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Church renewal by church planting: The significance of church planting for the future of christianity in Europe*

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Abstract

The current secularization of Europe faces churches with two challenges: poor contextualization and a lack of credibility. It is clear that innovation is needed to answer these challenges. Planting new churches, instead of being a rapid way to numerical growth (which it is not, at least not in Europe), can become a road to this innovation. This is an important reason to plant churches, apart from other, ecclesiological, and missiological reasons. Church plants are ecclesial laboratories: free havens for missiological experiments. This thesis is defended with an appeal to innovation theory, with historical examples, and with some promising recent developments in one of the most secular countries in Europe: the Netherlands.

Keywords

Europe, church planting, innovation, mission, Netherlands

Sunset in Europe?

Europe was Christianized in more than a millennium, and it became secular in less than a century. Initially, the steep decline of virtually all indicators of religious belief and behavior inspired predictions of a bright secularist future. However, today the insight has emerged that a post-Christian Europe is not

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a post-religious Europe at all. The influx of millions of often very religious immigrants has contributed to this. Nor has religion disappeared among their host peoples. J.H. Bavinck said it in his time: it is unlikely that “modern man has completely escaped the religious problem”.¹ Slowly but certainly, awareness has broken through that post-Christian Europeans have not left religion altogether. They embrace rather a potpourri of religious or semi-religious ideas, often embedded in very irrational and nationalistic convictions. Next to that there is an army of post-Christians seekers, who no longer feel at home in the classic institutions of Christianity, but who—using another metaphor of Bavinck’s—still warm themselves in the glow of the setting sun, and more or less live by its dying light.²

All this causes concern for politicians and intellectuals. Is Europe another example of a decadent, dying civilization that will soon be conquered by barbarians from the outside and the inside? What will be the future of this culture that has grown over a long period, within a historical matrix that has been significantly shaped by Christianity?³ In 1990, the chairman of the European Union, Jacques Delors, said that Europe needed a *soul* in order to have a meaningful future. His words were repeated afterwards by other political leaders, like José Manuel Barroso (2006) and Angela Merkel (2007).

The missiological challenge

Now, there is, according to the Polish philosopher Leszek Kolakowski, something “alarmingly desperate” in the words of intellectuals “who have no religious attachment, faith or loyalty proper and who insist on the irreplaceable educational and moral role of religion in our world”.⁴ All kinds of conversations about Christianity and its meaning for the future of Europe will remain sterile when convinced Christians do not participate. Humanly speaking, the success of this discussion depends largely on the question whether Christian churches will be able to pass on their tradition to future generations. In theological terms, our current context requires a vision for Christian *mission*. Everywhere in Europe churches discover that Europe has become a “mission field”.⁵ This is true, not just because

1. J.H. Bavinck, *Religieus besef en christelijk geloof* (Kampen: Kok, 1989), 76.

2. *Ibid.*, 9.

3. Danièle Hervieu-Léger, “The Role of Religion in Establishing Social Cohesion,” *Religion in the New Europe*, ed. Krzysztof Michalski (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2006), 51–52.

4. Leszek Kolakowski, *Modernity on Endless Trial* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 6.

5. As far as I know, the first European theologian who called his own country a “mission field” was Gerhard Hilbert in his *Volksmission und Innere Mission* (Leipzig: A. Deichert, 1917; lecture held in 1916). A landmark in Catholic Europe was the publication by Henri Godin and Yvan Daniel, *La France: Pays de mission?* (Lyon: Éditions de l’Abeille, 1943). In 1963, the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (WCCC) accepted the slogan “mission in six continents”. Cf. R.K. Orchard, *Witness in Six Continents: Records of the Meeting of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches Held in Mexico City, December 8th to 19th, 1963* (London: Edinburgh Press, 1964). Processing these insights is still ongoing. See further, Stefan

there are so few Christians left, but also because Europe faces challenges of a moral and religious nature.

