

CARMELITE SPIRITUALITY IN DUTCH SCHOOLS
OF SECONDARY EDUCATION

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In the Netherlands, Carmelite schools are organized in *Stichting Carmelcollege* (Carmel College Foundation). In the 95 years of its existence, *Stichting Carmelcollege* experienced considerable growth and fundamental transformations. The Foundation started in 1923 with two secondary schools. Nowadays, it is the second largest cooperation of secondary schools of denominational education in the Netherlands, connecting thirteen (comprehensive) schools. Education is provided by more than 4.300 teachers for 38.000 students, at 54 school locations.

On the surface, these schools will hardly be identified as Carmelite: no Carmelites work at the schools anymore, and except for the administrative building, Carmelite spirituality is barely visualized in iconography or other externalities. The name 'Carmel' is first and foremost understood as a name that connects those schools and that names their corporate identity, without a clue of its relation to a religious order.

If we want to answer the question in what way Dutch Carmelite schools inculcate Carmelite Spirituality, we are challenged to see under or behind this surface of reality. A full answer to this question will be beyond the scope of this article, but we aim to provide some incentives to deepen our understanding of the subject. Therefore, we consult the insights of one of the founders and the first secretary of *Stichting Carmelcollege*, the Blessed Titus Brandsma, O.Carm. Titus Brandsma (1882-1942) had experience in teaching and also some experience in leading a secondary school, he also wrote articles, gave lectures and speeches on education, he lobbied for Carmelite and other Catholic schools and presided over the Federation of Roman Catholic schoolboards for secondary education. In 1929, in a speech to the Catholic Federation of Colleges of Education, Brandsma spoke about

idealism at school.¹ In this speech he explicitly refers to seeing behind the surface of reality:

Seeing beauty in reality, seeing the things of everyday life not so much in the ordinary image, that does not make any impression, but in a more complete view, including also what does not attract and delight. It is the discovery of and love for higher values than those usually attributed to the things, not as something fictional but as something that is genuinely inside it.²

In this speech, Titus Brandsma joins in with the approach of Aristotle, that reality is the basis in which or under which elements of beauty can be discovered. Brandsma speaks about a beauty that cannot be observed with the naked eye. He takes the real situation as the starting point to find the ideals that come to the fore. While observing the real situation and acting in it, reflection occurs and insights are gained.

In this article, I will describe some historical developments of *Stichting Carmelcollege* and reflect on them with the insights expressed in the speech of Titus Brandsma. I am aware of the fact that I combine two realities that will not fluently fit together, but in this way, I will try to provide some incentives to observe traces of Carmelite Spirituality in the reality of the schools that are beyond the obvious.

1. FOUNDATION

In 1922, *Stichting Carmelcollege* did not appear out of nowhere. Education is traditionally one of the activities of the Carmelite order, also in the Netherlands. For instance, in the 17th Century, the count of Boxmeer invited the Carmelites to come to his town, with the condition that they would start a Latin school. The Carmelites of Antwerp accepted the invitation and it meant the return of the Carmelites after they were expelled from the Dutch area by the Reformation. Yet, in the first half of the 19th Century, the Latin school closed after almost 175 years. One of the reasons for this closure was that from 1814, by Royal decree, religious orders were not allowed to accept new novices. All monasteries had to peter out. In 1840, when

¹ TITUS BRANDSMA, *Idealisme op de kweekschool*, in *School en Studie* 4 (1931), 54-55, 69-70.

² *Ibid.*, 54.

the decree was revoked, only three Carmelite friars had remained and the Latin school belonged to the past.

In the second half of the 19th Century, after the revocation of the Royal decree, the number of Carmelite friars multiplied quickly. Already in 1855 the Carmelites from Boxmeer founded a monastery in Zenderen and in 1890 another one in Oss. With the increase of Carmelites, the desire to undertake educational activities revived. However, national politics impeded those activities. As a result of the separation of State and religion, the government supported only public schools. Denominational schools were non-public and consequently more expensive for the people. As a result, denominational schools depended on prosperous people who could afford it to send their children to a non-public school. Therefore, many non-public schools disappeared and new schools were difficult to start.

Nevertheless, at the end of the 19th Century, the Carmelites started a small school in Zenderen (in the region Twente). Encouraged by petitions from people in the neighborhood that repeatedly requested a secondary school (for the 12-18 year age group) for the benefit of the Catholics in the region. It started informal. From 1885 onwards, some Carmelites of Zenderen offered private lessons to students from outside the convent and in 1889 the preparatory seminary 'Sancti Alberti' was founded, with a separate department of a Latin School.³

In 1917, a constitutional amendment, article 23 of the Dutch constitution, arranged the separation of School and State. This amendment arranged equal state financial support of all schools. Although the effectuation of the amendment took some years, it was the start of a golden age of Catholic education. In this period, the Carmelites also made some efforts to start secondary schools.

