

The Move of the Institute for Ritual and Liturgical Studies to Amsterdam

Some Organizational and Programmatic Comments

Marcel Barnard

1. Transition of IRiLiS from Tilburg to Amsterdam

For more than 22 years Tilburg University hosted the Institute for Ritual and Liturgical Studies (IRiLiS).¹ Since 1 January 2015 the institute has continued its existence in Amsterdam at the Protestant Theological University. The transition was celebrated by means of a symposium on February 18, ‘The Future of Ritual: Spots and Shapes’. Where are we heading with ritual and liturgical studies? What are the research topics? What is the future of ritual? What are its spots and shapes? We welcomed distinguished guests from abroad, of whom Ronald Grimes (Waterloo, Canada) and Martin Stringer (Birmingham, UK) lectured at the symposium. Further, the former academic director of IRiLiS, Paul Post, presented a paper. The papers are published in this section of the *Yearbook for liturgical and ritual studies*.

2. A brief history of IRiLiS

The Liturgical Institute – as the institute was then called – was officially launched on 4 December 1992. Its founding father was the former professor of liturgical studies and sacramentology in Tilburg, Gerard Lukken. Since he was not able to attend the symposium in Amsterdam, he wrote a letter. In his letter he referred to the original mission of the institute: promoting the position of research in liturgical studies. He also referred to the words that he spoke on the occasion of the official launch of the institute.² He said (my translation – MB):

¹ Editor’s note: this introduction is based on the organizational and programmatic comments that the author made at the symposium ‘The Future of Ritual: Spots and Shapes’ on 18 February 2015 in Amsterdam. This symposium was organized by the Institute for Ritual and Liturgical Studies (IRiLiS) and the Protestant Theological University in Amsterdam to celebrate IRiLiS’ relocation to Amsterdam.

² This launch took place on 4 December 1992. The text of Lukken’s opening speech was documented in G. LUKKEN: *Ontwikkelingen in de liturgiewetenschap. Balans en perspectief* (= Liturgie in perspectief 1) (Heeswijk-Dinther 1993); see p. 27-28 for the original Dutch text of the translated quotation.

the institute is ultimately of national importance, and not only relevant for Tilburg. Distributing the areas of focus is essential in a time of austerity. It is the explicit intention to build the institute into an inter-university institute (...). Today is a modest beginning to be developed further. I sincerely hope that the newborn will have a long and rich life!

Measured by the rate at which changes take shape in the academic world, I think we can say that his aspiration has already been fulfilled. Gerard Lukken was succeeded by Paul Post and under his leadership the institute expanded into an inter-university institute with an international reputation. This reputation is largely also due to the international peer reviewed series of the institute, *Liturgia condenda*, published by Peeters, Louvain, the *Yearbook for liturgical and ritual studies*, and NSRL, Netherlands studies in ritual and liturgy.

The different names that the institute has carried reflect the history of academic theology as well as the development of our disciplines.³ As said, originally the Institute was called Liturgical Institute. Rooted in the then theological faculty in Tilburg, the focus was mainly on liturgy from an anthropological or ritual perspective. Consequently, in 2009 the name was changed to Institute for Liturgical and Ritual Studies. The approach from the perspective of ritual was now anchored in the name of the institute, and liturgical studies understood itself as participant on the multidisciplinary platform of ritual studies. The new name thus mirrored the open approach to the field of ritual and liturgy. Gerard Lukken writes in the letter that I mentioned, that this was seen as most important for vitalizing a credible Christian liturgy in our culture. The parallelism of Liturgical and Ritual Studies in the title of the then institute also acknowledged that liturgical studies and ritual studies do not automatically coincide. Of course this acknowledgment had to do with major changes in the fields of religion and ritual, and in the academic theological landscape. The number of theological faculties was reduced, – some scholars moved into humanities departments, some stayed in merged theological faculties. The institute was moved to the Tilburg School of Humanities, so it left the theological domain. In 2012 there was the latest subtle name change. The Institute for Liturgical and Ritual Studies became the Institute for Ritual and Liturgical Studies. Ritual and Liturgy changed places in the name of the institute. The overall and distinctive notion for the institute was eventually ‘ritual’ and liturgy is now seen as specification of ritual. Liturgical studies is inescapably part of ritual studies. I will not elaborate on the notions of ritual and liturgy now, but it is clear that historically the latter notion in the name of the institute refers to ecclesial Christian ritual. Anthropologically it is probably more complex; Roy Rappaport in his *Ritual and religion in the making of humanity* refers to liturgy simply as ‘more or less invariant sequences

³ I gratefully use board notes drafted by former academic director, Paul Post, in recent years.

of rituals'.⁴ More importantly, in late modernity borders are constantly crossed, the sacred and the secular are no longer separable domains (if they ever have been), and one cannot tell where 'ritual' becomes ecclesial 'liturgy' and vice versa. The movement of IRiLiS from Tilburg to Amsterdam, that is, the repositioning of IRiLiS at a theological university will no doubt continue the discussion about the qualities of ritual and liturgy, and what is anthropological and/or theological.

In summary, the profile of IRiLiS is and will be directly connected to the conviction that liturgy and ritual are complex and interrelated research objects, the exploration of which must be performed both in their contexts (anthropological, cultural and theological, past and present) and in close contact with other (sub)disciplines. In other words, IRiLiS has a forthright multidisciplinary profile.

