


# 'The idea of the University' and the 'Pretoria Model'

## *Apologia pro statu Facultatis Theologicae Universitatis Pretoriensis ad secundum saeculum*

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The article is authored by the Dean of Faculty of Theology at the University of Pretoria, celebrating the Faculty's centenary in 2017. The exposition of the argument is unfolded on the basis of Ricoeur's threefold *mimesis* of prefiguration, configuration and reconfiguration. The earliest decisive statement with regard to the nature of the Faculty, and which is eagerly pursued, was made by the Rev. M.J. Godfrey in 1888, epitomising theological training as of academic deference, that is as a *Faculty at a university* and not a seminary. This has been the fibre of Theology at the University of Pretoria and intellectual inquiry is an uncompromised value. The article is a critical reflection on the past century and an orientation towards the next hundred years, identifying the essence of what a real Pretoria Model could and should be and looking ahead to the next century. 'History is not a destination, but an orientation', sounds like a refrain in the article. The enterprise is contextual with regard to time and space. The assessment is subsequently done in terms of this continent and this century, that is Africa and the 21st century. The conclusion of the article is that the *Pretoria Model* fills a unique niche in theological inquiry at public universities competing for a position among the top 500 on the ranking of world universities.

## Introduction

The title of this article comes across as rather pretentious. This is however, not erudite at all. It is rather a bit of a tongue in the cheek remark of locating the article within a certain context which is not only to be understood in terms of the second century of existence of the Faculty of Theology at the University of Pretoria, but more importantly, in which the classical paradigm of the Faculty finds its identity and relevance. It is a recognition of its diachronically rootedness in the Western tradition of scholarly education.

The informed reader will immediately recognise the opening phrase in the title of the article, as the title of the renowned book of John Henry Newman (1809–1890), *The idea of the university* (1982). The historian G.M. Young has ranked this book with Aristotle's *Ethics* among the most valuable of all the works on the aim of education. Arthur Quiller-Couch told his students at Cambridge that, 'of all the books written in these hundred years there is perhaps none you can more profitably thumb and ponder.' (See Martin Svaglic in his Introduction to *The idea of the university* [Newman 1982:vii]).

There is an allusion to another important publication by John Henry Newman, and that is to his *Apologia pro vita sua* (2005). Newman, a highly influential figure in the Church of England, stunned the Anglican community in 1845 when he left his position as vicar of St. Mary's, Oxford, to join the Roman Catholic Church and set up a university for Catholics in Ireland. No one took greater offence than Charles Kingsley who responded with a scathing attack on Newman's faith and honour, which inspired his brilliant response in his spiritual autobiography. The depths and nature of Christianity, together with the Latin in the title ('A defence of one's life') have insured its status as a classic.

The expression, 'Pretoria Model', was first used by Conrad Wethmar (2000) in his rethinking of theological education at Pretoria, since the two sections (of the NGK<sup>1</sup> and the NHK<sup>2</sup>) have merged to a single *multi-ecclesial*<sup>3</sup> Faculty. Wethmar (1997) foresaw two decades ago quite a challenge for

1. *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk* and in English, Dutch Reformed Church (DRC).

2. *Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk* and in English, Netherdutch Reformed Church (NRC).

3. Note: not ecumenical.

theological education in the Western world, but for South Africa in particular:

In spite of all this, and understandably so, the South African debate is characterized by its own particular issues and emphases. These issues and emphases are to a large extent related to the new political dispensation that developed in South Africa. (pp. 415–416)

What Wethmar did not foresee in his 'Pretoria Model' are the changes in the international academic landscape and the impact it has on faculties of Theology worldwide.

The fourth allusion in the title is of course the centenary of the Faculty of Theology. The Faculty of Theology at the University of Pretoria (UP) was established in 1917.<sup>4</sup> It did not develop from a seminary as was the case of Stellenbosch and Potchefstroom, but developed as a *Faculty* with full academic status at the university since its inception, making this the oldest fully fledged Faculty of Theology in South Africa.<sup>5</sup>

Of the total number of eleven faculties of Theology at universities in South Africa, today only four<sup>6</sup> remain as proper faculties of Theology. I will argue that the world-ranking of universities has opened up a new challenge and even a niche for a new approach to Theology in the 21st century. I propose that the 'Pretoria Model' is given a new dimension and perhaps defines the nature of theology at the University of Pretoria for the time to come.

The exposition of the argument will be unfolded on the basis of Ricoeur's (1984:52-87) threefold *mimesis* of prefiguration, configuration and reconfiguration. This means that the idea of a university is therefore not understood as following everything, but rather as *preceding* everything. Immanuel Kant (1963:20) states in the preface to the second edition of his *Critique of Pure Reason*, that reason 'constraining nature to give answer to questions of reason's own determining', or as 'an appointed judge who compels the witnesses to answer questions he has himself formulated.'

The earliest decisive statement with regard to the nature of the Faculty, and which is eagerly pursued, was made by the

4.The first two theology students – P.J.J. Venter and M.M.J. Basson – were registered in 1917, although the institutionalisation of the Faculty was only finalised by April 1918. The first lecturers were Dr J.H.J.A. Greyvenstein and Rev E. MacMillan. Profs A.C. Paterson and H.T. Reinink took responsibility for the classics. This was the embodiment of the agreement with the church:

Daar is uitdruklike voorwaardes aan die Raad van die TUK gestel: dat ten minste een van die teologiese professore 'Hollandsprekend' moes wees, dat by die aanstelling van professore 'rekening wordt gehouden met de beginselen der Ned Herv Kerk in ZA', dat die kerklike professor in rang gelyk aan universiteitsprofessore sou wees, dat die 'verdeling der vakken' in oorleg met die kerklike professor sal geskied, en dat die Hervormde teologiese studente as universiteitstudente sal geld. Dit is aanvaar en die Hervormde teologiese opleiding was 'n werklikheid. (Loader 1989:427).

5.The University of Pretoria, formerly known as the *Transvaal University College* (TUC) had been established in 1908 under the direct influence of General Jan Smuts and commenced lectures in Kya Rosa with 32 students and 4 professors. The focus was on the classics, law and the sciences. Two of these four professors (Paterson and Reinink) were later affiliated to the Faculty of Theology. General Smuts was the first scholar to obtain an honorary doctorate from the University of Pretoria (13 December 1930) (cf. University of Pretoria, 2016a; University of Pretoria 2016b).

