

## Editorial foreword



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This academic *Festschrift* is devoted to Professor Jan van der Watt, famous New Testament specialist, academic, researcher, family man, friend and convinced believer.

Jan was born on 5 November 1952 in Germiston. He completed his high school career at the Andrew Rabie School in Port Elizabeth and is married to Shireen. They are the parents of one daughter and the grandparents of two grandchildren. Jan obtained quite a few degrees, including a DD degree in Theology and a DLit degree in Greek, both of which have been obtained cum laude. From an early age he distinguished himself in the academy. From 1980–1986, Jan was senior lecturer and head of the Department of New Testament and Pastoral Theology at the University of Fort Hare. After that, he became a professor at the University of Pretoria, where he later became head of the Department of New Testament until 2009. After that, the family moved to the Netherlands. Here, he is currently professor and head of the Department of Exegesis of the New Testament and Source texts of Christianity at Radboud University in Nijmegen.

Jan's creative academic insights, and in particular his fresh look at metaphors and ethics in the Gospel of John, received wide recognition amongst academics around the world. Hence, his impressive academic oeuvre, which includes visiting professor as Beeson International, visiting professor at Asbury Theological Seminary (September–December 2004) and as Mercator International professor during February–July 2005 at the Friedrich-Wilhelm University in Bonn. Jan was also visiting professor for longer periods of time at well-known institutions such as the Catholic University of Leuven (2002–2006), Mercator University of Duisburg (1990–1991), Humboldt University of Berlin (2000–2001; 2015), Ludwig-Maximilians Universität München (2011–2012; 2015), Theological University Camps (1995; 2005) and Utrecht (1999). In the USA, Jan is also not unknown. As a guest lecturer, he holds public lectures at Westminster Theological Seminary (1991) as well as at McAfee Theological Seminary at Mercer University in Atlanta (2015). In between Jan regularly holds academic guest lectures at various tertiary institutions across Europe, Asia, South Africa and Britain.

Several extraordinary professorships have already been awarded to Jan. This includes a visiting professorship at the Christian University of St Petersburg since 2010, an extraordinary professorship at his old alma mater in the Department of New Testament at the University of Pretoria (2009–2012), a similar professorship at North-West University (2010 to date) as well as at the University of South Africa (2012–2016).

In the midst of Jan's impressive lecturer repertoire, 44 doctoral students as well as 88 Master's students from around the world have already successfully completed their studies under his mentorship. No wonder that a wide range of academic prizes have already been awarded to Jan, including the Pieter van Drimmelen Medal for his contribution to theology and Bible translation in 2000, for the Afrikaans Bible translation, *The Message*, as well as the Andrew Murray Prize for the *Bible A–Z* in 2003, of which he is the editor. In 2006 he received the Totius Prize for his contribution to theology and Bible translation of the South African Academy for Science and Art, and in 2017 Jan won the prestigious Jan H. Marais Prize, also from the South African Academy of Science and Art, together with Professor Jaap Steyn for his outstanding contribution to Afrikaans as a language of science – this, in the midst of many other acknowledgments that Jan receives on a regular basis such as the prestigious Alexander of Humboldt award in Germany between 1990–2015; the highest rating for a South African theologian by the NRF between 2002–2009; and the University of Pretoria's Research Medal in 2008 as one of the 100 'Leading minds' in all academic disciplines between 1908–2008.

Jan has also distinguished himself over recent years as a leading role player in various academic committees and organisations. These include the chairmanship of the New Testament Working Community of South Africa (2000–2003); co-chair of the Johannesburg Seminar of the *Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas* between 1997–2003; A *Tyndale Fellow* at Tyndale House, Cambridge since 2004;

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a Mercator International visiting professor (2005); member of the Advisory Council of the Titus Brandsma Institute, Nijmegen (2010–2016); Secretary of the *Colloquium Johannes* (2013–present); and *Senior Fellow of the Excellence Program TOPOI* at the Humboldt University in Berlin (2015).

In the midst of Jan's continued membership of various academic associations such as NTSSA, SNTS, SBL and SNTC, he also serves as adviser in various academic councils such as academic adviser to the rector of the Christian University of St. Petersburg; The Research Project for New Testament Theology at North-West University; as well as the doctorate program of Regent University in the USA. Over and above this, Jan also served on the boards of various theological journals such as the *NGTT* (1989–2012) and *Neotestamentica* (1995–2006). He is also the worldwide general editor of the *Review of Biblical literature* since 2005; area editor for *Johannine literature and general epistles* of the 30th volume of *De Gruyter's* (Germany), *Encyclopedia of the Bible and its reception* since 2004; and senior editor of the *Oxford dictionary of the Bible and ethics*.

As a result of the leading role played by Jan around the world in facilitating academic conferences, it is mainly in his wide range of academic publications where he makes his mark internationally as outstanding Bible scientist, and especially as a connoisseur of the Gospel of John. In addition to 68 articles already featured in reputable journals, Jan is also author and editor of 40 internationally-known academic works; as author: *Family of the King: Dynamics of metaphor in the Gospel according to John* (2000 Brill); *Introduction to the Gospel and letters of John* (2010 Clark); as editor: *Salvation in the New Testament: Perspectives on soteriology* (2009 Brill); *Eschatology and the New Testament* (2011 Mohr Siebeck);

*The prologue of the Gospel of John: Literary, theological and philosophical perspectives. Papers read at the Colloquium Ioanneum 2013* (with R.A. Culpepper and U. Schnelle; 2016 Mohr Siebeck). In addition, Jan has already held 129 academic papers and guest lectures around the world. In between he succeeded in reproducing his theological inventions in popular-wise ways. As evidence of this, 34 Christian publications have already been revealed to the general public as well as a wide range of popular articles.

Jan van der Watt's academic tracks are very wide and deep. Colleges and students in South Africa, Europe, Asia and the United States have the highest appreciation for his outstanding academic abilities, his creative new insights in the New Testament and his academic honesty. Over the years Jan not only distinguished himself as an experienced expert and gifted interpreter of the New Testament, but also as someone who constantly makes paradigm shifts. In particular, his new insights into metaphors and his widespread view of implicit ethics in the Gospel of John revealed new research opportunities for which he receives wide international recognition. No wonder that Jan is now counted in theological circles as the leading connoisseur of the Gospel of John. His leading role as editor of leading international publications and journals as well as his impact as a mentor for many students, who in turn already have prestigious academic positions, is general knowledge. But maybe it is Van der Watt's humility and honesty, which is his most outstanding characteristic. His faith in and loyalty to his family, friends, colleagues and students is unprecedented. Jan is also a faithful believer practicing his theology to God's praise. Therefore, it is a great honour and privilege to dedicate this *Festschrift* to a formidable theologian like Jan van der Watt, someone who everybody can call their friend.