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Supplement 2

Theology at the University of Pretoria - 100 Years

(1917–2017)

Past, present and future

Edited by Dirk J. Human

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Edited by
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This volume is a commemoration of the academic and social contributions of the Faculties of Theology (1917–1999) and the combined Faculty of Theology (2000–2017) over the past century. The book is dedicated to all students of Theology from the past century but especially to those who will study Theology and Religion at this Faculty in the century to come.

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Research Justification

In this scholarly book, a century's theology presented by the Faculty of Theology at the University of Pretoria, is celebrated. All authors are academics or research associates of the University of Pretoria. A historical and futuristic overview with perspectives from the past, present and future, are examined. The past is not only portrayed by means of societal and scientific contributions and achievements, but the authors also reflect on malfunctions, ill behaviour and disappointments of church and theology, presented at the University of Pretoria within the South African context over 100 years.

The book commences with a chapter in which institutional transformation is discussed, as well as the changes that demonstrate the role of the Faculty of Theology within a secular state university. It includes an explanation of the importance of research impact, research productivity and research reputation. Among various discipline indicators, the category Theology and Religion Studies plays a significant role in the measurement of world university rankings of universities.

With regard to scientific and encyclopaedic content, the book focuses on the theological disciplines presented in the academic curricula: first the biblical sciences (Old and New Testament Studies), then the historical disciplines (Systematic Theology, Church History and Church Polity), and finally the practical disciplines (Practical Theology, Science of Religion and Missiology). The role of Religion Studies in a newly established Faculty of Theology and Religion not only enhances the diversity of interreligious tolerance and an atmosphere of dialogue, but it serves as platform to interconnect with the fields of Humanities, Social and Natural Sciences and other academic disciplines.

In the conclusive part of the book, contributions highlight the role of the centres in the Faculty (Centre for Contextual Ministry and Centre for Sustainable Communities), as well as the continental and international footprints of the two theological journals whose title ownership is attached to the Faculty of Theology of the University of Pretoria, namely *HTS Theological Studies* and *Verbum et Ecclesia*.

The methodology comprised in all the chapters amounts to a literature and contextual study. Since the book describes the histories of formal academic departments, these texts are of a descriptive, interpretative and critical character. Reference is made in some chapters to exegetical methods, like the historical critical methods.

The target audience of the book is academic scholars and theologians, who specialise in the different fields of Theology, the Humanities and other Social Sciences. The book is also accessible to scholars of other academic disciplines outside these disciplines. The book comprises original research by several authors and is not plagiarised from other scientific publications of this nature.

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Abbreviations appearing in the Text and Notes

AHCI	Arts and Humanities Citation Index
AH	Arts and Humanities
ASSAf	Academy of Science of South Africa
CCM	Centre for Contextual Ministry
CSC	Centre for Sustainable Communities
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
DRC	Dutch Reformed Church
DSS	Dead Sea Scrolls
ERIH	European Reference Index for the Humanities
ESCI	Emerging Sources Citation Index
Excelsus	Centre for Ministerial Development
FT	Faculty of Theology
FRT	Faculty Research Theme
HTS	*HTS Theological Studies/Teologiese Studies*
IBSS	International Bibliography of the Social Sciences
IF	Impact Factor
IMER	Institute for Missiological and Ecumenical Research
ISI	Institute for Scientific Information
JCR	Journal Citation Report
MT	Masoretic Text
NRC	Netherdutch Reformed Church
NRCA	Netherdutch Reformed Church of Africa
NT	New Testament
NTS	New Testament Studies
OAPEN	Open Access Publishing in European Networks
OT	Old Testament
OTS	Old Testament Studies
PT	Practical Theology
PTSA	Practical Theological Society of South Africa
QS	*Quacquarelli Symonds*

SA	South Africa
SciELO	Scientific Electronic Library Online
SJR	SCImago Journal Rank
SK	*Skrif en Kerk*
SMt	*Sondergut Matthäus*
THE	*Times Higher Education*
THRIP	Technology and Human Resources for Industry Programme
TLF	Tshwane Leadership Foundation
TRS	Theology and Religious Studies
UP	University of Pretoria
VE	*Verbum et Ecclesia*
WCC	World Council of Churches
WoS	Web of Science

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phased out. There were plans to replace it with the Centre for Sustainable Communities, which may continue in another form. Email: attie.vanniekerk@up.ac.za

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Foreword

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This book is a celebration of 100 years of Theology in the Faculty of Theology (FT) at the University of Pretoria (UP). A historical and futuristic overview is created with perspectives from the past, present and future. Authors are all personnel or research associates of the Faculty. The past is not only colourfully portrayed with societal and academic contributions, but it also assumes the malfunctions, ill-behaviour and disappointments of church and theology in the South African context over 100 years.

In a general introduction, the book starts with the changed role of the FT at a current secular state university, focusing on the importance of the impact of research productivity. Theology and Religious Studies (TRS) also contribute to the business of world university rankings.

The core of the book focuses on the contributions, deficits and future visions of the traditional theological disciplines, namely, firstly, the biblical sciences (Old and New Testament Studies), then the historical disciplines (Systematic Theology, Church History and Church Polity) and finally, the practical disciplines (Practical Theology [PT], Science of Religion and Missiology). The role of Religion Studies in a newly established Faculty of Theology and Religion not only enhances the diversity of interreligious tolerance and an atmosphere of interreligious dialogue, but it serves as platform to interconnect with the fields of Humanities and Social and Natural Sciences or other disciplines.

In the concluding part of the book, contributions underscore the role of the centres in the Faculty (Centre for Contextual Ministry [CCM] and Centre for Sustainable Communities [CSC]) as well as the continental and international footprints of the two theological

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journals, *HTS Theological Studies/Teologiese Studies* (HTS) and *Verbum et Ecclesia* (VE).

The book *Theology at the University of Pretoria - 100 years: (1917-2017) Past, present and future* consists of the following chapters.

In Part 1, **Johan Buitendag** and **Corneliu C. Simut** debate the title 'Rethinking research impact by Theology and Religious Studies with references to the Faculty of Theology at the University of Pretoria'. They reckon that TRS are two interconnected and mutually dependent fields of academic inquiry that belong to the larger and more encompassing domain of general humanities. Given this interconnectivity, reciprocity and interdependability with the humanities, TRS find themselves in the same position of constantly being evaluated from various perspectives, including the particularly measurable perspective of research outputs. While research outputs can be measured rather easily in the sense that they are tangible and readable in a published format, the way in which they are actually evaluated and given credit for their content is a totally different matter and quite a complex problem.

This chapter is an attempt to demonstrate that it is not fair to evaluate research outputs in the field of TRS only in comparison to completely different fields, such as the natural sciences, but they need to be evaluated in comparison to closer and more related domains from the very corpus of the humanities. It is suggested, therefore, that three distinct features should be taken into account for a proper and fair assessment of research outputs in TRS, namely research productivity, citations and academic reputation. These, in turn, must always be complemented by a set of necessarily subsequent measures such as an increased-productivity reward, a high-citations reward, a high-impact journals reward and an international-research increase. The proposed ranking indicators and their rewarding measures are discussed and exemplified with specific reference to the research performance of the FT within UP, South Africa (SA).

In Part 2, the role of the different theological disciplines in the Faculty are portrayed. It starts with the focus on the biblical sciences.

Regarding Old Testament Studies, **Dirk J. Human, Alphonso Groenewald, E.E. Meyer, Ananda Geyer-Fouché, Sampson S.**

Ndoga and **Gerda E. de Villiers** depict perspectives on 'Old Testament Studies: Glimpses of the past and future'. In a short historical overview of the academic and social contributions of the Department of Old Testament Studies (OTS) at the UP over the past century (1917–2017), this chapter provides a brief picture of how the Department has contributed to academia, church and society. In this year of the Faculty of Theology's centenary celebrations, the chapter contemplates selected highlights of the past and intends to discover the avenues of future vistas through current academic strengths, research foci of personnel and the actualisation of the Old Testament (OT) in the African context(s).

Since the inception of the UP in 1908, the Faculty of Humanities has been involved in OT related studies through the Hebrew language. OTS has become known over many years through individual scholars' expertise regarding Bible translation and the foci on specific parts of the OT, namely the Pentateuch, Psalms, Prophets or Second Temple literature. World-renowned projects since 1990 involved several international scholars. These include, inter alia, Pro Pent, Pro Psalms, Pro Prof and Qumran projects.

Because the department is located at a FT in Africa, it has always strived to become theologically relevant for local and African contexts. The department always envisions excellence and relevant scholarship for its contexts in academia, church and society.

Hanre Jansé van Rensburg treats New Testament Studies (NTS) under the title 'Celebratory nostalgia: Reflecting on the work and impact of New Testament Studies'. In the context of the centenary celebrations of the FT at the UP, this chapter takes a closer look at the Department of NTS. It does not only serve as a reflection on the past people and events that have led to the department's present. Making use of introspective examination focused on the department's current position, task and impact, this chapter aspires to allow for the generation and evaluation of mental representations of possible futures. It thus anticipates to explore the history, work and impact of the Department of NTS at the UP briefly by focusing on the variety of methods used by the current members of the department in their various

research projects as well as the impact that these projects have and can continue to have. In doing so, the chapter demonstrates that the department embraces a methodology which holds the diachronic and synchronous approaches in dialogue, thus pursuing a holistic approach. Through the pursuit of a holistic approach, the chapter demonstrates, that the Department of NTS ensures a focus on the distinctive contribution that the New Testament (NT) offers – a better understanding of the dialectic between theological conceptualisation and historical reality. The disciplines of the historical sciences are depicted as follows.

Daniël P. Veldsman, Johan Buitendag, Willem Fourie and **Tanya van Wyk** discuss Systematic Theology under the title 'Finding an academic voice in post-apartheid South Africa: Systematic Theology at the University of Pretoria'. The following question is asked: How can an academic voice of systematic-theological reflection find expression at a public university in a post-apartheid SA? In this chapter, the different research foci of the members of the Department of Dogmatics and Christian Ethics at the UP are presented and interpreted as attempts aimed to find such a voice as a collection of voices within a society characterised by shifting social-ecclesial and theological landscapes.

Specific research foci are structured and presented from the hermeneutical question that was posed by Ricoeur, namely *D'où parlez-vous?* [Where do you speak from?]. These are eco-hermeneutics; evolutionary perspectives on religious experience; an ethic of sociality within postcolonial, pluralist and unequal societies; and ecclesiological challenges and political theology. Against the background of the vision, objectives and values of the department, the main objectives of their respective approaches as explication of the 'speaking from' and 'speaking to'. In conclusion, they identify some of the most important contemporary issues that are, according to them, to be addressed within the southern African context.

With church-historical perspectives **Wim A. Dreyer** and **Jerry Pillay** outline 'Historical Theology: Content, methodology and relevance'. In this chapter, the authors reflect on Historical

Theology as theological discipline. They propose that historical theology could be applied to different areas of research such as prolegomena, history of the church, history of missions, history of theology, history of ecumenical theology or public theology and church polity. The point is made that historical theology, when properly structured and presented, could play a major role in enriching the theological and ecclesial conversation and in assisting the church in the process of reformation and transformation.

The third group of disciplines is characterised as the practical disciplines. **Casparus J. Wepener, Yolanda Dreyer** and **Johann A. Meylahn** provide perspective on 'The tradition of Practical Theology at the University of Pretoria'. The focus of this chapter is the tradition of PT at the UP. The authors look at PT from different angles in order to throw light on the unique position of the Department of PT at the UP by the time of the celebration of the centenary of the FT and especially also its future in this particular context. By looking at the history of the subject and the department as well as the global and local contexts in which the discipline is practiced in Pretoria, they sketch the possible direction in which this discipline can move at the Department of PT at the UP after 2017 (the year of the centenary of the FT).

The chapter challenges the discipline of PT to embrace the continent of Africa where the department is situated, an embrace which will impact on both ontology and epistemology. In this regard, they suggest a pneumapraxis to be part of the future of this discipline in SA. The chapter promotes both an intra- and interdisciplinary approach.

Science of Religion and Missiology receive attention from **Cornelius J. Niemandt** and **Jaco Beyers** in the chapter entitled 'Science of Religion and Missiology: Historical overview, theological discourses and future possibilities'. The history and contributions of the Department Science of Religion and Missiology at the UP are described with a particular focus on a discussion of the understanding of both disciplines. In the case of Science of Religion, the research covers theological discourses in the discipline, attending to issues such as secularisation and Theology of Religions. It is argued that, in the future, Science

of Religion will continue to contribute to three areas of concern, namely studying religions, secularisation and theology of religion and religions.

The chapter concludes with a brief overview of future contributions by the department. Missiology is defined in terms of current insights in the discipline against the background of the decline in mission studies at many universities. The research argues that Missiology is an intrinsic part of Theology. The following discourses in Missiology are noted, namely flourishing life, ecological justice, the role of the Holy Spirit in the *missio Dei*, missional church, contextualisation and indigenisation, and mission from the margins. The contributions of the department as well as future contributions are described. This includes an argument for the change of the name of the department to the Department of Religion Studies. In terms of future developments, research into flourishing life as well as deep incarnation are noted as exciting new possibilities.

Jaco Beyers elaborates further on the subject of Religion Studies in a chapter entitled 'Fathoming Religion Studies: Treading on the spider's web'. He reckons that any attempt at understanding religion proves to be a perilous undertaking. Understanding Religion Studies as it is envisioned to function at the Faculty of Theology and Religion at the UP already implies some problems. To fathom the breadth of Religion Studies is like treading on a spider's web: There are so many interconnected elements related to this field of study. The metaphor of a spider's web is utilised to portray the interconnectedness of religion to other elements. Kobus Krüger's concept of conditionality is utilised to describe this interrelatedness. There are many possible approaches to studying religion. This research highlights the anthropological, philosophical and sociological approaches. The relationship between religion and several other disciplines (i.e. education, law, science, politics and economy) is illuminated in this chapter.

Part 3 of the book outlines the contributions of the theological centres in the faculty and follows some footprints of the theological journals HTS and VE.

Stephanus F. de Beer and **Attie S. van Niekerk** first describe aspects of their centres in the chapter entitled 'Transforming curricula into the next century: Doing theology collaboratively with local communities'. As part of the faculty's celebrations of its first century of existence (2017), this chapter is an attempt to draw from the emergentist approaches of the CCM and the CSC, asking whether it perhaps offers clues for transforming curricula as we enter our second century. The chapter seeks to offer a vision for doing theology collaboratively with communities, in liminal spaces, opening up a transdisciplinary approach to theological engagement. In its engagement with local and struggling contexts, subverting the conventional suburban classroom spaces and hierarchies of knowledge alike, it opens itself up for the ongoing transformation of both theology and the theological curriculum as well as for the transformation of local communities. It presents the possibility of doing theology at a public university in a way that could have direct, and hopefully liberating and life-giving, impact in a deeply unequal society, mediating multiple households of freedom.

Andries G. van Aarde, Dirk J. Human and **Daniël P. Veldsman** provide a bird's-eye view on '*HTS Theological Studies/Teologiese Studies* and *Verbum et Ecclesia:* South African accredited journals with footprint'. This chapter forms part of the centennial celebration of the FT of the UP. The focus is on the two scholarly journals linked to the FT in Pretoria, namely HTS and VE. The first and longer section of the chapter focuses on HTS, the oldest and largest of the two journals. The second and shorter section is about VE. The overarching aim of the chapter is to tell the story of their historical and formal footprints that have shaped their respective character as scientific theological journals. Much attention is given to the contemporary functioning and positioning of the journals within the broader university and greater intellectual context but also to their relation to the African context.

In sum, the scope of the book enlightens not only the faculty's academic achievements but also its fragile history and exciting future.

Part 1

Introduction

Chapter 1

Rethinking research impact by Theology and Religious Studies with references to the Faculty of Theology at the University of Pretoria

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Introduction

In a recent article of mine, I argued that the 21st century has opened up a new niche for theology at a public university (Buitendag 2016). In my view, theology is a scholarly endeavour by believers in the public sphere in order to come to grips with multidimensional realities in a manner that matters.[1] I followed the definition of the Durban Declaration of a university, '[*u*]niversities are places of debate and contestation which provide space for new knowledge to be created, intellectual activity and freedom of thought'. (South Africa 2015). One has to distinguish among a seminary (in its different forms), Christians universities and lately, theological inquiry. Theological inquiry has a critical approach in its methodology. It implies contestation, interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary and even transdisciplinary research and wants to contribute to humans' search for understanding and meaning. It is not essentially ecclesiastical, perhaps not even ecumenical, but scientific in nature (Buitendag 2016):

> The point at stake here is that a new grammar has been developed for theology as a science. The challenge for a Faculty of Theology at a research-intensive university is to publish where it is noted, that is Scopus, The Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO) SA and the Norwegian list, and of course the Thompson Reuters' Web of Science, previously referred to as the Institute for Scientific Information (ISI), and the International Bibliography of the Social Sciences (IBSS). The three most important indices measuring the world ranking position of universities are currently the Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU), The *Times Higher Education* (THE) and the *Quacquarelli Symonds* (QS), each with its own criteria. (p. 5)

1. 'There are those who will claim that the third mission of universities (i.e. providing services to the communities – broadly conceived to include industry – in which they are embedded) is, in fact, a core function of universities. The work of Etzkowitz and Leydsdorff and their concept of the 'triple helix' is often cited as providing a model in which research, teaching and service are inseparable. While third-mission activities in contemporary universities may well be commonplace and perhaps even inescapable, it is still both conceivable and possible for these activities to be performed by organisations external to the university' (Cloete, Bunting & Maassen 2015:211).

How does one measure the impact of theological research? The traditional Hirsch Index (H-impact factor) does not do justice to the social sciences at all as it is not calculated for journals within Arts and Humanities (AH).

UP is to embark on a new model for research funding. A draft document, 'Proposal on allocation of research subsidy budget to faculties', was tabled at a meeting of the Academic Planning Committee (University of Pretoria 2016). This policy is still being developed and is by no means official and not disclosed. The importance of this document from a social science perspective, however, is that the argument for research impact is based on natural science indices. The essence of the proposal is basically the following:

- The ISI and IBSS databases will be used to identify international journal publications.
- Articles which are published in very high impact journals will be rewarded more than others. This will include articles in science, nature and the top journal of a particular discipline.
- Articles in international journals, which fall into the top 10% per discipline (as defined by Scopus) will be rewarded more than articles in other international journals.
- Articles in conference proceedings will be rewarded less than other internationally published articles.
- Articles in SA journals with an Impact Factor (IF)[2] of less than 1 (even listed by ISI, Scopus and/or SciELO SA) should not be awarded a subsidy.
- International is interpreted as being non-South African. Books (or chapters of books) only qualify for the allocation if they are published internationally.

I will argue therefore in terms of the three categories mentioned (research productivity, citations and academic reputation) as

2. 'Proposed by Eugene Garfield in 1955, the Impact Factor (IF) started to be used as a tool for assessing the quality of publications in the sixties and later used as a criterion for selection of journals to be indexed by the Science Citation Index (SCI)'. http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?pid=S0066-782X2011000200001&script=sci_arttext&tlng=en

listed in particular by QS. However, the point of this chapter is therefore to acknowledge a certain degree of differentiation of natural and social sciences, with special reference to theology, when the research footprint is to be measured. Both the QS and the THE magazine have decided to use the Scopus Index for the metrics. The IF is an indicator of the WoS, while Scopus uses a similar indicator, namely, the SCImago Journal Rank (SJR) (SCImago 2017). In concrete terms, the SJR ascribes scholarly journals to four quartiles and any journal which is included in the first quartile is considered to rank among the top 25% of the journals belonging to its specific field. Scopus works with different subject areas, which means that the values of the SJR are radically different among different sciences, very much like the IF at Thomson Reuters.[3]

This chapter should be regarded as the last of the series of three that I have authored in this regard. This particular chapter is based on my report submitted to the Executive, in response to the above-mentioned proposal tabled at the Academic Planning Committee in October 2016. My first article in this series appeared in 2014 (Buitendag 2014). Acknowledgement is hereby given to my co-author who has been the Editor-in-Chief of *Perichoresis: The Theological Journal of Emanuel University* since 2003, a thematic research journal included by the SJR in Q4 (289 out of 381) for the year 2015 and the only Romanian journal in the field of theology (not religious studies or philosophy) covered by WoS in Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI) (currently under review for inclusion in Arts and Humanities Citation Index [AHCI]). What I and the co-author inter alia have in common is our mutual battle against the perception that only First-World countries can predominantly produce quality research and that quality theology should be weighted by natural science instruments – as if '*ex Africa nunquam aliquid novi*'!

3. Thomson Reuters has recently sold the Web of Science to Clarivate Analytics (http://clarivate.com/scientific-and-academic-research/research-discovery/web-of-science/?_ga=1.234935873.1511600137.1486547578)

Reconsidering citations

There are three major instruments to measure citations:

JCR Impact factor[4]: 'The impact factor is … a measure of the frequency with which the average article in a journal has been cited in a particular year or period. The annual JCR impact factor is a ratio between citations and recent citable items published. Thus, the impact factor of a journal is calculated by dividing the number of current year citations to the source items published in that journal during the previous two years.'

SCImago Journal Rank[5] (SJR indicator): 'The SJR indicator is a measure of scientific influence of scholarly journals that accounts for both the number of citations received by a journal and the importance or prestige of the journals where such citations come from. The SJR indicator assigns different values to citations depending on the importance of the journals where they come from. This way, citations coming from highly important journals will be more valuable and hence will provide more prestige to the journals receiving them'.

The H-index[6] (Hirsch index): 'The H-index of a researcher is defined as the number of articles published by the researcher, whose citations are greater than or equal to that number. For example, when we say that the H-index of a researcher is ten, it means that he has [*they have*] at least 10 articles published, each with at least 10 citations. The greater the number of articles of great interest published by the researcher, the greater the number of citations achieved, and the greater his [*their*] H-index, reflecting the academic and scientific quality of the researcher and his [*their*] production capacity. However, only the total number of articles, for example, may hide the

4. http://wokinfo.com/essays/impact-factor/

5. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SCImago_Journal_Rank

6. http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?pid=S0066-782X2011000200001&script=sci_arttext&tlng=en

lack of relevance of each text in isolation. We can thus say that the H-index is the result of the balance between the number of publications and the number of citations'.

The number of citations is a ranking indicator, which generally amounts to 20% – 30% of the total score credited to the assessment of research outputs (Buitendag 2016:6). Thus, in concrete terms, the FT at the UP has been benchmarked for the past six years compared not only to similar theological faculties in SA, (Stellenbosch University, University of the Free State, and North-West University), but also with highly ranked international universities like those in Berlin, Edinburgh, and the Free University of Amsterdam.

Based on the bibliometric parameters supplied by WoS for the field of Religion, two aspects emerge as crucially important as well as poignantly valid for the redefinition of evaluation parameters not only in the general domain of AH but also in the specific fields of TRS. Thus, AH appear to be less dependent on specialised journals and more inclined to communicate scholarly productions by means of monographs/books as well as citations, both in and for the respective books. The exclusion of such paramount information from the assessment of research performance and its accompanying metrics is going to result in a severe under-representation of academic exchange in the field of AH, including TRS.

Secondly, citations in the broader domain of AH normally extend over a period ranging between two and five years, which are the standard time frames used by WoS for the calculation of the IF in Journal Citation Report (JCR). Invariably, this reflects as poor scores in Journal IFs in general, but also to extremely low scores for a 5-year IF. AH journals will score below par, even when a 10-year IF is used for the calculation of research performance metrics (Levitt et al. 2010:xi–xv).

Consequently, it is obvious that the number of publications exceeds the number of citations in the domain of AH, a common phenomenon that is also reflected in TRS. Inevitably, the IF does

not constitute a true or valid parameter for the assessment of scientific publications in AH. It is precisely because of the insufficiency, as well as the incapacity of the IF to adequately represent the quality of scientific research in AH that QS and THE magazine have recently taken the decision to make use of the Scopus Index for the purpose of redefining the metrics and criteria which assess the quality of research in scientific outputs throughout the realm of humanistic disciplines. To be sure, the IF is an indicator used by the WoS while a similar indicator called SJR has been employed by Scopus.

Citations, however, must be approached sensibly, not only from the perspective of their counted number, but also from the reality of the research field in which a certain scholar works. For instance, even in theoretical and natural sciences whose citation IF is much higher than that of AH, citations evolve at different rates: to give just one example, while in mathematics citations indicate a slow evolution, in biomedicine they evolve very fast (Tijssen 2015:65). Similarly, within the very domain of AH, TRS may develop a different evolution in terms of citation impact than History or Cultural Anthropology. Moreover, the same pattern exists even between Theology, on the one hand, and Religious Studies on the other. Currently, the phrase 'theology and religious studies' differentiates between Christianity, presupposed by 'theology', and other world religions, designated as 'religious studies'. Often, too much emphasis is placed on the former which is automatically and traditionally considered superior or more deserving to be studied than the latter.

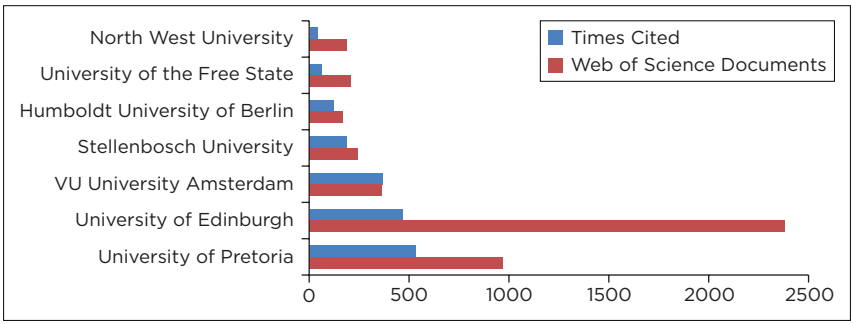
While this distinction is not always detrimental because some faculties may prefer to insist on Christian theology and not on world religions, both should constitute an institution of higher learning which aspires to be globally recognised as a genuine research university. A careful balance in this respect should be maintained and a merging of both as a single discipline which could be called religion or religious though could be investigated (Venter 2016:3–4).

In other words, a research university cannot afford not to be inclusive, if the same importance is not ascribed to all religions or cultures or societies. The conditions of objectivity and equal promotion in the academic field remain non-negotiable. This was exactly the motivation of the FT to change its name during the year of its Centenary to an inclusive 'Faculty of Theology and Religion'.

At the same time, one should never lose sight of the fact that the scientific world has a dynamic of its own and it is not always value or worth which prompt other scholars to read a certain article but often their subjective interests, their perspective on the country of origin of the author of that article, and other similar highly personal factors. For instance, in Africa, more than half of the continents 'most highly cited researchers' have so far been written in cooperation with colleagues from outside Africa (Tijssen 2015:71), which indicates that internationalisation and not necessarily one's intellectual value is what encourages an article be more frequently cited by others. Moreover, citations do not necessarily imply quality; one has to keep in mind that it is possible to have theological and religious journals which publish high quality articles but are not as cited as often as others. This may happen because it is assumed that Western journals tend to be generally considered better or more qualitative than their Eastern counterparts; hence, the preference of researchers to access and cite more from journals published in the developed world.

It is significant to notice in this respect that the research of the UP has a powerful impact with a ratio between citations and publications of 55% while, by comparison, the University of Edinburgh has 20%, as shown by the graph (Figure 1).

Consequently, educational policies seeking to support the publication of scientific articles for example in journals with an IF bigger than 1, will most certainly be detrimental not only in AH, but also, and especially in TRS. No single journal of TRS appears on the WoS IF list and all articles would therefore be excluded by the formula IF>1.



Source: Compiled by J. Buitendag.

FIGURE 1: International research footprint of benchmarking faculties of theology.

Coupled with the fact that in AH, vibrant academic communication is performed through books, not journals, it is more sensible to focus on assessment parameters which reflect the situation of the impact of academic products in AH in a more realistic way. This is why it seems to be more logical to move away from the IF system promoted by WoS and draw closer to the SJR produced by Scopus. As such, Religious Studies, which includes Theology, feature as a subcategory of the overarching AH in SJR with 381 journals listed as globally recognised for their scientific impact and only 95 journals included in the first quartile.[7] Therefore, it can be argued rather convincingly that these journals are considered the best in the world in the field of Religious Studies and they do contribute, although moderately, to the metrics of both the QS and THE citation indices.

It should be noted that only one journal in this list of 95 titles has a SJR factor which is calculated to be higher than 1, namely *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality* with an IF of 1.059. The remaining journals in the first quartile focusing on Religious Studies have IFs lower than 1, with the lowest of 0.157 for *The Jewish Quarterly Review* which ends the first quartile list. When it comes

7. http://scimagojr.com/journalrank.php?category=1212&area=1200&type=j

to the specific situation of SA, four journals make it into the first quartile: *HTS Theological Studies/Teologiese Studies* (0.236), *Neotestamentica* (0.212), *Acta Theologica* (0.197), and *Verbum et Ecclesia* (0.164).[8]

In light of this categorisation, it is evident that the WoS becomes rather inadequate as assessment criterion for scientific and humanistic journals. Educational policies attempting to prevent subsidies for articles with a factor lower than 1 do not take into account the points mentioned above. This is why the proposal to confine 'international journal publications' to WoS and IBSS databases' is in urgent need of serious revision.

I wish to make the following proposal to do justice to the principle of international benchmarking and quality research impact. To begin with, as far as TRS are concerned, the IF provided by WoS should be replaced by the score calculated by SJR, with a value higher than 0, so the proposed WoS IF>1 should be replaced by SJR>0 (Scopus, Elsevier), meaning, it has to appear in the SJR list with its four quartiles.

At the same time, the very definition of the adjective 'international' requires an equally substantial reconceptualisation. As such, South African journals listed in Scopus, some of which are also included in ISI/IBSS, should no longer be seen as local, but rather as international, since their contribution to scientific research is recognised by their inclusion in reputed international databases like Scopus. Hence the phrase 'international journals' should be interpreted as research based on international databases such as Scopus, WoS and Open Access Publishing in European Networks (OAPEN).[9] When these

8. http://www.scimagojr.com/journalrank.php?category=1212&area=1200&country=Africa&type=j&year=2015

9. Journals in the Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI) have passed an initial editorial evaluation and can continue to be considered for inclusion in products such as Science Citation Index Expanded (SCIE), Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI), and AHCI. All ESCI journals will be indexed according to the same data standards, including cover-to-cover indexing, cited reference indexing, subject

are South African journals, they will have to be published in English so that their international impact can be maximised and measured. In the very specific case of the UP, its radical transformation from a national to an international institution of higher learning is 'in part' the result of 'publishing in non-Afrikaans journals' (Makholwa 2014:21). This is extremely important because it appears that articles in English make the greatest impact due to their availability in the lingua franca of the 21st century, as demonstrated by the 97% of articles produced by African researchers between 2007 and 2011 (Pouris & Ho 2014:2172), which is a critical move towards rebranding research throughout the continent.

It should be stressed here that the very notion of impact is at stake in AH, and especially in TRS. It is problematic to ensure that what is termed 'research impact' is correctly ascribed to scholars and researchers in every field, as well as for TRS. It is equally difficult, if not impossible, to predict the impact that research works will have in the future; at the same time, there is no certainty in evaluating the research impact of academic works before being published. Based on these considerations and similar concerns (such as the fact that the research impact cannot always be convincingly attributed to a certain person or group of persons and that the same research impact cannot be based on the time frame between the actual publication of a certain research output and the first perceived evidence of the research impact), it may be necessary, helpful but also responsible and logical, to replace the idea of 'impact' with the notion of 'value' (Levitt et al. 2010:xiii). The problem of evaluating research outputs, however, does not vanish into thin air: the extremely difficult issue of finding a way to quantify, measure, and calculate the impact or value of scholarly work remains and must be legislated in some way for the sake of building a system of academic accountability.

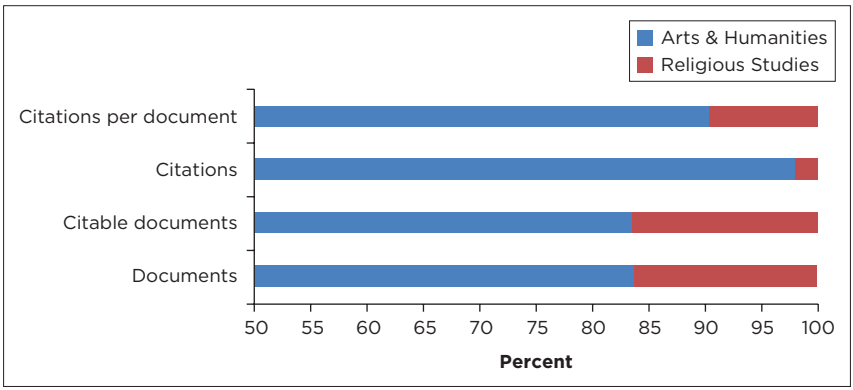
(footnote 9 continues …)
category assignment, and indexing all authors and addresses. (Exerpt from the *Web of Science Core Collection – Emerging Sources Citation Index* by Thomson Reuters Flyer).

Redefining productivity

In TRS, it is often the case that scientific productions, books and articles, are not always correctly evaluated from the standpoint of their importance for the field they serve. In other words, the number of research outputs is not always correctly matched with the impact they produce in the fields of TRS throughout the world. To take just one example, the members of the FT at the UP have constantly been exceedingly productive in terms of research outputs such as books and articles, to the point that the annual number of doctoral graduates (30 in 2015) became almost equal to the number of C1 staff, which is a remarkable achievement. As it happens, the FT is by far the smallest faculty within the UP (1.4% of students and 1.5% of lecturers) and it still produces approximately 12% of the article output and 9% of the weighted research output of the entire university.

It is crucial to understand that while TRS are not considered independent research fields by any indexing agency, they function as subcategories of the domain of AH and thus contribute, albeit indirectly, to the particular case of the UP. The aim is to firmly establish the position of the Faculty of Humanities, even if the FT is an independent organisational body. This situation is not unique throughout SA, so it is not unfair to affirm that TRS contributes solidly to the development of AH. It is thus clear that as a ranking indicator, productivity needs to be redefined, since the research of Faculties of Theology contribute not only to the establishment of their own field, but also to the reputation of adjacent domains throughout the spectrum of AH, as it amounts to 30% of the total score ascribed to the assessment of research outputs (Figure 2).

Since by virtue of the inclusion of TRS in the field of AH by all indexing agencies, the FT in SA are indirect contributors to the development of the faculties of AH, despite their independence from each other. It is important to acknowledge the FT by recognising their international contribution in terms of academic productivity. For instance, there is currently an uneasiness about



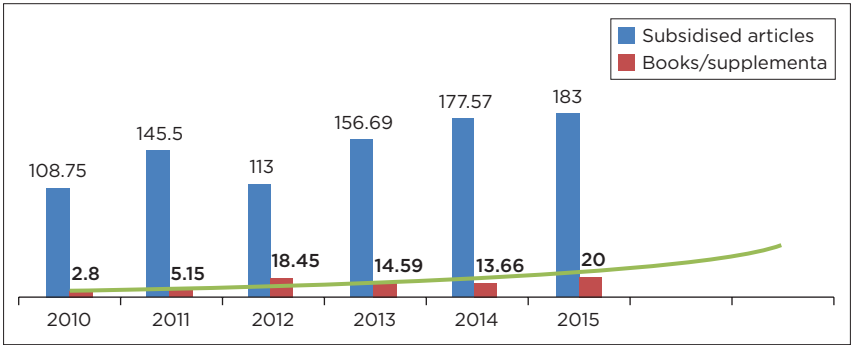
Source: Compiled from http://scimagojr.com/journalrank.php?area=1200&country=Africa&year=2015.

FIGURE 2: Contribution of Religious Studies to Arts & Humanities in South Africa.

the adequate definition of 'international' as applied to books and book chapters 'published internationally'.

In AH, most academic conversations are based on monographs and books, and the Book Citation Index is a crucial indexing instrument for TRS at the same level with AHCI, so what the latter is for journals the former is for books. Given that the publication of books has recently become more significant for world rankings and also for subsidy purposes by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) (with 10 units earned for a publication exceeding 300 pages), the FT at the UP has significantly increased its efforts to publish books for the past three years, as seen in Figure 3.

Having established the crucial contribution of books to the development of scientific research in TRS, it is vital that the adjective 'international' be applied not only to books and book chapters published outside SA, but also to those published in SA provided they are published in the Open Access system and listed in reputed international databases like Scopus, WoS, and OAPEN. Thus, 'books and chapters published internationally' should not be interpreted as exclusively 'non-South African' but



Source: Buitendag (2016b:4).

FIGURE 3: Faculty of Theology publications over five years: Articles versus books.

as inclusively South African if they are covered by the above-mentioned indexing agencies.[10]

When such goals are achieved, one must not lose sight of research incentives. As such, it is important to establish a fair compensation by means of such incentives with particular reference to every scholar. Current subvention fees for articles in accredited journals range from R5 000 to R15 000 in SA and in the case of the FT at the UP. have to be paid by the author. Some way of compensation has to be found. If not, it is inevitable that negative consequences will result. For instance, academics appointed by the UP in the FT, receive the lowest incentive rates as compared to the four benchmarking South African faculties of theology. If this situation is not remedied, losing associates, fellows and members of the staff will become an unfortunate reality, which may also result in a lack of motivation to publish productively.

This is why research productivity must be re-evaluated and redefined so that it may eventually, be adequately quantified and

10. The National Research Foundation expects that all book publications should be open access within 12 months after publication (http://www.nrf.ac.za/media-room/news/statement-open-access-research-publications-national-research-foundation-nrf-funded).

properly rewarded. Before quantification and reward, however, the very concept of operationalisation must aim at turning research productivity into something that functions well within universities. Thus, in order for research productivity to increase, universities will have to focus on stimulating individual incentives (self-determination, fulfilment and confidence), institutional factors (financial incentives and infrastructure), carefully designed and implemented funding policies (identification of donors and international cooperation), and the careful determination to instil a realistic research culture (management philosophy, behaviour regulations and leadership focus). Without these policies, research productivity is most unlikely to increase or at least be maintained at a steady level. Universities will be trapped into a never-ending cycle of attempts characterised by 'struggling to improve … academic research productivity' (Musiige & Maasen 2015:113–115, 110).

At the same time, and this is a serious caveat, productivity and reward must be balanced without losing sight of the fact that when productivity is measured by various ranking indicators originating from exact sciences, not only the very essence of TRS can become superfluous but also with the inevitable consequence of the diminishing role of applied theology. The idea of excellence will be 'reduced to statistical accountancy' (Mbembe 2016:4). Productivity is not the most important aspect of scientific research and neither is reward; yet, an exclusive focus on productivity and reward will inevitably lead to false comparisons between local and somewhat exotic institutions of higher education and very old and competitive universities (Mbembe 2016:5) which in turn will nullify the special character of the former while missing the effectiveness of the latter both in terms of productivity and incentives. Important as it may be, incentives must be devised cleverly because while it seems at first that only academic rewards are effective to boost the morale of scholars, it may be the case that non-academic incentives can prove to be at least as effective, provided researchers are given due credit for their work in the academy (Levitt et al. 2010:xv).

Since it appears that there is a direct connection between the scholars' morale and their research productivity (Wangenge-Ouma, Lutomiah & Langa 2015:130), there is little doubt that 'academic and research performance' must be connected to 'progression in academic careers' (Wangenge-Ouma et al. 2015:134). In other words, anyone who is productive in the academic field must be promoted so that the scholar themselves will be capable of perceiving some concrete results of their academic efforts. Thus, universities must constantly find ways to offer promotion opportunities with clear advancement methodologies from lower to higher academic ranks, financial allowances for academic work like supervision and publications, as well as recognition of supervision and publications provided they are both perceived and evaluated as successful (Wangenge-Ouma et al. 2015:138–140). A key aspect of the fine-tuning of incentives for the real increase of research productivity is to strike a balance between the time allocated to research and reasonable teaching loads which are often very heavy and burdensome, to the evident detriment of research productivity (Wangenge-Ouma et al. 2015:141).

With this in mind, productivity and incentives are important for university life because research outputs must be produced, disseminated, and validated somehow – this is, after all, the very life of universities. The balance between the two, however, must be kept in favour of those who are productive and fit for the deserved reward, irrespective of any aspects which pertain to their being other than their mind – the only real currency in universities. In offering rewards for productivity, discrimination of any sort, such as apartheid policies, must be avoided, discouraged, and – if possible – eliminated in favour of one's intellectual achievements. Evidently, moving beyond apartheid is a bold but necessary decolonisation measure which must imply that all people, irrespective of their particularities and country of origin, must be given equal chances to perform in the realm of scientific inquiry and subsequently be rewarded correctly in a globalised world which will neither avoid SA nor destroy its national attachment (Clark 2007:305). Thus, rewarding scholarly productivity must never be guided by tolerance, which only

increases intolerance, but only by fair, proper, and hopefully commensurate recognition of one's research products and their inherent quality, not by any kind of discriminatory aspects such as race, sex, or age (Njovane 2015:116–129).

While incentives must be fairly distributed so that all scholars are encouraged to produce research outputs, it is important to realise that senior scholars have the chance to produce works which have a higher impact. Factors such as the higher academic status and the wider range of opportunities present are more likely to favour senior and established scholars more than their younger and less experienced colleagues. It is often a fact that it is much more difficult for junior scholars to publish and then disseminate the results of their work through various conferences and workshops than it is for their senior colleagues who are much more famous in their fields (Levitt et al. 2010:xiv). This is why it is important to reassess productivity as well as the reality of academic reputations. A re-examination of these two factors as promotion criteria is long overdue.

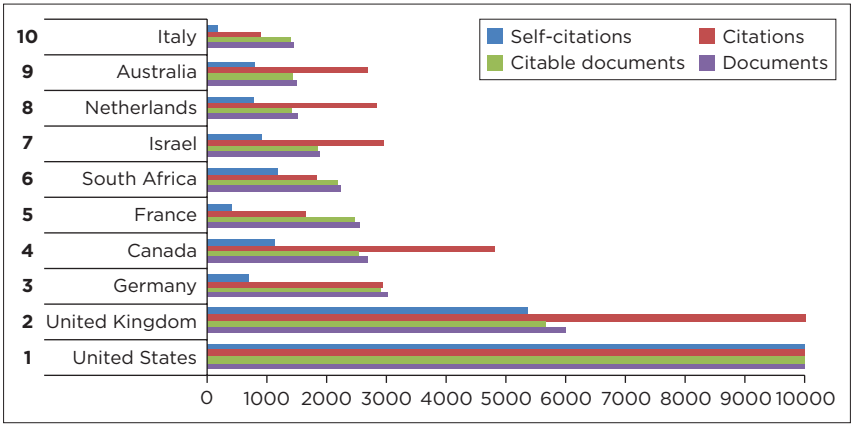
Rebranding reputation

The third ranking indicator in need of reassessment is reputation, which in fact derives from research impact and research productivity. Although notoriously difficult to measure, reputation appears to rise up to 40% of the total score ascribed to the assessment of research outputs, which turns it into the most important ranking indicator considered in light of scientific scoring. When applied to the particular case of the FT at the UP reputation is one of the defining criteria of the institution, which is not only renowned for its scientific excellence, but also its high esteem continentally and globally.

Set against the SJR regarding Religious Studies as subcategory of AH, South African universities hold the sixth position in the world. When included in the wider category of AH, the field of Religious Studies places SA 10 positions lower, namely dropping

to position number 16 in the world; it must be highlighted once again, that this happens when Religious Studies are judged from the perspective of their contribution to the development of the more encompassing category of AH.[11] The graph in Figure 4 is self-explanatory as it provides obvious evidence in favour of the global position of South African Religious Studies (no. 6) when considered separately from AH, but also the much lower position (no. 16) when placed within AH also within SA.

It is not unusual to understand why South African Religious Studies have such a powerful impact not only in SA, but also in Africa as a continent and then all over the world. As Paul Gifford indicates in his authoritative study entitled *African Christianity: Its public role*, the strongest institution south of the Sahara is the church. To be more precise, the most influential social reality which shapes human life in Sub-Saharan Africa is Christianity with its entire Sub-Saharan of confessional churches. This is indicative



Source: Compiled from http://scimagojr.com/countryrank.php?area=1200&category=1212.

FIGURE 4: International position of South Africa in the field of Religious Studies.

11. http://scimagojr.com/countryrank.php?area=1200

of the fact that no other organisation in Africa has dominance throughout the continent in the sense that it is indeed the best institution, both religiously and secularly, to interact with poor and disadvantaged people (Mamphele Ramphele). Such fringe activities naturally emanate from the church and its members, so it can be argued that if exceptional work leads to social reputation, it is only logical for universities to profit in a positive way, through the activities of the various faculties of theology. The equation is very simple: the church helps the poor, the church acquires a reputation and influence. The church collaborates with faculties of theology, the faculties of theology benefit from the reputation and influence of churches, and finally this reputation and influence placed upon the faculties of theology can be reflected positively and in numerous ways on the universities which host them. Why? Because while the work of the church reflects positively on the university, the reputation of the university is likely to increase because of the church without a heavy dependence or reliance on the church (Olson 2005:116). In other words, the university does not have to rely on the church; it only has to work with the church.

This is extremely important because, as noted before, not all scholars find it easy to make their research known throughout the academy. While more senior scholars have already built a reputation of their own and are consequently known and appreciated in their fields, the same cannot be said of junior scholars for whom going up in their field of expertise may prove much more difficult. This is why, junior researchers – and senior researchers too – should try to step beyond the academic field into society and find new ways to disseminate their research through any means which popularise science, for the sake of everybody, and especially of those less fortunate. For instance, they should no longer focus exclusively on conversing with experts in their fields but rather attempt to step beyond the narrow field of their expertise to connect with common people by means of popular magazines, newspapers, public lectures, and even popular books. All these aspects will certainly contribute not only to making

certain researchers known in society but also to strengthening the reputation of their faculties and universities (Levitt et al. 2010:xiv).

Establishing a solid reputation means confirmation of 'competitiveness on the international stage' (Cloete et al. 2015:20). Attaining a high level of international competitiveness is never easy and in order for this to be achieved, institutions of higher learning must turn into research universities. It is absolutely vital to understand at this point that reputation may mean different things in different countries, and even internationally. While in industrialised countries, academic reputation is established by being highly competitive and consequently published in top research journals, developing countries with slow growth economies and lower per capita income, scholarly reputation may mean getting involved in the advancement of local and national academic systems (Cloete et al. 2015:20). Reputation is first established nationally and only then internationally, although exceptional international achievements will undoubtedly increase local and national reputation as well.

Going back to the particular case of the FT at the UP, its social impact was noticed not only by the leaders of various churches in the country but also by society as a whole. In concrete terms, doctorates have been conferred by the UP on four current bishops of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa and the four partner churches of the FT elected their moderators form the faculty's academic staff members.This is compelling proof that the FT at the UP is not only thriving academically in terms of research indexing and academic productivity, but is also constantly growing in reputation both in SA and beyond.

As the work of the church is unceasingly informed as well as supported, in SA, by the teaching and research activities of the FT within the UP, it goes without saying that the FT is reflected in the work of the church. Thus, the reputation which the FT enjoys in society, also as a result of what the church does in helping the poor and the disadvantaged, reflects itself positively on the UP as institutional host for the academic

field of TRS which, despite the huge advances of sciences these days, remains a critical field for the development of social justice and human rights. People today may not be interested in explaining the existence of God, but they are surely interested in explaining belief or faith in God and how this becomes relevant in our secularised context; it is in fact explanations like these which promoted, develop, and defend not only social justice but also human rights so that the fabric of society remains intact (Balcomb 2012:9–10).

At the same time, given the exceptional performance of the FT with regard to scientific research as evaluated and based on scientific citations, research productivity, and academic reputation, all established nationally and internationally, it is clearly safe to say that the UP deserves to profit, substantially and steadily, from the scientific work of its FT. Lastly, but certainly not the least important, the UP has the opportunity to benefit from the reputation which its FT earned ecclesiastically, socially, and academically to strengthen its own global reputation among similar highly ranked institutions in the world. In order to do this, however, the need to produce as well as appoint a 'competent labour force' and 'highly skilled' professionals (Cloete et al. 2015:29) is more stringent than ever because academic progress and research advancement cannot be achieved unless scholars are recognised as globally competitive through the academic validation of their research outputs. Since competence transcends nationalities and nations, if the UP wants to increase its influence by raising its research impact, it is evident that policies must be enforced in favour of appointing competent researchers not only from the native South Africans, but also from abroad so that a comfortable balance should exist between equity and quality (Govinder, Zando & Makgoba 2013:5–7). In a globalised world, multiculturalism is not only a reality but also the very force behind the production of exceptional research outputs because appointing people from abroad is very likely to contribute to the consolidation of a vigorous national identity both socially and academically (Clark 2007:315).

Reimagining progress

Going forward is never easy and it is even less so for universities in a globalised world. However, if moving on is facilitated not only by obtaining better results, but also by obtaintaining better outcomes, the policies behind such facilitation are already a huge step forward. In other words, if universities could find a way to give credit for, assess and validate output within a meaningful framework, or within its own immediate context, progress has will have been established. When applied to TRS, this golden rule presupposes the evaluation of theological and religious work by means of instruments which are case specific for theology and religion, not for other disciplines. Concretely, TRS cannot be given value or added extra credit by being measured through the metrics provided by the WoS IF, on the contrary, in order for TRS to be correctly and meaningfully evaluated, such measurements must be done by means of SJR, which incorporates the criteria to validate the inner reality of AH as well as that of TRS.

