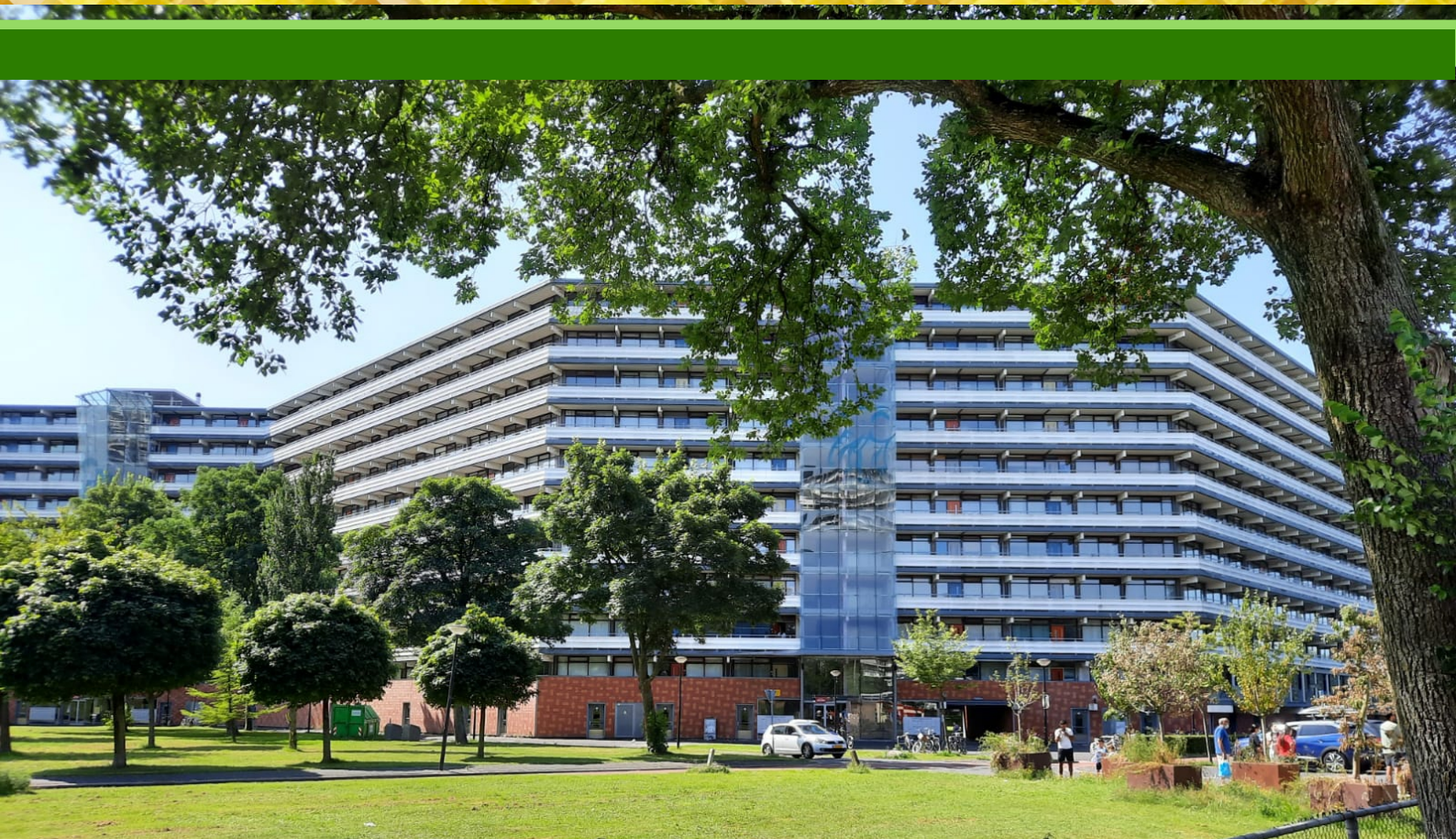




# AMSTERDAM BIBLE ACADEMY



**16TH EDITION**  
**AUGUST, 2021**

**Stichting Life and Peace Project:**

Training & Coaching Local Church Leaders for Ministry & Mission in Partnership with the Global University Springfield, US

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# GOD'S *Original* PLAN

**F**rom Genesis to Revelation the Bible reveals God as the creator of heaven and earth.

There is no doubt about this among all those who believe and acknowledge the Bible as the word of God. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," (Genesis 1:1). In response to this act of creation the psalmist declares, "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it," (Psalm 24:1). In Leviticus 25:23, God commanded his people that the land should not be sold permanently because it belongs to him. In his Word, God revealed that he is the one who made the earth and all that is in it. This is of great significance in our mission in the world, to know that everything belongs to God.

The story of creation in Genesis chapters 1 and 2 is also a story of the dynamic works of the Spirit of God. In his act of creation, God did not act alone. He acted by and through his Spirit. Individualism has no place in God's mission. It is a mission of partnership; as the text confirms, "Let us.". God's mission to the world is a call to the church to work together, in unity, in partnership.

It is also worthy to note that God was in the midst of the formlessness, emptiness and darkness. God was there to bring transformation. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge the presence of the Spirit and recognize his work in every context. In his act of creation, God transformed darkness into light. God was the first missionary, he modelled what he demands from everyone who believes and follows Jesus as Lord and Saviour.

The void and emptiness were filled with goodness, but the goodness could not be seen until God intervened. This is true of our communities and surroundings. There is so much goodness in the emptiness and hopelessness that surround us, and this emptiness can only be transformed when and only when we begin to intervene as followers of Jesus.

God not only created the heavens and the earth, he commanded the earth to bring forth plants, animals and all their kinds. He commanded the light to separate the darkness into day and night. God then created mankind in his own image. He gave them the most important role of taking care of the creation.

God created and gave mankind a special and unique responsibility: to be fruitful, fill, rule and subdue the earth. The authority to rule as given to mankind is to be exercised in the context of interdependence with the c r e a t i o n .

According to Dyness, from the outset our fortunes are linked with the soil and its fortunes are linked with ours.

**Dr. Moses  
ALAGBE**





# GOD'S *Original* PLAN

God is very much concerned with all aspects of his creation. We cannot therefore forget this important responsibility in our mission as followers of Jesus Christ. The world was created as an interrelated whole and as such we should not limit our mission to one aspect of the creation. Our mission must address the whole of creation. This was the situation from the beginning of creation. The plant we cultivate produces the oxygen we breathe and the plant for their production uses the carbon dioxide we emit. Mankind cannot survive without the support of the physical aspect of the creation. Our mission will be one sided the moment we separate the spiritual from the physical. The physical and the spiritual issues of life are both sides of the same coin.

In Genesis 1:26, God gave mankind the single privilege of caring for the whole of his creation. The account of creation further reveals that God gave mankind explicit instructions for the purpose of carrying out their responsibility. The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work the ground, to guard, keep and to take great care of the creation.

