has seen a move to the local in the last quarter of the 20th century, as against abstract applied theology based on foundationalist assumptions with its quest for certainty. However, this return to the local must take into account global factors that impinge on people's identities and experience, noting the "increasingly interconnected character of all human, political, economic, and social life on earth" (Hendriks 2004:27).

But, how do we go about understanding this glocal context? How do we take into account experience as a starting point, while trying to get to grips with local and global factors that influence that experience? What is called for is some form of social analysis.

7. SOCIAL ANALYSIS

Don Browning's fundamental Practical Theology argues for four movements within Practical Theology. Here, the first movement concerns us which is, what he calls, "descriptive theology." Descriptive theology is linked directly to what has just been discussed regarding the glocal nature of Practical Theology with its starting point in experience. Browning (1991:47) describes it as follows:

> Its task is more important than its name. It is to describe the contemporary theory-laden practices that give rise to the practical questions that generate all theological reflection. To some extent, this first movement is horizon analysis; it attempts to analyse the horizon of cultural and religious meanings that surround our religious and secular practices.

This desire to begin with descriptive theology, by necessity, implies the importance of social analysis. The human sciences are directly linked to descriptive theology in their role of determining the concrete reality that will, at a later point, be brought into dialogue with the Christian sources (Browning 1991:92-93).

Gerben Heitink (1999:221) takes into account the anthropological shift in theology, characterized by the empirical shift in Practical Theology since the 1960s (1999:220). None would doubt that there has been this empirical shift in Practical Theology, but we do need some perspective on this issue which I think Heimbrock (2011:155) provides us with:

> ... the empirical interest within Theology is neither an invention nor the sole property of Practical Theology. "Empirical Theology" as an explicit and programmatic formula has been labelled in the beginning of the 20th century, in remarkable theological efforts on both sides of the Atlantic. And this happened long before Practical Theology got its present form.

Heitink (1999:221), like Browning, believes the empirical data, which the social sciences uncover, is of utmost importance for theological reflection. This leads him to "an empirically orientated Practical Theology, which opts for a point of departure in the actual experiences of people and the situation of church and society, and is characterized by a theorizing approach that attempts to do full justice to empirical data."

Clodovis Boff sets out to demonstrate the importance of social analysis and the role of the human sciences for theological reflection. Although his work focuses mainly on the role they offer with regard to political theology, the insights are still of real use. Like those already mentioned, he affirms that a theology orientated toward practice must take into account the sciences of the social. This becomes important in what Boff (1987:6) calls "a socio-analytic mediation." The importance of the use of the social sciences is not just to gain a correct understanding of a given situation, but to help theology to avoid the abstract speculation that endangers real change. Boff (1987:7) puts it graphically in the following manner:

> The interfacing of theology with praxis through the medium of socio-analytic mediation has as its objective the safeguarding of theology from the empty "theorism" that, in certain circumstances, is a trait of academic cynicism that ignores the crying scandal of the starving and suffering multitudes of our world.

This must serve as a constant reminder that the use of the social sciences is not just for methodological integrity, but also has real people and their real situations as its focus. The social sciences, however, are not devoid of ideology with regard to both content and method. This will form an important part of our discussion later when the religious nature of the social sciences

will be examined. At this point, we should note some of the obstacles that one encounters when discussing the importance of the social sciences. Boff mentions five, which we shall briefly discuss and acknowledge.

7.1 Empiricism

Here, the importance of social analysis is argued against on the basis that the issues are self-evident and the concerns are immediate. Lacking social analysis here can lead to multiple misunderstandings as to what is actually taking place (Boff 1987:21). Natural scientific knowledge must form the basis of theological cognition. Those who claim that the facts are self-evident, and that no non-theological disciplines are therefore needed, might simply get caught up in "certain current, ideological images that common sense forms of facts" (1987:22).

7.2 Methodological purism

Here, socio-analytical mediation is excluded on the basis that theology has its own proper status and has no need of other disciplines (Boff 1987:24). This does not take into account that Theology, by its very nature, has arisen out of social reality and is socially mediated. Boff (1987:25) rejects this option and argues that theology ought to assume that it takes the raw material of life into account and seeks to do so critically.

7.3 Theologism

In many ways, theologism is linked to methodological purism in the sense of claiming theology's unique and independent status. Here, theology believes it possesses within its storehouse, all the resources necessary to comment on any given situation – whether political or otherwise (Boff 1987:26). It has its roots in a view of the world that argues for the transcendent nature of truth and a deeply sceptical attitude to real life (1987:27). Boff argues against theologism believing that one must take into account the silent prerequisites that the social sciences afford us in understanding reality (1987:26).

7.4 Semantic mix

Here, the insights of the social sciences are not so much discarded as they are not integrated critically or properly (Boff 1987:28). On the one hand, the information is taken into the theological discourse without proper attention to its role. On the other hand, things that emerged from the analysis, which one cannot tolerate or accept, are replaced by more spiritual content. It seeks to collapse the tension into either corner instead of seeking to hold the insights of the social sciences in creative tension (1987:28).

7.5 Bilingualism

Bilingualism is related to that of semantic mix and it is quite difficult to distinguish between the two. Essentially, what happens here is that the social sciences and theology interact on the same "field," yet speak two different "languages." What happens in this scenario is that one of the different languages will seek to overcome the other and force it aside (Boff 1987:29).

8. A WAY FORWARD?

Boff (1987:30) believes that a healthy relationship and appropriation of the social sciences are possible despite these difficulties and objections. He believes that theology ought to understand that its formal object must be distinguished by its material object. In other words, what emerges from the social sciences is not theology in the proper sense of the word. He explains it in the

following manner (1987:31):

> The sciences of the social furnish theology only with that upon which to ply its practice. Thus what for the sciences of the social is a product, finding, or construct, will be taken up in the theological field as raw material, as something to be (re)worked by procedures proper to theologizing, in such wise as to issue in a specifically theological product, and one so characterized.

The importance of the social sciences for Practical Theology cannot be disputed, despite the objections, which we have just examined with Boff's help. Of course, there are dangers inherent in the use of the social sciences. Boff himself has called for theology as a theoretical discipline to be aware of, and shaped, according to its own grammar. The truth is that Practical Theology today has unanimously accepted the importance of the social sciences – and perhaps uncritically so. Yet, Browning (1991:89) argues that we might have done so uncritically without taking into account the ideological bent of the social sciences and, indeed, the researcher's situatedness.

9. CONCLUSION

We have noted that both liberal and conservative dimensions of theology have been influenced by foundationalist assumptions – both with regard to the quest for an unquestioned starting point, as well as the goal of achieving certainty in knowledge. This quest manifested itself within Practical Theology which became a form of applied theology. This led to little room for the local realities with their more relative dimensions.

It is apparent that with the wide adoption of the pastoral cycle within Practical Theology we have seen a move beyond foundationalism. Knowledge is never absolutely certain, and is in many ways relative, as it emerges from different contexts and situations. Here experience is emphasized as a starting point (not foundation) which is then engaged with theoretically and then again returns to that context/practice. This process is continued as new knowledge and information emerges from local and global factors. In this way we might argue that Practical Theology has indeed moved on from its foundationalist assumptions.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ballard, P. & Pritchard, J. 2006. *Practical Theology in action: Christian thinking in the service of church and society*. SPCK. Great Britain.
Baranov, D. 2005. Conceptual *foundations of Social research methods*. Paradigm. Boulder.
Bevans, S.B. 2002. *Models of contextual theology.* Orbis. Maryknoll.
Boff, C. 1987. *Theology and praxis: Epistemological foundations*. Orbis. Maryknoll.
Bonino, J.M. 1975. *Revolutionary theology comes of age*. SPCK. London.
Bosch, D.J. 1991. *Transforming mission: Paradigm shifts in theology of mission*. Orbis. Maryknoll.
Browning, D. 1991. *A fundamental and Practical Theology: Descriptive and strategic proposals*. Fortress. Minneapolis.
Castells, M. 2004. *The power of identity. The information age: economy, society and culture*, volume II. 2nd ed. Blackwell. Oxford.
Chopp, R.B. 1995. 'Educational Process, Feminist Practice.' *Christian Century,* Vol 112/4, pp. 111-116.
Cochrane, J.R, de Gruchy, J.W & Petersen, R. 1991. *In word and Deed: towards a Practical Theology for Social Transformation.* Cluster Publications. Pietermaritzburg.
Cone, J.H. 1990. *A Black Theology of Liberation*. Orbis. Maryknoll.
Cronshaw, D. 2011. 'Re-invisioning theological education, mission and the local church.' *Mission Studies* Vol 28:1, pp 91-115.

De Kock, W. 2009. 'Open Seminary' Retrieved 14 November, 2011. http://www.openseminary.com/

De Kock, W. 2011. 'Open Seminary at Tabor. Master of Arts in Church Practice' Retrieved 14 November, 2011. http://www.tabor.vic.edu.au/files/publications/course-promo/2009-MACP-information-booklet.pdf

Graham, E., Walton, H. & Ward, F. 2005. Theological reflection: Methods. SCM. London.

Grenz, S.J. 1994. *Theology for the community of God.* Eerdmans. Grand Rapids.

Grenz, S.J & Franke, J.R. 2001. *Beyond foundationalism: Shaping theology in a post-modern context.* Westminster. Louisville.

Heimbrock, H.G. 2011. ' Practical Theology as Empirical Theology.' *International Journal for Practical Theology,* vol.14, pp. 153-170

Heitink, G. 1999. *Practical Theology: History, theory, domains.* Eerdmans. Grand Rapids.

Hendriks, H.J. 2004. *Studying congregations in Africa*. Lux Verbi. Wellington.

Hyun Kyung, C. 1990. *Struggle to be the sun again: Introducing Asian women's theology*. SCM. London.

Kim, H.S. (2007) The Hermeneutical-Praxis Paradigm and Practical Theology. *Religious education*, Vol.102, No.4, pp.419-436.

Kretzschmar, L. 1994. 'Ethics in a Theological Context' in: Villa-Vicencio, C & De Gruchy, J, Theology and Praxis. *Doing Ethics in Context: South African Perspectives.* Orbis. Maryknoll.

Kung, H. 1978. *Does God exist?* Collins. London.

Macallan, B. A post-foundationalist approach towards doing Practical Theology: a critical comparison of paradigms. Doctoral dissertation, Stellenbosch University. http://scholar.sun.ac.za/handle/10019.1/20127

Muller, J. 2009. 'Transversal rationality as a practical way of doing interdisciplinary work, with HIV and Aids...' Paper presented at the Seventh International Conferenc1e on New Directions in the Humanities, 2-5 June 2009, Bejing, China.

Poling, J. 2009. Toward a Constructive Practical Theology: A Process-Relational Perspective, in: *International Journal of Practical Theology,* vol. 13, pp. 199 – 216.

Schrag, C.O. 1992. *The resources of rationality: A response to the postmodern challenge*. Indiana University Press.

Segundo, S.J. 1976. *The liberation of theology.* Orbis. Maryknoll.

Thiel, J.E. 1994. *Nonfoundationalism: Guides to theological enquiry.* Fortress. Minneapolis.

Van Huyssteen, Wentzel. 1997. *Essays in postfoundationalist Theology.* Eerdmans. Grand Rapids.

Whitehead, J.D. & Whitehead, E.E. 1995. *Method in ministry: Theological reflection and Christian ministry.* Sheed & Ward. Lanham.

KEY WORDS

Practical Theology
Foundationalism
Pastoral Cycle
Post-foundationalism

Momberg, Marthie
Stellenbosch University

Cosmological distortion and coherence in *Tsotsi* (2005): A perspective on the role of Miriam[1]

ABSTRACT

In interpreting a film, the viewer actively participates in the construction of information. But whose perspective counts when doing so? Most people have such deep-seated frameworks of the universe that they do not even realise that far-reaching differences between interpreting totality do exist between people. As a result, they often project their own cosmological views onto the characters in a film. Without considering a relevant cosmological perspective in Tsotsi, an understanding of gender roles may be deprived of the necessary nuance and unjust conclusions could be reached. What should be noted here, is that concepts such as wisdom, the maintenance of harmonious social relationships and the measuring of the quality of experience through texture that are often linked to the female principle are also typical symbolic expressions of a coherent traditional African cosmology. This article explores the role of Miriam within such framework to conclude that her character overcomes gender stereotypes.

WHOSE PERSPECTIVE COUNTS?

Today Western scholars of both religion and media increasingly recognise the role of film in actively shaping and changing interrelated aspects of meaning, belonging, worldviews and identity (cf. Deacy 2001; Johnston 2007; Warren 1997; White 2004). In fact, films "have become the practical marketplace where individuals … gain information, communalize their concerns, and build meaning, identity and worldviews" (Horsfield, Hess and Medrano 2004: xix; cf. also Hoover 2006; Hoover and Park 2004; Marsh 2007).

Film can no longer be considered as merely entertainment, but rather as formative in the construction of culture and existential belonging. Such belonging and meaning are not simply created by the producers of messages, but rather through an interaction between the text or message, the context and the receiver of the message. The viewer, therefore, actively participates in the construction of information. As a result, spaces created by film necessitate pastoral reflection.

But whose perspective counts in such reflection? Is it appropriate to always use as one's point of departure one's own frame of reference when trying to understand existential meaning and belonging? What, for example, should inform scholarly comments on how a character's religious positioning is being portrayed in a particular film? More specifically, on what grounds can one regard film characters as inspirational and embodied with existential value, or alternatively, as romanticised and, therefore, as not very convincing?

I shall argue here that most people have such deep-seated emotional conceptual frameworks of the universe that they do not even realise that far-reaching differences between people on the level of existential belonging do exist. It often happens, for example, that someone from

---

1 This essay was originally published in Claassens, J. & Viljoen S., *Sacred Selves: Essays on Gender, Religion and Popular Culture* (Cape Town: Griffel), 207-223. Republished with permission.

a Western orientation incorrectly assumes that concepts such as redemption and a purpose-driven life are universal to all of humanity and thus also to all religious traditions. However, cosmological concepts (the nature of reality, the experience of one's immediate surroundings, how time is perceived, the role of chance versus determinism, the source of religious knowledge, the foundations of ethics, the modelling of survival, and so forth) may in fact all be symbolised differently and hence may portray different ways in which individuals perceive the totality of all that are both "here and out there".

Different paradigms

In this essay a person's cosmology or view of reality is understood as referring to a paradigm that reflects a particular way of relating to totality. Each paradigm is embodied by a selection of symbols reflecting how a person chooses to find existential meaning and belongs to all of reality, including the ultimately-real. In other words, a person's cosmology or reality view informs his or her belonging to totality. This association and process of making sense is in essence an expression of *"the quest for, realization or maintenance of, a sense of belonging to the ultimately-real"* (Cumpsty 1991:161) and, therefore, as Cumpsty argues, a deeply religious task.[2]

Yet religion as a way of belonging to totality as well as the multiple forms in which it may be expressed in different religious traditions should not be reduced to mere justifications of certain worldviews or identities, as this would imply a simple cause-effect relationship between religion and/or religious traditions and the formation of identity. This would furthermore mean that one may label religion as a "cause" behind a specific position and thereby absolve those involved of responsibility. Religion and religious traditions cannot be reduced to self-contained entities with independent lives of their own. In my view, religion associated cosmological paradigms and religious traditions can mutually inform identity but cannot position it, for example, as destructive, constructive, resistant, legitimising or innovative. Views of reality are embedded – consciously or unconsciously – in religious convictions and vice versa. In short, none of these dimensions exists independent of human perspectives and intervention. Views of reality together with religious traditions, culture and worldviews serve as sources of reference for a chosen identity, but they do not determine the interpretation, attitudes and positioning thereof. Only people exercise choices that result in positions of exclusion, inclusion, respect, disrespect, stereotypes, and so forth.

Without a relevant cosmological perspective in *Tsotsi* (2005), an understanding of gender roles may be deprived of necessary nuance. What should be noted is that concepts such as wisdom, the maintenance of harmonious social relationships and the measuring of the quality of experience through texture (as opposed to through goals) that are often linked to the female principle are also typical symbolic expressions of a coherent traditional African cosmology. Therefore: how can an understanding of the dynamics of gender roles in combination with cosmological views add meaning to an understanding of this film? Moreover, to what extent is there some interplay between gender stereotypes and the possible presence or absence of spiritual wholeness of specific characters?

In trying to answer these questions, I shall 1) explore how the cosmological paradigms of the young woman Miriam and Tsotsi (in the film with the same title), impact on the development of the character of the latter, and 2) reflect on some attributes typically associated with females. My focus will be on how each of the two characters symbolically expresses social coercion, the relation between individual and communal structures and their sources of ethics. I shall also acknowledge the broader socio-religious context of the two characters since all the symbols

---

2 I earlier used John Cumpsty's theory of religion to argue in favour of the relevance of different cosmological perspectives when analysing films. Cf. Momberg 2010.

in a person's cosmology impact on one another and thus influence the levels of distortion and coherency in a person's view of reality.

Diverse symbolic interpretations

Tsotsi was produced in South Africa and received the 2006 Academy Award for Best Foreign Film. This production is a modern-day adaptation of an unpublished novel written by Athol Fugard in and around 1959.

The film is set in a township outside South Africa's financial metropolis (Johannesburg). The themes of poverty, crime and violence, juxtaposed with affluence and well-being as a reflection of the country's economic and social disparities, ring true. The narrative is concerned with mothers, fathers and children on the canvas of a country characterised by diversity (South Africa), including diverse views of reality or cosmologies.

One may distinguish two cosmological paradigms in the film that are quite distinct from one another. Neither should be regarded as better or worse, they merely represent different ways of approaching life. If undisturbed and hence fully coherent, these paradigms are:

1. The modern Western paradigm (cf. Cumpsty 1991; Tarnas 1993) where the immediate world out there is experienced as real, but not ultimate. Thus, this paradigm is informed by a linear concept of time where striving towards goals leads up to the end (or the above) and towards ultimate fulfilment. It employs belief patterns and an active and purpose-driven engagement with the world-out-there in order to mould and shape it in the attempt to find existential meaning. As religious knowledge is here gained through revelation, chance plays a role and new beginnings are possible.
2. In the contrasting concept – as, for example, in a traditional African view of reality (cf. Cumpsty 1991; Louw 1998; Ukpong 1999) –the immediate world is also experienced as real. However, all of life is characterised by a network of relations between God and everything else, with the human being at the centre and experiences in the here and now all impact on, and are part of, a pulsating, coherent whole. The test of the quality of the immediate experience lies in the texture of daily life. As there is no distinct beginning or end within this monistic universe, time is perceived to be cyclical. The existential value of time is not found in terms of historical events but in terms of nature, such as seasons, the human life cycle and significant local experiences. What happened in the past has bearing on the present and on the future.

In each of these paradigms, the same cosmological factor may, on a symbolic level, be interpreted differently by the respective adherents of these views of reality (Cumpsty 1991:204-206, 218). For example:

1. The relation between individual and communal structures is common to both the traditional African and the modern Western views. They do, however, differ with respect to their loci of control. In the former, this relation is symbolically expressed as centred in the communal, in other words, it flows from the individual (the known) and from there moves to everything else (the lesser known). As such, an individual belongs to the ultimately-real by way of belonging to his or her community and, therefore, being human through others has existential value in a traditional African view of reality. In a modern Western view of reality, being in solidary with the communal carries existential value and this, in turn, requires organised group action by like-minded people.
2. Although all religious traditions subscribe to the notion of a future time when the actions

of humanity will be motivated by love, they differ in terms of what is regarded as the least desirable form of social coercion. In the traditional African context, social alienation is a threat and in this context fear represents the absence of being a human through others. In a modern Western paradigm, where freedom of choice and individual rewards are valued, the absence of love would tend to be portrayed by greed rather than by fear.

3. The source that inspires and governs the ethical relationship between people and their environment is yet another aspect whereby cosmologies differ and here too this factor acts in relation to the other in a particular cosmology. When a reality view is inspired by the end or by that which is above (as in a modern Western cosmology), a goal-oriented and a purpose-driven life is regarded as the ideal. But if the real is perceived as now as, for example, in a traditional African view of reality, the source of ethics is rooted in harmony and in individual purpose in the here and now.

These are but three examples of cosmological factors (the relation between individual and communal social features, social coercion and the source of ethics) that may all be interpreted differently. These subtle but important differences in the symbolic understandings of the same factors impact significantly on existential belonging. Taking them into account in one's understanding of a particular character may be useful if one wants to consciously refrain from projecting one's own paradigm onto those of others.[3]

MIRIAM'S INTERACTION WITH *TSOTSI*

My approach in this analysis will be fundamentally interpretive and thus hermeneutical. I shall try to maintain a self-critical perspective on my own existential understandings and also remain conscious of the fact that truth and reality can, as in postmodern scientific theories, be "radically ambiguous" (Tarnas 1993:397). Although none of my insights can be considered final, it nevertheless represents a point of view. My agenda here is to not only reflect on how existential meaning and belonging may be portrayed by a character in a film. It is also to consider how it might be projected onto the contents of, and characters in, a film and, in so doing, how one might miss an opportunity to increase one's own awareness of diversity and possibly also an opportunity to critically evaluate one's own place and position in the whole.

To understand gender in the context of Miriam's role and the interaction between Miriam and Tsotsi, it is necessary to give a summary of the events that lead to Tsotsi and Miriam's meeting. What, for example, happens to the cosmic belonging of a person in circumstances of neglect and disillusion? What position(s) is/are taken by Miriam and the main character (Tsotsi)? What informs the characters' concept(s) of existential belonging? These are some of the questions relevant for this discussion.

The film is set in post-apartheid South Africa. Despite the official abolition of apartheid, South

---

3 The concepts *Western* and *African* here do not refer to race or ethnic groups and should not be regarded as exclusive or divisive. Louw argues that "Africa…does not denote so much a continent, race, ethnicity or merely culture." Africa, according to him, is both a philosophical concept and a spiritual category. *Louw 2008:147.* The sharing of a geographical area over a long period of time can generally be considered a significant factor in linking people together in philosophical, spiritual or other ways. Any person from any background and for any reason may associate with the symbols of any cosmology. Hence these terms are used in their descriptive sense and not as evaluative. The term *Western* here refers to the mainstream sense of belonging in the Western world, influenced predominantly by Christianity. By contextualising Christianity (albeit very generically) I recognise that not all forms of Christianity are embedded in the same reality view and that there is no uniform kind of Christianity that may serve as a basis.

African society is rife with examples of extreme polarities between the haves and the have-nots. Tsotsi (a local word for a thug or a villain) is a teenage gangster from a slum area in Kliptown near Johannesburg. As a child, Tsotsi fled his home and he grew up on the streets. As a young adult, he remains above the poverty line by leading a corrupt and violent life of intimidation and robbery, seemingly without any emotion.

The opening scenes introduce the audience to a township where most dwellings are informal make-do shanties constructed from corrugated iron sheets, wood and bricks. From here the camera moves to a pair of dice thrown onto worn cardboard in one of the shacks. The introductory scenes suggest that a range of socio-economic and political issues may be at stake in the film. Life seems to be a gamble. In other words, it suggests that one has to take what one can get, which could be interpreted as engaging with reality by fitting into it as is typical of a traditional African view of reality. The viewer's gaze is guided so that it is impossible to miss the poverty in the township juxtaposed to the profile of the city of Johannesburg, the hub of corporate business in South Africa.

Tsotsi, with his three hoodlum compatriots, Boston (the teacher), Aap (the even-tempered overweight) and Butcher (the murderer), "do jobs". The very first "job" the viewer encounters, is the robbery of a dignified older black man on a train that shockingly turns into silent murder when Butcher pushes a sharpened bicycle spoke into the man's heart whilst the train continues its journey. Minutes before the murdered man boarded the train he had bought himself a tie and a fine blue scarf, presumably for his wife, from a stall at the station. Standing in the train, he did not even suspect trouble when the bodies of Tsotsi and the other three pushed up against him. In fact, the man chuckled kindly as he looked down on them. This scene is significantly positioned right at the beginning of the story. The murdered man's attitude is one of trust, care, and mutual respect and expresses an existential connection with fellow human beings, starting from the self as portrayed in a traditional African-oriented centred communal belonging. The man's source of ethics is portrayed as harmonious, also something which is typical of a traditional African cosmology. From the man's perspective there is an absence of malevolence and fear. His character is contrasted with the group of thugs who is about to rob and murder him and who seems to be without unaware of ties that bind them with the rest of society.

The latter observation warrants a short pause in the analysis. What does the behaviour of Tsotsi and his friends signify? At this stage, one can suspect that their behaviour indicates a negative positioning of social coercion (love versus fear) in terms of traditional African cosmology. It also seems that their social behaviour is characterised neither by centred communal belonging, nor by harmonious social relations. Is this then a movie about the traditional African view that is positioned in its positive context by some characters and negatively by others? It is, however, not as simple as that. It is neither merely a tale of redemption, as has been suggested by so many commentators in Western-oriented publications (cf. Barnard 2008; Dargis 2006; Dovey 2007; White, 2006) nor is it simply the story of a criminal who encounters a kind-hearted woman who is able to see beyond his hard demeanour and soften him in some romanticised way. The evidence points in a different direction.

For Tsotsi and his friends the dice (as suggested by the film) decided where they fit into society. Feeling alienated due to their socio-economic circumstances, they are not part of the establishment, not even in the shanty town. But it is about more than not having enough money. After they committed the chilling murder on the train, Tsotsi and his friends are drinking beer in a shebeen. Boston asks Tsotsi for his real name. Instead of giving an answer, Tsotsi slowly swivels backwards and forwards on his chair whilst staring intently at Boston. The latter (who vomited on the steps on arrival at their home station after the robbery and murder) insists to know Tsotsi's name. They have been together for six months, Boston argues, so Tsotsi should tell

his name – everyone, after all, has been given a name by one's mother. He proceeds: "Decency, Tsotsi. You know the word? Decency. I had a bit of it, so I was sick. *En daai groot man* [and that big man] with the tie … he had a lot. And now? He's dead."[4]

The term "decency" used here by Boston, should, within the traditional African view, be understood as respect and harmony, thus as finding existential meaning through being with others as encapsulated by the concept of *Ubuntu* (cf. Louw 1998). Boston yearns after this source of meaning and he provokes his peers to affirm that their very basic belonging to all-that-is-out-there has been distorted to the extent that it cuts through their very own beings. When Tsotsi maintains his silence, he breaks his empty beer bottle on the table between the gang members to deliberately cut himself with the blunt glass so that a thick line of blood streams from his forearm. Whilst pointing with his finger to the streaming blood, he says that *this* is what he felt like on the inside when the old man on the train was killed earlier that afternoon. "Has anything ever made you feel like this?" he asks Tsotsi. Perhaps Tsotsi's father or mother? "Jesus, Tsotsi, what about a dog?" At this stage the viewer does not know that it was precisely an encounter with his very ill mother (presumably suffering from AIDS), and his dog whose back was broken after two kicks by his angry and dominating father that led to the young David running away from home one night and ending up as Tsotsi, a child of the streets. What we do see, is how Tsotsi finally responds to Boston's provocation by jumping up and attacking him.

These two issues, that Tsotsi is not acknowledging or affirming his own name, and the lack of decency (read as a lack of spiritual interconnectedness with all that exists), position the main character as a person who has lost his own humanity. In traditional African terms, this implies losing the essence of one's spirituality. As both Barnard in her literary critique (Barnard 2008:541-572) and Dovey (2007:143-164) in his cultural study argue, this story (and hence also Tsotsi's identity) portrays the result of systemic damage to the social fabric of black South Africans over many years that are aggravated by contemporary issues such as the HIV/AIDS pandemic, violence against women and children as well as the increasing gap between rich and poor in the world.

After beating Boston to the floor, the nineteen-year-old Tsotsi runs away into the rainy night. This behaviour is similar to his response to the emotional confrontation, years ago, when the young David ran away from his parents' house. As Tsotsi runs in the pouring rain across a field between the township and a neighbouring suburb and crosses a stream, the visuals show flashbacks in his mind without using any fading or sepia effects to show any time difference. This technique integrates time; what happened then has bearing on what happens now and the latter is connected to what happened back then. Time becomes cyclical and even biological as in a traditional African cosmology. In these flashbacks, the audience meets the young David's dying mother who wants to touch him and who tells him to not be afraid. Her love and concern for him is contrasted with the uncontrolled anger, domination and emotional distance of his father who instructs his ill wife to not touch her son.

The directness of this technique effectively links the David of then with the Tsotsi of now. The pouring rain, the young David's tears and Tsotsi's crossing of a stream may symbolise the unconscious. Fluids have multiple symbolic meanings, such as, as being a symbol for the beginning and end of all things on earth, of intuitive wisdom, the mother-*imago,* the universal congress of potentialities and it can also be linked with the female principle (cf. Cirlot 2001).

> Immersion in water signifies a return to the pre-formal state, with a sense of death and annihilation on the one hand, but of rebirth and regeneration on the other, since immersion intensifies the life-force (365).

---

4 The language used in this film includes *tsotsi-taal* (tsotsi language), a hybrid mix of Zulu, Xhosa, the Sotho languages, Afrikaans and English, which is spoken in the townships and mines near Johannesburg.

Here the fluid becomes a medium through which Tsotsi reconnects with his emotions. He also reconnects with what has been suppressed as a result of his childhood trauma and hurt when the texture of the quality of his immediate experience became unbearable to the point where he could no longer affirm it as being part of reality. As a consequence, he had to run away.

All events in the film lead up to this moment of crisis. The distorted and unhappy positioning of Tsotsi's existential belonging is brought to the surface under severe pressure and makes Tsotsi run. He runs just as when he ran from home as a child after being confronted with disharmony and the unbearable behaviour of his father that made the young David's understanding of reality unbearable. Boston's insistence that there is not enough decency in their lives now reminds Tsotsi of his loss of cosmic belonging. Therefore, not only in a literal sense but also figuratively, he "runs from home" – from the place where he felt safe and thought he belonged.

When he reaches the affluent suburb, the drenched Tsotsi takes shelter under a tree and from here that spots an opportunity to highjack a car. In a shocking scene he shoots the driver of the car, a young, upper class, black mother. Thus class differences and violence against women are introduced. Tsotsi drives off but brings the stolen luxury vehicle to an abrupt stop when he realises that he has not only stolen a car but that there is also a baby on its back seat. At first he walks away from the damaged car and its passenger. However, because he remembers his previous existence as David, he returns to the baby. He carries the baby off in a shopping bag, one with a logo that reads "Expect More". These words may be understood as irony, yet Tsotsi's turn to the baby also initiates a turn towards taking others into account and, therefore, it is also a turn towards himself. The words on the shopping bag provide hope and suggest a shift towards something better – perhaps care? It is this potential, this association with the mother-*imago,* wisdom and the female principle that introduces the start of Tsotsi's healing on a religious-cosmological, and hence on an existential, level. It is also this theme that will develop through Tsotsi's encounter with Miriam.

However, Tsotsi's remembering and, as a consequence of that, his turn towards cosmological belonging is not an easy or even process. There are many examples in the film of his struggle to find a place where he, with his awakened emotions, can again feel spiritually safe and at home once more. One such example is his encounter with an old, crippled and half-blind man who was injured in an accident on a gold mine but who still likes the feel of the street heated by the rays of the sun. Tsotsi harasses the man and asks him: "Why do you go on if you live like a dog?" Upon this the man answers: "I like to feel the sun on the street. Even with these hands … I can still feel the heat." This is the old miner's way of saying that, despite his circumstances, he still experiences existential belonging in the texture of his daily experiences (in line with how the quality of experience is measured in the traditional African cosmology) and that he still fits into reality.

Which of the following makes sense? The crippled man who still enjoys feeling the sun; the injured dog that was in all likelihood left to starve after Tsotsi's father brutally kicked it; or what about Tsotsi's own mother's death due to AIDS; or the young, affluent, but now crippled, mother who survived the hijacking but does not want to continue living without her child? The answer to how life can still be worthwhile when one's back is broken or when one does not have a home is not clear to Tsotsi. In his current experience and sense of reality there is no viable alternative to confirm reality as being real. He returns to the township as the day breaks. It is a new day and the visuals imply that there may be another opportunity (in line with a modern Western view) to connect with intuitive wisdom (the source of religious knowledge in the African paradigm), the mother-*imago* and the universal congress of potentialities (Cirlot 2001:364-365).

In a long shot, highlighting the dirt streets of the shanty town, the camera, now focuses

on women queuing for water at a public tap at daybreak, thus also highlighting the gender stereotype of black women taking care of household chores. In the warm colours of dawn, Tsotsi spots a young woman with a baby strapped to her back. It is the same woman he almost knocked over the previous day when he and his hoodlum companions took possession of the road by their mere presence. He now walks up to her, holds her at gunpoint and forces her to her home. The woman is carrying her own baby on her back and a bucket of water in her hand, taking care to not spill it. Thus the notion of rebirth or regeneration is again raised here by way of the symbol of water.

The audience knows that Tsotsi had already injured the mother of the baby and at this stage does not know how the gangster will treat Miriam. The suggestion that she may be abused is clear as the water tap scene portrays her as subordinate in a patriarchal society. All of this happens at daybreak that also denotes the start of a new cycle in time. At her small but spotless shack, the armed Tsotsi abruptly forces the frightened woman to breastfeed the abducted baby.

Miriam is only a few years older than Tsotsi and a single mother – her husband had recently been killed on his way home from work. Despite her fear, Miriam is able to remain focused and consciously controls her behaviour to gradually calm the agitated gangster. This is her first step towards directing the interaction between them. Even though the circumstances demand submission to the armed Tsotsi, Miriam acts from a position of empowerment. Her graceful and wise attitude does not threaten him and he does not even realise that she is starting to take control of the situation. She has an inner strength that allows her to carry water, clean her house, earn a living and eventually to positively influence the behaviour of a gangster. Hence she is not restricted by societal stereotype gender roles. Miriam is her own, integrated person.

What perspective would be appropriate for understanding the impact of Miriam's character on Tsotsi? From a Western perspective, the woman, dressed in a contemporary and beautiful adaptation of traditional attire, can be viewed as a romanticised role model of how one can make a fresh start after trauma. Such a view, after all, incorporates the Western symbols of chance and new beginnings. Miriam seemingly takes charge of her own adverse circumstances and perseveres as she finds solace in striving towards a better tomorrow. Yet such interpretations of respectively chance versus determinism, the mode of engagement with the world-out-there and the source of ethics – that may sound perfectly plausible to someone from a modern Western perspective – may not be the only possibility applicable here.

Is the contact between Tsotsi and Miriam simply a "sentimental, highly unrealistic suggestion … of a love affair" as Dovey (2007:156) suggests? It is quite possible to draw such a conclusion and typify Miriam in such a stereotypical role as is evident from a comment by one film critic – that is, if one is not sensitised to recognise the spiritual dimension of the film. Allan Peach remarks that, when Miriam convinces Tsotsi to return the baby to its parents,

> the actors are so restrained that it seems as if the screen will explode if they don't at least touch. They do not, and their repressed feelings infuse the moment with a flood of emotions from simple hope to an unsettling fear of what is to come (Peach 2006).

In my opinion one should take into account that the film is based on a *Bildungsroman* where the aim is to investigate all dimensions in the coming-of-age of a character and subsequently from the perspective of the latter. The unfolding story and its juxtapositions also suggest cosmological diversity. My own Western-oriented cosmology can, therefore, not suffice. One cannot ignore the possible presence of an African cosmological perspective.

When viewed from a traditional African perspective, any veneer of inappropriate romanticism, submission or other stereotypical behaviour is stripped away to unveil Miriam's

spiritual wholeness. Although she experienced trauma in her life due to violence, she still has the capacity to take care of herself, her baby and others by working as a seamstress and selling mobiles. Miriam's behaviour is not motivated by greed, fear and violence. Moreover, her source of ethics has nothing to do with future goals or the pursuit of a better tomorrow as one would typically find in a Western cosmology. Her source of ethics rather seems to lie in finding individual purpose and in maintaining harmonious relationships with others – even with someone like Tsotsi. Miriam's colourful dress is no sentimental interpretation of her African identity; it is a symbol of the quality of her existence and hence of the texture of her life. In short, her manner and clothes represent the positive richness of her African heritage.

It is in Miriam's house that Tsotsi encounters the mobiles made of bits and pieces of everyday material – strands of wire, pieces of broken glass, scraps of rusted tins and reels of cotton. These odds and ends sparkle as they catch the light. The parts of the assembled pieces can be interpreted as symbols of ordinary moments of life that become worthwhile only when grouped together. The texture of an experience can, for example, be rusted and sad, or colourful and filled with light, or playful and filled with joy, as is portrayed in this film. If viewed from a Western perspective the mobiles could suggest that the very texture of everyday experiences (as in the traditional African cosmology) can be woven together in such a way that they offer something more. They offer something new, another chance (as typically in the modern Western view of reality) and thus something that is meaningful despite sadness, neglect, brokenness and distortion. From my own Western perspective, I would very much like to say that the aesthetic rearrangement of everyday objects in this scene results in symbols of transcendence. However, the closing of the film suggests a monistic nature of reality and thus transcendence in this film needs to be connected with the here and now.

What is so remarkable about this young woman is that in the midst of her personal suffering she resembles wholeness and is able to maintain an integrated and coherent view of reality. It is by watching her feeding the baby, that Tsotsi's journey to reconnect with his inner self and with a positive positioning of a traditional African view of reality is given momentum. He is slowly, very slowly, starting to realise his own hunger for a nurturing and meaningful existence. This inner awakening by identifying with the newborn, the nurturing by a wise woman who refuses money for looking after the baby and her eventual prompting of him to return the baby to its parents eventually leads to his yearning for the restoration of decency in his own life. "Decency", as Boston in the earlier scene explained to the more sophisticated criminal Fela, is about "(r)espect for yourself, it's got fuck all to do with your standard of living."

Tsotsi reconnects with the past by allowing the emotions of his childhood and his unfortunate parting from his parents to surface. He also recreates the possibilities of the present and the future by projecting the potential of new life, a fresh start, onto the baby. The latter is expressed, for example, by his naming of the baby "David" – after himself – and taking the baby (still in the shopping bag from the stolen car) to the sewer pipes where he used to live after he ran away from home as a child. In this scene there are brief, harrowing scenes of other inhabitants of the sewer pipes – real AIDS orphans who were recruited as actors. The possibilities of then, now and tomorrow merge. What happened in the past has bearing on the present and on the future. Time is again presented as cyclical, as typical in the traditional African view of reality and no longer as a (linear) flight from events that are best left behind in favour of a search for a better tomorrow. Therefore, although the concept of a new beginning is introduced, it is done within a monistic view of life and not dualistically where reality cannot be affirmed as the ultimate, as in a modern Western paradigm.

Tsotsi's life is in crisis and he realises that carrying on the way he has up till now brought no him fulfilment. He discovers that by changing his own position from resistance to something more

positive he can yet again affirm the immediate world out there as the real. With the impression left in the viewers' minds that he will return the baby in light of Miriam's firm insistence and his implied agreement, Tsotsi leaves her house for the last time. Then one sees a lightly coloured dog appearing on all fours (not a dark one like the one of his childhood that was left crippled by his father's kicks) from the alley in the same direction in which Tsotsi departs.

At the end of the film, when Tsotsi is arrested, one does not know how events and Tsotsi's life will turn out. It seems, however, as if Tsotsi's identity moved from a sense of disillusionment and distorted cosmic belonging within the traditional African reality view to a positive positioning of that same cosmology. He, for example, recognises the cyclical nature of time and reconnects with others after reconnecting with himself in three instances: by apologising to Boston and to the crippled man and by returning the baby. However, it also seems as if his symbolic interpretation of chance and determinism now shifts from a situation where chance is excluded to one where new beginnings are possible as in the Western paradigm. In this moment there may be an element of Tsotsi redeeming himself, yet this act remains within the overall context of the traditional African paradigm as it allows him to affirm his reality and thus his experience of his immediate world out there. If one wishes to talk about transcendence in this film, then such transcendence is not one towards a different kind of reality, but rather one where the quality of experience and social coercion is improved as one may expect in a coherent traditional African view of reality.

What we do know is that after his contact with Miriam, Tsotsi has rediscovered a source of ethics whereby he was able to restore harmony and find individual purpose within a community. Miriam is, however, not the only one who instigated this change. The baby who needed to be fed and to have its basic needs met, Boston who talks about feelings and the old man who is grateful for life despite his pitiful circumstances, also evoked responses and instigated change in Tsotsi's awareness. All these characters sensitised Tsotsi to the destructive force of fear as opposed to love; the existential value he can derive from harmonious social relations and individual purpose; and the relevance of a connection between the individual and communal structures whereby the former is affirmed by the latter. All these symbols can be linked to a traditional African view of reality. Thus the context of the film itself suggests that a consideration of an African view seems relevant for a nuanced understanding of the film. Hence these attributes should not be limited to the female principle, but should also be valued for their religious and existential perspective.

Tsotsi's existential repositioning is rooted in the restoration of his belonging to a monistic reality; his affirmation of the here and now as the constituting part of the real; his acceptance of fitting into this realness governed by a cyclical view of the nature of time; and by recognising his individual sense of purpose whilst being interconnected with his community. From an African perspective this repositioning, in the first instance, brings about healing.

CONCLUSION

May one conclude that Miriam's character inspires Tsotsi's character? If one is able not to be restricted by a modern Western cosmology but is willing to probe into an African view of reality, one may draw this conclusion. The portrayal of Miriam's character overcomes gender stereotypes and introduces a rounded, healthy personality with a positive view of reality. Tsotsi, or David, responds to her nurturing decisiveness and the film suggests that he eventually sets out on a more fulfilling path of existential belonging.

When religion is regarded as a way of belonging to totality, religious meaning need not be expressed in terms of or with reference to any specific religious tradition. By applying religion in

its cosmological sense in the analysis of film, the viewer has the opportunity to be sensitised to different ways of existence, belonging and meaning-making. This becomes easier if the viewer also enjoys the inner space to risk gaining a sense of an (sometimes) unsettling enrichment.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Barnard, Rita. 2008. Tsotsi: On Law, the Outlaw, and the Postcolonial State. *Contemporary Literature,* 49(4), 541-572. Online at: http://cl.uwpress.org.ez.sun.ac.za/cgi/reprint/49/4/541. [Accessed: 2011, 20 February].

Cirlot, Jacques E. 2001. *A Dictionary of Symbols.* Trans. J. Sage. London: Routledge, 364-367.

Cumpsty, John S. 1991. *Religion as Belonging: A General Theory of Religion.* Lanham, MD: University Press of America.

Dargis, Manhola. 2006. From South Africa, A Tough Thug Shows His Big Heart. *The New York Times.* 24 February. Online at: http://movies.nytimes.com/2006/02/24/movies/24tsot.html. [Accessed: 2012, January 25].

Deacy, Christopher. 2001. *Screen Christologies. Redemption and the Medium of Film.* Religion, Culture and Society Series. Cardiff: University of Wales Press.

Dovey, Lindiwe. 2007. Redeeming Features: from Tsotsi (1980) to Tsotsi (2006). *Journal of African Cultural Studies,* 19(2):143-164.

Hood, Gavin. 2005. *Tsotsi.* Dir.: Gavin Hood. Adapted from Athol Fugard, Tsotsi (1980). Perf.: Presley Chweneyagae, Terry Pheto. South Africa. 94min. Tsotsi langauge, isiZulu, isiXhosa, English, Afrikaans, Setswana, Sesotho. Prod.: Peter Fudakowski. Miramax Films.

Hoover, Stewart M. 2006. *Religion in the Media Age.* Oxon: Routledge

Hoover, Stewart M. and Park, Jin-Kyu. 2004. Religion and Meaning in the Digital Age: Field Research on Internet/Web Religion. In Horsfield, Hess and Medrano. *Belief in Media.*

Horsfield Peter., Hess, Mary E. and Adan M. Medrano (eds.). 2004. *Belief in Media. Cultural Perspectives on Media and Christianity.* Aldershot: Ashgate.

Johnston, Robert K. (ed.). 2007. *Reframing Theology and Film. New Focus for an Emerging Discipline.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

Louw, Daniël J. 2008. *Cura Vitae. Illness and the Healing of Life.* Wellington: Lux Verbi.

Louw, Dirk. 1998. Ubuntu: An African Assessment of the Religious Others. Paper presented at the Twentieth World Congress of Philosophy. 10-15 August, Boston, MA. Available online at: http://www.bu.edu/wcp/Papers/Afri/AfriLouw.htm. [Accessed: 2012, 25 January].

Marsh, Clive. 2007. On Dealing with What Films Actually do to People. In Johnston, Robert K. (ed.). *Reframing Theology and Film,* 145-161.

Momberg, Marthie J. 2010. Different ways of belonging to totality: Traditional African and Western-Christian cosmologies in three films. Unpublished MPhil (Religion and Culture) thesis, Stellenbosch University. Available: http://scholar.sun.ac.za/handle/10019.1/17. [Accessed: 2011, 31 January].

Peach, Allan. 2006. *Tsotsi. Audio Video Revolution.* 18 July. Online at: http://www.avrev.com/dvd-movie-disc-reviews/foreign/tsotsi.html. [Accessed: 2012, January 26].

Tarnas, Richard. 1993. *The Passion of the Western Mind.* New York, NY: Ballantine Books.

Ukpong, Justin S. 1999. Towards a Holistic Approach to Inculturation Theology. *Mission-Studies.* 16(2):100-124.

Warren, Michael. 1997. *Seeing Through the Media. A Religious view of Communications and Cultural Analysis.* Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press.

White, Bill. 2006. Confusion reigns in Oscar-winning "Tsotsi." *Seattle PI.* 17 March. [Internet]. Online at http://www.seattlepi.com/movies/263243_tsotsi17q.html. [Accessed: 2012, January 25].

White, Robert A. 2004. Major Issues in the Study of Media, Religion and Culture. In Horsfield, Peter, Hess, Mary E. and Adan M. Medrano (eds.). 2004. *Belief in Media. Cultural Perspectives on Media and Christianity.* Aldershot: Ashgate.

Marthie Momberg
Sesde slot 5
Brandwag aan Rivier
Stellenbosch
7600
E-mail: momberg@sun.ac.za

Nel, Marius
North-West University, (Potchefstroom)

Daniel 3 as satirical comedy

ABSTRACT

The tale in Daniel 3 is told to people living in the second century BCE whose lives were threatened by the Syrian Antiochus IV Epiphanes when they disobeyed his command to forsake their religion as a desperate measure of quenching recurrent Jewish rebellion. After reading the tale the Jews could not help but laugh at worldly kings who preposterously cut down the Jewish God, only to find out that he is in charge of the world, and that God has predetermined the destination of their kingdoms. The article describes the humorous and satirical elements in the tale in order to explain its impact on the initial readers. The fantastical elements of surviving a fiery furnace and a mighty king bowing before the god of a people conquered by his power, told tongue in cheek, can only be explained sensibly as satire and comedy.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Daniel tales (Dan 1-6) had at times been interpreted as haggadic tales, wisdom tales, customized martyr tales, midrash tales, religious or popular romances, miracle tales, court tales, court legends, and comedies, and in each case the interpretation had extracted some elements that are useful in reading and understanding the tales. In this article the narratological approach would be followed where we concentrate on the satirical elements in Daniel 3 in order to endeavour to unlock some of the impact of the tales on readers.

Satire can be defined as the poetic ridiculing of vices or follies of institutions and individuals by way of irony, sarcasm, etcetera with the purpose of changing readers' or listeners' perspective of these institutions or individuals by exposing their vices or follies. Satire is a form of comedy that is the description of a humorous or farcical incident of life representing everyday life and with a happy ending. The premise of the article is that there are enough comical and satirical elements in Daniel 3 in order that a satirical analysis can be useful in explaining the passage.

The tales (Dan 1-6) do not have apocalyptic features but form part of the Book of Daniel where the second part, the visions, are apocalyptic. Apocalyptic texts use mythological and metaphorical language to describe the indescribable of otherworldly realities and the battles that would introduce that reality, a reality that would end the present world and introduce a new world order. The present world for first-time readers of the Book of Daniel was the oppression by a Syrian king, Antiochus IV Epiphanes, and the tales mock and ridicule the Syrian king and his gods by emphasizing the power of the sovereign God of the Jews over all powers.

Two of the six tales contained in the first part of the Book of Daniel (1-6) entails statues. In Daniel 2 a composite statue of extreme brightness is portrayed with a head of fine gold, chests and arms of silver, belly and thighs of bronze, legs of iron, and feet of partly iron, partly clay (vv. 31-33). This statue is struck at its feet of clay and iron by a stone that breaks away, untouched by any hand, and shatters the statue into pieces as fine as chaff on the threshing-floor in the summer. The wind blew these pieces away and not a trace is left behind, while the stone grows into a great mountain that fills the whole earth (vv. 34-35). The meaning of the dream is that the kingdoms of the earth, including that of Nebuchadnezzar, a kingdom of sovereignty, power, strength and honour bestowed by God upon him, will be destroyed in order to accommodate a

kingdom which will never be destroyed or pass into the hands of another race, lasting forever while it shatters and absorbs all the previous kingdoms (vv. 37, 44).

In Daniel 3, king Nebuchadnezzar builds a statue entirely of gold; as if he wishes to topple the dream he had according to Daniel 2 (Lucas 2002:93). It is as if the king wants to assure that his own kingdom would last forever and that no weaker kingdom following his might threaten the kingdom he established with such power.

2. INITIAL READERS OF DANIEL 3

A presupposition used by exegetes is that the biblical text was written for a specific purpose and that the hermeneutical process should respect that purpose. Before analyzing Daniel 3 the question is asked: what were the social and political conditions in which the initial readers probably found themselves? The text can be read in many other ways but for our purposes it is functional to understand these conditions in order to try and hear what initial readers heard. All speech acts, besides saying something (locutionary act), do something *in* saying (illocutionary act), and finally achieve a certain effect *by* saying (perlocutionary act) (Ricoeur 1976:14).

Although some scholars are negative about defining the community addressed by the Book of Daniel, maintaining that there is no necessary connection between apocalypses and apocalyptic communities (Grabbe 1989:39), Beyerle (2002:205-206) is of the opinion that "no modern scholar who asks historical questions can ignore the social environment of apocalyptic literature." The sociological approach can be a major tool for the investigation of apocalyptic texts with the purpose of describing the communities it addressed.

Apocalyptic texts use mythological and metaphorical language to describe the indescribable of otherworldly realities and the battles that would introduce that reality but it is possible to deduce the social setting in which it originated. According to form criticism each genre arises in and is appropriate for its use in a particular situation. And the classical distinction made between apocalypse as a literary genre, apocalypticism as a specific religious and social movement, and apocalyptic eschatology as a specific religious perspective allows the description of the circles that composed and transmitted apocalyptic ideas and ideologies as well as the circumstances in which it happened.

None of the apocalyptic movements has survived until the present time and contemporary sociological models are of limited help in describing these movements; therefore the starting-point of such an investigation should be the text itself, not a theory of a hypothetical movement that may be related to the sources.

The tales in the Book of Daniel is combined with visions with a clear apocalyptic intent and even though it is accepted that the tales were earlier and functioned at first in another context (Collins 2004:554), it must be taken into account that it now forms part of an apocalyptic book. If the text is taken as the starting-point, then the two different genres, court-tales and visions, go back to different *Sitze im Leben* or social settings. The court-tales reflect the fate of Jews during the Babylonian exile and in the *diaspora,* while the visions are addressed to pious Jews persecuted for their faithfulness to their God and his law. The court-tales are reutilized to form the first part of a book containing also visions with apocalyptic intent. The Daniel apocalypse answers to this crisis. What are the belief-system and social-system of the two different social contexts in which the court-tales functioned?

During the sixth century BCE, Judah was disempowered by its exile to Babylon when its monarchy, religious and economic system were disbanded. A foreign king became all-powerful with the exiles existing without any legal rights. In the second century BCE, when the court-tales were retold, the Syrian king disempowered pious Jews when he suspended the temple cult and

prohibited religious customs like circumcision and even possession of Jewish scriptures. Again the foreign king became all-powerful when he prosecuted transgressing Jews.

The Book of Daniel refers to *maśkîlîm,* the wise men (Dan. 11:33-35; 12:3, 10; cf. 1 Macc. 2:42; 7:12-13; 2 Macc. 14:6) that will cause many to understand when there is oppression by evil power (Dan. 11:33). Recent scholarship does not allow identification of this group with an apocalyptic movement or a community. However, the *maśkîlîm* fit with a highly educated intellectual elite group, scribes that utilize motifs and forms that originated from earlier prophetic texts but reworked it as written apocalypticism. In this way the Book of Daniel becomes a transition from earlier prophetic traditions in the Hebrew Bible to the productive apocalyptists from the Second Temple period (Brueggemann 1997:172). The social milieu of the Daniel apocalypse can be described in terms of a well-educated, upper-class group, and not oppressed and deprived outsiders (cf. Josephus' *Antiquities* 10 §266; Birch et al 1999:445).

The Daniel apocalypse's hope for an otherworldly reality forms the centre of the *maśkîlîm's* belief-system as a result of the crisis presented to Jewish religion by the Hellenization of the Jerusalem Temple by Antiochus IV Epiphanes. The Maccabean revolt reflects a struggle within the Jewish community (Bickerman 1984:1-40) between Hellenizing Jews supporting Antiochus' Hellenization policy and a (minority) group of Jews protecting their tradition. The *maśkîlîm* used the Torah but also privileged revelations to the "wise" to create the apocalyptic worldview of the Book of Daniel (Collins 1985:140). The themes determining the context of the readers of the Book of Daniel are the oppression by a foreign king of Jews' religious heritage and the implications for the sovereignty of the Jewish God.

Barr (1984:42) emphasizes that ancient Jewish apocalypses use symbols as a means of indicating a symbolic transformation of the world, empowering its adherents to dream of a reality stripped of the negative elements caused by the crisis preceding and causing the apocalypse. On the one side is the reality of a lost and corrupt world and on the other side is the reality of salvation for believers with everlasting consequences (Beyerle 2002:224). While Antiochus' persecutions threatened Jewish identity there was a heavenly world closely related to future hope with the identification of the persecuted, the *maśkîlîm,* with heavenly beings in Daniel 12:1-3 (cf. 1 *En.* 104:2-6), making the symbols concrete. These apocalyptic symbols were derived from older traditions but rearranged in a way that it became disconnected from the symbolic universe of everyday experience. It is this new understanding of rearranged symbols that constitute the new reality of the Daniel apocalypse.

3. ANALYSIS OF DANIEL 3

a Nebuchadnezzar had a golden statue made	v. 1
b he summoned all to attend the dedication of the statue	v. 2
c everybody attended the ceremony	v. 3
d a herald ordered all to fall down and worship the statue at the sign	v. 4-5
c the herald announces that failure to worship would be answered with death	v. 6
b everybody worshipped the statue at the given sign	v. 7

The first part of the tale develops sequentially without any sign of tension. Then the tone changes in the second part.

e some accused the three Jews of disobedience to the order	vv. 8-12
f Nebuchadnezzar interviews the three Jews	vv. 13-15
g the three Jews answered to the accusation	vv. 16-18
f the king ordered the death sentence for the insubordinate Jews	vv. 19-20
e the king's order is executed	vv. 21-23

This part of the narrative is circular with the accusation made by "some Chaldeans"[1] against the three Jewish courtiers (e) who won the battle for knowledge and skill in every aspect of literature and learning, with Daniel also having the gift of interpreting every kind of vision and dream (Dan. 1:17), and making enemies as implied by Dan. 3:8. The king interviews the accused (f), listen to their defence (g), and orders the death sentence on them (f), which is executed (e).

The next part contains two songs in the deutero-canonical literature, representing poems of praise to Israel's God. Most researchers allow that these passages are from an Aramaic original, even though it is only preserved in the Greek and Syriac versions.[2] In MT's Aramaic text v. 24 corresponds to the Greek v. 91. These songs suppose that Azariah acts as the leader in the absence of Daniel, the most gifted of the four Jewish courtiers.

song of Azariah in the furnace	vv. 24-50
song of the three young men	vv. 51-90

The last part contains the dénouement of the plot created by the order to throw the three insubordinate Jews into a furnace which was made seven times hotter than usual and led to the instant death of the men who threw them into the furnace (vv. 20, 23).

h the king is surprised by the presence of a fourth man in the furnace	vv. 51-90
i he calls the three men from the furnace	v. 26
j everybody sees that they have not been harmed in the furnace	v. 27
k the king acknowledges the power of the Jews' God	v. 28
k he orders all to show respect to the Jews' God	v. 29
k he favours the three Jews	v. 30

The tale is constructed in a straightforward way to build up to the climax in vv. 28-30 where the sovereignty and power of the Jewish God is emphasized. The songs in the deuterocanonical books have the same purpose, with phrases such as, "you are upright in all that you have done for us, all your deeds are true, all your ways right..." (v. 27); "May you be blessed, Lord, God of our ancestors, be praised and extolled for ever" (v. 52); and "he has rescued us from the Underworld, he has saved us from the hand of Death, he has snatched us from the burning fiery furnace, he has drawn us from the heart of the flame! Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his love is everlasting" (v. 88-89).[3]

The macrostructure can be summarized (Lucas 2002:86):

A	Nebuchadnezzar decrees that a golden image be erected	1-7
B	The Jews accused	8-12
C	The Jews threatened	13-15
D	*The Jews confess their faith*	16-18
C¹	The Jews punished	19-23
B¹	The Jews vindicated	24-27
A¹	Nebuchadnezzar decrees that the Jewish God be honoured	28-30

4. DANIEL 3 AS SATIRICAL COMEDY

Satire refers to an unsatisfactory state of affairs, a militant word art where author as well as reader protests against this state of affairs, a reality that is experienced as threatening (Pretorius, 1992:464). In the case of the author and readers of the Book of Daniel it was dangerous to criticize Antiochus IV Epiphanes, and therefore satirical tales that originated in another context

---

1 "Chaldeans" refer not to the Babylonians in general but to divinatory specialists at the Babylonian court (Hartman & DiLella 1978:161; Collins 1993:186; Kirkpatrick 2005:101).

2 Wansbrough 1985:1473; Wills 1990:134-138.

3 The translation in the Jerusalem Bible is used.

are reutilized to describe the Jew's experience of the situation, but also to empower the Jew to act (Collins 1993:181). The real appeal of satire is in its literary merit; not what is said but how it is said, and what is not said determines the appeal of satire on the reader and listener (Pretorius, 1992:465).

An important element in satire is humour or comedy (Good, 1985:47-56). Humour is difficult to define because it is determined culturally and historically even though humour functions as an anthropological constant (Berger, 1997:10). Humour can be described in terms of three theories, according to Feinberg (1971:3-15): It is aimed at alleviating emotional stress or inhibitions about forbidden or taboo subjects; it is aimed at alleviating incongruity or frustration of expectations when acceptable conceptual patterns are shattered or upset; and it is aimed at confirming feelings of superiority or degradation. Martin (1998:15-60) proposes a holistic, three-dimensional model that acknowledges and described the cognitive, emotional and motivational causes of humour.

The storyteller in Daniel 3 playfully uses comedic and satiric elements to entertain the readers while also communicating a message of hope (Gunn & Fewell 1993:175; Lucas 2002:88). The essence of the tale is the confirmation of the sovereignty of the Jews' God by making fun at the foreign king who sings a song of praise to the Jewish God. Ironies, wordplays, mockery, hyperbole, and the fantastic characterize this short story leading to a highly structured, rhetorical masterpiece that accentuates both the king's grandiose view of himself and his true powerlessness (Valeta, 2008:79).

The king orders a top heavy, towering and tottering golden statue to be built that represents his majesty and power.[4] The word צְלֵם is a *Leitwort* and it occurs thirteen times in the chapter (vv. 2, 3, 5, 7, 12, 14, 18); it serves as a code for the Babylonian king's power (Aalders s.a.:79). The dimensions of the golden statue are excessive and exaggerated to the point of being unrealistically awkward (Hartman & DiLella 1978:160-161; Towner 1984:49; Collins 1993:181; Kirkpatrick 2005:101). The statue is in the form of an obelisk, with a base of three meters across and thirty meters high, causing the figure to be oddly shaped (Collins 1993:181) because it does not conform to the normal proportions of the human body (its proportions is 10:1 in contrast to the body's 6:1 or 5:1; Montgomery 1927:196; Aalders s.a.:78). The dimensions given reflect the Babylonian sexagesimal system, rather than the Egyptian decimal system, of numbers (Lucas 2002:88).

The emphasis in the tale is that Nebuchadnezzar is personally responsible for erecting the statue, and he is orchestrating the whole process, including its inception and unveiling (Kirkpatrick 2005:101). He has a direct interest in the destiny of the statue. That the statue is of gold reveals the economic power of the greatest sovereign on earth and its size reveals this king's permanence and stature (Fewell 1991:39).[5] The reader who has first-hand experience of the heavy burden of taxation imposed by the foreign king on his subjects, especially his exilic subjects, sees the irony of the servitude and phenomenal costs needed to build the statue in order to flatter the king's ego and the wasteful extravagance of imperial domination (Smith-Christopher 1996:61). The reader probably would have understood that the statue couldn't be

---

4 The text does not indicate when the erection of the statue happens, as in 2:1, although two Greek translations, the Septuagint and Theodotion, as well as the Syrian translation mention that it happens in the eighteenth year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, creating the impression that the king's rule has been well established. There is no good ground to accept the translations' dating of the event (Aalders s.a.:77; Lucas 2002:83).

5 Such statues were known from these times; Herodotus mentions a golden statue of Bel in Babel that was twelve cubits (el) or six meters high, and Diodorus Siculus mentions a statue that is twelve and a half meters high, while the colossus of Rhodes, one of the seven wonders of the world, was seventy cubits or thirty five meters high (Aalders s.a.:78; Lucas 2002:88).

of solid gold; it would have to be hollow to be in realistic capital terms. The grotesque, immense, disproportionate, golden statue is absurd and initial readers, informed by their faith in the Lord of the universe, might have reacted by smiling at the king's folly (Gunn & Fewell 1993:174-188).

Anyone reading the Book of Daniel would also see the connection between a statue in Daniel 2 with a head made of gold and the one in this tale (Fewell 1991:38-39). In Daniel 2 Nebuchadnezzar dreams how his empire would eventually topple, and directly afterwards (in terms of narrative chronology) he builds a statue representing his empire signifying its greatness but also its permanence. It is as though the king argues that if he could build a statue that would remain forever, his successors would not be able to topple his empire and in this way he would neutralize the power of the Hebrew God that demonstrated his power to establish his own kingdom at the cost of all earthly kingdoms. The Jewish reader in the second century BCE would know better, however. He would understand that this statue of gold would also be subservient to the sovereign Ruler of heaven and earth. The statue would become a monument to the king's fatal flaw in thinking that he could determine future events relating to his heritage.

The comedic intent of the tale is demonstrated by the use of lists throughout (Coxon 1986:109). There are lists of government officials with grandiloquent and pompous titles in verses 2, 3 and 27; of musical instruments in 5, 7, 10 and 15; and of subjects of the king in 4, 7, and 29.[6] The repetition in the lists and of the different lists are a technique of wordplay that fixes the reader's attention on the ludicrousness of what is happening (Gunn & Fewell 1993:175). The king is demonstrating his majestic splendour at all costs - everyone must attend the unveiling of his statue, all kinds of musical instruments must be used, and all people must obey his command to fall down and pay obeisance to the statue. The reader listening for the first time to the tale would feel the pompousness and stiltedness associated with the king's orders.

The lists in staccato form demonstrate the mechanical way in which everything is done in accordance with the wishes of the king and how everyone obeys him, in stark contrast to the three Jews, which the reader meets in verse 12. Perhaps the lists also serve as a satire on pagan culture (Avalos 1991:581).

That the list of all the officials that Nebuchadnezzar summons, including "and all the officials of the provinces" to include those not mentioned under the first six descriptions (v. 3), is repeated in identical form in verse 4 for all that come for the dedication of the statue, that turned into worship of the statue, reveals that the author is not interested in merely mentioning facts. The author wants to emphasize that the mighty king orchestrates the erection and dedication of his statue but that he also gets what he wants (Baldwin 1978:102). The audience provides adequate recognition of Nebuchadnezzar's need for social acknowledgement, and the hierarchical pecking order of the kingdom's elite, those who have high status and great honour themselves, affirming the loyal clientage of his administration, need to complete the picture at the ostentatious and pretentious ceremony (Kirkpatrick 2005:102). The size of the statue correlates with the obedience of his subjects, including employees of the treasury, judiciary, advisory, and governing bodies.

The king commands everyone to fall down and worship the statue; a command repeated in identical form in verses 6, 7, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15 and 18.[7] And everyone obeys him, as the list

---

6 By using the same terms for the king's subjects in 4:1 as in 3:29 the tales in Dan. 3 and 4 are linked to each other.

7 The honor demanded by the king for his statue representing his majesty can be defined as "the value of a person in his own eyes, but also in the eyes of society. It is his estimation of his own worth, his *claim* to pride, but it is also the acknowledgement of that claim, his excellence recognized by society, his *right* to pride" (Pitt-Rivers 1977:1). Nebuchadnezzar sets up the statue, seeking public acknowledgement, but also arranges for an audience to provide adequate recognition.

of people, nations, and tongues repeated in verses 4, 7, and 29 (and 31 with slight variation) declares. The musical instruments conscripted for the occasion are mentioned with minor differences in verses 5, 7, 10, and 15. Although the exact nature of the instruments mentioned is not known today the intention is clear, as the author provides all these detail in order to describe the total obedience of everyone to the command of the king (Hartman & DiLella 1978:154-155; Collins 1993:182; Baldwin 1978:103 reads v. 7 literally, "As soon as they were hearing they were falling down," to demonstrate the total and immediate response of the subjects). The narrative with its repetitions provides the reader with the idea that the king controls everything and everyone obeys the king unconditionally (Bar-Efrat 1984:212).

The penalty for disobedience is mentioned in verses 6, 11, 15, and 20, and the references to a red-hot furnace is repeated in verses 17, 21, 23, and 26 (Baldwin 1978:102 reminds that the adjectives, "burning fiery," appear redundant and is used by way of expressing the superlative). The furnace is heated to extraordinary temperatures according to verses 19 and 22, and "fire" is repeated in verses 24, 25, 26 and two times in 27, making the furnace of fire another *Leitmotiv* alongside the statue.

Wordplay can be found in the lists of officials in verses 2 and 3 with consonance, a technique of repetition of consonants at the end of words with a rhyming effect. Paronomasia, synonymic assonance and alliteration can be found in verse 4 and consonance is also utilized, again by the definite article ending. Verse 7 closes with paronomasia ("all;" "sound;" "all"), reinforcing the king's expectation of absolute obedience to his commands (Bar-Efrat 1984:201-202). Royal power is absolute, the subjects' obedience is unconditional, and everyone obeys the king (Gunn & Fewell 1993:175). The highly structured nature of the narrative creates a contrast with the three Jews' behaviour when they persistently refuse to obey the king's orders (vv. 16-18).

In verse 8 a discordant note sounds when the king's advisors denounce their fellow courtiers and their way of reporting agrees with the way the king's command and the lists are described. Verse 9's "O King, live forever!" is repeated in 2:4; 5:10; 6:6 and 21, becoming more and more ironical (Bar-Efrat 1984:67). The Chaldeans repeat the order to fall down and the penalty for refusing, as though the king needs reminding. The names of the three recalcitrant Jews are repeated no less than thirteen times to highlight the comedic aspect (Avalos 1991:587). Readers hear professional jealousy, envy[8] and xenophobia in the light of the performance of the Jewish component of Babylonian courtiers (1:20; 2:46) by men who are well aware of the circumstances in which these Jews were appointed and they resent the king's promotion of foreigners over their heads (Baldwin 1978:103-104; Collins 1993:186; Le Roux 1995:29; Lucas 2002:94). They "eat the pieces of flesh torn off from somebody's body" by slandering the Jews (Koehler & Baumgartner 1958:1121; Baldwin 1978:103; Kutsch 1997:636).

The three Jews are introduced by using their Babylonian names that probably refer to the names of Babylonian gods. The narrator uses it satirically to remind the readers of the interplay behind the tale of the Jewish God and the Babylonian gods, as the friends refer to in verse 18 (Baldwin 1978:104; Le Roux 1995:4; Aalders s.a.:83).

Their reply in verse 16b, "We do not need to answer you," is not the language of arrogance but only a way to explain that they do not need to manage their own defence (Helberg 1994:47; Aalders s.a.:84), as verse 17 explains, "We have the God we serve and He has the power to save us from your power. And even if he does not save us, you must know that we will not serve your god or worship the golden statue that you erected". Their answer demonstrates that the battle lines are drawn between the different gods rather than between the king and his recalcitrant

---

8 Kirkpatrick (2005:95) discusses "envy" from an anthropological perspective and defines it as aggression in response to the success of others. "Jealousy" also operates in response to one's own success and seeks to protect one's own possessions, whether of material or social value (Kirkpatrick 2005:96).

foreign subjects. The Jews face a choice between offering loyalty to a foreign king as patron and maintaining loyalty to their Judean Patron-God (Kirkpatrick 2005:103).

The king's reaction witnesses of his lack of control *contra* the picture of him created in the first part of the tale. After granting the Jews another opportunity to display their obedience and loyalty he becomes infuriated and his expression (צְלֵם) was changed (v. 19). The same word is used as for the statue, indicating the identity between the king and his statue. Perhaps the statue is an actual image of the king (Meadowcroft 1995:148), as suggested by verses 12 and 14 (Lucas 2002:88), and the reader remembers how the statue (צְלֵם) in Daniel was destroyed, satirizing the king (Fewell 1991:51). The Book of Daniel consistently describes the kings' responses in these terms; the kings lack emotional control or maturity and they react in a distorted way to events in contrast to the calm and measured way of reacting of the Jewish protagonists.

The Jews' response is short and measured in contrast to the long windedness and verbosity of the rest of the tale. They simply refuse to serve the king's god and worship his statue even if they die at the king's hand.[9]

The king's reaction is dominated by the references to the fiery furnace, with the fire symbolizing the king's fury and rage (Brensinger 2002:12). The furnace is red-hot (vv. 20, 21, 23, 26) but the fire does not consume the Jews (vv. 24, 25, 26, 27). The clothing of the three Jews is described in an alliterative list while the bounding of them is described in verses 20, 21, 23 and 24, in contrast to their being unbound (v. 25), indicating that the king's will is not done even though he tries his very best (Le Roux 1995:30). The scene creates an atmosphere of absurdity and humour.

That the furnace is heated seven times hotter than normal is hyperbolic and the consumption of the soldiers who throw the Jews into the furnace is grotesque. The seven-fold increase in the heat symbolically participates in the king's enkindled rage and consuming indignation (Kirkpatrick 2005:103). These soldiers bowed before the king's gods and his statue but have to die in carrying out their king's orders, an ironic twist to the tale.

The three Jews are unharmed but also unbound in the fire and walking around with a fourth person whose appearance the king describes as that of a son of the gods. Aalders (s.a.:85) interprets "son of the gods" in terms of ancient belief in creatures belonging for one half to the gods and the other half to humanity, and mentioned that the belief was widespread in the ancient world. He is not correct; for the polytheist Nebuchadnezzar the phrase would rather mean "a member of the pantheon" (Lucas 2002:92). The three Jews in distress find the time to compose and sing two elaborate hymns, as mentioned in the deuterocanonical Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible.[10] What should have been an execution leads to a theophany and when Nebuchadnezzar approaches the furnace to call the Jews the fire does not consume him as happened to his soldiers (v. 26). He calls the Jews "servants of God Most High," a title for God found in the Psalms, but elsewhere only on the lips of non-Jews (Gn. 14:18; Nb. 24:16; Is. 14:14; Wansbrough 1985:1477).

With the three Jews coming unharmed out of the furnace the author gives a last but abbreviated list of officials present at the ceremony (v. 27a), as though their importance is cut back to size. The officials inspect the three's bodies and hair, clothes and smell (v. 27b). It is as

---

9 Kirkpatrick (2005:104) explains that in the ancient world religion was bound up in kinship (domestic religion) and politics (political religion) and was thus inseparable from ethnic identity, traditional heritage, and collective honor. Religion concerns the proper respect and homage due to those on the ladder on whose rungs stand those who control one's existence (in terms of Malina's image).

10 Qumran showed conclusively that these additions were not part of the original where 1QDan[b], and apparently 4QDan[d], and other fragments lack the Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Hebrews, like the MT (Lucas 2002:85).

though they have to make absolutely certain that the men are unharmed, a humorous picture as if the officials are examining the Jews for lice (Valeta 2008:86).

The king has become converted and he utters the believer's prayer in verse 28, praising the Jews' God who rescued his servants when they chose to disobey the king and preferred to die rather than worship the king's gods and statue. Then the king issues another decree declaring that anybody who speaks disrespectfully of the Jews' God would be torn limb from limb and their houses destroyed (v. 29), as radical as the punishment for anyone who refused to bow before the statue. The tale ends with the king promoting the three Jews and showering favours on them (v. 30).

The king's reaction to God's interference reminds of his response in Daniel 2, where he offered an oblation and sacrifice to Daniel, gave him many presents and promoted him to a high rank (2:48-49). Now he embraces the Jews' God, the God of his conquered subjects who was also conquered by the Babylonian king (Good 1984:52). The conversion of the king is however conditional, as verse 29 testifies that his ethics has not changed much when he promises to kill anybody who does not obey his command (Fewell 1991:58; Valeta 2008:86).

Daniel and his friends were already promoted to the top positions according to 2:49; the king cannot give them more power that they have. The king is portrayed as a laughable and preposterous model of instability that reacts emotionally and unrealistically to whatever happens. The narrator is telling the tale with tongue in the cheek and a smile on the face.

The tale is about possessors of true power, with the mighty Babylonian king demonstrating his by erecting a statue of immense proportions just to find (again) that the Jews' God is more powerful and in control of heathen kings and their folly. "The mocking tone of the passage recalls the more obvious jibes of the prophets of the exile who, with devastating sarcasm, denounces the idols of his day as nothing and less than nothing before the greatness of the majesty of the living God whom Israel worshipped and served" (Russell 1989:59). The attack on idolatry witnesses to the real danger that Babylonian idolatry poses to Jewish exiles living in a foreign society and the temptation to bow the knee before the oppressor's mighty gods (Lucas 2002:93).

The heart of the conflict in the tale contains a comparison between the Judean God and the Babylonian king who puts himself in the place that rightly belongs only to God (Kirkpatrick 2005:93).

What initial readers would have heard is that heathen kings are not as all-powerful as they (and their subjects) think, but that they are subject to the authority of the Jews' God. The tale is humorous in order to demonstrate the foolishness of a heathen king in thinking that he can decide about the fate of God's people, the Jews. They would laugh at the Babylonian king who never learns his lesson because the next tale finds the king driven from society and living with the wild animals as a lunatic because he did not confess the rule of the Most High over human sovereignty (4:22). And by laughing at powerful heathen kings they would be encouraged to persist in their faithfulness to God in the face of Antiochus' prohibition to serve him.

5. SYNTHESIS

The Daniel tales (Dan 1-6) had at times been interpreted as haggadic tales, wisdom tales, customized martyr tales, midrash tales, religious or popular romances, miracle tales, court tales, court legends, and comedies, and in each case the interpretation had extracted some elements that are useful in reading and understanding the tales. In the article a narratological approach was utilized by concentrating on the satirical elements in Daniel 3 in order to test the premise that there are enough satirical elements in Daniel 3 so that a satirical analysis can be useful in explaining the passage and unlocking some of the impact of the tales on readers.

Satire is a word art where the author protests against an unsatisfactory state of affairs and a threatening reality (Pretorius, 1992:464). As it was dangerous to criticize Antiochus IV Epiphanes during his oppression of the Jewish religion and identity, satirical tales that originated in another context were reutilized to describe the Jew's experience of the situation, but also to empower the Jew to act. Readers living in the second century BCE who experienced the oppression of a foreign king suppressing their religion could not help but smile when reading the tale in Daniel 3 because the narrator uses satirical humour to demonstrate how worldly kings preposterously cut down the Jewish God, only to find out that he cuts them off because he is in charge of the world, including their kingdoms. The conclusion is that a satirical reading of Daniel 3 provides information about the initial readers' response to the tale because it explains the humorous elements as a way to convey the author's encouragement to his/her listeners.

The tales combine with the visions to form an apocalyptic book that uses mythological and metaphorical language to describe otherworldly realities and the battles between them that determine the present reality and its end when a new world order would introduce the kingdom of Jews as dominating all the kingdoms of the world. The tales mock the Syrian king and his gods when it emphasizes the power of the sovereign God of the Jews over all powers.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Aalders, G.Ch. s.a. *Daniël. Korte verklaring van de Heilige Schrift.* Kampen: Uitgeversmij Kok.

Avalos, H.I. 1991. The Comedic Function of the Enumerations of Officials and Instruments in Daniel 3. CBQ 53:580-588.

Baldwin, J.G. 1978. *Daniel.* Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries. Leicester: Inter-Varsity.

Bar-Efrat, S 1984. *Narrative Art in the Bible.* JSOTSup 70. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic.

Barr, D.L. 1984. The Apocalypse as a Symbolic Transformation of the World: A Literary Analysis. *Int* 38:39-40.

Berger, P. 1997. *Redeeming Laughter: The Comic Dimension of Human Experience.* New York: W. de Gruyter.

Beyerle, S. 2002. The Book of Daniel and its Social Setting, in Collins, J.J. & Flint, P.W. (eds.) *The Book of Daniel. Composition and Reception.* Vol 1, 205-228. Boston / Leiden: Brill.

Bickerman, E.J. 1984. *Four Strange Books of the Bible: Jonah, Daniel, Koheleth, Esther.* New York: Schocken.

Birch, B.C., Brueggemann, W., Fretheim, T.E. & Petersen, D.L. 1999. *A Theological Introduction to the Old Testament.* Nashville: Abingdon.

Brensinger, T.L. 2002. Compliance, Dissonance, and Amazement in Daniel 3. *EJ* 20:7-19.

Brueggemann, W. 1997. *Theology of the Old Testament.* Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy. Minneapolis: Fortress.

Collins, J.J. 1985. Daniel and His Social World. *Int* 39:131-143.

Collins, J.J. 1993. *Daniel. A Commentary on the Book of Daniel.* Hermeneia. Minneapolis: Fortress.

Collins, J.J. 2004. *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible.* Minneapolis: Fortress.

Coxon, P.W. 1986. The "List" Genre and Narrative Style in the Court Tales of Daniel. *JSOT* 35:95-121.

Feinberg, L. (ed.). 1971. *Asian Laughter: An Anthology of Oriental Satire and Humor.* New York: Weatherhill.

Fewell, D.N. 1991. *Circle of Sovereignty*. Plotting Politics in the Book of Daniel. Second edition. Nashville: Abingdon.

Good, E.M. 1985. Apocalypse as comedy: The book of Daniel. *Semeia* 32:41-70.

Grabbe, L. 1989. The Social Setting of Early Jewish Apocalypticism. *JSP* 4:27-47.

Gunn, D.M. & Fewell, D.N. 1993. *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible.* Oxford Bible Series. New York: Oxford University.

Hartman, L.F. & DiLella, A.A. 1978. *The Book of Daniel.* AB. Garden City, NY: Doubleday.

Helberg, J.L. 1994. *Die Boek Daniël.* Skrifuitleg vir Bybelstudent en gemeente. Kaapstad: N.G. Kerk-Uitgewers.

KoehlerL. & Baumgartner, W. 1958. *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros.* Leiden: E.J. Brill.

Kirkpatrick, S. 2005. Competing for Honor. A Social-scientific Reading of Daniel 1-6. Leiden / Boston: Brill.

Kutsch, E. 1997. krt to cut off, in Jenni, E. & Westermann, C. *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Vol

2. Tr. by M.E. Biddle, 635-637. Peabody, Ma.: Hendrickson.

Le Roux, C. 1995. *Profeet en politiek.* Daniël. Die Woord vir die mense. Halfway House: Orion.

Lucas, E.C. 2002. *Daniel.* Apollos Old Testament Commentary 20. Leicester: Apollos. Downers Grove: InterVarsity.

Martin, R.A. 1998. Approaches to the Sense of Humor: A Historical Review, in Ruch, W. (ed.). *The Sense of Humor. Explorations of Personality Characteristic,* 15-60. New York: W. de Gruyter.

Meadowcroft, T.J. 1995. *Aramaic Daniel and Greek Daniel. A Literary Comparison.* JSOTSup 162. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic.

Montgomery, J.A. 1927. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel.* New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

Pitt-Rivers, J. 1977. *The Fate of Shechem, or the Politics of Sex.* Essays in the Anthropology of the Mediterranean. Cambridge: Cambridge University.

Pretorius, R. 1992. Satire, in Cloete, T.T. (red.). *Literêre terme en teorieë,* 464-465. Pretoria: HAUM Literêr.

Ricoeur, O. 1976. *Interpretation theory.* Discourse and the surplus of meaning. Fort Worth: Texas University.

Russell, D.S. 1989. *Daniel. An Active Volcano*. Edinburgh: Saint Andrew.

Smith-Christopher, D.L. 1996. Daniel, in Keck, L.E. (ed.) *The Interpreter's Bible.* Nashville: Abingdon.

Towner, W.S. 1984. Daniel. IBC. Atlanta: John Knox.

Valeta, D.M. 2008. *Lions and Ovens and Visions.* A Satirical Reading of Daniel 1-6. Hebrew Bible Monographs, 12. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix.

Wansbrough, H. (ed.) 1985. *The New Jerusalem Bible*. Standard edition. London: Darton, Longman & Todd.

Wills, L.M. 1990. *The Jews in the Court of the Foreign King.* Ancient Jewish Court Legends. HDR 26. Minneapolis: Fortress.

KEY WORDS
Satire
Comedy
Apocalypse
Antiochan oppression
statue of gold

TREFWOORDE
Satire
Komedie
Apokalips
Antiocheense verdrukking
beeld van goud

Marius Nel
Extraordinary Professor, School of Biblical Studies and Ancient Languages, North-West University, Potchefstroom
P.O. Box 12373 BENDOR PARK ZA-0713
Cell: +27 83 454-9126 Office: +27 15 295-4508
E-mail: marius@tabernadei.co.za; nel.marius1@gmail.com

Nkonge Kagema, Dickson
Chuka University College, Kenya

Developing church leaders in Africa for reliable leadership: A Kenyan perspective

ABSTRACT

Reliable leadership is an indispensable component of any progressive society. The rapidly changing African society with its numerous challenges calls for reliable leadership. The Church which is the most trusted institution has failed to offer this reliable leadership to the African society. In spite of the fact that the Church in Africa is experiencing tremendous numerical growth, she has failed to produce enough leaders and the few available are not well-equipped to meet the needs of the African people in this century. If the Church in Africa hopes to be relevant to the African society, she has to re-think her training system. She must produce leaders who can be relied on by the African people. This is only possible if she produces enough well-qualified leaders to match the rapidly growing African Church and society.

1. INTRODUCTION

Africa needs reliable leadership today more than any other time before. Christian leadership just as the political leadership has become one of the major challenges facing the African society today. The twenty-first century as anticipated has come with numerous challenges, whereby Africa just as the rest of the world is undergoing rapid socio-economic and political changes, yet the leaders (both in the church and political spheres) are not able to adjust to these changes. New scientific and technological inventions have made the society more complex than it has ever been. The youths are the ones mostly affected by these changes as they wrestle to become 'modern' in a society where there are few role models. In face of these challenges, church leaders have been relied upon by the people to offer solutions but unfortunately this seems not to have happened. It can be argued in this paper that the Church which is one of the most reliable institutions in Africa seems not to have produced leaders who can be relied on by the church and society. Hendriks (2006) denotes that the churches in Africa have by far the highest level of public trust and as such can contribute immensely towards Africa's moral regeneration and towards the development of African leadership.

One question we may need to ask is whether the people in Africa can trust church leaders the same way they trust the Church as an institution. This paper mainly focuses on Kenya where the public trust in church leadership is slowly fading away as witnessed in August 2010. Although most of the church leaders in Kenya were against the new constitution (http://naibobi.wantedinafrica.com/news;http://allafrica.com/stories), the majority of the church members voted for it (Kenya Gazette, August 2010).[1] According to the poll conducted by Silo Breaker Star

---

[1]. When the New Constitution was drafted in 2010, the Church Leaders urged their members to reject it on the ground that it did not allow religious equity due to the provision it made for the Islamic Courts and also the clause allowing doctors to terminate pregnancy in the event that the mother's life was in danger. They argued that this was an indirect way of legalizing abortion in Kenya. The church leaders mobilized their followers to vote 'No' to reject the New Law. When the Referendum was held on 4 August 2010, the new constitution was ratified by over 67% of the votes cast. According to the Kenya Gazette (August

after the referendum on the constitution held in Kenya on 5 August 2010, about 58 per cent of Kenyans interviewed confessed to have lost trust in their church leaders (Silo Breaker Star 2010). This may be an indication of what is happening in the whole of Africa. The church in Africa is physically a growing institution and one wonders why such a trusted organization has not been able to produce trusted leaders.

2. LEADERSHIP NEEDS FOR A GROWING KENYAN CHURCH

The Church in Kenya just like in the rest of Africa is a numerically growing Church. Hendriks (2006) asserts that the one success story in Africa especially after the colonial period is the growth of the Christian Church. The Christian world's centre of gravity is currently shifting southwards to Africa, Asia and Latin America (Jenkins 2002). We however need to note that this numerical/physical growth does not correspond to the spiritual or even theological growth. In other words, the problem statement is that the church in Africa is growing numerically but not spiritually or theologically. This implies that the Church in Africa is expanding in terms of numbers, but its quality remains questionable. In the year 2005, the author studied the Anglican Church in Meru in Kenya and the findings had a lot to tell about the general Church in Africa. He found the Anglican Church in Meru was growing at a tremendously high rate, but the kind of Christianity that was being practiced was very superficial with many church members being Christians on Sundays but retreating to their traditions on other days (Nkonge 2005:80). Might this be an indication of what the entire Africa is experiencing? In this paper, we are however not concerned with the spiritual growth but with the theological output (although spiritual matters are not separate from theological issues), whereby we shall be asking whether the rapidly growing Kenyan church has managed to produce church leaders at the same rate so as to match this numerical growth. So to speak, reliability deals with the quantity and quality. In this case then, has the church in Kenya or even the whole of Africa produced enough and well-trained church leaders who can be relied upon to offer leadership in this century which has many challenges?

The Church in Kenya has been experiencing a tremendous growth since its inception in the nineteenth-century. Christianity was started in Kenya by the European missionaries who had come under the auspices of various Missionary Societies including, the Church Missionary Society (CMS) which started the Anglican Church in 1844, the Holy Ghost Mission (HGM) which planted the Catholic Church in Kenya in 1860, the United Methodist Mission (UMM) which started the Methodist Church in 1862 and the Church of Scotland Mission (CSM) which started the Presbyterian Church in 1891(Mumo 1997: 1). All these churches were started on the East African coast. Earlier efforts by the Portuguese to evangelize East Africa in the sixteenth-century did not bear much fruit as they were not very keen to put in practice what they propagated. While they emphasized that a Christian should have good morals, they had very rotten morals where some of them kept African concubines and most of them concentrated on commerce than on the gospel (Nkonge 2005: 24). As a result their religion had no impact in the lives of the Africans and in 1729 they were expelled from the East Africa by the Arabs (Baur 1990:23). From then henceforth, East Africa remained for a long time without any Christian presence until the Mission Societies in Europe started to send missionaries in the nineteenth-century (Waruta 1989:83).

David Barrett (1982:32) in the 1980's showed that Christianity in Kenya was the most preferred religion by the majority of Kenyans hence growing very fast. He estimated that Christians constituted 73% the Kenya's population and projected that this figure would rise to about 81.9% at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Barrett's projections are viable because according

---

2010), 6, 092, 593 Kenyans voted in the favor of the new law, while 2,795, 059 were against.

to the 2009 Kenya's population census released last year, about 82.5 % of Kenyans are Christians (Daily Nation, 2010 September). In the year 2008, I conducted research on the Anglican Church of Kenya (ACK). The findings of this research were that the ACK was experiencing tremendous numerical growth, about 6.7% per annum. The study also projected that if the same trend is maintained, about 18% of Kenyans will be Anglicans by the year 2030. The year 2030 is important because it is the year which Kenya plans to be fully developed (Nkonge 2008:63).

In this paper, we shall look at the four main Christian denominations in Kenya namely, the Roman Catholic Church (RCC), the Anglican Church of Kenya (ACK), the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA) and the Methodist Church in Kenya (MCK) to serve as examples to help us determine what is happening in Kenya and the rest of Africa. I have chosen these churches because they are the strongest denominations in Kenya today. The table below shows the estimate adherents of these churches in the year 2010 and their percentages in relation to the country's population which according to the 2009 population census results released in 2010 is about 38.6 million (Daily Nation, 2010 September). These figures are calculated from the churches' membership returns available at their headquarters in Nairobi.

Table 1- Adherents in the selected churches

Churches	Adherents	Percentage
Roman Catholic Church	9,028,525	23.3
Anglican Church (ACK)	3,960,587	10.3
Presbyterian Church (PCEA)	2,835,000	7.3
Methodist Church (MCK)	1,150,000	2.9
Total	16,974,112	43.8

According to the 2009 population census, Christians constitute about 82.5% of Kenyan population. If the main denominations in Kenya (RCC, ACK, PCEA and MCK) enjoy a following of about 43.8 % of Kenya's population as the table above indicates, then it means that the remaining churches such as the African Independent Churches (AICs), the Pentecostal Churches, the New Religious Movements and others form about 38.7% of Kenya's population. So the RCC, ACK, PCEA and MCK are the strongest denominations in Kenya. Kenya is predominantly a Christian country and church growth in this country cannot be understated (Daily Nation, 2010 September).

One question we need to ask ourselves is, if the church is growing so rapidly in Kenya, has it been able to produce reliable church leaders to match this growth? Can we be proud that we are a rapidly growing Church? Are the church leaders enough and well-equipped to manage the affairs of this growing Kenyan Church? This is our main concern in this paper. To answer some of these questions we shall start by looking at the estimate number of clergy (and their qualifications) currently serving in the denominations which we have selected. This will tell us what is exactly happening in these churches and the church in Africa in general.

2.1 Number of clergy serving in the RCC, ACK, PCEA, MCK and their qualifications
As we have already elucidated, *reliability* in this paper entails looking at whether the church in Kenya has enough well qualified church leaders to lead it in this challenging century. Reliable leadership here means that pastoral leaders are available whenever needed by their flock to offer spiritual help and guidance and that they are well-trained to meet the various challenges facing the African society today. In 1950s, Oliver (1952: 289, 291-2) while describing the situation in the African Church was startled that churches in East Africa and Africa as a whole had failed to allure the elite Africans into their leadership. This is in contrast to the

initial decades of colonialism when the literate Africans became either chiefs or churchmen. With the development of secondary education and the growth of secular opportunities the churches began to be left behind in the competition for the best educated Africans. The situation aggravated with the beginnings of higher education in Africa when most of the best educated people opted for secular employment. Oliver concludes that 'the church led by peasant priests risks disintegrating at the centre while expanding at the circumference.' In other words, the Church may expand numerically but if it lacks reliable leadership then it cannot go far. In 1970s, Mbiti (1971:177) was perturbed by the fact that in spite of the rapid growth experienced by the African Church in terms of the numerical growth, the church still lacked qualified leaders in its leadership and quality theological discernment. He lamented that "The church in East Africa and Africa as a whole as a whole has come into existence and has grown evangelistically and not theologically". The church that was experiencing a tremendous numerical growth had little to show for it in terms of the theological output. The Church in Africa had grown extensively in terms of members, sponsored schools, clinics, dispensaries and other physical facilities, yet the pastor remained the least educated person in the educated section of the society. He therefore lamented that 'the Church in East Africa and Africa as a whole has come into existence and has grown evangelistically and not theologically.' In the 1980s, Mugambi (1984:1-4) raised a similar concern. Till then, the Church in Africa could not attract the African elite into its leadership. The luscious well-paying secular jobs took the best educated Africans while the church which was perceived by many as a 'poor employer' was able to attract only the least educated Africans in its leadership.

