THE DEPARTMENT OF NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES, UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA (DUTCH REFORMED CHURCH), 1938–2008

ABSTRACT

This article deals with the history of the Department of New Testament Studies at the University of Pretoria from 1938 to 2008. The focus falls on the permanent staff members and their contributions during this period. The article begins with a discussion of the life and career of Prof. E.P. Groenewald. It then proceeds to the more difficult time of cultural boycotts, with Profs A.B. du Toit and F. Botha as members of the Department at that time. Then the careers of Profs J.G. van der Watt and S.J. Joubert are discussed. The article concludes with a discussion of the contribution made by Prof. G.J. Steyn.

INTRODUCTION

The Department of New Testament (up to 1999), today known as the Department of New Testament Studies (as of 2000), at the University of Pretoria has experienced several highlights in its seventy years of existence. The first professor, E.P. Groenewald, set the example of (and the bar for) the high academic standard that was to become a characteristic of the Department, recognised on both national and international levels. Of the 70 (approximately) students who have obtained their doctoral degrees from this department, a great many have become lecturers at other universities (many in South Africa itself, of course, but also in other countries such as the United States, Korea and Russia). The Department has also been able to attract students from countries such as Russia, Australia, Romania, the United States, Canada, Thailand, China, South Korea, Austria, Lithuania and several countries in Africa, accentuating the international profile of the Department.

Important to note is the fact that it has always been the lecturers connected to the Department that have given the Department its exceptional character. For this reason the story of the Department will be told by discussing the different professors and the contributions they have made.

THE DEPARTMENT’S FIRST PROFESSOR: E.P. GROENEWALD

Evert Philippus Groenewald was born on 2 June 1905 and grew up in the George district – first on a farm, then in the town itself. He matriculated there at the end of 1922, achieving especially good grades in Mathematics and History.

He studied at Stellenbosch University from 1923 to 1928. Here he emerged as student leader – he became secretary of the Student Representative Council and president of Dagbreek Residence. He played rugby for the Maties first team in the position of forward. Apart from his theological studies, he also paid particular attention to his Greek. Whilst at seminary he was particularly inspired by Prof. Johannes du Plessis. During this time he also obtained his master’s degree in Greek, with a dissertation entitled *Logos in die Griekse filosofie*. In 1929 he left for the Netherlands to continue his doctoral studies in the New Testament under the guidance of Prof. F.W. Grosheide. During this time he also travelled to Berlin, where he met the well-known Prof. Adolf Deissmann. He did a semester’s study at Tubingen under the renowned Prof. Gerhard Kittel (known for his theological dictionary). Here he also made the acquaintance of Rudolf Bultmann. He graduated *cum laude* on 1 July 1932 from the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam. His dissertation was published under the title *Koinonia (Gemeenskap)* by Paulus. It received praise from both Deissmann and Kittel, and became known as an important standard work in the field.

Back in South Africa, he became minister for the Free State congregation of Bethulie in 1932, but only the relieving minister of the local presbytery was present at his confirmation, as he was suspected of being a Du Plessis follower. At his departure to accept a professoriate at the University of Pretoria, once again only the relieving minister was present – this time because the suspicion of liberalism hung like a cloud over the new faculty. On 16 March 1938 Groenewald – together with Prof. G.M. Pellissier, Dr D.J. Keet and Dr J.H. Kritzinger – was confirmed as professor in the Pretoria-Oos Church. He and his colleagues were given the responsibility of developing the newly formed Faculty of Theology of the Dutch Reformed Church.

As professor Groenewald set a high standard in terms of scientific research, but always with a deep respect for the Bible as Word of God. He introduced his students to the best of resources, especially regarding continental theology. Because of this he created a spirit of true scientific research at the Faculty, coupled with a deep piety. He truly deserves the title of ‘father of New Testament science’ in South Africa. His students had a lot of respect for this strong and worthy figure of few (but carefully considered) words. Although he himself had only a few doctoral students, he did inspire many students to pursue further studies abroad. This meant that both his direct and indirect influence was visible, not only throughout South Africa but also internationally. He became dean of the Faculty of Theology in 1954, a role he fulfilled for the next 15 years.

