

# Discriminating Love

## God's Love As Distinctiveness, Preference, and Judgment

Research Programme

Biblical Exegesis and Systematic Theology (BEST)  
2018-2023

Theological University Apeldoorn  
&  
Theological University Kampen

**[VERSION 2022 03 22]**

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Prof. Dr. A. Huijgen

*Secretary:*  
Dr. A.J. den Heijer

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## Part I Introduction and General Information

### 1. Mission and Vision of BEST

In research group Biblical Exegesis and Systematic Theology (BEST), biblical scholars and systematic theologians cooperate to stimulate the interaction between those two fields of research, which have too long suffered from compartmentalization. On the one hand, fresh insights from Biblical studies shed new light on systematic questions. In this interaction, Biblical theology function as bridge between Biblical studies and dogmatics. On the other hand, systematic questions give a deepening impulse to Biblical studies by laying bare presuppositions and by stimulating distinctly theological readings of Biblical texts.

We strive for an inspiring understanding of Scripture that has a central interest in God and his works, and a systematic theology that is continuously refreshed by Scriptural input and not strapped by rigid conceptual structures, be it traditional or contemporary. The BEST group is based in the Netherlands and wishes to disclose the rich Dutch Reformed tradition to an international audience.

### 2. Programme Title

Discriminating Love. God's Love As Distinctiveness, Preference, and Judgment

### 3. Overview of the Programme

BEST is an interdisciplinary research group in which researchers cooperate from three different fields: Old Testament studies, New Testament studies, and systematic theology.

The theme of the programme, 'Discriminating love' is the focal point of our research. In our conferences we work together on themes immediately related to our central theme. Biblical scholars and systematic theologians bring together their perspectives on aspects of our research theme. In 2018, our attention is directed to the people of God's preference, Israel. The theme of our 2020 conference will be "the nature/logic of God's love'. Our final conference will focus on 'Discriminations in the Bible' (2022). In this conference we will look back on our research in the past years and formulate conclusions of our research up to that moment.

Furthermore, we strive to formulate research projects that are directly connected to the central theme of our research programme. Moreover, we will all write articles on the theme of 'discriminating love' in which we bring our research projects in direct relation to the research theme. As a result, the different projects will all contribute to a better understanding of our central theme.

Coherence is created also by interdisciplinary projects. One of our long term ambitions is to bring Biblical studies and systematic theology into a fruitful cooperation. Thus, we stimulate co-productions by BEST-researchers from different disciplines in really interdisciplinary projects.

The subtitle of our programme mentions three aspects of God's love: distinctiveness, preference, and judgment. These different aspects show the theme 'discriminating love' opens a field with a variety of different sub-themes. Not all our research projects focus on the centre of the theme, still these projects also will contribute to our understanding of the theme by the publication of articles that address our central theme more directly.

#### 4. Researchers

##### *Senior researchers:*

Dr. K. van Bekkum

Dr. J.M. Burger

Prof. dr. J. Dekker

Dr. A. van der Dussen

Prof. dr. P.H.R. van Houwelingen

Prof. dr. A. Huijgen (Programme leader)

Dr. M. Klinker-De Klerck

Prof. dr. G. Kwakkel

Dr. M.C. Mulder

Prof. dr. H.G.L. Peels

Dr. R.T. te Velde

Dr. H. de Waard

##### *Associate researchers:*

Dr. H. ten Brinke

Dr. J. Doedens

Dr. A.J. den Heijer (secretary)

Dr. A. Versluis

##### *PhD Students:*

###### *Internal:*

G.T. van Appeldoorn

K. de Graaf

J. van den Os

###### *External*

P.J. den Admirant

A.E.L. Bosker

Ch. Choi

C. Florijn

Ch. Gunawan

Chr. Hilbrands

H.S. Kim

S. Koser

Dr. L.A. de Lima

M.Y. Matalu  
P. Nijse  
A.Th. van Olst  
I. Roharjo  
A. Santoso  
J.-H. Seo  
R. Tissen  
B.A.T. Witzier  
W. van Veelen  
S. Yoo

*External researchers whose research description is not yet included in this document:*

B. Adamo  
R. Hurd  
C.-K. Kim  
E. Moerdyk

## 5. Description of the Research Programme

### a. Aim/objectives

#### *Background*

Our Western societies, philosophies and theologies are characterized by tensions between the unity of humanity as a whole and specific individualist, ideological, religious, ethnic or regional identities. While the Enlightenment emphasized the infinite value of humanity, human rights, and the principal equality of all humans, it also showed individualizing tendencies that ultimately, stimulated by the idea of authenticity in Romanticism, emphasize the distinctions between humans. So, while discrimination, under Western conditions, is among the most abhorrent vices, people construct their identities by using real or imagined distinctions, that may or may not be harmful and/or violent. How do legitimate distinctions differ from discrimination? Much current debate is preoccupied with the balance between the need for cultural identities and the dangers of discrimination.

This debate is not confined to the academy, but also relates to recent developments in society, such as the renewed attention for national and regional identities, the longing for strong leadership and the rise of authoritarian regimes, also in parts of the world where a healthy system of checks and balances seemed to have prevailed.

#### *Research Question*

The research programme for the years 2018–2023 of the research group BEST addresses an important issue against this background, with as its central question:

***How is the apparently discriminating nature of the love of God in Biblical texts and theological ideas to be interpreted and evaluated in light of the Reformed tradition?***

### *Theological concerns: God's discriminating love*

Not only the cultural tension between universality and particularity, but also genuine theological concerns make this question urgent for theology as such. A first theological concern involves the nature of God's love. Since the Christian tradition regards God as the God of all the earth, his love for his creation is universal. This is complicated, however, by the reality of sin in world, as the human choice against God. Against this background, the Bible and the Christian tradition also emphasize the particularity of God's love, primarily in the election of Israel, and, by extension, of the Church. A logic of love seems to presuppose a moment of choice, and the nature of love seems particular rather than universal. Still, God passionately loves righteousness.

It is apparent that God's love, as pictured in Biblical texts, draws distinctions between persons and peoples. God's love has a preference for righteous and vulnerable people, for those who fear him. Since this love is his own primary motive, not evoked by the objects of God's love—the Bible often emphasizes the unworthiness of the recipients of divine love—there is an apparent discrimination, although 'discrimination' should not be taken in the modern, defamatory sense, but rather in the sense that a *discrimen* is made. Against the present Western cultural background, the pressing question is how God's love, which discriminates between human beings, is to be interpreted and evaluated. On the one hand, the universality of mankind and God's universal reign suggest a negative evaluation, while on the other hand, the particularity of human life and the nature of God's grace suggest a positive one.

A second theological concern is raised by the suggestion of God's discriminating love by various texts in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. The Scriptures picture God as coming lovingly towards his creation and towards humanity, choosing to make himself vulnerable along the way. This culminates in Jesus as the Messiah of Israel. The dynamics of grace and God's will that no one is lost, are expressed in Jesus' story of heavenly joy about one sheep that was found. Meanwhile, Jesus draws borders and frequently speaks of judgment and hell, just like the prophets of the Old Testament, and the New Testament letters highlighted not only God's love, but also his flaming anger, jealousy, and retreat. Human evil evokes God's judgment, whereas at the same time new life is given through God's forgiving love. Accordingly, the tension of discriminating love is reflected in both Testaments, and particularly in the person of Jesus.

### *Societal issues: the nature of love, interpreted*

The theological reflection on the nature of God's love has consequences for reflections on the nature of love as such and, therefore, for society at large. The following questions illustrate this: Is love per se universal, or particular? Does love only make friends, or enemies too? Does love lead to self-hatred and weakness in present cultural battles? Or is a love that goes beyond the borders of family, clan and tribe an indispensable element in building a society in which contradictions will always be present? Which concept of love is most suitable for the Christian tradition, the (religious) foundations of Western societies, and the present humanitarian challenges?

### *Historical dimensions: theological ideas*

Finally, there is also an important historical dimension to this question. The present perception of love in late modern Western society is the result of a long cultural development and diverse influences and can also not be separated from the view of divine love in Judaism and Christianity. At the same time, this society has great difficulties in understanding why and how these traditions

define love as something that is not merely universal and directed towards all humans and all of creation, but also makes a distinction between good and evil, separating sin from the sinner, discriminates between people, even in violent ways.

*Focus and method: BE and ST, in light of the Reformed tradition*

The expertise of the research group Biblical Exegesis and Systematic Theology lies in the interface between biblical studies and theological reflection. The main question of the research programme will be answered with these dual focal points, while interdisciplinary and societal themes will also be taken into account, such as 'loving the stranger in your midst', 'loving the truth', and 'the Spirit who connects and divides.'

The research unit operates within the Reformed tradition. That is relevant, because this tradition has, more than other Christian traditions, emphasized the priority of God's love, the *discrimen* between the one person and the other not being due to personal qualities, but to God's electing grace. This grace does not merely distinguish between persons, but also within the person, in justification.. Members of the BEST group are loyal to this tradition, and dedicated to keep it up to date in dialogue with contemporary questions. This implies the use of state of the art research methods, and the aim is to communicate with the present cultural context.

## b. Approach

*BE and ST, in light of the Reformed tradition*

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## c. Innovative elements

An important innovative element of the BEST-group is that we bring together Biblical Studies and Systematic Theology. Often researchers in those disciplines work in splendid isolation, focusing on linguistic, historical, exegetical, philosophical or constructive methods and on their own specific field of interests. Christian theologians, however, should read Scripture with a theological interest (in search of God), and reflect on theological themes listening to the Scriptures. Theological specialization and the huge amount of literature make it difficult for individual researchers to combine Biblical and systematic perspectives. Consequently, we strive to work together in one group

to realize this really combination of perspectives that should be characteristic of all Christian theology.

#### d. Knowledge utilization

As research group, we present ourselves every week in our own 'Theologenblog', in which we as theologians share some of our views on theology and on the actuality. This weblog is published on the websites of two Dutch Christian newspapers, the Nederlands Dagblad ([www.nd.nl/theologenblog](http://www.nd.nl/theologenblog)) and the Reformatorisch Dagblad ([www.rd.nl/thema/opinie/2016/theologenblog](http://www.rd.nl/thema/opinie/2016/theologenblog)).

Moreover, we collaborate with other researchers from TUA and TUK in post-academic education organized in PEP ([www.pepredikanten.nl/](http://www.pepredikanten.nl/)) and AKZ+ where researchers from TUA, TUK and VIAA (Zwolle) share their theological knowledge with the general public ([www.weetwatjegelooft.nl/](http://www.weetwatjegelooft.nl/)).

For the period 2018-2023 we plan furthermore to publish together popular publications related to our biannual conferences, one on Israel and one on the love of God. Furthermore, we will strive to organize one or more popular activities where BEST-researchers will present their researches in lectures or workshops to the general public.

#### e. Scientific embedding

As research group, we want to stand in the Dutch reformed tradition that is solidly rooted in the reformed tradition and combines this with exegetical freshness and theological creativity. This implies that we intend to do historical or constructive work in systematic theology in serious interaction with Scripture, and to do historical-critical Biblical research with a real interest in theology. We stand at the cutting edge of different traditions and want to combine the best: on the one hand the continental tradition of historical-critical Biblical scholarship and hermeneutical sensitive systematic theology; on the other hand the variety of confessional Reformed traditions. The research group can therefore be associated with the so-called "theological interpretation of Scripture".

## 6. Organisation

1. The Programme Leader, assisted by his secretary, is responsible for making policy and executing initiatives that have been proposed and/or adopted by the group. The Programme Leader will pay particular interest to the academic interaction and exchange between members of the research group, in order to stimulate cooperation between biblical exegetes and systematic theologians.

2. Each year five meetings are organized:

- *August:*

a day meeting ('BEST-workshop') of the research staff, associate members and external PhD-candidates; during this meeting chapters written by PhD-students or articles by the research staff will be discussed;

- *October, December, April, June:*

a mid-day meeting with the research staff and associate members, closing twice with a short business meeting; during these regular meetings products by staff members or interesting articles/books by others will be discussed;

3. Every two years, an international academic conference is organised where a theme is discussed closely related to the central research theme of the programme. This will be done together with experts in the field from outside TUA/ TUK. In a call for papers, other researchers are invited to bring in their contributions and the results of their own research.

4. Before acceptance of proposals for doctoral research, these are discussed in a meeting of the research staff.

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

6. All members of the research group write an annual report to the Programme Leader which includes a statement of progress of their research, a survey of publications (both academic, professional, and popularizing), and conference papers related to the research projects. This report over the past year has to be handed in before 15 January. In January / February, the Programme Leader discusses the progress with the senior members of the research staff (the chair holders are responsible for their AIOs and PhD-students) on the basis of these reports. The Programme Leader will present a brief report on the progress during the first regular business meeting of the group.

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

## 7. Goals for Publication and Visibility

For individual researchers, we follow the norm formulated by NOSTER (the Dutch Research School for Theology and Religion): for a research position of 0,2 fte we expect every year one peer reviewed article. As a group, we want to publish between 2018 and 2023 three peer reviewed congress volumes.

Furthermore, we strive for digital visibility of our research group. In any case, we want to present our research via academia.edu. For other ways of digital presence, new ideas will be developed during this period.

## 8. Institutional embedding

BEST is a combined researchgroup of researchers from Theological University Apeldoorn and Theological University Kampen. The relations between BEST and both Theological Universities are captured in an agreement of both institutions.

In its research, BEST wants to serve God, his church and our society by inspiring and refreshing contributions from biblical and systematic perspectives, to nourish the Christian faith in our present west-European context.

The cooperation of Biblical Studies and Systematic Theology contributes to the necessary co-operation of the theological disciplines to overcome the usual compartmentalization. In this co-operation we search for the connection between Scripture and daily life. We strive to do so in teamwork, to produce high quality scientific output as well as professional and popular publications.

## 9. International network

As BEST-researchers, we have our national and international networks. We plan to cooperate to reinforce and enlarge our networks. To realize this intention, we have several practical plans.

- a. We want to reinforce our international profile by organizing sessions under the flag of international societies like the European Association of Biblical Studies, the American Academy of Religion, the Society of Biblical Literature or the Evangelical Theological Society. The network of the Scripture and Hermeneutics Seminar at the ETS/SBL-conference serves as an inspiring example.
- b. Furthermore, we will build our network with peers who share this interest our theme and in in the interaction between Biblical Studies and Systematic Theology. We plan to invite them to become partners or our research group.

## 10. Societal network

The BEST research group values societal relevance, and sees ecclesial relevance as one of its aspects. In the media, we continue to be present in the 'Theologenblog', published weekly at the websites of two Dutch newspapers (*Reformatisch Dagblad* and *Nederlands Dagblad*). Often, these blogs are published also on paper in the newspapers.

We combine our biannual conference with an activity or a publication with a more popular character. This can result in a combination of an academic conference with a more popular 'studiedag'.

Furthermore, we participate in the online courses organized by AKZ+ (a cooperation of TU Apeldoorn, TU Kampen and Viaa Zwolle).

Of course, all our individual members are active also in many activities. They preach in worship services, give lectures, write professional publications and popular publications.

## 11. Education

Fruits of our research find their way to the education of theological students in Kampen and Apeldoorn. Many of our senior researchers have teaching positions. If possible, in lectures and in specialization projects, research and education are coming together. More details can be found in the description of the projects of the individual researchers.

PhD-students receive their education at TU Apeldoorn and TU Kampen. Moreover, PhD-students with a position in Apeldoorn or Kampen (AIO's) participate in NOSTER. Incidentally, PhD-students receive a task in education (supervising bachelor-theses; lectures).

## 12. Budget/fundraising

For the period 2018-2023, we want to submit one or more applications for funding. These applications aim at the funding of duo projects for PhD-students, in which one theme is studied from different perspectives: one PhD-student works in the field of Biblical studies and one in the field of systematic theology. In this way, the combination of research in Biblical Studies and Systematic Theology can be given a new impulse.

## 13. Summary for the general public

NOG SCHRIJVEN

Part II Research Projects

## 1. Thematic Conferences

MD 1 Covenant

MD 2 Israel as Hermeneutical Challenge

MD 3 The Nature and Logic of God's Love

MD 4 Discriminations in the Bible

## 2. Multidisciplinary Research Projects

Divine Preference in Genesis 1–11 (OT/ST)

### 1 Summary

As a narrative describing existential elements in human existence (such as life, death, evil, sin, marriage, shepherding, agriculture, cities, metal working, music, worship, seasons etc.) both in a historical and paradigmatic way, Genesis 1–11 comprises vital elements for present day debate on the nature of reality and humanity. This project contributes to the debate on

### 2 Discipline(s)

Old Testament / Ancient Near Eastern Studies; Systematic Theology

### 3 Researchers

Koert van Bekkum; Arnold Huijgen

### 4 Description

#### *a. Aim / objectives*

Enlightening the debate regarding the nature of humanity in the context of creation in describing the main historical and systematic theological claims of Genesis 1–11.

#### *b. Relation to the BEST-program*

The project explores the theme of 'Discriminating love' in Genesis 1–11.

### *c. Approach*

Contextual, diachronic, synchronic and theological analysis of Genesis 1–11.

### *d. Knowledge Utilization*

The results of this project contribute to the ongoing debates on creation and evolution, artificial intelligence and human enhancement.

### *e. Scientific Embedding*

This project evolved from contributions to 'Baambrugge 2.0', an informal network of scientists and philosophers, to a large part connected to the Abraham Kuyper Center for Science and the Big Question, VU Amsterdam.

## 5 Goals and Planning

- two contributions to the volume William den Boer, René Franssen, Rik Peels (red.), *Kijk naar de vogels. Antwoorden op 24 cruciale vragen op christelijk geloof en evolutie* (2019)
- a brochure *Verdreven uit de hof, levend uit de belofte. De actualiteit van het begin van Genesis* (2019/2020)

## 6 Relation to Education

The analysis will bear fruit in the courses Discipline Oude Testament I (TU Kampen), Oude Testament 1 (ETF Leuven) and Dogmatiek 1 (TU Apeldoorn).

## 7 Budget

None

## A Methodological Framework for Doing Biblical Exegesis and Systematic Theology

### 1. Summary

To substantiate the methodology used in bringing together Biblical Exegesis and Systematic Theology, three researchers join efforts to formulate key elements of such a methodology.

### 2. Disciplines

Old Testament / New Testament / Systematic Theology

### 3. Researchers

Koert van Bekkum, Hans Burger, Arnold Huijgen

### 4. Description

#### *a. Aim / objectives*

To provide a methodological underpinning for the research group's work

#### *b. Relation to the BEST program*

It is central to the entire program.

### *c. Approach*

Analysis of the field, reflection, methodological considerations and guidelines.

## 5. Goals and planning

The article will be written in the first half of 2021. Publication 2022.

## Mary: Icon of Grace

### 1. Summary

Mary, the mother of Jesus, is theologically important for Reformed theology as well as for Roman-Catholic theology. Moreover, a research of Mary must combine Biblical exegesis and systematic theology, both in reception of theological traditions and constructive renewal.

### 2. Disciplines

Old Testament / New Testament / Systematic Theology

### 3. Researchers

Arnold Huijgen, Arco den Heijer

### 4. Description

#### *a. Aim / objectives*

To offer a theological assessment of Mary, Jesus' mother, to demonstrate the fruitful character of the combination of exegesis and theology.

#### *b. Relation to the BEST program*

This research provides an example of the combination of Biblical exegesis and systematic theology.

#### *c. Approach*

Three steps: exegesis of Biblical texts, analysis of the tradition, theological consideration and evaluation.

#### *d. Knowledge utilization*

This project aims not only at an impact at the scholarly level, but also in the church and the society, with an ecumenical aim.

#### *e. Scientific embedding*

#### *f. Relation to other sub-projects*

## 5. Goals and planning

- (Huijgen) Monograph in Dutch, 2021;
- (Huijgen) Article on the Reformers' interpretation of the virgin birth, in peer reviewed volume;

- (Huijgen/Den Heijer) Journal article on Mary in Acts 1:14.

#### 6. Relation to education

Huijgen will teach a course on Mary (2020).

#### 7. Budget

N/A

## 3. Old Testament

### 3.1 God's Love and Judgment in the OT Prophets

#### 1. Summary

This project aims at an in-depth investigation of the text and message of the Old Testament prophetic books that are closely connected to the times of Israel's and Judah's crisis and, eventually, their total collapse. The main focus will be on the image of God in his discriminating love in the preaching of the prophets Hosea and Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

#### 2. Discipline(s)

Biblical Theology – Old Testament.

#### 3. Researchers

The book of Hosea:

- Prof. dr. G. Kwakkel

The book of Isaiah:

- Prof. dr. J. Dekker

The book of Jeremiah:

- Prof. dr. H.G.L. Peels
- Drs. H. de Waard (supervisor: H.G.L. Peels)
- ~~Drs. B. Kang (supervisor: H.G.L. Peels)~~
- Drs. H.-S. Kim (supervisor: H.G.L. Peels; partly on Ezekiel)

Prophets in general:

- Chr. Hilbrands (supervisor: G. Kwakkel)

#### 4. Subprojects

The books of the so-called latter prophets are characterized by a strong tension between God's love and his devastating anger. On the one hand, the God of the prophets is the One who calls into account the people of Israel as his covenantal partner, which failed to live in accordance with its election and the stipulations of the covenant, and strayed away in apostasy and moral decline. The fierce reaction of YHWH as the insulted and deceived husband is depicted in colourful terms. The language of the prophetic oracles is coloured by the wounded love of God, who almost desperately seeks to restore the relationship with his people. On the other hand, the wrath of YHWH turns against his own chosen people, leaving no or scarcely any room for a future in the land. His love towards his people apparently has its limits. Especially in the books of Hosea and Jeremiah, which show a close affinity, this tension is elaborated in depth. In the books of Isaiah and Ezekiel, the same questions are at stake: how do God's love and God's judgment relate to each other, both with respect to Israel, and to the nations?

These subprojects focus on four prophetic books in particular:

- the books of the eight-century prophets Hosea and Isaiah (around the exile of Israel)

- the books of the sixth-century prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel (around the exile of Judah)

## Hosea and Isaiah

@@@Gert Kwakkel / Jaap Dekker

## Jeremiah and Ezekiel

The supposed historical background of the books of the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel are the final decades of the kingdom of Judah during the rise of the Neo-Babylonian Empire, and the first period of the Babylonian exile. Both prophetic books know about the ardent divine love for his people, and the final judgment due to its permanent erring away from YHWH. At the same time, the message of God's inner wrestling with respect to the fate of his people comes to the fore, He seems to be incapable of not having a relationship with Israel. While in the wake of the ruin of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple old certainties fall away, and the traditional image of God comes under pressure, the prophetic preaching point to a bewildering new way of living, via the exile.

This project aims at investigating the text and theology of Jeremiah and Ezekiel from various angles:

- An integral exegesis of the final part of the book, the collection of oracles against the nations and the final chapter, Jeremiah chapters 46—52 (OT 11; H.G.L. Peels);
- A detailed synchronic and diachronic analysis of Jeremiah chapter 52, and its relationship with the so-called Deuteronomistic History (OT 12; H. de Waard);
- A comparative investigation into the theme of shame/disgrace in Jeremiah and Ezekiel (OT 13; H.-S. Kim);
- An exegetical-theological research of the theme of God's vulnerability in Jeremiah (OT 14; B. Kang).

## Biblical Theological Contours of the Book of Isaiah

### *a. Researcher*

Prof. dr. J. Dekker

### *b. Aim / objectives*

A biblical-theological investigation of the Book of Isaiah in which the fruits of historical research are seriously and critically incorporated. Being one of the books most quoted in the New Testament it has contributed to a considerable degree to the New Testament view of God as revealing himself in Jesus Christ. In the Early Church the Book of Isaiah, therefore, received the honorary title of being the Fifth Gospel. However, it is clearly not only a book about God's love, but also about his judgment, which raises questions about the theological coherence of the book as a whole and the mutual relationships among its various themes.

The intended result of the project is a series of peer-reviewed articles on several theological themes from the Book of Isaiah that are important from a biblical theological perspective and relevant for understanding the contribution of the Book of Isaiah to the Christian Gospel. These articles, to be published in academic journals and in congress volumes of the research group, are meant to clear the way to a monograph on the biblical theological contours of the Book of Isaiah.

### *c. Relation to the BEST-programme*

This project contributes to the general research programme by illuminating the discriminating character of God's love as an inherent aspect of the theology of the Book of Isaiah.