In the fulfilment of the God given mission, mankind was in cordial relationship with God and with each other; there was no secret or any hidden agenda. They had intimate relationships with God and with one another. They were at peace with God, with each other and in harmonious relationship to the rest of the creation. In our modern terms, one could say life was good.

This harmonious situation was however shattered as revealed in Genesis chapter three. Genesis chapter three suddenly introduces us to the serpent and his role in the rebellion of mankind. The serpent was presented as one that was subtler

than the beast of the field. (More light is shed on this creature in 2 Corinthians 11:3, 14 and Revelation 12:9, which reveal the serpent as Satan). The tempter's basic ploy was to induce Adam and Eve to believe that they could deal with the world without God on their own terms. Thus Adam and Eve followed Satan, they abandoned God and their God given mission.

As a caring and loving creator, God began to look for Adam and Eve. The honest, faithful, open and peaceful relationship between God and mankind was broken. As a righteous and loving God, he began to address their situation. God went on a mission looking for Adam and Eve. He promised enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. He declared the victory of the seed of the woman over that of the serpent. This is significant in our mission to the world. God found them and covered their nakedness with the skins of animals. Mankind lost their position in God's order of creation and the rest of the creation suffered as a result.

The effect of this rebellion goes beyond a direct effect on mankind. It affected their vertical relationship with God and their horizontal relationships with one another. This rebellion also affected the relationship between mankind and their environment. The relationship between mankind and the earth lost its harmony. Man had to sweat to enjoy the fruit and the produce of the earth. The harmonious balance was truly upset and work became tedious, frustrating, toilsome and meaningless. Man became disintegrated, selfishly ambitious, greedy and slothful. The whole of the creation was thrown into painful hardship.

The aftermath of rebellion involves misuse of God-given power of dominion. People began to socially and economically oppress and dominate one another. "Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and was full of violence. God saw how corrupt the earth had become, for all the people on earth had corrupted their ways"



# GOD'S *Original* PLAN

(Genesis 6: 11). This was the time of Noah. Noah seems to be the only one who was obedient to God's commandment. God therefore revealed his plan of saving the earth from violence and destruction to Noah. Noah and his family were saved for this purpose while God destroyed the rest of the people with the flood. God reaffirmed his promise to Noah and commanded him to multiply and fill the earth (Genesis 9:1-7). The covenant made with Noah was for the sake of the whole earth. Noah's genealogies in Genesis chapter ten set the stage for God's program of restoration. This chapter concludes with the story of the spread of the nations over the earth after the flood. However, mankind soon returned to their evil and rebellious ways. They went into the world, in pursuance of their own evil deeds. This was expressed in their effort to build a tower in Genesis chapter 11.

God once again had to intervene; he confused their language and scattered them over the surface of the earth. From Genesis chapter three to eleven, it is evident that the rebellion of mankind affected the whole of creation. Because of this, God's act of salvation is also directed towards the whole of creation. God is concerned about all aspects of his creation. In continuation of his redemptive program, he chooses to call Abraham with the purpose of blessing all nations through him.

Genesis chapter twelve is significant in understanding God's mission to the world. This chapter opens with God himself taking the initiative once again in the continuation of his program of restoration. God called and commanded Abraham to leave his country, his people and his father's house, and to move to another land that God would show him. God promised to make him a great nation, to bless and make his name great, to bless

those who bless him and to curse those who curse him, and that all peoples on earth would be blessed through him. With this promise God addresses himself to the whole creation. God's purpose in calling and blessing Abraham is to bless the whole world.

Many have limited this blessing to spiritual blessing, but the life and account of Abraham and the nation of Israel indicate the opposite. Abraham fought to rescue Lot from political and economic oppression. He pleaded with God as he interceded against the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. It is interesting to note that God did not destroy Sodom and Gomorrah primarily because of sodomy, but because of their arrogance and failure to take care of the orphans and strangers. "Now this was the sin of your sister Sodom: She and her daughters were arrogant, overfed, and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and the needy. They were haughty and did detestable things before me" (Ezekiel 16:49).

In the Genesis account, God renewed his covenant with Abram, where he changed his name from Abram to Abraham (Genesis 17). Genesis chapter twenty-two concludes with the angel of the Lord pronouncing God's blessing again on Abraham. This was as a result of Abraham's total obedience to God's command to offer his only son as a sacrifice unto him. It is interesting to note that Abraham demonstrated his love and total surrender to God as Lord in this episode. It is also interesting to note the content of the blessing pronounced on him by the angel of the Lord. "The angel of the Lord called to Abraham from heaven a second time and said, 'I swear by myself,' declares the Lord, 'that because you have done this, and have not withheld your only son, I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed because you have obeyed me'" (Genesis



# GOD'S *Original* PLAN

22:15-18). God's Kingdom agenda seeks the personal salvation of all persons and the social transformation of all places. However, most of our nations are in the hands of people that do not acknowledge or submit to God as the creator and owner of the earth, as a result of this ignorance, there exist greed and the corruption that are now destroying the world.

In the continuation of his redemptive mission, God delivered the nation of Israel (the offspring of Abraham) from political and economic oppression in Egypt. He chose them to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exodus 19: 6). He brought them to the land he promised to Abraham as a nation set apart for his redemptive purpose. God commanded the Israelites, according to Leviticus 18:1-4, not to do what the Egyptians did. He also warned them not to do what the Canaanites did and in Leviticus 18 verse 24, God made it clear to the Israelites the reasons why he had punished the Canaanites and why the land had vomited them.

With Joshua as their leader after the death of Moses, the nation of Israel began to conquer and possess the land of Canaan. The rest of the land was conquered during the time of Judges. However, the book of Judges closed with a pathetic statement that everyone did what was right in his own eyes; thus, Israel as a nation began to walk away from their God-given responsibilities. They rejected God as their king and demanded to choose their own king (I Samuel 8:4-7). Many of the kings led the nation astray to worship other gods.

The nation of Israel began to do exactly what the Egyptians did. They misused their power and position to oppress the poor, the orphans, strangers and one another socially, economically, politically

and spiritually. The kings and the priests failed to reflect God's law in the structures and institutions over which they ruled. They failed to honour God in the political, economic, social and spiritual spheres.

God responded by calling individuals and sending them out as prophets to remind Israel of their responsibility and the consequences of their actions.

The prophets were sent at different times to remind the nation of their God-given assignment. Through the prophets God rebuked his people for neglecting the poor, the orphans and the widows; he rebuked them for perverting justice, for unjust taxation and fraudulent commerce. The Israelites ignored their God-given responsibilities, they served the Lord with their lips, but their hearts were very far from him. God continued to confront them. He confronted them for not taking care of strangers. Many times, God judged them. He allowed their enemies to defeat them and carry them into exile.

