

***The new reformation and the destiny of the Netherlands
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Introduction

In order to execute our tasks convincingly as Christians, it is of utmost importance to understand the reasons and purposes of these tasks. We gain such understanding only when we have a notion of God's total plan for this world and of the current priorities on His prophetic agenda. In this context we need to scrutinize our Bibles afresh in order to discover aspects of God's plan that have been long neglected or even have never received any serious attention at all. The understanding of God's total plan and agenda is even of paramount importance for the execution of assignments from the Lord that are still rather unknown and unappreciated in the Netherlands. Consequently these new assignments easily raise misunderstanding and controversy.

In this article we will discuss various important themes in God's plan and agenda for the Netherlands. We will argue in this context that the Lord has called the Netherlands to be a nation to serve as an example for a new reformation. But first we will address God's commission to make nations into disciples as an integral part of the biblical Great Commission.

The Great Commission for the nations

God does not merely call individuals but also entire nations. This becomes very obvious when we read how the Great Commission is articulated. In Mark 16:15, 16 we read that Christ commands His disciples to preach the gospel to all creation. This passage shows that it is each person's individual responsibility whether or not to accept the gospel. However, Matthew 28:19 says that we should make the nations into disciples. (Many translations state here 'disciples from the nations', meaning individual disciples from the nations, but the Greek does not say that) Luke 24:47 also speaks of preaching to all the nations, and not just to individuals.

Matthew 25:32, ff shows clearly that a nation as a whole can either be saved or lost. This passage speaks of the distinction between sheep and goats at the time of the Last Judgment. Many believers interpret this judgment of sheep and goats as a judgment of individuals. This is however incorrect. Verse 32 emphatically speaks of a distinction between

nations. God separates the nations that are goats from the nations that are sheep. The sheep nations inherit the kingdom of God, whereas the goat nations do not.

The Bible does not show a contradiction between a great commission that is focused on individuals and a great commission that is focused on nations. Apparently God's call to follow Him is addressed to both individuals and to entire nations. Naturally a nation can never become a disciple unless many of its individuals accept the gospel. The book of Revelation also shows both aspects of the Great Commission, after its final completion. Revelation 7:9 speaks of 'a great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues'. This passage talks about individual believers from all over the world.

Revelation 21:24 and 26, however, say that the people shall walk in the light of the lamb and that they and their kings shall bring their glory and honour into the New Jerusalem. (This passage is a fulfilment of Isaiah 60:11-20) Revelation 21 speaks of the collective salvation of nations, like Matthew 25. This does not mean that automatically all the people who make up a sheep nation will be saved, nor does this imply that those who come from a goat nation will necessarily be lost. In Revelation we read very clearly that 'He who overcomes shall inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son'. This truth applies to every individual from whatever nation he originally came from. In verse 8 we read 'but for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and liars' will be thrown into the lake of fire, whether he came from a sheep nation or from a goat nation.

The glory and destinies of the nations

The question is what the 'glory and honour' of nations exactly means. In the Old Testament the glory and honour of peoples and nations applied to all sorts of treasures which they offered as gifts to kings in order to honour them and show them gratitude and appreciation. We read this for example in Isaiah 60:11. The best known example of this principle in the Old Testament is the treasures the queen of Sheba offered to Solomon as token of honour, gratitude and admiration. (1Kings 10:1-10)

However, it is hard to consider the 'glory and honour' of nations as mentioned in Revelation 21 as material treasures. We need to interpret this glory and honour in the context of 1 Corinthians 3:13-15. It says here that on the day of judgment the fire will determine whether somebody's work remains or not. If the work remains the believer is not merely saved but receives an extra reward as well. If his work is burned up the believer will still be saved, but 'as through fire'. He will not receive an extra reward. Apparently the believer who lives and ministers in God's power and His guidance, builds something that is of eternal value. Likewise, sheep nations can make a lasting contribution which gives them an eternal glory and honour. The Bible is not very specific about the extra reward of an individual believer. Likewise, the Bible does not specify what this glory and honour of the sheep nations exactly is. Obviously this is supposed to surprise us. But the Bible is very clear that such a thing as eternal reward and glory and honour exist, both for individuals and for nations.