### *d. Approach*

Because there is only 0,2 fte available for this research project, the project will inevitably exceed the period of the general research programme. For that reason the term for the intended monograph is only an indication. In the meantime choices has to be made with regard to cooperation in joint publications to keep the goal of the project in mind. Therefore, priority will be given to writing articles that contributes the most substantively to clearing the way to the intended monograph.

### *e. Knowledge Utilization*

Because of its important reception history within Christianity, an investigation of the theology of the Book of Isaiah will help to understand how one of the main sources of the New Testament Gospel has contributed to Christian theology and still does. The investigation in particular of the relationship between God's love and his judgment within the Book of Isaiah will contribute to Christian reflections on the identity and character of God. It will also provide pointers for a substantiated contribution to modern discussions in western society about the relationship between religion and violence.

### *f. Scientific Embedding*

With regard to the Book of Isaiah 'The Three-Book Interpretation' that once replaced 'The One-Prophet Interpretation' now has abandoned the field in favour of the 'The One-Book Interpretation'. This is an important shift. Building on the results of historical and literary research, Old Testament scholarship now tries to do justice to the present unity of the Book of Isaiah. Often this unity is understood in mere literary terms. Recently scholars are also looking for a theological understanding of the unity of the book. This project is part of this international tendency in Isaiah studies, but more specifically aims at a biblical-theological understanding, studying the Book of Isaiah as part of Christian Scripture.

This project is connected to the Henk de Jong-chair of Biblical Studies and Christian Identity at the Theological University of Kampen, of which the present researcher is chair holder. The Henk de Jong-chair involves exploring and reflecting hermeneutically the questions that modern and postmodern Bible research evokes in relation to the Christian identity of the church, building on the work of Henk de Jong (born 1932).

### *g. Goals and Planning*

- 'Stilling or Stirring Up the Sea? The Translation of Isaiah 51:15', in: Koert van Bekkum, Gert Kwakkel et al. (eds), *Biblical Hebrew in Context: Essays in Semitics and Old Testament Texts in Honour of Professor Jan P. Lettinga*, OTS 75 (Leiden: Brill, 2018).
- 'What has David to Do with It? The Promise of a New Covenant in the Book of Isaiah', in: *Volume on the Covenant, Studies in Reformed Theology* (Leiden: Brill) (2019)
- Article in Dutch language about Eschatology in the Book of Isaiah, *Theologia Reformata of Soteria* (2019)

- 'The Restoration of Zion/Jerusalem: Reading Isaiah 60-62 as Part of Christian Scripture', Volume on Israel as Hermeneutical Challenge, Studies in Reformed Theology (Leiden: Brill) (2020)
- 'Open the Gates that the Righteous Nation May Enter': The Concept of the People of God in the Book of Isaiah', JSOT (2020)
- Article about God's Love and Judgment in the Book of Isaiah, JSOT, VT or ZAW (2021/2022)
- Monograph Biblical Theological Contours of the Book of Isaiah (± 2023)

#### *h. Relation to Education*

In the context of Biblical hermeneutics attention will be given to the New Testament use of quotations from the Book of Isaiah (BA-3; 2 EC). The biblical theological contours of the Book of Isaiah will be part of the discipline 'Theology of the Old Testament' (MA-2 Old Testament; 3,5 EC). Students specializing in the Old Testament will be encouraged to participate in this research project. This applies especially to international students who follow the one-year master's program at the University of Kampen preparing for a PhD at the Henk de Jong-chair.

#### *i. Budget*

Financial support would be welcome to offer opportunity to talented students to participate in the project. The *Nederlands Gereformeerde Predikantenopleiding* has a fund which gives support to ministers preparing a PhD by facilitating study leaves and sponsoring the costs of publications. For creating a vacancy for a PhD candidate / research assistant in this large project other funding would be necessary.

## The Oracles Against the Nations in the Book of Jeremiah

### *a. Researcher*

Prof. dr. H.G.L. Peels

### *b. Aim / objectives*

An integral exegesis of the closing section of the book of Jeremiah, the so-called oracles against the nations in chapters 46—51, including chapter 52. Historical, literary, as well as theological questions are at stake, with a special emphasis on the theological value of these prophecies. What is the image of YHWH communicated by these texts? How is the primary emphasis on total divine judgment to be understood, in the light of the Old Testament preaching of divine love?

This project joins the international Jeremiah research by contributing to (international) conferences, by publishing exegetical and biblical-theological articles on the theology of the book of Jeremiah in academic and professional journals, and specifically by preparing an exegetical volume in the series *Historical Commentary of the Old Testament* (Peeters, Leuven) and in *Commentaar op het Oude Testament* (Kok, Kampen).

### *c. Relation to the BEST-programme*

This subproject contributes to the general research programme by illuminating the discriminating character of God's love as an inherent aspect of the theology of the Book of Jeremiah.

#### *d. Approach*

In line with the approach of HCOT, this project focuses on a detailed exegetical analysis of the texts of Jeremiah 46-52, applying a variety of text-critical, historical, and literary methods. Both an overview of the main issues concerning the collection of the oracles against the nations in Jeremiah (background, composition, order, intention, etc.) and a theological evaluation will be part of the commentary.

#### *e. Knowledge Utilization*

The book of Jeremiah is the most voluminous of all Old Testament prophetic books, and is notorious for its message of judgment and doom. At the same time, precisely in this book the tension between God's love and God's anger comes to the fore. The investigation of these intricate and exciting prophecies contributes to a better understanding of the biblical God-talk and as such to Christian reflection on the identity and character of God. This, in turn, is of importance for modern discussions on religion and violence, charity/hospitality and discrimination.

#### *f. Scientific Embedding*

The subproject contributes to the investigation of the character of God in the Old Testament, both by analysing the God-talk and the ideas of divine intervention in the oracles against the nations, and by highlighting the uniqueness of JHWH in confrontation with the political and religious constellation in times of exile. This study is part of the international team which prepares the commentary HCOT. Part of this project is embedded in the research group 'Prophecy and Foreign Nations' of the European Association of Biblical Studies.

#### *g. Relation to other subprojects*

This subproject is closely related to three other subprojects on text and theology of Jeremiah, especially to H. de Waard's research on Jeremiah 52 (project H. de Waard) which will provide most direct input for this project, but also to B. Kangs research on the vulnerability of God in Jeremiah and H.-S. Kim's research on the theme of shame/disgrace in Jeremiah, who elaborate on issues that are present in and relevant to the collection of Jeremiah 46-52 as well. This cluster of Jeremiah-research, in turn, is related to the projects on Hosea and Isaiah (G. Kwakkel resp. J. Dekker). Together, these projects contribute to an understanding of God's discriminate love in the Old Testament latter prophets.

#### *h. Goals and Planning*

- "'But Fear not, O Jacob my Servant!'" The Place and Function of the Salvation Oracle in Jeremiah 46:27-28 MT', in: Koert van Bekkum, Gert Kwakkel *et al.* (eds), *Biblical Hebrew in Context: Essays in Semitics and Old Testament Texts in Honour of Professor Jan P. Lettinga*, OTS 75 (Leiden: Brill, 2018).
- 'De volgorde van de volkenprofetieën in het boek Jeremia', *Acta Theologica* (Fs S.D. Snyman), 2018
- 'Cursed be the one who withholds his sword from blood. An Exegesis of Jeremiah 48:1-10', *Old Testament Essays* (Fs W. Wessels), 2018
- 'Divine Tears About Divine Violence. God's lament in the oracle against Moab in Jeremiah 48', *Oudtestamentische Studiën* (2019)

- 'Priority of LXX in the Sequence of the OAN in the Book of Jeremiah?', in U. Becker, H. Bezzel and M. de Jong (eds), *The Oracles Against the Nations* (Mohr Siebeck, 2019)
- 'Forgiveness in the Book of Jeremiah', *Unio cum Christo* (2019)
- 'Kan God wenen?', article on the weeping God in Jeremiah, together with A. Huijgen (*Theologia Reformata*, 2019)
- 'The Joy of God from a Biblical-theological Perspective', 'The joy of God from a Religion-philosophical Perspective', two articles together with H.D. Peels (2019/2020)
- One, possibly two articles in *Vetus Testamentum* and *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, on aspects of the OAN / image of God in Jeremiah (2020-2021)
- *Jeremia. Deel 4* (Commentaar op het Oude Testament, Kok Kampen; ± 2023)
- *Jeremiah. Volume IV* (Historical Commentary on the Old Testament, Peeters Leuven; ± 2023)

#### *i. Relation to Education*

The results of this Jeremiah-project will be used in teaching several modules: OT hermeneutics (BA-1 and BA-3), OT exegesis (BA-2 and MA-1), and OT Biblical Theology (MA-1), as well in the OT-major (MA-3). Students specializing in the Old Testament will be encouraged to participate in this research project, in particular during the Grad-courses.

#### *j. Budget*

Financial support is needed for annual attendance of (international) conferences as ISBL, EABS, Joint Meetings of OTW, IOSOT, where papers will be presented: € 2500,- each year. Also, funds for the costs of two short stays (each a month) at research centres (Tyndale House; KU Leuven) in this period would be welcome: € 3000,- . Next, the costs of student assistancy, English translations (check by native speakers) and further preparation of publications: € 1000 annually.

## Jeremiah 52: Text, Context, Redaction [completed]

### *a. Researcher*

Drs. H. de Waard (PhD-student; supervisor prof. dr. H.G.L. Peels)

### *b. Aim / objectives*

A detailed investigation of Jeremiah 52, both from a synchronic and from a diachronic perspective. This final chapter of the book of Jeremiah, which provides an account of the fall of Jerusalem (587 BC) and of the release of king Jehoiachin in Babylon (562 BC), is largely identical to the final section of the book of Kings (2 Kgs 24:18–25:30), which can be regarded as its source text. At the same time, there are a number of significant differences between both text, as well as between the Hebrew (Masoretic) text of Jer 52 and its Old Greek translation. This project addresses the textual, literary, and historical questions that arise from these facts: how is the textual relationships between the texts/text forms to be understood? What place and function does Jer 52 have within the book of Jeremiah? When and for what purpose was this chapter added to the book? Which subsequent textual and editorial developments can be traced in it?

By investigating its final chapter, the project aims at furthering our understanding of the book of Jeremiah. A literary work's conclusion often provides clues about how to read the larger

work, but until now research on Jer 52 has remained fairly limited. Hence, the project can provide an important contribution to international Jeremiah studies.

#### *c. Relation to the BEST-programme*

While the first part of Jer 52, the account of Jerusalem's fall, gives an impressive description of Yhwh's judgment of his people, the story of Jehoiachin's release in the second part is often interpreted as a signal of a future for God's people. Accordingly, Jer 52 seems to summarize the book's double message of judgment and hope, of divine anger on the one hand, but divine love on the other. Moreover, his anger is poured out on the land of Judah, while his love is focused on the exiles in Babylon, so that Jer 52 is a testimony of how Yhwh make a distinction between different Judean communities. The project will shed light, therefore, on how the theme of "discriminating love" finds expression in the book of Jeremiah.

#### *d. Approach*

Since the project involves a textual-critical, literary-critical, and redaction-critical investigation of Jeremiah 52, a variety of methods is applied. In order to understand both text forms of the chapter as compositions in their own right, the (text-critical) comparison between them (and 2 Kgs 25) is preceded by a brief literary (synchronic) analysis of each of them. Similarly, the place and function of Jeremiah 52 within the book of Jeremiah is first analyzed synchronically, which then provides a basis from answering the diachronic questions about the chapter's inclusion into the book.

#### *e. Knowledge Utilization*

The project not only contributes to Jeremiah-studies, but will also yield relevant knowledge about the composition, transmission and re-use of Biblical texts in general, as well as about the scribal culture and religious ideas of Second Temple Judaism. Moreover, the book of Jeremiah being part of the Jewish and the Christian Bible, any contribution to a better understanding of (a part of) this book bears relevance to present members of these communities of faith.

#### *f. Scientific Embedding*

Over the past thirty years, Jeremiah studies has been a lively field of research. While traditionally the book was especially studied from a diachronic perspective, the 1990's saw the emergence of synchronic approaches. Meanwhile, the textual question (the relationship between MT and the Old Greek) has been a matter of ongoing controversy. The project stands at the crossroads of these various dimensions of Jeremiah studies.

#### *g. Relation to other subprojects*

The present subproject especially has a relation to the subproject of its supervisor prof. dr. H.G.L. Peels, "The Oracles Against the Nations in the Book of Jeremiah". The main intended output of that project is a commentary on Jeremiah 46-52. In addition to the Oracles Against the Nations (chs. 46-51), then, this commentary will also include Jeremiah 52, so that the present subproject will provide important input for the subproject of its supervisor.

#### *h. Goals and Planning*

- Monograph: *Jeremiah 52: Text, Context, Redaction* in *Oudtestamentische Studiën* (Brill, 2019).

### *i. Relation to Education*

Elements from the research for this project has been used in a course on textual criticism (BA-1) and are still used in a course on the history of ancient Israel (BA-3). In addition, they are occasionally discussed with students specializing in Old Testament studies (MA-5/6).

### *j. Budget*

The research is partly performed in the context of the researcher's appointment as research assistant of prof. dr. H.G.L. Peels at the Theologische Universiteit Apeldoorn (0,3 fte research time), and partly in the researcher's own time. No further funding is needed.

## Messages of Hope in the Book of Jeremiah

### *a. Researcher*

Dr. H. de Waard

### *b. Aim / objectives*

The Book of Jeremiah, particularly known for its extensive proclamation of Yahweh's judgment, also contains a wide variety of messages of hope, which announce a future beyond judgment. The project investigates these messages, both the distinctiveness of each of them and their historical and theological relationships. Starting with Jeremiah's early oracles to the former Northern Kingdom, the project aims to trace the development of the prophet's messages of hope, up to and including its articulation in the book's later, redactional layers. In addition, it aims to study these messages from a Biblical-theological perspective, as part of God's revelation in Scripture.

### *c. Relation to the BEST-program*

Yahweh's mercy, as announced in Jeremiah's messages of hope, does not extend to all people indiscriminately. Indeed, the various oracles in the book have different addresses, some being addressed to the former Northern Kingdom, others to the Judeans exiles in Babylon, and still others to all Judah or to Israel and Judah together. Remarkably, while Jeremiah's main focus is on the future of God's own people, the book also contains some promises for foreign countries (46:26; 48:47; 49:6, 39). The project will shed light, therefore, on how the theme of God's "discriminating love" finds expression in the book of Jeremiah.

### *d. Approach*

A detailed exegesis of relevant passages, applying both historical and literary methods. In the Biblical-theological studies, a salvation-historical approach will be followed, according to which both the Old and the New Testament testify to God's redemptive activity in human history, culminating in the work of Jesus Christ.

### *e. Knowledge Utilization*

The project not only contributes to Jeremiah-studies, but will also help pastors and other people interested in the Bible and/or theology to get a better understanding of this part of Scripture and its relation to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

#### f. Scientific Embedding

In general terms, the project relates to the lively fields of Jeremiah studies and Biblical theology. In addition to being embedded in the BEST-program, work-in-progress will be presented at the meetings of OTW, as well as in relevant sessions at scholarly conferences, such as the SBL International Meeting, the EABS Annual Meeting, and/or the IOSOT congress.

#### g. Relation to other subprojects

The present subproject especially has a relation to H.G.L. Peels' subproject about the oracles against the nations, which likewise focuses on the exegesis and theology of the book of Jeremiah. In particular, some of Jeremiah's message of hope are found in the oracles against the nations.

#### h. Goals and Planning

Paper at the 2021 BEST conference on "YHWH's Love for Northern Israel, according to Jeremiah," subsequently to be published in the congress volume

One or two papers at meetings of Old Testaments scholars (in 2021-2022)

One article in a B-journal on Old Testament studies (2022)

One article in an A-journal on Old Testament studies (2023)

One or two articles in B/C-journals on reformed/evangelical theology (2022-2023)

#### i. Relation to Education

The textual passages studied for this project can be used in BA-courses on Old Testament exegesis. In addition, work-in-progress will occasionally be discussed with students specializing in Old Testament studies (MA-5/6).

#### j. Budget

The researcher has a part-time (30%) appointment for research at the Theologische Universiteit Apeldoorn. This institution also provides a budget for visiting conferences.

## Shame and Disgrace in the Books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel

### a. Researcher

Drs. H.S. Kim (PhD-student; supervisor prof. dr. H.G.L. Peels; second supervisor still to be found)

### b. Aim / objectives

In God's relation with Israel and the peoples, both the ideas of shame and honor and the notions of sin and guilt play an important role. In the Bible shame words are used as many times as sin and guilt words, and these two language groups overlap in emotional, juridical, and social areas. This project focuses on the investigation of the theme of shame and disgrace. To this end, the two books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel are chosen because of their common historical background in the political, social and religious decline of the kingdom of Judah and the Jerusalem temple. Since the sound and resound of the shame motif is prevalent in the political upheavals and demolition of the Zion temple, here the meaning and significance of the shame/disgrace theme gain more importance than elsewhere. This study will focus on the following research question: What is the meaning and significance of the theme of shame/disgrace in the books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and how are these related to God's love and judgment?

This project aims at the publication of a PhD-thesis with the title *Shame and Disgrace in the Books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel*

#### *c. Relation to the BEST-programme*

This subproject contributes to the general research programme by illuminating an important theme in the theologies of the Books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, which can shed light on the broader question of the discriminating character of God's love.

#### *d. Approach*

Since shame words are imbedded throughout the whole books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, the function of these words will be examined in the structure of two prophetic books. Literary approach will be employed to trace diverse levels of the shame words. Exegetical studies will be done on the important passages.

#### *e. Knowledge Utilization*

First, this shame study in the two prophetic books, which will be done in an exegetical way, will shed light on the discussion in the other disciplines, such as psychology and cultural anthropology. Second, ministers could use the outcome of this study in pastoral counseling by addressing the issue of shame in the congregation.

#### *f. Scientific Embedding*

Compared to other biblical studies on the topic of shame, a more detailed investigation of the meaning and significance of the theme of shame in the latter prophetic books, especially in the books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, is needed. By filling this important gap, we can get a better picture of the theme of shame and its significance for the overall message of the prophets, in particular in its relation to the background of God's love and anger. Together with a rich understanding of the theme of shame, other important themes such as God's covenant and vengeance receive more vivid color.

#### *g. Relation to other subprojects*

This study will contribute to have a general view on the book of Jeremiah, which is being pursued by prof. dr. H.G.L. Peels and his other students.

#### *h. Goals and Planning*

- Monograph (PhD-thesis in English; 2022)

#### *i. Relation to Education*

This study will shed lights on the courses on the Prophetic Books, which is being taught by the researcher at the Theological Academy of the Independent Reformed Church in Korea.

#### *j. Budget*

The financial needs will be supplied by the Theological Academy, where the researcher is working as professor.

## The Vulnerability of God in the book of Jeremiah

This PhD project of drs. B. Kang has been cancelled in consultation with the supervisor, prof. dr. H.G.L. Peels.

## The Philistines oracles

### a. Researcher

Christian Hilbrands (PhD-student; supervisors: Prof. Gert Kwakkel, Prof. H.G.L. Peels)

### b. Aim / objectives

In recent research, individual collections of oracles against the nations (OAN) such as Am 1:3–2:16 along with individual nations such as Babylon within a single collection have been examined relatively thoroughly. But an analysis of the whole set of oracles against the Philistines that can be found in the books of the later prophets is missing. Although diachronic studies already exist there is no analysis and comparison of the individual Philistine sayings and their theological message with one another. Among other things, the relationship between YHWH, Israel and the Philistines as a whole, the relationship to the depicted past of Israel with the Philistines (cf. especially Judges, Samuel, Kings) and the present as described by the prophets are to be examined. Therefore the aim and heart of the thesis will be an exegetical analysis of the theological aspects of the Philistine prophecies. Hence, the project can provide a contribution to international studies on the oracles against the nations.

### c. Relation to the BEST-programme

The project explores the theme of 'Discriminating love' in Isa 14:28–32, Jer 47, Ez 25:15–17, Am 1:6–8, Zeph 2:4–7 and Zach 9:5–8. The Philistine oracles are an example *par excellence* for God's discriminating love. With the exception of Zach 9:8, they only proclaim the doom of the Philistines. Even the Assyrians and Egyptians do not appear in such a negative light in the OAN (see e.g. Isa 19:16–25, Jer 46:26b). A good example is Isa 14:32, where the Philistines are described in contrast to Zion and Israel, to whom Yahweh turns his love. So the theological question is why the Philistines are so detested and merely experience the unfavourable side of Gods "discriminating love".

### d. Approach

A synchronic and literary approach to the texts is chosen methodologically; the texts will be read and explained from the world of text. In accordance with recent research, the text analysis aims to compare the individual texts, their function, literary and theological message, similarities and differences in the overall book. In the course of the dissertation, it will become clear to what extent the individual oracles can be compared with one another or whether they are independent. The intertextual connections of the oracles against the Philistine, which have so far hardly been taken into account, will also be kept in mind.

### e. Knowledge Utilization

The *research* contributes to research on the Oracle against the Nations, the nations in the Hebrew Bible in general, and the Philistines in particular. In addition, the comparison of the oracles and possible connections enriches prophetic research (especially research on the twelve prophets). Furthermore, it can contribute to the theological understanding of God's nature and his love.

#### *f. Scientific Embedding*

The oracles against the nations are a controversial field of research. Most studies deal with diachronic questions, but in recent years synchronic questions are gaining more attention. Studies on individual nations such as the Philistines in particular have rarely been carried out, therefore they can close a research gap.

#### *g. Relation to other subprojects*

This subproject is closely related to other subprojects, especially to H.G.L. Peels commentary on the oracles against the nations in Jeremiah so that much input can be received and provided through the analysis of Jer 47. The vulnerability of God in Jeremiah (B. Kang) and the theme of shame/disgrace in Jeremiah (H.-S. Kim) are also relevant for the understanding of Jer 46-51. This project is also related to J. Dekker's study of Isaiah and general insights into the Twelve Prophets by G. Kwakkel. Overall, since the oracles on the Philistines are an example *par excellence* of God's discriminating love, this study will certainly enrich the whole research programme.

#### *h. Goals and Planning*

- Monograph (PhD-thesis) ± 2024
- One-two Articles in academic journals

#### *i. Relation to Education*

N/A

#### *j. Budget*

N/A

### Diversitas and Unitas: The Word of God in the Book of Amos

#### 1. Summary

This project investigates the diversity and unity of the Word of God in the book of Amos.

#### 2. Discipline(s)

Old Testament

#### 3. Researchers

Rudolf Tissen (first supervisor: prof. dr. Gert Kwakkel; second supervisor prof. dr. Ruth Scoralick)

#### 4. Description

##### *a. Aim / objectives*

This research seeks to answer the following question: Is it possible to explain the tension in the book of Amos (regarding the *telos* of subsequent text passages) from a specific understanding of the Word of God, that allows room for diversity and unity to stand next to each other in a meaningful whole?

#### *b. Relation to the BEST-program*

It is part of the BEST projects that investigate the prophetic books, in which God's discriminating love is evident in oracles of both judgment and promise. This project seeks to understand the prophetic concept of the Word of God, which can be seen as the expression of God's discriminating love.

#### *c. Approach*

The research will be conducted through an exegetical-linguistic analysis of the word of God in the book of Amos and a literary analysis of three specific passages of Amos. On the basis of this analysis, the unity and diversity in the word of God will be evaluated.

#### *d. Knowledge Utilization*

n/a

#### *e. Scientific Embedding*

This project is part of the scholarly discussions concerning the literary unity of the book of Amos and concerning the prophetic understanding of the word of God.

#### *f. Relation to other sub-projects*

n/a

### 5. Goals and Planning

The dissertation is scheduled for completion in 2023.

### 6. Relation to Education

n/a

### 7. Budget

n/a

### 8. Description of sub-projects

n/a

## 3.2 Other Projects

### Concepts of the Promised Land

#### 1 Summary

One of the most remarkable ways of divine discriminating love in Genesis to 2 Kings is the promise of the land to Abraham and his descendants. Geographical descriptions of this land previously belonging to the Canaanites and Amorites offer a valuable contribution to the message of biblical books. In addition, the depictions can be exploited in combination with non-biblical texts and archaeological remains in order to reconstruct their origin and use by the ancient scribes, for the

texts mostly refer to actual borders, locations and regions. For almost a century, the geographical descriptions and depictions of the land of Israel in Numbers 34:1-12 (cf. Ezekiel 47:13-20); Joshua 13—19; Judges 1:1-36; 1 Kings 4:7-19; 2 Kings 14:25 stand out as possible sources used by Israelite scribes in order to create their image of the past. Scholars studied the geography of the lists and districts and attempted to date them, while synchronic studies revealed that they clearly function in a storyline that is most of the time very critical of the way Israel deals with the religious pluralism of its environment.