However, in pursuance of his redemptive mission, God remembered the remnant, those who were serving him faithfully. He promised to bring them back and to give them their land (Amos 9:11- 12). God also reminded his people of his redemptive mission as promised in Genesis chapter three. Isaiah, Zechariah and others were sent by God to pronounce the coming of the Messiah and his mission to take his salvation to the ends of the earth (Isaiah 49:6, 56:1-8, 60:1-3, 66:19-21; Micah 5:2; Zechariah 9:9-11). After about 400 years of silence, God finally fulfilled his promise and our Lord Jesus Christ was born.

**Dr. Moses ALAGBE**



# Towards A BIBLICAL VIEW Of Peace & Justice



**Rev. Samuel Abeka**

**W**hat is wrong with us? From scholarly research, the world is more religious than one would think. It is estimated that contrary to the popular notion that religion is on the decline, 81% of humanity claim to belong to an organized faith. Besides, Christianity is the only religion with significant numbers in each region of the world. "A century ago, Margaret Loane debunked the proposition that religiosity in Europe is given way to secularization. She remarks that:

*"To count up the churchgoers and chapelgoers, compare the resulting number with the population, and then, if*

# Towards A **BIBLICAL VIEW** *Of Peace & Justice*

*there should be a great disparity, argue that the neighborhood is without religion; or to estimate the proportion of children and young persons in places of worship and then say, "Religion has no hold on them ..." is a most serious error. It is a confusion of formal outward signs and inward spiritual graces. Many of the poor rarely attend church, not because they are irreligious, but because they have long since received and absorbed the truths by which they live."*

Also, considering the replacement fertility rates in Europe, religious women, particularly Christians, are scoring higher. Therefore, Eric Kaufman of the University of London indicated in his book, *Shall Religion Inherit the Earth?* (2010) that it is irreligious that are abounded to face extinction. On this basis, Rodney Stark believes that religion, particularly Christianity, still has a future even in Europe. It will not go away, for it has the potential of revival.

The above information cuts to the heart of violence globally and points to the very source of hope for peace in the world. One of the maxims of all religious institutions proscribes war and advocates peace. Yet the question that remains to baffle many minds is how a religious (spiritual) world is full of war, violence, discrimination, intolerance, poverty, trauma, etc. The history of religions has images of atrocities committed against humanity, and this did not escape Leo D. Lefebure to point out briefly and bluntly:

*"Religious traditions promise to heal the wounds of human existence by uniting*

*human beings to ultimate reality; yet the history of religions is steeped in blood, war, sacrifice, and scapegoating. While many interpreters of religion have focused on the constructive role of religion in human life, the brutal facts of the history of religions impose the stark realization of the intertwining of religion and violence: violence, clothed in religious garb, has repeatedly cast a spell over religion and culture, luring countless "decent" people—from unlettered peasants to learned priests, preachers, and professors—into its destructive dance. . . . Moreover, texts that have been accepted as revelatory in different traditions, from the Jewish and Christian Bibles to the Qur'an to the Bhagavad Gita, directly enjoin violent struggle as the will of God."*

Simultaneously, there is ample evidence to show successes in peace initiatives by religious people for families, communities, and the world at large. Therefore, we can agree that there is a conflicting link between sacred texts and their practice. What are the reasons people of the same religious tradition would sacrifice to cause harm while others occupy themselves in bringing peace to society? From a Christian perspective, this article focuses on one important quality that should guide our conceptions of pursuing and brokering peace. It is worth mentioning that this article is an extract from a paper I wrote, which deals with *Spiritual Insight and Strength for Peace-building*.

## **UNDERSTANDING BIBLICAL VIEW OF PEACE**

There is no doubt that definitions and conceptual formulations have the subtle power to limit or stretch



# Towards A BIBLICAL VIEW Of Peace & Justice

one's ability to think outside the box. So, various understandings of peace have led to different conclusions, strategies, and methodologies for peace-building. For this reason, in the Christian tradition, peace theories have evolved over the centuries, notably Just war theory, Pacifism, and recently Just Peace.

One notable definition is that peace is the mere absence of war. This definition of all intent and purposes is very narrow; thus, O'Kane (1992) saw it as a "vacuous, passive, simplistic, and unresponsive escape mechanism too often resorted to the past-without success." Similarly, this kind of definition does not deal with underlying hatred and animosity within the hearts and minds of parties involved in a conflict. Under this condition, what is termed peace in the minds of the conflicted parties is a truce waiting for an opportune time to explode into an intractable conflict. Sadly, this is the predominantly outworking definition in our world—marriages, families, board rooms, parliaments, politics, including so-called democratic nations. The unresolved polarization within countries attests to the fact that many viewed peace only in terms of no war.

The better rendering of the definition states that peace is more than the absence of war. In this concept, the search and preservation of human dignity are at the center of its methodology. It solicits opposition to every ideology and action that deprives or discriminates against human flourishing and embraces justice as a necessary attachment to peace. These are embedded in the philosophical framework of Just Peace developed by the World Council of Churches. "It proposed Just

peace as a collective and dynamic yet grounded process of freeing human beings from fear of want, of overcoming enmity, discrimination and oppression, and of establishing conditions for just relationships that privilege the experience of the most vulnerable and respect the integrity of creation."

Given this development, we should look at peace in a broader spectrum, and MacLeod (1992) defined it as follows:

*"Awareness that all humans should have the right to a full and satisfying life. For an individual, this means developing his own and his loved ones' potential growth and reaching out to his neighbours to help assure that they have the same chance. For communities, this means developing fair regulations for living together and encouraging programs that will enhance fellowship among its many diverse elements. For nations, this means encouraging its citizens to strive for enhancement of a benign attitude toward all elements of their own society and toward all other nations."*

It is this aspect of awareness and the responsibility of the individual that strengthens the peace process. It calls for an inward introspection of one's conceptualization of peace and justice about conflict, violence, racism, discrimination, inequality, and wars. Only when a person overcomes these inhumane characteristics from within can we reach the threshold of peace. Peace with oneself is crucial, and it leads to doing justice with oneself.

## Where Justice and Peace Embrace

Usually, when we talk of peace, we mainly focus on interpersonal and international relations, paying little



# *Towards A* **BIBLICAL VIEW** *Of Peace & Justice*

attention to the intrapersonal— “Peace with oneself.” The just peace theory lends its power and conviction to the role of God in all matters of peace. “It is a gift; a blessing from God thus demonstrates the actuality of God's salvation among men and his creation.” Jesus' encounter with Zacchaeus illustrates this reality and necessity of intrapersonal peace (Lk 19:1-8). Jesus showed us an example of what can happen to a person who truly experiences the gift of peace from God. Here was a chief tax collector—a role famously known for fraud. His encounter with Jesus resulted in a sudden announcement; to give half of all his goods to the poor and that if he had defrauded anyone, he would restore fourfold more. This reaction is more than what the Old Testament law requires (Lev 5:16; Numbers 5:7), which adds a fifth (20%). One could see from this confession the readiness to the commitment to justice. The poor need justice, and Jesus gave him the gift of peace to dispense it. The peace he received within himself when he encountered Christ brought the best of humanity in him and began to see a responsibility hitherto he had ignored. It is worthy to note that equity, the practice of truth, and justice would hardly reach its beauty without this peace. We simply cannot give what we do not have.

