
Reformed Traditions in Secular Europe

**Research Program Practical Theology, Public Theology and
Theological Ethics**

2012-2017

(updated 1-4-2015)

Theological University in Apeldoorn

&

Theological University in Kampen

Program director: Prof. dr. S. Paas

Secretary: N.C. Smits MA

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1. Program Description

A profile of the research program

The traditions that developed out of the various protestant Reformations are involved in a continuous interaction with their surrounding context. On the one hand Christian faith, in particular its Protestant versions, attempts to influence societies and individuals. North-Western Europe is to a large extent the product of the "world formative" character of Protestantism. Yet, on the other hand, the Reformed traditions themselves are being influenced by their surrounding context. These are traditions that originate from (early) modernity and are characterized by many traits that typify secular modernity. The subject of this research program is formed by this dialectic between, on the one hand, the traditions of the Reformation and on the other hand, European modernity, with boundaries on three sides. First of all, the research will be limited to the traditions that came out of the various Protestant reformations in Europe. In the second place, research is limited to the interaction between these traditions and their context roughly from 1800 up till now, being the period of modernity and late modernity, which is the period in Europe where secularization seriously took hold. Thirdly, the research will focus on thinking through, clarifying and reinforcing the contemporary faith-practice in these traditions. This also applies to the more historiographic sub-projects of this program. All the sub-projects of this program have one thing in common and that is that they focus on interpreting Christian faith in its contemporary context by reflecting on concrete interaction between Christian faith and European society from 1800 till now. This will be done by on the one hand focusing on various disciplines such as Systematic Theology, Church History, Missiology, and Practical Theology, and on the other hand cooperating in an interdisciplinary project which aims to produce a joint publication.

Relevance

In the secularized part of the continent a distance has grown between Christendom and culture. This raises the question as to the future of Christendom, as it no longer is the ideological center of secularized European societies. This research program focuses on the interaction between the concrete activity of the church - in particular the local church- and the development of Christian theology in this secular context. To what extent are churches that stem from the Reformation successful in profiling themselves as sources of cultural

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citizenship and giving meaning to life? To what extent is Protestant theology able, weakened and marginalized as it is, to digest and think through present developments and contribute to a renewal of Reformed traditions and a secular culture? These questions will be the main subject of the practical- theological, historiographic and systematic-theological sub-projects. At the same time, when considering the gap between Christendom and culture there is the question of the future of Europe itself. This research program intends to contribute to the ongoing debate on this subject from a theological perspective. To what extent will styles of citizenship, politics, legislation and culture in the broader sense be shown to be vital when Christendom is no longer their central point of orientation? How will it be possible for Christendom to be a still present source of culture, even in a marginalized position? This point will be the focus of the public-theological and missiological research group.

Theoretical background

Many studies have taken the relation between Christendom and (secular) modernity as its subject. "Secularization" can be described as a complex of social developments that influence the position of religion in society (Paas 2011a). Conversely, it has often been suggested that religion, in particular Protestantism, has played an important role in the realizing of secularism (Taylor 2007). Even though secularism has been present in all times and is inherent to many religious traditions, it is striking that this phenomenon in Western modernity increasingly takes place outside and, as it were, over against these traditions. This form of modernity is characterized by a series of more or less coherent developments like the primacy of reason, the omnipresence of technology, individualization and individual freedom, mass movements and mobilization, capitalism (market and consumption), functional differentiation (the autonomy of different segments of society) and globalization (Lambert 1999). These are the developments that have strongly taken hold in Europe since the 1800's and it is pre-eminently these developments that seem to be the driving forces behind secularization in European societies.

Religions in general, and Christian traditions from the Reformation in particular, react by decay, adaptation, resistance and by renewal (Lambert 1999; see also Paas 2011b). In this array of attitudes we can easily recognize certain theological ways of dealing with one's own tradition (Gunton 1983). Ever since Bible times Christians have continuously had to react to new times, for instance by abolishing certain practices and convictions, or by recognizing God's hand in certain new developments and adapting to them and legitimizing them, or by

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resisting anything new. They have also actively shaped their surroundings, sometimes by accepting it and providing theological foundations, and sometimes by developing innovative practices and ideas that changed society.