Accordingly, vital questions are (a) what process of identity formation and orientation can be observed in this (re)shaping of texts and their ideological claim to places and regions and (b) how the references to the *realia* are related to the unique place of Israel among the nations and the nature of Yhwh's discriminating love of Yhwh.

## 2 Researcher

Koert van Bekkum

## 3 Description

### *a. Aim / objectives*

The following questions are to be answered. What is the meaning of the diverse descriptions of the land? How were they used in Israel's identity formation and orientation? Is it possible to describe the nature of the prophetic criticism and witness in these passages? What historical and theological development can be observed in the use of the concept of the Promised Land?

### *b. Relation to the BEST-programme*

The project studies the nature of divine discriminating love in the Promise of the Land as one of the core literary motifs in the historical work of Genesis to two Kings.

### *c. Approach*

The project combines a historiographical analysis of the texts using literary and historical-geographical studies with archaeological and non-biblical historical information regarding the social structure of the Late Bronze and Iron Age Southern Levant. In the end this should lead to biblical-theological conclusions.

### *d. Knowledge Utilization*

The result of this study puts all kind of views of the land of Israel and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict into perspective and therefore can be used in Churches, in Christian-Jewish-dialogue and by politicians using the Bible as their inspiration.

### *e. Scientific Embedding*

The historical-geographical part of the research is related to the session 'New directions in Historical Geography' (2019–2021) at the American Schools of Oriental Research

### *f. Relation to the other subprogrammes*

## 4 Goals and Planning

- Article in journal on literary criticism and message of the promise of the land to the patriarchal narratives (2020)

- Monograph *Concepts of the Promised Land* (2022)

## 5 Relation to Education

Related to teaching of biblical books and history of Israel in 'Discipline Oude Testament 1' (TU Kampen) and 'Oude Testament 1' (ETF Leuven).

### 1.6 Budget

In 2018 the Jagtspoelfonds and Stichting Honderd Gulden Reis sponsored part of a sabbatical for work on this project. Jagtspoelfonds also indicated that it might be willing to sponsor the drawing of maps for publication of the monograph.

## Qoheleth's Evaluation of Israel's History

### 1 Summary

To what extent is it possible to read the book of Ecclesiastes as an evaluation of Israel's history? This project tries to answer this question by investigating the intertextual relationship between Ecclesiastes and the history of Israel as described from Genesis to 2 Kings. There are three motivations why investigating this topic is profitable. First, there is a rich tradition of rabbinic interpretation which has extensively discussed the connection between Qoheleth and the Torah. Second, modern scholars have recently studied the intertextual relation between Ecclesiastes and a number of passages of historical books. Third, it would be interesting to examine the relationship between Ecclesiastes and the historical books from the perspective of the Reformed tradition, with its redemptive-historical reading of the Old Testament, for from a Christian perspective, Ecclesiastes is a part of the Old Testament canon.

### 2 Researchers

Jung-Hun Seo (PhD-Candidate); Koert van Bekkum (first supervisor); Gert Kwakkel (second supervisor)

### 3 Description

#### *a. Aim / objectives*

This project aims at bringing recent intertextual research for the book of Ecclesiastes to a next level by asking the question between intertextual relationship between Ecclesiastes and the history of Israel as described in the literary work from Genesis to 2 Kings as a whole.

#### *b. Relation to the BEST-programme*

The literary work of Genesis to 2 Kings highlights the special, close relation between YHWH and Israel, while the book of Ecclesiastes underlines the distance between God and humanity and hiddenness of the Creator in his relation to creation. There hardly seems to be any attention for YHWH's discriminating love for Israel. To what extent can this be interpreted as a re-evaluation of Israel's history and of the nature of the divine love?

### *c. Approach*

The book of Ecclesiastes is studied in its relation to the biblical books of Genesis to 2 Kings with help of biblical exegesis, intertextual studies and canonical exegesis.

### *d. Knowledge Utilization*

The project will offer new insight in the nature of the book of Ecclesiastes. This will enrich the understanding of the book and of wisdom literature, in particular in the protestant Churches in South-Korea.

### *e. Scientific Embedding*

[Describe the relationship to the broader field of scientific research]

### *f. Relation to other sub-projects*

[Describe the relationship to possible subprojects; see also below first 5]

## 4 Goals and Planning

PhD-thesis in 2022.

## Human Relations in Old Testament Ethics

### 1 Summary

This project investigates the relations between human beings in Old Testament ethics. It will focus on the distinctions made between (groups of) people.

### 2 Researchers

Dr. A. (Arie) Versluis (Research Associate Old Testament, TUA)

### 3 Description

#### *a. Aim / objectives*

This project aims at case studies of aspects of Old Testament ethics that are relevant to the theme of discriminating love. It will focus on the way how humanity is divided in Old Testament law. The project will start with a study of the position of slaves (are they considered the possession of their owners or (also) as human beings). The project includes inner-biblical developments, the relation to everyday life and the Ancient Near Eastern context, the nature of Old Testament law and the relation with the New Testament and theological ethics today.

#### *b. Relation to the BEST-programme*

This project studies 'Discriminating love' from the perspective of Old Testament ethics. Old Testament laws discriminate between various types of people (Israelites and strangers, adults and children, men and women, free and slave). The psalms and wisdom literature provide an ethical message by distinguishing between the righteous and the wicked with their corresponding way of life. The ways in which people are distinguished is directly relevant for the BEST-programme.

### c. Approach

Case studies of the relations between human beings in Old Testament ethics, starting with the position of slaves. A possible risk is that the case studies stand apart from each other; a close relation with the BEST-programme can connect the various studies.

### d. Knowledge Utilization

The results of this project may be of benefit for other disciplines of Old Testament studies and for theological ethics.

### e. Scientific Embedding

This project is interrelated with Old Testament studies and with theological ethics.

### f. Relation to other sub-projects

N/A

## 4 Goals and Planning

It is considered possible to publish one peer-reviewed article in a renowned journal or in an edited volume each year, if the researcher could do research one day a week. The last few years, this was possible from time to time (as for 2015–2020, I published one peer-reviewed article each year, plus a monograph in OTS), but this is highly uncertain for the near future (given the pastoral responsibilities in a large congregation and the editorial work for De Wekker). Without an appointed time for research, no detailed planning is possible.

## 5 Relation to Education

The researcher has no appointment for education.

## 6 Budget

A budget for visiting conferences is available from the TUA.

# God's Covenants with Humans in the Old Testament

## 1 Summary

Building on previous research on a number of covenants in the Old Testament and the meaning of Hebrew בְּרִית<sup>1</sup>, this project focuses on the stories about God's covenant-making

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<sup>1</sup> Gert Kwakkel, 'According to My Righteousness': Upright Behaviour as Grounds for Deliverance in Psalms 7, 17, 18, 26 and 44 (Oudtestamentische Studiën 46), Leiden: Brill 2002, 206–208; 'Verplichting of relatie: verbonden in Genesis; Henk de Jong en zijn visie op het verbond', in: J. Bouma e.a. (ed.), *Verrassend vertrouwd. Een halve eeuw verkondiging en theologie van Henk de Jong*, Franeker: Van Wijnen, 2009, 117–130; 'The Sinaitic Covenant in the Narrative of the Book of Exodus', in: Jason Van Vliet (ed.), *Living Waters from Ancient Springs: Essays in Honor of Cornelis Van Dam*, Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick, 2011, 27–40; 'The Conditional Dynastic Promise in 1 Kings 2:4', in: J. Dekker, G. Kwakkel (eds), *Reading and Listening: Meeting One God in Many Texts; Festschrift for Eric Peels on the Occasion of His 25th Jubilee as Professor of Old Testament Studies* (Amsterdamse Cahiers voor Exegese van de Bijbel en zijn Tradities – Supplement Series 16), Bergambacht: 2VM, 2018, 79–87; 'Berith and Covenants in the Old Testament: A Contribution to a Fruitful Cooperation of

with Noah, Abraham, the people of Israel, Phinehas and David. It explores the role and function of these covenants and their making in their literary context, as parts of the unfolding story of God's relationship with humans. In addition, it analyses prophetic texts about a covenant to be made after the Babylonian Exile.

By focusing on the exegesis of the stories about God's covenant in their literary context, it supplements current studies, mainly by Anglo-Saxon scholars, that have preferred to analyse the covenants from a more dogmatic perspective or within a framework taken from Ancient Near Eastern treaties.

## 2 Researcher

Gert Kwakkel

## 3 Description

### a. *Aim/objectives*

Presenting an exegesis of fundamental texts on God's covenants with humans in the Old Testament, as an addition or alternative to monographs such as those published by Scott W. Hahn<sup>2</sup> and Peter J. Gentry & Stephen J. Wellum,<sup>3</sup> on behalf of theologians, ministers and interested lay people.

### b. *Relation to the BEST-programme*

In the Old Testament, God's covenants operate as an important element of the way in which he relates to the people of Israel and to several persons, for example, Noah, Abraham and David. In these relations and in the covenants pertaining to them, God's discriminating love takes shape. Thus, the project is directly linked to the main theme of the BEST-programme.

### c. *Approach*

Research will focus on those texts in the Old Testament that set forth how God made covenants with men. The analysis will reconstruct the function of each act of covenant-making in the narrative: what exactly is involved in them (as regards, among other things, promises and demands) and how do they contribute to the development of God's loving relationship with people? The approach will be mainly synchronic, addressing the final shape of the Hebrew texts. Only a selection of secondary literature will be used: solid

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Exegesis and Systematic Theology', in Hans Burger, Gert Kwakkel, Michael Mulder (eds), *Covenant(s): Biblical, Historical and Systematical Perspectives*, submitted for publication in *Studies in Reformed Theology* (Leiden: Brill); 'Israel and the New Covenant in Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel', in: Koert van Bekkum, Arnold Huijgen, Michael Mulder (eds.), *Israel as Hermeneutical Challenge*, submitted for publication in *Studies in Reformed Theology* (Leiden: Brill).

<sup>2</sup> *Kinship and Covenant: A Canonical Approach to the Fulfillment of God's Saving Promises*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009.

<sup>3</sup> *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Wheaton: Crossway, 2018.

commentaries on biblical books published in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century and a few journal articles of good reputation.

*d. Knowledge utilisation*

The monographs to be published (see below) will help theologians, students and lay people to square their beliefs about covenant with what can be read in the authoritative texts of Scripture. They may guide them in finding their own position in the ongoing debates on covenant theology. Furthermore, ministers will find exegetical material which they can use for preparing sermons exposing the biblical texts, without reading them from a prefixed doctrinal framework.

*e. Scientific Embedding*

Parts of the results can be presented at conferences of Old Testament scholars (SBL, IOSOT, EABS) and evangelical theologians (ETS, Tyndale Conference). In addition, drafts will be discussed with colleagues at FJC and collaboration is sought with systematic theologians of TUA, TUK and FJC.

*f. Subprojects*

None.

#### 4 Goals and Planning

- Writing a monograph in two versions: in French and in Dutch. Both will be professional publications, addressing ministers and interested lay people. The French version will also be used at Faculté Jean Calvin (Aix-en-Provence) as a textbook to be read by students coming from other institutions who desire to be pursue their studies at FJC. Planning: manuscripts ready for editing and correcting in 2022.
- If possible: a few academic articles on exegetical or philological details explored in the writing process of the monograph. Planning: to be submitted for publication in 2021 and the following years.

#### 5 Relation to Education

Faculté Jean Calvin, Aix-en-Provence:

- Course 1.01, Introduction à l'Ancien Testament: the topic of the project is a regular part of this course;
- The French version of the monograph will be used as a textbook for students coming from other institutions, to familiarize them with an important aspect of the theology of FJC.

Theologische Universiteit Kampen:

- Bachelor 1: the topic could be dealt with as part of the course Oude Testament I, replacing age-old lectures on the relationship between the Old and New Testaments;
- Master 2: God's covenants come up fairly regularly in the course on Old Testament Theology.

## 6 Budget

As the project is part of the researcher's work as professor of Old Testament at Theologische Universiteit Kampen and Faculté Jean Calvin (Aix-en-Provence), no special budget is needed.

## 7 Subprogrammes

None.

## The Cutting Edge of Reality in God's Discriminating Love

### 1 Summary

God's discriminating love displayed in the Old and New Testaments appears to have a cutting edge, as God is dealing with people who tend to be stubborn and rebellious. One meets this cutting edge of reality when reaching the boundaries of human knowledge and capability. This is made clear by the narratives in the Old Testament pertaining to the origin of evil described as idolatry: humans are mostly responsible as transgressors of a divine commandment (Gen 3). However, the Old Testament also knows about evil heavenly forces usurping their power to lure humans into evil and not to go the way of God's discriminating love. The Old Testament part of the research will concentrate on the narrative of the so called "sons of God" in Genesis 6:1-4 and their "afterlife" in intertestamental narrative, as well as on the cutting edge of prophecy in its attempt to steer Israel society into the direction of God's love. This most clearly becomes visible in the Old Testament narratives in which "self-fulfilling prophecy" appears to be applied as a leverage in dead-end social situations.

In Intertestamental Literature, the research tries to fathom the source and origin of human tenacity / resilience. This will be researched in the Book of 4 Ezra, as compared to the origin of resilience according to New Testament writings.

For New Testament and Biblical Theology research, the cutting edge of discriminating love will be studied on several subjects. Firstly, it will be researched how the resurrection of Israel's Messiah should influence the agenda of the people of God in a way far more influential than it appears to be at present. Secondly, the cutting edge of discriminating love will be displayed in how the New Testament depicts miracles wrought by the apostles. The view of the apostle Paul's miracles in the Book of Acts and in Paul's letters will be compared. Thirdly, discriminating love encourages and empowers followers of the Messiah to display that love in everyday life. Within this context, this displaying of God-given love will be researched with respect to the New Testament, especially as it appears in the Book of Acts. Fourthly, a part of discriminating love is that humans are created in the image of God. This part of the research will focus on how biblical theology can contribute in a solution to the analysis of Iain McGilgrist about humanity creating a society in its own image, as McGilgrist describes this in his seminal work *The Master and His Emissary: The Divided Brain and the Making of the Western World*. Within the context of humans as the image of God, research is planned on the function of heavenly / spiritual beings in

ancient near eastern literature and the Old and New Testaments, resulting in a habilitation about this subject.

## 2 Discipline(s)

Old Testament / Intertestamental Literature / New Testament / Biblical Theology

## 3 Researcher

Jaap Doedens

## 4 Description

### *a. Aim / objectives*

Enlightening the debate regarding the nature of humanity in the context of cutting edge situations of discriminating love (the origin of evil, changing social situations, source of resilience, the effects of the resurrection, the origin and effects of diaconal acting, the correction of society creating a surrounding in its own image).

### *b. Relation to the BEST-program*

The project explores the theme of 'Discriminating love' in both the Old and New Testaments, as well as in Intertestamental Literature.

### *c. Approach*

Contextual, diachronic, synchronic and theological analysis of specific themes and passages from the Old and New Testaments, as well as Intertestamental Literature.

### *d. Knowledge Utilization*

The results of this project contribute to the ongoing debates on the origin of evil, the source of human resilience, artificial intelligence, and the societal effects of God's discriminating love.

### *e. Scientific Embedding*

Several scholarly publications and papers at international theological and biblical conferences (Comenius Conference at the Theological University Kampen (TUK) in 2018 and at the Pápa Reformed Theological Seminary (PRTA) in 2020 / Yearly Autumn Conference of the Biblical Institute of the Catholic University Lublin (KUL), Lublin, Poland in 2018, 2019, 2020).

## 5 Goals and Planning

*Cutting Edge of Discriminating Love in Old Testament Narrative and Prophecy*

Theme "Sons of God"

- "Living Linguistic Legacy: The 'Sons of God' in the Non-Biblical Dead Sea Scrolls." Pages 156–176 in *Biblical Hebrew in Context: Essays in Semitics and Old Testament Texts in Honour of Professor Jan P. Lettinga*. Oudtestamentische Studiën, 74. Edited by Koert van Bekkum, Gert Kwakkel, and Wolter H. Rose, Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2018.
- *The Sons of God in Genesis 6:1–4: Analysis and History of Exegesis*. OTS 76. Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2019.
- "Those Elusive Sons of God: Genesis 6:1–4 Revisited," *Bible and Interpretation*. Internet magazine of the University of Arizona (<https://bibleinterp.arizona.edu/articles/those-elusive-sons-god-genesis-61-4-revisited>)

- Paper about the role of the sons of God in the Genesis Apocryphon (paper for the 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Autumn Conference of the Biblical Institute of the Catholic University Lublin (KUL), Lublin, Poland, 2020. Changed to Zoom-Conference: Paper „Rehabilitating the Heroes: Exegetical Exoneration of Biblical Protagonists in the Genesis Apocryphon. International Conference on the Aramaic Manuscripts of 1 Enoch, (Lublin – online), October 20–22.” The conference was cohosted by the Institute of Biblical Studies (KUL, Lublin, Poland) and the Enoch Seminar. The Enoch Seminar is generously supported by the University of Michigan’s Frankel Center for Judaic Studies (<https://lsa.umich.edu/judaic>) and the Michigan Center for Early Christian Studies (<https://mcecs.org>).
- Publication: „Rehabilitating the Heroes: Exegetical Exoneration of Biblical Protagonists in the Genesis Apocryphon.” Conference Proceedings. Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism, Leiden: Brill 202X.

#### Theme “Prophecy”

- Paper entitled: „Ideology-Busting or Meta-Ideology? Self-Fulfilling Prophecy as a Political Leverage Tool.” Paper at the Comenius Conference Kampen (TUK) in 2018.
- „Ideology-Busting or Meta-Ideology? Self-Fulfilling Prophecy as a Political Leverage Tool.” In: Zsolt Görözdi, Henk de Roest, and Katya Tolstaya (eds.) *Roads to Reconciliation Between Groups in Conflict: Contributions to the 10th International Comenius Conference, 20–24 April 2016, Komárno, Slovakia*; Hans-Martin Kirn, Wolter Rose (eds.), *Theology in a World of Ideologies: Authorization or Critique? Contributions to the 11th International Comenius Conference, 18–21 April 2018, Kampen, The Netherlands*. Beihefte zur Ökumenischen Rundschau 133. Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2020, 159–170.

#### *Cutting Edge of Discriminating Love in Intertestamental Literature*

- Paper entitled: „Tenacity’s Trailhead: The Source of Resilience in 4 Ezra and the New Testament Compared” at the International Conference of the Hungaro-South-African Study Group, „Trauma, Turmoil, and Tenacity in Early Jewish Literature”, Pápa Reformed Theological Seminary (PRTA), Pápa, Hungary.
- Publication: „Tenacity’s Trailhead: The Source of Resilience in 4 Ezra and the New Testament Compared”. In: Trauma, Turmoil, Tenacity (working title). De Gruyter, 202x.

#### *Cutting Edge of Discriminating Love in the New Testament*

- Paper entitled: “‘Like the Angels’: The Resurrection Sets the Agenda”, at the 14th International Autumn Biblical Conference “Resurrection in the Bible and Ancient Mediterranean World”, at the Biblical Institute of the Catholic University Lublin (KUL), Lublin, Poland.
- Publication: “The Resurrection Sets the Agenda: Eschatology for a Post-Modern World.” *Biblical Annals* 9 (2019): 697–710.
- Paper entitled: „The Things That Mark an Apostle: Paul’s Signs, Wonders, and Miracles”, at the 15<sup>th</sup> International Autumn Biblical Conference “Miracles, Signs and Wonders: God’s Activity in the History of Salvation”, at the Biblical Institute of the Catholic University Lublin (KUL), Lublin, Poland.
- Publication: „The Things That Mark an Apostle: Paul’s Signs, Wonders, and Miracles.” *Analecta Biblica Lublinensia*, 2020, 543–564.
- Publication, book chapter: „Mélyebb, szélesebb, magasabb: A diakónia az Apostolok Cselekedeteiben és az első gyülekezetekben” [Deeper, Wider, Higher: Diaconia in the Acts of

the Apostles and the First Christian Congregations]. Chapter in a textbook edited by the Sárospatak Reformed Theological Academy (SRTA), 2020 (forthcoming).

#### *Cutting Edge of Discriminating Love in Biblical Theology*

- Paper for the International Comenius Conference about the theme “Imago Dei” at Pápa Reformed Theological Seminary, April 2020, entitled: In His Own Likeness, After His Image: Self-Propagating Parodies of Life.
- Habilitation-study (as part of the obligatory academic tenure in Hungary). Working title: *Viewing the Invisible: Heavenly Beings in the Bible*.

#### 6 Relation to Education

The analysis will bear fruit in Old Testament and New Testament exegetical courses, a book chapter in a study book for theological students published by Sárospatak Reformed Theological Academy about Diaconia, and international theological conferences at Pápa Reformed Theological Seminary (PRTA), Hungary, and the Biblical Institute of the Catholic University Lublin (KUL), Poland.

#### 7 Budget

Conference fees provided by PRTA (Pápai Református Teológiai Akadémia / Pápa Reformed Theological Seminary)

### God’s Patience, its Place and Significance in the Old Testament Divine Revelation

#### 1 Summary

#### 2 Discipline(s)

Old Testament

#### 3 Researchers

PhD candidate: Pieter J. den Admirant

First supervisor: prof. dr. H.G.L. Peels

Second supervisor: prof. dr. E. van Staalduine-Sulman

#### 4 Description

##### *a. Aim / objectives*

Although a lot of books and articles have been written about divine attributes like love, grace, mercy, and goodness on the one hand, and divine wrath and anger on the other hand, the attribute of God’s patience, as primarily indicated by the expression אַרְךָ אַפַּיִם has never been investigated in-depth, resulting in a monograph.

This research seeks to get a deeper insight into how the Old Testament speaks of God's patience as one of God’s attributes related to his wrath and mercy. So it tries to answer whether the notion of

God's patience does not conflict with the biblical testimony of a God whose anger can suddenly be kindled.

#### *b. Relation to the BEST-program*

This investigation is in line with and aims to deepen the research-program of BEST, in which the exciting and even more complicated sides of God's love are investigated.

#### *c. Approach*

After previous research has been considered the investigation starts with a philological and semantic analysis of the meaning of the collocation אַפִּים אַרְךְ. It will be investigated to what extent 'frame semantics' reveal the word pair's meaning more clearly.

Apart from the meaning, it is necessary to give a diachronic and synchronic exegesis of the passages in which the words אַפִּים אַרְךְ occur, starting with what is assumed to be the core text: Exodus 34,6f.

In addition, there will be research into the application of this collocation in the other parts of the Old Testament, the prophets and the psalter, showing their different accents.

There will also be a broader view on some aspects of wrath: When does God pour it out? When does He hold back? When does He go back on it? Here it seems necessary to include a short section on God's repentance (נחם) as a correlated concept exactly to gain more insight into God's patience.

#### *d. Knowledge Utilization*

Because this theme has not yet been sufficiently explored, it can contribute both to Old Testament theology and to systematic theological reflection on God's attributes.

#### *e. Scientific Embedding*

Curiously, there has been no extensive research to God's patience, one of his attributes mentioned by YHWH himself, resulting in a monograph. By filling this gap, we can get a deeper insight into the significance of God's patience as related to both his mercy and wrath.

### 5. Goals and Planning

A dissertation in four years

A peer-reviewed article on God's patience in the book of Isaiah

### 6. Relation to Education

Not applicable.

### 7. Budget

No funding is necessary for this project.

## Diachronic linguistics in the book of Isaiah

### 1. Summary

This project investigates the development of language in the book of Isaiah. To what extent does the book of Isaiah show evidence of linguistic development that points to different epochs, and what does this investigation contribute to the methodology of diachronic linguistics?

### 2. Discipline(s)

Old Testament

### 3. Researchers

Samuel Koser (PhD-Candidate)

Koert van Bekkum, Carsten Ziegert, Jaap Dekker (supervisors)

### 4. Description

#### *a. Aim / objectives*

The project has two aims: First, it will show to what extent the book of Isaiah reflects the historical development of Biblical Hebrew. Since language is an argument that is often used in dating different parts of Isaiah, the strength or weakness of this argument will be analyzed. Second, the project will discuss the usefulness of diachronic linguistics for dating Old Testament literature, especially for prophetic/poetic literature.

