

## **From the Pastor's Desk 1980-1989**

### **A PROPHET ON AN ORGAN BENCH**

This is the title of a book dedicated to Jan Zwart (1877-1937), one of Holland's foremost organists. Feike Asma, another well known organist, contributed to this volume on the place of organ music in the church and its history. The introduction was written by Prof. Dr. K. Schilder.

Organ music has been associated with the Reformed faith. Who can imagine a Reformed Worship service without an organ? Soon after a church has been erected an organ committee is formed to look into the acquisition of an organ. But organ music in the worship service hasn't always been part of the Reformed tradition. In the 17th century newly built churches in Holland had to wait for a long time for an organ. In the Westerkerk in Amsterdam they were without an organ for 55 years. The Reformers themselves associated organ music with Roman Catholicism which they had left behind. Some considered an organ a worldly instrument. The Reformer Zwingli didn't even allow singing. Organs were even torn down, for example the one in Gross-Munster in Zurich. The Synod of Dordt in 1574 didn't allow organ playing as it was supposed to be contradictory to the Bible.

Is music not part of God's creation? The Lord created the world and afterwards He "saw all that He had made, and it was very good". (Gen. 1-31) This also includes the world of sound. Music had an important role in the temple worship. If we may believe the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus, then there were 20,000 harps in Solomon's temple. The Bible tells us how King David regulated the worship services. He told "the leaders of the Levites to appoint their brothers as singers to sing joyful songs, accompanied by musical instruments: lyres, harps and cymbals" (1 Chron. 15-16). Even an organ is mentioned in Scripture, "Praise Him with the stringed instruments and organs". Of course this is not the pipe organ as we know it.

How important is organ music in our worship services today? Someone wrote that those who play music in the church are fulfilling a priestly function. I would add, and a prophetic function as well. Thank the Lord for church organists. Let us pray for ours as they contribute faithfully - Sunday after Sunday - to the up-building of our faith, and as they play to the glory of our God.