

# **Jewish Dimensions of a Free Church Ecclesiology: A Community of Contrast**

**A research proposal by drs. Daniël Drost, April 2012**

## *Supervised by*

Prof. Fernando Enns (promoter). Professor of Mennonite (Peace-) Theology and Ethics, Faculteit der Godgeleerdheid, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. Director of the Institute for Peace Church Theology, Hamburg University.

Dr. Henk Bakker. Universitair docent Theologie en Geschiedenis van het Baptisme, Faculteit der Godgeleerdheid, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.

Prof. Peter Tomson (extern). Professor of New Testament, Jewish Studies, and Patristics, Faculteit voor Protestantse Godgeleerdheid Brussel.

## *The provisional title (and subtitle) of the dissertation*

Jewish Dimensions of a Free Church Ecclesiology: A Community of Contrast

## *A brief description of the issue which the research project will investigate*

The research will start by investigating John Howard Yoder's perspective on what he provocatively calls the 'Jewishness of the Free Church Vision.' Strongly recommended by Stanley Hauerwas (Duke University), Michael Cartwright (Dean of Ecumenical and Interfaith Programs at the University of Indianapolis) and Peter Ochs (Modern Judaistic Studies at the University of Virginia) posthumously edited and commented on Yoder's lectures, which he had presented at the Roman-Catholic University of Notre Dame (*The Jewish Christian Schism Revisited*, 2003).

Mennonite theologian Yoder does a firm attempt to relate an Anabaptist (*Free Church*) ecclesiology to Judaism. Within the tradition of the free churches (independence from government, congregational structure, voluntary membership, emphasis on individual commitment etc.) we can identify characteristics of a self-understanding and an aspired relation to the larger society, which can also be traced in the story of the People of Israel, the Hebrew Bible, Second Temple and rabbinic Diaspora Judaism – Yoder claims. In contrast to some supersessionist approaches within some free church circles (mostly evangelical), Yoder seems to propose the opposite: by revisiting its Jewish roots, the church will become more fully what she originally is called to be: a contrasting community 'seeking the *shalom* of the city' (Jer 29:7). Yoder comes to the conclusion that 'the parting of the ways' of the People of Israel and the Church 'did not have to be', if both of them had lived up to that vocation. Starting from this bold thesis, he then turns to reformulate some elements of a *Free Church Vision*, being inspired and corrected by the fact of its Jewish origins.

The research will describe this approach to ecclesiology, analyze it within the context of his vast opus, and critically investigate its coherence. Secondly the critics will be explored. The research will investigate the broad reception of the proposed thesis within a group of Jewish theologians (*the Society for Textual Reasoning*) - in particular Peter Ochs, who has been in extensive conversation with Yoder's theology -, the criticism by Christian theologians, and finally his perspective will be tested by the latest research on 'the parting of the ways' (the historical question). Thirdly Yoder's ideas will be tested from within the ongoing Jewish-Christian dialogue, starting with the questions Miskotte raised in *Het Jodendom als vraag aan de kerk*. Summarizing the results of this investigation, I will move on to propose how the explored notions could contribute to an ecclesiology from a free church / Anabaptist perspective.

## *The significance of the research project for the chosen (sub)discipline and for theology in general*

In the current 'post Christendom' setting of a highly secularized context (mostly in the 'West') Yoder's *Anabaptist Free Church Vision* is regaining attraction by theologians from different traditions, especially in the fields of ecclesiology, ethics, and mission. Yoder's unique view on the Jewish roots of the church in general and the free church's self-understanding in particular will inform the ongoing debate on the relation of ecclesiology and ethics, and of church and society in general.

Doing Christian theology in the presence of and in conversation with the Jewish tradition and community, Yoder's ideas need to be tested and challenged within the ongoing Jewish-Christian dialogue (in its so called 'third stage'). Will they help to overcome some supersessionist tendencies and implicit anti-Jewish tendencies within Christian theology or do they – on the contrary – contribute to a misconception of the People of Israel, especially by the free churches?

