

HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies and Verbum et Ecclesia: South African accredited journals with footprint

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How to cite: Human, D.J., Van Aarde, A.G. & Veldsman, D.P., 2017, '*HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies and Verbum et Ecclesia: South African accredited journals with footprint*', in 'Theology at the University of Pretoria - 100 years: (1917-2017) Past, present and future', *Verbum et Ecclesia*, suppl. 2, 38(4), a1788. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v38i4.1788>

■ Introduction: *HTS Theological Studies/Teologiese Studies*

In the 1940s, HTS was *the* platform in SA where international theologians participated actively. From 2009 to the present, there has been a similar trend, and it is escalating. However, the period after the Second World War shows a decreasing trend with regard to the international footprint of HTS. The question is what the reasons for the decline and the recent renaissance could be. Since 2009 when the HTS became an open-access journal, 349 articles were published by international scholars in the field of Biblical Studies alone – 115 in OTS and 234 in NTS.⁵¹

HTS is a megajournal which is accredited by Scopus of Elsevier, the Clarivate Analytics WoS Index (formerly referred to as Thomson Reuters ISI, Arts & Humanities) and SciELO SA of the ASSAf. HTS is the oldest and largest theological journal in SA and is affiliated to the FT at the UP. However, despite its extent, it did not take its place in the world rankings of citation impact as would have been expected (Buitendag 2016:6 of 11; SJR 2016). Currently, the relationship between publications and the number of citations which they generate is an important factor in higher education since this, among other things, determines the world ranking of universities. The most important factor is actually the number of citations as it translates to a higher average number of citations per staff member. HTS nonetheless makes a significant contribution with its high number of citations, which is a result of its high number of publications. Seen from this perspective, ‘size’

51. In this chapter, the emphasis is mainly on journal articles in the field of biblical scholarship. The international engagement of the church historian, S.P. Engelbrecht, is therefore not discussed. Engelbrecht was one of the first group of professors appointed after the establishment of the FT at the UP in 1917.

does matter. The most prominent index is Scopus of Elsevier, which with its most significant metric, CiteScore, calculates the IF over a period of three years. In the domain of theology and religion, 345 accredited journals are included in Scopus Metrics.⁵²

From 2013 to 2015, HTS published 438 articles with 79 citations, self-citations excluded. The emphasis on world ranking at the UP would require from HTS to decrease the ratio. In other words, it should have fewer articles and more citations, or at least more citations per article. However, if such a requirement becomes an institutional demand, the overemphasis on world ranking would stand in direct opposition to HTS' editorial policy which aims not only at expanding the journal as a megajournal but also at providing an opportunity for young researchers and scholars from African countries to publish and so participate in international scholarly discourse (see Buitendag 2014:5 for the significance of the university as institution, and particularly theology and religious studies, for Africa). Where relevance for Africa and building capacity amongst young researchers are focal points, the pressure of world ranking without distinguishing between natural sciences, on the one hand, and humanities and social sciences, on the other hand, might become counter productive.

According to an article entitled 'Rethinking research impact by Theology and Religious Studies with references to the Faculty of Theology at the University of Pretoria' celebrating the centennial anniversary of the FT and authored by the Johan Buitendag (2017), international universities that are regarded as a benchmark by the UP include the Humboldt University in Berlin, the Free University of Amsterdam and the University of Edinburgh. In the field of TRS the ratio of citations per publication achieved by the UP is more favourable than the ratio of these universities (Buitendag 2017). In this regard, HTS is the

52. See Beatty (2017), and also <https://journalmetrics.scopus.com/>.

main source of publications for the UP (see Buitendag's [2016] first 'Centenary' article, entitled 'The idea of the University and the Pretoria Model: *Apologia pro statu Facultatis Theologicae Universitatis Pretoriensis ad secundum saeculum*'). According to Scopus Metrics, HTS compares as follows with the top international journals in this field. An excerpt of the statistics for the period 2013 to 2015 demonstrates the following (see Beatty 2017):

- *Harvard Theological Review* published 66 articles with 31 citations – a ratio of 32%.
- *Journal of Biblical Literature* published 146 articles with 56 citations – a ratio of 27%.
- *Journal for the Study of New Testament Studies* published 60 articles with 20 citations – a ratio of 27%.
- *New Testament Studies* published 97 articles with 30 citations – a ratio of 27%.
- *Scottish Journal of Theology* published 70 articles with 14 citations – a ratio of 19%.
- *Biblical Interpretation* published 65 articles with 9 citations – a ratio of 11%.
- *Novum Testamentum* published 54 articles with 13 citations – a ratio of 20%.
- *Biblical Theology Bulletin* published 60 articles with 5 citations – a ratio of 7%.
- *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovaniensis* published 71 articles with 11 citations – a ratio of 15%.
- *Vetus Testamentum* published 142 articles with 24 citations – a ratio of 14%.
- *Journal of Old Testament Studies* published 76 articles with 9 citations – a ratio of 12%
- HTS published 438 articles with 79 citations – a ratio of 15%.

