



# **Journeying Towards Multiculturalism? The Relationship between Immigrant Christians and Dutch Indigenous Churches**

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## **Abstract**

Due to globalisation and migration western Europe has become home to adherents of many different religions. This article focuses on one aspect of the changes on the religious scene; it investigates in what way immigration—and Christian immigrant religiosity particularly—has affected the structure and identity of the Dutch Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant Church in the Netherlands. We argue that the Roman Catholic Church in the Netherlands has been able to accommodate a substantial group of immigrants whilst the PCN seems to encounter more problems responding to the increasingly multicultural society. We conclude that both churches, however, in structure and theology, remain largely unaffected by the influx of immigrant Christians.

## **Keywords**

immigration, Christianity, western Europe, multiculturalism, churches, identity, Netherlands, Protestantism

## 1. Introduction

In the present age of increased migration the famous words by Heraclitus, *panta rhei* (everything is moving), could be rephrased as *pantes rheousin*, everybody is moving. Whilst migration has been a phenomenon of all times and all places, the twentieth century more than any period before, has been characterised by increased mobility of people and people-groups, moving from one place to another, in search of safety, economic welfare, political freedom, etc. As people, ideas, goods, and money move between different parts of the globe, people, countries, and markets previously largely separated from each other, are being brought into contact with each other. Thus, (the increase in) migration is widely considered both a consequence of globalisation as well as one of the factors enhancing the processes in globalisation.<sup>1</sup>

In western Europe, though by no means the main destination of migrants worldwide,<sup>2</sup> this has resulted in a substantial change in the composition of the population over the last 50 years; decolonisation, labour migration and the reception of refugees and asylum-seekers in the second half of the twentieth century have changed western European nations into multi-ethnic, multicultural and multi-religious societies. Though national and international policies have been developed in an effort to regulate migration, it seems likely that this pressure-cooker change of the European societies will persist in the foreseeable future.

In this article we focus on one particular aspect of the impact of migration on Dutch society. We investigate in what way immigration—and in particular Christian immigrant religiosity—has affected the structure and identity of Dutch churches. More specifically, we look at the way in which the two largest churches in the Netherlands, the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) and the Protestant Church in the Netherlands (PCN), have addressed the issue of Christian immigrants in the last decades and to what extent societal multiculturalism is reflected in the churches' structures and theology.

We have opted for these two case-studies for a number of reasons. First of all, the RCC and the PCN are the two largest churches in the Netherlands,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Nikos Papastergiadis, *The Turbulence of Migration: Globalization, Deterritorialization and Hybridity* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2000). 5–8.

<sup>2</sup> Philip J. Muus, *De Wereld in Beweging: Internationale Migratie, Mensenrechten en Ontwikkeling* (Utrecht: Jan van Arkel, 1995), 14–16 and 38. Most migrants move within their own region. This is especially true for Africa and Asia.

with the RCC representing around 4.4 million Christians<sup>3</sup> and the PCN representing about 2.3 million people.<sup>4</sup> Both churches have been deeply affected by secularisation over the last 30 years and are in the process of rethinking their identity and role in society. The emergence—and rapid growth—of immigrant religiosity (Islam, Hinduism and new Christian groups) in the secularised context of the Netherlands poses an additional challenge to the churches.

Structure- and theology-wise, the two churches are quite different. The Roman Catholic Church in the Netherlands is the national representation of a transnational, hierarchically structured and multicultural organisation. The Protestant Church in the Netherlands is a recent union of three national Protestant churches whose identity is closely linked to the history of the Netherlands, the Dutch language and Dutch culture.<sup>5</sup> This makes the study and comparison of the two churches more relevant: what kind of organisational structure and what approach to theology is best equipped to meet the challenges outlined above?

In our research we have used literature study, document analysis, and semi-structured interviews to gather information for the description of the two case studies.<sup>6</sup> We have analysed the case studies by means of a method proposed by Robert Schreiter in his book *The New Catholicity: Theology between the Global and the Local*. Schreiter distinguishes between three stages in the development of multicultural communities: (a) recognition of diversity; (b) respect for differences and (c) communication and cooperation for a common good. We have opted to use these three stages as evaluative criteria for the level of multiculturalism of the two churches.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>) RKKerk.nl, *Bisdommen van Nederland*, online available at <http://www.katholieknederland.nl/rkkerk/kerkprovincie/bisdommen/index.html> (accessed 30 July 2008).

<sup>4</sup>) Protestant Church in the Netherlands, online available at <http://www.pkn.nl/> (accessed 30 July 2008).

<sup>5</sup>) For a discussion of the ‘national’ character of Protestant Churches in Europe and its complications for international cooperation see: Eduardus A.J.G. van der Borgh, “Uniting Europe as a Challenge for the Future of the National Churches,” in Tim Noble et al. (eds), *Charting Churches in a Changing Europe: Charta Oecumenica and the Process of Ecumenical Encounter* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006), 105–125.

<sup>6</sup>) We would like to thank June Beckx (SKIN), Willem Jansen (STEK), and Jan Post Hospers (PKN) for their time to sit down and talk with us about their vision.

<sup>7</sup>) Robert Schreiter, *The New Catholicity: Theology between the Global and the Local* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1997), 95–96. Here, as early as 1997, Schreiter signalled that multiculturalism would not just have major consequences for the public sphere but

We argue that due to its transnational configuration and resources, the Roman Catholic Church in the Netherlands has been able to accommodate a substantial group of Christian immigrants; the PCN, however, due to its link to Dutch history and language, seems to encounter more difficulties in responding adequately to the changed society. Nevertheless, we question whether either of the churches has moved beyond structural adaptation and the recognition of differences and whether the churches actually respect the differences to the extent that they wrestle with the diversity and endeavour to develop mechanisms that include immigrant Christians in shaping the future of the churches.

We further argue that exactly because of its structure, its explicit focus on and roots in the Dutch society the PCN might be more flexible in the redefinition of its identity and may through the encounter with Christian immigrants be able to adapt its theology and outlook to the altered circumstances. The RCC in the Netherlands, on the other hand, is hampered by its transnational and hierarchical structure in this process of redefining its identity and theology.

In order to reach our conclusion we take a number of steps. The article starts off with a short description of migration history in the Netherlands, focussing on recent immigration history and its religious implications. In this paragraph we set the context for the two case studies and discuss terminology as well as the much-debated figures of immigrant Christians in the Netherlands. After having described the larger framework, the two case studies are presented, starting with the RCC, followed by the PCN. In the case studies we look at the infrastructures the RCC and PCN have developed to accommodate the influx of immigrants and at the impact of immigrant Christianity on theology. The article ends with an assessment of the present situation and a conclusion.

## **2. Migration and the Netherlands**

### *2.1. Facts, Figures, and Educated Guesses*

According to the 2008 data of Statistics Netherlands (from now on: CBS) almost twenty percent of the people living in the Netherlands are first or

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was also become one of the main challenges facing European contextual theologies in the twenty-first century.

second generation migrants.<sup>8</sup> In numbers, this means that a little below 3.2 million people out of the total 16.4 million inhabitants of the country are considered immigrants. Of these immigrants about 1.45 million are categorized ‘Western immigrants,’<sup>9</sup> whilst 1.77 million are classified as ‘non-Western’ immigrants.<sup>10</sup> The CBS uses the term ‘allochthonous’ (*allochtoon*) for this group of first- and second-generation immigrants.<sup>11</sup> In Dutch government policy this word is used to describe people who are born outside the Netherlands and/or people who have at least one parent who was born outside the Netherlands. However, in the public debate, the word has acquired a much broader, mostly negative connotation.<sup>12</sup> In this article, written from the destination country perspective, we prefer the term ‘immigrant’ to ‘allochthonous.’<sup>13</sup>

Whilst CBS has done extensive research into societal participation, education, etc. of immigrants, there have been no investigations into the

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<sup>8</sup> Statistics Netherlands is the English name of Centraal Bureau voor Statistiek (CBS). Han Nicolaas and Elma van Agtmaal-Wobma, “Demografie,” in: Ko Oudhof, Rik van der Vliet & Brigitte Hermans (eds.), *Jaarrapport Integratie* (Den Haag, 2008), 33, online available at <http://www.cbs.nl/NR/rdonlyres/37812C9B-39B7-46FC-A893-294F18933E81/0/2008b61pub.pdf> (accessed 4 February 2009).

