

**SOUTH AFRICAN PERSPECTIVES ON THE COMMUNICATION
OF THE BIBLE IN CHURCH AND SOCIETY**

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Abstract

This thesis reflects research undertaken over the past eight years about the way in which the Bible has been brought to bear on a number of frameworks within the South African socio-historical context. It is argued that it is not at all surprising that the Bible would become a part of the dialogues of the church; the Bible remains the source of the Christian identity of the churches in South Africa in a very particular way. Nor is it really unexpected that the Bible would be influential in discussions on broader societal issues in South Africa. With \pm 80% of the South African populace subscribing to the Christian faith, and with the most prominent strands of Christianity found in South Africa making so much of the role of the Bible in their lives of faith, it would be perplexing if the Bible had indeed not been a major feature in these debates. The Bible spoke and speaks to church and country in South Africa. Put differently, as a phenomenological formulation: the Bible is brought to speech, that is, is brought to communication within the closer ecclesiological precincts as well as the broader socio-political environment of South Africa, precisely because of the particular religious configurations that characterise church and culture locally.

The following is thus, albeit retroactively, posed as a general research question running centrally through all the research essays under review here: *How was the Bible brought to communication within different spheres of the South African society?*

A total of nine scholarly publications are included, although in fact they represent seven research outputs. In two cases the research was first published as chapters in books, and was then re-published in article format.

The most important conclusions reached, are:

- that the Old Testament is a vastly under-utilised source for communicating Christian spirituality, a state of affairs for which ten reasons can be indicated;
- that literal Bible translations are more effective in engaging Bible readers, because they invite active, interpretative participation by the intended receivers;

- that the use of the Bible for political purposes, even for opposing political causes, always reduces the Bible to a rhetorical tool, namely to substantiate views being propagated;
- that the present government's communication on religious matters has been rhetorically ambivalent: while continued funding for university programmes of — by name — Biblical Studies, has been questioned in Parliament and elsewhere, the churches (for whom the Bible is central to their identity and as a motivational force) are called upon to support government's social relief programmes;
- that the editorial and other comment columns of newspapers offer a substantial, yet vastly under-utilised resource for preachers in their attempts to deliver contextually relevant sermons;
- that deliberate consideration given to persuasive variables are of substantial importance to preachers; most important, though, for the long term effectiveness of the Gospel message, is the perceived integrity of the preacher;
- that both the Old and New Testaments offer substantial resources for the enhancement of communication and the building of relationships between different church denominations, with the caveat, though, that texts should not be misinterpreted, as has been the case, since this undermines the integrity of such processes.

The ways in which the Bible has been used in these different societal spheres are, thus, varied, yet seldom satisfactory. By indicating the problems and perspectives that have come to light through these research projects, a contribution may be made towards a more mature society in which religion plays a constructive role, and is, as a corollary, respected for what it is *in its own right*.

Key words: Religious communication, Bible, church, society, debate.

Opsomming

Hierdie tesis reflekteer navorsing wat oor die afgelope agt jaar onderneem is oor die manier waarop die Bybel ter sprake gebring is binne 'n aantal fasette van die Suid-Afrikaanse sosio-historiese konteks. Dit is geensins verrassend dat die Bybel deel sou word van debatte binne die kerk nie; die Bybel bly immers op 'n besondere manier die bron van die Christelike identiteit van die kerke in Suid-Afrika. Ook is dit geensins onverwags dat die Bybel sterk invloed sou uitoefen in gesprekke rondom breëre samelewingskwessies in Suid-Afrika nie. Met \pm 80% van Suid-Afrika se inwoners wat die Christelike geloof onderskryf, en met die mees prominente strome van die Christendom in Suid-Afrika wat 'n hoë premie op die rol van die Bybel in mense se geloofsbelewenis plaas, sou dit inderdaad moeilik verklaarbaar gewees het as die Bybel nie 'n belangrike faktor in hierdie debatte was nie. Die Bybel het gespreek, en spreek steeds, tot kerk en land in Suid-Afrika. Anders gestel, as 'n fenomenologiese formulering: die Bybel word tot spraak gebring, oftewel, tot kommunikasie gebring binne sowel die enger kerklike kringe as die breëre sosio-politieke landskap in Suid-Afrika, juis vanweë die spesifieke godsdienstige uitdrukkingswyses wat kerk en kultuur plaaslik kenmerk.

Die algemene navorsingsvraag wat, terugskouend, gestel word en sentraal staan aan al die navorsingsopstelle wat hier onder die loep kom, is: *Hoe is die Bybel binne verskille sfere van die Suid-Afrikaanse samelewing tot kommunikasie gebring?*

'n Somtotaal van nege wetenskaplike publikasies word ingesluit, hoewel dit eintlik sewe navorsingsuitsette verteenwoordig. In twee gevalle het die navorsing eers as hoofstukke in boeke verskyn, waarna dit as vakwetenskaplike artikels weer gepubliseer is.

Die mees belangrike gevolgtrekkings waartoe gekom is, is:

- dat die Ou Testament as 'n bron vir die kommunikasie van Christelike spiritualiteit, grootliks onderbenut is – 'n stand van sake waarvoor tien redes aangevoer kan word;

- dat letterlike vertalings van die Bybel meer effektief is om Bybellesers te betrek, omrede sulke vertalings aktiewe, interpreterende deelname by die bedoelde ontvangers ontlok;
- dat die gebruik van die Bybel vir politieke doeleindes, selfs al is dit ten behoeve van teenoorstaande politieke strewes, altyd die Bybel tot blote retoriese instrument reduceer, naamlik om bewyskrag te verskaf aan die siening wat voorgestaan word;
- dat die huidige regering se kommunikasie oor godsdienssake retories ambivalent oorkom: hoewel die voortgesette befondsing van universiteitskursusse in – by name – Bybelkunde in die Parlement en elders bevestigte is, word die kerke (vir wie die Bybel sentraal staan aan hulle identiteit, en dien as motiveringskrag) tog opgeroep tot steun aan regeringsinisiatiewe rondom maatskaplike noodverligting;
- dat die redaksionele en ander kommentaarkolomme van koerante 'n belangrike, dog grootliks onderbenutte bron bied vir predikers in hulle pogings om kontekstueel-relevante preke te lewer;
- dat dit van groot belang is vir predikers om doelbewus aandag te skenk aan oordingsveranderlikes; van grootste belang vir die langtermyn-doeltreffendheid van die evangelieboodskap is egter die waargenome integriteit van die prediker;
- dat beide die Ou en Nuwe Testamente substansiële hulpbronne bied vir die bevordering van kommunikasie en die uitbou van verhoudinge tussen verskillende kerkdenominasies, met dié voorbehoud dat tekste nie foutiewelik aangewend moet word, soos wat dikwels die geval was nie, aangesien dit die integriteit van sodanige prosesse ondermyn.

Verskillende maniere waarop die Bybel in hierdie sosiale sfere aangewend is, word dus gevind, maar min van dié gebruikswyses is werklik bevredigend. Deur in hierdie navorsingsprojekte probleme aan te dui en perspektiewe aan te bied, word 'n bydrae gelewer onderweg na 'n meer volwasse samelewing waarbinne godsdien 'n konstruktiewe rol speel, maar daarmee saam, waarin dit *in eie reg* erken word.

Sleuteltermes: Religieuse kommunikasie, Bybel, kerk, samelewing, debat.

Preface

The format chosen for the presentation of this dissertation is that of the collection of a series of scholarly publications around a central theme, as authorised by the relevant regulations of the university to which this dissertation is submitted.

The publications concerned here all have a single author, namely the candidate for this PhD, which therefore precludes the need for indicating which sections of the publications are for the account of which co-author. In addition, all publications have already appeared in refereed and accredited scientific publications, which satisfies relevant university regulations in this regard too.

The publications concerned are:

- “The Old Testament in Christian spirituality: perspectives on the undervaluation of the Old Testament in Christian spirituality”. *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 59/2, Junie 2003, 433-450.
- “Elke vertaling is ‘n vertelling. Opmerkings oor vertaalteorie, geïllustreer aan die hand van die chokmatiese *ratio interpretationis*”. *Old Testament Essays*. 15/3, December 2002, 754-765.
- “The Bible in the apartheid debate”, in Hofmeyr, JW, Lombaard, CJS & Maritz, PJ (eds) 2001. *1948 + 50 years. Theology, apartheid and church: Past, present and future* (Perspectives on the Church / Perspektiewe op die Kerk, Series 5: Vol. 1), 69-87. Pretoria: IMER (Institute for Missiological and Ecumenical Research), University of Pretoria.
- “The left governing hand and the right governing hand: begging for a church without public hands?” *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 109 (March 2001), 17-24.
- “ ‘n Woord vir ons wêreld. Kontekstuele prediking met behulp van kommentaarjoernalistiek”. *Praktiese Teologie in Suid-Afrika* 16/1, 2001, 19-39.
- “The Bible and ecumenism”. *Ekklesiastikos Pharos* 83/1&2, 2001 (New Series 12), 149-160.
- “Oortuiging” en prediking - woordspel op ‘n “hartsaak”. *Skrif en Kerk* 21/3,

2000, 607-620.

- “Ecumenism and the Bible”, in Lombaard, C (ed.) 1999. *Essays and exercises in ecumenism*; 26-41. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications.
- “ ‘n Woord vir ons wêreld: Kontekstuele prediking met behulp van kommentaarjoernalistiek”, in Lombaard, C (red.) 1999. “...in die wêreld...” *Vyf bydraes tot kontekstuele prediking*, 22-46. Johannesburg: Lewende Woorde.

Each of the publications assembled here is introduced by a brief description of its background and content, along with an indication of the way it relates to the other publications gathered here and to the central research theme, formulated as: *How was the Bible brought to communication within different spheres of the South African society?*

An overview of the sub-discipline of religious communication introduces these publications, at the same time indicating how these publications relate to this sub-discipline of communication studies and to one another. A brief closing section to this dissertation indicates a means by which the value of the sub-discipline of religious communication may be extended.

1. Introduction, orientation and overview

1.1 INTRODUCTION, ORIENTATION FROM PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE, THEORETICAL APPROACH

1.1.1 Introduction

Over the past eight years I have been engaged in researching the way in which the Bible has been brought to bear on a number of frameworks within the South African socio-historical context. It is of course not at all surprising that the Bible would become a part of the dialogues of the church (cf. Lombaard 2001a:69-70); the Bible remains the source of the Christian identity (cf. Lombaard 1999a:33-34; 2001a:83) of the churches in South Africa in a very particular way. Nor is it really unexpected that the Bible would be influential in discussions on broader societal issues in South Africa. With \pm 80% of the South African populace subscribing to the Christian faith¹, and with the most prominent strands of Christianity found in South Africa making so much of the role of the Bible in their lives of faith (Lombaard 2001a:69-70), it would be perplexing if the Bible had indeed not been a major feature in these debates. The Bible spoke and speaks to church and country in South Africa. Put differently, as a phenomenological formulation: the Bible is brought to speech, that is, is brought to communication within the closer ecclesiological precincts as well as the broader socio-political environment of South Africa, precisely because of the particular religious configurations that characterise church and culture locally.

¹ That is according to the 2001 census data. See <http://www.statssa.gov.za/SpecialProjects/Census2001/Census/temp/Religion%20by%20District%20Council2003725413596.xls> . See also <http://www.statssa.gov.za/SpecialProjects/Census2001/Census/Database/Census%202001/District%20Councils/Persons/Religion> .

1.1.2 Orientation from philosophy of science

The phenomenological nature of the latter formulation is intentional, because it is important for the correct appreciation of the nature of the work that is to be evaluated here *en route* to awarding the PhD in Communication Studies (more specifically, in the sub-discipline of religious communication). It is important in the sense that none of the publications that are to be evaluated, should in the first instance be seen as of a confessional nature. These chapters/articles are not solely affirmations of faith. Of course, academic writings that contain overt declarations of faith, cannot for that reason alone be regarded as academically unsound. Such publications would however find a home only within a faculty of theology.

Equally apparent, on the other hand, is the actuality that an entirely descriptive approach to our subject matter here would be as humanly unattainable as would be a wholly confessional approach to any discipline of science. Philosophy of science has taught us that the modernist attempts at separating completely "fact" and "interpretation" are devoid of validity (cf. Mouton 1987a:19; 1987b:57-79). Objectivism in science, as in all other fields of human endeavour (cf. e.g. Lombaard 2002a), does not exist. Rather, science as a human activity is a perspectivist undertaking - not in any fatalistic sense, though, but in the proper scientific sense of a *reflected*, that is a considered and logically argued, perspectivism. Such *reflected perspectivism* therefore entails that one is alert to one's own theoretical assumptions; one is candid about them; these assumptions are subjected to frequent scrutiny; and critical comparisons with analyses of the same subject matter from other perspectives is an inherent part of the practice of science.

1.1.3 Theoretical approach

These views from the philosophy of science stated above have direct impact on the manner in which one finds one's way within the available theoretical approaches to one's area of study. As far as theoretical approaches to the field of religious communication are concerned, three broad approaches can be posited. The first

may be termed a "neutral approach" to the study of religious communication; the second may be labelled a "confessional approach" to the study of religious communication; the third may be referred to as a "critical perspectivist approach" to the study of religious communication.

Each of these approaches will now be described briefly, critically weighing the merits of each, and indicating the position taken within the matrix of these possibilities in the publications to be evaluated below.

On a personal note, and with reference particularly to the middle part of the previous sentence, I should like to indicate here the intensely enlightening nature the exercise of placing, retrospectively, my own work within the network of theoretical approaches to religious communication has been. This exercise namely entails laying bare - through a process of meta-theoretical reflection that may be described as self-analytical or introspective - the assumptions that had in my own research often been unreflected, perhaps even taken reflectively, or at the very least had not been considered in such a systematic manner as offered here, and had accordingly been based on a vague sense of what "rings true" within my own broader context. Of course, this implicit, unspoken reliance on what "rings true" is most often the case in any scientific endeavour: as for instance the study of Deist (1994; cf. Lombaard 1998:645-646) had shown with particular reference to the way the Bible had been employed in the history of the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa, what "rings true" has to do with much more than any romantic notion of the pure pursuit of truth or with merely a formal fit of findings with the current state of the particular scientific discipline. This exercise of placing one's own work within what I have referred to as the network of theoretical approaches to religious communication, is one way of putting into practice the "reflected perspectivism" briefly considered above.

With the latter statement I have, of course, placed myself even more firmly than had been indicated in the brief discussion in 1.1.2 above, within the perspectivist approach to science. Naturally, this should be read too, then, as the foundational position from which the discussion in 1.1.3.1 – 1.1.3.4 below advances.

1.1.3.1 The "neutral approach" to the study of religious communication

Religion is perhaps more susceptible than most other fields of human inquiry to what may be referred to as detractors from the ideals of scientific objectivity. Deep seated emotions, prejudices, existential commitments, social and cultural and other affiliations all hold wary promise of detracting from what modernist science would consider disinterested science. The pursuit of knowledge should be free from subjective human values, this view of science holds.

Though the positivist philosophy that lies at the foundation of this view of science (cf. Mouton 1987b:57-79) may in extreme positions deny the legitimacy of religion altogether, the more nuanced and more broadly accepted positions within this world view would hold that religion is a well established human practice, and may as such be studied legitimately, be it by philosophical, psychological, comparative, phenomenological or, most probably, a combination of these and other means. The point on which this approach would insist, though, is that researchers should remain neutral in their study of religion(s). Researchers may not allow their own backgrounds and personal commitments to interfere with their work, if it were to retain its intellectual integrity. Allowing such considerations to enter into the scientific process would render the results questionable at the least; most probably, scientifically worthless. Researchers into religion should therefore bracket their own presuppositions, as it were, in order to practice good, that is "objective" science.

The ideal position from which to study religion in this approach, one could surmise, would probably be one of atheism, or, perhaps, agnosticism. One's own views on the existence of God, the validity of religion, the relationship between religions and other related matters would therefore not interfere - or not interfere quite as easily - with one's scientific investigations, than would have been the case if one were committed to certain religious views. The researcher would remain neutral (cf. Nielsen 1983:15, reacting to the views of Freud and Feuerbach in this regard).

This kind of view of science and, more specifically for our purposes here, of scholarly approach to religious communication will be drawn into question below, by 1.1.3.3 in particular. However, this "neutral approach" to the study of religious communication

is not without its value. Most particularly, for the moment, this approach has rendered us the tools of phenomenological analysis of religion in a way that would have been difficult within a confessional approach (see 1.1.3.2. below). It is, therefore, not the phenomenological approach itself that usually comes in for critique below, but its philosophical underpinnings (cf. Rossouw 1987:91-110 for an overview of phenomenological method), namely when it is placed in an uncritical way within the parameters of modernist views of science and, hence, an unreflected "neutral" scholarly approach to religious communication.

1.1.3.2 The "confessional approach" to the study of religious communication

For our purposes here, the "confessional approach" to the study of religious communication may be described as the opposite of the "neutral approach". Interestingly, though, these two approaches share the element of uncompromising commitments to a certain view of religion. Such commitments would however lie in diametrical opposition (namely: "no religious commitments" versus "only my/our religious commitments"). In both approaches, though, these commitments may be either intuitive, inadvertent, unawares, indifferent, uninformed or intentional, deliberate, calculated, studied, considered.

In the case of the "confessional approach" to religious communication, such commitments would entail that one's own position - whether it be personally chosen, culturally inherited or socio-politically enforced - would always be regarded positively, and would always be regarded in an exclusivist kind of way. The latter would imply that the own religion (be it Christianity, Islam or Judaism, for instance), the own denomination (be it Baptist, Sunni or Hassidic, for instance), or the own "conventicle" (a substratum or sub-substratum of the denomination that views itself as the purest expression of that particular faith) within a particular denomination, would always be regarded as the only "true way".

It is here that religious fundamentalism, in its different degrees, may be placed (cf. Alley 1990:267-271), though it must be kept in mind that the spectrum advances far beyond the reaches of what is usually understood as religious fundamentalism. In fact, liberal, syncretistic or secularised expressions of/on religion(s) may find their

place here too, in the case that no options other than those advanced by a particular propagandist (not meant here in any derogatory sense) may be acknowledged as legitimate (cf. van den Bercken 1989:97-104 especially).

It is imperative to note, though, that the majority of works that may be put under this heading are not given to such extremist leanings. These are publications (such as Kraft 1999; Ward 1994, Arthur 1998:36-47) which do not subscribe to any form of neutrality, but is consciously aimed at a certain readership and/or subject matter. Options other than the own may not be acknowledged, for which a whole range of reasons may exist, but the predominant intention of such publications is to serve the own constituency.

This kind of approach is not automatically uncritical, as may at first be assumed, most particularly of the more extreme versions of the confessional approach. In fact, "outsiders" to one's own confessionally committed position would always be denounced by using certain arguments, and even "insiders" would be assessed resolutely by means of the most fundamentally held tenets of belief and/or the most entrenched traditional practices. Critical engagement does occur, thus. The point is, however, that with this kind of approach the source or measure of critical assessment would never be a counterpoint taken externally to what is traditionally held; it would always be an internal source or measure. Nor could it even contemplate employing such an exterior source or measure. This may therefore be called a "closed system" or an "inward focussing system". The purpose of the scientific discipline of religious communication (or of any other science, for that matter) would in this approach be to affirm and strengthen what is already accepted, by adding greater depth and scope.

The latter, taken on its own, is of course not of necessity an unacceptable motivation for scientific endeavours. It is however the inclination that one would encounter within more extreme versions of the "confessional approach", to make this the *sole criterion* for valid science - its *raison d'être* - that is problematic. Such a view of science is restrictive, and not inclusive of wider possibilities inherent to any vigorous pursuit of science.

This approach to religious communication, though, has to its credit that it demonstrates the depth of insight inherent to an insider's role within a particular religion (cf. Rabe 2003 on the insider-outsider issue) - a depth of insight an outsider, coming to the subject matter from a "neutral approach" to the study of religious communication, could never hope to attain.

1.1.3.3 The "critical perspectivist approach" to the study of religious communication

The above brings us to a third possible approach in religious communication scholarship, which I have termed "critical perspectivist". This approach seeks to appropriate the strengths of each of the two aforementioned approaches, whilst not absorbing the too restrictive underpinnings of either. The "critical perspectivist approach" to the study of religious communication is certainly not holistic (a modern "power word" or "applause clause" that has become more or less devoid of authentic meaning), in that it does not seek to be all things to all people. Rather, researchers working within this approach would be clear about their broader philosophical and more specific theoretical assumptions, and would be conscious that these assumptions, along with a range of conscious and subconscious personal allegiances, bring both positive and negative aspects to bear on their practice of science, even if they may not always be fully aware what all of these positive and negative aspects are or entail. Examples of such an approach include the publications such as that by Attfield (2001).

This approach, post-modernist as it is in spirit², can therefore employ phenomenological description without assuming that such description is either value-free, nor maintaining that it renders "truth" in any absolute sense. Critical inquiry remains a continuous enterprise; answers are not timeless. The words "science"

² Note, though, that I do not accept (with Giddens 1991:2-3 & 1990:45-54) the traditional objection to post-modernism, namely that it allows for (almost) any possibility - à la Derrida - and therefore allows for no integrity or stability within the human condition, including scholarship. This view of mine is in line with a further minority view on the matter of post-modernism, which is that post-modernism is in reality not a cultural phase *after* modernism, but merely the latest development within modernism (Giddens 1990:45-54). Post-modernism, hence, can and does have its truths too. Post-modernism differs from modernism and inherited Greek philosophy, though, in that it appreciates competing truths, not seeking one value in order to elevate it above all others and for all time.

and "scholarship" are understood to be grammatically and intrinsically participial in nature.

Equally, the perspectivist character of the scientific endeavour can now not only be acknowledged, but also embraced. Freed from the unattainable goals of modernist scholarship, science now revels in its humanity³. Researchers' personal histories, academic training and philosophical-theoretical points of reference are not detractors from science, but contribute to it. Scientists practice their craft all the while acknowledging these "personal effects", and in so doing, invite others to engage in similar activity, which would add to a richer mesh of intersubjective human understanding of the subject area under investigation.

Knowledge is insight, which springs from certain broad frameworks. Knowledge remains subject to revision, because critical evaluation - taking the critical counterpoint both from within and without the own framework - never ceases. Critical perspectivism in the sciences, and for our purposes here in the sub-discipline of religious communication, thus *finds its academic integrity in the quality of the intellectual activity involved*. Human activity does not detract from science; human activity finds its place in the very nature of science. The quality of the intellectual activity involved is not measured by criteria external to humanity (as the "neutral approach" would have it) or by internal criteria (as the "confessional approach" would have it), but by other, similarly critical *scholars*.

Science is, thus, a *social* process. Knowledge is intrinsically *intersubjective*. This kind of view of science comes close to the romantic spirit of classical European Renaissance culture, and in some sense gives expression to the existentialist spirit inherent in post-modernism.

It is within this broad framework that the publications reprinted here for the PhD are to be understood. To spell this out in a more material way: it is clear from the

³ Science thus delights in the limitations of humanity, rather than feeling trapped within the determinism of its acknowledged theoretical limits, as modernist science is wont to criticise this approach - neglecting, all the while, to face the reality that it too is simply *an* approach, in which one could either feel trapped, or, after realising the relative nature of its being and all others, at best relish this utterly human nature of scholarship.

publications that I write from within a certain Christian frame of thought, namely a Reformed frame. Equally clear is the actuality that it is not an inward looking frame, in my case, but one that has been enriched by a number of features: my dual academic backgrounds in communication and theology; my professional experience which reflects both these backgrounds in a variety of ways; my interest in philosophical disciplines such as philosophy of science, philosophy of religion, and hermeneutics; my broad and thorough ecumenical and - to a more limited extent - inter-religious exposure; my ongoing, interdisciplinary academic reflection on the discipline of religious communication (the most systematic expression of which is to be found in these pages); my life-long interest in church practice; my ever-growing interest in politics... This list could be expanded *ad infinitum*. The point is, though, that all these features and more co-determine the perspective from which I write. At the same time, these very same features are those that enable me to practice science in a critical way. My academic identity and my intellectual pursuits are, thus, per definition both critical and perspectivist.

It is from this foundation that readers are invited to apply their minds in this process of critical evaluation too. Science is, as was stated above, a social process, intrinsically intersubjective. It is through precisely such a social, intersubjective evaluative route that the scientific merit of this thesis based on research publications will gain its academic integrity.

1.1.3.4 Orientation over the field of religious communication

A brief orientation of the field of religious communication is now provided, in order to describe the particular placement of the research publications within the field of religious communication.

Like most, if not all the fields of science in our time, interdisciplinarity is a characteristic of the specialism called "religious communication". As the appellation itself indicates, two broad fields of scholarship are included, namely Religious Studies (which for our purposes here is regarded as synonymous with terms such as "Theology", "Divinity", "Biblical Studies" and the like) and the Communication Sciences (meant here not in the senses of physical electronics, research on hearing

and speech defects, or satellite engineering, for which this designation has of late come to be used for). At once, the sub-disciplines in both these fields are included: homiletics, exegesis, missiology and journalism, marketing and small group dynamics - to name randomly three examples within each of these fields of scholarship.

These two fields have already been proven in practice to be compatible for scholarly purposes. To limit ourselves for the moment to the South African scene and again to no more than three cases within the two fields involved here for illustrative purposes: from the perspective of communication studies, for instance, the work of Rensburg (1989), Slabbert (1992) and Venter (1994) on religious matters may be noted; in the field of Religious Studies, the work of Dierks (1986), Pieterse (1987) and Vos (1995) may be mentioned for their use of insights from communication theory and research. The growing interest in this productive overlap between the two fields of communication and theology is evident too from the steep increase in the number of publications in this cross-over field since the 1980s.

At the same time, though, it must be noted that religious communication may be analysed from outside the two disciplines immediately implied by its name. This is found, for instance, in works by Salladay (1976) and Webster (1981), on sociolinguistics within a religious community. It is evident from these examples, that religious communication may justifiably be studied from outside the immediate spheres of what has traditionally fallen under the respective disciplines of either communication studies or religion scholarship.

As a brief indication of only some of the possibilities of the productive overlap between communication and theology, coming now primarily from within each of these disciplines, the following studies may be mentioned:

- proposing general (e.g. Slabbert 1992) or Christian (e.g. Attfield 2001; cf. also Du Toit 1992:178-192) theories of religious communication;
- indicating spiritual, religious and symbolic components inherent in communicative acts (e.g. Schultze 2000:87-110) or, on the other hand,

reinterpreting religion as communication by characterising the former as "sakrales fænomenologi" (Wind 1987);

- the relationship between the mass media and the church (Poderman 1996; Baum 1993:63-70; Soukup 1993:71-79; Russo 1993:91-98; Schultze 2000:111-121), with as some of the dimensions of this interaction, religion in the secular news media (Mowery 1995:85-87; Metz 1993:57-62; Fuchs 1993:82-85, Woodward 1993:99-110; Froneman 1989), and - more or less - its converse, the way religions make use of mass media (Ward 1994; Peck 1993; Schultze 1991);
- the relationship between church and journalistic life (Curtis 1990:217-230; Henze 1993:111-118) or between religious proclamation and secular advertising (Van Zijl 1995);
- the ambivalent role of both the media (Gumucio 2001:24-32) and religion (Himes 2001:43-51) on issues of war and peace;
- comparative textual-situational analysis for the purposes of enhancing communication between church denominations (Weiser 1992:9-34);
- religious journalism (Gaum 1984);
- the interrelationship between communication and religion in the context of current globalisation (Karecki 2002:145-151; Arthur 1998; Verstraelen 1996);
- spirituality and communication (Boom 1995; Kirkwood 1994:13-26; Muller 1992);
- the communication of theological and general morality within public discourse (Snyman 2002:39-48; Lategan 1999);
- the communication of a religious message through music, both modern (Gill 1990:12-24) and African traditional (Stinson 1998), or through art (Van der Merwe 1999);
- the way in which religions come to permeate certain cultures (Biernatzki 1991);
- the role of communication in religious education (Joubert 1994:1-9);
- Bible translation as intercultural communication (Nord 2002:98-116; Wendland 2001:1-33);
- the debate between the religious and natural sciences (Du Toit 2002:1011-1031);

- persuasion in a religious milieu (Baesler 1994:61-72; Rogsdale & Durham 1987:9-14), and more intense, conversion (Kellet 1993:71-83);
- dialogue between religions (Louw 1994:1-8; Fouché 1996: 79-102);
- religious communication in oral form - ancient (Boneham 1991:1-8), traditional African (Van Heerden 2002: 462-475) and modern-ecstatic (Hubble 1995).

Again, here, the list of possibilities may be expanded almost endlessly. In South Africa, however, the study of aspects of religious communication specifically from within the communication studies paradigm has been of a different character. The three most extensive local studies on religious communication - those by Rensburg (1989), Slabbert (1992) and Venter (1994) - share certain characteristics:

- All three these scholars relate in some way to De Klerk (1988:29-35), most often as a result reflecting the strongly psychological slant to De Klerk's contribution to religious communication⁴;
- All three implicitly demonstrate, by way of somewhat apologetic remarks interspersed at different points in their studies, feelings of insecurity about the validity of the discipline of religious communication;
- All three stand strongly in the scientific tradition of logical positivism⁵, from which they try to detach themselves - the chosen field of study by its very nature nudges one in this direction -, but they cannot break with the modernist scientific ideals in the social sciences, particularly as these ideals have found implicit expression in communication studies locally: searches for broadly explanatory (and usually graphic) models, which for that reason produce exploratory studies which sacrifice depth for the sake of breadth;
- All three try to gain some form of broader religious connection in their work by incorporating non-Christian or non-traditional Christian forms of religious expression into their work, yet none can do other than reflect the particular Christian context of South African society and of their own background;

⁴ De Klerk himself evidences very little in his religious communication work of his specific Potchefstroom-Reformed theological training, probably because of his substantial background in philosophy.

⁵ This is a characteristic, though, of local communication science in general, particularly as practiced at some Afrikaans language universities, and strongly related to American empiricism - as indicated by the almost mandatory questionnaires with statistical work in Afrikaans master's and doctoral theses in communication science - and individualism.

- This latter reflection, though, is more often than not based on popular ideas about God and divinity, rather than on thoroughly investigated theological constructs - none of the three evidence any form of academic training in Religious Studies - which leads them to unconsidered positions regarding a range of issues central to theology, on which vast bodies of fundamental literature may have been consulted⁶;
- All three rely strongly on what is called an *existentialist* frame of reference, yet without much philosophical grounding to this approach to life, and always drawing on Kierkegaard, yet more often than not with reference to secondary sources only⁷.

These remarks are meant as a broad characterisation of the main works on religious communication in South Africa - a stream from which I naturally cannot divorce myself. Some of these influences have subtly affected my work too, probably in more unknown ways than known.

This brings me now to a few remarks with which to characterise my own publications too, at least those I have gathered under the title "South African perspectives on the communication of the Bible in church and society". The implications of the latter part of this title is self-evident; however, the former wants for some explanation. In particular, the term "communication" should be clarified, not in the usual definitory manner - at this juncture we find ourselves way beyond the basics of the usual definitions of communication, which is simply accepted here as a given for the intended audience - but in a grammatological sense. Almost without exception, when the term "communication" is employed in communication studies and related disciplines, it is meant in a grammatically active sense. In the word itself lies implied the sense that communication *occurs*; almost by itself. Even when used as a noun and intransitively, "communication" carries a verbal denotative load (that is, a sense as a verb). "Communication" is a performative, operative, almost participial phoneme.

⁶ This is, of course, one of the inherent dangers of interdisciplinary studies: that one's expertise in one field is much greater than it is in the other(s).

⁷ This reference to Kierkegaard is again typical of any kind of philosophical consideration included in communication studies at the Afrikaans language universities, yet in the vast majority of cases, the primary Kierkegaardian sources never find reference.

However, the sense in which it is employed here, is different, namely in a passive meaning. Indicated here is not the way in which the Bible, as if by itself, communicates within the South African context, that is, speaks to or makes its voice heard within our society⁸. Rather, agents are involved here - humans by whom the Bible is *brought to communication*. This italicised passive formulation is the sense in which the term "communication" in the title of this paper is to be understood. Such an understanding is not only accurate for the way the influence of the Bible is indicated in the articles under review here (e.g. Lombaard 2001:69-87), but also opens the door for a phenomenological approach, as indicated above. It thus fits well within the discipline of communication studies, sub-discipline religious communication. In short, the publications listed below concern critical analyses of the ways in which the Bible was brought to communication within different spheres of the South African society.

In view of the above, thus, the following general research question could be posed, albeit retroactively, as running centrally through all the critical analyses under review here:

How was the Bible brought to communication within different spheres of the South African society?

The publications involved will now be listed and briefly described. The dimensions of religious communication will be indicated, as they occur in these publications.

1.2 THE PUBLICATIONS CONCERNED

A total of nine publications are listed below, although in fact they represent seven research outputs. Note, thus, that number 5 below is a re-publication in somewhat altered form of number 9, and number 6 is, similarly, a re-publication of number 8. *In both these cases the research was first published as chapters in books, and was*

⁸ Such a way of reasoning is, of course, entirely valid, if one approaches the matter from a dogmatological or systematic-theological perspective.

then re-published in article format for the purposes of attracting state subsidies for research articles. All nine articles are listed below, though, for two reasons: first, in order to give account of the full picture, and second, very briefly to give pertinent information on the specifics of the particular publication.

The publications are listed in reverse chronological order, that is, starting with the most recent publication

2003

1. “The Old Testament in Christian spirituality: perspectives on the undervaluation of the Old Testament in Christian spirituality”. *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 59/2, June 2003, 433-450

Originally from a paper read at the congress of the Southern African Society for Biblical and Religious Studies, 10 September 2002, at the University of Stellenbosch, this publication analyses the way in which the Bible is communicated both within the practical expressions of faith in the community of Christian believers and within the academic study of Christian spirituality. In both cases the use of the New Testament substantially surpasses that of the Old Testament, both quantitatively and qualitatively. Reasons for this communicative dynamic are posited.

2002

2. “Elke vertaling is ‘n vertelling. Opmerkings oor vertaalteorie, geïllustreer aan die hand van die chokmatiese *ratio interpretationis*”. *Old Testament Essays*. 15/3, December 2002: 754-765.

Originally from a paper read at the congress of the Old Testament Society of Southern Africa, 11 – 13 September 2002, at the University of Stellenbosch, this article offers suggestions for communicating through Bible translations exegetical and theological insights to the Bible reading public. Going against the grain of particularly locally accepted translation theory and practice, this article re-evaluates the ways in which the traditionally employed theories of

translation manage to communicate certain contents to the intended target audience / readership.

2001

3. “The Bible in the apartheid debate”, in Hofmeyr, JW, Lombaard, CJS & Maritz, PJ (eds) 2001: *1948 + 50 years. Theology, apartheid and church: Past, present and future* (Perspectives on the Church / Perspektiewe op die Kerk, Series 5: Vol. 1), pp 69-87. Pretoria: IMER (Institute for Missiological and Ecumenical Research), University of Pretoria.

Finding its first airing as a presentation to the 1999 Adult Education Gathering, First Presbyterian Church, Wausau, Wisconsin, USA, this chapter researches and evaluates the ways in which the Bible was employed rhetorically to enhance the communication of, respectively, the pro and anti-apartheid messages. It is concluded that the use of the Bible within political debate will always fail to appreciate the primarily religious nature of the messages of the Bible, and that in such cases the Bible is used merely as a rhetorically authoritative instrument to legitimate the preferred cause.

The book in which this research has been included, has since 2002 been a prescribed work for the MPhil Applied Theology programme at the University of Pretoria, as well as for undergraduate research assignments in Church History.

4. “The left governing hand and the right governing hand: begging for a church without public hands?” *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 109 (March 2001), pp. 17-24. (From paper read at 2000 conference of the Southern African Society for Biblical and Religious Studies).

This article analyses the ways in which, since 1994, different and even contradictory messages have been communicated by the South African government on the continuation of the study of religion at state universities. From these pronouncements, an attempt - the first, and until the formulation of

the controversial recent school policy on religion education⁹, only attempt - is made at fathoming the underlying, unstated thinking on matters religious within influential government circles.

Special reference to this research was made in the *Research Report 2001* of the University of Pretoria¹⁰.

5. “ ‘n Woord vir ons wêreld. Kontekstuele prediking met behulp van kommentaarjoernalistiek”. *Praktiese Teologie in Suid-Afrika* 16(1), 2001, 19-39.

In this article, a plea is made for the use of journalism, particularly the opinion pieces in newspapers, for the preparation of church sermons, in order to ensure more contextually relevant sermons. Employing such journalistic analyses is possible because of a surprising series of characteristics shared by the church and the newspaper industry, particularly in the Afrikaans speaking community.

Special reference to this research too was made in the *Research Report 2001* of the University of Pretoria¹¹.

6. “The Bible and ecumenism”. *Ekklesiastikos Pharos* 83/1&2 (2001; New Series 12), pp 149-160.

An analysis and critique is offered of the ways in which certain biblical passages are brought to communication in order to promote better relations between different Christian churches. Rather than unacceptable use of the Bible, firmer grounds for positive relationships between churches should be sought in a shared Christian identity.

⁹ Cf. Lombaard 2003:13 / <http://www.naspers.com/cgi/nph-bwgcis/RAPPORT/rapport/alg/storie/DDW?W%3DNAAMLYN%20PH%20IS%20%27Christo%20Lombaard%27%26M%3D2%26K%3D440040%26R%3DY%26U%3D1>

¹⁰ Cf. www.up.ac.za/services/research/report2001/ , more specifically: <http://www.up.ac.za/services/research/report2001/highlights/afr/index.html> , under "Theology".

¹¹ Cf. www.up.ac.za/services/research/report2001/ , more specifically: <http://www.up.ac.za/services/research/report2001/highlights/afr/index.html> , under "Theology".

2000

7. "Oortuiging" en prediking - woordspel op 'n "hartsaak". *Skrif en Kerk* 21 (3, 2000), pp 607-620. (Paper read at the 1999 *Lewende Woorde* sermon seminar, Dept. Greek & Latin Studies, R.A.U.)

Two points are raised: first, that variables from persuasive communication research may be employed with success in sermons, and second, that the greatest persuasive factor within a sermon is the personal spiritual integrity of the person delivering the sermon.

1999

8. "Ecumenism and the Bible", in Lombaard, C (ed.) 1999. *Essays and exercises in ecumenism*; pp 26-41 (29 contributors). Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications.

The contents of this chapter has been indicated under point 6 above. What should be added here, is that the research project of which the book is the outcome, was funded by the World Council of Churches. I acted as project leader and editor, with 29 contributors from six Southern African countries participating.

9. " 'n Woord vir ons wêreld: Kontekstuele prediking met behulp van kommentaarjoernalistiek", in Lombaard, C (red.) 1999. "...in die wêreld..." *Vyf bydraes tot kontekstuele prediking*;, pp 22-46. Johannesburg: Lewende Woorde.

The contents of this chapter has been indicated under point 5 above. What should be added here, is that this book was prescribed for the Homiletics course for BD students at the University of Pretoria in 2000.

Through these publications, varied perspectives are offered on the central research question indicated above.

Three of my other publications may well be categorised under the heading of religious communication too. However, they do not relate directly to the stated central research theme of this thesis. They are therefore listed here, but are not afforded further discussion:

- Telematiese Onderrig van die Ou Testament aan die Universiteit van Pretoria: 'n gevallebeskrywing. Paper read at OTSSA September meeting, with G de Villiers. To be published in *Verbum et Ecclesia*, 2004.
- The birth of the Internet in South Africa: a church-historical note. *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 29/2, Dec. 2003, 16-27.
- Some ethical dimensions to teaching Theology via the Internet. *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 115, March 2003, 43-61 (from the 2001 conference of the Southern African Society for Biblical and Religious Studies)

To conclude this section, the thematic connections between the nine publications under review here are indicated briefly, as they relate to the central research question: *How was the Bible brought to communication within different spheres of the South African society?* In indicating these recurring themes, the publications are for the sake of simplicity referred to only by their respective titles, with - where relevant - the two republications not referred to separately.

Theme 1: Integrity - that is, honesty about purposes involved and intellectual truthfulness in pursuing those purposes - is often deficient, yet is of the greatest significance for the validity of communication processes involving the use of the Bible. This theme runs through the following articles/chapters:

- “The Old Testament in Christian spirituality: perspectives on the undervaluation of the Old Testament in Christian spirituality”
- “Elke vertaling is 'n vertelling. Opmerkings oor vertaalteorie, geïllustreer aan die hand van die chokmatiese *ratio interpretationis*”
- “The Bible in the apartheid debate”
- “The left governing hand and the right governing hand: begging for a church without public hands?”

- “ ‘n Woord vir ons wêreld. Kontekstuele prediking met behulp van kommentaarjoernalistiek”
- “The Bible and ecumenism”
- “Oortuiging” en prediking - woordspel op ‘n “hartsaak”

Theme 2: The Bible, though used often, is not often used well. That is the case:

- within church practice;
- in the relationship between churches; and
- in socio-political debate.

In all these cases, one may speak of a communication breakdown or a hermeneutical circle gone awry. This theme finds expression in the following articles/chapters:

- “The Old Testament in Christian spirituality: perspectives on the undervaluation of the Old Testament in Christian spirituality”
- “Elke vertaling is ‘n vertelling. Opmerkings oor vertaalteorie, geïllustreer aan die hand van die chokmatiese *ratio interpretationis*”
- “The Bible in the apartheid debate”
- “ ‘n Woord vir ons wêreld. Kontekstuele prediking met behulp van kommentaarjoernalistiek”
- “The Bible and ecumenism”
- “Oortuiging” en prediking - woordspel op ‘n “hartsaak”

Theme 3: The Bible gets lost in the "political carnival" (the phrase of Ellul, quoted towards the end of “The Bible in the apartheid debate”) in the sense that its primary nature as a document of faith comes to be disregarded. The Bible thus becomes a tool of modern rhetoric only. This theme occurs in the following articles/chapters:

- “The Bible in the apartheid debate”
- “The left governing hand and the right governing hand: begging for a church without public hands?”
- “The Bible and ecumenism”

Theme 4: Imbalances occur in communicating from and on the Bible, be that in relating Word and world to one another, or in relating the Book of faith and the

community of faith to one another, or in relating different parts of the Bible to one another. This is demonstrated in:

- “The Old Testament in Christian spirituality: perspectives on the undervaluation of the Old Testament in Christian spirituality”
- “Elke vertaling is ‘n vertelling. Opmerkings oor vertaalteorie, geïllustreer aan die hand van die chokmatiese *ratio interpretationis*”
- “The Bible in the apartheid debate”
- “The left governing hand and the right governing hand: begging for a church without public hands?”
- “ ‘n Woord vir ons wêreld. Kontekstuele prediking met behulp van kommentaarjoernalistiek”
- “The Bible and ecumenism”
- “Oortuiging” en prediking - woordspel op ‘n “hartsaak”

Theme 5: Insights from communication studies are extremely useful in providing penetrating perspectives on problems related to religious communication, the practice of religion, and reflecting on matters of faith. This occurs because communication studies provides avenues of analysis not traditionally available to people intimately involved with the practice and/or study of religion. Thus, we are provided with an example of the productive investigative possibilities inherent to cross-disciplinary scholarly activity. This has been the case with all these publications:

- “Elke vertaling is ‘n vertelling. Opmerkings oor vertaalteorie, geïllustreer aan die hand van die chokmatiese *ratio interpretationis*”
- “The Bible in the apartheid debate”
- “The left governing hand and the right governing hand: begging for a church without public hands?”
- “ ‘n Woord vir ons wêreld. Kontekstuele prediking met behulp van kommentaarjoernalistiek”
- “The Bible and ecumenism”
- “Oortuiging” en prediking - woordspel op ‘n “hartsaak”

All five these recurring themes in the research being evaluated here may be summarised by and united within the central question: *How was the Bible brought to communication within different spheres of the South African society?*

In tracing these aspects of the central research question in the publications concerned, the results concluded to may be summarised as follows¹²:

- the Old Testament is a vastly under-utilised source for communicating Christian spirituality, a state of affairs for which ten reasons have been indicated;
- literal Bible translations are more effective in engaging Bible readers, because they invite active, interpretative participation by the intended receivers;
- the use of the Bible for political purposes, even for opposing political causes, always reduces the Bible to a rhetorical tool, namely to substantiate views being propagated;
- the present government's communication on religious matters has been rhetorically ambivalent: while continued funding for university programmes of - by name - Biblical Studies, has been questioned in Parliament and elsewhere, the churches (for whom the Bible is central to their identity and as a motivational force) are called upon to support government's social relief programmes;
- the editorial and other comment columns of newspapers offer a substantial, yet vastly under-utilised resource for preachers in their attempts to deliver contextually relevant sermons;
- deliberate consideration given to persuasive variables are of substantial importance to preachers; most important, though, for the long term effectiveness of the Gospel message, is the perceived integrity of the preacher;
- both the Old and New Testaments offer substantial resources for the enhancement of communication and the building of relationships between different church denominations, with the caveat, though, that texts should not be misinterpreted, as has been the case, since this undermines the integrity of such processes.

¹² I follow here the same order as is the case with the publications listed above.

The ways in which the Bible has been used in these different societal spheres are, thus, varied, yet seldom satisfactory. By indicating the problems and perspectives that have come to light through these research projects, I hope to contribute to a more mature society in which religion plays a constructive role, and is, as a corollary, respected for what it is *in its own right*.

