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THEOLOGY AND THE (POST)APARTHEID CONDITION

Genealogies and future directions

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EDITOR

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Knowledge transmission and generation belong to the core mission of the public university. In democratic South Africa, the transformation of these processes and practices in higher education has become an urgent and contested task. The Faculty of Theology at the University of the Free State has already done some original work on the implications of these for theology. One area of investigation that has not yet received due attention concerns the role of theological disciplines, and especially the relation between academic disciplines and societal dynamics. This research project addresses the challenge and this volume reflects the intellectual endeavour of lectures, research fellows and a post-graduate student associated with the faculty.

Each theological discipline has its own history and has already experienced reconstruction, both globally and in South Africa. Some of these genealogical developments and re-envisioning are mapped by the contributions in this volume. The critical questions addressed are: what are the contours of the (post)apartheid condition and what are the implications for responsible disciplinary practices in theology? The chapters convey an impression of the vitality of theology at the University of the Free State and in South Africa and give expression to fundamental shifts that have taken place in theological disciplines, and also of future tasks. This research project aims to stimulate reflection on responsible and innovative disciplinary practices of theology in South Africa, which, we envisage, will contribute to social justice and human flourishing.

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Chapter 1

Mapping the (post)apartheid condition: Interrogating theological disciplines

Rian Venter[1]

1. Background: Discourses on theological education

Reflection on theological education, internationally and in South Africa, displays a particular vibrant quality and the publications on this are like a never-ending stream. This could be indicative of dissatisfaction with the quality and relevance of the training, or a responsiveness to the demands of a drastically changing environment.

In the context of this research project the *shape* of the state of scholarship on the academic study of theology is pertinent. What are the questions being asked and what are the issues addressed? An overview of the South Africa reflection conveys a sense of the realization of changing times, and also a wide range of interests. See for example contributions by Bosch (1991), Brown (1994), Buitendag (2014), Conradie (1997), Dames (2010), Deist (1994), Higgs (2015), Landman (2013), Lategan (1993), Lombaard (2016), Maluleke (2006), Naidoo (2008 & 2016), Naude (2004), Robinson and Smit (1996), Smit (1993), Trisk (2015) and Wethmar (1996).

The contribution of South Africans to the massive World Council of Churches project *Handbook of Theological Education in Africa* (see Phiri & Werner 2013) should be carefully studied as it conveys an insight into some of the latest concerns in this reflection. There is interest in the future; a focus on new challenges like

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HIV and Aids, violence to women, ecology, and natural sciences; and attention is given to confessional identity and spiritual formation. The emphasis on Africa is strong and explicit, and a few explorations attend to specific fields of study like Biblical Studies, Mission and Pastoral Theology. Despite its commendable wide and inclusive scope, what is *not addressed* is conspicuous: the space of the public university for studying theology, the discourse of transformation in higher education in South Africa, and the deeper and sophisticated reaches into epistemology as such.

The specific contributions of the Faculty of Theology at the University of the Free State should be mentioned. In 2010, a conference was organised on the theme of 'Faith, Religion and the Public University' and the contributions were later published (see Venter 2011). The investigation was continued in 2012 with a focus on what epistemological transformation might entail and the various perspectives were published in the volume *Transforming Theological Education* (Venter & Tolmie 2012). It has become clear that the public university as public institution poses its own set of challenges to theology and this should be realised. Furthermore, the discourse on transformation is multi-layered and entails more than issues like the demographics of students, leadership and lecturers, but includes matters of language, symbols and institutional culture and ethos. And quite crucial – it requires an interrogation of the entire knowledge project, the knowledge transmitted in the curriculum and the knowledge generated in research.

During these faculty projects, it has crystallised, gradually and increasingly, that knowledge is inevitably mediated by disciplines. Investigation of theological practices requires attention to individual study fields such as New Testament, Church History and Missiology. A specific form of discourse should be initiated: *how are disciplines to be transformed*? This should be theorised and a number of critical questions emerge here, for example, what is distinctive about a 'discipline', what is the relationship between a social condition and the character of a discipline, how do disciplines legitimatise or critique a social order, and what does disciplinary accountability entail? In the South African context, the critical relationship between theological disciplines and apartheid in this discourse becomes inevitable, as does the question of responsibility in the

post-1994 democratic era. The present research project intends to contribute to this theorisation.

2. Horizon: The (post)apartheid condition

It would be possible to start with the disciplines, but another and more productive approach would be to enquire about the character of the horizon itself and then immediately one is confronted with a dilemma: how does one describe this? Obviously, a daunting task is at stake, a task fundamentally hermeneutical. A complex and multi-faceted reality is to be represented and to be distilled into a few manageable categories. This endeavour is also deeply fraught with the very concerns and interests of the cartographer. Five perspectives are suggested here.

A *first referent* to name this horizon could hardly be anything else but apartheid itself. To name the situation '(post)apartheid' instead of 'post-apartheid' signals the continued presence of the scars of this ideological and social experiment. South African has not yet left this behind and has not undone all the discriminatory practices. Doing theology is thinking with this reality as a constant cognitive companion. However, this implies more than mere memory; it implies an interpretation what this inherently and essentially entailed. Various evaluations have also been forwarded (see e.g. Dubow 2014:290-310). Doing responsible theology would at least require a minimal and working understanding of what shaped the mind of South Africans; what experiences formed the South African self. The insidious mentality to downplay the severity of apartheid should be resisted.

A *second interpretative strategy* could be to identify the configuration of several constituent elements of South African public life. This is a distinct and evolving reality formed by politics, economics, social relations, culture, intellectual traditions and religion. Each one of these obviously warrants in-depth reflection and involves contestation. The emergence of patronage politics, the deepening of economic disparity and an alarming unemployment rate, the perpetuation of social alienation and racial prejudice, the pursuit of ethnic and exclusive identity manifestations, and the growth of reactionary and fundamentalistic religious affinities all deserve mentioning. The catalogue of descriptors has

become fairly standardised: violence, intolerance, corruption, poverty, land, service delivery, etc. A sense of crisis is pervasively present. A large number of books have been published taking stock of the contemporary situation in recent years and the titles convey an undeniable impression of an emerging *genre of pessimism*. See for example, *What's Gone Wrong? South Africa on the Brink of Failed Statehood* (Boraine 2014), *A Rumour of Spring: South Africa after 20 Years of Democracy* (Du Preez 2013), *What if There Were no Whites in South Africa?* (Haffajee 2015), *How long will South Africa Survive: The Looming Crisis* (Johnson 2015), *We Have Now Begun Our Descent: How to Stop South Africa Losing its Way* (Malala 2015), *Wat Nou, Suid-Afrika?* (Eloff 2016).

It would be reductionist to describe the South African landscape in merely crisis vocabulary. It would be irresponsible to distort the face of a vibrant country with an immensely rich plurality. However, the psychological impact of these social dynamics is significant and should be accounted for. This generates a *third perspective* on the (post)apartheid condition – the pathology of its psychosociality.[2] The presence of anger, fear, disillusionment and hopelessness in the South African collective psyche should not be underestimated. 'Cynicism' could be an appropriate label to capture this state of mind. Any theology should recognise this manifestation of the experience of the (post)apartheid condition.

A certain distinctiveness characterises the South African face, but the commonality with a wider global world should also be emphatically considered. A mapping of the South African horizon should explicitly include the contours of the globalised world as a *fourth perspective*. Interconnectedness is arguably one of most outstanding features of the present age (see Khanna 2016). South Africa cannot be immunised from the global political and economic trends and uncertainty, much less from ecological shifts. South Africa is part of the Anthropocene, part of the digital revolution, part of developments in astrophysics and cosmology to name a few. Larger heuristic labels provide resources to 'name the present' (Tracy 1994). Cultural, intellectual and religious trends, like postmodernity, secularism, post-secularism, manifest themselves,

2 The work of Hook on the intersection between psychoanalysis and social formation is most relevant in this regard (see especially, 2014).

albeit in a distinct way, also in South Africa, and the international discourses on these phenomena should be carefully followed. South Africa with its own set of challenges is at the same time inextricably linked to a world which experiences radical and fundamental change.

A *fifth* perspective, in additional to and even despite the previous emphasis on globality, should be identified: a renewed sense of a postcolonial *African identity*. To discern the developments in higher education since last year, one will have to take note of the resurgence of Black Consciousness sentiments. The 'turn to Africa' has not yet taken place in theology. A conversation with major African intellectuals remains outstanding. To map the (post)apartheid condition there is a need for dialogue between the African Studies and Theology disciplines.

3. Dialectic: Disciplines and society

A 'discipline' studies one aspect of natural or social reality. In this sense, each discipline possesses an inalienable integrity, which cannot be subsumed by another discipline. This simple definition, however, hides an array of complex problems. How is that 'aspect' demarcated and interpreted? For example, what is the distinct field of focus of New Testament? Is it a set of canonical texts, or is it the life of the earthly Jesus and early Christianity? What is a 'text' and which Jesus is referred to? A certain plasticity is unavoidable when approaching the notion of 'discipline', and this allows for and requires the continuous articulation of the discipline practitioner's own interpretation. A second question surfaces, which is relevant for the problem of this chapter: what is the relationship between the understanding of the study of that 'inalienable aspect' and the social condition at that very moment? This raises *the crux* of the present investigation.

Identifying *various models* for understanding this relationship between a discipline and society is possible. The proposal offered here is obviously open for contestation and is merely forwarded as a heuristic typology.

An *immunisation* approach would argue for a distance. In practice, the deeper motivations could be simply a repristination mentality, that is, the scholar merely repeats earlier scholarship, which is often found in a confessionalistic

theology; or there could be an explicit argument that theology entails nurturing one into a tradition found in versions of post-liberal theology.

A second approach could be *confrontational*; it carefully diagnoses society, finds it deeply lacking and offers an alternative, sometimes radical up to the point of a different metaphysics. Radical Orthodoxy may be an expression of this. The intensity of the encounter should however not be underestimated.

A third approach is *transformative* and emphasises solidarity, interpretation, and a concrete praxis, and is found in various versions of liberation and postcolonial theologies. The driving force is less confrontational as it entails the pursuit of justice and the unmasking of ideological dynamics in society and in the academy.

A fourth approach is intentionally *dialogical* and exhibits an openness for a conversation with multiple civil institutions and disciplines. Various forms of correlational and public theologies could be placed here. These four approaches are simplified possibilities and could also be related to various forms of contextual theologies (see, for example, Bevans 2002). Sophisticated methodologies are present in some of these theologies.

The question could be asked whether these approaches attend sufficiently enough to a much deeper layer of influence, which is for most of the time, unaddressed and un-named: the level of the *episteme* of that era. The French philosopher, Michel Foucault (1926-1984) in his work *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (1966 orig.; Eng 1970) called attention to the dominant discourses in distinct epochs (for example, the Classical era, the Renaissance, the Modern period) and their hidden structures of knowledge, which ultimately determine how we experience and perceive society. The move from one era to another does not entail continuous movement, but discontinuous ruptures. These structures of knowledge should be decoded with an archaeological analysis. Fundamental is the relationship between things and our understanding – that is, conceptual representation – in and through language. This relationship between 'things' and 'words' differs from one epoch to another. In the successive eras, Foucault sees a shift from a direct relationship between a word and a thing, to words as a certain representation

of things, to words as representations of the human subject, and finally to words referring to themselves. These epistemes are epistemological codes by which societies legitimate certain forms of knowledge and dismiss others, and which ultimately structures institutional control.

With these insights of Foucault in mind as the backdrop, one may inevitably question whether the episteme operative in an apartheid era has not been replaced by another one. Not only local social factors but global intellectual trends, long in the making, have been the impetus behind this 'rupture'. By way of illustration the following can be suggested as example to indicate this epistemic shift:

Realist position – words/things	Critical realist or even social constructivist position
Positivist approach to knowledge	Constructivist approach to knowledge
Metaphysical view of reality	Post- or anti-metaphysics
Reality dualistic	Reality holistic and integrated
Anthropocentric concentration	Ecological sensitivity
Andro-centric or even patriarchal	Face of the other, celebration of alterity
Disciplinary fragmentation	Interdisciplinarity
Natural order, essentialism	Social constructions

These few examples (and the list can easily be expanded) refer to *changing assumptions* about the reality as such, about knowledge, about values and sensibilities, and are manifested in myriad ways in the reconstruction of disciplines. This wide epochal shift cannot be reduced to a single denominator or label. Behind these emphases and shifts are centuries of struggles and quests.

4. Reflexes: Transforming disciplines

The question that has not been explicitly addressed in the various discourses, and which some may even resist to accepting as legitimate, is about the transformation of disciplines at South African universities. What does this

entail? What is not advocated here are slow, cosmetic and opportunistic alterations. What is in mind is deliberate, intentional and radical reconstruction. Immediately a rebuttal to possible concerns should be stated: the compromise of scholarly integrity is not on the agenda at all, but a critical interrogation of conventional practices, which continue a tradition as if it is fixed. Seven suggestions of what this transformation might entail are briefly offered.

Practitioners should have an acute sense of the *state of scholarship* and the various attempts, nationally and internationally, which have been made by peers who also struggle, albeit in their own manner, with intellectual relevance and changing conditions. Chronicling the history of a discipline is *sine quo non* for the beginning of change. It would be arguably very difficult to produce quality academic work without a thorough acquaintance with the international work by fellow theologians, and with an antenna for the shifts in the respective disciplines. Disciplines are not static and immutable entities; disciplines are dynamic and evolving and have histories. The traditional one-sided geographical orientation, for example, to Europe, should be acknowledged. Transformation may also entail exploring the work by practitioners in parts of the world previously neglected, for example, Asia or South America.

Scholars should explicitly account for their *research paradigms* and the concomitant understanding of truth, science and knowledge. This conversation with especially philosophy of science is unavoidable in an era with a pre-occupation with epistemic accountability. At stake here is how the relationship between knowledge and reality is perceived. Whether theologians implicitly understand their work in a realist, critical realist or constructionist fashion has vast implications. Transformation is hardly possible in a paradigm with positivist convictions. When knowledge is viewed as objective and final, re-visioning is not possible. Transformation presupposes an acceptance of the main insights from the hermeneutical tradition: the historicality of all understanding and the pre-understanding of any interpreter. Precisely because *Dasein* is historical, epistemic change is possible and necessary.

In a sense related to the previous suggestion is the insistence that disciplines should integrate various '*frames of reference*'. It is incredible that theologians could

pretend that the voices of women, of people of colour, of persons with physical disability, of people from the South, do not exist. Numerous examples could be given to substantiate this. One of the most significant and most productive developments in theology since the mid-twentieth century is the proliferation of theologies produced by those absent before. Theological knowledge has been critiqued, expanded and refashioned. This 'turn to the other' has been unquestionably an enriching development in the scholarly world. What different frames of reference might imply is acknowledged as difficult, but the intellectual challenge is to think coherence amidst plurality and fragments. At the bottom, it is not only a matter of epistemic respect but of justice as such. Transformation will imply refiguring traditional canons of knowledge. Marginalised voices should not only be an add-on; disciplines should be re-centred. Disciplines will become, inevitably, polycentric sites of interpretation.

This respect for alterity, understood in terms of conventional and epistemic exclusion, also raises the imperative for South African theologians to accept their *African* location. Since the mid-1950s, when the first explicit African theologies were produced, this imperative has been on the theological agenda. The gravitational pull of Europe has continued to be irresistible and the benchmark for quality work remains the North. Time is long overdue to take stock of the developments in African theological thought and question the sporadic overtures to this challenge by the various disciplines.

The previous two suggestions have to do with expanding the traditional sources of knowledge. *Crucial conversations* have emerged, which enrich theology and which open new avenues in an understanding of the Christian vision. The reference here is obviously to the faith-science, and faith-arts dialogues. The quest for transformation is fundamentally one of justice and of enlargement. Narrow and insular thought easily becomes myopic and oppressive. The complex nature of problems faced by contemporary society renders multi- and interdisciplinary co-operation inevitable. Responsible practicing of disciplines, not only attends to other sources of knowledge, but also intentionally makes a public contribution to the challenges that confront humankind and specific people in South Africa.

On a most basic level, transformation could imply the scrutiny of *thematic choices* for curriculum and research. Why this, and not that, in a sea of possibilities? Why write a thesis on miracles in the Old Testament, while the society yearns for resources to think on justice? The possibility of selection, the presence of alternatives is a constant reality that confronts every theologian. Certain challenges in the South African environment insist on scholarly treatment. Theology cannot close her eyes to racism, violence, poverty, and the urgent need for reconciliation and justice – to mention only a few. In a country with a large number of religious adherents, theology has a particular responsibility to make a contribution. Often individual interests overshadow social accountability in the choice of research themes. Epistemic transmission and generation at public universities are fundamentally politically issues, geared to the common good. It would be fascinating reading to compile a list of, for example, PhDs completed at the South African theological faculties since 1976.

Each theological discipline has a responsibility to the construal of an *alternative world*, a world permeated with the promise and possibility of salvation. In a sense, scholarship could become so arcane, so sterile that it is forgetful of the aim of all knowledge pursuits: the flourishing of humankind and the planet. The legitimacy of each discipline is to be found exactly here. No discipline can obviously construct such a symbolic world on its own; disciplines make small, incremental but irreplaceable contributions to the 'greater picture'. Often theological disciplines become the game of scholars directed to themselves, seeking the approval of the best practitioners. Transformation transposes disciplines to the public marketplace, where value is judged differently. Insular pursuits, immunised from the vicissitudes of daily life and struggles, can hardly be justified at public universities.

These suggestions are sensibilities, which may obviously, if heeded, stimulate numerous configurations of the disciplines. At stake are acquaintance with global trends, a conscious account of the character of knowledge, a sense of justice and openness, solidarity with the continent, courage for conversation, a fine sense of ethics and a responsibility towards the common good. No stifling template is proposed, but maps for travelling various routes to human wellbeing.

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Chapter 2

The nature of knowledge in the South African theological discourse

Pieter G.R. de Villiers[1]

1. Introduction[2]

The study of theology and religion represents one of the most dynamic disciplines in the contemporary academic discourse in South Africa. The vibrant nature of the disc ourse is reflected in its place in institutions of learning, in the output of specialists in theology and religion who enjoy national and international status and in the large number of theological and religious journals that circulate widely and are indexed in major indices worldwide. In recent years, for example, a committee of The Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAF) that investigated scholarly publishing in South Africa, listed in its *Report on Grouped Peer Review of Scholarly Journals in Religion, Theology and*

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2 The theological discourse within an academic context and at tertiary institutions in South Africa since the 1970s lends itself to be investigated from the perspective of hermeneutics and its epistemological dimensions. In this chapter I shall provide a brief historical and theoretical analysis from my experience of the theological discourse since I started my academic career in 1971, before concluding with my evaluation of its present condition and offering constructive proposals about necessary future directions, once again with a focus on the context in which the theological discourse belongs. The discussions are, because of limited space in a chapter like this, by definition sketchy and general. More important, though, is to spell out a basic trend which is to be found in the development of the theological discourse in South Africa and to reflect on its dynamics and limitations. Given the breadth and depth of the theological discourse, this chapter focuses its investigation on a hermeneutical perspective and its underlining epistemology.

Related Fields (August 2013) a number of 23 journals (out of 250 of national journals (ASSAF 2013).[3] A large number of theological and religious societies also illustrate the dynamic nature of the discipline, with at least one each for the various sub-disciplines in theology and religion.[4]

This is not only true of developments within theology as a field of research, but also of the relationship with and impact of theology on society. Whilst religious and ecclesiastical structures often impede societal changes, South African theology has followed the lead of many of its counterparts in the rest of the world in exercising strong leadership about much needed societal change. One of the best examples is the leadership of theologians and churches in the struggle against apartheid.

2. Institutionalising church theology

The major impact of the South African theological discourse has roots in its colonial history. For a long time, churches were dependent on countries like the Netherlands, Scotland, Germany and the United States for their clergy. The situation began to change after the middle of the nineteenth century when theological training was institutionalised on a wide scale and clergy began to be trained locally. This process of institutionalising is to be seen in all denominations at the same time. The training was begun in order to ensure

3 See the full and comprehensive report at http://www.assaf.org.za/files/reports/evidence_based/RTRF-Complete.pdf. The focus of this report was on quality control.

4 The following societies participated in a recent meeting in Pretoria (July 2016): Association for the Study of Religion in Southern Africa; Association of Theological Institutions in Southern and Central Africa; Catholic Theological Society of Southern Africa; Church History Society of South Africa; Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians; Gereformeerde Teologiese Vakvereniging; New Testament Society of Southern Africa; Old Testament Society of South Africa; Society for Practical Theology of South Africa; Southern African Missiological Society; South African Science and Religion Forum; Southern African Society for Near Eastern Studies; Spirituality Association of South Africa; Theological Society of South Africa.

that clergy would have quality training, equal to the best that was on offer in colonial countries.[5] It reflects a clear desire to promote their intellectual quality.

Anglican churches initiated theological training in 1876.[6] Other churches[7] that began theological training locally were the Congregationalists (1865), Methodists (1867), Presbyterians (1872)[8] and Lutherans (1885).[9] This is also true of the Reformed tradition. The Dutch Reformed Church established the first theological seminary in South Africa in Stellenbosch in 1859, followed later by seminaries and faculties for theological training in Pretoria, Bloemfontein and in Potchefstroom.[10] The history of the Reformed tradition in South African comprises extensive theological reflection and debates that illustrate the inclination towards and also the reservation of intellectual

5 It is, for example, noteworthy that Scottish clergy who were invited to settle in South Africa, were trained at Scottish universities famous for their erudition and their important role in the Enlightenment. Cf. De Villiers (2015).

6 The Roman Catholic Church was a relative latecomer in South Africa. Training of priests in the Roman Catholic Church only started in 1922 at Marianhill. Seminaries were located in Pretoria (1947), Hammanskraal and Cedara. Denis (2010) gives a more extensive overview of theological training. The Moravians, Lutherans and various other smaller churches also established training centres. Cf. Denis (2007) for more information.

7 Denis (2012) summarised his research on early Anglican training in South Africa as follows: 'Various attempts at establishing Anglican theological education were made after the arrival in 1848 of Robert Gray, the first bishop of Cape Town, but it was not until 1876 that the first theological school opened in Bloemfontein. As late as 1883 half of the Anglican priests in South Africa had never attended a theological college.' Cf. also the relevant literature in Wingate (1998).

8 The Federal Theological Seminary in Alice was a training initiative of the Anglican, Methodist and Congregationalist Churches. Other than churches in the Reformed tradition, these denominations did not require all the clergy to have a tertiary education.

9 See Elphick and Davenport (1997:188-189) for the fragmented history of the Lutheran Church in South Africa and its training of clergy. Other, smaller groups were also active towards the end of the nineteenth centure: The Seventh-day Adventist training began in 1893 with the establishment of Claremont Union College, Cape Town, later to become Helderberg College.

10 For an overview of the history of Christian churches in South Africa, cf. Smit (2007). The most recent and comprehensive overview of theological education in many parts and denominational traditions in Africa is to be found in Phiri and Werner (2013).

excellence. The enlightened and irenic trends in ethical movements found in the writings of clergy in Stellenbosch (e.g. Murray and Hofmeyr) in the nineteenth century (cf. Brummer 2013, 2016) was the result of their exposure to the best of theological institutions in Scotland and the Netherlands. They bitterly opposed a liberal group (led by Kotzé and Burgers) because they argued that their modernist theologies had destructive consequences on faith communities.[11] Later, the intellectualisation of the theological discourse was intensified when orthodox and fundamentalist groups gained the upper hand. They criticised their evangelical opponents who taught in the theological seminary in Stellenbosch of deviating from the true Reformed principles as embodied in the church's articles of faith.[12] The turning point was a heresy trial against Prof. Johannes du Plessis, who was dismissed from his position but restored to it after a sensational court trial that dominated church and social media for years (1928-1932). After this trial, the influence of the Dutch theologian Kuyper and American fundamentalist traditions (e.g. in the Princeton Theological Seminary) turned theology in the official institutions of the Reformed tradition mostly into the guardian of orthodox Calvinist teachings (Brummer 2013; Deist 1994:17-20).

Theology increasingly found itself strictly under the discipline and control of church authorities. Dissent was not tolerated and opponents were increasingly ostracised and silenced (De Villiers 2014). The socio-political context with the growing nationalist consciousness that culminated in the apartheid era,

11 Cf. Giliomee (2013). Strong Dutch and Scottish influences greatly changed church life during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Both liberal and conservative groups existed in Reformed churches in South Africa. The ministry of Scottish ministers like Murray, with the influence of the Dutch Reveil, contributed to the revivals in the 1870s (Giliomee 2013; Ross 1987). The revivalists represented an evangelical theology, but they claimed to be orthodox. They were, ironically, instrumental in the defeat of liberal groups. Eventually, though, they and their successors could not remain standing under the onslaught of a strong fundamentalist theology. Cf. Brummer (2013).

12 S.J. du Toit (Totius) was a prominent, influential figure from this tradition. He became professor at the Seminary of the Reformed Church who broke away from the Dutch Reformed Church in the 1870 on theological grounds. Du Toit who actively promoted the insights of Kuyper, the conservative Dutch theologian, had a great influence on the Dutch Reformed Church and played an important role in the heresy trial of Du Plessis.

contributed decisively to this trend – mostly because the theological dissenters were often those who criticised the apartheid system. The vast number of publications by Kuyper and the American theologians reflects a sophisticated theology that promoted endless arguments about dogma, church polity and Biblical exegesis. These arguments promoted an intellectualisation of theology that was primarily interested in revealing errors in teaching. Here already one notices a focus on conceptual knowledge.

Of interest is how Reformed theologians kept on stressing the need for training also of indigenous people. A good example is the arguments of the learned Du Plessis, who already in 1911 observed that there was an urgent need in the country to train indigenous clergy at well-equipped training institutions because of their potential to contribute better to the mission of the church (Du Plessis 1911:406-407). This reveals the openness of theologians in the Reformed tradition to empowering indigenous clergy, insisting that proper, well-structured training was a requirement for the ministry. Here too, the focus was on intellectual training.

This tension between groups was not typical only of Reformed traditions, as the (in)famous history of the enlightened bishop Colenso in Natal reveals. At the time that theological seminaries were being established all over the country, the progressive Colenso, who engaged intensely with cutting edge scholarship of his time,[13] became controversial for his informed pronouncements on various theological themes, amongst them Biblical criticism and translation, and also for his controversial statements about polygamy and the British military actions in Natal. He was finally excommunicated by his diocese in 1866. Colenso, an educationist of some repute, as Kearney (1974:29) pointed out, as early as 1856 indicated his desire to set up a diocesan college for the education of indigenous people. In this, he shared ideals that were typical of his time and that reflected developments in other churches in South Africa.

Of special interest is the intellectual nature of these developments. The debates about theological matters that were raised both to shore up and promote a fundamentalist theology and the equally intellectual responses that would

13 Colenso (1862-1872) wrote, amongst others, a six volume analysis of the Pentateuch.

eventually be given against them, reflected critical thinking of a sophisticated nature and were often in tandem with what was being discussed and taught in other parts of the world.[14] This included interaction with dissenting views. Even among fundamentalist theologians (e.g. in orthodox groups), the debate with modernity was always present, often done to account for, legitimise and argue for the truth of their own convictions and positions.

Finally, it should be noted that similar developments in the theological discourse in South Africa are not simply a result of the inner dynamics of theology only. These were also the outcome of another development in modernity: By the middle of the twentieth century, enlightenment thinking had finally established itself within the academic discourse generally. The institutionalisation of theology and its intellectualisation since the second half of the nineteenth century continued a process that characterised the major economic, industrial and social contexts in the nineteenth century. Like elsewhere, the South African society began outgrowing its rural and traditional nature and was transformed into an industrial, urban and capitalist society (Villa-Vicencio, Gruchy and Grassow 2009). This worldwide intellectualisation of the academic discourse with an industrialised setting also illuminates why local developments mirrored the theological discourse that existed in colonial countries.

3. Institutionalising theology in new contexts outside the church

In the second half of the twentieth century, social dynamics integrated the theological discourse into new contexts that would determine its future nature decisively. A decisive step was taken to locate theology as an academic discipline at universities as the natural seats of learning. This represented a confirmation of theology as an intellectual enterprise. The consequences would ultimately affect the nature of theology incisively, as will be discussed below.

3.1 A shift to university training of clergy

Since the sixties, theology became a full-blown academic discipline when a number of seminaries, especially within the Reformed tradition, became university

14 An indication of the two contrasting positions and the theological level on which the debate was exercised, is found in Britz (2002).

faculties of theology. Within non-Reformed contexts, Rhodes University at an early stage established a Department Theology, initially a Faculty of Divinity, where for Anglican, Methodist, Congregational and Presbyterian students were trained, followed later by training at the University of Cape Town, Kwa-Zulu Natal and the University of Pretoria. Pentecostalist traditions, in some cases, also sought university training. The A.F.M. (Apostolic Faith Mission), for example, was accredited in 1993 at the then Rand Afrikaans University (presently the University of Johannesburg) after having had links with the University of South Africa since 1973.

In Reformed contexts, faculties of theology were established at the University of Pretoria, of Stellenbosch, Potchefstroom and of the Free State. They were initially fully under the control of the Dutch Reformed Church, the Reformed (Hervormde) Church and the Reformed (Gereformeerde) Church who kept an eye on, amongst others, the appointment of lecturers, selection of students and approval of curricula. In practice, academics had freedom to teach as long as they did not question church doctrine or challenge the political status quo too radically. The new academic contexts demanded the consolidation of theology as an academic discipline. Care was taken to ensure that its relationship with churches and its engagement with matters of faith would not compromise its intellectual and academic nature. The curriculum was being renewed to accommodate new developments in theological research in the rest of the world and to argue for the academic place of the various disciplines in the curriculum. Research areas like church polity, church history, Practical Theology (Jonker 1968; later on Burger 1991; Heitink 1993) and Missiology (Saayman 2013) were described as disciplines in their own right and extensive attention given to their academic identity and nature.[15]

This situation began to change more when the Reformed churches (at Stellenbosch and Pretoria) gradually appointed staff with more critical and enlightened approaches.[16] They represented a new generation of academics

15 Miller-McLemore (2012:1-4; 463-554) for similar trends elsewhere in the world.

16 This included academics like Andrie du Toit, Johan Heyns, Piet Meiring, Willie Jonker, Flip Theron, Martin Pauw, Bernard Combrink, Jaap Durand, Allan Boesak, and many others. In other places, theologians like David Bosch, G.C. (Pippin) Oosthuizen, Albert Geyser,

that underwent a solid training in theology. In this regard, it is illuminating to profile the social location of the theological discourse. Faculties drew a new type of student who were beneficiaries of the special regard that the apartheid regime, after it gained political power in 1948, had for education as a high priority. Afrikaans schools, colleges of education and universities were established all over the country and young people were motivated to pursue their education to the highest level.[17] The powerful Dutch Reformed Church was equally convinced about the prime importance of advanced learning and of proper education. Because of this ideal, but also because of the prestige and power of clerical positions at this time, the brightest of young minds in society chose to study theology. By the seventies of the twentieth century, some of them continued their theological training abroad. At first, they studied at institutions, mostly in The Netherlands, but after a while, they also did research in non-traditional places of learning (like various institutions in Germany). The same was to a lesser extent true of non-Reformed theologians who continued their research in places like Oxford, Cambridge and Durham and who were appointed to academic positions at then-English speaking institutions (like Cape Town, Johannesburg and Natal). As a result of this trend, theology was infused with a culture of exceptional learning and intellectuality. This younger generation of scholars began their teaching at universities in the late seventies and eighties. They gradually dared to actually teach insights and writings of major international scholars from other traditions and convictions. They rejected authoritarian thinking, emphasised rationality, debated with colleagues they regarded as excellent thinkers and were not reluctant to read and teach viewpoints that differed from their own. What mattered was credible research that had intellectual integrity.

Inus Daneel, Martin Prozesky, John de Gruchy and Charles Villa-Vicencio were appointed to influential departments at U.C.T., Johannesburg and Durban/Pietermaritzburg.

17 An example of this high ideal was the establishment of Afrikaans universities in Johannesburg and Port Elizabeth and educational colleges in several cities in the country.

3.2 Independent theological faculties

Another trend developed during the second half of the twentieth century as institutions were being established outside the ambit of church supervision. A major new phase in theological training was introduced when the University of South Africa (Unisa) established its theological faculty in 1959 with a number of excellent and highly qualified theologians. This faculty was initially staffed by young academics from predominantly Reformed contexts. Even though these academics were actively involved in the church, this development represented a clear break with the traditional association between church and theology. Unisa's Faculty of Theology in due course became controversial, attacked and vilified because of its critical research in theology, but, concomitantly, also because of its critical stance towards societal developments and church policies. The power of this faculty was enhanced when it began training students of other denominations and when its staff became prominent authors in the social media.

This trend towards unaffiliated training institutions grew when Theology and Biblical Studies were instituted at a large number of new departments and faculties (e.g. at the Universities of Fort Hare, Natal, Western Cape, Durban-Westville, Port Elizabeth, The North, Venda and many others). A network of theological institutions originated all over the country, enjoying academic freedom to pursue their disciplines with minimal, if any, accountability to churches. As a result, the theological discourse, liberated from church authority, was vibrant, critical and consistently intellectual in nature. Finally, a century after the first local training in theology began, the institutionalising of theology was brought to fruition and by the last two decades of the twentieth century, almost all tertiary institutions in South Africa had some form of theology as part of its academic offer. In this phase, the theological discourse displayed almost completely the intellectual culture of universities that had been developing since the Enlightenment. They had the freedom to publish without restraint, to teach without censure, to invite colleagues from all persuasions and to pursue excellence. All this reflected a consistent intellectualisation of theology.

3.3 Professional societies

At an early stage, another significant trend was visible: Academics in the field of theology began taking the initiative to establish professional theological societies where they would organise research that was accessible to all professionals in their fields. Because of the growth of theological institutions, but also because of the increasing number of graduates in the field who were not teaching at universities, these societies eventually had a large membership. The first of these were the Old Testament Society of South Africa, established in 1957 by professors and senior lecturers who were responsible for teaching Old Testament and/or Semitic languages at South African universities (Le Roux 1993) and the New Testament Society of South Africa, founded in 1965 by eleven scholars in the town of Potchefstroom in South Africa (1957 and 1965; cf. De Villiers 2005). These societies were a powerful source of theological research, meeting regularly on important themes and publishing extensively. They pertinently sought academic excellence in dialogue with international research developments. They too promoted the intellectualisation of theology, with attention to advanced research and, once again with little interference from churches and no church oversight.

4. Hermeneutics in/and the theological discourse[18]

The intellectualisation of theology had from the earliest time a conceptual nature. This can be illustrated by the way in which, from an early stage in the modern period, theology was characterised by hermeneutics. This interest was

18 Cf. the extensive discussion of the growing interest in hermeneutics within the context of Biblical studies in De Villiers (2005:234–237). He notes the early, strong interest in linguistics within the ranks of the New Testament Society of South Africa as a result of the remarkable influence of Prof. Jannie Louw, professor in Greek at the University of Pretoria, and remarks (2005:237), 'Though discourse analysis practically disappeared from the scene after 1983, the surge of interest in hermeneutics since then reflects the ongoing love affair of many South African scholars with methodological issues. The Society as a community of researchers created a space where this interest kept on developing and branching out in different directions. In fact, reading through contributions to *Neotestamentica* 22, it is clear that a shift in emphasis was taking place. It was no longer a matter of methodology, or, more precisely, a particular method like discourse analysis, but theoretical issues that were being discussed. The work of the Society was now more

to a large extent the result of the close relationship of churches and theology. Theologians were repeatedly confronted with questions about the meaning of Scripture as they were challenged by their exposure to advanced research that stood in tension with or deviated from dogmatic convictions and beliefs. The enduring legacy of controversial struggles of Colenso, Du Plessis and, later on, Geyser (De Villiers 2005) constantly reminded theologians of the threat of fundamentalism to their activities. In the seventies, for example, the publications of James Barr on fundamentalism (1981, 1984) received much attention from outstanding academics like Loader and Deist who were under severe pressure from their churches because of their enlightened views. Barr was invited to South Africa where his works were studied and widely discussed. This contributed to the prominent place of hermeneutics in the academic discourse, but also led to extensive discussions of methods, theory, models and exegetical approaches.

Typical of the intellectual trend in the early eighties was that exegetes began engaging in historical critical approaches to the Bible, in sociological readings, discourse analysis, literary criticism, reader's response, deconstruction and postmodernism (in Biblical Studies). A prime example of this strong focus was the volume of *Neotestamentica* of 1988 that was dedicated to the theme of hermeneutics. So contagious was this debate that it broadened to include systematic theologians. The discussion about hermeneutics in this volume subsequently led to a number of meetings at the University of Pretoria where exegetes and systematic theologians discussed hermeneutical themes.[19] A large number of articles on hermeneutics continued to appear in later volumes of *Neotestamentica* and in *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies*. During this

involved in hermeneutics than ever before.' For the relevance of hermeneutics in other disciplines, cf. also Smit (1988).

19 Cf. the extensive documentation in Smit (2009:53-86). His discussion is valuable because it illustrates how the preoccupation of New Testament scholars with hermeneutics in this time reflected major international trends in Biblical Studies as discipline. Due to the restricted space, only some major lines can be drawn in this chapter regarding this development. It will be important, for example, to investigate how local scholars contributed meaningfully to international research. Some scholars in this country played a major role to advance research on hermeneutics.

time a New Testament study group in Stellenbosch met on a weekly basis with the well-known Johan Degenaar, then still a controversial philosopher, to discuss hermeneutics and socio-linguistics. In their context, the works of Heidegger, Ricoeur, Fish, Iser and proponents of reception aesthetics / reader's response attracted much attention, as *Neotestamentica* 22 (1988) confirms.

This development in the theological discourse had some major outcomes. The interest in hermeneutics and the shifts in understanding scriptures had contributed to some major transformations of church life, such as, for example, the groundbreaking ordination of women in church offices (firstly by the Hervormde Church and then by the D.R.C. – the first churches in the country to take this step), a different approach to understanding Scripture and, after slow progress, the rejection of the apartheid policy.

In parts of the theological discourse that was located outside the Afrikaans-speaking Reformed churches, the situation was even more dramatic. In the then D.R. Mission Church, theologians like Durand, Bam, Smit and Boesak decisively contributed to the rejection and condemnation of apartheid as a heresy by the church.[20] Their criticism included a rejection of traditional scriptural justification of apartheid, but also careful analyses and appeals to the way in which Scripture delineated a just society that was based on the dignity of humanity and the church as body of Christ that defied exclusivist based on gender, race and social status. With intellectual integrity and informed arguments, they countered the arguments of those who supported and shored up the apartheid system on scriptural grounds.

