Editor's preface

The era of Gothic architecture coincided with the rise of many West European towns. Towns where citizens were in control and not -as had been the rule for a long time- the nobility and/or the clergy. In most of those old towns, the visitor will be struck by spires and towers crowning a town hall, church, trade centre, university, or other building. In such towers and spires, bells were hung. People in those times understood "the voice of the bell"! For bells had many functions (to tell the time, to call people to their religious duties, to give warning of fire, of the dangers of war, etc.). When later the bells were completed, particularly in the Netherlands, to a chromatically rising series of notes connected by wires to a keyboard, a new musical instrument was "born": the carillon. That the carillon culture is not just something of times long past is proved by the many new carillons in Europe, North America and Japan. Nevertheless as a musical instrument it has remained typical of the Netherlands and Belgium (the Southern Netherlands).

Professor Jan Tinbergen, who for many years was a professor at Erasmus University in the Dutch harbour town of Rotterdam, and by his merits in the area of the economic sciences won a Nobel Prize, in this booklet calls up students (and others) "to meet the challenges of the Third Millennium with positive plans". He has added a description of his scientific career (appendix, "About the Author").

Returning to the "world" of towers and bells, we could say that Professor Tinbergen imagines himself a keeper climbing his tower and overlooking the past, the present and the future. When the weather was clear, a tower keeper could survey a wide area. Therefore, with his bells he held an important position in urban society. In his essay, Professor Tinbergen emphasises that "keeper's function" of science, although in our age of aviation and space travel, he rather speaks of a "helicopter view". A more appropriate term, actually, since a helicopter must soon get back to ground level. And are not scientists sometimes blamed for living in "ivory towers"? The appendix shows that Professor Tinbergen, for one, has not only surveyed the world from the tower gallery, but has taken his keeper's views down to earth and has been deeply involved in earthly society!

We are rapidly approaching the Third Millennium of the Christian Era. Tower watchers are no longer in function. Modern means of communication have taken over the task of the chiming bells. The automatic clockwork assures that we -as one Dutch poet¹ has written somewhere- "hear the dark-bronze hours chime". But in Belgium and the Netherlands (and on a smaller scale elsewhere in the world), carilloneurs ("beiaardiers" in Dutch) are still making their towers "sing"! These professional musicians resemble somewhat their historical predecessors when for instance they adjust their repertoire to contemporary social conditions. The carillon has once been called "the world's most democratic musical instrument".

Perhaps, using another metaphor, we might also compare Professor Tinbergen's essay with a carillon concert attuned to today's social circumstances. His concert contains notes in a minor key which indicate his concern. Nevertheless Professor Tinbergen final chord is -most decidedly- in a major key!

THE EDITOR

¹ Ida Gerhardt