Christian mission has been defined as “the movement of Christianity in the world”.⁶ It is the way in which Christianity crosses social, cultural, and religious boundaries, and gets connected with different contexts. Mission is about the capability of the Christian faith to enter new contexts, connect different groups, inspire new generations, and impact societies. Seen from this perspective it is logical that Europe’s current situation raises questions of mission.⁷

Laboratories of contextualization and credibility

These questions emerge to a great extent from the awareness of the plurality of our late-modern society that increasingly drifts apart in life views, cultures, sub-cultures, and generations. The “ends of the earth” are no longer to be found at the horizon, but they take the shape of rifts within one and the same society. In the European people’s church tradition there has always been a strong impulse of *availability*; to be where people are. Gustav Warneck, the German missiologist, called this an *allgemeine Heilsanbietung* (a general offer of salvation).⁸ Whenever the Church is pushed back in certain subcultures, say that of the older conservative citizen or the African immigrant, this general offer will be affected, and the Church will experience a crisis of identity. Michael Herbst defines this challenge for the German context as follows: “How can we, in this imminent post-people’s church age, offer as much opportunities as possible to as many people as possible to hear the Word of Christ?”⁹ That this challenge also implies a larger variety of ecclesial forms seems obvious. Some years ago in England, the Archbishop of Canterbury, called this “a mixed economy of church”.

This is a first, missiologistical, reason for new church formation. Finding *contextual* forms of church will be more and more important for churches in Europe.

Paas, “The Making of a Mission Field: Paradigms of Evangelistic Mission in Europe,” *Exchange* (forthcoming, 2012).

6. F.J. Verstraelen, et al., eds, *Missiology: An Ecumenical Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 2.

7. Cf. Friedemann Walldorf, *Die Neuevangelisierung Europas: Missionstheologien im europäischen Kontext* (Giessen: Brunnen TVG, 2002). Also, his later reflection “Kontextuelle Missionstheologien für das postmoderne Europa,” *Mission im postmodernen Europa*, ed. Klaus W. Müller (Giessen: Brunnen TVG, 2008), 46–66.

8. Gustav Warneck, *Evangelische Missionslehre: Ein missionstheoretischer Versuch. Dritte Abteilung: Der Betrieb der Sendung* (Gotha: Friedrich Andreas Berthes, 1896 [2nd edn, 1902]), 253.

9. “Wie können unter den Umständen einer nahenden nach-volkskirchlichen Zeit möglichst vielen Menschen möglichst viele Gelegenheiten gegeben werden, das Wort Christi zu hören?” (Michael Herbst, “Eine Perspektive der Gemeindeentwicklung in nach-Volkskirchlicher Zeit,” *Gemeindepflanzung: Ein Modell für die Kirche der Zukunft?*, Matthias Bartels and Martin Reppenhausen, eds [Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2006], 47 [italics in original]).

However, the Christian tradition in Europe does not merely have a problem of a limited range. Much bigger is the *problem of credibility*. No one has defined this problem better than Lesslie Newbigin in his much-quoted saying that the congregation is the “hermeneutic” of the gospel.¹⁰ This is particularly true in a late-modern, Western society, where most people think they know how Christianity tastes—and no longer like it. Sojourner Jim Wallis says, “Our Bible is open to public examination, so is the church’s life. . . . The gulf between them has created an enormous credibility gap. . . . The power of evangelism today is tested by the question, What do we have to explain to the world about the way we live?”¹¹ When young people in the West think that the Church is obsolete, then this can only change, says Douglas John Hall,

when the . . . distance between church and world, faith and life, gospel and context is in some real measure overcome, or, speaking positively, only where the church lives unprotectedly in the midst of the world, where faith is a dialogue with life (not only an internal dialogue of the community of faith itself), where the gospel engages and is engaged by context.¹²

New contexts and generations will not be reached by pr-campaigns. If we want to reach new groups with the gospel in our colorful society, then this can only be done through a community. Often this will be a new community.

In short, the question of mission in post-Christian Europe concentrates on the dual issue of *contextualization* (building bridges to different groups in a plural society), and *credibility* (integration between message and communal life-style). Initiatives that focus on a contextualized and credible form of community around Jesus Christ will feed the missionary identity of the Church in today’s Europe. But this is not just important for Europe alone. Discoveries made here may appear an indispensable contribution to the mission of the Church in other continents, in a rapidly globalizing world. Europe may be a “laboratory for new forms of faith, new structures of organization and interaction, that can accommodate to a dominant secular environment” (Philip Jenkins).¹³

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10. Leslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 227: “How is it possible that the gospel should be credible, that people should come to believe that the power which has the last word in human affairs is represented by a man hanging on a cross? I am suggesting that the only answer, the only hermeneutic of the gospel, is a congregation of men and women who believe it and live by it”.
 11. Jim Wallis, *The Call to Conversion: Why Faith is Always Personal but Never Private* (New York: Harper, 2005, rev. edn), 21. So too Graham Tomlin, *The Provocative Church* (London: SPCK, 2002).
 12. Douglas John Hall, *The Cross in Our Context: Jesus and the Suffering World* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 177.
 13. Philip Jenkins, *God’s Continent: Christianity, Islam, and Europe’s Religious Crisis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 19.