5. Wider horizons

The intellectualisation of theology brought with it an open mindset which, in turn, stimulated interaction with other churches and traditions, and then moved beyond denominational borders to explore wider horizons. This had certain concrete and exciting consequences. Theologians again took the initiative for a more inclusive approach by formally incorporating and legitimising research

20 For an extensive description of all these examples, here mentioned only briefly, see the informative and illuminating discussion in Livingston (2014:3-410).

on indigenous theology, religions in Africa and world religions as a necessary part of the curriculum. They played a major role in promoting the study of African religions and indigenous groups (Daneel, Oosthuizen[21] and Prozesky), whilst the study of other religions was researched in an impressive manner by Kobus Kruger (1995, 2006). With this development, theology in South Africa became fully integrated into the global community with its cacophony of discourses, traditions and faiths. A telling confirmation of this was the changing identity of academic societies: they actively promoted membership from diverse denominations and groups, whilst most of them formally changed their names to become 'Southern African' (instead of 'South African').

These developments were not merely historical inevitable, imposed on the theological discourse by dramatic social and political changes that were the consequences of the new political dispensation. They were intensified by globalisation, secularisation, the loss of church authority, the ecumenical movement and the discussion between faiths. But most important was the inherent dynamic in the ongoing intellectualisation of theology. As theology became an established part of institutions of learning across the globe, interaction with similar fields of research, related disciplines and new forms of knowledge became a matter of fact. In an academic setting, academic culture required interaction with all those who were part of it.

It is noteworthy that the interaction with the international theological discourse is ultimately a two-way discourse. There is a growing interest in the way in which religion and theology have developed in an African context. This includes an interest in African Christianity by those who belong to other cultures and traditions. At the same time, there is an interest in other forms of indigenous religions (Draper 2003:172) and in what ways they relate to Christianity. The theological discourse in South Africa will in future develop more research in this regard.

21 Cf. e.g., the informative article of Kritzinger (1990) in which he discusses the work of Daneel and Oosthuizen on development, and illustrates how extensively they have engaged in research with African Independent Churches.

6. Participatory knowledge: indicating boundaries

The new, open and inclusive phase in which theology became consistently intellectual in its nature, role and function as an academic discipline reflects an important hermeneutical shift in the South African theological discourse. By the turn of the twenty-first century, the notion of participatory knowledge entered the theological discourse and began to signal the limitations of conceptual knowledge. The criticism of the high, distanced academic culture with a consistently intellectual nature came to the fore in a surprising manner during some debates at the height of the apartheid era about the questionable ethos of a theological discourse in most of the professional societies and many of the influential institutions. They were criticised because they often kept their distance from or ignored one of the most despicable political systems of our times or major social issues (De Villiers 1989; Smit 2009:53-86). Whilst, previously, theology had to be researched objectively in order to come to reliable conclusions, theology was now suspect of lacking credibility because it failed to account for its social standing and locations. Theologians were seen as defending their privileged status by claiming the high status of an academic enterprise and of advanced expertise with little political engagement in their research. Some theologians began questioning this lack of involvement from a hermeneutical perspective. They argued that it was not enough that a considerable number of theologians opposed the apartheid system in their personal capacities or in publications outside the official theological discourse, but also emphasised that no theology was truly 'objective'. The claim to objectivity was a fallacy that reflected a particular power play and defended a privileged position of interpreters.

As a result of these developments, the relationship of the theological discourse with the South African society began to change. By the middle of the eighties, with the social discourse in South Africa characterised by a deep political crisis, some of the younger theologians began noting and studying liberation, black, African and feminist theologies.[22] A significant number of emerging scholars began writing in this field. Boesak, Mosala, Goba and Maluleki were some

22 Cf. the discussion in Mwambazambi (2010) and Denis (2010).

of the first scholars to do so. Boesak (1986; but cf. also 1977, 1978, 1984) gained international acclamation from many exegetes for his analysis of the Book of Revelation, written when he was imprisoned by the apartheid regime. He is one of the first exegetes who illuminated the economic critique of the book, approaching it in terms of contextual theology from the perspective of a South African reader. Mosala (1990) developed an impressive hermeneutics with his book, *Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology in South Africa*. Both these publications illustrate a hermeneutical approach that was then emerging worldwide in academic circles: known as contextual theologies, they criticised a theology that tended to be academic and intellectual without challenging socio-political injustices and oppression. In some cases, this approach resulted in a new method, based on the see-judge-act approach: the point of departure was a careful consideration and evaluation of the reader's context followed by approaching the Biblical text to inquire about its relevance to that context.

To some extent, contextual hermeneutics with its focus on relevance, overlapped with Ricoeur's theory of interpretation (1976) which required not only explaining the meaning in a text, but also interpreting its sense for later readers. Interpretation was about the actuality of the semantic virtualities of the text. This contrasted with some historical critical readings that required from readers that they distance themselves from the text in order to evaluate it objectively. Ricoeur's theory of interpretation questioned this, stressing the interrelationship between epistemology (interpretation) and ontology (interpreter). An intellectualist approach is regarded as reducing understanding to explanation and bracketing or marginalising significance and appropriation. As a result, there is a vital disconnection of theology with the life experience of the theologian.

The influence of contextual theologies on theology – both locally and internationally – has been extensive. The political activism of contextual theologies, and lately, the development of public theology with its interest in societal engagement have resonated widely with many theologians: one can say with some confidence that the need to account for and address contextuality is now part of mainstream theology. Theology has been made aware of its

efficacious and transformative nature. At the same time, churches also have been embracing the need for a theology that relates to society.

There are, however, signs of change. And yet, it is striking to note some, if not a growing disenchantment in and with the theological discourse. This is to be seen in a worrying anti-intellectual trend outside the theological discourse that reacts against activist theologies that often create the impression that they seek to assert power rather than to serve or to inspire. This trend is found not only among laypeople but also among well-trained clergy who feel increasingly alienated by theological activities.

The overpowering effect of the technological age with its overload of information and the consumerist society that dehumanises and pressurises left theologians and faith communities with feelings of frustration and alienation. They are called to be politically aware and active but are often given a spiritual hunger diet. There also seems to be an increasing lack of interest in theologies that engage in technical, speculative discussions with little relevance for the faith experience of church members. As a result, those who embraced with relief and joy the epistemological and theoretical clarity with which enlightened theology challenged an oppressive dogmatist or fundamentalist discourse, are now looking elsewhere or to new forms of theologising that fulfil their spiritual needs. This is especially to be seen in the turn to spirituality (Kourie 2006), but also in the pursuit of beauty, as will now be explained in more detail.

7. A vision for the future

The previous discussion consistently points towards an epistemological approach that developed since the Enlightenment and that played a crucial role to promote a closed, totalitarian rationality that claimed logical argumentation as its highest good. Theology can by times invest heavily in an intellectual investigation of truths about God through rational arguments and irrefutable evidence, often speaking *about* experiencing God in faith without any self-implication of the researcher in this experience itself. This is obviously not an illegitimate or undesirable approach. Critical debate about propositions and doctrine can indeed be liberating and transformative. And it is equally

true that the researcher by times should assess traditional positions and beliefs critically and objectively from a (calculated) distance.

More important is what is not done, neglected or disparaged. This is illuminated by some major developments within society and popular religions, where subjective experiences of faith are actively pursued and longed for by those who know of the conceptual and the intellectual, but who are left cold and untransformed by them. Even among contextual theologies, there is a trend to be activist, preachy, prescriptive and authoritarian. Gutiérrez wrote that theological categories are not enough. He then does not appeal to political activism, but adds, that what is needed is a 'vital attitude, all-embracing and synthesising, informing the totality as well as every detail of our lives; we need a "spirituality"' (Gutiérrez 1973:203).

This perspective needs more attention. The respected New Testament scholar, Amos Wilder (1976:1) wrote almost despairingly about the prosaic state of affairs in some theological interpretive traditions in his systematic reflection on theopoetics as a form of theological aesthetics. He noted an addiction to the discursive, the rationalistic, and the prosaic, pleading for a theopoetic approach means doing more justice to the role of the symbolic and the prerational in the way we deal with experience.

He then proposes a striking alternative. 'We should recognise that human nature and human societies are more deeply motivated by images and fabulations than by ideas. This is where power lies *and the future is shaped*' (Wilder 1976:2). Wilder further asserts that the theological discourse needs to pay more attention to the imagination because

> imagination is a necessary component of all profound knowing and celebration; all remembering, realising, and anticipating; all faith, hope, and love. When imagination fails doctrine becomes ossified, witness and proclamation wooden, doxologies and litanies empty, consolations hollow, and ethics legalistic (Wilder 1976:2).

With such remarks, Wilder represents a growing trend that does not question knowledge as such, but rather an epistemology that reduces knowledge to the conceptual and privileges knowledge for its own sake (cf. Jenkins 2000:12).

Thereby the seminal issue of aesthetics is put on the agenda of the theological discourse as a major issue for its future.

A short discussion of aesthetics illuminates the meaningfulness of Wilder's remarks. Aesthetics is about beauty, which powerfully elicits emotional and mental responses in human beings. It is about the inspiration that people draw from poetry, visual art, music, literature, drama, theatre and architecture.[23] All of these can integrate lives, inspire action, transform people and bring meaning to their existence. The history of the church illustrates this point best and reveals what many contemporary believers are missing in their faith experiences. In the Middle Ages, aesthetics is found on the concrete level of richly illustrated Bible manuscripts (Caldecott 2009:39) that were used in liturgy that was conducted in cathedrals, spiralling mystically into the sky as symbol of the longing and desire for the divine, with their brilliant mosaics, imposing statues and graphic paintings of saints. In this space, the presence of the Sacred could be experienced by laypeople who escaped their abysmal, dreary living conditions to participate in the liturgies celebrated by clergy in coloured vestments and who led processions whilst incense was burnt and herbs were scattered on the floor to send up rich scents. 'These congregations were ambulatory, not because pews had not yet been invented, but to engage and enhance worshippers' sensory presence in the liturgy' (MacSwain & Worley 2012:49). In fact, one could well argue that doctrine and creed did not define, but articulated and supported the sensory experience of Christian faith.

If this kind of aesthetics has in many ways disappeared from religious life, aesthetics is today one of the most enduring characteristics of secular society. As a result of extraordinary technological developments in recent decades, global communities have been exposed in an unprecedented manner to beauty and imagination in arts, films, poetry, music and many other aesthetical genres and forms. As a result, important theory formation has been developed regarding the nature, impact and function of aesthetics. Leading thinkers like Fish and Derrida reaffirmed, for example, the importance of aesthetics for the

23 'Aesthetics' has become a term for a comprehensive phenomenon. In recent times, its horizon has broadened to also investigate 'everyday aesthetics' that relates to food, clothes, dwelling, socialising and going out (Melchionne 2013), city strolling (Paetzold 2013) or even wine tasting (Burnham & Skilleas 2013:6).

interpretation of texts and pointed out the limitations of conceptual knowledge as represented in theory and ideology. How comprehensive this development is, is revealed by the way in which aesthetics have impacted even on research in natural sciences. Thomas Kuhn, for example, remarked how paradigm shifts that brought about scientific revolutions were often the result of aesthetics (Edgar 2001:109-10). It seems then that aesthetics represents a legitimate source of knowledge, even though it differs from conceptual knowledge.[24] In this aesthetics to some extent reflects participatory knowledge which has to do with a sensed participation that comprises more than logical argumentation. Aesthetics produces insights through experiences, feelings, self-knowledge, discernment, sensing, remembering and intuiting. It is a valuable, necessary complement to conceptual knowledge, if not by times more effective. The transformative potential of aesthetics has been pointed out by Richardson (2009:50) who notes that people are less convinced by compelling, rational, logical arguments as in modernity. The arts inspire and motivate their spiritual and moral imagination.

Aesthetics has the potential to revitalise theology. It can re-enchant through exactly those dimensions, which previously were so central to the church. The challenge will be to understand *in what way(s)* aesthetics can revitalise theology. Some direction is to be found in Krüger's remarks about mysticism. He noted its beauty and aesthetical quality (Krüger 2006:9). Describing mysticism as 'the yearning of the human spirit for utmost transcendence and utmost integration; as awe before the ultimate mystery of the source of things; as the experience and the expression of the communion, union, or non-difference with, of commitment to, that source,' he adds:

> Apart from its other functions, art is essentially the creative expression of the search for the depth dimension of the world, and the expression of what has been glimpsed. Great music, painting, sculpture, poetry, drama – in all the many moods coming with that epoch, cultural and religious background and personal taste and talent – are great because they transport us to the portals of totality, infinity and unground (Krüger 2006:207).

24 Cf. Burrows (2005:341-342) on Gadamer.

Of special importance in this remark is his reference to the '*creative expression* of the search for the depth dimension of the world' (my emphasis). The history of mysticism illustrates how mystics expressed their awareness of the divine presence in imaginative and creative aesthetical forms. Biblical texts like Isaiah 6, Ezekiel 1 and Daniel 7 used beautiful, fiery and awesome imagery to speak of their mystical encounters before the 'throne' of God. The lyrical celebration of intimate love in the Song of Songs offered material for countless mystics of later times to speak in new ways about their mystical experiences of God's presence. The poetry of John of the Cross, the passionate poetry of Hadewijch, the lyrical prayers of Francis of Assisi, the rich symbolism in Dante's *Inferno* are all illustrations of the lasting, inspiring and transformative art of mystical authors of all times. They illustrate how aesthetics can re-enchant theological discourse.

8. Conclusion

The Enlightenment has liberated theology from the burdens of authoritarianism and ignorance. It has offered new forms of knowledge that brought understanding to many who sought answers on important matters and themes. Conceptual knowledge will remain with faith communities as a liberating gift and tool. And yet, it also has its limitations. The mature, self-critical researcher is also an integrated being who seeks to feel intimacy, excitement, consolation and many other experiences. Aesthetics offers many ways to provide in the need for such transformative experiences. It offers knowledge that is different, but that is equally important and transformative. It will take up a central place in the theological discourse of the future.

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Chapter 3

Africanising a theological discipline: Paradigm shifts for the new trends

K.T. Resane[1]

1. Introduction

Africa has embarked on a journey of self-discovery in a search for her self-identity (Theron 1996:19). This identity is to be built on the wealth of the traditional past and on the positive elements of the present. From the era of colonialism to apartheid in South Africa, the journey has affected all socio-cultural landscapes. African theologians, in particular, are overwhelmed by the central position theology occupies in the ongoing process of dehumanisation, oppression and exploitation by Euro-American male theology. In the twentieth-century, after all the aftermath of racial discrimination and the apex of structural evils in social strata, Africanisation remains the option in theological strategic moves.

There is abundant literature in the past two decades that attempt to define 'Africanisation'. This Africanisation can sound intimidating if not impossible for scholars resistant to change. Maluleka assists by defining 'Africanisation' as follows:

> Africanisation is the re-orientation of persons, institutions, products, processes and ideas towards a fresh, creative and constructive imaging of Africa and African contexts which take past, present and future African reality and African potential seriously, consciously and deliberately (Maluleka 2005).

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Gumbo (2016:33) appeals to the definition given by scholars such as Msila and Makgoba that Africanisation is 'the process or vehicle for defining, interpreting, promoting, and transmitting African thought, philosophy, identity and culture'. A similar vein of thought is expressed by Viljoen and Van der Walt (2003:13-17) – that Africanisation encompasses an African mindset or a mindset shift from a Western to an African paradigm. This study aligns itself with this latter definition on how to shift theology from the Western to an African approach. Albert Nolan (1997:97) describes 'paradigm shift' as a new model for trying to conceive what we are actually doing when we try to do theology, and especially Christian theology, in our context.

In order to embark on the Africanisation of theology, the theological institutions must move out of the silos or ivory towers of academic *gratis dictum* – a mere assertion that theologising is business as usual. This study proposes seven major shifts to be attempted and pursued at all cost. The time for *odium theologicum* (hatred for theology) has passed. An eschatological *locus standi* is inevitable.

2. From state theology to indigenisation and contextualisation

'State theology' receives numerous definitions and interpretations. The definition that is relevant to this debate is the one that was coined by the Kairos Document as:

> [T]the theological justification of the status quo with its racism, capitalism, and totalitarianism. It blesses injustice, canonizes the will of the powerful and reduces the poor to passivity, obedience and apathy (Kairos theologians 1985:3).

This theology is synonymous with nationalist theology, which claims its roots from the Jerusalem tradition, pioneered by the Davidic dynasty. Le Roux and Deist capture this theology's ancient roots:

> The nationalist theology rested on three pillars: the inviolability of the royal dynasty, of the temple, and of the city. It proclaimed unconditional salvation of Yahweh. He would save his people under all circumstances. Yahweh had made a covenant with the house of David that there would always be a descendant of David on the throne and that he could always depend on Yahweh's help. In the cult, unconditional salvation of Yahweh was continually emphasized.

> This theology was strongly supported by the Zadokite priests in particular (Le Roux & Deist 1987:107).

This assertion is loaded with an exegetical meaning of colonial and apartheid theology of the recent past. It gives a glimpse of what state theology is all about. First, the state or the government is made supreme. The theological constructs by colonial agents are considered sacrosanct and should be accepted as *littera scripta manet*, namely, what is written is permanent. The Bible, in particular, cannot be questioned or scrutinised. South African scholar, Takatso Mofokeng speaks of 'the theological prejudice or straightjacketing that we have been subjected to in the course of our Western theological training'. Mofokeng continues further and maintains that state theology fundamentally enforces that,

> the Bible is a religious document and that it should only be read theologically and not historically and materialistically… some of our African theologians have even accepted the Calvinist mystifications of the hermeneutical process among which is one that the Bible as the 'Word of God' which interprets itself (Mofokeng 1994:69).

This inevitably leads to a conclusion that the Bible is to be read uncritically and obediently without any application or analysis of the context.

State theology further attests to the fact that the church is the agent of God to convert the souls, not to change the societal structures. The temple (church) is the symbol of the presence of God, so her proclamations are to be holy despite the structural or societal injustices. After all, the *soteriological* functions of God are unconditional because of His promises that are *in saecula saeculorum*. This notion disregards the reality that the promises of God are supervenient.

The paradigm shift is inevitable. A shift from state theology to indigenisation and contextualisation is long overdue. The studies in the fields of anthropology, sociology, and the better understanding of cross-cultural interactions expose theology's symbiosis with Western civilization. The concepts such as adaptation, indigenisation and inculturation are at the locus of these academic disciplines. This leaves open questions regarding African culture and religion's relevance to Christianity. According to Theron (1996:17), in the Christianisation process,

the African should not be taken out of his/her culture, but he or she should become a Christian within his/her culture.

Theology does not operate on a *tabula rasa.* It does not emanate from *kenodoxia* – empty space or out of conceit. This is confirmed by Orobator, who writes:

> [A]s faith seeking understanding, theology does not operate in a vacuum; every attempt to understand faith is grounded on our experience … days are over when theology was simply exported wholesale from one context to another, without paying attention to the specificity of the host culture. Divorced from the local context in which we are situated, theology makes little or no sense at all. It is not an exaggeration to say that contemporary theological methodologies are all contextual (Orobator 2015:4).

Contextualisation has become synonymous with the relevance of theology in context. As a matter of definition, Theron (1996:17) maintains that: 'Contextualisation of theology also means the development of an own indigenous theology, but it implies more and goes further than the earlier terms.

In the process of theologising, the socio-political and socio-cultural considerations must be prioritised. Theology must enter the rhetorics of Africanising Christianity without compromise to the Biblical text.

3. From liberation theology to public theology

Liberation theology is one of the most documented theologies from below. Historically, its principal thrust was of Christian involvement on behalf of the poor (McGovern 1990:11). As a predominantly Third-World theology, it developed as a reaction to passivism of the mainstream theology to the plight of the poor and the oppressed masses. Social injustice within structural and social formations was by then its target. In the South American territories, liberation theology was 'a reflection on God's activity and God's transforming grace amongst those who are the victims of modern history' (Chopp, cited in Ford 1993:173). The South American Catholic scholars, such as Gustavo Gutierrez and Hugo Assmann, synonymised the definition of 'liberation theology' as a 'critical reflection upon man in the process of achieving his own

liberation, done from within the revolutionary milieu and contributing to it' (Berghoef & DeKoster 1984:49).

For almost half a century, liberation theology has focused towards transforming religion and the churches into active agents of change in the Third World.

> By empowering ordinary people and promoting new social movements, Liberation Theology has tried to change the assumptions that govern power and change power itself in ways that make a better life possible for the mass of the population (Levine 1995:2).

There is a notion amongst some academics that liberation theology has had its day. This is caused by the social upheavals and revolutionary events of the late eighties and the nineties in South America and the demise of apartheid in South Africa. However, in his book *The Future of Liberation Theology: An Argument and Manifesto*, Ivan Petrella (2006) proves this to be an ill-conceived notion and shows that this theology can be reinvented to bring its preferential option for the poor into the real world. In Chapter 3 of the book, he points out that liberation theology can build on its insight that the analysis of democracy cannot be separated from the analysis of the economic basis of society. Petrella is unapologetic that liberation theology, in its current form, should oppose the dominant social science approach to democracy as expounded in Latin America. This democracy subscribes to a minimalist procedural definition of democracy. The three phases of liberation theology's understanding of democracy are democracy via revolutionary socialism, democracy via the base communities and the current analysis of stagnant democracy. In Chapter 4, Petrella decries the impact of capitalism. The current liberation theology theorises 'capitalism' as an abstractly defined, hegemonic and indivisible totality. This leaves theology with options of revolutionary upheavals or defiant resistance from hegemonic capitalism itself – either way, the liberation theology will be left paralysed. This is the current status quo of liberation theology of today.

Levine (1995) points out that the attacks by conservatives in the Catholic Church and stiff competition from evangelical Protestants are contributory to the decline of liberation theology. The defeat of socialism, the decline and division of the left, and the return to pluralist politics and neo-liberal

economic policies demobilised the strong tentacles of liberation theology's ideals. Currently, there is the question of the alternative.

The alternative is public theology, which has become noticeable worldwide in the last fifteen or so years. It is widely understood as doing theology in a democratic society. It has gained its fame, as it is 'a reaction against the tendency to privatize the faith, restricting it to the question of an individual's salvation' (Van Hoozer & Strachan 2015:17).

Katrin Kusmierz (2009:18) in her doctoral dissertation on South African public theologies, asserts that 'public theology could be described as a post-cold war, postcolonial, post-secular theology answering to the complex exigencies of plural, multi-cultural democracies'.

The fact is that the dying institutional religion in the academy is shifting towards theological activity in the public area. The American missiologist and church strategist, Charles Peter Wagner (2006), refers to this as 'apostles in the marketplace.' Van Aarde (2008:1216) points out that: 'Public theology emerges in multifarious facets: in movies, songs, poems, novels, art, architecture, protest marches, clothing, newspaper and magazine articles.' Van Aarde (2008:1216) continues to reveal that public theologians' locational space, 'is not the university campus, but rather the public square – in other words, the modern-day *agora* – wherever it may be situated in the "global village" or in the cyberspace'.

In agreement, Melton (2001:4) points out that public theology is embedded in modern-day post-secular, populist culture, stripped from its critical function as it was absorbed into mass-consumer culture.

According to Storrar (2008:4-5), the task of public theology is to call people out of the complexity of the world of mutual incomprehension into the world of public citizenship in the company of strangers. Public theology presupposes that theology, especially Systematic Theology and its metanarratives should be relevant to the public challenges, whether scientific or social. As an academic endeavour, public theology should mobilise Christians for political engagement and involvement. The human-universe relationship at the scientific level is the discourse at the center of public theology. As a scientific analysis, it is expected to provide resources that connect people's faith with the practical issues facing

society. In other words, it offers a relevant and constructive way of doing theology. As Gustavo and Buttelli (2012:101-102) assert: '[It] is much more about conceiving new methodologies, tasks, ways, modes, styles, different places in the public sphere, and different 'publics' to relate to'.

Liberation theology opted for remaining part of the institutional religion, while public theology intends to break shells and vacate cocoons of theological ivory towers by exerting its ideals and constructs in the public square. However, let it be noted that some scholars view public theology as a continuing liberation theology. People like Bedford-Strohm (2008:151) see public theology 'as Liberation Theology for a democratic society'. Theology in Africa will have an enormous influence by practically moving out of silos into the public arena. The marketplace is where theology is to be deliberated, analysed and practiced. This gigantic step emancipates theology from what Ritzer (1997:225) calls 'superficiality and depthlessness'. Dreyer (2008) encapsulates the three tasks for public theology as: to include the public in the practising of theology; to include everyday matters in theological reflection; and to facilitate dialogue between theology and contemporary culture.

Public theology remains the preferred option for Africanising theology since socio-economic issues still need attention to usher in some social justice lacking in current decadent cultures that fail to attune themselves towards justice and ethical lifestyle. Public theology is further strengthened as an option because it is 'faith seeking to understand the relation between Christian convictions and the broader social and cultural context within which the Christian community lives' (Thiemann 1991:21).

Africa is riddled with civil uprisings. The African Development Bank reports that almost all protests since 2011 have been about inadequate wages and working conditions, the low quality of public service delivery, social divides, state repression and a lack of political reform.[2] Systematic Theology should depart from its comfortable silos and behold the current cultural shifts and endeavour to analyse the rationale behind human misery. It must stop its *briller*

2 http://www.afdb.org/en/knowledge/publications/african-economic-outlook (Retrieved 16 May 2016).

par son absence on the *agora* of world events but act strategically to construct the alternative reality that is suitable for African context.

4. From church theology to prophetic theology

Since the Kairos Document of 1985, in South Africa the term 'church theology' became part of theological discourse in socio-political discourses. The document popularised this term to describe theology which did not engage deeply in the struggle (Gustavo & Buttelli 2012:94). The Kairos Document describes church theology as follows:

> In a limited, guarded and cautious way this theology is critical of apartheid. Its criticism, however, is superficial and counter-productive because instead of engaging in an in-depth analysis of the signs of our times, it relies upon a few stock ideas derived from Christian tradition and then uncritically and repeatedly applies them to our situation (Kairos theologians 1985:9).

This theology sounds and looks appealing, especially to those who subscribe to the so-called progressive Christianity. It is the kind of theology that speaks about reconciliation, justice and non-violence. The one word that may rightly undergird this theology is 'neutrality'. Archbishop Desmond Tutu maintains that, 'The problem with this approach is that it leaves racialised inequalities untouched' (cited in Van der Borght 2009:9). This is due to its emphasis on incarnation within the unjust societal systems, without making an analysis of these systems. In so doing, it empowers those in power to continue their evil systems such as corruption, without any fear of being a prophetic voice calling to the contrary. It is clear that this theology 'is associated with an absence of social analysis and to a kind of spirituality without social engagement' (Gustavo & Buttelli 2012:95). Church theology has some complexity and character with the sensitivities buried beneath its bold façade. The call for wisdom here is that:

> Theology must continually resist and work against the temptation to generalize. This is true both in theology's orientation to its primary subject matter as well as in its effort to develop competence in social and cultural criticism (Lugo 2000:122).

It can further be pointed out that church theology is the theology of *Realpolitik* (power politics) which always work against *vox populi* (the voice of the people). According to VanGemeren:

> *Realpolitik*, or power politics, is a pragmatic application of any technique by which an individual or a group can maintain or enhance life. It is manipulative, works at the expense of others, and undermines the essential nature of revelation (VanGemeren 1990:26).

Politics of power justifies all human structures – good or bad. It associates primarily with power, society, economics, and cult. Resane and Buitendag maintain that:

> *Realpolitik* operates from the assumption that the religious structures are basically good and that people can improve their lives and society by preserving and improving the existing structures – never replacing them with something new (Resane & Buitendag 2008:1540).

It always embraces leniency towards the status quo because anything is fair in achieving the goal. *Vox populi* in this sense is the cry from the masses – cries pleading for alternatives towards a better life.

For theology to be Africanised, there must be a paradigm shift from church theology to prophetic theology. This is theology that is consonant with the Old Testament prophecies that were directed and based on social analysis. The Old Testament prophetism had some correlation with anthropology and sociology since many prophets were public and social figures fully integrated into the structures of society (VanGemeren 1990:43). The steps of liberation theology methods as explained by Boff (1987) should be actualised in prophetic theology. These steps, called *socioanalytic* mediation and *hermeneutic* mediation, should necessarily lead to a *practical* mediation. This is an action-orientated discipline that puts more emphasis on *praxis*. It can be rightly assumed that prophetic theology is a theology of hope that gives the sense that the best is yet to come. At its helm is people mobilisation and engagement. Prophetic theology calls for people to participate in the struggle, in campaigns, boycotts and criticism (Gustavo & Buttelli 2012:96); and what the Kairos Document calls 'a ministry of involvement and participation' (Kairos theologians 1985:29). This is the prophetic community that Corbett and Smith (1980:47) see as 'a caring

community, a group of Christians who hold a deep concern over what happens to others in the church, the neighbourhood, and the community'.

5. From black theology to reconciliation theology

Black theology, just like liberation theology, had its voice thundering through the Institute of Contextual Theology (ICT) and the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT). It is a theological reflection that was and still is, though to the lesser extent, prominent in North America and South Africa. Maimela defines it 'as a conscious and systematic theological reflection on black experience' (Maimela 1990:190). To summarise Maimela and other black theologians, one can conclude that black theology is a theological protest against white racial domination. It reflects on the black experience of oppression in the light of the Gospel.

Black theology found roots in South Africa through the black church leaders and academics (Sabelo Ntwasa, Dr Manas Buthelezi, Bishop Alphaeus Zulu, Prof. S.S Maimela, Prof. T.A Mofokeng, etc.); and through some students formations such as the United Christian Movement (UCM) and the South African Students Organisation (SASO). These organisations 'subscribed to the philosophy of black consciousness and saw black theology as a natural ally to its cause of "conscientisation"' (Motlhabi, cited in Hopkins & Antonio 2012:225).

Its main task is to challenge the misuse of the Bible for narrow political and economic self-interests of the dominant whites. The 'father' of black theology, James Cone insists that black theology is a Christian theology since it arises from the oppressed community; it is Christo-centric since Jesus is the Liberator. He argues that:

> It is a rational study of the being of God in the world in light of the existential situation of an oppressed community, relating the forces of liberation in the essence of the gospel, which is Jesus Christ (Cone 1998:1).

This sentiment is also captured by Andrews and Smith (2015:7), who write:

> Transforming theological traditions has been one of the more successful campaigns of the Black Theology project. It continues to challenge

> prevailing Christian theological constructs that buttress oppressive theological distortions and social conditions.

Christina Landman (2010:49-65) highlights Maimela's understanding of the task of black theology as follows:

- To bring the needs of the voiceless to the public arena;
- To present itself as a site for dismantling the religious discourses that sustain race- and gender-based discrimination;
- To deconstruct these harmful religious discourses and rescope them as healthy societal practices that will bring healing to those who suffer discrimination and are deprived of their human dignity.

From the early eighties, some South African ecclesiastical circles started discourses on reconciliation. The spirit of reconciliation became the euphoria of the nineties, perpetuated by Nelson Mandela and Bishop Desmond Tutu. The sad situation was the looming absence of the church's voice, especially after the dawn of democracy in 1994. The silence of black theologians' voice in public affairs that was so audible previously necessitated doing theology in a post-apartheid era. Theology had to shed itself of the past and embark on a journey of reconciliation. Africanising theology can move forward through and on the path of reconciliation; however, this calls for dialogue on current menaces in civil and socio-cultural affairs. The resurgence of black theology carries the load of reconciliation rather than sectional and factional theological address in society. However, the potential of positive contribution of black theology is impeded by factions within ecclesiastical communities; as some of these communities are still divided along racial lines.

Reconciliation is both vertical and horizontal – relationship with God and inter-human relationships. Relevant Africanised theology should be both theocentric and anthropocentric. It is *Gloria in Excelsis* and love to humanity – Godward and humanward. Reconciliation involves 'healing and bringing together broken relationships' (Kärkkäinen 2013:364). It is when broken relationships are mended or restored. Boesak (1979:39) sees God-Human relationship in activity, hence 'God liberates in order to reconcile'.

Reconciliation initiatives shape the authenticity of theology in curriculum deliberations. There is a need to propel theology forward into the theological education curriculum. God-human-universe curvature needs a full theological address in order to balance the weakness of the theologies of the past. 'Colonial education was hegemonic and disruptive to African cultural practices, indigenous epistemologies and ways of knowing' (Higgs 2016:1). Theology of reconciliation is a practical theology of Christian incarnation in a hurting world. Like public theology, it is out there in the *agora* and driven by *presence* rather than just by *proclamation – incarnation* as against *kerygma*. According to Higgs, reconciliation theology claims what was lost in the past. It acknowledges the truth that:

> [T]here is an existential and humane need today to decolonise the curriculum in Africa by means of postcolonial education systems that reclaim indigenous African voices through curriculum reforms and the transformation of education discourses (Higgs 2016:1).

Since black theology is in the stage of dormancy, Africa is in the phase of readjustment where reconciliation initiatives are to be vigorously executed. Reconciliation can no longer afford to be abstract (Schreiter 1998:11-12). It needs to be part of theology curriculum and church calendar in order to foster Africanisation that is theologically correct and humanly harmonised.

6. From parochial theology to theology of dialogue

Parochial theology is encased in the silos or ivory towers of academic institutions. Invaluable research in the form of dissertations, theses, books, conference papers, etc. are piling the dust in the archives of libraries. There is no sign of taking these research facts out into the public in order to enlighten the communities of available resources for societal upliftment. Colloquiums, congresses, conferences, indabas, workshops, seminars, and consultations on pertinent issues affecting theology in context are held at learning campuses, without much effort into the manner of transmission to the populace for improvement of quality life.

The large volumes of research finding are more of what institutions, faculties, departments, and churches within the walls, can gain rather than what the communities should gain. This parochial mentality works against African

ubuntu of mutual sharing. This speaks more of humanness. Humans do not live for themselves. They live with and for others. Theology cannot exist for itself. It exists for God and the people. Theologians need each other and must study for each other. This exodus out of silos can enhance Africanisation of theological discipline when scholars of different traditions and persuasions can dialogue with each other. This calls for methodology applied in teaching theology.

> We should move away from the traditional (monastic) view whereby students are trained outside of society. This approach denies theological students the understanding of society and its problems. We should attempt to produce candidates with independent minds, critical but constant, who can challenge the theological orthodoxy of the past (Kandovazu 2001:72).

Dialogue is a special kind of discourse that enables people with different perspectives and worldviews to work together to dispel mistrust and create a climate of good faith.

Kärkkäinen (2013:23) maintains that '[t]he obvious "practical" reason for Christian theology to enter into a sustained dialogue with other religions is the prevailing diversity of religions'. This assertion is in accordance with his latest contribution that 'the term "dialogical" in a more specific sense here means an intentional and intense engagement of other living faith traditions' (Kärkkäinen 2016:4). This when convictions are humbly shared in honesty. The respectful argumentation overrides the parochial and supremacist attitudes. In fact, Kärkkäinen believes that robust debates by Euro-American male-initiated theologies must be contextual. This means inclusivity is inevitable – women, liberationists, postcolonialists and Global South theologians, are needed as full participants of the dialogue.

Through dialogue, theologians can break negative stereotypes towards shifting the focus from transactions to relationships, creating a community where participants become more sympathetic to one another even when they disagree. As Humphrey Waweru (2011:98) asserts: There is great potential for inter-religious dialogue between Christianity and African religion if the dialogue already taking place on the plane of culture can be developed.

The dialogue activities focus on teaching and reinforcing knowledge, skills, and awareness of diversity issues in higher education related to race, gender, sexual orientation, and religious literacy. Furthermore, Christian theology must enter into dialogue with African religion in order to gain insights regarding

> intermediaries, inspiration (ancestors as the primary source of cultural innovation, and culture as a means of calling to specific ministries, Christology, Christian identity, cosmology and the experience and understanding of God (Waweru 2011:98).

This encourages difficult dialogues on important and challenging topics that are essential to democratic citizenship in an increasingly diverse society carrying diverse theological persuasions. The purpose of theological dialogue is to gain understanding and learning from one another. Francis Xavier Clooney expresses it as follows:

> Dialogue must permanently shape the whole theological environment, but dialogue is not the primary goal of theology, which still has to do with the articulation of the truths one believes and the realisation of a fuller knowledge of God (Clooney 2001:173).

Dialogue of different theological confessions and religions contributes towards Africanisation of theological discipline by educating about and promoting academic freedom and free speech, principles and practices. These are some of the practices that can enhance African democracies. Theological discipline should foster open dialogue about issues that have provoked conflict on campus among different faith, cultural and political groups. An Africanised curriculum should educate students, faculty, staff and the larger religious community about different perspectives focused on conflicts in their communities and around the world. Theology should create a platform on which to offer training in conflict resolution and dialogue for undergraduates, graduate students and faculties. Theological education should create opportunities for students in conflicting groups to engage in community engagement events, such as mission trips and building projects. Reconciliation and dialogical theologies should broaden local and national political leaders' understanding of theology's efforts, featuring Africanisation and decolonisation of the curriculum to foster understanding of academic freedom, human rights and the actual campus climate. Through

reconciliation dialogue, Afrocentric theology and Eurocentric theology will find each other, and forge some synergy towards the restoration of eco-human dignity.

7. From ecumenical theology to communion theology

Ecumenical theology is a theological endeavour of promoting unity among churches and denominations of different confessions. The ecumenical movement goes further to speak of promoting worldwide unity among religions through greater co-operation and improved understanding. Ecumenical theology through the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church's Vatican II had exerted enormous influence in world Christianity. There are national councils of churches working interdenominationally to incarnate the unity that Christ mandated his followers with and to extend Christ's witness in the world.

Communion theology is about the loving and caring of believers with God and Christ among the Persons in the Godhead. Communion theology is about the unity of the faith whereby all members receive empowerment to live and carry out God's purpose for life. As one reads in Ephesians 4:13[3]: 'Until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God, and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ', one realises that the Apostle Paul explains how the various offices in the ministry and the work of the ministry lead to the edifying, the building up, of the body of Christ in and through love. This loving communion expresses solidarity with the world. 'The triune God constantly sustains life and resists destructive powers of nonbeing and violence' (Kärkkäinen 2014:321).

Unity in the faith is not the union of nature, but the union of plan, of counsel, of purpose – seeking the same objects, and manifesting attachment to the same things, and the desire to promote the same ends. The ongoing deliberations of this unity are that ecumenically all theologians of the fraternal hold to mutual understanding, and appreciation of diversity.

The interdenominationalism that characterises the ecumenical movement is becoming conspicuously absent from public affairs. There is no strong

3 Scriptural quotations throughout the book follow the *New International Version*.

rationale behind this unless it is historical. As Keener and Keener (2006:6) assert: 'History offers a series of painful lessons to a divided church'. Regardless of this, the paradigm shift is towards mutual embrace and understanding of each other. This approach is abhorred by conservative Christians, but it is the way the *agape* of God can be manifested in a hurting world. Africanisation is a process whereby society is not polarised and proliferated but synchronised and harmonised.

8. From Eurocentric hermeneutics to Afrocentric hermeneutics

Africans are striving to assert their right to appropriate and theologise their Christian faith according to their socio-economic, cultural and religious needs. African hermeneuticists endeavour to bring their theology into a dynamic and fruitful interaction with their socio-cultural context. They commit themselves to search for a solution, using a new and independent approach to the Biblical text, and a more relevant epistemological cause. This is confirmed by Mofokeng when he writes:

> Many theologians from oppressed segments of our modern societies have come to recognize that, without effecting a hermeneutical break with dominant liberal hermeneutics and making a new hermeneutical beginning, no liberative theology is possible (Mofokeng 1994:70).

