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Theology and *botho/ubuntu* in dialogue towards South African social cohesion

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South Africa is one of the most unequal societies in the world. This article is a literature study on the role of theology and the African philosophy of *botho* or *ubuntu* trying to address this social inequality. It is this situation that has led to poor (if not the absence of) cohesion in society. It shows how theology through its constructive nature has for years shifted from dogmatism to interdisciplinary dialogue with other sciences and philosophies in order to arrive at facts that are helpful to building harmonious societies. Dialogue is a vehicle that makes this interaction possible. It is pointed out that dogmas, creeds, symbolics, apologetics, etc., all emanated from dialogical deliberations. *Botho* as life practice of humanity to others is a philosophy that emphasises togetherness or communality. It is a philosophy that puts an individual at the centre of a community. No individual can be contextually rooted without other human beings. It is the people in context that give individuals the meaning and the essence of life. The goal of this dialogue is social cohesion, which is defined as strong relationships enhanced by a sense of solidarity amongst members of a community. It is when *botho* is socially situated, resulting in theology constructed through dialogue towards desired social cohesion, in order to address the cosmic imbalances that threaten humans' quality of life. It can be presented in a formula: theology + *botho* or *ubuntu* = cohesive society.

Contribution: This article contributes towards the importance of dialogue between theology and the African philosophy of *botho*. The dialogue leads to social cohesion which is needed for harmonious co-existence in unequal society of South Africa.

Keywords: theology; *botho/ubuntu*; dialogue; social cohesion; sciences.

Introduction

South Africa is one of the most unequal societies in the world. The gap between the poor and the rich, black and white, heterosexual people and homosexual people, educated and uneducated, etc., is wide and is growing wider all the time. Our historical footprints created this most disjointed society, and it leaves the masses with emotionally unhealthy citizens carrying anger, rage, prejudices, jealousy, hatred, etc. Political ideologies seem to be blunted in addressing these social menaces. Ecclesiastical communities are caught with lowered heads of shame, seeing that their kerygmatic activities seem to be bearing no fruits. The gospel is preached incessantly, but criminal activities such as violence, rape, housebreaking, carjacking and murder grow higher daily. These are signals to the fact that theology is either passive or muted, whilst *botho* philosophy is dormant or becoming culturally extinct. However, there is hope proposed in this article. That hope is a commencement of a dialogical journey between theology and *botho.*

The central idea of this paper is to point out that theology and *ubuntu* result in cohesive society. Through the study of theology as a constructive discipline, that is, engaging other disciplines (secular or theological), the ideal of cohesive society can be realised. In this case, theology and *botho* are invited as dialogical partners to bring social cohesion to a chaotic world full of inequalities, prejudices, marginalisations and all sorts of inhumane treatment of other people. The literature review leads to the conclusion that there is a possibility of attainment of social cohesion if theology and human philosophies such as *botho* dialogue with each other. The foundation laid is that theology's nature as a narrative discipline is constructive, therefore reaching conclusions by validations from other life sciences and philosophies. Passive relationships between theology and these other disciplines can be broken through dialogical initiatives. All members of any society or community desire to be a part of cohesiveness, where harmonious co-existence is a norm. Theology and *botho* can dialogically make this a reality.

Theology and *botho* or *ubuntu* in dialogue

Theology has always been a dialogical discipline. All creeds, confessions, liturgies, genres, etc., came into existence because of dialogue. For instance, the First Council of Nicaea (325) is regarded as the first ecumenical council of the Christian Church. It was presided over by Emperor Constantine, who engaged about 300 bishops to confront Arius' views that denied the equality of the Father and the Son, asserting that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is *homoousios* [of one substance] with the Father (Shelley 1982:115). The dialogue was initiated, and in the presence of the Emperor, produced this famous Creed that is recited or sung every Sunday in many denominations across the world. In many Reformed circles, there is the Barmen Declaration, formulated in 1934 as a result of dialogue of Reformed and Lutheran church leaders opposing the Nazi-influenced German Christianity. With the recent and current heightening of ecumenical initiatives, we see formulations of positional statements addressing Christian involvement in socio-ecclesial issues. Whether one studies symbolics (creeds, confessions, etc.), or dogma in depth (definition or description of the Christian faith considering the Bible), dialogue with other voices gives a responsible account of the traditional doctrines of the church. As theology went through some development, it started to invite other social and natural sciences in order to arrive at its sought-after truth. This development led to systematic theology in particular being dubbed as constructive theology.

