

Ecodomy as education in tertiary institutions. Teaching theology and religion in a globalised world: African perspectives

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On 29 July 2017, an international colloquium entitled 'Re-Imagining Curricula for a Just University in a Vibrant Democracy – Carrying the Conversation Forward' was held at the Faculty of Theology, University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa. A wide range of scholars from African and non-African countries provided variegated perspectives on how tertiary theological and religious education could contribute positively to the development of contemporary societies – African and non-African. This article focuses on the colloquium's African contributors by means of the concept of ecodomy, envisaged as a constructive process. Whilst the attending academics came from Europe, the USA, South Africa and Ghana, this article takes into consideration only the contributions provided by African scholars. The purpose of this selection is to identify ecodomic or constructive ways to argue in favour of university education in the fields of theology and religion which share the potential to be applied across the whole African continent. Bearing in mind that Africa has been dealing with decolonisation awhile, these African contributions investigate issues such as contextualisation, science, practice, illumination and holism from the governing principle of decolonisation, which is also the overarching societal umbrella for academic development in Africa. This study concludes with an assessment and a proposal written from an exclusively South African vantage point which demonstrates the viability of tertiary theological and religious education for the ongoing ecodomic development of African societies.

Keywords: Education; Ecodomy; University; Theology; Religion; Constructive; Africa.

Introduction

'Re-Imagining Curricula for a Just University in a Vibrant Democracy – Carrying the Conversation Forward' was a vital event for tertiary theological and religious education. Thus, on 29 July 2017, scholars from all over the world, African and non-African, demonstrated that theology and religion could be extremely important when and if taught in universities and other institutions of higher learning. The Faculty of Theology at the University of Pretoria (the oldest of its kind in South Africa) celebrated its centennial in 1917, and this colloquium epitomised its slogan of 'Gateway to ...' and its emphasis on an open and inclusive faculty. Even a doyen like Moltmann (2019) acknowledged this approach when he wrote the following in one of his latest publications:

Ich sehe, wie überall in der weltweiten Christenheit eine umfassende Theologie des Lebens entsteht: Papst Franziskus hat der katholische Theologie den Weg gewiesen mit den Enzykliken 'Gaudium Evangelii' und 'Laudatio si'. In der reformierten Theologie ist in Korea eine OHN-Theologie entstanden und in Südafrika entsteht eine 'Oopmaak' – (Gateway-) Theologie, eine Öffnungstheologie. [I see how a comprehensive theology of life arises everywhere in worldwide Christianity: Pope Francis has shown the way to Catholic theology with the encyclicals 'Gaudium Evangelii' and 'Laudato si'. In the reformed theology, an OHN theology developed in Korea and in South Africa an 'Oopmaak' (gateway) theology, an opening theology, emerged.] (p. 44; [author's own translation])

This article investigates the specific African contributions to the colloquium based on the idea of ecodomy, the main research theme of the Faculty of Theology and Religion within the University of Pretoria. Anchored in Müller-Fahrenholz's (1995:109) understanding of ecodomy as a constructive process, the investigation of African contributions to the Pretoria colloquium aims at seeing how teaching theology and religion in tertiary educational institutions could contribute to the development of a special community spirit, a key ingredient of social growth.

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(Buitendag 2019) explains the appropriateness of the theme as follows:

In 2014, I introduced the concept of *ecodomy* to the Faculty, and it was accepted as the overarching Faculty Research Theme (FRT) for the decade to follow. I encountered this concept for the first time in a publication of the World Council of Churches (Muller-Fahrenheit 1995). He addresses the current world crises with regard to ecological and social disequilibria. We need new visions for 'household politics' (*oikodomia*) on the one hand and a reinterpretation of the traditional 'aliens in a foreign land' (*paroikia*) on the other hand. The constructive and immanent thrust of *ecodomical* communities must incorporate the element of critical non-conformity. (p. 7)

As a spinoff of 'Teaching Theology at African Public Universities as Decolonization through Education and Contextualization', authored by Buitendag and Simuť (2017),¹ this current article attempts to move beyond decolonisation towards the investigation of its outcomes, such as the actual development of society. The article intends to demonstrate the thesis that the study of theology and religion in university settings could simultaneously be an active contributor to the progress of African societies in general by eliminating long-lasting problems such as oppression and its pervasive presence in local African contexts. This is a ramification of what Buitendag and Simuť (2017) envisages in a recent article.