6 The following universities used to have faculties of Theology: Unisa, University of the Western Cape, Rhodes University, Fort Hare University, Zululand University, University of KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo University. In most cases these faculties dissolved into the Faculty of Humanities as departments or schools of religious studies.

Rev. M.J. Goddefroy in 1888, epitomising theological training as of academic deference, that is as a *Faculty at a university* and not a seminary:

Wij moeten een Hoogeschool hebben - geen Kweekschool [...] een kweekschool is tegen ons Ned Herv beginsel. In onze kerk word nooit leeraars toegelaten of zij moesten hunne opleiding aan een werkljike universiteit gehad hebben (Oberholzer 2010:2 of 12).

This has been the fibre<sup>7</sup> of Theology at the University of Pretoria and intellectual inquiry is an uncompromised value of the Faculty and the line I follow in unfolding the argument.<sup>8</sup> As a sort of tacit presupposition, the unfolding will be executed to the point where the Pretoria Model finds a niche in its own right at a public university competing for the top 500 positions of research-intensive world universities.

This article does not pretend to be a historical exposition of the Faculty over the past one hundred years.<sup>9</sup> It is a critical reflection by the Dean on the past century and an orientation towards the next hundred years, identifying the essence of what a real Pretoria Model could and should be and looking ahead to the next century.<sup>10</sup> History is not a destination, but an orientation will sound like a refrain in this article and during the centenary. It is a humble endeavour to make sense of the past in the light of the future.

Obviously, this enterprise should be contextual with regard to time and space. The assessment is subsequently done in terms of this continent and this century, that is, Africa and the 21st century. This article ultimately proposes that the Pretoria Model fills a unique niche in theological inquiry at public universities competing for a position among the top 500 on the ranking of world universities.

## Prefiguration

The Western universities or communities of teachers and scholars (*universitas magistrorum et scholarium*) are almost a thousand years old. The oldest university is Bologna, it dates back to the late eleventh century. The universities of Oxford and Paris were to follow soon and were established in 1096 and 1215 respectively. In lists based on broader definitions, *Al-Qarawiyin*, founded in 859 as a *madrasa* is sometimes considered to be the 'oldest university.'

7.Hierdie klem op universitêre onderwys is nooit deur die Kerk laat vaar nie, selfs nie toe besluit is om by gebrek aan 'n universiteit tog maar 'n kweekskool op te rig nie. Waarskynlik is die Kerk in hierdie opvatting gesterk deur die feit dat die vooruitsig van 'n eie universiteit reeds in 1889 in die Volksraad te berde gebring is. (Loader 1989:413–414).

8.This of course is not a commonly accepted fact. Wethmar cites John Wycliffe who rather vehemently took the opposite position when he wrote: 'Universities, with their programmes of study, their degrees, and their professorships, are products of vain heathenism; they are as much good to the church as the devil is.' (1997:427).

9.See inter alia the following contributions in this regard: Van der Merwe (2008:27–48); Van der Merwe & Vos 2009:1–9); Oberholzer (2010:1–12).

10.Elna Mouton, a previous dean of the Faculty of Theology at Stellenbosch University, formulated this approach to history quite aptly during their 150th celebrations, when she wrote:

Die oomblik het 'n goue geleentheid gebied om nie slegs die verhaal van teologie op Stellenbosch oor te vertel nie, maar ook om geskiedenis te maak, om 'n nuwe verhaal van versoening en hoop te help skep. (Mouton 2010:141).

The origin of many medieval universities can be traced back to the Christian cathedral or monastic schools,<sup>11</sup> which appeared as early as the 6th century and were run for hundreds of years as such before their formal establishment as universities during the high medieval period (Wikipedia contributors 2016). Andrew Louth (2004:70) identifies a certain monk, Bede of Northumbria, to be the first scholar to equip monastic schools for education, he also authored textbooks on grammar and rhetoric, the two subjects together with dialectic that constituted the *trivium*, the introductory part of the medieval curriculum. These were the early beginnings of the eighth century. This introduction enabled the learners to read, write and think in Latin and to enable them subsequently to have access to the scriptures.

Beyond the *trivium* lay the *quadrivium* which entailed music, arithmetic, geometry and astronomy. They completed the *artes liberales* – the so-called liberal arts – which is still a familiar term used at modern universities. The monastic schools' aim was to enable monks to fulfil their vocation as monks and to come to know God, to praise him and to love him. This is encapsulated in the term *contemplatio* which consisted of the four steps of *lectio* → *meditatio* → *oratio* → *contemplatio*. This reading, thinking, pondering ultimately led the monks to contemplation: to looking to God, to be aware of God's presence (Louth 2004:70). The human intellect was seen as not only doing things, but getting beyond them and knowing reality. Discerning God, is perhaps what it was all about. Louth (2004) makes the following important conclusion from this:

Right from Aristotle, and indeed earlier, the acknowledgment of the supreme value of contemplation, and the need that there be those who may devote their time to this, has been linked to acknowledgment that human beings are not simply earth-bound entities. (p. 77)

Although I will later attempt to define theology within the context already referred to, it is nevertheless important to allude to the pre-Christian era in this regard, not so much to find the roots of university, but rather to indicate what a university is all about. The Ionic philosophers already tried to explain the ultimate problems of the origin of the universe. They asked the question of what is fundamental to all things, or as the Milesians put it, the basic substance or *Arche*. Thales of Miletus (c. 624–546 BC) reduced everything to water, Anaximander (c. 610–545 BC) was of the opinion the *Arche* of all things is the boundless and Anaximenes (c. 585–528 BC) held the opinion that breath and air encompass everything (Zeller 1963:32). Since the earliest times, humans have had the urge to penetrate to the absolute in order to understand the whole.