We need to ask ourselves whether the situation today is different from what these scholars had observed. We have already seen that the church in Kenya is a growing church, experiencing remarkable numerical growth since its inception in the nineteenth-century. In this section, we need to find out whether the Church in Kenya is producing enough and qualified leaders to match this rapid growth. Can we be proud that we have a rapidly growing Church in Kenya? The success of any organization, the Church included, largely depends on its ability to produce enough and well-qualified, reliable leaders.

2.2 Estimate Number of Clergy Serving in Our Selected Churches

Table 2 below shows the estimate number of clergy serving in the mainline churches in Kenya in the year 2010. The number of clergy serving in these churches has been acquired from the headquarters of these denominations in Nairobi and also from their directories. The clergy working in institutions/places other than in the parishes are not included. For the Catholic Church only the diocesan clergy are considered.

Table 2- The Number of clergy working in the selected churches

Denomination	No. of Christians	No. of Clergy	Clergy per Christians Ratio
Roman Catholic	9,028,525	1,479	1: 6104
ACK	3,960,587	1,555	1:2547
PCEA	2,835,000	613	1:4625
MCK	1,150,000	247	1:4656

Figures in this table show the dismal situation facing the church in Kenya today. In table 1, we showed that the church in Kenya is experiencing remarkable numerical growth. The ratio of clergy per Christians in table 2 is, however, worrying. There are very few pastors serving the large

and growing population of Christians in Kenya today. Figures in table 2 show that in the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) one priest takes care of the spiritual needs of about 6100 Christians and in the Protestant churches one pastor serves about 2500, 4600 and 4700 Christians in the ACK, PCEA and MCK respectively. The question we should ask ourselves is how one pastor can effectively nurture such a large flock without some of them dying of hunger or thirst. Is it practically possible for one pastor/ priest to effectively satisfy the spiritual needs of 6100, 2500, 4600 or 4700 'sheep' without some of them going astray? The Gospel of John (1:1-5) gives an illustration of a shepherd and his flock whereby it says that (NIV),

> The sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them and leads them out.

This text refers to Jesus Christ who is a very reliable shepherd of his flock. Reliable leadership entails that the shepherd knows his sheep by name including the old, young, weak, strong, sick and so on. This is only achievable if he/she is near them. If he/she is close to them then he/she is aware of all the challenges they are facing. In his study of the Anglican Church of Kenya, the author noted that although the ACK had a membership of about 3,711,890 adherents in the year 2008, only about 1,565,056 (42%) Anglicans attended the church services regularly (active members). The remaining 2,146,839 (58%) members were just Anglicans by name. He attributed this to, amongst others, a lack of enough pastors to serve the rapidly growing Anglican Church in Kenya. He concluded that 'A situation whereby 58% of the church members are not taken care of spiritually is a dangerous one' and so called on the ACK's leadership to wake up and address the situation without further delay' (Nkonge 2008:64). This is basically what is happening in all the African churches. The African Church is growing remarkably but it lacks enough leaders to match this growth as is clearly exemplified by the Kenyan situation.

This may explain why some Christians keep on moving from one denomination to another in search of spiritual nourishment. Currently, the ACK Diocese of Meru where I was born, brought up and ordained is among the smallest dioceses in the ACK. It has only roughly 12,872 members of which the majorities (about 95%) are defectors from other denominations mainly the PCEA, MCK and RCC.[2] In December 2010, I conducted research in the diocese to ascertain why some Christians had defected from their original churches such as the RCC, PCEA and the MCK to join the ACK. I interviewed 28 ACK members asking them why they had preferred the ACK to their original churches. Out of these 28 members, 23 (82.1 %) cited poor leadership in their original churches as the main cause of their defection. Asked to explain further, 17 (77.3 % of those who had cited poor leadership) said that they felt segregated because they had nobody to share their problems with as their pastors were inaccessible. Interestingly, 11 (39% of those interviewed) confessed that they were considering defecting to other churches because the ACK was still not meeting their spiritual needs. In this case therefore, success in leadership is gauged in terms of availability of the pastors. Some churches make it very hard for Christians to have access to their bishops or pastors. At times, the pastor may be willing to listen to all his/her flock but it becomes difficult due to the large numbers he/she is handling. A bishop or a pastor who always insists on appointments before his flock can see him/her is bound to fail. Table 2 clearly indicates that the church in Kenya has a real problem due to lack of enough clergy to lead it in spite of its rapid growth. A shepherd is a friend of all and can only claim to know his sheep if he knows their needs. Looking at the ratio of clergy per Christians, one wonders whether one priest/pastor can effectively nurture such a large group without some of the flock getting lost. The challenges of

---

2 The dominant denominations in Meru are the Roman Catholic Church (RCC), PCEA and MCK. The ACK is new having been started in 1969 as compared to RCC in 1913, PCEA in 1910 and MCK in 1910.

the twenty-first century are immense and call for a pastor/priest who is quite near to his/her sheep so that he/she can understand them and their needs. Such a pastor is able to meet the spiritual needs of his Christians. Therefore, although the Church in Kenya is growing rapidly, it does not produce enough leaders. One may ask why the growth continues even if there are not enough pastors.

In this regard the important influence of other ministries within the church in Kenya and Africa as a whole need to be recognized. The ministry of the laity has played a significant role in the growth of the church in Kenya and the rest of Africa. For instance, the structural organization of the Catholic Church is unique. Apart from the priests, there are other trained church leaders entrusted with the spiritual welfare of the Catholic congregations and parishes. These include Brothers, Sisters and Catechists. Therefore, although the priests are few, other church leaders play a significant role in shepherding and evangelization. For example, by the end of the year 2009, the Catholic Church had about 7,499 catechists (Catholic Church Directory 2009). Other denominations have a similar arrangement. The ACK has lay leaders and evangelists; the PCEA has church elders and evangelists and the MCK has accredited preachers and evangelists. But what makes the Catholic Church distinct from the Protestant churches is the fact that the Brothers, Sisters and Catechists are trained people. Sometimes Brothers and Sisters go through the same training with priests. What distinguishes them is the kind of services they offer. In the Protestant churches the lay leaders, church elders, preachers and evangelists are not necessarily trained people (see Mugambi 1995: 27-29).

However, those familiar with what is happening on the ground know that the success of the church in Kenya is mainly attributed to these lay people. It is therefore important that the church starts to think about them so that they are well-equipped for their ministry. The twenty-first century has come with numerous challenges and the society has become complex with many people who are well-educated. The success of the church depends on how well she is prepared to address the spiritual needs of this complex society. We cannot expect a lay leader, church elder or a preacher who is not well-trained to address the spiritual needs of a congregation which has professors, doctors, teachers, engineers and other professionals. The Kenyan Church needs to re-think its leadership development.

Some denominations have tried to address the problem of lay church leadership training by starting some institutions which mainly concentrate on training lay church leaders, but they are also facing a lot of challenges. For instance in 1958, the ACK started Church Army Africa to train Anglican evangelists and lay leaders. This however did not last for long as the trained evangelists were later ordained into priesthood but most of them subsequently left the ACK after which the members were once again served by untrained evangelists and lay leaders. The PCEA also has a lay training centre at Kikuyu which is currently not running and has no coordinator (PCEA Directory 2011). The Theological Education by Extension (TEE) program which was started by the Protestant churches as an ideal model of equipping lay church leaders is also not doing well. In the ACK TEE has died due to lack of finances (Nkonge 2008: 249).

The current crisis of insufficient pastors in the Kenyan Church may need to be addressed in other ways. It is very expensive to train and pay a pastor especially by the members of a congregation or a church which find it hard to survive due to limited resources. If a church wants to have well trained and well paid pastors, the number of members needed to finance these expenses, will be high, at least two thousand (Mugambi 2012). Therefore, instead of just thinking of adding more pastors, the church in Kenya as well as the whole of Africa may have to consider empowering the 'other ministries' through proper training. Ways and means should be devised to train lay leaders, evangelists, catechists, church elders and preachers. An important thing to note is that some of these church leaders are professionals in other areas and they do

not have to be paid by the church. If the church therefore takes advantage of this and offer them sound theological training, they can offer very effective leadership to the church and the society.

2.3 The academic Qualifications of the Clergy: An example from the ACK

In the previous section, we have found out that the Church in Kenya is unable to produce enough church leaders to match its rapid growth rate. In this section we are asking whether the few church leaders produced by the Church are equipped well enough to lead the church and society in the twenty-first century. We are going to examine what is happening in the ACK, the largest Protestant Church in Kenya. This will be an indication of what is happening in the other churches in Kenya and the entire Africa. With the assistance of the Archbishop's office I conducted research to find out about the academic qualifications of the clergy currently serving in the ACK. The information we got is analyzed in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Academic Qualifications of the ACK Clergy

Qualifications	No. of Clergy	Percentage
Less than three years Theological Training	218	14%
Certificate in Theology	322	21%
Diploma in Theology	753	48.4%
First Theological Degree (BA, BTh, BD etc)	177	11%
Two theological Degrees (MA, MTh, M.Div, STM)	61	4%
Doctor of Ministry (DMin)	8	0.5%
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD, DTh)	12	0.87%
A Secular Degree and some Theological Training	4	0.26%
Total	1555	100%

Observations

Figures in Table 3 above show the following:

- Majority of the ACK Clergy (83%) have Diploma and below qualifications, That is, Diploma- 48%, Certificate- 21% and less than 3 years Training- 14%
- There are very few theological graduates in the ACK. Only 177 (11%) have a first theological degree and barely 4% have two theological degrees.
- There is a visible lack of clergy with doctorates. Only 0.5% of clergy have Doctor of Ministry degrees and 0.87% has Doctor of Philosophy degrees.
- Very few ACK Clergy are professionals in other areas (only 0.26%).

This example from the ACK serves to explain what is most probably happening in all the Kenyan churches and possibly in the rest of Africa too. The Kenyan society is growing very fast with many professionals such as doctors, lawyers, university lecturers, teachers, engineers, business people and farmers among others. Kenya's public and private universities and other institutions of higher learning are producing many graduates every year. The percentage of church leaders with degrees is declining considerably if compared to the growth of graduates in all other sectors of society. These graduates are the people who come to the church every Sunday to listen to their pastors' sermons. The trouble is that the sermons listened to by these people are coming from pastors who are, on average, poorly trained. The challenge of this is that few church members are willing to attend Sunday services regularly or are active church members. For instance, in the ACK, out of the total membership of about 3,711, 890, only about 1,565,056 (42%) members

attend the Sunday services regularly (active church members). This is mainly attributed to the boring and irrelevant sermons they receive from their poorly trained pastors (Nkonge 2008:64). The Church that has sponsored the best schools in Kenya and has started several universities is progressively failing to produce well-trained shepherds for its flock. [3]

The Church therefore needs to re-think its mission and ministry. The situation whereby majority of the clergy have diplomas or is less qualified is negative for a growing church with a growing number of well-educated people. It won't be able to handle the immense challenges of the twenty-first century. The case of the ACK whereby only 42 per cent of its followers attend the church services regularly can tell us a lot about the entire church in Africa (Nkonge 2008:64). People go to the church because they have various spiritual needs which need to be understood and need to be prophetically challenged. If this is not met and if respect for the pastor dwindles, they will leave the church disappointed. How could we expect them to continue attending the church services if sermons are of inferior quality? This is an exigent challenge calling for an urgent response. In concluding this section, we state the fact that there is lack of leadership in these matters in the Kenyan Church. Might this be a picture of what is happening in the whole of Africa?

3. RECRUITING RELIABLE LEADERSHIP

Kenya and the rest of Africa face numerous crises today. Authoritarianism, ethnic clashes, environmental degradation, poverty, hunger, corruption, diseases, internally displaced persons (IDPS), refugees et cetera have created a very desperate situation in Africa. As Archbishop Desmond Tutu puts it,

> The picture is bleak and the prospect one of seemingly unmitigated gloom. It is as if the entire continent was groaning under the curse of Ham and was indeed in all aspects of the Dark Continent of antiquity. Africans may well ask: "Are we God's step children? Why has disaster picked on us so conspicuously?" We appear to be tragically unique in this respect (Ngara 2004:1).

No other time has there been such a need for reliable leadership in the entire African Continent as now. Most of the political leaders in Africa have failed to offer reliable leadership to their nations, leading to perpetual tension as recently witnessed in many African nations including Ivory Coast, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Egypt, Libya and many others. The Church has been relied upon to fill the leadership vacuum, but she has seldom acted decisively and prophetically. The performance of the Church in Africa is generally hampered by what Hans Küng cited several years ago. He asserted that (1974:29),

> The Vatican … vigorously defends social justice, democracy and human rights for the world outside, but continues to maintain internally an authoritarian style of Government, the inquisition, the use of public monies without public control. And the World Council of Churches … concentrates its efforts for peace… without producing peace within its own sphere, between the Churches.

Küng was concerned about a church that was busy struggling to transform the 'world out there',

---

3 The best performing secondary schools in Kenya are those sponsored by the church such as Alliance High school, Starehe Boys' centre, Mangu High school etc. All the denominations which are our foci in this paper also have their own universities.

yet she could not transform herself. Kenya's ACK Bishop Githiga (2001) argues strongly on the obligation of the church to fight societal vices such as tribalism, political dominance, nepotism et cetera. The biggest challenge however is how an authoritative, autocratic and tribally biased church can be a bulwark against authoritarianism, autocracy and tribalism. The church can only offer reliable leadership to the society if it is able to offer reliable leadership within itself. This can be achieved if the church recruits reliable leaders.

3.1 The recruitment process

The process of selecting candidates for ministerial formation or priesthood varies from one denomination to the other. The Catholic Church for example has a very organized system of selecting candidates for the priesthood. The process usually takes a long time. Those who join priesthood in the Catholic Church are sometimes selected very early while in secondary schools. After they join the seminaries, the candidates undertake some philosophical training which takes a minimum of two years. Once they are through, those who pass in philosophy are enrolled for theological studies which take a minimum of four years. Therefore, the minimum period one can take to train for priesthood in the Catholic Church is six years. Those who do well are recommended to go for further studies and others are posted to the parishes or other stations. There are several stages in training which ensures that at the end only the determined ones qualify to become priests. Those who do not qualify join other Church ministries with the aim of entering the ministry at a lower standard.

In the Protestant churches, the main factor considered for one to join the church ministry as an ordained priest or minister is the 'call'. The biggest challenge however has been to determine who has a 'call' and who has no 'call.' This is aggravated due to the high rate of unemployment in Kenya. In other words, how do you measure 'calling'? Some people have been joining the church ministry not because of the conviction that God is calling them, but because it is not easy to secure any other form of employment due to limited places. Civil servants often join the church ministry after retirement from the civil service so that they can at least have some work.[4] In this case, church ministry has been a life-buoy for those who failed in their secondary school examinations and those who are not ready to retire from the civil service.

Academic qualifications are not an absolute requirement when it comes to selecting candidates for training in the Protestant theological colleges. One should at least have a Form Four certificate. This minimum academic requirement is too low. For instance, while the minimum requirements for a diploma certificate in the public and private universities and other Government tertiary colleges is aggregate C in O-levels (Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education), in most of the theological colleges, the minimum requirements for a diploma in theology is a D+ and a letter of recommendation from the church leader. This has greatly degraded the quality of theological education in Kenya.

Complementing low academic qualifications of those entering theological studies is the lack of adequate qualifications for the lecturers entrusted with the work of preparing church leaders in the theological colleges. The author's research into this matter focused on the academic qualifications of the lecturers teaching in the ACK provincial theological colleges. It showed that of the twenty lecturers teaching in the five ACK Provincial Theological Colleges, namely, St. Andrews, St. Paul's, St. Philip's, Bishop Hannington and Berea, only two had doctoral degrees. Of these two, one is an expatriate. Those with Masters Degrees were thirteen while the remaining five had first theological degrees. A situation whereby the theological colleges which are charged with the responsibility of preparing leaders for the African Church lack lecturers with doctorates does tell a lot about the future of such a church. Nkonge (2008:197) comments on this and says that,

---

4 The retirement age of civil servants is 60 years while in the church it is 65 years.

In a situation where the church lacks sufficient and well-qualified personnel involved in leadership training, the mission of that church is affected. This is because the leaders prepared in the theological colleges cannot be relied upon to offer effective leadership to a church characterized by numerous challenges especially in this century. Such leaders are not relevant as they cannot interpret the Gospel of Christ to suit the changing needs of the society.

If the church leaders who are expected to help the African society are not enough and not well qualified and equipped, it means that such leadership cannot be relied upon to meet the needs of the afflicted African people. The process of the recruitment of church leaders therefore needs serious attention if the church in Kenya and the rest of Africa intends to survive in this rapidly changing century. Church ministry should not be seen as a place where those who never make it in life take refuge. It is important to consider whether one is called to serve God as a priest or minister, but it is equally important to get academically well-trained persons to serve the church.

4. TRAINING FOR RELIABLE LEADERSHIP

One question that needs to be asked is 'Are leaders born or made?' The answer to this question depends on one's perspective. To some people leadership is inborn as was the case with African traditional society or Judaism (see Githiga 200:1). We however need to be careful because although leadership in the African Traditional Society was mainly hereditary, there were some leadership skills that one had to learn from his father or other leaders before he took over the leadership of the clan or community. Even in the Old Testament, leadership required a lot of training. For instance, Moses had to learn many skills in the wilderness as he worked for his father in law (see Exodus 2:15-3:1). Similarly, King David may have learnt a lot from King Saul's palace where he was always called to entertain the king (1 Samuel 16:14-23). In the wilderness, he also acquired many leadership traits such as courage, determination, war skills et cetera as he took care of his father's flock (1Samuel 16: 11; 17:15 NIV).

Leadership may be an inborn gift but one has to learn it (see Githiga 2009:2). An important thing to note is that the church is an organization of Christian believers. As such, she needs reliable leadership just as other organizations. For any organization to succeed in achieving its goals it needs to have reliable leadership. Mugambi and Nkonge point out that the major business of the church on earth is to be in mission (Mugambi 1989:101; Nkonge 2004:100). This mission cannot be successful if there are too few well-trained reliable leaders. Stuckelberger and Mugambi (2005:12) argue that leaders are available in abundance, but responsible leaders are rare and hard to find. They feel that this responsible leadership entails good management and stewardship. Gitari (2005:206) elucidates that responsible leadership involves servant hood, stewardship, good administration, evangelism, quest for just social structures and promotion of national unity. The leadership called for by Stuckelberger, Mugambi and Gitari is tantamount to what we are referring to as reliable leadership in this paper. If the leader is responsible, then those led will rely on him/her and his/her leadership.

It is therefore clear that although leadership is a gift, we need to train reliable and responsible leaders. The theological colleges and the curriculum used to prepare church leaders are indispensable tools in this process. Chilver (1999:129) denotes that the future of the church is determined by its theological colleges. He asserts that "If theological colleges veer to the left with so many doubts about the authority of the scripture, the church in time will be so much affected." Nkonge (2008:129) contends that if theological colleges produce 'half baked' church

leaders, then the future of the church in which they are to offer effective leadership is tainted.

5. CONCLUSION

More than ever before the Church in Kenya and the rest of Africa are in dire need of reliable leaders to guide it morally, ethically and missionaly. The development of leaders through training therefore needs close scrutiny. New models must be devised to help church leaders (both clergy and laity) in their theological reflections so that they are in a position of effectively proclaiming the Gospel of Christ to the currently rapidly changing African society.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Barrett, D 1982. *World Christian Encyclopedia: A Comparative Survey of Churches and Religions in the Modern World, AD 1900-2000* Nairobi: Oxford University Press.

Baur, J 1990. *The Catholic Church in Kenya* Nairobi: St. Paul Publications

Catholic Church in Kenya Directory, 2009.

Chilver, A 1999. The Spiritual Formation in the Theological Colleges. *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology,* Volume 18.2.

Church Leaders Oppose New Draft Constitution http://nairobiwantedinafrica.com/news 5/5/2010

Daily Nation 2010, September 1.

Gitari, D 2005. *Responsible Leadership* Nairobi: Acton.

Githiga, G 2001. *The Church as the Bulwark against Authoritarianism* Nairobi : Uzima.

Githiga, G 2009. *Effective Church Leadership* Nairobi: Uzima.

Hendriks, J 2006. Sustainable Seminaries, Reliable Leadership: The Net ACT Story 2000-2010. http://academic.sun.ac.za/netact/PAPER-TEA-LIMURU 20 AUG 2010.pdf.

Jenkins, Philip. 2002. *The next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kenya: Church Leaders Reject the New Law. http://allafrica.com/stories 2/4/2010

Kenya Gazette, 2010. 'Independent Electoral and Boundaries Referendum Results, Notice No. 10019. Vol. CXII-No. 84, 23 August'.

Küng, H 1974. *On Being a Christian*. Glasgow: Collins.

Mbiti, J 1971. *New Testament Eschatology in an African Background.* London: London University Press.

Mumo, P 1997. A Study of Theological Education in African Inland Church, Kenya: Its Historical Development and its Present State. Unpublished PhD Thesis, Nairobi: University of Nairobi.

Mugambi, Jesse Interviewed by the author on 31 March 2012, at Nairobi.

Mugambi, JNK 1989. *The Biblical Basis for Evangelization.* Nairobi: Oxford University Press.

Mugambi, JNK 1995 From Liberation to Reconstruction. Nairobi:EAEP

Ngara, E 2004. *Christian Church Leadership.* Nairobi: Pauline's Publication.

Nkonge, DK 2005. A Study of the Anglican Church in Meru: Challenges encountered in evangelization. Unpublished MA Thesis. Nairobi: University of Nairobi.

Nkonge, DK 2008. Leadership Training for mission in the Anglican Church of Kenya. Unpublished PhD Thesis, Pretoria: University of South Africa.

Oliver, R 1952. *The Missionary factor in East Africa* London: Longmans.

Presbyterian Church of Kenya (PCEA) Directory, 2011.

Richardson, A 1969. *A Dictionary of Christian Theology* London: SCM

Silo Breaker Star 2010, August 9. http://www.silobreaker.com.

Stuckulberger, C and Mugambi, JNK 2005. *Responsible Leadership* Nairobi: Acton

Waruta, D 1989. The Church as a teaching community in *Christian Mission and Social Transformation,* JNK Mugambi (ed) Nairobi.

Contact details:
Dr Dickson Nkonge Kagema
Chuka University College,
Faculty of Arts and Humanities,
P.O Box 109 – 60400 Chuka,
Kenya.
E-posadres: dicknkonge@gmail.com

Prof HJ Hendriks
Fakulteit Teologie
Universiteit van Stellenbosch
Privaatsak X1
7602 MATIELAND
Kantoor: 021 808 3260
Huis: 021 886 6034
Sel: 073 772 6706
E-posadres: hjh@sun.ac.za

Pienaar, HE[1]
University of Pretoria

Overture to practical theological facilitation

ABSTRACT

The author introduces what he calls practical theological facilitation. The metaphor and activity of facilitation is regarded as an important lens and dimension in, and to, practical theology. It is espoused not only as an approach to standing practice but in particular as a professional-vocational activity or role in itself. This role is called practical theological facilitation or is referred to as a facilitative approach in practical theology.

Practical theological facilitation consists of two aspects, namely, professional-vocational facilitation and facilitative consulting. These two aspects relate in some ways to what the reader might understand from what practitioner facilitation and conventional consulting involve. There are however notable differences. For these differences and distinguishing accents to facilitation and consulting, the tradition of inquiry, particular accents in practical theology, and the subdiscipline of pastoral therapy are judged to be important conversational partners.

1. INITIAL BRUSH STROKES

With this article I introduce the idea of *practical theological facilitation.* As with all things, how I came about this theme has a story. While the story is connected to many motivations in favour of practical theological facilitation neither the story nor the motivations will be addressed here. I will attempt rather, as with the way many musicians commence, to write initial rhythmic phrases, melodies and harmonies towards a larger composition. Although I have developed supporting arguments in other works relating to neutrality and epistemology in facilitation this article marks the first and introductory work on the matter. It can only be but a prelude or overture to something more, as part of the larger composition of practical theology.

Practical theological facilitation is founded in an interdisciplinary dialogue. Apart from my ordinary world, which is practical theology, a discipline in the larger domain of theology, I draw on two conversational partners. These are practitioner facilitation and conventional consulting.[2] The aforementioned fields of practice might, to some, conjure workplace association that are most always informed by psychology and/or economic and management sciences. Along these lines professional fields might spring to mind such as organisational and industrial psychology, organisational development, or any other formal training that may have taken a consulting.

What one can appreciate regarding practical theological facilitation is that its focus lies with the medium as it takes shape in any given discipline or field of professional practice mentioned above. Roger Schwarz (2005:25) is of the opinion that facilitation speaks to principles of effective human interaction. There is no doubt in my mind that, while it is relevant to workplace settings,

---

1 Dr Elmo Pienaar is currently a Research Fellow of the Department Practical Theology, University of Pretoria who is working under supervision of Prof Julian Müller from the same department.

2 Throughout the article I kept with the custom in literature. The verb form is mostly used in reference to the practice of consultation (i.e., consulting) and the noun in reference to facilitation. See in this regard many of the titles of works referenced.

it is not restricted to any particular field of practice since it relates to human interaction in various contexts. It is informed by (is in conversation with), and informs (relates to) a multitude of practices in, for example, humanities, economic sciences, and social sciences.

2. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

The idea of facilitation as it relates to practical theology specifically should be thought of as having traffic in opposite directions.

One lane involves *facilitation as a key metaphor* that heads into the discipline of practical theology. As such it has relevance to any of the many practical theological subdisciplines, for example, homiletics, liturgical studies, pastoral counselling, and congregational studies. This represents a facilitative approach 'to' practical theology or *facilitative practical theology.* Viewed in this way, facilitation provides an accent relevant to the subdisciplines that I will not elaborate on in this article.

The other lane involves *facilitation as (what could be) a professional role* that heads from practical theology to society in view of all its organisations, institutions and cultures; towards the practice of life even outside of the immediate concern with congregational or even ecclesial contexts. This represents a facilitative approach 'in' practical theology, or then that which we will call *practical theological facilitation.*

The article has two broad sections. In section A, I refer to accepted general practical theology approaches but also specific accents that I deem relevant to a facilitative approach in, and to, practical theology. Section B puts forward initial notes on the musical staff of practical theological facilitation (as opposed to facilitative practical theology) as it finds expression in professional-vocational facilitation and facilitative consulting.

3. SECTION A: APPROACHES AND ACCENTS IN PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

Practical theology[3] in my estimation has for the most part been a type of chameleon discipline. The story of its development attests to having fought hard battles for its integrity and place as a discipline.[4] I will not go into that here but the reader should know this: It is due to this fiery furnace development that I think it is superbly positioned for interdisciplinary pursuit and academically extremely well positioned to fulfil the facilitative endeavour I envision.

Three intra-disciplinary matters aid the conversation regarding a facilitative approach in, and to, practical theological: (1) the way in which the discipline has been able to tie together different approaches or rationalities in one design, (2) two conceptual developments from about the 1970's that have become part of the foremost musical clefs in which the genre of practical theology is composed, and (3) certain epistemological accents (or to follow our metaphor), rhythmic ideas, melodies and harmonies, perhaps even a different time-signature as part of the larger composition of the music of practical theology.

3.1 Different approaches in one design
In the courtship between facilitation and practical theology, from practical theology's side

---

3 This section does not aim to be comprehensive in the way that it reflects the rich tapestry of practical theological tradition and inquiry. For such a pursuit, as a place to start from, see Richard Osmer's recent article on what he sees as a current international perspective on practical theology, especially in conjunction with his book on an introduction to the field of practical theology (respectively published in 2011 and 2008).

4 For some of these challenges see Don Browning, 1991:4.

it brings a rich tradition of inquiry in what Osmer (2008:2) refers to as paradigms that are constituted on a metatheoretical level. De Roest (1998:25) mentions that Bäumler had already in 1976 expressed that practical theology is not characterised by a single method; advocating that different methods should be used in a practical theological ensemble. Dingemans (1996:91) notes that *coalescence of approaches and complementarity of methods* are key phrases in practical theology.

Consequently attempts were made to establish a harmony between major approaches (De Roest 1998:22) and in this regard De Roest mentions Van der Ven, Mette, and Browning. Browning (1991) for instance puts forward a process of descriptive, historical, systematic, and fully practical theology in his work on a *Fundamental Practical Theology*. Heitink (1993:174) delineates three approaches in practical theology. To him the practice, or what he calls action theories (Heitink 1993:174), of practical theology is placed in an interconnected play between a hermeneutical cycle (with the purpose of understanding), an empirical cycle (with the focus on explaining) and a strategic or regulative cycle (with the intention of changing) (Heitink 1993:161). De Roest (1998:22-25), following Van der Ven (1993), distinguishes between an 'empirical-analytical', a 'hermeneutical' or a 'critical-political' approach or accent. Osmer and Schweitzer (2003:1) refer to practical theology's four distinguishable but mutually influential tasks being descriptive-empirical, interpretive, normative and pragmatic with the relationship between them part of a hermeneutical circle (Osmer & Schweitzer 2003:1-5; Osmer 2011:2). Osmer (2011:3) refers to these as the disciplines reflective equilibrium in that "virtually all practical theologians today, give at least some attention" to the above.

Attempts to build bridges between approaches, also outside of theological traditions, is still relevant today. Arbnor and Bjerke (2009:323-348), with their work *Methodology for creating business knowledge,* promote a trifold approach between three perspectives they distinguish in research, namely analytical-empirical, systemic and an actor's view. They refer to, and elaborate on what they call a *methodology of complementarity.*[5]

I would like to go one step further in making a connection between the notion of different models, cycles, accents or approaches to the idea that these represent different transversal rationalities. The notion of transversality pertains to Van Huyssteen (2000:429). This is important to us in that facilitation, more so even practical theological facilitation will have to work with various proponents of differing perspectives, through what philosophers speak about as "transversal performance of rationality" (Van Huyssteen 2000:429). Stated differently (Van Huyssteen 2000:429) the facilitator's task relates to the dynamic interaction of dialogue where dissimilar rationalities converge towards a vanishing point without assimilating the other.[6] All approaches become part of the dialogue wherein *interjudgemental reliability* (Baart 2003:147) rather than traditional research values of reliability, validity and generaliseability takes prominence.

Not that they necessarily are, but any of the above mentioned approaches or models could still pass for, and be practiced from, a modernist thought paradigm that relies on the idea of a knowable objective reality. For instance, the systems view[7] as a precursor to social

---

5 They do not use the word complementarity in an ordinary sense where two parts make up a whole (2009:341). They rather propose that when, for instance, techniques, thinking and ideas of one methodological approach is used in another, they are *reshaped* on the way; they *change form and content with* context (2009:342, italics in original).

6 In this Van Huyssteen (2000:429) relies on Donald Capps (1999) concerning the relationship between theology and psychology.

7 This is similar to second order cybernetics, or constructivism - as opposed to constructionism - or as referred to by Brown (2010:251) 'second order epistemology' - as opposed to 'third order epistemology' (2010:253).

constructionism (Müller 1996:80; Freedman & Combs 1996:1-8), although very interpretive, and emphasising understanding, and while not disinterested in explaining (as with the analytical view), still espouses the notion of an objective reality (Arbnor & Bjerke 2009:50-51; Müller 1996:80-81).[8] In addition to the family therapy context that Müller (1996) writes about, De Roest (1998:26) refers to Paul Dietterich (1998) as an example of systems thinking in relation to general ministry and mission.

Here over, practical theology also saw the development of post-modern (as in, after-modern) related approaches. Julian Müller is one such scholar who has developed, and worked with other scholars in developing such approaches. Along with these approaches came a shift in emphasis from ontology (the nature of reality) to epistemology (forming of reality) (Müller 1996:80). These approaches are expressed particularly in social constructionism, narrative practice and postfoundationalism[9] which I deem important in furthering a facilitative approach in, and to, practical theology. They take serious the construction of realities based on social interaction and language, underscoring amongst other notions, narrative rationality, contextuality, interdisciplinarity, and intersubjectivity.

Arbnor and Bjerke (2009:51) provide us with the useful and creative distinction that differentiates the analytical-empirical and systemic views with what they call an actor's view. This view in turn relates to postmodern specific approaches in practical theology. Herein the person is always an actor that is part of the construction. Whereas the prior mentioned approaches (analytical and systemic) assume a fact filled or *factive reality,* the latter puts forward a *factified reality.*

3.2 Two central clefs of recent practical theology

A second practical theological layer that informs practical theological facilitation is sought in vital changes in the discipline over the past five decades. I think of these changes as stemming from the postmodern cradle of practical theology. It has to do with the discipline taking its focus in *action* (practice) (in piano, for instance, the left-hand clef) and doing so *interpretively* (in piano, for instance, the right-hand clef).

It was from the end of the sixties that through gradual agreement practical theologians' point of departure were situated in practice (De Roest 1998:19); hence, leading in an era of a movement between 'practice-theory-practice.' Browning (1991:9) remarks that this movement indicates the fundamental process of human thinking. The change was so encompassing that practical theology came to be known as a *handlungswissenschaft,* meaning a science of action whereby normative prescription or theological description paved way to social-scientific description (De Roest 1998:20). Social sciences were therefore an early interdisciplinary partner.

Of equal importance to situating practical theology's formal object of inquiry in practice (resulting from the social sciences especially), the 1970's endowed us with an interpretive framework. This was made possible in particular with the resurgence of the practical philosophies (Browning 1991:3). It is perhaps for this reason that family therapy (a discipline native to me) went through a "philosophical midlife crisis" (Nichols & Schwartz 1991:143, in Müller 1996:80). Hereby modernist approaches had to pave way for the postmodern that underscores meaning, interpretation, and intersubjectivity of knowledge (Müller 1996:80). It signified a movement

---

8 It should be noted that a systems approach can be practiced from a postmodern constructivist position as Fourie (2010:380) drawing on Poerksen (2004) reminds us: Our views cannot claim ultimate truth seeing that it is a construction as any other.

9 See in this regard as cited in this article Müller 2011a, 2011b, 1996, and co-authored with Demasure 2006. See also other scholarly contributions from 2004, co-authored with Schoeman 2004, co-authored with Van Deventer and Human 2001.

from the prominent systems discourse to families as *interpretive communities* (Müller 1996:80) or what Paré (1995:2) refers to as *storying cultures.*

3.3 Epistemological accents in the larger composition

With development of such remarkable calibre – with the prominence placed on a science of action and an interpretive lens – it was only a matter of time until overt postmodern accents or harmonies were to be composed and performed. These accents in question find expression in social construction, narrative-, and postfoundational practice as I have referred to above. I mention it here, again, since these accents do not necessarily constitute models. In my particular narrative, these concepts have come to be rooted in the subdiscipline of pastoral care and counselling.

With the informing accents of narrative practice, social constructionism and postfoundationalism, the focus lies strongly with the individual embedded in a context; less so on a general characteristic or agenda of practical theology as a discipline. To reiterate, the implication is that the practical theologian's life becomes an artwork in living on the ecotone[10] between, for instance, church and academia (Müller 2011b:3-4), or adding as Tracy (1998) does, the public sphere or society. This implies firstly that there is enough scope for a practical theologian to involve him or herself in matters where one might not ordinarily encounter his or her participation. Secondly it means that such an approach opens up vistas for interdisciplinary conversation with humanities, at least in the same measure that practical theology has been in conversation with the social sciences for quite some time.

It is against the importance of postmodern harmonies that we find confluence between facilitation and certain epistemological accents in practical theology. One of the reasons for this is because facilitation carries with it a particular view of how we know, of epistemology. Although there is in my evaluation still much room for epistemological discussion in practitioner facilitation, in many respects facilitation employs and points in the direction of postfoundational epistemology.

4. SECTION B: FACILITATION

The previous section introduced the kind of things in practical theology that bears reference to my proposal. It related to (a) different approaches in one model, (b) a focus on action/practice and interpretation, (c) in conjunction with the accents of narrative practice, social constructionism, and postfoundationalism. The following section serves to convey my particular ideas about facilitation.

4.1 Disambiguating facilitation

In my estimation, the word facilitation is generally employed in three ways: it is used colloquially, in many instances it is used to denote a skilful-postural approach, and lastly it could also have a professional-vocational connotation.

The frequent understanding is one that we encounter in everyday use. Let me call this s a *colloquial* understanding and bear in mind that it does not relate to what this article is about. A physiotherapist will use a phrase such as the 'facilitation of movement.' Hereby he or she might help patients to enlarge their range of post-operative physical motion. Whether the context is a personal or vocational one, i.e. used in everyday language or a technical term the word is still used colloquially.

---

10 An 'in-between' patch of landscape where two ecologies are in tension. Accessed 4 March 2012, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecotone

The second understanding denotes a specific approach to things. I will call this a *skilful-postural* approach. Many professions could benefit from a skilful-postural approach to what they do. In so doing someone in their formal role as teacher, mediator, coach, manager, group therapist, leader, and may I add, practical theologian will seek to provide space for others to build relationships, think and reflect, exercise choice and express their creative potential (Hunter *et al*. 2007:32).

The line however becomes somewhat indistinct. Taking the practice of coaching as an example (business or life coaching for instance), many claim to have a facilitative approach. In coaching surveys conducted from 2003 to 2007, Palmer and Whybrow (2008:9, 10) differentiated roughly 28 approaches in coaching e.g. a cognitive-behavioural or neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) approach. The majority describe their practice however (irrespective of whether they are cognitive-behavioural, narrative based or other) as facilitative.

Confusion sometimes arises when people use the word facilitation in, especially, a helping professions context, purely colloquially such as it seems above. Adding to this confusion, facilitation has been a rather vague and poorly understood practice, mastered only by human resources types (Bens 2005:1). The understanding I propose is that a skilful-postural approach needs to be accompanied by a high degree of awareness and self-reflection regarding the role of facilitation as it relates to whatever activity or profession is in question.

Thirdly, the word facilitation is used in, what I refer to as, a *professional-vocational* manner. It relates to classical-, practitioner, or proper facilitation. Along these lines Hunter *et al.* (2007:32) refers to the facilitator as practitioner. The intention here is that of a formal role that is adopted, to which some kind of remuneration for services is often in question.

The contexts in which formal facilitation might be appropriate or wherein it could play a significant part vary considerably. It might involve things such as facilitation of strategy workshops, team conflict resolution, change processes or mergers and acquisitions.

The degree to which I propose the practical theologian could take up the facilitative role lies somewhere between a skilful-postural and a professional-vocational role, and could at times be one or the other. Facilitative practical theology could be said to require a skilful-postural stance whereas practical theological facilitation takes its expression in a professional-vocational role. Bear in mind that there is also a counterpart to the professional-vocational role of practical theological facilitation, namely, facilitative consulting.

While both aspects of practical theological facilitation could be professional and vocational, in this article I restrict the reference to professional-vocational facilitation to denote practitioner facilitation; pertaining to an in-the-moment, and mostly a direct contact event between facilitator and a group. Here over, although not entirely unrelated to the above description of Ingrid Bens regarding practitioner facilitation, facilitative consulting has to do with processes that develop over time and does not necessarily require direct conversational engagement with all relevant parties at every step of the way. In the reader's mind this might strongly relate to proper consulting rather than to facilitation.

Henceforth, under the idea of practical theological facilitation, I put forward my two notions of the aforementioned: professional-vocational facilitation and facilitative consulting. Both of these have the dimensions of *process* and *communication* as integral concepts. The understanding of process and communication in both professional-vocational facilitation and facilitative consulting are very much related. With facilitative consulting however its scope widens. Müller (2000:69) notes that he had done away with the distinction he made in his book dating back to 1996, *Om tot verhaal te kom,* between process and agenda. I would like to retain something of that notion as it is currently an important distinction in facilitation. Bens (2005:9) notes that the words process (how) and content (what) are words that the reader will hear over and over again.

4.2 Professional-vocational facilitation

This role is one that readers might recognize from experience in workplace settings. It is less ambiguous than facilitative consulting.

Ingrid Bens (2005:5) offers a description of the task of the formal practitioner facilitator. She explains that a facilitator is one who "...contributes structure and process to interactions so groups are able to function effectively and make high-quality decisions. A helper and enabler whose goal is to support others as they pursue their objectives."

The above takes shape along the lines of an in-the-moment event where mostly one person, the practical theologian facilitator, engages a group in process and communication. In this role the facilitator is mostly able to speak directly and comfortably with all people in the group although large group formats are not necessarily out of view.

4.2.1 Process

The idea of process refers to everything that happens from initial contact with a client, therefore even before any form of official inquiry is made. The client may be community leaders, the government, a ministry team, or a manager. The process engagement stops officially when there is mutual understanding that no more involvement or further responsibility is required.

As an example of such a process Bens (2005:41-48) proposes seven stages in facilitation: (1) Assessment and Design; (2) Feedback and Refinement; (3) Final Preparation; (4) Starting-; (5) During-; (6) Ending a Facilitation; (7) Following Up on a Facilitation.

A pivotal concern regarding a broad understanding of process requires one to consider how to establish, what White and Nair refers to as, 'participatory communication' (1999:36-37) throughout. Hereby people "have a right to voice their views and become active partners in the development process" (White & Nair 1999:36-37).

With professional-vocational facilitation, stages 4 to 6 are what most would see as actual facilitation: An in-the-moment event and direct contact with a group. In these stages, of actual facilitation, the notion of process becomes especially important. In these stages process consideration is concerned with the manner in which the facilitator will enable the process (unfolding of an engagement) to take place efficiently and effectively (Bens 2005:45). The particulars of 'how' is more adequately answered by the next section, by the type of conversation sought and the proficiency of the facilitator in that communication.

4.2.2 Communication

In order for the group to be efficient and effective as mentioned above the facilitator engages through any number of, what is regarded as, core practices in the profession (Bens 2005:35) for example to listen actively, help identify needs, bringing everyone into the discussion, accepting and using feedback, and asking relevant and probing questions.

What I would like to underscore from my specific tradition of inquiry is not so much what the relevant core practices are or might entail but the nature of the conversation. The nature of the conversation is characterized by three notions: Preference for (1) narrative logic and stories as foremost linguistic framework, as underpinned by social constructionist epistemology that constructs and moulds reality (Freedman & Combs 1996:22). Arbnor and Bjerke (2009:49) call our attention to reconstructed-logic, which aligns with practical theology's choice for an interpretive framework and relates to the notion of narrative practice. (2) Yet another aspect is transparency: Facilitator, Miki Kashtan, helps us in this matter when she chooses for deliberate transparency in what she calls the art of transparent facilitation, over against the idea that the facilitator should be neutral (Kashtan 2005:573). An important aspect of being transparent consists of animating presuppositions, values and attitudes. (3) Another aspect involves "deep listening" in a "sacred

space" (Hunter *et al.* 2007:98) as the basis on which conversational realities evolve.

4.3 Facilitative consulting

Being more ambiguous than professional-vocational facilitation, facilitative consulting warrants more explanation.

Since what I describe might sound to the informed reader like consulting I would like to clarify my choice for the accent rather on facilitation.

4.3.1 Consulting or facilitation?

Among the reasons for why I refrain from calling this outright consulting is that my intention with it resembles the values or beliefs that professional-vocational facilitation assumes, e.g. equal regard despite rank or position; that people are capable of doing the right thing; that the process can be trusted (Bens 2005:8). My choice is further underlined by my view that the latent and implied epistemology of facilitation differs to that of consulting: Facilitation relates to a postmodern epistemology that in my tradition requires a not-knowing stance: In pastoral narrative therapy, the pastor takes a 'not-knowing' posture wherein "the therapist does not challenge the client's version of reality with preconceived therapeutic knowing" (Demasure & Müller 2006:416). Here over, conventional/classical consulting exudes an attitude of knowing, of transferring my knowledge to you, of modernism.

I have looked to facilitation literature and found that there are indeed expressions of facilitation that relate to consulting. These expressions are important as they are included in what is put forward as an international *handbook* of facilitation (which in other words it gives itself out as an important voice on the matter of facilitation); *The IAF handbook of group facilitation.* See in this book the chapter contribution from Troxel (2005:259-608) that relates to *organisational* processes that would normally be the endeavour of consulting. This facilitative consulting approach is also relevant outside of the corporate organisational context and could play a pivotal role in large scale *community* development processes, as seen in *The Art of Facilitating Participation. Releasing the power of grassroots communication* (ed. White 1999).

Although that might not be the intention of the said literature it still suggests that there is adequate motivation to develop a theory along these lines. There is merit, therefore, in grouping together professional-vocational facilitation and facilitative consulting under the umbrella term of facilitation. Indeed many facilitative informed practices (leadership, coaching, training, and so forth, as referred to by Schwarz 2005:25), with adaptation to some of its central concerns, fits within the framework of practical theological facilitation. The practice of coaching can for instance refer to a regulative (to borrow from Heitink above), or strategic moment (to borrow from Browning) in one facilitative consulting design. All of these moments are however informed by facilitation.

There could be any number of 'moments' (as for instance, coaching, as an element in professional-vocational facilitation) as long as it equates with, in a broad sense, practical theological concern, and purposefully aligns with the values and practice of facilitation. In similar fashion narrative therapy, for example, is not pastoral narrative therapy if it does not, as with pastoral therapy, in some way pertain to reflection on practice from the perspective of the experience of the presence of God (Demasure & Müller 2006:416) while simultaneously doing so from a narrative epistemology.

Schwarz, in contributing to the handbook of the International Association of Facilitation, acknowledges the depth to which professional-vocational values and principles of facilitation have rooted in other practices: In this he refers to the facilitative consultant, facilitative coach, facilitative trainer, and facilitative leader saying that they all rely on underlying core values and

principles of facilitation (2005:25). I still regard these as displaying a skilful-postural approach to something else. It is therefore somewhat problematic that Schwarz (2005:25) mentions facilitative consulting on the same line with the others. Then he proceeds, and herein I agree. More so than being based on principles of facilitation (e.g., facilitative leadership) it is said that these underlying core values and principles are principles of effective human interaction (2005a:25). This underscores my preference for stating that facilitation and not consultation is in this approach the primary concept. The measure in which I see facilitation as an epistemological statement tips the scale in view of facilitative consulting as something other than merely consulting that takes a skilful-postural facilitative slant.

4.3.2 A basic understanding of facilitative consulting

Facilitative consulting has a much larger agenda and is much more elaborate than professional-vocational facilitation. It is generally a community, institution, or organisation-wide undertaking and has the intention of effecting change on a much larger scale. It is more aptly viewed by requiring involvement in a process over time, i.e. not restricted to an in-the-moment event, with an organisation, institution or movement as a client, and does not necessarily involve direct conversational engagement of the practical theologian facilitator with all parties. Professional-vocational facilitation will inevitably form part of the larger endeavour.

It is especially with facilitative consulting that practical theology's tradition of different accents in one design aids us. The practical theologian will find him- or herself in a position of having to work with different modalities of inquiry and practice. Where practical theology aids as well is in how all of these come together communicatively and interpretively.

Again the process and communication dimensions of facilitation deserve discussion.

4.3.3 Process

I have given an indication earlier of what the process aspect of professional-vocational facilitation might involve. With regard to consulting proper, Cope (2010) designs his entire book around the process of consulting and calls it *The Seven C's of Consulting.* It consists of the following stages: (1) Client; (2) Clarify; (3) Create; (4) Change; (5) Confirm; (6) Continue; 7) Close. Peter Block (2000) puts forward *Flawless Consulting* and distinguishes five stages of consulting, namely (1) Entry and Contracting; (2) Discovery and Dialogue; (3) Feedback and Decision to Act; (4) Engagement and Implementation; (5) Extension, Recycle, or Termination.

To be sure, there are numerous processes (models, approaches and the like). Consequently, while the *process dimension* of the facilitative consulting role is concerned with establishing the why, who, what, and when, practical theological facilitation lingers especially with 'how' as informed by epistemology. With facilitative consulting the processes role may also involve, for example, tasks having to be completed, plotting project milestones, allocating resources, and empirical data gathering. The primary concern is still *how* these elements come together, namely and reiterating, communicatively and interpretively across time.

When Schwarz (2005:25) refers to the facilitative consultant, along with other endeavours that could take a facilitative slant such as teaching or coaching, it is not clear exactly what type of consulting is in question. Yet, to highlight, one of the things that differentiates facilitative consulting from his list is that many types of consultants work with the whole of the organisation through its contracted stakeholders in a process that unfolds over time. This happens either actively as part of the design or it at least holds some implications for the organisation or community. The following professions or endeavours mostly exemplify such organisation-wide involvement: organisational development, organisational design, process consultation, change management or community development.

What the above organisation-wide examples also have in common (and thereby differentiating it further from, say, the facilitative teacher) is the extent to which they are process minded. Ingrid Bens (2005:1), in our quoted definition of professional-vocational facilitation remarked that facilitation offers structure and process to interactions of groups. We abide with this professional-vocational characteristic in consideration of also the broader facilitative consulting endeavour, of being especially process minded.

To me this does not imply that it is the facilitator that would necessarily be the one that chooses, and at least not in isolation. Referring again to Ingrid Bens above, I would like to underscore the word she uses, namely to 'offer.' The facilitator would offer, whereas the consultant will perhaps inform. The facilitative consultant is at best (to borrow from Gerhard Egan's well known work, 2010), a skilled-helper. Shall we perhaps say skilled-'offerer'? In offering, when taken seriously, one finds an invitation to co-construction. To clarify what is already implicit. It is in 'offering' that it becomes clear that the choice for the word facilitation (above consultation) reflects an epistemological imperative.

4.3.3.1 Anthem to consultation

This does not entail that reference to practice of consulting was employed for lack of a better word. The idea of consulting is preferred as opposed to, say, facilitative project management. The preference for consulting, also, reflects an epistemological position and in its conjunction with the word facilitation is a critique against practitioner facilitation's belief in the possibility of neutrality whereby which, according to Hunter *et al.* (2007:26) and many others, the facilitator should refrain from taking part in the content of group discussions. These two words together, facilitation and consulting, surely presents a dialectic relationship that elsewhere I have referred to as presenting yet a third epistemological position and movement beyond objectivity or subjectivity. As Müller (2011a:3) puts it, this new epistemology (i.e., postfoundationalism) signifies a shift from the subjective to discourse, from the individual to social and situates the human subject in communicative praxis. Although Müller speaks about holistic pastoral ministry, what he says surely relates to the dialectic tension between facilitation and consultation. One of the things that comes to his mind is that said ministry involves a not-knowing approach while (and herein also lies the facilitators dialectic tension), at the same time taking an approach of active engagement.

4.3.3.2 Consultant as exerting an experience-distant voice

Furthering the choice for the word consulting: The choice has to do with what practical theologian, Henk de Roest (1998:35), calls (and in this he draws on cultural anthropology), the experience-distant voice. Hereby outsider rationality is presented as a reflection on the practices in question. What De Roest says is that religious academia needs to employ experience-distant perspectives such as, for example, social sciences. In our context the tables are turned in that the practical theological facilitator will present the experience-distant voice.

This experience-distant voice is in my estimation not just the task of social sciences, or in our scenario, theology, but also of art. If it also incorporates the arts then at the very least one should understand that the experience-distant voice is not an "I know better" voice. It rather represents a different transversal rationality than submitting an objective scientific rationale. Consequently it is the practical theologian's life, as a work of art (Müller 2011b:3-4), that becomes the experience-distant voice.

Following Van Huyssteen will explain why the facilitative consultant role is laden with transversal potential. Van Huyssteen (2000) puts forward an evolutionary biological argument concerning the origins of human rationality. If understood correctly, he says, this explains why

our brains it seems are hardwired for cognitive fluidity (Van Huyssteen 2000:433). (Wo)man's propensity towards art, religion and culture came from our cognitive fluidity. I propose that these fluid rationalities provide experience-distant perspectives that could be put forward or embodied by the practical theologian facilitator.

Here over, other practitioner roles (e.g., project manager), is at greater risk of being engulfed by the prevalent scientific discourse of exact causal relationship and purely argumentative reasoning that is often void of context. In this respect Müller (2011b:2), conveys that arguments separated from a narrative dimension quite could possibly lead to becoming ahistorical and acontextual, and in the end irrelevant.

4.3.3.3 Towards process consulting

When referring to consulting I mostly have a specific understanding of consulting in mind. In the broad profession of consulting (change consultants, management consultants, image consultants, marketing consultants, and the like) the distinction is made between consultants (individuals or companies) whose expertise lie in a specific content area and those that focus rather on process, referred to as process consultants. Financial firms and engineering companies are typical examples of content-expert consultants, although one would rarely, if ever, refer to what they do as 'content' consulting. The differences between process and content consultants are no trivial matter. Mick Cope notes that this informs the whole style, approach and outcome of the consultancy process (2010:170).

This article aligns itself with the endeavour of process- rather than content consultants. Examples of process consultants would mostly include those that work with any matter relating to change in various fields: mergers and acquisitions, information technology implementation, company restructuring and required change from strategy development (Cameron & Green 2009).

The idea of process is of course further accentuated in terms of a facilitative approach since even process consultants could work from a paradigm that conveys that they know best, even if it is still confined to all things process. Doctorate Practitioner, Alan Weiss, in his book *Process Consulting* mentions that successful consulting endeavours have mostly to do with putting in place conditions of success. Thus success is not in the first instance ascribed to expert content knowledge. Facilitators, Janoff and Weisbord (2005:244) resonates somewhat in that they set out to create conditions under which people will do their best using what they already have.

The notion of process consulting is linked to the field of organisational development, works with several social processes and is perhaps best ascribed to the ideas of Edgar Schein (Vail 2008:228). Vail (2008:219) in the chapter contribution, *Process Wisdom,* refers to process as the heart of the field of organisational development. It is important to remember that it is with Schein and other organisation development pioneers such as Chris Argyris and Donald Schon that the practice and origin of facilitation lie (Bens 2005:1).

4.3.4 Communication

The *communication dimension* of this role creates awareness around the presence and nature of voices, texts, and contexts (tangible or intangible, audible or inaudible, explicit or implicit). In addition the concern here is with creating platforms (which are not necessarily in-the-moment events, but still by means on which to interact, collaborate, and converse regarding the above. To aim outside the scope of this article for the moment: It is at communicative events or with collaborative platforms where one would consider wherein it is that one might find God's voice in a particular context. These contexts are varied and could include matters of family, ecology, politics, economy, and more. Voices of the marginalised, disenfranchised, those subdued to the

misuse of positional (hierarchical awarded) power, or any concerns that *advocating theology* sensitized us towards has relevance in this dimension.

In reflecting on relevant voices the idea of hermeneutics aids us, especially in the context of a narrative-hermeneutic view.

Firstly though, suffice a general departure: I see hermeneutics, in line with Ganzevoort (2009)[11] as having a twofold understanding 1) "the classical focus on the relation between text and reader" and 2) the process of human interpretation that "places existential themes at the centre of investigation."[12]

With this broader understanding of hermeneutics in mind, Heitink is still relevant. He notes that our historical context embeds us within the understanding formed by the tradition of the group, influenced by our personal capability for understanding and informing life history, wherein also psychological factors can help or hinder our religious (spiritual) understanding (Heitink 1993:190). Heitink's (1993:191) short formulation for the hermeneutical cycle relates to our facilitative consulting role and will help us reflect on what it is that influences participating voices, texts and contexts. In this cycle he refers to pre-understanding, observation or experience, interpretation and discourse, meaning-making "zingeving," practice / action "handelen."

Secondly, in my view one cannot dissociate hermeneutics also from narrative epistemology. This changes the view of hermeneutics, informed by a modernist paradigm, to that of being a postmodern, postfoundational pursuit. Consequently the task of hermeneutics is not to decipher in order to obtain the 'true' understanding, but hermeneutics becomes the quest, in that, it involves a communicative act of story construction in itself (i.e., a communicative praxis event), in order to obtain a collaborative interpreted understanding. Gerkin had already noted in 1991 that "...the central purpose of ministry practice is best fulfilled in assisting individuals, families, and communities in the transformation of life by means of the transformation and reinterpretation of their core stories" (Gerkin 1991:59). Afford me two adaptations to this: This is not only the purpose of ministry but also theology, and to be precise, practical theology and then also practical theological facilitation. Then, to be clear, this transformation and reinterpretation could take place in varied contexts, private, public and corporate. Even more specific in order to extend the notion of community that is mentioned, it includes institutions, organisations, cultures, societies and any other kind of shape or expression that people sharing life might take.

I have not touched on something that clearly relates to the facilitative consulting perspective, namely church development consultants. Even so I will only briefly comment on it here. The extent to which facilitative practices and values, process mindedness, communication and interpretation, and postmodern epistemology are employed differentiates facilitative consulting from church consultants. The latter could be practiced from a facilitative perspective and may well be, but is not necessarily, congruent with facilitative consulting. Doing so, being facilitative as a church consultant, does not automatically assume a facilitative approach in, and to practical theology. As Browning (1991:285) remarks that "[m]ost church development consultants do not go far [and I clarify: other than being descriptive as one of practical theology's tasks] in helping the congregation move through the next three movements of fundamental practical theology – the movements of historical, systematic, and strategic practical theology." Also, Browning (1991:285) refers to some consultants that see their task as primarily a social science endeavour and as objective and value-neutral. I see facilitative consulting as value-laden and perhaps drawing on the humanities in equal measure and more than on social sciences, while certainly not being restricted to a descriptive task.

---

11 Referring to his presidential address delivered at the *International Academy of Practical Theology,* titled *Forks in the Road when Tracing the Sacred,* see section heading *Hermeneutics*).

12 See Müller (2011a:3) for hermeneutics in relation to postfoundationalism.

5. CONCLUSION

Much needs to be said still about how practical theology and facilitation, as understood in this article, could come together. While practical theology's tradition of inquiry, practice and particular personal accents certainly in my view deems my facilitative endeavour a practical theology informed one, I have not spoken about how the agenda of practical theology may come into view in facilitation. Surely this is a whole other matter as I do not think that what constitutes practical theology is defined by a narrow theological agenda but has more to do with the person of the practical theologian, a conclusion that Müller (2011b:4) also comes to.

At this stage of the journey my attempt has been to get the practical theologian, the practitioner facilitator and perhaps also the professional consultant to think creatively in the direction of what practical theological facilitation might entail. It asks for ongoing reflection in two ways: Firstly, reflection on facilitation as a value informed by a postmodern epistemological voice as it relates especially to groups in varied expressions (e.g., families, institutions, communities, organisations, and movements), and secondly, reflection on the ways and the concerns of practical theology in relation to the action area of facilitation.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Arbnor, I & Bjerke, B 2009. *Methodology for creating business knowledge.* 3rd ed. London: SAGE.

Baart, A 2003. The fragile power of listening. *Practical Theology in South-Africa* 18(3), 136-156.

Bäumler, C 1976. Methoden der empirischen Sozialforschung in der Praktischen Theologie. Munchen: Matthias-Grunewald-Verlag.

Bens, I 2005. *Facilitating with ease. Core Skills for Facilitators, Team Leaders and Members, Managers, Consultants, and Trainers.* 2nd ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Block, P 2000. *Peter Block. Flawless Consulting. A guide to getting your expertise used.* 2nd ed. San Francisco, CA: Pfeiffer.

Browning, D S 1991. *A fundamental practical theology. Descriptive and strategic proposals,* Minneapolis: Fortress Press.

Cameron, E & Green, M 2009. *Making sense of change management. A complete guide to the models, tools & techniques of organizational change.* 2nd ed. London: Kogan Page.

Capps, D 1999. The lessons of art theory for pastoral theology. *Pastoral Psychology* 47(5), 321-346.

Demasure, K & Müller, J 2006. Perspectives in support of the narrative turn in pastoral care. *NGTT* 47(3&4), 410-419.

Cummings, T G 2008. *Handbook of Organization Development.* Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE.

De Roest, H 1998. *Communicative identity. Habermas' perspectives of discourse as a support for practical theology.* Kampen: Uitgeverij Kok.

Dietterich, P M 1989. *Systems model of the church in ministry and mission.* Chicago: Center for parish development.

Dingemans, G D J 1996. Practical theology in the academy: A contemporary overview. *The Journal of Religion* 76(1), 82-96.

Ecotone, n.d., Ecotone, viewed 4 March 2012, from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecotone

Fourie, D P 2010. Asking about ambivalence: A different kind of therapist neutrality. *The American Journal of Family Therapy* 38, 374-382.

Freedman, J & Combs, G 1996. *Narrative therapy: The social construction of preferred realities.* New York: W.W. Norton and Company.

Ganzevoort, R R 2009. Forks in the road when tracing the sacred. Practical theology as hermeneutics of lived religion. Presidential address to the International Academy of Practical Theology, Chicago, 3 August 2009.Viewed 28 February 2012, from http://www.ruardganzevoort.nl/pdf/2009_Presidential.

pdf

Gerkin, C V 1991. *Prophetic pastoral practice. A Christian vision of life together.* Nashville: Abingdon.

Heitink, G 1993. *Praktishe theologie. Geschiedenis, theorie, handelingsvelden.* Kampen: Uitgeverij Kok.

Hunter, D, Thorpe, S, Brown, H & Bailey, A 2007. *The art of facilitation. The essentials for leading great meetings and creating group synergy.* Revised ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Janoff, S & Weisbord, M 2005. Facilitating the whole system in the room: A theory, philosophy, and practice for managing conflicting agendas, diverse needs, and polarized views, in Schuman, S (ed), *The IAF handbook of group facilitation,* 241-254. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Kashtan, M 2005. The gift of self: The art of transparent facilitation, in Schuman, S. (ed), *The IAF handbook of group facilitation,* 573-590. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Müller, J C 2011a. Postfoundational practical theology for a time of transition. *HTS Teologiese Studies/ Theological Studies* 67(1). Art.#837, 5 pages. DOI: 10.4102/hts.v 67i1.837.

Müller, J C 2011b. (Outo) biografie as teologie. *HTS Teologiese Studies/ Theological Studies* 67(3). Art. #1113, 5 pages. http:// dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts. v67i3.1113

Müller, J C 2004. HIV/AIDS, narrative practical theology, and postfoundationalism: T**he** emergence **of a** new story. *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 60(1&2), 293-306.

Müller, J C 2000. *Reis-geselskap. Die kuns van narratiewe pastorale gesprekvoering.* Wellington: Luxverbi.

Müller, J C 1996. *Om tot verhaal te kom: pastorale gesinsterapie.* Pretoria: RGN Uitgewery.

Müller, J & Schoeman, K 2004. Narrative research: A respectful and fragile intervention, *Sociale Interventie* (13)3, 7-13.

Müller, J, Van Deventer, W & Human, L 2001. Fiction writing as metaphor for research: A narrative approach. *Practical Theology in South Africa* 26(2), 76–96.

Nichols, M P & Schwartz, R C 1991. *Family therapy. Concepts and methods.* Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Osmer, R R 2011. Practical theology: A current international perspective. *HTS Teologiese Studies/ Theological Studies* 67(2). #Art. 1058, 7 pages. http:// dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts. v67i2.1058

Osmer, R R 2008. *Practical theology: An introduction.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Osmer, R R & Schweitzer, F L (eds) 2003. *Developing a public faith. New directions in practical theology. Essays in honor of James W. Fowler.* St. Louis, Missouri: Chalice Press.

Palmer, S & Whybrow, A (eds) 2008. *Handbook of coaching psychology. A guide for practitioners.* East Sussex: Routledge.

Paré, D A 1995. Of families and other cultures: The shifting paradigm of family therapy. *Family Process* 34(1), 1-19.

Poerksen, B 2004. *The certainty of uncertainty: Dialogues introducing constructivism.* Exeter, UK: Imprint Academic.

Schuman, S (ed) 2005. *The IAF handbook of group facilitation,* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Schwarz, R 2005. The skilled facilitator, in Schuman S. (ed), *The IAF handbook of group facilitation,* 21-34. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Tracy, D 1998. *The analogical imagination: Christian theology and the culture of pluralism.* New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company.

Troxel, J P 2005. Affirmative facilitation: An asset-based approach to process consultation, in Schuman, S (ed), *The IAF handbook of group facilitation,* 591-608. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Vail, P B 2008. Process wisdom: The heart of organization development, in Cummings, T G (ed), *Handbook of organization development,* 219-236. Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE.

Van der Ven, J A 1993. *Practical theology: An empirical approach.* Kampen: Kok Pharos.

Van Huyssteen, J W 2000. Postfoundationalism and interdisciplinarity. A response to Jerome Stone. *Zygon* 35(2), 427-439.

Weis, A 2002. *Process consulting. How to launch, implement, and conclude successful consulting projects,* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass/ Pfeiffer.

White, S A (ed) 1999. *The art of facilitating participation. Releasing the power of grassroots communication.* New Delhi: SAGE.

White, S A & Nair, K S 1999. The catalyst communicator: Facilitation without fear, in White S A (ed), *The art of facilitating participation. Releasing the power of grassroots communication,* 35-51. New Delhi: SAGE.

Author details
Dr. H Elmo Pienaar, Research Fellow,
Department of Practical Theology,
Faculty of Theology,
University of Pretoria.

Address:
Lynnwood Road,
Hatfield, 0083, Gauteng, South Africa.
Mobile phone: 082-4107645
Office phone: 012-4202669
Email address: elmo.pienaar@up.ac.za

Pretorius, Helgard Meyer
Stellenbosch University

"Seekers of truth and justice": an investigation of the Accra Declaration's ecclesiology[1]

ABSTRACT

This article investigates the implied ecclesiology of the *Accra Declaration* (WARC, 2004). It does this by viewing the document through the lenses of various ecclesiological categories: Biblical images or metaphors, social manifestations of the church, Protestant and Catholic marks of the church, the threefold office of prophet, priest and king, the four ministries or dimensions of the church and Avery Dulles's *Models of the Church (*1976). This is done in an appreciative manner, yet reveals some of the shortcomings of the document's implied ecclesiology. It also lays the foundation for deeper reflection on the role of the church with regard to social issues such as global economic injustice and ecological destruction.

ABSTRAK

"Seekers of Truth and Justice": 'n Ondersoek na die Accra-verklaring se ekklesiologie

Hierdie artikel stel ondersoek in na die *Accra Verklaring* (WRGK, 2004) se veronderstelde kerkbegrip. Hiervoor word verskeie ekklesiologiese kategorieë as lense gebruik waardeur die dokument bestudeer word: Bybelse beelde en metafore, sosiale gestaltes van die kerk, Protestante en Katolieke tekens van die ware kerk, die drievoudige amp van koning, priester en profeet, die vier bedienings van die kerk en Avery Dulles se "Models of the Church" (1976). Die ondersoek word op 'n waarderende basis gedoen, maar wys ook van die veronderstelde ekklesiologie se swakpunte uit. Die artikel lê ook 'n goeie fondasie waarop dieper oor die kerk se rol in sosiale kwessies, soos ekonomiese en ekologiese ongeregtigheid, besin kan word.

1. INTRODUCTION

The public challenges facing the globalising world raise fundamental questions regarding the church and the role that it is called to play within societies. This has been the case throughout the long history of the church. One way of approaching this interplay between public challenges and the church is by investigating church documents that address such challenges. One such document, and the focus of this article, is the Accra Declaration (Accra) by the World Alliance of Reformed Churches' (WARC's) general council (WARC. 2004. *The Accra Confession: Covenanting for Justice in the Economy and the Earth.* http://www.warc.ch/documents/ACCRA_Pamphlet.pdf)

---

[1] The author is a Licentiate student in the Faculty of Theology, Stellenbosch University. This article is based on the author's Master of Divinity research in Systematic Theology under the title *The Church in the Accra Declaration* (Stellenbosch University, 2011). The full text is available at: http://db.tt/6HHq0ZI2.

This article investigates the implied ecclesiology of Accra. This is done by using seven ecclesiological categories as lenses through which to view the document. These categories range from Biblical images of the church, to Protestant and Catholic marks of the church, to Avery Dulles's *Models of the Church.* The end result is hopefully a rich tapestry that reflects something of the ecclesiology that featured in the back of the general council's collective mind in Accra, 2004.

The reasons for doing such a study are the following: 1) to investigate how the WARC general council views the church within the context of global economic injustice and ecological destruction; 2) to explore the interplay between traditional ecclesial images and metaphors and the unique context within which the church is called to be the church today; 3) to begin asking questions regarding the coherence, credibility, relevance, adequacy and authenticity of ecclesiologies that function within this delicate interplay between the church and the publics that it addresses.

The article will be concluded with a brief reflection on the findings and how they may inform further critical reflection.

2. BIBLICAL IMAGES OR METAPHORS

In his well-known study *Images of the Church in the New Testament* Paul Minear (1960) identifies and describes 96 different images of the church used in the New Testament (NT). Some of these ecclesiological images also feature in Accra's response to economic injustice and ecological destruction. Due to space restrictions, only two are discussed here (cf. Pretorius, 2011: 24 for a more complete discussion).

2.1 The flock and the Good Shepherd

Paragraph 28 of Accra makes reference to Jn. 10:10, and is a clear expression of the NT *flock imagery.* In it God calls the church to follow Jesus in his "public mission" for fullness of life for all. This image extends through paragraph 29 with reference to Jesus being the "Good Shepherd" who lays down his life for his sheep (Jn. 10:11). The predominant image in both John 10's allegory and Accra is that of the church, a flock of sheep, dependent on its Good Shepherd, Jesus, for life.

It is also significant to note *how* Accra employs the flock imagery. According to Minear (1960:87), "constant reference to the story of Jesus, culminating in his death for men" prevents the NT flock imagery from distortion. In other words, *Jesus* becomes the norm, the Good Shepherd to whom church leaders, false prophets and wayward sheep are constantly compared and judged (1960: 87). Similarly, in Accra, the church's identity and calling is rooted in its calling to follow Jesus in his life giving mission, spelt out in Luke 4:18 (Accra 28)[2]. This causes Accra to "reject any church practice or teaching which excludes the poor and care for creation in its mission; giving comfort to those who come to 'steal, kill and destroy' (Jn. 10:10) rather than following the "Good Shepherd" (Jn. 10:11)" (Accra 29). Thus, Accra employs the flock imagery to define the church's mission of fullness of life for all, but also to identify and reject church practices that sabotage this mission by not following the "Good Shepherd".

2.2 The called *ecclesia*

Another important Biblical image in Accra's ecclesiology is that of "calling". Within paragraphs 26-35, the word "call" is used 7 times with God as the subject. The NT word often translated as church, *ecclesia*, stems from the Greek root *kaleo,* which means "call". Hans Küng (1968: 82) adds that the NT use of *ecclesia* is rooted in the Septuagint. Therein *ecclesia* is the preferred Greek translation of the Hebrew word *kahal,* which, when qualified by the phrase "of the Lord,"

---

2 Parenthesised figures indicate *paragraphs* in the Accra Declaration.

refers to the congregation of those chosen by God; gathering around Him as their centre. This is the most common use of *ecclesia* in the NT (1968:83-4).

Similar language is found in paragraph 30: "We believe that God calls men, women and children from every place together, rich and poor, to uphold the unity of the church and its mission, so that the reconciliation to which Christ *calls* can become visible" (my emphasis – HP). God's call is the crux of this very loaded ecclesiological confession. It is in God's call that the church finds its unity in diversity (*men, women and children… rich and poor*), its broad catholicity (*from every place*), and its apostolic *mission of reconciliation.* Thus, paragraph 30 confesses faith in the *ecclesia* – a people gathering around Christ's call to unity and reconciliation.

The word "call" occurs another six times in paragraphs 26-35. In each case God is the subject of the verb and the object is implicitly or explicitly "the church". These statements confess what Accra believes about the church's *identity* (call to *be*), and its *mission* (call to *do*). Thus, the *ecclesia* image in Accra expresses something of the dynamic interplay between the church as a *gathered* community and as a *gathering* of people for a particular purpose (cf. Kung, 1968: 84; 325-330).

Once again, these statements of faith (Accra 26, 28, 30) are consistently followed by a paragraph in which a certain theology (Accra 27), church practice or teaching (Accra 29, 31) is *rejected.* Thus, the calling of the church does not only qualify the church in a positive manner, but sets boundaries of the church's identity and mission by way of rejection.

3. MANIFESTATIONS OF THE CHURCH

According to Smit (2002:246), the English term "church" can refer to at least six contemporary manifestations of the church. These include local *congregations, worshiping communities, denominations, the ecumenical church, individual believers and voluntary Christian associations* (2002:246).

As a product of the WARC, Accra is firmly situated in the ecumenical and Reformed traditions. The implications of this are twofold. Firstly, the authors recognise the significant *challenge* that proper reception holds for the ecumenical and Reformed traditions (Accra 15) (cf. Smit, 2009: 182). The difficulty and controversy surrounding Reformed and ecumenical structures of authority are well known (2009: 182). Secondly, the authors emphasise (Accra 15, 38, 39, 40) the *need* for proper reception as they share the central Reformed belief that confessions should be embodied within the lives of local congregations and believers (2009:182).

Overall, the council is aware of Reformed ecclesiological structures; calling on member churches, to receive, interpret and communicate the document to the *local congregations* (Accra 37-40) – the building blocks of the Reformed church (Smit, 2009:182). Accra claims not to be the final authoritative word and calls on "member churches" (Accra 39), "local congregations" (Accra 39), "other communions, the ecumenical community, the community of other faiths, civil movements and people's movements" (Accra 41) to partake in an "on-going and global process of reflection and resistance" (2009:182). In spite of this typically Reformed emphasis, Accra pays very little (if any) attention to the church as *worshipping community* and to *individual believers.* Ironically, this damages the chances of a good reception as the document fails to address some of the most important manifestations of the church, in spite of its emphasis on the need for proper reception. Accra doesn't recognise the primacy of the church as *worshipping community,* while its lack of reference to the role of *individual believers* underestimates the immeasurable public role that believers play as disciples in their everyday lives (Smit, 2008a 72-75; 2008b:110-111).

4. PROTESTANT MARKS OF THE CHURCH

After Luther's initial ecclesiological proposals it soon became necessary for the second generation Reformers to develop more coherent doctrines as the separation became more permanent (McGrath, 2001:482). Calvin responded with his Reformed marks of the true church: 1) that the Word of God should be properly preached and listened to, and 2) that the sacraments should be rightly administered (Cf. Calvin, *Institutes* 4.1.9.). Soon, the Strasbourg reformer Martin Bucer added church discipline as a third mark (2001:484). These marks justified the Reformers' break from Rome, but also sought to prevent further division within the Protestant churches (2001:483). Calvin's marks of the church have been very influential throughout the Reformed tradition and are also found in the Belgic Confession (art. 29) (Alston, 2002:60-1).

4.1 The preached Word

Accra's emphasis is on the Word of God being properly preached. The importance of Scripture in Accra already supports this. From the introduction where paragraph 1 recalls that the "churches reflected on the text of Isaiah 58:6", to paragraph 42 where Deuteronomy 30:19 (*Choose life that you may live, you and your descendants*) is referred to, the document is rich in Scriptural references and allusions. In addition, the confessional form of the document, especially paragraphs 15 to 36, serve to publicly proclaim God's good news *to the world.* Thus, Accra seems to have integrated Karl Barth's warning against Reformed ecclesiology that is without a sense of mission – where proclamation is only directed toward the faithful (cf. Alston, 2002:61; Barth, *CD* (1962), IV/1:764-83).

   As mentioned in chapter 3 above Accra places a lot of emphasis on reception, which points to another aspect of Calvin's definition of the church. In addition to "the Word of God purely preached" Calvin sometimes added: "... and listened to." For Calvin pure preaching was not enough. The Word of God had to be heard and accepted with ears of faith!

   However, there is a polemic aspect to Accra's use of Scripture as well. After the church is called to stand *with* victims of injustice (Micah 6:8) and *against* forms of injustice (Amos 5:24) (Accra 26), the document rejects "any theology that claims that God is only with the rich and that poverty is the fault of the poor..." and "any theology which affirms that human interests dominate nature" (Accra 27). Then, after referring to Jesus' public mission of life and justice (Accra 28), the council rejects "any *church practice or teaching* which excludes the poor and care for creation in its mission" (Accra 29). These examples suggest that just and fair theology becomes the new criterion for what "pure preaching" entails. In addition, the language of rejection vaguely introduces Bucer's mark of *discipline* even though the consequences of "rejection" are not spelt out. This raises questions regarding the WARC's capacity to enforce discipline (Cf. WARC expulsion of DRC in Ottawa, 1982) and whether this is indeed implied in the document.

4.2 The sacraments

In Calvin's eyes (to speculate for a moment) Accra would perhaps have presented a very one sided depiction of the true church. Keeping in mind that Accra is not a treatise on the church, it is still remarkable that no reference or allusion is made to either Baptism or the Eucharist, which are very central to Calvin's ecclesiology (see e.g. Horton, 2009:405-414) and equally relevant to social questions (Smit, 2008b:103-4). Here Accra breaks from Reformed ecclesiology and seems to lean towards a more critical approach to the sacraments characterised by, amongst others, Camillo Torres, José M. Castillo and Ulrich Duchrow (Forrester, 1995:151-2).

   These theologians represent an approach to the relationship between the sacraments and

ethics, that view the practice of sacraments, especially within contexts of injustice, as affirming and upholding the *status quo.* However, such an understanding of worship and rituals can be contested on both social and theological grounds and many have in fact pointed to the transformative, subversive role that rituals such as baptism and Eucharist can play (Forrester, 1995:150; Smit, 2008b:103-4). The WCC's *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* document (1982) is an example of such an approach that rather views the sacraments as the nourishment that inspires and anticipates God's grace and justice[3].

With these strongly opposing views in mind, one is at a loss to interpret Accra's silence on the matter of sacraments. Did the authors remain silent to avoid taking sides in the debate? Or should the silence be seen as a covert statement that the sacraments are no longer relevant – possibly even a distraction – where matters of economic justice are concerned?

5. CATHOLIC MARKS OF THE CHURCH

From its earliest beginnings, believers came to confess their faith in the church. One such confession is found in the early Nicean-Constantinopolitan Creed that confesses faith in the *one, holy, catholic* and *apostolic* church. Over time these four adjectives became known and used as "marks" or "attributes" of the church. Most ecclesial traditions employ the marks as norms or criteria that define the church's theological self-understanding given by God (Smit, 2002:250). In the Reformed tradition especially, the marks are not so much attributes of the church as such, but rather of Jesus Christ and the gospel, the ultimate source of the church (Dulles, 1976:126-7).

5.1 Unity
The unity of the church stems from its *one* faith in *one* God and Father of all, *one* Lord, *one* Spirit, *one* baptism, *one* bond of love and *one* hope (Eph. 4:1-6) (Smit, 2002:250; Küng, 1968:273; Moltmann, 1977:342). Unity has always been a major theme in the ecumenical movement, and a very contentious one in Reformed circles (2002:250).

The *first* explicit claim that Accra makes regarding unity, which alludes to similar statements in the Confession of Belhar, is in paragraphs 30-31:

"We believe that God calls men, women and children from every place together, rich and poor, to uphold the unity of the church and its mission, so that the reconciliation to which Christ calls can become visible. Therefore we reject any attempt in the life of the church to separate justice and unity."

This statement says a lot about *how* Accra understands the unity of the church: Firstly, unity is seated in a shared *calling* from God (see also Confession of Belhar (1986) par. 2). Secondly, unity must take on *visible* forms in the church's being and mission (see Belhar par. 3-5). Thirdly, for Accra unity transcends barriers of gender, age, geography and socio-economic standing (see Belhar par. 7-9). Finally, Accra sees a vital connection between justice and unity. Here Accra alludes to Belhar (articles II and IV) and the Declaration of Barmen (1934, Article I/8.01) by

---

3 Cf. for e.g. the WCC's *BEM* document on the Eucharist: "The eucharistic celebration demands reconciliation and sharing among all those regarded as brothers and sisters in the one family of God and is a constant challenge in the search for appropriate relationships in social, economic and political life... All kinds of injustice, racism, separation and lack of freedom are radically challenged when we share in the body and blood of Christ... (par. 20) Reconciled in the Eucharist, the members of the body of Christ are called to be servants of reconciliation among men and women and witnesses of the joy of resurrection (par. 24).

insisting on the "tight connection" between unity and justice (Smit, 1984:54-55). Thus, Accra's ecclesiology builds on two relatively late Reformed confessions that both make direct reference to the four marks of the church (cf. Barmen, I/8.01 and II/8.06; and Belhar, par. 2).

The *second* statement regarding unity forms part of the confession of sin in paragraph 34. In spite of its primary focus on justice, Accra still deems it necessary to address disunity in its confession of sins. This too suggests that Accra relies on *Belhar* in which article 2, *unity*, and article 4, *justice*, are bound together in a mutually inclusive relationship via article 3, *reconciliation.* Accra also recognises that the disunity *within the Reformed family* has impaired the church's "ability to serve God's mission in fullness" (Accra 34).

As the three major streams within the WCC illustrate, unity in the ecumenical movement is sought either in mission and witness, service and public involvement, or faith and order (Smit, 2002:250-1). In the *third* place, Accra sees the common confession and covenant before God binding the church together to work for justice. This conviction becomes explicit in paragraph 37 whereby Accra questions the legitimacy of the popular maxim: "service unites while faith/doctrine divides":

> "By confessing our faith together, we covenant in obedience to God's will as an act of faithfulness in mutual solidarity and in accountable relationships. *This binds us together to work for justice …"*

Finally, in paragraph 41, the general council "commits the WARC to work together with other communions, the ecumenical community, the community of other faiths, civil movements and people's movements for a just economy and the integrity of creation…" Thus, in addition to paragraph 37, where the common confession is the binding factor, paragraph 41 suggests that joint efforts for justice bind Reformed churches beyond its own walls with other ecclesial traditions, faiths and secular civil movements. Accra moves beyond a typically Reformed understanding of unity to share in a more recent development in the World Council of Churches' Faith and Order movement that closely relates ecclesial unity and universal unity of mankind as an eschatological category (cf. Bergjan, 1994:68-70).

5.2 Holiness

The Hebrew word for holiness, *kadad* implies being separated or set apart and often has God as subject (Küng, 1968:324; McGrath, 2001:499). This corresponds well with the New Testament *ecclesia* imagery discussed above (McGrath, 2001:325). The holiness of the church is primarily a theological distinction that is closely associated with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and the church's unique calling by God to witness to God's grace and love (Smit, 2002:251; McGrath, 2001:499-500; Küng, 1968:329-330).

In Accra, the holiness of the church has an important, albeit implicit place, and is closely related to the *ecclesia's* unique calling from God. This calling apart by God is reinforced and qualified by three other important theological motifs in Accra: 1) justice, 2) the sovereignty of God, and 3) confession of sins.

In Accra holiness is understood primarily in terms of *justice.* Within its particular context, the general council identifies the struggle for justice with the *integrity* of the church's faith (Accra 16). This relationship is developed further in paragraphs 24-29. Just as the church's call to be holy, originates in God's holiness, the church's faith in the God of justice also results in its calling to be a people of justice (Accra 24). This leads the church to reject any ideology or regime "that puts profits before people, does not care for all creation, and privatises those gifts of God meant for all" (Accra 25). This pattern continues in paragraphs 26-29. Thus, in language typically used

to denote holiness ("God is… therefore we are… therefore we reject…"), Accra sacralises justice as a central concern in the life and mission of the church of the Holy One. Secondly, for Accra the church is holy wherever it acknowledges and respects *God's sovereignty* over the whole creation (Accra 18). This emphasis on God's sovereignty leads it to reject "any claim of economic, political and military empire which subverts God's sovereignty over life and acts contrary to God's just rule" (Accra 19). Here, the church's holiness rests in its confession of God's sovereignty over every aspect of life and the consequent rejection of all that denies it (Accra 21). Thereby the claim and call to justice mentioned above extends beyond the boundaries of the church and addresses the whole world.

Finally, an important link is made between holiness and *confession of sins.* Jürgen Moltmann, in his treatment of the church's holiness, states that "the church is holy because it is sanctified by Christ's activity in and on it" (1977:353). Thus, when the church prays for forgiveness it acknowledges both its sin *and* its holiness through God's forgiveness (1977:353). Therefore the church is holy wherever it openly acknowledges and confesses its sins (1977:353). The general council affirms this by confessing its own guilt in contributing and benefitting from unjust systems, and calls on churches in the Reformed family to do the same (Accra 34).

5.3 Catholicity

The word catholic is derived from the Greek phrase *kath'holou* which means "full" or "the whole" (McGrath, 2001:500). The catholicity of the church refers to its belief in the *whole* of the gospel, extended through the *whole* of time and place, including *all* brothers, sisters, fathers and mothers, and that the gospel has implications for the *fullness* of life (Smit, 2002:501).

The catholic spirit of Accra is already clear from the first paragraph where it addresses the theme of "*global* economic injustice and *ecological* destruction". Thereby, the document shows concern for the current economic-ecological predicament – to the widest extent possible. This catholic disposition is developed further in paragraph 17:

> "We believe in God, Creator and Sustainer of *all* life, who calls us as partners in the creation and redemption of the *world.* We live under the promise that Jesus Christ came so that *all* might have life in *fullness* (Jn. 10:10). *Guided and upheld by the Holy Spirit we open ourselves to the reality of our world."* (My emphasis – HP)

This short Trinitarian paragraph reveals three important presuppositions regarding catholicity. 1) The catholicity of the church is *quantitative;* stemming from its faith in the Creator and Sustainer of *all* life. 2) The catholicity of the church is *qualitative;* resting on Christ's promise of life in *fullness.* 3) Guided by the Holy Spirit, this catholic faith and hope open the church to the reality of the world, extending beyond its own boundaries in true catholicity.

As with holiness above, God's sovereignty also plays an important role in the church's *catholicity* (Accra 18). This relationship is seen in paragraph 20 where God's inclusive covenant with all of creation (Gen 9:8-12) is chosen above the covenant made with Abraham (Gen. 12-17). This sees the sovereign God's grace and blessings extending beyond Israel and the nations to the non-human creation as well (Accra 20).

5.4 Apostolicity

In the Reformed tradition *Apostolicity* primarily refers to the church's origins and continued association with Christ's apostles (McGrath, 2001:502; Alston, 2002:60). Thus, for Reformed Christians continuity is not based on historical or judicial grounds, but rather on the church's authenticity and the truth of its message and life (Smit, 2002:251; Alston, 2002:60).

In Accra apostolicity takes form in the calling to follow Jesus Christ in his public mission of justice (Accra 28). Thus, apostolicity does not rest on what Dulles (1976:120) calls an "apostolic deposit of doctrine, sacraments and ministry," but rather on remaining faithful to "the public mission of Jesus" as defined by Luke 4:18 (Accra 28). As the apostolic church it *confesses, witnesses* and *acts* in obedience to the Crucified Lord, which inevitably leads to suffering as a consequence (Accra 35).

6. PROPHETIC, PRIESTLY AND ROYAL OFFICES OF THE CHURCH

In their descriptions of the public work of the church, some ecclesiologists have turned to the threefold office of prophet, priest and king. Methodist scholar Geoffrey Wainwright is a contemporary proponent of the threefold office of Christ who also recognises the threefold office as a suitable ecclesiological framework (1997:109). The following section maps Accra's implied ecclesiology according to Wainwright's treatment of the threefold office.

6.1 Prophetic
Accra's emphasis is primarily on the prophetic task. This is evident due to the document's confessional form through which it conveys "the word and work of God to the world" (Wainwright, 1997:121). Thus, the form of Accra itself speaks of a church that is called to witness to God's will and saving work in a very particular context (Accra 15-16). In doing so Accra follows its Lord's example of being a herald of God's grace (paragraph 28 - Luke 4:16-24) and responds obediently to Jesus' commission in Mat. 28:16-20 (1997:121-2; 131). This does not however preclude the danger of persecution. Indeed, Accra envisions a prophetic church, which, like most prophets, suffers in service of its message (1997:132).

Then, in paragraph 32 the prophetic office of the church is given an eschatological edge: "We believe that we are called in the Spirit to account for the hope that is within us through Jesus Christ, and believe that justice shall prevail and peace shall reign." This agrees with Wainwright's (1997:133) vision of the church's prophetic office: "to help the world see its own best future."

6.2 Priestly
In Accra the priestly functions of the church are first heard in the calls to stand with the poor (Accra 26), hear the cries of the suffering (Accra 1, 5, 28) and look through the eyes of the powerless (Accra 11). Such solidarity with the poor and marginalised evokes images of Christ's vicarious suffering and mediating advocacy as the eternal High Priest (Wainwright, 1997:138-9).

Then, in Paragraph 30 of the Accra Declaration, God call's people together "so that the reconciliation to which Christ calls can become visible." Here the church is called to participate in the reconciling work of Jesus Christ, the ultimate High Priest (Heb. 7:11-28). Thus, the church fulfils its priestly role by embodying reconciliation where there is alienation and estrangement (1997:152-153).

Finally, the priestly office is implied in the doxology of paragraph 36, which is a quote of the Magnificat (Luke 1:52f). Indeed, prayer, worship, thanksgiving and praise form part of the living sacrifice that the church, the "holy priesthood", gives to God (Wainwright, 1997:137;145-149) (1 Peter 2:4).

6.3 Royal
In Accra the kingly functions of the church are subsumed in the prophetic office. Thus, where the royal office is concerned, Accra points away from the church towards the *sovereignty of God:* "We believe that God is sovereign over all creation. 'The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof'

(Ps. 24:1)" (Accra 18). The church's kingly office is its faith in and obedience to *God's* sovereignty (Accra 18), and is manifest in its *prophetic* witness to this truth. This is not too different from Wainwright's view of the church as "Royal-Servant", teaching an autonomy-seeking world about the authority, freedom, power and hope of the Servant Lord (Wainwright, 1997:154-8).

7. DIMENSIONS OF THE CHURCH

The church's ministries can also be described according to the four Greek words, *marturia* (witness)*, diakonia* (service/mediation)*, koinonia* (fellowship) and *leitourgia* (liturgy)[4]. Each of these words denotes a different dimension of the church's being. As its popularity among practical theologians may suggest (cf. e.g. Burger, 1999:203-260), the locus of the four dimensions of the church is usually the local congregation. This makes them especially suitable for investigating Accra's vision of the church's practical response to its public challenges.

7.1 Marturia
The discussion above indicated that Accra has a high regard for the church's witness. However, the word 'witness' has two meanings; and both are implied in Accra's ecclesiology. The first meaning implies 'seeing' or 'recognising'. This corresponds with the WARC's methodology of "recognition, education, and confession" that produced Accra. This structure continues in the document itself, which first sees and interprets (Accra 6) the "signs of the times" before moving towards confession.

The second meaning of 'witness' has to do with 'speaking' or 'giving testimony'. It is embodied by Accra itself as a public "confession" of what the church sees and holds to be true through its faith in the triune God. This second meaning comes to full expression in the confessional part of the document (Accra 15-36) and its call on churches to express *their* own commitment through confession of faith (Accra 38).

7.2 Diakonia
In the Reformed tradition *diakonia* is often understood as the active, loving service of the church to those in need (cf. Burger, 1999:245-260)[5]. The focus on those that are in need makes this dimension of the church's ministry an important category by which to describe Accra's ecclesiology.

In the confessing part of Accra (15-36) each statement of faith is followed by a *"Therefore…"* (Accra 19, 21, 23, 25, 27, 29, 31). This implies that witness and confession is not only an end in itself, but also a step on the way to living a different life (Accra 16).

The last section of Accra also suggests a shift towards the diaconal dimension of the church. Paragraph 37 calls on churches "to *work* for justice in the economy and the earth both in our common global context as well as our various regional and local settings." Paragraph 38 reiterates this sentiment as it urges churches "to translate this confession into *concrete actions"* (my emphasis – HP). Then, paragraph 42 commits the general council "to changing, renewing, and restoring the economy and the earth."

---

4 Cf. the Dutch Reformed Church's (DRC's) *Algemene Diensgroep vir Diens en Getuienis,* unpublished and unofficial, progress report viewed at the October 2011 DRC Synod held in Boksburg (4.5-4.10) for a very insightful description of the four dimension's of the church.

5 Alternatively, Thiselton (2007: 493-5) argues convincingly that the Lukan and Pauline uses of the term denotes that of an office of *mediators* or *ministers* authorised by the apostles to minister the word on a local level, thereby freeing the apostles "for wider public proclamation". This differs from the typically Reformed interpretation of administering food and funds (2007:494).