Following immediately below, electronically reproduced copies of the research publications described above are included, in the order listed above. The covers of the publications are included in the reproduction, in order to clarify the nature of the publications as book or academic journal, as is the Table of Contents in each case, in order to indicate where my contribution fits in the volume.

Note again that, *in order to give full account of the research under review here*, in both applicable cases where the contributions which were first published as chapters in books and then re-published in article format, both those formats are reprinted below.

2.1 Publication 1: Introduction

“The Old Testament in Christian spirituality: perspectives on the undervaluation of the Old Testament in Christian spirituality”. *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 59/2, Junie 2003, 433-450.

Originally from a paper read at the congress of the Southern African Society for Biblical and Religious Studies, 10 September 2002, at the University of Stellenbosch, this publication analyses the way in which the Bible is communicated both within the practical expressions of faith in the community of Christian believers and within the academic study of Christian spirituality. In both cases the use of the New Testament substantially surpasses that of the Old Testament, both quantitatively and qualitatively. Reasons for this communicative dynamic are posited.

Of the five recurring themes within my research on how the Bible was brought to communication within different spheres of the South African society, indicated in the the overview of the publications under review here, the following apply to this specific publication:

- Theme 1 – Integrity in communication: If the Christian community wants to take seriously the confession that all parts of the Bible relate to its identity in an equally valid and authoritative way, then the role of the Old Testament in the active faith life of the church and of individual believers simply has to receive greater attention. The communication of the Bible within believing circles cannot claim any integrity if large parts of that Bible remain, in effect, muted. Openness of communicative channels would imply giving all parts of the Bible due recognition.
- Theme 2 – Using the Bible well: The previous paragraph to some extent already implies this one: that the Bible is not used in a justifiable way, with in the present instance this criticism relating most particularly to practice within the church. When the larger part of the Bible, the first two thirds, is left out of the hermeneutical circle, claims on the fully active role of the Bible within the church are, at the very least, suspect. Whereas denominations such as

Roman Catholicism may claim holy tradition, and Anglicanism may claim reason as mediating interpretative agents in the communicative involvement of the Bible within the church, the Reformed tradition, so influential in South Africa, can offer no such claims. Poor Bible usage cuts to the heart of denominations which confess to hearing God speak directly from Scripture.

- Theme 4 – Inner-biblical communicative imbalances: As this theme relates to the specific publication under review here, the one-sided emphasis on the New Testament in the life of faith (that is, the spirituality) of the church, to the detriment of voices from the Old Testament, results in imbalanced faith perceptions. These come to the fore in aspects such as a thoroughly a-historical view of the Bible, so common among Christians; an openness to sectarian views; and an inclination towards self-centered pietism. Restoration of the balance between the two Testaments in how they are brought to speak to the church, would provide definite counter-measures to these negative tendencies within the broader Christian community.

From these three points of view it is clear that the way the Bible is brought to communication within the Christian faith community, there is cause for concern.

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The Old Testament in Christian spirituality: Perspectives on the undervaluation of the Old Testament in Christian spirituality¹

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Abstract

Christian spirituality draws strongly on the Bible. Yet, it is the New Testament that almost without exception features most prominently. Ten possible reasons are offered why the Old Testament takes on such a disproportionately diminutive role in the practice and study of spirituality: Textual complexity/critical scholarship/theological education; Modern popular pieties; The cultural gaps between the Old Testament worlds and our worlds; Theological difficulties/Christian sensibilities; Fear of "boundary-less" interpretations; The reference to Scripture by writers on spirituality; The notion of progressive revelation; Theological diversity within the Old Testament; OT : NT = law : grace; The long and the short of textual units.

1. INTRODUCTION: FAITH AS LIFE AND THE BOOK OF LIFE

Spirituality is like dancing; play; sex and pleasure (cf Kourie 2001:4); taste and touch and the other senses (Gorringer 2001:1-27), beauty (so too Thijs 1990:57-67), breath and the wind (McGrath 1999:1-2) in *this* sense: it is better experienced than described. Words do not succeed, here as in many other spheres of life (Lombaard 2001a:60-61; Kagan 2002), in portraying adequately

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the dimensions of these primary states of being, these “sensations” of being human. Hence the variety of expressions and definitions employed to explain what is meant by the term “spirituality”, and consequently also the varied domains of religion or faith which is described with this term (see Waaijman 1993:5-57; Marmion 1998:3-40; Downey 1997:5-29; Smit 1989:85-92; Oostenbrink 1999:367-383; Kourie 2001:3-7).

From an existentialist perspective², it could be said that faith is life. *Credo ergo sum*. For believers, life without faith is non-life³, both in this world (psychologically, at least) and in the next. “Christian spirituality is not just one dimension of the Christian life; it is the Christian life” (Downey 1997:71; cf Berkhof 1990:1-2). For the faithful, faith is a “way of life” (Cunningham & Egan 1996:9; McGrath 1999:3); faith is life⁴.

The Old Testament, on its part, has often been described as the “Book of life”. Against the (perceived) centeredness on Christ and faith alone in the New Testament, the Old Testament is experienced as of a more “earthy” order: what

² Interestingly, referring very positively to Rossouw (1963), Jonker (1989:292) too indicates the strongly existentialist character of the spirituality of the Reformation.

³ This is the sort of idea that underlies the thinking of e.g. Taylor (1986:17-34), though there is an unnecessarily alarmist way. Evangelical and missiological inclinations of an alarmist kind is probably counter-productive in our time – see Lombaard (2000:614).

⁴ From this perspective, “religion” is the broader category and “spirituality” is the way in which one expresses one’s faith, for our purposes here, one’s Christian faith. Often in both popular and academic circles, this order is reversed, e.g. Nel (2001:10): “... spirituality should be seen as the most basic human principle of ultimate meaning-seeking and ... religion should be seen as the most prominent parameter”. In order for our purposes here to clear up somewhat this confusion of a phenomenological or a humanities approach and what might be termed a confessional or a Christian theological approach to spirituality/religion/faith, I would suggest a categorisation from the broadest to the most personal category as: existential quest(ion)s / “the *depth dimension* of all human existence” (Downey 1997:14; italics added) → religions and philosophies → expressions of commitments (in various social spheres of differing size and importance) within each of the former → personal experiences and expressions of faith. The latter is not an isolated and insular piety; “holistic spirituality” (Marmion 1998:2; Kretzschmar 1995a:31-44 & 1995b:45-54; cf Downey 1997:24-25; Cunningham & Egan 1996:18-21; Du Toit 1993:39-40) includes the dimensions of society, politics and church – see e.g. Lombaard (2001b:85-86); Smit (1989:85); Hulley (2000:55-65); Nolan (1982:7-11) – be it directly or indirectly. My references to spirituality in the rest of this paper refer to the last two of these four “levels” or “spheres” in interaction. The academic study of spirituality, though of course related to all four these levels and hence not “objective” in any positivistic sense, takes “a step away” in order to analyse, compare and theorise these phenomena, and to consider meta-issues. Refer to Addendum 1 at the end of this article for a graphic presentation of the “levels” or “spheres” of spirituality.

are considered the “normal aspects” of life is to a greater extent encountered in the first two thirds of the Bible. This includes the birth and death of ordinary people; their customs, laws and rituals; the animals, plants, seasons and other aspects of nature they encounter; friendship, love and even erotica (cf Loader 2001:98-111); violence and murder; politics and family matters; rural and urban contexts; epic journeys of survival; God’s words – bearing both good news and bad – and human responses to those words – both positive and negative ... (cf the subtitles to Preuß’s 1991 and 1992 double volume of Old Testament theology: respectively *JHWHs erwählendes und verpflichtendes Handeln* and *Israels Weg mit JHWH*).

On the face of it, then, it would seem that “faith as life” and the “Book of life” would be an easy match. Not so, though. The Old Testament is only infrequently drawn from for spiritual exercises, and continues to play a much less substantial role in the Church than its proportions in the Bible would suggest. Even when the Old Testament is referred to, it is often only done in a more or less metaphorical sense, rather than exegetically or theologically, and then all too briefly too, with the Old Testament references enclosed by ample references to New Testament texts (e g Cunningham & Egan 1996:9-14; cf Snyman 1997:376-377)⁵. This should be of concern particularly to church traditions, such as Calvinism (cf Jonker 1989:294-295), which stress the equal inspiration and value of all parts of Scripture (cf Potgieter 1990:25-26). In Roman Catholicism too, though, which offers us the deepest roots of the modern interest in and practice and study of spirituality, there is the strong sense that all modern spiritualities go

⁵ This is the case in general; there are of course exceptions, e g Cunningham & Egan (1996:144-148). The thematic approach of McGrath (1999:35-81, 88-108) goes about employing the Bible in a different way; here too though the New Testament features more prominently. The two studies which have come to my attention that give the most promising direction for the use of the Old Testament within Spirituality, are by the New Testament scholar Du Toit (1993:28-46), who takes the *praesentia Dei* as central moment, and the Old Testament scholar Snyman (1997:375-387), who takes life *coram Deo* as central moment (cf also Barr 2000:55-56). Nolan (1982:29-41) employs “justice” as the central spiritual theme of the Old Testament, and “love” as that of the New, which leads him to “Kingdom Spirituality” (Nolan 1982:43-58) – concepts which were very fruitful for his anti-apartheid theology (cf Nolan 1988), yet too narrow to do justice to the diversity of theologies, ethics and spiritualities within the Bible (cf Lombaard 2001b:81-86).

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back to the four Gospels' and the Pauline spiritualities (cf Marmion 1998:25)⁶. The emphasis remains on the New Testament (see, in addition, the registers in Smit 1988:184-185; 1989:93-94, and the relative length of the discussion in the adjoining chapters in Jones, Wainwright & Yarnold 2000; Barr 2000:47-57; Jones 2000:58-89).

The purpose of this paper is to outline some of the reasons for the existing difficult fit of "faith as life" and the "Book of life", that is, of spirituality and the Old Testament.

2. TEN POSSIBLE REASONS

I propose ten possible reasons for the less than ideal reference the Old Testament finds within the theory and practice of Christian spirituality. These ten reasons are given as an overview, and does not purport to be an exhaustive historical overview, or for that matter as a full digest of current developments and trends⁷. Like most writing on spirituality, the ten reasons suggested here are based on a personal sense informed by various forms of individual experiences, academic readings, and intellectual reflection guided by a range of influences. Taken together, though, the ten reasons offered here seek to elucidate the undervaluation of the Old Testament in the practice and study of Christian spirituality.

2.1 *Textual complexity/critical scholarship/theological education*⁸

The text of the Old Testament is not a simple text⁹. The long history of its development which historical critical scholarship has indicated, yet on which

⁶ An interpretation that relays spirituality to Scripture only, would be too superficial: expressions of spirituality naturally draw from the Bible, but do so within certain ecclesial, social and political circumstances, reacting upon these too, as acknowledged by Marmion (1998:26), (see also Downey 1997:46-48; Smit 1988:191-192; Smit 1989:91).

⁷ For a historical and modern international overview of spirituality, see the essays collected in Jones, Wainwright & Yarnold (2000).

⁸ On the latter, see Peterson (1997:54-60).

⁹ For a historical overview of what is meant philosophically by the "text" of Scripture within circles concerned with spirituality, see Pacini (1991:174-210).

there seems to be no consensus¹⁰ makes the Hebrew Bible a book that is often ignored for the purposes of spiritual enrichment. The concomitant repetitions, contradictions and inconsistencies found in the texts of the Old Testament has not helped to endear this part of the Scriptures to the Bible reading public. Important here is to note, though, that the historical scholarship of the Old Testament does not in essence stand at odds with Spirituality scholarship¹¹, since the latter is to a great extent historically oriented (see e.g. Downey 1997:54-72, 126-127; McGrath 1999:135-172; Cunningham & Egan 1996:7; Casey 1994:12-30; Holmes 1981:14-157). This shared focus on the past, along with the implied, yet still unexplored, shared interests in the philosophy of history, hermeneutics etc, should make these two disciplines if not twins, then at least siblings who share a special bond. The place at which to start such interdisciplinary interaction, is already during the education of clergy and others interested in religion, at tertiary education institutions. The breach between the disciplines of Old Testament Science and Spirituality with which most of us grew up theologically, would thus in time be closed in both the theory and practice of Spirituality.

2.2 Modern popular pieties

To a great extent the modern Christian church is characterised by pieties, which may be described as "Jesus only" or, particularly in more charismatic expressions, "Spirit centeredness" (on the latter, see e.g. Runia 1988:181-185; Jonker 1989:293, 298). Spirituality traditionally draws on Christ, the Spirit and the Church (Marmion 1998:26). Though the importance of neither Jesus nor the Holy Spirit in Christian theology is to be diminished, the role of the First Person in the Trinity deserves greater attentiveness in the Church (so too Kourie 2000:17-18; 2001:7), hence opening the door to the Old Testament to a greater extent.

¹⁰ The Pentateuch theories are a case in point: see Wellhausen (1963⁴) *versus* Blum (1990) *versus* van Seters (1994) *versus* Braulik (1991) *versus* Otto (2000), to name some of the main players. Regarding the New Testament, Jones (2000:60) mentions the parallel problems historical critical scholarship has created too.

¹¹ On the relationship between Spirituality and Theology in general, see e.g. Sheldrake (1998:33-34, 183-195); Marmion (1998:29-39); McGrath (1999:27-33); interestingly, Greshake (2000:21-32) places Spirituality as the primary category over theology.

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My call is thus for a more clearly Theocentric, that is Trinitarian (Sheldrake 1998:47-62, 75-83; cf Fee 2000:24-32), sensitivity in the Church. Interestingly, even when others (e.g. Downey 1997:44-45, 79-80) stress the Trinity and the Bible, the resulting references are in no greater extent to the Old Testament. This stands, to some degree at least, in the tradition of systematic theologians too, who employ the New Testament substantially more than the Old, and better, in considering the central tenets of the Christian faith, to which the doctrine of the Trinity belongs.

2.3 The cultural gaps between the Old Testament worlds and our worlds

It takes only a brief encounter with the Old Testament for us to experience the practices and traditions we encounter there as "strange". This holds true for readers from both primarily Western and primarily traditional African backgrounds (on the former, see Barr 2000:48-49; on the latter, see Kudadjie 1996:66-78). From whichever cultural matrix one encounters the Old Testament, one could easily misunderstand matters that seem familiar and reject matters that seem outlandish. In order to aid the bridging of such divergence, the study of the greater context of the Ancient Near East and its implications for our understanding of the Old Testament and the spiritualities one finds reflected there, should not be underestimated. Such study may indeed open some doors to appropriating aspects of these ancient spiritualities we encounter to spiritualities¹² in our times (Nel 2001:3-5). The cultural gaps between the Old Testament worlds and our worlds need not be only estranging, but may also be enriching.

2.4 Theological difficulties/Christian sensibilities

Throughout the Christian centuries, the sensitivity of the faithful to the violence, sanctioned by God, that we encounter in the Old Testament, has often rendered this part of the Bible to the margins of active Christian literature. How could a

¹² The plural "spiritualities" is used advisedly – see e.g. Cunningham & Egan (1996:15-16); McGrath (1999:8-24); Du Toit (1993:29).

loving God be so cruel and violent? Features such as the attribution of such acts to God by writers centuries after the recounted events would have occurred, in order to make a theological or political point, long realised by Old Testament scholars, do not make much popular impact, because they do not fit well with popular notions of Scriptural inspiration. However, the Humanistic legacy of Reformation figures such as Desiderius Erasmus includes that the Bible can at once be treated as wholly human literature and as holy, that is divinely inspired Scriptures (Tracy 1989:255-258). The Bible critically studied and the Bible spiritually nourishing are not two notions at odds (Schneiders 1989:19). Education of lay believers on both inspiration theory and the less direct (i.e. non-applicationary) ways in which aspects of the Old Testament world unacceptable to modern sensibilities should be seen, is a prerequisite for the Book of Life finding adequate expression in the spiritual life of believers.

2.5 Fear of “boundary-less” interpretations

Particularly the clergy and the *doctores* of the modern Church have developed an aversion to ways of reading the Bible that are unscientific, that is, without a thoroughly scientific method – be it historical criticism, structuralist methodologies or literary analyses (cf e.g. Kraus 1982; Richter 1971; Alter 1981, respectively). The earlier traditions of biblical interpretation, such as allegorical readings, are now severely frowned upon, for the reason that they could be so free as to allow almost any exposition. Biblical interpreters in our time who employ these techniques soon find themselves outside the main streams of interpretation, not only because of the uncontrolled exegesis, but also because of the theological implications such methods have for the view of Scripture. The Old Testament with its at times violent contents – to name again this one among the many difficulties people often raise – tended for these very reasons to fall prey more easily to interpretative techniques such as allegory (cf Rossouw 1963:48-87). Reading the Bible with a view to spiritual enrichment creates the impression for many that it comes just too close for comfort to these unacceptable interpretative techniques (cf Holmes 1981:12; Houlden 1983:48; Schneiders 1989:8-19). A

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"higher" or "deeper" meaning, an "eternal truth", a spiritually and at times emotionally moving result from such readings seem to leave the door ajar for uncontrolled, even plainly wild interpretations to become acceptable. The fact that, for instance, classic historical critical readings from the Old Testament can be employed fruitfully in spiritual reflections (Schneiders 1989:19), since both are contextually oriented (Nolan 1982:22-27), lies outside the field of experience of many, and thus remains largely unknown.

2.6 The reference to Scripture by writers on spirituality

Writers on spirituality habitually insist on the importance of the Bible (e.g. Holt 1993:28; Kourie 2000:14), to the point that Houlden (1983:48) could formulate: "what else is the Bible if not spirituality?". Scripture is one of the "constitutive disciplines" of Spirituality as an academic discipline, as Schneiders (1998:43), among others, indicates. She continues to point out that: "The scholar of Christian spirituality, therefore, needs a ... deep familiarity with the content and dynamics of this literature and a methodological competence that will allow her or him to handle biblical material responsibly" (Schneiders 1998:43). But then follows the by now unexpected statement: that no specialist knowledge is required; one merely "must be shaped by the great biblical motifs" (Schneiders 1998:43). This stands at odds with the demands made by the complexity of particularly the literature of the Old Testament referred to above. What is more, living from Scripture becomes thus, in a sense, only at a distance, not close-up, with the minutiae of biblical literature providing the unexpected riches that would feed both the exercise and the academic discipline of Spirituality. In the history of Christian spirituality, there has in general been given "no attention to the variety of background, historical period and authorship" (Houlden 1983:48) of the biblical texts. Hence, for the most part, spirituality scholars will study other's use of Scripture (e.g. Casey 1994:12-30) or propose hermeneutical approaches (e.g. Waaijman 1995:5-39), but tend not to engage in exegesis primarily. Old Testament science is the poorer for this (cf. Fee 2000:3-15; Schneiders 1989:19).

2.7 The notion of progressive revelation

Both in academic theology and in popular faith the notion of a progressive, that is, a continuing, "ever better" divine revelation in the Bible is quite common. This concept inevitably accords greater stature to the New Testament than to the Old. Even when the Bible as source for Spirituality is discussed in a sensitive, well-informed and careful manner (e.g. Cunningham & Egan 1996:35-41), one cannot escape the nagging sense that the Old Testament is read as though through New Testament spectacles. At times the idea that the New Testament is more advanced than the Old, is quite pronounced (Nolan 1982:61); hence the New Testament is referred to much more frequently than the Old Testament is (Nolan 1982:43-72). The idea of progressive revelation is, however, difficult to relate to the conviction, in some Christian churches at least, of the equal authority all parts of Scripture (cf Potgieter 1990:25-26). In addition, reversing the idea of progressive revelation while employing its terminology, Loader (1985:14-15 particularly) has indicated a way in which the Old Testament provides a "corrective" to the New. Lastly, neither the Old Testament nor the New can properly be interpreted other than in the others' light (Schneiders 1989:4). On the basis of these three points, my petition here is for bifocals: for us to accord both Testaments full integrity in encountering us equally as Word of God. Hence the Old Testament could come into its own in its relationship with Spirituality.

2.8 Theological diversity within the Old Testament

The theological diversity within the Old Testament relates not only to the different theologies found in the Old Testament (which is examined in the sub-discipline within Old Testament Science of Old Testament Theology; cf e.g. Preuß 1991:1-27 for an overview), but also to the different "group religions" within Israel (cf e.g. Albertz 1992:40-43) that could at the same time support different theological traditions which may or may not have been mutually exclusive (cf Weippert 1990:150-160, Albertz 1992:40-43, Van der Toorn 1996:181-205, Zevit 2001:643-646). This diversity of theologies in the Old Testament is not as clearly separated as are the different theologies in the New Testament. Hence, for

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instance, the different expressions of Yahwism in the Old Testament is more difficult to identify and to come to terms with than are the different representations of Jesus we find in the New Testament (in Matthean, Markan, Lukan, Johannine, Pauline and Petrine theology – cf Du Toit 1993:29), in the Church (e g in Roman Catholic, Anglican, Orthodox, Reformation, Charismatic/Pentacostal and Third Word Institutionalised churches – see e g, respectively, Maruca 1983:336-339; Cull 2000:100-124; Lash 1983:283-285; Rice 1991; Russel-Boulton 2000:125-137; Tshelane 2000:138-156) and across churches (e g in "liberation spirituality" – cf Marmion 1998:336-346; Sobrino 1988 – and "feminist spirituality" – cf Marmion 1998:346-357, King 1989; Dreyer 1999:360-379; Rakoczy 2000:69-91). Yet, if the theological diversity within the Old Testament were mastered to a greater extent, these would both enrich the different spiritualities prominent in our time and, because of a greater sense of shared heritage and identity, enhance the possibilities of communication between these contemporary traditions.

2.9 OT : NT = law : grace

Often still in the churches and among their members the relationship between the Old Testament and the New is seen as one of law in opposition to grace (alternatively, as promise *versus* fulfilment – see e g Achtemeier & Achtemeier 1962). A strong tendency thus remains to equate the Old Testament with "law", as opposed to the New Testament containing "grace" that, in Pauline language, frees us from the law (cf Jonker 1989:298). The implied deduction is left that we are thus "freed" from the Old Testament, returning to it only to see how we were enslaved to/by law, or – always somewhat awkwardly – to find ways of now expressing gratitude to God for receiving grace. In this way, for instance, Nolan (1982:29-41) employs "justice" as the central spiritual theme of the Old Testament and "love" as that of the New. This creates a false sense with many that the "Old" in "Old Testament" refers to that which no longer applies, since something better has come along (Zenger 1998:12-18). A "false sense", since as Holt (1993:31), among others, points out, God as a God of wrath and mercy is

found in both Testaments of the Bible. Neither law nor grace, neither promise nor fulfilment is restricted to the Hebrew or Greek sections of the Bible. More radically: read closely, the laws in the Old Testament *are* expressions of grace. The “law” against which Paul reacts and which often informs the recurring aversion among some Christians to the Hebrew Bible, is not the Old Testament as a book, but the practice of some of his contemporaries (which they on their part had related to certain interpretations of certain parts of the Hebrew Bible). To apply such exegetically inaccurate and theologically unsound categories as these to the Old Testament, and on those grounds then dismiss two thirds of the Bible as unworthy of our spiritual consideration, stands no one in good stead.

2.10 The long and the short of textual units

In practice, Christians find it easier to read small sections from the New Testament - mere verses often – to “take something from it”, than is the case with sections from the Old Testament. A parable, a bare sentence from the Sermon on the Mount, or a single Pauline injunction seems more manageable than the Joseph novella, an Isaian prophecy or even a Psalm or Proverb which can at times turn out to be treacherously taxing just before bed time. This, though popular, is of course a false perception: reading a single verse from the New Testament leaves one as vulnerable to misinterpretation as does reading a single verse from the Old Testament. Yet, the perception persists, so that except for a courageous few, the New Testament is preferred for a “quick read”. This leaves the Old Testament, or at least the greatest part of it, under-utilised in the spiritual life of the Church as a whole and in that of the individual believer.

The case here is not that the Old Testament finds no place at all within Spirituality. However, these ten reasons offer some explanations for the tradition within the Christian churches that the New Testament nourishes us spirituality, while the Old Testament remains in the spiritual shadows, so to speak. Even when the Old Testament is employed, only two *loci* from it figure with any given frequency: most beloved, the Psalms (Holt 1993:29; Houlden 1983:48-49; Wakefield 1983:322-323; cf Sklar-Chik 2000:195-208), and second, the concept

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of *imago Dei* (Gen 1:27). In both cases, better readings are often required¹³, though with some shining exceptions which take historical-critical exegesis seriously (Brueggeman 2002; Stuhlmüller 2002). By and large, then, the Old Testament plays a much smaller role in spirituality than its proportions in the Christian Scriptures would suggest. This is the case within churches, for individual believers, and where the Bible is a source for instruction.

3. CONCLUSION

Investigating the relationship between the Old Testament and Spirituality is no one-sided quest for relevance on the part of the former, though no doubt being relevant to church, society and individual believers is incumbent upon us (cf Nel 2001:2-3). The Bible remains, first of all, a book of faith, but then always with its *immediate* implications for the broader contexts in which believers find themselves (Lombaard 2001b:85-86). To change somewhat the imagery of Gorringer (2001:106), this is like the tango dance, which consists of two steps. If one takes one step only, you fall over. The second step follows automatically and very rapidly on the first. This too is part of the interactive essence of Christian spirituality: that the Bible will be one step of the dance of life, and Christian practice the other – with neither step taken in half measure.

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¹³ E.g., Sklar-Chik (2000:204-207) reads Psalm 57 as Davidic, and the idea of humanity created in God's image is often so loaded with modern meanings that one can hardly refer to such interpretations as exegesis – cf Lombaard (2001b:78-80).

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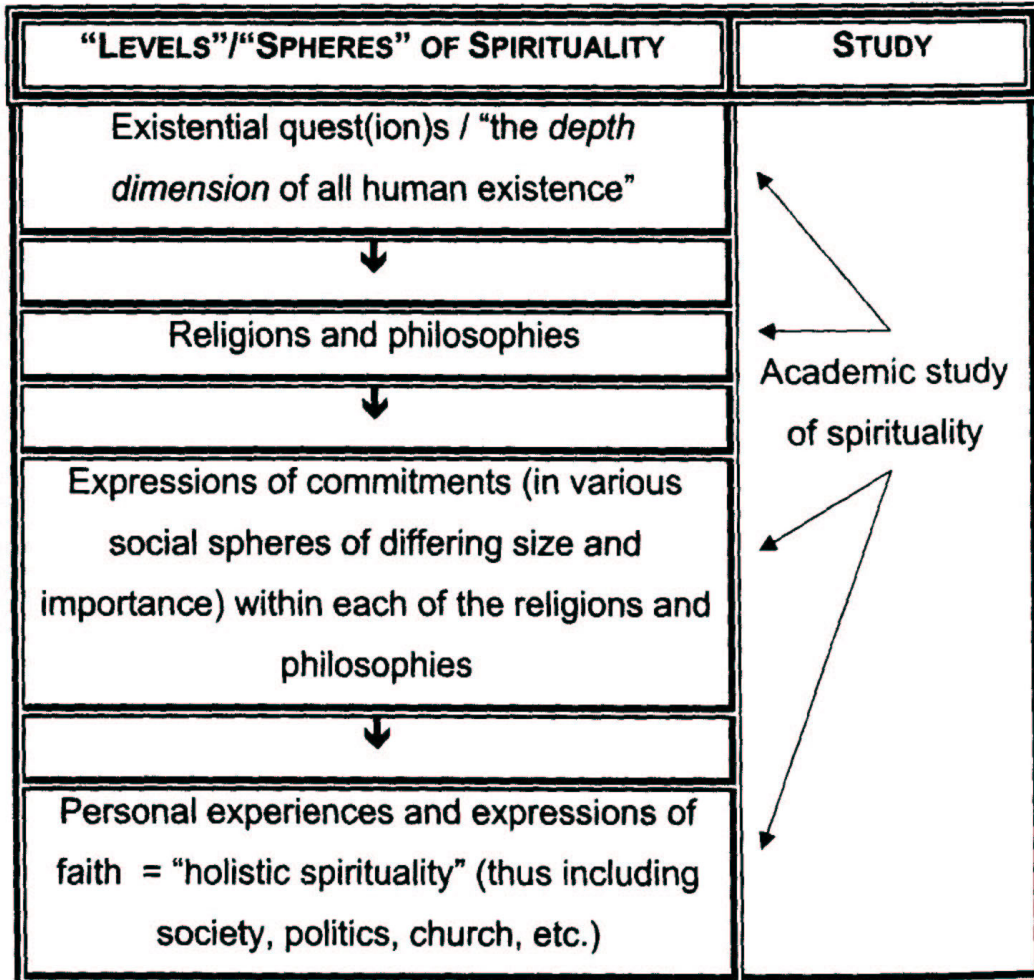
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ADDENDUM 1: "LEVELS"/"SPHERES" OF SPIRITUALITY



2.3 Publication 2: Introduction

“Elke vertaling is ‘n vertelling. Opmerkings oor vertaalteorie, geïllustreer aan die hand van die chokmatiese *ratio interpretationis*”. *Old Testament Essays*. 15/3, December 2002, 754-765.

Originally from a paper read at the congress of the Old Testament Society of Southern Africa, 11 – 13 September 2002, at the University of Stellenbosch, this article offers suggestions for communicating through Bible translations exegetical and theological insights to the Bible reading public. Going against the grain of particularly locally accepted translation theory and practice, this article re-evaluates the ways in which the traditionally employed theories of translation manage to communicate certain contents to the intended target audience / readership.

Of the five recurring themes within my research on how the Bible was brought to communication within different spheres of the South African society, indicated in the the overview of the publications under review here, the following apply to this specific publication:

- Theme 1 – Integrity: Dishonesty in public communication on the possibilities of Bible translation was the direct stimulus for this research paper. Written in Afrikaans for precisely the reason that such dishonest public communication had occurred in the Afrikaans speaking Christian community in particular, this article sets out to expose, albeit in subdued academic mode, the marketing hype around the currently very popular and financially rewarding enterprise of providing new Bible translations. The popular myth overtly played upon in marketing these new translations, namely that translating the ancient religious source documents of Christianity into modern Afrikaans only now truly communicates the Word of God to the modern Bible reader, is contradicted. Precisely the opposite occurs: rich textual meaning in the source documents is not conveyed in so-called dynamic translations; rather, meaning is reduced to the most accessible modern sense possible. Disingenuously declaring the contrary to the Bible-reading public, is devoid of communicative integrity. It

misleads the believing public on precisely the terrain where open, honest communication – devoid of the slight tweaks inherent in marketing messages, for the purpose of polishing public images and enhancing sales – should be the norm, namely where the role of the Bible in their lives is concerned.

- Theme 2 – Using the Bible well: A second, related criticism offered, and again implicitly directed at the marketing materials of these publishing exercises, is on the conveyed message that the Bible translation technique employed for these new translations are, somehow, better than other translation techniques. This article argues that such statements are meaningless when made in such a way. Only when translations based on similar theories are compared, can value judgements on the relative merits of the translation outcomes be made. Simply to compare translations across theories is to disregard what each distinctive theory / technique tries to do. The use of the Bible is not well served by grossly over-simplifying statements.
- Theme 4 – Communicative imbalances: The two public misrepresentations pointed out in the two preceding paragraphs have a direct bearing on the way the nature of the Bible is communicated to broader society. Selling the public on an illegitimate, romanticised view of the Bible serves the religious community poorly, and does not help in fostering a positive relationship with as complex a document as the Bible. Neither does it nurture a positive relationship with God, whom believers hear through the Bible; oversimplification and misrepresentation never does.
- Theme 5 – Insights on religion provided by communication studies: The above indication of the rhetorical background to the article under consideration here, and the contents of the article itself, provides ample example of the valuable contribution insights borne from the discipline of communication studies has to offer religion. This relates not only to the very practical exercise of Bible translation, but also to the less tangible but equally real socio-communicative context within which these translation projects are undertaken.

From these four points it is clear that the way the Bible as a translated document of faith has been brought to communication within the Afrikaans speaking Christian

community of late, has not been positive. Communicative and theological integrity would demand better.

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Elke vertaling is 'n vertelling. Opmerkings oor vertaalteorie, geïllustreer aan die hand van die chokmatiese *ratio interpretationis*¹

Christo Lombaard (UP)

ABSTRACT

Every translation is a narration. Remarks on translation theory, illustrated by means of the chokmatic ratio interpretationis.

Of the various approaches to Bible translation, the literal and dynamic equivalent methods have been most influential in the Afrikaans community. At times, some of these various approaches have been presented to this community as 'the best', which overlooks the reality that each translation method chooses to recount only something about a single aspect of the original text, such as the structure of the source language or a particular facet of the meaning of a pericope. This is illustrated with reference to Proverbs 1:7. The author has for theological reasons a preference for literal translations, which like a negligé invites the Bible reader to explore more of what has been revealed, whereas freer translations, like a chastity belt, allows for only one option, which is often culturally accommodating and hence leads to personally unchallenging renderings of the source text. Yet, this does create grounds for judging the quality of different translations. The value of translations can only be measured relative to other translations following the same method and relative to the objectives of the translation.

A INLEIDING: OM TE VERTAAL IS OM TE VERHAAL

Verskillende vertaalteorieë is al in verband met Bybelvertaling aan die hand gedoen. In Afrikaans was die letterlike vertaalwyse en dinamies-ekwivalente vertaalwyse die twee mees invloedryke Bybelvertaalteorieë,² wat neerslag gevind het in onderskeidelik die *Ou* en die *Nuwe Afrikaanse Bybelvertalings* (1933, hersien 1953, en 1983).

In die nadenke rondom vertaalteorieë, maar veral ook in populêr-kerklike kringe, word soms die indruk gewek dat een vertaalteorie en -praktyk beter of

¹ Referaat gelewer tydens die kongres van die Ou Testamentiese Werkgemeenskap van Suid-Afrika, 11-13 September 2002, te Stellenbosch. Die uitdrukking 'Elke vertaling is 'n vertelling' is gemunt in Lombaard (2002:38).

² Die stryd tussen hierdie twee vertaalteorieë duur al millenia lank; kyk Turro (1983: 4-53, 67-116) en Orlinsky & Bratcher (1991:1-266) vir oorsigte.

swakker as ander is. In hierdie artikel word dit egter beredeneer dat elke vertaling *kies* wat dit vertaal; anders gestel: elke vertaling *kies* wat dit is omtrent die grondteks wat dit wil verhaal.³ Geen vertaling kan alles omtrent 'n grondteks oorvertel nie; keuses word gemaak. Beter gestel: geen vertaling kan *die meeste* van die dinamika van die grondteks in die brontaal in sigself opneem nie.⁴ Met dinamika word hier bedoel die eie-aard van die brontaal; die grammatika; die betekenis-, woord- en klankspelmooitlikhede daarvan; idiome en idiomatiese (d w s 'gebruiklike') woordaanwending; die verhouding taal-dialek-sosiolek-idiolek; en talle ander aspekte van die brontaal soos ons dit in die bronteks aantref (vgl Wendland 1987; Deibler 1988; Baker 1992). Min van hierdie aspekte kan gekommunikeer word in die teikentaal, omdat tale so onewe is.⁵ Keuses word dus nie net *gemaak* oor wat vertaal word nie, maar word ook *afgedwing*, onkeerbare, soos wat die vertaler die onstuitbare krag van die teikentaal tot interaksie bring met die onbeweegbare muur van die brontaal. Elke vertaalproses kan uit hierdie (teoreties onmoontlike,⁶ maar prakties noodsaaklike) interaksie net iets kleins oorbring. Vertalers kies – hopelik vooraf, hopelik bewustelik – wát hierdie iets kleins is wat hulle wil oorbring. Dit wat hulle oorbring, is wat hulle in die teikentaal kom vertel van die bronteks; dit is hulle storie.

- ³ Die dubbele betekenis van 'verhaal' is intensioneel.
- ⁴ Ek kies dus hier – in die taal van die Guttiaanse vertaalteorie, soos geskets in Smith (2002:109-112) – in beginsel téén die moontlikheid van 'n pure 'direkte vertaling' van Bybelse tekste, met 'indirekte vertaling' as die enigste menslik-moontlike vertaalwyse. Slegs 'n breukdeel van 'n bronteks se volle kommunikasie-dinamika is vertaalbaar, en watter breukdeel dit is wat die betrokke vertalers wil vertaal, berus op hulle (implisiete/eksplisiete) besluit en (implisiete/eksplisiete) vertaal-teorie. Smith (2002:12) is na my mening selfs oor 'indirekte vertaling' te optimisties: buiten dat 'n vertaling slegs 'n deeltjie van die kommunikasie-dinamika van die bronteks weergee, dra die vertaling ook onkeerbare, onontkombaar nuwe betekenis-dimensies by. Selfs die beste intensies van vertalers kan dié interpretasie-moontlikhede in die teikentaal en on/willekeurige verstaansprosesse by Bybellesers nie uitsluit nie.
- ⁵ Die filosofiese hermeneutiek is dus onontbeerlik hier; vgl Thiselton (1992) vir 'n uitvoerige bespreking. Baker (1992:20-42) bespreek die praktiese problematiek van die onewenheid van tale vir die vertaalproses.
- ⁶ Walls (1990:24) skryf: 'translation is the art of the impossible'. Besprekings van die probleme van vertaling as 'n onderneming (eerder as van spesifieke vertalings), soos dié van bv Wendland (1987), wys op die onmoontlikheid van die opset van vertalings, gewoonlik op een van twee gronde: ontologies-epistemologies en linguisties-kultureel. Dit behels onderskeidelik die redenasieel dat die werklikheid nie as bestaande gereken of geken kan word buite taal om nie ('n redenasieel wat gewild is in die filosofiese hermeneutiek en die semiotiek, beide waarvan onontkombaar aan die sirkelgangprobleem ly, naamlik dat taal met taal geanaliseer word; vgl Lombaard (2002:60), of dat tale nie parallel loop nie en dus nie dieselfde realiteite op soortgelyke maniere tot uitdrukking kan bring nie (vgl Baker 1992:8).

B DIE CHOKMATIESE *PRINCIPIUM INTERPRETATIO*

Laasgenoemde punt word hieronder geïllustreer aan die hand van die chokmatiese *principium interpretatio*, gevind in Psalm 111:10; Spreuke 1:7; 9:10; 15:33; en Job 28:28.⁷

Die mees bekende voorkoms hiervan is Spreuke 1:7:

יְרֵאֵת יְהוָה רֵאשִׁית דָּעַח.

Hierdie geykte uitdrukking, waarvan slegs Spreuke 15:33 en Job 28:28 woordeliks presies ooreenstem,⁸ is 'n relatief laat toevoeging (Von Rad 1972:54-55), veral as die ouderdom van spesifiek die wysheidsliteratuur in die Antieke Nabye Ooste in aanmerking geneem word. Dié geykte uitdrukking word naamlik vroegstens eksilies, bes moontlik post-eksilies as *principium interpretatio* tot die wysheidskorpus toegevoeg. Met die aandrag op die monoteïstiese Jahwisme al hoe sterker groeiend vanaf die ballingskap (aanvang 586) onder invloed van die Deuteronomistiese teologie,⁹ word die grootliks implisiete religieuse karakter van die wysheid (vgl Von Rad 1972:61-64) verander, naamlik geherkarakteriseer, tot uitdrukking van – nou eksplisiet – die Jahwisme (vgl Zenger 1998:294). Die *principium interpretatio* bring die wysheid dus binne 'n strenger monoteïstiese Jahwe-geloof tuis deur as hermeneutiese sleutel tot die wysheidsliteratuur te funksioneer. Dit is aan die hand van hierdie chokmatiese *principium interpretatio*, as illustrasiegeval, dat enkele vertaalteorieë hieronder aan die woord gestel word. Op dié manier word elkeen van hierdie vertaalteorieë 'n spreekbeurt gegun om te vertel wat dit in die vertaalpraktyk aan ons omtrent die bronteks verhaal.

C WAT WIL VERTAALTEORIE OORVERTEL?

Voordat vertaalteorieë geïllustreer word aan die hand van die *principium interpretatio*, eers kortliks 'n beskrywing van elk. Die drie bekendste benaderings tot vertalings word onderskeidelik toegelig: die letterlike, die dinamies-ekwivalente, en die parafrase-vertaalwyses.

1 Letterlike vertalings

Letterlike vertalings, soos die Nederlandse *Statenvertaling*¹⁰ (kyk Verdegaal 1998:55-62), die *Ou Afrikaanse Vertaling*, die *King James Version* (kyk Opfell

⁷ Von Rad (1972:65-73) se bespreking van die betekenismoontlikhede en die teologiese dimensies verbonde aan hierdie verse bly steeds instruktief.

⁸ Hierdie is aanduidend van die orale aard van dié spreuk, wat op ongedetermineerde wyse, dus min of meer natuurlikerwys, skriftelik neerslag vind op verskillende plekke binne die wysheidskorpus.

⁹ Vir 'n eenvoudige opsomming van die Deuteronomistiese teologie, vgl Lombaard (2002:1-82). Vgl ook die opstelle opgeneem in De Moor & Van Rooy (2000).

¹⁰ Vir 'n oorsig oor die Bybel in Afrikaans vanaf die *Statenvertaling*, kyk Wegner 1985:221-238; meer reserant en meer inklusief, Hermansson 2002:6-18.

1982) en die *American Standard Version*, probeer verseker dat dit die 'waarheid'¹¹ van die Skrif in die teikentaal oordra deur, so ver moontlik, die brontaal woord vir woord in die teikentaal oor te sit (vgl Bastiaens 1998:151; Joubert 2001:314; 2002:31). Dikwels gebaseer op 'n foutiewe interpretasie, of meer toegeeflik, 'n herinterpretasie van die Reformatoriese beginsel dat Skrif met Skrif vergelyk moet kan word, word konkordantisties (Verdegaal 1998:59; Turro 1983:100-101) gewerk: dieselfde vertalingswoord word telkens gebruik vir dieselfde bronwoord (vgl Lorein 1994:49-50), tensy die resultaat erg ongemaklik is. Die vorm van die teks staan voorop (vgl Weiss 1990:11¹²). In hierdie model pleeg vertaalkunde bloot taal-kunde, met formele korrespondensie die doelstelling (cf Smalley 1991:111). *Woorde* dra betekenis, en die blote oordrag van 'n woord uit een taal na 'n ander impliseer suksesvolle betekenisoordrag en, daarmee saam, 'waarheid'-getrouheid.

Filosofies kan die agtergrond tot hierdie vertaalbenadering beskryf word as iets van 'n naïewe realisme of 'n romantisisme. Daarmee saam lê die kiem van die fundamentalisme egter hierin opgesluit (vgl Verdegaal 1998:62), asook, binne Afrikaanssprekende geledere, van politieke en teologiese konserwatisme/reaksionisme (die Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk gebruik byvoorbeeld amptelik steeds die *Ou Afrikaanse Vertaling*).

2 Dinamies-ekwivalente vertalings

Hierdie tipe vertalings, soos die *Nuwe Afrikaanse Vertaling*, die *New International Version*, en die *New Revised Standard Version* (vgl Joubert 2001:315; 2002:30), wil die *gedagtes* wat in die antieke teks opgesluit lê, in die nuwe teks weergee. Die retoriese opset word so ver moontlik weergegee, sodat gedagtes-binne-kultuurkonteks weergegee wil word, selfs herhaal wil word as dieselfde-gedagtes-binne-veranderde-kultuurkonteks (vgl Hendriks 1998:65; Jordaan 2002:21-24) (of, minstens, *insig* bied in wat hier genoem is die gedagtes-binne-kultuurkonteks – vgl Smalley 1991:111). Die kommunikasie van die *inhoud* van die teks, eerder as die vorm, kry voorrang. Eksegese deur die vertalers word dus geïmpliseer (Joubert 2001:316; 2002:32). Nie woorde nie, maar groter taaleenhede word vertaal (Smalley 1991:122), in die vorm van perikope (Smalley 1991:132; Hendriks 1998:75; vgl Vosloo 2001:186) as die draers van idees of begrippe (Bastiaens 1998:151), sodat retoriek, konnotasies en emosies van ouds as 't ware herhaal wil word in die teikentaal (Joubert 2001:316-317; 2002:32-33). So formuleer die Inleiding tot *Die Boodskap met Psalms en Spreuke* (Van der Watt *et al* 1996:8): 'Ons moet vandag in Afrikaans hoor wat die mense destyds in

¹¹ Een van die reëls wat by die vertaling van die *King James Version* gegeld het, lui: '... and as little altered as the Truth of the original will permit' (Opfell 1982:139).

¹² Natuurlik is die onderskeid tussen vorm en inhoud en funksie teoreties van aard – vgl Jordaan (2002:20, 26-27); Wendland (2002:180-183) –, want hierdie faktore is, saam met ander elemente soos sosio-kulturele konteks, die betrokke medium en dies meer, verweefde aspekte van betekenis.

Grieks gehoor het', en in daardie vertaling word daarom doelbewus probeer 'om die *gedagtes* wat daar in die kompakte Grieks lê, duidelik in hedendaagse Afrikaans weer te gee' (*Die Boodskap met Psalms en Spreuke* (Van der Watt *et al* 1996:9); klem toegevoeg). Kortom, sulke vertalings probeer tegelykertyd 'brontekstgetrouw en doeltaalgericht' wees ten einde 'adequaat' te vertaal (Bastiaens 1998:152).