In this research program these attitudes will be considered as heuristic concepts. They will help to open up insights into the multi-dimensional character of the dialectic between modernity and the traditions of the Reformation. This research project aims to describe the various dimensions of this dialectic and to interpret them from the contours of developments, drawn above. Besides this, the research will have an evaluative approach to these theological answers and faith-practices. In that sense this research itself can be a contribution to the various ways in which the faith tradition responds to modernity.

Gunton (1983), Colin, *Yesterday and Today: A Study of Continuities in Christology*, 1983, 2nd Ed. 1997

Lambert (1999), Yves, "Religion in modernity as a new axial age: secularisation or new religious forms?," *Sociology of Religion* 60.3 (1999) 303-333

Paas (2011a), Stefan, "Post-Christian, Post-Christendom, and Post-Modern Europe: Towards the Interaction of Missiology and the Social Sciences," *Mission Studies* 28, 3-25

Paas (2011b), Stefan, "Prepared for a missionary ministry in 21st century Europe," *European Journal of Theology* 20.2, 119-130

Taylor (2007), Charles, *A Secular Age*, CUP: Cambridge

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2. Research group's personnel

Academic staff

A. Tenured staff

Prof. dr. Th. Boer

Prof. dr. A.L.Th. De Bruijne

Dr. A. van der Dussen

Prof. dr. G.C. den Hertog

Dr. P.W. van de Kamp

Dr. M.J. Kater

Prof. dr. R. Kuiper

Prof. dr. S. Paas

Dr. J.H.F. Schaeffer

B. Non-tenured staff

Dr. D. van Keulen 0.5

C. PhD-candidates (AIO's)

J.M. de Jong 0.4

J. van 't Spijker 0.4

N.C. Smits 0.2

Other researchers

a. Professor with an endowed chair

Prof.dr. G. Harinck 0

b. Associate researcher

Dr. J.P. de Vries 0.5

c. External PhD. doctoral candidates

L. Blijdorp

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Solomon Chafomo, MA

Drs. J.J. Lubbe

Dr. A. van Langevelde

c. Joint doctorates

H. Blom (VU)

A.M. de Jonge (VU)

3. Procedures

1. The program director and his secretary are responsible for policy making and carrying out initiatives that have been proposed and/or adopted by the group. The programme director will pay particular interest to the academic interaction and exchange between members of the research group, in order to stimulate cooperation.

2. Conferences: each year six meetings are organized:

- *August:*

an all day meeting with all members, including associate members and external PhD. students; during this meeting chapters written by PhD. students or articles by the tenured staff will be discussed;

- *October, December, April, June:*

a mid-day meeting with the tenured staff (and AIOs), with at the end a short business meeting; during these regular meetings products by staff members or interesting articles/books by others will be discussed;

- *January/February:*

a conference of the tenured staff with (an) invited speaker(s) from outside TUA/TUK (depending on the possibilities, this conference can be planned later in the year, exchanging the date with a regular meeting).

3. Proposals for doctoral research are discussed for approbation in a meeting of the tenured staff and the AIOs.

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4. Supervisors give direction to their AIOs and PhD. students in agreement with the specific guidelines of their own university.

5. All members of the research group write an annual report to the program director which includes a statement of progress of their research, a survey of publications (both academic and professional), and conference papers related to the research projects. This report has to be handed in before December 31st of that year. In January of the following year the Program director has individual conversations with the senior members of the tenured staff (the chair holders are responsible for their AIOs and PhD. students) on the basis of these reports. The results will be discussed during the first regular business meeting of the group.

6. Each year an annual report is produced on the basis of the reports of the members, discussed by the tenured staff, and then sent to the individual Governing Boards of both universities.

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4. Sub-projects making up the total project

The sub-projects are listed by alphabetical order of the names of the researchers.

Projects by profs. Boer and Kuiper and by dr. Kater are still in development. They will be included in the program in the second half of 2015.

I. The History and Theology of Neo-Calvinism

a. Researchers

G. Harinck, H.W. den Boer, J.M. de Jong.

External researcher/PhD. Candidate (VU not included): D. van Keulen, J.J. Lubbe, A. van Langevelde.

b. Description

Neo-Calvinism was an influential force within 19th and 20th century Dutch Protestantism. In the century following 1870, it played a stimulating role within church, academy and society. More than any other recent Dutch Protestant movement, it has also had an international impact, one that continues more noticeably abroad (primarily in North America) than in the present day Netherlands. Various developments within the tradition have taken place and divergent interpretations of the tradition offered. This research will focus on a coherent overview of this tradition and the current understanding thereof.

