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THE CAVE OF ADULLAM

OR

ACHOR, A DOOR OF HOPE?

A history of the
Faculty of Theology
of the University of South Africa

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Professor J A Lombard, the founder of the faculty

Preface

I believe that a title should be a condensation of the contents of a book. I have chosen the title 'Cave of Adullam or Achor, a door of hope?' I believe it achieves what I intended it to do. But then it requires some explanation. The two metaphors of the title linked with an 'or' indicate that this is a controversial faculty. On the one hand there are critics who have a very negative opinion of this faculty - some of them derisively refer to it as a cave of Adullam. The cave of Adullam was the place where David assembled a gang, described in I Sam 22:2 as 'all who were in distress or in debt or discontented'. They say that at this faculty can be found all those theologians who are in some kind of moral distress or who have run into some or other creditor or who are dissatisfied with the political policies of government or the doctrinal and/or political decisions of their churches. They are discontented because they have been overlooked by the theological faculties of their own churches, and now they take shelter in this 'open' faculty where they can take all kinds of liberties - doctrinal, political and even moral.

When the faculty was started thirty years ago, the founder believed that big changes must and would take place in South Africa - changes that would be as traumatic for many South Africans as was losing the First and Second World Wars for the Germans. He wanted to establish a faculty that would give the Christians in South Africa something to hold on to when the status quo gave way and they experienced disillusionment in the theology which proclaimed the status quo as the will and blessing of the Lord. This brought me to my second metaphor from the Old Testament. Achor is a valley in the mountainous country between Jericho and the Dead Sea. To many Jews it recalled misfortune and perdition. It was there that Achan and his whole family were stoned because they had sinned. And yet, when the liberated people of God returned from Babylon, they were once again refined on their homeward journey by all the tribulations of the desert, and when they crossed the Jordan River they experienced the despised Achor as 'a door of hope' (Hosea 2:15).

The title ends with a question mark. When I was asked to write the history of the first thirty years of the Faculty of Theology, I endeavoured to be true to the motto of Spinoza - not to deride, not to lament and not to curse, but to understand. I have tried to give this history within its context. When you have honoured me by reading it, you may decide for yourself: Adullam or Achor?

I would like to thank the university authorities for giving me permission to do research in the archives. I am grateful to Mr D P Coetzee who opened many doors for me, and to Mr De Jager and especially Mrs Van Niekerk of the archives, who supplied me with all the assistance I needed. I must mention the help of my colleagues in faculty, who shared their memories, insights and publications with me. Without their aid this task could not have been achieved. I want to convey a word of thanks to Kevin Roy and Joan Millard who did their utmost to rescue something of the English language in the manuscript. And how can I thank Annatjie Smit for transcribing everything I wrote on the word-processor?

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The author

CHAPTER 1

The preamble

In June 1960 the first professor of Theology took office at the University of South Africa. His post was described as a chair in Theology. In the proposal which recommended this post to Senate, it was stated that the incumbent of this chair was to organise and develop theological studies at the University. This suggested that some theological work was done at the University which needed extension and organising. The report sounded a very optimistic note, mentioning that the committee believed that this appointment would undoubtedly bring about a large enrolment of students (Minutes of the Board of Lecturers, 5 May 1959). History has proved it correct.

The question is rather intriguing: How could the University of South Africa possibly have been involved in any theological training before 1960? In this preamble I would like to describe that pre-history of the theological faculty. This requires that we should commence with the founding of the University of South Africa in 1918. And it is rather surprising to find a clause in the very first statute of the University of South Africa which authorised it, subject to certain provisions, to confer the degrees BD and DD in the Faculty of Arts. To understand this requires the researcher to go back to the genesis of the University of South Africa.

The University of South Africa has its roots far back in the last century, when the Cape Colony was granted some kind of responsible government by Britain. There arose a need to examine candidates for employment in the civil service. In 1859 the Board of Public Examiners was founded for this purpose. It soon became apparent that the need was greater than just for the public service, and what was really needed was some kind of university in the Cape Colony. The local press spearheaded a campaign which resulted in the passing of Act 16 of 1873. The new university, called the University of the Cape of Good Hope, was not modelled on the classical medieval universities, but on the University of London, which did not impart knowledge, but was an examining body which set examinations and awarded degrees to students who studied on their own at various colleges (*Financial Mail* 1989:61). It is clearly stated in the University Incorporation Act of 1910, paragraph 8, that 'the Council of the University of the Cape of Good Hope shall have the power to confer, after examination, and according to the by-laws and regulations of the University the degrees of ... Bachelor of Divinity and Doctor of Divinity'.

With the establishment of the two well-known universities in the Western Cape in 1916, the University of Cape Town and the University of Stellenbosch, it was decided to disband the University of the Cape of Good Hope and to establish in its place the University of South Africa. The *Yearbook of the Union of South Africa* has this entry:

The University of South Africa from the 2nd of April 1918 became the legal successor of the University of the Cape of Good Hope, the headquarters of which have been removed from Cape Town to Pretoria, and which embraces the following constituent colleges: Grey University College, Bloemfontein; Huguenot University College, Wellington; Natal University College, Pietermaritzburg; Rhodes University College, Grahamstown; the University College of Potchefstroom and the Transvaal University College, Pretoria. In the case of each college there is a governing Council responsible for general administration, while academic matters and discipline are controlled by the College Senate, consisting entirely or mainly of the professors on staff, the executive functions being discharged by the Registrar, or in some cases, by the Principal.

(*Yearbook* 1922:257)

At two of the above-mentioned colleges students were trained for the ministry. The Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk had an arrangement with the Transvaal University College by which their ministers were trained in the Faculty of Theology, after completing a BA degree. After completion of their theological training they received a BD degree from the University of South Africa. The Gereformeerde Kerke in South Africa moved their theological school from Burgersdorp to Potchefstroom, and it was incorporated as a faculty of Theology at the Potchefstroom University College, with more or less the same arrangements employed as in Pretoria. Both these churches stood in the 'Reformed' tradition, and consequently they saw to it that their ministers were trained in the Reformed tradition. So the theological training at the University of South Africa, via its constituent colleges, was very much in the Reformed mould. This explains why the degrees BD and DD were conferred by the University of South Africa ever since its inception in 1918. Prior to the establishment of the chair of Theology in 1960, the University of South Africa conferred at least 72 BD degrees and seven DD degrees.

Until the end of the Second World War, theological training for the ministry in the 'English-speaking' churches in South Africa was done in Britain or America. But then four of them, the Presbyterian Church, the Methodist Church, the Anglican Church and the Congregational Church, approached the Rhodes University College and after successful negotiations appointed the first professor of Divinity at an English-speaking university college in South Africa in the person of Dr Horton Davies. He arrived in Grahamstown on 23 January 1947. He had to obtain permission from the University of South Africa to establish a three-year degree course for theological students, presented by the Faculty of Arts, but which included six theological subjects. At first he met with opposition to studies in Divinity from the Senate Committee, the members of which were by then all members of the theological faculty of the Potchefstroom University College, because the Transvaal University College had become the University of Pretoria. After he had argued his case, the theologians from Potchefstroom yielded and gave their support, and so opened the door for what I would like to call the English tradition of theological training for the ministry (Hewson 1984:221-228). This gave the opportunity for theological candidates in English-speaking churches to receive a university education. As things turned out this was a very important theological development that would have a decisive influence on theological training at the University of South Africa.

Our university was proud of its level of theological training. It was with great concern that the chairman of the Committee of Senate dealing with matters concerning the study of Divinity reported to Council that it had come to his

attention that according to Circular E 56 of the Department of Education, which dealt with the recognition of the degrees of South African universities by the Dutch government, it appeared that they only recognised the BD degrees of the universities of Pretoria and Stellenbosch, but that no mention was made of the BD degrees of the University of South Africa. This was a very sensitive situation, because in reality this meant that the theological training of both the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk and the Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk was recognised in the Netherlands, but not that of the Gereformeerde Kerke in South Africa. On the proposal of the committee, Council decided to approach the Department of Education and ask them to rectify the situation (Minutes of Council, 23 September 1932).

The previous meeting of Council had approved new regulations for the degree of Doctor of Divinity at the University of South Africa. These stipulated that a candidate would only be allowed to enrol for the degree of DD if he had been in possession of a Magister Divinitatis degree for at least four years. To obtain this master's degree, the candidate was required to write a thesis dealing with any subject in the field of theology, and which was approved by Senate (Minutes of Council, 23 June 1932).

In 1948 the Council of the University of South Africa was forced to face a new crisis. A government circular (53/58) stated:

As you are aware, Natal University College intends to promote a private bill next session, in order to secure a charter as an independent university. At the same time the Native College at Fort Hare has reached a stage in which it is entitled to the status of a full college. As a result it has become obvious that the whole future of the University of South Africa has to be reconsidered, and the Governor-General has appointed a commission to go into the whole matter. It is quite clear that if the developments anticipated by this commission take place, there will have to be introduced at least six bills in the near future, with the possibility that all existing university acts will have to be amended, and perhaps a consolidating and amending act for higher education in general will be required.

(Minutes of Council, 5 April 1948)

Prior to this move by the newly elected National Party government, 'Council, on recommendation of Senate' decided in September 1945 that a division for the tuition of external students should be created:

1.1 The activities of the Division be limited, for the present, to the tuition of students in the Faculties of Arts, Social Sciences, Commerce and Administration, Education and Law.

1.2 The Division to be placed under the guidance of a Director, assisted by a secretary and the necessary administrative personnel and a full-time teaching staff.

1.3 The Division is to be administered by a joint committee of Council and Senate and to consist of:

The Chairman of Senate;
The Director of the Division;
The Principal of the S A N C;
The Deans of the Faculties of Arts and Commerce and Administration;
Two representatives of Senate;
Two representatives of Council.

1.4 The necessary steps had to be taken to amend the University Act and Statutes for the purpose of incorporating the Division as an integral part of the University.

It may be stated that the Rt Hon J H Hofmeyr, Minister of Education, welcomed the University's intention of providing tuition to external students and promised to table the required amendment as a governmental measure. This happened during the 1946 session of Parliament when Act no 12 of 1916, as amended, was again amended by Act 18 of 1946 to satisfy the new requirements

2.3 Lecturers were appointed in the following departments: Classics and Classical Culture, English, Dutch, African Studies, Politics and Public Administration, History, Economics, Psychology, Sociology, Education, Geography, Mathematics, Law, Accounting and Commerce.

Enrolment started on the 1 March 1947. In November 1947 the number of those enrolled totalled 1 240, exceeding the estimate by no less than 240.

(Minutes of Council, 5 April 1948)

This development brought tension between the University of South Africa and the existing private correspondence colleges who felt, with some justification, that the University was now intruding into their field (Minutes of Council, 29 April 1949). Although the University was prepared to discuss the matter with these colleges, it was not prepared to forfeit the Division of External Studies. It is not difficult to see the reason. The Division of External Studies was the University of South Africa's only hope for its future existence.

Council itself asked the opinion of the constituent colleges on the future of the University of South Africa. Most of the colleges preferred not to voice an opinion, others were convinced that this university had fulfilled its mission, and the natural thing to do now was to disband. But the Potchefstroom University College supported their former colleague, Professor A J H van der Walt, and suggested that the University should be reconstituted in such a way that it could accommodate the external students as its main component (Minutes of Council, 21 September 1949).

Council supported this recommendation, and in 1951 legislation was enacted which structured Unisa as a university for 'distance education', and put it on a par with the other South African universities (*Financial Mail* 1989:62).

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A FACULTY OF THEOLOGY

How did all these developments affect theological training at the University of South Africa? Surprisingly enough, in spite of all the uncertainty, Senate recommended the institution of a faculty of Theology at its meeting of 19-22 April 1949. It must be pointed out that this decision was based on the old system and to my mind was nothing more than a practical measure to enable the faculties of Potchefstroom and Grahamstown to organise their respective theological training programmes until such time as both these colleges became independent universities:

Senate recommends the institution of a Faculty of Divinity, replacing the present committee of Divinity Studies. The constitution will be: the present members of the study com-

mittee, plus Prof P J S de Klerk (PUC); two representatives of the Theological Faculty of the South African Native College (Sect 44 of Statute 1); three representatives of the Board of the Faculty of Arts (for Classics, Semitics and Philosophy); one representative of the Board of the Faculty of Education.

(Minutes of Council, 29 April 1949)

Council agreed, thereby reinstating the degrees BA (Theol), BD, MDiv and DD. At its meeting of 11-14 April 1950 Senate recommended to Council that the Faculty of Divinity should *only examine but not teach* candidates in theological subjects, and that this should be borne in mind in determining the composition of Senate (Minutes of Council, 21 April 1950).

In its report to Council in 1951, Senate voiced its opinion that the Faculty of Theology should lapse at the next meeting of Senate, and thereafter continue whatever was left to be done by the former faculty in the Faculty of Arts (Minutes of Council, 28 June 1952). At its meeting in 1952 Council resolved to abolish the Faculty of Theology and appoint a committee of theological studies in the Faculty of Arts to deal with theological options that could be taken for the BA degree. The committee consisted of Professors S du Toit (Potchefstroom) and Horton Davies (Grahamstown) (Minutes of Council, 28 June 1952).

The Faculty of Theology reported back to Senate that the dean had sent a circular to all the theological faculties re the continuation of the Faculty of Theology at the University of South Africa. The unanimous feeling was that there should not be a faculty of theology for external studies. They recommended that the Faculty of Theology be abolished and that only a committee of studies in Divinity be appointed to deal with theological options in the BA (Theol) course in the Faculty of Arts (Minutes of Senate, 17-19 September 1952).

This proposal was probably not approved by Senate, because reports of the Faculty of Theology appeared annually in the minutes of Senate and Council. In 1959 the Board of Lecturers were asked to pay attention to the plight of the 206 students who were involved in theological and related subjects. These students were in Biblical Studies I (80); II (10) and III (3); Systematic Theology I (35); II (5); Church History I (13); II (1); Hebrew I (48); II (0) and Judaica (0). They recommended that a professor of Theology and Semitic Languages be appointed. It was stipulated that his task would be to organise and extend theological studies and that, if possible, he should be well-trained in Semitic Languages as well as Theology (Minutes of Council, 27 June 1959). The report

also stated that this faculty of Theology should have all the necessary departments so that its students would receive a thorough training, as research had confirmed a definite need for such training.

Before this appointment was made, the Faculty of Arts requested a chair in Semitic Languages (Minutes of Council 1960:270). Obviously this development had an influence on the appointment of the professor of Theology. Dr A H van Zyl was appointed professor of Semitic Languages on 24 September 1960 (Minutes of Council 1960:729).

The post of professor of Theology was approved and duly advertised. A selection committee was appointed, and they had the responsibility of choosing the person who would have to start the new faculty, therefore their names are worth mentioning: Professor S Pauw, Dr W Cosser, Professors S J H Steven, E P Groenewald, A van Selms, W J Snyman and A M T Meyer, and Dr W D Jonker. They had no fewer than 15 candidates to choose from, and they asked nine of them to appear for a personal interview - Rev I H Eybers and Drs B Engelbrecht, J A Heyns, D Kempff, J A Lombard, G C Oosthuizen, J A Stoop, G J Swart and S J van der Walt. These were excellent candidates - and with the advantage of hindsight we can say that every candidate would have steered the new faculty in a different direction. The choice of the selection committee was Dr J A Lombard. His Curriculum Vitae was most impressive: BA (Greek and Hebrew) with distinction in 1938; BD with distinction in 1942; DD in New Testament with distinction in 1951, with a thesis on 'The symbolism of the Fourth Gospel'. Professor E P Groenewald was his promoter. He was working on a second theological degree, in Systematic Theology, under Karl Barth with the title 'Mission und Eschatologie'. Some of his references were from distinguished theologians: Karl Barth, E P Groenewald, B J Marais, F E O'B Geldenhuys and A M Meiring, who was at that time the Moderator of the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Transvaal. He listed no fewer than 33 publications, some of them scientific papers, others popular theology (Report of the Selection Committee, 25 March 1960).

So Johannes Lombard became the first professor of Theology at the University of South Africa. It was his task to lay the foundations of, and give direction to, the new faculty.



Professor J A Lombard and the famous K Barth (Väterchen)

CHAPTER 2

Towards a *theologia evangelica*

When Professor Lombard accepted the chair of Theology at the University of South Africa, he seems to have experienced it as a command from God; not merely a change from pastor to professor, but as the consummation of everything that had happened to him. He went to Basel on an occasion, lonely and bewildered:

He stood there, not knowing what to do. He knocked at the door. It was late at night. 'Väterchen' [K Barth] was still working. With him everything became cosy and friendly, as if even the powers of chaos had to remain silent. At first glance the father realised that something had happened to his son. The son dared to cry. And he could tell everything. Not the next morning, but the day after he was able to walk over mountains and abysses. Because a real father had come into his life. In Karl Barth's presence we were able to become unimportant but not despondent.

(Lombard 1956:895)

He stayed with Karl Barth for more than two years. On his departure for South Africa, when he had already bidden Barth farewell, he ran back to him, embraced him and cried. 'Väterchen, how can I survive without you?,' and Barth answered: 'Go and be a Väterchen in South Africa.'

To him this command became a reality with this appointment. It was his commission to lay the foundations and give direction to a new faculty of Theology that would not be limited by ecclesiastical concerns but would be open to the guidance of the Living Christ - a major vehicle to proclaim the message of hope. 'To testify to the world concerning the world's hope is the meaning of the existence of the Church in every age and every clime' (Lombard 1956:893). This commission gave purpose to his experiences at Basel. Everything became clear. This faculty would carry the message of Barth, the evangelical theology, into Southern Africa and he would be a Väterchen to 'his' team of lecturers, inspiring them, educating them and at times comforting them.

He gave a summary of his theology, which was not only a system but the development of his own spiritual experience of following Jesus. This process of following Jesus for him started

... at a SCA conference at our small town of Heidelberg [in South Africa]. While a minister was preaching in simple terms, it suddenly happened: Follow me! Jesus is the One. In Him is the fullness of God. He leads. I follow. Even if I have failed Him many times, He led me ever more deeply into His way and His light and Truth became increasingly brighter.

(Lombard 1979:61)

At that time his faith was childlike and defenceless:

But in church and state everything appeared quite clear and simple and possible for us all. It would be the same in the case of the University and theology, we thought. The state, nestled within the British Empire, guaranteed peace and calm and progress Culture was completely Christianised. Every single activity was opened with the reading of the Scriptures and prayer, indeed no cultural organisation or political meeting would dare to do otherwise God is available. He is there, he is known, easily grasped, dignified - that's why he's there, after all! From Europe he came to Africa on behalf of European Christianity God was the highest authority, majesty and omnipotence ... naked sovereignty.

(Lombard 1979:61, 62)

As he looked back to that period, he realised that the only point of real light was the missionary zeal. 'Even that fitted exactly into the larger pattern. Now is the time to lead Africa to "repentance and faith". It was the laity who took the initiative - the enthusiasm was dumbfounding: half the University attended a revival meeting of the SCM' (Lombard 1979:63). But all this was eventually extinguished by the Dutch Reformed Church

... which no longer had a good theology, based as it was on the premises of Neo-Calvinism, probably strengthened by Anglo-Saxon Puritanism. It all became a service to the nation. Faith no longer was an act of obedience, the following of Jesus according to the Scriptures, but an assent to the truth of formulas - an authoritarian faith. The theology of the Afrikaner churches was dominated by H Bavinck's 'Reformed Dogmatics' where everything could be classified into loci which formed a theological system in which all knowledge of God was obtainable.