Die populariteit van hierdie tipe vertalings onder vertalers oor die afgelope dekades het moontlik filosofies nog iets te danke aan 'n steeds sloerende Platoniëse, of meer modern, Kantiaanse idealisme, naamlik in dié vorm dat 'n 'verhewe' idee/gedagte wat agter die woorde van die bronteks skuilgaan, (eksegeties) nagespeur en vervolgens puur oorgedra kan word in die formulering van 'n nuwe teks. Die inherente optimisme in ook hierdie vertaalteorie is egter deur die praktyk getemper, sodat die benaming 'dinamies-ekwivalent' tans vervang word met terme soos 'dinamies-kompetent', 'funksioneel-ekwivalent', 'betekenis-gebaseerde vertalings' en 'idiomatiese vertalings' (Smalley 1991: 106¹, Naudé 2002:47). Nogtans het sulke vertalings steeds ten doel om die kultuurskok wat moderne lesers in hulle ontmoeting met die antieke tekste van die Bybel sou (of: behoort te!) ervaar, te elimineer (Joubert 2001:318-319; 2002:34-35; vgl Nord 2002:98-116).

3 Parafrase-vertalings

Hierdie tipe vertalings, soos *The Living Bible*, *Het Boek* (kyk Van Velzen 1994: 79-87) en *Die Boodskap* is dikwels bedoel vir eerste lesers van die Bybel, met die doelstelling dat hulle mettertyd sal oorgaan tot ander tipes vertalings vir studiedoelindes (Carson 1979:83-84; Van Velzen 1994:79; Naudé 2002:64). Aan die ander kant is daar ook die implisiete doelstelling met parafrase-vertalings om die Bybel 'makliker' te maak om te lees, in die hoop dat dit daarom meer gereeld deur meer mense gelees sal word – iets van die missionêre bewussyn wat agter baie Bybelvertalings lê. Interessant genoeg, voel vertalers in hierdie tradisie hulleself dikwels verbonde aan beide bostaande Bybelvertalingsteorieë (Van Velzen 1994:81-82); aanhangers van dié twee teorieë sal egter nie 'n parafrase-vertaling met gemak as naby familie wil erken nie. Nogtans moet 'n mens erken dat die grenslyn tussen dinamies-ekwivalente vertalings en parafrase-vertalings vaag is (vgl Wegner 1985:231), net soos ook die grens tussen letterlike en dinamies-ekwivalente vertalings (Weiss 1990:12 dui naamlik die *King James Version* nie as 'n letterlike vertaling aan nie; vgl ook Van der Watt 2002:256-259).¹³

¹³ Die sogenaamde 'third code'-konsep binne die nuwe deskriptiewe benadering tot vertaling, dit wil sê die manier waarop die vorm van die bronteks en die dinamika van die vertalingstaal op 'n unieke wyse vermeng word in die vertaalde teks, bied 'n verenigende perspektief op hierdie relatiewe onderskeide – vgl Kruger (2002: 77-79). Kyk ook Jordaan (2002:19-21).

Parafrase-vertalings vertrek van dieselfde idealistiese en optimistiese gronde as dinamies-ekwivalente vertalings, met die taalgebruik wat egter altyd meer populêr, soms eintlik populisties is. 'n Veel groter afstand tussen die vorm van die grondteks en dié van die vertaling word dus geskep in 'n poging om die inhoud van die grondteks nader aan die teikenleserskap te bring. Op hierdie gronde meen ek dat, hoewel *Die Boodskap met Psalms en Spreuke* (1966) en sy voorgangers hulleself as dinamies-ekwivalente vertalings blyk te verstaan, hulle eerder binne die parafrase-tradisie staan.¹⁴

4 *Excursus minimus*: Studievertalings

Studievertalings het die afgelope aantal jare binne veral die Afrikaanssprekende gemeenskap groot aanhang verkry (Vosloo & Van Rensburg se *Die Bybel in Praktyk*, 1993, gemodeleer op die 1991-*Life Application Bible*; Vosloo & Van Rensburg se *Bybellennium Eenvolumekommentaar*, 1999; vgl Vosloo 2001:184-187), telkens gebaseer op die dinamies-ekwivalent vertaalde *Nuwe Afrikaanse Vertaling*. Lorein (1994:46-62) stel egter voor dat studievertalings merendeels letterlike vertalings behoort te wees, met voetmots ter verduideliking (vgl Vleugels 1994:63-71). 'n Groeiende getal oproepe om meer sodanige studie-Bybeluitgawes word in die jongste tyd gemaak (bv Joubert 2001:324-325; 2002:40-41). Studievertalings met verklarende aantekeninge is egter geensins 'n nuwe uitvindsel nie; so byvoorbeeld het reeds die *Statenvertaling* (1637, maar uitgeredigeer is die 18de-eeuse uitgawes) en *The English Authorized Version* (1611) sulke hulpmiddels ingesluit (Verdegaal 1998:60).

D DRIE VERTAALTEORIEË AS VOORBEELDE

Met die uitsondering van Studievertalings, word elk van bostaande besprekings vervolgens geïllustreer aan die hand van die chokmatiese *principium interpretatio*, soos dit in Spreuke 1:7a aangetref word.

Die Hebreuse teks en drie Afrikaanse vertalings daarvan word hieronder diagrammaties aangebied.

| BRON: | AANGEHAALDE TEKS: | AFGEDRUK AS: |
|-------|---|------------------------|
| BHS | יְרֵאָה יְהוָה רֵאשִׁית דַּעַת | |
| OAV | Die vrees van die HERE is die beginsel van die kennis | Gewone teks |
| NAV | Kennis begin met die dien van die Here | Poesie |
| BPS | Lewensgeluk begin by liefde vir die Here | Sonder versaanduidings |

¹⁴ Wendland (2002:181) tabelleer ook *The Message*, die Engelse voorganger tot *Die Boodskap*-reeks, as parafrase.

| |
|---|
| Sleutel: |
| BHS = Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia |
| OAV = Ou Afrikaanse Vertaling (1933 & 1953) |
| NAV = Nuwe Afrikaanse Vertaling |
| BPS = Die Boodskap met Psalms en Spreuke |

'n Paar opmerkings oor die vertalings weergegee in dié diagram sal duidelik maak wát dit is wat elke vertaling ons omtrent die bronteks vertel.

Die *Ou Afrikaanse Vertaling* volg die woordorde in die Hebreeus presies na. Daarmee saam word die grammatiese reël in verband met die lidwoord by genitief-konstruksies in die Hebreeus tot die letter toe gevolg: telkens word die bepaalde lidwoord in-vertaal, selfs al lees dit nie glad in idiomatiese Afrikaans nie. Hierdie tegniek het egter wel die (on/bedoelde?) gevolg dat iets van 'n ritmiese lees daardeur bemoontlik word, sodat 'n poëtiese ritme – soos in die Hebreeus – na te speur is, sonder dat die teks – eweneens soos in die Hebreeuse grondgeskrifte – as poësie op die blad afgedruk is. Op hierdie maniere, onder andere, vertel die *Ou Afrikaanse Vertaling* ons meer omtrent die vorm van die Hebreeuse teks as wat enige van die ander vertalings probeer doen. Die betekenisinhoud moet egter deur die leser gesoek word; verskillende interpretasie-moontlikhede moet oorweeg word; 'n maklike of finale antwoord bly dikwels net buite bereik. Die Skrifwaarheid word eksegeties¹⁵ onklaar oorvertel.

Die *Nuwe Afrikaanse Vertaling* se enigste ooreenkoms met die *Ou Afrikaanse Vertaling* se weergawe van hierdie versdeel is dat יְדָעָה steeds met 'kennis' vertaal word. Die meer idiomatiese Afrikaans lei daartoe dat die woordorde verander word. הִנֵּה word nie meer met 'HERE' vertaal nie, maar volgens die beleid van die 1983-vertalers, met 'Here'. Die mees opvallende verskil is dat die frase יִרְאֵה הִנֵּה nou met 'dien van die Here' weergegee word: nadat hoeveel preke moes verduidelik dat die kultureel-begronde frase 'vrees van die HERE' nie sinonimies aan angs verstaan moet word nie, soek die 1983-vertalers na 'n minder kultureel-belaaide weergawe. Ter wille van 'n eenvoudiger vertelling van hierdie frase, word die misterieuse, selfs mistiese van 'n vreemd-kulturele geykte uitdrukking prysgegee. Die enigste oorblywende aanduiding van die vreemdheid van die bronteks is dat die teks in die *Nuwe Afrikaanse Vertaling* in gedig-formaat op die bladsy afgedruk word sonder dat die inhoud van die gedig aan populêre konvensies van Afrikaanse digkuns voldoen. Min van die vorm van die bronteks word ons vertel, en die betekenis-moontlikhede van die versdeel word

¹⁵ Die teologies-hermeneutiese fasette van die klaarheid van die Skrif – vgl Rossouw (1963) – word dus nie hier in twyfel getrek nie. Met 'onklaar' word hier beide eksegeties 'onduidelik' en interpretatief 'onafgehandeld' bedoel.

ook ingeperk (beide kwantitatief en juis daarom kwalitatief) deurdat die vreemd-hede onvreemd oorvertel word.

Die Boodskap se weergawe is die vryste vertelling van die drie weergawes hier aangegee. Dit laat met redelike gemak 'n lesing toe (hoewel geen van die vertalers sulke standpunte steun nie!) waarin lesers populêre welvaartsteologie en soete liefdesteologie kan inlees. Sulke dominerend-populêre kultuurwaardes van die lesers word hier geensins in gesprek gebring met gedagtes uit 'n vreemde tekswêreld nie. Bevestiging van aanvaarde waarhede is al wat hier gevind kan word. Nóg woorderde, nóg die manier waarop die teks op die bladsy afgedruk is,¹⁶ en allermens vreemde uitdrukkings bied die geleentheid tot kritiese vrae oor die verstaan van die teks. Hierdie is 'n leserstek: dié Skrifwoord vertel gewone Bybellesers weer wat hulle reeds glo; dit laat hulle nie nuut nadink nie. Die verskeidenheid interpretasiemoontlikhede wat die leser gebied word is nóg minder as wat die geval is met die *Nuwe Afrikaanse Vertaling*, want ons word nog meer presies vertel 'wat daar staan'.

Uit hierdie kort oorsig reeds word dit duidelik dat elke vertaling 'n totaal ander vertelling bied. Hoe meer letterlik die vertaling is, hoe meer skemer die bronteks se vorm nog deur; hoe vryer die vertaling is, hoe meer domineer die konvensies van die nuwe taal en die verwagtings van die moderne lesers. In dié sin is 'n letterlike vertaling 'n negligé, en vryer vertalings iets meer van 'n kuisheidsgordel.

Interessant genoeg, bied die progressief vryer vertalings nie méér insig in die bronteks nie, maar altyd minder: al hoe minder interpretasiemoontlikhede van die bronteks word aan die leser van die vertaling gebied. Meerduidigheid word vereenvoudig tot 'n al hoe nouer betekenis-speelruimte. In 'n sekere sin is dit juis die teendeel van die verwagting wat altyd rondom meer dinamiese vertalings geskep word: hulle bied wel aan om ons meer te laat verstaan van die betekenis van die bronteks, maar die manier waarop dit gebeur, is deur al hoe meer betekenisemoontlikhede te verduister.¹⁷ Die kuisheidsgordel vervang die negligé; 'n geforseerd-onskuldige lees vervang die uitnodiging om die teks van naderby te leer ken.¹⁸ Uitlokkende betekenisvrae wat met letterlike vertalings nog deurskemer, word in dinamiese vertalings gewoon ontoeganklik afgesluit.

Hierdie evaluerende opmerkings maak duidelik waar my simpatieë lê sover dit Bybelvertalings-benaderings aangaan. Dit beteken egter nie dat daar geen

¹⁶ Met die bemerking van hierdie vertaling is duidelik gemaak dat versnommers nie in die teks aangedui is nie. Daarmee saam is genoem dat daar in die oorspronklike Bybelteks in ieder geval nie versaanduidings was nie. Dit laat by baie Bybellesers die indruk dat hierdie vertaling dus nader aan die oorspronk is as wat ander vertalings met versaanduidings is.

¹⁷ Hierin vind ek my dus aangetrokke tot resistiewe vertaalteoretici soos Venutti, Wallmach en Derrida, soos bespreek in Naudé (2002: 53-54)

¹⁸ Contra Van der Watt (2002: 256)

plek vir verskillende tipes vertalings is nie. Eerder is my pleidooi dat geen vertaalwyse sal voorgee om te wees/doen wat dit nie kan wees/doen nie. Aanhangers van elk van die vertaalwyses hierbo bespreek, het hulleself soms aan hubris skuldig gemaak, deur die voorgestane vertaalwyse as 'holier than thine' voor te stel.

E SLOT: OOR GOEIE VERTALINGS EN SWAKKES

Op grond van al bostaande oorwegings, is dit myns insiens onmoontlik om in absolute terme na vertalings te verwys as goed of sleg, beter of swakker. 'It is in fact virtually impossible, except in extreme cases, to draw a line between what counts as a good translation and what counts as a bad one. Every translation has points of strength and points of weakness and every translation is open to improvement' (Baker 1992:7).¹⁹ 'n Relatiewe beoordeling van Bybelvertalings is dus al wat sinvol is (vgl Naudé 2002:50).

Die vraag wat deur hierdie opmerking afgedwing word is: *relatief waartoe?*

Beoordeling van 'n vertaling, gebaseer op 'n sekere vertaalteorie, kan op grond van bostaande oorwegings nie met veel sin gemaak word relatief tot 'n ander vertaling wat gebaseer is op 'n ander vertaalteorie nie (so ook Bastiaens 1998:151-152). Wat die twee vertalings te vertel het, is te verskillend; elk verhaal 'n eie storie vanuit/omtrent die bronteks. Ook kan 'n kwalitatiewe oordeel nie met sin gefel word aan die hand van die bronteks nie, juis omdat elke vertaling bloot 'n deel van die bronteks se dinamika in die teikentaal kan oorvertel. Hierdie twee (relatiewe) maatstawwe het dus nie veel gebruikswaarde vir die bepaling van die kwaliteit van 'n vertaling nie.

Relatiewe beoordeling van 'n Bybelvertaling kan wel sinvol op twee ander gronde geskied: relatief tot ander vertalings wat op dieselfde vertaalteorie geskoei is, en relatief tot die intensie van die vertaling (vir lg, vgl Smalley 1991: 111-112). Die mate waartoe een, of vergelykenderwys, méér vertalings daarin slaag om te vertel wat dit wil vertel omtrent die bronteks, dit wil sê met die oog op sekere doelstellings met die betrokke vertaalonderneming, verskaf die mees sinvolle kriterium vir beoordeling, naamlik of die vertaling goed of sleg is, en waar meer as een vertaling geskoei op dieselfde vertaalteorie beskikbaar is, watter vertaling(s) beter of swakker is.²⁰ Die intensie van die vertaling – dit wat dit omtrent die bronteks wou vertel – is dus die basiskriterium vir kwaliteits-

¹⁹ Dit is ook die geval met kommentare, wat veel meer uitgebreid oor die basisteks kan uitwei – vgl Vosloo (2001:187).

²⁰ Die kriterium hier het slegs te make met die mate waartoe die vertaling dit wat dit wou oorvertel van die bronteks, inderdaad oorvertel. Ander kriteria, soos die aanvaarding van die vertaling deur die betrokke teikenleserskap – 'n kriterium wat dikwels geld met Bybelvertalings, of estetiese oorwegings, soos die elegansie van die taalgebruik in die teks wat in die teikentaal gelewer word, word hier nie in berekening gebring nie.

beoordeling hier. Vergelyking tussen twee of meer vertalings, geskoei op dieselfde vertaalteorie en dus met vergelykbare vertaalintensies, bied 'n tweede beoordelingskriterium, maar met dié tweede kriterium wat afgelei word vanaf die basiskriterium.

Vanuit hierdie deskriptiewe invalshoek tot vertaling (vgl Kruger 2002:77-79²¹; Naudé 2002:50-52, 62-64), is dit dus eintlik niksseggend om 'n vertaling bloot 'goed' of 'swak', 'beter' of 'slegter' te noem, omdat die kriteria vir beoordeling nie uitgespel is nie. Verskillende Bybelvertalings het verskillende doelstellings, wat saamhang met 'n bepaalde vertaalteorie,²² wat sáám die gronde bepaal vir die beoordeling van 'n vertaling. Afhangende van wat 'n Bybelvertaling vanuit/omtrent die grondteks verhaal, kan dan aanbevelings rondom die mees sinvolle gebruik van die betrokke vertaling aan die (breëre/beoogde) leserspubliek gemaak word.

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²¹ Myns insiens is die deskriptiewe benadering tot vertaling wel van waarde vir die studie van die vertaalwese, maar dit hef nie die tradisionele vertaalteorieë op nie: laasgenoemde bly nodig vir enige vertaalprojek. Die deskriptiewe benadering is dus 'n bruikbare benadering vir ook *wirkungsgeschichtliche* eksegetiese studies – iets wat Kruger (2002:95-98) in geheel vertaalkundige terme ook aan uitdrukking verleen.

²² Meestal word vertaal-intensie en vertaalteorie nie losstaande van mekaar bedink wanneer 'n nuwe vertaling oorweeg word nie. Om primariteit aan een van dié twee momente te verleen, is dus nie moontlik nie.

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2.5 Publication 3: Introduction

“The Bible in the apartheid debate”, in Hofmeyr, JW, Lombaard, CJS & Maritz, PJ (eds) 2001. *1948 + 50 years. Theology, apartheid and church: Past, present and future* (Perspectives on the Church / Perspektiewe op die Kerk, Series 5: Vol. 1), 69-87. Pretoria: IMER (Institute for Missiological and Ecumenical Research), University of Pretoria.

Finding its first airing as a presentation to the 1999 Adult Education Gathering, First Presbyterian Church, Wausau, Wisconsin, USA, this chapter researches and evaluates the ways in which the Bible was employed rhetorically to enhance the communication of, respectively, the pro and anti-apartheid messages. It is concluded that the use of the Bible within political debate will always fail to appreciate the primarily religious nature of the messages of the Bible, and that in such cases the Bible is used merely as a rhetorically authoritative instrument to legitimate the preferred cause.

The book in which this research has been taken up, has since 2002 been a prescribed work for the MPhil Applied Theology programme at the University of Pretoria, as well as for undergraduate research assignments in church history.

The five recurring themes within my research on how the Bible was brought to communication within different spheres of the South African society, indicated in the overview of the publications under review here, apply as follows to this specific publication:

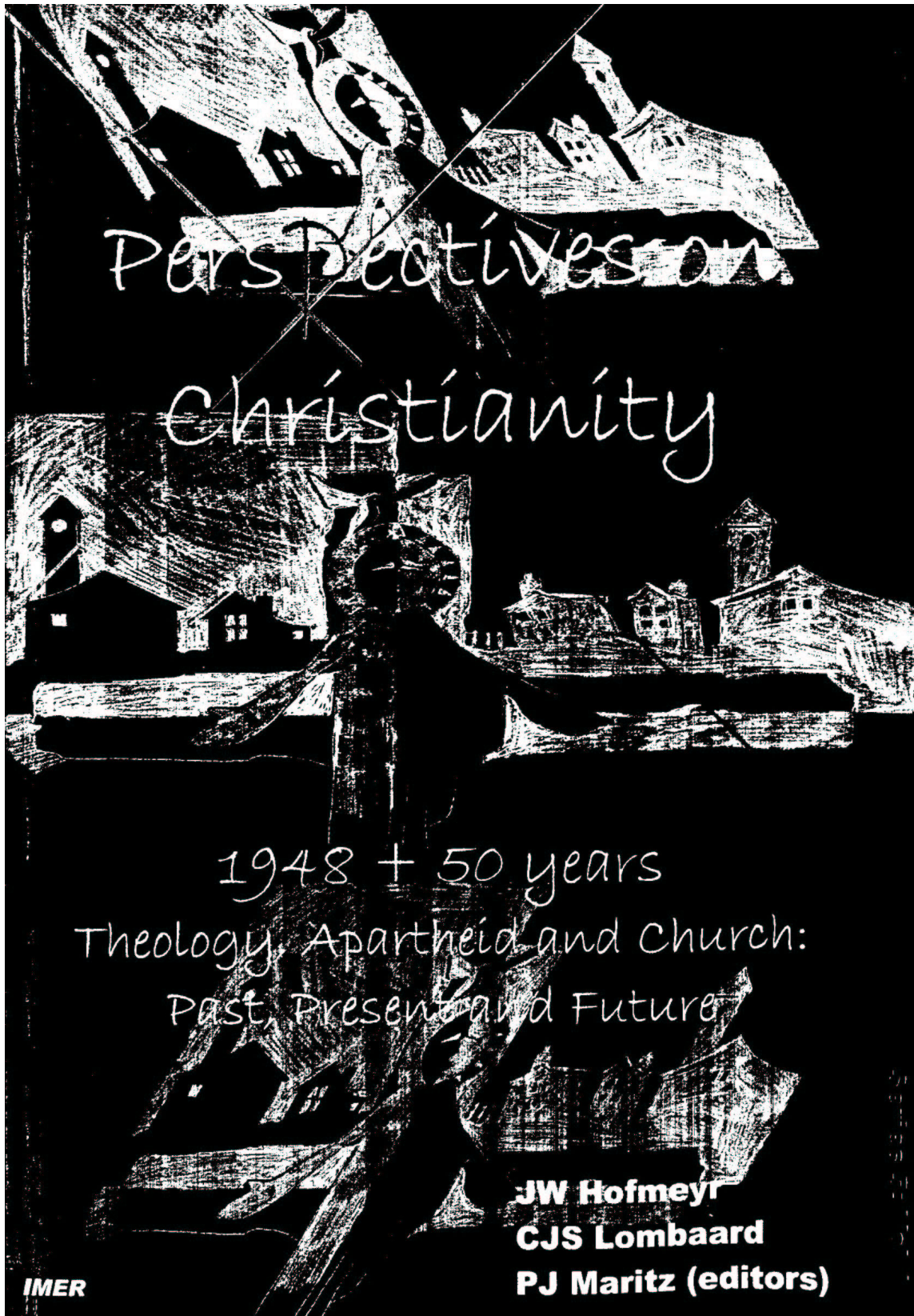
- Theme 1 – Integrity: Exegetical integrity would require that the diversity of the biblical messages on whichever issue be recognised; communicative integrity would require that this complexity be conveyed by theologians to their audiences. This study shows how such intellectual honesty and public truthfulness became victim to political commitments, on all sides, during the apartheid years in South Africa. (This has not changed in post-1994 South Africa; see e.g. "Rulers welcome the blessings of the gods", *Pretoria News*

2004/02/18, 9 and "Wees versigtig vir politici met Jesus onder die vlerk", *Rapport* 2004/03/21, 16.)

- Theme 2 – Using the Bible well: Neither within church practice, nor in socio-political debate during the apartheid years in South Africa, has the way in which the Bible was employed been commendable. One may speak of a communication breakdown: the hermeneutical circle of text and reader "reading" one another was distorted by socio-political commitments, in the sense that certain readings were deliberately sought, others deliberately opposed, and much of the Bible ignored. This was the case within both the pro- and anti-apartheid camps. The "noise" of politics in the interpretative relationship of Bible and reader was simply too loud to allow for fundamentally sound interaction. This is not meant to imply that politics should be absent from this communicative circle; that too would amount to a distorted hermeneutical process. However, politics should not be the only consideration when reading (certain) biblical texts.
- Theme 3 – Rhetorical functionality: The reason for the dynamic indicated in the preceding two paragraphs, is that the Bible had in the apartheid-debate become reduced to a rhetorical tool with which to convince others of one's views. If the Bible, and therefore God, said apartheid was either right or wrong, then society had to follow – this was the role in which the Bible was placed in political argument in church and society. Clearly, more is mandated from a Book spanning millennia and a variety of political systems in the process of coming into being; equally, more is required of a Book that seeks to impart faith too.
- Theme 4 – Communicative imbalances: This feature closely parallels that in the previous publication, as discussed above: oversimplification of the biblical diversity for the sake of greater impact on whichever public cause, serves the religious community poorly, and hinders a positive relationship with a complex Bible and, as a result, with an – ultimately – mysterious God.
- Theme 5 – Insights on religion provided by communication studies: Rhetorical analyses and political communication clearly lie as academic stimuli behind the coming to fruition of this publication. The intersection between politics and faith remains a challenging and relevant field of interest.

This intersection cannot be studied with any great measure of validity without a thorough grounding in both communication science and religion. Interdisciplinarity defines this field of scholarly activity.

All five recurring themes thus feature in this publication.



Perspectives on
Christianity

1948 + 50 years
Theology, Apartheid and Church:
Past, Present and Future

JW Hofmeyr
CJS Lombaard
PJ Maritz (editors)

IMER

1948 PLUS FIFTY YEARS

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(Editors)

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THE BIBLE IN THE APARTHEID DEBATE

C.J.S. LOMBAARD

"In reality the church ought to invent and innovate. It ought to propose something new. It should never serve as an instrument of propaganda. It should never seek to justify any political force...strictly speaking, God has nothing to do with such things. Or perhaps he does, but I know nothing about it. The Bible does not enable me in any way to declare that a given regime is in conformity with God's will. It is not my job as a Christian to identify history with God's will. We do not have to think that because such and such a power is set up it is God who set it up."

(- Ellul 1986:127)

A STRONG VOICE

The Bible has had a broad influence on Western and Western-influenced culture, as was again attested to by Bloom including it in his "canon" of literature (see Bloom 1994:4-6,531). This influence took root in Southern Africa not only by way of the immigrants from Europe, but also through the missionary zeal of early converts from the indigenous peoples (cf. Crafford 1991; Denis 1995). The result was that by far the larger part of the South-African population is - statistically speaking, at least - of the Christian faith.

Among the Afrikaans speaking churches, this Christian presence is dominated by the Reformed/Calvinist tradition (cf. Durand 1985:39-42; Deist 1994a:155ff), a tradition which makes much of placing all parts of life under the direction of the Word of God. On the other hand, a strong evangelical tendency is also to be discerned among the black clerical leadership of "the struggle", i.e. against apartheid (cf. Kretschmar 1986:3-13); this evangelical stream also makes much of Scripture as the rule of life (cf. Pobee 1987:148-151). The Bible thus comprises a substantial part of what may variously be called "the great narratives" (Lyotard 1989:315), the "culturele geletterdheid" (Goedgebuure 1993:11),

or the "Fundament aller Kultur und Bildung" (von Rad 1974:12) of Southern African society.

In the light of this, it is not at all surprising that the Bible was often used, for about half a century, in the debate on apartheid, which was so central an aspect of the Southern African society. What is right and what is wrong for this *country*, what God wants *politically* for the people - the answers to such questions would be found in the Bible. Scripture *would* legitimate the different views on apartheid. Despite some opinions to the contrary in both the pro- and anti-apartheid camps, the stronger groups in both camps would insist that the Bible did in fact voice their respective truths. Scripture (read: God) would surely support such a righteous cause...

SCRIPTURE IN TWO CAUSES

The situations from which the pro-apartheid and the anti-apartheid interpretations of the Bible sprang, are remarkably similar. In both cases, political freedom and social identity of certain people were under threat (cf. Walker & Cochrane 1996:6²). In both cases this situation was reflected upon theologically; both could, in this sense, be said to be contextual theologies (Govender 1980:77). In both cases it was the Old Testament which came to hand more often (cf. Hopkins 1989:169-170; Bauckham 1989:3-4; Deist 1994a:85-91) - its related histories make for fruitful, though opposing, parallels (cf. J du Preez 1979:107-109,116; Snyman 1994:173-175). Such similarities set the ground for interesting comparison.

With the listing below of the use that was made of the Bible, first by the apartheid protagonists, then the apartheid antagonists, much liberty was taken in some respects. Exhaustive coverage of all the uses, the users or the used references is not given. The contexts in which the biblical texts were applied are also not given, except to list them under the pro- or anti-apartheid headings. Furthermore, the Bible does not always seem to have been applied with the same vigour: the Bible varied as to how much it had to say in favour of apartheid (cf. e.g. *Reis met apartheid* 1997) in accordance with the times, while its pronouncements against apartheid increased steadily as time went by. In addition, as Smit (1992:87) exclaimed: "Legitimizing apartheid has not been the only activity of Afrikaans-speaking Reformed theologians!", to which may be added that younger generations were indeed very critical of their predecessors (e.g. Breytenbach 1988 on Groenewald 1947). Apartheid has also not

been the only theme in the work of South African theologians who opposed apartheid (Mbiti 1986:56); nor were South Africans the only ones who partook of the debate on exclusivist white theology (cf. Maimela 1987:29-31). All these variables have, for the sake of brevity, been glossed over below. What follows then are some excerpts which should enable one to gain an understanding of how the Bible ventriloquised pro-apartheid and anti-apartheid viewpoints.

THE BIBLE PRO-APARTHEID

It was a sense of anxiety about the mixing of races, together with an uncovering of certain "principles" on race in Scripture (cf. *Ned. Herv. of Geref. Kerk* 1948:279-280), which gave sanction to a pro-apartheid reading of the Bible. The socio-political milieu, combined with a set of philosophical assumptions about the Bible and truth (cf. Deist 1994a:155-260), gave credence to a theology of apartheid. To state, as did Groenewald (1947:65), that objective exegesis shows apartheid as a "central truth" ("*grondwaarheid*") of Scripture, corresponded well with the sensibilities of an intimidated minority with a current claim to power (see Ngcokovane 1989 for an overview of the relevant church, political and cultural scene). First and foremost, it was their own constituency (the "eie" - JJ Kritzinger 1996:101; Botha 1980:24-25) to whom the Afrikaans language churches paid attention. Despite the fact that the Bible does not admit of race as a central theological theme (as e.g. *Kerk en Samelewing* 1986:19 later states), it could - in such circumstances - be made into "a biblical *principium*" (Durand 1978:4-5; or: "biblical keynotes" - Von Allmen 1977:8), without actually having to explain what is meant by phrases such as "eternal principles on race relations" in the Bible (WS Vorster 1979:184-187). The social setting would simply uphold such truths.

Furthermore, theological views at the time generally tended to be *declared* valid, rather than arguments and implications weighed (Loader 1978:10; cf. Deist 1994a:189-210). Moreover, questioning these "principles" and/or "conclusions" was understood as a questioning of the authority of the Bible itself (cf. Durand 1978:9; 1985:41-42). Such a manner of theologising by the church could consequently provide a *firm spiritual spine* to the political policy of apartheid in South Africa (W Nicol 1988:131; cf. PGR de Villiers 1988:7 & Engelbrecht 1982:29).

The favoured texts used in the theology of apartheid to sanction racially segregated congregations were Genesis 11,

Deuteronomy 32:8 and Acts 1:8 & 17:26. 1 Corinthians 7:17-24, Revelation 5:9 & 7:9 were later added. From the mention of *nations* and *boundaries* between nations in such texts, conclusions were summarily drawn about racial segregation within society and the church (*Sending-beleid* 1935; König 1987:8-11; *Reis met apartheid* 1997:6-7; cf. *Faith & Protest* in Nürnberger & Tooke 1988:41-44).

It was often stated that apartheid had to be attested to by the Bible for it to be acceptable as a solution to the "race problem" of South Africa (e.g. Groenewald 1947:43; *Ras, volk en nasie ...* 1974:5,8; AB du Preez 1955:2; *Herderlike skrywe* 1973:1; cf. Deist 1994a:405-415). This tenet having been postulated, the subsequent reasoning ran as follows: while the obvious unity of the human race is founded on Adam and Eve (Genesis 1:26-29) and on Noah (Genesis 10:32), the diversification of this unity by God in Genesis 10 & 11 should not be taken lightly (also Genesis 15:18; Deuteronomy 32:8; Amos 9:7; Acts 17:26). This diversification of humanity was entrenched and perpetuated with the mission-text (Matthew 28:19 - so too the famed Article III of the *Ned. Herv. Kerk*: see e.g. Dreyer 1961:68; *Herderlike skrywe* 1973:3f), at Pentecost (Acts 2:8f) and for all times (Revelation 5:9, 7:9, 14:6, 19:15), with the implication that such divisions must therefore be observed in modern times (Groenewald 1947:44-47). These thoughts and texts in Groenewald's 1947 work were to be repeated in many a church document and other publications (e.g. AB du Preez 1955) endorsing apartheid.

Another, similar, line of reasoning could be pursued as follows: God the Creator is primarily One who separates, as Genesis 1-2 shows (JD du Toit, referred to by Brink 1954:33; cf. Kinghorn 1986:101). In history, God split up the faithful generations of Seth and the unfaithful generations of Cain; disregarding this division brings about Divine punishment - Genesis 7 (De Klerk 1939:56). However, respecting God's set boundaries bears blessings - Deuteronomy 7:1-11 (Groenewald 1947:57). Therefore the existence of separate peoples is a "healthy Christian principle" (Wm Nicol 1947:21, translated), which is in line with God's creation and will. The racial differentiation implied in Genesis 10:32, 18:18, and Matthew 25:32 will continue for eternity: Isaiah 2:4, Christologically interpreted (Sampson 1966:72).

The pentateuchal narrative of the tower of Babel played a particularly significant part in attempts to prove the legitimacy of apartheid. Babel, it was argued, proves that a false unity in

humanity was corrected by God (De Klerk 1939:56). This is thus a history of *grace*, showing the idea of apartheid to be "Scriptural,... Christian,... natural,... and just" (Wolmarans 1961:90; JD Vorster, quoted in Kinghorn 1986:107-108; cf. Villa-Vicencio 1977:27). Even the exodus adds to the argument: it is for "my *people*" that Moses claims national autonomy in Exodus 9:1 & 10:3. This distinction between nations was then traced in the New Testament as well: the Jerusalem congregation was for *Jewish Christians*; in their mission Jesus and his followers *differentiated* clearly between Jews and Greeks. Unity in Christ (Ephesians 4:4-6; Galatians 3:28; John 15:4-5; John 17; Ephesians 2 & 4 etc.) is therefore purely spiritual, never at the cost of diversity, and no more than a "supernatural organic communion" (Groenewald 1947:56-61; Federal Council 1960:7,8).

Hence it is clear: the Bible teaches *national* (Psalm 80:14; Isaiah 5:1-5; Philemon 3:4f; 1 Corinthians 7:18), *social* (Deuteronomy 7:2-4, Nehemiah 13:23), *occupational* (Deuteronomy 22:10; 2 Corinthians 6:14), *judicial* (1 Corinthians 6:1-11) and *religious* (Deuteronomy 7; John 17:14; 1 Corinthians 8:4-7 & 10:19-22; 2 Corinthians 6:14 & 7:1) apartheid (Groenewald 1947:51-55). In line with this, and taking the Genesis 19 narrative and Psalm 86:9 into consideration, it is thus impossible to accept "non-whites" into church membership (cf. Loader 1978:19). More extreme interpretations even used Genesis 9:25 and 10:6 to legitimate the oppression of blacks by whites (cf. Burden 1994:11-12).

With such a thought world providing the referential framework, a number of challenging issues arise, three of which are briefly touched upon: racially mixed marriages, the issue of domination, and exceptions to the rule.

Racially mixed marriages cut particularly close to the bone, since both the anxiety mentioned above and the much treasured clarity of borders between races became endangered by such *matrimonium mixtum* (cf. Verhoef 1961). Biblical support had to be sought here: Paul, it was argued, acknowledged racial differences (Galatians 3:28; 2 Corinthians 6:14) and accordingly rejected racially mixed marriages. It could thus be deduced from this that the distinction between civilised Christian nations and the lower nations closer to nature ("*natuurvolke*") has not been terminated; conversion to Christianity does not imply a merging of nations. Racially mixed marriages would only lower the standards of both nations involved, which cannot be God's will (De Klerk 1939:56-58; cf. Potgieter 1956:11). Inter-racial marriages was thus

considered a serious offence indeed against God's creation (e.g. *Geref. Kerk* 1964:457). It was such arguments which were used by the Afrikaans speaking churches for influencing government to comply to Scripture by banning inter-racial marriages (cf. Verhoef 1961:153-154).

An underlying uneasiness about *dominating* the majority of the country is to be detected among the Afrikaans speaking theologians of the time. However, by couching the issue in fitting concepts, the situation could be perceived as acceptable: the fact that the Bible shows some nations dominating others, and the reference in Galatians 4:2 to trusteeship, render such practices acceptable. One nation may lead another. However, such command must be used to the benefit of those dominated (Romans 14:15,21; 1 Corinthians 8:9-13; Matthew 25:31f). For such service towards self-reliance, leading to territorial segregation, those dominated should be grateful (Groenewald 1947:61-65). In South Africa particularly, this indebtedness should be acknowledged, because the local white settlers were much more Christian in their practices than their counterparts on other continents (Wolmarans 1978:88).

Concepts such as election and covenant were used in such a context, though interpreted in a "narrow and chauvinistic" sense (Villa-Vicencio 1989:14), with Afrikaners having a holy calling to bring some light of Christian civilisation to dark Africa (cf. Moila 1991:31-32), though never equality (cf. Du Toit 1959:8-9). This "divine racism" (Moila 1991:32) interpreted election to mean "separateness" rather than a "holiness of instrumentality or servanthood" (Maimela 1987:27), despite its intentions to the converse.

Exceptions to the uncovered divine rule of segregation had to be accounted for as well. "Anomalies" in the Bible, such as the examples of Rahab of Jericho, Ruth's marriage to Boaz, Timothy's parentage and the proselites within Israel were simply stated to be mere peculiarities which do not lessen the general rule of apartheid (Groenewald 1947:57; *Ned. Herv. of Geref. Kerk* 1948:282,284). The parable of the good Samaritan can also not be used to deny the aims of apartheid, because "after the Samaritan's ministrations ... (they) went their own separate ways". Similarly, "love thy neighbour" (cf. *Herderlike skrywe* 1973:71), "I was hungry and you gave me food", and "created in God's image" do not imply any equality other than spiritual. Rather, "charity ... itself postulates the earthly inequality of man" (Sampson 1966:65-71). In history, the rare mixing of nations had as purpose an

increase in the number of nations, and through such an increase greater glory is given to the Creator (Groenewald 1947:49; *Ned. Herv. of Geref. Kerk* 1948:284). Such exceptions should thus not be held as being of any normative value.

It seems from a cursory glance that racial segregation as applied to church, society and matrimony was indeed accepted as being biblically mandated - at least earlier on - by some of those churches *against* whom racial segregation was practiced (e.g. Dutch Reformed Mission Church 1953:5,9; *Ned. Geref. Sendingkerk* 1962:264; though not by all - *Wynberg Ring* 1948:9-11; Dutch Reformed Church in Africa 1973:318). This seeming anomaly is however clarified once one realises that the ministers finding such biblical sanction pro-apartheid were often ministers of the *Ned. Geref. Kerk* serving in what was then known as the "daughter churches".

With increasing pressures brought to bear on the Afrikaans language churches regarding their Bible sanctioned pro-apartheid stance, a need for new systematic accounts arose. The two most influential church documents in this regard are "*Ras, volk en nasie...*" and "*Kerk en Samelewing*".

Ras, Volk en Nasie was intended to take the sting out of the *Ned. Geref. Kerk*'s finding of direct biblical support for apartheid. While *Ras, Volk en Nasie* (1974:11) thus acknowledges that the Bible does not know apartheid, the refined rhetorics (intended not to offend those within the *Ned. Geref. Kerk* who differed?) do not question received apartheid ideas (cf. Kinghorn 1986:105). In the concept of "cultural diversity" (cf. *Ras, Volk en Nasie* 1974:12f) a hermeneutical key was found to keep supporting apartheid (Hexham 1980:44). Similarly, while *Ras, Volk en Nasie* (1974:98) accepts that no biblical texts specifically disavow racially mixed marriages, nonetheless the term "specifically" ("*letterlik*") is interpreted as meaning that *by implication* the Bible indeed provides guidelines (cf. Van Wyk 1976:104) for such a rejection. Added to this, practical circumstances were now being seen as justifying government's continued ban on such marriages (e.g. *Ned. Geref. Kerk* 1974:479).

In brief, despite the declared rejection of biblicistic interpretation in *Ras, Volk en Nasie*, its "dehistoricising interpretation" (Von Allmen 1977:6-9), insisting on eternal principles, shows differently. It could be argued that perhaps the insistence on a Christomonistic interpretation of the New Testament *and* the Old Testament (*Ras, Volk en Nasie* 1974:9) opened a methodological door for such a-historical interpretations.

The fact that Christ *must* be found in the Old Testament implies that plain textual context is traded in for more general, received truths (cf. Von Allmen 1977:7-8). Having done this with the Old Testament, the finding of eternal truths on race in the whole of the Bible is but a small step to take. The hermeneutics is consistent; the results, more than questionable.

Such official pronouncements of "no evidence" on apartheid in the Bible were however not broadly accepted within the church (cf. De Blank 1964:8-9). Neither were black people's day-to-day experiences changed by such pronouncements (cf. Maimela 1987:44). This "discrepancy between the profession of 'in Christ, neither Greek nor Jew' and the practice of 'in Christ, separate development only'" did not go by unnoticed by anti-apartheid theologians (Hopkins 1989:30).

Kerk en Samelewing, similarly to *Ras, Volk en Nasie*, also explicitly acknowledges that the Bible cannot be used to determine politics (*Kerk en Samelewing* 1986:8,53). Once again, though, it deduces indications, regulations, demands and principles ("riglyne", "voorskrifte", "eise", "Skryfbeginsels" - *Kerk en Samelewing* 1986:23-24,41) for relations between racial groups so that, after all, church pronouncement and contemporary state ideology were not far removed (W Nicol 1988:127). It seems that between Groenewald's 1947-work and *Kerk en Samelewing* four decades later, the use of the Bible had qualitatively not changed much (Kinghorn 1990:73-75). *Kerk en Samelewing* did not reflect a biblical challenge to think and theologise anew (NM Kritzing 1989:79-81).

To review: although the Afrikaans language churches denied being theologically fundamentalist (e.g. *Ras, Volk en Nasie* 1974:8,9), both the popular view from outside (e.g. Sparks 1994:7, cf. 99-100) and the views of theologians from inside these churches (e.g. Loader 1978:14-29; Le Roux 1994:9-10) are less optimistic in this regard. The three large Afrikaans language churches, despite their differences, used the Bible in much the same manner (Loader 1978:21). Pro-apartheid interpretations took no cognizance of the distinction between history and pre-history (so still *Kerk en Samelewing* 1986:21; cf. Villa-Vicencio 1977:25), perhaps because the concept of revelation, even oracle, took primacy over the view of the Bible as a temporal document. Furthermore, the meaning of biblical texts were stretched in order to fit the desired meaning (cf. Durand 1978:5). Selectivity and assigned interpretative keys, leading to exclusive interpretations, were added to this hermeneutical construct. The result was a

Bible which legitimated, indeed, demanded apartheid of the Christian world if we were to be obedient.

THE BIBLE ANTI-APARTHEID

Few parallels to the pro-apartheid urgency of finding apartheid in the Bible can be found in the anti-apartheid readings of the Bible, viz. in that chapters, books and large sections of church documents were devoted to extracting verses on apartheid. This does not detract from the fact, however, that anti-apartheid readers dealt methodologically with the Bible in much the same manner as did their pro-apartheid counterparts. The less abundant literature in this regard may conceivably be attributed to factors such as a shorter tradition of theological writings among particularly black theologians, less access to publishers and printers than their white counterparts, a tradition of oral rather than written presentation of arguments, and the like. Research into the anti-apartheid use of the Bible is therefore more difficult than the study of pro-apartheid readings of the Bible, forcing one to make greater use of qualitative analyses of a smaller number of cases, which brings with it greater dangers of misconstrual.

From the extant writings, however, one gets the impression that while much writing was done on hermeneutics by local black theologians (cf. Kretzschmar 1986:75-82 for a summary), less was done in practical exegesis (Mbiti 1986:55). This could perhaps explain to some extent the tendency of the anti-apartheid use of the Bible to be "unsophisticated", "simplistic" and "uncritical" (Mpumlwana 1993:8). Our situation in front of the text (West 1995:64-70,131ff; cf. Mosotoane 1978:31) simply carried more weight than the historical situation behind the text; the immediate applicability of texts took primacy over truly exegetical studies (Motlhabi 1987:9-11; cf. Parratt 1987:150).

The hermeneutical key of liberation theology remains "the poor" (cf. e.g. Burden 1994:8; *Rustenburg Declaration* 1990:4.1.1). Very often it is stated that the God of the Bible is on the side of the weak and oppressed (e.g. Goba 1988:97; Boesak 1993:194; *Kairos Document* 1986:25-26,28). In the Bible God sides with the suffering and marginalised, never with those in power (cf. Abrahams 1994:246-247,252). Liberation is thus understood "as being at the very heart of" the theological disciplines, an approach which "believes itself to be true and faithful to Scripture" (Mosothoane 1978:29).

Two texts which feature prominently in anti-apartheid theology are the exodus narrative and Luke 4:18-19 (Kretzschmar 1986:80,

cf. Motlhabi 1987:6-8; PGR de Villiers 1987:55-73). In each case, the oppressed in South African society were identified specifically with those who were to be set free in these biblical texts. The oppressed became the new Israel: where this association was used religiously, it was applied to give comfort; where used politically, however, it was often "to legitimate immoral acts" (Maimela 1987:27). As to Luke 4, its frequent citing has much to do with a perceived need to add authority to the views of anti-apartheid theologians (Mosothoane 1978:31), and less to do with thorough exegesis of the meaning of this passage within *its* (as opposed to *our*) situational and textual context.