Theology and contextualisation

In fighting oppression in all its forms of theoretical and practical manifestations by teaching a wide range of subjects, and thus including theology and religion, Snyman (2017), professor at the University of The Free State in Bloemfontein, South Africa, underscores the crucial role of history. According to him, teaching theology and religion in tertiary education institutions cannot be carried out effectively without a proper knowledge and understanding of history, because history provides perspectives and perspectives shape contexts. If this is true, and Snyman is correct, then history is capable of contributing to the development of society in general and also to the development of African societies in particular. In order to prove his point, Snyman builds on the Marxist conviction that human beings are a 'product of history', a notion explained by Fromm (2013:24) in terms of human creativity. Concretely, human beings are inextricably connected to the natural world and also to the temporal existence of material reality, which means that human beings cannot detach themselves from history. The reality of all human beings is determined by their existence within the complex developments of history, so history in its entirety – with positives and negatives – must be known, for university education should make an ecodomic difference in the world. That is why Snyman (2017:63) insists that the human being is a 'product of history'; without a proper knowledge of history which could be conducted effectively

1.A book, *Ecodomy – Life in its Fullness*, was subsequently published by some members of the faculty offering a coherent and conceptual portrayal of aspects regarding ecodomy (see Human 2017). This was based on an international conference in September 2014 at the Faculty of Theology, University of Pretoria, Pretoria.

by university teaching, there is no real development and progress.

According to Snyman (2017), history reveals not only a certain chronology but also the action of politics; in the case of the African continent, the proper knowledge of history leads to an equally proper knowledge of the problems which have afflicted the continent, such as the apartheid. Because the African continent has been involved in decades of various decolonisation attempts in dealing with its colonial past, it is imperative that universities, and especially public universities, make sure that decolonisation is performed in ways which serve African societies. Thus, Snyman proposes that decolonisation should be performed from the standpoint of African societies. Decolonisation must serve and help African societies, and whilst this may or may not mean a certain degree of de-westernisation and de-Europeanisation, it is clear that any decolonisation effort must be initiated and carried out by the local African people. According to Snyman (2017:62), in essence, this is decolonisation based on contextualisation: African societies must decide for themselves whether decolonisation should be carried out by accepting or rejecting western or European values, or whether the whole process should be implemented in different terms. Regardless of which way forward is accepted, decolonisation itself cannot be carried without the assistance of universities, which can ecodomically serve local communities in virtually any respect: Scientific, economic, social or else.

When it comes to theology and religion, Snyman (2017:62) admits that Africa's connection with Europe and the west in this respect – many Africans are Christians – may be a problem, but this is not an indication that this connection is indeed a problem. Africans must decide for themselves whether or not decolonisation includes or excludes such non-African connections and values, because this decision – the very essence of contextualisation – is the only way which could lead to a truly ecodomic development of African societies and, by extension, of any other human society for that matter.

Theology and science

Whilst contextualisation is a crucial effort to adapt various solutions to particular societies, especially in Africa where the process of decolonisation is a specific issue, ecodomic effects with visible impact within societies in general may not become real unless universities broaden the influence of theology and religion within their teaching and research curricula. This perspective was proposed by Mante (2017:31), professor at Trinity Theological Seminary in Accra, Ghana, who began his argument in favour of the teaching of theology and religion in universities from the conviction that real life – and all life for that matter – is 'seriously religious'. Distancing himself from any western attempt to support secularisation in higher education and life, in general, Mante postulates that secularisation itself is a 'metaphysical assumption' and consequently neither a natural and

progressive movement within history and society, nor a necessary condition for human progress. Mante is aware that human beings have always been in search of some sort of 'proof' – regardless of whether this was scientific or not – but proof itself is not necessarily and certainly not always scientific. Mante (2017:31–32) argues that not all human beings are by necessity compelled to look for scientific proof in their lives; some, and possibly more than expected, may be in search of the sort of proof, which is provided by theology and religion, as argued by Overbeck ([1873] 2002:76), one of Friedrich Nietzsche's closest friends, towards the end of the 19th century.

