

DR. P. C. SNIJMAN: A FORGOTTEN OLD TESTAMENT SCHOLAR¹

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ABSTRACT

Dr. P. C. Snijman was the first South African scholar to obtain a Ph.D. in Old Testament Studies at the Free University of Amsterdam, with a thesis on the prophecy of Zephaniah. He died shortly after returning to South Africa. The aim of this paper is to describe the life and contribution of this pioneer in the field of Old Testament Studies in South Africa. This paper starts with a biographical sketch of Snijman. He was one of the pioneers of Christelik-Nasionale Onderwys (Christian National Education). His contribution in this regard is discussed, with special reference to a paper he wrote in 1910. His contribution to the study of Zephaniah is evaluated, with a discussion of some examples of his exegesis. It is clear that his death impacted negatively on the study of the Old Testament in his own church and in South African theological circles in general.

A INTRODUCTION

Dr. P. C. Snijman was the first South African scholar to obtain a Ph.D. - in Old Testament Studies - at the Free University of Amsterdam, with a thesis on the prophecy of Zephaniah. He received the degree in 1913 and died in May 1915. Because of his untimely death he was prevented from making a substantial contribution to the study of the Old Testament. The aim of this paper is to describe the life and contribution of this pioneer in the field of Old Testament Studies in South Africa. It starts with biographical data of Snijman, discusses his contribution to education and will then discuss his thesis, focusing on his methodology and contribution to the study of Zephaniah. It is clear that his death impacted negatively on the study of the Old Testament in his own church and in South African theological circles in general.

B BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

Philippus Christoffel Snijman was born on 16 June 1875 (Smit 1981:2). Sources differ about the place where he was born. According to *inter alia* Smit

¹ This article is a revised version of a paper read at the meeting of the Old Testament Society of South Africa in Stellenbosch in June 2009. The meeting coincided with the celebration of the hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the Theological Seminary at Stellenbosch, and had as theme "One hundred and fifty years of Old Testament Studies in South Africa." This paper is dedicated to the memory of the first South African to obtain a doctoral degree in Old Testament Studies.

(1981:2) and Van Rooy (1992:162), he was born in Venterstad, in the Cape Colony. According to Van der Vyver (1969:61), he was born in Burgersdorp, also in the Cape Colony. His father was Willem Johannes Snijman and his mother Sophia Aletta Susanna, also born Snijman. His father served as minister of the Reformed Church Venterstad from 1877 to 1913 (GKSA 2009:604). The latter completed his studies at the Theological School in Burgersdorp in 1876. This makes it more probable that P. C. Snijman was born in Burgersdorp, while his father was still a student at the seminary. According to the baptismal records of the Reformed Church Burgersdorp, he was baptised in that town on 4 July 1875 (*Gereformeerde Kerk Burgersdorp, 1868-1888, under 4 July 1875*).

He studied for the ministry at the Theological School of the Reformed Churches in South Africa at Burgersdorp. He passed the admission examination to that school on 19 and 20 March 1891, while not yet sixteen years old (Smit 1981:2). In 1895 he received the B.A. degree (Jooste 1972:21). After completing his studies, he was appointed as an assistant at that school on 8 December 1897. He was legitimated on 8 June 1898 and he was called as professor at the Theological School on 10 June 1898, six days before his twenty-third birthday (Smit 1981:2-3). At the School he became a very close friend of another student, J. D. du Toit, the later well-known Afrikaans poet and the first South African to obtain a doctoral degree at the Free University of Amsterdam (Buys 1972a:17). Snijman taught at the School for four and a half years, before accepting a call to the Reformed Church Steynsburg in 1903 (Smit 1981:3). His time at the Theological School coincided partly with the Anglo-Boer War. During the war he served as ambulance orderly during the Battle of Stormberg and was one of many that were forced to watch the hanging of the Cape rebel Klopper in Burgersdorp (Buys 1972a:17).