(Lombard 1979:64-70)

And then came the disillusionment - Lombard's own theology was shaken by England's empiricism and subjectivism, the arrogance and rationalism of the Frenchman Descartes, and the German idealism of Hegel and Schleiermacher. This cut off the branch on which he was sitting. Nothing was certain any more. And so he, who earlier had been so triumphant, could only pray: 'Lord, I know that you cannot possibly exist. Please help me!' (Lombard 1979:71).

But then he met Karl Barth, a

... normal person, who with a gigantic freedom, simply walked through all the sham wisdom and hypocrisy. With a single glance he saw through two centuries of German idealism and like the child in Hans Christian Andersen said: 'The King has no clothes on' It is not an overstatement to say that this voice sounded to us like the Scotsman who shouted "Hal-lelujah" during Kirk-week, or like a Mozart symphony you heard for the first time, or simply like voices welcoming you home after you'd been out all night lost in the bushveld.

(Lombard 1979:71)

The earthquake was to get worse and the darkness of the night deeper and colder. When Lombard arrived in Europe, Adolph Keller's *Christian Europe today* was published in London (1942). He spoke of Christian Europe in such a way that it almost sounded as if God had withdrawn. The refugee problem in Europe and the United States was overwhelming. Among those refugees were believing Christians who had put their hope in the League of Nations but were bitterly disappointed. They became an ever-growing caravan of despair. This challenged 'Christian Europe' with the questions: Is the church a lie? Is Christian brotherhood a mere phrase and no reality? What lies at the heart of the Christian church in Europe? At this time, when disaster threatened on every front,

... Barth, with head held high, said joyfully: '*Theologische Existenz Heute!*' We may be joyful, because we are not heading for a vacuum, but for a space that has been filled. We are going to meet the King in the fullness of His royal rule, let us prove this by being it, by living from it. In South Africa too, theology can again mean joy, freedom and beauty, if we will learn from Barth that the community of Jesus Christ lives from the coming of His Kingdom - and not from deified natural orders.

(Lombard 1979:75, 76)

For his inaugural address (1960:1-56) he chose the topic: 'Mission as an act of Christian hope'. The essence of this lecture I would summarise thus:

In this chair it is about the basic truth and about the true character of the New Testament - about the Word of God. Here we will be asked to give account of what it means to be a Christian, to be a church, to do theology. This question has become a matter of life and death, because Christianity has become much too interwoven with Western Europe - and Western Europe has lost its credibility. If the church wants to have a message for the world, it must detach itself from this *Corpus Christianum*, this Christian Society, and its adherents must become the pilgrim people of God, en route from Resurrection to Parousia, living on the hope of the One who comes - the Eschaton! Theology, for its part, must become a message of hope, not only to the people who attend church on Sundays, but to the whole world. This missionary church must carry the message of hope, be an instrument of God, who in Jesus Christ stepped out of His concealment to meet humanity. This theology can not be a set of principles, dare not be a 'habitas' or a 'securitas' theology, but must bring a new era in theological thinking. This evangelical theology was born out of the ashes of

theology of the nineteenth century and found ecclesiastical expression in the 'Confessing church' that confronted Hitler and German Christianity. Behind it were the theological contemplations of J C Blumhardt, Kuttler, Ragaz, Schlatter and Kierkegaard - not to forget Dostoevsky - and finally Karl Barth.

The theology to be taught at Unisa can not be contemplated behind the walls of confessional or ecclesiastical protection. It is called to stand in the University amongst all the other sciences, exposed and vulnerable, because it does not apply the generally accepted apriories and categories - it is called to be a servant, a witness - looking at its own precarious position with humour. Yes, theology is a dangerous undertaking, because it finds its real essence in making itself redundant in the *lumen gloriae*, while it surrenders itself joyfully to the guidance of the Spirit of the One who is the Hope of the world.

Eight years later the first edition of a journal of the Faculty of Theology of the University of South Africa came into being. It is not surprising that it was called *Theologia Evangelica*. In Professor Lombard's contribution, 'Theology in action', he re-emphasized the theological position of the faculty. Brief extracts will suffice: It is our purpose to accompany our students on this glorious road with great humility. Our first and deepest loyalty will be to the Gospel of God, Jesus Christ our Lord. Our theology will be a *theologia viatorum* - a theology en route. We have no theological school in which to shelter. We are in service of Jesus Christ, and we can only point away from ourselves towards Him, our final destination. Nobody must take us to task because we are not in service of one particular church. We serve an evangelical student community, therefore we cannot but confront Roman Catholicism. But we do not wish to be negative, because we serve the Lord, Jesus Christ.

It must be viewed as a little miracle that an ecumenical faculty, with its only loyalty being to Christ, became a reality at this time and place in the history of our country. We cannot come to rest on one particular school of theology and pretend that that is the final theological word on the issues of our day, or that this is the ultimate church or even the ultimate nation. In the New Testament 'ecumene' means the whole world. We will be on our way towards the ends of the earth and to the end of history. Naturally this kind of theology will disturb people and bring down ivory towers and deprive people of their false securities.

Yet this theology is being done with a joy beyond words, because the gospel is a joyful subject. It fills us with an eschatological joy that assures us: everything is well because God is the ultimate of everything. A theology which does not reflect this joy in the church and towards the world is not real theology (Lombard 1968:7-8).

Lombard believed that it was his mission to teach his version of the evangelical theology of Karl Barth in this faculty. He called his staff together on suitable and less-suitable occasions, lecturing them on this theology. This theology is reflected in the topics of the doctoral students who enrolled to study under his guidance: 'The meaning of the Parousia of Jesus Christ for Christian missions' (E J L le Riche); 'The concept of the church in the theology of Karl Barth' (J F Potgieter); 'Reconciliation and the mission of the church according to the theology of Karl Barth' (H Denkema); 'The Christocentric message today' (J A Lamprecht) and 'Eschatology, with special reference to the Kingdom of God and the Christian Hope' (L M Heyns). Not all these theses were completed, but he was the promoter of nine doctorandi who completed their doctoral studies.

It stands to reason that one of his first objectives was to acquire lecturers for the new faculty. He applied to Senate for two additional chairs, one in Old Testament Biblical Studies and one in Science of Religion and Missiology, as well as a senior lectureship in New Testament Biblical Studies (Minutes of Council 1961:410). In the accompanying motivation he pointed out that there were no fewer than 211 theological students. Besides the seven doctoral students there were 161 students in the three courses in Biblical Studies and 44 in the two courses of Systematic Theology. In his argument, he revealed his goals for the new faculty very clearly. To establish a fully-fledged faculty it was vitally important to start off correctly. Therefore the whole encyclopedia of the study of Divinity had to be kept in mind. The aforesaid encyclopedia required a faculty with six departments: Old Testament, New Testament, Dogmatics and Ethics, Science of Religion, Church History and the latest discipline, Missiology. In the light of this final goal he asked for two chairs to start with, one in Old Testament and the other in Science of Religion.

He grasped the fact that if this faculty were ever to become viable, it was essential to open its doors to people who found the BA, BD courses too difficult. Therefore he applied to Senate for permission to install a new degree in Theology - a BA (Theology). He proposed that this degree be structured in the following way: Biblical Studies I, II and III; Systematic Theology I, II and III plus three compulsory subjects - Afrikaans I or English I, Greek I and Hebrew I. Two courses had to be done from the ensuing package: Church History I and II, Missiology I and Science of Religion I.

At the request of the Minister of 'Black' Education, he also requested permission to install a two-year diploma in Theology which would comply with the requirements of the 'Black' colleges, because the BD course as well as the proposed BA (Theology) degrees were out of the reach of those students (sic!).

Professor Lombard described this request from the minister as a cry from the Black communities. He proposed that this diploma course should have the following curriculum: *First year*: Old Testament exegesis and theology; New Testament exegesis and theology; Dogmatics and Ethics; Comparison of Religions and the theory and history of missions. *Second year*: Old Testament and New Testament Hermeneutics, Philosophy of Religion, General and South African Church History (Minutes of Council 1961:410-412).

Council referred the establishment of the two new degrees to the Board of Lecturers and Senate, but approved the two chairs. The posts were duly advertised, but then a strange piece of manoeuvring happened in the selection committee (Minutes of Council 1961:763). The selection committee took note of the fact that the Committee on General Affairs of Senate recommended not filling the chair in Science of Religion, because it seemed as if a very able candidate from Europe might be available for the post in the near future. Therefore the selection committee decided to write a letter to all the applicants for this post, notifying them that the post would not be filled immediately, but only at a later stage (Minutes of Council 1961:763).

The selection committee then paid attention to the applicants for the post of professor of Old Testament Biblical Studies. There were no fewer than thirty candidates, and four of them were called upon to appear before the selection committee - Drs B J van der Merwe, J H Scheepers, P J N Smal and I H Eybers. The unanimous recommendation of the committee was that Dr I H Eybers be appointed as professor of Theology with his main commission being Biblical Studies. This was approved by Council. Dr Eybers accepted the post and became the second professor of the Faculty of Theology.

Professor Lombard convinced Senate that it was necessary to have at least four departments in the Faculty of Theology at that stage. The four departments should be Old Testament, New Testament, Dogmatics and Ethics, and Science of Religion. Senate thus recommended this to Council, but the Executive Committee of Council recommended to Council that Theology should be limited to three departments at that stage, and that it was for the Faculty of Theology to decide how they would divide the work. This recommendation was approved by Council (Minutes of Council 1962:88). Faculty complied and recommended that the three departments would be Old and New Testament, Dogmatics, Ethics and Practical Theology, and Church History, Missiology and Science of Religion (Minutes of Council 1963:294).

Professor Lombard's attempt to obtain the services of Professor Blauw for the Department of Missiology and Science of Religion failed, so the post was advertised again. Ten candidates applied for the post, and the selection committee recommended Pastor P G Pakendorf, a Lutheran, as their first choice, with Professor G C Oosthuizen, the Dean of the Faculty of Theology at Fort Hare, as their second choice (Minutes of Council 1962:484). But then Pastor Pakendorf was elected as bishop of the Lutheran Church in South Africa, and he believed that it was his duty to accept this post in his church. Professor Oosthuizen decided that it might be wiser to stay where he was. Professor Lombard was desperate to fill this post because there was an urgent need for someone capable of writing study guides for the students in Church History, Missiology and Science of Religion.

It was at this point that Professor Lombard, in his capacity as member of the examination committee at the theological faculty of Pretoria, took note of a student, Mr A C Viljoen, who had spent a few years studying abroad, and then passed his doctoral examinations at Pretoria with distinction. Before Mr Viljoen left the Netherlands for South Africa, a statement was published in which he made some critical remarks about the (to him) obvious interference of the South African Prime Minister, Dr Verwoerd, with the Dutch Reformed Church's response to the decisions of the Cottesloe Conference. This statement was badly received by the leaders of the Dutch Reformed Church and the professors at the faculty in Pretoria, and this made the chances very slim of Mr Viljoen receiving a call to one of the NGK congregations. He was badly in need of some income to live on. Professor Lombard succeeded in having him appointed to the post in a temporary capacity as a senior lecturer. Professor Lombard told me that the Principal, Professor Pauw, was very hesitant to agree, but Lombard insisted and succeeded.

Because Professor Lombard had such clearcut ideas about what he wanted to do in the faculty, he tried to select his staff very meticulously. His task was made somewhat easier by the fact that those Afrikaans-speaking theologians who made critical sounds against the apartheid policy of the National Party were rarely appointed to lecturing posts in the faculties of the different churches, in spite of the fact that some of them had exceptional qualifications. It was feared that they might contaminate the minds of the students. These ministers usually applied for posts at the theological faculty of Unisa.

A new issue arose which threatened the existence of the faculty. In 1962 the University of South Africa came to the crossroads again. The Nationalist government under Dr Verwoerd's leadership was determined to apply its policy of separate development to all levels of society - that included the

universities. Government was eager to turn all the constituent 'Black' colleges of Unisa into independent 'Black' universities. It also felt the need to support the Afrikaner community of the Witwatersrand by erecting an Afrikaans university in Johannesburg. Because they believed the independence of the 'Black' universities would necessarily result in the diminishing of Unisa's students, government believed that Unisa, with its outstanding personnel, could be moved to Johannesburg and become a residential university. For that purpose the Minister of Education met the Principal of Unisa on 13 February 1963. When he heard the Minister's case, the Principal replied that he was not against the move to Johannesburg, but he and his council were not prepared to sacrifice its function as a correspondence university. He pointed out to the Minister that government's decision was based on grave misconceptions. One was that the majority of the students of Unisa were 'Black' so that the independence of the 'Black' university colleges would spell the end for Unisa. In reality the total loss of the college students would be cancelled out by the average growth of only two years. The second misconception was that the people of Pretoria believed that because Unisa was a 'Black' university, a congestion of 'Black' students would spoil one of the most beautiful areas of Pretoria. The Principal pointed out to the Minister that all the members of Council who lived in Pretoria wished Unisa to stay in Pretoria. He told the Minister that the University was in the position where it had the challenge to think big, and he gave the Minister the assurance that Council would always act in a realistic and responsible way.

These were critical days for the Faculty of Theology. If government persisted in moving Unisa and its staff to Johannesburg to become a residential university, the theological faculty hardly would have survived. As things turned out, government abandoned its plan to move Unisa to Johannesburg. They did erect an Afrikaans university in Johannesburg, and its Principal (Professor G van N Viljoen) and quite a high percentage of its personnel came from the Unisa staff. In a letter to the Principal, the Minister predicted that Unisa would face a gloomy future because of the independence of the 'Black' universities, and warned Council not to expect any sympathetic treatment nor additional financial support from government. Unisa (and the Faculty of Theology) would have to weather the storm on its own (Minutes of Special Meetings of Council 1964:17-54).

Did the Faculty of Theology make any progress? Great wisdom was required from the dean for this faculty to become viable. Professor Lombard realised that the fact that Biblical Studies was recognised by the Department of Education as a school subject was of the utmost importance for the future of the faculty, and this also suited his vision that this faculty should be a missionary

endeavour for the salvation of the country. What better vehicles could he ask for than teachers who were trained in evangelical theology teaching Biblical Studies to pupils in the secondary schools all over the country! In 1963 there were no fewer than 202 students enrolled for Biblical Studies I, 48 for Biblical Studies II and 17 for Biblical Studies III. There were no fewer than 66 enrolled for Systematic Theology I, and 33 for Church History I.

But Professor Lombard became aware of a serious impediment. Biblical Studies was placed in Group D of the Faculty of Arts, which meant that students could not do any postgraduate studies in it, nor could they supplement Biblical Studies as the main subject with Systematic Theology or Church History. The Faculty of Arts simply argued that Biblical Studies was by its very nature not an arts subject but a theological subject, and that a faculty of Arts could not be expected to present postgraduate courses in theological subjects. Professor Lombard formally requested that Biblical Studies be classified in Group A. In the ensuing debate he was asked to write a memorandum to Senate to argue his case. He started his memorandum with academic arguments, but ended with theological arguments. I quote:

If we remove Biblical Studies from the A group, we will put the course of history in reverse, and also into contradictions and absurdity. Biblical Science is the basic subject from which both the school and the University grew - right from the synagogue, and then at an accelerating tempo after the seventh and eighth centuries via the 'Chapter' schools to the public schools (a fruit of the Reformation). It is a fact that you can hardly change the course of the history of more than a thousand years, by arguing that the study of this one 'Biblos' which shaped the development of the university is now 'überhaupt' and not basic any more. This brings us to the foundations from which there may not be any deviation. It concerns the theological perspective that the Old and New Testaments have a primary Author. How can theology dare to call itself theology if this Author and His book are treated as a phenomenon? Theology can only be in service of 'God's Word'. The gravity of the case for scientific theology hinges on this single confession: Theology's source of knowledge is not its own creation, but the witness of a Word and a relationship that is given. If that is taken away theology has no right to pose as theology. There was a time when theology was nothing more than a history of religions, or merely philosophy, or a subsection of sociology - when everything in

the Faculty of Arts was sociology. But that time has passed. How can we at this university possibly teach the logos of wisdom or the logos of ethics or whatever section of the logos, if we do not teach the basic Logos, the Logos of God? Here we are dealing with the knowledge of the Bible which is basic and therefore it must be in Group A. That is the essence of the matter.

(Minutes of the E C of Senate 1962:185-187)

Professor Lombard was relentless in all matters he thought were important for the establishment of the faculty. Here he perceived that the future of the faculty depended upon the issue of Biblical Studies. How right he was! In the minutes of Senate, 28 March 1962, it was noted that a compromise had been agreed upon. The Faculty of Arts reported that the motion asking for the inclusion of Biblical Studies in Group A had been withdrawn, while Group D, which included all the theological subjects, would be headed: 'Theological Subjects'. This opened the way for postgraduate studies in Biblical Studies at the University of South Africa. The importance of this development for the future of the theological faculty can hardly be over-estimated.

It is rather fascinating to observe how Professor Lombard tried to find lecturers who would comply with his ideals of what the faculty should be. In 1963 Council approved an additional two senior lecturer posts for the Faculty of Theology - one in the Department of Systematic Theology, Ethics and Practical Theology, and the other in the Department of Church History, Missiology and Science of Religion. Because he himself was a dogmatician, Professor Lombard thought it wise to fill the first vacancy with a specialist in the field of Practical Theology. Six candidates applied for the post, and three of them were called upon to appear before the selection committee - Pastor B O Johanson of the Baptist College and two Dutch Reformed ministers, Dr B J Engelbrecht and Rev J M Odendaal. The selection committee unanimously recommended Pastor Johanson. In the light of this it is rather strange to note that when Dr Johanson was later recommended for promotion, the Executive Committee of Senate found it necessary to bring to the attention of the newly appointed members of staff, as well as the old hands, the decision taken at the investment of the Faculty of Theology, namely that the theological education to be given by the to-be-established faculty should not in any way contradict the Reformed Confessions or the Westminster Confession (Minutes of Senate 1959:151).

This reminder came rather late in the day. I have pointed out that Professor Lombard clearly stated that the faculty would not be under the protection of any creed or church. There had been no objection to this from the authorities of the University. If they later objected because Johanson was at heart a Baptist, it is an open question whether they were not in danger of transgressing the famous conscience clause, applicable to all South African universities with the exception of the University of Potchefstroom, and which reads as follows: 'Nobody may be required as a condition for being allowed as a graduate, professor, lecturer or student of the university, or to fill a post or receive remuneration or any privilege, to be subjected to a test of his/her religious convictions, and nobody may be discriminated against on the grounds of his religious convictions' (Statute of the University of South Africa, Minutes of Council 1967:1412 ff).

Dr F J Botha, a minister of the NGK, was appointed as senior lecturer in New Testament Studies (Minutes of Executive Committee of Council, 19 September 1963). Council approved these appointments as well as that of the senior lecturer in Church History. Professor Lombard reported to the selection committee that he had reason to believe that Professor Dr Blauw of the Netherlands might be interested in the chair - so it was recommended that Professor Blauw should be approached to fill this chair for one year as a guest professor, with the option of accepting a permanent appointment. He would be assisted by a senior lecturer. Two candidates were interviewed, Rev J A Greyling and Mr A C Viljoen, who filled the post in a temporary capacity. The selection committee unanimously recommended Mr Viljoen (Minutes of Council 1964:106).

In a report to the Board of Lecturers (5 March 1965) the dean of the Faculty of Theology reported that negotiations with Professor Blauw were unsuccessful but that he was fortunate enough to find an outstanding candidate in the person of Dr W D Jonker, a minister of the Dutch Reformed Church in Johannesburg, who had had a brilliant academic career and had gained his doctorate in Systematic Theology. He was convinced that he was the only suitable candidate available, so a selection committee was appointed to interview Dr Jonker. The selection committee recommended to Council that Dr Jonker be appointed as professor and head of the Department of Church History, Missiology and Science of Religion - although he was not a specialist in any of these fields (Minutes of Council 1965:112).