This comparison over three years indicates that the HTS compares well with the most influential journals, including those of international scholarly societies (e.g. Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas, Society for Old Testament Study, Society of Biblical Literature, American Academy of Religion and the International

Academy of PT) and journals in Belgium, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the USA which are published *inter alia* by Peeters Publishers, Cambridge University Press, Brill Publishers and Harvard University Press.

Against this background and the benchmark which was set, the chapter gives a brief overview of the history and scope of HTS. It shows how HTS, at its inception, was an international asset by describing the legacy of the four ‘founding’ biblical scholars of the FT, namely Antonie Greyvenstein, Berend Gemser, Adrianus van Selms and Albert Geysler. The chapter argues that if editorial policy should defer to world-ranking aspirations, HTS international footprint and its relevance for Africa will be largely diminished. To substantiate this argument, a brief historical overview indicates the reasons for successful international collaboration in the past and why this has disappeared in the middle phase. It indicates how it would be possible to maintain the recently reoccupied space, and by doing so, the international footprint will come full circle. Yet, world-ranking elitism can be compared to the paradox in today’s socio-political and economic world: While globalisation is a reality, the trend is inward and self-serving. Such a trend goes against everything religion stands for and can lead to the demise of academic TRS in SA.

■ ***HTS Theological Studies/Teologiese Studies from inception to the present***

HTS was founded in 1943 (see Human & Van Aarde 2008:9–24). It was an initiative of theologians from the UP (professors of the NRCA) and Dutch scholars.⁵³ The Cape Town based international

53. At its inception, the editorial board of *HTS Theological Studies* formulated three objectives: sound scholarly biblical investigation, loyalty to the legacy of the Reformation and to the Hervormde Kerk and accommodation of the research

Dutch publishing house HAUM/Du Buissy was the first sponsor. The theologians were responsible for managing the academic quality, and HAUM/Du Buissy Publishing House provided the administrative infrastructure. The NRC became the title owner of HTS. In other words, HTS is not a journal of the UP or its FT, and it should not be regarded as an 'in-house' scholarly journal. After its establishment at the UP in 2000, the Reformed Theological College of the NRC took up the administrative task while academic quality was the responsibility of the editorial board of national and international academics. Only a small minority of these was attached to the UP. This is still the case today. The financial contribution by the Hervormde Kerk for the publication of the first issue in 1943 was £25 (see Oberholzer 2010a:2).

Over the years, a close collaboration developed between the NRC and the FT at the UP (established in 1917) regarding the infrastructure and scholarly quality of HTS. The Reformed Theological College is responsible for the infrastructure and the Editorial Board ensures that HTS adheres to the criteria for accreditation set by the DHET of the South African national government. Tertiary institutions in SA receive financial subsidy from the Department of Education for published research outputs in accredited journals. Since the beginning of this subsidy policy, HTS has been recognised as an accredited scholarly journal. Due to its international accreditation by the WoS (Thomson Reuters ISI, Arts & Humanities Index), Elsevier Scopus and SciELO SA, the accreditation of HTS by DHET is automatic.

(footnote 53 continues ...)

articles of scholars from other ecclesial traditions (cf. Oberholzer 2010a:2 of 20). Over the years, which now already amounts to a century, the lecturers in the FT who were attached to the NRC have remained loyal to all these objectives. What has changed is that the accommodation of the theological contributions of other scholars has transcended the Reformed focus. Articles have been accepted for publication in an inclusive manner so that even research originated from other denominational and religious traditions has been disseminated by HTS, provided that they are blind peer-reviewed to ensure academic quality and that they are non-polemical of nature and not hostile to Christianity.