How does renewal happen?

With this we have landed amidst the theme of this article: church renewal by church planting. This word, “renewal”, goes beyond “adaptation” of the existing church. Today many people realize that the Christian tradition in Western Europe will have to do more than “adapt”. On a weblog by Boele Ytsma, a Dutch writer about emerging church, I read that (for example) making changes in Sunday morning worship, to attract teenagers, is like “pimping a walker”. Regardless how nicely the instrument is made, no teenager wants to be seen with it.¹⁴ What we need are *innovations*: changes that go beyond adaptations.

Here, a well-known paradox can be seen: innovation (renewal) cannot be planned or programmed.¹⁵ If you can predict what a future innovation will look like, it is no real innovation. Innovation is behind the horizon. We are looking for new answers, rather than answers we can see from where we stand.¹⁶

How can renewal/innovation take place? Only by not concentrating on results but on the arrangement of stimulating processes. The Dutch scholar Bart Nooteboom states that radical renewal will only happen when people can escape the power of existing structures, the tendency to conform that is present in every organization.¹⁷ This will happen, for example, when creative people are brought together in a separate unit within the organization, or when they are encouraged to start a new organization. There must be “free havens” for innovations, contexts with a challenging environment, facing us with questions that cannot be answered right away. “Changing the existing often requires a long detour of experiments outside the established order” (Nooteboom). New ideas originate outside or at the margins of an organization—not in the well-balanced center. This also explains why long periods of stability are interrupted by relatively sudden revolutions (new ideas and practices “accumulate” at the margins and “break through” to the center). The Protestant Reformation in the

14. Boele Ytsma, 13 Oct. 2008. See <http://boeleysma.nl/2008/10/32484-de-gepimpte-rollator-en-dubbel-beleid> (accessed on 22 Feb. 2011).

15. “In general, theories of invention don’t predict how inventions will occur, even less so when... Instead, theories of invention usually point out factors that are viewed as important in order to understand why some environments seem more dynamic than others” (Thomas Kaiserfeld, “A Review of Theories of Invention and Innovation,” *CESIS paper 47* [2005]: 4).

16. Moreover, a more or less bureaucratically organized process of planned innovations usually requires a high investment in terms of meetings, report-writing, and the like. This is easier for large organizations (like a denominational board or a central church council) than for small organizations (like a young church plant). As a consequence, especially more innovative Christian organizations will not participate in such a process. This is usually the tragic background of many official church reports that ask for innovations: they are produced in a bureaucratic process, and are therefore almost always predictable.

17. Bart Nooteboom, “Innovatie: theorie en beleid” (inaugural lecture, Universiteit van Tilburg, 8 Oct. 2004).

sixteenth century was such a breakthrough that had been prepared for centuries by movements and groups at the margins of Christendom.

Thus, innovation theory teaches us that radical innovations usually take an outside route, that they take generations before they break through to the center, and that they will mostly be prepared and tried in small communities that focus on the solution of a problem, at the margin of a larger organization.

Medieval examples of such communities were the monasteries. They were established out of a desire for a more intense Christianity. Spiritual disciplines were developed here, that later found their way to the wider life of the Church. The Dutch Further Reformation (*Nadere Reformatie*) derived its disciplines of prayer and Bible reading around the daily meals from the monastic laboratory—and made them mainstream in at least part of the Reformed community in the Netherlands.¹⁸

Another example is the Protestant missionary movement, emerging in the late eighteenth century outside the Church, nested itself in societies, to find its way back to the churches gradually from the middle of the twentieth century. This has not changed today. Alan Hirsch even says that mission history shows us that “*All great missionary movements begin at the fringes of the church, among the poor and marginalized, and seldom, if ever, at the center.*”¹⁹