The key expression in coming to grips with what the understanding of reality (*read*: university) is all about accepting what has been said by Kant (see the above citation),

11. Other institutions of higher learning, for example those of ancient Greece, ancient Persia, ancient Rome, Byzantium, ancient China, ancient India and the Muslim world, are not included owing to their cultural, historical, structural and juristic dissimilarities from the medieval European university from which the modern university evolved.

is Anselm's *fides quaerens intellectum* or 'faith seeking understanding'. The theologian's task is not to determine the object of inquiry, but to be guided by the inherently rationality of the object itself.<sup>12</sup> This concept has its antecedent already in the theology of Augustine (MacDonald 2010:1012): 'Unless we believe these things, we would do nothing at all in this life' (Augustine 1996:130). A measure of faith is a *sine quo non* when one wants to come to grips with reality. This is the proper epistemic approach to reality, which transcends the empirical senses. Yet, reason plays the primary role in furnishing depth of understanding to what we believe in faith. MacDonald (2010) recapitulates this point effectively when he says that:

Augustine affords reason the primary role of furnishing depth of understanding or knowledge to what we believe in faith even if we only can achieve full understanding or knowledge, and thus perfect happiness, in the life to come. (p. 1012)

MacDonald (2010:1013) uses this argument to contend that this allows theology at a secular university, because all disciplines have certain epistemic authorities. The question is not whether a discipline is grounded in certain presuppositions, but rather *which* authoritative teaching they are grounded in.

For Cardinal John Henry Newman (1982) it is clear that Theology is a branch of knowledge and that universities should teach universal knowledge:

But this, of course is to assume that Theology *is* a science, and an important one: so I will throw my argument into a more exact form. I say, then, that if a University be, from the nature of the case, a place of instruction, where universal knowledge is professed, and if in a certain University, so called, the subject of Religion is excluded, one of two conclusions is inevitable, - either, on the one hand, that the province of Religion is very barren of real knowledge, or, on the other hand, that in such a University one special and important branch of knowledge is omitted. (p. 16)

The argument for Newman is that knowledge is an end in itself and not for the sake of one or other ulterior motive. The university appeals to common sense and not some ecclesiastical rules and only then is it a place at which it can make humans fit for the world.<sup>13</sup>

However, the universality and unity of the scientific disciplines has turned out to be only a phantom and although the very concept of truth is in danger of losing its place in the modern university, Ebeling (1981:16–18) argues, it has an intrinsic relationship to human life and is preserved in both the person of the scientist who conducts the research and

12. But in relation to this Subject, we are at once confronted with the problem of knowledge. All speaking and hearing in the Church of Jesus Christ entirely rests upon and is connected with the fact that God is known in the Church of Jesus Christ; that is to say, that this Subject is objectively present to the speakers and hearers, so that man in the Church really stands before God. If it were not so, if man did not really stand before God, if God were not the object of his perception, viewing and conception, and if he did not know God – whatever we understand by 'know' – then he could not speak and hear about Him. Then everything declared and heard in the Church would have no Subject and would be left in the air like an empty sound. (Barth, Bromiley & Torrance 2004:3).

13. For a masterfully exposition and re-examination of the thoughts of Newman, see Jaroslav Pelikan (1992).

in the impact of that research on the environment and is therefore indispensable. Religion is a major determinant in human life (Van de Beek 2012:84).

MacDonald (2010:995) cites Donald Wiebe claiming that theology is intrinsically driven by at least some sort of *a priori* commitment to 'an independent subject matter – that is, God, the gods, the Transcendent, Ultimate Reality, and so on.' World views are templates that govern the social construction of a symbolic universe. Michael Polanyi developed the expression *tacit knowledge* as a central part of knowledge in general in order to express what we look for and have some idea about what else we may want to know: 'we can know more than we can tell.' (Polanyi 1966:6). Subsequently, tacit knowledge indicates shared values and tradition, rather than scepticism and lies at the heart of scientific discovery.

Western societies have made fundamental errors in believing that an objective body of knowledge exists and is waiting to be discovered, secondly that the actual possession of such knowledge is neutral and value-free and thirdly that the pursuit of knowledge benefits all human endeavour rather than just a specific class (Grenz & Olson 1996:313). Thus, the argument goes, theology cannot produce valid knowledge (Van de Beek 2012:83).

In a well-researched and argued paper, 'Why the university needs theology', Edna McDonagh puts up four reasons to address this question, namely historical, cultural, societal and intellectual grounds. She is of the opinion that 'a combination of ignorance and arrogance is undermining the role of the humanities, including theology, in the intellectual enterprise of many universities' (2006:141). The *historical grounds* are not only mentioned because theology was an embryotic part of Western universities, but also because scientific dialogue is impossible without the Judeo-Christian heritage of the different disciplines. She (McDonagh 2006) gives a backhand compliment to Richard Dawkins in acknowledging that reality needs a multi-dimensional approach and asserting that:

[E]ven in the very latest anti-religious writings of scientist Richard Dawkins the scientific arrogance and theological ignorance expose the need for a dialogue with university theology which he refuses or has no opportunity to address. (p. 142)

The *cultural grounds* deal with the sources of human beliefs and practices in their historical context, otherwise they are mere shallow surveys of current lifestyles. Ritual practices of both the past and the present should be engaged with. It is noteworthy that many secular studies nowadays base their methods of interpreting texts, on earlier Jewish and Christian approaches. On *societal grounds* McDonagh (2006:145) argues that many professional disciplines like food science, engineering and medicine are significant social practices and interact with religion through the medium of morality. Theology contributes not only to the social cohesion of society, but shapes the value system too. This all escalates into the *intellectual ground* when it becomes clear that theology

(and philosophy) yield certain ultimate questions about human and cosmic life and death. This is of course 'subject to critical intellectual exploration and scrutiny if they are not to lapse mere self-deception and superstition' (McDonagh 2006:148).

## Configuration

'The house of religious studies is full of strange beds and even stranger bedfellows' (Hart 2002:93). It is rather important to distinguish between different forms of theological tuition and learning. The scope of this article is not a general one, but very focused on theology as a science<sup>14</sup> taught at a secular university, with or without ecclesial sanction (although with recognition). William Hart (2002:94) differentiates between Theology (upper case) and *theology* (lower case but with italics). Theology with a capital 'T' refers to a devotional, confessional, and dogmatic enterprise, that is, very much church-based. On the other hand, *theology* with a small 't' and written in italics, refers according to Hart, to a liberal, academic, and humanistic enterprise, that is very much based on philosophy. 'Theology is fideistic; *theology* is fallibilistic.' However, there is a *tertium datur* too: a theology with a small 't' and non-italicised. Hart commends this option to a post-Theological culture.