Together with a few of his former students he founded the New Testament Society of South Africa (NTSSA) on 30 March 1965 in Potchefstroom. This organisation had as its goal the collaboration
of South African New Testament scholars, with all their knowledge and influence, in order to promote the study of the New Testament. Over the past 40 years this organisation has delivered great service in this regard. The NTSSA’s journal, Neotestamentica, is recognised internationally and the articles published in it are taken note of widely. As a pioneer in his own time, in comparison with his peers, he published many articles.\(^1\) Groenewald also served on many church and cultural commissions. In the different synods he was a respected figure. Among other things he was the chairperson of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod, which entailed several international trips. A highlight was being elected chairperson of the Church Convention in 1962 in Cape Town, where the different synods of the Dutch Reformed Church were finally united. Over and above many other tributes he received four honorary doctoral degrees. In 1988 he also received the Order for Meritorious Service (Gold) from the State President. During the University of Pretoria’s centennial celebrations Prof. Groenewald was honoured with a centenary medal as one of the University’s one hundred leading intellectuals of the last hundred years.

His work as translator of the Bible brought him special joy. He was the chairperson of the task team who were responsible for the 1983 translation – a task that he performed with great responsibility, in spite of the fact that he was already advanced in years. Even at a great age, and in spite of failing eyes, he still studied and published his work. He died on 22 August 2002 at the age of 97.

He married Gertruida van den Heever in 1935; two sons and one daughter were born of the union. Evert Philippus Groenewald was truly a great man in both form and stature, who left a deep imprint on his students and on the church of his time. Despite later (justified) criticism on his view of the racial situation in South Africa, his overarching heritage is impressive.

PROFESSOR AT A CRITICAL TIME: ANDRIE DU TOIT

Prof. E.P. Groenewald was succeeded by one of his students, Andrie du Toit. Andries Bernhardus du Toit was born on 19 November 1931 in Boshof in the Orange Free State. He matriculated in 1948 in Parys as one of the top achievers of his province. He obtained his BA degree from the University of Pretoria in 1951, and his BD degree in 1954, both cum laude. He left for Basel, Switzerland in 1956, where he completed his initial theological studies. At the University of Basel he obtained his ThD degree cum laude under the guidance of Prof. Oscar Cullmann in 1959. His dissertation was published as Der Aspekt der Freude im urchristlichen Abendmahl by P.G. Keller in 1965.

Upon his homecoming he became minister for the Springs DRC congregation (1959–1964). At the same time he stayed under the guidance of Prof. Oscar Cullmann in 1959. His dissertation was published as Der Aspekt der Freude im urchristlichen Abendmahl by P.G. Keller in 1965.

Returning to his academic work, Prof. Du Toit quickly became known as a very good and thorough lecturer, and in 1988 he was jointly awarded the University’s Lecturer of the Year award. From 1989 until his retirement he was part of the prestigious group of Exceptional Achievers of the University of Pretoria. On a postgraduate level he has had 21 doctoral candidates since 1971, and he served as co-promoter in two cases. Many of his former students today hold academic positions in South Africa as well as internationally.

He also played a leading role in the New Testament Society of South Africa (NTSSA). As one of the founding members, he served as secretary of the Society for 15 years (1965–1980). From 1965 to 1979 he also served as editor for the NTSSA’s journal, Neotestamentica – a journal that is known internationally today.

Prof. Du Toit enjoys recognition on both national and international levels for his publications and international appearances at conferences and universities. But one of the highest distinctions that he has received in his discipline was when he was elected president of the worldwide association for New Testament scholars, the Studiorum Novi Testament Societas, which gathered in Lund, Sweden in 2008. He was the first New Testament scholar from the southern hemisphere to be granted this honour. This was a belated reward for all the influential work he did, but a great deal of his career was lived out in the years of apartheid, when international contact was problematic. In spite of this he still attended international conferences and delivered papers, and after the political changes in South Africa he wasted no time in organising a New Testament Conference for August 1993 in association with his colleagues from the Netherlands. This heralded the end of the theological-cultural boycott of the Dutch theologians.

