

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

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**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 Tübingen 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. Kritzingen – 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.<sup>1</sup> 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, after 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 academically active, obtaining his MA degree in Greek (*cum laude*) from the University of Pretoria in 1962. From Springs he moved to the Riveria DRC congregation (1964–1968), after which he became a student minister at Universiteitsoord

DRC (Pretoria, 1968–1970). After the retirement of Prof. E.P. Groenewald he became professor and head of the Department of New Testament (Section B) at the University of Pretoria in 1971. From 1984 to 1987 he also served as dean of the Faculty of Theology (Section B).

Even though he was involved in the academic arena on a full-time basis since 1971, his influence would still be felt in the church. He was (for example) part of the church commission responsible for both the documents *Ras, volk en nasie* and *Kerk en samelewing*. In this regard he played a very important part in the DRC's denunciation of the Biblical grounding of apartheid, something that his predecessor at the faculty had defended. Up until recently he was a member of the DRC Commission for Bible Interpretation and Translation, as well as the Advisory Council on Bible Translation for the Bible Society of South Africa. He was also the New Testament editor and co-translator for *Die Bybel. Nuwe Lewende Vertaling*, which was published by CUM Books in 2007. Currently he is involved with the preparation of the new official Afrikaans Bible, which should appear within the next decade. Over and above all of the aforementioned, he also wrote in local papers on a regular basis and made appearances on radio.

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 prestige group of Exceptional Achievers of the University of Pretoria. On 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 level 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 Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns), and the Totius award in 1998. He was honoured twice with *Festschrifte* 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,

1. Some of Prof. Groenewald's most important publications are: 1939. *Die Nuwe Testament deur die eeue bewaar*. Pretoria 1947. 'Apartheid en voorgodskap in die lig van die Heilige Skrif' in G. Cronjé, *Regverdige rasse-apartheid*. Stellenbosch; 1948. *Paulus en Korinthe*. Stellenbosch; 1948. *Die Evangelie volgens Markus*. 'Kommentaar op die Bybel' Series. Pretoria; 1965. *In gelykenisse het Hy geleer*, 2nd edn., Pretoria; 1960. 'Die Christelike huis', *NGTT* 1, 1–12; 1961 'Die Koninkryk van God volgens die Evangelie van Thomas', *Tydskrif vir Geesteswetenskappe* 1, 59–66; 1962. 'Die ekklesia in die Nuwe Testament', *NGTT* 3, 389–402; 1964. 'Calvyn en die Heilige Skrif', *NGTT* 5, 131–141; 1967. *Die Eerste Brief aan die Korinthiërs*. Cape Town; 1967. *Die Tweede Brief aan die Korinthiërs*. Cape Town, 1968. *Handboek Bybelse geskiedenis: Nuwe Testament*. Pretoria: Interkerklike Uitgewerstrust; 1969 'Krisis in die interpretasie van die Nuwe Testament', *NGTT* 10, 2–12; 1972 'Die aktualiteit van 'n nuwe Afrikaanse Bybelvertaling', *NGTT* 11, 209–220; 1973. *Die Evangelie van Lukas*. Cape Town; 1977. *Die pastorale briewe*. Cape Town; 1977. *Die Briewe van Petrus – Die Brief van Judas*. Cape Town; 1980. *Die Evangelie van Johannes*. Cape Town; 1986. *Die Openbaring van Johannes*. Cape Town. Over and above these scientific publications, he also wrote many popular articles and reviews (for *Die Kerkbode*, *Ons Jeug*, *Die Voorligter* etc.).

Christology, issues relating to ministry, and methodology). His unique contribution to canonical study on the New Testament in 1978, *Handleiding by die Nuwe Testament. Volume 1*, should be 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.<sup>2</sup>

He also published quite a few successful scientifically based popular books, such as *Room van Romeine* and *Hebreeërs 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 to international standards, and that the study of the New Testament became ever more popular. For this reason he has been described, on more than one occasion, as the *doyen* of New Testament scholars in South Africa.

## PROFESSOR FRIKKIE BOTHA'S POPULARITY STRENGTHENS THE DEPARTMENT

Frederik Johannes Botha was born on 1 April 1930 in Krugersdorp as the eldest son of Christiaan Johannes Botha and Susanna Hendrina Aletha Botha (born Oosthuizen). He performed

excellently in school and matriculated from 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 majoring 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 Eoangelie en die Eerste Brief van die Apostel Johannes*. He married Susanna Coetzee in the same year, and from this union 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 vrou en die draak. 'n Eksegetiese studie van Openbaring 12*. He obtained his MA degree in Greek in the 1950s.