Church declarations against apartheid which were well stated, seem often to have been accompanied by biblical references which were less well considered (e.g. *Statement* 1991:266-268). Once again, it seems that quotations from the Bible were added in order to legitimate assertions of the declaration drafters. The uneasy fit between sound socio-political pronouncements and doubtful exegetical bases leaves one wondering: could it be that the biblical references were added on at later stages? (This practice is not unknown with church documents through the centuries, up to and including the *Kairos Document* 1986:18-20.) In a similar vein, to state that peace in South Africa could only come through/after justice, may hold true in our modern understanding of the terms. However, to call Matthew 5:9 ("Blessed are the peacemakers...") in support (SACBC 1990:7), does that text no justice.

In such official church declarations against apartheid, a more satisfying mention of the Bible is also to be found. Biblical texts are namely alluded to, a practice which is credible in that it acknowledges, or at the very least hints at acceptance of the vastly different worlds of an ancient set of circumstances referred to in the Bible and some modern predicament. Yet, such an approach recognises its indebtedness, in some unspecified way, to the Bible and the specific text mentioned, in constituting the current declaration. So, for example, Jeremiah 21:8 may be alluded to, while radically and overtly reinterpreting its meaning so that adherence to apartheid now becomes the way of death, the way of life being the dismantling of apartheid (SACBC 1990:5). The allusion does not seek to read a condemnation of apartheid directly into the Bible; it does, however, solicit some resemblances between the settings then and now to come to a roughly comparable proclamation (similarly the *Kairos Document* - so Deist 1987:144-145). Likewise, the *Belhar Declaration*

(1982/1986) - although one could (*contra* Van Niekerk 1996:449-451) criticise the use of the texts listed in support of its assertions, printed in bold - does not seek to enlist biblical texts to justify the overtly anti-apartheid pronouncements, i.e. those parts printed in italics.

In most cases, however, such a "tentative" validation of opinions against apartheid would not be sufficient. The circumstances of the struggle against racial discrimination demanded a smooth, closed system of interpretation which would provide secure answers to troubling issues. The sensitive issue of racially mixed marriages provides a good case in point:

In arguing in favour of acceptance of racially mixed marriages, the *Spro-cas* document *Apartheid and the church* (1972:88) contends that the Old Testament does in fact show marriage between people of different nations (Exodus 2:16f, Numbers 10:29, Judges 1:16 & 4:11), and even of different races (Numbers 12:1) during Moses' life. What is more, Miriam "is punished for her prejudice against mixed marriage, which God approves" (AB du Preez 1959:67 makes for interesting comparisons in this regard). The Old Testament (2Samuel 18:21; Jeremiah 38:7ff & 39:15ff) also accepts black people living among Israel (*Spro-cas* 1972:88).

The rhetorical set-up of such reasoning should of course be borne in mind: the intention is to show, against pro-apartheid readings of the Bible, that the Old Testament knows and indeed accepts unrestricted inter-racial contact. The implied conclusion is that in our times no principled objection to such contact would therefore stand exegetical investigation. However, despite these rhetorical designs, for our purposes the similarity between such a use of the Bible and the pro-apartheid interpretations described above, seem clear.

In the interpretation of the Bible in the anti-apartheid movement, it was once again the Old Testament which was most frequently used. Without any exposition, a text such as Isaiah 8:1-8 would be applied directly to the South African political situation (Tutu 1982:27-30). In the same way as Isaiah of Jerusalem (Nolan 1990:14) and Jeremiah 6:14 (Zulu 1964:304) proclaimed a false peace within Israel, so was this true of South Africa. This situation in South Africa was therefore inconsistent with the creation theology of Genesis 1 and 2 - with these texts read as a unit and with meaning attributed beyond what the text properly allows for (Boesak 1982:243-248). In such reasoning the idea of humankind as the "image of God" (Genesis 1:26) is frequently used (e.g. Freeland 1961:19-27), without much exegetical grounding of the

phrase, however, and with much attribution of meaning from modern philosophical conceptions on the worth of humans.

The conclusion one can draw from such straight-forward applications of the Old Testament is that the situational parallels between the circumstances ancient and modern enticed theologians to cross the bridge of centuries too quickly, as if it were a highway. The observed pile-up of apartheid on our end of this bridge was too engrossing a view for anti-apartheid theologians to carefully note the dangers of the exegetical routes taken by them. The Bible was often little more than a vehicle of authority intended to help clear up the mess at the crossroads ahead.

Much the same can be said with regard to the use of the New Testament. For instance, in the quest to biblically base the issue of reconciliation, texts such as Colossians 3:11 were used (SACBC 1985:224). However, in applying such texts to the South African situation, the meaning of the term reconciliation was stretched to cross the divide between a small, ancient congregation and a broad, modern society. Indeed, many church documents in their use of the concept of reconciliation jump too easily from the contexts of the New Testament church to the different racial groups in Southern Africa (W Nicol 1988:124; cf. Villa-Vicencio 1988:161-162; exceptions include *Spro-cas* 1972:89-91). That reconciliation between *Christians* in South Africa, i.e. "within the church", would have been a more appropriate application of Colossians 3, and the indication that a broader societal scope may indeed be fruitfully gained from texts such as 2 Corinthians 5:19 and Colossians 1:20, was left to professional exegetes such as Breytenbach (1986:16-20) to indicate. The socio-political involvement of theologians caught up in a struggle against apartheid seemed not to have allowed for meticulous exegesis as a point of departure.

The point of departure of anti-apartheid theologians may perhaps be the primary cause for some rather unacceptable anti-apartheid readings of the Bible. This starting point is the insistence that the only tenable reading of the Bible is to take the poor, weak, oppressed, suffering, marginalised etc., as a starting point. Such a view ignores at least two matters: that the Old Testament, and to some extent the New Testament as well, was largely written by a small powerful elite in such a way as to serve its purposes. This, at the very least, obscures our accepted boundaries between the poor and the powerful. In the second place, we must not forget that many parts of the Bible indeed

legitimate authorities (cf. Chikane 1988:157,162-165; Mosala 1993:247-248), despite the fact that those authorities would measure up poorly to our current moral sensitivities. It will thus have to be accepted that some texts just do not fit a hermeneutics of the poor. Furthermore, some texts are open to disparate interpretations (cf. Le Roux 1987:33-44 on Isaiah 61; Le Roux 1992). Such texts are, however, not mentioned in the anti-apartheid readings of the Bible.

To a large extent, the points made in the closing paragraph on the pro-apartheid use of the Bible above may be repeated here. The adding of a designated hermeneutical key (leading to exclusive interpretations), the problems of selectivity and overextended textual meaning, and the periodic absence of the distinction between history and pre-history in the biblical texts are also found in the anti-apartheid readings of the Bible. The interpretative methodologies of the two camps in the apartheid debate thus show close affinity.

A HORSE SHOE OF INTERPRETATION

If a comparison is made of the use of the Bible by those on the two sides of the apartheid debate (cf. Deist 1987:127ff), it seems that the *methodology* of interpretation did not reflect the political opposition of the "adversaries" involved (cf. Mosala 1987:1-65). Whereas the two sides could be placed politically at opposite ends of a straight line, their respective readings and application of the Bible do not reflect such a polarity (so too Snyman 1994:175-177). The straight line of political opposition should rather be curved into the shape of a horse shoe¹, with the two ends quite close to each other, to accurately reflect the respective uses of the biblical texts. Ideological opposites, it seems, do not necessarily imply exegetical and hermeneutical opposites. Differently formulated: a deep attachment and a commitment to a cause does not bode well for scientifically responsible exegesis (cf. Bauckham 1989:4).

Such semblances do not suggest that there are no differences between the use of the Bible pro- and anti-apartheid. For instance, the pro-apartheid interpretation makes more of creation (especially in its later phase), the anti-apartheid interpretation prefers the exodus (cf. Mosothoane 1978:29-31; Abrahams 1994:249); the former demands acceptance of the created order (understood as including the political *status quo* - cf. Durand 1985:49), the latter stresses change; the former seeks thus to uphold a past, the latter seeks to build a new future (cf. Govender 1980:77-78; Snyman 1994:175-176). These commitments led,

broadly speaking, to Genesis 1-11, for example, being given a stronger voice pro-apartheid, with Exodus, Amos and Luke being heard more clearly in anti-apartheid circles. (This is a very broad distinction, though, not to be absolutised: cf. e.g. Groenewald 1947:56-57, and Beckers 1969:122-127 on the early Afrikaner use of the exodus; on the anti-apartheid use of creation - Boesak 1982:243-248; De Blank 1964:11; SACBC 1985:223-224.) The same texts could also receive vastly different treatments by the opposing groups (e.g. SACBC 1988:9 *versus* Sampson 1966:65f on the parable of the Good Samaritan).

One can, however, conclude that for pro-apartheid theology the *diversity* of humanity in the Bible was held to be definitive for faith, church and society; for anti-apartheid theology the *unity* of humanity in the Bible directed such matters. In both instances, however, a strong case can be made that this view of humanity was first detected socially and then discovered biblically. As a corollary, each side found only its view reflected in God's Word, ignoring the reality that the opposing view might also be found in biblical literature.

The acceptance of the Bible as having instrumental value for modern socio-political concerns (West 1995:62; Deist 1994a:36-38), was thus accompanied by the practice of a purely "referential" (Burden 1978:25) and therefore selective use of the Bible (cf. Motlhabi 1987:8-9 & BB Keet as discussed by Kinghorn 1986:112). Perhaps *the* example in this regard is provided by the "two chapters 13": rebels read Revelation, rulers read Romans (W Nicol 1988:128; Mosothoane 1978:32-33; cf. *Kairos Document* 1986:3-5). The Bible had become - to both sides in this debate - "a *political source book*" (Oosthuizen 1968:164), and a mono-perspectival one at that. Religion and culture (Synnott 1995:69-70) or religion and politics were identified with one another.

Once one has gained some understanding of the socio-political and emotional commitments of any group of readers of the Bible, one is often tempted to judge people less critically on their use of Scripture. Thorough exegesis is frequently passed over in order to get to the real issue which concerns the speaker/writer (cf. e.g. Buti 1977:5-9). This method of using the Bible is indicative of at least two characteristics common to such readers:

1. reference to the Bible is regarded as important, because these are people trying, in their own manner, yet on similar premises, to live in accordance with Scripture (cf. Deist 1994b:255-257); and

2. more often than not the need for an authority greater than their own in arguing the case at hand seems evident (cf. WS Vorster 1984:213-217).

Consequently, reference to the Bible does not in the first instance reflect reverence for the Bible as a historical document. Respect for a biblical passage in its original setting(s) is less important than securing a biblical message for today. Wanamaker's remark (1989:17-18) on the relation between an inerrant view of biblical authority and an erring use of biblical texts thus holds more or less true for both sides involved in the apartheid debate. The vital distinction "between (confessing the) authority (of Scripture) and (actually using Scripture for) authorisation" (Smit 1994:288) should be taken more seriously. Equally significant in this regard is the differentiation Bauckham (1989:6) draws between reading the Bible as instructions for or alternatively as instructive to one's life. The Bible should, as Deist (1982:50, cf. 8-18,47-57) suggests, be seen less as teaching and more as attesting to. GE Lessing's famous *garstige Grabe* must be taken seriously.

GUARDING THE GATES TO EDEN

The living Christian faith is not a-historical; neither is the Bible. Together both relate to our concrete existence *coram Deo*. Taking this existence with God (cf. Combrink 1986:218) as a point of departure, our *Christian identity* should steer our relations with all people (SACBC 1990:7). This identity is not primarily *kata sarka*, but *kata pneuma* (Breytenbach 1988:55,63; cf. W Nicol 1988:124) - something which has not always been easily exemplified by the church as an institution (Villa-Vicencio 1988:193-220). Examples nevertheless *do* exist of South African Christians with diverse political opinions together explaining the implications of their faith (e.g. Cottesloe Consultation 1961, before the matter exploded into controversy).

Such attempts are of course not without problems (see DE de Villiers & Smit 1995:39ff and the literature cited there). Notwithstanding this, it seems to remain broadly accepted that political readings of the Bible are both inevitable and necessary, with the proviso, however, that such attempts seek never to legitimate and always to remain self-critical (cf. e.g. Snyman 1994:178-179).

Some measures have therefore been proposed to gatekeep against broad political misuse of the Bible. These include

(following Bauckham 1989:18-19) continued study of biblical texts, reading publications by exegetes from socio-political milieux different from one's own, a critical awareness of our world, and making more of the study of the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of biblical texts (cf. PGR de Villiers 1988:9; Breytenbach 1986:17-19). To the fourth suggestion may be appended encouragement of the growing interest in the historiography of biblical studies (e.g. Le Roux 1993; West 1995).

In addition to these measures, the increased awareness that the divide between biblical scholars and ordinary readers of the Bible should be bridged (West 1992:10; 1995:80), must be commended. Projects such as those by Vosloo (1989) and Wittenberg (1991) ought to be, and indeed are being expanded upon. Furthermore, the cultivation of an appreciation of hermeneutical problems is undoubtedly a step in the right direction (PGR de Villiers 1988:9).

Pobee's suggestion (1987:31) should also be taken seriously. Pobee envisages a combination of confessionality with a *religionsgeschichtliche* approach in biblical studies (a vision which was, at least in part, fulfilled by Albertz 1992a & 1992b). A delicate balance between these two aspects of confessionality and *Religionsgeschichte* might indeed help to combine security of faith with insight into the relativity of what we believe (cf. Deist 1994b:259), in such a way as to perhaps lighten the frightening burden of Platonic truths which are too often required of Scripture and faith. In such a way, the biblical *diversity of theologies* (which Loader 1978:11 calls "theologies and counter-theologies") could find sound reflection in our words about God.

These seven suggestions, among others, intend to improve and broaden understanding of the nature of the Bible and its communication with contemporary believers; they aim to regulate access to an Eden of innocent reading.

Despite any and all such measures, I remain, however, sceptical. These and other proposals provide no guarantees that the Bible will not in future be interpreted in a one-sided manner, in favour of some socio-political cause(s). The application of the Bible to any current ethos is indeed often "very naive, misleading and dangerous" (Smit 1994:287). Furthermore, principles which are not biblical, but are nonetheless ethically satisfying and well suited to Christian sensibilities (cf. Keet 1957:2), are frequently presented as biblical morality (cf. Rustenburg Declaration 1990:4.2.4). When God is "completely domesticated" (Maimela 1987:36; cf. Deist 1987:128-129) to one's own cause, the Bible

will continue to make supporting pronouncements, exclusively, to such readers. Measures such as those proposed above can merely aspire to making such roads somewhat less travelled.

CLOSING THE GATES TO EDEN

My - admittedly hesitant - submittance, drawing on the above, is the following: that the Bible cannot legitimately be used for modern-day political pronouncements. The use of the Bible to discuss politics subverts its intentions in two ways: the contextual messages of the ancient texts are largely discarded, and the biblical texts habitually serve but to legitimate. Neither of these features accord the Bible its authentic place as a book of faith. The use of the Bible for political assertions should therefore not be regarded as warranted practice.

This position, formulated rather bluntly in order to drive the point home (a more nuanced statement might add "at least not in the heat of the debate" or "at least not in this way"), will probably not be accepted by many readers of the Bible. The question may well be asked, if the Bible does not address our political context, does the Bible address us at all? My suspicion is, however, that the old and still prevalent popular view, that the Bible must be an accurate *book of history* if it is to be credible at all, has been transposed to include the political sphere as well. Similarly then, and perhaps even more broadly accepted, the Bible is held to be a relevant *book of politics* if it is to be credible and relevant at all. Perhaps such a view needs questioning.

It is in no way my intention to suggest withdrawal into a-political pietism. The Bible presents, often in surprising ways, a faith which has a profound political impact. My point is, however, that faith itself, and not the political impact, is the message in/of the Bible. This *faith* has many implications, in all spheres of life. But the same faith can both support and oppose a government (the Chronicler versus the Deuteronomistic Historian, Romans 13 versus Revelation 13). The politics, it seems, is incidental. Life *coram Deo*, whatever the broader societal situation, is the primary focus of biblical texts. The faithfuls' relation to and interpretation of this context changes; politics is not the message. To adapt media critic Marshall McLuhan's well known phrase: *the medium* (of conveying a view of the context) *is the message*; that is *faith*. "Politics cannot do what the gospel and the Spirit can do..." (Bauckham 1989:10). The true message of the church should not be allowed to get lost within the "political carnival" (Ellul 1986:130).

Christian *faith*, however, in the proper all-encompassing concept of it, will touch on politics. The faithful, to be such, will not withdraw from political pronouncements and actions where such are needed. To be true to the nature of the Bible, we should however not project such concerns of ours into Scripture. The Bible does not know democracy and human rights as the prime political and social values in the same way as we do; neither did it know apartheid and group rights as such values. It provides no such gardens of Eden for us to return to. The Bible, however, knows of the practical implications of a life of faith in diverse contexts.

CONCLUSION

To (in)form our decisions and practices in life, Christians refer to the Bible as the authoritative guide. Such guidance may, phenomenologically speaking, be sought from any other source. It is, however, because of what Luther would call the internal *claritas scripturae* and what Calvin would call the *testimonium Spiritus Sancti internum* (cf. Rossouw 1963:229-246), that it is indeed the *Bible* to which Christians refer. It is through this subjective involvement with the Bible as the Word of God that we, as individual Christians and as church(es), seek to live in accordance with Scripture. We cannot, however, live as clones of either ancient Israel or the early church; our worlds are too dissimilar. We can try, however, in our own time and place, to present the biblical God to the world in the best way we see fit.

It was the *objective truths* of the previous two centuries which led to much suffering (so too Du Plessis 1992:3-4,13). Perhaps then, it is through our *subjective faith* that we may step onto better paths in what one hopes might be a better century. In sincerity we have to acknowledge to ourselves that our faith and practices are born "neither from the whole of the Bible, nor from the Bible alone" (Deist 1978:58). Our faith is rather (in)formed by (expanding on Wogaman 1993:1-22) Scripture, Christian history and tradition, experience, our thoughts and actions and those of others, the church, philosophy, societal norms and practices - all these and more, in different and ever changing measures. Such is the path of individual *and* communal Christian faith; it cannot claim clear objectivity.

Such paths do indeed seem more fragile than the secure truths often demanded of Bible and belief. But - with Krentz 1975:67; cf. Deist 1994b:257-262 - is that not truer to the nature of our faith?

The Bible in the apartheid debate

NOTES

1. I borrow this metaphor from the South African political communicator dr Paul Vorster.

THE BIBLE IN THE APARTHEID DEBATE

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2.7 Publication 4: Introduction

“The left governing hand and the right governing hand: begging for a church without public hands?” *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 109 (March 2001), 17-24. (From paper read at 2000 conference of the Southern African Society for Biblical and Religious Studies).

This article analyses the ways in which, since 1994, different and even contradictory messages have been communicated by the South African government on the continuation of the study of religion at state universities. From these pronouncements, an attempt - the first, and until the formulation of the controversial recent school policy on religion education¹, only attempt - is made at fathoming the underlying, unstated thinking on matters religious within influential government circles.

Special reference to this research was made in the *Research Report 2001* of the University of Pretoria².

Of the five recurring themes within my research on how the Bible was brought to communication within different spheres of the South African society, indicated in the the overview of the publications under review here, four apply as follows to this specific publication:

- Theme 1 – Integrity: This theme comes to this fore in this article in the analysis of the strategic lack of integrity and cohesion of communication from government about religion. While on the one hand dismissing the importance of academic study of (aspects of) religion, government insists that faith-based organisations get involved in helping it solve the country's problems. This communicative dilemma is indicated and reacted upon in this article.

¹ Cf. Lombaard 2003:13 / <http://www.naspers.com/cgi/nph-bwcgis/RAPPORT/rapport/alg/storie/DDW?W%3DNAAMLYN%20PH%20IS%20%27Christo%20Lombaard%27%26M%3D2%26K%3D440040%26R%3DY%26U%3D1>

² Cf. www.up.ac.za/services/research/report2001/ , more specifically: <http://www.up.ac.za/services/research/report2001/highlights/afr/index.html> , under "Theology".

- Theme 3 – Rhetorical functionality: Here the Bible, particularly in its academic setting in the form of the university subject of Biblical Studies, is indicated as used by government spokespersons to communicate – albeit not altogether intentionally! – a decidedly negative view of religion within influential circles of the governing political party. Precisely because no clear policy on religion had been formulated by the governing party (that is only slowly becoming a reality now, and may not be entirely accurate, because views on religion and spirituality are at present changing within these circles), different and even opposing sentiments on the role of faith in society has been conveyed.
- Theme 4 – Communicative imbalances: The divergent views communicated by government on religion certainly stood the highly religious South African society in no good stead. This is seen most clearly at the moment in the current confusion on religious observance and religion education at state schools in South Africa.
- Theme 5 – Insights on religion provided by communication studies: Here the ability gleaned in different ways from both communication studies and the exegesis of religious texts, namely to read between the lines and to deduce underlying currents of thought from scarce pronouncements/documents, has made it possible to draw the outlines of an unspoken policy on religion that informs government thinking and actions in this regard. The accuracy of this deduced policy has since been confirmed by means of informal discussions with the religion desk of the ruling party, and with reference to poorly distributed documents by the ruling party in which religion is touched on in some ways.

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THE LEFT GOVERNING HAND AND THE RIGHT GOVERNING HAND: Begging for a church without public hands?¹

Christo Lombaard

ABSTRACT

This article seeks to fathom current government policy on religion in South Africa. No formal policy on religious matters exists, with the result that pronouncements by government officials relating to matters religious are at times contradictory. Yet, strands of thinking within government circles may be deduced from such pronouncements. Two tenets of this unformalised policy which may be detected are proposed: first, what may be termed a "flat" view of religions, and second, a South African variation of the trend towards the separation of church and state. Reasons are submitted why government policy should affirm a positive role for religion and the church in society, including universities.

1. Introduction

Since its rise to power in 1994, the present government has not pronounced a single, coherent policy on religion. Matters of faith are not alone in this regard, of course. It takes some time, always, for a revolutionary movement such as the African National Congress (and its alliance partners) to come to terms with practical governing. Opposition rhetoric frequently finds expression only with difficulty, and after political compromises and disillusioning engagement with reality, in coherent, formal governing policy². This dynamic was seen in South Africa too, most dramatically,

¹ Paper read at the congress of the South African Society for Biblical Studies and Religious Education, 12 May 2000, at the Vaal Triangle Campus, Vanderbijl Park, of the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education. My thanks to Prof. J. R. Cochrane, University of Cape Town, for pointing me towards the relevant RICS materials and to Ms E. Kern for making available the relevant seminar material of the Goethe Institut (Johannesburg).

² Cf. J. R. Cochrane, "The making and unmaking of public life", *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 100 (March 1998) 87-89.

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initially, in the field of economic policy³, but also in other fields such as international relations⁴, the military⁵ and, less visibly, but for our purposes here importantly, religion.

The closest South Africa comes to a policy on religious matters is in the Bill of Rights (specifically Section 15, Chapter 2 of the South African Constitution), which guarantees freedom of religion, belief and opinion - assurances which find application in legislation such as The Employment Equity Act (No. 55 of 1998), particularly Chapter 2 of the Act, titled "Prohibition of Unfair Discrimination". This absence of any formal policy on religion is slightly surprising, considering the religious nature of South African society by and large, as is also attested to by the not infrequent religious references made, formerly, by members of the South African Constitutional Assembly⁶ and, now, by members of Parliament⁷.

In the absence of formal policy on any particular matter, it is to be expected that different government officials will at times make discordant public statements. I would like to point out such practice on the matter of religion.

2. *Conflicting signs*

Our concern here is with the conflicting signs sent by government, via its officials, on its relationship with the church (by which I mean the Christian churches). On the one hand, the church is frequently implored by senior government officials to render assistance with a myriad matters which demand the attention of an under-resourced government⁸. These matters include, in no particular order, the HIV/AIDS-pandemic,

³ I refer here to the change in ANC economic policy from nationalisation of large enterprises to free market principles, a change perhaps most dramatically highlighted by the remark by the Minister of Finance on the "amorphous entity called the market" early in 1996. Cf. S. J. Terreblanche, "The ideological journey of South Africa: from the RDP to the GEAR macro-economic plan" (www.ricsa.org.za/me99, 1999) 80-96, especially 84-85, and M. Pothier, "The Poverty of Policy" (www.ricsa.org.za/me99, 1999) 98-101, especially 98.

⁴ Cf. C. Landsberg and Z. Masiza, "Strategic ambiguity or ambiguous strategy? foreign policy since the 1994 election", *Policy: Issues and Actors* 5, no. 11 (October 1995) 11ff and H. Solomon, "In search of a South African foreign policy", *Fairy godmother, hegemon or partner? in search of a South African foreign policy*, ISS Monograph Series no. 13 (May 1997) ed. H. Solomon (Halfway House: Institute for Security Studies) 1-2.

⁵ Policy matters have developed very slowly, even coming to a standstill, since the publication of the *White paper on defence: defence in democracy*, as approved by the South African Parliament, May 1996. See particularly Chapter 2, 53-58. See also <http://www.mil.za/Secretariat/Main%20Secretariat.html> on the *White paper on defence*. Although this document was to have been followed up with a document spelling out the practicalities of South African defence policy, the latter document is yet to be published.

⁶ J. Botha, "Appeal to religious authority in the South African constitutional assembly", *Scriptura* 67 (1998) 303-334.

⁷ J. de Gruchy, J. Cochrane, S. Martin, K. Davey and H. Mchlauli, "Theological reflection on public policy: representing Christianity in the South African parliament. A draft RICSA document", *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 98 (July 1997) 81-88.

⁸ B. Turok, "On RDP & GEAR: governing under constraints" (www.ricsa.org.za/me99, 1999) 96-97.

crime, poverty, race and gender relations, unemployment, the third world debt problem and the moral decay of society. On these matters and more, the church renders services government is simply unable to provide, and government has come to rely on the church, among other institutions, to yield such assistance. In this respect then, it seems that the present government has a very positive view of the church and its activities through which the population of the country is served.

On the other hand, though, the present Minister of Finance has on at least two occasions - one of which was in Parliament - publicly and conspicuously questioned the sense of continued funding of, by name, Biblical Studies departments at state universities. With Biblical Studies lying at the core of the identity of the Christian church⁹, such remarks are perceived by many theologians, clerics and lay persons as a threat to the integrity and the identity of the church.

In order to understand these divergent types of remarks made by government officials, perhaps it will make sense to try to fathom the strands of thought behind them.

3. *An attempt at deducing informal "policy" on religion*

One problem encountered when attempting to deduce thinking on religion in government circles, is precisely the dissociated public remarks made by government officials identified earlier. However, we are not left without any other resources in this regard. Apart from a general impression one gains from media reports that touch on this matter, two important recent events have also added some insight. The first was the 1997 seminar titled "Spiritual power for nation-building", co-hosted by the World Conference on Religion and Peace - South Africa (WCRP-SA) and the Goethe-Institut in Johannesburg, at which various contributors from church and political life put on the table some of their perspectives on the relation between church and state in South Africa¹⁰. The second event took place in 1999. Dubbed the "Multi-Event 1999"¹¹, this conference organised by the Research Institute on Christianity in South Africa (RICSA), University of Cape Town, produced additional valuable insights towards this matter.

Drawing on these sources, I would suggest, as a way of initiating debate, that the kind of policy on religion with which influential figures in government would feel most comfortable would develop along two lines: firstly, what I would call a "flat" religious view, and second, a non-American type of separation between church and state.

9 Cf. e.g. C. Lombaard, "The bible and ecumenism", *Essays and exercises in ecumenism*, ed. C. Lombaard (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 1999) 34-35.

10 For the background to this seminar, cf. M. Rick "Introduction", in WCRP-SA: *spiritual power for nation-building* (Johannesburg: Goethe-Institut, 1998) 4-7.

11 For, respectively, the background to and a summary of the results of the Multi-Event 1999, cf. G. Walters, S. W. Martin and J. R. Cochrane, "Constructing a language of religion in public life", *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 103 (March 1999) 64-87; and J. R. Cochrane, "Religion in public life and the Multi-Event 1999", *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 104 (July 1999) 54-58.

3.1 Tenet 1: A “flat” view of religions

The first of these two lines entails the idea that all religions are equal, not only before the law, but also coram Deo.

Only religious extremists in modern Westernised states would suggest that one religion should by law be given preference above others¹². In the Western-type government current in South Africa, this view is possibly held by those responsible for the Cape Town bombing incidents of late¹³, and pinned for in some Christian circles. It remains, thus, a minority view by far.

The view that all religions should be equal in the eyes of the state seems, however, at times to be translated into a religious principle. In a philosophical, rather than a more appropriate historical interpretation of religion, the view is held that all religions provide ways to the same deity. This interpretation of religion finds its more direct, modern (and related) roots in traditional Indian and Eastern religions, in the philosophy of - most influentially - John Hick¹⁴, and in what is often called “New Age” religious thinking¹⁵, which has risen to popular recognition in Westernised countries over the past three decades. It is also a comfortable position to hold for a government that finds a broad spectrum of religions and non-religions represented both in its own make-up and in the populace it serves.

This view that all religions are equal not only before the law, but also in essence, could be termed a “flat” view of religions: it glosses over historical, dogmatic, liturgical and a host of other differences between religions¹⁶. Even in the face of claims to exclusive truth inherent to the main stream of many of these religions (claims which need not imply religious intolerance, yet comfortably retain a communicative

12 We must not overlook the fact, though, that this is indeed the case in a number of non-Western states, perhaps most noticeably in the Middle East; nor should we forget the religious conflicts simmering in countries such as Nigeria, Malaysia and India. For a broad introductory overview, cf. D. Westerlund (ed.), *Questioning the secular state: the worldwide resurgence of religion in politics* (London: Hurst & Company, 1995).

13 Cf. R. Omar, “Does public policy need religion? the importance of the inter-religious movement” (www.ricsa.org.za/me99, 1999) 27.

14 For a summary of Hick’s views in this regard, cf. e.g. P. Badham (ed.), *A John Hick reader* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1990) 7-13 and the collection of essays by Hick taken up in the same volume. Locally Hick has been studied by A.K. le Roux, *Epistemologie, teologie en religieuse pluralisme: ’n filosofies-teologiese studie met besondere verwysing na die werk van John Hick* (Unpublished D.D. dissertation, University of Pretoria, 1994).

15 Cf. e.g. J. du Preez, “The New Age”, *A world of religions. a South African perspective*, ed. P. Meiring (Pretoria: Kagiso Publishers, 1996) 204-219.

16 Perhaps the following two comments quoted from (now President) T. Mbeki, “From liberation to transformation”, in WCRP-SA, *Spiritual power for nation-building* (Johannesburg: Goethe Institut, 1998) 15-16 serve to illustrate this remark: “The basic ethos of all religions is the construction of a society where the ‘image of God’ - a human being - becomes the centre of the universe”, and “But this very freedom of choice, which is fundamental to the very essence of religions...”. The rhetorical strategy of interpreting differing religions from a modern political need serves to downplay their differences.

dimension¹⁷), this “flat” view stresses similarities, at times for the purpose of encouraging dialogue and peaceful co-existence, which would be in the interest of any democratic state, at times also based on the assumption that all faiths inherently share the same God¹⁸.

Based on my perceptions of public pronouncements by government officials on matters religious along with public actions of government, it could be deduced that this “flat” view would be a first tenet - if unacknowledged, perhaps subliminal or intuitive, certainly unwritten - of present government thinking on religion.

3.2 Tenet 2: A home-grown separation of church and state

The second tenet of this unformalised policy, I posit, differs from what would be the most comfortable position for the state, where - analogous to the position in the USA¹⁹ - church and state are set apart totally. On the American scene this policy has developed into practices which have traits that are reminiscent of fundamentalism or authoritarianism²⁰: absolute church-state separation has to be adhered to, to the extent that the *minutiae* of public life have to be legislated on²¹; traditional prayers are substituted by patriotic singing of the national anthem - to which most religious institutions respond by displaying national(ist) symbols like the national flag prominently at gatherings, either as a contextualising gesture in support of the prevailing nationalism, or as an apologetic (in the theological sense) enterprise.

In South Africa, the present government’s practice related to religion has developed along a different line. Because of the importance of religion to the majority of South African citizens, on the one hand, and because of the resultant legitimacy religion may

17 Cf. D. J. Krieger, “Communication theory and interreligious dialogue”, *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* XXX, no. 3-4 (Summer-Fall 1993) 331-353, particularly 351-353.

18 A more viable alternative is to accept the reality of the “unlikeness” of different religions. For this cf. D. Ackerman, “Humanity, ambiguity, vigilance and difference” (www.ricsa.org.za/me99, 1999) 46-48 who says “... unless we affirm our differences constructively and understand our mutual interdependence, there is no hope for true, lasting and peaceful community”. Cf. also D. J. Krieger “Communication theory and interreligious dialogue”, 351-353 for a viable model of interreligious contact.

19 A. A. Adams, *A nation dedicated to religious liberty: a constitutional heritage of religion clauses* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990).

20 Fundamentalism and authoritarianism share a view of “truth” which finds its roots in Platonic philosophy and is still conventionally held in Westernised societies. This view of “truth” encompasses connotations of eternity, absoluteness, singularity, solidity, unchangability, possession of a certain elevated position and, hence, holiness - connotations which are usually understood in typically modernist categories. It therefore abhors alternative and divergent views and will excommunicate those holding them.

21 A recent case concerns the use of religious language in state affairs. I quote part of Note #5882 from PCUSA NEWS: “The Sixth Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals ruled last week that the state of Ohio may not continue using its official motto, “With God, all things are possible” - Jesus’s words, as reported in chapter 19 of the New Testament Gospel of Matthew In a split decision, the three-judge court ruled that the motto violates the constitutional principle of separation of church and state because its words, “at a minimum, demonstrate a particular affinity toward Christianity in the eyes and ears of a reasonable observer.”

add to government, on the other hand, religion is incorporated into, rather than excluded from the most visible government functions, even if at times this is clearly uncomfortable. These functions include, for instance, the installation of a new head of state, radio and television programmes on the public broadcaster, and public education²². However, religion is included in a very specific way: all (in a somewhat loose sense) religions are given (roughly) equal space, regardless of the number of any particular religion's adherents that may be expected to be exposed to these functions. In this way, the state portrays itself as independent, yet not irreverent. By not distancing itself from religiosity as such, even though it does not give public indication of religious preferences, the present government gives expression to its own brand of church-state separation²³.

In South Africa, thus, the separation between church and state is not absolutist. The state will deliberately attempt, however, not to be seen to associate itself with any particular religion or, within a given religion, with any particular denomination, in perceived exclusion to others.

Perhaps these two proposed tenets of present government's unformalised thinking on religion afford some understanding of the background against which to read the at times conflicting signs it gives on religion.

4. Towards straightening policy lines

The remarks by the Minister of Finance referred to earlier were wholly unexpected, and, many felt, unjustified. Perhaps, as a trained economist and by way of his portfolio, the Minister may be forgiven for measuring everything in financial terms, by which measure Biblical Studies certainly is not one of the most effective wealth-creating academic disciplines. That would seem true only on a superficial level, though. To defer to the language of the marketplace: the church has added immeasurable value to South African society. Only five instances of this are mentioned here:

Firstly, the continuing role²⁴ of the church in establishing a just society is well corroborated. The fact that so many former ministers of religion, pastors and priests hold senior office in the present government, both in appointed and elected positions, bears ample testimony to this role. Secondly the influence of the church on the populace and the leadership elite is frequently mentioned as one of the important ingredients to the *peaceful* political transition of 1994²⁵. Thirdly, one of the key features which has made the internationally admired South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission extremely difficult to emulate in other parts of the world,

22 Cf. e.g. Notice no. 200 of 1999, *Government Gazette* 404, no. 19775 (23 February 1999).

23 Cf. O. Kallscheuer, "Nation building, religious community and the secular state", in WCRP-SA, *Spiritual power for nation-building* (Johannesburg: Goethe Institut, 1998) 27-30.

24 Mbeki, "From liberation to transformation", 16.

25 Cf. e.g. D. Johnston, "The churches and apartheid in South Africa", *Religion, the missing dimension of statecraft* eds. D. Johnston and C. Sampson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994) 177-207.

is the fact that someone with the religious gravity, moral integrity and political legitimacy of a Desmond Tutu is not necessarily available to them. Next, since 1994 the church has been on the forefront of supporting many of the policies of the present government²⁶. A case in point is the arduous process of implementing the new education policy. Despite all the initial difficulties around whether theological education could be set out in Outcomes Based terms at all, the church has pressed ahead to be among the first in the educational sector to establish a Standards Generating Body, namely for Christian Theology²⁷. This Body will formulate the criteria according to which credits will be awarded on the National Qualifications Framework – a key to the new educational policy. Here too church support of central government initiatives is clearly attested. Lastly the active role of the church in supporting members of society in various forms of distress has already been referred to above.

Apart from these very practical considerations, and of equal importance is the fact that the question whether theology has a home at the institution of the university is no longer raised, either from history or in principle. The research by Conrad Wethmar²⁸ makes a foundational case for this claim.

Any question marks over the continued place of theology in general and Biblical Studies in particular at state universities, therefore, would be misplaced. These disciplines are central to the well-being of the church (and the university!) and the church is central to the well-being of the country. Based on these three aspects of the role of the church in society - the very real importance of faith in the lives of the majority of South Africans, the practical value of the church to society, and the principled home of academic theology at the university - it is imperative that Biblical Studies remains part of the university.

5. Conclusion

Njongonkulu Ndungane, Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town, has recently again²⁹ pointed out the relationship between rights and responsibilities. This language could

26 Cf. e.g. M. Dandala, "A call to harness the spirit of the nation" (www.ricsa.org.za/me99, 1999) 53-57, particularly 55. Also published in *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 104 (July 1999) 59-63.

27 Notice No. 812 of 1999: South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) "Public notice by NSB 07 Human and Social Studies of an application to register an SGB for Christian Theology" *Government Gazette*, 408, no. 20234 (25 June 1999).

28 Cf. C. J. Wethmar, "Wat het Athene met Jerusalem te doen? enkele histories-sistematiese gesigspunte in verband met die vraag of die teologie aan die universiteit tuishoort", *Skrif en Kerk* 17, no. 2 (1996) 473-490, and the literature cited there; and C. Lombard "The study of religion in independent Namibia", *Scriptura* 53 (1995) 97-124, particularly 110-111.

29 N. Ndungane, "A role for religion in the public square?" (www.ricsa.org.za/me99, 1999) 14. This kind of analysis finds a base in sociological theory on role expectations - see e.g. A. F. Steyn and H. J. C. van Rensburg, *Sosiologie* (Cape Town: Academica, 1987, Second edition) 96-97 and N. Gross, W. S. Mason and A. W. McEastern *Explorations in role analysis: studies of the schoolsuperintendency role* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1958/1965).

equally be applied to government. It remains true, of course, that the relationship between church and state in South Africa has changed in a number of ways since 1994³⁰, which has meant that extant practices are frequently questioned³¹. If government, however, charges civil society, notably the church, with the challenges presented by South African society, could it not be argued that, as a corollary, it is incumbent upon the government to fund the training of the officers of the church? That there is a need for the church to play its role has been variously affirmed, from within the church³², by community groups³³ and, if unofficially, by very prominent government officials³⁴. The most effective way by which present government can legitimately empower the church to continue its very active role in society, is to continue funding the training of its clerics at state universities. This would include Biblical Studies, which has as its scope the book that lies at the heart of all Christian theology.

In addition, government should formalise its policy on funding theological training at state universities. This would have two direct consequences: it would be an empowering and enabling vote of confidence in the continued role of the church in society; and it would put at ease those concerned about the future of theological education at state universities, and allow them to redirect their energies constructively.

30 Cf. E. Rasool, "Humility & courage: a challenge to religion" (www.ricsa.org.za/me99, 1999) 38-39. and C. Lombaard, "Introduction", *Essays and exercises in ecumenism* ed. C. Lombaard (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 1999) 3.

31 Cf. Rick "Introduction", 6-7, on secularisation redefining rather than expelling traditions.

32 E.g. N. Ndungane, "A role for religion" 14-15 and M. Dandala, "A call to harness the spirit of the nation" (www.ricsa.org.za/me99, 1999) 55-56.

33 Cf. W. Sokutu "'A voice from the periphery': a community group's perspective of the role of religion in public life" (www.ricsa.org.za/me99, 1999) 58-59.

34 Cf. T. Mbeki, "From liberation to transformation", 16 and T. Mbeki, "Religion in public life: engaging power" (www.ricsa.org.za/me99, 1999) 50-52 [Mbeki was Deputy President of South Africa at the time of these addresses]; J. Gerwel, "The question of religion in public life: an RDP of the soul?" (www.ricsa.org.za/me99, 1999) 18; F. Chikane, "Looking to the future: 'religion & public life' in perspective" (www.ricsa.org.za/me99, 1999) 61-62; S. Mkhathshwa, "Assigning responsibility: a response to José Chipenda" (www.ricsa.org.za/me99, 1999) 67; cf. C. Mayson "Spirituality and nationhood", in WCRP-SA, *Spiritual power for nation-building* (Johannesburg: Goethe Institut, 1998) 9-10. Dissenting or cautioning voices are also heard, though, e.g. C. Niehaus "Ethical challenges of the present (1)" (www.ricsa.org.za/me99, 1999) 18-21.

2.9 Publication 5: Introduction

“ ‘n Woord vir ons wêreld. Kontekstuele prediking met behulp van kommentaarjoernalistiek”. *Praktiese Teologie in Suid-Afrika* 16/1, 2001, 19-39.

In this article, a plea is made for the use of journalism, particularly the opinion pieces in newspapers, for the preparation of church sermons, in order to ensure more contextually relevant sermons. Employing such journalistic analyses is possible because of a surprising series of characteristics shared by the church and the newspaper industry, particularly in the Afrikaans speaking community.

Special reference to this research too was made in the *Research Report 2001* of the University of Pretoria¹.

Of the five recurring themes within my research on how the Bible was brought to communication within different spheres of the South African society, indicated in the the overview of the publications under review here, the following apply to this specific publication:

- Theme 1 – Integrity in communication: Written particularly for Afrikaans ministers of religion, this article seeks to investigate ways in which the quality of sermons may be enhanced. For the sake of contextually relevant sermons, journalism, particularly interpretative journalism, can make an invaluable contribution towards the sermon, as one of the most common forms of religious communication. Employing interpretative journalism would have sermons come across as more relevant and better informed.
- Theme 2 – Using the Bible well: Whereas the Afrikaans churches place particular emphasis in their theological training on the Bible languages and on exegetical skills, the next phase of preparing a sermon, namely bringing an ancient message home within the modern world, receives much less attention. Thus, the sermon is often only half a message: what

¹ Cf. www.up.ac.za/services/research/report2001/ , more specifically: <http://www.up.ac.za/services/research/report2001/highlights/afr/index.html> , under "Theology".

happened/happens in the text may be indicated. However, how that same message should take root in modern-day life, is often left either unsaid, or done in an awkward and unconvincing way. To bring the Bible home in our time, that is, to use the Bible to its full extent, requires excellent interpretative tools to analyse our socio-political context. Interpretative journalism offers just that.

- Theme 4 – Communicative imbalances: The problem many ministers would experience in making use of insights from interpretative journalistic writings, include a fundamental mistrust of the press and unrealistic expectations of newspapers. Should these two aspects be changed, a more fruitful communication process between journalistic text and the theologian-reader can be envisaged, and springing from that, better-informed and hence more credible communication from minister to congregation during the sermon.
- Theme 5 – Insights on religion provided by communication studies: The very positive impact journalism, when understood realistically and used well by ministers, can have on the quality of sermons, is another indication of the fruitfulness of the overlap between Communication Studies and religion. Contextuality is of greatest importance in the art of sermonising. Journalism provides a credible, accessible and multi-perspectival avenue in this regard.

From these four points, it is again clear that the way the Bible is brought to communication within the Christian community is well served by (certain aspects of) the discipline communication studies.



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BOOK REVIEWS/BOEKRESENSIES

**'N WOORD VIR ONS WÊRELD: KONTEKSTUELE PREDIKING MET
BEHULP VAN KOMMENTAARJOERNALISTIEK⁽¹⁾**

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ABSTRACT

**A word for our world: contextual preaching enhanced by
editorial journalism**

In this article, the value of employing journalism, particularly editorial journalism, towards preaching that is contextually more relevant, is analysed. Because theological training often does not include any substantial segment on analysing in a valid way politics, society, economics and trends related to these spheres of life, ministers would do well to draw on sources that excel at these kinds of analyses. Editorial columns provide one such forum. Reasons for ministers undervaluing the positive contributions which (editorial) journalism may make to their sermons, are discussed. The substantial overlap between the societal spheres of church and press, particularly in the Afrikaans speaking community, enables ministers to draw on this resource in order better to equip church members to live their lives faithfully within the world.

"Hätten wir uns doch früher zur Bibel bekehrt, damit wir jetzt festen Grund unter den Füßen hätten! Nun brütet man abwechselnd über der Zeitung und dem Neuen Testament und sieht eigentlich furchtbar wenig von dem organischen Zusammenhang beider Welten, von dem man jetzt deutlich und kräftig sollte Zeugnis geben können."

Brief van Karl Barth, gedateer 11 November 1918, aan Eduard Thurneysen⁽²⁾

1 INLEIDING

Daar is met reg al daarop gewys dat die teologiese opleiding van Afrikaanssprekende predikante nie daarop gerig is om predikers toe te rus om polities-sosiale omstandighede te "lees" en op verantwoorde wyse te interpreteer nie (o.a. Le Roux 1996:370; Hollenweger 1997:10). Dit het nie alleen te doen met die redes waarom studente hulle vir teologiese studies aanmeld nie⁽³⁾, maar is

waarskynlik ook tekenend van die Protestantisme in die breë, as die woorde van Ellul (1985:154) ernstig geneem: "I hardly ever find Protestants speaking with competence on political economics, sociology, social psychology, or political science". Die tendens is dus dat, wanneer sosiale, politieke, ekonomiese en verbandhoudende analises wel op die preekstoel gemaak word, dit dikwels oningelig, op die eerste gevoel af, geskied. Analises wat verantwoordbaar en goed deurdrag is, is skaars in predikersmond.