#### *b. Relation to the BEST-program*

The project correlates only indirectly with the BEST-program, because it facilitates the correct interpretation of the historical context of Isaiah.

#### *c. Approach*

The method of linguistic dating is used. There are some risks to be aware of. It is to be considered, for example, which features of linguistic dating can be used in poetic literature, while also the possibility of editorial revisions is to be taken into account. Therefore, the choice of texts in Isaiah and the choice of linguistic features must be carefully thought through.

#### *d. Knowledge Utilization*

The project will offer an argument that will help in dating different parts of Isaiah. It will also contribute to the discussion regarding the extent to which diachronic linguistics can be used as a strong argument in dating other books in the Old Testament.

#### *e. Scientific Embedding*

The project will contribute to the discussion of the role of diachronic language in dating Old Testament books in general and the dating of Isaiah in particular.

#### *f. Relation to other sub-projects*

n/a

### 5. Goals and Planning

PhD-Thesis in 2025

## 6. Relation to Education

n/a

## 7. Budget

n/a

## 8. Description of sub-projects

n/a

# Narrow Escape. An Evaluation of the Hourglass Model of Henk de Jong as a Hermeneutical Guide in Biblical Theology for Understanding the Relationship between the Old and New Testaments

## 1. Summary

The research project focuses on the hourglass model of Henk de Jong as a possible hermeneutical guide for understanding the relationship between the Old and New Testaments. Although several factors question the legitimacy of understanding the Old and New Testaments together (e.g., historical criticism, a growing awareness of the Jewish character of the Old Testament, and the participation of Jewish scholars in biblical theology). However, there are still biblical scholars who, while clearly aware of these developments, advocate understanding the Old Testament together with the New Testament. De Jong is one of them, advocating an hourglass model. That model fits in a salvation-historical approach, but has its own characteristics. The model focuses on the historical and theological development of election in the Old Testament as the way through which humanity and creation are reconciled with God. This research project aims to evaluate the model, comparing it with other models on the relationship between the two testaments and the views of some prominent Jewish scholars. The main research question is formulated as follows:

*To what extent does the focus on the ongoing narrowing in God's election of Israel in the Old Testament, which characterizes Henk de Jong's hourglass model, contribute to a deeper understanding of the relationship between the Old and New Testaments?*

## 2. Discipline(s)

Biblical Theology – Old Testament

## 3. Researchers

Kasper de Graaf (PhD-student; supervisor: Jaap Dekker; second supervisor: ... [to be determined])

## 4. Description

### a. Aim / objectives

By introducing and evaluating the hourglass model of Henk de Jong, the research project aims to evaluate the importance and meaning of the election motif in the discussion about the historical and theological relationship between the Old and New Testaments. It thereby seeks to bring different Jewish and Christian perspectives into conversation with the hourglass model. The research project aims to explore the strengths and weaknesses of the hourglass model concerning its understanding

of the Old Testament, in order to gain a deeper understanding of the relationship of the Old and New Testaments.

While the primary objective of the research project is at the academic level, it also has value for church and society. That will be addressed below under 'd. Knowledge Utilization'.

#### *b. Relation to the BEST-program*

Divine election is an expression of God's love, but at the same time applies making distinctions, the major one being the distinction between Israel and the nations. An investigation of the hourglass model may contribute to a better understanding of these distinctions and of the way in which God's love relates to non-chosen people.

In addition, BEST aims to bring biblical exegesis and systematic theology into conversation. My research project is biblical-theological in character and therefore operates at the interface of both disciplines.

#### *c. Approach*

I will first describe the current state of research, both with respect to the discussion of the relationship between the Old and New Testaments, and with respect to the election motif. Next, I provide an in-depth description of the hourglass model. I then focus on other models that articulate the relationship between the two testaments, and how they incorporate the election motif. I select five models that represent a broad spectrum of conservation partners for the hourglass model, in order to evaluate it properly. In doing this, I have to focus well on the election motif, because a risk is that I take on too much work. I also bring the hourglass model into conversation with prominent Jewish scholars.

In this way, I can come to an evaluation of the hourglass model. In order to evaluate it as fully as possible, I will also perform exegesis on some important texts on the election motif. The selection of these texts will be based on their importance or negligence in different models. The focus in the exegesis will be theological: what is the scope of the text with respect to election?

#### *d. Knowledge Utilization*

The research project addresses hermeneutical questions, which are current in churches today: how could Testament texts be adequately preached? How understands the church itself in relation to Israel? In the church, many want to avoid supersessionism, after the horrors of the Holocaust. But how does the church relate to Israel? The research project can contribute to reflection on these questions. Furthermore, in Western society is divine election perceived as unjust and discriminatory, because it seems to conflict with tolerance and diversity. At the same time, people find religious diversity difficult. They have trouble with exclusive truth claims, and they wrestle with the relationship between particularity and universality. This is evidenced, for example, by a re-emerging anti-Semitism in society. The research project addresses these themes, and can make a modest contribution to reflection on them.

#### *e. Scientific Embedding*

In biblical theology, the debate is ongoing how to understand the Old Testament adequately, doing justice to the Old Testament itself, which is read both by Jews as Tanakh and by Christians as part of the Christian canon. In this debate the hourglass model of De Jong is worth investigating, because by focusing on the sequence of step-by-step narrowing divine elections it presents a unique type of a salvation-historical approach, which takes its starting point in the historical and theological developments within the Old Testament itself.

Moreover, election is precisely a theme where Christian and Jewish understandings of the Old Testament diverge. On that point, there are many questions within the breadth of theology, especially when it comes to the distinction between Israel and the nations. The position of Israel is a hermeneutical challenge to theology.

#### *f. Relation to other sub-projects*

The research project is connected to the Henk de Jong-chair of Biblical Studies and Christian Identity at the Theological University of Kampen. In that way it relates to Jaap Dekker's biblical-theological research.

#### 5. Goals and Planning

Some conference papers / (peer-reviewed) articles in the next few years.  
Dissertation / monograph in 2026.

#### 6. Relation to Education

The research project relates to the course Old Testament Theology in the Master Theologie Predikant at TU Kampen. In that course (in which Gert Kwakkel and Jaap Dekker are engaged) the hourglass model of Henk de Jong is also discussed.

#### 7. Budget

The aio position has been funded by crowdfunding. And visits to conferences and purchase of literature can be (partially?) funded via the TU Kampen.

## 4. New Testament

### Identity formation in the New Testament and Dead Sea Scrolls through the use of the contrast light and darkness

#### 1. Summary

This research looks on the influence and the aim of the use of light and darkness for the sociological context in which the contrast between light and darkness is used in the New Testament and Dead Sea Scrolls.

The aim of this research is to give insight and an overview of the use of light and darkness in the New Testament and the Dead Sea Scrolls for identity formation.

It's related to 'Discriminating Love' in case of God's preference love for light and the people of light. They are saved and not appointed to death, but to eternal life (1 Thess. 5:9).

#### 2 Researcher

Gijsbert van Appeldoorn MA (PhD student; internal supervisor prof. dr. P.H.R. van Houwelingen, external supervisor prof. dr. J.W. van Henten (UvA)).

#### 3 Description

##### *a. Aim / objectives*

This project aims to:

1. Describe the use of the 'light-darkness'-metaphor in Qumran and the New Testament for the purposes of creating group identity.
2. Make a comparison of the use of the 'light-darkness'-metaphor between Qumran literature and the New Testament for the purposes of creating group identity.
3. Analyze how dualistic tendencies are produced by using of the 'light-darkness'-metaphor. Which social boundaries are evocated through this contrast?
4. Sketch the significance of the use of dualistic oppositional words such as light and darkness in religious groups in the present time. Does the use of such oppositional terminology in a pluralistic context create intolerance?

##### *b. Relation to the BEST-program*

Stigmatizing with light and darkness contains a high degree of discrimination. Light is relating to love and (eternal) life, and on the contrary darkness is related to hate and death. The question is what are the identity markers to belong to light/darkness, c.q. God's love and God's wrath.

##### *c. Approach*

I use several tools from other methodologies, such as metaphor analysis, some heuristic tools from Social Identity Approach (SIA) and close reading of the passages in which the contrast light and darkness occurs.

#### *d. Knowledge Utilization*

The study is an example of combining the research on metaphor in Scripture in combination with the influence of languages on the sociological context of Scripture.

Further is relevant for public theology. Can you rightly rely on contrasting passages in the New Testament to distinguish between believers and unbelievers today? The risk of fundamentalism and discrimination on the ground of religion is in sight.

#### *e. Scientific Embedding*

This project is embedded in the research program on the 'Discriminating Love'. The question of this specific investigation is how the boundaries of communities in the first century were created before and after Christ through using the contrast 'light and darkness' in written sources. What are the results of the use of dualistic terminology on the view of the communities on their pluralistic environment?

#### 4 Goals and Planning

- One peer reviewed English article on the results of this project (2022).
- Monograph (PhD thesis; 2023)

#### 5 Relation to Education

Function as a pastor in ecclesiastical congregation

#### 6 Budget

- Gift of a church member
- Greijdanus Kruithof Fonds.

#### *Christus Sunthronos: an investigation of the origin and character of the use of Ps 110 in the New Testament*

A PhD thesis defended on 21 January 2020 under supervision of prof. dr. T.M. Hofman, prof. dr. H.G.L. Peels, and prof. dr. H. Gzella. Although supervised by one of BEST's senior researchers, the project has not been formally included in the current research programme 'Discriminating Love'.

#### *Babylon destroyed: an exegetical investigation into the communication strategy in Revelation 18*

The researcher, drs. W. de Bruin, has decided to cancel this project before completion, in consultation with the supervisors, prof. dr. H.G.L. Peels and dr. M.C. Mulder.

#### *Abraham and the Riches of Christ: The Pauline Concept of Inheritance*

The researcher, Rhett Powell Dodson has cancelled this PhD project in consultation with the supervisors, prof. dr. P.H.R. van Houwelingen and dr. M.C. Mulder.

## God's Justice in the Catholic Epistles: The Stories of Cain & Abel and Sodom & Gomorrah according to James, John, Peter and Jude

### 1. Summary

The research project attempts to find commonality in the Catholic Epistles, arguing that the God's justice represents a theme that links these letters. Since the Catholic Epistles employ a variety of Old Testament allusions, especially to the stories of Cain & Abel and Sodom & Gomorrah, it seems appropriate to understand the concept of God's justice in the letters of James, Peter, John and Jude in light of the stories they make use of. It will be investigated how the stories of Cain & Abel and Sodom & Gomorrah function in the Catholic Epistles.

### 2 Researcher

Chandra Gunawan, MA (External PhD Student; First supervisor: Prof. Dr. P.H.R. van Houwelingen; Other supervisors: Dr. Pieter J. Lalleman and Prof. Dr. Stanley E. Porter)

### 3 Description

#### *a. Aim / objectives*

The research aims to answer the following questions:

1. Why do the authors of the Catholic Epistles make use of the stories of Cain & Abel and Sodom & Gomorrah?
2. How do the authors of the Catholic Epistles interpret, apply and integrate these stories in writing about God's justice?

#### *b. Relation to the BEST-programme*

This project will contribute to enlightening the issue of God's discriminating love, the theme of BEST research project 2018-2023, from the perspective of God's justice. Considering that the justice of God and his love are inseparable, it will be shown that the concept of God's indiscriminating justice includes his encompassing love.

#### *c. Approach*

This project will apply both Background Analysis and Systemic Functional Linguistics. While the first approach contributes to understanding the stories of Cain & Abel and Sodom & Gomorrah in their historical and literary contexts, the second method helps to understand the role and the function of these stories in the Catholic Epistles as a letter corpus.

#### *d. Knowledge Utilization*

This research will propose that, in order to have a better understanding of the Catholic Epistles, New Testament scholarship should consider the linguistic evidence. While understanding the historical and literary context of these letters in the traditional way is still important, studying the language

employed in the texts may uncover more information about the author, the readers, and their relationship.

#### *e. Scientific Embedding*

While it is evident that within the field of New Testament Studies the Catholic Epistles need to receive more attention, only a few scholars have noted that there may be a commonality that links these writings. At the same time, New Testament scholars also have identified that both the understanding of God and Old Testament traditions play important roles in most of them. This research project will analyze the concept of justice as a common theological theme that connects the Catholic Epistles.

#### 4. Goals and Planning

- Monograph in English (PhD thesis, 2021/2022)
- Academic and popular articles in Indonesian (2022-2023)

#### 5. Relation to Education

This project is an example of the application of linguistics in biblical exegesis. While understanding the Greek is mandatory for the interpretation of the New Testament, the study of linguistics has demonstrated that the language has not only a grammatical but also to a social function. Biblical linguistics is very important in contemporary New Testament scholarship and could help students to develop their skills in the interpretation of the New Testament.

#### 6 Budget

- Short-term research at TU Kampen in January 2019
  - Travel : € 1.100
  - Accommodation : no cost (staying at the guest house of TUK)
  - Living Expense : € 300
  - Visa : € 85
- Short-term research at TUK in January 2020
  - Travel : € 1.100
  - Accommodation : no cost (staying at the guest house of TUK)
  - Living Expense : € 300
  - Visa : € 85
- Short-term research at TUK in January 2021
  - Travel : € 1.100
  - Accommodation : no cost (staying at the guest house of TUK)
  - Living Expense : € 300
  - Visa : € 85

I will pay for the visa applications and the living expenses, but, for the remaining fee, I hope that I could apply the scholarship to Greijdanus Foundation.

# The Public Performance of Paul in the Book of Acts as Demonstration of God's Discriminating Love [completed]

## 1. Summary

PhD research that analyses the message for the implied audience of the book of Acts of Paul's public performance as portrayed in this book, by looking at the spatial setting, script, words and gestures of Paul's performance in relation to the various audiences and their responses. Paul's performance is presented as response to the calling of the Lord, who sends salvation to the entire world. At the same time, Paul's powerful performance often results in a division of the audience. Thus, God's love appears to have a universal scope but is discriminating in its effectuation. Detailed analysis of Paul's performance will contribute to understanding how God's love discriminates in public space through the action of God's messengers.

## 2. Researcher

Arco den Heijer MA (PhD student; Prof. P.H.R. van Houwelingen, first supervisor; Prof. B.J. Koet, second supervisor; Dr. J. Barentsen, advisor)

## 3 Description

### *a. Aim / objectives*

The primary aim is to analyse Paul's public performance in the book of Acts, through careful exegesis of representative case studies. The focus of this research is to examine the intended impact of his performance on those for whom the author of Acts wrote his book, taking into account multiple aspects of Paul's public performances (e.g., their spatial setting, their cultural script(s), and the social status of Paul as portrayed in Acts) and taking into account the socio-historical situation of the implied audience of Acts.

### *b. Relation to the BEST-programme*

In Paul's public performance as herald of Christ and his salvation, and in the often contradictory responses that his performance evokes, the effect of God's discriminate love in public space becomes visible. Close analysis of his performance will therefore contribute to our understanding of the nature of God's discriminating love as expressed in Scripture, i.e. in the book of Acts.

### *c. Approach*

For the PhD research, a representative number of passages from the book of Acts have been selected for close analysis of Paul's public performance. For each passage, a number of aspects of Paul's performance will be examined that are taken from contemporary theories of public performance, coupled with ancient theory on performance to provide a culturally specific view on which factors contribute to effective and impressive performance. The interaction with contemporary Performance Studies gives this research an innovative impulse and opportunities to connect the research results with other disciplines and with church practice today. The pitfall of this approach is that it risks anachronism and the pressing exegetical results to fit the chosen models. To avoid this pitfall, contemporary models are used strictly for heuristic purposes: they are used to put questions to the text, but the answers are given through exegetical research (with a focus on narrative-literary

criticism, because this project looks for the impact of Paul's performance on the audience of the book of Acts, rather than for the historicity of the performances as portrayed in the book).

#### *d. Knowledge Utilization*

Used properly and with caution, the results from this research on Paul's public performance can inform the way in which churches today seek to be present in the public sphere. Moreover, the research sheds light on how representations of performances in books and other media impact those who view the performances through these representations. The impact of public performance is perhaps today greater than ever through the many ways in which it can be represented and communicated across the globe. This research may stimulate the awareness that similar dynamics existed in the ancient world and are in fact attested in literature that is part of Christianity's sacred canon.

#### *e. Scientific Embedding*

As a PhD project, this research is embedded primarily through its supervisors. Prof. dr. P.H.R. van Houwelingen (Theological University Kampen), member of the BEST research group, is the first supervisor. Second supervisor is prof. dr. B.J. Koet (Tilburg School of Catholic Theology). Dr. J. Barentsen (ETF Leuven) is involved in this project as consultant on the use of contemporary social-scientific theory in biblical exegesis. Furthermore, the researcher participates (in addition to the BEST meetings) in the NOSTER Biblical Studies Seminar and the ETF doctoral colloquium. Part of the research will be carried out in Tyndale House (Cambridge, UK), where the researcher will also participate in the New Testament Research Seminar of the Faculty Divinity of Cambridge University.

#### *f. Relation to other subprojects*

N.A.

### 4 Goals and Planning

- Dissertation on 'the public performance of Paul in the book of Acts' (July 2020)
- Contributions to the BEST conferences on 'Israel', 'the logic of love' and 'discriminations in the Bible' (due in 2018, 2020, 2022)
- An interdisciplinary article together with a systematic theologian of the BEST group on Paul's public performance in Athens, to be published in a peer-reviewed journal, to be submitted in Fall 2018
- An article with key research results in a high-ranking journal for biblical studies (ZNW, Novum Testamentum, JSNT, JBL etc.), to be submitted in Spring 2020

### 5 Relation to Education

N.A.

### 6 Budget

Four months of research in Tyndale House (Cambridge) have been enabled through contributions of the Stichting Honderd Gulden Reis, Stichting Jagtspoelfonds, Vicariefonds Ridderlijke Duitse Orde Balije van Utrecht and the Greijdanus Kruithof Fonds.

## God's Discriminating Love according to Acts

### 1. Summary

With this postdoc project, I continue my PhD research on the book of Acts with a focus on contributing to the BEST conferences in the current programme on the discriminating love of God. Interestingly, the book of Acts does not speak about God as someone who loves. Moreover, an important aspect of the theology of Acts is that God does not discriminate. Thus, the book of Acts provides something of a corrective to the idea of the programme that the discriminating love of God is a central tenet of the biblical view of God. At the same time, the theme of God's discriminating love provides an incentive to look at how the book of Acts does speak about God's involvement with the world and with humans, and how God's non-discrimination relates to statements about God's ordaining people for salvation (apparently not ordaining others, although this is not made explicit in Acts).

### 2. Researcher

Arco den Heijer

### 3 Description

#### *a. Aim / objectives*

The aim is to investigate the theology of the book of Acts with a focus on the themes of God's impartiality and on how (if at all) Acts expresses God's love.

#### *b. Relation to the BEST-programme*

This project investigates the theme of the BEST-programme from the perspective of the book of Acts.

#### *c. Approach*

The investigation will proceed by discussing passages in Acts that speak about God's impartiality (especially Acts 10:34-35) and about God's care for the world or for people (e.g. Acts 14:17, about God's giving of reign and fertile seasons), interpreting them in the context of the entire narrative of Acts and in the context of other Jewish and early Christian authors (with special attention to Philo of Alexandria and Josephus). The aim will be to show not only the emphasis on God's impartiality, but also those elements in Acts that complicate this emphasis and suggest a more nuanced and dynamic picture of God's dealings with humans.

#### *d. Knowledge Utilization*

Since this project concerns an important aspect of the biblical view of God, the findings can be used as input for systematic theologians (for example, through discussion in the BEST conferences) and for pastors and other Christians in reflecting on how God is portrayed in the Bible.

#### *e. Scientific Embedding*

The project contributes primarily to the scholarly debate on the theology of Acts. In addition, in seeking to contextualize this view of God within Jewish literature of the first century CE, it contributes to a growing body of scholarship that interprets (Luke and) Acts as Jewish literature.

#### *f. Relation to other subprojects*

N.A.

#### 4 Goals and Planning

- Contributions to the BEST conferences on 'the logic of love' and 'discriminations in the Bible'
- Contributions to the Theologenblog
- An peer-reviewed article about God's impartiality in Acts and in Philo of Alexandria

#### 5 Relation to Education

The research will deepen my insight in the book of Acts and will thus be of use in teaching the bachelor course 'Introduction into the Gospels and Acts', which I hope to teach in the Fall of 2021 at the Theological University Kampen.

#### 6 Budget

No funding has been acquired for this project.

### Messengers of discriminating love. The twelve apostles as disciples of Jesus and missionaries of the gospel

#### 1 Summary

Twelve apostles were chosen by Jesus to be his disciples during his ministry in Israel, and after the Ascension they went out and proclaimed the gospel everywhere, beginning in Jerusalem. How was their message received? They were disciples of a controversial rabbi and preached the crucified Christ: a stumbling-block to Jews and foolishness to Greeks (Paul in 1 Cor. 1:23, on behalf of all Christian preachers). What differences occurred, in particular with respect to preaching and/or response, between a Jewish and a Greek audience? Similar questions could be asked concerning other differences between people, for instance their life, calling, and socio-cultural context. How did the twelve apostles articulate in all such situations their message of 'discriminating love': the tension between the notion of love and salvation on the one hand and the notion of sin and the coming judgment on the other hand? Since the apostolic testimony implies a sometimes strongly contested truth claim, the witness (μάρτυς) may also become a martyr, as the Book of Revelation shows. Based on the above reflections, the following main research question can be formulated: how did the controversial message of the twelve apostles relate to their individual life stories and their joint mission—could they practice what they preached?

#### 2 Researcher

Prof. dr. P.H.R. van Houwelingen.

### 3 Description

#### *a. Aim / objectives*

This research project aims at developing a kind of theological biography of the twelve apostles. Combining biographical and theological data from textual sources could be a distinguishing feature of the project. Moreover, contrary to previous studies, Paul (the thirteenth apostle) will remain in the background.

#### *b. Relation to the BEST-programme*

The apostolic message of 'discriminating love' encompasses the tension between the notion of love and salvation on the one hand and the notion of sin and the coming judgment on the other hand.

#### *c. Approach*

A practical challenge in this research project is the imbalance regarding the information about the twelve apostles after the Ascension. Our main textual source is the first half of the book of Acts, which tells most about Peter and, to a lesser degree, about John. There is a lot of secondary literature only on Peter. Nevertheless, by focusing on the above research question and by differentiating between their roles before and after the Ascension (respectively as disciples of Jesus and as missionaries of the gospel) an overview of the twelve apostles as messengers of discriminating love seems to be possible.

#### *d. Knowledge Utilization*

Particularly, the question 'How did the controversial message of the apostles relate to their individual life stories and their joint mission?' is not only interesting for biblical scholars, but also relevant for Christian believers. After all, discipleship is what connects us with the apostles as followers of the earthly Jesus, and mission is what connects us with the apostles as ambassadors of the heavenly king.

#### *e. Scientific Embedding*

This research project is embedded in several other BEST-projects. First of all, in the Kampen postdoc project "Suffering from a perspective of honor and shame" by dr. Myriam Klinker-De Klerck (NT 9). Next, in three Kampen PhD projects: "Public debate by Jewish-Christian teachers in Acts" by Arco den MA (NT7), "Justice in the Catholic Epistles" by Chandra Gunawan MA (NT 6), and "Vindication of the Martyrs in Revelation 20" by dr. Leandro de Lima (NT 10). Third, in two Apeldoorn PhD projects: "Babylon in Revelation 18 and the Old Testament oracles against the nations" by Wim de Bruin (NT 4), and "The Vengeance of God in the New Testament" by Arjan van den Os (NT12).

There is an international network of fellow researchers expertise in a particular area of research who may be consulted during the project. For the Book of Acts: Armin Baum, Bart Koet, Christoph Stenschke, Steve Walton, and Arie Zwiep. For the Catholic Epistles: Peter Davids, Pieter Lalleman, Darian Lockett, and Robert Yarbrough. For the Book of Revelation: Gordon Campbell, Jan Willem van Henten, and Henk van de Kamp.

#### *f. Relation to other subprojects*

N.A.