Peace within is necessary in our world of consumerism and materialism since economics is one of the prime reasons for war and conflict. Exploitation, competition, and wars are all fruits of

a lack of contentment. Personal peace should be the health status of peacemakers and the ultimate goal of peace enterprise. An unhealthy soul is a restless one who could agitate conflict for a whole community, nation, and world. The desire to have more is internally driven, which is a critical concept in the Christian doctrines; evil desires come from within a person. Therefore what fuels racism, discrimination, hatred, violence, and all of its categories come from within a restless soul, insecure of the future.

## **Conclusion**

The article's introduction stimulates hope for religion now and in the future, yet the ever-increasing presence of war, hatred, violence, racism, discrimination, economic exploitation, and environmental degradation point to a contradiction of faith and its practice. This article has shown that these vices are unacceptable and call for a radical view of understanding peace and justice. We should embrace MacLeod's theory as stated above on peace, which encourages the right for every human to have a full and satisfying life. While this is a right call and humanly difficult, Jesus showed us an unconventional means through his encounter with Zacchaeus: that peace and justice begin from within a person, and it is part of the gift of salvation that God offers. Therefore, in as much as God has dispersed Christians in every region of the world, the call to promote peace and justice is an urgent missionary goal for every Christian. Once Jesus' method is uniquely practicable through a gift from himself, Christians worldwide should practice and lead justice and peace for a better world.



# Discipleship

*At Amsterdam Bible Academic, discipleship is at the core of our program*

**T**he problem of the body of Christ, in different parts of the world is the failure to disciple those who choose to follow our Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus began his ministry by choosing twelve men who followed him and submit to his teachings and ways of life. They were together 24/7 through the entire three years that our Lord spent on the earth. They stayed with him and learned from him how to live and function as a child of God. Jesus came to show us a new way of life. A life of faith in a physical world of facts. A Life of the kingdom of God while living in the kingdom of men.

Before our Lord ascended to heaven, he commanded his first disciples to go into the world and disciple the nations. This is the main assignment of the first disciples, and this is the main assignment of the body of Christ.

At Amsterdam Bible Academic, discipleship is at the core of our program. Every student is assigned to a lecturer for this purpose and our goal is to help our students to be faithful disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ and to disciple others as they travel through life as followers of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I happened to stumble on article 17 of the Mennonite church about discipleship, which I believe should be read by every church denomination. Part of this article is reproduced below without editing.

## Article 17. Discipleship And The Christian Life by Mennonite Church

We believe that Jesus Christ calls us to take up our cross and follow him. Through the gift of God's saving grace, we are empowered to be disciples of Jesus, filled with his Spirit, following his teachings and his path through suffering to new life. As by faith we walk in Christ's way, we are being transformed into his image. We become conformed to Christ, faithful to the will of God, and separated from the evil in the world.

The experience of God through the Holy Spirit, prayer, Scripture, and the church empowers us and teaches us how to follow Christ. Likewise, as we follow Christ in our lives, we are brought into closer relationship with God, and Christ dwells in us.

Through grace, God works in us to recreate us in the image of Christ, himself the image of the invisible God. Wherever Christian faith is active in love and truth, there is the new creation. By the new birth, we are adopted into God's family, becoming children of God.

Source: <https://www.mennoniteusa.org/who-are-mennonites/what-we-believe/confession-of-faith/discipleship-and-the-christian-life/>

### CORONA & LECTURES AT ABA

Zoom App provided us the opportunity to continue our studies at ABA.

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### Level One (Certified Minister)

Upon completion of the Level One Ministerial Certificate, a student should possess the academic qualification that includes a working knowledge of Bible study methods, New Testament content, and Pentecostal doctrine. He or she will possess the basic skills needed to begin serving in a ministerial role in the local church.

- . BIB 114 Christ in the Synoptic Gospels
- . THE 114 Introduction to Pentecostal Doctrine
- . BIB 115 Acts: The Holy Spirit at Work in Believers
- . BIB 117 Prison Epistles: Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, and Philemon
- . BIB 121 Introduction to Hermeneutics: How to Interpret the Bible
- . MIN 123 The Local Church in Evangelism
- . MIN171 A Spirit-Empowered Church: an Acts 2 Ministry Model (required course in 2018)
- . THE 142 Assemblies of God History, Missions, and Governance \*
- . MIN 181 Relationships and Ethics in Ministry
- . MIN 191 Beginning Ministerial Internship
- . THE411 The Church: Pentecost to Reformation may be taken in place of THE142 Assemblies of God History, Missions & Governance for those students who are not pursuing Assemblies of God credentials or who are not affiliated with the Assemblies of God. Credential candidates may not take THE411 in place of THE142.

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**NOTE:** Students who completed their Level One (Certified) studies under the previous eleven-course plan (1997-August 2005) should follow the [Level Two Transition Program](#).

- . THE 211 Introduction to Theology: A Pentecostal Perspective
- . BIB 212 New Testament Survey
- . BIB 214 Old Testament Survey
- . BIB 215 Romans: Justification by Faith
- . MIN 223 Introduction to Homiletics
- . THE 245 Eschatology: A Study of Things to Come
- . MIN 251 Effective Leadership
- . MIN 261 Introduction to Assemblies of God Missions
- . MIN 281 Conflict Management for Church Leaders
- . MIN 291 Intermediate Ministerial Internship

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Upon completion of Level Three Ministerial Certificate, a student should possess the academic qualification that includes mastery of several of the more difficult books of the Bible, advanced theological concepts, and administrative skills required for ministerial roles.

**NOTE:** All students who have completed Levels One and Two, whether under the pre-2007 requirements or transitional license, should take the following Level Three (Ordained Minister) requirements:

- . THE 311 Prayer and Worship
- . BIB 313 The Corinthian Correspondence
- . BIB 318 The Pentateuch
- . BIB 322 The Poetic Books
- . MIN 325 Preaching in the Contemporary World
- . MIN 327 Church Administration, Finance, and Law
- . MIN 381 Pastoral Ministry
- . MIN 391 Advanced Ministerial Internship

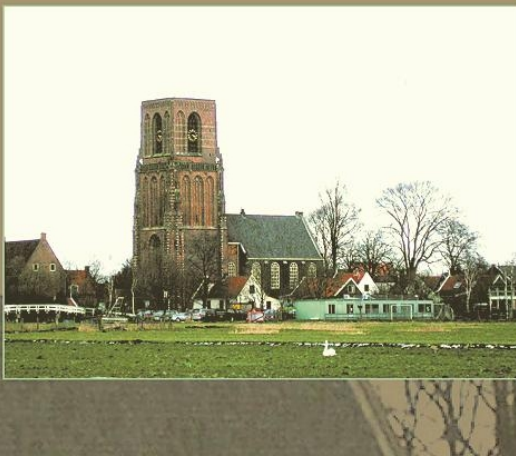


# Review of The Dutch and their Gods

## THE DUTCH AND THEIR GODS

SECULARIZATION AND TRANSFORMATION OF RELIGION  
IN THE NETHERLANDS SINCE 1950

ERIK SENGERS (ED.)



