

The authority of Scripture and the *incomprehensibilitas* of God

A van de Beek*
(Free University Amsterdam)

ABSTRACT

The authority of Scripture and the *incomprehensibilitas* of God

In this article the author provides a new perspective on the Reformed notion of the authority of Scripture. Following the lead of the Belgic Confession he indicates that this authority does not imply that the Bible should be regarded as a collection of fixed truths but that it communicates the Truth as a relationship to Christ to those who experience the presence of God through reading the Bible in communion with believers throughout the ages. Because the Bible is the living Word of God and the living God himself meets us in it, the Scriptures are pre-eminently – more so than nature – the medium through which we know God in his unfathomable liberty.

1 SCRIPTURE AS REVELATION

Why is the Bible the Word of God? One can give various answers to this question. Articles 5 and 7 of the Belgic Confession mention various options: because the Church says so; because it is such an ancient book; because most people believe it to be so¹. But whatever arguments men can conceive for the Bible being the Word of God, they never appear sufficiently strong that one can base faith upon them. The only reason that is left is that the Bible is the Word of God because it proves itself to be so. That does not mean that the Bible is true because it says it is. If that were the case, one could open the Bible at II Timothy 3:16, “All scripture is inspired by

* Prof Van de Beek is also a research associate of Prof C J Wethmar in the Department of Dogmatics and Christian Ethics at the University of Pretoria.

1 Article 5: “not so much because the Church receives and approves them as holy and canonical..”; Article 7: “Nor may we put on equal footing any writings of men, however holy they may have been, with the divine Scriptures; nor custom, with the truth of God ... nor the great multitude; nor antiquity; nor the succession of times or persons; nor the councils, decrees or statutes”. English translation by Vander Lugt, G 1968, as approved for use by the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America.

God,” and say’ See, the Bible is true, because the Bible says so!’ But that is circular reasoning.

When I say that the Bible is true because it proves itself to us to be true, I mean something different. It is a matter of the words coming across with authority. One accepts them in the same manner as one does the words of another man who comes across to you as trustworthy, so that you are in fact believing not only the words but the other person. In the last analysis, you trust another person not because someone else says that you must do so, or because they themselves claim to be trustworthy, but because of other often intangible factors that are associated with the personhood of the other. Only then is there a basis for a relation of real trust. It is the same with the reading of the Bible. In the reading and listening, God comes through, we are convinced. That affords a much greater certainty than if someone else had said that the Bible is true. This certainty is what is involved in the concept of *autopistia*: Scripture makes itself believable². What the Bible tells us comes to life in us. The One about whom the Bible speaks begins to live in us. Thus the Bible becomes a contact with another person: it is the living word of God, *viva vox Dei*³. This concept, which played such an important role in the early Reformation, can not be emphasized enough. The Bible is not a book containing truths, but Truth. By Truth we do not mean an axiom, from which all truths are derived, but the Person who is the Truth⁴.

2 Calvin (1559:1,7,4-5).

3 Therefore it does not go far enough to say, as does König (2001:17), that the Bible is a witness to the real revelation and is only revelation in that sense. I can well understand his idea as a reaction to a view that strongly objectifies Scripture, but it does not do justice to the pneumatological character of the address of Scripture, on the one hand, and to the equally pneumatological character of revelation in the events and persons, such as the Exodus from Egypt or the person of Jesus, of which Scripture speaks. For the latter it is true that He is confessed not because flesh and blood have revealed that, but through the Father in heaven, who has given his Spirit (Mt 16:17). The idea of a distinction between the revealed Word and the written Word goes back to Barth (1932:4).

4 Cf. Conradie et al (1995:1): “In fact, believers hope to meet God personally through the reading of the Bible”. I am in full agreement with this, although more than these authors I would emphasize that we become “believers” through God first speaking to us, and that in each new reading of the

In theology this experience of being addressed and convinced is called “the witness of the Holy Spirit”. In the figure of the Holy Spirit, it is God himself who approaches us in the words of the Bible. On the one side, this is a matter of being convinced inwardly (the internal witness of the Holy Spirit); on the other side a matter of the words as they stand in the Bible (the outward witness of the Holy Spirit). But the two go together. You cannot speak of the Holy Spirit, who convinces us, apart from the Scriptures, and you cannot speak of the Bible as the Word of God without also speaking of being inwardly convinced of that. That would be as silly as saying, “Mary is the nicest girl that there is, but I know nothing about her”⁵.

All too often the Bible is seen only as objective truth. Many discussions in Reformed theology deal with the objectivity of the authority of Scripture⁶. In this, we forget that the *testimonium externum* and the *testimonium internum* always go together. Where that is forgotten, one is no longer dealing with the work of the Spirit, who is after all God precisely in indwelling with people. Many discussions about the authority of scripture lack this pneumatological centre and therefore become sterile and dead. Only when we recognize that the authority of Scripture means that we are being addressed in an authoritative manner does Scripture maintain its character as the living word of God.

This does not at all mean that we should fall into subjectivism, at least if that is understood to mean that the truth of Scripture depends on my own subjective choice or feelings. The truth of Scripture is not a subjective choice, nor is it an objective fact capable of

Bible God is always present there again, where we had not counted on finding Him, and is thus present in ways we had not expected. Through this, the active process of interpretation receives much more emphasis than the experience of the address in the name of God.

5 Cf. Van Wyk (1989:51): “It seems to me impossible that a non-believer – as a non-believer – will experience the Bible as the Word of God, and equally impossible that a believer will not experience the Bible as the Word of God”.

6 In an extreme form this is exemplified by the Synod of the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands at Assen, where the question of the historical facticity of the serpent in Eden having spoken was elevated to status confessionis.

being proven⁷. One can better express the relation to Scripture by saying that the believer is the subject of a passive sentence: I am addressed, I am affected by Scripture⁸. But precisely in this being affected we experience that this emanates from the Other. The initiative is on the part of the Other, but we experience that only when we are affected⁹. Then we can also say that Scripture was already the Word of God before we realized that. You were always there, but I did not know You. Or as Augustine said, “Too late did I love you, Love so old and so new!”¹⁰.

Each reading of Scripture is a search for a new encounter with Him. We cannot force this encounter. We have no power over Scripture. That is precisely the problem with objective scriptural authority. Then we could employ the Scriptures at our discretion, and also use it against others as we pleased. If, however, it is a matter of being addressed, then we are dependent on the Spirit who freely demonstrates his love by addressing us in the Word.