Locally his theological achievements were recognised with the Pieter van Drimmelen medal in 1992 (awarded by the Südafrikanische Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns), and the Totius award in 1998. He was honoured twice with Festschriften by his former students and colleagues. After his retirement he was also awarded an honorary doctorate in theology by the University of Pretoria (1998).

Andrie du Toit published widely, both on academic and popular level. Especially his editorial work on the six-volume commentary series Handleiding by die Nuwe Testament (HNT) and the publication of a collection of his treatises (Focusing on Paul. Persuasion and theological design in Romans and Galatians) stand out as great achievements. He initially published on the broader spectrum of the New Testament (especially Matthew,
Christology, unique issues relating to ministry, and methodology). His unique contribution to canonical study on the New Testament in 1978, _Hebreërs vir vandag: Deel 1_ (page number not for citation purposes), is mentioned in this regard. But his focus eventually shifted to the Pauline collection. This shift gained momentum in 1979 with his publication on justification in Romans 6. In his article ‘Vilification as a pragmatic device in early Christian epistolography’ (1994) he argued that vilification of the opposition played a very important part in Paul’s letters. This motif has now been recognised and taken up internationally. The finesse of his academic skill comes to the fore even more clearly in his article ‘Forensic metaphors in Romans and their soteriological significance’ in the book _Salvation in the New Testament. Perspectives on soteriology_ (2005). In this article he illustrates, through excellent use of rhetoric, the way in which the forensic metaphors used in the letter to the Romans influence the meaning of (for example) justification.

He also published quite a few successful scientifically based popular books, such as _Room van Romeine en Hebreërs vir vandag._

Though Prof. Du Toit retired in the 1990s he remains academically active, both in the church and in the academic world. He regularly participates in conferences and is still an active member of the research unit for the study of the New Testament of the Department of New Testament Studies at the University of Pretoria.

In a time of crisis, with South Africa suffering under several boycotts, Prof. Du Toit made sure that the standard of New Testament research in South Africa remained equal. In a time of crisis, with South Africa suffering under several boycotts, Prof. Du Toit made sure that the standard of New Testament research in South Africa remained equal.

**PROFESSOR FRIKKIE BOTHA’S POPULARITY STRENGTHENS THE DEPARTMENT**

Frederik Johannes Botha was born on 1 April 1930 in Krugersdorp as the eldest son of Christian Johannes Botha and Susanna Hendrina Aletha Botha (born Oosthuizen). He performed exceptionally well in school and matriculated at Monument Park High School in 1946.

He began his studies at the University of Pretoria in 1947. He obtained his BA degree in 1949 with three major subjects: Greek III (cum laude), Hebrew III (cum laude) and Human Sciences III. He obtained his BD degree _cum laude_ at the end of 1952 with a dissertation entitled _Hamartia in die Evangelie en die Eerste Brief van die Apoel Johannes_. He married Susanna Coetzee in the same year. The finian four children were born. During 1953 he lectured part-time in Greek, and at the end of that year he was successful in his final examination for the ministry (_cum laude_). His thesis for his candidacy for the ministry was entitled _Die ewe en die draak_. His thesis for his candidacy for the ministry was entitled _Die ewe en die draak_.

In 1961 he completed his doctoral examination _cum laude_. His majoring subject was New Testament, with Old Testament and Dogmatics as secondary subjects. He graduated in 1965 under the guidance of Prof. E.P. Groenewald, with a dissertation entitled _Die kerk in die Openbaring van Johannes_. He obtained his DD degree in Greek in the 1950s.

He served as minister in the DRC congregations of Breiten (1954–1957) and Tsionsville (1957–1963). In September 1963 he was appointed senior lecturer in New Testament at the University of South Africa. He became professor there in October 1965. He was then appointed at the University of Pretoria: first as senior lecturer in New Testament in 1976, and then as professor. He remained in the Department as professor until his untimely death on 5 July 1985 due to leukaemia.