Reading a text from an African perspective provides a picture of struggle which dominated ancient societies. In fact, as black theology surmised, the Bible is a product of struggle. It relays the clash of classes, ideologies, and cultural contours. We should notice that in it, 'we are dealing with people who are organized socially, economically, politically and religiously, and that in the organization of their societies conflicting classes or interest groups emerged' (Mofokeng 1994:71).

This means that the starting point in hermeneutical processes and journeys is an analytical reading of the context. This enables the acquiring of epistemological lenses towards the Bible context analytically. Mosala associates himself with this notion by pointing out that:

> [T]he Bible is rent apart by the antagonistic struggle of the warring classes of Israelite society in much the same way that our world is

> torn asunder by society's class, culture, racial and gender divisions (Mosala 1989:16).

Mofokeng (1987) alludes to the fact that black people, 'ever since the Bible was brought to them, asserted their right to appropriate and interpret it according to their socio-economic, cultural and religious needs.

It is not enough simply to have a lofty view of the Bible and its authority. There should be an interpretation and application of the Bible in an African context. Sam Oleka (1998:104) cautions that 'a wide gap exists between the Biblical world and the contemporary world as a whole, and contemporary Africa in particular'. Interpretation, like curriculation must be done responsibly. Thought forms and world views are essential tools of understanding customs, habits, behaviours and messages intra- or inter- culturally. Cole (1998:104) points out that: 'A Christian theologian must combine an understanding of the thought patterns, world and life views of the Biblical settings with those of his own contemporary culture'.

Theology is called upon to robustly take the position of a prophetic and dialogical role in the Africanisation of theological education. Mofokeng directs this responsibility to theologians:

> We share responsibility for whatever happens in nations where Christianity is the dominant religion because *we determine* the *texts* (including Biblical ones) that are suitable for use in the religious practice of our people. We also determine suitable and effective *uses* as well as suitable and effective *strategies* and *language* (Mofokeng 1994:66).

The institutions of learning, especially theological disciplines must consider new hermeneutics for Africa. South African Biblical scholar Gerald West (2015:21) directs theologians towards a tri-polar approach of doing hermeneutics. These are the pole of the Biblical text, the pole of the African context, and the pole of appropriation. This connects the text with a context and a reader 'who activates a form of dialogical appropriation that has a theological and praxiological (i.e. committed action) dimension' (West 2015:22).

9. Conclusion

There is a need to overhaul theological training and conceptualisation. Theology students coming out of the institutions should be creative scholarly thinkers, producers, rather than carbon copies and consumers of the theologies mentioned in this chapter. The task of theology in Africa should be to liberate Africa from the yoke of colonial theology made to keep an African believer an alien in his/her own cultural context. There must be emphases and attempts to create and develop a new humanising theology for African people. For theology to be authentic, 'no aspect of our humanity may be excluded from the focus of its reflection' (Orobator 2015:5). There must be a *genesis* from state theology to indigenisation and contextualisation, from liberation theology to public theology, from church theology to prophetic theology, from black theology to reconciliation theology, from parochial theology to dialogical theology, from ecumenical theology to communion theology; and above all from Eurocentric hermeneutics to Afrocentric hermeneutics. This is a journey that theologians must embark on as it is, according to Maimela (1987:145), a task which should be the promotion of the process of individual and social transformation.

It is theology, especially, Systematic Theology that has to become a tool to change outdated values and become a moral force for change in Africa's public domain. Africanisation is a process that can lead to achievements through these paradigm shifts. This calls for what Orobator calls inter-disciplinarity, by which he means dialoguing with different disciplines; and adapting and adopting their methodologies, and their data and statistical analysis as a basis for a theological reflection on some particular issues (Orobator 2015:9). Theologians are to become change agents. Without them, Africanisation of theology is a dream in a pipeline. It is true that:

> People need theology and, more particularly, theology needs people. Theology needs the reflection of people committed to Christian practice to preserve its vitality and wholeness (Pobee & Amirtham 1986: ix).

The contextual relevance of theology in Africa is not an option but a must. Mercy Oduyoye boldly announced:

> Theologians throughout the world who felt a call to speak more relevantly to their age and generation freed themselves from traditional

> dogmatic and systematic theology and focused on life issues. Instead of telling people what questions to ask and then furnishing them with the answers, theologians began to listen to the questions people were asking and then seek the answers (Oduyoye 1986:3).

There are critical considerations to be borne in mind to embark on this journey of Africanisation. This will demand another paper for the record. Mkhatshwa is of the strong opinion that 'a theology and spirituality rooted in the African experience must be developed' (Mkhatshwa 1986:67). The same sentiment is expressed by Stinton (2004:61-63) who highlights relevance which must be deliberated through appropriate sources and methods for a contemporary context in which theology must be practiced. African theologians are implored to abandon *amnesia* in order to rise above the level of passiveness and vigorously engage in the shifts proposed in this study and move towards the new trends. The bottom line is 'we are morally responsible for the future of theology … we are exemplifying theology and fashioning it for the future' (Hardy 1993:21).

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Chapter 4

Tracing the religious character of the proverbial tradition of Proverbs

Nicolaas F. Schmidt[1]

1. Introduction

This chapter traces the past genealogies and future possibilities pertaining to the divine character and God-talk of Proverbs and its Biblical Hebrew proverbial tradition. It shows *how* the religious interpretation of Proverbs was influenced by social, historical and theological contexts in the pre-1994 period by national and international scholarship alike, as well as to *what* influences were introduced after 1994 by African scholarship to enhance the religious character and promote future studies on the God-talk of the proverbial wisdom tradition.

Our guidelines follow the contribution of international scholars such as John Collins, Walter Brueggemann, Roland Murphy and James Barr to the study of Proverbs, as well as the most important African theological publications of Madipoane Masenya and Willie van Heerden. We close with some conclusions pertaining to the religious future of the Biblical Hebrew and African proverbs.

2. International and South African scholarship in debate on the God of Proverbs

The religious character of Proverbs and the God-talk of its proverbial tradition were perceived as part of the special revelation of God's Word. However, the rational, scientific and empirical impact of Biblical and historical criticism from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries actually turned the tide against

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the special revelatory nature of these texts in favour of more imminent studies and more mediated and general revelatory approaches to the wisdom literature of the Hebrew Bible.

Collins (1977) initially argued that Proverbs and its proverbial wisdom tradition are creation-based, and therefore might just as well constitute a Biblical precedent for natural theology. Although he admits that natural theologians cannot fully grasp or adequately know God in terms of human reason, Collins (1977:67) affirms 'that natural human knowledge has its fulfilment and goal in the knowledge of God'. Proverbial wisdom essentially constitutes an incipient form of natural religion and creation theology in the broad senses of the term. Sages may obtain knowledge of the Creator *via* reasonable-natural and creative-theological investigations into the divine order of the universe. Brueggemann (1997:336) agrees with Collins that natural theology testifies to God's hidden order, which is deduced from the inferential, observational and experiential acts of daily life. Even the passive (*Sondergut*) sayings in Proverbs, which do not mention God at all, serves as primary proverbial expressions of God's hidden character, as well as to his divine words and actions as the Provider of Life and Executor of his created order.

The transcendent nature-culture distinction between special revelatory faith and natural theological reason has since been exposed by immanent post-Enlightenment scholars as nothing but the ideological, theoretical and dichotomised distortions of Western rationalism and materialistic modernism. Murphy (1998:271, 1994:5) reminds us in this regard of the words of Barr:

> If one believes that God was revealing himself in the creation and continues to do so, why is it that 'natural' theology and not 'revealed'? ... If one believes that God was revealing himself in ancient Israel, why is this not 'natural'? Perhaps all theology is both 'natural' and 'revealed? (Barr 1993:114)

Even Von Rad (1972:61) agreed that 'for Israel, there was only one world of experience and [that] this was perceived by means of a perceptive apparatus in which rational perceptions and religious perceptions were not differentiated'.

In pre-apartheid South Africa similar theological and hermeneutical paradigm shifts took place – albeit a few centuries later – from a defence in favour of the special revelation encountered in Proverbs' proverbial tradition, to a more generally acceptance of the general revelatory character and natural theology communicated in the wisdom literature of the Hebrew Bible.

Initially, during the years and decades after the 1960s – when several theological institutions were established at universities in Stellenbosch, Pretoria, Bloemfontein, Potchefstroom, and elsewhere – most Hebrew and Old Testament lecturers preferred to follow the 'grammatical-historical' approaches of their Reformed predecessors, which boiled down to a severe disregard of the proponents of Biblical and historical criticism. However, as more 'white' theologians travelled and studied overseas after the 1960s and during the 1970s and 1980s, they returned from abroad as people theologically trained and religiously equipped to challenge and change the politically-established laws and -promulgated apartheid policies of the South African government and its society. Especially the well-known and internationally acclaimed publications of Jimmy Loader (1979) and Philip Nel (1982) – particularly in light of their initial disagreements and eventual reconciliations – are of relevance to our discussion.[2]

Loader (1976), on the one hand, took the lead in the reason-revelation conversation, by suggesting that the ancient Near Eastern wisdom literature – including the proverbial texts and tradition – might be illustrative of more relativity than originally perceived. Loader (2001) then continued to address the 'deficient' revelatory nature of proverbial wisdom as natural theology in terms of the extended Barth-Bultmann debate, as well as of proverbial learning as being written down in the indicative form and edited as proverbial virtues between the sages and scribes' commands of advice (cf. Loader 1996, 2001, 2004). Proverbial learning, as a relative form of natural theology, is constituted as part and parcel of our 'tainted' understanding of natural theology, despite the lack of appreciation of its natural dimensions. The inner logic inherent to proverbial wisdom implies that God's creation is the natural source of the

2 The dissertations of both Loader and Nel were internationally published by De Gruyter in Berlin.

sages' intuitive knowing of and inductive reasoning about his divinely-created order (cf. Loader (2001: 235-240).

Nel (1982:127, 101), on the other hand, initially rejected the idea of Loader that proverbial wisdom resides in natural theology, and promoted the admonitions of Lady Wisdom as part of the parental sayings and God's special revelation: the preamble principle and concept of God-fearing in Proverbs 1:7 indirectly link the notions of human reason and divine revelation as specially-revealed knowledge of righteous human behaviour. The sages' epistemological framework of God-fearing harmonises the polar truths of YHWH's special revelation with human wisdom and philosophical reason, but without any contradictions, since the God who reveals himself is also the God who created the universe.

Nel eventually came to situate himself between Loader's view of proverbial wisdom as natural theology and Otto's focus on wisdom's knowledge as part of the special revelation of God and his creation theology. Regarding the question of whether the proverbial wisdom tradition should be seen as part of natural theology, Nel both agreed and disagreed with Loader and Otto:

> Yes, because wisdom's knowledge does not spurn empiric observation and the possibility to glean from natural/empiric regularities and the cosmic order valuable instructions for circumspect conduct and an orderly society, and ultimately insight into God's order. It is no, because there is a limit to empirically inferred knowledge, the ultimate achievement of which lies within the boundaries of trust and belief. From the perspective of trust (fear of Yahweh) the individual and society are aware of their obedience to and responsibility for wisdom's knowledge as a divine gift and task (Nel 2002:448-9).

Nel had since arrived at the conclusion that no tensions exist in Proverbs between virtuous faith as belief in God's created order and wisdom as knowledge about God, humanity and the world (Nel 2002:435-6). The sages believed in God's order, but also acquired proverbial knowledge of God *via* their natural perceptive organs, that have been wisely created by God himself (cf. Prov. 20:12). The sages' judgements on God's divinely-revealed order cannot be placed on the same level as that of the sages' naturally-manifested gestalt perceptions and experiential knowledge. Proverbs 3:18-20 and 8:22-31 remind us that the

cosmological Wisdom which YHWH uses when he created the cosmos is the same knowledge that permeates the entire universe and is available to the sages. The notion of rationality, therefore, constitutes the centre of the proverbial wisdom tradition, and illustrates that knowledge of God's created order and our human reason are basically 'flip sides of the same coin'.

3. African influences on the God of Proverbs and its proverbial wisdom tradition

The first part of this study focused on a discussion of the religious character of Proverbs and the God-talk of the proverbial wisdom tradition. Having dealt with both the rational-Biblical and history-critical influences on the God of Proverbs and the emergence of new generations of proverbial South African scholarship, we are currently challenged to address the issue of how the religious character of Proverbs and the God-talk of the proverbial wisdom tradition are influenced by African religion as theological discipline, part and parcel of the post-apartheid condition, following on the establishment of a new democratic South African Republic after the first general elections in 1994. In order to gain a picture of this matter, twenty sources were investigated. The results of the investigation led to three observations.

Firstly, pertaining to an ancient African worldview, which is structured on five levels, namely, God or the Supreme Being; other gods, lesser deities and divinities; the realms of the nature and animal spirits; the ancestors, shades or the 'living dead'; and the human devotees and/or practitioners (cf. Adamo (2005:9-13).

Almost all of the consulted articles refer to human beings in their capacities as devotees or practitioners of religions and beliefs, according to the ancient African worldview of established and accepted religions. However, much less attention is given to the other four levels of God and the gods, as well as the spirits and ancestors. One possible explanation of the absence of God and the divinities may be a certain kind of reservation amongst African people, to more

openly talk about and freely discuss the religious character of the 'hidden' or 'dark' realms of the Divine and God(s).[3]

Secondly, when permitted to talk more openly about and freely discuss the interaction and/or relationship between the five levels of the ancient African worldview, some of the most prominent science of religion perspectives – such as those of Krüger, Lubbe and Steyn (2012:36-37) – identify at least two common beliefs amongst African cultures and religionists, on the religious character and God-Talk of African religion: First, the belief of most African people in a Supreme Being, 'described by one or many names, either in terms of activities or place of abode'; and second, 'the need for intermediaries to facilitate communication'. Such intermediaries may derive from the realm of the ancestral and nature spirits in southern, east, central and South Africa, as well as the lesser divinities and deities in West and Western Africa.

In 2015 – twenty-one years after the coming of age of the democratic Republic of South Africa – Nigerian Professor David Adamo (2015:31-52) lectured an American audience on the seven 'tasks of African Biblical hermeneutics', namely:

1. To formulate a Biblical hermeneutic that is 'liberational and transformational' in nature.
2. To break the hermeneutical hegemony and ideological stranglehold that Eurocentric-Biblical scholarship has long enjoyed.
3. To rectify 'the effect of the cultural ideological conditioning to which Africa and Africans have been subjected' to in the business of Bible interpretation.
4. To promote not only African culture but African identity as well.
5. To understand God according to the Scripture and cultures of Africa.

3 More direct discussions of the African God(s) may be found in Mbiti (1970) and Turaki (1999).

6. To ensure that the task of African Biblical hermeneutic(s) includes the 'Blackening of the Bible', i.e., the centralising and locating of Africans at the centre of the world.[4]

7. To interpret the Bible as existentially scriptural in nature.

Adamo (2005:36-47) also elaborated on the sevenfold task of African Bible hermeneutics in terms of an eightfold 'distinctiveness' of such hermeneutics, which is characterised in terms of a communal Bible reading, which is at once both powerful, African, comparative, evaluative, self-interpretative, interested, indicative, as well as 'black' in nature. Apart from making such challenging statements to a (most probably) intellectual audience, one cannot help but notice how the author's 'tasks' and 'distinctions' of African Biblical hermeneutics often seem to contradict one another.

Once again, a careful review of most of the twenty sources substantiated the lack among African authors to refer directly to the religious character of Proverbs and the God-talk of its proverbial wisdom tradition. Alternatively, in the few cases where such authors refer to the divine, it is at least done indirectly from the perspectives of the ancient African worldview and in terms of the generally and most-accepted religious character and God-Talk of African religion.

Thirdly and finally, the only persons who have courageously established themselves – by direct combinations of the cultural perspective of the ancient African worldview with the accepted religious character and God-Talk of African religion and proverbs – seems to be Unisa Professors Madipoane Masenya and Willie van Heerden.

Masenya published on two issues: first, on the perspective of Proverbs on poverty, parental instruction, Lady Virtue and the wise ant in Proverbs 31 and 6 (cf. Masenya 1996, 2004, 2006, 2010, 2015), and, secondly, from the perspective of African theology, on her role and function in terms of a Bosadi (womanhood) approach (cf. Masenya 1997, 2002, 2003, 2009, 2011, 2013, 2014).

4 Schreiter (1991) editorially and contextually summarises the *African faces of Jesus* in terms of the diverse images or characters of Masters of Initiation, Leading, Healing, Liberating and Suffering.

Van Heerden initially researched two papers on the discipline of hermeneutics, before eventually proceeding to publish another two articles on African religion per se. In his first paper, Van Heerden (1994:327) focused on how the enjoyable 'stories' found in the Hebrew Bible may be considered via the usage of the concepts of 'imagination' and 'interpretation' as creative and innovative processes of 'building differently'. However, for Van Heerden, this revealed something of his next anticipated interest in African culture proper. He concludes that:

> [T]he distance between the Old Testament and its interpreters (culturally and chronologically) may be a blessing in disguise, since it provokes worlds, different from ours, which enables us to see our world as 'more than it is' (Van Heerden 1994:327).

Van Heerden's next paper focused on the contemporary perspectives of wisdom and intelligence, which compared the definitions of Roger Whybray's definition of wisdom as a human attribute and the so-called more complex 'wisdom compass' proposed by the Egyptologist Aleida Assman. Van Heerden convincingly proceeded to substantiate the age-old Old Testament adage, 'A [humanly-appointed] bright spark is not necessarily a [divinely-ordained?] wise person' (Van Heerden 1996:526).

Only after he had combined the concepts of 'proverbial wisdom' and 'metaphor' – as part and parcel of the issue of an ongoing dialogue between Biblical faith and African culture, or 'inculturation', did Van Heerden come to the conclusion that the cultural gap between Biblical and African wisdom is in need of explanation or re-enactment in terms of corresponding African concepts or customs:

> Metaphorical proverbs might be useful tools for dealing with tensions in creative ways. They can bring about a better understanding of new perspectives, or even changes to one's conceptual and religious frameworks. Illustration material includes Old Testament wisdom literature, Jesus' use of proverbs in the Synoptic Gospels, and African proverbs (Van Heerden 1997:512).

Finally, having executed whole-heartedly – like Madipoane Masenya – the hermeneutical paradigm shift in the dialogue between the Biblical Hebrew and African proverbs, Van Heerden (2006) discussed the dialogue between African

Proverbs and Biblical texts, such as Proverbs' religious character and the God-talk of its proverbial wisdom tradition. By combining narrative metaphor, theology and therapy with African proverbs, Van Heerden (2006:429ff) quotes from numerous African proverbs – for example, 'It's on the old mat that one weaves the new one' – to explore the differences and distances between the Biblical and African proverbs. This last article of Van Heerden (2006:430) truly discusses the way in which religion deals with the religious character of Proverbs, as well as the God-talk of its proverbial wisdom tradition. Of particular importance are the conclusions reached by Van Heerden:

> [T]rue dialogue between [the] two exponents of classical [African proverbs and Bible texts] is possible and enriching. Such dialogue is possible when African wisdom and Bible texts are used to affirm or extend each other, but also to confront each other (Van Heerden 2006:438).

4. Conclusion: African influences on the God of Proverbs

As part of an Old Testament contribution to the book, we aimed to trace the religious character of the Biblical Hebrew text of Proverbs, as well as the God-talk of its subsections and proverbial wisdom tradition.

Previous studies were advanced in terms of the theology ('God-language') of the Bible from the cognitive-scientific perspective, which illustrated the validity and reliability of the application of the methods of cognitive science to textual data obtained from the Hebrew Bible.[5]

The remarks stated and discussed in the previous paragraphs on African proverbs and the Bible's God-talk lead to one cautious suggestion about the hermeneutics on the proverbial literature as part and parcel of the wisdom tradition in the Hebrew Bible: in opposition to the cultic and charismatic God-language of the priestly Pentateuch and prophetic Deuteronomist, the intellectual and religious God-fearing of the proverbial sages seems to be in some ways similar to the classical-medieval definition of theology, not as

5 Both of the Biblical and linguistic enterprises mutually benefit, as part of the hermeneutical endeavour, from this thesis: theology is for Vanhoozer (1997:16) 'largely a matter of language and language is largely a matter of theology'. Cf. Schmidt (2016).

special revelations divinely poured out from the heavens, but much rather as mediated forms of natural and theological inspiration, in terms of the well-known and –accepted dictum:

fides quaerens intellectum ('Faith seeking understanding').[6]

6 Migliore (1991:2) attributes this definition variously to Augustine and Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109). It seems obvious to note that the cultural worldview and metaphorical conceptualisations of the Biblical Hebrew sages on God, religion and wisdom differ greatly from the Greek and Latin scholars. Cf. Plantinga, Thompson and Lundberg (2011:8) and Schmidt (2016).

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Chapter 5

What happened to the prophets in South Africa since 1994?[1]

S.D. (Fanie) Snyman[2]

This contribution endeavours to trace developments in the study of the prophetic literature of the Old Testament in South Africa during 1995-2015. After exploring previous investigations on the state of Old Testament scholarship in South Africa, some observations are made on the publication of articles pertaining to the prophetic literature. Some trends are pointed out and in the end, a few suggestions are made concerning the future of Old Testament Studies in South Africa. Ultimately it is argued that both the local and the global, the then and the now must be kept intact to secure a vibrant study of the Old Testament in the years to come.

1. Introduction: Problem statement and methodological remarks

This contribution aims to provide the reader with a broad overview of developments in the field of Old Testament Studies in South Africa during the last twenty odd years. The problem statement investigated is formulated in the title of this contribution: What happened to the prophets in South Africa since 1994? By the term 'prophets' I refer to the so-called 'Latter Prophets' in the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible. Although the investigation will touch upon the broad field of Old Testament Studies in general, the focus will be primarily

1 An expanded version of a paper read at the congress of the International Organization for the Study of the Old Testament (IOSOT) held at the University of Stellenbosch, 4-9 September 2016.

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on the prophetic literature and more specifically the Latter Prophets of the Old Testament. The date mentioned refers to the political change South Africa made to a fully representative democratic dispensation in 1994.

The method followed to answer this question was to investigate the publication of articles on the Latter Prophets in *Old Testament Essays* since 1995 till 2015, thus covering a period of twenty years. This methodological approach follows the approach used by Masenya and Ramantswana (2012:589-637) when they investigated articles published in that journal from 1994-2010. It will at once be apparent that the method followed contains limitations. The investigation is limited to the Latter Prophets only and only articles published in *Old Testament Essays* are taken into account. The reasons for this approach are simply to keep this investigation within controllable limits and secondly because *Old Testament Essays* may be seen as the flagship academic journal on the study of the Old Testament in South Africa. The aim of this contribution is to provide a snapshot of Old Testament scholarship in South Africa as reflected in the *Old Testament Essays* journal. The present investigation can thus in no way claim to be comprehensive.

There are also other possibilities that could have been followed. One could have consulted other theological journals both locally and abroad to gain a more comprehensive view of what have been published in the field of Old Testament Studies. It will also be interesting to investigate the research done on a specific prophetic book in the Old Testament and to determine developments that took place in the research on a book within the prophetic literature. Another possibility that may also be fruitful would be to examine doctoral theses written by Old Testament scholars during the last twenty years. This kind of investigation would also yield interesting findings in tracing trends in Old Testament scholarship in South Africa.

To look back on what was achieved has also been done elsewhere. In 2015, the 75th anniversary of the Dutch Old Testament study society, 'Het Oud-testamentisch Werkgezelschap in Nederland en België' was celebrated (Spronk 2016) with contributions on trends in Dutch Old Testament scholarship.

2. Previous investigations on the state of Old Testament scholarship in South Africa

The present investigation is not the first one of its kind. In the past twenty odd years, other investigations of this kind have been done.

2.1 Le Roux 1993

A good starting point will be to begin with the monograph Le Roux (1993) wrote on the history of Old Testament scholarship in South Africa providing the reader with an overview of the trends and emphases in Old Testament scholarship in South-Africa since the founding of the Old Testament Society of South-Africa in 1957 up to 1987, thus covering a period of thirty years. In this monograph, Le Roux depicted Old Testament scholarship in South Africa at that time as a 'story of two ways', meaning a historical or diachronic reading of Old Testament texts over against a structural or synchronic reading of the Old Testament texts. Old Testament scholarship is seen as either focusing on the production of texts or on texts in their so-called final form. Neither of these two dominant modes of reading Old Testament texts made it a necessity to pay attention to the current context within which the texts are read by scholars. Looking back and with the benefit of hindsight one wonders if the characterisation of Old Testament scholarship in South Africa as 'a story of two ways' was not perhaps an oversimplification of the scene of Old Testament Studies at that time. This may be because the book was written in the midst of a heated debate on methodology within the guild of Old Testament scholars in South Africa during the late seventies and early eighties of the previous century. Almost another 30 years have lapsed so it is time to not only re-evaluate the early years of Old Testament scholarship but also to update the history of Old Testament scholarship in South Africa.

2.2 Deist 1994

The publication by Deist (1992, 1994) may serve as an initial point of orientation. In this paper, Deist provided a brief overview of the current state of Old Testament scholarship at that time. He highlighted the variety of approaches followed by Old Testament scholars since the late sixties and early seventies of

the previous century. Earlier, the monograph of le Roux is mentioned where he characterised the study of the Old Testament as a 'story of two ways'. Deist clearly differed from the view of Le Roux and argued that a variety of approaches were followed already since the late sixties and early seventies. In this regard, Deist (1994:34-35) mentioned historical criticism, structural and discourse analysis, sociological and psychological textual analysis, speech act theory and reception theory, poetics and deconstruction and post-modernism as approaches followed by South African Old Testament scholars. Deist (1994:35-36) referred to more than twenty Old Testament scholars but with only Mosala as the single black scholar mentioned. In September 1991, a symposium initiated and organised by the late Prof. J.P.J. (Hannes) Olivier from the University of Stellenbosch to bring Old Testament scholars together to reflect on the demands a new political dispensation in South Africa may have on the study of the Old Testament proved the point Deist made. The varieties of approaches followed were discussed at that conference (Botha, Bosman, Burden & Olivier 1994). Interesting, however, is that only one paper read by a 'black' South African Old Testament scholar was published (Abrahams 1994:244-253).

Deist made a few important observations. According to him, 'South African Biblical scholars followed every move made by scholars in Europe and the USA' (Deist 1994:34) so much so 'that the present South African scene of Old Testament Studies does not look very different from that in Europe or the USA' (Deist 1994:36). This resulted in a lack of theological reflection as well as a lack of a truly South African approach to the study of the Old Testament (Deist 1994:36-38). Without suggesting in any way that South African Old Testament Studies should withdraw from the international arena of Old Testament Studies, he nevertheless pleaded for an approach that will take the South African context seriously so that we can provide answers to 'our specific problems' (Deist 1994:39). The critical question to be addressed is 'what are the questions posed to us by our context?' (Deist 1994:40).

Unfortunately, Deist himself did not elaborate on the challenge he posed to South African Old Testament scholars. Neither did he give an indication of what he had in mind when he referred to 'context'. Did he mean the political context, the intellectual context, the sociological context or the context of the

churches in South Africa? He also did not give any hint in terms of what kind of problems he referred to and where or how the study of the Old Testament can make a contribution solving the problems we are faced with in South Africa. Deist himself did not make a contribution with regard to the directions he proposed. Currently, we are confronted with a multitude of ethical problems but would that then mean that we should have been paying more attention to the ethics of the Old Testament?

2.3 Lombaard 2006

According to Lombaard (2006:144), South African scholarship may be categorised into two broad approaches: exegetical-theological and hermeneutical-theological studies. For Lombaard (2006:146-151), two 'false pieties' should be recognised. False piety one is a kind of an implicit acceptance that hermeneutics outranks exegesis. The second false piety is the call for Africanisation or contextualisation/relevance. Lombaard is critical of an Africanisation or contextualisation of the Old Testament. Lombaard's answer to this unmasking of false pieties is the study of the Old Testament – 'its text, theology, languages, history, cultural background and related matters. Exegesis is our strength' (Lombaard 2006:152).

2.4 Van Heerden 2009

In 2009, Van Heerden (2009:695-718) provided us with an overview of research done on the wisdom literature since 1987 till 2009. He provides the reader with a fairly comprehensive review of publications relating to the theme of wisdom literature and environmental studies. At the end of his investigation, Van Heerden (2009:712-714) identified four tendencies emanating as the results of the research he did. Eco-theological studies done by Old Testament scholars were mainly published in books addressing the matter of theology and environment. Secondly, Van Heerden distinguishes three types of eco-theological studies, a covenantal type focusing on the Biblical text; a prophetic type focusing on the impact of ideology and a mystic type with a focus on an ecstatic experience of communion within the earth community. Thirdly, Van Heerden challenges Old Testament scholars to think of new metaphors from

the Old Testament that may foster hope and guide our attitudes in the context of the environmental crisis. Lastly, Van Heerden calls our attention to issues that require further research, for instance, the relationship between gender and earth; the need for African perspectives on eco-theology; a dialogue between different religious traditions and lastly, the impact of societal problems on ecological matters.

2.5 Masenya and Ramantswana 2012

In 2012, Masenya and Ramantswana (2012:598-637) asked the question 'if there is anything new under the sun in South African Old Testament Scholarship' or 'does South African Old Testament scholarship reflect a paradigm shift from being mostly focused on the Biblical text and its original contexts to reflecting more on contemporary issues?'. Masenya and Ramantswana are clear about their own hermeneutical point of departure. Against the focus on the text, as it has been in the past, their point of departure is to read the Bible in the light of present-day contexts. This means that the South African context is the social location from which the Biblical text is read (Masenya & Ramantswana 2012:599). Reading the Biblical text is a two-way process – one reads the text in terms of one's experience and one reads one's experience in terms of the text (Masenya & Ramantswana 2012:599-600). The aim of the article they wrote is to investigate 'how scholars integrate the subject-matter of Biblical Studies/Old Testament Studies with the modern day readers' contexts, including African contexts (Masenya & Ramantswana 2012:603).

The result of their investigation is that South African scholarship is still white male-dominated as evidenced by the current membership of the Old Testament Society of South Africa and the staff profile in South African universities (Masenya & Ramantswana 2012:632). Furthermore, very few South African Old Testament scholars engage pertinent issues affecting the African continent (Masenya & Ramantswana 2012:633). The net result of the investigation is thus that Old Testament Studies in South Africa remained essentially unchanged (Masenya & Ramantswana 2012:634). The Eurocentric approach of a historical-critical enquiry into the text seemed to have won the day. By staying with Western paradigms, Old Testament scholars alienated

themselves from the (South) African context. In a sense, history repeats itself, Masenya and Ramantswana observed, because during the apartheid years 'South African Old Testament scholars also chose not to prophesy' (Masenya & Ramantswana 2012:634).

2.6 Meyer 2015

In 2015, Meyer responded to the questions Masenya and Ramantswana (2012:598-637) posed. Meyer argues at length that a historical inquiry into the text is something we cannot do without. In fact, even scholars who propagate an engagement with contemporary issues will concede that as Meyer demonstrated (2015:3-6). Meyer also warns against a too shallow interpretation and an easy way out of the problematics of a text. The result is that he finds himself reluctant to engage with contemporary issues and is far more comfortable with 'constructing ancient histories than engaging with contemporary issues' (Meyer 2015:6).

2.7 Bosman 2015

Recently, Bosman (2015a:636-644) provided an overview of studies done in Old Testament. Bosman succeeded in highlighting several trends in South African Old Testament scholarship. In this regard he discussed the African continent as context; interpretation from African (cultural/plural) perspectives; eco-theological perspectives; feminist/womanist perspectives; philosophy of religion perspective and a spirituality perspective. Bosman (2015a:650) concluded by stating that 'current Old Testament scholars should reflect on the impact and legacy their research will have in future'. He pleaded for multi-dimensional approaches where the study of the ancient text, as well as the current African/South African context can be cultivated. Elsewhere he stated the same conviction:

> The interface between academic and popular interpretations of the Old Testament will remain an important concern for most African members of the guild of Biblical scholarship. This inevitable emphasis on reception, however valid, cannot afford any blanket disdain for matters related to the critical investigation of the text as a literary and as a historical phenomenon (Bosman 2015a:267-268).

3. Observing the data

Part of this investigation was to do a survey of publications in *Old Testament Essays* since 1995. From 1995-1999 only four articles by three black Old Testament scholars – one of them female – were published (Kawale 1995:7-30; Masenya 1997:439-448, 1998:271-287; Zulu 1998:182-194). Only nine females published articles out of a total of more or less 150 articles published in 1995-1999.

During the next five years (2000-2004), twenty articles were published by female scholars and five articles were published by black Old Testament scholars. The next period of five years (2005-2009) witnessed a rise in the articles published by black Old Testament scholars. No less than 22 articles emanated from black Old Testament scholars and 43 articles were published by female scholars. The period stretching from 2010-2015 witnessed an even sharper increase in the amount of articles published by black scholars. No less than 57 articles were published during this period while 31 articles were published by female scholars.

Some progress has been made: During 1995-1999, only four articles by black Old Testament scholars were published over against 57 articles during the period from 2010-2015. The number of published articles by female scholars increased from nine during 1995-1999 to 45 during 2005-2009 and 31 from 2010-2015. Only 4% of articles published were authored by black Old Testament scholars during the period of 1995-1999. During the 2010-2015 period, 23,3% of articles were published by black Old Testament scholars. Also, during this period, the number of articles published by female Old Testament scholars rose from 7% to almost 13% of the total number of articles published.

The prophetic book of Jeremiah seems to be the favourite amongst Old Testament scholars with 19 articles published between 1995-2015 against 17 on the book of Isaiah and only seven on the book of Ezekiel. Publications on the Book of the Twelve are fairly evenly spread with published articles ranging between four (Micah, Habakkuk) to six articles (Amos, Zechariah, Malachi) dedicated to the respective books. Two articles each were published

on Obadiah and Haggai while only one article was published on Zephaniah. Interesting enough, no article on the book of Joel was published during the period investigated. The book of Jonah seems to be the favourite one amongst the Book of the Twelve with seven articles published.

4. Tracing the trends in Old Testament scholarship pertaining to the Latter Prophets

Did we respond to the challenges posed by Deist to Old Testament scholarship? We have to admit that Old Testament scholarship, in general, is still overly orientated to trends in Europe and the USA. Should this be seen as a negative that should rather be avoided by now twenty years after 1994? To my mind, no. South African Old Testament scholarship is and will be part of the global discussion on problems and unresolved issues in the research done in Old Testament Studies in general and the prophetic literature in particular. The study of the Old Testament is a global enterprise.

We also did not develop a uniquely South African way of engaging with the Old Testament. Fresh approaches and new methodologies are usually not developed collectively but are developed by individuals as Bosman (2015a:636-654) illustrated and then followed and refined by others. Masenya's Bosadi approach (Masenya 2005:741-751) or the approach developed by West (1991) and more recently, the approach developed by Gericke (2010:627-651) and Lombaard (2012) are all approaches that may be seen as uniquely South African approaches to the study of the Old Testament, but these scholars are individuals.

We did not really engage in a theological reflection on the Old Testament as Deist challenged us to do. Although we did produce some research highlighting the theological message of the Old Testament and the prophetic literature in particular (Peels & Snyman 2012), this challenge still remains a challenge to be met in future. Research on the prophetic literature focuses on other issues with too little attention paid to the theology of the prophetic literature. It is, for instance, quite significant that South African Old Testament scholarship has not yet produced a Theology of the Old Testament. We need to ask ourselves in what way did our context really play a significant role in our research agendas.

Although I agree with Masenya and Ramatswana that Old Testament scholarship tended to be not interested primarily in current issues of the day, I disagree with them that Old Testament Studies remain essentially unchanged. It is at once apparent that there was a marked increase in the publication of articles coming from black scholars. In this sense, the landscape of Old Testament scholarship in South Africa has been immensely enriched by their contributions. The contribution that black Old Testament scholars make to our knowledge and understanding of the prophetic literature lies especially in their hermeneutical engagement with the context they come from.

Female Old Testament scholars (both black and white) are still a minority. Interesting enough, the issue of the presence of female Old Testament scholars hardly came to mind in the overviews of Le Roux and Deist. Bosman (2015a:651) rightly observed that 'patriarchy in different shapes and sizes disallowed a strong female voice in African Old Testament scholarship'. The female contributors to *Old Testament Essays* are so few that they can be named. In an earlier age, one may mention the names of Dalene Heyns, Joan Annandale, Frances Klopper and Helen Efthimiades-Keith, while more recent and regular contributors are Madipoane Masenya, Gerda de Villiers, Julie Claassens, Magdel le Roux and Charlene van der Walt.

It seems as if Masenya and Ramantswana view a reading of the Old Testament from a South African contextual point of view as the one and the only alternative to a more historical or 'Western' reading of the Old Testament. Are we satisfied with the notion that engaging with contemporary issues by reading the Old Testament text from a particular social location is the answer to the question of an indigenous South African brand of Old Testament scholarship? I do not think so. To address contemporary issues is not something unique or special to South African Old Testament scholarship. It is rather the hallmark of African Old Testament scholarship including South African Old Testament scholars. The observation made by Holter still holds true:

> A most characteristic feature of African theology in general, and certainly also of African Old Testament scholarship, is its presence within the social, political and ecclesiastical context of Africa. As far as Old Testament scholarship is concerned, this presence often

> reflects a deliberate will to deal with questions considered as relevant to individual believers, church and society, and it is based upon the assumption that there is some sort of correspondence between the African experience and the Old Testament (Holter 1998:241).

More recently, Bosman (2015a:266) concurs with this observation when he remarks: 'Therefore the reception of flesh-and-blood African readers of the Old Testament entail taking serious cognisance of their local social locations without aspiring to be relevant for the African continent as a whole'.

It is also not entirely true to claim that white South African Old Testament scholars do not engage in contemporary issues. In fact, Masenya and Ramantswana (2012:605-629) concede this in their article on the state of South African Old Testament scholarship. White South African Old Testament scholars did address local issues but they did so in other ways by publishing books and articles in non-accredited and more popular (sometimes church-related) journals. One can refer here to publications on power and social justice (Strydom & Wessels 2000). In addition, Deist (1976, 1981) excelled in publications aimed at the ordinary Bible reader. Old Testament scholars contributed to publications, such as the extremely popular *Bybel in Praktyk* (Vosloo & van Rensburg 1993) and the *Bybellennium* (Vosloo & van Rensburg 1999) – publications aimed at applying the Biblical text to the ordinary and current reader of the Bible. White South African Old Testament scholars also addressed present-day issues in scholarly articles. Strydom (1997:494-511, 2000:103-108, 2005:356-370) published several articles relating the prophets of the Old Testament with current South Africa. Spangenberg (2009:662-676) argues that the ecological crisis we face will prompt Old Testament scholars to research the Old Testament from that perspective. Scheepers (2010:161-177) addressed ethnicity, cultural diversity and poverty in South Africa from an archaeological point of view. White South African scholars also engage in the problem of how to bridge the gap between ordinary Bible readers and scientific approaches done by scholars in Old and New Testament. Already in 1995, Le Roux (1995:167-190) wrestled with the problem of the 'then' and 'now' and argued for a life related theology that will comprise of both the 'what it meant' and 'what it means' questions (cf. also

Jonker 1997:69-83,2005:637-650; Lombaard 2006:144-155; Van Heerden 2006:500-524).