Since Yoder offers some surprising perspectives on 'the parting of the ways' and the character of Judaism and Christianity in general, their relationship and historical development, this investigation also aims at contributing to re-visit some New Testament narratives as well as re-visioning parts of the history of the early church.

### *The methodology to be used*

The research will be carried out within the field of systematic theology (especially ecclesiology), relying – in parts – on the methodology and insight of exegetical and historical sciences, as well as of Jewish studies.

First the research will investigate Yoder's interest in Judaism as relating to a *Free Church* ecclesiology within the context of his entire opus.

Secondly, the hermeneutical and epistemological presuppositions need to be tested in their relation to Yoder's theological system? This needs to be evaluated from within (coherence) and from outside (critics). In order to do so I will describe some relevant aspects of the reception of Yoder's work in contemporary theological studies, in particular the Jewish critic by Peter Ochs, and test it against the latest ideas on 'the parting of the ways', from a more historical point of view.

Thirdly, I want to review his perspective in the light of ecclesiological insights from the Jewish Christian dialogue after WW2.

Finally, building upon Yoder's perspective, the reception of his ideas and the critical investigation of Yoder's approach, the research will rearticulate some ecclesiological aspects from a free church perspective by making use of other such approaches.

### *The main research question*

In which regard is John Howard Yoder's identification of the Jewish roots of a Free Church ecclesiology coherent and appropriate for developing a contemporary ecclesiology from an Anabaptist perspective?

### *A provisional table of contents*

After the introduction Ch I is a description of Yoder's perspective. Ch II is a critique of this perspective: questions to be raised, from Jewish and Christian theologians. Chapter III broadens the view to recent Jewish-Christian dialogue, ecclesiological consequences and how this is related to Yoder's approach. In Ch IV I will present the results of the inquiry, and re-articulate the researched ecclesiological notions where necessary to contribute to an Anabaptist ecclesiology. Ch V holds the conclusions and recommendations for further research.

### *A brief description of the content of the planned chapters*

#### Introduction

- Introduction to the research project and leading question
- Applied methodology
- Possible alternatives

#### I. John Howard Yoder's view on the 'Jewishness of the *Free Church Vision*'

##### I.1. *The Jewish-Christian schism revisited*

- Historiography (revisionist, 'what could have been', amateur approach)
- The Jewish people (Israel as a missionary people, the Jeremiad turn, *Galut* as calling),

- The early church and further historical developments (early church and free churches as ideal, critical towards 'the apologists', disavowing Constantine)
- The schism (tertium datur, the 'Jewishness' of Jesus, the disciples, the early church and the gospel).

#### I.2. *The "Jewishness" of the Free Church Vision*

- Yoder's perspective on Jewish communal and free church ecclesiological notions such as pacifism, minority communities, the possibility of obedience, praxis leading to knowledge, the shaping of community and identity by 'a book'.
- Yoder's approach to Theology in general and Ecclesiology in particular
- Emerging questions

#### II. Critical Reception of J.H.Yoder's theses by Jewish and Christian Theologians

- II.1. Reception and criticism by Jewish theologians, such as Peter Ochs
- II.2. Reception and criticism by Christian theologians, such as Michael G. Cartwright, J. Alexander Sider, Chris K. Huebner, John C. Nugent, Paul Martens and Fernando Enns.
- II.3. The historical question: Yoder's perspective tested against the latest research on 'the parting of the ways' (Daniel Boyarin)

#### III. Doing Ecclesiology in light of the Jewish – Christian Dialogue (since WW2)

- III.1. The Dutch context: K.H. Miskotte, Simon Schoon
- III.2. The North-American context: Paul M. van Buren
- III.3. The German context: Friedrich-Wilhelm Marquardt
- III.4. The global context: World Council of Churches
- III.5. The Radical Traditions (David Novak, Michael Wyschogrod, Stanley Hauerwas, Kendall Soulen)

#### IV.A Re-formulation of *Free Church* (Anabaptist) Ecclesiology

- Summary of the main results of the research
- Research question and re-formulation of emerging theological and ecclesiological questions
- Developing elements of a contemporary free church ecclesiology from Anabaptist perspective