From different parts of the Netherlands, requests were sent to the Carmelites to start a secondary school, but for various reasons most requests were turned down or the negotiations did not succeed.⁴ The first school that was realized, was in Oss, the town with a Carmelite convent where Titus Brandsma was living. Already in 1913 the local bishop allowed to found this Catholic secondary school and the necessary money was collected, but World War I slowed down the process. When the Carmelites made no effort to start the school, the

³ ANTOINE JACOBS, *Kroniek van de Karmel in Nederland 1840-1970*, Hilversum, Verloren, 2017, 664-665.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 666-667.

municipal government became tired of waiting. In 1919 they started a commercial school (*Middelbare Handelsdagschool*) and asked the Carmelites to run it. The Carmelites accepted this task, with the intention to extend this commercial school with a high school (*Hogere Burgerschool*) as soon as possible.⁵

Because the Carmelites, as a religious order, had no proper juridical status, they could not take final responsibility for a school that needed state subsidy. Therefore, in 1922, they set up a foundation: *Stichting Carmelcollege*. The Provincial Board of the Carmelites was *qualitate qua* the Board of this Foundation. In 1923 the Foundation was able to take over the commercial school in Oss and transformed it into a high school. At the same time, a grammar school was started in Oldenzaal (in the region of Twente). The regional schools of Oss and Oldenzaal are situated about 150 kilometers apart from each other, which is quite a distance and influences the way the foundation was run. It explains why, from the very beginning, *Stichting Carmelcollege* was an educational association.

Although the constitutional amendment of 1917 enabled non-public schools to receive subsidy, for several years it was not granted. The new grammar school in Oldenzaal was, for instance, paid for by the Catholic community of Twente. Together with the Carmelites, six other religious orders were asked to start the requested Catholic grammar school in this region, but the Carmelites were the only order that eventually dared to take the risk. In that region of the Netherlands, the Carmelites were well-known for the friars of Zenderen and the Carmelite nuns in the same village. Nevertheless, the project had to conquer a lot of scepticism and distrust by the people. Primary schools were fine, but secondary schools teaching sciences were considered a threat for the Catholic youth. As a result, in this region, secondary education stayed behind.⁶

In 1923, after years of preparation, the school in Oldenzaal started with two classes first grade students: 50 children were accepted

⁵ MATHIAS ARTS and JOHANNES VAN ROOY, *Vijf en twintig jaar middelbaar en voorbereidend hoger onderwijs door de p.p. Carmelieten in Nederland 1923-1948: Geschiedenis van het Carmelcollege te Oss en van het Twents Carmellyceum te Oldenzaal*, s.l., s.n., 1948, 21-36.

⁶ P.H.F. BAKELS – WHAT ARE THE NAMES?, *De betekenis van de karmelieten voor het middelbaar onderwijs in Twente*, in G.J. RIBBERT, J.TH.M. HODES, B.J. THÜSS, editors, *De Karmel in Twente 1855-1995: 140 Jaar zielzorg en middelbaar onderwijs*, s.l., Stichting De karmelieten in Twente, 1995, 117-118.

after an entrance exam: 43 boys and 7 girls.⁷ That the school educated both boys and girls was not a matter-of-course. It was a help to get more pupils, and therefore to improve the financial base of the school. The archbishop of Utrecht approved this co-education in Oldenzaal, while the diocesan bishop of Den Bosch refused the same in Oss. The Carmelites were not happy with the mixed school. Titus Brandsma called it 'a difficult case'. It was considered a necessity and at length, the Carmelites tried to open a separate school for girls, that should be led by nuns.⁸

Both schools asked for brave decisions by the Provincial Chapter: It was a time that the Dutch Province did not have a wealth of available, educated friars; state support was not granted yet, which was an enormous financial risk; and the amount of parents that would send their children to this school was uncertain. Success was not granted and a lot of energy and money was involved.

Titus Brandsma was, as secretary of the Foundation, responsible for all the negotiations with the state officials and episcopacy.⁹ In 1924 the message came that state support was granted for the grammar school in Oldenzaal. That was a huge relief.

Perspective of future

To make these brave decisions, idealism was needed. The idealism was first of all triggered by the needs of local people. Parents wanted their children to receive proper education. This education is aimed at the future of their children. In his speech to the Catholic Federation of Colleges of Education, Titus Brandsma reminds educators that they have to keep in view this future:

A teacher's range of view should not be limited to the time the students are in school, it has to include those who are already at work. The training must be aimed at ensuring that the students are flourishing after graduation, working good in society, with a good mentality.¹⁰

According to Brandsma it is ideal when the lessons and the example of the educator bear full fruit much later. It is ideal when a teacher gives his pupils something that is a life-long treasure.¹¹ Well

⁷ G.A. BENNEKER – WHAT ARE THE NAMES?, *Twents Carmellyceum in Oldenzaal: 40 jaar*, s.l., s.n., 1963, 111.

⁸ JACOBS, *Kroniek*, 677.

⁹ *IBID.*, 669, 673, 683.

¹⁰ TITUS BRANDSMA, *Idealisme*, 54.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 69.

aware of day-to-day reality, Brandsma acknowledges that the meaning of education is not noticeable everywhere and not every day. He calls it “the sum of small successes, too small for the moment to be seen and noticed, but visible when reviewing the whole.”¹² That’s why he advocates the perspective of the future as a widening of view. We have to look at the immediate visible results, and beyond.