5. Facing the future

Old Testament scholarship in South Africa is in a unique position by being the meeting ground for African approaches to the Old Testament as well as traditional Western approaches. It is thus not a matter of either/or but rather a matter of both/and. The recent meeting of the International Organisation for the Study of the Old Testament (IOSOT) hosted by Stellenbosch University (4-9 September 2016) is of symbolic meaning. For the first time, a European Old Testament academic society met on African soil. Being the meeting ground between different approaches to the Old Testament means that we may critically engage in academic debates in order to refine our approaches and methodologies. Various scholars have made progress in this regard (Mtshiselwa 2011:668-689; Snyman 2011:464-491; West 1999, 2000:29-53). Bosman (2015a:652) speaks in this regard of a vulnerable but resilient dialogue with those who differ from us in acknowledgement of our interconnectedness.

There is still much theoretical reflection to be done on the way in which we do Old Testament Studies in South Africa. Lombaard's question (2006:150) 'what would make a study African' is still not answered in a satisfactory manner. The study of the Old Testament is more than engaging Old Testament texts to contemporary issues. As Masenya and Ramantswana (2012:589-637) point out in their article, to read Old Testament texts in the light of present-day contexts is not a particularly South African approach, nor is it unique to Africa or South Africa. It is something that African Old Testament scholars across the African continent do and they do so by making use of methodologies developed elsewhere. The same phenomenon is found in Latin America and in Asia.

We still lack critical methodological reflection on the methodologies we use in the study of the Old Testament. What would be the best way to do it? If we choose to address contemporary issues in church and society from an Old Testament perspective, then we should also engage in the theoretical question of how do we engage with ethical matters from an Old Testament perspective.

It is noteworthy that theoretical reflection on the subject of the ethics of the Old Testament is almost non-existent in South Africa. Lombaard (2006:152) suggests that we shall have to focus on the exegesis of the text together with the theology, languages, history, cultural background and related matters. By focusing on this strength in a focused way, university, church and society are best served.

If the local situation is of such importance that it serves as the starting point on reflecting on the Old Testament, then how does one define the concept of context? Does context refer to the local situation of the researcher? Does context refer to the current political and/or socio-economical, ecclesial, intellectual, cultural or geographical position of (some) South Africans? Does context refer to Masenya's womanhood ('bosadi') approach as 'the unique experience of an African-South African woman' (Masenya 2005:741-751)? Does context refer to a broader African context, and if so what do we mean by an African context since Africa is a rather broad concept that covers a multitude of languages, cultures, customs, etc? Does context refer to the South African context or should we narrow context down to a particular local cultural context (Mtshiselwa 2011:668-675)? So, if we embark from a contextual point of departure, the very notion of what we mean by context must be more clearly refined.

Context does play a role. The #FeesMustFall campaign at the end of 2015 and the student unrest experienced on almost all campuses in South Africa in February 2016 and that escalated during September 2016 to such an extent that most universities in South Africa had to close for a longer or shorter period, make a reflection on the teaching and research done in Old Testament (and for theology at large for that matter) an imperative. Most recently, questions were asked about the curricula followed by universities and in particular whether or not university curricula still reflect a colonial approach and to what extent curricula were transformed to an African way. The age-old questions of knowledge 'for whom and to what effect' must be addressed anew broadening the question even more to 'why, where and when' as well. The curriculum taught at the undergraduate level will have an impact on the postgraduate research done.

Furthermore, there are imperatives for transformation in higher education that will also influence the way in which we as Old Testament scholars teach and research the Old Testament in South Africa.

6. Conclusion

The Old Testament is a collection of writings from more than two thousand years ago. We can, therefore, not escape the historical dimension of the Old Testament text. At the same time, current readers of the Old Testament seek the relevance of these ancient texts in their day-to-day living conditions. As the experts in Old Testament, South African Old Testament scholars can also not escape the obligation to bridge the divide between the then and now of Old Testament texts. This calls for a both/and position. South African Old Testament scholars cannot afford themselves the luxury of a disinterested study of the text. At the same time, the historical dimension of the text cannot be ignored.

It is essential that South African Old Testament scholarship maintains a global and local interest. We are part of a global enterprise of finding answers to the problems raised by the scientific study of the Old Testament. At the same time, we cannot afford to study the Old Testament decontextualised from any particular local community. A glocal (as a conflation of both global and local) interest seems to be the most appropriate way to follow.

The study of the Old Testament cannot be narrowed down to one or two dominant ways. The present state of Old Testament Studies is rather a kaleidoscope of different approaches, exegetical methodologies, hermeneutical interests and this is the way it will be for the foreseeable future. The variety of approaches should rather be embraced than lamented. In a nutshell, both the local and the global, the then and the now must be kept intact to secure a vibrant study of the Old Testament in the years to come.

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Chapter 6

Pauline Studies in South Africa: Did anything change in 50 years?

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1. Introduction

In the invitation to this research project sent out by Rian Venter, the following paragraph, in particular, caught my attention:

> Epistemological transformation is a major dimension of the radical changes which are taking place and find concrete embodiment in curricular and research practices. These cannot be responsibly approached without an acquaintance with the histories of individual disciplines and their evolving and mutating nature. Applied to theology: each discipline has its own history, and has already experienced reconstruction globally and specifically also in South Africa. These genealogical developments and re-envisioning should be systematically and comprehensively mapped. The absence of this in theological discourse is a clear intellectual and academic lacuna in South Africa.

Andrie du Toit (1993a, 1993b, 1994), Hermie van Zyl (2000) and Pieter De Villiers (2005a, 2005b) have already done some important work in terms of the mapping of New Testament Studies as an academic discipline in South Africa. The aim of this brief study is much more modest and focuses, in particular, on Pauline Studies. I will not attempt to cover everything that has been done in this regard in South Africa. It is clear from the studies of the abovementioned three colleagues that such a massive undertaking would only be possible as part of a huge research project. I rather attempt to offer a

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tentative answer to the question: 'Did anything change in Pauline Studies in South Africa in the past 50 years?' I do so by comparing some of the recent volumes of *Neotestamentica* with the three earliest volumes devoted to Pauline Studies, the first of which was published almost 50 years ago. Although this does not provide a full picture of the situation, it might perhaps help us gain an impression of the changes that took place – a type of 'Instagram' of Pauline Studies in South Africa if you like – thus highlighting certain trends that might be helpful for the issue addressed by this research project.

The reason why I decided on *Neotestamentica* is, first, the fact that it is published by the New Testament Society of Southern Africa (NTSSA) – a scholarly society that had a major impact on the academic study of the New Testament in this country,[2] and second, that *Neotestamentica* is highly regarded as a scholarly journal and quite rightly viewed as providing a window on New Testament scholarship in this country.

I will begin by briefly examining the articles in the first three issues of *Neotestamentica* devoted to Pauline themes, followed by those published since 2012. These will already show some differences. The next section will focus on global developments in Pauline Studies, which will serve as preparation for the final section, where we will try to understand the changes that took place.

2. Pauline Studies in South Africa as reflected in certain volumes of *Neotestamentica*

The NTSSA was founded in March 1965 in Potchefstroom (De Villiers 2005a:95). The second meeting was held in July 1966 in Stellenbosch. Some of the papers read at that meeting were published in co-operation with the Society of the Study of the Old Testament under the title *Biblical Studies – 1966* (Du Toit 1967:7).[3] The third meeting was held in July 1967

2 The huge impact of the NTSSA on the academic study of the New Testament in South Africa has been chronicled in an excellent way by De Villiers (2005a; 2005b).

3 Du Toit (1967:7) mentions several papers: The date of the death of Jesus and the conversion of Paul; the authorship of the Epistle of Jude; the nature of the witness of the church in the world according to Matthew 5:13-16; the curse of the cross and the renewal of the covenant; a motivation for θεός in Romans 9:5; exegesis and kerugma;

in Pretoria; the papers read at that conference were published in the first issue of *Neotestamentica* in 1967.[4] The theme of both the conference and the first issue of *Neotestamentica* was the Sermon on the Mount, thus setting a pattern that would last a long time: The meeting of the society would be devoted to a particular theme, and the papers would be published in the ensuing issue of the journal.[5]

The first issue of *Neotestamentica* devoted to Pauline Studies was Volume 3, published in 1969. This issue consisted of the papers that were read at the conference held in Potchefstroom earlier that year. The conference theme was 'Paul's view of the *pneuma*'.[6] Of the six papers, Willem Vorster's one was devoted to an exegetical issue, namely the interpretation of the problematic sentence ὁ δὲ κύριος τὸ πνεῦμά ἐστιν in 2 Corinthians 3:17 (Vorster 1969:37-46). The remaining five papers were devoted to important theological themes regarding the Spirit in Pauline theology. P.J. du Plessis (1969:9-20) discussed the concept in Pauline theology; Johnny Roberts (1969:21-36), the Spirit and *charismata* in the Pauline Letters; Bernard Combrink (1969:45-51), the relationship between Spirit and power; Andrie du Toit (1969:52-60), the expression ἐν πνεύματι in Paul's Letters, and Johannes Engelbrecht (1969:61-75), Spirit and eschatology in Paul's Letters. The papers all reflect a high standard of scholarship, and it is

and παῖς θεοῦ and ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ in Acts 1-13. Of these only the last three appeared in *Biblical Studies – 1966*. Of these the one by Jannie Louw (1966:227-229; A motivation for θεός in Rom. 9:5) is important for our study. As De Villiers (2005b:237-238) shows, Louw begins by referring to various interpretations of the text, and then goes on to offer a "'structural"' analysis – what would later become the hall mark of his academic contribution – in which he drew attention to important textual characteristics in order to reach a decision on this exegetical matter.

4 This volume also contained one article on a different theme, that of Sarel van Rensburg on sanctification according to the New Testament; this paper was read at the first meeting of the society.

5 This pattern was only changed in 1987 from when on an additional issue was published every year. Cf. De Villiers (2005a:81, n. 11.)

6 All the papers were read in Afrikaans and, except for the one by Du Plessis, published in Afrikaans, with English summaries at the end. The Afrikaans title of the issue was 'Die *pneuma* by Paulus. Enkele gedagtes oor die Heilige Gees in die Briewe van Paulus.'

obvious that the authors were well aware of international developments and relied mostly on European sources, namely, English, Dutch and German works.

Seven years later, Pauline Studies again received attention. *Neotestamentica* 10 was devoted to 'Ministry in the Pauline Letters' and contained papers read at the twelfth meeting of the Society, held at the University of South Africa earlier that year. The pattern is similar to that followed in Volume 3. The following important aspects regarding ministry in Paul are worked out in detail: the question as to whether church offices can be founded on Paul (Roberts 1976:1-19); the relationship between Christ's rule and that in the church (Du Plessis 1976:20-30); *charisma* and church office (Lombard 1976:31-52); the relationship between apostolate and office in Paul's theology (Malan 1976:53-68); indications of church rule/government in Pauline paraenetic material (De Villiers 1976:69-80); church order in the Pastoral Epistles (Floor 1976:81-91); women and ecclesiastical ministries in Paul (Pelser 1976:92-109), and the offices in the early church history (Botha 1976:110-123). In terms of scholarship, the verdict should be similar to that of *Neotestamentica* 3: good scholarship, well aware of developments in European New Testament scholarship, and expressing similar sentiments, although, in most instances, tending towards the conservative side, for example, in terms of Pauline authorship of the Deutero-Pauline Letters – an issue that has a considerable impact on this particular theme.[7]

The 1981 NTSSA conference was again devoted to Pauline Studies. This seventeenth meeting of the society was held in Stellenbosch. The pattern is basically similar to the previous two instances. The theme 'Salvation by faith; aspects of Pauline theology' was scrutinised from various angles. Two differences should be mentioned: first, an international scholar – Hendrikus Boers, from the Candler School of Theology, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia, also made a contribution, and secondly, almost all the contributors used discourse analysis in their papers. This comes as no surprise, as the highly influential work of Jannie Louw (1979) on Romans was published two years earlier. The following themes were discussed: the problem of Jews and Gentiles in the macro-structure of Romans (Boers 1982:1-11); righteousness in Romans, with special

7 The notable exception in this regard was Pelser.

reference to Romans 3:19-31 (Roberts 1982:12-33); reconciliation in Romans (Fryer 1982:34-68); the Adam-Christ typology in Romans 5:12-21 (Lombard 1982:69-100); the objective reality of the renewal of life in Romans 6:1-11 (Pelser 1982:101-117); bound to do right (Malan 1982:118-138); the children of God in Romans 8 (Van Rensburg 1982:139-179); the Holy Spirit and the eschatological view in Romans 8 (Coetzer 1982:180-198); and the salvation of Israel according to Romans 9-11 (De Villiers 1982:199-221).

To summarise: The pattern that we have seen developing is one of an emphasis on specific theological themes (the Spirit, ministry, salvation by faith) worked out thoroughly, with leading European scholars as the primary discussion partners.

Let us now jump 30 years, from 1991 to 2011, to the most recent conference of the NTSSA devoted to Pauline Studies. This meeting was held from 6-9 September 2011 on the Potchefstroom campus of North-West University (this description in itself already indicates the major political changes that took place in the meantime). The theme of the conference was 'Early Christianity and Empire – then and now'. The keynote speaker was Kathy Ehrensperger from the University of Wales, on the topic 'Speaking Greek under Rome – Paul, the power of language and the language of power'. The four other main papers were all devoted to aspects of Empire Studies: Nestor Miguez (from Buenos Aires, Argentina) addressed the meeting on 'The political and economic dimension of grace in Paul'. Take note of how this approach differs from the approach when salvation of faith was the theme of the conference thirty years earlier. Pieter J.J. Botha (Unisa) spoke on 'Resisting, negotiating and imitating Empire: New Testament scholarship and imperial contexts'; Francois Wessels (Stellenbosch University) on 'The anti-imperial Paul', and Christoph Stenschke (Wiedenest, Germany) on 'Be subject to the governing authorities and pay to all what is due them …, but God's redeemer will come from Zion! A nuanced view of the Empire in Paul's Letter to the Romans'.[8] The

8 Some of these papers were published in *Neotestamentica* during 2012 (in some cases in an altered form): Ehrensperger (2012:9-29); Miguez (2012:287-298) and Stenschke (2012:338-378). By now the practice that all the papers of a particular conference were to be published in a specific volume had been abandoned.

conspicuous difference in terms of earlier approaches is the appropriation of Pauline literature in terms of a different framework. Let us examine the article by the keynote speaker, Kathy Ehrensperger, as an example. She questions two notions, namely, that Paul's use of 'Hellenism' enabled him to liberate the Gospel from Jewish limitations, and that he used Greek as a language of power, thereby introducing a 'dominating power discourse into the Christ-movement' (Ehrensperger 2012:10). Instead, she proposes that Paul should be viewed as 'part of a creative Jewish discourse which used Greek in a particularly Jewish way and thereby related to and subverted the dominating cultural and political discourse of the time' (Ehrensperger 2012:10).

The change that occurred can also be noted when one examines other articles published in *Neotestamentica* from 2012 to 2015. On the one hand, one still finds good scholarly contributions along traditional lines. See, for example, the studies of Michael Sokupa (2012:172-189) who analyses Colossians 2:16 in order to arrive at a better description of the opponents reflected in the letter; Dirk Venter (2014:283-302) who offers a careful interpretation of the obligations of brothers, sons and debtors in Romans 8:12-17, and Philip la Grange du Toit (2015) who argues for a different interpretation of Paul's reference to keeping the commandments in 1 Corinthians 7:19. On the other hand, it is important to note that the majority of the articles on Pauline themes were presented in terms of frameworks that differed from such an exegetical and theological framework. I highlight three examples.

First, Jeremy Punt (2013:146-169) investigates the connections between brothership language, gender concerns and slavery metaphors in Galatians, and shows the complexity of these relationships. He argues that this should make one wary of making simplistic claims that social distinctions between males and females and between the free and slaves did not play any role in Pauline communities in Galatia; the actual situation was much more complex.[9]

9 Cf. also another article by him in which he draws attention to the 'context interplay between genealogies and masculinity' (Punt 2014:303) in the allegory that Paul develops in Galatians 4:21–5:1.

Secondly, Elna Mouton (2014:163-185) reads Ephesians 5:21-33 – a text drenched with the patriarchal context within which it originated – in terms of a feminist[10] and postcolonial framework, and shows how it can be appropriated in a resistant way by keeping its 'transformative potential … in balance with its paradoxical relation to the rest of the letter, as well as its life-threatening history of interpretation' (Mouton 2014:181-182). As she puts it: '[T]he text primarily challenges us to use its explicit theological thrust as a rhetorical *lens* to read against its patriarchal grain of history of reception' (Mouton 2014:181; her emphasis). Once again, the difference between such an approach and that underlying the 1976 conference on ministry in the Pauline Letters is clear.

Thirdly, Pieter Craffert (2014:387-403) approaches heavenly journeys in the Bible (such as the one mentioned by Paul in 2 Cor. 12:2-4) from the perspective of secular studies of out-of-body experiences. The implications of such an approach for the social-scientific reading of the New Testament are then pointed out: It is necessary to move beyond mere descriptions of such journeys in terms of modern social-scientific terms, and rather focus on journeys such as neuro-cultural phenomena. According to him, this would move the debate away from the issue of veridicality to other matters, for example, the social functions that such journeys fulfil within a particular group or society.

3. Global trends in Pauline Studies

For the daunting task of outlining the major trends in Pauline scholarship, I will rely on three recent works.

As a point of departure, I take the work of Meeks and Fitzgerald, in particular, the three major trends identified by them. They highlight three major changes that occurred in Pauline Studies in the last century (Meeks & Fitzgerald 2007:589-591).

First, the *geographical setting* has moved slowly from Europe to North America. A century ago, there was no doubt about Germany being the geographical centre of Pauline Studies. Since World War II, however, this pattern has changed

10 Cf. Nortjé-Meyer (2015:1-19) for a good overview of the (slow) progress made by feminist New Testament scholarship in South Africa.

slowly. Nowadays, the majority of the studies on Pauline literature is published in North America.

Secondly, the academic conversation on Paul has become much more *diverse*. A century ago, the discussion was dominated by white male Protestants from Europe. Nowadays, male and female scholars from various denominations and literally from all over the world make important contributions to Pauline Studies.

Thirdly, Pauline Studies have become much more *interdisciplinary* in nature. This is partly due to the fact that the New Testament and Early Christianity were not only studied in seminaries or theological faculties, but also in departments of religion, where the focus of the subject had to be shifted, and increased interaction with other scholars from the humanities gave rise to new approaches. This very broad picture may be given more flesh in different ways. I give two examples.

First, let us examine the book by N.T. Wright, *Paul and His Recent Interpreters* (2015). Wright divides his overview into three sections: Paul among Jews and Gentiles, re-enter 'apocalyptic', and Paul in his world – and ours. In the first section, he begins with the contribution of F.C. Baur and then proceeds to the debate on whether Paul should be interpreted primarily in terms of a Gentile or Jewish origin. He then discusses the contribution of E.P. Sanders and the changes brought about by the New Perspective. In the second section, he turns to the renewed interest in an apocalyptic Paul. He discusses the contributions by Ernst Käsemann, J.C. Beker, Martin de Boer, Louis Martyn, and Douglas Campbell. The third section is devoted to the growing emphasis on social history, social science and attempts to provide a thick description in Pauline Studies, the most important scholars being Wayne Meeks and David Horrell. He also discusses the issue he summarises as 'Paul in the marketplace' (Wright 2015:305) – a deliberate attempt to bring Pauline Studies into dialogue with the thinkers of our day. In this regard, he refers to the works of scholars such as Giorgio Agamben and John Milbank.

Secondly, I refer to the *Paulus Handbuch*, edited by F.W. Horn (2013). This massive work (653 pages), to which most of the prominent German Pauline scholars contributed, begins with a brief overview of Pauline research. Although

it is presented from a different perspective, it overlaps to a large extent with the work of Wright. It also begins with a discussion of the contribution of Baur and then moves on to the history of religion school, followed by another section on the impact of Rudolf Bultmann and his students. The New Perspective on Paul also receives attention (although not with the same enthusiasm as Wright presents it), and finally, the overview moves to the impact of newer approaches, focusing on social history and history of religions.

Let us now examine the developments in Pauline Studies in South Africa against this very broad background.

4. Conclusion: Did anything change?

Back to the question raised at the beginning of this study: Did anything change in 50 years in Pauline Studies in South Africa? From the 'Instagram' of Pauline Studies in South Africa – hopefully, more than 'a poor reflection in a mirror' (1 Cor. 13:12; NIV 1984) – to which I have drawn your attention, it has become clear that the answer to this question should be in the affirmative. Important developments have indeed occurred in this part of the discipline. It has become clear that the academic study of Pauline literature in South Africa has been *broadened* in at least three ways, in a process reflecting, to a large extent, what has been happening globally in Pauline Studies.

First, there is a *growing diversity* in the participants involved in the academic discussion. In the first three issues of *Neotestamentica*, all the contributions were made by white males from the Protestant tradition. Nowadays, theirs is but one voice in the discussion of Paul; the conversation now also includes females, black scholars, and academics from diverse theological orientations.

Secondly, the traditional 'European' approach to Paul has been broadened to include *other theoretical frameworks.* In the earlier discussion, I mentioned new approaches such as Empire Studies, feminism, postcolonialism, gender studies and even neuro-sciences. Such changes reflect not only a change in methodology but also a shift at a deeper level. As Rian Venter pointed out, four crucial questions should be addressed when new knowledge is generated, namely '*Whose knowledge* is transmitted? *Whose perspective* is informing the knowledge?

To what effect is the knowledge conveyed? Who are the *conversation* partners?' (Venter 2015:185, his emphasis). Although New Testament scholarship in South Africa (and globally) still has a long way to go, some progress has already been made in terms of some of these issues in South Africa.

Thirdly, *the way in which Paul is appropriated for our times* has been broadened. It seems that 40, 50 years ago the main dialogue partner which the discipline had in mind was the institutionalised church (perhaps, in some instances, even in a narrower sense, Protestant churches). Nowadays, a broader audience seems to be the target: not only institutionalised churches but also society in general. This is true in particular when ideological-critical approaches are followed because issues that become important then include the (ab)use of power, the way in which gender construction and discrimination function, and the disastrous impact of colonialism. The effects of these issues are just as important in 2016 as they were in the Graeco-Roman world of the first century CE. Look again, for example, at the theme of the most recent meeting presented by the Pauline subgroup of the NTSSA: 'Early Christianity and empire – *then and now*' (my emphasis).

As mentioned earlier, Pauline scholarship in South Africa still has a long way to go. I want to identify at least five challenges that, in my opinion, scholars involved in the study of Paul should take seriously.

First, the diversity in approaches should be embraced not only for the sake of variety but also primarily because a change in approach often results in new insights and sometimes make old certainties crumble. As I pointed out above, Pauline scholars in South Africa already use a variety of approaches. However, a great deal more needs to be done. Simply view the variety of methods discussed in a recent book edited by Joseph Marchal (2012): historical approaches; rhetorical approaches; spatial perspectives; economic approaches; visual perspectives; feminist approaches; Jewish perspectives; African-American approaches (and we may add African approaches); Asian-American approaches; postcolonial approaches, and queer approaches. As far as I am aware, several of these have not yet been used by South African scholars.

Secondly, there is the challenge of taking our context more seriously. In a sense, the DNA of Biblical scholars makes them shy away from putting too much emphasis on their own contexts. This inclination was nurtured over centuries by a healthy respect for the Biblical documents and the contexts within which these documents originated. However, this may lead to a situation where the results of one's scholarly engagement may seem as having no consequence at all for the various publics that theology has to address. What we need in Pauline scholarship is, what Heikki Räisänen called, 'actualising interpretation' (Räisänen 1990:137-141; cf. also, more recently, Räisänen 2005:435-438), where the 'present-day significance' of our study of Paul becomes evident, for example, by considering how our readings of Paul may be used in a constructive way in our particular South African context. To mention but one issue: In our context, with its (continuing) history of the abuse of power, one would expect a tendency in Biblical and, in this instance, Pauline scholarship to point out the relevance of Paul's gospel for our context for this issue. One would also expect ideological-critical approaches such as feminism and African approaches to play a much more significant role in the appropriation of Paul for our times. Sadly, this does not happen. The title of a recent article lamenting this situation is telling: 'Africa, where art thou? Pondering post-apartheid South African New Testament scholarship' (Tsehla 2014:259-281).

Thirdly, there is the challenge of devising a comprehensive picture of Paul. I am aware that post-modernity has made us wary of master narratives, but what is the use of concentrating on all the interesting little bits in Paul's writings without all of this fitting into a broader, more comprehensive picture of Paul which can be tested against other proposals? It seems that we might be unable to see the wood for concentrating too much on the trees. I am not aware of any such comprehensive interpretations of Paul from a South African scholar. This might be due to the subsidy system of DHET that encourages the publication of articles instead of books. However, in other sections of New Testament Studies, this did not prevent scholars from publishing books. To mention but one, Andries van Aarde's 2001 book on the historical Jesus. It is also with envy that one looks at what is happening in other countries in terms of comprehensive pictures of Paul. Think, for example, of the discussion in

Germany on the recent theologies of Paul. See, for example, the book edited by Frey and Alkier (2013) in this regard.

Fourthly, the challenge highlighted by Wright and discussed earlier – taking 'Paul in the marketplace' seriously – still lies open to us. Although such a project might seem to be more urgent in highly secularised contexts such as Europe, the importance of engaging with philosophy and other subjects from the humanities cannot be ignored. In an African context, engagement with African philosophies and world views might be a fruitful avenue to start such a dialogue.

Finally, the overarching challenge for Pauline scholars (and indeed for all New Testament scholars) is to practise their discipline in such a way that it remains *a theological discipline*. It is easy to lose track of this ideal, be it as a result of overspecialisation, too much emphasis on methodology, or perhaps even the mistaken idea that Systematic Theology will take care of this for us. Theology, New Testament Studies, and Pauline Studies should, in the final instance, be concerned with the question of transcendence, of *God*. Recently, Paul-Gerhard Klumbies (2015) brought to our attention that this seems to have unfortunately slipped our minds often in the little more than two centuries since New Testament Studies is autonomous. Klumbies' call should be heeded – also by Pauline scholars in South Africa:

> Als *Theologie* versieht die Theologie des Neuen Testaments ihre Aufgabe allerdings, indem sie die neutestamentlichen Texte auf ihren Verweischarakter hin sichtet und den Gottesbezug als den Referenzpunkt der frühchristlichen Überlieferung in den Blick nimmt. Ihr als solches neutrales methodisches Instrumentarium ist ausgerichtet auf das übergeordnete theologische Interesse. ... Jenseits ihres methodisches kontrollierbaren Anteils bezieht sich die neutestamentliche Theologie mit ihrer Ausrichtung auf Gott als Gott auf einen Referenzpunkt auβerhalb ihres Textcorpus und jenseits empirisch belegbarer Erfassbarkeit (Klumbies 2015:161, his emphasis).

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Chapter 7

What makes Christology in a post-apartheid South Africa engaged and prophetic? Comparative study of Koopman and Maluleke

Jakub Urbaniak[1]

This study seeks to compare and assess the Christological insights of Nico Koopman and Tinyiko Maluleke, as representatives of public theology and black theology based on their engaged-prophetic character. Graham Ward fosters a way of 'engaged' theologising, which,

> [G]ives due attention to our historical, cultural, and social placement … a mode of theological enquiry concomitant with the incarnation of God in Christ and the Church as the body of Christ involved in the operations of redemption in and through the materialities of our embodiment and our cultures (Ward 2016:ix).

The Christological considerations of Koopman and Maluleke are measured also according to their prophetic potential, namely, in terms of their ability to spell out an alluring, inviting vision of an alternative community based on the principles of the reign of God and to offer courageous criticism where the status quo does not adhere to that vision, in particular where power is abused.

1. Introduction

This study attempts to compare and assess the Christological insights of Nico Koopman and Tinyiko Maluleke. Special attention is given to Koopman's

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reflection on the implications of the comprehensive lordship of Christ for theology's engagement in and responsibility for the public sphere; Trinitarian and Christological foundations of human dignity; Jesus as the utmost expression of divine and human vulnerability; and the threefold office of Christ as the key to understanding the public calling of the church. Regarding Maluleke, emphasis will be put on the preliminary questions about African culture(s) as a 'host' for Christ and identifying an African Jesus in the 'hidden transcripts'.[2]

In conclusion, I argue that Koopman's 'global Reformed Christ', albeit displaying an *African veneer*, upon scrutiny, appears to be unfamiliar with and unconcerned about the problems faced by most South Africans today, and thereby fails to constructively engage with African (especially black African) contexts of our day. Maluleke's Christological approach, on the other hand – thanks to his emphasis on cultural-theological factors necessary for *Africanness* to be acknowledged as a legitimate 'host' for Christ as well as his multi-faceted reflection on African appropriations of Jesus – meets the requirements for an engaged and prophetic Christology.

Koopman and Maluleke have been chosen as the prominent representatives of the two 'actors' on the local theological scene that seem to be best suited to embrace a radically engaged-prophetic trajectory: public theology and black theology.

'Public theology' can be broadly defined as a mode of doing theology that is intended to address matters of public importance (De Gruchy 2007:26). In South Africa, it has its fairly well-established headquarters at the Beyers

2 There are a number of topics raised by Koopman with regard to what has been traditionally labelled as functional Christology or, more commonly, as soteriology. These include: reconciliation as *hilasmos* / *katalassoo*; reconciliation and justice as the restoration of dignity through fostering an ethos of embrace and participation; the Belhar model of compassionate and covenantal justice; and the social implications of justification, especially for the creation of a specifically Christian human rights culture. Analogically, in Maluleke one finds, inter alia, reflection on the symbolical, representative and tentative nature of human reconciliation as illustrated by the tension between amnesty and justice inherent in the South African reconciliation process and by the TRC's own 'hegemony of truth'. I examine these soteriological themes in another comparative study of Koopman and Maluleke, which is going to be submitted for publication by the end of 2016 (provisional title: 'Public and black theology's takes on justice and reconciliation').

Naudé Centre for Public Theology in Stellenbosch, with Dirkie Smit and Nico Koopman as its main protagonists. It is practised around the country mainly, though not exclusively at Dutch Reformed institutions, yet some liberal English theologians such as John de Gruchy and Jim Cochrane also publish under its auspices. Public theology in South Africa is underwritten by the Global Network for Public Theology (GNPT), an academic research partnership founded in 2007 in Princeton, New Jersey. It would be fair to say that public theologians are currently the most prolific among 'theological species' in the country.

South African black theology, in turn, is in the state of dormancy according to some and in 'a paradoxical state of non-existence' according to others (Motlhabi 2009:171ff). Originating in the 1970s, black theology has lost its paradigm as a result of changed conditions in the country since the fall of apartheid and due to a shift from the *church struggle* to *church struggles* (De Gruchy 2004:223-260). And yet Maluleke suggests that black theology lives (*and feeds?*) on a permanent crisis; thus perhaps the occasional 'lone voices in the wilderness', like his own, should not be dismissed. Post-apartheid publications of Maluleke, Vellem,[3] Tshaka, West and the members of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians like Dube, Nadar, Phiri and Hadebe, among others, may all bear witness to the fact that black theology still has 'a lot of life in its belly' (Maluleke 1995a:27).

The broader question that underlies this study concerns responsible disciplinary practices in Systematic Theology in general and Christology in particular, within the framework of the post-apartheid tertiary education. Therefore, the Christological approaches in question will be elaborated on through the lens

3 Ironically, Vellem is the director of the Centre for Public Theology at the University of Pretoria, though he is undeniably rooted in the tradition of black and prophetic theology. One could argue that the liberation theology has stronger claims to call itself 'public' than this fairly new theological creature that has emerged recently and whose representatives (at least some of them) see it as either a successor or a fulfilment of liberation theology (Maluleke 2011:82). Vellem's own theological reflection, like that of Maluleke, Tshaka and others, could be a case in point. However, even if the demarcation lines between public theology and black theology are sometimes blurry on institutional level, I hold to the clear distinction between the two, as articulated in this study.

of the fundamental theoretical perspectives characteristic of public theology and black theology. However, the analysis and the critical comparison of the existing Christological resources will be the primary focus of this study.

2. Nico Koopman: A global Reformed Jesus with an African veneer[4]

Koopman reflects a strand of Reformed thought that is situated within a 'confessing' church trajectory. This strand offers forthright public witness as to the sinful nature of apartheid and emphasises the need for active theological resistance by the churches from within (epitomised, inter alia, by Beyers Naudé, the Christian Institute and the Belhar Confession). As a pioneer of public theology within South Africa at the Beyers Naudé Centre for Public Theology at Stellenbosch University, Koopman was also the main driving force behind an interdisciplinary human dignity programme set up at the Faculty of Theology at Stellenbosch in 2008, while he was the dean (Palm 2016:212). For Koopman, a faithful public theology has a liberational agenda that aims to transform reality (Koopman 2007c, 2009a, 2009b). He believes that reading the signs of the times and participating in a variety of struggles is the only way in which theologians may offer a public, inclusive and cosmopolitan hermeneutic in glocal contexts (Koopman 2012a:132-138; see also Palm 2016:216).

Now, I turn to the four selected aspects of his Christological approach.

2.1 The Reformed view of the lordship of Christ and the 'public vocation' of theology

According to Koopman, it is the Reformed view of the universal lordship of Christ that grants theology its utterly public character. Even though he is aware of some limitations inherent in certain strands within Reformed praxis under apartheid (Koopman 2007b:297), it is 'the *Reformed* conviction about the supreme sovereignty of Jesus Christ our Lord' (Koopman 2007b:306, my emphasis) that, in his view, 'informs a black social ethic or black theology'

4 This section is based on my article 'Probing the "global Reformed Christ" of Nico Koopman: An *African-Kairos* perspective', which offers a more in-depth analysis and critique of the major themes in Koopman's Christological approach. It has been submitted for publication in *Stellenbosch Theological Journal*.

(2007b:306). Here he follows Boesak to acknowledge that black theology, which is faithful to this Reformed conviction about the supreme sovereignty of Jesus Christ, 'takes the situation of oppression and dehumanisation of black people and all other oppressed people seriously' (Koopman 2007b:296).

2.2 Trinitarian and Christological foundations of human dignity

Koopman emphasises that human dignity is always inalienable, for it resides in one's total dependency on the divine Other from whom one receives it. Thus it is grounded not in human competencies and capabilities, 'but in the *gift* of triune love' (Koopman 2010a:241, my emphasis; see also 2007a:184). Of particular interest to us is, of course, Koopman's Christological definition of the *imago Dei* as the foundation of human dignity. Koopman considers the giving of Jesus Christ as the crucified and broken saviour to be the culminating point of God's attachment to humans (Koopman 2010a:240). Interpreting the *imago Dei* Christologically ensures that it is not used repressively to reflect only the perfection of humanity. Like Moltmann, Koopman applies this insight to issues of disability where relatedness, communicative action and interdependence become key (Palm 2016:216; see also Koopman 2008a). This Christological interpretation of the *imago Dei*, which eliminates all attempts at identifying divine image and likeness with the concept of a perfect human being, resonates perfectly with Koopman's *anthropology of vulnerability and dependence* (Koopman 2010a:241).

2.3 Jesus: The epitome of divine and human vulnerability

For Koopman, 'faith in the triune God is faith in the vulnerable God' (Koopman 2008a:241). In one of his articles, Koopman distances himself from Reinders' reliance on the immanent Trinity, deeming his use of Zizioulas' ecstatic concept of God (*God as communion*) too speculative. Instead, he develops his theological anthropology of relationality, vulnerability and dependency by drawing inferences from the economic Trinity (Koopman 2007a:182-183). This more Biblically-grounded approach allows him to conceive of the crucified and risen Christ, the culmination point of God's self-revealing love, as an epitome of divine and human vulnerability. These two trajectories are

not necessarily exclusive. God's vulnerability, 'manifested in the relations of interdependence between Father, Son and Spirit … reaches its culmination point in the cross of Jesus Christ' (Koopman 2008a:243), through which the triune God expresses the ultimate compassion, sympathy, concern, and solidarity towards a suffering world.

What is really essential from the perspective of Koopman's public theology is an 'ecclesiology of vulnerability', which emerges from these notions of God and Christ. As Koopman puts it, 'from this vulnerable God … the church receives her essence, identity, and mission' (Koopman 2008a:243-244). If divine and human vulnerability is to define the vocation, mission ethos, public theology and relevance of the church (Koopman 2008a:246), then Christians must simply stand where God stands, that is, under the cross, with the most vulnerable (Palm 2016:217, 2008a:243-244).

2.4 The threefold office of Christ and the public calling of the church

Koopman's take on the church and its public calling – that of vulnerability, humility and servanthood – brings us back to his Christology, for he describes the public role of the church in terms of its priestly, prophetic and royal tasks (Koopman 2008a:250-251). As *vulnerable prophets*, *priests* and *royals*, Christians participate in God's mission in the world following their master Jesus Christ – the ultimate prophet, priest and king – and witnessing to him in word and deed, teaching and concrete action (Koopman 2008a:251). Thus drawing upon John Calvin's notion of the threefold office of Christ, Koopman articulates the threefold quest for the restoration of human dignity in Christological perspective and indicates the way along which this restoration might be operationalised (Koopman 2008a:266; see also 2010a).

More traditional aspects of this Christological doctrine apart, there are two fairly original points in his exposition that deserve our attention. Firstly, the organic connection between his Christology and ecclesiology results in a number of insightful reflections about the prophetic, priestly and royal modes of being in the world (Koopman 2008a:251-253). Their common denominator is found in the dialectic of *dependence* and *agency* personified by Christ 'the resurrected Lord who is also the vulnerable crucified Lord' (Koopman 2008a:254).

Secondly, Koopman suggests that Calvin's Christology, and his work on the threefold office of Christ, in particular, may provide avenues for restoring human dignity *specifically* in Africa (Koopman 2010a:240). Most of his views in this respect appear somewhat vague and far too broad to be deemed relevant to any particular African context. I will return to this criticism later. One of his insights, however, is noteworthy. Koopman draws interesting parallels between the threefold office of Christ and the Confession of Belhar (1986) as he proposes that the former informs the latter (Koopman 2010a:247).

3. Tinyiko Maluleke: An African Jesus with unresolved issues[5]

Maluleke is one of the most productive black theologians in a democratic South Africa. He challenges the accusation, raised by some, that black theology 'has slept through the revolution' (Maluleke 1995:21) and he posits that becoming 'more academic and intellectual' in nature does not necessarily imply that today's black theology is by definition anti-grassroots (Maluleke 1995:22-23). The main task facing black theology in our day, in his view, has to do with defining African culture and reflecting critically on how it can be engaged theologically in the pursuit of liberating African people from various forms of oppression and marginalisation that they still experience (Maluleke 1995:26). In many of his works, he probes the Africans forms and appropriations of Christianity and insists that 'our task is to study and not to suspect or control' African Christianities, for through it, 'we may gain valuable insights into the shape and form of religion and religiosity in the world today' (Maluleke 2010a:379). Let us now examine Maluleke's take on Christological issues.