Prof. Botha was known to be a pious, devoted man; exceptionally loyal to his church, defender against any movements beyond or outside of the church. During his student years he was appointed chairperson of the student organisation _Deo Gloria_. As minister he fulfilled his calling with great enthusiasm and skill.

Even though Prof. Botha delivered several papers at many different academic conferences, his passion did not lie with the publication of articles and books. He devoted himself more fervently, and with greater joy, to his sermons and lectures. Because of this he was a popular and dynamic speaker with an exceptionally good memory, which meant that he could speak without the help of notes. His students listened to him with rapt attention.

Prof. Botha played an important part in the Bible translation of 1983. His meticulous nature and his excellent knowledge of the Greek of the New Testament were obvious—he did his translation work with exceptional dedication and fervour, for which he never really received the acknowledgement that he deserved. But being the modest and humble man that he was, this (lack of) acknowledgement was not as important to him as the fact that he was able to serve the Kingdom of God in this way.

**PROFESSOR JAN VAN DER WATT JOINS THE DEPARTMENT**

Jan Gabriel van der Watt joined the Department of New Testament Studies in April 1986, after the untimely death of Prof. Frikkie Botha. He was born in Germiston on 5 November 1952. He matriculated from Maritzburg High School in 1946. He began his studies at the University of Pretoria in 1947. He obtained his BA degree in 1949 with three major subjects: Greek III (cum laude), Hebrew III (cum laude) and Human Sciences III. He obtained his BD degree _cum laude_ at the end of 1952 with a dissertation entitled _Hamartia in die Evangelie en die Eerste Brief van die Apoel Johannes_. He married Susanna Coetzee in the same year. The finian four children were born. During 1953 he lectured part-time in Greek, and at the end of that year he was successful in his final examination for the ministry (_cum laude_). His thesis for his candidacy for the ministry was entitled _Die ewe en die draak_. His thesis for his candidacy for the ministry was entitled _Die ewe en die draak_.

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Andrew Rabie High School (Port Elizabeth) with an A average, and began his studies directly after that with ministry as goal. After he finished his admission studies at the Universities of Port Elizabeth and the Orange Free State, he completed his theological studies at the University of Pretoria. He obtained all his academic qualifications cum laude. Two of these were his DD degree in New Testament in 1986 (with a dissertation entitled Ewige lewe in die Evangelie volgens Johannes) and a DLitt degree in Greek in 1999 (with a thesis entitled Dynamics of metaphor in the Gospel according to John).

Upon completion of his theological studies, he was appointed senior lecturer and head of the Department of New Testament and Practical Theology at the University of Fort Hare in 1980. He served as head of the Department of Biblical Studies at the same university from 1982 to 1986. In 1985 he received a call to become the first part-time minister in the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa, Midlands, a ministry that was to bring him much joy.

His life underwent a dramatic change when, in 1986, he was appointed lecturer, and come October of that same year, professor, in the Department of New Testament at the University of Pretoria. With the retirement of Prof. du Toit in 1993 he became the head of the Department, a position that he held until the end of 2008. In 1997 Van der Watt became director of the research unit for the study of the New Testament at the University of Pretoria. It not only encouraged research among young New Testament scholars but also piloted several international research projects, resulting in extensive publications. In the meantime, he was appointed guest adjunct professor at the Christian University of St Petersburg, and as personal academic advisor to the rector of the university. He also served on the senate of the Christian University of St Petersburg. Another honour bestowed upon him was being appointed Mercator International Professor at the Friedrich-Wilhelm University in Bonn, Germany between February and July 2005 – one of the highest German accolades of the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft that could be bestowed on any scholar.