In his latest publication, *Knowledge and Christian belief*, Alvin Plantinga, by using the tools of modern epistemology, argues for a rational and warranted theology; 'Christians not only *can* be but also *are* justified in holding their characteristic beliefs' (2015:45) and it is in this line that I (Buitendag 2014) endorse the QANU Report on the *Quality Assurance of Netherlands Universities*.<sup>15</sup> Van de Beek (2012:86-89) argues for a 'filled neutrality' in the study of Theology at a public university. This makes provision for all religions and philosophical world views, assessed by their own internal critique.

In my mind, theology and religious studies are not birds of the same feather. Similarities can so easily be over accentuated and differences glossed over. There is a major difference in epistemology. The assumptions of modernistic liberal understanding have been challenged from different angles and 'the presumptive epistemic privilege of the scholar has been shaken as the epistemological foundations upon which it was based have crumbled' (Cady 2002:113). Each of us inhabits a particular place and time and that limits research and making it provisional. No scholar is above the data, but

14. In his *The conflict of the faculties*, Kant distinguished the philosophical or liberal arts faculty from the professional faculties of law, medicine and theology. A faculty of theology was defended within a university, not for its independent engagement in the pursuit of knowledge, but for the professional training of ministers. However, it is unsatisfactory to divide reason and sensibility: 'Humans live in one world, of which reason, understanding and sensibility must together provide a coherent and plausible conceptual interpretation' (Ward 2009:88).

15. It is important for theology to be present in secular universities. It has a very positive role to play in providing reflective enquiry into fundamental questions of human nature and existence, and in exploring the approaches to those questions within one or more major and historically crucial religious traditions. Theology has therefore to be conserved as an autonomous discipline with its own theory-building and methodology, independently of the external approach of religion by religious studies and of its more instrumental use for ministerial training, and also irrespective of the commitment to church policies. (QANU 2013:8).

is in relation to it. The academic and cultural trends of the last 50 years oppose abstraction and the universalisation of knowledge. Abstract analysis has made place for contextual relationality. Kathryn Tanner (2002:206) aptly states: 'In a search for truth humbled by the recognition of constant change and limitations of perspective, this cultural contest would require the widest possible purview.'

I would like to conclude my argument with a citation by Denys Turner (2005) with regard to the place of theology at a university:

And that precisely is the reason why any university should want to have in its midst the presence of theologians: for 'Religious Studies' people ask only the same old sorts of questions that the anthropologists, or psychologists, or historians, or sociologists ask, as it happens about religions, whatever they are. Whereas theologians ask distinctive questions all of their own that no one else would have thought of asking, questions of such oddity that you are obliged, as a first sort of task, to demonstrate that they can be legitimately asked at all – like Leibniz's question, 'Why is there something rather than nothing?' (pp. 36–37)

Although there are both 'strange beds' and even 'stranger bedfellows', I would like to distinguish between the different models all using the same adjective 'theological': theological training, theological education and theological inquiry. *Theological training* is carried out by a church, and financially supported by the relevant denomination(s). Obviously there is much emphasis on the praxis of the denomination and very little or perhaps no independent thinking happens. The training is for a fixed period after which the candidate is licensed by the church. But these schools, sometimes even seminaries, are independent and not linked to a university. This is outside the scope of this article. *Theological education* is of a much higher standard, and institutions offering it are often accredited by Higher Education as a seminary. Whereas the previous has the emphasis on praxis, this model has theory as well and proper study of the confessions and creeds is done. The focus is broader than only the denomination, and society is seen as the context of the ministry. This is a lifelong education, and continuous teaching and learning normally takes place. A more advanced form, is a Christian university. In Africa it becomes an increasingly popular development for excelling seminaries.<sup>16</sup>

The third category is what I see as a new challenge, yet a niche for theology. *Theological inquiry* is what Hart calls theology spelled in lower case (no italics) which has a critical approach in its methodology. It is open for contestation, interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary and even transdisciplinary research and wants to contribute to humans' search for understanding and meaning. It is not *essentially* ecclesiastical, perhaps not even ecumenical, but scientific in nature. It tries to be a worthy dialogue partner among the different sciences

16. A very good example is St Paul's University in Nairobi. As vision it states is to be 'a university of academic excellence based on Christian principles producing graduates in various fields for global service' and as mission it wants, 'to develop servant leaders by imparting knowledge, skills and values through creative methods of education, research and Christian spiritual formation.' ('Vision & Mission', on St Paul's University webpage).

at the university. It accepts the challenge to compete internationally and adheres to the demands of the world-ranking systems with the core criteria of publish or perish. Its focus is the scholarly world and it realises that 'glocalisation' is the route to go; it contributes to global scholarly debates from a local perspective. The following concise table lists the differences between the two, although binary forces:

The Pretoria Model is fit to taking up this challenge. The latest *InCites* data<sup>17</sup> shows that the Faculty at the University of Pretoria is ranked position #25 in the world with regard to research done by religious institutions as per the Web of Science categories. This position is based on the (1) articles on the Web of Science, (2) Normalized Citation Impact, (3) Times Cited, and (4) International Collaborations. The following graphs indicate both the four South African faculties of theology<sup>18</sup> as well as the three international Faculties the Faculty at Pretoria has chosen to benchmark itself against.<sup>19</sup>

The point at stake here is that a new grammar has been developed for theology as a science. The challenge for a Faculty of Theology at a research-intensive university is to publish where it is noted, that is Scopus, *The Scientific Electronic Library Online* (SciELO) SA and the *Norwegian list* (Tshilidzi 2016:34) and of course the Thomson Reuters' Web of Science, previously referred to as the *Institute for Scientific Information* (ISI), and the *International Bibliography of the Social Sciences* (IBSS). The three most important indices measuring the world ranking position of universities are currently the *Academic Ranking of World Universities*<sup>20</sup> (ARWU), *The Times Higher Education*<sup>21</sup> (THE) and the *Quacquarelli Symonds*<sup>22</sup> (QS), each with its own criteria:

**Table 1:** Differences in models.

Theological inquiry	Theological education
Science	Doctrines
Society	Church
Coherency & consistency	Truth
Descriptive	Prescriptive
Journey	Arrived
Open to influences	Close to influences
Diverse methodologies	Single methodology
Inclusive	Exclusive