3. Organizational, structural and programmatic continuities and changes of IRiLiS

After the move to Amsterdam, the profile and mission of IRiLiS, as well as of its academic publications and book series, will also continue to be as guiding and relevant, as topical and innovative as before. This means that we commit ourselves to staying a network for innovative research in the field of ritual and liturgical studies, and will continue to coordinate, stimulate and internationalize research in the field of ritual and liturgical studies.

The move to Amsterdam also implies some organizational and structural changes. From its foundation, all general coordinating activities took place from Tilburg, which also supplied the coordinator. Charles Caspers, Els Rose, the late Ike de Loos, Petra Versnel-Mergaerts and lastly Louis van Tongeren were successively the well-known coordinators of the institute. Without them the institute could not have survived this long. I would like to mention in particular the last Tilburg coordinator, Louis van Tongeren, and the meticulous way in which he has fulfilled his task. Without letting himself be disturbed by the academic hustle and bustle, he helped organize the quiet progress and transition of the institute. As our academic editor he has steadily led the progress of our publication series with great precision. It is our privilege that he again edited this edition of the *Yearbook*.

From now on, the coordinator will be provided by the Protestant Theological University. The institute expresses its gratitude to the board of the Protestant Theological University for the provisions that were made to enable the foundation of the institute in Amsterdam. It is apparent that this was no obvious choice in these times of austerity. We are very glad that we could appoint Mirella Klomp as the institute's first coordinator here in the capital of the country.

⁴ R. RAPPAPORT: *Ritual and religion in the making of humanity* (= Cambridge studies in social and cultural anthropology 110) (Cambridge 1999) 169.

Paul Post and I changed positions. He became the chair of the governing board of the institute, while I took on his position as academic director. I want to say a few words about this, because I feel truly humbled when simply writing down these words: ‘we changed positions’. I already mentioned the immense importance of Paul Post for the institute. When I took office in 1998 as a part-time lecturer in liturgics at the University of Amsterdam, Paul Post was top of my list ‘important to get acquainted with’, but I felt also shy to meet the giant. It is due to him that our contact was cordial from the start and led to stimulating cooperation. Together with Martin Hoondert we developed the substantive notion of ‘beyond’ that is now programmatic for IRILiS and its publications.⁵ We have moved beyond the church, beyond the liturgical movement, beyond liturgical studies - but ritual and liturgy have remained and require ongoing study. So, the notion of ‘beyond’ is not primarily to be understood as a concept of time, but as a notion of positioning. There are no longer a core and margin in ritual and liturgical arenas. Each particular stance is indeed particular, specific, – and not commonly held. The notion of ‘beyond’ is not to say that there are no particular views, but that they should be clearly articulated and understood as some among many points of view. The term has helped to understand the complex, layered, dynamic liturgical and ritual field. Ritual and liturgical studies do not only have the task to describe and analyze the plural and complex field, but also to deconstruct claims regarding an alleged dominant core.

As said, the Liturgical Institute was founded as an inter-university institute. The partners that participate in the institute are mainly the same that founded the institute back then: Tilburg University, which later included one of the other original partners, the Catholic Theological University Utrecht; Groningen University (now participating through the Institute for Christian Cultural Heritage) and Radboud University (now participating through the Centre for Thanatology). The Protestant Theological University, located at Amsterdam and Groningen joined the institute in 2008. Further, some roman-catholic congregations, where liturgical studies are considered of paramount importance, participate in the institute.

The board of the institute has decided to develop the institute in the direction of a network structure. More than a platform, a network allows different types of participation, for instance temporary participation on a project basis, or participation by providing specific services, et cetera. Authors in our series will have to submit their books or articles edited according to the style sheet of the series.

⁵ M.J.M. HOONDEERT: *Om de parochie. Ritueel-muzikale bewegingen in de marge van de parochie. Gregoriaans. Taizé. Jongerenkoren* (Heeswijk 2006); M. BARNARD & P. POST: ‘Balance and perspective. Some critical observations regarding the historiography of the era of the liturgical movements in the Netherlands’, in L. VAN TONGEREN, M. BARNARD, P. POST & G. ROUWHORST (eds.): *Patterns and persons. A historiography of liturgical studies in the Netherlands in the twentieth century* (= Liturgia condenda 25) (Leuven / Paris / Walpole, MA 2010) 469-485.

Related to this, the institute will further internationalization and explicitly seek partners abroad. Exploratory talks have been held with Pretoria and Stellenbosch in South Africa, Yale Divinity School in the United States and Erfurt in Germany. This intended collaboration is consistent with existing contacts.

A light and flexible organization structure has proved to be stimulating for the discipline of ritual and liturgical studies. Anyone who takes the limited resources and limited number of researchers into account, will be amazed at the production of articles, books, and the number of PHD-students. Frijhoff has called us ‘a self-conscious discipline’.⁶ And rightly so! The structure is not something to dwell on too long. Eventually, the structure is the condition for substantive research. Substantial content needs only light packaging. With this light structure we look confidently to the future.

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⁶ W. FRIJHOFF: ‘Slachtoffer van eigen historisch succes? Lastige vragen van een buitenstaander aan een zelfbewuste liturgiewetenschap’, in L. VAN TONGEREN & P. POST (red.): *Voorbij de liturgiewetenschap. Over het profiel van liturgische en rituele studies* (= Netherlands studies in ritual and liturgy 12) (Tilburg / Groningen 2011) 63-83.