#### V. Conclusion

Conclusion and prospects for further research

Bibliography

#### *A time schedule including the planned date of the public defense*

2011 - 2013 start research, introduction  
 2014 ch I  
 2015 ch II  
 2016 ch III  
 2017 ch IV,V  
 Summer 2018 public defense

*An indication of the research time per week to be invested by the Ph.D. student during the planned period*

Two days a week

*An indication of the level of competence in English, according to the TOEFL norms or equivalents*  
 Sufficient

### A Provisional bibliography

- Bader-Saye, S. *Church and Israel after Christendom: The politics of Election*. Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2005
- Baer, J. F. *Galut*. Im Schocken Verlag, 1936
- Bergen, J. M. *Power and Practices: Engaging the Work of John Howard Yoder*. Herald Press, 2009
- Bieringer, R. / Garcia Martinez, F. / Pollefeyt, D. / Tomson, P.J. (eds.), *The New Testament and Rabbinic Literature*. Brill, 2010
- Boddens Hosang, F.J.E. *Establishing Boundaries. Christian-Jewish Relations in Early Council Texts and the Writings of Church Fathers*. Brill, 2010
- Boyarin, D. *Borderlines: The Partition of Judeo Christianity*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006
- Boyarin, D. *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism*. Stanford University Press, 1999
- Braaten, C. E./ Jenson, R. W. (ed) *Jews and Christians. People of God*. Eerdmans, 2003
- Brueggemann, W. *Theology of the Old Testament. Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy*. Fortress Press, 1997
- Buren, P. M. *A Theology of the Jewish-Christian Reality. Part I-III*. Harper & Row, 1980-1988
- Carter, C.A. *The Politics of the Cross: The Theology and Social Ethics of John Howard Yoder*. Brazos Press, 2001
- Doerksen, P. *Beyond Suspicion: Post-Christendom Protestant Political Theology in John Howard Yoder and Oliver O'Donovan*. Paternoster Press, 2009
- Duin, C. van. *Bijbels ongelooft. Een radicaal-doperse theologie van het Oude Testament*. Eburon Uitgeverij, 2010
- Dula, P. *The New Yoder*. Cascade Books, 2010
- Enns, F. 'Believers Church Ecclesiology: A Vital Alternative within the Ecumenical Family,' in: Dueck, A. (ed.) *New Perspectives in Believers Church Ecclesiology*, CMU Press 2010, p. 107-124
- Enns, F. 'Believers Church Ecclesiology: A Trinitarian Foundation and Its Implications,' in: Dueck, A. (ed.) *New Perspectives in Believers Church Ecclesiology*, CMU Press 2010, p. 179-198
- Enns, F. *The Peace Church and the Ecumenical Community: Ecclesiology and the Ethics of Nonviolence*. Pandora, 2008
- Enns, F. 'A Trinitarian Approach to Ecumenical Peace Church Ecclesiology,' in: Clapsis, E.(ed.), *Violence and Christian Spirituality. An Ecumenical Conversation*. WCC, 2007, p. 242-254
- Enns, F. (ed.) *Seeking Cultures of Peace: A Peace Church Conversation*. Cascadia, 2004
- Frymer-Kensky, T. (ea) *Christianity in Jewish Terms*. Westview Press, 2000
- Harink, D. *Paul among the Postliberals. Pauline Theology beyond Christendom and Modernity*. Brazos, 2003
- Hauerwas, S. *The Wisdom of the Cross: Essays in Honor of John Howard Yoder*. Eerdmans 1999
- Horbury, W. (ed.) *The Cambridge History of Judaism. Volume 3, The Early Roman Period*. Cambridge University Press, 1999
- Huebner, C. K. *A Precarious Peace: Yoderian Explorations on Theology, Knowledge, and Identity*. Herald Press, 2006
- Katz, S.T. (ed) *The Cambridge History of Judaism. Volume 4, The Late Roman-Rabbinic Period*. Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- Kerr, N. R. *Christ, History and Apocalyptic: The Politics of Christian Mission*. Cascade Books, 2009
- Kinzer, M. S. *Postmissionary Messianic Judaism. Redefining Christian Engagement with the Jewish People*. Brazos Press, 2005
- Lash, N. *Theology on the Way to Emmaus*. Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2005
- LeMasters, P. *The Import of Eschatology in John Howard Yoder's Critique of Constantinianism*. Edwin Mellon, 1994
- Levering, M. *Jewish-Christian Dialogue and the Life of Wisdom: Engagements with the Theology of David Novak*. Continuum, 2010
- Lindbeck, G. A. *The Church in a Postliberal Age. (Radical Traditions)* Eerdmans, 2002
- Lindbeck, G. A. *The Nature of Doctrine. Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age*. Westminster, 1984
- Marquardt, F.-W. *Aufeinem Schul-Weg. Kleinere christlich-jüdische Lerneinheiten*. Orient & Okzident, 2005
- Marquardt, F.-W. *Eia, wärn wir da – eine theologische Utopie*. Chr. Kaiser, 1997
- Marquardt, F.-W. *Was dürfen wir hoffen, wenn wir hoffen dürfen? Eine Eschatologie. Band 1-3*. Chr. Kaiser, 1993-1996
- Marquardt, F.-W. *Das christliche Bekenntnis zu Jesus, dem Juden. Eine Christologie. Band 1-2*. Chr. Kaiser, 1990/1991
- Marquardt, F.-W. *Von Elend und Heimsuchung der Theologie. Prolegomena zur Dogmatik*. Chr. Kaiser, 1988
- Martens, P. *The Heterodox Yoder*. Cascade, 2012
- Miskotte, K. H. 'Het Jodendom als vraag aan de kerk.' in: *Theologische Opstellen. Verzameld Werk 9*. Kok,