<sup>9</sup> The term ‘Western migrants’ is somewhat confusing here as it includes migrants from Japan and Indonesia. These two countries because of their socio-economic and socio-cultural position, are considered ‘Western’ in the statistics of the CBS. CBS, *Begrippen*, online available at <http://www.cbs.nl/nl-NL/menu/methoden/begrippen/default.htm?ConceptID=1057> (accessed 4 February 2009).

<sup>10</sup> The exact figures are: Western allochthonous people: 1,449,700; and non-Western allochthonous people: 1,765,700; see Nicolaas, “Demografie,” 33.

<sup>11</sup> The term is somewhat confusing as most people have a Dutch passport as well as Dutch citizenship.

<sup>12</sup> Philomena Essed and Sandra Trienekens note: “In practice, *allochtoon* captures the mix of racial thinking and cultural hierarchies.” Hence, on the basis of phenotype, people remain allochthonous, despite having lived in the Netherlands for several generations and speaking the language perfectly.” Cf. Philomena Essed & Sandra Trienekens, “‘Who Wants to Feel White?’ Race, Dutch Culture and Contested Identities,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 31/1 (2008), 57–59.

<sup>13</sup> The UN defines the term ‘migrant’ as ‘a person who has moved to a country other than his or her usual residence for at least a year, so that the country of destination effectively becomes his or her new country of usual residence’ and for the first generation descendants of such a person. Antoine Meyer (ed.), *People on the Move: Handbook of Selected Terms and Concepts Version 1.0* (Den Haag & Paris: The Hague Process on Refugees and Migration/ UNESCO Section on International Migration and Multicultural Politics, 2008), 12–13. Although we prefer the UN terminology and definition, in order to be able to use the CBS statistics, we have opted to substitute immigrant for allochthonous.

religious affiliation of immigrants. The only data available are those of the religious affiliation of people in the Netherlands as a whole. The most recent figures indicate that about five percent of the Dutch population (850,000 people) is Muslim; the majority of these are immigrants.<sup>14</sup> Data about immigrant Christians are more difficult to produce; they are included in the general statistics on the Christian communities in the Netherlands. Hijme Stoffels (VU University, Amsterdam) estimates the total number of immigrant Christians (Western as well as non-Western) at about 1.3 million.<sup>15</sup> Calculations of the total number of non-Western Christian immigrants in the Netherlands vary considerably. In 2002 Kathleen Ferrier, former coordinator of the platform for immigrant churches SKIN,<sup>16</sup> estimated the number of non-Western Christian immigrants at about 800.000.<sup>17</sup> Frans Wijzen (Radboud University, Nijmegen), in 2003 gives the considerably lower number of 640.000;<sup>18</sup> Stoffels' calculations are even lower: about 516.000.<sup>19</sup> As most of the immigrant communities have other priorities than keeping statistics and most of these estimates do not take the numerous *sans papiers* into account, the figures remain educated 'guess-work.' However, in view of the total number of Christians in the Netherlands, which the Scientific Council for Government Policy estimates at 7 million,<sup>20</sup> immigrant Christians appear to form a substantial percentage of Christianity in the Netherlands (roughly a fifth). Even the

<sup>14</sup> CBS, *Ruim 850 Duizend Islamieten in Nederland*; see <http://www.cbs.nl/nl-NL/menu/themas/bevolking/publicaties/artikelen/archief/2007/2007-2278-wm.htm> (accessed 30 July 2008).

<sup>15</sup> Hijme Stoffels, "A Coat of Many Colours: New Immigrant Churches in The Netherlands", in Mechteld Jansen & Hijme Stoffels (eds), *A Moving God: Immigrant Churches in the Netherlands* (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2006), 15–16.

<sup>16</sup> SKIN is the name of a platform for migrant churches in The Netherlands, established in 1997. The acronym SKIN stands for Samen Kerk in Nederland (Together Church in the Netherlands). For more information see: <http://www.skinkerken.nl/> (accessed 30 July 2008).

<sup>17</sup> Kathleen Ferrier, *Migrantenkerken* (Kampen: Kok, 2002), 30.

<sup>18</sup> Frans J.S. Wijzen, "Op zondag willen wij onszelf zijn... Allochtone Christenen in Nederland," in: Cor Hermans (ed.), *Is er nog godsdienst in 2050?* (Budel: Damon, 2003), 97.

<sup>19</sup> Stoffels, "A Coat of Many Colours," 15.

<sup>20</sup> Wim B.H.J. van de Donk, Petra Jonkers, Gerrit Kronjee & Rob Plum, *Geloven in het Publieke Domein: Verkenning van een Dubbele Transformatie* (Den Haag, Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid, 2006), 91; see [http://www.wrr.nl/dsc?c=getobject&s=obj&!sessionid=1OvofBaqyo3l50uVxzYXp1K78HdWzm\\_QW2AD1FEodvhsYlyp3M0aG BFhXOqKEXXIW&objectid=3840&!dsname=default&isapidir=/gvisapi/](http://www.wrr.nl/dsc?c=getobject&s=obj&!sessionid=1OvofBaqyo3l50uVxzYXp1K78HdWzm_QW2AD1FEodvhsYlyp3M0aG BFhXOqKEXXIW&objectid=3840&!dsname=default&isapidir=/gvisapi/) (accessed 30 July 2008).

most conservative estimates indicate that around one out of every 13 Christians in the Netherlands seems to be of non-Western origin. The world church has become a local phenomenon.

## 2.2. *Immigration History*

Migration—both immigration and emigration—is not a new trend in the Dutch context.<sup>21</sup> On the whole, up to the 1960s the Netherlands was statistically considered an emigration country, i.e. more people moved away from than into the country.<sup>22</sup> Because of the focus of this article we only discuss trends in migration to the Netherlands after the Second World War. Immigrants after World War II are often divided into a number of categories: migrants related to the colonial past, labour migrants, migrants due to family reunion and migrants arriving as refugees or asylum seekers. However, the numbers as well as the names of the categories vary according to author.<sup>23</sup>

In the case of the Netherlands, a sizeable number of immigrants have come from the former colonies, often triggered by the independence of the colonies.<sup>24</sup> The first group of about 300.000 people—arriving between 1946 and 1964—were people from the former Dutch colony of Indonesia.<sup>25</sup> In the 1970s a second—substantial—group of colonial immigrants came

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<sup>21</sup> For an overview of migration in the Netherlands see: Han Nicolaas & Arno Sprangers, *Buitenlandse Migratie in Nederland 1795–2006: De Invloed op de Bevolkingsamenstelling*, available online at <http://www.cbs.nl/NR/rdonlyres/6A1AD820-F436-4039-AC85-F19B5673E8AB/0/2007k4b15p32art.pdf> (accessed 30 July 2008).

<sup>22</sup> Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid (WRR), *Nederland Als Immigratiesamenleving* (Den Haag: SDU Uitgevers, 2001), 35. Cf. the press statement of CBS, *Minder Immigranten dan Emigranten*, [www.cbs.nl/nl-NL/menu/themas/bevolking/publicaties/artikelen/archief/2003/2003-142-pb.htm](http://www.cbs.nl/nl-NL/menu/themas/bevolking/publicaties/artikelen/archief/2003/2003-142-pb.htm) (accessed 25 May 2008).

<sup>23</sup> Andrew Geddes, *The Politics of Migration and Immigration in Europe* (London: Sage, 2003), 17–19, 104–105; WRR, *Nederland als Immigratiesamenleving*, 56–58; The categorisations are not without critique: the boundaries are blurry and people can transition between the various categories. Cf. Khalid Koser, *International Migration: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 18–19.

<sup>24</sup> Geddes, *Politics of Migration*, 16.