All the contributors did a great job. They all presented their arguments objectively. The book helps me as a foreign missionary to understand the recent historical past of the Dutch church, the response of the Dutch Christianity to different stages of secularization and the prevailing spiritual situation in the Netherlands.

However, I observed that none of the authors gave a significant attention to the contribution and the place of the immigrant churches and the Dutch Pentecostal church to the spiritual climate of the Netherlands.

I do agree with Erik Sengers in his introduction that the Netherlands is characterized by 'a free-floating' religion with a high number of seekers. However, the question posed in this introduction is whether the recent developments in modern Dutch religion a sign of secularization is or of a transformation of religion.

In his contribution to the issue of secularization and the decline of Dutch churches James Kennedy made a very important observation on page 34, and I quote

"Probably too often the plethora of religious organizations did not sufficiently motivate people to develop a rich inner life, opening the churches to the criticism, heard often in the 1960s' that the forms of religious organization were arbitrary and based more on earthly motives than spiritual conviction".

However, his conclusion that recent Dutch religious history should be interpreted as a transformation of religion, not as it's decline is too ambiguous considering his observation as stated above, the continuous decline in church membership of the Dutch mainline churches .and the numerous empty church buildings ( many of which has been sold and converted to shopping mall, sport hall, mosques etc. )

I tend to agree with Van Harskamp's observation that in various churches and religions, significant changes have taken place, however, secularization is still taking place. I will however like to defer with him that it is a conjecture that secularization marches on while interest in religiosity continues and perhaps even grows. Secularization has come to stay but it is very clear that people are not satisfy and are still searching for the missing link in their spirituality.

Jos Becker's graph 1. on secularization according to CSB and SCP clearly indicates the rise in secularization (though slowing down ) , and the church membership data confirmed the decline in church membership.

This contribution with data shows clearly that secularization is still taking place while church membership and church attendance are in decline.

The above observation is further confirmed by Paul Post on page 77. According to him, church attendance in Roman Catholic church decreased during the last 35 years from more than 2.7 million to 439,000 visitors per weekend.

It is also evident in this presentation

This observation could be confirmed considering the numbers of people travelling to places like Nigeria and India for the purpose of spirituality.

# GOD

## The Creator of Heaven and Earth Offers a Choice

Rev. Ingrid Powel



In the book of Deuteronomy God offers His people: The Choice of Life or Death

[11](#)“This command I am giving you today is not too difficult for you, and it is not beyond your reach. [12](#)It is not kept in heaven, so distant that you must ask, 'Who will go up to heaven and bring it down so we can hear it and obey?' [13](#)It is not kept beyond the sea, so far away that you must ask, 'Who will cross the sea to bring it to us so we can hear it and obey?' [14](#)No, the message is very close at hand; it is on your lips and in your heart so that you can obey it.

[15](#)“Now listen! Today I am giving you a choice between life and death, between prosperity and disaster. [16](#)For I command you this day to love the LORD your God and to keep his commands, decrees, and regulations by walking in his ways. If you do this, you will live and multiply, and the LORD your God will bless you and the land you are about to enter and occupy.

[17](#)“But if your heart turns away and you refuse to listen, and if you are drawn away to serve and worship other gods, [18](#)then I warn you now that you will certainly be destroyed. You will not live a long, good life in the land you are crossing the Jordan to occupy.

[19](#)“Today I have given you the choice between life and death, between blessings and curses. Now I call on heaven and earth to witness the choice you make. Oh, that you would choose life, so that you and your descendants might live! [20](#)You can make this choice by loving the LORD your God, obeying

him, and committing yourself firmly to him. This is the key to your life. And if you love and obey the LORD, you will live long in the land the LORD swore to give your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.”

Life comprises of a string of choices. The main choice we have to make is a choice for Eternal Life or Eternal Death. Once the choice for life is made you have to continue to make choices on the way. Decide on whom you will trust, while running the race on the path of Life.

Proverbs 3:5

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.

God does not only invite us to walk the path of Life, but also navigates us so walk straight and make decisions that bring glory to God.

As the hymn writer and poet John Oxeham, so beautifully describes in “The ways”

THE WAYS

To every man there openeth  
A Way, and Ways, and a Way.  
And the High Soul climbs the High way,  
And the Low Soul gropes the Low,  
And in between, on the misty flats,  
The rest drift to and fro.



# GOD

The Creator of Heaven and Earth

## Offers a Choice

But to every man there openeth  
A High Way, and a Low.  
And every man decideth  
The Way his soul shall go.

In every situation a choice must be made, a choice to obey God or not. The choices we make on our path of life determine if our soul goes the high way or the Low. I pray

Thar your choices will be for the High Way, for His Way.

In the bible we find many examples of believers in God who made courageous choices to Go God's way.

### Joshua 24:15

<sup>15</sup> But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.” Courage to stand for the Lord

### Samuel 3:10

<sup>10</sup> The LORD came and stood there, calling as at the other times, “Samuel! Samuel!”

Then Samuel said, “Speak, for your servant is listening.” Courage to listen and obey

### Daniel 3: 16

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. <sup>17</sup>If the God whom we serve exists, then He is able to deliver us from the blazing fiery furnace and from your hand, O king.

<sup>18</sup>But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden statue you have set up.” Courage to reject Idolatry.

Obedience to God requires courage and is often met with opposition. Opposition from within and without. We should remember that it is privilege and also requires perseverance and dedication to be obey God's calling.

Ephesians 2:10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

God has a plan for his children and every plan of God will be opposed in this sinful world, because the ruler of this present world is God's opponent.

But when Jesus speaks to His disciples about persecution in In John 16:33 He says:

These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world

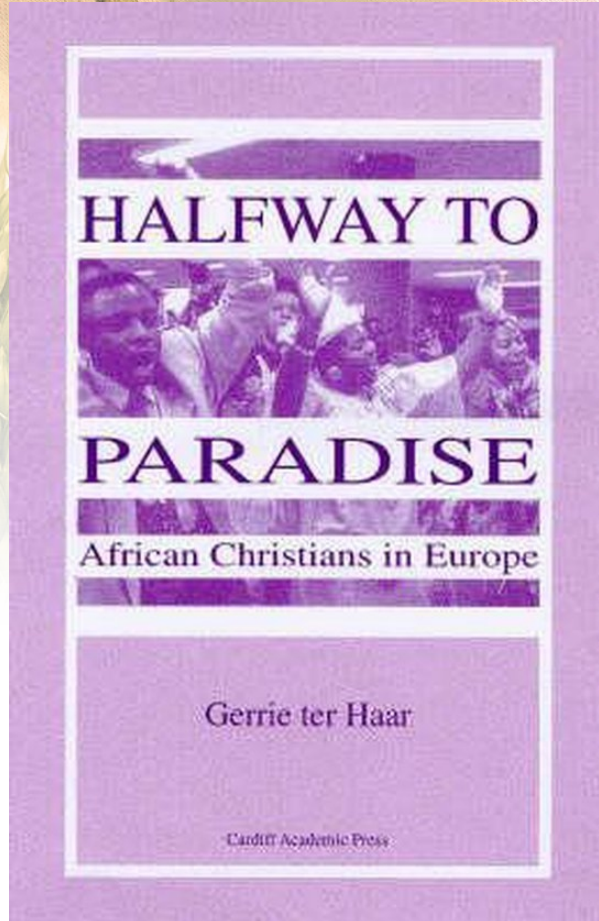
Sometimes obeying God might literally cost you your life.