3.1 'Christ in Africa': Preliminary questions about Christianity and culture(s)

Perhaps the most significant contribution Maluleke has made to theology in general and African reflection on Christ, in particular, is the way in which he

5 This section is based on my article 'Between deep incarnation and an African Jesus: Maluleke's quest for an embodied Christology', in which a more thorough and focused study of Maluleke's Christological approach is offered. It is going to be published in UFS Theological Explorations Vol. 2 in 2017.

emphasises and articulates the role of culture(s), cultural differences, power dynamics and all the related issues in the emerging of what we call today 'African Christianity'. These issues, Maluleke (1994a:60) insists now and again, precede the question of 'Christ in Africa'; they also influence and determine the manner in which Africans experience, interpret and proclaim Christ today. In the conclusion of his 1994 article on 'Christ in Africa: The influence of multi-culturity on the experience of Christ', Maluleke writes:

> White (and Black) African Christians, theologians and churches must begin to situate themselves epistemologically and contextually in Africa. For this to happen, Africa must cease to be something out there. This has implications both for the churches and theology. Both need to effect a kind of *epistemologica ruptura* from the West (Frostin 1988) ... Africa ... its culture, its (pre-colonial) past, and present as well as all its peoples must be taken seriously as a valid and creative 'host' of Christ. This means challenging and going beyond Euro-Western conceptions of Africa even if these are held by Africans (Maluleke 1994a:62).

Maluleke (1994a:52) stresses that African culture, and not the activities of missionaries, must become 'a pivotal source of the African experience of Christ'.[6] One cannot even begin to talk meaningfully about 'Christ in Africa' unless one takes Africa and Africanness very seriously, unless one acknowledges 'the reality of Africa as culturally (at least) distinct from Europe and America, not only three hundred years ago but today' (Maluleke 1994a:52).[7]

Another issue raised by Maluleke (1994a:56) has to do with the challenges that white and black Christians in South Africa are facing today as they seek to 'perceive, receive and proclaim Christ'. He poses a series of difficult questions

6 At the same time, Maluleke (1994:50) is keenly aware of the need to investigate the highly controversial role of missionaries, merchants and colonialists in 'bringing Christ to Africa'.

7 Even in our day, for many, 'to be truly Christian means not to be truly African' (Maluleke 1994:53). For many, including many Africans, Western Christendom and Western church-type provide the only standard of what it means to be Christian. When African Christians deviate from that Western model, they tend to be ridiculed or looked upon with suspicion (Maluleke 1994:54).

regarding white Africans and in particular members of the largely Afrikaner Reformed tradition:

> What is Africa's challenge to what Jaap Durand has called 'Dutch Reformed Church schizophrenia' – meaning 'its concern for the social and political welfare of the Afrikaner people, on the one hand, and its apparent lack of concern for the same problems amongst blacks' (Durand 1985:49). What is Africa's challenge to the English-speaking churches, which have a tradition of protest without resistance (Villa-Vicencio 1988)? What is the challenge of black and African theologies for the white church (Kritzinger 1988)? (Maluleke 1994a:57-58).

Finally, Maluleke critically probes the concept of multiculturism. One may be tempted – and many South African theologians today eagerly succumb to that temptation – to situate one's reflection on Christ against the multicultural, 'colour-blind' or 'rainbow' background. But talk of multiculturism or a 'rainbow nation' does not eliminate 'the disproportionate power relations and power realities between various cultures' (Maluleke 1994a:60). Talk of multiculturism often lapses into an 'attempt to file out the disturbing historical memory of the hegemonic dominance of a single culture', namely Euro-American civilisation, 'versus several non-cultures' (Maluleke 1994a:59). Thus the romantic and harmonious notion of multiculturism becomes a 'cover-up' for the actual religious, socio-political, economic and power basis of 'cultural' differences (Maluleke 1994a:60:63).

3.2 Searching for an African Jesus in the 'hidden transcripts'

In his search for the *African* appropriations of Jesus, Maluleke recommends the shift of focus from what he calls, following James Scott (1990), the 'public transcript' towards the 'hidden transcripts'. Describing the attitudes of African Pentecostals and the members of African Independent Churches, he observes:

> They will proclaim and extol the 'Biblical' and 'Western' Jesus verbally (i.e., the 'public script') but underneath of all that and in their practical lives of faith, they will rewrite the image of Jesus (i.e., the 'hidden transcript') (Maluleke 1997a:18).

One of the defining features of grassroots African Christianity is its Christocentric-celebratory nature (Maluleke 2000b:84). The same attitude

permeates a typical African approach to preaching (Maluleke 1997a:25). African Christianity interweaves the spirit of faith, freedom, boldness and even playfulness (Maluleke 1997a:14) with a certain propensity for the tragic, which is inherent especially in African Christology (Maluleke 2000b:84). The image of an African Jesus that emerges from Maluleke's reflection – I want to suggest – is that of Jesus 'with unresolved issues'. Because of his proximity to and identification with African people, this Jesus shares in their hardships and – even though he is the healer par excellence – he has no easy answers to offer. He is certainly not 'a removed King who sits on the clouds', nor is he just 'a happy-clappy Jesus. He is a screaming Jesus – screaming on the cross and screaming in Africa: on the pulpits, on the streets, and in the squatter camps. The African Christ who smiles on the cross is a paradox inviting reflection. This is a defiant smile' (Maluleke 1997a:27). And perhaps most importantly, he is an approachable Jesus from whom power can be derived and requested (Maluleke 1997a:22), but also the one who is keen to enter the African world, with all its joys and unsolved problems. Not to transform it – at least not immediately, not miraculously, but simply to share the fate of his people. 'Africans are taking [this] Jesus by the hand, teaching him a few African 'moves' and sensitising him to local issues and conditions' (Maluleke 1997a:27).

The most interesting Christological themes discussed by Maluleke include: (a) What Jesus and Africans have in common? And why '*there's no one like him*'? Maluleke reflects on brokenness as the aspect of Jesus which makes him most intimately close and familiar to African people, but also on the dialectic of Africans' identification and non-identification with Jesus due to his integral otherness (Maluleke 1997a:20-24, 2000b:83-93).[8] (b) Cross as a (not unproblematic) site of reconciliation. Maluleke ponders the question whether forgiveness is a human or a divine business. He also explores the intricate relationship between truth, knowledge and power in the context of gender, racial, ethnic and economic reconciliation in Africa (Maluleke 2000b:88-89). Finally, (c) disruptive potential of the African representations of the *parousia*.

8 The latter results in an intricate dialectic between the glory, uniqueness, superiority and otherness of Jesus on the one hand and the agency of the work of ordinary people on the other hand (Maluleke 2000b:86).

While comparing the coming of Jesus of *Woza Albert!*[9] with that of Jacob Zuma and the ANC, Maluleke depicts the return of Jesus, who finds

> a country not only battling with the triple challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequality, but also with the challenges of corruption, bad religion and toxic leadership' and who is 'furious at the way things are – the poverty, the hunger, the corruption and deceit that reign while the innocent suffer' (Maluleke 2015a:36; see also 1997a:19).

4. What makes a Christology engaged and prophetic?

In his recent *How the light gets in: Ethical life I* (2016), first of the four volumes in an 'engaged systematic theology', Graham Ward fosters a way of theologising which 'gives due attention to our historical, cultural and social placement – and therefore the locatedness and provisionality of its own enquiry ... a mode of theological enquiry concomitant with the incarnation of God in Christ and the church as the Body of Christ involved in the operations of redemption in and through the materialities of our embodiment and our cultures' (Ward 2016:ix). Following this line of thinking, an engaged Christology is one that is the fruit of the mutually critical *engagement* of the faith in the Christ-event with social and political contexts wherein this faith is located. Such Christology avoids meta-narratives and universalising speculations. It stems from and speaks to a particular context. But it also knows that it is always only *provisional* due to its social and cultural embodiment.[10]

Apart from being examined in terms of their 'engaged' character, Christological considerations of Koopman and Maluleke are to be measured according to their prophetic potential, namely, in terms of their ability to spell out an alluring vision of an alternative community based on the principles of the reign of God

9 A political satire play that imagines the second coming of Christ in apartheid-ridden South Africa, written in 1981 by M. Ngema, P. Mtwa and B. Simon.

10 This resonates well with David Tracy's understanding of theology. For Tracy, 'an interpretative horizon of theology ought to be found in the critical correlation between the religious classic – the event and person of Jesus Christ as captured by scripture-in-tradition and experienced ever anew in the church through word, sacrament, and action – and the contemporary situation (today's culture in its historicist-pragmatic complexity) (Urbaniak 2015:989-990; see also Tracy 1981:406;422).

and to offer courageous criticism where the status quo does not adhere to that vision, in particular where power is abused (Koopman 2008:251; Maluleke 2000:30; Vellem 2010:5). If being 'engaged' means being a fruit of the engagement with the cultural embodiment of faith, being 'prophetic' means that Christology not only stems from such an intentional engagement with social and political realities, but that it also boldly *engages* those realities, and when needed it challenges them, calls them into question – indeed, it speaks truth to power regardless of the consequences. What informs such a prophetic engagement is precisely an inviting vision of 'an alternative community based on the principles of the reign of God' (Vellem 2010:5).

Put simply, for the sake of my analysis, 'engaged Christology' means the one which is *nourished by the context* (through a critical engagement with it), whereas 'prophetic Christology' means the one which *goes beyond* the social, political and cultural realities and *challenges the existing status quo* by offering an alternative vision of reality underpinned by the values of God's reign.

5. Testing a 'global Reformed Jesus' and an 'African Jesus'

Based on this twofold criterion, I want to suggest that, unlike Maluleke's take on 'Christ in Africa', Koopman's Christological approach fails to thoroughly engage with African contexts and, as a consequence, is also lacking in prophetic dimension. The two are so interrelated that without a serious engagement of the faith in the Christ-event with social and political contexts in which this faith is embodied, Christological reflection cannot offer a truly transformative and challenging alternative to the status quo. In my view, Maluleke's emphasis on cultural and theological factors necessary for Africa and *Africanness* to be acknowledged as a legitimate 'host' for Christ as well as his multi-faceted reflection on African appropriations of Jesus, meet the requirements for an engaged and prophetic Christology.

In terms of theological resources from which Koopman and Maluleke draw, the main discrepancy between them has to do precisely with their different foci. And this is consistent with the profiles of public theology and black theology at large. It is fair to say that both theologians situate their reflection in a *glocal* context, namely, they acknowledge the impact of global developments

on local life as well as the importance of local initiatives for the transformation of global perspectives. However, while Koopman's focus is on the global, Maluleke's is undoubtedly on the local. Let me substantiate these claims with some illustrations.

For Koopman, practicing a critical public theology is to be understood as 'a redemptive, constructive, humanising and dignifying presence of Christian faith in public life' (Palm 2016:212; see also Koopman 2010c:131-132). While fulfilling that vision, public theologians do not aim to 'replace the various contextual and liberation theologies but rather drink from their rich wells' (Koopman 2009b:423). And in terms of principles, Koopman's Christological approach certainly follows this direction. Whether he talks about the need to take the situation of oppression and dehumanisation of black people seriously (Koopman 2007b:296), the church's calling to speak on behalf of the silenced, most wronged and vulnerable in society (Koopman 2007b:299) or avenues for restoring human dignity in Africa (Koopman 2010a:240) – all these themes are in tune with liberation and contextual theological agendas. What is more, they show his concern for an African context out of which he theologises.

However, when one moves from the level of abstract principles to that of actual theological ideas, Koopman's capacity (or willingness) to 'drink from the wells of the various contextual and liberation theologies' is not that obvious anymore. In fact, different 'wells' come to the fore. When Koopman speaks of 'the wells of the Christian tradition' (Koopman 2008b:266), he means first and foremost the theological resources inherent in the Reformed tradition, for it is faithfulness to this tradition that 'enables us to be faithful to public life in a sustainable, constructive and redemptive manner' (Koopman 2007b:295).

Theological references found in his texts reflect this trend. His most natural 'interlocutors' include Calvin and his contemporary commentators such as Cornelis van der Kooi, Stephen Edmondson, Geoffrey Wainwright, and Douglas Hall;[11] and theologians of disability like Stanley Hauerwas, Hans Reinders, and Christine Smith.[12] Among his broader ecumenical and other

11 See Koopman (2010a).

12 See Koopman (2007a).

references one finds, inter alia, John Zizioulas,[13] Sallie McFague,[14] John Webster,[15] Helmut Thielicke,[16] James Gustafson[17] and the British philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre.[18]

Regarding local theologians, Koopman acknowledges that he is indebted particularly to Allan Boesak, John de Gruchy and Dirkie Smit. And indeed, references to Boesak and Smit abound in his reflection.[19] However, these Reformed voices from South Africa (especially De Gruchy and Smit) are themselves, at least to an extent, falling under the category of a 'globalising' and 'universalising' theological discourse.[20] Only in passing would Koopman refer to the father of the Black Consciousness Movement, Steve Biko[21] or to black theologians such as Mosala,[22] Tutu[23] or Maluleke.[24] In fact, Boesak seems to provide the most solid – if not the only – bridge between Koopman's (otherwise *cosmopolitan*) public theology and the contextual and prophetic heritage of South African theological traditions (see Buttelli 2012:106). But even here one could call into question Koopman's creativity and originality in referring to Boesak. Rather than appropriating his views constructively, he rather quotes the well-established views of his Reformed colleague without really engaging with them (see, for example, Koopman 2007b:297-299, 2014b:989-990).

13 See Koopman (2008a).

14 See Koopman (2007c).

15 See Koopman (2010a).

16 See Koopman (2007a).

17 See Koopman (2004a, 2005b).

18 See Koopman (2007a).

19 See, respectively, Koopman (2007b, 2008b, 2009a, 2010b, 2014b) and Koopman (2007b, 2007c, 2008a, 2008b, 2009a, 2009b, 2010c), etc.

20 See de Gruchy's *Confessions of a Christian humanist* (2006) and Smit's *Essays in Public Theology* (2007).

21 See Koopman (2005b).

22 See Koopman (2008b).

23 See Koopman (2010a).

24 See Koopman (2010a:242ff).

Koopman's attempts at engaging with African realities *theologically* must be generally deemed unsuccessful. The first reason for that is that he often seems to operate from a perspective in which Western theological tradition (if not civilisation at large) is considered as the paradigmatic reference for all other traditions and points of view, including African. For example, he suggests that there is a parallel between the 'dawning of comprehensive salvation' and 'what the African tradition, according to Boesak, calls wholeness of life' (Koopman 2007b:297). Elsewhere, he proceeds in a very similar way with regard to the so often used (and abused) concept of *ubuntu*. He identifies, or at least he believes so, the very meaning of *ubuntu* in Western theology and he simply links it with *ubuntu* as a specifically African expression of this (universal?) idea (see Koopman 2005a, 2014b). Thus bringing 'the African' into the picture aims, not at making a novel and original contribution but merely at showing the existing connections and parallels, perhaps somewhat in the spirit of a traditional theology of inculturation. One could add to that another objection, namely that 'Africa' and 'South Africa' usually appear in Koopman's reflection as somewhat abstract concepts, 'entities' (see, for instance, Koopman 2009b, 2010a, 2010b, 2010c); seldom does he refer to specific African contexts, ethnic/ social groups or communities.

Most references to African culture and religion found in Koopman's writings are somewhat shallow. He does not seem to see the need to elaborate on them. Three examples, taken from the same article, follow.

> Africa, with its various forms of brokenness and alienation needs the dignifying work of Jesus Christ the priest ... Rescue theory with its emphasis on the delivery from evil powers that exist in personal and structural forms might have relevance for Africa's quest for the restoration of dignity ... On a continent with so many injustices and abuses the confession about the kingship of Christ serves towards the restoration and actualisation of dignity in Africa (Koopman 2010a:246).

These are promising Christological insights but they are merely signalled and remain undeveloped in Koopman's work.

At a few occasions, we find in Koopman a fairly thorough analysis of the social and political situation in South Africa – which should be a departure point of

any prophetic theology (Le Bruyns 2012:92-93). One of the best examples is found in his article on 'Human dignity in Africa: A Christological approach' whose first part is devoted to the discussion about the various forms of 'the violation of human dignity in Africa' (Koopman 2010a:241-246). In the second part of his article titled 'Restoring human dignity in Africa: Insights from Christology', Koopman draws upon John Calvin's notion of the threefold office of Christ to suggest the avenues for the needed restoration of dignity. Unfortunately, apart from the reference to the Belhar Confession (1986), African contexts are virtually absent. Thus what is missing, in this case, is the constructive link between social analysis and theological ideas.

A final illustration of Koopman's 'shallow appropriation' of Christological resources can be found in his reflection on the public-theological potential inherent in both prophetic and sacramental Christological models as elaborated upon by Sally McFague (see Koopman 2007c:206-209; see also McFague 2001:167-170). McFague's ideas definitely have theological potential and could be creatively appropriated and contextualised. But instead of that, all that Koopman has to offer – after giving a summary of her views – is a well-rounded conclusion, which is as valid for the unemployed mother of eight in Tembisa as it is, at least in principle, for Bill Gates:

> Christians are called upon to help people, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to see differently. Where people see differently, where they see the world as hidden in Christ and where they see with the lenses of cruciform and sacrificial living, their hearts, minds and wills and eventually laws, policies and social practices are transformed; this renewal and transformation is worked out by the Spirit (Koopman 2007c:209).

One's hopes get kindled when 'African people' are mentioned explicitly in the next paragraph. But again we only learn that 'in the midst of our crises and challenges, African people can believe in a God who has created us for lives of dignity and flourishing' (Koopman 2007c:209). Despite the seemingly persistent presence of 'evil' in the world, Africans – like all people and all of creation – are liberated by God from every enslavement, nurtured and embraced by Christ's salvific sacrifice so that they may flourish; this entails not only

spirituality but also their earthly, material, economic, political and cultural life (Koopman 2007c:209). This somewhat benign vision may resonate well with McFague's prophetic and sacramental Christologies, but it fails to engage with the daily reality of most African people. And even more importantly, I believe, the shortcomings of Koopman's reflection are evident, once again, in his failure to identify and articulate a link between theological resources that he draws upon and the social-cultural reality that he aspires to address. This is what I call an 'African veneer' in Koopman's Christological approach.

Maluleke, on the other hand, engages sporadically particular views of the European and American authors; for instance, Volf's insight on the tension between God's 'preferential option for the poor' and God's preferential option for all of humanity and creation (Maluleke 2000b:87ff) or Foucault's notion of the 'hegemonies of truth' (Maluleke 2000b:88ff). However, unlike Koopman, he resists making those the main reference points for his own theological analysis and rather examines them critically from the perspective of an African (black) theologian. Apart from liberation theologians like Gutiérrez, Maluleke – not surprisingly – draws mainly from African theological traditions. Among his theological interlocutors, one can find Foucault,[25] Cone,[26] Volf,[27] Storrar[28] and other 'northerners'. But the much more prominent position is occupied by local authors like Motlhabi,[29] Mosala,[30] Mofokeng,[31] Tutu,[32] Maimela,[33] Chikane[34] or Tlhagale[35] as well as African theologians from other parts of the continent

25 See Maluleke (2000b:88-89).

26 See Maluleke (2000b:91).

27 See Maluleke (2000b:87ff).

28 See Maluleke (2011).

29 See Maluleke (1995, 1996a, 1997c, 2008).

30 See Maluleke (1995, 1996a, 1997b, 1997c, 1997e, 2000a, 2008, 2010b).

31 See Maluleke (1995, 1996a, 1997a, 1997c, 2000a, 2000b).

32 See Maluleke (1995, 1997b, 1997c, 1997e, 2000a, 2000b, 2005b, 2010b).

33 See Maluleke (1995, 1996a, 1997c, 2000a).

34 See Maluleke (1995, 1997b, 2000a).

35 See Maluleke (1995, 1997c).

like Mugambi,[36] Oduyoye,[37] Mbiti,[38] Bediako,[39] Setiloane[40] and Magesa.[41] Interestingly, Maluleke uses the same phrase as Koopman: 'to drink from our own wells'. But when he announces the 'time to drink from our own wells' (Maluleke 1996a:17), he means the wells of various African cultures, including Africa's unique forms of Christianity.

Of course, the comparison between theological resources that Koopman and Maluleke draw from must not be seen in isolation from other aspects of their theologising; neither should it be over-simplified. The question of theological references, even in the case of Christology that can be rightly described as engaged and prophetic, calls for a careful analysis that will bring about a qualified and not an 'easy-going' criticism. Needless to say, what is at stake is not proving the superiority of the 'African wells' over the 'Western/Northern wells', or the other way round, but rather becoming aware of and articulating the contextual-interpretative complexities, plasticity and interconnectedness of various *cultural-hermeneutical wells* that we as theologians drink from in our respective contexts. In this regard, Maluleke's meta-theological reflection on the *proper sources* of Christology in the South African context (see Maluleke 1994:50ff) offers valuable insights – something that Koopman's reflection lacks.

As we have seen, only after considering the preliminary questions 'about the meaning, experience and possibilities of Christ in a supposedly multi-cultural South Africa' (Maluleke 1994a:61), does Maluleke examine some features of specifically (South) African approach to Jesus. Situated in such a theoretical framework, Maluleke's treatment of 'Christ in Africa', an otherwise deceptively familiar topic, does not degenerate into some kind of folk- or ethno-theology which can easily become flat and elusive (Maluleke 1994a:61). As a sharp observer and analyser of the ways in which Africans, mainly South Africans,

36 See Maluleke (1997a, 1997c, 1997e, 2000a, 2000b, 2010a).

37 See Maluleke (1996a, 1997c, 2000a).

38 See Maluleke (1995, 1996a, 1997c, 2000a, 2008).

39 See Maluleke (1995, 1996a, 1997c, 1997e, 2000a, 2000b, 2010a).

40 See Maluleke (1995, 1997c, 2000a, 2000b, 2008).

41 See Maluleke (1997a, 1997c).

are C*hristologising* (Maluleke 1997a:16), he identifies a number of trends regarding the attitudes and beliefs of African Christians as well as the features of an African Jesus whom they celebrate (Maluleke 1997a:27). The two are organically connected.

Maluleke refers to different levels or degrees of the appropriation of Christ by Africans. As the *purest expression of African Christianity*, the so-called African Independent (Initiated) Churches (AICs) are living proof that African cultures can be a legitimate host, home and 'container' for Christ – just as Europe and Europeaness have been for ages (Maluleke 1994a:53). Accused by many of being other-worldly, separatist, syncretist or sectarian, the AICs are the places where Christ truly becomes and is worshipped as the *healer, liberator, ancestor, mediator, elder brother, the crucified one, head and master of initiation* and the *Black Messiah* (Maluleke 1994a:57). Maluleke points out that Africans are already 'enacting' their Christologies (Maluleke 1994a:62). Even pockets of 'Africanised' Christianity within the so-called 'mission churches' and 'English-speaking churches' give creative expressions to their Christological beliefs; they also, Maluleke insists, must be taken seriously as 'valid African appropriations of Christianity' (Maluleke 1994a:54).

Black theology as understood and practiced by Maluleke is *vulnerable to the moods* of the marginalised and powerless and reads the signs of the time from their point of view (Maluleke 1995:11). This is not merely a theoretical principle, as in the case of many public theologians, but an actual organising principle of Maluleke's theologising. In several papers, he embarks on the analysis of a language of the so-called 'popular religion' – 'a rather trivialising and inadequate appellation', as he notes (Maluleke 2000b:83). Still far from being fully decoded by theologians, this language can be found in African lay-preaching, testimony-giving, singing and in many spontaneous liturgies – the diverse media of what Malueleke calls the 'hidden transcripts'. To access those transcripts one has to visit the garage services, house churches, tree-churches, train-churches, women's churches and youth churches which are the 'natural home' of the liturgies celebrated by African churches (Maluleke 2000b:83). The pre-funeral-day night vigils, the foot stamping, the ceremonies of 'taking off the black mourning clothes', the peculiarly African preaching style, the

Manyano and the *Amadodana* traditions, the funeral 'celebrations', etc. (Maluleke 1994a:54) – all these practices contain a potential 'Christological material'. In particular, Maluleke (1997a:19) considers the repetitive choruses of indigenous Christian songs as a good breeding ground for these 'hidden transcripts' to thrive.

Maluleke (1997a:15) rightly points out that the 're-imagining and appropriation of Jesus Christ should be one of the deepest barometers of Christian contextualisation'. As 'one of the least negotiable aspects of Christianity ... Jesus, as the Christ, is the one Christian 'act' that is generally accepted to be not repeatable' (Maluleke 1997a:15). This is why one must carefully observe 'what happens to Jesus every time he is *pro-claimed* or re-imaged', whether it is 'portrayal or betrayal' (Maluleke 1997a:15; see also Wessels 1990:13).

Some of his recommendations are radical. When he calls black and African theologies 'to show more respect for African culture and African traditional religions than to see them merely as preparations for the Christian gospel', he stresses that 'we have no right to view everything in African life as waiting for Christianity in order to be fulfilled' (Maluleke 1996a:16). One of the possible implications of such an attitude is that it is 'not only for Jesus to become the Supreme Ancestor, but [to] simply join the ranks of other ancestors who are at the service of the Supreme Being in Africa' (Maluleke 1996a:16). Needless to say, few conservative (Western) theologians would find this proposal agreeable. But it should be emphasised that it stems directly from an engaged and prophetic approach to theologising, as exemplified by Maluleke.

His prophetic stance is even more evident when he addresses issues emerging at the crossroads of religion and culture(s):

> The global structures that combine to render Africans poor and dependent must be factored in when discussing Christian presence in Africa. The economic racism that ensures that the continent's white minority remain the richest and most powerful group must be challenged. Indeed the ethnocentricity (together with all its antecedents) that has led to the many internecine wars and genocide

> is a sign of brokenness that needs to be acknowledged and addressed (Maluleke 2000b:92).

The discrepancy in question concerns not only Koopman and Maluleke but is also characteristic of the theological traditions they represent. Generally speaking, while many public theologians find their natural conversation partners in the likes of Foucault, Ricoeur, Habermas, Hauerwas and Parker Palmer (see, for instance, De Beer & Swart 2014; Dreyer 2011; Dreyer & Pieterse 2010; Forster 2015; Koopman 2007a), black theologians gravitate towards the thinkers like Fanon, Du Bois, Said, Mbembe and Biko, who define the specifically postcolonial context for the south (Maluleke 2011:88; see also Tshaka 2014; Vellem 2014; West 2013). Needless to say, using those two theories – postmodern and postcolonial – as different frameworks for their respective quests, public theology and black theology display a number of disparities. Postmodernity lacks a theory of resistance and generally fails to cultivate a transformative agenda due to its detached attitudes. Hence, public theology's overwhelmingly positive notion of 'public', which results in a somewhat romantic, if not naïve, vision of revolution. As Maluleke reminds us, many angry southerners live not in a postmodern world described by some public theologians as a benign global village, but in a harsh post-colony (Maluleke 2011:88).

A global, cosmopolitan Christ, for whom *all life matters*, can hardly meet them where they are. They have to keep looking for a barefoot African Jesus who is willing to learn a few 'moves' from them and be sensitised by them to their local issues and conditions (Maluleke 1997a:27).

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Chapter 8

The Triune God in South African Systematic Theology since 1976

Rian Venter[1]

1. Brief motivation: Focus on God-symbol

The dialectic between *relevance and identity* has been a methodological key in my theology since I worked on a doctoral thesis in the mid-eighties. Originally I thought about resurrection and liberation, and gradually I expanded this to a focus on Trinitarian theology within the (post)apartheid condition, and wrote, merely for myself, a programmatic essay in 2004 on this. My intuition has always been that I should take apartheid seriously, not merely as a social ethical question, but also as an epistemic *topos*. At the same time, the question about God has intrigued me from early on, realising that the identity of faith and theology, stands and falls here. The so-called 'return of God in contemporary theology' (Tracy 1994) and the emergence of the Trinitarian Renaissance naturally appealed to me and I situated my own thinking and research along these parameters. The recognition of 'something',[2] whether we name it God, or the divine, or the Sacred, or the Ultimate, or the Transcendent, remains of absolute importance. That symbol is a final orientation to make sense of reality, and by saying this I do not deny others their right to advance a radical immanent understanding of life. For the Christian faith, the Trinitarian symbol is the central reference, and from this Mystery, we should construct the cognitive content of the faith and its relevance to society at large. Hów

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2 See for a discussion of the apt Dutch term '*ietsisme*' – Sarot (2014).

that confession has academically and socially functioned in South African Systematic Theology is my interest in this submission.

2. The previous generation of systematic theologians

Unfortunately, nobody has undertaken a full and detailed history of Systematic Theology in South Africa.[3] Such a task would not only be helpful but at the same time most daunting to complete. It would require a focus on theologians, institutions, societies, journals, post-graduate research, but also interpretative categories to understand the various operating paradigms. One insight will undeniably transpire: the dominance of the Reformed tradition, which could be easily explained historically. Major systematic theologians, obviously with few exceptions, were from this tradition. My own narrative will mostly follow this path, although I am aware of remarkable systematic theologians from other traditions.

The seventies and eighties in South Africa were, in terms of Systematic Theology, dominated by figures like J.A. Heyns, W.D. Jonker, A. König and J.J.F. Durand. It was in a sense the exciting heyday of this discipline and the era of the influence of textbooks. To find in Afrikaans for the first time work of high quality, with an ambitious and totalising scope, was quite an experience. The series *Wegwysers in die Dogmatiek* was introduced by Durand with his work on God – *Die lewende God* (1976). Two years later Heyns published a full and comprehensive dogmatics, *Dogmatiek* (1976), which became an immensely influential reference book for ministers. König started series of monographs on God, eschatology and Christology, doctrine of creation and eventually the anthropology, which was introduced by his *Hier is ek!* (1975).

In this purview, one cannot describe the position of specifically Heyns, Durand and König who wrote explicitly on God. But a number of perspectives can be raised. These theologians all worked in a typical Western tradition, deeply influenced by Dutch theology and to some minor extent, German theology. They would all have considered themselves as Trinitarian theologians. Retrospectively, a number of commonalities can be identified: the critical shift

3 See Strauss (1995) for research with a limited focus.

advocated by Barth, whose work preceded all their publications, that the Trinity should be the *fundamental optic* for theology, has not been internalised by them. Second, very little, if any trace at all, of *social Trinitarianism*, is present in their work. Thirdly, there is no openness to the reality of *Africa* and its conception of the divine. Finally, their positions to apartheid, which differed, were not informed fundamentally by their Trinitarian faith, but by other considerations and other forms of theological rhetoric. Dogmatics remains in their work, of which the academic quality should in no way be questioned, sanitised from the travails of history and its conflicts.

3. Excurse: The Trinitarian Renaissance

It may be interesting to correlate the South African work with the international Trinitarian Renaissance. The work by Barth, his *Church Dogmatics* Volume 1/1 (original 1936) and by Rahner, his essay in *Mysterium Salutis* Volume 2 (original 1967) are widely considered the impetus for the new twentieth-century interest. The actual narrative may go much further back, even two centuries and especially to Hegel (see Sanders 2012:22-24).[4] Barth established an intimate relationship between revelation as his point of departure and the Trinity, and by placing a discussion of this doctrine right at the beginning of dogmatics cemented it as the determining hermeneutical optic for all the subsequent discussion. The foundation was laid for a consistent Trinitarian vision of the Christian faith.[5] Rahner called attention to the dismal position of the Trinity in actual church life and formulated what has become known as the Rahner rule: 'The "economic" Trinity is the "immanent" Trinity and the "immanent" Trinity is the "economic" Trinity' (Rahner 1997:22). The far-reaching ontological and epistemological implications of this affirmation are

4 Sanders (2012:23) in an interesting treatment of the history of the Trinity emphasises that a rather 'Romantic doctrine of the Trinity … made its way into the modern age'. Reinterpretation took place in light of central Romantic ideas: world history, human experience and the retrieval of the past. He correlates motifs and concerns of Trinitarian scholars like Moltmann, Pannenberg, LaCugna and Johnson with these ideas.

5 See Habets & Tolliday (2011) for a detailed discussion of various aspects of Barth's Trinitarian views.

still being explored by scholars. It does not seem that these early developments have decisively influenced the previous generation South African systematicians.

The Trinitarian Renaissance and its emphases have been well described and only a few features can be highlighted. Central in this shift is obviously a new enthusiasm and appreciation of the doctrine. More substantial are the prominence of the immanent/economic distinction and its significance, the turn to *relationality* to identify the nature of God and the insistence on the 'practical implications' of the doctrine (see Kärkkäinen 2009 and Schwöbel 2014 for excellent overviews). A book like *The Oxford handbook to the Trinity* (Emery & Levering 2011) conveys an impression of how comprehensive and far-reaching the recovery actually has been. Seminal early work were published by Boff (1988), Jenson (1982), Jüngel (1976), LaCugna (1991) and Moltmann (1981),[6] to mention only a few. The turn to the Trinity obviously generated much controversy.[7] Ways clearly part on interpretations of patristic theologians such as the Cappadocians and Augustine on the notion of a 'social Trinity', on reinterpretations of divine attributes like immutability and simplicity, and on the precise function of the doctrine. It seems that the next generation had to engage with these reflections.

4. Present generation of systematic theologians

The well-known textbook *Doing Theology in context* (De Gruchy & Villa-Vicencio 1994) was not only published in a symbolically significant year but inaugurated also a new era. The chapter on the Trinity by Catholic scholar Brian Gaybba is a significant contribution. It was well informed by the work of scholars like Boff, Gunton, LaCugna, Moltmann and Rahner, and also signals the potential impact on society. Gaybba claims that 'the doctrine of the Trinity has an undeniable advantage as a theological basis for reflecting on social structures' (Gaybba 1994:86). The value of the Trinity as 'socio-political

6 Dates of translations.

7 For only one example, see the work of the vocal critic Stephen Holmes (2012). His basic thesis is summarised in the following words (:2) – 'I see the twentieth century renewal of Trinitarian theology as depending in large part on concepts and ideas that cannot be found in patristic, medieval, or Reformation accounts of the doctrine of the Trinity.'

model' is to be found in 'total sharing' among people; he also emphasises that the Trinity should be allowed 'to cast sufficient critical light on nationalism' (Gaybba 1994:86, 87). Unfortunately, this excellent article was not followed up with further work on the Trinity.

John de Gruchy, who straddles in a sense both the previous and the present era and who continues with outstanding work even after his retirement, is an interesting case. His extensive oeuvre does not evidence that he is a Trinitarian thinker; this can be clearly seen in this own evaluation of this more recent work on God as the ultimate mystery (De Gruchy 2014:157-166). In his work *Christianity and democracy*, he has a subsection on 'the Triune God and human sociality' in which he refers to the doctrine to explain the significance of the *imago Dei* for human relationality (De Gruchy 1995:238-243).

A bibliographical overview of publications by the contemporary South African systematic theologians on Trinitarian theology conveys an impression that they have clearly taken note of the 'turn to the Trinity' in twentieth-century theology. There is definitely a much greater awareness of the decisive importance of the Trinity for doing theology and there are indications of an exploration of Trinitarian resources for distinct research interests.

Dirkie Smit, in an overview of the present developments in Systematic Theology, identifies the Trinitarian Renaissance as the first of such new interests. He views this as the self-critical reflection by the Christian community on her own conviction (Smit 2013:387f). In another contribution, he investigates specifically what a Reformed understanding of the Trinity might entail (Smit 2009). He emphasises that all Reformed theologians consider the Trinity as central to their work. One cannot, however, escape the impression that there is a certain hesitation in his work towards the immanent Trinity and to the practical value, that is, socio-political, of the doctrine (see Smit 2009:65, 72, 75). The emphasis is more on the action of God (Smit 2009:66). This discussion by Smit gives a good understanding of why the Trinitarian symbol has played such a small role in political life. If the emphasis is predominantly on the agency of God, other potential discursive employments, for example, mimetic and heuristic ones, are eclipsed.

Nico Koopman's interest in the Triune God comes from his work on public theology and he proposes 'a Trinitarian approach' (Koopman 2007). The typical stress, identified by Smit, is clearly seen in his proposal: Koopman is interested is the work of God and he utilises the planetary theology of McFague to develop this so-called 'Trinitarian approach', which is basically a compilation of multiple ideas associated with each divine Person. As long as a theology does not fully account *what doing Trinitarian theology entails*, it will come across as rather incoherent as can be seen in this work. The very implications of God's identity as Triune do not crystallise in Koopman's work.

Some of the most informed and creative work is found in a number of articles by Robert Vosloo. What makes his work particularly important is the hermeneutical exploration of the Trinitarian doctrine with categories found in post-modern thought, for example 'gift' and 'hospitality'. With Trinitarian resources, he interprets human personhood, Christian moral life, and otherness and hospitality (Volsoo 1999, 2002, 2004). Vosloo is aware of the dangers of an uncritical analogical movement from the Trinity to human life but still believes that 'Trinitarian theology will continue to play an important role to free our imagination' (Vosloo 2004:89).

David T. Williams (2003) wrote arguably the most comprehensive work on the practical implications of Trinitarian theology – *The 'two hands of God': Imaging the Trinity*. The basic assumption is that 'The church should then act in a Trinitarian way in the world, reflecting the nature of God in the way it acts' (Williams 2003:14). He employs the notion of 'imitating the Trinity' without reservation (see Williams 2003:22ff), and discusses then in successive chapters mission, harmony between people, marriage, the socio-economic order, poverty, the population crisis, environmentalism and worship. There is, sadly, no evidence of recognition of his work by other systematic theologians. One may question whether the work does not suffer from 'over-reach' and whether it does not precisely exemplify the projections of social Trinitarianism which makes it so suspect to its many critics. For example, Williams wants to justify exclusive heterosexuality with an appeal to the Trinity (Williams 2003:72ff). Analogical thinking should be approached with nuance and not in the way he does.

The contribution by E. Conradie (2013) about an adequate Trinitarian theology is crucial. His focus is on ecology and he placed this in the complex frame of the relationship between creation and salvation. This line of thinking deserves further exploration.

It should also be noted that a number of doctoral theses were written on the Trinity as an expression of the new interest. Hadebe (2013) explored the Trinitarian confession for gender challenges in the context of HIV and Aids; Kombo (2000) worked on African Trinitarian theology; Kritzinger (2004) on Walter Kasper; Leene (2013) on the Trinity and gender relations; Van Wyk (2013) on a Trinitarian ecclesiology; and Verhoef (2008) on Robert Jenson.[8]

When one compares the two eras – before and after 1994 – and their employment of Trinitarian resources there are obviously common emphases, but there are also some distinct shifts to be identified. There is undeniably greater interest in and enthusiasm for Trinitarian reflection. One encounters a greater variety of themes, problems addressed and theologians engaged. In an interesting article, Van den Brink and Van Erp (2009) investigated the question whether the new interest in the Triune God has affected Dutch theology and came to fairly negative conclusions about the embrace and integration of this development. My impression, in terms of South African Systematic Theology, is fairly the same. Some affirming nod to the Trinitarian Renaissance in one or two articles does not amount to an in-depth constructive engagement with the confession and its implications for understanding the Christian vision and for social life. Three weaknesses characterise South African Systematic Theology: a neglect of Patristic theology, an occupation with narrow research foci and a failure to construct comprehensive material 'dogmatics' like the older scholars, and a hesitance to think consistently from the perspective of the central God-symbol. When saying these, one should immediately acknowledge excellent work being done on ecology, the faith-science dialogue, and public theology. Behind the three weaknesses could be historical, theological, but also social reasons.