Since the IF from WoS functions better for natural and social sciences, but less well for AH, it is irrational to apply metrics specific to exact sciences to disciplines which are not scientific. The way forward for TRS is to be fairly judged against criteria of performance which are sensible for the field of TRS, and at most for AH, but not for other sciences. And if progress is associated with meaningfulness, then the scientific evaluation of academic outputs in TRS must be done through ranking indicators which must not only be adapted to measure the scientific life of TRS, but also to confer meaning upon the work of theologians and religious scholars through a rightful and just evaluation.

At the same time, fair compensation must be awarded to theologians and religious scholars who publish in significant journals which are covered by various databases of scientific repute throughout the world. A possible way forward towards the financial compensation of researchers is to decrease the amount of money given to articles which make it into the DHET, to maintain the same value, differentiated though from smaller

to bigger amounts, for articles published in journals covered by SciELO SA, Scopus, and the first quartile of JSR, and to increase the funds for the journals published in journals indexed in the top 10% of the journals listed in JSR.

The differentiation in funding should be applied to all three ranking indicators evaluated so far, namely citations, productivity, and reputation, provided each is reconsidered, redefined, and rebranded in such a way that not only individual researchers are compensated meaningfully for their hard work, but also so that the whole field of TRS is advanced and constantly supported through policies focused on reimagining and the defining of academic advancement.

This model can be implemented fairly easily. In particular, the faculties of TRS should focus on producing articles which will be published in the journals which are listed in the top 10% of their discipline as included in SJR provided by Scopus. As of 2017, 381 journals are listed in the subcategory of religious studies, while 95 of them are included in the first quartile. There are currently seven traditional disciplines in TRS, namely NTS, OTS, Systematic and Historical Studies, Science of Religion and Missiology, PT, Religion Studies, and Multidisciplinary Approaches. In any theological faculty, the heads of departments should be asked to identify the top seven journals in their respective fields of academic research, all included up to date in the first quartile including journals which transcend specific disciplines into broader domains of scientific inquiry.

It is, therefore, absolutely necessary to implement a responsible methodology for the accurate and meaningful evaluation of the scholarly impact of all works pertaining to the fields of TRS. Such a methodology, characterised by sensitivity, fairness and responsibility towards the personal and collective effort by scholars off their published works, must always have as its prime aim to advance and progress the Faculty of TRS and by consequence, the reputation of the hosting university. The very first step towards the establishment of scientific

progress in the fields of TRS consists of reconsidering citations, redefining productivity, rebranding reputation, and reimagining advancement through the active implementation of two simple and clear policies. Firstly, the formula IF>1, that refers to articles published in journals for which WoS calculates an IF bigger than 1, must be changed in the sense that it must be replaced by the formula SJR>0, pertaining to articles published in journals for which SJR calculates an IF bigger than 0. Secondly, it is crucially important that the very definition of the concept 'international' should be adapted to cover databases like Scopus, WoS, and OAPEN (perhaps ERIH as well[12]) even if they include, in the specific case of SA, journals published in SA. For the sake of clarity, South African journals which are listed in the international databases, Scopus, WoS, and OAPEN and even the European Reference Index for the Humanities and the Social Sciences (ERIH PLUS) should no longer be considered local, but fully-fledged international because their inclusion in these databases is not only a recognition of their scientific value, but also a confirmation of their scholarly impact at international level in the academic field. The implementation of such academic policies will not only ensure the proper evaluation, credit and compensation for the work of individual academics, but also that the prestige of faculties of TRS, as well as that of their hosting universities, is adequately established scientifically, socially, and culturally.

Nevertheless, when science, society, and culture blend together in a reality which seeks to produce knowledge, advancement, and progress, it is advisable to realise that research ranking is a Western product. The fact that it is Western is not automatically bad; it is however a reason for concern regarding how African universities attempt to rebrand themselves in a globalised world where AH seems to lose their appeal (Abdullah 2011:18). The hegemony of the West in scholarly research is a fact, whether or not it is the result of the fact that African universities want

12. https://dbh.nsd.uib.no/publiseringskanaler/erihplus/about/criteria_for_inclusion

to imitate or emulate their Western counterparts. Western as it is, research and university ranking is a tool which may prove useful when dealing with the reality of the necessity to quantify the value and impact of scholarly products and if it is good, then African universities should make use of it. Deciding how or which ranking system should be used for certain fields of academic inquiry is where serious discernment should prevail. At the same time, seeing how these evaluations are useful to society as a whole, is another issue which requires close and careful examination. Coming to grips with such complex realities requires not only academic work, but also solidarity and cooperation, both national and international (Abdullah 2011:18–19) so that adequate measures are devised and implemented for the successful promotion of scientific research even in fields of inquiry which are more difficult to evaluate, like AH or TRS.

This is why in 2010 the RAND Corporation published a survey which revealed that AH, and by implication TRS, are neither dying as academic disciplines or fields of scholarly inquiry, nor are they succumbing to the exact and natural sciences. In fact, the survey clearly indicated that both the University of Cambridge and the Arts and Humanities Research Council, which both ordered the study, were most interested in the situation of AH not only in tertiary education contexts but also in the non-academic background of contemporary society. In fact, both institutions were actively involved in finding ways to do the following:

- Evaluate the impact of AH.
- Devise mechanisms to fund AH.
- Develop better ways to understand, describe and assess research impact in AH.
- Seek to put together an adequate methodology for the proper evaluation of the research impact of AH.

These four aspects reveal that there is an active interest not only in the field of AH, but also in how these impacts on society as a whole. Better ways to evaluate this impact need to be developed. AH impact on society and it is because of this

awareness and its contribution to research, that AH should be evaluated as fairly and correctly as possible. The most striking aspect which results from this study is the urgent need to find new methods to assess the research impact of AH. There are more ways than one to evaluate the impact of AH. It is highly possible that more than one way exists and can coexist. AH are so complex and difficult to evaluate that one must be open to multiple possibilities which can all be valid even in different settings (Levitt et al. 2010:xi–xii).

This complexity also points to the fact that the very notion of impact is problematic, primarily because AH have 'many impacts' both within and beyond universities, in the publishing industry, professional practice, mass media, and cultural life. Consequently, the research impact in AH is not only difficult to measure accurately, but also extremely hard to predict. Such realisation leads to another problematic aspect, namely that young researchers need an extensive period of time for research which will consequently represent lower impacts while their senior colleagues will most probably score higher points on this assessment criteria.

At the same time, given their specificity, AH are more likely than exact and natural sciences to produce 'public knowledge creation'. This is problematic in calculating their real research impact, because this impact is often unplanned and often impossible to evaluate. Despite these acknowledged difficulties, it is clear that AH (TRS included) continue to effect a considerable influence in the academic field and in most common strata of society. To evaluate this influence, it is imperative that assessment criteria be adjusted responsibly, in order to take into account these variants from other academic disciplines (Levitt et al. 2010:xiv–xv).

It is certainly very clear that even in the favourable outcome that such policies are accepted and then duly implemented, the ever present issue of finances comes into question. Is it feasible that the promotion of TRS by means of the proper recognition of scientific works pertaining to these fields be sustained in the

long run and if so, is it possible to find the adequate financial means to insure such progress?

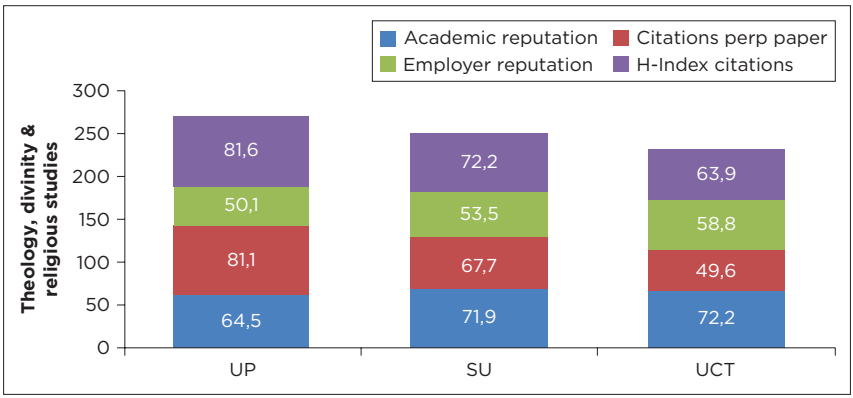
While the question is certainly obvious, so is the positive answer which accompanies it and can be found in the so-called 'triple-helix' formula focusing on the rather complex web of relationships between university, industry, and government (see Cloete et al. 2015:211). In other words, universities must find ways to cooperate with various industries and government institutions for the proper evaluation and fair compensation of the scientific work of their scholars even to the point that not only natural and social sciences are favoured, primarily because their results are more easily absorbed into society to generate income, but also because humanities and especially TRS are envisioned as partners in promoting success, advancing progress, and improving life. For such a vision to take shape, one needs to consider the so-called '(neo-) institutional perspective' on the relationships between university, industry, and government, according to which the university works in partnership with the industry and government in order to find new visions into innovation, so that mutually beneficial relationships are mutually profitable. Universities should not only be dependent on the government or the industry (the statist configuration), neither should they be left to manage on their own either (the laissez-faire configuration). On the contrary, universities must be included in a system which functions in such a way that the results of scholarly work (scientific, social, cultural, financial etc.) are enjoyed by the university, industry, and government alike (the balanced configuration) (Ranga & Etzkowitz 2013). Evidently, in the real world, universities cannot function without finances, so the debt-free college model based on tuition free initiatives are headed for disaster while the state funded college model anchored in full government support may lead to shortcomings in teaching and research (Sweetland Edwards 2016:76–77).

This is why having the necessary financial means to run a university from various sources like students and/or university,

industry, and government appears to be a policy of common sense – not only because it makes mutual interdependency a cause for serious accountability, but also because it may work as an incentive for each and all the institutions involved in financing education and hence further development.

Should such policies be adopted, the relationship between universities, industries, and government will be considered from the so-called '(neo-) evolutionary perspective because these three entities will inevitably 'coevolve' into 'subsets of social systems'. In other words, universities, industries, and government will develop together into self-sustaining systems which will automatically inform as well as influence society as a whole. When this happens, these interactions between universities, industries, and government will be able to be measured by specific indicators which will give concrete shape to the cooperation between scholars, managers, and policy makers. Provided this model functions well, universities will become, quite naturally, entrepreneurial because they will have to constantly seek new ways of interaction with the industry and the government so that their work is not only properly rewarded financially, but also transposed meaningfully into the wider web of social existence for the active and unceasing promotion of the common good. When applied to TRS, people training in these fields must be aware, sympathetic, and respectful of other religions so that by means of such understanding, society is going to constantly move forward in a never-ending pursuit of knowledge and progress (Hinnells 2004:127–128).

The QS World University Rankings by Subject 2017 released on 08 March 2017 their latest metrics and rankings in a new category of 'Theology, Divinity & Religious Studies' (QS WUR 2017). The FT at Pretoria (and so Stellenbosch and Cape Town) has been ranked in a position between positions 51–100 in the world (Figure 5). No other African institution appears on this list. Pretoria achieved position 14 in the world regarding h-impact and position 28 in the world regarding citations per paper. This is the number one position in Africa.



Source: Compiled by J. Buitendag.

FIGURE 5: Three faculties of Theology in Africa among the top 100 of the QS WUR.

Firstly, religion is not dying in the world, despite the advancement of science, for instance, in the Global South Christianity is on the rise and this situation is likely to remain unchanged at least for the next few decades (Werner 2011:94); and secondly, in Southern Africa most church leaders lack theological education because of prohibitive costs (Werner 2011:96). Thus, if the UP finds ways and encourages policies to theologically and religiously instruct not only people from SA but also from the whole region of Southern Africa, its chances to expand its social, intellectual, and cultural influence will grow exponentially.

Findings and proposals

As a field of scientific inquiry, TRS is at crossroads. In order for it to thrive in the academic environment, the whole system which evaluates TRS from the perspective of its scholarly outputs needs serious rethinking. This chapter has identified three areas of such revision: citations, productivity, and reputation. As indicated in the chapter, citations must be reconsidered by changing the very instrument based on which assessments are made, namely switching from WoS IF to the calculations provided by SJR performed by

Scopus as the only currently valid database encompassing the actual life of representative journals in TRS. Then, productivity must be redefined by acknowledging that within AH, the subcategory of TRS makes an enormous contribution which is not duly acknowledged; moreover, scientific productions in the field must be rewarded by proper incentives, so that scholars are encouraged not only to advance academically but also contribute to the development of the field. Thirdly, reputation has to be rebranded by building an international community of scholars, in the specific case of SA, while equity and quality must be in equilibrium. More international scholars from abroad should be appointed so that competitiveness is fostered, which often results in better output. These three measures should lead to reimagining academic progress especially by turning institutions of higher learning not only into entities of trained evaluators and promotors of scientific quality in research and publication, but also in centres of research productivity which are adequately connected to the high quality standards of global research.

Summary: Chapter 1

TRS are two interconnected and mutually dependent fields of academic inquiry, which belong to the larger and more encompassing domain of general humanities. Given this interconnectivity, reciprocity, and interdependability as integrative part of the humanities, TRS find themselves in the same position of being constantly evaluated from various perspectives, including the particularly measurable aspect of research outputs. While research outputs can be measured rather easily in the sense that they are tangible and readable in a published format, the way they are actually evaluated and given credit for regarding their content is a totally different matter and a whole lot more complex a problem. This chapter is an attempt to demonstrate that research productions in the field of TRS should be evaluated not only against other completely different fields, such as natural sciences, but also against closer and

more related domains from the very corpus of the Humanities. It is suggested, therefore, that three distinct features should be taken into account for a proper and fair assessment of research outputs in TRS: research productivity, citations, and academic reputation. These, in turn, must be always complemented by a set of necessarily subsequent measures such as an increased productivity reward, high citations reward, high impact journals must be rewarded, and international to be increased. The proposed ranking indicators and their rewarding measures are going to be discussed and exemplified with specific reference to the research performance of the FT within the UP, SA.

Part 2

Theological disciplines

Chapter 2

Old Testament Studies at the University of Pretoria: Glimpses of the past and future

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Short historical overview

The two departments of OTS in the different Faculties of Theology at the UP (Sections A and B – from 1917 to 1999) and the one combined Department of OTS (since 2000) have respected academic histories.[13] OTS had been part of the Faculty since its inception (Rautenbach 1960:168). In 1917 OTS was lectured by A.C. Paterson (1917–1923) who was situated in the Faculty of Humanities and who had the initial commission to lecture the Hebrew Language and OTS in the FT (Rautenbach 1960:168).

Two features have characterised OTS between 1917 and 2017. Firstly, its strong relationship with Semitic Languages, and secondly, the privilege that the subject was executed by two separate departments of the faculty, namely the Netherdutch Reformed Church of Africa (NRCA) between 1917 and 1999 (then called Section A) and the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) between 1938 and 1999 (then called Section B).

Pioneer B. Gemser (1926–1955), E. Mulder (1956–1970) and A. van Selms (1938–1962) not only affirmed OTS close relationship with the Semitic Languages and the religious world of the Ancient Near East, but also its embeddedness in a strong international and intellectual academic tradition of the time (Oberholzer 1992:68; Spies & Heydenrych 1987:110–116). As first professor in the department (Section B), J. Kritzinger's approach to OTS was theologically conservative, probably because the academic relationships with the Netherlands and Germany had shaped OTS and scholars' local profile in this early period (Spies & Heydenrych 1987:123–125).

13. It is not the intention to portray a complete history here. Such portrayals have been done already (see Breytenbach 1996:125–127; Breytenbach and Le Roux 2002:120–122; Le Roux 2009:1–9, 2013:196–224; Oberholzer, Breytenbach & Venter 1992:57–136; Prinsloo 1996:142–143).

During the middle part of the previous century, Afrikaans Bible translations dominated the academic responsibilities of the influential J.P. Oberholzer (1971–1992) and A.H. van Zyl (1966–1986). Both academics participated in projects of the Bible Society of South Africa, especially in the 1953 and 1983 Afrikaans Bible translations. Oberholzer was further engaged in the Afrikaans Bible translation for the deaf, *Die Afrikaanse Bybel vir Dowes* (Oberholzer 2008) and the Bible for All (*Die Bybel vir Almal*).[14] Successors of both these academics continued with this Bible translation tradition. In the department (Section A) both A.P.B. Breytenbach and P.M. Venter pursued Bible translation projects (Breytenbach 1996:125–127). The former, who specialised in Pentateuch Studies and Second Temple literature, completed the isiNdebele Bible translation as project leader (2012).[15] Venter, whose research interests are OT wisdom and apocalyptic literature and OT canon studies, also participated in the Afrikaans BDV translation (*Die Bybel, 'n Direkte Vertaling*).[16]

In the OT department (Section B) W.S. Prinsloo (1975–1997) internationalised OTS during a time of isolation with his Psalms studies. Prinsloo and J.H. Le Roux (1987–2009) became the opposite proponents of academic discussions between text immanent and diachronic exegesis in SA (Prinsloo 1996:142–143). After this period of synchronic-diachronic debates, the rise of both Pentateuch (Pro Pent) and Psalms (Pro Psalms) seminars strengthened the position of the department internationally (Le Roux 2012:1–10)[17]. Le Roux (see Le Roux & Otto 2007) enhanced the international profile of Pentateuch studies while

14. See https://www.bible.com/versions/2-aba-bybel-vir-almal

15. See https://www.bible.com/versions/450-snd12-isindebele-2012-translation

16. See https://www.bybeldirektevertaling.co.za

17. See also https://up-za.academia.edu/JurieLeRoux

D.J. Human contributed to the internationalisation of Psalms studies. Since 2000 Human was the programme manager for Biblical and Religious Studies, which in 2006 became known as Religion Studies (Van der Watt 2002; Human 2002:114–116).

From 2000 the two separate departments were merged into one department with A.P.B. Breytenbach (Head of Department), P.M. Venter, J.H. Le Roux and D.J. Human as academic staff. Apart from the engagement in Bible translation, their academic activities include several other OT foci in the OT syllabus (Breytenbach & Le Roux 2002:212–122).

Between 2001 and 2017 the academic strength of the department was underscored by the establishment of a series of academic projects, which include the following:

- The Pro Pent (Project for the study of the Pentateuch) seminar originated in 2001 under the auspices of J.H. Le Roux and E. Otto (Munich). Since then this annual seminar has gained international recognition and has been held in Pretoria, Munich, Vienna and Stellenbosch. As successor of Le Roux and Pentateuch specialist E.E. (Sias) Meyer has become the young newcomer to the formidable Pro Pent organising team.
- The Pro Psalms (Project Psalms) seminar started in 2003 with D.J. Human as guardian. This annual seminar has taken place in Pretoria, Munich, Vienna and Stellenbosch.
- The Pro Prof (Project Prophets) seminar started in 2013 with A Groenewald as academic driver and initiator.
- In Qumran studies an international seminar started in 2015 with the appointment of A. Geyser-Fouché as specialist in Second Temple and apocalyptic literature.

The department sets a high priority on international interaction, African involvement and the inter- and transdisciplinary character of its academic projects. Projects on African Hermeneutics and the relation of the OT to ancient Near East literature receive special focus in the OTS teaching activities. International conferences held on the themes of suffering (2009), poverty (2014–2015),

land issues (2016) and (in)justice (2017) have underscored the academic intention of the department to be contextually relevant in Africa. A.P.B. Breytenbach, P.M. Venter, D.J. Human and E.E. Meyer participate in the BDV Bible translation.

Current permanent staff members are D.J. Human (Head of Department), A. Groenewald, E.E. Meyer, A. Geyser-Fouché and G.E. de Villiers. S.S. Ndoga is a part-time extraordinary lecturer. Honorary members who have been appointed are E. Otto (Munich) and J.A. Loader (Vienna). Extraordinary professors are T. Römer (Paris, Lausanne), U. Berges (Bonn), C. Frevel (Bochum), A. Mojola (Limuru). Several national and international research associates and post-doctoral fellows have been active in the Department during the past decade. Honorary doctorates were conferred on J.P. Oberholzer and A.H. van Zyl in the previous century and later to E. Otto in 2007 and W.A.M. Beuken (in 2016).

Old Testament – A pearl to be treasured

Texts of the OT and Hebrew Scriptures rank amongst the world literature of all times. This corpus of texts is not only captured in the canons of the Jewish and Christian faith communities, but it also shares traditions with the Muslim faith and traditions beyond theology and faith. Its texts mirror a diverse and often contradictory picture and sometimes fluctuate between opposite and binary theological positions. No wonder that the history of the reception of the OT is showcasing that this library or parts of it was often overemphasised or rejected (Hasel 1972:15–34, 145–165). It is impossible to sketch a comprehensive picture of OTS and its subsequent subdisciplines. It may rather be appropriate to render a few preliminary perspectives on the importance and beauty of its nature, to emphasise the imperative of dialogue and interrelationship with other theological and non-theological disciplines, and to envisage

a few dreams of this department's future vistas in this regard (Hartenstein 2012):

> Theology as a science shows an integrated and a multi-faceted character. This character is built by the perspectives of its different subject disciplines in their interconnectedness and in their relationship with Theology as a whole and in their relationship with the sciences beyond Theology. Despite a relative autonomy of every theological sub-discipline, there is a mutual obligation, shared by every discipline, to build the *Sache* of Theology – a process that is always incomplete and underway. (p. 6)

This pertains to OT scholarship too. In order to contribute to this mutual obligation among disciplines, and to be sensitive to the combined importance and responsibility of all theological subdisciplines this chapter outlines selected perspectives on the nature, challenges and contribution of OT scholarship, before it delineates a short futuristic dream and academic ideals of this department.[18]

No other book has captured the imagination and has influenced religion and culture of the Western world more than the OT (Levin 2010:7–8). Although you do not read this library of books from beginning to end like a novel, it offers striking and fascinating literature such as the narratives on creation, stories on the life and fate of the Israelite patriarchs, social ethics, thrilling narratives on Saul, David and other kings, the painful afflictions of Job, distressful cries of hopelessness (laments), hymns and the exuberant joy of the Psalms, the wisdom and life-giving principles of Proverbs, a pessimistic world view of Qohelet, erotic descriptions of Songs, or admonitions and visionary perspectives of the prophets. Despite the language barriers, or the cultural and time abyss between the ancient 'then' and the current 'now', the OT provides a mirror for contemporary readers to recognise their own doubt or joy, anguish and pain, brokenness, frailty, vengeance or forgiveness, relief, hope or thankfulness, and many more (Levin 2010:9).

18. See Faculty website: http://www.up.ac.za/old-testament-studies

OT texts articulate both functions of comfort and admonishment in applicable contexts which either challenge or convince contemporary readers to make 'wise' decisions in modern life situations. These texts narrate ancient, experienced realities, and bear the potential to mediate valued life realities and cherishing religious experiences (Becker 2005:1). In this sense the OT is a pearl to be treasured. OT scholarship is thus privileged to unravel and facilitate the understanding possibilities of these texts in all their various facets and with all possible scientific means. This scholarship is further confronted with hermeneutical challenges of past and present normativity, contextual ethics, and the processes of interpretation and reinterpretation. This is a task performed in dialogue and in cooperation with other theological and non-theological disciplines.

The scholarship and nature of OTS is diverse but coherent. Its content becomes evident in a variety of smaller sub-disciplines or study fields (Exegesis, Hermeneutics, Theologies, History of Religion, Ethics, Biblical Archaeology, Iconography etc.). Although every subfield has a specific aim and task, these fields do not operate independently but converge and complement one another. The exposition, analysis and contemplation of OT texts (and contemporaneous artefacts) as faith witnesses of the Yahweh religion are multiple tasks.

Reflections on the history of the literature of the OT (*Literaturgeschichte*) made OT scholars aware of the challenges they would face in the future. An awareness of these challenges amongst scholars of other theological disciplines built mutual understanding and cohesion in their distinct endeavours to build the *Sache* of Theology as an interdisciplinary theological enterprise. Schmid (2008, 2011:244–262) identified the following contentious issues, namely: scribal activities and schools in Israel; the role of non-canonical, early Israelite and Jewish literature; oral and written form of texts; periodising the OT history of literature; methodological problems regarding historical arrangement of texts; inner-biblical discussions; and the relationship between histories of literature and the canons.

OT scholars of the department are thus challenged to address the above challenges with enthusiasm in order to build OT scholarship in the next century. Scholarship on the sub-disciplines of OT Theology, Israelite History of Religion, and OT Hebrew Ethics will continue to be relevant, while the important role of Biblical Archaeology, ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the social history of Israel will remain part of the spheres of OT contemplation.

Old Testament studies – A way forward

In the past century, OTS at the UP has shown a respectful academic history, especially with regard to Bible translation and selected fields of biblical exegesis. A tradition has been built on the study of the Pentateuch, Psalms, Prophets and Second Temple Literature. In close cooperation with the Department of Semitic Languages (currently Ancient Languages) in the Faculty of Humanities, OTS has built a national and international academic reputation. This FT is a multi-church faculty in Africa and provides, with other departments, theological and religious training to ministers of religions, pastors, theologians and those interested in religion.[19]

The Department formulates its academic vision as follows:

> *[T]*o present 'excellent education' in Old Testament Studies; to conduct 'world recognised research' on selected Old Testament study fields; to deliver 'meaningful service' in the community and to pursue ongoing 'staff development and specialisation'. In pursuing this vision the department has committed itself to the mission of *innovative and excellent enquiry-led teaching and learning* for under- and postgraduates; quality research by personnel; promoting a relevant and structured research culture for postgraduate students and research fellows; increasing its international profile and involvement, especially in Africa; and constructive community involvement in broader communities on local and national level.[20] (n.p.)

19. From 2018 this faculty at UP will be known as the Faculty of Theology and Religion.

20. See Faculty website: http://www.up.ac.za/old-testament-studies

The intention in the department is to promote ongoing personal and academic development of staff and to create a working environment which stimulates creativity and a happy workforce.

OTS is aligned with the dreams and academic ideals of the FT at the UP, especially with the institution's 2025 vision. The department was subjected in 2013 to an external, national and international audit of which the outcome suggested refinements to its curricula, teaching and learning as well as research aims. Since the #must-fall movement in SA in 2016, the challenges regarding social context, language, transformation and institutional culture have come to the foreground. During this year of centenary celebrations (2017), the department has committed itself again to address the challenges of the current contextual and institutional contexts in SA.

Both the personnel and continuing projects of OTS will contribute to address the academic and social challenges in future. Academic projects like the Pro Pent, Pro Psalms, Pro Prof and Qumran seminars, the African Contextual Hermeneutics meetings,[21] and other academic activities[22] are essential contributors to an OTS Department located in Africa in the next century. Furthermore, the department contributes to the *Faculty Research Theme*, entitled 'Ecodomy' (Life in its

21. This forum was established in 2012 and serves as discussion platform or academic incubator for OT scholars or those interested in gender issues to stimulate research on the use, interpretation and application of OT texts in contextual situations.

22. International video conferences: These annual conferences have been held the past seven years between the Universities of Pretoria and Essen-Duisburg, Dortmund and Bochum (Germany). This e-learning instrument stimulates undergraduate teaching and international contact between undergraduate students. It further serves as assessment measurement to evaluate the standard of undergraduate courses. Postgraduate seminars, colloquia: Postgraduate seminars and colloquia are arranged quarterly, when postgraduate students and research associates present their research projects in smaller discussion groups.

fullness) or well-being of society.[23] By doing this OTS strives to keep the OT and Hebrew Scriptures vibrant and relevant for the African context(s). A better understanding of these ancient texts should enhance the faith or religious experience of its readers.

Transformation and the future

In agreement with the UP 2025 institutional vision, OTS is committed to the value of diversity and transformation in its various forms and interpretations. In the past, until 1994, the study of the OT was almost exclusively a white male dominated enterprise. Snyman (2013:2) indicates that epistemological transformation is evident in two aspects of the study of the OT in SA since the last two decades of the previous century, '[*t*]he first epistemological transformation (was) from a predominantly conservative approach to the study of the Old Testament to critical scholarship' and 'a kind of second epistemological transformation' was a 'remarkable diversity of approaches' and an increase in 'race and gender representation' from 1994 until 2012.

The urgency to take the African context(s) more into consideration and to address questions from the African continent more seriously requires serious attention. This entails sensitivity for the multi-African social contexts. Without neglecting existing paradigms new epistemological knowledge systems should be added to the academic system. This includes inter alia more indigenous knowledge systems. Such systems will enrich the study of the OT and add value to theological and religious education. Further transformational aspects to be addressed are pedagogy and the openness to critical thinking.

23. Two books on this theme have been published with contributions by OT personnel and associates. See Human (2015) and Human (2017).

The department is committed to explore and pursue all possibilities to develop the aspects of Africanisation, diversity and transformation as academic values on different levels. In 2012 the first woman in the history of the department was appointed as a permanent staff member (A. Geyser-Fouché). The second woman appointment was G.E. de Villiers in 2015. An appointment after 2013 was S.S. Ndoga as honorary senior lecturer. The number of black undergraduate and postgraduate students has increased during the past two years. But, academia and church are both in dire need for more African academics who can teach biblical and OTS with the knowledge of Hebrew, Aramaic or other Semitic languages.

The academic profiles and activities of departmental personnel build the avenues for future contextual academic scholarship. Their strengths and academic development are incubators for the academic stature of the department in the century to come. Without providing their complete academic profiles, glimpses of the staff members' current research interests, inclinations and contributions open up the gates to some futuristic vistas. They are presented in the following outlines of the Pentateuch, Prophets and Writings, with additional ancient Near Eastern themes and Religion Studies

Pentateuch

E.E. (Sias) Meyer

E.E. (Sias) Meyer was appointed in 2010. He wrote a thesis on the Priestly Code and aspects of the book of Leviticus. Meyer, thus, as the successor of J.H. Le Roux is the Pentateuch specialist in the faculty (Le Roux 2013:217–218) and will specialise in this part of the Hebrew canon in future.

Until the 1990s the South African OT scenario was dominated by text-imminent methods. This tendency is described in the book of J.H. Le Roux (1993) with the apt title of *A Story of Two Ways*.

The two ways to which Le Roux refers are the text-imminent and the historical-critical methods. The latter was less used. As Le Roux (1993:352) states in the conclusion of his book 'historical criticism has clearly not been accepted or digested by the South African theological establishment'. The question today is: What has happened since the early nineties and where should South African OT criticism, especially the study of the Pentateuch, be going in the next few decades? Meyer will address this question continuously.

Meyer underscores that specific future foci will include three possible areas of growth and contestation. These are firstly, the challenge by some South African OT critics that some other scholars have become too focused on Historical Criticism and need to focus more on contemporary issues. Secondly, in response to this challenge, the OT in general and the Pentateuch, in particular, have the potential in helping readers to engage with ethical issues. Thirdly, the study of the Pentateuch reminds us that religious texts are not innocent, but that they were created in ancient historical contexts and served ancient agendas. Therefore we need to continue reading them critically.

In 2012 M. Masenya and H. Ramantswana (2012:604) challenged OT scholars that 'the historical critical trajectory appears to have captured the hearts of SA OT scholars'. This claim was based on an assessment of articles published in *Old Testament Essays* between 1994 and 2010. Masenya and Ramantswana drew from an earlier challenge of F.E. Deist (1992) to other OT scholars to create 'an indigenous South African tradition of OT scholarship' (Deist 1992:314–315). The main question was whether it is enough to engage with the text of the OT within the historical context of ancient Israel or should scholars today rather allow this ancient text to interact with the contemporary world. In this context one is reminded of the classical distinction made by Stendahl (1962:422) between what a text 'meant' and what it 'means'. For Masenya and Ramantswana South African OT scholarship is somehow stuck with what a text 'meant' and they would like these scholars

to engage more with what the text 'means'. At least, this criticism by both these OT scholars shows that South African scholarship has started to take historical criticism seriously, although they think that it is not enough. Their challenge should be taken seriously. But it does not seem clear. The question is: How do we venture from the ancient text to our modern-day world in the hope that the text might somehow change our world today?

One challenge today entails that we might read biblical texts to serve our modern-day political agendas, even if these agendas are good and just. These kinds of readings are often characterised by inconsistent methodologies. This inconsistency is, for instance, visible in the work of E. Farisani. Although Farisani (2010:515) usually warns 'against an uncritical reading of a text', and heeds this warning in his engagements with texts such as Ezra-Nehemiah, his reading of 1 Kings 21:1–29 is actually very uncritical and does not ask any critical questions about the agendas of the authors (see Farisani 2005; also Meyer 2015). Despite this pitfall a renewed debate on the use of the OT in modern-day ethics is needed, especially in Africa. Whatever we do in an attempt to engage with contemporary issues, the challenge is to be consistent. The question remains how we should address the challenge posed by Masenya and Ramantswana.

A possible way to explore the question is to ask about the ethics of the OT and especially those in the Pentateuch. Many of the legal codes in the Pentateuch, such as the Decalogue or the Deuteronomic and Holiness Codes show clear ethical content. Yet, OT critics often see content as a description how ancient Israel thought about ethics, but they are often reluctant to ask more normative questions. A good example of that is the engagement with ethics by John Barton (2014:276) who, only on the last page of his book, turns to the question of applying the 'ethics of the Old Testament' today. He argued that it was not what he intended to do. Barton hopes that, by showing the relevant ancient issues, we might today discover that we share similar issues.

One would think that the Pentateuch could help readers today about the issues of 'land', 'poverty' and 'inequality'. There are laws in the Pentateuch addressing poverty while the larger Pentateuch reflects the story about the promise of land. Themes like 'land' and 'poverty' obviously resonate with the African and South African context(s) and their challenges. Yet, many scholars have shown that there are different views on land in the OT. Habel (1995) has shown this in his book where he identifies at least six ideologies of land. How does this help us if the OT does not agree on the relationship between land and identity? Just as we cannot agree on the meaning of land today, neither could the ancient authors of the OT.

Habel's (1995:31) first ideology is that of the king owning all the land. But this ideology is absent from the Pentateuch and only found in certain Psalms like Psalms 2 and 72. Why did the ideology of the king owning all the land not make it into the Pentateuch? Furthermore, why are the legal collections of the Pentateuch not attributed to the king as in most other societies of the ancient Near East?[24] It seems that, like many modern-day constitutional democracies (our own included), the ancient authors of the Bible already understood that the power of human authority figures should be curtailed and limited. The critical study of the Pentateuch would help the reader to understand how ancient authors thought about power and the abuse of power. However, there is also another side which has to do with the influence of empire on the OT and the Pentateuch. How to relate these questions to today remains the challenge of our current hermeneutical reflections on the texts.

One of the issues in OT criticism is: Why is the OT so positive about the Persian Empire? The Assyrians and Babylonians are criticised and despised, but the Persians are portrayed in a positive light. One obvious answer is usually that they presumably

24. Quite a few scholars have asked this question. A recent example would be Tsai (2014:170-175).

funded the Second Temple, which was in the time of Darius, more or less 515 BCE (Frevel 2016:309). The Holiness Code has ethical content as was previously mentioned, and one could add that, like the first part of Leviticus, it still portrays the cult as central. Many scholars argue that this text was written in the Persian Period[25] and this leads to an essential question: Is the Holiness Code pro Persian Empire or critical of the empire?[26] Is it thus embracing the empire or somehow resisting it? Similar political and ideological questions should be asked in OTS today and in the future.

Hieke (2014b:679–687), for instance, in his interpretation of the Molech laws in Leviticus 18 and 20, offers what one could call 'an anti-imperial reading', where these texts warn people living in Yehud against allowing their children to serve the Persian king. 'Molech' is understood as a coded reference to 'king' which in this context would mean Persian king. The text becomes some kind of a coded encouragement to resist the Persian Empire.

Balentine (1999:39–57) on the other hand offers a different interpretation. He presents a broad overview of how ancient empires worked, including the 'social control' they had used to keep conquered nations subdued. He then presents an interpretation of the priestly creation narrative (Gn 1) which concludes with the creation of Sabbath. For Balentine (1999:49), what we have is 'a symbolic picture of a world where religion and the priestly cult is preordained by God as the highest purpose of creation'. Endorsing the cult means for Balentine endorsing the empire that built it.

25. See Otto (2007:199-200) for the early fourth century, Nihan (2007:574) for late fifth century with Grünwaldt (1999:379-381) and Hieke (2014a:70) aiming more for the middle of the fifth century.

26. I am familiar with the debate started by Peter Frei and his hypothesis of Persian Imperial Authorization as well as the arguments of the Heidelberg School. I do not find their arguments that convincing and would rather agree with Ska (2006:217–226) that the Pentateuch was created as the result of the internal need for unity and not external Persian pressure.

Whichever way we read the Pentateuch, it constantly reminds us that religious texts like the Bible are not innocent texts, but that they were created in real historical contexts where powerplay and political agendas were of the order of the day. In this sense, they have real potential to resonate with modern-day African or South African politics. Hopefully, these texts and such interpretations inspire readers to be more critical and strive for greater ethical values and not simply serve contemporary political agendas. Yet, like the ancient authors of the Pentateuch debated issues of ethics, poverty, land and identity, we should follow their example to keep on debating these issues in contemporary African and South African societies. They endorse a way that contemporary readers could follow.

With the above challenges and questions Meyer will appropriate and contextualise the Pentateuch to students of OTS in years to come.

Prophets

Alphonso Groenewald

Alphonso Groenewald was appointed permanently in the Department in 2006. Although he initially specialised on the Book of Psalms, he also focused his career further on Prophetical studies. He convincingly combined and intertwined both synchronic and diachronic exegesis in his methodological approach to exegesis and texts (Le Roux 2013:213–214). Since then he has lectured in Biblical and Religious Studies, Religion Studies and OTS. He has been responsible for teaching all the Prophetic Literature since 2011. His main focus of research has been the book of Isaiah (mainly Is 1–12) since 2010.

Groenewald completed his DTh (2003) at the University of Nijmegen (Netherlands), entitled 'Psalm 69: Its structure, redaction and composition', which was published in 2003. He obtained a Master's degree in Semitic Languages from the

UP (1996) with a dissertation entitled 'Poetic conventions in a Young Babylonian prayer of the lifting of the hand to the goddess' *Ištar*. His conclusion contributed to the view that a serious shortcoming in the analysis of Akkadian texts is the lack of attention paid to a detailed literary analysis of such texts. This shortcoming is especially discernible in the case of poetic texts. It is widely accepted that poetic texts contain a great number of specialised techniques which play an important role in their interpretation. His comprehensive poetic analysis of this Babylonian prayer made it clear that this text is an artistically composed prayer and that this poet was an artist in his own merit who contributed to the poetic literature of the Ancient Near East.

In his doctoral thesis Groenewald concluded that the text of Psalm 69 'is the product of a multi-stage redactional-compositional process' (Groenewald 2003:291). Le Roux (2009:5) emphasised that Groenewald reaffirms the structural analysis (of his Pretoria teacher W.S. Prinsloo) as the basic exegetical approach but also underscored the importance of the diachronical aspects of a text (cf. also Groenewald 2004:62–72). In this regard he follows the methodology of Ulrich Berges, his teacher in Nijmegen, who calls this approach a 'diachronically reflected synchrony' (Berges 1999:119–120, 2000:170). The specific nature of the OT requires the exegete to focus on more than only the final text of the individual psalm, or for that matter, any other OT text. The OT, as an ancient book, was written over a very long time and went through processes of reworking and revision from different perspectives in different contexts and in different epochs. This complex origin and growth of the texts of the OT is part of its attraction: One can 'even assert that the power of the Old Testament literature actually lies in this long, involved process' (Groenewald 2007:108; Le Roux 2009:5).

Any analysis of OT texts should take the historical dimension of the OT seriously (Le Roux 2009:5). Literature of the Hebrew Bible is compared with a cathedral which was planned and built over decades and centuries. Therefore it reflects the building styles from different epochs and often shows no sign of unity or style. In order to comprehend the structure of a cathedral, one has to dig into the history of its origins. The 'layers' of the OT were put together like building blocks over many years. These layers highlight the OT's long development, as well as the particular theological thinking of a specific period in Israel's existence (Le Roux 2009:5; cf. also Groenewald 2007:109). In years to come, students of OTS should still unravel these processes in their studies and research.

His research focus on prophetic literature reflects a twofold emphasis, namely the focus on the literary as well as the historical nature of these texts. Both the synchronic and the diachronic analysis indicate the development of the text of Isaiah 1–12 in different layers. It is thus necessary to take the historical embeddedness of the message of the book of Isaiah seriously, as it is the product of a long and complicated process of development and transmission. Texts are indeed rooted in human history and cannot be properly understood apart from their historical rootedness. The relationship between the synchronic and the diachronic analysis is of a subtle nature and both dimensions should be retained (cf. Groenewald 2009, 2011b, 2013a, 2013b).

Although Isaiah 1–12 is presented to the reader as a single literary unit at the opening of the book of Isaiah, an analysis of these chapters shows that they are a composition written and composed through several centuries of Judahite history. A key focus of Groenewald's exegesis is the exploration of the ways in which these texts link with other texts within the canon, specifically with texts in the Pentateuch. Literary studies have highlighted the way all texts dialogue with and reuse parts of other texts: whether they agree with or oppose those other texts. One can thus say: No text is an island. In OT scholarship

it has often been the tendency to focus only on one book or a group of books as if they existed in isolation from one another as separate worlds. This statement would imply that each one of these different books was written and composed amongst isolated social and literary groups. It, though, is impossible to imagine that the different scribal groups in the post-exilic province of *Yehud* functioned and worked in totally isolated compartments. There were only a few highly educated scribes in post-exilic Jerusalem and despite their differences, they shared a social discourse which was reflected in their literary creations. This assumption does not imply flattening the differences in theologies and ideologies existing between these groups or even within the different books they created. On the contrary, these literary creations are reflections of robust discourses existing between these different groups in different epochs of history and understandably contain multiple ideologies and voices (cf. Groenewald 2011a, 2012). More of these inner-biblical discourses will have to be identified, contemplated and appropriated for the African and South African contexts in future.

As was stated above, Groenewald established a project with the focus on Prophetic studies (Pro Prof). Since 2012, an annual seminar focusing on topics from the prophetic literature and its relevance to the African and South African context(s) has been organised. The aim is to foster the exegetical tradition this Department has been associated with over the last century and to apply this tradition to the prophetic literature (Le Roux 2009:7).

Recently, Groenewald has engaged with the new field of 'Trauma Theory and Biblical Studies' and its application to the prophetic books, especially the Book of Isaiah (cf. Carr 2011; Garber 2015). Theologians have always engaged with questions of human suffering. This discourse about suffering and God's 'implied' absence is described as the theodicy question. Theodicy engages with claims about the goodness and presence of God during mysterious situations of suffering in the world. The rise of trauma studies and the theological engagement with it can move

theology, in particular, and OTS specifically in new directions. Such perspectives would lead to distinctive theological articulations and present profound challenges to theological understandings (Rambo 2010:5). Biblical scholars make use of trauma theory (Rambo 2010):

> [*B*]oth to make sense of the accounts of violence, suffering and catastrophe within these sacred texts and to give theological expression to contemporary contexts of suffering … Trauma theory provides a distinctive lens through which to interpret sacred texts and for rethinking the claims and central beliefs arising from them. (p. 30)

At the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st centuries OT scholars paid new attention to the experiences of the destruction of Samaria and Israel (late 8th century BCE) and the Babylonian exiles (early 6th century), and the subsequent effects of these two traumatic events on the people of Samaria and Judah (Carr 2014:3). The effect of the Babylonian exile, as well as its aftermath, was the driving force behind the text production and preservation of many of these materials that we have in the Hebrew Bible. The stamp of exile was thus placed on much of this canon.

This insight caused a number of scholars to examine the material in the Hebrew Bible in the light of trauma theory (Garber 2015:24–25). This, according to Carr (2011:304), would explain some of the unique characteristics of Judean scribal prophecy, namely its 'communal audience and focus on collective guilt as compared with archives of Near Eastern prophecy (e.g. Mari, Neo-Assyrian prophecy) that had not gone through the sieve of exilic trauma'. Trauma studies can therefore be helpful in the study of the Hebrew Bible, as contemporary research on trauma highlights the manner in which overwhelming suffering often has a tremendous effect on memory and behaviour, even in indirect ways. Trauma could thus be defined as 'an overwhelming, haunting experience of disaster so explosive in its impact that

it cannot be directly encountered and influences an individual/group's behavior and memory in indirect ways' (Carr 2014:7).

Apart from his exegetical approach, various competencies regarding Psalms and Prophetical Literature and his interest in trauma studies, Groenewald will teach and appropriate the different texts to students of Africa in future.

Old Testament writings

Ananda Geyser-Fouché

Ananda Geyser-Fouché was appointed in 2012 as successor of P.M. Venter. She obtained a Master's degree in Semitic Languages (2000) on Qumran texts, a PhD degree (2006) on Chronicles and has interest in the Second Temple and OT wisdom literature (Le Roux 2013:218). She studied at the Qumran Institute in Gröningen (the Netherlands) under the guidance of world-renowned Qumran experts F.G. Martínez and E. Tigchelaar. In both her Master's and PhD studies she gained experience in reading Second Temple Literature. This has enabled her to develop a niche for the uniqueness of texts from the Second Temple era as well as from Qumran texts. In pursuing educational studies, she received a postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education in 2008 which has influenced her teaching methodology. For Geyser-Fouché teaching is a process of facilitation where students are involved in their own learning processes with a strong component of research that is implemented through inquiry-based learning.

Geyser-Fouché's lecturing responsibilities are overlapping extensively with her field(s) of research. Her teaching duties include modules on biblical narratives and historiography with emphasis on the books of Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah and Ruth. Other modules include OT wisdom (including books like Job, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes) and apocalyptic literature, like the book of Daniel and overviews on the apocryphal apocalyptic literature, like Enoch, Baruch and Qumran.

Geyser-Fouché has included philosophical concepts from postmodern literary theories in her research. She has applied these literary concepts in her interpretation of both OT and Qumran texts (Geyser & Breytenbach 2006; Geyser-Fouché 2016a). As a result of this she has focused on the type of language that different Judaic texts used in order to convey ideologically driven messages. Furthermore, she attends to the polemic nature of OT and other Judaic texts. She interprets texts critically, which is reflected in her dialectic critical orientated theology. In her research she examined crucifixion texts in Qumran and compared these with OT regulations, asking whether Deuteronomy 21:18–23 is the source or the intertext for the Temple texts (cf. Geyser & Van Aarde 1998; Geyser-Fouché 2014b). In addition, Geyser-Fouché addressed contextual questions asked from the viewpoint of an ecclesial perspective. Two of these questions were the matters of 'heaven and hell' (Geyser-Fouché 2015), and the question about discernment (בין) in the OT (Geyser-Fouché 2014a).

Part of Geyser-Fouché's research was done on the powers behind Chronicles in comparison with texts in Genesis, Samuel, Kings and a selection of other sources. This was complemented by research on the tendency to idealise David or Moses according to the community's place of worship: powers behind Chronicles in contrast to the powers behind the Qumran community. This is compared to a David against Moses or to the temple cult against the Torah (cf. Geyser & Breytenbach 2006). The latter is one of the topics about which a lot of research can still be done and which will surface in future research. Lately, she engaged in gender-specific studies regarding Qumran texts 4Q184 and 4Q185 (cf. Geyser-Fouché 2016b, 2016c).

Ecotheology is another important research interest of Geyser-Fouché. She links this theology with the created order as reflected in wisdom literature. Furthermore, she endeavours to understand the human being's ecological responsibility from an evolutionary perspective, with special emphasis on order and creation theology from OT wisdom literature. There is an

attempt by her to draw a connection between these entities. This research entails an exposition of various aspects, namely, cosmology, ecology, evolutionary biology and order in the wisdom literature.

In summary, Geyser-Fouché's research themes focus on texts from the second Temple Judaism, which include: wisdom literature, narratives, apocalyptic literature and Qumran Studies. In the past, Qumran Studies did not receive much attention in SA. Geyser-Fouché initiated and conducted several activities in this regard. These include a national conference on Qumran Studies at the UP (2015), an issue with high standard publications (2016) and participation at IOSOT, Stellenbosch (2016). Geyser-Fouché cooperates with a local research associate, A. Viljoen, and two internationally renowned Qumran scholars, namely E. Tigchelaar from KU Leuven, Belgium and (the late) P. Flint from TWU, Canada.

The Department of OTS currently hosts a registered project on Qumran Studies. This project contributes to a special niche for Qumran Studies in Africa (which is a scarcity in SA). Research questions on various aspects are inter alia addressed in dialogue with other national and international Qumran scholars annually. As part of the Faculty of Theology's centenary celebrations (2017), the Department organises and hosted the national Old Testament Society of South Africa (OTSSA) conference (05–07 September). In 2017 the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls is celebrating its 70th anniversary.

Texts from the Second Temple period cannot be studied in isolation. Results from this project are stimulating interdisciplinary cooperation. This includes inter alia postmodern literary theories, cosmology, ecology, evolutionary biology, ecotheology, NTS, Talmudic and Apocryphal studies, et cetera.

In future, the academic challenge would be to read and interpret these themes and textual studies within the context(s) of the African and South African societies. Geyser-Fouché will play a major role in this endeavour.

Dirk J. Human

Dirk Human is since September 2012 the Head of Department and the longest serving academic personnel member in the FT (25 years). Aspects of his academic profile are already described elsewhere (see inter alia Le Roux 2009, 2013:210–212).[27] Therefore a complete academic profile of him is not necessary here.

Human's primary research focus is on the book of Psalms. His supervisor, W.S. Prinsloo, has left a legacy of national and international renowned Psalm research in the Department (see Prinsloo 2000). This focus has also inspired the research fields of other Prinsloo students in the Department of Ancient Languages at the UP, namely Phil Botha, Gert T.M. Prinsloo and Henk Potgieter.