- Jerusalem: Jesus paid with His life. God clothed in flesh came as a missionary to the earth to bring the good news to humanity and save whosoever believed in Him. He died a torturous death on the cross at the age of 33
- Equador: Jim Eliot was an American, who left America at the age of 28, to answer his call to Equador. to bring the gospel to the Auca Indians. He and four others were killed on arrival in 1956. Jim left behind a wife and a little child. His motto was: He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose. Two years later his wife went to the same tribe as a missionary with her 3-year-old daughter. The tribe accepted Jesus as Lord.
- Uganda: Imam Yusuf, became a Christian in 2020, his wife left him took the 2 youngest children with her and left the two older children with him. He was killed at 41 years old

# BOOK

## Review

### Halfway To Paradise (African Christians in Europe)



This book is a compilation of the result of research conducted by the author concerning the new Christian movements which the Africans have brought to Europe, the influence of these churches on the immigrants' social-economic life and their attempt to evangelize Europe. The social political background of the formation of African congregation was also discussed in detail.

The focus of the book is Bijlmer, the multicultural ethnically populated South east of Amsterdam in Holland.

She further addresses the various issues concerning immigrants and in particular African immigrants of the Christian faith in Europe. It dealt with the content of their belief and how they practice this belief, what they think about Europeans and how Europeans relate to them.

It also addresses the differences between the African and the European Christianity.

It touches on the dynamic interaction which exists between tradition and the modernity of African Christianity as practiced in Europe.

There is a chapter that deals with the way in which (African) ethnic and religious communities living

abroad are often described in terms of a diaspora. It dealt thoroughly with the implications of the term diaspora as regards Africans living in Europe. In this respect it also addresses the ways these African churches are organized and how their networks function.

She concluded the book by using the situation in Bijlmer and the results of researches that has been conducted in this area about the interaction between religion, ethnicity and culture to show the future importance of this interaction in the future multicultural societies of Europe.

#### ANALYSIS AND CRITICS

In as much as I do agree with most of the author's observations and discoveries, I have a number of disagreements over some of her analysis.

The author focused to a great extent on The True Teaching Of Christ Temple (TTCT) in Bijlmer in the first few chapters of the book, using this church as an example of the types of African immigrant churches in The Netherlands. The TTCT's practices syncretism, mixing the Scripture with African spiritual tradition. They do not have any contact with any of the other African initiated churches in Bijlmer. Therefore, this church cannot and should not be used as a representative of African initiated churches in the Netherlands.

In discussing the charismatic character of the African believers and their congregation, the author made the following statement and I quote: "They easily change church affiliation or frequent several churches at the same time. When questioned about this they will often say that the essential thing is that 'we all worship the same God'. Nevertheless it does also happen that people break away from one congregation to start a new church, just as there are examples of the opposite, where two or more groups have merged into one in the course of time. On balance, however, the proliferation of these churches cannot be ascribed generally to a process of schism." I have been involved in this area since 1993. I will like to say



# GOD Offers a Choice

## The Creator of Heaven and Earth

- India: Evangelist Ravi was killed because he refused to stop sharing the gospel. His wife Sumi declares; if it must be "I'll die for Jesus; I will never forsake him. I will continue to live here and continue with the ministry of my husband.
- Cameroun: Christians gather for service on Sunday. Because of violent attacks by Boko Haram, Dieudonné, 15-year-old, keeps guard to warn members of approaching danger.
- Amsterdam: Believers in Jesus Christ choose to walk the narrow path, that leads

to Life. They stirred up on another to use the Gift of God which was in them, knowing that God had not given them a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind in conformity to 2 Timothy 1:6-7

May the chorus of the song by Jamie Owens-Collins ring in our hearts:

We're marching on... with hearts courageous,  
We'll follow where you want us to.  
And should you lead us where the battle rages,  
Let us march with hearts courageous, after You.

MAY THE ALMIGHTY GOD, THE CREATOR BE GLORIFIED IN OUR LIVES. MAY HIS WILL BE DONE ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN, IN JESUS' NAME

AMEN AND AMEN

## BOOK Review

### Halfway To Paradise (African Christians in Europe)

from my experience that the breaking and establishment of many African initiated churches is due to reasons such as personality clashes, lack of training among the leadership, organization and financial mismanagement. It is really schism, and this is a real problem.

The statement on page one hundred and twenty seven that "the prohibition against smoking and drinking which are enjoined in most African initiated churches may also be seen as part of the survival strategies of illegal immigrants, since abstention helps them to stay in good health." This statement is absolutely not true. Many African believers in Europe come from Pentecostal background and to abstain from alcohol and smoking is part of the Pentecostal doctrine.

On page one hundred and forty two, the author made a general statement that African believers are proud of their tradition such as pouring libation (an African tradition) during burial ceremony. This is very unfortunate.

I do agree that there is lack of real contact between the African-initiated churches and the established

European churches, despite the works of different organizations in this direction.

#### TRANSFERABLE PRINCIPLES.

##### Use of literature and Mass media

According to the author, this has been very effective in the propagation of the gospel, we are living in the world of information and entertainment. I believe that we cannot be more effective in presenting the gospel as we creatively present the message in a way that will appeal to our audience.

##### Demonstration of the power of God in healing and deliverance

As African believer or church in Europe, I strongly believe that one of the ways to have an impact in this continent is through the demonstration of the power of God in healing and deliverance. Europeans have a great depth of knowledge and we cannot outwit them.

##### Unity

When churches are united, there is potential for a great impact.



## TYNDALE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY BADHOVEDORP THE NETHERLANDS

**"LOCATED IN THE NETHERLANDS, FOCUSED ON EUROPE AND REACHING THE WORLD."**

Tyndale Theological Seminary is an interdenominational, evangelical seminary which prepares students for ministries as pastors, teachers, missionaries, church planters, and denominational leaders around the world. The seminary is a graduate, professional school offering accredited Masters Programs in the English language.

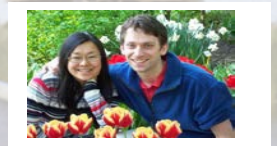
Tyndale is located only minutes from the center of Amsterdam, the Netherlands. The seminary's location provides a wonderful venue for Tyndale's international student body. Since 1985, students have come from over 75 different countries to be trained for ministry.