Source: Compiled by author

17. This analysis was done by Steynberg (2016).

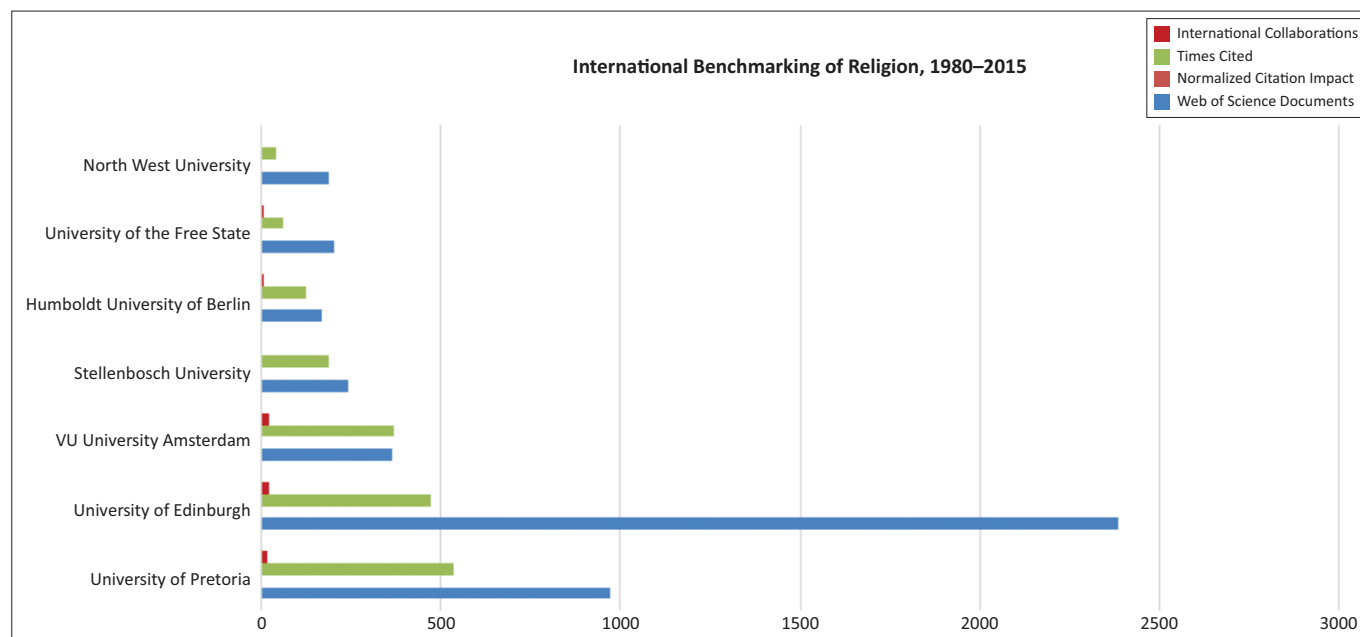
18. South African faculties of theology respected positions are: Stellenbosch University (#158), University of the Free State (#186) and North West University (#199).

19. The Protestant Theological University (PThU) is unfortunately not listed by the Web of Science, although close collaborations exist with this fine institution.

20. The *Academic Ranking of World Universities* (ARWU) is conducted by researchers at the Centre for World-Class Universities of Shanghai Jiao-Tong University (CWCU). The league table was originally compiled and issued by Shanghai Jiao-tong University in 2003, the first global ranking with multifarious indicators (Shanghai Rankings 2016).

21. 'The *Times Higher Education* World University Rankings, founded in 2004, provide the definitive list of the world's best universities, evaluated across teaching, research, international outlook, reputation and more.' (THE 2016).

22. QS *Quacquarelli Symonds* was founded in 1990 and has established itself as the leading global provider of specialist higher education and careers information and solutions. (QS 2016).



Source: Steynberg 2016

Figure 1: Research footprint of benchmarking faculties of Theology.

Table 2: Indices measuring ranking.

ARWU	THE	QS
Nobel Medal Alumni, 30% Highly Cited Researchers, 20%	Teaching and learning environment, 30% Citations, Per Paper, 30%	Academic Peer Review, 40% Employer Review, 10%
Nature/ Science Papers, 20% Papers indexed in Science and Social Science Citation Indices, 20%	Int'l Staff and Students, 7.5% Research Income from Industry, 2.5%	Staff: Student Ratio, 20% International Staff, 5% International Students, 5%
Per Capita performance, 10%	Research volume, income and reputation, 30%	Citations per Faculty/Staff, 20%

Source: Respective webpages

Theology has unfortunately no independent research field for these classifications and is grouped among different disciplines by different indices often as part of the Social Sciences or Humanities. In the *SCImago Journal & Country Rank*<sup>23</sup> (SJR), theology is found under the subsection of *Religious Studies* which is in turn under the umbrella of *Arts and Humanities*. Theology in South Africa is according to this index in position #6 in the world (SJR 2016). The South African *Department of Higher Education and Training* (DHET) groups Theology and Religion with Philosophy, of which the latter is in many cases the only denominator.<sup>24</sup> The ranking of a university is therefore not equal to the ranking of that university's respective research fields.<sup>25</sup>

The following table demonstrates the only five South African theological journals listed by the SJR (SJR Journal & Country Rank 2016). *HTS Theological Studies*, in the top position in Africa and 40th in the world, is the oldest and largest

23. The *SCImago Journal & Country Rank* is a portal that includes the journals and country scientific indicators developed from the information contained in the Scopus® database (Elsevier B.V.).

24. Group 17 of the Classification of Educational Subject Matter (CESM) is 'Philosophy, Religion and Theology' and contributes 5.96% to the total publications of South African universities and is ranked in the 8th position of all fields (Tshilidzi 2016:14).

25. Although the Faculty of Theology is the smallest faculty at the University (1.4% of students and 1.5% of lecturers), it delivers more than 12% of the article output of the University of Pretoria.

theological journal in South Africa and affiliated to the Faculty of Theology at the University of Pretoria (SJR 2016). The journal in the third position, *Verbum et Ecclesia*<sup>26</sup> is affiliated to the Faculty of Theology at the University of Pretoria as well.