This implies that the principle that 'many are called but few are chosen' not only applies to individuals but to nations as well. The Lord calls every nation to become a sheep nation, but many nations will fail to answer God's call. All this further implies that like individuals and churches, the destinies of the different nations also vary. Of course the unique call and destiny of a nation is most obvious in the case of Israel. As the nation of Jesus' birth is has a unique place in God's plan of salvation, both in the past and in the future.

Making people into disciples implies that we help them to discover their unique destinies. Mentoring whole nations implies the same thing. We need to help a nation find and realize its unique destiny in the Lord.

The discipleship of nations is more than mass evangelism

The discipleship of a nation involves more than mere evangelism, and making as many individual Christians. A new convert who wants to become a disciple of Christ needs to change all aspects of his life according to the Will of God. This implies that he actively brings his character, work, family, social relations and finances, etc, under Christ's dominion. Mentoring a nation implies the same thing. All aspects of this nation's life have to be changed by the gospel. In order for a nation to become a disciple the gospel needs to impact a nation's politics, administration, economy, education, social life, etc.

The discovery that making nations into disciples is a main part of the Great Commission has serious consequences for the concrete agendas of believers and churches. Many evangelical and charismatic churches regard the great commission mainly as winning many souls and building big churches. Church leaders call upon their members, through emphatic appeals from the pulpits and through the introduction of a sequence of programs from abroad, to invest much time and effort in evangelism. These appeals and programs seldom bear much lasting fruit and cause a lot of frustration among the members. Most believers simply do not have the gift of evangelism and therefore received only a limited task in the area of evangelism from the Lord. At the same time the members are not encouraged to use the gifts they do have in making a contribution to the great commission for the nation as a whole, by permeating state and society with the gospel through the testimony of their lives.

Church leaders tend to believe that a breakthrough of the kingdom necessarily occurs in the church. Churches appreciate (or do not for that matter) their members on the basis of their contribution to the churches' projects. They regard work in state and society mainly as a chance to recruit new church members and to make money that can be used to finance church projects. The churches and their leaders underestimate the importance of activities in state and society as instruments for the Great Commission in terms of making both individual disciples and turning the nation into a disciple. They pressurize their members to participate intensively in all sorts of church activities, which do not allow them much room for activities in state and society.

The believers' contributions to state and society are key instruments in mentoring a whole nation. These contributions also have a positive effect on the interest for the gospel among individual people. A growing influence of the gospel on sectors of state and society creates openings for evangelism among people who are never reached effectively by the church. This influence also constrains the operation of demonic powers in state and society that make people spiritually blind to God. This influence also changes a society's spiritual climate which reduces the chances of the enemy to steal again the seed of the gospel earlier sown into individuals through evangelism, enabling this seed to sprout and grow. After all, a great problem in evangelism is the falling back of many new converts because the enemy has succeeded to rob the gospel's seed. This happens very frequently because of the spiritual pressure from the new converts' social relations and society as a whole, which are dominated by demonic forces.

The strong emphasis on church activities at the expense of contributions to state and society is partly based on a misconception of the biblical notion of 'not being of this world'. This notion means that believers should not allow themselves to be influenced by the pagan powers, ideas and values that dominate the minds and conduct of non-believers in state and society. But it certainly does not mean that we have to withdraw into a Christian subculture which prevents us from having interaction with non-believers. Such withdrawal will rob us from access to our mission field. The prophet Daniel and his friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, are excellent illustrations of the Lord's design for our relationship with the world. All four men did not allow themselves to be contaminated by the idolatry, occultism and pagan practices at the courts of Babylon and Persia. Yet they exercised high and influential

positions in those societies. They used the wisdom they received from the Lord to make their pagan surroundings flourish and in this way gave a great testimony of the Lord.

A new reformation

The notion that discipleship also applies to entire nations is quite consistent with the reformation, and certainly with the Calvinist tradition. The reformation advocated reforms in individual lives and in the church, but subsequently it advocated these reforms in state and society too. Changes in the public life of a nation were part and parcel of the reformation's objectives. The tradition of the reformation has deeply impacted the history of the Netherlands. Furthermore, the reformed theology from the nineteenth century strongly emphasised the dominion of Christ in 'church, state and society'. This theology deeply impacted the Netherlands as well. During the last two decades there has been a growing interest and focus on the discipleship of nations in evangelical and charismatic circles.