"What a great place to study! Staff and students from all over the world, from many different denominations, all together with one desire: to grow in knowing Christ and making Him known. This experience will be beneficial for the rest of my life and ministry. Martijn Rutgers, Netherlands

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## ABOUT AMSTERDAM BIBLE ACADEMY (ABA)

**A**BA is a weekend and evening School designed to meet the needs of every believer in and around Amsterdam who is committed to knowing Christ and making him known. We recognized that many could not afford a full time Bible school. This could be due to full time working schedule or numerous other reasons. For such people Amsterdam Bible Academy is the best place to enhance your spiritual growth and prepare for ministry. Since 1996, ABA have been providing Theological, Mission and Ministry education to local church leaders and believers in and around Amsterdam. Many of our graduates are now in different ministries in and outside The

Netherlands. ABA is affiliated to Global university Springfield, Missouri in USA. Degrees and Diplomas awarded by ABA is recognized world wide. Check [www.globaluniversity.edu](http://www.globaluniversity.edu) for more information. If your desire is to know Christ and to make Him Known we will be glad to have you study with us. ABA is a Not-for-Profit training Department of Foundation Life & Peace International for the purpose of raising and developing transformational leaders for the mission of God to the world.. Jesus said, "I will build my church...". Amsterdam Bible Academy is committed to the building of Christ's church for the spiritual, social and economic transformation of the world. ABA Registrar: Pastor Henry Anna

## PARTNERSHIP & APPRECIATION

**W**e will like to thank all our prayer and financial partners for your support and encouragement. We are grateful to Stg. URCO for scholarship grants. Your partnership is a great source of encouragement. Amsterdam Bible Academy is Not For Profit project of Foundation Life & Peace International. (ANBI) Your prayer and financial support will be greatly appreciated, to enable us to continue to

provide this much needed ministry, mission and Theological training to the immigrant church leaders and members in the Netherlands. Gifts and donations will be appreciated.

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## CHURCH IN ACTION



**Migrant churches reaching and supporting our community during the corona epidemic**



# The African Churches in Amsterdam

**T**he exodus of Africans to The Netherlands began in the late 80's. This exodus of Africans to different parts of Europe could be seen as the sovereign act of God. Many Africans left their countries, families and culture for Europe due to several reasons, ranging from the search for greener pasture to the flight from economic/political instabilities, oppression and wars.

Prior to 1980, many African countries were relatively politically and economically stable. Before 1980, Africans only travel for business or study purposes. This situation changed in the '80s and many Africans including large numbers of believers were forced to flee to different parts of Europe.

The movement of people from one region of the world to another has always been part of life. Stories of displaced people group, exodus and refugees could be traced back to the time of Abraham. The same could also be seen in the history of the Jewish nation and during and after the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. God always use this for the accomplishment of His purpose.

**Reflecting on Ray's book (Theology as Big as the City) on migration, I could only conclude that the African and immigrants from other parts of the world, living in The Netherlands and in different European cities, are not necessarily victims, but people in the plan and purpose of God to reach the nations just as God used the Jewish dispersion in the 400 years inter-testament period for the preparation of the spread of the gospel.**

**I will be focusing on the development, challenges, expectations and concern of African congregations in The Netherlands.**

But Briefly let me say one or two things about GATE.  
GATE stands for Gifts From Africa to Europe.

GATE is a networking organization that was established by AEA ( Association of Evangelicals of Africa ) for the purpose of networking the African believers, congregations and African Christian organizations for Mission in Europe . Our activities involve development of leaders and training believers for mission in Europe, Organizing consultations among the Afro-European Christian leaders, and between Afro-European and European Christian leaders, Organization of conferences, seminars workshops for training and sharing of ideas, that empowers us for partnership and mission.

Our final goal is bringing African congregations in Europe into partnership with European congregations for a combine evangelization of Europe.

The vision of GATE has been kept alive but we are still very far from reaching our goal. This is due to a several reasons . If time permits I will be glad to share more about GATE.

But for now I will like to deal with the issues at hand.

**Development of African congregations.**

The first group of African immigrants in The Netherlands came from Ghana, west Africa. On arrival in the Netherlands, they began to meet regularly in small groups for prayer at homes . These groups also offer social and emotional support to members. The inability to fit into the established churches in The Netherlands due to the cultural differences and the feelings of non-acceptability are some of the initial reasons for the establishment of the first generation of African churches. Before 1980, there was no visible African congregation in Amsterdam or in any part of The Netherlands. By the mid-1990's African Christians living in the Netherlands had a wide choice of churches at their disposal in fairly easy reach . Today one could find African churches from every part of Africa in Amsterdam.

It is important to note that 95% of the existing African churches were not sent by their home churches. These churches were established by individuals or groups of



# The African Churches in Amsterdam

African believers who felt called or who rose up to the religious/spiritual and social needs of their fellow immigrants. This is important to remember as it is one of the root of many of the major problems confronting African churches in Amsterdam. As at June 2005, the number of African churches in Amsterdam has greatly increased. The available record indicates establishment of new churches nearly on monthly basis.

For practical and analytical purposes, the African churches in Amsterdam could be categorized into five groups. 1) The fully independent churches, 2) African independent churches which later connected with the home churches. 3) African churches planted by Africans supported by Dutch independent churches 4) African Catholic church without link to Roman Catholic Church, and 5) African churches planted by African missionaries sent from Africa.

**Conclusion:** The establishment of the first sets of African churches in The Netherlands can be said to be a response to the inability of the first sets of African believers in finding a place of acceptance in the Dutch churches and because of this, these churches are culturally homogenous. However there are a number of African churches that can now be classified as multicultural, especially those in Amsterdam. It is important at this junction to mention that immigrants from about 150 nations make up 45% of the population of Amsterdam.

## Challenges confronting African churches in Amsterdam

**Trained Personnel :** Proliferation of African immigrant churches without following biblical church planting principles has resulted in many self-acclaimed pastors and prophets. 95% of these pastors have no formal Theological, biblical, ministry or pastoral training. This lack of training especially in the area of culture and cultural adaptability is responsible for mismanagement, personality / culture clash and our

inability to keep the Dutch indigenous and people from other cultures in our congregations.

**Language problem :** This is the major part of the Dutch culture posing a great challenge to us as Africans. Since many were not sent as missionaries, but came for the purpose of finding a greener pasture, the Dutch language was therefore not a priority. In Amsterdam as in other parts of The Netherlands, nearly every body speaks English. Foreigners are not therefore motivated to learn the Dutch language. Some of these pastors expressed their desire to learn the language, but of course time must be devoted for such a project. Since 99% are doing secular jobs in addition to their pastoral jobs, it becomes very difficult to have extra time for learning the language. The problem of language therefore is one of the greatest obstacles confronting the African immigrant churches in Amsterdam.

**Unstable environment:** Netherlands that used to be generous to immigrants is now hostile to people of different culture, especially at the Governmental level. This could be attributed to the global terrorist challenge. The harsh blanket policy on immigration is unfortunately having a toll on the African congregations.

