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THE BIBLE, OPEN AND DISTANCE EDUCATION AND LEARNING, AND SPIRITUALITY: POSSIBILITIES IN A POST-SECULAR TIME

ABSTRACT

To teach the Bible to students of theology at tertiary level (university/seminary/(Bible/Mission) college) is at the best of times fraught with difficulties. Combining the initially often intellectually a-critical religious sentiments of students with the demands of biblical/Old Testament/ New Testament studies as science (language skills, exegetical methodologies, critical theories, hermeneutics of understanding and of relevance) is characterised by some difficulties, which lead to various and some extreme reactions among students. The balance between spirituality and exegesis is not always easy to maintain for many teachers of theology. These problems are in some respects compounded in Open and Distance Education and Learning institutions such as the University of South Africa, where direct contact with students and, hence, spiritual formation (undertaken either implicitly or explicitly) is limited and media-ted. Yet, new times also hold new promises. This contribution outlines an intellectual matrix of these problems and dynamics, with possibilities offered that align well with the more faith-positive cultural sentiments currently dawning internationally, known as post-secularism.

1.   AN INTELLECTUAL ARCHAEOLOGY

Part of my contribution is, in some respects, self-reflective. Not in the sense that I will foremost be analysing myself, but that I will be drawing more overtly than usual on my professional history and research writings.[1] These self-reflective moments, based on work experience, relate as much to my academic positions and intellectual reflections thereupon as to my research publications on four matters, namely the Bible, Christian spirituality, theological education, and the intersection between these matters.

I outlined my career in Lombaard (2016a:1-2) and elaborated on it in Lombaard (2019:3-4). This included briefly:

• Theological Education by Extension College (Johannesburg): Education by post, mostly; pre-degree to degree-equivalent qualifications (four years).

• Faculty of Theology, University of Pretoria: Telematisising courses as supplementary mode to traditional teaching modes (five years).

• University of South Africa: Fully electronic mega-university courses. I worked exclusively with postgraduate students in Christian spirituality (15 years).

Between the presentation of the paper, on which this publication is based, and the time of its publication, I changed my professional affiliation, and took up a professorship in Practical Theology and Mission Studies at the University of Pretoria on 1 March 2021. Given the altered teaching methods necessitated by the 2020-2021 COVID-19 pandemic, and my finalising this article, most of the teaching was conducted via electronic media.

My academic backgrounds at the University of Johannesburg – then called the Rand Afrikaans University – (communications studies and theology), the University of Pretoria (theology), and the North-West University's Potchefstroom campus (communication studies), which were rounded off during the above work years, were in the Humanities, namely communication studies (religious communications) and theology (Old Testament studies). This dual education quite naturally and in various

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1   In a sense, all research does so: One cannot write about what one has not read, lived through or critically reflected on. This intellectual biography is, however, more often than not hidden behind the subject matter and the competences required to analyse one's topic, but with an author's self often visible "between the lines", as it were, for the careful reader to see.

ways influenced my writing, which, tightly tailored to the topic of this presentation, led to the key insights summarised below.[2]

I draw on the insights from my additional publications, in order to construct the argumentation:

• About teaching spirituality in a university context (Lombaard 2015a; 2021 forthcoming).

• About the methodological tensions inherent to the discipline of spirituality (Lombaard 2011).

• On how post-secularity relates to the teaching of spirituality (Lombaard 2015b; 2016c; Lombaard *et al.* 2019).

• On influential figures from, for example, Old Testament studies and their contribution to spirituality studies, among other writings (Lombaard 2006).

Many of the issues, on which I elaborated in these publications, are viewed, in this instance, as prior building blocks, on which the argument below rests, rather than rebuilding those arguments anew.

2.   "GOODBYE"[3] BIBLE = "GOD BE WITH YE" BIBLE

Basically, Christianity cannot do without the Bible (Lombaard 1999:26-41). Although this may be taken as a self-serving argument, given my specialisation also in the Old Testament, not to mention my Calvinist roots, the argument in a chapter titled "Ecumenism and the Bible" (Lombaard 1999:26-41) was on the centrality of the Bible to the identity of the churches. Apart from the usual confessional statements on Scripture, from which churchgoers are led to elevated beliefs about this Holy Library, the Bible also has the phenomenological advantage that it provides continuity as a relatively stable point of orientation for Christian identity. This qualification "relatively" is not inconsequential, both because the canon is not identical across church traditions[4] and because the interpretation of the Bible is not stagnant.