At the beginning of 2009, commencing with volume 65 of HTS, the NRCA entered into a publishing agreement with African Online Scientific Information Systems (AOSIS) and became South Africa's first online, open-access theological journal. In 2007, the journals *Practical Theology in South Africa* and HTS united their endeavours and became one theological research portal. Online open access means that all content is freely available without charge to users. They can read, download, copy, distribute, print, search or link to the full text of the articles or use the texts for any other lawful purpose without requesting permission from the publisher or the author. A total of 4 767 707 downloads have been recorded since 2009 (when HTS became a fully open-access electronic journal), and the journal is read in 163 countries. In December 2015, the following number of visitors ('readers') have been registered for 2015: Africa - 15 710, the Americas - 14 583, Europe - 5873, Asia - 3726, Oceania - 1152. Of these numbers, new visitors amount to 30 379, of which 10 665 returned as visitors.

■ The legacy of the founding scholars: Foundational freedom

J. de Zwaan (Leiden), H.Th. Obbink (Utrecht) and G. van der Leeuw (Groningen) from the Netherlands played an influential role in the first Editorial Board together with the Dutch-born internationally recognised OT scholars B. Gemser and A. van Selms. Other academics on the Editorial Board during the first four years (1943-1947/8) were J.H.J.A. Greyvenstein (NTS and PT), S.P. Engelbrecht (Church History) and A.S. Geyser (NTS) of the UP. Greyvenstein, Gemser, Van Selms and Geyser can be regarded as the 'founding biblical scholars'.

The contribution of the founding biblical scholars of the FT since 1917, namely Antonie Greyvenstein (1878-1967), Berend Gemser (1890-1962), Adrianus van Selms (1906-1984) and Albert Geyser (1918-1985), can be described in terms of three cornerstones. The first is that no confession or cultural tradition should get in

the way of free biblical investigation which has the aim to bring the gospel message to life. Nationalism is the temptation to protect one's own interests, to turn inward, to deny the universal implications of the gospel message and is an obstacle to sharing the love of Christ unconditionally. The key term of the centennial celebration of the FT in 2017, namely 'gateway', expresses this ideal of academic freedom and openness to all.

The second cornerstone is freedom from Calvinistic fundamentalism. Fundamentalism is the attempt to come into the right relationship with God by following 'the letter' of the Confessions. A better alternative would be to preserve 'the spirit' of the Confessions together with the spirit of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The result is liberation from fundamentalism and separatism – and openness to the other.

The third cornerstone is freedom from liberal modernism. This is the ideology that human ideals can become the ultimate reality, free from God and the gospel of Christ and absolutely free from confessions. The consequence of this 'freedom' is human corruption and death. Fundamentalism and nationalism, however paradoxical that may sound, can feed into this ideology because confessions and nations are human constructs. The Belgian Confession is clear that no confession or human ordinance or resolution of churches or human ideals or cultural values can be remotely compared with the gospel of Christ (cf. Janssen 2016:159–161)

■ Crossroads or gateway?

These cornerstones were articulated by the 'founding scholars' in their research articles published in HTS. At the 50th anniversary celebrations of the FT, the values inscribed in these cornerstones were recognised but not embraced.⁵⁴ They were labelled 'social

54. J.A. Loader (1979:114) demonstrates that, in South Africa, fundamentalism has not been challenged adequately. There were scholars who kept a neutral stance. However, they did not advocated neutrality but nurtured fundamentalism. Others have denounced fundamentalism as a matter of principle but, paradoxically in

gospel' and 'humanism', allegedly similar to thought found in the work of contemporary theologians such as Rudolph Otto with his emphasis on holiness, Rudolf Bultmann with his 'subjective' existential hermeneutics and Jürgen Moltmann with his ecumenical theology. In an almost preposterous tone, 'biblical-reformational theology' was considered a remedy ('korreksie') for the 'heterodoxy' allegedly promoted by Otto, Bultmann and Moltmann (Oberholzer 1981:47) – all three actually Protestant theologians! In contrast, a conviction was articulated that civil religion ('burgerlike godsdiens') would always be the temptation and that this temptation must be resisted (Oberholzer 1981:47). Ironically, the UP was acclaimed by leading figures in the FT to be a tertiary educational institute for the benefit of Afrikaners ('Afrikanervolk') (Oberholzer 1981:43). However, what was not recognised is that fundamentalism and nationalism nurture a paradigm of racism, sexism and homophobia.⁵⁵

A different tragedy manifested at the time of the 75th-anniversary celebrations of the FT. The faculty demonstrated to some extent that it was ready for the new millennium (see Oberholzer 2010c:9-10 of 35). However, as far as the pioneer scholars were concerned, no mention was made of the contributions of Gemser and Van Selms in preparation of the new millennium (see, inter alia, Oberholzer 1992:67-82). Only Greyvenstein and Geysler were commemorated but often at the cost of marginalising those who dared to remember (see inter alia Van Aarde, De Villiers & Buitendag 2014).