An example in our times is the Evangelical Movement in the Netherlands. This has been a real incubator of liturgical renewal. To quote the Dutch liturgical specialist Marcel Barnard, “Whoever travels on a Sunday morning through Protestant Holland and attends church services here and there, will soon find out that evangelical Christianity has an unmistakable influence, even in congregations that have been inspired by the Liturgical Movement”.²⁰

Spirituality, mission, liturgy. . . It is important to see that these practices have not been designed from behind a desk by an ingenious or rebellious theologian, who has consequently put his insights into print, whereafter they have been adopted by a benevolent church. No, they have remained outside the gates for a long time, have been despised and rejected on a regular basis, have also been purged and cleansed, and have eventually emerged as vital forms of faith, able to appeal to a wider audience than just the lunatic fringe. New ideas do not just drop from the sky; they must arise and take shape in a stimulating environment, an incubator. For example, we will never understand the Evangelical (free church) Movement in the Netherland if we do not see that this was—and partly still is—primarily a church-planting movement.

18. For this, see A. de Reuver, *Verborgen omgang: Sporen van spiritualiteit in Middeleeuwen en Nadere Reformatie* (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 2002).

19. Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2006), 30. Italics in the original.

20. Marcel Barnard, *Liturgie voorbij de Liturgische Beweging: Over “Praise and Worship,” Thomasvieringen, kerkdiensten in migrantenkerken en ritualiteit op het internet* (Zoetermeer: Meinema, 2006).

Reasons for church planting

This is how I like to look at church planting today: as the establishment of a missiological laboratory. The approach of church planting as an incubator of ecclesiological renewal catches on increasingly. Partly this has been caused by the somewhat disappointing experiences with church planting in the 1980s and 1990s. An instrumental approach that focused on numerical growth reached its summit there.²¹ Its main emphasis was on the replication of existing models of being church, rather than innovating them. It was thought that the expansion of supply would automatically lead to an increase of demand. On the whole this appeared to be a wrong assumption.²²

Especially in England this experience has led to profound reflection on church planting, which has been facilitated and stimulated—interestingly—by the Church of England. This reflection has also resulted in a report of Anglicans and Methodists, *Mission-Shaped Church* (2004), and the subsequent initiative *Fresh Expressions of Church*.²³ Discussions in Germany and the Netherlands have been influenced by this process.²⁴ The German report *Kirche der Freiheit* clearly is witness to this, with its plea for a greater diversity of local congregations in the national church.²⁵ Apparently, in the Netherlands we have to wait a little longer for such a bold official document by an older church community. We are being overtaken from the left and the right.

This process of thinking through church planting has led to a much stronger theological basis of church planting than in the older approach that was driven by church growth ideas. I already mentioned *contextualization* and *credibility* as the

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21. In England, the Netherlands, and Germany large-scale programs of church planting have been established, then inspired by the American organization DAWN (*Discipling a Whole Nation*). See James H. Montgomery, *DAWN 2000, 7 Million Churches to Go: The Personal Story of DAWN Strategy for World Evangelization* (Pasadena, 1989). Cf. Jörg Knoblauch, Klaus Eickhoff, Friedrich Aschoff, eds, *Gemeinde gründen in der Volkskirche: Modelle der Höffnung* (Moers: Brendow, 1992); Stefan Paas, “Nederland zendingsland: Naoorlogse gemeentestichting,” *Als een kerk opnieuw begint: Handboek voor missionaire gemeenschapsvorming*, Gerrit Noort et al., eds (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 2008), 93–94.
 22. A critical discussion of the DAWN-initiative in England can be found in George Lings and Stuart Murray, *Church Planting: Past, Present and Future* (Cambridge: Grove, 2003); Martin Robinson, *Planting Mission-Shaped Churches Today* (Oxford: Monarch, 2006), 21–29. Similar conclusions with regard to East Germany are drawn by Sabine Schröder, *Konfessionslose erreichen: Gemeindegründungen von freikirchlichen Initiativen seit der Wende 1989 in Ostdeutschland* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2007).
 23. *Mission-Shaped Church: Church Planting and Fresh Expressions of Church in a Changing Context* (London: Church House Publishing, 2004).
 24. For the Netherlands, see particularly the last part of Noort, *Als een kerk opnieuw begint*. For Germany, see Bartels and Reppenhagen, *Gemeindepflanzung. Mission-Shaped Church*, translated into German by Michael Herbst.
 25. *Kirche der Freiheit: Perspektiven für die Evangelische Kirche im 21. Jahrhundert* (Hannover: Kirchenamt der EKD, 2006).