As minister in Steynsburg, he was granted leave with full pay in 1911 by his church to go to Amsterdam to study at the Free University (Van der Vyver, G. C. P. 1972:23). His promotion to doctor in Theology was on 12 December 1913 in Amsterdam. His thesis was on the prophecy of Zephaniah, with Prof. Dr. C. van Gelderen as promoter. He was not the first South African to obtain a doctorate from the Free University in Amsterdam, though. The first one was his good friend J. D. du Toit. In his second volume on the relationship between the Free University and South Africa, Schutte (2005:718-727) lists all South Africans who received a doctoral degree from the Free University. The first six names on this list are J. D. du Toit (1903), W. P. Steenkamp and W. A. Joubert (1910), B. B. Keet and Ph.C. Snyman (sic) (1913) and F. Postma (1914). Snijman was the only Old Testament scholar amongst these six. The next doctorate in Old Testament was obtained by J. H. Kritzinger in 1935. He (1935) wrote a thesis on the prophet Joel, with the same promoter as Snijman, and with exactly the same structure as the thesis of Snijman. He also states in his introduction that the subject of the thesis was proposed to him by his promoter, as was the case with Snijman.

While in the Netherlands, he was called as second theological professor at the Theological School Potchefstroom. After much thought he declined this call, as not being fair to the congregation that had granted him two years' leave and because of his work relating to the Christian school in Steynsburg (Buys 1972a:17). He returned to his congregation in Steynsburg at the beginning of 1914. He died on 9 May 1915 (Smit 1981:3), probably from some kind of gastric fever (Van Rooy 1992:62). On this day, according to Postma (1916:45), a precious life came to an end. His life was short, but filled with hard work blessed by the Lord (Postma 1916:48).

While professor at the Theological School, he married Gertruida Adriana van Rooy on 4 October 1898 (Van Rooy 1992:162). His father-in-law, Johannes Cornelis van Rooy, was one of the Dutch teachers brought to South Africa by the Dutch Reformed Church in 1857 (Postma 1916:41). Dr. Snijman and his wife had seven children. A brief sketch of his wife and their seven children can be found in Van Rooy (1992:62-68). She died on 5 January 1919 at the age of 42. Their eldest son, Willem, later became professor in New Testament Studies at the Theological School Potchefstroom and the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education. The second son, Johannes, died in 1933 in a car accident at the age of 24. Their five daughters all lived to a high age, no one less than 78 years (cf. Van Rooy 1992:163-167).

As far as his personality is concerned, Dr. Snijman was described as mild, modest and hard-working (Smit 1981:3). He was a keen and conscientious student, who frequently worked right through the night when he was studying in Amsterdam, to the detriment of his health (Smit 1981:5). The result was that he returned frail and overworked from the Netherlands at the beginning of 1914, and never really recovered. As minister he was just as conscientious, with a strong personality and a friendly disposition (Van der Vyver 1972:25). After the death of Dr. P. C. Snijman and his wife, their close friend and the well-known Afrikaans poet Totius (J. D. du Toit), wrote a poem in their honour.²

² The earliest version of the poem that was available was published in 1924 by L. J. du Plessis, *Totius in sy Verse. 'n Biografiese Verklaring van sy Gedigte met Bloemlesing* (Kaapstad: Nasionale Pers, 1924), 139-140. It can be found in the complete works of Totius, in the final volume, as well as in the separate collection of his poems (Totius, *Versamelde Gedigte*. Kaapstad: Tafelberg, 1988), 342-343. It was also published by P. W. Buys, "Bouers van die Calvinisme. Dr. P. C. Snyman (1)," *Woord en Daad* 14/119 (1972a: 17-19 and A. J. Van Rooy, *Die familie Van Rooy in Suid-Afrika* (Genealogiepublikasie 38. Pretoria: RGN, 1992), 63. The different versions differ in some respects. The oldest version, in Du Plessis, *Totius in sy verse*, 139-140, reads as follows:

Weer bymekaar

In the next section, Dr. Snijman's contribution to education will be discussed. When he died, the school he had founded lost its spiritual father. In an article in the yearbook of that school in 1915, it is indeed stated that the school had lost its father (*Jaarboek* 1915:5: "De vader van de School is heengegaan. Dr. P. C. Snijman is er niet meer").

C SNIJMAN AND CHRISTELIKE NASIONALE ONDERWYS (CHRISTIAN NATIONAL EDUCATION)

During the time of his ministry in Steynsburg, both before and after his studies in Amsterdam, Snijman made a significant contribution to the development of education in Steynsburg and beyond. In this respect he can be regarded as one of the founders of the idea of *Christelike Nasionale Onderwys* (Christian National Education). Soon after his confirmation in Steynsburg in 1903, he started with his work in this regard. At that stage the Reformed Church decided to move the Theological School from Burgersdorp. Snijman advocated Steynsburg as an alternative venue (Van Rooy 1932:121). To support his effort, his mother-in-law, the widow of the teacher J. C. van Rooy, donated the sum of 1000 pounds. Through the efforts of J. D. du Toit it was decided, however, to move the Theological School to Potchefstroom. The money donated by his mother-in-law was still available, but then to be used for a Christian school, which was established in 1905 (Van Rooy 1932:122).