In the process of unfolding my argument about my way to a re-orientation of the Pretoria Model, it is appropriate to conclude this section now by offering my understanding of both what a university in my view is all about and together with that, what theology in this context could be. It does not exclude other definitions, but as argued, the grammar prescribes the following:

Universities are places of debate and contestation which provide space for new knowledge to be created, intellectual activity and freedom of thought. (South Africa 2015)

Theology is a scholarly endeavour by believers in the public sphere in order to come to grips with multi-dimensional realities (being) in a manner that matters (bread).

These definitions will be fleshed out in the next and last section, before some final concluding remarks.

## Refiguration

The case for theological education cannot be finally made once and for all. It needs to be made again and again, because what theology and theological education are called to do, varies in each social setting and cultural circumstance (Brueggemann 1991:100).

Research universities in the 21st century cannot be single-purpose institutions anymore, but must rather be pluralistic

26. Strangely enough, *Verbum et Ecclesia* is listed under the category of 'Sociology and Political Science' and not 'Religious Studies' as the rest.

**Table 3:** The five Theological SA journals with an international footprint.

Rank in Africa	Title	SJR ranking	H index	Total Docs (3 years)	Total Refs	Total Cites (3 years)	Citable Docs (3 years)
1	<i>HTS Theological Studies</i>	0.261	7	438	7048	81	430
2	<i>Neotestamentica</i>	0.210	5	52	944	11	51
3	<i>Verbum et Ecclesia</i>	0.196	2	56	2230	8	57
4	<i>Missionalia</i>	0.193	4	54	415	11	48
5	<i>Acta Theologica</i>	0.170	5	153	2436	17	148

Source: SCImago Journal and Country Rank (SJR) 2016

in the sense of combining various functions.<sup>27</sup> Kofi Annan, a former Secretary General of the United Nations, strongly promoted the importance of universities for development in Africa, (quoted in Cloete, Maasen & Bailey 2015):

The university must become a primary tool for Africa's development in the new century. Universities can help develop African expertise; they can enhance the analysis of African problems; strengthen domestic institutions; serve as a model environment for the practice of good governance, conflict resolution and respect for human rights, and enable African academics to play an active part in the global community of scholars. (p. 12)

This means that universities have to become agents of change and 'the critical source of equalisation of chances and democratisation of society by making possible equal opportunities for people' (Cloete *et al.* 2015:2).

The second Higher Education (HE) summit on transformation took place in Durban 2015 and a public declaration was released on 17 October 2015 (South Africa 2015). Students and staff were fundamentally interrogating the nature and pace of transformation at our universities and fundamentally questioned the state of universities in South Africa, *who* is teaching and researching, *what* are they teaching and researching, and what the *qualitative experiences* of students in our universities are like.

The summit agreed inter alia that:

- Higher Education is a public good.
- Democratic citizenship and the right to dignity critically underpin the mandate of our public universities.
- Universities have a developmental role to play in redressing inequalities in broader society.
- Curriculum change is at the core of university transformation initiatives.
- Transformation of universities is multidimensional and complex.
- The term transformation must continue to be interrogated and discussed at deeper levels.
- Workers are an integral part of the communities of public universities.

During the Mini-Lekgotla of the Faculty of Theology on the 4<sup>th</sup> December 2015, Prof Kobus Krüger<sup>28</sup> was invited to

27. In a rather cynical way, Stefan Collini (2012:Loc 62) refers to the 'trinity' signalling the position of universities today in Britain: 'funding', 'impact' and 'access'.

28. There was not a published paper presented only his personal notes which were given to the Dean. The indicated paragraphs quoted freely from that.

provide direction to the possible positions the Faculty could go towards in the future with regard to its values of inclusivity and diversity. As an introduction, he alluded to three entangled sets of problems that compel humanity today to rediscover and return to the root and nature of things.

- Firstly there is the *ecological crisis*. Humankind's scientific developments and their technological applications and extensions have become a problematic force in the overall tissue of reality. At the level of popular culture plain materialism, not coinciding with, yet related to science, poses an enormous problem and challenge to theology.
- Then there is the *social crisis* with its many faces, reminding us that injustice towards children and women, minorities and majorities and the socially exposed and weak of all kinds are today as prevalent as at any time in the past.
- Thirdly, there is the loss of legitimacy of all traditional religious and other value systems, even when they are propped up laboriously, sometimes aggressively, in some parts of the world. *All religions are in a crisis*. Humanity has entered a new kind of culture, global in spread but shorn of ultimate meaning.

Like ancient Polynesian way finders over vast stretches of ocean, Krüger said, humanity today will have to draw on all dimensions of human experience and knowledge; remember past stretches of water covered and islands passed on the way here; be able to read the tides and the winds of the present moment; and have a good understanding of the groundswell, the deep currents in the ocean of human consciousness. We have entered a new axial age, and it may be time for an exciting new start.

The challenge for the Faculty of Theology at Pretoria is therefore to be globally competitive, yet locally relevant. Richard Starcher (2004) of the *Nairobi of the Evangelical Graduate School of Theology*, found that:

[R]esearch participants most often expressed a desire to grow in competence (knowledge or skill) in connection with a desire to be of greater service to Africa or the African Church. (p. 211)

With regard to the relevance of theology in South Africa, Anthony Balcomb (1998:68) distinguishes subsequently between *theologies of bread* and *theologies of being*. The first type is engaged in the reconstruction of the South African society and the latter type struggles with the quest for identity in a society dominated by Western values. Relevance is therefore not only an ethical question, but an ontological as well as an epistemological one. Deconstruction of the heritage of the past century and engaging in the world debate from an

African vantage point, is what should be pursued. A comprehensive transformation of curricula<sup>29</sup> is therefore needed, or as Achille Mbembe (2016) phrases it:

A Eurocentric canon is a canon that attributes truth only to the Western way of knowledge production. It is a canon that disregards other epistemic traditions. It is a canon that tries to portray colonialism as a normal form of social relations between human beings rather than a system of exploitation and oppression. Furthermore, Western epistemic traditions are traditions that claim detachment of the known from the knower. (p. 5)

That this challenge has been appropriated by the Faculty, is evident from inter alia a recent report from the Head of the Department of Practical Theology, Prof. C.J. Wepener (2016), to the Dean:

The aim of practical theological research is a better understanding of faith practices as well as the continuing renewal of a theory for praxis. Ultimately Practical Theology wants to make a contribution regarding the healing of individuals, society and creation which for us includes issues such as justice, reconciliation, inclusivity, equality, poverty alleviation – in essence the meaningful reconnection of individuals and communities to themselves, each other, creation and God. (Unofficial email by C.J.W. to J.B).