two most important drivers of new community formation. Next to this, two other motives are strongly emphasized today. First, there is an *ecclesiological* motive: church planting brings mission into the heart of the Church. A church that dedicates itself to church planting has no choice but to think about its own identity. This is first and foremost important in areas where Christianity has been present for ages, as in Europe. Precisely here, church and culture are closely entangled. By rediscovering its identity as a people of mission in a vulnerable minority situation, the Church can liberate itself from external conformity with culture and internal conformity with tradition. In this way it can experience the vitality of the gospel anew.²⁶ In other words, church planting is a path of continuing reformation for the Church (*semper reformanda*).

Second, we also see a *practical-theological* motive: church planting can make us aware of the power of small congregations. It is remarkable that the growth of churches seldom if ever raises theological questions, whereas church planting is often debated. In the West we have come to get used to larger churches to such an extent that we no longer see the risks involved. We tend to see smaller churches as fraught with danger, vulnerable in terms of sectarianism, manipulative leadership, suffocating relationships. Indeed, this is possible. But generally, smaller communities will have the potential to reflect the communal life of the New Testament church much more naturally than large churches. This is an important consideration: if a church increases in numbers, it may be a wise course to aim for the establishment of a new congregation rather than the expansion of the old one.²⁷ Growth is not everything; there is something like ecclesial obesity.

All these motives mentioned above underline in my opinion that today's main task is not to plant as many churches as possible, but to develop *new* ways of being church. In the Netherlands we do not need, at least not for now, *more* churches. Whoever wants to start the umpteenth evangelical church in the Dutch Bible Belt, should seriously ask him- or herself if all this talk about evangelism contains any reality at all.²⁸ Some denominations—I will hide their names under the cloak of

26. Tim Chester, "Church Planting: A Theological Perspective," *Multiplying Churches: Reaching Today's Communities through Church Planting*, ed. Stephen Timmis (Geanies House: Christian Focus, 2000), 26.

27. There are several models that try to combine the power of large and small congregations. An example is the so-called "mission-shaped community". See Mark Stibbe and Andrew Williams, *Breakout: One Church's Amazing Story of Growth through Mission-Shaped Communities* (Milton Keynes: Authentic, 2008). Cf. Tim Chester and Steve Timmis, *Total Church: A Radical Reshaping around Gospel and Community* (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2007).

28. The research by Martijn Vellekoop, "Nieuwe kerken in een nieuwe context: Onderzoek naar gemeentestichting in Nederland en de rol van contextualisatie" (MA thesis, VU University, 2008), is very clear about this, in my opinion. Although 93 percent of the Dutch church planters mention missionary reasons, it appears that only very few make a serious job of contextualization, and that new church plants are concentrated in those areas where many churches are present already. There is simply a lot of church planting that amounts to denominational expansion, disguised as mission.

love—still legitimate their church planting activities on their websites with phrases like this: “We plant churches, because our denomination is still absent in many places.” This pertains to mere denominational expansion, and it deserves every criticism that has been leveled against it, for example by Roman Catholics and Ecumenical Protestants.²⁹

We do not need *more* churches, but we desperately need *contextual* and *credible* churches. As far as this is more a matter of innovation than adaptation I think we cannot and should not avoid new church planting. More than ever before we need incubators of creativity, sacrifice, and inspiration at the organizational margins of ecclesiastical life. This, and nothing else, legitimates church planting in a post—Christian society.

Examples

Where can such practices be found in the Netherlands today? According to innovation theory, these practices emerge where three conditions have been satisfied. First, questions need to be addressed that cannot be answered by the application of existing knowledge. For example, how can the concept of “church” become meaningful for twenty-somethings in Amsterdam?³⁰ Second, the group addressing these questions must be composed of different, sometimes contradictory personalities, ideas, theologies, and cultures. Innovative cultures are hybrid cultures. We can think of multicultural communities, inter-denominational communities, cooperation between older and younger people, and so forth. Third, there must be a certain amount of agreement about values and aims in this group. People do not have to agree on everything (rather not!), but there must at least be a shared desire and a certain assent about styles of leadership, conflict management, and so forth.