Apart from his individual Psalm projects he has initiated and established an international Pro Psalms seminar, where national and international Psalms specialists have discussed relevant themes annually since 2003. In the past few years various themes have been discussed, such as Psalms and suffering (2009), Psalms and their redactions (2012), Psalms and the poor (2015–2016), Psalms and (in)justice (2017). Several academic books have appeared during the past 14 years as a result of this seminar. They include: *Psalms and Liturgy* (Human & Vos 2004), *Psalms and Mythology* (Human 2007), *Psalms and Hebrews, Studies in Reception* (Human & Steyn 2010), *Psalms and Poetry in Old Testament Ethics* (2012). The themes of suffering, land issues and poverty are relevant for the African and South African contexts and will be discussed for a long time to come.

Various themes in the book of Psalms have an ongoing relevance for the future and for emerging researchers. Together with other poetical books of the Hebrew Scriptures the teaching and theologising of these themes and subject will remain vivid in the next century.

27. See http://orcid.org/0000-0003-0346-4209

Ancient near eastern themes and religion studies

Gerda E. de Villiers

Gerda de Villiers is the second woman to be appointed in the Department in 2015. Her teaching responsibilities are grounded in the Faculty's programme for Religion Studies, where her expertise on Ancient Near Eastern religions comes to the fore.

De Villiers[28] completed her DLitt thesis in Semitic Languages at the UP entitled 'Understanding Gilgamesh: his life and his story' (De Villiers 2004). She was linguistically equipped to read the Gilgamesh Epic in its original language, Akkadian. In the first part of her thesis she attempts to uncover the legendary king Bilgames/Gilgamesh, who inspired the Epic, and to trace the origins and development of the Epic from its Sumerian roots to the Standard Babylonian Version. Thereafter she analysed the Epic by means of the contemporary literary theory of Gerard Genette. De Villiers concluded that the Gilgamesh Epic is experiencing a recent survival in current African contexts because it is able to enter the experiences of modern readers, namely a search for the meaning of life. According to the Epic, the meaning of life is to be found in life itself, and what the individual makes of it (De Villiers & Prinsloo 2004:165–181).

In 2016 De Villiers completed a PhD thesis in OTS on the book of Ruth, 'Israel se Identiteit en die Boek Rut' (De Villiers 2016a). She analysed this book by means of a historical critical approach, which is to read the narrative against a particular socio-historical period in Israelite history. De Villiers concurs with those scholars who date the book to the Second Temple period of the Israelite history. She has indicated that one of the main problems of the post-exilic Israelite community was the question of identity: Who was 'Israel'? Mosaic laws and books like Ezra and Nehemiah argue that foreigners (like the Moabites) be excluded; the book of Ruth

28. A word of gratitude to De Villiers for this part of the chapter.

offers a sweet yet powerful contra-argument for the inclusion of foreigners in the YHWH-worshipping community. De Villiers concludes that the book of Ruth may thus be employed to address contemporary issues where Scripture does not give clear answers, like for example the debate regarding homosexual relationships and marriages (see De Villiers & Le Roux 2016).

De Villiers lectures in the Religion Studies where she introduces students to ancient myths and ancient religions. Initially the focus was on the world of the Ancient Near East: the myths and religions from Mesopotamia, Egypt and Greece. However, there appear to be more students who adhere to religions other than Christianity, or who do not have an interest in the Bible as such. Therefore De Villiers is currently including religions from the worlds of fire and ice: Meso-American and Norse religions, in the syllabus.

Gerda de Villiers thus focuses on two areas of study: Israel and the Hebrew Bible, as well as the surrounding world of Israel, namely the Ancient Near East. She especially attempts to discover the ways in which some of these pagan myths were not merely taken over but reinterpreted by the authors of the Hebrew Bible within Israel's unique YHWH-theology (De Villiers 2006:26–34, 2016b:45–57). Now and in the future, she will continuously aim to raise an awareness of the dialogue between Israel and its ancient Near Eastern neighbours, and also to command respect for all religions, ancient as well as modern. In this way, she and the Department play an invaluable role to build religious tolerance on campus, in SA and on the African continent.

Africanisation and decolonisation

Sampson S. Ndoga

It has repeatedly been stated that the Department should constantly reinterpret and adapt its academic position in the African and South African contexts. Africa is different from other

continents and asks different questions (Le Roux 2013:198). In this regard, Sampson Ndoga, honorary senior lecturer in the Department, contributes hugely to the verbalisation of an understanding of Africanisation and decolonisation. He articulates the following.

The call for Afrocentric readings of the OT is a response to the historical hegemonic hold of Euro-American scholars on biblical studies. The Africanisation of biblical interpretation came to the fore initially as a missiological exercise, as Drogers (1977:43) correctly observes, prompted by the need to contextualise texts for precritical audiences. Admittedly, the process proved condescending as a construct of Euro-American thought whose dualism did not allow Westerners to fully appreciate the indivisibility of the spiritual and material world view of the African (cf. Kaunda 2015:74; Ngong 2009:1). The exclusion of Africans in the attempt to Africanise the interpretation of biblical texts naively produced readings latent with a Western world view. When African scholars progressively became active participants, their theological perspective was endemically dependent on the foreign discourse as studies reveal.

After the missionary era, Africanisation of OT texts took a different turn with the advent of critical African scholars. To start with, the quest for an authentically African Christianity seemed elusive given the colonial context in which such attempts were purely theomimicry (see Voshikawa et al. 2017; Boik & Gremmea 2016; Chayaamor & Hannachi-Belkadi 2017). Early African theologians were not viewed as independent thinkers but participated in the theological discourse under the supervision of Euro-American missionaries or attended Western institutions (see Rankin 2003:85–100). As a result Adamo (2007:21), for example, describes himself as a product of theological training that was contextually and scholarly non-African in which European manners were inculcated, alien values promoted while local cultural values were either dismissed or demonised.

The non-African context was exacerbated by the seeming coincidence of the missionaries and colonialists. Both the

missionary proselytising effort and the imperial agenda introduced the language, culture and systems that were viewed collectively as civilisation. In the process, although missionary endeavours cannot be wholly demonised as Paustian (2014:1–25) attempts to argue, the damage to the psyche of the African identity is incontestable. Kaunda (2015:74) goes to great length to describe the dislocation and alienation of the African in ways that paralysed their way of knowing and a sense of place in the world.

In speaking about the displacement of local ideals, Dube (1999:34) espouses that in speaking foreign languages Africans were not only exposed to grasping syntax and morphology but assuming a culture which carried a body of values. This is reflected in Holter's (2002) listing of doctoral dissertations in OT by African students from 1967 to 2000 which reveals among other observations that the fetters of Western exegesis held strong. In a review of this publication, Bediako (2004) comments on the dissertations that:

> [*N*]one shows serious use of the African context as a resource for interpretation or indicates that the African world, with its awareness of transcendence that is 'larger' than what the Western Enlightenment outlook allows for, can illuminate the Old Testament, probably because most dissertations were produced at Western institutions. (p. 138)

However, critical African scholarship, taking a cue from political emancipation, grew in confidence and took on the brand of theology clothed in Western attire, as Gathogo (2008:162) writes that 'by loosening the missionary interpretive control of the Bible some African Christians adopted new hermeneutical technique to exegete the biblical texts within their own notion of authenticity'. Maluleke (2000:195) predicted the emergence of this new paradigm of the agency of the African in interpreting and enhancing a methodology that would give a better handle on the strategies used to marginalise them. Decolonisation of the Bible represents part of that paradigm as the critical awareness of the connection between texts and the Euro-American

exegetical analyses and the necessary repositioning through a new hermeneutical framework that allows the reclaiming of an authentic African identity and faith. For OTS the process is perhaps twofold.

Firstly, as current scholarship reveals (see Adamo 2007; Dada 2010; Kinyua 2015; Masalha 2012; Punt 2003) decolonisation is by definition a response to colonial readings of OT texts. Punt (2003:58) describes it as a hermeneutic of suspicion and of retrieval or restoration. As such concomitant identity of this reading will necessarily have a reactive notion. Kinyua (2013:58) calls it a discourse of resistance. Ngong (2009:7) labels the readings produced prior to decolonisation as 'imperial texts'. Kinyua (2013:58) calls analyses of Bible translation contributions towards the ultimate discourse of resistance against discourse of colonialism. The decolonising agenda has contemporaries in other contexts (Ahluwahli 2000) and disciplines (Wa Thiong (1998) all advocating for a denunciation of any subjugation motifs. Küster (2014:172) opines the inevitability of a response by stating that Christian intellectuals found themselves needing to face the question of why they wanted to keep the religion of their former colonisers. This turbulent phase is perhaps a necessary development but will culminate into what can authentically be described as an African reading of the OT.

Secondly, African OT readings will perhaps emerge informed by a new hermeneutical framework by African scholars using African realities to interact with the biblical text, not as a reaction to Euro-American readings, but purely in their own right as such. Masenya (2004:455) questions whether it is wise or folly to continue to teach African students Western-oriented readings of OT texts. Teaching such readings at the exclusion of others is certainly folly, but pretending that these readings do not exist as legitimate value-adding intellectual property negates academics. Nyende (2009:132) iterates the need for ethnic studies as urgent and requires appropriateness of curriculum within the African context. As Oden (2007) revealed in his seminal publication on the paradoxical genesis of Western Christian thought via the North

African writing fathers, Tertullian, St Augustine of Hippo, Cyprian, Origen and Athanasius. Sadly, these champions have not always been presented and celebrated as African.

Kaunda (2015:74) highlights an important impediment to an African reading of the biblical text – African self-negations as a result of the dehumanisation of the African identity. He disputes the adequacy of the decolonisation theology as an emancipatory approach when he writes that (Kaunda 2015):

> African theology or decolonial thinking did not put into consideration the extent to which Africans had internalized oppression and lost sight of indigenous agency which led to recolonisation of the self by Africans. (p. 75)

He proposes a viable framework for decolonising the African mind through independent thinking.

The task of OTS on hand is by no means easy. There are some implications worth considering:

1. The promotion of African scholars in OTS in order to subscribe to the seemingly limited voices within certain disciplines (see Mangayi 2012).
2. The emergence of African theology whereby the concept 'decolonisation' is no longer necessary as the adjectival qualifier for reading OT texts.
3. The continued publication of collaborative projects by African scholars such as the Africa Bible Commentary (Adeyemo 2006) commensurate with other publications of this nature.
4. When the African identity and voice represents multiple voices across the continent, particularly those at the grass roots, whose views have not always been considered in the reading of the biblical texts.

Ndoga and other African OT scholars will enrich the department in future by contemplating and adding diverse African epistemologies to existing international ways of text interpretation and appropriation. In the next century African voices should resonate clear and with a strong global footprint.

Résumé

This chapter intends to cast selective glimpses of the past, present and anticipated future of the Department of OTS at the UP. During the centenary celebrations of the FT (2017), this contemplation is imperative. Academic activities and contributions of its personnel, students and associate scholars of the past and present hold a significant influence on its prospective academic stature and future. Their relevance and the contextualisation of OT and Ancient Near Eastern literature in the South African and African contexts could resonate in an influential and clear global footprint. Therefore, the Department will continuously strive for academic excellence at a world-ranked Faculty and University. In alliance with ecclesial partners, society and academic collaborators this Department will work for academic integrity to be locally relevant and internationally competitive in the century to come.

Summary: Chapter 2

In a short historical overview of the academic and social contributions of the Department of OTS at the UP over the past century (1917–2017), this chapter provides a limited picture of how the department has contributed to academia, church and society. In this year of the Faculty of Theology's centenary celebrations, this chapter contemplates selected highlights of the past and intends to discover the avenues of future vistas through current academic strengths, research foci of personnel and the actualisation of the OT in the African context(s).

From the inception of the UP in 1908, the Faculty of Humanities has been involved in OT related studies, namely the study of the Hebrew language. OTS has become known over many years through individual scholars' expertise regarding Bible translation and the foci on specific parts of the OT, namely the Pentateuch, Psalms, Prophets or Second Temple literature. World renowned projects started since 1990 to involve several international scholars.

These include inter alia Pro Pent, Pro Psalms, Pro Prof and Qumran projects.

Because the department is located at a FT in Africa, it has continuously strived to become theologically relevant for local and African contexts. The department continually envisions excellence and relevant scholarship for its contexts in academia, church and society.

Chapter 3

Celebratory nostalgia: Reflecting on the work and impact of the Department of New Testament Studies at the University of Pretoria

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Point of departure

The year 2017 marks a momentous occasion for the UP's FT – its centenary celebrations. The celebration of such a significant moment in the existence of the FT almost automatically gives way to a kind of nostalgic indulgence in retrospection. Yet, the

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Department of NTS does not only want to reflect on the past events that have led to the present, but aspires introspectively to examine the Department's current position, task and impact in order to allow for the prospective generation and evaluation of mental representations of possible futures. It is this ability that fundamentally shapes human cognition, emotion, motivation and movement into the future. This chapter thus anticipates briefly to explore the history, work and impact of the Department of NTS at the UP. It is done by focussing on what has been identified as our three widening circles of interest or focal points:

- The Department is, first and foremost, a department dedicated to equipping students from *the partner churches* with the best possible training in NTS.
- The Department must also situate itself within *the greater South African and African contexts* in which it is embedded – especially with topics such as the decolonisation of 'traditional' Western scholarship which is currently gaining greater national momentum.
- Simultaneously, as NT scholars, members of the Department will always endeavour to keep close contact with *the larger context of international New Testament scholarship* and the unique perspectives that they might contribute to the discipline.

The history of the Studies (as of 2000; until 1999, it was known as the Department of NT) has been documented before in various contributions at significant junctures (see, for instance, the summarised histories by Steyn 2013a and Van der Watt, Du Toit & Joubert 2009). In these histories, the focus was on each of the different professors[29] associated with the Department of NTS since its inception. This is, of course, of immense value as each one of these lecturers contributed to the development of the Department's 'exceptional nature' (Van

29. J.H.A. Greyvenstein, E.P. Groenewald, A.S. Geyser, S.P.J. Janse van Rensburg, A.B. du Toit, G.M.M. Pelser, F.J. Botha, A.G. van Aarde, J.A. van der Watt, P.A. Geyser, S.J. Joubert, G.J. Steyn, E. van Eck and J. Kok, as well as E. Mahlangu.

der Watt et al. 2009). The current contribution should thus not be read in isolation from those histories and reflections that have gone before. It will, however, differ from the format of those that have gone before in the sense that it will not use as starting point each individual current lecturer[30] but rather the Department's research projects.[31] This choice is made in order to provide a different vantage point from which to view the Department's work and impact. The aim of this contribution is thus to focus on (1) the variety of methods used by the *current* members of the Department of NTS in their various research projects, and (2) the impact that these projects have and can continue to have in terms of the three widening circles of influence as mentioned above. For this reason, the research projects will be used as the framework for this chapter. Under each project as heading more detail regarding the past, current and future work on the project will be discussed. In these discussions, I shall reference current members of the Department who have been, and are contributing to the specific project.

Providing context for the current reflection

Hurtado (2009) observes the following:

> [*T*]wentieth-century New Testament scholarship is a story of a great proliferation in approaches, emphases, and methods, a growing diversity of scholars in gender, ethnicity, geography, and religious stances, and also a greater diversity in the types of academic settings in which their scholarship is conducted than had characterized preceding centuries. (p. 43)

30. G.J. Steyn, E. van Eck, J. Kok, M. Speckman and Z. Dube.

31. Special mention must be made at this point of the continued work of Prof. A.G. van Aarde at the Department of New Testament Studies as honorary professor and editor of the highly acclaimed journal *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* (see e.g. De Villiers 2011; Jackson 2011; Le Roux 2011).

This story is one that has been, and is also playing out in the Department of NTS at the UP. The department was firmly built on the foundation of the classic diachronic approaches such as historical-critical, social-scientific and text-immanent exegesis (see Steyn 2013a; Van der Watt et al. 2009). However, since the upsurge of synchronic approaches during the 1970s and 1980s (e.g. structural, discourse and narrative analysis, to name a few), the Department of NTS has made it a priority to ensure that a holistic approach to textual analysis and interpretation is followed (Steyn 2013a) as both the historical (diachronic) and the literary (synchronic) approaches are central to responsible exegesis. This is a sentiment shared internationally in the highest levels of NT research, demonstrated by Tuckett (2014) in an article evaluating the work and significance of the Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas when he makes the following statement:

> A focus wider than one simply on the NT texts alone, bringing into play the broad spread of early Christianity in all its diversity, is vital to the health of our discipline. It exposes us to the breadth of early Christian life and thought. As such, it may challenge us to think through, and to rethink, what might be our response to the claims made by these texts, whatever our background, our prior or current beliefs, or our 'religious' persuasions. (p. 184)

This proliferation was accompanied in the latter decades of the 20th century by the considerably greater salience and influence of a far greater transcultural diversity in scholars and approaches, involving figures and developments in Latin America, Asia and Africa (Hurtado 2009). It is especially important when taking into account that the field was previously heavily dominated by the work of Western or European (especially German) scholars. In fact, Frye (1982; cf. Kwok 2005:82) referred to the Bible as the 'great code' that underwrites Western civilisation. In many other parts of the world, too, the Bible is part of the prevailing cultural legacies (e.g. Brenner 2000:7–12; Sugirtharajah 2003:81). Sugirtharajah (2002) puts it as follows:

> The Bible … 'simply swarms us'. Western culture and literature are saturated with its language and imageries. It has invaded colonies

> and has intruded into the political and social and cultural life of peoples who were not necessarily part of the Biblical heritage … The overwhelming presence of the Bible was the result of modernity. (p. 204)

Emphasising its cultural role, David Tracy (1981, 1987) referred to the Bible as a 'classic' text. As classic, it bears a surplus and longevity of meaning, but it nevertheless resists definitive interpretation. In fact, as in the past, the Bible can also function as a means of 'interruption' in cultural processes, depending on its interpreters' (or consuming audiences') openness to engage its notions of truth (Punt 2016). As a NT department firmly ensconced within the context of an ever-evolving SA (specifically) and Africa (broadly), the importance of the principle of *semper reformanda* (ongoing reformation) is always at the forefront of its work. It is this openness to engage critically with its notions of truth that has allowed the Department constantly to transform or to be at the forefront of transformation, touching the South African context on many levels (Steyn 2013a):

- In the political arena, the insights gained from NT exegesis led to the Department's eventual strong break with political organisations, racism and churchism.
- On a social level, this focus on ongoing reformation led to the termination of discrimination according to gender, language and/or culture.
- By addressing bigger transformation issues like socio-economic, ecclesiological and spiritual transformation, the Department and its members have become instruments of hope in various social contexts.

However, as is the nature of ongoing reformation, it cannot be achieved. It must remain an unremitting process to continue to facilitate transformation which leads to peace, reconciliation and global justice. That is why this process is always the Department's priority through particular focus on the analysis, description and relevance of Judaeo-Christian

identities, conducted on the nexus of Hellenistic Judaism and Early Christianity as situated within the broader contexts of late antiquity. This becomes evident when examining the various research projects that the Department pursue and to which I now turn.

Examining the research projects of the Department of New Testament Studies

The Jewish Scriptures used by early Christian societies

The LXX and Hebrews

The Department of NTS contributed, through the work of Gert J. Steyn (2011a), to the insight that LXX manuscripts ought to be compared to NT manuscripts – but then ancient manuscript witnesses should be compared with manuscripts, not eclectic modern printed text editions with each other (see also Steyn 2010a:211–226, 2010b:238–255). Further aspects of this comparative and intertextual research on the LXX and Hebrews include investigations related to Hebrews' possible Egyptian origin (Steyn 2016b:103–122); its composition (Steyn 2011b, 2014a:68–87); quotations from the Torah (Steyn 2000:263–272, 2002:207–223, 2006a:135–151, 2007:152–168, 2011b, 2016c:337–357), Psalms (Human & Steyn 2010; Steyn 2003a:493–514, 2003b:262–282, 2004:1085–1103, 2006b:119–134, 2009a:384–406, 2010c:194–228) and Minor Prophets (Steyn 2009b:119–140); its relationship to the Dead Sea Scrolls (Steyn 2016d); the use of Septuagint terminology (Steyn 2009c:583–607, 2014b:113–125, 2015d:117–143); intertextual connections with the Maccabean literature (Steyn 2015e:271–291); moral language attained from Hebrews' Scriptures (Steyn 2010d:311–329) and inevitably related aspects of its theology (Steyn 2001:433–440, 2003c:1107–1128, 2005:123–134, 2011c:429–450, 2011d:143–164).

The LXX and the rest of the New Testament

Steyn's investigation into the LXX *Vorlage* of the explicit quotations in Hebrews shows that nearly all of the quotations from the Torah in Hebrews are also to be found in Philo of Alexandria (except the allusions to Gn 47:31 and the quotations from Dt 9:19 and 32:43). In addition, the text form of all these explicit Torah quotations is in agreement with the form of the Torah quotations found in Philo – in contrast to those of the Masoretic Text (MT) and LXX. Both Hebrews and Philo deviate from the readings of the MT and the LXX witnesses. This could mean that Hebrews and Philo might have known and used an earlier common LXX *Vorlage* of the Torah, thus independently using the same version of the Scriptures in another form than that known to us in the reconstructed versions of the LXX (and the MT). This actually strengthens possible Alexandrian commonalities. The phenomenon begged further investigation. Steyn thus expanded his quest for the LXX *Vorlage(n)* of the NT quotations to also include the Pauline literature, the Gospels and Acts. His consequent research that compared the LXX, Philo and the NT involved a number of LXX quotations from the Torah but was also extended to text-critical investigations on the quotations from Isaiah and the Minor Prophets.

Torah quotations

Meticulous investigations into the Torah quotations in the Pauline literature that overlaps with those in Philo brings a clearer understanding of the differences between Paul's LXX *Vorlage* and that of his own editorial hand. In Galatians, evidence surfaces about a text form other than the reconstructed LXX that we have and which might underlie those quotations (cf. Steyn 2012a). In the Corinthian correspondence, there is little doubt that Paul and Philo followed a very similar LXX tradition, but where Philo seems to be much closer to the wording of his *Vorlage*, Paul made some hermeneutical adaptations in 1 Corinthians 15:45 and some stylistic changes in 2 Corinthians 8:15 (cf. Steyn 2013b).

Investigations into the Gospels of Mark and Matthew show that one of the most striking differences among the Torah quotations is the presence, or absence, of the Greek personal pronoun. Mark's readings seem to be, in general, slightly closer to the LXX whereas Matthew's readings tend to be closer to the readings of the same passages in the works of Philo of Alexandria. Matthew probably used Mark as a source in these cases, finding the quotations discussed above via his Markan source. However, whereas the Markan version of the quotations under investigation remains closer to our known LXX text form, the Matthean versions very often differ from Mark and seem to be closer to Philo. The differences are most probably due to the editorial hand of Matthew – perhaps due to adjustment to a known LXX version? (cf. Steyn 2013c).

In his research on the Torah quotations in the Acts of the Apostles, Steyn (2013d) comes to the conclusion that there are no clear traces of another *Textvorlage* of the Torah that was used by Luke and/or Philo in the six cases investigated. Luke's quotations in these instances resemble adaptations and interpretations already made in the Christian tradition by his time. A number of cases show evidence of conflations and paraphrases of the quoted passages. Noteworthy, however, is that Philo's text form and that of the reconstructed LXX text are very close in the cases investigated. Where Philo notably differs from the reconstructed LXX text, Luke tends to represent a text form that is closer aligned to that of the LXX than to that of Philo.

In research presented as a keynote paper during the New Testament Society of South Africa on John, Steyn (2015a) points out that the single Torah quotation in John's Gospel that overlaps with Philo leaves very little doubt that the differences should be ascribed to the editorial hand(s) of the Johannine School, rather than to an alternative LXX text form.

Isaiah quotations

The research by Steyn on the text form of the Isaiah quotations in the *Sondergut Matthäus* (SMt) was later requested by acclaimed Hebrew text-critical scholar Emanuel Tov during an LXX conference in Greece. Steyn has shown that there are hardly any differences regarding the Hebrew text form between the Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS) and MT versions. It is clear that Matthew adopted the text form of those Isaiah quotations that came from Mark or Q as he had found it in this source material. Thus, if he stayed close to the text form of those quotations as found in his synoptic source material, he would probably do the same regarding the text form of the source(s) that he used for these SMt quotations. There seems to be a tendency for the text form of the Isaiah quotations in the SMt sections to moves closer, at a number of places, to the Hebrew versions (DSS, MT) and to some of the early translations of the LXX such as the Syriac translations (Syro-Palestinian and Syro-Hexapla) as well as the Egyptian Coptic translations (especially in the Boharic dialect). These commonalities are pointing to the likelihood that Matthew used another LXX text form than the reconstructed LXX of today (and one which is also closer to the Hebrew of the DSS and *Codex Leningradensis*). A synoptic overview of the differences and similarities between these texts confirms not only that the Hebrew text form underlying the six quotations in Matthew was close to that of the DSS and *Codex Leningradensis*, but it also points to a possible closer connection with the fifth column of Origen's Hexapla (cf. Steyn 2012b).

Dodekapropheton quotations: Romans and Matthew as examples

It is striking that all quotations from the Minor Prophets in Romans are to be found in Romans 9–11, except for the quotation from Habakkuk 2:4 in Romans 1:17. Paul clearly seems to have followed mainly an LXX version of the Minor Prophets with

traces of minor textual variations compared to those of modern-day reconstructions. The quotations from Malachi 1:2 and Joel 3:5 are in close agreement with the (reconstructed) LXX whereas the quotation from Hosea 2:25 should rather be understood as a paraphrase. The remaining two quotations from Hosea 2:1 and Nahum 2:1 are indisputably conflated quotations (cf. Steyn 2015b).

Two categories of explicit 12P quotations in Matthew are distinguished, namely those of his sources Mark and Q (12PMk and 12PQ) – and those in his *Sondergut* material (12PSMt). The latter includes 12P quotations that belong to Matthew's 'fulfilment *florilegium*' (12PSMt–ff) and the rest of the 'proper SMt' quotations (12PSMt–p). Seven quotations from the 12P were found via Matthew's sources (Mark, Q and a pre-Matthean 'fulfilment *florilegium*'). Quotations from 12PMk and 12PQ were copied by Matthew with clear traces of his own editorial involvement. However, none of the three fulfilment quotations (12PSMt–ff) agree with the existing or extant LXX text forms. In fact, they display closer alignment towards known Hebrew texts (cf. Steyn 2016a). A paper read and published at the Vatican clearly shows how Matthew substitutes Micah's ἄρχοντα for ἡγούμενος in Matthew 2:6. The term ἡγούμενος occurs in Matthew 10 times – all referring to the Roman governor – so that Matthew intentionally adjusted it in order to present Jesus with the *terminus technicus* as governor (*praefectus Iudaeae*; cf. Steyn 2013e).

☐ Investigating the LXX text forms of the Torah quotations common to Philo and the New Testament

If traces of the text form of an Old Greek Version from the Torah are still to be found and if it is at all possible to trace such an early text form, one of the places to look for it would be in the quotations from the Greek OT by Judeo-Hellenistic writers such as Philo, Paul and other NT authors. However,

comparative studies on the quotations from the Torah in the NT seldom take cognisance of the *Corpus Philonicum*. These studies generally tend to compare the quotations to mainly the MT and LXX. Lately, and justifiably so at least, the Dead Sea Scrolls are increasingly included in such textual comparisons of OT quotations in the NT. However, the place of the Hellenistic Jewish writer Philo of Alexandria such textual comparisons remains largely neglected. Similar to this oversight in NT comparisons is the tendency to ignore these quotations in the NT where they overlap in Philo. This overlap of OT quotations between Philo and the NT is of great importance in studies that occupy themselves with the text forms of the LXX that might possibly underlie these quotations. The phenomenon begs further and more careful investigation.

The findings of the study on the assumed LXX Vorlage of the quotations in Hebrews inevitably raise the question whether such an overlap between Hebrews and Philo might be the result of a common LXX Vorlage of the Torah, used by both of these authors, and one that might possibly point in the direction of an earlier LXX text form. In order to address this issue responsibly, a comprehensive investigation into the text forms of all the Torah quotations that show similarities with the *Corpus Philonicum* and the NT is thus planned. Philo's use of Scripture (almost exclusively the Torah) becomes vital for such a study – aspects which Steyn started to investigate recently. A book manuscript on this research problem of a common LXX Vorlage used by Philo and the NT authors is already in an advanced stage of publication.

☐ A synopsis of textual variants of the OT quotations in the NT

The aim of this project, envisaged by Steyn, is the compilation and publication of a reference tool, consisting of three volumes, for biblical scholars and pastors as an instrument to be used in the assessment and interpretation of explicit scriptural

quotations by the early Christian writers of the NT. The project proposes to address the general weakness of previous synopses by suggesting that a responsible scientific comparison between quotations in the NT and their OT pretexts can only be done when the variant readings of both testaments are compared, not by merely comparing reconstructed eclectic and printed text editions. Ancient manuscript witnesses should thus be compared to manuscripts and not modern printed text editions to each other. Given the complicated history of 'the' LXX text and its relationship with the Hebrew textual traditions – including that of the Dead Sea Scrolls – it soon becomes impossible to make any responsible remarks about the NT author's hermeneutical activity and theological intention unless the range of different OT and NT textual traditions are compared. Several factors beg for a careful comparison of variant readings when studying the NT quotations:

- The fact that the majority of NT quotations are closer to LXX textual traditions than to Hebrew textual traditions and that deviating readings were sometimes brought into conformity with each other by copiers of the LXX, MT and NT requires caution.
- The fluidity of texts during their written and oral transmission, as the result of editorial, scribal and even liturgical influences, also requires great caution in textual comparisons between the quotations in the NT and their OT counterparts.
- The fact that different versions of the NT text and different LXX versions were in circulation, which means that the particular reading of a printed eclectic text might not necessarily be the one that was used by the other, should also alert scholars in their comparative studies on the text of the OT quotations in the NT.

There is thus a dire need for a tool to engage with the NT writers' interpretation of their Scriptures responsibly. Scriptural interpretation is the basis on which theological arguments are constructed, and the lack of hard evidence frequently leads to gross misunderstandings, subjectivism and discrimination. A technical tool that compares the variant readings available for

the explicit quotations from Scriptures will greatly assist biblical exegetes in determining the availability of alternative early textual traditions and identifying the early Christian writer's own interpretative hand in using the Scriptures. Three volumes are planned, namely (1) the Pauline literature, (2) the Synoptic Gospels and Acts and (3) Johannine literature, Hebrews and the General Epistles. The prestigious publisher, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, has already offered to publish this manuscript.

Side impact on the field

Steyn's (cf. 2015c) work led to a proposal to coin a new term in canonical biblical scholarship, namely 'retrodiction' – in opposition to 'prediction' – to explain a past event or state of affairs in the light of present information.

The parables of Jesus as symbols of social transformation

Methodologically speaking, this research project has three main points of departure:

- Jülicher (1888:92–111) draws a distinction between the context in which Jesus told his parables and the different Synoptic contexts in which Jesus' parables were allegorically retold. Following from this distinction, the interest of the project is the parables of Jesus the Galilean.
- The project consciously tries to avoid the fallacies of ethnocentrism and anachronism and therefore employs social-scientific criticism as exegetical approach. This approach particularly enables the modern reader to come to grips with the cultural values and social dynamics of the social world of Jesus which are implicit in the parables spoken by him.
- Where applicable, available documented papyri are used to identify the possible social realities and practices (cultural scripts) evoked by each parable. The parables, as Dodd (1961:10) has argued, are realistic narratives about everyday events in

1st-century Palestine. To help the modern reader of the parables to identify what is realistic (normal) in the parables and what is not (normally the 'surprise' in the parable), papyri from early Roman Egypt provide 'solid ancient *comparanda* on the practices and social realities which the sayings of Jesus and the parables presuppose' (Kloppenborg 2014:2). The social *realia* invoked in the parables should not be neglected as in many cases the intended meaning of Jesus' parables can be found in a parable's 'unrealistic' features.

Related to these three main points of departure, the project also believes that the parables should be read against the background of the socio-cultural, political, economic and religious realities of 1st-century Palestine. Furthermore, it believes that the central theme of Jesus' parables is considered to be the noneschatological kingdom of God (see Van Eck 2016:30–35) and that the parables be classified as atypical stories (comparisons) which make ethical points related to systemic and personal transformation (see Van Eck 2016:36–41).

This research project started in 2006 and has culminated in the publication of *The parables of Jesus the Galilean: Stories of a social prophet* (Van Eck 2016). Firstly, the method to be followed in the project was determined (Van Eck 2009a:1–12; see also Van Eck 2015a:1–10), and thus far, 11 parables have been interpreted. The conclusion reached at this point in the project is that the parables have already interpreted Jesus as an ethical-eschatological social prophet (Van Eck 2016:301; see also Van Eck 2011a:1–10).

Several students partook in this project. Oxton (2011) and Van Zyl (2012) did some groundwork for a detailed reading of the Unjust Steward (Lk 16:1–8) for which the reading is still to be undertaken. Mabinja (2016) applied the reading of the Tenants (Gos. Thom. 65) to the exploitative situation of day labourers in the De Doorns community. Van Eck and Mashinini (2016:1–10) proposed that the general message of Jesus' parables can be used as a critique on food security systems for vulnerable households across the south-western townships (Soweto) and Pretoria. Finally, Van Eck,

Renkin and Ntakirutimana (2016:1–8) used the interpretation of the parable of the Feast (Lk 14:16b–23) to address spatial justice and reconciliation. It is argued that the parable critically engages with the real-life experiences of marginalised people living on the periphery of Pretoria and the boundaries that are created by mega churches in their close surroundings. In the parable, Jesus advocates for the eradication of all boundaries linked to the social-economic status of the marginalised. From a social justice perspective, there is no such thing as privileged space. On the contrary, privileged space builds boundaries.

The research project envisages to analyse several other parables of Jesus, using the same methodology. Currently, the possible parallels between the parables of Jesus and the rabbinic parables are also being investigated.

Sexuality in the New Testament

This research project initially focused on marriage as institution in the Second-Temple period in 1st-century Palestine, especially on Jesus' stance on marriage. In a three-part series, attention is first given to the cultural scripts in the 1st century that guided the understanding of marriage, namely marriage as an institution embedded in the social institution of the family (kinship), the role of honour and shame and dyadic personality. Attention is also given to the different marriage strategies that can be discerned throughout biblical times, concluding that the institution of marriage most probably should be seen as a cultural construct. As acceptable cultural norms change, so does the understanding of marriage (see Van Eck 2007a:81–101). The second part of the series, discusses the 1st-century Mediterranean world's understanding of what marriage, betrothal, adultery, divorce and remarriage entail (see Van Eck 2007b:103–128), and in the final contribution, it is indicated that Jesus' stance towards marriage as institution in his time was negative, especially because of its patriarchal structure and the 'legitimate' marginalisation of women and children (Van Eck 2007c:481–513). Building on these preliminary conclusions,

Kotzee (2016:1–112) investigates marriage as understood by Paul, the deutero-Pauline and trito-Pauline letters, affirming the cultural constructiveness of marriage in this literature.

A second focus of this programme is the study of sexuality in the NT, especially what the OT and NT say about homosexuality. In the South African context, it is clear that the so-called 'seven texts' on homosexuality (Gn 19:5; Jdg 19:22; Lv 18:22, 20:13; Rm 1:24–7; 1 Cor 6:9; 1 Tm 1:10) are read in the light of two different views of Scripture. These are a literal reading (the 'plain sense of Scripture') and a more critical (non-fundamentalist) reading which also takes into account recent studies on the socio-cultural world of the texts and other possible translations of the original Hebrew and Greek languages. To find a way forward in the debate on homosexuality, both ways of interpreting the texts (and the consequences of each reading) are discussed. The reading of the 'seven texts' concludes that:

- Modern readers of the Bible (theologians and non-theologians) should not project their modern frame of reference onto Scriptures or other ancient texts. The biblical authors, most importantly, did not share our knowledge about sexual orientation.
- The real reason for the division between Christians about homosexuality is that we have different views on the use and authority of the Bible.

This project, finally, also focuses on the understanding of masculinity in the NT and related texts. In this regard, Stewart (2015:1–9) has investigated hegemonic masculinity and the masculinity of Jesus as a 'boy' in Acts as well as the understanding of masculinity in the Infancy Gospel of Thomas.

Reading the New Testament and related texts using different hermeneutical approaches and exegetical methods

This research project focuses on the reading of biblical and related texts by using the four traditional hermeneutical

approaches (historical-critical, synchronic, reader response and social-scientific criticism).

Using historical criticism, Van Eck (2000:973–1008) proposes a provenance for Mark, the gospel that is the focus of a narratological reading of the Gospel narratives as part of this research project (see below). With regard to historical Jesus studies, Van Eck (2015a:1–10) argues that current memory studies used in historical Jesus research seems to be, in fact, *Formgeschichte* in a new dress. It is very theoretical in approach and has thus far yielded no substantial results in this research field. The approach, Crook (2014:1–11) argues, can in fact lead to a New No Quest phase in historical Jesus studies. This, however, does not mean that memory studies have no contribution to make to historical Jesus research, especially being a new and upcoming approach.

Narratology, an exegetical method that falls in the text-immanent hermeneutical approach, is one of the main foci of this research project. Initially, the focus was on the ideological function of space in narratives (with as focus Mark; see Van Eck 1986:339–349, 1988:139–163, 1991a:1–24). As the project developed, the focus turned to a narratological analysis of Mark as narrative (see Van Eck & Van Aarde 1989:778–800), the use of story time and narrated time in Mark as it relates to Mark's eschatology (Van Eck 2012a:64–90), characterisation in Luke (Nyiawung & Van Eck 2013:1–12) and Mark's point of view (ideological perspective) in presenting Jesus as Son of God (MacDonald & Van Eck 2016:1–10).

Using reader-response criticism as approach, this programme also engages in reading biblical texts from an African perspective (see Van Eck 2005:679–701). Several masters and doctoral students in the Department of NTS who reside in Africa have contributed to this focus of the programme. Nyiawung and Van Eck (2013:1–9) present an African hermeneutic reading of Luke 9:18–22 in relation to conflict and leadership in the pastoral ministry in the Cameroonian context. Van Eck and Ekyarikunda (2016:1–8), in turn, compare the traditional understanding of the Law by Luther with the understanding of the Law in the Lutheran Church of Uganda. Furthermore, Siame (2015) interprets the Jubilee year in Luke 4:16–30 amidst poverty in Zambia 50 years

after its independence. Currently, the following research topics are being pursued:

- Jesus' ethics as a basis of peace and reconciliation in Zimbabwe.
- An Akan perspective on Jesus Christ as depicted in Hebrews.
- The understanding of the Lord's Prayer in an Ewe-Ghanaian context.
- An analysis of Mark 6:14–29 in the light of civic societies' struggle against labour injustices in postcolonial Zimbabwe.

Linking with work done on narratology and the parables, the reading of ancient texts using social-scientific criticism is also part of this research project. The first project in this programme is a combination of a narratological and social-scientific reading of Mark (Van Eck 1995a). This publication lays the foundation and draws the broad contours of the project, especially with regard to the anthropological models and social-scientific theories to be employed. This programme attends to the following social aspects (cultural scripts) of the 1st-century Mediterranean world:

- Meals as ceremonies in Mark (Van Eck 1995b:1114–1126).
- The baptism of Jesus as status transformation ritual (Van Eck 1996:187–216).
- The 'office' of the elder in early Christianity from a social-scientific perspective (Jones & Van Eck 2010:1–10; Van Eck 1991b:656–684).
- Sickness and healing in Mark (Van Eck 2010:1–8; Van Eck & Van Aarde 1993:27–54).
- Patronage in Mark (Van Eck 2014a:101–132).
- A social-scientific reading of fasting in Luke 18:9–14 (Mathews & Van Eck 2013:1–9).
- The role of ethnicity as it relates to community formation in 1 Thessalonians (Cho, Van Eck & Wepener 2015:1–7).
- Jesus' inclusive message (Van Eck 2014b:57–88).

Side impact on the field

This programme, finally, also developed two social-scientific theories, namely a theory on how to understand social memory

as creating identity (Van Eck 2011be:201–212) and a theory on how to read ancient texts that relate to the social game of gossip (Van Eck 2012b:1–10).

Identity formation and social transformation in early Christianity

The continuing aim of this project is the establishment of the ethical and missiological principles which directed early Christian societies (Kok 2011, 2012a, 2015b, 2016; Kok & Maqoma 2016; Kok & Niemandt 2009; Kok et al. 2014a, 2014b). The project centres on themes such as identity, ethics and ethos, reconciliation, the transcendence of boundaries and sensitivity (i.e. inclusivity) towards the outsider (Kok 2010, 2012b, 2012c, 2013, 2015a). This focus on identity formation leads to the involvement of various social-scientific theories (e.g. social identity, dialogical self and ethnicity theory; see Dube 2012a, 2012b, 2012c, 2012d, 2014a; Kok 2014). With these aims, the project aligns with the Faculty of Theology's current theme – '*Oikodome* – Life in its fullness'. Work in this project continues, among others with the publication of *New perspectives on healing, restoration and reconciliation in John's gospel* by Kok (2016).

Biblical hermeneutics in the context of African societies

This project aims to establish responsible socio-religious mechanisms for the use and application of biblical texts in the contexts of African societies (Speckman 2007, 2014b, 2016a, 2016b, 2016c, 2016d).

Embodied hermeneutics

This research area seeks a fresh approach to African hermeneutics, one which is cognisant of the negative effects of globalisation and multiculturalism. Theoretically, it develops the ubuntu philosophy further by using Gabriel Marcel's ideas of non-objectification and

participation (see Louis 1976:34). As major contribution, the two principles of nonobjectification and participation provide a fresh redescription of the activities of Jesus of Nazareth. They also provide a theological-constructive postmodern space that engages with the negative effects of globalisation and multiculturalism. Embodied hermeneutics, as a research project, emerged from noticing a void in current research in Africa that takes further the ideas of ubuntu as a unique perspective to re-describe Jesus. Major African hermeneutical perspectives – that is liberation, Black, B intercultural, womanism, *bosadi*, vulnerability and many other theologies – while relevant in their raising of local issues do not dialogue with global challenges, especially the negative effects of globalisation and multiculturalism (Dube 2012a, 2012b, 2012c, 2012d, 2013a, 2013c, 2014b, 2015a, 2015b, 2015c, 2015d, 2016b, 2016c, 2016d). Globalisation refers to the interconnectedness of the world through media and trade, so much so that an event that happens in one part of the globe sends shock waves through the rest of the world (Held 1996:55). As globalisation spreads, it consequently spreads economic inequalities, which trigger exponential levels of migration and other concomitant issues like xenophobia and violence (Giddens 1990:15).

Embodied hermeneutics acknowledges the contribution of proponents of African hermeneutics but finds them retreating from the rest of the world by cultivating an Afrocentric and regional voice. Thus, as Africa meets the world, there is a tendency among most approaches to African biblical hermeneutics to cultivate a parochial epistemology. In most cases, such stance results in a rebuttal of everything that is seen as 'un-African', which is true for most contextual African approaches. One example of such an Afrocentric approach is John Mbiti (1986:20) who, in most of his books, sought to show a distinct and/or parallel African epistemology where issues such as Christology, eschatology and anthropology are concerned. Recently, using a decolonial approach, Masenya and Ramatswana (2015:2) also warned fellow African biblical scholars not to forget their unique contextual experiences. There is nothing against interpreting

the world based on one's locale, but the emphasis created by Masenya and Ramatswana's (2015:3) does not account for the interplay between the African continent and the outside world. In their words (Masenya & Ramatswana 2015), African biblical scholars should consider the following:

> [*B*]e wary of running away from their African selves or identities and relying heavily on Western paradigms. If their scholarship is to impact positively on grassroots communities, African biblical scholars have to take seriously their own African epistemologies, philosophies and frameworks. In a nutshell, African context(s) need(s) to occupy centre stage in their scholarship. (p. 3)

They (Masenya & Ramatswana 2015) further say that the first step to start a conversation regarding African biblical hermeneutics is to assert our Africaness, for the following reasons:

> [*D*]ecolonisation cannot be complete whilst Africans continue to depend on Western paradigms at the neglect of their rich heritage. The development of an African mind-set is a process in which those who were objects of Western paradigms revisit their knowledge systems and cultures to extract lessons for the current moment in a bid to become participants and producers of knowledge in a global context. (p. 3)

The statements made by Masenya and Ramatswana are representative of several similar approaches by most African scholars, who do not account for the dialogue between African and global issues. In this way, they are retreating from the world and cultivating a narrow assumption that African problems need a uniquely African remedy. Similar critique can be brought against Black Theology, the 'womanhood approach' of Mercy Amba Oduyoye (2001), 'sociological hermeneutics' by Farisani (2010:507), 'contextual Bible reading' by Gerald West (2011:431) and the 'hermeneutics of vulnerability' by Gerrie Snyman (2011:16). Embodied hermeneutics, which is influenced by the idea of ubuntu, builds on the ideas of Gabriel Marcel to argue that Africa and the globe are at a juncture where they need a hermeneutic that reminds them of their interconnectedness and oneness rather than their strangeness or distinctiveness. They

need a hermeneutics that reaffirms the cardinal teachings of Jesus of Nazareth and reminds us of our collective human race.

What hermeneutical interjection reminds us of our collective humanness? It seems that the negative effects of globalisation and multiculturalism – as evidenced by rising numbers of people who migrate (or are displaced), combined with rising ethnic and racial attacks – are that the human race is self-destructing because of their inability to feel each other's pain. We live in a world where the human body has been reduced to a mere instrument in pursuit of materiality. The much lauded triumph of global capitalism did not translate into global peace. Instead, as global capitalism engulfs the globe, inequality spreads (Fukuyama 1989:3). We live in a world of disjuncture and fragmentation, which Anthony Giddens (1990:13) rightly characterised as spaces of contradictions. An example of this phenomenon is industrialisation which, while advancing technology, affects the ecology and displaces people from their land. Similarly, militarism, while reinforcing security, affects global peace. Further, instead of global welfare, we live with global inequalities and a false sense of progress. Global capitalism, with its hype towards individual success, has little to offer towards welfare. Commenting on this, Jean Baudrillard (1983:20) further notes that capitalism, far from helping the poor, rather presents a libidinal economy where participants are lured into the pursuit of pleasure. Arguably, the contemporary world, due to pursuit of pleasure and self-gratification, has lost sight of the value of human interconnectedness and coexistence. People value material goods more than their fellow humans (Dube 2016a:1). The question this research project seeks to answer is the following: What hermeneutical lens can bring people together as interconnected beings and as one human family?

Embodied hermeneutics is anchored on Gabriel Marcel's ideas (Louis 1976:34) of non-objectification and participation. Marcel, from a phenomenological perspective, says that the contemporary world is dictated to by the rational epistemology of objectification, the distancing and manufacturing of 'alienation between subjects and objects' (Louis 1976:34). The epistemology of Marcel builds on the earlier views of Kant and Kierkegaard who argue for the limit of reason. Thus, an epistemological shift,

replacing reason, is required – the world should be understood based on the experiences of the human body. For Marcel, rationality produces chaos and an objectification of human experiences and reality. As solution and as a shift in epistemology, being or existence should be understood as assimilated and inseparable from reality (De Lacoste 1995:69). Thus being 'is that which resists any exhaustible analysis of the mere "facts of experience"' (Louis 1976:37). Marcel explains this as follows (Louis 1976):

> [*T*]he more I objectify the world, the more I weaken its ties … the more impenetrable it becomes to me, yet the less significance this impenetrability has; life becomes more an experience which is lived in fullness rather than questioned in detail. (p. 39)

If reality is treated as assimilated to being, then chances are fewer that it can be treated as a problem or an object that exists apart from ourselves. The notion that the body is interpenetrated by reality – inseparable – makes useful to our context of globalisation and multiculturalism the concepts of non-objectification and participation from the work of Marcel by understanding being as intertwined, as common humanness (not rapture or distinctiveness). From an African perspective, the epistemology of Marcel elaborates further on the tenets of ubuntu – I am because we are. By using these ideas of non-objectification and participation, we are able to explain what it means to be human in a globalising and multicultural context. In this way, embodied hermeneutics aims to provide a fresh view, re-describing Jesus of Nazareth as well as providing a constructive postmodern space that critiques the evils of globalisation and multiculturalism.

Embodied hermeneutics has two major contributions:

- It moves from the narrow contextual approaches that have dominated African hermeneutics to viewing the body as global and a participant. Instead of reacting against globalisation and multiculturalism, embodied hermeneutics offers a constructive postmodern space where the body is

described as a microspace of the collective humanity. Being human is thus embracing the collective – the body is extended, which has implications for phenomena like 'racism' and 'ethnicity'. Being is participating and assimilating (De Lacoste 1995:69). From this perspective, embodied hermeneutics offers a constructive postmodern critique of current global social evils such as xenophobia, racism and ethnicity since these come from a discursive epistemology that the body is unique and distinct. If the body is a participant, as Marcel argues, it does not see other bodies as problems but rather as part of its own existence and reality. This fact may help as a starting point concerning coexistence.

- Textually, embodied hermeneutics provides a fresh platform to understand the activities of Jesus of Nazareth, which were geared towards new households characterised by inclusivity and assimilation.

This project, though still in its infancy stages, is set for collaboration with similar research identified in the Young Research Leadership Program at the UP. Further, the 72nd General Meeting of the Society for New Testament Studies – to be held at the UP from the 8th to the 11th of August 2017 – concurrently hosts a seminar on African hermeneutics, which will serve as a crucial platform to showcase the ideas of this research.