The latter interpretative dynamism relates to two matters. On the one hand, as scholarship expands and, on the other, as the relationship

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2   More could be said, and further explications could be taken on every point, as will be evident from reading what follows.

3   https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/79929 (goodbye): "Etymology: Probably shortened … *God be with you*".

4   See the much-undervalued publication by Deist (1988), who takes this matter to great depths.

between either an individual or the group/church and the Bible fluctuates over time, the Bible speaks differently. Or, perhaps better stated, the Bible is experienced as speaking differently than at another time. I keep for a moment to within church circles to illustrate each of these two matters. A great deal has been written about the "spiritual maturity" of individual believers in various ways,[5] and this is often related to the Bible (Merton 1972); yet church groups[6] also shift in what is often called their "hermeneutics".[7] Such a movement within and among churches can in our time best be illustrated in the controversies regarding homosexuality.[8]

Despite such flows of interpretation and currents in orientation towards the Bible, with seemingly ever greater diversities developing, Christian sentiments seem, for the greater part, to remain ardently in favour of keeping strong links to the Bible, with a prominent recent exception being Slenczka (2013:83-119), in relation to the Old Testament only (Lombaard 2016b:6-30). Such pro-Bible inclinations are sure to continue as, over the next decades, the world is set demographically to becoming more religious and more conservatively religious.[9] Broadly speaking, conservatism in Christianity – characterised by, *inter alia*, biblical literalism and traditionalist orientations on matters of marriage and sexuality, for example – is usually more avowedly linked to the Bible, whereas greater liberalism within Christianity – characterised by, *inter alia*, critical Bible reading and non-traditionalist orientations on matters of marriage and sexuality, for example – tends to be oriented more implicitly to the Bible; there are certainly exceptions to both these trends.

In addition, as much as the generally irenic pursuit of greater spiritual maturity would usually treasure the Bible (Merton 1972), even so in its more politically activist expressions (Nolan 1988; 2006), it must be noted that strong disagreements between circles, in dispute on the Bible and on its interpretation, show no less such an orientation. The circumstance

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5   From developmental psychology, the classic work by Fowler (1981); see Nel (2018:136-137, 165-169); on spiritual accompaniment, see, for example, the influential work of Merton (1960).

6   In this instance, church groups are understood as denominations, or parts of denominations, or intersections across denominations.

7   See, for example, on the African scene, classics such as Cochrane (1987) and Mosala (1989), and contemporary reviews such as those by Ukpong (2001:147-167). For a missiological analysis, see Van der Merwe (2015:166-185).

8   De Villiers (2006:186-198) provides excellent, systematised insights characterising the two major camps in this debate.

9   See the Pew survey reports on www.pewforum.org/2017/04/05/the-changing-global-religious-landscape/www.globalreligiousfutures.org. Lombaard (2016c:1-6).

remains that it is indeed *the Bible* that is under discussion; arguments of this kind are never about insignificant matters.

The Bible thus remains an essential constituent of by far the greater part of a notably diverse Christianity; it accordingly retains its phenomenological role as providing an instance, among a number of others, of continuity. It, therefore, can continue in its role of not only being interpreted by (the community of) believers, but of itself interpreting (the community of) the believers – a theological point made by both Luther and Calvin, though differently, and reflected on theologically in great detail in Rossouw (1963). In parallel, and remarkably, the classic post-modernist texts on texts also argue along similar lines, that texts are active/activated in various ways. These "texts on texts" do so by analysing deferred textual meaning (classically, Derrida 1976) and also via reader response theory (see, for example, Thiselton 2009:306-348). In both the latter approaches, though, interpreting texts functions without a realist conception of God, in its typically postulated self-enclosed world of interpretation. For that reason, they do not offer the same positive religious formation, which the older, confessional formulation would, that the Bible actively interprets the faithful.

At the same time and equally faith-affirming, the Bible has the spiritual function that it takes believers "away" from themselves (Lombaard 2020:1). This is the opposite of the self-help genre of books on pop-psychology or pop-spirituality and of the worst kind of Bible study groups, where everything revolves around the I, or of solely affirming theologies (all of which are forms of fundamentalism), where everything revolves around the us. The blind spot of such approaches is gigantic: it is everything but themselves. The hubris of such inclinations shows in the first, last and almost-everything-in-between centripetal question: "But what does this mean for me, respectively us?". Such an orientation is not unique to Christianity, nor to religion, and, within Christianity, it is no new theology, with for instance Psalm 109 both in itself and in its modern interpretations illustrating such a self-centeredness (Scheffler 2011:192-207).

