

## FOREWORD

I have often wondered why for some Americans the distance to the Netherlands seems so great, while for others it is so short. More than the Atlantic Ocean separates American churches from their Dutch cousins. It is apparent, too, that the distance when measured from west to east is much greater than when measured from east to west. They know our churches better than we know theirs. In fact, I believe the story of the Pilgrims has been studied more thoroughly by them than by us. At any rate, whatever the measure, we are ill-informed of their achievements, and this is nowhere truer than in theology. Apart from a few students who move from Grand Rapids or Holland, Michigan, to the Free University in Amsterdam, eastbound theological explorers seldom stop in the Lowlands. Some find the adjustment to Britain less taxing; others respond to the prestigious weight of German scholarship. Only a few seek out the Dutch faculties. When they do, they normally discover in the Dutch university a social climate as congenial as the British and an academic vitality as stimulating as the German. Yet the fact remains that the number of visiting students and teachers is too scanty to mediate the wealth available.

It is therefore of prime importance that more Dutch theology should be made available in English. The American ear does not readily conquer the venerable Dutch language, and professors in Holland continue to lecture in that alien medium, even though most could lecture readily in several other tongues. Translation is therefore essential. Nor should such translation be limited to an occasional best-seller written by a famous savant. If we are to understand the theological climate, we must become familiar with the staples of the curriculum, things like surveys of church history and introductions to the Bible.

It is as a representative of this last type that I welcome this small book by Professor Klijn. It covers what he considers to be the basic data needed by every student of the New Testament, presented in

brief compass and in lucid style. From his post on the theological faculty in Utrecht he has lectured on this subject for many years, yet he has written this book in English with American college and seminary students in mind. His concern for them began when he spent a term as visiting lecturer in Boston some years ago. What is good for Utrecht and Boston should be good elsewhere. For so succinct a book it would be silly to provide a verbose preface. I therefore confine myself to a staccato "Thank you" to Professor Klijn for this contribution to the theological conversation between the Dutch and the American.

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