The 'shape and size' of the Faculty of Theology has been indicated by the University's Executive as a matter that should be revisited. The Vice-Principal: Institutional Planning therefore formally requested the Dean on 9 March 2015 by an email<sup>30</sup> to conduct an investigation into the possibility of transforming certain research clusters into managerial units, that is, departments, with the potential implication of reducing the number of departments in the Faculty (Ströth 2015).

The following Terms of Reference<sup>31</sup> were set by the Executive:

- To review the current structure of the Faculty and suggest possible changes to improve its organisational efficiency and research productivity in support of the University's strategic goals.
- To suggest strategies that could be implemented to optimise efficiencies, concentrate resources and expertise, and enhance research and teaching excellence in partnership with cognate departments and programmes in the Faculty of Humanities.
- To identify any challenges to the enhancement of organisational functioning (including the formal

29. The research on transforming the theological knowledge done by the Faculty of Theology at the University of the Free State (UFS) is most commendable in this regard (Venter & Tolmie 2012).

30. Beste Johan. Baie dankie vir die gesprek wat ons verlede week gehad het tov Teologie by UP. Ek stel dit graag op skrif dat UP Bestuur groot waardering het vir die besondere bydrae wat deur jou Fakulteit gelewer word. Dit is ook so deur die Rektor oorgedra met die vorige prestasie rondte met Dekane. Wat die toekoms van die Fakulteit aanbetref is dit baie duidelik deur die Rektor aan my en Norman oorgedra dat ons Teologie as 'n onafhanklike Fakulteit wil hou. Daar is tans oor die hele UP 'n aantal inisiatiewe besig om te kyk na die bestuurseenhede waarbinne dissiplines funksioneer en die voorstel is dat ons bestuurseenhede skep wat bely n is met fokus areas 'cluster van dissiplines' wat 'n kritiese massa verteenwoordig en nie klein [en] baie bestuursomgewings skep nie. Dit is dan die versoek dat julle as Fakulteit met 'n voorstel kom oor hoe ons hiermee vorentoe [kan] gaan. Nogmaals baie dankie vir die baie goeie werk. Groete, Anton. (Personal e-mail by A.S to J.B).

31. See the report of the Dean to the Academic Planning Committee (APC) of 09 February 2016 (Buitendag 2016).

relationships between the Faculty of Theology and church partners), particularly in relation to research, teaching and learning, and professional training. Also, to suggest possible ways of overcoming these challenges.

It was a *sine qua non* throughout these discussions was that the integrity and independence of the Faculty should be maintained as well as the six established disciplines of Theology. The restructuring is therefore to be seen as a managerial issue in order to improve the operational efficiency of the Faculty. Based on a Faculty Lekgotla (Pure Joy, 10–11 March 2016), the Dean prepared a report to the effect of reducing the current six departments to five and to rename both the departments and the Faculty.

The following changes are proposed<sup>32</sup> (Buitendag 2016:3–4):

- The Departments of Church History and Church Polity and the Department of Dogmatics and Christian Ethics will merge.
- The Department of Science of Religion and Missiology will be converted to a Department of Religion Studies.
- The name of the Faculty is to change to the Faculty of Theology and Religion (Afrikaans: *Fakulteit Teologie en Religie* and Sepedi: *Lekala la Thutatumelo le Bodumedi*).
- The Faculty will comprise of five departments with the following proposed names:

1. Department of Old Testament and Hebrew Scriptures (*Ou-Testamentiese en Hebreuse Literatuur*). Abbreviation: OTL.
2. Department of New Testament and Related Literature (*Nuwe-Testamentiese en Verwante Literatuur*). Abbreviation: NTL.
3. Department of Systematic and Historical Theology (*Sistematiese en Historiese Teologie*). Abbreviation: SHT.
4. Department of Practical Theology (*Praktiese Teologie*). Abbreviation: DPT.
5. Department of Religion Studies (*Godsdiensstudies*). Abbreviation: DRS.

South Africa is a multi-religious society and a secular constitution (*vis-à-vis* Zambia which is Christian as per its Constitution). In order to adopt a broader inclusive religious, theological and ecclesial diversity at the University of Pretoria (UP) it was proposed that the Faculty of Theology be renamed to the *Faculty of Theology and Religion*. The addition of *and Religion* should enhance diversity and diminish exclusiveness. This will do justice to the broader vision of inclusivity and advance the prospects of other religions. It was however, emphasised that the slightest idea of syncretism be obliterated. Both the external review panel and the Faculty proposed the formation of a new department, namely a *Department of Religion Studies*.<sup>33</sup>

32. This proposal was formally accepted by the Executive and adopted by Senate on 29 September 2016.

33. Biblical and Religious Studies used to be a programme of the Faculty administered by the Faculty of Humanities. It has several elective modules offered to other UP Faculties.



## Gateway To ...<sup>34</sup>

'History is not a destination, but an orientation'. It is important not only to interpret the past, but to come to terms with it as well. Like any human, the Faculty has a two-pronged genealogy, the line of the fatherly ancestry and the line of the motherly ancestry. In terms of the Pretoria Model and the discussed reconfiguration, it is decisive to identify the core traits in the fibre of the Faculty. In Wethmar's mind, this is undoubtedly the issue of either the *simplex ordo* (NGK) or the *duplex ordo* (NHK) and the clear choice of the former (Wethmar 2000:425). This however, is much more complex than presented here. Neither the NGK nor the NHK had a pure application of either model. No distinction was later<sup>35</sup> made between church subjects (Dogmatics and Practical Theology) and the others. In both sections of the Faculty, the respective churches played a crucial role in the appointment of *all* academic staff and in the case of the NHK, they dismissed a New Testament professor<sup>36</sup> whose actions would be in a *duplex ordo* dispensation, inappropriate. Since the amalgamation of the two sections in 2000, it was clearly stated in the agreements with the churches that academic appointments would be made according to university's rules and regulations, with the only proviso that denominational allocated positions would be filled from the ranks of that church, but appointed by a Recruitment and Appointment Committee of the University. I would rather contend that the Pretoria Model is in its fibre a *hybrid* with more traits of the *duplex ordo*, except for the distinction of church subjects vis-à-vis academic subjects and that the current complement of lecturers are all believers and even licensed ministers of a number of different denominations. Loader<sup>37</sup> has indicated convincingly that the nature of the Faculty since its inception, was very much based on the Dutch *Ethical Theology* which most probably today is very much the character of the Pretoria Model, which is neither liberal, nor orthodox but finds a dialectical third option