Professor Jonker delivered his inaugural lecture on a topic in Church Polity: 'Om die regering van Christus in Sy Kerk' (About the government of Christ in His Church). This inaugural address is a brilliant exposition of Protestant

Church Polity, but Church Polity plays a very minor role in the Church History courses at Unisa. It was quite obvious that Professor Jonker was not happy in this chair, and within a year he accepted a call back to the ministry, although he was prepared to accept a chair in Practical Theology at the Theologische Hogeschool in Kampen, the Netherlands, only two years later. After a few years he returned to South Africa to accept a chair in Systematic Theology in the Faculty of Theology at Stellenbosch. Today he is one of the leading dogmaticians of our country.

The post had to be advertised again, and in contradiction to Professor Lombard's statement to the Board of Lecturers a year previously, no fewer than ten candidates applied, two of whom had doctorates in Church History from universities in the Netherlands. The selection committee was still very hesitant to accept them though, and they first had an interview with a non-applicant, Dr B Spoelstra, a minister of the Gereformeerde Kerk. When they established that his doctorate was in History and not in Church History, they asked Dr J A Stoop, a minister of the Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk, to appear for an interview. At that time he fell into disfavour with his own church and some government officials because he was very outspoken about his opposition to the well-known Article 3 in the constitution ('wetboek') of his church, which restricted membership to 'White' people. The report of the selection committee of Senate has this very suggestive addition that 'after an extensive interrogation' Dr J A Stoop 'was recommended for the post' (Minutes of the Executive Committee of Senate, 9 September 1966).

The same selection committee was asked to recommend a candidate for the chair in New Testament Studies and a senior lecturer in Old Testament Studies. In the latter post Dr B J van der Merwe, a minister of the Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk, was recommended unanimously. For the chair in New Testament Studies the committee had difficulty in choosing between Dr P J du Plessis and Dr F J Botha. The vote went to F J Botha. The members of the committee commented that they regarded themselves fortunate to have had two such excellent candidates for the post. Therefore they requested Council to appoint Dr Du Plessis on an *ad hominem* basis in a senior lectureship, because he would most certainly be appointed elsewhere and thus be lost to the University of South Africa. Council approved all the recommendations of the selection committee, with the exception of Dr Du Plessis, because there were no vacancies (Minutes of Council 1965:711, 735, 758).

The following year Professor Lombard applied for relief in his own department. He most probably had a junior person in mind, as his motivation in asking for a lecturer and not a senior lecturer was that 'it gives opportunity to

build up slowly and to determine if this is the right person for future promotions'. But Council approved a senior lectureship, which was duly advertised. From the nine applicants the selection committee recommended Rev A König, a minister of the NGK, by four votes to two 'because of his youth and his exceptional intellectual acuteness and accomplishments' (Minutes of the E C of Senate, 9 September 1966).

This extension of staff is a clear indication that the faculty was making remarkable progress. In the six years of its existence the number of students grew constantly. In 1966 the Department of Old and New Testament Studies had no fewer than 507 students, the Department of Dogmatics, Ethics and Practical Theology had 180 students and the Department of Church History, Missiology and Science of Religion had 92 students. Of these students only two were enrolled for the BD course, while there were no fewer than 11 doctoral candidates (DD).

In the Principal's 1967 report he mentioned that the Faculty of Theology had 947 students of whom no fewer than 610 followed courses in Biblical Studies. The growth was certainly not in the BD courses, but in those for the BA (Theol).

It became clear that the future of the faculty called for an adaptation to the Anglo-American style of theological training. This forced the faculty to pay attention to a request from a committee which consisted of lecturers and members of Council: 'It is being argued that the language requirements for a degree in theology are too high. Dr Lombard is requested to discuss this issue at a meeting of the Faculty of Theology' (Minutes of Board of Lecturers, 8 March 1963). At that time a student had to include Greek II, Hebrew II and Latin I in a BA degree which had to be completed before he could enrol for BD. He had to do at least Hebrew I, Greek I and Afrikaans I or English I in a BA (Theology) course.

The miracle faculty kept on expanding, perhaps not as fast as the rest of the University, but beyond expectations. In the Principal's report of 1968 he mentioned the first casualty - Dr B J van der Merwe, senior lecturer in Old Testament Studies, who died suddenly of a heart attack. Enrolment kept on rising. In that year no fewer than 370 students enrolled for BA (Theology), three for BD and 15 for DD. No fewer than 458 students enrolled for one of the three courses in Systematic Theology. Church History is not mentioned in the report (Minutes of Council 1969:472).

The first stage of the history of the faculty ended rather tempestuously. Some of the members of faculty did not feel happy about the way in which Professor Lombard officiated as dean of the faculty. They complained that his administration of formal matters was more or less chaotic. They could not bear what they experienced as his paternalistic attitude. He frequently called them into his office and acted like 'Väterchen' Barth, discussing with them all the fascinating aspects of evangelical theology for hours on end, while their desks were loaded with work. Four of them came to the conclusion that a change of dean was an absolute necessity, so they decided to nominate Professor J A Stoop for the office. One of the 'rebels' was Dr A König, a member of the Department of Systematic Theology. When the plan came to Professor Lombard's attention, Dr König manfully told him that he would vote for Professor Stoop. This development struck Professor Lombard like a stroke of lightning. He was so convinced of his divine calling to guide this new faculty into the beauties of evangelical theology, and that this evangelical theology, with the faculty as its source and powerbase, would be the leaven that would eventually permeate the entire ecclesiastical and political life of South Africa. He tried desperately to persuade his colleagues to re-elect him, but to no avail. Faculty elected Professor Stoop as dean for the period 1970-71, and this was approved by Council (Minutes of Council 1970:3).

This turn of events caused so much tension, not only in the Department of Systematic Theology, but in the faculty at large, that the Principal had to report the matter to Council, who asked him to continue his investigation (Minutes of Council 1970:657). Things became so bad that Council appointed a committee of inquiry consisting of the chairman of Council, Mr A J Koen (Convenor), Mr J H van Dyk, Rev G J Davidtsz (who withdrew) and Justice V G Hiemstra (Minutes of Council 1970:658). The heart of the tension was in the Department of Systematic Theology, Practical Theology and Ethics. As it happened, Professor Johanson took study leave and resigned as head of the department, and Senate thought it wise to appoint Professor Theo van Wijk, dean of the Faculty of Philosophy and Arts, as acting head of the department (Minutes of the E C of Senate 1970:438). The committee of inquiry reported back to Council, recommending the unusual procedure of appointing Professor E P Groenewald, a New Testament scholar and dean of the Faculty of Theology at the University of Pretoria, as professor without any teaching responsibility but with the sole instruction of officiating as head of the Department of Systematic Theology for at least a year. Council also decided to send a delegation to Professor Lombard to try and solve the problems (Minutes of Council 1971:69). Professor Groenewald accepted the post. On 22 February 1971 Mr Koen and Professor Theo van Wijk met the members of faculty,

briefed them on the decisions of Council and exhorted them to bury the hatchet (Minutes of Council 1971:82).

It seems that things did calm down in the department as well as the faculty. Professor Groenewald resigned at the end of 1972 and Professor Johanson was appointed head of the department from 1 January 1973 (Minutes of the E C of Council 1972:456), and when he took his sabbatical leave, Professor Lombard was appointed head of the department (Minutes of the E C of Council 1972-6:584) and when the latter's term of office expired Professor A König was appointed head of the department (Minutes of the E C of Council 1972-6:976).

Although the department as well as the faculty survived these very unfortunate events, and even kept on growing at a remarkable rate, they did leave scars. In actual fact this more or less spelled the end of the academic careers of both Professors Johanson and Lombard. On 11 March 1976 Professor Johanson notified the university that he had accepted a call to the City Temple congregation in London (Minutes of the E C of Council 1976:801). Professor Lombard stayed on but did little more than give guidance to his doctoral students. In 1978 he asked for what he himself described as his last application for study leave. In his application form he stated a very ambitious study programme. He believed that visits to the universities of Cambridge, Oxford, London, Manchester, Nottingham, Durham, Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Leeds would be the crowning glory of his life. He also intended writing a book on the theology of Karl Barth and another in which he wanted to expand his own credo, as well as two other books on reconciliation and on Jesus (Minutes of the E C of Senate 1978:1742). The books were never published. He did travel to England, and at some of the universities his lectures ended with standing ovations.

At the end of 1979 he resigned. Although his letter of resignation has a tragic note, it is a moving document, worthy of quoting for a number of reasons - one of them being the witness to a dream that refused to die:

The moment has arrived to inform you that everything points to the fact that it is time for me to dedicate myself to publishing. For that purpose I need to withdraw myself to my closet and my study. You are aware of the marvellous but surprising fact that my theological message appealed to people in Europe and beyond. I am under continual pressure to get my witness to Scotland, England, Switzerland and Germany concerning the Evangelical Theology, Karl Barth's contribution and South Africa's participation ready for publication. Because of this I ask permission to retire on the 31st

of December after nearly twenty years of service to the University. You are aware of the fact that I would have loved to go on until May, to complete the twenty years of service, but the most fruitful, and I hope the most selfless service will now be accomplished My prayer to Jesus Christ, our Lord, is that my association with and gratitude to you will be made concrete by my life and work, and that I will bring joy to the university and the whole country in the use of every moment granted to me and through every word that I will witness to His name.

(Minutes of the E C of Senate 1979:3728)

The dream and the intentions accompanying it have not materialised as yet. Professor Lombard did show me a whole shelf of unpublished manuscripts in his study - who knows? In 1970 he contributed an article to *Hermeneutica*, a Festschrift in honour of Professor E P Groenewald. It was titled: '... Sodat ek Hom mag ken' ('... So that I may know Him'). A prominent New Testament scholar told me that it was the best article in the book, which undoubtedly contained articles of outstanding quality. In this article Professor Lombard expounds on the place and role of the Bible in his evangelical theology. According to my own perception it was a brilliant summary of Karl Barth's hermeneutic. As I will indicate later, the hermeneutic applied today in the departments of Old and New Testament, the 'new hermeneutic', goes beyond that of Barth (and Lombard). It stands to reason that the founder of the faculty would not be happy with the theological trends that are presently pursued by some of the members of faculty. In retrospect one realises that he saw the work of all the departments through the spectacles of systematic theology. This was doomed to fail because every department became a separate entity, pursuing the goals of their respective disciplines, a tendency which was enhanced by the establishment of the different theological associations and the appointment of secretaries for every department.

I must point out that it seems as if his own predictions backfired on him. He said himself that theology is a dangerous undertaking, because it finds its real essence in making itself redundant. Therefore the theologian is exposed and vulnerable. When he himself became redundant because the faculty moved from his foundations to a position beyond the parameters of his own perceptions - and this is a position no theologian can escape, be he Augustine, Luther, Calvin or Barth - he did not succeed in looking at his own precarious position with humour.

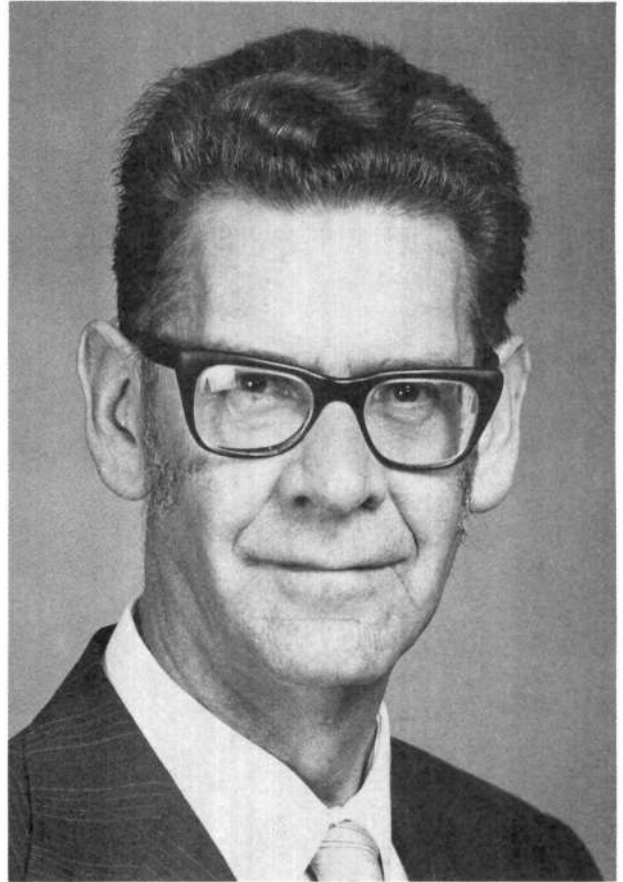
This and all other failures cannot detract from the appreciation the faculty owes Professor Johannes A Lombard for laying the foundations for a faculty that would be free from the '*habitas* and *securitas* theology' and in which the feeling can take root that 'we are in possession, we are safe within a God-given system' (Lombard 1979:66). What we must take with us from him is an awareness of our vulnerability. We must go on doing what is waiting for us on our desks and keep on doing it, awaiting our own hour of redundancy with a sense of humour!

THE SECOND AND THIRD DEANS

28



Professor J A Sloop (1970-73)

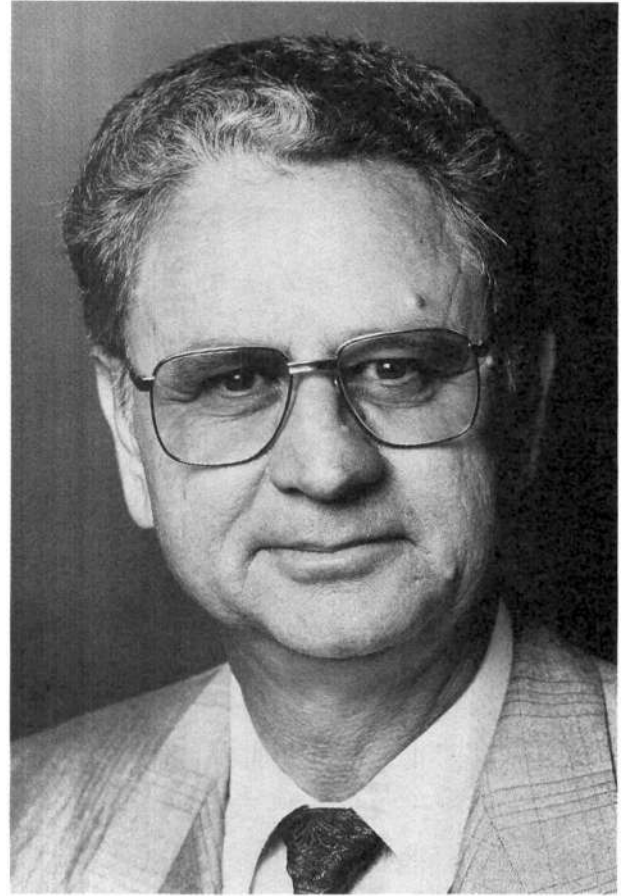


Professor D J Bosch 1974-77, 1982-87

THE FOURTH AND FIFTH DEANS



The late Professor I H Eybers (1978-81)



Professor J J Burden (1988-)

CHAPTER 3

Towards an ecumenical theology

The young Faculty of Theology faced the problem of viability. In the university context this all boiled down to student enrolment. A faculty may have idealistic programmes and able lecturers, but if students do not enrol for its courses, it will in due time have to close shop. In the present state of the South African economy and with the way in which the government subsidises universities, faculties and departments are forced to consider the 'market' and to adapt to the requirements of the potential students if they wish to grow. In this respect the Faculty of Theology at Unisa was, and still is, in a very vulnerable position. It does not have the official support of any specific denomination which requires its candidates for the ministry to follow its courses ... on the contrary, some of the larger denominations take a very negative attitude towards the theological faculty at Unisa, so much so that they actually close their doors to it.

Strange as it may appear, it was the churches of the Reformed tradition that were most negative towards the theological faculty of Unisa. When the faculty was instituted, it was stipulated by Council that nothing should be taught which contradicted the three Reformed Confessions of Unity or the Westminster Confession. The basic theological course was the typical Reformed requirement whereby a student could only enrol for a BD after completion of a BA

degree which had to include Greek II, Hebrew II, and Latin I. The BD course consisted of New Testament Studies III, Old Testament Studies III, Dogmatics and Ethics III, Church History III, Practical Theology III and Missiology III. One would have thought that this presented a marvellous opportunity for the Reformed churches to have those candidates who could not afford to be full-time students at a residential university trained for the ministry. This did not happen and it is important to understand why.

The Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk (NGK)

The NG Kerk, as well as the other two Reformed churches in South Africa, the Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk and the Gereformeerde Kerke in South Africa, are confessional or, as they prefer to call themselves, confessing churches. They require the candidates who have completed their theological studies to sign a document in which they vow not to preach a word in contradiction to the three confessions of unity - the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism and the five Decrees of the Synod of Dordt. It stands to reason that their theological training is done within the framework of their confession. Whenever they study a theological topic or a theology or a methodology which is not of the Reformed tradition, it is always done in an apologetic manner, always concluding with proof that the Reformed tradition is the pure 'Biblical' point of view. It can be questioned whether this kind of training is scientific and really belongs at a university, where every point of view is open to testing and verification, and whether this training should not rather be given at a seminary. But these three churches have succeeded in coming to an arrangement with the respective universities where their faculties are situated, giving them total control over the syllabuses, the appointment of lecturers and the supervision over their conduct as well as their doctrine.

It is not surprising that the establishment of a theological faculty which confers the BD degree should have received the attention of these churches. In 1961 the representative of the Natal Synod of the NGK on the Curatory of the Theological Faculty (Section B) - Section A is under the control of the Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk - of the University of Pretoria reported back to his Synod:

The Curatory took cognisance of the fact that the University of South Africa appointed a professor in Theology, in the person of Dr J A Lombard, a graduate from our Faculty of Theology at Pretoria, and a professor in Semitic Languages (for preparing students to study the Old Testament) in the

person of Dr A H van Zyl, also a graduate from Pretoria and a candidate for the ministry of our church. It is clear that these appointments will create opportunities for obtaining a BD degree. It seems a matter of utmost importance that the Curatory of the Theological Faculty should investigate the possibility of young people obtaining a BD degree from the University of South Africa and then simply applying for permission to enter the ministry of the church.

The Synod of Natal referred the whole issue to the Synod of the Transvaal which has supervisory authority over the theological faculty at Pretoria and in whose area the University of South Africa is located (Minutes of the General Synod of the NGK 1962:160).

The two ministers of Vryheid and Newcastle were not satisfied to leave it at that and tabled a motion asking their representative on the Curatory 'to act timeously by voicing a strong protest against the possibility of any candidate being allowed into the ministry in the Dutch Reformed Church, who had not trained at our two recognised institutions according to our confession and tradition' (Minutes of the General Synod of the NGK 1962:160).

In the constitution ('kerkorde') of the reconstituted Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk the matter of the training of candidates for the ministry is a matter for the General Synod. The General Synod of 1970 had on its agenda a report from its own executive committee dealing with the 'non-ecclesiastical theological training at Unisa' - this in response to the reports of both the Synodical Commission of the Northern Transvaal Synod and its own committee on missions, voicing concern about the fact that both Black and White students received theological training at Unisa. The General Synod asked the two bodies to continue their investigation into the matter and promised them all the help they could muster (Minutes of the General Synod of the NGK 1970:29). In 1982 they adopted a proposal from the Synodical Commission:

Because of the different kind of theological training offered by the University of South Africa and the fact that the NGK has no participation in appointing, selecting, supervising and disciplining lecturers, nor in the training and guidance of students, Unisa's training will not be recognised in part or in toto for entry into the ministry of the NGK.