In other words, scientific proofs based on secular or secularising methods do not necessarily provide objective and implicitly helpful results for all the members of a certain society. For Mante (2017:32), religious answers are equally, if not, more effective in assisting ecodomically the progress and development of human societies in Africa or elsewhere. Nevertheless, because in the western world the influence of secularisation prompted universities to divorce theology and religion from natural and social sciences with the rather logical result that theology and religion were taught separately from any such scientific field of inquiry, Mante has a radically different approach. As all life is 'seriously religious', what he proposes is that universities should seriously consider putting social and natural sciences back together with theology and religion. In more concrete terms, any university – secular or confessional, public or private – should make sure that they no longer entertain the 'idea of ghettoizing religion into some private sphere' but teach theology and religion together with social and natural sciences (Mante 2017:34).

The implication of this point of view is that, for example, a student of chemistry should also take classes in theology and religion if he or she is really concerned to benefit from a wider, more encompassing, and positively broad perspective on human existence. If this works for a certain person, it should work for an entire society, so the liberation of theology and religion into the wider spectrum of university sciences is the only truly ecodomic way to provide students with solid academic training. To be sure, Mante (2017:36) does not advocate the prioritisation of theology and religion over natural and social sciences or what he calls 'the pontification of a particular religion'. On the contrary, what he defends is the reconsideration of both categories of sciences – theology and religion, on the one hand, and social and natural sciences on the other – in light of their equally ecodomic or constructive potential for the development of genuinely pluralistic human societies in Africa and across the globe.

Theology and practice

Having established that in order for theology and religion to work ecodomically in the world, they must be taught as a science amongst sciences, or as a humanistic science amongst other humanistic, social and natural sciences; nevertheless, whilst this is a theoretical endeavour, the very next step to

ensure that theology and religion do contribute ecodomically to the development of a society is to make sure that their theoretical teaching in the academic settings of universities is coupled with their practical involvement in all aspects of any human society. This idea is promoted by Bosman (2007), professor at the University of Stellenbosch in South Africa, who advocates the necessity that theology and religion be practically involved in all the facets of human society. In other words, as Bosman (2017:10) suggests, theology and religion should pervade – in a practical way – the economic, social, political, environmental, intellectual and legal life of society if they are indeed to bring an ecodomic or constructive contribution to the development of human beings throughout the world.

The effectiveness of the involvement of theology and religion in the practical life of men and women in a society does not 'just' work; they need to be defined according to certain criteria if they are indeed to be ecodomically functional and practically effective. That is why Bosman (2017) suggests that theology and religion can indeed work in a society in a practical way if they are conceived in terms of rationality, pedagogy and ethos – these are, according to Bosman (2017:11), the three fundamental criteria which must define theology and religion if they are to work practically in a society. Defined as rationality, theology and religion must find ever new methods to practically apply human reason in key domains of human action and predominantly in hermeneutics, assessment and action. Contemporary societies need to understand that theology and religion are vital for the development of society not only because they help people interpret human life and the value of human existence, but they also provide men and women with ways to evaluate the dynamics of whatever happens in the world. If what Bosman (2017) says is true, then it means that McClendon (2002:38) is correct when he argues that theology and religion should never be treated exclusively as a theoretical discipline taught in tertiary education institutions, but should, in fact, be accepted and promoted as a practical *métier*, a genuine vocation which works like any other job with concrete ecodomic or constructive results.