Titus Brandsma is aware of the value of study, not just for the student’s future, but also for the teachers. He discerns ‘the vocation to guide the development of others’ as an educational value and combines this with ‘the enrichment of own knowledge and development’.¹³ Brandsma was, with his good friend Fr. Hubertus Driessen, a fiery promotor of the reassessment of study in the Carmelite order. Taking responsibility over schools stimulated the atmosphere of study in Carmel. Teachers were needed, and therefore, Carmelites had to obtain (academic) diplomas. However, Brandsma and Driessen disagreed on the scope of these studies. Driessen wanted to focus them on philosophy and theology, but Brandsma held the opinion that Carmelites could also teach other subjects, like classics or modern languages, history or science and mathematics. While Driessen disputed that lay people could educate these subjects, Brandsma stated that teaching these subjects was also a real chance to mould people religiously and morally.¹⁴ In line with the opinion of Brandsma, in 1920, eight student friars were sent to Tilburg to study mathematics, English, French or German.¹⁵ But Driessen’s opinion was realized on a larger scale. The schools in Oss and Oldenzaal had for the most part lay teachers and the members of management and teachers of religion were all Carmelite priests.¹⁶

Reflecting on these historical developments, we become aware of the role of idealism in this reality. Titus Brandsma opens our eyes for a vision, an ideal, a mission that is aimed at the future; the vocation to guide the development of others, aimed at a flourishing future for the present youth. A vocation that the Carmelites acknowledge for themselves and share with others.

¹² Ibid., 69.

¹³ Ibid., 55.

¹⁴ BROCARDUS MEIJER, *Titus Brandsma*, Bussum, Paul Brand, 1951, 47-48.

¹⁵ JACOBS, *Kroniek*, 292.

¹⁶ Ibid., 682.

2. EXPANSION

In the years after World War II, the number of students increased. In Oldenzaal, the building became too small. The Carmelites opted for a new school in the city of Hengelo. Starting this school in Hengelo was also motivated by the fear that others would jump in and start competing grammar school.¹⁷ The Carmelites opted for monopoly in education and pastoral care in the region and tried to protect it from competition with other religious orders. As a consequence, after the founding of Hengelo (1946/47) four other schools in the region followed: Deventer (1949), Enschede (1953), Almelo (1954) and Hengelo-Twicken (1966).¹⁸ In the same periode, the Carmelites accepted a request from the growing city of Emmen, when they asked for help. A Carmelite convent and school were opened in 1958.¹⁹

In this period, the Carmelites also planned a new convent in the western part of the Netherlands, in Dordrecht. They wanted to transfer the philosophical studies to this new convent, and they desired to take responsibility for pastoral work in the local parish, the caravan camp and the companies of industry. The diocesan bishop agreed, on the express condition that they would accept the high school. The Carmelites accepted and from 1958 until 2003, the school was part of *Stichting Carmelcollege*.²⁰

The Carmelites were approached from even more parts of the Netherlands, to start secondary schools, but those requests were either turned down by the Carmelites or the negotiations failed.²¹

In the Dutch Province, including the provincial board, the increase of schools was questioned. Many objections were made.²²

First of all, by the expansion of *Stichting Carmelcollege*, education became a dominant mission of the province, as important as pastoral work. This had a huge influence on community-life. The program at school and the program of the convent conflicted. Moreover, some Carmelites disputed the work at the schools as a proper priestly job.

¹⁷ Ibid., 697.

¹⁸ JACOBS, *Kroniek*, 696-712.

¹⁹ Ibid., 119, 713-714.

²⁰ Ibid., 117-118, 712-113.

²¹ Ibid., 693-696.

²² Ibid., 690-693.

Also financial objections were made, since the Province made up the deficit of the schools. However, this objection was countered by the finding that the salary of the Carmelite teachers was the main income of the Province, and the benefits far outweighed the costs. The perspective of the schools was that, if managed well, they would be able to support themselves within six years.

Another objection was the limited number of available (certified) Carmelite teachers. Already now, the amount of Carmelites that was engaged in education disturbed the balance in the provincial activities. In consideration of the schools, they preferred a proportion between Carmelite and lay teachers of one-to-two, but the increase of schools made it impossible to reach that goal. The schools in Oldenzaal and Oss hardly made new vocations, which was the low percentage of Carmelite teachers blamed for. In time, Carmelites just held the management positions and took care of education of religion. The opinion was that the Carmelite identity of the education failed.²³

Fourthly, the provincial board did not want to force young friars into a teaching job.

As a result, the provincial board pleaded for concentration of the activities and for the transfer of some schools to other school organizations. However, in real terms, *Stichting Carmelcollege* extended.