Naturally, there is no such thing as a fully centripetal or a wholly centrifugal theology and/or engagement with the Bible and/or life of faith. The matter is one of priority. Where does the emphasis lie? On what I/we feel, think, believe, experience, say, do, aspire to, wish for? Or on – to keep to our topic in this instance – engagement with the Bible to find out more about the text and its world, about the God we find mediated by the Bible, and about the church/community/cause to be served?

3.　IMPLICATIONS FOR THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

To a substantial extent, students of theology choose this field of learning, because they feel themselves called to, or driven by a life of meaning through service. At the same time, given the conservative, fundamentalist, pietist and other more or less closely related expressions of faith that could give rise to such a sense of call, and from which most of the students in theology in South Africa therefore come, the own salvation and perhaps the sacrifice of the self take on central roles in their lives of faith. This translates practically into an expectation with many, though certainly not all, that their theology studies would be constituted primarily by "more of the same": that, which is already held dear, is to be affirmed and deepened. Theology studies may, within this mindset, be expected to be critical perhaps, but then in the sense only that errors or shortcomings may be eliminated (purification) and more spiritual value could be added in continuation with what has been experienced thus far (sanctification). Such encounters would be essentially affirming, which is centripetal, rather than putting to question dearly held and often hardly reflected on ideas and ideals. Such probing would be experienced as undermining rather than refining; destructive instead of instructive.

The immediate education context may well play a role, in this instance, given the different intentions with such varied, though not unrelated institutions such as universities, seminaries, Bible colleges and more. However, a generic indication of "the university way", "the seminary approach", "the Bible college manner" and more, is not viable, given the diversities involved. The learning environment, approach and method for studying the Bible, for teaching spirituality and for spiritual or ministerial formation is different for every university, seminary, Bible college, and so on, with each providing its own contents and emphases. In addition, there is, in some respects, substantive overlap between how some of these different types of institutions handle these matters. Put differently: there is no content, approach, emphasis, and so on that is distinct to any of these different types of institutions. Naturally, these also change over time, as contexts and the persons involved change. A highly complex and dynamic institutional matrix is, therefore, involved in such matters, which cannot be traced in this instance; the influence of such matters, however, must be acknowledged.

As much as it is good educational practice to start with students – as the cliché goes – "from where they are" (and naturally, the education enterprise is much more involved; see, for example, Künkler 2011), from there on to broaden their horizons, such horizons are – as all of us engaged in theological education know – certainly not always set up in order to

confirm the views with which students had arrived for their studies.[10] "Enriching students' outlook" – another cliché – is not equal to:[11]

- withholding from students coached (in church, school or more informally within broader society) in the Augustinian views on Scripture (such as that the opening chapters of the Bible relate a fall into sin from a state of initial grace), the by now no longer new theories on the non-Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch (see, for example, Albertz 2018:65-92);

- withholding from students, uninformed on the nature of historiography, what is commonly known as the synoptic problem (see, for example, Theissen 2007);

- maintaining a single, self-legitimating view of the history of the one true church, in the face of the history across millennia of heresies, schisms, reformations, revivals and experiences (see, for example, Crafford & Gous 1993);

- maintaining a single, own dogmatological/systematic-theological view of the nature of the sacraments (see, for example, Boersma & Levering 2015);

- keeping to the idea of the mission of the church as solely saving souls (see, for example, Bosch 1991), and

- keeping to the idea in practical theology that pastoral counselling and psychology are foundationally at odds with one another (see, for example, Greyvenstein 2019).

Be it the insights facilitated in our classes or those conveyed in standard textbooks in the particular field; be it that the responsible lecturer, the institution and/or the church involved, or any other bodies with interests at stake agree with these ideas, decisions on these matters are forced on the educational process. These decisions include which of these ideas are presented to what extent to students and at which stage of their studies, mediated in which spirit and style by the lecturer, and to what extent – relating to both content and manner – dissension will be tolerated, accepted or encouraged. These educational decisions cannot be avoided. How will

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10 Alikin (2020) indicates that study trips to Israel and Rome help ameliorate theology students' *naïvité* concerning the historical and cultural placement of the Bible texts. I speak from a context where such measures had not been possible for my generation because of politics, but for my generation and for the generations of students before and after me, because of economic limitations. Such potentially helpful study trips are usually beyond the reach of the vast majority of South African students of theology.