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*, and obtained his DD degree on 11 September 1965.

He served as minister in the DRC congregations of Breyten (1954–1957) and Townsvie (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.<sup>3</sup> 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 Gabriël van der Watt joined the Department of New Testament in April 1986, after the untimely death of Prof. Frikkie Botha. He was born in Germiston on 5 November 1952. He matriculated from

2. Some of Prof. du Toit's most important publications are the following: His articles 1962–1966 'Abendmahl', 'Gastmahl', 'Herrenmahl', 'Liebesmahl', 'Mahl', 'Mahlzeit', 'Rüsttag', 'Speisung', and 'Tisch' in L. Rost & B. Reicke (Hrsg.), *BHH*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967. 'The self-revelation of Jesus in Matthew 5-7', *Neot* 1, 66-72; 1968. 'The incarnated Word – a study of John 1:14', *Neot* 2, 9-21; 1969. 'Die pneuma by Paulus', *Neot* 3, 52-60; 1978. 'Kanoniek van die Nuwe Testament' in A.B. du Toit (red.), *Handleiding by die Nuwe Testament 1*, 87-306. Pretoria: NG Kerkboekhandel; 1979. 'Diakaisyne in Röm 6. Beobachtungen zur ethischen Dimension der paulinischen Gerechtigkeitsauffassung.' *ZThK* 76, 261-291; 1981. 'Strukturele teksanalise en die Suid-Afrikaanse redevoeringsanalise', *Skrif en Kerk* 2, 3-14; 1983. 'Freude' in G. Krause & G. Müller (Hrsg.), *ThR* XI, 584-586. Berlin/New York: De Gruyter; 1984. 'Chronologie van Paulus' in A.B. du Toit (red.), *Handleiding by die Nuwe Testament V*, 23-37. Pretoria: NG Kerkboekhandel; 1985. 'Mortuaria in Johannes 1' *SK* 6, 113-124; 1988. 'Gesetzesgerechtigkeit und Glaubensgerechtigkeit in Rm 4:13-25: In Gespräch mit E.P. Sanders', *HTS* 44, 71-80; 1989. 'Persuasion in Romans 1:1-17', *BZ* 13, 192-209; 1989. 'Primitive Christian belief in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, in the light of Pauline resurrection and appearance terminology', *Neot* 23, 309-330; 1990. 'Analyse van die opbou, argumentasiegang en pragmatiek van die Galateebrief: 'n eerste oriëntering', *SK* 11, 154-165; 1990 'Faith and obedience in Paul', *Neot* 25, 65-74; 1993. 'Canon of the New Testament' in B.M. Metzger & M.D. Coogan (eds), *The Oxford companion to the Bible*, 102-104. Oxford: Oxford University Press; 1993. 'Die Kirche als doxologische Gemeinschaft im Römerbrief', *Neot* 27, 69-77; 1994. 'Galatians 6:13. A possible solution to an old exegetical problem', *Neot* 28, 157-161; 1994. 'Vilification as a pragmatic device in early Christian epistolography', *Biblica* 75, 403-412; 1996. 'The centrality of grace in the theology of Paul', *NGTT* 37, 598-609; 1997. 'Geschiedenis van die Palestynse Jodedom in die tydperk 539 v.C. tot 135 n.C.' in A.B. du Toit (red.), *Handleiding by die Nuwe Testament II: Die leefwêreld van die Nuwe Testament*, 231-251. Halfway House: Orion; 2000. 'A tale of two cities: Tarsus or Jerusalem revisited.' *NTS* 46, 375-402; 2000. 'Hoffnung III. Neues Testament', *RGG* Band 3, Sp. 2000, 1824-1826; 2005. 'Forensic metaphors in Romans and their soteriological significance' in J. van der Watt (ed.), *Salvation in the New Testament. Perspectives on soteriology*, 213-246. Leiden-Boston: Brill (NovTSup 121); 2005 'Shaping a Christian lifestyle in the Roman capital' in J. van der Watt (ed.), *Identity, ethics and ethos in the New Testament*, 167-197. Berlin: De Gruyter (BZNW 141); 2006. *Die Bybel. Nuwe Lewende Vertaling*. Vereeniging: CUM (editor and co-translator); 2007. Breytenbach, C. & Du Toit, D.S. (eds), *Focusing on Paul. Persuasion and theological design in Romans and Galatians*. Berlin/New York: De Gruyter (BZNW 151). Some of his more popular publications are: 1984. *Room van Romeine*. Wellington: Bybelkor; 2002. *Hebreeërs vir vandag*. Vereeniging: CUM; 2004. *Beleef God se genade*. Cape Town: Lux Verbi.