■ *Quo vadis*?

When thinking about how the NT Department at the UP should move forward, it is important to bear in mind that its present discussion takes place at a time when – contrary to the confident expectations of classical secularisations theory – it is witnessing the growth of religion and religiosity on an unprecedented scale (see for example Graf 2004; Micklethwait & Wooldridge 2009; Taylor 2007). Furthermore, even though the implications of this global phenomenon are still not clear, it would be a serious mistake to assume that it is now back to 'business as usual' and that doing theology and training a new generation of scholars

can continue uninterrupted in the traditional way. Views on religion and religious discourse have changed substantially, making the continuous rethinking of NT studies as a discipline an urgent task (Lategan 2009:30). As Craffert (2007:196) has so eloquently pointed out, mainstream Western NT studies are very easily 'trapped between orthodoxy, the necessity to be contextually relevant, and the ethnocentric heritage of the scientific world view'. As a NT department in SA, its task is complicated even further by the tendency of African NT studies to become trapped in the belief that the exegesis (and even readings) of ordinary people are sufficient when addressing contemporary experiences. Like its Western counterpart, it can lack a sensitivity to historical consciousness with a proper sense of the 'otherness' of the texts. In order to avoid these 'traps', NT studies should 'more fully explore the interdisciplinary and dialogical space in the human sciences' (Craffert 2007:197), as Clines (2005) puts it:

> To be truly academic, and worthy of its place in the Academy, biblical studies has to be truly critical, critical not just of lower order questions like the authorship of the biblical books or the historicity of the biblical narratives, but critical about the Bible's contents, its theology, its ideology. And that is what biblical studies has notoriously not been critical about at all. To be critical, you have to take up a standard of reference outside the material you are critiquing. (p. 25)

As was stated in the 'Point of departure' and has been made clear by the discussion of the variety of research projects currently pursued by the Department of NTS, the Department embraces a methodology which holds the diachronic and synchronous approaches in dialogue, thus pursuing a holistic approach. Although the one – diachronic – can be described as more 'classic' than the other – synchronous – both methods are of equal importance. Practically, this means that the Department's priority must, both at present and in future, always be the application of both methods when doing research. As Lategan (2009:31) says, '[*t*]he more instruments we learn to play, the richer the music will hopefully be that is produced'. The NT itself,

accepted as master narrative in both the partner churches and the society as a whole, is far too important to neglect or abandon. Barton and Muddiman (2001) make this case as follows:

> Biblical criticism, sometimes known as historical criticism of the Bible or as the historical-critical method, is the attempt to understand the Bible by setting it in the context of its time of writing, and by asking how it came into existence and what were the purposes of its authors. The term 'historical'' is [*used*] because biblical books are being studied as anchored in their own time, not as freely floating texts that we can read as though they were contemporary with us … Biblical Criticism uses all available means of access to information about the text and its context, in order to discover what it may have meant when it or its component parts were written. (p. 1)

To understand these 'ancient texts', interpreters need knowledge of their languages and of their manuscripts. They must also take account of sources or redactors and their 'social settings'. It is important that certain insights about the texts no longer be sidelined for these texts are human creations – they are the product of human text-critical construction, translation and interpretation (Craffert 2007:198). Continuing to make the study of the original languages a priority grants us access to a proper understanding of how the message of the NT is structured as well as access to the world of the NT itself (Lategan 2009:31). Without this thorough knowledge, responsible exegesis becomes almost impossible. Without access to the text *corpus* of the 1st century (of which the NT forms an integral part), the theological, social, economic and political context – so essential for the understanding of the NT – becomes almost impossible to grasp. One of the enduring problems of the biblical message is its 'overfamiliarisation' – through endless repetition, combined with centuries of interpretation, reinterpretation and translation, the message has become almost completely domesticated. The attempt to let Scripture speak 'here and now' has – ironically – rendered the message, in many respects, almost indistinguishable within our context. We will always remain in urgent need of 'the experience of alienation' (Lategan 2009:32) that working with the original languages provides us as this helps us to understand

again how 'strange' the Palestine of the 1st century really was, how different the world and NT message was, in order to rediscover its true contours for ourselves and for new contexts. Yet the field of our study is not only the exegesis of 2727 books for the database of early Christian sacred documents has already been increased and cannot be disregarded. The books that would later form the NT, like other Christian literature of the period, originated in a literary context that reveals relationships not only to other Christian writings but also to Greco-Roman and Jewish works. Of singular importance is the extensive use of, and interaction with, the Jewish Bible (MT and LXX). Both implicit and explicit citations as well as countless allusions appear throughout the books of the NT – from the Gospels and Acts to the Epistles and the Apocalypse. Studying this 'related literature' enables a better understanding of the people, the ways they created their Christian identity and their sense-making struggles within the confines of their faith and cultural world. By way of this 'historical consciousness', we are able to confront real people, our ancestors in faith, which protects us from misusing them for our own ends (Craffert 2007:198). In this confrontation with our ancestors, orthodox creeds and dogmas cannot and should not be removed from this field of study for tradition and prejudice shape who and what we are. Bernstein (1991) puts it in the follow words:

> Gadamer has sought to challenge the prejudice against prejudice. He has defended the centrality of tradition and rightful authority of all human understanding. We are beings thrown into the world who are always shaped by and shaping the traditions that form us. (p. 24)

The implication is that these orthodox traditions should themselves and in their own right be (and remain) part of our dialogue with the past. Although the importance of making use of an expanded (and ever expanding) corpus when conducting research is already evident in the Department's different research projects, this commitment will be 'made official' in 2018 when the Department's name will change to 'New Testament Studies and Related Literature'. This kind of appreciation of the historicity of

the NT can assist in overcoming the fears associated with change but also in moving beyond the restrictions of a positivistic understanding of history as it creates a space to explore both the strengths and weaknesses of alternative strategies of interpretation and promotes a better grasp of diversity and pluriformity (Lategan 2009:34).

However, 'pure' exegesis has, by means of the ethics-of-interpretation debate, been expanded into a dialogical interpretive process which looks not only at what texts *say* and *mean* but also at what they *do*. This realisation – that all interpretations and historical constructions are preliminary – creates the space for continuous (re)search (Craffert 2007:199). Meeks (2005) says it as follows:

> The task of constructing a more fair and honest picture of the past never ends. There are always new discoveries to be assimilated, unconsidered factors to be evaluated, fresh comparisons to be weighed, novel perspectives to challenge our assumptions, blind spots in our seeing that will become evident only when new pairs of eyes join the search. (p. 164)

Both impulses on the ethics of interpretation – what interpretations *do* as well as the considerate engagement with others – are implicated in this dialogical model and kept in balance because both are considered to be of equal importance (Meeks 2005:161).

Of course, within a university context, it is impossible to escape the implications of the Enlightenment and the scientific world view. However, within an interdisciplinary framework – one with a changed view of knowledge and the systematic study of meaning – it is precisely the understanding of meaning that is at the centre of research (Craffert 1998). The biggest benefit of continuing with this model is its potential to embody – within the discipline of NT studies – an *ethos of dialogue*.

Within this framework of historical consciousness, dialogical engagement with the writings of early Christianity implies a sensitivity to and respect for culture and its otherness (Craffert 2007:199). In place of the normative use of the NT, it can now be

appreciated for its formative value (Meeks 2005:166). Reading and respecting these texts thus means to go and do likewise, not the same; it is the challenge of doing something 'culturally similar, not identical' (Pilch 1989:26). A dialogical engagement also implies sometimes not doing as they did. In a world of growing consumerism, it is not unexpected but nevertheless surprising that the NT is so often still used as a mere list of truths to be 'raided' while in actual fact it contains such a wealth of wisdom *when treated as a discussion partner* (Craffert 2007:199).

This framework thus not only offers new options for existing research questions (such as historical Jesus research or ethical questions) but rather an alternative *style* of scholarship. This model embodies the tools for continued critical engagement with multiple readings and divergent voices in its own midst. Today we understand enough about interpretation to know that the premium placed on dialogical truth is totally different from the *claim to be right* or the *right to claim the truth*. As Murray, quoted by Bernstein (1991:339), says '[*b*]arbarism … threatens when men [*and women*] cease to talk together according to reasonable laws … Civility dies with the death of dialogue'.

In word and deed, Jesus personifies an alternative possibility to deal with injustice et cetera, and developing such a critical consciousness and the ability to interpret our current situation in terms of these alternative values should remain an important goal in theological education. We need a critical consciousness – a 'hermeneutics of the alternative' – that does not lead to resignation but to the discovery of new possibilities and the appreciation of complementary perspectives (Lategan 2009:34). We must ensure a focus on the distinctive contribution that the NT offers – a better understanding of the *dialectic* between theological conceptualisations and historical reality for, in this sense, the NT implies an 'ethics of the deed' (Lategan 2009:36). It is, therefore, of the utmost importance for the Department of NTS to keep on consciously asserting and demonstrating dialogue as its highest ideal within the contexts of the church, the university and the world as it ventures into the future.

Summary: Chapter 3

In lieu of the centenary celebrations of the FT at the UP, this chapter takes a closer look at the Department of NTS. It does not only want to serve as a reflection on people and events that have led to the department's present. Making use of introspective examination focused on the Department's current position, task and impact, the chapter aspires to allow for the generation and evaluation of mental representations of possible futures. It thus anticipates exploring the history, work and impact of the Department of NTS at the UP, briefly by focusing on the variety of methods used by current members of the Department in their various research projects as well as the impact that these projects have and can continue to have. In doing so, the chapter demonstrates that the Department embraces a methodology which holds the diachronic and synchronous approaches in dialogue, thus pursuing a holistic approach. Through this continual pursuit of a holistic approach, the Department of NTS ensures a focus on the distinctive contribution that the NT offers – a better understanding of the dialectic between theological conceptualisations and historical reality.

Chapter 4

Finding an academic voice in post-apartheid South Africa: Systematic Theology at the University of Pretoria

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On 'speaking from' and 'speaking to'

'D'où parlez-vous?' was always the first question that the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur (1913–2005) asked of his students in the 1970s in his Philosophy seminars in Paris, France. Translated from French into English, the first question was: *Where do you speak from?* The Irish philosopher Richard Kearney, now Charles Seelig professor of Philosophy at Boston College in the USA, was one of the students who attended Ricoeur's seminars. Kearney (2010:xi) refers to Ricoeur's question in the opening statement of his widely read and influential philosophical writing on returning to God after God, namely *Anatheism*. In this chapter, we argue that it might be helpful to explore Kearney's reference to Ricoeur, self-critically asking the very same question of the Department of Dogmatics and Christian Ethics in the FT at the UP in SA in the 21st century: *Where do we speak from?*

'Where do we speak from?' entails as enquiry the following questions: Who are the 'we' that are doing the teaching and research. In what context(s) are we pursuing our teaching and research endeavours. What are we doing, how do we go about our pursuits, and why are those important to us? The answers to these questions – although not all of them will be addressed explicitly – give flesh (and blood) to the very basic hermeneutical questions: Who is saying what to whom, why, where and when.[32] After a brief description of the historical background of the Department, the broad outlines presented as our 'speaking from' are highlighted by focusing on each member of our

32. With this formulation, the very important challenge that was posed by the vice chancellor of the University of the Free State, Prof. Jonathan Jansen, to the FT at the Free State University must be kept in mind. It gave rise to their important publication on epistemological transformation in the South African tertiary context with the title *Transforming theological knowledge: Essays on theology and the university after apartheid* (Venter & Tolmie 2013) as response to the challenge. In this publication, there are very insightful articles on the teaching and research activities of their current academics as response to the *what* and *why* questions on teaching and research practices.

Department and, subsequently, each member's specific research contributions (speaking to).[33] Then the most important aims and outstanding issues that are currently pursued are indicated. The history of the Department, spanning the period from its inception in 1938 to 1999 (the other line from 1917 to 1999) and then from 2000 to 2013, has already been recorded in earlier articles.[34] The most comprehensive articles[35] on this history are those by Koekemoer (1992), Oberholzer (1992), Van der Merwe & Vos (2009) and Wethmar and Veldsman (2013). The chequered history of the Department with its name changes, the two sections for theological training (Section A and Section B) which housed the later divided departments, the new history of one Faculty after 2000 and its re-establishment as one Department after 2000 is not the focus of our exposition. However, the current composition and objectives of its theological research and some of its teaching foci are explicated. To appreciate this history fully, it has to be read from the perspective of the rich and wide-ranging academic heritage left by its immediate predecessors,

33. The director of the Centre for Public Theology, Prof. Vyuani Vellem who has also been a member of the Department since October 2010, was unfortunately not available to contribute to this overview. He is an ordained minister in the Uniting Presbyterian Church of South Africa. He studied at Fort Hare, the University of Cape Town and the University of Pretoria where he completed his PhD with the title 'The symbol of liberation in South African public life: A black theological perspective' (2007). He is a specialist in Liberation Theology. He focuses his research on themes such as Christianity and democracy, Christianity and economics and on fields such as Ecclesiology, Public and Liberation Theology and Spirituality. Four of his most recent publications in 2015 are 'Unshackling the Church', 'Tumelo le Moruo', 'Black Theology of Liberation and the Economy of life' and 'Black Theology of liberation: A theology of life in the context of Empire'.

34. From 2000 onwards, the Faculty dissolved the A and B sections and became one Faculty.

35. See also the recent article by Ungerer (2015) for historical detail of the history of the Faculty. In my unpublished inaugural address, *Constructively engaging in post-dogmatic Dogmatics,* a summary is given of all the current research foci of the Department in relation to world-wide trends in systematic-theological teaching and research (cf. Veldsman 2014a).

namely Ben Engelbrecht, Johan Koekemoer, Johan Heyns, Conrad Wethmar and Etienne de Villiers.[36]

The approach to answering the question '*Where do the members of the Department of Dogmatics and Christian Ethics speak from?'* should originate from within the vision of the Department in which it is deeply embedded. In its vision, it is stated that the Department is to conduct programmes for teaching, research and community service in the field of doctrinal theology, systematic reflection, Christian ethics and philosophy of religion in an internationally and locally relevant manner. It is a vision that is pursued in a multi-church environment which implies that the opportunity exists for different church traditions to be adequately represented and for these traditions to also be encouraged to enter into a creative and scholarly dialogue with one another. The vision is translated into five objectives. These are to provide relevant theological and religious education; to nurture transformative leaders; to perform quality research; to promote justice, peace, the integrity of creation and a reconciling diversity; and finally, to engage people on the margins of society. The values that find expression in the pursuit of these objectives are critical thinking, intellectual excellence, transformational praxis and inclusivity. We now turn to the research interests of the respective departmental members.

Academic pursuits: Where do we speak from?

Buitendag: On eco-hermeneutics

Johan Buitendag is an ordained minister of the NRCA. He completed his dissertation on *Skepping en ekologie* in 1985

36. For overviews on the rich and important heritage, see Van der Merwe (2000) on Koekemoer, Wethmar and Vos (1998) on Heyns, Wethmar and Veldsman (2012) on De Villiers; and Veldsman (2008) on Wethmar.

and took up a part-time position as Senior Lecturer in the Department (Section A) in 1989, succeeding G.C. Velthuizen. He was appointed permanently in 2001. After a period during which he was Deputy Dean (2004–2009) and Head of the Department, he became Dean of the Faculty, a position that he still holds.[37] His supervisor, Ben Engelbrecht, focussed mainly on a Barthian approach in his career. An important theological shift took place back then, turning from strict traditional dogmatic-confessional reflection to a broader systematic-theological engagement.

As academic, Buitendag never proposed to present any complete or even definable theological design himself. Theology is for him far too wide, too deep and too high for such attempts. He also did not present his theology as taking a finally shaped theology as point of departure. His theological journey which dates back to his high school years unfolded seekingly and existentially between several beacons (see Van Aarde & Van Wyk 2014:11–13).

His theology has an unfolding and emerging nature. As it develops, it becomes refined and expands laterally. That is why he likes the image of a rhizome that Gilles Deleuze uses. To him, this is almost a poetic description of Faraday's field theory in electromagnetic radiation. Reality is not elements or atoms but energy fields in-between.

Theology is an understanding of reality (Buitendag 2013) or, put more correctly, a humble attempt to be a responsible discourse partner in the human being's search for meaning and understanding. He is of the opinion that theology can contribute to the understanding of reality. Therefore, he also prefers the word 'understand' to a word like 'viewpoint'. Understanding is indeed subjective, but at least, it has a rational and critical claim.

37. See the Festschrift for Buitendag, edited by Andries Van Aarde and dedicated to Johan Buitendag at the event of his 60th birthday: *HTS Teologiese Studies/ Theological Studies* 70(1).

The dialogue with other sciences is therefore extremely important (cf. Buitendag 2014a, 2014b). He argues that we should listen to one another and learn from one another. Theology should also have a stand at university and should engage in an accountable and reasonable manner with other sciences. The analogy of faith and reason speaking two different languages (Einstein) seems to him a confusion of tongues. Somewhere, theology should partake in the lingua franca of the day.

If Buitendag has to point to one book that decisively shaped his understanding of reality at the beginning of his academic career, it has to be Jan Smuts's *Holism and evolution*. Smuts draws a line with the sequence *matter – life – mind*. This line is admittedly linear, yet remarkable. Smuts' discourse partners were also Einstein and Darwin and hence Buitendag's interest in their respective points of view. Subsequently, he occupied himself with two disciplines in the natural sciences, namely, Physics (Buitendag 2008) and Biology (Buitendag 2012a). He regarded Physics as important for understanding time and space and Biology for knowing more about life. His thesis, completed in 1985, pertained to creation and ecology, and in it, he had already drawn the contours of a theologically accountable understanding of reality. The Apostles' Creed sees creation as the work of the Father, Karl Barth explains it Christologically while it is clear to Buitendag that creation called for pneumatological reflection. Therefore, the later 'pneuma-theology' of Gijs Dingemans rather appeals to him.

This engagement with insights from physics and evidence from biology shaped him gradually to reflect increasingly in a more inductive and *a posteriori* way on reality. Theistic language of revelation is neither heard nor appreciated by people outside of theology. He realised increasingly that the fierce resistance against a natural theology caused much damage to Protestant theology. It became elitist and removed itself from the scholarly debate. He sensed in his own mind a shift away from discontinuity to continuity in our symbolic universum. This implied for

Buitendag that some *theologoumena*[38] necessarily had to be translated in a new way (cf. Buitendag 2012d). Of utmost importance is probably the radical revision which he had to make in his mind about our understanding of revelation and the Bible (Buitendag 2008). Like Brunner, he is of the opinion that the human being has a certain natural capacity to engage with God and that much insight can be provided by nature. Thus the description of reality by quantum physics is not just a handy metaphor for scholars in the humanities but provides an essential understanding of reality. The same is relevant to the ant or the bee, for example. Empirical studies indicate that what happens in the nest of termites or in the beehive applies mutatis mutandis to human societies (Buitendag 2013). Our symbolic universe is a much more integrated but yet pluralistic whole than a dichotomist yin-yang image.

In a certain sense, Buitendag's whole theological enterprise is a conceptual juggle with ontology and epistemology – an expression he took from the Dutch theologian Luco van den Brom: the theologian as a juggler (Buitendag 2012b, 2012c). For Buitendag, Systematic Theology is a humble endeavour to come to grips with reality. Understanding reality is what science is about. It is his conviction that theology can indeed contribute to this end and subsequently has to engage in scholarly dialogue with others. Theology has a cognitive approach to reality, one which regards nature as knowable and therefore understandable. There are no hidden secrets for theologians to disclose! However, he argues, we can augment a frame of reference to unveil prejudices, assumptions and one-dimensionality. The natural, physical, biological, human and social worlds are the realm of God's immanent presence and therefore the manifestation of a divine creative action. Due to the involvement of the total human being, such a view is consciously – and subconsciously –

38. Buitendag lists a few of these *theologoumena* which he considers in need of review regarding a theological understanding of reality in the 21st century. They are the *Bible, Original sin, Descensus, Image of God* and *Filioque* (see, e.g., Buitendag 2012d).

shaped within a bio-cultural framework. To express this, he used the word 'triangulation'. The meticulous investigation of the natural scientist, the richly imaginative horizons of the artist and the divine far-sightedness of the theologian are brought into discourse with one another, leading to an appreciation which is larger than the sum of the parts.

Veldsman: On religious experience from evolutionary perspectives

Danie Veldsman is an ordained minister of the DRC. He completed his dissertation titled 'Etisering – Personalisering – Eksistensialisering' in 1987 and took up a position as Senior Lecturer in the Department in August 2007, succeeding Conrad Wethmar. He has been heading the Department since 2011. His research focus and contribution can be described as a reconceptualisation of religious experience from evolutionary perspectives within the science-theology dialogue (cf. Veldsman 2013a, 2014a, 2014b). What does the reconceptualisation entail?

It reflects on our relationship with God from our concrete existence as human beings of flesh and blood, that is, as historical-contextual human beings that are biologically woven together. It further reflects on our faith relationship from within an awareness of our biological and physical make-up and the constraints that determine our being human (cf. Veldsman 2013c). The reconceptualisation entails reflecting from evolutionary perspectives, in a critical and an interdisciplinary manner, on the relationship between us as people living in the world and God as Creator and Saviour of the world. This implies that we need to put together the best theological and the best scientific insights in a comprehensive, integrated manner to open up new and exciting horizons of insight into being human in the world before God (cf. Veldsman 2013a; 2013d). It entails reflection that is permeated by the most basic (negative) conviction: no evolution, no experience, no religion. Formulated as a positive conviction, it entails that evolutionary developments with regard

to self-consciousness made religious experience possible. To mention just one example of an important contribution from evolutionary insights, I refer to the cognitive-affective character of being human (cf. Veldsman 2014c). We are woven together biologically in this manner. In everyday metaphoric language, it means that our heads are located within our hearts (and vice versa). It is not possible to separate the two. We are wired and strung together in this way by our nervous system (cognitive) and blood network (affective) that interacts in such a manner with the world in which we live connectedly and with which we interact to enable (self)conscious experiences. The two networks always operate and function together. The affective dimension forms the most basic layer of being (self)conscious human beings. It is a stratification of our being (self)conscious that consists of mood, emotions and feelings. To put it in faith terminology with the help of the French philosopher and theologian Blaise Pascal, we love God with our hearts, not with our reason(s). According to Pascal, the heart has reasons of which reason itself is not even aware! It is on this relationship of faith that we reflect in an interdisciplinary manner with all the other sciences. It is to study 'reasons' that have been moulded over centuries by evolutionary processes and developments in our interactions and connectedness with all of creation. Most of these reasons lie embedded in our being human and finds expression in our emotions as an integral rational part of our cognitive interaction within the world. In influential paleoanthropological and neuroscientific discourses, it is explicitly stated that emotions represent the embodiment of the logic of human survival. In short, we survive as human beings where 'survival of the fittest' implies neither physical strength nor primarily adaptability (although it is extremely important). Rather, it implies our ability to care, to have empathy, to show compassion and love, to kindle hope – all flowing from our cognitive-affective composition in our interaction with the world and towards others (cf. Veldsman 2013b, 2014c).

Our cognitive-affective composition and our connectedness with creation determine our faith relationship with God, with all

others and with the world. This conviction forms the basic thrust of post-dogmatic reflection that finds expression in numerous ways in our systematic-theological curriculum.[39] One such way is reflection on the important role of art (especially icons), music, the film industry and philosophical discourses (e.g. anatheism) in our deep relationship with God that oozes life. Perhaps formulated more systematically, I claim that a post-dogmatic dogmatics represents a very specific hermeneutical attitude and approach that starts with experience.[40] Experience is here seen not as the primary and exclusive source of all of our reflection but specifically as a vehicle for all our interdisciplinary theological reflection, as embodied human beings, on God, revelation, Christ and the Holy Spirit, being human, the Bible, salvation, what we dare to hope, et cetera (cf. Veldsman 2014a). It represents a hermeneutical interdisciplinary (cognitive-affective) willingness to look concrete life before God and with all others in the world straight in the eye! It entails a cognitive-affective willingness that will take its own historicity and context seriously so that that embodied personhood will find concrete expression in the moment 'when we speak' with others, at different places, on various occasions and on diverse issues on our relationship with God from multilayered and coloured life perspectives.[41] Hermeneutics (as the art of understanding) then becomes a school of life for being humble and for explorative imagination. Reflection ultimately becomes part of an exciting cultural-linguistic process or cognitive-affective event of layered signification that reminds us incessantly of the depth of alterity that cannot be exhaustively or lightly fathomed.

39. The basic thrust can also be seen and described as an exercise in cultural-religious literacy.

40. A post-dogmatic Dogmatics never implies that we leave dogmatic reflection as such 'behind us'. It will always be an integral dimension of all reflection. It however wants to convey a specific hermeneutical attitude and disposition that takes seriously embodied personhood with all its limitations and determinations as historical-contextual living beings.

41. From this approach flows spontaneously the focus on concrete issues within the South African context such as the theological-existential importance of water, to give but one example (see Veldsman 2015).

Fourie: On defining morality in Africa

Willem Fourie, an ordained minister, completed his dissertation in 2009. It was later published as *Communicative freedom: Wolfgang Huber's theological proposal* (Fourie 2012a; also see Fourie 2014). He took up a position as Senior Lecturer in the Department in January 2011, succeeding Etienne de Villiers. In his research, he investigates the possibility and contours of an ethic of sociality that is useful in postcolonial, pluralist and unequal societies. His focus is the postcolonialities, pluralisms and inequalities of southern Africa.

In Fourie's opinion, the ongoing efforts by both academics and students to 'Africanise' especially the human sciences in many ways resonate with key themes in the Reformed tradition. To him, the core of this call lies in the challenge of claiming, or in some senses reclaiming, African intellectual subjectivity. The Reformed tradition is known for its emphasis on the faithful embodiment of the Christian faith in concrete socio-cultural circumstances. He highlights three elements of this thrust (cf. Fourie 2011a). The Reformed tradition, firstly, emphasises the importance of embodiment. To be a Christian only makes sense if it is concretised and enacted in a specific historical and cultural moment. To practice theology in Africa would necessarily have to mean that the resultant theory should be authentic and rooted in the histories, experiences and cultural landscapes of Africa. This does not mean, however, that the rootedness in a particular culture or environment should have the final say in matters of faith and ethics. Reformed theologians have insisted on the primacy of the gospel or the specific Christian nature of this tradition throughout the ages. The life and teaching of Jesus transcend any attempt at cultural exclusivism. Ingrained into the Reformed tradition is its inherently critical stance towards the cultural form of any expression of the Christian articles of faith or morals. This second dimension means that the ideologies and systems of thinking in which both Western and African moral theory are embedded should be made available for critical engagement.

A third dimension of the Reformed tradition is its collaborative thrust. Despite some examples to the contrary, notably in SA, this is expressed by the Reformed interest in ecumenism. It is also expressed by the Reformed interest in working together with actors in sectors other than those in the religious sector (see Fourie 2012b, 2012c for attempts at operationalising this collaborative thrust). For South African Reformed theologians, this means that the pluralism of the South African society should form the basis for public engagement (see Fourie 2011b).

The above-mentioned elements of the Reformed tradition is leading Fourie to deepened reflection on an adequate understanding of foundational ethical concepts. At least two are worth highlighting, namely 'Africa' and 'morality'. With regard to the former, Fourie reflects on the extent to which 'Africa' is useful to describe the context in which we seek to concretise the Christian faith in SA. 'Africa', when used as a geographic designation, seems to refer to a complex collection of people and groups, speaking literally thousands of languages, adhering to numerous religious traditions, straddling a spectrum of socio-economic positions and calling vastly different cities and towns home. Is there any sense in which 'Africa' is a useful term without legitimating those who seek to reduce the people and groups of the continent to a few clichés? A similarly complex set of questions can be asked about the concept of 'morality'. Is morality a Western concept, or is it possible to define morality in ways that includes non-Western socio-cultural resources? Is it possible to distinguish between the phenomenon of morality as such and the content of specific moralities? Is it possible to incorporate sources of knowledge that have their origins in radically different contexts into a coherent and constructive concept of morality?

Fourie concludes, albeit in a preliminary fashion, that a reflection on the internal coherence and usefulness of the concept 'Africa' forms a useful starting point for such a project (see Fourie 2015). It is possible to argue that external actors invented 'Africa' (and he uses 'invention' in a less sophisticated

manner than, for example, Mudimbe 1988, 1994) in order to name their political and economic ambitions. This usage started with the expansion of the Roman Empire and was entrenched by the colonial enterprise. According to Fourie, 'Africa' only relatively recently became the self-description of people and groups who live on what is now the continent of Africa. He interprets the uses of 'Africa' in the 1900s as the reclamation of the subjectivity of 'Africans' in which 'Africa' at times functions as designation for a 'representative ideal'. According to Fourie, 'Africa' is useful to describe the context in which he seeks to develop moral theory. In its most restrictive sense, it seems to designate a place, which coincides to a large extent with what is called the continent of Africa, in which many people and groups actively attempt to reclaim their subjectivity. After centuries of denigration and suppression and also of the uncritical imposition of institutions and ideas developed elsewhere, Africa seems to designate a place characterised by the reclamation of socio-cultural resources with their origin in this 'place'.

Reflection on the internal coherence of the concept of 'Africa' enables reflection on avenues for finding ways in which to use the concept 'morality' that do not contradict the very project of developing moral theory in 'Africa'. This is leading Fourie to the inclusion of meta-ethical elements in his project. At the risk of generalising too much, he seeks to reflect on the descriptive elements of moral theory rather than focussing only on the normative or prescriptive elements. In this regard, he draws on the seminal work done by John Searle (1995) and Raimo Tuomela (2007). This is motivated by the fact that the descriptive endeavour already has normative overtones. An agenda-setting collection of texts that appeared as early as 1970 is illustrative in this regard. The 'psychological' or 'autonomous' definitions of morality proposed by Whiteley (1970:21–25) and Cooper (1970:72–90) resemble what can be described as specific normative approaches to morality (also cf. Wallace & Walker 1970). In terms of Fourie's project, however, it is important to note that the notion of a social, or as he would term it 'descriptive',

approach to morality – also identified by Whiteley and Cooper – is not absent among moral theorists in the 20th century. The major challenge with many normative approaches to morality is that they often unwittingly conflate the phenomenon and the content of morality as the content of specific moralities is used to define the phenomenon of morality. This is visible in the works of many leading lights in the Western tradition, including Immanuel Kant (2002:57), David Hume (1896:160, 455–476) and later John Stuart Mill (1963:207).

Fourie is currently working on the provisional assumption that it is indeed possible to use the concept 'morality' and to develop 'moral' 'theory' in 'Africa' in ways that do not contradict such an endeavour. Its usefulness is dependent on strict provisions and to some extent, corrections of the conventional approach to morality in much of Africa. He argues that normative approaches to morality – approaches that use the content of specific moralities to define the concept of morality – could fruitfully be complemented by a more descriptive approach (see Fourie 2016).

Van Wyk: On ecclesiological challenges and political theology

Tanya Van Wyk is an ordained minister of the Netherdutch Reformed Church (NRC). She was appointed as part-time teaching assistant to the Dean of the Faculty, Johan Buitendag, in 2010 and as Senior Lecturer in the Department in 2014. She completed her dissertation, 'Church as heterotopian space: A Trinitarian-ecclesiological model for the third millennium', in 2013. The study focusses on the challenge of being church in the post-secular 21st century (cf. Van Wyk 2012; 2013a; 2014). This is part of her ongoing main research theme, namely 'reconciling diversity'. Van Wyk's initial research within this theme focussed on ecclesial 'unity' and 'catholicity' and issues of race, gender and sexuality (cf. Van Wyk & Buitendag 2008, 2010). She argued that a revisited theological anthropology is a necessary step on the church's journey towards reconciling diversity (inclusivity) with

special reference to the NRC's historical justification of separate ethnic-based churches and the ongoing debates regarding the understanding of homosexuality (Van Wyk & Buitendag 2011a, 2011b). Another main part of her doctoral work was research on the life and work of Edward Schillebeeckx and Jürgen Moltmann – specifically the manner in which their respective theologies connected church and world. From their different denominational contexts, they crossed theological and geographical barriers and reconciled diversity. This is evidenced by Schillebeeckx's argument for replacing *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* (outside the church no salvation) with *extra mundum nulla salus* (literally: outside the world no salvation) (cf. Boeve 2010; Schillebeeckx 1982; Van Wyk 2013b). Moltmann's political theology (Moltmann 2013) crosses church, national and paradigm barriers, from Germany to the USA and South America (Van Wyk 2015). The importance of political theology for the South African context cannot be understated. In Van Wyk's current research, building on the research done so far, the main focus therefore is Political Theology.

Her project for the next three years is grouped under the title 'Postmodern space and reconciling diversity: The church as heterotopia and the South African democratic ideal'. Part of her doctoral study had already focussed on the manner in which the great revolutions in North America and France were the breeding ground for concepts such as 'nation' and 'nationalism' and how 'unity' was interpreted in terms of the dominant ideology of nationalism and nation. In Germany, the ideology of National Socialism compromised the integrity of the church. In SA, apartheid had a similar effect. In 2015, SA celebrated 21 years of democracy. Twenty one years after the first democratic elections in 1994, overcoming the heritage of a binary paradigm is the challenge facing democracy in SA. This binary thinking entails the revival of nationalism versus the utopia of one nation as well as the relationship between particularity and universality, individuality and pluriformity, and unity and diversity. A similar amount of time (in this case 26 years) has elapsed since the fall of the Berlin wall. The events that set in motion the unification of

Germany have parallels with those that precipitate South African reconciliation. Germany and other countries of the European Union are to this day struggling with the relationship (or tension) between a particular national identity and the ideal of a unified Europe. Different nations in the European Union are currently experiencing a serious migrant crisis. The migrant issue often gives rise to a revival of nationalism. Concerns in the European Union are in ways similar to the binary paradigm that faces SA. In post-1989 Europe, philosopher Jürgen Habermas is of the opinion that unity could only be functional if particular nationalities were maintained. He coined the term 'commitology' to indicate an epistemology that entails an explicit commitment to unity as well as to particularity (diversity). In secular Europe and postcolonial globalisation, both religion and nationalism can present obstacles to a commitment towards reconciling diversity. Habermas also uses the term 'postnational constellation' to describe the result of a commitment to both particular nationalities and globalisation (Habermas 2001, 2013).

The negative attitude towards religion and nationalism has a history in both the secular European and postcolonial globalised contexts. In Europe, religio-political monarchical entities perpetuated exploitation, colonialism and intolerance. National Socialism degenerated into a hegemony which led to world wars. In SA, Christian nationalism contributed to the apartheid ideology. Though SA cannot be equated with secularised Europe, theologically speaking, the relationship between a nation-state ideology and religion that affected both contexts cannot be denied. From a postcolonial perspective, SA is the product of both contexts, namely Europe and Africa. The challenge of overcoming the binary paradigm that is facing the South African democratic ideal is one of reconciling diversity and the political dimensions of reconciliation.

These contours constitute the current focus of Van Wyk's setting of her systematic-theological study about reconciling diversity. The contours demonstrate the complex relationship between political ideologies and religion. The contribution of her research is to develop a model in the field of political theology

according to which differences do not cease to be but can cooperate in a reconciling manner. Her research is driven by five key aspects, namely critical theology, theology of justice and a humane society, prophetic theology, public theology critical of policy and theology of concrete change (cf. Van Wyk 2015).

Where do we speak to?

From the above, it is clear that each member of the Department gives concrete expression to the question of Ricoeur, namely, *Where do we speak from?* It is indeed a question that is explicitly taken seriously in order to speak from our specific contexts as white and black Reformed theologians at a public university in the 21st century to the contexts of our concrete existence in a post-apartheid SA, acknowledging the historical-contextual character of all of our understandings of our life worlds. This could entail approaching being human from an eco-hermeneutical viewpoint or formulating more clearly from a strongly infused political and gender awareness our theological understandings of being church in the spaces in which we find ourselves. It could be to explicate as embodied persons our deepened and stronger integrated understandings of personhood from and within the theology-science dialogues or within liberation-theological discourses and contexts or to explore and express as Africans, in reclaiming African intellectual subjectivity, our making moral sense of the world in which we live. These themes represent the very diverse although related current research contribution and pursuits of our Department – also for the years to come. It is a diverse research contribution and pursuit in search of ultimate contextual relevancy. It searches for relevance, which will incessantly have to be guided in future by the spirit of the initial question that was taken as vantage point, namely *Where do we speak from?* It implies for the future as 'speaking to' that the members of the Department are to continue to reflect self-critically with others by asking how contextual our faith reflections are after all for being persons of and in Africa. We need to ask about the nature

of the knowledge that we perceive ourselves to share with one another, about ways in which our knowledge is still permeated and determined by our own (political-social) preferences and positions of power. We need to ask whether the 'others' are really welcome(d) in our understandings. Ultimately, we need to ask about the difference that it makes to our being persons of faith (and churches) in a relationship with God, people who want to make a concrete difference and change the world for the better for everybody. All of these questions (and even more questions that will certainly come up) will be embedded as an ongoing task, as taking responsibility for and being accountable in talking about God, about being human, about liberating faith and about being moral persons in the 21st century at a public university in Pretoria, SA.

Summary: Chapter 4

How can an academic voice concerning systematic-theological reflection find expression at a public university in a post-apartheid SA? In this chapter, the different research foci of the members of the Department of Dogmatics and Christian Ethics at the UP are presented and interpreted as attempts to find such a voice as a collection of voices within a society characterised by shifting social-ecclesial and theological landscapes. The specific research foci, namely eco-hermeneutics; evolutionary perspectives on religious experience; an ethic of sociality within postcolonial, pluralist and unequal societies; and ecclesiological challenges and political theology are structured and presented in terms of the hermeneutical question that was posed by Ricoeur, namely *D'où parlez-vous?* [Where do you speak from?]. Against the background of the vision, objectives and values of the Department, the main objectives of their respective approaches as explication of the 'speaking from' and 'speaking to' are outlined. Some of the most important contemporary issues are identified in a conclusion that are, according to them, to be addressed within the Southern African contexts.

Chapter 5

Historical Theology: Content, methodology and relevance

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What is in a name? Quite a lot ...

South African universities and theological faculties are in a process of fundamental transformation and restructuring. In recent times, several theological faculties were closed or restructured to form part of faculties of arts. In general, theology is low on the list of priorities at tertiary institutions, especially in

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terms of funding. Theology is under pressure, and in the current academic environment, church history, in its traditional form, has all but disappeared from South African universities.

Church history is challenged not only by external factors such as the restructuring of universities but also by internal factors such as a tendency to function in isolation from other related disciplines. Denis (1997) articulates this as follows:

> In South Africa, church history is an isolated discipline, almost completely cut off from the social sciences and from secular history in particular. Its academic status can be described as weak. (p. 84)

He is of the opinion that church historians are to blame for this situation because of their Eurocentric and church-specific approach to church history. Furthermore, church historians (as theologians) are not well educated in terms of normal historiographic methodologies. This criticism was voiced earlier by Maluleke (1995) in his PhD dissertation.

Another factor which is a great challenge to church history is the lack of interest in history as a subject as the research by Black (2014) points out. He is of the opinion that educational institutions in SA regard history as unimportant. In the National Department of Education, history is regarded as a 'dustbin subject' (Black 2014:360–361).[42] Teachers with little knowledge of history, an uninteresting curriculum, the general perception that history is unimportant and emphasis on natural science and mathematics resulted in dwindling numbers of learners interested in taking history as a subject in matric. Students start their theological education at university with very little knowledge of history and very little interest in studying history.

We make a last remark on the 'weak' position of church history in its traditional form. In the past, historians sometimes misused their knowledge of history for ideological purposes, including the justification of apartheid. History was used to exclude people,

42. It is interesting to note that the #RhodesMustFall campaign has generated a renewed interest in the learning of history. The Department of Education is looking at making it a compulsory subject at schools.

to discriminate and to legitimise certain actions by church and government. As a result, church history is often regarded with suspicion, suspected of having one or other hidden agenda. Some church historians find it difficult to write history in a critical and responsible manner (see for instance Van Jaarsveld 1953; Maluleke 1995). This is of course not true of all church historians, but many examples could be presented where the ecclesial bias of historians is quite evident.

In this contribution, it is proposed that 'church history' should transform into 'historical theology'. However, the name 'historical theology' should be understood in a particular manner. Since Adolf von Harnack's (1851–1930) monumental *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte* presented the theological world with an overview of Christian doctrine based on solid historical research, historical theology was often regarded as a history of doctrine. It is suggested here that the term 'historical theology' should be used in a more generic sense, almost as an umbrella term, which would include various subdisciplines such as history of doctrine and church history.

History and theology

McGrath (2001:380–405) is of the opinion that the relationship between faith and history could be regarded as the central theological question of the 20th century as it influenced many aspects of theology. Against this background, the relevance of historical theology is not only determined by its ability to preserve our factual knowledge of the past but by the contribution that historical theology makes to all theological discourse. In this section, some theologians (and philosophers) are mentioned very briefly just to illustrate the tension-filled relationship between history and theology.

Heidegger and Bultmann

There is much variety in the way in which theologians approach history. At the start of the 20th century, historians such as

Leopold von Ranke, philosophers such as G.W.F. Hegel and Karl Marx as well as theologians such as Adolf von Harnack and Ernst Troeltsch exerted a significant influence on historical sciences and theology (see Van Niftrik 1948:29–31). It took a new turn with the publication of Martin Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* ([1927] 1963) to place the question of human existence and historicity in the centre of the theological debate. The *eigentliche* of every human being is that we are always on our way through history (Dreyer 1974:11–12). Furthermore, Heidegger frees historical research from the subject-object scheme (Pieterse 1979:29). Historical documents do not only convey historical facts but articulate human existence. Vice versa, understanding human existence is one of the important requirements for the proper understanding of historical texts.

Later in his life, Heidegger placed more emphasis on the interpretation of texts (Palmer 1969:141) and language as the space of human existence. Our understanding of human existence and historicity can never be divorced from language because language reveals the essence (*Sein*) of human existence (West 1996:104). Language transcends the individual subject and existence.

Rudolf Bultmann follows Heidegger and develops a very specific understanding of history. Bultmann's affinity to Heidegger has been researched extensively (see Macquarrie 1955). In his *Gifford Lectures*, Bultmann (1955) developed his understanding of history and eschatology, and two fundamental questions were put on the agenda, '[*h*]ow should we understand historical documents as it [*sic*] developed within a specific tradition' (Bultmann 1955:6–7) and 'what is the nature of historical knowledge' (Bultmann 1955:110). He also enters into the debate on the objectivity of historical research and historical knowledge.

Barth

Although not known as a church historian, Karl Barth was probably one of the most erudite church historians of the 20th century and wrote major works on Anselm, Calvin, history of doctrine

and the history of Protestant theology. With the publication of his *Römerbrief* (1919 [1963]), following Sören Kierkegaard, Barth placed much emphasis on the dialectical tension between time and eternity or between man and God (McGrath 2001:107). Barth describes history as a conversation between past and present wisdom as '*... ein fortgesetzes, immer ausrichtigeres und eindringenderes Gespräch zwischen der Weisheit von gestern und der Weisheit von morgen, die eine und dieselbe ist*' (Barth [1919] 1963:v).

Barth had a major influence on many younger theologians such as Ebeling, Bromiley and McGrath and their understanding of historical theology and theology in general. In 1932, the first part of Barth's *Kirchliche Dogmatik* appeared. He writes (KD I/1/1), '*Dogmatik ist als theologische Disziplin die wissenschaftliche Selbstprüfung der christlichen Kirche hinsichtlich des Inhalts der ihr eigentümlichen Rede von Gott* ...' Barth emphasises the ecclesial and Scriptural nature of theology. According to him, theological reflection should not depart from the religious feelings of humanity (Schleiermacher) but rather reflect on God and the self-revelation of God in history through his Word. All theology should be of service to the church and the proclamation of the gospel.

Ebeling

Shortly after World War 2, Gerhard Ebeling (1912–2001) was appointed as lecturer in Church History at the University of Tübingen. He immediately published his *Kirchengeschichte als Geschichte der Auslegung der Heiligen Schrift* (Ebeling 1947) in which he used the German term 'Geschichtstheologie'. In this publication, he sets out certain principles for the study of church history. Ebeling places much emphasis on the relevance of historical knowledge for all theological disciplines as well as for the church in its proclamation of the gospel. Like Barth, Ebeling is of the opinion that theological reflection should be of service to the church and the proclamation of the gospel. If historical theology would facilitate knowledge of the history of

Biblical interpretation, it would be of immense benefit to the proclamation of the gospel and as such an indispensable part of theological education for ministry. Historical theology must be of service to exegesis, preaching, liturgy and ecclesial order (Ebeling 1947:22–28). Ebeling places the hermeneutical question in the centre of theological endeavours (Palmer 1969:52). As a result, he regards historical theology as a history of Biblical interpretation.

Ebeling (1947:6–9; 1954:5–6) is of the opinion that theology should consist of hermeneutics (exegesis of Biblical texts), historical theology, systematic theology and PT. He pleads for an open discourse on relevant topics between the various theological and other disciplines. He regards the silos in which the various disciplines function as detrimental to proper theological discourse and not to the benefit of the church (Ebeling 1954:6). Ebeling finds the commonalty between the various theological disciplines in the fact that all theology should be based on the interpretation of Scripture. Against this background, Ebeling is of the opinion that systematic theology and historical theology should open the lines of communication with much closer co-operation.

Later in his life, Ebeling placed more emphasis on the interpretation of texts, instead of trying to establish objective and 'true' knowledge of history. Under the influence of Martin Heidegger, he also places much focus on language as 'event'. History is understood as a language event (Palmer 1969:53). Language creates reality and shapes history. As a result, Ebeling is better known among philosophers for his contribution to hermeneutics and among practical theologians for his 'New Homiletic' (see Pieterse 1979). In contrast, church historians rarely mention Ebeling despite his publications on the method and content of historical theology (see Ebeling 1947, 1954). A few exceptions are J.A.A.A. Stoop (1978:112), Graham Duncan (2005:58), Jeremy Punt (2006:892) and J.P. Labuschagne (2008), who all mention Ebeling in one or two sentences without any detailed discussion.

Bromiley

Geoffrey W. Bromiley (1915–2009) published his *Historical theology* in 1978 (Bromiley 1978). In the introduction (Bromiley 1978), he writes:

> An ideal historical theology – or even an introduction to it – lies beyond the limits of human possibility. Indeed, even the ideas of the ideal differ so broadly that what might approximate the ideal for some falls hopelessly short for others. Writing a historical theology involves a venture and rests on a series of choices of aim, method, matter and approach, choices which are in some sense arbitrary and all of which are open to dispute. (pp. xxi–xxix)

Bromiley continues to explain his aim, method, content and approach to historical theology. In his approach, he places the emphasis not primarily on the origin and historical development of doctrine but rather on the individual theologians, their contribution to the church and their role in the history of the church. Bromiley (1978) also makes an important remark when he says the following:

> Historical theology is not just a history of Christian theology but is itself theology. Hence the observer ceases to be an observer and becomes a participant. He is himself a Christian doing theology in its historical dimension. (p. xxv)

According to this approach, a historical theologian is primarily a theologian and not an historian. Following Karl Barth, Bromiley (1978:xxvi) is of the opinion that historical theology has a very important function in describing the way in which theologians and the church engaged with the Word of God through the centuries. It should also be regarded as a discipline which is practised to the benefit of the church (Bromiley 1978:xxviii) and serves the ministry and mission of the church.

McGrath

In recent times, Alister E. McGrath had a major influence on the content, structure, methodology and teaching of historical theology through his various publications (see for instance

McGrath 2001, 2013). McGrath (2013) describes historical theology as follows:

> [*T*]he branch of theological inquiry which aims to explore the historical development of Christian doctrines, and identify the factors which were influential in their formulation and adoption. Historical theology therefore has direct and close links with the disciplines of church history and systematic theology. (p. 8)

In comparison to Bromiley who structures his approach according to individual theologians in various historical periods, McGrath places more emphasis on the history of doctrine in his approach to historical theology. However, reading his publications, one is struck by a strong sense of history, a clear understanding of the context within which certain doctrines developed. This underlines McGrath's view that the interface between church history and systematic theology is quite pronounced. Therefore it makes sense, as in many faculties across the globe, to have a 'Department of systematic and historical theology' as will be the case at the UP.

In the following section, some remarks are made on the content and structure of historical theology, based on some of the ideas of the abovementioned theologians as well as the practical situation of teaching historical theology at the UP.

Historical theology: Content and structure

Introductory remarks

The traditional approach to church history is to divide it into four periods (Early Church, Medieval Period, Reformation and Modern Period) and to describe the main events and personalities of a certain period. Well-known examples of this approach are Bakhuizen van den Brink (1980) who divided his *Kerkgeschiedenis* into four volumes corresponding with the four periods. Bromiley (1978) also followed these periods in his *Historical theology* but in a more nuanced manner.

Reventlow (2009) divided his *Epochen von Bibelauslegung* into four volumes, following the four periods, and McGrath (2013) followed the same pattern in his *Historical theology*.

We are of the opinion that the structure and content of historical theology should not be determined by only one aspect such as period or a particular content. Historical theology consists of diverse elements, determined inter alia by the approved curriculum, pedagogical principles, context (Africa), internationally recognised fields of research, ecclesial tradition and the need to train well-equipped candidates for ministry. With this in mind, it is suggested that historical theology be structured and organised in seven subsections:

- introduction to historical theology
- history of churches
- history of theology
- history of missions
- public theology
- church polity
- ecumenical history.