## 4 Goals and Planning

- “Het koninkrijk van God en de navolging van Christus,” / “Das Reich Gottes und die Nachfolge Christi”, chapter 13 in: Armin Baum & Rob van Houwelingen (eds.), *Theologie van het Nieuwe Testament in twintig thema's / Themenbuch neutestamentlicher Theologie* (Utrecht: KokBoekencentrum, 2019 / Gießen: Brunnen Verlag, 2020)
- Contribution on ‘Apostolic Co-workers as Role Models for Ministers’ in a Dutch volume on Leadership and Ministry (Amsterdam: Buijten & Schipperheijn, 2020)
- Dutch monograph, provisional title: *De twaalf apostelen: loopjongens van Jezus en uitlopers van het koninkrijk*. Utrecht: KokBoekencentrum, 2022 [The Twelve Apostles: Message-Bearers of Jesus and Vine-Branches of the Kingdom]

## 5 Relation to Education

- Mastercourses ‘New Testament Theology’ and ‘The Apostolic Church’
- Master specialisation theme ‘The gospel of the apostles in consonance and resonance’

## 6 Budget

N.A.

## Suffering from a perspective of honor and shame

### 1 Summary

Research question: In what way is the interpretation of the suffering of Christians in the New Testament interwoven with notions of honor and shame, and what does this contribute to the development of an authentic Christian lifestyle in a Western context?

### 2 Researcher

Dr. Myriam Klinker – De Klerck

### 3 Description

#### *a. Aim / objectives*

In a first stage of the project I want to investigate (a) whether and how experiences of suffering in the New Testament are interwoven with notions of honor and shame, and (b) whether this sheds new light on how these experiences were interpreted by the early Christians.

In a second stage of the project I want to reflect on the significance of the results of the first stage for developing an authentic Christian spirituality/lifestyle in a Western context. More specifically, I will do this by comparing my results to the thinking of Michael Gorman on ‘cruciformity’.

#### *b. Relation to the BEST-programme*

One of the expressions of God's discriminatory love seems to be his "preferred option" for what is vulnerable and humble, for the suffering.

### *c. Approach*

My research is based on study of primary (New Testament & Umwelt) and secondary literary sources, whereas the topic of suffering relates to 'real life'. One of the pitfalls is that too much theorizing denies the concrete praxis in all its vulnerability.

I am considering to start intercultural Bible-reading sessions on the topic of suffering. The aim is to find out (a) if 'real persons' who have a culture of shame as their primary culture type recognize my exegesis of the relevant New Testament passages, and (b) how these persons cope with their suffering on a spiritual level.

### *d. Knowledge Utilization*

One of the expressions of God's discriminatory love seems to be his "preferred option" for what is vulnerable and humble, for the suffering. This is a point of attention for Western Christians. Western society has a problematic relationship with the vulnerable and the humble, and more generally with various forms of 'suffering'. Westerners have difficulty incorporating suffering into their lifestyles. Notions such as social engineering and success are held in high esteem, while the broken side of human existence is fought against and minimized. All this goes hand in hand with a strong idea of autonomy that leaves little room for a kenotic attitude. In addition, the experience of suffering - individually and globally - is a major obstacle for many Westerners to believe in a personal, loving, and all-powerful God. As early as the eighteenth century this problem of theodicy was pictured philosophically by Leibniz in response to a devastating earthquake in Lisbon. Today, the theodicy problem is still alive.

In a paper at an ETS conference in Columbia 2016, Jayson Georges stated that 'the' contemporary Western theodicy and Israel's theodicy are fundamentally different from each other. In the west, says Georges, the theodicy problem is approached in a typical philosophical-rational way. Israel, however, has a more social than philosophical form of theodicy, strongly interwoven with the social notions of honor and shame. "Comparing the two theodicies can help us read the Bible on its terms and reveals the real problem faced by humanity"<sup>4</sup>.

### *e. Scientific Embedding*

Half a century ago anthropological research drew our attention to honor and shame as pivotal values in Mediterranean social systems (J. Pitt-Rivers, J.G. Peristiany e.a.). In the following decades knowledge of honor and shame turned out to be valuable a lens for studying New Testament texts too (B. J. Malina, J. H. Neyrey e.a.). Regarding texts on Christian suffering, however, only a few publications have emphasized the importance of honor and shame for interpreting them (J. H. Elliott, B. L. Campbell, D. A. deSilva). I want to broaden that alley of research by asking whether language and patterns of honor and shame can sharpen our understanding of how Christians of the first century gave meaning to their experiences of suffering and what that means for developing an authentic Christian spirituality/lifestyle in a Western context.

### *f. Relation to other subprojects*

N.A.

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<sup>4</sup> J. Georges, "The Real Problem with Evil and Suffering" op <http://honorshame.com/evil-and-suffering/> (bezocht op 16 maart 2017).

#### 4 Goals and Planning

- Chapter about suffering in the NT in Armin Baum & Rob van Houwelingen (eds.), *Theologie van het Nieuwe Testament in twintig thema's / Themenbuch neutestamentlicher Theologie* (Utrecht: KokBoekencentrum, 2019 / Gießen: Brunnen Verlag, 2020).
- Papers / articles on an academic level (e.g. Amsterdam New Testament Research Colloquium VU - 2018; SBL San Diego 2019; Facharbeitsgruppe Neues Testament – Marburg; Studiosorum Novi Testamenti Conventus; ...)

#### 5 Relation to Education

In the introductory course on Paul, I spend two hours on the topic of Paul's reflection on his own 'suffering'. Of course, the results of my research inform the content of what I say on that topic.

#### 6 Budget

Part of my project has been sponsored by a private donation (member of the GKv). On June 21, 2018 I explained my research on a *Dîner pensant* in Nijkerk.

### The resurrection of the beheaded and the millennial kingdom in Revelation 20:1-6: a study on the vindication of the martyrs

#### 1 Summary

Revelation 20.1-6 carries the interpretative weight of hundreds of passages from the Old and the New Testaments, which are *already interpreted* in theological system. This means that frequently the text in chapter 20 of Revelation is "obliged" to say much more than it actually does, due to the simple fact that the theological system adopted by the interpreter pushes onto the text a range of meanings that are irrelevant to the text itself.

There is no reference in the text to an earthly kingdom of peace and prosperity among the nations. The text does not mention Israel nor any detail of the kingdom itself when it comes to physical experiences. Likewise, in the text there is no reference to the conversion of the believers as some kind of spiritual resurrection. The problem, however, seems to be the fact that the theological system is a premise in most premillennial and amillennial interpretations of Revelation 20.1-6, preventing interpreters from seeing what the text actually says.

An often neglected aspect in the interpretation of the text in Revelation 20.1-6 is the reference to the "beheaded" and the reward promised to them. These Christians who have been killed violently are the only ones explicitly mentioned as having the right to take part in the resurrection referred to in the text, and in the millennial kingdom. The most common solution among amillennialists and premillennialists is simply to suppose it as a representative group of all believers, hence, defining the spiritual (amillennialist) or physical (premillennialist) aspect of the "first resurrection". Nevertheless, these solutions do not do justice to the text here considered.

## 2 Researchers

Dr. Leandro A. de Lima (External PhD Student; First promoter: Dr. P.H.R. van Houwelingen; Second promoter: Dr. Jan Willem van Henten)

## 3. Description

### *a. Aim / objectives*

The aim of this project is to provide an exegetical and thematic analysis of the “first resurrection” in the book of Revelation, in order to understand who participates in it. The derived issues may be divided into two subgroups:

1) Is this a spiritual resurrection? Or rather does the text allow for the possibility of a physical resurrection? Can we determine when this resurrection is supposed to happen – before or after the second coming of Christ? To answer these questions it is necessary to answer the following ones: 2) What is the concept of martyrdom that appears in Revelation? Moreover, what is the importance of the concept of “faithful death” and its vindication to the theology of the book? Will the whole Christian church go through the “first resurrection” according to Revelation or does it appear as a “restitution in an act of special preference” only to the “beheaded”?

### *b. Relation to the BEST-programme*

The relationship of love and sacrifice of the Martyrs with Jesus Christ, described in Revelation, which fits the current theme of the BEST-programme 'Discriminating love'. A special reward is promised to those who remain faithful to Christ to the point of death. So, this seems to be a two-way street. At the same time that God gives martyrs a special love, which is "discriminatory" in relation to other Christians, since only martyrs seem to receive such a reward, so martyrs give God an exclusive, sacrificial love, which is also different from the love shown by other Christians.

### *c. Approach*

The text will be studied in itself and in its literary context, comparing it with the other statements in the book of Revelation regarding the deceased believers and the vindication promised to them, and then comparing it to other parts of the Bible, and only then to theological systems. The intertextuality of the passage with other canonical and non-canonical texts, from the Hebrew world as well as from the Greco-Roman one, will be considered, which may shed more light upon the interpretation of the text.

### *d. Knowledge Utilization*

The results of this research project will be useful for New Testament hermeneutical studies, especially for the interpretation of the Book of Revelation, within the discussion of the millennial kingdom. However, the research also brings the concept of martyrdom in Revelation in dialogue with other literature, thus supporting the development of this wider field of study.

### *e. Scientific Embedding*

Considering that the theme of martyrdom is very current because of various world events, not only of Christians experiencing violence in different parts of the world, but also of extremist groups that use the idea of martyrdom to cause violence, the concept and reward of martyrdom developed in Revelation may be useful to other researchers who study Jewish and Christian apocalyptic movements.

#### 4. Goals and Planning

- Monograph (PhD thesis, goal date 2019)

#### 5 Relation to Education

This research project is very useful for my current role as a New Testament professor at the Andrew Jumper Center for graduated students in São Paulo, Brazil. It provided tools to develop my skills as a researcher, writer and teacher of New Testament Studies, especially in regard to the book of Revelation.

#### 6 Budget

The writing of the first draft of the PhD thesis is almost ready, so the only remaining budgetary need will be the financing of the trip to Kampen for the defense of the dissertation.

### Paul's Use of Scripture as a Formative Framework for his Understanding of God's discriminating Love for Israel and its Hermeneutical Impact

#### 1 Summary

This project focuses on Paul and the way he is using the Scriptures to undergird his understanding of the Gospel, in full continuation of God's revelation to the people of Israel. Paul stresses the consequences of the coming of Jesus as the Messiah, opening up the new eschatological era in which Gentiles are entering the covenant with God. At the same time the apostle confesses God's faithfulness towards his promises to Israel. Both Israel and the Gentiles have a special place in the history of salvation, which Paul illuminates by reading the Scriptures, making use of contemporary exegetical and hermeneutical methods. By tracing back the way Paul uses the traditions of Israel to understand the Scriptures, this exegetical project will shed light on Paul's view on the close relationship between Jews and Gentiles within the communities he is writing to. As a consequence this will illuminate how God's lasting love for Israel is to be understood.

#### 2 Researcher

Michael Mulder

#### 3 Description

##### a. Aim / objectives

Reflecting on the way Paul considers God's promises to Israel as actual and continuing expressions of His discriminating love in the apostle's own days, it appears to be relevant to analyze the way he uses the Old Testament as actual word of God in the new context of the community he is addressing. By many intertextual connections, not only some words, but also their contexts appear to be of lasting relevance in a new situation. This intertextual approach is to be elaborated methodically, exegetically as well as hermeneutically.

- *Methodologically.* The way in which texts are quoted by Paul, just as in later rabbinic tradition, cannot be isolated from their literary contexts. This is evident and a common

assumption in New Testament scholarship – although even today this is not commonly brought into practice in exegetical approach. This assumption not only deserves more scholarly attention, it should be elaborated in a wider sense. Besides the literary context, there are more contexts that should be taken into account, i.e. exegetical traditions which are linked to the texts Paul quotes, as well as liturgical traditions which are acknowledged and esteemed within reading communities. A systematic investigation on the background and evaluation of ancient haftarah traditions could prove to be helpful for today's exegetical practice.

- *Exegetical focus on some specific themes/texts.* Previous research has been done on Israel in Romans 10, which has not been published in English yet. One of the aims is opening up some results of this research to a broader audience. Other focuses will be: the use of ancient traditions in the exegesis of the allegory in Galatians 4 and in Paul's admonitions to the 'strong' and the 'weak' in the community of Rome (making use of the Song of Moses in Deuteronomy 32, esp. in Romans 15). By taking liturgical traditions into account, more intertextual levels can be discerned in his quotations and allusions to Old Testament contexts. This provides new insights and connections, shaping new perspectives on Paul's understanding of the Gospel, and the way he perceives the relationship between Jews and Gentiles in the light of this reading of Scriptures.
- *Hermeneutically.* Paul's reading of Scripture was important to him in order to understand the Gospel and for his view on the faith community he is addressing. How is the way Scriptures are used by Jewish faith communities connected to this self-understanding? And how do these communities, reading partly the same texts, connect to the methods Paul was using? Could some results from the first two stages of this research plan be brought into the dialogue between Christian and Jewish faith communities, reading texts together? These hermeneutical questions are to be taken up in combination with the project *Israel as Hermeneutical Challenge*.

#### *b. Relation to the BEST-programme*

The focus on God's continuing love for Israel is closely connected to the BEST program 'Discriminating Love'. Mention is made of the particularity of God's love, primarily in the election of Israel. What does it mean that God's love is expressed to this particular people, that is still alive, and with whom Christian theologians do not have a lot of common research projects exploring the Scriptures? Has God forsaken his promises of love to this people, or does it still have his special attention in gracious and merciful lasting love? If so, what are the consequences of this way of 'discrimination' within his love? These questions will be elaborated exegetically, with special attention to the way Paul developed his theological stance, by reading the Scriptures.

#### *c. Approach*

This research will be performed on three levels, as described above: methodically, exegetically as well as hermeneutically. The core of the project will be at the first two levels, the third level will be elaborated in collaboration with the project *Israel as Hermeneutical Challenge* (MD 2).

#### *d. Knowledge Utilization*

Valorization of this project has several dimensions. Results will be used in the framework of New Testament theological studies for a non-scientific audience as well. The main focus of valorization will be in the conferences and studies on the field of Jewish-Christian dialogue.

#### *e. Scientific Embedding*

Although intertextuality is a common term within contemporary research, a thorough investigation of intertextual links of the quotations Paul brings in into his argumentation is not a common endeavor yet within exegetical studies. Taking liturgical traditions into account is a quite new impetus on this field. The interrelation of the results of new exegetical study with systematic theological reflection on Jewish-Christian relations opens up new challenges as well.

#### *f. Relation to other subprojects*

The relation to the project *Israel as Hermeneutical Challenge* has been mentioned (MD 2). There is a slight connection to the *Covenant* project as well (MD 1).

### 4 Goals and Planning

- Article (peer reviewed): on the reception of a specific text in Jewish and Christian Traditions: 'The Voice of Community. Jewish and Christian Traditions Coping with an Absurd Commandment (Deut. 21: 18-21)', published in 2018.
- Article (peer reviewed): 'Reigning with Christ for a Thousand Years: Revelation 20:1-6 in the Context of Jewish Apocalyptic Tradition' published in 2018.
- Article (peer reviewed): 'Covenant, Election and Israel's Responsibility: A Clarification through an Intertextual Analysis of Quotations from Scripture in Romans 10' to be published in Congress Volume of the BEST-research group in 2021.
- Article (peer reviewed): 'Paul's dual focus: "Rejoice, o Gentiles, with his people". An intertextual analysis of the quotations in Romans 15:7-13', to be published in the Congress Volume on Israel as Hermeneutical Challenge in 2021-2022.
- Article (peer reviewed): research on the liturgical context as part of intertextuality: 'Haftarot bij Paulus. De liturgische context van citaten als onderdeel van intertekstualiteit', to be published in 2021.
- Valorization: 'Israël in het Nieuwe Testament: een hoopvol mysterie' in Kees Kant, Michael Mulder, Bernhard Reitsma e.a., Twaalf artikelen over Israël, published in 2018
- Valorization: 'Leviatanbeelden in de Joodse traditie', published in 2018.
- Valorization: 'Christ as Mercy Seat. The Meaning of Paul's Use of the Term hilasterion in Romans 3:25 as Source of Forgiveness', to be published in 2021.
- Valorization: 'Das alt- und das neutestamentliche Gottesvolk im Neuen Testament' in Theology of the NT (to be) published in Dutch (2019) and in German (2021).

### 5 Relation to Education

The results of this research are brought into the classroom as part of the Bachelor Course 'Judaism', and Church and Israel, as well as in the courses on exegesis of the New Testament, both on Bachelor's as well as Master's Levels. Students are engaged in parts of the research projects. The interchange between research and educational interests is vital here. Parts of the research work will be done in the framework of study trips for Christian students in Jerusalem, exchanging their insights with Jewish scholars and students on Conferences to be organized in Jerusalem with Jewish scholars.

## 6 Budget

Attendance of relevant conferences: € 1.000,- per year.

## The Vengeance of God in the New Testament

### 1 Summary

This project studies the concept of the vengeance of God in the New Testament in its social and cultural Greco-Roman and Old Testament background. Many readers of the Bible consider the vengeance of God as a stumbling block: how can a God of love and mercy (Ex. 34,6) be a God of vengeance (Ps. 94,1; Luk. 21,22)? How can believers evoke Gods vengeance (Rev. 6,10) and praise God for his executed vengeance (Rev. 19,2), while they are asked to love God and their neighbor (Matth. 22,37-40)? Can Jesus even be called an Avenger (1 Thess. 4,6)?

This project takes up this troubling image and focuses on New Testament texts and its hermeneutical consequences. Old Testament scholarship has provided us with some works on the vengeance of God, but New Testament scholarship lacks such a scholarly work. Hermeneutical studies on the 'violent' image of God also tend to focus on troubling images of God in the Old Testament, thereby omitting 'violent' images of God in the New Testament. The present study attempts to provide a exegetical-hermeneutical investigation on (the relevance of) the vengeance of God in its contemporary and current context.

### 2 Researcher

Arjan van den Os MA (PhD-student; internal supervisor: prof. dr. H.G.L. Peels, external supervisor: prof. dr. J.W. van Henten)

### 3 Description

#### *a. Aim / objectives*

- To explore the cultural-anthropological background of vengeance in its Greco-Roman context, in concreto in its context of honor and reciprocity;
- To analyze the current trouble with the image of an avenging God;
- To examine the exegetical –theological meaning of the vengeance of God in the New Testament;
- To reflect on the hermeneutical consequences of the exegetical-theological meaning of the vengeance of God in the New Testament;

#### *b. Relation to the BEST-programme*

The tension between the positive and negative side of God's acts in history is the heart of this research project and of the research programme. This project wants to analyze the friction between God's love and vengeance and attempts to provide a reformed perspective and 'solution' of this tension.

### *c. Approach*

Part I of this project analyzes the practice of vengeance in contemporary Greco-Roman society by studying the concepts of honor and reciprocity. Also, the Old Testament is examined. New Testament vengeance texts are subject to an exegetical-theological inquiry in Part II. The hermeneutical implications of the findings in Parts I and II are surveyed in Part III and a hermeneutical guide is provided for these types of biblical texts. The biggest pitfalls in this approach of the subject is space and time: the project could exceed limits. The only solution is to be critical on my own material and to let my work be reviewed (by my supervisors, readers, or hearers at presentations).

### *d. Knowledge Utilization*

The valorization of this project has several options. People nowadays are sensitive to violence, and above all religious violence. Reading vengeance texts in the Bible can be a trigger for people to reject biblical authority and teaching. Illumination of the motives for vengeance in biblical times, uncovering our difficulties with this concept and reflection on the implications of the concept of vengeance in our days can be stimulating for the debate on religious violence in the world. Another option for valorization is the connection between the findings in Part I and New Testament scholarship. Social-scientific study of Greco-Roman culture has just recently been integrated in New Testament scholarship and is therefore in its infancy. Concepts as 'grace' (John Barclay) and 'honor' (David DeSilva) are examined on its presence and impact in the New Testament. The study of the social and cultural background of vengeance in Greco-Roman society takes this 'new' research in account and can be valorized in publications.

### *e. Scientific Embedding*

this project is a corollary of two trends in New Testament scholarship: the upcoming attention for the social and cultural Greco-Roman background of the New Testament and the hermeneutical sensitivity for violent texts in the Bible. This project aims to be a balanced inquiry on a sensitive subject, taking negative projections and feelings into account and still retaining biblical authority. This research will thus negotiate with contemporary academic trends, but by its subject and way of inquiring will fill up a hiatus in New Testament scholarship.

### *f. Relation to other subprojects*

N.A.

## 4 Goals and Planning

- Monograph (PhD-thesis; 2023);
- Some popular publications concerning the subject of the project (2018-2023);
- Papers on academic conferences (SBL, EABS, BEST), presenting some parts of my research or aspects affiliated with my project;

## 5 Relation to Education

Part I of my research can be integrated in introductory courses on the New Testament theology and exegesis. An elective course can be given on shadow sides of the biblical God, in cooperation with BE and ST teachers.

## 6 Budget

There are possibilities to request additional funds for academic presentations of material, because of the importance and urgency of the topic of religious violence.

## Spiritus Interpres. Hermeneutical implications of the New Testament affirmations about the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit

### 1 Summary

Reading the New Testament one is confronted with radical and fundamental affirmations about the Holy Spirit who discloses men to the truth of God, particularly in the literature attributed to the apostles Paul and John. Understanding the Word of God, getting the right view on Jesus Christ, is not something which one chooses for by oneself, but something one has to receive from above. This understanding is presented as a gift of God's love, which opens up the mind and hearts of the privileged ones.

A thorough exegesis of the significant New Testament texts with a number of biblical theological conclusions will be followed by an inventory and discussion of the hermeneutical implications, in particular with regard to present-day (postmodern) academic interpretative theories, indicating which hermeneutical space can be defended for the activity of the Spirit in the interaction with Scripture.

### 2 Researchers

Drs. B.A.T. Witzier (external PhD-student); Prof.Dr. H.G.L. Peels, supervisor; dr. A.W. Zwiep, second supervisor)

### 3 Description

#### *a. Aim / objectives*

In what way does God's love reach out for humankind by means of this specific activity of the Spirit which enables the understanding of God and his Word? Or, in other words, what are the hermeneutical implications of the New Testament affirmations about the dependence on the illuminating work of the Spirit? That is the central question this research-project aims to answer.

#### *b. Relation to the BEST-programme*

One of the gifts of God's love is the understanding of His truth mediated by the illumination of the Spirit. Some people receive this gift, others do not. Analysing the relevant New Testament texts about why and how the Spirit illuminates people and defining the hermeneutical implications, will give more insight into the ways of Gods' "discriminating love".

#### *c. Approach*

The journey from formulation of the central question to the conclusion will be made in two stages. The first one will be a thorough exegesis of the related New Testament texts in the Pauline and Johannine literature. On this basis a number of biblical theological conclusions will be made. These conclusions will be followed by a general inventory of the hermeneutical implications for that

interaction with Scripture that respects the illuminating work of the Spirit, i.e. the faithful and ecclesiastical interaction with Scripture. The second stage will be to enter in discussion with present-day (postmodern) academic hermeneutical theories. The challenge will be to indicate which hermeneutical space can be defended for the activity of the Spirit in the academic interaction with Scripture.

#### *d. Knowledge Utilization*

If there is, biblically speaking, no access to true knowledge of God without the illuminating activity of the Holy Spirit, an insightful description of the hermeneutical implications will be of great value not only for the understanding, but also for the witness of God's love to the world.

#### *e. Scientific Embedding*

Exegesis, biblical theology and biblical hermeneutics.

#### *f. Relation to other sub-projects*

This project can be seen as the counterpart from the perspective of biblical theology to dr. Hans Burger's projects on theological hermeneutics).

### 4 Goals and Planning

- Monograph (PhD-thesis in Dutch; 2023), provisional title: Spiritus Interpres. Hermeutische implicaties van het nieuwtestamentische spreken over het verlichtende werk van de Heilige Geest.

### 5 Relation to Education

N.A.

### 6 Budget

N.A.

## Crucicentrism in African evangelical theology?

### 1. Summary

This project attempts to investigate the role and significance of the cross of Jesus Christ in the works of four African evangelical scholars. By using a hermeneutic framework, the project aims to answer the main research question how the New Testament account of the cross is understood in African evangelical theology as formulated by Byang H. Kato, Tokunboh Adeyemo, Tite Tiénou and Yusufu Turaki, with regard to the sociopolitical situation and theological debates of their time.

### 2. Discipline(s)

New Testament, Intercultural Theology.

### 3. Researchers

Wouter van Veelen, MA (external PhD student); Prof. dr. Rob van Houwelingen (TU Kampen, First promotor);

Prof. dr. Martha Frederiks (UU, Second promotor).