By die dood van dr. en Mevr. Snyman

Nou is hul altwee dood, altwee
Waar is die woord wat laafnis gee?

Twee bloeisels by mekaar gebloei,
Twee appels aan één tak gegroei.

Daar kom 'n hand om die één te knak,
En die ander val ook van die tak.

Hy is gepluk vir die dode-dal,
Maar sy, sy het net afgeval....

Maar die hand wat hom het neergehaal,
Het ook na haar toe afgedaal --

Daarin is hul weer één van lot –
en dis die hand van God!

Nou is hul altwee dood, altwee,
Maar dis die woord wat troos kom gee.

Snijman can be regarded as the heart and soul of these efforts in Steynsburg (M. D. Van der Vyver 1972:37). The school opened on 17 July 1905, with sixty children, fifteen of them being grand-children of the late teacher J. C. van Rooy and his wife Anne Francois, who donated the 1000 pounds (M. D. Van der Vyver 1972:39). In 1908 the school delivered its first matriculants, including J. C. (Joon) van Rooy (M. D. Van der Vyver 1972:40), who later became the first rector of the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education. The Teacher's Training College at Steynsburg was opened in 1914. It closed its doors in 1950, delivering about 850 teachers during this time (M. D. Van der Vyver 1972:41, 48 and 49). The history of the college was described as part of a survey of the history of the Christian education in Steynsburg between 1904 and 1950 by Van der Vyver (1958).

Buys (1972b:15) refers to fifteen articles written by Snijman in *Het Kerkblad*, published by the Reformed Churches between 1905 and 1907. In his articles on Snijman, Buys summarises the main points of Snijman's view on education. Snijman saw the aim of education to build the faith of the children. He did not want to establish a church school, but a confessional school, not restricted to one denomination. He wanted a free school, free from the government, but available to the nation. These principles were applied in Steynsburg, in the school and college he established (Buys 1972b:16-17). The establishment of the school are briefly discussed by Buys (1972c). He (Buys 1972c:16) quotes famous words uttered by Snijman in this regard: *Die gesiedenis van die Kristelike school is 'n geloofsgesiedenis* (The history of the Christian school is a history of faith). These fifteen articles of Snijman present his preliminary ideas on education. As his views on education are not the main thrust of this article, these articles will not be discussed in detail. The most complete exposition of Snijman's view on education appeared in the golden jubilee volume of the Reformed Church Burgersdorp in 1910. This article will be discussed in more detail as it describes his view systematically in broad detail.

This contribution of seventeen pages offers a range of thoughts that merits a closer look. One of the most interesting factors related to this contribution is the language he used. The other contributions in that volume were written in Dutch, at that stage still an official language, and frequently the language used in church, partly on account of the Dutch *Statenvertaling* and metric version of the Psalms (from 1773) still used in the church. Snijman, however, wrote in Afrikaans. That he used Afrikaans can easily be seen from the use of the definite article ("die" and not "de" or "het") and a verbal form such as "kan gesê word." As far as orthography is concerned, Dutch forms do appear (such as "zusters," "onderwijs," "ik" and "eigenlik"). His used of "ver" ("for," instead of "vir" is also noteworthy (all these examples are from the first page of the article; Snijman 1910:125).

In his article Snijman uses the term *Gereformeerde onderwijs* (Reformed education). He says that teaching in a school is reformed when the teacher is reformed in the subject he teaches (Snijman 1910:126). He regards a teacher as not being consistent when he follows Darwin as far as natural science is concerned, but is impressed by the majestic omnipotence of God when reading Genesis 1. The same double-heartedness appears when a teacher confesses that man is born in sin, but in the practice of teaching accepts the good nature of children as far as ethical matters are concerned (Snijman 1910:127).