<sup>25</sup> Leo Lucassen, “Appendix. Een Kort Overzicht van de immigratie naar Nederland in de Twintigste Eeuw,” in Jaap Vogel, *Nabije Vreemden: Een eeuw Wonen en Samenleven* (Den Haag: SDU Uitgevers, 2005), 226. For a detailed history of the Moluccans in the Netherlands see: Elias Rinsampessy, *Saudara Bersaudara: Molukse Identiteit in Processen van Cultuurverandering* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1992).

to the Netherlands: the Surinamese.<sup>26</sup> The Netherlands Antilles and Aruba are origin of another substantial part of the Dutch immigrant community; these islands are still part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, and have the status of a separate country within the Kingdom—just like the Netherlands.<sup>27</sup>

The second group of post World War II immigrants to the Netherlands are the so-called labour migrants, who were recruited from the late 1950s onwards to carry out low-skilled work. Initially labour migrants came from Italy, Spain, Greece and Yugoslavia; later, from the mid 1960s onwards, people were recruited in Turkey and Morocco.<sup>28</sup> The recruitment came to an abrupt standstill in 1973, when, due to the economic recession and growing unemployment following the oil crisis, the Dutch government closed the borders for labour migrants and developed a restrictive immigration policy.<sup>29</sup> However, immigration did not decrease. In the first half of the 1970s labour immigrants began to adopt the Netherlands as their long-term country of residence and started to transfer their families or prospective partners to the Netherlands, thus multiplying the number of initial labour immigrants. Migration with the purpose of family reunification or formation can therefore largely be considered a consequence of labour migration.<sup>30</sup>

In more recent years new groups of highly educated labour migrants have arrived, mainly from so-called ‘Western’ countries. This has created a gap between the wanted and welcome labour migrants who are highly educated and fill the vacancies in the top end of the corporate labour market and those

<sup>26</sup> Vogel, *Nabije Vreemden*, 139–140; WRR, *Nederland Als Immigratiesamenleving*, 58; Geddes, *Politics of Migration*, 104–105; CBS Statline Databank, *Bevolking; Herkomst-groepering, Generatie, Geslacht en Leeftijd, 1 januari*; see <http://statline.cbs.nl/StatWeb/publication/?VW=T&DM=SLNL&PA=37325&D1=0&D2=2-4,11,46,95-96,136,51,193,214,231&D3=a&D4=0&D5=0&D6=0,4,8,1&HD=080328-1648&HDR=T,G3,G4,G5 &STB=G2,G1> (accessed 27 May 2008).

<sup>27</sup> *Statuut voor het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden*, see [www.nrc.nl/redactie/binnenland/statuutkoninkrijk.pdf](http://www.nrc.nl/redactie/binnenland/statuutkoninkrijk.pdf) (accessed 25 May 2008). Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Naar Nieuwe Staatkundige Verhoudingen*; see <http://www.minbzk.nl/onderwerpen/de-nederlandse/nieuwe-staatkundige> (accessed 25 May 2008).

<sup>28</sup> WRR, *Nederland als Immigratiesamenleving*, 56; Stephen Castles & Mark J. Miller, *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003) (3rd revised edition), 68–69.

<sup>29</sup> WRR, *Nederland als Immigratiesamenleving*, 56.

<sup>30</sup> Lucassen, “Appendix,” 227; WRR, *Nederland Als Immigratiesamenleving*, 51, 56–57; Castles & Miller, *Age of Migration*, 3, 80; Geddes, *Politics of Migration*, 17.



from mostly non-Western countries, who are generally unwanted and unwelcome and who are forced to seek jobs at the bottom end of the labour market.<sup>31</sup> However, with the recent rapid expansion of the EU and an increased East-West migration within Europe, the characterisation of the European immigrants as ‘non-problematic’ has become more controversial; especially the considerable number of Polish labour immigrants has given rise to a heated debate on pros and cons of European migration.<sup>32</sup>

Refugees and asylum seekers form the third and last category of immigrants. This group is highly diverse in terms of education, culture, and religion. The increase in numbers of asylum seekers in the mid-1980s gave rise to changes in admittance regulations. The disappearance of borders within the EU has led to a reinforcement of the outer borders and a tightening of the EU member countries’ individual and joint migration policies.<sup>33</sup> Distinguishing between those having ‘justified’ claims to asylum, and those that have not, has proven increasingly difficult, resulting in ‘years on end’ procedures for residence applications.<sup>34</sup> It has also resulted in a substantial and ever-increasing number of migrants, who have an irregular legal status and who are looking for low-skilled work.<sup>35</sup>

### 3. Dutch Churches and Immigrant Christians

#### 3.1. Introduction

Before embarking on our two case-studies, we would like to make a remark on terminology. In much of the literature on Christian immigrants in the Netherlands, the term ‘migrant churches’ (*migrantenkerken*) is used.

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<sup>31</sup> Saskia Sassen, *Cities in A World Economy* (Thousand Oaks: Pine Forge Press, 2006), 74; Alejandro Portes, “Introduction: The Debates and Significance of Immigrant Transnationalism,” *Global Networks* 1/3 (2001), 188.

<sup>32</sup> Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, *Bevolking Groeit Met 46 Duizend*; see <http://www.cbs.nl/NR/rdonlyres/592240F7-06CE-4A14-AAD1-39C29011ED37/0/pb08n011.pdf> (accessed 5 May 2008).

<sup>33</sup> Castles & Miller, *Age of Migration*, 13–14; Geddes, *Politics of Migration and Immigration in Europe*, 126ff.

<sup>34</sup> WRR, *Nederland als Immigratiesamenleving*, 59–62.

<sup>35</sup> Godfried Engbersen et al., *Illegale Vreemdelingen in Nederland: Omvang, Overkomst, Verblijf en Uitzetting* (Rotterdam: RISBO Contractresearch BV/Erasmus Universiteit, 2002), 3–4.

However, there is ample discomfort among Dutch researchers and church officers about the adequacy of the expression. Objections are that the term highlights the migration experience, rather than the Christian character of the people and leaves a number of questions unaccounted for: e.g. who is an (im)migrant, and (when) does (im)migration start and end.<sup>36</sup> In addition, June Beckx, the secretary of the platform SKIN, has remarked that many Christian immigrants consider the term ‘migrant churches’ pejorative. She proposes the term ‘immigrant churches’ as these churches find their roots in networks of immigrants.<sup>37</sup> However, considering the fact that a number of churches, such as the Roman Catholic Church, consist of immigrant as well as indigenous members, we propose to leave the term ‘(im)migrant churches’ altogether. In the article we consistently use the expression ‘immigrant Christians,’ thus emphasizing that immigrants, also in matters of religiosity, are active agents: people who actively opt to express their religiosity in ways and forms that suit their lives, or can refrain from doing so...

### 3.2. Case Study I: *The Roman Catholic Church in the Netherlands*

The majority of immigrant Christians in the Netherlands is Roman Catholic.<sup>38</sup> Hence, it seems appropriate that the first case study addresses

<sup>36</sup> Most researchers, however, continue to use the term, for lack of a better one. Cf. Ferrier, *Migrantenkerken*, 33; Jansen & Stoffels, *A Moving God*, 4; S. Wartena, “Migrantenkerken, Definities, Evaluaties en Alternatieve Benaderingen,” in: Han Euser et al. (eds.), *Migranten in Mokum: De Betekenis van Migrantenkerken voor de Stad Amsterdam* (Amsterdam: VU Drukkerij, 2006), 26–27; Sjaak van ‘t Kruis, *Born in Sion: Policy Framework for the Relationship between the Uniting Churches in the Netherlands (‘Samen Op Weg’) Inter-Church Ecumenical Organisation and the Immigrant Churches OR Organisations of Christian Immigrants* (Utrecht: Bureau Voorlichting MDO Samen op Weg-kerken, 2001), 29. See also Claudia Währisch-Oblau, “‘We shall be Fruitful in this Land’: Pentecostal and Charismatic New Mission Churches in Europe,” in: André Droogers et al. (eds.), *Fruitful in this Land: Pluralism, Dialogue and Healing in Migrant Pentecostalism* (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 2006), 33. Währisch-Oblau states: “That their churches came into being due to migration is just accidental; it does not define them.”