- 1990
- Mulder, M.J. (ed.) *The Literature of the Jewish People in the Period of the Second Temple and the Talmud, Volume 1 Mikra. Text, Translation, Reading and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity. Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum. Section Two.* Van Gorcum Co., 1988
- Nation, M. T. *John Howard Yoder: Mennonite Patience, Evangelical Witness, Catholic Convictions.* Eerdmans, 2006
- Novak, D. *Talking with Christians. Musings of a Jewish Theologian.* (Radical Traditions) Eerdmans, 2005
- Novak, D. *Jewish-Christian Dialogue: A Jewish Justification.* Oxford University Press, 1989
- Nugent, J. C. *The Politics of Yahweh. John Howard Yoder, The Old Testament, and the People of God.* Cascade, 2011
- Nugent, J. C. *Radical Ecumenicity: Pursuing Unity and Continuity after John Howard Yoder.* Abilene Christian University Press, 2010
- Ochs, P. *Another Reformation: Postliberal Christianity and the Jews.* Baker Academic, 2011
- Ochs, P. *The Free Church and Israel's Covenant.* J.J. Thiessen Lecture Series. CMU Press, 2010
- Ochs, P. *The Return to Scripture in Judaism and Christianity: Essays in Postcritical Scriptural Interpretation.* Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2008
- Ochs, P./ Levene, N. (eds.) *Textual Reasonings. Jewish Philosophy and Text Study at the End of the Twentieth Century.* Radical Traditions. Eerdmans, 2002
- Ollenburger, B. C. *A Mind Patient and Untamed: Assessing John Howard Yoder's Contributions to Theology, Ethics, and Peacemaking.* Cascadia Publishing House, 2004
- Polner, M./ Merken, S. *Peace, Justice, and Jews. Reclaiming Our Tradition.* B&B, 2009
- Polner, M./ Goodman, N. *The Challenge of Shalom: The Jewish Tradition of Peace and Justice.* New Society Publishers, 1994
- Safrai, S. / Stern, M. (eds.) *The Jewish People in the First Century. Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum. Section One, Volume One and Two.* Van Gorcum Co., 1974, 1976
- Schoon, S. *De weg van Jezus. Een christologische heroriëntatie vanuit de joods-christelijke ontmoeting.* Kok, 1991
- Schreckenber, H. / Schubert, K. (eds.) *Jewish Traditions in Early Christian Literature, Volume 2 Jewish Historiography and Iconography in Early and Medieval Christianity. Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum. Section Three.* Van Gorcum Co., 1992.
- Schwarzschild, S. *The Pursuit of the Ideal. Jewish Writings of Steven Schwarzschild.* State University of New York Press, 1990
- Schwarzschild, S. *Roots of Jewish Nonviolence.* Jewish Peace Fellowship, 1981
- Sider, J. A. *To see history doxologically: History and holiness in John Howard Yoder's Ecclesiology.* Radical Traditions. Eerdmans, 2011
- Soulen, R. K. *The Divine Name(s) and the Holy Trinity: Distinguishing the Voices.* Volume One. Westminster John Knox Press, 2011
- Soulen, R. K. *The God of Israel and Christian Theology.* Fortress Press, 1996.
- Tomson, P. J. *De scheiding van jodendom en christendom in de tweede eeuw: herbeschouwingen en open vragen.* (openingscollege begin academiejaar, 7 oktober 2010), [www.protestafac.ac.be/Lezingen/Openingscollege2010.htm](http://www.protestafac.ac.be/Lezingen/Openingscollege2010.htm)
- Tomson, P. J. *De dynamiek van het christelijk-joods conflict 50-150 AD,* *Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift* 62 (2008) p. 284-298
- Tomson, P. J. (ed.), *The Image of the Judaeo-Christians in Ancient Jewish and Christian Literature.* Mohr Siebeck, 2003
- Tomson, P. J. *'Als dit uit de Hemel is...'* *Jezus en de schrijvers van het Nieuwe Testament in hun verhouding tot het Jodendom.* B. Folkertsma Stichting voor Talmudica, 1997.
- Tomson, P. J. (ed.) *Jewish Traditions in Early Christian Literature, Volume 1 Paul and the Jewish Law. Halakha in the Letters of the Apostle to the Gentiles. Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum. Section Three.* Van Gorcum Co., 1990.
- VanderKam, J.C. (ed.) *Jewish Traditions in Early Christian Literature, Volume 4 Jewish Apocalyptic Heritage in Early Christianity. Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum. Section Three.* Van Gorcum Co., 1996
- WCC *The Theology of the Churches and the Jewish People. Statements by the World Council of Churches and its member churches.* WCC Publications, 1988
- Weaver, A. E. *States of Exile: Visions of Diaspora, Witness, and Return.* Herald Press, 2008
- Wright, N.G. *Disavowing Constantine: Mission Church and the Social Order in the Theologies of John Howard Yoder and Jurgen Moltmann.* Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2007
- Wyschogrod, M. *Abraham's Promise: Judaism and Jewish-Christian Relations.* (Radical Traditions). Eerdmans, 2004
- Wyschogrod, M. *Body of Faith: God in the People Israel.* Harper & Row, 1983