He was convinced that the education legislation in the Cape did not allow reformed education (Snijman 1910:128). He pleaded for free schools, without subsidy from the state. The textbooks used in this kind of school should be written from a reformed perspective as well, he felt. He objected to views on religion at school that were current in his time. In these views three different approaches were propagated, namely no religion at school at all, or a neutral kind of approach teaching all religions, or religion without any confessional binding (Snijman 1910:130-131). These views would entail no religion at school at all, or colourless religion, or taking children from different religions (and denominations) separately for religious instruction (Snijman 1910:132). He levelled severe criticism against these approaches (Snijman 1910:133-135) and pleaded for one world view in each school (Snijman 1910:136). He wanted religious education on a confessional basis to be the main aim of the kind of school he propagated (Snijman 1910:139). This kind of debate is still topical in our time, especially amongst those people propagating free schools with a religious or even denominational basis against the approach of the government of the day for more secular schools, without preference for a specific religion.

D SNIJMAN'S *DE PROFETIE VAN ZEFANJA* (THE PROPHECY OF ZEPHANIAH)

In his introduction to the thesis Snijman thanks his promoter, Prof. Dr. C. van Gelderen and states that the subject of his thesis was proposed to him by his promoter. The public defence of his thesis was on 12 December 1913, just eighteen months before his death. In this section a brief survey of the structure of the thesis will be given, followed by a discussion of a number of examples from the thesis to demonstrate his approach to the prophecies of Zephaniah.

The thesis has the character of a commentary on the book of Zephaniah. He starts with a list of the literature consulted for his study in which he mentions the general works and commentaries that he had consulted, as well as other literature, such as quite a number of articles in the *Zeitschrift für die alt-testamentliche Wissenschaft* (Snijman 1913:1-6). He consulted works in Dutch, English, French, Latin and German, including the works of many critical scholars like Budde, Cornill, Duhm, Ewald, Hitzig, Kuenen, Marti, Sellin and Wellhausen, to name a few. Additional literature is mentioned in footnotes.

Snijman does not formulate a specific problem for his study, but begins in his introduction with the normal introductory matters that one would find in a commentary, such as the person, time and work of the prophet (1910:7-26). He discusses the authenticity of the book in some detail (1910:26-44). The introductory chapter is followed by a chapter dealing with the exegesis of the book and he concludes with a chapter on the theological meaning of the book. As an addendum he presents a translation of the book into Dutch (1910:221-226).

He cautiously discusses the possibility that the Hezekiah mentioned as the great-great grandfather may have been the king with that name, making Zephaniah a distant cousin of Josiah (Snijman 1913:8-10). The possibility is enhanced by going back to the fourth generation, but the fact that Hezekiah was not called "the king," argues against the possibility. He states that neither of these arguments settles the matter. After discussing the views of some scholars, he says that the impossibility of Hezekiah being the king with that name was not established by the opponents of that view, while the supporters of that view can claim no more than a probability. This is typical of the careful weighing of different views by Snijman. His discussion of this issue compares well with the discussion of Vlaardingerbroek (1999:12-13). Sweeney (2003:48) also says that the matter should be left open.

Snijman (1913:11-23) pays a lot of attention to the time of the prophet. He divides the reign of King Josiah into three periods, 639-627, 627-621 (the period of his reform) and 621-608 (till his death at Megiddo). The main argument used by scholars in favour of dating the prophet in the first period is the description of the situation in Jerusalem that does not fit the time of the reform and later. Others date the prophet at the beginning of the time of the reform and see the prophet as supporting the reform of Josiah. The youth of the king would have made it possible for the princes to act as described in 1: 8 and 9 in this case. This view also linked up with the theory of a Scythian advance over western Asia at about 625 B.C.E. Snijman is, however, convinced that arguments about the Scythians' advance and the possibility of an attack by Pharaoh Psamtek cannot be used to decide between the first two periods in the reign of Josiah. He regards the arguments in favour of the first period in the reign of Josiah for the time of the prophet stronger than those in favour of the second period, as the situation of that period fits the message of Zephaniah better. His own preference, however, is to date the prophet in the third period of Josiah's reign, after the reform. He sees the reform as more external in nature as far as the people is concerned. The princes referred to in Zeph 1:9 would then be Josiah's own sons, whose reigns would later be condemned as evil in the eyes of the Lord. Snijman dates Zephaniah thus near to the end of the reign of Josiah. He accepts the unity of the book, after a detailed discussion of all the scholars who doubted the authenticity of certain sections of the book (Snijman 1913:27-39). His own presuppositions about the book as revelation are clear

when he discusses the authenticity of Zeph 3:14-20, which presupposes the exile. He says that this argument is invalid when one accepts that through divine intervention the prophet was able to transfer himself into the future (Snijman 1913:38). As far as the structure of the book is concerned, he accepts a tripartite division, with 1:2-18a containing the threat of judgement 1:18b-2:15 an admonition and 3:1-20 a promise (Snijman 1913:44-46).