(Minutes of the General Synod
of the NGK 1982:643, 644)

It must be mentioned that the NGK has laid down no official impediment to ministers doing postgraduate studies at Unisa. A very high percentage of the postgraduate students are ministers of the NGK. More than half of the staff of the theological faculty at Unisa are trained ministers of the NGK. Until 1978 the ministers who accepted posts at Unisa were granted full status as ministers on the grounds of Article 11.2 of the constitution ('kerkorde') of the NG Kerk, which stipulates:

If a minister leaves his congregation and accepts another office, he forfeits his status as minister of the Word of God, the only exception being if he is appointed in a synodical post or beforehand receives permission from the law committee of the General Synod. Such permission can only be granted if his new office is of a spiritual nature and stands in direct relationship to the preaching of the Gospel.

Unisa lecturers were regarded as such.

But in 1978 the Synod decided to apply the old Reformed principle, as was laid down in the Church Order of Dordt, very stringently. Accordingly the status of a minister was again brought in direct relation to a calling from a congregation. They did stretch this principle slightly to include a calling by a synodical body, thus including professors of theological faculties of the church.

At the Synod of 1982 some organisations like the Bible Society, who employed ministers of the church and thought that it was important that those ministers should maintain their status, asked Synod to include them in the list of the privileged. Synod changed Article 11 to read: '... and is regarded to be in the interest of the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk'. In the procedural rules for the status of ministers they are mentioned: ministers in service of the Bible Society, the religious programmes of the South African Broadcasting Corporation, Transworld Radio and the Afrikaans Student Christian Movement. But professors of Theology at Unisa only have the status of a candidate (proponent).

I think it is important to point out that the attitude of the personnel individually and as a faculty has been very cooperative towards the three theological faculties of the NG Kerk. Some of them preach regularly in various congregations. Since 1975 Professors F J Botha, J H Roberts, W S Vorster, W Vosloo, H J Dreyer (Semitics) and Dr C F A Borchardt have been asked by the University of Pretoria to do part-time lecturing in the Faculty of Theology in Pretoria. The council of the University of South Africa gladly gave them

permission to do so. The Curatory of the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk paid Unisa the compliment of calling some of the Unisa lecturers to posts in their faculties: F J Botha, C F A Borchardt, W Vosloo, J H le Roux, J A du Rand and recently Professor J W Hofmeyr. They all accepted, a proof of their sustained loyalty to their church. Rev H C van Zyl accepted a call to the Theological Seminary in Bloemfontein. Professor A H van Zyl, the first professor of Semitic Languages at Unisa, was called as professor in Old Testament Studies at the Faculty of Theology, where he served for an extended period, even as dean of the faculty. Professor Bosch, when he was dean of the Faculty of Theology at Unisa, declined a call as associate professor at Stellenbosch (perhaps this is the appropriate place to mention that he was invited no less than twice to accept the prestigious chair in Missiology at Princeton in the United States, which he also declined).

In 1974 the Huguenot College at Wellington approached Unisa and asked to be incorporated as a college of Unisa without forfeiting its own character (Minutes of Council 1975:301-305). (This is a college where social workers and spiritual workers are trained for service in the Dutch Reformed churches.) After long deliberations this request was granted and arrangements were made to the satisfaction of both the Board of Control of the Huguenot College and the Council of Unisa. The principal of the college is a full member of the Faculty of Theology at Unisa.

The same goodwill was demonstrated when the South African Bible Society asked Unisa to relinquish Professor F J Botha from half of his obligations for a period of five years so as to enable him to help with a new translation of the Bible into Afrikaans. The Bible Society paid Unisa R2 000 per annum to enable the University to make use of a substitute for half of Professor Botha's services. Council approved this (Minutes of Council 1970:293).

The Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk allows ministers of their church who accept lecturing posts at Unisa's theological faculty to keep their status as ministers of the church on condition that they serve as pastoral assistants in one of the congregations of the church. In that way the church maintains its supervision over the lives and the doctrine of these lecturers. This seems to be a very wise decision not only from the church's perspective, but also as concerns the lecturers. They remain involved in their church, and since they have to face a congregation when preaching, their theology is prevented from becoming philosophical speculation.

In 1969 one of the prospective students enquired from the secretary of Synod about the possibility of completing his theological studies (BD) at Unisa and being ordained as a minister of the Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk. He was told in answer: 'You are notified, with the consent of the Chairman of the Curatory, that we have had previous enquiries of this nature, which we refused, because the church does not recognise the BD degree of the University of South Africa to be adequate to allow candidates into the ministry in the Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk' (Minutes of the General Commission of the Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk 1969:86).

The General Synod faced this same question in 1983 via a report of their Curatory:

The Curatory paid attention to the problem of students taking a BD degree at Unisa. The doubts of the Curatory are because of the fact that the training done at that University is of an academic nature and not geared for the training of ministers. The Curatory suggests that Synod should use discretion by allowing some students who did not study at our faculty into the ministry after hospitation of one year at our faculty.

(Minutes of the Synod of the NHK 1983:260)

Synod did not accept this proposal, but decided: 'Ministers of the church are only trained in the Theological Faculty, Section A, at the University of Pretoria. Partial BD training at another faculty will not be recognised for degree purposes' (Minutes of the Synod 1983:125, 126). This decision and the fact that it would not be included in their constitution may be an indication that they left the door slightly open for dealing with every application on merit.

The Gereformeerde Kerke in South Africa, to the best of my knowledge, would never ever contemplate the possibility of allowing anybody trained at Unisa to minister to 'White' congregations. As far as I can interpret the documents, the positive attitude this church had towards the establishment of a theological faculty came from the presumption that it would be the heart of theological training for 'Black' ministers, in the true tradition of the pre-1957 structure of the University of South Africa. This interpretation is confirmed by the fact that the Hammanskraal Theological School for training 'Black' ministers for the Gereformeerde Kerke in South Africa initially made use of the study material for the BD courses at Unisa (Minutes of Council 1969:336 and

Minutes of Senate 1969:835-836). This relationship does not exist any more, and the Hammanskraal Theological School is attached to the theological faculty of the Gereformeerde Kerke at the University of Potchefstroom.

The picture was brighter from the point of view of the so-called 'English-speaking' churches, as well as from the non-traditional, and those ministers (Black and White) who were trained at a theological seminary and who now wished to obtain a university degree in theology.

As I have indicated previously, four of the English-speaking churches in South Africa, the Methodist Church, the Presbyterian Church, the Congregational Church and the Anglican Church, were responsible for the installation of a faculty of Divinity at Grahamstown. It is only natural for these churches to prefer that all their candidates receive their theological training at Grahams-town or the Federal Seminary. In spite of this, these churches do not regard Grahamstown as the only faculty where their theological students can be trained for the ministry.

The Methodist Church has a system of in-service training. Their probationers are allowed to do their academic theological training at the College for Theological Education by Extension (TEEC) or at Unisa. In 1989 no fewer than 29 Methodist probationers were doing the BTh course at Unisa. The General Conference of the Methodist Church has resolved that probationers enrolling for the BTh course at Unisa are required to include the following courses in their curricula: Biblical Studies I, and introductory half-courses in each of the following subjects: Systematic Theology, Theological Ethics, Church History, Practical Theology, Missiology and Science of Religion; two additional half-courses in Biblical Studies or Old Testament and/or New Testament studies; an additional half course in each of the four subjects; a further six half-courses in the subjects chosen as majors. Such probationers are required to pass a minimum of two half-courses in the previous end-of-year examination. All the curricula must be approved by the Secretary of the Committee for Extra Collegiate Probationers (Minutes of the Conference of the Methodist Church 1988:32-55). Residential students of the Methodist Church are trained at Rhodes University or the Federal Seminary (Fedsem) in Pietermaritzburg.

The Presbyterian Church, according to information supplied by the Reverend Perkins, secretary of the Committee on the Ministry of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, also allows their probationers to do a BTh degree

at Unisa. While still a probationer, the candidate must serve in a congregation under the supervision of an ordained minister. Before being allowed into the ministry, he must deliver letters of recommendation from this minister as well as from the Kirk-session, and a degree or a diploma in theology. Most residential students study at Rhodes University.

The Anglican Church encourages their probationers to rather take the theological course of the TEEC - usually the Diploma of the Joint Board of Theology. Those students who distinguish themselves in these courses are encouraged to do a university degree either at Rhodes University, Natal University or Unisa. Those who have chosen to study at Unisa are required to do courses as well in Christian Worship and Christian Education supplied by the church. Lay ministers are encouraged to study either at the TEEC or Unisa, depending on their scholastic qualifications. Residential students are trained at St Paul's College, Grahamstown, or at the Federal Seminary.

The Congregational Church's ministers are trained either full-time at Grahamstown or the Federal Seminary in Pietermaritzburg, or part-time through Unisa. In addition they have the system of probationer training which is under the supervision of a director and a committee for training of ministers during the probationer period. After receiving their degree or diploma the probationers must do service in a congregation under supervision of an ordained minister. Only after completion of this period are they allowed to be ordained as ministers.

The Roman Catholic Church does not make use of the Faculty of Theology at Unisa for training diocesan or religious priests, because they are expected to receive their training at St John Vianney College or at Cedara, both of which are affiliated to the Urbana University in Rome. They do, however, allow individuals to do postgraduate studies at Unisa. There are no restrictions on nuns who wish to obtain a degree in theology enrolling at Unisa. The fact that Professor Brian Gaybba and Sister (now Professor) Marie-Henry Keane were appointed to the staff of the theological faculty of Unisa naturally served as an encouragement for many nuns to enrol at Unisa.

The majority of the 'White' **Baptist** ministers are trained at the Baptist seminary in Parktown, Johannesburg, and the majority of 'Coloured' ministers at their seminary in Cape Town. Naturally they can only obtain a diploma in

theology from the seminaries, and those Baptist ministers who have the desire to obtain a university degree in theology, which would open the door for them to do postgraduate studies, often study at Unisa.

The Faculty of Theology, under the leadership of Professor D J Bosch, has made a meticulous analysis of the curricula of every seminary in the country, and is prepared to give academic credits to students who studied first at one of these seminaries, according to the academic standard of the work done at the different seminaries. The Baptist College in Parktown receives high accreditation, and this encourages many Baptist ministers to enrol for a degree at Unisa.

When the theological faculty was established it also received support from the smaller non-traditional churches. It seems as if the Seventh Day Adventist Church's theological College at Helderberg, Somerset West, made use of the Unisa courses, very much in the same way as the Gereformeerde Kerke did with their 'Black' students at Hammanskraal. They allowed their best students to enrol for a BA (Theol) degree, and the lecturers assisted the students in these 'degree-classes' in mastering the study material Unisa supplied. Naturally this enabled the lecturers to point out to their students any undesirable theological tendencies in the various courses. (Lately this college works in collaboration with Andrews University in the United States, a university run by the Seventh Day Adventist Church in America. This university has full accreditation, and those ministers who pass their examinations quite frequently enrol for postgraduate studies at Unisa.)

The Lutheran Seminary at Mapumulo in Natal decided in 1969 to enrol some of their students for the BA, BD courses at Unisa. The controlling board decided that these students must take Biblical Studies III, Sociology III, Greek II, Hebrew II, Latin I plus one course in English or Afrikaans (Minutes of the Executive Committee of Senate 1969:589). This association also diminished with time.

Pastor J T du Plessis, the honorary secretary for the Committee on Education and Training of the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa, asked Senate if it would be possible for the University of South Africa to adapt its theological courses in such a way that it could accommodate his church's requirements for training their pastors. The matter was referred to the Faculty of Theology. In its report, which was approved by Senate, it stated that the University of South

Africa cannot install courses for separate churches or religious organisations, but it invited the students from the AMF to make use of the theological courses of Unisa. If the AFM finds it necessary to supplement those courses with other courses they deem necessary, it is naturally free to do so, but it must be understood that these courses cannot be part of the curricula of the Unisa courses (Minutes of Senate 1959:258).

This directive was applied by many of the smaller churches. Many of the ministers from the Pentecostal and Charismatic churches who had been trained at seminaries enrolled for a degree at Unisa. The same applied to 'Black' ministers from across the spectrum. Most of them had a diploma of some kind from a seminary or Bible school, and many of those who had the required scholastic qualifications enrolled for a theological degree at Unisa.

This development could not but have a very determining influence on the direction in which the new faculty had to move. The 'market' required the lecturers to move away from the continental style of theological education towards the Anglo-American style. This change had a very negative effect on postgraduate work in the Biblical subjects as well as Church History.

It is rather surprising to note how long it took the lecturers to grasp the full implications of this change. In 1973 three senior members of faculty edited a very important publication, *Introduction to theology*. The English edition appeared in 1974. It is obvious that its purpose was to introduce students to the full spectrum of theology, but this theology was done from a Reformed theological perspective. The authors included Professor F J van Zyl of the Hervormde Kerk's Faculty of Theology as well as Dr P B van der Watt, at that time from the NGK Faculty of Theology at Stellenbosch. One can only presume that the idea behind the book was that it would be used by all the 'Reformed' theological faculties.

In the first chapter Professor König explained to students what theology was all about. Why is it accommodated in a separate faculty? His answer:

Without Jesus Christ and faith in Him, an independent theological faculty would indeed be unnecessary. This faith has taken shape in the lives of men, in proclamation and prayer, in songs of praise and obedient Christian living. This Word, Jesus Christ, accepted and appropriated, is the theme in all the theological subjects.

(König 1974:10)

He expounded the object of theology:

In theology we are concerned with more than 'God-in-Jesus-Christ'. Precisely because this God is the living God, the acting God, theology is concerned with his acts ... his creatures, and the unique relationship in which He stands towards his creatures: the covenant. Though theology reflects ... particular accents and emphases at particular times ... nevertheless the breadth and comprehensiveness of the object, God and his creation, must never be surrendered to a passing theological fashion.

(König 1974:10)

When he dealt with the subject of theology, he emphasized the wide range of 'theologians': Precisely because reality is inseparably bound to God, but at the same time is estranged from God, we live in a tension-ridden, troublesome and dangerous situation. Anyone engaged in a theoretical way with this unnatural situation - in whatever discipline it may be - is basically busy with theology, even though it may be non-Christian and radically unsound. Because of the possibility of this unsound theology he narrowed the theologians down:

But in order to be such a theologian (or mature Christian) it is essential to live in the 'communion of the saints' and so to share in the thinking of other believers In this sense theology is pursued in and by the church. And yet the theological subject needs to be even more limited. The sheer volume of the Bible, the long duration of church history, the complex situation in which we live, demand intensive specialisation For this reason it is important that there should be 'theologians', people that are fully engaged in the various theological disciplines.

(König 1974:15, 16)

In his chapter on the Old Testament Professor Eybers wrote: 'If we are to really do any theology (statements about God), before anything else, it is necessary to know and understand the content of the Bible, for in the Bible God reveals himself to man' (Eybers 1974:31). Professor F J Botha wrote: 'The Old and the New Testaments together form Holy Scriptures. The Old points forward to the New, and the New links with the Old. The one cannot be studied apart from the other. There is no difference in principle between the

study of the Old and the New Testaments' (Botha 1974:72). Dr Van der Watt used a very Reformed approach to describe Church Polity. 'Church law sets out to study the government of the institutionalised church - as this must be according to the word of God ... *scientia sacra regendi ecclesiam* (Voetius)' (Van der Watt 1974:113).

The same can be said of Professor D J Bosch's chapter on missiology. He was fresh from the 'mission field', and his sympathetic attitude towards the praxis of mission is obvious:

Even though missiology has only recently emerged as a full-fledged theological subject, its concern is nevertheless very old ... from the moment of its birth the church was engaged in mission, and indeed as something which was quite self-evident, involving no self-questioning as to why it was doing it, or whether it was doing it in the right way.

(Bosch 1974:159, 160)

'Whenever in the history of the Christian church the main emphasis has fallen on theologising, or dogma, mission work has seldom come into its own' (Bosch 1974:162). 'At the risk of over-simplification we can almost assert that the greatest mission expansion took place where the matter of mission enjoyed the least theological recognition' (Bosch 1974:163). He did not argue that theology and mission are irreconcilable, but rather that this state of affairs should be attributed to a distorted ecclesiology. Missiology was a technique rather than a theology of mission. Since the Second World War the tide has turned. 'A mass of publications on the basis of mission and the Biblical theology of missions appeared' The new developments are a tremendous gain for church, mission and theology. 'If the church is not mission it ceases indeed to be the church. So too, if theology is not mission related, it ceases to be theology. But also: Mission ceases to be mission if it is not church-related' (Bosch 1974:163, 164). He argues that the place of missiology in the field of theology 'touches the very essence of theology'. But to fulfil its task the church must set out 'a scripturally based concept of the definition, goals and method of mission. Missiology is thus both descriptive and normative' (Bosch 1974:167).

In his chapter on practical theology, Professor Johanson pointed out that the title of the discipline is very misleading. He believes that practical theology is not concerned in a superficial way with the practical aspects and problems of the ministry. It was Schleiermacher who laid the foundations for its position as a scientific study, and gave it a place in the sciences of the contemporary

church (Johanson 1974:173). In his exposition of this relationship he used the Reformed theologian W D Jonker's 'Theologie en praktyk', the Englishman Martin Thornton's 'The function of theology', and Karl Barth's 'Church dogmatics'. He concludes:

Practical Theology then is theology through and through, having its specific theological orientation in the doctrine of the church. This doctrine, rightly understood, is rooted in Christology, and, as the 'earthly-historical' manifestation of His presence, it reaches out into the world in service, witness and example.

(Johanson 1974:179)

This period saw an amazing growth in the student body and consequently new members of staff had to be appointed. The heads of departments realised that they could encourage students from the English-speaking churches and the smaller churches if lecturers were appointed from outside the Reformed tradition. It was not that easy because applicants from Reformed quarters usually had better academic qualifications. In this period Canon Trevor Verryn (Anglican), Rev J S Wiid (Baptist), Professor Klaus Nürnberger (Lutheran), Ms C Kourie and Dr Brian Gaybba (Roman Catholic) and Dr C Villa-Vicencio (Methodist) were appointed. Some of the appointments made from the Reformed tradition were young men who had just completed postgraduate studies abroad, and who would possibly not have been acceptable to Reformed theological faculties, either because of their political convictions or their 'liberal' theology. Since the sixties, lecturers were appointed who in later years would play a leading role in the faculty - Drs J J Burden, J S Krüger, W J M Janson, C J Botha, P G R de Villiers, W S Vorster, W A Saayman, J W Hofmeyr, I J du Plessis, E A C Pretorius, Ferdinand Deist, H A Lombard, Joan Annandale, Len Hulley, J A Wolfaardt, M L Daneel, W Vosloo and H J C Pieterse. Among the appointments in the junior ranks we find theologians who are starting to play major roles in the faculty - E van Niekerk, W J Wessels, H L Bosman, J Steyn and J A Burger.

With the demand for a more 'English'-orientated training arising, the attitude of the Reformed churches towards their members in faculty did not really enhance the interests of 'Reformed theology' at the faculty. These lecturers experienced some form of ostracism, letting them feel that they had let their own church down by taking up posts at Unisa. It required an effort on their part to feel at home in their own churches. They were seldom asked to preach in their own church, and given very little recognition. Because of many

reasons, to which I will return later, some of them found it hard to listen to, what they believed to be, hopelessly outdated expositions of Scripture. One cannot escape the feeling that the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk forfeited the talents and service of some of its brightest young men, and so lost the opportunity to have an influence in a faculty which indisputably plays a major role in the development of theology in Southern Africa.