When the 'founding scholars' left the church, international collaboration largely came to an end in the 1950s and 1960s.

(footnote 54 continues ...)

their own academic discourse, articulated their views in such a way that their discourse actually served the objectives and technics of fundamentalism.

55. Oberholzer (1963:3), however, in an address at the formal annual opening of the Faculty of Theology on 19 February 1963 expressed his opinion that it should be conceded that Bultmann was correct in claiming that the history of Israel as witnessed in the OT should be regarded as a 'failure' ('*scheitern der Geschichte*').

Scholars of the new millennium who dared to commemorate them and embrace the values of their contribution engaged in ecumenical relationships and sought international collaboration. As a result, HTS has grown into a megajournal – a fitting monument to the perseverance of the ‘founding scholars’. The focus and scope of HTS read as follows, ‘*HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* is an acclaimed Open Access journal with broad coverage that promotes multidisciplinary, religious, and biblical aspects of studies in the international theological arena’ (HTS n.d.). This is in line with both the values of the founding scholars (published in the first volume of HTS in 1943) and the ideal of the vision and mission of the Faculty of the FT at the UP, formulated as follows by Johan Buitendag (2016):

In the process of unfolding my argument about my way to a re-orientation of the Pretoria Model, it is appropriate to conclude ... by offering my understanding of both what a university in my view is all about and together with that, what theology in this context could be. It does not exclude other definitions, but as argued, the grammar prescribes the following: ‘Universities are places of debate and contestation which provide space for new knowledge to be created, intellectual activity and freedom of thought’ (South Africa 2015). Theology is a scholarly endeavour by believers in the public sphere in order to come to grips with multi-dimensional realities (being) in a manner that matters (bread). (p. 6)

In the course of the last three years, 124 black African scholars published in HTS. During the last eight years, 349 international biblical scholars published in the journal. On 15 February 2017, downloads of articles published in HTS in 2016 amounted to the astounding number of 72 865, most of which from the Centenary Volume dedicated to the Vice-Chancellor, Cheryl de la Rey.

If the ideal of world ranking advocated by higher-education institutions is not balanced by service to both academia in Africa and ecumenically oriented TRS the result will be similar to the devastating effects of fundamentalism and nationalism. Theologians attached to the UP would be deprived of academic enthusiasm to maintain their publication achievements. When

the ideal of ranking becomes paramount to inward self-serving focus, it goes against the grain of the reality of globalisation and runs the risk of bringing international collaboration to an end. In the current era of globalisation, cross-country cooperation requires that South African publishing initiatives and endeavours (journals as well as books) are to be recognised as integral to international academia. Not only South African theological journals but also monographs and collected works ought to be actively supported by means of institutionally initiated financial incentives. Such an approach and policy demand the commendation of multi-focused theological research and interfaith religious studies and not merely an overemphasised individualism and specialisation.

Bibliometrics with regard to research output is needed for sound research management. Ranking will follow as a bonus almost automatically if quality research is done. What is an imperative to the FT is service to church and society in SA, Africa and abroad. The objective and motivation to serve Africa were advocated strongly by Dean Johan Buitendag (2014) in his article entitled 'Between the Scylla and the Charybdis: Theological education in the 21st century in Africa'. The current collaboration by non-South African scholars is the effect of their respect for the proven achievements of their South African colleagues. However, this collaboration could be put at risk if ranking criteria are applied by university management without taking into consideration the distinction between the nature and practice of scientific disciplines (humanities/social sciences and natural sciences). A strategy which measures AH – including TRS – with the same yardstick as the natural sciences (overemphasising citations and the IF of research output) should be challenged. However, this does not imply that ranking per se should be dismissed. Ranking itself is a globalising phenomenon in the sense that comparison and competition with the rest of the world are measured. However, when competition neglects the insight that a university is a 'public good' and that theology presupposes epistemological inclusivity, the trend to overemphasise ranking

needs to be challenged. It could 'kill' local African theological journals and with it the opportunity for upcoming scholars from Africa to publish in locally relevant journals.

An alternative strategy for publishing could still be the focus to publish in 'international journals' in compliance with the 'definition' given to the term 'international', namely journals indexed inter alia in Scopus of Elsevier, WoS of Clarivate Analytics and SciELO SA of the ASSAf. At the same time, the publication of books in AH ought to be promoted more assertively as a strategy to influence institutional reputation (an important measure in world rankings). Ironically, the international ranking agencies point out that citations in AH are rather meaningless, and the focus here must be on other parameters of ranking measurement, for example staff-student ratio, international scholars-staff ratio and citations per staff member.