#### 4. Description

##### *a. Aim / objectives*

In a lecture at Igbaja Bible College (now Igbaja Theological Seminary) in 1974, the late Byang Kato (1936-1975), founding father of African evangelical theology, presents himself as an evangelical scholar. One of the characteristics of an evangelical Christian, according to Kato, is faith in the vicarious and atoning death of Jesus: "Christ and him crucified." (1 Cor.2:2). Kato's emphasis on the atoning work of Christ aligns with what has been identified as one of the central characteristics of evangelicalism worldwide, being 'crucicentrism'. This hermeneutic research project would like to investigate the role and significance of the cross of Jesus Christ in the thinking of Kato and three other self-proclaimed African evangelical theologians: Tokunboh Adeyemo (1944-2010), Tite Tiénou (1949-) and Yusufu Turaki (1946-). The reason for comparing these three theologians with Kato is that each in his own way has identified strongly with Kato's strategic mission for African evangelical theology. A comparative analysis, then, would provide a good picture of how the understanding of the cross developed after Kato's death, against the background of the changing socio-political and theological situation in Africa. Taken together, the four theologians to be studied could give an overview of how the cross has been interpreted and appropriated in African evangelical theology since its emergence in the 1960s, thus enabling us to evaluate the heated discussions of the early years of African theology. The project will focus on subquestions such as: to what extent is crucicentrism a characteristic of African evangelical theology? Are there significant differences between the theologies and theological approaches of Kato and the three other African evangelicals with regard to the interpretation of Christ's death? What hermeneutical processes are used to contextualize the significance of the cross to African settings and do these settings change over time?

##### *b. Relation to the BEST-program*

The reason for pursuing this PhD-project within the research programme Discriminating Love is that in the western (Reformed) tradition the cross of Jesus Christ as his atoning sacrifice is generally considered to be a distinctive feature of "orthodox" Christianity. To what extent does this also apply to African Christianity? Does African evangelicalism hold the same view of the Christ-event? Or should its distinctiveness be found in other aspects of the New Testament testimony, such as, for example, the supremacy of Christ? Historically, African evangelicalism emerged as a reactionary movement against what was perceived as universalistic and syncretistic tendencies in African theology. According to the African evangelicals, by contextualizing the gospel within the theological framework of the African traditional religions, its distinctive message would be comprised. The position one takes in this ongoing debate may considerably influence the way the cross is viewed in a particular theology. Thus, by studying the hermeneutics of African evangelicalism with regard to the significance of the cross of Jesus Christ, this research project aims to contribute to a contextual understanding of the central theme of God's discriminating love.

##### *c. Approach*

The methodology that I will adopt has been developed in the field of "inculturation hermeneutics". Inculturation hermeneutics studies the interplay between the Biblical message and the African culture and religion.

For the purpose of this study, I will use the analytical tool for studying the role of the Bible in African Christianity as developed by Gerald West. This method aims to identify four distinctive features in any African theology, in order to consider how these features are deployed and how they relate to

biblical interpretation. These are the Bible, Christian tradition, African culture/religion, and African contemporary contexts. According to West, these four distinctive features not only overlap to some extent, but each of the four does not carry the same weighting and influence in a particular theology. In this study I will try to retrace how these features relate in the works of African evangelical scholars as to the interpretation of the cross. The value of using a matrix of four distinctive features is that it offers a useful tool to compare how these features are deployed in the works of Kato, Adeyemo, Tiéno and Turaki with regard to the crucifixion. What role and influence does each of the four features have in their thinking and how can this be explained against the background of their time? In addition to these four features, West discerns three significant factors that affect our understanding of the role of the Bible in Africa. I consider these factors as useful research limitations. These are synchronic/diachronic perspectives, insider (emic) /outsider (etic) perspectives and oral/textual perspectives. As to the first factor, my study will be diachronic. Starting from the early years of African theology I will retrace how the understanding of cross developed in the works of Kato and his successors. Second, since I am a Dutch theologian, I conduct this study from an outsiders point of view (etic). It is important not to forget throughout the project that I am only a “guest observer” in this theological debate. Lastly, this study will be limited to the textual level, as I will be focusing on the published works of Kato, Adeyemo and Turaki (and to a lesser extent that of Tiéno) as their written contribution to the theological debate in African Christianity.

#### *d. Knowledge Utilization & Scientific Embedding*

Significance of the research project:

1. New Testament studies: to get new insights in the interpretation and application of the atoning work of Christ by African evangelical scholars. How does the death and resurrection of Christ function in their exegetical work?
2. Intercultural theology: to gain a deeper understanding of the hermeneutics in African evangelical theology, a movement that apparently has been underexposed in intercultural theology.
3. Systematic theology: to provide a theological model for evaluating the significance of the cross of Jesus Christ and the scope of salvation in African evangelicalism.

#### 5. Goals and Planning

Publishing of 5 articles in peer-reviewed journals in the period from 2020 to 2025.

#### 6. Relation to Education

N.A.

#### 7. Budget

N.A.

## 5. Systematic Theology and Theological Ethics

### 5.1 The Trinity and the Logic of Love

#### 1. Summary

Christian theology is inherently Trinitarian theology. Since the Trinity is not merely a doctrine among many, but the root doctrine of the Christian Church, it should be decisive for our hermeneutic of Scripture, and our anthropology. The present project aims at

- a) Trinitarian hermeneutic of the Old Testament (because if that works, it will work for the New Testament);
- b) understanding and evaluating present models of Trinitarian theology;
- c) understanding the logic entailed in God's Being Triune, that is: God being love;
- d) exploring the implications for anthropology of God's Triune Being (e.g. via the idea of humans as *imago dei*).

The present project builds on the conviction that both the Christian Church and departments of theology are best served with a theology that centers on the cores of the Christian faith throughout the ages, while being on speaking terms with present culture. Particularly in (c) and (d), the interaction with the present Western culture will take place.

This project aims at developing a thoroughly Trinitarian theology for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. To develop such a theology, an interaction with Biblical texts is crucial (since in earlier times, Trinitarian theology has been accused, and sometimes rightly so, of being overly abstract and unbiblical), as is the interaction with present ideas of Trinitarian theology. At the root of Trinitarian theology lies the understanding of the relationality of love of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. If the logic of that love is not abstracted from the doctrine of the Trinity itself, but is employed as Trinitarian logic, the understanding of self, world, and time will be renewed.

#### 2. Discipline(s)

Systematic Theology, and to a lesser degree Biblical Studies

#### 3. Researchers

- Prof. Arnold Huijgen (overview of all projects);
- Changjun Choi MA (d)
- Dr. Pieter Nijssen BTh (b)
- Drs. Anne Th. van Olst (b)
- Audy Santoso MA (b)
- Ivan Roharjo @@@

#### 4. Subprojects

- Trinitarian Hermeneutic of the Old Testament
- The Logic of Trinitarian Love
- Canons of Dordt

- Herman Bavinck's Theological Relationship with John Calvin in relation to the Doctrines of the Trinity and the Image of God
- Spirit in Time – An investigation of the proprium of the Holy Spirit in His action in history
- Christological concentration in the theology of Abraham van de Beek
- Theosis in the Theology of Robert Jenson
- A Reformed evaluation of Gregory Boyd's Theodicy of the warrior God

## 5. Goals and Planning

Publication goals can be found under the various subprojects. The main goals of the subprojects are:

- A constructive proposal for a Trinitarian hermeneutic of the Old Testament is presented in a peer reviewed article by Arnold Huijgen, 2020;
- In the context of the 2020 conference, a preliminary publication is prepared (ready end 2019, publication 2020), the conference volume with the relevant article appears in 2022.
- The commemoration of 400 years Canons of Dordt is a succes, both academically and for a wider audience. This is testified by peer reviewed articles and a more popular publication.
- The dissertation project of Changjun Choi is brought to a close by 2021;
- The dissertation project of Pieter Nijssse is brought to a close by 2023;
- The dissertation project of Anne van Olst is brought to a close by 2023;
- The dissertation project of Audy Santoso is brought to a close by 2021;
- A dissertation project on Gregory Boyd's warfare theodicy is started;

## 6. Relation to Education

A smaller course on the Trinity and the Old Testament will be offered.

PhD student will be invited to present (parts of) their research to master students.

MA students will be stimulated to write their MA thesis as part of one of the subprojects.

## 7. Budget

TBD

## A Trinitarian Hermeneutic of the Old Testament

### *a. Researcher*

Prof. dr. Arnold Huijgen

### *b. Aim / objectives*

Building on earlier research on traces of the Trinity in the Old Testament and in interaction with various streams of theological interpretation of Scripture, this subprojects aims at developing the groundwork for a Trinitarian hermeneutic of the Old Testament that is on speaking terms with present-day exegesis, including historical-critical exegesis.

### *c. Relation to the BEST-programme*

Since this project seeks to further the interaction between Biblical exegesis and systematic theology, it belongs to the core methodological aims of the BEST programme. Also, the Trinity is often related

to God's being love, while the Old Testament shows particularly the discriminating character of God's love (which is at the center of the BEST programme). This subproject brings these aspects together.

#### *d. Approach*

Constructive systematic theology

#### *e. Knowledge Utilization*

Towards the end of the research period, a publication for a more general audience will be considered.

#### *f. Scientific Embedding*

This research relates to the so-called Theological Interpretation of Scripture, the circles of the Society for the Study of Theology, and projects of other colleagues.

#### *g. Relation to other sub-projects*

Particularly to project 2 (The Logic of Trinitarian Love).

#### *h. Goals and Planning*

- "'Our God is One": The Unity of YHWH and the Trinity in the Interplay between Biblical Exegesis and Systematic Theology', in Jaap Dekker and Gert Kwakkel (eds.), *Reading and Listening: Meeting One God in Many Texts. Festschrift for Eric Peels on the occasion of his 25th jubilee as professor of Old Testament Studies*. Amsterdamse Cahiers supplement series 16 (Bergambacht: 2VM, 2018).
- "Allegory within the bounds of the letter: Toward a pneumatological reorientation of protestant interpretations of the Old Testament", in peer reviewed Festschrift, Brill, Fall 2018. Article describes the need for a combination of 'literal' and 'allegorical' approaches.
- "Calvin's Old Testament Theology And Beyond. Paradoxes, Problems, and Comparisons With The Approaches of Arnold van Ruler and Kornelis Heiko Miskotte" in *Oxford Handbook to Calvin and Calvinism*, eds. Bruce Gordon and Carl Trueman, 2019. Article describes main tenets of the Reformed approach of the Old Testament.
- Monograph in Dutch: *Lezen en laten lezen: Gelovig omgaan met de Bijbel*, 2019.
- "Wat betekent de schepping van de mens naar Gods beeld als alle leven een gemeenschappelijke oorsprong heeft?" in *Kijk naar de vogels. Vervolg van het gesprek over evolutie* (Kampen: Brevier, 2019).
- "Israel as Question: A Reconsideration of Kornelis Heiko Miskotte's Essay on Israel as Hermeneutical Challenge to the Church", in conference volume on Israel by BEST group, 2020.
- 2020 Publication peer reviewed article. Constructive proposal.

## The Logic of Trinitarian Love

### *a. Researcher*

Prof. dr. Arnold Huijgen

#### *b. Aim / objectives*

The 19<sup>th</sup> century German theologian Isaac August Dorner stated that God relates as a person to persons, and does so in a loving way. This influenced, among others, Karl Barth, particularly in his doctrine of God. By concentrating God's judgment in Christology, no discrimination between humans can exist in such a theology. The present subject seeks ways to articulate both God's personhood and love, and the judgment this love entails, in ongoing connection to biblical studies. Also, the ramifications of Trinitarian love in anthropology are taken into account, particularly in the Reformed tradition.

#### *c. Relation to the BEST-programme*

Since this project seeks to further the interaction between Biblical exegesis and systematic theology, it belongs to the core methodological aims of the BEST programme. Also, the Trinity is often related to God's being love, while the Old Testament shows particularly the discriminating character of God's love (which is at the center of the BEST programme). This subproject brings these aspects together. Moreover, one of the two main conferences of the BEST group are devoted to the theme of the logic of God's love.

#### *d. Approach*

Constructive systematic theology

#### *e. Knowledge Utilization*

N.A.

#### *f. Scientific Embedding*

N.A.

#### *g. Relation to other sub-projects*

Particularly to project 1 (A Trinitarian Hermeneutic of the Old Testament).

#### *h. Goals and Planning*

- "Covenant Theology as Trinitarian Theology: A Discussion of The Contributions of Michael S. Horton, Scott W. Hahn, and N.T. Wright", article in Congress Volume on covenant by BEST group. This article aims at reframing covenant theology as Trinitarian theology;
- "The Challenge of Heresy: Servetus, Stancaró, and Castellio", in: *John Calvin in Context*, ed. R. Ward Holder, Cambridge University Press, 2019. This article describes what heresy as violation of the doctrine of the Trinity was in Calvin's context;
- "John Calvin's Trinitarian Theological Anthropology Reconsidered", in: *T. & T. Clark Handbook to Theological Anthropology*, eds. Mary Ann Hinsdale and Stephen Okey, Bloomsbury 2019.
- "Das 'semen religionis' und 'pietas' in Calvins Theologie und der 'Anknüpfungspunkt' und 'Frömmigkeit' bei Schleiermacher – Ein Vergleich zweier reformierten Theologen", in volume Münster.
- "What is Love? What is the Trinity?" Peer reviewed article 2020;
- Article in conference volume BEST group, result of the 2020 conference: 2022.
- Journal article: response to reactions on *Lezen en laten lezen* (in Dutch, 2020).
- *Gewone Catechismus [Ordinary Catechism]*, with Dolf te Velde and Theo Pleizier (2019);

- ‘Christelijk geluk in een seculiere cultuur. Een verantwoording van de belangrijkste theologische keuzes in de *Gewone Catechismus*’, article *Theologia Reformata* with Theo Pleizier en Dolf te Velde, evaluation of the *Gewone Catechismus* (2020).
- ‘On the Construction of Religious Texts: The Case of Writing a Catechism’, with Theo Pleizier en Dolf te Velde, evaluation of the *Gewone Catechismus* (2020).

## Discriminating love in the Canons of Dordt

### *a. Researchers*

Prof. dr. Arnold Huijgen

Dr. Dolf te Velde

### *b Aim / objectives*

In the Reformed tradition, the discriminating nature of God’s love has been codified in the Canons of the Synod of Dordt (1618–1619), the jubilee of which falls within the time frame of the present research programme. This subproject aims at retrieving and revitalizing the theology of the Canons of Dordt.

### *c. Relation to the BEST-programme*

[Describe the relationship to the BEST-programme ‘Discriminating love’ where this project is part of]

### *d. Approach*

Historical Theology, systematic theology

### *e. Knowledge Utilization*

Conference for a broader audience (10 May 2019), resulting in a book.

### *f. Scientific Embedding*

Cooperation between TU Apeldoorn, Hersteld Hervormd Seminary and Groningen University in organizing an expert meeting.

### *g. Relation to other sub-projects*

N.A.

### *h. Goals and Planning*

- A. Huijgen, “The Theology of the Canons of Dordt: A Reassessment after Four Hundred Years”, *Unio cum Christo*, Fall 2018.
- 2021 A. Huijgen, Peer reviewed article in conference volume.

## Herman Bavinck’s Theological Relationship with John Calvin in relation to the Doctrines of the Trinity and the Image of God

### *a. Researcher*

Changjun Choi (PhD-student; prof. dr. A. Huijgen, supervisor; prof. dr. G. Harinck second supervisor)

### *b. Aim / objectives*

The aim of this project is to analyse and evaluate Bavinck's theological relationship with Calvin in relation to the doctrines of the Trinity and the image of God. This project will focus on the following research questions: The central question of this study is, *What is Bavinck's views on Calvin's theology and his life in general, and particularly in relation to the doctrines of the Trinity and the image of God?* Under this central question, four points are intended:

1. What is Bavinck's theological identity in relation to recent discussion between two Bavincks hypothesis and one Bavinck?
2. What is Bavinck's historical context, particularly in relation with Calvin's role in neo-Calvinism and theological landscape of Netherlands of his time?
3. What precisely are Bavinck's doctrines of the Trinity and the image of God? What influence did contemporary discussion partners have on Bavinck and what is Bavinck's use of Calvin's thoughts over against anti-trinitarianism and the modernism?
4. What are the continuities and developments of the doctrines of the Trinity and the image of God of Bavinck in relation to those of Calvin?

### *c. Relation to the BEST-programme*

This study can be the part of the BEST programme in terms of its aims and the focuses. This study would contribute to understanding of Bavinck's theological relationship with Calvin, both by investigating Bavinck's interpretation and appropriation of Calvin's theological arguments and his life in the face of the challenge of anti-trinitarianism and the modernism, and by highlighting that while Bavinck shares with Calvin a basic trinitarian perspective in line with the Reformed tradition, that Bavinck's emphasis on the relationship between the immanent and economic Trinity, particularly the notion of humans as *imago dei*, illuminates the distinctiveness of his thought compared to that of Calvin.

### *d. Approach*

Historical theology, systematic theology

### *e. Knowledge Utilization*

N.A.

### *f. Scientific Embedding*

N.A.

### *g. Relation to other sub-projects*

N.A.

### *h. Goals and Planning*

- Monograph (PhD-thesis in English; 2019)

## Spirit in Time – An investigation of the proprium of the Holy Spirit in His action in history

### a. Researcher

Pieter Nijse (external PhD-student; prof. dr. A. Huijgen, supervisor; prof. Dr. P.M. Wisse, second supervisor)

### b. Aim / objectives

To describe a) how the proprium of the Holy Spirit has been guaranteed, and b) how it does relate to the proprium of the Father and the Son in the theology of Oepke Noordmans, Karl Rahner, Wolfhart Pannenberg and Rowan Williams. This description will be placed against the background of the relationship between God and history.

Recently a renaissance of interest in Trinitarian theology has been observed and with that also a serious attention to social trinitarianism. The latter maintains a view on the Trinity as a *sociality* of the three divine Persons, each more or less considered as a *center of consciousness*. Although this renaissance seems to fade out nowadays, it nevertheless leaves the systematic theology with the question what can be defined as the *proprium* of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Especially for the Spirit there doesn't appear to be an obvious answer in the recent Western theology.

Without any doubt Western thinking has been influenced immensely by the philosophy of the Enlightenment. For pneumatology this is even more true because of the work of G.W.F. Hegel. Could before this age the immanent trinity hide behind the paradigm *opera trinitatis ad extra indivisa sunt*, after Hegel's appearance in the field, the Spirit became more and more an inner-worldly transforming force, that one could study in the process of history. As a consequence, the person of the Spirit got fully absorbed by its work. God and world start to overlap. This fundamental difference of principles implies that post-Enlightenment pneumatology cannot be applied in the traditional systematic framework without caution.

On the other hand because of the above mentioned paradigm, pre-Enlightenment theology has difficulties in answering the enquiry of social trinitarianism, which it imposes on us today validly. For that reason I want to study twentieth century theology to understand how they have seen the *proprium* of the Holy Spirit to deduce a kind of spectrum of possibilities. While doing so, the relationship between God and history will be a matter of continuous attention. The choice of the theologians has been inspired by the observation that they have dealt with the question explicitly and has been guided by the desire to guarantee geographical, denominational and temporal breadth.

### c. Relation to the BEST-programme

The Holy Spirit has been related, if not even equated, to the Divine Love. As such a study to the proprium of the Spirit in relation to the proprium of the Son has to do with the question whether and how one can discriminate the Love of God from his other actions in this world. The research will focus on the Systematic Theological realm, but since the action of the Spirit is explicitly part of the question, not only theological concerns will be addressed, but also the societal issues (the nature of love) can be addressed. It has nice congeniality with other studies in the programme, especially the one on *The Logic of Trinitarian Love*.

*d. Approach*

Constructive systematic theology

*e. Knowledge Utilization*

N.A.

*f. Scientific Embedding*

N.A.

*g. Relation to other sub-projects*

Particularly to project 2 (The Logic of Trinitarian Love).

*h. Goals and Planing*

- Monograph (PhD thesis in English, approx. 2025)
- If possible, an article in a peer reviewed journal

## Christological concentration in the theology of Abraham van de Beek

*a. Researcher*

Anne Th. van Olst (external PhD-student; prof. dr. A. Huijgen, supervisor; prof. dr. P.M. Wisse, second supervisor).

*b. Aim / objectives*

The aim of the study is to investigate how the central place of staurological christology in the theology of prof. dr. A. van de Beek relates to the differentiation of the Father and the Son as Trinitarian Persons, which is necessary from a biblical-theological and systematic-theological point of view. Also, Van de Beek's Christological approach in his ecclesiology, eschatology and doctrine of creation will be assessed. The research will disclose Van de Beek's theology and will probably provide the first dissertation on his theology.

*c. Relation to the BEST-programme*

This research focuses on the necessity of a Trinitarian embedding of God's revelation in the cross of Christ. This fits neatly in the research programme of Biblical Exegesis and Systematic Theologie (BEST): 'Discriminating Love', which deals with the tensions between God's universal and discriminating love in the cross of Christ.

*d. Approach*

Systematic theology

*e. Knowledge Utilization*

N.A.

*f. Scientific Embedding*

N.A.

#### *g. Relation to other sub-projects*

Particularly to project 2 (The Logic of Trinitarian Love)

#### *h. Goals and Planning*

- Monograph (PhD thesis in Dutch, approx. 2023)

### Theosis in the Theology of Robert Jenson [completed]

Audy Santoso defended his thesis on 26 February 2021.

#### *a. Researcher*

Audy Santoso (external PhD-student; prof. dr. A. Huijgen, supervisor; prof. dr. C. van der Kooi, second supervisor)

#### *b. Aim / objectives*

This research will evaluate Robert Jenson's theology on *theosis* and assess his contribution to the Reformed tradition. It will examine Jenson's revised metaphysical understanding of (1) the Creator-creature distinction, (2) the mediator role of Christ, and (3) the understanding of self. Jenson's insights will then be tested by the Reformed tradition, in particular, the study will bring to bear John Calvin's critique of Andreas Osiander on the three above-mentioned aspects. The study's notable findings will be used to formulate a Reformed understanding of the subject.

#### *c. Relation to the BEST-programme*

Jenson is considered one among contemporary Trinitarian theologians. The trinitarian God that Jenson portrayed is the one who brought Israel out from Egypt and raised Jesus from the dead; a historical God, who in his act of creation is not creating a cosmos, but rather history. Love as the actual life of God is brought to its self-revealing from the very beginning in which God makes time and space for creatures. Theosis then as the goal of the history lies in the very nature of God as love, which consists in His goodness, truth and beauty. It is in this sense that this research related to the Discriminating Love in BEST-programme.

#### *d. Approach*

N.A.

#### *e. Knowledge Utilization*

N.A.

#### *f. Scientific Embedding*

N.A.

#### *g. Relation to other sub-projects*

N.A.

#### *h. Intended output*

- Dissertation 2021

## The Doctrine of Atonement of Calvin and Turretin From Their Trinitarian Perspective

### 1. Summary

My research will investigate how Calvin and later Turretin who more convincingly refuted Socinus do in fact provide a unifying idea of eternal generation to holistically integrate the presuppositions of the Trinity and Christology, such as 1) the one consubstantial essence (*essential aseity*) of the three persons of God, 2) the hypostatic distinction of the second person by eternal generation (a hypostatic act of begetting) that reveals the eternal Son's mediatorship in the decree, 3) the necessity of the *extra calvinisticum*, 4) the necessity of Christ's vicarious satisfaction, and 5) the cooperative working of the three persons in Christ's office in time.

### 2. Discipline(s)

Systematic Theology

### 3. Researchers

Sungkyu Joo (external PhD-student)

Prof. Dr. A. Huijgen, Supervisor

Prof. Dr. Aza Goudriaan, Second supervisor

### 4. Description

#### *a. Aim / objectives*

[Which aims do you want to reach with this research project?]

I will recover a robust Reformed trinitarian model of atonement by resurrecting a complete and correct understanding of Calvin and Turretin's Christology and doctrine of the Trinity, thus responding to the rejection of the necessity of Christ's vicarious satisfaction by Socinus and the Socinians as well as the modern scholars.

#### *b. Relation to the BEST-program*

[Describe the relationship to the BEST-program 'Discriminating love' where this project is part of]

Chapter 4 and 5 will systematically describe how Calvin and Turretin's doctrine of the Trinity and the Son's subordination to the decree of God can provide not only a holistic idea to overcome Socinus's criticism of the doctrine of the Trinity but also God's eternal, infinite, unchangeable love to promote Christian piety and worship.