These realities contributed to the fact that the theologians of Unisa had to widen their perspectives on theology to take their students' needs into account - it had to move to a more ecumenical approach to theology. One of the first theologians to grasp this reality was Professor Adrio König. In 1976 he read a paper at the annual meeting of the Dogmatic Society of South Africa at Stellenbosch. His topic was 'Theological and confessional plurality and pluriformity' (König 1976:47-56). In this paper he asked penetrating questions and made bold statements. He pointed out that if one could integrate plurality in theology into the total conception of your theology, it could broaden and enrich your outlook on the totality of God's revelation, and should therefore be welcomed. He argued that there is a big difference between a confession (of your faith) which is an act of decision for Christ, and a creed, which is the systematic exposition of the beliefs of a particular denomination. He insisted that there can only be one confession of faith in the church, but this confession could be articulated in different ways by the different denominations. Pluriformity of creeds can only mean that each of the denominations possesses just a portion of the truth, so if one really wants to have a grasp of the fullness of the truth, one would have to study all the creeds and understand them in their historical and theological context.

In 1975 some of the lecturers of faculty published a volume of essays titled *Theology and renewal*. This volume is a testimony of the effect of the lecturers' encounter with other theologies. It did not only bring renewal to their theological approach, but also to their application. All nine essays indicated that some kind of renewal was taking place over the broad spectrum of their theology: 'A few old and new approaches to the books of the Old Testament' (I H Eybers); 'The exegesis of the Synoptic gospels - past and future' (W S Vorster); 'A renewing approach for the exegesis of the Pauline conditional clauses' (J A du Rand); 'What is the church?' (J H Roberts); 'The Afrikaans churches and the Rebellion, 1914-15' (C F A Borchardt); 'Vincentius of Lerinum on changes and renewal' (J A Stoop); 'Reformed certainty over and against Roman Catholic infallibility' (A König); 'En route to a theologia Africana' (D J Bosch) and 'Christian worship and social change' (Brian Johanson).

In 1978 the faculty was compelled to issue a second (revised and enlarged) edition of *Introduction to theology*. All the authors this time were on the staff of Unisa. When A König revised his introductory chapter on 'Theology', he re-emphasized his Christological approach. 'This accepted or appropriated Word, Jesus Christ, is the deepest ground for the unity and solidarity of these disciplines and their grouping in one faculty' (König 1978:8). He asks: 'Then what ought to be the role of the Bible in theology?' And his answer:

On the one hand, in certain subjects (Biblical Studies, for example, or Old and New Testament) by their very nature the Bible will play a great part - yet even here students will find that they do not deal only with the Bible, but will have to consult many other books that directly or indirectly explain facets of it. On the other hand it is basically correct to say that in all theological subjects the Bible ought to have a normative function.

(König 1978:13)

When he acknowledges that all theological investigation concerns the question of God, he qualifies his answer in this way:

The entire created reality must come under the scrutiny of theology. This becomes a little clearer when we take account of the theological character of creation, which is not a static entity, but a beginning, with world history as a necessary sequel - as the realisation of God's covenant, which is his purpose in creation. In these terms, then, we cannot possibly be engaged legitimately with any facet of reality, if we do not recognise its reference to God and its place in his plan. Who, for instance, can study or expound the preaching of Amos without becoming directly involved in questions of social structures and practical politics, but always in their relation to faith.

When he explained the subject of theology, he revealed his paradigm: 'In the church we find united those who accept a particular origin, goal, answer and interpretation - i.e. that all reality has been created by God and has its goal in joyful fellowship with Him' (König 1978:17).

One of the obvious additions to the second edition is the chapter on ecumenical theology, which I believe is a reproduction of Professor König's inaugural address. In this chapter he emphasized ecumenical theology which inquires into the correct attitude that should exist among the differing confessions. This is clearly an endeavour to explain the theological approach in the theological faculty of Unisa.

In modern times theologians from different confessions are increasingly helping one another, discovering more and more mutuality and learning to tackle the issues confronting Christianity together. We realise that our divisions stand under the judgment of God. The time of polemic and apologetic attitudes toward fellow-Christians is past. This spirit hallmarks the identity of the Theological Faculty at Unisa. Our student body displays a great diversity of confessional groupings, and lecturers are appointed on academic quality and not on confessional loyalty. Faculty in 1976 expressed its purpose 'to serve ecumenically on a broad front' and so to make as much provision as possible for the particular requirements of the various churches and seminaries.

(König 1978:314)

He believed that we could accomplish this by applying a scientific method to all our theoretical research. 'We have to insist, of course, that all applicants are Christians, since the nature of this field of study demands a faith-relationship with Jesus Christ. By virtue of the object of study a person who is not a Christian, is not fully equipped to engage in research in this field of study or to teach it' (König 1978:315).

But this argumentation eventually takes him beyond Unisa. From a scientific, academic perspective 'every theological faculty must by definition be ecumenical, seeing that each of its various disciplines has only one area of study'. To the scientific argument he adds an ecclesiastical one:

Because of the biblical message concerning the church as the one flock of the one Shepherd, the one body of the one Head, the one people of the one God, the one temple of the one Spirit, this church with one hope, one faith, one baptism, dare not subscribe to any structural or other impairment of, or challenge to its unity ... in the church there must always be

room for different theologians and various types of theologies Individuals - and even ecclesiastical groupings may, of course, give preference to particular theologies and thus to particular faculties.

(König 1978:315, 316)

All this does not imply 'that a lecturer may not hold his own confessional or theological views, but rather that his fidelity to them will not be exclusive or function antithetically; they will rather inspire him to understand and teach the scriptural message along with his colleagues from other confessions and churches' (König 1978:314).

In the exposition of his own discipline, 'Systematic theology', he explained why this subject is necessary, although we believe not in a system, but in Jesus Christ the living Lord. He argues that Jesus Christ is the most encyclopedic person who ever lived - so if we wish to live in fellowship with Him, we need to learn something of his rich life, and to understand what we believe when we confess Him. He agrees that there are different confessions and creeds, all trying to formulate the full meaning of his person. In systematic theology all the traditional confessional theologies receive attention - Orthodox theology, Roman Catholic theology, Lutheran and Reformed theology, Pentecostal theology and the theology from the Churches of England. By studying systematic theology in this way, our understanding of Scripture increases and will always keep on changing. In this sense this discipline's task is always to test the message of the church and deter it from heresy (König 1978:134-198).

König practised what he preached. He proved the sincerity of his views by appointing people from different denominations in his department: Dr C Villa-Vicencio (Methodist), Dr B Gaybba and Sister Marie-Henry Keane (Roman Catholic), Dr Klaus Nürnberger (Lutheran), Dr Simon Maimela (a Black Lutheran) and Dr Len Hulley (Methodist).

Professor J A Stoop did not make any substantial changes in his introduction to 'Church history' (pp 100-120). The mere fact that he put all the emphasis of the subject on the early (Patristic) period naturally has some bearing on the ecumenical perspective as such, because the major schisms in the church took place after this period. During the early period the church was still defending its unity boldly against the heretics and schismatics. There was one impediment to this approach by Professor Stoop - to study this period requires a sound knowledge of Greek and Latin, and the faculty had eased its language requirements. The study of the early period never really flourished.

But it was in the introduction to Church Polity that the difference between the contributions in the first and the second editions is very obvious. Where Dr Van der Watt wrote from a Reformed perspective, Professor Stoop approached Church Polity from a historical perspective. He started from the early period and gave a description of the historical development of church government. He believed Church Polity must be 'the history of ecclesiastical legal forms'.

Missiology. Professor Bosch did not rewrite his article, but in his modifications a new approach is depicted. It is obvious that he became sensitive towards sophisticated 'Black' and Asian feelings, which he probably did not encounter or 'hear' while he was a missionary in Transkei. Now he had become conscious of those people experiencing missions as paternalistic, the affluence of White superiority, and a clear indication of the absence of sensitivity for, or appreciation of, the religious heritage of indigenous peoples. These people are simply regarded as the objects of mission. They, from their side, see the missionary as part and parcel of the colonial era, apostles of affluence, not sacrifice; cultural superiority, not Christian humility; technological efficiency, not human identification; White supremacy, not human communion and liberation (Bosch 1978:231). Bosch contradicts this with the 'White' depiction of mission as the 'spreading-of-the-gospel-of-Jesus-Christ-overseas' (Alex Beale).

The answer to this predicament? Not two sciences of mission, but a scientific approach - 'to be on guard against every tendency to partiality, continually to compare and correlate the facts, carefully to investigate before making any pronouncements, always remaining critical - even of his own standpoint' (Bosch 1978:231). Is this a step towards the approach of Science of Religion? Bosch answers by pointing out that Missiology and Science of Religion are (at the moment) associated in one department, although they are both full-fledged subjects in their own right. In practice this means that each must be prepared to acknowledge that the other can influence it. If, for instance, Science of Religion assumes that, because Missiology regards one religion as the true one, it is not really an objective science - it cannot expect Missiology to take it seriously. But conversely, should Missiology accuse Science of Religion of complete relativism and refuse to admit that in the religious experiences of people of other faiths there are genuine elements, it must not be taken aback at Science of Religion's ignoring it (Bosch 1978:241).

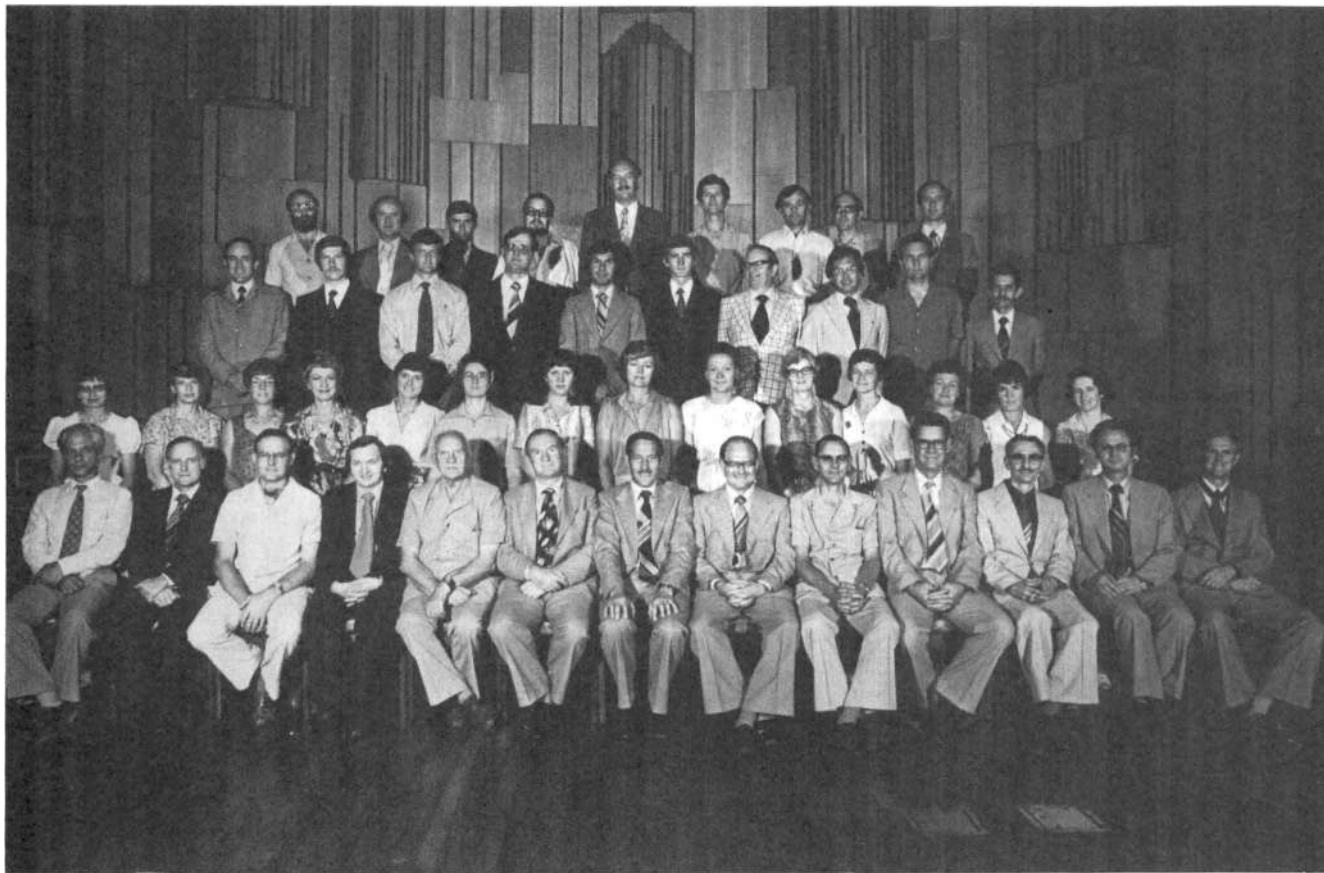
I think it is fair to conclude that the theological trend of this period could be regarded as a move towards ecumenical theology. This is underlined by two publications, both collections of essays on the theme of ecumenism, with members of faculty as editors. The first, *Die eenheid van die kerk* (The unity of the church), was compiled by Dr Piet Meiring and Rev Henry Lederle in 1978, and is obviously a reaction to a similar publication by Rev Koot Vorster the previous year, naturally from the opposite perspective, *Veelvormigheid en eenheid* (Pluriformity and unity).

The second volume was edited by Professor A C Viljoen, in honour of Professor Ben Marais on the occasion of his seventieth birthday. It was published under the poetic title: *Ekumene onder die Suiderkruis* (Ecumene under the Southern Cross) - a collection of essays in recognition of the pioneer work of Ben Marais in the Southern African context. The editor wrote in the preface:

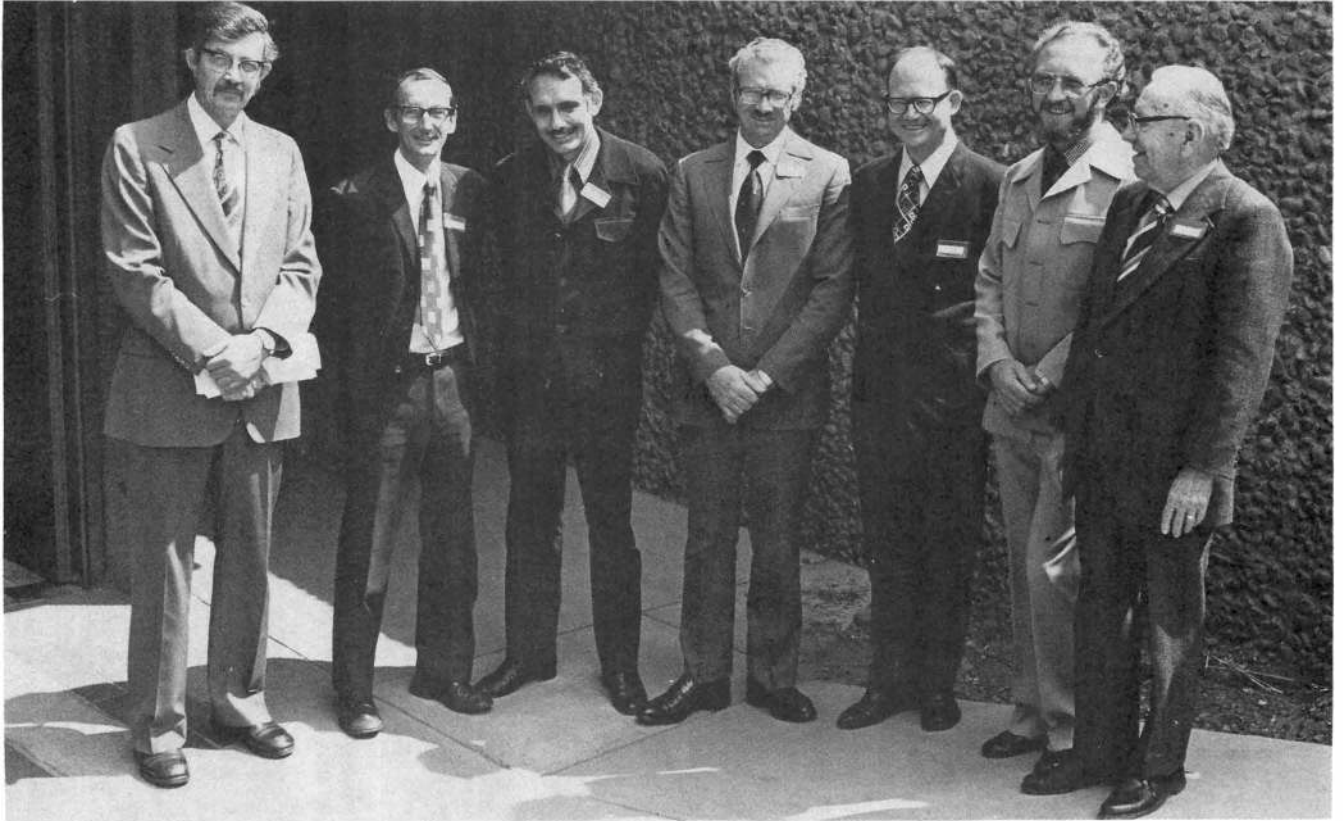
The ecumenical movement has become the hallmark of the church history of the twentieth century - 'the great new fact of our era'. It was in this field that Professor Ben Marais made his most important contribution - not only in discussions at international conferences and ecumenical deliberations, but also in the South African context. These were rough seas, stirred up by theological and non-theological factors, which made life difficult for pioneers - true to the South African tradition. His contribution will most probably receive more attention as the historical perspective becomes more clear. This collection is a modest effort by some colleagues, former students, and friends to show their appreciation on the occasion of his seventieth birthday.

It was also a milestone in the theological development of the Faculty of Theology.

THE THEOLOGICAL FACULTY, 1979



FIRST ANNUAL SEMINAR PRESENTED BY THE
INSTITUTE FOR THEOLOGICAL RESEARCH, 1977



*l to r: Professor C Alant, Father A Nolan, Professor J J F du Rand,
Professor C W H Boshoff, Professors J H Roberts, W S Vorster, C H Rautenbach*

CHAPTER 4

Towards a new understanding of the Bible

It seems to me that the most important change in the theology of the faculty was in the Biblical subjects. How can this be explained? Some of the brightest young students who excelled in Greek, Hebrew, Old and New Testament Studies during their undergraduate and theological studies at the local Reformed theological faculties, won scholarships for postgraduate studies abroad. (It is a fact that the opportunity to study abroad is one of the most wonderful things that could happen to a South African.) Those who went to Germany had the unpleasant experience of feeling at a loss, because the methodology and general approach to the study of the Biblical sciences differed vastly from those which they were taught at the local theological faculties. While the faith of some was rocked, others experienced this as a new vision on theology and on the Bible. When they graduated and returned to South Africa, they could do nothing else but continue their research along these lines. They realised that the only way to receive international acclaim was to proceed on these principles. Such students as were appointed at Unisa enjoyed the freedom to follow their convictions. Not that this did not have repercussions, as we will point out later, because the ecclesiastical community was not ready for this new approach, and some of the theological students who were members of the

‘evangelical’ churches were startled by this method. (What overseas graduates who were fortunate enough to receive appointments at the theological faculties of their own churches did is something worth researching, but will be left out of this history.) What is the essence of this new hermeneutic?

NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES

It is common knowledge that our philosophy of life is a determining factor in the way we do our scientific research (Vorster 1987:375). In the pre-critical period, the period before the Enlightenment, the study of the New Testament was hallmarked by a symbolic interpretation. At that stage of New Testament studies the Vitalistic paradigm was dominant, namely the acceptance that life originates in a vital principle, distinct from chemical and other physical forces. To a large extent this was the paradigm from which the New Testament was taught in South Africa.