Are there other ways that the Spirit can do that besides the Bible? That is a theoretical question, because the fact is that we know God through Scripture. As a rule such hypothetical questions do not get us anywhere in theology, but only leave us worse off. We can only observe that God comes to us through Scripture, and subsequently we can see evidence of Him in the whole reality of our lives (“nature”), like so many gifts which testify to his love and so many startling experiences that testify to his wisdom. But He himself

7 One finds a strong argument for an objective conception of truth in De Boer et al (1981:26-54).

8 See further Van de Beek (1994; 1996b:59-71). Man is there sketched as the “subject of a passive sentence” (1996b:61). This being addressed is therefore something other than the relational concept of truth that was developed in the Synod of the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands “God met ons” (GKN 1979), and is also advocated by Heyns (1981:20-21) in his idea of dialogical inspiration (cf. the critique of Potgieter 1990:21). There is a relation involved, but not in the sense that we share in determining the truth of Scripture. Scripture itself convinces us, and thus obtains authority.

9 Cf. Van Wyk (1989:40): “The revelation of God to man is experienced by man, yes, there is a close relation between revelation and experience, indeed, but not one such that this experience is constitutive with regard to the revelation, but always remains instrumental”.

10 Augustine, Confessions X, 27.

encounters us through Scripture. Once He has come to us in Scripture, that is where we go to seek Him again. The more we feel ourselves addressed by Scripture, the more obvious it is that we find our way there again in hope of the encounter with God.

We did not ourselves discover that God meets us in Scripture¹¹. There are generations of people who have had the same experience. The community of the Church put us on the right track. It was there that we first heard the Scripture, directly or indirectly. We receive Scripture in community. I think that this aspect cannot be emphasized too much, especially in modern times. If the churches of the Reformation already had the inclination to strongly move Scripture toward the individual, that is even more the case in the Evangelical movement. There the Bible is often seen as the most personal of possessions, and the community of faith is only a collection of individuals who think alike. In that context it is important to show that we receive the Scripture through the Church. She is our mother, says Calvin, following Cyprian¹². That is not to say that we believe the Scriptures because the Church, our parents and teachers told us to do so, but that our interest was raised through their encounters with the Scriptures, even shaping a positive attitude already through a relation of love and respect for those who went before us. But it became the Word of God only when it was no longer hearsay, but God meeting us himself.

Neither did the Church choose the Scripture as canon. When the Church accepted the Scripture as canon, that was because it acknowledged that it heard God's voice in these books. The books had convinced the Church of that. The canonisation process was thus also a matter of autopistia: Scripture making itself credible as canon¹³. What happened was not that on a particular occasion a synod asked, "What books shall we choose as the canon?" Rather, the question was "In what books have we experienced God speaking to us?" Thus the Church is a community of people who have encountered this God through the same text. Therefore the Church is a community built around Scripture. The Scripture is therefore not its property, but

11 Cf. 1 Cor. 14:36, "Did the word of God originate with you?" and 4:7, "What have you that you did not receive?"

12 Calvin (1559:IV,1,1 and 4). Cf Cyprian, *De Unit. Eccl.* 6.

13 On this, see Van de Beek (1998a and 1998b).

a gift which becomes a gift anew each time the Holy Spirit becomes God in our midst and in our hearts through its words. That also means that we cannot use Scripture as a means of proving that we are right. We can only testify to others about what God has permitted us to experience of Him, and in doing so to speak of his love and wisdom, which has first touched our own lives. We do not control Scripture, but Scripture controls our thinking and action. It is precisely because of this that pain can arise when others deal with Scripture casually or imperiously. Exactly when people in the Church do this, is the pain most sharply felt. It would be as if your own brother said rude things about your mother, totally failed to understand her, and refused to see that he has her to thank for his life.

2 REVELATION

The Scriptures reveal our God. He himself comes to us. One might think that through investigating Scripture thoroughly one might get more of a hold on God and more precisely define the nature of his being. One might also deduce that from the confession of faith. Article 1 of the Belgic Confession says that God is an eternal and incomprehensible being. God is incomprehensible. It appears that is a premise, before we begin to speak of revelation¹⁴. Subsequently, Article 2 then asks how we know Him. The answer is, vaguely through nature, but much more clearly through Scripture. It seems as if the incomprehensibility of God is being clarified bit by bit. The incomprehensible, Eternal One is emerging from concealment. First, we can already see his contours in nature. Then we see Him delineated clearly and lucidly in Scripture. In this article I will demonstrate that the *incomprehensibilitas* of God is founded precisely in Scripture. Scripture does not give us the sort of clarity that scientific investigation provides through the analysis of an object. That might be the case if the Bible were a book of truths about the divine being, and thus objective scriptural authority was correct. Because the Bible is the living word of God and the living God himself meets us in it, the Scriptures are pre-eminently - more so than nature - the medium through which we learn to know Him “in his unfathomable liberty”. We never get a grip on Him, and it is precisely in this that He is close to us as the living One.

14 Cf. Graafland (2001:54).

Thus I am arguing that revelation does not remove the *incomprehensibilitas Dei*, but draws our attention particularly to it¹⁵. That is not, however, at the cost of knowing God, but leads us to know Him as the One we will never fully understand, who graciously addresses us¹⁶.

3 THE WORD OF MAN

The Bible is the Word of God because God himself approaches us in it. The Bible is, however, the Word of God through ordinary human words with a human history. We experience being approached precisely in the human words, because the Spirit has entered into human existence. There alone can we find Him, because He is meeting us there, just as we can only know God in the human Christ who, as the Crucified, is God himself.

15 Cf. Barth: “Gerade im Glauben werden wir uns die Fähigkeit, Gott anzuschauen und zu begreifen, absprechen müssen”. Barth then (1932:207-208) shows how the confession of *incomprehensibilitas* in Reformed theology is ambivalent about its foundation. Does it derive from Greek philosophy or from Psalm 139? The fact that Barth has problems with the approach of the Belgic Confession should be clear from his remark that it, like the *Confessio Gallicana*, “zu jedem Unfug kommen konnte” of again readmitting natural theology to Christian doctrine. To my mind Barth here does an injustice to the significance of Article 1, and as a consequence also Articles 2 – 3, mentioned before. Much more sharply than Barth, Bakker (1948:24-27) rejects the approach of the Belgic Confession as Scholastic. On the other hand, Polman s.q.:115-119 suggests that, following Calvin, what we have here is not a matter of speculation, but something learned from Scripture. Feenstra (1940:17-20) also proceeds from the idea that according to the *Confessio Belgica* God is knowable exclusively from Scripture.

