

Regional Conference 2012

Liberal Religion on 'Hold', 'Play', or 'Fast Forward'?

19th to 22nd July 2012, Elspeet, Netherlands

Background information

For a long time, liberal religious people have regarded themselves as the avant-garde in cultural spirituality - progressive in their political outlook, and forerunners in philosophy and science. Are we still keen to take the lead? And if so, where are the leaders to be found?

Programme

Programme items will focus on the theme of *leadership*. We will be concentrating on two issues: Is there a cause for our member groups to take up anew - a leading role in the renewal of religious thinking? What are our challenges? And: What would ideally be the profile of our new leaders?

The programme also features an orientation on Dutch religious culture and an introduction to the new/renewed activities of IARF.

Thursday, 19th July

14.00 - Registration. Explore the venue and its setting, meet up with old friends, make new acquaintances.

16.00 - Opening: In the presence of chairs and other representatives of the boards of the Dutch member groups and affiliates, the conference will be opened by the Rev. **Yoshinobu Miyake**, representing the Right Reverent Mitsuo Miyake, IARF president. Both gentlemen are priest in the (reformed Shinto) Konko Church of Izu. Rev. Miyake has been our contact person for channeling the aid given to victims of the disasters that struck Japan in 2011. The opening programme will include storytelling by **Kees Posthumus**. He has gained renown with performances about Calvin, Arminius and Menno; his international career includes a tour of Israel.

Dinner

Lecture: *Do the splits: the liberal mentality and the future of the earth* by Prof. **Meerten B. Ter Borg**, retired senior lecturer in the sociology of religion and emeritus professor of noninstitutional religion at Leiden University. In his presentation he will try to show that a liberal mentality (religious or not) is almost indispensable. The big questions mankind has to cope with in the 21st century ask for a split: on the one hand we must stand in our own tradition, on the other hand we must tolerate at the same time that the traditions of other cultures are incompatible with that tradition. This is what a liberal mentality is about. Prof. Ter Borg has devoted most of his studies to the subject of implicit religion and sense-making. He was able to point out strong traces of 'implicit religiosity' in the worlds of economics, medicine, the arts, the media and in politics, and recognized a strong connection between sense-making and power. His publications in English include contributions to the journals *Implicit Religion* and *Sociological Analysis*, and the *Oxford Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*. His essay *Some ideas on Wild Religion* can be found online. Discussion.

Evening to be concluded with a devotion by **Greteke de Vries** and **Andreas Peter** (Liberal Protestant)

Friday 20 July

Devotion by **Arben Sulejmani** (Bektashi)

Lecture: *Directive, informative and deliberative professional-client relationships* by Prof. **Anne Ruth Mackor**.

Prof. Mackor is professor of professional ethics, in particular the legal professions, at the Faculty of Law of the University of Groningen and Socrates professor of professional ethics at the Faculty of Theology and Religious studies and the Faculty of Philosophy of the same university. At the Faculty of Theology she teaches students of spiritual counseling. She is a member of the advisory committee on spiritual care of the Dutch Humanist Alliance. The subject of her lecture will be the ethics of being a (non-) directive professional. In former times, persons of authority, like doctors, lawyers, ministers, and priests were expected to be paternalistic or directive in their behaviour towards their 'clients'. Their professional ethics now seems to demand that, instead, they only offer information to their clients, thus enabling them to make an educated and autonomous decision on their own. However, it is questionable whether merely offering information is sufficient for clients to make autonomous decisions. The question that she will tackle in her talk is whether it is possible to steer a middle way between being over- and under-directive. Her article:

Standardization of spiritual care in health care facilities in the Netherlands: blessing or curse? In *Ethics and Social Welfare*, Vol. 3, no. 2, July 2009, pp.215-228 is likely to be of interest to some of our participants.

Plenary by **Robert Papini**: *IARF (k)now*, concerning the work of the IARF Secretariat. He will give a presentation on the functions of the new website, which inter alia allows exchange of information between victims of religious freedom violations, but there are possibilities for expansion into other roles. Participants are invited to have a thorough look at it prior to arrival, and give their feedback during this session. Suggestions for improvement will be welcomed. Other questions about the secretariat's activities can be put for further discussion.