The term 'constructive theology' became popular in the 1980s (Rieger 2013:484). Constructive theology is a redefinition of systematic theology through understanding that theology is an ongoing dialogue or discourse with other disciplines as a way of understanding the traditional doctrinal beliefs. Many systematic theologians from Catholic, Protestant or Orthodox denominations still feel uncomfortable with the usage of the term. On the other hand, there is a feeling that 'systematic theologians are somewhat arrogant, misplaced and inappropriate in today's world' (Pickard 1998:109). Many theologians, however, prefer 'constructive' over 'systematic' since 'constructive' carries the connotation of addressing the current epistemic crisis in theological fields. One example of these theologians is Peter Hodgson, who expounds this stance in his *Winds of Change* (1994). The liberationists, especially the feminist theologians such as Betcher, McFague and Keller, openly embrace the use of constructive theology instead of systematic theology.

Theology is a social science that cannot function and formulate statements without an interdisciplinary approach. Theological constructivism is when knowledge and reality are the outcomes of their context, when two or more disciplines apply different methodologies towards common conclusion for the good of those affected in the context. In a nutshell, it is when philosophy of *botho* remains convicted that theological knowledge is constructed by the people in the cosmos (context). In this discussion, it is when theology and *botho* work together towards harmonious social cohesion. Constructive theology is comfortable with the fact that knowledge is socially and theologically constructed, when theology and other disciplines in natural or social sciences co-construct one another. This eclectic involvement is born out of the theological persuasion that 'involvement in the real and concrete life of the people in all their agonies, fears, and hopes is the mark of a true theology' (Tesfai 1996:95).

The esoteric reality is that the nature of theology and its activities inevitably 'involve a dialogue with those at work in other fields' (Torrance 1965:13). In other words, as Kärkkäinen (2014:364) asserts, 'theology is confessional by nature, on all sides'. It is an active and an engaging discipline. It cannot be parochial, as it deals with cosmic challenges from all angles. It seeks to engage 'other disciplines in addressing areas of social and cultural concern' (eds. Pfitzner & Regan 1999:ix). The articulation of theological epistemology, Torrance (1965:13) continues, 'must make use of the forms of thought and speech that are current in the world'. If theology indeed is *fides quaerens intellectum* [faith seeking understanding], its practitioners are therefore 'obligated to try to untie intellectual knots by intellectual means' (Lindbeck 1984:16). Excluding other disciplines, secular or spiritual, theology will be preventing itself from specifying positively its own affirmations. Theology cannot exert itself out of or apart from the world. As theologians, 'we do not live within a vacuum, but within a context, the intellectual, cultural and social contours of which have been shaped by the past' (McGrath 1997:82). Theologians must understand the world within which they live and should engage with this world's thinking in order to fulfil *missio Dei* in this world. Theology 'must engage in dialogue with all the masterful movements of the times if it is to be faithful to the Gospel' (Torrance 1965:16). This is especially true with science, for dialogue between the two enhances theology and contributes towards theologians' cognitive capacity to 'clarify their fundamental methods in the light of their own peculiar subject-matter' (Torrance 1965:17).

The larger part of theology's participation is in and upon religious faith, embracing and including all other theological disciplines such as biblical studies, church history, historical theology, philosophical theology, religious studies, ethics and missiology. However, this confirms that a sound constructive theologian is the one who also engages 'nontheological and nonreligious fields such as natural sciences, cultural studies, and the study of living faiths *such as* Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism' (Kärkkäinen 2013:13). This means it should 'seek to express the content of this faith in the clearer and most coherent language available' (Macquarrie 1971:1), as it also 'seeks a coherent and balanced understanding' (Kärkkäinen 2013:14). Barth (1979:12) had the same notion when he claimed, '[*e*]vangelical theology is concerned with Immanuel, God with us! Having this God for its object, it can be nothing else but the most thankful and happy science'. This author is of the strong conviction that authentic theology is the one that goes out of the Christian circle to seek

not relevancy but the means of reaching out to the needs of the context where it operates. This context is populated with the marginalised poor, economically disadvantaged, politically sidelined, religiously discriminated against, racially marginalised and sexually abused, as well as the socially abandoned masses in our society in general, here referring to the poor, the widowed, orphans, the landless masses, the victims of sexual violence (rape victims, victims of homophobia, etc.) and the victims denied access to basic service deliveries because of corruption in high places; such a list can go on and on.