One example of this interest and focus are the 'apostles of the market place'. This notion is based on the experience or assumption that church leaders lack the anointing and abilities that are necessary to lay a foundation for breakthroughs within the spheres of state and society. Such breakthroughs require people with a special anointing and gifts who are labelled as 'apostles of the market place'. There are also prophets of the market place who receive revelation from the Lord about breakthroughs in special sections of state and society. Subsequently the apostles of the market place give these breakthroughs concrete form

Another example has been demonstrated in the well known 'transformation videos', under the leadership of George Otis Jr. These videos show not merely many individual coming to Christ, but also the collective lives of entire cities, regions, and even nations, being changed by the gospel. Moreover, the Dutchman Pieter Bos has recently written a few authoritative books on this topic.

Another element of the new reformation is the so called 'transfer of wealth'. This is a financial breakthrough which will imply that the treasures of the world will be used increasingly to finance developments and projects of the kingdom in church, state and society. The financing of these developments and projects will no longer be carried by believers only, but by secular financial sources as well. Such transfer of wealth is a partial fulfilment of Bible passages like Isaiah 23:17, 18 and 60:5 and 6.

These prospects and developments indicate that the discipleship of entire nations is a priority on the Lord's agenda, after the long neglect of this part of the Great Commission by the church. The Lord wants to give a massive harvest of converts before Christ's return. But He also wants to see breakthroughs in the area of the discipleship of nations, implying that the gospel is not merely going to exercise great impact on the private lives of many people, but on the nations' public life as well. The discipleship of entire nations, in which state and society are also noticeably influenced by God's power, forms, together with the conversion of many individuals, the core of a new reformation.

The role of churches in the new reformation

The focus on breakthroughs of the gospel in state and society does not mean that churches become less important. There always remains a fundamental distinction between believers in Christ and non-believers. The believers form a family with Christ as its head. Believers need to behave as family members toward each other. A church is a place where people can feel at home, feel accepted, loved and helped. Those principles of family need to take concrete shape which is the task of churches and church groups.

The task of churches and groups also involve the mentoring of individual believers toward spiritual maturity. Teaching and pastoral care are therefore main responsibilities of church leaders. The Bible shows that the lost and hurting sheep always have a special spot in

Christ's heart. (Isaiah 40:11; Ezekiel 34:15,16; Matthew 18:12; John 10:11-13) Churches therefore need to pay special attention to people with a more than average need of help and mentoring, because of their history or personal situation. Finally, it is the duty of churches and church groups to support their members to give shape to Christ's commission to make both individuals and their nation into disciples, at their own particular positions in society.

The new reformation compels local churches and groups to reflect on their place and core tasks afresh. First of all the task of making our nation into a disciple more than ever requires that we work together with all true believers in the Netherlands. Mentoring our nation is a common purpose that we can only achieve together. The body of Christ is more than our own church, denomination or group, but comprises of all believers in our land. This implies that we apply the biblical passages on the body of Christ, like 1 Corinthians 12 and 14 and Ephesians 4, not merely to our own group, but on the believers from our region and even from our entire land as well.

The notion that the body of Christ consists of all the believers in a nation has received much attention lately. However, old practices of segmentation and division tend to be tenacious. So far individual churches, small networks of churches and denominations have conducted themselves too much like autonomous and autarchic little bodies of Christ. For example, churches or groups regularly start projects for which they actually lack the proper anointing, whereas similar projects are already being undertaken effectively by other churches or ministries. Even small groups and churches try to appoint their own 'prophets' or 'apostles', whereas they could profit much more from consulting anointed prophets and apostles who work at a regional or national level. Evangelism by one single church is often ineffective as well. In many instances evangelism is more fruitful if undertaken by specialised ministries, such as mass evangelists, or large scale alliances between various churches. It is also more effective when believers use their positions in state and society as a platform to testify of Christ than when they drag unbelievers to church meetings. Churches and groups can do the follow up of all these undertakings and mentor the new converts.

Churches and groups necessarily neglect their core tasks because their programs are too ambitious. As a result of such neglect many church members remain immature, do not know their Bibles even after many years, are unable to live in victory over their problems, and remain dependent on 'anointed' men and women. Apart from that, many members do not really feel at home in their churches, whereas many weak 'sheep' still lack the attention that they really need.