16 Bavinck (1918b:3) also goes into the relation between *incomprehensibilitias* and Scripture, and correctly says that Scripture confirms the *incomprehensibility* in the strongest possible terms. But he places that in contradiction with God’s knowability: “Scripture confirms that [the exaltedness of God] as strongly as possible, but it still presents one doctrine about God, which fully maintains his knowability”. Through this he misses the point that it is precisely the *incomprehensibility* of God that is knowledge of Him, just as the *incomprehensibility* of a loved one is precisely in the knowing of them. In fact, by the use of the word “confirms”, Bavinck indicates that he has a primarily philosophical image of God, one which to be sure, is confirmed by Scripture, but at the same time is raised by knowledge. See also the critique of Bavinck in Bremmer (1961:196).

That does not mean that there are two manners in which God reveals himself, Christ and the Spirit, because it is precisely he Spirit who reveals Christ to us as the Living One through the Scripture. Herman Bavinck¹⁷ therefore has correctly compared the relation of the Bible as the Word of God and a collection of texts with the person of Christ¹⁸. We confess of Christ that he is God, but he is God in a human form. The more deeply his humanity is drawn, the more we understand the nature of his divine immanence¹⁹. In the same way, the Bible has all the features of an ordinary human book. Everything human has a certain place in history, and a certain manner of coming into existence. That is also true for the Bible. It did not fall down from heaven, but was written by people. It was written in languages which are foreign to us, and have to be translated. It was written *in* cultures which are foreign to us, and is marked by their peculiarities. People can deny all of that, and read the Bible as a book of universal truths, but not only do these people get themselves into a hopeless tangle because there are all kinds of things in the Bible which do not add up, but as an even greater problem, they lose sight of the fact that the Word of God is meant to be an encounter with concrete living persons. The Living God comes into our concrete existence precisely in our listening well to what other people in their concrete situations have said about God because He came into their concrete existence²⁰. We will examine a number of examples in the subsequent sections.

4 HISTORY

The fact that Scripture sounds different in different situations can be seen already in the Bible itself, and can be illustrated by parallel

17 Bavinck (1918a:399). For his idea of organic inspiration see also Potgieter (1990:20-21).

18 For others who use the same analogy, and a critical evaluation of it, see Berkouwer (1967:114-141).

19 For this in extenso, see Van de Beek 1998c.

20 That Scripture is comprehended in human words is therefore not in conflict with theopneusty, but exactly its ultimate consequence, as Potgieter (1990:23) suggests. The miracle of the Spirit is that we do not receive the word of men as human words any more, but as that which it in truth is, the Word of God (Formula for the Installation of Ministers of the Word, NHK 1983:143). If that is true even for preaching, how much more then is it true for the Bible.

texts. The story of the Queen of Sheba is told in I Kings 10. There she says to Solomon, “Because the Lord loved Israel for ever, he has made you king” (v 9). When the writer of Chronicles tells that story again after the exile, he brings with him all the experience of the suffering and dissolution of Israel. Thus, according to him the queen says, “Because your God loved Israel and would establish them forever, he has made you king over them” (II Chron. 9:8). It is not the intention that we should here ask “What did she actually say?” It is unlikely that either is a verbatim report. But what the Chronicler wants to say is, “If you want to understand what the text from Kings means in our time, that is how you have to say it. Then you could simply say that God loves Israel; now you have to say that God wanted to establish Israel”.

The text does not just have a history itself, but works with history. That can also be illustrated from the Bible text itself. II Samuel 21 is a good example of that²¹. Verse 8 says that David turned over the sons born by Michal to Adriel to be hung. But anyone with a good knowledge of the Bible knows that Michal was childless (II Sam. 6:23) and furthermore was not married to Adriel, but to David himself (I Sam. 18:27). Merab, her older sister, was married to Adriel (I Sam. 18:19). Most modern translations correct this. But why does “Michal” appear in the Hebrew text? Of course, that could be a later mistake as the text was copied. But if we accept that, it goes against the rule that the *lectio difficilior* is the most probable. Rather, we are perhaps to be reminded that Merab was to have been married to David (I Sam. 18:17-19), and that her children then would have been his children. In this way it fixes attention on the fact that David is the heir to the house of Saul and his kingship, and thus on the responsibility that David himself should have taken to achieve a reconciliation instead of shoving that off on a poor mother and her sons. What follows - and particularly the close of the chapter - points toward this. The word “Michal” thus has the same function as the “You are that man” of II Samuel 12:7.

Thus, the writer deliberately manipulates history in order to turn it into a sermon. Indeed, we have to see the whole of the way Biblical writers deal with history in this light: it is a form of preaching. In the Bible the boundaries between history, parable, and myth are

21 See Van de Beek (1997) for this more comprehensively.

therefore fluid. There is history, but it is anything but written in the manner of modern historiography, as the likewise no less modern fundamentalists would have it. Much less is it possible for one to found faith on it. Our faith is not based on facts, but rooted in the living Word of God.

The apparent error forces us to think. But we can never be certain if our conclusion was the author's intention. The error evokes something in us and appeals to our moral sense. But for someone else it may call up something quite different. No one can say "I know for certain what the author intended". No one can use the text unequivocally for his own purposes. It can only get us thinking. But exactly in that thinking and rethinking the text, the meaning of which can never be firmly established, it continues to involve us. We cannot file it away in a drawer, but it continues to speak to us. Precisely in its lack of clarity it continues to be vital and the Word of God, rather than a word that people can control.

5 CULTURE AND SOCIETY

The text of the Bible has a history which is linked with the ongoing history of Israel and the earliest Christian community. This history includes not only the changes in the political constellation, but also differences in the social situation. The two versions of the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5, are a forceful example of this. Exodus says that the Sabbath is rooted in God's resting on the seventh day, after six days of creation. Deuteronomy roots it in the liberation out of Egypt. Exodus is of the opinion that, following the example of the Lord, people also must regularly interrupt their creative labour. Deuteronomy is not concerned with the creative work of free men, but with slaves in their daily toil. They have their rights too in the name of God, because God is a liberator from slavery. According to Deuteronomy too, *nota bene*, Moses proclaims that he received the words from God himself, from God's own mouth, in the midst of the fire. And then he goes on to say something other than what God said according to Exodus. Is Moses here distorting that Word which is most characteristic of God in the Old Testament? He indeed changes it. But for Deuteronomy that is necessary, because in its situation people have forgotten the commandments of the God who does justice to the poor and looks after the slave.