<sup>37</sup> “Onder Migrantenkerken versta ik dus kerken van immigranten. En of die nou een eerste, tweede of een derde generatie zijn, dat maakt niet uit, maar ooit zijn ze van buiten Nederland hier gekomen en ze spreken nog steeds de taal van het moederland en ze gebruiken nog steeds de gewoonten van het moederland waar ze ooit vandaan zijn gekomen.” Interview with June Beckx, Amersfoort, 23 April 2008.

<sup>38</sup> Jaap Beukema, *Een Kerk Bekent Kleur: Gemeente-zijn te Midden van Minima, Moslims en Migrantenkerken* (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 2002), 74.

the situation of the Roman Catholic Church in the Netherlands. Discussions on the Roman Catholic Church in a particular country should take the fact into account that the Roman Catholic Church is a transnational—or in its own vocabulary, universal—Church. General policies are developed in Rome and implemented through hierarchical structures at the regional, national, and local level, when and where applicable. Considering the Roman Catholic church-model, it is to be expected that Roman Catholic immigrants do not seek to establish new churches. The overall aim is integration in the ecclesial structures in the country of residence.<sup>39</sup> As early as 1952 the need for an international body, occupying itself with the consequences of emigration was recognised: this resulted in the establishment of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People in 1970.<sup>40</sup> The instruction by Pope Paul VI *De pastorali migratorum cura* (1969) delegated the responsibility for immigrant Christians to the church in the country of destination.

In the RCC in the Netherlands two different responses to immigrant Christians can be distinguished: the first response focussed on practical issues, leading to structural adjustments of the church-organisation; the second response was theological and has led to reflections on migration and multiculturalism as theological loci. We will first focus on the structural consequences of migration and then move to theology.

The first substantial developments with regard to immigrant Christians began in the early twentieth century, when migrant labourers (Italians, Poles, and Slovenians) arrived to work in the mines in the southern part of the Netherlands. Chaplains, often priests from religious congregations, were appointed to care for the immigrants liturgically and pastorally; structurally however the immigrants were considered to be part of (and their organisations a subdivision of) the local territorial parish. After World War II, when immigrants from the former Dutch colony of Indonesia arrived, categorical pastorates emerged; these pastorates gradually developed into parishes based

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<sup>39</sup>) Johannes Th. Rijk points out that as early as the fourth Council of the Lateran in 1215 the RCC developed structures to cater for migrants; see Johannes Th. Rijk, *De Weg van de Multiculturaliteit in de Nederlandse Kerk: Bijdrage tot een nadere bezinning* (Den Bosch: Stichting Allochtonenzorg, 1995), 2; Jan A.B. Jongeneel et al., *Gemeenschapsvorming van Aziatische, Afrikaanse, Midden- en Zuidamerikaanse Christenen in Nederland: Een Geschiedenis in Wording* (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 1996), 44–45.

<sup>40</sup>) Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People (PCPCMIP), *Brief Historical Overview*; see [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/migrants/documents/rc\\_pc\\_migrants\\_doc\\_19960520\\_profile\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/migrants/documents/rc_pc_migrants_doc_19960520_profile_en.html) (accessed 6 August 2008).

on ethnicity and in a later stage into language-based parishes.<sup>41</sup> These so-called ‘categorical parishes’ were seen to supplement the existing structures of the territorial parishes. Gradually, consultation between the various initiatives for immigrants in the Dutch RCC gave rise to two organisations; the organisation *Cura Migratorum* (1975) supervised the diaconal care for Roman Catholic immigrants, whereas *Stichting Allochtonenzielzorg*<sup>42</sup> (1975) focussed on the pastoral care for immigrants.<sup>43</sup>

Johannes Th. Rijk, delegate to the Bishops’ Conference of the Netherlands on issues of pastoral care for immigrants, notes, that the 1969 Papal Instruction on structural accommodation of immigrants was not implemented in the Netherlands until the 1990s. Only in 1993 the Bishops’ Conference of the Netherlands applied the instruction to the Dutch context, laying out three models for Roman Catholic immigrant communities: a. the personal or immigrant parish (*paroecia personalis*), based on ethnic-linguistic commonalities in membership; b. the quasi-parish (*quasi-paroecia*), which consists of a ministry for the immigrants within the local parish; and c. a chaplaincy (*cappelanus*), the appointment of a priest for a variable, not yet organised group of faithful with ethnic and/or linguistic commonalities.<sup>44</sup> Estimates are that there are presently about 50 Roman Catholic immigrant parishes (type a) in the Netherlands, consisting of various groups of immigrants.<sup>45</sup> The year 2005 saw another development in the Dutch Roman Catholic Church with regard immigrant Christians: the

<sup>41</sup> Judith E. Maaskant, *Afrikaan en Katholiek in Rotterdam: Waar Kerk je dan? Kerkelijke Verwachtingen van Afrikaanse Katholieken in Rotterdam en het Migrantenbeleid van de RKK* (Nijmegen: Wetenschapswinkel Nijmegen, 1999), 49.

<sup>42</sup> Translation: “Foundation for the Pastoral Care for Allochthonous People.”

<sup>43</sup> Berry van Oers, *25 Jaar Cura Migratorum: Uit de kronieken van de landelijke katholieke instelling voor allochtonenpastoraat en de interreligieuze dialoog* (Den Bosch: Cura Migratorum, 2001), 17–18.

<sup>44</sup> Rijk, *De Weg van de Multiculturaliteit Kerk*, 6–7; Jongeneel et al., *Gemeenschapsvorming*, 44–45; Jorge Castillo Guerra, Frans Wijsen & Moniek Steggerda, *Een Gebedshuis voor alle Volken: Kerkopbouw en Kadervorming in Rooms-Katholieke Allochtonengemeenschappen* (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 2006), 20; Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People (PCPCMIP), *Erga Migrantes Caritas Christi (The Love of Christ Towards Migrants)*; see [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/migrants/documents/rc\\_pc\\_migrants\\_doc\\_20040514\\_erga-migrantes-caritas-christi\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/migrants/documents/rc_pc_migrants_doc_20040514_erga-migrantes-caritas-christi_en.html) (accessed 6 May 2008), paragraph 91.

<sup>45</sup> Werkgroep Eenheid met Identiteit, *Kairos. De Tijd is Rijk: Uitdagingen voor Migrantenparochies en Territoriale Parochies in the Nederlandse R.-K. Kerk* (Utrecht: Nederlandse Bisschoppenconferentie, Haarlem: 2007), 3.

diaconal and pastoral care of immigrant Catholics, up till then the responsibility of *Cura Migratorum* and *Stichting Allochtonenzorg*, was transferred to the dioceses. This move has led to renewed reflection on the relation between the immigrant and indigenous Roman Catholic Christians.<sup>46</sup>

The phenomenon of migration has not just led to adjustment of structures in the Roman Catholic Church; migration has also become a theological locus.<sup>47</sup> One of the most recent documents is the 2004 papal instruction *Erga Migrantes Caritas Christi* (“The Love of Christ towards Migrants”).<sup>48</sup> The document speaks about migration as “a significant ‘sign of the times,’” which challenges the ministry of the church and sees migration as an issue of identity for both the local church and the catholicity of the one universal Church.<sup>49</sup> Recurrent theological notions are ‘hospitality to the stranger’, the need to acknowledge the migrant as a fellow human being, the notion ‘of having been strangers yourself’ and ‘Jesus Christ appearing to people in the form of a stranger’ (Mt. 25:23). To follow Christ, according to the instruction, means that ‘the believer is always a *pároikos*, a temporary resident, wherever he may be’.<sup>50</sup> Migrants, because of their diversity, are ‘a reminder of that universality which is a constituent element of the Catholic Church’ and an ‘appeal to live again the fraternity of Pentecost, when differences are harmonised by the Spirit and charity becomes authentic in accepting one another.’<sup>51</sup> Unity however is not to be interpreted as uniformity; the instruction specifically instructs to create space for varieties in liturgy, rites and popular piety and leave space to negotiate between unity and diversity.<sup>52</sup>

Since the 1990s a number of documents has been published that specifically address the Dutch situation.<sup>53</sup> One of the first was the 1995 booklet entitled *The Way of Multiculturalism in the Dutch Church* by the above-mentioned Johannes Rijk. Rijk is very critical about the participation of

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<sup>46</sup> Castillo Guerra, *Een Gebedshuis voor alle Volken*, 16.