In this process, Fr. Raphael Gooijer, o.carm. played an important role. In 1941 he had become secretary of *Stichting Carmelcollege*, and over 35 years he stayed in its board. Besides, for thirty years he presided the Federation of Roman Catholic schoolboards secondary education (he succeeded Titus Brandsma). Gooijer gained great expertise in material, juridical and financial aspects of secondary education and was even called 'Minister of Catholic education in the Netherlands'.²⁴

One by one, the objections in the Dutch Carmelite Province were countered by Raphael Gooijer, and in 1965, the Province breathed a positive appreciation of the school activities. The province appreciated that youngsters and their parents were reached. Moreover, the Carmelites could provide an example for the lay teachers to be Christian educators. A majority of the Carmelites considered the work at schools as significant priestly activities, which met with the goal of Carmelite life. It enriched Carmelite life and stimulated study in the

²³ Ibid., 723.

²⁴ Ibid., 720-721.

convents. And last but not least, it was an appropriate source of income.²⁵

Formative education

In 1948, celebrating 25 years *Stichting Carmelcollege*, Rector Martinus Benneker o.carm. of Oldenzaal stated:

Secondary education includes, in addition to scientific education, formation in religious, cultural and social fields. All of this, however, is seen as a whole, as the education and formation of young people into full members of Church and society.²⁶

This vision on education seamlessly blends with the speech of Titus Brandsma in which he advocates that in education, people must have an eye for more than just knowledge. According to Brandsma, the focus on knowledge is good and commendable, but it is 'only half'.²⁷ Education should also imply the development of character and 'the human-religious moral formation of man as a whole, of man who is more than mere intellect or mentality'.²⁸

If we reflect for a moment on the present situation of the schools, I read this broad view on education in the course-document for 2020:

We equip students for the rest of their lives. For this, they need more than the basic subjects and learning cognitive skills: it's about 'the entire person', with all his talents. We want to help our students to develop into mature and responsible people, with a well-developed moral compass, who can independently find their way in their world and contribute to it.²⁹

In his speech, Titus Brandsma shows not just a broad view on education, he also speaks about the style of education. He for instance argues that teachers must allow flexibility in education.³⁰ Teachers who lack space for it, he titles as exam drillers: 'those who are only focused on the development of the intellect according to the established program'. But, according to Brandsma, it's not just about drilling lessons. No matter how good, there is more:

²⁵ Ibid., 690-693.

²⁶ BENNEKER, *Twents Carmellyceum*, 6.

²⁷ BRANDSMA, *Idealisme*, 69.

²⁸ Ibid., 55.

²⁹ *Koers 2020*, Hengelo, Stichting Carmelcollege, 2015, 6.

³⁰ BRANDSMA, *Idealisme*, 70.

Certainly the teacher must set many requirements for the development of the intellect, but they must not be a heartless disciplinary teacher. They must understand the child and be aware that the child is not a machine. Respect, true respect is related to 'spare', adapting to the demands and needs of the child. And for education, adaptation is necessary. No excessive rigidity. There is more to accomplish, than just drill lessons. Rousseau said the true word, that one can only raise a human being, by beholding him as a human being, a human being with manifold demands, that cannot just be entirely abstracted at school. The broader view of the task brings idealism into the life of the teacher, because then the fulfillment of the life task gives a lot of pleasure and satisfaction.³¹

Titus Brandsma issues the pedagogical relation between a teacher and a pupil, which cannot be narrowed down to the transfer of a package of knowledge. A teacher has to deal with the child as a human being, as a person, a person with manifold demands and needs. Brandsma emphasizes what he has said earlier on in his lecture, that knowledge and love must go hand in hand.³² The motives he mentions reveal his vision on the job of a teacher. Beyond the reality of developing the intellect, a child is raised. The raising of the child is not something that comes on top of the transfer of knowledge, or next to it, but as an essential condition for it. And even stronger it brings the teacher idealism, 'a lot of pleasure and satisfaction'.

This emphasis on formative education opens our eyes for what we just have seen with regard to the expansion of Stichting Carmelcollege and the discussions about it in the Carmelite Province. We can easily adapt Brandsma's plea for seeing the child as a human being with manifold demands to the way in which the Carmelites behold themselves and their fellow friars: as persons with demands that ask for respect and adaptation.

3. SEPARATION

From the Sixties onward, Carmelite schools underwent a transformation from schools with an obvious Catholic identity into schools that were – at least visibly – less clearly Catholic. The number

³¹ Ibid., 70.

³² Ibid., 55. Brandsma elaborated the role of love in education in an unpublished article *Meer liefde in de opvoeding*. Titus Brandsma Archives, Boxmeer.

of Carmelites that were involved in the schools decreased. Yet, the leading positions were still held by Carmelites and the teachers of religion were mostly Carmelites. The board of the Foundation was *ex officio* formed by the members of the Provincial board that were chosen at the Provincial Chapter. Some people started to criticize the board for their policy in leading the schools, for instance, that they appointed friars to teach without proper training in pedagogy, stuck to a rector that was regarded 'unprofessional', or transferred a rector that was doing an excellent job.³³ This criticism can be understood as an exponent of a changing culture. In that time, an emancipation of lay people with regard to the religious took place. And the casualness of the high position of the religious in society changed. In line with this development, the need to reorganize *Stichting Carmelcollege* was revealed. In 1968 this reorganization was carried out and the Carmelite order reduced its responsibility. With this reorganization, the Dutch Carmelite Province and *Stichting Carmelcollege* were formally disconnected. The foundation was no longer run under the flag of the Carmelites. However, in the board of *Stichting Carmelcollege* two seats (a minority) were still reserved for Carmelites and in the first years many Rectors were still (appreciated) Carmelite friars.