Thus, even when the Bible is the most characteristic Word of God, an author always writes in a concrete social and political situa-

tion. He does that precisely because the Bible is most peculiarly the Word of God, and God does not speak in truths which are outside of time, but comes to meet people of flesh and blood in their concrete situations, so that they may know Him. Thus we must also keep the cultural situation well in mind.

The New Testament repeatedly speaks about slavery. Slaves are not called upon to revolt, but to stay obedient (Eph. 6:5, Col. 3:22, Tt 2:9). Does that mean that slavery is a Biblical given, or even divinely sanctioned? Absolutely not. Paul lived in a culture in which slavery was accepted to a great extent. Sometimes, however, it became too much for the slaves, and they rose in rebellion. Paul says that slaves should not do that, because then it would create the impression that Christians were thinking of such rebellion when they spoke about “freedom in Christ”. Precisely by subjecting himself in obedience to his master, even if he was a bad master, a slave can demonstrate that he lives in a freedom which passes all understanding. The love of Christ is other - and more - than fleeing from your master. Does Christianity thus support the status quo? Anything but - because if the master is won for the Lord, then his slaves will become neighbours to be loved. Even if they then remain possessions in the sight of the law, they are brothers and sisters in Christ. If it is in the interest of obedience to this Lord who has given himself as a slave on our behalf to release a slave or to serve a slave, then you do that. The letter to Philemon is a little gem of how to deal with the laws of the culture and the freedom of the Christian individual.

We have to view the texts in Romans 13 regarding the role of the authorities in the same way. These texts are not about eternal values, but about the concrete situation of Rome, in which the relative peace of Rome is to be chosen over resistance. But if Rome changes, then the “servant of God” suddenly reveals herself as the beast from the sea (Rev.13) or the Great Whore (Rev.17-19). Even then Christians are not called to resistance, but to perseverance: not giving in to the pressure of the Beast, not sacrificing, but equally not identifying your freedom in Christ with rebellion. If Christians do that, then the Beast has also won, because then your freedom depends on earthly happiness.

Comparable arguments can be developed with regard to texts about the relations between men and women, or about homosexuality. In the context of a dominant patriarchal culture, New Testament writers call upon women to be subject to men (Eph. 5:22, I Pt 3:1).

But no more than was the case with slavery, does this involve an eternal divine command. Only, no misunderstanding should be allowed about the nature of a woman's freedom in Christ (I Pt 3:4-6). Just as little misunderstanding is permitted with regard to the freedom of a Christian man: this is founded in Christ, who offered himself up totally for the other (Eph. 5:25-31). In the context of Hellenistic culture, Jews condemned the pagans' homosexual relations. They knew better. In Romans 1:26-27 Paul sides with them. He opts for the Jewish culture over the Hellenistic perverting of human relations. But subsequently he handles them just as roughly: "Therefore you have no excuse, O man, whoever you are" (2:1). You cannot base your status before God on the possession of the Law and the condemnation of another, but only in justification through Christ (Rom. 2 and 3). Paul's condemnation of homosexuality thus has a double purpose: to reveal the perversion of the pagans, but also, precisely in his siding with the Jews, to expose their own supposed righteousness. Thus Paul chooses for neither the rich Hellenists with their abused slaves, nor for the Jews with their rules of the Law - that has also become refuse for them (Phlp. 3:8) - but knows himself chosen by Christ.

When we are conscious of the cultural situation of the writers, we discover that the Bible is not interested in affirming a culture or creating a counter-culture, but that it is about life with God in Christ, which as such fulfils our whole being, and in which everything intended in the commandment for good living is fulfilled. "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind, and your neighbour as yourself". If that is lived out, then the culture - any culture, even your own subculture - comes into crisis. But that is not a goal in itself, but a consequence. If we pay close attention to the cultural and social situation of the texts, their meaning for us is not undermined, but becomes all the more penetrating. You lose your life, your culture or counterculture, and thus your orientation to the world. Only Christ remains.

6 THEOLOGY

There are also theological differences among the authors. Actually, these cut deeper than cultural or historical differences, because the latter can be ascribed to various human factors. Theology, however, is a question of something being said about God. But evidently pronouncements about God can differ just as much as those about

people and their culture. There are differences in theology which are sometimes very fundamental, and certainly have to do in part with the situation in which the text arose, but also have to do with varying visions that the biblical writers had on God and his relation to us.

In II Samuel 24:1 the writer says that the Lord incited David to conduct a census of Israel. This census is subsequently condemned, and leads to punishment - incidentally, not for David, but for the nation entrusted to him. What sort of picture of God does that give us?

The writer of I Chronicles 21, who takes up the story of the census again, apparently had difficulty with the version in II Samuel. He turns it around to Satan inciting David (I Chron. 21:1). Thus the responsibility is taken away from God and placed not only on Satan, but on David, who after all should not have listened to Satan, but to the command of God. Two theological visions are in conflict here: the one insists that God is the effective power behind everything; the other wants to keep God separated from wrongdoing, and ascribes that to an accord between mankind and the devil. You can harmonise them by saying that the Satan in I Chronicles is in no sense a counter-God, but just as in the book of Job is a member of the heavenly court circle, and thus ultimately still subject to God. How deep the dualism of Chronicles runs is impossible to say precisely. But undeniably Chronicles attempts to create space between God and wrongdoing. We have to allow both of the views to stand side by side. Apparently one can speak of God in both ways.

One finds such theological differences everywhere in the Bible. Sometimes you have to listen closely to authors; sometimes they are obvious and sometimes, on further examination, the difference will be less than it first appeared.

7 THE UNITY OF SCRIPTURE

All these human factors determine Scripture, and not in merely incidental ways so that they could be peeled away from the real message like the skin of a fruit, leaving the real message behind. The whole of the Bible is a human book. If one leaves it at that, and becomes obsessed with the differences, the Bible loses its power. We can also, however, allow ourselves to be inspired by *certain* authors, and experience divine authority in their message. That happens constantly in ecclesiastical practice. Luther swore *by* Paul, and *at* James and

his “epistle of straw”. Others have loathed Paul, for a variety of reasons.