The project consists of the following elements:

1. A *Neo-Calvinism Handbook*. The Handbook is international in character, particularly concerning its contributing authors and languages, and deals with about 100 topics. Its about 60 authors will bring a strongly international flavour, as will its eventual publication in both English- and Dutch-language versions.
2. Historical research of
 - a. the (inter-)national expansion of Neo-Calvinism
 - b. Neo-Calvinism and international politics
 - c. Neo-Calvinism and colonial policy
 - d. biographies of neo-Calvinists

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3. Three international conferences

4 Translations in English of important Neo-Calvinist publications

c. The aim of this research project

The aim is to assess the influence of Neo-Calvinism in the Netherlands and abroad and its view on international relations and politics, and to evaluate this movement as part of modern culture of the 19th and 20th century.

d. The framework of this research project

The research project is jointly supported by the Theologische Universiteit Kampen and the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, and is institutionally linked with the Kuyper Center for Public Theology (Princeton, NJ, USA). The project will involve international researchers and aims at building a research network.

e. Planned results before Dec. 31, 2017

G. Harinck: 1 monograph in English (a biography of N.M. Steffens, 2013), 2 monographs in Dutch (History TU Kampen, 2014), Neo-Calvinism in the USA 1880-1930 (2015)), 3 edited books in English (proceedings conference on Neo-Calvinism and the French Revolution, Paris (2015), proceedings conference on Neo-Calvinism and Roman Catholicism, Rome (2017), Handbook Neo-Calvinism (2017)), 8 academic articles written in English, 8 academic articles in Dutch

D. van Keulen: 1 translation in English of a manuscript on Ethics by Herman Bavinck (2017)

J.M. de Jong: dissertation on the ecclesiology of K. Schilder in relation to the missional church discourse in the second half of the 20th century

PhD1: A. van Langevelde: a dissertation in Dutch (biography of Cornelis Veenhof, 2014)

PhD2: H.W. den Boer, 1 dissertation written in Dutch (Modernity and the rise of the denomination in the 19th century, 2015), 3 academic articles (of which 2 in English)

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PhD3: J.J. Lubbe: a dissertation written in Afrikaans (The reception of Abraham Kuyper in South Africa till 1920, 2016), 1 academic article written in English.

PhD4: H. van der Jagt (VU): A dissertation written in Dutch (biography of Alexander W.F. Idenburg, 2017), 3 academic articles (of which 2 in English), 6 contributions to the public debate

PhD5: J.M. de Jong: dissertation on the ecclesiology of K. Schilder

3 international conferences (Paris 2012, Rome 2014)

1 international workshop

3 translations

Planned Expansion

The following parts of the project require expansion: One PhD. project.

II. A Renewed Neo-Calvinist Public Theology for a Post-Christian Context

a. Researchers

A. L. Th. de Bruijne, J.P. de Vries

External researcher/PhD. candidate: Solomon Chafomo (Ethiopië).

b. Description

Secularization in Europe is leading to a profoundly altered public position of the church (Christian community) and theology. Existing theories about the calling of the church in the public domain carry the stamp of the long period in history in which the church and/or theology possessed a dominant position. This applies to the 19th century neo-calvinistic tradition, which did acknowledge the changed social context, but subsequently aimed, above all, for a form of reChristianization of society. It is the ambition of this research to renew this neo-calvinistic tradition with an eye to the current context, by engaging it in a conversation with three partners: a. the Biblical and and historical source texts (which was the aim at the start of the the 19th century); b. the contemporary revival of public and political theology

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(already going on, above all, in its Anglo-Saxon variant) and the debates associated with this;
c. the practice of political and public participation of churches and Christians in Europe.

The project consists of the following elements:

1. Developing a sound Biblical-theological and systematic-theological hermeneutical framework to reflect about the public calling of the church (Christian community) and theology.
2. A theological discourse between the various subdivisions within neo-calvinism (theologically as well as philosophically) and the current public-theological and political-theological debate, integrating the broader theological tradition. The aim is to evaluate and reformulate the (neo-) Calvinistic tradition with an eye to the modern context.
3. Public theological reflection on present-day issues which church and Christians in society face, with the purpose of helping the church and Christians with fruitful insights and practical possibilities. We think especially about the following topics:
 - a. the late-modern economic impasse regarding capitalism;
 - b. the themes around war and peace;
 - c. questions concerning how Christians are to value the nation-state in a globalizing world and with a growing impulse to form local communities;
 - d. questions concerning the forming of relationships and sexuality;
 - e. the possible contribution of the church to human rights;
 - f. the formation of a moral Christian community in a post-Christian setting;
4. Theological participation in the public debate.

c. The aim of this research project

This research project intends to contribute to the renewal of public reflection and practice of churches and Christians within post-Christian Europe through publications in both English and Dutch medium, international magazines and by publishing essays. Besides that, the goal is to actually contribute, directly or indirectly, to the public debate going on within churches and society.