- Yoder, J. H. *Spiritual Writings*. Orbis Books, 2011
- Yoder, J. H. *A pacifist way of knowing. John Howard Yoder's nonviolent epistemology*. Cascade Books, 2010
- Yoder, J. H. *Christian Attitudes to War, Peace and Revolution*. Brazos Press, 2009
- Yoder, J. H. *The War of the Lamb. The Ethics of Nonviolence and Peacemaking*. Brazos Press, 2009
- Yoder, J. H. *The Jewish Christian Schism Revisited*. Radical Traditions. Herald Press, 2003/ 2008
- Yoder, J. H. *Karl Barth and the Problem of War, and Other Essays on Barth*. Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2003
- Yoder, J. H. *Preface to Theology. Christology and theological Method*. Brazos Press, 2002
- Yoder, J. H. *To hear the word*. Cascade Books, 2001/ 2010
- Yoder, J. H. *For the Nations: Essays Evangelical and Public*. Eerdmans, 1997
- Yoder, J. H. *The Royal Priesthood. Essays Ecclesiological and Ecumenical*. Herald Press, 1994/ 1998
- Yoder, J. H. *Body Politics. Five Practices of the Christian Community Before the Watching World*. Herald Press, 1991/ 2001
- Yoder, J. H. *The Priestly Kingdom. Social Ethics as Gospel*. University of Notre Dame Press, 1984
- Yoder, J. H. *The Politics of Jesus*. Eerdmans, 1972/ 1994
- Yoder, J. H. *Nevertheless: The Varieties and Shortcomings of Religious Pacifism*. Herald Press, 1971/ 1992
- Yoder, J. H. *The Original Revolution. Essays on Christian Pacifism*. Herald Press, 1971/ 2003
- Yoder, J. H. *Täuferium und Reformation im Gespräch*. EVZ – Verlag, 1968
- Yoder, J. H. *Discipleship as Political Responsibility*. Herald Press, 1964/ 2003
- Yoder, J. H. *The Christian Witness to the State*. Herald Press, 1964/ 2002
- Yoder, J. H. *Täuferium und Reformation in der Schweiz, I. Die Gespräche zwischen Täufern und Reformatoren 1523-1538*. Schriftenreihe des Mennonitschen Geschichtsvereins, Nr. 6. Verlag H. Schneider, 1957/ 1962