The danger exists that we will begin to see the differences in the Bible as so fundamental that no unity is left. Then the multiplicity of ideas and situations becomes an excuse for noncommittal attitudes today. Even then there were already Christians who followed John, and James, and Paul, and so forth. Therefore you can now have Roman Catholics, Reformed, Christian Reformed, and a host of others. What difference does it make? The Bible has so many varieties, so they must all be equal.

Those who give up the quest for the unity of Scripture have surrendered themselves to a liberal, “to each his *own*” concept of freedom. That does no justice to the passionate commitment to their subject on the part of the authors of the Bible. Both Paul and James would have defended their faith to the death. They lived for it, and they would die for it. It was not a matter in which they differed from one another (those were things on which they could shake hands as brothers: Gal. 2:9), but something which united them.

In the last century, scientific investigation of the Bible has focused all attention on the differences in the Bible and the history of the texts. That cannot be done too thoroughly, because without it the Bible becomes a book of general truths from which every reader can choose what suits them. But in this one can also lose sight of the boundaries. With some New Testament critics one gets the idea that if Paul and Matthew had met one another, they would have talked past each other. Certainly there is the tendency to all too easily harmonise differences, and it is good to give Matthew a hearing first before we interrupt him with Paul. But at the same time there is a unity of Christians that cannot be denied.

The books of the New Testament have an internal coherence that is the foundation of a certain type of Christian confession. It is precisely critical - and particularly feminist - theologians who have pointed this out repeatedly.²² Other variants were rejected. This matter demands being thought through without pulling any punches. Why were these others rejected? If we are not careful we will allow ourselves to be deceived by making cultural forms normative. It was not the social position of women or men that was the crux of the

22 See for instance Schüssler-Fiorenza (1983).

matter. The unity of the New Testament is not rooted in a certain cultural pattern. It is much too varied a document for that, and indeed cannot be harmonised. There is just as little unity in the psychology of the authors or even in the direction of their theological views. With regard to that, historical criticism cannot be critical enough.

Where then does the unity lie? It lies in the unity of the confession that Jesus is Lord, further amplified as the confession that the man Jesus of Nazareth came to be known by the Holy Name of Israel's God. In that the New Testament opposes those who believed that the divine was found in the purest spirit, or that through the coming of Christ our pure soul had already been liberated. Concrete changes in this, our human existence, were what it was all about. But we also must not be under the illusion that these will ever be achieved by conscientious observance of the Law. It is rather a matter of what God has done, acting in this world in Christ who was crucified, and what God has confirmed by raising Him - with Whom, through his Spirit, we too are raised.

The New Testament finds its unity in the confession of Jesus as God who took on flesh. There were certainly other people who said that God appeared in Christ, but they denied that he came in the flesh (I Jn 4:2) - that was human, all too human; at the most the High God had some spiritual link with the human Jesus. There were also people who saw Jesus in the flesh, as a prophet, but could not accept that this Crucified One was the Lord; that was an insurmountable stumbling block for them.

Now, one might think that this is a matter of particular texts and only certain authors in the New Testament. In that case, we would do with the confession of Jesus as God something like liberation theologians do with their predilection for certain texts from Isaiah and Amos.

However, that is not the case. It would be beyond the scope of this article to here demonstrate, on the basis of their texts, that all New Testament authors see Jesus as God in our midst. Also, that's not how it works, because very quickly the question becomes the manner in which someone interprets the text, and what one is reading into it. Much more important is that some texts are very emphatic on this. The most familiar is Philippians 2:6-11, apparently a song that was already familiar before Paul quoted it in his letter. There

Jesus is presented as abiding in divine form (the form which according to Greek philosophy is precisely the most real), in other words, as a divine being, who has humbled himself to assume the nature of a man and slave, even to obedience to death on the cross. Precisely for this he bears the NAME above all names, the holy NAME of Israel's God.

Now, confessing the man Jesus of Nazareth as God is not something that one can do and another not. Either you join in the confession, or you experience it as blasphemy. As accepted by the broad community of Christians, who together shaped the texts that now form the New Testament, it was confessed that Jesus is God, then this applied to all, or to none. Perhaps modern liberal Christians can be non-committal in their thinking on this, but not Christians of the first century, who lived in a community with Jews who did not even dare to pronounce the holy NAME. For a Jew who denied it, it was an abomination if someone confessed this. Only against this background can one understand the passion of Saul of Tarsus in his persecution of the community. That others (and then preferably exactly Christians who were the most genuine Jews) would deny that and still live in a community of faith and table fellowship with those who confessed this, is not possible. From this perspective, it is natural that James also speaks of Jesus as "the Lord of glory" with no further qualification (in Hebrew, *'adon hakkabod*, as Segond (1993) has, or even more probably to be translated with *jhwah hakkabod* (Ja 2:1; cf. I Cor. 2:8).

To this point we have spoken only of the New Testament. However, do we not, by linking its unity precisely with the confession that God has come in the Crucified One, not create a gaping chasm between the Old and New Testaments? According to the New Testament itself, no. Christ is seen as precisely the fulfilment of the Scriptures, and thus of the Old Testament. It is rather common that this is understood as meaning that there are Old Testament texts which bear witness to Jesus, such as Isaiah 9:1-6 or Micah 5:1. This is not, however, what is meant when the New Testament calls Christ the fulfilment of the Law and prophets. This can be illustrated by Luke 18:31. One version of this (followed by the RSV) is, "Everything that is written of the Son of Man by the prophets will be fulfilled". That goes with the idea that the prophets have said certain things which will be fulfilled by Jesus. The more probable reading (followed by the NEB) is however, "Everything that is written by the

prophets will come true for the Son of Man". That means that Christ is the fulfilment of the whole Old Testament²³. Everything that is there will find its consummation in Him. That is much more than prophecy as a prediction of the future. It is a matter of the coming together of the whole of reality in his person.