The practical value of theology and religion as rationality is given by their capacity to interpret what happens in the world, then evaluate the complexity of world events and finally assist men and women in taking responsible decision for the improvement of individual and communitarian life in the world. When defined as pedagogy, theology and religion must work practically in serving all human beings across the globe, and in doing so, they must detach themselves from serving ideologies of any sort – political or otherwise. The ecodomic goal of theology and religion is also pursued when they are implemented practically as ethos because in this capacity, as Bosman makes clear, theology and religion must be involved in tackling the highly complex and extremely sensitive issues of 'class, gender, and race'. In doing so, however, theology and religion can reach their ecodomic potential only if they are put into practice in ways which exclude 'ideologized prejudice' of any sort (Bosman 2017:12).

Theology and illumination

It should be clear by now that theology and religion are not just academic disciplines or practical manifestations of human religiosity. In fact, theology and religion are much more than this: They are instruments of world transformation beyond any possible boundaries. Meylahn (2017), professor at the University of Pretoria in South Africa, uses two very appropriate metaphors in describing the ecodomic role of theology and religion in transforming the world by proper interpretation and practical involvement in the complex issues of human societies. Meylahn's (2017:37) metaphors are those of light and logos; as such, theology and religion are the light or logos which have the capacity to 'illuminate' the whole world. Whilst it is clear, as Harink (2009:158) points out, that the metaphors of light and logos are borrowed by Meylahn from the very core of Christian dogmatic theology with reference to the transfiguration of Jesus Christ, Meylahn's intention is not to restrict his explanation to the tenets of Christian religion.

On the contrary, what Meylahn (2017) attempts to achieve by using the metaphors of light and logos is to move beyond Christianity into the realm of all world religions. As such, Meylahn is interested in presenting theology and religion as instruments which can help human beings see the world from different angles, so that they can explain how and why men and women should perceive the world in literally 'a new light'. The process whereby one can see the world in a new light begins at the university, where theology and religion should be taught in such a way that they provide inspiration and innovation. Meylahn (2017:38), however, warns that this particular approach to theology and religion in tertiary education could be achieved exclusively in 'just universities' which can work properly only if they are allowed to exist as such in 'vibrant democracies'. It is only in such democratic contexts that theology and religion could truly achieve their ecodomic or constructive potential when taught in the institutions of higher education. Meylahn's next step is to make sure that the world is an extremely complex reality characterised primarily by an incredible diversity, so the world is made up of smaller worlds. Teaching theology and religion in tertiary education institutions must take this reality into full account, and hence, theology and religion must be taught based on a university curriculum capable of creating 'spaces for different worlds' (Meylahn 2017:38).

Thus, teaching theology and religion ecodomically means promoting an unrestrictive, critical and multi-cultural way of thinking. This particular approach to theology and religion should always be based on an epistemology that is constantly open to the multi-layered realities of the world with the specific intent to create equality for all people in all societies. According to Meylahn (2017:39), the teaching of theology and religion in tertiary education illuminates the world, and in doing so, they work ecodomically whenever they create an environment which allows for everybody to be treated equally, openly and justly irrespective of where they live

across the globe in what he identifies as 'multi-cultural' and 'multiple-world contexts'.

Theology and holism

At this point, however, things become a bit more complex because the actual study as well as the teaching of theology and religion leads to various interpretations of all aspects pertaining to (1) theology and (2) religion. In the 21st century, as a result of many intellectual influences exerted over centuries of earnest inquiries and research, the tenets of (any) theology and (any) religion could be interpreted in at least two ways, traditional and non-traditional, or in terms which allow for the existence of God as an ontologically real and personal being or in terms which present God as a mere concept in one's mind (or even as absent altogether). Because these interpretations are conflictual, how could theology and religion achieve their ecodomic or constructive purpose? Simuț (2017:56), senior vice-chancellor postdoctoral research fellow at the University of Pretoria in South Africa, suggests that the conflictual nature of traditional and non-traditional interpretations of (1) theology and (2) religion are not a problem for as long as both hermeneutical approaches to theology and religion are taught holistically in public universities.