<sup>47</sup> Castillo Guerra, *Een Gebedshuis voor alle Volken*, 180.

<sup>48</sup> PCPCMIP, *Erga Migrantes Caritas Christi*.

<sup>49</sup> PCPCMIP, *Erga Migrantes Caritas Christi*, paragraph 103.

<sup>50</sup> PCPCMIP, *Erga Migrantes Caritas Christi*, paragraphs 14–17; For local publications see, e.g.: Bishops’ Conference in the Netherlands, *Ik was Vreemdeling: Herderlijk Schrijven over Migranten en Vluchtelingen*, (Utrecht: Secretariaat RKK 1998); Werkgroep Eenheid met Identiteit, *Kairos. De Tijd is Rijk*.

<sup>51</sup> PCPCMIP, *Erga Migrantes Caritas Christi*, paragraphs 16–18.

<sup>52</sup> PCPCMIP, *Erga Migrantes Caritas Christi*, paragraphs 44–48.

<sup>53</sup> The overview does not claim to be exhaustive.

immigrant Christians in the RCC. He observes that there are as yet no true multi-cultural parishes in the Netherlands. More intense cooperation and communication between the local territorial parish and the immigrants' parish are required to bring about a church in which all feel at home and which transcend the divisions for unity.<sup>54</sup>

Another well-known document on migration was the 1998 pastoral letter *I Was a Stranger*, published by the Bishops' Conference in the Netherlands.<sup>55</sup> The document addresses the issue of immigration in general, but also refers to the topic of immigrant Christians. The letter is openly critical of the government immigration policies and the tendency in society, including the church, towards xenophobia.<sup>56</sup> Also critical was the 2006 publication by a research-team from the Nijmegen Institute for Missiology (NIM), consisting of Jorge Castillo Guerra, Frans Wijzen and Moniek Steggerda. Their book, which investigates the self-reliance of the Roman Catholic immigrant communities in the Netherlands, shows that the RCC has not yet thoroughly reflected and acted on its growing multiculturalism. The Dutch RCC, according to the book, does not as yet invest in multicultural leadership nor do theology, liturgy etc. reflect the diversity of the RCC membership.<sup>57</sup> Even more recently (2007) the document *Kairos: The Time Has Come*,<sup>58</sup> written by the working group 'Unity with Identity' of the Diocese of Haarlem, has addressed the challenges faced by both immigrant communities and territorial parishes: "[...] a quest in mutual cooperation for unity in Christ, as children of one Father, while keeping one's own identity."<sup>59</sup> The document advocates pastoral care in diversity, meeting the needs of the diverse parishioners; once that is realised, a dialogue between the territorial parishes and the immigrant communities can ensue.<sup>60</sup>

Evaluating the development of the RCC in The Netherlands towards a multicultural church by the means of the three stages proposed by Robert Schreiter (i.e. recognition, respect, and cooperation and communication)

<sup>54</sup>) Rijk, *De Weg van de Multiculturaliteit*, 15.

<sup>55</sup>) Bishops' Conference in the Netherlands, *Ik was Vreemdeling*.

<sup>56</sup>) Bishops' Conference in the Netherlands, *Ik was Vreemdeling*, 18, 20–22.

<sup>57</sup>) Castillo Guerra, *Een Gebedshuis Voor Alle Volken*, 143.

<sup>58</sup>) Werkgroep Eenheid met Identiteit, *Kairos. De Tijd is Rijk*.

<sup>59</sup>) "[...] een zoektocht in onderlinge samenwerking naar de eenheid in Christus, als kinderen van één Vader, met behoud van ieders identiteit" (Werkgroep Eenheid met Identiteit, *Kairos. De Tijd is Rijk*, 2).

<sup>60</sup>) Werkgroep Eenheid met Identiteit, *Kairos. De Tijd is Rijk*, 11–13.

it becomes clear that on the leadership level, the two stages of recognition of diversity and respect for diversity are affirmed and implemented. It is evident that the RCC as world church as well as the RCC in the Netherlands acknowledges and appreciates the large cultural diversity of its membership as well as the implications for church and theology. Diversity is considered a sign of the global church, and as such part of the essence of the Church.

However, on the local level it is evident that Dutch RCC struggles with the question how the respect for the cultural and religious identities of immigrants can be balanced with the aspiration to be one Dutch Roman Catholic Church. Thus, a tension can be observed between the provision of structures enabling the diversity of the church on the one hand and 'keeping the flock oriented toward the inherently universal nature of the organization' on the other.<sup>61</sup> In Schreiter's vocabulary this struggle is entailed in the stage of respect for the other as other (stage two). The future will have to show, whether the most recent developments, in which the immigrant communities are no longer supervised by the organisation *Cura Migratorum* and *Stichting Allochtonenzorg*, but have become part of the various dioceses, are helpful in the journey towards a multicultural church. It is evident that with the termination of the two organisations which in the past reported to the Bishop's Conference on the issues of (im)migration, it will be much more difficult to put the issues pertaining to multiculturalism within the church, on the national church's agenda. One could query whether the closing-down of infrastructures that specifically voiced the concerns of immigrant Christians, is not pre-empting the emancipation of a still vulnerable and not always vocal group.

The provision for linguistic-ethnic parishes raises the question to what extent these parishes are embedded in the existing territorial parishes in the Netherlands and the Dutch context. Or to phrase it differently: to what extent does this organisational model actually promote integration rather than segregation.<sup>62</sup> It would seem that only when great care is taken to create structures of regular interaction and exchange between the linguistic-ethnic and territorial parishes, segregation can be avoided.

Despite the ongoing changes in structures and the first tentative steps towards theological reflection on the issue of migration and migrants, the

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<sup>61</sup> Cecilia Menjivar, "Religious Institutions and Transnationalism. A Case Study of Catholic and Evangelic Salvadoran Immigrants," *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* 12/4 (1999), 598–599.

<sup>62</sup> Rijk, *De Weg van de Multiculturaliteit*, 9.

RCC in the Netherlands cannot—as yet—be considered a multicultural church. Developments stagnate especially in the final step of communication and cooperation, where the creation of a community in which all participate equally is ensured. Those within the church structures also reach this conclusion. As early as 1995 Rijk noted that integration of immigrant communities in the Dutch RCC proceeds very slowly. Realistically speaking however, the journey towards multiculturalism is a long-term multi-generational project, according to Rijk.<sup>63</sup> Similar observations were made more than a decade later by the NIM research-team in 2006. Castillo Guerra, Wijzen and Steggerda signal a lack of interest and solid policy on the national as well on the local level (in immigrant as well as in indigenous parishes) to invest in multicultural leadership.<sup>64</sup> Also theology, liturgy, popular piety and theological training in the Netherlands do not reflect the multicultural character of the society, according to the team.<sup>65</sup> Policy issues related to immigrant-communities they note, have so far been a marginal phenomenon.<sup>66</sup> This despite the fact that, if estimates are correct, one out of every ten Roman Catholics in the Netherlands is an immigrant.

Rijk, as well as the NIM research-team and the working-group *Unity with identity*, stress the need for regular interaction between the various communities. Though all acknowledge the importance of accepting each other as ‘the other’ in his/her cultural and religious otherness, they at the same time plead for regular encounters, services etc. that might start off a process of reflection and growth towards a more multi- and intercultural church. Thus, according to the NIM team, the church can fulfil ‘a diaconia of culture’: becoming a bridge between the Dutch society and countries of

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<sup>63</sup> Rijk, *De Weg van de Multiculturaliteit*, 6–15.

<sup>64</sup> Some form of multicultural leadership is attained by the import of priests from other parts of the world (e.g. India, Poland, and Argentina) to meet the shortage in priests in Dutch parishes. But the aim here is not a strive to become a multicultural church.

<sup>65</sup> Castillo Guerra, *Een Gebedshuis Voor Alle Volken*, 143. Castillo Guerra et al. observe that many immigrant communities have depended on the time and resources of Dutch priests and brothers and sisters from missionary congregations who returned to the Netherlands. As this group is getting older and there is no generation to succeed them, the question of the pastoral care of the immigrants is getting more urgent. Castillo Guerra et al. however wonder whether immigrant communities realise the urgency of the situation. Castillo Guerra, *Een Gebedshuis Voor Alle Volken*, 16. The booklet *Kairos. De Tijd is Rijk* also picks up on this issue; cf. Werkgroep Eenheid met Identiteit, *Kairos. De Tijd is Rijk*, 11.