Daarom dat die kerkblad *Die Hervormer* (89/4, 15 Mei 1996:4) soos volg redaksioneel kommentaar kan lewer op die saak van "Vervelige prediking": "Prediking is dikwels net bla-bla-bla, 'n herhaling van ou, geïkoneerde clichés.... Elke Sondag...dieselfde lewensvreemde gedagtes...". Selfs tydens groot politieke veranderingseras in Suid-Afrika, is dié sake wat die daaglikse lewe ingrypend sou verander, nie werklik aktueel in preke aangeraak nie (vgl. Cilliers 1996:3-4, 11; Pieterse & Theron 1994: veral 141-142, 153-154), ten spyte daarvan (vgl. Pieterse & Theron 1994:153) dat predikers dikwels juis die teendeel glo! Die dominee is soms "so 'n sakrale figuur dat hy niks weet van wat om hom gebeur om sinvolle kommentaar te kan lewer nie" (De Klerk 1982:7), wat lei tot "ontersaaklike prediking" (Van Niekerk 1993:67).

Om hierdie stand van sake te verander, anders gestel: om wel kontekstueel-relevante preke te lewer⁽⁴⁾, verg dat beide die antieke Bybelse tekste en die hedendaagse mens(dom), elk teen die agtergrond van unieke en omvattende historiese omstandighede, verstaan moet word. Dit is die "dubbele interpretasieprobleem" (Deist 1983a:19; vgl. Cilliers 1996:24, 37, 52-80, 115): om die Bybel én die moderne situasie intelligent te "lees" en by mekaar uit te bring. Slaag die oorbruggingspoging (vgl. Stott 1982:137-168 & 180-194), kan die kerk op dié manier die kultuur waarvan dit deel is beide op geldige wyses interpreteer en dit positief probeer beïnvloed (kyk Niebuhr 1975:190ff en Nida 1960:206ff). Beide dié aspekte is nodig: "... eie volk, die samelewing en die owerheid ... (a)lle aspekte van die hele lewe moet krities in die lig van die Skrif ondersoek, en

daaroor gepreek word” (Pieterse & Theron 1994:152-153; vgl. Askes 1990:455, 458); anders gestel: “preke wil die evangelie vir die situasie ontsluit” (Cilliers 1994:11).

Die opleiding van predikante vir die Afrikaanstalige kerke sluit tradisioneel ‘n sterk komponent Bybelwetenskappe in. As daar egter ‘n leemte in die opleiding is ten opsigte van die verstaan van die samelewing waarbinne hierdie predikante later moet arbeid⁽⁵⁾, sal ander metodes gekweek moet word om dié insig te stimuleer. Die sinvolle gebruik van joernalistiek, spesifiek die kommentaarjoernalistiek, is één voorbeeld⁽⁶⁾, van so ‘n metode.

2 ENKELE VERBANDE TUSSEN DIE KERK EN DIE PERSWESE

Die geskiedenis van die Afrikaanse pers⁽⁷⁾, oor die afgelope halfeeu toon ‘n nouer verband met die kerk as wat die geval blyk te wees met die joernalistiek in ander lande of selfs die nie-Afrikaanse joernalistiek in Suid-Afrika. Hierdie verbintenis, wat waarskynlik spruit uit die gedeelde Afrikaanssprekende “teikengehoor” en die daarmee samehangende sosio-politiese en ideologiese voorkeure (sien o.a. Pienaar 1979:126ff), kom op die koerantbladsye op twee maniere na vore: die gereelde beriggewing oor kerksake (wat strek van skandale tot sinode-verslae), en die kommentaarartikels deur teoloë wat gereeld op die hoofartikelblad⁽⁸⁾ van Afrikaanse koerante verskyn.

Ook op institusionele vlak skemer ‘n verbintenis tussen kerk en koerantwese onder Afrikaanssprekendes deur, naamlik in die aanstelling van redakteurs. Van die bekendste persone wat die brug van preekstoel na redakteurstoel oorgesteek het, is Drr D F Malan, A P Treurnicht, Willem de Klerk, Gerrit Velthuyzen en Izak de Villiers. Om op ‘n opmerking van Ton Vosloo (1982:16) voort te borduur: politieke party, koerant en kerk staan in Afrikaanse kringe dikwels (te) na aan mekaar. “Dwarsdeur die hele geskiedenis van die Afrikaans-nasionale beweging... was kultuur en politiek, Kerk en taal diep verweef. Skouer aan skouer het hulle in ‘n sigbaar soliede falanks gemarsjeer” (Pienaar 1979:127).

Kerk en koerant deel egter ook 'n hele reeks kenmerke⁽⁹⁾ wat hulle nader aan mekaar bring as wat met die eerste oogopslag die geval blyk te wees. Om maar 'n paar sulke gedeelde eienskappe te noem, beide instellings:

- * vertrou op 'n redelik konstante ondersteunersgroep;
- * staan in 'n krities-solidêre verhouding tot hierdie groep;
- * beskou die rol wat hulle in die breër samelewing speel (met reg - vgl. Froneman 1989:9-10) as van uiterste belang;
- * het 'n sekere boodskap wat aan die wêreld waarbinne die instelling funksioneer, oorgedra (wil) word (vergelyk die aanhaling van G Velthuyzen in Louw 1989:23);
- * voel sigself verbonde aan sekere beginsels wat bevorder moet word;
- * voel sigself verbonde aan 'n opvoedingstaak⁽¹⁰⁾;
- * kan gebruik maak van dieselfde hulpmiddele, soos die sosiologie (vgl. Burg 1987:85-102 & Dekker 1982:13-18).

Hierdie gedeelde kenmerke maak dit duidelik dat die werksterreine en -wyses van kerk en koerant nie anders kan as om dikwels te oorvleuel nie. Dit is daarom met goeie gronde dat, byvoorbeeld as Burger (1987:19) die belang van die *Sitz im Leben* vir die verstaan van 'n Bybelse teksgedeelte wil verduidelik, dit aan die hand van 'n voorbeeld uit juis die joernalistiek gedoen word. Eweneens is dit ook nie verbasend dat populêre werke wat van die joernalistiekformaat gebruik maak - soos Thom (1996, 1997, 1998) se *Bybelkoerant*, soortgelyke Engelstalige werke (kyk ook Rutledge 1998), asook godsdientige tydskrifartikels (bv. "Jerusalem Chronicle" in *Face to Face* 1/2, Nov./Dec. 1997:16-17) - 'n publikasie-opbloei beleef nie⁽¹¹⁾. Van die Bybelse literatuur is al met joernalistieke genres vergelyk (bv. Burd 1987:87), en by geleentheid is dit al oorweeg (vgl. Burd 1987:86) om onder andere predikante en joernaliste saam op te lei!

Kerk en joernalistiek het dus veel wat hulle aan mekaar verbind, méér as wat met 'n eerste oogopslag mag blyk.

Die feit dat kerk en koerant se rolle in sekere opsigte vergelykbaar is, het dié

implikasie - wat selde besef word - dat die kerk op die pers kan steun⁽¹²⁾ in sy verkondigingstaak. Waar predikante se spesialis-kennis naamlik selde akkurate en aktuele samelewingsanalise insluit, is dié tipe analise en beoordeling by uitstek in die kommentaarartikels van koerante te vinde. Predikers kan dus met groot vrug gebruik maak van die spesialis-kennis opgeneem in die kommentaarkolomme van koerante. Daarom word vervolgens kortliks op hierdie aspek van die koerantwese gekonsentreer.

3 SAMELEWINGSANALISE IN KOERANTE

Die hoofartikel “is die hart van ‘n koerant se uitkyk”, en lewer kommentaar op die belangrikste sake van die dag (Vosloo 1982:19, 20). By uitstek is die hoofartikel daarom dié ruimte in ‘n koerant waar kommentaar gelewer word op gebeure wat die samelewing, of ‘n deel daarvan, die meeste kan/sal raak (polities, ekonomies, emosioneel, ens.). Gewoonlik word hierdie kommentaarkolom nie deur ‘n individu behartig nie, maar deur ‘n paneel van kundiges op verskillende gebiede. Een van die lede van hierdie paneel sal wel aangewys word om die uiteindelige artikel te skryf, maar eers word die betrokke saak gedebateer deur die paneellede (vgl. Vosloo 1982:14; Nel 1994:23).

Ander kommentaar- en agtergrondartikels verskyn op dieselfde bladsy as die hoofartikel, asook dikwels op die bladsy direk daarnaas. Laasgenoemde sluit soms die briewekolom in, wat op sigself interessante insigte kan bied. Meestal sluit hierdie kommentaarbladsye in ‘n koerant ook gereelde bydraes en ander opiniestukke deur kenners in, hetsy dit aangebode of uitnodiging-artikels is.

Dit is in hierdie kommentaarkolomme waarin, by uitstek, aspekte van die samelewing geanaliseer word op ‘n toeganklike wyse. Onderliggende sosio-politiese teorieë en die filosofiese aannames daarvan word nie hier beredeneer nie; eerder word argumente kort, pront-uit, dog (meestal) stylvol gestel - teenoor sekere standpunte en ten gunste van ander opinies. Op hierdie manier kry die leser, wat nie op hoogte hoef te wees van byvoorbeeld die totale verskeidenheid ekonomiese benaderings nie, toegang tot ingeligte standpuntstelling en debat. Deur

hierdie kolomme oor tyd heen te volg en die verskeidenheid opinies - ook teenoorstaande sienings - te evalueer, vind lesers hulself later *bewustelik* meer aangetrokke tot sekere breë opinie-"bondels"⁽¹³⁾, gebaseer op die leser se eie waardes. Laasgenoemde sal in die geval van die predikant gevormde en ingeligte Christelike, Bybelse, teologiese en verbandhoudende waardes insluit, wat sal uitkristalliseer in sienswyses wat in die openbaar gestel word. Hoe meer hierdie openbare standpuntstelling gevoed is deur die skrywes van 'n hele reeks kommentators, des te meer stel predikante hulself veilig teen onbeholpe samelewingsanalises en die daarmee gepaardgaande waargenome irrelevantheid.

Om terug te keer tot die skrywers van kommentaarartikels: dit verg 'n sekere tipe persoon om die hoofartikel of ander opiniestukke in "n koerant te behartig. Die skrywer moet op hoogte van sake wees, en moet heersende menings en partye beide kan onderteun en kritiseer (vergelyk Vosloo 1982:19, 20; Lombaard 1990:71-74 lys ook 'n aantal vereistes wat aan koerantredakteurs en/of kommentaarartikelskrywers gestel word). Dit is juis hierdie ingeligte, onafhanklike tipe denke wat kommentaarartikels by uitstek 'n bruikbare instrument maak in die hand van 'n predikant wat sy/haar boodskap reëlreg wil rig op die sosiale omstandighede waarbinne gemeentede leef. Weliswaar behoort kommentaarartikels nie goedsmoeds nagepraat te word nie. Geïnterpreteer deur die bril van die prediker se eie (geloofs-, persoonlike - en intellektuele) geskiedenis, in die lig van die betrokke gemeente se geskiedenis, maak dit egter uitsprake oor die samelewing moontlik wat meer getoets, oorwoë en ingelig is.

Natuurlik kan ook veel geleer word oor 'n samelewing deur die *tipe koerante* wat in 'n gemeenskap *beskikbaar* is⁽¹⁴⁾. Ook kan goeie insig verkry word uit 'n *spesifieke koerant* se inhoud in verband met dié sake wat koerantskrywers en -lesers (in indirekte interaksie) belangrik⁽¹⁵⁾ ag. Maar vir die mees uitgesproke beeld van die ratwerk van 'n samelewing/gemeenskap, bied die *kommentaarkolomme* wat in die pers in den breë aangebied word, die meeste waarde. Hieruit kan 'n mens die sosiale omgewing leer ken: tendense, gebeure,

agtergrond, houdings, ensovoorts, in die verlede, hede en toekoms⁽¹⁶⁾. Wat meer is, in dié kolomme word nie net sogenaamde koue, kliniese feite aangebied nie; wat daarvan *gemaak* kan word, word veral hier ingesluit. *Singewing* staan voorop⁽¹⁷⁾.

Praktiese oorwegings - soos koste en die beperkte beskikbaarheid van 'n wye verskeidenheid koerante - het in die verlede die lees van verskillende kommentaarkolomme deur 'n individu bemoeilik. Dit was te meer die geval met individue, soos predikante, wat dikwels nie in groot stedelike sentra werk nie. Moderne tegnologie maak egter hierdie artikels nou meer toeganklik. Die rekenaar en internet speel hierin 'n groot rol (kyk byvoorbeeld die werk van die Kanadese sistematikus Lochhead 1997, veral pp 42-54, en sy literatuurverwysings op pp 107-110; ook, plaaslik, Kraft 1999:379-392). Met die internet wat tans 'n al hoe meer noodsaaklike hulpmiddel word, kan predikante gemaklik toegang kry tot verskillende koerante se inhoud, insluitend die kommentaarartikels - ook internasionaal. Twee Suid-Afrikaanse internet soekprogramme⁽¹⁸⁾ wat in hierdie verband 'n vertrekpunt bied, is die volgende:

<http://www.fanagalo.co.za>,

http://www.iol.co.za/html/frame_news.php,en

<http://www.news24.co.za> .

Hiervandaan kan die meeste van die groot plaaslike dag- en weekblaaie se internet-tuisblaaie besoek word, van waar die redaksionele en ander kommentaarartikels gevind kan word.

Laastens: naas koerante kan nuustydskrifte soos *Time*, *Newsweek*, en plaaslik, *Insig*, *Die Suid-Afrikaan*, en *Noseweek* ook met vrug geraadpleeg word vir kommentaar- en agtergrondrubrieke, omdat sulke nuustydskrifte groot dele van hul inhoud afstaan aan aktuele agtergrond- en kommentaar-stukke. Hoewel ander nuusmedia ook met vrug gebruik kan word, het die gedrukte nuusmedia (naas die elektroniese media: radio, televisie en Internet-nuusdienste) oor die afgelope dekades al hoe meer die leiding geneem met spesifiek kommentaarjoernalistiek⁽¹⁹⁾. 'n Medium wat gelees word, eerder as geluister of gekyk word, leen sigself

naamlik meer tot beredeneerde argumentvoering en gedetailleerde uiteensettings. Ook hierdie bronne kan dus met vrug, verkieslik oor 'n lang tydperk heen, en verkieslik naas mekaar, aangewend word om die wêreld waarin die Woord gebring word, beter te begryp.

4 KERK EN KOERANT: VRIEND OF VYAND?

Die probleem van die beskikbaarheid van kommentaarjoernalistiek aan 'n individu sal oor die volgende paar jaar met hulpmiddels soos die Internet so goed soos opgelos word. Dit waarborg egter nog nie dat predikers die perswese al hoe meer sal aanwend ten bate van relevante prediking nie. Die rede hiervoor is 'n reeks persepsies en houdings omtrent die joernalistiek wat dikwels onder predikante (onder andere) gevind word. Hierdie meerendeels negatiewe instelling veroorsaak dat die pers óf swak geag word óf min of meer geïgnoreer word as 'n positiewe invloed op predikante se preekvoorbereiding. Hierdie en aanverwante sake word vervolgens in oënskou geneem.

4.1 Predikers se houdings jeens die pers

Die funksionele aanwending van die pers in onder andere preke word dikwels belemmer daardeur dat predikante en teoloë tradisioneel redelik negatief teenoor die pers staan⁽²⁰⁾. Dié houding gaan daarmee gepaard dat:

- * volgens populêre meningspeilings, joernaliste in vergelyking met ander professionele persone (vgl. De Klerk 1983:6-8) oor die algemeen nie 'n hoë geloofwaardigheid in die samelewing geniet nie;
- * wat betref die kleiner samelewingsfeer van die kerk, word die verhouding ook geskaad daardeur dat die pers dikwels kerksake op onverantwoordbare wyses rapporteer, of bloot foute maak met tegniese terme uit die kerklike wêreld (kyk Froneman 1989:205-206 vir voorbeelde);
- * daarmee saam gaan ook die gegewene dat die joernalistiek nie

daaglik/weeklik akademiese werke probeer lewer nie⁽²¹⁾, terwyl predikante met minstens twee grade - soos wat dit die geval in die Afrikaanstalige kerke is - van nature meer op hulle gemak met beredeneerde en genoteerde akademiese werke sal wees (vgl. bv. Du Toit 1992:4 kol. 2).

* Verder is dit nie altyd die *inhoud* van berigte nie, maar wel die *wyse van aanbieding* wat moeilik pas binne die ideale waaraan predikante hulself verbonde voel⁽²²⁾.

Bo en behalwe hierdie vier faktore, is daar ook minstens 'n drietal ander sake wat 'n rol speel in hierdie dikwels negatiewe persepsie van die pers onder predikante, elk waarvan effens meer aandag verlang:

4.2 Hoor die blye tyding...

Predikante is daarop ingestel om die evangelie - die *goeie nuus* - te verkondig, terwyl by uitstek *slegte nuus* in koerante gevind word (vgl. ook De Klerk 1982:7). Kritiek teen die meestal slegte nuus in koerante word daarom keer op keer in uitsprake - ook van buite die kerk - oor die nuusmedia gevind.

Die nuusmedia kan sigself egter met reg teen bostaande kritiekpunte verdedig deur aanspraak te maak op die waghond-funksie (ook genoem die *fourth estate*) wat nuusinstellings binne 'n dinamiese demokrasie vervul. Die nuusmedia vervul naamlik dié rol dat dit regeringsinstellings (in al drie hoedanighede: wetgewend, regsprekend en uitvoerend) onder die vergroot-glas beskou ter wille daarvan om die samelewing teen misbruike van gesag te beskerm (kyk onder andere Hulteng & Nelson 1983:74ff). 'n Kritiese instelling jeens hierdie gesagsliggame in die samelewing is dus 'n inherente deel van die pers se identiteit - iets wat in Afrikaanssprekende kringe, wat volgens populêre opinie gesag eerder respekteer as bevraagteken, dikwels op sigself alreeds moeilik aanvaarbaar is. Daarmee saam word die antwoord op die "alleen slegte nuus"-aanklag gewoonlik vanuit perskringe beantwoord met die gedagte dat slegte nuus nie deur die media geskep

word nie; die media reflekteer gewoon die negatiewe gebeure in die samelewing. Die implikasie van hierdie verslaggewing is dan dat daar dan stappe geneem sal word deur individue/instansies in die samelewing om hierdie sake te probeer regstel. Die nuusmedia help dus die samelewing om sigself te verbeter, en vervul dus in dié opsig 'n "wasbalie"-funksie⁽²³⁾.

Die gedagte wat aan die grond van dié roltoekenning lê is die volgende: die drie bene van die moderne staat - wetgewend, uitvoerend en regsprekend - het geen absoluut betroubare ingeboude kontrole wat die burgery beskerm teen magsmisbruik deur die regering van die dag nie. Selfs met 'n grondwet en handves van menseregte wat daarop gemik is om die publiek teen die staat (en, in sekere demokrasieë, teen mekaar) te beskerm, kan die landsburger nie self te wete kom hoedat wanadministrasie, wange-drag en ander euwels hom/haar benadeel nie. Die taak van die pers is dus nie om te rapporteer wat *aangaan* nie, maar wat *verkeerd gaan* (Beckett 1994:3). Op dié manier vervul die pers dus 'n edel, selfs 'n profetiese rol binne 'n demokratiese samelewing⁽²⁴⁾. Waar die perswese egter soms norme - dit is sowel eie standaarde as verwagtinge van buite die onmiddelijke joernalistieke kring - oortree, kan daar natuurlik met reg kritiek uitgespreek word, ook sover dit die interpretasie of singewing van 'n nuusitem aangaan (vergelyk Molefe 1994:132-133). As 'n mens egter op Rawlsiaanse wyse⁽²⁵⁾ moes kies tussen 'n samelewing met 'n ooraktiewe pers en een met 'n onderaktiewe pers, sal die meeste mense waarskynlik eersgenoemde kies. By hierdie profeties-kritiese benadering van die pers kan die prediking met groot vrug aansluit, waarskynlik tans gemakliker as voorheen, noudat die Afrikaanse kerke nie meer in die bevoorregte magsoffisiele posisie van vroeër staan nie.

Behalwe vir dié "edele" motief, is daar ook verbandhoudend daarmee markgerigte redes waarom slegte nuus "goeie nuus" is: "That's the trouble with all the 'give us good news' demands the people are constantly making of the press. People might think they want good news and say they want good news, but what they actually read is bad news. Bad news is crisp; good news is dull... It's not that

editors are ghouls; it's that people are more gripped by a snake striking than by a doe grazing." (Beckett 1994:4).

4.3 "...mens moet net waarheid sê..."(26)

Dan is daar ook die objektiwiteitsideaal waaraan die meeste predikante - soos teweens die grootste deel van die samelewing - hulself verbonde voel. Enersyds is dié objektiwiteitsideaal egter onmoontlik: die beperkinge van tyd en spasie in die joernalistieke prosesse, die eienskappe van taal, die menslike beperktheid van nuuskrywers, -redakteurs en -lesers, en dies meer, maak 'n verhewenheid bo menslike invloed op "slegs wat gebeur het" 'n blote droom-beeld (geïnspireer deur 'n veelheid van antiek-Griekse en modernistiese filosofiese oorwegings). Andersyds is só 'n kliniese objektiwiteitsideaal ook onwenslik, want dit is onmenslik: om slegs "feite" te hanteer sonder om die implikasies en toepassingswaardes daarvan eksplisiet uit te lig. Dié tipe objektiwiteitsideaal impliseer dus prakties joernalistieke funksieversaking, en mense sal daaronder ly (vgl. Lombaard 1990:12-75). Niemand het beter toegang tot die interpretasiemoontlikhede oor nuusgebeure as die joernalis self nie, en dié moontlikhede is net soveel deel van die werklikheid as die "feite". Die "feite" alleen is dus slegs die halwe waarheid. Die werklikheid behels méér. (Om kortweg 'n voorbeeld te gee: "Huis sak weg in sinkgat" is feitelike, "harde" nuus. Gerugte dat streeksowerhede al 'n tyd lank vermoedens hieroor geheim hou, is egter net so belangrik, en so-ook die voortgaande mynbedrywighede in die omgewing. Al is laasgenoemde twee sake minder openlik en meer spekulatief van aard as die aanvanklike tragedie, moet dit uitgewys word, want politieke verantwoordelikheid en menselewens - beide konkrete sake! - is op die spel.)

Met die kliniese objektiwiteitsideaal as beide onbereikbaar en onwenslik gestel, is "onpartydigheid" ook nie 'n realistiese verwagting om op die nuusmedia te plaas nie (vergelyk onder andere Eldridge 1993:148ff). "Koerante is betogende instellings en nie neutrale instellings nie" (De Klerk 1983:7); "koerante (is) draers

van 'n bepaalde boodskap" (Vosloo 1982:16); 'n koerant is 'n instelling wat "sy beginsel-sê sê" (De Klerk 1982:7) - beginsels wat "gekoppel is aan bepaalde politieke en samelewingstandpunte" (Vosloo 1982:18). Hierdie "koninkryksroeping" (De Klerk 1982:7) of "roepingsbewustheid" (Vosloo 1982:18) verskaf 'n raamwerk vir die bepaalde koerant se verslaggewing. "Geen koerant ... is neutraal nie" (De Klerk 1983:8). Geen koerant durf sigself ook as neutraal uitgee as dit eerlik wil wees met die leserspubliek nie. En geen koerant durf sigself as objektief uitgee as rolvulling ernstig opneem word nie. Openlikheid oor waar 'n koerant, die eienaars daarvan en die skrywers daarin se simpatieë lê, is egter broodnodig. Bekendheid met hierdie voorkeur-belange van 'n koerant sal ook die gebruikswaarde daarvan vir predikers verhoog, want wedersyds gedeelde én uiteenlopende waardes is in die oopte. Verdere interpretasie en singewing kan nou vanuit Bybels-teologiese hoek in die prediking geskied.

4.4 Persvryheid

Gepaardgaande met hulle verskillende benaderings tot die rol van die pers, blyk teoloë en joernaliste ook verskillende opvattinge rondom die konsep *vryheid van die pers* te hê. 'n Voorbeeld van elk sal dié verskille duidelik maak. Ter aanvang, die siening van 'n teoloog (Du Toit 1992:4 kolom 2):

"Venynige en onophoudelike kritiek, die skromelike skending van mense se privaatheid, die vooruitloop van demokratiese en geregtelike prosesse, blatante sensasionalisme en ander verskynsels word die kenmerke van die sogenaamde 'vrye pers'."

Hier skimp die term "vrye pers" op iets soos 'n bandelose pers. Stel dit byvoorbeeld teenoor die volgende aanhaling uit 'n satiriese kommentaar-kolom van 'n joernalis (Bullard 1998:2):

"Do we have a right to know these things and to pry into a public figure's private life? The answer is a resounding yes. Politicians delight

in our adulation and we are expected to turn up and applaud them at political rallies or ... hang on to their every word during television news broadcasts. They are not shy to tell us how to live our lives and to claim that they represent family values, honesty, integrity and all those good wholesome things. So, when we find out that their own sordid lives are rather removed from what they expect from the rest of us, we have every reason to crow and bay for blood”.

In hierdie denklyn verteenwoordig die “vrye pers”-gedagte die idee dat die pers ‘n waghond-funksie jeens maghebbers namens die samelewing in den breë het. Anders gestel: ‘n gesonde demokrasie huisves ‘n gesonde pers (vergelyk ook De Klerk 1990:232).

Vir die kerk en predikante om volle nut te put uit die joernalistieke genres, is groter waardering vir die rol en selfbeeld van die pers dus nodig⁽²⁷⁾.

4.5 Samevatting

Op verskillende tye kom kerk en pers in konflik (Froneman 1989:1-5), en vir ‘n verskeidenheid van redes. Vir kerk en koerant om mekaar se ja-broers te wees, is hoogs ongesond vir beide hierdie samelewingsinstellings en vir die samelewing as geheel. Miskien is die beste formulering van die algemene verhouding tussen kerk en pers, minstens soos wat dit binne die Afrikaanssprekende gemeenskap ontwikkel het, steeds “onafhanklikheid-in-gebondenheid, vriendskap-in-spanning” (Pienaar 1979:130-131).

Dat hierdie twee “samelewingsverbande”⁽²⁸⁾ op verskillende wyses oorvleuel, staan tans vas. Dit is juis hierdie oorvleueling wat dit moontlik maak vir die kerk om die pers aan te wend; meer spesifiek gestel: vir predikers om die kommentaarkolomme aan te wend ten behoeve van kontekstuele prediking. Dit is juis oorvleueling, parallele, analogieë tussen die antieke wêreld - gereflekteer in die Bybelse tekste - en óns wêreld - gereflekteer in onder andere kommentaar-joernalistiekkolomme - wat kontekstuele, konteks-sensitiewe prediking hoeg-

naamd moontlik maak⁽²⁹⁾. Die hulpmiddels vir die lees van die *antieke tekste* in hul ontstaanswêreld is goed bekend aan predikante in die Afrikaanstalige kerke. Naas 'n reeks ander moontlikhede wat predikante kan aanwend om beter insig in die *moderne wêreld*, hulle arbeidsmilieu te verkry, bied kommentaarjoernalistiek ook 'n bruikbare instrument daarvoor.

5 SLOT

Die valse sosio-politieke sekerhede wat soms van preekstoele af verkondig word (vgl. Stott 1982:169-170 & Van Niekerk 1993:67-73) sal bes moontlik getemper word daardeur dat predikers via die kommentaarkolomme van koerante aan 'n veelheid kompeterende - en soms ewe aantreklike, hoewel weersprekende - interpretasies blootgestel word. Die kompleksiteit van sake sal nie meer so maklik misgekyk kan word nie. Daarmee saam sal die wyse van kommunikasie in die prediking ook beïnvloed word: eerder as dat finale *antwoorde* van die preekstoel af verskaf word, sal die *interaksie* tussen God, mens en wêreld eerder in preke aan die orde gestel word. "Communication is about *negotiating* messages, not *transmitting* meanings" (Bluck 1989:3, klem toegevoeg)⁽³⁰⁾.

Waar Afrikaanse preke tydens politieke verskuiwingstydperke te dikwels né die sake van die dag aangeraak het nie (vergelyk Cilliers 1996:3-4, 11; Cilliers 1994:1-13; Pieterse & Theron 1994:141-142, 153-154), kon die kommentaarjoernalistiek dit uit sy wesensaard wel doen⁽³¹⁾. Die verantwoordelikheid lê tans by predikers om hierdie leermeesters hierdie kuns te gaan afvra. Die pers by uitstek bied insiggewende analyses op toeganklike wyse aan die leserspubliek. Om nie hierdie hulpbron, of 'n ander hulpbron wat soortgelyk kan funksioneer, te gebruik nie, is om die saak van kontekstuele prediking skade aan te doen. Gebrek aan kontekstuele prediking impliseer op sy beurt weer die teenoorgestelde van 'n belydenis wat aan die hart van die Gereformeerde teologie lê: dat die Bybel die lewende Woord van die lewende God is.

ENDNOTAS:

⁽¹⁾ Hierdie artikel is in “’n ander formaat gepubliseer, onder dieselfde titel, as ‘n meer uitgebreide hoofstuk (met preekvoorbeeld) in Lombaard 1999. Die ander bydraers tot die boek was Du Toit (1999:4-21), oor kontekstuele prediking met behulp van rolprente; Lourens (1999:47-69), oor kontekstuele prediking met behulp van beeldende kunswerke; Mulder (1999:70-92) oor kontekstuele prediking met behulp van moderne musiek; en Vos (1999:93-110), oor kontekstuele prediking met behulp van letterkunde. Hierdie weergawe word hier gepubliseer weens die beperkte verspreiding van die boek.

⁽²⁾ My dank aan Drr Hans-Anton Drewes en Beat Huwyler, op verskillende wyses verbonde aan die *Karl-Barth Archiv* en die *Theologische Fakultät* te Basel, Switserland, vir hulle hulp om hierdie aanhaling op te spoor. Die bron is: K Barth-E. Thurneysen: *Briefwechsel*, Vol. 1: 1913-1921. Zürich: Karl Barth-Gesamtausgabe V, 1973, p 300. Perkins (1984:18), soos vele ander, sinspeel waarskynlik op bostaande aanhaling as hy skryf: “... Bible study requires ‘the Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other’. It must be contextual.”

⁽³⁾ Die studie van Van Vuuren 1990, veral pp 212-228, verdien om in dié rigting uitgebrei te word.

⁽⁴⁾ Kontekstuele prediking het nie net met politiek te make nie; eweneens kan dit nie aan politiek verbygaan nie - Van Niekerk 1993:67-69.

⁽⁵⁾ Die metode van predikantsopleiding bly ‘n moeilike keuse: afstandsonderrig het dié voordeel dat studente nie vervreemd raak van die samelewing nie, maar die kwaliteit akademiese tyd kan hier in gedrang kom; daarteenoor, met residensiële opleiding, verval studente maklik oor die opleidingstyd heen in ‘n “eiland-situasie” waardeur intieme kontak met die breë samelewing verloor kan word, maar wat weer juis akademiese toewyding kan bevoordeel.

⁽⁶⁾ Ebersöhn (1982:1) waarsku tereg dat die kommunikasie-media geen “wondermiddels” bied nie. Ook hier word geen kommunikasiekuur aangebied nie; hoogstens een moontlikheid tussen vele ander.

⁽⁷⁾ Vir verskillende wyses van geskiedskrywing oor die (Suid-) Afrikaanse pers, sien byvoorbeeld Van Deventer 1993, Mervis 1989, Crwys-Williams 1989, Clarke 1987, Argus 1989, Meiring 1987, Diederichs 1993:71-98, Alhadeff 1976; verbandhoudend, kyk ook die boeke gesenseer deur Tomaselli 1995:61-70. Die mees resente - en toeganklike - oorsig oor die praktiese aspekte van die joernalistiek, is dié van Froneman 1998.

⁽⁸⁾ Die *hoofartikel* moet nie verwar word met die *hoofberig* nie. Laasgenoemde is die berig wat op die voorblad van ‘n koerant onder die hoofopskrif verskyn. Die *hoofartikel* daarenteen is die amptelike kommentaarartikel van die koerant wat gewoonlik in ‘n spesiale kolom op die hoofartikelblad, nader aan die middel van die koerant, verskyn. Op dié bladsy en op die bladsy direk daarnaas (die sogenaamde “*op-ed page*”) word die eksplisiete kommentaarbydraes van ‘n koerant tradisioneel aangetref. Ten opsigte van hierdie kommentaarbydraes, kan onderskei word tussen die kommentaar gelewer in die hoofartikelkolom (wat eerder aan die koerant se amptelike opinievormers as aan ‘n spesifieke persoon gekoppel moet word), betaalde kommentaarskrywers, en briëfskrywers (vgl. Nel 1994:58).

⁽⁹⁾ Kyk ook De Klerk 1982:7. Vir ons doeleindes hier word dié kenmerke gewoon fenomenologies, eerder as prinsipiële-teologies beskryf. Vir laasgenoemde. word lesers na die tradisionele dogmatiek-werke verwys.

⁽¹⁰⁾ ‘n Onderskeid moet egter hier getref word: waar die kerk dikwels in praktyk sy opvoedingstaak as godsdienstige en morele *rigtinggewing* sien, is die pers se opvoedingstaak meer gerig daarop om lesers te help *aanpas* by kontemporêre omstandighede. Waarskynlik is dit sulke verskillende opvattinge (wat wel kan oorvleuel) wat aanleiding gee tot heelwat van die debatte tussen kerk en koerant. Kyk byvoorbeeld. Du Toit 1992:4 kolom 3.

(11) Verbandhoudend, die opmerking van Bluck (1989:2-3) waarin hy onder andere teologie en joernalistiek vergelyk: "the location of enormous power, once held by the poets and priests of traditional societies (is now held) by the magnates and gatekeepers of modern electronic media".

(12) Natuurlik is die teenoorgestelde ook waar: die pers kan weer by die kerk aanklop as dit kom by sake soos teologiese uitsprake, morele oordele en dies meer. Beide kerk en pers moet mekaar se waarde kan waardeer (Froneman 1989:ii; De Klerk 1982:7).

(13) Met opinie-"bondels" word bedoel 'n min of meer logies samehangende reeks opinies oor 'n verskeidenheid van sake. Die samehang van die opinies word moontlik gemaak deur onderliggende waardes. Ideaal gesien, sal al 'n mens se opinies logies verband hou met mekaar, en sal daar nooit teenstrydighede wees nie. Menslik gesproke is daar egter heelwat inkonsekwentheid, weens 'n reeks onderliggende waardes - en ook emosies - wat dikwels onondersoek bly en net implisiet in opinies en houdings na vore kom.

(14) Dit verg byvoorbeeld 'n gevestigde industriële en finansiële sektor om 'n koerant met oorwegend ekonomiese nuus lewensvatbaar te maak; 'n groot aantal skandaalblaaië sê ook iets oor die samelewing wat dit finansiële dra.

(15) "Belangrikheid" word in die nuusmedia deur middel van die tegniese term "nuuswaardigheid" aangedui. De Beer (1977:39-40; cf. 40-75) sistematiseer nuuswaardigheid tot twee dimensies, te wete *afstand* (waargenome nabyheid van nuusgebeure, insluitend beide tyd en ruimte) en *intensiteit* (invloed, omvang en die ongewoonheid van nuusgebeure). Dieselfde kenmerke speel 'n rol in die bevordering van aktuele prediking: preke wat naby aan die hoorder se leef tyd en leefruimte kom, en wat daarby die potensiaal tot groot invloed het, sal as relevant waargeneem word. Preke wat sigself skuldig maak aan die teenoorgestelde, sal daarenteen as irrelevant beleef word. Sulke irrelevante kommentariëring word soms in die Amerikaanse kommentaarjoernalistiek "*Afghanistanisme*" genoem: slegs sake wat ver genoeg van die kommentator en lesers verwyder is, en dus "veilig" is, word aangeraak, sodat geen persoonlike konsekwensies daaruit spruit nie. Preke wat hulself aan "*Afghanistanisme*" skuldig maak sal eweneens lewensvreemd voorkom.

(16) Insake spesifiek die toekoms, merk De Klerk 1983:11-12 op dat die pers dikwels 'n voorloper met sosiale (r)evolusie is.

(17) Die teologiese parallel hierop is ooglopend.

(18) My dank aan die samesellers van twee internet-tuisblaaië wat vertalings van Engelse rekenaar-verwante terme, in dié geval van die frase "search engine", voorstel:

* <http://www.afrikaans.com/index6.html#Rekenaarterminologie>, en

* <http://www.geocities.com/Wellesley/5897/1e06.html>.

(19) Bluck 1989:55-56 lys die voor- en nadele van die verskillende massamedia (Internet egter nog uitgesluit).

(20) Predikante sien die massamedia óf as "the new Moloch, the modern idol to which faith, truth and human values are being sacrificed" óf as "a powerful and theologically neutral instrument ... to communicate Christian truth to millions ..." (Forrester 1993:67). Kyk ook Ebersöhn 1982:1-9; De Klerk 1982:7; Pieterse 1988:26-31; Vorster 1995:444, 452-455, 462.

(21) Bydraend hiertoe is onder andere die volgende twee faktore: die tydsdruk waaronder joernaliste verkeer, asook die skryfstyl-vereistes van die joernalistieke genre en sub-genres (wat na vore kom selfs wanneer joernaliste meer omvattende publikasies lewer - kyk Tomaselli 1995:62).

⁽²²⁾ So byvoorbeeld. skryf Du Toit (1992:4 kolom 1): "Dit beteken natuurlik nie dat die waarheid (in koerante) verswyg moet word nie, maar wel dat dit in liefde gepraat word, soos die Bybel van ons vra". Dié tipe redenasie laat egter buite rekening dat dele van die Bybel self erg krities, en "liefdeloos" so, staan teenoor partye van wie verskil word. Vergelyk byvoorbeeld die verskillende blikke wat op die instelling van die koningskap in die Ou Testament gebied word.

⁽²³⁾ Ek neem hierdie terminologie oor van 'n mondelinge mededeling deur Dr. Willem de Klerk in 1988.

⁽²⁴⁾ Vir 'n opsomming van teorieë oor en kritiek op die massamedia, kyk Jansen 1989 en Jansen & Steinberg 1991. Vir 'n opsomming van die etiese dilemmas wat saamhang met die perswese, kyk Froneman & De Beer 1993:249-268; ook Molefe 1994:129-134. Kyk Nel 1994:205-206 (ook 212-217) vir 'n kort opsomming van etiese benaderings binne die joernalistiek. De Klerk (1983:10-11) lys die pers se paradoksale etiese norme en riskante optrede. Kyk Bluck 1989:44-51 vir 'n opsomming van sieninge oor die invloed van die media.

⁽²⁵⁾ Die regsfilosoof John Rawls het die volgende model voorgestel om by die mees regverdigde samelewing moontlik uit te kom: gestel 'n mens sou nie weet wie jy in die samelewing gaan wees nie, en jy het dan 'n aandeel in die skepping van daardie samelewing voordat jy deel daarvan word, sal jy 'n samelewing daarstel waarin by verre die meeste mense 'n redelike veilige bestaan kan voer. Kyk byvoorbeeld Rawls 1971; veral pp 11-13 bied 'n eenvoudige verduideliking van sy teorie.

⁽²⁶⁾ Aanhaling uit *In simplicate cordis*, NP van Wyk Louw, in *Tristia* 1962:24.

⁽²⁷⁾ De Klerk 1982:7 skryf: "Die kerk moet ook begrip en beheersing hê van die taal van die koerantmedium."

⁽²⁸⁾ J A Heyns se terminologie; kyk veral Heyns 1986.

⁽²⁹⁾ "... der Text selber ist unter geschichtlichen Verhältnissen hervorgebracht worden, und die Interpretation des Textes wird unter gegebenen historischen Verhältnissen hervorgebracht" (Deist 1983b:38). Kretzschmar 1986:73 gee 'n nuttige grafiese voorstelling van hierdie proses.

⁽³⁰⁾ Kyk ook Bluck (1989:3-24) se hantering van J Fiske se onderskeid tussen kommu-nikasie as 'n starre proses en kommunikasie as 'n uitruil van betekenis. Dié onderskeid kan saamgevat word met die Afrikaanse woordspel-onderskeid tussen 'n mededeling en mede-deling van betekenis.

⁽³¹⁾ Selfs al het dit soms ook 'n leerproses in kleiner streekskoerante geverg - vergelyk Jansen 1995:210-211.

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2.11 Publication 6: Introduction

“The Bible and ecumenism”. *Ekklesiastikos Pharos* 83/1&2, 2001 (New Series 12), 149-160.

An analysis and critique is offered of the ways in which certain biblical passages are brought to communication in order to promote better relations between different Christian churches. Rather than unacceptable use of the Bible, firmer grounds for positive relationships between churches should be sought in a shared Christian identity.

The five recurring themes within my research on how the Bible was brought to communication within different spheres of the South African society, indicated in the the overview of the publications under review here, apply as follows to this specific publication:

- Theme 1 – Integrity & Theme 2 – Using the Bible well: In this case, these two themes feature together. The article in question here argues against the poor use of the Bible to further the ecumenical cause, because that would bring the integrity of the process and its justification into discredit, thus harming what is the essential and very positive enterprise of building relationships between different church denominations. Rather, by using the Bible well, the legitimacy of inter-church relations and, where appropriate, unifications, is well served.
- Theme 3 – Rhetorical functionality: Because of the heartfelt concern for the unity of the church (even when not meant organisationally), it is often easy to misinterpret biblical passages by pressing them into service in ways they were never designed to do. The Bible should however not be used as a simple rhetorical tool to offer further legitimacy to what is already a good cause. Rather, let then Bible speak on its terms.
- Theme 4 – Communicative imbalances: Rhetorical need is the cause for the misrepresentation of certain biblical passages. Rather, these passages, along with all the others, should be read and studied to form and inform what

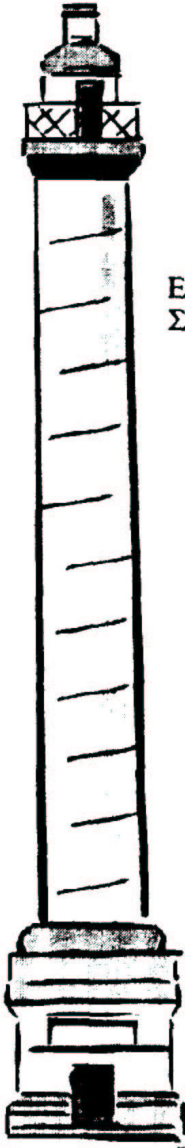
may be called a Christian identity. It is through this identity that the ecumenical movement will find its strongest building blocks, rather than through seemingly more tangible proof texts. The latter, however, offers false comfort, when their textual and historical-contextual intent are distorted by modern interpreters in order to communicate what is the current perceived need.

- Theme 5 – Insights on religion provided by communication studies: Here too, sensitivity to what the ancient texts communicated, and what they may communicate to our times, lies at the heart of what cross-disciplinary scholarly activity – such as that between communication studies and religion – can render us.

All five these recurring themes in my research thus feature in this article.

ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑΣΤΙΚΟΙ

ΦΑΡΟΣ



ΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΟΝΙΚΟΝ ΘΕΟΛΟΓΙΚΟΝ ΠΕΡΙΟΔΙΚΟΝ
ΣΥΓΓΡΑΜΜΑ ΤΟΥ ΠΑΤΡΙΑΡΧΕΙΟΥ ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΕΙΑΣ

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THE BIBLE AND ECUMENISM¹

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For many reasons, Christians relate various aspects of their lives to the Bible. This also holds true for the matter of ecumenism. In this article, some themes and texts from the Old Testament (particularism-universalism, inner-religious pluralism, Joshua 24) and New Testament (e.g. John 17) that may be related to the matter of ecumenism are discussed, with the conclusion that none really apply to what is understood as the ecumenical enterprise in our times. That should however not be taken to mean that ecumenism is therefore in some way an illegitimate enterprise. Without employing in invalid ways the Bible for our purposes, though, churches can and should remain committed to ecumenical endeavours based on a shared Christian identity created by the Holy Spirit. In such processes, the Bible as a unifying factor remains of central importance.

1. SO SAYETH SCRIPTURE?

Christians often want to relate their points of view to the Bible. The following are two of the (related) reasons why this is done:

1. Christians believe that the Bible is the inspired Word of God (though the term "inspiration" might be interpreted in different ways); and
2. Christians want to live in accordance with Scripture, that is, we want to let the Bible guide us in our daily lives.

Because many Christians live in such close contact with the Bible (regular readings, sermons, meditations, *et cetera*), it becomes easy to

¹ This contribution was first published in Lombaard, C (ed.) 1999. *Essays and exercises in ecumenism*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, pp 26-41. It is republished here in an altered form, with the permission of the publisher, because of the widely divergent readership of the two publications involved.

forget the "great gap" (GE Lessing famously called it a *garstige Grabe*) that exists between us and the biblical texts in terms of time, culture, thought worlds and the like. This brings the risk that we might carry too much of our own thoughts into the Bible, thus:

1. not permitting the (differing) biblical texts themselves to speak clearly to us; and
2. allowing (selected) biblical texts to reaffirm only what we already believe.