Thus, the council itself models the diaconal movement from confession to action to all other manifestations of the church. How such diaconal ministry is to take form in the various manifestations of the church, is however rather vague.

7.3 Koinonia

Koinonia is often used in ecumenical circles to refer inclusively to the various nuanced understandings of the unity of the church. In this light, unity in Accra has already been discussed under *5.1* above. However, *koinonia* can also refer to the active promotion of authentic fellowship and partnerships.

Such partnership first appears in paragraph 17 where humanity is called to participate in God's creative and redemptive life (cf. also Accra 2, 17, 37, 38 and 41). Thus Accra identifies the church's calling with humanity's calling in general. This theological presupposition later impels the church to partner with those outside its own borders as well (Accra 41).

However, this open spirit is tarnished by the unwillingness to partner with role players in the economic and political spheres of society (cf. Smit, 2009:183). Why does the shared calling of humanity (Accra 17) and the inclusive covenant of God (Accra 20, 22), only translate into partnership with civil society and not with political, judicious and economic institutions (cf. Smit, 2009:183)?

7.4 Leiturgia

The only expression of *leitourgia* in the whole document is the doxology in paragraph 36 (Lk. 1:52f). Does Accra not view worship as a significant part of its ecclesiology? Or could it be that Accra doesn't value *leitourgia* as a valid response to injustice? If it is true that "we have become captivated by the culture of consumerism, and the competitive greed and selfishness of the current economic system" and that "[t]his has all too often permeated our very spirituality" (Accra 35) is it not astounding that no reference is made to the very locus of Reformed spirituality, namely worship?

Worship plays a fundamental role in Reformed ecclesiology and is the unique *locus* of the Christian church: "Dit is die *oord,* die plek en die tyd, waar die Christelike kerk ontspring" (Smit, 2008a:72). Furthermore, many Reformed theologians today argue that the liturgy, in all its facets, is the heart from which the church's response to social issues is born (cf. Smit, 2008b:101-5 and Smit, 2008c:145-153). Thus, Accra breaks from Reformed ecclesiology for a more activist approach (cf. 4.2 above) and does so with regard to an aspect where the Reformed church may arguably be able to make its most significant contribution to a more just society.

8. DULLES'S MODELS OF THE CHURCH

In his influential study *Models of the Church* (1976), Avery Dulles employs a useful typological scheme to distinguish between various ecclesiological models. Dulles subjects each ecclesiology to three standard questions to determine in which model it belongs: 1) what are the bonds that unite the church? 2) Who are the beneficiaries of the church? 3) What is the goal or purpose of the church? The same questions are applied here to Accra's ecclesiology.

8.1 Bonds of unity

In Accra the primary bond of unity is the church's shared confession of faith in the triune God (Accra 15, 37). Similarly, for what Dulles calls the herald model, a shared, faithful response to the proclaimed gospel is the uniting element of the church (Dulles, 1976:77). The *ecclesia* image discussed above also plays a pivotal role in the *herald* model (1976:73-4). Therefore, in Accra, as

in the *herald* model, it is a shared confession, but also a *shared calling from God* to the service of God's reign that binds the church together (1976:74).

In some respects, Accra also agrees with the *servant* model's bonds of unity. Paragraph 41, for example, commits the church to work for a just economy with communions and associations beyond its common confession. Thus, while faith is the primary bond in Accra a shared commitment to justice as also an important binding factor (Cf. Dulles, 1976:90-1).

8.2 Beneficiaries

When it comes to beneficiaries Accra is most like the *servant* model, where the church's beneficiaries are "all who hear from the church a word of comfort and encouragement, obtain a respectful hearing, or receive material help in times of need" (Dulles, 1976:91). Thus, unlike the other models, its primary beneficiaries are not necessarily members of the church.

Accra shares the servant model's inclusivity by including all people of the world, rich and poor (Accra 17, 30), as possible beneficiaries of the church. With God as its role model (Accra 20, 24), Accra makes special mention of the poor (Accra 20, 28), suffering (Accra 5), powerless (Accra 11), marginalised (Accra 20), victims of injustice (Accra 26), oppressed, hungry, blind, imprisoned, downtrodden, stranger, orphan and widow (Accra 28) as *special* (Accra 24)[6] beneficiaries of the church. More than that, they are included as "preferential *partners*" of the church - as active participants in God's work (Accra 20). Accra's ecclesiology also follows another more recent (green) ecclesiological development when the benefits of God's reign is said to extend beyond humanity to include the whole of the earth (Accra 1, 5, 20, 22, 26, 37, 42).

In addition to the above, Accra still prioritises proclamation of the gospel so that people may come to faith in Jesus Christ. In this sense Accra agrees with the *herald* model, wherein the beneficiaries of the church "are those who hear the word of God and put their faith in Jesus as Lord and Saviour" (Dulles, 1976:78). Therefore, in Accra, the beneficiaries of the church include those who hear the gospel and respond in faith to its call. Such a response seems to include confession of guilt (Accra 34) and repentance from whatever denies fullness of life to God's creation (Accra 19, 21, 23, 25, 27, 29, 31).

8.3 Goal/Purpose

For Dulles the benefits that people can hope to receive are synonymous with the goal or purpose of the church. Once again, Accra agrees most with the *herald* and *servant* ecclesiological models.

The *herald* model's primary goal is to proclaim the gospel (Dulles, 1976:78). "The Church's responsibility is not necessarily to produce conversion (only God can do that), still less to build the Kingdom of God; but rather to evangelise all the nations in accordance with the 'great commission' of Mt. 28:18-20" (1976:78). Correspondingly, Accra witnesses to God's reign (Accra 32) and calls for repentance (Accra 15-35).

However, Accra also breaks from the herald model in a number of ways: *Firstly,* in terms of the church's "methodology" (1976:86). Statements like, "we are challenged by the cries of the people who suffer and by the woundedness of creation itself," and "we open ourselves to the reality of the world", imply *dialogue* rather than proclamation. This approach is more typical of the servant model, in which the world is a proper theological locus and not simply a passive recipient of the church's witness (1976:85-6).

Secondly, Accra shares the servant model's basic assumption of solidarity with the world

---

6 Note the similarity between Accra par. 24 and *Belhar,* art. 4. While Accra follows *Belhar* by saying that "God is in a *special* the God of the destitute...", and not the liberation theologians in their "*preferential* option for the poor," one might still ask whether Accra leans more towards the former or the latter? Cf. Smit, 1984.

(1976:85-88), which begins with people that are marginalised, oppressed and powerless (Accra 24-29). Therefore, the church's purpose extends beyond that of an institution, community, sacrament or messenger. The church of Accra is a servant that is called "to stand with those who are victims of injustice", and "against any form of injustice" (Accra 26).

Finally, while Accra gives no indication that the church can bring about God's reign of justice it does place a lot of emphasis on active involvement within the economy (Accra 16, 35). The church is expected "to change, renew and restore the economy and the earth" (Accra 42). For Accra, the church's primary purpose in this context is not to gain new recruits, but to serve people and nature by working for a more just economy (1976:91). This dichotomy between the herald and servant models raises important questions about the relationship between church and eschatology. Does Accra's church simply proclaim the kingdom or does it help to bring it about? Is the ultimate benefactor Jesus, or the Church?

In light of Dulles' models then, Accra's ecclesiology is part *herald* and part *servant.* This also raises questions about the models that do not find expression in the document. Could a stronger *institutional* sensibility not enable the church to relate more clearly with its members and more credibly with others in the public sphere? Could the "mystical communion" model not help to revive the deformed spirituality and lack of empathy that Accra laments? Could the *sacramental* mentality not help to articulate the unique role of the church within the tension between the *already* and the *not-yet?*

9. CONCLUSION

The above description of Accra's implied ecclesiology was done in an appreciative manner. The goal was to shed light on the way in which ecclesiological metaphors and images functioned to present a picture of the church within the context of global economic and ecological injustice. It reveals that ecclesiological images and doctrines function in very dynamic ways to convince and create meaning within particular contexts. It is interesting to note, for example, how the challenge of global economic injustice redefines the church's holiness (5.2), or how the prophetic office of the church becomes the preferred mode of relating with the public sphere when "the integrity of our faith" is challenged (6.1)[7]. In other cases important ecclesiological elements such as liturgy (7.4) and the sacraments (4.2) fall away to make room for activist vigour and ecumenical partnerships (7.3). Clearly, the specific contextual challenges facing the general council deeply influenced how they came to view the church[8].

One way of assessing the church model that emerged from the description above, is by subjecting it to generally accepted, inter-subjective criteria[9]. This enables one to identify certain strengths and weaknesses of the church model, which in turn may be helpful when considering adjustments or alternative proposals. Such inter-subjective criteria would have to include coherence, credibility, intelligibility, relevance, adequacy and continuity with scripture and tradition (Pretorius, 2011:56-62)With some exceptions, like the silence regarding the sacraments, it seems that the Accra Declaration puts forward a coherent image of a church that is willing

---

7 Cf. Naudé, P. 2008. What has Accra to do with New York? An analysis of moral discourse in the Accra Confession. *NGTT,* 3-4 (49). p. 206-216.

8 Cf. Smit, DJ. 2008d. Challenges for Reformed Churches in Africa: A Contemporary Narrative, in *International Journal for the study of the Christian Church,* vol. 8, no. 4, November 2008 (330-334).

9 Cf. Chapter 4 of Pretorius, HM. 2011. *The Church in the Accra Declaration: A theological description and critical evaluation of the implied ecclesiology of the Accra Declaration (2004).* Unpublished Master of Divinity research assignment (University of Stellenbosch). Full text available at: http://db.tt/6HHq0ZI2.

to address relevant issues from the basis of sound Reformed ecclesiological roots. However, serious questions are raised regarding the credibility and adequacy of Accra's ecclesiology. The credibility of Accra's church model becomes questionable when it is subjected to commonly held ideas regarding society (Pretorius, 2011:66-71). As Smit (2009:183) points out: "The document shows hardly any sensitivity to contemporary forms of structured pluralism and the political, social and cultural complexities of our global world." Furthermore, as the discussion on the *Four Dimensions of the Church* (7) suggests, Accra's practical ecclesiological implications and suggestions are vague, uninspiring and unrealistic (Pretorius, 2011:71-82). It is doubtful whether Accra assists local congregations and ordinary Christians in addressing injustice through the means available to them (Smit, 2009:184).

Ecclesiology offers a good vantage point from which to describe and assess the merits of a church document. When complemented by a more thorough assessment by standard inter-subjective criteria it becomes even more nuanced and helpful. If churches really are "seekers of truth and justice" as par. 11 of Accra suggests, they will look to continually grow in honest self-awareness and work to be more diligent and credible as seekers of Christ's reign of justice.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Alston, Wallace M Jr. 2002. *The Church of the Living God: a Reformed Perspective.* Westminster John Knox Press. Louisville.

Barth, K. 1962. *Church Dogmatics,* IV/1:764-83. T. & T. Clark. Edinburgh.

Bergjan, S. 1994. 'Ecclesiology in Faith and Order Texts', in *Ecumenical Review,* 46, 1, pp. 45-77.

Burger, CW. 1999. *Gemeentes in die Kragveld van die Gees: oor die unieke identiteit, taak en bediening van die kerk van Christus.* Buvton. Stellenbosch.

Dulles, A. 1976. *Models of the Church: A critical assessment of the church in all its aspects.* Gill and Macmillan. Dublin.

Forrester, Duncan B. 1995. 'Ecclesiology and Ethics – A Reformed Perspective' in *The Ecumenical Review.* Vol 47. (pp. 148-152).

Horton, Michael S. 2009. 'Union and Communion: Calvin's Theology of Word and Sacrament,' in *International Journal of Systematic Theology.* Vol. 11, no. 4 (398-414)

Küng, H. 1968. *The Church.* Search Press. London.

McGrath, A.E. 2001. *Christian Theology: An Introduction,* 3rd edition. Blackwell Publishing. Oxford.

Minear, P.S. 1960. *Images of the Church in the New Testament.* The Westminster Press. Philadelphia.

Moltmann, J. 1977. *The Church in the Power of the Spirit.* SCM Press. London

Naudé, P. 2008. *What has Accra to do with New York? An analysis of moral discourse in the Accra Confession.* NGTT, 3-4 (49). p. 206-216.

Pretorius, HM. 2011. *The Church in the Accra Declaration: A theological description and critical evaluation of the implied ecclesiology of the Accra Declaration (2004)*. Unpublished Master of Divinity research assignment (University of Stellenbosch). Full text available at: http://db.tt/6HHq0ZI2.

Smit, DJ. 1984. "'In a Special Way the God of the Destitute, the Poor and the Wronged'", in *A Moment of Truth: The Confession of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church,* Cloete, GD & Smit, DJ (eds.). Eerdmans. Grand Rapids.

Smit, DJ. 2002. 'Deel van "Kerk" deur die eeue? - die werklike kerk op soek na die ware kerk', in Nell, I. and Burger, C. (ed.) *Draers van die Waarheid: Nuwe Testamentiese visies vir die gemeente.* Buvton. Stellenbosch

Smit, DJ. 2008a. 'Oor die kerk as 'n unieke samelewingsverband', in Koopman, N. (ed.) *Geloof en Openbare Lewe: Versamelde Opstelle 2.* SUN PReSS. Stellenbosch.

Smit, DJ. 2008b. 'Oor die kerk en maatskaplike uitdagings in ons land', in Koopman, N. (ed.) *Geloof en Openbare Lewe: Versamelde Opstelle 2.* SUN PReSS. Stellenbosch.

Smit, DJ. 2008c. 'Lex orandi, lex credendi, lex (con)vivendi? – Oriënterende inleiding tot liturgie en etiek,' in Koopman, N. (ed.) *Geloof en Openbare Lewe: Versamelde Opstelle 2.* SUN PReSS. Stellenbosch.

Smit, DJ. 2008d. *Challenges for Reformed Churches in Africa: A Contemporary Narrative,* in "International

Journal for the study of the Christian Church", vol. 8, no. 4, November 2008 (330-334).

Smit, DJ. 2009. 'Theological assessment and ecclesiological implications of the Accra document "Covenanting for Justice in the Economy and the Earth" - Tentative comments for discussion', in Boesak, A. and Hansen, L. (ed.) *Globalisation: The politics of empire, justice and the life of faith.* SUNPReSS. Stellenbosch.

Wainwright, G. 1997. *For Our Salvation: Two Approaches to the Work of Christ.* Eerdmans. Grand Rapids.

World Council of Churches. 1982. *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry.* Faith and Order Paper No. 111. World Council of Churches. Geneva.

KEY WORDS
Accra Declaration
Church
Ecclesiology

TREFWOORDE
Accra Verklaring
Kerk
Ekklesiologie

CONTACT DETAILS
Mr. Helgard Pretorius
Student (Systematic Theology),
Stellenbosch University,
South Africa
helgardpretorius@gmail.com
+27 (0)79 520 5563

.

Punt, Jeremy
Universiteit Stellenbosch

Nuwe Testament tekste en kontekste: Oor die verband tussen hermeneutiek, identiteite en gemeenskappe[1]

ABSTRACT

New Testament texts and contexts: On the relationship between hermeneutics, identities, and communities

This paper focuses on different texts, Pauline texts as well as those (scriptural) texts invoked by Paul in his texts, and ever-present imperial "super"-texts. The imperial co-establishes the social setting of Paul's letters given the rhetorical use of Othering in the Roman Empire with its identity politics. The rhetorical power of Paul and his scriptural texts contributed to discursive formations, since a strong sense of being and identity was negotiated through these texts, even when admitting that such formations are always in process, mutating and reformatting. Construing notions of Others was a particularly important feature in defining boundaries, for generating insiders and outsiders in Pauline texts.

1. INLEIDING: BELANG VAN IDENTITEIT, TOE EN NOU

Die bestudering van die Nuwe Testament gaan primêr oor hermeneutiek, die soeke na die beste moontlike interpretasie van tekste en kontekste van die antieke wêreld. Om onderrig te gee en navorsing te doen oor die Nuwe Testament in 'n akademiese omgewing, veral aan 'n Teologie Fakulteit, veronderstel 'n breër hermeneutiese rol en bykomende kontekste, soos byvoorbeeld die studie van die betekenis van antieke tekste vir moderne kontekste soos geloofsgemeenskappe. Nuwe Testament tekste en kontekste is in die verlede op verskillende bruikbare en interessante maar ook ontoeganklike en laakbare wyses geïnterpreteer, in die akademie, kerk en samelewing – en dit gebeur vandag nog. Uiteraard was sakrale tekste nog altyd belangrik in hoe religieuse gemeenskappe hulleself verstaan het: 'n wederkerige verhouding waar tekste gemeenskappe informeer en gemeenskappe betekenis toeken aan tekste. Die interaksie tussen teks, hermeneutiek en gemeenskappe kan daarom verduidelik word vanuit die perspektief van identiteit, waar identiteit as selfbewussyn sowel as verhouding tot "Andersheid" verstaan word. Terwyl identiteit as tema 'n aanduiding van antieke belange sowel as moderne sentimente is,[2] is my fokus hier op die historiese aspekte.

Die verstaan van identiteit in die Nuwe Testament in terme van ander groepe of mense as

---

1 'n Geredigeerde weergawe en Afrikaanse vertaling van 'n professorale intreerede gelewer op 17 April 2012, en wat met toestemming van Stellenbosch Universiteit hier gepubliseer word.

2 Die groeiende belang van identiteit in ons era het waarskynlik veel te make met die belangrike, geo-politiese gebeure in Sentraal en Noord Afrika, in die Midde-Ooste, in Oos-Europa, en die Balkan-lande, om enkele voorbeelde te noem. Daarbenewens moet verskillende militêre ekspedisies in die afgelope dekades en gepaardgaande omvorming van groot dele van die wêreld, sowel as 'n groeiende belang by (of ten minste bewussyn van) groepsidentiteit in 'n toenemend geïndividualiseerde wêreld, in ag geneem word. Vandag neem die dikwels retoriese vraag, "what is in a name?", soms nuwe betekenis aan. Belangstelling in hul herkoms, in familie-geskiedenis, oorspronge – selfs wanneer nie noodwendig itv huidige affiliasies nie – reflekteer iets van mense se besorgdheid oor identiteit sake.

"die Ander" of deur "Andersheid" – deur "Andering" ("Othering") – het in die onlangse verlede heelwat aandag ontvang.[3] Paulus se aansprake oor Andersheid of verskille tussen mense en groepe op grond van verskillende grenslyne, sluit nie die moontlikheid van substansiële verskille uit nie. Soos identiteit was Andersheid egter nie 'n vaste of statiese entiteit nie. Dit was kultureel gekodeer en retories verwoord met politieke en kulturele implikasies.[4] Andersheid was dikwels meer 'n aanduiding van die grense wat 'n outeur wou stel as 'n beskrywing van die eienskappe van die betrokke mense. In Paulus se briewe in die Nuwe Testament is sy konstante, eksplisiete aansprake op en subtiele eggo's van die Geskrifte van Israel (min of meer die Ou Testament/ Hebreeuse Bybel) een van die beste voorbeelde van die interaksie tussen tekste, hermeneutiek en gemeenskappe, en die impak hiervan op identiteit – soos in sy appèl op Abraham in sy brief aan die Galasiërs.

Om een verdere tree te neem: die wedersyds-vormende aard van interpreterende gemeenskappe en sakrale tekste blyk teenwoordig te wees ook in geleerdes se ondersoeke. Met ander woorde, die toename in identiteit-studies (insluitende etnisiteit) gee aanleiding tot hernieude belangstelling in die aard van die raakpunte tussen tekste en kontekste. Dit is veral in die raakpunte van hermeneutiek en teks, en gemeenskappe en identiteit waar stimulus vir veel navorsingswerk in die Nuwe Testament gevind word. Die impetus volg in die voetspore van 'n lang – alhoewel nie altyd gelyke nie – tradisie van akademiese navorsing waar Bybelse tekste in hul oorspronklike antieke, Mediterreense wêreld bestudeer word.

2. 'n SAAK VAN KONTEKSTE; KONTEKSTE MAAK SAAK!

Navorsing oor identiteit-sake in die Nuwe Testament kan nie beperk word tot die noukeurige lees of literêre studie van tekste nie, omdat tekste in hul sosiale gesitueerdheid betekenis het en sáák maak. Die agtergrond, sosiale plasing of konteks[5] was aan die een kant nooit afwesig in Nuwe Testament ondersoeke nie; aan die ander kant, die skopus en aard van die betrokkenheid daarvan was tipies van oneweredige aard.[6] In die heel vroeë stadium van Bybel-interpretasie, toe nog grootliks beperk deur kerklike grense, het selfs die Antiocheense skool van die vierde eeu en die latere Middeleeuse *quadriga* reeds voorsiening gemaak vir die letterlike interpretasie van tekste. Die erkenning van die historiese geplaasdheid van tekste het meestal kwalik effek gehad op die interpretasie (Bray 1996:105-107; 147-157).

Met die aanvang van akademiese studie van die Bybel in alle erns in die negentiende eeu het die historiese bewussyn, wat Bybel-interpretasie sedert die sestiende eeu toenemend beïnvloed het, verder beslag gekry.[7] Die oorheersing van die histories-kritiese metode, wat nie losstaan van die ontwikkeling van Nuwe Testament as dissipline nie, was op hande (Lategan 2004:140). Sosiohistoriese kontekste van tekste het sedert die twintigste eeu meer aandag gekry

---

3 Voorbeelde sluit in Buell (2005); Campbell (2008); Dunning (2009); Ehrensperger & Tucker (2010); Hodge (2007); Wills (2008); kyk Spina (2009) oor (meestal) die OT.

4 Kategorieë van en idees oor andersheid en verskille is inherent onstabiel (kyk Dunning 2008:5) en terwyl hul gebruik in NT tekste retories is, verdien hul raakpunte met taal en politiek verdere aandag.

5 Hierdie is van die terme wat vir die sosiale plasing van NT tekste gebruik word – my voorkeur is vir "sosiale plasing" en die rasionaal daarvoor sal algaande duideliker word in hierdie artikel.

6 Vir 'n onlangse, kort verkenning van die ontwikkelings in Bybelse hermeneutiek, sien Lategan (2009a; 2009b). Thiselton (2006) verskaf 'n langer inleiding tot en bespreking van Bybelse hermeneutiek. Kyk bv ook Blount (1995), Schüssler-Fiorenza (1999) en Segovia (2000) vir verskillende oorwegings en gesprek in hierdie verband.

7 Goeie voorbeelde van waarop die radikale skuif uitgeloop het in die ontmoeting met historisiteit kan gevind word in Kümmel (1958:358-362), waar beide die outentiekheid van tekste en die geldigheid van hul aansprake onder die loop kom (kyk Lategan 2004:138).

en 'n groter rol in Bybelinterpretasie ingeneem as ooit tevore.[8] Terwyl daar tans in verskillende opsigte wegbeweeg word van die positivisties geallieerde[9] histories-kritiese metode, bied nuwe historiografiese kennis ander insigte op en toegang tot geskiedenis. Die historiese geheue is immers 'n dinamiese, konstruktiewe en sin-gewende onderneming.[10] In samewerking met groter en konsekwente gebruik van sosiologiese, antropologiese en verwante navorsing-skemas en metodologieë onder bybelwetenskaplikes, neem historiese sake toenemend 'n ander rol in Bybelinterpretasie in.[11]

Die andersoortigheid is tweërlei van aard, epistemologies en metodologies. *Epistemologies* is daar genoegsaam rede om die soektog na die "realiteit agter die teks" te laat vaar, ten dele omdat "realiteit" die verkeerde woord is vir die doel met sulke soektogte; ten dele omdat dit (daarom) 'n verlore saak is, met mislukking gewaarborg; en ten dele omdat die beoogde doel met die produk (die nagejaagde realiteit) problematies is. Die argument gaan verder as die skopus van hierdie aanbieding, en daarom kan hier net volstaan word met die standpunt dat realiteit altyd gekonstrueer word; nooit *an sich,* objektief, of neutraal is nie; nie gevind word nie, maar altyd gekonstrueer word.[12] Die tipiese intensie met histories-kritiese soektogte vir die realiteit agter die teks was (en is) geleë in 'n interpretatiewe kontroleringsfunksie, in histories-kritiese sanksionering of ten minste arbitrasie.[13] Die laat twintigste-eeuse "linguistiese skuif" in Nuwe-

---

8 Hierdie ontwikkeling was nie onverwant aan groter epistemologiese en hermeneutiese verskuiwings in die wêreld nie. Soos Diner verduidelik in sy opstel oor die spektrum van historiese paradigmas as "delayed modes of interpretation of historical processes that have preceded them" (Diner 2007:151). Die ouderdom van die geheue oorrompel die ouderdom van die samelewing; op dieselfde wyse wat die samelewing dit met die vorige "sematicization" van die volk of die staat gedoen het, het die laasgenoemde op hul beurt weer die premoderne *ancient régime* verplaas (Diner 2007:149-163).

9 "The theological justification, or better still, the *sanctification* of the historical-critical method by Käsemann, thus rests squarely on its perceived ability to guarantee closeness to (historical) reality (*Wirklichkeitsnähe*)" (Lategan 2004:140, beklemtoning in die oorspronklike, kyk Martin2008:3-9; Segovia 1995b:278-280).

10 "Herinnering kan beskryf word as die artikulasie van die verlede in die hede" (Pollak 2009:296). Sosiale geheue studies kom nog 'n "ordelike sentrum" kort, maar dit word gebruik in studies oor mondelinge en skriftelike mite. Sosiale geheue word verwoord deur middel van godsdiens en nasionalisme, mnemoniese praktyke in spesifieke sosiale webwerwe, die sosiale herinnering van gewone menslike aktiwiteit, of die plooibaarheid van die voorafgaande en hul politieke gebruik (Brenner en Long 2009:3-4).

11 Die weerstand van Nuwe-Testamentiese geleerdes om die singewende rol van historiese werk te erken staan in verband met teologiese redes (tekstuele geldigheid hang af van die historiese waarheid), wetenskaplike werk (erkenning van die Bybelse tekste se historisiteit, maar tog onwilligheid om die linguistiese skuif volledig te verreken), en epistemologiese redes (rasionalistiese en positivistiese nalatenskap van histories-kritiese werk sowel as die ewige vrees vir anachronisme of die gevaar van "modernisering" van tekste) (Lategan 2004:145-146). Te veel geloof in die vermoë van tekste om hul eie wêreld te konstrueer of te verbeeld mag sodanige sterk agentskap toeskryf aan tekste dat dit die erkenning van die ideologiese belange van die lesers of vertalers inhibeer.

12 Opposisie teen essensialistiese denke impliseer nie die verwerping van vlees en bloed entiteite nie (soos gepropageer deur sommige vgl. Roth 2003). Dit kritiseer eerder die denkbeeldige aard van wat as vaste kategorieë (essensialisme) en seker gronde (objektiwiteit) (vgl. Brown 2001:44) voorgehou word, wanneer sosiale verskynsels in terme van transhistoriese wese onafhanklik van bewuste wesens gesien word, en die weiering om te erken dat die mense die kategoriese struktuur van die werklikheid bepaal.

13 Dikwels met teologiese regverdiging, of soos Lategan dit stel, die heiliging van die histories-kritiese metode, want dit was (is) gesien dat dit nabyheid aan die historiese werklikheid (*Wirklichkeitnähe*) waarborg, terwyl dit Bybel lesers beskerm teen beide 'n *sacrificium intellectus* wanneer die sekulêre instelling van die heilige uit die oog verdwyn, en teen 'n docetiese teologie waar Christus blote metafisiese simbool is (Lategan 2004:144, in reaksie op Ernst Käsemann se werk in die besonder). Kyk Segovia (1995:281-285).

Testamentiese studie het helaas nie uitbuiting van tekste se sosiale plasing gestuit nie, selfs nie te midde van entoesiastiese aktiwiteit in tekstualiteit en literêre representasie nie (Lopez 2011:69). Daar is nietemin toenemende erkenning dat tekste deel is van 'n groter "inseparable, relational web of residues and artifacts that hang together in ways that are not always easily comprehensible" (Lopez 2011:80). Aangesien hierdie ontwikkelinge en skuiwe ingenestel is in verskillende magskonstellasies, is die onlangse "politiese skuif" (Stanley 2011:111) in Paulus studies nie moeilik om te verstaan nie – 'n saak waarna ek binnekort terugkeer.

Metodologies is die verskil in benadering tot historisiteit ten opsigte van die sosiale plasing van die Nuwe Testament ook opvallend.[14] Die verskil is geleë daarin dat weg beweeg word van "agtergrond" studies wat lig wil werp op die Andersheid van die eerste-eeuse konteks op historiese, sosiale, politieke, ekonomiese en kulturele gronde. Die fokus verskuif nou na die gebruikmaking van sosiale plasings in al hul kompleksiteit as heuristiese middels.[15] Meer as om 'n byna estetiese funksie in die situering van tekste te vervul, is sosiale plasing eerder besorg oor die daarstelling van 'n geloofwaardige interpretasieraamwerk. Eerder as om waardering vir die eksotiese te ontlok, wil konteks as sosiale plasing die moontlike resonansies van die teks karteer. Die kartering sluit die waarskynlike konnotasies en denotasies van betekenis en gepaardgaande illokusionêre effekte in. Verder, eerder dat die Nuwe Testament tekste vensters open op die antieke wêreld, beaam die konstruering van geloofwaardige kontekste dat ongeïnterpreteerde realiteit nie bestaan nie (sien Lategan 2004:145).

'n Ander benadering tot geskiedenis en historiese ondersoek is dus op die tafel, en sal waarskynlik toenemend deur bybelwetenskaplikes ernstig geneem word.[16] Nieteenstaande die groeiende skeptisisme teenoor historiese kritiek as metode,[17] betwyfel geleerdes oor die algemeen nie die belang van 'n historiese bewussyn in die studie van die Bybel nie. Bybelwetenskaplikes toon steeds groot affiniteit vir die geskiedenis en die waarde daarvan,[18] maar toenemend vir 'n nuwe opvatting met betrekking tot historiografie,[19] waarna sommige as

---

14 Die klem in die historiese kritiek op metodologiese kundigheid toon 'n aantal belangrike swakhede: die historiese klem belemmer literêre analise; die antieke wêreld is gewoonlik sonder beroep op sosiologiese en antropologiese modelle bestudeer; en die oorheersende kommer oor die teologiese inhoud en boodskap van die tekste het gelei tot 'n beperkende en idealistiese benadering tot die teks binne die vroeë Christendom, gesien byna uitsluitlik in terme van teologiese posisies, konflikte en ontwikkelings (Segovia 1995b :281-285). Die gevare van 'n valse optimisme oor 'n self-verterende "histories-kritiese metode" is reeds duidelik in aansprake oor die metode se vanselfsprekende belangrikheid.

15 Die materiële omgewing en sosiale ligging van tekste dien nie as óf blote agtergrond óf getuienis om die historisiteit van die Bybelse tekste en figure te bewys nie (kyk Lopez 2011:79).

16 Drie belangrike aspekte uit die studie van historiese narratiewe sluit in: die skryf van die geskiedenis is altyd meer en minder as die verlede; geskiedskrywing reken met die hede waartoe die verlede gelei het en is dus 'n kragtige instrument vir die legitimering van die gemeenskap, identiteitsvorming en onderrig; en, in geskiedskrywing verkry die gebeure narratiewe vorm (Green 2005:61-62).

17 Veral in teoretiese sin, aangesien histories-kritiese studies te midde van teoretiese uitdagings nog wyd beoefen word (vgl Segovia 1995a:1-32). Kyk ook Bray (1996:480-481) oor die analitiese eerder as sintetiese aard van die historiese kritiek; die gebrek aan 'n samehangende stelsel van denke; vertroue op onvoldoende data; en besorgdheid oor 'n teks se feitelike akkuraatheid. Vir die argumente oor die waarde van die historiese kritiek, hoewel soms in 'n nuwe gedaante, vgl bv Barton (1998:9-20); Collins (2004:196-198); Collins (2005); Fitzmeyer (2008).

18 "And even where [in the study of religions and theology] texts remain of central concern there is new interest in the social and cultural conditions within which they were produced and in the concrete histories of their transmission and reception" (Davaney 2001:9).

19 Historiografie is al beskryf as "the written record of what is known of human lives and societies in the past *and how historians have attempted to understand them"(*Partner 2008:1; beklemtoning bygevoeg)

die Nuwe Historisme verwys[20] (bv Henz-Piazza 2002). Ten spyte van die uitmergelende debat oor tekste as verhelderende vensters op die antieke wêreld of as self-reflekterende spieëls van huidige lesersbelange,[21] is die konstruering van geldige en geloofwaardige sosiale plasings van tekste nie 'n opsionele ekstra in Nuwe Testament hermeneutiek nie. Hoe kan dit sinvol gebeur? Wat is nodig dat die soeke na geloofwaardige historiese raamwerke nie linguistiese, strukturele en resepsie-historiese aspekte in hermeneutiek verdring nie? Hoe kan pogings om beheer oor betekenis te verkry deur aansprake op geskiedenis, vermy word? Historiografiese insigte wat die gekonstrueerde aard van realiteit ernstig neem verskuif die fokus weg van tekste wat toegang tot 'n gewaande ware realiteit bied, en ontneem kontekste hul beweerde estetiese en beheerfunksies. Die klem verskuif na 'n waardering vir die gekonstrueerde ("re-membered") aard van die geskiedenis,[22] met ander woorde na 'n herwaardering van die onderlinge verhouding tussen tekste en kontekste. In kort, tekste konstrueer kontekste net soveel as wat tekste ingebed is in kontekste.[23]

In die geval van Paulus, spreek hy op die oppervlak die saak van die Galasiër-gemeente se nuwe identiteit aan, maar op 'n dieper vlak gaan dit oor sy aanwending van 'n historiese, Joodse tradisie vir die volgelinge van Jesus in Galasië – 'n situasie tekenend van die samespel tussen hermeneutiek, tekste en gemeenskappe in historiese kontekste. Paulus se briewe met hul retoriese krag was deel van die vroegste diskursiewe en retoriese formasies van die vroeë volgelinge van Jesus, wat, soos die verskeidenheid van Nuwe Testament dokumente duidelik maak, aanleiding gegee het ook tot verskillende sosiale formasies.[24] Twee aspekte van hoe Paulus te werk gegaan het met die onderhandeling van identiteit in Galasiërs was sy opname van die Geskrifte se Abraham-tradisie en Anderheid-aansprake wat by tye sterk ooreenkoms met imperiale strategieë van Andersheid toon.

3. PAULUS, IDENTITEIT EN TEKSTE IN 'n IMPERIALE KONTEKS

'n Herevaluering van die historiografie in teksinterpretasie moet rekening hou met die Romeinse Ryk se alomteenwoordigheid in die tyd van die Nuwe Testament, en die imperiale omgewing se invloed op tekste en hermeneutiek, gemeenskappe en identiteit. 'n Ander fokus met betrekking tot die imperiale omgewing het nie net te make met 'n andersoortige benadering tot geskiedenis en sosiale ligging nie, dit is ook die gevolg van 'n meer afgeronde benadering tot Paulus. Om die waarheid te sê, navorsing oor identiteit het beduidende momentum in die Nuwe Testament en Paulus studies (veral) gekry met die Nuwe Perspektief op Paulus, en meer onlangs, die Radikale Nuwe Perspektief op Paulus. Hierdie perspektiewe maak ander maniere om Paulus te verstaan

---

20 "New Historicism is essentially a turn away from theory and a movement in the direction of culture, history, politics, society and institutions as the social contexts of the production of texts" (Carroll 1998b:52).

21 Om die metafoor uit te brei, die teks kan bestudeer word soos portret in sy eie reg, nie vir toegang tot die verlede nie en nie as weerspieëling van die huidige leesmatige posisies en belangstellings nie (vgl Bray 1996).

22 Vanuit 'n literêre perspektief, "History is 'fictional', not in the sense of something false but in the sense of something produced in language" (Schüssler Fiorenza 1989:23).

23 Uiteraard is sulke historiografiese pogings net soseer gelaai met ideologiese belange as wat histories-kritiese benaderings nog altyd was. Die ontkenning van belange is net so nutteloos soos wat die uitwissing daarvan onmoontlik is, en daarom vereis dit deursigtigheid in benadering en deurlopende kruis-wigte en teenwigte tussen die verskillende metodes en resultate.

24 Hierdie formasies "represent not the inexorable *verweltlichung* or development toward world-church, but the constant cycle of problematization, protest, reform. Its social power lies in what it provides in imagination and discursive formation" (Wimbush 1996:34).

moontlik, en skram weg van die individualistiese, vergeestelikte interpretasies deur aan te dring op die belangrikheid van die sosiale ligging van Paulus en sy gemeenskappe.

Baanbrekerwerk deur Krister Stendahl (1963) en Ed P Sanders (veral 1977, kyk 1983) is verder geneem en uitgebrei deur verskeie ander geleerdes (in Paulus studies, veral JDG Dunn 1982) as die Nuwe Perspektief op Paulus (NPP). Die NPP (her)bevestig die Joodsheid van die Nuwe Testament omgewing en ontmasker in die proses invloedryke stereotipes wat die interpretasie van hierdie tekste stuur. Ondanks die grondverskuiwende werk van die NPP, is sekere talmende en dikwels negatiewe stereotipes en denke oor die Tweede Tempel Judaïsme nog nie heeltemal uitgewis nie, ook nie in teologiese gesprekke en kerklike tradisies nie.[25] Meer onlangs het die huidige radikale nuwe perspektief op Paulus (Zetterholm, Nanos, Eisenbaum en ander geleerdes) die Nuwe Testament-wetenskap met nog 'n reeks vrae oor hul sosio-kulturele omgewing, en oor die identiteit van die Jode, Paulus en Jesus volgelinge in die eerste eeu gekonfronteer. In kort, deur enersyds afstand te doen van 'n geskiedenis van idees-benadering wat 'n universele Paulus spiritualiseer en andersyds met onvergenoegdheid oor monolitiese teologiese verduidelikings wat geneig is om Jode te demoniseer, kan nuwe benaderings om Paulus se briewe sinvol te interpreteer toenemend aangewend word. Geleerdes, dikwels geïnspireer deur imperiale studies of postkoloniale benaderings, wys byvoorbeeld op die belangrikheid om Paulus binne die konteks van die Romeinse keiserryk-retoriek te lees. Alhoewel so 'n leesstrategie nie sonder teenstand is nie, moet 'n sekere vertroudheid met die imperiale instellings en gebruike onder die eerste-eeuse mense egter erken word, soos Deissmann (1995:341) reeds lank gelede op aangedring het.

3.1 Imperialistiese sosiale liggings

Veral wanneer die suidelike Romeinse provinsie van Galasië die sosiale ligging van hierdie brief is, is die imperiale konteks belangrik vir die verstaan van die Andersheid-diskoers en gepaardgaande subtiele aanduidings oor die Ander. Maar, historiese beskrywings van die materiële of ideologiese hulpbronne van die Ryk het onnodiglik gely onder 'n engheid van fokus. Die Romeinse Ryk was 'n onderhandelde *konsep*, wat die wêreld geskep het wat dit bewoon het (vgl Hardt en Negri 2000:xv) – sonder dat die konsepsuele die sterk, geskakeerde materiële teenwoordigheid daarvan ontken. In die eerste plek was Ryk 'n konstruk, 'n konsep, nie 'n nasie nie, en dus sonder grense, 'n regime wat feitlik die hele beskaafde wêreld beslaan het. Ryk se heerskappy het verder gestrek as die materiële en het sy invloed uitgeoefen nie net op die menslike liggaam nie, maar op die menslike psige ook. Onderhandelinge met en die afdwing van imperiale ideologie was nie een-dimensioneel of sonder wedersydse, kruis en dwars beïnvloeding tussen Ryk en onderdane nie. Eerder, die imperiale het afgesmeer aan mense te midde van hul weerstand daarteen (vgl Punt 2012).

'n Tema wat tot op hede verwaarloos is,[26] is die doelbewuste of terloopse opstel van 'n groep se identiteit teenoor imperiale invloed en impak (vgl Martin en Barnes 2003:11). Wat het dit vir sy opvatting van identiteit behels dat Paulus die retoriese en materiële wêreld van die Romeinse Ryk gedeel het? In soverre dit identiteit raak, het dit ten minste beteken dat mense in die eerste

---

25 Volgens Elliott gaan die NPP nie ver genoeg nie, en veral Dunn bly steeds binne die Jode / Paulus binêre kontras (Elliott 1994:55-90) en beweeg slegs vanaf 'n teologiese kontras (soteriologie en die rol van geloof en werke van die wet / Torah) na 'n sosio-kulturele kontras (besnydenis, dieet wette en feesdae / Sabbat as identiteitsmerkers). Jode wat verkeerd gedink het oor hul soteriologie, word nou Jode wie se goeie soteriologie nie verhoed het dat hulle ander uitsluit op grond van hul gebrek aan Joodse lewenswyse en gebruike nie.

26 "Reimagining Paul and his communities in his Roman imperial context through the postcolonial optic of hybridity is not about Paul or his Roman imperial context. Critical reimagination is about us and our desires for particular relationships with the ancient, contemporary, and future worlds" (Lopez 2011:94).

eeu 'n Romeins-gedefinieerde wêreld gedeel het wat blatant wantrouig was oor barbare uit die Weste en sogenaamde onstuimiges en verwyfdes uit die Ooste (Lopez 2011:81). Die Romeine se introspektiewe identiteit en hul vervreemding van ander groepe het voortgespruit uit ideologiese redes eerder as historiese "werklikheid".[27] Eerste-eeuse stereotipering as spesifieke voorbeeld van Andersheid was nie die taal van eenvoudige beskrywing of akkurate profiele van *ander* mense nie, maar was verweef met identiteit-politiek: om die identiteit van die Self en Ander uit te stippel, en die bevordering van die eie deur die afwysing van die ander kant.[28] Soos Smith (1985:47) aangevoer het, "the real urgency of a 'theory of the other'...is called forth not by the requirement to place the 'other', but rather to situate ourselves". Stereotipering het 'n bevoorregte posisie in imperiale ideologie ingeneem, nie soseer (indien enigsins) om die gestereotipeerdes te beskryf nie maar het eerder die belange en identiteit van diegene wat gebruik gemaak het van stereotipering verklap met hul definiëring van die self deur ander.[29]

Wanneer Paulus met kwalik bedekte irritasie dan na die ontvangers van sy brief as "onverstandige Galasiërs" verwys (῏Ω ἀνόητοι Γαλάται, Gal 3:1), maak hy gebruik van neerhalende kategorieë van die tyd. Sou die brief gerig gewees het aan 'n gemeenskap in die Romeinse provinsie van Galasië,[30] sou dit ook 'n etniese verwyt ingehou het. Burgers van 'n Romeinse provinsie wat aangespreek word as "Galasiërs" en boonop as "dwase" sou 'n ernstige belediging gewees het. As 'n etniese belediging sou dit konnotasies ten opsigte van die berugte Keltiese volk van die Noorde ingehou het, die imperiale buitestaanders. Meer as etnisiteit was egter betrokke, omdat 'n aanklag van dwaasheid in daardie tyd ook 'n geslagtelike belediging met afwaartse sosiale glykrag geïmpliseer het (Bassler 2007:45), Galasiër manne aan wie vroulike eienskappe nou toegeskryf word. Deur "idioties" of "dwaas" te gebruik in 'n sosiale omgewing beïnvloed deur sulke Romeinse konsepte, verwoord Paulus se opmerking sy gevoel teenoor die Galasië-gemeente in terme wat aan die identiteitspolitiek van die Romeinse Ryk herinner. Soos tekste, is ook identiteit gekonfigureer en kontekstueel geplot en maak daarom slegs sin in sosiale kontekste.

3.2 Betrokkenheid van tekste by identiteit

Teen die eerste-eeu het tekste in verskillende vorms 'n belangrike meganisme in die formulering en afwysing (in kort, onderhandeling) van identiteit geword. Die Romeinse imperiale invloed en die versadiging van die materiële en ideologiese wêreld met tekste, skriftelik en mondeling (vgl Lopez 2008), het grootliks bygedra tot die geskrewe diskoers in die instandhouding van identiteit.[31] 'n Breë verstaan van tekste om sowel mondelinge as geskrewe tekste van verskillende soorte in

---

27 Die Romeinse Ryk het 'n spesiale dimensie verleen aan Foucault se opmerking dat "die andersheid van die ander ... per definisie niks op sigself is nie, maar alleen dit is wat ons daarop projekteer, die skatkis van ons begeertes" (Carusi 1991:102).

28 Dus, beskuldigings deur sommige Romeinse skrywers teen die vroeë Christene, soos rituele kindermoord en kannibalisme, "kan verstaan word as heeltemal geloofwaardig vir sy gehoor - nie omdat daar gedink is dat die beskuldiging 'waar' sou wees nie, maar omdat dit effektief 'n kollektiewe afkeer uitgespreek het vir die kenmerkende Christelike weiering om deel te neem in die gemeenskaplike kultuur van die stad en ryk" (Knust 2006:7).

29 "It is the prior understanding of the other as a dangerous threat to society that leads ancient authors, whether in history or fiction, to draw on a common stockpile of typical anti-societal actions" (Harland 2007:74).

30 In die suide van Klein-Asië, eerder as in die noordelike gebied van die subkontinent (vgl Fiensy 2004:48-50).

31 "The threefold dialogue of memory with narrative design, socio-cultural mindset and socio-political interest, in itself infused by mindsets and ideals, continues throughout the generations in ever-changing contexts, as long as memory lasts" (Pollak 2009:298).

te sluit, is nodig, tesame met 'n waardering vir die belangrike rol wat herinneringe gespeel het in die verhouding tussen tekste en identiteite. Die verhouding tussen die narratief en herinnering is sterk[32] en word gekenmerk deur groot diversiteit en veranderlikheid. Die verhouding word bemiddel deur kuns en verskeie vorme van "narratief", en deur geskiedenis in narratiewe raamwerke in te pas (Pollak 2009:297). So byvoorbeeld het keiser Augustus in sy *Res Gestae,* waarvan die geskrewe teks versprei is oor die antieke wêreld, die geskiedenis herskryf in die naam van die Ryk. Die gebeure van die verlede is herformateer en herontwerp om só legitimiteit op te eis vir die Romeinse imperiale heerskappy en om die krag daarvan te vier. Literêre ontwerp was op komplekse wyse verweef met politieke, sosio-kulturele en godsdienstige konnotasies en kontekste.

Die maniere waarop mense in die eerste eeu ook hul eie en ander se identiteit opgerig, ontwerp en geformateer het, was veelvoudig en dikwels uiteenlopend. Kulturele, godsdienstige, (kwasi-) politieke en verskeie ander bekommernisse het telkens weer in spel gekom. Ten spyte van die hoofsaaklik mondelinge omgewing, is identiteit nogtans onderhandel ook deur die gebruik van tekste en gesaghebbende tekste in die besonder.[33] Die alte dikwels steeds gangbare oorvereenvoudiging van die Nuwe-Testamentiese dokumente as "Christen" dokumente wat daarop gemik is om "die Jode" as die primêre Ander (bv Wills 2008:1, 167-193) af te wys ten einde "die heidene" te akkommodeer, is kennelik foutief. Die erkenning van hierdie fout open 'n hele nuwe wêreld ten opsigte van identiteit, te midde van die gesofistikeerde maar komplekse en dubbelsinnige maniere waarop identiteit geplot was.

Paulus het die Abraham-verhaal gebruik, of beter, herwin om terselfdertyd die grense te bepaal tussen die volgelinge van Jesus en diegene buite die groep, selfs diégene wat dieselfde tradisie gedeel het, en om die in-groep te herdefinieer. In Galasiërs 4:21-5:1 het Paulus 'n sekondêre verhaal van Abraham saamgeweef waarin die status van sy vroue van kardinale belang was. Slawerny word nou die maatstaf van verskil, en was bepalend vir die groepering van Jode sowel as ander wat Jesus volg aan die een kant, en alle ander Jode aan die ander kant. Die Abraham-verhaal is basies tot Paulus se Andering van nog 'n groep wie se identiteit onbekend is, maar wat hom baie ontevredenheid veroorsaak het (vgl Gal 5:12; moontlik ook Gal 1:8-9): sy teenstanders.[34] Met die vraag na hul eie identiteit onbeantwoord, het diegene wat Paulus geïdentifiseer het as sy teenstanders 'n ander opinie gehuldig ten opsigte van die kriteria en die aard van die identiteit van Jesus-volgelinge. Dit was waarskynlik die nabyheid van Paulus en sy teenstanders, en die vele ooreenkoms tussen hulle (vgl Smith 1985:46-47) wat bygedra het tot Paulus se opgewonde oorreaksie in Galasiërs,[35] omdat sy eie grense só ook op die proef gestel is.

---

32 "…history relates to factuality and to actual situations, processes and events sequences in the past, whereas memory implies set of mind, value judgment, and, more than that, one's attitude to the past thus evoked" (Pollak 2009:296).

33 "On the one hand, then, narrative, whether in prose or in poetry, is the main channel for the performance of memory. On the other hand, the image of the past is profoundly affected by narrative. If history is a formless interplay and endless succession of occurrences, narrative imposes order and plot, and turns incidents into motifs that serve to build and to concretize the plot" (Pollak 2009:298).

34 Die ander word dikwels in situasies van konflik, wat deur 'n aantal kriteria ("wette") beskryf kan word, gekonstrueer: konflik met eksterne teenstanders dien die versterking van grense; dit versterk groep struktuur; konflik word aangewakker deur die nabyheid van die opponente; konflik bind teenstanders saam; en konflik dra by tot 'n unitêre beskouing van teenstanders (Wills 2004:9-10).

35 Opinies verskil oor die oorsprong en identiteit van diegene wat Paulus geïdentifiseer het as sy teenstanders in Galasië, en selfs die terminologie waarmee na hulle moet verwys word na: "Judaïseerders", "teenstanders", "aanstigters" of "moeilikheidmakers", ens. Baie terme word vir semantiese, ideologiese en historiese redes afgewys en bv Nanos verkies "beïnvloeders" (Nanos 2000:151). Daar is selfs voorgestel dat hulle gesante van Antiogië of Jerusalem was wat Paulus dopgehou

3.3 Konstruering / dekonstruering van identiteit in Galasiërs: Paulus as Ander?

Paulus het die gebruik van die Geskrifte van Israel aangewend in sy strategie om binne- en buitestaanders te definieer. Sy aanwending van die Abraham-verhaal vir nie-Joodse gelowiges het voldoen aan die heersende strategie van die herwinning van tradisies van die verlede, ook van ander mense, vir die eie groep. Die funksionering van Andering in eerste-eeuse identiteit politiek vra egter om versigtigheid. In hierdie era het individualisme nie hoogty gevier nie, maar eerste-eeuse Mediterreense mense het hul identiteit, wat hul bewussyn van wees en behoort ingesluit het, afgelei van die groepe waarvan hulle hulself as deel beskou het. Die meervoud ("groepe") is insiggewend. Te midde van 'n verwarrende – vanuit ons perspektief – verskeidenheid van opsies, van beskikbare affiliasies, het mense in die antieke (ook) behoort aan meer as een groep, wat bestaan het vir soortgelyke en ander doeleindes. Mense se idee van identiteit meer genuanseerd as 'n eenvoudige of eensydige politieke identiteit wat in opposisie tot werklike of denkbeeldige Andere opgestel is (Wills 2008:1-5). Andersheid is nie ontken nie en is trouens by tye selfs beklemtoon, maar tog het antieke samelewings dikwels hul historiese herinneringe in terme van 'n verlede wat ontleen is aan ander groepe saamgestel. As gevolg hiervan is tradisies van die verlede herwin deur gemeenskappe en groepe wat hulself met die legendes en tradisies van ander vereenselwig het (Gruen 2011:3-4). Die verhouding met die Ander was dus nie geformuleer net deur (nuwe of bestaande) kontraste tussen self en Ander nie. Andere en hul tradisies is nie net bevraagteken, verguis, of ontken nie, maar ook opgeneem en nuut "oorgedoen".[36] Hierdie ambivalensie word miskien die beste gesien in self-opgenome Andersheid.

Daar is reeds in Paulus se briewe spore van die neiging tot die toeëiening van Andersheid te bespeur, 'n tendens wat nie veel later nie in 'n ontluikende Christendom prominent en selfs dominant sou word (iets wat dikwels voortgaan in ons tyd). In Galasiërs word Paulus se eie identiteit gekenmerk deur Andersheid op verskillende vlakke, of ten minste 'n bewuswording van die skuif na die grens van die Andersheid. Aan die een kant het sy status as self-aangestelde apostel aan die heidene (bv. Gal 2:2,7) nie beteken dat hy afstand gedoen het van sy Joodse identiteit (Gal 2:15) nie, terwyl Paulus se missie aan die ander kant sy teenwoordigheid in vreemde gebiede geïmpliseer het. Sy nabyheid aan Andersheid het in Galasiërs sy tol van Paulus wat nou ook lyk soos 'n Ander geëis (Eisenbaum 2000:145).[37] Ongeag Paulus se implisiete (bv Gal 3:6-9) en eksplisiete (Gal 4:28) aansprake op deelname aan Abraham se nalatenskap, dui die brief aan die Galasiërs op sy kommer dat hy van daardie erfenis en die gepaardgaande tradisies en identiteit uitgesluit sou kon word, en sy gepaardgaande besorgdheid om te bly binne die "Israel van God" (Gal 6:12-16).

In Filippense 3:20 maak Paulus aanspraak op hemelse burgerskap vir Jesus-volgelinge, maar reeds in die vroeër Galasiër brief het Paulus sy gehoor se fokus op die "Jerusalem daarbo" (Gal 4:26) gevestig. Nie net is die Jerusalem daarbo eerder as die "huidige Jerusalem" in die brandpunt nie. Jerusalem daarbo as "moeder" is ook die verduideliking van die oorsprong van die Jesus-volgelinge en die maatstaf van hul oriëntasie. Paulus se aandrang op die hemelse Jerusalem as maatstaf van die vroeë Christelike identiteit is ingebed in sy herwinning van die Abraham-

---

het sedert hy Antiogië verlaat het (Wan 2007:257-258), wat die vraag laat ontstaan of hulle dieselfde groep is waarna elders verwys word, vgl Fil 3:2 (honde, doeners van die bose dade), 2 Kor 11:05, 12:11 (super-apostels); of 2 Kor 11:15 (dienaars van Satan)?

36 Dit impliseer natuurlik nie dat die gedagte van Ander onbelangrik was in identiteit-konstruksies en -onderhandelinge nie, aangesien die Ander 'n belangrike, indien nie altyd nie eksplisiete of direkte verwysingspunt gebly het.

37 Kyk ook Dunning (2008). Die opneem van 'n buitestaander identiteit in Paulus is kompleks, aangesien die andersheid wat hy verkondig vir gelowiges geleë was daarin om te verskil van hierdie wêreld, asook van sekere gebruike en tradisies (sommige waarvan hy selfs gedeel het) onder die gelowiges.

vertellings, in soverre Abraham die paradigmatiese vreemdeling-inwoner in die Hebreeuse Bybel was (Gen 23:4). Self-andering of die aanvaarding van Andersheid in die vorm van die vreemdheid *topos* in teologiese diskoers was dikwels waardevol, beide vir die ondersteuning van Christene in die artikulering van 'n kontra-kulturele houding sowel as vir die bevordering van 'n gepaardgaande lewenswyse. Die aanspraak op en viering van Andersheid[38] bevat egter 'n gevaarlike onderstroom omdat die retoriek van vreemdeling-status tot 'n onverrekende rigiditeit sou kon lei.[39]

4. AFSLUITING

Vrae oor identiteit(e) in Bybelse navorsing is die gevolg van verskillende belange en nie net 'n weerspieëling van kontemporêre kwessies in 'n vinnig veranderende wêreld vol onsekerhede nie. Identiteit, en die idee van identiteit as dinamies, betrokke, aktiwiteit-konstruerend, kompleks en verweef, het implikasies vir die sosiohistoriese en hermeneutiese kartering en die verstaan van 'n aantal sentrale kwessies in Nuwe Testament navorsing. Gegewe die Bybel se impak oor baie jare heen op verskillende maniere op kulture in verskillende dele van die wêreld, en die Westerse wêreld in die besonder, kan die voortsetting van hierdie invloed op moderne konstruksies van identiteit nie geïgnoreer of geminag word nie.[40] Soos geleerdes en teoretici soos Edward Said in sy *Orientalism* uitgewys het, het die Bybel nie agterweë gebly in die formulering van Andersheid in die Weste se kolonies nie.[41] Self-opgenome Andersheid is nie sonder gevare nie: gedagtig aan die blywende retoriese waarde van die vreemdeling-*topos*, hoop Dunning dat hedendaagse Christene "think with greater nuance, complexity, and self-reflexivity about what they are doing when [they] make the decision … to draw upon the *topos* to construct religious identity" (Dunning 2008:114).[42]

Daar is waarskynlik min, indien enige, versameling tekste waarmee soveel mense oor die

---

38 Om te verwys na die vroeë Jesus-volgelinge se waardering vir verskil deur *paroikos* (vreemdeling-inwoner), *xenos* (vreemdeling of buitelander), *parepidēmos* (vreemdeling) en *politeia* (burgerskap) is merkwaardig in die lig van ander, universele eise (bv Mt 28:18-20; Hand 1:8, ens), en tegelykertyd onvoldoende omdat sulke verskil vloeibaar is en uitgepluis moet word (kyk Dunning 2009:1-3).

39 Die gevaar kom op drieledige manier na vore. Een, aansprake op vreemdeling status kan die maniere waarop Christene inderdaad die wêreld waarin hulle lewe hul eie gemaak het, belemmer. Dit kan tweedens, 'n skild word om self-kritiek te vermy, aangesien hulle identiteit op oortuigings en gedrag staatmaak wat hulle onderskei van sosiale konvensies en hul aansprake op marginale of teen-kulturele status uitbou. En, uiteindelik versterk die Ander- of vreemdeling-troop ook 'n sektariese mentaliteit wat kontak met ander gemarginaliseerde groepe kan toelaat, maar afstand teenoor meeste ander groepe in die hand werk en selfs die andersheid van al die ander groepe verplaas (Dunning 2009:113-116).

40 Instemming met die sentiment tersyde, die aanspraak dat "The Bible, directly or indirectly, defines identity for most of the people in the world" (Wills 2008:2) is dalk net te sterk – tensy die idee van indirekte invloed uitgebrei word, wat op sy beurt dan inbreuk maak op die nuttigheidswaarde van die aanspraak?

41 Miskien moet Nuwe Testamentici in Suid-Afrika hulself nie te maklik by Perkins (2009:1) skaar nie: sy kies vir die rol 'n memorialis, wat "terugkyk op 'n historiese oomblik met ooreenkomste met ons eie", eerder as 'n historikus wat in die historiografie-genre neig om "verhale te genereer wat na 'n sinvolle toekoms wys"?

42 "Handelinge van identiteitsvorming is opsigself geweldshandelinge" (Schwarz 1997:5). Ooreenkoms in terme van identiteit of eenvormigheid impliseer ook verskil, soos die konstruksie van die self altyd oproep, en, wat die Ander as buitestaanders konstrueer (vgl Lieu 2004:15). Hierdie gedagtes bereik hul swaartepunt in teoretici soos Freud, Girard en Lacan vir wie geweld en identiteitsvorming verweef is: die behoefte om 'n mens se eie identiteit te vestig behels alte dikwels die uitwissing van die identiteit van die ander.

tydperk van soveel eeue interaksie gehad het en gebruik het in hul selfverstaan of identiteit, en ook vir die ontwerp van hulle "Ander(e)" insluitende hul vyande. By tye mag dit selfs onbewustelik gebeur het. Ook daar waar die Geskrifte hulle *habitus* informeer, is Bourdieu se opmerkings oor agente se betrokkenheid in meer as waarvan hulle bewus is, van toepassing: "It is because agents never know completely what they are doing that what they do has more sense than they know" (Bourdieu 1990:69). Die afgelope en voortgaande invloed van die Bybel in die vorming van moderne konstruksies van die Ander in ons land en ander dele van die wêreld, in verskeie areas van die lewe, beteken dat die studie van tekste en kontekste, van die interpretasie van gemeenskappe en geïnskribeerde herinnering van kernbelang vir beide die verstaan van die Nuwe Testament en mense se lewens vandag is.[43]

BRONNELYS

Barton, J. 1998. Historical-critical approaches. In *The Cambridge companion to biblical interpretation,* ed. J Barton, 9-20. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.Blount, BK. 1995. *Cultural Interpretation: Reorientating New Testament Criticism.* Minneapolis: Fortress.

Bassler, JM. 2007. *Navigating Paul. An Introduction to Key Theological Concepts.* Louisville, London: Westminster John Knox.

Bourdieu, P. 1990. *The Logic of Practice.* Stanford: University of Stanford Press.

Bray, G. 1996. *Biblical Interpretation: Past and Present.* Downers Grove: InterVarsity.

Brenner, A and BO Long. 2009. Introduction: Memory, Telling and the Art of [Self-]Definition. In *Performing memory in biblical narrative and beyond,* eds. A Brenner and FH Pollak, 1-10. The Bible in the Modern World, vol 25; Amsterdam Studies in the Bible and Religion, vol 3. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix.

Brown, D. 2001. Refashioning Self and Other. Theology, Academy, and the New Ethnography. In *Converging on Culture. Theologians in Dialogue with Cultural Analysis and Criticism,* eds. D Brown, SG Davaney, and K Tanner, 41-55. AAR Reflection and theory in the study of religion series. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.

Buell, DK. 2001. Rethinking the Relevance of Race for Early Christian Self-Definition. *Harvard Theological Review* 94(4): 449-76.

-----. 2005. *Why This New Race? Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Campbell, WS. 2008. *Paul and the Creation of Christian Identity.* T & T Clark Biblical Studies. London: T & T Clark.

Carroll, RP. 1998. Poststructuralist Approaches. New Historicism and Postmodernism. In *The Cambridge Companion to Biblical Interpretation,* ed. J Barton, 50-66. Cambridge Companions to Religion. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Carusi, A. 1991. Post, post and post. Or, where is South African literature in all this? In *Past the Last Post: Theorizing Post-Colonialism and Post-Modernism*, eds I Adam and H Tiffin, 95-108. New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Collins, JJ. 2004. The Politics of Biblical Interpretation. In *Biblical and Near Eastern Essays. Studies in Honour of Kevin J Cathcart,* eds. C McCarthy and JF Healey, 195-211. London, New York: T & T Clark International.

Collins, JJ. 2005. *The Bible after Babel. Historical Criticism in a Postmodern Age.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Davaney, SG. 2001. Theology and the Turn to Cultural Analysis. In *Converging on culture. Theologians in dialogue with Cultural Analysis and Criticism,* eds. D Brown, SG Davaney and K Tanner, 3-16. AAR

---

43 Nuwe Testament as dissipline bestudeer Bybelse en ander kontemporêre dokumente. Hierdie tekste word bestudeer saam met en in die era of konteks waarin hulle ontstaan het, aangesien daar 'n onlosmaaklike band tussen teks en konteks is. Uiteindelik gaan dit nie primêr oor die studie van tekste *in* kontekste in die sin van die soeke na die realiteit agter die tekste nie; maar oor die studie van tekste *en* kontekste in die sin van die situering van interpretasie in geloofwaardige konstruksies van die antieke wêreld – bewus daarvan die konteks gekonstrueer is en afhanklik is van interpretasie op dieselfde wyse as wat tekste van interpretasie afhanklik is.

Reflection and theory in the study of religion series. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.

Deissmann, GA. 1995 (1910). *Light from the Ancient East: The New Testament Illustrated by Recently Discovered Texts of the Greco-Roman World.* 4th ed., trans. LRM Strachan. Peabody: Hendrickson.

Diner, D. 2007. From Society to Memory: Reflections on a Paradigm Shift. In *On Memory. An Interdisciplinary Approach,* ed. D Mendels, 149-63. Oxford: Peter Lang.

Dunn, JDG. 1982. The New Perspective on Paul. *Bulletin of John Rylands Library* 65: 95-122.

Dunning, BH. 2009. *Aliens and Sojourners. Self as Other in Early Christianity.* Divinations: Rereading Late Ancient Religion. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Ehrensperger, K and JB Tucker, eds. 2010. *Reading Paul in context: Exploration in identity formation. Essays in honour of William S Campbell.* Library of New Testament Studies, vol. 428. London: T&T Clark / Continuum.

Eisenbaum, P. 2000. Paul as the New Abraham. In *Paul and Politics. Ecclesia, Israel, Imperium, Interpretation. Essays in Honor of Krister Stendahl,* ed. RA Horsley, 130-45. Harrisville: Trinity Press International.

Elliott, N. 1994. *Liberating Paul. The Justice of God and the Politics of the Apostle.* The Bible & Liberation. Maryknoll: Orbis.

Fiensy, D. 2004. The Roman Empire and Asia Minor. In *The Face of New Testament Studies. A Survey of Recent Research,* eds. S McKnight and GR Osborne, 36-56. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic.

Fitzmyer, JA, sj. 2008. *The Interpretation of Scripture. In Defense of the Historical-Critical Method.* Mahwah: Paulist.

Green, JB. 2005. Learning Theological Interpretation from Luke. In *Reading Luke. Interpretation, reflection, formation,* eds. C Bartholomew, JB Green and AC Thiselton, 55-78. Scripture and Hermeneutics Series. Grand Rapids: Paternoster; Zondervan.

Gruen, ES. 2011. *Rethinking the Other in Antiquity.* Martin Classical Lectures. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Hardt, M and A Negri. 2000. *Empire.* Cambridge, London: Harvard University Press.

Harland, PA. 2007. 'These People Are...Men Eaters': Banquets of the Anti-Associations and Perceptions of Minority Cultural Groups. In *Identity and interaction in the Ancient Mediterranean. Jews, Christians and Others. Essays in honour of Stephen G Wilson,* eds. ZA Crook and PA Harland, 56-75. New Testament Monographs. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix.

Hens-Piazza, G. 2002. *The New Historicism.* Guides to Biblical Scholarship: Old Testament Series. Minneapolis: Fortress.

Hodge, CJ. 2007. *If Sons, Then Heirs. A Study of Kinship and Ethnicity in the Letters of Paul.* Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.

Kirk, A. 2005. Social and Cultural Memory. In *Memory, tradition, and text. Uses of the past in Early Christianity,* 1-24. Semeia Studies. Atlanta: SBL.

Knust, JW. 2006. *Abandoned to Lust. Sexual Slander and Ancient Christianity.* Gender, Theory, and Religion. New York: Columbia University Press.

Lategan, BC. 2004. History and Reality in the Interpretation of Biblical Texts. In *Konstruktion von Wirklichkeit: Beiträge aus geschichtstheoretischer, philosophischer und theologischer Perspektive,* eds. J Schröter and A Eddelbüttel, 135-52. Theologische Bibliothek Töpelmann, vol. 127. Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter.

------. 2009a. New Testament Hermeneutics (Part I): Defining Moments in the Development of Biblical Hermeneutics. In *Focusing on the Message. New Testament Hermeneutics, Exegesis and Methods,* ed. A Du Toit, 13-63. Pretoria: Protea.

------. 2009b. New Testament Hermeneutics (Part II): Mapping the Hermeneutical Process. In *Focusing on the Message. New Testament Hermeneutics, Exegesis and Methods,* ed. A Du Toit, 65-105. Pretoria: Protea.

Lieu, JM. 2004. *Christian Identity in the Jewish and Graeco-Roman World.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lopez, DC. 2008. *Apostle to the Conquered. Reimagining Paul's Mission.* Paul in Critical Contexts. Minneapolis: Fortress.

-----. 2011. Visualizing Significant Otherness. Reimagining Paul(ine Studies) Through Hybrid Lenses. In *The Colonized Apostle. Paul through Postcolonial Eyes.* Edited by CD Stanley, 74-94. Paul in Critical Contexts. Minneapolis: Fortress.

Martin, DB. 2008. *Pedagogy of the Bible: An Analysis and Proposal.* Louisville: WJK.

Martin, JM and LL Barnes. 2003. Introduction: Religion and Empire. *JAAR* 71(1): 3-12.

Mattingly, DJ. 2011. *Imperialism, Power, and Identity: Experiencing the Roman Empire (Miriam S Balmuth Lectures in Ancient History and Archaeology).* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Nanos, M. 2000. The Inter- and Intra-Jewish Political Context of Paul's Letter to the Galatians. In *Paul and Politics. Ekklesia, Israel, Imperium, Interpretation. Essays in Honor of Krister Stendahl,* ed. RA Horsley, 146-59. Harrisville: Trinity Press International.

Partner, NF. 2008. Historiography (Concordia University, Wisconsin). http://www.cuw.edu/Academics/ programs/history/historiography (accessed 13 February 2008).

Perkins, J. 2009. *Roman Imperial Identities in the Early Christian Era.* Routledge Monographs in Classical Studies. London: Routledge.

Pollack, F. 2009. Afterword:Perspectives in Retrospect. In *Performing memory in biblical narrative and beyond,* eds. A Brenner and FH Pollak, 296-9. The Bible in the Modern World, vol 25; Amsterdam Studies in the Bible and Religion, vol 3. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix.

Punt, J. 2012. Empire and New Testament texts: Theorising the imperial, in subversion and attraction. *HTS Teologiese Studies/ Theological Studies* 68(1), Art. #1182, 11 pages. http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts. v68i1.1182

Revell, L. 2009. *Roman Imperialism and Local Identities.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sanders, EP. 1977. *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion.* Philadelphia / London: Fortress Press / SCM Press.

------. 1983. *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People.* Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

Schwartz, RM. 1997. *The Curse of Cain. The Violent Legacy of Monotheism.* Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press.

Schüssler Fiorenza, E. 1989. Text and Reality – Reality as Text: The Problem of a Feminist Historical and Social Reconstruction Based on Texts. *Studia Theologica* 43(1): 19-34.

-----. 1999. *Rhetoric and Ethic. The Politics of Biblical Studies.* Minneapolis: Fortress.

Segovia, FF. 1995a. "And They Began to Speak in Other Tongues": Competing Modes of Discourse in Contemporary Biblical Criticism. In *Reading from This Place. Vol. 1: Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in the United States,* eds. FF Segovia and MA Tolbert, 1-32. Minneapolis: Fortress.

-----. 1995b. The Text as Other: Towards a Hispanic American Hermeneutic. In *Text & Experience. Towards a Cultural Exegesis of the Bible,* ed. D Smith-Christopher, 276-298. Biblical Seminar, vol. 35. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.

-----. 2000. *Decolonizing Biblical Studies: A View from the Margins.* Maryknoll: Orbis.

Smith, JZ. 1985. What a Difference a Difference Makes. In *"To see ourselves as others see us". Christians, Jews, "others" in Late Antiquity,* eds. J Neusner and ES Frerichs, 3-48. Scholars Press Studies in the Humanities. Chico: Scholars.

Spina, FA. 2005. *The Faith of the Outsider. Exclusion and Inclusion in the Biblical Story.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Stanley, CD. 2011. Paul the Ethnic Hybrid? Postcolonial Perspectives on Paul's Ethnic Categorizations. In *The Colonized Apostle. Paul through Postcolonial Eyes,* ed. CD Stanley, 110-26. Paul in Critical Contexts. Minneapolis: Fortress.

Stendahl, K. 1963. The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West. *Harvard Theological Review* 56: 199-215.

Thiselton, AC. 2006. *Thiselton on Hermeneutics: Collected Works with New Essays.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Wan, S. 2007. The Letter to the Galatians. In *A postcolonial commentary on the New Testament writings,* eds. FF Segovia and RS Sugirtharajah, 246-64. The Bible and Postcolonialism. New York: T & T Clark.

Wills, LM. 2008. *Not God's People: Insiders and Outsiders in the Biblical World.* Religion in the Modern World. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.

Wimbush, VL. 1996. "... Not of This World...": Early Christianities As Rhetorical Ans Social Formation. In *Reimagining Christian Origins: A Colloquium Honoring Burton Mack,* eds. E Castelli and H Taussig, 23-36. Valley Forge: Trinity Press International.

Zetterholm, M. 2010. Jews, Christians, and Gentiles: Rethinking the Categorization Within the Early Jesus Movement. In *Reading Paul in context: Exploration in identity formation. Essays in honour of William*

S Campbell, eds. K Ehrensperger and JB Tucker, 242-54. Library of New Testament Studies, vol. 428. London: T&T Clark / Continuum.

Kontakinligting:
Prof J Punt, Ou & Nuwe Testament, Fakulteit Teologie, Stellenbosch Universiteit, Privaatsak X1, MATIELAND 7600. Tel 021 808 2615; ePos: jpunt@sun.ac.za
Jeremy Punt (jpunt@sun.ac.za)
Stellenbosch University

Sarot, Marcel
Universiteit van Tilburg

Theologie: Een dwaze wetenschap?[1]

ABSTRACT

In the Netherlands, theology is currently disappearing from the non-confessional universities. That is to be deplored, since theology has several important public functions. One of these is that theology contributes to the 'normative capital' of a society. But is theology up to its public functions? Or has it become a pastime for an in-crowd that is irrelevant for the wider society? The argument proceeds in two stages. First: Can one adhere to the maxim *Lex orandi, lex credendi* without giving up one's intellectual autonomy and becoming irrelevant to non-believers? By explaining this maxim in light of its origin with Prosper of Aquitaine, the author shows that this is indeed possible. Second: Is there something to be learnt from Erasmus of Rotterdam, who – while being a confessional theologian – has become an icon of modernity? The author argues on the basis of his *Enchiridion* and his *Praise of Folly* that Erasmus was a constructive theologian with serious attention for the spiritual life. We can learn from him (1) to uphold the highest academic standards, (2) to combine loyalty to confession with a critical attitude towards abuses, (3) to denounce abuses without attacking individuals, and (4) to root our theologies in the piety of a community.

1. DE PUBLIEKE FUNCTIE VAN CONFESSIONELE THEOLOGIE

De organisatie van het theologisch onderwijs en onderzoek in Nederland maakt turbulente ontwikkelingen door. Eén van die ontwikkelingen is de onttakeling van de theologie aan de openbare universiteiten. De afgelopen vijfentwintig jaar heb ik als theoloog gewerkt aan een openbare universiteit, de Universiteit Utrecht. Toen ik begon te werken, was dat nog aan een Faculteit Godgeleerdheid; toen ik enkele dagen geleden de deur achter mij dichttrok, was dat de deur van een Departement Religiewetenschap en Theologie, een Departement dat bezig is de theologie te ontmantelen en op te gaan in een Departement Wijsbegeerte en Religiewetenschap. De ontwikkelingen aan de Universiteit Utrecht staan niet op zichzelf; ook aan de Universiteit van Amsterdam is de theologie verdwenen en aan de Universiteit van Leiden leidt zij een kwijnend bestaan. De Rijksuniversiteit Groningen lijkt als enige openbare universiteit nog bereid om in de theologie te investeren.

De teloorgang van de theologie aan openbare universiteiten is een gevolg van een dalend studentenaanbod in combinatie met onvoldoende inzicht in het belang van theologie. Het dalend studentenaanbod leidt ertoe dat het aanbieden van theologie voor openbare universiteiten financieel onaantrekkelijk is. Dan ga je daar alleen mee door als je er op inhoudelijke gronden belang aan hecht. De praktijk leert dat dit aan openbare universiteiten in afnemende mate het geval is.

De theologie aan de openbare universiteiten in Nederland incasseert forse klappen; hierdoor

---

1 Dit is de tekst van het openingscollege dat ik in verkorte vorm heb uitgesproken bij de opening van het academisch jaar aan de Theologische Universiteit Kampen uitgaande van de Gereformeerde Kerken (Vrijgemaakt).

kan gemakkelijk de indruk ontstaan, dat theologie als zodanig een aflopende zaak is. Naar aanleiding van deze rede stelde een journaliste me de vraag: Zal het over 25 jaar nog mogelijk zijn om theologie in Nederland te studeren? Mijn antwoord is: ja. Neem de Theologische Universiteit Kampen als voorbeeld: hier is het studentenaantal de afgelopen jaren relatief stabiel. Iets soortgelijks geldt voor een aantal andere confessionele instellingen. Dat deze instellingen bovendien groot belang aan theologie hechten, hoeft geen betoog. Het voortbestaan van de theologie aan deze instellingen is daarom vooralsnog gewaarborgd. Sterker nog, het relatief belang van theologie aan deze instellingen groeit. Waar de Theologische Universiteit Kampen in het verleden een relatief kleine opleiding was, die wegviel tegen opleidingen met vele tientallen studenten per jaar, bent U nu getalsmatig in theologisch Nederland een factor om rekening mee te houden. Uw *marktaandeel* is gegroeid. En dat geldt niet alleen voor U, maar bijvoorbeeld ook voor de Theologische Universiteit Apeldoorn en meer in het algemeen voor de protestantse theologische opleidingen: die houden stand waar openbare opleidingen teloorgaan.

Als kerkelijke of confessionele theologie relatief in opkomst is, dan is het tijd voor een nieuw zelfbewustzijn en een nieuw elan. Dat nieuw elan is niet alleen voor de universiteiten van belang, maar ook voor de maatschappij. Theologie heeft immers niet alleen een kerkelijke maar ook een publieke functie. Wij kunnen de theologie niet straffeloos afschaffen, niet alleen omdat de kerk dan geen goed opgeleide predikanten meer zou hebben, maar ook omdat de maatschappij erdoor zou verarmen. Zo is door het werk van prof. Hooykaas en vele anderen[2] duidelijk geworden dat het niet toevallig is dat de moderne natuurwetenschap in het christelijk Westen ontstond. Het christendom – en volgens de agnost Floris Cohen zelfs meer in het bijzonder het protestantisme (Cohen – vormde de levensbeschouwelijke achtergrond waartegen de moderne wetenschap tot bloei kon komen. Het christendom

1. ziet de werkelijkheid zelf niet als goddelijk maar als schepping van God: je *mag* de werkelijkheid dus onderzoeken;
2. ziet de werkelijkheid als schepping van een intelligentie die ons te boven gaat: je *kunt* de werkelijkheid dus zinvol onderzoeken;
3. ziet de werkelijkheid als bron van kennis over God: het is dus *goed,* de werkelijkheid te onderzoeken.

Het verbaast daarom niet dat de eerste moderne natuurwetenschappers veelal christenen en vaak ook theologen waren; juist hun opvattingen maakten die natuurwetenschap mogelijk (Sarot, 2006:118–119). Juist daarom is het zo ironisch dat atheïsten als Herman Philipse zich nu op grond van de wetenschap tegen het christendom keren. James McAllister, een atheïstisch wetenschapsfilosoof, heeft Philipse onlangs gekapitteld over diens opvatting dat religie niets verklaart dat de wetenschap niet beter verklaart. Volgens McAllister verklaart religie tenminste vier fundamentele aspecten van onze werkelijkheid die de wetenschap niet verklaart, en tenminste voorlopig ook niet zal verklaren:

1. Het ontstaan van het universum;
2. Het ontstaan van leven;
3. Het ontstaan van bewustzijn;
4. Het ontstaan van moraal (McAllister 2012).

McAllister heeft wel vragen bij de verklaringen die religies van deze zaken geven, maar hij

---

2 Hooykaas 1972; voor meer literatuur, zie Sarot 2006: 118–119.

waardeert desalniettemin *dat* ze een verklaring geven. Ik onderschrijf dat hier graag, en voeg er aan toe dat een samenleving die geen antwoord meer heeft op een vraag als die waar onze moraal vandaan komt, in feite beginselloos. Let wel: ik claim niet dat iedereen in een samenleving het eens moet zijn over vragen als: waar komt onze moraal vandaan? Het kan geen kwaad dat mensen erover van mening verschillen en over dat verschil in gesprek gaan. Het kan ook geen kwaad als de discussies hoog oplopen. Maar wanneer het dominante sentiment in een samenleving wordt "het leven is zomaar ontstaan", "de moraal is zomaar ontstaan", enzovoort, dan ontstaat er een moreel vacuüm waarin niets meer waard is dan iets anders en waarin de grootste schreeuwers altijd gelijk krijgen. Er ontstaat dan een samenleving die zelf zo weinig normatief kapitaal[3] heeft dat wanneer mensen van buiten komen die wel heldere opvattingen, waarden en idealen hebben, deze mensen al heel snel als bedreigend worden ervaren. Op dit moment zie je dat in de Nederlandse samenleving gebeuren met moslims uit niet-Westerse culturen. Als onze samenleving sterke eigen idealen had, zou het debat met "vreemde" idealen interessant zijn; maar waar die idealen goeddeels ontbreken, is er slechts een leegte. En leegtes hebben nu eenmaal de neiging om vol te lopen. Daarom voelen velen zich bedreigd door de islam en volgt een xenofobe reactie – een reactie die veel sterker is dan je zou mogen verwachten op grond van de zes procent moslims in Nederland, moslims die zich in een zwakke sociaal-economische positie bevinden en die een geloof belijden dat voor het grootste deel van de Nederlanders geen enkele aantrekkingskracht heeft (Van Rossum 2010:6).

Het is één van de taken van de theologie, bij te dragen aan het normatief kapitaal van een samenleving. En waar de openbare theologie dit laat liggen, wordt het een taak van de confessionele of kerkelijke theologie. De vraag is echter: is confessionele of kerkelijke theologie wel tegen deze taak opgewassen? Is confessionele theologie niet uit haar aard gericht op een doelgroep, en is zij daarom ook niet uitsluitend voor die doelgroep interessant?

2. IS CONFESSIONELE THEOLOGIE EEN HETERONOME WETENSCHAP?

Als wij de vraag aan de orde stellen, in hoeverre de confessionele of kerkelijke theologie een zinvolle bijdrage kan leveren aan de publieke taak die ik zojuist aan de theologie heb toegeschreven, dan kunnen wij niet heen om het feit dat theologie het moeilijk heeft in de wetenschappelijke wereld. In een moment van zelfspot grapte Paul van Geest ooit dat de theologie de enige wetenschap is die een object bestudeert waarvan het niet zeker is of het bestaat.[4] Herman Philipse betoogde dat alles er op wijst dat theologie geen wetenschap kan zijn. Hij trekt daar de conclusie uit dat de Nederlandse staat op moet houden de theologie als wetenschap te financieren (Philipse 1996). Philipse heeft zijn zin niet gekregen, maar de figuur van de kerkelijk hoogleraar , waartegen hij in hetzelfde artikel fulmineerde, is inmiddels uit de wet verdwenen. En de Nederlandse Organisatie voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek financiert steeds minder theologisch onderzoek. Onderzoek in de dogmatiek en ander onderzoek dat heel duidelijk voortkomt uit een bepaalde kerkelijke traditie, hoe goed ook, lijkt bij NWO nagenoeg kansloos. Beoordelingscommissies – die bijna altijd in meerderheid uit niet-theologen bestaan – oordelen negatiever over het belang en de wetenschappelijke kwaliteit van een onderzoeksvoorstel naarmate het duidelijker religieus gemotiveerd is. Als wij dit zien in samenhang met de ontwikkelingen aan de openbare universiteiten, dan kunnen wij niet anders dan concluderen dat de door Philipse voorgestane verbanning van de theologie van de academie weliswaar nog niet voltooid is, maar dat er wel degelijk een begin mee is gemaakt.

---

3 Onder het "normatief kapitaal van een samenleving" versta ik het geheel van zingevende en normatieve opvattingen dat het publieke discours van een samenleving bepaalt.
4 In zijn inaugurele rede aan de Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 2006.

Het voornaamste bezwaar tegen de theologie is niet dat haar object irrelevant is; iedereen is het er over eens dat religie een belangrijke factor in de samenleving is, en daarom ook een belangrijk object van studie is. Het voornaamste bezwaar is evenmin dat de theoloog een gelovig perspectief inneemt. Ongelovigen zullen vaak moeite hebben met een gelovig perspectief, maar tegelijk zullen zij toegeven dat alle geesteswetenschap, in de woorden van H.W. von der Dunk (1994:56), "gebonden aan standplaats, tijd en wereldbeeld" van de wetenschapper is.[5]

Nee, het grote probleem van confessionele theologie is voor de seculiere wetenschapper dat confessionele theologie *onvrij* zou zijn. Tegen de achtergrond van de idealen van de verlichting is niet moeilijk in te zien, wat het probleem is. Een van de belangrijkste van die idealen is dat de mens vrij moet zijn in het gebruik van zijn rede. Immanuel Kant zegt het in zijn klassieke artikel "Wat is Verlichting?" als volgt: "*Verlichting* is het uittreden van de mens uit de onmondigheid die hij aan zichzelf te wijten heeft. Onmondigheid is het onvermogen om zich zonder leiding van een ander van zijn verstand te bedienen" (Kant 1988:59). Enkele bladzijden verderop in hetzelfde opstel legt Kant verder uit:

> Voor deze verlichting wordt niets anders gevraagd dan vrijheid, en wel de onschadelijkste vrijheid onder alles wat maar vrijheid mag heten, namelijk de vrijheid om van zijn rede in alle opzichten een openlijk gebruik te maken. Nu hoor ik echter van alle kanten zeggen: redeneer niet! De officier zegt: Redeneert niet, maar exerceer! De belastinginspecteur: redeneer niet, maar betaal! De geestelijke: redeneer niet, maar geloof! ... Hier is overal beperking van de vrijheid. Welke inperking echter is hinderlijk voor de verlichting? Welke niet ...? Ik antwoord: het openlijke gebruik van zijn rede moet te allen tijde vrij zijn, en dat alleen kan verlichting onder mensen tot stand brengen; het privé gebruik van de rede mag echter meer dan eens zeer nauw beperkt zijn, zonder toch daardoor de vooruitgang van de verlichting bijzonder te hinderen (62–63)

Dit roept de vraag op, wat Kant precies verstaat onder publiek gebruik en privé gebruik. Deze vraag beantwoordt hij als volgt:

> Ik versta onder het openlijke gebruik van zijn rede het gebruik, dat iemand als geleerde van haar maakt ten overstaan van de lezende wereld. Het privé-gebruik noem ik het gebruik, dat hij op een bepaalde hem toevertrouwde burgerlijke post of in een ambt van zijn rede mag maken (62–63).

Even verderop past Kant dit toe op de geestelijke: in zijn verkondiging dient hij zich te houden aan de leer van de kerk die hij dient, terwijl hij in zijn wetenschappelijk bezig zijn daarvan volstrekt en onbeperkt vrij moet zijn. Als geestelijke maakt hij dus privé gebruik van zijn verstand, als geleerde openlijk (64–65). Ook al zouden wij juist geneigd zijn om het gebruik dat de geestelijke als geestelijke van zijn verstand maakt, publiek te noemen,[6] de inhoud van de onderscheiding is duidelijk. Kant heeft er alle begrip voor dat een predikant binnen de grenzen van het kerkelijk dogma moet blijven, maar een wetenschapper moet vrij van elke bevoogding kunnen denken.

De invloed van deze denkwijze van Kant kan nauwelijks overschat worden. Tot op de dag van vandaag hebben veel mensen er wel begrip voor dat een geestelijke *als geestelijke* niet zomaar alles kan zeggen, zoals een militair *als militair* niet alles kan zeggen. *It goes with the job,* denken ze dan. Maar een wetenschapper moet altijd in alle vrijheid onderzoek kunnen doen

---

5 Von der Dunk zegt dit van de geschiedwetenschap. Zie over perspectiviteit ook Sarot 2006, 148–151.
6 Zie Delfgaauw in zijn inleiding op Kant 1988, 27.

en kunnen spreken en publiceren. Daarmee wordt *confessionele theologie* een *contradictio in terminis,* tenminste, als wij "theologie" opvatten als een wetenschappelijke discipline. Immers, *confessionele* theologie is gebonden aan een confessie – en staat in dat opzicht gelijk aan de preek van een predikant – terwijl theologie *als wetenschap* vrij zou moeten zijn. Als theologie een *heteronome* wetenschap is, is het *geen* wetenschap.

Als er één frase is die zowel karakteristiek is voor de confessionele theologie als suggereert dat theologie een heteronome wetenschap is, is het wel het Latijnse adagium: *Lex orandi, lex credendi.* De wet van het gebed is de wet van het geloof, zo zou je kunnen vertalen. Onder dit adagium wordt meestal verstaan dat de christelijke gebedspraktijk en de christelijke liturgie mede bepalen wat wij moeten geloven.[7] Gebed en liturgie zijn dan dus een gezaghebbende bron van theologie. Dat betekent ook dat de christelijke liturgie een argument, ja zelfs een doorslaggevend argument in het theologisch debat kan zijn. De gezaghebbende theoloog Alister McGrath geeft hiervan de volgende twee voorbeelden. In de vroege kerk beargumenteerden de gnostici, op basis van het door hen scherp aangezette onderscheid tussen het materiële en het spirituele, dat materie inherent kwaad was. Ireneus gebruikte in zijn weerlegging van de gnostici als argument dat water, brood en wijn worden gebruikt in de christelijke sacramenten. Als dergelijke materiële zaken een belangrijke plaats innemen in de christelijke liturgie, dan kunnen zij toch niet inherent kwaad zijn?[8] McGrath's tweede voorbeeld heeft betrekking op de discussie met Arius (ca. 250–336), die betoogde dat Jezus het hoogste van Gods schepselen was. Athanasius (296–373) bracht hier tegenin dat de christelijke liturgische praktijk, waarin christenen tot Jezus bidden en Hem aanbidden, onverenigbaar is met de opvatting dat Jezus een schepsel is. Als Arius gelijk heeft, is de aanbidding van Jezus een vorm van afgoderij.[9]

De discussie van Arius en Athanasius is een prachtige illustratie van het onbehagen van hedendaagse seculiere wetenschappers hebben bij confessionele theologie. Athanasius is de confessionele theoloog die op basis van de gebedspraktijk en de liturgie van de kerk het denken van Arius kritiseert en met zijn kritiek de kerk achter zich krijgt. Arius neemt in dit debat de positie van de rationalist in die betoogt dat als Jezus God was, christenen een veelgodendom accepteerden. Als de liturgie dat suggereert, behoeft de liturgie correctie op grond van het redelijk denken (McGrath 1994:191). De hedendaagse verdediger van de vrijheid van de wetenschap zal zich in dit debat derhalve positie kiezen voor Arius. Kortom, met de spreuk *lex orandi, lex credendi* zitten wij midden in de problematiek van de academische geloofwaardigheid van confessiegebonden theologie.

Voor ik daar meer over zeg wil ik nog iets zeggen over de verhouding van de protestantse theologie tot dit adagium.   Die is enigszins dubbelzinnig (vgl. Wainwright 1980:218–219). Enerzijds is er waardering voor dit adagium en zijn er theologen die erbij aansluiten. Zo is de genoemde Alister McGrath per saldo positief, hoewel hij wel opmerkt dat niet alleen de liturgie als norm voor de theologie kan gelden, maar ook – omgekeerd – de theologie ontsporingen in de liturgie moet kunnen kritiseren.[10] De Lutheraanse theoloog Gerhard Ebeling gaat een stap verder, en geeft in feite een hedendaagse herformulering van het adagium wanneer hij zegt dat

---

7 Waddell 2009s noemt twee alternatieve interpretaties van het adagium. Volgens de eerste betekent het dat ons ons gebed en onze liturgie de inhoud van ons geloof weerspiegelen, en volgens de tweede dat geloofsinhoud en liturgie identiek zijn. Vgl. ook Wainwright 1980:218.

8 Ireneus, *Adversus Haereses* IV 18,4–5.

9 Athanasius, *Epistula ad Adelphium episcopum et confessorem,* 3–4. Cf. McGrath 1994:191.

10 McGrath 1994:191–2. Dat McGrath positief is, is niet zo verbazingwekkend, want volgens het Anglicaanse kerkrecht is de leer van de Anglicaanse kerk te vinden in de *Thirty-Nine Article of Religion, The Book of Common Prayer,* en *the Ordinal.* Zie het bekroonde essay van Natacha-Ingrid Tinteroff (2012). Pius XII (1947), legt het primaat bij de relatie *lex orandi – lex credendi* heel duidelijk bij de *lex credendi* zoals gearticuleerd door het leergezag. Vgl. Wainwright 1980: 222–224.

het gebed een hermeneutische sleutel tot de Godsleer is:

> Das Phänomen des Gebetes wird somit zum hermeneutischen Schlüssel der Gotteslehre. Von da aus öffnet sich das Verständnis für das Gott zugesprochene Sein und für die Gott zugesprochene Attribute. Die Lehre von Gott ist deshalb in Korrelation zur Lehre vom Gebet zu entwerfen (Ebeling 1979:193).