**Issue of Time :** Africans are not very conscious of time. This is in serious contrast to the Dutch culture. The issue of 'taking' and not keeping time is a great cultural problem affecting the African congregations.

**Doctrinal Differences:** Most African believers came from the Pentecostal background. Speaking in tongues and abstinence from Alcohol are some of the strong doctrines. This is an area that has hindered cooperation between them and the Dutch indigenous churches.

**Acceptability by the indigenous churches :** There is no real contact for partnership between the Dutch indigenous and the African immigrant churches. There are many reasons for this. Doctrinal and cultural differences are largely responsible for this, among other reasons are the non-welcoming attitudes either consciously or unconsciously of the leaders of the established churches. However this is gradually changing, but we still have a long way to go on both sides.

# The African Churches in Amsterdam

**Lack of place of worship :** Many of the African churches in Amsterdam are in the South Eastern part of the city. This is because this part of the city is made up of more than 70% non-Dutch residents. When this part of the city was created, the church was thought to have die . In fact only one church building was in the initial plan. The migration and the concentration of foreigner was not anticipated. The area was initially built to accommodate the Dutch citizens returning from South Africa after the collapse of Apartheid. It was a failed project which eventually became a haven for foreigners. Many African churches therefore do not have a permanent place of worship. Some did succeeded in renting school halls for their Sunday worship services. The acute shortage of accommodation drew the attention of the Government in the past three years and now permission has been giving to rent or buy properties at sites reserved specifically for industries. However, many of these churches cannot afford the cost.

**Finances :** A large percentage of African immigrants are doing menial jobs with very low salary, despite the fact that many are graduates of Universities from their countries of origin. The language problem among others in addition to Dutch laws of integration are responsible for this great problem. Hence many Africans in Amsterdam are financially poor despite their skills and education.

**Division :** There are hundreds of African churches scattered all over the city of Amsterdam. This might look good, but it is sad that many of them are solitary work of individuals or groups that doesn't have contact with other groups. The African church in The Netherlands is seriously divided, not on doctrinal issues. Among others, ethnicity and personality clashes are responsible for majority of the problems that result in division.

In the past ten years the numbers of the African

churches in Amsterdam alone has doubled from eighty to more than one hundred and sixty. As good as this might appears, it is to my opinion not productive. The motive of leaving existing churches and establishing another is not because of the call and the desire for mission. In most cases, the reasons can be traced back to personality problems in the church. Because of this most African churches are small and weak congregations unable to financially support themselves and not attractive to the Dutch population. I will therefore like to disagree with Gerrie ter Haar who says that the proliferation of these churches cannot be ascribed generally to a process of schism. .

Despite all these challenges, African churches have in the past fifteen years brought back to Amsterdam the visible presence of the church. Their presence has been a great source of inspiration to the Dutch believing remnants. We have been approached by many Dutch believers with the desire to share in the joy they observe in our worship services and private lives despite the huge difficulties confronting us as immigrants.

These churches in addition to creating positive spiritual climate in the city has been a great source of social support for many immigrants living in Amsterdam. They are havens for those who would otherwise have ended up in the street and create huge social problems in the community. These churches offer immigrants the place to learn how to survive in their new environment. It is a place through which immigrants gradually flow into the community. Many of the social problems confronting immigrants are successfully dealt with without the knowledge of the local Government. Many of these problems would have cost the Government a huge budget. The hope of the church in Amsterdam seems to lie squarely on the vibrant spirit filled African churches scattered all over the city. But our effectiveness depends largely on the degree and the strength of our unity and understanding of the culture of our host nation. I have resolved to devote a larger proportion of my ministry for this cause.



# The African Churches in Amsterdam

## Expectation and Concern

After ten years of working with and among the African immigrant churches in Amsterdam, I will like to conclude that these churches are great sources for workers in God's kingdom for Europe. Their endurance and faith in the face of adversities and situations that sometimes look insurmountable is unparalleled. The gifts of prayer and worship could transform the mission of the church in our postmodern society of Amsterdam. ( Music is trans-cultural ) The joy of worshipping and serving God is clearly evident in many African immigrant churches. The African immigrant churches are doing a lot in providing social and spiritual support for Africans living in Amsterdam. Our challenge is networking and crossing the cultural border, so that through us the Lord will reveal Himself to the Dutch themselves.

This I believe is possible in partnership. Partnering with the existing established indigenous churches will open several possibilities for joint mission projects. Mission history has proved that the best people that can evangelize a nation are the indigenes themselves. Partnership will also reduce isolation, as at now the African immigrant churches are isolated. Most of these churches are many times not aware of Government policies and how these policies affect the community in which we live and ministered. Many do not have the knowledge of the socio-political and economic situation of our host nation. So also are they not aware of the Dutch culture. Networking and partnering in different areas is the a solution to these problems . However partnering should and must begin among the African immigrant churches themselves. This is a big barrier that is yet to be conquered. However the past five years has witnessed the coming together of about twenty African pastors in this direction. There is more to do in bringing the like-minded pastors together in partnership for the purpose of mission. Our

effectiveness will rise or fall with the degree and level of partnership among ourselves and with the Dutch indigenous churches.

There are still several obstacles that are needed to be overcome. These includes cultural and doctrinal differences. The major obstacle is the Dutch view of Africans as beggars and those who have come with a bowl in their hands. Unfortunately, the indigenous churches are not exempted from this wrong perception.. I believe dialogue and sharing experiences is the starting point.

In the Western political climate, the issue of number is of great importance, hence the need for networking among these scattered African churches for effectiveness. In the present situation, many of these churches are not effective as far as mission is concerned. Another important reason for networking is the opportunity for fellowship, brainstorming and sharing ideas with regards to mission in relation to culture. Networking will also provide a platform for effectively dealing with the issue of accountability and schism. In addition to all the above, networking also provides opportunity for group trainings in much needed areas of ministry and leadership in a multicultural setting .

Ignorance of the culture is a guarantee for isolation and ineffectiveness. This includes the knowledge of the language, the social structures , values systems and world view of the nation.

In response to all of these we are now re-evaluating the only theological and ministry training center in Amsterdam ( Amsterdam Bible Academy founded in 1996 ) for the purpose of meeting the above needs. Our goal is to turn this training center into a ministry research and training center , where workers at leadership level will be produced for the great work that God has entrusted to us in our present multicultural setting

The image shows a close-up, slightly blurred view of several wheat stalks with golden-brown heads. The stalks are positioned vertically, filling the frame. Overlaid on this background is a series of horizontal black lines, typical of a notebook page. In the top-left corner, the word "Notes:" is written in a black, cursive-style font. The overall lighting is warm and soft, suggesting a sunny day in a field.





# AMSTERDAM BIBLE ACADEMY

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## AMSTERDAM BIBLE ACADEMY

Amsterdam Bible Academy: Opportunity for personal spiritual growth,  
training, education, empowerment for mission and ministries