Some years after the re-organization, research revealed that the majority in the foundation preferred the Carmelite order to be represented in *Stichting Carmelcollege*, but without the minimum criterion of two board members and with the reservation of managerial competence.³⁴ The schools and of the foundation as a whole held on to a Carmelite-Catholic identity - not just to account for the outside world, but also as a principle within the foundation itself. It was chosen to keep the name Carmel. The board of the foundation regarded the maintenance of the 'identity (Catholicity)' as their responsibility.³⁵

Some decades later, in 1996-1997, to celebrate of the 75th anniversary of *Stichting Carmelcollege*, a study was conducted on the inspiration of teachers, entitled "What impassions us?". The researchers used a questionnaire asking about values, norms, denominational background, faith, etc. Remarkably, in the whole research the name

³³ JACOBS, *Kroniek*, 724-730.

³⁴ P. SMETS, N.J.J.M. BAKKER, *De organisatie van de Stichting Carmelcollege: een exemplarische studie naar het bestuur van een onderwijsorganisatie*, Nijmegen, Instituut voor Toegepaste Sociologie, 1979, 121.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 10, 13.

of Carmel or Carmelites does not occur! Not in the questions and not in the answers. A reflection takes place “on the reverification of the identity, and then, the mission and course that follow this reverification”.³⁶

Idealism of inspiration

Although the research method of the study in 1996-1997 was completely different from the study Titus Brandsma performed to give his speech, there is one similarity: both locate the idealism and identity of a school close to practice, namely with the teachers, their opinions, their actions, their inspiration and their enthusiasm. Brandsma emphasizes the role of passion: “Nothing more killing than uninspired students.”³⁷ For teachers, it demands creativity and study to reveal the sensitivity of these students. Brandsma pleads for a positive attitude:

We should not easily resign ourselves to the fact that a large group seems to be missing energy. The human heart is not insensitive, if only the beautiful and the good are made known in the right way. If this happens, then there will arouse passion in a lukewarm heart and a great blessing is gained. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance that education is assigned to men and women who have the capacity, even for those who are passive and unenergetic, to bring things alive, to radiate higher values from it, that, in the long run, will certainly captivate the mind.³⁸

Titus Brandsma also warns against pessimism, as a threat to idealism at school. For instance, he mentions the idea that the school serves little more than to keep the children of the streets and that it has little to no use. According to Brandsma, pessimism shows a cloudy vision, a limited horizon, which gives away enthusiasm and idealism. Future teachers must be armed against pessimism. They have to learn to deal with disappointment and disillusionment, in order that it does not depress them and blot out higher values. “Next of shadow is light,” Brandsma says.³⁹ He asks for attention to bright spots that exist in this “superficially viewed, disappointing and disillusioning life”. He speaks about seeing reality, “in which the beautiful, the luminous, is always

³⁶ M. THEUNISSEN Hand others, *Wat bezielt ons? Een project over de inspiratie van de Carmel docenten voor het onderwijs. Rapportage over de periode november 1996-november 1997*, Nijmegen, Universitair Instituut voor de Lerarenopleiding, 1998, 75.

³⁷ BRANDSMA, *Idealisme*, 55.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid., 69.

connected with the cast shadow of the unsatisfactory.” In his speech, Brandsma continuously recalls the idea that idealism is not located outside reality, and should not be chased out of that reality.

In the Carmelite Rule, the development of resilience is a crucial aspect: a Carmelite “shall use every care and diligence to put on the armor of God, so that you may be able to withstand the deceits of the enemy”.⁴⁰ The armor of God shows six parts, including the breastplate of justice and the shield of faith. And it is said “in silence and hope will be your strength ...”. Titus Brandsma himself is an example of someone who has picked up this resilience. The fruit of that is his defense against racism and his impressive attitude towards the camp bullies. Brandsma continually appealed to humanity in the inhumane situation of Dachau.

Resisting a pessimistic, fatalistic or cynical view of life demands exercises. At *Stichting Carmelcollege* an attitude is promoted that teachers look for the possibilities of students. This approach is called ‘using the green pencil’. While marking papers with a red pen emphasizes all the mistakes and shortcomings in the students’ work, a green pencil calls to a positive appreciation that shows students what they do well and encourage them to learn more. The result of such an approach may be that students not only get insights in what they can, but also learn to deal with mistakes and failures in a positive way. This applies not only to the students but also to the teachers themselves. An eye that exercises in seeing bright spots can make us resilient in dealing with disappointments, or as Brandsma says ‘the cast shadow of the unsatisfactory’.⁴¹

Titus Brandsma himself showed an incredible enthusiasm and passion. He is called “the new Elijah”,⁴² referring to the biblical prophet in whose tradition the Carmelites live. From their origin on Mount Carmel, Elijah is considered the father and leader of the Carmelites. He was a prophet with fierce zeal and with a sword of fire. That passionate inspiration stems from his relationship with God, and from his eye for people. The same is true of Titus Brandsma. He lived with God, and was socially very involved. He saw the people around and was committed to their needs and questions.