This question of the dating of the prophet's actions is still open in modern discussions. Vlaardingerbroek (1999:13-17) is a good example, discussing mainly the dating before or after the reform, but questioning the idea that Zephaniah was pro-reform, a view accepted by Snijman. Rudolph (1975:255) supports the pre-reform view. This is the majority view at present (Berlin 1994:34). Sweeney (2003:18) places the prophet at the beginning of the reform and supports the pro-reform view.

It is impossible to discuss Snijman's commentary in detail. A few examples will be discussed to illustrate the way he worked and the kind of conclusions he reached.

In Zeph 1:2 a well-known grammatical problem occurs, as far as the words $\text{קִיְּמָה} \text{קִיְּמָה}$ are concerned. As the words stand, they should be read as a *Qal* infinitive absolute of קָמַם and as a *Hiphil* imperfect of קָמַם . BHS for example wants to read the first word as *Hiphil* infinitive of קָמַם ("I will again make an end"). Snijman (1913:51) discusses this problem in some detail. He refers to the remarks of other scholars and distinguishes three possibilities, taking both forms from either קָמַם or קָמַם , or the first from קָמַם and the second from קָמַם . He discusses the emendations proposed by scholars, accepting one of the first two possibilities. He agrees with scholars like Keil, Kleinert and Orelli by retaining the reading of the Masoretic text. He says the use of the two different roots may be deliberate, using two words that sound alike and do not differ that much in meaning to emphasise the judgement. He asks why two forms of the root קָמַם were not used. He says that the main idea is carried by the root קָמַם , and the emphasis is on the result. By sweeping away the destruction is brought about. The syntactical irregularity is then seen as deliberate. This example testifies to Snijman's conservative approach to the Masoretic text. He refers frequently to the Masoretic text, but does not state in his bibliography which edition he used of the Hebrew Bible, or of the other ancient versions for that matter. He probably used the second edition of Kittel's *Biblia Hebraica*, where the Minor Prophets were edited by Nowack (Kittel 1908). The examples that he discusses with regard to the readings considered above agree with note 2a in this edition (Kittel 1909:882).

A recent discussion of this problem is offered by Vlaardingerbroek (1999:57-59), who mainly considers the same possibilities as Snijman, choos-

ing for the verbal root קסא in both instances. Smith (1984:126) favours the proposal of Sabottka to read the first form as a Hiphil imperfect of קס , a possibility not considered by Snijman but accepted by BHS. Berlin (1994:72) supports the same solution as Snijman, as does Sweeney after a long discussion of all the possibilities (Sweeney 1003:58-62).

In Zeph 1:11, Snijman (1913:78-79) has an interesting view on the verb הִלִּילֵךְ . This verb is generally taken as an imperative, but he argues that it should be understood as a perfect. In a footnote he refers to the aspect of the verb, saying that he prefers using the term *aspectus*, rather than *tempus* or *modus*, linking the meaning to the action of the verb being completed or not in the view of the speaker. In accordance with this, he rejects the idea that the next verb (נִדְמָה) should be taken as a prophetic perfect (as for example in the New American Commentary: *Wail, you who live in the market district; all your merchants will be wiped out, all who trade with silver will be ruined*). His discussion of the meaning of the words בְּנֵעַן and נְטִילֵי again demonstrates his knowledge of the literature and Hebrew morphology and syntax. Snijman's view is explicitly rejected by Rudolph (1975:263), who thinks that the verb should then have been preceded by the conjunction ו . This remark indicates, however, that he did consult the work of Snijman as the only author with this view. Sweeney (2003:90) does not mention Snijman, but agrees with his view of reading the verbal form as a perfect.