3. Prof. Botha had only a few publications, of which the most renowned were: 1960. 'Die deurtog deur die Skelfsee', *NGTT* 1, 39-42; 1963. 'God is nie die Vader van alle mense nie', *NGTT* 5, 9-13; 1967. 'Recent research on the Lord's Prayer', *Neot* 1, 42-50; 1968. 'Die Woord is betroubaar', *Theol Ev* 1, 78-84; 1969. 'Die Jode in die Vierde Evangelie', *Theol Ev* 2, 40-45; 1969. 'Die gebruik van logos in die Vierde Evangelie' *Theol Ev* 2, 75-81; 1978. 'Die eenheid van die kerk by Johannes' in J.D. Vorster (ed.), *Veelvormigheid en eenheid*, 5-8. Cape Town: NG Kerkuitgewers; 1984. '1 Tesselonicensis' in A.B. du Toit (red.), *Handleiding by die Nuwe Testament V*, 142-50; 1984. 'Die Woord is betroubaar', *Theol Ev* 1, 78-84; 1969. 'Die Jode in die Vierde Evangelie', *Theol Ev* 2, 40-45; 1969. 'Die gebruik van logos in die Vierde Evangelie' *Theol Ev* 2, 75-81; 1978. 'Die eenheid van die kerk by Johannes' in J.D. Vorster (ed.), *Veelvormigheid en eenheid*, 5-8. Cape Town: NG Kerkuitgewers; 1984. '1 Tesselonicensis' in A.B. du Toit (red.), *Handleiding by die Nuwe Testament V*, 142-50; 1984. '2 Tesselonicensis' in A.B. du Toit (red.), *Handleiding by die Nuwe Testament V*, 166-173. Pretoria: NG Kerkuitgewers; 1986. 'Die verklaring van die boek Openbaring', *NGTT* 27, 29-37. He also had popular articles published in *Ons Jeug*, *Die Voorligter* and *Die Kerkbode*.

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.<sup>4</sup> 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 *Teologische 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 Beeson 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 international 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 (1998, 2005), Innsbruck (1998) and 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 his 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 level. 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.<sup>5</sup> 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. Zimmermann); *Identity, ethics and ethos in the New Testament* (2006, editor); *Reading the Bible in Africa. A South African perspective* (2007, together with Drs N. Ndwandwe 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, De Gruyter, 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