Because of the political changes that South Africa underwent in 1994, the doors of the international arena opened for South Africans. Prof. Van der Watt reaped the benefits of this change by representing the Faculty as guest professor the world over. He lectured for longer periods of time at universities such as the Catholic University of Louvain, Belgium (2002, 2004, 2006), the Mercator University of Duisburg (Alexander von Humboldt researcher 1990/1991), the Humboldt University of Berlin (Alexander von Humboldt researcher 2000/2001), and the Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelm University in Bonn (Mercator International Professor 2006). He also lectured in the Netherlands at the Catholic University of Utrecht and the University of Utrecht (1999), at the famous Theologische Universiteit Kampen (1995 and 2005). In 2001 he was offered a chair there (an offer that he declined). He appeared as guest professor in South Korea at the Chongshin University in Seoul (2001) and several other Korean universities (2008). He was invited as the Bosson International Scholar to Asbury Theological Seminary in Kentucky from September to December 2004. In 2008 he was nominated the Alexander von Humboldt professor by the rector of the University of Mainz, Germany. The goal of this professoriate is to help establish excellence and international acclaim in a given area of research.

Prof. Van der Watt’s extensive contact with biblical scholars speedily began delivering concrete dividends. Not only did he open up new opportunities for international study for his colleagues and students, but he himself was often invited to deliver lectures at international universities such as the Austrian Universities of Vienna (1995, 1999, 2003), Linz (1998). In Germany he also regularly delivered lectures at the University of Munster (1991), the University of Duisburg-Essen (1995, 2001, 2002 and 2003), the Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelm University in Bonn (2005) and the universities of Bielefeld (2005) and Jena (2005). In this way an extensive academic network between the Department of New Testament Studies and many international universities came into being – a fact reflected by the average of six international New Testament scholars that visit the Department annually.

Apart from this international exposure as scholar and academic, he was constantly reinvesting his knowledge and skill in undergraduate and postgraduate students. Especially his guidance of postgraduate students is unequalled in the South African New Testament context. He has already guided some 30 DD or PhD students to the successful completion of their studies, as well as 56 master’s degree candidates, and he is currently actively supervising a further 20 students on postgraduate research. A further 56 master’s degree candidates, and he is currently actively supervising a further 20 students on postgraduate research. Some of these students originate from Africa, the USA, Romania, South Korea, China, Australia, Thailand and Russia.

Prof. Van der Watt has an impressive academic publication record. Over and above these academic articles in both national and international scholarly journals, he is also making academic breakthroughs in the international book publishing market. A few of his recent international academic publications are: Christology and theology in the Gospel according to John (2005, co-editor with Prof. Gilbert van Belle and P. Maritz); Salvation in the New Testament. Perspectives on soteriology (2005, editor); Imagery in the Gospel according to John/Bildersprache im Johannesevangelium (2006, co-editor with J. Frey and R. Zimmerman); Identity, ethics and ethos in the New Testament (2006, editor); Reading the Bible in Africa. A South African perspective (2007, together with Drs N. Ndawonde and E. Mahlangu); Introduction to the Gospel and Letters of John (2008); and Ethics and ethos in the Gospel according to John (2007). These have been published by some of the world’s most renowned theological academic publishing houses, such as T&T Clark, Brill, DeGruyter, Peeters and Mohr Siebeck.

Prof. Van der Watt has also been appointed to leading positions on several international projects. Since 1998 he has served on the editorial board for the Review of Biblical Literature (RBL), a scholarly journal of the Society of Biblical Literature. It is the biggest organ of review for Biblical academic books in the...
world. Moreover he has functioned as the editor of the RBL since 2003. He was also appointed co-chairperson, responsible for the ‘Johannine literature and general epistles’ of the international 30-volume De Gruyter Encyclopedia of the Bible and its reception in 2004. He has served as chairperson of the New Testament Society of South Africa (NTSSA) from 2000 to 2003, and as co-chairperson of the Johannean Seminar of the Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas from 1997 to 2003.

Prof. Van der Watt has also received several national and international awards. In 1990/1991 he received the internationally sought-after Alexander von Humboldt Stiftung award. From 1999 to 2007 he has continually been awarded as Exceptional Academic Achiever at the University of Pretoria, an honour reserved for the 40 (approximately) most outstanding lecturers at the university.

As from 2002 up to now he has been graded as an internationally established and leading researcher in his field by the National Research Foundation of South Africa – no New Testament scholar in South Africa has a higher grading. In 2008 he also received a centenary medal from the University of Pretoria – an award given at the University’s centenary celebration to the 100 leading minds at the University of Pretoria over the past 100 years.