God's design for a new reformation shows a functional division of labour and fruitful collaboration between churches and networks of churches on the one hand, and movements intersecting all the churches, specialised ministries and leaders of the market place on the other hand. Their leaders will no longer operate as kings or queens with absolute power in their little spiritual kingdoms but function as a council of elders for the Netherlands. In this design those leaders with a special anointing on the national level will also be recognised, whether their original base of influence is a church, specialised ministry or a sector of the market place.

The destiny of the Netherlands

Just as persons may miss the divine destinies for their lives, nations can miss theirs too. It is further possible that a nation will realize only a part of its destiny. Old Testament Israel presents a good example of this principle. Israel did not conquer every area that the Lord had promised it. Furthermore, Israel controlled much of the land it had conquered only temporarily. The largest area it ever possessed was during the reign of Solomon, but after this Israel suffered a steady decline. Likewise, it is possible that certain aspects of a nation's destiny become manifest temporarily but do not receive form permanently.

The Lord determines the destiny of a nation and we need to hear from Him what this destiny is. We cannot determine God's destiny for our own lives based on human wisdom or strength. Likewise a nation cannot determine and realize its destiny in its own strength. The specific destiny of a nation is not only important for the nation concerned. Some nations have a strategic place in God's plan for the world, and therefore influence the destinies of other nations to an extent that is more than average. Naturally Israel is the prime example of this. A nation's history nevertheless provides some clues to understanding its destiny. The Netherlands was strongly influenced by the first reformation which already reveals something of this nation's destiny. At the same time this history also reveals major hindrances that inhibit God's redemptive plan for the Netherlands.

The history of reformation in the Netherlands is precious to the Lord, in spite of all its major mistakes and shortcomings. He plans to reopen this well, but also plans to make this well purer and more powerful than before. Haggai's prophecy about the Jewish temple that Zerubbabel built after the return from Babylonian exile which says "the latter glory of this house will be greater than the former" will apply to the new reformation in the Netherlands as well (Haggai 2:9) This implies that the influence, power and purity of the new reformation in the Netherlands will greatly exceed that of the first reformation.

The Netherlands as a beacon of light of new reformation

The Netherlands has a very strategic destiny in the world. It is called to be a beacon of light. Isaiah 42: and 60:3, which apply to Israel in the very first place, also have a special relevance for the destiny of the Netherlands. This nation needs to provide a modern times example of how nations can give shape to Christ's dominion, not just in the church but also in state and society. This means concretely that powerful Christians will rise up in various strategic sectors of society, including even the entertainment industry, both in high professional positions and in low ones. These people will manifest the authority and character of Christ in these positions and exercise great influence on their environment. The Lord will give these people wisdom to make schools, hospitals, companies, city administrations, etc., flourish while keeping high moral standards. They will also win the favour of influential non-Christians. As a result of that many people will be actively interested and eventually turn to the Lord.

The moral standards kept in public life will make giant leaps. Christians will receive respect again rather than scorn, whereas perversion, crime and all forms of dishonesty and corruption will go down drastically. The media and public opinion will no longer be dominated by anti-Christian topics and sentiments, but will pay attention and do justice to breakthroughs of God's kingdom. This development will go hand in hand with a major breakthrough in manifestations of God's presence among Christians, as well as with a strong increase in signs and wonders. These signs and wonders will not take place just in church buildings, but in office buildings, schools, streets, hospitals, and even in pubs and discotheques.

The destiny of the Netherlands is, to put it differently, to provide an example of a new reformation. The old reformation started as an incisive reform of the church on the basis of the renewed discovery of core issues of the gospel, such as justification by faith, repentance and holiness. It resulted in a movement that deeply impacted the secular world as well, and especially in Europe and the USA. The Lord wants to use the Netherlands as an instrument for the breakthrough of a new reformation of church, state and society in the world today.

Reasons why the destiny of the Netherlands is not yet breaking through

Like other nations, the Netherlands will not automatically realize its destiny. It is further possible that the Dutch nation will give shape to its destiny only very partially. In order to

realize this destiny it is imperative that Christians in the Netherlands understand this destiny and pursue it very actively. Therefore, a change in people's vision and mindset, including that of church leaders, desperately needs to occur. It is important to pray and fight for more than the success of our own church or ministry. If we want to see our nation's destiny realized, we inevitably need to invest much time, prayer and effort into this destiny and make great sacrifices on behalf of it.