Snijman (1913:98) calls Zeph 2:1-2ab a *crux interpretum*. This passage is one of the sections where he goes his own way. It reads as follows in the Masoretic text:

הַתְּקוֹשְׁשׁוּ וְקוֹשׁוּ הַגּוֹי לֹא נִבְסָף:
בְּטָרֶם לָדֶת חֶק בְּמִץ עֵבֶר יוֹם

Sweeney (2003:110) translates as follows:

Assemble yourselves and gather, O worthless nation, before the decree is born, (and) like chaff, the day has passed.

The first two verbs come from the same root and are usually linked to the gathering of straw. This is accepted by Snijman, although he sees a more positive action in the people gathering around the Lord, not the people gathering as straw to be destroyed. The verb at the end of the first line is usually taken in a negative sense, like “worthless” in the translation of Sweeney. Snijman does not accept this negative connotation of the final phrase in this line. He thinks that “the rest” is addressed in this phrase, not the “unjust.” They do not long for what is wrong, but will be delivered like a log from a fire (Snijman 1913:98-103).

The first part of verse 2 is very problematic, as can be seen from the discussion in the commentaries and no satisfactory solution has been found. Snijman extensively discusses the problems, specifically the emendations proposed by Wellhausen, following the Septuagint, which reads “before you become as the flower that passes away”. In the end Snijman again stays faithful to the Masoretic text and translates: “*eer het besluit is gebaart, gelijk kaf (zijn) dag voorbijgegaan is*” (“before the decision is born like straw that passes its day by”). Vlaardingebroek (1999:117-120) gives a useful survey of current solutions, although he deems verse 1 as untranslatable. Snijman’s translation sounds a bit like Berlin’s (1994:3): Before the decree’s birth – “the day is fleeting like chaff.” An interesting agreement between the work of Snijman and Berlin is the attempt to make sense of the Masoretic text even in very problematic passages. Olivier (1973:75) mentions Snijman’s view amongst others on the beginning of verse 1, but does not follow it.

Zeph 2:6 again presents a good example of Snijman’s treatment of a passage with textual problems. The Masoretic text reads:

וְהִיְתָה חֶבְלֵי הַיָּם נֹזֶת כְּרֵת רְעִים וְגִדְרוֹת צֹאן;

This is translated by Smith (1984:133) as:

And the border of the sea shall become pastures, meadows of shepherds and folds for sheep.

This can be compared to Snijman’s translation (1913:109) “*En de Kuststrook zal wezen³ herders-woningen en -putten en schaapskralen*” (“And the coastal region will be dwellings for the shepherds and wells and folds for the sheep”). He offers another extensive discussion of the readings of the variants, especially the omission of the coastal region by the LXX. The LXX has: “And Crete shall be a pasture of flocks, and a fold of sheep.” His own interpretation again retains the Masoretic text and explains the word כְּרֵת as coming from a root כרה, meaning a well. He sees an asyndetic construction with the nouns נֹזֶת and כְּרֵת both in the construct before the shepherds. Berlin (1994:103-106) also wants to retain the Masoretic text, but treats the two words as part of a construct chain: “The seacoast shall be encampments of shepherds’ pastures and sheepfolds.”

What is clear from these examples is that Snijman had a very good knowledge of Hebrew, as well as of Greek and Latin. He refers to the Peshitta as well, but he does not discuss any examples from the Syriac in detail. He was also very well acquainted with the commentaries and other studies available at that time. He discusses different views in detail, including the views of critical

³ This word has a very interesting form. Normally one would expect “zijn,” not “wezen.” It could probably be an influence on Snijman’s Dutch from the developing Afrikaans, where the word would be “wees.”

scholars. He was very conservative in his approach to the Hebrew text and did not accept emendations with no support from at least the versions.

In a short final chapter, Snijman (1913:215-216) discusses the theological meaning of the book. He takes the historical context of the prophet, as he sees it, very seriously. Zephaniah's view of the future is thoroughly Old Testament in nature, historically and nationally determined. However, beneath these concrete forms, there is an eternal content. He talks about the future. He can only use forms that the history preceding the final consummation tendered, but in doing so he looks forward to the final consummation as an act of God. His historical situation can also be seen in his depiction of the day of the Lord, when he speaks about the peoples of his time and his own people within their historical circumstances.