#### *c. Approach*

[Describe your approach / methode, the possible risks and pitfalls that you are facing, and your solutions]

Analytical comparison of systematic theology

I will describe the different understandings of "eternal generation" of Calvin and Turretin that have led scholars to have different view of the doctrines of both the Trinity and Christology. I will describe how although Calvin appeared to have a different approach, he and Turretin shared a strikingly similar trinitarian perspective. In doing so, I will present a theological notion of eternal generation and procession to resolve the debate over the necessity of Christ's vicarious satisfaction and thus provide a balanced view of Christ's threefold office in the external cooperation of the Trinity in time.

#### *d. Knowledge Utilization*

[Describe in which way the knowledge generated by the research proposed could be used in other fields / by others]

The love of the Trinity God, hidden in God's decree, will be described in this research proposed, so that the knowledge and love of God would burn the hearts of preachers, strengthen the liturgies and sacraments of worship, and truly inspire the godly life of saints.

#### *e. Scientific Embedding*

N.A.

#### *f. Relation to other sub-projects*

N.A.

### 5. Goals and Planning

PhD-thesis in English: Hopefully, July 2023 - December 2023

### 6. Relation to Education

This is reflected in the catechism education I teach at church and at home.

### 7. Budget

This is possible with the help of churches and individual sponsors.

### 8. Description of sub-projects

N.A.

## 5.2 Other Projects

### God Hidden and Revealed: A Reformed and an Eastern Orthodox Perspective

[completed]

#### 1 Summary

This project deals with the doctrine of God's hiddenness and revelation, focusing on the Reformed and Orthodox traditions. In particular, it discusses the views of the Reformed theologian Herman Bavinck and the Orthodox theologian John Meyendorff. The project reflects the advance of

ecumenical awareness in Christian theology and the persuasion that by engaging in dialogue with other Christians each tradition can enrich itself without denying its distinctive features.

## 2 Researcher

Dmytro Bintsarovskyi, PhD student (Prof. B. Kamphuis, first supervisor; Prof. H. Boersma, second supervisor; Dr. J.M. Burger, co-supervisor).

## 3 Description

### *a. Aim / objectives*

The primary aim of this project is to compare and evaluate the Reformed and Eastern Orthodox perspectives on the relation between God's hiddenness and revelation. While this issue has been fundamental to both traditions, no attempts have been made to extensively, comparatively, and critically analyze how it was understood by Reformed and Orthodox theologians. The project does not only fill this gap, but also seeks to clarify the relation between God's hiddenness and revelation.

In comparing the two traditions, the goal is not to overemphasize similarities and to relativize differences, thereby artificially bringing the two traditions to agreement. Rather, the project seeks to deepen the discussion and come to better disagreements—that is, to more informed and nuanced disagreements founded on the proper understanding of the views and intentions of the dialogue partners.

### *b. Relation to the BEST-programme*

The dynamics of God's hiddenness and revelation in the Bible shows that in different periods of salvation history, God does not reveal himself equally to all people, but rather reveals himself progressively and discriminatively. His revelation does not simply convey information, but communicates him as the loving Father.

Both traditions—Orthodox and Reformed—has emphasized the voluntary character of God's self-disclosure, his constant control over his revelation, and the unworthiness of its recipients. Furthermore, in the Reformed tradition, God's hiddenness has often been described in terms of the hiddenness of his will and the particularity of his special grace. It has been argued that the differences between people are not caused by their personal qualities or choices, but should be traced back to the mysterious hidden will of God, which determines the actual events in history.

The project also serves the BEST-program's goal to "disclose the rich Dutch Reformed tradition to an international audience." The translation of the dissertation into Russian or Ukrainian, as well as translation of Bavinck's major works into Russian and publication of several articles about him in Russian/Ukrainian journals, will introduce the Dutch Reformed (especially neo-Calvinist) tradition to the Russian-speaking theological circles.

### *c. Approach*

In the first chapter of the dissertation, I shortly introduce the approaches of the Orthodox and Reformed traditions, especially as they developed in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In the subsequent two chapters, I focus only on two theologians, the Reformed theologian Herman Bavinck and the Eastern Orthodox theologian John Meyendorff. These two chapters are independent of each other and reflect the method, context, and terms of each theologian. They are descriptive in character and form the foundation of the subsequent comparison and evaluation that are presented in chapter IV.

One of the pitfalls of the projects is that Bavinck and Meyendorff did not show a genuine interest in each other's traditions, which reflected the general lack of interaction between Reformed and Orthodox theologians, especially in their days. While in descriptive chapters I let the theologians speak in their own terms, without imposing upon them issues with which they themselves did not wrestle, in the final chapter I still try to bring their vocabularies and commitments closer to each other and identify areas of agreement and disagreement between them.

Another pitfall is the choice of evaluation criteria that would be equally acceptable for Bavinck and Meyendorff. I decided to choose three criteria which, albeit interpreted somewhat differently, are important for both theologians: the preservation of God's incomprehensibility, the reality of encounter and union with God, and the oneness of God.

#### *d. Knowledge Utilization*

The results of this research could primarily be used for deepening and intensifying a broader dialogue between the Reformed/Protestant and Orthodox traditions. They can also be used by Christians of other traditions, since the task of formulating the relation between God's hiddenness and revelation is common for all Christians.

#### *e. Scientific Embedding*

Being part of the BEST program, the project also reflects developments in Christian theology in the past decades: namely, a growing interest in such themes as deification and participation in God; the realization of the importance of the doctrine of God for Christian spirituality; greater attention to Orthodox theology in the West; a new wave of Bavinck studies, especially in the English-speaking world. Most importantly, the project reflects the growing ecumenical awareness, which challenged all traditions, gave rise to new ways of thinking, and urged theologians to learn from other traditions in formulating their doctrine and in dealing with contemporary questions.

#### *f. Relation to other sub-projects*

N/A

### 4 Goals and Planning

- Public lecture at Regent College, Vancouver (October 2018)
- Dissertation "God Hidden and Revealed: A Reformed and an Eastern Orthodox Perspective" (November 2018)
- An article in a peer-reviewed journal (?)
- Translation of the dissertation into Russian or Ukrainian and its publication (2020)

### 5 Relation to Education

At this moment, I am involved in the educational process in Ukraine, where I have been working as a part-time employee of the Evangelical Reformed Seminary. The results of this study, especially once it will be translated into Russian/Ukrainian, can benefit students of this seminary and other theological students.

## 6 Budget

Stichting Afbouw has already agreed to cover the costs of redaction. Once my dissertation is approved by the assessment committee, I will apply to the same foundation for covering the costs of printing (60 copies). No further financial resources are necessary.

## Discernment in Christ. Theological hermeneutics, Scripture and Participation in Christ

### 1 Summary

For Christians living in a pluralist and secular world, it is important to learn to discern in accordance with God's discriminating love. This project reflects on Christian discernment and the formation of Christian discernment, starting from Jesus Christ and the participation of believers in Christ. The project moves from theological hermeneutics to the doctrine of Scripture. In modern times, questions concerning knowledge and certainty received a central place in the doctrine of Scripture and in theological hermeneutics. This resulted in a (quasi-)foundationalist narrative about Scripture and hermeneutics. The aim of this project is to develop an alternative narrative for theological hermeneutics in a 21<sup>st</sup> century post-Christian context, that is no longer modern.

### 2 Researcher

Dr. J.M. Burger

### 3 Description

#### *a. Aim / objectives*

Discernment is an important theme for theological hermeneutics. Theological hermeneutics serves practices in which Christian believers are able to discern what is best (Phil 1,10). Learning to discern means learning to discriminate imitating God's discriminating love. In our secular and pluralistic world, however, the formation of Christian discernment is controversial and contested.

In this project, reflection on discernment will be closely connected to the person of Jesus Christ, for several reasons. First, to discern Scripture rightly it is important to see how Jesus Christ as the Word of God relates to Scripture as the word of God. Second, the importance of Christ for discernment is implied in e.g. Paul's statement that all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Christ (Col 2:3). Third, human beings have to learn to discern in accordance with God's discriminations. According to the Christian tradition, human sin has noetic consequences, leading to human inability to discern in a right way. Thus, the relationship with Christ is important for soteriological reasons. To discern what is best, participation in Christ is an important source for renewal.

Furthermore, in this project reflection on discernment will be closely connected to reflection on Scripture. Remaining in Christ cannot be separated from remaining in the Scriptures, and in the process of the renewal of our understanding the Scriptures play an important role. Although theological hermeneutics is different from the doctrine of Scripture, in the reading and application of the Scriptures the fruits of theological hermeneutics can be seen.

In Christ, the Christian church finds a new perspective on God, on the Bible, on the self and the other, as well as on the world. This project concentrates on the new perspective that Christians receive in Christ and by reading the Scriptures in the light of Christ. It will explore the significance of

Jesus Christ and of 'participation in Christ' for Christian understanding. Presupposed is that theological hermeneutics is intrinsically theological and that reflection on hermeneutics cannot be separated from material theological themes.

The aim of this project is the development of a systematic theological narrative for theological hermeneutics in our 21<sup>st</sup> post-Christian context, that can replace a modern (quasi-)foundationalist narrative. This narrative will be developed to nourish a Christian discernment, following the discriminating love of God.

#### *b. Relation to the BEST-program*

True Christian discernment is a discerning activity that follows the discriminating love of God. At the same time, the more theologians have learned to discern what is best, the better they will be able to appreciate and understand God's discriminating love. Reflection on discernment and hermeneutics serves the development of a fruitful theological perspective on God's discriminating love.

#### *c. Approach*

In developing a narrative, the ordering of themes is important. One could start with Christ, move to Scripture and then to our understanding. However, this easily would lead to a narrative that seems deductive and does not make contact with our context.

Therefore, another route will be chosen. Our present situation will be the starting point. Here we see that Christian discernment is controversial and contested. At a deeper level, the influence of human sin can be traced. Furthermore, it can be noticed that modern, (quasi-)foundationalist approaches of hermeneutics and Scripture work no longer effectively. From this present situation, I will move to participation in Christ and the resulting renewal of our understanding. The significance of Jesus Christ and of 'participation in Christ' for Christian understanding will be explored. In a next step, it will be investigated how Scripture is used by the triune God in this process of renewal of our understanding. This leads to reflections on the Scripture and its attributes, but also on the relationship between *sola Scriptura* and *solus Christus*. In a final step, it will be argued that the resurrection of Christ is the Archimedean point for theology, contested and hidden in our pluralistic world but nevertheless foundational.

#### *d. Knowledge Utilization*

Within Dutch neocalvinist churches, hermeneutical questions received more urgency in the last decade. Where relativism looms, a new narrative about reading and understanding Scripture in a context that is no longer modern, is needed. This project develops such a narrative, that can be used by pastors and reformed christians in their reading of Scripture.

#### *e. Scientific Embedding*

Theological hermeneutics

#### *f. Relation to other subprojects*

To understand the relationship between Jesus Christ and Scripture, an important question regards the position of Jesus Christ within the plot of Scripture. This question will be investigated using the covenants in Scripture to reconstruct the plot of the Bible. This will be done in a project together with prof. dr. G. Kwakkel.

Furthermore, this project is connected to the PhD-project by Arjan Witzier (Spiritus Interpres. Hermeneutical implications of the New Testament affirmations about the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit) and to the PhD-project by Ramesh Chand on Kevin Vanhoozer and Indian contextual theology (supervised by A.L.Th. de Bruijne and J.M. Burger).

### 3 Goals and Planning

During the period 2012-2017, much material has been gathered, papers and articles have been written. Main goal in this project is to bring all this material together into a coherent monograph.

- 'God's Character and the Plot of the Bible', in Jaap Dekker, Gert Kwakkel (Eds.), *Reading and Listening: Meeting One God in Many Texts. Festschrift for Eric Peels on the occasion of his 25th jubilee as professor of Old Testament Studies*, Amsterdamse Cahiers Supplement Series 16 (Bergambacht NL: 2018), 239-247
- 'God's Mercy and Practices of Mercy', in Hans Schaeffer, Gerard den Hertog, Stefan Paas, *Mercy.Theories, Concepts, Practices.Proceedings from the International Congress TU Apeldoorn / Kampen, NL June 2014* (Wien: LIT Verlag 2018), 99-114
- 'Transformatie door de vernieuwing van het denken', in Festschrift (2018)
- 'Why do you believe that Scripture is the Word of God? Owen's doctrine of Scripture Reconsidered', in K.M. Kapic, W. van Vlastuin (Eds.), *John Owen between Orthodoxy and Modernity* (Leiden: Brill 2018 / 2019)
- Article in a Festschrift (2019)
- 'Hoe moeten we vanuit evolutionair perspectief denken over cognitieve gevolgen van zonde en genade?', in William den Boer, Rene Fransen, Rik Peels (Eds.), book with theological reflections on evolution (2019)
- Article in *International Journal of Theology* (2019/2020)
- 'Discernment in the light of an authoritative revelation? Rethinking the authority of Scripture' (article, based on a paper on the Eleventh International Comenius Conference 'Theology in a World of Ideologies: Authorization or Critique?', Kampen NL, 19<sup>th</sup> of April 2018; 2019)
- 2023 Monograph

### 4 Relation to Education

In 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 the project for specialization in systematic theology in the master in Kampen was immediately connected to this project: 'Hermeneutiek en Schriftleer'.

Furthermore, the results of this project area used in the lectures on hermeneutics and Scripture in the common course in the one year master-program and in the lectures on hermeneutics in MTP1, both in Kampen.

### 5 Budget

N.A.

# A critical examination of the idea of the 'fruitio Dei' as essence of the heavenly blessing

## 1 Summary

In the theology of Augustine there is a sharp contrast between 'enjoying God' and 'using the world'. Continuing my examination of objections to the idea that creational reality may only be 'used', I should like to evaluate the concept of the 'fruitio Dei' (enjoying God) as the center of eschatological expectation .

## 2 Researcher

Dr. A. (Ad) van der Dussen, lecturer Systematic Theology, Theological University Kampen

## 3 Description

### *a. Aim / objectives*

In my research I want

- to give attention to the biblical roots of the concept of 'fruitio Dei',
- to evaluate Neoplatonic influences,
- to examine the connection between 'fruitio Dei' and the expectation of the resurrection of the *body*,
- to discuss the relation between this concept and a more anthropocentric and 'worldly' approach of heavenly blessing,
- to determine if it is inherent to the 'fruitio Dei' that only the saints will participate in it.

### *b. Relation to the BEST-programme*

There is an implicit relation of this project to the BEST-programme 'Discriminating love', so far Augustine himself was convicted that only God's elected people shall participate in the bliss of the 'fruitio Dei'. An explicit relation is given with the concept itself: perhaps it is inherent to it that only the angels and the saints can enjoy God. One of my aims is to examine this possibility.

### *c. Approach*

Neither a historical theologian, nor a specialist in Patristic theology, I am looking for a thematic analysis of my theme, without the ambition to attribute to the study of Augustinian theology, but with special interest in the usefulness of the theme for contemporary Christian eschatology.

### *d. Knowledge Utilization*

A critical exposition of the subject 'fruitio Dei' can be helpful for teachers in Systematic Theology and for preachers, who want to reflect on the Christian eschatology.

### *e. Scientific Embedding*

The subject of my study is of special importance for the Neocalvinistic eschatological reflection: possibly it is a correction of a one-sided 'wordly' approach of eternal life.

#### *f. Relation to other sub-projects*

N.A.

#### 4 Goals and Planning

It's my ambition to publish an article (in English?) on academic level in 2019 or 2020.

#### 5 Relation to Education

Because of uncertainty with regard to my educational activities in 2019, it's difficult to say anything about the relation of this research-project to my teaching.

#### 6 Budget

N.A.

### *The filioque-controversy [completed]*

#### 1 Summary

The project is connected to one of the theological issues which divided the eastern and western churches: an interpolated expression, *filioque*. Against theological oppositions and misunderstanding of the two traditions around the expression, it will provide a possibility to reach a satisfying consensus on the *filioque* controversy. It will take three theological approaches: the patristic, biblical-theological, and systematic-theological approaches. By them, it will find a complementary understanding of the two divided traditions. In the procedure, the hypostatic particularity of the Spirit as 'love' will be examined in terms of the relationship in the Triune God and between God and the creatures.

#### 2. Researcher

Drs. C. Lee (PhD Student); prof. dr. B. Kamphuis Supervisor

#### 3 Description

##### *a. Aim / objectives*

The goal of the project is to study the possibility of reaching a satisfying consensus on the *filioque*-controversy with patristic, biblical-theological, and systematic-theological approaches.

##### *b. Relation to the BEST-program*

According to both of Gregory of Nyssa and Augustine whose Trinitarian thoughts will be discussed in the project, the Triune God is called 'love.' Especially, the Spirit is called as 'love' in the Trinity and in the relationship between God and His creatures directly by Augustine and indirectly by Gregory. By researching of the triune God and the relationship within Him, especially that between the Son and the Spirit, the project will contribute to identifying God who is the Trinity and love and to articulate the hypostatic existence of the Spirit as 'love.'

### c. Approach

The project takes three theological approaches. First of all, the patristic approach is at its foundation. The ideas of the church fathers about the triune God and the *filioque*-problem provide the basis for the doctrinal development in the *filioque*-controversy. Among the church fathers, Augustine and Gregory of Nyssa are substantial to the controversy. Then, the biblical-theological approach is also used by this project. Selected Bible texts important for the *filioque*-problem can be studied to evaluate the patristic and contemporary understanding of the triune God and the proceeding of the Holy Spirit, and to define a criterial boundary in the *filioque*-controversy. Lastly, the systematic-theological approach is taken into consideration. Results from the patristic and biblical-theological approaches will be compared and systematically combined to make a possibility for a satisfying consensus. Study of the recent development of the doctrine of the triune God in the systematic theology is needed.

### d. Knowledge Utilization

The project has two reasons for significance. First of all, a satisfying consensus of the *filioque*-problem can provide an opportunity for the doctrine of the triune God to be deeply understood from an ecumenical perspective. The alleged differences in the doctrine between the Western and the Eastern Churches become conspicuous by the different view on the proceeding of the Holy Spirit. These differences can be ecumenically re-evaluated by a consensus of the *filioque*-problem. Secondly, this project can show that the differences in systematic-theological presentations of the Christian dogma can be complementary. A particular understanding of the *filioque*-problem brings about different presentations of the Christian dogma. Sometimes these differences seem to be contradictory with one another. A satisfying consensus of the *filioque*-problem could offer a perspective from which these differences are considered not to be contradictory but to be complementary.

### e. Scientific Embedding

[Describe the relationship to the broader field of scientific research]

## 4. Goals and Planning

- Monograph (PhD thesis in English; 2019)

## 5 Relation to Education

The *filioque* problem is one of the issues which caused the schism between the eastern and western churches. By the issue which divided the churches, however, the project will overcome theological confrontation and provide a complementary comprehension of each of the divided tradition. In this sense, it will enrich a distinguishing understanding of each of the two traditions and encourage a complementary understanding of them for theological students.

## 6 Budget

N/A

# Emotions in Religious Experiences in the Thought of Jonathan Edwards and Sarah Coakley: A Comparison

## 1 Summary

This PhD research will analyze the thought of Jonathan Edwards and Sarah Coakley on how they understand emotions and afterwards making a comparison between both. In order to make an adequate comparison, apprehending the context of Edwards as 18<sup>th</sup> century theologian who involved in his own context and understanding the contemporary context; the context of Coakley, will be necessary. Hence, some efforts will be done in this project: 1) Making an overview of the history of emotions. 2) Zooming up the context of both Edwards and Coakley, and doing a careful analysis of their thought on emotions. 3) Comparing between both and constructing an application to the contemporary polemic (e.g. between Reformed and Charismatic).

## 2 Researcher

Muriwali Yanto Matalu (external PhD student; Dr. J.M. (Hans) Burger, first supervisor; prof. Dr. A.L. Th. (Ad.) de Bruijne, second supervisor; Prof. Dr. J.W. (Joke) van Saane, third supervisor).

## 3 Description

### *a. Aim / objectives*

The aim of this project is to study the concept of emotions in Edwards' view and to compare it with the concept of emotions in Coakley's thought.

### *b. Relation to the BEST-program*

The theme of the BEST (Biblical Exegesis and Systematic Theology) 2018-2023 is "Discriminating Love." While the BEST program endeavours to explore the theme of "divine love" and its implications for human love (e.g. in OT, NT, systematic theology, and in interdisciplinary themes), this research seeks to describe and analyse the emotions in which love is one of its aspects in the light of God's discriminating love.

### *c. Approach*

This study will be in the context of a theological-anthropological approach by using the conceptual analysis method. Furthermore, in comparing these thinkers, the method will be used in a hermeneutically sensitive way. In this sense, every step will endeavor to evaluate the question on how their vision relates to their context, specific challenges, potential, and to the relevant scientific knowledge of the time. Four necessary things will be done:

1. An analysis of texts to reconstruct their "conceptual geography" regarding ideas related to emotions. In this sense, words and concepts which are used to realities in which we use to refer to as "emotions" (love, anger, joy, fear, sadness and so forth). They are, for instance, emotions, feelings, passions, affections, and sentiments. Thus, how these words and concepts are used as well as how they function is substantial to analyze.
2. An analysis of their theological anthropology, such as: a) How Edwards and Coakley see the place of emotions in the relationship with God and Christian life. b) How they understand the dynamic of sin and salvation that influence, change, and transform emotions. c) How these thinkers evaluate emotions theologically.

3. Making a comparison of the reconstructions of their thought processes which is guided by the research question.
4. Making conclusions in which the research question will be answered.

#### *d. Knowledge Utilization*

The result of the study, namely, the richness of understanding of emotions from both Edwards and Coakley, which is discovered in this research, will be functioned as a contribution to the contemporary debates about emotions, particularly to the polemic between Reformed and Charismatic.

#### *e. Scientific Embedding*

This project is imbedded to the broader research on emotions in systematic theology, philosophy, and psychology on how emotions are understood, for instance, whether they are parts of the soul (e.g. lower part as Aquinas views them) or mere biological, cognitive or non-cognitive, etc. yet still maintaining the biblical truth. Moreover, this research can be imbedded to the current scientific research on theological dialogue between Reformed and Pentecostal/Charismatic, such as the work of Ean Carlin (Reformed and Charismatic: Issues and Resolutions, 2013).

#### *f. Relation to other subprojects*

N.A.

### 4 Goals and Planning

- Monograph (PhD Dissertation goal date 2022)
- Some parts of the research will be published in academic theological journals particularly in Indonesia
- Also, parts of it have possibilities to be presented at theological seminars/presentations

### 5. Relation to Education

N.A.

### 6 Budget

This research need funds for enabling the researcher to go to Kampen, the Netherlands, at least once a year, to utilize the library and to meet face to face with the supervisors.

## Predestination

### 1. Summary

The doctrine of predestination articulates the dynamics of God's grace and his 'discriminating' love in a pointed way. The Reformed theological tradition in particular offers a penetrating analysis of the questions concerning eternal salvation and damnation in relation to God's infallible decree and to human response. This project investigates questions and tensions in the traditional Reformed understanding of election (e.g., the question of determinism and freedom, and of the Trinitarian character of election), searches for a connection with philosophical anthropology, and engages in empirical research in the practical experience of the doctrine of election.

## 2 Researcher

R.T. te Velde.

The project will be executed in co-operation with other researchers: for the first area (see 17.3.c under 1.a and b) professional philosophers; for the first area 1.c biblical scholars (OT/NT) within BEST; for the third area experts in empirical social research (e.g. Praktijkcentrum, and Driestar Gouda).

PhD students and postdoc researchers will be involved if possible, with the help of external funding.

## 3. Description

### *a. Aim / objectives*

The doctrine of predestination articulates the dynamics of God's grace and his 'discriminating' love in a pointed way. The Reformed theological tradition in particular offers a penetrating analysis of the questions concerning eternal salvation and damnation in relation to God's infallible decree and to human response.

Research in the theme of predestination has a number of objectives:

1. Clarify key concepts and distinctions that are employed in the Reformed exposition of the doctrine of election, for example in the Canons of Dordt and the theology surrounding it.
2. Solve tensions and apparent contradictions that have often been detected in the Reformed doctrine of predestination.
3. Offer constructive proposals to better place the doctrine of election in the larger, Trinitarian framework of the Christian faith.
4. Stimulate the exchange between biblical scholarship and systematic theology in regard of the Scriptural foundations of the doctrine of election and reprobation.
5. Explore the potential of the Christian doctrine of predestination in the wider philosophical context of the human condition and the reflection on the destiny of human life.
6. Establish a fruitful interaction between empirical research in the practice of belief and Church and systematic theological reflection concerning election and reprobation and related question.