Then came the critical period which was dominated by the mechanistic paradigm, in which the accent falls on the fragments and not on the totality. Historical criticism not only dominated everything in New Testament scholarship, but in many circles was viewed as the only way to solve the problems in the field of New Testament study (Vorster 1987:378).

In the historico-critical method there are certain points of departure in regard to the reality to be researched, usually referred to as the ‘Vorverständnis’, from which the research proceeds. The New Testament scholar must be a highly qualified researcher, and will try to understand the New Testament as literature about the Christian faith of the first century in a scholarly way. This research therefore is historical and literary. Furthermore, it is accepted in these circles that the Christian faith was the result of some kind of syncretism and that the core of it was the cult and the liturgy. The religious convictions of the early Christians were transmitted to succeeding generations and were eventually written down in documents known to us as the New Testament. These documents are windows through which the researcher can catch a glimpse of Jesus as well as the deeds and convictions of the early Christians. This approach not only determines how the New Testament scholar views the documents of the New Testament, but also how he will study them and what he should study. The New Testament is not studied as a coherent totality but it is broken up into fragments which are studied separately in an atomistic way. The texts of the New Testament are fragments, each of which has its own genesis. These geneses are studied by applying the historico-critical methods mentioned previously. The researcher always has to keep in mind that the

origin of the New Testament is to be seen as the origin of these small fragments - each having its own history. This is called *Formgeschichte*. This atomistic approach is applied to the language also. The Greek of the New Testament also has roots in the Septuagint and Aramaic. In the New Testament science, the focus must always be on the fragments and not on the totality (Vorster 1987:379, 380).

The words which are vital in New Testament studies are *interpret* and *understand*. They really emphasize the distance between the modern Christian reader and the time when the faith came into being. The world of the people who wrote the Bible and that of the modern reader differs so vastly that the Bible does not communicate its message clearly any more. The historico-critical method emphasizes this estrangement - and this emphasis can be experienced positively or negatively (Vorster 1987:380).

The degree to which Vorster applied this historico-critical method in his academic activities is very obvious in the second edition of *Introduction to theology*: 80-133. He was asked to write the chapter on an introduction to the study of the New Testament. On the very first page Vorster indicates the premise and the perspective from which he approaches both theology in general and the study of the New Testament. He believes theology is 'the scientific study of the texts about God. These we find in the Bible.' The Bible, and then specifically the New Testament, is 'Holy Scripture', and

its texts have something to say to the modern world about God, yet they must be read in a scientific way. Until recently, in certain circles, the Bible functioned as a theological work with its own codes and laws of interpretation ... with the result that the study of it has been carried out in a non-scientific context, since neither the methods applied nor the results obtained, could be controlled or verified. Among those who did regard the Bible as literature, it is the so-called historical approach that dominates the scene. We need to see this approach against the backdrop of the previous century's conviction that if you know the history of something, you understand the matter itself. To a considerable extent contemporary New Testament Science is still regulated by these two factors, though more and more scholars are trying to grapple with these problems by paying more attention to questions of a methodological character.

(Vorster 1978:80)

The atomistic approach is obvious in his explanation of the New Testament as a book: It

... consists of a collection of twenty seven documents written by a number of authors at various times during the first two centuries Quite apart from the fact that these writings were produced by different authors at different times, the question arises in particular as to whether we may speak of a unity of vision in them, or that the most distinctive characteristic of the New Testament is that it had so many facets. Understandably, twenty seven documents will not necessarily reflect the same point of view.

(Vorster 1978:81)

‘The character of this volume with its twenty seven components makes it necessary for us to examine each of them very thoroughly in terms of its literary genre, its age and its purpose At least four literary genres may be distinguished in the New Testament: gospels, letters, a historical monograph and an apocalypse’ (Vorster 1978:86). The scholar must be able to read the text in its original language, and pay attention to all the linguistic influences bearing on the origin of the text. The modern science of translation must be part of the equipment of every New Testament scholar. ‘The time has gone - and gone for good - when a New Testament scholar could adequately fulfil his task as an exegete with the aid of a knowledge of Greek, a traditional lexicon ... a concordance and grammar’ (Vorster 1978:87).

Vorster stated that for a New Testament scholar to understand the New Testament, necessitates the application of the ‘new hermeneutics’ - ‘the discipline in which philosophy, theology, literary criticism, exegesis and other human sciences interact upon one another in respect of the question of understanding’. Hermeneutics is ‘more than simply a subdivision of Biblical Science. It impinges upon theology as a whole, and its scope extends far beyond that’ (Vorster 1978:87). The New Testament scholar will have to employ an array of auxiliary disciplines. But in order to interpret the New Testament within its context he will have to use these auxiliary disciplines as well as the canon of the New Testament to construct a frame of reference. Furthermore he will apply the textual criticism and the introduction science in a historico-critical way. The historico-critical approach, with its four major components, will have to be applied: Source criticism (*Literärkritik*), form criticism (*Formgeschichte*), tradition criticism (*Traditionsgeschichte*) and redaction criticism (*Redaktionsgeschichte*) (Vorster 1978:92).

New Testament studies were to be taught according to the historico-critical method for more than a decade at the theological faculty of Unisa. Professor Vorster ventured to explain this method in his inaugural address. The reaction aroused by this address will be dealt with in the next chapter.

THE INSTITUTE FOR THEOLOGICAL RESEARCH

A very important milestone in the development of Biblical scholarship in the Faculty of Theology was the establishment of the Institute for Theological Research. As far back as 1951 Council received circular C/146/51, in which the government gave notice of the amendment of legislation re researchers:

The academic staff of a university shall be deemed to include such research workers (not being professors, lecturers or teachers) as are incumbents of posts which the Senates of such Universities have by resolution recognised as posts having academic status, and such research workers shall be deemed to be teachers of the University in respect of any provision referring to teachers of the University in the act incorporating the said university or any amendment thereof or in the Statutes of the said university or any amendment thereof.

(Minutes of Council, 24 September 1951)

In 1970 the Executive Committee of Council recommended to Council 'that it be approved in principle that research officers may be appointed in all the departments at the University' (Minutes of Council 1970:656).

The first step towards establishing such an institute came from the New Testament scholars who became aware of the lack of cooperation in theological research and the need for the coordination of specialised research done by individuals in the field of theology in this vast country. Their idea was an institute that would serve the whole theological community of South Africa (Vorster 1976:1). The first step taken by these scholars was for the specialists in the six major theological disciplines to organise themselves into study groups ('werkgemeenskappe') so as to promote research in their respective fields of study. At their annual meetings, topics for special research would be decided on, papers would be prepared by individuals or sub-groups, and then be read at the congresses and published in reports or magazines. The establishment of these 'werkgemeenskappe' must undoubtedly be regarded as a major step in promoting research in the field of theology in South Africa (Vorster 1976:3).

It is a fact worth mentioning here that in at least five of the six 'werkgemeenskappe' it was the lecturers of Unisa who played a leading role, not only in the establishment, but also in the *modus operandi* - which was an endeavour to obtain the cooperation of scholars of all the denominations. The only exception was the Study Group for Practical Theology. The leading figure there was Professor H D A du Toit, of the Faculty of Theology (Section B) at Pretoria University. From the perspective of that faculty's approach to Practical Theology, it did not make sense to include non-Reformed theologians, so they restricted their membership to theologians from the Reformed tradition (this has also changed, and Practical Theologians from all the denominations can now be members of the Study Group for Practical Theology).

The first step in realising this dream was taken by two young New Testament scholars of Unisa, Dr J H Roberts and Mr W S Vorster, who applied successfully for a research grant from their university to do research on the methodology of New Testament Studies. Mrs Jansie Kilian, a qualified librarian, was appointed to assist with the information-retrieval system. (This proved to be a very fortunate appointment, because today Jansie Kilian and Willem Vorster are the heart of the institute.) The success of the project convinced everybody concerned of the necessity of such a research centre, and after long negotiations it was decided by Unisa to establish an autonomous research institute that could be the basis for all theological research in South Africa. In 1975 Council approved the constitution of the Institute for Theological Research (Minutes of Council 1975:1149-1151). Senate also approved a senior lectureship in Old and New Testament Studies until such time as the institute would be able to provide the necessary structure for its personnel (Minutes of the E C of Senate 1975:836). The Selection Committee unanimously recommended to Senate that Dr W S Vorster be appointed as director of the institute, with the rank of research professor. This was approved by Council (Minutes of Council 1976:6).

It was at one of the annual meetings of the New Testament scholars that Professor J H Roberts of Unisa proposed that a committee should investigate the possibility of establishing an institute for Biblical research. This study group reported back that they were convinced of the necessity of such an institute, but believed that it should be attached to a university. After discussions it was decided to approach Unisa (Vorster 1976:3).

Nobody could have had any doubt about the direction in which Professor Vorster would launch his research programmes, because his publications were very

explicit: *Modern linguistics in Bible research*; *The historicity of the facts of Jona*; *A new trend in New Testament scholarship* and *How consistent are exegetes in their thinking?*

The director had great aspirations for the role of the Institute for Theological Research. He dreamt that the whole faculty would be involved in research programmes. He himself continued with the project on the methodology of New Testament Studies, and the Department of Systematic Theology registered a project on ecumenism (Minutes of Senate 1977:678). What this institute has achieved is a success story on its own. It is not only stimulating and guiding much of the research done in the Faculty of Theology at Unisa, but it has handled important research programmes of its own. One of the dreams that did not materialise was the participation of all universities in South Africa. One of the major projects of the institute seems to be arranging seminars on burning issues of the day. It approaches these topics courageously but in a scientific way, not afraid to look at the other, sometimes very sensitive side of the issue. It seems to be undaunted in the choice of its topics but wise in choosing its teams of speakers of whom it requires the highest academic standards and methodology. The papers read at the seminars are published and made available not only to those who attend the conferences, but to the public, usually at a reasonable price. The topics appear to give a reasonably accurate reflection of theological tides: *Church and society* (1977); *Scripture and the use of Scripture* (1978); *Church unity and diversity in the South African context* (1979); *Spirit in Biblical perspective* (1980); *Christianity among the religions* (1981); *Denominationalism: its sources and implications* (1982); *Church and industry* (1983). As the faculty's attention moved towards socio-political issues, so the topics of the seminars followed suit: *Sexism and feminism in theological perspective* (1984); *Views on violence* (1985); *Reconciliation and construction* (1986); *Are we killing God's earth* (1987); *The right to life: issues in bio-ethics* (1988) and *The morality of censorship* (1989).

THE C B POWELL BIBLE CENTRE

A fascinating development within the Institute for Theological Research was the founding of the C B Powell Bible Centre, which came into being after an agreement between the trustees of the late Charles Bergh Powell Will Trust and Unisa was signed on the evening of 22 November 1983. Professor Vorster documented this remarkable history (Vorster 1985:3-13).

To understand the Bible Centre and its own special character, it is very important to know something about the man C B Powell. He was born in Kimberley on 26 February 1908, was a good sportsman but also distinguished himself in

academic circles. He was very enthusiastic about his faith. After he had qualified as a land surveyor, he started his career in SWA/Namibia, later moving to Cape Town (in 1949), where he became a very successful businessman and farmer.

He displayed increasing impatience with the so-called 'evangelicals' of the Christian faith who preoccupied themselves with the 'saving of souls' without really understanding what they were doing. He decided to establish a Bible academy where excellent theologians who had their feet on the ground could teach ordinary laymen the treasures to be discovered in Biblical research. His untimely death on 22 August 1979 eventuated in the trustees deciding to donate funds to Unisa to found a C B Powell chair for Biblical scholarship. The aim was to present practical Christian seminars in which the richness of the Bible could be made available to laymen.

The wishes of the donor regarding the Bible Centre are clearly stated in a letter he wrote to his nephew, Mr Alan Powell:

My one fear with a Biblical Research Centre is that of it becoming an academic project and so fails to do justice to those insights which can only come when the Holy Spirit controls the whole personality of the researcher. I am aware that a saint who is a scholar too, is a rare bird and I am most anxious, if at all possible, for this to be recognised and as far as possible to be given high priority

He continues:

Is there not a danger that theologians talk to one another without this talking also being to the common intelligent and informed laymen? Is it not desirable to arrange small classes as part of a project, where dialogue could take place on issues studied so as to keep the feet of the researchers on mother earth by dealing with them so as to remain personal and practical in application?

(Vorster 1985:9-10)

Unisa decided, after consultation with the trustees, to found a centre within the Institute for Theological Research. The staff of the centre are appointed as members of the institute, and the centre's objectives are to promote and to make available to ordinary lay people the results of Biblical scholarship by:

- (i) offering lectures, individually or as a series, courses, seminars, symposia, workshops, group discussions, exhibitions, etc;
- (ii) publishing research results as well as popular scientific literature about the Bible and its implications; and
- (iii) researching the Bible empirically and theoretically (Vorster 1985:11).

The founding of the C B Powell Bible Centre inaugurated a new era of doing theology at Unisa. In addition to formal teaching and research, the opportunity was created to explore the possibilities an ecumenical faculty, the only one of its kind in the country, can offer in terms of community education. Because of the number and quality of the members of faculty, the Powell donation can be used to promote the results of Biblical research in innumerable ways to ordinary Christians (Vorster 1985:11). The first 'rare bird' or director of the Bible Centre was Professor P G R de Villiers. He left Unisa to accept the chair in New Testament Studies at the theological faculty of Rhodes University in 1988. Professor Francois Swanepoel succeeded him.

A glance at the courses (with the enrolment in brackets) proves that the C B Powell Bible Centre is endeavouring to comply with the wishes of the donor: 'Religious stories for children', 1985 (147); 'Disinvestment', 1985 (21); 'How to read the Bible', 1985 (110); 'Healing by faith', 1985 (315); 'Standing by God in his hour of grieving', 1986 (150); 'How do I communicate my suffering', 1986 (150); 'Liberation Theology', 1986 (38); 'A seminar on reading the Bible', Cape Town 1986 (54); 'The Bible, the church and demonic powers', 1986 (109); 'The realism of the Text', 1986 (37); 'The Bible in a new era', 1986 (30); 'Eschatology', 1987 (50); 'Early Christians', 1988 (38); 'The Bible and stress', 1988 (74); 'The Letter to the Romans', 1988 (44); 'Good news for rich and poor', 1989 (42); 'Bible stories and their secret', Pretoria, 1989 (40); 'The message of the Bible in a nutshell', 1989 (100); 'Bible stories and their secret', Port Elizabeth 1989 (12) and the Spring School: 'God, the Bible and the child', Cape Town, 1989 (38).

THE OLD TESTAMENT

In 1986, with the celebration of its twenty-fifth anniversary, the Department of Old Testament Studies asked Professor J H le Roux, who had been a member of the department for sixteen years, to write the history of that department. His method was to give a brief description of the contribution made by each of the members of the department (Le Roux 1987:198-221). Previously he had

written an article in honour of the late Professor Eybers (Le Roux 1983:114-129). I can hardly do better than use these descriptions to indicate the developments in that department and also to illustrate how a department actually functions in the Faculty of Theology:

Prof I H Eybers. He occupied the first chair for Biblical Studies and taught Old Testament until his death in 1981. He had a confessional approach and studied the Old Testament from the perspective of faith. This had an influence on his views on the sub-disciplines of Old Testament scholarship as well. Because he believed in the unity between the Old and the New Testaments, he also believed that the Old must be interpreted in a Christocentric way. Many problems are attached to the canon of the Old Testament, but the solution must be sought in Christ. In studying the collection of books called the Old Testament, the scholar must determine how it was fulfilled in Christ. Israel's history must be interpreted from the viewpoint of salvation history. The ultimate task of the exegete is to determine the kerygma and its fulfilment in Christ (Le Roux 1983:14).

Professor J J Burden joined the department on 1 December 1975. He emphasized that teaching involved interpretation and understanding, and therefore primarily constituted a hermeneutical problem. Secondly he thought that the teaching method should receive attention and thirdly that the different frames of reference should be taken into account when formulating a teaching strategy. The lectures of the department became well planned, educational objectives were formulated and lectures were presented in a more comprehensible form. His own field of specialisation was the poetic texts, where he emphasized parallelisms to help understand Hebrew poetry. He came from the mission field and emphasized the necessity of understanding the African 'world-view', as a considerable number of students were 'Black' and had an affinity for the Old Testament due to the kindred atmosphere and common elements in their ways of thought. Therefore world-view should be the starting point for the interpretation of the Old Testament in Africa, because it is from this vantage point that reality is interpreted (Le Roux 1987:200-201).

Professor F E Deist joined Unisa in 1977. After a period of study under Otto Kaizer at Marburg, he wrote an article on style as criterion for discerning literary sources in the Old Testament. He has written more than twenty books and contributed numerous articles to South African and international journals. His contributions to the department touch on a wide variety of subjects - on the *history of Israel* he emphasized that it should be understood from different angles, remembering that facts are only symbols of the past and not past reality itself, and therefore each reconstruction of the past is hypothetical. He gave

fresh impetus to *Pentateuchal research* in South Africa and has fresh views on the *Old Testament prophets*, and has made valuable contributions to *hermeneutics*, *textual criticism* and the *interpretation* of the Old Testament for modern society. Deist is not afraid to rethink and reformulate his ideas. He started out from a naive realism, moved into critical rationalism and then to critical realism (Le Roux 1987:202). He is convinced that the idea of timeless formulations of truth should be abandoned because every expression of truth is determined by history. Truth will always remain *eingeschränkte, historische und perspektivische Wahrheit*. The text of the Bible originated in a certain context and continues to exist in different contexts. So every interpretation of the Bible is thus determined historically. Biblical hermeneutics is the theory of a scholarly understanding of the Bible. One exegetical method can never be absolutised as the only valid way of approaching Scripture. So the Biblical context and the historico-critical method is a possible means of understanding the Bible, but the context of the exegete also influences his understanding of the text. In the early church the *regula fidei* was the touchstone for interpreting Scripture, during the middle ages it was the authority of the Pope, in Reformed circles it is the reformed confessions. All through the centuries each generation had its own *regula fidei* which determined what must function as 'Word of God' (Le Roux 1987:206).

J A Loader. This brilliant scholar with three doctorates (Semitics, UP, Old Testament, Groningen and Church History, Unisa) was a pupil of A van Selms. As an author his works reveal certain characteristics: erudition, thoroughness, control of the subject, interest in the minutest detail and a command of the Afrikaans and English languages. When Loader joined the department many expected a clash of interests to be inevitable as Loader had been using the discourse analysis method, while Deist used the historico-critical method. The clash did not materialise because both were too aware of the advantages and shortcomings of the different approaches to be lured into exclusivism (Le Roux 1987:216, 217). Like Deist, Loader's point of departure is history. Via the Dutch Old Testament scholars' 'third option' (that truth can only be experienced inwardly), Loader believes that our theological task consists of two aspects: critical analysis and interpretation. The Old Testament scholar must not only analyse his text, but also interpret it. This interpretation must be based on critical research. Loader is deeply involved in the study of the wisdom literature, for which he has received international recognition. His publications on the wisdom literature are based on a text-immanent reading of the final texts. Taking delight in the aesthetics of a text, he detects the smallest detail in the text, indicates its literary importance and determines its function (Le Roux 1987:206-209).

H L Bosman focuses his attention on Old Testament ethics and keeps himself busy with the problem of contextualising Old Testament studies in Africa, as well as with the theories of science underlying the methodologies applied by Old Testament scholars (Le Roux 1987:209).

Joan Annandale completed her basic theological studies at the University of Pretoria and then studied for several years under Otto Plöger in Bonn. Ever since she joined the department in 1970 she has been propagating the historico-critical approach to the Old Testament. Her first publication in *Theologia Evangelica* was 'What is Formgeschichte' (Annandale 1971:1-24). This caused many heated debates between her and the head of the department, Professor Eybers.