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d. The framework of this research project

This research program is (or can be) linked to related programs or projects nationally and internationally, among which is the sub-program "Public Theology" of the Protestant Theological University in Amsterdam and the Theological faculty of Groningen, the Institute for social empowerment (Behavioral Science, University of Groningen, The Netherlands), the Blaise Pascal Institute (Free University Amsterdam, The Netherlands), the Kirkby Lang Institute (Cambridge, England), the Kuyper Center for Public Theology (Princeton, New Jersey, U.S.A.), the Groen van Prinsterer Foundation (academic think tank of the Christian Union political party in Amersfoort, The Netherlands).

e. Planned results before Dec. 31, 2017

A.L.Th. de Bruijne: 1 essay written in English, 1 essay written in Dutch, 16 academic articles written in English, 20 articles written in Dutch, 30 contributions to the public debate

J.P. de Vries: 1 monograph written in English, 4 academic articles (of which 2 written in English), 4 academic articles (of which 2 in English), 6 contributions to the public debate

Solomon Chafomo: a dissertation written in English, 1 academic article written in English.

PhD 1: 1 dissertation written in English, 3 academic articles (of which 2 in English)

PhD 2: 1 dissertation written in English, 3 academic articles (of which 2 in English)

Postdoc: 1 monograph written in English, 3 academic articles (of which 2 in English)

Planned Expansion

The following parts of the project require expansion: 2, 3 b+c+d+f. Two PhD. projects and an extra postdoc starting in 2013 (to be realized by raising the necessary funds).

III. Atonement, forgiveness and ethics

a. Researchers

G.C. den Hertog, N.C. Smits

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b. Short description

The relationship between guilt, forgiveness and ethics is subject to an ever growing interest and urgency. There are different reasons for this phenomenon. The fall of the Berlin wall, the end of Apartheid, and the encouragement of genocide in the former Yugoslavia (to mention only a few events) have put the question on the agenda as to how to continue as a society in the light of actual, existing guilt. And at the same time we are faced with the reality of the destruction of human life as a result of physical and sexual violence, which has more and more been taken up as a theme in modern literature.

Remarkably, in this same period the classical Reformed doctrine of atonement has been criticized, and one has to wonder if there may be a possible connection between these two developments. Is there indeed a deficiency in the classical Reformed doctrine of atonement where it concerns the possibility of application in the ethical domain? If so, are we talking about a structural and irreparable deficiency? However, one has to also consider the possibility that it is precisely the distancing from the classical Reformed confessions which has, to a greater or lesser extent, hindered a proper dealing with questions around guilt and forgiveness.

c. The aim of this research project

The aim of this project is to clarify the questions, points of conflict and perspectives in the relationships between guilt, forgiveness and ethics. It seeks to embody a critical reflection about the Christian understanding of atonement in the current context.

d. The framework of this research project

The research will take place at the Theological University in Kampen, while seeking connections elsewhere.

e. Planned results before Dec. 31, 2017

G.C. den Hertog: One monograph written in Dutch. Three academic articles written in German.

N.C. Smits: A monograph about atonement

IV. Christian Mission in Post-Christian Europe

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a. Researchers

S. Paas, J. van 't Spijker, H. Blom, A.M. de Jonge

b. Short description

In the past century Europe has been discovered to be a mission field. A great number of initiatives have been developed in this area. The tragedy is that this growing effort has been accompanied by an enormous decline of the Christian tradition in Europe. In this research project this area of tension is to be explored, with as a final aim the production an up-to-date English missiology for Europe.