After lunch a visit will be paid to the *Flevopolders* - new land that has been reclaimed from the sea formerly called the *Zuiderzee*. It is barely half a century old and its infrastructure has been designed to fit the ideals of 50 years hence. We'll visit a part of the polder that has more history than the surrounding lands: the former island of Schokland, now an insignificant hillock but steeped in history and still boasting a medieval church. Participants will have the opportunity to visit the local museum which has a collection of medieval artefacts and other finds from an even earlier age. The return journey will be via Kampen, a charming example of the many historic towns that The Netherlands can boast. After that, they'll sample the favourite food of most Dutch children, and quite a few adults: Pannekoeken (pancakes).

Finally, **Andries Govaart** will do a multimedia presentation on religious aspects of the work of American artist Frederick Franck.

Evening devotion will be led by **Nedko Popov** (Unitarian)

Saturday 21st July

Morning devotion by **Zsuzsánna Bartha** (Unitarian)

Lecture: *Ethics in Dutch business: seen as a mix of business case, morality, regulation, personal ideals and liberal biblical insights* by **Bram Rutgers van der Loeff**, former senior advisor Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Entrepreneurship and Philosophy of Life, of the Dutch Employers Federation VNO-NCW (1989 – 2008). Also former (VNO-)NCW delegate to Uniapac, the World Federation of Christian Entrepreneurs. Economist/ econometrist and lay preacher. Remonstrant, freemason and former teacher Transcendental Meditation (1975 – 1982). Now president of the Dutch Macular Degeneration Patients Association.

The programme continues with a workshop programme which concentrates on current IARF activities, projects, and scope. For newcomers to IARF a workshop by **Lucie Meijer**, in which she will give an introduction to IARF, aimed at people who would like to become actively involved with IARF or would like to start a new chapter (25 individuals constitute a chapter; countries may have several chapters targeting different aspects of IARF work) Lucie has been involved with IARF throughout her life and has worked at the Frankfurt secretariat for more than a decade. In the seventies, she was the driving force behind IARF's *social services programme*. Parallel to that **Yehuda Stolov**, executive director of IARF member group *Interfaith Encounter Organization*, will explain his efforts to unite local religious leaders in Hebron and get them to support a peace initiative. IARF is currently supporting this programme financially. **Annelies Trenning** and **Renate Bauer** will give a workshop on IARF lobbying at the European Parliament, notably with the European Platform on Religious Intolerance and Discrimination (EPRID) and the European Parliament Platform for Secularism in Politics (EPPSP). IARF participation in these could be controversial and will be up for debate

In the afternoon the workshop programme will be continued. **Morse Flores** and **Wyske Dijkstra** will facilitate a workshop on IARF human rights work in Geneva. Morse is our new Main Representative at the United Nations now that John Taylor has expressed his wish to take a back seat; at IARF's request, John has agreed to stay on in an advisory role. Morse is in favour of a broad approach to Human Rights, not separating Religious Freedom issues from other (minority) rights. He'll give an explanation of the complicated structures of ECOSOC and its mechanisms as well as its procedures to reach agreement. **Wyske Dijkstra** will give practical advice and hints on how to influence these procedures using existing social structures, media, and the democratic process, using the Dutch UPR (Universal Periodic Review) process as an example. A light-hearted alternative will be provided by **Mariken Hanke van Peurse** leading a musical workshop. She is a music teacher and professional player of recorders.

An IARF EME business meeting will take place from 15.30 on.

The day will be concluded with a cultural programme coordinated by **Hanke van Peurse**. Contributions from participants welcome.

Sunday 22nd July

Programme conclusion. Interreligious celebration coordinated by **Shlomo Alon** and closing ceremony. Programme ends 12.00

End of programme 12.00 (lunch not included; available to participants at their own expense)

The IARF Peace Commission will meet after lunch through Monday. Programme to be booked separately with Richard Boeke, chair.

For further information and enquiries iarfeme2012@gmail.com www.iarf.net