With regard to HTS, it should be acknowledged that, according to Scopus, HTS had more citations for 2015 than the combined total of the other four theological journals that are ranked top in Africa,⁵⁶ namely 79 citations versus 72. However, HTS also published more articles (438) than the other four together (403) during the three-year period of 2012–2014. As a result of its high article output, its three-year IF (Citesore) ranks HTS lower than *Neotestamentica* and *Missionalia* which are placed first and second respectively in Africa. HTS is ranked third. Yet, when one looks at output (number of articles) and citations, HTS has the same 'influence' as the other top journals together.

Therefore, research conducted in the FT at the UP and disseminated by the scholarly journals closely attached to the UP should in the first place strive for honesty to the nature, epistemology and methodology of TRS. This implies a challenge to relativize human ideals with the spirit of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

56. They are *Neotestamentica*, *Missionalia*, *Verbum et Ecclesia* and *HTS Theological Studies* (see Steynberg 2017).

■ *Verbum et Ecclesia*: Establishing a clear footprint in Africa

VE was established in 1980 and is connected to *Excelsus*, the Dutch Reformed Church's Centre for Ministerial Development. This academic journal had an innocuous start at the FT (Section B) but has since developed into an international multidisciplinary theological journal with a focus on original research, contextual theological perspectives and perspectives from Africa, from women and from emerging academics from marginal groups.

The journal envisions to portray an increasing African profile in future since statistics have also shown that the impact of the journal is specifically evident in Africa. The Africanisation of research themes and foci on Africa will also contribute to the Faculty of Theology's academic and social impact on this continent in future.

■ Introduction: Small beginnings

Skrif en Kerk (SK) was the original Afrikaans name of VE with its establishment in 1980. The initiator and first editor of the journal was Willem S. (Riempies) Prinsloo, an OT scholar who represented the Lecturers' Council (Dosenteraad) of the FT (Section B), the theological faculty of the Afrikaans speaking DRC. In a turbulent socio-political and over-heated religious Afrikaans-speaking society, the initial aim or intention of this journal was to convey the academic theology of the Faculty to Afrikaans-speaking ministers of religion and their congregations. Behind this aim was the intention to counter fundamentalist theologies from the viewpoints of OTS and NTS, PT, Church History, Missiology and Science of Religion as well as Dogmatics and Christian Ethics. The only international scholars who would have been able to read and understand the articles were Flemish or Dutch speaking scholars.

Volume 1 of the journal (1980) consisted of only six articles from six male Afrikaans professors from OT, NT, PT, Church

History and Church polity in the Faculty.⁵⁷ Thirty-seven years later, in volume 37 (with two issues) of 2016, 68 articles were published in theology and related (or interdisciplinary) themes, written by both men and women from a variety of different communities in SA, Africa and other parts of the globe.⁵⁸ The second issue of Volume 37 (2016) focused on the theme of gender, sexualities and women studies.⁵⁹ These articles appeared predominantly in English. VE has been an open-access, online, peer-reviewed theological journal since 2009.⁶⁰

The difference between the first (1980) and last (2016) volumes of the journal's completed publications clearly indicates the small beginnings, change in focus and scope, growth in readership and footprint, and the expansion of different horizons of VE over almost four decades. Some of these changes are indicated and discussed below. In addition, we reflect on visionary elements for the journal while contemplating its past, present and future impact regarding theology in its inter and transdisciplinary discussions with other disciplines and sciences. New future contexts would require contemplation to reach new academic horizons and impact.

■ Different phases of growth

Apart from the socio-political changes in SA after 1994, increasing tendencies of globalisation, the role of the World Wide Web, the merging of two Faculties of Theology (Sections A and B) at the UP, international rankings of the universities and other factors, the different Editors-in-Chief have brought change and

57. <http://verbumetecclisia.org.za/index.php/VE/issue/view/45>

58. <http://verbumetecclisia.org.za/index.php/VE/issue/view/90>

59. <http://verbumetecclisia.org.za/index.php/VE/issue/view/91>

60. <http://www.ve.org.za>. The journal is published by AOSIS, an international online publisher.

development in the journal's outlook and presentation. Without repeating the journal's history (Human & Van Aarde 2008:9–20), it is important to underscore some aspects to illustrate the journal's growth and footprint.