<sup>66</sup> Castillo Guerra, *Een Gebedshuis Voor Alle Volken*, 143.



original residence. It is in living this bridge-function that multicultural parishes can become powerful witnesses to the society at large.<sup>67</sup>

### 3.3. Case-study II: The Protestant Church in the Netherlands

“Our church is far too white,” was the heading of an article in the PCN church magazine *Kerkinformatie* of June 2008.<sup>68</sup> The article covered an interview with the outgoing Secretary General of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands, Bas Plaisier. In the interview Plaisier emphasised that the present membership of the PCN is not representative of world-Christianity as present in the multi-cultural composition of Dutch society:

Whilst society has changed, the Protestant Church in the Netherlands is still predominantly white, especially in its representative structures. Worldwide, the majority of Protestants is black or coloured; in our country there are several hundreds of thousands of migrant Christians, but only in rare instances are they members of our church.<sup>69</sup>

The intention of the PCN, according to the interview, is that “the Protestant Church wants to be a church with space for people from various cultures.” Concrete steps in this direction have already been taken. The article mentions the recently signed agreement of association with Gereja Kristen Indonesia Nederland and states that processes toward a similar agreement with the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (section Amsterdam South-East) are underway.<sup>70</sup>

Formalised relationships with immigrant Christians however are not as new as the article seems to suggest. Though the Protestant Church in the Netherlands is a recent church (2004), it is the continuation of three older protestant churches: the Netherlands Reformed Church (NRC), Reformed

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<sup>67</sup>) Castillo Guerra, *Een Gebedshuis Voor Alle Volken*, 170-172.

<sup>68</sup>) Dirk Visser, “Ds. Bas Plaisier: ‘Onze Kerk is Veel Te Wit,’” *Kerkinformatie* 160 (2008), 4.

<sup>69</sup>) Visser, “Ds. Bas Plaisier,” 4.

<sup>70</sup>) Protestantse Kerk in Nederland, *Protestantse Kerk Gaat Associatie Aan Met Gereja Kristen Indonesia Nederland*; see <http://www.pkn.nl/default.asp?inc=news&rIntId=4221&rIntNavId=4962&rIntNavMotherNavId=0&rIntNavStepMotherNavId=0> (accessed 16 June 2008). Cf. Ordinance 14–15 in Generale Synode van de Protestantse Kerk in Nederland, *Kerkorde en Ordinantie van de Protestantse Kerk in Nederland Inclusief de Overgangsbepalingen* (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 2003), 183–184; Visser, “Ds. Bas Plaisier”, 4.

Churches of the Netherlands (RCN) and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Kingdom of the Netherlands (ELCKN). The individual churches had, previous to their unification, formal understandings with a number of Christian immigrant groups. As early as 1578 the synod of the Netherlands Reformed Church<sup>71</sup> convening at Dordt, accepted the churches of French-speaking Protestant refugees, known as the *Église Wallonne*, as part of the NRC. The Wallonian churches, existing and represented at the general synod up till this day, have a certain independence regarding structure, finance and liturgy.<sup>72</sup> Interestingly, this church has gained new momentum providing for francophone immigrants, many of whom are African. Likewise the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands since 1992 have an Urdu-speaking congregation in Rotterdam, which consists of immigrants belonging to the Church of Pakistan, an established partner church of the RCN.<sup>73</sup> Apart from these, there are many well-established, but non-formalised relations with Christians from Indonesian backgrounds, the Surinamese Christian communities, the Moluccan churches and Papuan Christians.<sup>74</sup>

In the past, many of these associations with immigrant Christians have come about more or less coincidentally. However, in its new constituency as PCN, the church has taken up the issue as a matter of policy and have explicitly provided for associations like the above-mentioned in the Church Order. The regulations in Ordinance 14 concerning ecumenical relationships, in the fourth paragraph specifically create the possibility of far-reaching inter-church cooperation and the possibility of dual membership

<sup>71</sup>) Until 1816 the Netherlands Reformed Church was called the *Nederduitsch Gereformeerde Kerk* (NGK). In 1816 the NGK, together with the Wallonian and Scottish churches, formed the Netherlands Reformed Church.

<sup>72</sup>) Otto de Jong, *Nederlandse Kerk Geschiedenis* (Nijkerk: Callenbach, 1985), 150. Similarly, also the two English speaking Scottish Presbyterian parishes were incorporated in the larger church body of the NRC. A similar international and intercultural agreement was developed for the *Evangelisch-Altreformierte Kirche*, Niedersachsen. The AEK Niedersachsen, which draws upon a membership from the border area between The Netherlands and Germany, applied and was accepted to become a classis within the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands in 1922. The relationship with the PCN was formalised in 2004.

<sup>73</sup>) Irene M. Pluim & Elza Kuijk, *Relaties Met Migrantenkerken: Ervaringen en perspectieven* (Utrecht: Kerkinactie, 2002), 35ff.

<sup>74</sup>) PERKI Nederland, *Indonesische Christen Gemeenschap in Nederland*; see <http://www.perki-nl.org/nl/> (accessed 1 August 2008). Since 1990 the RCN has supported a minister for PERKI. See: <http://www.perki-nl.org/nl/> (accessed 1 August 2008); Van 't Kruijs, *Born in Sion*, 28.

for churches. This dual membership is possible with those churches with which the PCN has “special ties regarding confession and history,” provided there is “sufficient agreement in belief and church order.”<sup>75</sup> The intention is that some of these associations will eventually lead to integration in the PCN structures as separate classes (comparable to the *Église Wallonne*) and as such will be represented in the general synod.<sup>76</sup> For many of the immigrant communities this is, of course, not an option as there is no denominational kinship, historical tie or sufficient proximity in belief and church governance. Therefore, it seems right to state that, parallel to the RCC in the Netherlands, the PCN on an institutional level has close ties with particular groups of immigrants, i.e. those that are somehow “akin” to the PCN and much more loose or no connections to a far larger group of immigrant Christians, such as those who are of Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Pentecostal or Charismatic persuasion. However, despite the fact that immigrant Christians may come from churches that would meet the formal criteria of the PCN, many do not end up in PCN congregations, as noted at the beginning of this case description. Jan Jongeneel et al. conclude that the cause for this segregation might lie in the fact that the existing churches provided insufficient space for the distinct community life and spirituality of the immigrants.<sup>77</sup>

Since the 1990s the topic of the relationship with Christian immigrant groups has been on the agenda of the churches that now form the PCN. In 1992, the co-operation with the Moluccan Theological Council gave rise to the creation of a platform for immigrant Christians. In 1997 this initial platform developed into SKIN (Together Church in the Netherlands), the present platform for immigrant churches in the Netherlands.<sup>78</sup> The PCN churches have contributed to the conception of SKIN through the Hendrik Kraemer Institute, and have supported the platform financially since 1995.<sup>79</sup> The church—again through the Hendrik Kraemer institute—also invests in the training of immigrant pastors and other church leaders.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Protestantse Kerk in Nederland, *Kerkorde en Ordinantie*, 97–98.

<sup>76</sup> Protestantse Kerk in Nederland, *Protestantse Kerk Gaat Associatie aan*; Cf. Jongeneel, *Gemeenschapsvorming*, 49.

<sup>77</sup> Jongeneel, *Gemeenschapsvorming*, 50.

<sup>78</sup> Otto Ruff, “Het Ontstaan van SKIN,” *SKIN* 13/3 (november 2007), 6–7.

<sup>79</sup> Van ‘t Kruijs, *Born in Sion*, 11.