This becomes an even greater danger when one passionately believes a certain point of view to be correct. Our emotional commitment might lead us to assume that God cannot but support this point of view, and therefore we "mine" the Bible (Bright 1967:121) for each possible text that might support our view.

In such circumstances, the way we understand the Bible, differently formulated, the way we allow the Bible to speak to us, becomes distorted. The give and take of understanding the ancient Holy Scriptures (what F Schleiermacher has described as the "hermeneutical circle" - see Thiselton 1992:204-236) becomes more a giving of meaning to the biblical texts and less a receiving of meaning from them.

These considerations may very well come into play when the subject of ecumenism comes under discussion.

2. SOME SAY YES, SOME SAY NO...

Ecumenism, though generally looked upon favourably in our times, was not and is not universally regarded as something positive among Christians. In addition, different churches see different models of ecumenical contact as preferable to others. In the explanation of such viewpoints, reference is often made to the Bible.

A question basic to current ecumenical debate, which is however not always asked, is the following: Is what we understand about ecumenism to be found in the Bible *at all*? Following on this, another discomfiting question needs to be asked: Should our understanding of ecumenism not be found in the Bible, would this mean that the Bible has nothing to do with our ecumenical concerns today? It is these two questions which will be addressed below.

2.1 Ecumenism in the Old Testament?

To find exact parallels to our ecumenical issues in the Old Testament is not possible. No texts in the Old Testament are concerned with the (re)unification of the people of God whose diversity had come to destroy their previous unity. Some interesting situations in the Old Testament

which seem related to ecumenism have been indicated (e.g. Rusch 1985:2-4). The problem with these situations is that they differ radically from any of our modern ecumenical concerns; ecumenical insights for today can therefore not be appropriately deduced from these texts.

Particularism (*Israel überall*) versus universalism (an "open doors" practice) in Israel is a much-investigated theme in Old Testament science. It is broadly accepted that there is a tension between these two strains of thought in the Old Testament. To illustrate: on the one hand, the 'am (people of Israel) is placed over against the *gôjim* (nations) as the chosen people of Yahweh (e.g. in 1 Chronicles 17:21). Terms such as *qahal* (congregation) and especially *'edah* (gathering) have at least exclusivist overtones (see Berger 1989:199-201). The book Deuteronomy and other Old Testament books influenced by it (e.g. Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, the Prophets - see Clements 1989:50-60, 95-99), the Priestly writings (e.g. Leviticus, Numbers), as well as other post-exilic literature (e.g. Ezra, Nehemiah), contain coinciding themes of "Yahweh alone" and "Israel alone". Particularism (or exclusivism) represents a definite understanding within Israel's history.

Of course, this "drawing of boundaries" had more to do with the exclusion of other religions than with separation between segments of the same religion. This distinction, however, becomes slightly blurred if one accepts theories such as the Kenite origin of Yahwism (i.e. that Moses learnt Yahwism from Jethro, a Kenite priest - Exodus 2:16-3:4, 18:1-27; see De Moor 1990: 6, 223ff for a recent discussion) or a closer Edomite-Israelite relationship, including religion, than was traditionally assumed (Hoekveld-Meijer 1996).

Conflict between different groups within Yahwism is however also found in the Old Testament. Rival politico-religious parties were often found in Israel, throughout its history (Albertz 1992a & 1992b). But here once again we have to bear in mind that the issue of the (dis)unity of different church structures was never implied. Furthermore, whereas state politics play a relatively minor role in the modern ecumenical movement, for the ancient near eastern sensibilities there was no such division between politics and religion. To this may be added the fact that this relationship (religion - politics) differed in the various periods of Israel's history (Albertz 1992a & 1992b). This state-faith connection in the Old Testament makes a translation of those circumstances into our modern secular-ecclesial separation very difficult. The *garstige Grabe* allows only for tenuous application at best.

The closest that ancient Israel's religion came to some kind of parallel with our modern ecumenical concerns lies in the pre-monarchic period.

If one accepts the famous "*Gott der Väter*"-hypothesis of A Alt (1929), some parallels may be perceived. Alt proposed that different groups carrying independent traditions of the God of Abraham, the Fear of Isaac (e.g. Genesis 31:42a) and the Mighty One of Jacob (e.g. Genesis 49:24b), were united into one common religious tradition (Exodus 3:6). (This unification of traditions was possible for the Pentateuchal authors/editors because the oral heritage which preceded them had already identified the God of the Fathers with Yahweh). Nowadays different churches in the process of uniting, may find some analogy to their unification in this history, though of course in Alt's theory there is no question of *reuniting* what used to be one, and in modern ecumenism there is no question of political involvement bringing about legitimate unity.

The theory of M Noth (see e.g. Noth 1954:83-104) regarding Joshua 24 could similarly be analogically viewed: the renewal of the covenant of Sinai, according to Noth, included a number of tribes not involved with the exodus and desert experiences. The happenings related in Joshua 24 served to unify politically and religiously those involved in an "amphictyony" of tribes. Here too the same two concerns which concluded the previous paragraph would apply.

Other instances which indicate a leaning within Israel's faith towards universalism are the blessing of Abraham ("And *all people on earth* will be blessed through you" - Genesis 12:3 [NIV], italics added; see Westermann 1981:175-177), and the Esther and Jonah narratives (perhaps placed strategically after the particularistic books of Ezra and Nehemiah in the canon? - Potgieter 1996). In no such instances, however, is the explicit issue in question the establishment of closer relations between people of the same faith. God's greater grace, rather than ecumenism, would be a preferable categorisation of these cases.

It seems then that, although apparently fruitful avenues exist in finding answers to our ecumenical concerns in the Old Testament, the situations ancient and modern are just too divergent. Each historical context is unique; history cannot repeat itself precisely. Parallels within these diverse contexts do open up some windows for application; direct application, as is too often unquestioningly assumed and employed, however, should be guarded against. The *garstige Grabe* must be taken seriously; the integrity of the meaning of the Old Testament texts within their contexts should not be regarded as unimportant.

2.2 Ecumenism in the New Testament?

My contention here is the same as above: the New Testament does not know ecumenical concerns as we do, i.e. the issue of contact between

different institutionalised and separate(d) churches. The closest approximation we find in the New Testament relates to two spheres:

1. Internal tensions: relationship problems within (not between) one or more small local congregations;
2. Externalising pressures: problems between Christians and the Jewish congregations within which they initially functioned, but which began rejecting them.

As to the *internal tensions* which the early Christian faith communities experienced: it is within this context that metaphors such as the Pauline image "body of Christ" (Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12) served. For Paul the church constitutes people who are intimately *related to Christ*, that is, represented by Christ before God through being incorporated in his salvific death. Therefore these people are *related to one another*: "those who belong to Christ, belong to each other" (Roberts 1979:98, translated; see 93, 95-97).

This is the same idea being conveyed in Ephesians and Colossians, though through a somewhat altered imagery (Christ now becomes the head of the body), and in the metaphor of the vine and branches in John 15: *through* their shared relationship with Christ, unity among fellow believers flows forth (Berger 1989:202-205).

Here we find unity which:

1. dares not experience diversity of gifts as a threat, but acknowledges it as the gift of the same Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:4-7);
2. acknowledges the diversity of backgrounds and functions of the faithful to be in harmony in Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12-31; see Roberts 1979:99).

Hence, our modern dualistic jargon of church unity "in principle and in practice" or "both spiritually and visibly" bears distinctions which find no roots in these New Testament texts and the thought world they convey (see Nichol 1993:23; Rusch 1985:8-9). Unity in the New Testament cannot be bisected in such a way; it would belie the *koinwvia* (*koinonia* = fellowship - Louw & Nida 1988:446, see 569) within the small local congregations (Frieling 1995:47). Furthermore, letters written to more than one congregation (as are the epistles of James, 1 Peter, Revelation to John, Ephesians - Berger 1989:203) fit perfectly into this ecclesiology, which accepts unity and diversity within one (though not without affirming the truth of Christ - e.g. 1 Timothy 1:3; Revelation 2:2).

Coming to *externalising pressures*: The solidarity between Christians from a Jewish background and those from a heathen background may

well be questioned. There had indeed been problems (see Nichol 1993:23-25), as for example Acts 10-11 demonstrates. This conflict was addressed at the Jerusalem meeting (Acts 15 - Frieling 1995:48-49) without resolving it permanently, but without the church dividing into separate institutions (as has become the modern habit). The insight in Acts 15:11 (Nichol 1993:26) is carried through when Paul depicts Jew and Greek - among other groups - as united in Christ (Romans 1-3, especially 10:12; Galatians 3:28 etc.). Other New Testament literature, such as Ephesians, renews this model (Berger 1989:206; also Col 3:11).

These old tensions came forcefully to the fore once again, some three decades later, when Christians were ejected from the synagogues within which they had been accustomed to worshipping. The Gospel of John, written shortly after these occurrences (see Du Rand 1991:53, 68), might therefore be expected to reflect inner Christian tensions between believers from heathen backgrounds and those more closely related to the Jewish synagogue community which was now expelling them (Du Rand 1991:52-53, 63-66). See however John 17:20, which spells out the norm for the Johannine congregations.

This brings us to the following matter: McAfee Brown (1987:22; see Leeming 1967:100) correctly observes that, where modern-day denominations do decide to unite, their "motivations usually include...a desire to respond...to Jesus' high-priestly prayer 'that they all may be one' (Jn. 17:21)". However John 17 - as De Wet (1994:15 i.a.; 1997:34, 43) emphasises - presents unity as unity is in the Johannine congregations, not as it *should be*. This text has no intention of encouraging the unification of churches. John 17 (especially verses 20-23) presents unity as it *was* for the Johannine readership.

This would lead to the conclusion (which is little more than a reassertion of the above) that:

1. the early church was characterised by an unquestioned "functional unity" (De Wet 1994:77, translated) or "working unity" (Nichol 1993:23, translated) which required no verification or restoration; and
2. the John 17-prayer was understood within a very small circle: what was referred to was not unity between different Christian churches, but unity between the individuals within the very small local faith communities.

All the above implies what should have been clear at the outset of our modern ecumenical concerns: that what we understand ecumenism to be is foreign to New Testament literature, even at first glance. Many writers (e.g. Frieling 1995:46-47; Crafford 1993:5-6; Hagemann 1987:797; McAfee Brown 1987:18, Leeming 1967:96, Visser't Hooft 1960:1569)

acknowledge that the Greek word *oikoumené* - from which the English word *ecumenism* derives - knows only the following meanings in the New Testament: "the empire of Rome", "the inhabited world" or "the inhabitants of world". *oikoumené* within the New Testament refers to matters outside the domain of the church's identity (see Louw & Nida 1988:10, 16, 106). Only later did the term *oikoumené* come to be related to the church in particular (see e.g. Frieling 1995:49-68; Crafford 1993:6). The implication of this, which is seldom explicated (some interesting exceptions do however exist - see e.g. Perkins 1984:18-27), is that *already* on this *superficial* level care should be taken not to impart our current understanding of ecumenism on the New Testament.

2.3 The relationship Bible-ecumenism

Often when so-called "biblical foundations" for ecumenism were questioned - especially in the Southern African context over the past few decades - there were at least two (related) underlying motives:

1. the intention to discourage ecumenical relations; and
2. the implication that, should our ecumenical concerns not be found in the Bible, we could not legitimately engage in ecumenical relations.

Even though the implicit acceptance that our ecumenical concerns are to be found in the Bible has been challenged above (in 2.1 and 2.2), I favour neither this *intention* nor the *implication*. The fact that our ecumenical concerns are not attested to in the Old and New Testaments does not render modern ecumenical practices and hopes illegitimate. As with many other important issues in the lives of Christians, we cannot find "proof texts" in Scripture to provide us with an answer for all times and places.

What we can and should do, is to study the ancient biblical texts within their contexts. This would help us understand how fellow-believers of generations ago thought about their life *coram Deo*. In some way this would impress upon our *Christian identities* (a concept I take over from SACBC 1990:7) some parallel thoughts and actions, enticing us to lead our Christian lives (in)formed by Scripture. We should also recognise, however, a whole range of other influences on our Christian identities: we are, of course, children of our time. Therefore we cannot, and should not try to, live as carbon copies of the ancient faithful in ancient worlds. Christians can, however, in our day and in our way, try to give expression to a holy life before the same God we find in the Bible.

Part of our current Christian identity is the realisation of the importance of ecumenism. The growth of the ecumenical movement may of course be ascribed to a whole range of factors. However, our core

confession should remain that the same Spirit which speaks through the Bible, grants the church (meant here in its broad sense) the ecumenical process (see Raem 1995:86). Our Bible-moulded, equally our Spirit-moulded, Christian identity leads us, in our times, towards an ecumenical consciousness and practice.

This approach, I would argue, brings both the freedom to respect the biblical texts for what they are and the liberty to pursue our ecumenical concerns. It may well be that "(w)e are firmly convinced that Jesus Christ intends oneness to exist among his people" (Crumley 1985:v), but that should not force us to find our ecumenical concerns within biblical texts and contexts. Our concerns are *ours*; the *garstige Grabe*, along with our respect for the integrity of the biblical texts, should prevent us from demanding answers to questions the biblical authors did not know. Yet our current Christian identity, (in)formed by Scripture, can still dream of and practice ecumenical ideals.

3. THE RELATIONSHIP ECUMENISM-BIBLE

We have seen that the Bible does not directly reflect our understanding of issues related to ecumenism, principally because our ecumenical concerns did not exist within the life and faith worlds reflected in the Bible. But this does not mean that the Bible is not an issue in the current ecumenical movement...

To review what has been stated above: the way in which the Bible would touch on modern ecumenism is through Christians who accept the Bible as a "rule of faith and life". Our Christian identity is formed and informed by (among other factors) the Bible and what it proclaims. And for the greater part of Christianity, there is a growing consciousness that our Christian identity currently asks of us some concern for ecumenism.

In this process of a growing sensitivity to and practice of ecumenism, the issue of Christian relationship with/to other faith traditions will be presented repeatedly (see Frieling 1995:73-75; Hagemann 1987:801), though under socio-political circumstances unlike any experienced before. In this process Christians will also be encouraged to affirm their identity - sensitively, of course - as Christians (e.g., see Raiser 1989:61-72, 89-95 on "Christocentric universalism"). In this affirmation the Bible should continue to be a very important part of the Christian identity: the Bible remains the "soul of theology" (so recently again Dohmen 1996:175-180; see Frieling 1995:74, Leeming 1967:98, 100). Should the Bible lose its centrality within Christianity, two related consequences become possible:

- 1. that the identity and self-awareness of Christianity will be much changed, presumably in the direction of syncretism;**
- 2. that the ecumenical process will be shattered into at least two major groupings: those who still accord the Bible its traditional authority on faith matters within the church, and those who reinterpret biblical authority in a different (presumably less central) way.**

The former would probably defeat the claims of Christianity; the latter would defeat the purpose of ecumenism.

It seems then that the Bible will, at the very least, remain important in this way to ecumenical considerations in the times ahead. Put another way, by way of a summary: even though we cannot directly uncover contemporary ecumenical issues in the Bible, we will continue to find the Bible an important issue in contemporary ecumenism.

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2.13 Publication 7: Introduction

“Oortuiging” en prediking - woordspel op ‘n “hartsaak”. *Skrif en Kerk* 21/3, 2000, 607-620. (Paper read at the 1999 *Lewende Woorde* sermon seminar, Dept. Greek & Latin Studies, R.A.U.)

Two points are raised: first, that variables from persuasive communication research may be employed with success in sermons, and second, that the greatest persuasive factor within a sermon is the personal spiritual integrity of the person delivering the sermon.

The recurring themes within my research on how the Bible was brought to communication within different spheres of the South African society, indicated in the the overview of the publications under review here, apply as follows to this specific publication:

- Theme 1 – Integrity: The feature most strongly emphasised in this article, is that the perceived integrity of the message of the preacher during a sermon is the key ingredient to a successful sermon. This is particularly emphasised in the second part of the article.
- Theme 2 – Using the Bible well: Here it is important to note that the way in which preachers find themselves spoken to by the Bible, is determinative of how authoritatively they will be perceived as conveying the biblical message from the pulpit. As the first part of the article indicates, persuasive techniques are valuable tools for a preacher; however, most important is the perceived integrity of the preacher.
- Theme 4 – Communicative imbalances: The previous paragraph explains the phenomenon, difficult to accept within charismatically inclined religious circles, that a good sermon cannot be merely equated to effective oratorical technique. Because the perceived integrity of the preacher remains the primary persuasive factor, sermons delivered poorly but with a sense of personal conviction are more influential over the longer term in the lives of the

audience than sermons delivered with great fanfare, but which does not seem to touch the preacher himself/herself.

- Theme 5 – Insights on religion provided by communication studies: As a summary of the above three paragraphs, it could be said that the use of persuasive variables in sermons may well enhance their effect on the lives of the hearers. However, the perceived conviction of the preacher in the validity of his/her sermon, is of greater persuasive worth.



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“Oortuiging” en prediking: woordspel op ‘n “hartspel”

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ABSTRACT

Persuasion/Conviction and Preaching: Word Play on a Heart Game

This article employs a wordplay on “oortuiging” - persuasion and integrity - to analyse certain aspects of homiletics. Examples of the use of research into persuasive communication and the benefits of these perspectives for effective preaching are given. Of greater importance, though, is the integrity of the preacher, which has three dimensions: that ministers should themselves be convinced of the theology of the text from which they preach, that the concrete contexts of the hearers of the message should be addressed competently, and that exegetical methodology and homiletical pronouncements should correspond.

1 ‘N HARTSPEL...?

Prediking is in twee opsigte ‘n “hartspel”. In die eerste opsig is prediking iets wat vir ons as belangstellendes¹ in hierdie *omvormende kunsvorm* ná aan die hart lê. Om die lewende Woord van die lewende God in ‘n preek ná te praat², bly aangrypend-onbegryplik. Ons kan prediking ontleed in verskillende dimensies, maar dan bly daar altyd iets onontleedbaars oor – ‘n misterie. Spiritualiteit en prediking bly daarom eng verbonde aan mekaar, en vind mede neerslag in die wese (die eksistensie) van die prediker. Prediking raak óns bestaan, ons menswees, ons roeping aan die hart....

Maar prediking is, tweedens, ook ‘n “hartspel” omdat dit aan die kern lê van gelowige-wees en gemeente-wees. Die *praedicatio verbi Dei*, spesifiek in die Reformasie-teologie, is ‘n “hartsaak”: nóg die individuele gelowige, nóg die gemeenskap van die gelowiges (die gemeente) is denkbaar in tradisionele Gereformeerde denke sonder die prediking van die Skrif as polsslug (vgl bv Rossouw 1963:140ff; 205-213).

¹ Hierdie artikel is ‘n verwerkte weergawe van ‘n referaat gelewer op Saterdag 21 Augustus 1999 tydens ‘n seminaar oor prediking gereël deur die uitgewer *Lewende Woorde*, verbonde aan die Departement Griekse en Latynse Studies, Randse Afrikaanse Universiteit, waar die seminaar ook gehou is.

² “The *critical* paraphrase... is the crown of any interpretation”-Von Rad 1965/66:13.

As ons die spel³ van prediking speel, impliseer die dinamika van hierdie spel dus, breedweg, twee “speelrigtings” as die prediker as vertrekpunt geneem word:

- * na buite – hulle wat die preek aanhoor (die gelowige/die gemeente); en
- * na binne - óns as predikers, belangstellendes, entoesiaste.

Ek gaan hierdie tweedeling gebruik om ‘n paar opmerkings te maak rondom die term “oortuiging”. Eers wil ek oortuiging betrek op die hoorder (Dingemans 1991 se terminologie; sien veral bladsye 51-65 van sy werk; kyk plaaslik onder andere Pieterse 1988:79-128); daarna wil ek oortuiging betrek op die prediker.

2 OORTUIGING EN DIE HOORDER VAN DIE PREEK

Oor die teologiese aspek wil ek hier nie uitbrei nie⁴: ek neem dit gewoon as gegewe dat ‘n mens, by wyse van spreke, ‘n instrument is in enige proses waar die evangelie oorgedra word. Die werklike oortuigingswerk bly die terrein van die *Heilige Gees*.

Tog, as instrument, kan ‘n mens sekere kommunikasieveranderlikes aanwend (vgl Burger 1991:27-30): afhanklike diensbaarheid beteken nie inisiatiefloosheid nie. Drie van dié veranderlikes wat binne ‘n (ver)Westerse kultuur toepaslik is⁵, word aangeraak⁶. In navolging van die bekende (maar ooreenvooudigende⁷) kommunikasiemodel “Sender-Boodskap-Ontvanger”, word telkens een aspek gekies uit

³ Hierdie tipe metafoor word deesdae al hoe meer in Afrikaanse teologiese geleedere gevind: eksegese is ook al as spel beskryf (Le Roux 1996:46-56), dogmatiek-homiletiek as dansmaats (Vos 1994:52-64), die erediens as fees en die liturgie as dans (Müller 1990 se hele werk, en p 107 onderskeidelik) – met gemengde reaksie (o a Prinsloo 1996:21-33; Heyns 1994:158-159). Ook die Nederlandse Ou-Testamentikus E Noort het tydens ‘n onlangse kongres in Pretoria die volgende opgemerk: “eksegese is kuns... koorddans sonder vangnet...”.

⁴ Raadpleeg gerus die tradisionele dogmatiek-werke insake die teologiese aspekte van die prediking. Ook, resent, plaaslik en opsommenderwys: Beukes 1993:34-44. Oor die “Gepredikte Woord” of “Verkondigde Woord” het J A Heyns (1977:8-20; 1978:146-147; 1988:82 – vergelyk Jonker 1994:21-22) plaaslik die “Woord-spel” van Karl Barth (1955:89-127) uitgebrei.

⁵ Die kultuurbepaaldheid van retoriese tegnieke moet nooit oor die hoof gesien word nie. Retoriek is nie bowe-kulturelik nie. Hierdie besef lei tot redelik ernstige vrae rondom die retoriese kritiek in die analise van die Bybel.

⁶ Hierdie veranderlikes is gekies bloot op grond van persoonlike voorkeur, en daar is vele meer sulke veranderlikes- sien byvoorbeeld Mulholland 1994; Bettinghaus & Cody 1994; Ross & Ross 1981.

⁷ Sien byvoorbeeld Severin & Tankard 1992:38-53; meer algemeen: Littlejohn 1996; plaaslik en toegepas op die prediking: Webb 1986:35-45.

navorsing oor, onderskeidelik, Sender-, Boodskap- en Ontvangerveranderlikes⁸. Telkens word eers die kommunikatiewe agtergrond gegee (hierin word redelik sterk gesteun op Lombaard 1990:116-124, 141), waarna die toepassing daarvan binne die konteks van die prediking uitgelig sal word.

In die aanduiding van hierdie veranderlikes, is dit nie moontlik om al die verbandhoudende sake aan te dui nie⁹. Hierdie inhoude is dus gedekontekstualiseer, en sal moeilik effektief aangewend kan word sonder dat die verbandhoudende sake ook eers in berekening gebring word. Tog bied dit eerste insigte in die moontlike waarde wat deur hierdie tipe navorsing gebied kan word.

2.1 'n Sender-veranderlike: Die "sleeper"-effek

Die aanvaarding van 'n boodskap, veral 'n ooredingsboodskap, deur 'n ontvanger is veral aanvanklik sterk gekoppel aan die waargenome geloofwaardigheid van die sender. Dié saak is goed bevestig in die navorsing (vgl Severin & Tankard 1992:153-157). Die "sleeper"-effek behels egter dat, met verloop van tyd, die identiteit en rol van die sender van 'n spesifieke boodskap in die geheue van die ontvanger geskei word van die inhoud en effek van die boodskap. Dit beteken dat 'n hoogs-geloofwaardige persoon se boodskap aanvanklik 'n sterk ooredende effek kan hê, maar dat hierdie boodskapinvloed met verloop van tyd afneem. In die geval van 'n sender met 'n lae waargenome geloofwaardigheid, is die teenoorgestelde egter waar. Soos wat sender en boodskap-inhoud mettertyd in die gedagtes van die ontvanger geskei word, sal die boodskap aan invloed toeneem (vgl Drop et al 1972:31-33).

Die implikasie is dus dat ooredingsinvloed en sender mettertyd al hoe meer onafhanklik van mekaar in die gedagte-wêreld van die ontvanger funksioneer. Die "sender se invloed, hetsy positief of negatief, (neem dus af), sodat die inligting toenemend op eie meriete beoordeel word" (Lombaard 1990:116).

⁸ Die gebruik van kommunikasieteorie ter verryking van die homiletiek en die praktiese teologie in die algemeen, is geen nuwigheid in Afrikaanse teologie-navorsing nie. Sien veral die werke van H J C Pieterse en C J A Vos, wat saamgevat word in Vos & Pieterse 1997:15-28. Sien ook Heyns & Pieterse 1990; Nel 1994: o.a. pp 21f, 83f, 291; Webb 1986:31-61; Cronjé & Van Wyk 1982. Met my keuse hier van dié drie elemente in die kommunikasieproses – te wete, Sender, Boodskap en Ontvanger – probeer ek die te enge onderskeid in die praktiese teologie tussen die klem op óf die pastor óf die gemeente (sien L M Heyns in Heyns & Pieterse 1990:18-19) ondervang. Sowel die kommunikasiegebeure in die erediens as geheel as enige van die elemente daarvan is 'n legitieme studieveld.

⁹ Sien byvoorbeeld Bettinghaus & Cody 1994 en Mulholland 1994 vir 'n goeie oorsig oor navorsing in die ooredingskunde. Vir verdere bronne sien onder andere <http://carmen.artsci.washington.edu/propaganda/contents.htm> en http://directory.netscape.com/Science/Social_Sienes/Psychology/Persuasion_and_Social_Influence/

Die invloed van hierdie “sleeper”-effek, is bevind, kan deur middel van sekere tegnieke aangewend word ter wille van groter oorredingseffektiwiteit. Één daarvan is waarskuwing teen teenbeïnvloeding. Indien ‘n ontvanger reeds ‘n boodskap aanvaar, is dit moontlik om hierdie aanvaarding stewiger te anker deur die ontvanger daarop te wys dat daar ander kompeterende “interpretasies” is. Hierdie teenargumente kan gelys en bespreek word. Selfs al word teenargumente egter net in verswakte vorm bespreek, of dit word bloot genoem d at daar teenargumente bestaan, kan dit die opinie wat die ontvanger tans huldig, help “innokuleer”. Aansluitend by die “sleeper”-effek, vergroot die invloed van hierdie waarkuwing/“innokulasie” oor tyd heen, sodat weerstand teen latere beïnvloeding mettertyd vergroot (Drop et al 1972:31-33; Williams 1984:92).

Die *implikasies* hiervan vir die *prediking*, is kortweg, goeie nuus vir “swak” sprekers en slegte nuus vir “goeie” sprekers:

* Vir predikers met ‘n lae waargenome geloofwaardigheid as gevolg van, byvoorbeeld, ongemaklike openbare optrede, beteken dit dat alles nie verlore is nie. Hulle boodskappe mag wel op die kort termyn minder effektief blyk te wees omdat hulle “swak sprekers” is, maar mettertyd word die boodskapinhoud en die sender van mekaar geskei in die gedagte-wêreld van die ontvangers. Die boodskap sal dan aan invloed toeneem. In kerklike taal: die evangelie word dus steeds goed bedien, oor tyd heen, ten spyte van dorings in die vlees (2 Kor 12:7, met apologie) van die prediker.

* Met “goeie” sprekers is dit anders gesteld. Predikers met ‘n hoë waargenome geloofwaardigheid, wat dikwels deur kerkgangers verbind word daaraan dat die predikante “goeie sprekers” is, word maklik invloed-ryk deur hulle prediking. Mettertyd egter, soos wat boodskapinhoud en sender van mekaar geskei word in die gedagte-wêreld van die ontvangers, verloor die boodskap aan oortuigingskrag. Waargenome sendergeloofwaardigheid kan dus nie onbepaald die waargenome meriete van ‘n boodskap “dra” nie. Dit is dus, oor die lang termyn, slegte nuus veral vir predikante wat deur middel van ‘n “persoonlikheidskultus” die evangelie bedien.

Die insig dat ‘n goeie spreker en ‘n goeie prediker nie noodwendig dieselfde ding is nie, vind dus hier ook uitdrukking.

In verband met die waarde van waarskuwings teen teenbeïnvloeding (die “innokulasie”-effek) en die “sleeper”-effek daarmee verbonde, net enkele kernopmerkings. Hierdie verskynsel verklaar onder andere die effektiwiteit van jeugbediening (vgl Nel 1982:72) op ‘n vroeë ouderdom, maar ook die weerstand teen nuwere Bybeluitleg in die kerk.

Vroeëre “waarskuwings” teen, onderskeidelik, nie-Christelike lewenswyses en ‘n ander Bybelbegrip, speel bepaald ‘n rol in die permanensie van hierdie gevestigde houdings¹⁰.

Voorbeelde van verdere moontlike toepassings hiervan kan vermenigvuldig word.

2.2 ‘n Boodskap-veranderlike: Kongruensie-skepping

Gemeenskaplike gronde tussen sender en ontvanger is die basis van waar af (nie-geforceerde) oortuiging moontlik word. Hierdie gedeelde belange moet vroeg in die boodskap reeds gestel word; dit is ‘n “aanvangstaak” (Lombaard 1990:116). Soos wat enige openbare speker weet, moet die gehoor se belangstelling vroeg reeds getrek word. Die aanduiding van gemeenskaplikhede wen ook vertrouwe, wat die sender se geloofwaardigheid – een van dié belangrikste oorreedingsveranderlikes – verhoog¹¹.

Taal en spreekstyl in die boodskap is ‘n goeie manier om identifisering met die sender te verhoog (Rall 1980:25). Daarmee saam moet die argumente in die boodskap direk in verband gebring word met die ontvanger se “huidige probleme, houdings, verwagtinge, ideale, behoeftes en waardes” (Lombaard 1990:117). Hierdie sake moet aangeraak word in die “probleem” wat vroeg in die boodskap gestel word, en, belangrik, ook in die verlangde “oplossing” wat aangebied word. Maniere waarop ‘n effektiewe “oplossing” (dit is die oorredingsintensie) aangebied kan word, sluit in (ter opsomming van Fleming & Levie 1978:214-216 en Lerbinger 1977:10):

- * bied “beginselkennis”: dit wil sê inligting wat die onbekende verstaanbaar, aanvaarbaar, en dan positief voorstel;
- * dui die “gebruikswaarde” aan: die voorstel wat aan die hand gedoen word, moet ooglopend effektief blyk te wees in die oplossing van ‘n sekere probleem of in die weerspieëling van ‘n belangrik-geagte waarde;
- * die “aanpasbaarheid” van die voorstel: ‘n rigiede voorstel sal moeiliker aanvaar word as een wat aangepas kan word binne onderskeie kontekste, soos wat dit individue/groepe se kontekstuele eise en voorkeure pas;
- * die “ego-funksie”: voorstelle wat die moontlikheid bied om uitdrukking te gee aan die selfbeeld van die ontvanger, staan ‘n

¹⁰ Houdings kan omskryf word as “the internal mental and emotional states that affect how we react to outside persuasion... our feelings, beliefs, or ideas that affect how we may eventually behave” – Williams 1984:87.

¹¹ Vergelyk die titel van die hoofstuk “The magic of rapport” in die populêre werk van Zucker 1994:67-75.

goeie kans op sukses¹². Die ideale selfkonsep word ook hierin betrek: die strewes van die ontvangers word ook ingesluit.

* interessantheid: prikkeling van ontvangers se belangstelling bly ook hier belangrik;

* geloofwaardigheid: stellings wat gemaak word, moet as geldig waargeneem word.

Natuurlik moet die kongruensie wat die boodskap skep tussen sender en ontvanger genoeg ruimte laat vir verskil: sonder verskil is oortuiging onnodig (Lombaard 1990:118). 'n Te groot oorvleueling tussen sender en ontvanger se opinies impliseer dikwels vir 'n ontvanger dat verandering onnodig is (die "assimilasie-effek"); 'n te ekstreme verskil tussen sender en ontvanger veroorsaak weer dat die boodskap as meer ekstreem waargeneem word as wat dit werklik is (die "kontras-effek" - Lerbinger 1972:74; cf Sandell 1977:77), wat daartoe lei dat die boodskap óf geïgnoreer, óf verwerp, óf tot aanvaarbaarheid verdraai word (Rall 1980:2; Sampson 1964:277). Die "aanvaardingsveld" – die sielkundig-aanvaarbare "grense" vir 'n boodskap om potensieel aanvaar te word (Triandis 1971:187) – moet dus versigtig binne die boodskap daargestel word. Indien tyd dit toelaat, kan tegnieke soos die "voet-in-die-deur"¹³ en die "deur-in-die-gesig"¹⁴ as oorredingstrategieë aangewend word (Lerbinger 1972:74).

Om hierdie saak te *betrek op die prediking*, word 'n denkbeelde situasie geskets: 'n predikant wil die gemeente betrokke kry by 'n voedselskema vir armes in die middestad. Die gedeelde belange moet dus eers in die preek gestel word - sake soos liefde tot God en liefde tot die naaste, met laasgenoemde wat ook praktiese hulp aan armes beteken. As die gedeelde basis van empatie en roeping tot optrede¹⁵ wat predikant en gemeentelide deel, gestel is, kan dié saak nou ook verbind word aan verdere gedeelde behoeftes (bv in verband met probleme: voorkom diefstal deur voedsel te voorsien; in verband met ideale: streef na 'n gemeenskap waar almal genoeg het). Deur verder "beginselkennis" oor te dra (oor hoe die projek prakties geloods kan word), en deur die "aanpasbaarheid" van die projek (bv by individue se besige programme) aan

¹² Interessant genoeg, lyk dit of 'n aggressiewe, outoritêre oorredingsappèl die mees effektiewe oortuigingsmetode is indien met outoritêre persoonlikhede gewerk word.

¹³ Die "voet-in-die-deur"-tegniek stel eers 'n meer gematigde standpunt; indien dit aanvaar word, word hierop voortgebou na 'n meer progressiewe standpunt.

¹⁴ Die "deur-in-die-gesig"-tegniek stel eers 'n te ekstreme standpunt, wat beslis verwerping sal ontlok; later word dan 'n meer gematigde standpunt aangebied, wat minder ekstreem lyk as wat dit sou geblyk het as dit van die begin af gestel is. Daarom word dit vervolgens makliker aanvaar.

¹⁵ Die verhouding tussen houding en gedrag is egter nie noodwendig of eenvoudig nie (Vgl Williams 1984:93-96) vir 'n opsomming hiervan.

te toon, word die kanse op effektiewe oortuiging vergroot. Indien gemeentelede vermoedelik traag sal wees om betrokke te raak, kan die voet-in-die-deur tegniek moontlik gebruik word - deurdat aanvanklik 'n baie beperkte betrokkenheid by die projek as ideaal gestel word.

Kongruensie tussen prediker en gemeente word dus in die boodskap uitgespel. Dit word dan gebruik as basis in die oortuigingsproses.

2.3 'n Ontvanger-veranderlike: Selfagting

Selfagting is die waarde wat persone aan hulleself heg (vgl Ross & Ross 1981:31). Hoe laer persone se selfagting is, hoe meer oorreedbaar blyk hulle te wees, te meer deur persone met 'n hoë waargenome selfagting. Lae selfagting impliseer naamlik dat eie opinies as van minder waarde as dié van ander persone geag word.

Selfagting is een van die belangrikste ontvangerveranderlikes insake die effektiwiteit van 'n oortuigingspoging. Dit hang egter saam met sake soos intelligensie, opvoedingspeil, en dies meer, omdat hierdie sake weer bepaal in hoe 'n mate rasionele en emosionele boodskapelemente (in so 'n mate as wat hulle onderskeibaar is - Rall 1980:20) aansluiting vind by die oorredingsvatbaarheid van die ontvangers (Lerbinger 1972:71).

In die geheel gesien beteken hierdie vertrekpunte dat rasionele argumente aan te beveel is vir ontvangers met 'n hoë opvoedingspeil, as die gevolge van die boodskap helder tuisgebring moet word by die ontvangers, of as die onderwerp tegniese onderskeidings benodig (Rall 1980:20). Dit is tipies die soort boodskappe wat aan persone met 'n hoë opvoedingspeil gebring sal word. Omdat dié groep mense weens 'n suksessirkel in hulle lewens (vgl Jones 1977) geneig sal wees tot hoë selfagting, sal 'n appèl op hulle denke, eerder as hulle emosies, die beste oorredingsresultate verkry.

'n Emosionele aanpak is meer gepas waar die ontvangers die sender reeds vertrou (Johannesen 1967:38), waar ideale, begeertes of optrede sonder vergoeding van die ontvangers verlang word, en waar die ontvangers 'n lae intelligensie/opvoedingspeil het (Rall 1980:20; Andersen 1971:158). Met laasgenoemde waarskynlik die belangrikste van hierdie veranderlikes (wat dus 'n groot impak sal hê op die ander veranderlikes), is die implikasie dat rasionele argumentvoering - ten spyte van die Westerse vertroue op die rede - waarskynlik onsuksesvol sal wees om ongesofistikeerde mense se houdings/gedrag te verander¹⁶.

Om hierdie oorredingsaspek *op die prediking toe te pas*: sommige van die geloofsherlewings in die negentiende eeuse kerkgeskiedenis het

¹⁶ Hierdie insig open belangrike perspektiewe vir byvoorbeeld HIV/VIGS-voorkomingsprojekte in veral landelike gebiede.

gepaard gegaan met groot klem op die wederkoms-en-oordeels-teologie (vgl Bosch 1991:281-283, 313-327). Vrees was 'n belangrike motief in dié tipe prediking, en vrees is juis een van dié mees kragtige emosionele appèlle - indien gematigd aangewend (vgl Severin & Tankard 1992:167-161; Lombaard 1990:121-123). Die herlewings was suksesvol in dié sin dat groot groepe mense hulle tot die Christendom, of tot groter "Christelikheid", bekeer het.

Tans reageer teoloë egter dikwels negatief op die moontlikheid dat dié tipe prediking nog in bekeringsveldtogte aangewend word. Kommunikasiekundig beskou, is dit aanduiding van twee sake:

* dit is eintlik te verwagte dat teoloë, weens 'n hoër opvoedingspeil en daarmee gepaardgaande hoë selfagting, negatief op hierdie emosionele vreesboodskappe sal reageer, ongeag of dié boodskappe direk op hulle gerig is of nie;

* aan die ander kant verwoord teoloë wat dié sendingmetode kritiseer waarskynlik akkuraat 'n kultuur-historiese tendens, naamlik dat mense oor die algemeen (minstens in Westerse en verwesterse lande) tans 'n baie hoër opvoedingspeil het as wat die geval was tydens hierdie groot herlewingsbewegings.

Daarom is dit waarskynlik geldig om op te merk dat sowel die opvoeding/selfagting van die teoloë as dié van die samelewing tans, kommunikasiekundig gesproke, die groeiende afkeur in emosionele, vreesopjaende prediking verklaar.

2.4 Samevatting

Uit bostaande blyk dat die aanwending van kommunikasienavorsing, spesifiek oorredingsnavorsing, interessante en bruikbare perspektiewe vir die prediking kan bied. Wat hier aangebied is, is egter bloot eerste treë. Voordat met enige gesaghebbendheid oor dié sake gepraat kan word, is veel meer interdisiplinêre navorsing¹⁷ nodig.

Laat ek daarom vir eers hierby volstaan, en oorbeweeg na die tweede deel van my woordspel rondom oortuiging en prediking.

3 OORTUIGING EN DIE *VERBI DIVINI MINISTER*

Een van my leermeesters, Professor Wil Vosloo, is iemand wat verseg om twee sake van mekaar te skei: die harde akademiese studie van 'n

¹⁷ Insluitend teologie, sielkunde, sosiologie, kommunikasiekunde, filosofie, etiek, kultuurstudies, en dies meer.

Bybel-tekste, en die sinvolle pastorale – dit is, kerklike - toepassing van hierdie arbeid. Een van sy “spreuke” wil ek hier aanhaal¹⁸:

‘n goeie prediker het drie kenmerke:

hy/sy sal die gemeente wat voor hom/haar sit, goed ken;

hy/sy sal die betrokke Bybeltekste goed ken; en

hy/sy sal opreg glo, dit wat hy/sy verkondig.

Dit is oor die laaste frase wat ek eerste iets meer wil sê. ‘n “Goeie prediker”¹⁹ is een wat van harte glo dit wat in sy/haar preek verwoord²⁰ word. Anders gestel: wat ‘n goeie prediker bring, is ‘n boodskap met integriteit – die boodkapper se wese word mede in die *kerugma* (verkondiging/boodschap) opgeneem. Ek gló wat ek preek. Níé omdat ek my troeteltemas beprek nie, maar omdat ek myself geheel oortuig vind van die boodskap van die Bybeltekste wat my - en dan my hoorders - *intrek*. Dit gaan dus nie net daarom dat ek die Bybeltekste verstaan nie, maar óók dat ek myself – en dan my hoorders húlleself - in die Bybeltekste verstaan vind (vgl Rossouw 1963:229-245). Die Bybel lees my, respektiewelik: óns.

Hiedie “oortuiging” van die prediker is dus om oortuig te wees van die integriteit (teologies-eksistensiële en prakties) van sy/haar *aangesprek wees* en *nápraat* van die Bybel.

Híerdie *oortuiging* wat met prediking gepaard gaan, het sekere voorvereistes, wat ons by die eerste twee dele van die Vosloo-spreuk hierbo terugbring.

‘n Prediker wat sy/haar gemeente nie ken nie, kan moeilik meer as tydlose waarhede kwytraak. Hoewel dit deel van die (ver)Westerse kerkstroming se tradisie is (vgl Nürnberger 1999:21-23), is dit nêr te Grieks-filosofies, nêr te Westers om altyd reg te laat geskied aan die kontekstuele gesitueerdheid van die evangelie²¹. ‘n Preek moet neerslag vind grondvat in die spesifieke konteks van die hoorders²². Dit is des te moeiliker in (ver)Westerse kerke en denke, wat beginnels bo praktyk stel.

¹⁸ Let egter daarop dat hierdie ‘n “orale uitspraak” is. Sover ek weet, het Vosloo nooit hierdie insigte op papier neergepen nie.

¹⁹ Vergelyk die opmerking hierbo oor goeie sprekers en goeie predikers...

²⁰ Die woord “verwoord” is doelbewus gekies: dit verwys na voetnota 2 van hierdie artikel. Prediking in die reformatoriese tradisie is nie die kwytraak van eie wysheid nie, maar bly die nápraat van die Skrif. Vergelyk Von Rad (1965/66:11-18).

²¹ Sien Nolan (1988:15) in verband met “universalising truths”.

²² Die erns van dié konkreet-historiese dimensie spreek onder andere ook daaruit dat vele studies wat erns maak met die sosio-historiese agtergrond van die Bybelse tekste, tot soortgelyke gevolgtrekkings as dié van, byvoorbeeld, Strijdom & Van Aarde (1990:185) kom: “dat teologie in ‘n konkrete sosio-historiese konteks funksioneer, en nie *in abstracto* nie”.

Maar hierdie “spesifieke konteks” is nie enkelvoudig nie. Gemeentelike konteks sluit in: belangrike sake in die lewe van individuele gemeentede; singewende momente in die lewe van die gemeente as geheel; die nouer (plaaslike) en breër (internasionale) sosio-politiese en kulturele konteks²³; die ekologiese konteks, die ekonomiese konteks (Marx is dood...?), en dies meer²⁴. Die eerste twee van hierdie aspekte kan moeilik aangeraak word deur ‘n gas-prediker in ‘n gemeente; al die ander moontlikhede bly egter nog beskikbaar.

Die Afrikaanse kerke se teologiese opleiding gee egter min aandag aan hierdie “buite-persoonlike” realiteite (vgl Lombaard 1999:22-24). Dit maak dit alreeds moeilik vir persone wat deur so ‘n leerskool gegaan het, om oor hierdie sake te preek. Daarmee saam: baie mense wat besluit om predikant te word, neem dié besluit om hulle “iets wil beteken vir *mense*”. Beide hierdie tendense word gekleur deur kerklike en persoonlike geskiedenis met ‘n sekere soort piëteit (naamlik piëtisme), gepaardgaande met ‘n redelik eng (en on-Calvinistiese!) siening van “roeping” (meer spesifiek: roepingsterreine; vgl McKim 1992:339-341). Al hierdie aspekte maak dit makliker vir predikers om “ewige waarhede” (vir die brein) eerder as kontekstueel-relevante boodskappe (vir die hele mens) te lewer²⁵.

Sodanige eensydige klemtone in die prediking verarm nie alleen die hele onderneming van prediking nie, maar verskraal ook die areas wat aange(s)preek word. Al hierdie kontekste (sosio-polities, kultureel; ekologies, ekonomies) moet met oortuiging aangeraak word in die prediking, te meer omdat die Gereformeerde Christendom by uitstek nog altyd God se heerskappy oor al hierdie sake bely het. “It is never possible to express the Word in timeless abstractions, but each witness must use his

²³ Christelike, dit is Bybelse, prediking as kultuurkritiek bly ‘n grootliks onontginde dimensie van prediking, klaarblyklik oor alle kulture heen. Dit is óf as gevolg daarvan dat ons dikwels onbewus is van ons eie kulturele aannames (wat ons dan gewoon in die Bybel “in-lees” of selektief “rááklees”), óf weens ‘n on(der) ontwikkelde vermoë om kultuur (gebruike, aannames, “waarhede”, tradisies, mensbeelde, verhoudinge, tendense, “mites”) krities te “lees”, óf omdat dit psigologies so ongemaklik is om ‘n mens se eie kultuur te bevraagteken.