The project has the following subdivisions:

1. Mapping out missionary efforts in Western Europe since the Second World War.
2. A description of the changes which the Christian tradition has experienced, especially in Western Europe.
3. An interpretation of these changes from a social science theoretical perspective (theory of secularization).
4. An interpretation of these changes from a theological perspective. In which ways can Christian theology evaluate these changes?
5. A developmental framework for a missiology for Western Europe, in which theological evaluation is combined with strategic recommendations.

c. The aim of this research project

This research project will be attempting to contribute to the missiological debate about the future of the Christian tradition in Europe through English and Dutch publications in international journals. Further, the idea is to provide those involved in mission work in The Netherlands with helpful, appropriate information and the results of reflection about missions in Europe.

Subdivisions of this project will aim to help the Church Practice Center, which has been set up by some Reformed institutions in The Netherlands.

d. The framework of this research project

The project is linked to the research program of the J.H. Bavinck chair at the Free University of Amsterdam. This project is especially focused on church planting and church renewal in the secular, European context.

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Internationally there are exchanges with the research programs of the IEEG in Greifswald, Germany, and the Lutheran School of Theology in Copenhagen, Denmark. There are also exchanges with the University of South Africa (Pretoria) and Calvin College in Grand Rapids (Michigan, U.S.A.).

e. Planned results before Dec. 31, 2017

S. Paas: 1 English-language monograph, 8 English-language academic articles, 10 Dutch-language articles.

J. van 't Spijker: 1 English-language dissertation on missional ecclesiology in a Reformed perspective, 4 articles

H. Blom: 1 English-language dissertation on evangelism in Amsterdam, 2 articles (2018)

A.M. de Jonge: 1 dissertation on missionary mobilization by community formation, 2 articles (2018)

V. The relationship between Dogmatics and Ethics in Dialectical Theology

a. Researcher

G.C. den Hertog

b. Short description

The relationship of Dogmatics and Ethics has been an issue from the beginning within the broad field of Dialectical Theology, and has yet to be addressed satisfactorily. Karl Barth's Ethics has been the subject of several recent monographs, Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Ethics has been actualized by various theologians, while the Ethics of Hans Joachim Iwand has not yet been made very accessible (his Ethics classes of 1930-1932, 1946 and 1951 have been made readable and digitalized, but have not been published as of yet).

c. The aim of this research project

Knowledge of problems and opportunities for reflections on fundamental questions of Ethics in the context of Dialectical Theology, brought in relation to the Dutch Reformed tradition.

d. The framework of this research project

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The study of Barth's Ethics commenced with lectures about the ethics of the early Barth at the Reformierte Sommeruniversität in Münster (August, 2011) and will be continued with a lecture in German about the Ethics of the late Barth at the symposium *Karl Barth als Lehrer der Versöhnung (1950 - 1968). Vertiefung – Öffnung – Hoffnung. Internationales Symposium vom 30. Mai bis 2. Juni 2013 in der Johannes a Lasco Bibliothek Emden.*

The study of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Ethics will commence with the article "Bonhoeffer's 'outlines for Ethics,'" in : *D. Bonhoeffer, Aanzetten voor een ethiek, vertaald en ingeleid door Gerard den Hertog en Wilken Veen (Boekencentrum / Zoetermeer 2012, 9-32 (Bonhoeffer, Outlines for an Ethics, translated and introduced by Gerard den Hertog en Wilken Veen (Boekencentrum / Zoetermeer 2012, 9-32))* and has been continued with the lecture (in German) "Ethik als Antwort auf dem Erfolg" (Ethics as an answer to success) at the *Internationale Bonhoeffer Kongress Sigtuna 2012: Reconsidering The Political in The Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (Wednesday June 27– Sunday July 1, 2012, Sigtuna Sweden).

The study of the Ethics of Hans Joachim Iwand has been a long-term project, but has received a new and pointed impulse by a lecture at the Iwand-Symposium with the title: *Das verhältnis von Dogmatik und Ethik bei Iwand (the relationship between Dogmatics and Ethics in Iwand's works)*. The study has been continued with a lecture (in German) at the *Internationale Iwand-Tagung anlässlich des Themenjahrs der EKD "Reformation und Toleranz": "Über das Zusammenleben in einer Welt. Anstöße Hans Joachim Iwands für die Christenheit in einer globalisierten Welt"* (February 12-14, 2013, Universität Saarbrücken). (*International Iwand conference on the occasion of the Theme Year of the Evangelische Kirche Deutschland "Reformation and Tolerance": about Living Together/ co-existence in the world. An Impulse from Hans Joachim Iwand for a Christendom in a globalized world*).

e. Planned results

One monograph written in Dutch.