8 A number of singular reflections, although not part of sustained attention but of excellent quality, should be mentioned. See for example Loubscher (2003) and Theron (2008).

What is clearly needed is greater acquaintance and engagement with the Patristic theology, new interest to articulate comprehensive and material constructions of the Christian vision, and a deep intuition of the decisive and critical centrality of the God question. This should be coupled with an acute sense of belonging, of social location and that theology happens in this dialectic between identity and relevance.

5. Excurse: An example of new Systematic Theology

At this point in the argument, it may be fruitful to glance briefly at the international scene and note the vitality of Systematic Theology and the reconstructive projects underway.[9] It is worth mentioning the ambitious work by Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen. This Finnish scholar, from Pentecostal orientation, is writing a five-volume work which he calls *A constructive Christian theology for the pluralistic world* (see Kärkkäinen 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016*).* His point of departure is a radically changed world, and he explicitly calls for a theology which is *coherent, inclusive, dialogical* and *hospitable* (Kärkkäinen 2013:1-33). What is impressive in his reconstructive work is the attention to Biblical theology, Trinitarian theology, a conversation with global Christianity, faith/science dialogue, voices of the marginalised 'other', and world religions in the articulation of the material Christian vision. Obviously, one could raise critical questions and cannot copy this for the South African context, but the approach here warrants careful attention.

6. Future of the Triune God in South African Systematic Theology

The future will arguably always surprise us, as the movement of the Triune God can never be domesticated in our extrapolations from our existing knowledge. But if one is audacious enough to intimate an agenda, it may include the following *six whispers*:

The great theological advances of the twentieth century – the new interest in the Trinity and the explicit turn to contextuality – should be nurtured and brought in close mutual interaction. The challenge may be to map a

9 New multi-volume projects are being developed by, for example, S. Coakley, G. Ward, and K. Sonderegger.

full Trinitarian theology for (post)apartheid South Africa. This will require a retrieval of the paramount importance of the *God-symbol* to orientate life, and a deep commitment to a sense of place. Within this dialectic, Systematic Theology could navigate its future direction.

There is much hype about *interdisciplinarity*, but little is really accomplished about material Systematic Theology. Responsible speaking about God requires scholarly insights of Biblical studies, of historical theology, of philosophy of religion, of spirituality, but also of cultural theory. The task of an interdisciplinary approach to the God-question has not been addressed.

Such an interdisciplinary approach should be enriched by employing intentionally a variety of interpretative frameworks, for example, alterity, faith/science dialogue, faith/art dialogue, global voices (especially from the South), and world-religions. At the moment most of these theologies function in a compartmentalised manner without much integration and coherence. Each interpretative framework elicits some vision on the divine mystery. The voices and the instruments should be conducted into a symphony.

What the referent to the linguistic construct 'Triune God' entails, can never be exhausted and domesticated. The mystery of the Ultimate should deepen, but at the same time, the human naming of the identity of this Reality should continue. Apophatic theology and kataphatic theology cannot do without the other. The imaginative and Trinitarian rethinking of the *divine perfections for our place* is a particular outstanding task. What attributes do we select for this context, and how do we interpret them Trinitarianly? This is a theological, but also an ethical and political responsibility.

Many attempts at doing Trinitarian theology can be found, but little account *how* this should be done is given. How does the God-referent function discursively and rhetorically? Most of the time, the approach is to elaborate on the multiple manifestations of divine action, sometimes modelling is used. Much more is at stake. God can be understood in terms of *agency*, but the resistance to *mimesis* in unfounded and should be properly described. But God also could function *heuristically*. How these three interact should be carefully distinguished and described to advance *theo-thinking*.

'God' is for many a form of inhibiting reality. The very *categories of God-association* should be redefined. 'God' is the fecund source of novel, imaginative, and creative thinking. The glory of the Triune God is the source of the beauty of theology.

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Chapter 9

A prophetic word on studies in prophetic preaching? Re-visioning prophetic preaching's (post)apartheid condition

Martin Laubscher[1] *and Wessel Wessels*[2]

1. In need of a prophetic word on studies in prophetic preaching?

There is no doubt that any newcomer to the academia of Homiletics in South Africa will be thoroughly met by the importance of studying the practice of prophetic preaching in South Africa today. There is currently – as we will show – a quite progressive productivity (research interest and output) amongst most of our colleagues in South Africa regarding this particular theme. This in itself is not strange when we compare it to the homiletical agendas in other parts of the world (cf. Brueggemann 2012, 2014; Tisdale 2010; and Travis 2014, to name a few). Our interest and motivation in the study of prophetic preaching are thus already evident from the top priority it occupies within our 'homiletica'. The mere fact that it is currently so highly prioritised begs further critical exploration.

The fact that it is of broad and current interest on the agenda, does not (necessarily!) constitute a problem. We join this discussion not only because we sense the self-evident relevance and importance of the emergence of this 'sub-

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discipline' (studies in prophetic preaching) within a discipline (Homiletics), but rather because of the need for certain key questions to address and consider in order for the former to reach its assumed potential. Prophetic preaching's transition and transformation from mere hot topic into emerging sub-discipline won't happen if its top priority on the agenda is not severely interrogated and critically reflected on. What intrigues our critical minds is the current absence of a genealogy of studies in prophetic preaching in the (post)apartheid condition. The critical question for Homiletics and prophetic preaching – with its relevance obviously beyond its own borders – to pursue today is not just to know what is the current (politically correct) point of discussion on the agenda, but rather to ask 'Since when?' Can we really continue and pursue the future of prophetic preaching in South Africa without a clearly informed historical consciousness? What if this current focus is contra the history of the discipline, in other words, without a real history to speak of?

The vested interest in so-called studies in prophetic preaching becomes even more complicated and problematic when we read and sense this development within the transitions and shifts surrounded by broader theological discourses during the past four decades. We have no problem with prophetic preaching being at odds with the current theological discourse in South Africa, but does it have a history or at least a historical consciousness to back it up? What does one make of the fact that influential theologians like John de Gruchy (2004) and Piet Naudé (2015:354) argued for a shift from prophetic theological discourse towards public theological discourse after 1994? And even if there have been recent signs of a re-appreciation (within this bigger framework of public theology) for 'prophetic witness in democratic South Africa' (De Villiers 2010), 'kairos moments and prophetic witness' (De Gruchy 2016), 'kairos consciousness' (Boesak 2015), 'prophetic theology in black theology' (Vellem 2010) or 'epistemological dialogue as prophetic' (Vellem 2016), all of these promising signs occur with no clear reference, notice and/or appreciation for the current state and focus within our 'homiletica'.

At the moment, public theology as prophetic theology is not well connected with the current evolving interest in the practice of prophetic preaching, and we sense the need to probe the history of the study of prophetic preaching in

South Africa. To put it bluntly: What to make of the fact that the theological discourse during the struggle years pushed and drove the prophetic mode of theological discourse (cf. Kairos Document), but then (maybe) without a trace of it within the academic work of Homiletics at the time?

Obviously, one may object and voice that the practice of prophetic preaching accompanied the prophetic theological discourse at the time (cf. Boesak 1982; Naudé 2013; and Tutu 1983, to name a few), but what about *the study* thereof? Do we sense the important implications in this particular differentiation between the practice and the study of prophetic preaching? Is it an interchangeable and dynamic order in which historical consciousness critically shape and (in)form theologising in the (post)apartheid condition?

Noticeably, these questions preview and foresee both some of the critical content in the genealogy and the envisioned future of studies in prophetic preaching. We will, therefore, now address each more thoroughly in that particular order.

2. Genealogical mapping of prophetic preaching

Before we start with the genealogical mapping of prophetic preaching, we give a rationale for this particular approach. The insight behind the above question concerning a need for a prophetic word on studies in prophetic preaching was the result of practical theologian Richard Osmer's (2008) well-known and used approach regarding the first two (of four) tasks of Practical Theology. In this we respond to the tasks of addressing 'What is going on?' and 'Why this is the case?'. Not only do we integrate two questions in this section, but we also opted for Michel Foucault's genealogy as a hermeneutical tool to address these questions. According to Gutting, genealogy is a 'history of the present' with the primary intent:

> [N]ot to understand the past in its own terms or for its own sake, but to understand and evaluate the present, particularly with a view to discrediting unjustified claims of authority (Gutting 2005:50).

We shall treat the source texts then 'not as documents', but rather 'as monuments', because:

> [T]hey use what Descartes – and many other writers, famous or not of the same period – wrote as clues to the general structure of the system in which they thought and wrote (Gutting 2005:34).

Foucault sensitises us not to be naïve regarding the dialectic between knowledge (discipline) and society (apartheid). '[T]hat changes in thought are not due to thought itself, suggesting that when thoughts change the causes are the social forces that control the behavior of individuals' (Kearney 1986:50).

Besides being informed by Osmer and Foucault concerning our methodological approach, there are also certain restrictions we need to acknowledge right at the start of our genealogical mapping of studies in prophetic preaching. Firstly, homiletic thought, in comparison to other Practical Theology disciplines, is often limited and chronologically removed. Secondly, a prophetic homiletic thought is often hidden within homiletic thought without being named as prophetic. Because of these restrictions, three structural choices were made: Firstly, we will be genealogically mapping a variety of homiletic contributions, some which are not explicitly prophetic in nature. Secondly, we will loosely group the contributions together in four decades: 1974-1983, 1984-1993, 1994-2003 and 2004-2015. Thirdly, because of the sheer amount of sources that may be implicitly applicable to Homiletics (i.e. the insights from all theological disciplines), this is not a comprehensive account, but rather a test sample.

During the 1974-1983 decade, three important works were published. Firstly, Willie Jonker's *Die Woord as opdrag*, with the crux of his argument being that faithful preaching is when the words of the specific Scripture text are expounded in the sermon (Jonker 1976:34-35). Jonker (1976:48,118) adds the word *prophetic* twice to this central argument, in both instances, the prophetic nature of preaching lies therein that the Scriptural text is expounded for the *specific* and *actual* context in which the congregation finds themselves.

The second important work is Allan Boesak's *Black and Reformed,* a publication of his speeches and writings of the preceding decade. Although heavily laden with black theology (theology from the perspective of the black, oppressed person of apartheid South Africa), Boesak never uses the word 'prophetic'. The crux of Boesak's argument lies therein that the predominant practice of

preaching is 'individualistic, other-worldly' and irrelevant to the life of the black church (Boesak 1984:28, 33). Boesak (1984:29) proposes that preaching should be for the 'whole of life … [a] message to our people in such a way that it makes sense in the *de facto* situation'.

The third important work for this decade is the sermon help series *Woord teen die lig* with Coenie Burger, Bethel Müller and Dirkie Smit as editors. *Woord teen die lig* appeared from 1981 to 2002. The tasks of this series are threefold: exegetical help, theological-hermeneutical help and homiletical help (Burger, Müller & Smit 1981:1-2). We believe their central concern in helping preachers lies in the second task, theological-hermeneutical, in order to 'formulate the message of the text for our time and situation' (Burger *et al*. 1981:1-2, authors' translation). *Woord teen die lig* does not mention prophetic preaching.

Much could be said about how these three works differ, but in two aspects they are similar. Firstly, all three works emanate from *concern* about the practice and integrity of the preaching of the day. Learning from Foucault, we may call this concern the social power that drove the production of these works. However, each work has a different form of concern. Willie Jonker's concern is *didactic*, endeavouring to remind preachers of the theological essence of preaching. Allan Boesak's concern is a concern of *struggle*, from the perspective of black oppression. *Woord teen die lig's* concern is *pastoral*, escorting the preacher on the way of preparing a sermon. The second similar aspect is the understanding in all three works that a more faithful preaching would be *contextual*. Learning from Foucault, we may call this contextual proposal the system of thought that governs this period. Jonker's proposal that preaching is prophetic when the context of the congregation is taken seriously equates prophetic preaching with contextual preaching. However, contextual preaching is not conceived by Jonker as being prophetic preaching, but rather as the correct way preaching is to be done. At the same time, each of the sources speaks about a greater contextuality in preaching *for their own context*. Stated differently, although all the sources call for contextual preaching, they do not discuss the plurality of contexts in South Africa, nor how different contexts influence the reading of the Bible.

During the 1984-1993 decade, two authors, Hennie Pieterse and Theuns Dreyer, are important, as well as the *Woord teen die lig* series. Hennie Pieterse contributes with an article in honour of Gerald Ebeling called 'Contextual preaching' (1984), as well as two books, *Communicative preaching* (1987) and *Die Woord in werklikheid. 'n Teologie van die prediking* (1988). Although his article implies a preaching which is contextual, Pieterse's (1984:7-9) main understanding of contextual preaching is that it is a 'hermeneutic interaction between text and the contemporary situation' where 'the text is allowed to address us'. In his two books, Pieterse (1987:5, 1988:97) avers that preaching is a dialogue between the Scriptural text and the context of the congregation. Theuns Dreyer endeavours to redefine preaching in his 1989 article, 'Poging tot 'n herdefinisie van die prediking binne die raamwerk van die Reformatoriese teologie'. Dreyer (1989:359 speaks about a 'prophetic responsibility' in preaching, which he believes is to announce the Word of God (author's translation). He goes on to show how preaching is a hermeneutic event with two phases: 'meditational exegesis [and] homiletical meditation' (Dreyer 1989:360-364, authors' translation). The Reformed definition Dreyer proposes is:

> Preaching is a pneumatological word event, where a called minister of the Word, via a communicative experience with a Scripture text, escorts the congregation within their concrete situation towards an encounter with the living God (Dreyer 1989:365, authors' translation).

To our mind, Dreyer's prophetic responsibility, with its vague nature of announcing the Word of God, is equal to his Reformed definition of preaching. Stated differently, for Dreyer, there is no difference between preaching and the prophetic responsibility of preaching.

Lastly, with regards to *Woord teen die lig*, one major change from the previous decade takes place. *Woord teen die lig* still has three tasks, the first is still exegetical help and the third homiletical help, but the second task is now hermeneutical help instead of theological-hermeneutical help. The hermeneutical task is described as *to clarify* the point of contact between the exegesis of the text and the context of the local congregation (Burger *et al.* 1987:9).

The word that stands out in all the sources is 'hermeneutic'. In each case there is also a performative verb to constitute hermeneutic; Pieterse uses 'hermeneutic interaction', Dreyer uses 'hermeneutic event' and *Woord teen die lig* uses 'to clarify'. However, none of the sources explicitly lay out the hermeneutical theory they refer to. Therefore, in conversation with Foucault, *generalised hermeneutics* constitutes the system of thought during this decade. Also, prophetic preaching is yet to emerge as a term apart from the normative definition of preaching. The question, which remains to be answered about this decade is, why is generalised hermeneutics the system of thought? In this decade, a rise is seen in contextual theologies, especially contextual theology as embodied in the *Kairos Document* of 1986 and back theology as embodied by the likes of Allan Boesak and Desmond Tutu. This entails that struggle preaching is steeped in contextuality, whilst the opposite is true of preaching which upholds the status quo and is steeped in Biblicism (see Pieterse 1987:20). The reason for proposing generalised hermeneutics may be to cultivate a concession between the two extremes. In conversation with Foucault, the social power of this decade is one of *concession* as an academic bridge between the white church, backed by the apartheid government, and the black church in the struggle.

The third decade 1994-2003 constitutes a shift in homiletic thought. In this decade, we find six important scholars whose homiletic work should be contemplated. Johan Cilliers contemplates preaching (through sermon analyses and homiletic theory) in a myriad of books and articles since 1996, integrating his thoughts on preaching in a 2004 book, *The living voice of the gospel*. Cilliers' (2004:25-26) central argument is that preaching is a blending of four voices, 'the voices of the preacher, the Biblical text, the congregation (context) and that of God'. This work of Cilliers aims to be comprehensive of his thoughts on preaching. However, to our mind, in attempting to be comprehensive, Cilliers' treatment of the contextual voice ignores the complexities of different South African contexts and the wealth of contextual theologies in South Africa, thus, lapsing into a type of culturally enclaved contextuality of the local congregation. Moreover, the voice of the local congregation that comes to the fore is that of a bourgeois white congregation. Theuns Dreyer (1996:821) takes note, with disdain, of a movement in homiletic thought that proposes that

preaching be contextual and the context be the public and political contexts. In opposition to this movement, he states that the 'political ideology of the rainbow nation, disregard[s] the interests of separate cultural groups' (Dreyer 1996:829-830, authors' translation). For Dreyer (1996:826-827), preaching should find its source in the Bible and be simultaneously clothed in the culture of the local congregation. This entails that a church can exist as 'volkskerk' for the Afrikaner (Dreyer 1996:831). Malan Nel, in his 2001 book *Ek is die verskil: Die invloed van persoonlikheid in die prediking*, believes that preaching is only successful when it 'stirs a faith community and brings them into motion … in God's direction for the congregation' (Nel 2001:5, authors' translation). By contemplating the insights from and analysing church growth in the liberal protestant tradition of the United States of America, Nel (2001:48-64) believes the personality of the preacher is paramount in order to stir a faith community to God's will.

Hennie Pieterse (1995:97), in his book *Desmond Tutu's message: A qualitative analysis*, is so inspired by Desmond Tutu's sermons that he proposes 'Liberation Theology and prophetic preaching should guide the churches' contribution to the struggle for liberation from poverty through reconstruction and development'. We believe that this marks the moment prophetic preaching is conceived in South Africa as preaching which is keenly aware and takes serious the ethical-political-societal dimensions of preaching. Jakobus Vorster is adamant that the changing culture of South Africa should have no impact on the nature of preaching and claims the authoritarian nature of preaching is where the prophetic aspect lies:

> Preaching is prophetic in that it exposes the salvation truths in the total context [of the Bible] and conveys this to the congregation for the edification of the believers. The prophetic nature of preaching gives an exceptional own character to the authority of preaching (Vorster 1995:459, authors' translation).

Cas Vos (1995:20-52), in his book *Die blye tyding. Homiletiek uit 'n hermeneuties-kommunikatiewe perspektief,* proposes preaching to be hermeneutical and communicative. Hermeneutical in the sense of the preacher understanding the Word, making understandable the Word in the unique context and coming

to understand the Word by those for whom salvation is meant (Vos 1995:23). Communicative in the sense of four partners within the preaching event: the preacher, the listeners, Christian tradition (as received in the local congregation) and the text (Vos 1995:33-34).

The decade 1994-2003 consists of a myriad of differences in homiletic thought, a *negative* system of thought. As, we believe, is visible in the myriad of different emphases and methods of doing Homiletics in the work of the scholars, a certain *energising* social power takes charge, searching for, possibly, new and interesting avenues within homiletic thought. It is in this negotiative system of thought and the energising social power that prophetic preaching is coined within South African Homiletics. However, prophetic preaching is yet to become an important subject of discussion.

The final decade under consideration is 2004-2015. In this decade, the term 'prophetic preaching' as propounded by Hennie Pieterse becomes an important subject of discussion. We have in this decade, six important homiletic scholars. Allan Boesak (2014:1060) understands the centrality of prophetic preaching to be oppositional, a proclaiming of 'the kingdom of God, and … [an embracing of] the struggles of the poor and the powerless, in such stark contrast with and in opposition *to* [the powerful]'. Johan Cilliers (2008:189) contemplates preaching as 'Foolishness. Complete and utter nonsense'. In this vein, he emphasises the counter-testimonial character of the Bible and proposes such preaching to be an act wherein 'the powers of this world are to be resisted ... ethically, aesthetically, comically' (Cilliers 2009:192, 2009:193). Although Cilliers' 'foolish' preaching has some characteristics in common with prophetic preaching, he never names it as such. Only in 2015, Cilliers gives his insights in prophetic preaching. Firstly, he suggests that preaching that debates political issues in the sermon using eschatological language is a theologically unsophisticated definition for prophetic preaching (Cilliers 2015:373-374). Cilliers (2015:374-383) then proposes that the experience evoked by the sermon points to its prophetic nature. The evoking of fear and therefore a legitimisation of the status quo is anti-prophecy (Cilliers 2015:375). The evoking of anticipation for God's new future is prophetic preaching. Cilliers (2015:378-379) goes as far as to reinterpret Desmond Tutu's preaching as prophetic, not in his usage of liberation

theology, but in the evoking of anticipation, often through humour. Fritz de Wet and Ferdi Kruger (De Wet & Kruger 2013:1) takes the point of departure of prophetic preaching to be: 'Preaching that ministers the Word of the eternal God to a society in need of change and destined for change'. The change society is destined for is Christians refocusing society to a restored relationship with God (De Wet & Kruger 2013:7). Building on these thoughts, Kruger and De Wet (2015:10) believe that preaching Jesus' death and resurrection discloses false idols in society and conquers the death such idols bring about. De Wet states the following as prophetic vision:

> Becoming progressively aware of God's vision for this world from a heart that is in the process of being purified by God's grace, we can begin to name reality with a prophetic vision for a world where more than enough flows for all from the unrestrained heart of God as it is revealed through his redemptive grace in Jesus Christ (De Wet 2015:8).

Hennie Pieterse (2013:5) still confirms some of his previous thoughts on prophetic preaching, that it is 'contextual … from the angle of the poor … in terms of their need for justice and righteousness'. However, he proposes now that prophetic preaching is only viable in a prophetic church, where support exists for preaching that speaks from the angle of the poor and for justice. Along with the openness for prophetic preaching, such a prophetic church will also have to be a new eschatological space where life can be formed amongst Christians with Christ as Lord (Pieterse 2009:5, 6). Cas Vos (2005:294) still takes a hermeneutic-communicative approach to preaching. However, in contemplating prophetic preaching, Vos (2005:302) lingers between two extremes: On the one hand, he claims 'hermeneutics always functions in an ideologically critical way', implying that all hermeneutically sound preaching is prophetic preaching. On the other hand, he claims 'prophetically critical hermeneutics allows us to interpret the message of the text creatively so that our preaching to the poor is liberating … [and brings about the ability] to respond … through action', implying that prophetic preaching is socio-economic-political preaching. That being said, Vos never explicitly contemplates prophetic preaching after this, which may indicate that his contemplation on prophetic preaching is underdeveloped. In his later work, Vos (2007:333) understands

the sermon to be an event of naming God as hope for the listeners. This hope is steeped in playful love with humour and irony, which both 'captures the heart … of the listener … [and] teaches us not to take ourselves, or others too seriously' (Vos 2007:340). With the insights of Ricoeur's hermeneutics, Vos (2008:118) goes on to show that the sermon, in expounding the Scriptural text, should move the listener into newness and otherness.

Bethel Müller (2013:5), in contemplating the *Woord teen die lig* series, makes three important contributions: Firstly, the prophetic task of preaching is to form the ecclesial identity around the Bible in opposition to the societal culture. Secondly, the Bible should be interpreted from both the '*theologia crucis* … a homiletic of the alienated, of the poor, of the heartbroken, of suffering and pain' and the '*theologia gloriae*, having its firm basis in the victory over sin and death on the cross' which generates hope (Müller 2013:6). Thirdly, preaching is a joyous and playful event; 'the preacher is *homo ludens* – playing, praying and preaching before God, reaching out to the congregation in joy' (Müller 2013:8).

In this decade, prophetic preaching and conversations around prophetic preaching are paramount. There is also a myriad of different branches and interpretations of prophetic preaching. In conversation with Foucault, the social power at work could be called the *exposition* of prophetic preaching. In other words, the conversations around prophetic preaching try to exposit a viable, faithful and well-developed definition of prophetic preaching. However, this also means that there are different branches or interpretations of prophetic preaching. Allan Boesak and Fritz de Wet propose that prophetic preaching should be what Hennie Pieterse proposed it to be in 1995, closely related to the liberation theology of apartheid and busy with socio-economic-political issues. Hennie Pieterse, although still holding on to some aspects of prophetic preaching as liberation theology, has moved in a more ecclesial direction. Bethel Müller also sees the forming of an ecclesial identity contrary to society to be an important aspect of prophetic preaching. Lastly, with Johan Cilliers' reinterpretation of Desmond Tutu's preaching, preaching as anticipation for the future through play, fooling around and humour becomes a viable interpretation of prophetic preaching. In this branch of prophetic preaching, Johan Cilliers, along with Cas Vos and Bethel Müller can be found

standing. Lastly, in conversation with Foucault, this decade's system of thought is certainly *prophetic* as all homiletic thought are implicitly or explicitly busy with prophetic preaching.

3. Re-envisioning the (post)apartheid condition of studies in prophetic preaching?

Our immediate and first afterthought on the above is that surely there has been a great deal of change that occurred in the study of prophetic preaching. In fact, the development can be described as phenomenal – latent at the start, coined in the middle, and dominant today. From the initial generalisation and singular take on context and hermeneutics, accompanied with its isolation from the practice thereof and the particular societal dynamics at the time, we see today much more particularity, with differentiation and societal dynamics reflected within its eventual emergence. In fact, it does not take much to see a clear attempt to move from the apartheid condition.

A second glance, however, also reminds us of phenomenal change in society. Maybe we should not so swiftly equate the change for the transformation of a discipline, as the outer surroundings also underwent similar changes. There may have been some change, but what if the change is still within the same paradigm with the same trajectory? There may have been greater differentiation in terms of context, but what if the context and interest we serve are still our own (apartheid) inwardly focused context and concerns? We may have experienced the emergence of prophetic preaching, but what if the study of prophetic preaching actually becomes a tool to protect vested interests and particular histories? It is one thing to be critical concerning the way the transition after 1994 occurred in South Africa, but it is actually quite another for Boesak (2014) then to propose we just need to remember – and thus repeat – what we did previously. It is one thing for De Wet and Kruger (2013) to accentuate prophetic preaching in terms of exposing corruption in society, but quite another to suggest this is the most pressing concern white reformed churches in South Africa has to be prophetic about. It is one thing for De Wet and Tisdale (2014) to acknowledge contemporary prophetic preaching theory in South Africa, but quite another to do so without recognising the dichotomy of its absence before 1994. Thus, just

the emergence of prophetic preaching should not so easily suggest that a lot has necessarily changed.

Thirdly, the explicit differentiation in terms of interest in the *practice* and the *study* of prophetic preaching becomes of paramount importance. To put it bluntly, we still find ourselves having only one side of prophetic preaching: now in the (post)apartheid it is present in its study as a response to absence in practice, while during apartheid it was practised, but absent in its study. The coining of the phrase 'prophetic preaching' only in 1995, thus does not entail the absence nor our ignorance of the practice beforehand – but actually, and importantly, a quite late self-consciousness in its actual study. The development of the study should not only seek the renewed practice of prophetic preaching – being primarily reactionary with asking questions like 'Where have all the prophetic gone?' – but also develop a more self-critical consciousness and critique regarding its history, differentiation and articulation of its practice *and* study. Thus, part of our insight into the development of the (emerging) sub-discipline, while facing its (post)apartheid condition, will be to seek better integration between the two and also seek, in the light of this past, a more predominant envisioning of the future. We stress the differentiation between practice and study precisely to avoid either one being mistaken for or isolated from the other, thereby envisioning a much more interchangeable order and dynamic between the two.

Fourthly, the emergence of the study of prophetic preaching as a sub-discipline within Homiletics will thus also be challenged to differentiate more thoroughly between the different contexts and publics to which it will have to listen and voice itself. The study of prophetic preaching should not only see the practice of prophetic preaching and the publics of the church and society as its main interest (cf. De Gruchy 2015), but as a discipline it may also be a strange gift for doing theology and academic work more wholesome and thoroughly. This also assumes that the discipline itself should critically reflect upon its emergence and presence regarding the transition from previous prophetic theological discourse towards the current one of public theology. The emergence of the disciplinary status of studies in prophetic preaching would not necessarily be acknowledged in the centres of intellectual disciplinary power, but at least it has to be critically

present. Thus, envisioning its disciplinary status should not result in further fragmentation and isolation, but actually be a gift towards bridging and integrating knowledge for a more wholesome theology and practice.

Finally, the gradual development and differentiation that we have seen in context and hermeneutics need to transfer also further into the critical engagement with fellow colleagues' work. We find it strange to notice how one can write about prophetic preaching in South Africa today without any explicit critique of the current studies itself. If we really would like to see the growth and development concerning the practice of prophetic preaching in South Africa, then the critical engagement with each other's work is of paramount importance. The bibliographies tell a story: obviously, we should not isolate ourselves from colleagues in the northern hemisphere, but our main point of orientation should, in fact, be our rootedness with fellow colleagues in the exposed (post) apartheid condition where we embrace critique and embody self-critique. In short, the growing interest in the study of prophetic preaching in South Africa inevitable asks for greater reflection in our bibliographies.

4. Conclusion

What we have attempted here is not only to show more recognition and appreciation of what colleagues have done over many years but also to seek critique in order to take the next bold step in the discipline's development. A lot has changed, but there is also a lot that reminds us of our (post)apartheid condition. Whether there is a need for this prophetic word on the study of prophetic preaching, and whether we should envision the immediate tasks as spelled out here, is for the emerging discipline itself to decide.

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Chapter 10

Transitions in the study of leadership in Practical Theology

K.J. Pali[1]

1. Introduction

The success or failure of every nation, organisation, or church is often attributed to the quality of its leadership (Ngambi 2011:9). The quality of leadership should be understood in the context of whether leadership adheres to the values espoused by society, an organisation, or Scripture and positively influences the followers and the context. For example, from some of the mainline churches in various parts of the world, the poor state of the laity, poor financial income and an inward-focused ministry of the congregations are mostly blamed on the poor leadership of the minister and his/her team and poor training from the theological institutions (Stevens & Collins 1993:xii). By contrast, in terms of some of the charismatic and African independent churches, their success of the ministry is attributed to their quality ministerial leadership, which seems to have fared well concerning financial management and income, lay ministry and membership growth (De Gruchy 1986:29).

The main aim of this study is to critically reflect on the leadership studies published by scholars in Practical Theology in South Africa, whose journal, the *Journal of Practical Theology in Southern Africa (JPTSA)*, is published on the website of the *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* (*HTS*).[2]

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2 Available from: http://www.hts.org.za/index.php/hts/issue/archive

The research problem in this paper is based on the following: Leadership is one of the most discussed, studied, and written about topics in our society (Bligh & Meindl 2005:11). As a result, there are some epistemological and practical transitions in the understanding and practice of leadership. In Practical Theology, leadership studies is one of the least developed disciplines (Jinkins 2012:309), and this may be attributed to the centralisation of leadership around the minister at the expense of the lay people (Campbell 2000:80; Stevens & Collins 1993:xii). Avis (1992:xii, 1) argues that, in the past, Christian leadership received a low profile in academic training, because churches were not confident of their leadership and preferred to lean towards management. Another reason could be that there is no consonance between the academy and the church on the meaning and role of leadership (Jinkins 2012:308). In light of the above, the guiding research question is: What transitions occurred in leadership studies within Practical Theology over the past two decades?

In order to respond to the research question, a general study of leadership literature from organisational leadership studies and the Christian perspective was done. But the particular focus was on Christian perspective and, the aim was to reflect on the general status of leadership literature, including theology, in general, so that it could be compared with what is published in the *JPTSA*. Out of a selection of articles on leadership studies published in that journal, fourteen were identified, covering the period from 1992 to 2015. The focus of these articles sets the boundaries for this study. The view given on the state of leadership studies in these articles is limited to their own contents.

2. The scope of Practical Theology

The scope of Practical Theology has changed, as it has become infinite, international, and multi-religious (Ganzevoort 2009:2, 7, 8; Osmer 2008:x; Reader 2008:5). It can be said that it involves anything that concerns the role of humanity in the world as expected by the Supreme Being (Woodward & Pattison 2000:7). This change has affected the nature of Practical Theology, which has shifted from being a prescriptive discipline that received findings and guidelines from Biblical, historical and Systematic Theology to being an empirically descriptive, and critically constructive theoretical discipline

of religious practice, with transformative outcomes through theological and practical activity (Graham 2000:109; Heitink 1999:xv, xvi). As a result of the changes in its scope and nature, Practical Theology must now review its approach to leadership in the external and internal ministry of the congregations. The contemporary and future role of Practical Theology would be to interpret the Scripture and the church tradition in terms of the present context, to contribute concrete proposals to societal problems, and to facilitate the renewal and development of a society (Campbell 2000:85; Graham 2000:109; Heyns 1997:31).

The specific call for a review of the approach to leadership studies in Practical Theology is necessary because leadership is assumed to be responsible for the success or failure of an organisation, a nation, and even a congregation (Ngambi 2011:9). Therefore, leadership should first be empowered and transformed in order to smoothly implement change and help congregations rediscover their identity and mission (Rendle 2001:173).

This study discusses the concepts related to leadership studies within Practical Theology. The approach entails a brief general discussion of the trend of scholarship on leadership from a Christian perspective, in particular. This is followed by a comparison of and reflection on the trend of scholarship on leadership studies in articles published in the *JPTSA* covering the period 1992-2015.

3. Definitions of leadership

A general study of leadership literature revealed that there is a growing interest in the study and production of leadership literature (Bligh & Meindl 2005:11). Despite this, Burns (1979:1-3) once mentioned that leadership is the least understood phenomenon on earth. This statement is based on the fact that there is no agreement on a definition of leadership. Leadership description often ignores or excludes followers, and a leader is often overrated at the expense of his/her followers.

In light of the above, it was realised that leadership scholars are reluctant to give a definition of 'leadership'. Bass and Bass (2008:23) argue that the search for a true definition of leadership is fruitless. The Bible does not provide a definition of

leadership (Giles 1992:7). However, there are as many definitions of leadership as there are people who attempt to define it. Realising this challenge, Bass and Bass (2008:15-22) classified the transitions in leadership definitions as follows:

The *leader-centric* definition emphasises the effect of a unilateral influence on the part of the leader as a person. The traits of a leader are emphasised and the leader is believed to have qualities that differentiate him/her from the followers. For example, leadership is viewed as a skill or an ability to induce compliance from the followers (Northouse 2012:5).

Leadership as a *cause of some effect* uses delegated authority and initiates the process of influence in order to mobilise followers towards positive goals. For example, leadership is regarded an initiative to mobilise followers to achieve specific goals for the common good (Stogdill 1974:14).

Leadership as a *relationship of influence* or interaction is assumed as a process of mutual influence or quality relationship of influence between a leader and his/her follower (Wright 2009:3). The emphasis, in this instance, is on the relationship, the interactive event, sharing responsibilities, and communication between the leader and his/her follower, not the qualities of the leader as such (Northouse 2012:5).

In light of the above, leadership studies have shifted from viewing leadership as a specialised role due to some special qualities or skill, towards understanding leadership as a shared process in a social system where everyone has the potential to exercise leadership (Yukl 2002:3, 4). Another shift is that from a leader to a quality relationship of influence between a leader and his/her follower. According to Wright (2009:3), the notion of leadership as a quality relationship of influence between a leader and his/her follower has shifted the locus of leadership from the leader to a mutual and quality relationship between a leader and his/her follower.

For Wright (2009:3), the consequence of this shift is that the burden of leadership is shifted from an individual to both a leader and his/her follower who have the opportunity to exchange their role in leadership. In other words, depending on the context and need, a leader may adopt the role of a follower and a follower may adopt the role of a leader. The shift towards leadership

as a quality relationship of influence implies sharing responsibilities. This involves decentralisation of leadership power since now both the leader and the follower have the potential to influence each other. Furthermore, this shift in the notion of leadership implies that the issue of hierarchy, control or emphasis on differentiation between a leader and his/her follower is no longer prominent, as sharing and equality in the practice of leadership are highlighted as significant values in leadership.

In terms of the leadership studies published in the *JPTSA*, scholars are reluctant to define leadership; they would rather describe it (Elliot 2008:687; Mwambazambi & Banza 2014:2; Nell 2015:6). The reason for this is that definitions cause contradictions and are often vague (Magezi 2015:4, 6). Of those who gave definitions of leadership, Labuschagne and Malan (2010:4) state that '[l]eadership is a process which has to do with actions and consciousness of an individual with regard to [a] specific goal'. This definition acknowledges a shift from a leader's traits to leadership as a process, but it is still not clear what kind of process leadership is. Magezi (2015:4) raised concern that there is a need for a concise articulation of the meaning of leadership in order to constructively engage in global leadership debate.

Definitions of leadership are conceptualised from different levels. According to Yukl (2002:13-16), these levels of conceptualisation of leadership are intra-individual leadership processes that focus on the aspects of self-management and self-leadership and that can be manifested in personal skills, qualities, mature personality and the quality behaviour one displays in private and public life. Yukl (2002:14) states that this approach and understanding of leadership is very rare. The dyadic process of leadership is about the relationship between a leader and his/her follower; in this instance, the effectiveness of leadership is dependent on the quality of co-operation and trust in the relationship. The group process of leadership is about the role of leadership in a group and how leadership contributes to group effectiveness. A good example is the role of leadership in, for instance, a church council meeting. The organisational process of leadership is about leadership that occurs in a larger open system wherein groups are subsystems. In this instance, the role of leadership is to help the organisation adapt to its environment and acquire the resources needed to

survive. Within the context of their article, Labuschagne and Nel's (2010:4) definition of leadership may be classified between the dyadic and the group process, as it emphasises individual consciousness and actions of leadership within congregations and organisations. The shortcomings of Christian leadership studies to clarify the levels of conceptualisation of leadership can be observed, especially in self-leadership. More research is needed on the topic of leadership integrity, discipline and self-management. In the articles published in the *JPTSA*, scholars are aware of the shift in leadership definitions, although a plea could be made that more research is needed to articulate this shift and to highlight the analysis of its implication in congregation ministry.

3.1 Distinction and relationship between leadership and management

Hellriegel, Slocum and Woodman (1998:301) describe 'management' as maintaining order, organisation and control; the manager is the person who directs the work of others and brings order and consistency to the work settings. By contrast, they describe 'leadership' as coping with change and guiding followers to new unexplored destinations. In the context of congregational ministry, should leadership and management be engaged in equal measure or be rejected at the expense of the other? In response, Shawchuck and Heuser (1993:21-23) and Rendle (2001:14) mention that both leadership and management are essential in the congregation. However, leadership and management are not the same and are not essential in the same measure. Shawchuck and Heuser (1993:21-23) further state that congregations, having become fixed in a status quo, inwardly focused and in decline, reflect a state of being over-managed and under-led. By contrast, Rendle (2001:14) argues that overemphasis on leadership can alienate members by removing trusted behaviours and principles that provide stable bases for progress. Briefly, both management and leadership are necessary; the leadership in the congregations must know when to interchange them.

As leadership scholars who published articles in the *JPTSA*, Mellody and Theron (2006:108) and Manala (2010:1) acknowledge that leadership and management are both needed in a congregation. Although they agree that they are distinct from each other, they suggest that a minister can assume the identity of both a

leader and a manager in a congregation, but that the minister must know when to exercise management and leadership. However, an in-depth definition of both concepts is not given, except for a description of what they entail. Most scholars in the *JPTSA* do not indicate which one should be preferred, but one can deduce that they think both are needed in the congregational ministry.