As already mentioned in the previous paragraph, Willem S. Prinsloo (1980–1997) was the first editor of SK. He was an OT scholar. His scholarly competence and international exposure ensured that quality academic research was disseminated in the Afrikaans-speaking (and later broader) communities. His successor was Cas J.A. Vos, a practical theologian (1998–2001). Vos was also a systematic theologian and poet, which impacted on his approach as editor. He added a rubric, namely *Theology Chronicle*, to every edition of VE, in which an author discussed in-depth current scholarly books or themes for the current contextual situation.⁶¹ More English and international scholars contributed to the journal during this time. At the end of Vos's tenure, the name of the journal was changed from SK to VE. Hereby the journal has assumed a broader inclusive and international character.

From 2002 to 2015 Dirk J. Human, an OT specialist, filled the office of Editor-in-Chief. Alphonso Groenewald and later Kobus Kok and Cas Wepener became Assistant-Editors to assist with book reviews and communication. During this period, several changes took place, namely a decline in Afrikaans contributions and an increase in English publications (see Human & Van Aarde 2008:22–23) as well as an increase in international scholars (Human & Van Aarde 2008:22). Furthermore, articles were increasingly published in other recognised African indigenous languages like Sepedi (see Farisani 2011; Mahlangu 2011; Mampuru & Mojalefa 2015; Mojalefa 2011; Vellem 2015). In 2009, VE became an open-access, online, peer-reviewed journal that is accessible globally. Whereas 250 to 350 hard

61. <http://verbumeteclesia.org.za/index.php/VE/issue/view/72>. See also the following volumes of the journal under his editorship.

copies of issues were published before 2009, the number of visitors and downloads increased dramatically between 2011 and 2016.⁶²

During the tenure of Human, the focus and scope were narrowed to increase the journal's current unique focus. Apart from its earlier focus to publish original national and international research and to provide intra and interdisciplinary theological and scientific dialogue with contextual perspectives, VE started to encourage scholars from Africa as well as women and young academics and scholars from minority groups to submit their research for publication. In addition, special volumes or *Festschriften* were dedicated to important relevant themes or retiring colleagues in the Faculty, mostly edited by invited editors. Themes include sexuality (VE 27/1, 2006), DRC Theological training at the UP from 1938 to 2008 (VE 30/3, 2009), violence (VE 32/2, 2011), ubuntu (VE 36/2, 2015) and Ecodomy-Life in its fullness (VE 36/3, 2015) while *Festschriften* were dedicated to Archbishop D. Tutu (VE 23/3, 2002), C.J. Wethmar (VE 29/2, 2008), P.G.J. Meiring (VE 29/3, 2008), D.E. Villiers (VE 33/2, 2012), J.H. Le Roux (VE 34/2, 2013) and J.C. Müller (VE 35/2, 2014). For C.J.A. Vos, a *Festschrift* was dedicated in a special book volume (Human & Veldsman 2012).

Due to the requirement for international standards for academic articles and publications, VE is accredited on several recognised lists. This includes the DHET list for subsidised journals; the Scopus list, which serves as statistical source for the THE and QS university rating systems; the SciELO SA list; the Norwegian Register for scientific journals and several other indexing services.⁶³ The journal and its Editorial Board remain committed to international publishing standards and its peer-review policy.

62. See the statistics of the annual journal report for 2016 in Addendum 1.

63. See the homepage of VE regarding indexing and archiving and DHET accreditation (<http://www.ve.org.za>).

In 2016, Daniël Veldsman, a systematic theologian of the Department of Dogmatics and Christian Ethics, succeeded Dirk Human as Editor-in-Chief of VE. He immediately inherited a very difficult national and international tertiary environment and is challenged by several external and internal challenges. These challenges are the very same as those that have been aptly described by Van Aarde in his section on HTS and need not to be repeated here. Since his appointment, articles on themes relating to the dialogue between the natural sciences and religion (theology) has received noticeable emphasis.

Perhaps a last remark regarding the growth of the journal will suffice. Keeping in mind that VE was always connected to the structures of the Afrikaans-speaking DRC as juridical authority,⁶⁴ the journal has, since 1980, gradually exceeded the boundaries of ecclesiastic borders, exclusivity regarding language and race and the challenges of local and national perspectives. Its footprint in Africa globally is becoming stronger.

■ DHET and ASSAf audit report (2013)

The DHET and the ASSAf have been conducting audits on scholarly journals in Religion, Theology and Related Fields since 2010. The main aims of the audits were to see if these South African journals complied with international practices and standards and were worthy of state subsidy and to improve unhealthy cultures. In 2012, the DHET recognised VE on its list of subsidised journals.