Three academic articles written in German

VI. Reformed Identity in the Midst of Change (2012-2014)

a. Researcher

J.H.F. Schaeffer

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b. Short description

What is the identity of local Reformed Churches (Liberated), in the light of the changes which this denomination, these congregations, and broader, the church in Western Europe is experiencing? The research project is ecclesiastical in character, whereby an ecclesiology "from above" is supplemented by an ecclesiology "from below" (Haight, 2004-2008). Within ecclesiology this research project is grouped under "congregational studies" (Ammerman e.a.; Cameron e.a.). For this research project it means that aspects of identity are: behavior, symbols, and communication (o.a. Van Riel, 2010). Research will be carried out regarding how congregations give shape to their formal identity (vision documents, website, etc.). Further, how identity is experienced is to be examined: what are congregations doing (via participating observation of a number of congregations)? Research will also be carried out regarding what the experienced identity is (via surveys). The choice of (the number of) congregations will be based on sufficient representative diversity in level of education, age, and sex of the respondents, and on the basis of sufficient representative diversity with respect to geography (urban-rural) and phase of life (Brouwer e.a.).

c. The aim of this research project

This research project seeks to develop an instrument of analysis for examining the identity of the local congregation, applying it to various congregations. Via English- and Dutch-language publications a contribution will hopefully be made to the development of strategies, from a Reformed perspective, regarding carrying on a conversation regarding the content of and ways of being the church. Subdivisions of this project are intended to develop innovations in the areas of being-a-congregation, forms of organization, and Systematic Theological deep reflection (working together with the Church Practice Center), with an eye to the new demands which a changing environment presents.

d. The framework of this research project

This project is linked to the Church Practice Center of the Reformed Churches (Liberated). This center brings three levels of knowledge in connection with each other: field research, college level (hogeschool), university level, all serving the Reformed Churches (Liberated).

e. Planned results before Feb. 28, 2014

J.H.F. Schaeffer: 2 English articles; 2 Dutch articles; 1 Dutch monograph.

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Planned extension

- 1 Community and worship. The importance of the church service for community in the experience of church attendees within the smaller Reformed church communities (Reformed Churches (Liberated)), Christian Reformed Churches, Netherlands Reformed Churches)
- 2 Church office and leadership in the 21st century. Descriptive and explorative research into the current concept of office and experience of church office in theology and church (in cooperation with the Christian College in Ede)

VII. Church diaconate in urban society

a. Researcher

P.W. van der Kamp

b. Short description

The following question guides the research in the field of diaconal service: *which activities and methods qualify for shaping the practice of diaconate in the city (from a local Reformed church), founded on a Biblical-theological vision of being a diaconal congregation?*

- We are dealing with advice on a practical-theoretical level (reflection level 1), which, at the same time, needs a clear and responsible grounding in a vision regarding the practice of diaconate (reflection level 2). Therefore, both levels need attention in this research project.

- Reflection level 1 (theory of practice) requires an evaluation of existent activities and methods. The most appropriate instrument of research will be of an empirical nature (quantitatively, but certainly qualitatively as well). One study being considered is a comparison between the functioning of several local churches in Amsterdam (known as *Amsterdam in Beweging*, Amsterdam in Action churches), and the Protestant Diaconie Amsterdam (aligned with the Protestant Church in the Netherlands, PKN). An empirical study like this one could be done in churches in Amersfoort or Zwolle, depending on the available budget and staffing (perhaps in collaborating with the Reformed College in Zwolle and the CvSv ("Centrum voor Samenlevingsvraagstukken," Center for Social Issues, connected with the Reformed College, Zwolle)).

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- This research project concentrates on diaconate in the city (or: in urban society), since urban society is an important barometer for realistic opportunities of church related diaconal outreach in an individualized and postmodern society. Furthermore it will be possible to make a link with previous research done regarding the interaction between local churches and urban society.