11 The examples could be multiplied. I will simply keep to one example from each of the traditional six subjects in the theological encyclopaedia.

the dominant theories and/or the seemingly most useful approaches past and present be introduced? Not making the decisions consciously means that the decisions are made by default.

Each of these "new" matters introduced to students may well, for many of them, prove discomfiting and perhaps controversial, although the contentiousness would, in separate cases, be differently constituted. These then raise the possibilities for students of: growing fully – though at various tempos – into these for-them-new views; by and large rejecting the novel understandings; ignoring them, or superficially mouthing them just for the sake of examinations, but never internalising or perhaps even understanding them;[12] or, in some manner, more or less critically accepting parts or the kernels of the new ideas.

Mediated by the perceived credibility and apparent intent of the lecturer (the moral character, virtue and so forth, as referred to by Ott 2020), but affected perhaps as much by the personalities involved on all sides, and facilitated by whichever educational approaches had been employed, the education satisfaction experience of students can veer widely on the popular scale from one to ten. These same experiences may measure quite differently with the lecturers and other parties with interests at stake. There are many variables.

The more *extreme reactions* observed with some students are: leaving their faith and leaving the course; leaving the course, in order to rescue their faith;[13] taking leave of their faith because of further deductions from the insights obtained during the study years;[14] taking drastic measures such as instituting charges of heresy against lecturers, making use of startlingly destabilising strategies.

In Western/ised and modern/ist contexts, the alternatives at the extremes would be constituted by religious fundamentalism and by militant (or missionary) atheism (or anti-religiosity). These latter sentiments have, in recent years, been formulated most famously by the "New Atheism movement, stoked by its 'Four Riders' – its most popular proponents Richard Dawkins (2006), Daniel Dennett (2006), Christopher Hitchens (2007) and Sam Harris (2014)" (Biernot & Lombaard 2020:3). Along similar lines are the recent works by Hägglund (2019) and Jigoulov *et al.*'s (2020) Old Testament introduction aimed explicitly at non-religious believers as readers. The number of books given to views that may be classified in

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12   In my experience, a surprising number of theology students engage in this strategy.

13   In my experience, this happens usually later.

14   In my view, this had not been fully worked through, but only up to a point, although, of course, people who take this route may well for a variety of reasons disagree with me.

our time as the current expressions of traditionalism, conservativism or fundamentalism range much wider, finding their early beginning with *The fundamentals: A testimony to the truth* (Dixon 1910-1915), as the early major series in this regard.

With these few aspects of the theological education process indicated, I will now touch on the peculiar instance of Open and Distance Education and Learning (ODeL).

4.   "FROM A DISTANCE" – NO SONG-AND-DANCE

In previous studies, I have indicated how aspects related to specifically information communication technology (ICT) affect theological education and ministerial formation. These publications,[15] with a brief outline of the contributions, include in chronological order:

a. Lombaard (2003). For all the power of ICT as an educational medium, it also has vast exclusionary potentiality, to leave even further behind those who are already, to a great extent, excluded from mainstream society, which would fit poorly with the foundational commitments of church and university.

b. Lombaard and De Villiers (2004). Educational limitations on, for example, depth and context of knowledge and misplaced expectations on the role of the educator, count among the problems with theological e-ducation that are easy to overlook.

c. Lombaard (2005). A diversity of ethical approaches in ICT as an educational medium is pleaded for and, in this instance, in debate with a theologian-information scientist and a Christian ethicist.

d. Lombaard (2009). The ephemeral nature of ICT is such that the depth and integrity that is the mainstay of theological education may easily be betrayed.

e. Lombaard (2019). Within different formats of theological e-ducation, I describe and analyse one personally experienced, internationally facilitated instance.