After a review of specific criteria and procedures, national and international peer reviewers, panels and meetings (Gevers 2013:11-16), a consensus report was issued by ASSAf on all 23

64. This includes the Centre for Theology and Community (CTC), the Institute for Ecumenical Research (IMER) and since 2008, the Centre for Ministerial Development (Excelsus).

theological and related journals. The journals were arranged in six specific categories, namely antiquity, mainstream theology, specific theological traditions, science/scholarship in theology, religious studies and specific religious traditions (Gevers 2013:3–4). VE was categorised in the locus of mainstream theology (Gevers 2013:41–44).

The panel's consensus view was that VE be accepted on the list of DHET-accredited journals and on the SciELO SA platform. Furthermore, the editor was encouraged to lead the journal to 'greater international and wider national participation' and 'tighter peer review' (Gevers 2013:44). In the consensus review, it is stated that 'the journal compares reasonably well with a number of international journals, but it is not in the same category as the leading international journals' (Gevers 2013:43). VE accepted these challenges to improve on aspects of its publication policies and practices in the next couple of years.

■ **Statistics: Journal report 2016**

Some statistics in the annual report of 2016 provide evidence of the qualitative improvement of article publication and the journal's African footprint.

Table 1 and Table 2 illustrate the submitted manuscripts and the published articles between 2010 and 2016.⁶⁵

These tables illustrate that, every year, more manuscripts were submitted than published. Even though some manuscripts were transmitted to be published in the following year due to the peer-review process, there was still a notable rejection rate. This emphasises the editor's control over the quality of submitted manuscripts.

65. See journal report for 2016 in Addendum 1.

TABLE 1: Submitted articles between 2010 and 2016.

Year	Submitted articles
2010	77
2011	74
2012	101
2013	88
2014	66
2015	132
2016	120

TABLE 2: Published articles between 2010 and 2016.

Year	Published articles
2010	54
2011	51
2012	47
2013	70
2014	74
2015	84
2016	68

Table 3 and Table 4 show the number of first-time visitors who visited the VE website from various continents and a detailed picture of those visitors from Africa.⁶⁶

In comparison to previous statistics, the interest of African readers showed the largest increase in 2016. Continents that followed were America, Europe, Asia and Oceania. The African footprint of VE seems evident (Table 4).

The largest number of first-time visitors to the journal in Africa are South Africans. This underlines VE's national and continental affinity.

66. See journal report for 2016 in Addendum 1.

TABLE 3: First-time visitors per continent in 2016.

Continent	First-time visitors
Africa	47 272
America	17 942
Europe	7235
Asia	5478
Oceania	1543

TABLE 4: First-time visitors from African countries in 2016.

In Africa	First-time visitors
South Africa	25 130
Kenya	12 139
Nigeria	2708
Zimbabwe	1492
Sudan	1224

TABLE 5: Female authors between 2009 and 2016.

Year	N
2009	5
2010	5
2011	9
2012	3
2013	13
2014	12
2015	17
2016	22

Another significant contribution to VE has been female authors. Statistics from between 2009 and 2016 show clearly that there has been an increase in the number of female authors (Table 5). Hopefully this upward trajectory will continue in future.

Finally statistics on the journal’s citations and impact of the past few years (Table 6), shows a growth in citations.

TABLE 6: Citations between 2012 and 2016.

Year	Citations
2012	9
2013	40
2014	41
2015	59
2016	61

TABLE 7: Citation-based measurements.

Citation-based measurement	2015
CiteScore, based on Scopus, Elsevier	0.17
Source-Normalised Impact per Paper based on Scopus, Elsevier	0.40
Scimago Journal Rank (SJR), based on Scopus, Elsevier	0.16
H-index, based on Google Scholar	7.00

TABLE 8: Downloads between 2013 and 2016.

Year	Downloads
2013	221 354
2014	364 126
2015	522 621
2016	556 674

Citation-based measurements of VE for 2015 are represented in Table 7.⁶⁷

It is important to caution that the quality of individual articles should be assessed of the journal. In this regard VE still has to improve in the future.

The number of downloads of articles over the past four years is shown in Table 8.

67. <http://verbumeteclesia.org.za/index.php/ve/pages/view/journal-impact>. The editor cautions that 'authors, readers and researchers should assess the quality of the content of individual articles, and not judge the quality of articles by the reputation of the journal in which they are published'.

These statistics clearly show an increase in the number of downloads over the past four years. The Editor-in-Chief works towards increasing this tendency in future.