Whenever (1) theology and (2) religion are being studied as sciences, various methodologies based on predominantly rational approaches to all theologies and religions are used for the research of their constitutive doctrines and practices to the point that traditional interpretations are perceived as less or even non-scientific, whilst non-traditional understandings are seen as more modernistic and scientific. This dichotomy, Simuț (2017) warns, leads not only to different approaches in teaching theology and religion but also, in many institutions of higher education, to the exclusion of one or the other from the curricula. Thus, more traditional institutions of tertiary learning tend to avoid modernistic approaches to theology and religion, whilst more non-traditional schools are happy to exclude traditional views from their curricula. The result is what Simuț calls the 'pigeonholing of theology', a phenomenon which has disastrous consequences on the educational process and also has the potential to cancel the ecodomic nature of both theology and religion. Despite this grim perspective, however, Simuț (2017:57) is convinced that there is a viable solution which could not only maintain but also boost the ecodomic potential of theology and religion: As pigeonholing theology ends in providing students with selective information, theology and religion should be taught holistically in all their complexity, traditional and non-traditional, so that students should benefit from the whole experience of learning the entire spectrum of doctrine and practice in theology and religion.

When theology and religion are being taught in a holistic manner, which includes both traditionalism and non-traditionalism, both classical and secular approaches to

doctrine and practice, these could and would achieve their economic potential. Whilst such an integrative approach may be a bit more difficult to achieve in confessional schools, it is a must in public universities where there should be no 'shifts' from 'liberalism to traditionalism' and the other way around, as recommended by Vainio ([2010] 2016:1). Simut (2017:57) is most emphatic when he suggests that public universities must always provide students with all available information pertaining to the academic study of theology and religion, traditional and non-traditional, because this is the only way to make sure that theology and religion do work economically in all social contexts.

Assessment

The idea of this article was to explore whether there is a feature that belongs to all African perspectives on tertiary education explained in terms of economy, namely whether university education, and especially religious or theological education, still has a powerful, relevant and long-lasting impact in the development of African societies?

In attempting to find ever new methods to not only be involved in society but also in doing so to actively and effectively contribute to the betterment of people's individual and communitarian situations, institutions of higher education have the chance to economically achieve what Mashabela (2017:4), professor at the University of South Africa, describes as 'community development'.

The hottest potato in the whole African continent for decades has been the rather thorny issue of decolonisation, which primarily deals with the fact that Africa needs to find ways to deal with its colonial past. Mashabela (2017) insists that in order for decolonisation to work, it must turn into a programme which is constantly fed intellectually and implemented practically. Decolonisation, therefore, must be built in such a way that it becomes continuous, durable and permanent. This particular purpose cannot be achieved, Mashabela believes, without the aid of universities and other institutions of higher education, which means that decolonisation must be forged in the university, built within the university and applied by the university in society. Mashabela (2017:3–4) is convinced that without the assistance of tertiary education, the programme of decolonisation is doomed to fail gloriously and African societies won't be benefitted from any development whatsoever.

Decolonisation, Mashabela (2017) thinks, must be steered towards building an African consciousness, a valid Africanness, but without university education this cannot be achieved. No practical economic project could be achieved without university education, but in order for education to work towards community development, the whole tertiary education curriculum must be re-imagined, re-formed and re-organised. According to Mashabela (2017:3), nothing can work without this tremendous effort to rebuild university education anew through a constant process of reconstruction, re-examination, reinterpretation and reconsideration; these

actions are time-consuming processes in themselves which, if performed for the sake of society, eventually produce economic effects with concrete results throughout all the strata of African societies, but also anywhere else in the world.

