

**Pieter Kok - minister and stained-glass artist-
1929 – 1981. 'Preaching with your hands'.**

On entering the Goede Herderkerk (good shepherd church) was are surprised by the imposing stained-glass window there. It takes up the hole eighth bay of the western wall of the church. It covers an area of more than 30 m².

But not only its dimension is impressive, the expression in the Biblical scenes is even more so. It is a window that has been designed with great skill. When you look at the window, you soon ask yourself who the designer was and what inspired him to create such a design.

The window is designed by P.H.G.C. Kok, minister and stained-glass artist.

Reverend Kok was a minister at the Evangelical Lutheran Church, and he remained with the congregation in Weesp until his death in 1981 in spite of receiving a call from other congregations a number of times. After his theological studies, he studied Monumental art.

at the Rijksacademie voor Beeldende Kunst (national academy for the fine arts) in Amsterdam. When he had completed these studies, people said of him because of his qualities: 'That man Kok won't accept a ministerial calling anymore'. However, it turned out differently, Reverend Kok moved into his first parsonage on the Oude Gracht in Weesp.

When he settled there, the stained-glass artist moved in with him, as it were. He said about it: 'I have a calling and a profession, in that order. The two have become one. The one flows into the other, and I'm glad people see it that way'. His energy was phenomenal; he was not only chairman of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod but also active in artist circles and the Association of Artists and Sculptors.

But his greatest concern, according to an interview in the regional paper De Gooi en Eemlander on 24 January 1956 was typically; 'that the pastoral work should not be neglected because of it, in particular visiting the sick and faith instruction'. As a practitioner of monumental art, as the academy refers to it, Rev Kok was not only involved in designing many windows (many of the them stained-glass) but also in other related fields, such as architecture.

The field also includes wall paintings, mosaics, cement reliefs, wire sculptures, etc. The filtered sunlight of stained-glass windows shines not only into many churches, such as the Nicolaikerk in Utrecht and the Austin Fairs Church in London, but also into other buildings.

The field also includes wall paintings, mosaics, cement reliefs, wire sculptures, etc. The filtered sunlight of stained-glass windows shines not only into many churches, such as the Nicolaikerk in Utrecht and the Austin Fairs Church in London, but also into other buildings.

Profane and Sacred Buildings

Rev Kok moved readily between these two fields, but there is no doubt that his involvement in his sacred work appealed to him the most. In him you see the inconceivable energy of a creative person of broad orientation, passion and dynamics, with the resilience that is a condition for actually giving content to what he feels called to do.

Parenesis

In our church tradition, clarification of a design is usually from a Christian perspective. For the modern Westerner, it is somewhat disconcerting that the underlying story is often more than just Christian history. Parenesis - exhortation or consolation- is a clarification of one dimension, expression goes further and encompasses more. The design holds many layers of meaning. It is a 'layered' design. This represents the exclusivity and expressiveness of this window. In this reflection, the subject must be the source materials that have contributed to Pieter Kok's criteria for the design.

The Cross – a Universal Image of the Era

This is the reason for the double Latin cross, which appears to raise itself in all its length and breadth to the sky and, by means of a hinge on its longitudinal axis, turns itself in a circle and at the same time, as in a single movement, towards the earth! Is this the essence of reconciliation? Wonderful thought! It is not as though the bending is arbitrary. The cross circles around the peace dove, representing the navel or the umbilical chord with mathematical precision. In the image of the world, this is the point of friction; so also in this scene.

The Cross, the Circle and the Centre

The image of cross, circle and centre is evidently a very powerful one. It already manifested itself in ancient times. The word Jerusalem had a very special association for someone who lived in the period of the modern Middle Ages. It wasn't just any old city somewhere in Palestine but represented the heavenly Jerusalem. Myth and reality overlapped each other. In the Biblical book of Revelations, the heavenly Jerusalem is now pictured as a square city with a high wall and twelve gates. That squareness tallies quite closely with the reality of the earthly Jerusalem: a twelfth-century map shows a square city with crooked streets.

However, around 1150 when the Gothic era began, like a thunderbolt very curious prints appeared showing no relation to either the mythical image or the factual reality.

There are eight images from the twelfth century in which Jerusalem is presented as a city with a round wall, and in its streets in the form of a cross divide the whole into four parts.

These prints appear to be fabrications. In other words, experience doesn't count anymore, nor does the image from John's Revelations, the last book in the Bible, regarded as the ideal for hundreds of years. The medieval person is suddenly guided by another ideal.

Calling it an 'ideal image' is not quite right, 'archetype' is probably better. The 'layeredness' of the window brings us to a second line of reflection, Golgotha. It can be assumed that Kierkegaard was familiar with this wonderful metaphorical image. The following section discusses that image.

Golgotha

There is certainly reason to assume that such archetypal images are derived directly from Jewish and Christian sources. After all, in Christian texts there are hundreds of legends that have their roots in Jewish sources. Christian re-working is considered secondary, but in the Christian tradition it is convenient that in certain Jewish traditions there is a conviction that Adam's grave is located at Golgotha, the place where Jesus was crucified.

There is a very strange tradition, inscribed in the fifth century A.D. that tells the story of the dying Noah commissioning his son to remove Adam's body from the ark in cooperation with Melchisedek and to bring it to the centre of the earth.

Where that is will become clear, for the Angel of the Lord will show the two men the way.

There, four extremities hang together for, when God created the world, his power led the way and the earth went after him from four sides. And there, in the centre, His power stopped and rested: That is where redemption will take place.

When Sem and Melchizedek arrived at Golgotha 'the centre of the earth' after much effort,

the angel showed Sem the place. And when Sem had placed the body of our father Adam on this spot, the four parts separated and the earth opened up in the form of a cross.

As soon as they had laid him in the earth, the four parts moved to cover the body of our father Adam and the door of the outer part of the earth closed.

The spot was called 'The place of Skulls' because the heads of all mankind were laid there and 'Golgotha' because it was round. Early Christian theologians were of course delighted with such a tradition of Jewish origin, because the idea of a centre of the world corresponds with the basic fact in Christian faith: Golgotha.

The centre of the earth contains Adam's skull and carries the Redeemer's cross. The blood of Christ also flows over the head over the first man, and the salvation story begins at the cosmic centre, when time is at the year 0.

After this religious excursion into time, a contribution to the conceptualization of the image, we return tot the church.

From Where?

The background accounts fort the double cross! It turns definitively tot the earth, or to a world lost in zin. 'At this cross salvation is found', as an old familiar song says.

Pieter Kok typifies this in a particularly striking way: The universal promise, the intertwined Alpha and Omega are chiselled as a monument into the horizontal beam at the place where it bends towards the earth: Already from the time of Adam, I am the beginning and the end.

The author John had already spoken, but now yet again for what he says is brought to life in this wonderful sculpture of the cross as the ultimate translation: 'He is a reconciliation for all our sins and not only for ours but for those of everyone in the whole world'.

Publication of this tekst is in consultation with and the permission of Mrs D.Kok- Meulenbroek.