De Zuid-Afrikaans/Nederlandse calvinistische theoloog Vincent Brümmer zet zijn grote project over de Godsleer dat zou resulteren in boeken als *Over een persoonlijke God gesproken* (Brümmer 1988) en *Liefde van God en mens* (Brümmer 1993) dan ook in met een boek over het gebed, waarin hij de opvatting van Ebeling citeert en waarin hij daadwerkelijk uitgaat van een analyse van de gebedsrelatie met God om op basis daarvan te komen tot een analyse van de eigenschappen van God (Brümmer 1985).[11] Brümmers opvattingen heb ben vervolgens veel invloed gehad in protestants Nederland. Men ziet dit bijvoorbeeld ook terug in de dissertatie van Dolf te Velde: *Paths beyond Tracing out* (Te Velde 2010), waarin Brümmer en zijn leerlingen met veel waardering worden beschreven. Men kan dus zeker niet zeggen dat dit principe dat zo nauw verbonden is met confessionele theologie, *Lex orandi, lex credendi,* vreemd is aan de protestantse theologie. Maar tegelijkertijd zal duidelijk zijn dat de Reformatie niet het hoogste gezag toekent aan de *lex orandi:* het is niet *sola liturgia of sola oratione* maar *sola scriptura.* Waar de Schrift het hoogste gezag heeft, komt de wet van het gebed – en zeker die van de liturgie – op een tweede plaats. De achterdocht van de Reformatie tegenover het principe dat de gebedspraktijk de geloofsleer bepaalt is ook te begrijpen vanuit concrete toepassingen. Waar het principe wordt gebruikt om Gnostici of Arianen te weerleggen, hebben protestantse theologen geen probleem. Maar het is bijvoorbeeld ook gebruikt om de leer van het vagevuur te verdedigen: als wij voor overledenen mogen bidden, moet hun toestand in het hiernamaals ook kunnen verbeteren (Wainwright 1980:450–451). Hier heeft de protestantse theologie, op basis van het gezag van de Schrift, duidelijk een andere visie.[12]

> Laten wij dan nu eens nader bezien waar het *lex orandi, lex credendi* vandaan komt en wat er *precies* mee is bedoeld. In tegenstelling tot wat vaak wordt gedacht, is dit adagium niet letterlijk terug te vinden bij de kerkvaders. Het is ontleend aan een werk dat lang aan Paus Celestinus I (†432) werd toegeschreven omdat het in het manuscript waarin het werd overgeleverd volgde op een brief van Celestinus. Tegenwoordig denkt men dat het werd geschreven door de monnik Prosper van Aquitanië, secretaris van Paus Leo de Grote (400–461) (De Clerck 1994:180). Letterlijk zegt hij *ut legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi* (Hvang 2009:224): zodat de *lex supplicandi* de wet van het geloof bepaalt. Eén dubbelzinnigheid die de formulering *lex orandi, lex credendi* aankleeft, is hiermee in ieder geval verdwenen. Aangezien in het Latijn de woordvolgorde niet de betekenis bepaalt, is niet duidelijk wat in de bekende formulering nu het onderwerp is en wat het naamwoordelijk deel van het gezegde. Je kunt het adagium ook lezen zoals Pius XII

---

11 Het citaat van Ebeling bevindt zich op blz. 167, waar Brümmer ook nog als opvatting van Gerhard Sauter citeert dat "unser reden von Gott nur möglich ist auf Grund des *Redens zu Gott".* Sauter argumenteert: "Die Theologie sehe ich deshalb auf das Gebet angewiesen und in sie verankert, weil im Beten die Grundunterscheidungen ausgesprochen werden, die die Wirklichkeitserfahrung des Glaubens konstituieren; Sache der Theologie ist es, die durch diese Unterscheidungen gewonnenen Erkenntnisse in ihrem Zusammenhang und in ihrer Zuordnung aszusagen" (Sauter 1981:219, 227).

12 Andere typisch rooms-katholieke, door protestanten afgewezen, theologische opvattingen die wel met een beroep op de *lex orandi* zijn verdedigd vanuit liturgische teksten zijn de onbevlekte ontvangenis van Maria tenhemelopneming van Maria met lichaam en ziel (Wainwright 2003:88–89).

het wilde lezen: de *lex credendi* bepaalt de *lex orandi.* Bij Prosper kan dat niet: de *lex supplicandi* is het onderwerp, de *lex credendi* het lijdend voorwerp. Maar dat betekent nog niet dat precies duidelijk is wat Prosper bedoelt. Prosper ondersteunt in het geschrift waaruit het adagium afkomstig is met een reeks citaten van Paus Innocentius I (401–417), Paus Zosimus (417–418) en het Concilie van Carthago (418) de Augustiniaanse, anti-Pelagiaanse positie. Uit de citaten volgt, zo zegt hij, dat "het begin van een goede wil, de groei van onze prijzenswaardige inspanningen en de volharding tot het einde aan de genade van Christus moeten worden toegeschreven. " Hier zegt Prosper dus dat de kerk steeds heeft geleerd dat alle stadia van geloof – begin, groei en volharding tot het einde – aan de genade van Christus moeten worden toegeschreven. Daarmee richt hij zich tegen Pelagius en de Semipelagianen die het belang van de menselijke factor sterker beklemtoonLaten wij in dit verband ook kijken naar de voorbeden die onze priesters, op gezag van de apostelen, overal in de wereld en in de hele katholieke kerk op dezelfde wijze bidden. Laat deze gebedsopdracht (de *lex supplicandi*) de inhoud van het geloof (de *lex credendi*) bepalen. Wanneer immers onze voorgangers naar hun opdracht bidden, bevelen zij de hele mensheid bij de Goddelijke barmhartigheid aan en bidden en smeken:

dat geloof mag worden gegeven aan de ongelovigen

dat afgodendienaars mogen worden bevrijd van hun dwaling […]

dat ketters bekeerd mogen worden en het katholiek geloof mogen aanvaarden.[13]

En zo gaat Prosper nog even door met een reeks van voorbeden gericht op joden, zondaars en doopleerlingen, waarin steeds opnieuw aan God wordt gevraagd hen te bekeren. In de zojuist geciteerde passage zet Prosper zijn aanval op het Pelagiaans gedachtegoed voort met een beroep op de Bijbel. Hij doet dat op een heel slimme manier, door zich te beroepen op een van *hun* bewijsplaatsen: het begin van 1 Timoteüs 2.

---

13 Prosper van Aquitanië, *Liber praeteritorum sedis apostolicae episcoporum auctoritates de gratia dei et libero voluntatis* 8 Migne PL 51:209-210. Engelse vertaling in: De Letter 1963: 183–184 en in De Clerck 1994:181. In de Nederlandse vertaling die ik in de hoofdtekst geef probeer ik de betekenis goed weer te geven maar maak ik de tekst iets minder barok. De Latijnse tekst luidt:

Praeter beatissimae et apostolicae sedis inviolabiles sanctiones, quibus nos piissimi patres, pestiferae novitatis elatione dejecta, et bonae voluntatis exordia, et incrementa probabilium studiorum, et in eis usque in finem perseverantiam ad Christi gratiam referre docuerunt, obsecrationum quoque sacerdotalium sacramenta respiciamus, quae ab apostolis tradita, in toto mundo atque in omni catholica Ecclesia uniformiter celebrantur, ut legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi.

Cum enim sanctarum plebium praesules mandata sibimet legatione fungantur, apud divinam clementiam humani generis agunt causam, et tota secum Ecclesia congemiscente, postulant et precantur

ut infidelibus donetur fides,

ut idololatrae ab impietatis suae liberentur erroribus,

ut Judaeis, ablato cordis velamine, lux veritatis appareat,

ut haeretici catholicae fidei perceptione resipiscant,

ut schismatici spiritum redivivae charitatis accipiant,

ut lapsis poenitentiae remedia conferantur,

ut denique, catechumenis ad regenerationis sacramenta perductis, coelestis misericordiae aula reseretur.

Haec autem non perfunctorie neque inaniter a Domino peti, rerum ipsarum monstrat effectus: quandoquidem ex omni errorum genere plurimos Deus dignatur attrahere, quos erutos de potestate tenebrarum transferat in regnum Filii charitatis suae (Coloss. I, 13), et ex vasis irae faciat vasa misericordiae (Rom. IX, 22). Quod adeo totum divini operis esse sentitur, ut haec efficienti Deo gratiarum semper actio, laudisque confessio, pro illuminatione talium vel correctione referantur.

1 Allereerst vraag ik dat er voor alle mensen gebeden wordt, dat er smeekbeden, voorbeden en dankgebeden voor hen worden uitgesproken. 2 Bid voor alle koningen en gezagsdragers, opdat we rustig en ongestoord kunnen leven, in alle vroomheid en waardigheid. 3 Dat is goed en welgevallig in de ogen van God, onze redder, 4 die wil dat alle mensen worden gered en de waarheid leren kennen. 5 Want er is maar één God, en maar één bemiddelaar tussen God en mensen, de mens Christus Jezus, 6 die zichzelf gegeven heeft als losgeld voor allen, als het getuigenis voor de vastgestelde tijd. (NBV)

In vers 4 staat dat God wil dat alle mensen worden gered. Aangezien in de praktijk niet alle mensen worden gered, moet dat wel betekenen – zo redeneerden de Pelagianen – dat er in de praktijk voor de redding van een mens meer nodig dan Gods wil alleen: de wilsact van die mens. [14] In *De vocatione omnium gentium* I 12–15 besprak Prosper deze tekst al eerder maar trekt hij heel andere conclusies dan de Pelagianen. Uit de oproep voor *alle* mensen te bidden, trekt Prosper de conclusie dat onze redding uiteindelijk geheel van God afhankelijk is. Dat uiteindelijk niet alle mensen gered worden is een mysterie, zoals er aangaande God wel meer zijn, maar doet niets af aan het feit dat onze redding geheel en alleen van God afhankelijk is.

In onze tekst komt Prosper terug op 1 Timoteüs 2: 1–6. De *lex supplicandi* waarover hij spreekt is de opdracht om te bidden voor alle mensen; het is die universele gebedsopdracht die de inhoud van ons geloof moet bepalen. Prosper doelt met *lex supplicandi* derhalve niet in algemene zin op de inhoud van onze gebeden en liturgie, maar specifiek op de universele gebedsopdracht van Paulus in 1 Timoteüs 2.[15] En met de *lex credendi* doelt hij niet op geloofsinhouden in het algemeen, maar op het specifieke punt dat voor hem met de gebedsopdracht verbonden is: alle mensen zijn in hun belangrijkste keus, die voor of tegen God, uiteindelijk van God zelf afhankelijk. Dat blijkt zowel uit de universele gebedsopdracht als uit de wijze waarop de kerk die invult, want de voorbeelden van voorbeden die Prosper geeft zijn uiteindelijk allemaal voorbeden om bekering. Als wij bidden om bekering, zo lijkt Prosper te willen zeggen, veronderstellen wij dat die bekering van God komt.

Zowel de Semipelagianen als Prosper gaat het om vers 4, waarin staat dat God wil dat alle mensen tot geloof komen. Prosper legt dit vers uit vanuit zijn directe context: vers 1 over het bidden voor alle mensen, en vers 6 over de ene Middelaar, Jezus Christus. *Zijn* uitleg is dat omdat God wil dat alle mensen worden gered (vs. 4), wij God om die redding moeten vragen (vs 1), want er is maar één weg: Jezus Christus (vs. 6). De Pelagiaanse exegese die is gebaseerd op het contrast tussen God universele heilswil (vs. 4) en het ervaringsfeit dat niet alle mensen worden gered, kan Prosper negeren omdat het feit dat niet alle mensen gered worden niet in de directe omgeving van vers 4 wordt genoemd.

Vervolgens gaat Prosper nog even door en laat hij zien dat zijn uitleg van 1 Timoteüs 2 overeenstemt met enkele andere teksten uit het Nieuwe Testament:

Dat deze smeekbeden niet zomaar, alleen voor de vorm , tot God worden gericht, blijkt wel uit hun effect. Steeds weer onttrekt God talloze mensen aan hun dwalingen en redt ze uit de macht van de duisternis om ze over te brengen naar het rijk van zijn geliefde Zoon (Col. 1:13), en van objecten van toorn maakt hij objecten van barmhartigheid (Rom. 9:22–23).

---

14 Augustinus, *Contra Iulianum* IV 8.42; vgl. Hwang, *Intrepid Lover,* 75. Zie ook Prosper van Aquitanië, *De vocatione omnium gentium* I 12–15.

15 In *De vocatione omnium gentium* gebruikt hij voor dezelfde gebedsopdracht de uitdrukkingen *doctrinae apostolicae regula en lex supplicationis.* Zie Van Slyke 2004:130-151; vgl. Wainwright 2003:88; Waddell 2009b.

En de kerk is er zozeer van overtuigd dat dit uitsluitend aan Gods handelen te danken is dat zij God zonder ophouden dankt en prijst dat Hij deze mensen verlicht en weer op de goede weg zet.

Zo zet Prosper met nog eens twee verwijzingen naar brieven van Paulus en een nieuw beroep op de gebedspraktijk van de kerk de puntjes op de i en besluit waar hij begon: anders dan de Semipelagianen denken is de bekering van mensen uitsluitend en alleen te danken aan God.

Laten wij nu in twee stappen de oogst van het voorgaande binnenhalen en de vraag aan de orde stellen in hoeverre hiermee de bezwaren van protestantse theologen respectievelijk seculiere wetenschappers tegen het adagium *Lex orandi, lex credendi* zijn ondervangen. Eerst het voorbehoud van de protestantse theologie. Dit kwam hierop neer, dat dit adagium een aan de Schrift vreemde norm oplegt aan de theologie. Waar het Prosper van Aquitanië betreft, komt dit bezwaar te vervallen nu blijkt dat de *lex supplicandi* waarover hij het heeft gezien moet worden in aanvulling op de kerkelijke belijdenis en het Bijbels getuigenis, en dat deze 'wet' bovendien in de eerste plaats betrekking heeft op de Bijbelse opdracht om voor de redding van alle mensen te bidden uit 1 Timoteüs 2. Waar dit adagium uit zijn context wordt gehaald en in algemene zin gaat voorschrijven dat de inhoud van gebed en liturgie[16] de inhoud van het geloof bepaalt, krijgt het een andere betekenis dan in het werk van Prosper. Dat is in principe nog geen reden om deze interpretatie af te wijzen. De protestantse theoloog zal hier terughoudend zijn in zijn oordeel: enerzijds is de Schrift de hoogste norm, anderzijds zal de beproefde liturgie van de kerk in veel gevallen Schriftgetrouw zijn, en is het daarom wel degelijk een aanwijzing van belang wanneer de liturgie van de kerk Jezus aanbidt als God (dit tegen de Arianen), water, brood en wijn gebruikt in de sacramenten (dit tegen de gnostici), en bidt en dankt om de bekering van joden, heidenen, afvalligen of zondaars (tegen de Semipelagianen). De *lex orandi* kan daarom ook binnen de protestantse theologie zoals bij Prosper een legitieme bouwsteen zijn in een cumulatieve argumentatie voor een bepaalde positie, een argumentatie waarin de Schrift uiteindelijk het doorslaggevende gewicht in de schaal legt.[17]

Laten wij vervolgens kijken wat dit betekent voor de seculier-wetenschappelijke kritiek op dit adagium, namelijk dat het theologie tot een heteronome wetenschap zou maken. Ook dit kan men nu niet langer handhaven. Met betrekking tot Prosper niet, omdat gebed en liturgie bij hem niet het gezag van een wet hebben. En ook niet met betrekking tot die theologen die het *lex orandi, lex credendi* breder willen toepassen, want ook voor hen heeft het niet de kracht van een dogma in de trant van *liturgia locuta, causa finita.*

In dit verband wil ik wijzen op een dubbelzinnigheid in het begrippenpaar heteronomie / autonomie. Autonomie betekent letterlijk 'jezelf tot wet zijn.' Dan gaat het om *morele* autonomie. In die zin hebben christenen moeite met autonomie: wij erkennen een macht boven ons. Maar bij Kant kwamen wij een andere zin tegen: zonder leiding van een ander je verstand gebruiken. *Sapere aude!* Durf je van je eigen verstand te bedienen! Je zou kunnen zeggen: dit is *intellectuele*

---

16 Dat Prosper ook uit liturgische rituelen dogmatische conclusies trekt, blijkt uit hfdst. 9 van de *Auctoritates*, waar hij zich tegen de Semipelagianen beroept op de exorcismen die voorafgaan aan de eigenlijke doop. Van Slyke 2004 gaat dan ook te ver wanneer hij stelt dat "any temptation to equate Prosper's 'lex supplicandi' with 'liturgy' ought to be resisted".

17 Ook naar Rooms-Katholieke opvatting zal men van de *lex orandi* geen *knock down* argument maken en zal deze hooguit een plaats hebben binnen een bredere argumentatie. Verschil is wel, dat de Schrift in dit geval weliswaar zeer belangrijk is, maar niet doorslaggevend. Uiteindelijk is het *magisterium* doorslaggevend. Zie Pius XII 1947:47.

autonomie. Daar heeft een christen geen moeite mee, en zeker een christen*wetenschapper* niet. Ook wanneer de christenwetenschapper vóór hij aan de slag gaat, God om diens leiding vraagt, ontslaat dat de wetenschapper niet om zélf te denken. God en mens zijn geen concurrenten: Gods leiding concurreert niet met ons denken. Dit geldt in alle wetenschap, ook in de theologie, ook daar waar de theoloog zich onder het gezag van de Schrift stelt. Dat God Zijn wil heeft geopenbaard, betekent niet dat de mens niet meer zelf hoeft te denken als hij wil weten wat die wil dan precies inhoudt.

Daar kan zelfs wetenschappelijk denken voor nodig zijn. Wij zien dat in Prospers uitleg van 1 Timoteüs 2, wij zien dat bijvoorbeeld ook in de vraag wat de Bijbel te zeggen heeft over de vrouw in het ambt (Klinker-de Klerck 2011). Het antwoord op een dergelijke vraag is geen invuloefening waarbij als je op de goede plaatsen de goede dingen invult, er vanzelf de juiste uitkomsten uit komen rollen. Nee, het gaat hier om een hermeneutisch proces waarin verschillende Bijbelteksten, en ook verschillende genres Bijbelteksten, met elkaar in verband moeten worden gebracht en waarin de vraag aan de orde moet komen: als wij de cultuur waarin deze teksten werden geschreven verdisconteren, wat moeten wij dan als Gods boodschap in deze teksten zien? Dat dit een denkproces is en geen invuloefening, blijkt ook wel uit het feit dat verschillende kerken op dit punt – zoals op andere punten – tot verschillende conclusies komen.

Mijn conclusie is derhalve, dat christelijke theologie die het adagium *lex orandi, lex credendi* serieus neemt, in tegenstelling tot wat veelal wordt gedacht kan voldoen aan dat hedendaagse ideaal van wetenschap dat stelt dat de wetenschapper in alle vrijheid gebruik moet kunnen maken van het eigen verstand. Christelijke theologie wordt niet gediskwalificeerd door haar methode.

3. THEOLOGIE EN RELEVANTIE: HET VOORBEELD VAN ERASMUS

De vraag is niet alleen: hoe kan confessionele theologie wetenschappelijk geloofwaardig zijn? Nee, de vraag luidt ook: hoe kan confessionele theologie een bijdrage leveren aan het publieke domein, aan het intellectuele debat in onze samenleving? Er zijn ook in onze tijd steeds weer boeken die in het publieke intellectuele debat een zodanige rol spelen, dat zij als het ware de rol krijgen van een gedeeld referentiekader, zoals bijvoorbeeld Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self* (Cambridge, MA, 1989), Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (NY: Free Press, 1992), Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (NY: Simo & Schuster, 1996). In Nederland kun je recent bijvoorbeeld denken aan Dick Swaab, *Wij zijn ons brein* (Amsterdam: Contact, 2010). Christelijke boeken bereiken meestal niet een dergelijke status; het laatste boek dat dat wel deed was, denk ik, Harry Kuitert, *Het algemeen betwijfeld christelijk geloof* (Baarn: Ten Have, 1992), en dat boek was vooral kritisch over geloof. Toen ik jong was, hadden boeken van Schillebeeckx en Berkhof die status: op de meest onverwachte plaatsen herkende je de opvallende rug van Berkhofs *Christelijk Geloof,* en een beetje intellectueel had ook wel een boek van Schillebeeckx in de kast. Kan gelovige, opbouwende theologie nog altijd een dergelijke rol vervullen, of ligt die tijd definitief achter ons?

Hier wil ik daar iets over zeggen aan de hand van een klassieke Nederlandse theoloog die verschillende van dergelijke boeken heeft geschreven, waarvan er één de eeuwen heeft doorstaan en nog altijd door protestant, katholiek en humanist gelezen en gewaardeerd wordt: Erasmus van Rotterdam. Mijn keuze voor Erasmus is mede ingegeven door het feit dat Erasmus in onze tijd op de eerste plaats wordt gezien als geleerde en humanist en hij als het ware een merknaam geworden is van zodanige kwaliteit, dat ook een alom gerespecteerde seculiere universiteit zich niet schaamt, zijn naam te voeren. Je kunt je moeilijk voorstellen dat de Rotterdamse Universiteit zichzelf de Johannes Calvijn Universiteit Rotterdam zou noemen,

of de Thomas van Aquino Universiteit Rotterdam; Thomas en Calvijn worden weliswaar als grote geleerden erkend, maar worden toch teveel gezien als behorend bij één specifieke kerk. Voor Erasmus ligt dat kennelijk anders. Een tweede reden om me te concentreren op Erasmus, is dat hij een vaktheoloog was die grote invloed had op de publieke opinie van zijn tijd. Een derde reden is, dat Erasmus een Rooms-Katholieke theoloog uit de tijd van de Reformatie is die, hoewel hij Rooms-Katholiek is gebleven, toch grote invloed op de Reformatie heeft uitgeoefend, zowel op Luther (Augustijn 1962; Huizinga 1936) als op Calvijn (Wendel 1950 :12–20), Tyndale (DeCoursey 1966) en anderen.

Erasmus schreef tenminste drie bestsellers: de *Adagia* (1500), het *Handboekje* (1503) en de *Lof der zotheid* (1511). De *adagia* zal ik hier verder niet bespreken; het is een verzameling spreuken en citaten; hoewel Erasmus vaak uitgebreide voetnoten en toelichtingen geeft, kunnen wij hier niet spreken van een oorspronkelijk theologisch werk. Het succes van het *Handboekje voor de militante christen* was niet zo groot als dat van de *Adagia*, maar het was er wel degelijk (Huizinga 1936:58). Gedurende Erasmus' leven werd de Latijnse tekst meer dan vijftig maal herdrukt (O'Donnell 1981:xiv); daarnaast verschenen vertalingen in het Engels, Duits, Tsjechisch, Spaans, Nederlands en Pools (Dolan 1964:24). Dit is een uitgesproken vroom boek in de traditie van de de Broeders des gemenen levens, bij wie Erasmus een deel van zijn opleiding had genoten, in de traditie ook van Thomas à Kempis en diens *Navolging van Christus.* Verschil met de *Navolging* is dat dat werk door de eeuwen heen populair is gebleven, terwijl het *Handboekje* van Erasmus in vergetelheid is geraakt. Dat komt wellicht doordat Erasmus later zowel in Rooms-Katholieke als in protestantse kring verdacht werd; in Rooms-Katholieke kring vooral omdat hij zo lang wachtte met zijn reactie op Luther, en in protestantse kring vanwege de inhoud van die reactie. De Sorbonne veroordeelde in 1526 zelfs enkele stellingen uit het *Handboekje* (Dolan 1964:25; Huizinga 1936:171) en uiteindelijk wordt Erasmus niet vanwege zijn vroomheid of rechtzinnigheid herdacht, maar vanwege zijn geleerdheid. De *Lof der zotheid* is verreweg het meest succesvolle boekje van de drie; sinds het in 1511 voor het eerst verscheen, is het steeds weer en in talloze talen herdrukt, en dat tot op de dag van vandaag. Al met al waren Erasmus' geschriften in zijn eigen tijd zo populair, dat in de jaren dertig van de zestiende eeuw tussen de tien en twintig procent van alle verkochte boeken op zijn naam stond (Galli & Olsen 2000:343). Tijdens zijn leven werden er 300.000 exemplaren van zijn Griekse Nieuwe Testament verkocht, 750.000 exemplaren van andere boeken (Johnson 1976:Ch.5).

Erasmus kan derhalve zonder overdrijving één van de eerste bestsellerauteurs worden genoemd. Opmerkelijk is vervolgens dat deze theoloog primair als eminent wetenschapper wordt herinnerd; ook op gebieden waar hij zich bij uitstek als gelovige heeft uitgesproken, wordt hij toch vooral als wetenschapper herdacht. Het feit dat hij zich als gelovige uitsprak, werd kennelijk op geen enkele wijze ervaren als *strijdig met* zijn wetenschappelijke integriteit. Dat geldt bijvoorbeeld voor de bijbelwetenschap (Krans 2006). Erasmus had een broertje dood aan exegeten die bleef hangen een puur wetenschappelijke benadering van de letterlijke betekenis van Bijbelteksten en daarbij de geestelijke betekenis volstrekt uit het oog verloren:

> Ik zou aanbevelen dat je vooral die commentatoren leest die zo ver mogelijk van de letterlijke betekenis afwijken. Degenen die ik het sterkst zou aanbevelen zijn naast Paulus Origenes, Ambrosius, Hiëronymus en Augustinus. Te veel van onze moderne theologen neigen tot een letterlijke interpretatie, die onbedoeld misleidend is. Zij delven niet tot in de mysteriën, alsof Paulus niet de waarheid sprak toen hij zei dat onze wet een geestelijke is. Sommige van deze theologen zijn zo onder de indruk van deze menselijke commentatorendat zij wat oude uitleggers te zeggen hadden, naar het dromenrijk verwijzen.[18]

---

18 Vrije vertaling van: 'Ex interpretibus diuinae scripturae eos potissimum delige, qui a littera quammaxime

Deze woorden hebben nog niets van hun actualiteit verloren en hadden evengoed geschreven kunnen zijn met veel hedendaagse wetenschappelijke exegese in gedachten. Filologisch-historische benaderingen zijn zinvol, maar als zij worden verabsoluteerd gaat alle aandacht naar taal en cultuur en verdwijnt de boodschap van de tekst uit beeld.

In onze tijd is de *vroomheid* van Erasmus enigszins op de achtergrond geraakt. Wij lezen vooral de *Lof der zotheid,* en daaruit dan de satirische passages over theologie, monniken en geestelijkheid. Toen ik de *Lof der zotheid* enkele jaren geleden voor het eerst helemaal las, viel mijn mond dan ook open. Dit was een ander boek dan dat waarvan ik de inhoud *dacht* te kennen. Huizinga heeft opgemerkt: 'Voor de tijdgenoten heeft de betekenis der Laus Stultitiae voor een niet gering deel in de directe satire gelegen' (Huizinga 1936:79.) Ik denk dat dat niet alleen voor de tijdgenoten van Erasmus gold, maar ook voor latere generaties. Een populaire inleiding in Erasmus vat zijn intentie in de *Lof der zotheid* als volgt samen: 'De ware wijsheid is voor Erasmus in laatste instantie niets anders dan het evenwicht dat elk fatsoenlijk mens moet bewaren tussen zijn hart en zijn verstand en iedere verstoring van deze harmonie is in zijn ogen verwant aan dwaasheid' (Van Damme 1960:114). In talloze karakteriseringen van de *Lof der zotheid* wordt wel kort vermeld dat ook het geloof in de sfeer van de dwaasheid wordt getrokken (Degroote 1971:170), maar daar wordt het ook bij gelaten. Huizinga peilt dieper, wanneer hij stelt:

> Door het gehele werk heen klinken voortdurend twee thema's door elkaar: dat van de heilzame dwaasheid, die de ware wijsheid is, en dat van de gewaande wijsheid, die louter dwaasheid is. ... Nu is het duidelijk, dat het hoofdthema in het eerstgenoemde ligt. Daarvan gaat Erasmus uit, daarheen keert hij terug. Slechts in het middengedeelte, der revue der menschelijke kundigheden en waardigheden in hun algemene dwaasheid, neemt het tweede thema de overhand, en wordt het geschrift een gewone satire op de menschelijke dwaasheid (Huizinga 1936:78–79).

Voor Huizinga is het hoofdthema van dit werk derhalve de heilzame dwaasheid die de ware wijsheid is. Maar hoewel het woord 'heilzaam' hier verrassend trefzeker gekozen is, zoekt men bij Huizinga tevergeefs naar een nadere invulling van dit heil.

Dat zou er mee te maken kunnen hebben dat Huizinga geen antenne heeft voor de religieuze kant van Erasmus. Maar het zou er ook mee te maken kunnen hebben dat Huizinga dit werk van Erasmus te veel als een tussendoortje ziet, een *amuse* geschreven tijdens enkele dagen van ziekte. Daarmee tuint Huizinga dan met open ogen in de literaire fictie die Erasmus zo zorgvuldig heeft geconstrueerd. Met open ogen, want Huizinga lijkt zich er goed van bewust dat de kleinerende wijze waarop Erasmus steeds over de *Lof der zotheid* heeft gesproken, als bedoeling had, zijn critici de wind uit de zeilen te nemen (Huizinga 1936:81–82). Hij doorziet echter niet (Huizinga 1936:73–74), dat ook de fabel dat het werk in slechts enkele dagen tot stand kwam, deel is van deze strategie. M. A. Screech heeft laten zien, dat het boekje dat in eerste druk werd gepubliceerd in Parijs in 1511, immens verschilt van de editie uit 1516 die wij kennen uit onze vertalingen. Wat weinig mensen zich realiseren, is dat Erasmus aan het boekje is blijven werken. In 1511 telde het nog slechts 48 blz., en het is duidelijk dat Erasmus tussen 1511 en 1514 (toen

---

recedunt. Cuiusmodi sunt in primis post Paulum Origenes, Ambrosius, Hieronymus, Augustinus. Video enim neotericos theologos litterae nimium libenter inhaerere et captiosis quibusdam argutiis magis quam eruendis mysteriis operam dare, quasi uero non uere dixerit Paulus legem nostram spiritualem esse. Audiui ego nonnullos, qui sibi usque adeo humanis illis commentatiunculis placebant, ut ueterum interpretamenta paene pro somniis contemnerent.' Erasmus, *Enchiridion militis christiani* 2 (http://www.intratext.com/IXT/LAT1000/_P3.HTM). Vgl. Voor Erasmus' Schriftopvatting De Maeseneer 1963:84–107; Kohls 1966:126–143, 182;. Aldridge 1966; Hofmann 1994.

in Straatsburg in editie verscheen die al veel leek op de latere in Basel gedrukte editie) nog heel veel aan het boek heeft geschaafd en toegevoegd. Wij moeten derhalve concluderen dat Erasmus jaren heeft gewerkt aan het boek zoals wij dat kennen. Het is een voldragen werk van Erasmus op het toppunt van zijn kunnen; in 1516 was hij in de tweede helft van de veertig (Screech 1980:xix–xx).

De belangrijkste reden echter dat de diepere religieuze dimensies van de *Lof der zotheid* tot voor kort niet werden opgemerkt, is dat dit niet paste in het gangbrae beeld van het ontstaan van de Reformatie. In dat beeld ontstond de Reformatie omdat de Rooms-Katholieke Kerk diep in verval verkeerde en had Erasmus daarbij een dubbele rol. Enerzijds bereidde hij de Reformatie voor met zijn teksteditie van het Nieuwe Testament en zijn kritische studies van de kerkvaders. Anderzijds bereidde hij de Reformatie voor met zijn satirische kritiek op de kerk van zijn dagen. Erasmus wordt zo gezien als wegbereider van de Reformatie, niet als geleerde met een eigen agenda. Zijn opbouwend-vrome werk past niet in de beeld; dat geldt zowel voor het *Enchiridion* als voor het slot van de *Lof der zotheid,* waarin Erasmus naar eigen zeggen niets anders wilde doen dan in een ander register nog een keer herhalen wat hij in het *Enchiridion* al had gezegd (ScreecIn zijn *Enchiridion* geeft Erasmus tweeëntwintig algemene regels voor een waarlijk christelijk leven (*regulae generales veri Christianismi*). Uit deze regels blijkt, hoe christocentrisch de vroomheid van Erasmus is. Het gaat hierom, dat wij Christus voor ons plaatsen als het enige doel van ons leven, dat wij al ons streven, al onze pogingen, onze vrije tijd zowel als ons werk uitsluitend en alleen op Hem richten (regel 4). Onze enige toegang tot Christus is het geloof, en daarom moeten wij het grootste vertrouwen op de Schrift hebben (regel 1). Nergens leren wij meer over Jezus dan in de Evangeliën (regel 5); er staat niets in de Schrift dat niet tot ons heil dient (regel 1). Heel ons leven moeten wij in dit licht beoordelen: het gaat erom dat wij meer en meer één worden met Christus (Erasmus 1905: vgl. Weiler 1997:18–20).

Wie eerst het *Enchiridion* leest, vervolgens *De lof der zotheid,* ontdekt dat de overeenkomsten inderdaad zeer groot zijn. In twee opzichten vindt in de *Lof der zotheid* echter een radicalisering plaats. Eerstens heeft vooral het middendeel van de *Lof der zotheid* het karakter van een Luciaanse satire.[19] Praktijken die in het *Enchiridion* onder kritiek worden gesteld, worden hier ronduit belachelijk gemaakt. Dit geldt bijvoorbeeld voor allerhande devoties. In het Enchiridion stelt Erasmus dat mensen die voordeel verwachten van een reliek van het heilig Kruis in hun huis, er beter aan zouden doen het mysterie van het kruis voortdurend voor ogen te houden (Erasmus 1905:157). In de *Lof der zotheid* neemt Erasmus allerlei devoties als bijgeloof op de korrel en steekt er ongezouten de draak mee. De gewoonte om heiligen om voorspraak te vragen en daarbij aan elke heilige zijn eigen invloedssfeer toe te kennen (zodat wij juist Antonius moeten aanroepen om verloren voorwerpen terug te vinden), kan bij hem slechts op hoon rekenen. Dat neemt niet weg dat Erasmus wel plek heeft voor de heiligen: als wij van hun voorbeeld leren hoe Christus na te volgen in onze eigen tijd, dan is dat prima (Erasmus 1947:79–83)! Kortom, Erasmus' kritiek op wat hij afwijst wordt bijtender, maar zijn boodschap blijft ongewijzigd. Het tweede opzicht waarin Erasmus' boodschap in de *Lof der zotheid* wordt geradicaliseerd is dat in de *Lof der zotheid* wanneer het om navolging gaat, het *Kruis* van Christus nog centraler staat dan in het *Enchiridion.* Paulus spreekt in zijn brieven diverse keren over de dwaasheid van het Kruis, en Erasmus citeert hem:

> De boodschap over het kruis is dwaasheid voor wie verloren gaan, maar voor ons die

---

19 Lucianus (ca. 120–180) was in de vroege Renaissance de meest gedrukte Griekse schrijver. Hij was Erasmus' favoriete auteur uit de oudheid. Erasmus vertaalde zijn werk en werd diepgaand door hem beïnvloed, wat vooral tot uitdrukking komt in de *Lof der zotheid* en de *Colloquia familiaria.* Zie Veenman 1999.

worden gered is het de kracht van God. Er staat namelijk geschreven: "Ik zal de wijsheid van de wijzen vernietigen, het verstand van de verstandigen zal ik tenietdoen." […] Want zoals God in zijn wijsheid bepaalde, heeft de wereld hem niet door haar wijsheid gekend, en hij heeft besloten hen die geloven te redden door de dwaasheid van onze verkondiging. De Joden vragen om wonderen en de Grieken zoeken wijsheid, maar wij verkondigen een gekruisigde Christus, voor Joden aanstootgevend en voor heidenen dwaas. Maar voor wie geroepen zijn, zowel Joden als Grieken, is Christus Gods kracht en wijsheid, want het dwaze van God is wijzer dan mensen […]. Denk eens aan uw roeping, broeders en zusters. Onder u waren er niet veel die naar menselijke maatstaf wijs waren […]. Maar wat in de ogen van de wereld dwaas is, heeft God uitgekozen om de wijzen te beschamen […]. Zo kan geen mens zich tegenover God op iets beroemen. Door hem bent u één met Christus Jezus, die dankzij God onze wijsheid is geworden. Door Christus worden wij rechtvaardig en heilig en door hem worden wij verlost. (1 Cor. 1: 18–30)[20]

Het staurocentrisme van de *Lof der zotheid* lijkt dus te verklaren vanuit de Paulijnse link tussen Kruis en dwaasheid. Erasmus werkt in de slotbladzijden van zijn *Lof der zotheid* vervolgens naar een climax toe, waarin hij niet alleen het kruis waarmee Christus voor ons het heil heeft verworven als een vorm van dwaasheid typeert, maar ook het geloof waarmee wij dat heil accepteren en dat heil zelf. Ook dat zijn voor hem vormen van dwaasheid. Wanneer er in het evangelie staat "Ik dank U, Vader, […] dat Gij deze dingen voor wijzen en verstandigen verborgen hebt, doch aan kinderkens geopenbaard" (Mt. 11:25; cf. Lc. 10:21), dan wil Erasmus het *nèpioi* dat in de hier weergegeven NBG51-vertaling met "kinderkens" is vertaald, met "dwazen" (*stulti*) vertalen. Het Griekse *nèpios* betekent letterlijk "niet-sprekend"; kleine kinderen spreken nog niet. Vandaar kan het overdrachtelijk ook "dwazen, idioten" betekenen; de overeenkomst is natuurlijk gebaseerd op het feit dat die ook niet spreken. Erasmus prefereerde deze vertaling vanwege het contrast met de "wijzen en verstandigen".[21] Gelovigen zijn geen wijzen en verstandigen, maar dwazen. Zelfs het heil waarnaar zij streven is een vorm van dwaasheid. En opnieuw speelt Erasmus dan met de verbinding tussen gekte en niet kunnen spreken: de mystieke extase die een voorproefje is van het hemels geluk, is *ineffabilis,* onuitsprekelijk; in deze extase geraakt de mens buiten zichzelf en wanneer hij weer tot zichzelf is gekomen, weet hij niet waar hij geweest is en wat hij gehoord of gezien heeft. Daarom kan hij er ook niet over spreken. Toch zouden zij, die een dergelijke ervaring hebben meegemaakt, niets liever willen dan op deze wijze eeuwig waanzinnig zijn, ook al is dit maar een klein voorproefje van hun toekomstig geluk (Erasmus 1947:164–166).

Zo is het slot van de *Lof der zotheid tevens de climax:* een beschrijving van de hoogste dwaasheid, dat wil zeggen de mystieke extase als voorproefje van het eeuwig hemels geluk.

4. SAMENVATTING EN CONCLUSIES

In het voorgaande heb ik stilgestaan bij de aard en de status van de confessionele theologie. Ik heb

---

20 Een reeks citaten uit deze tekst treft men bij Erasmus 1947:152–154.
21 Erasmus 1947:154. Screech 1980:30–33: Erasmus vertaalde daadwerkelijk met *stulti* in de eerste editie van zijn *Novum instrumentum,* maar haalde later *contre coeur* bakzijl voor de scherpe kritiek die hij op dit punt ontving. Hij wijzigde zijn vertaling, maar in commentaren en parafrases handhaafde hij zijn standpunt. De NBV kiest nu niet voor de 'letterlijke' vertaling met 'kinderen,' maar voor de vertaling 'eenvoudige mensen.' Die vertaling is misleidend, omdat 'eenvoud' ook een morele betekenis kan hebben: bij eenvoudige mensen denk je al gauw aan eerlijke en onschuldige mensen in tegenstelling tot sluwe, berekenende en schijnheilige mensen. Die morele lading is hier duidelijk niet bedoeld; het gaat hier niet om mensen die onschuldig als kinderen zijn, maar om mensen die zelf nog niet kunnen denken of spreken.

betoogd dat nu het zwaartepunt van theologische Nederland verschuift van de Rijksuniveriteiten naar confessionele instellingen, het tijd is voor een nieuw elan van de confessionele theologie. Ik heb betoogd dat onze cultuur theologie nodig heeft; zowel de moderne natuurwetenschap als onze moraal zijn diepgaand verbonden met de theologie. Waar theologisch denken wordt vervangen door "zomaar-denken" (de wereld is zomaar onstaan, onze moraal is zomaar ontstaan), ontstaat er een intellectueel en moreel vacuüm dat in een handomdraai opnieuw gevuld is, maar dan nu op een manier die wij niet alleen afwijzen maar waar wij ook geen weerwoord meer tegen hebben. Juist het besef dat wij geen weerwoord hebben, leidt tot de xenofobe reacties op de islam, reacties die veel sterker zijn dan men op grond van de feiten over de opkomst van de islam zou verwachten. Die feiten vallen immers nogal mee.

Vervolgens ben ik ingegaan op de kritiek die je vaak hoort dat theologie, en met name confessionele theologie, onvrij, heteronoom, en daarmee onwetenschappelijk zou zijn. Voorzover theologie binnen de grenzen van een bepaalde confessie of belijdenis moet blijven, zo heet het dan, is theologie heteronoom en onvrij, en daarmee ook geen wetenschap. Ik heb deze kritiek besproken aan de hand van een adagium waarmee confessionele theologie nogal eens geassocieerd wordt: *Lex orandi, lex credendi.* Volgens een gangbare interpretatie betekent dit dat de wet van het gebed, ofwel de liturgische praktijk van de kerk, bron en norm van de theologie is. Ik heb laten zien dat de kerkvader op wie dit adagium teruggaat er een heel andere bedoeling mee had, namelijk: als wij de opdracht hebben om te bidden voor de bekering van mensen, dan moet die bekering uiteindelijk ook van God afhankelijk zijn. Deze uitspraak was bovendien niet als algemeen adagium bedoeld, maar had zijn plaats in een discussie met Semipelagianen. Natuurlijk kan men bij dit specifieke Schriftberoep ook de vraag naar heteronomie stellen, maar wij hebben gezien dat hier geen sprake is van *intellectuele* heteronomie: Prosper beroept zich wel op de Schrift, maar dat betekent geenszins dat met hem niet wetenschappelijk over de betekenis van Schriftpassages te discussiëren valt. Integendeel, op een dergelijke wetenschappelijke discussie is hij juist uit.

Nadat ik op deze wijze de wetenschappelijkheid van confessionele theologie tegen één belangrijke tegenwerping heb verdedigd, keerde ik terug naar de relevantie van theologie, en dat deed ik aan de hand van Erasmus. Erasmus is in onze tijd in bredere kring vooral bekend als wetenschapper en satiricus. Van zijn theologisch werk is vooral zijn aanval op Luther nog altijd bekend, en dat dan vooral in protestantse kring. Dat Erasmus ook een constructief theoloog was met grote aandacht voor het geestelijk leven, blijkt zowel uit het *Enchiridion* als uit het slotdeel van de *Lof der zotheid.* Zelfs de satirische passages uit zijn *Lof der zotheid* blijken geïnspireerd op zijn visie op wat een waarlijk christelijk leven was: hij drijft de spot met het tegendeel. Ik heb al gezegd dat ik meen dat de confessionele theologie in onze tijd voor belangrijke opdrachten staat. Kan zij bij het vervullen van die opdrachten nog iets leren van Erasmus? In welke opzichten kan Erasmus ook voor ons nog een voorbeeld zijn?

Erasmus hanteerde de hoogste wetenschappelijke standaards. Zijn statuur als intellectueel was onomstreden; hij hoefde in het wetenschappelijk debat in niemand zijn meerdere te erkennen. Dit is ook nu voor de theologie van groot belang: dat theologen intellectuelen zijn die op grond van hun wetenschappelijk werk ook buiten eigen kring gezag hebben.

Erasmus was priester en rooms-katholiek theoloog; toch zal niemand gedacht hebben dat hij een soort buikspreker van de Paus was. Hij combineerde trouw aan de traditie waaruit hij voortkwam en aan de christelijke geloofsbelijdenis met een grote vrijmoedigheid om binnen die traditie misstanden aan de orde te stellen. Ik ben mij er van bewust dat er op specifieke punten kritiek op Erasmus mogelijk is, maar toch denk ik dat theologie die in onze tijd een verschil wil maken, iets soortgelijks zal moeten doen: enerzijds vasthouden aan de eigen traditie en belijdenis en anderzijds met vrijmoedigheid kritiek leveren waar daar aanleiding toe is, binnen en buiten de eigen traditie.

Erasmus speelt op de bal, niet op de man. In de inleiding op de *Lof der zotheid* beklemtoont hij dat hij bewust de namen van zijn tegenstanders niet noemt (Erasmus 1947:16); hij is niet op ketterjacht. Ook hier kunnen hedendaagse theologen nog veel van Erasmus leren, niet alleen waar het gaat om het respectvol *benaderen* van collega's met een andere opvatting, maar ook waar het gaat om het respectvol *beoordelen* van collega's met een andere opvatting. Te veel theologen kunnen alleen kwaliteit ontdekken in onderzoeksvoorstellen waar zij inhoudelijk sympathie voor hebben. In een tijd waarin een groot deel van het wetenschappelijk onderzoek op projectbasis wordt gefinancierd, waarbij de oordelen van wetenschappelijke *peers* doorslaggevend zijn, keert dit zich tegen de theologie: als een goed voorstel door *peers* op oneigenlijke gronden negatief wordt beoordeeld, zal de Nederlandse Organisatie voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek (NWO) het niet financieren. NWO moet immers afgaan op de peers.

Erasmus' theologie is niet alleen geworteld in geleerdheid, maar ook in vroomheid. En op die vroomheid is zijn denken uiteindelijk ook weer gericht – ook in de *Lof der zotheid,* en dat nog wel heel expliciet. Dat lijkt mij ook voor de hedendaagse theologie van belang: dat zij geen louter academische discipline wordt, maar geworteld blijft in het geloofsleven van een gemeenschap, en daarop ook blijft gericht.

BIBLIOGRAFIE

Aldridge, John W. 1966. *The Hermeneutics of Erasmus.* Winterthur: P.G. Keller.
Augustijn, Cornelis 1962. *Erasmus en de Reformatie: Een onderzoek naar de houding die Erasmus ten opzichte van de Reformatie heeft aangenomen.* Amsterdam: H.J. Paris.
Brümmer, Vincent 1985. *Wat doen wij als wij bidden? Een studie in de wijsgerige theologie.* Kampen: Kok Agora.
Brümmer, Vincent 1988. *Over een persoonlijke God gesproken: Studies in de wijsgerige theologie.* Kampen: Kok Agora.
Brümmer, Vincent 1993. *Liefde van God en mens.* Kampen: Kok, 1993.
Cohen, H.F. 2011. *How Modern Science Came into the World.* Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
De Clerck, Paul 1994. "'Lex orandi, lex credendi': The Original Sense and Historical Avatars of an Equivocal Adage'", *Studia Liturgica* 24, 178–200.
Degroote, Gilbert 1971."Van de 'Lof der zotheid' tot de 'Samenspraken,'" in: C. Augustijn e.a., *Erasmus.* Hasselt: Heideland-Orbis, 165–184.
De Letter, P. (ed.) 1963. *Prosper of Aquitaine: Defense of St. Augustine.* NY: Newman Press.
DeCoursey, Matthew 1966. "Erasmus and Tyndale on Bible-Reading", *Reformation* 1, 157–164, op internet: http://www.tyndale.org/Reformation/1/decoursey.html (bezocht 16 juli 2012).
De Maeseneer, F. 1963. *De methode van de theologie volgens Erasmus.* Rome?: Bibliotheca Alfonsiana.
Dolan, John P. 1964. *The Essential Erasmus.* NY: The American Library.
Ebeling, Gerhard 1979. *Dogmatik des christlichen Glaubens,* I. Tübingen: Mohr.
Erasmus, Desiderius 1905. *A Book Called in Latin Enchiridion Militis Christiani, and in English the Manual of the Christian Knight.* London: Methuen; op internet: http://ebooks.library.ualberta.ca/local/bookcalledinlati00erasuoft (bezocht 5 oktober 2012).
Erasmus, Desiderius [11]1947. *De lof der zotheid* vert. J.B. Kan. Amsterdam: Wereldbibliotheek.
Erasmus, Desiderius 1981. *Enchiridion Militis Christiani: An English Version* ed. by Anne M. O'Donnell. Oxford: OUP.
Galli, Mark & Ted Olsen 2000. *131 Christians Everyone Should Know.* Nashville: Holman Reference.
Hofmann, Manfred 1994. *Rhetoric and Theology: The Hermeneutic of Erasmus.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
Hooykaas, Reijer 1972. *Religion and the Rise of Modern Science.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
Huizinga, Johan [3]1936. *Erasmus*. Haarlem: Tjeenk Willink.
Hwang, Alexander Y. 2009. *Intrepid Lover of Perfect Grace: The Life and Thought of Prosper of Aquitaine.* Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press.
Johnson, Paul 1976. *A History of Christianity.* NY: Atheneum, geraadpleegd via http://krotov.info/

history/00/posnov/johnson_06.htm, 16 juli 2012.

Kant, Immanuel 1988. *Wat is Verlichting?* Ingeleid, vertaald en geannoteerd door Prof.dr. B. Delfgaauw. Kampen: Kok.

Klinker-De Klerck, Myriam 2011. *Als vrouwen het Woord doen: Over Schriftgezag, hermeneutiek en het waarom van de apostolische instructie aan vrouwen.* Barneveld: De Vuurbaak.

Kohls, Ernst-Wilhelm 1966. *Die Theologie des Erasmus* Bd. I. Basel: Friedrich Reinhardt Verlag.

Krans, Jan 2006. *Beyond What is Written: Erasmus and Beza as Conjectural Critics of the New Testament.* Leiden: Brill.

McAllister, James 2012. ”Verklarende kracht van religieuze kennis”. Lezing op Boeksymposium Herman Philipse God in the Age of Science? Utrecht, Descartes Centre, 27 april 2012.

McGrath, Alister E. 1994. *Christian Theology: An Introduction.* Oxford: Blackwell.

O'Donnell, Anne M. 1981. 'Introduction,' in: Erasmus 1981, xiv–liii.

Philipse , Herman 1996. "De teugelloosheid van de theologie" *NRCHandelsblad* 4 januari 1996, http://vorige.nrc.nl/redactie/Web/Opinie/1995007/16.html (bezocht 5 juni 2012).

Pius XII 1947. *Mediator Dei.* Rome: Vaticaan.

Sarot, Marcel 2006. *De goddeloosheid van de wetenschap.* Zoetermeer: Meinema.

Sauter, Gerhard 1981. ”Reden von Gott im Gebet”, in: Bernhard Casper (Hg.), *Gott nennen: Phänomenologische Zugänge.* München: K. Alber, 219–241.

Screech, M.A. 1980. *Ecstasy and the Praise of Folly.* London: Duckworth.

Te Velde, Dolf 2010. *Paths beyond Tracing out: The Connection of Method and Content in the Doctrine of God, Examined in Reformed Orthodoxy, Karl Barth, and the Utrecht School.* Delft: Eburon*.*

Tinteroff, Natacha-Ingrid 2012. " Why I'm an Anglican and I Believe I Shall Remain so", http://www.stbonifacetrust.org.uk/documents/20120511_winning_essay.pdf (bezocht 18 september 2012).

Van Rossum, Maarten 2010. *Waarom is de burger boos?* Amsterdam: Nieuw Amsterdam.

Van Slyke, Daniel G. 2004. 'Lex orandi lex credendi: Liturgy as Locus Theologicus in the Fifth Century?', *Josephinum* 11, 130-151, http://www.pcj.edu/journal/essays/vanslyke11-2.htm#12 (bezocht 13 juli 2012).

Van Damme, Daniel 1960. *Erasmus.* Utrecht: Spectrum.

Veenman, René 1999 . "Van schoolvoorbeeld tot atheïst: Lucianus in de Nederlanden tot 1700", *De zeventiende eeuw* 15, 175–195.

Von der Dunk, H.W. 1994. "Geschiedenis en Wetenschap", in: P.B. Cliteur, H.D. Pappa & R.T.P. Wiche (red.), *Overtuigend bewijs: Over het wetenschappelijke van de niet-exacte wetenschappen.* Amsterdam: Boom, 1994, 38–64.

Waddell, James Alan 2009a. "Rethinking Lex Orandi Lex Credendi", http://lexcredendilexorandi.wordpress.com/2009/05/22/hello-world/ (bezocht 27 september 2012).

Waddell, James Alan 2009b. ”Lex Orandi Lex Credendi as a Theological Locus of Lutheran Liturgy”, http://lexcredendilexorandi.wordpress.com/2009/05/22/lex-orandi-lex-credendi-as-a-theological-locus-for-lutheran-liturgy/ (bezocht 27 september 2012)

Wainwright, Geoffrey 1980. *Doxology: The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine and Life.* London: Epworth Press.

Wainwright, Geoffrey 2003. "Systematische-theologische Grundlegung", in: Hans-Christoph Schmidt-Lauber (Hg.), *Handbuch Der Liturgik: Liturgiewissenschaft in Theologie und Praxis der Kirche.* Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht), 72–94.

Weiler*,* Anton G. 1997. *De spiritualiteit van Erasmus christen-humanist.* Nijmegen: Valkhof Press; op internet: http://www.titusbrandsmainstituut.nl/PDF/4%20Uitgaven/Titus%20Brandsma%20Lezing%201997%20-%20Weiler-Spiritualiteit.pdf, bezocht 5 oktober 2012.

Wendel, François 1950. *Calvin: Sources et Évolution de sa Pensée Religieuse.* Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

KEY WORDS

Marcel Sarot
Professor of Fundamental Theology
Tilburg School of Catholic Theology | Tilburg University | P.O. Box 80.101 | 3508 TC Utrecht
M.Sarot@uvt.nl | tel. +31 13 466 3839

Schoeman, WJ
Universiteit van die Vrystaat

Op soek na gemeentes met integriteit: die bydrae van CW Burger[1]

ABSTRACT

Looking for congregations living with integrity: the contribution of CW Burger

The aim of the article is to reflect on the contribution of dr. Coenie Burger regarding the study of congregations. The focus will be on criteria to identify congregations that are living with integrity. Three aspects need attention in this regard: the identity of a congregation, the direction of a congregation and the fields of ministry of a congregation. Burger uses the notae eccleciae as markers to evaluate the vision, commitment, community and service of a congregation.

Gemeentes speel 'n belangrike rol in die kerk en in die gemeenskap. In die kerk word gelowiges saam gegroepeer in geloofsgemeenskappe wat saam aanbid en God dien. Dit is weer lede van die gemeenskap wat saam kom en as gelowiges in die gemeenskap 'n bepaalde rol speel. Na beide kante toe kan die kritiese vraag gevra word of gemeentes doen wat hulle veronderstel is om te doen? Is gemeentes nog gelóófsgemeenskappe of het dit maar net nog 'n sosiale instelling geword? Die doel van die artikel is om spesifiek te reflekteer oor die werk van dr. Coenie Burger oor gemeentes en die bediening van gemeentes. Dit is nie moontlik om die volledige veld van gemeentewees, wat deur Burger ondersoek is, te bespreek nie, maar hier sal voorkeur gegee word aan die vraag hoe om geloofwaardige gemeentes na te speur. 'n Kernvraag in die verband is: Wanneer lewe 'n gemeente met integriteit? Watter riglyne kan gebruik word om die stand van gemeentewees te bepaal? Dié vrae sal as raamwerk en fokus gebruik word in die verdere bespreking van Burger se bydrae in die verband.

'n Geloofsgemeenskap kan nie maar net tevrede wees met die normale gang van sake nie, maar behoort gereeld die kritiese vraag vra: Is dit wie en wat ons is, wel die naam kerk en gemeente werd? Dit is 'n vraag wat Burger (1999:288) met huiwering vra, en wel om die volgende drie redes:

1. 'n Mens behoort versigtig te wees met jou oordeel oor ander. Die gelykenis van die onkruid (Matt 13:24-30) verduidelik die punt baie goed. Menslike beoordelingsmaatstawwe werk nie altyd goed nie.
2. Die formulering en toepassing van sulke maatstawwe is altyd 'n subjektiewe saak. 'n Eie verstaan is nie noodwendig 'n "regte" verstaan nie.
3. Is die toetsing en evaluering van gemeentewees nie 'n te negatiewe proses om 'n positiewe resultaat van te verwag nie? 'n Waardering vir die positiewe kan in die verband 'n konstruktiewe bydrae maak (Schoeman en van den Berg 2011: elektroniese bron).

Die soeke na geloofwaardige gemeentewees dwing 'n mens egter om die vraag na die

---

1 'n Deel van die artikel was gelewer as 'n voordrag by die kongres: "Theology in times of transition creating a continuous inclusive conversation. A celebration of the work of Coenie Burger." 23 tot 25 Januarie 2012 by Stellenbosch.

herkenbaarheid van die gemeente te vra. Terme wat soms in die nadenke oor gemeentewees gebruik word is: suksesvol, effektief en relevansie (sien Burger 1999:289, Gaum 2011:93). Dit is terme wat nie kritiekloos op gemeentewees van toepassing gemaak kan word nie. "Dit is nie maklik om vir die kruis en die kruisevangelie plek te maak in 'n suksesvolle kerk nie - ook nie vir die belangrike Bybelse motiewe soos diens, selfverloëning of lyding nie." (Burger 1999:289). Die evaluerende vraag oor gemeentes behoort 'n huiwerende maar tog noodsaaklike teologiese vraag te wees. "As ons tog iets wil maak van die reaksie van die mense op die kerk, meen ek dat ons moet vra na die *geloofwaardigheid* (eie kursivering) van die kerk – eerder as om te flirteer met begrippe soos sukses, gewildheid of erkenning. Die vraag is nie in die eerste plek of mense met ons saamstem of van ons hou of beïndruk is met wat ons doen nie, maar of hulle respek het vir ons integriteit en vir ons eerlike toewyding aan dit waarin ons glo." (Burger 1999:122). Die vraag na die geloofwaardigheid en integriteit van gemeentes is 'n noodsaaklike vraag wat telkens weer en weer gevra moet word. "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 ..." (Newbegin 1989:227). In navolging van, onder andere Newbegin, vra Burger die vraag na die integriteit van geloofsgemeenskappe.

As dit gaan oor meer as die sukses en effektiwiteit van 'n gemeente, hoe kan 'n gemeente beskryf word om die integriteitsvraag te antwoord? As beginpunt word gekies om te kyk na die aard van 'n gemeente. In terme van watter konsepte en riglyne kan 'n gemeente beskryf word? Op voetspoor van Burger kan drie vrae in die verband gevra word:

• Aan wie behoort 'n gemeente;
• wat behoort 'n gemeente te doen
• en hoe word 'n gemeente se bediening beskryf?

In die beantwoording van die drie vrae sal daar veral gekyk word na die bydrae van Burger (1991, 1995, 1997, 1999, 2001, 2002 en 2008) en ook hoe dit kan help om die geloofwaardigheid en integriteit van 'n gemeente te karteer.

1. DIE IDENTITEIT VAN 'n GEMEENTE – 'n WESENLIKE VRAAG

Die wesentlike vraag is: aan wie behoort 'n gemeente? Gemeentes se identiteit lê in hulle verhouding met God: hulle behoort aan God. God Drie-enig het 'n verbond met elke gelowige, en daarom ook met die gemeente, gesluit. Die vraag na die identiteit van die gemeente is 'n vraag na die wese of die oorsprong van die gemeente. Dit beteken dat die oorsprong van die gemeente alleen in die gemeente se verhouding met die drie-enige God gevind kan word. "Die kerk kan sonder die Gees, die Seun en die Vader nie bestaan nie en nog minder verstaan word. Dit is die eerste en ook wortelverhouding waarin die kerk staan." (Heyns 1977:85). Van Gelder (2000:35) en Guder (2000:28 e.v.) beklemtoon verder die Triniteit as vertrekpunt vir die verstaan van die identiteit van die kerk en gemeente.

Burger (1999:55-63 en 2001:15-18) trek 'n paar duidelike riglyne oor die identiteit van gemeentes. Die gemeente se verhouding met die Here is 'n baie eksklusiewe verhouding. Die Eerste Gebod wys daarop dat 'n gemeente nie twee Here mag dien nie, maar alleen aan die lewende God verbind moet wees. Die Here het die reg op hierdie eksklusiewe verhouding met sy volk omdat Hy hulle gered het. Die inisiatief lê by God en daarom word sondaars as sy kinders aangeneem. Dit lei tot gemeenskap tussen God en sy gemeente. Die Here se reg op die volk word

gekwalifiseer deur die feit dat Hy hulle liefhet en dat Hy wil hê hulle moet Hom liefhê. Metafore wat in hierdie verband gebruik word, is: ouer-kind, nuwe familie en huisgesin (sien ook Burger 1997:125-165). Die Here Jesus het sy dissipels lief en verwag dat hulle Hom in gehoorsaamheid sal volg. Die gemeente bewys hulle liefde vir die Here deur sy wil te doen en sigbaar aan Hom gehoorsaam te wees. Die liefdesgebod, die Wet van God en liefde wat sigbaar word, bevestig 'n geloofsverhouding met Jesus Christus. "Identiteit waarvan niks sigbaar word nie, is min werd." (Burger 1999:61). Die gemeente word opgeroep om met God te leef, soos wat Hy Hom aan hulle bekendmaak. Die Tweede Gebod vra dit ondermeer van 'n gemeente.

Die vraag na die identiteit van die gemeente plaas baie direk die integriteit van die gemeente op die tafel. Die vraag na die gemeente se identiteit vra na die belydenis en die geskiedenis of verhaal van die gemeente. Dit is in die eerste plek 'n konfessionele identiteit: Vir die meeste gemeentes is hulle konfessionele agtergrond deel van hulle identiteit (Burger 1999:70). Dit bring byvoorbeeld die gemeente se verstaan van 'n gereformeerde identiteit na vore.

Tweedens vra die identiteitsvraag na die verhaal van die gemeente, drie faktore het 'n sterk vormende invloed op die narratiewe aard van die gemeente:

- die ontstaansgeskiedenis van 'n gemeente (bv. die aanleidende faktore vir die stigting van die spesifieke gemeente);
- die pioniersleiers wat 'n sentrale rol gespeel het by die stigting van die gemeente (predikante, kerkraaslede ens);
- belangrike gebeurtenisse in die ontplooiing van die gemeente se verhaal (Burger 1999:71).

'n Ondersoek na die gemeente se konfessionele en historiese identiteit lê die antwoorde oor die vraag aan Wie die gemeente behoort, bloot. Gemeentes se identiteit is daarom grondig anders as die van byvoorbeeld 'n sosiale vereniging. Die werk van Burger kan in die verband deur 'n narratiewe aanpak 'n treë verder geneem word. In die soeke na die gemeente se identiteit behoort die verhale in en oor die gemeente opgeteken en geanaliseer te word. Op 'n narratiewe en kwalitatiewe vlak kan die verhale van gemeentes veel oor die konfessionele identiteit van 'n gemeente sê. 'n Spesifieke narratiewe metodologie kan hiervoor ontwikkel word.

2. DIE BESTAANSDOEL VAN 'n GEMEENTE – 'n RIGTINGGEWENDE VRAAG.

In watter rigting of koers behoort 'n gemeente te beweeg? Die identiteit van die gemeente dien as vertrekpunt vir die bepaling van die doel van die gemeente. Wat 'n gemeente behoort te doen word direk gekoppel aan die identiteit van die gemeente. Uit die identiteit van die gemeente kom die bestaansdoel van die gemeente na vore. Die missie dui die doel van die kerk aan (Burger 1999:77). Ander terme wat in dié verband vir die doel van die gemeente gebruik kan word, is: roeping, opdrag, gestuurdheid of sending van die gemeente.

Die vroeë christelike kerk het 'n sterk missionêre ingesteldheid gehad. Die sending van die vroeë kerk het gedraai om die besef dat God se Koninkryk in Jesus Christus 'n werklikheid geword het. Bosch (1991:54) vat die missionêre ingesteldheid van die vroeë geloofsgemeenskap soos volg saam: "The New Testament witnesses assume the possibility of a community of people who, in the face of the tribulations they encounter, keep their eyes steadfastly on the reign of God by praying for its coming, by being its disciples, by proclaiming its presence, by working for peace and justice in the midst of hatred and oppression, and by looking and working toward God's liberating future." Die vroeë gemeentes het 'n duidelike verstaan van hulle opdrag en roeping gehad.

Hoe sou die taak of doel van 'n gemeente beskryf kon word? Burger (1999:79-84) wys op die

volgende riglyne waarlangs dit beskryf sou kon word:

- Die kerk is 'n gemeenskap met 'n opdrag. Die kerk is eiendom van God en daarom in sy diens. Metafore om die opdrag mee te benoem is onder andere: sout van die aarde, dienskneg, boodskapper of ambassadeur.
- Die inhoud van die opdrag is om getuies in diens van Jesus Christus en sy Evangelie te wees. Die kerk het die opdrag om Jesus Christus as Here te verkondig.
- Die inhoud van die Evangelie is veelkantig en inklusief. Die heil en verlossing wat Jesus bring, is omvattend, daarom is dit nodig om wyd en inklusief oor die verlossing wat Jesus gebring het, te dink.

'n Gemeente voer sy opdrag uit deur getrou aan sy identiteit te wees. Die gemeentedoel is nie onderhandelbaar nie, aangesien dit deel van die wese van 'n gemeente is. Die volgende aspekte kan as wesenlik deel van die gemeentedoel uitgewys word (vergelyk Burger 1999:84-90):

- Die doel van Christus se missie en gevolglik die gemeente se doel, is 'n heelgemaakte wêreld, 'n wêreld wat met God versoen is. Die Koninkryk is groter as die kerk. Die kerk en gemeente staan op alle lewensterreine in diens van die koms van die Koninkryk.
- Die gemeente is teken en getuienis van die heil: getuies nie net in wat die gemeente sê en doen nie, maar ook in wat die gemeente is - "sout vir die aarde" en "lig vir die wêreld". Die geloofsgemeenskap stel daarom 'n voorbeeld aan die gemeenskap. "'n Sterk missionêre bediening sonder 'n duidelik evangeliese lewenstyl en identiteit gaan op die lange duur geen geloofwaardigheid hê nie. Ons moet aan die een werk, sonder om die ander na te laat." (Burger 1999:88). Gemeenskap deurbreek die eensaamheid en vervreemding in intermenslike verhoudinge. Die gemeente is getuie dat Christus mure afbreek.
- Dissipels (en burgers) is getuies op die markplein. Dit is 'n getuienis van liefde en geregtigheid teenoor groepe, gemeenskappe, instansies en samelewingstrukture; juis ook op die markplein en nie net tydens die gemeente se amptelike byeenkomste nie. "Bevordering van recht en gerechtigheid jegens allen die lijden onder onderdrukkende en onrechtvaardige situasies, de slachtoffers van radicale, politieke en economische onderdrukking, discriminatie en vervolging" (Noordegraaf 1998:193).

In 'n latere artikel (2008) wys Burger pertinent op die publieke rol van die geloofsgemeenskap. Die kerk en veral gemeentes het 'n bepaalde rol om binne die breër samelewing te speel. Die publieke kerk is nie net oor sy eie lidmate besorg nie, maar speel ook in die samelewing 'n belangrike rol, omdat God drie-enig die Verlosser vir die hele wêreld is (Burger 2008:249). Gemeentes het 'n baie duidelike publieke rol en dit is gekoppel aan die doel of missionêre verstaan van die gemeente. Sou gemeentes dit vandag nog so verstaan of bring die gerigtheid op "eie" lidmate die integriteit van gemeentes onder verdenking?

In 'n wêreld wat deur 'n post-christendom leefstyl gekenmerk word het die sendingveld weer die grense en bestaanswêreld van die gemeente op 'n unieke wyse binnegekom. "A very uncertain congregation, then, looks across an unfamiliar missionary frontier to an environment that appears less and less friendly and wonders." (Mead 1991:27). Die verskuiwing beteken dat gemeentes weer opnuut sal moet analiseer hoe om die missio Dei vandag uit te leef.

Indien 'n gemeente sy gerigtheid op sy bestaansdoel verloor, verloor die gemeente sy greep op sy bestaansrede. Die wesenlike gevaar bestaan dat 'n gemeente baie goed kan funksioneer, baie aksies en aktiwiteite kan onderneem, maar sy doel uit die oog kan verloor. Gemeentes fokus dan meesal op instandhouding van die status quo. As dit gebeur is 'n gemeente niks meer

as 'n goeie en effektiewe organisasie of sosiale instelling nie. Dit is daarom noodsaaklik om in die vraag na die integriteit van die gemeente altyd die bestaansdoel van 'n gemeente voor oë te hou. 'n Kritiese analise en selfondersoek is daarom noodsaaklik.

3. GEMEENTELIKE BEDIENING – OP WATTER TERREINE?

As die missio Dei die missio ekklesia bepaal, is die volgende noodwendige vraag: Op watter verskillende terreine vind die gemeentelike bediening plaas, sodat die gemeentedoel bereik kan word? Die konsep "bedieningsterrein" gee 'n omvattender beskrywing van wat as die "funksies" van die kerk verstaan kan word (sien Pieterse 1991:67-68). Burger definieer bediening soos volg: "Ons bedoel met bediening van die kerk die totaliteit van aktiwiteite waardeur die kerk of gemeentes probeer uitvoering gee aan hulle missie." (1999:104). Die bediening van die Evangelie geskied deur die werksaamheid van die Heilige Gees; dit is 'n omvattende opdrag. In die uitvoering hiervan gebruik die Gees mense en ander middele. Die getuienis van die totale gemeente is so 'n middel wat die Gees gebruik. Die gemeente word gesien as die eerste en primêre middel wat die Gees in sy werk met betrekking tot die kommunikasie van die Evangelie wil gebruik (Burger 1999:104). Dit wat die gemeente is, sê (of bely), doen en bid, moet in kongruensie wees vir die gemeente om geloofwaardig te wees. Gemeentelike aktiwiteite kan op 'n verskeidenheid van bedieningsterreine geskied.

Burger kies die volgende vier bedieningsterreine vir 'n gemeente as terreine waarbinne die totaliteit van gemeentelike aktiwiteite behoort te val om uitvoering aan die gemeente se missie of bestaansrede te gee (sien ook die bydrae van Louw 1992:130-131, Pieterse 1993:160-161 en Nel 1994:27 oor die vier bedieningsterreine):

- **Leitourgia:** "Die term word hier gebruik as 'n koepelbegrip vir al die aanbiddingsaktiwiteite van die gemeente." (Burger 1999:204). Die klassieke en mees algemene vorm van leitourgia vind in die erediens plaas. Liturgie beteken om te bid.
- **Kerugma** verwys na die verkondiging of bekendmaking van die boodskap van die evangelie. "Kerugmatiese diens, soos dit hier verstaan word, verwys na alle aktiwiteite in die gemeente wat primêr gefokus is op die Bybel en sy unieke boodskap – hetsy dit is om die boodskap beter te hoor, dit te verstaan, dit met ander te bespreek of om dit deur te gee aan mense wat dit nog nie ken nie." (Burger 1999:216). Dit vind in die erediens plaas, maar ook baie wyer in die gemeentelike aktiwiteite.
- **Koinonia:** "Dit gaan oor die ondersteunende en gemeenskaplike aktiwiteite wat gelowiges in die gemeente uitvoer waardeur Christene aanmekaar gebind word en so die versorgende en helende krag van die evangelie ervaar." (Burger 1999:231). Koinonia staan in 'n noue verband met die gemeente se missie tot liefde. Iets van die Bybelse shalom - gemeenskap moet weerspieël word. Die samekomste van die gelowiges speel in die verband 'n belangrike rol. In die Ou Testament word die geloofsgemeenskap deur die Tora saamgebind. In die Nuwe Testament gee Jesus aan sy dissipels die opdrag om mekaar lief te hê sodat die wêreld iets van Hom en sy liefde in hulle lewe sal sien (Joh. 13:35, Joh. 17:20-26).
- **Diakonia** wys daarop dat gelowiges God sal eer "…. deurdat ons ander mense en sy skepping dien met selfverloënende dade van liefdesdiens." (Burger 1999:245). Daar bestaan 'n sterk band tussen geregtigheid en diens. Diakonia beteken dat gelowiges bereid sal wees om te doen wat reg is (Miga 6:8, Matt 7:23). "Dit is waarskynlik die bediening wat deur die eeue die meeste afgeskeep is deur die kerk" (Burger 1999:246).

Hierdie gemeentelike bediening moet nie as 'n versmalde bediening van net die ampte verstaan word nie, maar as 'n omvattende bediening van die totale gemeente (Burger 1999:108-109). Dit is meer as net die werk van ampsdraers en kommissies in gemeentes. Gemeente en lidmate is omvattend by al die bedieninge betrokke.

Burger (1999:112) maak 'n onderskeid tussen die opbou na binne en die uitreik na buite ten opsigte van elk van die vier terreine. Die onderskeid tussen opbou na binne en uitreik na buite is, in die lig van die bestaansdoel van die gemeente, problematies. In 'n later werk (2002:267-273) laat vaar Burger die onderskeid tussen na binne en na buite. Dit is 'n verbetering, want dit laat groter reg geskied aan die missionêre doel van 'n gemeente. Alle gemeentelike bediening geskied vanuit die gemeente se missionêre opdrag en nie vanuit 'n onderskeid tussen "binne" en "buite" nie.

Die vraag na die stand en integriteit van die gemeente is 'n vraag na 'n balans tussen die vier bedieningsterreine. Die gevaar bestaan dat een of meer van die terreine afgeskeep kan word. Sonder om die belang van die erediens te onderskat, vind daar ook liturgiese- en kerugmatiese handelinge in 'n kleingroep plaas of het 'n erediens ook 'n sterk diakonale en koinoniale dimensie. 'n Verdere vraag is ook wat gebeur op die vier terreine van Maandag tot Saterdag in die lewe van die geloofsgemeenskap? Die vier praktyke is verder deel van die publieke getuienis en lewe van die gemeente (Burger 2008:253). Is daar op al vier terreine 'n openheid en interaksie tussen gemeente en gemeenskap? Die belangrike en kritiese vraag plaas die gemeente vierkantig binne die publieke lewe.

4. 'n TEORIE OM DIE GEMEENTE SE FUNKSIONERING MEE TE ONDERSOEK.

Burger se boek *Die dinamika van 'n Christelike geloofsgemeenskap* verskyn in 1991 en word met die Andrew Murray prys bekroon. Die bedoeling van die boek was om 'n teorie oor die funksionering van 'n geloofsgemeenskap vir oorweging op die tafel te sit (Burger 1991:149). Burger (1991:20-21) onderskei vier prosesse wat in die dinamika en funksionering van 'n gemeente aan die werk is:

- Visie: van statiese formules tot 'n hoopvolle visie
- Verbintenis: van vae instemmings tot 'n vaste verbintenis
- Gemeenskap: van privatisme en selfsorg tot sorg vir mekaar
- Diens: van 'n selfgerigte verstandsgodsdiens tot 'n lewe van daadwerklike diens.

Sou hierdie vier prosesse gebruik kon word om 'n gemeente se integriteit mee te analiseer? Burger verskaf self die antwoord deur ten opsigte van elkeen van die prosesse 'n teologiese kontrolepunt van uit die eienskappe van die kerk te identifiseer. Die vier eienskappe dien in 'n meerdere of mindere mate by elkeen as kontrolepunt, maar daar is in elke geval minstens 'n primêre punt wat Burger uitlig. In 'n latere werk brei Burger verder uit op die vier eienskappe van die kerk as 'n manier om die gehoorsaamheid en outentiekheid van 'n gemeente te toets (Burger 1999:290-299).

In die Geloofsbelydenis van Nicea en die Apostoliese Geloofsbelydenis word vier eienskappe van die kerk bely: sy eenheid, heiligheid, algemeenheid en apostolisiteit. "Die eienskappe is deur God aan die kerk as *gawe* geskenk om daardeur die wyse van die kerk se bestaan in die wêreld aan te dui; die eienskappe is egter ook as *opdrag* deur God aan die kerk gegee om daardeur die taak van die kerk in die wêreld aan te dui; en die eienskappe is ook as *belofte* deur God aan die kerk gegee om daardeur die kerk steeds op die volheid in die toekoms gerig te bly hou." (Heyns 1981:377). Heitink (2007:28-32) gebruik ook die vier eienskappe as 'n vertrekpunt vir die

ontwikkeling van 'n ekklesiologie (sien ook Breytenbach en Pieterse 1992:102 en Dreyer 2009: elektroniese bron in die verband).

Burger soek die antwoord na 'n beter toets vir die gemeente se gehoorsaamheid, wat ook rekening hou met die unieke aard van gemeentewees, deur die vier eienskappe van die kerk te gebruik. Die vier prosesse met hulle primêre kontrolepunte word vervolgens bespreek:

Eerstens gaan dit oor 'n gedeelde visie op die koninkryk van God. "Sonder 'n visie wat funksioneer op die vlak van 'n gedeelde droom kan daar nie sprake wees van 'n lewende en effektiewe geloofsgemeenskap nie."(Burger 1991:37). Die primêre kontrolepunt ten opsigte van die visie van die geloofsgemeenskap is die Christelikheid of apostolisiteit van die kerk. Die waarheid van die evangelie word op die punt gekontroleer. Die vraag is: "Is dit werklik in sy wese 'n Christelike visie op die wêreld?" (Burger 1991:67). Dit gaan oor die navolging van die leer van die apostels (Heitink 2007:31). Die Skrif dien as die finale maatstaf en bron van waarheid vir die kerk. Die Woord word daarom deur die gemeente ernstig opgeneem en as riglyn vir die gemeentelike lewe aanvaar. Dit sou dit insluit dat die kerklike tradisie ook ernstig opgeneem word. Die vraag oor die geloofwaardigheid van die gemeente is na die erns waarmee die apostolisiteit van die gemeente opgeneem word, word genoeg van die gemeente se energie aan die apostolisiteit van die kerk gespandeer? (Burger 1999:299).

Tweedens behoort daar 'n vaste geloofsverbintenis aan die visie te wees. 'n Lewende en effektief funksionerende geloofsgemeenskap is afhanklik van die lede se vaste, kontroleerbare geloofsverbintenis aan die visie van die gemeente (Burger 1991:73). Die heiligheid van die kerk is in die verband die primêre kontrolepunt van die geloofsverbintenis. Word die geloofsgemeenskap herken as mense wat aan Christus behoort en so lewe? (Burger 1991:94). Dit gaan oor die gemeente se toewyding aan die taak van die kerk, oor die andersheid van gesindheid en lewe wat die evangelie van lidmaat en gemeente vra. 'n Lewe van liefde, 'n lewe wat kies vir wat reg is en wat op alle lewensterreine na vore kom is hier ter sprake. In die soeke na integriteit word gevra na die konsekwensies van so 'n lewe vir die gemeente se waardes en prioriteite. Is daar 'n entoesiasme en vreugde vir so 'n lewenswyse van heiligheid (Burger 1999:295)? Alfsvåg (2008:37) wys daarop dat die tien gebooie en ook die uitleef van geloof, hoop en liefde merkers sou kon wees van so 'n gehoorsame lewe.

Derdens is daar in die gemeente 'n sorgende gemeenskapslewe (koinonia) waarin mense mekaar op hierdie pad ondersteun. "Gemeenskap" verwys na 'n diep lewens- en lotsverbondenheid wat die Christelike geloofsgemeenskap kenmerk (Burger 1991:99). Is daar ruimte en plek vir elkeen binne in die geloofsgemeenskap, daarom is die eienskap van katolisiteit die primêre kontrolepunt in die verband (Burger 1991:116). Werklike koinonia word eers getoets as by dit "andersdenkendes" kom. Die katolisiteit van die kerk beteken dat dissipelskap alle ander verhoudinge te bowe gaan. Alle gelowiges deel die belydenis met mekaar. Dit behels 'n openheid teenoor alle lewe en alles wat God geskep het. Die konsekwensie van die eienskap is dat alle Christene in die gemeente welkom is en met vrymoedigheid ontvang moet word. Die katolisiteit van die kerk vra of 'n gemeente 'n oop deur en hart het vir alle gelowiges, ook die wat anders is en anders dink as waaraan die gemeente normaalweg gewoond is (Burger 1999:298). Heitink (2007:30-31) wys op 'n kwantitatiewe en kwalitatiewe aspek in die verband, aan die een kant omvat dit 'n deel van die mense, maar aan die anderkant is dit vir alle mense. Die sorgende gemeenskap is oop vir alle mense.

Vierdens plaas die gemeente klem op 'n sterk georiënteerdheid op dade en doen, in die wete dat

die kern van die christelike lewe diens is. Geloof word sigbaar deur selfverloënende dade van diens en liefde aan God, die naaste en hele wêreld. Die kerk is 'n diensgemeenskap en bestaan nie ter wille van homself nie (Burger 1991:123). Diens gaan oor 'n getuienis teenoor die hele wêreld. Indien die eenheid 'n realiteit binne die lewe van die geloofsgemeenskap is, sal die mense begin om mekaar te dien in die gesindheid en liefde van Christus. Die eenheid van die kerk funksioneer daarom as primêre kontrolepunt in die verband (Burger 1991:143). Eenheid en liefde hang ten nouste saam met, en is 'n bevestiging van die gemeente se identiteit in Jesus Christus. Die herkenbaarheid van die eenheid van die kerk op gemeentevlak kan aan die hand van die volgende getoets word (Burger 1999:293): Verstaan die gemeente dat die egtheid van die gemeente se identiteit in Christus getoets word aan die hand van die gelowiges se uitleef van liefde en eenheid met ander gelowiges? Verstaan die gemeente die radikaliteit hiervan en hoe dit verhoudings beïnvloed? Kerklike verdeeldheid is daarom pynlik en onaanvaarbaar (Heitink 2007:30).

Die akuutste probleem vir die NG Kerk in 1991 is op die vlak van die kwaliteit van lidmate se geloofsverbintenis (Burger 1991:151). Die sigbaarheid van 'n heilige lewe is onder verdenking. Hoe sou dit aangespreek kon word? Burger stel voor dat daar begin word by die derde beginsel – 'n lewende onderlinge gemeenskap (koinonia). Direk daarmee saam word aandag gegee aan diens en dan visie voordat by die geloofsverbintenis uitgekom word. Hoe sou dit in 2012 beskryf kon word? Die grootste uitdaging vir gemeentes is waarskynlik op die vlak van diensbaarheid aan die gemeenskap en daarmee saam die gebrek aan eenheid as kontrole punt. Die gemeentelewe is op selfsorg gerig met 'n sterk klem op 'n geprivatiseerde godsdienstige lewe (Sien Schoeman 2010:123). Die uitdaging vir gemeentes lê in 2012 op die vlak van gesamentlike diens in die gemeenskap.

5. 'n VERDERE TREE OPSOEK NA GEMEENTES MET INTEGRITEIT

Burger en Heitink, soos hierbo aangetoon, gebruik die eienskappe van die kerk as indikatore om die integriteit van die gemeente mee te ondersoek. Dit help beslis, maar is die gebruik van die eienskappe genoegsaam of sou 'n verdere tree gegee kon word? Die kenmerke van die kerk sou in die verband kon help (sien ook Gaum 2011:75-76). Die kenmerke van die kerk, gesien vanuit die Reformasie-oogpunt, is voorwaardes vir kerk-wees. Die Reformasie het daarop gewys dat die kerk uitwendig aan die eienskappe kan beantwoord – formeel altans – en tog nie die ware kerk is nie. Die empiriese kerk is nie vanselfsprekend die ware kerk nie en daarom het die reformatore 'n kritiese maatstaf ingevoer wat as die kenmerke bekendstaan. Die kenmerke van die kerk word gebruik om tussen die ware en die valse kerk te onderskei (Jonker 1994:75). Die Reformasie dui as kenmerke van die ware kerk die suiwere en by name die amptelike bediening van die Woord, die sakramente en die tug aan (NGB Art. 29).

Die kerk is nie in sy suiwer gestalte in die wêreld te vinde nie. Juis daarom is dit die taak van die kerk om voortdurend in die lig van die eise van die Woord te reformeer. "Eintlik het die ware kerk maar een kenmerk, en dit is of die Woord daarin heers, terwyl die vals kerk die Woord op allerlei maniere minag en aan homself en sy eie besluite meer gesag toeskryf." (Jonker 1994:75). Dit is vir gemeentewees belangrik, aangesien dit beteken dat 'n gemeente altyd selfondersoekend besig moet wees om toenemend in gehoorsaamheid aan die Woord te lewe. 'n Gemeente binne die reformatoriese tradisie sal altyd hierdie kenmerke as deel van sy belydenisgrondslag moet verreken. Dit help gemeentes om met groter integriteit as gemeente binne en vanuit die reformatoriese belydenis te lewe.

Die kenmerke is voorwaarde vir die kerk, daarom is dit ook voorwaarde vir die eienskappe van

die kerk. Indien aan die bepaalde voorwaardes voldoen word, ontstaan 'n kerk en gemeente met bepaalde eienskappe. As daar dus analities na 'n gemeente gekyk word, moet die kenmerke van die kerk, vanuit hierdie belydenis, ook ten opsigte van die spesifieke gemeente, verreken word. Binne 'n gemeente konteks kom vrae na die gehoorsaamheid aan die Woord, die gebruik en viering van die sakramente en die uitlewe van 'n daadwerklike liefdesgemeenskap aan die orde. Die kenmerke kan, naas die vier eienskappe, as 'n verdere stap gebruik word as rigtingwysers in die soeke na 'n gemeente met integriteit.

6. MERKERS VIR 'n GEMEENTE MET INTEGRITEIT

Sonder om die rol van strukture, strategieë en selfs leierskap in die gemeente te onderskat (sien Burger 1995:38 oor die kongruensie tussen die komponente), is 'n teologiese verstaan van wat dit beteken om 'n geloofwaardige geloofsgemeenskap te wees noodsaaklik. Burger het hiermee beslis gehelp deur vrae na die identiteit, taak en bedieningsterreine van die gemeente op die tafel te plaas. 'n Grondige teologiese verstaan van wat dit beteken om 'n geloofwaardige gemeente of 'n gemeente met integriteit te wees is daarom nodig. Dit is wesenlike en rigtinggewende vrae wat herhaaldelik beantwoord moet word.

'n Verdere stap in die soeke na geloofwaardigheid, wat Burger ook uitgewys het, is die gebruikmaking van die eienskappe van die kerk. Barth maak die volgende insiggewende opmerking oor die rol van die belydenis van die vier eienskappe in die gemeente: "Credo ecclesiam means that I believe that the congregation to which I belong, in which I have been called to faith and am responsible for my faith, in which I have my service, is the one, holy, universal Church. If I do not believe this here, I do not believe it at all." (1949:144). Die belydenis van die eienskappe en ook die kenmerke van die kerk, kan gemeentes help om met integriteit te lewe.

BIBLIOGRAFIE

Alfsvåg K 2008. Notae ecclesiae in Luther's Von den Konziliis und Kirchen *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church.* Vol. 8, No. 1, February 2008, 33–42

Barth K. 1949. *Dogmatics in outline.* Londen: SCM Press Ltd,.

Bosch D.J. 1991. *Transforming mission. Paradigm shifts in Theology of Mission.* New York: Orbis Books.

Dreyer, T.F.J., 2009, ''n Kerk met karakter: Die perspektief van Gerben Heitink', *HTS Teologiese Studies/ Theological Studies* 65(1), Art. #315, 5 bladsye. DOI: 10.4102/hts.v65i.315

Breytenbach, H.S. EN Pieterse, H.J.C. 1992. Doelwitte vir gemeentebou in die lig van 'n prakties-teologiese ekklesiologie. *PTSA*, no 7(2): 101-112.

Burger, C.W., 1991, *Die dinamika van 'n Christelike geloofsgemeenskap* Kaapstad:Lux Verbi.

Burger, C.W., 1995, *Gemeentes in transito. Vernuwingsgeleenthede in 'n oorgangstyd.* Kaapstad:Lux Verbi.

Burger, C.W., 1997, *Familie van God! 'n Ander manier van dink oor God, oor geloof en oor die kerk.* Kaapstad:Lux Verbi.

Burger, C.W., 1999, *Gemeentes in die Kragveld van die Gees.* Bloemfontein: CLF-Drukkers.

Burger, C.W., 2001, *Ons weet aan wie ons behoort. Nuut gedink oor ons gereformeerde tradisie.* Wellington:Lux Verbi.

Burger C. en Nell I (redakteurs), 2002. *Draers van die waarheid: Nuwe Testamentiese visies vir die gemeente.* Matieland: BUVTON.

Burger C.W. 2008. Die reformatoriese verstaan van die geloofgemeenskap (gemeente) as 'n publieke gemeenskap. *Scriptura* no 99: 247-258.

Gaum F 2011. *Fluit-fluit die kerk is uit?* Wellington: Bybel-Media.

Guder, D.L. 2000. *The continuing conversion of the church.* Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company,

Heitink G 2007. *Een kerk met karkater. Tijd voor herorientatie.* Kampen: Uitgeverij Kok.

Heyns J.A. 1977. *Die Kerk.* Pretoria: N.G. Kerkboekhandel.

Heyns J.A. 1981. *Dogmatiek.* Pretoria: N.G. Kerkboekhandel, 2de druk.

Jonker W.D. 1994. *Bevrydende Waarheid.* Wellington: Hugenote Uitgewers.

Louw D.J. 1992. Die ontwerp van 'n prakties-teologiese ekklesiologie vir gemeentebou, *PTSA,* 7(2).

Mead L.B. 1991. *The once and future church.* New York: Alban Institute.

Nel, M. 1994. *Gemeentebou.* Halfway House: Orion Uitgewers.

Newbigin. L. 1998. *The Gospel in a pluralist society.* Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

Noordegraaf A. 1998. *Vijf broden en twee vissen.* Zoetemeer: Uigeverij Boekencentrum.

Schoeman, W.J. 2010. The Congregational Life Survey in the Dutch Reformed Church: Identifying strong and weak connections. *Ned Geref Teologiese Tydskrif.* 51(3-4): 114-124

Schoeman, K. & Van den Berg, J.A. 2011. An appreciation for the positive! Appreciative engagement as congregational- and pastoral lens. *Hervormde Theological Studies:* 76(2): Art. #887, 7 bladsye. DOI:10.4102/hts.v67i2.887.

Van Gelder C. 2000. *The essence of the church. A community created by the Spirit.* Grand Rapids: Baker Books.

KEY WORDS
congregations
Coenie Burger
notae ecclesiae
ministry

TREFWOORDE
gemeentes
Coenie Burger
notae ecclesiae
bediening

Kontakbesonderhede:
Prof. W.J Schoeman
Departement Praktiese Teologie
Fakulteit Teologie
Universiteit van die Vrystaat
E-pos: **schoemanw@ufs.ac.za**

Sheridan, Tim M & Hendriks, H Jurgens
Stellenbosch University

The Emergent Church movement[1]

ABSTRACT

Something about the word "missional" has captured the imagination of many
Christians in Western societies and beyond. The term, though relatively new as a
description of the church, is now used widely across confessional traditions and
within both "Emergent" and "Missional" Church movements. The employment of
the term "missional" includes the superficial along with the profound, the culturally
captive alongside the richly biblical. At its best, the word "missional" describes not
a specific *activity* of the church, but the very *identity and vocation* of the church as
it takes up its role in God's story in the context of its culture, and participates in his
mission. This article will engage the Emergent Church movement and summarize
its contributions toward the development of the missional identity and vocation of
the church in the West. In the next article, the Missional Church movement 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. INTRODUCTION

The church in the West faces an identity crisis in light of the collapse of Christendom and the
dislocation of the church's dominant position in society. This problem has been well documented
in recent years by the work of Lesslie Newbigin and those who have built on his important
work. An ever-growing number of voices are calling for the church in the West to recover its
missional identity and role – to become once again missional in its ecclesiology. As work is being
done on developing a missional ecclesiology, attention needs to be given to the critical task of
discernment. How can the church in the West discern its missional vocation as it seeks to recover
a missional identity?