In addition, there are major spiritual hindrances that prevent the Netherlands from coming into its destiny. In order to realize God's destiny for his life a new Christian has to repent from the sins and iniquity both of his own past and of his ancestors. He further needs to be delivered from demonic bondages that are connected to these sins and iniquity and has to close the door to demonic influences. Likewise we have to address the sins and iniquity in the history of our nation if we want to see God's destiny for our nation to break through. The key to this is what we call 'identificational repentance'. Daniel is the prime example of this practice. (Daniel 9) Subsequently, it is imperative that we deliver our nation from the influence of demonic thrones that have rooted themselves in our land using these sins and iniquity as openings. The instrument for such deliverance is high-level spiritual warfare. Among Dutch Christians, the vision for repentance of past national sins is much stronger developed than the vision for high-level spiritual warfare. Yet from the Old Testament we can learn that spiritual warfare is absolutely necessary for breakthroughs. Israel did not receive the Promised Land on a silver platter during the leadership of Joshua, but had to take it from the pagan peoples through intensive battles.

Some examples

A good example of sins and iniquity in the history of the Dutch nation is the love of money. This love has proven to be a major source of iniquity, reaching its lowest point in the Dutch role in the slave trade. In this context it is not surprising that the call for freedom of religion was not the only factor that triggered off the Dutch revolt against the Spanish rule in the 16th century. Discontentment about the introduction of an extra tax by Spain, the so-called tenth penny, played an important role as well. In order to remove the obstacle of the iniquity of the slave trade we need to ask forgiveness from the descendants of the victims and reconcile to them. But it is also necessary to conduct spiritual warfare against the influence of Mammon, and to tear down the thrones from which this demonic power rules.

The Netherlands has always been characterised by many problems revolving around power, authority and 'being always right'. In the Dutch nation everybody wants to be his own boss and frequently other people's boss as well. Up to this day the Dutch find it very difficult to submit to any form of central authority or authority figures. The history of the Netherlands has displayed numerous quarrels, divisions and power struggles, both in church, state and society. Christians suffer from these conditions just as much as non-Christians. Land and nation show many competing petty kingdoms ruled by many petty kings or queens. Proverbs 28:2 shows that a condition in which everybody wants to be the boss is related to rebellion.

A spirit of rebellion has already entered the nation during the struggle for independence from Spain in the 16th century. Though there were excellent and valid reasons for this struggle it was mixed with a rebellious attitude against any form of central authority. The spirit of rebellion has remained in the Dutch church and society ever since. In order to break this spirit of rebellion personal and identificational repentance are necessary first of all. But this spirit of rebellion is also facilitated by the demonic powers of Leviathan and Jezebel, which have to be dealt with through high-level spiritual warfare.

Mistakes made during the first reformation

Except the removal of past hindrances we also need to learn from the mistakes of the past. Such lessons will help the Dutch people to prevent similar mistakes that might erect new obstacles to the destiny of the nation. In this paragraph I will briefly discuss a few of these mistakes.

In the past the Dutch believers have conducted many of their Christian activities in their own strength and according to their own ideas. This major mistake is one of the reasons why the reformation has not been able to win the hearts of many Catholics. The Christian faith in the Netherlands mainly revolved around the correct doctrine; its approach was quite dogmatic. Faith meant in particular the acceptance of the right doctrines with the intellect. The Christian leaders in the Netherlands were not apostles who walked in signs and wonders, but academically-trained theologians. Like the ancient Greek philosophers they were first of all thinkers. In many cases the theologians tried to do justice to the Bible, but they relied heavily on their human intellect and very little on the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. If we look at the theological controversy between the Arminians and Gomarists during the famous synod of Dordrecht in 1618 and 1619 through contemporary lenses we cannot fail to notice that various aspects of both competing theologies were artificial and intellectualistic. Despite the pious intentions and the references to the Bible, both theological positions were most of all products of clever reasoning, not of divine revelation.

