Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam develops McClendon Chair

AMSTERDAM – VRIJE UNIVERSITEIT – BAPTIST HOUSE, September 1, 2017

The Dutch Baptist Seminary, the Faculty of Theology of Vrije Universiteit, and six other partners signed a partnership agreement to establish the James Wm. McClendon Chair for Baptistic and Evangelical Theologies at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. The McClendon chair expands the chair of Baptist Studies held by Prof. dr. Henk Bakker.

The signing took place at the Baptist House in Amsterdam, September 1, 2017:

We partner together in establishing and supporting the McClendon Chair for Baptistic and Evangelical Theologies at the Theological Faculty of the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. Through this we are dedicated to stimulate a way of doing theology that is convictional, embodied, narrative and directly related to the practice of the church. We trust that McClendon’s legacy with its international, ecumenical and Christocentric approach, will contribute to the academic discourse as well as to the challenges that churches face in the twenty-first century.

It was signed by respectively:

Joeke van der Mei, Chair of the Baptist Union in the Netherlands

Prof Dr R. Ruard Ganzevoort, Dean Faculty of Theology, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

Dr Stuart Blythe, Rector International Baptist Study Centre Amsterdam

Rev Jonathan Zondag, Secretary of the Evangelical Society in the Protestant Church of the Netherlands

Dirk van Schepen, MA, Management Team Christian University for Applied Theology Ede

Rev Tony Peck, General Secretary, European Baptist Federation, and Regional Secretary, Baptist World Alliance

Prof Dr Nancey Murphy, McClendon’s wife and fellow scholar till his death in 2002, was ‘present’ through skype and confirmed her wholehearted support and approval for the Chair.

About Prof Dr Henk Bakker

From 2013 – 2017 Rev Prof Dr Henk Bakker (1960) was Professor of Baptist Studies - History, Identity, and Theology of the Baptist Faith at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. He is also lecturer of Theology and Historical Theology at the Dutch Baptist Seminary, Amsterdam, and lecturer of Baptistic Histories and Theologies at IBTS Centre, Amsterdam.

From 2005 – 2017 Dr. Bakker was Lecturer of New Testament and Theology at Ede Christian University of Applied Sciences, and from 1991 - 2004 Lecturer of New Testament and Theology and the Evangelical Theological Institute, Veenendaal. From 1985 – 1990 he was Lecturer of Theology at the Evangelical Theological Faculty and at Bible Institute Belgium, Leuven. He published extensively on early Christian studies, especially on martyrdom, and history and modern (predominantly baptistic) theology.

About the McClendon Chair
Rev Prof Dr Henk Bakker: “At the onset of the third millennium McClendon’s theology proves even more beneficial and relevant than decades before, because in the present demise of grand narrative of the church, Christian life should be spoken of in terms of diaspora ecclesiology. The church is, and will become, a social-religious minority. Hence, Christianity will not predominantly be studied as a historical and dogmatic reality, but as a lived conviction and a lived religion. Whosoever thinks and believes as a Christian lives like a Christian. McClendon’s basic premise may be summarized in the three words noted down in his Ethics: radical Christian materialism. Christianity is about knowing and obeying Christ as bodily as it can be, as regards our personal constituency as an individual who is a follower of Christ, and as regards our social constituency as a person who engages with others and forms and folds the community of Christ”. Dr Bakker says that “it is the vision of this Chair to uphold a high standard of academic work in researching the many sources, the varieties of systematic presentations and the ranges of ecclesial expressions of the baptistic and evangelical faith”.

Dr Bakker announced five research trajectories to be issued from 2017 to 2022:
1. Discerning communities (action-research based) and community building
2. Leadership by interpretation in Baptist and Evangelical communities
3. Fresh expressions of Baptist and Evangelical (missional) churches
4. Early Christian Spiritual Formation (e.g. Mystagogy in New Testament and Early Christianity), cooperating in The Centre for Patristic Research

Others about the Chair

“With its name, the McClendon Chair refers to a type of theology that is thoroughly academic and profoundly practical, radically baptistic and courageously ecumenical. It will produce scholarship that takes seriously the challenges of our world. With that profile, the McClendon Chair and its Chair-holder, Prof Dr Henk Bakker, will contribute significantly to the multicolour theology at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.

Professor Ruard R. Ganzevoort, PhD, Dean of the Faculty of Theology of Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam

“McClendon’s work offers an international, ecumenical, yet, distinctly confessional approach to doing theology. IBTSC itself promotes research in this area and sees this Chair as an opportunity to develop further collaborative learning, teaching, and research with the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam into this particular expression of the Free Church tradition. Prof. Dr. Bakker is an internationally acknowledged scholar in this field”.

Stuart Blythe, PhD, Rector of International Baptist Theological Study Centre (2014-2017), Amsterdam, Associate Professor John Gladstone Chair of Preaching & Worship, Acadia Divinity College, Wolfville, Nova Scotia, Canada

“I was James McClendon’s wife and fellow scholar for seventeen of his years. Knowing what he knew and cared about, the shape of this Chair perfectly honours his memory. He was not narrowly Anabaptist, or even Baptist, but gleaned resources from many religious movements and revivals. The interests of the holder of the Chair, Prof Dr Henk Bakker, are remarkably similar to his. This Chair is a great honour in his name and I look forward to supporting its work in any way I can”.

Nancey Murphy, PhD, Senior Professor of Christian Philosophy, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, CA, USA
“Prof. James McClendon was my friend and colleague for many years. We first met in the midst of Anabaptist beginnings in Zurich and worked together in the Believers’ Church Conference at McMaster University (Hamilton) in 1996 where he was the keynote speaker. I have valued Jim’s theological accomplishment and used it many times in my advanced seminars. It brings together many streams in the Believers’ Church Tradition. I welcome the establishment of the Chair in his honour at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam”.

William H. Brackney, PhD, Professor emeritus at Acadia University, Wolfville, Nova Scotia, Canada, Pioneer MacDonald Chair of Baptist Theology and Ethics, Carey Theological College, Vancouver, Canada, effective January 1, 2018.

The Baptist World Alliance representing over 40 million Baptist believers globally, is delighted to be a co-sponsor of the McClendon Chair. McClendon’s writings are a gift and a continuing challenge to the whole church, but especially to Baptists who dare to embrace his ‘baptist vision’.

Rev Tony Peck, General Secretary, European Baptist Federation, and Regional Secretary, Baptist World Alliance

Donations and information
Contributions to the McClendon Chair may be made online at www.bwanet.org/give, writing “McClendon Chair” in the comment section inside the donation system.

For more information look at www.mcclendonchair.com.