■ **Clear footprint in Africa: Concluding remarks**

From the above depiction and statistics, it is evident that VE is developing a clear footprint regarding theological impact in Africa. This fact contributes to the Africanisation of the journal and the contextualisation of relevant theological themes and content. The improvement of academic quality and participation of stronger national and international research with the focus on Africa, women, marginalised groups and relevant contextual themes will be the main drivers of the journal's publication culture in future. The same holds – as has been indicated in the previous section – for its more established and stronger sister journal at the FT namely HTS. Both are engaging, sharing and establishing their respective footprints as scholarly journals in service to church and society in SA – and in Africa and abroad.

■ **Summary: Chapter 10**

The chapter forms part of the centennial celebration of the FT at the UP. The focus is on the two scholarly journals attached to the FT in Pretoria, namely HTS and VE. The first and longer section of the chapter is on HTS, the oldest and largest of the two journals. The second and much shorter section is on VE. The overarching aim of the chapter is to tell the story of their respective historical and formal footprints that have shaped their respective characters as scientific theological journals.

Much attention is given to the contemporary functioning and positioning of the journals within the broader university and intellectual context but also in relationship to the African context.

Addendum 1

VERBUM ET ECCLESIA, FIRST QUARTER, 2016



JANUARY - MARCH 2016

JOURNAL REPORT

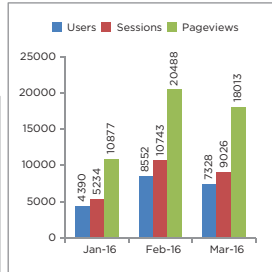
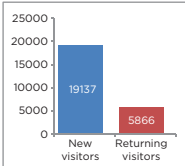
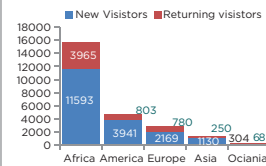
ONLINE ACTIVITY

User: A visitor who had at least one session within the selected date range. Session: A container for the actions a user takes on the website, 1 user can have multiple sessions.

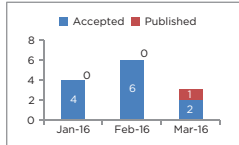
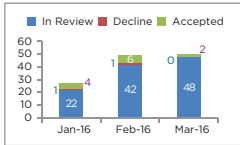
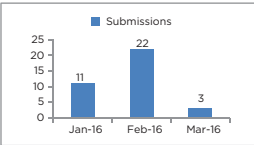
Pageviews: Total website pages browsed by users.

Newvisitor: A user who did not have Google Analytics cookies at the time of the visit.

Returning visitor: A user with your existing Google Analytics cookies from a previous visit.



MANUSCRIPT OVERVIEW



SUBMISSION ORIGIN

- JANUARY**
 University of South Africa (5), Stellenbosch University (1), North-West University (2), University of Pretoria (2), University of KwaZulu-Natal (1)
- FEBRUARY**
 University of South Africa (10), Stellenbosch University (1), University of Johannesburg (1), University of Botswana (1), North-West University (4), University of Pretoria (3), Rector of Kasa Vubu University (1), Perth Bible College (1)
- MARCH**
 University of South Africa (1), University of Pretoria (1), United Church of Zambia University (1)

DECISIONS IN REVIEW

- JANUARY**
 Accept Submissions (4), Revisions Required (4), Resubmit for Review (2), Declines Submission (1), No Decision (16)
- FEBRUARY**
 Accept Submissions (6), Revisions Required (7), Resubmit for Review (2), Declines Submission (1), No Decision (33)
- MARCH**
 Accept Submissions (2), Revisions Required (8), Resubmit for Review (1), Declines Submission (0), No Decision (39)

PUBLISHED CONTENT

- COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**
 South Africa (1)
- PLACE OF ORIGIN**
 University of South Africa (1)
- SECTION**
 Original Research (1)

SUBMITTED
36

ACCEPTED
12

PUBLISHED
1

ACTIONS

TOTAL DOWNLOADS
2634583
 RECORDED SINCE 2009

Article that earned the most downloads:
 Christianity and the African traditional religion(s): The postcolonial round of Engagement
 Author: David T. Adamo
 DOI: 10.4102/ve.v32i1.285
 Downloads: 103068

CITATIONS RECEIVED
7
 SINCE JANUARIE 2016

Article that earned the most citations:
 Pitfalls in 'Biblical' leadership
 Author: Volker Kessler
 DOI: 10.4102/ve.v34i1.721
 Citations: 2

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