Discernment of missional vocation for the church in the West must take place in the context
of dialogue and engagement with those from other theological and ecclesiological traditions.
There are two important movements attempting to recover the missional identity and role of
the church in the West. Those two movements are loosely defined as the "Missional Church"
movement and the "Emergent Church" movement. These movements encompass a wide
diversity of theological and ecclesiological traditions and backgrounds but are held together
by a common desire to discern missional vocation as the church in the West seeks to renew its
missional identity. The Emergent church movement is a growing, global, inter-denominational
movement that is finding expression in many diverse ecclesiastical and theological traditions.
Eddie Gibbs and Ryan Bolger define emerging churches as "missional communities that are
arising (emerging) from within postmodern culture and consisting of followers of Jesus seeking
to be faithful in their place and time" (2005, 28).

---

1 The article is based on Chapter 4.2 of Sheridan's doctoral dissertation (2012). H Jurgens Hendriks and
  Mike Goheen were the promoters.

2. BRIEF HISTORY

Initially, there was movement, particularly in North America, around an emerging generational ministry focus among youth pastors and young church planters to the so-called "Generation X." Networks began to emerge around this generational issue. Within the United Kingdom context, alternative worship movements began. These movements led to the emergence of a "church within a church" – expressions of the alternative worship movements among both youth groups and post-youth-group communities.

As both of these movements began to evolve, they morphed into something deeper. Youth leaders and planters began attending to the cultural shift from modernity to postmodernity and began to realize that this shift encompassed something that was much wider and deeper than the generational reality. The search was on for new forms of church and "church practices" that would somehow go deeper than finding strategies for growth or renewal; and, at the same time, would be relevant with and connect to the emerging postmodern culture in the West (Jones 2008, 7-20).

Tony Jones' insight into the desire to move beyond the perceived dichotomies of liberalism and fundamentalism resonates with Scot McKnight's keen insight into what he describes as the "ironic faith" that influenced this movement as it began. McKnight identifies eight catalysts to the Emergent movement:[2]

- For Emergents, the evangelical doctrine of inerrancy does not sufficiently express the truth about the Bible.
- The gospel Emergent leaders heard as children and teens is a caricature of Paul's teaching. They are discovering Jesus, the gospels, and "kingdom of God" theology.
- The Bible and science debates affect Emergent leaders, leading them to embrace the Bible as largely narrative in form and to not see it in an antagonistic relationship to modern science.
- Many of these leaders have been badly burned by the lack of integrity among popular evangelical leaders of their era. This has pushed them to champion the importance of integrity and authenticity and also become leery and at times downright suspicious of established church leaders and their potential to abuse power and authority.
- Emergent leaders are deeply affected by the multiculturalism and pluralism of the public school systems in North America and Europe. These realities and ideologies have made them more pluralistic in their view of world religions and broad in their understanding of what it means to be "Christian."
- Through appreciation of postmodern thinkers, Emergent leaders are learning to exercise a deconstructionist critique of the Bible and sometimes of God. This is particularly the case with "difficult" passages of the Bible.
- The homosexuality issue, particular the heated cultural debate that has ensued in North America, has deeply affected them. There is a shared belief among Emergents that the Bible's teaching on this issue is much more sophisticated and nuanced than the pro-gay and anti-gay tendencies they see in culture and the church.
- Finally, Emergent leaders are also greatly shaped by the postmodern critiques of language. As a result, many are keenly sensitive to the limitations of language to capture theological truths.

---

2 McKnight describes these as catalysts that "moved disaffected evangelicals from an ironic faith within evangelicalism to a fork in the road: either abandon traditional evangelicalism for an emergent form of post-evangelical Christianity, or abandon Christianity altogether" (McKnight 2008b).

This historical context has led some critics, like D.A. Carson, to describe the Emergent movement as a "protest movement." Carson sees in the movement a four-fold protest along the following lines: a protest against the institutional established church in the West; a protest against conservative forms of evangelicalism, particularly Fundamentalism and Dispensationalism; a protest against modernism, especially modernist epistemologies; and a protest against seeker-sensitive, mega-church movements within evangelicalism (2005, 20-36).

Against the backdrop of this brief historical context, it is easier to appreciate what many leaders within the movement have described as the "liminal phase" in which the movement finds itself. This time of "liminality" is one of "dismantling and rebuilding." So it is wise to look back to what this movement is emerging *from* more than what it is emerging *into.*

McKnight's catalysts above are helpful in identifying the nuanced realities from which the movement is seeking to emerge. A key piece here is the cultural shifts that those in this movement feel we in the West are experiencing, from modernity to postmodernity. Because of the uncertainty of our time period, those in this movement are calling for space to have a conversation about what it would look like to dismantle the church in the West and rebuild it. The Emergent "conversation" is about what we need to dismantle and what, as well as how, we begin to rebuild in a postmodern culture (Gibbs and Bolger 2005, 28-29).

Even in this time of liminality, the Emergent movement is gaining a greater sense of definition. Jones has sought to provide some more clarity and definition to the movement. In *The New Christians,* Jones cites the four values and their attendant practices that are commonly shared among members of the Emergent Village, a key network in this global movement. Says Jones, "In the language of a religious order, we call these four values our 'order and rule'" (2008, 222-226):

- a commitment to following God in the ways of Jesus, with particular emphasis on Jesus' message of the kingdom of God;
- a commitment to honour and serve the church in all of its forms and traditions;
- a commitment to follow Christ into the world and be committed to seeking the restoration of God's world; and
- a commitment to respectful conversation and dialogue with all who participate in this growing global movement.

Building on this need for greater definition, Phyllis Tickle is calling Emergent leaders to boldly articulate the new form of Christianity that she sees arising at this transitional time in the history of Christianity. In the closing words of *The Great Emergence,* Tickle writes of Emergent leaders, "They must begin now to think with intention about what this new form of the faith is and is to become; because what once was an emerging but innocuous phenomenon no longer is. The cub has grown into the young lion; and now is the hour of his roaring" (Tickle 2008, 163).

3. KEY PRACTICES OF THIS MOVEMENT

For such a diverse and growing movement, it is challenging to summarize the key practices of churches that are being shaped by and participating in this movement. We can begin with the following key practices, core to the movement.

The first Emergent practice can be broadly described as "following the ways of Jesus in the world." A few things stand out as part of this core practice. First, an emphasis is placed on seeing the gospel of the kingdom of God as the key to understanding not only Jesus' proclamations but also his lifestyle and practices (Gibbs and Bolger 2005, 47-8). There is a strong emphasis on

every disciple of Jesus being called to follow Jesus in a life that is "on mission," to erect signs of the kingdom of God in this world.

Emergents see the kingdom of God and our mission within it as larger than the institutional church. Gibbs and Bolger argue, "The church is not necessarily the centre of God's intentions. God is working in the world, and the church has the option to join God or not" (2005, 42). Adding to this emphasis, Emergents see mission primarily as the mission of God, *missio Dei. Missio Dei* is seen as God's effort to renew all of creation; and therefore, many would define the task of those who follow Jesus as seeking to discern our place in this mission of God in the world. Gibbs and Bolger summarize this core practice well:

> In Jesus, they [emerging churches] discovered a long-forgotten gospel, the idea that we have an invitation to participate with God in the redemption of the world. Emerging Churches accepted this offer, and they joined the *missio Dei,* God's outward movement to humanity. Jesus announced the kingdom of God, and this is the message emerging churches seek to proclaim in their newly formed missional communities (Gibbs and Bolger 2005, 64).

A second key Emergent practice is what Gibbs and Bolger refer to as "transforming secular space." What is primarily at stake here is a very intentional desire to foster practices that deconstruct the sacred/secular dichotomy that has been inherited in the West from the Enlightenment tradition. Borrowing heavily from Gibbs and Bolger, consider some of the implications of "transforming secular space" that are often noted by Emergent leaders. The first is the drive to see all of life as sacred space. "Church" becomes not so much an institution, a place, or a people, but rather signals intentional practices of life that become part of a sacred rhythm of fellowship and service. Second, there is a desire for so-called "secular life" to become infused into our spirituality, our worship, and our so-called "sacred" spaces (e.g. mainstream music becoming part of our "worship music" and providing clues for liturgical practices of confession, etc.). Third, there is an intentional move from systematic to non-linear ways of thinking, telling the truth and reading the biblical text. This includes an emphasis on truth as embodied – hearing what God is doing concretely in the lives of people. There is an aversion to propositional language and monological speech to communicate truth. A fourth implication of this is a desire to see non-textual ways of communicating and embodying the gospel. An emphasis is placed on aural and visual forms of communication and embodiment of truth. Fifth is the focus on "incarnational engagement with culture," to practice embodiment of truth in our culture. Finally, Emergents seek what Ray Anderson has described as "secular sacrament" (Anderson 2006, 104-105). Brian McLaughlin describes it this way: "[The] secular sacrament of the kingdom of God involves living life in the manner intended by God, but does not necessarily include personal salvation in the process . . . the mission of God's people is to be a kingdom blessing to the world, not necessarily a soteriological blessing" (2008, 107).

A third key Emergent practice is *emphasizing community.* When it comes to thinking about the church as a community, the focus for many in the Emergent movement is on the kingdom of God, and the church's relationship to the Kingdom becomes a defining core for its ecclesiology. That relationship emphasizes the church as a people who are sent out into the world seven days a week to embody the life of the kingdom of God, in contrast to the church as a people gathered one day a week for worship. Stress is placed on the church as the community called to be a servant and sign of the kingdom, being the community of those who are called together in order to be sent into the world as witnesses. Emergent churches see the need to deconstruct church practices in light of this. We must be willing to question all church practices and ask how they can serve or be part of the kingdom mission of the church (Gibbs and Bolger 2005, 96).

A fourth area of key Emergent practices concerns the hospitality and practices of inclusion. The following practices are part of this theme: the Eucharist as a central act of worship, with the emphasis on the meal as a place of hospitality and welcome to the stranger; creating safe places for community gatherings with an emphasis on the gathering for corporate worship as a safe place for inclusion of the stranger and outsider; a softening of boundaries that would tend to exclude others, and intentional fostering of a "come as you are" culture in the local community; a stress on embodied relational evangelism where presence is emphasized before proclamation, changed lives before changed beliefs, and belonging before believing; and the desire through these practices of hospitality and inclusion to embody a public faith that is attractive instead of a privatized faith. Gibbs and Bolger summarize these practices well, "Emerging Churches focus on changed lives rather than changed beliefs. People do not want to be converted, but experiencing the life of the kingdom may be welcomed by many. The focus is to create cultures of the kingdom and to allow God to do the work" (2005, 128-129).

A fifth area of key Emergent practices is in the area of worship. As a brief survey of Dan Kimball's landmark book on Emergent churches would demonstrate, issues and habits of worship have been a key area of practices that Emergent church leaders have focused on.[3] Some of the key practices that stand out in this area include: a critique for what is seen as the way in which modernity made church "non-participatory" in many established patterns of worship and worship gatherings (e.g. seating arrangements, centrality of pulpit, etc.); a desire to practice worship as a place where people share journeys and offer up their lives to each other and that cannot therefore be dominated by one person from the front; a movement to dialogical preaching models and methods instead of monologue; and the ongoing tension of seeking full participation in corporate gatherings in practice, while trying not to succumb to the dangers of becoming insular and non-missional in a desire to stay small and ensure high levels of participation (Gibbs and Bolger 2005, 156-172).

A sixth area of key practices relates to the arts. In Emergent churches a high value is placed upon creativity and using the full range of creative gifts in the community. There is emphasis on the importance of everyone being able to create and contribute toward the corporate expressions of worship and to use of all the various arts in the worship gathering and life of the community. Beyond the corporate experiences of the community, Emergent churches also seek deep cultural engagement with the arts and creative gifts (Gibbs and Bolger 2005, 173-190).

A seventh key practice is the re-thinking of leadership practices and roles. Leadership practices within Emergent churches tend strongly toward non-hierarchical models of church leadership. Leadership shifts to a more facilitative role, with many emerging churches experimenting with the idea of "leaderless groups." Leaders as facilitators are to create space for the group to discern its calling and embody the various practices highlighted here. Power is diffused throughout the group. Decision-making is on a consensual basis (Gibbs and Bolger 2005, 192-213). McLaughlin summarizes these practices around leadership well: "This type of leadership flattens the typical modern hierarchy and creates a community in which 'all members help make decisions and take turns leading, actions that serve as a counter to the control and oppressive tendencies of modernity'" (McLaughlin 2008, 109).

Finally, an eighth key Emergent practice is the renewal of ancient spiritualities. Gibbs and Bolger highlight the rediscovery among Emergent church leaders of ancient practices and disciplines of spirituality. Celtic and other contemplative traditions, including those of Ignatius

---

3 A huge portion of Kimball's 2003 book on Emerging Church is dedicated to the way Emerging Churches are experimenting with worship and different models preaching (eight of the 11 chapters in part two are on these issues). We should also recall that the U.K. expression of the Emergent church movement was initially largely an alternative worship movement.

like *Lectio Divina* and the *Examen,* are reflected in the practices of discernment, reflection and meditation, and communal listening to God's spoken word. Monastic orders are also taken by many Emergent churches, leading to what has been called a "neo-monasticism": a truly eclectic spirituality from a variety of ecclesiastical and theological traditions, most of which are largely pre-modern in nature (Gibbs and Bolger 2005, 217-234).

4. KEY THEOLOGICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL EMPHASES

4.1 Relationship between gospel and culture

The Emergent church movement prioritizes the need to understand deeply the relationship between the gospel and culture in the West today. This is largely not a philosophical or theoretical problem, but rather is focused on relating the gospel to people in our culture who find themselves presently outside of the institutional church.[4] Yet it must be noted that even though many leaders in this movement see themselves as being largely pragmatic, theological and philosophical assumptions do of course underlie their practice and are embedded in their practices.

Brian McLaren has led the way for this movement on this issue. As McLaren puts it, we are living in a changed world where enormous cultural shifts have taken place, and so we need a changed church, or at least new maps for the church and new kinds of churches (2000, 11-17). McLaren argues that it is important for the church in the West today to emphasize the discontinuity of the cultural shift we are experiencing from modernity to postmodernity. This discontinuity will help us realize more clearly and decisively that we need re-invented churches in the West, not renewed or restored churches. The emphasis among Emergent leaders is on the prophetic and provocative posture toward culture and cultural change in the West (McKnight 2006, 2007). McLaren does not simply highlight discontinuity, he also emphasizes the importance of engaging in our postmodern world in light of numerous opportunities that postmodernity provides the church, and allowing the postmodern world to deconstruct the "modern viruses" that have plagued the church today (2000, 159-198).

As McKnight points out, within the Emergent church movement, there are three postures taken in relationship to postmodern culture. The first is a critical stance toward postmodernity in which the stress is placed on doing ministry *to* postmoderns, often with a very sharp edge that emphasizes the dangers of the postmodern situation. The second posture is a mildly critical stance in which we seek to do ministry *with* postmoderns, seeing postmodernism largely as the cultural context within which we are called to live out the gospel. The third is the posture of those who seem largely devoid of criticism about postmodernism and instead are seeking to do ministry *as* postmoderns, largely embracing much of the postmodern story. As McKnight laments, this third group gets much of the publicity and criticism in light of the tendency toward polarities and false dichotomies that this group embodies (2007, 3).[5]

Jones argues that the Emergent movement is critically concerned with unmasking the ways in which the gospel has been domesticated by modernity and the Enlightenment

---

4 Dan Kimball's recent *They Like Jesus but Hate the Church* is a good example here, looking in detail at some of the key cultural barriers that often keep postmoderns outside the institutional church (2007).

5 McKnight puts it this way: "They love either-or claims, especially when one side wins and the other side loses – as in 'relational rather than rational.' While I think such language is much more often a ranking of truths by the *via negative* rather than some superficial false dichotomy, no one can dispute that the emerging folks have at times embraced such language in order to create a clear divide and to pound in some stakes. False dichotomies might be the opiate of the emerging style; as for opiates, it has to be one of the more charming ones" (2006, 13).

project. The movement largely began by wrestling with the implications of postmodernity and deconstructionism for the church in the West today, particularly in order to identify the assumptions of modernity and the Enlightenment operative in the church in the West (Jones 2008, 40-43).[6]

4.2 Disillusionment with modern forms

A second theological emphasis within the Emergent church movement is a growing disillusionment with the modern forms of church and established churches. McLaren argues for totally reinvented churches (2000). Bolger suggests that one of the key characteristics of the Emergent church movement, in contrast particularly with the Missional Church movement, is what he describes as disillusionment with ecclesiology and the church (2007). And Jones has put it perhaps even more starkly, when he suggests that the church in the West today is simply dead; the modern church has outlived itself and its usefulness to God (2008, 4). Jones highlights at several points how the Emergent church movement finds the modern forms of church problematic. Emergents work to move beyond the differences that have divided Christians in the modern period, especially the fundamentalist and liberal camps. Emergents want to emphasize a generous orthodoxy that appreciates the contributions of all branches of Christianity and seeks to form something new that will be inclusive of the diverse branches. Wanting to move beyond the way the modern church has become over-institutionalized and bureaucratic, Emergents believe the church should function more like an open-source network. This "open-source network" way of functioning will provide for the whole community open access to all learning and instruction, over against the teacher- or preacher-dominated models of the modern church. The pastor should be seen as a broker of a conversation and dialogue, not the primary speaker. Leadership structures should be flattened out. Jones summarizes much of this posture by suggesting that often Emergents are starting new churches in order to save their own faith, not necessarily as an outreach strategy (2008, 197). The disillusionment with the established and modern forms of church threatens to undo the faith of the Emergents; newer expressions are needed to save their faith. The Emergent movement is a post-institutional church movement in many ways, and is leading to a growing call to re-examine the institutional church in the West today.[7]

One of the more theological arguments within this movement is a small but very influential book by Pete Ward entitled *Liquid Church.* In this book, Ward's concern is for a renewal and reformation of the church in order for it to be an effective agent in changing our culture. He describes "liquid" as a new way of being God's people in worship and in mission where the emphasis is placed on the church as primarily a network of people and relationships and communications, but not as a gathering of people that meet at a certain time and place. Ward wants to see a shift from thinking about church as structures, institutions, and meetings to thinking about church in less formal ways. He argues that there will be three implications to this type of shift: first, we will discover that the church is not an institution; second, we will realize that "church" happens whenever people communicate with each other; and third, the emphasis will be placed on living as Christ's body in the world, with no weekly gathering together required for this (Ward 2002, 2-4). Ward argues that Paul's nuanced use of the word ἐκκλησία and his

---

6 Given this emphasis on questions and issues of gospel and culture, it is striking to note the absence of a well articulated model for contextualization, which is what this whole issue raises from a missiological perspective. The absence of such a critical tool as this, as well as the absence of a well-articulated understanding of the nature of culture, has hindered the Emergent church movement in its engagement with and understanding of the cultural context in the West today.

7 There is a growing amount of literature being spawned by this growing disillusionment. See Sanders 2007, Cunningham 2006, Duin 2008, Viola and Barna 2008, and Kinnaman and Lyons 2007.

understanding of the church as the body of Christ provide us with liquid, organic notions of what the church is and move us beyond the static and "solid church" ecclesiologies of the past (2002, 7-8). Ward concludes by arguing that we need a "liquid reformation" of the structures and social organization of the church in the West, because the liquid culture in which we live moves us to engage in what God is doing in the world beyond and outside of the institutional church (2002, 10-16).

4.3 Instrumental view of the church

A third theological emphasis for the Emergent movement is the growing instrumental view of the church. That is, within the *missio Dei,* Emergents tend to marginalize the place of the church: it either serves the larger purposes of the kingdom of God or, if it is unable or unwilling to do so, is bypassed.

Doug Pagitt argues that there are essentially three types of responses to the cultural shifts in the West today. The first option is that the church can seek to return to the Reformation and seek to hold onto tradition; the second option is that the church can seek to make deep systemic changes, but in the end still see itself as the centre of God's mission and thus avoid significant theological changes as it relates to the role and identity of the church; and the third option is to embrace the reality that the church is not necessarily the centre of God's intentions, but rather to see that God is working in the world, and the church has the option to join God or not in his mission in the world (Gibbs and Bolger 2005, 42). Pagitt argues that the church has no privileged place in God's mission, and must continually orient itself toward the world so that it might participate in what God is doing, wherever it might find God at work in the world (2007, 131). The focus must be on engaging in the work of the kingdom of God wherever that work might be. The church may be an instrument in God's kingdom purposes, but the church is not essential nor necessarily the main instrument God will use.[8]

4.4 Epistemological assumptions

A fourth key emphasis found within the Emergent church movement concerns its shared epistemological assumptions, reacting to the foundationalism and rationalism of modernity that has affected the church in the West. Emergents are particularly keen to expose the ways in which the modernity of the West has shaped the way the church has approached its theology and practices.

Emergents argue that language is "non-representational" (McLaren 2000, 66). That is, our minds are not a mirror of reality and our language and thoughts do not therefore represent a neutral, unbiased representation of objective reality that is external to our minds. Rather, we are profoundly limited and shaped by our perspective and social location. Theologizing, as a result, should be seen as an art, not as a rigid science that seeks to provide dogmatic certainty. We need to develop a different rhetoric when we speak and do theology; a rhetoric where our words are simpler, softer, and fewer (McLaren 2000, 89).

Connected to this is a growing emphasis placed on *mystery* as an important epistemological category. Our words should be seen as servants of the mysteries of faith, not as a tool to articulate all the answers. Certainty must give way to mystery and answers must be trumped by more

---

8 Scot McKnight disagrees, arguing that the lack of clarity about the relationship between the kingdom of God and the church in the Emergent movement presents a major weakness: "According to the New Testament, the kingdom vision of Jesus is, it seems, only implemented through the church. Only in the community of Jesus does one hear about the problem of Adam and Eve's rebellion and the need for resolution through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit … We need more reflection by Emergents on the relationship of kingdom and church" (2008a, 5).

questions. Combined with this is the growing deconstructionist perspective on tradition, which leads many Emergents to be especially sensitive to the ways that modernity has domesticated the church and the gospel in the West. These "modern viruses," to use McLaren's language, must be deconstructed so that the church can be freed from the epistemological assumptions of the past. Thus, we must learn to embrace the postmodern aversion to certainty, the sensitivity to context, and the importance of our own subjectivity (McLaren 2000, 162-164).

Jones adds further nuance with some additional assumptions that are shaping this movement. First, Jones argues that an envelope of friendship and reconciliation must surround all debates about doctrine and dogma, instead of the modernist concern for right doctrine that sought to emphasize correct thinking in a way that divides (2008, 78-9). Second, we must place emphasis on the local, conversational, and temporary nature of all of our theologizing. Complexity is highlighted, averting our tendency to simplify and "nail-down" mysterious theological concepts (2008, 112-114). Third, we must become increasingly aware of our relative position to God, to one another, and to history in such a way that this awareness breeds a humility open to dialogue and ongoing discovery (2008, 115, 140-42). Fourth, Emergents believe that truth, like God, cannot be definitively articulated by finite human beings. We must be willing to embrace paradox and a wider rationality that allows space for the imagination, creativity, intuition, emotions, and dialogue (2008, 153-159).

4.5 Biblical-theological starting point
A fifth emphasis that must be briefly mentioned is the biblical-theological starting point for mission. It is striking that the majority of Emergent leaders take as their starting point for biblical and theological reflection on mission one of the following:

- *The mystery of the incarnation of Jesus Christ.* The so-called "incarnational model" of Jesus' life becomes a starting point for the church to follow Jesus in its desire to "incarnate" the gospel in our culture.
- *The life and practices of Jesus Christ during his earthly ministry.* Great emphasis is put on how Jesus' life and ministry was centred around the kingdom of God and his engagement with the world in his life and ministry. The church is then called to continue the kingdom practices of Jesus in its own context today.
- *Missio Dei.* As noted above, this tends to move in a direction that emphasizes God's relationship with the world and his work outside the church, presenting the church with the option of joining God's mission in the world or being passed by in that mission

What is lacking in all of these starting points is a robust biblical-theological understanding of the mission of the church that at the same time does full justice to the biblical understanding of the *missio Dei,* the kingdom of God, and the OT mission of Israel as it relates to the mission of God's people in the NT.

4.6 Praxis oriented
As Scot McKnight argues, the Emergent church movement has a praxis oriented emphasis (2007, 3), especially in three key spheres. First, worship: Emergents like creative, experiential worship that seeks to challenge many of the assumptions and practices that have shaped the modern expressions of public worship gatherings – especially preferring participatory dialogue in place of monological preaching, as well as inclusive seating arrangements and other intentional steps to encourage experiential participation in the worship event.

Second is orthopraxis. Emergents focus more on faith practices beliefs. In fact, there is in

many cases an aversion toward tying down a strict orthodoxy filled with doctrinal content. Peter Rollins puts it this way: ". . . orthodoxy is no longer (mis)understood as the opposite of heresy but rather is understood as a term that signals a way of being in the world rather than a means of believing things about the world" (2006, 3). How a person lives will be more important than what a person believes. Emphasis is placed squarely on the need to live the right way, embodying the ways of Jesus rather than the teachings of Jesus (McKnight 2007, 4).

And third is missional living. The Emergent church movement overlaps with the Missional Church movement in this regard, and shares a concern for the church's concrete participation in the life of local communities. This is participation where God's redemptive work is already occurring, in the holistic redemptive work of God to bring (McKnight 2007, 4).

5. GROWING DIVERSITY

The Emergent movement is marked by a growing diversity, and is increasingly difficult to define. McKnight suggests measuring the diversity within the movement in large part by distinguishing how "soft" or "hard" the postmodern tendencies are among those in the movement. "Softness" would characterize those who are more critical of the postmodern story, while "hardness" would characterize those who are perceived to uncritically embrace much of the postmodern story (McKnight 2006, 10-14).

The growing diversity within the movement presents a challenge to those who would seek to define it. However, for those within the movement, the diversity is noted and celebrated, including in a recent collection of essays, *Emergent Manifesto,* which draws together over 25 different voices from the growing "Emergent Village," an online forum for the Emergent church movement. Jones summarizes well the contribution this book brings:

I hope that you can see the beauty in the mess that is this book. It's not one, univocal message. But, seriously, who would want a garden of all green beans? No, you've got to have variety, and that's what you'll find in the pages that follow. What is Emergent Village? A mess. A beautiful, *good* mess (Pagitt and Jones 2007, 15).

While fully aware of this growing diversity, the key practices and emphases described above clarify what might be termed a centre of the movement. Likewise, Phyllis Tickle, in her recent *The Great Emergence,* seek to define what she terms an "Emergent Centre:" a networked authority marked by its egalitarianism and its practices of open source discernment, "wait[ing] upon the Spirit and rest[ing] in the interlacing lives of Bible-listening, Bible-honouring believers;" a distrust for metanarratives and logic; a belief in paradox and mystery; a relational concept of reality and the human self; and a desire to "re-write" Christian theology into something Jewish, paradoxical, narrative, and mystical. Tickle acknowledges the necessary deconstruction phase through which this movement has passed, but calls on the leaders of this movement to move boldly into the future by bringing greater definition and clarity to the new faith that is emerging from within the Emergent movement (Tickle 2008, 162-163).

6. CONCLUSION

The Emergent Church Movement surfaced in the first decade of the 21st century. It is an important movement that needs to be engaged deeply since its goal is to move beyond the perceived dichotomies of liberalism and fundamentalism. Surface treatments and knee-jerk reactions will not help equip the church in the West to engage in discernment of its missional identity and vocation. Important theological and philosophical questions are being asked by those within this movement. It emphasizes following the ways of Jesus in the world, deconstructs the sacred/

secular dichotomy of the Enlightenment and accentuates community as well as hospitality and inclusion. Thus it is forcing the church in the West to revisit core practices, theological starting points, epistemological assumptions, and ways in which modern and postmodern culture are shaping the church today. It is rethinking worship, the role of creative arts, leadership and the renewal of the ancient spiritualities. Issues for discernment facing the church in the West today are being raised and need to be engaged in order for the church in the West to renew its missional identity and vocation. As such major shifts are taking place in ecclesiology. Emergents have an instrumental view of the church. It should be focused on the *missio Dei.* Epistemologically the movement is decidedly post-foundational, realizing that we need to embrace paradox, live with mystery and that we cannot rationally fully comprehend God as finite human beings. For Emergents, doing theology starts with the Bible is praxis oriented and missionally focused. As the movement is in a liminal phase it marked by a growing diversity.

REFERENCES

Anderson, Ray S. 2006. *An Emergent Theology for Emerging Churches.* Downers Grove: IVP.

Bolger, Ryan. 2007. What is Missional Church? Interview with Alan Roxburgh published online at http://vimeo.com/channels/allelon#7787593.

Carson, D.A. 2005. *Becoming Conversant with The Emerging Church: Understanding a Movement and Its Implications.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

Cunningham, Sarah. 2006. *Dear Church: Letters from a Disillusioned Generation.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

Duin, Julia. 2008. *Quitting Church.* Grand Rapids: Baker.

Gibbs, Eddie and Bolger, Ryan. 2005. *Emerging Churches: Creating Christian Community in Postmodern Cultures.* Grand Rapids: Baker Academic.

Jones, Tony. 2008. *The New Christians: Dispatches from the Emergent Frontier.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Kimball, Dan, et al. 2003. *The Emerging Church.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

Kimball, Dan. 2007. *They Like Jesus but not the Church: Insights from Emerging Generations.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

Kinnaman, David and Gabe Lyons. 2007. *UnChristian.* Grand Rapids: Baker.

McKnight, Scot. 2006. "What is the Emerging Church?" Fall Contemporary Issues Conference at Westminster Theological Seminary, October 26-27, 2006.

McKnight, Scot. 2007. "Five Streams of the Emerging Church." *Christianity Today.* Accessed at: www.ctlibrary.com/print.html?id=40534

McKnight, Scot. 2008a. "McLaren Emerging." *Christianity Today.* September 2008. Accessed September 29, 2008 at www.christianitytoday.com/ct/article_print.html?id=59862

McKnight, Scot. 2008b. "The Ironic Faith of Emergents." *Christianity Today.* September 2008. Accessed September 29, 2008 at www.christianitytoday.com/ct/article_print/html?id=59863

McLaren, Brian. 2000. *The Church on the Other Side: Doing Ministry in the Postmodern Matrix.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

McLaughlin, Brian. 2008. The Ecclesiology of the Emerging Church Movement. *Western Theological Seminary,* vol. 61, no. 3, Fall 2008, 101-118.

Pagitt, Doug. 2007. The Emerging Church and Embodied Theology, in *Listening to the Beliefs of the Emerging Churches: Five Perspectives.* Edited by Robert Webber. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

Pagitt, Doug and Jones, Toney, editors. 2007. *An Emergent Manifesto of Hope.* Grand Rapids: Baker.

Rollins, Peter. 2006. *How (Not) to Speak of God.* Brewster, Mass: Paraclete Press.

Sanders, Brian. 2007. *Life After Church.* Downers Grove: IVP.

Sheridan, TM. 2012. Being a hermeneutic of the gospel: Hermeneutical and epistemological foundations for a missional ecclesiology. Doctoral dissertation Stellenbosch University. http://scholar.sun.ac.za/handle/10019.1/19913

Tickle, Phyllis. 2008. *The Great Emergence: How Christianity is Changing and Why.* Grand Rapids: Baker.

Viola, Frank and George Barna. 2008. *Pagan Christianity?* Carol Stream, Ill: Tyndale.

Ward, Peter. 2002. *Liquid Church.* Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson.

Tim M Sheridan,
Senior Pastor, Maple Ridge CRC
20245 Dewdney Trunk Rd.
Maple Ridge BC V2X3C9
Canada.
pastortim@mapleridgecrc.com
Cell +1 (778) 874-7542; Home +1 (604) 460-0337

H Jurgens Hendriks
Emeritus Professor: Practical Theology en Missiology
Executive Director: Network for African Congregational Theology (NetACT)
Faculty of Theology, 171 Dorp Street, Stellenbosch 7600. South Africa.
+27-21-808-3260 (w); +27-21-808-3251 (fax); +27-73-772-6706 (cell); hjh@sun.ac.za

Smit, DJ
Universiteit Stellenbosch

Oor die teologiese inhoud van die *Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis* vandag[1]

ABSTRACT

On the theological content of the Confessio Belgica in the light of today

The paper is an edited version of a public address during the 450 year celebration of the Confessio Belgica in the Faculty of Theology of Stellenbosch University. It reflects on the theological content of the Confessio Belgica in the light of today and with a deliberate focus on South African Reformed circles. In a first section the background claim is made that the theological content of Reformed confessional documents is always deeply related to their genesis and therefore to the historical circumstances under which they were originally adopted and in some cases also afterwards gradually accepted more broadly. A second section builds on the conviction that the theological content of such documents is therefore to be found in central convictions or claims (that were at stake, most probably disputed at the time), rather than in all and every detail. A few brief references serve as reminders of some historical South African Reformed debates about these central convictions of the Confessio Belgica. A third section considers some issues involved in so-called hermeneutics of tradition, in the Wirkungsgeschichte of confessional documents and in the ongoing reception of their relevance under new and radically different circumstances, in this case the totally different South African context and centuries later. In a final section, this process is illustrated by showing how the theological content of the Confessio Belgica became "liberating truth" again for some in South African Reformed circles, during the birth of the Confession of Belhar.

Dis onmoontlik om in dié kort tyd in te gaan op die teologiese inhoud van die *Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis* (*NGB*) – daaroor word immers talle en omvangryke boeke geskryf. In Suid-Afrika hoef 'n mens net te dink aan J.A. (Johan) Heyns se *Inleiding in die Dogmatiek* (1992).[2]

---

1 Hierdie bydrae is gebaseer op 'n openbare voordrag tydens die amptelike herdenking in die Fakulteit Teologie, Stellenbosch, van die 450 jarige bestaan van die *Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis,* op 22 November 2011. Die viering was in die vorm van 'n openbare simposium, waartydens prof. Hendrik Bosman en prof. Robert Vosloo ook voordragte gelewer het. Die oorspronklike vorm van die voordrag is hier onveranderd behou, maar voetnote met verwysings is bygevoeg ter wille van akademiese gebruik deur lesers.

2 Sien byvoorbeeld die werk van die gesaghebbende dogmatikus van Pretoria, J.A. Heyns. Hy het reeds in 1978 'n *Dogmatiek* geskryf, Pretoria: NGKB, wat hy in die voorwoord beskryf as 'n "inleiding tot die dogmatiek." By die onderskeie loci verwys hy daarin direk na die betrokke gedeeltes in die Drie Formuliere van Eenheid, wyd bekend en aanvaar in die tradisie van Gereformeerde kerke van Nederlandse oorsprong. In 1992 skryf hy dan nóg 'n werk, nou met die titel *Inleiding tot die dogmatiek aan die hand van die Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis,* Pretoria, NGKB, waarin hy voluit dié belydenisskrif as uitgangspunt neem – "as uitgangspunt en oriënteringsbron." Hy beskryf dit as "hierdie belangrike en nog steeds rigtinggewende belydenisgeskrif van ons kerk," met verwysing na die Ned. Geref. Kerk. In

Boonop is dit ook nie nodig nie – aangesien die inhoud waarskynlik goed bekend is aan enige gehoor wat soos vanaand byeen kom om die ontstaan van dié Protestantse belydenisskrif 450 jaar gelede te herdenk. Laat ons daarom eerder dié geleentheid benut om na te dink oor vrae rondom die moontlike relevansie – of nié – van dié teologiese inhoud. Met die oog daarop maak ek *drie inleidende stellings*.

1.TEOLOGIESE INHOUD INGEBED IN DIE ONTSTAANSGESKIEDENIS

In die eerste plek word Protestantse belydenisskrifte altyd gebore in spesifieke sosiale en historiese omstandighede, as konkrete aanleiding tot hulle ontstaan. Hulle teologiese inhoud kan nie verstaan word los van dié politieke en kerklike oomblikke nie. Hulle is almal pogings om in konkrete situasies die evangelie opnuut te bely – gegee die uitdagings van die tyd, die veronderstellings en die voorstellings, die standpunte en strydgesprekke, die taalgebruik en konsepte van die tyd.[3]

Tegelyk hang hul waarheid nie af van die historiese oomblik, moontlike nut binne die sosiale en kerklike konteks, potensiële gediensstigheid aan ander strewes en motiewe nie, maar uitsluitlik van die vraag of die evangelie in dié oomblik van omstredenheid reg gehoor is, of nie. Hul waarheid is nie die waarheid *van* die oomblik nie, maar die waarheid van die evangelie *vir* die oomblik.[4]

Suid-Afrika is dikwels gebruik gemaak van standaard Nederlandse werke. Vir die oorspronklike tekste met annotasies, sien byvoorbeeld J.N. Bakhuizen van den Brink, *De Nederlandse Belijdenisgeschriften,* Amsterdam: Ton Bolland, 1976; vir uiteensettings en besprekings van die inhoud, sien byvoorbeeld die vier-delige werk van A.D.R. Polman, *Onze Nederlandsche Geloofsbelijdenis. Verklaard uit het Verleden geconfronteerd met het Heden,* Franeker: Wever, z.j., asook sy latere, meer populêr geskrewe twee-delige *Woord en Belijdenis. Eenvoudige Verklaring van de Nederlandse Geloofsbelijdenis,* Franeker: Wever, z.j. Volgens sy eie beskrywing is laasgenoemde nie net eenvoudiger geskryf nie, maar ook vanuit die Heilige Skrif belig eerder as vanuit die verlede (soos die vorige vier bande), wat beteken het dat "feitelijk een geheel nieuw werk ontstaan is."

3 Oor die tipies Gereformeerde siening van belydenis en belydenisskrifte, sien D.J. Smit, "'Bevrydende waarheid?' – Nagedink oor die aard van die Gereformeerde belydenis," *Acta Theologica* jrg 26, 2006/1, 134-158 (met literatuur). Meer uitvoerig, sien ook E. Busch, *Credo,* Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003; P. Jacobs, *Theologie Reformierter Bekenntnisschriften in Grundzügen,* Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1959; W. Niesel, (Hrsg.) *Bekenntnisschriften und Kirchenordnungen der nach Gottes Wort reformierten Kirche.* Zürich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1938; W. Niesel, *Das Evangelium und die Kirchen. Ein Lehrbuch der Symbolik,* Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1960; G. Plasger & M. Freudenberg, *Reformierte Bekenntnisschriften,* Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005; J. Rohls, J *Theologie reformierter Bekenntnisschriften,* Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, UTB, 1987; L. Vischer (ed), *Reformed Witness today,* Bern: Evangelische Arbeitsstelle, 1982.

4 Histories invloedryk, maar ook besonder leersaam vir vele Suid-Afrikaanse denkers was in hierdie verband die sieninge van Karl Barth rakende belydenis, die trou aan en die relevansie en "relatiewe gesag" van die ekumeniese credo's, die historiese en kontekstuele aard van Gereformeerde belydenisskrifte en die noodsaak wat kan ontstaan aan nuwe belydenisvorming, in oomblikke van waarheid. Sien hiervoor D.J. Smit, "Social transformation and confessing the faith? Karl Barth's views on confession revisited," *Scriptura* 72, 2000:1, 76-86 (met literatuur). Meer uitvoerig, sien G. Plasger, *Die relative Autorität des Bekenntnisses bei Karl Barth,* Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2000; M. Freudenberg, *Karl Barth und die reformierte Theologie,* Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1997; B. Klappert, *Versöhnung und Befreiung,* Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1994; G. Plasger, "'Du sollst Vater und Mutter ehren!'. Karl Barth und die reformierte Tradition," in M. Beintker, C. Link & M. Trowitzsch (Hrsg.), *Karl Barth in Deutschland (1921-1935). Aufbruch □ Klärung □ Widerstand,* Zürich: TVZ, 2005, 393-405. Van Barth self, sien byvoorbeeld *Das Bekenntnis der Reformation und unser Bekennen.* München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1935; Wünschbarkeit und Möglichkeit eines allgemeinen

Dis daarom nodig om tydens dié herdenking die dramatiese ontstaan van die *Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis* in herinnering te roep, ten einde die diepe erns van wat op die spel was, die aard van die destydse konflikte en die reaksie van die belydenis op dié situasie met beroep op die evangelie te onthou en te respekteer.

In die nag van 1 Nov 1561 word 'n pakkie met die belydenis en 'n begeleidende brief by die poort van die kasteel te Doornik gelaat. Dis geskryf deur Guido de Bres – toe die plaaslike predikant, 'n kundige en belese teoloog, vroeër 'n vlugteling en later 'n martelaar wat sterf vir sy geloof. Die brief is 'n passievolle pleidooi gerig aan die owerhede om nie voort te gaan om die Gereformeerde gelowiges te vervolg nie (omdat hul belydenis, soos uiteengesit in dié klein boekie, nie in stryd is met die klassieke geloof van die kerk nie en hul lewe en gedrag ook nie ongehoorsaam is aan die owerheid nie), maar met die duidelike bereidheid om te ly vir hul belydenis, indien die onregverdige vervolging sou voortduur. Wie die inhoud wil verstaan moet dié geskiedenis onthou.[5]

2. TEOLOGIESE INHOUD TE VINDE IN DIE SENTRALE MOTIEWE

In die tweede plek bestaan die blywende aansprake van belydenisskrifte gevolglik in dit wat hulle wil bely, in hul beslissings en getuienis in die konflik van die oomblik. In die uitleg van belydenisskrifte was dié saak dikwels hoogs omstrede en diep verdelend – óók in Suid-Afrika. Die spektrum van standpunte oor hul rol en gesag wissel nie slegs van dié wat min of geen gesag daaraan toeken tot by dié wat wel bely dat dit gesaghebbend en oriënterend is nie, maar ook laasgenoemde groep sélf is diep verdeeld, oor die vraag waarin die betroubaarheid en gesag setel. Ook hier is 'n hele spektrum van sieninge en formulerings wat deur die geskiedenis telkens weer sou lei tot ernstige meningsverskille.

Dié spektrum val ook nie saam met die sogenaamde verskil tussen *quia* (omdat) en *quatenus* (in soverre as) standpunte oor die verhouding tussen belydenisskrif en Skrif nie. Selfs binne die geledere van dié wat eerder die *quia*-standpunt onderskryf (omdat hulle besef dat *quatenus* 'n niksseggende openheid tot willekeur en subjektiwistiese relatiwisme kan open), is daar naamlik 'n spektrum van standpunte moontlik, afhangende van die vraag *waarin* die ooreenstemming met die Skrifte gesoek word – vanaf letterlik elke moontlike formulering aan die een kant tot by "in gees en hoofsaak" aan die ander kant, 'n formulering wat in die geskiedenis eweneens arbitrêr benut is.[6]

---

reformierten Glaubensbekenntnisses, *Vorträge und kleinere Arbeiten 1922-1925. Gesamtausgabe III.* Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1990, 604-643; *Die Theologie der reformierten Bekenntnisschriften 1923. Gesamtausgabe II.* Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1998 (*The theology of the reformed confessions,* Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002, tr. D L & J J Guder); *Texte zur Barmer Theologischen Erklärung,* Zürich: TVZ, 2004.

5 Sien byvoorbeeld die uiters indrukwekkende, nuwe werk wat onlangs in Nederland verskyn het, van die hand van E. Braekman & E. de Boer (reds.), *Guido de Bres. Zijn leven, zijn belijden,* Utrecht, Uitgeverij Kok, 2011. Dié pragtige werk bevat nie alleen gesaghebbende opstelle oor 'n wye verskeidenheid van historiese temas rondom De Bres self asook rondom die *Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis* se ontstaan nie, maar oor lesenswaardige opstelle oor die verbreiding en nawerking van dié belydenisskrif, in vele dele van die wêreld.

6 Vir 'n inleiding in die destydse debatte oor die aard van die gesag, sien byvoorbeeld D. Nauta, *De verbindende kracht van de belijdenisschriften,* 1969, Kampen: J H Kok. Vir 'n deeglike en 'n meer omvattende perspektief op die gesag van geloofsbelydenisse en belydenisskrifte as net die streng Gereformeerde uit Nederlandse kringe, sien J. Pelikan, *Credo,* New Haven: Yale, 2003, veral 245-364. Pelikan formuleer wat hy bestempel as onaanvaarbare alternatiewe skerp maar helder: "A *quia* would seem to imply that loyalty to the teaching of these confessions is tantamount to loyalty to the teaching of Scripture. Critics found this implication concerning the confessions to represent an inherent

Debatte hieroor sou hewig woed in Gereformeerde kringe wêreldwyd.[7] Dit sou ook die resepsie van die *Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis* stempel en uiteraard ook in Suid-Arikaanse geledere telkens weer opvlam en diepe verdelinge vestig en versterk, tot vandag.[8] So sou Berkouwer byvoorbeeld op dié vrae ingaan in sy "Vragen rondom die belijdenis" (1963)[9] en A.J. (Andries) Venter sou sy argumente plaaslik benut in *Kerk en Belydenis* (1965) in die reeks "Die Stryd om die Kerk."[10] Dit gaan om "die totale struktuur," "die sentrale bedoeling," "sentrale motiewe," "beslissende grondmotiewe," "die diepste intensie," "die skopus," "die Bybelse lig wat deur die belydenis heen straal" – met al dié uitdrukkings soek Berkouwer om te sê waarin ware trou aan belydenisskrifte eintlik bestaan, in onderskeid van wat hy beskryf as "notariële" of "tekstualistiese" opvattinge.

Waarskynlik sal vele vandag ten minste in beginsel saamstem (al bied dit nog geen maklike rigsnoer in konkrete debatte nie) dat sulke belydenisse nie a-historiese, tyd- en kontekslose dokumente met ewige en finale formulerings is nie. Hulle inhoud – en daarmee hul blywende getuienis en krag – lê eerder in hulle strekking, religieuse motiewe, geestelike beslissings, in die insigte in die evangelie wat hulle verwoord, die diepe oortuigings wat hulle bely téénoor misleidende oortuigings in die lug. W.D. (Willie) Jonker praat in *Bevrydende Waarheid* (1994) van "swaartepunte" – óók in die *Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis*.[11]

---

contradiction with the principle of *sola Scriptura* ... Did the Lutheran *quia*-subscription ... (and the Reformed equivalents of such subscription ...) smuggle the authority of the tradition back in – even when the tradition was the doctrine that only Scripture, and not tradition, was to be the authority? The reply to this objection was that a confessional subscription *quatenus* was meaningless and unenforceable. It provided only an illusory protection ... Subscribing to the creed only 'to the extent that' it agreed with Scripture carried with it no specification of just what that extent was. After all, as the rhetorical argument put it, a Christian could subscribe even to the Qur'ān to the extent that it harmonized with the Bible ... The other theological question ... is generically related to it: Does subscription to a creed or confession extend only to the doctrines stated in it, or also to other matters, to its historical, political, scientific, and moral judgments, and above all to its interpretations of specific passages of the Bible? Once again, the alternatives could be put in ways that were equally unpalatable," 271-272. Presies hierdie tipe alternatiewe en hierdie soort debatte sou ook in Suid-Afrikaanse kringe gevoer word rondom die *Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis.*

7 Besonder interessant met die oog op die Suid-Afrikaanse debatte, sien byvoorbeeld H. Berkhof, "Die toekoms van die Gerformeerde konfessie," *Pro Veritate* 1964/6, 1-2; asook W.D. Jonker, "Die moderne belydenisbeweging in Suid-Afrika – en Calvyn," *In die Skriflig,* 1993, 27 (4), 443-461 en veral die oorwoë W.D. Jonker, *Bevrydende waarheid.* Wellington: Hugenote-Uitgewers, 1994.

8 Sien byvoorbeeld die bydraes wat versamel is in H.L. Bosman et al (reds.), *Die Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis – Ontstaan, Skrifgebruik en Gebruik,* Pretoria, UNISA, 1987. Dit was die produk van 'n navorsingsprojek wat gefokus het op die Skrifgebruik in die *Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis,* maar in die praktyk oor breër gewerk het en ook historiese bydraes en selfs empiriese resultate ingesluit het. Verder ook J. Buitendach, "Die belydenis van die kerk," *Acta Theologica.Supplementum 3. Essentialia et Hodierna,* 2002, 17-34 ; asook die werk van S.A. Strauss, byvoorbeeld in sy "Die aktualiteit van die NGB na vierhonderd vyf en twintig jaar," *Fax Theologica* 1986/2, 53-68; "Riglyne vir die etiek in die Drie Formuliere van Eenheid," in *Waar die paaie saamwoon,* opgedra aan P W Buys, Potchefstroom: Teologiese Publikasies, 131-145; en "John Calvin and the Belgic Confession," *In die Skriflig* 1983/4, 501-517.

9 In sy epogmakende bydrae getitel "Vragen rondom die belijdenis" behandel Berkouwer byvoorbeeld temas soos die waarheid, die geldigheid en die betekenis van die belydenis, en in verband daarmee dan hulle Skriftuurlike karakter, hulle menslike aard, die sogenaamde onderskeid tussen inhoud en vorm, en die vraag wat trou aan die belydenis werklik beteken G.C. Berkouwer, 1963. Vragen rondom die belijdenis, *GTT* 63, 1-41.

10 Venter, A. J. *Kerk en belydenis,* Potchefstroom: Die Evangelis, s.j. Venter sluit ook direk aan by die artikel en die formuleringe van Berkouwer.

11 W.D. Jonker, *Bevrydende Waarheid. Die Karakter van die Gereformeerde Belydenis,* Wellington,

3. TEOLOGIESE INHOUD, WIRKUNGSGESCHICHTE EN BLYWENDE RELEVANSIE

In die derde plek beteken dit dat belydenisskrifte roep om *Wirkungsgeschichte*, lewende tradisie, 'n dinamiese geskiedenis van resepsie, uitleg, toeëiening en uitlewing. Trou aan die tradisie bestaan nie daarin dat formulerings bloot herhaal word nie. Erken van gesag bestaan nie in blinde weiering om verder te worstel oor hedendaagse uitdagings nie. Lojaliteit vra juis voortgaande Skrifondersoek, teologiese arbeid, soeke saam met die heiliges om die waarheid steeds beter te ken.

Wat die *Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis* betref word dié noodsaak aan voortdurende kritiese omgang met die destydse voorveronderstellings, heersende lewensbeskouinge, stand van eksegetiese en teologiese kennis en beskikbare konseptuele raamwerke byvoorbeeld goed geïllustreer aan die hand van artikel 36 se opvattinge oor staat en kerk. Die relevansie vandag kan nie bloot daarin bestaan dat ons blindelings herhaal en aanvaar alles wat daarin staan nie. Egte trou vra ook om kritiese omgang met die tradisie self en met herkenning van toevallighede wat nie wesenlik tot die tradisie self behoort nie.[12]

Hugenote-Uitgewers, 1994. Hy bespreek die drie sogenaamde Formuliere van Eenheid, te wete die *Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis,* die *Heidelbergse Kategismus* en die *Dordtse Leerreëls,* en in 'n laaste hoofstuk oor Gereformeerde belydenis vandag situeer hy *Barmen* en *Belhar* binne wat hy beskryf as 'n hedendaagse belydenisbeweging. As hy die *Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis* se swaartepunte bespreek, behandel hy agtereenvolgens die leer van die Heilige Skrif, die oud-kerklike dogma wat gehandhaaf word, die radikale verdorwenheid wat geleer word, die weg van verlossing wat beskryf word, die kerklike en geloofspraktyke wat daaruit afgelei word, die ekklesiologie en sakramentologie wat daaruit volg (en hy bestee veel aandag aan die siening van die kerk), asook die sieninge van kerk en staat en die laaste oordeel wat gehuldig word, 55-91.

12 Oor Artikel 36 se aktuele belang is byvoorbeeld so onlangs as 2010 'n doktorale proefskrif by Potchefstroom geskryf, sien D.F. Muller, *Die roeping van Suid-Afrikaanse owerhede binne 'n grondwetlike demokrasie in die lig van artikel 36 van die Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis,* Potchefstroom, November 2010, volledig beskikbaaar op die internet, by http://dspace.nwu.ac.za/handle/10394/4395. Oor dieselfde tema, byvoorbeeld ook D.C.S. van der Merwe, 'Die verandering van artikel 36 van die NGB in Nederland in 1905: progressie of regressie?,' *In die Skriflig* 3 (11), 1969, 1-64; J.M. Vorster, 'Godsdiensvryheid in 'n toekomstige Suid-Afrika in die lig van artikel 36 van die Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis', *In die Skriflig* 27 (3), 1993, 307-321; C.F.C. Coetzee, 'Godsdiensvryheid in die lig van artikel 36 NGB', *NGTT* 47 (1&2), 2006, 143-157; P. Fourie, 'Godsdiensvryheid in die ban van NGB Art 36 – seën of vloek?', *NGTT* 47 (1&2), 2006, 158-172. Geleerdes het al meermale aangetoon hoe filosofiese en politieke gedagtes geskoei op Artikel 36 bygedra het tot die fundering van apartheid, deur religieuse begronding te bied vir die selfverstaan van 'n sogenaamde Christelik-nasionale regering en die eksklusiewe en onderdrukkende ideologie en beleid wat daaruit gevloei het. Só was daar later ook, in die vroeë 1980s, 'n dramatiese oomblik toe 193 predikante van die drie wit Afrikaans-sprekende Gereformeerde kerke 'n publieke getuienis gepubliseer het waarin hulle die destydse nuwe konsep grondwet verwerp het, met die argument, gebaseer op Artikel 36, dat hulle as Christene nie politieke mag kan deel met bevolkingsgroepe (volkere of rasse) wat potensieel mense kon insluit wat nie gelowiges is nie. Die destydse insluiting, al was dit in twee afsonderlike, eie huise van die parlement, van mense wat onderskeidelik as Kleurling en Indiër geklassifiseer was in terme van die apartheidswetgewing, was gevolglik vir hulle in stryd met hulle geloof en belydenis: 'Ons bely saam met die Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis Artikel 36 dat die staat 'n verantwoordelikheid het om sorg te dra dat die grondslae van die Christelike samelewing nie ondermyn word nie. Dit maak magsdeling met groepe wat die Bybelse grondwaardes verwerp, prinsipieel onmoontlik.' In die kritiek op dié soort argument is egter eweneens van Artikel 36 gebruik gemaak. Vir kritiese reaksies teen dié soort gebruik van Artikel 36, sien byvoorbeeld W.D. Jonker, "Die koningskap van Christus en die staat in 'n godsdienstig-pluralistiese land," *Scriptura* 12, 1984, 1-16; asook W.P. Esterhuyse, "Respons op "Die koningskap van Christus en die staat in 'n godsdienstig-pluralistiese land'," *Scriptura* 12, 1984, 16-19. Die konflik oor apartheid was dus reeds ook in dié baie spesifieke sin 'n konflik tussen twee uitleg-geskiedenisse van die *Nederlandse*

Die saak van die blywende relevansie van 'n tradisie is egter ingewikkelder. Volgens 'n bekende opvatting is daar ten diepste net enkele dwaalleringe wat deur die eeue telkens weer in verskillende gedaantes herhaal – byvoorbeeld gnostiese motiewe. In die mate dat dit waar sou wees, is 'n eerste vraag rondom die blywende relevansie van belydenisskrifte dus een van onderskeidingsvermoë, primêr een van herkenning. Herken ons nog in ons tyd en in nuwe gedaantes dieselfde versoekinge waarteen die belydenisse destyds verwoord is? Herken ons nuwe woordvoerders en gemeenskappe waarin dieselfde verleidinge teenswoordig beliggaam word – en is ons steeds bereid om hulle teen te staan, dalk op nuwe maniere, miskien helderder uitgespel as destyds (soos wat die *Dordtse Leerreëls* nodig geag is om standpunte reeds in die *Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis* ingeneem nóg duideliker te bely?). In Suid-Afrika was daar telkens oomblikke waarin posisies en praktyke op dié manier in die naam van die *Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis* krities gekonfronteer is.[13]

In beginsel is dit boonop moontlik dat daar wél nuwe uitdagings kan ontstaan, nuwe dwaalleringe, wat die evangelie verkondig op wyses wat deur ander as in stryd met die Woord geag word. Die tradisie ken so 'n oomblik as *status confessionis*, waarin nie die inhoud van bestaande belydenisse op die spel is nie, maar die evangelie self – en die geloofwaardige verkondiging of uitlewing daarvan. As Gereformeerdes in sulke oomblikke oordeel dat hulle op die mond geslaan is en nuut moet bely, is dit geen mosie van wantroue in bestaande belydenisskrifte, asof dié nie meer geldend en relevant sou wees nie, maar bloot die erkenning dat in 'n lewende tradisie alles nooit finaal uitgespreek kan word nie.[14]

Die saak is egter nóg ingewikkelder, omdat daar nóg moontlikhede bestaan. Dis immers ook denkbaar dat gelowiges tot die oortuiging kan kom dat hulle juis wat die grondmotiewe van die belydenis betref dit nie langer meer eens is met hul eie tradisie nie. Dis moontlik dat hulle op grond van nuwe insigte en oortuigings verplig voel om innerlik afskeid te neem van die diepste grondslae van die tradisie self.

Daarmee word 'n laaste moontlikheid egter duidelik – en die saak selfs nóg meer dramaties. Dis immers ook moontlik dat ons met ons hedendaagse insigte en oortuigings kan dwaal – en ten ónregte kan oordeel dat die tradisie verkeerd is. Dis immers voorstelbaar dat ons onsself – ten

---

Geloofsbelydenis. Die merkwaardige aan die verhaal was immers dat swart Gereformeerde gelowiges nie hulle rug op die tradisie en die belydenisse gekeer het omdat dié benut was om hulle uit te sluit en te onderdruk nie, maar omgekeerd hulle juis óp die tradisie beroep het teen (hierdie uitleg van) die tradisie. Hulle het die Gereformeerde tradisie, insluitende die *Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis,* toegeëien as hulle eie.

13 Verskeie bekende Suid-Afrikaanse Gereformeerde teoloë het meermale oor belydenisskrifte en die Gereformeerde belydenistradisie nagedink en geskryf, ook in werke wat dikwels op kritiese tye 'n verskil sou maak, sien byvoorbeeld J.J.F. Durand, "'n Belydenis – was dit werklik nodig?," en "Belhar – Krisispunt vir die NG Kerke," albei in G.D. Cloete & D.J. Smit (reds.), *'n Oomblik van waarheid,* Kaapstad, Tafelberg, 1984, 39-48, 123-134; A.A. Boesak, *Black and Reformed. Apartheid, liberation and the Calvinist tradition,* Maryknoll, Orbis, 1984; G.D. Cloete, "Galatians 2:15-21 and the Belhar Confession (1986) in dialogue," in *Living Theology,* eds. L.D. Hansen, N.N. Koopman & R. Vosloo, Wellington, Bible Media, 2011, 277-291; H.R. Botman, "Gereformeerdheid en die Belydenis van Belhar?'," *Vraagtekens oor Gereformeerdheid?,* red. W.A. Boesak & P.J.A Fourie, Belhar, LUS, 1998, 94-11; R.S. Tshaka, "Confessional theology as belligerently public theology – How confessional theology relates to notions of Africanness and Reformedness," in *Living Theology,* eds. L.D. Hansen, N.N. Koopman & R. Vosloo, Wellington, Bible Media, 2011, 292-304.

14 Sien hieroor byvoorbeeld D.J. Smit, "A *status confessionis* in South Africa?", *JTSA* 1984/47, 21-46, asook die gesaghebbende studies van U. Möller, "Status confessionis? Confessing our faith in the context of economic injustice," *Reformed World,* 1996, 46/3, 138-144; asook in sy vroeëre omvangryke studie *Im Prozeß des Bekennens.* Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1999, wat almal goed bekend is in Suid-Afrikaanse kringe.

onregte – skaar aan die kant van dié teen wie die belydenis destyds uitgespreek is. Om dié rede pas 'n self-kritiese gesindheid ons – presies op dié punte waar ons meen om van die belydenis se teologiese inhoud te verskil en afstand te neem. In sulke situasies is die ingewikkelde vereiste dat ons teen ons eie sekerhede in sal bly huiwer om tóg eers te vra of daar nie dalk wysheid van oordeel in die tradisie verskuil lê wat ons tans nog nie insien, maar wat ons dalk moet waak om nie te maklik prys te gee nie.

Kortom, die vrae van trou aan belydenisskrifte en hul blywende relevansie is kompleks. Om saam te vat, wat leer Skrif en teologie ons vandag, wat weet óns, dalk béter? Wat is daar in die *Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis* aan historiese toevallighede, aan destydse veronderstellings wat ons nie meer só deel nie? Watter gedaantes neem die dwaalleer wat daar afgewys word in ons dag aan, teen welke hedendaagse misleiding wil die *Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis* se grondmotiewe ons dalk waarsku? Herken ons hulle, kan ons hulle ontmasker? Is dit dalk nodig dat ons oor sommige van hulle méér sal sê, duideliker sal praat? Of is daar vandag nuwe versoekinge, gestaltes waarin die evangelie ten onregte verkondig word, wat vra om nuut te bely? Is ons dalk op punte oortuig dat die *Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis* eintlik dwaal en dat ánder religieuse sieninge en strominge gelyk het, sodat ons ter wille van eerlikheid dit liewer openlik moet erken? Of behoort ons self-krities te vra of die *Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis* nie tóg dalk iets sien wat ons tans nog nie begryp nie, aangesien dit óns insigte mag wees wat te kort skiet?

Dis alles te illustreer aan die hand van die *Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis*. Die *Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis* volg volgens Jonker die sogenaamde teologiese struktuur, die volgorde van God (artikels 1-11), Vader (12-17), Seun (18-21) en Heilige Gees (22-37). Veralgemenend (en met risiko van oor-vereenvoudiging) verwoord die eerste twee dele oor God die Vader asook die derde deel oor God die Seun redelik tradisionele leringe (alhoewel op talle punte destyds ook omstrede, was dit meesal nie die werklik kerk-verdelende faktore nie), en is die vierde deel oor die Gees die deel met die mees omstrede teologiese en die destyds verdelende beslissings. Anders gestel, die retoriese strategie was breedweg om die owerstes te oortuig van hulle trou aan die algemene Christelike leer (grootliks dele een tot drie) en hulle te onderskei van die Anabaptiste (grotendeels deel vier).[15]

Met die struktuur van die *Belydenis* van agter beskou, roep dit reeds vele vrae op oor die implikasies van die teologiese inhoud van die *Belydenis* in Suid-Afrikaanse kerklike en spesifiek Gereformeerde kringe vandag. Hoe staan ons (byvoorbeeld) vandag wat betref die *Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis* se sieninge van die werklike teenwoordigheid van Christus in die sakramente en van die kerk; van die heil in Christus; van ons totale verdorwenheid, Gods voorsienigheid en dubbele Godskennis; van die Triniteit? Elk van dié temas is vandag hoogs omstrede en die kritiese vraag is in welke mate die *Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis* bydra om ons denke en geloof hier plaaslik te help oriënteer, of nie.

---

15 Hierdie retoriese bedoelinge en strategie word byvoorbeeld duidelik uitgespel in die aangrypende begeleidende brief, gerig aan Koning Philips II van Spanje; vir die oorspronklike tekste daarvan, sien Bakhuizen van den Brink, *De Nederlandse Belijdenisschriften*, 62-69. Dit begin by voorbaat al direk met woorde wat duidelik dié soort strekking dra: "Door middel van deze brief willen wij U op de hoogte stellen van het lijden van Uw volk. Graag hadden wij ons persoonlijk bij U verdedigd tegen de beschuldigingen die men tegen ons inbrengt. Onze vijanden hebben echter zoveel valse aanklachten bij U ingediend, dat wij de kans niet krijgen voor U te verschijnen om onze zaak te bepleiten. Wij worden zelfs verbannen, vermoord en verbrand. Nergens zijn we veilig. Daarom vragen wij U of U naar onze klachten wilt luisteren."

4. TEN SLOTTE: TEOLOGIESE INHOUD AS BEVRYDENDE WAARHEID

In dié lig is dit tog merkwaardig dat en hoe die teologiese inhoud van belydenisskrifte op 'n dag êrens vir gelowiges in dié tradisies opnuut soveel betekenis kan kry dat hulle dit inderdaad as "bevrydende waarheid" belewe. Dit het met die *Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis* gebeur tydens die ontstaan van die *Belydenis van Belhar* (1982/1986).[16] Op vele maniere kan die sleutel rol van die *Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis* in dié geskiedenis aangetoon word.[17]

Dit word *eerstens* duidelik uit die wyse waarop die *Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis* die *daad* van belydenis direk geïnspireer het – byvoorbeeld in die self-verstaan van die 1982-Sinode oor wat hulle aan die doen was,[18] in die beslissende rol van 1 Petrus 3:15-16 sowel in die *Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis* as in die Sinode se besluite,[19] asook in die feit, die styl en die strekking van die

---

16 Vir die geskiedenis en die inhoud van die *Belydenis van Belhar,* sien byvoorbeeld ook, benewens Cloete & Smit, J.G. Botha & P.J. Naudé, *Goeie nuus om te bely,* Wellington, Bybel-Media, 2010 (English translation, *Good news to confess,* Wellington, Bible Media, 2010); Botha & Naudé, *Op weg met Belhar. Goeie nuus vir gister, vandag en môre,* Pretoria, Van Schaik, 1998; and P.J. Naudé, *Neither Calendar nor Clock. Perspectives on the Belhar Confession,* Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2010.

17 Sien byvoorbeeld die Belgiese publikasie *De Belijdenis van Belhar en haar betekenis voor ons,* Informatie- en bezinningsmateriaal voor de kerken van de Verenigde Protestantse Kerk in België (ook in Frans), 2000. Uiteraard was dit nie die enigste invloed agter die *Belydenis van Belhar* nie. Verskeie ander trajekte en tradisies kan natuurlik ook onderskei en meer uitvoerig aangedui word. So is daar onder andere byvoorbeeld ook die invloed van die gebeure rondom die *Teologiese Verklaring van Barmen;* sien daarvoor onder andere N.J. Horn, 'From Barmen to Belhar and Kairos', *On reading Karl Barth in South Africa,* ed. C. Villa-Vicencio, Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1988, 105-120; asook D.J. Smit, 'Barmen and Belhar in conversation – A South African perspective', *NGTT* 47, 1&2, 291-302. Vir die invloed van Karl Barth, sien byvoorbeeld P.J. Naudé, *Neither Calendar nor Clock,* 77-103. Vir die belangrike invloed van ontwikkelinge binne die geledere van die destydse beweging binne die Gereformeerde kerke bekend as die Belydende Kring, sien byvoorbeeld J.N.J. (Klippies) Kritzinger, 'Celebrating communal authorship: the Theological Declaration of the Belydende Kring (1979) and the Belhar Confession', *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* Vol 36, Supplement, July 2010, internet http://uir.unisa.ac.za/handle/10500/4600. Ook verskeie ander invloede kan egter onderskei en aangetoon word.

18 In die periode direk ná die aanvaarding van die konsep belydenis van Belhar in 1982 is dié konsep in uitvoering van die besluit oraloor in die destydse NGSK bespreek, in gemeentes en ringe. Tydens dié geleenthede het prof. Gustav Bam, die dosent in Praktiese Teologie aan die Universiteit van Wes-Kaapland wat as amptelike adviseur die oorspronklike suggestie in die Sinode gelaat het dat méér dalk nodig was as slegs die verklaring van 'n *status confessionis,* dikwels in gemeentes gepreek aan die hand van 1 Pet 3:15-17. Een weergawe van dié preke, met die tema "Gereed om 'n antwoord te gee" is gepubliseer in die amptelike versameling van preke oor *Belhar* wat deur die Sinode gepubliseer en versprei is, bekend as *Eenheid, Versoening, Geregtigheid. Preke rondom die Belydenis van Belhar,* Belhar, LUS, Sinodale Kommissie vir Publikasie en Kommunikasie van die NGSK, 1988, 15-19.

19 Op die buiteblaaie van die oorspronklike weergawes van die *Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis* was dit naamlik die Bybelgedeelte wat aangehaal en afgedruk was, elke keer weer en in die verskillende tale. Aan die einde van die lang voorwoord, in die vorm van 'n begeleidende brief aan Koning Philip, waarin verduidelik en gemotiveer word wat hulle aan die doen was en waarom,is dit een van die vyf Bybelgedeeltes wat aangehaal word, waarin "gelowiges deur die Nuwe Testament vermaan word om belydenis van hulle geloof voor die mense te gee." Dit was duidelik dié teks in die lig waarvan die oorspronklike skrywers hulle eie optrede en bedoelinge verstaan het. Presies dieselfde het gegeld tydens die Sinodes van die NGSK waartydens hierdie besluite geneem is. Só het die heel eerste kommissie al hulle verslag geopen met die woorde: "U kommissie het in die uitvoering van sy taak 1 Pet 3:15-16 as rigsnoer geneem: 'In julle harte moet daar net 'n heilige eerbied wees vir Christus die Here. Wees altyd bereid om 'n antwoord te gee aan elkeen wat van julle 'n verduideliking eis oor die hoop wat in julle is. Maar doen dit met beskeidenheid en met eerbied vir God. Sorg dat julle gewete skoon bly',", *Handelinge van die Drie-en-Twintigste Vergadering van die Hoogeerwaarde Sinode van die Nederduitse*

Begeleidende Brief.[20]

Dit word *tweedens* duidelik uit die wyse waarop die *Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis* die *inhoud* van die *Belhar* stempel – by uitstek wat betref die *Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis* se ekklesiologie. In die dekade lange debatte wat *Belhar* vooraf gegaan het sou teoloë soos Jonker[21] en J.J.F. (Jaap) Durand[22] hulle telkens uitdruklik op artikels 27-29 van die *Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis* beroep in stryd met heersende opvattinge oor die volkskerk en die pluriformiteit van kerke.[23]

Gereformeerde Sendingkerk in Suid-Afrika op 22 September tot 6 Oktober 1982 in Belhar, G.10.3, Bylae Nr. 10.3, punt 1, 753. Verder aan in dieselfde verslag word dan besluit "dat die Begeleidende Brief deurgaans saam met die Belydenis sal deurgegee word in die besonder aan die kerkrade en ringe; dat die Sinode uitdruklik verklaar, nie alleen dat hy die belydenis aanvaar nie, maar dat hy dit suiwer en alleen doen in die gees en met die verwagting van 1 Pet 3:15-17 en van die begeleidende brief," *Handelinge van die Drie-en-Twintigste Vergadering van die Hoogeerwaarde Sinode van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Sendingkerk in Suid-Afrika op 22 September tot 6 Oktober 1982 in Belhar,* G.10.3, Bylae Nr. 10.3, punte 6 & 7, 753.

20 Vir die volle teks van die *Begeleidende Brief,* sien die amptelike webwerf van die VGKSA, by http://www.vgksa.org.za/documents/Belydenis%20van%20Belhar.pdf Vir 'n meer uitvoerige bespreking van die inhoud en strekking van die Brief, sien byvoorbeeld D.J. Smit, '"No other motives would give us the right"' – Reflections on contextuality from a Reformed perspective', *Studies in Reformed Theology 8. Christian Identity in Cross-Cultural Perspective,* eds. M.E. Brinkman & D. van Keulen, Zoetermeer: Meinema, 2003, 130-159. Weer eens kan daar geen twyfel oor bestaan dat hulle met dié gees bedoel het om te handel in die gees van die oorspronklike begeleidende brief by die *Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis* nie.

21 Vir Jonker, sien byvoorbeeld veral W.D. Jonker, *Aandag vir die kerk,* Potchefstroom, Die Evangelis, 1965; *Om die regering van Christus in sy kerk*, Pretoria, Unisa, 1965; *Die Sendingbepalinge van die Ned. Geref. Kerk van Transvaal,* Potchefstroom, Studie-groep kerk en Wêreld, 1962. Hy argumenteer in groot detail met behulp van die *Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis* se artikels oor die kerk vir sigbare kerkeenheid en teen die destydse kerkordelike reëlings en praktyke. Sien byvoorbeeld net sy bespreking by *Aandag vir die kerk,* 26-30.

22 Vir Durand, sien byvoorbeeld veral J.J.F. Durand, *Una sancta catholica in sendingperspektief,* Amsterdam, Ten Have, 1961; 'Calvyn as ekumeniese gees', *NGTT* 1964, 167-182; 'Ware ekumenisiteit – die Gereformeerde Vaders', *Die Ekumene,* reds. W.A. Landman et al, Stellenbosch, Kosmo-Uitgewery, 1964, 24-39 (met bladsye 38-39 uitdruklik gewy aan die *Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis,* artikels 27-29); 'Kerkverband – wese of welwese?', *Die eenheid van die kerk,* reds. P. Meiring & H.I. Lederle, Kaapstad: Tafelberg, 1979, 73-77.

23 Alreeds in die inleiding van *Belhar* is daar duidelike sinspelings op Artikel 27 van die *Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis,* met sommige van die uitdrukkings, maar ook selfs die logika en die volgorde van sekere van die uitsprake wat dieselfde is, alhoewel hierdie oortuigings uiteraard 'n nuwe relevansie vind in die totaal verskillende historiese konteks van die die apartheid ekklesiologie, teologie en samelewing. "Ons glo en bely 'n enige katolieke of algemene kerk, 'n heilige vergadering van almal wat waarlik in Christus glo, wat almal hulle volle saligheid in Jesus Christus verwag en in sy bloed gewas is, geheilig en verseël deur die Heilige Gees. Hierdie kerk was daar van die begin van die wêreld af en sal tot die einde daar wees, want Christus is 'n ewige Koning, wat nooit sonder onderdane kan wees nie. En hierdie heilige kerk word deur God teen die woede van die hele wêreld bewaar, alhoewel dit soms 'n tyd lank baie klein is en dit in die oë van die mense lyk asof dit tot niet gegaan het - soos die Here vir Hom gedurende die gevaarlike tyd onder Agab sewe duisend mense bewaar het wat nie voor Baäl gekniel het nie. Verder is hierdie heilige kerk nie geleë in, gebonde aan of bepaal tot `n sekere plek of sekere persone nie, maar is die oor die hele wêreld versprei en verstrooi. Tog is dit met hart en wil en deur die krag van die geloof in een en dieselfde Gees saamgevoeg en verenig." Interessant genoeg, in 'n bydrae wat geskryf is ter huldiging van Jaap Durand verwys J.N.J. (Klippies) Kritzinger juis na die oortuiging in die inleiding van *Belhar* dat die Drieënige God die kerk sal bewaar en versorg "tot aan die einde toe" en skryf dit daaraan toe dat Durand, wat 'n lid was van die kommissie wat die konsep belydenis geformuleer het, '"n persoon van goeie hoop" is. Die woorde én die oortuiging wat hier bely word spruit uiteraard reeds uit die woorde van Artikel 27 van die *Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis* ("en sal tot die einde daar wees"), wat

Die neerslag van dié bydraes – en uiteraard van vele ander – is duidelik te sien in die inleiding van *Belhar* en die eerste artikel oor die eenheid van die kerk[24]. Op die heel eerste en voorlopige handgeskrewe ontwerp van *Belhar* staan verwysings na die betrokke gedeeltes in die *Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis* (en die *Heidelbergse Kategismus*) uitdruklik bo-aan.[25]

Dit word *derdens* duidelik uit die wyse waarop die *Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis* die *gees* van Belhar motiveer, die vaste voorneme om dié oortuigings te bely en uit te leef ondanks verset

op hulle beurt weer berus op bybelse beloftes; sien J.N.J. Kritzinger, 'Jaap Durand – man of good hope', *Discerning God's justice in church, society and academy,* eds. E. Conradie & C. Lombard, Stellenbosch, Sun Press, 2009, 209-210.

24 In Artikel 29, by voorbeeld, word 'n onderskeid gemaak tussen ware en valse vorme van die kerk en hierdie onderskeiding maak dit moontlik en soms ook – met verwysing na 'n *status confessionis* – nodig om hierdie soort onderskeiding aan te bring, oftewel, in die woorde van die *Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis,* om te vra of die evangelie suiwer gepreek en gehoor en die sakramenete korrek bedien en gevier word, of wanneer sommige in die kerk nie dalk vir hulleself meer gesag probeer toeëien as vir die Woord van God nie: "Ons glo dat ons sorgvuldig en met groot oplettendheid uit die Woord van God behoort te onderskei watter kerk die ware kerk is, aangesien al die sektes wat daar vandag in die wêreld is, hulle ten onregte die naam kerk toeëien. Ons praat hier nie van die huigelaars wat in die kerk met die goeies vermeng is en tog nie aan die kerk behoort nie alhoewel hulle uiterlik daarin is; maar ons sê dat 'n mens die liggaam en die gemeenskap van die ware kerk moet onderskei van al die sektes wat beweer dat hulle die kerk is. Die kenmerke waaraan ons die ware kerk kan uitken, is die volgende: Wanneer die kerk die evangelie suiwer preek, die sakramente suiwer bedien soos Christus dit ingestel het en die kerklike tug gebruik om die sondes te straf - kortom, wanneer almal hulle ooreenkomstig die suiwere Woord van God gedra, alles wat daarmee in stryd is, verwerp en Jesus Christus as die enigste Hoof erken. Hieraan kan ons met sekerheid die ware kerk uitken, en niemand het die reg om hulle daarvan af te skei nie. Vervolgens, aangaande die lidmate van die kerk: Ons kan hulle uitken aan die kenmerke van die Christene, naamlik hulle geloof dat hulle die enigste Verlosser Jesus Christus aangeneem het en dat hulle daarna die sonde ontvlug, die geregtigheid najaag, die ware God en hulle naaste liefhet, nie na regs of links afwyk nie en hulle sondige natuur met sy werke kruisig. Hiermee sê ons nie dat daar nie nog groot swakheid in hulle is nie; inteendeel, deur die Gees stry hulle juis al die dae van hulle lewe daarteen, terwyl hulle altyd weer hulle toevlug neem tot die bloed, die dood, die lyding en gehoorsaamheid van die Here Jesus Christus, in wie hulle deur die geloof in Hom vergewing van hulle sondes het. *Wat die valse kerk betref: dit skryf aan homself en sy besluit meer mag en gesag toe as aan die Woord van God; dit wil homself nie aan die juk van Christus onderwerp nie; dit bedien die sakramente nie soos Christus dit in sy Woord beveel het nie, maar neem weg en voeg by na eie goeddunke; dit vertrou meer op mense as op Christus, en dit vervolg hulle wat volgens die Woord van God heilig lewe en wat die valse kerk oor sy euwels, gierigheid en afgodery bestraf.* Hierdie twee kerke kan maklik uitgeken en van mekaar onderskei word."

25 Sommige van die oorspronklike handgeskrewe kopieë van die *Belydenis van Belhar* is beskikbaar in die argief van die Verenigende Gereformeerde Kerk in Suider-Afrika in die gebou van die Fakulteit Teologie in Stellenbosch.

en lyding.[26] Dit blyk veral uit die slot se belydenis dat Jesus die Heer is[27] – die invloed van die *Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis* se eie ontstaan en inhoud is hier onmiskenbaar.[28] H.R. (Russel)

---

26 Dié motief is duidelik aanwesig, en nie alleen in die hele gebeure en die dáád van belydenisvorming, mét 'n begeleidende brief, bewus van die verdere teenstand wat dit mag oproep, bo en behalwe die onderdrukking en vervolging wat reeds intens ervaar is nie – immers ook in en tydens die Sinode self, met predikante wat lede van die Sinode was maar skielik sonder verhoor in hegtenis geneem is letterlik tydens die duur van die sitting. Die motief word naamlik ook uitdruklik verwoord in die slot van *Belhar,* as gesê word: "Ons glo dat die kerk geroep word om dit alles te bely en te doen, in gehoorsaamheid aan Jesus Christus, sy enigste Hoof, al sou ook die owerhede en verordeninge van mense daarteen wees en al sou straf en lyding daaraan verbonde wees. Jesus is die Heer." Die Begeleidende Brief by die *Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis* verwoord dwarsdeur dieselfde gees en toon, byvoorbeeld as gesê word: "U mag, mijnheer de koning, als U ons na het aanhoren van onze klachten schuldig bevindt, de brandstapels en andere straffen in Uw koninkrijk vermeerderen … Wij danken echter onze God dat het bloed van onze broeders, voor onze zaak, of liever voor de zaak van Jezus Christus vergoten, tot God roept. De verbanningen, gevangenisstraffen, pijnbanken, verbeurdverklaringen, martelingen en andere verdrukkingen bewijzen wat dat het ons niet om onszelf te doen is. Wij zouden het immers veel gemakkelijker kunnen hebben, als wij deze leer niet verdedigden. Wij vrezen echter God, verschrikt door het dreigende woord van Jezus Christus, die zegt dat Hij ons verloochenen zal voor God Zijn Vader, als wij Hem voor de mensen verloochenen. Omdat wij weten dat wie Christus wil volgen, zijn kruis op moet nemen en zichzelf moet verloochenen, ondergaan wij al deze martelingen geduldig … Men vervolgt ons niet alleen als vijanden van U en van de samenleving, maar ook als vijanden van God en van Zijn kerk. Daarom vragen wij U of U ons wilt beoordelen naar onze geloofsbelijdenis die wij U hierbij anbieden. Wij zijn bereid deze belijdenis zonodig met ons eigen bloed te bekrachtigen. Hopelijk zult U erkennen dat men ons ten onrechte scheurmakers, opstandelingen en ketters noemt. Want wij belijden niet alleen de hoofdpunten van het christelijke geloof, vervat in de apostolische geloofsbelijdenis, maar de gehele leer die Jezus Christus ons geopenbaard heeft tot leven, gerechtigheid en behoud ... Wij beven bij deze woorden en schrikken van de dreigementen van hen die macht hebben ons lichaam te verbranden. Maar anderzijds horen wij de apostel zeggen: Ook al zouden wij, of een engel uit de hemel, u een Evangelie verkondigen, afwijkend van wat wij u verkondigd hebben, die zij vervloekt!"

27 Trouens, dis moontlik om te argumenteer, soos wat vele wel doen, insluitende Jaroslav Pelikan in sy gesaghebbende *Credo,* New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002, byvoorbeeld 59 e.v., dat die belydenis dat Jesus die Heer is die oer-belydenis agter álle Christelike geloofsbelydenisse is, die eintlike "inhoud" van die belydenis. Dié soort aanspraak word telkens gemaak met beroep op die ryk-geskakeerde maniere waarop die oer-belydenis dat Jesus Christus die Heer is in die vroeë kerk en in die Nuwe Testamentiese geskrifte gefunksioneer het. Aanvanklik was dit 'n roemende reaksie op die opstanding van Jesus Christus, 'n belydenis van hulle diepste geloof dat Hy self hulle Heer en God is. Daarmee het dit egter dadelik 'n hermeneutiese funksie begin vervul, en het hulle die Ou Testamentiese boeke, hulle geloofsdokumente, begin lees met dié bril, met die oortuiging dat Hy die Here van die skepping en die geskiedenis was en is, en met die verwagting dat hierdie boeke van Hóm getuig. In die Briewe wat geskryf is om die evangelie te verkondig en in die Evangelies wat sou volg om te vertel wie Jesus waarlik is word hierdie oortuiging die inhoud van die vroeg-Christelike verkondiging, prediking en onderrig, soos die preke in Handelinge ook aangrypend laat blyk. God het Hóm Here en Christus gemaak – dís die evangelie en dís hulle prediking. Daarmee word dié evangelie die grondslag van hulle onderlinge eenheid met mekaar, ondanks alle verskille en spanninge, sodat hulle vermaan word om almal te aanvaar wat bely dat Christus die Here is, aangesien niemand dit kan doen buiten die één Heilige Gees wat hulle saambind, ondanks alle verdelinge en agterdog nie. Wie trouens ontken dat Hy die Here is, dat Hy waarlik in die vlees gekom het en aan die kruis gesterf het, is besig met dwaalleer en hang 'n valse evangelie aan, soos die Briewe van Johannes begin aantoon. En teenoor die aansprake van die samelewing, kultuur en magspolitiek en ekonomie dat die keiser heer is bely die vroeë kerk – vrymoedig en moedig, in die openbaar, al kos dit hulle verguising en vervolging – dat Christus die Here is, en daarmee word die belydenis wat aanvanklik net hulle geloof roemend verwoord het tot 'n verreikende politieke aanspraak, wat deur die eeue sou bly weergalm, telkens weer – tot letterlik in die woorde van *Barmen* en *Belhar.*

28 Die verwysing na 1 Pet 3:15 is die heel laaste Bybelse verwysing in die *Belydenis van Belhar.* "Ons

Botman het onlangs gewys op die belang van dié oortuiging as sleutel tot *Belhar*.[29] Dié verbande word byvoorbeeld dramaties verwoord in die slotwoorde van Allan Boesak se 1981-toespraak voor ABRECSA met die titel "Black and Reformed" (uit die gelyknamige bundel, 1984), as hy doelbewus die destydse optrede dui in die lig van die gees en selfs die letterlike woorde van die *Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis*.

So the confession that Jesus Christ is Lord of my life is not spiritual escapism. It is a confession with profound implications for the whole of life. It is a fundamental theological affirmation of the place of the Christian in this world, and it firmly sets the limits of the powers of this world. It places us within the best tradition of the Christian church through the ages ... It is comfort, but it is more: it is ... quiet, subversive piety ... (I)n this struggle I am inspired by the words of the Belgic Confession: 'The faithful and elect shall be crowned with glory and honor ... and their cause, which is now condemned by many judges and magistrates as heretical and impious, will then be known to the cause of the Son of God.' This, also, is our tradition and is worth fighting for."[30]

---

glo dat die kerk geroep word om dit alles te bely en te doen, in gehoorsaamheid aan Jesus Christus sy enigste Hoof, al sou ook die owerhede en verordeninge van mense daarteen wees en al sou straf en lyding daaraan verbonde wees. Jesus is die Heer. Aan dié enige God, Vader, Seun en Heilige Gees, kom toe eer en heerlikheid in ewigheid," met as Bybelse verwysings in die kantlyn, Efes 4:15-16, Hand 5:29-33, 1 Pet 2:18-25 en 1 Pet 3:15-18. Daar was ook al vroeër in die *Belydenis* verwysings na Artikel 28 van die *Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis,* byvoorbeeld in die geïmpliseerde oortuiging dat afkoms of enige ander toestand geen gelowige uitsluit van lidmaatskap van die kerk nie, asook in die uitdrukking dat die eenheid ook daarin sigbaar word dat gelowiges mekaar dien en onderling opbou volgens hulle onderskeie gawes. In die geheel kan lesers waarskynlik verskillende motiewe uit Artikel 28 van die *Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis* herken in *Belhar*: "Ons glo - aangesien hierdie heilige vergadering 'n versameling is van hulle wat verlos word en daarbuite geen saligheid is nie - dat niemand, wat sy stand en status ook al is, hom in selftevredenheid van hierdie vergadering afsydig mag hou nie; intendeel, almal is verplig om daarby aan te sluit en hulle daarmee te verenig om die eenheid van die kerk te bewaar deur hulle almal - as lede van een en dieselfde liggaam - aan sy leer en tug te onderwerp, die nek onder die juk van Jesus Christus te buig en volgens die gawes wat God aan elkeen gegee het, die broers in die opbou van hulle geloof te dien. En om dit beter te kan doen, is dit volgens die Woord van God die plig van alle gelowiges om hulle af te skei van hulle wat nie aan die kerk behoort nie, en hulle by dié vergadering aan te sluit, waar God dit ook al gevestig het, *selfs al sou regerings en wette van regeerders daarteen wees en daarvoor die dood- of lyfstraf oplê.* Daarom handel almal wat hulle van hierdie ware kerk afskei of nie daarby aansluit nie, in stryd met die bevel van God" (kursief bygevoeg). In die kerklike debatte in Gereformeerde kringe in Suid-Afrika is dikwels beroep gedoen op hierdie artikels uit die NGB deur diégene wat krities was oor die skeiding wat in kerke tussen gelowiges gemaak is op grond van ras.

29 H.R. (Russel) Botman het dié oortuiging verwoord tydens 'n paneelbespreking op 12 Mei 2011 tydens die Sinodesitting van die NG Kerk van die Wes- en Suid-Kaap, volgens 'n berig in die dagblad *Die Burger,* geskryf deur die joernalis Neels Jackson. Dié berig is op die internet toeganklik by http://www.dieburger.com/Suid-Afrika/Nuus/Eenheid-moet-nou-volg-20110512.

30 A.A. Boesak, *Black and Reformed. Apartheid, Liberation, and the Calvinist Tradition,* Maryknoll, Orbis, 1984, 83-99. Dit is sonder meer by enige aandagtige deurlees duidelik waarom die beskrywing van die laaste oordeel in Artikel 37 soveel troos bied aan dié gelowiges wat ly en onregverdig beskulding en behandel word in die geskiedenis en waarom Boesak gevolglik daartoe aangetrokke gevoel het om dié oortuigings toe te eien vir homself en vir sy mede-gelowiges. "Ons glo ten slotte, in ooreenstemming met die Woord van God, dat, wanneer die tyd gekom het wat die Here bepaal het - dié tyd is vir alle skepsels onbekend - en die getal uitverkorenes volledig sal wees, ons Here Jesus Christus met groot heerlikheid en majesteit uit die hemel sal kom, liggaamlik en sigbaar, soos Hy opgevaar het (Hand. 1:11), om Homself as Regter oor die lewendes en dooies aan te kondig, terwyl Hy hierdie ou wêreld aan vuur en vlam sal prysgee om dit te suiwer … (D)an sal die geheime bedrog en huigelary van die mense in die openbaar voor almal oopgevlek word. *Daarom is die gedagte aan hierdie oordeel vir die oortreders en goddeloses met reg ontsettend en skrikwekkend maar vir die vromes en uitverkorenes begeerlik en troosryk. Want dan sal hulle volle verlossing voltooi word, en hulle sal daar die vrugte ontvang van moeite en lyding*

Ongeag van die vraag hoe – dalk waarderend, dalk krities, dalk sinies en skepties – mense ook mag oordeel oor dié hernieude toeëiening van die teologiese inhoud van 'n 16e eeuse belydenis-dokument uit veraf en vreemde lande en tye, bly dié Suid-Afrikaanse storie 'n merkwaardige demonstrasie van die werking van 'n belydenis-tradisie. Die geloofsinhoud kan op 'n dag nuwe aktualiteit en betekenis krt, vir mense in totaal nuwe omstandighede en gekonfronteer met radikaal ander en nuwe vrae. Die merkwaardige van die Suid-Afrikaanse ervaring was boonop dat gelowiges hulle op een en dieselfde tradisie beroep het maar met radikaal teenoorstaande oortuigings. Presies dit was egter immers óók al die geval tydens die ontstaan van die *Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis*. Die eerste figure het hulle op die Christelike evangelie beroep, soos wat hulle dit in daardie historiese oomblik verstaan het, net om te vind dat ander nie dié evangelie op dieselfde wyse verstaan en dieselfde gevolgtrekkings daaruit maak nie, met bloedige en tragiese gevolge. Dis juis hierdie ambiguïteit van die geloof en die belydenis wat ons herdenk in dié dae as ons hier in Suid-Afrikaanse kringe terugdink aan gebeure, figure en dokumente van 450 jaar gelede, ver van hier.

wat hulle gedra het. Hulle onskuld sal deur almal erken word, en hulle sal die verskriklike wraak sien wat God sal voltrek oor die goddeloses wat hulle in hierdie wêreld wreed vervolg, verdruk en gekwel het. Maar die goddeloses sal deur die getuienis van hulle eie gewete tot erkenning van hulle skuld gebring word; hulle sal onsterflik word dog slegs om gepynig te word in die ewige vuur wat vir die duiwel en sy engele voorberei is (Matt. 25:41). Die gelowiges en uitverkorenes, daarenteen, sal met heerlikheid en eer gekroon word. *Die Seun van God sal hulle naam voor God, sy Vader (Matt. 10:32), en sy uitverkore engele bely; alle trane sal van hulle oë afgevee word (Op. 21:4). Dan sal dit bekend word dat hulle saak, wat tans deur baie regters en owerhede as ketters en goddeloos veroordeel word, die saak van die Seun van God is.* En as 'n beloning uit genade sal die Here self hulle so 'n heerlikheid gee as wat die hart van 'n mens nooit kon bedink nie. Daarom verwag ons hierdie groot dag met sterk verlange om die beloftes van God in Jesus Christus, ons Here, ten volle te geniet." Ook na hierdie woorde hoor 'n mens verwysings en sinspelinge in die konklusie van *Belhar.*

Smit, DJ
Stellenbosch University

Trinity, history – and discernment?[1]

ABSTRACT

The paper is an edited version of a public address during a consultation celebrating the life and work of CW (Coenie) Burger. The theme was discernment and this essay reflects on some possible implications of the doctrine of the Trinity for practical discernment in the so-called missional church today. In a first section, a controversial South African incident serves as reminder of the difficulties and dangers involved in claims discerning God's presence and work in human history. Sections two to four successively call to mind three major proposals regarding discernment based on the presence of the living God (Richard Niebuhr), the revelation of God in the Crucified Jesus (Bram van de Beek) and the work of the Triune God (Michael Welker). A final section briefly considers the recent contribution of the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben, who argues that the Christian doctrine of the Trinity indeed provides the only proper background against which to understand Western developments in politics and the economy.

