Boekbesprekings / Book Reviews

skap as die inhoud oordra, om daardeur effektiewe paratekstuele kommunikasie moontlik te maak. Vir diegene wat deur die ultimatum-tipe titel uitgedaag of aangespoor word, is die inhoud wel 'n beloning.

Lindijer, C H 1998 – Postmodern Bestaan
Zoetermeer: Uitgeverij Boekencentrum

Boekaankondiging
Het etiket “postmodern” word vandaag te pas en te onpas op tal van zaken geplakt, soms zonder veel kennis van deze cultuur. Het is dan ook niet eenvoudig om te ontdekken wat postmodernisme precies inhoud. De literatuur daarover is vaak diepziinnig en moeilijk te begrijpen.

In dit boek wil de auteur op een prettig, leesbare maar niet oppervlakkige manier informeren over deze stroming. Hij doet dat in vier delen.

In het eerste deel beschrijft hij het postmodernisme in al zijn uitingen, waaronder filosofie, letterkunde en architectuur. In deel twee komen twee stromingen aan de orde die op dezelfde crisis reageren als het postmodernisme: fundamentalisme en New Age. In het volgende deel tekent de auteur de facetten van het menszijn in een postmoderne tijd – onder andere leren leven met leegte, verzet tegen trends.

Het laaste deel is geheel gewijd aan postmoderne theologie en postmodern geloof. Hierin passeren verschillende theologen en auteurs de revue en wordt de postmoderne visie op enkele wezenlijke geloofsaspecten beschreven. De auteur besluit met een beschrijving van een mogelijke postmoderne geloofgemeenskap.

Dit boek vormt een belangrijke informatiebron over de heersende cultuur van vandaag en morgen.

Mudge, Lewis S 1998 – The church as moral community. Ecclesiology and ethics in ecumenical debate
Reviewer: Dr Gafie van Wyk


Hans-Georg Gadamer wrote in Wahrheit und Methode “Wer verstehen will, muss also fragend hinter das Gesagte zurückgehen. Er muss es als Antwort von einer Frage her verstehen, auf die es Antwort’
Mudge shares this view of Gadamer's. He is concerned that people are posing questions the wrong way and therefore do not understand some important issues at stake in society and in the church. He believes that some important matters are dealt with in such a way that truly important upstream questions are avoided. At other times questions are put in such a way that they themselves become the question that one has to deal with. He concludes that "conditions of this kind signal a decline in the morality of discourse itself" (p 7). The decline in the morality of discourse signals the decline in morality as such. Mudge describes the morality crisis of our own time when he says: "... our world is not stable. It is deeply threatened by its own frantic pursuit of productivity and profit. Ironically, as our public moral resources diminish the question faced by our planetary civilization deepen. It is not only that persons are left to pursue their lives in a world without norms. In a morally fragmented time, we face questions of such radical scope and import that they can be dealt with only in collective ways. These issues have to do with the very continuation of life on earth itself" (p 22). From where will the wisdom come and the courage to deal with the questions of morality in our time?

Mudge refers to a statement of Konrad Raiser as the heart of the matter that is at stake here. Raiser writes: "What is at stake is no less than the reconstruction of ethics as such. The question is whether there is an independent entry point to ethics starting from the experience and reality of the church" (p 23). Mudge tries to demonstrate "that there is an independent entry point to ethics starting from the experience and reality of the church." He says:

> It can be said today that the more one sees moral behavior as depending on specific communal allegiances rather than on publicly available forms of reasoning, the more the *whole* life of the *ekklesia* – doctrine, liturgy, personal spirituality, service, social witness – becomes a moral reality in its own right. If the community of faith is the primary source of moral consciousness, then *everything* about that community’s life, not just specific commandments or ethical reflection as such, contributes to that end" (p 43).