Prof. Van der Watt places a high premium on scientifically based popular publications, and is renowned both nationally and internationally as religious speaker and writer. He is in fact one of only six religious writers in South Africa to have sold more than a million copies of his Christian books. His books Die Boedskap (in association with Stephanus Joubert) and Die Aposelreën van Ou en Nuwe Testament (in association with Francois Tolmie) have been top-sellers for the past few years. It is thus no wonder that he was awarded the Van Drimmelen medal by the South African Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2000 for his outstanding contribution to theology and to Bible translation. In 1997, and again in 2003, he received the award for best Christian publication for Die Boedskap from the Christian Bookellers of South Africa (CBSA). He was also awarded the sought-after Andrew Murray award in 2000 for Die Bibelliteratuur, and again in 2003 for his role as editor of the impressive Die Bybel A–Z. Another great honour that befell him was being awarded the Totius award by the Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns in 2006 for his constant outstanding contribution to South African theology.

Prof. Van der Watt’s specific contribution to the Department can be seen on two levels: his intensive work on the Johannine writings (he established the Department as a centre for Johannine study and research) and the elaborate network of international contacts that he has developed (establishing the Department as a centre for New Testament research).

PROFESSOR STEPHAN JOUBERT’S PARTICULAR IMPACT ON THE DEPARTMENT

In 1997 Stephanus Johannes Joubert joined the Department for a fruitful period of time. He was born in Kempton Park on 24 October 1958. After completing his high school education in Kempton Park, he studied at the University of Pretoria and obtained the following degrees: BA (1979), BD (1982, cum laude) and DD (1987, cum laude). His doctoral theme was the collection in Paul, a theme that has remained further his work. As a student his qualities of creativity and diligence were already obvious. After he completed his studies he became minister at the Kempton-Kruin DRC congregation (1988–1990), a congregation with which he still has ties today.

In July 1990 he began his academic career at the University of Pretoria as associate professor in the Department of Biblical Studies. He was promoted to full professor and head of the Department in 1994. In 1997 he shifted his academic focus. He would remain professor in the Department of New Testament at the University of Pretoria – where he established himself as an excellent lecturer with whom the students had a great affinity, especially because of his ability to integrate theory and practice – until his departure for New Zealand in 2002.

September 2002 was the beginning of a new phase in his life. He was called as minister to the Afrikaans church in Auckland, New Zealand. He left South Africa for approximately a year in order to minister to that congregation. He returned to South Africa in October 2003, and served as part-time minister for the DRC congregations of Vallesig (October 2003 to March 2004), Moreletapark (April 2004–2007), Kempton Kruin (2006–2008) and Mossel (2006–). He has also been lecturing part-time at the University of Pretoria as extraordinary professor since 2007. His main focus, however, is his editorship of e-church, an Internet-based ministry to Christian believers.

Although he published widely and on several topics (even the short letter of Jude), his main focus has always been the socio-scientific side of exegesis – especially with regards to the Pauline literature. He has been an active member of the international Context Group for years, where he works with scholars such as Bruce Malina. He was also awarded the elite Alexander von Humboldt award in 1997, which he used for research under a prominent New Testament Scholar, Prof. Hans-Josef Kluck, in Munich, Germany. His book Paul as benefactor. Reciprocity, strategy and theological reflection in Paul’s collection (2000) exhibits his skill at combining theological and historical study in a creative and effective manner. This skill has led to his appearance as guest speaker internationally – he has made appearances at, for example, the Christian University of St Petersburg, Russia, and the University of Wuppertal, Germany.

Nationwide he would become known among lay people as a talented writer of scientifically based popular books – finding final expression especially in the translation of the New Testament into everyday Afrikaans in the form of Die Boedskap (in association with Prof. Van der Watt) in 1997, which he has seen through publication under a prominent New Testament Scholar, Prof. Hans-Josef Kluck, in Munich, Germany.

After leaving academia in 2002, his interest shifted from the academic to church matters. Currently he is acting as a consultant to the church, with regular appearances nationwide. He has also formed strong ties with renowned international scholars such as Prof. Sweet, whose work focuses mainly on the New Testament church. He has taken on this new challenge in ministry with exactly the same fervour with which he did his academic work.