However, when Snijman follows a revelational historical line into the future, he depicts Zephaniah's view of the eschaton as a type of what is to come. He speaks of exile and return, of the rebuilding of the temple, and the fulfilment of Zephaniah's prophecy in those historical events. A second fulfilment of the day of the Lord breaks through with the coming of Christ and the final fulfilment at the second coming of Christ at the end of time, when all the nations will have a share in the final theocracy, the eternal kingdom of God. Of these future events Zephaniah's prophecy serves as a type.

In a series of articles published in *Het Kerkblad* early in 1914 J. D. du Toit (1914a, b and c) discussed the thesis of Snijman. In the first article (Du Toit 1914) he gives an extract from the preface of the thesis. In the second (Du Toit 1914b) he discusses two of the theses ("stellingen") that were added to the thesis. In accordance with the custom at the Free University, Snijman had to add a number of theses to the doctoral thesis, some of them dealing with issues from Zephaniah (1-3), some with matters from the rest of the Old Testament (4 and 5) or from the New Testament (6-8), some with general theological issues (9, 10, 12-16) and two with matters related to education and religion (11 and 17). The theses discussed by Du Toit are one of the two related to education and religion and one related to the name of the Reformed Church.

Thesis 11 reads as follows:

De leer van den door de Overheid der Kaap Provincie voor de Openbaar School goedgekeurden Catechismus, dat er drie genademiddele zijn, nl. het Woord, het Sacrament en het Gebed, zegt òf te veel òf te weinig.⁴

Thesis 16 reads as follows:

⁴ The teaching of the Catechism approved by the Government of the Cape Province that there are three means of grace, namely the Word, the Sacraments and Prayer, says either too much or not enough.

De naam “De Gereformeerde Kerk van Zuid-Afrika” worde door de zich aldus noemende kerkengroep in overeenstemming met haar kerkrechtelijk beginsel vervangen door dien van “De Gereformeerde Kerken in Zuid-Afrika.”⁵

Du Toit agreed with these two statements (Du Toit 1914b:6-7). In the Reformed tradition only the Word and the sacraments are usually seen as means of grace. As far as the name of the Reformed Churches is concerned, the suggestion of Snijman was followed up about seventy years after his thesis. In the final article, Du Toit (1914c:2) describes the thesis as a commentary. He describes the structure of the work and is very positive about Snijman’s own translation. He commends his knowledge of Hebrew and mentions his use of the term aspect for the verbal system of Hebrew. He commends Snijman’s use of other authors and has a positive view of Snijman’s own interpretations. As far as the text of the book is concerned, Snijman was very conservative and not in favour of the liberal use of conjecture. Du Toit describes the work as of high scientific value.

Dr. A. Troelstra wrote an appreciation of the thesis of Snijman in the journal *Stemmen des Tijds* (Troelstra 1913/14:347-348). He was very positive about the way in which Snijman summarised the different views on the exegesis of Zephaniah, making a reasoned choice or going his own way. Troelstra discusses some points where he would differ from Snijman and mentions a work of Henderson that he did not consult, because Snijman did not use older works, with the exception of Calvin and Hävernack (Troelstra 1913/14:345). He lists some other works that Snijman could have used, including Sellin’s *Einleitung*. Troelstra is positive about Snijman’s work, but would have liked a critical survey of the literature. Troelstra called the thesis a commentary and expressed the view that it should be followed by more similar works (Troelstra 1913/14:346).

This work of Snijman is not referred to frequently in studies on the book. Rudolph (1975:257) lists it under the commentaries included in his bibliography, as do Van der Woude (1978:154), Vlaardingerbroek (1999:xvii) and Seybold (1985:118). Olivier (1973) refers to it as well. He refers to Snijman in his discussion of Zeph 1:2, without discussing his view in any detail (Olivier 1973:2). He discusses some of the proposals of Snijman, but ignores him most of the time.

⁵ The name “De Gereformeerde Kerk van Zuid-Afrika” (the Reformed Church of South Africa) should be replaced by “De Gereformeerde Kerken in Zuid-Afrika” (the Reformed Churches in South Africa), according to the principles of the church polity of this group.

E CONCLUSION

Through his untimely death, the Reformed Churches, and probably Old Testament scholarship in South Africa as well, lost an early pioneer in the field. His thesis was a very thorough work, taking note of different views, including many scholars from whom he differed with regard to his view of Scripture. He took their views seriously, and did not just write them off on ideological grounds, without entering into debate with their views. When thinking back over 150 years of Old Testament scholarship in South Africa, it is fitting to revisit and honour his work.

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