This approach to historical theology is quite daunting in its scope and content. It will require a high level of specialisation, especially in terms of research (Vosloo 2009:56–57). However, it provides a thematic structure which enables a contextual approach to reading, understanding, interpreting and applying history. The focus on 'context' as a key indicator and factor in the study of church history is extremely important. For example, in our endeavour to teach church history at the UP, it has become our practice to relate periods of early, middle and reformation history to the African context. The stress on context draws us into the expansion of ideas that emanate from the African experience and encounter rather than simply rely on Western influences and interpretations. The focus on themes rather than on specified periods in history opens the doors for contextual engagement and the quest for Africanisation. This we consider to be absolutely essential in the quest for relevance and application to our own context and experience.

☐ Introduction to historical theology

An introduction to historical theology will not only reflect on the origin, methodology and aim of historical theology as discussed above but should also ask three questions.

The first question is: *What is the church*? Ebeling made the point that our understanding of the nature of the church (ecclesiology) is of fundamental importance to historical theology. The way in which the church manifests empirically in different contexts and in different traditions is the subject matter of historical-comparative ecclesiology (see Kärkkäinen 2003). It is also important to the study of the ecumenical movement and ecumenical ecclesiology during the modern period. The history of the church is the history of God's Church. It is thus important to keep in mind this bigger picture and not reduce it to mere denominational interest. While the Department of Church History and Church Polity at the UP is keenly supported by certain participating denominations, our focus is to expand this to research, understanding and stressing the universal (catholic) nature of the church.

The second question is: *What is history?* It is important to understand history and humanity in its historicity. To this extent, a sound knowledge of the philosophy of history is important. Questions regarding time and eternity, the meaning and purpose of history, the method of historical enquiry and the relationship between subject and object all need attention (see Berkhof 1958; Brunner 1953; Bultmann 1964; Cullmann [1946] 1962; 1965; Dreyer 1974; Ebeling 1954; Van Oordt 2012). To simply study history as past events has no bearing on the present or shaping of the future. The latter elements are crucial to the studying of history. As Cairns (1996:17) puts it, '[*h*]istory as event is absolute, occurring only once in time and space; but history as information, inquiry, and interpretation is relative and subject to change'. Cairns' definition further reminds us that research is not done in an ivory tower. He sees in this the need for the contextualisation and communication of events.

The third question is: *What is the meaning of history?* Historical enquiry helps us to understand human existence and the realities we have to contend with. It assists with making sense of historical events. It even helps us to find meaning in life. Dreyer (1974) describes it as follows:

> Die historikus moet die verlede op so 'n wyse beskrywe dat dit sinvol is. Dit beteken dat ons beskrywing 'n koherente verhaal is wat reg laat geskied aan die wese van die mens as mens, maar tegelykertyd die spesifieke mens in sy spesifieke leefwêreld beskrywe … Sinvolle beskrywing is dus waar en dit berus op drie grondpilare: die noukeurige kennis van die verlede, die samehangende beskrywing en die intuïtiewe insig in die mens as medemens. (pp. 83–84)

This implies that historical research is not so much about 'objective' truth and historical facts but rather about making sense of the past, of understanding why things happened. It is not only a question of what happened but rather why it happened. This focus sheds light on human activity, which is significant in the sense that it enlarges our understanding of the past and of the present and that it contributes to meaningful thinking about the future.

History of churches

In this subsection of historical theology, the history of specific churches is studied. This also includes specific events or personalities in such churches. It could be regarded as a 'history from below' (Vosloo 2009:59–60) where the forgotten and marginalised people are recalled, the little stories which disappeared behind the grand narratives.

Ebeling (1947:20) is of the opinion that a 'history of Christianity' (for instance Latourette [1964] whose *History of Christianity* covers 1513 pages) is practically impossible and not worth much. However, it could be argued that a general knowledge of church history is important to all theologians, even if it is just for their general education and as reference to their own fields of expertise.

History of theology

The various approaches discussed above (history of biblical interpretation, history of doctrine, history of individual theologians) could all form part of a subsection 'history of theology'. As such, a history of theology would study the life and contribution of individual theologians, theological movements (Dialectical Theology, Liberation Theology, Black Theology, etc.) as well as the development of doctrine in various traditions and churches. The historical background to these theologies is vital to understand the context in which they emerged and to see how they can be relevantly applied to another experience. For example, Liberation Theology has been applied in many different contexts in the world.

History of missions

If we understand the church as part of the *missio Dei* and the church as essentially apostolic, history of missions is simultaneously a history of the church (Bosch [1991] 2006:390). The history-of-missions movements in Europe, Africa, Asia, Latin America and other parts of the world are at the same time a history of the church. A study of the history of missions shows how the church has been involved in the world throughout the ages. This is often reflected, sometimes controversially, in the writings and records of missionaries.

Public theology

The inclusion of public theology within the ambit of historical theology would require more explanation as this is normally not the case. We are, however, of the opinion that there is a case to be made for this view, considering the nature of public theology. Gerard Mannion (2009) describes various definitions and approaches to public theology. He (Mannion 2009:122) points out that, throughout the history of the Christian church,

there had always been public theology or 'theology in the public square'. Jesus Christ preached in public places and confronted the authorities (civil and religious) with their moral bankruptcy, explaining the values of the kingdom of God (Mannion 2009:128). This was continued during the early development of the Christian church (the best known example is the apostle Paul's discussion of a Christian's relation to the government and emperor in Romans 13). Augustine's *City of God* is a classic text, written in the context of a Roman Empire which was in decline, facing major political, social and moral collapse. During the Medieval and Reformation eras, there was a continuous stream of theologians who struggled with questions of how faith should relate to evolving patterns of social and political change. These included theologians such as Thomas Aquinas (1225–1275), Marsillius of Padua (1275–1342), William of Ockham (1288–1348), Margery Kempe (1373–1438), Ignatius de Loyola (1491–1556) and Mary Ward (1585–1645) as well as Luther and Calvin during the Reformation (Mannion 2009:132).

The same point is made by Roger Haight (2005:81) when he argues that, during the Reformation, it became clear that the relationship between the church and society is forever dynamic and changing, resulting in a particular ecclesial identity. No church or religion ever functions or exists in isolation. Society influences the identity of the church and the shape of faith, and religion equally influences the identity of society. Consequently, there is a close connection between sacred and secular history. They constitute a polarity: They are interdependent concepts – not opposites, not contradictory but existing in a tension. As Avis (2003:53) points out, '… both sacred and secular are constellations of meaning denoting significance for human life in society'.

Most would agree that public theology is social, political and practical in nature. Mannion (2009:122) is of the opinion that the 'best public theology involves theological hermeneutics in the service of moral, social and political praxis'. In public theology, questions of ethics, ecclesiology and being church with integrity is of constant importance. This was illustrated in the 20th century in

Nazi Germany, especially by theologians like Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Karl Barth as well as the Barmen Declaration which became a classic text of public theology (Mannion (2009:137). The Belhar Confession could also be included in this line of classical texts.

Over the last three decades, public theology has become so popular that it is impossible to give a complete overview (see Mannion 2009:126–132). Suffice it to mention that it is an area of theology where one has to tread carefully in order to avoid the pitfalls of generalisation, lack of nuanced historical discourse, exclusivism, hypocrisy and a pessimistic world view. Public theology requires sound knowledge of social and ecclesial history.

☐ Church polity

Church polity is a theological discipline which builds on ecclesiology and understanding the church within a very specific context (Koffeman 2009:11). Church polity is imbedded in a specific ecclesial tradition and history (Van Wyk 1992:294). When church polity is studied as *ius constitutum*, the history of the church as well as the present situation of the church are of the utmost importance. One of the noticeable observations we make today is the need for the cross-pollination of ideas related to church polity. In this sense, it becomes necessary to interact on different understandings of church polity which enriches and informs church-specific practices. In this respect, mission ecclesiology and ecumenical 'ecclesiology' is increasingly becoming attractive to denominational institutions. It is thus imperative that church polity should be taught with this interactive method in mind.

☐ Ecumenical history

Ecumenical movements have helped churches and Christians all over the world to reflect on and engage with different realities and common experiences. World bodies such as the World Council of Churches (WCC) and The World Communion of Reformed Churches have directed the churches to global issues

such as poverty, racism, climate change, economic justice and gender justice. These themes have helped churches to reflect on and engage with broader realities and global matters. In SA, the South African Council of Churches played an instrumental role in dismantling apartheid. Tracing the origins, work and witness of these ecumenical movements is imperative in understanding and appreciating the history of the church in the world. Ecumenical issues and the opportunities offered by religious pluralism and concerns for justice and equality have led us to become more sensitive to differences of opinion and approach. They have also indicated the need for church history to broaden its relationship with other related (theological) disciplines.

Conclusion

In placing Church History in a theological curriculum, there can be many overlapping interests with other disciplines, for example history of missions, history of the Bible and exegesis, history of spirituality and systematic theology. In this chapter, we argued that 'church history' should transform into 'historical theology'. We examined the various approaches to historical theology and with this broad understanding, indicated how this might shape the restructuring of church history at the UP, both in curriculum transformation and departmental structure.

Summary: Chapter 5

In this contribution, the authors reflect on historical theology as theological discipline. The authors propose that historical theology be applied to different areas of research, namely prolegomena, history of the church, history of missions, history of theology, history of ecumenical theology or public theology and church polity. The point is made that historical theology, when properly structured and presented, could play a major role in enriching the theological and ecclesial conversation and in assisting the church in the process of reformation and transformation.

Chapter 6

The tradition of Practical Theology at the University of Pretoria

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Introduction

The liturgical theologian Geoffrey Wainwright employs the beautiful image of rowers to illustrate the concept and process of tradition. In an article entitled 'Back to the future', Wainwright (1997) describes the image of the sport of rowing in which a team races forward while looking backward. The team sits together as one, facing to the back, and in trust and dependence on the person who steers from the back of the boat and who directs both the tempo and the direction, they move forward (cf. also Smit 2007, 2008; Wepener 2008). The word 'tradition' comes from the Latin *tradere*, which literally means 'to hand down' or 'to hand over' (cf. Odendal 1991:1163). *Tradition* includes both a process of handing down (tradition) and the content of what is handed down (*traditum*) and can furthermore be described as '… a transgenerational process by which society reproduces itself' (Gassmann 2008:517). In both Afrikaans and English, the word tradition [tradisie] is used in several ways, for example, depicting a movement such as the 'Reformed or the Charismatic tradition', for a custom such as the 'tradition of observing Lent' or for a collection or set of practices such as 'Pentecost traditions'. On a more general and basic level, the word 'tradition' refers to a general 'handing over' of knowledge and practices 'from generation to generation' (cf. Odendal 1991:1163). In this regard, Geoffrey Wainwright (1997:45–64) calls tradition both a gift and a charge.

The Department of PT at the UP embodies an academic tradition that has grown and developed over 64 years between 1953 and 2017. In many respects, it is similar to other Departments of PT, but it is also unique or at least somewhat different in quite a number of ways. Since its inception as a department at the FT at the UP in 1953 (Büchner & Müller 2009:1–2), the Department of PT has grown from its humble beginnings as a very small department to, by the time of writing this contribution, being the largest of six departments in the FT and making a huge contribution with regard to teaching, research outputs and postgraduate-student

supervision (cf. Wepener 2013a).[43] As such, the Department is what it is today because of many factors, including its historical theological background and also, and importantly, its geographical context.

In this chapter, the 'rowboat' of the Department of PT and its concomitant tradition will be described and traced within its multiple contexts. However, we shall also consider the river on which this boat is rowing, including the unknown parts of the river towards which this boat is heading. Firstly, we shall sketch some global trends with regard to the field of PT. These current-day trends can only be understood if the history of the discipline is also touched upon, a point to which we also attended in this first section. Thereafter, we elaborate on some South African trends and take a brief look at the discipline of PT on the continent of Africa with a special emphasis on West Africa as this is the part of the rest of Africa with which the Department has very good contact and cooperation, especially Ghana. In a third move, we describe the history of the Department which is important for a centenary publication such as this volume of *Verbum et ecclesia*. Thereafter, we make some observations regarding the future of the discipline in the Department at the UP, especially in the light of its unique history and geographical rootedness in the Gauteng Province of SA and simultaneous connectedness to a global context (cf. Barnard, Cilliers & Wepener 2014).

Global trends in Practical Theology

Modern-day PT is the study of faith practices within their multi-layered cultural contexts. Internationally, there is huge interest and activity in this theological domain (cf. Miller-McLemore 2012) in which the Department of PT at the UP participates and

43. The fact that the Department was officially established only in 1953 does not mean that practicaltheological reflection was absent before that time. On the contrary, the teaching of and reflection on subjects such as preaching and pastoral care would have been present since the establishment of the Faculty of Theology in 1917.

contributes from our unique South African context. The aim of practical theological research is a better understanding of faith practices, also sometimes referred to as lived religion, as well as the continuing renewal of a theory for praxis. Ultimately, PT wants to make a contribution regarding the healing of individuals, society and creation which for us includes issues such as justice, reconciliation, inclusivity, equality and poverty alleviation – in essence, the meaningful reconnection of individuals and communities to themselves, each other, creation and God. This was, however, not always how PT was thought of.

The Dutch practical theologian Dingemans (1996) concurs with Schleiermacher when he points out that the praxis of PT is traditionally viewed as '*Kirchenleitung*', which existed as a collection of '*Kunstregelen, a techne, an abgeleitete und angewandte Wissenschaft*' [a science, or rather applied science, which is deduced from philosophical and historical theory]. These rules of art were traditionally aimed at the priest's duties regarding sermons, catechises and pastoral work. For certain Protestant theologians, catechises and pastoral work were even viewed as derivatives of the sermon. Thus PT is applied where the truth is brought to the fore by other theological fields. The result of this was one-way traffic (Dingemans 1996; cf. also Wepener 2009:16–17):

> [*D*]e kerk en de theologie stelden vast wat de waarheid is en de ambtsdragers gaven dat door in – in die situatie aangepaste – 'pasmunt', waarbij de praktische theologie werd geacht hulpdiensten aan te reiken. (pp. 18–19)

The Zeitgeist of the Enlightenment and thereafter was increasingly one of individualism and choice, also with regard to religion. Participation in church life was seen as a voluntary matter. Friedrich Schleiermacher (1958:155–156, 157; see Gerkin 1997:47–48, 107), often seen as the father of modern Protestant theology, was in favour of a separation between the public and private spheres and located religion in the private sphere. In Europe and North America, churches became voluntary organisations and lost

their position of dominance. Religion gradually lost its definitive influence on the formation of social values.

According to James Poling (2011:149–150), modern PT begins with Schleiermacher's work, *Brief outline of the study of theology*, published in 1811, in which he organises theology into philosophical, historical and practical theology. PT was understood as theological reflection on church practices, and the focus was on the work of the clergy. This changed in the 20th century when the emphasis moved away from what Edward Farley calls 'clericalism', and PT developed into a fully-fledged academic discipline which investigates faith practice in all its manifestations.

According to Schreiter (1998:25), a new area of study in the field of PT has come to the fore in recent years. This new field has as its point of departure the life of the congregation; it moves into theory and then back to life (practice to theory to practice). The first step is therefore to describe the situation of the congregation. After that, the description is correlated with the theory and then moves to the life of the congregation for a refocused praxis. Thus we find here a spiralling movement between theory and practice with a focus on the improvement of the praxis. 'For both Groome and Browning, the final move in doing practical theology is action, a renewed practice of the faith' (Schreiter 1998:27).

Dingemans's view on the purpose of PT is linked to that of Schreiter. For Dingemans (1996:13), PT is not positioned in contrast to theoretical theology but rather points towards a theological reflection on practice. Didactic terminology has been applied here to describe the process, namely the starting situation (as factually encountered) and the desired situation (as envisaged). This mutual relationship between theory and practice within PT is taken as the research object by PT and is described as an 'inseparable reciprocal relationship' by Dreyer (1999:48). She says that it is this relationship, this research process, which not only tests the situation but also makes recommendations regarding the situation in which believers find themselves (cf. also Wepener 2009).

In order to accommodate this shift in mindset away from an exclusive focus on texts and towards the study of active persons as part and parcel of the research process, it was necessary to introduce the methods of the social sciences. Traditionally, only the methods of the human sciences have been used in theological faculties, and to this day, there is a measure of suspicion attached to the use of other methods in theology. Be that as it may, today there is global consensus on the view that PT is an interdisciplinary science which applies the methods of the social sciences and the human sciences.

Like Schreiter, Dingemans (1996:60) distinguishes between three steps, namely an analysis of the practical theological situation, a search for the normative aspects and finally, the development of a strategy for change. Each step has a different scientific method, namely that of the social sciences (step 1), theology (step 2) and the agogical sciences (step 3), respectively. By the year 2017, Richard Osmer's 2008 book *Practical theology: An introduction* has become popular and is used at different departments all over SA, also at the Department of PT at the UP. Osmer works with the so-called four tasks of practical-theological interpretation, namely a descriptive-empirical task, an interpretative task, a normative task as well as a pragmatic task. A book by Mikoski and Osmer (2012) that traced the history of the Department of PT at Princeton Theological Seminary, written at the bicentenary of that Seminary, also traces the history of the discipline, specifically in relationship to their institution which is an interesting work for comparison with our own department. With this broad historical overview with regard to PT the focus will now shift to developments regarding this discipline on the continent of Africa and in SA in particular.

(South) African trends in Practical Theology

In this section, we look at developments in the field of PT on the continent of Africa. We look at Sub-Saharan Africa in general (De Klerk 2012:v–x; Wepener 2013b) and at West Africa and SA in

particular. In both cases, the development of the field can only be understood and appreciated against the backdrop of historical developments in the particular areas on the continent where the disciplines are practised. Against this background and in terms of personal experience from working closely with colleagues in African countries other than SA as well as from visiting these countries to teach or engage in research, we know that, apart from SA, there is not a strong tradition in Sub-Saharan Africa to use the name PT there are, however, many scholars whose aims and objectives for both research and teaching are similar to how practical theologians from, for example, SA or the Netherlands will describe their aims and objectives (cf. Wepener 2006). We shall now firstly look at developments in West Africa.

West Africa

In order to comprehend current trends in PT in West Africa, it is imperative to firstly paint a somewhat bigger picture regarding the recent history of this part of the world. Large parts of Africa have been colonised by Western countries (Nwachuku 2012) since the 15th century. This created a context in which the West did a large amount of missionary work in Africa in a particular way. By means of the missionary movement, which was characterised by 'the ethnocentric presuppositions of European theology' (Nwachuku 2012:518), a certain kind of theology was introduced from Europe into Africa. This meant that the existing religious traditions of precolonial Africa were not appreciated, and missionaries in general had a very negative attitude towards these beliefs. Building on the work of scholars such as Idowu, Mbiti and Pobee, Nwachuku (2012:517) concludes that most of these scholars agree on two characteristics of Africa's pre-missionary religious understandings, namely convictions about a supreme being and an emphasis on actions such as rituals in daily life rather than abstract beliefs (see also Olupona 2000). Mbiti ([1969] 2008:3) also writes that many practices are to be found in Africa that were not 'formulated into a systematic set of dogmas which a person

is expected to accept' and adds that '[*r*]eligion in Africa is written not on paper but in people's hearts, minds, oral history, rituals and religious personages like rain makers, officiating elders and even kings'. The attitude towards these pre-existing religious practises drastically changed in the postcolonial context which Nwachuku (2012:520) describes as 'an outburst of theological consciousness' in post-independent West Africa.

On the one hand, many members of the traditional churches left these denominations and joined newer independent mega-churches. Christian universities were established, and the media, for example Nigeria's Nollywood, had a huge impact on religion (Nwachuku 2012:520–521). This means that the religious expressions or faith practises as researched and taught in PT have undergone large-scale changes over the past decades – since these countries became independent. On the other hand, there is also a reappreciation of precolonial religious traditions and attempts to incorporate them in practical theological reflection. In this regard, the Ghanaian scholar Emmanuel Lartey's book *Postcolonializing God: An African Practical Theology* is a good example (cf. Lartey 2013).

The developments regarding faith practices on grass roots level mean that more attention in practica theological reflection is given to developments in traditions such as AICs and Pentecostal churches. The developments regarding the re-appreciation of precolonial religious traditions open up spaces to work on postcolonial issues in the field but also to develop newer and exciting approaches such as intercultural and interreligious approaches in PT (cf. Lartey 2003). Developments in SA with regard to the discipline are similar but also in significant ways very different to what we have described here.

South Africa

In a discussion regarding the current state of PT in SA, Dreyer (2012:505–513) refers to four factors that played and still play a role in this regard. Firstly, the political, social, cultural, economic

and religious realities of the country are important factors. The statistics that were provided in this chapter reflect much of these realities that impact our discipline. However, there are also factors that are not reflected in the numbers. In this regard, the apartheid legacy as well as many challenges that SA is currently facing should also be taken into consideration such as poverty (cf. Pieterse 2001), people living with HIV or AIDS, unemployment and widespread anger (cf. Wepener 2015d; Wepener & Pieterse 2016). Dreyer (2012:507) also refers to church-state relations where, in pre-1994 SA, the state was in typically reformed manner seen as an extension of the church. This situation changed when the country became a secular democracy and churches had to reposition themselves.

The second factor that Dreyer discusses is institutional infrastructure and the impact of huge-scale downsizing at institutions of higher education on the discipline. Post-1994 SA has fewer departments of PT. However, 'it is well established in theological faculties at four of the traditional white universities connected to reformed churches' as well as at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and at the University of South Africa (Dreyer 2012:509).

With regard to the third factor, namely academic societies and publications, Dreyer (2012:509) mentions the establishment in 1969 of the Practical Theological Society of South Africa (PTSA) which organises annual conferences. One of the staff members of our Department, Yolanda Dreyer, currently serves as president of the PTSA. Furthermore, a journal, *Practical Theology in South Africa*, is part of the journal HTS.

The last area that Dreyer (2012:510–513) discusses is fields of study, models and research methods. As elsewhere in the world, SA also bears witness to a movement to expand the object of study in the discipline to include lived religion. However, the accent is still strongly on pastoral actions and church life which

reflects the continuing importance of churches and religious communities in SA as the statistics also confirms. Regarding models in PT, Dreyer (2012:512–513) identifies a confessional and also an empirical approach, resulting in especially an intra-disciplinary model.

With this brief description of PT in West Africa and SA, the focus now shifts to the history of the Department of PT at the UP.

A concise history of the Department at the University of Pretoria

Recent years saw two articles that focus on the history of the Department of PT at the UP (cf. Büchner & Müller 2009; Wepener 2013a).[44] This subsection will not attempt another rendition of this history but rather just a brief summary of existing work. The history of the Department can be read against the backdrop of the South African trends discussed above. In SA, PT was initiated more than a century ago with the introduction of a fourth chair in Theology at the Seminary in Stellenbosch in 1899 (Dreyer 2012:505) although the FT at the UP was only established in 1917.

We focus here on a set beginning with the appointment of a lecturer in this particular discipline as well as the establishment of the Department of PT. It is, however, important to look closely at the decades preceding these events because chances are that some of the other theological subjects might have been approached in a way that, at the time, would have been defined as PT. Subdisciplines in the field such as Homiletics were indeed part of the curriculum even before the establishment of a

44. Both articles focus more on the Dutch Reformed Church's Department before the year 2000 and on the amalgamated Department after 2000. As can be seen in this section, there are also several other articles that focus (indirectly) on the history of PT in the Faculty of Theology at the UP.

department as was the case elsewhere in the world (cf. Mikoski & Osmer 2012).

The Department originated from a Reformed background just like the Faculty, and its setting was and still remains important, namely being in the north of the country. Büchner and Müller (2009) discuss the impact of the process of urbanisation in the first decade of the 20th century, especially in the northern parts of SA:

> With the strong emphasis on the context in the north and the importance of the faculty within these industrialised surroundings, practical subjects became increasingly important and necessarily had to receive more attention. (p. 1)

In these early years, the content of the subject focussed mainly on church ministry although Büchner and Müller (2009) point to the fact that someone like H.D.A. du Toit also made students aware of the demands within the community:

> For example, besides the books that he prescribed, he took the initiative to encourage a group of students to attend the first National Congress on Church and Industry in Johannesburg in 1970. (p. 2)

On 21 December 1916, the Council of the Transvaal University College accepted the nomination of one lecturer each by the NRCA and the Presbyterian Church (PC). They were J.H.J.A. Greyvenstein (NRCA) and the Rev. E. Mcmillan (Presbyterian), respectively. The FT was established shortly thereafter in 1917. During the early years, Greyvenstein was responsible for 'church specific' lectures in three fields, namely systematic theology, the confessions and what is called 'practical theology' in the historical literature (see Oberholzer 2010:31). This referred not to the academic discipline we know today but rather to the practical formation of students for ministry. By 1934, this PT was not part of the official curriculum for the degree BD, and there were no examinations (see Oberholzer 2010:37).

A new contract specifying different sections of the FT for the different churches was signed on 11 October 1937 when the DRC

joined the Faculty. The theological training of the NHKA was called Section A and that of the NRC Section B. In 1947 after his retirement, Greyvensteyn was offered a part-time position as 'professor in PT Section A, funded by the NRCA (Oberholzer 2010:47–48, 52). Later, preaching exercises were shared by all lecturers of Section A, and 'Praktika' was the responsibility of Greyvensteyn's successor, NT professor Albert Geyser (Oberholzer 2010:53). This remained the status quo until J.I. de Wet was appointed as temporary part-time lecturer in PT on 01 February 1963. He was responsible for preaching theory, Christian education and pastoral care. Preaching practice, liturgical studies and pastoral psychology were taught by other lecturers (Oberholzer 2010:78–80). In 1967, a doctorate in PT was conferred on D.J. Booysen, and S.J. Prins received a doctorate in Pastoral Psychology. A chair in PT was established with J.I. de Wet as first professor in the FT, Section A, at which had by then become the the UP. He was succeeded in 1983 by T.J.F. Dreyer, who was succeeded by Yolanda Dreyer in 2000. She was the first female student at the faculty, Section A, the first female minister ordained in the NRCA and the first female professor at the FT.

With this brief history regarding PT at the FT of the UP in mind, we now turn to the current Department in the year 2017, the various lecturers and their fields of specialisation and research interests.

The Department in the year 2017: Teaching and research

Faith practices that are investigated and taught in the Department include pastoral care, liturgical rituals, church music, congregational studies, preaching, youth work as well as diaconal studies.

Yolanda Dreyer lectures Introduction to PT and is also responsible for modules in Pastoral Care and Youth Work. She

furthermore lectures Hermeneutics and Trauma Counselling to Master students. Dreyer's research field is Pastoral Care, and she is involved in an international research team, 'New directions in Practical Theology', that meets annually in Princeton and publishes in the *Journal of Pastoral Psychology*. She also has various national and international research associates that are involved in a research project entitled 'Gender, power, sexuality and pastoral involvement'.

Johann Meylahn's research focuses on the conversation between context, philosophy and theology, and in his teaching, he attempts to encourage this conversation in the context of Congregational Pastoral Care and also Congregational Studies. The journey with these ideas was also part of a recent book entitled *Church emerging from the cracks* (Meylahn 2012). The relevance of this conversation can be seen in various contexts and themes such as lived religion, which is also a focus area of many of his postgraduate students.

Moganetsi Makulubele's teaching interest is on exploring ideas about Diakonia and Community Development. Furthermore, he is currently working on his PhD thesis, looking specifically from a postfoundational narrative perspective at the challenges of adolescent pregnancy for individuals, families and communities. The context of this research is the Limpopo Province, specifically in Mahwelereng Township.

Stephan de Beer's research and teaching focus is on urban ministry and congregational diaconate with a focus on homelessness and spatial justice as well as methodologies in doing child theology. Students working under his supervision focus especially on issues of inequality in society, specifically in cities.

Cas Wepener lectures Liturgy and Homiletics with a specialisation in Ritual-Liturgical Studies. His research focuses on liturgy and ritual and the ongoing process of national reconciliation in SA. He is also interested in creative writing and is a published author of fiction.

Apart from the research and teaching themes of the full-time staff, all other members of the department are also engaged in exciting research and work. Maake Masango specialises in Pastoral Care and Trauma Counselling. Julian Müller focuses on postfoundational narrative pastoral care and is also intimately involved in the University's ubuntu project. Malan Nel is an expert in Congregational Studies and Youth Work. Cas Vos is a renowned Afrikaans poet with a rich theological oeuvre and a special emphasis on Homiletics. Daléne Flynn has just joined the Department and is continuing her research on sport as ritual (see Flynn & Wepener 2015). In the year 2017, the Department of PT is a large and active department in the FT, proud of its rich past and excited about the future. In what follows, we explore the (South) African context in which we do PT and the possible implication that this context should have on how we conduct our work.

The future of a department of Practical Theology in (South) Africa

In order to explore the theme of the future of our discipline on the continent of Africa, it is imperative to have a closer look at the context in which we do PT According to Kenyan theologian Jesse Mugambi (2009:110; see also Dreyer 2012:506–507), Christianity grew at a rate of 3.82% in Africa between 1910 and 2010. In SA, 40.7% of the population belonged to Christian churches in 1910 compared to roughly 82% in 2010. Johnson and Ross (2009:112) indicate that, in 1910, there were roughly 19 700 adherents of AICs in Southern Africa compared to about 20 814 000 in the year 2010. Among the six major Christian traditions listed by Johnson and Ross, AICs showed the fastest growth rate over the past century in Southern Africa, and neo-Pentecostal churches are also growing strongly. The remaining Christians broadly belong to traditional churches as Ghanaian theologian Abamfo Atiemo (2015) calls them. This is still in itself a very large group. In the

past, these churches were referred to as mainline churches, but they are, as Atiemo points out, definitely no longer mainline in Africa.

The members of these churches, of course, participate in various faith practices. Somewhat older data from CASE (Community Agency for Social Enquiry) show that as many as 91% of persons between the ages of 18 and 35 in SA indicated that they attend worship services. In addition, the World Values Survey (1999–2002) indicates that the most conservative figure for persons attending religious services in SA at least once a month is 71.77%. We can also mention that, in general, religion in Africa is not so much about beliefs, dogmas and creeds as it is about the performance of faith practices (cf. Lartey 2013:28).

Thus, in Africa and also in the greater Tshwane area, people are indeed still engaged in faith practices in churches. It is important to note that this is where the Department of Faith Practices of the UP is situated, and this is also where our students come from. They are mainly from traditional churches, to a lesser degree from AICs and also from (neo-)Pentecostal and Charismatic churches. Although we are all globally connected in the network society, our Department is rooted in Tshwane. We are not located in Toronto, Tilburg or Tübingen where PT is also practised but in Tshwane where the landscape pertaining to faith practices is completely different from similar landscapes in the West or other parts of the world.

In light of our unique origins as a Department and of this contextual description, it is important for us to ask where all of this leave us at the Department of Faith Practices at the UP in the year 2017. Firstly, we must continue to practise the virtue of scholarly hospitality and remain, as a Department, a spacious house accommodating what exists, but we also need more. It is indeed a time in which we are rowing on the river, looking back at where we come from, but also moving forward on our river which is flowing in Africa. Our spacious Department should be ever expanding, making room for what is needed. In order to develop our vision in this regard, we take our cue

from Andy Root's (2014) book *Christopraxis: A practical theology of the cross* to prophesy about matters that we deem necessary for us to be able to position ourselves for the future of our discipline in sub-Saharan Africa. We also build on this in the conclusion to this chapter.

Root (2014) argues for an approach within the field of PT where the emphasis on human action is augmented with a greater emphasis on the actions of God, and he does so by means of critical realism and the theology of justification as developed by Jüngel. Root's work and his whole approach within the field can be very helpful to us. This kind of approach asks for more and new interdisciplinary alliances and a continuation of the already established transversal rationality. We would like to add here that a spirituality of liminality opens up greater possibilities together with the methodological hospitality for a renewed transversal rationality. Root critiques existing approaches and argues for a so-called 'ministerial transversal rationality'. He uses the concept 'ministerial' because the event of God's being in coming to humanity is an ontological encounter between the divine and human in which time is infused with eternity, where God gives Godself for humanity (Root 2014:94). Various epistemological conceptions witness to parts of reality, and '[*r*]eality itself pushes us into and out of such interdisciplinary conversations' (Root 2014:n.p.).

This is also true in Africa and is a challenge that we are facing. Actually, it will become more and more difficult to call theological endeavours 'PT' without these methodological and epistemological commitments. From experience, we know that the people with whom we do research in local communities do not take off their theological hats when we arrive, and accordingly, we should also keep them on during all the tasks of PT (cf. Wepener 2015a, 2105b). One can, for example, here recall Browning, who says the following (in Ammerman et al. 1998):

> [/]f we believe that God is actively working in the world, and is not only an afterthought to explain what is happening in the world, then

> the description of what is happening in the world is a theological task. (p. 16)

African spirituality, such as is found in AICs and theological traditions such as the Reformed tradition, can find each other in SA within what we would like to call – following Root but with reference to Africa and not North America – a pneumapraxis. Here we believe that Van Ruler's (1973:9–40; Wepener 2009:21) theonomic reciprocity can be helpful again as it has so often been in practical theological reflection in SA in the past but now with a specific eye for the divine and human encounter in Africa as such and not only in preaching or worship. We believe that we should also embrace a PT of the Spirit that is ontologically rooted in the active working of the Spirit of God and where the faithful experience this dynamic in their daily lives and epistemologically in the signs of the Spirit as lived faith practices.

From an African perspective, Lartey (2013:xiii) argues that God is viewed as active, involved and in interaction with humans who, in keeping with God's divine nature, act to decolonise, diversify and promote counter-hegemonic social conditions. What we are developing here is certainly not an argument for a so-called Prosperity Gospel but an argument for practical theologians to approach the faith practices that they are researching in a way that suits the continent where these practises occur (cf. also Smith 2012).

Not taking into consideration the role of the Spirit and the spirits in religion and theology in sub-Saharan Africa will result in a reductionist approach. John Mbiti ([1969] 2008:4) rightly states, '[*n*]o line is drawn between the spiritual and the physical'. A pneumapraxis will not exclude a Christopraxis, but we believe that there is a crucial contextual difference in the two approaches. This difference relates to Root's Western context which allows him to wrestle almost exclusively with the cross and what he calls nothingness. In our view, a view which was formed in the process of conducting numerous interviews and focus groups and which is supported by the work of scholars

such as the Ghanaian scholar Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu and the Cameroonian scholar David Ngong (2014), a typical experience of Christians – including AICs, neo-Pentecostal Churches and Traditional churches – in Africa already includes the cross and nothingness in the harsh conditions of many people's daily lives and that is one reason why the Spirit and the power of the Spirit are so important (cf. Anderson 2003).

We would like to present the example of a mother who was a member of the Reformed church in Mbekweni in the Western Cape when we were doing research on the theme of worship and poverty. She told one of the authors of this chapter that poverty is her reality from Monday to Saturday. On Sunday, she needs to experience the power of God's Spirit, not more of the lamenting that she experiences during the rest of her week. Here, we could also introduce the concept of 'spiritual capital' as a subset of social capital as it is becoming more and more part of the vocabulary of scholars such as Nigerian theologian Afe Adogame (2013:106). In this chapter, however, we would like to stay with the theological concept of pneumapraxis.

Such a pneumapraxis approach will even further open up an academic space within our Department in which the experience of 'life in the Spirit' can be embraced by means of a methodology that refrains from a reductionist world view and dares to enter the holistic African world view of the Spirit and the spirits. What we present here is not the answer or the direction for our Department but rather a first indication from our side to point towards an area where we can become even more hospitable, where our Department can become more spacious. Hopefully, these very preliminary thoughts can also assist in leading us to where we can gain some wisdom for proceeding in this regard.

Exactly one year ago, a paper entitled 'Bliksem' (cf. Wepener 2015c) was delivered at an 'Ecodomy' conference in the FT at the UP. In this paper, an argument was developed, following mainly Nigerian liturgist Elochukwu Uzukwu (1997) but also Ted Jennings (1996), for a greater appreciation of a bodily based epistemology

when conducting practical theological research on African soil. In the current chapter, we want to augment Wepener's argument with a pneumatological ontology for researching faith practices in sub-Saharan Africa, the continent of the Spirit and the spirits. As the Ghanaian practical theologian Lartey (2013:26) describes our continent, '[*a*]ll of life pulsates with the rhythms of the spiritual realm'.

While keeping in mind the history of our Faculty and Department as well as the contextual realities in which we are doing PT we now build on the previous section and think out loud about the part of the river that we are entering as we continue the tradition of doing PT in Pretoria.

A way forward for a Practical Theology Department in Africa?

We do not think that there is *a* or *the* way forward but at best, maybe, possible *ways* forward. We also do not think that such a way can be clearly formulated at this stage. We would suggest that *sites for thinking* such possible ways could perhaps be indicated, together with identifying some possible challenges. Yet it would need to be a matter of creatively engaging with these challenges in these sites of thinking, thereby opening up a space for changing the ways of thinking. These sites of thinking, as well as the concomitant challenges, have already been indicated in the previous paragraphs.

Andrew Root's Christopraxis proposes a way forward for PT with his shift in focus from human practices – hermeneutically, linguistically and culturally understood – towards God's action. When taking into consideration the specific African context, it was argued above that it might be more useful to refer to a pneumapraxis, thereby creating space for the diversity of experiences of divine action or experiences of the actions of the Spirit or spirits.

Root's Christopraxis is based on critical realism, specifically in the context of ministry. The focus is on realism as the experiences

of divine action are seen as being real and should therefore be taken seriously. However, one should also engage with these experiences critically as they should be interpreted within a specific transversal hermeneutic paradigm. The critical point for Root is to interpret divine action as Christ's action, Christopraxis, which then serves as the hermeneutical key to interpret the experienced action. Christopraxis is for Root essentially the movement from death to life, interpreted in the light of both a Theology of the Cross and a Theology of Justification.

These theologies (of Justification or of the Cross) are not interpreted as dogmas but serve as hermeneutical keys with which to interpret Christopraxis. They thereby offer a paradigm for critical engagement and the interpretation of divine action.

To interpret divine action within the paradigm of Christopraxis and the hermeneutical keys of a Theology of the Cross and a Theology of Justification make sense in a North American context where these theologies have played a dominant role in the self-understanding of Protestant and Evangelical faith communities. The question, however, is: Would such a hermeneutical key make sense in an African context?

The African context offers its own challenges. We would like to highlight only three challenges:

- How do we *respond* to the specific African context?
- How do we *think* such a response to the context?
- How does the response influence possible *practices*?

How do we respond to the context?

Root's context was North America, but our context is Africa where the tradition of a Theology of the Cross and/or a Theology of Justification by faith and grace alone might certainly have influenced those Christian traditions that have their roots in Europe and North America but will not necessarily be part of the tradition of Pentecostal and African Initiated Churches. The context could be described as a multi-world context where there

are different worlds, and in these worlds, the divine acts are experienced very differently as they are interpreted within very diverse worlds. Within a modern world influenced by the West, it would make sense to interpret divine action by using metaphors from the Protestant Christian narratives as these narratives have played an important part in the creation of the modern and postmodern Western worlds.

The question is whether these same metaphors can serve as paradigms (epistemology) of critical engagement with regards to the interpretation of divine actions in multiple-world contexts where many of these worlds do not share the history or tradition of the Western world? Would those worlds be expected to convert to modernity or postmodernity first before one could engage them in critical (transversal) conversation? Alternatively, would these multi-worlds challenge the basic epistemological assumptions of Western modern and/or postmodern worlds? What kind of epistemology would be needed to respond to a multiple-world context?

How do we think such a response?

Alain Badiou (2009) argues in his book *Logics of worlds* that true change happens when epistemology changes. Otherwise, it would make more sense to talk about modification (Badiou 2009:259). He argues that, for change to happen, an exception is required, '... an exception to the laws of ontology as well as to the regulation of logical consequences' (Badiou 2009:360).

The African context with its multiple worlds is such an exception to the laws of Western ontology. Things appear that do not make sense in Western ontology, and yet they appear, and they appear within their own ontology, that is, within their own worlds of meaning. These appearances challenge the dominant Western ontologies and thereby question them.

The idea of the West being confronted with an Other is not new. On the contrary, it has always been part of the Western

history, specifically the colonial history. Yet, in the past, the Other was assimilated into the Same even if it was assimilated by calling the other *the Other*, the Other of the Same. In identifying the differences, the Other was assimilated into the Same as that which is different. To really listen to the context and thereby take the context seriously, that which *is* needs to be taken together with how it shows itself, that is, within its own ontology even if that ontology is an exception to the dominant ontologies and their epistemologies.

What is required is a new epistemology that can think various epistemologies together without creating a multicultural mix or resign to the idea of relativism. Critical engagement remains necessary in engaging in a multiple-world context, but what needs to be creatively sought is a paradigm from which one critically engages the different worlds. Bruno Latour argues that '[*n*]either Nature nor the Others will become modern. It is up to us to change our ways of changing' (Latour 1993:145).

How does the response influence possible *practices*?

Such an emerging epistemology will certainly affect how PT is done in all four of Miller-McLemore's (2012:4) related but distinctive locales:

- scholarly discipline
- activity of faith
- method of study
- curricular area.

In each of these locales, the question will be twofold. Firstly, is there room for different voices coming from different ontologies, and secondly, are the different epistemologies respected, that is, is there a democracy of epistemologies?

These two questions arising from the specific African context will shape the path into the future, determining how we reflect

about faith practices in these contexts while remaining open to critically engaging in global conversations.

Conclusion

In this chapter we looked back, we looked at the context around us, and we also looked forward. What we shared with you is part of the ongoing story of PT at the UP at the time of celebrating the centenary of its FT. In the words of Wainwright, we see this tradition that we are part of, the tradition that was handed over to us and that we are busy handing over again, as both a gift and a charge.

Summary: Chapter 6

The focus of this chapter is the tradition of PT at the UP. We consider it as practiced in the Department of PT at the UP at the time of celebrating the centenary of the FT by looking at it from different angles in order to focus on its unique position and especially its future in its particular context. By looking at the history of the subject and the Department as well as the global and local context within which the discipline is practiced in Pretoria, the possible direction is sketched in which this discipline can move at the Department of PT at the UP after 2017 (the year of the centenary of the FT).

The chapter challenges the discipline of PT to embrace the continent of Africa where the department is situated, assuming that such an embracing will impact both ontology and epistemology. In this regard, we suggest a pneumapraxis to be part of the future of this discipline in SA. The chapter promotes both an intra and interdisciplinary approach.

Chapter 7

Science of Religion and Missiology at the Faculty of Theology, University of Pretoria: Historical overview, theological discourses and future possibilities

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Introduction

Science of Religion has been taught at the FT since its inception 100 years ago. Together with Philosophy of Religion, it formed part of the original group of subjects that have been presented since 1917. The first lecturer was the Rev. E. Macmillan (Presbyterian).

When the Faculty divided into two ecclesiastical faculties in 1938 the NRCA and the NRC, the Department also split along these lines.

Science of Missiology has been taught since 1938 when D.J. Keet (NRC historian) included the history of mission in the curriculum of Church History. From 1949 onwards, he also taught the subject Science of Missiology on an unofficial basis to students with an interest in missions.

In 1953, the department was renamed 'Science of Religion and Missiology', and H.D.A. du Toit was appointed as professor and head of the Department of Science of Religion and Missiology at the then Dutch Reformed FT (Section B) (Meiring & Niemandt 2013:119).

The two ecclesiastical divisions were united in 2000. This brought into the equation the considerable knowledge of and insight into Science of Religion of P.J. van der Merwe, and it gave birth to a very unique situation where Mission Studies and Science of Religion are studied and taught in one department.[45]

This overview of the Department Science of Religion and Missiology will attend to both of these disciplines.

45. See Meiring and Niemandt (2013:119–144) for a more comprehensive description of the history of the Department.

Science of Religion

In its most simplistic form, religion is an attempt at addressing brokenness and creating wholeness (Kobia 2005:1). What we deem as religion represents a journey to wholeness, healing and the mending of broken relationships. Religion is expressed in cultic and ritual praxis and communicates by means of symbols and metaphors. This is located within a social setting and directed towards adherents of religion as well as to society at large.

Religion is concerned with understanding reality (Beyers 2010:1). Although reality exists independently of human existence, humans engage in the process of interpreting reality. The Christian doctrine of 'general revelation' teaches that God revealed, and is still revealing, Himself in external reality (i.e. reality outside of human consciousness). Calvin, however, taught that no human being could truly discern God's revelation without looking through the lens of faith. Only after coming to faith in Jesus Christ is humanity able to discern the meaning of God's revelation in his creation. The direct object of Science of Religion is not faith but religion. When talking about faith, we as Christians assume that we are talking about the Christian faith, referring to that living relationship between God and the Christian believer that has been, and is being, mediated by Jesus Christ.

The dilemma is that, if the focus of Science of Religion is religion and the attempt is to engage with religion in as neutral and unbiased a way as possible, Theology ought not to play any role. In the FT of the UP, Science of Religion is part of the Department Science of Religion and Missiology, thus located within Theology. Being integrated into Theology means that the traditional neutral stance of Science of Religion can no longer be maintained. What we are presenting in this discipline may be termed 'Theological Science of Religion', implying the study of religion from a Christian theological interest and perspective. In this discipline, Theology considers the theological meaning of the common phenomenological structure of all religions as well as the encounter of the Church with other religions.

In the discipline 'Science of Religion', students are introduced to a selection of the beliefs and practices of other religions (e.g. Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Traditional African Religions). South African society has become increasingly plural with the implication that members of society are exposed to new and divergent ideas and cultural practices. Preparing for ministry within the Christian tradition requires knowledge about non-Christian traditions. However, what are the implications of gaining knowledge of other religions? Science of Religion wants to interpret religions through a theological lens.

Theological discourses in Science of Religion

Within the discipline of Science of Religion, several discourses are presented simultaneously. The approach to studying religions entails a sociological, anthropological as well as theological position. The main focus is, of course, an understanding of religions. Students are exposed to beliefs and practices of the world's main religions. During the first-year courses, the emphasis is on explaining the terminology and concepts utilised within the discipline. In the second-year modules, the focus is on the methodology utilised in studying religions. Phenomenology, comparative studies as well as cognitive approaches are investigated as methods. During the third year, students apply the knowledge gained so far by studying world religions and discerning a theology of religions.

As to research, the discipline of Science of Religion at the UP has two main areas of interest, namely, secularisation and theology of religions.

Secularisation

Secularisation can be categorised into three different groups, namely 'secularisation as differentiation of the secular spheres from religious institutions; secularisation as decline in religious

beliefs and practices; and secularisation as marginalization of religion to a privatized sphere' (Casanova 1994:211).

These categories do not imply the disappearance of religion but mainly refer to the change of location of religion in society – and a change in the status of religion.

The demise, and even disappearance, of religion has been predicted in the past (compare the work by Berger [1967] and Luckman [1967]). However, as time passed, new social developments required a revision. A revised theory by Berger (1999:13) predicts that religion will not only remain intact but will, in fact, grow. It has to be acknowledged that the process now known as secularisation has played havoc with Western civilisation. The effect of secularisation has had an impact on Europe, Northern America as well as the colonies of world powers.

Where Berger used to be negative about the persistence of religion, he became convinced that religion will not only persist but grow. 'The world today is massively religious, is anything but the secularized world that had been predicted' (Berger 1999:9). The old secularisation theory might be true in some instances, but in general, Berger finds the theory that 'secularity will triumph … unpersuasive' (Berger 1999:12). The 'massively secular Euro-culture', Berger determines, exhibits what he would rather call the 'widespread alienation from the organized church' or 'a shift in the institutional location of religion' (Berger 1999:10). Religion has shifted from the public sphere to the personal sphere.

Currently, the debate has shifted to reflect an understanding of a post-secular situation or even a time of resacralisation. In this new context, Science of Religion can contribute to Theology by indicating the status and function of religion in society and by explaining the role the church can play under changed conditions in society. As religion is no longer located in the public sphere, individuals exercise their religion in a

private 'invisible' form (compare Luckmann 1967:86). Science of Religion provides theological insight into the role and function of religion in society and advises the church on how to organise itself and how to engage society with the gospel under changed conditions.

Theology of Religion and religions

The relationship between Christianity and other religions needs to be addressed by Theology. In this regard, Science of Religion can provide insight.

The world has become plural in more ways than one (Kärkkäinen 2003:18). This plurality applies to all levels of existence such as religious affiliation, race and culture, social and economic status, and even differences in world view. This diversity of societies has brought about exposure to a variety of other (and different) traditions. Plurality implies connectedness to the other. Globalisation has made communities aware of their differences. Any claim to universal truth or universal religious applicability must be prepared to be tested in this world-wide forum.

Religions are in contact with one another, and one can add to this the presence of those not subscribing to any religion. Kärkkäinen (2003:19) indicates those who do not believe and those who do engage differently in society. The South African context reflects a multicultural and multireligious environment. Values and religious viewpoints previously accepted without question must now be prepared to be questioned. The church and its members are moving into unknown territory. Theology is called upon to provide answers to questions now arising from interreligious encounters. These and many other points end up on the agenda of the discipline of Science of Religion in Theology.

Theology of Religion (*Theologia religionis*)

Science of Religion provides theological reflection on the technical debate about the phenomenon of religion, resulting in a theological theory of religion. Dupuis (1997:7) indicates that the theology of religion asks, from a Christian perspective, what religion is and seeks to interpret the universal religious experience of humankind. It further investigates the relationship between revelation and faith, faith and religion, and faith and salvation. The understanding of the nature of the own religion evidently leads to an understanding of the relationship with other religions.