It is notable, amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, how education worldwide has been propelled into e-ducation mode, a means of distance training, in a much more dramatic manner than earlier arguments on technologically mediated teaching and learning had managed to do. These were the

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15   I leave aside those publications that are, in a sense, more tangentially related to the matter at hand.

technological hype(r)-elations and the business raptures of dramatically increased student numbers with dramatically cut costs – neither of which, for various good reasons, fulfilled their respective technocratic nightmare scenarios (Lombaard 2019:1-2). One would surmise that an ODeL university of quite some experience and of imposing dimensions such as the University of South Africa (Unisa) should not only adapt easily to the medical and legislative new realities forced by the COVID-19 pandemic, but would almost instantaneously emerge as a world leader in this regard, setting trends and either assisting other institutions or poaching their students as it vastly expands. The tribulations apart that had instead beset the Unisa reality, many a university/seminary/(Bible/Mission) college (each with their own attendant setbacks and, not infrequently, flawed management reflexes) has now also had to face the long-standing Unisa theology questions on the viability of ministerial formation[16] by means of non-contact tuition. Studying theology, to be sure, does not entail only conveying information. The formative aspect – spiritual nurturing, be it undertaken explicitly or implicitly – of theological education is just as much a part as curating the content, facilitating the learning, cultivating critical thinking and practical application, as well as fostering certain aspects of professional ethos and other constitutive matters. Neither ignoring (by thinking or pretending that it does not exist) nor making light of this matter of spirituality (by casting it as academically frivolous) does service to theological education. Such reactions merely impoverish the metaphysical orientation of the disciplines that should be making more of it than any other course of study. My discipline of Christian spirituality has, since the beginning of the millennium (Kourie 2010:17-31), dealt with these concerns, although only at postgraduate levels and not explicitly directed at church ministry, yet fully internationally, with great theological and other diversities among the relatively small number of students, and often with exceptionally good academic results.[17] Given the limited interaction possibilities with these students across the globe, almost all of which interaction is technologically mediated (which, along with time zones and languages employed, play their role too – see Lombaard 2019:5) rather than taking place face-to-face, the nature of the mostly written communication must be such that it is characterised by qualities such as:

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16   As is standard in the field of spirituality studies, I understand spirituality as the experience of faith, and formation as the guided growth towards greater spiritual maturity provided to students, for example. The former is related to believing and the latter to education. These two matters are not synonymous.

17   The quality of the Master and Doctoral studies submitted and, as a result, the publication of students' academic work puts paid to the not infrequently expressed misgivings on the intellectual demands that would characterise spirituality studies.

- Expressed as much as implied, though never mechanical or insincere, trust and confidence in the student;

- Empathy with the student's studies and circumstances;

- Encouragement ("motivation", in the South African sense of the term);

- Setting the academic bar high, expressly and fully critically (and unafraid of the academic subjectivities that this entails);

- An open, warm style of communication;

- Frequently indicating the spiritual aspect of the work in feedback to a student, in order deliberately to keep alive this aspect in the study experience (*i.e.* in the mind, reading, writing and thus developing the identity of the student).

Admittedly, these communicative qualities are enabled by the relatively small number of students supervised, many of whom are more mature in both life experience and faith than typical undergraduate students might perhaps be. Nevertheless, the intellectual as much as spiritual progress that can be witnessed in most instances is quite remarkable.

One central insight gained from these experiences, however, remains the following (Lombaard 2015:25-54; 2019:6-7):

> the 'coldness' that may be assumed of both technologically-mediated and distance education, is seldom experienced ... a psychological feature of such study, 'behind screens' as it were, is that students at times find themselves conveying aspects of their studies, lives and contexts that would less easily occur in face to face supervisor-student interactions ... the two elements of technological and geographical distance do not [necessarily] detract from either the existential or the emotional 'warmth' [of the educational process].

From this follows the deduction (Lombaard 2019:7):

> Certainly, technological mediation changes the educational relationship. However, new media do not destroy this bond, and in some respects, the professor-student relationship is being enriched.

5.   THE ROADS INCREASINGLY TAKEN

The latter insight from the, in only some respects, millennial academic discipline of spirituality, comes also as the broadly cultural orientation to matters of religion are undergoing an evident shift. It must be noted

that these matters play out differently in each context; for instance, related, in this instance, most directly to the classically liberal-democratic characteristic (often a mere trope) of the *separation of church and state*:

- In Africa, where the ideas, ideals and practices of democracy or communism had across the continent been variously adopted and adapted, this had not been at the same cost to religiosity that had characterised the standard bearers either of democracy, which have historically speaking been France and the USA, or of communism, which has historically speaking been the USSR. Respectively within these contexts, matters of faith had – in unwitting parallel – been marginalised or criminalised. The innate religiosities we find in Africa have not copied these essentially modernist-European reflexes.