An effective programme of decolonisation, as proposed by Mashabela, needs to take into account the fact that the re-formation of university curricula should be worked based on the fundamental conviction that tertiary education is for everybody. This is not to say that everybody will eventually attend university courses, but if anyone is indeed interested in pursuing tertiary education, he or she will have the opportunity to do so without facing discrimination of any kind. University education, therefore, must be devised for the majority of people within any society, in the case of Africa, for what Hargreaves (1996) designates as the 'underprivileged African majority'.

To resume Mashabela's (2017:4) argument, universities in Africa must focus on how to solve the problems of the African continent if the programme of decolonisation is to be successful at all and produce visible and beneficial economic results for African societies. The local African needs and local African problems must be the aim of any decolonisation effort worked in an African institution of higher education. Otherwise, any such decolonising efforts yield no economic results, and the programme itself won't serve the needs of African societies.

If the common denominator of all contributions presented at the 2017 Centennial Colloquium is the development of society in as many respects as possible based on university education in all fields, including theology and religion, with the purpose of providing men and women in all human societies with economic solutions to their problems, then it makes sense to promote theology and religion in all their hermeneutic complexity. Thus, Ford's (2017:4) recommendation that theology and religion should be taught in order to educate people regarding inadequate forms of faith, coupled with Mante's (2017) suggestion to teach theology and religion alongside natural and social sciences, and with Simut's (2017) proposal that traditional and non-traditional understandings of theology and religion be included in all university curricula, leads to a single conclusion: In higher education, teaching theology and religion must be as inclusive as possible. Nothing should be excluded and everything should be included, even what D'Costa (2005:ix) identifies as 'secularized forms of theology'.

Why such a wide approach to pedagogical inclusivity in teaching theology and religion in higher education? Simply because in order to be economically effective for the whole world, theology and religion must be a faithful mirror of the contexts they are attempting to help. If problems are misdiagnosed, the solutions are very likely to be problematic as well; that is why the issues of a certain context must be identified as precisely as possible if proper solutions are to

be found and applied therein. In the case of Africa, if decolonisation is to be ecologically successful, then one should consider Shizha's (2012:171) proposal, which explains that decolonisation efforts should 'reflect Africa's social and cultural realities'.

In Africa, however, decolonisation goes hand-in-hand with fight against poverty, and it is always good to be aware of the fact, correctly underlined by Kennedy (2006), that poverty is a key focus of contemporary theology, and hence, various theological approaches from across the world could be appropriated or at least considered for ecological results within the African continent. Nevertheless, one must never lose sight of the fact that the foundation of theology is hermeneutics because, as explained by Guarino (2005:171), hermeneutics conveys 'enduring meanings' to any theological endeavour. Thus, any ecological attempt to teach theology and religion in any university, African or non-African, must feature a serious, earnest, open and inclusive hermeneutical approach. Hermeneutics is an understanding, and proper understanding is the key to ecological development, and hence, teaching theology and religion based on a sensible approach to hermeneutics is vital for any university, African or non-African.

It is clear thus that there is no genuine development without tertiary education, and as theology and religion are part of the university curricula, they both contribute ecologically to the development of human societies. Dimou (2009:17) is correct to underline that in modern times, under the influence of various secularisation tendencies, 'the state challenged the prerogative of the church over instruction', but this should never mean the exclusion of theology and religion from university curricula, especially on the grounds of secularisation, laicisation or similar social tendencies. On the contrary, one must realise anew that the very essence of theology and religion is their educational propensity despite secularisation, so if true education leads to social development, then it is rather evident that teaching theology and religion would lead to social development. In the case of Africa, teaching theology and religion in local universities could and would eventually contribute to the social development of African societies with potentially excellent ecological results for decolonisation and the fight against poverty.