5. Some of his most renowned publications are: 1985. 'A new look at John 5:25–29 in the light of the use of the term 'eternal life' in the Gospel according to John', *Neot* 19, 71–86; 1987. 'Ewige lewe in die Johannesevangelie. 'n Denotatiewe ondersoek', *NGTT* 28, 255–262; 1989. *Christus is julle hoop. Die brief aan die Kolossense – 'n semantiese diskoersanalise*. Pretoria: 1990. 'The use of *aiōnios* in the concept *zoe aiōnios* in John's Gospel', *NT* 31, 217–228; 1990. 'The use of *zao* in 1 Thessalonians: a comparison with the use of *zao/zoe* in the Gospel of John' in R.F. Collins (ed.), *The Thessalonian correspondence*, 359–369. Louvain: Louvain University Press; 1995. 'Metaphorik' in Johannes 15', *BZ* 38, 67–80; 1996. 'The composition of the prologue of John's Gospel: The historical Jesus introducing divine grace', *WThJ* 57, 311–332; 1998. 'The dynamics of metaphor in John's Gospel', *SNTU* 23, 29–78; 1998. 'My reading of 1 John in Africa' in I. Kitzberger (ed.), *Personal voices in New Testament scholarship*, 142–155. London/New York: Routledge; 1999. 'Ethics in 1 John: A literary and socio-scientific perspective', *CBQ* 7, 1–21; 2000. *Family of the King. Dynamics of metaphor in the Gospel according to John*. Leiden: Brill (Biblical Interpretation Series 47); 2000. 'Der Geist macht lebendig. Die Lektüre von 1 Joh im afrikanischen Kontext', *Protokolle zur Bibel* 9, 1–22; 2001. 'Please, sit over here. You may stand over there.' Exegetical notes on James 2:1–4', *HTS* 57, 210–229; 2001 'The cross/resurrection-events in the Gospel of John, with special emphasis on the confession of Thomas (20:28)', *Neot* 37, 127–145; 2003. Editor and contributor of major sections in *Die Bybel A–Z*. Vereeniging: CUM; 2004. 'Double entendre in the Gospel according to John' in G. van Belle, J.G. van der Watt & P. Maritz (eds), *Christology and theology in the Gospel of John*, 463–481. Louvain: Peeters; 2005. 'Salvation in the Gospel according to John' in J.G. van der Watt (ed.), *Salvation in the New Testament. Perspectives on soteriology*, 101–131. Leiden: Brill (NTS 121); 2005. *Apokriewe van die Ou en Nuwe Testament*. Vereeniging: CUM; 2005. Van Belle, G., Maritz, P. & Van der Watt, J.G. (eds), *Christology and theology in the Gospel according to John*. Louvain: Peeters; 2006. 'Ethics and ethos in the Gospel according to John', *ZNW* 97, 147–176; 2006. 'Ethics alive in imagery' in J. Frey, J.G. van der Watt & R. Zimmermann (eds), *Imagery in the Gospel according to John/Bildersprache im Johannesevangelium*, 421–448. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck (WUNT 200); 2006. 'Radical social redefinition and radical love: Ethics and ethos in the Gospel according to John' in J.G. van der Watt (ed.), *Identity, ethics and ethos in the New Testament*, 107–134. Berlin: De Gruyter; 2006. Frey, J., Van der Watt, J.G. & Zimmermann, R. (eds), *Imagery in the Gospel of John/Bildersprache im Johannesevangelium*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck (WUNT 200); 2007. 'Repetition and functionality in the Gospel according to John. Some initial remarks' in G. van Belle & P. Maritz (eds), *Repetition and variation in the Gospel according to John*, 87–109. Louvain: Peeters; 2008. 'Ein himmlisches Gericht (vom Brot des Lebens) Joh 6,32–40,48–51' in R. Zimmermann (Hrsg.), *Gleichnis-Kompendium des Neuen Testaments*, 755–767. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck; 2007. *Introduction to the Gospel and Letters of John*. London: T&T Clark.

4. 2005. *Salvation in the New Testament. Perspectives on soteriology*. Leiden: Brill; 2006. *Identity, ethics and ethos in the New Testament*. Berlin: De Gruyter; 2009. *Eschatology of the New Testament*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck. Van der Watt served as editor for all of these publications.

world. Moreover he has functioned as the editor of the RBL since 2005. 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 Johannine Seminar of the *Studiolum 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 Boodskap* (in association with Stephan Joubert) and *Die Apokriewe 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 Boodskap* from the Christian Booksellers of South Africa (CBSA). He was also awarded the sought-after Andrew Murray award in 2000 for *Die Bybellenium*, 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 he researched further in his life. 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 Valleysig (October 2003 to March 2004), Moreletpark (April 2004–2007), Kempton-Kruin (2003–2008) and Mosaic (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<sup>6</sup> (even the short letter of Judas), 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 Klauck, 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.

Nationally 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 Boodskap* (in association with Prof. Jan van der Watt). For this work he was awarded the Van Drimmelen medal by the Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns in 2000, and the award for best Christian publication by the CBSA both in 1997 and 2003. He also won the Andrew Murray medal for his contribution to *Die Bybellenium* in 2000.

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 renewal of the church. He has taken on this new challenge in ministry with exactly the same fervour with which he did his academic work.