The shift in this instance is that, in general leadership study, there is a movement away from a management approach to a leadership approach, whereas, in leadership studies in the *JPTSA*, there is an emphasis on assuming both identities and even sometimes re-asserting the role of management (Mellody & Theron 2006:115).

3.2 Influence of secular theories on Christian leadership

There is a distinction between Christian and secular leadership theories (Popkes 2005:347). These theories often mutually influence each other. The question is, how should Christian leadership respond to an influence of secular leadership theories? Kessler (2013:1) warns that one should be wary of baptising secular leadership theories into Christian practice because secular theories tend to undermine the Christian values of leadership (Dunn 1995:21). Other scholars, such as Ikenye (2010:65) and Sanders (1984:28), agree that one can adopt secular leadership skills and theories in Christian leadership, but only on condition that secular skills and theories enrich and complement the Biblical norms of Christian leadership. In addition, Sanders states (1984:28) that 'spiritual leadership blends natural and spiritual qualities. Natural qualities are spiritual since [they] are God-given'.

Furthermore, the role of culture should not be undermined in the practice of leadership. One should understand that culture influences leadership, whether Christian, secular or natural. According to Plueddemann (2009:67, 68), either God or Satan could be a dominant power that influences culture, hence, we may have a bad or good leadership in a particular culture. Good leadership is a crucial factor for the success and sustainable growth of the church (Page 2008:22). Bad leadership is often sourced by Satan to thwart the good plans of God. In 2 Kings 21, King Manasseh of Judah disobeyed the Lord by building altars for Baal and worshipping all the hosts of heaven and serving them. In

John 8:44, 10:10, Satan is depicted as the source of evil and influences others, even those in leadership, to do evil like killing, stealing and destroying.

In organisational leadership theory, culture contextualises leadership and spirituality refines and elevates effective leadership practices to a universal status. Osborn, Hunt and Jauch (2002:799) argue that leadership is linked to icons of culture. This means local cultural practices impress certain values and marks over time on leadership practices. Hence, models of leadership in various contexts including Christianity are influenced by culture (Plueddemann 2009:158, 180; Van der Walt 2006:124). Consequently, leadership in traditional Africa is viewed as communal, person oriented and hierarchical in contrast to Western notions of leadership, according to which leadership is viewed as individualistic and task oriented (Van der Walt 2006:124). Spirituality is now regarded as essential for promoting good leadership and refining leadership by contributing to leadership effectiveness, creating an ethical climate, inspiring trust and promoting positive work relationship (Reave 2005:656, 664). Furthermore, spirituality elevates effective leadership practices like charity, vision, and humility to a universal level of leadership practices (Reave 2005:663). Hence, in the African context, Khoza (2006:246, 247) suggests that *ubuntu* is exportable and one of the gifts of Africa to the world. He understands *ubuntu* as a Zulu concept that means personhood, and fosters practices of interdependence, communality and co-operation. In leadership practices, *ubuntu* encourages leadership towards respect of human dignity, shared vision and resources, and striving for a common goal (Ncube 2010:79-81).

In the Christian context, good leadership should have an in-depth theological understanding of leadership as a calling that forms a basis for a sound leader's spirituality (Van der Borght 2005:240). Plueddemann (2009:157) warns that Christian leadership practices should be sensitive to the cultural practices of the context. However, one should not just accept cultural practices of leadership as they are, they must be evaluated against theological principles, which informs us of the normative practices of leadership. For Christians, Plueddemann (2009:158, 159) says, the Bible is the ultimate source of knowledge about what is expected of good leadership. The Bible has the potential to play a

significant role in refining cultural practices of leadership so that they may be integrated to the universal principles of leadership.

It would be a serious error to ignore cultural influence on leadership, as leadership must fit the cultural context within which it exists (Kessler 2013:1). This means that African leadership or organisational leadership skills and theories from Western countries could be used in Christian leadership to enrich and complement Christian leadership practice. It should, however, be noted that one can only adopt those aspects of African or organisational leadership theories from Western countries that agree with Christian norms.

Leadership scholars who published articles in the *JPTSA* are positive about Christian leadership adopting some secular theories from both social sciences and management sciences (Breytenbach 1992:87; Manala 2010:4). Mellody and Theron (2006:106, 115) add that congregational management should be informed by management sciences and that the ministers should study business management skills in order to enhance their management and administration skills. Furthermore, Kessler (2007) uses McGregor's theory to assess the behaviour of congregational members as lazy or intrinsically motivated. In summary, there appears to be a shift towards embracing non-Christian theories of leadership from social sciences, Western and African culture, and it is assumed that such practices can be embraced as long as the non-Christian leadership theories do not distil the quality of Christian leadership theory.

3.3 Essence of Christian leadership

What makes Christian leadership unique and distinctive from other leadership practices and skills? Rinehart (1998:27) argues that Christian leadership is appointed by God, serves God and his Kingdom within a specific context and culture, and is, therefore, accountable to God. Furthermore, Christian leadership must first be theocentric and then anthropocentric, whereby the spiritual needs of humanity are catered for in the manner enlisted by God (Ikenye 2010:67). The perception of Christian leadership as originating from God influences the entire spectrum of leadership motives, models, morals, and function (Dunn 1995:21, 24, 28). I shall discuss the models and function of leadership later. The motive of Christian leadership is obedience and sensitivity to the divine calling

(Jer. 17:10); hence, its practice would be from the perspective of selflessness and service to a divine calling. Christian leadership emphasises quality ethics, integrity and values, due to the influence of a relationship with God (Sanders 1984:18), and imitating Christ (1 Thess. 1:6-7). It thus appears that the practice of Christian leadership is inspired by discernment of its calling and relationship with God who is also the judge of the motive of our leadership practices. Therefore, Christian leadership should be practiced from one's understanding of one's identity and calling, not one's position.

In articles in the *JPTSA*, leadership scholars engage the discussion on the distinction between Christian leadership and other leadership practices. Some of the mentioned unique attributes of Christian leadership include that Christian leadership are collective and collegial, with a strong sense of caring and oversight (Elliot 2008:685, 687; Labuschagne & Malan 2010:1). Christian leadership does not encourage dominion, but humility and service (Nell 2015:4). It is a leadership that represents God and provides a service that enables holistic growth (Manala 2010:5). In light of the above, it can be stated that leadership studies, as published in the *JPTSA*, are aware of the distinction between Christian leadership and other leadership practices. These most often underline that leadership that values a relationship with God demonstrates a shift from dominion to humility and service that promote holistic growth.

4. Character of leadership

The character of Christian leadership is highly spiritual, as Christian leadership is accountable, obedient and sensitive to the mission of God (Frambach 2007:98). In both private and public spaces, the character of Christian leadership must reflect on the quality relationship with God (Eccles. 12:14; Isa. 29:15-16; Jude 6:25; Matt. 6:4, 6; 10:26, 27). This means that the Christian's life in the church, home, and society should not contradict the relationship with God. Sanders (1984:40-44) mentions the following characters of leadership as derived from 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. The social qualification, which calls for a Christian leader to have a good reputation outside the church (1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:8). The domestic qualification emphasises that the Christian leader must manage his/her family well. The

Christian leader is expected to display personal attributes such as being blameless, self-controlled, respectable, and hospitable (1 Tim. 3:2, 3; Tit. 1:6, 7, 8). The mental qualification implies that a leader must be of a sane and sensible mind. Spiritual maturity emphasises that a church leader must have a firm hold on the Word of God, by being certain about the Gospel. A church leader must be morally sensitive against alcohol abuse, love of money and have the ability to control his/her anger (1 Tim. 3:3; Tit. 1:7).

In the articles on leadership studies published in the *JPTSA*, the character of Christian leadership is described as being informed by quality ethics, being exemplary, emulate Christ and not of some questionable status (Botha 2014:1; Breytenbach 1992:98; Elliot 2008:687; Magezi 2015:2; Mellody & Theron 2006:106). It can be discerned that quality ethics is based on two metaphors, namely, emulation of Christ and representation of God, not necessarily a position. Both metaphors compel and influence Christian leadership to practice high-quality ethics. However, it should be noted that there is a need to emphasise quality ethics in the practice of leadership, especially in the context of South Africa and Africa, which suffered from the legacy of imperialism. The reason for this is that quality ethics in leadership facilitates influence and transformation in the process of leadership (1 Cor. 4:16, 11:1; 1 Tim. 4:12).

5. The process of influence

According to Yukl (2002:141), influence is the essence of leadership and may yield either commitment by followers, or indifferent compliance and resistance. In addition, influence in leadership can be expressed by any leader whether as an individual or in the context of a group. The processes used to facilitate influence include coercion (Deut. 6:6-9), whereby threats and force are used to implement a decision; persuasion (2 Cor. 5:11) to win over the follower to support the common goal; a set of examples (1 Cor. 4:16, 11:1; 1 Tim. 4:12) as a set of behaviour to be emulated by followers, and a mutual exchange (John 6:26), whereby one follows a leader because of the material benefits they derive from him/her. However, persuasion through the Word of God and personal behaviour, which reflect imitating the life of Christ, are regarded as the main instruments of influence in Christian leadership (Wright 2009:4).

More research is still needed on how Christian leadership influences its followers and whether that influence is successful or not. In articles on leadership studies published in the *JPTSA*, mentoring and modelling are mentioned as instruments that can be used to facilitate influence in the process of leadership. Masango (2011:1) argues that mentoring as a process of guidance aims to change the behaviour of the mentee so that she/he functions more effectively. Manala (2010:3) relates that a minister must model a behaviour that she or he expects the followers to emulate. From an in-depth study of both Manala (2010:5) and Masango (2011:1), one can deduce that setting a good example is regarded as the key to leadership influence that brings change in the follower.

The influence process in leadership must bring about a deep change in the persons involved in leadership. This deep change must involve the attitude, mind and behaviour for the purpose of attaining the desired goal of an organisation or mission of God (Tannenbaum, Weschler & Massarik 2013:5). The influence of Christian leadership should contribute to the fundamental change of external behaviour and inner being. Plueddemann (2009:69, 70) mentions that the influence of Christian leadership must bring change to external and internal cultural practices. External cultural practices involve clothing, food, wedding traditions, music, and family traditions. Internal cultural practices refer to the cultural values that influence us to practise materialism, tribalism or racism, and the worldview which is our central sphere from which the deepest meaning of life and assumptions about nature of reality emanate. It involves spirituality and the mind and, when successfully transformed, it often helps us serve God better. For example, in Acts 10, it was only after Peter experienced a mind-shift that he was able to embrace and proclaim the good news to Cornelius.

From the articles on leadership studies published in the *JPTSA*, one could deduce that setting a good example in word and deed leads to the effective influence of leadership (Manala 2010:2, 5; Masango 2011:1, 2). However, the following factors may contribute to the failure of the process of leadership influence: the way in which leadership views the lay people (Kessler 2007:82); and the uncertainty of the minister's calling (Cooke 2008:27). Others factors include a diminished view of the minister's office, and a leadership hierarchy that misuses its power through manipulation and coercion in order to enforce

social distance between a leader and his or her followers (Nell 2015:4, 6), and when a minister as a leader feels unappreciated in his or her leadership ministry (Joynt & Dreyer 2013:3, 4). Scholars are aware of the consequences of the leadership's process of influence. As indicated earlier, leadership scholars seem to focus more on challenges that hinder leadership influence. However, further studies should determine to what extent congregational leadership is successful in influencing congregational members and society at large.

6. A leader and a follower

General studies on leadership have shifted from an emphasis on the leader to a focus on the follower, impact on the context, and the quality relationship of influence between the leader and the follower (Avolio, Walumbwa & Weber 2009:422). Followers in leadership are increasingly viewed as significant, and their value in leadership is appreciated (Dvir & Shamir 2003:328). Leadership is no longer an individual activity with unidirectional influence; it has become a shared, relational, social process of influence, whereby authority and leadership responsibilities are shared and distributed (Avolio *et al.* 2009:430). Followers in leadership have a choice to either reject, accept or modify the influence in the leadership process in collaboration with a leader (Bass & Bass 2008:400).

In Christian leadership literature, there are some shifts in studies on a leader and a follower. In a congregational context, leadership is often associated with the minister who, due to his/her leadership skills, is overrated, while the lay people leadership is underrated (Kritzinger 2007:14). How does one differentiate between a minister and the lay people? Ordination of the minister was viewed as a rise in status and delegation of authority to do a specific ministry; hence, the minister was above the lay people (Tucker 2003:vii). This caused a shift in the historical interpretation of the priesthood of believers as people of God to being attributed to only ordained ministry. This resulted in the undermining of the gifts of the spiritual leadership to all believers while permitting the unbridled practice of the charismata of the leadership of the minister (Kuhrt 2004:13).

Elevating the minister above the lay people made the minister the centre of the ministry in the church, the prince of the pulpit, the manager of the

congregation, and the executive of the denomination (De Gruchy 1986:28). However, contemporary Christian leadership literature encourages a shift of leadership from a leader (minister) to a quality relationship of influence between a minister and the lay people (Wright 2009:3). In this relationship of influence, the leadership responsibilities and authority are shared, and the status of the minister and the laity is not differentiated, although their individual function may be distinguished. Furthermore, in Christian leadership, the ultimate leader is God, who delegates leadership to all believers (Migliore 2004:308). Hence, all Christians are followers before they are leaders, and their leadership is a gift that must be used with sensitivity (Oates 1982:83).

In the past, the office of the minister in a congregation and his/her function in the ministry of the Word and in the administration of sacraments was assumed to be a *sine qua non* and a full-time job (Van der Borght 2005:243, 244). That practice has now been challenged. Can the congregation exist without a minister? Should the minister be employed full-time in a ministry? The office of the minister is still essential in the ministry of the congregation, but the Pauline tradition of tent-making ministry signifies that the office of the minister need not be full-time position (Acts 18:1-4; 20:33-34). In addition, De Gruchy argues that the full-time appointment of a minister hinders priesthood ministry, as a minister is assumed to do everything; hence, the minister is overburdened with ministerial duties (De Gruchy 1986:28, 29). Kritzinger (2007:15, 23) reasons that full-time ministry is expensive, as the minister must be maintained and paid a salary. This practice stifles the effectiveness of the ministry and outreaches.

Leadership scholars who published articles in the *JPTSA* indicate the following shift in a relationship between a leader and a follower. Nell (2015:1, 3, 6) indicates that, in contemporary leadership studies, there is a shift of leadership power from a leader to a team, a group, and a network. He critically remarks on the shift of leadership from the focus on the minister to a group when he asks: Does it now make congregations leaderless or is that the end of leadership? Further findings from his empirical work indicate that there is a shift from viewing lay people as a flock and a minister as a shepherd to viewing each

other as members of the body of Christ. It is important to note a shift towards viewing a minister first as a follower of Christ before s/he is viewed as a leader.

Lastly, there is an evolving challenge that, although there is a shift towards sharing and equality in leadership, some followers still prefer the old practice of leadership that emphasises differentiation and authority. To demonstrate, Manala (2010:1) states that 'to give back ministry to the lay people is laudable, but in the township, a strong leadership and management is demanded from the pastor'. This means that members of the congregations among black people still prefer a leader who manifests extraordinary qualities of leadership. Gordon (2011:198, 19) attributes this resistance to sharing responsibilities and power to organisational antecedents and sociocultural practices that reinforce the traditional hierarchy of leadership practice.

According to Kuhrt (2004:8, 9), in the New Testament era (1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 1:5-6), lay people were viewed positively as part of the priesthood, as they shared ministry and authority with the minister. However, the historical development of congregational leadership has assigned the priesthood exclusively to the minister, at the expense of the marginalisation and undermining of lay people (Russel 1986:56, 57). The lay people were encouraged to be generally passive; to be active only in congregational life, and left to fend for themselves in the week (Diehl 1997:92). Stevens and Collins (1993:xi) thus view the lay people as untapped resources and as not adequately used in the congregation.

In congregational leadership, the above implies that there is now a shift from viewing the minister as an extraordinary person with elevated status and a master of all to a priesthood of believers (Kritzinger 2007:22). This priesthood of believers enhances the view of lay people as diverse and valuable in leadership practice; hence, they share leadership responsibilities and authority (Dunn 1995:92). This also implies that the success of congregational leadership is dependent on the co-operation of lay people who have the right to either reject or accept the influence of leadership (Dunn 1995:91, 92). In the *JPTSA*, leadership scholars indicate that congregational leadership of the lay people still needs further research. However, Kessler (2007:82) classifies lay people in the congregation as lazy or inspired in terms of their ministerial duties.

7. Types of leadership styles

A style of leadership refers to the approach one uses or the specific behaviour one adopts to achieve one's goal in leadership relationship (Plueddemann 2009:180). Leadership methods are provisional, whereas principles of leadership in Christian leadership are given and permanent (Finzel 1998:101). In the Bible, especially in the New Testament, one encounters various forms of leadership, how they emerged, functioned and changed to meet the new needs. Briefly, the Bible does not support one style of leadership but manifests various styles based on context and culture (Stevens & Collins 1993:58). However, the practice and implementation of these styles were governed by the Biblical principles of care, humility and servanthood (Jer. 23:1-8; Mark 10:35-45; John 13:15-17) as influenced by the divine mission. According to Plueddemann (2009:171), every style of leadership is susceptible to cultural influence. Therefore, it is advisable that, before any style of leadership can be adopted as Christian practice of leadership, it must be subjected to the principles of the Gospel and Kingdom of God.

What guides the choice of an appropriate style of Christian leadership? Various factors contribute to choosing a specific style of leadership: D'Souza (2001:168) mentions those factors such as the needs of the followers, the personality of a leader, the context, and the tasks to be achieved. In Christian leadership, the followers' level of spiritual maturity and material needs influence the style of leadership used in the congregation. Personalities, such as being overt, task-oriented or visionary, prompt one to select a specific style of leadership. The context of leadership varies and influences the choice of a style of leadership. The context of leadership can be described in terms of space, like Africa and Western countries, and become abstract, like chaos and stability. Leadership is tasked to bring about change in the lives of people and, in order to achieve this task, various approaches are used such as vision, exchange of gifts, or coercion (Stevens & Collins 1993:58).

In terms of leadership studies, as published in the *JPTSA*, research acknowledges that various situations of poverty, prosperity, weakness and others prompt a certain style of leadership (1 Cor. 9:2-22; 2 Cor. 8:9; Phil. 2:5). Leadership styles from management sciences could be used if subjected to Biblical values

(Breytenbach 1992:87). Some leadership studies in the *JPTSA* agree that the following factors contribute to a choice of style of leadership: the personality of a leader; the context; the task at hand; and the relationship with the follower (Breytenbach 1992:87; Kessler 2007:82; Magezi 2015:7).

8. Role of leadership

The role of Christian leadership is dependent on the leadership understanding the mission of the Triune God as delegated to the church. The mission of the Triune God is God oriented, that is to glorify God for God's own glory. It is human oriented, because God intends to reconcile humanity with Godself so that humanity can experience the transforming relationship with God. The role of Christian leadership varies from the ultimate and contingent one. Contemporary Christian leadership studies tend to highlight the ultimate purpose of leadership: to direct people into communion with the life of the holy Trinity (Saines 2010:517). In order to achieve this ultimate purpose of leadership, numerous tasks should be accomplished, and this leads to the contingent role of Christian leadership in equipping and building the body of Christ (Eph. 4:11-12), and bringing change within, and through humanity (Ncube 2010:79).

Branson (2007:118-122, 2011:54-56) summarises the countless contingent functions of leadership. *Interpretive role*: Leadership gives meaning by interpreting historical documents, experiences and events happening within a context (Frambach 2007:99). *Relational role*: how leadership enables effective and quality relationships between humanity and God, environment and humanity itself in the context of the congregation, family and society. The *implemental role* involves using structures, resources, activities and one's responsibilities to organise, equip and transform humanity and other creation for the glory of God.

The role of the minister in the contemporary congregational ministry is changing. This is due to accelerated and increasing changes in society and the expansion of the field of Practical Theology. This has prompted a shift in the practice of leadership in congregational ministry from a ministry centred on the minister, to one that involves and empowers ordinary members of the

congregation (Van der Ven 1993:35, 36). These changes have resulted in the uncertainty and review of the minister's role (Van der Borght 2005:234). To better understand the role of the minister, one has to be clear about the mission of the Triune God as delegated to the congregation. In addition, there needs to be clarity that the identity of the minister as a representative of God is a priority before that of the denomination of the church (Oates 1982:65). The role of the minister can be summarised as interpreting, relational, and implementing (Branson 2007:118-122, 2011:54-56). To achieve this role, the Word and the sacraments are the best instruments that can be used; the minister need not be full-time (De Gruchy 1986:29; Kritzinger 2007:39, 57). The motive of the minister in practising ministry should be one of transforming, empowering, and equipping the lay people for the ministry in their daily life. Hence, preaching, mission and pastoral care should be driven by these motives and understanding of the mission of the Triune God.

The research from leadership studies in the *JPTSA* does not emphasise the distinction between the ultimate and the contingent purpose of Christian leadership. It does, however, show the contingent role of leadership as serving people, caring, equipping people, managing, mentoring, and healing (Breytenbach 1992:98; Cooke 2008; Elliot 2008:685; Manala 2010; Masango 2011; Mellody & Theron 2006:115; Nolte & Dreyer 2008). The emphasis on the ultimate purpose of leadership is crucial to remind those in Christian leadership of their accountability to the Triune God.

9. Conclusion

Leadership studies, as published in the *JPTSA*, indicate some consonance and gaps with the transitions that occur within general leadership studies, especially in the Christian context. The consonance in transitions within general leadership studies is in the following. Leadership studies in the *JPTSA* indicate, to some extent, the shift from a leader-centric definition to understanding leadership as a process of influence. This shift has reoriented leadership to be viewed as a process of sharing responsibility and authority. This means that both the minister and the lay people, in the process of leadership, have the opportunity to exchange the role of leading and following and to share the

responsibilities of leadership. This shift calls into effect the practice of viewing each other as equal partners in leadership; hence, those in the leadership process are responsible for the success or failure of the leadership. However, a shift towards sharing leadership responsibilities and being equal partners can create a dilemma among some followers who still prefer the old practice of leadership that emphasises differentiation and hierarchy.

Articles on leadership studies, as published in the *JPTSA*, also indicate a shift towards acknowledging the minister as both a leader and a manager in a congregation; the minister simply needs to know when to exercise management and leadership. However, these articles do not indicate which aspect should be preferred, but it can be deduced that both are needed in the congregational ministry. Furthermore, these articles indicate a shift towards an interdisciplinary approach to leadership studies. Hence, they are positive about the adoption of some secular theories from social sciences and management sciences in Christian leadership, although the present emphasis is on subjecting those non-Christian theories to Christian principles. In addition, scholars publishing in the *JPTSA* are aware of the distinction between Christian leadership and other leadership practices, and encourage a shift from leadership behaviours and methods that promote dominion to those that stress humility and service in order to promote holistic growth.

In articles on leadership studies published in the *JPTSA*, the character of Christian leadership is described as being informed by quality ethics, exemplary, and emulating Christ, and that it should not be of some questionable status. However, there is an increasing need for an emphasis on quality ethics in the practice of leadership, especially in the context of South Africa and Africa that suffered from the legacy of imperialism. To help change the context, there is an increasing need to study the process of influence. Studies published in the *JPTSA* suggest mentoring and modelling of deeds and words as instruments that can be used to facilitate influence in the process of leadership. It should also be noted that these studies highlight the factors that may contribute to the failure of the leadership influence process, namely undermining the lay people and the minister's uncertainty about his/her calling.

The following gaps were identified and need further research in leadership studies within Practical Theology: Leadership studies have grown tremendously, and one cannot accept that leadership studies within Practical Theology should lag behind. Leadership studies in Practical Theology need to take cognisance of the different levels of conceptualising leadership, which can be an intra-, dyadic and group level process, and their implication on the ministry of leadership within congregations. Research is needed on intra-leadership, which involves aspects of self-leadership and self-management. There is also a research gap in the study of the followers' role and impact on the leadership practice within the congregation. Lastly, there is a need for leadership studies within Practical Theology to intentionally mobilise towards teaching leadership as accountable to the Triune God and expected to serve the Triune God through service guided by the motive of transforming humanity and glorifying God.

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Chapter 11

Practical Theology exploring interdisciplinary practices: The quest for engaging with lived religion in the South African context

W.J. Schoeman[1] and J.A. van den Berg[2]

1. Introduction

The internationally renowned American practical theologian, Bonnie Miller-McLemore, reflected a few years ago in the following critical way on the position of South African Practical Theology:

> I think, for example, of the history of South African practical theology as inextricably forged within the still binding ties of the Dutch Reformed Church or its strong connections with Dutch universities rather than other African universities (with the ease of flying between South Africa and the Netherlands rather than intra-continentally in Africa paradigmatic). These influences were apparent when I attended the Society for Practical Theology in South Africa in January 2011. It was also clear that native African theologies and religions are exerting new pressures and that universities have changed radically in post-Apartheid years not only in terms of racial and ethnic make up but also in terms of economic assessment of academic work, making it harder for practical theology to justify itself (Miller-McLemore 2012a:114-115).

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In taking the above critique seriously, as well as the trajectory of the broader research project, namely that of 'Theology and the (post)apartheid condition: Genealogies and future directions', the aim of this study is to explore and describe a possible road towards a more relevant Practical Theology for the South African context.

The following structure will be used for presenting this contribution. For heuristic purposes, the focus will specifically be on developments as well as challenges regarding the scope of Practical Theology in the post-apartheid South African context as experienced during the last few decades. The mapping of proposals already made by other scholars for the reconstruction of Practical Theology will also receive some attention. Finally, the study will consider the field of lived religion and critically describe creative and constructive proposals and practices through which future visions and directions could be articulated. In the documentation of these perspectives, the focus will be on the generation of new perspectives regarding research and not so much on curricula development.

With regards to the integrity of the contribution, it is important for the authors to acknowledge the influence of their own endless 'complexities of identities' (Ackermann 2014:n.p.) on the perspectives provided. Since perspectives are shaped by the 'context in which we live and by our biographical experiences' (Ackermann 2014:n.p.), it is important for both authors to indicate that they are middle-aged white men who have experienced apartheid and post-apartheid conditions in South Africa. The authors, therefore, acknowledge that they 'belong to diverse categories simultaneously and, depending on the circumstances, one or other category will emerge' (Ackermann 2014:n.p.). Although the influences of a Western paradigm are still prominent in the way the authors deal with science, both are also privileged to live and work in Africa as African theologians.

2. Broadening the scope of Practical Theology

Initially, the discipline of Practical Theology was understood as the practical application of theology directed towards usage, as well as the development of practical church practices. In this regard, Ganzevoort wrote the following:

> In the history of our discipline, there has been a strong current of understanding practical theology as applied theology. That is, practical theology was understood as the discipline where theology was applied to practice, especially to the professional practice of ministers and priests. Practical theology added the layout and presentation so to speak to the texts that other theologians had written (Ganzevoort 2004:18).

The empirical and hermeneutical turns and developments of the twentieth century (Osmer 2008:20-23; Van Gelder 2007:97-104) have, however, resulted in practical theological research becoming strongly practice orientated (Hermans 2014:121). Practical Theology was one of the only disciplines in theology, with the possible exception of Missiology, to be comfortable in assimilating perspectives from empirical sciences. The direct result was that Practical Theology has evolved from only being an 'applied theology' into becoming a science in which practices, situated in local and concrete contexts, are empirically described in order to hermeneutically provide for a contextual theological description. In terms of this, two orientations are of importance.

Firstly, the focus of Practical Theology's practices is not only directed towards the theological world but encompasses all domains of human existence. Sharp (2012:426) has therefore correctly indicated that 'Practical Theology has a history of careful attention to the unresolved tensions built into persons, interpersonal relationships, and communal and institutional identities'. In South Africa, theology, and more specifically Practical Theology itself have made, in the words of Dames (2014:174), 'paradigm shifts which have influenced society on many levels. Liberation theology, black theology and feminist theology have changed the way people, society and institutions should be perceived, approached and valued'.

The focus of a public practical empirical description should, therefore, not only encompass church practices but also, in particular, daily life. In this regard, Ganzevoort and Roeland (2014:93) write that with an emphasis on lived religion the focus is not only on institutionalised religion, but also on all possible cultural and social daily activities and practices of ordinary people. This growing commitment 'to what matters in lived experiences of individualised

human persons in the context of webs of relationships' (Sharp 2012:426), constitutes one of the strengths of Practical Theology.

Secondly, there is the acknowledgement that theological normative perspectives do not have to be incorporated in practice, as they already implicitly in an inductive manner form part of the fibre of all possible practices. Ganzevoort (2004:18) emphasises this understanding when stating that 'the theological and normative dimension of Practical Theology is not something added to empirical investigations, but present in the material we research'. Underlying this orientation is the acknowledgement of the belief that Practical Theology embodies a hermeneutical lived religion, which gives preference to 'the praxis itself and to the knowledge concerning God that is being developed, found and lived within this praxis' (Ganzevoort 2008:11-12).

In summary, practical theologians internationally would nowadays agree that 'Practical Theology', as a strategic discipline, is concerned with the theological study of practices with an emphasis on lived religion (Ganzevoort 2009).[3] In terms of practices – within which not only primary theologically defined practices are assumed – acknowledgement is accorded to the 'theory-laden importance' of the character of practice. In the empirical description of the practice, recognition is given to the already implicit presence of normative perspectives. In this regard, Browning (1991:5) justly observed: 'Theology can be practical if we bring practical concerns to it from the beginning'. However, in his contribution to the esteemed *Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology* (2012), the well-known South African practical theologian, Jaco Dreyer (2012:511), has indicated that the practical theological practice in South Africa differs from the international emphasis on practices of lived religion. 'Practical Theology in South Africa seems first and foremost concerned with pastoral actions, church life and training for ministry'. Linking up with this critique, perspectives on, amongst other, the epistemological transformation towards an African Practical Theology, were negotiated in a previous contribution by members of the Department Practical Theology at

3 David Hall's collection of essays by social historians and sociologists brought the term into the 'academic vernacular' (Ammerman 2014:194).

the University of the Free State (Schoeman, Laubscher, Pali & Van den Berg 2012:127-143). The further explanation of these perspectives for the post-apartheid condition in South Africa in all its complexity will be included in the next section, where proposals already made by other scholars for the reconstruction of Practical Theology, will be accommodated.

3. Possible proposals for reconstructing a South African Practical Theology

It is common knowledge that 'Christian theology has been done predominantly utilising tools and resources developed in the European contexts' (Lartey 2013:124). In reaction to this orientation, Butea has argued in his doctoral thesis, titled 'Encountering God in Haiti: An invitation to postcolonial Practical Theology', that:

> Decoloniality is concerned most principally with advancing new modes of knowing in order to create new knowledge that is untainted by the modern project. It seeks to decolonise the systems of knowledge that are based on Eurocentric modes of knowing. It is intended to change both the rules of the knowledge/power dynamic as well as the terms of the conversation. Its principal aim is to create new epistemologies and dismantle the centers of power along epistemic, political, social, and economic lines (Butea 2015:18).

Flowing from the understanding that 'Practical Theology is shaped by the political, social, cultural, economic, and religious aspects of a specific context' (Dreyer 2012:506), we have argued that in an orientation towards the notion of lived religion, Practical Theology begins with concrete lives and practices (Sharp 2012:425). In this orientation, a postcolonial approach can be accommodated when it aims 'to lessen global oppression and increase justice, particularly in the concrete lives of women and children, through recognising the full humanity of all persons' (Sharp 2012:424).

In a research endeavour to accomplish this challenge and as a result of the previous described scope and orientation, the development of Practical Theology is significantly influenced by the so-called 'empirical turn', which has presented a method and form to theological search unmatched by other theological

disciplines (Ganzevoort 2004:18). In the empirical search, it is emphasised that Practical Theology 'might truly become theology of praxis: building theological theory from the material of human praxis' (Ganzevoort 2004:32). As guideline to engage these practices in a postcolonialising way, the international well-known practical theologian, Emmanuel Lartey (2013:xvi-xviii), provides the following coordinates in his book *Postcolonialising God: New perspectives on Pastoral and Practical Theology*:

- Postcolonial activities question the dominance in human relations through the disruption of dominant structures and relations in an effort to instill a more egalitarian relationship between humans.
- Strategically postcolonial activities focus on the relation between theory and practice which is expressed in transformational action.
- Postcolonial activities are characterised as hybrid and multi-faceted within which a multitude of voices are accommodated in multi-dimensional discourses and practices.
- With a feeling of creativity, postcolonial activities are dynamic in nature and in a constant state of change searching for new forms of expression.
- Postcolonial activities are polyvocal with a special focus on the voices of the marginalised.

With these perspectives as background, emphasising, on the one hand, the importance of a postcolonial approach and, on the other hand, the importance of practice, Dreyer (2012:513) has suggested the following important stepping stones in the reconstruction of a South African Practical Theology:

- Practical theologians from all institutional contexts will have to be more representative of the South African context in terms of race, gender and religious orientation.
- Practical theologians have the challenge to develop a distinctive South African identity. Practical Theology is often still too dependent on the Northern hemisphere as reflected, amongst others, in the books and curricula which are in the main prescribed from Europe and the USA.

More must be done to develop handbooks and course material from a South African context.

- The next challenge is to develop closer links with training institutions and other practical theologians in the rest of Africa. Networks with practical theologians in Africa can be developed much more.
- Another challenge is to make research projects more ecumenically representative. In academic Practical Theology, the Pentecostal/ charismatic churches are often not regarded as important with a marginalised position,
- A last challenge is to develop a Practical Theology that has a sensitivity towards and involvement with social challenges and problematic.

In addressing these challenges and opportunities, Andrews and Smith have indicated that the need of,

> doing black practical theology lie in developing methodological approaches that privilege human experiences of the contexts, issues, and events shaping black lives and worldviews for the purpose of engaging critically with theological studies and traditions and the human sciences (Andrews & Smith 2015:4).

Existing possibilities, such as the development of a postfoundational Practical Theology, within which an orientation of transversal reality is sustained, comprise a further enlargement of hermeneutical orientations in Practical Theology, which confirm the importance of empirical descriptions on a multitude of levels and with a contextual sensitivity. The addressing of these challenges can, for example, be supported by a seven-step methodology associated with an investigation in transversal rationality, as accommodated within an interdisciplinary post-foundational Practical Theology. According to Müller (2004:300) this seven-step methodology consists of the following movements:

- The description of the specific context.
- Describing and listening to in-context experiences.
- The interpretation of experience in collaboration with co-researchers.
- The description of the experience in terms of different traditions of interpretations.

- Religious reflection, comprising a consideration of spiritual aspects with the focus on God's presence as experienced in a specific situation.
- An in-depth description of the experiences through interdisciplinary investigation and lastly the development of an alternative interpretation.

4. Looking for relevance within and beyond Practical Theology

The field of study within the discipline of Practical Theology evolved and changed (as indicated in the previous section) over the past 50 years. There was a move away from the 'clerically dominated view of pastoral care and the consequent emphasis upon other ways in which the wider church engages with its social and political context' (Reader 2008:6). This movement became even broader to include a wide variety of faith practices, not only within a clerically-dominated focus but also within society. In his presidential address to the International Academy of Practical Theology, Ganzevoort (2009) identified the object of study for Practical Theology as ranging from the ordained ministry and the church to culture and society at large. As previously indicated, the concept of lived religion is used to broaden the scope of Practical Theology to the role of religion within the broader society:

> The lived religion we will be looking for is closely related to 'popular religion', which is usually taken to mean the religion of the ordinary people that happens beyond the bounds and often without the approval of religious authorities. Students of popular religion have turned our attention to festivals and shrines, ritual healing practices, but religion does not have to be marginal to be 'lived'. What happens inside religious organisations counts, too. Those who wish to 'de-center' congregations and other traditional religious communities will miss a great deal of where religion is lived if those spaces are excluded from our research endeavor. Lived religion is not, then, identical to popular religion. Both approved traditional practices and new innovations may be 'lived'. … Looking for lived religion does mean that we look for the material, embodied aspects of religion as they occur in everyday life, in addition to listening for how people explain themselves (Ammerman 2014:190).

Ammerman (2014:201) has therefore rightly indicated: 'It is not just that people take religion into everyday life; they also take everyday life into religion'.

This leads to the understanding of the hermeneutics of popular culture as 'the shared environment, practices, and resources of everyday life for ordinary people within a particular society' (Lynch 2005:14). The role of faith communities in the life of ordinary people in the interaction between congregation and society cannot be ignored in the study of Practical Theology. 'Lived religion as the subject of Practical Theology aims simultaneously at religious practices within and outside of the church by analyzing the manifold relations between church life and cultural life' (Weyel 2014:154). The search for relevance is not only needed within the clerical paradigm but also to seek a wider scope and research field in order to identify relevance within Practical Theology and engage with other disciplines in the study field of theology as well as with other academic disciplines.

According to the *New Oxford American dictionary*, 'relevance' refers to the notion that the matter at hand be closely connected or appropriate (McKean 2008). Doing and practising theology within a certain environment means that it should be connected to both the Word as a text (or tradition) and the context to be appropriate for the time and place it is practised within. The hermeneutical process and turn within Practical Theology should enhance relevance, from the perspective of both the text and the praxis. Is it possible to describe relevance from different perspectives, as markers within this hermeneutical process? At least four markers can be identified in a hermeneutical process to point towards relevance: theological, practical, contextual, and methodological.

Seeking *theological* relevance in the first place and not theological reflection as an afterthought but as part of an integrated process (Miller-McLemore 2012b:24), is not the final step in a case analysis. Osmer (2008:129) identifies in this regard the normative task of prophetic discernment of Practical Theology. 'Discernment is the activity of seeking God's guidance amid the circumstances, events, and decisions of life' (Osmer 2008:137). De Gruchy (2014:46) emphasises the importance of redefining traditions: 'The danger is to control the tradition by selecting only those trajectories that support one's argument'. Traditions stay alive through a conversation with the past, above all with the Scripture, about the meaning of the text and tradition for the present.

As in the case of theology, Practical Theology has a normative component. It makes demands on those who practise it to live by the sacred and transcendent convictions it professes. Greater clarity about our theological and not just our practical contribution is one of the challenges, but success in this realm will advance the discipline and its value for religious communities and the common good (Miller-McLemore 2012b:25). Both texts and traditions should be taken seriously, within a specific context, in order to enhance theological relevance.

The second marker refers to the seeking of *practical relevance*, not as a form of 'social science lite' (Osmer 2012:70), but to engage in a constructive way with faith practices of individuals, congregations and communities. The relationship between theological theory and ecclesiastical and ministerial praxis is determined neither by a complete separation nor by an identification of the two, but by a bipolar tension-filled combination between theory and praxis (Heitink 1999:152). De Gruchy (1987:66) maintains that, 'The task of the practical theologian is to reflect critically on ecclesial and social praxis in the light of the Biblical, liberatory tradition within his or her particular context'.