Anyone who reads the Old Testament finds there that God, indeed, desires to dwell close to man, and that this nearness is precisely dominated by themes of reconciliation and death. In the confines of this article we will not elaborate on this. I will merely give a couple of examples. The book of Job can be read as a court case. At the end Job gets everything back in double measure. In a legal context, this means that his possessions had been unjustly taken from him (Ex. 22:4). God thus assumes the guilt for everything which happened to Job²⁴. Another example is the excessive violence that Deuteronomic literature advocates against the peoples of Canaan. They must be totally exterminated. We see the fulfilment of these texts in Jesus, upon whom all the violence is concentrated. The cross is the fulfilment of Joshua and Judges. The text that everything will be fulfilled in Christ therefore fits perfectly in the announcement of Jesus' proceeding to Jerusalem.

8 STORIES

If the unity of the Bible can ultimately be found in the confession that Jesus is God, why can't we stop at that? Why then all that confusing multiplicity of stories? Precisely that has to do with the mystery of God. God cannot be tied up into a neat package. Anyone who too easily says "Your faith stands or falls with the confession of the divinity of Christ" loses sight of the fact that God reveals himself in concealment. We must however be more precise and say that God reveals himself in the mystery of human life. Jesus is not an isolated figure. His coming takes place in the midst of the people in the circle around him, until the end of time. He became truly human in the circle of real people. That is precisely what is revealed in the Bible, a book full of human stories, with a human origin.

23 The former is hardly represented in the manuscripts, and is easily explained by the view of prophecy as a prediction of future events. Metzger (1970) does not even take the trouble to discuss the variant.

24 See Van de Beek (1992:87-97). Another example is Jesus as fulfilment of the sonship of God of Israel or its king; see Van de Beek (1996a).

Do we have to know all of the history of the origins and development of Scripture in order for it to speak to us? If that were so, the smartest historical critical theologian would be the one who knew the most of God's revelation. That might be the case, but it doesn't have to be. The Bible is a book full of stories that are immediately human. But our seeking and interpretation is also fully human. It is finite and you must always stand open to be corrected. You try to go after the human in the text by seeking out its irregularities. From these you can conclude that more than one hand has been involved in the text. Sometimes that is correct, but sometimes not.

In Mark's story of the storm on the sea the disciples ask Jesus whether he is concerned about their fate (4:38). Jesus answers their question only two verses later. Between their question and his answer, he addresses the sea. This could mean that the address to the sea was inserted into the ongoing story of the exchange with the disciples by a later writer. But it could also mean that the narrator of Mark 4 reveals the pure psychology that only after removing the cause of fear is there any sense in speaking to people, or that theologically he wishes to say that God's answer is the liberating deed and not discussion.

The one possibility does not exclude the other. It is precisely the editing of stories that each time produces a richer content. There was a time when Bible commentators refused to discuss anything they ascribed to a later hand, or restored the text to its "original" form²⁵, as though it was not interesting to ask why the later editor added or changed something. What was he trying to say by doing so? Thus we come to a confluence of the two ways: reading the text in terms of its origin and development, and reading it in its present form, in which the present form is a composition which, precisely through all the puzzles of its development standing out in relief, forces us to think about God and his people, about God who meets us in these texts²⁶.

25 See for instance the parts of *Das Alte Testament Deutsch* on Isaiah and Jeremiah by Hertrich (1950); Kaiser (1960 and 1973); Weiser (1952).

26 Graafland (2001:91-112) therefore correctly resists either-or thinking in relation to scholarship and faith in scriptural research. Scholarship must understand its limits, and dealing with Scripture in faith is enriched and deepened by academic research.

9 TEXTUAL CRITICISM

God's encountering us in human history stretches all the way to include slips of the pen in copying texts. Why does a copyist make such an error, and why is such an error then taken up in the text? Isaiah 9:2 tells us that God has brought gladness to the people. In the next verse, in the Revised Standard Version, we find "thou hast increased its joy"; the King James Version reads "and not increased the joy"²⁷. Well, which is it? The Hebrew text has *lo* "not". But if spoken out loud, it could just as well be *lo*, without *'aleph*: "for them". If a scribe was copying while somebody else was dictating the text, the one could be what was read, and the other what got written. "Thou hast increased joy for them" was read, while the Industrious scribe wrote "Thou hast not made joy increase". Perhaps his mind was wandering to thoughts of his sick child - or to the fall of Jerusalem. Each following generation is in this way challenged to think about the God who gives gladness. The gospel is proclaimed to us - a great light. But is this joy really so great? How many people feel closer to that scribe with his careless fault than to the original text? But was that scribe really careless, and not, on the contrary, a deep thinker? Or was it perhaps even the original text, which a later scribe, who was more superficial than the stubborn prophet, changed into "for them"? After all, that is more logical, and sounds so much better, does it not?

It is precisely modern emendations to the text which can often aid us in obtaining a theological understanding of them. As a rule, people who introduce such emendations do so because the text does not flow well. It would be more logical if something else were there, it seems. Our modern preconceptions play a large role in what is "logical". Therefore with our emendations we must be very careful not to rob the text of its power in its peculiarity. The emendations made by others can aid us in tracking down these peculiarities: where someone else felt a change was needed, there was apparently something strange or difficult. Precisely in attempts to fathom these difficulties, new understandings of Scripture can often arise. Emendations are like honey guides: birds that indicate where honey is, although they themselves are not the honey.

The fact that a text appears to take a difficult turn is not necessarily a result of the limitations of our modern preconceptions. It may have been just as much the case already for people at the time the text was created, or for translators at a later date. That means that

support for an emendation by, for instance, the Septuagint is no proof that it is correct. It can just as much mean that the translators then already had difficulty with a stubborn text, which therefore precisely in its obstinacy became all the more a challenge to understand. That is true even in the opposite case. Even if the Septuagint or the emendator might be right with regard to the original version, the question still remains how the aberrant version came to be.

In this way errors, uncertainties and irregularities can become ways in which God speaks to us. Just as in Christology, it is also true for exegesis and Bible criticism that God cannot be drawn too deeply into flesh. It is precisely in the human, the all too human, that God meets us.

The measure of our minds is limited. Through the texts we can only be led to reflection. Perhaps many of the irregularities which tax our minds, and to which we attach whole theologies, have an extremely banal explanation. The scribe was just careless. Paul's argument perhaps has a pause at that point only because the ink ran out, or because someone arrived to pick up a tent he had ordered. Anything can get us to thinking, but we will never know for sure what the answer is.