- In China, we observe at present startlingly intense official suppression of religion, with especially Islam but also Christianity bearing the brunt of these state measures. The horrors that at times accompany these actions by government have been reported on in the news media; rest assured, more such distressing reports will follow. However, could these perhaps be the last authoritarian convulsions against matters of faith in a country that will, during the estimable future, unfold increasingly influentially internationally, as some have predicted?

- In the currently most influential country, the USA, religion respectively Christianity has taken on a distinctive role in both private and public life. Given to Christian fundamentalisms, be they to the right or to the left (see, for example, Bloom 2006), religion is by law excluded from public life. Yet in practice it affects, often unacknowledged, most aspects of society, and enjoys many exceptions. These matters also play out differently in this instance.

Yet, given that the North Atlantic countries and Europe, in particular, historically give expression (not always by noble means, as writers on decoloniality assert) to the most influential cultural impulses and intellectual analysis of our and earlier times, these heritages are drawn on, and mirrored against, in order to form a coherent enough picture to which to relate. Therefore, and to summarise vast swathes of history and ideas much too compactly (and hence too densely), the religio-cultural-intellectual frame in which we operate may be stated as follows (quoted from Lombaard 2020:2):

a. Whereas in *modernist times*, roughly since the French Revolution, faith has been progressively marginalised in broader society, namely as illogical (among other reasons given), and

b. whereas in *post-modernist times*, roughly the 20th century, faith has been metaphorised, namely as a linguistic game of meaning,

c. during the *presently emerging post-secular* sensibilities, faith (in many forms) is being recovered as something both normal and actual. This means that belief is acknowledged as having a finely attuned rationality to it, and the Divine is encountered by people as something as fully real, though differently so, as any other aspect of the human experience.

In parallel to the alphabetisation above, then:

a. Whereas, within modernism, *history* provides the anchor criterion for satisfactory understanding,

b. and *language* in post-modernism,

c. in post-secularism, *experience* (-of-meaning/fulness) produces that anchor criterion ... Within this evolving cultural atmosphere, what is not sensed somehow to move the spirit/to touch the psyche/to stir one's being is not regarded as speaking to the implicitly felt sense of validity of individuals and societies, ever more so.

I restate such an insight-dense formulation in the quotation above in a perhaps more accessible way. Within a pre-modern and wholly religious frame of reference, everything in life is inescapably related to God. However, within the secularist frame of reference, religion and/or God are marginalised, either by placing these aspects outside of the public sphere (modernism's banishment of religion and/or God to the private domain) or by metaphorising everything to do with religion and/or God (post-modernism's exclusively linguistic representation of religion and/or God). In the recently dawning post-secular frame of reference, however, religion is no longer either almost-involuntarily privileged or almost-involuntarily marginalised, but it is progressively regarded as a normal aspect of everyday public life.

The latter, currently emerging religio-cultural-intellectual ambience renders an altogether more faith-positive mood, in which we will, increasingly so, undertake theological education. Whereas some of the problems of modernism – post-modernish is set to diminish (though not disappear, given diversities) – such as the questioning of the place of theology at the university, other problems are set to increase. These will include dealing with more robust public expressions of faith, for which especially European leaderships in all spheres of life are poorly equipped, as well as combating most probably more militant expressions of Christianity that have difficulty expressing first and foremost and in humility the love ethic central to Christianity.

The manners in which the Bible is placed into interaction (Lombaard 2014:205-225) with students, and in time via them with the church and the broader multiple religious publics, are always diverse. Much can already be gained simply from engaging in different modes of theological education, just as some useful insights have already been won from experience. Given the new era, in which we will increasingly find ourselves, *faith-seeking understanding* is, however, set to encompass many new dimensions – some foreseeable, but some will certainly surprise us. The roads increasingly taken in our world, demographically towards diversely more faith-positive societies, electronically towards bridged distance, and culturally towards the *experience* of, *inter alia*, faith as the central criterion of sensed validity, together form a confluence of influences that are set foundationally to alter our reality. The path has already been set for theological education anew.

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Keywords	Trefwoorde
Bible	Bybel
Education	Opleiding
Spirituality	Spiritualiteit
Post-secularity	Post-sekulariteit