²⁴ Harrington 1980:190 (vgl Strijdom & Van Aarde 1990:185) merk hieroor op: “The great interpreters from Origin to Bultmann have studied biblical texts with an eye toward individual experience and have relied on various kinds of philosophical anthropology. Yet critics of this personalist approach always point to the communal and social character of NT writings. They correctly demand a hermeneutic more appropriate to the material being studied. Perhaps the critical use of sociological concepts will help toward developing a socially-oriented method of interpretation”.

²⁵ Dit impliseer nie dat een van dié twee nou on-Christelik is nie. Beide is historiese uitdrukkings van verskillende Christelikhede. Nürnberger (1999:22-23) argumenteer in hierdie rigting deur sy gebruik van die inklusiewe frases “Christian fold” en “versions of Christianity”.

own contemporary language” (Schweizer 1970:23; vgl Strijdom & Van Aarde 1990:185).

Om met oortuiging oor hierdie sake te kan preek, verg egter ‘n goed ingeligte prediker. Dit is daarom ‘n belowende ontwikkeling wat tans in teologiese opleiding plaasvind, dat studente by sommige instellings ook ‘n hoofvak uit ‘n ander, tradisioneel nie-teologiese terrein kan neem as deel van ‘n teologiegraad. Dit sal aan predikante die instrumente voorsien om met kompetensie oor verskillende kontekste te kan preek. Die kerke staan dus ‘n beter kans om naas “ewige waarhede”, ook tydgebonde, aktueel-relevante preek-“uitsette” te voorskyn te sien kom.

Oor die voorlaaste deel van die Vosloo-spreuk (die predikant sal die betrokke Bybelteks goed ken), wil ek nie veel sê nie; die meeste wat ‘n mens hieroor kan sê is ooglopend. Die belangrikste vir ‘n predikant om met geloofwaardigheid en oortuiging te kan preek, bly vir my dat eksegetiese metode, preekinhoud en lewenstoepassing²⁶ by mekaar sal aansluit.

Om dit met ‘n voorbeeld konkreet te stel: van tyd tot tyd word gevind dat die Pretoria-skool²⁷ van struktuur-analitiese eksegetiese die vertekpunt vorm om in ‘n preek uitsprake oor die historiese Jesus te maak. Diegene wat bekend is met die Suid-Afrikaanse eksegetiese-debat²⁸, sal bewus wees daarvan dat vir die grootste deel²⁹, plaaslike struktuur-analitiese historiese navorsing wantrou en hulle bevindinge beperk tot die teks, eerder as om hulle te waag aan die geskiedenis van waaruit die teks voortkom. Die filosofiese aannames en die eksegetiese praktyk wat met hierdie teksimmanente metode saamgaan, maak dit beswaarlik moontlik om oor geskiedenis iets te sê. Die teks staan op die voorgrond. Daarom is dit myns insiens nie moontlik om byvoorbeeld oor die *historiese* Jesus te preek, as ‘n *a-historiese* metode van Bybeluitleg gevolg is nie (vgl Lombaard 1996:106-113). Die integriteit van die ineengestremde proses van eksegetiese-preek-toepassing word daardeur gekompromiteer.

Om ‘n preek te lewer wat oortuig - ten spyte daarvan dat ‘n mens van die eksegetiese resultate en hoe dit in die preek opgeneem is, kan verskil - is dit dus van die uiterste belang dat leesmetode en verkondigingsinhoud by mekaar aansluiting vind.

²⁶ Die skeiding van dié drie aspekte bly kunsmatig.

²⁷ Dié benaming is na my beste wete die eerste keer in Lombaard (1997:204) gebruik.

²⁸ Sien Le Roux (1993) vir ‘n oorsig oor die debat binne die (Suid-)Afrikaanse Ou Testamentiese wetenskap tot 1987. Werke oor die debat binne die plaaslike Nuwe Testamentiese wetenskap, en ‘n nuwe verwerking van die 1993-werk in verband met die plaaslike Ou Testamentiese wetenskap, word tans deur Le Roux voorberei.

²⁹ J A Loader (1998:496-497), byvoorbeeld, is ‘n uitsondering.

4 SLOT

Die prediker beskik oor metodes om die oortuigingskrag van sy/haar boodskaplewering te bestudeer. Enkele, voorlopige voorbeelde daarvan is hierbo gegee. Van groter belang is egter die integriteit van die prediker self. Integriteit oortuig.

Dit is belangrik vir 'n prediker wat aktueel wil preek om die individu, kerk en samelewing in al hulle fasette op geldige wyses te kan "lees"³⁰. Dit maak oortuigende toepassing van die Bybelteks moontlik. Dit is ewe belangrik om die Bybelteks goed te kan verstaan, op so 'n wyse dat Bybeluitleg, -prediking en -toepassing 'n oortuigende geheel vorm. Van grootste belang is egter dat die prediker homself / haarself ook van die teologie van die betrokke Bybelteks oortuig, verstaan vind. As die prediker vanuit 'n geraáakte geloof preek, sal gemeentes veel vergewe, omdat hulle kan meeleeft (op verskillende maniere) in die spiritualiteit-met-integriteit waardeur hulle hulself opgeneem vind.

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³⁰ Vyf benaderings hiertoe word in Lombaard 1999 aangetref, naamlik deur die predikant en rolprent-resensent Danie du Toit, die teoloog en skrywer Christo Lombaard, die predikant en skilder Marius Lourens, die predikant en sanger Francois Mulder, en die teoloog en digter Cas Vos.

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2.15 Publication 8: Introduction

“Ecumenism and the Bible”, in Lombaard, C (ed.) 1999. *Essays and exercises in ecumenism*; 26-41. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications.

The contents of this chapter has been indicated under Publication 6 above. What should be added here, is that the research project of which the book is the outcome, was funded by the World Council of Churches. I acted as project leader and editor, with 29 contributors from six Southern African countries participating.

Because this is the parallel publication to publication 6, what follows is a repetition of what has been indicated there.

The five recurring themes within my research on how the Bible was brought to communication within different spheres of the South African society, indicated in the the overview of the publications under review here, apply as follows to this specific publication:

- Theme 1 – Integrity & Theme 2 – Using the Bible well: In this case, these two themes feature together. The chapter in question here argues against the poor use of the Bible to further the ecumenical cause, because that would bring the integrity of the process and its justification into discredit, thus harming what is the essential and very positive enterprise of building relationships between different church denominations. Rather, by using the Bible well, the legitimacy of inter-church relations and, where appropriate, unifications, is well served.
- Theme 3 – Rhetorical functionality: Because of the heartfelt concern for the unity of the church (even when not meant organisationally), it is often easy to misinterpret biblical passages by pressing them into service in ways they were never designed to do. The Bible should however not be used as a simple rhetorical tool to offer further legitimacy to what is already a good cause. Rather, let then Bible speak on its terms.

- Theme 4 – Communicative imbalances: Rhetorical need is the cause for the misrepresentation of certain biblical passages. Rather, these passages, along with all the others, should be read and studied to form and inform what may be called a Christian identity. It is through this identity that the ecumenical movement will find its strongest building blocks, rather than through seemingly more tangible proof texts. The latter, however, offers false comfort, when their textual and historical-contextual intent are distorted by modern interpreters in order to communicate what is the current perceived need.
- Theme 5 – Insights on religion provided by communication studies: Here too, sensitivity to what the ancient texts communicated, and what they may communicate to our times, lies at the heart of what cross-disciplinary scholarly activity – such as that between communication studies and religion – can render us.

All five these recurring themes in my research thus feature in this chapter.

*Essays and
Exercises
in*

**ECUMENISM
ECUMENISM**

Christo Lombaard

Essays and Exercises in Ecumenism

Editor:

Christo Lombaard



Cluster Publications

1999

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The Bible And Ecumenism

Christo Lombaard

1. So Sayeth Scripture?

As Christians we often want to relate our points of view to the Bible. The following are two of the (related) reasons why we do this:

1. we believe that the Bible is the inspired Word of God (though we might interpret the term "inspiration" in different ways); and

2. we want to live in accordance with Scripture, that is, we want to let the Bible guide us in our daily lives as Christians.

Because many Christians live in such close contact with the Bible (regular readings, sermons, meditations etc.), it becomes easy for us to forget the "great gap" (the German theologian GE Lessing called it a *garstige Grabe*) that exists between us and the biblical texts in terms of time, culture, thought worlds etc. This brings the risk that we might carry too much of our own thoughts into the Bible, thus:

1. not permitting the (differing) biblical texts themselves to speak clearly to us; and

2. allowing (selected) biblical texts to reaffirm only what we already believe.

This becomes an even greater danger when one passionately believes a certain point of view to be correct. Our emotional commitment might lead us to assume that God cannot but support this point of view, and therefore we "mine" the Bible (Bright 1967:121) for each possible text that might support our view.

doors" practice) in Israel is a much investigated theme in OT-science. It is broadly accepted that there is a tension between these two strains of thought in the OT. To illustrate: on the one hand, the 'am (people of Israel) is placed over against the *gôjim* (nations) as *the* chosen people of Yahweh (e.g. in 1 Chr. 17:21). Terms such as *qahal* (congregation) and especially *'edah* (gathering) have at least exclusivist overtones (see Berger 1989:199-201). The book Dt and other OT-books influenced by it (e.g. Ex, Lev, Num, the Prophets - see Clements 1989:50-60, 95-99), the Priestly writings (e.g. Lev, Num), as well as other post-exilic literature (e.g. Ezra, Neh), contain coinciding themes of "Yahweh alone" and "Israel alone". Particularism (or exclusivism) represents a definite understanding within Israel's history.

Of course, this "drawing of boundaries" had more to do with the exclusion of other religions than with separation between segments of the same religion. This distinction, however, becomes slightly blurred if one accepts theories such as the Kenite origin of Yahwism (i.e. that Moses learnt Yahwism from Jethro, a Kenite priest - Ex 2:16-3:4, 18:1-27; see De Moor 1990: 6, 223ff for a recent discussion) or a closer Edomite-Israelite relationship, including religion, than was traditionally assumed (Hoekveld-Meijer 1996).

Conflict between different groups within Yahwism is however also found in the OT. Rival politico-religious parties were often found in Israel, throughout its history (Albertz 1992a & 1992b). But here once again we have to bear in mind that the issue of the (dis)unity of different church structures was never implied. Furthermore, whereas state politics play a relatively minor role in the modern ecumenical movement, for the ancient near eastern sensibilities there was no such division between politics and religion. To this may be added the fact that this relationship (religion - politics) differed in the various periods of Israel's history (Albertz 1992a & 1992b). This state-faith connection in the OT makes a translation of those circumstances into our modern secular-ecclesial separation very difficult. The *garstige Grabe* allows only for tenuous application at best.

The closest that ancient Israel's religion came to some kind of parallel with our modern ecumenical concerns lies in the pre-monarchic period. If one accepts the famous "Gott der Väter"-

hypothesis of A Alt (1929), some parallels may be perceived. Alt proposed that different groups carrying independent traditions of the God of Abraham, the Fear of Isaac (e.g. Gen 31:42a) and the Mighty One of Jacob (e.g. Gen 49:24b), were united into one common religious tradition (Ex 3:6). (This unification of traditions was possible for the Pentateuchal "authors" [J, E] because the oral heritage which preceded them had already identified the God of the Fathers with Yahweh). Nowadays different churches in the process of uniting, may find some analogy to their unification in this history, though of course in Alt's theory there is no question of *reuniting* what used to be one, and in modern ecumenism there is no question of political involvement bringing about legitimate unity.

The theory of M Noth (see e.g. Noth 1954:83-104) regarding Jos 24 could similarly be analogically viewed: the renewal of the covenant of Sinai, according to Noth, included a number of tribes not involved with the exodus and desert experiences. The happenings related in Jos 24 served to unify politically and religiously those involved in an "amphictyony" of tribes. Here too the same two concerns which concluded the previous paragraph would apply.

Other instances which indicate a leaning within Israel's faith towards universalism are the blessing of Abraham ("And *all people on earth* will be blessed through you" - Gen 12:3 [NIV], italics added; see Westermann 1981:175-177), and the Esther and Jonah narratives (perhaps placed strategically after the particularistic books of Ezra and Nehemiah in the canon? - Potgieter 1996). In no such instances, however, is the explicit issue in question the establishment of closer relations between people of the same faith. God's greater grace, rather than ecumenism, would be a preferable categorisation of these cases.

It seems then that, although apparently fruitful avenues exist in finding answers to our ecumenical concerns in the OT, the situations ancient and modern are just too divergent. Each historical context is unique; history cannot repeat itself precisely. Parallels within these diverse contexts do open up some windows for application; direct application, as is too often unquestioningly assumed and employed, however, should be guarded against. The *garstige Grabe* must be taken seriously;

the integrity of the meaning of the OT texts within their contexts should not be regarded as unimportant.

2.2 Ecumenism in the New Testament?

My contention here is the same as above: the New Testament (NT) does not know ecumenical concerns as we do, i.e. the issue of contact between different institutionalised and separate(d) churches. The closest approximation we find in the NT relates to two spheres:

1. Internal tensions: relationship problems *within* (not between) one or more small local congregations;
2. Externalising pressures: problems between Christians and the Jewish congregations within which they initially functioned, but which began rejecting them.

As to the *internal tensions* which Christian faith communities experienced: it is within this context that metaphors such as the Pauline image, "body of Christ" (Rom 12, 1 Cor. 12), served. For Paul the church constitutes people who are intimately *related to Christ*, that is, represented by Christ before God through being incorporated in his salvific death. Therefore these people are *related to one another*: "those who belong to Christ, belong to each other" (Roberts 1979:98, translated; see 93, 95-97).

This is the same idea being conveyed in Eph and Col, though through a somewhat altered imagery (Christ now becomes the head of the body), and in the metaphor of the vine and branches in Jn 15: *through* their shared relationship with Christ unity amongst fellow believers flows forth (Berger 1989:202-205).

Here we find unity which:

1. dares not experience diversity of gifts as a threat, but acknowledges it as the gift of the same Spirit (1 Cor. 12:4-7);
2. acknowledges the diversity of backgrounds and functions of the faithful to be in harmony in Christ (1 Cor. 12:12-31; see Roberts 1979:99).

Hence, our modern dualistic jargon of church unity "in principle and in practice" or "both spiritually and visibly" bears distinctions which find no roots in these NT texts and the thought world they convey (see Nichol 1993:23; Rusch 1985:8-9). Unity in

the NT cannot be bisected in such a way; it would belie the *κοινωνία* (*κοινωνία* = fellowship - Louw & Nida 1988:446, see 569) within the small local congregations (Frieling 1995:47). Furthermore, letters written to more than one congregation (as are the epistles of James, 1 Pt, Rev, Eph - Berger 1989:203) fit perfectly into this ecclesiology (understanding of church) which accepts unity and diversity within one (though not without affirming the truth of Christ - e.g. 1 Tim 1:3; Rev 2:2).

Coming to *externalising pressures*: The solidarity between Christians from a Jewish background and those from a heathen background may well be questioned. There had indeed been problems (see Nichol 1993:23-25), as for example Acts 10-11 demonstrates. This conflict was addressed at the Jerusalem meeting (Acts 15 - Frieling 1995:48-49) without resolving it permanently, but without the church dividing into separate institutions (as has become the modern habit). The insight in Acts 15:11 (Nichol 1993:26) is carried through when Paul depicts Jew and Greek - amongst other groups - as united in Christ (Rm 1-3, especially 10:12; Gal 3:28 etc.). Other NT-literature, such as Eph, renews this model (Berger 1989:206; also Col 3:11).

These old tensions came forcefully to the fore once again, some three decades later, when Christians were ejected from the synagogues within which they had been accustomed to worship. The Gospel of John, written shortly after these occurrence (see Du Rand 1991:53, 68), might therefore be expected to reflect inner Christian tensions between believers from heathen backgrounds and those more closely related to the Jewish synagogue community which was now expelling them (Du Rand 1991:52-53, 63-66). See, however, Jn 17:20 which spells out the norm for the Johannine congregations. And this brings us to the following matter:

McAfee Brown (1987:22; see Leeming 1967:100) correctly observes that, where modern-day denominations do decide to unite, their "motivations usually include...a desire to respond...to Jesus' high-priestly prayer 'that they all may be one' (Jn. 17:21)". However Jn 17 - as De Wet (1994:15) emphasises - presents unity as unity *is*, not as it should be. This text has no intention of encouraging the unification of churches. Jn 17 (especially verses 20-23) presents unity as it

was for the Johannine readership.

This would lead to the conclusion (which is little more than a reassertion of the above) that:

1. the early church was characterised by an unquestioned "functional unity" (De Wet 1994:77, translated) or "working unity" (Nichol 1993:23, translated) which needed no verification or restoration; and
2. the Jn 17-prayer was understood within a very small circle: what was referred to was not unity *between* different Christian churches, but unity *between* the individuals *within* the very small local faith communities.

All the above implies what should have been clear at the outset of our modern ecumenical concerns: that what we understand ecumenism to be is foreign to NT-literature, even at first glance. Many writers (e.g. Frieling 1995:46-47; Crafford 1993:5-6; Hagemann 1987:797; McAfee Brown 1987:18, Leeming 1967:96, Visser't Hooft 1960:1569) acknowledge that the Greek word *oikoumené* - from which the English word *ecumenism* derives - knows only the following meanings in the NT: "the empire of Rome", "the inhabited world" or "the inhabitants of world". *oikoumené* within the NT refers to matters outside the domain of the church's identity (see Louw & Nida 1988:10, 16, 106). Only later did the term *oikoumené* come to be related to the church in particular (see e.g. Frieling 1995:49-68; Crafford 1993:6). The implication of this, which is seldom explicated (some interesting exceptions do however exist - see e.g. Perkins 1984:18-27), is that *already* on this *superficial* level care should be taken not to impart our current understanding of ecumenism on the NT.

2.3 The relationship Bible-ecumenism

Often when so-called "biblical foundations" for ecumenism were questioned - especially in the Southern African context over the past few decades - there were at least two (related) underlying motives:

1. the *intention* to discourage ecumenical relations; and
2. the *implication* that, should our ecumenical concerns not

be found in the Bible, we could not legitimately engage in ecumenical relations.

Even though the implicit acceptance that our ecumenical concerns are to be found in the Bible has been challenged above (in 2.1 and 2.2), I favour neither this *intention* nor the *implication*. The fact that our ecumenical concerns are not attested to in the OT and NT does not render modern ecumenical practices and hopes illegitimate. As with many other important issues in our lives as Christians, we cannot find "proof texts" in Scripture to provide us with an answer for all times and places.

What we can and should do is to study the ancient biblical texts within their contexts. This would help us understand how our fellow-believers of generations ago thought about their life *coram Deo* (before God). In some way this would impress upon our *Christian identities* (a concept I take over from SACBC 1990:7) some parallel thoughts and actions, enticing us to lead our Christian lives (in)formed by Scripture. We should also recognise, however, a whole range of other influences on our Christian identities: we are, of course, children of our time. Therefore we cannot, and should not try to, live as carbon copies of the ancient faithful in ancient worlds. We can, however, in our day and in our way, try to give expression to a holy life before the same God, the God we find in the Bible.

Part of our current Christian identity is the realisation of the importance of ecumenism. The growth of the ecumenical movement may of course be ascribed to a whole range of factors. However, our core confession should remain that the same Spirit which speaks to us through the Bible, grants us the ecumenical process (see Raem 1995:86). Our Bible-moulded, equally our Spirit-moulded, Christian identity leads us, in our times, towards an ecumenical consciousness and practice.

This approach, I would argue, brings both the freedom to respect the biblical texts for what they are and the liberty to pursue our ecumenical concerns. It may well be that "(w)e are firmly convinced that Jesus Christ intends oneness to exist among his people" (Crumley 1985:v), but that should not force us to find our ecumenical concerns within biblical texts and contexts. Our concerns are *ours*; the *garstige Grabe*, along

with our respect for the integrity of the biblical texts, should prevent us from demanding answers to questions the biblical authors did not know. Yet our current Christian identity, (in)formed by Scripture, can still dream of and practice ecumenical ideals.

3. *The Relationship Ecumenism-Bible*

We have seen that the Bible does not directly reflect our understanding of issues related to ecumenism, principally because our ecumenical concerns did not exist within the life and faith worlds reflected in the Bible. But this does not mean that the Bible is not an issue in the current ecumenical movement.

To summarise what has been stated above: the way in which the Bible would touch on modern ecumenism is through Christians who accept the Bible as a "rule of faith and life". Our Christian identity is formed and informed by (among other factors) the Bible and what it proclaims. And for the greater part of Christianity, there is a growing consciousness that our Christian identity currently asks of us some concern for ecumenism.

In this process of a growing sensitivity to and practice of ecumenism, the issue of Christian relationship with/to other faith traditions will be presented repeatedly (see Frieling 1995:73-75; Hagemann 1987:801), though under socio-political circumstances unlike any experienced before. In this process we will also be encouraged to affirm our identity - sensitively, of course - as Christians (see Raiser 1989:61-72, 89-95 on "Christocentric universalism"). In this affirmation the Bible should continue to be a very important part of our Christian identity: the Bible remains the "soul of theology" (so recently again Dohmen 1996:175-180; see Frieling 1995:74, Leeming 1967:98, 100). Should the Bible lose its centrality within Christianity, two related consequences become possible:

1. that the identity and self-awareness of Christianity will be much changed, presumably in the direction of syncretism;

2. that the ecumenical process will be shattered into at least two major groupings: those who still accord the Bible its traditional authority on faith matters within the church, and those who reinterpret biblical authority in a different (presumably less central) way.

The latter would probably defeat the claims of Christianity; the former would defeat the purpose of ecumenism.

It seems then that the Bible will, at the very least, remain important in this way to ecumenical considerations in the times ahead. Put another way (and summarising this chapter): even though we cannot directly uncover contemporary ecumenical issues in the Bible, we will continue to find the Bible an important issue in contemporary ecumenism.

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Questions and Exercises 2

- 2.1 Interview any two persons (one at a time!) in your congregation about their point of view on ecumenism, and do the same with any two persons who belong to a different church denomination from yours.

Remember: you might have to briefly explain the concept of ecumenism. Use your insights from Chapter 1 to do this. (Elaborate where the person being interviewed may not understand). Be careful, however, not to influence the person's opinions on ecumenism while doing this.

In preparing for the interviews, formulate three or four questions on ecumenism which you would like to ask the persons you will interview. These questions should determine the person's *attitude* towards ecumenism, and the *reasons* which the person gives to justify this attitude. (Once again, be careful not to influence the person's opinions by the way the questions are formulated.) Write these questions down before the first interview, use the same questions for all four interviews, and include the questions in the report you submit.

Since you will write a report on the interviews, make sure that you carefully take down on paper the following particulars during the interview:

- 2.1.1 each person's name, gender, age, occupation, church affiliation, and a telephone number or address where each may be contacted;
- 2.1.2 each person's attitude towards ecumenism;
- 2.1.3 the reasons given for each person's positive or negative attitude towards ecumenism.
- 2.1.4 Did the person refer to the Bible at all in giving the reasons for her/his attitude towards ecumenism?
 - 2.1.4.1 If the person does refer to the Bible during the interview, take care to note how this is done, which

specific passages from the Bible are referred to (if any), and in your written report evaluate how the Bible was used.

- 2.1.4.2 If the person did not refer to the Bible, ask whether s/he relates his/her point of view on ecumenism to the Bible. In your report, evaluate this answer as well.

Do not write a word-for-word report of each interview. However, include the essence of the relevant answers in your report, perhaps quoting once or twice where a person has used a memorable phrase.

Your report should be between 900 and 1 100 words in length (note that this does not include the biographical details of persons interviewed.) The report should focus on:

- * the reasons the persons gave for their attitude towards ecumenism, and
- * the role which the Bible played in these reasons.

Compare, contrast and evaluate how the Bible was used by each person interviewed in your report. For this purpose, rely on your own insight, commentaries on the passages named, and other relevant literature at your disposal. Be diligent in acknowledging these sources in your report.

- 2.2 Pastor Pete delivered a sermon on Sunday which showed an extremely negative attitude towards ecumenism. Taking his reading from Gen 11:1-9, Pastor Pete said that God had created the different languages and nations. God had thus established diversity and boundaries amongst people. Therefore, Pastor Pete concluded, ecumenical contact - which seeks to bridge these differences - is a grave sin against God.

Write a letter (500-700 words) to Pastor Pete. Explain to him that, while you accord him the freedom of his attitude towards ecumenism, you doubt whether one can use Gen 11:1-9 to justify his opinion. In your

letter, refer to the authorship and dating of Gen 11:1-9. Say too whether you think Gen 11: 1-9 can be related to the issue of ecumenism, and why you think so.

Remember, the purpose of the letter is not to discuss Pastor Pete's attitude towards ecumenism, but his use of the Bible in substantiating his point of view. Therefore, use at least two commentaries on Genesis, as well as any other relevant literature at your disposal. Although this is not common practice in letter writing, acknowledge your sources diligently, and include a bibliography.

- 2.3 Reverend Ntebatse is a theologian who is very active in ecumenical circles. She got together a group of 15 people, each of whom is a lay member of a different church denomination. The members of this group chose as their motto "Together in perfect unity" (Col 3:14).

Reverend Ntebatse is, however, not sure whether this motto and the verse to which it refers can indeed be used to reflect the ecumenical identity of the group. She therefore asked you to present a research report (500-700 words) on the topic: "*Together in perfect unity* - does this mean the same for us as it meant in Col 3:14?"

In your report, refer to the authorship and dating of Colossians. Also say whether you think Col 3:14 can be related to the issue of ecumenism, and why you say so. Remember, the purpose of the report is not to discuss the group's attitude towards ecumenism, but their use of the Bible in validating their activities. Therefore, use at least two commentaries on Col, as well as any other relevant literature at your disposal. (Since it is a formal report, acknowledge your sources diligently, and include a bibliography.)

2.17 Publication 9: Introduction

“ ‘n Woord vir ons wêreld: Kontekstuele prediking met behulp van kommentaarjoernalistiek”, in Lombaard, C (red.) 1999. *“...in die wêreld...” Vyf bydraes tot kontekstuele prediking*, 22-46. Johannesburg: Lewende Woorde.

The contents of this chapter has been indicated under Publication 5 above. What should be added here, is that this book was prescribed for the Homiletics course for BD students at the University of Pretoria in 2000.

Because this is the parallel publication to publication 5, what follows is a repetition of what has been indicated there.

Of the five recurring themes within my research on how the Bible was brought to communication within different spheres of the South African society, indicated in the the overview of the publications under review here, the following apply to this specific publication:

- Theme 1 – Integrity in communication: Written particularly for Afrikaans ministers of religion, this article seeks to investigate ways in which the quality of sermons may be enhanced. For the sake of contextually relevant sermons, journalism, particularly interpretative journalism, can make an invaluable contribution towards the sermon, as one of the most common forms of religious communication. Employing interpretative journalism would have sermons come across as more relevant and better informed.
- Theme 2 – Using the Bible well: Whereas the Afrikaans churches place particular emphasis in their theological training on the Bible languages and on exegetical skills, the next phase of preparing a sermon, namely bringing an ancient message home within the modern world, receives much less attention. Thus, the sermon is often only half a message: what happened/happens in the text may be indicated. However, how that same message should take root in modern-day life, is often left either unsaid, or done in an awkward and unconvincing way. To bring the Bible home in our time, that is, to use the Bible to its full extent, requires excellent interpretative

tools to analyse our socio-political context. Interpretative journalism offers just that.

- Theme 4 – Communicative imbalances: The problem many ministers would experience in making use of insights from interpretative journalistic writings, include a fundamental mistrust of the press and unrealistic expectations of newspapers. Should these two aspects be changed, a more fruitful communication process between journalistic text and the theologian-reader can be envisaged, and springing from that, better-informed and hence more credible communication from minister to congregation during the sermon.
- Theme 5 – Insights on religion provided by communication studies: The very positive impact journalism, when understood realistically and used well by ministers, can have on the quality of sermons, is another indication of the fruitfulness of the overlap between communication studies and religion. Contextuality is of greatest importance in the art of sermonising. Journalism provides a credible, accessible and multi-perspectival avenue in this regard.

From these four points, it is again clear that the way the Bible is brought to communication within the Christian community is well served by (certain aspects of) the discipline communication studies.



“...IN DIE WÊRELD...”
VYF BYDRAES TOT KONTEKSTUELE
PREDIKING

Onder redaksie van
CHRISTO LOMBAARD

LEWENDE WOORDE
RANDSE AFRIKAANSE UNIVERSITEIT
DEPARTEMENT GRIEKSE & LATYNSE STUDIES
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2

'n WOORD VIR ONS WÊRELD: KONTEKSTUELE PREDIKING MET BEHULP VAN KOMMENTAARJOERNALISTIEK

Christo Lombaard

"Hätten wir uns doch früher zur Bibel bekehrt, damit wir jetzt festen Grund unter den Füßen hätten! Nun brütet man abwechselnd über der Zeitung und dem Neuen Testament und sieht eigentlich furchtbar wenig von dem organischen Zusammenhang beider Welten, von dem man jetzt deutlich und kräftig sollte Zeugnis geben können."

Brief van Karl Barth, gedateer 11 November 1918, aan
Eduard Thurneysen¹

INLEIDING

Daar is met reg al daarop gewys dat die teologiese opleiding van Afrikaanssprekende predikante nie daarop gerig is om predikers toe te rus om polities-sosiale omstandighede te "lees" en op verantwoorde wyse te interpreteer nie (o.a. Le Roux 1996:370; Hollenweger 1997:10). Dit het nie alleen te doen met die redes waarom studente hulle vir teologiese studies aanmeld nie², maar is waarskynlik ook tekenend van die

¹ My dank aan Drr Hans-Anton Drewes en Beat Huwiler, op verskillende wyses verbonde aan die *Karl-Barth Archiv* en die *Theologische Fakultät* te Basel, Switserland, vir hulle hulp om hierdie aanhaling op te spoor. Die bron is: K. Barth-E. Thurneysen: Briefwechsel, Vol. 1: 1913-1921. Zürich: Karl Barth-Gesamtausgabe V, 1973, p 300. Perkins (1984:18), soos vele ander, sinspeel waarskynlik op bostaande aanhaling as hy skryf: "... Bible study requires 'the Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other'. It must be contextual."

Protestantisme in die breë, as die woorde van Ellul (1985:154) ernstig geneem: "I hardly ever find Protestants speaking with competence on political economics, sociology, social psychology, or political science". Die tendens is dus dat, wanneer sosiale, politieke, ekonomiese en verbandhoudende analises wel op die preekstoel gemaak word, dit dikwels oningelig, op die eerste gevoel af, geskied. Analises wat verantwoordbaar en goed deurdag is, is skaars in predikersmond.

Daarom dat die kerkblad *Die Hervormer* (89/4, 15 Mei 1996:4) soos volg redaksioneel kommentaar kan lewer op die saak van "Vervelige prediking": "Prediking is dikwels net bla-bla-bla, 'n herhaling van ou, geykte clichés.... Elke Sondag...dieselfde lewensvreemde gedagtes...". Selfs tydens groot politieke veranderingseras in Suid-Afrika, is dié sake wat ons daaglikse lewe ingrypend sou verander, nie werklik aktueel in preke aangeraak nie (vgl. Cilliers 1996:3-4, 11; Pieterse & Theron 1994: veral 141-142, 153-154), ten spyte daarvan (vgl. Pieterse & Theron 1994:153) dat predikers dikwels juis die teendeel glo! Die dominee is soms "so 'n sakrale figuur dat hy niks weet van wat om hom gebeur om sinvolle kommentaar te kan lewer nie" (De Klerk 1982:7), wat lei tot "ontersaaklike prediking" (Van Niekerk 1993:67).

Om hierdie stand van sake te verander, anders gestel: om wel kontekstueel-relevante preke te lewer², verg dat beide die antieke Bybelse tekste en die hedendaagse mens(dom), elk teen die agtergrond van unieke en omvattende historiese omstandighede, verstaan moet word. Dit is die "dubbele interpretasieprobleem" (Deist 1983a:19; vgl. Cilliers 1996:24, 37, 52-80, 115): om die Bybel én die moderne situasie intelligent te "lees" en by mekaar uit te bring. Slaag die oorbruggingspoging (vgl. Stott 1982:137-168 & 180-194), kan die kerk op dié manier die kultuur waarvan dit deel is beide op geldige wyses interpreteer én dit positief probeer beïnvloed (kyk Niebuhr 1975:190ff en Nida 1960:206ff). Beide dié aspekte is nodig: "... eie volk, die samelewing en die owerheid ... (a)lle aspekte van die hele lewe moet krities in die lig van die Skrif ondersoek, en daarvoor gepreek word" (Pieterse & Theron 1994:152-153; vgl. Askes 1990:455, 458); anders gestel: "preke wil die evangelie vir die situasie ontsluit" (Cilliers 1994:11).

Die opleiding van predikante van die Afrikaanstalige kerke sluit tradisioneel 'n sterk komponent Bybelwetenskappe in. As daar egter 'n

² Die studie van Van Vuuren 1990, veral pp 212-228, verdien om in dié rigting uitgebrei te word.

³ Kontekstuele prediking het nie net met politiek te make nie; eweneens kan dit nie aan politiek verbygaan nie - Van Niekerk 1993:67-69.

leemte in die opleiding is ten opsigte van die verstaan van die samelewing waarbinne hierdie predikante later moet arbeid, sal ander metodes gekweek moet word om dié insig te stimuleer. Die sinvolle gebruik van joernalistiek, spesifiek die kommentaarjoernalistiek, is één voorbeeld⁵ van so 'n metode.

ENKELE VERBANDE TUSSEN DIE KERK EN DIE PERSWESE

Die geskiedenis van die Afrikaanse pers⁶ oor die afgelope halfeeue toon 'n nouer verband met die kerk as wat die geval blyk te wees met die joernalistiek in ander lande of selfs die nie-Afrikaanse joernalistiek in Suid-Afrika. Hierdie verbintenis, wat waarskynlik spruit uit die gedeelde Afrikaanssprekende "teikengehoor" en die daarmee samehangende sosio-politiese en ideologiese voorkeure (sien o.a. Pienaar 1979:126ff), kom op die koerantbladsy op twee maniere na vore: die gereelde beriggewing oor kerksake (wat strek van skandale tot sinode-verslae), en die kommentaarartikels deur teoloë wat gereeld op die hoofartikelblad⁷ van Afrikaanse koerante verskyn.

⁴ Die metode van predikantsopleiding bly 'n moeilike keuse: afstandsonderrig het dié voordeel dat studente nie vervreemd raak van die samelewing nie, maar die kwaliteit akademiese tyd kom hier in gedrang; daarteenoor, met residensiële opleiding, verval studente maklik oor die opleidingstyd heen in 'n "eiland-situasie" waardeur intieme kontak met die breëre samelewing verloor kan word, maar wat weer juis akademiese toewyding kan bevoordeel.

⁵ Ebersöhn (1982:1) waarsku tereg dat die kommunikasiemedia geen "wondermiddels" bied nie. Ook hier word geen kommunikasiekuur aangebied nie; hoogstens een moontlikheid tussen vele ander.

⁶ Vir verskillende wyses van geskiedskrywing oor die (Suid-) Afrikaanse pers, sien bv. Van Deventer 1993, Mervis 1989, Crwys-Williams 1989, Clarke 1987, Argus 1989, Meiring 1987, Diederichs 1993:71-98, Alhadeff 1976, verbandhoudend, kyk ook die boeke geresenseer deur Tomaselli 1995:61-70. Die mees resente - en toeganklike - oorsig oor die praktiese aspekte van die joernalistiek, is dié van Froneman 1998.

⁷ Die *hoofartikel* moet nie verwar word met die *hoofberig* nie. Lg. is die berig wat op die voorblad van 'n koerant onder die hoofopskrif verskyn. Die *hoofartikel* daarenteen is die amptelike kommentaarartikel van die koerant wat gewoonlik in 'n spesiale kolom op die hoofartikelblad, nader aan die middel van die koerant, verskyn. Op dié bladsy en op die bladsy direk daarnaas (die sg. "*op-ed page*") word die eksplisiete kommentaarbydraes van 'n koerant tradisioneel aangetref. Ten opsigte van hierdie kommentaarbydraes, kan onderskei word tussen die kommentaar gelewer in die hoofartikelkolom (wat eerder aan die koerant se amptelike opinievormers as aan 'n spesifieke persoon gekoppel moet word), betaalde kommentaarskrywers, en briefskrywers (vgl. Nel 1994:58).

Ook op institusionele vlak skemer 'n verbintenis tussen kerk en koerantwese onder Afrikaanssprekendes deur, naamlik in die aanstelling van redakteurs. Van die bekendste persone wat die brug van preekstoel na redakteurstoel oorgesteek het, is Drr DF Malan, AP Treurnicht, Willem de Klerk, Gerrit Velthuyzen en Izak de Villiers. Om op 'n opmerking van Ton Vosloo (1982:16) voort te borduur: politieke party, koerant en kerk staan in Afrikaanse kringe dikwels (te) na aan mekaar. "Dwarsdeur die hele geskiedenis van die Afrikaans-nasionale beweging ... was kultuur en politiek, Kerk en taal diep verweef. Skouer aan skouer het hulle in 'n sigbaar soliede falanks gemarsjeer" (Pienaar 1979:127).

Kerk en koerant deel egter ook 'n hele reeks kenmerke⁸ wat hulle nader aan mekaar bring as wat met die eerste oogopslag die geval blyk te wees. Om maar 'n paar te noem, beide instellings:

- * vertrou op 'n redelik konstante ondersteunersgroep;
- * staan in 'n krities-solidêre verhouding tot hierdie groep;
- * beskou die rol wat hulle in die breër samelewing speel (met reg - vgl. Froneman 1989:9-10) as van uiterste belang;
- * het 'n sekere hoodskap wat aan die wêreld waarbinne die instelling funksioneer, oorgedra (wil) word (vgl. aanhaling van G Velthuyzen in Louw 1989:23);
- * voel sigself verbonde aan sekere beginsels wat bevorder moet word;
- * voel sigself verbonde aan 'n opvoedingstaak⁹;
- * kan gebruik maak van dieselfde hulpmiddele, soos die sosiologie (vgl. Burg 1987:85-102 & Dekker 1982:13-18).

Hierdie gedeelde kenmerke maak dit duidelik dat die werksterreine en -wyses van kerk en koerant nie anders kan as om dikwels te oorvleuel nie. Dit is daarom met goeie gronde dat, byvoorbeeld as Burger (1987:19) die belang van die *Sitz im Leben* vir die verstaan van 'n Bybelse teksgedeelte wil verduidelik, dit aan die hand van 'n voorbeeld uit juis die joernalistiek gedoen word. Eweneens is dit ook nie verbasend dat

⁸ Kyk ook De Klerk 1982:7. Vir ons doeleindes hier word dié kenmerke gewoon fenomenologies, eerder as prinsipiële-teologies beskryf. Vir lg. word lesers na die tradisionele dogmatiek-werke verwys.

⁹ 'n Onderskeid moet egter hier getref word: waar die kerk dikwels in praktyk sy opvoedingstaak as godsdienstige en morele *rigtinggewing* sien, is die pers se opvoedingstaak meer gerig daarop om lesers te help *aanpas* by kontemporêre omstandighede. Waarskynlik is dit sulke verskillende opvattinge (wat wel kan oorvleuel) wat aanleiding gee tot heelwat van die debatte tussen kerk en koerant. Kyk bv. Du Toit 1992:4 kol. 3.

populêre werke wat van die joernalistiekformaat gebruik maak - soos Thom (1996, 1997, 1998) se *Bybelkoerant*, soortgelyke Engelstalige werke (kyk ook Rutledge 1998), asook godsdientige tydskrifartikels (bv. "Jerusalem Chronicle" in *Face to Face* 1/2, Nov./Dec. 1997:16-17) - 'n publikasie-opbloeï beleef nie¹⁰. Van die Bybelse literatuur is al met joernalistieke genres vergelyk (bv. Burd 1987:87), en by geleentheid is dit al oorweeg (vgl. Burd 1987:86) om o.a. predikante en joernaliste saam op te lei!

Kerk en joernalistiek het dus veel wat hulle aan mekaar verbind, méér as wat met 'n eerste oogopslag mag blyk. Die feit dat kerk en koerant se rolle in sekere opsigte vergelykbaar is, het dié implikasie wat selde besef word - dat die kerk op die pers kan steun¹¹ in sy verkondigingstaak. Waar predikante se spesialis-kennis naamlik selde akkurate en akuele samelewingsanalise insluit, is dié tipe analise en beoordeling by uitstek in die kommentaarartikels van koerante te vinde. Predikers kan dus met groot vrug gebruik maak van die spesialis-kennis opgeneem in die kommentaarkolomme van koerante. Daarom word vervolgens kortliks op hierdie aspek van die koerantwese gekonsentreer.

SAMELEWINGSANALISE IN KOERANTE

Die hoofartikel "is die hart van 'n koerant se uitkyk", en lewer kommentaar op die belangrikste sake van die dag (Vosloo 1982:19, 20). By uitstek is die hoofartikel daarom dié ruimte in 'n koerant waar kommentaar gelewer word op gebeure wat die samelewing, of 'n deel daarvan, die meeste kan/sal raak (polities, ekonomies, emosioneel, ens.). Gewoonlik word hierdie kommentaarkolom nie deur 'n individu behartig nie, maar deur 'n paneel van kundiges op verskillende gebiede. Een van die lede van hierdie paneel sal wel aangewys word om die uiteindelijke artikel te skryf, maar eers word die betrokke saak gedebateer deur die paneellede (vgl. Vosloo 1982:14; Nel 1994:23).

Ander kommentaar- en agtergrondartikels verskyn op dieselfde bladsy as die hoofartikel, asook dikwels op die bladsy direk daarnaas.

¹⁰ Verbandhoudend, die opmerking van Bluck (1989:2-3) waarin hy o.a. teologie en joernalistiek vergelyk: "the location of enormous power, once held by the poets and priests of traditional societies (is now held) by the magnates and gatekeepers of modern electronic media".

¹¹ Natuurlik is die teenoorgestelde ook waar: die pers kan weer by die kerk aanklop as dit kom by sake soos teologiese uitsprake, morele oordele en dies meer. Beide kerk en pers moet mekaar se waarde kan waardeer (Froneman 1989:ii; De Klerk 1982:7).

Laasgenoemde sluit soms die briewekolom in, wat op sigself interessante insigte kan bied. Meestal sluit hierdie bladsye gereelde bydraes en ander opiniestukke deur kenners in, hetsy dit aangebode of uitnodiging-artikels is.

Dit is in hierdie kommentaarkolomme waarin, by uitstek, aspekte van die samelewing geanaliseer word op 'n toeganklike wyse. Onderliggende sosio-politiese teorieë en die filosofiese aannames daarvan word nie hier beredeneer nie; eerder word argumente kort, pront-uit, dog (meestal) stylvol gestel - teenoor sekere standpunte en ten gunste van ander opinies. Op hierdie manier kry die leser, wat nie op hoogte hoef te wees van bv. die totale verskeidenheid ekonomiese benaderings nie, toegang tot ingeligte standpuntstelling en debat. Deur hierdie kolomme oor tyd heen te volg en die verskeidenheid opinies - ook teenoorstaande sienings - te evalueer, vind lesers hulself later *bewustelik* meer aangetrokke tot sekere breë opinie-"bondels"¹², gebaseer op die leser se eie waardes. Laasgenoemde sal in die geval van die predikant gevormde en ingeligte Christelike, Bybelse, teologiese en verbandhoudende waardes insluit, wat sal uitkristalliseer in sienswyses wat in die openbaar gestel word. Hoe meer hierdie openbare standpuntstelling gevoed is deur die skrywes van 'n hele reeks kommentators, des te meer stel predikante hulself veilig teen onbeholpe samelewingsanalises en die daarmee gepaardgaande waargenome irrelevantheid. Om terug te keer tot die skrywers van kommentaarartikels: dit verg 'n sekere tipe persoon om die hoofartikel of ander opiniestukke te behartig. Die skrywer moet op hoogte van sake wees, en moet heersende menings en partye beide kan onderteun en kritiseer (vgl. Vosloo 1982:19, 20; Lombaard 1990:71-74 lys ook 'n aantal vereistes wat aan koerantredakteurs en/of kommentaarartikelskrywers gestel word). Dit is juis hierdie ingeligte, onafhanklike tipe denke wat kommentaarartikels by uitstek 'n bruikbare instrument maak in die hand van 'n predikant wat sy/haar boodskap reëlreg wil rig op die sosiale omstandighede waarbinne gemeentelede leef. Weliswaar behoort kommentaarartikels nie goedsmoeds nagepraat te word nie. Geïnterpreteer deur die bril van die prediker se eie (geloofs-, persoonlike

¹² Hiermee word bedoel 'n min of meer logies samehangende reeks opinies oor 'n verskeidenheid van sake. Die samehang van die opinies word moontlik gemaak deur onderliggende waardes. Ideaal gesien, sal al 'n mens se opinies logies verband hou met mekaar, en sal daar nooit teenstrydighede wees nie. Menslik gesproke is daar egter heelwat inkonsekwentheid, weens 'n reeks onderliggende waardes - en ook emosies - wat dikwels onondersoek bly en net implisiet in opinies en houdings na vore kom.