<sup>80</sup> There are a number of training facilities for protestant immigrant pastors and church leaders: Nederlands Bijbel Instituut, part of College Windesheim, the course at the Hendrik

The PCN engages with immigrant Christians on the local level as well. In the cities of Rotterdam, Amsterdam and The Hague local diaconal organisations maintain close contacts with communities of immigrant Christians. Next to practical assistance, organisations like STEK (City and Church) in The Hague and Kerkhuis (Church-house) in Amsterdam enable encounters between indigenous and migrant Christians for example through intercultural bible reading programmes. STEK also took the initiative for an investigation into the net value of the voluntary services that immigrant Christians render to society, saving the state significant expenses in the area of social welfare.<sup>81</sup> A similar research was recently done in Rotterdam, for all Christian churches.<sup>82</sup>

Theological reflection on the presence of immigrant Christians is a rather recent phenomenon in the PCN; for many decades the main focus of the churches concerning immigrants has been the relation with Muslim immigrants.<sup>83</sup> This focus on Islam and Muslims seems to have had as a side-effect the negligence of the relations with other immigrants, e.g. Christian immigrants.

In 2001 the general brochure on migration and immigrant Christians, *Born in Sion*,<sup>84</sup> was published. The booklet gives an overview of the status quo of the relation with Christian immigrant communities and makes a plea to move from ‘missionary’ and ‘diaconal’ attitudes to true ecumenism.<sup>85</sup> This attitude is characterised by the STEK coordinator for interreligious dialogue and contact with “migrant churches” Willem Jansen, as a shift from “economical to ecumenical relations.”<sup>86</sup> The brochure also highlights that unity and uniformity are two different things; ecumenical diversity is

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Kraemer Institute, Utrecht, Anglophone Master’s program Church Ministry at the Free University in Amsterdam. Castillo Guerra, *Een Gebedshuis Voor Alle Volken*, 152.

<sup>81</sup> Jaap van der Sar, *Gratis en Waardevol: Rol, Positie en Maatschappelijk Rendement van Migrantenkerken in Den Haag* (The Hague: Stichting Oikos, 2007).

<sup>82</sup> Jorge Castillo Guerra, Marjolein Glashouwer & Joris Kregting, *Tel je Zegeningen: Het Maatschappelijk Rendement van Christelijke Kerken in Rotterdam en hun Bijdrage aan Sociale Cohesie* (Nijmegen: NIM/Radboud University, 2008).

<sup>83</sup> It is striking that in discussion about Islam Muslims are lumped together on the basis of a shared religiosity, whilst immigrant Christians are described on the basis of their ethnic background e.g. Ghanaian Christians, Urdu, Polish etc. Seemingly, there is a need of ‘othering’, making the stranger ‘the other’, be it by religion, be it by ethnicity.

<sup>84</sup> Van ‘t Kruis, *Born in Sion*, (Utrecht: MDO Binnenland 2001).

<sup>85</sup> Van ‘t Kruis, *Born in Sion*, 33–34, 36.

<sup>86</sup> “I consider it part of my job to endeavour to come from economic to ecumenical relationships” (interview with Willem Jansen, The Hague, 2 April 2008).

not a threat, but should be considered an enrichment and a challenge to one's own perceptions.<sup>87</sup> *Born in Sion* proposes three policy topics for the coming years: awareness building, education and research, and political lobby (poverty, migrants with irregular status, social welfare etc.).<sup>88</sup>

In 2004 a report on multiculturalism appeared, entitled *Beeld en Gelijkenis* (Image and Likeness).<sup>89</sup> The document provides an analysis of the tensions in society due to cultural and religious diversity. It endeavours to do justice to the cultural clashes and frictions multiculturalism implies<sup>90</sup> and stresses that equal opportunities in participation in society are minimal norms for social cohesion.<sup>91</sup> The document sees an archetype of an immigrant in the Biblical character Ruth: she proved to be of crucial importance for the future of Israel.<sup>92</sup> Her story is taken to counter the scepticism towards multiculturalism in society; the document rather stresses diversity as a blessing: different peoples can share a land if they share the resources, do each other justice and are loyal to each other. The document also highlights the call to dialogue with immigrants of different religious persuasions. Dialogue essentially is about the shared humanity in God and can enrich the participants: "Cultural diversity is the essence of God's good creation: apparently His image and likeness are much richer than we ever could have thought of ourselves." To be a full human being, we need "the other" and "the others."<sup>93</sup>

In the 2005 PCN vision document for the life and work of the church *Learning to live out of wonder*, the relationship with immigrant churches is barely touched upon. In the section on cooperation with other churches and organisations the document puts the relationship with immigrant

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<sup>87)</sup> Van 't Kruijs, *Born in Sion*, 33–34.

<sup>87)</sup> Van 't Kruijs, *Born in Sion*, 38.

<sup>89)</sup> Protestantse Kerk in Nederland, *Beeld En Gelijkenis: Een Visie Van De Protestantse Kerk in Nederland Op Multicultureel Samenleven* (Utrecht: MDO, 2004), see [http://www.pkn.nl/kerk&krijgsmacht/site/uploadedDocs/MDO\\_04\\_02\\_nota\\_Beeld\\_en\\_Gelijkenis.doc](http://www.pkn.nl/kerk&krijgsmacht/site/uploadedDocs/MDO_04_02_nota_Beeld_en_Gelijkenis.doc) (accessed 1 August 2008).

<sup>90)</sup> Both *Image and Likeness* and *Born in Sion* mention that some differences actually may be unbridgeable. There are differences in worldview and different processes of modernity, different economic statuses and ethnic and cultural contradictions. Van 't Kruijs, *Born in Sion*, 33; Protestantse Kerk in Nederland, *Beeld En Gelijkenis*, 10–11.

<sup>91)</sup> Such as non-violence, no exclusion, no dehumanisation, respect for life, justice, tolerance and truthfulness, equality before the law and partnership. Cf. Protestantse Kerk in Nederland, *Beeld En Gelijkenis*, 11.

<sup>92)</sup> Protestantse Kerk in Nederland, *Beeld en Gelijkenis*, 11–12.

<sup>93)</sup> Protestantse Kerk in Nederland, *Beeld en Gelijkenis*, 13.

churches mainly in the perspective of joint missionary cooperation. Although it mentions that “ties need to be strengthened and the cooperation needs to be broadened and deepened,” the document does not clarify what this would concretely entail.<sup>94</sup>

Contrary to the focus at the national level on the relations with immigrant Christians, for many of the local congregation relations with Christian immigrants seem to be a paper issue only. June Beckx of SKIN recalls a survey among PCN congregations, investigating the familiarity with immigrant churches and the interest in contact with neighbouring immigrant congregations; the result was paltry. PCN congregations at the grassroots, apart from inviting maybe the occasional exotic gospel choir to grace a service, showed little interest; they are in general too wrapped up in their own problems.<sup>95</sup> The local relationships with immigrant Christians seem concentrated in the larger cities, and are often included in the diaconal projects and ministries. Though this assistance is much needed, considering the myriad of practical, legal, financial and administrative demands posed on them, it also obscures the equality of the relationship and complicates ecumenical interactions. Jan Post Hospers, one of the persons charged with the task of fostering relations with immigrant Christians in the PCN, confirms that the general trend is to move away from the diaconal relationship, but acknowledges that there is no ready-made script as to how this should be done; the points of departure of the communities involved are very different. Many immigrant communities struggle for their survival where the indigenous Dutch church members are concerned with very different issues.<sup>96</sup>

Looking at the PCN’s relationship with immigrant Christians by means of Schreiter’s stages of multiculturalism, it is clear that within the PCN there is support and acknowledgement of immigrant Christians and their communities (stage one)—though often at a distance. As the PCN is a national church and there is no overarching identity as a Universal Church, the border between similarity and dissimilarity is drawn along confessional and historical lines. Alliances are contracted with those groups that somehow have historical, confessional, or other ties with the PCN and aspire close structural cooperation with the PCN; those that do not, will not, or

<sup>94</sup> Protestantse Kerk in Nederland, *Leren Leven van de Verwondering: Visie op het Leven en Werken van de Kerk in haar Geheel* (Utrecht: Protestantse Kerk in Nederland, 2005), 19.

<sup>95</sup> Interview with June Beckx, Amersfoort, 23 April 2008.