6. Some of Joubert's most renowned publications are: 1988. 'Die tekstuele strategie wat Paulus in 1 Korintiërs 16:1–4 ter organiserende van die kollekte vir die gemeente in Jerusalem volg', *NGTT* 29, 120–128; 1990. 'Language, ideology and the social context of the letter of Jude', *Neot* 24, 335–349; 1991. 'n Verruimde invalshoek tot die verlede? Die sosiaal-wetenskaplike benadering tot die Nuwe Testament', *HTS* 47, 39–54; 1992. 'Behind the mask of rhetoric: The intra-textual relationship between Paul and the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 8', *Neot* 26, 101–112; 1992. 'Wanneer die onmoontlike moontlik word: Paulus as verkondiger en bouer van 'n nuwe universum', *NGTT* 33, 301–310; 1994. 'A kaleidoscope of approaches: Paradigms, paradigm changes and the 'Umwelt' of the New Testament', *Neot* 28, 23–40; 1995. 'Managing the household. Paul as *paterfamilias* of the Christian community in Corinth' in P.F. Esler (ed.), *Modelling early Christianity*, 213–223. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul; 1995. 'Persuasion in the letter of Jude', *JSNT* 58, 75–87; 1998. 'Facing the past. Transtextual relationships and historical understanding in the Letter of Jude', *BZ* 42, 73–88; 1999. 'Religious reciprocity in 2 Corinthians 9:6–15: Generosity and gratitude as legitimate responses to the 'charis tou theou'', *Neot* 33, 50–63; 2000. 'Romeine 15:22–33. Die Pauliniese kollekte as 'n elfde-uur suksesverhaal', *NGTT* 41, 297–304; 2000. 'Coming to terms with a neglected aspect of ancient Mediterranean reciprocity. Seneca's views on benefit-exchange in *De beneficiis* as a model of social exchange' in J. Pilch (ed.), *Social scientific models for interpreting the Bible. Festschrift for Bruce Malina*. Chicago: Deo Publishers; 2000. *Paul as benefactor. Reciprocity, strategy and theological reflection in Paul's collection*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck; 2001. 'One form of social exchange or two? 'Euergetism', patronage, and Testament Studies', *BThB* 31, 26–37; 2002. 'When the dead are alive! The influence of the living dead in the letter of Jude', *HTS* 58, 576–592; 2003. 'Poverty in early Christianity' in R.E. Averbeck, M.E. Chavalas & D.B. Weisberg (eds), *Life and culture in the Ancient Near East*, 371–388. Bethesda: CDL Press; 2005. 'Charis in Paul. An investigation into the apostle's 'performative' application of the language of grace within the framework of his theological reflection on the event/process of salvation' in J.G. van der Watt (ed.), *Salvation in the New Testament. Perspectives on soteriology*, 187–211. Leiden: Brill (NTS 121).

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 Pharos 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 Vandenhoeck & 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 at the same institution 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 disengaged 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.<sup>7</sup> 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 nature 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.

7. Some of his more renowned publications are: 1989. 'The occurrence of "Kainam" in Luke's genealogy: Evidence of Septuagint influence?', *EThL* 65, 409–411; 1990. 'Intertextual similarities between Septuagint pretexts and Luke's Gospel', *Neot* 24, 229–246; 1996. 'Pretexts of the second table of the Decalogue and early Christian intertexts', *Neot* 30, 451–464; 1997. 'Luke's use of Mimesis? Re-opening the debate' in C.M. Tuckett (ed.), *The Scriptures in the Gospels*, 551–558. Louvain: Peeters; 1997 'Jesus-Sayings in Hebrews', *EthL* 77, 433–440; 2005. 'Soteriological perspectives in Luke's Gospel' in J. van der Watt (ed.), *Salvation in the New Testament: Perspectives on soteriology*, 47–71. Leiden: Brill (NTS 121); 2005. 'Torah quotations common to Philo, Hebrews, Clemens Romanus and Justin Martyr: What is the common denominator?' in C. Breytenbach, J.C. Thom & J. Punt (eds), *The New Testament Interpreted*, 135–151. Leiden: Brill; 2006. 'Driven by conviction and attitude. Ethical dimensions in the Acts of the Apostles' in J.G. van der Watt (ed.), *Identity, ethics, and ethos in the New Testament*, 135–166. Berlin: De Gruyter (BZNTW 141); 2006. 'The occurrence of Ps 118(117):6 in Hebrews 13:6. Possible liturgical origins?', *Neot* 40, 119–134; 2007. 'Deuteronomy in Hebrews' in S. Moyise & M.M.J. Menken (eds), *Deuteronomy in the New Testament*, 152–168. London: T & T Clark; 2008. 'Which LXX are we talking about in New Testament scholarship? Two examples from Hebrews' in M. Karrer & W. Kraus (eds), *Die Septuaginta – Texte, Kontexte, Lebenswelten*, 697–707. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck (WUNT 219).