## Curriculum Vitae

### Contact and Personal Information

Name Daniël Drost  
Adres Roggeveenstraat 20  
City/Zip 3814 VC Amersfoort  
Telephone 033 4532036 / 06 27345355  
Email [allesiisverlicht@hotmail.com](mailto:allesiisverlicht@hotmail.com)  
Date of Birth 21 februari 1979 te Kampen

### Education

Theologische Universiteit Kampen, 1999-2008, drs  
- Specialization in New Testament, Master Thesis: *De dood van een rechtvaardige. Een onderzoek naar de gewelddadige dood van Jakobus de broer van de Heer*, Kampen 2006. Supervised by dr P.H.R. van Houwelingen, dr F. van der Pol and drs M.C. Mulder.  
- including a minor Judaïca at the Theologische Universiteit Apeldoorn.  
Seminarium van de Unie van Baptistengemeenten in Nederland, 2007-2008, minister

### Topical Situation

Baptistenseminarium Barneveld, *since April 2012*  
*Wetenschappelijk Medewerker - parttime*  
Baptistengemeente Deventer, *since April 2012*  
*Minister – parttime*  
St Kruiskamp, Urban Expression Amersfoort, *since April 2009*  
*Churchplanter (minister) - parttime*

### Publications

#### Scholarly Publications

Master thesis: *De dood van een rechtvaardige. Een onderzoek naar de gewelddadige dood van Jakobus de broer van de Heer*, Kampen 2006. Supervised by dr P.H.R. van Houwelingen, dr F. van der Pol and drs M.C. Mulder

#### Professional Publications

##### Articels:

'Grote Joodse Denkers: Rabbi Hillel, Rashi, Maimonides, Baäl Shem Tov, Rabbi Nachman van Brestlav'. *Israel Aktueel*. 27<sup>ste</sup> jaargang, nr 241-245, Mei - November 2011

'Jezus en de Baäl Shem Tov' in *Israel en de Kerk. Tijdschrift voor bijbelse bezinning en voor toerusting van de christelijke gemeente*. Maart 2011 | 9/4

'Een soort van thuiskomen' in *Op koers?! Lessen aan het seminarium van oud-studenten*. Baptistica Reeks. Huizing, W. / Leer, T. van der (red.). Baptisten Seminarium, 2010

'Orthodoxie heeft de toekomst' in *De kerk is dood, leve de koning. Wat blijft christenen verbinden?* Bruijne, O. de / Postema, S. (red.). KOK, 2010

'Waarom de 'sektarische verleiding' een verkeerde voorstelling van zaken is: een antwoord aan James Gustafson', 'Interpretatie van de Schrift: waarom discipelschap vereist is'. Translations in Hauerwas, S. *Een robuuste kerk. Christelijke ethiek voor een postchristelijke samenleving*. Boekencentrum, 2010

Reviews:

To See History Doxologically. History and Holiness in John Howard Yoder's Ecclesiology. J. Alexander Sider. In: *Soteria – Kwartaalblad voor evangelische theologische bezinning*. 29<sup>ste</sup> jaargang, nummer 1, 2012.