I will mention a few promising examples, without saying too much about the concrete innovations that can be found there. Again, if we can define innovations in advance, they are generally not real innovations at all.

An interesting tension between Western and non-Western expectations of church and mission can be observed in multicultural congregations, for example with regard to leadership. Dutch democratic traditions regularly merge here with non-Western, more hierarchical and charismatic approaches to leadership. These practices are still in their infancy, but I firmly believe that here a laboratory for new approaches of leadership, office, and structure are in the making.

29. A critical discussion of church planting as a missionary subject can be found in Gerrit Jan van der Kolm, *De verbeelding van de kerk: Op zoek naar een nieuw-missionaire ecclesiologie* (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 2001), 98–138. In my opinion, Van der Kolm asks good questions and he analyzes very sharply the shortcomings of many missionary-ecclesiological studies. However, in my opinion, his own project runs ashore on inconsistent and abstract reasoning. See (*article reference removed for the sake of blind review*).

30. See <http://www.protestantsamsterdam.nl/jeugd/nieuws/376-onderzoek-naar-twintigers-en-wat-zij-voor-de-kerk-kunnen-betekenen.html>.

Interesting combinations are present as well in smaller Reformed denominations, where different theological currents fuse. The last few years I have been involved closely in this process through my work for Via Nova, a city center church plant in Amsterdam.³¹ Here it can be experienced in reality how old oppositions between “orthodox” and “liberal”, “evangelical” and “reformed”, and “high church” and “low church” hardly function anymore. A new and rich mix of theology and practices comes into being, something that may look quite “churchy” as far as institutional shapes are concerned, but differs in many respects from other churches, for example in terms of culture, life together, and life in the world. I have used the term “restaurant church” to describe this phenomenon.³²

Yet another example we can find in the various combinations of evangelical spirituality and social service, such as movements like *Urban Expression* and *New Monasticism*. In the Dutch Christian tradition a deeply rooted tendency exists to separate church and organization as much as possible. But here, in a context that is completely “de-pillarized”, we find many attempts to bring them together again in the shape of celebrating and worshiping communities incarnating the gospel in old neighborhoods. Here, we find not just an interesting transcendence of the classic opposition between evangelicals and ecumenicals, but also a hybridization of church and social institution.³³

Transfer of knowledge

The last step in the innovation process is the transfer of what has appeared successful. Often this is not simple. There is even an “innovation paradox” in the Netherlands: many good things are invented, but they are seldom used. One reason for this is the problem of tacit knowledge. Knowledge that has been found is often intuitive, self-evident and therefore not accessible for rational analysis by those who have not participated in the process. This is especially true for small organizations, like church plants, because much that happens here takes place in informal relationships. Tacit knowledge must be made visible and explicit before it can have an innovative influence.

This problem can partly be solved by good networks between existing congregations and new congregations. Programs and bureaucracy will not help us here. Good personal relationships will be much more effective. Trust is required, and a certain distance. New projects must not continually be searched for their immediate results; if we do this, we will extinguish creativity. We must always be aware that real innovation requires a long-term perspective: often it takes decades before real innovation penetrates the center.

31. www.vianova-amsterdam.nl. See also chapter 6 in Noort, *Als een kerk opnieuw begint*.

32. See (*references removed for the sake of blind review*).

33. I have further explored this elsewhere. See (*reference removed for the sake of blind review*).

To achieve this, “maieutic” bodies are needed: midwives who help the child of knowledge to see the light. They are organizations that define this knowledge, describe it, and make it accessible for the broader church. Hopefully, in a missionary age theological faculties will present themselves increasingly as such midwives.³⁴

Author biography

Stefan Paas (b. 1969) wrote his PhD thesis in Old Testament Studies (1998). He has published in missiology, political theology, and biblical studies. He has worked as a church planter in several Dutch cities. Currently, he is university lecturer in missiology at the Theologische Universiteit Kampen, and J.H. Bavinck Professor for Church Planting and Church Renewal at VU University, Amsterdam.

34. *(Reference removed for the sake of blind review).*