Conclusion: A South African proposal

As the common feature of all the colloquium contributions discussed was to highlight the importance of social development based on the ecological teaching of theology and religion in higher education institutions as anchored in open and critical hermeneutics, a team of top management officials from the University of Pretoria authored a Draft Framework Document aiming at the radical rethinking of the whole teaching curricula in the field of theology and religion (this was rather a happy coincidence because the document

was available long before the colloquium). In order for the actual teaching of theology and religion in higher education to work ecologically in society, the theological and religious curriculum must be reconsidered – or, as it was rendered in the document itself, re-imagined – in accordance with the local situation of each institution of higher education and its immediate social context. With regard to South Africa, the recognition of problems within the local context was crucial, and so the document underlined the 'exclusion, marginalisation, and social injustice' which still mark South African society more than 20 years into its post-apartheid history (University of Pretoria 2017:65). The Earth Charter International (2000a, 2000b) says it aptly in the following two of its principles, Principles 2 and 3:

2. Care for the community of life with understanding, compassion, and love.
 - a. Accept that with the right to own, manage, and use natural resources comes the duty to prevent environmental harm and to protect the rights of people.
 - b. Affirm that with increased freedom, knowledge, and power comes increased responsibility to promote the common good.
3. Build democratic societies that are just, participatory, sustainable, and peaceful.
 - a. Ensure that communities at all levels guarantee human rights and fundamental freedoms and provide everyone an opportunity to realise his or her full potential.
 - b. Promote social and economic justice, enabling all to achieve a secure and meaningful livelihood that is ecologically responsible. (n.p.)

That's why this study has suggested that the new university curricula should be heavily anchored in the fundamental human values of 'dignity, equality, human rights, and freedom' (University of Pretoria 2017:65). Teaching theology and religion in higher education can be considered a notorious failure in the absence of such values, and so the rethinking of the university curricula along these lines is seen as a mandatory vision which needs to be shared by the university management with teachers on the one hand, and the members of academic staff and students, on the other (University of Pretoria 2017:66). Ecological results, however, cannot be achieved unless this vision is practically implemented in university curricula which promote 'critical inquiry, thinking, and democratic public engagement' (University of Pretoria 2017:66). In other words, there has to be a constant interaction between the university and the society, between teaching and application, between theology and religion as appropriated in the classroom and theology and religion as applied in the society. That's why the new curricula would aim at providing 'responsiveness to the social context, epistemological diversity, renewal of pedagogy, and classroom practice' (University of Pretoria 2017:66).

When teaching of theology and religion is based on these prescriptions, the ecological results of theological and religious ideas would be revealed in society, provided that universities entertain an 'institutional culture of openness

and critical reflection' (University of Pretoria 2017:66). Nevertheless, intellectual vigilance is compulsory because the new curricula have to avoid the 'limitations, gaps, and shortcomings' of the old curricula if teaching of theology and religion in universities is to ecologically transform and reform not only theological and religious education, but also the local and global contexts which they address (University of Pretoria 2017:72). Ecology is therefore possible not only in universities but also in societies, because theology and religion are fundamental features of humanity in general and of the human being in particular. Indeed, ecology as education is possible for as long as the institutions of higher learning across the world and local governments will actively support the teaching of theology and religion for their intrinsic educational, pedagogical, interpretative and transformational values.

God has created the household of life and human beings to live in community with one another (World Council of Churches [WCC] 2007):

God has created the household of life (*oikos*) and human beings to live in community with one another (Psalm 115:16 and Genesis 1–2). We are created in God's own image and likeness and have the responsibility to take care of God's good creation. The Christian notion of *oikos* resonates with the African understanding of *ubuntu/botho/uzima* (life in wholeness) and *ujamaa* (life in community). They embrace, among others, the values of the fullness of life, full participation in all life processes, including in the economy and ecology. It further entails the just care, use, sharing and distribution of resources and elements of life. Where the above and life-affirming relationships have been violated, the institution of restorative, redistributive and certificatory (wisdom) justice is necessary. These principles of justice, reparation, restoration and reconciliation, forgiveness, mutual love and dignity for all God's creation ought to be promoted ecumenically as bases for constructive critique of global capitalism, which increasingly violates life-in-abundance (John 10:10). (n.p.)

No wonder Moltmann (2019:99) changes Luke 7:27 to read instead that you must love God, your neighbour *and the earth* as yourself.

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