Rudolf Otto (1932:5) provides a theological explanation of the origin of what he refers to as 'the Holy'. The Holy exists independently and autonomously from human existence. Humans merely become aware of the existence of the indescribable Holy. This feeling is described as a feeling of dependence (Otto 1932:10). In reaction to this becoming aware, humans construct an appropriate response which manifests in religion (Otto 1932:82). This is a theological explanation as to the origin of religion. This position is also clear from the theology of religion present in the opening section of the monumental work of Calvin's *Institutie*. In the opening section (Calvin 1931:8, para. 1), Calvin indicates that he is convinced that religion is a universal human phenomenon that must be explained as the effect of an innate *semen religionis* [seed of religion] and a *sensus divinitatis* [sense of divinity]. By this, Calvin indicates that humans have a natural knowledge of the Divine. Such innate ability is traced back to God's creation of humankind. God reignites this awareness of the divine in humans by 'adding droplets' to human existence from time to time. Religion is thus part of human nature. Ontologically, humans have been predetermined for religion.

The question about the origin, nature, and essence of religion remains one of the fundamental theological issues. Many modern

theologians claim that religion as phenomenon provides theology with an important theoretical challenge. A theological theory of religion is essential for the church's understanding of itself.

Theology of Religions (*Theologia religionum)*

Theology of Religions is concerned with the theological reflection on the meaning and value of other religions (Kärkkäinen 2003:20). This is where theology focuses on religions that are neighbours or challenging the message and/or mission of the church – with a view to evaluating such religions in terms of revelation, salvation and the challenge they pose (from a Christian perspective). The purpose is to reach a deeper level of understanding of the other. Theology of Religions also aims to formulate principles and guidelines with a view to the practical coexistence, witnessing toward and dialogue with members of other faiths.

Ever since Christianity had to consider its relationship with other religions, a debate, which is not done, has been raging. The debate started out as an intrareligious debate between Christians as to how to understand the relationship between Christians who are differing on interpretations of matters of faith. The apparent statement made by Origen that no salvation is possible outside the 'house' of the church was directed against sectarian groups within Christianity (Dupuis 1997:87). The church father Cyprian had the same intention when he formulated the principle '*extra ecclesiam nulla salus est*' [outside the church there is no salvation] (Dupuis 1997:88). This was done within the context of the struggle between the church and sectarian groups (Berkouwer 1965:231).

Only when Christianity became state religion (Dupuis 1997:89) did this principle become the official position of the church and was it applied far beyond its original scope in terms of intent and time (Berkouwer 1965:230), namely to all who found themselves outside of the church – all non-Christians. Even the most spiritual

and pious gentile should convert to the Christian faith and church in order to be saved. Piety as such offered no hope of salvation (Kärkkäinen 2003:64).

Over time, as the debate between Christianity and non-Christian religions raged on, three positions became apparent, namely exclusivism (referred to as the replacement model by Knitter 2005:19–43), inclusivism (referred to as the fulfilment model, Knitter 2005:63–108) and the pluralistic position (referred to as the mutuality model, Knitter 2005:109–172). Knitter (2005:175) indicates the inadequacy of these three models to comply with the requirements of postmodern thought, and he suggested a fourth model, namely the acceptance model. Based on the acceptance model, Knitter (2005:181) professes that religions will have to acknowledge that they differ too much from one another. Postmodern thought does not subscribe to only one truth – in fact, many truths exist. In light of this principle, Knitter suggests that religions make peace with the fact that they have nothing in common (neither a common origin, nor a common goal). This results in an impasse where religions have to accept that they have nothing to say to one another. Interaction between religions ought to be restricted to being polite neighbours (Knitter 2005:183).

After the groundbreaking insights provided by Knitter, it seemed that the end of a long-standing debate was approaching. However, new approaches surfaced in an attempt to bridge the impasse identified by Knitter. Kenneth Rose, Paul Hedges, David Cheetham and Jenny Daggers all indicate possible directions the debate may take in future.

Kenneth Rose (2013) suggests that pluralism will, in future, be the only coherent explanation of religious diversity. With pluralism, Rose (2013:9) refers to a theory ascribed to John Hick, suggesting a solution to exclusivism and inclusivism. All reflection on the relationship between Christianity and other religions will eventually have to agree to the pluralistic view, according to Rose (2013:2). Acknowledging pluralism is inevitable (Rose

2013:5). This is also the challenge in a multireligious South African context. Pluralism recognises the validity and the equality of all religions. No religion can be considered inferior to any other religion in terms of revelation or salvation. All religions must be viewed as having knowledge of the transcendental.

Paul Hedges (2010) suggests a scheme of polarisation between plurality and particularity when reflecting on the relationship between religions. There is a plurality of religions, each claiming particularity. This polarisation drives the interreligious debate. Hedges acknowledges the impasse reached in the debate. He now considers how religions can co-exist while acknowledging the reality of the plurality of religions and simultaneously, laying claim to uniqueness and particularity (Hedges 2010:9, 228). The most appropriate model addressing this problem is, according to Hedges (Hedges 2010:2), pluralism. Pluralism suggests radical openness to the religious other (Hedges 2010:111, 230). This openness is already present in the Christian tradition (Hedges 2010:2). Hedges (2010:3) argues from a post-liberal theology of religions. From this position, the plurality of religions needs to be acknowledged. Christianity has, over time, evolved into a position of 'radical openness' towards other religions (Hedges 2010:2). This does, however, not imply a subscription to the classical position of pluralism as presented by John Hick (Hedges 2010:113–115). With the pluralist position, Hedges (2010:229) suggests a need to respect the plurality as well as the particularity of religions. Hedges suggests that a radical openness towards other religions should acknowledge the existence of differences and not only ignore these differences. Such radical openness, Hedges suggests, is an effort to avoid the impasse of the pluralist-particularist deadlock.

Christianity depicted as being 'closed', as opposed to a radical open Christianity, focuses on set doctrines, beliefs and creeds, excluding all that differ and enforcing dominance by claiming the sole right to truth (Hedges 2010:230). This 'closed' position, Hedges (2010:230) suggests, grew not from a search and application of the truths found in the gospel but rather from

socio-political concerns which formed the Christian identity as the dominant power in society.

Radical openness, for Hedges (2010:247), entails the possibility of mutual fulfilment for all religions. He indicates that mutual fulfilment should imply the '... need for religions to overcome the building of barriers and embrace a radical openness to one another' (Hedges (2010:249). In every context, 'the voices that come to us from the margins' ought to be accepted (Hedges 2010:251) for acceptance of the 'Other' implies critically questioning the 'Own'. Hedges (2010:252) suggests that Christianity will need to consider whether the traditions, denominations and doctrines have not become the idols Christians worship? Openness towards other expressions of religiosity cannot deny, ignore or oppress other religions.

David Cheetham's (2013:2) contribution to the interreligious debate is an attempt to create appropriate 'spaces', or rooms, where religions will feel comfortable to meet. He identifies four spaces of encounter, namely interspirituality, aesthetics, interreligious ethics and spiritual reasoning. With interspirituality, Cheetham (2013:6) refers to the interreligious sharing of spiritual activities such as prayer, meditation and spiritual experiences.

Cheetham (2013:7) suggests that the nature of interreligious encounters be changed from focusing on the religious to focusing on the aesthetic and ethical spaces. With 'aesthetic attitude', Cheetham (2013:123) suggests that other religions are viewed as one would view a work of art – emphasising ways of seeing (Cheetham 2013:127). The intention is to experience empathy with other religious traditions on an aesthetic level. This is reached by being an 'imaginatively participating perceiver' (Cheetham 2013:147) and not a participant. Viewing other religious traditions is a subjective activity. Mutual appreciation is attained by seeing the other for what it is and appreciating the uniqueness and beauty within each tradition.

The third space of encounter is ethical spaces (Cheetham 2013:149). Cheetham (2013:157) is sceptical of this space as

neutral global ethics will not necessarily be sensitive towards the particularities within cultures and traditions.

As a fourth space of meeting, Cheetham (2013:177) suggests the attitude exhibited by the Scriptural Reasoning movement. They see meeting not as a discussion forum of differences or similarities but emphasise 'understanding above agreement; collegiality above consensus' (Cheetham 2013:179). This particular space of meeting is not theologically defined and opens up the possibility of meeting within in-between spaces.

Cheetham's contribution is an attempt at seeking new ways of meeting. His approach focuses on ways of seeing and meeting the 'Other' and the spaces where meeting might be possible. He does not focus on the content of the meeting itself. He is suggesting the scene for the encounter, preparing conditions conducive to meaningful interreligious encounters.

A current contribution by Jenny Daggers (2013) attempts to establish a theology of religions, recognising the postcolonial context as paradigm within which interreligious deliberations take place. According to Daggers (2013:1), the traditional models of theology of religions consisted of 'Eurocentric imperialist attitudes'. Daggers (2013:1) suggests a postcolonial theology of religious differences to indicate the transition from a monologue in Eurocentric Christianity to acknowledging religious plurality. Daggers (2013:2) suggests that, within a postcolonial context, a revised particularist theology of religions is necessary. This will acknowledge the particularity of religious traditions while simultaneously respecting the integrity of all religions. A Christian particularity grounded in Trinitarian theology is suggested by Daggers (2013:2). This encourages Christianity to act with hospitality towards postcolonial theologies, recognising interreligious concerns.

The postcolonial environment is characterised by religious diversity. This is evident in a postcolonial SA. Daggers (2013:2) poses a revised pluralist model to turn '... theology of religions towards the dynamic process of constructing lived religion within each received tradition' (Daggers 2013:2). Theology of religions

became entangled (Daggers 2013:18) in a colonial understanding of Christianity as being superior to other religions. This caused Christianity to view other religions from a position of power and superiority.

Daggers reminds us that the context within which other religions are currently viewed is no longer a Eurocentric, Christian-pivotal perspective. Theology of religions must therefore engage in a process of disentanglement in order to recognise and acknowledge religious diversity and equality. Disentanglement refers to the process of acknowledging the value of local religious expressions as seen from their own point of view.

The future of Science of Religion

The discipline 'Science of Religion' will continue to make contributions to these three areas of concern (i.e. studying religions, secularisation, theology of religion and religions).

Science of Religion at the UP is currently collaborating in an international research project investigating Christian-Muslim relations. The Christian-Muslim Relations 1900 (CMR 1900) project, chaired by David Thomas (University of Birmingham), is investigating all literary references to Christian-Muslim encounters from 700 to 1900 AD. The results of this project are disseminated in a Brill publication, now at volume 11 already. This will provide an outline of Christian and Muslim interactions over the centuries. The Southern African contribution to this project comes from the Department of Science of Religion and Missiology. In this way, the department is addressing the challenge of interreligious encounters.

A second project associated with Science of Religion is the *Timbuktu project*. In this project, headed by Maniraj Sukdaven, a translation of the Timbuktu manuscripts is attempted. Research on the content of the documents will provide insights into Christian-Muslim encounters.

The theological reflection on the relationship between Christianity and non-Christian religions remains at the centre of the discipline of Science of Religion at the UP. Students are encouraged to contribute to the debate by way of research essays and minidissertations. Knowledge of religion and religions will always be an integral part of theological thought. Science of Religion ought to remain within theology as theological discipline (Sundermeier 1999:245). For Sundermeier (1999:247), the connection between Science of Religion and Missiology is so close that one cannot be described without referring to the other. Science of Religion constantly reminds Missiology of the challenge that the presence of other religions poses.

Missiology

Missiology deals comprehensively with mission. Missiology at the UP. finds itself conceptualised according to the description of Michael Goheen (2014:loc.1854–1856), following the broad outlines of the Lausanne Movement in describing mission as the participation of God's people in God's mission to renew the whole of creation and the lives of all its peoples and cultures in their totality. Stanley Skreslet (2012:loc.388–389) focuses more on the issue of systematic research and defines Missiology as the systematic study of all aspects of mission. Verster (2014:882) adds the focus on the comprehensive fullness of life from the perspective of salvation in Christ.

Although there is a decline in mission studies at universities (Kim 2015:82; Verster 2014:883) and Missiology is integrated with disciplines such as Practical Theology[46] at some universities (such as Stellenbosch), a strong case can be made for the continuation of Missiology as a distinct discipline within Theology. David Bosch (1991:9) argues convincingly for Missiology as a branch of the discipline of Christian Theology. Verster describes it as the 'ambivalent situation' of mission and missiology, '[*w*]hile many

46. Kim (2015:94) argues that the shift of interest in mission to the local church has tended to benefit the study of PT rather than mission studies.

institutions in the West are inclined to regard mission as obsolete, there are those pursuing its radical value for church and society' (Verster 2014:884). Recent insights include the emphasis on mission as participation in the life-giving mission of the Triune God (WCC) as well as all the attention paid to mission at nearly all the important ecumenical events early in the new millennium (see Niemandt & Pillay 2015). Kim (2015) argues for the relevance of mission studies because of the following:

> [*W*]orld Christianity is not just the result of recent missionary expansion but is a phenomenon that goes back into the New Testament which brings together documents – such as the four Gospels – from a wide geographical area. (p. 82)

She also mentions the fact that mission has never been entirely a colonial phenomenon and that mission from the global South is now well established. Verster (2014:889) argues that Missiology is an intrinsic part of theology and that it has to be acknowledged as part of the university. As theological subject, it needs to be discussed and evaluated. He states that theology would be the poorer if missiology was not taught as part of the theological disciplines.

Missiology has been taught as a discipline at the UP in the Department since 1938. The content broadly covered the following areas: Theology of Mission, History of Missions, Theory and Praxis of Mission, and Theology of Religions.

The consolidation of the curriculum since 2007 as well as the momentum of a more multidisciplinary approach, have led to the integration of History of Missions with Church History. The growth of Christianity in the so-called Global South has caused a sharper focus on theologies of the Third World as well as attention to African religions and African Initiated Churches. The explosion of interest in the concept of 'missional church' led to the introduction of Missional Ecclesiology (why is the church missional by its very nature?), complemented by Missional Leadership (how can a congregation be guided to take ownership of the missional calling) as well as Missional Practice (what are meaningful and effective ways to be missional in our context?)

(see Meiring & Niemandt 2013:128–129). Theology of Mission and Theory and Praxis of Mission are still part of the curriculum.

Theological discourses in Missiology

Current theological discourses in Missiology have been deeply influenced by important ecumenical events in the new millennium, affirming Bosch's (1991:369) remark on the importance of world (ecumenical) missionary conferences in the understanding of mission. This is enhanced by the foci of the International Association of Mission Studies (IAMS) and other regional academic organisations.

Together towards Life (=TTL; Keum 2013), the 2013 mission affirmation by the WCC (the first in more than 30 years), continues to play a defining role in recent mission studies. Much has been published on TTL since the first drafts appeared, and the major discourses can be summarised as follows:

- ***Ecological justice*:** Niemandt and Pillay (2015:35) researched trends in ecumenism and mission in four significant ecumenical events of the new millennium, and concluded that the most important issues '… that perhaps typify the most important missional and ecumenical trend, is the unequivocal commitment to ecological justice issues'. Eco-justice is a comprehensive term and always includes ecology, economy and equity (Faramelli 2015:151). In this regard, TTL (Keum 2013:5) states, 'rather the gospel is the good news for every part of creation and every aspect of our life and society. It is, therefore, vital to recognize God's mission in a cosmic sense, and to affirm all life, the whole *oikoumene*, as being interconnected in God's web of life. This focus relates to the research theme of the FT at Pretoria, namely '*Oikodome*: Life in its fullness'. Ecodomy in mission refers to the growing attention to earth-keeping and life in fullness in missiology (Niemandt 2015:1).
- ***The role of the Holy Spirit in the missio Dei*:** A whole section of TTL focuses on 'The Mission of the Spirit' (para. 12–18),

discussing themes such as the role of the Spirit in creation, the role of the Spirit in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, the Spirit and ecclesiology, the particularity of the Spirit's work in redemption and the Spirit in mission praxis. Keum (2012:3) draws attention to the fact that TTL focuses on the *missio Spiritus* within the Trinitarian understanding of mission. Kim (2015:89) ascribes the interest in the Holy Spirit and pneumatological perspectives in mission studies to the wide-ranging interest in spiritual experience and spirituality. Another reason is the rise of Pentecostal and charismatic perspectives, a phenomenon that is also changing the face of Christianity in Africa.

- ***A reiteration of the importance of contextualisation and indigenisation, and the crucial role of discernment as the first act of mission (Kim 2009:34)*:** Theology must serve context, and context informs theology. Missiology has a particular sensitivity towards contextualisation (Niemandt 2014b:42). Kim (2015:86) also notes the continued interest in the relationship between mission and culture in the United Kingdom. TTL recognises the importance of discernment and affirms (Keum 2013:11), '[*t*]he churches are called to discern the work of the life-giving Spirit sent into the world and to join with the Holy Spirit in bringing about God's reign of justice (Ac 1:6–8). When we have discerned the Holy Spirit's presence, we are called to respond.'
- ***Mission from the margins*:** Goheen (2014:loc. 2550–2551) calls this mission in weakness and suffering a response to mission from strength. Mission is no more a movement from the centre to the periphery and from the privileged to the marginalised. Marginalised people are playing an equally important part in God's mission, and TTL (Keum 2013:5) even speaks of a 'reversal of roles' and 'shift of the mission concept from "mission to the margins" to "mission from the margins"'. Globalisation enhances marginalisation. It represents a shift from rural to urban, from poor countries to rich cities and from one nation to another – a present-day global diaspora (Niemandt 2013:23).

The theme for IAMS 2016 was 'Missiological approaches to religious change'. In his important book on mission studies, Skreslet (2012:loc.405–414) also focuses on the processes of religious change. He refers to the importance of, and changes in, religious boundaries and conversion into and out of Christianity. This crossing of boundaries is inherent to missiology, and Wickeri, Wickeri and Niles (2000:4–11) point out that Christianity is called to renegotiate its boundaries. For Christians, the love of God and the love of our neighbour make the renegotiation of boundaries an especially important issue. Skreslet (2012) adds the vast demographic changes in Christianity to this theme of religious change and argues the following about missiology:

> [*It must*]... understand better what these demographic changes might mean, how factors of culture have shaped patterns of religious affiliation, and the various means by which Christians have sought to engage people outside the church with the claims of the gospel. (loc. 405–414)

Skreslet (2012:loc.414–415) also refers to the reality of faith as an 'enduring characteristic of missiology'. The WCC (2011) tabled a document – 'Christian witness in a multi-religious world: Recommendations for conduct'. The document states that Christian witness in a pluralistic world includes engaging in dialogue with people from different religions and cultures (WCC 2011:3). Much of this issue of the missionary encounter with other world religions has been discussed in the section on Science of Religion (see section A, especially on Theology of Religions).

The Centennial World Missionary Conference celebrated the famous 1910 conference in Edinburgh. In the Edinburgh 2010 Common Call, the issues of justice and unity were again emphasised (Niemandt & Pillay 2015):

> Trusting in the Triune God and with a renewed sense of urgency, we are called to incarnate and proclaim the good news of salvation, of forgiveness of sin, of life in abundance, and of liberation for all poor

> and oppressed. We are challenged to witness and evangelise in such a way that we are a living demonstration of the love, righteousness and justice that God intends for the whole world. (pp. 40–41)

This issue is of particular importance in the African context, and the 10th General Assembly of the All African Conference of Churches (AACC 2013) reflects this priority in the congress theme, 'God of life, lead Africa to peace, justice and dignity'. The AACC decided to work towards a just global economic system that appreciates the God-given gift of dignity among all his people (AACC 2013:12). Justice issues will probably focus more and more on economic justice, especially in the light of the worldwide economic crisis since 2008 and the continued and increasing divide between rich and poor. This theme relates closely to the issue of eco-justice mentioned earlier.

One of the important and lively discourses in Missiology is on the theme of missional church. Kim (2015:85) describes this discourse as the widest and most intense discussion around mission. Literally hundreds of books and publications have appeared on this issue (see Van Gelder & Zscheile 2011 for a comprehensive overview). Together toward Life (TTL) (Keum 2013:26) recognises the importance of new initiatives in the revitalisation of the church. A significant number of denominations added affirmations concerning the missional nature of the church to their church polity or formulated policy documents (see also Nyomi 2013:76; Skreslet 2012:loc. 1729–1730). Together toward Life (Keum 2013:7) poses the following important question, '[*h*]ow can the church renew herself to be missional and move forward together towards life in its fullness?' It answers later in the document, stating that it 'is not the church that has a mission but rather the mission that has a church' (Keum 2013:63). The discourse on missional church is especially relevant in the South African context where a number of denominations prioritise the aspect of missional church. In terms of church partners of the FT at the UP, the NRC the PC and the NRCA all have lively discourses and have made policy decisions concerning missional church (see also Niemandt 2014a:7–9).

Conflict, especially in Africa, underscores the importance of reconciliation and peace building. The AACC (2013:10) paid particular attention to peace building, stating that justice, peace and dignity should be seen in the living situation of people, especially the marginalised (AACC 2013:15).

Challenges particular to the African context continue to stimulate discourse in Missiology. These include the explosive growth of the Christian faith in Africa, postcolonial and African theology, the rise of Pentecostalism in the world and Africa (see Tennent 2010:loc.4749) and the emergence of African Initiated Churches as an expression of Christian faith.

All of these discourses form the background against which research and teaching in the Department plays out.

Current theological contributions of the Department

The current theological contributions of the Department reflect most of the missiological discourses mentioned, and research is done in the following areas:

1. ***Mission as justice, reconciliation and peace building*:** In 1996, Piet Meiring was appointed by President Nelson Mandela to serve, alongside Archbishop Desmond Tutu, on the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC 1996–1998) where he was primarily involved in reparation and rehabilitation issues as well as coordinating the TRC Faith Community Hearings. He also published extensively on the issue of reconciliation. A new *Chronicle of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission* (American edition with a new foreword and epilogue) appeared in 2014. He published three chapters on reconciliation and peace-building in international peer-reviewed publications (Meiring 2013, 2015a, 2015b) as well as numerous articles in South African academic journals. Thias Kgatla also contributed research to the issue of justice and reconciliation and published on the issue of mission and conflict in SA.

2. ***The emergence of Missional Ecclesiology*:** ecclesial interest in the research theme and the worldwide interest in the issue of missional church ignited considerable research in the Department. Meiring and Niemandt made a significant contribution to a new policy document of the DRC, namely the 'Framework document on the missional nature and calling of the Dutch Reformed Church'. Niemandt published a number of articles on emerging missional churches, missional leadership and missional spirituality, and he also supervised six PhD and 16 Master's dissertations that have contributed to research on this theme. Van Niekerk also contributed to research on missional ecclesiology with an article on missional congregations in the South African context.
3. ***Ecological justice and sustainable life*:** Attie van Niekerk leads a team of researchers working on sustainable life practices. They have published extensively on improving the quality of life of households and communities and co-operate closely with the Nova Institute. Nova has more than 20 years of grass-roots level experience in the research and development of solutions to improve the quality of life of low-income households in Southern Africa. Two Master's students in Social and Cultural Anthropology from the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam did practical research regarding vulnerable children in different locations in SA. In 2016, Laetitia Simorangkir, from the same department, did fieldwork for her research on care arrangements in South African communities in Hammanskraal. There are plans to continue the research of the three students in order to guide a movement for Early Childhood Development that was started in the Dutch Reformed Family of Churches. 'Kerk in Actie' of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands provided financial support for the Nova Institute to take part in this movement, and the research will be done in close interaction with Nova. Two students completed Master's research on sustainable lifestyle under Van Niekerk's supervision. Nico Gronüm did research as post-doctoral fellow on sustainable life from the perspective of changing world views, virtue ethics and epistemological structures and published these finding in peer-reviewed journals. Niemandt published research from an ecumenical and ecclesiastical perspective on the theme of flourishing life, focussing on TTL, the mission affirmation of the WCC.

4. ***Missiological interest*:** In the role of the Holy Spirit in mission, and especially the spectacular rise of Pentecostalism in Africa (see Kőhrsen 2015:61) has led to research in this particular form of the Christian faith in Africa. Peter White from Ghana did research as post-doctoral fellow on Ghanaian Pentecostal Churches and published extensively on the issue.
5. ***Christianity in Africa and African religion*:** Thias Kgatla and Attie van Niekerk published various books and research articles related to the theme of Christianity in Africa and African religious practises. Kgatla also published on the issues of mission and globalisation and African religiosity. Three PhD students completed research under the supervision of Kgatla on this important research theme.
6. ***Religious change and the reality of faith*:** See the section on Science of Religion.

The future vision or focus for the Department

One of the most important issues in terms of the future of the Department is the conversion of the Department of Science of Religion and Missiology to a Department of Religion Studies. This is part of the broader transformation of the FT where the name of the faculty is to change to the Faculty of Theology and Religion (Afrikaans: *Fakulteit Teologie en Religie*; Sepedi: *Lekala la Thutatumelo le Bodumedi*) in 2017. The current programme on Religion Studies will move from the Faculty of Humanities to the FT and will become part of the newly named department.

The change in the name of the Department reflects the reality of a number of European and American mission departments where the name has been changed from Missiology (or derivatives) to a more inclusive and general name. Kim reflects on the situation in the United Kingdom (Kim 2015; see also Goheen 2014:loc. 459):

> University departments of theology continued the trend toward diversifying into 'theology and religious studies'. Where there had been integration between the two disciplines, the Christian input

> developed into Christian studies and theology was no longer only Christian theology. (p. 80)

There is a long and fruitful relationship between Missiology and Religion Studies, and the new dispensation will certainly broaden the scope of research. The challenge will be to keep the interest focused on the missionary dimension of the Christian faith in the midst of the wide-ranging transformation of the UP and the FT along with the political pressure to identify common ground among world religions. Verster's (2014) argument comes to mind:

> Mission should be an essential part of the discussion of the church's role in society. Missiology, as discipline, can guide the evaluation of mission's task in the world. Missiology remains essential as theological subject and should be regarded as irreplaceable. (p. 891)

The research theme of the FT, '*Oikodome*: Life in its fullness', represents a fascinating opportunity in the light of the intersection with TTL, the WCC's mission affirmation. It also relates to the theme of the AACC, 'God of life, lead Africa to peace, justice and dignity'. This focus on life allows the opportunity to investigate two closely related topics: What is life in fullness from a missiological perspective? What is the relation between life and the theology of mission?

In terms of the first topic, the global interest in research on flourishing and joyful life represents a wonderful opportunity to compliment the discourse from a missiological perspective. Joy stands at the very core of the Christian faith, life, and practice. Jürgen Moltmann (2015:loc. 296) says that 'Christianity is a unique religion of joy', 'expressed in its liturgical feasts, its depiction of God, and its treatment of theodicy'. Evangelism can be described as an invitation to joyful and flourishing life. A number of recent theological studies focussed on joy and human flourishing. The project of Miroslav Volf at Yale has already produced two important books on joy and human flourishing (Volf 2015; Volf & Blair 2015). It is significant that the first encyclical issued by Pope Francis (2013) was *Evangelii Gadium*. Volf's (Volf & Blair 2015:2)

conviction that a vision of flourishing life, found in Christianity as well as other world religions, is essential to individual thriving and global common good applies to Africa as well. The AACC decided that all life must be protected and stated the following, '[*w*]e need to promote and enhance life to ensure holistic growth for everyone' (AACC 2013:15). This focus on life includes the idea of economic justice.[47] Volf (2015:63–64) states that world religions provide people with a sense of life, a way to cope with the crises of life and direction on the relationship between individuals, communities and creation. Religions guide people as to how they should relate to others and what good they should strive to achieve. He argues that all the world religions share the broad idea of flourishing life and that this constitutes a point of convergence and unity that makes more sense than the mere pursuit of life that goes well.

The work done on sustainable life and poverty intervention and the network with various research and church partners places the Department in an ideal position to continue with a unique African contribution to participate in God's mission to allow life to flourish.

In terms of the second topic related to life in fullness, the theological discourse on 'deep incarnation' enriches Missiology. The concept of deep incarnation broadens the wellknown idea of incarnation to include all of created reality (see Gregersen 2015). Theology is familiar with the concept of incarnation that signifies the coming-into-flesh of God's eternal Logos. Pears (2009:118) argues that the incarnation of God in Christ is at the centre of the Christian faith. Deep incarnation extends this idea and states that, in and through the process of incarnation,

47. The importance of ecological justice issues is evident in the following affirmations in TTL (WCC 2013:73–76), (1) '[*w*]e affirm that mission begins with God's act of creation and continues in re-creation', (2) '[*w*]e affirm that the mission of God's Spirit is to renew the whole creation', and (3) '[*m*]ission, then, is to denounce the economy of greed and to participate in and practice the divine economy of love, sharing and justice.'

God the creator and the world of the flesh are conjoined in such depth that God links up with all vulnerable creatures. In Christ, God enters into the biological tissue of creation in order to share the fate of biological existence. In the incarnate One, God becomes Jesus, and in him, God becomes human. The Most High and the very lowest are united in the process of incarnation. Deep incarnation connects the missio Dei to life in the broadest sense. Koama (2015:282–283) even argues that the missio Creatoris Dei precedes the church and thus the mission ecclesia. The church exists only to participate in the mission of the Creator.

The concept of deep incarnation supports this argument and allows the combination of reflection on mission from the margins, holistic mission that includes participating in the totality of God's mission and creation and contextualisation.

The lively discourse on missional ecclesiology invites further discussion on missional transformation and especially the role of missional leadership. This includes closely related themes such as the nature and praxis of missional spirituality, the relationship between the *missio Creatoris Dei* and the *mission ecclesia*, leadership in complexity and transformational strategies. The theme generated considerable interest amongst researchers, and a number of postgraduate students will continue research on these issues.

The focus of mission in the missionary era was primarily on the preaching of the Gospel and on the planting of churches. In the missional approach, the focus is broadened to include the healing of all relationships as a way of serving God and the *missio Dei*. The whole congregation is called to become involved in the local communities and the local context. To get involved in very complex issues (e.g. the eradication of poverty, a more sustainable lifestyle, caring for vulnerable children) in a meaningful and effective way requires research that engages communities and other role players.

All of these challenges must take root in and flourish on African soil. The AACC (2013:149) called for theological reflection on ecumenism, theology of religions, theology and development, gender, African political theology, justice, peace and reconciliation, and dialogue and communication.

The particular circumstances in SA, combined with the promising prospects for theological reflection from an African perspective, create an ideal situation to cultivate flourishing life. The 'new' Department of Religion Studies is ideally positioned to contribute and serve God's mission in Africa.

Summary: Chapter 7

The history and contributions of the Department Science of Religion and Missiology at the UP have been described with a particular focus on a discussion of the understanding of both disciplines. In the case of Science of Religion, the research covers theological discourses in the discipline, attending to issues such as secularisation as well as Theology of Religions. It is argued that, in future, Science of Religion will continue to contribute to three areas of concern, namely studying religions, secularisation and theology of religion and religions. The section concludes with a brief overview of future contributions by the Department. Missiology is defined in terms of current insights in the discipline against the background of the decline in mission studies at many universities. The research argues for Missiology to be an intrinsic part of Theology. The following discourses in Missiology are noted, namely flourishing life, ecological justice, the role of the Holy Spirit in the *missio Dei*, missional church, contextualisation and indigenisation, and mission from the margins. Past and future contributions from the Department are described. This includes an argument for the change of the name of the Department to the Department of Religion Studies. In terms of future developments, research into flourishing life as well as deep incarnation are noted as exciting new possibilities.

Chapter 8

Fathoming Religion Studies: Treading on the spider's web

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Introduction

For Wiebe (2005:98), the term Religious Studies[48] is so ambiguous that he is unsure whether it is responsible to talk about a separate discipline going by this name at a university. For him, the question is about the difference between the academic study of religions and the study of religions at any other institution of education? It is merely by consensus that the name of the endeavour to study religions academically has ended up as Religious Studies. It is according to Wiebe (2005:98) impossible to define Religious Studies.

48. Scholars alternate between Religion Studies and Religious Studies. I here prefer Religion Studies. When I use Religious Studies in this chapter, it reflects the position of the particular scholar who is cited. In this case, Wiebe prefers Religious Studies.

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What follows here is not an attempt at doing the impossible but rather an attempt at providing a context within which Religion Studies can be located and function.

The premise for the discussion that follows is that religion is part of human fibre. To have a religious inclination is part of being human. It does not imply that all humans are religious. It merely assumes the potential that all humans have to act religiously should they wish to. Stated differently, it assumes that the human brain can acquire religion (cf. Boyer 2001:4). Secondly, the assumption is that religion is not only an isolated element coconstituting with other elements the human functionality. Religion is interconnected to all aspects related to human behaviour. One consequence of this assumption is that it is not easy to define religion as an entity easily separable from other aspects of existence. Smith (1991:53) indicates how many cultures do not have a word to indicate what we today denote as 'religion'. This implies that some cultures hold a close connection to what we refer to as religion and ordinary existence to the extent that it is impossible to separate the different spheres of existence.

This does not imply that the human functionality can be divided into many separate, loosely connected spheres as Western anthropology attempts to do. Human functionality does not consist of the sum of religious, physical, emotional, rational, economical, innovative, creative, reflective and other spheres. The human condition is that of interrelatedness of all of these spheres. Engaging with religion is like treading on a spider's web: Many related issues pick up the vibrations of the engagement. This chapter attempts to create awareness of the interrelatedness as well as to suggest an approach of acknowledging the width as well as the depth of Religion Studies. In this regard, the concept of conditionality as introduced by Kobus Krüger is helpful.

Studying the breadth of Religion Studies emphasises the reach and connections that religion has. The vast terrain of multiple connections spanning human existence is like the individual

strands of a spider's web. Religion has to do with education, law, human sciences, economy, ecology, theology and many other fields. This has implications for the way in which Religion Studies functions at a tertiary institution of learning.

I do not consider only the breadth of Religion Studies. The depth of Religion Studies is equally important. The depth of study refers to the quality, intensity and details of studying different religions. To what extent can other religions be studied and can remarks be made before it becomes biased. The point of departure in this research is that religions can be studied conditionally.

Just like treading on a spider's web can be a perilous activity, so studying religion has pitfalls of which to be aware of. Three pitfalls are identified here:

1. ***The part can easily be mistaken for the whole*:** Studying religion can easily mislead the researcher into thinking that the religion at hand is the only true religion. Smith (1991:41) refers here to the 'reification' of religion. Religion is studied as a *res*, an object to be analysed. The connections and relations of religion are then ignored. Religions should be studied within their contexts. Each and every religion carries its own truth and validity. In this regard, Smith's (2000:35) distinction between first and second-order classification is helpful. Religion as first-order classification is the name given to the associated religious-type activities in which people engage. Religion as a second-order classification refers to the concept itself as a generic description of all these activities put together. When discussing religion, this distinction should be kept in mind. Smith (1991:1–3) differentiates ways in which the term religion can be used. When talking about religion, we need to make clear what we are talking about. For instance, are we talking about one specific religion or about the concept of religion as such?
2. ***The researcher can be insensitive*:** A second pitfall may be that, when studying religion, researchers can easily end up being insensitive to what effect their words or actions may have on adherents of other religions. In line with the metaphor, a word of warning to tread lightly would be appropriate.

3. ***When everything is religion, nothing is religion*:** The multiple relationships in which religion stands can easily be confused with religion itself. Religion does not possess the mythical Midas touch. Everything that is touched by religion does not become religion. The autonomy of the different disciplines with which religion is connected must be maintained. The disciplines then interconnect without giving up their own identity. In the same way, the scholar of religion does not become a quasi-sociologist or quasi-artist by studying the relationship between religion and sociology or art.

The end goal of the study of religion is neither the cognitive awareness of the existence of different religions nor the emotive realisation of the existence of a greater concern for all humankind. Rather, the aim is to envision how religion can contribute to social cohesion and peaceful coexistence, irrespective of the religion to which people belong. In this regard, Smith's (1991) suggestion of an alternative concept to religion is an important principle throughout this argument. This goal is especially relevant to Religion Studies located at a university in SA where minds are formed to enable human beings to contribute responsibly to the well-being of all in human society.

In order to achieve this goal, it will be important to identify the connections religion has. Being aware of the interrelatedness of religion creates awareness of the role that religion plays in society. This opens up new fields of investigation. Scholarly research into the connections that religion has is important to fathom the reach of religion. For this task, Religion Studies must prepare itself.

Related terminology

Religion or religious studies?

The traditional way of referring to the study of religions is Religious Studies (cf. the concise description of the origin of the name in Beyers 2016a:2). The discipline Science of Religion

was introduced during the 20th century. It is mostly used in the English-speaking world, especially North America. The word 'science' is considered to have too much baggage to be used indiscriminately for a discipline of scholarship. Therefore, the term Science of Religion has been substituted by 'Religious Studies'. Gradually, a state of affairs developed where the discipline Science of Religion came to exist in parallel with Religious Studies.

The term Religion Studies is a recent addition to the plethora of names used for the discipline. Religion Studies is mostly used to refer to the study of religion from an educational perspective. The difference between Religious Studies and Religion Studies can be explained based on a semantic argument. 'Religious' in Religious Studies is an adverbial description of the nature of the study undertaken, emphasising the manner in which the study will be conducted. This can easily lead to the perception that a biased understanding will be the result. With Religion Studies, religion is used as a noun indicating the object to be studied, emphasising the object to be studied without the suspicion of any bias. Wiebe (2005:99) indicates how the terms Religion or Religious Studies were used interchangeably in the history of the development of the discipline. In this contribution, the signifier Religion Studies will be used.

For Wiebe (2005:99), it is important to note that Religion Studies assumes a position of investigating religion as a social phenomenon, shedding the theological cloak regarding which some might question the study of religion at a university. The purpose of Religion Studies is to reach an academic and critical understanding of religious traditions without creating the perception of nurturing faith. Studying religion at the UP is done from a nonconfessional and unbiased position. Religion Studies at the UP is, in line with the description by Wiebe (2005:99), not a faith-based study of religion as theology and religion education would attempt. There is no instruction in religion but only teaching about religion (Wiebe 2005:100). Without

the confessionally bound position associated with seminaries, the scope of studying religion academically is opened up to include a wide variety of possible approaches and connections. It is in this context that Wiebe's comment (2005:98) about the impossibility to define Religion Studies as an academic discipline must be seen. Regarding this, Benson's (1987:92) description is valuable. He describes the connectedness of Religion Studies as '... disciplines gathered around the complex phenomenon of religious belief and practice'. As indicated above, the concept of conditionality is helpful in describing this multiple connectedness of Religion Studies.

Conditionality

With conditionality, Krüger (1995:101) refers to the interwovenness of religious traditions in the past. This historic connection opens up the possibility of dialogue between religions in future. Based on commonality in the past, religious divergences to enrich one another the moment they interact. This does, however, not imply a greater common metareligion acting as a common ancestor to all existing religions. Religions as belief systems do not necessarily share a common historic denominator. The concept of familiar traits uniting religions into different families (see Smart 1986:46) is not necessarily ignored. In contrast, religiosity may suggest common notions instilled in human spiritual awareness. What then is connected? Is it humans, the adherents of religions that are connected? Is it the common interest of human beings in something greater, or is it the different notions of transcendence that are connected?

Krüger (1995:102) indicates that conditionality implies the unifying interest among human beings in becoming free. This freedom, according to Krüger, implies being free from the oppressive and manipulative social system characterised by causality and determinism. Under such conditions, humans are pretexted as to what gives meaning to humanity. Meaning is in fact derived from critical engagement with the metaphysical (Krüger 1995:103).

In this way, traditional religious systems can be restrictive in providing meaning to human existence. As these systems originated in a particular context (in the past), meaning has faded away over time with only the system remaining, prescribing to adherents different means to find meaning in life.

Based on Krüger's theory of conditionality, this study departs from the assumption that reality must be viewed holistically. Knowledge does not originate and exist in a vacuum. When studying religions, the context and interrelatedness of all things cannot be ignored. This implies that a particular choice is made in order to understand reality. Reality is connected.

The relationship between theology and religion studies

In comprehending Religious Studies,[49] Whaling (2001:229) indicates the extent and reach of Religious Studies. Five traditions can be identified. Religion Studies is concerned with all the world religions, which include the major world religions but also the minor traditions as well as the 'dead' traditions that no longer exist. Whaling also includes the primal religions as well as the new religious movements. There is also an argument to make, of which Smart (1991:16) is an exponent, to include in the scope of Religious Studies the world of no religion, namely secularism and ideologies (i.e. Marxism, capitalism, etc.).

Christianity is one of the traditions included in the scope of Religion Studies. The understanding of the existence of and the relationship between Christianity and other religions falls within the field of theological consideration. As Religion Studies at the UP is located within the FT and Religion, special attention to the relationship between Theology and Religion Studies is required here.

49. Whaling prefers Religious Studies.

As the relationship between Religion Studies and Theology has been discussed elsewhere, I make only brief references here (compare Beyers 2016a). Religion Studies is hosted at the UP in the Faculty of Theology and Religion. What are the implications of the connection between Theology and Religion Studies? For Ford (2005:91), the task of Theology is to train people for a specific profession. The task of Theology at a university is to provide the professional labour force that society needs. As Theology is concerned with religion, students need to be educated to cope with the quite often pluralistic religious nature of society. South African society is no exception. Religion Studies assists Theology in order to prepare students for operating within the field of religion.

Braun (2000:7) describes the differences between Theology and Religion Studies by identifying two extremes. Here, the difference between the insider and outsider perspectives (emic and etic) comes into play. The outsider studying religions has a descriptive approach while the insider may tend to explain rather than just describe. For Braun, Theology takes on an explanatory role while Religion Studies tends to be descriptive only. The result is that Religion Studies ends up with almost all of reality within its scope (Braun 2000:7). To this, I come back later.

It seems that the same thing that separates Religion Studies from Theology in fact becomes the element that binds the two together. Religion Studies investigates human expressions of encounters with that which is considered of higher value. The human actions are important. Smith (1991:19) contends that religious humans are concerned with God and that the observer to the encounters is concerned with religion. The accusation can indeed be made that Religion Studies makes religion devoid of all gods and only emphasises human actions, as Friedrich Heiler claims (see Pannenberg 1973:366). The result would be that Religion Studies is indeed viewed as a humanistic science. Religion Studies, however, never negates the existence of that which is considered of higher value. This would be against the nature of Religion Studies to make judgmental statements about religions.

Both Religion Studies and Theology are concerned with that which is considered of higher value. Theology focuses on the transcendental and Religion Studies focuses on the human response to the awareness of the existence of what is considered of higher value. This corresponds to Theo Sundermeier's (1999:17) definition for religion.

Religion Studies is not interested in judging whether religions are true or not. Ninian Smart (in Connolly 2001:xii) confirms the descriptive nature of Religion Studies. Theology might be interested in the question of truth. To Religion Studies, all expressions of religious encounters are true and valid and are not to be evaluated and judged. In this sense, Religion Studies retains its descriptive function.

Based on the differences mentioned above, it seems that Theology and Religion Studies are indeed not a good fit. Christianity is one religion among many, especially so in the multireligious environment of SA. In Africa, Christianity still carries the label of the religion of the colonial oppressor which causes suspicion about what Christianity wants to say about other religions. The link between TRS can easily be viewed as an attempt at getting to know other religions only in order to prey on their weaknesses and convert their adherents. This would imply a hierarchical social structure where other religions are viewed as inferior to Christianity. Civilisation is then equated to being Christian. These misperceptions need to be rectified. Through a process of decolonisation, the relationship between Christianity and non-Christian religions in Africa needs to be redefined. Religion Studies can play a vital role in this regard. By presenting knowledge about the other, Religion Studies breaks down borders between religions and create an awareness of a shared interest in and shared obligation to take up responsibility for social wellbeing.

Theology is no longer indigenous to Christianity (Olson 2011:13). Theology is increasingly perceived to be part of the academic activity in various religious traditions. Many religions

contemplate the existence of the transcendental and the human relationship to the transcendental. It would then be possible to have Jewish theologians converse with Muslim theologians and even Hindu, Buddhist and Christian theologians. Part of the changes in the social structure of postcolonial SA is a religious freedom guaranteed by a democratic constitution that permits freedom of affiliation and freedom of expression. This new freedom indeed encourages scholars to discuss and express freely the different ways of perceiving the transcendental.

Of course, it has to be acknowledged that Religion Studies originated from a theological background (Chitando 2008:106). Breaking the stronghold of Theology on Religion Studies is part of an ongoing postcolonial process. Chitando (2008:107) reminds us of the efforts that have been made at institutions of higher education in Africa since 1960 to replace the academic discipline of Theology with Religious Studies as a conscious effort to break with Western academic dominance. When Religion Studies is located at a Faculty of Theology and Religion, some suspicion might still linger, but in the long run, the positive interaction between Theology and Religion Studies will prove to be fruitful to both.

The scepticism concerning the relationship between Theology and Religion Studies to which Chitando (2008:107) refers might be waning. Africa has fully embraced Christianity. In fact, Christianity in Africa is growing. Theologians abound in Africa. There has indeed been progress in terms of discussing the relationship between Christianity and other religions in Africa. Christianity is not the only religion in Africa. The relationship that Christianity has had with Islam and Traditional African Religion has been in the academic spotlight for some time. The postcolonial endeavour has made some progress in this regard. The emergence of New Religious Movements and the syncretistic formation of subjective and elective expressions of spirituality still need attention. Theology and Religion Studies can in this regard play an important academic role in studying these new religious expressions.

In conclusion to this section, it must be reiterated that, in a multireligious environment like SA, a growing awareness of religiosity requires knowledge of religions. Growing amounts of religiously motivated conflict and violence intensifies the need for knowledge on religions. In SA, the case is no different. Chitando (2008:118) indicates how the fact that students in SA in particular have been exposed to religious education from an early age in missionary schools or churches in local communities has contributed to the increasing interest in religion. This growing interest in religion is confirmed by the growing number of students registering for courses presented on religion at the UP. Olson (2011:13) indicates that this growing interest in Religion Studies is a world-wide phenomenon due to the fact that students no longer want to study Christianity in isolation. Connolly (2001:1) confirms this tendency of increasing interest in studying religion.

The growth in interest in religion is not only reactionary. It is not only the need to comprehend the reasons for religiously motivated violence that drive the study of religion. There is also a proactive tendency. Religions together realise that, in order to bring about transformation in society, to establish social justice and to alleviate poverty, religions need to take hands and cooperatively bring about change responsibly. In this sense, there is also the positive motivation for religions to understand one another.

What is religion?

The easy answer would be to state that Religion Studies is concerned with studying religion. This, however, begs the question as to what religion is? It remains extremely difficult to define religion (Smith 1991:17). To this, Braun (2000:4) and Schilderman (2014:176) concede. For Smith, the inadequate existing multitude of definitions for 'religion' is an indication that the term should be discarded as it has become unusable. It is not the purpose of this discussion to attempt addressing the problem of defining religion.

This has been dealt with elsewhere (cf. Beyers 2010:2). Cox (2010:3–7) suggests that studying the groups of definitions has more value than studying the definitions themselves.

Smith's (1991) explanation of how religion ought to be viewed is a valuable indicator for how to treat Religion Studies. Understanding religion is never an unbiased endeavour. The culture of the researcher always plays a role. Culture contributes to the spectacles through which religion is viewed (Smith 1991:18). For too long, Smith argues (1991:52), has Western understanding determined the way in which religion is perceived, what can be deemed religious as well as the relationships between Religion Studies and other disciplines. Western thought has produced names for the world religions. The way of studying religions is the result of the Western scholarly processes.

A Western understanding of what constitutes religion caused scholars to divide the world into religious (i.e. everything resembling Western and European traditions and culture) as opposed to no-religion (i.e. everything non-Western) parts. Alongside this process, the Enlightenment developed the notion that knowledge resides only in facts. Facts can only be studied empirically. A study of the transcendental is therefore redundant since the transcendental proved to be inaccessible to empirical scrutiny. In contrast, human reaction and responses to the transcendental can be studied empirically.

Smith (1991:53 fn. 2) suggests that, instead of referring to religion, it is more appropriate to talk about 'cumulative traditions'. Traditions have contexts and history. The concept of religion tends to call to mind a structured system of beliefs. This includes the understanding of faith. There are more words to refer to these phenomena that Western minds have provided with names over time (Smith 1991:52). Smith suggests piety, reverence, faith, devotion, God-fearing. These terms do not necessarily call to mind an organised system.

The value of Smith's suggestion lies in the fact that the context of Religion Studies at the UP. is ambivalent.

A concept that has a Western bias such as religion is studied at an educational institution with a Western history within a continent that is everything but Western. Africa can be many things to many people but being exclusively Western is not one of them – or this is no longer the only way of thinking about Africa. In an era of postcolonialism, it is necessary to think anew about studying traditional concepts.

After carefully indicating that the concept of religion is in fact a concept originating from a Western (modern) stance of naming and analysing the human environment and behaviour, Smith comes up with a solution as to the problem of transposing the (Western) concept of religion onto world religions. His (Smith 1991:50) suggestion is to discard the term religion altogether. His argument maintains that the term religion is misleading, confusing and unnecessary. The term religion hampers the understanding of people's faith and traditions. This hampering is caused by our attempt to conceptualise faith and traditions into what we refer to as religion. As indicated earlier, Smith recommends the terms piety, tradition, faith and religiosity in the place of religion. Wiredu (1998:32) argues that (an) African understanding(s) of religion differs from (a) Western understanding(s) of reality. Laws applied to activities in the physical world in Western understanding do not exclude activities ascribed to spiritual activities in an African understanding.