Mudge uses the metaphor "household of life" (p 113) to argue his point of view. He describes the household of life as a larger human community, with specific religious communities at its core, where the realisations happen and energy is released for serving the still-larger human community. This strategy does not suggest that Christians should try to tell the world how to think. Rather it offers a context to the world in which it may do its own thinking free of the shallow alternatives the world itself gives. Mudge sees this position as one of moral hospitality in action. "The Christian household offers a sensitivity to the kinds of suffering that lie behind the confident secularity of so many people. It offers a willingness not to give advice, or to argue positions, but to be with other persons in their individual and communal identities, prayerfully including all in the larger context of God’s purposes for humankind" (p116).

Mudge's conception of ethics can best be summed up as not only the confutation of several postmodern sceptical objections against an independent entry point to ethics, but also as an objection to any traditional or new principle of universalization in ethics and the grounding of such a principle by any available form of reasoning. This position is contra the whole Kantian tradition (today represented by the position of Habermas in philosophical ethics) and also contra contemporary Lutheran theology that argues that the proclamation of the Gospel frees people in such a way that they can and must use rational arguments to ground their moral positions.

It is crucial that this book be debated in the church, because the controversial point of view that Mudge defends is shared and practised by a broad spectrum of Christians at grass roots level. Its seems as
if the contemporary church is breaking with its tradition when the question of an independent entry point to ethics is at stake.

Root, M and Saarinen, R (ed) 1998 – Baptism and the unity of the church


Reviewed: Dr Johan Buitendag

In order to grasp the quintessence of the book, its title – Baptism and the unity of the church – should actually be turned around: The unity of the church and baptism. The subtext, according to the title, is therefore in effect the main text. Baptism should serve as the vehicle to achieve and promote this goal of the unity of the church. The scholar, therefore, who wants to delve into the whole problem of the different issues at stake in baptism will perhaps be disappointed. But the one who is interested in a current debate of the ecumenical movement will be richly rewarded. The book wants to investigate the possibility of looking at the other (read: neglected) sacrament in pursing the ideal of visible church unity. Most Christian churches teach that baptism is a sacrament of salvation as well as a sacrament of initiation into the Christian community. It is therefore strange that it doesn't play a bigger role in the ecumenical debate of our day. The book follows the line of reasoning that this possibility is indeed viable. Perhaps it can achieve what the Eucharist hitherto has failed to bring about: real koinonia.

The book is the result of a study that was requested by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and begun by the Institute for Ecumenical Research in Strasbourg. A consultation [sic] followed in 1996 in Hvittorp (Finland). A consensus was established among the participants that unity in baptism transcends all divisions. Unity is more eminent than differences and this is rooted in the one baptism (Eph 4:5). Emphasis should thus be laid on the indicative nature of unity and not solely on its imperative. We are thus all members of the one church and this definitely has implications for the existence of different churches. But this demands more research, according to the Hvittorp discussions.

In a well-balanced and rather traditional Lutheran manner, the Study Paper argues that albeit baptism is the fundamental bond of communion in the church, it is neither the only nor the final bond. Our baptismal unity should move us to ecumenical engagement of full altar or pulpit fellowship and full communion. And this unity is not something that should be achieved, but we are called to live and rejoice in it. It is perhaps necessary to highlight two aspects here. Does baptism according to the Lutheran tradition really make someone a member of the church? Although Lutherans have not understood confirmation as a sacramental addition to baptism, the baptised are withheld from the Eucharist until such a moment where they are confirmed by the church. This practice is perhaps an obstacle to overcome in this debate. Susan Wood's proposal of an “integrated rite of initiation” which would reconnect baptism with the Eucharist is worth mentioning. The ecclesial meaning of the Eucharist has largely been neglected in the past, which will be retrieved in this reciprocally interpreted integration of baptism and Eucharist. This makes this “integrated rite of initiation” necessary. Secondly, the whole issue of the charismatic movement's “baptism of the Holy Spirit” (second blessing) raises a problem as well. Neither have the merely baptised a birthright to the Eucharist nor are they second-class church members. This, of course, asks for biblical,