### *b. Relation to the BEST-program*

The project addresses key questions of how God's discriminating love has been understood in the Reformed tradition and how this understanding can be revitalized today. One part of the project focuses on the underlying conceptual structures of dogmatic speech about God's discriminating love. Other parts attempt to move toward practical and spiritual application of this doctrine to the lives of believers and humans in general.

### *c. Approach*

The research will cover three different areas:

1. Analysis of open questions from the traditional Reformed doctrine of predestination, for example:
  - a. Is the relation between God's choice and our human choice determined unilaterally, or is there room for some contingency and freedom in this relationship?
  - b. What is the Trinitarian character of the decree of election, in connection with the notion of the 'covenant of redemption' (*pactum salutis*);

- c. How can newer exegetical and biblical-theological proposals in the interpretation of *loci classici* for the doctrine of election (e.g., Romans 9-11, Ephesians 1, passages from the Gospel of John) be processed in the systematic-theological reflections on this doctrine?
2. Establishing a connection to philosophical anthropology: How do people deal with the notion of 'destiny' in their lives, and how could the theological concept of predestination contribute to a deeper and richer understanding of this destiny?
3. Empirical theological research to the practice and experience concerning the doctrine of election in the church. This can be investigated, for example, in preaching, catechesis, and pastoral care. It is possible and desirable to include a comparative study among several denominations.

The projects listed under 1.a-c can be approached by means of 'traditional' methods of dogmatic, historical, and philosophical analysis. The researcher is sufficiently skilled to employ a mixed methodology in order to investigate the relevant aspects of the doctrine of predestination. For a fruitful dialogue with biblical scholars (1.3), BEST is a promising environment. A first challenge in this respect will be to achieve a joint identification of relevant questions and prominent parts of the biblical revelation to be studied.

Exploring the potential of 'predestination' for philosophical anthropology is even more challenging. A first attempt was delivered as a paper at a congress of Christian philosophers. Deeper conversation with and assistance by trained (Christian) philosophers will be necessary.

Performing empirical research in relevant fields of ecclesiastical and religious practice will require specific expertise of social scientists. Fortunately, this expertise is available within the network of TU Kampen. Input from systematic theology is needed in creating the conceptual design of the research questionnaires, and in interpreting the data.

#### *d. Knowledge Utilization*

The doctrine of predestination is often experienced as one of the most problematic parts of the Reformed faith. Clarifying and explaining the crucial questions in this regard will affect the attitude of all those Christians who are sensitive to questions concerning eternal salvation and damnation. The immediate dissemination is through professional publications aimed at pastors and other theologians who are involved in pastoral work. Also a direct connection with 'lay people' will be made by means of lectures and courses offered through AKZ+, for example on aspects of the Canons of Dordt and on pastoral questions concerning people who lose their faith.

For the project related to philosophical anthropology, a wider audience will be attained by writing articles in philosophical journals and magazines, and by participating in interdisciplinary debates focusing on the human search for destiny in life.

The planned research in empirical practices will yield significant outcomes that help Church leaders to understand the experiences and questions people face in various parts of the Christian life. These findings will be communicated with pastors, pastoral workers, and probably will also be transmitted through courses and training programs for local congregations. On an academic level, scholars from the social sciences will be invited to reflect on the research outcomes, and to provide help in interpreting the psychological and social dimensions of 'lived faith' in relation to the doctrine of election.

#### e. Scientific Embedding

The projects listed as a.i-ii are a direct follow-up of earlier research projects (dissertation/monograph on the doctrine of God; edition of *Synopsis purioris theologiae*). In addition to BEST, the Research Group Classic Reformed Theology continues to be an important network of researchers in historical theology. Internationally, opportunities to arrange sessions and further co-operation occur at American Academy of Religion and Evangelical Theological Society (US), Society for the Study of Theology (UK), and several seminaries in North America. International connections will be expanded during the next research term.

#### f. Relation to other sub-projects

[Describe the relationship to possible sub-projects; see also below first 5]

### 4. Goals and Planning

Academic level:

- papers at international conferences (ETS 2018 and 2019; Groningen 2019; SST 2019; AAR 2019/20);
- articles in *Journal of Reformed Theology* (2019), *International Journal of Systematic Theology* (2020);
- editing a *Companion to the Synopsis of a Purer Theology* (Brill 2020);
- together with international colleagues editing a handbook on the Canons of Dordt (2021);
- further journal articles on aspects of the sub-projects indicated above;
- Organising one or more international conferences, at least concerning the exchange between the theological doctrine of predestination and philosophical anthropology, and on the historical and theological analysis of the doctrine of election around the Synod of Dordrecht;

Professional level: lectures and courses in the PEP-program;

Book publications will partly overlap with those mentioned above under 'Academic level'.

Populair:

- lectures and courses in the AKZ+-program and through other connections (CHE).
- Contributions to several religious and secular media (church magazines, newspapers etc.)

### 5 Relation to Education

In the MA program, I offer a project in Systematic Theology focusing on the doctrine of predestination. During the next couple of years, this will yield a number of MA theses on topics related to the research project.

Also the bachelor theses which I hope to supervise will probably deal with aspects of 'discriminating love'. Students are free to choose their topic, but I am confident that they will be attracted to the general theme of our research program. In that connection, interdisciplinary co-operation with colleagues in Old and New Testament studies is desirable.

### 6 Budget

Funding for PhD candidates and postdocs. Especially research in the second area (see 16.3.c) has the potential for receiving a grant from funds like the Templeton Foundation. Also the empirical research (the third area, see 16.3.c) can be externally funded by foundations associated with the relevant church denominations. In both cases, the proposal will be stated in an interdisciplinary way. For the

projects in the first area., grant proposals can be written on selected aspects that have a clear external relevance.

## Truth and the articulation of a Reformed theological hermeneutic

### 1. Summary

This project will begin by looking at some of the leading issues in the discussion of truth and theological hermeneutics facing Christians as they seek to understand truth in our current context. The work of David W. Tracy and Kevin J. Vanhoozer will be examined as two explicitly Christian examples of explicitly Christian views on truth and theological hermeneutics. The view of truth found in John's gospel will then be examined from a Biblical-Theological perspective. Using John's view of truth as a critical perspective, the views of Tracy and Vanhoozer will then be evaluated from a Systematic-Theological perspective. The aim of this project is to seek to contribute toward the articulation of a Reformed view of truth.

### 2 Researcher

Researcher: William C. Traub

Supervisors: 1. Dr. J. M. Burger (Theological University Kampen), 2. Prof. dr. A.L.Th. de Bruijne (Theological University Kampen), 3. Prof. W.G. Campbell (Union Theological College, Belfast).

### 3. Description

#### *a. Aim / objectives*

The overall aim of this research project is to contribute to an articulation of a Reformed view of truth and theological hermeneutics. This will be accomplished by means of a Systematic-Theological evaluation of the views of David W. Tracy and Kevin J. Vanhoozer on truth and theological hermeneutic evaluated by means of a Biblical-Theological examination of the notion of truth found in the gospel of John. The focus in looking at the views of Tracy and Vanhoozer will be to truly hear their voices, highlight their strengths and weaknesses, see how they grapple with the issues presented in the larger conversation regarding truth, evaluate their contributions from a Systematic-Theological perspective and explore how their views might contribute to an articulation of a Reformed view of truth and theological hermeneutics. The purpose of the Biblical-Theological analysis of the view of truth found in the gospel of John is to provide a clear yet focused representation of a Biblical notion of truth which can then serve as a critical perspective to evaluate the views of Tracy and Vanhoozer. The aim of the project is evaluative in nature rather than formative or generative, i.e. the intent is not a full articulation of a Reformed view of truth or theological hermeneutics. Rather, on the basis of a Biblical-Theological examination of the idea of truth in John's gospel, it is to evaluate the contributions of Tracy and Vanhoozer toward such an articulation.

#### *b. Relation to the BEST-program*

It is hoped that this project will fit into the BEST programme by facilitating a conversation

about truth and theological hermeneutic through the combination of a Systematic-Theological examination of two explicitly Christian voices in the current discussion on truth and theological hermeneutics evaluated by a Biblical-Theological investigation of the idea of truth in John's gospel.

#### *c. Approach*

Following an introductory section sketching some of the key issues in the current discussion of truth and theological hermeneutics, the research will consist of three major areas. First, the views of truth and theological hermeneutics of David W. Tracy and Kevin J. Vanhoozer will be examined and compared as two examples of attempts to articulate an explicitly Christian theological hermeneutic. While both Tracy and Vanhoozer present explicitly Christian views of truth and theological hermeneutics, they represent contrasting perspectives within the Christian tradition: Roman Catholic from Tracy and evangelical Protestant from Vanhoozer. Special attention will be given to identifying and evaluating the usefulness (as well as weaknesses) of their respective approaches. This will be followed by a Biblical-Theological examination of the notion of truth found in John's gospel. To be sure, the view of truth found in John's gospel is not 'the' Biblical view of truth, and represents only one aspect of what Scripture has to say about truth. Nor is John's intention to present us with a Systematic-Theological 'concept' of truth. Rather, his view of truth must be understood from a Biblical-Theological perspective, i.e. John's view of truth will be evaluated on the basis of Biblical-Theological principles, such as, but not limited to, language usage, context, and the role of a passage within the overall flow of the book, rather than on the basis of a Systematic-Theological evaluation. Finally, the view of truth presented in John's gospel will serve as a critical perspective to evaluate the views of truth and theological hermeneutics presented by Tracy and Vanhoozer from a Systematic-Theological perspective. As an outcome of this evaluation, an attempt will be made to specify some key elements of a Reformed view of truth and theological hermeneutics.

#### *d. Knowledge Utilization*

n/a

#### *e. Scientific Embedding*

Theological hermeneutics.

#### *f. Relation to other sub-projects*

n/a

### 4. Goals and Planning

The intention is to publish a Ph.D. thesis by approximately the Autumn of 2022.

### 5 Relation to Education

The results of this project will be used primarily to inform the lectures on Old Testament exegesis at Edinburgh Theological Seminary.

6 Budget

n/a

## Augustine's use of Scripture related to his doctrine of predestination.

### 1. Summary

The research concerns Augustine's use of Scripture related to his doctrine of predestination as formulated in the final stage of his writing activities, particularly in his so-called Semi-Pelagian works.

### 2. Researcher

Dr. H. ten Brinke

### 3. Description

#### *a. Aim / objectives*

The aim of the project is to give a description and an evaluation of Augustine's use of Scripture related to his doctrine of predestination.

The motivation for this research: undeniably there is a difference, at least in atmosphere, between the biblical speaking about election and the doctrine of predestination as it took root, since Augustine, within the Western Church, and as it is confessed since the Synod of Dordrecht 1618/9 by Reformed churches. Where is this difference? Is it only a difference in atmosphere, or is it a difference in terms of content between Paul (and the other biblical authors) and Augustine (and the doctrine of predestination in his tradition)?

#### *b. Relation to the BEST-program*

Predestination is an example of God's 'discriminating love'. To describe and to evaluate Augustine's uses of Scripture related to his doctrine of predestination is a part of the answer to the central research question of the programme 'Discriminating Love': "How is the apparently discriminating nature of the love of God in Biblical texts and theological ideas to be interpreted and evaluated in light of the Reformed tradition?"

The research can offer a contribution to the project 'Predestination' (R.T. te Velde) and indirectly to the project 'Discriminating Love in the Canons of Dordt' (A. Huijgen and R.T. te Velde) (Systematic Theology projects 7 and 1.3 respectively).

#### *c. Approach*

I shall focus on (the use of Scripture related to) the doctrine of predestination as Augustine developed it since 396 (*Ad Simplicianum*). Among Augustine experts there is a lot of debate on the question of whether there is continuity or discontinuity in the doctrine of grace between the early and the later Augustine, but all of them, including the defenders of continuity in Augustine, do agree that there is a development, in which Augustine's publication *Ad Simplicianum* represents a decisive stage. Since my concern is with the final version of Augustine's doctrine of predestination (it is not a historical but a systematic research), as it has had a large influence on the Western Church, in principle I will restrict myself to his publications from *Ad Simplicianum* onwards, with particular attention to the publications in relation to the so-called Semi-Pelagian works.

The criticism that Augustine fits Scripture to his convictions, or gets Scripture to say what it has to say according to his doctrine of predestination and does not do justice to what Scriptures says itself, will be evaluated.

Questions (partly from a contemporary systematic interest) to which the research could answer are: which place gets, in Augustine's explanation of relevant biblical passages,

- the human response in relation to God's predestination?
- the collective (God's people, Israel, the church) in relation to the individual?
- the relation between Christ and predestination ('predestination in Christ')?

#### *d. Knowledge Utilization*

Knowledge generated by the research could be used in the further reflection and evaluation of the classical doctrine of predestination (Augustine – Calvin – Canons of Dort).

#### *e. Scientific Embedding*

A lot is being written about Augustine's doctrine of grace and of predestination. To my knowledge, there is no publication in which the whole of Augustine's use of Scripture related to his (final) doctrine of predestination is described and evaluated. Therefore, a publication as output of the proposed research can be an addition to the existing results of research.

#### *f. Relation to other sub-projects*

n/a

### 4. Goals and Planning

The result of the research will be published in one or more English-language articles. It is not yet possible to plan this (these) publication(s).

### 5. Relation to Education

n/a

### 6. Budget

The research is done in leisure time, without payment. Budget will be needed for the linguistic correction of the article(s): € 50,00 per 1.800 words, so ca. € 200 for an article of approximately 7.000 words.

### 7. Description of sub-projects

n/a

## The place of Scripture in theological ethics

### 1. Summary

### 2. Researcher

Dr. Douwe J. Steensma

### 3. Description

#### *a. Aim / objectives*

The aim of this research is to understand the use of Scripture in theological ethics. In Reformed theological ethics, Scripture is the starting point of the systematic reflection on moral acting. The questions of this research are: Does Scripture give substantive indications for the moral teaching of the church, and for the morality of Christians today? If so, how does it give those directions? In what way have church and theology applied those directions in moral reflection? How do we have to appeal to Scripture in moral debate?

The aim of this research is also to help Christians who appeal to Scripture to ground their moral life.

#### *b. Relation to the BEST-programme*

Scripture is one of the greatest signs of the love of God.

#### *c. Approach*

Theological ethics (systematic theology)

#### *d. Knowledge Utilization*

N.A.

#### *g. Scientific Embedding*

N.A.

#### *h. Relation to other sub-projects*

N.A.

### 4. Goals and Planning

A book in Dutch. A scholarly publication, 2021/2022

## Sex difference in theological-ethical perspective

### 1. Summary

### 2. Researcher

Dr. Douwe J. Steensma

### 3. Description

#### *a. Aim / objectives*

Talking about two sexes is no longer as obvious as before. Things that seemed obvious are not so sure today. This uncertainty has increased, among other things, because of a strong thinking movement in society that decouples the gender role and also the gender identity from the sex. According to some, gender identity should even be the object of choice. The male-female model is

doubted, questioned and contested. In addition, historical scientists argue that speaking of two sexes is a modern invention.

The uncertainty about speaking about two sexes is also heightened from a completely different angle. This concerns attention to the problems of those who experience friction between their sex and gender identity. In addition to this problem of gender dysphoria, the situation of persons who have both male and female sexual characteristics plays a role.

Partly on the basis of the problems of intersex, some theologians also argue in favour of letting go of the binary male-female model. Church and theology in the tradition of the Reformation must determine their position.

#### *b. Relation to the BEST-programme*

N.A.

#### *c. Approach*

Theological ethics (systematic theology)

#### *d. Knowledge Utilization*

N.A.

#### *e. Scientific Embedding*

N.A.

#### *f. Relation to other sub-projects*

N.A.

### 4. Goals and Planning

An article in a peer reviewed journal (2021).

## Noordmans's hermeneutics of the Old Testament

### 1. Summary

Noordmans's hermeneutics of the Old Testament are investigated.

### 2. Discipline(s)

Systematic Theology; Early Church; Old Testament.

### 3. Researchers

Researcher: JP Florijn

First supervisor: A Huijgen

Second supervisor: M Lamberigts

### 4. Subprojects

- Translation into the English of Noordmans's main work, *Re-creation*.

- Transcription of Noordmans's as yet unpublished Old Testament sermons.
- Articles on relevant subparts of the thesis, possibly on:
  - Kohlbrugge's dialectic theology.
  - Noordmans's synthesis of Kohlbrugge, psychology and existentialism.
  - Noordmans on the development of dialectic theology (Luther—Barth—Kohlbrugge).
  - Noordmans's development of Augustine in his dialectic theology.

## 5. Description

### *a. Aim / objectives*

To clearly formulate Noordmans's hermeneutics of the Old Testament, in a practical manner; to investigate how he arrived at his approach; and to see whether it is still applicable today.

### *b. Relation to the BEST-program*

This study in the area of systematic theology, is more specifically on hermeneutics, which is an area of study that intersects well with the exegetical branches of theology. As such, it is well-suited to the program.

### *c. Approach*

Distill Noordmans's hermeneutics from both a theoretical point of view, i.e. from his books and articles, and also from a practical point of view, viz., from his sermons and meditations. Contrast with both early church and modern approaches in similar directions. Evaluate.

### *d. Knowledge Utilization*

Noordmans's approach may prove useful today; and likewise, any shortfalls will show us what not to do in our day.

### *e. Scientific Embedding*

The study is embedded in the field of hermeneutics; furthermore, it may have implications for our understanding of Noordmans and thus twentieth-century theology.

### *f. Relation to other sub-projects*

These are part prerequisite, part matter that does not fit well with the main thesis.

## 6. Goals and Planning

- First version *Re-creation* was finished as of 01-2021.
- First private draft of the OT sermons 90% complete as of 03-2021.
- Main thesis planned to be done before YE22.
- Other articles no clear horizon.

## 7. Relation to Education

None directly at present.

## 8. Budget

Nil – self-funded.

## To know and to be known

Evaluation of Stanley Hauerwas', Oliver O'Donovan's and Joachim Negel's reflections on friendship in contrast to familial bonds and marriage.

### 1. Summary

The aim of the research is to connect and compare three positions of theologians (Negel, Hauerwas and O'Donovan) on the topic of friendship and evaluate their position in light of insights on the biblical witness on the topic.

### 2. Discipline(s)

Ethics

### 3. Researchers

Drs. A.E.L. Bosker under supervision of dr. D.J. Steensma and prof. dr. A. Huijgen

### 4. Description

#### *a. Aim / objectives*

An evaluation of the phenomenon of friendship with the help of three theologians who have given the topic of friendship more than a passing glance. The three perspectives on the theme will be compared and related to insights from Scripture.

#### *b. Relation to the BEST-program*

Friendship is 'discriminating love' because one cannot be friends with everyone and besides one cannot be friends with anyone. God's love is involved in friendship first because God is the Creator of all good things and second because God offers His friendship to man (as needs to be explored).

#### *c. Approach*

The main focus is the literature of Stanley Hauerwas, Oliver O'Donovan and Joachim Negel. The first chapter of the dissertation will include a brief survey of the latest discussions and biblical insights on the topic of friendship. This is necessary to be able to compare Hauerwas', O'Donovan's and Negel's interpretation of friendship with biblical data. To take Scripture as normative is known as a 'Reformed Perspective', which is the aim of the Research Project.

#### *d. Knowledge Utilization*

Contemporary societal debates include issues such as homosexual relationships, but also the prevention of loneliness and even the giving of meaning to life (debates about euthanasia for example). Besides, friendship is also a topic that is very much related to the understanding of the church. Including the more or less hierarchical structures within a church.

#### *e. Scientific Embedding*

Hauerwas' is known as the 'best theologian' according to the New York Times in 2001. Negel published a book on friendship in 2019. O'Donovan is a well-known theologian, mostly by his book *Resurrection and Moral Order*. These three theologians grew up with different traditions, which will make the upcoming discussion on friendship more interesting. Combining perspective most likely

gives new perspectives. Only very recently has been given more attention to the topic of friendship in theology, especially in theological ethics.

#### *f. Relation to other sub-projects*

In part to the project on Genesis 1-11, concerning the question whether Adam's loneliness was solved by offering a friend first and a wife second. Secondly, if brotherly is meant to be a form of friendship as well as parental love.

#### 5. Goals and Planning

Dissertation 2026. Every year an article on a subproject (chapter in the dissertation).

#### 6. Relation to Education

Not yet.

#### 7. Budget

None

#### 8. Description of sub-projects

Article on Hauerwas' perspective on friendship. (January 2022)

Article on Negel's perspective on friendship. (2023)

Article on O'Donovan's perspective on friendship. (aiming at 2024)

Article on biblical data related to topic of friendship (2025)

Dissertation.

Valorization: Novel on the theme of friendship which includes the perspectives of Hauerwas, Negel and O'Donovan concerning the topic. 2025

### [An Evaluation of Gregory A. Boyd's Theodicy, when Compared to Paul Helm's Theodicy, in Light of a Biblical Portrait of God](#)

#### 1. Summary

Christian theology affirms that God is all-loving and all-powerful. Yet one way or another, it has to deal with the reality of evil. Gregory Boyd, a proponent of open theism, proposes Trinitarian Warfare theodicy, a type of free will theodicy that he integrated with biblical framework of cosmic warfare between God and Satan. Boyd's foundational tenet is the divine love that is ultimately shown to us on the cross. In supporting his arguments on theodicy, God, sin, evil, and salvation, Boyd proposed a hermeneutical framework that he called cruciform hermeneutic.

Boyd's appreciation on Biblical data, focus on Christ, and cross-centered approach should interest us in comparing it with a type of theodicy approach in Reformed theology and to see whether there are constructive insights that we may learn from the dialogue.

This research will analyze Gregory Boyd's theology by comparing him with Paul Helm's Reformed theology, especially in their theodicy, theology proper, view of evil, soteriology, and biblical hermeneutic.

## 2. Discipline(s)

Systematic Theology that to a certain degree is related to Biblical Approach

## 3. Researchers

Ivan Adi Raharjo (first supervisor: prof. dr. A. Huijgen; second supervisor: prof. dr. M. Sarot)

## [4. Subprogrammes]

[If applicable. If so, please change the numbers below.

Mention the sub-projects, cohering with this project. Under second 5.f the relationship to the other sub-projects is described, under 9 the projects themselves]

## 4. Description

### *a. Aim / objectives*

This research project will analyze the Trinitarian Warfare theodicy that is proposed by Gregory A. Boyd. In order to examine his theodicy in a rather comprehensive manner, this project will evaluate Boyd's underlying view of God, evil, salvation, and biblical hermeneutics. Such evaluation will also be done through comparison with a Calvinist view, represented by Paul Helm. The analysis result of this research will highlight the features, strengths, and weaknesses of Boyd's theodicy.

### *b. Relation to the BEST-program*

[Describe the relationship to the BEST-program 'Discriminating love' where this project is part of] Both BEST-program and Boyd's theodicy are focusing on divine love. Nevertheless, while BEST-program is highlighting the discriminating aspect of divine love, Boyd is emphasizing God's willingness to open Himself up and make Himself vulnerable to the undetermined human free will. Those two views seem in direct opposition. Yet perhaps through the dialogue between these two opposing views, we can gain more insight into the nature of divine love.

### *c. Approach*

Analytical comparison of systematic theology

### *d. Knowledge Utilization*

N.A.

### *e. Scientific Embedding*

In my discussion of Paul Helm's view of eternity, I notice how one's view of God and His interaction with the world is closely related to one's philosophy of time. The topic of time, the debate whether it is static or flowing, are also study interests in contemporary science.

On the other side, just as process theology, in defending the tenet of an undetermined future, open theism seeks supports from modern quantum physics that claims the indeterminacy if reality in quantum realm.

### *f. Relation to other sub-projects*

[Describe the relationship to sub-projects, if applicable]

## 5. Goals and Planning

[What will be organised and/or published as part of this project, and when?]

## 6. Relation to Education

[How does this project relate to educational activities in which you or others are engaged?]

## 7. Budget

[Which budget is needed for this investigation? Do you have ideas for (additional) funding?]

## 8. Description of sub-projects

[Description of the sub-projects; see under the first point 5]