1. RECOGNIZING THE FINGER OF GOD IN HISTORY?

In March 1979 a conference at UNISA focused on "The Meaning of History."[2] Not so much times of transition, these were deeply troubled times of struggle and conflict. The interpretation of history was also a site of struggle – and believers and theologians were all part of these very real struggles. A group of right wing activists from the Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging led by Eugene Terreblanche entered the Senate Hall in full battle dress, attacked, tarred and feathered the respected historian F.A. van Jaarsveld on stage, in front of the shocked scholarly audience, before his lecture on diverse interpretations of the event at Blood River in 1838.

This became the earliest incident for which an amnesty application before the Truth and

---

1 This paper was read during a consultation on the theme "Theology in times of transition. Creating a Continuous Inclusive Conversation, A Celebration of the work of Coenie Burger," at the Hofmeyr Centre, Church Street, Stellenbosch, 23-25 January 2012. Most of the contributions and discussions during the consultation dealt with the theme of "discernment" and the invitation was that this plenary paper should consider possible implications of the doctrine of the Trinity for practical forms of discernment and for so-called missional ecclesiology today. The form of the oral presentation was left unchanged, and only the references were added for purposes of publication. The personal style and content, honouring Coenie Burger, has therefore also been retained.

2 For the collection of papers delivered during the Conference, but without any account on the eventful day, see A. König & H. Keane (eds.), *The Meaning of History,* Pretoria: UNISA, 1980. The literature dedicated to this theme is of course limitless, both in scholarly, literary and popular discourses. Therefore only two studies are mentioned, both because they call attention to the complexity of these questions, in the same way that the present essay attempts to do. The first is the very old but influential and still informative collection of classic perspectives on the theme, edited by the well-known Karl Löwith, *Meaning in history,* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970, with essays working backwards from Burckhardt and Marx to Augustine, Orosius and the Biblical view of history. The second is the late work by the eminent ethicist, mainly from Chicago, James Gustafson, *An examined faith. The grace of self-doubt,* Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2004.

Reconciliation Commission was received. On 10 May 1999 Eugene Terreblance defended their conduct by arguing that it was motivated by their religious convictions, their interpretation of the acts in history of "our God, the Holy Trinity, and the God of Blood River, who brought, who gave us the victory at Blood River." In detail, he described the events at Blood River, interpreting all these detail in the light of the conviction that "it was God, it was not a myth." Asking for amnesty, he refused any apology.

> "I cannot for the sake of this court and simply lip service, say I am sorry because my Master, Jesus from Nazareth, and the Trinity of God was defended by me because my nation was defended by me."[3]

In a significant key note address during the same meeting, the systematic theologian J.J.F. (Jaap) Durand reflected on "God in History – an Unresolved Problem," later also published in Afrikaans, as "Die Vinger van God in die Geskiedenis – 'n Onopgeloste Probleem," to which (then Bishop) Desmond Tutu responded, with approval and enthusiasm.[4] Jaap Durand has been the one theologian in South Africa – as I have argued elsewhere[5] – who took the problem of history more seriously than most, in many ways and in several studies, including his ground-breaking doctoral work on Aquinas in *Heilsgeskiedenis en die dialektiek van syn en denke* (1973).[6]

Durand explained that theological thought since the 20th century can be characterized by the rediscovery of the concept of history in God's revelatory acts. Theologians from different traditions again understood that the God of Israel was in the truest sense the God of history. This includes an awareness that history is open towards the future, being part of this history means expecting the unexpected and risking the new. In biblical language, this openness to the future is emphasized by the conviction that God as the Lord of history is a living God who acts freely and who, although God remains true to Godself and to God's promises, never becomes slave to a kind of blueprint of history. On the contrary, God's actions are free, new, creative and unexpected. God's actions in history are contingent in that they resist formalization and programming.

These convictions, he continued, are not limited to any so-called salvation-history, separate from the everyday experience of so-called universal history, but belong integrally to the biblical view of history. The conviction that history, some way or other through, in partnership with or even in spite of human beings, is written by the finger of God is a premise of faith that follows inevitably for those that accept God's revelation as recorded in the Bible, he argued. However, as he pointed out,

> "this premise creates more problems than it solves with regard to the interpretation of history. Indeed, history is a story written by the finger of God, but do we have the text?

---

3 For the report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission on the amnesty application, see the *Report*, Volume 6, Section 3, Chapter 6, 461-563. For the full verbatim account of the hearing, see TRC Amnesty Hearing 53396 20120120(i).txt, in internet at http://sabctrc.saha.org.za/originals/amntrans/1999/99051011_klk_990510kl.htm

4 J.J.F. Durand, "God in History – an Unresolved Problem," in König & Keane, 171-178, with the response of D. Tutu on 178-181. Also J.J.F. Durand, "Die Vinger van God in die Geskiedenis – 'n Onopgeloste Probleem," in Durand, *Teks binne konteks. Versamelde opstelle oor kerk en politiek,* Teks en Konteks 1, red. D.J. Smit, Bellville: Universiteit van Wes-Kaapland, 1986, 91-99.

5 D.J. Smit, "In die geskiedenis ingegaan," in E. Conradie & C. Lombard (eds.), *Discerning God's Justice in Church, Society and Academy,* Stellenbosch: Sun Press, 131-166.

6 J.J.F. Durand, *Heilsgeskiedenis en die dialektiek van syn en denke,* Stellenbosch: Universiteit, Ongepubliseerde doktorale proefskrif, 1973.

Things are ambiguous or inscrutable. Do we have any assurance that the things we consider to be momentous coincide with those which would be found momentous if God showed us the whole text and commented on it?" (Durand 1980:73).

Already in the Bible itself, this is also the case, he argued. Ambiguity and inscrutability are of course true also of God's history as told in the Bible. So-called bare facts do not have any revelatory character, not even in the Bible. They always have to be interpreted. Although it is God's history, it is at the same time also human history – and one of rebellion and failures.

All such interpretations are, however, also ambiguous, and therefore controversial. Even in cases where God's rule in itself was not questioned, the interpretation of God's presence – already in the Bible itself – was indeed questioned, "the *interpretation* of these events, the presumptuous conclusion that in these events the will of God and God's intention could be *discerned*" (his italics).

"To confess that history is a story written by the finger of God is one thing; to identify, interpret and attach a specific divine meaning to specific parts of that story is quite another matter" (1980:174).

The thrust of Durand's argument then becomes a warning against the widespread and influential tendency in the history of the church to develop some kind of fixed pattern in terms of which faith and theology think that it does indeed become possible to interpret history as God's story and to attach divine meaning to specific parts of that story. This temptation, according to him, is prevalent in many different ways and forms in history and today – in theological movements, figures, systems. However, our trust in our own patterns contradict our own confession of the living God, acting freely in history.

"If we believe in the presence of the living God in history, a God who acts freely and creatively, history can never be a closed circle with a fixed pattern. What we do as a result is to create our own pattern, perhaps not always a total pattern, but at least a pattern comprehensive enough to accommodate the fragments that need interpretation" (1980:174).

The eternal *ordo ad Deum* (of Aquinas) appears on the level of the temporal – and we can recognize and name this divine presence, we can interpret and discern the divine meaning of history, behind the flux and changes, the transformations and transitions of everything contingent and surprising.

Indeed, in recent years, he concluded, a new approach to the problem of God in history seemed to appear in theology. In this new approach the ideas of contingency and an open future do not seem to be in conflict with God's presence in history. The problem is resolved by no longer speaking about God as One who rules the world in transcendent majesty according to a fixed and preconceived plan. God is now rather seen as One who, with human beings as partners, makes history and in a certain sense is part of this historical process. This is an ambiguous development, according to Durand. On the one hand, it reflects something of the biblical message of a living God. On the other hand, there is the acute danger that God could be dissolved in a historical process.

What is certain, for him, is that such a new (and more biblical) approach makes the task of discernment of God's finger in history even more difficult.

"This makes the interpretation of historical events from a theological point of view very difficult. Of course there is a pattern and plan, but not in the sense of a blueprint that we can somehow discover, because God is God's own plan. This fact makes the interpretation of history a hazardous undertaking because we mortal people lack the necessary data. It can also be a dangerous undertaking" (1980:177)[7]

2. DISCERNING?

One of the theologians who struggled like few others with this difficult and dangerous challenge to discern the presence of God in history was the North American Richard Niebuhr.[8] For him, theology precedes ethics. Before asking what we must do, we should ask what is happening, what God is doing. Only then, understanding what is going on and what God is doing, can we ask how we should respond.

But how can we know what God is doing? He answered this question in his classic called *The Meaning of Revelation* (1941), a radical attempt to keep Barth and Troeltsch together in a way that would have a lasting impact on different theological streams, including narrative theology, faith formation studies and responsibility ethics.[9]

In a chapter on "The point of view" he emphasized both our historical relativism (we are conditioned by our socio-historical situation) and our religious relativism (we can speak and think about God only from the point of view of faith in God). Christian theology has no other option but to be 'confessional', i.e. to start "by stating in simple, confessional form what has happened to us in our community, how we came to believe, how we reason about things and what we see from our point of view", or also in his own words "by recalling the story of Christian life and by analyzing what Christians see from their limited point of view in history and in faith" (Niebuhr 1941: 5-31).

This led to his well-known discussion of "The story of our life" (1941:32-66), in which he made the important distinction between "history as seen" and "history as lived" (or "external" and "internal" history). The church has no other way of stating its faith than by telling its own story.

He argued that "the great source of evil in life is the absolutizing of the relative." Christianity faces the continuous temptation of *idolatry,* of "taking something relative for the living God." Normally, this means that Christian faith and the church are seen as instrumental, as necessary for serving other purposes, whether religious, cultural, ethical or political. In his famous study on *Christ and culture* he would later discuss this tendency under the rubric of the "Christ and culture"-position.[10] For the Christian community, argued Niebuhr, the challenge is to find the unity of their life-story in the revelation of the personal, living, one God in the Christ-event. They should be willing

"to regard all events ... as workings of the God who reveals himself and so to trace with piety and disinterestedness, so far as its own fate is concerned, the ways of God in the lives of men. It is necessary for the Christian community, living in faith, to look upon all the events of time and to try to find in them the workings of one mind and will" (1941:63).

---

7 All the references from Durand, "God in History – an Unresolved Problem," 171-178.

8 For Richard Niebuhr and for the following brief discussion, see more fully D.J. Smit, "Theology and the transformation of culture – Niebuhr revisited," in Smit, *Essays in Public Theology. Collected Essays 1,* ed. E. Conradie, Stellenbosch: Sun Media, 2007, 179-210 (for an earlier version, *JTSA,* September 1990, no 72, 9-23. In addition to his major books mentioned there, for eighteen unpublished essays by Niebuhr that were published posthumously, see the collection edited by W.S. Johnson, *H. Richard Niebuhr. Theology, History, and Culture: Major Unpublished Writings,* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996.

9 For the following argument and most of the references, see H. R. Niebuhr, *The Meaning of Revelation,* New York: Harper & Row, 1941.

10 H. R. Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture,* New York: Harper & Row, 1951.

These thoughts were powerfully expressed in *Radical Monotheism and Western Culture,* where he contrasted henotheism and polytheism with radical monotheism.[11] It is from these sinful, divisive, and destructive interpretations of society and culture that the revelation of the One God can liberate us.

The crucial question, therefore, becomes how to use this view of revelation in interpreting history, concrete, present-day events, theologically? He explained this by using Pascal's well-known dictum, when he discussed "reasons of the heart" and emphasized the role of imagination (1941:67-100). Understanding by means of revelation is in opposition to "the evil imaginations of the heart," to our idolatrous interpretations, and not in opposition to reason as such (1941:79-80). We must use our imagination, seeking patterns for interpretation, and then make reasonable, rational observations and conclusions.

Apart from revelation, he argued, we have other patterns which we employ in understanding our joys and sorrows, but for the most part they are not only inadequate, leaving us ignorant, but evil, tending to lead to destruction. There is, however, "an image neither evil nor inadequate which enables the heart to understand and the event through which that image is given them Christians call their revelation" (1941:80).

What is this image of revelation, making discernment possible? Interestingly, suffering played a major role in his own answer. In our interpretation of history, our understanding-through-revelation of what is happening, suffering plays the key role in our interpretation of the past, the present and the future. Without going into any detail here, his conviction was that such discernment will lead to conversion – conversion of our memories, conversions of our actions in the present (since we do not understand what we are doing to others), and conversion of our fears and dreams.

By now it should also be clear why "responsibility" became the term that he preferred to describe the proper moral conduct of Christians.[12] They must respond to the living God, revealing Godself in history according to the pattern of Jesus Christ, or according to his famous motto, "God is acting in all actions upon you, so respond to all actions upon you as to respond to his action" (1963:126). Especially in later years, he often used the distinction between human beings as answerers, makers and citizens. He wanted to contribute a theory of moral responsibility, using the root metaphor of "human-beings-as-answerers." For him, moral action was more a situational response to challenges than pursuing ideals or adhering to laws (1963).

Therefore, for him, Christianity was "permanent revolution" or *metanoia.* Through the years he used many synonymous expressions: change of mind, repentance, conversion, redemption, republication, reinterpretation, revolution, reconstruction, restoration, reorganization, metamorphosis, transformation, transvaluation, transfiguration. This was also the conviction behind the well-known fifth type in *Christ and culture* as well as the reason why he consistently called this position "conversionism."

"Transformation" does not in the first place refer to something active on the part of Christians, but instead to a response on their side, a response of radical, revolutionary conversion, a response to what the living God is doing. That is why it is called "concrete *conversion*." At the same time, it is important that this "revolutionary faith" or "conversion" meant responding to what God is doing in particular situations, in very concrete, and ever-changing, socio-historical situations. That is why it is called "*concrete* (or contextual) conversion."

This conversion, the proper transformation of self, church and society, does not take place in terms of timeless, abstract and never-changing principles, ideas or slogans, but in terms of the concrete and very particular historical contexts and what the sovereign God, known in Jesus Christ, is doing there and then. This makes a theological analysis of the situation a prerequisite for moral response.

---

11 H. R. Niebuhr, *Radical Monotheism and Western Culture,* New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960.
12 H. R. Niebuhr, *The Responsible Self,* San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1963.

For all these reasons, he was very much aware of the context, both of time and place, in which he practiced theology. His first book was the epoch-making *The social sources of denominationalism* (1929), a sociological analysis of American churches.[13] With that approach he introduced a new kind of doing situational theology, with the help of social analysis, which was to have major effect in American theology in the 20th century.

Not satisfied with a sociological interpretation, however, *The kingdom of God in America* (1937) followed as sequel, to complement the sociological interpretation with a theological one,[14] but his appreciation of social analysis and historical awareness characterized all his work afterwards. Even when using his method of "typologies," constructing timeless "ideal-types" in order to classify and understand dominant trends, he showed extraordinary sensitivity for the socio-historical contexts of the theologians and movements he discussed.

In his famous *Christ and Culture* all this was still very obvious. He never simply looked at ideas, principles or motifs, but discussed theologians as concrete, living people, within particular historical contexts and movements. This also explains why the proper response expected of the church differed so continuously through his publications. Responsibility, he said, is exercised in society and in time and history, responding to the living God, by telling the full story, interpreting history and discerning God's intentions and actions.[15]

For him, in our interpretation of what is going on in society and culture, in our reading of revelation in history, in our interpretation of God's actions in events and movements, in our decisions as to what is responsible praxis within our situation, we must remember and acknowledge our relativity and limitations, but that should not make us afraid of confessing and acting, instead, it should encourage us to listen to others, especially to those "on the underside of history," those suffering under a cross, and we should be willing to be converted, fundamentally.

What then, finally, *is* the proper image, the pattern, provided by the revelation in Christ? In a way, the cross of Jesus became for him the basic paradigm with which to interpret and respond to suffering.

3. IN HISTORY?

Even the cross, however, can be used in different ways to tell our story and to discern God's presence in history – as another more recent but again very influential example from a different context may illustrate. One theologian during the 20th century who struggled like few others to discern the presence of God in history in the light of the cross of Jesus Christ is the Dutch *dogmatikus* Bram van de Beek.[16]

---

13 H. R. Niebuhr, *The social sources of denominationalism,* New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1929.

14   H. R. Niebuhr, *The kingdom of God in America,* New York: Harper & Row, 1937.

15   H. R. Niebuhr, *The Responsible Self,* San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1963.

16 The literature is extensive. From Van de Beek himself, on these kind of themes, see for example *Waarom? Over Lijden, Schuld en God,* Nijkerk: Callenbach, 1984, *Nogmaals, Waarom?,* Nijkerk: Callenbach, 1986, *Tussen Traditie en Vervreemding; Over Kerk en Christenzijn in een Veranderende, Cultuur* Nijkerk: Callenbach, 1985, *Waar is God in deze Tijd,* Nijkerk: Callenbach, 1994, *Psalmen in de nacht,* Nijkerk: Callenbach, 1994, *Rechtvaardiger dan God: gedachten bij het boek Job,* Nijkerk: Callenbach, 1992, *Ontmaskering. Christelijk Geloof en Cultuur,* Zoetermeer: Meinema, 2001, *Hier benede is het niet,* Zoetermeer: Meinena, 2005, *Is God terug?,* Zoetermeer: Meinema, 2010. For the following argument and the references, see for example only the overview in D.J. Smit, "'Alexamenos worships his god'? An attempt to understand Bram van de Beek's Christology as the heart of his theology" *Strangers and Pilgrims on Earth. Essays in Honour of Abraham van de Beek, Studies in Reformed Theology Nr. 22,* P. van Geest & E.A.J.G. Van der Borght (eds.), Leiden: The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill NV, 37-58.

His struggle with this question – discerning God's presence – is evident since his earliest work and over decades. In particular, however, he responds to this question in his major Christological works. In increasingly radical fashion he would focus on the cross of Jesus as the true work and only presence of God. Even the resurrection, crucially important as it is, should be seen in light of the cross only.

His third Christological study, on God who exercises justice – *God doet recht* – is extremely instructive.[17] What is God doing?, is the question with which he opens an overview of contemporary theology. His often moving answer is that God seems not to be doing anything.

> "De dingen gaan zoals ze gaan en zoals ze altijd gegaan zijn… Zo ver je kunt terugkijken in die geschiedenis, zien we alleen de gewone gang van het wereldgebeuren" (Van de Beek 2008:13).

This is not the experience of a lack of faith, he says, but of faith itself. Contemporary theology, he argues, finds several ways of dealing with this deep spiritual crisis. In diverse ways, theology appeals to the *eschatos* (and resurrection) to provide promises which make more positive interpretations of history and of our experiences possible. We discern signs of the kingdom. We find ways to talk about progress, whether in history and society or in our personal lives.

On the whole, contemporary theology is, according to him, an attempt (in diverse ways) at meaning-making, *zinduiding,* discerning some presence of God when in fact God is absent, doing nothing. He finds such attempts in the many contemporary church and theological tendencies from which he regularly distances himself – particularly also in his own teachers, including Berkhof, Van Ruler and the later Barth, in Protestant theology and church life in the Netherlands, in the ecumenical movement and its involvement in so-called life and work activities, but also in the circles of pietism and evangelicalism with their stress on personal growth and fulfilment of the self. Words that he recognizes almost as slogans of these meaning-making attempts to discern and describe a presence and activity of God are for example success, growth, progress, and morality.

However, he points out that the need to do theology in this way already goes back to the early church. He describes how, under the conditions of the Constantinian revolution, the incarnation became central (rather than the cross), with similar kinds of spiritual implications. The focus now became the presence of holiness (somehow) in the world – in many ways and forms, but together this led to a loss of eschatology which radically affected Christology, pneumatology, ecclesiology, sacramentology, and views on the Christian life, all changes that Van de Beek discerns and radically opposes in his work.

> Over against this, he opts for Alexandrian theology, following in the footsteps of Athanasius. "(T)he Alexandrian theology becomes a theology for people who have nothing to loose. It is a theology for people whose entire life is one long Good Friday. It is the theology of people who have lost every illusion that tomorrow will be a better day."[18]

> "Ik richt me daarbij allereerst op mensen die geen enkele hoop meer hebben dat het morgen beter wordt in de wereld. Onder hen reken ik mij zelf. Het gaat om de God die ons gebroken bestaan wil delen tot het einde."[19]

---

17 Abraham van de Beek, *God doet recht. Eschatologie als christologie,* Zoetermeer: Meinema, 2008.
18 Abraham van de Beek, *Jezus Kurios,* Kok: Kampen, 1998: 33.
19 Abraham van de Beek, *Jezus, bij hoog en bij laag,* Kok: Kampen, 1999: 22.

It is therefore also not enough to speak of Jesus as crucified. The deeper point is that he is crucified as a victim. Jesus suffers as a victim of human power, human violence, human injustice. The cross is not a religious and spiritual symbol, but a harsh and cruel reality. Jesus is slain and slaughtered. Even more, the victim on the tree is innocent, he hangs there because he is cursed, unjustly judged, rejected – and this also by God.

For Van de Beek, this is crucial. God is here at work, God is here judging Jesus, judging the world – in the Crucified. This judgment includes victims and perpetrators alike, moral and immoral, believers and unbelievers. These distinctions – so important for our moral, religious and spiritual sensibilities – all disappear in light of the cross, in fact, they become dangerous and misleading. Here, no-one is moral, no-one is just.

One should therefore say even more. In the Crucified God is judging Godself. The Crucified is the Judge himself. It is the King of Israel hanging on the tree. It is the Lord hanging on the cross, the Lord of glory. It is Godself carrying the judgment there. Van de Beek does not hesitate to use the strongest of expressions to make this point. For him, this *is* the point. It is Godself hanging on the cross. This is for him the comfort of the gospel. God provides justice. God *does* deliver justice – in spite of all doubts, questions and fears to the contrary. The cries of the victims are not in vain. Their prayers have been answered. That is why the curse-psalms are not alien to the message of the gospel, but its climax. Whoever does not understand this, does not understand the gospel.

In the cross, the kingdom of God becomes visible in history, and *only* in the cross – not in the resurrection and most certainly not in our erecting any so-called signs of the kingdom. He does not tire of underlining that the cross is the visible mode of God's reign. This is his central argument in *Goed doet recht*, in response to the questions of doubt and fear – not primarily from the sceptics, but more seriously in the heart of believers – whether God does anything at all.

> "God participeert in deze wereld ... God is de God die slachtoffer is van de wereldgeschiedenis, in de schaar van kinderen, met een moeder die een zwaard door haar ziel heeft gekregen. Dat is het oordeel over onze wereld. Dat is onze diepste realiteit ... Dit is de realiteit van de wereld ... De geschiedenis van Christus legt het wezen van de wereld bloot. Het is een veroordeelde wereld. Het is de wereld waarin God participeert. Hj is gekomen tot het zijne. Aan het kruis is haar God" (Van de Beek 2008:283-284).

If there are signs of the kingdom, they are to be found in suffering and disasters, all caused by God. The many disasters in history become further promises, assurances, that God does indeed act and do justice – since these disasters are all God's works. They are the only positive signs of the coming of the kingdom. "The hunger in Africa, the epidemic of AIDS, the tsunami in Asia ... This is what God has done" (2008:303, translated). This is how God is coming in the world.

He now realizes that pneumatology *is* eschatology. The outpouring of the Spirit *is* eschatological, except that this should not be understood as future, nor the relationship between Christ and Spirit in historical terms, in linear succession, in terms of outworking, development or progress. In the history of the church this has been the common understanding, also in his own earlier pneumatology, but that is based on misunderstanding – namely understanding the Spirit anthropologically, optimistically, without crisis, and the cross only as intermezzo.

No, the cross is *the* eschatological event, the inbreaking of God's final judgment. The result is a pneumatology of judgment. To a *christologia crucis* belongs a pneumatology of judgment, just as a pneumatology of progress belongs to an incarnation Christology (whether understood in a personal or historical way, as progress in one's own spiritual life or progress towards a better future for the world).

There is only one coming (and presence) of Christ, namely the all too human history of Jesus on the cross, which then finds some "extension in time" in that we see this one coming in different moments, different *kairoi*. After the cross, nothing further happens – but the one cross becomes visible in different moments. Over against almost all of 19th and 20th century theology – from Weiss to Wright, from liberal theology to Cullmann and Pannenberg, from Bultmann to Barth – this means for him that nothing new can happen in history. He qualifies this "extension in time" again and again, in order to prevent possible misunderstandings. For example, it does not allow a (often positive and optimistic) church-historical interpretation of the (coming of the) kingdom.

Living in the world means forsaking the world. That is why the images of resident aliens and strangers are better suited to describe the Christian life than the image of pilgrims, because pilgrim falsely still suggests the idea of some purpose or goal, which believers do *not* have. Sadly, this is denied in many ways – also by ecumenical Protestantism.

He is deeply sceptical about all attempts to describe the Christian life in terms of *vivificatio;* about any interest in exercising power; about the pervasive passion in church and theology for morality, social structures and history; about the so-called prophetic role of the church; about any so-called involvement of the church in politics; about the so-called erection of signs of the kingdom; about any so-called trajectory in history that points towards the eschatos. All *these* forms of interest in the world have to do with progress and improvement (whether personal or historical), with exercising power and making sense, with change, transformation and meaningful renewal – and all these he rejects.

Living in this world, believers await the final judgment, which he describes as the day of God's wrath, in direct contrast to all contemporary humanist attempts to see the day within the perspective of God's – free and all-inclusive – love. The proper biblical paradigm for the doctrine of God, he argues, is not love, security and comfort, but justice, particularly justice for the oppressed. Both victims and perpetrators stand under this judgment.

Apart from the cross, there is *no* glory and *no* sense in morality (whether personal or public), in social or political structures (whether in liberal attempts to build up or liberationist attempts to overthrow) or in history (whether individual or communal).

The only possible response is conversion. Conversion means that they recognize God's action in the Crucified and in the circle of all those who also carry their crosses, and that they join this circle, by willingly leaving the social, economic and political structures that determine the face of this world, even giving up their claims to morality – in short, that they leave everything and follow Christ. Ultimately, believers respond by celebrating the eschatological meal.

"Dan kan men zelfs zeggen dat de viering van de eucharistie de realiteit van zijn komen is ... Er is geen reden om angstig 'Nog niet' te roepen als we het messiaanse maal mogen vieren ... Het avondmaal zelf is de viering van de komst van het koninkrijk" (2008: 330-331)[20]

It is not without reason that he talks so often about a sense of spiritual crisis. It is the crisis of the possibility to talk about God at all – without anything that happens, without anything visible, without any presence. He sometimes speaks movingly about the "slijtage van de tijd" – which one should not underestimate. He has always been fascinated by the question whether and how we can talk about God, "(w)ant wij moeten ons niet verbeelden God met onze theologie te kunnen uitbeelden."[21]

---

20 All references to *God doet recht,* also in Smit 2012.

21 Van de Beek, "Antiochië en Alexandrië in Leiden," in *Waar is God in deze tijd?,* Nijkerk: Callenbach, 1994, 25-26.

4. THE LIVING GOD?

Hopefully, Van de Beek's radical *theologia crucis* serves as demonstration that the difficult task remains, even when people agree that the cross of Jesus provides the proper image for us to discern the meaning of revelation, the presence of God in (our) history and world. The cross can be understood in different ways to help us to interpret reality and respond to whatever we experience as claims on us.

It becomes even more complex when our Christology is not only or primarily focused on the cross, but when – say – the incarnation, the life and ministry, the words and works, the resurrection, the ascension and intercession or a future return of Jesus also inform our imaginations more decisively – as David Bosch argued so movingly during SACLA I (the South African Christian Leaders Assembly).[22]

It becomes still further complex when not only (or not primarily) Christological convictions and images, but also other concerns and notions building on the second and third articles of the creed influence our imaginations and our reasoning and interpreting hearts. This is of course the case in many circles worldwide in recent theology after the so-called Trinitarian Renaissance.[23]

One contemporary thinker deeply concerned with discerning the Trinitarian presence and work of the Living God in reality and history is the German systematic theologian Michael Welker.[24] Describing his own theology as biblical-realistic, standing in the Reformed tradition (of Calvin, Barth and Moltmann) and deeply engaged with inter-disciplinary scholarship from a wide variety of fields and traditions (including Whitehead, Luhmann and Polkinghorne), Welker is consciously reflecting on the Trinitarian tradition and from a Trinitarian perspective.

The essay by Welker dedicated to Moltmann on his 80th birthday could serve as representative illustration, also because it is – according to its own subtitle – an attempt to develop a doctrine of the Trinity with biblical orientation. It is called "Der erhaltende, rettende und erhebende Gott. Zu einer biblisch orientierten Trinitätslehre," and it is a contribution in the volume called *Der lebendige Gott als Trinität.*[25]

Welker takes his point of departure in contemporary experiences of disaster, suffering and evil, and asks how it is possible to speak of God and life in the face of these realities? In his own words, only a complex Trinitarian response based on the dynamic biblical account could show the way.

Therefore, he first discusses God as Creator by showing the ambivalence and ultimate lack of comfort of any "natural" creation theology (appealing mainly to Calvin). Not only do believers need to face "das ungeheure Maß der Zerstörung und das Ausmaß des Leidens," but they

---

22 Bosch gave his lecture called "For such a time as this" on Sunday July 8 1979, in other words only months after the eventful day at his home University and Faculty. The gist of the lecture later became part of his influential monograph, *Transforming mission. Paradigm shifts in theology of mission,* New York: Orbis, 1991, 512-518.

23 The literature is overwhelming, but see for example the special edition of the *Journal of Reformed Theology* called *The Doctrine of the Trinity in Christian Faith and Global Theology,* Volume 3. No. 1, 2009, with an introductory essay by Gijsbert van den Brink with the same title (and extensive references).

24 Again, the relevant literature both by and about Welker is overwhelming. For his Trinitarian thought and responses to that, see only the German *Festschrift* dedicated to him on his 60th birthday, *Gegenwart des lebendigen Christus,* G. Thomas & A. Schüle (Hrsg.), Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2007, as well as his own two important doctrinal works, *Gottes Geist,* Neukirchener-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1992, and *Gottes Offenbarung: Christologie,* Neukirchener-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2012.

25 M. Welker, "Der erhaltende, rettende und erhebende Gott. Zu einer biblisch orientierten Trinitätslehre," in *Der lebendige Gott als Trinität. Jürgen Moltmann zum 80. Geburtstag,* M. Welker & M. Volf (Hrsg.), Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2006, 34-52.

also have to stop ignoring and denying "die unvermeidbare Zerstörungskraft allen physischen Lebens," since all life exists at the cost of other life. Creation is beautiful and wonderful, yes, but there is also another side to creation and to life. Discerning the presence and work of the Creator may not silently attempt to deny this reality.

> "Ich werde im Folgenden zunächst auf die tiefe Ambivalenz und letzte Trostlosigkeit einer Wahrnehmung von Schöpfer und Schöpfung aufmerksam machen, die sich nur auf die Hervorbringung, Erhaltung und Bewahrung der natürlichen Welt konzentriert" (2006:36).

Calvin was already very clear and honest about the fact that on the basis of these observations alone it is impossible to discern between our own misleading impressions and constructions and true knowledge, since every claim will remain vague and confusing.

> "Calvin weist schonungslos darauf hin: Auf dieser Basis können die Menschen niemals zwischen ihren Phantasien und Einbildungen und der wahren Erfahrung Gottes unterscheiden … Mit vernichtender Nüchternheit stellt Calvin solche frommen Illusionen bloß .. Das Empfinden der Gottheit durch natürliches Ahnvermögen, dem menschlichen Geist eigen, bleibt vage oder – wie Calvin sagt – ein 'eitles und flüchtiges' Wissen" (2006:40).

He then deals with the self-revelation of the saving God in the crucified and resurrected Christ (in critical dialogue with Moltmann himself).

> "Zweitens wird zu bedenken sein, was es heißt, dass Gott sich erhaltend und rettend, schöpferisch und neuschöpferisch der Welt im gekreuzigten, auferstandenen und erhöhten Christus und durch ihn zu erkennen gibt" (2006:36).

Although the claim that God revealed Godself in Jesus Christ is the central confession of the Christian faith, Welker says – appealing to Luther and to Barmen 1 – that it is not so easy to integrate this claim into our theological knowledge. Does this claim not raise almost unanswerable questions?, he asks. How can this claim be related to the claims of the first article of the Trinitarian faith? Is the claim that we face Godself in the flesh, in suffering, on the cross and in death not completely incomprehensible in comparison to the (already difficult, but in many ways more reasonable) questions of creation?

> "Doch wie kommen wir von den schöpfungstheologischen Überlegungen von den Beobachtungen zu den dunklen Seiten der Schöpfung, zu den Grenzen des abstrakten Omnipotenzdenkens und zu den Ambivalenzen der natürlichen Religiösität, wie kommen wir von dort aus zu einem trinitätstheologischen Erkenntniszugang zu Gott? Betreten wir mit der Konzentration auf den Menschen Jesus Christus und auf der Gekreuzigten nicht einfach eine andere Welt, völlig andere Erfahrungsbereiche? Ist die Forderung, im Menschen Jesus und in Kreuz und Leiden Gott zu erkennen, nicht eine unerträgliche Zumutung? Warum wird Gott in der Inkarnation und in Kreuz und Leiden nicht gerade völlig unkenntlich?" (2006:42).

In response to these questions, Welker develops his own Christological views, in this essay in dialogue with impulses from Moltmann.

Finally, he introduces the care for and salvation of creation in the power of the Holy Spirit (engaging with natural scientists, like John Polkinghorne) as a third way of responding to the challenges in the Christian faith and tradition. After all, it may be that Christological answers alone are inadequate to deal with the issues.

> "Ist das Leben und Wirken Jesu Christi nicht zu klein, um überzeugend das schöpferische und neuschöpferische Wirken Gottes prägend zum Ausdruck zu bringen? Erst auf diesem Niveau des Fragens erreichen wir die Ebene der zu entfaltenden Trinitätstheologie," (2006:47)

and therefore, he argues, following the Christian creed,

> "(M)üssen wir (drittens) versuchen, die Kraft des Heiligen Geistes in der Schöpfung und die die Schöpfung erhebende Teilgabe am göttlichen Leben zu erfassen" (2006:36).

His intention and hope is indeed that such a theological thought process – and *only* such a thought process ("nur die Konzentration auf das Wirken des dreieinigen Gottes") – may help us to see and interpret the Living God and the divine work in the world in a Trinitarian way.

> "Mit diesem theologischen Erkundungs- und Gedankengang werden wir an eine Wahrnehmung des lebendigen Gottes und des göttlichen Wirkens in der Schöpfung heranführen, die trinitätstheologisch verstanden und entfaltet werden kann" (2006:36).

However, such a Trinitarian approach will not function as easy explanation or magic formula. It could rather help to sustain the patience of faith and its ability to endure in the midst of destructive meaninglessness and senseless lack of purpose (that Kant observed in history and the world).

> "Nicht das Interesse an einem theologischen Glasperlenspiel ist dabei leitend. Die Trinitätslehre soll vielmehr helfen, den langen Atem des Glaubens zu verstehen und zu bewahren inmitten der Erfahrungen zerstörerischer Sinnlosigkeit und 'Zweckwidrigkeit' in dieser Welt" (2006:36)[26]

These last sentences are important, since they claim that the doctrine of the Trinity is needed, not only because it provides a more comprehensive theological response, but because in this way it fulfils an important practical, pastoral role, precisely when believers do *not* understand.

Again, it is impossible to enter here into any of the questions raised by this approach. The crucial claim is that only in this complex Trinitarian way can faith hopefully speak more responsibly about such experiences of disaster, since any partial answer would remain inadequate and misleading. A partial answer would not be sufficient. In this way, Welker demonstrates the importance for the tradition of a Trinitarian spread in speaking the language of faith – also in any attempt to discern the presence of the Living God in history and reality.

5. ON THE KINGDOM, THE POWER, AND THE GLORY?

---

26 All these foregoing quotations are from Welker, "Der erhaltende, rettende und erhebende Gott. Zu einer biblisch orientierten Trinitätslehre," in *Der lebendige Gott als Trinität.*

However, even the use of Trinitarian language and the willingness to search for a Trinitarian spread in our interpretation of what is happening does not guarantee simple spiritual processes and agreement on what to say and do, on the contrary. The doctrine of the Trinity is no fixed pattern or easy solution either to the difficult questions of discernment. It obviously offers no final protection against confusion and the evil imaginations of our heart. Perhaps a brief consideration of the work of an influential contemporary philosopher may serve as helpful reminder that the doctrine of the Trinity may in fact make matters far more complex.

Giorgio Agamben is an Italian philosopher. In the tradition of Foucault, he is engaged in writing a history – or better, a genealogy, and better still an archaeology – of modern politics in the West. In a recent study translated as *The Kingdom and the Glory* (2011) he argues that present-day notions of politics in the West can only be understood against the background of Christian theology – although most political philosophers do not realize this at all.[27]

His argument is therefore one continuous engagement with Carl Schmitt, the famous 20th century German legal scholar who also argued, in his controversial *Political Theology,* that politics can eventually only be based on theology (and therefore also a continuous engagement with Erik Peterson, the opponent of Schmitt and the discussion partner of Karl Barth).[28]

Over against Schmitt, who defended absolute sovereignty (of the political leader, in his case Hitler) over politics and law, who declared that the sovereign possesses absolute power (exemplified in the right to declare a state of emergency, suspending both all political discussion and the rule of law) and who based that on an understanding of the divine sovereignty, Agamben argues that economy (understood to include both what is today called the economy, but also what is called the practical administration of government) is where power really functions.

According to Agamben, Schmitt (like Foucault, albeit in a different way) was therefore correct in his opinion that the paradigm of politics today is to be found in the history of Christian theology, but he was mistaken in his opinion where real power is exercised. It does not belong to the (political) sovereign, but it is distributed all over the economy which includes the government and its administration – and yes, its original paradigm is indeed to be found in the history of Christian theology, namely in the doctrine of the Trinity. The subtitle of his work is therefore "For a Theological Genealogy of Economy and Government."

This is not the place to enter in detail into his argument on politics and the economy and not even the place to follow his creative and often fascinating reconstruction of the archaeology of the doctrine of the Trinity. We only follow very broad strokes of his argument in an attempt to sense some of the relevance for our theme of discernment of the divine presence and actions.[29]

---

27 G. Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory. For a theological genealogy of economy and government,* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011. The present work is part of a much larger project, called *Homo Sacer,* on the genealogy (or nature) of power in the West. This work is therefore *Homo Sacer II,2* in the series, not yet completed.

28 See the influential study C. Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four chapters on the concept of sovereignty,* Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2005, as well as the essays published as *Political Theology II: The myth of the closure of any political theology,* M. Hoelzl & G. Ward (eds.), Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008. For a recent detailed and authoritative interpretation of Schmitt's contribution and remarkable influence, see R. Mehring, *Carl Schmitt. Aufstieg und Fall,* München: C.H. Beck, 2009. For the relationship between Erik Peterson and Barth, see for example B. Nichtweiss, "Lebendige Dialektik. Zur Bedeutung Erik Petersons für die theologische Entwicklung Karl Barths," in *Karl Barth in Deutschland (1921-1935). Aufbruch – Klärung – Widerstand,* M. Beintker, C. Link & M. Trowitzsch (Hrsg.), Zürich: TVZ, 2005, 313-330 (with literature).

29 All the following references are therefore to G. Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory. For a theological genealogy of economy and government.* For a very helpful discussion, see also R. Reeling Brouwer, "Dogmatics: an Aporetic Heritage? A re-reading of Karl Barth in the light of Giorgio Agamben's study *Il*

The key to understand his discussions of "kingdom," "power" and "glory" lies in the widespread use of the notion of "economy" already in Paul and then in the early church, and in the distinction which then developed between "theologia" in the strict sense of the word (also called the immanent Trinity) and "oikonomia" as description of God's actions in history, in Jesus Christ and in the Spirit, through both the One eternally begotten and the One proceeding from the Father, in short, through what is today often called the *missio Dei.*[30]

Put simply, the church became increasingly interested in the economy, in what God was (supposedly) doing. What Paul still described as "the economy of the mystery" (meaning: what we see in Christ is the revelation of God's mystery) became "the mystery of the economy" – a fascination with the questions what precisely was happening and how precisely God was actively involved.

By way of the notion of "God's will" (which Agamben describes as a kind of invention by the church to overcome the gap, the aporia between theology and economy, between immanent and historical, the fracture between being and action), by way of a very complex doctrine of (different) providence(s), by way of a detailed angelology – and all these he documents in minute philological detail from the history of Christian theology – the church gradually built complex bridges to relate (the inactive immanent Godself) with the actual realities of history and the world.

The kingdom (*theologia,* the immanent Trinity) was seen as inactive, while the real effective power was given to and administered by a diversity of administrators (powers, structures, laws, angels, will, providence, general and special, etc). The power(s) represented the king(dom), even in its own absence and inactivity, increasingly to such an extent that the glory owed to the kingdom, and needed to legitimate the power(s), became more and more real, and no longer only symbol and ritual.

Again, Agamben provides intriguing examples of glory that was given to material objects and military or cultic events justifying the power(s) in their historical functions of representing the (inactive, absent, immanent) kingdom. The most glorious is perhaps the empty throne, surrounded and adorned with all kinds of regalia – that had to be worshiped as if the power representing the kingdom were in fact present. On his cover is a beautiful picture of such an empty throne, from the Papal Basilica of St. Paul outside the Walls in Rome, but this is just one example of many.

For Agamben, this archaeology is important to show (over against Schmitt) that the sovereign is not that powerful, but in fact inactive (like the Fisher King of the Grail Legend, or contemporary monarchs in Western democracies, *le roi règne, mais il ne gouverne pas*), and that real power in contemporary societies is exercised by those who administer government and economy, while the public opinion and public media provide the necessary glory, keeping up the glorious appearances of the powers, so that we all believe there is somewhere a king on a throne behind the glories of the spectacles offered to us.

For many other reasons the study is also fascinating for theological readers, including radical implications for issues of providence and notions of secularism. For the purpose of discernment, however, major implications and questions should already become clear.

To put them in Agamben's terms, is it really possible for us to discern the presence and the actions of Godself in our world and in history with the help of the doctrine of the Trinity, if the doctrine of the Trinity was indeed developed to protect the fracture between immanent

---

Regno e la Gloria," hopefully forthcoming in the Zeitschrift für dialektische Theologie.
30 For a very insightful discussion of the history and use of the term mission Dei, see John G. Flett, *The witness of God. The Trinity, Missio Dei, Karl Barth, and the nature of Christian community,* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010.

and economic? Is it really possible for us to reckon with God as living and free, and the future therefore as contingent and open (Durand)? Are we perhaps rather trying to discern the divine economy and mission, the providence of God, the divine will, natural laws and processes, perhaps the role of angels and spiritual powers? In that case, however, is our view on the divine providence or will or natural laws not once again a kind of pattern, a blueprint, a fixed scheme? Remembering for example John Calvin's 159 sermons on the Book of Job, struggling "to trust in the often incomprehensible providence of God" amidst experiences of darkness, hiddenness, and unknowability – what can we finally know about the *arcana operatio,* the "secret operation of God"?[31] Could we ever succeed in not being misled by the glory, justifying the powers governing our world, our histories and our lives? Are we in any way able to escape the relativity of our points of view, our stories and our idolatrous imaginations (Niebuhr)? Even when we employ the images of our Christological faith and our Trinitarian creeds, or our discourses of God's providence and will, do our interpretations not remain partial, contested, conflicting, witnesses to our lack of spiritual knowledge (Van de Beek, Welker)? In short, in our attempts at spiritual discernment, what are we truly discerning – and what could be the proper, modest enough language to describe what we are actually doing? Our discourses of discernment are after all also rhetorical languages, and therefore languages of power?

6. CONCLUDING COMMENTS CELEBRATING CW BURGER

I consciously tried to pay tribute to Coenie Burger also by way of my formal treatment of this topic. As so often in our wonderful friendship over so many years, I did not choose the topic, but it was given to me, and in fact if I did not explicitly ask for the topic, I would probably only have seen it today, on the program. Like so often before, he seems to think that serious systematic theologians should have something to say on any possible theme – without any reflection and preparation (somewhat like Luther on pastors, who should always be immediately ready to pray, preach and die).

I deliberately tried not to be practical, because he is the practical theologian, often asking me systematic theological questions, because he is keenly interested in systematic theology and convinced of the importance of systematic theological reflection. I know by now that he will draw practical conclusions for himself, on plans and priorities and processes.

I also tried not to give any coherent answer at all, but only to raise a diversity of issues, somehow related to one another. Most of the time, Coenie does not want answers and he will in any case not follow the answers one gives, he is more interested in gathering information, if possible from as many people and many sources as possible, and then he will make up his own mind. He has always been more interested in the conversation itself than in any advice and opinions, more interested in friends and friendship and fellowship than in being told what to do.

I consciously tried to respond to the theme by raising questions, since this is what he often wants to hear. He would often ask one's opinion about possible difficulties and concerns, about potential risks and dangers, about problems that should be taken into account – something that I always appreciated, since I like the question marks more than the answers myself.

I further tried to provide the information and to raise the concerns in the form of references

---

31 See for example D.J. Smit, "On illness and providence? Questions from the Reformed tradition," in Smit, *Essays on Being Reformed, Collected Essays 3*, R.R. Vosloo (ed.), Stellenbosch: Sun Media, 2009, 141-164 (with extensive literature); but in much more detail the work of Susan Schreiner, for example her *Where shall wisdom be found?,* Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1994; her *The theater of his glory,* Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001; and again her very helpful essay "Calvin as an interpreter of Job" in *Calvin and the Bible,* D. McKim (ed.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, 53-84.

to books, in the form of stories about a list of important theologians and publications, some of them people that he knows and will trust, but some of them also new and strange, so that he could perhaps look for them too, since he loves to hear about books, new and old.

Finally, I tried to bring themes together that are of interest to Coenie – the presence of God, the nature of the presence of Jesus with us, the nature of the presence of the Spirit in the church. We all know his own publications on these themes and his passion for serious reflection on these questions.[32] He recently talked to me about books on providence, he recently asked me for books on the power of God, I cannot remember that he has asked anything about angels, but you never know. I hope that he will soon write on these themes, for all of us to benefit.

Others have already done this, and I can only add my voice to theirs, and thank him for wonderful friendship and for his dedication over so many years to theology and the church and to people.

KEY WORDS
Discernment
CW Burger
JJF Durand
A van de Beek
M Welker
G Agamben

TREFWOORDE
Onderskeiding
CW Burger
JJF Durand
A van de Beek
M Welker
G Agamben

---

32 From the large number of well-known and widely read publications by C.W. Burger at least three may be mentioned that deal directly or indirectly with the themes discussed here, namely *Gemeentes in die kragveld van die Gees,* Stellenbosch: BUVTON, 1999; *Ons weet aan Wie ons behoort,* Wellington: Lux Verbi.BM, 2001; *Waar is Jesus nou? Hoe Jesus na sy hemelvaart onder ons teenwoordig is en werk,* Vereeniging: CUM, 2011.

Van der Watt, JS & Louw, DJ
Stellenbosch University

Masculine identity and the projection of 'male images' in mass media: towards a pastoral hermeneutics in theory formation

ABSTRACT

Human identities in general - including gender and sexual identities – have recently become more diverse and malleable. This is to a great extent because of the pervasive influence of the mass media and popular culture, which proposes to offer important tools to help men (and women) adjust to contemporary life. Some parts of popular culture are reasserting traditional forms of masculinity, whilst others are challenging them - telling men what they are now 'supposed to' look like, act like, be like.

Media representations can be viewed as influencing our socialised schemata of interpretation for gender identities. This is also applicable to theological schemata of interpretation concerning commercialised men and masculinities. We drew upon work in variety of disciplines, such as cultural and media studies, sociology, theology and psychology, in order to examine issues concerning masculinities within this information era, influenced by the prescriptive role of mass media. In this way more insight was gained in terms of the dominating discourses reflected by images of men and masculinities in the global mass media, and how this can be investigated critically, from a pastoral hermeneutical perspective.

Magazines were also viewed as crucial media to analyse in order to understand male identity in a more comprehensive way. Therefore we chose our own South African cultural context within which we suggest the critical assessment of the influence of certain mass media representations – particularly displayed in magazines - on various expressions of masculinity. This was suggested in order to promote and co-create men and masculinities that focus on life-giving intimacy, vitality and human dignity.

1. INTRODUCTION

The field of practical theology[1], including the practice of pastoral hermeneutics[2], is constantly challenged to understand pastoral actions against the background of contemporary life issues,

---

1 In broad terms practical theology (with pastoral care as subfield) can be defined as a place where religious belief, tradition and practice meets contemporary experiences, questions and actions, and conducts a dialogue that is mutually enriching, intellectually critical, and practically transforming. Woodward and Pattison (2000:13-17) explicates various essential characteristics of the scope or field of practical theology. Two of these main traits are also critically important to highlight at the start of this article, namely its (1) interdisciplinary and (2) dialectical nature.

2 Woodward and Pattison (2000) suggest that there is no one view about which of these terms ('pastoral' versus 'practical' theology) should predominate over the other. Practical and pastoral theology can thus both be seen as genuinely practical/pastoral and authentically theological. We would however simultaneously like to maintain the distinction which Graham (2000) makes, i.e. between 'practical' denoting the generic activities of Christian ministry and 'pastoral', the more interpersonal levels of care. Cf. Louw (2008).

e.g. international communication (Louw 2000). It is on the basis of this assumption that the human soul can no longer just be seen as a private entity, but that is growingly becoming a "global entity". According to Poling (2004:182) one of the three core questions for the revision of pastoral theology, care, and counselling in a time of global market capitalism is: How can we improve the quality of pastoral care across lines of gender[3], race, and class?

A pastoral hermeneutics should therefore be continually in discussion with culture as expressed in international discourses, concerning the understanding of our being human within a global paradigm. In this regard a 'critical existential realism' should be adopted, i.e. to evaluate critical paradigms influencing human self-understanding, very specifically paradigms within the gender debate and their impact on identity. Consequently a pastoral hermeneutics has the task to: (1) probe critically into the different schemata of interpretation which controls our contact – as humans from differing race, class and gender backgrounds - with the contemporary world; and (2) contribute towards theory formation for a pastoral anthropology on being male.

If pastoral care still wants to operate within the traditional and historic paradigm of *cura animarum,* 'soul care', and if we can work with the pastoral anthropological presupposition that 'soul' is not so much a substantial entity within human beings, but the reference to the quality of our being human (relational networks) within the presence of a living God, determined by the spiritual formula: to love God and fellow human beings; social and cultural analyses within specific contexts becomes paramount. One such context within a postmodern society is the realm of the social media and its impact on our being human and self-understanding.

This is where the need for a *gender sensitive pastoral hermeneutics* becomes clear, because it can perform the dual function of addressing issues of culture, whilst being critical of that culture from a gender-sensitive pastoral perspective[4]. Pastoral hermeneutics thus seeks to find ways to raise questions of accountability of the society (and the church) to women and men, and the accountability of those men and women in taking responsibility for their lives. Due to the so called 'male crisis', the constant criticism on patriarchalism from a gender perspective, and confusion about male identity within the quest for equality, the article will focus on issues concerning masculinities[5].

Men have also in recent times been depicted as the victims rather than the perpetrators of violence, and as captives between traditional and new ideas and perceptions about masculinity.

---

3 Charles Sherlock (1996:175) explains the complexity of the concept gender in three subcategories, which is helpful in trying to understand it. Firstly gender can refer to gender identity (attempts to describe the differences between men and women). Secondly, it can indicate gender relations (the patterns of power, norms, customs and roles which govern women and men's lives). Thirdly, it can connote gender representations (the ways in which gender concepts help to organize ideas about culture, nature, knowledge and social perspectives). In this article we work with a notion of gender as a set of social and cultural meanings assigned to biological (sexuality) differences. 'Gender' therefore becomes an analytical tool enabling us to probe deeply into our everyday practices as women and as men within the context of our religion, culture and history. See also Van der Watt (2007:45-63).

4 In conjunction with Bonnie Miller-McLemore's view on pastoral care (1996; 2000), the object of study in this pastoral theological undertaking is the 'living human web'. Within this framework pastoral care still entails practical religious, spiritual, and congregational care for the suffering, involving the rich resources of religious traditions and communities, contemporary understandings of the human person in the social sciences, and ultimately the movement of God's love and hope in the lives of individuals and communities.

5 To understand how these issues are situated within the relation between masculinity, embodiment and power, as well as within the reciprocity between masculinity and Christian spirituality, see Van der Watt (2007).

Moreover (amongst others) new social prescriptions about fatherhood[6] within a framework of masculinity and child care, have come to the fore. The dynamics of change in masculinity therefore takes place within the greater arrangements of, and reciprocity between (big) changes within both the public and private spheres of the society. Changes in the labour market, on the political playing field and in domestic spheres (within a globalising culture) have forced men to explore and internalise new concepts of masculinity.

2. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF GENDER WITHIN A PASTORAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Critical gender perspectives have made a significant difference to most academic fields, including the study of religion (and theology). Yet many scholarly publications on religion still seem to give little or no recognition to the profound epistemological, methodological, and substantive changes that contemporary gender studies, especially women's scholarship and feminist theories, but also the growing field of men's studies in religion, have produced over the last thirty years (King 2005). Thus, the engendering of religions and their study provides a great challenge to contemporary practical theological research, and therefore we deem it necessary to take cognisance of its impact in this article.

Furthermore, to state the obvious (which is often ignored): gender is simply a central feature of social life – one of the main organizing principles around which our lives as human beings revolve. We come to know ourselves and our world primarily through the prism of gender and it therefore shapes our identities and the institutions, in which we work, live, play and exist. Our gendered state of being in life mostly happens unconsciously, and especially men were rarely in history understood through the gender-lens. Gender, together with race and class, is therefore a central mechanism by which power and resources are distributed in our society and one of the main concepts out of which we design the meanings of our lives. According to Bowie (2005:3420): 'While age, ethnicity, class, and many other factors also have culturally prescribed norms, gender is the most universal and salient social organizing principle.'

We suspect that the contemporary, globalising culture (generally termed postmodernism) has made the question of masculinity acutely problematical in many different cultural contexts. It is

---

6 Fatherhood is an integral element in the construction of masculinities, but it is interpreted in different ways. Although the connection between fathers and masculinity seems patently obvious, it is, in fact, a complex subject. One researcher that recognizes this complexity is R.D. Parke (2000), who assumes a developmental focus to provide a psychological perspective on the complexities of father involvement. Since men's increased involvement in care-giving, there has been a change in the nature of fatherhood as it is continuously 'shaped and reshaped according to cultural context, work and family relations' (Brandth and Kvande 1998:2). For men who accept that fathering goes beyond their contribution to conception, there are many ways of interpreting fatherhood. It may be understood as negotiating a responsibility to provide and protect, or it may be interpreted as an entity in which one's children become part of one's identity – "I am my children". Masculinities which value both responsibility and care can and should be fostered. Such masculinities should steer clear of the claim that fatherhood gives men power over women and children and justifies authority and tyranny. Basically, '…fatherhood can make a contribution to the lives of men. It can give meaning to their lives and open up unexplored channels of emotional engagement. When men accept the fatherhood role, in whatever form, they also contribute to the broader goals of gender equity. Fatherhood should be a role that integrates men into families, rather than separating them from children, women and other men.' (Morrell 2006:23). Other important questions to attend to are: How does fatherhood feature in the way men understand masculinity? How does/did race and class shape fatherhood? How do/did understandings of fatherhood change over time? See for example, Hewlett (2000), for a brief overview of anthropological approaches and studies of father involvement with insights into how father involvement is conceptualized in the USA (and has changed over time). See also Corneau (1991:12-13) and Van der Watt (2007:95-101).

assumed that this is mainly because of a diversity of images and projected representations in the mass media that confuse men in their search for a meaningful masculine identity. The problem which will subsequently be addressed is the suspicion that the meaning of their masculinity is often not experienced in a healthy and coherent manner by many men. Rather, they experience confusion in terms of their identities and role functions as men, also influencing attitudes within relational networks (e.g. within their families, and marriages where applicable).

By qualifying it holistically and relationally, the non-negotiable need to view masculine identity not only philosophically or phenomenologically, but out of a pastoral anthropological perspective, becomes clear. In such a pastoral anthropology we opt for an inclusive anthropology which operates with both the mutuality of relationships (*relatio*) as well as the identity of being qualities (*substantia*), rather than merely with the predominance of *substantia.* The outcome of this argument is an inclusive and normative anthropology, which determines healing due to the fact that the questions 'How do I see myself?', 'Who is the other?', 'How do you understand and perceive God?'; determine one's approach to life. (cf. Louw 2008)

Within a pastoral anthropological paradigm the quality of our being human ☐ which is an indication of our human dignity ☐ is given out of the re-creation in Christ through the Holy Spirit. Such a paradigm has implications for all dimensions of being human – also for the meaning and value of pastoral care to men. Therefore, the theological foundation of pastoral anthropology is that a Christology gives the human person a new quality of being human (human dignity) through a pneumatology[7].

To what extent are practical theologians and pastoral caregivers cognisant of the above mentioned realities? How are current pastoral-theological research and care initiatives intently directed to attend to these important issues in theory formation for the pastoral ministry?

3. INTERPRETING THE PARADIGMATIC FRAMEWORK OF THE INFORMATION AGE

'Over the past three decades, digital technologies have powerfully changed our lives. They are woven into the very way we understand and relate to the world around us. We are now a digital culture. We are no longer who and what we were just a few decades ago.' (Tim Challies 2011:10)

People living in the twenty-first century inhabit a *digital information* and *consumer* society, where the manufacturing and dissemination of information has become an essential facet of modern democratic and commercial processes. Shifting to the cultural realm, we see the emergence of a similar pattern of networking, flexibility, and symbolic communication, organized around electronic media (including computer-mediated communication networks). According to Castells (1999), cultural expressions of all kinds are increasingly enclosed in or shaped by this world of electronic media[8] . But the new media system is not characterized by the one-way, undifferentiated messages through a limited number of channels that constituted the world of mass media. And it is not a global village.

'Instead of a global village we are moving towards mass production of customized cottages. While there is oligopolistic concentration of multimedia groups around the world, there is at the same time, market segmentation, and increasing interaction by and among the individuals that break up the uniformity of a mass audience.' (Castells 1999:404). These processes induce

---

7 See Van der Watt (2007:247-272) for a detailed discussion of the basic dogmatic tenets of a pastoral anthropology.

8 The term 'media', in the established sense, usually refers to 'communication media' and the institutions and organisations in which people work (the press, cinema, broadcasting, publishing etc.) and the cultural and material products of those institutions (the forms and genres of news, road movies, soap operas which take the material forms of newspapers, paperback books, films, tapes, discs). (Lister et al. 2000:9-10)

the formation of what he calls *the culture of real virtuality*. It is called so and not virtual reality, because when our symbolic environment is, by and large, structured in this inclusive, flexible, diversified hypertext in which we navigate every day, the virtuality of this text is in fact our reality, the symbols from which we live and communicate.

It has become a truism to observe that we live in media-saturated societies. Media production is now one of the largest and most lucrative industrial sectors in the global economy[9]. Yet for all of its dominant presence in our lives, there is a feeling that this kind of media saturation is not a 'good' thing. The media, and in particular television, have been credited with 'fabulous' powers to change people and have been blamed for contributing to most social ills. It has been blamed for the undermining of trust in politics, the decline of religion, the increase in crime and violence in society, the dumbing down of popular culture, the growth of permissiveness, and as, generally speaking, having the power to corrupt and deprave[10]. (McCullagh, 2002; Wardrip-Fruin and Montfort (eds.), 2003)

The social significance of the mass media within this current information and consumer society therefore cannot be understated. The media-saturated contexts we live in are built upon an emerging, dominant social structure: the Network Society – which is (according to Castells, 1999:398-399) in turn characteristic of informational capitalism, as constituted throughout the world. Media of communication are extraordinary diverse, and it sends targeted messages to specific segments of audiences and to specific moods of the audiences. These media are increasingly inclusive, bridging from one to another, connected throughout the globe and yet diversified by cultures, constituting a hypertext with extraordinary inclusive capacity. *These media networks also transform power relationships.*

In light of this background, it becomes clear that within the current globalising world context and the (above-mentioned) Network Society, the mass media are of central importance to the maintenance of modern culture[11] and the reproduction of contemporary societies. Different forms of media culture such as magazines, television, film, popular music, and advertising provide role and gender models, fashion hints, life-style images, and personality icons. The narratives of media culture offer moral messages, ideological conditioning, and various patterns of proper and improper behaviour, 'sugar coating social and political ideas with pleasurable and seductive forms of popular entertainment'. (Durham and Kellner 2001:1)

Likewise, media and consumer culture, cyber-culture, sports, and other popular activities engage people in practices which integrate them into the established society, while offering pleasures, meanings and identities. Different individuals and audiences respond to these texts disparately, negotiating their meanings in very complex and often paradoxical ways. Learning to live and think as Christians in our time therefore requires learning to engage with media and culture. Hence it is also particularly important for practical theologians and pastoral caregivers to become aware of the power of images, and find both the tools to explore and critique these images as well as the opportunities to shape that which so thoroughly (albeit subconsciously) shapes us.

---

9 According to McCullagh (2002) thirteen of the 100 richest people in the world are media magnates. 'Media consumption is the predominant activity in the domestic sphere in industrialised societies, and second only to work in terms of the time spent on it.' (McCullagh 2002:2)

10 For an in-depth discussion on the power of the media, see *Media and Power*, James Curran (2002).

11 The historical development of the media has subsequently been instrumental in the emergence of what we understand as modern social and cultural life. O' Sullivan (et al.) (1998) identifies three key aspects of their presence: 1. They represent the emergence of large-scale systems of *public* communication, linked to what has been called the *public sphere;* 2. Simultaneously, these developments have also had important implications for the *private* sphere and everyday life 'at home'; 3. The media and mass communications have interacted with pre-existing cultures, forms and values in a number of significant ways. Of these, perhaps the most central has been in the development of *popular* culture…' (O' Sullivan 1998:29)

We contend that when we explore media such a films or magazines theologically we are busy with practical theology as hermeneutical culture-analysis, thus describing the phenomena in our globalising culture in theological language, and interpreting material in these media as symbolizations of fundamental themes in the society. In others words, *theological perspectives on the content of, e.g. films or magazine can and should enrich the dimension of meaning-making and the co-creation of (gendered) identities in life that are essentially healthy, and promote human dignity.*

The power of mass media[12]

Within this proliferating image and media culture, in which new technologies are changing every dimension of life from the economy to personal identity, fresh critical strategies are needed to read cultural texts, and to interpret the conjunctions of sight and sound, words and images - that are producing seductive cultural spaces, forms, and experiences.

Therefore it is imperative - also for practical theologians and pastoral caregivers etc. - to understand and analyse the cultural environment if one wants to get a grip on these phenomena's impact on people's daily lives. There is not a single approach that contributes the 'golden key' to cultural and media criticism. All given theories and methods have their limitations as well as strengths, their illuminating perspectives as well as their blind spots. A critical reading of media texts can reveal a wealth of meanings, values, and messages, often contradictory.

In short, *the mass media constitute a primary source of definitions and images of social reality and the most universal expression of shared identity.* O' Sullivan et al. (1998:3) gives attention to the importance of *ritual interaction* with modern media. This means that forms of media consumption - reading, watching, listening etc. – are particular ways of creatively participating in the life of modern culture. In this manner, the media have been termed '*consciousness industries*', involved in the manufacturing or management of the public sphere, of consensus and consent. That is, in providing images, interpretations and explanations of events occurring in the wider world, the modern media do not simply and neutrally provide information about that world, but actively encourage us to see and understand it in particular ways and in certain terms. Therefore it is important to be cognisant of the fact that '*Technology, media, performance, play, consumption, family and gender relationships are all intertwined.*' (Lister et al. 2000:279).

One of the biggest debates about the social impact of the media can be boiled down to one question: do the mass media have a significant amount of power over its audience, or does the audience ultimately have more power than the media? In other words, do the media simply give a reflection of the social realities of life or do they create a particular reality independent of life itself in order to influence its receivers? These questions are also relevant for pastoral theologians and caregivers to engage with critically, in order to gain more insight concerning the reciprocal relationship between media and masculine identities.

We, in following the cues from some media experts (like Durham and Kellner, 2001; McQuail 2000; and Devereux 2003), would advocate the usefulness of a wide range of theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of media, culture and society. However, through this article we suggest a particular pastoral hermeneutical perspective to analyze cultural and mass media influences, which can for instance be applied constructively via an empirical analysis of different media like magazine.

---

12 The mass media can be divided into 'old' media such as film, magazines, newspapers, radio and television, and 'new' media such as the Internet, digital television, and WAP-based technology. According to Lister et al. (2000:9-11) the term 'new media' is a blanket description that subsumes a whole range of different practices and processes. 'New media' can therefore not be used as a collective singular noun as if it referred to a more or less coherent entity. It rather immediately suggests something far less settled, known and identified.

Mass media do not merely portray a world; they propagate a worldview. The worldview and values propagated by the cinema[13], magazines, TV etc. – however subtly or implicitly this may occur – should be assessed critically by practical theologians and pastoral caregivers, through a posture of constructive engagement rather than a silent standoff.

4. MEDIATED IMPRESSIONS OF GENDER[14] REPRESENTATION AND RELATIONS

Susan Bordo (1999:215) asserts that: 'we live in an empire ruled not by kings or even presidents, but by images.' Thus, attempting to talk about such a broad topic, the images of men and (women) within such a broad field - 'the media' - is a very big task. Each week a new set of movies is released. Every day, television programmes, documentaries, children's entertainment, game shows, chat shows, lifestyle programmes, films, soap operas, music videos and more are broadcasted. Magazines, the internet and World Wide Web, newspapers[15] and adverts all contain images of men (and women), and even songs on the radio (or played in shops and cafes) might feed into, or challenge, our ideas about gender.

How does media content reveal unequal relationships of power? Does the predominance of a hegemonic discourse about class, race or gender have a bearing on what audiences believe about the social world? Cultural studies scholar Douglas Kellner asserts, 'Radio, television, film and other products of the culture industries provide the models of what it means to be male or female, successful or a failure, powerful or powerless…media culture helps shape the prevalent view of the world and its deepest values: it defines what is considered good or bad, positive or negative, moral or evil'. (Kellner 1995:1)

This assertion affirms the prevalence of the array of messages within media content which people daily read/see about gender roles. Do these messages challenge or perpetuate what are currently viewed as the 'appropriate' gender roles in a specific social setting or cultural context? What do these messages tell people about masculinity and femininity? What sorts of assumptions are inherent in these media messages about being a 'man' or a 'woman' in the early twenty-first century? What aspects of being male or female are downplayed or ignored altogether in these media messages? If one was to compare how these messages concerning gender politics vary with those reproduced in the mass media, for instance, twenty years ago, how do they differ, and why?

---

13 Since the invention of motion pictures a century ago, Johnston (2000:41) observes five differing theological responses that the church has made to film, as it has learned from and has sought to influence Hollywood. He labels these responses avoidance, caution, dialogue, appropriation, and divine encounter. According to Johnston (2000:64) there are (at least) six theological reasons why a Christian should enter into dialogue with film:

(1) God's common grace is present throughout human culture. (2) Theology should be concerned with the Spirit's presence and work in the world. (3) God is active within the wider culture and speaks to us through all of life. (4) Images as well as words can help us to encounter God. (5) Theology's narrative shape makes it particularly open to interaction with other stories. (6) The nature of constructive theology is a dialogue between God's story (Bible, Christian tradition, and a particular worshiping community) and our stories (the surrounding culture and life experiences).

14 Within media content and across a variety of media genres we are presented with a range of representations about gender. Media content plays a hugely significant role in shaping our perceptions of what is to be 'male' or 'female', and it thus reflects changing dominant discourses about femininity and masculinity. It also carries a set of hegemonic assumptions about human sexuality, but its representations pertaining to being 'a man' or being 'a woman' are not fixed entities; they change over time.

15 See Davis (2005) in Van der Watt (2007:462-464) for an example of an article in a South African newspaper that focuses on this issue of the representation (and/or mis-representation) in the media.

According to Lemon (1991:126) media messages convey certain 'preferred meanings' which reflect the interests of the dominant group(s) in society. In this way the media perpetuate and maintain images and world views, such as dichotomous gender divisions, which are compatible with the goals and objectives of the dominant group(s). In this sense, the media play an important role in perpetuating and legitimising patriarchal ideology as well as the traditional male sex role, sometimes with perilous and abusive side-effects (cf. Van der Watt 2011). Because in most developed societies the media are controlled and dominated by (white) men, whose fundamental interests lie in maintaining the patriarchal status quo, the media invariably present a white, male dominated, capitalist perspective.

This is not to say that media content is a mirror image of the realities of gender identities in the social world. The gulf between representations and reality has been much commented upon. Van Zoonen and Costera Meijer (in Devereux 2003:131) for example, argue that: 'It is indeed easy to see that real women are much more different and more diverse than their representations in the media would seem to suggest. If media images were indeed a reflection of reality, 'real' women would be relatively rare in most parts of the real world, and Black, older, disabled, lesbian, fat, poor, or Third World women would be virtually non-existent.'

Notably in response to the women's movement and growth of feminist scholarship, conventions for representing gender in mass media have come under increasing scrutiny during the past two to three decades[16]. Up until the early 1990's however, these efforts have been limited in at least two ways. First, content analyses have focused almost exclusively on women, and men's roles in media have been implicitly viewed as unproblematic. Second, most studies have relied on mainstream sex-role theory, which assumes that mass media transmit stereotypical gender images that shape role expectations and, in turn, inform behaviour and identity. However, sex-role theory oftentimes ignores or underemphasizes power differences between the sexes, the relational processes through which gender identity is socially constructed, and dynamic linkages between gender images and larger systems of ideology and social structure. (Sabo and Jansen 1992:169)

In history then it mostly appears, unsurprisingly, that the mass media used to be very stereotyped in its representations of gender. In his book *Media, gender and identity,* Gauntlett (2002) indicates that, as well as showing men being more active, decisive, courageous, intelligent and resourceful, television and movies also showed a much greater quantity of men, compared to women. There were exceptions, of course - it's not hard to think of the odd clever, brave, or challenging female character from the past – but these remained exceptions to the norm.

But during the early 1990's and into the new century things have been changing quite considerably. Gender roles on television became increasingly equal and non-stereotyped - within some limits - although the majority of lead characters were still male. Men and women are seen working side by side, as equals, in the hospitals, schools and police stations of television-world. Advertisers have by now realised that audiences will only laugh at images of the pretty

---

16 Media professionals' lack of knowledge of gender and development is one of the major challenges facing not only the international women's movement, but also media professionals who have to be trained. The 1995 Beijing Conference on Women identified the media as one of the critical areas of concern for the advancement of women's equality and development, in an era of globalisation. See the article, Globalisation and gender training for the media: Challenges and lessons learned (2000), wherein Patricia A. Made discusses her experience of developing gender training for media professionals. One local South African example of this growing scholarship is Lizette Rabe (2002). See her article, *Eve-olution: the status of female voice in South African media,* in which she examines the status of women in South African media, both as providers of and subjects in media. The stereotypical representation of women in news is questioned against an historical overview of women as news providers. The need to focus on gender - and specifically the position of black women - in media, is also addressed.

housewife, and have reacted by showing women how to be very sexy at work instead. (Gauntlett 2002:57)

Therefore, *media representations of gender today are more complex, and less stereotyped, than in the past.* Women are seen as self-reliant heroes quite often today, whilst the depiction of masculinity has become less straightforward, and more troubled. Advertising, and the broader world of stars and celebrities, promotes images of well-toned and conventionally attractive women and men. Simultaneously, gay and lesbian characters have started to gain greater acceptance within the TV mainstream, and even in some films and magazines. The images of women and men which it disseminates today may be equally valued, but remain distinctive, and diverse.

The pervasive influence of mass media on masculine identity

Many of the academic books on 'masculinity' are - for the 'average man on the street' at least - disappointing, as they dwell on archetypes from the past, and have little to say about the real lives of modern men; whereas top selling magazines and popular self-help books - and, to a lesser but significant extent, TV shows and movies - are full of information about being a man in the here-and-now. Some parts of popular culture are said to be 'reasserting' the traditional forms of masculinity, whilst others are challenging them.

The mass media suggests lifestyles, forms of self-presentation, and ways to find happiness which may (or may not) be illusory. According to Gauntlett, 'Our relationship with our bodies, our sexual partners, and our own emotional needs, will all also be influenced by media representations, but (of course) in complex ways which will be swayed and modified by our social experiences and interactions.' (Gauntlett 2002:113-114). Men are daily bombarded with images of masculinities in the mass media. Changing the definitions of manhood will therefore require a serious confrontation with images of power as well as structural realities of power in social life. Social scientists are only now beginning to understand the enormous influence that the media have in shaping our ideas about what it means to be a man. If masculinity is to be conceived of as a social construct, what role do the media play in formulating it? How do men (and women) learn what behaviours are 'manly'?

The mass media thus create artificial standards against which boys (and men) as well as girls (and women) measure themselves and others. According to Kimmel & Messner (2004:505): 'Virtually no men can approach the physiques of the cartoon version of Tarzan or even G.I. Joe... No wonder we often feel like we fail the test of physical manhood. We are constantly 'seeing' masculinity, in the movies, in commercials, in pornography etc. Any effort to understand – let alone transform – masculinity must take account of the ways in which we see ourselves reflected through the lenses that record our fantasy lives.' (e.g. see illustration 1 here below)
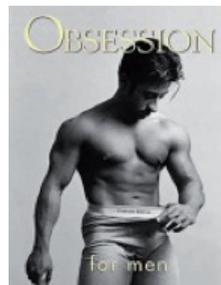
Illustration 1 courtesy of www.adbusters.org[17]

---

17 Permission given by Adbusters (see Rogers 2006).

Masculine identity as global and local question has been placed in the focal point afresh by these developments. This above-mentioned problem has relatively recently (in the late 1980's and early 1990's) developed (within sociological circles) into a so-called 'crisis of masculinity', where traditional forms of expression as confirmation of masculine identities, are often not readily available to or recognisable by men any longer.

In summary: *media content acts as an extremely powerful source of social meaning.* The mass media are centrally involved in the social construction of reality for audience members, giving them an understanding – however limited – of both their immediate and their more distant social contexts. In this way – in terms of this article's specific focus - *the mass media creates and reflects a diverse variety of masculinity forms and schemata of interpretation to evaluate it.*

5. MAGAZINES AS CULTURAL TEXTS OF LIFE IN A PASTORAL HERMENEUTICS

The realms of both 'religion' and 'the media' are themselves transforming and being transformed. According to Hoover & Clark (2002:2-3), religion today is much more a public, commodified, therapeutic and personalised set of practices than it has been in the past. At the same time the media are collectively coming to constitute a realm where important projects of 'the self' take place – projects that include spiritual, transcendent and deeply meaningful 'work'. Religion and media are therefore increasingly converging, meeting on a common turf: the everyday world of lived experience.

Instead of thinking of it in separated domains, media, religion and culture should be thought of as an interrelated web within society (Hoover and Lundby 1997:3-4). Magazines, movies etc. seek to engage us, their viewers, as whole human beings. They invite – we might almost say, demand – our response. Magazines are exceptionally accessible media forms within a pluralistic society, in which competing issues of public and private life are formulated and represented for consideration and interpretation. Magazines can represent the most intimate and private confrontations of values. Indeed religion and magazines *share* an interest in, and attention to, values. The connection between the two has, however, not always been obvious or simple.

Religion is not confined strictly to what happens in a synagogue or church but is manifested in diverse cultural formations in our society, including popular magazines. If we want to understand popular culture, we need to study different media forms - including magazines - because it indeed has the potential to reinforce, to challenge, to overturn, or to crystallize religious perspectives, fundamental values and ideological assumptions.

When one reflects on the essence of Christian theology, it becomes clearly self-evident that it is not merely the study of Scripture text, but of worldly context. Stone (2000:3) affirms this assertion powerfully by saying: 'When we read the Bible but are not able to read the world, we risk reducing the gospel to either a weapon or a toy.' Theology – especially practical theology - always demands an intimate familiarity with both. Given this double requirement of theology, the world of magazines can be an important dialogue partner for Christians who are interested in thinking seriously about their faith, gender, relationships etc. We are convinced that Christians should be actively engaged with culture: studying it, discerning positive and negative aspects, and working to redeem it. (Romanowski 2001:43)

In summary: *when we explore popular magazines theologically we are busy with theology as hermeneutical space in dialogue with contemporary culture.* In our postmodernist culture our imagination is to a large extent stimulated and formed by the media-driven culture in which we live. What we find interesting and amusing is determined by multinational corporations which earn huge amounts of money if they can give us the feeling that we desire and resonate what they present to us. We encounter this media-world (amongst others) in magazines, which are

rich sources of theological material. As theologians we can utilize it as illustrations for theological reflection, insights and resources. This is also a perspective which can help us to find new ways of transmitting the Christian faith in a mediatized and commercialized image culture.

The public task of practical theology and pastoral care is therefore, amongst others, to interpret the cultural representations in our globalising culture within theological frames of reference. Thus, pastoral anthropological perspectives on the content of magazines can and should enrich the dimension of meaning-making and the symbolization of (male and female) identity in life[18]. In terms of the aim and theme of this article, magazines are also viewed as crucial media to analyse in order to understand male identity in a more comprehensive way. Therefore we choose our own South African cultural context within which we suggest the critical and constructive assessment of the influence of certain mass media representations – particularly displayed in magazines - on various expressions of masculinity.

6. MEDIA AND MASCULINITY IN SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXTS

The birth of the 'new' South Africa (27 April 1994) have shifted social configurations. Identities are in the process of being renegotiated and cultural borders are being transgressed. Material power relations[19] weaken against a boundless reshaping of the cultural landscape. In addition, South Africa cannot escape the era of accelerated globalisation that on the one hand impacts on the ways in which culture and identity are being conceptualised, and on the other, hegemonizes locally dominant political and societal discourses.

The political and social changes that South Africa is undergoing can thus be viewed as mediated – by media in a broad sense, thereby including mass media, art and cultural expression. But this mediation takes place within a complex and ever-changing set of power and gender relations, both global and local. This process is further played out on a variety of fronts, ranging from the mass media and new media to mainstream art forms such as theatre or the urban aesthetics of graffiti art, poetry, intellectual property, and uniquely South African forms of *hip-hop, kwaito* (a uniquely South African music genre), television and drama etc.

Therefore, media perceptions represent practices in which the construction of gender identity takes place. The characters in advertising function as textual constructions of possible modes of femininity and masculinity. *The challenge however lies in getting the media to acknowledge the ever wider-growing existence of the diversity of South African women and men.*

Changes in South Africa thus influenced gender relationships in areas of critical importance to gender identity and power – the family, the formal sector, political and civic institutions etc. Apartheid has been viewed for a long time as the reason for the persecution of African people, but the impact of apartheid on gender relationships (and specifically on men) is – as far as we could ascertain - less well researched and documented. Militarization and compulsory national service has for instance at one stage brought about a growing intolerance of differences and diversity. In the arena of sport masculinity and male prowess, the male body became a kind of public image and icon[20]. Physical power is projected as a kind of powerful image for masculinity.

---

18 For a more elaborate discussion on related issues, see Ganzevoort and Knegt (2004).

19 Lene Øverland (2003) examined the perpetuation of the dominant patriarchal ideology in advertising. She focused on advertising content and represents a snapshot case study of gender representations in contemporary post-apartheid South Africa, and asked the following important questions: do race and class mediate messages that reflect gender and sexual stereotypes? How do members of various communities read and reflect around gendered and sexual stereotypes and what impact do these messages have on people's lives? (Øverland 2003:272-273). For a more detailed discussion of Øverland, see Van der Watt (2007:142-143).

20 According to Burnett (2001:71), "Male only, or 'true' sports, like soccer and rugby, have become

Competitive sport in the media has become a main provider of (hegemonic) masculine images in South Africa[21].

Many people still hold the view that South Africa is one of the bastions of chauvinism. South African men are in many instances stereotyped, and certain aspects of masculinity are isolated and highlighted as representative of all men. This results in the failure to unleash the richness and diversity of different forms of masculinities, e.g. within the diverse forms of so-called (black) African or (white) Afrikaner communities (Van der Watt 2007:104-111). Nevertheless, in many parts of South Africa it is an undeniable fact that very few men are truly caring and mindful of their intimate relationships regarding the way they treat vulnerable people like women and children, specifically in township communities. The fact is that in many townships in South Africa, due to patriarchalism, many women and children are still exposed to violence and male oppression. Due to the abuse of power, an authoritarian stance, men are not concerned about how they treat women and children, they do not reflect on their roles in family life, consciously attempt to create more equal ways of sharing domestic tasks and decisions, or explicitly reject violent methods of resolving conflicts.

According to Sideris (2004:29), 'In many cases a social context persists where traditional notions of the family hold sway. According to these ideas, gender and age hierarchies dictate the rights, duties and obligations of men, women and children in the family. Biology and "God's will" are invoked to justify these structures of hierarchy and in this way they are presented as the *natural* order of family relations. And popular ideas about gender permit the use of violence to maintain authority'. Therefore, the examination of practices of men who transgress norms, and their debates about 'what it means to be a man', in specific historical contexts, is very necessary. (see Sideris 2004[22])

However, a growing body of literature in South Africa details transformations in the meanings attributed to manhood and changes in the practices of men. A collection of papers edited by Robert Morrell (2001)[23] brings together research that explores the varying expressions of masculinity that have been fashioned by South Africa's complex and violent racial and sexual politics – *in order to unleash the richness and diversity of different forms of masculinity.* Without discounting the historical challenges that social, economic and political forces have posed for different sectors of men and the on-going transformation of ideas that define masculinity in South Africa, recent scholarship identifies the transition to political democracy as a moment of

---

a domain where masculinity is celebrated and promoted by media and governments at national and international levels as a unifying force."

21 Cf. also Van der Watt (2007:231-237) on the significance of the unique relationship between sport and masculinity.

22 Tina Sideris (2004) documents changes in gender relations in the Nkomazi region, a rural area situated in South-Eastern Mpumulanga province. Drawing on fieldwork and clinical work (as psychologist) conducted over an eight year period, Sideris examines how a small group of men have reflected upon their practices and redefined themselves as 'different'.

23 Morrell's book, *Changing men in Southern Africa* (2001), was aimed at optimizing this potential depth of 'multiple masculinities' in Southern Africa.

significant challenge to men (Morrell 2001; Posel 2005[24]; Walker 2003[25]; Reid & Walker 2005[26]).

It is within this specific South African cultural context that we suggest an analysis and assessment of the influence of certain mass media representations on various expressions of masculinity. This can for instance be done via a pastoral hermeneutical survey of selected magazine editions, which can give a very distinct indication of current popular forms of masculinities, and its main characteristics.

7. CONCLUSION

In this article it was explicated that pastoral hermeneutics has the task to: (1) probe critically into the different schemata of interpretation which controls our contact – as humans from differing race, class and gender backgrounds - with the contemporary world; and (2) contribute towards theory formation for a pastoral anthropology on being male. Researchers in practical theology and pastoral caregivers should actively engage with and analyse popular culture and mass media communications as settings within which masculinities are represented and enacted in different ways, times and places (cultural contexts).

Within a pastoral anthropological paradigm the quality of our being human – which is an indication of our human dignity – is given out of the re-creation in Christ through the Holy Spirit. It was asserted that such a paradigm has implications for all dimensions of being human – also for the meaning and value of pastoral care to men. This is where the need for a gender sensitive pastoral hermeneutics was identified, as well as the need that current pastoral-theological research and care should intently be directed to attend to these important issues, in order to gain more insight concerning the reciprocal relationship between media and masculine identities.

Mass media are providing the shared 'cultural environment' for most people and more so than any other single institution. To a large extent the social media constitutes a primary source of definitions and images of social reality and the most universal expression of shared identity. These media networks also transform power relationships and have the power to shape our values and behaviour, and even our faith. Media content indeed acts as an extremely powerful

---

24 Deborah Posel (2005) puts the phenomenon of baby rape and the more general phenomenon of sexual violence into historical perspective, highlighting the manner in which sexuality, particularly male sexuality has become politicised in contemporary South Africa. She tracks the emergence of public scrutiny of sexual violence in media reports and argues that it was the rape of infants that 'focused the spotlight of shame squarely on men' and evoked a sense of moral panic. Rape cases, particularly those involving babies and young children, are highly publicised and become the yardstick by which the 'moral fibre' of the nation is measured. In this discourse of moral shame, Posel shows how it is men – fathers, brothers, sons – who are blamed.

25 Walker (2003) examines young men, perpetrators of abuse, who have joined an organisation that provides support and counselling to men who want to change. Her analysis of their testimony reveals their struggle to remake themselves in contrast to past versions of manhood which they interpret as oppressive (Walker 2003:23). Careful to avoid rigid and premature categorisation of the efforts these men make to come to terms with the process of change, Walker nevertheless suggests the rise of new notions of masculinity.

26 Reid and Walker's (eds.) book Men behaving differently (2005) takes up the challenge of examining the relationship between sexuality and social transition, in different institutional and geographical locations, and look at new masculinities which have been forged in post-apartheid South Africa. The essays in this book reflect on masculinity in a state of flux, reconfiguration and change. 'This includes immediate and tangible changes in South Africa's political landscape, transitions in academic enquiry into gender and sexuality, and also emerging possibilities for alternative sexual and gender identities.' (Reid and Walker 2005:2)

source of social meaning and its representations of gender today are more complex, and less stereotyped, than in the past. Thus, theological perspectives on the content of, e.g. films or magazines can and should enrich the dimension of meaning-making and the co-creation of (gendered) identities in life that are essentially healthy, and promote human dignity.

The problem which subsequently arises is the suspicion that the meaning of their masculinity is often not experienced in a healthy and coherent manner by many men. Rather, they experience confusion in terms of their role functions as men, also influencing attitudes within relational networks (e.g. within their families, and marriages where applicable). We therefore suggest that in order to understand the iconic impact of male images on self-understanding and male embodiment as projected by the social media, selected examples from international men's magazines should be analysed in order to understand how the interplay with the cultural schemata of interpretation could assist practical theologians and pastoral caregivers, to reflect critically from a pastoral anthropological perspective, on current images that determine male identities.

Through such a pastoral hermeneutical survey we suspect a meaningful contribution can be made to pastoral care practices and practical theological theory formation that combat toxic and destructive forms of masculinity, and instead, promote and co-create men and masculinities that focus on life-giving intimacy, vitality and human dignity.

REFERENCES

Bordo, S., 1999, *The male body: A New Look at Men in Public and in Private,* Faggar, Strauss and Giroux, New York.

Bowie, F., 2005, 'Gender roles', In L. Jones (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Religion* (Vol. 5, 2nd edition), Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2005, pp. 3420-3423, 15 volumes.

Brandth, B. and Kvande, E., 1998, Masculinity and child care: the reconstruction of fathering, *The sociological review,* 46 (2), pp. 293-313.

Burnett, C., 2001, Whose game is it anyway? Power, play and sport, *Agenda,* 49, pp. 71-78.

Castells, M., 1999, 'An introduction to the information age', In H. MacKay and T. O'Sullivan (eds.), *The media reader: continuity and transformation.* Sage Publications: London, 1999. pp. 398-410.

Challies, T., 2011. *The next story: life and faith after the digital explosion.* Zondervan, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Corneau, G., 1991. *Absent fathers, lost sons: the search for a new masculine identity*. Shambhala Publications, Boston.

Curran, J., 2002, *Media and power,* Routledge, London.

Davis, C., 2005, 'Ode to the lost man', In Van der Watt, J.S., 2007, 'Images of men and masculinities in cultural contexts: a pastoral assessment', DTh thesis, Dept. of Practical Theology and Missiology, University of Stellenbosch.

Devereux, E., 2003, *Understanding the media,* Sage publications, London.

Durham, M.G. and Kellner, D.M. (eds.), 2001, *Media and cultural studies: keywords,* Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, UK.

Ganzevoort, R.R. and Knegt, H.C., 2004, 'Nothing is fake... It's merely controlled: The Truman Show als theologisch material', *Theologisch Debat,* [online.] 1(2), pp. 39-45.

Gauntlett, D., 2002, *Media, gender and identity: an introduction*, Routledge, London.

Graham, E.L., 2000, Practical theology as transforming practice, In J. Woodward and S. Pattison (eds.), *The Blackwell reader in pastoral and practical theology,* Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, UK, 2000, pp. 104-117.

Hall, S., 1994, Cultural identity and diaspora, In P. Williams and L. Chrisman (eds.), *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial theory: a reader,* Harvester Wheatsheaf: New York, 1994, pp. 392-403.

Hewlett, B.S., 2000, 'Culture, History, and Sex: Anthropological Contributions to Conceptualizing Father Involvement', *Marriage & Family Review,* 29 (2/3), pp. 59-73.

Hoover, S. and Lundby, K. (eds.), 1997, *Rethinking Media, Religion and Culture.* Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.

Hoover, S.M. and Clark, L.S. (eds.), 2002, *Practicing religion in the age of the media: explorations in media, religion and culture,* Columbia University Press, New York.

Johnston, R.K., 2000, *Reel Spirituality: Theology and Film in Dialogue,* Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Kellner, D., 1995, *Media culture: cultural studies, identity and politics between the modern and the postmodern,* Routledge, London.

Kimmel, M.S. and Messner, M.A. (eds.), 2004, *Men's lives* (6th edition), Pearson Education, Inc., Boston.

King, U., 2005, 'Gender and Religion: An Overview', In L. Jones, ed. *Encyclopedia of Religion* (Vol. 5, 2nd edition), Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2005, pp. 3296-3310, 15 volumes.

Lemon, J., 1991, 'Images of men and the crisis of masculinity: an exploratory study' MA thesis, University of South Africa.

Lister, M. (et al.), 2000, *New media: a critical introduction,* Routledge, London.

Louw, D.J., 2000, *Meaning in suffering,* Peter Lang, Frankfurt.

Louw, D.J., 2008, *Curae Vitae: Illness and the healing of life in pastoral care and counselling - a guide for caregivers.* Stellenbosch: Unpublished Manuscript.

Made, P.A., 2000, Globalisation and gender training for the media: Challenges and lessons learned, *Gender and Development,* 8 (1), pp. 29-34.

McCullagh, C. (ed.), 2002, *Media power: a sociological introduction*, Palgrave, New York.

McQuail, D., 2000, *McQuail's Mass Communication Theory,* Sage publications, London.

Miller-McLemore, B.J., 1996, 'The living human web: pastoral theology at the turn of the century', In J.S. Moessner (ed.), *Through the eyes of women: insigths for pastoral care,* Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 1996, pp. 9-26.