The solutions that Dutch Christians created to problems in state and society were often determined by human wisdom and strength as well, and had serious drawbacks. In the 19th century and in beginning of the 20th, the Dutch pastor and theologian Abraham Kuyper, who later became prime minister, strongly facilitated the social and political emancipation of Calvinists citizens. Dutch politics and society became ordered according to the principle of 'pillarization'. The different segments of society: Calvinists, other reformed, Catholics, socialists and liberals all developed their own institutions; such as political parties, schools, labour unions, hospitals, etc. These chains of institutions based on religion or world view were called 'pillars'. These pillars formed closed subcultures within one society which strongly restrained the social interaction between people of different world view or religion.

The main drawback of this pillar system was that Christians withdrew to a high degree in their own subcultures. As a result of this they were not able to build the intensive personal contacts with non-believers that are necessary to win their hearts and get them interested in the gospel. Consequently the impact the gospel had on the non-Christians, who had their own pillars, was significantly reduced. The pillar system further reinforced the notion that the gospel was only important for members of the Christian pillars, implying that other Dutch citizens did not need to bother about God or the gospel. At this time the pillar system has lost its status as a comprehensive ordering design for Dutch society. But the after effects of a 'pillar mentality' still restrain the confidence of many Christians in their testimony to non-Christians.

Principles for a new reformation

If Dutch Christians want to see the breakthrough of the nation's destiny, the believers need to give an example of true unity among them. Such unity can only be successful if it has the right foundation. Proverbs 28:2 shows that a nation can only continue to prosper if it has leaders with understanding and knowledge. The Church therefore can only come into the right permanent order with leaders who have received the necessary anointing of understanding and knowledge from the Lord. The appointment of leaders on any other basis, such as personal loyalties, ambition and self-promotion will only result in a further increase of disorder and division.

God builds His church on the foundation of apostles and prophets. It is therefore imperative that those whom the Lord has called for these offices will be recognised in the land. They are the ones who have received the anointing of understanding and knowledge from the Lord to lay the foundation of the church. Because the church of Christ consists of all true believers, and not of one particular church or denomination, the prophets and apostles are not necessarily people with a position in a specific church. The apostles and prophets of the market place, which we have discussed in a previous section, are important pillars of a new reformation. It is of paramount importance that these ministers and the apostles and prophets who minister in and to churches recognise one another and collaborate, rather than repress, criticise or ignore one another.

Recently the Netherlands has shown a new interest in unity collaboration between church leaders in a city or region. The idea behind this is that such unity and collaboration lays the foundation for spiritual breakthroughs in a city or region. This idea, however, is based on an obsolete vision that does insufficient justice to the Lord's most recent revelations about the prophetic and apostolic order. Unity and collaboration between church leaders has some usefulness. However, not all church leaders are prophets and apostles, nor are all prophets and apostles church leaders. For this reason unity and collaboration between church leaders cannot lay the foundation of a new reformation.

A new reformation is nevertheless a commission for all believers. The prophets and apostles lay the foundations, but the other believers need to give further shape and content to the influence of the kingdom in state and society. Teachers, shepherds and evangelists will also play an important role in equipping the believers for this commission, each ministering with their own gifts. These teachers, shepherds and evangelists may have a church as their ministry base, or may be based in a specialised ministry or in a sector of the market place.

Unlike in many instances in the history of Christianity there will be no contradiction between intimacy with the Lord and social responsibilities in the new reformation. A deep intimacy with the Lord will form the foundation of all activities of the believers. There will also be a strong emphasis on worship in spirit and truth, both individually and collectively. God will use this worship to open the heavens and manifest His presence strongly, both in churches and in secular settings. The Lord will regularly touch non-believers spontaneously in the public squares, offices and shops. Christians will also heal and deliver people in God's Name publicly, as Jesus did in His time. From the intimacy with the Lord He will further teach the believers personally how to give shape to God's kingdom in their personal lives, but also in their work places and social settings.

We have already discussed high-level spiritual warfare and identificational repentance. These activities will remain important. They are not merely necessary as preparations for further breakthroughs, but also to protect breakthroughs from the counteroffensives of the enemy who want to steal the achievements of the breakthroughs. Apart from that, believers will pray with greater spiritual authority than before. Their prayer lives will no longer mainly consist of requesting the Lord friendly if He may perhaps do something. Prayer will increasingly be prophetic and apostolic intercession: calling into being in the power of the Holy Spirit the plans of God that He has already revealed to us before.