Research into the area of the diaconate carries a certain ecclesiastical urgency, because diaconal service belongs to the heart of being a church community, but often does not receive the attention it deserves (as church history shows). Within Practical Theology a further development of theory around diaconal service is relevant as well, not only of questions about the role of the churches in the execution of the "Wmo," the Law for Social Support (enacted by the Dutch government), but also in connection with the changes in society at large, such as: individualization, dismantling of the welfare state in The Netherlands, the construction of a participating society, and the growing fourth stage of life (vital old age).

c. The aim of this research project

This research will focus on forming a relevant theory about the diaconate (especially in urban society) and will seek to contribute, by means of publications, to the ongoing reflection about the future of diaconal service of churches in Dutch society. It is central to this that those who work in the field of the diaconate receive good, up-to-date information to be able to develop their own vision about diaconate. The research wishes to give some support to the "Praktijkcentrum," Center for Practice (formed by several Reformed Institutions in The Netherlands).

d. The framework for this research project and possible expansion

There are many opportunities for collaboration with other researchers. Input from Biblical scholars is essential for the Biblical-theological reflection of the theme. The research will also benefit from a systematic-theological grounding of the theme "union-with-Christ." Diaconate and the concept of the diaconal church are namely to be considered as the contextual shape of the union with Christ, of which fellowship and solidarity form the center. Also important is an exchange with researchers who are engaging in society trends and "civil society."

For the context of the diaconate, the dismantling of the welfare state and the construction of a participating society are important social developments that calls for broader research. In this

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area there are good possibilities involving the appointment of a junior researcher who can concentrate on the general question to be investigated: what does the change to the welfare-state in The Netherlands mean for the diaconate of the church? Flowing out of this theme there are also connections to be made with research in the area of public theology.

e. Planned results for Dec. 31, 2017

- A book about the research theme (at the end of 2017), as terminating point for this research project, in Dutch (due to the relevance for the Dutch urban context).
- Four or five articles over sub-themes (for example, the pre-publishing of results of the empirical research). At least two of these articles will be in English. The articles must appear in the course of the research period.

VIII. Enjoying life

a. Researcher

A. van der Dussen

b. Short description

In our modern culture hedonism is a dominant factor. There is resistance to the Christian faith, in particular the Calvinist variant. In this research project the plan is to study how Christianity and hedonism relate to each other. While on the one hand the study will explore to what extent and how Christian faith offers room for enjoying life, it will on the other hand explore how from a Christian viewpoint criticism can be made of a hedonistic life-style.

The project will focus on the following issues:

1. The place of "enjoying life" in the Old and New Testament
2. The place of natural life in Christian faith
3. The theme of asceticism, within as well as outside the Christian faith
4. The diminished interest in the afterlife within modern day western Christianity

c. The aim of this research project

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The research's aim is the thematization of the questions regarding the relationship between Christendom and hedonism and to suggest what a balanced Christian view of enjoying life might look like.

d. The framework of this research project

The research is closely linked to the planned expansion of the sub-project with the title: *The relationship between of systematic theology and ethics within dialectic theology*

e. Planned results before Dec. 31, 2017

A. van der Dussen: one article written in English, two or three articles written in Dutch and one monograph in Dutch.

IX. The publication of an academic edition of Van Ruler's works

a. Researcher

D. van Keulen

b. Short description

The Reformed (Hervormd) Arnold Van Ruler (1908-1970) is regarded as one of the most original thinkers in Protestant circles in The Netherlands in the 20th century. In 2005 it was decided to republish a representative selection of texts authored by him. Along with essays already published, as yet unpublished texts from the Archive of Van Ruler (maintained by the department of special collections of the Utrecht University Library) are scheduled for being published. The edition is thematically arranged.

So far four parts in five volumes of the Collected Works have appeared:

Part 1: What is theology? (2007)

Part 2: Revelation and Holy Scripture (2008)

Part 3: God, creation, man, sin (2009)

Part 4: Christ, the Spirit, and salvation, Volume A and B (2011)

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c. The aim of this research project

Critical republication of the texts of A.A. Van Ruler.

The texts are introduced and annotated. The annotation has a threefold purpose:

- a) where necessary, historical clarification;
- b) tracing Van Ruler's sources;
- c) cross-references within Van Ruler's total *oeuvre* (with the aim of making it conveniently accessible).

d. The framework of this research project

This research project is being carried out as a cooperative project between the Theological University in Kampen, the Protestant Theological University, and the Christian College (Christelijke Hogeschool) in Ede.

e. Planned results before Dec. 31, 2017

Two books:

A.A. van Ruler, Collected Works, Part 6. Culture, society, politics, education.

To be published in two volumes: Volume 6A and Volume 6B.

As a spin-off of this project several journal articles and conference papers are expected to appear.