Practical relevance is more than the ecclesial praxis or ministry of a faith community, but should also be understood as the practice of lived religion, 'on what people do rather than on "official religion" its sacred sources, its institutes, and its doctrines' (Ganzevoort & Roeland 2014:93). For Practical Theology, practical relevance would mean the study of the holistic and inclusive ministry or praxis of the congregation, and also, in a broader sense, the fields of practices with which the congregation and its members (their lived religion) engage in society. Pieterse (2013:176), for example, uses the concept of lived religion in the study of Homiletics to point beyond the sermon to its practical relevance in society.

Theology always functions within a specific context, that is, if the hermeneutical process is taken seriously. 'Contextual theologians are convinced that theology is not just about knowledge; it is about life, about living, and about faithful practice of the gospel' (Bevans 2014:49).

The third marker refers to *contextual relevance***.** In reflecting on the context from a practical theological perspective, the work of Browning, Heitink and

De Gruchy may be used as examples. Browning (1991:8) described 'theology' as a fundamental Practical Theology with four movements, namely, descriptive theology, historical theology, systematic theology and strategic practical theology. He continues: The aim of a descriptive theology is 'to describe the contemporary theory-laden practices that give rise to the practical questions that generate all theological reflection' (Browning 1991:47). Descriptive theology could be used to build a link between context and text, a movement between practice-theory-practice. This movement would encourage contextual relevance. Heitink (1999:8-9) worked with praxis 1 and praxis 2. Praxis 1 refers to the mediation of the Christian faith through communicative actions within, for example, the church, school or family: 'Practical Theology studies how these processes take place, and how these structures can be adapted that there can be a real transmission of the Christian tradition'. According to Heitink (1999:9), praxis 2 is about the praxis of the modern society, the domain or context of action. Praxis 2 is the background for praxis 1 and congregations and their members participate through communicative actions in, and take responsibility for, the development of society (Heitink 1999:168). Theology as a whole is involved in the relationship between praxis 1 and praxis 2, and congregations should mediate between praxis 1 and praxis 2 to build contextual relevance.

John de Gruchy (1987:39) states that there is a vital link between the congregational ministry and the context and that this interaction should be taken seriously. As an example, in the South Africa of the 1980s, this would mean that 'ministry has to be related to the struggles of the black community for justice and liberation and at the same time to the fears and failures of the white community'. Living in a post-apartheid context does not mean that the effects and consequences of apartheid will disappear or die: '[A]partheid has already killed – not only large numbers of human beings but also many things in the life and spirit of individuals and communities across the country' (Cochrane, De Gruchy & Petersen 1991:5-6). The post-apartheid context requires a process of transformation and, therefore,

> implies a process of transforming the church to enable it in turn to be, a transforming community, but also a prophetic ministry

> directed at society as a contribution to the flourishing of justice (Cochrane *et al.* 1991:10).

The active engagement of the following three documents may contribute to this transformation and contextual relevance: the *Kairos Document*, *Evangelical Witness* and the *Belhar Confession* (Gustavo & Buttelli 2012:97).

Contextual (and for the same reason, theological and practical) relevance should take the African, and in this case, the South African post-apartheid context seriously. The (South) African geography, history and demography differ from that of the USA and Europe and are less affected by secularisation than the countries in the Northern hemisphere. Steve de Gruchy (2014:43) preferred to talk about a social theology that 'empowers the churches to engage in the task of social transformation'. This is an engagement in the life of the local community that speaks and acts on behalf of God known through Christ on social issues like poverty, unemployment, climate change and violence. Lived religion also contributes to this as 'lived religion, as a theory, is in a sense critical towards secularisation that identifies with a decline of institutionalised forms of religion' (Weyel 2014:154). Lived religion makes religion 'visible' in the cultural life of society. A contextual theology is biased towards the poor and committed to the struggle against oppression of all kinds, and the struggle for liberation in all its dimensions (De Gruchy 2014:41).

The use of a *relevant empirical methodology* could be identified as a fourth aspect in the endeavour to be relevant. This aspect should be seen as in line with the empirical turn in Practical Theology that was discussed earlier. The empirical aspect of Practical Theology could be described as 'insights emerging in the midst of practices like pastoral counseling, interreligious dialogue, spiritual direction and community development, as well research using methods of the social sciences' (Osmer 2014:61). Empirical research has played an important role in the development of Practical Theology over the last few decades, or what Osmer (2008:10, 37) calls, the first task of Practical Theology; the descriptive-empirical task and ranges from informal to formal attending.

It is important in this regard if the local context is taken seriously, to work from an inductive starting point. Deduction uses established theories as a

framework to interpret empirical data, while induction is a process where theories are constructed from empirical data by searching for themes from the empirical evidence (Babbie 2011:48-58; Somekh & Lewin 2012:322, 324). An inductive methodology will start with the concrete empirical context or evidence and then work towards more abstract concepts and theoretical relationships (Neuman 2006:60).

The development of an inductive methodology could be taken further by asking who are the research partners. In practice-orientated research on and with congregations, it is important to ask, who is the problem-owner and what is the action problem (see Hermans & Schoeman 2015:30-32). The empirical knowledge is the result of co-operation and a co-construction between the researcher and the researched and/or the problem owner. The action problem is not what the researcher defines or desires to research but it is reflected in the understanding or question of the problem owner. In practice-oriented research, the description of the action problem is the result of a process between the researcher and the problem owner (for example the leadership or board of a congregation). Practice-orientated research has a distinctive preference for an inductive methodology.

An interdisciplinary postfoundational Practical Theology was discussed above and reference was made to its methodology. This methodology also illustrates the preference for an inductive methodology and the role of the co-researcher may be used to illustrate this. In using this methodology 'interpretations of experiences are made, described and developed in collaboration with "co-researchers"' (Müller 2005:82). The researcher places an emphasis on interpretations of the co-researchers and is not looking in the first instance for data, but for interpretations and meanings given by the co-researchers. In conducting a research project amongst church leaders Müller used the following methodology:

> We conducted unstructured interviews in which we asked them to share their stories about coping and hoping as pastors. We prefer to refer to them as co-researchers, and do not see them as 'objects' of our research. When we refer to someone by name it is a fictional

> name, because we would like to guard for the privacy of our co-researchers (Müller 2002:737).

The concept of 'co-researcher' may enhance the development of an inductive methodology. An inductive methodology helps in the study of lived religion and needs to take notice of lived religion as a theoretical concept (Weyel 2014:157). The study of lived religion places the research of empirical forms of lived religion in the centre (Gräb 2014:111) and may be done inductively as an appropriate and relevant methodology.

The inductive nature of practical theological methodology is ideally positioned to accommodate these indicated practices. According to this orientation, Practical Theology listens to situations and assesses the needs of the people involved in these contexts. It resists deductive speculations based on propositions deemed representative of the truth as a matter of tradition or history. Practical Theology is concerned with subjectivity in its entirety (Buteau 2015:32). Questions are therefore addressed as they emerge from the situation while suspending or bracketing presumptive theological answers (Buteau 2015:46).

An important development in Practical Theology over the last few decades is that it wants to be transformational, not only to people but also to the understanding and situation of the current context and world (Reader 2008:7) and to be relevant in the post-apartheid context. By striving for relevance and using the above mentioned markers, Practical Theology could contribute to the transformation of people, congregations and communities and thus remain connected and appropriate for a specific time and place.

Could the markers help in describing a relevant research agenda for the study of congregations?[4] From a practical theological perspective, two aspects are important in the study of congregations: firstly, a practical theological ecclesiology, and, secondly, an analytical framework. In describing and exploring congregational life, a practical theological ecclesiology and an analytical framework should be in critical interaction with each other to be

4 The field of congregational studies is merely used as an example in order to illustrate the argument, but this could also be applied to other fields of study within practical theology.

relevant (see Schoeman 2015:72-80). The four markers should, also in the case of congregational studies, be used in the development of an ecclesiology and an analytical framework.

Lived religion is also important in this regard because there was a movement in the study of congregations, not only towards the study of ministerial activity within a congregation but also an interest in a range of faithful practices found in ordinary settings (Nieman 2012:134). According to Weyel, Practical Theology, and in this instance the study of congregations

> should not limit its scope of interest to institutional forms, i.e. religious practice within the church, but it attends to the relationship between constituted church and lived religion in a constructive and critical way (Weyel 2014:159).

These activities in ordinary cultural settings may be explored as 'lived religion', and a changing (post-apartheid) context 'requires us to adopt a broader perspective to the field we define as lived religion' (Ganzevoort & Roeland 2014:97). The importance of congregations and the way in which their members are involved in the local context through a lived religion requires more research (Schoeman 2015:80-81). Given the position of the church and Christians in post-apartheid South Africa, the role that faith communities and its members play in society needs to be researched in a transformational and relevant way. This also holds true for faith formation, pastoral care, homiletics and liturgy as other fields of study within the discipline of Practical Theology.

5. Conclusion

The initial criticism regarding the status of Practical Theology in South Africa – on which basis this chapter was introduced – was reflected on by using various theoretical perspectives with the aim of providing alternative readings. In emphasising the extreme importance of the meaning of context and practice for the task of Practical Theology in a post-apartheid South Africa, a sensitivity for and orientation towards the decolonising of harmful patterns of relating are asked for (Sharp 2012:426). In steering away from a one-sided domination of privileged cultures and methodologies a new effort is made to bring African

contexts to the forefront of the future conversation in Practical Theology (Andrews 2014:25).

In the most recent development of Practical Theology, special emphasis is centred on the tracing and description of the so-called 'lived religion' as embodied in different perspectives. Sensitive to the principles underlying a postcolonial orientation, further perspectives are presented in support of the argument that congregational study practices can indeed be strongly associated with the description of lived religion. De Gruchy therefore rightfully indicated that:

> For doing theology, despite being one of the oldest of all the sciences and for long their queen, is not antiquarian but always contemporary; it has to do with what it means to be a community of faith and a believer here and now (De Gruchy 2011:10).

Therefore, within the study field of Practical Theology not only congregational and ministerial practices but also all other informal practices embedded in everyday life, testify to an understanding of a contextual and contemporary theological orientation. Living and working in Africa, this orientation and affirmation call for developing descriptions of a postcolonial Practical Theology of lived religion.

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Chapter 12

Missiology in a postcolonial (post-apartheid) South Africa: Some contours for a contextually relevant Missiology

Gideon van der Watt[1]

1. Introduction

The traditional era of missionary activity – and consequently 'Missiology' as theological discipline studying this activity – reached its climax during the middle decades of the twentieth century. After World War II, mission, traditionally understood as Western enterprise reaching out to the non-Western world, began its decline. It had to face the reality of an increasingly secularised West; the decolonisation of its erstwhile mission fields with their subsequent disapproving reaction to imperialism and Western cultural aggression; and the shift of the gravity of Christianity from the North and West to the South and East, with the emergence of independent churches and new faces and features of this new majority Christianity. The infamous outcry 'missionary go home!' and the resulting 'moratorium debate', underscored this reality. What should the role of mission and Missiology be in this new era, if any? Are we hearing mission and Missiology's death bells ringing?

In South Africa, with churches, mission organisations and missionaries who collaborated with apartheid, as skilfully documented in Richard Elphick's history on the missionary enterprise in South Africa (2012), the question is even

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more acute: is there a credible way of redeeming mission and Missiology from its own past of entrenching social inequality and serving the colonial project?

In 1995, at the dawn of the democratic, post-apartheid South Africa, Kritzinger presented his inauguration lecture as Professor in Missiology at the University of South Africa. At the event he posed the question regarding Missiology as a discipline at a public university: is it proper (accountable) to maintain a Department of Missiology at a public university paid for by all taxpayers, including non-Christians, while the specific concern of such a department is to convert others to the Christian faith? Is there space for Missiology – often understood as Christian 'propagandalogy' aimed at the destruction and displacement of other religions – at a state-funded university observing religious pluralism as enshrined in the South African constitution? This question can even be expanded: is it proper to maintain a Western-orientated, colonial approach to Missiology in a postcolonial South Africa (Kritzinger 1995:367)? Verster (2014) also grapples with the position of Missiology in a deliberately 'neutral' university in a secular democracy. Can a university, or any scientific discipline for that matter, pretend to be neutral? Clearly, the integrity of Missiology as a theological discipline is at stake.

The three-layered challenge to Missiology in a post-apartheid South Africa could, therefore, be summarised as religious, ideological and cultural plurality, the new faces of Christianity in the South and the postcolonial project.

I would argue that mission and Missiology remain essential, even increasingly so, in the pluralist, postcolonial and post-Western/Christendom era. As a theological discipline, Missiology has a distinct and very important contribution to make, especially in its relation to and engagement with the other theological disciplines. But then only within the framework of a new conceptualisation of Missiology, founded in what is called the Trinitarian Renaissance in theology – *missio Dei* – and consciously discerning and rethinking its calling in new and changing contexts.

2. What are these changing contexts influencing our understanding of mission?

It will suffice to reflect briefly on three of the most decisive contextual changes in the South African religious landscapes.

2.1 The postcolonial context

Several scholars deal with the question on Missiology in postcolonial contexts. See the Council for World Mission's important statement 'Mission in the context of Empire' (2010), and the articles by Bate (2013) and Hanciles (2014). Missiology needs to disentangle itself from its own colonial past and deliberately engage with the restorative and healing endeavours of communities in the postcolonial situation.

In an insightful and even provocative article, Tinyiko Maluleke (2007) describes what the concept 'postcolonial' entails in the South African context. 'Postcolonial' does not mean that the colonial era has been done with; it is rather the extension of colonialism, the continuous struggle to deal with and overcome the legacy of colonialism (apartheid), not only in terms of land, economy and political freedom, but also in terms of the prevailing mentalities of internalised inferiority and superiority. Colonialisation is the art of objectifying people, making them 'things' to be owned and abused within the colonising power structures. Maluleke uses the Israelites' colonisation of the so-called 'promised land', and especially the invasion of Rahab the prostitute's house, as well as the invasion of herself – colonising her, enslaving her through fear of the power of Israel's God and eventually getting her to collaborate in the colonising project by betraying and selling out her own people – as powerful metaphor to explain the postcolonial dilemma. The question is if Rahab, after being colonised, could become a credible missionary to her people, witnessing to the God of Israel? Can the colonised become credible missionaries, using the very same Bible and witnessing to the power of the very same God that has been used in the first place to colonise and 'bewitch' them? How can the colonised be receptive to mission? Is mission at all possible in the postcolonial phase? Maluleke's answer is eventually, yes, if God is viewed through the lens of the crucified Christ – colonised, disempowered, objectified, abused – as the core message of mission

in a postcolonial phase. The task of Missiology will thus be more than just focusing on the *missio* in *missio Dei;* it will have to commence with exploring the meaning of *Deus* in postcolonial contexts. Only from this point can it then engage in the reconstruction and healing of wounded societies that are struggling to unravel the prevailing relational, structural, physical, emotional and spiritual bondages (wounds) left by colonisation.

2.2 Plurality/postmodernity

Towards the end of the twentieth century, the British theologian, Lesslie Newbigin (1989) wrote his seminal book *The gospel in a pluralist society*, explaining the end of the Western Christendom-era and the dawn of a plurality of truths, faiths, cultures, etc. In the West, it resulted in shifting faith to the domain of private and subjective values, away from the public discourse of scientific facts. Mission in the twenty-first century finds itself in an era of plurality and secularity. This has become an increasing feature in the postmodern and even post-postmodern era (Yip 2014).

Plurality is not only a feature in the secularised, postmodern West, but even the so-called Global South is characterised by plurality, albeit not in the same way as in a secularised West. Christian faith-communities operate within local contexts where they mostly find themselves a minority amidst a majority of non-Christian faiths, ideologies, worldviews and truths. It requires theological answers to the question on how to engage the other within authentic, reciprocal relationships, and not merely engaging them from a position of a benefactor to the other (Van Gelder 2013:43).

Yip (2014:410) emphasises that a traditional anthropology, including the notion of an objective description of another culture and the notion that culture is homogeneous, coherent and integrated, is not tenable. Within the plurality of globalised identities, it is for instance not anymore possible to do research on and develop a strategy of reaching 'people groups' as coherent, integrated cultures or worldviews. He proposes 'critical realism' as an approach to the study of cultural contexts and contextualisation in mission, taking historical analysis (listening to peoples' stories) seriously, as well as studying multi- and inter-culturality.

2.3 Shift of the centre of gravity of Christianity

Scholars like Andrew Walls (2004 and 2005), Timothy Tennent (2007), Philip Jenkins (2006 and 2007), Pocock, Van Rheenen and McConnell (2005), Lamin Sanneh (2008), Jehu Hanciles (2014), and the World Council of Churches' 2013 document 'Together towards life – mission and evangelism in changing landscapes', all point to the significance of the major 'shift of centre of gravity of Christianity' to the South and the East. It especially has major consequences for the reconceptualisation of traditional Western notions of mission and Missiology. While Christianity is declining in the West and North, it is growing exponentially in the South and East. It has become the 'majority Christianity', with a variety of new centres. Some of the most important 'new faces' of this majority Christianity are a much more conservative reading of the Bible; an immediate and direct application of Biblical truths to people's lives; an uncritical acceptance of miracles and a world of spirits; a focus on healing, prophecy and immediate relief of material needs; a more collective approach (communal understanding – 'I am, because we are'); an experiential rather than rational faith; the rise of neo-Pentecostal and charismatic movements; and independent entrepreneurial ministries – a diversity of local churches increasingly replacing the traditional denominational and confessional understanding of church. It is in this context that the 'prosperity gospel' is thriving, spreading like wildfire in, for instance, sub-Sahara Africa. (Hanciles 2014:122-124; Tennent 2007:15; Van Gelder 2013:42-45). Missiology cannot but engage with these realities of Christianity in the Global South – of which South Africa forms part and parcel. This requires more than the mere translation of the Bible message affecting the different languages and cultures (Sanneh 1989); it necessitates a deliberate incarnational immersion, with a *kenosis* attitude, into the different language and cultural contexts, reciprocity and engagement with other religions and non-Christian ideologies (which often form the majority in these contexts). Rather than merely focusing on practices and pragmatics, Missiology is increasingly obligated to focus on theology and theory (Van Gelder 2013:42) – on the 'translatability' (Tennent 2007, Walls 2004, 2005) of important theological concepts. It also implies a

deliberate focus on pneumatology, a holistic understanding of salvation and the integration of theological disciplines.

3. Some features of re-imagining mission

In 2013, at its 10th Assembly in Busan, South Korea, the World Council of Churches accepted the declaration: 'Together towards life – mission and evangelism in changing landscapes' (TTL). This statement enriched Missiology and stimulated academic reflection on mission (Niemandt 2015b:2-3). Along with other statements like the 'Cape Town Commitment' (Lausanne Movement 2011), TTL, in particular, provides a new framework for the reconceptualisation of mission and Missiology, for the South African context as well.

3.1 Missio Dei *as foundation*

TTL built on the missiological developments since Karl Barth, who kindled the so-called Trinitarian Renaissance, influencing Moltmann, Hoekendijk, Hartenstein, Vicedom, Newbigin, Bosch and others – and subsequently Missiology as a discipline. Since Barth, mission has been conceptualised primarily as an activity of God self, originating and flowing from the very nature of the Triune God (Niemandt 2015b:4-6, see also Bevans & Schroeder 2006:286-303 and Bosch 1991:399). 'Mission' has, therefore, been defined as *missio Dei*. Bosch explained the concept of *missio Dei* as originating from Barth (albeit not the exact words), and expounded at the 1952 Willingin Conference of the International Missionary Council:

> Mission was understood as being derived from the very nature of God. It was thus put in a context of the doctrine of the Trinity, not of ecclesiology or soteriology. The classical doctrine on the *missio Dei* as God the Father sending the Son, and God the Father and the Son sending the Spirit was expanded to include yet another 'movement': Father, Son, and Holy Spirit sending the church into the word (Bosch 1991:390).

Affirming this understanding of mission, TTL states: 'Mission begins at the heart of the Triune God and the love which binds together the Holy Trinity overflows to all humanity and creation' (TTL, Article 2). The origin of mission is thus no more placed in the church, but in the Triune God; and mission's

range is not merely the salvation of humankind, but the renewal and care of the whole of creation – Hoekendijk's understanding of an all-encompassing *shalom* as the essence of salvation.

Important in the concept *missio Dei* is the focus on the Trinity as being relational, communal, reciprocal, ecstatic (*ekstasis)* – outward movement – overflowing love and the distinct but concerted mission of the three Persons in the Trinity.

3.2 Turn towards pneumatology

Within the Trinitarian foundation of mission, TTL expresses a renewed appreciation for the mission of the Holy Spirit. 'Life in the Holy Spirit is the essence of mission, the core of why we do what we do and how we live our lives' (Article 3). Under the heading, *Spirit of mission: The breath of life*, the document refers to the universality of the Spirit's economy in creation and redemption. However, it also stresses that the Holy Spirit as the agent of mission is understood as the continuing presence of the resurrected Christ – relating the work of the Holy Spirit to the salvation through Jesus Christ (Article 18). It is the Spirit who gives life (the breath of life); it is the Spirit who causes the flourishing of creation; who bestows Spiritual gifts and discernment; who transforms unjust communities and brings liberty. The focus on the mission of the Holy Spirit (*missio Spiritus*) is understood as the theological framework within the Trinitarian understanding of mission. Emphasising the role of the Spirit in the understanding of mission, as embracing dynamism, transformation and diversity, has vast implications for reconceptualising mission in the contexts of post-colony, pluralism and new features of Christianity in the South and East (Niemandt 2015b:7-8; Yong 2005:176).

3.3 Affirmation of life

TTL strongly affirms life as the content of salvation. Its opening words state: 'We believe in the Triune God who is creator, redeemer, and sustainer of all life … Affirming life in all its fullness is Jesus Christ's ultimate concern and mission (John 10:10)' (Article 1). Salvation is not partial, meant for humanity alone, but God's mission is to be conceptualised in its cosmic dimension; it affirms all life, the whole *oikoumene* (Article 4).

3.4 Missional ecclesiology – church partaking in God's mission

TTL affirms the role of the church as it developed in the discourse on a missional understanding of church as instrument (participator) in God's mission. Guder ably described this shift:

> The ecclesiocentric understanding of mission has been replaced during this century by a profoundly theocentric reconceptualisation of Christian mission. We have come to see that mission is not merely an activity of the church. Rather, mission is the result of God's initiative, rooted in God's purposes to restore and heal creation (Guder 1998:4).

The church is the gift of God to the world for its transformation towards the kingdom of God. The church is therefore called to exist in unity, being an inclusive (hospitable) community and bringing the healing and reconciliation to the world (Article 10).

The focus also shifts to local congregations, to the way in which each local congregation is led by the Spirit in discerning its missional response to its own contextual realities (Article 72). This may lead to emerging forms (revitalised, 'fresh expressions') of being church in the local context. In this regard, one of the important tasks in the South African context is to find ways of transforming into or establishing new multi- and intercultural faith communities – embracing diversity as a gift of the Spirit. The formation of various forms of partnerships can be another helpful instrument in building lasting relationships across all boundaries and sharing opportunities to service and witness projects and programmes.

3.5 Focus on context – discernment

In emphasising the role of the Holy Spirit in mission, TTL also underlines the importance of the Spirit's gift of discernment as the first act of mission; the most decisive step in the missional journey. This entails the process of incarnation into the various contexts in which the Gospel is proclaimed: discernment of the historical, cultural, economical, socio-political and religious contexts and the translation of the good news into the various contexts (not merely translating into languages but also in terms of translating theological concepts).

Discernment is a relational action, done in communion with others, in mutual love and in respectful dialogue (Niemandt 2015b:10).

3.6 From the margins

A new feature in defining mission in the recent decades has been the reversal of the direction of mission, from 'mission *to* the margins' to 'mission *from* the margins'. People on the margins, the poor, the disabled, the powerless, the migrants, etc. are claiming their key role as agents of missional transformation (Article 6). This re-imagining of mission and evangelism as 'from the margins' is significant in the contexts of post-colony, plurality and the new faces of Christianity in the South and East.

3.7 Evangelism as prophetic dialogue

Witness (*martyria*) takes concrete form in evangelism – the communication of the whole Gospel through word, deed, communion and intercession, to the whole of humanity in the whole world. The goal is the salvation ('flourishing of life') of the world and the glory of the Triune God (Article 80). TTL affirms Bosch's understanding of evangelism, which remains the kernel or spearhead of mission, as:

> that activity of the church's mission which seeks to offer every person, everywhere, a valid opportunity to be directly challenged by the gospel of explicit faith in Jesus Christ, with a view to embracing him as Saviour, becoming a living member of his community, and being enlisted in his service of reconciliation, peace and justice on earth (Bosch 2008:17).

Mission remains the sharing of our faith with people of other faiths, ideologies and convictions and inviting them to discipleship – it is done with conviction, as bold prophetic witness, but it is simultaneously also done in respectful dialogue, in being present with and hospitable to others (building authentic relationships), with humility and incarnational love, in Christ's way (Articles 86–92). Article 90 lists the six 'recommendations for conduct in a multi-religious World': rejection of all violence; affirming freedom of religion; respect for the other's

culture; renunciation of false witness; ongoing discernment as part of other persons and community's decision making; and building relationships.

TTL underlines the importance of dialogue, especially with people of other faiths. Dialogue affirms our common life and shared goals for the flourishing of life and the integrity of creation. We are to be constantly reminded that we cannot bring God along onto other faiths and cultures; it is rather a case of jointly discovering and witnessing to the God who is already there, actively engaged through the Spirit that has already being poured out on all (Acts 2, 17). Bevens and Schroeder (2006: 348-361) combine the concept *prophetic* with *dialogue* in describing the underlying theological approach that should accompany all missional or evangelising activity. Mission is about entering into *dialogue* with people of different convictions; it is never about imposition, but always about persuasion and freedom-respecting love, putting the dignity of others in high regard. It should be entrenched in God who saves through self-emptying; it can never think of itself as superior to others. Proclamation should always happen within a context of dialogue, acknowledging that God's Spirit is already present in those to be reached. But, mission is also about *prophetic* witness, proclaiming Christ and the coming of God's kingdom, with conviction – Bosch's notion of 'bold humility'. This is especially important in contexts of plurality, post-colony and in the non-West Christianity.

4. Positioning of Missiology as theological discipline

In the West, Missiology remained for long on the periphery of theology, focusing on the practicalities of engaging foreign cultures, non-Christian religions and worldviews as the self-realisation (self-expansion) of the church in these missionary situations. Under the influence of Schleiermacher, Missiology has been seen merely as a dimension of or appended to Practical Theology (Bosch 1991:491; Kirk 1999:19). However, since the efforts of Gustav Warneck who occupied the first post in Missiology, at the University of Halle (1896-1910), Missiology was established as a discipline in its own right with chairs in Missiology to be established at theology faculties all over Europe and the USA (Verster 2014:880-883). But Missiology (the traditional paradigm) started its decline since the latter decades

of the twentieth century, struggling to defend its right to exists as a theological discipline (Hanciles 2014:123).

Since the Willingen Conference in 1952, Missiology as theological discipline changed – in what Van Gelder calls a 'Copernican revolution' – from a focus on practicalities and strategies of the church's mission, to reconceptualising mission as the mission of the Triune God in the world:

> It represented a fundamental shift from a Christology-based understanding of mission as being the church's responsibility to a trinitarian-based understanding of God's mission in the world as having a church (Van Gelder 2013:42-43).

Missiology represents 'a disciplined and scientific study of the basis, methods, and goals of Christian mission' (Hanciles 2014:127).

What should be the positioning of Missiology in regards to the other theological disciplines? Bosch discusses three scenarios: (1) Missiology could remain a separate discipline, dealing with the exotic, but peripheral – that which lies across cultural, geographic and other boundaries – in what Bosch calls the theological faculty's 'department of foreign affairs'; (2) it could become a totally independent subject establishing its own fourfold pattern, followed by theology 'proper', and thus duplicating the other disciplines in establishing its own hermeneutical focus on Biblical subjects, its own mission history, its own missionary Systematic Theology and ecclesiology and practical application; or (3) Missiology could be dissolved into all the other disciplines – the integrational model – abandoning the teaching of Missiology as a separate subject and expecting of other disciplines to incorporate it as missionary/missional dimension into their respective fields of study. Although this third option of being an integrated part of the other subjects would perhaps be the most principled stance, it has the danger of Missiology – and its important fields of focus – practically disappearing within the other disciplines.

Whilst there are convincing arguments for a total integration into the other disciplines, there are strong practical arguments for maintaining the distinct contribution Missiology can make to the revitalisation and contextualisation of

the other disciplines, infusing the entire theological curriculum with the subject matter arising from the frontiers of mission's engagement with the world.

> Missiology, then, accompanies the other theological subjects in their work; it puts questions to them and lets them put questions to it; it needs dialogue with them for their and for its own sake. It is, in terms of its dimensional aspect, that Missiology challenges and responds to the challenges of specific disciplines (Bosch 1991:495).

Van Gelder (2013:53) also emphasises the task of bringing a robust Trinitarian mission theology into conversation with the whole of the theological curriculum.

A balance needs to be reached between Missiology's integration into other disciplines and the unique and distinct contribution it can and should make in the mission of theology. Kirk (1999:11) puts it bluntly: '[T]here can be no theology without mission – or to put it another way, no theology which is not missionary'. He calls for a balance between a theology of mission and the mission of theology in order to protect theology from becoming sterile and irrelevant. It, therefore, calls for a continuation of the task and therefore existence of a theology of mission. Andrew Walls, Timothy Tennant, Craig van Gelder and others all emphasise the role of Missiology in revitalising the other theological disciplines by carrying questions and challenges from the frontiers of engagement with the world, the changing contexts, its dialogue with other faiths, ideologies, cultures, etc. to the tables of sister disciplines. It thus helps to establish a new mission of theology, revitalising it, steering it away from the sterility of the so-called ivory tower mentality. It plays a role in the translatability, indigenisation or incarnation of theology into the changing contexts.

But what does that mean for Missiology in the non-West? There can be no doubt that scholars from within the contexts of non-Western Christianity have a huge and decisive role to play in deconstructing and reshaping Western frameworks for theology and Missiology. New institutions and models of education need to be established, focusing on the contextual realities and questions asked by the majority church in the South and East. Theology must deliberately form part of the discussion on liberating Missiology from its captivity in Western intellectual traditions and institutions.

Hanciles, Van Gelder and others argue for the necessity, especially in non-Western theological institutions, of a more inter-disciplinary and deliberately integrative approach between all disciplines in theology, as well as engagement with other non-theological subjects and disciplines. The classical Western divisions between disciplines become increasingly difficult to maintain within a postcolonial and postmodern era. In a postcolonial Africa, most authors would not classify their own work as Missiology, but what most are involved in is nothing but a missionary theology (Hanciles 2014:128). As an example: a missional thrust in the other theological disciplines will have to be sufficiently present in a curriculum that will also be filled with non-theological subjects with the aim of preparing students for a 'tentmaking' ministry. It will for instance not be possible to separate church history from mission history, for in the non-West the two are similar. The same applies to teaching Systematic Theology in the context where Christianity, as a minority religion, constantly needs to respond to the challenges posed by the majority faiths in their context.

Within the context of post-colony, the shift of Christianity's centre of gravity to the South and East and the context of plurality, theology itself and Missiology in particular, need to be translated into new concepts, while keeping the agency of God at the centre of conversation in engaging with the diverse contexts – it should be profoundly Trinitarian, contextual and pneumatological.

The question posed by Kritzinger regarding Missiology in a Faculty of Theology at a public university remains. Should Missiology not just become part of Religion Studies, religious studies or science of religion? He argues that all religions perceive themselves as agents of change, and in that sense as missional. Christian communities are not alone in having a sense of mission, or expansion. Missiology from a Christian viewpoint should be supplemented by also studying (equally comprehensively) the missional dimension of other faiths. Within a context of a plurality of faiths, this is the only responsible option of making space for Missiology as a discipline distinct from religious studies (Kritzinger 1995:368). Kritzinger (1995:372) maintains that the purpose of Missiology 'is not to take anything away from Christians, but to open up space, alongside of a Christian Missiology, for the study of the missions of other religious communities'. It should, however, not be an abstract study of systems of belief,

but rather enquiring into beliefs of fellow human beings. It should thus be dialogical, studying with the other. Kritzinger also emphasises the importance of the Africanisation of Missiology, which is not merely about external decorations; it is primarily about power and the question who sets the agenda – even if it may originally imply a measure of syncretism.

> It is therefore also the task of missiology to foster the dialogue between stall keepers of a particular tradition about the interpretation of their message and ways of communicating it in an African context (Kritzinger 1995:394).

Missiology in a postcolonial era should grapple with the realities of the African contexts, but then not from the basis of the power and status of Christianity's majority position but collaborating with others, in real dialogue.

According to Maluleke (2007:524), a postcolonial Missiology should, while building on the endeavours of black, African and African Women's theologies, also consider the need for the re-evangelising of Africa – 'because the first evangelisation has been just too colonial, violent and imperialistic in its approach.'. Postcolonial Missiology should, therefore, also take issues like the persisting power imbalances, land, ecology and violence (including structural or economic violence) seriously, while keeping a keen eye on new trends of imperialism amidst the so-called 'knowledge economies', 'globalisation' and the 'information highway' (Maluleke 2007:525).

5. Focus areas in a relevant curriculum for Missiology

In establishing a curriculum for a contextually relevant discipline of Missiology, there are several lists of focus areas to be included (Bevans & Schroeder 2006:252-395; Kirk 1999:75-205). Dawid Bosch's chapter on the 'Elements of an emerging missionary paradigm' remains relevant for a curriculum of Missiology, especially for a South African context. He suggests 13 elements of 'mission *as*' (rather than mission *is*), all centred in the *missio Dei*: (1) church with others, (2) *missio Dei,* (3) mediating salvation, (4) quest for justice, (5) evangelism, (6) contextualisation, (7) liberation, (8) inculturation, (9) common witness, (10) ministry by the whole people of God, (11) witness to people of other living faiths, (12) theology, and (13) action of hope (Bosch 1991:368-511).

I propose that at least the following focus areas and current study resources be considered in designing a contextually relevant curriculum for Missiology in postcolonial, pluralistic and new majority Christianity of the Global South contexts.

5.1 Reflection on missio Dei *as the foundation of mission*

There is a constant stream of books and articles published on *missio Dei* within the framework of a Trinitarian foundation. Dawid Bosch's magisterial work *Transforming mission – Paradigm shifts in theology of mission* (1991) remains a standard-bearer in studying the theology of mission. The books by Kirk (1999) and Bevans & Schroeder (2006) build on the work of Bosch. Christopher Wright's (2006) comprehensive volume *The mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's grand narrative* is an excellent exposition of a missional hermeneutic, especially focusing on the Old Testament. The Cape Town Commitment (Lausanne Movement 2011) and the World Council of Churches declaration *Together towards life* (2013) are two important documents on *missio Dei,* providing a framework for current missiological reflection.

5.2 Missional ecclesiology, local congregations and missional leadership

Probably the two most influential books in the discourse on a missional ecclesiology are *Missional church*, edited by Darrell Guder (1998) and a follow-up publication *The missional church in perspective* (Van Gelder & Zscheile 2011) reflecting on the developing discourse since the publication of the *Missional church* in the North American context. This discourse has had a profound impact on the South African discussion, especially in the ambit of the South African Partnership for Missional Congregations and the material published by the Stellenbosch-based Communitas/Ecclesia and the publishing house BibleMedia. But much more needs to be done to make this missional discourse relevant to the African context, by deliberately also engaging with African interlocutors.

In terms of studying the practices of missional theology in the southern African context, the focus should be on congregationally shaped theology as congregations grapple with challenges in their own contexts. Hendriks (2004)

gives guidelines for theologising in local congregations' practical engagement with challenges in their own (Southern African) contexts. It develops a missional praxis for studying congregations.

The focus should also be on missional leadership, on 'an appropriate missional understanding' of leadership to organise (creating listening spaces) and transform (the role of transformational leadership) the church into being missional (Meylahn 2012:53-56; Niemandt 2015b:11).

5.3 Discernment of contexts/communities and community development

In collaboration with other disciplines in social sciences, Missiology should develop practical instruments in discerning the complexities of contexts and the challenges it poses to the affirmation of the flourishing of life. Appreciative enquiry, participatory research methods, facilitating 'deep' and joint listening to individuals and the community's stories (narrative approach), incarnational immersion into and presence within community centres, exposure across cultural, socio-economical divisions, etc. are essential first steps on a missional journey (Niemandt 2015b:9-10). Meylahn (2012:56-67) describes this process of listening as five dance movements: listening (entering a community and actively listening to narratives); interpreting (placing the stories in various narrative settings); discerning (identifying cracks in dominant myths); re-authoring or poetry (retelling narratives in terms of the story of the Triune God); and embracing – listening (creating inclusive, safe spaces, continuously listening as way of communal life). It is about the church being *in* and not *of* the world, being in a liminal space, and being open to the transformational work of the Triune God. This implies experiential theological praxis.

Community development as a new discipline in social sciences is, therefore, becoming increasingly important in the transformation of communities in the postcolonial project. It should be included in a Missiology curriculum. 'Development' should however not be understood as a typically colonial concept (facilitating the growth, expansion, advance, increase or change of the so-called underdeveloped or developing communities). It should rather be conceptualised as in line with the original Latin meaning of the verb *velo,* which implies to veil, cover up, enfold – as in *envelop*e – and with the verb

develo meaning the undoing of the above: un-veil, uncover, unfurl, the process of taking something out of whatever it has been swaddled in (Van der Watt 2016:1). Development thus means to participate with postcolonial (wounded) communities in the undoing or disentangling of that which is preventing the liberation/recovery/healing of their authentic selves – be it dysfunctional or broken relationships, lack of access to resources, internalised inferiority, woundedness, etc. Community development is about the facilitation of the discovery/realisation/restoration of being image bearers of God and called to stewardship and responsibility towards the self, others, creation and God. Regarding community development, the book of Myers (2012) could currently serve as the best handbook.

5.4 Prophetic/public witness

An important part of the curriculum of Missiology should also be the church's calling to prophetic or public witness, advocating for justice (Niemandt 2015a), reconciliation (D'Souza & D'Souza 1996) and peace. The integrity of the church's witness to the world depends on its exemplary embodying of the unity and love in the one body of Christ, across all borders of race, language, culture, etc. Ecology and the integrity of the earth (the so-called green-, blue- and brown-theologies) are also becoming increasingly important subjects amidst the realities of climate change and the impact it has on especially poor communities.

5.5 Evangelism and dialogue with people of other faiths (or no faith)

Evangelism remains the heart of mission. Of particular interest is evangelism as respectful dialogue or prophetic dialogue (Bevans & Schroeder 2006) with people of other faiths. The book *South Africa, Land of many religions* (Meiring & Meiring 2015) is an excellent handbook for reflection on the dialogue between Christians and people of other faiths in the South African context.

5.6 Sharing in partnership

In a postcolonial context the erstwhile 'colonial' relationship between the so-called mother (sending church) and daughter church (receiving church) should

take on the form of partnerships between equals (between sister churches, but also with other institutions like NGOs), sharing the contributions from both partners, building relationships of mutuality, accountability, respect, making joint decisions and taking joint responsibilities for mission endeavours. According to the CWM Theology Statement of 2010, partnerships have become the defining mode of mission engagement in a postcolonial era and it needs to be reflected on as missiological praxis (CWM 2011).

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