Miller-McLemore, B.J., 2000, 'How sexuality and relationships have revolutionized pastoral theology', In J. Woodward and S. Pattison (eds.), *The Blackwell reader in pastoral and practical theology*, Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers, 2000, pp. 233-247.

Morrell, R., 2001, The times of change: men and masculinity in South Africa, In R. Morrell (ed.), *Changing men in Southern Africa,* University of Natal Press, Scotsville, South Africa, 2001, pp. 3-37.

Morrell, R., 2006, Fathers, fatherhood and masculinity in South Africa, In L. Richter and R. Morrell (eds.), *BABA: men and fatherhood in South Africa.* [Online]. HSRC Press: Cape Town.

Available from: http://www.hsrcpress.ac.za/full_title_info.asp?id=2113

[cited on 20 February 2012]

Nuttall, S. and Michael C., 2000, Introduction, In S. Nuttall and C. Michael, *Senses of culture: South African Culture Studies,* Oxford University Press: Cape Town, 2000, pp. 1-27.

O' Sullivan, T. (et al.), 1998, *Studying the media: an introduction* (second edition), Oxford University Press, New York.

Øverland, L., 2003, Another male fantasy: race, gender and advertising, In H. Wasserman and S. Jacobs (eds.), *Shifting selves: post-apartheid essays on mass media, culture and identity,* Kwela Books, Cape Town, 2003, pp. 267-282.

Parke, R.D., 2000, 'Father Involvement: A Developmental Psychological Perspective', *Marriage & Family Review,* 29 (2/3), pp. 43-58.

Poling, J.N., 2004, 'Pastoral care in a time of global market capitalism', *The journal pastoral of care and counseling,* 58 (3), pp. 179-185.

Posel, D., 2005, 'Baby rape': Unmaking se secrets of sexual violence in post-apartheid South Africa, In G. Reid and L. Walker (eds.), *Men behaving differently: South African men since 1994,* Double Storey Books, Cape Town, 2005, pp. 21-64.

Rabe, L., 2002, Eve-olution: the status of female voice in South African media, *Ecquid Novi,* 23 (1), pp. 152-169.

Reid, G. and Walker, L. (eds.), 2005, *Men behaving differently: South African men since 1994,* Double Storey Books, Cape Town.

Romanowski, W.D., 2001, *Eyes wide open: looking for God in popular culture,* Brazos Press, Grand Rapids.

Rogers, M., 2006, e-mail, 20 June, reprints@adbusters.org

Sabo, D. and Jansen, S.C., 1992, Images of men in sport media: the social reproduction of gender order, In S. Craig, (ed.) *Men, masculinity and the media,* Sage Publications, Newbury Park, CA, 1992, pp. 169-184.

Sherlock, C., 1996, *The doctrine of humanity,* Inter-varsity Press, Leicester.

Sideris, T., 2004, "You have to change and you don't know how!": Contesting What it Means to be a Man in a Rural Area of South Africa, *African Studies,* 63 (1), pp.29-49.

Stone, B.P., 2000, *Faith and film: theological themes at the cinema,* Chalice Press, St. Louis, Missouri.

Van der Watt, J.S., 2007, 'Images of men and masculinities in cultural contexts: a pastoral assessment', DTh thesis, Dept. of Practical Theology and Missiology, University of Stellenbosch. Accessible at http://hdl. handle.net/10019.1/19742

Van der Watt, J.S., 2011, 'The peril of patriarchal power: distorting dignity and intimacy in (male) sexuality', paper presented at the 9th World Congress of the International Council on Pastoral Care and Counselling, Rotorua, New Zealand, 21-27th August.

Wardrip-Fruin, N. and Montfort, N. (eds.), 2003, *The new media reader,* MIT Press, London.

Walker, L., 2003, 'Men Behaving Differently: South African Men since 1994', paper presented at the Sex and Secrecy Conference, 4th Conference of the International Association for the Study of Sexuality, Culture and Society, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 25-28th June.

Wasserman, H. and Jacobs, S., 2003, Introduction. In H. Wasserman and S. Jacobs (eds.), *Shifting selves: post-apartheid essays on mass media, culture and identity,* Kwela Books, Cape Town, 2003, pp. 15-28.

Woodward, J. and Pattison, S., 2000, 'An introduction to pastoral and practical theology', In J. Woodward and S. Pattison (eds.), *The Blackwell reader in pastoral and practical theology,* Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, UK, 2000, pp. 1-19.

Zegeye, A. (ed.), 2001, Imposed ethnicity. In A. Zegeye, *Social identities in the new South Africa,* Vol. 1, After Apartheid, Social Identities in South Africa Series, Kwela Books, Cape Town, 2001, pp. 1-24.

COMPETING INTERESTS

KONTAKBESONDERHEDE
Dr Stephan van der Watt
Sangenya Chou
Soto 23-20
Tokushima City
Japan
770-8025
Tel: +81(0)886787310
Sel: +81(0)9013289409
E-pos: stephan@missiejapan.co.za

Prof DJ Louw
Fakulteit Teologie
Privaatsak X1
7602 MATIELAND
Tel: 021 887 1703
Sel: 083 2996 546
E-pos: djl@sun.ac.za

Van Niekerk, PI
Stellenbosch University

Towards a theology of the body. A spirituality of imperfection

ABSTRACT

Human weakness, a disabled body, and fragile faith make a theology of vulnerability and finitude relevant. I was basically moulded in a theology which does not adequately address concrete daily life of vulnerable people who have disabilities. Traditionally theology does not deal with physical imperfection, decay and dying. Philosophies that separate the mind and body have a strong influence in Christian traditions. Dualism is antithetical to the reality of Christ who had a body himself. Henri Nouwen's spiritual journey of vulnerability and brokenness make his "Spirituality of imperfection" grounded in experience. To come to accepting disease and death as part of life gives meaning to "we have this treasure in jars of clay", according to 2 Cor 4:7.

THE FAITH HEALER

A few years ago I attended a Christian camp. At one of the sessions the main speaker called those forward who wanted to be healed. A friend of mine tried persuading me to go, but I refused. My friend really wanted to see me healed from Parkinson's disease and told the faith healer about my condition. I then did stand up and allowed him to pray for me. He laid his hands on me and prayed for total recovery – of Alzheimer's. I whispered that it was Parkinson's. No wonder no miracle happened, he prayed for the wrong condition.

I realised more than ever before that disease or disability is not necessarily something that could and perhaps should be cured by faith healing or medical treatment. Suffering is not always to be explained or to be understood; one just needs to accept it as part and parcel of life. The way persons with disabilities are treated sometimes though, make them feel they are objects and this should not be the case. They need affection from dear ones. They need solidarity from their friends and from people around them, acceptance. From God they need compassion.

We do not want sympathy, but empathy, understanding, and respect. Sometimes this happens in peculiar ways. For example, the other day I went to an end-of-season sale at Woollies and tried on some clothes. I came out of the fitting room still struggling to close my zip. The assistant asked me innocently if she could help me. Her concern left me with a smile!

This reminds me of the movie "Patch Adams" which is based on a true story. The medical care model at the *Gesundheit* Institute has it that patients are treated as friends. The health of the staff is as important as the health of patients. And care is infused with fun and play. (Wikipedia.)

I was basically moulded in a theology which is not adequately connected to the concrete daily lives of vulnerable people who have a "dis-ease", and therefore a theology that does not deal with disability, decay and dying. With the current article I would like to take the reader on a spiritual journey towards an "embodied Spirituality" (Van den Berg 2008). As we go along, we shall take a glimpse at different perspectives on a "Theology of the body / Theology of weakness", how it builds upon Incarnation and how it works towards a Spirituality of imperfection. Theology and spirituality are not separated. According to Thomas Aquinas and Karl Rahner, faith is to be lived in the first place (Egan 2005:14).

To be disabled one way or another brings to mind the New Testament writer Paul, who states that we are like fragile clay jars (2 Cor 4:7); we have perishable bodies. Paul's image of treasure in clay jars reveals his

> weakness, lack of eloquence, ordinariness, fragility, suffering, and hardships. ... While Paul's application of the image may have seemed outlandish, the image itself would have been familiar to Paul's audience. Cheap, fragile, often unattractive, and readily discarded, clay jars were part of everyday life – much like the plastic container of today. (Ashley 2008.)

With this metaphor the apostle does not make any distinction between body and soul. Paul is referring to the person as a whole. He continues in the next chapter: "our bodies are like a tent" (2 Cor 5:1) – our bodies are vulnerable, exposed to the powers of nature, wind and weather; bodies that could be contaminated with viruses and venom. It is interesting to note that the literal translation of John 1:14 – "the Word had become flesh and came to live amongst us" – reads: "Jesus came and pitched his tent amongst us". This reminds us of Jesus' own vulnerability.

Luke's story of the birth of Jesus emphasises his frailty. In Chapter 2 Luke writes about the shepherds and the angels. An angel appeared among the shepherds announcing the Saviour's birth. The angel said they would find a sign: a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger. Luke uses the word "sign" to underline the symbolism of helplessness. According to Wilson (2004:36), "this sign offers us a new perspective. God is a baby weak and defenceless". The baby in the manger pictures God in a baby body, little and innocent – "a symbol of God's weakness" (Coffin 2003:17). The historian Plinius explains the custom of swaddling: "'After that first experience of daylight, children have all their limbs swaddled, a severer bondage than that of any domestic animal'" (Müller 1995:2). God entered the world as "a helpless and fragile new born baby" (Forbes 2007:156), and in bondage, so to speak. There is no distance left between "the human and the divine" (Nouwen 2007).

The writer of Deutero-Isaiah uses the metaphor of a bruised reed which God will not break, to indicate God's compassion for frail and weak people and the special task God has in mind for them (Isaiah 42:3). "The Servant's gentleness, both as unassertiveness (v. 2) and as tenderness to the weak and inadequate (v. 3), is unmarred by any weakness of his own: the words *fail* and *discouraged* (v. 4) pointedly take up the Hebrew terms already used for *dimly burning* and *bruised*" (Kidner 1970:613).

As an old man, Qoheleth wrote a beautiful poem on ageing. The youth should remember their Creator,

> before the sun and the light and the moon and the stars grow dark, and the clouds return after the rain; when the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men stoop, when the grinders cease because they are few, and those looking through the windows grow dim; when the doors to the street are closed and the sound of grinding fades; when men rise up at the sound of birds, but all their songs grow faint; when men are afraid of heights and of dangers in the streets; when the almond tree blossoms and the grasshopper drags himself along and desire no longer is stirred... (Eccl 12:2-5b).

Sawyer (1975:519) comments, "'the famous allegory of growing old' remains at the centre of most modern interpretations of Eccl 12:1-6 and a grotesque list of geriatric symptoms that have been identified in the passage can readily be compiled; e.g., deafness, constipation, ischuria,

acrophobia, and agoraphobia in vs. 4 anorexia, impotence, and white hair in vs. 5".

SPIRIT OR BODY?

The bias against the body as impure, sinful and distracting from the spiritual, is upsetting, and to attach primary importance to rational thinking, disturbing. Berry (1982:953) reckons: "It is not accidental that the mainstream of Western theological tradition seems to have had so little to say about the empirical human situation. The structure of Christian belief received its normative character in centuries dominated by the two intellectual movements that were radically dualistic and distrusted the materiality of humankind". He refers to the philosophies of Neo-Platonism and Gnosticism.

Neo-Platonism is defined as "a type of idealistic monism in which the ultimate reality of the universe is held to be an infinite, unknowable, perfect One" (The Neoplatonic Doctrine). *Nous* or "pure intelligence" comes from the One and its image is the world soul. From the world soul human beings have received their "lesser souls". According to this philosophy, "The most perfect being was the least physical, and had the least to do with the physical; that the way of salvation necessarily leads from the body, from the earthly-historical, to a realm of pure spirit" (Berry 1982:953). According to Plotinus (204-270 C.E.) who is considered the first main proponent of Neo-Platonism,

> The bodily Kind, in that it partakes of Matter is an evil thing. What form is in bodies is an untrue-form: they are without life: by their own natural disorderly movement they make away with each other; they are hindrances to the soul in its proper Act; in their ceaseless flux they are always slipping away from Being. Soul, on the contrary, since not every Soul is evil, is not an evil Kind. – Enneads, 1.8.4. (Enneads 2011.)

Gnosticism also rejects the body and regards it as a prison for the soul. It opposes Incarnation. "Christ could not possibly have a body: (1) because the absolute cannot enter into a real union with the finite; and (2) because matter is evil, and the spiritual world is ever in conflict with it" (Heick 1965:72).

Sölle and Gloyes (1984:29) consider the dichotomy of body and spirit as "an idealistic spirituality", which is "the enemy of creational spirituality". However, remnants of the philosophies of dualism are still alive and kicking today. In the church, people's bodily needs, their physical abilities or disabilities are devalued when body and soul are separated (Harren 2009:274). Furthermore, the emphasis on a "theology of the infinite" has a strong influence on Christian traditions. This theology refers to "an inquiry into the identity and existence of divine beings, divine activity in history and nature, the purpose and destiny of human life as these are revealed by a being called 'God' to others called 'persons'" (Berry 1982:953). This dualistic world view is universal. In fact,"(w)hen religions arose, this disassociation became even more pronounced as the 'you are not your body' belief. Countless people in East and West throughout the ages have tried to find God, salvation, or enlightenment through the denial of the body" (Tolle 2005:95).

ALL IN ONE BODY

Dualism is antithetical to the reality of Christ who had a body himself. The traditional Christian view of the body is "something to be overcome in order to receive the joys of heaven. This is paradoxical since probably the most important article of Christian faith is that God became (hu)

man" (insertion in brackets mine) (Isherwood & Stuart 1998:15) – in Jesus.

The birth, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus, all facets of the Gospel, and historical events of Jesus' ministry, took place in this one body. Jesus as swaddled infant and nailed grown-up makes one recognize God's humanity and humility. "Incarnation and Eucharist need to be firmly tied into the concrete events and images of the baby in the manger and the body on the cross" (Naylor 1996). Jesus' physical resurrection and ascension emphasise God's bodiliness even more. "In some mysterious way the resurrection also has a physical dimension with those wonderful post-resurrection encounters: Mary wanting to hold Jesus, Thomas needing to see and touch Jesus' wounds to enable his acclamation 'My Lord and My God', and the breaking of bread bringing recognition of Jesus" (Naylor 1996).

The sacramental value of his body is associated with a sensory experience of the Gospel. "In the sacrament, Christ touches us in and through his own body that is broken for us. In so doing, Christ binds us to himself and to one another" (Harren 2009:274). Christians may just as well speak of the body as sacrament: "The sharing of Jesus in our humanity and our receiving and sharing the broken bread, bring us into bodily relationship and unity: we are one body in Christ" (Naylor 1996).

God is even perceived as disabled and powerless. "In the resurrected Jesus Christ, they saw not the suffering servant for whom the last and most important word was tragedy and sin, but the disabled God who embodied both impaired hands and feet and pierced side and the imago Dei" (Eiesland 1994:99). As mentioned before, God as baby became the "all-powerless God", completely dependent on human care (Nouwen 2007). "How can we be afraid of a God who wants to be 'God-with-us' and needs us to become 'Us-with-God'?", reflects Nouwen (2007).

Wentzel van Huyssteen reasons that when one fully understands the meaning of Jesus' bodiliness, compassion for fellow human beings becomes a divine action.

(T)he image of God is not found in some intellectual or spiritual capacity, but in the whole embodied human being, "body and soul". In fact, the image of God is not found in humans, but is the human, and for this reason *imago Dei* can be read only as *imitation Dei;* to be created in God's image means we should act like God, and so attain holiness by caring for others and for the world. (Van Huyssteen 2006:320.)

SPIRITUALITY OF IMPERFECTION

People's faith could be as vulnerable as their bodies are. Proverbially, for people with Parkinson's, their faith could be just as shaky as the tremor of their hands. Julian Müller (2011) and Anton van Niekerk (2005) address this theme. As Müller (2011) states, faith is vulnerable and unstable, wavering between conviction and terror, completely honest and tentative. Van Niekerk (2005:27) contends that living one's faith by loving one another and making the world a better place is more important than confessing a dogma and knowing exactly what one believes.

A fragile faith, human weakness and a disabled body, make a theology of vulnerability and finitude relevant. In his article, "Seeking a Theology of the Finite", Donald Berry refers to "A body theology". This kind of theology "must, in short, include, in a non-masochistic way, a theology of pain and suffering, a recognition that time and the healing powers of nature are not always efficacious; indeed, that in the final analysis, they are never more than temporarily successful" (Berry 1982:955).

Henri Nouwen's theology of weakness and powerlessness fits my understanding of a theology of the body best. Nouwen's personal spiritual journey of vulnerability and brokenness, and his pastoral ministry to persons with mental disability with their limitations and frailty, ground his

"Spirituality of Imperfection" (Hernandez 2006) in authentic and unique experience. Nouwen (1998:19) acknowledges the spiritual importance of the human body:

> In Jesus, God took on human flesh. The Spirit of God overshadowed Mary, and in her all enmity between spirit and body was overcome. Thus God's Spirit was united with the human spirit, and the human body became the temple destined to be lifted up into the intimacy of God through the Resurrection. Every human body has been given a new hope, of belonging eternally to the God who created it. Thanks to the Incarnation, you can bring your body home.

I AM MY BODY

My body is mine; your body is yours – do not resist it. "Do not fight against the body, for in doing so you are fighting against your own body. You are your body." (Tolle 2005:96). The established author Nancy Mairs (1989:271), who has Multiple Sclerosis, writes: "I am some*body*. A body. A difficult body to be sure, almost too weak now to stand, increasingly deformed, wracked still by gut spasm and headaches and menstrual miseries. But some *body.* Mine. Me. In establishing myself as writer, however modest my success, I have ceased to be *nobody.* I have written my way into embodied self, and here I am at home".

> Humanity and Christianity are interrelated. Sölle and Gloyes (1984:29) explain:
> My body tells me that I am in pain, hungry, have sexual needs. It is through my body that I know it is not so very good here on earth. The wrong way to relieve this tension is to deny and to suppress the body and its needs in favour of affirming an idealistic spirituality cleansed of all bodily desires.

Self discovery and discovering God go together. But this self who is being discovered, is a body (Naylor 1996). A way to come to know God is to listen to one's body (Harren 2004:279). Personal empowerment happens when one accepts one's body – "Transformation is through the body, not away from it" (Tolle 2005:95). One can be at home in one's body, because God is Emmanuel. God is not revealed to us "'up there', remote, but the God who is Emmanuel, the God who is with us, battered and bruised as we are, sharing our life in all its richness and also in all its sadness's and also our death" (Forbes 2007:156).

Louw (2005:16) calls our being "an embodied soul and a spirited body". We become a "Spirited body" when our physical bodies, infused with cultural heritage, have received "the Breath of God's Spirit" (Murphy 2006:ix). Then our being gives form and expression to "a new spirituality" (Nouwen 1998:32). My body is my embodied spiritual self!

> It is the body that makes spiritual experience passionate, that brings to it intense desire and pleasure, pain, delight, and remorse. Without all these things, spirituality is bland. In the world's spiritual traditions, sex and art and music and dance and the taste of food have been for millennia forms of spiritual experience just as much as ritual practice, meditation, and prayer. (Lakoff & Johnson 1999:568.)

THE PARADOX OF LIFE

Perspectives on a theology of the body are filled with paradoxes. We need God's compassion; God's power of suffering, serving, and acting. It is God's redeeming and restorative love that

gives the Christian faith a solid base and credibility. However, God became part of humanity, allowing humanity to become part of God (2 Pet. 1:4). And now God's desire to be loved by us, can be fulfilled (Nouwen 2007). "People are not God's puppets, but persons with integrity and potential, whom God has engaged as his partners in each of the placid or painful phases of existence" (Ellens 1987:27).

Our bodiliness is paradoxical as well. Our strengths and weaknesses, pleasure but also discomfort and pain, are all reminders of our embodied existence which make a theology of the body relevant (Berry 1982:955). Health and disease are embraced as ways of living. Everybody gets ill; although some conditions are more serious than others (Ellens 1987:27). Subsequently, illness is not regarded as "an enemy, but a creation of the organism" (Ellens 1987:12). And we all die.

Body theology recognises the potential of humans, but within boundaries. "(T)he root of the human malaise is our giving in to the idolatrous desire to become just such a 'No-Limit Person'. … Faith comes as the gift of accepting ourselves as 'a person with limits' – not grudgingly, not spitefully, but gratefully" (Berry 1982:955).

At the time of writing this article, a well-known rugby player made the headlines of an Afrikaans newspaper *Die Burger.* Joost van der Westhuizen, a former captain of the Springboks, has been diagnosed with a fatal neurological disease. We all are vulnerable, because we are human. Sometimes even babies are born with some disability. "Illness is an element on the growth continuum of conception-birth-life-death-and eternal life. It is a distortion of the comfortable and direct line of growth we idealize, from birth to self-actualization; but it is not the opposite of growth. Indeed, it is often a growth inducer" (Ellens 1987:15).

Moore (2004) reflects in *Dark Nights of the Soul* that during life's darkest hours the challenge is to restore oneself and to become someone with human dignity, depth and soul. My spiritual journey has brought about a faith that is "embodied in concrete living" (Ahner 2007:19). Spirited bodies embody imperfection. Each of us is like an African pot standing with its three legs of faith, hope and love in the ashes of last night's fire, still with the leftover in it to be enjoyed by our friends.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ahner, G. 2007. *Business Ethics. Making a life, not just living*. New York: Orbis Books.

Ashley, E. 2008. *The scandal of weak leadership: Paul's defence of ministry.* Online at *http://www.lutterworth.com/pub/on%20eagles%20wings%20ch5.pdf* Accessed: 9 May 2011Berry, D. 1982. Seeking a Theology of the Finite. *Christian Century,* 99, September: 953-956.

Coffin, W.S. 2003. God and the world's disorders. In Langford, J.R. & Rouner, L.S (Eds.) *Walking with God in a fragile world.* Oxford: Rowman & Litttlefield: 13-21.

Egan, H.D. 2005. Theology and Spirituality. In Marmion, D. & Hines, M.E. (Eds.) *The Cambridge Companions to Karl Rahner.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 13-28.

'Ek kan nie sê hoeveel tyd hy oor het nie' – Dokter. Joost ernstig siek. 2011. *Die Burger,* 13 Mei:1.

Eiesland, N.L. 1994. *The Disabled God: Toward a Libratory Theology of Disability.* Nashville: Abingdon Press.

Ellens, J.H. 1987. *Psychotheology: Key issues.* Pretoria: UNISA.

Enneads. Online at *http://www.john-uebersax.com/plato/enneads.htm#egf4*. Accessed: 9 May 2011.

Forbes, G. 2007. And Finally ... Risk Assessment on Christmas Eve. *The Expository Times,* 119 (3):156.

Harren, J. 2009. Bones and Bread: Knowing God in our Bodies through the Communion Table. *Journal of Religion, Disability & Health,* 13(3-4):274-292.

Heick, O.W. 1965. *A History of Christian Thought.* Philadelphia: Fortress.

Hernandez, W. 2006. *Henri Nouwen: A Spirituality of Imperfection.* Mahwah: Paulist Press.

Isherwood, L. & Stuart, E. 1998. *Introducing Body Theology.* Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.

Kidner, D. 1970. Isaiah. In Guthrie, D. & Motyer, J. (Eds.) *The New Bible Commentary Revised.* Leicester:

Inter-Varsity Press: 588-625.

Lakoff, G. & Johnson, M. 1999. *Philosophy in the flesh. The embodied mind and its challenge to Western thought.* New York: Basic Books.

Louw, D.A. 2005. *Ratwerke van die menslike siel. Oor volwassenheid en lewensvaardighede*. Stellenbosch: SUN Press.

Mairs, N. 1989. *Remembering the Bone House.* New York: Harper & Row.

Moore, T. 2004. *Dark nights of the soul.* London: PIATKOS.

Müller, J. 1995. Die Barmhartigheid van Kersfees – Lukas 2:1-10. In Sinodale Kommissie vir die Diens van Barmhartigheid NGK Suid-Transvaal. *Nood voor die deure van die kerk.* NGK Suid-Transvaal: 1-6.

Müller, J. 2011. *Om te mag twyfel. 'n Gelowige se reis.* Cape Town: Tafelberg.

Murphy, N. 2002. Introduction. In Russel, R.J., Meyering, T.C. & Arbib, M.A. (Eds.) *Neuroscience and the person. Scientific perspectives on divine action.* Berkeley: Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences: i-xxxv.

Naylor, V. 1996. *The Theology of Touch.* Online at *http://www.franciscanarchive.org.uk/1996jan-naylor*. Accessed: 22 February 2011.

Nouwen, H. 2007. *God's powerlessness.* Online at *http://helenl.wordpress.com/2007/03/0/gods-powerlessness-by-henri-nouwen/* Accessed: 2 May 2011.

Nouwen, H.J.M.. 1998. *The inner voice of love. A Journey Through Anguish To Freedom.* New York: Doubleday.

Sawyer, J.F.A. 1975. The ruined House in Ecclessiastes 12: A reconstruction of the original parable. Journal of Biblical Literature, 94(4), December: 519-531.

Sölle, D. & Cloyes, S.A. 1984. *To work and To love: A Theology of Creation*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

The Holy Bible New International Version. 1983. Cape Town: Bible Society of South Africa.

The Neoplatonic Doctrine. Online at http://www.123HelpMe.com/view.asp?id=78872 Accessed: 5 May 2011.

Tolle, E. 2005. *The Power of Now. A Guide to Spiritual Enlightenment.* London: Hodder & Stoughton.

Van den Berg, J.A. 2008. An embodied spirituality: Perspectives for a bodily pastoral anthropology. *Acta Theologica,* 2:118-132.

Van Huyssteen, J.W. 2006. *Alone in the world? Human uniqueness in science and theology. The Gifford lectures.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company.

Van Niekerk, A. 2005. *Geloof sonder sekerhede.* Wellington: Bybel-Media.

Wikipedia. *Patch Adams.* Online at *http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patch_Adam*s. Accessed: 5 May 2011.

Wilson, W.J.G. 2004. *A faith unfaithful (wrestling with belief.)* Indiana: Author House Bloomington.

KEY WORDS
Spirituality of imperfection
Dualism
Disability
Incarnation
spiritual journey
Body theology

TREFWOORDE
Onvolmaakte spiritualiteit
Dualism
Gestremdheid
Vleeswording
Spirituele reis
Lyfteologie

CONTACT DETAILS
Dr Pieter van
Niekerk (research
associate,US)
PO Box 503
Great Brak River
6525
heaven@lantic.net

Venter, R
University of the Free State

The agency of the Holy Spirit and heuristic categories for discernment in spirituality

ABSTRACT

Living in a complex world with many challenges may render discernment as Christian spiritual practice increasingly important. If discernment is understood as an interpretation of the movement of the Holy Spirit in life, one obvious and fruitful avenue to gain better insight into this may entail an exploration of the very nature of this agency. To map the work of the Spirit is a striking hiatus in scholarly literature on discernment, and the article intends to address this. The need is for heuristic, that is, problem-solving, categories for reflecting on the agency of the Spirit. This article specifically contributes towards exploring such insight by studying contemporary developments in pneumatology. In recent study on the work of the Spirit, seven trends are investigated, and corresponding notions such as novelty, emergence, justice, hospitality, beauty, the impossible, and relationality emerge as ways to interpret the movement of the Spirit. These motifs, it is argued, may provide a lens to discover the divine possibilities in each moment in life and to understand discernment better.

1. INTRODUCTION: DISCERNMENT & PNEUMATOLOGY

"A discernment of cries". This lies at the core of a wise and creative theology for the twenty-first century, asserts Ford (2011:1) in a reflection on the future of Christian theology. Discernment is an imperative in our time; there is an urgent need for both a critical reading of the deep changes and shifts taking place globally and a courageous naming of what responsible living might entail. At stake, for Christians and theology, is more than Aristotelian phronēsis, practical wisdom, which is often mentioned by philosophers.[1] Christian discernment is about distinguishing the divine possibilities at each moment.[2] The active presence of God in the world is fundamental to a Christian vision; events do not merely occur. Discernment in Christian spirituality has a basic Trinitarian grammar (Lonsdale 2005a:247).[3] The work of the triune God should be perceived and interpreted under and in the conditions of our time. Discernment, however, is not a simple human reflex; it requires a sensitive antenna to the mysterious movement of the divine, rendering it a most demanding practice. The focus of this article is on one specific aspect of these "divine possibilities", of this grammar of discernment – the pneumatological. The work of the Spirit or, in other words, pneumatic agency will be examined. The thesis to be explored is that attention to the nature of the work of the Holy Spirit may contribute to

---

1 Prominent, e.g., in works by Gadamer, Ricoeur and MacIntyre.
2 The Dutch scholar of spirituality, Kees Waaijman, writes extensively about the *diakrisis* (2000:481-512), and identifies a basic insight (2000:508): "Onderscheiding ziet in de feitelijkheid de goddelijke ontwikkelingsmogelijkheden die zich ieder moment aanbieden."
3 In another contribution, Lonsdale (2005b:248) strikingly describes discernment in terms of pneumatology: "It is an attempt to help persons and communities to tune in to what the Spirit of Christ is doing and desires to do in the world."

a better understanding of discernment. Put another way, adequate categories for describing pneumatic agency may have heuristic potential for discernment. If a lens is available to perceive the work of the Spirit, such an undertaking has, in my opinion, not been adequately addressed in related literature.4 Sustained attention to the character of the work of the Spirit in discussion on Christian discernment has been neglected.

The wider frame for the problem to be addressed is the relationship between doctrinal theology and spirituality, which does not enjoy consensus in scholarship and which cannot be explored in this instance.5 Suffice it to say that my approach is dialogical, accepting that Systematic Theology could be enriched and determined by spirituality and experience, but simultaneously suggesting a hermeneutical function for doctrinal articulations. This implies that dogmatic explorations may provide a spatial sphere, a symbolic or linguistic world for interpreting and even stimulating experiences.6 Dogmatic statements are interpretations in language, which creates, as sociology of knowledge taught us, 'worlds' which are inhabited and which generate subsequently various experiences. This will be embodied in the approach of this article. A brief overview will be given of the state of scholarship on pneumatology, and main developments and emphases will be introduced without any claim to exhaustive treatment. An attempt will be made to distil major motifs prominent in contemporary thinking about the Holy Spirit.

The aim of the article and of the specific approach serves this hermeneutical orientation. By identifying these so-called contemporary motifs, I intend to construe categories for reflecting on and addressing intellectual questions. Put differently, in the words central to the long traditions of discernment, criteria will be named to discern various spirits of our time. Potentially three contributions could be made: an idiom to speak about the Holy Spirit under the intellectual conditions of our time may be suggested; a hermeneutical lens for reading events and texts spiritually may be provided, and discernment as such may be relocated to a broader, public sphere. Delimitation should also be mentioned. "The juncture of mind and Spirit", which is central in discernment and which has been thoroughly explored by Munzinger (2007) in his study,7 is not the question to be addressed in this instance. The article has a specific theological focus, that is, the nature of God the Spirit's work.

2. TRENDS IN CONTEMPORARY PNEUMATOLOGY – CENTRAL MOTIFS

---

4 Reference to the Holy Spirit is often found, but an explicit exploration of the nature of the work of the Spirit is neglected in discussions of discernment. One example may illustrate this. In her recent work on discernment, Liebert (2008) describes it as "the process of becoming aware of how God is present, active and calling us …" (:8); it is "the desire to follow the Spirit of Jesus" (:9). She emphasises that it "does matter how we think about God" (:15), and identifies in her seven-step procedure for discerning a decision that one should seek the "presence of indicators", that is "signs of the Holy Spirit's work" (:20). However, nowhere in her study is the very nature of God's work through the Spirit theorised. In the more detailed discussion of the practice of discernment, she refers to the work by Jonathan Edwards (:151), but offers no theological reflection of her own.

5 For a brief, but good discussion, see Endean (2005:74-79).

6 Interestingly, in his discussion of discernment, Buckley (1993:274) warns that religious experience does not absolve one from critical reflection and the doctrinal content of Christian faith.

7 Munzinger's (2007:18) study argues for discernment as the "nerve centre" of Pauline thinking. Developing a comprehensive approach to discernment, he links spirituality, ethics and theology in Paul. Discernment is about the "interaction of human mediation and divine revelation", and the result of the eschatological new heart. Despite his thorough and detailed scholarship on discernment, and his intended comprehensiveness, I have a lingering concern that an inadequate pneumatology is the weakness of the work. My impression is that a privatised notion of the Spirit's work is found in the subtext of the argument.

The position of pneumatology remains ambivalent in recent Systematic Theology. In some work, the reduction to Christology and soteriology continues, with a concomitant narrow privatised vision of the Christian faith; fortunately, there are clear indications of new sensibilities. One example can be highlighted: the volume Constructive Theology (see Jones & Lakeland 2005) with contributions by a number of scholars in the USA known for their progressive intuitions.[8] The chapter on pneumatology not only warns about new "sites of Spirit-talk" (e.g., feminism and charismatic renewal), but also offers an intriguing "subaltern history" of the Spirit, presenting a historical account from the underside. Constructive proposals along cosmic, ecological and musical (jazz) keys are presented. The creative nature of the exploration matches the very free nature of the Spirit. Of particular interest in the extended chapter is a mapping exercise, suggesting avenues for discerning the Spirit; these are "six marks of the Spirit's movement" (2005:243ff), indicating that the Spirit is prophetic, performative, particular, processual, paradoxical and primordial. This article intends to do something similar, but with a different approach. This section will identify a number of critical developments in pneumatology and one major motif will be distilled accompanying each one. It is emphatically not an essentialising exercise, but merely an endeavour to listen to voices, and to learn how the Spirit's work is conceptualised in various intellectual spheres. The basic conviction is that these newer trends may allow glimpses into the nature of the Spirit's agency.

2.1 Holy Spirit and Pentecostalism – Novelty

The obvious phenomenon to highlight from the outset is arguably global Pentecostalism. From the perspective of a sociology of religion, considering the rapid global growth of the movement and the large numbers at stake, this is a most significant development in the history of the Christian faith. This elicits a host of questions which are beyond the scope of this article. Excellent treatments are available which discuss the origin, development, internal mutations, and various features of the theological edifice.[9] Suffice it to state that the movement signals a larger social shift – a resistance to both the tyrannies of tradition and modernity. The astute observer Harvey Cox (1999:139) is of the opinion that we are witnessing "a fascinating transformation of religion, a creative series of self-adaptations" to the momentous change taking place in society, a barometer to something larger whose inner meaning is still being gauged. The question is whether an outstanding motif could be gleaned from the movement in order to generate new insight into the work of the Spirit.

Conventional treatments usually point to the same recurring themes. Kärkkäinen (2002:92), for example, names a particular brand of spirituality as the core of Pentecostalism and the category experience as being essential to it. The doctrine of Spirit baptism is regarded as the single most important element of the Pentecostal pneumatology, which is affirmed by speaking in tongues (2002:95ff). Apart from these generic structural features, motifs such as power and healing are often encountered. In certain contexts, for instance in Africa, additional themes such as prosperity and spiritual warfare, have also acquired prominence.

It is important to note that a rather vibrant and ambitious Pentecostal scholarship, probing beyond mere description of the phenomenon, has been emerging. Some of the most creative and constructive reflection on pneumatology is undertaken by Pentecostal theologians. The

---

8 The textbook by Plantinga *et al.* (2010) should also be mentioned. The chapter on pneumatology is indicative of a new awareness, and the Spirit is related to newer Trinitarian developments, but also to the appreciation of a cosmic orientation, i.e. ecology, world religions, and holistic spirituality.

9 The work *An introduction to Pentecostalism* (2004) by the leading authority Allan Anderson is recommended. See also Anderson, Bergunder, Droogers & Van der Laan (2010) for an outstanding multidisciplinary study on the phenomenon of Pentecostalism.

work by Amos Yong, to mention only one scholar, extensively explores crucial and pressing contemporary problems such as faith and science, inter-religious dialogue, politics, human disability, and global theology from a Pentecostal perspective. His theology goes beyond narrow denominational concerns and contributes to a deepening of pneumatology as such. Traditional theology cannot afford to ignore the research done by Pentecostal scholars.

Another influential Pentecostal scholar, James Smith (see 2003:109ff), may pave the way to identify a critical motif indicative of the identity of this movement. He raises the question of the fundamental elements of a Pentecostal world view and identifies radical openness to God and, more specifically, God doing something differently or new as central to this movement. His scriptural appeal is to Acts 2 where Peter offered a pneumatic explanation of the strange phenomena. God is working in unexpected ways because of the continued ministry of the Spirit.[10] Smith's (see, e.g., 2008) deeper philosophical convictions emerge in other work. Intrinsic to Pentecostalism is a specific ontology – a dynamic, open and participatory one. Being as such is not closed, but open to the surprises of God. Smith resists metaphysical and methodological naturalism, which presupposes a closed universe with no possibility of novelty.[11]

2.2 Holy Spirit and Science – Emergence

One of the most significant and exciting discourses in theology is represented by the faith-science dialogue. The incorporation of pneumatological perspectives in this reflection holds the promise of generating potentially fruitful avenues for the entire theological enterprise. The ground-breaking work of Pannenberg (see esp. 1994:79-84) in this regard should be mentioned.[12] He incorporated terminology from physics such as *force-field* in his treatment of the Holy Spirit. A complex of notions such as *cosmic Spirit, life, materiality* and *body* can be associated with this more recent interest and warrant detailed expositions of each one of these. This article will focus on one specific central theme in the faith-science conversation – that of *divine agency.* An active participant in this debate, Philip Clayton (2005:345), is of the opinion that the question of divine agency represents science's single greatest challenge to theology. The importance of this issue is understandable and is also reflected in the ambitious twenty-year interdisciplinary project on *Scientific perspectives on divine action.*[13] To reflect pneumatologically on divine agency as central problem in the faith-science question may open truly interesting avenues.

The very *possibility* of divine action seems in a quantum era much less problematic than in a previous cosmological dispensation presupposing naturalistic closure. Polkinghorne

---

10 The other elements Smith identifies include healing of the body, the role of experience and an affective epistemology, and commitment to empowerment and social justice.

11 What surfaces in this instance is the intriguing contribution of Pentecostal scholars to the faith-science debate, especially concerning divine action. Smith counters an interventionist model of divine action. The Holy Spirit is always at work in creation; sometimes, however, the "intensity of participation" may change (see 2008:890). Such a view allows for regularity and the miraculous. For further and a more detailed discussion on Spirit and Philosophy, and Spirit and Science, see two recently published works by outstanding Pentecostal scholars: Smith (2010), and Smith and Yong (2010).

12 Several concerns inform Pannenberg's pneumatology. He tries to avoid the dangers of privatising the Spirit to subjective areas, and to counter the reduction of the Spirit's work to soteriology. Hence, his starting point is a retrieval of the Biblical notion of the Spirit as the life-force sustaining all life. Employing Michael Faraday's ideas, he aligns theology with the changed view of physics on the relation between force and body, i.e. bodies are regarded as forms of forces. See Kärkkäinen (2004a) for a full discussion of Pannenberg's views, as well as for the wider application of his pneumatology, especially to his doctrine of God. He also offers some critical remarks.

13 This was jointly undertaken by the *Vatican Observatory and* the *Berkeley Centre for Theology and the Natural Sciences.* See Russell *et al*. (2008) for summaries of the research. The neglect of pneumatological exploration is one of the disturbing weaknesses of this most commendable project.

(2006:169ff), who is both theologian and particle physicist, argues for room for the spiritual dimension by appealing to both the "intrinsic unpredictabilities in the physical process" and the "self-effacing character" of the Spirit's presence. By interfacing Heisenberg's uncertainty principle of quantum physics and the theological tradition of the reticent, veiled or hidden work of the Spirit, opens the possibility of speaking of God's work in the creaturely realm. True novelty can emerge in this instance.[14]

The argument for this possibility intimates a critical issue for pneumatology, the question of a *cosmological framework.* The question can be raised as to whether the paradigm shift in physics from Newton to Einstein has been adequately registered in theology and especially pneumatology. In a seminal article, Vondey (see 2009) attempted to profile the repercussions of these two cosmologies for pneumatology. In line with Pannenberg's thesis, he points to the replacement of the concept of force by field theory, but also that time and space are no longer external to matter, but are intrinsic to it. According to Vondey (see 2009:27-36), pneumatology should be developed in terms of an entirely different set of notions such as order, rationality, relationality and movement, for example. The role of the Spirit as agent of order[15] and rationality in the cosmos should be thought afresh. Particularly suggestive is his proposal that the Spirit should be revisioned in a new cosmology valuing process and change, not as presence, but as *movement.[16]*

One problem of utmost importance has crystallised in the debate on causality: *the emergence of complexity.* The key question is whether higher levels of reality in the hierarchy of complexity are simply the outcome of lower level casual powers, or whether bottom-up causation should be complemented by top-down notions. George Ellis (2006:759) mentions the "casually incomplete theory of the world" of physics, because questions pertaining to ethics, aesthetics, metaphysics and meaning lie beyond the ambit of science. "Nature's stunning capacity for self-complexification" (Gregersen 2006:782) has afforded theologians the opportunity to counter reductionist views of science and to connect concepts of emergence and complexity with divine action. The work of Amos Yong (see 2006) deserves careful notice.[17] He is well aware that *emergence* is a metaphysical construct and, as a theologian, he links emergence explicitly with the Holy Spirit. The processes of differentiation in reality are ascribed to the life-giving presence and activity of the Spirit of God (2006:198). A pneumatological account of emergence is an attempt to account for the openness of the world to its future.[18]

---

14 Russell's (see, e.g., 2007:202ff) notion of NIODA (non-interventionist objective divine action) has become well known in faith-science circles. He expressly locates God's action at quantum level. Whether he has developed this pneumatologically is not known to me.

15 Vondey (2009:28) observes that the Spirit is responsible not only for order and harmony, but also for disorder, chaos and discontinuity. In his early work on pneumatology, the Dutch scholar, Van de Beek (1987:210-214), presents a treatment of "de chaotiserende Geest". These insights are based on the work by another Dutch theologian, Van Ruler.

16 It should be pointed out that Vondey's important work is in a sense one-sided. The story of paradigm shift in physics and eventually cosmology entails not only the work by Einstein on general and special relativity, but also the constellation of developments concerning quantum mechanics by scholars such as Bohr and Heisenberg. To situate pneumatology in the faith-science debate is daunting and requires an acquaintance with cosmological developments since the second half of the twentieth century.

17 These few remarks cannot do justice to Yong's detailed and nuanced arguments. His major work *The Spirit of creation* (2011) should be consulted. In this book, he engages with the Divine Action Project from a Pentecostal perspective and develops a detailed pneumatological cosmology.

18 The new work edited by Welker (2012) on the cosmic work of the Spirit is relevant to the discussion in this entire section. This book signals the growing importance of the intersection between pneumatology, ecology and faith-science discussions.

2.3 Holy Spirit and Politics – Justice

Pneumatology has not escaped the powerful deprivatising trend in theology with the articulation of various liberation theologies since the 1960s. The Holy Spirit has been linked with social conflict and the liberative aspirations of people subjected to multiple forms of injustice. Various proposals are currently available as academic resources which can stimulate reflection on the work of the Holy Spirit in a political key. One of the earlier book-length explorations was the Latin American José Comblin's *The Holy Spirit and Liberation* (1989). This work not only attended to the experiences of the Spirit in history by the poor in their quest for liberation, but explicitly addressed the need for a *new model* of spirituality (1989:125-139), expressing life in the Spirit "in the midst of the real world, with its economic and social structures, its politics". In this instance, a pneumatology is developed of the Spirit's action in and through history, which is observed in the irruption of the poor. Recently, Amos Yong surprised with his *In the days of Caesar* (2010) – an impressive and comprehensive Pentecostal political theology. His so-called "Pentecostal assist" is an attempt to make a genuine creative contribution to a field already crowded with proposals. His basic hypothesis is conveyed in the motto "many tongues, many political practices" (2010:109) and his Biblical appeal is mainly – in typical Pentecostal manner – to Luke-Acts. This complex and multilayered work addresses a wide range of spheres, namely politics, economics, culture and history. However, the argument is so dense that the reader finds it difficult to seek a unified pneumatological entry into the work. The central notion of justice is sadly neglected.

One can obviously argue in a variety of ways about the *Biblical evidence* for a relation between Spirit and justice. One striking example can be singled out: the pairing of Spirit and justice by the eighth-century Judean prophet Micah (see Levison 2009:41-47 for a fitting discussion). In his indictment of other prophets, Micah is surprised by their ignorance of justice (3:1 – "Should you not know justice?"). The question about the Spirit "being cut short" (2:7, i.e. losing patience) is countered with an appeal to justice: as long as there is justice, the Spirit is not cut short. In the confrontation with the other, false, prophets, Micah construes his own prophetic identity in terms of Spirit, power and justice – "But as for me, I am filled with power, with the Spirit of the Lord, and with justice and might" (3:8). Two fundamental realities are linked in this instance: the axiomatic quality of justice (see also 6:8) and the endowment of the prophet with the Spirit of the Lord.

Michael Welker's work (1994) is a major text on pneumatology, and is important not only for his methodology, but also for the themes he discusses which are particularly relevant to this article. He rejects abstract treatments of the Spirit, and focuses as systematic theologian on the Biblical witnesses and on the broad spectrum of experiences of God's Spirit. A clear sensitivity to the socio-political work of the Spirit can be detected throughout his work. The experiences of the Spirit are "firmly embedded in various experiences of life that is threatened and endangered … A people is threatened with annihilation. A political system collapses …" (1994:x). The triad "justice, mercy, and knowledge of God" runs like a golden thread through the work (see, e.g., 1994:221 as major statement to this effect). The Book of Judges and the messianic passages in Isaiah receive thorough interpretation. Liberation signifies distinct signs of the work of the Spirit. The presence of the Spirit is discerned as "a renewal of the people's power of resistance in the midst of universal despair" (Welker 1994:53). He repeatedly asserts that the Spirit is the "Spirit of righteousness". A number of other views by Welker are noteworthy: the Spirit champions diversity and plurality (1994:134) and works in creaturely "fleshliness" (1994:163); the Spirit is a "public person" (1994:312) as it forms the domain of Christ's resonance.[19]

---

19 Like Pannenberg, Welker (see 1994:313 esp. n 51) utilises a non-theological term – "domain of resonance" – borrowed from Luhmann. This refers to the fact that identity is formed in a network of

2.4 Holy Spirit and Religions – Hospitality

The relation of the Christian Faith to other religions, and the question of the status of those religions form some of the most difficult intellectual challenges for theology. An exclusivist model is obviously possible, as it is also encountered in fundamentalist circles. Increasingly, an ethically more accountable approach frames the problem as being *faithful* to one's own truth-seeking tradition, whilst *respecting* and even valuing other similar traditions. A wide range of inclusivist and pluralist proposals are available, without any of these having acquired normative status. Noteworthy, however, is the enthusiasm for probing Trinitarian options in the discourse.[20] Apart from these suggestions, one also encounters explicit pneumatological endeavours which deserve attention, and which will be briefly introduced in this section.

The work by Haight (2008) exemplifies such a typical pneumatological attempt to come to terms with religious plurality. The objective, in this instance, is not to present his work as necessarily the most persuasive, but to investigate the *kind of rhetoric* employed by proponents of such an approach. He is convinced that a theology of the Spirit may be the key to a satisfying Christian theology of religions. His argument consists of a number of crucial theological *moves.* *Spirit* is viewed as a symbol with a specific referent, that is, the transcendent, creative and salvific power at work in the world (2008:63). He avoids personal language, and is most sensitive to the non-literal quality of all speech about God. Intentionally, Haight defines Spirit with an expansive intent. This is also evident in the representation of the relation between Christ and the Spirit by opting for a Spirit-Christology. The Spirit is viewed as preceding Christ; this implies that His entire ministry was constituted by the Spirit. This obviously weakens the focus on the absoluteness of the Christ figure. Finally, Haight re-envisions the conceptual framework for understanding the divine-world/human economy (2008:65ff). He replaces the traditional chronological two-phase scheme of salvation, which follows creation, with an evolutionary model which fashions creation and salvation in a more integrated manner. This allows God as Spirit to act in the world as power and love in a comprehensive sense, also in religions where responses to ultimacy are manifested. His model is an unavoidable shift from Christocentrism to Theocentrism. Haight's proposal, which has been presented in a truncated manner, gives an indication not only of the theological arguments present in this approach, but also of the stark problems inherent in the entire challenge of religious pluralism.

Amos Yong formulated a "pneumatological theology of inter-religious hospitality" which should be meticulously studied.[21] Like Haight, he stresses that our specific historical moment – post-9/11, according to him – renders exclusivist claims problematic and requires more dialogical approaches. In typical Pentecostal fashion, he finds the starting point in Acts 2:17, with the narrative of the Holy Spirit being poured out on all flesh and which speaks of God's universal embrace of humanity with her many cultures, languages and religions (2007:58ff). Luke-Acts is primarily a witness of Trinitarian *hospitality* (2008:100ff). Christian hospitality is grounded in the hospitable God – "God gives himself by the Holy Spirit at Pentecost to all flesh, and by doing so welcomes and embraces all of humanity" (2007:62). Pentecost is an ultimate expression and manifestation of divine hospitality. Christian faith, according to Yong, should be performed, meaning that God's hospitality should be embodied in a hospitable church. Finally, hospitality requires reciprocity and mutuality. Interestingly, this elicits some of the implications of Yong's dialogical model: an inter-religious encounter can change Christians as such! This may be the

---

relationships. The presence of the Spirit can be felt in worldwide influence and effectiveness (1994:315).

20 The work by Kärkkäinen *Trinity and religious pluralism* (2004b) offers an exceptionally good overview of the major proposals in this regard.

21 Yong has published widely on this. *Hospitality and the Other* (2008) conveys his views in detail. The 2007 article summarises his major arguments quite succinctly.

surprises which the Spirit could bring. Hospitality should especially be performed at the table; eating with the religious Other may establish authentic dialogue. His dialogical approach of inter-religious hospitality is more ambiguous than other models, because it requires discernment in each context and to what the Spirit may be saying and requiring (Yong 2007:65). He is confident that the Spirit may be active in various religions in surprising ways (Yong 2007:65).

The emphasis on hospitality and its express relation to the Spirit is a valuable insight. Hospitality has become a major optic in both postmodern theory and Christian theology. An appreciation of the pluralistic context of contemporary society and of the major challenges generated by Otherness and the perennial possibility of violence chiefly contributed to this re-appreciation of an ancient virtue. Literature on the topic abounds, also in theology.[22] Yong's specific contribution is to link Otherness Biblically with the Lucan writings, define it pneumatologically and apply it to a major intellectual problem.

2.5 Holy Spirit and Aesthetics – Beauty

The growing interest in another conversation, namely that between theology and arts,[23] should not escape our attention in the search for heuristic categories to speak about the agency of the Spirit. Notions such as beauty, wonder, and enjoyment emerge in this instance; these have been sadly neglected in the past and resulted in impoverished discourse about God. Theological aesthetics have become a potentially productive resource for exploring ways to speak about the work of the Spirit. Despite the new interest in linking God with beauty, explicit pneumatological treatment remains a field to be developed more fully. In this brief purview, possible avenues for such further reflection can be mentioned.

The remarkable *Biblical narrative* in Exodus 35:30ff, recounting the endowment of Bezalel and Oholiab with artistic skill by God's Spirit to construct the tabernacle, forms an obvious starting point. Striking in this passage is the association of creativity with the work of the Spirit.[24]

In the *Christian tradition,* one occasionally encounters, for instance in Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and the Cappadocians, some connotation of beauty with the Spirit. In the West, the association of beauty has been predominantly with the Son, for example in the work of Augustine, Thomas and even Von Balthasar. According to Sherry (2007:8), the more explicit pneumatological discussions of beauty are found in the work of Russian theologians such as Evdomikov and Bulgakov, and especially in the work of the eighteenth-century American Puritan *Jonathan Edwards.* Beauty is arguably more pervasive in his work than in any other theologian's (see Farley 2001:43). Brief remarks can be made about the role of the Holy Spirit in his aesthetics. His consistent Trinitarian theology forms the background of Edwards's thought; the role of the Spirit in the Triune life determines his understanding of pneumatic beauty. In typical eighteenth-century fashion, beauty is equated with *harmony:* the Spirit is the harmony, the excellence and the beauty of the deity (see Delattre 2006:152ff). As substantial love, the Spirit is divine beauty. Edwards also identifies the Spirit with joy, delight, happiness and affection. Authentic religious experience, as "sense of the heart" – to employ typical terminology by Edwards - is an actual infusion of the One who is beauty, and is consequently "an aesthetic experience of the deepest kind" (see Mitchell 2003:28).

The most detailed contemporary exposition of the relation between the Holy Spirit and

---

22 One major recent source can be mentioned, that by Newlands and Smith – *Hospitable God* (2010). This work examines hospitality as a cognitive tool for reframing thinking about God, divine action and discipleship, and explores the application to urgent social dilemmas. Unfortunately, a pneumatological perspective on hospitality has been neglected.

23 For an overview, see Dyrness (2007).

24 For a detailed discussion, see the article by Hess (2011).

aesthetics is found in the work by Sherry – *Spirit and Beauty* (2002). His basic argument is developed in terms of Trinitarian theology and eschatology. The Spirit's work is to communicate in natural and artistic beauty the glory of the Father. Earthly beauty is an anticipation of the transfigured world to come. He ponders the implications of a neglect of beauty as category to understand God and the Christian life. Appreciating beauty contributes to a renewal of the doctrine of God and to a retrieval of fundamental human responses such as wonder, joy and celebration (see 2002:164-173; 2007:13).

2.6 Holy Spirit and Postmodernity – The Impossible

The so-called "turn to religion" is one of the remarkable developments in the intellectual horizon since the last quarter of the twentieth century. One specific trajectory of this interest, which manifested itself in various academic fields, is relevant to this article: the interaction with Heidegger's notion of onto-theology and with Derrida's later thought. Major works on God by philosophers of religion such as Marion (1991), Kearney (2001) and Caputo (2006) have been published. These works established a discourse with clearly recognisable features, and are of significance to theology. Kearney's term *anatheism* captures the central concern aptly: a return to God after the atheist critique of the traditional God of onto-theology. This is an attempt to present "a divinity at last free from the three-headed monster of metaphysics – the Omni-God of omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence …" (Manoussakis 2006:xvi). A new set of terms has emerged - *gift, hospitality, otherness,* and *excess* – to reflect on transcendence and the divine.[25] One particular central category plays a major role in the debate and will be briefly introduced: *the Impossible.* Unfortunately, the potential application to and significance for pneumatology have not yet been – to my knowledge – investigated. The semantic connotations to the term convey critically important insights which can be used to reflect on the agency of the Holy Spirit. Such an argumentative move will not only assist pneumatology, but also place it within the ambit of postmodern sensibilities.

One specific exposition by a Christian theologian can be conveyed in this instance. David Tracy (2011:124), a talented scholar and active participant in this discourse, appreciates the *Impossible* as a most productive entry to the question of naming God in our postmodern era: "this postmodern route of the Impossible … is an exceptionally promising route to naming God as the incomprehensible, hidden, all-loving one whom we worship." The background to this notion is the radical critique of the self-confidence of the modern logos, the ambition to understand the reality of God, to fit God into a specific horizon of intelligibility.[26] The quotation of Tracy's view conveys the three senses he identifies to fill the *Impossible* with content: *incomprehensibility, hiddenness* and *love* (see 2011:124-127). The Impossible God is radically beyond our grasp; is veiled in suffering and negativity, and is sheer excess and gift. This notion of God disrupts and transgresses our modernistic rationality, our power relations and our understanding of love.

Tracy's interpretation of the *Impossible* is acutely relevant to a reflection on the identity and the agency of the Spirit. Traditionally, the Spirit has been associated exactly with these descriptors. The question about doing theology after onto-theology presents itself with urgency. Schrijvers (2006:303, 313) correctly points out that the critique of onto-theology carries with

---

25 The series of conferences at Villanova University, resulting in a number of important volumes, should be mentioned. See, e.g., the one that highlights the notion of "the Impossible" – Caputo & Scanlon (1999) – *God, the gift and postmodernism.*

26 Onto-theology decides in advance how God will enter philosophical discourse. Most often God is modelled after causal theories, and God becomes the *prima causa,* the First Being. God cannot be anything else but the totality of being, saving beings from contingency and incoherence. See Schrijvers (2006:302ff).

it the seed of *idolatry-critique.* Theology should be aware of her perennial tendency to master transcendence. The challenge can be framed differently: the otherness of the Other should be respected. Thinking and speaking about the Other should be on the Other's terms, and not a reduction of the Other to a reflection of the same. The postmodern discourse and the contributions by thinkers such as Marion, Kearney and Caputo and their respective proposals about "saturated phenomena", "excess of posse beyond esse" and about "God as event", provide valuable resources to overcome onto-theology, and to disrupt attempts to control God conceptually, including the Holy Spirit.

2.7 Holy Spirit and Trinitarian Renaissance – Relationality

At some stage, an academic treatment of the Holy Spirit's work is confronted to address fundamental questions, which are less impressionistic and more ontological. At least three such questions can be identified. Is it possible to integrate in some manner the diverse testimonies and experiences encountered in Christian Scripture to construct some minimally identifiable profile of the Spirit? What is the relationship between the two testaments and their distinct representations of the Spirit;[27] is there a continuity? Finally, what is the relative position of the Spirit to YHWH and to Jesus Christ? These questions amount to a basic, but central problem: the ultimate *mystery of the identity* of the Spirit.[28] Two resources may assist in addressing this and will be cursorily introduced in this section: the *Trinitarian Renaissance,* and the *turn to relationality.*

The question concerning the identity of the Spirit was *historically* never subjected to the same intense scrutiny and debate as that of Jesus Christ. Constantinople ("the Lord, the giver of life … who together with Father and Son is worshipped and glorified") stabilised the identity of the Spirit, and for the Western tradition Augustine's description of the Spirit as the bond of love (*vinculum caritatis*) became immensely influential. The *filioque controversy* resulted in two divergent pneumatologies in the East and the West. The critical insight is that the Spirit has always been conceptualised in terms of *referentiality* (see, e.g., Welker 2007:243, 245), albeit with different emphases by the two great Christian traditions. That the Spirit is eternally related to the Father from whom procession takes place, and that the Spirit witnesses to the Son who had sent her resulted in an ambiguous biography of the Spirit. There is at once a recognisable identity, but at the same time some element of reduction and even eclipse. The Spirit can be understood in terms of the Father and the Son and their mutual relationship, but here remains an intriguing elusiveness, a certain veiledness.

Recent Bibliological studies have stressed the complex and variegated nature of the OT traditions of the Spirit of God (see Firth & Wegner 2011), and the genealogy of traditions from Israel via Judaism to Early Christianity (see Levison 2009). Ontological continuity is finally not a matter of argumentation, but of faith conviction. Levison, who has produced arguably the most important Bibliological work in recent years, argues strongly for continuity, and may represent

---

27 The associations of *Spirit* in the OT and NT are emphatically diverse. The OT has a more cosmic orientation, and endowment is selective; the NT has a virtual exclusive focus on Jesus Christ, and a universal character, but within a limited and specific social sphere – the church. See, e.g., Schweizer (1989:408ff).

28 See Webster's (1983:4) comment on the need to identify the Spirit.

an emerging majority position.[29] The Trinitarian Renaissance of the late twentieth century[30] has not only "recovered" the doctrine of the Trinity as central mystery of the Christian faith, but also established a new appreciation of the relational nature of the very identity of the Christian God. This new interest has stimulated the re-examination of traditional theological positions, and advocated a consistent re-visioning of the entire edifice of systematic theology. Consequently, pneumatology is also being revisited.

One such project is that by Jürgen Moltmann (1992) with his notion of a Trinitarian pneumatology. He is dismissive of the reductionist tradition of limiting the Spirit to the church and the mediation of grace, and of opposing revelation and experience as exclusive alternatives. Creation and redemption are much more closely linked by him. The life-giving and creative Spirit of God and the redemptive Spirit of Christ are similar (1992:9). The central category for appreciating the Spirit is *life.* Moltmann's (1992:34; see also 42) holistic pneumatology allows one to experience God "*in, with and beneath* each everyday experience of the world". The presence of God is experienced where life is affirmed. The Spirit is "the divine well-spring of life" (1992:82). The traditional *ordo salutis* is also aligned to this central concept of life (e.g., rebirth to life; sanctification of life). The same applies to the spirituality: A true spirituality "will be the restoration of the love for life" (1992:97).

A Trinitarian identification of the Spirit is generative of at least *five critical insights.* The Spirit is not only a mode of efficacy, but *co-constitutive* of the very life of God; "a second difference" is required, in Milbank's (1986:230) words, to establish the distinctive pluralist understanding of God's identity in the Christian imagination. Secondly, *identity* is construed in terms of *relationality.* The identity of Father, Son and Spirit, respectively, is established not in typical modernist fashion as autonomous self-constitution, but by the face of the Other. Selfhood carries with it connotation of ex-stasis, mutuality, reciprocity, donation, gift – ultimately of love. The Trinity is the grammar of this love. This moves thinking decisively beyond any vestige of modalism. Thirdly, any traditional truncation is reverted; the Spirit's identity is *expanded* in the relationship to both Father and Son, to both creation and redemption. This implies the dialectic of both universality[31] and particularity. The Spirit is the power of life, but also the power of cross and resurrection of a contingent life. Fourthly, the Trinity furnishes a decisive *hermeneutical lens.* McDonnell's (1985:206) statement, "The Trinitarian mystery is the ultimate reality and the absolute hermeneutic", can be interpreted in various directions, not only for an entire theological vision, but also specifically for pneumatology; he also warns against a pneumatology "divorced from Trinitarian controls and principles" (1985:214).[32] Finally, and for this article's argument most critical, a Trinitarian optic can integrate the other motifs. The love of the Triune Spirit is the white light that radiates the bright colours of novelty, emergence, justice, hospitality and beauty. The Spirit is the *exuberant agency of the Father and the Son.*

---

29 The position by the Dutch scholar Van de Beek in his new study on the Spirit (2012:393ff) represents an extreme opposite view, limiting the Spirit to Christ and the church. A careful analysis of his arguments is necessary. My impression is that his view should be understood in terms of his larger oeuvre, and especially his pessimistic assessment of secular culture. Pneumatologies are determined by strong theological currents. Interestingly, he distances himself from his earlier, more cosmically oriented work (1987).

30 The literature on the topic is vast. The recently published work by Emery and Levering (eds.), *The Oxford handbook of the Trinity (2011),* provides a virtual encyclopaedic state of current scholarship. It also includes a separate article on *Trinitarian pneumatology.*

31 Kasper (1983:202) makes the striking observation in terms of a universal perspective: The Holy Spirit "is concerned with life as such and with the meaning of all life, with the origin and goal of life, with the power that gives life."

32 In McDonnell's (1985:208ff) view, the Spirit is the "point of contact between God and humankind", and refers to the "link character" of pneumatology.

3. THE CHARACTER OF PNEUMATIC AGENCY AND DISCERNMENT

The implication of the results of the previous and central part will be pointed out in this section. The underlying conviction has been throughout that better understanding of the nature of the Spirit's work may facilitate discernment. Consequently, the potential impact by the distilled motifs should be intimated.

a. The specific approach followed in this instance does not pretend to present either an exhaustive or even exclusive treatment. The strengths are, however, obvious: the discussion is located in contemporary concerns and debates, but also conveys some indication of the expanded appreciation of the Spirit's reach. The critical question, which can be directed to my approach and the results, is whether it can carry the burden of *Christian Scriptural witness.* It is virtually futile to attempt to typologise the numerous associations with Spirit in the Bible; they are too diverse to be reduced to singular and comprehensive categories. Certain motifs such as life, endowment for tasks, power, future, truth, and the link with Christ do recur and should be expressly noted,. Where these motifs cannot be integrated with my proposal, the limitation should be acknowledged, and additional motifs should be added. An interesting test case will be the traditional relation between Spirit and salvation. To determine where to group it will depend on what soteriological metaphor is preferred, e.g. righteousness or theosis will obviously show affinity to different linguistic connotations – one to justice, the other to relationality.

b. The question should be pondered as to whether an *interdisciplinary* conversation with other non-theological disciplines could offer valuable recourses for conceptualising the nature of the Spirit's work and action. This refers to the heuristic potential of *theories of agency.* In the manner that socio-scientific theories have benefited Biblical interpretation, similar theories from sociology, for instance, could enrich theological reflection. I consider this a promising area for future research.

c. The *inherent expansiveness* of the motifs identified should be recognised. Each motif elicits a range of *semantic possibilities* of related notions. For example, when reflecting on the Holy Spirit in terms of novelty, freedom comes to mind; of emergence – the future; of justice – reconciliation; of hospitality – otherness; of beauty – desire; of the Impossible – excess, and of relationality – vulnerability. A *surplus of meaning* is thus at play, and the possibilities should be creatively explored. A fundamental consideration with the deliberate selection of trends was to relocate the agency of the Spirit to a *public* world featuring numerous conflicts of interpretation. The expansiveness refers not only to linguistic notions, but also to social, anthropological and intellectual domains. The Spirit is present *in a unique manner* in our epistemologies, our politics, our art, our relations, and so on. Discernment is required in every sphere of life;[33] our pneumatologies should correspondingly be spacious.

d. Each motif does not only encourage the articulation of associated notions, but also possesses structurally a *counter motif* which *resists* the very work of the Spirit. Basic to discernment is the old tradition of two ways (see Waaijman 2000:485ff). Every assertion

---

33 Buckley (1993:279) is worth quoting when he discusses the history of the tradition of discernment: "Discernment ranged over the whole interpretative process in which human beings make decisions."

about the character of the Spirit's work evokes a field of connotation which opposes that. For example, an inexhaustible reservoir of possibilities presents itself – reactionary forces of sameness militates against the novelty of the Spirit; stasis against emergence; violence against justice; hubristic narcissism against hospitality; disharmony against beauty; closure against the Impossible, and autonomy against relationality.

e. The question could be validly raised as to whether speaking about the Spirit does not require *dialectical modes* of thinking. How can thinking accommodate the dialectic of creation/recreation, of cross/resurrection? Should the very modes of conceptualisation not be informed by the very nature of Spirit? A strong tradition, for instance in Paul, Luther, and Bonhoeffer, connects cross/power, presence/absence. I consider this a genuine pneumatological problematic which warrants further reflection. For example, emergence connotes higher levels of complexity with chaos; community presupposes particularity and unity; love is vulnerable, and power is not coercive. Levison (2011:90) points to the "symbiosis of ecstasy and intellectual acuity", emphasising "In a remarkable way, ecstasy and restraint, spontaneity and study, coalesce in early Christianity". The very *propium,* the *recognisable and unique identity* of the work of the Spirit, may be found exactly here. That each motif requires *dialectical qualification* seems to me inevitable. The inability to think dialectically and the insistence on making univocal assertions may be at the basis of much theological polemic. The implications for discernment are obvious: it will require space for ambiguity and for irony as inherent part of life.

f. To move from the results of the pneumatological overview to an interaction with discernment penetrates arguably to the heart of the argument. Or, to put it differently: how do these motifs *apply to discernment* and assist in any way? Assuming that discernment is essentially a *hermeneutical* practice, these motifs do establish a lens, or to change metaphors, create a symbolic world within which decisions are to be made. It would strictly be possible to pursue an analytical application with each motif. However, these motifs operate in a somewhat integrative fashion to form a specific pneumatic "habit of the mind", a disposition towards the world and its challenges. Those who inhabit the world of the Spirit, who love by the logic of the Spirit, display a preference for an open, hospitable, just and dialogical world, and embrace acts of kenosis and celebration. This description can endlessly continue, but always the same colours will be used to paint this exuberant sphere of the Spirit.

g. The previous line of thought has evoked reference to Spirituality. Nurturing a habit of mind for living in the strange world of the Spirit is nothing but journeying with the Spirit to greater intimacy with Transcendence. Inevitably, the theological investigation into pneumatology should enquire after its impact on Spirituality.[34] If love subsumes notions such as novelty, emergence, justice, hospitality, beauty, and the impossible, then the question as to whether the Spirit does not extend an invitation to *participation*[35] in a

---

34 In an excellent and recent article, Shults (2008) follows exactly the same argumentative procedure. Having examined shifts in contemporary pneumatology, he raises the question of the "transformation of spiritual practices" (2008:284). He centres his discussion on three major shifts in pneumatology, i.e. matter, person and force. He concludes that these conceptual shifts facilitate "embodied, communal, and hopeful forms of holistic spirituality" (2008:284).

35 In Trinitarian discourse, the question as to whether *imitation* should not rather be replaced with *participation* is often debated. Especially those who are critical of social Trinitarianism do prefer this; see,

Trinitarian fellowship becomes acute. If the ultimate mystery of the Spirit's identity is related to the Father and Jesus Christ, then the proposal for a *Trinitarian Spirituality*[36] becomes an attractive possibility. Because the very life of the Triune Mystery is eternally fecund, ecstatic, glorious, generous, in short love, those lives who participate in this open fellowship become iconic of these very perfections. The Holy Spirit renders Christian discernment a Trinitarian virtue, a capacity to opt for justice against violence, for hospitality amidst alienation, and for beauty in an age of ugliness.

4. CONCLUSION

The article argued that it is indeed possible to identify marks to interpret the movement of the Holy Spirit. Elements of a grammar for speaking about the work of the Spirit, which are receptive to the sensibilities of contemporary reflection, have been suggested. Where there are whispers of novelty or increasing complexity in the physical world, or justice and hospitality in the socio-political sphere, or beauty in human imaginative expression, we may rightfully discern the work of the Spirit. The 'impossible' will prevent conceptual control of the Spirit: despite recognisable features of the presence of the Spirit, her movement will always remain incomprehensible and hidden. But, finally, the work will always relate to the Father and the Son. The idiom of the Spirit's language is recognisable as a movement of love in our challenging world. Where the beautiful melody of love is heard, the music of the Spirit is performed.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Anderson, A 2004. *An introduction to Pentecostalism.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Anderson, A, Bergunder, M, Droogers, A & Van der Laan, C (eds.) 2010. *Studying global   Pentecostalism: Theories and methods.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
Baum, G (ed.) 1999. *The twentieth century: A theological overview.* Maryknoll, NY: Orbis.
Buckley, M J 1993. Discernment of spirits, in Downey, M (ed.) 1993:274-281.
Caputo, J D 2006. *The weakness of God: A theology of the event.* Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
Caputo, J D & Scanlon, M J (eds.) 1999. *God, the gift and postmodernism.* Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
Clayton, P 2005. Theology and physical science, in Ford, D F (ed.) 2005:342-356.
Clayton, P & Simpson, Z (eds.) 2006. *The Oxford handbook of religion and science.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Comblin, J 1989. *The Holy Spirit and liberation.* Maryknoll, NY: Orbis.
Cox, H 1999. The myth of the twentieth century: The rise and fall of 'secularization', in Baum, G (ed.) 1999:135-143.
Delattre, R A 1968 (2006). *Beauty and sensibility in the thought of Jonathan Edwards.* Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock.
Downey, M 2000. *Altogether gift: A Trinitarian spirituality.* Maryknoll, NY: Orbis.
Downey, M (ed.) 1993. *The new dictionary of Catholic spirituality.* Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press.
Dyrness, W A 2007. The arts, in Webster, J, Tanner, K & Torrance, I (eds.) 2007:561-579.
Ellis, G F R 2006. Physics, complexity and the science-religion debate, in Clayton & Simpson 2006:751-766.
Emery, G & Levering, M (eds.) 2011. *The Oxford handbook to the Trinity.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Endean, P 2005. Spirituality and theology, in Sheldrake 2005:74-79.
Farley, E 2001. *Faith and beauty: A theological aesthetics.* Aldershot: Ashgate.
Fiorenza, F S & Galvin, J P (eds.) 2011. *Systematic Theology: Roman Catholic perspectives.* 2nd ed. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress.

---

e.g., Tanner (2012: esp. 382-386).

36 There is a growing literature on this subject. For a beautiful meditation, see Downey (2000) – *Altogether gift: A Trinitarian spirituality.*

Firth, D G & Wegner, P D (eds.) 2011. *Presence, power and promise.* Nottingham: Apollos (Inter Varsity).

Ford, D F 2011. *The future of Christian theology.* Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Ford, D F (ed.) 2005. *The modern theologians.* 3rd ed. Oxford: Blackwell.

Gregersen, N H 2006. Emergence and complexity, in Clayton & Simpson 2006:767-783.

Haight, R 2008. Holy Spirit and the religions, in Jensen, D H (ed.) 2008:55-69.

Hess, R S 2011. Bezalel and Oholiab: Spirit and creativity, in Firth & Wegner 2011:161-172.

Holder, A (ed.) 2005. *The Blackwell companion to Christian spirituality.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Jensen, D H (ed.) 2008. *The Lord and Giver of Life: Perspectives on constructive pneumatology.* Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox.

Jones, S & Lakeland, P (eds.) 2005. *Constructive theology: A contemporary approach to classical themes.* Minneapolis, MN: Fortress.

Kärkkäinen, V-M 2002. *Pneumatology: The Holy Spirit in ecumenical, international and contextual perspective.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker.

---2004a. The working of the Spirit of God in creation and in the people of God: The pneumatology of Wolfhart Pannenberg. *Pneuma* 26(1):17-35.

--- 2004b. *Trinity and religious pluralism.* Aldershot: Ashgate.

Kasper, W 1983. *The God of Jesus Christ.* London: SCM.

Kearney, R 2001. *The God who may be: A hermeneutics of religion.* Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Levison, J R 2009. *Filled with the Spirit.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

---2011. Recommendations for the future of pneumatology. *Pneuma* 33:79-93.

Liebert, E 2008. *The way of discernment: Spiritual practices for decision making.* Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox.

Lienhard, J T 1980. On 'discernment of spirits' in the early church. *Theological Studies* 41(3):505-528.

Lonsdale, D 2005a. The church as context for Christian spirituality, in Holder, A (ed.) 2005:239-253.

---2005b. Discernment, in Sheldrake, P (ed.), 2005:247-249.

Manoussakis, J P 2006. Introduction, in Manoussakis, J P (ed.) 2006:xv-xx.

Manoussakis, J P (ed.) 2006. *After God: Richard Kearney and the religious turn in continental philosophy.* New York: Fordham.

Marion, J-L 1991. *God without being.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

McDonnell, K 1985. A Trinitarian theology of the Holy Spirit? *Theological Studies* 46:191-227.

Milbank, J 1986. The second difference: For a trinitarianism without reserve. *Modern Theology* 2(3):213-234.

Mitchell, L J 2003. Jonathan Edwards on the experience of beauty. *Studies in Reformed Theology and History no 9.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton Theological Seminary.

Moltmann, J 1992. *The Spirit of life: A universal affirmation.* London: SCM.

Munzinger, A 2007. *Discerning the Spirits: Theological and ethical hermeneutics in Paul.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Newlands, G & Smith, A 2010. *Hospitable God: The transformative dream.* Surrey: Ashgate.

Pannenberg, W 1994. *Systematic theology, vol 2.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

Plantinga, R J, Thompson, T R & Lundberg, M D (eds.) 2010. *An introduction to Christian theology.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Polkinghorne, J 2006. The hidden Spirit and the cosmos, in Welker 2006:169-182.

Russell, R J 2007. Five key topics on the frontier of theology and science today. *Dialog* 46(3):199-207.

Russell, R J, Murphy, N & Stoeger, W R (eds.) 2008. *Scientific perspectives on divine action: Twenty years of challenge and progress.* Vatican City: Vatican Observatory Publ & Berkeley: CTNS

Schrijvers, J 2006. On doing theology 'after' Ontotheology: Notes on a French debate. *New Blackfriars* 87:302-314.

Schweizer, E 1989. On distinguishing between spirits. *Ecumenical Review* 41(3):406-415.

Sheldrake, P 2005. *The New Westminster dictionary of Christian spirituality.* Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox.

Sherry, P 2002. *Spirit and beauty: An introduction to theological aesthetics.* 2nd ed. London: SCM.

---2007. The beauty of God the Holy Spirit. *Theology Today* 64:5-13.

Shults, F L 2008. Spirit and spirituality: Philosophical trends in late modern pneumatology. *Pneuma* 30:271-287.

Smith, J K A 2003. What hath Cambridge to do with Azusa Street? Radical Orthodoxy and Pentecostal theology in conversation. *Pneuma* 25(1):97-114.

---2008. Is the universe open for surprise? Pentecostal ontology and the spirit of naturalism. *Zygon* 43(4):879-896.

---2010. *Thinking in tongues: Pentecostal contributions to Christian philosophy.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

Smith, J K A & Yong, A (eds.) 2010. *Science and the Spirit: A Pentecostal engagement with the sciences.* Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Tanner, K 2012. Social Trinitarianism and its critics, in Woźniak, R J & Maspero, G (eds.) 2012:368-386.

Tracy, D 2011. Approaching the Christian understanding of God, in Fiorenza, F S & Galvin, J P (eds.) 2011:109-129.

Van de Beek, A 1987. *De adem van God: De Heilige Geest in kerk en kosmos.* Nijkerk: Callenbach.

---2012. *Lichaam en Geest van Christus: De theologie van de kerk en de Heilige Gees.* Zoetermeer: Meinema.

Vondey, W 2009. The Holy Spirit and the physical universe: The impact of scientific paradigm shifts on contemporary pneumatology. *Theological Studies* 70:3-36.

Waaijman, K 2000. *Spiritualiteit: Vormen, grondslagen, methoden.* Kampen: Kok.

Webster, J 1983. The identity of the Holy Spirit: A problem in Trinitarian theology. *Themelios* 9(1):4-7.

Webster, J, Tanner, K & Torrance, I (eds.) 2007. *The Oxford handbook of systematic theology.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Welker, M (ed.) 2006. *The work of the Spirit: Pneumatology and pentecostalism.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

Welker, M 1994. *God the Spirit.* Minneapolis, MN: Fortress.

---2007. The Holy Spirit, in Webster, J, Tanner, K & Torrance, I (eds.) 2007:236-248.

Welker, M (ed.) 2012. *The Spirit in creation and new creation: Science and theology in Western and Orthodox realms.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

Woźniak, R J & Maspero, G (eds.) 2012. *Rethinking Trinitarian theology.* London: T & T Clark (Continuum).

Yong, A 2006. *Ruach,* the primordial chaos, and the breath of life: Emergence theory and the creation narratives in pneumatological perspective, in Welker 2006:183-204.

---2007. The Spirit of hospitality: Pentecostal perspectives towards a performative theology of interreligious encounter. *Missiology: An International Review* 35(1):55-73.

---2008. *Hospitality and the Other: Pentecost, Christian practices, and the neighbor.* Maryknoll, NY: Orbis.

---2010. *In the days of Caesar: Pentecostalism and political theology.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

---2011. *The Spirit of creation: Modern science and divine action in the Pentecostal-Charismatic imagination.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

KEY WORDS
Discernment
Holy Spirit
Hospitality
(The) Impossible
Pneumatic agency
Relationality
Spirituality

TREFWOORDE
Onderskeiding
Gasvryheid
Geestelike handeling
Heilige Gees
(Die) Onmoontlike
Relasionaliteit
Spiritualiteit

Prof. Rian Venter
Faculty of Theology
Department of Systematic
Theology
University of the Free State
P O Box 339
BLOEMFONTEIN 9300
Tel: 072 2095956
E-mail: rianventer@mweb.co.za

Verster, P
Universiteit van die Vrystaat

Die sendingimplikasies van Kolossense 1:15-20

ABSTRACT

The implications for missions of 1 Colossians 1:15-20

The implications of 1 Colossians 1:15-20 concerning Christ as head of the cosmos and the church are huge. It is generally accepted that the author of this hymn used an original form of the text to generate the reworked present form. Themes such as creation, Christ as head of the church, the unity of Christ and God, reconciliation at the cross and aspects of the atonement are explained. The missiological implications are that Christ as head of the cosmos has every right on all aspects of the universe; the unity of Christ and God means that the salvation is radical and total in Him; the atonement brings total salvation from Christ who died on the cross but who was also resurrected; the Christological implications are that all powers should acknowledge that they are limited by Him who died on the cross and that the salvation entails encompassing and total welfare.

1. INLEIDING

Kolossense 1:15-20 is 'n merkwaardige teksgedeelte. Nie alleen bevestig hierdie lied die besondere betekenis van Jesus Christus vir die kerk nie, maar dit maak ook die kosmiese betekenis van Jesus Christus duidelik. Christus is hoof van die kerk en die heelal. Christus se hoofskap hang egter ook ten diepste met sy versoeningswerk saam. Die universele aard van die versoening kom ook sterk na vore. Vir die sending het dit verskeie implikasies en die teenwoordigheid van die volheid van God in Christus beteken ook dat die sending hierdie waarheid sal moet verkondig. Die feit dat Jesus die Here van die heelal is, het die implikasie dat Hy die wonder van God ten volle vertoon.

2. NAVORSINGSVRAE

Die vraag wat gestel moet word, is: Wat is die implikasie van Christus se hoofskap in die versoening vir die kerk en die wêreld? Dit beteken dat 'n mens ook sal moet beoordeel op watter wyse Christus se versoeningswerk nie alleen die kerk bepaal nie, maar ook die wêreld in al sy verbande. Sou dit 'n omvattende benadering tot die sending onderlê, en indien wel, op watter wyse?

3. ONTLEDING

Ten spyte van die feit dat daar verskeie standpunte oor die teksgedeelte is, is daar redelike konsensus dat dit 'n himne is. "The striking character of the language used in the middle section of the first chapter of Colossians suggests the identification of vv. 15-20 as a separate hymnic unit: a glorification of the Son of God as co-creator of the universe and the one in whom God reconciles all to Himself (Behr 1996:247; vgl. egter Harris 1991:41 wat van mening is dat sekere stylfigure nie noodwendig 'n himne veronderstel as daar nie 'n duidelike metriese patroon is

nie). Dit beteken nie dat daar 'n lied in die moderne sin van die woord voorkom nie. Sekere stilistiese elemente wat voorkom, dui egter op die himniese karakter van die gedeelte. Baugh (1985:228) skryf: "I find, however, that the structure of Col 1:15-20 can indeed be identified without reconstructing the text. In its details it is quite intricate; nevertheless, the overall pattern is a simple chiasm much like poetry and prose from the OT and from other Semitic works... This assumes that we can rank the Colossians poem as a type of Semitic versus some other kind of poetry."

Oor die Pauliniese outeurskap van die gedeelte is daar geen eenstemmigheid nie. Daar is verskeie eksegete wat nie die outeurskap van Kolossense aan Paulus toeskryf nie, en ook nie dié van die himne nie (vgl. Helyer 1983:170,171 vir 'n volledige oorsig oor die vraagstuk). O'Brien (2002:xli e.v.) beklemtoon egter wel dat Paulus die outeur kan wees. Hy sou ook deur die redigering van die gedeelte die outeur van die himne kon wees. Hy verwys na argumente teen die Pauliniese outeurskap en toon aan dat so 'n beoordeling nie aanvaar behoort te word nie. "Such a judgment in our view appears to be unduly negative and presupposes an almost infallible understanding of what Paul could or could not have done. It also does not really explain the close similarities between Colossians and the generally accepted Pauline letters,..." (kyk ook na Guthrie [1974:554] en Kümmel [1975:346] vir aanvaarding van die Pauliniese outeurskap). Brown (1997:610-615) is egter veel meer huiwerig en na deeglike oorweging besluit hy teen Pauliniese outeurskap (kyk ook na Schweizer [1982:59]), terwyl Barclay (2001:35) versigtig is om 'n keuse uit te oefen (kyk ook na Standhartinger [1999:29 e.v.] oor die pseudepigrafiese werke in die Nuwe Testamentiese tyd].

Dit is dus nie duidelik of ons hier met 'n deeglik gekonstrueerde himne te doen het nie, maar wel dat sekere stylfigure dit veronderstel (O'Brien 2002:32 e.v.). Ook Guthrie (1981:352) wys op die ritmiese vorm, ongebruiklike woordeskat en verhewe styl as himniese karaktertrekke. Schweizer (1982:63e.v.) probeer selfs om die oorspronklike himne te rekonstrueer. Barclay (2001:59) meen dat dit nie ooreenkomste met hellenistiese of Joodse himnes toon nie, maar dat dit wel sekere himniese karaktertrekke vertoon. Dunn (1996:83-84) beskou dit wel as 'n himne in oorspronklike vorm. Okure (2002:64) is van mening dat dit 'n lied is wat by die doop gesing is.

Sekere parallelle gedeeltes kom voor. O' Brien (2002:36 e.v.) toon dit volledig aan:

- ος εστιν εικων ("Hy is die beeld", v. 15) is parallel aan ος εστιν αρχη ("Hy is die oorsprong", v. 18).
- πρωτότοκοσπάσης κτίσεως ("eersgeborene van die skepping [die Eerste, verhewe bo die hele skepping", v. 15) is parallel aan πρωτοτοκος εκ των νεκρων ("eersgeborene uit die dood. [Hy is die Eerste, die Een wat uit dood opgestaan het]", v. 18).
- Verder word elkeen van die die relatiewe sinne deur gevolgsin gevolg, 'n sinsnede wat begin met οτι ("omdat"):
- οτι εν αυτω εκτισθη ("omdat alle dinge deur hom geskape is, [God het deur Hom alles geskep]", v. 16); en
- οτι εν αυτω ευδοκησεν ("omdat in Hom ... verheug [God het besluit om met sy volle wese]", v. 19).
- Die kosmiese aspekte van Christus se heerskappy word aangetoon in vers 16, ειτε θρονοι ειτε κυριοτητες ειτε αρχαι ειτε εξουσιαι ("trone maghebbers en heerskappye en gesagvoerders"[konings, heersers, maghebbers, gesagvoerders]) en vers 20, ειτε τα επι της γης ειτε τα εν τοις ουρανοις ("dinge [alles] op die aarde en in die hemel").

Verder kry 'n mens die frekwensie van πας ("alles") en die formele chiasme in 16c and 20:

A τά πάντα ("alle dinge[alles]")	B και δι αυτου ("en deur Hom ")
B δι αυτου και ("vir Hom en")	A τά πάντα ("alle dinge [alles]").

In vers 16 kom twee voorbeelde van chiasme voor. Twee reëls kom voor in 'n chiasme van sinonieme parallelisme:

οτι εν αυτω εκτισθη τα παντα

τα παντα δι αυτου και εις αυτον εκτισται

"want in Hom is alle dinge geskep [God het deur Hom alles geskep]"

"Alle dinge is vir Hom en deur Hom geskep"

Tweedens word τά πάντα ("alle dinge") uitgebrei:

εν τοις ουρανοις και τα επι της γης

τα ορατα και τα αορατα

"In die hemel en op aarde,

Sigbare en onsigbare dinge [alles wat gesien kan word en alles wat nie gesien kan word nie]"

Die herhalende τά πάντα ("alle dinge") en werkwoord εκτισται ("skep") is 'n voorbeeld van 'n *inclusio wat die tweede* chiasmus bind. Die formele korrespondensie tussen 17 and 18 moet ook aangetoon word:

17	και αυτος εστιν προ παντων
18	και αυτος εστιν η κεφαλη
	"en [voor alles was Hy al daar] ...
	En [Hy is die hoof] ..."

Hierdie verduideliking deur O'Brien (2002:36 e.v.) bevestig dat daar wel 'n sterk himniese karakter aan die teksgeldeelte is.

Dit is duidelik dat Paulus standpunt inneem teen 'n dwaalrigting waarvan die aard onseker is, al word gnostiek en misteriegodsdiens dikwels aangedui (Barth and Balke 1994:21-23). In die dwaalrigting word Christus se heerskappy bevraagteken en die volkomenheid van sy verlossingswerk aan bande gelê. Hierteenoor stel Paulus Christus se totale en volstrekte uniekheid (Roberts 1984:150). Barclay (2001:40-48) gee 'n volledige oorsig oor standpunte oor die saak waarteen Paulus polemiseer naamlik, Joods-Christelike gnostiek, 'n verchristelikte misteriegodsdiens, mistieke Joodse geloof, Hellenistiese filosofie en sinkretistiese volksgeloof. Guthrie (1981:353) veronderstel 'n Joodse agtergrond vir die himne. Hy veronderstel ook dat

Paulus polemiseer teen die gedagte dat die Torah verhewe is deur Christus se verhewenheid te beklemtoon. Barclay (2001:67) hanteer die saak vanuit die standpunt dat dit 'n kreatiewe teologiese ontwikkeling is waarin Christene heidense konsepte met die opgestane Christus in verband bring soos die hellenistiese Jode die hellenistiese filosofie met Joodse wysheid vermeng het. Dunn (1996:90) beklemtoon ook dat die element van wysheid 'n belangrike rol in die gedeelte speel. Witherington III (2007:130) toon volledig aan dat daar elemente is wat ooreenstem met die Wysheid van Salomo ten opsigte van die rol van wysheid en dat daar dus ook verwysings na die Joodse begrip voorkom.

4. HOOFTEMAS

Sekere hooftemas kom in die gedeelte sterk na vore.

4.1 Skepping

Die verband tussen die gedeelte wat Christus as die Eerste voor die skepping stel en Genesis verbind die heil in Hom met die skeppingsteologie. As beeld van God is die Seun die een deur wie die hele skepping in sy volheid geskape is. Die Seun as beeld van God is egter van 'n ander aard as Adam, wat skepsel is. Die beeld van God dui op 'n verteenwoordiger of manifestasie van God (Schweizer 1982:66). Thompson (2005:29) wys op die implikasies van Christus as beeld van God. Die onsigbare God is in Hom sigbaar en verder is Hy die volle beliggaming van God soos die wysheidbeeld dit vertoon. Lohse (1971:48) beskryf dit soos volg: "As the 'image' of the invisible God, he does not belong to what was created, but stands with the creator who, in Christ, is acting upon the world and with the world." Dit is God se heiligheid wat in Christus gestalte vind (Lähnemann1971:47). Die Seun is self die een deur wie geskep word. Hy is egter nie slegs die Skepper van die fisiese, sigbare wêreld nie, maar heers ook oor die onsigbare magte en heerskappye. Uitman (1978:32) toon aan dat dit juis nie die magte is wat aanbid moet word nie, maar Jesus self. Teenoor die "af"goddelike magte is die een wat aanbid moet word waarlik God. Christensen (2007:318) beklemtoon dat: "Christ is not an example of something else, neither a universal principle nor an abstract rationality. He is, in his person and work, the actual presence and activity of the living God." Ook Gundry (2010:12) bevestig dat die Seun deur die inkarnasie die onsigbare God sigbaar maak. Witherington III (2007:133) beklemtoon dat die ooreenstemming tussen Christus en God nie in uiterlike voorkoms geleë is nie, maar in die volledige verteenwoording van God in Christus.

Martin (1972:40-42) toon aan hoe die vraag of die skeppingsteologie in die teks deur die gnostiek beïnvloed is, bevraagteken moet word omdat die gnostiek waarskynlik nie vroeg ontwikkel het nie, en omdat 'n mens waarskynlik eerder die agtergrond in die Joodse wysheid as in die gnostiek moet soek. Kolossense beskou die heerlikheid van Christus as skepper in samehang met die wysheid van God en met die personifisering van die wysheid in die Ou Testament (Bruce 1977:124). Christus is die volle wysheid van God (Thurston (1995:33). Bruce (1984:102) skryf in hierdie verband: "Whatever other figures in Jewish literature may have préexistence ascribed to them, none of them is credited with such cosmic activity and significance as are here predicated of the préexistent Christ."

Die Seun se heerlikheid word verder bevestig deurdat Hy die een is vir wie alles geskape is. Verder word die voorsienigheidsleer bevestig daarin dat die Seun die een is wat alle dinge in stand hou. Christus is dus nie alleen die een wat die skepping inisieer nie maar ook die Een wat dit bewaar (Carson 1983:43). Hiermee word ineens die wonder vasgelê van die Seun as die Een wat die hele skepping bepaal (vgl. Kümmel 1975:336). Die Seun is inderdaad die eniggebore van God en die verband met Johannes 1 is ook duidelik. Die himne bevestig die Seun se heerlikheid.