The problem is, however, that, by discarding the concept of religion, the discipline of Religion Studies loses focus as to what ought to be studied. Religion Studies is neither anthropology nor Theology. Where anthropology focuses on studying human behaviour in all its forms from a purely humanistic point of view, Religion Studies concentrates on the spiritual behaviour of humans without studying the transcendence to which human spiritual attention is directed as Theology would attempt. Religion Studies studies the congealed traditions that communities inherited and apply to their own current needs. The separate belief systems and their relationships are still within the scope of Religion Studies. Smith's suggestion can be employed as a method of studying the

belief systems (or religions) of the world. The value of Smith's analysis lies in making scholars aware that studying a religion is not complete without taking note of the religiosity or cumulative tradition lying at the foundation of the religious expressions. In this way, Religion Studies at the UP. still studies religion but now, following Smith's notion, also takes heed of the religiosity underlying religious expressions.

The way in which Smith presents the object of study as cumulative traditions, piety or religiosity is important in an African context. Since the concept 'religion' has convincingly been proven by Smith to have a Western origin, it by default does not apply to what we want to study in an African context. Smith's suggestion for alternatives to religion is relevant to Religion Studies in Southern Africa.

Smith's analysis seems to be a new formulation of phenomenology as already suggested by Husserl. Husserl's understands that studying religion means that the assumptions of the researcher are put in brackets, referred to as *epoche* (cf. Krüger 1982:17–18), and that the researcher sees the phenomena as they present themselves. The researcher also asks what lies beneath that what the senses permit the researcher to engage with, referred to as intentionality (cf. Krüger 1982:17). These views of Husserl lead to not only studying religion but also religiosity, faith, piety and traditions. Studying and defining religion is determined by the specific approach (either sociology, psychology, philosophy or theology (cf. in this regard Cox 2010:3–7).

The discussion on what constitutes religion inevitably leads to the question on how to study religion, in particular in Africa. Surely, exchanging existing terminology with new semantic modified alternatives will not suffice.

How to study religion?

It is important to differentiate between approaches, theories and methods. An approach would indicate the broader field within

which the object of study is placed. Braun (2016:1) understands under 'approach' a specific disciplinary position (i.e. history, linguistic, sociology, psychology, anthropology or theology). Connolly (2001) extends this list by including several other more possible approaches (i.e. feminist and phenomenological approaches). An approach would be the lens through which a researcher views the topic at hand. A theory of religion is required in order to study religion. The theory becomes the matrix or background against which the research is placed. The theory represents the understanding of the researcher as to what constitutes religion or history or the social role of religion and how it functions. Braun (2016:1) believes that Religion Studies has become theory-orientated due to the fact that there are so many definitions and methods of studying religion.

As to methods employed, studying religion would refer to a particular way of gathering and disseminating information. Olson (2011:13) indicates that there are a huge number of different methods to be applied in Religion Studies. In this regard, the research done by Stausberg and Engler (2011) and Chryssides and Greaves (2007) on the multitude of methods and approaches in Religion Studies is very helpful. As to what method to apply, two principles identified by Creswell (2015:48) are important. The topic to be investigated dictates the method to be utilised. The skills of the researcher also determine the method to be used. When studying religion, it is religion that determines the methods. At times, a combination of methods may be the best option. In this regard, Connolly (2001:8) recommends scholars of religion to simultaneously be 'specialists' and 'generalists'. One single method (the specialist way) is inadequate in investigating religious elements to their fullest. Therefore, whether studying a single element or a combination of elements, it would be advisable to utilise multiple methods (being a generalist).

The approaches, theories and methods to studying religion can vary. The task of Religion Studies is, however, never to present only historical, chronological facts but in fact to create a model for understanding the processes leading to the development of

religions and their connections to other religions. An understanding of what constitutes religion is necessary in order to understand how religions relate. A method remains a tool in order to unveil knowledge. A method can become a means in itself and distract the researcher from investigating material unbiased.

In discussing approaches to studying religion, Connolly (2001:2) states that, within different approaches, a variety of perspectives can be embedded. All approaches (naturally this does not apply to the theological approach) are outsider approaches (Connolly 2001:2). This reveals something of the approach of researchers within Religion Studies. Researchers are rarely religiously committed to a religion under scrutiny. In this regard, the different models that Smart (1986:208–209) identifies are relevant regarding the religious affiliation of the researcher. It remains important that any research be accessible to religiously as well as non-religiously orientated researchers.

In discussing approaches to studying religion, Connolly (2001:4) uses the image of a map. Approaches are like maps in the sense that they try and identify the territory, in this case, of religion. Maps have limitations in the sense that they can (speculatively) try and explain unchartered territory and even be conflicting in terms of identifying the boundaries of religion. The bottom line that Connolly (2001:4) makes, and this corresponds to Krüger's theory of conditionality, is that it is difficult to indicate where the study of religion begins and where it ends.

What is, however, helpful is to identify ways in which religion manifests in human existence. In this regard, Ninian Smart's suggestion (1991:6–12) is helpful in identifying seven areas where traces of religion can be experienced: mythical (narrative), ritual, social, ethical, doctrinal, experiential and material.

It is not the purpose here to present an exhaustive list and analysis of methods to be utilised in Religion Studies. It is, however, important to emphasise the fact of multiple methods and the fact that the material at hand should determine the methods to be utilised.

Entering the spider's web

When Connolly (2001:2) refers to the different perspectives embedded in the various approaches, the image of a spider's web comes to mind. As has been mentioned in a previous section, religion can be viewed from different perspectives. Also important is to remind ourselves of conditionality. Religion as human behaviour does not function in isolation. Close connections with other elements exist naturally. In this section, I discuss the different relationships in which religion stands, not as a complete analysis but merely as a brief overview of the range of possible relationships. Indeed, knowledge does not originate or exist in isolation.

Religion Studies does not intend teaching in religion but teaching about religions (cf. Wiebe 2005:101). This teaching is, however, not only focussed on conveying empirical and theoretical knowledge about religion. According to Wiebe (2005:101), the tendency worldwide is that Religion Studies introduces students to engagement with basic human social issues such as freedom, meaning, ethics, love, death and justice. In the case of Religion Studies at the UP, a conscious attempt is made to contribute to social cohesion through conveying understanding of the religious other. Not only knowledge of other religions is encapsulated in the curriculum, but the result of and response to the existence of such knowledge becomes the invisible curriculum.

I now proceed to illustrate how religion in its interrelatedness to other elements functions like a spider's web. I take a look at religion from the perspective of the main approaches, namely anthropological, philosophical and sociological (including education, law and politics). In each case, the different perspectives associated with the approach will be highlighted. Connections to other fields of interest, which does not necessarily represent an approach to studying religion, will also be mentioned.

Anthropological approaches

When identifying the anthropological approaches to studying religion, Gellner (2001:29, 37) indicates that ethnography and cultural studies are perspectives from which religions can be studied. Religion is part of human behaviour and culture (cf. Beyers 2017 for an analysis of the connection between studying religion and culture). If religion is seen as a segment of culture, studying religion is an anthropological and ethnographic exercise (Gellner 2001:1). Religion does have a social role in society. In each society, these roles differ. What is important about the place and function of religion in society is, as Gellner (2001:22) indicates, that anthropology requires a holistic approach. Social activities, like religious activities, must be investigated within the social context within which they operate. Religion is connected to other aspects of society and this interrelatedness (read 'spider's web') needs to be recognised. Gellner (2001:22) points out that, when religion is studied from an anthropological approach, it must be viewed together with, for example, agriculture, politics, magic and medicine. These aspects do not necessarily support one another but can in fact oppose one another. Thus, medicine in society can be the result of scientific research and experimentation while religion in the same society would prescribe magical potions in order to arrive at healing, thus presenting an alternative to medicine.

The task of the anthropologist is to interpret events, actions and words in a society. The source to be interpreted is accessible through empirical analysis. The task of anthropology does not, however, stop with recording these empirical data but continues to the interpretation of such data (Gellner 2001:29). This is especially helpful in investigating rituals with religious meaning in societies. The phenomenological approach dovetails here with the anthropological approach as phenomenology (which in essence has a philosophical foundation) is indeed interested in the way things present themselves. The meaning attached to the phenomena is just as important as a description of the phenomenon.

Erricker (2001:73) discusses phenomenology as approach when studying religion. Phenomenology is interested in how things present themselves and how this should be understood.

Religion Studies at the UP has a proud tradition of phenomenology. Through comparative investigation, different phenomena of various religions have been analysed and discussed. Since it is a university in Africa, the tendency is to focus on Traditional African Religion and its phenomena as present in society. With a strong connection to Theology at the UP Religion Studies also tends to conduct research from a theological approach, investigating phenomena in light of biblical insight.

Philosophical approaches

In the history of the discipline of Science of Religion, there was a stage when the discipline was referred to as Philosophy of Religion. This is indicative of a period during which reflection on the phenomenon of religion played an important role. Shortly after the Second World War, the exposure that Europeans had had to cultures and religions from all over the world led to a serious reflection on what others believes and why (cf. Wiebe 2005:98). This was not only an interest in the content of other religions but also a (philosophical) question as to their origin and nature.

In introducing the philosophical approach to studying religion, Fisher (2001:118) identifies the following branches of a philosophical approach, namely logic, epistemology, ethics and metaphysics. With logic, Fisher refers to the thought process of arranging arguments coherently and testing the argumentation as to proving a premise. This approach is not meant to be a personal attack on any adherent of religion but only analysing statements made by adherents of various religions.

Metaphysics is the philosophical concern with reality. Fisher (2001:120) describes the typical questions that metaphysics asks as follows: Do I exist? What makes me me? What will happen to

me when I die? The questions directly related to religion explore the existence of God and the harmony of the cosmos, the origin of life, et cetera. Some adherents of religions experience this kind of interrogation as disrespectful to their integrity and therefore blasphemous. Sensitivity is necessary when disseminating the results of investigating religions.

The third branch is epistemology. This branch of philosophy is interested in the manner in which we come to have knowledge. Important is to keep in mind is that, as pointed out earlier here, knowledge does not exist in a vacuum. Knowledge originates and exists within a context (Fisher 2001:120). Knowledge grows organically as people remember and build on the knowledge of previous members of society. This confirms what Smith (1991:53) refers to as 'cumulative tradition'. Knowledge is accumulated and simultaneously discarded as answers are no longer possible within a particular paradigm, necessitating a new paradigm. The result is that there is no final answer to questions. Answers apply to specific contexts. When studying religion, the knowledge that we gain does not relate to the beliefs that people have. Knowledge is of a different nature than belief. Knowledge can be true or false whereas belief cannot be judged with the same measure.

The fourth branch that Fisher (2001:121) identifies is ethics. This relates to values by which people conduct themselves and go about performing their duties. Applied to religion, ethics is the rules by which people conduct their religious life. This must, however, be qualified as religious life is not to be distinguished from life in general. Ethics in the study of religion also relates to the manner in which the researcher engages with adherents from religions. There is an acceptable way of ethical research. Ethics as a religious element can also be applied to studying phenomena in society. The way human rights are applied within a community is based on religious convictions. The way in which lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning members of society are treated is based on religious ethics. The treatment of the ecology is based on religious convictions. The way in which legislation addresses social matters such as abortion, euthanasia and

poverty is influenced by religious ethics. Ethics is an important element in the study of religions.

Sociological approaches

Religion is part of human social behaviour. The Durkheimian premise ([1912] 2001:315) of the social function of religion cannot be ignored. When studying religion, the visible traces of religion within social structures and behaviour come into play. Northcott (2001:193) introduces sociological approaches to studying religion. Studying religion may lead to insight into the relationship and reciprocal influence between religion and social structures, ideologies, culture, class and group interactions.

For Northcott (2001:201) there are four social categories where religion interacts with society:

- social stratification (class, ethnicity)
- bio-social categories (sex, gender, marriage family, childhood, ageing)
- patterns of social organisation (politics, economics)
- social processes such as boundary formation (globalisation, intergroup, interpersonal).

As a fifth category, I would like to add secularisation as social process in which the decline and consequent influence of religion in society is studied.

In all of the categories identified and mentioned above by Northcott, the underlying principle is power. Religion does become a facilitator to power in society. Through religiously based principles, power is exerted on society, either through social stratification, separating classes and ethnic groups or demarcating the social roles of individuals such as the aged, women, children, sick and the poor. Religion can even play a part in political structures. Where a theocracy is perceived to be the best way of governing society, religious principles determine the manner in which a society is governed. Religious structures and political government structures then overlap. As to the influence of religion

on the economy, Weber's (1930) theory on the contribution of Calvinism to the establishment and expansion of capitalism is a standard example. The way in which religions interact in society (or the lack thereof) falls within the scope of Religion Studies.

From a humanities point of view, the relationship between religion and social expressions of religion is important. The relationship between religion and art or religion and music is an important field of study for Religion Studies, as is the study of the psychology of religion. The migration of cultural groups is also an important element to study. With cultural migration (either forced or voluntary), the influence of religion upon a society (either country, cultural community or urban environment) is important for social studies.

Secularisation is a specific phenomenon to study in society. Whereas religion had played a determining role in society for a very long period, the social function of religion has been perceived to recede in recent times. There have been several theories as to the reasons for this. Berger (1967) states that religion will disappear from society at the rate that the influence of religion is decreasing. Luckmann (1971) has a variation on Berger's theory by indicating that religion will indeed disappear from public life but will continue to exist in the private sphere. Upon this, Berger (1999) surprises by apologising for his theory based on information of the 1960s and reformulates a theory, indicating that religion will actually grow. This led many scholars to start talking about the era of post-secularisation or sacralisation. What becomes apparent is that the form and function that religion will take on under this new dispensation have changed. It would be more appropriate to talk about religiosity. As an indication of the reaction of religion to secularisation, Krüger, Lubbe and Steyn (2005:291) identify three reactions, namely atheism, alternative spiritualities and fundamentalism. Studying religion in society will henceforth include studying atheism, new religious movements as expressions of the alternative formations of religion as well as the backlash to restore an idealised era where religion influenced society from a fundamentalist point of view.

☐ Religion studies and education

It is unclear whether the relationship between Religion Studies and Education warrants the existence of a new field or approach. Education may not be seen as a separate approach when studying religion, but is does come into play when religion in society is part of educational formation. SA has a Constitution warranting freedom of affiliation and expression, subscribing to religious freedom. To govern this freedom, the Department of Education follows the regulations as set out in the National Policy on Religion and Education (2003). This document differentiates between religious education, religious observances and religious instruction. Teaching learners about different religions is part of the responsible activities in a community to make people aware of the existence of differences, also in terms of religious convictions. This is the task of education and should be done by trained educators.

Adherents to religion cannot be denied participation in religious observances. These observances may be conducted at schools but must be tended to by religious leaders. Learners may also not be forced to participate in any observance.

As to religious instruction, the task of nurturing faith in a particular religious community is not the task of the education system but should rather be relegated to the religious community and be done by the religiously trained.

☐ Religion and law

Religion as part of society stands under the guidance and protection of the legal system. The protection of religious affiliation is warranted in Chapter 2 (Bill of Rights) of the South African Constitution (Coertzen 2014:127). Religious beliefs and obligations can at times clash with legal prescriptions. In such cases, special permission from legal bodies are required in order to continue with religious activities. In this regard, the use of trance-enhancing drugs by the religious community known as

Rastafarians is a good example. This group has been involved in a legal battle to legalise the use of dagga for religious purposes within Rastafarian belief (Williams 2017).

The law determines the legal status of religion within society. It is also the law that states and protects the rights of religious minorities in societies. In this regard, the status of immigrants and their religion must be protected by law. This becomes part of the discourse on the protection of human rights.

Religion has a dual nature. It needs to direct its attention at the spiritual realm while remaining anchored in the physical realm of this-worldly laws and obligations. In this sense, the duality of religion as a liminal case between the divine and mundane must be recognised.

Religion and science

Studying the relationship between religion and science is a growing field of interest. In using the term 'science', I refer to natural sciences without implying that religion cannot be studied scientifically. This exactly is the point of contention. The modernist differentiation between empirically based facts and unproven opinion creates a schism between religion and natural sciences (cf. the main arguments on the relationship between religion and science in Stenmark 2010:278–295).

A possible point of contact between religion and natural sciences might be the mutual concern for the natural environment (cf. Beyers 2016b). Religion and natural sciences share in the responsibility to take care of created reality which is perceived to exist independently of any divine intervention. The relationship between human beings and nature has been ambivalent. During the modern era, humans were perceived to be the dominant being, ordained by divine command to govern over all of creation. This created a distance between humans and the natural world, and creation was viewed as being at the disposal of human need. It was only later, with the arrival of postmodern thinking, that a new relationship between human beings and the natural world

was envisioned. Humans are now perceived to be part of created matter. Realising the shared destiny for human beings and created matter has led to new thinking on a responsible relationship between the two. New tendencies have encouraged a spiritual bond between humans and nature, connecting humans through religious connotations to the created matter that surrounds us. Studying religion can include an awareness of ecology.

Religion and politics

Religion and religions can play an active role in politics. Religion can be employed by politicians to manipulate people into either voting for a certain political party or supporting suggested legislation. This is not a new phenomenon. Since ancient times, the gods were consulted on political decisions. What we witness in modern times is, however, an abuse of religion in order to coax people in order to gain their political support.

Framing political speeches in a religious discourse or referring to cultural values in order to force people on emotional grounds to support political decisions is a dishonest but tragically effective use of religion by politicians (cf. Beyers 2015:18–19). The reasons why politicians make religious references may be a combination of the following:

- Religious gatherings form excellent platforms for political activities.
- A holistic understanding of reality in some cultures causes no objection to mixing contexts. No differentiation between politics and religion can be argued under this understanding of reality.
- Communities may be accustomed to the influence of religion in politics. It may be a social acceptable way of conducting politics.
- Political and religious discourses touch on deep human concerns. Religion and political group formation may act as identity markers in society and can therefore not be ignored.
- Religion acts as a core cultural identity marker. Imploring religion connects people to their cultural heritage.

- Religious jargon within political discourse lays a subtle claim to divine approval of political decisions. Political opponents are portrayed as agents of evil, as opposed to religious good.
- Religious communities are already existing, well-organised groups, ready to employ government policies.

☐ Religions and economy

I have already made reference to Weber's (1930) theory of religion about the emergence of the economic model of capitalism. What also comes to mind is the way in which religion itself has become commercialised. Prosperity theology contributes to the commercialisation of religious goods (Gbote & Kgatla 2014), and people give money to the church under the assumption that blessing will follow in their lives. Religion started commerce in commodities such as books on religious topics, relics, objects needed to perform rituals, guided pilgrimages and retreats as ways of spiritual enrichment, all ways of making money in the name of religion.

Religions also became part of an alternative culture. Through projects funded by institutions, religious communities started caring for the poor and needy in society. Religious institutions took on the responsibility of relieving poverty, enabling people to survive in a world driven by buying, selling, possessions, assets and ignoring the poor. The way in which religions drive these campaigns of caring for those in need in society has become a focal point for Religion Studies.

■ Conclusion and recommendations

The process followed here to identify and discuss the relationships in which religions are involved betrays a modernist understanding of reality. The segmentation of reality into different spheres is a typical modernist understanding of reality in order to get a grasp on reality. Dissecting reality into different spheres may cause one to understand the different elements in society, but it does not mean that one fully comprehends the meaning stemming from

the relatedness of the different elements. This can be compared to separating the different strands in a spider's web, thinking that, by separating the strands, one will reach a better understanding of the working of the web. In effect, one only gains knowledge of one strand without comprehending the influence that all strands have on one another. The metaphor of the constitution of an onion applies here: Can you find the essence of an onion by peeling away its different layers, or can you find the essence of an onion by viewing all the layers combined?

This critical remark does not undo the discussion above. The purpose was not to comprehend religion but indeed to indicate the breadth and depth of the reach of religion on reality and the ways in which these can be studied.

Another danger to be aware of is that it might seem as if Religion Studies is presented here as a hand maiden to other disciplines. Smart (1986:164) refers in this regard to the ancillary function of Religion Studies. This may create the perception that Religion Studies is a discipline only in relation to other disciplines. Religion Studies does in fact have its own field of research and interest as well as methods. Religion as expressed by humans does remain the focal point of Religion Studies.

When studying religion in Africa, the context (all interrelatedness) must be kept in mind. Religion Studies in the Faculty of Theology and Religion at the UP must bear in mind that religion cannot be viewed as a Western concept only. Western methods and approaches must also keep track of other possible ways of understanding and studying religion in all its relations. Religion must be studied from a postcolonial perspective. This means that any study of religion must be aware of the new configuration of relations in which religion exists.

■ Summary: Chapter 8

Any attempt at understanding religion proves to be a perilous undertaking. Understanding Religion Studies as it is envisioned to

function in the Faculty of Theology and Religion at the UP already implies some perils. To fathom the breadth of Religion Studies is like treading on a spider's web: There are so many interconnected elements related to this field of study. The metaphor of a spider's web is utilised to portray the interconnectedness of religion to other elements. Kobus Krüger's concept of conditionality is utilised to describe this interrelatedness. There are many possible approaches to studying religion. This research highlights the anthropological, philosophical and sociological approaches. The relationship between religion and several other disciplines (i.e. education, law, science, politics and economy) is illuminated. Religion Studies at the UP should be aligned with the post-colonial demands for a particular way of doing research in Africa.

Part 3

Centres and theological journals

Chapter 9

Transforming curricula into the next century: Doing theology collaboratively with local communities

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Introduction

The FT at the UP celebrates its centenary in 2017. This coincides with a renewed urgency for free, decolonised education, fuelled by student protests on campuses across the national landscape but also by theoretical discourse. Considering the transformation of curricula in SA today, in all disciplines but also in theology, cannot be done in isolation from the changing socio-historical and political-economic context of SA.

The main title of our chapter is 'transforming curricula into the next century'. This chapter aims to contribute in a small way towards imagining what curricula might look like as we enter into the next 100 years of theological education at a public university in the South African context. It can however not do so without also (very briefly) acknowledging the story of theological education at this institution in the first 100 years. 'Transforming curricula' is used in a way similar to Bosch's (1991) concept of 'transforming mission'. Not only does it speak about the transformation of curricula in terms of politics, preferences and praxis, to use the language of Steve de Gruchy (2003:451–466), as well as pedagogical approach, but it also speaks of theological curricula itself having a transformational impact on people, communities and the construction of theology itself.

The subtitle of our chapter then refers to a distinctive approach emerging from at least two spaces within the FT.These could be captured as 'doing theology collaboratively with local communities'. This chapter will unpack the emerging approaches of the CCM and the CSC, presenting the characteristics of their approaches as possible clues for grappling with transforming curricula.

A common thread in the commitments of both these centres is their actions with and on behalf of communities facing immense poverty and exclusion, aiming to facilitate healthy and sustainable communities. These are loaded and contested terms, but in the course of this chapter, we shall explicate our meaning in the use of these terms.

We consider the transformation of curricula as doing theology collaboratively with local communities in line with the Faculty Research Theme entitled '*Ecodomy*: Life in fullness' (Faculty of Theology 2013). We do, however, consider this research theme critically in the light of Letty Russell's work (1987:25–28) *Household of freedom*, hoping to contribute to freeing the theme from the risk of institutional smothering. At the same time, we allow for the theme itself to help liberate and transform curricula in order to enable a new vision and consciousness for building and multiplying 'households of freedom' as prophetic alternatives in our 'global household of bondage'. Local communities and households or families should be places that embody households of freedom and life, overcoming oppressive forces of bondage, exclusion and annihilation.

Theological education, the public university and the public good

The nature of theological education at a public university will by definition be different from theological education at a private university or a church-based theological seminary. The purpose of the public university is to serve the public good in the broadest possible sense (cf. Botman 2012:xiii–xv; Leibowitz 2012). The context within which such a university is located but also the contexts from which it draws its students need to codetermine the nature of its curricular content. It needs to offer education that will appropriately prepare students with both the consciousness and abilities to contribute critically, (de)constructively and innovatively to the socio-economic, political, environmental, spiritual and spatial well-being of individuals, communities, organisations and regions in which they are required to serve. This is an important task for theology at a public university, namely to help churches, faith communities and different religious expressions to reflect on the possible roles they could play in the public sphere with the aim of affirming life beyond the private spiritual lives of individuals only.

For this reason, theological education at a public university faces particular challenges. Theological education often represents the dominant religious or denominational persuasion of a particular tradition and therefore, at best, easily excludes people from other persuasions or traditions and at worst, contributes to giving theological or religious sanction even to oppressive regimes. The same can happen at a public university since this location, although theoretically supposedly autonomous, remains at the mercy of the government of the day and other powers that be. The challenge therefore is to shape theological curricula that could significantly contribute to the freedom and well-being of societies by presenting spaces for rigorous and critical engagement, hosting not only similarity but particularly diversity, hosting different traditions and even religious expressions and hosting contesting voices in order to become not only places of freedom and life but also what Parker Palmer (1998:90–95) speaks of as 'a community of truth' which is 'a web of communal relationships' committed to learn together. Such theological education would endeavour to mediate ongoing and multiple freedoms, both in, of and through its own curricula, of the very traditions it is hosting but also of the communities it is hosting.

The crisis of education goes deeper though. Instead of contributing towards households of freedom and life, it often only serves to perpetuate our global household of bondage, domesticating students into toeing the proverbial line, becoming servants of empire. Noam Chomsky (1989:s.p.) speaks of it as 'a system of indoctrination of the young', saying that '... the educational system is supposed to train people to be obedient, conformist, not think too much, do what you're told, stay passive, don't cause any crisis in democracy'. In his mind, what is presented as education is in fact the exact opposite of what it should be.

At first glance, the current free education movement in SA speaks mainly of the accessibility of education in terms of cost, but students actually raise much deeper questions.

Journalism professor Jane Duncan (2016) articulates it in the following way:

> My understanding of the issue is that it is about demanding that education be delivered as a public good, or as a commons, and not as a commodity. In other words, the profit motive must be removed from education delivery. (s.p.)

Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2016) states the following about this student movement:

> [*T*]he emerging student archive … is unapologetically about decolonisation. The students openly embrace the black consciousness ideas of Steve Biko and Frantz Fanon's ideas on decolonisation. The students speak of changing the very idea of the university from being a 'westernized' institution into an 'African university'. (s.p.)

Students articulate a vision of reclaiming the commons but then not just any commons. They are looking for a commons that will make space for contesting voices, that will dismantle colonial constructs, that will place African voices and perspectives at the core of the educational endeavour and that will deconstruct the hierarchical nature of institutional cultures. It is a cry for ongoing liberation from past vestiges, a yearning to recreate a collective identity not defined by colonial constructs or what is perceived to be constructs of whiteness. While this cry cannot be engaged with in an uncritical way, it cannot be ignored either.

Theological education at an African public university should not only embrace a movement of ongoing liberation and self-assertion but actually needs to lead the way to discerning and constructing liberating and transforming curricula. We owe it to the contexts in which we are called to do life-giving theology. Even more, we need to allow these contexts to shape our theological questions and emphases, but we also need to consider how we can do better theology in these contexts, in collaboration with local communities and silenced voices. It is in inviting such voices to disrupt our theological constructs and in dealing creatively with them that life-giving transformations can start to occur.

Theological education at the University of Pretoria

Even though the UP always used to be a public university, the FT – at least since 1938 – almost exclusively served students of the white DRC and the NRC, and all faculty members also came from these churches. At the onset, in 1916, it was a collaboration between the NRC and the PC (Wethmar 2000:417). At that point, the DRC in Transvaal did not want to participate as it did not want to jeopardise unity in the DRC having already had, at that stage, a Theological Seminary at Stellenbosch.

There were some exceptions with a few (white) students from churches such as the Apostolic Faith Mission or the Evangelies Gereformeerde Kerk enrolling at the UP However, in essence this was a faculty for white students, serving mostly two white denominations steeped in Reformed theology. Since 1938, the DRC joined, and it marked the beginning of the long collaboration between the NRC and the DRC. This collaboration was not unproblematic though as both churches have been steeped in deep-seated controversies for more than a century before 1938 (Wethmar 2000:418). This eventually led to the strange arrangement of having two separate faculties of theology for these two churches at the same University.

Only in 1998, following radical changes in the South African political landscape, did this change when a document was adopted that paved the way for an ecumenical or multi-church faculty to be developed. This also led to the amalgamation of the previously separate faculties of theology into one new faculty (Wethmar 2000:421–424). Today the formal partner churches in the FT are the DRC, the NRC, the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa and the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa. In addition, a growing number of students from a range of traditions, from Roman Catholic to African Initiated Churches

to independent Pentecostal and Charismatic groups, study at the faculty.

Wethmar (2000) argues about the ecumenicity that was introduced in 1997 in the following way:

> It is, however, important to take note of the fact that ecumenicity in this case is not indicative of confessional indifference. It does not imply non-denominationality, but rather denominations in dialogue. This again implies that each participating church can have its students educated without alienating them from their church tradition, and simultaneously they can be trained to cope with the demands of being church in a plural society. (pp. 426–427)

The weakness of this model might be for those students who do not come from large and well-resourced denominations or traditions, who might find themselves isolated if the emphasis remains on participating churches.

Wethmar (2000:416), in the abstract to his article that explains the changes that occurred in the FT between 1997 and 1999, says '[*d*]uring the past three years the FT at the University of Pretoria was involved in a profound process of transformation.' The article provides a clear overview of the changing nature of the Faculty with an emphasis on the shift towards a more ecumenical Faculty. Of concern is the article's silence about the socio-political context in which the Faculty flourished during its first 80 years of existence although the author recognises it in saying that the scope and space available for the article did not allow an in-depth exploration of this issue (Wethmar 2000:419–420). The article also strikes one as suggestive of transformation as a complete product that occurred between 1997 and 1999, not acknowledging the depth of (de)construction that subsequently had to take place to enter into a completely new dispensation.

In order to enter the next 100 years with a vision of contributing to the public good, it is important to call into memory where we have come from at first. Theological education at the UP did not originate in a proverbial vacuum. It took place within the context

of an Afrikaner Nationalist institution informed by so-called Christian values. Universities such as Pretoria, Stellenbosch and Potchefstroom were the custodians of the dominant consciousness of the apartheid ideology and also, predominantly, served to transfer the values associated with this consciousness. As part of these institutions, the faculties of theology obviously played the role of providing theological sanction to the system of the day and for most of the time and for most of its faculty members, uncritically so. There were only a few dissenting voices during this time.

Almost 20 years after the initial transformation process that had started in 1997 and had led to a new multi-church faculty in 1998, critical challenges remain, partly because transformation is an ongoing process. Firstly, the legacy of the first 100 years cannot simply be erased without a very deliberate and deep transformation processes, undoing the wrongs of the past systematically, maintaining what is still valuable and boldly constructing new futures. This would include a fresh imagination for both curricular transformation and the kind of institutional culture required for hosting a transforming curriculum. Although the FT has become a multi-church faculty, a possible danger is that the balance of power remains with the original two churches or with the formal church partners. This might be so even though the majority of new students entering the faculty every year come from a variety of denominations and increasingly also from black independent Pentecostal churches that do not necessarily have the same leverage to influence curricula or institutional practices. Ways need to be found that will allow for the diversity of churches represented in the faculty to contribute to the critical accompaniment of and reflection on the ways in which the faculty offers theological education and formation.

Secondly, the faculty probably does not appreciate adequately the contexts from which the growing majority of our students come if the curricula are not emerging from within the realities and demands of those contexts simply because the majority of faculty members do not come from such contexts themselves.

Transforming curricula would need to ask much deeper and more foundational questions of both the content, structure and methodology of the current curricula than simply making cosmetic changes. We need to gain a much clearer understanding of who our students are and of what it is that they would engage with on completing their studies. The traditional concept of a full-time minister called by a resourced congregation to serve in pastoral ministry is almost non-existent for many, if not most, of the new generation of students in our faculty. For many of them, ministry will be a part-time engagement. Others articulate visions of returning to their communities of origin to help break the cycle of poverty, to serve girl children at risk or to do something else related to community development or community transformation. It is important to make a special effort to ensure that current curricula are preparing the growing number of students to engage meaningfully in their future ministry because the nature of the contexts with which they would have to engage is vastly different from the contexts for which the faculty is used to prepare students. Even the contexts in which the traditional students of the faculty – white students from the DRC and NRC – will find themselves are increasingly multicultural contexts with growing socio-economic challenges.

Mainstreaming the diaconal function of the church – expressed in community development or social enterprises – into curricula for theological education might be one of the most appropriate and timely contributions of theological education at a public university. In a context of deep inequalities that threaten to derail the frail democracy we have gained, such a contribution should not be underplayed. Theologically, it belongs to the essence of a servant church. How best can students be prepared both theologically and practically to be agents of such a church, making deep social changes, fostering a consciousness that will build households of freedom and life wherever they find themselves? How best can students be prepared to be critical and imaginative thinkers who will construct solutions with communities, as theological imperative, to some of society's

most pressing problems? Our submission is that the answer to these questions lies in transforming curricula and pedagogical methodologies in order to enable just that.

Transforming curricula would include participation in the current decolonising debates and discourses, acknowledging as a starting point the Christian accompaniment of colonial expansion and exploitation. Already as far back as 1981, the Caribbean theologian Noel Erskine (1981) pleaded for the decolonisation of theology. Not only should a transformed curriculum stand in the sign of decolonising education, but it should also contribute to pedagogies that continue to decolonise (cf. Tejeda, Espinoza & Gutierrez 2003). Just as the 'rainbow nation' was a vision seeking to evoke a new imagination among a deeply divided people, requiring hard, consistent work in order for the 'rainbow' to become a reality, so decolonising the minds of both formerly oppressed and oppressor and decolonising institutions and curricula will not be an overnight process. It should, however, be a deliberate process of creating spaces for hard conversations in which vestiges of a colonial consciousness should be unmasked, named and transformed collectively into an alternative consciousness.

One of the challenging tasks would be to foster, amidst the diversity of theologies and personalities working at the FT, a collective consciousness or vision, going into the future. The diversity does not have to be an obstacle and could in fact be a gift if it does not continue to foster separation but contribute to a new and rich consciousness that is rooted theologically. Again, gleaning from the student movements and other social movements around the country – such as Abahlalibase Mjondolo and others – critical theological engagement with the work and thought of Frantz Fanon, Steve Biko, Mahmood Mamdani and others are extremely important in considering curricula for theological education today. These voices as well as the voices of all people who live and work in the many contexts of our part of the world, those living within the context of urban and rural poverty and those who are rich, those who work and those who do not work, those who suffer and those who do not suffer, the oppressed and the oppressor all give

us insight into the nature and dynamics of our context and help us to see how the God of the Bible is indeed God with us, mediating a way towards freedom and life.

If we are not able to engage such voices critically – as signs of the times – and if we are not open to learn from their insights at the same time, not only theological education but our very theologies will be relegated to the margins with no credible role to play in terms of contributing to the public good.

Working collaboratively with local communities and starting with the diverse perspectives of those that live in the contexts where our students will serve, are important shifts required for a decolonised, contextually appropriate curriculum.

In the rest of this chapter, we consider two spaces within the FT in which a deliberately transdisciplinary approach is emerging, doing theology collaboratively with local communities. We would like to present such an emerging approach as a possible contribution to considering transforming curricula in the direction of a decolonised, inclusive paradigm, doing theology with and doing theology from below.

Considering the Centre for Contextual Ministry and the Centre for Sustainable Communities: Attempting to do theology collaboratively with local communities

Institutes, centres and units at the UP exist to consolidate the research, teaching and community-engagement activities of the university. Often, research themes spanning across disciplines are hosted in these entities.

The two centres reflected upon here were established at different times, from different theological disciplines and with different aims. Over the years, however, a remarkable similarity

has developed regarding the questions and issues we engage with, albeit in different ways.

In what follows, we provide an overview of the two centres. We then trace the outline of a common paradigm that we see developing, considering how it could perhaps contribute to rethinking curricula.

The Centre for Contextual Ministry

The CCM was established in 1993 to address the need of church leaders and ministry practitioners who lacked access to formal theological education. Malan Nel saw this need and conceptualised a centre that could offer continuous education, equipping grass-root leaders for ministries in context. Starting at the Vista University, the Centre was absorbed into the FT at the UP in 1999 when Vista closed its doors and merged with other universities across the country.

Today the Centre combines a strong continuous-education portfolio with a growing emphasis on engaged, transdisciplinary research. More than 1000 students are certified annually for courses taken with the Centre in four thematic clusters, namely leadership studies, healing and counselling, organisational and congregational development, and urban and community transformation. In addition, the Centre hosts four research themes dealing with faith in the city (including homelessness, housing, migration and urban theological education); social cohesion and reconciliation (including spatial justice, restitution, our collective woundedness and languages of engagement); children, faith and society (including methodologies for doing child theology, children and youth at risk) and spirituality and health (including the role of spirituality in health-care systems, paediatric health care and mental health).

The Centre remains committed to its original vocation which was to offer access to theological training for people who lack such access. However, over the years, the continuous-educational

offering was diversified. It now includes basic courses for people with Grade-10 qualifications, short advanced courses on a range of topics and one and two-year programmes offered as specialisations and accepted as course work towards honours and master's degrees in PT.

The Centre's students are all practitioners and therefore bring into the classroom setting a rich pool of knowledge and experience. In its pedagogical methodology, the Centre increasingly tries to find innovative ways of sharing knowledge instead of traditional modes of knowledge transfer in which so-called 'experts' disseminate knowledge downward, so to speak (cf. De Beer 2014a; De Beer 2014b:132–136). We also seek ways for the classroom to be in different social locations than only that of a suburban university campus. The contexts in which people serve become the classrooms, offering rich possibilities for transforming curricula.

Since 2012, a number of shifts have occurred in the Centre as it enters its next 20 years. Firstly, the Centre is asserting and locating itself much clearer within the framework and self-understanding of contextual theologies as they have emerged over the past decades. In terms of methodology, epistemology, a preferential option for the poor and generating knowledge from below, it seeks to be consistent with contextual paradigms everywhere. It therefore also reviews its course offerings in terms of a clearer praxis approach to doing theology, helping our students to embrace their own agency as reflective practitioners or practising theologians. The person and context of the participant (student) becomes the central locus of theological reflection instead of abstract theological concepts that then have to be translated (sometimes forced) into local contexts. The emphasis on local agency also has the potential to contribute to deconstructing theologies from below.

A second important shift is to embrace a second pillar alongside our focus on continued education. Since 2014, when our Board adopted such a resolution, the Centre has also been focusing on engaged, transdisciplinary research in four areas as

outlined above. There were different reasons for this shift. On the one hand, the Centre wanted to align itself to the University's research focus and its Policy on Units, Centres and Institutes. Equally important, however, is the Centre's commitment to root its educational offering in dedicated and engaged research that will help to continuously inform, deepen, assess and revise its course offerings and course contents. Lastly, the research themes hosted also give a clear indication as to the focus areas to which the Centre is committed for ongoing research, teaching and action. Our sense is that our research themes and the chosen research methodologies inherently carry the possibility to contribute rather directly to the public and common good.

A third shift or, at least more intentional emphasis, is the work that the Centre does on campus and in relationship to other existing initiatives, projects, departments or centres at the UP. The Centre aligns itself to the Faculty Research Theme, '*Ecodomy:* Life in fullness' (Faculty of Theology 2013). In practice but also theoretically, the Centre's own point of departure is the 'extreme un-fullness of life' experienced by a large percentage of people in South African communities, mediated by or evident in inequality, poverty, violence, different forms of exclusion or discrimination, spatial fragmentation, corruption and poor governance as well as racial, economic or gender divides. We contemplate speaking about fullness of life from within such contexts of 'extreme un-fullness' and reflect on constructing appropriate faith and community responses that could start to usher in viable and just alternatives. Our point of departure for theological engagement and reflection is therefore to shift our social location, not only in the abstract but even physically, from a suburban university campus to the contexts in which such un-fullness are mostly expressed. That is why we are exploring the possibility of a satellite office on the Mamelodi Campus of the University with the expressed desire to connect with the growing informal settlements of Mamelodi East as a space of learning and possible transformation of our own curricula.

The Centre also aligns itself with the Capital Cities Institutional Research Theme at the UP (Faculty of Humanities 2013), which focuses on ways in which space, justice and belonging are mediated, or not, in capital cities. In our case, we are focusing on the City of Tshwane, but we are in conversation with other cities in the Global South. This is not an accidental alignment but stems from a deep-seated conviction that transforming curricula in theological education generally, but particularly at the UP would fail to respond adequately to the local and regional context in which it is situated if it does not reflect deliberately on its urban realities. The UP is located in the Gauteng City Region with 13.2 million. Projections are that this City Region will have more than 20 million people by 2025, making it one of the fastest growing urban metropolitan regions in the world. Massive urban migration, deepening inequalities, challenges concerning the urban environment, emerging social movements and the emergence of diverse religious expressions in the face of such urban complexity warrant dedicated theological enquiry and action. Our faculty is particularly well located to respond to this challenge innovatively.

The Centre collaborates widely with other disciplines on campus on issues ranging from poverty and justice to higher-education transformation to social cohesion and reconciliation.

In August of every year, the Centre is leading a collective of students and academics in a project called 'feast@UP', committed to the formation of citizenship for social justice (cf. De Beer 2014b). It does so in conjunction with an annual community festival, the Feast of the Clowns, hosted by the Tshwane Leadership Foundation (TLF). During this festival, semester courses in some departments at the University are aligned to the theme of the festival, students are encouraged to participate in workshops and events associated with the festival, academic colloquiums are hosted on campus and various creative tools such as poetry, film and music are employed to explore issues of justice, both theoretically and very concretely and practically.

Since 2012, the Centre has expanded and solidified its network, and it has been doing its research mostly in close collaboration with faith-based or civil-society organisations committed to similar themes in order to allow for local contexts to inform our research questions, to shape research findings and to contribute to the generation of new knowledge and insights. We are, however, also collaborating with organisations that have similar research findings to potentially contribute directly to local communities (De Beer 2014b:132–136). In its research on faith in the city, the 'feast@UP' programme and the Urban Studio, which is a trans-disciplinary space for action, reflection, dialogue and research, hosting much of the Centre's urban agenda, the Centre is collaborating closely with the TLF (cf. De Beer 2012, 2014b). Stephan de Beer, who is the Director of the Centre, has been the founder and leader of the TLF from 1993 to 2013 and still remains actively involved with inner-city issues, particularly in the areas of homelessness and social housing.

The Village of Support is the Centre's incubator for child and youth-development training programmes. The Centre has collaborated closely with the Royal Bafokeng Institute and the Phokeng Ministers' Fraternal over the years, responding with educational offerings to expressed needs from within this community and after incubating the courses in Rustenburg-Phokeng rolling them out for presentation elsewhere (cf. Van der Walt, Swart & De Beer 2014).

Similarly, the Centre is hosting Hospivision, a faith-based organisation, for a research project entitled Spirituality and Health (De la Porte 2016). Hospivision provides pastoral services in both public and private hospitals across the country, backed up by solid ongoing research on the relationship between spirituality and health and in particular, spirituality and institutional health care. In a recent article, De la Porte explored the contribution of spirituality and pastoral work as well as faith-based communities and faith-based organisations to 'holistic people-centred health care in South Africa'.

In conversation with the Petra Institute and the Child Theology Africa Network as well as with practitioners and activists engaged in restorative justice, reconciliation and restitution work or social

justice work, the Centre develops its research agendas around children, faith and society, and social cohesion and reconciliation, respectively. These collaborations help ensure the transdisciplinary nature of the research projects on which the Centre embarks. Research outputs do not exist in a vacuum but are shared in ways that can transform local practices almost immediately.

The Centre for Sustainable Communities

The idea for a CSC has evolved out of the Institute for Missiological and Ecumenical Research (IMER). IMER was established in 1979 by the DRC when this church's missionary movement was already in sharp decline as Saayman (2007; quoting G. van der Watt) indicates:

> The total number of DRC missionaries (ordained as well as lay, both foreign and home missionaries) shrunk from 1078 to 551 in four short years between 1973 and 1977; and the total number of ordained missionaries declined from 308 to 192 during the same period. (p. 108)

What remained of the movement continued to collapse. By the end of the 1980s, there was little left of what was once a strong movement in SA and neighbouring countries. IMER did not survive the demise of the missionary movement and for a long time, has had no capacity to do independent work. It existed only as a meeting place or connection between other entities. In IMER's place, the CSC is in the process of being registered. Its future is uncertain and depends, among others, on the ways in which questions such as those discussed below are answered.

IMER was related to Missiology and to the missionary paradigm. This paradigm can be described as follows: The church sends a missionary somewhere to preach the gospel, to call people to be saved by believing in Jesus Christ and to plant a church (e.g. Kritzinger, Meiring & Saayman 1994).

In the meantime, another paradigm that we call the missional paradigm has been evolving. This paradigm can be described as

follows: God sends the local congregation to engage with its local context, to help heal all relationships (with God, with each other, with creation) and to be witnesses in word and deed of the *missio Dei*, namely that God is taking world history on its way to the end where the whole creation, the household of God, will experience both freedom and the fullness of life. An important part of the shift from a missionary to a missional paradigm is a deep appreciation for God's presence in places where we became involved before arriving there. With that comes a great sensitivity and respect for and understanding of what God is doing in certain localities and for local people and communities, seeking to collaborate with and strengthen what already exists instead of doing things for people.

An important guideline in understanding what God is doing can be found in the theme of 'wholeness of life or life in its fullness'. This theme, with related terms such as life-affirming and life-giving relationships, practices and ministries, has been a central theme in many church circles in the world over the last number of years. Life-giving theology is the motto of the FT at the UP and it gives more content to its research theme, '*Ecodomy:* Life in fullness'. The 2013 General Synod of the DRC accepted a document on the mission of the church which states that a missional congregation is called to restore relationships in a broken world and to live according to God's plan for his creation (Algemene Sinode 2013:9). This policy document resonates with documents in churches in the rest of the world, over a broad spectrum, such as the document *Together towards life* in the Resource Book of the WCC of 2012, documents of the Roman Catholic Church such as the encyclicals *Caritas in veritate* (Benedict XVI 2009) and *Laudato Si', On care for our common home* (Franciscus 2015) as well as documents such as Balia and Kim (2010), Edinburgh 2010, volume II: *Witnessing to Christ today* (Van Niekerk 2015:3).

The theological reflection on the missional paradigm and the involvement of the local congregation to promote the fullness of life in and with her local communities are well developed. Much work has been done regarding the leadership that is

needed to convince a local congregation of its calling to be so involved. The gap that the Centre sets out to fill is to develop the resources (knowledge, skills, networks, funding, etc.) that are needed to engage constructively with very complex and massive issues such as overcoming poverty, developing sustainable practices and caring for vulnerable children. What is the best that a congregation can do, given its identity, calling and limited capacity? The other gap that the Centre fills is to develop the resources in local communities in collaboration with local people.

These were the questions that IMER and the Centre have struggled with over the last decade or two. A major obstacle has been that, as the former missionary movement phased out, IMER's financial support from the DRC has been receding since the early 1990s. The new missional movement is still taking shape and has not gained enough momentum to fund a new research centre, even if such a centre is needed.

The only way to do some research was by way of a partnership. IMER and the Centre have been cooperating with the Nova Institute since 1994 when Nova started out as an independent one-man NGO. Attie van Niekerk, who was the director of Nova, started to work as a part-time researcher at IMER and lecturer in Missiology in 1997. When J.J. Kritzinger retired in 2002, Van Niekerk became director of IMER. At the time, Nova was making good progress as a consultant for industry and government departments, focusing on aspects of the daily life of low-income households and communities such as energy use and food production. We were convinced that these topics were relevant for what IMER was working towards, but we did not know how all of it would come together.

In 2003, IMER and Nova entered into a joint venture that was called the Functional Household Programme. Nova was about to sign a contract with an industry to reduce air pollution caused by the use of coal in low-income households in certain townships. An agreement was reached that the contract would be signed by three parties: Nova, the industry and the UP on behalf of IMER. This opened the way to apply for funding from

Technology and Human Resources for Industry Programme (THRIP), an arm of the national government's Department of Trade and Industry. The Department instituted THRIP to support research and development that would promote the competitiveness of industries in the country. The joint venture was a success. In September 2005, the Functional Household Programme received the THRIP Excellence Award for Social Development from the minister of Trade and Industry.

Today, Nova has grown into a social enterprise with 23 full-time staff members of which six are former students of the FT. Nova's vision is a healthy household culture in Southern Africa. It develops and promotes ways (models, products, technology, practices) to improve the quality of life of households. It specialises in ventures such as developing and implementing sustainable and effective patterns for domestic energy use, practices for small-scale commercial farming that use conservation farming methods and cooperation between the local church and households in caring for orphans and vulnerable children, whose numbers have increased sharply in recent years.

Nova is an independent organisation that works with industries, government departments, knowledge institutions, churches and NGOs. Cooperating with Nova is a good example of the types of joint venture that the church needs in order to increase its capacity and effectivity. Many similar partnerships are needed. However, our sense is also that such an approach could help redefine and reshape the nature of theological curricula, namely the way in which different insights, experiences and views are shared to provide students with a richer exposure to various disciplines and diverse contexts. This is important for academic and practicing theologians, community developers and social activists.

Berkhof (1973:364) regards diaconal service as one of nine institutional instruments of the church for transferring the fullness of life given by Christ. Both the seriousness of the Christian message and the seriousness of many people's needs require that diaconal work be taken much more seriously than before.

The way in which the Centre must be structured in future is uncertain, but there is clearly a need for research if the church is to engage in a meaningful way in the issues of our time. Although the Centre has no source of funding, the role it has played as connector that brings together different role players will remain a minimum role that it can continue to play in future. One example is that, since 2007, the Centre has formally hosted 20 students from the Netherlands who did field work as part of their studies with Nova. This is leading to longer-term partnerships.