- en intellektuele) geskiedenis, in die lig van die betrokke gemeente se geskiedenis, maak dit uitsprake oor die samelewing moontlik wat meer getoets, oorwoë en ingelig is. Natuurlik kan ook veel geleer word oor 'n samelewing deur die *tipe koerant* wat in 'n gemeenskap *beskikbaar* is¹³. Ook kan goeie insig verkry word uit 'n *spesifieke koerant* se inhoud in verband met dié sake wat koerantskrywers en -lesers (in indirekte interaksie) belangrik¹⁴ ag. Maar vir die mees uitgesproke beeld van die ratwerk van 'n samelewing/gemeenskap, bied die *kommentaarkolomme* wat in die pers in den breë aangebied word, die meeste waarde. Hieruit kan 'n mens die sosiale omgewing leer ken: tendense, gebeure, agtergrond, houdings, ens., in die verlede, hede en toekoms¹⁵. Wat meer is, in dié kolomme word nie net sogenaamde koue, kliniese feite aangebied nie; wat daarvan *gemaak* kan word, word veral hier ingesluit. *Singewing* staan voorop¹⁶.

Praktiese oorwegings - soos koste en die beperkte beskikbaarheid van 'n wye verskeidenheid koerante - het in die verlede die lees van verskillende kommentaarkolomme deur 'n individu bemoeilik. Dit was te meer die geval met individue, soos predikante, wat dikwels nie in groot stedelike sentra werk nie. Moderne tegnologie maak egter hierdie artikels nou meer toeganklik. Die rekenaar en internet speel hierin 'n groot rol (kyk bv. die werk van die Kanadese sistematikus Lochhead 1997, veral pp 42-54, en sy literatuurverwysings op pp 107-110). Met die internet

¹³ Dit verg bv. 'n gevestigde industriële en finansiële sektor om 'n koerant met oorwegend ekonomiese nuus lewensvatbaar te maak; 'n groot aantal skandaalblaie sê ook iets oor die samelewing wat dit finansiël dra.

¹⁴ "Belangrikheid" word in die nuusmedia deur middel van die tegniese term "nuuswaardigheid" aangedui. De Beer (1977:39-40; cf. 40-75) sistematiseer nuuswaardigheid tot twee dimensies, te wete *afstand* (waargenome nabyheid van nuusgebeure, insluitend beide tyd en ruimte) en *intensiteit* (invloed, omvang en die ongewoonheid van nuusgebeure). Dieselfde kenmerke speel 'n rol in die bevordering van aktuele prediking: preke wat naby aan die hoorder se leeftyd en leefruimte kom, en wat daarby die potensiaal tot groot invloed het, sal as relevant waargeneem word. Preke wat sigself skuldig maak aan die teenoorgestelde, sal daarenteen as irrelevant beleef word. Sulke irrelevante kommentariëring word soms in die Amerikaanse kommentaarjoernalistiek "*Afghanistanisme*" genoem: slegs sake wat ver genoeg van die kommentator en lesers verwyder is, en dus "veilig" is, word aangeraak, sodat geen persoonlike konsekwensies daaruit spruit nie. Preke wat hulself aan "*Afghanistanisme*" skuldig maak sal eweneens lewensvreemd voorkom.

¹⁵ Insake spesifiek die toekoms, merk De Klerk 1983:11-12 op dat die pers dikwels 'n voorloper met sosiale (r)evolusie is.

¹⁶ Die teologiese parallel hierop is ooglopend.

wat tans 'n al hoe meer noodsaaklike hulpmiddel word, kan predikante gemaklik toegang kry tot verskillende koerante se inhoud, insluitend die kommentaarartikels - ook internasionaal. Twee Suid-Afrikaanse internet soekprogramme¹⁷ wat in hierdie verband 'n vertrekpunt bied, is die volgende: <http://www.gogga.ru.ac.za> en <http://www.fanagalo.co.za>. Hiervandaan kan die meeste van die groot plaaslike dag- en weekblaai se internet-tuisblaai besoek word, van waar die redaksionele en ander kommentaarartikels gevind kan word.

Laastens: naas koerante kan nuustydskrifte soos *Time*, *Newsweek*, en plaaslik, *Insig*, *Die Suid-Afrikaan*, en *Noseweek* ook met vrug geraadpleeg word vir kommentaar- en agtergrondrubrieke, omdat sulke nuustydskrifte groot dele van hul inhoud afstaan aan aktuele agtergrond- en kommentaarstukke. Hoewel ander nuusmedia ook met vrug gebruik kan word, het die gedrukte nuusmedia (naas die elektroniese media: radio, televisie en internet-nuusdienste) oor die afgelope dekades al hoe meer die leiding geneem met spesifiek kommentaarjoernalistiek¹⁸. 'n Medium wat gelees word, eerder as geluister of gekyk word, leen sigself naamlik meer tot beredeneerde argumentvoering en gedetailleerde uiteensettings. Ook hierdie bronne kan dus met vrug, verkieslik oor 'n lang tydperk heen, en verkieslik naas mekaar, aangewend word om die wêreld waarin die Woord gebring word, beter te begryp.

KERK EN KOERANT: VRIEND OF VYAND?

Die probleem van die beskikbaarheid van kommentaarjoernalistiek aan 'n individu sal oor die volgende paar jaar met hulpmiddels soos die internet so goed soos opgelos word. Dit waarborg egter nog nie dat predikers die perswese al hoe meer sal aanwend ten bate van relevante prediking nie. Die rede hiervoor is 'n reeks persepsies en houdings omtrent die joernalistiek wat dikwels onder predikante (onder andere) gevind word. Hierdie meerendeels negatiewe instelling veroorsaak dat die pers óf swak geag word óf min of meer geignoreer word as 'n positiewe invloed op predikante se preekvoorbereiding. Hierdie en aanverwante

¹⁷ My dank aan die samestellers van twee internet-tuisblaai wat vertalings van Engelse rekenaarverwante terme, in dié geval van die frase "search engine", voorstel:

* <http://www.afrikaans.com/index6.html#Rekenaarterminologie>, en

* <http://www.geocities.com/Wellesley/5897/1e06.html>.

¹⁸ Bluck 1989:55-56 lys die voor- en nadele van die verskillende massamedia (internet egter nog uitgesluit).

sake word vervolgens in oënskou geneem.

(i) Predikers se houdings jeens die pers

Die funksionele aanwending van die pers in o.a. preke word dikwels belemmer daardeur dat predikante en teoloë tradisioneel redelik negatief teenoor die pers staan¹⁹. Dié houding gaan daarmee gepaard dat:

* volgens populêre meningspeilings, joernaliste in vergelyking met ander professionele persone (vgl. De Klerk 1983:6-8) oor die algemeen nie 'n hoë geloofwaardigheid in die samelewing geniet nie;

* wat betref die kleiner samelewingsfeer van die kerk, word die verhouding ook geskaad daardeur dat die pers dikwels kerksake op onverantwoordbare wyses rapporteer, of bloot foute maak met tegniese terme uit die kerklike wêreld (kyk Froneman 1989:205-206 vir voorbeelde);

* daarmee saam gaan ook die gegewene dat die joernalistiek nie daaglik/weeklik akademiese werke probeer lewer nie²⁰, terwyl predikante met minstens twee grade - soos wat dit die geval in die meeste Afrikaanstalige kerke is - van nature meer op hulle gemak met beredeneerde en genoteerde akademiese werke sal wees (vgl. bv. Du Toit 1992:4 kol. 2).

* Verder is dit nie altyd die *inhoud* van berigte nie, maar wel die *wyse van aanbidding* wat moeilik pas binne die ideale waaraan predikante hulself verbonde voel²¹.

Bo en behalwe hierdie vier faktore, is daar ook minstens 'n drietal ander sake wat 'n rol speel in hierdie dikwels negatiewe persepsie van die pers

¹⁹ Predikante sien die massamedia óf as "the new Moloch, the modern idol to which faith, truth and human values are being sacrificed" óf as "a powerful and theologically neutral instrument ... to communicate Christian truth to millions ..." (Forrester 1993:67). Kyk ook Ebersöhn 1982:1-9; De Klerk 1982:7; Pieterse 1988:26-31; Vorster 1995:444, 452-455, 462.

²⁰ Bydraend hiertoe is onder andere die volgende twee faktore: die tydsdruk waaronder joernaliste verkeer, asook die skryfstyl-vereistes van die joernalistieke genre en subgenres (wat na vore kom selfs wanneer joernaliste meer omvattende publikasies lewer - kyk Tomaselli 1995:62).

²¹ So bv. skryf Du Toit (1992:4 kol. 1): "Dit beteken natuurlik nie dat die waarheid (in koerante) verswyg moet word nie, maar wel dat dit in liefde gepraat word, soos die Bybel van ons vra". Dié tipe redenasie laat egter buite rekening dat dele van die Bybel self erg krities, en "licfdeloos" so, staan teenoor partye van wie verskil word. Vergelyk byvoorbeeld die verskillende blikke wat op die instelling van die koningskap in die Ou Testament gebied word.

onder predikante, elk waarvan effens meer aandag verlang:
(ii) *Hoor die blye tyding...*

Predikante is daarop ingestel is om die evangelie - die *goeie nuus* - te verkondig, terwyl 'n mens by uitstek *slegte nuus* in koerante vind (vgl. ook De Klerk 1982:7). Kritiek teen die meestal slegte nuus in koerante word daarom keer op keer in uitsprake - ook van buite die kerk - oor die nuusmedia gevind.

Die nuusmedia kan sigself egter met reg teen bostaande kritiekpunte verdedig deur aanspraak te maak op die waghond-funksie (ook genoem die *fourth estate*) wat nuusinstellings binne 'n dinamiese demokrasie vervul. Die nuusmedia vervul nl. dié rol dat dit regeringsinstellings (wetgewend, regsprekend en uitvoerend) onder die vergrootglas beskou ter wille daarvan om die samelewing teen misbruike van gesag te beskerm (kyk o.a. Hulteng & Nelson 1983:74ff). 'n Kritiese instelling jeens hierdie gesagsliggame in die samelewing is dus 'n inherente deel van die pers se identiteit - iets wat in Afrikaanssprekende kringe, wat volgens populêre opinie gesag eerder respekteer as bevraagteken, dikwels op sigself alreeds moeilik aanvaarbaar is. Daarmee saam word die antwoord op die "alleen slegte nuus"-aanklag gewoonlik vanuit perskringe beantwoord met die gedagte dat slegte nuus nie deur die media geskep word nie; die media reflekteer gewoon die negatiewe gebeure in die samelewing. Die implikasie van hierdie rapportering is dat daar dan stappe geneem sal word deur individue/instansies in die samelewing om hierdie sake te probeer regstel. Die nuusmedia help dus die samelewing om sigself te verbeter, en vervul dus in dié opsig 'n "wasbalie"-funksie.

Die gedagte wat aan die grond van dié roltoekenning lê is die volgende: die drie bene van die moderne staat - wetgewend, uitvoerend en regsprekend - het geen absoluut betroubare ingeboude kontrole wat die burgers beskerm teen magsmisbruik deur die regering van die dag nie. Selfs met 'n grondwet en handves van menseregte wat daarop gemik is om die publiek teen die staat (en, in sekere demokrasieë, teen mekaar) te beskerm, kan die landsburger nie self te wete kom hoedat wanadministrasie, wangedrag en ander ewels hom/haar benadeel nie. Die taak van die pers is dus nie om te rapporteer wat *aangaan* nie, maar

wat *verkeerd gaan* (Beckett 1994:3). Op dié manier vervul die pers dus 'n edel, selfs 'n profetiese rol binne 'n demokratiese samelewing²². Waar die perswese egter soms norme - dit is sowel eie standaarde as verwagtinge van buite die onmiddellike joernalistieke kring - oortree, kan daar natuurlik met reg kritiek uitgespreek word, ook sover dit die interpretasie of singewing van 'n nuusitem aangaan (vgl. Molefe 1994:132-133). As 'n mens egter op Rawlsiaanse wyse²³ moes kies tussen 'n samelewing met 'n ooraktiewe pers en een met 'n onderaktiewe pers, sal die meeste mense waarskynlik eersgenoemde kies. By hierdie profeties-kritiese benadering van die pers kan die prediking met groot vrug aansluit, waarskynlik tans gemakliker as voorheen, nou dat die Afrikaanse kerke nie meer in die bevoorregte magsposisie van vroeër staan nie.

Behalwe vir dié "edele" motief, is daar ook verbandhoudend daarmee markgerigte redes waarom slegte nuus "goeie nuus" is: "That's the trouble with all the 'give us good news' demands the people are constantly making of the press. People might think they want good news and say they want good news, but what they actually read is bad news. Bad news is crisp; good news is dull... It's not that editors are ghouls; it's that people are more gripped by a snake striking than by a doe grazing." (Beckett 1994:4).

(iii) "...mens moet net waarheid sê..."²⁴

Dan is daar ook die objektiwiteitsideaal waaraan predikante - soos tewens die grootste deel van die samelewing - hulself verbonde voel. Enersyds is dié objektiwiteitsideaal egter onmoontlik: die beperkinge van tyd en spasie in die joernalistieke prosesse, die eienskappe van taal, die menslike beperktheid van nuusskrywers, -redakteurs en -lesers, en dies meer, maak 'n verhewenheid bo menslike invloed op "slegs wat gebeur het" 'n blote

²² Vir 'n opsomming van teorieë oor en kritiek op die massamedia, kyk Jansen 1989 en Jansen & Steinberg 1991. Vir 'n opsomming van die etiese dilemmas wat saamhang met die perswese, kyk Froneman & De Beer 1993:249-268; ook Molefe 1994:129-134. Kyk Nel 1994:205-206 (ook 212-217) vir 'n kort opsomming van etiese benaderings binne die joernalistiek. De Klerk (1983:10-11) lys die pers se paradoksale etiese norme en riskante optrede. Kyk Bluck 1989:44-51 vir 'n opsomming van sieninge oor die invloed van die media.

²³ Die regsfilosoof John Rawls het die volgende model voorgestel om by die mees regverdige samelewing moontlik uit te kom: gestel 'n mens sou nie weet wie jy in die samelewing gaan wees nie, en jy het dan 'n aandeel in die skepping van daardie samelewing voordat jy deel daarvan word, sal jy 'n samelewing daarstel waarin by verre die meeste mense 'n redelike veilige bestaan kan voer. Kyk bv. Rawls 1972; veral pp 11-13 bied 'n eenvoudige verduideliking van sy teorie.

²⁴ Aanhaling uit *In simplicate cordis*, NP van Wyk Louw, in *Tristia* 1962:24.

droombeeld (geïnspireer deur 'n veelheid van antiek-Griekse en modernistiese filosofiese oorwegings). Andersyds is só 'n kliniese objektiwiteitsideaal ook onwenslik, want dit is onmenslik: om slegs “feite” te hanteer sonder om die implikasies en toepassingswaardes daarvan eksplisiet uit te lig, is funksieversaking, en mense sal daaronder ly (vgl. Lombaard 1990:12-75). Niemand het beter toegang tot hierdie interpretasiemoontlikhede as die joernalis self nie, en dié moontlikhede is net soveel deel van die werklikheid as die “feite”. Die “feite” alleen is dus slegs die halwe waarheid. Die werklikheid behels méér. (Om kortweg 'n voorbeeld te gee: “Huis sak weg in sinkgat” is feitelike, “harde” nuus. Gerugte dat streeksowerhede al 'n tyd lank vermoedens hieroor geheim hou, is egter net so belangrik, en so-ook die voortgaande mynbedrywighede in die omgewing. Al is lg. twee sake minder openlik en meer spekulatief van aard as die aanvanklike tragedie, moet dit uitgewys word, want politieke verantwoordelikheid en menselewens - beide konkrete sake! - is op die spel.)

Met die kliniese objektiwiteitsideaal as beide onbereikbaar en onwenslik gestel, is “onpartydigheid” ook nie 'n realistiese verwagting om op die nuusmedia te plaas nie (vgl. o.a. Eldridge 1993:148ff). “Koerante is betogende instellings en nie neutrale instellings nie” (De Klerk 1983:7); “koerante (is) draers van 'n bepaalde boodskap” (Vosloo 1982:16); 'n koerant is 'n instelling wat “sy beginsel-sê sê” (De Klerk 1982:7) - beginsels wat “gekoppel is aan bepaalde politieke en samelewingstandpunte” (Vosloo 1982:18). Hierdie “koninkryksroeping” (De Klerk 1982:7) of “roepingsbewustheid” (Vosloo 1982:18) verskaf 'n raamwerk vir die bepaalde koerant se verslaggewing. “Geen koerant ... is neutraal nie” (De Klerk 1983:8). Geen koerant durf sigself ook as neutraal uitgee as dit eerlik wil wees met die leserspubliek nie. En geen koerant durf sigself as objektief uitgee as dit sy rol ernstig opneem nie. Openlikheid oor waar 'n koerant, die eienaars daarvan en die skrywers daarin se simpatieë lê, is egter broodnodig. Bekendheid met hierdie voorkeur-belange van 'n koerant sal ook die gebruikswaarde daarvan vir predikers verhoog: wedersyds gedeelde én uiteenlopende waardes is in die oopte. Verdere interpretasie en singewing kan nou vanuit Bybels-teologiese hoek geskied.

(iv) Persvryheid

Gepaardgaande met verskillende benaderings tot die rol van die pers, blyk teoloë en joernaliste ook verskillende opvattinge rondom die konsep

vryheid van die pers te hê. 'n Voorbeeld van elk sal dié verskille duidelik maak. Ter aanvang, die siening van 'n teoloog (Du Toit 1992:4 kol. 2):

* "Venynige en onophoudelike kritiek, die skromelike skending van mense se privaatheid, die vooruitloop van demokratiese en geregtelike prosesse, blatante sensasionalisme en ander verskynsels word die kenmerke van die sogenaamde 'vrye pers'."

Hier skimp die term "vrye pers" op iets soos 'n bandelose pers. Stel dit byvoorbeeld teenoor die volgende aanhaling uit 'n satiriese kommentaarkolom van 'n joernalis (Bullard 1998:2):

* "Do we have a right to know these things and to pry into a public figure's private life? The answer is a resounding yes. Politicians delight in our adulation and we are expected to turn up and applaud them at political rallies or ... hang on to their every word during television news broadcasts. They are not shy to tell us how to live our lives and to claim that they represent family values, honesty, integrity and all those good wholesome things. So, when we find out that their own sordid lives are rather removed from what they expect from the rest of us, we have every reason to crow and bay for blood".

In hierdie denkvyn verteenwoordig die "vrye pers"-gedagte die idee dat die pers 'n waghond-funksie jeens maghebbers namens die samelewing in den breë het. Anders gestel: 'n gesonde demokrasie huisves 'n gesonde pers (vgl. ook De Klerk 1990:232).

Vir die kerk en predikante om volle nut te put uit die joernalistieke genres, is groter waardering vir die rol en selfbeeld van die pers nodig²⁵

SLOT

Op verskillende tye kom kerk en pers in konflik (Froneman 1989:1-5), en vir 'n verskeidenheid van redes. Vir kerk en koerant om mekaar se ja-broers te wees, is hoogs ongesond vir beide hierdie samelewingsinstellings en vir die samelewing as geheel. Miskien is die beste formulering van die algemene verhouding tussen kerk en pers, minstens soos wat dit binne die Afrikaanssprekende gemeenskap ontwikkel het, steeds "onafhanklikheid-in-gebondenheid, vriendskap-in-spanning" (Pienaar

²⁵ De Klerk 1982:7 skryf: "Die kerk moet ook begrip en beheersing hê van die taal van die koerantmedium."

1979:130-131).

Dat hierdie twee "samelewingsverbande"²⁶ op verskillende wyses oorvleuel, staan tans vas. Dit is juis hierdie oorvleueling wat dit moontlik maak vir die kerk om die pers aan te wend; meer spesifiek gestel: vir predikers om die kommentaarkolomme aan te wend ten behoeve van kontekstuele prediking. Dit is juis oorvleueling, parallele, analogieë tussen die antieke wêreld - gereflekteer in die Bybelse tekste - en óns wêreld - gereflekteer in o.a. kommentaarjoernalistiek - wat kontekstuele, konteks sensitiewe prediking hoegenaamd moontlik maak²⁷. Die hulpmiddels vir die lees van die *antieke tekste* in hul ontstaanswêreld is goed bekend aan predikante in die Afrikaanstalige kerke. Naas 'n reeks ander moontlikhede wat predikante kan aanwend om beter insig in die *moderne wêreld*, hulle werksmilieu te verkry, bied kommentaarjoernalistiek ook 'n bruikbare instrument daarvoor.

Die valse sosio-politieke sekerhede wat soms van preekstoele af verkondig word (vgl. Stott 1982:169-170 & Van Niekerk 1993:67-73) sal bes moontlik getemper word daardeur dat predikers via die kommentaarkolomme van koerante aan 'n veelheid kompeterende - en soms ewe aantreklike, hoewel weersprekende - interpretasies blootgestel word. Die kompleksiteit van sake sal nie meer so maklik misgekyk kan word nie. Daarmee saam sal die wyse van kommunikasie in die prediking ook beïnvloed word: eerder as dat finale *antwoorde* van die preekstoel af verskaf word, sal die *interaksie* tussen God, mens en wêreld eerder in preke aan die orde gestel word. "Communication is about *negotiating* messages, not *transmitting* meanings" (Bluck 1989:3, klem toegevoeg)²⁸. Waar Afrikaanse preke tydens politieke verskuiwingstydperke te dikwels níe die sake van die dag aangeraak het nie (vgl. Cilliers 1996:3-4, 11; Cilliers 1994:1-13; Pieterse & Theron 1994:141-142, 153-154), kon die kommentaarjoernalistiek dit uit sy wesensaard wel doen²⁹. Die verantwoordelikheid lê tans by predikers om hierdie leermeesters hierdie

²⁶ JA Heyns se term; kyk veral Heyns 1986.

²⁷ "... der Text selber ist unter geschichtlichen Verhältnissen hervorgebracht worden, und die Interpretation des Textes wird unter gegebenen historischen Verhältnissen hervorgebracht" (Deist 1983b:38). Kretzschmar 1986:73 gee 'n nuttige grafiese voorstelling van hierdie proses.

²⁸ Kyk ook Bluck (1989:3-24) se hantering van J Fiske se onderskeid tussen kommunikasie as 'n starre proses en kommunikasie as 'n uitruil van betekenis. Dié onderskeid kan saamgevat word met die Afrikaanse woordspel-onderskeid tussen 'n *mededelingen mede-deling van betekenis*.

²⁹ Selfs al het dit soms ook 'n leerproses in kleiner streekskoerante geveerg - vgl. Jansen 1995:210-211.

kuns te gaan afvra. Die pers by uitstek bied insiggewende analises op toeganklike wyse aan die leserspubliek. Om nie hierdie hulpbron, of 'n ander hulpbron wat soortgelyk kan funksioneer, te gebruik nie, is om die saak van kontekstuele prediking skade aan te doen. Gebrek aan kontekstuele prediking impliseer op sy beurt die teenoorgestelde van 'n belydenis wat aan die hart van die Gereformeerde teologie lê: dat die Bybel die lewende Woord van die lewende God is.

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PREEKVOORBEELD

*"Oop monde, soos
Amos ... oop wonde,
soos Israel!"*

Skriflesing Amos 7:9-17
Tema Wanneer God se
geregtigheid groter
word as sy genade

Dit was net so ná die middel van die 1970's. Dr. Willem de Klerk sit in sy stoel in die redakteurskantoor van 'n bekende Afrikaanse koerant. Die nuutste uitgawe van sy koerant het skaars twee uur gelede op straat verskyn in Johannesburg en omgewing. Daarin het Dr. De Klerk dit vir die eerste keer gewaag om in die hoofartikel van sy koerant skerp

¹ 'n Paar verduidelikings om die preek beter te plaas:

1) Hierdie preek is bedoel vir 'n gemeente op 'n relatief hoë sosio-ekonomiese en opvoedkundige peil, met al die kommunikasieveranderlikes daarby geïmpliseer.

2) Dit word aanbeveel dat gemeentelede die Bybel oophou by die gelese gedeelte, sodat die terugverwysings tydens die preek meer sinvol is.

3) Die preek volg die model (á la Von Rad) dat die gelese gedeelte *na-vertel* word, waartydens agtergrondgewens ook ingesluit word en - soms baie fyn - moderne sinspelings gemaak word.

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kritiek uit te spreek op die regering van die dag². In die redakteurskantoor lui die telefoon. Dit is 'n oproep uit Kaapstad, uit die kantoor van die Eerste Minister: "Hoe durf jy jou eie mense só aanval?!" Dit was in 'n soortgelyke situasie wat die profeet Amos homself bevind het. Amos kritiseer die mense, die leiers van Israel, maar hulle wil sy mond

4) *Redaksionele ontwikkelinge* in die teks word ook in die preek verwerk, uitgewys en toegepas - juis hierdie ontwikkelinge dui die hedendaagse toepassingsmoontlikhede aan.

* In 'n publikasie tans in voorbereiding word punte 3) en 4) verder uitgewerk.

² Op die eerste oogopslag lyk dit ietwat nutteloos om so 'n ou kommentaarartikel soos dié waarna hier verwys word, te gebruik, veral omdat dit selde die geval sal wees dat predikers sulke ou stukke sal gebruik tydens preekvoorbereiding. Die historiese waarde van dié spesifieke artikel regverdig egter in hierdie geval die aanwending daarvan. En soos wat dit dikwels die geval met die Ou Testamentiese profete was, nl. dat hulle waarde eers veel later algemeen besef is, kan ook dié hoofartikel se bydrae terugskouend eers volledig waardeer word. (My dank aan die volgende persone en instansies wat my behulpsaam was met die joernalistieke navorsing: Die Instituut vir Eietydse Geskiedenis by die Universiteit van die Vrystaat, Mnr. Petros Rapule van *The Citizen* se biblioteek, biblioteekpersoneel by die Randse Afrikaanse Universiteit, en die Theological Education by Extension College (Southern Africa), wat die soektogte befonds het.)

toestop. Amos wil die verkeerde dinge wat hy sien, *regmaak*. Israel se leiers wil egter nie hê dat hulle foute uitgewys moet word nie.

Ons ken almal Jesus se opsomming van die Wet: jy moet God liefhê, en jy moet jou naaste liefhê. En ons weet óók: waar die liefde tot jou naaste tekort skiet, daar loop jou verhouding met God ook verkeerd. Dit is *hierdie selfde beginsel* wat Amos aan die volk Israel wou stel. Amos het gesien dat daar fout was met die mense se verhoudings met mekaar. En daarmee saam het hulle verhouding met God skeefgeloop...

'n Mens lees vroeër in die boek Amos van hoe die ryk mense van Israel die armes uitgebuit het. En hierdie uitbuiting het ernstige afmetings begin aanneem. Arm mense is weens hulle skuld vir die prys van blote sandale as slawe verkoop. Die rykes het die armes ingedoen in hofsake, en die rykes het selfs die armes tot 'n soort prostitusie gedwing. En soos maar altyd: as mense hulle medemense uitbuit, het hulle ewe min respek vir God ook. Israel het die knie begin buig voor vreemde gode.

In die Suide van die landstreek Palestina was daar in daardie tyd 'n redelik welgestelde boer en die sakeman, genaamd Amos. Op sy sakereise sien hy al hierdie verkeerde dinge wat uitbroei daar in die Noordelike provinsie, in Israel. En die Here druk hom dit op die hart om hierdie

geloofsgenote van hom te gaan aanspreek. Wat doen hulle dan nou aan hulle medemense? Waar is hulle naasteliefde? Wat het geword van hulle getrouheid aan God? Vir omtrent 'n jaar lank laat Amos sý sake staan, om aan sy medegelowiges in Israel die boodskap van God se geregtigheid te bring.

Ons moenie dink dit was maklik vir Amos om sy mond in Israel te gaan oopmaak nie. Ons moenie 'n te mooi, te romantiese beeld van 'n profeet vir onself opstel nie. Dieselfde probleme wat ons maar sal teëkom as ons die owerhede wil aanspreek, het Amos ook teëgekóm. Vir 'n tyd lank moes hy sy eie belange om die agtergrond stel. Om die waarheid te sê, Amos moes selfs sy eie *veiligheid* op die spel plaas:

In vers 12 het ons saam gelees hoe Amasia vir Amos waarsku om terug te gaan na die Suide, na sy tuiste toe. Amos moes liewer van die Suide af sy boodskap verkondig - dáár waar koning Jerobeam hom nie kan bykom nie. Want hier in Bet-el praat Amos binne die koning se magsgebied, by die koning se amptelike tempel, téén die koning. En dit is gevaarlik! Politici hou nie van kritiek nie, veral nie as die heerser alleen-maghebber in die land is nie. Amos speel met sy lewe.

Maar Amos moet 'n keuse maak: gaan hy toegee aan die druk van koning Jerobeam en sy priester se kant af, of gaan hy

gehoorsaam wees aan sy roeping...? Net soos ons voorbeeld van netnou uit die joernalistiek uit, moes Amos kies tussen wat die heerser wil hê en wat hy glo reg is.

Ten spyte van die gevare wat dit vir hom kan inhou, kies Amos die moeilike weg. Hieroor gaan hy nie kompromieë aan nie: Amos blý praat teen die sosiale ongeregtigheid binne Israel, en hy doen dit dáár - ín Bet-el. Amos sal blý praat teen Israel se gebrek aan naasteliefde, en daarmee saam hulle gebrek aan liefde vir God.

As 'n profeet 'n sê te sê het, dan beteken dit selde 'n maklike pad. As 'n gelowige - selfs téén ander gelowiges in - 'n boodskap van geregtigheid bring, dan vrá dit iets. Om reg te laat geskied aan die swakkes in die samelewing, beteken soms dat 'n mens die maghebbers moet aanspreek. En hoeveel van óns het daardie moed...?

As u 'n plek teëkom waar mense uitgebuit word, het u die moed van u oortuiging om dit reg te stel? Om owerhede te kritiseer oor dinge wat buite hulle veld van aandag val, is moeilik, maar rég. Want die geringes van die samelewing val nie buite God se veld van aandag nie. Dit is oor sulke onderdruktes dat ons ons monde moet oopmaak, soos Amos sy mond oopgemaak het.

Israel was skuldig - daarvoor is nie twyfel nie. Mense het hulle

landsgenote, ook hulle geloofsgenote, uitgebuit en verdruk. Hieroor *verdien* hulle die straf van God.

Maar: kán God mense straf? Sál God werklik *oor gelowiges* die oop wonde van 'n ramp bring? Is sy liefde, sy genade nie tóg groot genoeg dat Hy sal vergewe nie? Amos verkondig dan nou so die oordeel van die Here; wat van vergifnis?

As 'n mens hierdie hoofstuk van die boek Amos deurlees, dan sien jy dat God wél vergewe. Reeds twee keer hét God hierdie liefdeloosheid, hierdie verdrukking van die magteloses in Israel veroordeel. Maar elke keer, voor God Israel straf, was dit juis *Amos* wat om genade gepleit het. Amos vra genade vir dié mense wat hy self aankla. En elke keer het die Here Amos se gebed verhoor: God se genade was groter as sy geregtigheid. God se genade oor Israel kry telkens nog voorkeur bo sy oordeel.

So het Amos namens Israel vrystelling beding van die oordeel van die Here. En dan was daar gelukkig nog tyd dat Amos sy boodskap aan Israel kon herhaal. Amos kon voortgaan om Israel te wys op hulle verkeerde optrede teenoor die verdruktes; Amos kon nog vir Israel oproep tot bekering van hulle verkeerde dade teenoor die swakkes van die samelewing.

Maar nou, nou het dinge verander. Voorheen kon Amos nog sy mond oopmaak en Israel

kritiseer; nou is daardie tyd verby. Want die “establishment” van Israel, dié mense met gevestigde belange in die huidige stand van sake, wil nie meer hoor wat Amos sê nie. As Amos sy mond oopmaak, wil Israel dit toestop. Die woord van die Here, die woord van geregtigheid, mag nie meer in Israel gehoor word nie... Dit is waarvan ons saam in vers 13 gelees het. Daar in die koning se heiligdom, daar waar Jerobeam aanbid, dáár sal nou net gesê word wat Israel wil hoor. In Bet-el, in die amptelike heiligdom, mag die woord van Goddelike geregtigheid, mag Amos se woorde oor sosiale geregtigheid, nie meer gespreek word nie. Want dit affronteer die “establishment”; Israel wil *hoor* net wat Israel *wil* hoor. Dít is die situasie waarmee Amos gekonfronteer word: hy wil 'n boodskap van die Here bring, maar in die *kerk* mag hy dit nie doen nie. Die kerk het verword tot 'n plek waar die uitbuiters se gemoedere gestreel moet word. Israel se godsdienste, God se spreke moet aangepas word om die *status quo* te bevestig. Die kerk moet die wêreld napaat, selfs al het Israel se leefwêreld vrot geword...

U sien dus: in die Israel wat Amos moes aanspreek, het een groep Israëliete die ander misbruik. Dit het die staat gepas, want die koning het daarby gebaat. En nou was dit tyd dat die kerk óók die verdrukking van die

swakkes moes aanvaar. Amos moes sy oop mond toemaak. Die woord van geregtigheid, die suiwer boodskap van die Here, mag nie meer in Israel verkondig word nie. En dit is op *hierdie punt* wat God se geregtigheid groter móét word as sy genade.

Solank die woord van die Here nog vryelik in Israel verkondig kon word, was daar plek vir genade. Terwyl Amos nog die ongeregtigheid van die Godsvolk kon uitwys en kon afwys, kon die Here daardeur nog vir Israel terugroep op die regte pad. Maar nou, nou mag daardie woord van geregtigheid nie meer gehoor word nie. Watter pad bly daar dan vir die Here oor? Sy profeet mag nie meer praat nie... Dan sal die Here self moet ingryp; dan sal God self drastiese stappe moet neem om Israel terug te roep tot die weg van regverdigheid.

Dit is waarom God vir Israel straf. Daar was nog altyd genade, solank die woord van die Here suiwer verkondig kon word. Maar nou word daardie kritiekwoord stilgemaak, en daarmee breek die kritieke tyd vir geregtigheid aan. Dit is waarvan ons in vers 16 en 17 gelees het. Dit was genadetyd toe die Here nog kon praat met sy volk; nou is dit tyd vir onkeerbare geregtigheid.

Dit is hierdie selfde boodskap wat óns met onself moet saamdra. Waar ons enige groep mense aanspreek, waar gelowiges enige gesagsinstansie uitdaag - selfs as

daar medegelowiges onder daardie groep is - omdat daar mense is wat swaarkry deur hulle toedoen, dan staan ons nie alleen in die geloofsgeskiedenis nie. Andere stel vir ons 'n voorbeeld hierin. Soos Amos. Want God verdoem telkens deur sy woordvoerders 'n gebrek aan naasteliefde: Ons maak ons monde oop weens verkeerde dinge, soos Amos. 'n Gelowige kan as gelowige enige owerheid aanspreek oor verdrukking wat plaasvind. Want deel van God se liefde is dat daar geregtigheid in die samelewing sal wees. Maar as enige owerheid, enige staat, enige "establishment"-groep, selfs: enige kerk saamspan om die lot van die swakkes mis te kyk, dan *verdien* hulle die straf van die Here. Maar soos Amos, moet ons ook bid dat God steeds sy genade sal betoon aan dié teen wie ons praat. Ons is nie betrokke in 'n liefde-haat verhouding nie - liefde vir die magteloses, haat teenoor die maghebbers nie.. As Christene bly ons verbind tot 'n liefde-liefde verhouding, selfs tot die mate toe dat ons bly bid vir diegene teen wie ons opstaan. Want ook dít is deel van die boodskap van die boek Amos.

In Israel het almal saamgespan om die lot van die swakkes te misken.

Selfs die kerk moes help toesmeer. Dáárom verkondig die Here die oordeel oor Israel hier

in vers 17. Dit is al manier wat oorbly waarmee die Here sy volk kan terugruk op die regte weg - die weg van geregtigheid, die pad van praktiese naasteliefde.

Dit was die gebeure tussen Amos en Amasia. Dit moes groot indruk op 'n deel van die gelowiges gemaak het, want nog lank daarna is dié gebeure oortel. Die grootste deel van die volk Israel is intussen oor die aarde verstrooi; die mense in die Noorde van die land - dié mense vir wie Amos gaan preek het - sou nooit weer terugkeer na 'n eie land toe nie. In die Suide, in Juda was daar wel nog 'n paar vlugteling-priesters oor wat betyds uit die Noorde gevlug het. Veral hierdie priesters vertel nog gereeld die verhaal van Amos en Amasia vir mekaar oor.

Op 'n keer is daar van hierdie priesters en volgelingen wat wonder: is hierdie herinnering nêr 'n stuk geskiedenis? Het die geregtigheid van die Here soos dit afgespeel het tussen Amos en Amasia, tussen die Here en Israel, enige blywende waarde? Die meeste van die mense betrokke by daardie gebeure is tog reeds dood.... Maar die Here, die eintlike Een wat Israel aangespreek het - Hý lewe tog! Ons glo nog in Hom! Daarom moet hierdie verhaal nog steeds vir ons betekenis hê...

En daarom het hierdie latere priesters 'n opskrif vir hierdie gebeure gaan neerskryf. In óns

Bybel is dit oorgelewer in vers 9, wat ons saam gelees het. Sô interpreteer hierdie priesters die gebeure tussen Amos en Amasia:
* Nie net die nageslag van Isak is uitgewis nie, besef hierdie priesters, maar ook hulle onsuivere godsdiensbeoefening. Wat oorbly, is nou suiwere godsdiens: liefde tot God én naaste.

* Nie net die koninklike heiligdom te Bet-el is vernietig nie: ál die heiligdomme waar die ware woord van die Here onderdruk is, is veroordeel.

* Nie net die enkele koning, Jerobeam, is gestraf nie, maar sy hele regering en die hele monargie wat die rug op God se profeet gekeer het, sou nooit weer bestaan nie.

Met ander woorde: met vers 9 - die opskrif bo die vertelling oor Amos en Amasia - wou die priesters aandui dat daardie gebeure blywende waarde het. Net vir daardie persone in Bet-el was Amos se boodskap belangrik nie. Die latere priesters kon dit toepas op hulleself ook: waar *gelowiges se godsdiens* die minderes misken, daar kom die straf van die Here. Waar die *kerk* hom deur die owerhede laat oortuig om maar oë toe te knyp, daar kom die straf van die Here. Waar *owerhede* die woord van gelowiges en die woord van die Here oor ongeregtigheid wil stil maak, daar *verdien* hulle die oordeel van die Here. Maar *onverdiend*, kom hulle ons

aanhoudende genadegebede ook toe, soos wat Amos vir sy teenstanders gebid het. Omdat Israel hulle nie gesteur het aan Amos as hy sy mond oopmaak nie, moes hulle die oop wonde van ballingskap, van vernietiging verduur. Maar dit is nie 'n boodskap wat net vir Jerobeam & kie. gegeld het nie. Dit is 'n boodskap wat wyer tref - ook vir die mens ná Jerobeam se tyd. En omdat hierdie "veralgemening" reeds in die boek Amos opgeteken is, daarom kan ons dié "veralgemening" voortsit, om ook tot ons tyd te spreek. Die boodskap van Amos aan Israel bly steeds geldig.

Elkeen van ons kan per geleentheid 'n Amos wees. Dalk moet ons die bekende dinge vir 'n tydlank agterlaat; dalk moet ons selfs ons persoonlike veiligheid op die spel plaas. Maar as daar mense is wat ly, dan is dit óns, die gelowiges, wat moet help. Soos wat Amos - by wyse van spreke - die mond van die Here was, moet ons dit ook wees. Ons moet ook ons monde kan oopmaak om te probeer regmaak waar mense, ook owerhede, verkeerd maak. Waar mense die woord van die Here dan dalk wil stil maak, daar verdien hulle die skrikwekkende ingrype van die Here. Vir Israel het hulle selfopgelegte doofheid die oop wonde, die pyn van ballingskap en vernietiging beteken. Mag dit vir ons nooit so wees dat óns die

mense is wat die woord van die Here wil stil maak nie. Mag ons nooit dié gelowiges wees wat net deur die oop wonde van 'n ballingskap teruggebring kan word op die regte pad - liefde vir God én naaste - nie.

En hierdie dinge geld ook vir ons lewe hier in die nuwe Suid-Afrika. Selfs in 'n veranderde land - lank aan die kom, maar dikwels vir ons te snel in sy aankoms

- laat ons vandag, môre en verder die nood raaksten van swakkes, armes, dié wat uitgebuit word. Soos die Amos-voelinge.

Laat ons ons oë oophou, dat ons trou sal bly aan die God van die Bybel, die God van Amos.

En laat ons dan, soos 'n moderne Amos-voelinge in Suid-Afrika, ons monde oopmaak om God se geregtigheid en regverdigheid teenoor alle mense te verkondig.

Amen.



3. In closing

The purpose of the studies collected here, when taken collectively, was to analyse the ways in which the Bible has been used in a range of societal spheres. The uses were found to be varied, but, as was indicated, seldom satisfactory. These collected research essays therefore relate in different ways to the central research question: *How was the Bible brought to communication within different spheres of the South African society?*

To summarise again the conclusions reached with respect to this research question:

- the Old Testament is by no means utilised to its full potential for communicating Christian spirituality;
- the better to engage Bible readers, literal Bible translations are preferable, for the reason that these kinds of translations elicit greater interpreting activity;
- the Bible always becomes but a legitimating tool when pressed into service for the sake of political rhetoric;
- the present government sends mixed signals on religion: on the one hand, it questions the legitimacy of the university discipline of Biblical Studies, while on the other hand, it seeks logistic support from churches, which base their faith on the Bible;
- for the sake of specific, relevant sermons, the editorial pages of newspapers constitute an important inspiration for preachers;
- insights from persuasive communication would serve preachers well, and prime among these, would be the importance of perceived integrity;
- to enhance ecumenical work, the Bible offers many possibilities, though only if it is interpreted validly.

From these bases, it now becomes possible to offer suggestions on what may be done with these insights reached.

It has become part of the liturgy of dissertations in communication studies and related social sciences that, in closing, a few indications of possible further research

are provided (even though these suggestions are hardly ever pursued). In this instance, I would like to approach the matter differently. In the overview of religious communication earlier in this dissertation, though, lists have been provided and arguments offered which could serve well as indicators for further research within the field of particularly religious communication. I would prefer here to take the matter forward in a somewhat more concrete matter, by suggesting an academic vehicle for the pursuit of such scholarship.

It is clear to my mind that religious communication is by no means likely to become a discipline within faculties of theology locally. These faculties are still feeling pressures about their continued existence at state universities, and are hence unlikely to explore with any vigour the possibility of incorporating yet another field within its range of disciplines. On the other hand, communication departments at state universities are experiencing such success with ventures into such fields as marketing communication, sports communication and the like, that they experience no need to broaden their horizons any further. Incorporating a somewhat esoterically perceived field such as religious communication into teaching and research programmes will only be done with great difficulty. Yet, the discipline of religious communication is set to be a rising star, for instance if the frequently predicted global role, often conflictual in nature, of the two religions of Islam and Christianity over the next half a century is taken with any seriousness. Religious communication could play a major role in assuaging, mediating or preventing such foreseen religiously coloured¹ conflict, not only locally, but also globally.

My suggestion in the face of this situation is therefore the following: *that a research institute for religious communication be set up* in order to provide for these approaching needs. Such a research institute would not only undertake research

¹ I formulate carefully here: "religiously coloured conflict". Most often, religion is but one of a host of factors which lead to armed conflict, as has been the case in the recent past in the Middle East, Central Africa, Eastern Europe, Indonesia, Northern Ireland etc. The point is, however, that religion becomes the focal point of the different parties' identities. This is, on the one hand, tragic, since it then seems as if religion is the primary force fuelling the conflict, which is most often not the case. On the other hand, though, such a crystallised point of identity makes religion a very powerful force for peace too. If peace can be religiously motivated and tensions solved on the basis of the crystallised point of identity that religion is in such conflicts, religion can be a more effective factor than most for putting an end to conflict. It is this latter point which remains open to be exploited for the good of all involved by a discipline such as religious communication.

into as wide a range as possible of themes related to the field of religious communication, but would also offer opportunities for specialist post-graduate studies. Drawing students from both the communication and the religion sides, quite possibly along with some other related disciplines too, such a research institute would be an ideal vehicle for the development of this interdisciplinary field of religious communication.

Delivering both research and well equipped post-graduate students, all of which could make substantial contributions to various sectors of society, such a research institute would have the potential of becoming a world centre of excellence in the field. Indeed, such an institute would never reach its potential if it settled for making local contributions only. If initial seed funding could be obtained from secular communication institutions, from religious communication institutions such as the World Association for Christian Communication, and from religious bodies such as the World Council of Churches, a framework of co-operation would already have been established within which such a research institute could function influentially and continuously. Once established, such an institute could become self-sustaining by means of income from research subsidies, research grants, consultation services, and the subsidies associated with delivering post-graduate students. Co-operation with academic and research institutions across the globe in diverse fields such as communication, religion, politics, sociology and the like, would be a *sine qua non* for the success of such a research institute.

My proposal in closing is thus not only a plea for further research, but also for a vehicle which would facilitate research in the field of religious communication in particular. The vision for such a research institute has already been given here. The next main step is to identify a university which would have the foresight to support such a body, giving it the academic legitimacy it would need in order to begin its work within the potentially highly yielding field of religious communication.

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