⁴⁰ Translation by John Vriend in KEES WAAIJMAN, *The Mystical Space of Carmel. A Commentary on the Carmelite Rule*, Leuven, Peeters, 1999, 34.

⁴¹ BRANDSMA, *Idealisme*, 70.

⁴² For instance, KILIAN HEALY, *Prophet of Fire*, Rome, Institutum Carmelitanum, 1990, 292-304.

A question for teachers, headmasters and others involved at school is: What are you passionate about? When are you deeply moved? And your colleague? Your students? These are questions that open up a space for idealism. In education, enthusiasm, passion, inspiration and motivation are important pillars for learning processes. How does a Carmelite school stimulate the enthusiasm of students and enhance the inspiration of employees?

Nowadays, the schools of *Stichting Carmelcollege* are increasingly developing into 'learning communities', in which not only the students are objects of the learning process, but the school as a whole is learning. By stimulating a learning attitude of the school as a whole, steps are taken to strengthen everyone's enthusiasm for the core tasks of the school. In the reality of the schools we have to be able to detect the success of this policy.

4. COMMUNION

In the last decades, the expansion of *Stichting Carmelcollege* continued with schools in different cities: Oldenzaal (1973), Raalte (1975), Almelo (1978), Oss – several schools (1994-95), Groenlo (1994-95), Eindhoven (1997), Gouda (1998) and Haren (2006).⁴³ One of the reasons for this expansion was that, by state regulations, the scope of *Stichting Carmelcollege* had to widen. In 1990, the Ministry of Education and Science started to labor for comprehensive schools, that offered secondary education in a variety of levels (instead of for instance separate grammar schools). When education was provided in a comprehensive school, students could more easily switch from one level to another. In some of these comprehensive schools also education for children with special needs was provided. Nowadays, special education has become integral part of regular education.

The widened scope of the schools was primarily realized by a fusion wave. For instance in the city of Oss and in Deventer, step by step almost all distinct schools joined each other and formed one comprehensive school under the board of *Stichting Carmelcollege*. In the same development, one Carmelite school (Dordrecht) joined with another local school and choose another coordinating schoolboard, so left *Stichting Carmelcollege*.

⁴³ *Carmel Magazine: Stichting Carmelcollege 90 jaar*, Hengelo, Stichting Carmelcollege, 2012.

Another reason for schools to opt for fusion, was that it became more difficult to facilitate separate schools. This convinced also schools from other parts of the country to knock on the door of *Stichting Carmelcollege*. Some of these schools were originally led by other religious traditions (Marists, Augustinians, Jesuits).

A remarkable development is that even schools without a Catholic identity joined in. Some of these schools were based on Protestant principles, others were not rooted in religion. To enable the participation of these schools (without denying or restraining their own identity), the articles of association of *Stichting Carmelcollege* had to be changed. Since 2001, the originally Catholic foundation became a foundation 'for particular schools of Catholic, interdenominational, Protestant and general particular education'. Nowadays, thirteen comprehensive schools (with over 50 locations) each have their own signature.

According to the articles of association:

Stichting Carmelcollege intends to promote and maintain all forms of secondary education, on the basis of values from the Jewish-Christian tradition, directed by the Catholic religious community from which the Carmelite order founded *Stichting Carmelcollege*.⁴⁴

On behalf of a multiform world of faith and culture, the teaching activities intent to contribute to the humanization of the world in a Christian perspective. A translation of this intended contribution is care for people: 'every human being, the whole human being, all human beings'. *Stichting Carmelcollege* regards it as its responsibility to exercise authority not just over Catholic schools but also over 'schools that, from another perspective, realize similar educational activities, especially in guiding students in confrontation with the meaning of life.'⁴⁵

The schools are largely autonomous and independent. At the same time, they form an alliance of solidarity. In the articles of association, the formal relation with the Carmelites is described; The Dutch Carmelite Province has the right to nominate somebody for one seat in the Supervisory Board. Up to now, a Carmelite friar holds that seat.

Idealism of community

In his speech on idealism, Titus Brandsma emphasizes the importance of community sense in education, by pointing at the threat of

⁴⁴ *Statuten*, Hengelo, Stichting Carmelcollege, 2011, art. 2.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

complacency. “It is very good to develop self-esteem at a college of education, but one must continue to keep in mind that one is limited in ones gifts.”⁴⁶ At school, educators complement each other, even beyond the direct colleagues. At school, Brandsma says, “one must strive for continuity, to build on the experience of others, to adapt to others.”⁴⁷ He stresses that one should even learn from “those who take a different route”.⁴⁸

Titus Brandsma regards complacency as an important danger to society. We have to acknowledge that we depend on each other. This is, as Brandsma says in another speech, “one of the first conditions for the restoration of the shattered order”.⁴⁹ He himself manifested this sense of community in his strong social commitment. In 2015, he was posthumously appointed as a honorary citizen of the city of Oss, because of the great merit he had for this city.