The Centre fills the gap that was indicated in 1938 by Karl Barth in his essay *Rechfertigung und Recht* ([Justification and justice]; official English title *Church and state*). Barth (1960) says that there was a gap in the theology of the Reformers, namely the following:

> [*They did not set out what the*] inner and vital connection is between service of God in Christian living … in the worship of the Church as such, and another form of service, which may be described as a 'political' service of God …. (pp. 101–102)

The 'political' service of God refers to the affairs of human justice and life in general. If there is no such inner connection, it would be possible to build a highly spiritual message and a very spiritual church, a message that has ceased to seek or find any entrance into the sphere of these problems of human justice – as has happened with Pietistic sterility. In contrast, one can build a very effective society which has lost contact with the vital values and direction that we as humans cannot provide for ourselves. Barth (1960:104–105) blames this separation, at least partly, on the gap in the Reformers' teaching, and he sets out to correct it in his context.

The gap between faith and everyday life that was mentioned by Barth is relevant for the relationship between Nova and the Centre but also for the relationship between theological education at the UP and grass-root communities, particularly communities of struggle. Nova has established itself as a social enterprise, not a church organisation or even an overtly Christian organisation. We do, however, read the Bible and pray at our meetings and remind ourselves that we are not

ashamed of the gospel and that we have to remain ready to give account of the hope that is in us. Nova is involved in the affairs of everyday life but searches for ways to incorporate the results of its work into the ministry of the church, to contribute to a more meaningful diaconal service. The ministry of the church traditionally does not include an active and highly developed involvement, with non-church organisations, in the everyday issues of local communities that we are facing today. We need to go wider than the tradition, for example in the DRC, of social workers working as professionals in and with the church.

The serious levels of un-fullness of life in our context are not issues that we traditionally dealt with. Many of these issues are both new and massive: Climate change, the huge numbers of HIV-positive parents and vulnerable children, the levels of urbanisation and the scale of informal housing and homelessness were not key issues that the church had to deal with in previous centuries.

Nova has a core group of theologians who work with engineers, architects, agriculturalists, medical scientists, statisticians, anthropologists and others. However, the question remains how we can bridge the gap between faith and life, between what organisations such as Nova do and the ministry of the church. This is a question for both the Centre and Nova.

One can raise another question in the context of considering transforming curricula, namely whether the issues articulated above should not become the starting points for our theological engagement. Instead of abstract theologising that is applied in practise afterwards, allowing for our different theological disciplines to be brought to bear on specific societal challenges where un-fullness or un-freedom flourish, should we not imagine possible theological alternatives, even solutions, in the light of our theological and other sources? This will constitute a rather decisive shift from the current theological curriculum and pedagogy.

An emerging transdisciplinary paradigm: Clues for transforming curricula?

A common, and complementary, transdisciplinary paradigm seems to be emerging in the approaches taken by the two Centres. We suggest that clues for transforming curricula are hidden in some of the characteristics of this paradigm.

We are rooted in a 'lived faith' (cf. Gutierrez 1988:xxxiv), searching for the way in which serving God in the liturgy relates to serving God in everyday life (in the household, in the community and/or in the public square)

We are concerned with and take as point of departure in our methodology the fundamental issues of our context. These include the search for a better quality of life and indeed structural transformation as part of the struggle against destructive forces such as dire poverty. They also include the gap between rich and poor; the interlinked questions of identity, urbanisation and migration; the destruction of the ecology; gender issues; scourges such as HIV and malnutrition; and how the church and theology can exercise a preferential option for the poor.

Wearer convinced that the Christian faith has something of fundamental importance to contribute in the search for meaningful responses to these fundamental issues, the search for a way that leads to life. At the same time, however, we are convinced that Christendom has helped to create many of the colonial and apartheid constructs and the systems and oppressions with which we are still contending in communities today (cf. Terreblanche 2014). Our research, teaching and engagement in communities therefore also seek to offer a deep and rigorous critique of Christendom and the socio-ecclesial constructs it has birthed while seeking to foster radically re-imagined socio-cultural-ecclesial possibilities.

We believe that our search for preferred realities must integrate faith, action, socio-ecclesial analysis, the rigorous discipline of scientific and interdisciplinary reflection and inquiry, and bold action. We embrace as methodological framework for doing theology the praxis approach of Holland and Henriot, and we are also deeply informed by Freire's pedagogical approach, at least in the CCM.

We believe that our contribution must become clear in the process of working with others who do not necessarily share our faith, but who are also seeking for answers to the same issues. We are still learning, but in practice, both of us are network organisations – networking and networked. By seeking together, we hope to enter into the 'dialogue of life', which Bevans and Schroeder (2004:383) regard as the foundation for any other kind of dialogue, and the dialogue of action. The dialogue of life is the way in which we live with people of other convictions in the affairs of daily life, and the dialogue of action is the way in which we work together to solve problems that threaten all of us. We do not approach these issues with ready-made answers, but, drawing from the narrative approach's not-knowing posture, we agree with Sophie Oldfield (2013) that '… the notion of engaged research challenges us to think carefully about the relationships in which and through which research is sustained'.

Different relationships must be considered:

- ***The relationship between different theological disciplines*:** Contextual approaches to doing theology are in essence interdisciplinary, subverting knowledge or disciplinary hierarchies and starting its reflection with people in local contexts, often from below. In reflecting on contextual challenges, we draw on the diversity of theological resources and disciplinary insights to reflect responsibly and to construct appropriate proposals for alternative practices and better communities. We are able to navigate between disciplines, often having worked in disciplines other than our current ones, not being exclusively 'married' to a particular discipline. Rigorous theological and scientific inquiry that is at the same

time contextual and action-oriented does not allow itself to be constrained by often artificial disciplinary boundaries.

- ***The relationship with other sciences*:** We realise that the questions of our time cannot be grasped by one scientific discipline alone. We must work with other sciences. Theologians must learn from others, and we must make our own contribution to the broad scientific endeavour to understand our context. One of our contributions may be that we could try to understand something of the role of religion in shaping the everyday lives of people.
- ***The relationship with people of other faiths*:** In terms of migration, for example, we try to understand how the faith sensibilities of people, whether Christian, traditional African, Muslim or Buddhist, sustain people in their difficult migratory journeys. We also try to understand how religious constructs help perpetuate or heal prejudice and other fractures in urban society. We find helpful the concept of 'prophetic dialogue', as described by Bevans and Schroeder, which maintains the elements of sincere dialogue with sharing our own faith.
- ***The relationship with people within the context*:** We believe that our search for a way forward must be done *with* people who struggle in their own lives with the fundamental issues mentioned above. It is not a purely theoretical matter, and it cannot be done in isolation from what actually happens in our context. This is consistent with contextual or narrative approaches of doing theology in which alternative stories are coconstructed or alternatives to the status quo are ushered in by people and communities themselves, practising agency deliberately, even against the odds. Schreiter (1985) speaks of the community as theologians when he describes the process of constructing local theologies. Our Centres deliberately seek to subvert knowledge hierarchies that often tend to locate knowledge narrowly and exclusively in academic institutions at the expense of retrieving local, community or indigenous knowledge and wisdom wherever they are to be found.

Implicit in the emerging approach outlined above is an embrace of *liminality* as the necessary posture for transforming or transformational leadership – searching for solutions for the world's most pressing challenges in the threshold spaces between races and

groups, powerful and powerless, church and society, academic and non-academic institutions, chaos and order, the already and the not-yet. It is precisely in the liminal spaces where one finds the uncertainty of new realities with new challenges, where innovative responses are often birthed, but without an embrace of the gift of liminality, our certainties often prevent the innovative new beginnings.

Wepener (2015a) proposes not only a position but a spirituality of liminality for doing qualitative ethnographic liturgical research in a postcolonial African context. He unpacked this more in his inaugural lecture as Head of the Department of PT at the UP, suggesting that such spirituality should be what root this Department in a postcolonial (decolonising?) time such as this. Waaijman (2002) describes a liminal spirituality as being in an uncertain place, virtual outsiders, paradox '[*y*]et, there is a current of life here: creativity, community, equality, vital energy, insight, imagination, wholeness, naturalness.' Liminal spaces often give birth to spiritualities 'outside the established cadres of culture' (Waaijman 2002), namely the spirituality of exile, the spirituality of the desert fathers, spiritualities formed outside established religious orders or spirituality lived as loneliness (disconnectedness) in the very connected modern mass culture.

The previous arguments can be combined in a growing sense that a distinctive feature of our emerging approach is the transdisciplinary nature of our work. We insist on scholarship – teaching, research and engagement in and with communities – that embraces processes where researchers from different disciplines and people who are in the actual situation put their heads together to search for meaningful solutions to concrete problems with which people in the particular situation are struggling. Klein (2001:4) puts it succinctly '[*t*]he core idea of transdisciplinarity is different academic disciplines working jointly with practitioners to solve a real-world problem.'

In the CCM, we practice trans-disciplinarity, for example, in our Urban Studio where researchers, practitioners, activists and community members consider local urban challenges

together, articulate research questions and through research and conversation seek to construct shared and new knowledge and understanding that has the potential to be liberating or transformational. Another example is an extensive homelessness research project, entitled 'Pathways out of homelessness', which created different spaces in which homeless and former homeless individuals, civil-society organisations, city officials and politicians, and researchers and students collaboratively considered homelessness, its causes, possible solutions or sustainable pathways out of it. A result was to develop and recommend an integrated policy and strategy on street people for the City of Tshwane, elements of which are already implemented by different organisations in the city.

Nova's approach, which is shared by the CSC is based on the realisation that solutions that have worked in one context may not work in another. In fact, they often do more harm than good. Household residents must be involved in the process to design the appropriate solution(s) that would satisfy their specific needs in their context. This is done, in practice, when a concrete problem is addressed, for example air pollution caused by the domestic use of coal, the depletion of wood sources in rural areas due to the domestic use of wood, the dire need for a better quality of life for vulnerable children. It is done by way of a transdisciplinary research and development process in which researchers from different backgrounds and a representative number of household members put their heads together to reach consensus on the needs and problems and to decide together what the best potential products and/or processes are to solve those problems.

The most promising solutions are implemented on a small scale and are then evaluated, improved and iterated again until one of them complies with all the set criteria. That is the first milepost. The second is to find ways in which such solutions can be taken to scale. The church has the mission and the values, the infrastructure (from synodical committees to congregations in local communities) and dedicated members to make it ideal for

bringing some of these solutions to people. Where that happens, our dream of the church and the Centre mutually helping each other becomes reality.

The examples above clearly embody a way of doing theology collaboratively with communities, congregations and (faith-based) non-profit organisations. The strong focus on local congregations and local communities, as locales for theological action-reflection, combined with a strong social enterprise paradigm (as found in Nova), maintaining high levels of excellence and putting a high premium on results that can be measured and monitored, could contribute to both the contexts and the competencies for transforming curricula. Instead of serving the rather narrow constituencies of the traditional church partners only, such an approach could considerably broaden the partner base to include a more diverse range of church partners as well as faith-based (and other) social enterprises and local communities. In such a way, mutuality will be fostered through which both the FT and the partners could contribute to each other in terms of a liberating or transforming agenda.

Lastly, the emerging approach in our Centres tends to be overtly political, in the sense of 'political' service to God as Barth described it, expressed in a deep concern with the management of the *polis*; the daily human affairs of cities, communities and households; the ways in which resources are managed and distributed or monopolised and denied. This is also a natural alignment with the broader Faculty Research Theme (FRT) which is '*Ecodomy:* Life in fullness'[50]. The Centres concern themselves very intentionally with economic, environmental

50. *Ecodomy* is a translation of the Greek word *oikodome* which means 'to build the household'. *Oikos* is the root word from which words such as economy, ecology and ecumenical are derived. Theologically, these words all deal with God's concern for the household of creation, the household of humanity and ways in which resources are shared, distributed or managed (stewarded) in the household

and socio-political matters in everyday public life, in cities and in local communities. It does so, however, from a strong sense that everything is not well in the household and that cleansing is needed first in order to build households of freedom, to use Russell's language. It is in the (seemingly tame) acts of cleansing that theological discourse will find its liberating or transforming posture, replacing domesticated forms of theological education with processes that are raising consciousness and liberating both theology and students alike to be able to discern and be disentangled from colonial and other shackles and to be nurtured towards being agents building households of freedom instead.

Into the future …: Doing theology collaboratively with local communities?

Based on the unfolding foci and methodologies of our two Centres over the past few years, as described above, we seem to have developed certain shared or overlapping thematic interests which probably call for greater synergy and collective action. Also, a certain theological methodology has developed that emphasises collaboration with local communities, congregations or organisations in finding solutions for societal challenges.

Centres at universities tend to be innovative and entrepreneurial in approach, not having the same institutional constraints as academic departments. The innovations practiced or discovered in centres are often not captured or articulated well enough, and yet they could become contributors to transforming curricula.

At the heart of this chapter, we argue for a transdisciplinary approach that will do theology collaboratively with communities, in liminal spaces. Recognising the past 100 years of the Faculty's life and acknowledging that curricula were never neutral theologically or politically and often supportive of the status quo, this chapter pleads for the FT at the UP to once again take sides but this time in a drastically different way. Russel Botman (2012)

reflected on the role of the public university, and borrowing from him, we would argue that this should be the particular role of a transforming theological curriculum at a public university:

> The time has come for universities to take sides. They cannot just be players on the field – they need to pick a side. And that side should be the public good. Emphasising the public good is a choice for the marginalised, for the poor, for struggling communities. If universities choose to follow this route, their influence starts growing because they are no longer just impacting on the terrain of policy but concretely contributing to the remaking of the world. (p. xv)

We could be complicit with neo-colonial paradigms that once again deny some a place under the sun, or we could usher in a new era of doing theology, collaboratively with communities, and in doing so, we could help remake the world with people, multiplying households of freedom.

Summary: Chapter 9

The FT at the UP celebrates its first century of existence in 2017. This chapter is an attempt to draw from the emerging approach in both the CCM and the CSC, asking whether it perhaps offers clues for transforming curricula as we enter our second century. The chapter seeks to offer a vision for doing theology collaboratively with communities, in liminal spaces, opening up a transdisciplinary approach to theological engagement. In its engagement with local and struggling contexts, subverting the conventional suburban classroom spaces and hierarchies of knowledge alike, it opens itself up for the ongoing transformation of both theology and the theological curriculum as well as for the transformation of local communities. It presents the possibility of doing theology at a public university in a way that could have direct and hopefully liberating and life-giving impact in a deeply unequal society, mediating multiple households of freedom.

Chapter 10

HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies and *Verbum et Ecclesia*: South African accredited journals with footprint

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Introduction: *HTS Theological Studies/Teologiese Studies*

In the 1940s, HTS was *the* platform in SA where international theologians participated actively. From 2009 to the present, there has been a similar trend, and it is escalating. However, the period after the Second World War shows a decreasing trend with regard to the international footprint of HTS. The question is what the reasons for the decline and the recent renaissance could be. Since 2009 when the HTS became an open-access journal, 349 articles were published by international scholars in the field of Biblical Studies alone – 115 in OTS and 234 in NTS.[51]

HTS is a megajournal which is accredited by Scopus of Elsevier, the Clarivate Analytics WoS Index (formerly referred to as Thomson Reuters ISI, Arts & Humanities) and SciELO SA of the ASSAf. HTS is the oldest and largest theological journal in SA and is affiliated to the FT at the UP. However, despite its extent, it did not take its place in the world rankings of citation impact as would have been expected (Buitendag 2016:6 of 11; SJR 2016). Currently, the relationship between publications and the number of citations which they generate is an important factor in higher education since this, among other things, determines the world ranking of universities. The most important factor is actually the number of citations as it translates to a higher average number of citations per staff member. HTS nonetheless makes a significant contribution with its high number of citations, which is a result of its high number of publications. Seen from this perspective, 'size'

51. In this chapter, the emphasis is mainly on journal articles in the field of biblical scholarship. The international engagement of the church historian, S.P. Engelbrecht, is therefore not discussed. Engelbrecht was one of the first group of professors appointed after the establishment of the FT at the UP in 1917.

does matter. The most prominent index is Scopus of Elsevier, which with its most significant metric, CiteScore, calculates the IF over a period of three years. In the domain of theology and religion, 345 accredited journals are included in Scopus Metrics.[52]

From 2013 to 2015, HTS published 438 articles with 79 citations, self-citations excluded. The emphasis on world ranking at the UP would require from HTS to decrease the ratio. In other words, it should have fewer articles and more citations, or at least more citations per article. However, if such a requirement becomes an institutional demand, the overemphasis on world ranking would stand in direct opposition to HTS' editorial policy which aims not only at expanding the journal as a megajournal but also at providing an opportunity for young researchers and scholars from African countries to publish and so participate in international scholarly discourse (see Buitendag 2014:5 for the significance of the university as institution, and particularly theology and religious studies, for Africa). Where relevance for Africa and building capacity amongst young researchers are focal points, the pressure of world ranking without distinguishing between natural sciences, on the one hand, and humanities and social sciences, on the other hand, might become counter productive.

According to an article entitled 'Rethinking research impact by Theology and Religious Studies with references to the Faculty of Theology at the University of Pretoria' celebrating the centennial anniversary of the FT and authored by the Johan Buitendag (2017), international universities that are regarded as a benchmark by the UP include the Humboldt University in Berlin, the Free University of Amsterdam and the University of Edinburgh. In the field of TRS the ratio of citations per publication achieved by the UP is more favourable than the ratio of these universities (Buitendag 2017). In this regard, HTS is the

52. See Beatty (2017), and also https://journalmetrics.scopus.com/.

main source of publications for the UP (see Buitendag's [2016] first 'Centenary' article, entitled 'The idea of the University and the Pretoria Model: *Apologia pro statu Facultatis Theologicae Universitatis Pretoriensis ad secundum saeculum*'). According to Scopus Metrics, HTS compares as follows with the top international journals in this field. An excerpt of the statistics for the period 2013 to 2015 demonstrates the following (see Beatty 2017):

- *Harvard Theological Review* published 66 articles with 31 citations – a ratio of 32%.
- *Journal of Biblical Literature* published 146 articles with 56 citations – a ratio of 27%.
- *Journal for the Study of New Testament Studies* published 60 articles with 20 citations – a ratio of 27%.
- *New Testament Studies* published 97 articles with 30 citations – a ratio of 27%.
- *Scottish Journal of Theology* published 70 articles with 14 citations – a ratio of 19%.
- *Biblical Interpretation* published 65 articles with 9 citations – a ratio of 11%.
- *Novum Testamentum* published 54 articles with 13 citations – a ratio of 20%.
- *Biblical Theology Bulletin* published 60 articles with 5 citations – a ratio of 7%.
- *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovaniensis* published 71 articles with 11 citations – a ratio of 15%.
- *Vetus Testamentum* published 142 articles with 24 citations – a ratio of 14%.
- *Journal of Old Testament Studies* published 76 articles with 9 citations – a ratio of 12%
- HTS published 438 articles with 79 citations – a ratio of 15%.

This comparison over three years indicates that the HTS compares well with the most influential journals, including those of international scholarly societies (e.g. Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas, Society for Old Testament Study, Society of Biblical Literature, American Academy of Religion and the International

Academy of PT) and journals in Belgium, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the USA which are published *inter alia* by Peeters Publishers, Cambridge University Press, Brill Publishers and Harvard University Press.

Against this background and the benchmark which was set, the chapter gives a brief overview of the history and scope of HTS. It shows how HTS, at its inception, was an international asset by describing the legacy of the four 'founding' biblical scholars of the FT, namely Antonie Greyvenstein, Berend Gemser, Adrianus van Selms and Albert Geyser. The chapter argues that if editorial policy should defer to world-ranking aspirations, HTS international footprint and its relevance for Africa will be largely diminished. To substantiate this argument, a brief historical overview indicates the reasons for successful international collaboration in the past and why this has disappeared in the middle phase. It indicates how it would be possible to maintain the recently reoccupied space, and by doing so, the international footprint will come full circle. Yet, world-ranking elitism can be compared to the paradox in today's socio-political and economic world: While globalisation is a reality, the trend is inward and self-serving. Such a trend goes against everything religion stands for and can lead to the demise of academic TRS in SA.

HTS Theological Studies/Teologiese Studies from inception to the present

HTS was founded in 1943 (see Human & Van Aarde 2008:9–24). It was an initiative of theologians from the UP (professors of the NRCA) and Dutch scholars.[53] The Cape Town based international

53. At its inception, the editorial board of *HTS Theological Studies* formulated three objectives: sound scholarly biblical investigation, loyalty to the legacy of the Reformation and to the Hervormde Kerk and accommodation of the research

Dutch publishing house HAUM/Du Buissy was the first sponsor. The theologians were responsible for managing the academic quality, and HAUM/Du Buissy Publishing House provided the administrative infrastructure. The NRC became the title owner of HTS. In other words, HTS is not a journal of the UP or its FT, and it should not be regarded as an 'in-house' scholarly journal. After its establishment at the UP in 2000, the Reformed Theological College of the NRC took up the administrative task while academic quality was the responsibility of the editorial board of national and international academics. Only a small minority of these was attached to the UP. This is still the case today. The financial contribution by the Hervormde Kerk for the publication of the first issue in 1943 was £25 (see Oberholzer 2010a:2).

Over the years, a close collaboration developed between the NRC and the FT at the UP (established in 1917) regarding the infrastructure and scholarly quality of HTS. The Reformed Theological College is responsible for the infrastructure and the Editorial Board ensures that HTS adheres to the criteria for accreditation set by the DHET of the South African national government. Tertiary institutions in SA receive financial subsidy from the Department of Education for published research outputs in accredited journals. Since the beginning of this subsidy policy, HTS has been recognised as an accredited scholarly journal. Due to its international accreditation by the WoS (Thomson Reuters ISI, Arts & Humanities Index), Elsevier Scopus and SciELO SA, the accreditation of HTS by DHET is automatic.

(footnote 53 continues …)
articles of scholars from other ecclesial traditions (cf. Oberholzer 2010a:2 of 20). Over the years, which now already amounts to a century, the lecturers in the FT who were attached to the NRC have remained loyal to all these objectives. What has changed is that the accommodation of the theological contributions of other scholars has transcended the Reformed focus. Articles have been accepted for publication in an inclusive manner so that even research originated from other denominational and religious traditions has been disseminated by HTS, provided that they are blind peer-reviewed to ensure academic quality and that they are non-polemical of nature and not hostile to Christianity.

At the beginning of 2009, commencing with volume 65 of HTS, the NRCA entered into a publishing agreement with African Online Scientific Information Systems (AOSIS) and became South Africa's first online, open-access theological journal. In 2007, the journals *Practical Theology in South Africa* and HTS united their endeavours and became one theological research portal. Online open access means that all content is freely available without charge to users. They can read, download, copy, distribute, print, search or link to the full text of the articles or use the texts for any other lawful purpose without requesting permission from the publisher or the author. A total of 4 767 707 downloads have been recorded since 2009 (when HTS became a fully open-access electronic journal), and the journal is read in 163 countries. In December 2015, the following number of visitors ('readers') have been registered for 2015: Africa – 15 710, the Americas – 14 583, Europe – 5873, Asia – 3726, Oceania – 1152. Of these numbers, new visitors amount to 30 379, of which 10 665 returned as visitors.

The legacy of the founding scholars: Foundational freedom

J. de Zwaan (Leiden), H.Th. Obbink (Utrecht) and G. van der Leeuw (Groningen) from the Netherlands played an influential role in the first Editorial Board together with the Dutch-born internationally recognised OT scholars B. Gemser and A. van Selms. Other academics on the Editorial Board during the first four years (1943–1947/8) were J.H.J.A. Greyvenstein (NTS and PT), S.P. Engelbrecht (Church History) and A.S. Geyser (NTS) of the UP. Greyvenstein, Gemser, Van Selms and Geyser can be regarded as the 'founding biblical scholars'.

The contribution of the founding biblical scholars of the FT since 1917, namely Antonie Greyvenstein (1878–1967), Berend Gemser (1890–1962), Adrianus van Selms (1906–1984) and Albert Geyser (1918–1985), can be described in terms of three cornerstones. The first is that no confession or cultural tradition should get in

the way of free biblical investigation which has the aim to bring the gospel message to life. Nationalism is the temptation to protect one's own interests, to turn inward, to deny the universal implications of the gospel message and is an obstacle to sharing the love of Christ unconditionally. The key term of the centennial celebration of the FT in 2017, namely 'gateway', expresses this ideal of academic freedom and openness to all.

The second cornerstone is freedom from Calvinistic fundamentalism. Fundamentalism is the attempt to come into the right relationship with God by following 'the letter' of the Confessions. A better alternative would be to preserve 'the spirit' of the Confessions together with the spirit of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The result is liberation from fundamentalism and separatism – and openness to the other.

The third cornerstone is freedom from liberal modernism. This is the ideology that human ideals can become the ultimate reality, free from God and the gospel of Christ and absolutely free from confessions. The consequence of this 'freedom' is human corruption and death. Fundamentalism and nationalism, however paradoxical that may sound, can feed into this ideology because confessions and nations are human constructs. The Belgian Confession is clear that no confession or human ordinance or resolution of churches or human ideals or cultural values can be remotely compared with the gospel of Christ (cf. Janssen 2016:159–161)

Crossroads or gateway?

These cornerstones were articulated by the 'founding scholars' in their research articles published in HTS. At the 50th anniversary celebrations of the FT, the values inscribed in these cornerstones were recognised but not embraced.[54] They were labelled 'social

54. J.A. Loader (1979:114) demonstrates that, in South Africa, fundamentalism has not been challenged adequately. There were scholars who kept a neutral stance. However, they did not advocated neutrality but nurtured fundamentalism. Others have denounced fundamentalism as a matter of principle but, paradoxically in

gospel' and 'humanism', allegedly similar to thought found in the work of contemporary theologians such as Rudolph Otto with his emphasis on holiness, Rudolf Bultmann with his 'subjective' existential hermeneutics and Jürgen Moltmann with his ecumenical theology. In an almost preposterous tone, 'biblical-reformational theology' was considered a remedy ('korreksie') for the 'heterodoxy' allegedly promoted by Otto, Bultmann and Moltmann (Oberholzer 1981:47) – all three actually Protestant theologians! In contrast, a conviction was articulated that civil religion ('burgerlike godsdiens') would always be the temptation and that this temptation must be resisted (Oberholzer 1981:47). Ironically, the UP was acclaimed by leading figures in the FT to be a tertiary educational institute for the benefit of Afrikaners ('Afrikanervolk') (Oberholzer 1981:43). However, what was not recognised is that fundamentalism and nationalism nurture a paradigm of racism, sexism and homophobia.[55]

A different tragedy manifested at the time of the 75th-anniversary celebrations of the FT. The faculty demonstrated to some extent that it was ready for the new millennium (see Oberholzer 2010c:9–10 of 35). However, as far as the pioneer scholars were concerned, no mention was made of the contributions of Gemser and Van Selms in preparation of the new millennium (see, inter alia, Oberholzer 1992:67–82). Only Greyvenstein and Geyser were commemorated but often at the cost of marginalising those who dared to remember (see inter alia Van Aarde, De Villiers & Buitendag 2014).

When the 'founding scholars' left the church, international collaboration largely came to an end in the 1950s and 1960s.

(footnote 54 continues ...)
their own academic discourse, articulated their views in such a way that their discourse actually served the objectives and technics of fundamentalism.

55. Oberhlozer (1963:3), however, in an address at the formal annual opening of the Faculty of Theology on 19 February 1963 expressed his opinion that it should be conceded that Bultmann was correct in claiming that the history of Israel as witnessed in the OT should be regarded as a 'failure' ('*scheitern der Geschichte*').

Scholars of the new millennium who dared to commemorate them and embrace the values of their contribution engaged in ecumenical relationships and sought international collaboration. As a result, HTS has grown into a megajournal – a fitting monument to the perseverance of the 'founding scholars'. The focus and scope of HTS read as follows, '*HTS Teologiese Studies/ Theological Studies* is an acclaimed Open Access journal with broad coverage that promotes multidisciplinary, religious, and biblical aspects of studies in the international theological arena' (HTS n.d.). This is in line with both the values of the founding scholars (published in the first volume of HTS in 1943) and the ideal of the vision and mission of the Faculty of the FT at the UP, formulated as follows by Johan Buitendag (2016):

> In the process of unfolding my argument about my way to a re-orientation of the Pretoria Model, it is appropriate to conclude … by offering my understanding of both what a university in my view is all about and together with that, what theology in this context could be. It does not exclude other definitions, but as argued, the grammar prescribes the following: 'Universities are places of debate and contestation which provide space for new knowledge to be created, intellectual activity and freedom of thought' (South Africa 2015). Theology is a scholarly endeavour by believers in the public sphere in order to come to grips with multi-dimensional realities (being) in a manner that matters (bread). (p. 6)

In the course of the last three years, 124 black African scholars published in HTS. During the last eight years, 349 international biblical scholars published in the journal. On 15 February 2017, downloads of articles published in HTS in 2016 amounted to the astounding number of 72 865, most of which from the Centenary Volume dedicated to the Vice-Chancellor, Cheryl de la Rey.

If the ideal of world ranking advocated by higher-education institutions is not balanced by service to both academia in Africa and ecumenically oriented TRS the result will be similar to the devastating effects of fundamentalism and nationalism. Theologians attached to the UP would be deprived of academic enthusiasm to maintain their publication achievements. When

the ideal of ranking becomes paramount to inward self-serving focus, it goes against the grain of the reality of globalisation and runs the risk of bringing international collaboration to an end. In the current era of globalisation, cross-country cooperation requires that South African publishing initiatives and endeavours (journals as well as books) are to be recognised as integral to international academia. Not only South African theological journals but also monographs and collected works ought to be actively supported by means of institutionally initiated financial incentives. Such an approach and policy demand the commendation of multi-focused theological research and interfaith religious studies and not merely an overemphasised individualism and specialisation.

Bibliometrics with regard to research output is needed for sound research management. Ranking will follow as a bonus almost automatically if quality research is done. What is an imperative to the FT is service to church and society in SA, Africa and abroad. The objective and motivation to serve Africa were advocated strongly by Dean Johan Buitendag (2014) in his article entitled 'Between the Scylla and the Charybdis: Theological education in the 21st century in Africa'. The current collaboration by non-South African scholars is the effect of their respect for the proven achievements of their South African colleagues. However, this collaboration could be put at risk if ranking criteria are applied by university management without taking into consideration the distinction between the nature and practice of scientific disciplines (humanities/social sciences and natural sciences). A strategy which measures AH – including TRS – with the same yardstick as the natural sciences (overemphasising citations and the IF of research output) should be challenged. However, this does not imply that ranking per se should be dismissed. Ranking itself is a globalising phenomenon in the sense that comparison and competition with the rest of the world are measured. However, when competition neglects the insight that a university is a 'public good' and that theology presupposes epistemological inclusivity, the trend to overemphasise ranking

needs to be challenged. It could 'kill' local African theological journals and with it the opportunity for upcoming scholars from Africa to publish in locally relevant journals.

An alternative strategy for publishing could still be the focus to publish in 'international journals' in compliance with the 'definition' given to the term 'international', namely journals indexed inter alia in Scopus of Elsevier, WoS of Clarivate Analytics and SciELO SA of the ASSAf. At the same time, the publication of books in AH ought to be promoted more assertively as a strategy to influence institutional reputation (an important measure in world rankings). Ironically, the international ranking agencies point out that citations in AH are rather meaningless, and the focus here must be on other parameters of ranking measurement, for example staff-student ratio, international scholars-staff ratio and citations per staff member.

With regard to HTS, it should be acknowledged that, according to Scopus, HTS had more citations for 2015 than the combined total of the other four theological journals that are ranked top in Africa,[56] namely 79 citations versus 72. However, HTS also published more articles (438) than the other four together (403) during the three-year period of 2012–2014. As a result of its high article output, its three-year IF (CitesSore) ranks HTS lower than *Neotestamentica* and *Missionalia* which are placed first and second respectively in Africa. HTS is ranked third. Yet, when one looks at output (number of articles) and citations, HTS has the same 'influence' as the other top journals together.

Therefore, research conducted in the FT at the UP and disseminated by the scholarly journals closely attached to the UP should in the first place strive for honesty to the nature, epistemology and methodology of TRS. This implies a challenge to relativize human ideals with the spirit of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

56. They are *Neotestamentica, Missionalia, Verbum et Ecclesia* and *HTS Theological Studies* (see Steynberg 2017).

Verbum et Ecclesia: Establishing a clear footprint in Africa

VE was established in 1980 and is connected to *Excelsus*, the Dutch Reformed Church's Centre for Ministerial Development. This academic journal had an innocuous start at the FT (Section B) but has since developed into an international multidisciplinary theological journal with a focus on original research, contextual theological perspectives and perspectives from Africa, from women and from emerging academics from marginal groups.

The journal envisions to portray an increasing African profile in future since statistics have also shown that the impact of the journal is specifically evident in Africa. The Africanisation of research themes and foci on Africa will also contribute to the Faculty of Theology's academic and social impact on this continent in future.

Introduction: Small beginnings

Skrif en Kerk (SK) was the original Afrikaans name of VE with its establishment in 1980. The initiator and first editor of the journal was Willem S. (Riempies) Prinsloo, an OT scholar who represented the Lecturers' Council (Dosenteraad) of the FT (Section B), the theological faculty of the Afrikaans speaking DRC. In a turbulent socio-political and over-heated religious Afrikaans-speaking society, the initial aim or intention of this journal was to convey the academic theology of the Faculty to Afrikaans-speaking ministers of religion and their congregations. Behind this aim was the intention to counter fundamentalist theologies from the viewpoints of OTS and NTS, PT, Church History, Missiology and Science of Religion as well as Dogmatics and Christian Ethics. The only international scholars who would have been able to read and understand the articles were Flemish or Dutch speaking scholars.

Volume 1 of the journal (1980) consisted of only six articles from six male Afrikaans professors from OT, NT, PT, Church

History and Church polity in the Faculty.[57] Thirty-seven years later, in volume 37 (with two issues) of 2016, 68 articles were published in theology and related (or interdisciplinary) themes, written by both men and women from a variety of different communities in SA, Africa and other parts of the globe.[58] The second issue of Volume 37 (2016) focused on the theme of gender, sexualities and women studies.[59] These articles appeared predominantly in English. VE has been an open-access, online, peer-reviewed theological journal since 2009.[60]

The difference between the first (1980) and last (2016) volumes of the journal's completed publications clearly indicates the small beginnings, change in focus and scope, growth in readership and footprint, and the expansion of different horizons of VE over almost four decades. Some of these changes are indicated and discussed below. In addition, we reflect on visionary elements for the journal while contemplating its past, present and future impact regarding theology in its inter and transdisciplinary discussions with other disciplines and sciences. New future contexts would require contemplation to reach new academic horizons and impact.

Different phases of growth

Apart from the socio-political changes in SA after 1994, increasing tendencies of globalisation, the role of the World Wide Web, the merging of two Faculties of Theology (Sections A and B) at the UP, international rankings of the universities and other factors, the different Editors-in-Chief have brought change and

57. http://verbumetecclesia.org.za/index.php/VE/issue/view/45

58. http://verbumetecclesia.org.za/index.php/VE/issue/view/90

59. http://verbumetecclesia.org.za/index.php/VE/issue/view/91

60. http://www.ve.org.za. The journal is published by AOSIS, an international online publisher.

development in the journal's outlook and presentation. Without repeating the journal's history (Human & Van Aarde 2008:9–20), it is important to underscore some aspects to illustrate the journal's growth and footprint.

As already mentioned in the previous paragraph, Willem S. Prinsloo (1980–1997) was the first editor of SK. He was an OT scholar. His scholarly competence and international exposure ensured that quality academic research was disseminated in the Afrikaans-speaking (and later broader) communities. His successor was Cas J.A. Vos, a practical theologian (1998–2001). Vos was also a systematic theologian and poet, which impacted on his approach as editor. He added a rubric, namely *Theology Chronicle*, to every edition of VE, in which an author discussed in-depth current scholarly books or themes for the current contextual situation.[61] More English and international scholars contributed to the journal during this time. At the end of Vos's tenure, the name of the journal was changed from SK to VE. Hereby the journal has assumed a broader inclusive and international character.

From 2002 to 2015 Dirk J. Human, an OT specialist, filled the office of Editor-in-Chief. Alphonso Groenewald and later Kobus Kok and Cas Wepener became Assistant-Editors to assist with book reviews and communication. During this period, several changes took place, namely a decline in Afrikaans contributions and an increase in English publications (see Human & Van Aarde 2008:22–23) as well as an increase in international scholars (Human & Van Aarde 2008:22). Furthermore, articles were increasingly published in other recognised African indigenous languages like Sepedi (see Farisani 2011; Mahlangu 2011; Mampuru & Mojalefa 2015; Mojalefa 2011; Vellem 2015). In 2009, VE became an open-access, online, peer-reviewed journal that is accessible globally. Whereas 250 to 350 hard

61. http://verbumetecclesia.org.za/index.php/VE/issue/view/72. See also the following volumes of the journal under his editorship.

copies of issues were published before 2009, the number of visitors and downloads increased dramatically between 2011 and 2016.[62]

During the tenure of Human, the focus and scope were narrowed to increase the journal's current unique focus. Apart from its earlier focus to publish original national and international research and to provide intra and interdisciplinary theological and scientific dialogue with contextual perspectives, VE started to encourage scholars from Africa as well as women and young academics and scholars from minority groups to submit their research for publication. In addition, special volumes or *Festschrifts* were dedicated to important relevant themes or retiring colleagues in the Faculty, mostly edited by invited editors. Themes include sexuality (VE 27/1, 2006), DRC Theological training at the UP from 1938 to 2008 (*VE* 30/3, 2009), violence (VE 32/2, 2011), ubuntu (VE 36/2, 2015) and Ecodomy-Life in its fullness (VE 36/3, 2015) while *Festchrifts* were dedicated to Archbishop D. Tutu (VE 23/3, 2002), C.J. Wethmar (VE 29/2, 2008), P.G.J. Meiring (VE 29/3, 2008), D.E. Villiers (VE 33/2, 2012), J.H. Le Roux (VE 34/2, 2013) and J.C. Müller (VE 35/2, 2014). For C.J.A. Vos, a *Festschrift* was dedicated in a special book volume (Human & Veldsman 2012).

Due to the requirement for international standards for academic articles and publications, VE is accredited on several recognised lists. This includes the DHET list for subsidised journals; the Scopus list, which serves as statistical source for the THE and QS university rating systems; the SciELO SA list; the Norwegian Register for scientific journals and several other indexing services.[63] The journal and its Editorial Board remain committed to international publishing standards and its peer-review policy.

62. See the statistics of the annual journal report for 2016 in Addendum 1.

63. See the homepage of VE regarding indexing and archiving and DHET accreditation (http://www.ve.org.za).

In 2016, Daniël Veldsman, a systematic theologian of the Department of Dogmatics and Christian Ethics, succeeded Dirk Human as Editor-in-Chief of VE. He immediately inherited a very difficult national and international tertiary environment and is challenged by several external and internal challenges. These challenges are the very same as those that have been aptly described by Van Aarde in his section on HTS and need not to be repeated here. Since his appointment, articles on themes relating to the dialogue between the natural sciences and religion (theology) has received noticeable emphasis.

Perhaps a last remark regarding the growth of the journal will suffice. Keeping in mind that VE was always connected to the structures of the Afrikaans-speaking DRC as juridical authority,[64] the journal has, since 1980, gradually exceeded the boundaries of ecclesiastic borders, exclusivity regarding language and race and the challenges of local and national perspectives. Its footprint in Africa globally is becoming stronger.

DHET and ASSAf audit report (2013)

The DHET and the ASSAf have been conducting audits on scholarly journals in Religion, Theology and Related Fields since 2010. The main aims of the audits were to see if these South African journals complied with international practices and standards and were worthy of state subsidy and to improve unhealthy cultures. In 2012, the DHET recognised VE on its list of subsidised journals.

After a review of specific criteria and procedures, national and international peer reviewers, panels and meetings (Gevers 2013:11–16), a consensus report was issued by ASSAf on all 23

64. This includes the Centre for Theology and Community (CTC), the Institute for Ecumenical Research (IMER) and since 2008, the Centre for Ministerial Development (Excelsus).

theological and related journals. The journals were arranged in six specific categories, namely antiquity, mainstream theology, specific theological traditions, science/scholarship in theology, religious studies and specific religious traditions (Gevers 2013:3–4). VE was categorised in the locus of mainstream theology (Gevers 2013:41–44).

The panel's consensus view was that VE be accepted on the list of DHET-accredited journals and on the SciELO SA platform. Furthermore, the editor was encouraged to lead the journal to 'greater international and wider national participation' and 'tighter peer review' (Gevers 2013:44). In the consensus review, it is stated that 'the journal compares reasonably well with a number of international journals, but it is not in the same category as the leading international journals' (Gevers 2013:43). VE accepted these challenges to improve on aspects of its publication policies and practices in the next couple of years.

Statistics: Journal report 2016

Some statistics in the annual report of 2016 provide evidence of the qualitative improvement of article publication and the journal's African footprint.

Table 1 and Table 2 illustrate the submitted manuscripts and the published articles between 2010 and 2016.[65]

These tables illustrate that, every year, more manuscripts were submitted than published. Even though some manuscripts were transmitted to be published in the following year due to the peer-review process, there was still a notable rejection rate. This emphasises the editor's control over the quality of submitted manuscripts.

65. See journal report for 2016 in Addendum 1.

TABLE 1: Submitted articles between 2010 and 2016.

Year	Submitted articles
2010	77
2011	74
2012	101
2013	88
2014	66
2015	132
2016	120

TABLE 2: Published articles between 2010 and 2016.

Year	Published articles
2010	54
2011	51
2012	47
2013	70
2014	74
2015	84
2016	68

Table 3 and Table 4 show the number of first-time visitors who visited the VE website from various continents and a detailed picture of those visitors from Africa.[66]

In comparison to previous statistics, the interest of African readers showed the largest increase in 2016. Continents that followed were America, Europe, Asia and Oceania. The African footprint of VE seems evident (Table 4).

The largest number of first-time visitors to the journal in Africa are South Africans. This underlines VE's national and continental affinity.

66. See journal report for 2016 in Addendum 1.

TABLE 3: First-time visitors per continent in 2016.

Continent	First-time visitors
Africa	47 272
America	17 942
Europe	7235
Asia	5478
Oceania	1543

TABLE 4: First-time visitors from African countries in 2016.

In Africa	First-time visitors
South Africa	25 130
Kenya	12 139
Nigeria	2708
Zimbabwe	1492
Sudan	1224

TABLE 5: Female authors between 2009 and 2016.

Year	*N*
2009	5
2010	5
2011	9
2012	3
2013	13
2014	12
2015	17
2016	22

Another significant contribution to VE has been female authors. Statistics from between 2009 and 2016 show clearly that there has been an increase in the number of female authors (Table 5). Hopefully this upward trajectory will continue in future.

Finally statistics on the journal's citations and impact of the past few years (Table 6), shows a growth in citations.

TABLE 6: Citations between 2012 and 2016.

Year	Citations
2012	9
2013	40
2014	41
2015	59
2016	61

TABLE 7: Citation-based measurements.

Citation-based measurement	2015
CiteScore, based on Scopus, Elsevier	0.17
Source-Normalised Impact per Paper based on Scopus, Elsevier	0.40
Scimago Journal Rank (SJR), based on Scopus, Elsevier	0.16
H-index, based on Google Scholar	7.00

TABLE 8: Downloads between 2013 and 2016.

Year	Downloads
2013	221 354
2014	364 126
2015	522 621
2016	556 674

Citation-based measurements of VE for 2015 are represented in Table 7.[67]

It is important to caution that the quality of individual articles should be assessed of the journal. In this regard VE still has to improve in the future.

The number of downloads of articles over the past four years is shown in Table 8.

67. http://verbumetecclesia.org.za/index.php/ve/pages/view/journal-impact. The editor cautions that 'authors, readers and researchers should assess the quality of the content of individual articles, and not judge the quality of articles by the reputation of the journal in which they are published'.

These statistics clearly show an increase in the number of downloads over the past four years. The Editor-in-Chief works towards increasing this tendency in future.

Clear footprint in Africa: Concluding remarks

From the above depiction and statistics, it is evident that VE is developing a clear footprint regarding theological impact in Africa. This fact contributes to the Africanisation of the journal and the contextualisation of relevant theological themes and content. The improvement of academic quality and participation of stronger national and international research with the focus on Africa, women, marginalised groups and relevant contextual themes will be the main drivers of the journal's publication culture in future. The same holds – as has been indicated in the previous section – for its more established and stronger sister journal at the FT namely HTS. Both are engaging, sharing and establishing their respective footprints as scholarly journals in service to church and society in SA – and in Africa and abroad.

Summary: Chapter 10

The chapter forms part of the centennial celebration of the FT at the UP. The focus is on the two scholarly journals attached to the FT in Pretoria, namely HTS and VE. The first and longer section of the chapter is on HTS, the oldest and largest of the two journals. The second and much shorter section is on VE. The overarching aim of the chapter is to tell the story of their respective historical and formal footprints that have shaped their respective characters as scientific theological journals.

Much attention is given to the contemporary functioning and positioning of the journals within the broader university and intellectual context but also in relationship to the African context.

Addendum 1

VERBUM ET ECCLESIA, FIRST QUARTER, 2016

AOSIS Publishing

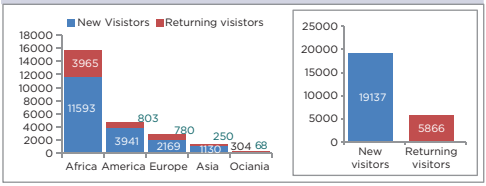
JOURNAL REPORT

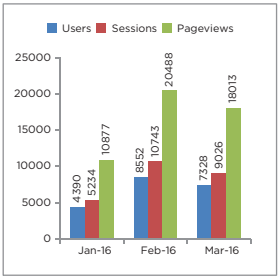
JANUARY – MARCH 2016

ONLINE ACTIVITY

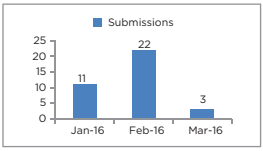
User: A visitor who had atleast one session within the selected date range.
Session:Acontainer for the actions a user takes on the website, 1 user can have multiple sessions.

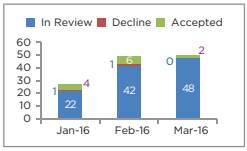
Pageviews: Total website pages browsed by users.
Newvisitor: A userwho did not have Google Analytics cookiesat the time of the visit.
Returning visitor A user with your existing Google Analytics cookies from a previous visit.

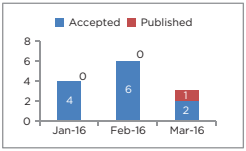




MANUSCRIPT OVERVIEW







SUBMISSION ORIGIN

JANUARY
University of South Africa (5), Stellenbosch University (1), North-West University (2), University of Pretoria (2), University of KwaZulu-Natal (1)

FEBRUARY
University of South Africa (10), Stellenbosch University (1), University of Johannesburg (1), University of Botswana (1), North-West University (4), University of Pretoria (3), Rector of Kasa Vubu University (1), Perth Bible College (1)

MARCH
University of South Africa (1), University of Pretoria (1), United Church of Zambia University (1)

DECISIONS IN REVIEW

JANUARY
Accept Submissions (4), Revisions Required (4), Resubmit for Review (2), Declines Submission (1), No Decision (16)

FEBRUARY
Accept Submissions (6), Revisions Required (7), Resubmit for Review (2), Declines Submission (1), No Decision (33)

MARCH
Accept Submissions (2), Revisions Required (8), Resubmit for Review (1), Declines Submission (0), No Decision (39)

PUBLISHED CONTENT

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN
South Africa (1)

PLACE OF ORIGIN
University of South Africa (1)

SECTION
Original Research (1)

SUBMITTED	ACCEPTED	PUBLISHED
36	12	1

ACTIONS

TOTAL DOWNLOADS

2634583

RECORDED SINCE 2009

Article that earned the most downloads:
Christianity and the African traditional religion(s): The postcolonial round of Engagement
Author: David T. Adamo
DOI: 10.4102/ve.v32i1.285
Downloads: 103068

CITATIONS RECEIVED

7

SINCE JANUARIE 2016

Article that earned the most citations:

Pitfalls in 'Biblical' leadership

Author: Volker Kessler
DOI: 10.4102/ve.v34i1.721
Citations: 2

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How can the academic voice of theological reflection at a public university in a post-apartheid South Africa in the 21st century find expression? In this scholarly book different research foci of the researchers of the Faculty of Theology of the University of Pretoria are presented and interpreted as attempts aimed to find such a collection of voices within a society characterised by shifting social-ecclesial and theological landscapes. Among the research foci the reader will find reflections on eco-hermeneutics, evolutionary perspectives on religious experience, an ethic of sociality within postcolonial, pluralist and unequal societies, and ecclesiological challenges and political theology. These perspectives are structured and presented from the hermeneutical question that was posed by the philosopher Paul Ricoeur, namely *D'où parlez-vous?* (*Where do you speak from?*). Against the background of the vision, objectives and values of the University of Pretoria's Faculty of Theology, the contributors to this collected work outline the main objectives of the respective approaches as explication of the 'speaking from' and 'speaking to'. Some of the most important contemporary issues are identified to be addressed within the southern African contexts.

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Professor Johan Buitendag, Dean of the Faculty of Theology of the University of Pretoria

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