Space prohibits my going into detail on the contributions of younger members of the department like P J van Dyk, W J Wessels, J A Burger, W A G Nel, J P H Wessels, C L van W Scheepers, J G Strydom, I P G Gous, M Heyns and others who joined the department more recently. Their main contribution is yet to come. It is of the utmost importance to quote the last paragraph of Professor Le Roux's article, keeping in mind that he is now a professor at the theological faculty of the University of Pretoria: 'In this department of Old Testament are gathered a number of talented scholars whose research and educational work have made a major impact on the South African theological scene. One can foresee that the Department will continue to play a leading role in Old Testament research in this country' (Le Roux 1987:221). The strange thing is that it is exactly because of this new understanding of the Bible that some people accuse Unisa of being heretical. And it is exactly in this field that Unisa is endeavouring to keep in touch with Biblical research in the rest of the world. That they have to pay a price to achieve this, will be explained in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

In the storms

In the late seventies and early eighties the faculty must have realised the truth of Professor Lombard's adage that theology is a dangerous undertaking - especially so if that theology does not serve a particular denomination and has no theological school in which to shelter. This kind of theology, he said, will disturb people and bring down ivory towers and deprive people of their securities. And when a theology rocks the foundations of a people, it must be prepared to face hectic reaction and to be branded as heresy. I will concentrate on only three of these issues.

THE INAUGURAL LECTURE OF PROFESSOR W S VORSTER

Professor Vorster was appointed a professor at the end of 1976, and his inaugural address was delivered on 23 June 1977. He used the opportunity to describe the methodological approach he would apply in the programmes of the Institute for Theological Research. As could be expected he used terminology accessible to non-theologians. There was no reaction from his audience that evening. But a knowledgeable journalist, Rykie van Reenen, from *Rapport*, the Afrikaans Sunday paper, gave a true account of his lecture in the paper and, as is expected of a reporter, she tried to make this very technical theological discourse comprehensible to the readers of her paper. The heading given to her report was very striking: 'Read the Bible like a storybook.'

This over-simplification sounded like blasphemy to many believing Christians, who were brought up with the conviction that the Bible was the infallible Word of God. They read the newspaper report out of the theological context in which it was born. One gets the impression that many of them did not even read beyond the summary of the article, which reads:

- * We read the Bible wrongly. That is why we do not understand what this Book - the collection of old manuscripts written long ago - has to say to our modern age.
- * It is not a book with a set of rules to be consulted on issues such as whether a woman may wear slacks or should put on a hat when she goes to church, or whether you should partake in revolutionary activities or buy bonus bonds in aid of the defence force.
- * Even in sermons Bible texts are frequently applied to support the opinion of the preacher, but in such a way as if they are the Lord's opinion. Sermons can sometimes be delivered without a Biblical text.
- * It is time that we realise that it is not important whether the Bible is historically or scientifically true. It is literature and literature dealt with truth in its own particular way which differs from the method of a historical report.
- * We must read the four gospels as literature, as narratives, and read them in the same way as, say for instance, *Kennis van die aand* of André P Brink.
- * From the disciplines such as linguistics, literary science and communication we should obtain the tools to make this old, old book comprehensible and relevant for modern people.

(*Rapport*, 3 July 1977:15)

The reactions were tempestuous. There were suggestions that Vorster would become a second Du Plessis, the Stellenbosch professor of the NGK who was released from his post because of his historico-critical interpretation of the Bible. The difference, however, was that no church had any control over the theological faculty at Unisa. Professor Vorster made available to me a file of reactions to this report, reactions which can be divided into four categories:

- (i) Those of lay people and church councils who had no feeling for the problems addressed by the new hermeneutic. Here ministers could be included who never really studied this method and rejected it out of hand as modernism and theological liberalism. Most of them were pious

Christians who accepted the text of the Bible as it stands, and were not disturbed by contradictions or narratives which are difficult to accept, because they attributed this to the omnipotence of God. They read the text as a message from God, without comparing it with other parts of scripture, convinced that this is the way a reborn Christian should read the Bible. They accused Vorster of being an unconverted infidel who rejected the authority of God and of his Word. Three hundred members of one congregation signed a letter of protest and sent it to the Principal of the University. The movement 'Aksie Morele Standaard' announced that they were going to take up the battle axe.

- (ii) Those of theologians who accepted the authority of the Bible and had a hermeneutic which they firmly believed helped them to understand the message of the Bible. They saw this method as a heresy coming from Europe that endangered the religious life of the country. The New Testament scholar at the University of Potchefstroom, Professor J C Coetzee, attacked him in three consecutive editions of *Die Kerkblad* (7, 14 and 21 July 1977). He lamented the fact that it was not only necessary to protest against the rejection of the authority of Scripture in Reformed circles in the Netherlands, but now also at the theological faculty of Unisa. He exhorted Vorster in the Name of Jesus Christ, the King of the Church, to leave this disastrous road. He pointed out that the Bible leaves no alternative.

- Jesus was born from a virgin - or he was the son of a whore.
- Jesus died on the cross for our sins - or his death on the cross was the tragic end of an idealist who paid the penalty for his dreams.
- Jesus rose from the grave - or Scripture is a collection of lies and our faith of no avail.

- (iii) Those of theologians who agreed with Vorster up to a point, but felt that perhaps he went too far. Dr D J C van Wyk, the editor of *Die Hervormer*, agreed with Vorster that the Church could and should make use of other sciences to help us understand the message of the Bible. Expositors must keep in mind that the Bible was written by humans ages ago. It is very important that we should understand the Bible correctly, because our faith and our salvation require it from us. But then he made a few critical remarks, as he was convinced that there would be dangerous consequences from Vorster's lecture, which raised concern. We should not over-emphasise the role of linguistics or any auxiliary science and keep in

mind that the Bible has a divine origin as well as a human origin. Many of the abuses of the Bible pointed out by Vorster have been pointed out frequently in the past (*Die Hervormer*, October 1977).

In the same edition of *Die Hervormer*, a New Testament scholar wrote an article in which he defended Professor Vorster. Van Aarde shared Vorster's concern about the irresponsible and unscientific use of Scripture. He differed from Vorster in so far as he believed that certain facts in the Bible must be true - including the virgin birth, Jesus' life, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension to heaven.

- (iv) There was whole-hearted support and praise for Vorster's academic approach and integrity, but such reactions on file all came from some of the most outstanding Biblical scholars in Europe: Freek Klijn (Groningen), Gerard Luttikhuisen (Groningen), C J Labuschagne (Groningen), Georg Strecker (Göttingen), Wolfgang Richter (München), W C van Unnik (Utrecht), James Barr (Oxford) and A van der Woude (Groningen). An extract from Klijn's letter must suffice: 'It was a great pleasure to receive your inaugural lecture. I found it excellent. I am convinced that you have done a great service by giving an account of all the problems attached to interpretation. From your letter I understand that you aroused a cloud of dust. I hope that you were not attacked personally. Honesty and integrity always survive that kind of attack. I hope that there was some positive reaction as well.'

I was told that the Principal of the University received a letter in which he was promised a huge donation to university funds if he closed down the theological faculty. The Minister of Education, the Honourable Dr P J Koornhof, who was spending his holiday at the Natal South Coast, received a telegram from Pretoria: 'As a Christian and as a citizen of the Republic of South Africa I demand that inquiry should be made as to how it is possible for Professor Vorster of Unisa to make such statements about God's Word as were reported in *Rapport* of July 3, 1977 page 15.' The minister phoned the Principal that same night, and Vorster had to appear before the Principal the next day.

The chairman of the Committee of Senior Lecturers of the Faculty, Dr J S Krüger, arranged a symposium on 19 September 1977. Invited were all those interested in an open discussion on the inaugural lecture. In the letter of invitation it was mentioned that the lecture had evoked varying reactions, some enthusiastic, others perturbed, others negative. As Professor Vorster could not

respond to all the reactions individually, this meeting was arranged so that the matter could be discussed, criticism (positive and negative) articulated and Professor Vorster allowed to clarify his position.

After the symposium, Professor Deist released a press statement (Deist 1977:1-2) in which he summarised the proceedings. The reactions expressed at the symposium centred mainly on two issues - the comparison between the Bible and *Kennis van die aand*, and his purported statement that the virgin birth was a gynaecological impossibility. Vorster replied that he never stated that the New Testament was like *Kennis van die aand*, but only that the New Testament should be read as literature. Although the Bible is the Word of God, and the Holy Spirit must guide us in interpreting Scripture, it should still be read in a scientific way. He never rejected the virgin birth - he confessed his belief in it every Sunday in church. He also stated his concern that people reacted so vehemently to a newspaper report about his inaugural lecture, without reading the text of the lecture. He concluded by confessing that he was a Christian and a child of God - but that this did not release him from his obligation to interpret the Bible for his own generation in a scholarly way.

The Dutch Reformed Church responded according to its laws. Professor Vorster received a letter from the secretary of the classis of Lyttelton, Rev A Gerber (now a Conservative Party MP), the body which had supervision over the conduct and doctrine of Vorster because he was living within the boundaries of that classis. In this letter he stated that rumours were circulating about a deviation from sound doctrine by Vorster. These rumours had now been substantiated in writing, and Vorster was summoned to appear before the classis on Saturday 29 October 1977 according to the prescriptions of Articles 90.3 and 90.5 of the constitution of the church. The rumour was that his doctrine was not in line with the Reformed Confessions of Faith concerning the following doctrines:

- (a) the Virgin birth
- (b) the Divine origin of the Bible
- (c) that it is not important whether the historical facts of the Bible were true.

When Vorster arrived at this investigation, he was surprised to find two of his previous colleagues, Rev Christo Saayman and Professor F J Botha, acting as witnesses to his heresy. After a thorough investigation Professor Vorster declared publicly that he believed in the virgin birth, accepted the divine origin of the Bible, and believed that the basic facts of the New Testament were true. Thereby the rumour was refuted. The executive committee of the classis, in a

letter dated 30 October 1977, officially declared the rumours to be false, and requested Professor Vorster to make a public statement about his beliefs in that regard. Vorster again issued a press release, thus complying with the demands of the church.

There is no doubt that this run of events was damaging to Vorster's local image, but it also was bad publicity for the University. It must have had a negative effect on the Faculty of Theology - how much is difficult to assess. On 12 July 1977 the dean of faculty, Professor D J Bosch, received a letter from Dr R K Eyck, chairman and director of studies of the Full Gospel Church in South Africa, in which he asked for clarification on the faculty's views on Scripture. He asked whether the views expressed by Vorster were the accepted views of faculty. He needed this information for a report to the meeting of his church, and for clarity on how he should advise them on the continuation of links between his church's students and Unisa. An abstract from the dean's answer reads: Professor Vorster is a confessing Christian like you and I and he is not afraid to confess it. I would like to mention that he was never in doubt about the authority of the Bible, but that he is seeking for a meaningful use and interpretation of the Bible in our present situation. I have no doubt that there are differences of opinion between him and some of his colleagues, even at the University of South Africa. But I am convinced that these differences are of such a nature that believing Christians could discuss them in a meaningful way.

The Moderator of the Seventh Day Adventist Church, in a letter dated 5 August 1977, also expressed his concern about the tendency in the inaugural lecture that cast doubt on the authority of the Bible. If these 'concerns' really had any effect on the enrolment of students from these churches, or for that matter all the 'evangelical' churches, might be a very important subject to research.

THE TAR-AND-FEATHER EPISODE

In 1978-9 the Department of Systematic Theology paid intensive attention to the theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg. His works were prescribed and students received guidance on how to understand his theology. The same kind of action was followed by the Dogmatic Society of South Africa. Systematic theologians all over the country met periodically to discuss one of Pannenberg's books or discuss one of the themes from his theology. Eventually it was decided to hold a congress at Unisa from 28 to 30 March 1979 with a theme from Pannenberg's theology. The theme decided on was: 'The meaning of history', because Pannenberg, in his theology, distinguishes between secular and salvation history.

The dogmaticians wanted to pay attention to the interpretation of history, with possible reference to examples from South African history such as the battle of Blood River. They planned the congress to be an experiment in interdisciplinary dialogue. Specialists from different disciplines such as history, philosophy, political science, education and theology, representing different ethnic groups, were involved either as speakers or respondents.

The organisers succeeded in arranging for Pannenberg to visit South Africa and to deliver two papers at the conference. The programme looked impressive: 'A historical mirror of Blood River' (Professor F A van Jaarsveld); 'The meaning of history - probing the problem' (Professor P S Dreyer); 'Which bed for Goldilocks - an essay on values and the historian' (Professor J R H Davenport); 'On interpreting the history of Afrikaner political thinking - some problems and issues' (Dr A du Toit); 'The place of history and history teaching in our educational system' (Professor R E van der Ross); 'God in history - an unresolved problem' (Professor J J F Durand); 'The concept of God in the historical explanation. A statement on Wolfhart Pannenberg's theology of history' (Dr C M L Villa-Vicencio). Pannenberg's lectures would have been the cherry on the top at a congress that really promised to be an in-depth inquiry into a very relevant issue. To help Pannenberg in his preparation for the congress, they decided to supply him with questions that cropped up during the discussion of his books. Unfortunately some of these questions disturbed Pannenberg to such an extent that he cancelled his visit to South Africa a week or two before the congress.

The chairman of the congress, Professor A König, feared that the withdrawal of Pannenberg would cause people to lose interest in the congress. He thought it wise to 'leak' some controversial parts of Professor Floors van Jaarsveld's lecture to a Sunday newspaper in an effort to encourage people to attend. It worked like a bomb. Unfortunately some people attended whom they did not bargain on.

Sister Marie-Henry Keane was the secretary, waiting at the entrance to the Senate Hall for late registrations. She could not believe her eyes when about forty men, clad in khaki clothes, entered the building and headed for the Senate Hall. She spread her arms in front of the door, and in her most formal Irish told them: 'You may not enter. You have not registered.' For a moment they hesitated, then regained their confidence, pushed her through the swing doors and entered the hall.

At that moment Professor Van Jaarsveld was at the podium busy with his paper in which he argued that the Day of the Covenant - the Afrikaner's celebration of their victory over Dingaan's armies at Blood River on 16 December 1838 - ought not to be treated as a Sunday. He had checked the documents and discovered that the vow which is read every year is not the same as the one made by the Voortrekkers before the battle. In the original vow it was never promised the day would be celebrated as a Sabbath, as is promised in the versions read in our time. He suggested that the day should be an ordinary holiday without religious connotations. Non-Afrikaners should be allowed to do what they like on that day. Cinemas and theatres should be open and people should be allowed to take part in sport.

He was only seven minutes into his paper when he became aware of a large crowd of people coming into the hall. As a seasoned professor he thought they were late-comers to the lecture. But suddenly they grabbed him, held his arms apart and tried to force open his jacket. While they held him in a crucifixion position they splashed tar from a can and poured it into his face, and over his shirt and jacket. Eugene Terre'blanche, the leader, cracked his sjambok a few times and moved to the microphone, while some of his escorts unfurled a huge 'Vierkleur' (flag). Then he announced that he was from the Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (I think this was their very first public action), and that their actions were a protest against the vilification of Afrikaner tradition. He read out a statement that was drawn up by the 'Groot Raad' of the AWB and signed by the secretary of the movement, J J Groenewald. He left this official document on the table: It read: 'We as young Afrikaners are tired of seeing spiritual traditions and everything that is sacred to the Afrikaner desecrated and degraded by liberal politicians, dissipated academics and false prophets who hide under the mantle of learning and a false faith - just as Professor Floors van Jaarsveld now, at this symposium, attacks the sanctity of the Afrikaner in its deepest essence This standpoint draws a line through the significance of the Afrikaner's history and is blasphemous' (*Sunday Times*, 1 April 1979). While all this was happening the Principal, Professor van Wijk, who had delivered the opening address, quietly slipped out of the hall and phoned the police. When someone shouted that the police were coming the objectors moved out and went back to the Voortrekker Monument where they thanked God for the success of their mission.

The damage to the Senate Hall was in excess of R4 000 and ten members of the AWB appeared in court on charges of trespassing on Unisa property, assault with intent to do grievous bodily harm to Professor van Jaarsveld, crimen injuria for tarring and feathering Professor van Jaarsveld, and malicious damage to property. They all pleaded guilty. They admitted that they had

decided to tar and feather Professor van Jaarsveld at a gathering at the Voortrekker Monument, where they had discussed their plan of action. They were found guilty on the charges of *crimen injuria* and malicious damage to property for soiling a cement slab, a carpet, a chair, the podium and a microphone with tar. Giving evidence in mitigation, Terre'blanche said: 'The Day of the Covenant was being questioned. When a subject like this is discussed, I know it is a leftist assault.' J J Groenewald said that he had gained the impression that Professor van Jaarsveld was a historian who was moving outside his field and doubting the holiness of the Covenant. He interprets history in terms of the present and not on the grounds of mere historical facts, in order to make provision for other nationalities. He saw the symposium as an assault on the Afrikaner, because they were putting the Day of the Covenant on stage before a multi-racial audience (*The Citizen*, 27 June 1979).

The AWB men were fined R7 200 or 3 700 days' imprisonment. It is said that a rich farmer came forward and paid the fine on their behalf (*Pretoria News*, 14 May 1979).

IN POLITICAL STORMS

The Faculty of Theology takes great pride in the fact that it is an open faculty and that the only criterion for appointment of staff is academic excellence. This principle is very idealistic and not always so easy to maintain, and it has far-reaching consequences. The fact that it is teaching ecumenical theology makes it inevitable that the convictions of the members of faculty will cover the whole spectrum of political as well as theological views. The critics of the faculty often do not keep in mind that you cannot tag the pronouncements of a section of faculty to the faculty at large.

The logical consequence of this is inevitably that there will be members of staff opposed to the political policies of the government. I have mentioned that some of the NGK theologians accepted posts at Unisa because their political pronouncements made them unacceptable to the curatories of their own church. As the faculty developed, theologians from the English-speaking section of the community were appointed to the faculty. Some of them had strong anti-government convictions. A third factor to be kept in mind is the appointment of 'Black' members of staff, who, by the nature of South African politics, would see the political issues from a totally different perspective.

Then there is a purely theological factor which played a role in the theological faculty's getting involved in politics - the rise of social ethics. Ever since Kant, ethics has become a very important component of modern theology and in this century sociology has become the dominant human science. It is only natural that social ethics was to become a very important component of the theological curricula of faculty. It is no surprise to note how many articles of a socio-political nature appeared in *Theologia Evangelica* since the early seventies - 'The co-responsibility of churches for the future of society' (B O Johanson); 'Labour legitimation' (J S Kruger); 'Justification and social justice' (H Lederle); 'Theology and soot?!' (W J C Cilliers); 'Theology as a response to social change' (J S Kruger); 'The church and politics' (A König); 'Welfare and how it is measured - the concern of both church and state' (L Hulley); 'Evangelism and social transformation' (D J Bosch).

Members of faculty signed public statements with very clear political implications. One of the lecturers kindly supplied me with a list of all the statements with political overtones that he had signed: The well-known 'Ope brief' (Open letter) which 123 ministers of the NGK signed in asking for change (1982); another 'Ope brief' in support of Dr C Villa-Vicencio (1982) - we will go into this in detail; a press release in reaction to the refusal of the church council of the NGK congregation Universiteitsoord, to make their communion glasses available for a eucharist in which 'Black' Christians would participate (1983); the Kairos document (1985); an open letter to voters not to participate in the municipal elections of 1987; The Road to Damascus (1989) and a letter of protest to the Principal because of his remarks on and handling of the bus boycott (1989).