Hierdie heerlikheid oorspan die hele heelal. Uitman (1978:34) noem dit die *leitmotiv* van die hele brief.

Hierdie *leitmotiv* bepaal die skepping in al sy verbande. Geen aspek van die heelal is van die heerskappy van Christus uitgesluit nie. Die skeppingsteologie word so op radikale wyse aan Christus verbind. In Ou Testamentiese verband word die skepping bepaal deur God self wat die dinge tot aansyn roep, en God se heerlikheid word daardeur bevestig. Jesus Christus self word nou die een wat die skepping bepaal (Witherington III 2007:134). Dit beteken dat God en Christus, as eenheid, self radikaal in die heerlikheid deel. Die skeppingstaal is egter volledig. Guthrie (1981:356) skryf dan ook: " In no clearer way could he have set Christ at the very centre of creation, and in no more explicit terms could he have asserted his superiority." Goppelt (1982:77) stel dit soos volg:

Being the agent of creation meant accordingly not merely participation in an event at the beginning but the enduring relationship to the cosmos. He was the 'first-born of all creation' (v. 15b) not because he was the first one to be created and as such would introduce the succession of that which was created, but because he 'is before all things' (v. 17).

Dit beteken ook totale oorwinning. Wilson (1997:197) praat daarom van God se kosmiese oorwinning wat daarin geleë is dat Christus ook oor die kosmiese magte triomfeer. Dit is dan juis Christus wat die magte onttroon en deur sy rol in die skepping en sy versoenende dood aan die kruis sy heerskappy toon (Thompson 2005:9).

4.2 Christus se hoofskap oor die kerk
Harris (1991:43) verduidelik dat die onsigbare God wat 'n ontoeganklike lig bewoon Hom sigbaar in sy Seun openbaar. Die verhouding tussen Christus en die kerk word egter ook duidelik vasgelê. Die heerlikheid van die Een wat die beeld van God is, maar juis in sy verhewenheid bo die skepping is, bevestig ook sy heerlikheid as Hoof van die kerk. Die eie unieke aard van die kerk word sterk bevestig. Hy is nie alleen die Hoof van die kerk nie. Hy is ook die oorsprong daarvan. As Here van die heelal is Hy in besonder die Here van die kerk (kyk na Guthrie 1981:357). O'Brien (2002:49) skryf:

We consider, then, that it was Paul, rather than some unknown redactor, who is the originator of this way of expressing the church's vital union with Christ, the head (cf. Col 2:19). Using the Old Testament concept of corporate personality and by referring to "body" (σωμα) and "head" (κεφαλή) as he does, he has made his own distinct contribution to NT Christology and ecclesiology."

Christus is die Een wat bepaal wat die kerk is. Dit beteken dat die kerk inderdaad die skepping van Christus is. Christus is die Hoof van die skepping en ook van die kerk. Die Here van die kerk is die onbetwiste Here van die Koninkryk van God. Waar die Hoofskap van Christus in Efesiërs op die kerk van toepassing is, word dit in Kolossense na die hele wêreld uitgebrei (vgl. Uitman 1978:7).

4.3 Die eenheid van Christus en God
Die Christologie bepaal dus hierdie benadering op 'n besondere wyse (Standhartinger 1999:217). Deur die opstanding word bevestig dat Hy die eerste plek in die heelal inneem. Die opstanding bevestig die hoofskap van Christus oor die kerk en die wêreld. Die eenheid met God is dus nie onderhandelbaar nie en word in die gedeelte radikaal bevestig. Die eenheid met God bevestig dus die wonderbare erkenning dat Christus die Here is. Guthrie (1981:358) toon aan dat die

Godheid van Christus juis daarmee bevestig word. Tripp (2004:78) toon in geen onduidelike taal die eenheid aan: "Christ is the image of God, and, as the firstborn before all creation, the instrument of creation, so that his relationship with the Father is the matrix and model of their shared work of creation. As the means of the reconciliation of all creation with the Father, he is (the texts say at least this much) indwelt on a permanent basis by the full being of deity."

4.4 Die versoening aan die kruis

Christus se eenheid met God lei dan ook tot die versoening omdat God die versoening in Christus Trinitaries bewerk. Daarmee verkry die versoening 'n eie goddelike karakter. God woon met sy volle wese in Christus. Hy versoen alles deur Hom met Homself. Volgens Uitman (1978:36) gaan dit nie om idees of gedagtes of spekulasies nie, maar om 'n heilswerklikheid met reële gebeure en handelinge deur God waar Hy Homself offer, gee en oorgee in Jesus Christus. Guthrie (1974:551) bevestig Christus se "immeasurable superioriy" in teenstelling met die voorstelling aangaande Christus deur die dwaalleraars van die Kolossense. Die werklike belewenis van die versoening beteken dat die heil in Christus in die tyd werklik word (Wall 1993:70). Die versoening is 'n radikale daad van God. Dit is nie die mens wat God beïnvloed of aanmoedig om 'n nuwe verhouding te skep nie, maar God in Jesus Christus wat die daad van versoening moontlik maak (Schnelle 2003:454).

4.5 Die totale reikwydte van die versoening.

O'Brien (2002:56) beklemtoon die universaliteit van die versoening:

> Paul affirms that this universal reconciliation has been brought about, not in some other-worldly drama, but through something done in history, the death of Jesus Christ upon the cross.

Die versoening het dus 'n sterk universele betekenis. So kan die betekenis van die volledige heil wat Christus bring, bevestig word (Guthrie 1981:358). As sentrale tema is die versoening bepalend vir die verlossing van die wêreld. Die bedreiging deur die magte en heerskappye is dus verbreek. Die kruis van Christus het die radikale hoop na vore laat tree. Hierdie hoop is volledig omdat dit ook universeel is. Die versoening strek dus verder as die kerk, maar sluit dit ook in. Vanuit hierdie universele heil moet die koningskap van Christus beklemtoon word. Ook Brown (1997:604) bevestig Christus se totale heerskappy: "By divine election God in all fullness dwells in Christ. That is why through him all things can be reconciled to God" (1:20a). Carson (1983:46) beklemtoon ook die reikwydte van die versoening. Wall (1993:69) skryf: " To deny Christ as the Lord of God's creation is to deny the redemptive consequences of Christ's death; to reject God's desire to delight in the inherent goodness of creation is to reject the prospect of a new creation of redeemed humanity in Christ." Pokorný (1987:66) wys daarop dat die eskatologiese werklikheid hier in Christus reeds 'n aanvang neem.

Die werk van Christus is egter in die versoening van wesenlike belang. Dit vind nie los van Christus plaas nie en kan daarom nie universele versoening wees nie (Martin1972:49). Ook Schweizer 1982:93) beklemtoon die radikale aspek van die versoening, maar hy beklemtoon dat dit in die geloof in Christus neerslag vind. Peterson (2010:44): "Colossians 1:20 teaches, then, not "cosmic salvation" or even "cosmic redemption," but "cosmic restoration" or "renewal." Through the work of Christ on the cross, God has brought his entire rebellious creation back under the rule of his sovereign power."

5. TEOLOGIESE IMPLIKASIES

Christus se wonderbare verlossing wat universele implikasies het, word in hierdie gedeelte uitgewerk. Dit beteken dus juis dat Christus self verheerlik word. Dit wat Hy doen, bevestig self ook die heerlikheid van die verlossing wat Hy bewerk het. Die universele betekenis daarvan is dus wonderbaar en die heil se reikwydte dus totaal.

Niks en niemand kan van die betekenis van die heil uitgesluit word nie. Die reikwydte sluit alle magte, heerskappye en mense en koninkryke in. Christensen (2007: 319) verduidelik dit soos volg: "The writer of Colossians is clear: Christ is Lord over all other powers and authorities, even supernatural ones. Proponents of the false teachings in Colossae (see 2:8-13) probably saw these other beings as rivals of Christ, or they saw in the existence of those other powers the opportunity to 'hedge their bets' by giving allegiance to those other powers alongside Christ. Barth en Blanke (1994:201-202) wys op hulle beurt daarop dat verskeie standpunte oor die magte en heerskappye voorgedra word, maar dat dit na alle waarskynlikheid op alle strukture en instellings dui.

Daar is twee aspekte wat verreken moet word. Die een is dat die versoening inderdaad universeel is en alle aspekte van die bestaan insluit. Die ander is dat dit nie veronderstel dat universalisme bevestig word nie. Shultz (2010:444) skryf: "The Bible clearly rules out universalism, but it also teaches that all things created by God are reconciled to God through Christ's death. Therefore the Bible teaches *universal reconciliation, but not universal salvation."*

Die beklemtoning van Christus se heerlikheid bevestig aan die een kant die universele karakter van die heil. Aan die ander kant beteken dit ook dat die heil nie anders as juis in Hom gevind kan word nie. Hy is Here en dit sluit die moontlikheid van ander verlossers uit.

6. SENDINGIMPLIKASIES

Kolossense skakel met Jesaja 19:19-25 en alhoewel dit nie beteken dat die heil universalisties verstaan moet word nie, beteken dit tog dat die verlossing volledig universeel is. In Jesaja 19 word op unieke wyse aangetoon dat God nie slegs vir Israel heil bewerk nie maar ook vir Egipte en Asirië, die vyande van Israel. Hierdie wonderlike volledige heil neem nie weg dat in Jesaja die oordeel wel ook voorkom nie. Vir die Christologie beteken dit dan inderdaad dat Christus die Here van die kerk en die heelal is. Vir die sending het dit radikale implikasies.

6.1 Die hoofskap van Christus oor die heelal beteken dat Hy reg op alle aspekte van die heelal het

Hierdie universele aspek van die heil bevestig die wonder van Christus se heerskappy. Hy is die een wat op alle wesens, geskape werklikhede en magte reg het. Vir die gebroke werklikheid skep dit die hoop op 'n nuwe werklikheid, asook die nuwe verwagting op hierdie nuwe hoop. Kolossense toon hiermee juis aan hoe dat die vernuwing van die gebroke werklikheid moontlik is. Die werklikheid is nie 'n totale put van ellende nie. Groter as die bedreiging vir die skepping en geskapenes is die verwagting van die heil wat in Christus verkry kan word. Hy is dus nie bloot 'n geskape wese nie, maar in werklikheid die hoof oor die geskape werklikheid. So verkry die werklikheid nuwe inhoud in die sin dat Hy daaroor heers. Dit is juis die groot bydrae van die ontwikkeling van die gereformeerde beskouing wat God se heerskappy in Christus oor die hele skepping bevestig. Die sending kan juis vanuit hierdie verhouding 'n nuwe blik op die werklikheid in Afrika verkry en lewer (Van der Walt 2003:545 -551).

Dit beteken verder ook dat die afgode afgewys moet word. Christus alleen is Here (Smit 1986:31). Ook Walsh en Keesmaat (2004:89) wys daarop dat Paulus om die hart van die gemeente

veg om dit juis teen die magte van die koninkryke van hierdie wêreld stelling te laat inneem: "In a culture of power as truth, we need servant communities ministering to the most vulnerable to demonstrate that truth is on a cross. In a culture of radical uncertainty, we need preaching and liturgy that build the body of Christ, where truth takes on flesh." Christus versamel as hoof van die kerk vir Hom 'n gemeente tot eer van God. Hy roep die mense om hulle voor God te verootmoedig en by die gemeente aan te sluit.

Christus se hoofskap sluit ook die kerk in. Die kerk kan nou nie los van die heelal gedink word nie. Die kerk as liggaam bestaan in die heelal waarin Christus ook die hoof is. Die kerk is dus die gemeenskap wat in die noue verbintenis met die hoof lewe en so ook die heil vertoon. In die kerk is die hoofskap van Christus so teenwoordig dat dit duidelik is dat die heil 'n werklikheid is en ook dat die heil die totale werklikheid kan deursuur.

Dunn (1996:104) vat dit saam:

It says much for the faith of these first Christians that they should see in Christ's death and resurrection quite literally the key to resolving the disharmonies of nature and the inhumanities of humankind, that the character of God's creation and God's concern for the universe in its fullest expression could be so caught and encapsulated for them in the cross of Christ (cf. already 1 Cor. 1:22-25,30).

Verder is dit duidelik dat die totale lewe in die eenheid met die Christusgebeure nou die gelowige stempel. Jesus Christus is die begronding van die nuwe lewe. Die kerk leef uit hierdie begronding (Schnelle 2003:551).

6.2 Die eenheid van Christus met God beteken dat die heil volledig en totaal in Hom is

Christus is een met God. Die volheid van God woon in Hom. Hy maak die verlossing totaal moontlik, alleen omdat God die een is wat in sy volheid in Christus woon. Die Goddelike heerlikheid stempel daarom die bestaan van die mens.

Maier (2005:338) dui aan hoe volledig die heil in Christus is:

All this brings into striking relief the panegyric affirmations of Colossian Christology. An early Christian audience listening to Col. 1.15-23, with its charged diplomatic language, surrounded by imperial imagery celebrating the cosmic and earthly concord of Roman rule, could not have helped but recognize imperial overtones in the celebration of an incarnate Son in whom the fullness of God dwelt (1.19; 2.9) to bring about a universal reconciliation. Like Nero, whom imperial poets acclaimed as an embodied deity, and Seneca celebrated as the head of the body, the Roman Empire, on whom all rests and depends for its health and vigour, the incarnate Son, the enthroned Jesus, heads the cosmos by which all things hold together (1.17) and from whom, in the "empire [βασιλεία] of his beloved Son" (1.13) comes growth and renewal (2.9-10, 19; 1.6).

Die toekoms van die mens word bepaal deur die lof aan die hoof wat die volheid van God vertoon. Die nuwe werklikheid is dus moontlik omdat die hoof van kerk en heelal self die volheid van God vertoon. Daar kan geen twyfel bestaan dat die Godheid van Christus soos nog nooit vantevore bevraagteken word nie en dat die sending juis ten opsigte van hierdie waarheid onomwonde moet getuig dat Jesus één met God is. Migliore (2004:177) skryf daarom: "*God* acts, suffers, and triumphs in and through Jesus. In Jesus Christ we do not have less than God's very own presence in our humanity. In this person the eternal God suffers and acts for our salvation."

6.3 Die versoening is heilbrengend in Hom wat sy lewe gegee het aan die kruis maar ook opgestaan het uit die dode

Nêrens verkry die hoofskap van Christus meer indringende betekenis as wanneer aangedui word dat Hy die Een is wat aan die kruis gesterf het om die versoening te bewerk nie. Hierdie versoening het deur middel van die opstanding tot volledige heil gelei. Okure (2002:62) verduidelik hoedat 'n missiologiese lees van Kolossense moontlik is.

> Missiological reading here refers primarily to how the letter can be read to promote an atmosphere where Christians and peoples of other faiths can live and work together as God's children and members of the one human family, respecting the religious freedom of each, and yet, for Christians, without ceasing to proclaim Jesus as God's gospel or Saviour of humanity. The letter to the Colossians addresses in its own context, though in different terms, the questions of the uniqueness, unicity and salvific universality of Jesus. It therefore poses a serious challenge to missiology today within the contemporary background of religious pluralism.

Kruis en opstanding verkry sodoende 'n bepaalde intensie wat die hoofskap van die Here verder invul. Die hoofskap kom uit God maar word ook deur die verlossing en versoeningsdade van die kruis en die opstanding bepaal. Dit het ook kosmiese betekenis. Die heelal word bepaal deur die hoof wat juis die een is wat in sy eenheid met God uit die dood opgestaan het. Die nuwe lewe volg hieruit sodat Thompson (2005:12) skryf: "In Christ, appropriate conduct is self-giving, directed towards the other, and colored by humility, graciousness, truth and love."

Sending wat nie die volheid van die heil vir kerk én kosmos deurgee nie, is altyd beperkend. Dit beteken dat die sending juis in gehoorsaamheid en in diens aan die hoof die volheid van God moet vertoon. Dit sluit die volle skepping in. Die heil sluit die mens in die bestaan op aarde in, sowel as sy hoop op die ewige lewe. Die ekologiese aspekte word dus ook erken. Nie alleen moet die skepping as God se werk erken word nie maar ook moet die mens verantwoordelikheid vir die gesonde hantering van die skepping aanvaar. Nie alleen onder die huidige omstandighede moet met groot respek met God se hele skepping omgegaan word nie – soos om besoedeling teen te werk – maar ook wat die toekoms betref, moet gestreef word na riglyne vir 'n ekologies vriendelike gemeenskap (Conradie 2006:195). Die hoofskap van Christus oor die heelal beteken die nuwe aarde moet reeds sigbaar word in die versorging van die wêreld wat tot ons beskikking is. Die hoof is hoof van die kerk wat die versoening en verlossing vir mense in hierdie wêreld maar ook in die ewigheid beteken, maar die hoof is ook hoof van die heelal wat die totale vernuwing van die totale skepping insluit. Trevethan (1981:44) dui aan dat dit baie duidelik moet wees dat 'n dualistiese benadering, waar Christus slegs vir 'n geestelike wêreld van belang is, nie volhoubaar is nie omdat Hy die Here van die kerk en die skepping is. Die bydrae van Bosch (1991:511-519) vir die sending word juis gestempel deur sy beklemtoning van die heilsgebeure in Christus. Al God se dade, vanaf die inkarnasie waar God radikaal ingegryp het tot by die wederkoms waar die tyd voltooi word, bevestig God se heerlike aanvaarding van die mens en die skepping.

6.4 Die Christologiese implikasies van die heil is dat alle magte moet erken dat dit beperk word deur die Een wat volledige heil bring

In hierdie werklikheid stuit ons teen die magte wat in die wêreld voorkom. Die magte skyn onoorwinlik te wees. Die hoof oor die kosmos is die een wat die magte onttroon. Juis Hy is die een wat as hoof die heil bring waarin die magte moet erken dat daar een is wat heerliker en sterker en magtiger is as die magte van die wêreld, al is dit die mag van die gekruisigde wat swak geword het om te verlos. Christus self bring die heil wat die heelal insluit. Hierdie vrede kom

deur die bloed van Christus. God se heiligheid word deurgaans beklemtoon en slegs in Christus kan daar herstel kom (Witherington III 2007:136).

6.5 Herstel in alle verbande is dus essensieel

Jesus is die een wat die herstel bring. In sy heerlikheid maak Hy alle dinge moontlik, juis omdat Hy die Here is. Die Hoof wat deur sy lyding sy Hoofskap, wat van 'n ander aard as gewone aardse hoofskap is, bevestig het, bring die heil vir die gemeenskap. Gundry (2010:15) wys daarop dat die volheid van God juis die volledige versoening in die Seun moontlik maak deur die vrede wat Hy met sy bloed aan die kruis bewerk het. In Christus is die sending en die koninkryk ten diepste aan mekaar verbonde (Moreau et al 2004:81). Die gevolg is dat die Christelike sending in die geskiedenis op ongeëwenaarde wyse heilbrengend op mense en gemeenskappe ingewerk het (Webster 1982:765). O'Brien (1995.63) dui ook aan dat die essensie van die boodskap van die sending by Paulus juis die aankondiging van die ware hoop was. Ten spyte van die swakheid van die kerk bring die heil in Christus op alle terreine nuwe hoop. Dit is alleen moontlik vanuit die perspektief van die hoofskap van Christus oor kerk en heelal.

7. SLOT

Die himne in Kolossense is die bevestiging van die hoofskap van Jesus Christus tot heil van die heelal en tot verbreking van die magte van diktatuur en misdadigheid en die heil wat kom in die wonder van dít wat Hy bewerk. Niks en niemand kan meer deur sy heerlikheid onaangeraak wees nie.

BRONNELYS

Barclay, J.M.G. 2001. *Colossians and Philemon.* Sheffield. Sheffield Academic Press.[New Testament Guides].
Barth, M. & Blanke, H. 1994. Colossians: A new translation with introduction and commentary. (Translated by A.B. Beck.) New York: Doubladay. [The Anchor Bible].
Baugh, S.M. 1985. The poetic form of Col 1:15-20. *Westminster Theological Journal 47(2): 227-244.*
Behr, J. 1996. Colossians 1:13-20: A chiastic reading. *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly,* 40(4):247-264.
Bosch, D.J. 1991. *Transforming mission: Paradigms shifts in theology of mission.* Maryknoll, New York: Orbis.
Brown, R.E. 1997. *An introduction to the New Testament.* New York: Doubleday.
Bruce, F.F. 1977. *Paul: Apostle of the Free Spirit.* Exeter: Paternoster.
Bruce, F.F. *1984.* Colossian problems, pt 2: The "Christ hymn" of Colossians 1:15-20. *Bibliotheca Sacra* 141(562): 99-111.
Carson, H.M. 1983. *The epistles of Paul to the Colossians and Philemon: An introduction and commentary.* Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. Leicester: InterVarsity.
Christensen, R.L. 2007. Colossians 1:15-28. *Interpretation 61(3):318-320.*
Conradie, E. 2006. *Waar op dees aarde vind mens God? Op soek na 'n aardse spiritualiteit.* Wellington: Lux Verbi. BM.
Dunn, J.D.G. 1996. *The epistle to the Colossians and to Philemon: A commentary on the Greek text.* Grand Rapids Mi: Eerdmans, [The New International Greek Testament Commentary]
Goppelt, L. 1982. *Theology of the New Testament.* Volume 2. The variety and unity of the apostolic witness to Christ. (Translared by Alsup, J) Grand Rapids Mi: Eerdmans
Gundry, R.H. 2010. (e Book edition 2011.) *Commentary on Colossians and Philemon.* Grand Rapids: Baker Academic.
Guthrie, D. 1974. *New Testament Introduction.* London: Inter-Varsity.
Guthrie, D. 1981. *New Testament Theology.* Leicester: Inter-Varsity.
Harris, M.J. 1991. *Colossians and Philemon.* Grand Rapids Mi: Eerdmans

Helyer, L.R. 1983. Colossians 1:15-20: Pre-Pauline or Pauline? *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society 26(2):167-179.*

Kümmel, W.G. 1975. *Introduction to the New Testament.* London: SCM. [New Testament Library]

Lähnemann, J.1971. *Der Kolosserbrief.* Gütersloh: GütersloherVerlagshaus Gerd Mohn.

Lohse, E. 1971. *Colossians and Philemon: A commentary on the epistles to the Colossians and Philemon.* (Translated by WR Poehlmann and RJ Karris). Philadelphia: Fortress. [Hermeneia- A critical and historical commentary on the Bible]

Maier, H.O. 2005. A sly civility: Colossians and empire. *Journal for the Study of the New Testament 27(3):323-349.*

Martin, R.P. 1972. *Colossians:The church's Lord and the Christians liberty.* Exeter: Paternoster.

Migliore, D.L. 2004. *Faith seeking understanding: An introduction to Christian theology.* Grand Rapids, Mi: Eerdmans.

Moreau, A.S., Corwin,G.R. & McGee, G.B. 2004. *Introducing world missions: a Biblical, historical and Practical survey.* Grand Rapids Mi: Baker Academic.

O'Brien, P.T. 1995. *Gospel and mission in the writings of Paul: an exegetical and theological analysis.* Grand Rapids: Baker books.

O'Brien, P.T. 2002. *Vol. 44: Word Biblical Commentary : Colossians-Philemon.* Word Biblical Commentary (31-63). Dallas: Word, Incorporated.

Okure, T. 2002. "In him all things hold together: A missiological reading of Colossians 1:15-20. *International Review of Mission* 91(360): 62-72.

Peterson, R.A. 2010. "To reconcile to himself all things". *Presbyterion* 36 (1):37-46.

Pokorný, P. 1987. *Der Brief des Paulus an die Kolosser.* Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament 10/1. Berlin: Evanglische Verlagsanstalt.

Roberts, J.H. 1984. Die Gevangeskapsbriewe. In Du Toit, A.B. (Red). *Die Pauliniese briewe: Inleiding en teologie. Handleiding by die Nuwe Testament Band V.* Pretoria: NG Kerkboekhandel, 114-157.

Schnelle, U. 2005. *Apostle Paul: his life and theology* (Translated by M.E. Boring). Grand Rapids: Baker Academic.

Shultz, G. 2010. The reconciliation of all things in Christ. *Bibliotheca Sacra 167(668):442-459.*

Schweizer, E. 1982. *The letter to the Colossians: A commentary.* (Translated by A Chester). Minneapolis: Augsburg.

Smit, D.1986. *Christus is die Heer! Oordenkings en Bybelstudie uit die Kolossensebrief.* Kaapstad: Lux Verbi.

Standhartinger, A. 1999. *Studien zur Entstehungschichte & Intention des Kolosserbriefs.* Leiden: Brill.

Thompson, M.M. 2005. *Colossians and Philemon.* Grand Rapids Mi: Eerdmans. [The two horizons New Testament commentary].

Thurston, B. 1995. *Reading Colossians, Ephesians & 2 Thessalonians: A Literary and theological commentary.* New York: Crossroad.

Trevethan, T.L. *1981. Our joyful confidence: The Lordship of Jesus in Colossians. An exposition.* Downers Grove: InterVarsity.

Tripp, D. 2004. *katoikēsai, katoikei* (Colossians 1:19, 2:9): Christology, or soteriology also?*: Expository Times 116(3):78-79.*

Uitman, J.E. 1978. *De brief van Paulus aan de Colossenzen.* Nijkerk: Callenbach. [De Prediking van het Nieuwe Testament].

Van der Walt, B.J. 2003. *Understanding en rebuilding Africa: From desperation today to expectation for tomorrow.* Potchefstroom: ICCA.

Wall, R.W. 1993. *Colossians and Philemon.* Downers Grove: InterVarsity. [The IVP New Testament Commentary Series]

Walsh, B.J. & Keesmaat, S.C. 2004. *Colossians remixed: Subverting the Empire.* Downers Grove: IVP Academic.

Webster, W. 1982. The messenger and mission societies. In Winter, R.D. and Hawthorne, S.C. *Perspectives on the world Christian movement: A Reader.* Pasadena: William Carey Library: 763-769.

Wilson, W.T. 1997. *The hope of glory: Education & exhortation in the epistle to the Colossians.* Leiden: Brill.

Witherington III, B. 2007. *The letters to Philemon, the Colossians and the Ephesians: A socio-rethorical commentary on the captivity epistles.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Prof Pieter Verster
Hoof, Departement Sendingwetenskap, Fakulteit Teologie, Universiteit van die Vrystaat, Bloemfontein, 9300. Suid-Afrika.
E-pos: versterp@ufs.ac.za
Tel +27(0)51 436 44 66
Sel +27(0)82 375 67 93
Faks +27(0)51 401 35 08

Vorster, Nico
North-West University

The GKSA's use of Article 30 CO in the era of apartheid

ABSTRACT

This article discusses the GKSA's (Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika) use of article 30 CO during the apartheid era. The central theoretical argument is that the GKSA Synods gave a Kuyperian content to the expression 'ecclesiastical affairs in an ecclesiastical manner' in article 30 CO, and this enabled them to evade sensitive political issues. The article states that the Kuyperian ecclesiology contains serious deficiencies and proposes that the relevant expression must rather be interpreted from the perspective of God's kingdom, because the church is a sign and instrument of God's kingdom on earth that anticipates the kingdom of God. 'Ecclesiastical affairs' ought to refer to all religious-ethical, social-ethical and spiritual issues that pertain to the principles of God's kingdom, while 'ecclesiastical manner' ought to depict the church's unique way of dealing with matters through witness, confession and proclamation.

1. INTRODUCTION

Article 30 of the Church Order of the GKSA (Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika) determines the agenda of church assemblies. Whereas article 28 CO is concerned with the prophetic task of the church towards the government, article 30 delineates the kind of issues that a church may address through its church assemblies. The article reads as follows:

> Church assemblies shall deal only with ecclesiastical matters and shall do so in an ecclesiastical manner. Major assemblies shall deal only with matters that could not be finalized in minor assemblies or that concern all the churches in question collectively.

From the above it is clear that article 30 prevents church assemblies from commenting on issues that fall outside the competency of the church. It also ensures that the church acts in an ecclesiastical manner. Obviously, the GKSA's interpretation of art 30 will determine the manner in which the church exercises its prophetic task towards government as demanded by article 28 CO and article 36 of the Belgic Confession.

In what follows I will focus on three issues regarding article 30 CO:

- The historical origin and principal foundation of article 30 CO.
- The GKSA use of the terms 'ecclesiastical issues in an ecclesiastical manner' during the Apartheid era.
- Supplying a proper definition for the term 'ecclesiastical issues in an ecclesiastical manner'.

2. THE HISTORICAL ORIGIN AND PRINCIPLE FOUNDATION OF ARTICLE 30 CHURCH ORDER

Bouwman (1970:29) states that article 30 originated as a reaction against the Roman Catholic idea of *Corpus Christianum* that asserted the church's authority over all spheres of life. According to this view the church may exert its authority in art, science, the state and culture. Canon law was

used to enact state law (cf Van der Linde, 1983:123). Calvin, in contrast to Rome, distinguished between civil and spiritual government (Inst. 4.20.1). These two forms of government differ in nature and ought not to be confused with each other. The church is a spiritual community of believers and may not be regarded as the patron of the natural spheres of life. Every sphere of life has its own God-given integrity. It would therefore be wrong to typify Calvin's approach to government as theocratic, since he did not propose that the church should govern all spheres of life. Calvin's view might be better circumscribed by the term theocentric. Both the state and church are servants of God and ought to act in obedience to God, but each in their own way according to their own calling.

The Reformed believers of the sixteenth century feared that church assemblies could bring about a new form of papal dominance (cf Spoelstra, 1989:178). The first article of the Church Order of Emden 1571 therefore determined that no church or church office may dictate other churches or offices[1]. The 1578 Synod of Dordrecht stated in art 17 that churches may only deal with ecclesiastical affairs and that the government and church must decide together on issues of mutual concern[2]. The current version of article 30 was drafted by the 1581 Synod of Middelburg as articles 21 and 22[3]. It does not refer to 'issues of mutual concern' but simply states the task of church assemblies to deal only with ecclesiastical matters, and then in an ecclesial manner. The Middelburg articles were combined into one (art 27) by the 1586 Synod of Gravenhage without any change to the wording. The Synod of Dordt placed the wording of Gravenhage's article 27 in article 30 to follow logically upon article 29[4]. Article 29 distinguishes between the various church assemblies, while art 30 determine the agenda of church assemblies. The Dordt version is the version currently used by the GKSA.

The main ecclesiological principle underlying article 30 is that every institution in life acts within its own God-given sphere. The church cannot be equated with the kingdom of God, but is an instrument and servant of God's kingdom in a specific sense. It is a communion of believers that proclaim the word of God and administer the sacraments. It cannot exert legal or political executive authority because it is not a civil entity, and ought to refrain from interfering in the duties of government. Instead the church needs to stay true to its calling by dealing with ecclesiastical issues. Government, conversely, is a servant of God's kingdom in the sense that it maintains law and order (Romans 13). It may not claim for itself the right to exercise the spiritual power of the church.

Article 30 also possesses an anti-hierarchical element. It limits the power that major assemblies may exert over local congregations and upholds the principle that the chief

---

1 Gheen Kercke sal over een ander Kercke, gheen Dienaar des Woorts, gheen Ouderlinck, noch Diaken sal d'een over d'ander heerschappie voeren, maar een yeghelijk sal hen voor alle suspicien, ende aenlockinge om te heershappen wachten (Synode van Emden, 1571: art 1).

2 In deze versamelinghen en sal niet ghehandelt worden, dan van Kerckelijken dingen ende dat na wyse der Kerckenregieringhe. Ende soo vele die dinghen aengaet de welcke eensdeels Kerckelick eensdeels politisch syn, ghelyck somwylen in houwelicksche ende ghelycke saken voorvallen, het verschil dat daerouer ontstaet sal by de Ouericheyt ende Kercken-raet te samen gheeyndicht worden (Synode van Dordt 1578: art 17).

3 XXI: In deze tsamencoemsten sullen gheen andere dan kerckelijke saecken, ende tselue op kerckelijke wijse ghehandelt werden. XXII In meerder vergaderinghen sal men niet handelen dan tghene in minderen niet heeft connen afghehandelt werden, of dat tot de Kercken der meerdere vergaderinghe int ghemein behoort (Synode der Middelburg, 1581: art 21, 22).

4 In dese t'samen-comsten sullen gheen ander dan Kerckelijke saecken, ende t'selve op Kerckelijke wijse ghehandelt worden. In meerder vergaderinge salmen niet handelen, dan't gene dat in mindere niet heeft afghehandelt konnen worden, ofte dat tot den Kercken der meerder vergaderinghe int ghemeyn behoort (Synode van Dordrecht, 1618-1619: art 30).

responsibility of church government lies with the local church. Major assemblies are not permanent superstructures elevated above minor assemblies, but a temporary assembly of delegates from different churches that assist each other in church government by taking decisions based on Scripture, the church order and the creeds. Article 30 limits the agenda of major assemblies by stating that they can only discuss issues that minor assemblies were not able to solve or issues that belong on the agenda of a major assembly. Such issues are typically appeals and issues of common interest such as theological training, examination of prospective ministers, discussions with government, and visitation (cf Monsma, 1967:122).

Article 30 not only determines the agenda of ecclesiastical assemblies, but also the manner in which ecclesiastical affairs must be dealt with. According to article 30 ecclesiastical affairs ought to be handled in an 'ecclesiastical manner'. This definition has caused much interpretative difficulty in the GKSA and was often misused during the Apartheid era to keep sensitive political issues from the agenda of church assemblies. The tragic result was that the GKSA, in general, stayed silent on issues of power abuse and discrimination during the Apartheid years.

3. THE GKSA'S USE OF THE TERM ECCLESIASTICAL AFFAIRS IN AN ECCLESIASTICAL MANNER.

The definition of 'ecclesiastical affairs in an ecclesiastical manner' received attention during the 1916 and 1942 GKSA Synods. The need to reflect on this expression was caused by the political and social circumstances of these periods (Vorster 1993:224). Both Synods used the 1574 and 1578 Synods of Dordrect's interpretation of 'mixed' issues that pertain to both church and state (cf Strauss, 1994:584)

The 1916 GKSA Synod took place shortly after the Afrikaner Rebellion against British rule. Synod was obliged to give advice on whether believers have a right to resist authorities under certain circumstances. In its consideration of the issue the Synod called on article 30 CO and stated that 'mixed' issues that pertain to both church and state fall under the category of 'ecclesiastical affairs' (GKSA, Acta, 1916:93-96). The 1942 Synod dealt with article 30 in relation to the church's calling in community life. The issue was regarded as important because the Afrikaner community experienced extreme poverty and social problems after the Great Depression and during the Second World War. The Synod stated that article 30 ought not to be interpreted in an absolute sense, because Church Order 28 allows the church to correspond with the government, while article 21 expects the church to supervise the education that its members receive at schools. According to Synod 1942 the church had expressed itself on various issues in times leading up to the assembly such as welfare, legal issues pertaining to marriage and the prevention of promiscuity (GKSA, Acta, 1942:25). The term 'ecclesiastical affairs in an ecclesiastical manner' must, according Synod 1942, be understood within its historical context. It is not the intention of the article to renounce the calling of the church with regard to political, scientific and social issues (GKSA, Acta, 1942:25). In fact, the church has a unique calling to shed the light of God's Word on all spheres of life, especially through preaching. The Synod felt that there are spheres where church, government and social institutions share mutual interests (GKSA, Acta, 1942:26). Every Church Assembly must decide for itself when such issues of mutual interest are at stake and when the Church's opinion should be voiced (GKSA, Acta, 1942:26).

It is clear from the above-mentioned that the GKSA Synods of 1916 and 1942 did not interpret the terms 'ecclesiastical issues in an ecclesiastical manner' in a legalistic or narrow ecclesiocentric sense. They recognized that issues might arise that are of common interest to both state and church. However, during the Apartheid era this nuanced and balanced approach gave way to a rigid ecclesiocentric approach that decisively influenced the GKSA's approach to political ethical issues. This shift was largely due to the rise of Kuyperian and Neo-Calvinist

thought in the South African Reformed tradition, as well as political motives.

Abraham Kuyper's distinction between the church as organism and institute had a profound influence on the GKSA from the 1940's onwards (cf Van Wyk 1991:181). At the heart of his theology lies the differentiation between God's common grace and particular grace. The state originates from God's common grace and is an instrument that God uses to resist sin and maintain law and order in society. The church, conversely, originates from God's particular grace and is concerned with administering God's word (Kuyper, 1932 ii:664). Kuyper explained his definition of the church as *organism* and *institute* through the words *geworteld* (rootedness) and *gegrond* (location). *Geworteld* depicts the organic nature of the lives of Christians that emanates from their relationship with Christ. *Gegrond* presents the principle that the faithful must organize in an institute that is based on the foundation of God's Word (cf Kuyper 1870:13). According to Kuyper the church in the form of organism precedes the church in its manifestation as institute. The organism forms the heart of the church and is the life-giving power from which the church as institute arises (cf Kuyper, 1870:15). Though the institute is born from the organism, the organism is simultaneously invigorated by the institute's administering of the Word (cf Kuyper, 1870:15).

The institute is the official formation of the church, and therefore its calling is the official proclamation of the Word and sacraments (cf Kuyper, 1932 II:272). It cannot influence society directly, because its calling is limited to the community of the faithful. Any direct involvement of the institute in society would amount to a breach of the principle of sovereignty in own sphere (cf Kuyper 1909 III:204). With the principle of sovereignty in own sphere Kuyper attempts to express the idea that every sphere of life is governed by its own unique principles and possesses its own God-given integrity. Whereas the principle of sovereignty in own sphere limits the Church as institute to focussing on 'ecclesiastical affairs', the church as organism may influence society in a secondary sense through the faithful who obey their calling as Christians in the various spheres of society (cf Kuyper, 1909 III:204). Kuyper, therefore, did not allow much room for church assemblies to make official pronouncements on societal issues. He was, however, a strong proponent of the participation of Christian organizations in public life through political parties, schools and universities, which would represent the prophetic voice of Christianity in the public realm (cf Strauss, 1993:12). Kuyper's emphasis on the need for Christian organizations was based on his anti-thetical notion that Christians and non-Christians, faith and unbelief, cannot function within the same institutions. Christians have to organize their force within their own isolated circle (cf Kuyper, 1885:5, 13-15).

Kuyper's understanding of the Church as institute with the limited task of administering of Word and sacraments influenced the GKSA profoundly. The *Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland* with whom the GKSA had strong relations made extensive use of the Kuyperian distinction between *organism* and *institute* (cf Buys 1970:171). The Kuyperian views of Dutch church polity theologians such as Bouwman, Jansen and Rutgers also had a significant influence on the GKSA (cf Vorster 1997:190). Jansen (1952:143) for instance states that Church assemblies may not deal with any social, political, military or scientific issues, while Bouwman (1970:30) remarks that the task of the church pertains to the sacral realm. The church must call on its adherents to shed the light of God's word on natural life, but it may not make pronouncements on issues pertaining to the state, society, arts or science. Herman Dooyeweerd also utilized the ecclesiology of Kuyper in his Neo-Calvinist societal doctrine, while the Reformed South African philosopher Henk Stoker incorporated it in his version of Neo-Calvinism. The result was that 'ecclesiastical matters in an ecclesiastical manner' was now understood as issues that pertain exclusively to the community of faithful. Ethical issues raised by Apartheid were henceforth classified as non-ecclesial matters that pertain to the civil realm and have no relevance for church assemblies. The General Synod

of 1984 (GKSA, Acta:46) for instance stated:

> It is not the task of the church as institute to attempt to influence government on issues pertaining to national and social reform. [own translation]

After a 1984 resolution of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod (RES) meeting held in Chicago reproached the GKSA for its passive stance towards Apartheid, the GKSA responded in a similar fashion:

> In viewing the political situation in South Africa as an absolute and holding the GKSA responsible for a political situation the RES Chicago 1984 transgressed the principle which implies that ecclesiastical matters must be decided on ecclesiastical grounds. The GKSA express their deepest concern in connection with the non-Scriptural and ideological norms, e.g. "territorial state" by which the RES violated its task as an ecclesiastical body in passing judgment on the GKSA and South African political and economical issues (GKSA, Acta, 1988:236).

The above-mentioned quotations are only a few examples of incidents where the GKSA utilized a Kuyperian definition of article 30 CO to evade sensitive political-ethical issues. Numerous quotations of a similar kind are documented in Synodal Acta. The approach of Synods of the GKSA towards Apartheid can be stated as follows:They refrained in terms of art 30 to grant Apartheid theological legitimacy, but they also refused on the basis of art 30 CO to reject Apartheid outright as unethical in terms of art 30 CO. The Christian Reformed Church rightly accused the GKSA of abstraction and 'sins of omission' (GKSA, Acta 1988:861-862, 870).

However, the GKSA's use of art 30 CO was not consistently Kuyperian in nature in all social matters. This begs the question whether the GKSA's Kuyperian interpretation of art 30 was really based on theological premises or whether Kuyper's ecclesiology was utilized as a convenient theological tool so that the church could remain silent regarding Apartheid. GKSA Synods seem to have taken refuge in a Kuyperian definition of article 30 when sensitive political issues were at stake, but they were not reluctant to address micro-ethical social issues such as drug and alcohol abuse, Sunday labour, educational issues, immigration, promiscuity, gambling, censorship and abortion in terms of article 28 CO. A consistent Kuyperian application of article 30 would have prevented the GKSA from commenting publicly on these issues.

For the sake of balance, it needs to be noted that were some odd occasions on which the GKSA questioned Apartheid practices, though in a vague manner. The problems arising from migrant labour, the rights of aliens and minorities, the Law on Mixed Marriages, the Immorality Act and the Group Areas Act were addressed (cf Vorster 1988:4-5). The GKSA's critical responses to Apartheid were mostly stimulated by the RES's decisions on Apartheid and received official status through the GKSA's membership of the RES. Two of the most important decisions that had their origins in RES resolutions are the 1985 GKSA decision on the moral acceptability of a Bill of Human Rights (GKSA, Acta, 1985:651) and the 1991 Synod's rejection of Apartheid as a sin (GKSA, Acta, 1991:87). In general however, the GKSA's stance during the heyday of Apartheid on sensitive political issues were vague and elusive.

4. REDEFINING THE TERM 'ECCLESIASTICAL AFFAIRS IN AN ECCLESIASTICAL MANNER'

Though article 30 CO was abused during the Apartheid era, it is important to acknowledge that the article serves an important theological principle namely that the calling of the church is

not all-encompassing but specific in nature and therefore limited. The church ought to refrain from interfering in non-ecclesiastical issues that fall outside of its competence and jurisdiction. Instead the God-given integrity of every sphere of life ought to be respected.

However, the experience of Apartheid has shown that ecclesiocentric interpretations of article 30 could produce disturbing results. The problem with the Kuyperian ecclesiology and, for that matter, a Kuyperian interpretation of article 30 CO, is that it separates the institutional and organic dimensions of the church community in a dualist sense. The church is allowed to preach to the faithful on certain issues, but may not deal officially in church assemblies with the same issues. The institutional church is thus reduced to an otherworldly spiritual community who may preach the Word of God to the faithful, but who possesses no prophetic duty towards the state and public life itself. It functions as a voiceless observer of public affairs. But can the official organs of a church be silent when crimes against humanity and other atrocities are committed? Is the Church as institution not also supposed to be a visible sign of God's kingdom in the world? Why should the official church only proclaim the Word of God to the community of the faithful and not to the world outside the official church? Is the church as institution not also an important component of civil society? Is it not the task of the institutional church to profess its faith to the world? Surely, the Afrikaans speaking churches could have changed the political landscape in South Africa drastically if they were prepared to issue official statements rejecting Apartheid as a sin.

The root problem in Kuyper's ecclesiology lies in his use of the terms common and particular grace. Calvin did not employ the notions of common grace and particular grace in a mutually exclusive way. He rather viewed common grace as an important introduction to God's particular grace. Kuyper, however, utilizes the notion of common grace to develop a comprehensive doctrine on culture. He gives an independent content to the realm of common grace and casts it off from the realm of particular grace. But can common grace function independently and separately from particular grace? Kuyper's exclusion of the institutional church from the sphere of God's common grace is, in my view, an impediment to a truly Christian view on society. He addresses the vacuum that the Church's absence leaves in society by proposing that Christian organizations represent the Christian community in public life. However, this notion could result in precisely the opposite effect of what Kuyper desires. Kuyper wants to preserve the spiritual nature of the church, but experience teaches us that Christian parties often tend to use churches for their political efforts to attain power, while clerics inevitably become involved in or are associated with such parties. Stated differently: the danger in relying on Christian political parties to represent Christianity in the public realm lies in the fact that a church can become an extension of a political party or a political party an extension of a church. In my view, it is far more desirable that the Church speaks in a churchly manner as Church in the name of the Church. The question is of course: How should we then define the terms 'ecclesiastical affairs in an ecclesiastical manner'?

Theologically and biblically speaking the church ought to be regarded as a visible sign and instrument of God's kingdom on earth. The Gospels not only describe the coming of the kingdom as the central message in Jesus' preaching, but also relates the purpose of the *ecclesia* directly to the kingdom of God (cf Mark 1:15,Mat 16:18-19). The term kingdom (βασιλεία) is a dynamic expression that refers to God's reign, kingship and absolute dominion over all things and denotes the fact, terrain and manner of God's reign (cf Van der Walt, 1969:99, Louw & Nida 1989:16, 478). Its significance for social ethics and ecclesiology lies therein that it relates God's reign to the whole of creation, all spheres of human life, to the world and history.

The Kingdom of God penetrates the world through the coming of Christ. Christ establishes God's βασιλεία on earth through his victory over sin. The Kingdom of God is therefore a present

reality. The gospels talk about the Kingdom as being 'at hand' (Mk 1:15) and 'among you (Lk 17:21). However, the βασιλεία is also a future reality in the sense that God's kingdom will only be fully established at the end of times (Lk 13:29, Mt 8:11). The church is not the kingdom of God, but anticipates the kingdom of God by reminding the political order of its provisional nature in contrast to the ultimacy of God's eschatological future (Pannenberg, 1977:101). Barth (1935:21) rightly states that the existence of the state is not separate from the kingdom of Jesus Christ. Its foundations and its influence are not autonomous. It is outside the church, but not outside the range of Christ's dominion. Christians therefore have the continuous calling to critically assess human structures and to renew them. This does not mean that Christians can expect the state or civil society to gradually become the kingdom of God. The task of the church is rather to anticipate the kingdom of God (cf Pannenberg, 1977:37, Barth 1935:31). Colossians 2:15 relates Christ's reign directly to the disarming (ἀπεκδσάμεος) of the powers and authorities (τάς ἄρχας καί τάς ἔξουσίας) of this world and to make a public spectacle of them (Col 2:15). The τάς ἄρχας καί τάς ἔξουσίας refer to the powers that reign the world and bind the souls of men, such as the powers of unbelief, injustice, suppression of the poor, materialism, selfishness, discrimination etc (Ridderbos, 1979:5). The sanctifying role of the Church in the world therefore includes obeying the will of God and disarming the oppressive powers of this world by using the keys of the Kingdom, namely preaching the Word of God.

Applied to art 30 CO we can state that 'ecclesiastical affairs' ought to refer to all religious-ethical, social-ethical and spiritual issues that are relevant to the principles of the kingdom of God namely justice, freedom, reconciliation, love, peace and joy (Cf Mt 22:37-39, Rom 14:17, 2 Cor 5:18-20, Rom 13, Col 1:20). The church's task is not limited to the community of the faithful, but it has a prophetic task towards all spheres and institutions of life, because all spheres of life fall under the reign of God. This, however, does not mean that the church has the right to rule or control other spheres of life. This is where the term 'ecclesiastical manner' is applicable.

The term 'ecclesiastical manner' ought to refer, in my view, to the fact that the power of the church is spiritual in nature and not coercive. The central task of the Church is to proclaim the Word of God and to apply the principles of God's Word within a certain context. It uses the typical biblical and Christian discourses of preaching (κήρυγμα), proclamation (κηρυσσω), confession (ὁμολογεω) and witness (μαρτυρια); and refrains from violence, activism, lobbying, the mustering of power and civil disobedience. Though civil society might be entitled to use activism, lobbying or strikes to resist power abuse, the church in its institutional organized form cannot engage in such activities because these methods do not pass the test of handling issues in an 'ecclesiastical manner'. Of course the ecclesiastical discourses of proclamation, witness and confession do not always need to be dogmatic or theological in nature. At times, the church will have to translate Christian values into practical or secular language to make an effective contribution to a public debate.

The terms 'ecclesiastical matters' and 'ecclesiastical manner', should inform each other. A matter that cannot be dealt with in an 'ecclesiastical manner' is probably from the outset not an 'ecclesiastical matter'. For instance, the fact that the typical ecclesiastical discourses of preaching, witness, proclamation and confession are not at stake in public debates about issues such as the development of sport infrastructure, practical methods of crime prevention, town planning, naming streets or in scientific debates about the interpretation of empirical data, is an indication that these issues fall outside the church's domain of influence. A further caveat needs to be considered. An issue could be ethical in nature, but the church could lack the competence and knowledge to comment on the issue. In such cases, the church's inability to employ ecclesiastical forms of discourse effectively and authoritatively, is an indication that the issue should, for the time being, not be dealt with as an 'ecclesiastical matter'.

5. CONCLUSION

The GKSA did not support the Apartheid policy officially and publicly. It rather evaded sensitive political issues by utilizing Kuyper and Neo-Calvinist philosophy's distinction between the church as institute and organism to provide the term 'ecclesiastical matters' in article 30 CO with a narrow content. To rectify this misuse of article 30 CO, this article proposes that the terms 'ecclesiastical matters in an ecclesiastical manner' should be understood from the perspective of the kingdom of God, because the church is an instrument of God's kingdom that anticipates the kingdom of God. All religious-ethical, social-ethical and spiritual issues that pertain to the principles of God's kingdom should be considered as 'ecclesiastical matters'. The term 'ecclesiastical manner' ought to refer to the spiritual power of the church and entails the discourses of proclamation, witness and confession.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BARTH, K. 1935. *The word of God and the word of man.* Translated by Douglas Norton. London : Hockler & Stoughton.

BOUWMAN, H. 1970. *Gereformeerd Kerkrecht: het recht der kerken in de praktijk. Deel 1 & 2.* Kampen : Kok.

BUYS, P.W. 1970. Die ekklesiologiese onderskeiding Organisme en Instituut as antwoord op die problematiek van die Volkskerk: 'n historiese, prinsipiële en praktiese studie. Potchefstroom : PU vir CHO. (Proefskrif-Th. D.)

CALVYN, J. 1992. *Institusie van die Christelike godsdiens* 1559. Boek 4. Vertaling deur H.W. Simpson. Potchefstroom : Calvyn Jubileum Boekefonds.

GEREFORMEERDE KERK IN ZUID-AFRIKA. 1916. De handelingen van de achttiende algemene synodale vergadering van de Gereformeerde Gemeenten in Zuid-Afrika. Pretoria : N. D. van der Reyden.

GEREFORMEERDE KERK IN SUID-AFRIKA. 1942. Handelinge van die sewe en twintigste sinodale vergadering van die Gereformeerde Gemeentes in Suid-Afrika. Aliwal-Noord : Westelike Stem.

GEREFORMEERDE KERK IN SUID-AFRIKA. 1984. Handeling van die vierde algemene sinode van die Gereformeerde Kerke in Suidelike-Afrika. Potchefstroom : Administratiewe Buro.

GEREFORMEERDE KERKE IN SUID-AFRIKA. 1985. Handelinge van die twee en veertigste Nasionale Sinode. Potchefstroom : Potch : Herald

GEREFORMEERDE KERKE IN SUID-AFRIKA. 1988. Handelinge van die drie en veertigste Nasionale Sinode. Potchefstroom : Potch Herald.

GEREFORMEERDE KERKE IN SUID-AFRIKA. 1991. Handelinge van die vier en veertigste Nasionale Sinode te Potchefstroom. Potchefstroom : Potch Herald.

JANSEN, J. 1952. *Korte verklaring van de kerkorde der Gereformeerde Kerken.* Kampen : Kok.

KUYPER, A. 1870. Geworteld en gegrond: de kerk als organisme en instituut: intreerede uitgesproken in de Nieuwe Kerk te Amsterdam. Amsterdam : De Hoogh.

KUYPER, A. 1885. Ijzer en leem: rede ter inleiding op het gebed voor te enige Hoogeschool hier te lande, die op Gods Woord gegrond staat. Amsterdam : Kruyt.

KUYPER, A. 1909. *Encyclopedia der heilige Godgeleerdheid.* Deel III. Kampen : Kok.

KUYPER, A. 1932. *De Gemeene Gratie.* Deel II. Kampen : Kok.

LOUW, J.P. & NIDA, E.A., *eds.* 1989. *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament based on semantic domains.* Vol. 1, 2. New-York : United Bible Societies.

MONSMA, M. 1967. *The new revised church order commentary: a brief explanation of the church order of the Christian Reformed Church.* Grand Rapids, Mich. : Eerdmans.

PANNENBERG, W. 1977. *Human nature, election and history.* Philadelphia : Westminster Press.

RIDDERBOS, H. N 1979. *Church, world, kingdom.* Potchefstroom : Instituut vir bevordering van Calvinisme.

SPOELSTRA, B. 1989. *Gereformeerde kerkreg en kerkregering. 'n Handboek by die kerkorde.* Hammanskraal: Hammanskraalse Teologiese Skool.

STRAUSS, P.J. 1993. Op die tweesprong? Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk oor die tema "kerk en samelewing" in die *Kerkorde* en *Kerk en Samelewing* - 1990. Bloemfontein : UOVS.

STRAUSS, P. J. 1994. Kerklike sake, die kerk en die koninkryk van God. *In die Skriflig,* 28(4):581-592.

SYNODE VAN EMDEN. 1905 (1571). De acta der Emdensche Synode van 1571. (*In* Biesterveld, P. & Kuyper, H. H. *reds*. Kerkelijk handboekje bevattende de bepalingen der Nederlandsche synoden en andere stukken van beteekenis voor de regeering der kerken. Kampen : J. H. Bos. p. 35-60).

SYNODE VAN DORDT. 1905 (1578). De acta der Nationale Synode van Dordrecht 1578 met de Particuliere vragen. (*In* Biesterveld, P. & Kuyper, H. H. *reds*. Kerkelijk handboekje bevattende de bepalingen der Nederlandsche synoden en andere stukken van beteekenis voor de regeering der kerken. Kampen : J. H. Bos. p. 95-141).

SYNODE VAN MIDDELBURG. 1905 (1581). De kerkenordening van de Nationale Middelburgsche Synode 1581 met de Particuliere vragen, Visitasiereglement en Schoolordening. (*In* Biesterveld, P. & Kuyper, H. H. *reds*. Kerkelijk handboekje bevattende de bepalingen der Nederlandsche synoden en andere stukken van beteekenis voor de regeering der kerken. Kampen : J. H. Bos. p. 141-190).

SYNODE VAN DORDT. 1618/1619 (1905). De Kerkenordening van de Nationale Synode van Dordrect 1618, 1619. (*In* Biesterveld, P. & Kuyper, H. H. *reds*. Kerkelijk handboekje bevattende de bepalingen der Nederlandsche synoden en andere stukken van beteekenis voor de regeering der kerken. Kampen : J. H. Bos. p. 225-250).

VAN DER LINDE, G.P.L. 1983. *Die kerkorde. 'n Verklaring van die gereformeerde kerkorde.* Potchefstroom: PTP.

VAN DER WALT, T. 1969. Die voleinding van die koninkryk. (*In*: Du Toit, S., e.a. *Die koninkryk van God.* Potchefstroom : Potch Herald. p. 96-112.)

VAN WYK, J.H. 1991. Kerklike getuienis in 'n polities gepolariseerde samelewing. (*In:* Helberg, J.L. red. *Kerkwees as getuienis in Suid-Afrika vandag.* Potchefstroom : PU vir CHO. p. 172-193).

VORSTER, J. M. 1988. Die roeping van die Gereformeerde kerke in die Suid-Afrikaanse politiek. *In die Skriflig,* 22(85):2-12.

VORSTER, J.M. 1993. Kuyper se ekklesiologie en die interpretasie van "kerklike sake" in artikel 30 van die Kerkorde van die Gereformeerde Kerke van Suid-Afrika. *In die Skriflig,* 27(2):215-229, Junie.

VORSTER, J. M. 1997. *Is die kerk funksioneel? Gedagtes oor Gereformeerde kerkvernuwing in 'n post-moderne konteks.* Potchefstroom : PU vir CHO.

KEY WORDS
Article 30
Church Order
GKSA (Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika)
Kuyper

Kontakbesonderhede:
Prof. Nico Vorster
Fakulteit Teologie
Posbus 20004
Molenstraat
Noordbrug
2522 POTCHEFSTROOM
Tel: 018 2991023
e-pos: nico.vorster@nwu.ac.za

Vosloo, RR
Universiteit Stellenbosch

Die resepsie van die Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis in Suid-Afrika, met spesifieke verwysing na die konfessionele neo-Calvinisme van die 1930's

ABSTRACT

The reception of the Belgic Confession in South Africa, with special reference to the confessional neo-Calvinism of the 1930's.

This article was first read at a symposium marking the 450 year celebration of the *Confessio Belgica* held at the Faculty of Theology of Stellenbosch University in November 2011. It reflects on a specific aspect of the reception of the *Confessio Belgica* (or *Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis*) in South Africa, namely the way in which the *Confessio Belgica* was read and interpreted by Professor E.E. van Rooyen in the 1930s. Van Rooyen, who was professor of Old Testament and Apologetics at the Theological Seminary at Stellenbosch, can be viewed as a proponent of the so-called confessional neo-Calvinism that became stronger in certain circles in the 1930s. By attending to Van Rooyen's commentary on the *Confessio Belgica* (as published in the journal *Die Gereformeerde Vaandel* between 1933 and 1937), the article identifies and underlines the way in which "Modernism" functions as a type of "enemy construction" (*vyandsbeeld*) in Van Rooyen's writings, over against which Reformed or Calvinist identity is posited. In light of this exploration, the final part of the article briefly reflects on the question whether the discourse in South Africa today on Reformed Confessions in general, and on the *Confessio Belgica* in particular, can find a way between, on the one hand, the neglect of confessional particularity and, on the other hand, insular exclusivism.

1. INLEIDING

Toe die personeel van die kasteel in Doornik (Tournai) vroegoggend op die 2de November 1561 'n geheimsinnige pakkie met briewe en 'n geloofsbelydenis in die voorpoort gevind het, sou hulle kwalik kon raai watter verdere resepsie hierdie geloofsbelydenis in die jare en eeue daarna sou vind. Daar word algemeen aanvaar dat hierdie belydenis – wat as die Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis (NGB) of die *Confessio Belgica* bekendheid verwerf het – as 'n gemeenskaplike belydenis van gereformeerde gelowiges in die Nederlande ontwikkel het, met die Franse predikant Guido de Bres as outeur. De Bres wou met hierdie belydenis, soos blyk uit die begeleidende brief aan Koning Filips II, asook uit die die inhoud van die belydenis, duidelik maak dat die gereformeerdes nie rewolusionêre wederdopers is nie en dat hulle verlang om volgens die suiwer evangelie van Jesus Christus te lewe.

In hierdie kort artikel wil ek nie ingaan op die lewe van De Bres of die ontstaans- en ontwikkelingsgeskiedenis van die *Confessio Belgica* nie. Vir die wat meer hieroor wil lees, kan ek verwys na die mooi koffietafelboek oor Guido De Bres se lewe en belydenis wat onlangs in

Nederland gepubliseer is[1], asook na Nicolaas Gootjes se boek *The Belgic Confession: Its History and Sources* (wat in 2007 verskyn het). [2] Hierdie sake kry ook aandag in 'n interdissiplinêre werk van H. L. Bosman *et al* wat onder die titel *Die Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis – Ontstaan, Skrifgebruik en Gebruik* in 1987 verskyn[3]. Ek gaan ook nie 'n breë oorsig gee oor die resepsie van die NGB sedert die eerste Franse publikasies daarvan in 1561 nie. In 'n hoofstuk in die genoemde koffietafelboek oor De Bres, met as opskrif "Helder geluid klinkt ver: De Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis van lokaal tot globaal", word eweneens 'n nuttige oorsig oor ('n deel van) die resepsiegeskiedenis gegee, met verwysing na die neerslag van die dokument in verskillende tale en lande. Die hoofstuk meld dat daar in die 19de eeu in Suid-Afrika Nederlandse en Engelse uitgawes van die NGB verskyn het. Daar word verder verwys na die vertaling van die belydenisskrifte in Afrikaans wat in samehang met die Bybelvertaling en psalmberyming onderneem is, en in 1937 met die Psalmboek verskyn het.[4] Latere kerkboeke en handboeke vir erediensgebruik sou verdere vertalingsveranderings aanbring.

Hoewel hierdie artikel nie in detail op die resepsie geskiedenis van die NGB in Suid-Afrika wil ingaan nie ('n saak wat beslis om verdere navorsing vra), wil dit wel graag aandag vra vir een vorm wat die resepsiegeskiedenis van die NGB in die 1930s in Suid-Afrika aangeneem het, met spesifieke verwysing na die skrywes van Prof E. E. van Rooyen (wat Ou Testament en Apologetiek aan die Kweekskool op Stellenbosch doseer het) in die blad *Die Gereformeerde Vaandel*.[5]

2. KONFESSIONELE NEO-CALVINISME, *DIE GEREFORMEERDE VAANDEL*, EN DIE NEDERLANDSE GELOOFSBELYDENIS

Kort na die afsluiting van die bekende Du Plessis-saak deur die Kaapse Sinode in November 1932 verskyn daar 'n nuwe teologiese blad onder die titel *Die Gereformeerde Vaandel,* met drie van die vier professore van die Kweekskool op Stellenbosch op die redaksie, te wete professore E.E. Van Rooyen, D.G. Malan en D. Lategan. Dié blad groei uit *Die Ou Paaie,* 'n blad wat weer in

---

1 Braekman, Émile, De Boer, Erik (reds) 2011, *Guido de Bres, Zijn Leven, zijn belijden* (Utrecht: Kok).
2 Gootjes, N H 2007. *The Belgic Confession: Its History and Sources* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic).
3 Bosman, H L *et al* 1987. *Die Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis – Ontstaan, Skrifgebruik en Gebruik* (Pretoria: Universiteit van Suid-Afrika).
4 In die verband kan daar ook verwys word na 'n 'n artikel oor "Ons Belydenisskrifte" in die bundel *Koers in die Krisis,* uitgegee in 1935, waarin Ds. Daniël Erasmus melding maak van 'n ontwaking in die belangstelling ten opsigte van die kerklike belydenisskrifte, en dan noem hy dat daar verwag kan word "dat wannneer die Afrikaanse vertaling daarvan eenmaal uitgegee is, dit die ontwaakte belangstelling tot dieper ondersoek sal prikkel". Sien Stoker, H G en Potgieter, F J M (reds), *Koers in die Krisis I* (Stellenbosch: Pro Ecclesia Drukkery, 1935), 103.
5 'n Mens sou natuurlik ook na ander aspekte van die resepsie van die NGB in teologiese diskoers in Suid-Afrika kan verwys, soos byvoorbeeld ten opsigte van die belofte van die NGB vir kategetiese leerstof, of die manier waarop die NGB neerslag gevind in die teologiese werke van Johan Heyns en Willie Jonker. Sien in die verband: Botha, W 1972, *Die Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis as Kategetiese Leerstof* (MTh tesis, Universiteit van Stellenbosch); Heyns, J A 1992, *Inleiding tot die Dogmatiek aan die hand van die Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis* (Johannesburg: NG Kerkboekhandel); Jonker, W D 1994, *Bevrydende waarheid: Die karakter van die gereformeerde belydenis* (Wellington: Hugenote Uitgewers). Daar kan ook daarop gelet word dat Allan Boesak sy belangrike artikel "Black and Reformed: Contradiction or Challenge?" afsluit met 'n verwysing na die Nederlandse geloofsbelydenis, artikel 37: "The faithful and elect shall be crowned with glory and honour, and the Son of God will confess their names before God his Father and his elect angels; all tears shall be wiped from their eyes; *and their cause, which is now condemned by many judges and magistrates as heretical and impious, will then be known to be the cause of the Son of God".* Boesak, A A 1984, *Black and Reformed: Apartheid, Liberation and the Calvinist Tradition* (New York: Orbis), 99.

1926 as reaksie op Du Plessis se blad *Het Zoeklicht* begin is. Die ontstaan van *Die Gereformeerde Vaandel* is moontlik gemaak deur 'n groot skenking van Pieter de Waal Neethling, 'n lidmaat van die gemeente Stellenbosch, wat 10 000 pond ter beskikking van die trustees (Van Rooyen, Malan en Lategan) gestel het, met die doel "om 'n tydskrif uit te gee ter handhawing van die suiwere leer van ons Kerk, en ter voorligting van ons volk op teologiese en godsdienstige gebied".[6] Die blad het dan ook ten doel "(1) om die konfessionele standpunt van ons Kerk te handhaaf … (2) om op hierdie hegte fondament bestendig voort te bou … (3) om alle dwalinge te bestry".[7]

Dié blad kan binne die kader van die neo-Calvinistiese konfessionalisme geplaas word wat na die afloop van die Du Plessis-saak al hoe sterker na vore getree het.[8] Reeds in die eerste uitgawe blyk hierdie verbintenis tot 'n konfessionele (of dalk eerder konfessionalistiese) standpunt in 'n artikel van Van Rooyen oor "Die Belydenis en die Handhawing daarvan deur die suiwer Gereformeerde Kerke".[9] Van Rooyen verwys hierin na wat hy beskryf as die huidige ontwrigte en sorgwekkende tye en hoe dit saamhang met die naweë van die groot wêreldoorlog en die ekonomiese depressie, soveel so dat vele Westerse lande van die goudstandaard moes afstap. Maar, vervolg Van Rooyen, "wat nog veel erger en baie onheilspellender as die heersende depressie en die toenemende afstapping van die goudstandaard is, is die depressie en afstapping van die goudstandaard op die gebied van die waaragtige geloof en geestelike lewe by ons westerse volke". En die groot oorlog is vir Van Rooyen nie al rede hiervoor nie:

> Die groot oorlog het dit seker ook verskerp maar reeds lank tevore het die moderne ongeloof, toenemende godsdiensverslapping en wêreldsin die Protestantse kerke van die wêreld van ons tyd binnegedring in 'n verlammende depressie van die innerlike geloofslewe en afstapping van die goudstandaard van die Protestantse Belydenisse teweeg gebring. Selfs meer as een Geref. Kerk het daartoe gekom om groot offers aan die Molog van belydenisversaking te bring.[10]

Van Rooyen gee 'n spesifieke historiese interpretasie van die redes vir belydenisversaking en verwys in die proses na die "kille, koue Rasionalisme wat sy bevriesingsveroorsakende asem hoe langer hoe meer oor die kerklike en godsdienstige lewe van heel Europa geblaas het."[11] Vir Van

---

6 *Die Gereformeerde Vaandel,* Januarie 1933: 6.

7 *Die Gereformeerde Vaandel,* Januarie 1933: 6.

8 Sien hieroor Vosloo, R R, "Konfessionele neo-Calvinisme na die Du Plessis-saak". *NGTT* 51 (Supplementum), 2010: 275-288.

9 Kritiek teen die stigting van *Die Gereformeerde Vaandel* sou nie uitbly nie. In *Het Zoeklicht* van 15 November 1932, nog voor die eerste uitgawe van *Die Gereformeerde Vaandel,* reageer Du Plessis krities op die skenking van Neethling en meen hy oor die blad "dat dit die reinste fundamentalisme sal verkondig" (1932:323). Hy haal verder die verklaring aan wat die trustees van die blad jaarliks moet onderteken – 'n geloofsverklaring dat die drie Formuliere van Enigheid ooreenstem met God se Woord, sowel as die verdere verwerping van, onder meer, die Ewolusie-teorie en die beskouing dat Moses nie die outeur en skrywer van die Pentateug is nie (1932:324). Na die verskyning van die eerste uitgawe van *Die Gereformeerde Vaandel* lewer Du Plessis weer skerp kritiek in *Die Soeklig* (soos *Het Zoeklicht* sedert 1933 heet) op die swak wetenskaplike kwaliteit van die bydraes, met spesifieke verwysing na Van Rooyen se artikel (15 Februarie 1933:35-36). Hierdie aanval van Du Plessis op *Die Gereformeerde Vaandel* (of soos hy dit noem, "die nuwe Neethling-blad") roep in die daaropvolgende uitgawe, soos te verwagte, weer reaksie uit. Lategan reageer namens die redaksie en meen dat Du Plessis "onsimpatiek is teenoor alles wat Gereformeerd en Kalvinisties is. Vir hom beteken dit alles Dopperisme, en elke poging om liefde in te boesem vir die Gereformeerde waarhede in ons kosbare Belydenisskrifte vervat, is slegs 'n verdoppering van ons Kerk" (*Die Gereformeerde Vaandel,* Maart 1933:94).

10 *Die Gereformeerde Vaandel,* Januarie 1933:12.

11 In sy analise beskou Van Rooyen veral 1816 as 'n onheilspellende jaar – die jaar toe die Nederlandse

Rooyen is die Rasionalisme en die Franse Rewolusie hoofoorsake vir die feit dat die "kinderlike en heelhartige aanvaarding van die Heilige Skrif en die daarop gegronde Geref. Belydenis het al meer verdonker geraak" het. Die term "Modernisme" funksioneer in die konteks as 'n soort sambreelterm wat die bedreiginge vir die gesonde leer saamtrek. Hy skryf:

> Ons lewe in 'n tyd van hoogspanne en oormoedige modernisme in die hele beskaafte wêreld; 'n modernisme wat daarop uit is om die regsinnige leer te verwater en te bestry … Maar die Geref. Kerke moet die soet gefluit van daardie vroom getinte modernisme met moed en durf weerstaan.[12]

Ons sou kon sê dat die modernisme in die verband as 'n tipe gereformeerde vyandsbeeld funksioneer (teenoor "regsinnigheid" of "die Calvinisme").[13] Hoe dit ook al sy, Van Rooyen stel homself ten doel om die verbintenis tot die belydenisskrifte in *Die Gereformeerde Vaandel* te laat neerslag vind, en tussen Maart 1933 en November 1937 verskyn daar maandeliks – op enkele uitsonderings na – artikels oor die NGB onder die opskrif "Ons Belydenisskrifte". Dié artikels word later (in 1948) in boekvorm uitgegee.[14]

In Maart 1933 begin Van Rooyen se artikels oor die NGB bied myns insiens 'n belangrike venster op die neo-Calvinistiese konfessionalisme van die 1930s. In 'n gesprek oor die resepsie van die NGB in Suid-Afrika verdien dit dus die nodige aandag. Die deeglikheid waarmee van Rooyen sy bespreking van die NGB aanpak verdien vermelding. 'n Sekere taalgebruik val op (waarmee Du Plessis in die 1930s reeds 'n mate van geïrriteerdheid mee gehad het), asook 'n antitetiese houding teenoor die tydsgees. Deurgaans funksioneer die "modernisme" dus as vyandsbeeld en belydenishandhawing word as uiters noodsaaklik gesien om die nodige weerstand hierteen te bied. Ek lig hierdie gedagtes toe met enkele voorbeelde uit Van Rooyen se artikels oor die NGB.

In Maart 1933 begin Van Rooyen sy reeks oor die NGB – wat ten doel het "om in die kolomme van hierdie blad 'n beskeie poging te waag om meer lig te versprei oor ons Belydenisskrifte en indien moontlik, meer liefde tot hulle weer aan te kweek".[15] Die eerste afdeling handel oor die lewe van De Bres. Veral De Bres se beginselvastheid word beklemtoon, met verwysing byvoorbeeld na sy tyd in die tronk kort voor hy gehang is: "De Bres het die lyding daaraan verbonde met groot geduld en berusting verdra. Nooit het sy karakteradel met helderder glans

---

Hervormde Kerk die ondertekeningsformulier gewysig het. Hy wys voorts op die wysiging wat ook in Suid-Afrika aan die ondertekeningsformulier aangebring is (by die sinode van 1824), maar dat daar in 1837 weer "na die goudstandaard van Suiwer-Gereformeerde Belydenis en Belydenisondertekening teruggekeer is … Deur so die skip van die Nederd. Geref. Kerk van die rotse van leervryheid en ongeloof weg te stuur en in die diep waters van suiwer Gereformeerde leer en belydenisondertekening sy koers weer te gee, het ons vaders die Nederd. Geref. kerk 'n onteenseglike groot diens bewys" (*Die Gereformeerde Vaandel,* Januarie 1933:17).

12 *Die Gereformeerde Vaandel,* Januarie 1933:17.

13 Vir 'n interessante bespreking van vyandsbeelde in die gereformeerde geheue, sien die afdeling "Vijandsbeelden" in Harinck, G, Paul, H en Wallet, B (reds.), *Het Gereformeerde Geheugen* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverig Bert Bekker, 2009), 181-248. Naas die inleiding oor vyandsbeelde (deur George Harinck) is daar informatiewe lemmata oor "Rome" (John van Zuthem), "Franse Revolutie" (Beatrice de Graaf), "Schoolstrijd" (Roelof Bisschop), "Modernisme" (C.M. Van Driel) en "Communisme" (Wim Berkelaar).

14 Van Rooyen, E E 1948, *Die Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis* (Stellenbosch: Pro Ecclesia). In Mei 1938 begin Van Rooyen met 'n reeks oor die Tien Gebooie aan die hand van die Heidelbergse Kategismus. Dit word later ook in boekvorm gepubliseer. Sien Van Rooyen, E E, *Die Tien Gebooie: Populêre en prakties stigtelike verklaring vaan die hand van die Heidelbergse Kategismus* (Bloemfontein: Sondagskool Depot).

15 *Die Gereformeerde Vaandel,* Maart 1933:95.

geskitter as in daardie aaklige gevangenis nie".[16] Van Rooyen verwys na die bekende briewe wat hy uit die gevangenis geskryf het, "briewe waaruit daar onwrikbare beginselvastheid maar ook groot teerheid van hart deurstraal".[17] In sy slotopmerking maak Van Rooyen 'n toepassing op die Suid-Afrikaanse konteks:

> Ons lewe in 'n tyd van toenemende beginselloosheid en papheid op godsdienstige en sedelike gebied ... ook in Suid-Afrika … By baie mense is die yster uit die bloed en die staal uit hulle wil weg … Mag dit God die Heer behaag om ooit in Suid-Afrika in hierdie ontwrigte tye, weer manne van die stempel van de Bres te vorm en in sy diens te gebruik.[18]

In April 1933 vervolg Van Rooyen sy reeks en gee hy 'n bondige oorsig oor die NGB, asook 'n nadere uiteensetting van Artikel 1. In die daaropvolgende maande bespreek Van Rooyen die NGB artikel vir artikel. 'n Sekere teologiese stellingname blyk duidelik en dit word veral weerspieël in Van Rooyen se slotopmerkings by elke artikel. Deurgaans word die gevaar van dwaling beklemtoon. Sy slotopmerking by die bespreking van artikel 12 (oor die skepping van alle dinge) is tekenend van hierdie aksent.

> Dwalinge was daar altyd en sal daar steeds in 'n wêreld van sonde wees. Sulke dwalinge moet deur die kerk steeds by die lig van die Heilige Skrif ondersoek en blootgelê word. En dan moet hulle, hoe skoonskynend hulle ook al mag wees, "vewerp en verfoei" en nie vertroetel word nie. So alleen kan die Kerk en die enkele Christenmens geestelike sterk en veerkragtig word en bly. Anders bly die dwaling op die kerklike lewe soos 'n bloedsuier sit, en verteer die kragte van die Kerk en Christendom gaandeweg.[19]

Deurgaans vorm, soos genoem, die Modernisme 'n tipe vyandsbeeld. As slotopmerking by die bespreking van Artikel 9 oor die Drie-eenheid skryf Van Rooyen byvoorbeeld: "Die Modernisme in sy konsekwente vorm loën hierdie waarheid op 'n plompe wyse; en waar dit die oorhand in die kerk kry word dit die dood in die pot vir so 'n kerk. Omdat die modernistiese loëning van die Drie-eenheid so 'n kerkgemeenskap in sy hartaar aantas. Wees op u hoede, geagte leser, vir die soet maar verraderlike gefluit van die Drie-eenheidsloëning van die modernisme."[20] En in die bespreking van artikel 29 oor die ware kerk, het hy dit soos volg oor die kerkvervalsing in Protestantse geledere:

> Dit is die kerke waarin die holle, heillose modernisme vaste voet en die oorhand gekry het. In daardie Kerke is die vervalsing nog erger as in die Roomse Kerk. Immers die Woord van God word eenvoudig weggekritiseer; aan die hoogheilige Persoon van Christus sy godheid ontsê, sy soendood weggedoesel, en die twee sakramente van alle ware betekenis ontdoen.

---

16 *Die Gereformeerde Vaandel,* Maart 1933:94.

17 *Die Gereformeerde Vaandel*, Maart 1933:94.

18 *Die Gereformeerde Vaandel,* Maart 1933,:97

19 *Die Gereformeerde Vaandel,* Junie 1934:173. Hierdie aksent kom telkens voor. In die bespreking van artikel 3 skryf Van Rooyen byvoorbeeld: "Nie die kortsigtige en dwaalsieke mens moet die Heilige Skrif kritiseer nie – maar die Skrif moet die mens kritiseer". En as slotopmerking by artikel 7, oor die volkomenheid van die Skrif, lees ons: "Die skuldige en blywende plig van elke ernstige Belyer is om die oppervlakkige en verderflike leringe van daardie geeste, of dwaalsieke mense steeds op die proef te stel: die leringe aan die hand van die Heilige Skrif te ondersoek en te toets, en as dit daarmee stry, dit dan van gansche harte te verwerp … So alleen sal hy bestand wees en bly teen die suigkrag van die tydsgees met al sy ongeloof, bygeloof, wêreldsin en akelige ongeregtigheid" (Desember 1933: 415).

20 *Die Gereformeerde Vaandel,* Februarie 1934:50.

Verskillende Kerke is reeds diep deur hierdie kwaad aangetas. Mag ons Ned. Geref. Kerk daarvoor bewaar bly.[21]

Deurgaans pleit Van Rooyen in sy bespreking dat die gelowiges nie moet slap wees te midde van die bedreiginge van die tyd nie. Die slotopmerking in die bespreking van die artikel oor die uitverkiesing is verteenwoordigend van hierdie aksent:

Dit is 'n tyd van groot oppervlakkigheid, waarin selfs baie christene as slappe riete deur allerlei winde van vreemde leer heen en weer gebuig word. Die gelowige en kinderlike aanvaarding van die uitverkiesingsleer, soos hierbo omskrywe, sal hulle lewensbootjie die regte koers deur die deindende bare en golwe laat hou."[22]

Die gereformeerde gelowige moet daarom "vashou" aan die belydenis om die onstuimige tydsgewrig te kan weerstaan.[23]

Om saam te vat: Van Rooyen gee 'n deeglike bespreking van die NGB, maar duidelik sien hy die tydsgewrig as onheilspellend, onstuimig, benard, oppervlakkig en sorgwekkend. Deurentyd is daar sprake van die gevaar van verslapping in die lig van die bedreiging van die modernisme en ander "ismes" (soos Rasionalisme en Kommunisme). Gereformeerdes moet hulle identiteit

---

21 *Die Gereformeerde Vaandel,* Junie 1936:173. Soortgelyke gedagtes kom dikwels voor. In die slotopmerking by die bespreking van Artikel 10 oor die godheid van Christus skryf Van Rooyen: "ons leef in 'n tyd van toenemende afval en ongeloof … Veral ook die leerstuk van die waaragtige Godheid van Christus word in die kringe van die ongelowige wysbegeerte en van die leë en luidrugtige modernisme op kerklike gebied aangeval, soms deur plompe loëning en dan weer deur listige verwatering daarvan" (April 1934:105). En in die artikel oor die nagmaal (artikel 35): "Dog die houding van besliste afwysing moet nie alleen teenoor Roomse misbruike ingeneem word nie. Dit moet stellig ook aan die dag gelê word met betrekking tot die slappe Nagmaalsopvatting van rasionaliste en moderniste in die geledere van die Protestantse kerk" (Augustus 1937, 239). In die bespreking van Artikel 36 word die bedreiging van die Kommunisme by die van die Rasionalisme en die Modernisme gevoeg: "Ons lewe tans in 'n tydsgewrig waarin die Kommunisme op nog baie erger en onheilspellender wyse die kop uitsteek. Die voorstanders van die Kommunisme van die sestiende eeuse Wederdopers het nog by hulle oproerigheid die geloof aan God vasgehou. Die hedendaagse Kommunisme wortel egter in 'n stryd-lustige ateïsme of godloënary" (September 1937:269).
22 *Die Gereformeerde Vaandel,* Oktober 1934:309. Op dieselfde bladsy as hierdie artikel verskyn daar ook 'n insetsel oor "Die Modernisme" wat onder meer na die "verderwende, afbrekende werk" van die Modernisme verwys. Dieselfde uitgawe bevat 'n artikel wat skerp afwysend is op Du Plessis se kritiek op die Vrystaatse kerk se verandering van die formulier vir die indiensneming van predikante (310-312).
23 Van Rooyen skryf byvoorbeeld na aanleiding van artikel 26 oor die middelaarskap van Christus: "Die Roomse kerk misken Christus se middelaarskap van voorbidding. Maar ons lewe in 'n tydgewrig waarin ook die Protestantse wêreld vele mense met die middelaarswerk van Christus in alle opsigte eenvoudig skoonskip maak. Unitariërs en allerlei slag van ander moderniste doen dit onomwonde. Sowel teenoor hulle loëning as teenoor die Roomse miskenning moet ons as Gereformeerdes 'vashou' aan die volle middelaarskap van Christus. Daarin lê die krag tot lewe en tot weerstand" (Januarie 1936:18). Na aanleiding van artikel 28 oor die ware kerk klink 'n soortgelyke gedagte: "Teenoor daardie ongelowige en eiegeregtige tydsgees moet die ware gereformeerde steeds stel 'n hartgrondige aanvaarding en kloeke belydenis van *al* die waarhede van die Christelike godsdiens. Só alleen sal hy instaat wees om die tydsgees die hoof te bied" (Maart 1936:90). En in die bespreking van artikel 32 oor die tug, skryf Van Rooyen in dieselfde trant: "Ons lewe in 'n by uitstek losbandige en tugtelose tydsgewrig … Mag die Here God aan alle ampsdraers in ons Kerk en ook ander Kerke veel krag en moed gee om steeds onbevreesd die snoeimes van gesonde tugoefening te hanteer en alle skadelike en krag-opswelgende waterlote uit die wingerd van ons kerklike lewe uit te knip" (Januarie 1937:20).

beskerm en selfs versigtig wees vir samewerking met ander kerke en liggame.[24] Van Rooyen se slotopmerking in die laaste artikel van die reeks oor die NGB trek 'n hele aantal grondmotiewe saam:

> Wat ons benarde tyd broodnodig het, is 'n ruim aantal mannen en vroue, 'standvastig, onbeweeglik, sterk' in die geloof en wel 'n geloof met 'n positief-Christelike inhoud, soos die Geloofsbelydenis tot ons spreek. Dan sal ons gewisselik nie soos slappe riete deur 'allerlei winde van onsuiwere leer' heen en weer gebuig word nie, of deur die soetgefluit en oppervlakkige gekeuwel van die hedendaagse sektewese van koers gebring word nie. Met so 'n geloof sal ons dan "rustig te midde van die golwe' kan bly.[25]

3. DIE NEDERLANDSE GELOOFSBELYDENIS VANDAG: ANDERKANT INTROVERTE GESLOTENHEID EN STRYDVAARDIGE EKSKLUSIWITEIT?

Van Rooyen se skrywes oor die NGB moet in die konteks van sy tyd beoordeel word. Nogtans kan genoem word dat dit duidelike trekke van die konfessionele neo-Calvinisme van die 1930s en daarna vertoon. Dit is verder moeilik om nie die nawerking van die Du Plessis-saak in talle van Van Rooyen se opmerkings oor die toepassing van die belydenis te lees nie (Van Rooyen was, soos genoem, 'n sterk teenstanders van Du Plessis). Ek dink Hennie Rossouw vat dit goed saam in 'n insiggewende praatjie oor "Die Du Plessis-saak" (gelewer by 'n byeenkoms van die Degenaar-besprekingsgroep op 2 Desember 2000 te Stellenbosch), wanneer hy die opmerking maak dat na die Du Plessis-saak "die gees ... van gekontroleerde intellektuele openheid teenoor buite-kerklike denke, en van akkommodering van verskillende binne-kerklike vertolkings, dit met verloop van tyd verloor het teen 'n meer doktrinêre, verabsoluterende en antitetiese gees van introverte geslotenheid en strydvaardige eksklusiwiteit".[26] In so 'n konteks funksioneer die verstaan van die belydenisskrifte dan maklik in diens van 'n "introverte geslotenheid" en 'n "strydvaardige

---

24 Van Rooyen is ook skepties teenoor samewerking met ander organisasies (elders in *Die Gereformeerde Vaandel* skryf hy skerp krities teen die CSV, en in die laatdertiger jare sou *Die Gereformeerde Vaandel* 'n kritiese houding inneem teenoor B. B. Keet se verstaan van die ekumene en die eenheid van die kerk). In die bespreking van die artikel oor die doop skryf Van Rooyen: "Ons lewe in 'n tydsgewrig waarin daar op kerklike gebied die groot en klinkende woord van *saamwerk, saamstaan* almeer verneem word. Daar word vroeg en laat aangedring op samewerking met met allerlei s.g. christelike liggame en stromine, maar waarvan die eg Protesantse karakter byna geheel en al verbleek het, ook op die punt van die instelling van die doop en sy betekenis ... Daarom moet ons die gehoor gee aan die geroep om samewerking met genoemde liggame en stromine baie versigtig wees, en steeds skerp toesien dat ons gereformeerde, gesond-skriftuurlike geloofs-standpunt nie verwater word of geweld aangedoen word nie" (139).

25 *Die Gereformeerde Vaandel,* November 1937:337.

26 Rossouw, H W, "Die Du Plessis-saak", 14. In hierdie (na my wete ongepubliseerde) praatjie wys Rossouw daarop dat daar ook in die politieke lewe in dieselfde dertigerjare met die opkomende Afrikaner volksbewussyn 'n nuwe oriëntering en klem gekom het. In die lig van hierdie hierdie verskuiwings op kerklike, teologiese en politieke gebied merk Rossouw teen die einde van sy praatjie op: "Die ontdekkende gees van grensoorskryding en inklusiwiteit, van uitreikende kommunikasie en kontak met die vreemde, van die uitskuif van horisonne en die ontgin van nuwe perspektiewe het, so lyk dit my, in die dertigerjare dus op meer as een terrein van die Afrikanerkultuur in die slag gebly" (15). Sien ook Kinghorn se opmerking dat die hantering van die Du Plessis-saak in die Ned. Geref. Kerk tot die ontstaan van 'n hermeneutiese vakuum aanleiding gegee het: "Ná die Du Plessis-saak was daar geen klimaat meer vir 'n sinvolle en kritiese ondersoek en debat oor sake van disputeerbare aard nie. Vir jare daarna sou agterdog heers oor enige poging om die hermeneutiese vraag voluit ernstig te behandel". Sien ook Kinghorn, J (red), *Die NG Kerk en Apartheid* (Johannesburg: MacMillan, 1986), 55-56.

eksklusiwiteit". In die gereformeerde kerke wat met wit Afrikaanssprekendes geassosieer word, het hierdie grondhouding dikwels met 'n onkritiese omhelsing van die opkomende Afrikaner nasionalisme en patriotisme saamgehang. In die nadenke oor die betekenis van die belydenskrifte vir vandag, moet hierdie spesifieke resepsiegeskiedenis – en die impak daarvan op die teologiegeskiedenis – myns insiens deeglik verreken word.

Ek sluit af met drie kort opmerkings na aanleiding van bogenoemde bespreking:

• Met die onlangse besluite van die Ned. Geref. Kerk oor die aanvaarding van die Belhar belydenis is die gesprek oor die belydenis van die kerk opnuut in die brandpunt. Dikwels word die pleidooi gehoor dat die gesprek oor Belhar saam met 'n gesprek oor die aard van gereformeerde belydenisskrifte, asook met 'n bestudering van die drie formuliere van eenheid, moet geskied. Dit is inderdaad 'n belangrike aksent. In die proses is dit wel belangrik dat daar gewaak moet word teen 'n oorspanne konfessionaliteit, soos wat ek meen dit in sekere gereformeerde kringe in die 1930s en daarna neerslag gevind het. Vandag lê ons uitdagings sekerlik anders, maar dit bly steeds noodsaaklik om 'n verantwoordelike weg te vind tussen – aan die een kant – konfessionalistiese engheid waarin die belydenisskrifte as 'n tipe sjibbolet vir teologiese (en politieke) konserwatisme funksioneer, én – aan die ander kant – 'n houding van konfessionele ongeërgdheid waarin die belydenisskrifte bloot antikwariese waarde het en geen wesenlike rol in die lewe van die kerk en die teologie speel nie.

• 'n Tweede opmerking: Met die lees van Van Rooyen se kommentaar op die NGB val die fokus op die gevaar van dwaling op, asook dat die belydenisskrifte help om dit te bestry. Hierdie fokus is uiteraard belangrik in die gesprek oor die belydenisskrifte. Maar dit is beslis 'n verskraling as die belydenisskrifte meestal gebruik word as "'n stok om mee te slaan" en nie as 'n "staf of mee te gaan nie" of as 'n "lied" nie. Die belydenisskrifte moet as spreekreël vir die prediking dien en ook die gemeente tot lofsang aanspoor.[27] Hiervoor is nie net herhaling van die tradisie nodig nie, maar ook wat mens 'n "tradisie-geïnformeerde kreatiwiteit" kan noem. Dit gaan oor die verbintenis aan die tradisie as 'n *lewende* tradisie.[28]

• Ten slotte: Eweneens moet daar 'n weg tussen geslote identiteitsdenke en identiteitsontkenning gesoek word. Hierdie weg dui in die rigting van identiteitsverruiming. Daar is die verleiding om die belydenisskrifte so te gebruik dat dit in diens van 'n eng identiteitsdenke staan. Die belydenisskrifte word dan gebruik om skerp grense tussen regsinniges en liberales (of watter etikette ook al gebruik word) te trek. In 'n tydsgees wat as bedreigend beleef word, word oorlewing op kerklike en teologiese gebied dan met 'n streng handhawing van die belydenisskrifte gelykgestel en word in die proses geen plek vir 'n kritiese hermeneutiek, 'n historiese bewussyn of 'n ekumeniese openheid gelaat nie. Die taal van oorlewing kan juis 'n weerspieëling van geslote identiteitsdenke wees en as motivering daarvoor dien. Hierteenoor moet onthou word dat Christelike kerke nie in die eerste plek geroep is om te oorleef nie, maar om in die lig van die bevrydende waarheid van die evangelie as versoende gemeenskappe te oorleef *in geregtigheid*. Dit beklemtoon, myns insiens, waarom die gesprek oor die teologiese

---

27 Vgl. Jonker, *Bevrydende waarheid*, 9, in aansluiting by Van Ruler en Noordmans.

28 Vir 'n bespreking wat die begrip "lewende tradisie" in gesprek bring met die Gereformeerde tradisie in Suid-Afrika, sien my artikel "Reforming Tradition? Remarks on Reformed Theology in South Africa, in Conversation with Alasdair MacIntyre". *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 139:18-31.

betekenis van die NGB in Suid-Afrika vandag nie van die gesprek oor die toe-eiening van die Belhar belydenis losgemaak kan word nie.

Kontakbesonderhede:
Prof RR Vosloo
Fakulteit Teologie
Privaatsak X1
7602 MATIELAND
Kant; 021 808 3256
Huis:021 880 0604
Sel: 072 341 3806
E-pos: rrvosloo@sun.ac.za