Nor is that necessary. In every instance, the important thing is what the text summons up in us in God's name. Historical background and the origins and development of the text, and literary criticism can aid us in this, but, first and foremost, the text has its own immediate eloquence. I don't need to know Shakespeare's life history and how Hamlet came to be written in order to enjoy the poetry or the performance of the play. Why a text moves one person and not another remains a mystery between the text and reader, and ultimately between God and man. At its deepest it has to do with the mystery of election, just as each deeper relation between two individuals has to do with a mystery that is rooted in the *mystery* of the individual. Why one person appeals more to me than another has everything to do with who I am at the depth of my being, and who the other is at the depths of his or her being. Why I feel myself addressed by God has everything to do with who I am at the depth of my being, and Who God is at the depth of his being²⁸. The relation

28 Cf. Calvin, Institution, 1,1,1: knowledge of God and knowledge of oneself go together most closely.

grows through regular engagement with the Bible as the place where I encounter Him. But this is not straightforward, as the Bible is an obstinate book, full of all the unruliness of human existence. By persevering in tolerating questions, you grow in faith. But that is only true because every question first discomfits you anew²⁹.

10 COVER TO COVER

If the Bible is the meeting place with God, it is important to read the Scriptures in their entirety. That is not an external necessity, but is part of the nature of the relation. If we love God above all else, we will want to know his fullness. We will want to encounter Him wherever possible³⁰.

There are as many encounters with God as there are texts in Scripture. Indeed, upon rereading the same text we can be led to a new and surprising encounter. Through all these meetings we learn to know God better. Therefore the Reformation correctly chose for the *lectio continua* rather than set cycles of readings. In love, even the smallest things, foolish trifles for others, interest us. Even a family tree becomes interesting under those circumstances. When I come home, my wife asks, “Who did you see today?” And I tell her. It has no real relevance, except for the two lives which seek to be one as much as possible. Similarly, God has seen quite a few people, and tells us about them. He can reel off a whole list of names, for instance at the beginning of Numbers. Often we don't hear what He is saying. Some people even never hear what God says. They are more interested in other things. But especially if you love God, such a text, or even a single name, can suddenly grab you. Then you become curious about who Hazzelelponi was (I Chron. 4:3). I will never know. I know only that God found her important enough to include her name in his book among all the other names unknown to me. In that way we know God as the God who knows the names of all those people whose names go unreported in the history books.

29 Origen, *De Principiis*, IV,1,15, argues that difficult passages occur in the Bible deliberately to keep us humble and prevent us from thinking of Scripture as our own possession.

30 The active aspect to which I referred with regard to Conradie et al 1995 (see note 4) certainly plays a role here.

When God begins to speak through his Word, we increasingly yearn to hear what He says, what He intends and why He says it as He does. Then we meet that strange character Jabez (I Chron. 4:10), of whom we know only that he asked God to multiply his possessions, and keep him from all harm. In response, we note that God suddenly does something quite unexpected: He fulfils the wishes of Jabez. God is often different in Scripture than our dogmas – Reformed or otherwise - would lead us to anticipate. Far from diminishing the relationship, each uncertainty deepens it, just as each uncertainty about what my wife intends leads me to listen more closely to what she says, because that reflects something of who she is - and who she is, she is for me.

It is the same with Scripture: by permitting yourself to be surprised every morning by what is different there, God's grace becomes new each day.

11 INCOMPREHENSIBLE

Thus, we must conclude that Scripture does not clarify a diffuse picture of God from nature, doing away with *incomprehensibilitas*. Rather, Scripture lets us see that God is unfathomable in ever new ways in which He wills to speak to us³¹. That happens even in text variants. Even the heart of the confession of Christian faith, that God himself meets us in Jesus, is not excluded from this. John 1:18 says that Jesus is the only-begotten God. This is by far the best attested reading in the manuscripts³². But there remains the disturbing other version: “the only-begotten Son”. The divinity of Christ is never to be taken for granted. We, are ever again confronted by the questions, “Who do men say that I am? And you, who do you say that I am?” Each time the question must be answered anew.

The more you know of the Bible, the more you realise that it is never possible to speak the final word in theology. The abstract philosophical concept of God can be formulated clearly enough: God

31 Feenstra (1940:19) therefore correctly makes a distinction between the unknowableness and the incomprehensibility of God, *Incomprehensibilitas* does not mean that God cannot be known, but that we can never comprehend and fathom Him.

32 On this, see Van de Beek (1996b:156, note 6).

is “the being above which man can conceive nothing higher”. Anyone looking around at nature is already faced with problematic questions. There is not only the elegance of the impala and the beauty of the cheetah, but also the fact that cheetahs kill impalas. Nature is not so unequivocal, and the Maker of all addresses us in the mystery. But anyone who reads the Scriptures, where God addresses us most intimately, is all the more surprised by the multiplicity and complexity of the witness. The more critically one dares to ask questions, the more one becomes aware of the irregularities, and the richer the words of God become - at least if one is prepared to accept that God cannot be neatly packaged into our personal or social selection of texts and models of interpretation. If Scripture itself speaks, and not our selection or interpretation, only then do we arrive at the Reformation’s *sola Scriptura*. That does not draw us away from the community of the Church through the ages, but links us precisely into a community of faith with those who have gone before us, to whom the Word also spoke.

Lastly, we must ask ourselves if Guido de Bres himself intended this in articles 1 and 2 of the Belgic Confession. That is also not easy to prove, but we can show it is plausible. Article 1 begins “We believe with the heart...”. Our image of God is thus not a result of philosophical reflection, but of faith³³. Article 2 subsequently explains how we know that, and presents nature and Scripture. Article

33 I am, therefore, not in agreement with Van Genderen and Velema 1992: 163, who pose the question, apparently intended rhetorically, of whether the beginning of Article 1 is really that happily formulated. They see too much philosophical influence here, although they are willing to be guided by this article (165). In fact, what we have here is knowledge of God obtained through Scripture cast in philosophical language, but that by no means supposes that its content is derived from philosophy. Verboom (1999:41-43) has grasped the intention of the article at a much deeper level: it concerns existential involvement in faith as learned from Scripture. Graafland (2001:53-54) finds that Verboom can really only demonstrate this in an indirect manner, and would therefore rather that Guido de Bres had chosen a different formulation for the beginning of his confession. That is not really so much De Bres’s fault as the result of the fact that these terms have become technical terms in Reformed scholasticism, which people believe they can read as simple truths, apart from the Scripture. If I say that God is incomprehensible and one, I am not per se saying anything philosophical. It can be a good summary of what I read in Scripture and experience in the living relationship of faith.