For many people it is a puzzling question why some theologians are always in the vanguard of everything that smells of politics. They feel that theologians should keep themselves busy with spiritual matters and leave politics to the politicians. Is that a sound judgement? Has Christ nothing to say about our earthly existence?

The events surrounding the promotion of Dr C Villa-Vicencio are a very good example of theologians' involvement in politics. Before he joined the staff of Unisa, Charles Villa-Vicencio served several congregations of the Methodist Church and then proceeded to the United States where he earned a PhD at Drew University. Then he was the Superintendent Minister of the Inner City Mission in Cape Town. There he had to minister to people who suffered

under the apartheid laws. Shortly before he joined Unisa, he published a booklet, *The theology of apartheid*, in which he gave a historico-critical account of the development of the theology that had backed up the apartheid policy of the government. He wrote:

Unless we have gone out of our minds, we as a people of this land will begin to put wrong right. Whatever fantasies some white South Africans may have about being God's chosen, it is well to remember His wrath was not compromised against his chosen but disobedient people Israel, nor against the Holy City of Jerusalem (Amos 2:4ff; Isaiah 1:10-20; Jeremiah 5:20-29) nor will it be compromised against us (Luke 12:4-5). To defend an immoral policy that arbitrarily inflicts suffering on people because of the colour of their skins is a rebellion against God.

(Villa-Vicencio 1977:24)

In 1979 the head of his department recommended to the Executive Committee of Senate that he be granted a three-notch increase in his salary. His publications were mentioned as part of the motivation. I mention the list of publications, because all of them were of an anti-government political character: *The theology of apartheid*; *Theology and politics in South Africa*; *Theologized nationalism*; *The Babylonian captivity of the Church* and *Is the ghost of Cottesloe still with us?* The increase was granted (Minutes of the E C of Senate 1979:3319). In 1980 the selection committee for Systematic Theology, Theological Ethics and Practical Theology unanimously recommended that Dr H J C Pieterse (Practical Theology) and Dr C Villa-Vicencio (Theological Ethics) be promoted to associate professorships. The Executive Committee of Senate recommended accordingly (Minutes of the E C of Senate 1980:2519). At the September meeting of Council it was decided that the promotions in this department be carried over to the agenda of the November meeting (Minutes of Council 1980:1120).

At the November meeting Council resolved:

1. That the promotion and appointment of senior staff in this department be held over until 1981.
2. That vacancies again be advertised and applications awaited.
3. That applications considered during 1980 be reconsidered in 1981.

4. That in the case where staff, who qualified for promotion during 1980, are promoted during 1981, the possible leeway in salary be taken into consideration.

(Minutes of Council 1980:1400)

At the first meeting of Council in February 1981 the matter was raised again and Council resolved that a committee be appointed 'to go into all the aspects of the situation and report back to Council'. The committee consisted of the Principal (convenor), Drs A J Koen, P M Robbertse, E F Potgieter and Professor Marinus Wiechers (Minutes of Council, 25 February 1981). At the next meeting it was decided that Professor M Wiechers should 'remain a member of the committee after 31 May 1981' - probably because his term of service as representative of Senate expired on that date (Minutes of Council, 1 April 1981).

On the 3 June 1981 it was decided unanimously that:

1. Dr H J C Pieterse be promoted to associate professor, effective from 1 October 1980, with the normal adjustments.
2. Dr C Villa-Vicencio be promoted to associate professor on 1 July 1981 with the normal adjustments.

(Minutes of Council: 3 June 1981)

All I could deduce from the minutes of Council was that the problem revolved round Dr Villa-Vicencio - nothing more! I had to turn to the newspaper clippings in the archives to reconstruct (their version of) the story: According to the newspaper reports the root of all evil was a statement made by Villa-Vicencio on one of the most sensitive issues in South African politics - support for the Programme to Combat Racism (PCR). He had attended a WCC consultation on racism in the Netherlands as a delegate of the SA Council of Churches. In an interview with *Elsevier*, the Dutch weekly, he ascribed the grants by PCR of the WCC to Swapo as 'a gesture of brotherly solidarity'. He stated that the money was to be used for humanitarian purposes. He was attacked for this in editorials and reports in some of the pro-government newspapers. He replied that the SACC did not justify violence, that Christians had to express love and help to people 'caught on both sides of the struggle, that the SACC delegation had abstained from voting, and that he opposed violence. It was on this issue that 'the Broederbond-backed establishment on the council was opposed to his promotion' (*Ecunews* 1981:7).

The council referred the issue back to the selection committee who stood by their recommendation unanimously, and the executive committee of faculty confronted the Principal and demanded that he state unequivocally whether Unisa was a free and open multi-racial institution, or whether it remained an Afrikaner Nationalist-dominated institution (Ecunews 1981:7). The Principal then raised another reason for the council's decision - break in the confidentiality of the matter. While this issue was still under discussion, he received a letter from Rev Cyril Wilkens, the general secretary of the Methodist Church of South Africa, in which he mentioned the use made by his church of Unisa's Faculty of Divinity in the training of ministers, and how pleased he was to hear of Dr Villa-Vicencio's promotion. The Principal saw this as a leak of confidential information and an attempt to influence the University's decision when considering the matter (*Sunday Times*, 7 December 1980). When Council finally gave way, it was described as 'a victory for academic freedom at the University' (*The Star*, 24 July 1981).

It is difficult to assess all the complications of this confrontation. It sparked off a worsening relationship between the Principal and the senior members of the theological faculty (Ecunews 1981:7) which lasted quite a few years and most probably did not enhance the position of faculty in the hierarchy of the University. I suppose one could draw the conclusion that this row did the image of the University in some quarters no good either, and must have had an effect on the fund-raising efforts of the Department of Development.

CHAPTER 6

Towards the new South Africa

After thirty years of existence the Faculty of Theology at Unisa can look back on some remarkable achievements. Although it is the smallest faculty in the University, it is the largest theological faculty in the country. It consists of 123 members of staff of whom 78 are in permanent posts and 45 are temporary members of staff. In 1989 it had no fewer than 1 268 students enrolled for one or more of the theological subjects - mostly Biblical Studies. Of these students 999 were busy with their first degree in theology. Four students were busy with their BD degree on postgraduate level. There were no fewer than 285 post-graduate students of whom 96 were busy with honours, 69 with master's and 120 with doctoral degrees.

Up until 1989 the University of South Africa had conferred 36 lower diplomas in theology, 561 BTh degrees, 237 honours, 22 BD, 74 master's and 100 doctoral degrees. The staff have not only pulled their weight in their tutorial duties, but they have also excelled in research. No less than 19,9% of the articles published by Unisa members of staff in recognised magazines during the past few years have come from the pens (and word-processors) of members of

the theological faculty. The university recognised excellence of service by awarding special merit status to 16 of its senior professors last year, and of them no fewer than four were professors in theology. If I may say so, at least four of the others must have come close to being recognised as well.

This is indeed a well-equipped team to face the challenges of the future. But although staff excellence is a blessing under normal circumstances, the present economic crisis aggravates what I would call the not uncommon tension caused by the academic and natural 'generation gap'. Many of the highly qualified young lecturers are experiencing a severe economic squeeze. Most of them are at the age when family life puts high demands on young parents. Many of them wisely bought their own homes when money was freely available and interest rates low. The sharp rise in interest rates on home loans today causes great anxiety and unbearable economic pressure. What can they do to make ends meet? The harder they work to improve their qualifications and the more they plead for some financial relief, the greater become their frustrations. A reported remark by one of the senior members of the Cabinet to the effect that Unisa staff do not deserve a pay rise because they only work half a day (office hours are from 7:45 till 13:00 on weekdays) did not improve the situation. How on earth they ask, can he be ignorant of all the hours of toil put in at home during afternoons and evenings? With the subsidy system applied to universities, very little can be done by the university authorities themselves to alleviate their plight. The only way out is promotion, but most senior colleagues are a decade or more away from retirement. It is under this kind of circumstance that 'unnatural' tensions develop in a faculty.

The future holds another form of uncertainty. There is no ecclesiastical 'conveyer-belt' that keeps on supplying students to the faculty. Students who enrol at Unisa do so out of their own choice. How this happens, why they prefer to study at Unisa and who they are, needs some serious research. Our dean, Professor Burden, and Mrs Millard of the Department of Church History did some exploratory research on the students of Biblical Studies and Church History respectively, which will be published in due course. I gratefully make use of some of their research findings:

The survey of the 1989 student body in the Department of Church History produced the following statistics:

Course	Registered	Male	Female	White	Black	Coloured	Asian	Wrote exams
KGA100-K	144	108	36	84	41	14	5	85
KGA200-N	40	38	2	18	14	5	3	29
KGB200-S	25	22	3	10	10	3	2	16
KGA301-S	32	30	2	22	5	4	1	19
KGA302-T	31	29	2	21	5	4	1	16
KGB301-W	17	15	2	11	3	2	1	10
KGB302-X	16	14	2	11	3	1	1	8
<i>Total</i>	305	256	49	177	81	33	14	183

Of these students 34 first-year students, 21 second-years and 19 third-years gave their occupation as 'religious worker'. There were also 20 first-year, five second-year and four third-year students who were teachers.

Professor Burden found that in 1986 men made up 47,8% and women 52,2% of the enrolment for Biblical Studies, while in 1987 the percentages were 49,5% and 50,5% respectively. Religious workers constituted 2,9% of the enrolment in 1986 and 3,3% in 1987. Teachers have by far the largest representation in this department, making up 71,8% of the numbers in 1986 and 69,7% in 1987.

This is a very superficial insight into our 'market'. What does the future hold for this faculty? The words of Professor Lombard were never more true than today. Our faculty's future depends so much on the way we analyse our situation as well as the future. On 27 September 1989 the faculty held a symposium in which departments had to answer the question of their own relevance. From what was said there, or told by heads of departments, or written elsewhere, I have tried to compile a synopsis of how the different departments see the future and what they are doing to comply with future demands:

The departments of Old and New Testament. I was told by members of these departments that the article by W S Vorster (1987:374-394) gives a very good indication of the position of these two departments. Both departments are moving towards a post-critical stage in which the holistic paradigm will be

dominant. The Biblical sciences are aware that 'facts' are theory-dependent. There are no literary facts - they all exist within interpretive frameworks (paradigms) that change through the centuries.

The emphasis has shifted from the author and his circumstances to the text and the reader. The text is viewed as a holistic object and a system of signs in a communication process. The text thus obtains an epistemic status, and therefore the epistemology of the two testaments falls into structuralistic, narrative and rhetorical interpretations. On the other hand the reception theories prove beyond doubt the subjective character of our interpretation of the Bible. There is interaction between the reader and the text, which explains why no consensus could be reached on the interpretation of certain texts. It is an open question whether the reception theory will not even enlarge this tendency. It is clear that great changes are taking place, which will effect Biblical sciences fundamentally. Vorster believes that they are moving away from the historico-critical paradigm but are as yet still in a pre-paradigm stage in which the holistic approach is playing a major role. These sciences might end up in a post-industrialised concept of reality.

Missiology believes that its relevance lies in the concept *contextualisation*, where all the urgent issues of human development and justice are brought into discussion. To put contextual missiology into practice, three aspects of the utmost importance are:

- * A clear understanding of history so that conscientisation can take place and the liberating aspect can be introduced;
- * A continual movement between action and reflection;
- * A continual movement between text and context.

All this is possible only after a thorough analysis of society is made. In this respect other social sciences can make a valuable contribution, but missiologists must do their own empirical research to enable them to make their own analysis. Missiology must also be in constant but critical dialogue with missiologists elsewhere. This we can call the ecumenical dimension, because we need the input of the rest of the ecumene. Lastly, the incarnational character of the gospel must drive us to an involvement in the lives of people and a commitment in situations of conflict.

Systematic Theology, says the head of the department, applies the loci system by which the separate doctrines are studied in the traditional sequence. But they make a point of contextualising each and every doctrine, pointing out what the consequences are for our situation in South Africa. Inevitably this 'applied' theology brought every member of the department into an involvement in the 'struggle' in the country, which makes them play the role of prophets to many, but false prophets to others.

Science of Religion will be concentrating on stimulating the kind of theological thinking necessary in the new and free society into which we are moving and will endeavour to supply a metaphysical framework in cooperation with the rest of the Faculty of Theology. What will be the religious epistemology in the new South Africa? Science of Religion does not see it as its task to supply the answer but will supply only the non-exclusive style that will widen the horizons of students and help them to learn something from other religions. The department will endeavour to discover Africa religiously - African religion was never taken seriously - and to bring the wisdom of the West into dialogue with Africa and the East.

Theological Ethics has three basic goals. Firstly, the student is encouraged to develop an open, critical and inquiring mind. Secondly, this department will impart certain information regarding ethical issues which are examined and discussed in the courses. Finally, students are helped to develop particular skills to exercise ethics, using resources such as the Bible, ethical theories (both theological and philosophical) and the approaches of various individual ethicists. The objective is to enable students to function independently as ethicists.

Practical Theology's point of departure is the probing question: Is this discipline a science in its own right, with its own methodology, in which problems in its own field of study are solved in its own particular way, or is it nothing more than applied New Testament studies or applied Dogmatics? Over and against the traditional approach to practical theology, which probes the theological aspect, and which this department accepts, it makes room for empirical research on the communication process of the coming of God through His Word (Fiet). The staff believe that not only is the knowledge of God theology, but also the event through which God is known. Practical Theology studies the actions of intermediators who are destroying the *discommunication* between God and humanity. In these courses attention is

paid to the theological point of departure - the communicative processes by which God comes into and changes the lives of persons. Secondly, the basic ecclesiastical theories on communication are studied - their anthropologies and their views on communal life, etc. Thirdly, attention is given to different theories of how this communication takes place. Here students study theories on preaching, on liturgy, on the caring of the flock, etc. Then they create new models to communicate the reality of the Kingdom to our age as well as the age to come (Pieterse 1981:142-156).

Church History. The main objective of this department is to describe the history of the church from an ecumenical perspective. In the field of South African Church History this called for a pioneer spirit. At the conference Professor Pillay pointed out that relevance should be seen in a wider perspective than the demands of economics, and social and political principles. Knowledge has an intrinsic value, deepening self-awareness and self-understanding. The insights of theology in general, and Church History in particular, are indispensable to society. By being critical we can preserve the integrity of our goals and engender Christian self-understanding. The church historian faces the problem of how to exegete historical traditions and to demystify our historical heritage, and in doing this, has to overcome the problems of selectivity and perspective propagation. Theology must always be contextualisation - we must place our own context in continual dialogue with the Bible. The church historian must supply the history of that dialogue over the past two thousand years, and like a psychoanalyst unfold layer upon layer of beliefs, memories, phobias, unfulfilled wishes, fantasies, etc. He must also bring the different contextual perspectives into dialogue, enhancing the dialogue text-context, which will happen continually in the South Africa of the next century.

CONCLUSION

In the Faculty of Theology at Unisa it is not a denomination or a curatory or the dean that determines the course and content of the theology taught, but the separate departments. Naturally the head of department plays a key role. After reading the aims and goals of the various departments, one thing stands out loud and clear: *Unisa has no theology, they are only doing theology*. From outside its reports may seem like reports of the World Council of Churches - more or less every perspective is raised. There is no unanimity but continual dialogue - *Quot homines tot sententiae!*

Never were Professor Lombard's words more true:

The theology of Unisa is called to stand in the university amongst all other sciences, exposed and vulnerable, because it does not apply the general apriories and categories - because then we will have to return to the theology of the nineteenth century. We must continue to do our work modestly, not to rule but to serve ... a precarious undertaking. It is dangerous because it finds its real essence in becoming redundant. And yet it is a beautiful science - the most beautiful of them all, effusing itself and going up in the lumen gloriae.

(Lombard 1960:53)

One would wish this to be the ultimate future of this faculty!

List of members of faculty, (temporary and permanent), 1990

DEPARTMENT OF OLD TESTAMENT

Prof J A Loader
Dr J Annandale
Mr D Barnard
Mr W S Boshoff
Prof H L Bosman
Prof J J Burden
Dr J A Burger
Prof F E Deist
Dr I G P Gous
Dr M Heyns
Mrs F Klopper
Mrs R Nel

Mr W A G Nel
Mrs A Pieters
Mrs M Rootman
Dr C L v W Scheepers
Dr E H Scheffler
Mr G Snyman
Dr I J J Spangenberg
Dr J G Strydom
Mrs F van der Spek
Prof P J van Dyk
Dr S W van Heerden
Mnr J P H Wessels
Prof W J Wessels

DEPARTMENT OF NEW TESTAMENT

Prof E A C Pretorius
Mr P R Bosman
Mr J E Botha
Mr P J J Botha

Mr C R le Roux
Prof H A Lombard
Mr W H Oliver
Prof J H Roberts

Mr P F Craffert
Ds J C de Klerk
Prof I J du Plessis
Dr J Engelberecht
Mr P J Gräbe
Prof P J Hartin
Mrs M M Jacobs
Mrs C E T Kourie
Dr H R Lemmer

Mr C W Schnell
Dr W A Sebothoma
Mr G J Steyn
Mr J Steyn
Mr G A van den Heever
Mrs J M Viljoen
Mr J N Vorster
Mrs H J Winter

INSTITUTE FOR THEOLOGICAL RESEARCH

Prof W S Vorster
Mrs L Bedingfield
Mrs J M C Fouché
Mrs J Kilian
Mrs N Muir
Prof F A Swanepoel
Mrs P van der Merwe
Mrs I Victor
Rev A H Anderson
Mr J A C Bosman
Mr A S Combrinck
Mr J H Conradie

Mr M C Gerber
Mr J P T Koen
Mr J Liebenberg
Mr F A Meyer
Mrs J M Nel
Mrs M D Robbertze
Miss J H Rykheer
Mrs H Schoeman
Mr H Schoombie
Mrs G Theron
Mr J Trollip
Mr I A van Tonder

DEPARTMENT OF SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY AND THEOLOGICAL ETHICS

Prof A König
Mr A Blom
Mrs A Cronje
Dr C W du Toit
Rev S Fourie
Prof L D Hulley
Prof M-H Keane
Prof H I Lederle

Prof S S Maimela
Dr T Mofokeng
Rev Z Mokgoebo
Rev I E Nghatsane
Ds D Olivier
Mrs M Opperman
Ds J F van Heerden
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DEPARTMENT OF PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

Prof J A Wolfaardt
Prof J T de Jongh van Arkel
Dr J S Dreyer
Ds J J Gerber
Rev M Hestenes
Prof L M Heyns

Prof H J C Pieterse
Ds G J le Roux
Dr E Tema
Dr J P J Theron
Mev D van Eeden
Dr A G van Wyk

DEPARTMENT OF CHURCH HISTORY

Prof C J Botha
Prof J W Hofmeyr
Prof G J Pillay
Dr C Landman

Dr G Frank
Mrs J Millard
Mrs A Smit

DEPARTMENT OF MISSIOLOGY

Prof D J Bosch
Rev D Balia
Dr N Botha
Prof M L Daneel
Mr A G S Gous

Mr S T W Hayes
Dr J N J Kritzinger
Prof W A Saayman
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Mrs M Willemse

DEPARTMENT OF SCIENCE OF RELIGION

Prof J S Krüger
Mrs D M Eicker
Mr D P Goosen
Miss G Kooverjee

Prof C du P le Roux
Ds G J A Lubbe
Mrs H C Steyn
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SECRETARY OF FACULTY

Mrs M Robinson

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Prof P R van Dyk

SUBJECT LIBRARIANS

Ms M Strassner
Ms C Zeelie

Ms E Burger
Ms S Botha

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