The new reformation is imperfect

As believers we are called to make our nation into a disciple, and to give shape to the kingdom of God in state and society. This does not mean however that we can create the new heavens on this old earth ourselves. Revelation 21 shows that the New Jerusalem will come down from heaven, and that it will come on a new earth that will take the place of the old one. Apart from this, the grace we receive from the Holy Spirit on this earth is only a down payment of the glory that will be revealed to us later. Likewise, whatever we accomplish in

the power of the Holy Spirit here on earth will be no more than just a little foretaste of the glory of God's kingdom after Christ's return.

We will still face human and demonic opposition as long as we live and work on the old earth. The enemy will try to annihilate every breakthrough of the kingdom, using both developments in our own nation and developments worldwide as his instruments. In this context it is important to understand that not every nation has the same destiny as the Netherlands, nor the same potential for a new reformation. A breakthrough of a new reformation in some nation can certainly go hand in hand with an increase of darkness in other nations (Isaiah 60:2) In various nations the perspective of the believers is the same as the perspective of the church in Smyrna as mentioned in Revelation 2:8-11. The believers in such nations will suffer oppression and persecution. The Lord does not require such believers to give shape to a new reformation, but to remain faithful and steadfast in their troubles.

The Lord Himself will also send us serious difficulties from time to time in order to test us. A pitfall of a society with a strong Christian presence consists of the risk of opportunists and nominal Christians who present themselves as Christians for personal advantage. The Lord will send us difficulties in order to separate the chaff from the wheat and to purify the faith of His true children. (Proverbs 3:11,12; Hebrews 12:6)

Indigenous and non-indigenous Christians and the destiny of the Netherlands

The question remains who exactly belong to the Dutch nation and who do not. The question what qualifies as a people, land or nation has been subject to long and extensive academic discussions. Addressing this issue in depth is beyond the scope of this article. But we observe that the Bible does not speak of nations as static or completely exclusive entities. In the Old Testament we can read that, with some exceptions, foreigners living among the Jews could become part of the nation after some generations if they identified with God's laws, nation and people. (see also Ezekiel 47:22) This implies that according to biblical standards, people from foreign descent who live in the Netherlands can be counted as part of the nation, provided they identify with the nation and its destiny. (Ruth 1:16) In addition, the difference between indigenous and non-indigenous Dutch is somewhat relative. Almost every Dutch citizen will have at least some 'foreign' blood running through his veins, if only we dig deeply enough into his family history.

The Lord uses non-indigenous Dutch also to introduce certain values that imply enrichment to our nation's heritage. Of course this applies in particular to the influence of non-indigenous Christians on the Dutch church. From African Christians we can learn a lot about spiritual authority and confidence; from Caribbean Christians we learn about joy and exuberant worship; and from Asian Christians we can learn about willingness to serve and good manners. Naturally the presence of large non-indigenous groups also brings risks. They can introduce foreign gods and practices that only hinder God's destiny for the Netherlands. The Islamic agenda which wants to bring the whole world into submission, willingly or unwillingly, is a very clear example. However, when we as believers break through in God's authority we will reverse this threat and turn it to good, and change the Islamic threat into a fruitful mission field.

Conclusion

In this article we have argued that God does not merely have a destiny for individuals and churches, but for entire nations as well. The destiny of the Netherlands is to provide an example of a new reformation to other nations. A new reformation is a situation in which the kingdom of God is given shape through many conversions and signs and wonders on the one hand. But on the other hand the kingdom is manifested through a strong and incisive influence of the gospel on state and society. No longer is the gospel merely a private matter, but also a

matter of public life in the nation. For this to break through we need to remove iniquity and demonic strongholds from the past. High-level spiritual warfare is an important tool to achieve this purpose.

The new reformation will only receive form when the prophets and apostles of the Netherlands will start to function in their real authority. In addition to the prophets and apostles who minister from a church or a church-related ministry, the prophets and apostles of the market place are very important. The prophets and apostles of the market place need to lay the foundations for the breakthrough of the kingdom in state and society. But all believers have a duty and functions in working out the new reformation in our nation. The new reformation further requires a new reflection of the actual core tasks of the churches and on the division of labour between church leaders on the one hand and the prophets and apostles of the market place on the other hand.