At *Stichting Carmelcollege* community sense is challenged in the collaboration of the thirteen schools with more than 50 distinct locations. And within those schools it is elaborated in its communal mission to “care for human beings - every human being, the entire person, and all people.”⁵⁰ In the Dutch multicultural and highly individualized society, schools and teachers are working in the tension between order (program, structure) and diversity (adaptation to the person). In the last decades, space for the person has become of paramount importance: ‘every human being counts’. The schools want to offer space to the diversity of students, the space to have their own opinion, to make their own choices, and to argue and express them. This also implies protecting the vulnerability of students to be unique. Not just the mind is supposed to be addressed at school, but also the emotional, social skills and creative skills should be developed. In other words, ‘the entire person’.

It is not surprising that in this era of diversity the conformation to the individual person is elaborated much more than Titus Brandsma accounts for. Yet, *Stichting Carmelcollege* counterbalances this attention on ‘individualization’ by the threefold-mission of the schools in which ‘every human being’ is always considered in the triad: ‘every human being, the entire person, all people’. This reveals the tension

⁴⁶ BRANDSMA, *Idealisme*, 70.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ TITUS BRANDSMA, *Godsbegrip*, Nijmegen, Dekker en van de Vegt, 1932, 33. English translation by Joachim Smet.

⁵⁰ Identiteit, missie, <https://www.carmel.nl/carmel/identiteit>, 25 October 2017.

between every human being and all people; between every individual and the great community where nobody is ruled out. Thus, the notion of ‘all people’ refers not only to everyone at school but also looks at the boundaries of the school. For example, each school has taken responsibility for one or more social projects, locally and abroad. The school is integral part of the world around.

In his speech, Titus Brandsma links our human interdependency with a need for development, a need to improve the education that is offered by teachers and schools:

When one is aware of his limitations, development will be a joyful future. This [awareness] generates the energy to accept new educative methods and to test new resources. In this perspective, education includes even higher values, which may not be traceable in the current phase of development.⁵¹

Brandsma is confident about the future: “Also here, love for education will prove to be inventive and will provide education with higher values, which are still undeveloped.”⁵²

5. IMPASSIONED PEDAGOGY

For about ten years now, step by step, *Stichting Carmelcollege* rediscovered the Carmelite order as a valuable partner, especially in formulating its identity. This rediscovery of a Carmelite identity was strongly stimulated by KeesWaaijmano.carm., who held a position in the Supervisory Board (2008-2017), and welcomed by the managers of the foundation. In 2013, another huge contribution was made by Ben Wolberso.carm., the then prior-provincial, who was invited to give a lecture for ‘the convent of headmasters’. Wolbers described some values that connect the Carmelite order and the Carmelite schools. This speech was warmly received. As a follow-up, one by one, Carmelites are invited to one of the schools, and have a meeting over one of those values with a small group of students, teachers and/or headmasters. About each of these meetings, an article is published in the school magazine of *Stichting Carmelcollege*.⁵³

⁵¹ BRANDSMA, *Idealisme*, 70.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ CARMEL MAGAZINE, Hengelo, Stichting Carmelcollege, 2015 – 2017.

As a result of the rediscovered connection with the Carmelite order, *Stichting Carmelcollege* now formulates its vision on pedagogy as nourished by – among others – Carmelite spirituality. The Foundation formulates its ‘impassioned pedagogy’ by itself.⁵⁴ It is all but vague or unworldly:

The spiritual ground of our pedagogy should for instance be visible in the way a teacher talks with students about the study results; the way in which teachers speak to each other about the development of students; that students are stimulated to learn and to develop talents; that students are ordered to keep the building clean; and that students receive the attention that they ask for. These events are small in time and space, but have great significance, and can have life-long and formative value. So concrete is impassioned pedagogy. This concrete, impassioned pedagogy is in the hands of everyone who works at school and everyone who is involved in school. No-one can pass the buck to someone else. And everyone can claim this responsibility.⁵⁵

Stichting Carmelcollege is aware of the fact that the formal organization of a school has to facilitate this pedagogy. The Foundation stimulates its employees to see their school as a pedagogical value-based community:

Pedagogy is aimed at the development of young people: the development of their personality; the development of their knowledge and competences; the development of the qualities that make them in their personal life dignified and valuable, and enable them to face their environment valuing.⁵⁶

Valuation is the ability to make a difference between attractive and not attractive, between right and wrong, between doing the right thing and making mistakes, between sense and nonsense. Through this ability, people can stand up in the world in which they live, distinguish, choose and act independently. For the personality of students, the ability to appreciate is decisive.⁵⁷

Education is impossible without hope. Otherwise, what could one offer to the development of students? Pedagogy stands for development. And development is fueled by hope. How do schools keep this hope up? What

⁵⁴ Scholen met een bezielde pedagogie, in *Bezielde professionaliteit: Aandacht*, Hengelo, Titus Brandsma Instituut & Stichting Carmelcollege, 2016, 11-14.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 11-12.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 12.

is hope, if the future should be different from what we can see from today's perspective?⁵⁸

That *Stichting Carmelcollege* rediscovered its Carmelite roots and rekindled the ties with the Carmelite order, is shown in the description of impassioned pedagogy. In this description, Carmelite spirituality is explicitly described by the values that are recognized in it:

Carmelite spirituality calls for a sense of modesty from the understanding that everyone is doing part of the work. Everyone has to share in the work of the community.⁵⁹

- Carmelite spirituality keeps time open: future is coming, a new world that will come to us and that will be more than what we expect of it and make of it. We are working in the present, but not for the benefit of the present.
- Carmelite spirituality keeps the person open: the person is not a malleable and repeatable individual, not a product of educational mechanisms. Ultimately, a person is an open mystery, irreplaceable, and not dividable or adaptable to fixed idea's or roles. As a consequence we have to approach each person with respect; respect the other as he or she is. We have to support the other to discover and show the best of oneself (and withhold our own projections and interests).
- Carmelite spirituality opens the ambition: the ambition of people is not the same as the ambition of an individual who is self-satisfied and who focusses on possessing instead of being. Carmelite spirituality maintains the pedagogical ambition of people who live with each other, appeal to each other, give life to each other.
- Carmelite spirituality keeps life open: when life is concealed by things that are just fun and that lead the attention away from suffering which demands care. Compassion arouses relationships of people who are not self-sufficient. Impassioned pedagogy exists because of this compassion: being attentive and focused, and be present with your head and your heart. It is practicable, also in schools. Are there limits to compassion?
- Carmelite spirituality lives from the Mystery that lives in every person, the Mystery in which everyone shares, the Mystery we cannot own. This Mystery supports us and cares for us like a person. Carmelites call this Mystery God. They give attention to this Mystery and let it turn their lives around for the sake of compassion, from the appreciation that the future is coming, for the sake of trust in life and openness for each other, for the sake of setting free, values that belong to pedagogy.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Ibid., 13.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 13.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 14.

With the help of this concept of impassioned pedagogy, and in some other initiatives, the distance that has grown in the last decennia of the 20th century between the Carmelite schools and the Carmelite order is being slowly and carefully bridged. The heritage of Titus Brandsma, for instance his sayings on 'knowledge is only half', is a huge contribution to this renewed interest and mutual inspiration.

Idealism of paired values

Although the statement 'knowledge is only half' is easily adapted in the current discussions on values at schools, it is 'only half' of what Titus Brandsma argues for. Even more characteristic for Brandsma, and probably more challenging, is that he pleads for discernment. Not without reason, he recalls at the end of his speech the values that he has mentioned in pairs:

Next of material values there are spiritual values,
besides the intellect love,
in addition to action, consciousness and satisfaction.
Along with school there is family and society.
Next to providing knowledge there is the formation of the heart, the
direction of effort.
Along with shadow light shines,
Apart from disappointment there is reason for trust,
next to ungratefulness there is the gratitude of the community as well as
of the individual
if not by words it is anyway by deeds that show its fruits.
Along with rigidity there is the possibility of development,
Next to insufficiency the ever-enriching torrent of all kinds of devices.⁶¹

With this enumeration of values, two by two, Titus Brandsma indicates the aspect of discernment. Not in order to reject the one and choose the other, but in valuing both. According to Brandsma, idealism stands for making space for discovering and loving what is truly present in reality. In other words, to see them and to appreciate them in day to day reality. He ends his list of values with phrasing the religious layer of these values:

Finally, along with the temporary there is the eternal.
Besides the execution of earthly work the accomplishment of the duty
that is imposed by Providence.

⁶¹ BRANDSMA, *Idealisme*, 70.

Next to the work of man is the work of God, who gives full development.⁶²

There is more than the work of man. In education, we must be aware that the development of students (and teachers) is not just the result of human effort. There is more. Titus Brandsma refers to a reality that Carmelite spirituality cannot and will not omit. As a Carmelite, living in the tradition of Elijah, the fiery prophet, Brandsma could not but testify of God's presence among the people. Also in his thought about God, he is Aristotelian – beholding God in reality, “as the deepest ground of our being, hidden in the profoundest depths of our nature, yet able to be seen and contemplated.”⁶³

For *Stichting Carmelcollege* this explicitly religious aspect of the philosophy of life is not widely shared in the organization. In their own description of impassioned pedagogy they call it ‘the Mystery that lives in every person’. Sometimes this seems to be a matter of language, sometimes the objection against an explicitly religious expressions is more fundamental. Nevertheless, within the mission of the schools to care for human beings, there is the notion of care for ‘the entire person’, which includes dealing with a philosophy of life. And, as we saw described in the articles of association, the foundation supports ‘educational activities, especially in guiding students in confrontation with the meaning of life.’⁶⁴ In this respect it is not without meaning that *Stichting Carmelcollege* gives notice of the idea of openness in Carmelite spirituality. This openness implies the openness to speak about what matters to one another, and to withstand the idea to have – and express – certainty about the constitution of this Mystery of life, one way or the other.

To my opinion, Titus Brandsma would have been proud reading that the schools are so well-aware of their formative task, and search for contemporary language to formulate ‘what is more than knowledge’.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ BRANDSMA, *Godsbegrip*, 33.

⁶⁴ *Statuten*, art. 2.