<sup>96</sup> Interview with Jan Post Hospers, Utrecht, 26 May 2008.

cannot, fall mostly on the other side of the divide, as they are just too different. A complication in establishing relationships with immigrant Christians, is that many of them are organised in structures that are much more flexible and temporary than those of the established Dutch mainline churches; the latter often find themselves at a loss by the frequent splits and mushrooming of new churches.<sup>97</sup>

It is yet to be explored, what it actually implies for the identity of the church that the PCN is in the process of including Indonesian, Moluccan, Pakistani, or Ghanaian churches (Schreiter, stage two). It is unclear whether these communities will be present at synods by a mere nominal representation or whether their contributions will be seen as representing the constructively critical voice of the world-church and of the worldwide partner churches of the PCN. The latter would imply giving more weight, space and voice to these churches; more than their numerical attendance would suggest.

The presence of substantial groups of francophone Africans in the *Église Wallonne*, which is historically part of the PCN, raises the question of language: what would happen if the PCN could/would facilitate gatherings, in which for example English is the *lingua franca*? Would this attract new groups of immigrant Christians and thus enhance the journey towards a multicultural church?

Aware of the changed situation in Dutch society, the PCN is fully cognisant of the presence of immigrant Christians and at times even looks at them with more than a smidgen of envy. Whereas the PCN is struggling with the consequences of secularisation and with a constant loss of members, immigrant Christianity is alive and kicking. In the interview cited above, Plaisier expresses the hope that African churches in the Netherlands will be able to stimulate the PCN. That the discrepancy in liveliness between the African immigrant churches and the Dutch indigenous churches has a direct bearing on their respective cultures and worldviews, is not stated; it raises some doubts with regard to the viability of the hope that immigrant religiosity will revive the PCN and will be able to formulate answers to issues that are specific to the Dutch secular context. The latter demands an inculturation process of immigrant Christianity in the Dutch context and the Dutch context to immigrant Christianity, which takes time and possibly generations.

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<sup>97</sup>) Währisch-Oblau, "We shall be fruitful," 44.

Stage two of working towards a multicultural community is identified by Robert Schreier as the stage of respecting difference; this includes addressing differences and the consequences of those differences, such as struggling against those tendencies that make difference a reason for exclusion and discrimination. Whilst the PCN confesses its commitment to respecting differences in its policy documents, this confession seems to run into difficulties when it comes to translating this into real action. While the document *Image and Likeness* explores the tensions, conflicts and consequences of the multi-cultural society, it hardly transfers and relates these to the practice of every day life, as the vision document *Learning to Live out of Wonder* also illustrates.

Through its involvement in SKIN the PCN maintains relationships with a variety of immigration communities and thus acknowledges the diversity of immigrant Christianity. In relation to SKIN churches the PCN moves beyond mere recognition and respects the diversity by contributing to the platform SKIN and by helping to facilitate the theological training and societal introduction of immigrant pastors, through the Hendrik Kraemer Institute. It thus strengthens the ‘otherness’ of the Christian immigrants whilst at the same time helps them to get acquainted with Dutch society.

Recapitulating, we can say that with certain communities of immigrant Christians the PCN is willing to move into a bond of structural union. Time will tell whether the multiculturalism will move beyond a mere nominal representation in the general synod, and move, via the stage of respecting and facing the differences, towards a multicultural church where people from a diversity of background on the basis of equality communicate and cooperated towards a community that empowers all. Another question here is, how this will be implemented beyond the national institutions at the grassroots level of the local parishes.

Presently, however, many of the relationships of the PCN with immigrant Christians seem to be characterised by diaconal work and thus are unequal. Within the PCN networks, there is widely acknowledged consent that this inequality in the relationship has to change; how this should be done and where the change should lead to, remains an open question. Cooperation and communication with immigrant Christians happen, but the playing field is not level. However, meeting each other as equal partners however is not something the PCN can implement on its own; the transformation needs to happen in dialogue with immigrant Christians, despite the many structural, financial, cultural, organisational



and theological differences. The conclusion then may be that, though a number of steps have already been taken, in order to come to meaningful relations between an established church like the PCN and Christian immigrant communities quite some hurdles still need to be taken. Though the PCN aspires and encourages multicultural relationships, the PCN is not yet a multicultural church.

#### 4. Conclusion

In the last 40 years the Netherlands, through the impact of globalisation and migration, have rapidly developed into a multicultural and multi-religious society. This development coincided with a period of severe and progressive secularisation, which caused an identity crisis in the Dutch churches. Over the years the Dutch churches have realised that the immigrants are not *en bloc* Muslim, but that there are substantial numbers of Christians among them. Both churches that were researched for this paper, the Roman Catholic Church in the Netherlands and the Protestant Church in the Netherlands, have adapted their structures to accommodate certain groups of Christian immigrants. Denominationally, the majority of immigrant Christians is Roman Catholic. Thus, Christian immigrant religiosity will have a more profound impact on the RCC in the Netherlands than on the PCN.

The Roman Catholic Church, being part of the worldwide Roman Catholic Church has rather easily adapted its structures to include Roman Catholic immigrants. To due its transnational network, the RCC Netherlands can fairly easily tap into international resources of best-practice and personnel, thus catering for immigrants in their own cultural spheres and in their own tongues with the aid of personnel from elsewhere.

Mere numerical presence of immigrant Christians in a church however, does not mean that a church can be called multicultural. Drawing on Robert Schreiter's "stages towards multiculturalism," criteria were applied to evaluate the churches' journeys towards multiculturalism. Schreiter states that a community can only be called multicultural when all partners, on the basis of recognition and respect of equality, can communicate and cooperate towards a common future. Following Schreiter's criteria the RCC in the Netherlands cannot yet be called a multicultural church. The church still has to face a number of challenges before it reaches that stage.

For first challenge is to put in place a lasting infrastructure on the various levels of the church, in order to facilitate meaningful interaction between the linguistic-ethnic parishes and territorial (indigenous Dutch) parishes, leading to mutual exchange and change. The second challenge that was identified is the need for the transformation of leadership, theology and spirituality so as to include immigrant Christianity. The third challenge for the RCC is the question how the linguistic-ethnic parishes can be assisted in the process of contextualisation to Dutch society; the fact that the church itself, in structure and theology, is internationally oriented, is an additional complication.

According to Schreiter's criteria, the PCN can also not yet be called a multicultural church. For the PCN a number of challenges were identified as well. The PCN is a national church, strongly linked with Dutch history and Dutch culture. This is both its strength and its weakness. The PCN (and its predecessors) has, from its inception, had to negotiate its identity in relation to churches of different confessional or cultural traditions whilst maintaining and rephrasing its own identity in relation to the Dutch context. This has led to a profound involvement in ecumenical networks. This means that the PCN can use its ecumenical experience and networks to establish relationships with the new incoming Christian communities and to introduce these new groups in ecumenical circles. It can also, exactly because of its contextuality, be a guide into the intricacies of Dutch church life (especially Protestant church life). However, the link between its identity and its context is also a hurdle for the PCN in its relationship with immigrant Christians. Because its identity is negotiated in relation to the Dutch context, the PCN cannot include immigrant Christians in its structures without radically opening up a process of redefining its identity, including its heritage. The churches of immigrant Christians that become part of the PCN through associations, will form a challenge to the identity of the PCN *from within*. The litmus test is whether the PCN will genuinely, i.e. not just structurally, be able to make place for the different cultural expressions of Reformed/Lutheran Christianity (often with roots in a colonial past). This seems to be the most important, yet a very profound challenge for the PCN.

So far the PCN has established ecumenical relationships with a number of immigrant Christians and has signed associations of agreement with those new-coming churches that somehow have a historical and/or confessional link with the PCN. The fact that many of the immigrant Christian do not have these ties, challenges the PCN to reflect on the type of relationship

it aspires with those immigrant Christians that do not wish to and cannot become part of the PCN. Presently the relation is mostly either through contact via the platform SKIN or a relationship of aid, of diakonia; though necessary, these form a hurdle for good ecumenical contacts.

Presently, neither the RCC nor the PCN can be called a multicultural church, if the standards of Schreiter are used. Structural adjustments have been made in some cases, but theological reflection has only just started. Christian immigrants are recognised, sometimes respected, but only rarely given an equal opportunity in communication and cooperation towards a joint future of the Dutch church.

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