His contribution to the Department lies in his ability as lecturer to create a passion for the New Testament in his students, and the important role he played nationally in the establishment of social scientific research as part of the exegetical process.

THE FOURTH GENERATION: PROFESSOR GERT STEYN

Gert Steyn joined the Department of New Testament Studies in 2003. In a way he could be regarded as the fourth generation of New Testament lecturers – he had attended the classes of Profs Du Toit, Botha and Van der Watt. Gert Jacobus Steyn was born on 5 March 1962 in Wolmaransstad. He obtained his BA degree from the University of Pretoria in 1983. Later he also obtained his BA Hons. (1986), BD (1986), MA in Greek (1988) and DD (1994) degrees from the University of Pretoria; the latter two degrees were awarded cum laude. His dissertation, written under Prof. Cilliers Breytenbach and entitled Septuagint quotations in the context of the Petrine and Pauline speeches in the Acta Apostolorum was published by Phares in 1995. He also obtained a DLit. in 2009 from the University of Stellenbosch for his work on the Old Testament (LXX) quotations in Hebrews, to be published by Vandenhoek & Ruprecht in Göttingen (2010) under the title A quest for the assumed Septuagint Vorlage of the explicit quotations in Hebrews. Steyn began his career as junior lecturer at the University of South Africa in 1987. In 1992, after his return from Germany – where he studied with a DAAD scholarship under Dietrich-Alex Koch and Cilliers Breytenbach for his doctorate in New Testament (1990–1991) – he was appointed lecturer at the Federal Theological Seminary in Pietermaritzburg. In 1993 he was appointed director (principal) of the Theological Education by Extension College in Southern Africa, based in Johannesburg. In this position he gained valuable knowledge of theological education, as well as important administrative and managerial skills. After seven years of teaching on a part-time basis as senior lecturer at the University of Johannesburg he was appointed associate professor in Greek in 2001. In 2002 he joined the Faculty of Theology at the University of Pretoria, first as associate professor and since 2006 as full professor. This did not mean, however, that he disregarded entirely from church practice – in the period between 1992 and 2005 he has been active as part-time pastor in the Dutch Reformed Church, for example the Andrew Murray congregation in Johannesburg.

In the five years that Prof. Steyn has been with the Department he has already proven himself to be a hardworking theologian and scholar. Being awarded the sought-after Alexander von Humboldt award opened many doors for him. In 2002 he returned to Germany, where he began working on the text forms of the Septuagint quotations in Hebrews with Prof. Koch in Munster – this was submitted for his second doctorate. Most of his publications thus deal with the theme of the New Testament writers’ use of their Scriptures.7 He focuses mainly on the LXX (Septuagint) and is taking a leading role in South Africa in this regard. In 2006 he became one of the founding members of the Association for the Study of the Septuagint in South Africa.

Steyn was invited to become a member of the internationally prestigious New Testament Society, the Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas, in 1999 and has been invited a number of times since then as an active member to read papers on his specialised research on early Christian hermeneutics at a number of conferences. Prof. Steyn has added a new dimension to the Department through his interest in early Christian hermeneutics and regarding the reception of ancient traditions – especially in light of the texts of the LXX, Philo of Alexandria and the Dead Sea Scrolls. The value of these comparative investigations requires historical approaches, such as textual criticism. His eagerness to establish this interest on a national level and his international engagement with peers in this field has also contributed to New Testament scholarship in this Department.

THE FUTURE

Throughout this article it has become clear that the history of the Department is intertwined with the history of its professors. The uniqueness of each professor has furnished the Department’s particular contribution in each era, and has made the Department a valuable asset to the Faculty of Theology and the University of Pretoria as a whole. For this reason it is difficult to predict the future – it coincides directly with the professors who will be taking up future positions in the Department. What is known for certain is that the Department is well-established both nationally and internationally, and that it produces lectures and publications of the highest standard. This ethos has been shaped over many years, and there is no reason to believe that this will change in the near future.