2 thus lists what the sources are by which we know what is stated in Article. This means one must not read Article 1 as a sort of general religious confession, which is subsequently given Christian content; but as a summary of the confession regarding God that we articulate on the basis of our experience with Scripture. Through Scripture, we know that God is incomprehensible. That Guido de Bres does not proceed from a philosophical concept of God, but from a confession rooted in Scripture, further fits perfectly into 16th century Reformed theology. In light of Calvin's philippics against the sophists, it would be difficult to propose that a philosophical concept of God could form the opening of the confession of persecuted Reformed believers³⁴.

Consulted literature:

- Augustine, Confessiones, in J P Migne, *Patrologia Latina* 31:659-868.
- Bakhuizen van den Brink, J H² 1966. *De belijdenisgeschriften van de Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk*. 's-Gravenhage: Boekencentrum.
- Bakker, D. 1948. De Leer aangaande God, in J N Sevenster e.a., *De Nederlandse Geloofsbelijdenis kritisch beschouwd*. Assen: Van Gorcum.
- Barth, K 1932. *Die Kirchliche Dogmatik II,1*. Zurich: Verlag der evangelischen Buchhandlung.
- Barth, K 1940. *Die Kirchliche Dogmatik II,1*. Zurich: Verlag der evangelischen Buchhandlung.
- Bavinck, H³ 1918a. *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek I*. Kampen: Kok.
- ,³ 1918b. *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek II*. Kampen: Kok.
- Berkouwer, G C 1967. *De Heilige Schrift II*. Kampen: Kok.
- Bremmer, R H 1961. *Herman Bavinck als dogmaticus*. Kampen:Kok.
- Calvijn, J⁴ 1559. *Institutie*.
- Conradie, E, Jonker, L, Lawrie, D & Arendse R 1995. *Fishing for Jonah: various approaches to Biblical interpretation* (Text and Context 6). Bellville: University of the Western Cape.
- Cyprian, De Catholicae Ecclesiae Unitate, in J P Migne, *Patrologia Latina* 4:509.
- De Boer, A P, Glashouwer, W J J, Knevel, A G & Ouweneel, W J 1981. *De bijbel in de beklagenbank*. Hilversum: Evangelische Omroep.

34 Cf. Polman s.q.:115: "Calvin would have listened to these questions and reproaches with amazement".

- Feenstra, J G⁶ 1940. *Onze Geloofsbelijdenis*. Kampen: Kok.
- GKN 1981. *God met ons: over de aard van het schriftgezag*. Kerkinformatie 113, Leusden: Informatiedienst GKN.
- Graafland, C 2001. *Bijbels en daarom gereformeerd*. Zoetermeer: Boeken-centrum.
- Heyns, J A² 1981. *Dogmatiek*. Pretoria: NGKB.
- Herntrich, V 1950. *Der Prophet Jesaja Kap. 1-12*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht (ATD 17).
- Kaiser, O 1960. *Der Prophet Jesaja Kap. 1-12*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht (ATD 17).
- Kaiser, O 1973. *Der Prophet Jesaja Kap. 13-39*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht (ATD 18).
- König, A 2001. *Fokus op die 300 geloofsvrae wat mense die meeste vra*. Wel-
lington: Lux Verbi.
- Metzger, B M 1970. *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*.
London-New York: United Bible Societies.
- NHK⁸ 1983. *Dienstboek voor de Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk in ontwerp*, 's-
Gravenhage: Boekencentrum.
- Origen, De Principiis, in J P Migne, *Patrologia Graeca* 11:115-414.
- Polman, A D R s.q. *Onze Nederlandse Geloofsbelijdenis* 1. Franeker: Wever.
Potgieter, PC 1990. *Skrif, dogma en verkondiging*. Kaapstad: Lux Verbi.
- Schüssler-Fiorenza, E 1983. *In memory of her: A feminist theological recon-
struction of Christian origins*. New York: Crossroad Publishing Company.
- Segond, L 1993. *Le Nouveau Testament en Hebreu et Francaise*. Edgware,
Middlesex: Society for Distributing Hebrew Scriptures.
- Van de Beek, A 1992. *Rechtvaardiger dan God: Gedachten bij het boek Job*.
Nijkerk: Callenbach.
- , 1994. To be created precedes our creativity, in *Louvain Studies* 19:34-45
- Van de Beek, A 1996a. Zoon van God. Over de zijnswijze van Israel, Jezus en
de christenen, *Kerk en theologie* 47/1:2-21.
- , 1996b. *Schepping: de wereld als voorspel voor de eeuwigheid*. Baarn:
Callenbach.
- , 1997. Feiten en belijden: over de betekenis van de geschiedenis voor gods-
dienstige teksten, in *Dieslezingen 1997: Prijswinnaars en Laureaten*,
Leiden: Rijksuniversiteit.
- , 1998a. Wiens canon accepteren wij? Een protestantse visie op de fundering
van de bijbel als canon, in K D Jenner and G A Wieggers (eds). *Heilig boek*

- en religieus gezag: ontstaan en functioneren van canonieke tradities.* Kampen: Kok, 45-68.
- , 1998b. Being Convinced: On the Foundations of the Christian Canon, in A van der Kooij & K van der Toorn, *Canonization & Decanonization: Papers presented to the International Conference of the Leiden Institute for the Study of Religions (LISOR) held at Leiden 9-10 January 1997.* Leiden Brill, 331-350.
- , 1998c. *Jezus Kurios: de christologie als hart van de theologie.* Kampen: Kok.
- Vander Lugt, G T (ed). 1968. *The Liturgy of the Reformed Church in America.* New York: Board of Education, Reformed Church in America.
- Van Genderen, J & Velema, W H 1992. *Beknopte gereformeerde dogmatiek.* Kampen: Kok.
- Van Wyk, J.H. 1989. *Die Woord is waardevol: 'n Dogmatiese besinning oor die reformatoriese Skrifbeskouing.* Potchefstroom: Potchefstroomse Universiteit vir CHO (Wetenskaplike Bydrae van die PU vir CHO reeks A: Geesteswetenskappe 72).
- Verboom, W 1999. *Kostbaar belijden: De theologie van de Nederlandse geloofsbelijdenis.* Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum.
- Weiser, A 1952. *Der Prophet Jeremia Kap. 1-25/13.* Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht (ATD 20).