34.The Faculty's Centenary Committee has decided that this is the strapline for the celebrations. It implies not only a gate, but an *open gate* inviting the traveller to proceed. The early Christians were known as 'The Way'. With this the Faculty wants to endorse its mission of inclusivity and wants to take along marginalised people of the past, whether of race, of gender, of ideology, of language or whatever. Therefore, it is a confession of our erroneous exclusivity of the past as well. The old wooden gates of the University are symbolically placed in a *fixed* open position in front of the building of the Faculty.

35.The two so-called church subjects only started at UP in 1952 and 1967 respectively. General Jan Smuts, Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa requested the then Vice-Chancellor of the University of Pretoria, Prof. C.H. Rautenbach a previous member of the Faculty of Theology (1939–1948), to visit St. Andrews University and to duplicate the Scottish structure of departments at UP. The Presbyterian legacy of the Faculty has become integral to the Faculty because of this fact and not because of the initial lecturers in 1917.

36.For this history, see Van Aarde, De Villiers and Buitendag (2014). Prof Geyser was the first doctorate candidate of this Faculty (1945).

37.'Aangesien die "derde opsie" ook die tuiste was van die etiese teoloë, is dit begryplik dat die Hervormers predikante sou beroep van *deur die etiese teologie beïnvloed* was (bv. ds L.E. Brandt), dat professore van etiese inklinasie onder hul leermeesters sou tel (vgl. die keuse van Van Drimmelen, Fourie, Vermooten, Greyvenstein, Engelbrecht en Wolmarans), en dat hulle hul geledere sou versterk met hulp uit dieselfde oord (getuige die hulp van Obbink en die koms van Gemser en Van Selms). Dit is des te meer begryplik aangesien die etiese teologie alles kon bied wat vir Hervormers belangrik was: distansie van die gereformeerde teologie, afwysing van die bevindelikheid van die "evangelischen" (vgl. Valeton [1909] se kritiek hierop, uitgewerk in sy bespreking van die verskillende rigtings en die standpunt van die etici daarteenoor), en tegelyk 'n regsinnigheid wat standpunt teen die liberale teologie ingeneem het. Daarom moet verwag word dat die Hervormde teologie, soos bedrywe aan die fakulteit te Pretoria, die karakter van die "derde opsie" en meer bepaald dié van die etiese teologie sou vertoon.' (Loader 1989:423).

of pursuing truth as an encounter. Postfoundationalist approaches are noted in many publications by the Faculty. In my view (Buitendag 2014), the *Postliberal Theology* of the Yale School gives very much vocabulary to express this crucial trait of the Pretoria Model. This approach permits space for different and authentic voices, each in their own right.

In my mind it is clear that the Faculty has to continue to closely collaborate with different churches, religious institutions and different religions. It is also clear in my mind that academic excellence is not negotiable and that churches would have to add a certain amount of denominational flavour to the theological inquiry offered at the Faculty. If theology really wants to serve the church, it should have 'certain degree of freedom in relation to the official structures of the church' (Wethmar 2012:81). This implies a new application of the *duplex ordo* in the sense that all six disciplines are academic, yet ecclesiastical.

By means of an approach of constructive dialogue, a Faculty Theology at a public university has to contribute to human's urge to comprehend nature or rather reality. I concur with David Ford (2007) when he states that:

Academic or public theology seeks wisdom in relation to questions, such as those of meaning, truth, beauty and practice, which are raised by, about and between the religions and are pursued through engagement with a range of academic disciplines. (p. 117)

Truth-seeking is intrinsic to the inquiring mind and characterises theology as well, or as Ford puts it, 'speaking the truth in love' (Ford 2005:727). This is perhaps what Wethmar (1997) sensed when he stated that:

Christian theology will no longer retain its position at state-funded universities for traditional religious or ideological reasons but it will have to justify its presence in academic and moral terms. (p. 416)

However, Van de Beek (2012:85) warns against a meta-religious moral framework which so-called 'objective' researchers apply in investigating their subject matter. A public university should never become idiosyncratic.

The Faculty of Theology has therefore engaged in critical multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary research on a wide spectrum of strategic academic and societal interests ranging from social cohesion, social ethics and leadership, missional church to narrative pastoral care and to actual biblical-hermeneutical challenges to the influential science-theology discourses. Much of the research has as its focus the problem of poverty, the challenges of reconciliation and the need for restorative justice, involving key role players from different sectors of society, industry and academia.

Prof Kobus Krüger (2015) has concluded his argument at the said Mini-Lekgotla of the Faculty with the following blessing:

Clearly the Faculty has arrived at a moment of truth. It could become a pioneering Faculty, exploring new academic and religious ways in the Republic of South Africa, Africa, and wider. I believe the Faculty is strategically well-positioned, administratively in excellent hands and academically excellently equipped to fulfil that role. My very best wishes accompany you.

In the 2013 Faculty Plan, the following introductory paragraph led the vantage thinking of the author and is perhaps the *leitmotif* of his thinking (Buitendag 2012):

The last message of the late President Paul Krüger to the people of the old *Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek* in the Transvaal during his exile in Switzerland in the final days of the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902), was that they should gather from the past what was good and of value and build a future on it. However praiseworthy, it should be turned upside down in real business and strategic thinking: *visualise the future and build a history accordingly.* (p. 2)

'*Ars longa, vita brevis*', is the slogan on the cornerstone of the Theology Building on the campus of the University of Pretoria. Life is short, but art forever. And so is theology here to remain. Or to conclude with another Latin expression: '*ex Africa semper aliquid novi.*' There is always something new from Africa. May this Pretoria Model as *ars theologica Africana* be a gateway to the Kingdom. *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika!*

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