Theology takes its biblical mandate seriously: '[*c*]ome, let us reason together' (Is 1:18) or even 'I will go over and see this strange sight' (Ex 3:3). Theology is a practice of coming closer to the situation to gain insight. It is expected to cross the barriers – social, political, intellectual, scientific or religious – in order to affirm its stance and position. Failure to take this eclectic approach leaves theology lean, inept, passive and irrelevant, to and in the context where it operates. This concern is expressed by Pfitzner and Regan (eds. 1999) that:

> A theology which gives voice only to the intramural dialogue of the faithful should not be surprised if the wall between church and society becomes increasingly high and impenetrable for those who are *extra muros*. (pp. ix, x)

Botho or *ubuntu* and theology in dialogue

The African philosophy known as *botho* (Sotho languages) or *ubuntu* (Nguni) is used as the context of this article – the context in which theology is practised and from which theology arises. Since the 1990s, *botho* has been dominating literature in almost all science disciplines. Definitions, descriptions and perspectives are provided as a way of engaging this African philosophy in both formal and informal educational processes. As a philosophy, it 'has to do with being human to each other or recognizing another person's humanity and the interconnectedness of our lives' (Madigele, Mogomotsi & Mogomotsi 2021:93). As an articulation of communalism, *botho* is 'the root of African philosophy, the wellspring flowing with African ontology and epistemology' (Ramose 2002:320). The Bashi tribe in Congo expresses it proverbially as *Umulume ajirwa n' owabo*, meaning a man is shaped by another man (Balenga 2017:12). Societal disintegrations, communal strife, ecclesial divisions and selfhood in tatters could be addressed and eliminated if *botho* were seriously considered, where realisation suggests that no person was born in a vacuum; rather one is born in a community, including both human and nonhuman entities (Ramose 1999). Social disintegrations and disharmonies could be quelled if Africans could re-position themselves towards *botho* ways of life where one lives for others; therefore, no economic imbalances in communities could exist. Balenga (2017:227) states that if properly applied, '[*u*]buntu would reduce, in a dramatic way, humanity's evils, such as injustice, theft, poverty and selfishness'. As a philosophy of togetherness, *botho* 'calls the individual to be responsible towards one's neighbours and indeed the whole community including everything on earth' (Madigele et al. 2021:93).

Theology operates in broad diversities of contexts and therefore should engage all possible disciplines in order to make authentic dictums. In the era of decolonisation of all epistemologies, including theology, the theological methods are human contexts and experiences, 'in particular the local experience of African people in their history, culture and contemporary situation' (Healey & Sybertz 2012:49). Theology must be seen both within and outside the Christian circle of thinking. It is for this reason that Kobe (2021:5) highlights the fact that '*Ubuntu* must be studied outside Christianity, so that *Ubuntu* can manifest itself as it continues to exist in the language, culture and spirituality of the Bantu speaking people'. *Botho* philosophy overarches any discipline in sciences, and therefore it can be applied in any subject to make the point. It can be used to research and to declare findings in any discipline of study. It has become common in studies of management and leadership, ethics and morality, anthropology, sociology, psychology, theology, etc. This notion of cross-curricular appearance is reinforced by Müller (2021:3) that '[*t*]he concept of *ubuntu* is interdisciplinary. No discipline can claim *Ubuntu* to belong to that specific subject'. This philosophy helps us to understand theology properly within the South African perspective. *Botho* is used in this article as a religious expression 'similar to an idiom that makes possible the description of realities, the formulation of beliefs and the experiencing of inner attitudes, feelings, and sentiments' (Lindbeck 1984:33). It is therefore obvious that '[*t*]o be able to interpret a theology properly, we must attend to its historical, ecclesial, and polemical contexts' (Anizor 2018:54).

Botho as a life practice of humanity to others is a philosophy that emphasises 'the importance of community in the realisation of individual potential' (Ndekha 2020:2). It is a philosophy that puts community at the centre of an individual rather than the other way around. It points out that no individual can be contextually rooted without other human beings. It is the people in context who give individuals the meaning and the essence of life. Resane (2017:93) refers to this context in which it has been 'equated with human-ness or humanity towards others', whilst Buthelezi (1990:8) continues in a similar vein to say that *botho* 'is humanism in its all-embracing sense'. Kuscus (2021) refers to it as:

> [*T*]he essence of a human being, the divine spark of goodness inherent within each of us. It articulates a spirit of interdependence, reciprocity, dignity, the common good and peaceful co-existence. (p. 9)

This already demonstrates the importance of communality, participation with others or team spirit in order to achieve more. It is when theology confers with other disciplines for the sake of empowerment of the community in question. Theology is not just knowledge of biblical content. It is interdisciplinary and therefore embracive, inclusive and

comprehensive, both in content and character. Looking it from the theo-practical point of view, *botho* determines and sublimates the methods or approaches of doing theology in the African context. It is not just an ontological way of thinking but an instrument of ethics during collaborations where dialogists see themselves as interwoven partners for a common purpose of unity, understanding and rigorous community transformation. As Resane (2017:93) says, '[*i*]t is used as a measuring stick for ethics in social interaction and interfaces'. Its communality is highlighted by Chisale (2020:2), who has the point of view that 'Africans defend their communality through the ethic of *ubuntu* by which everyone and everything is seen to be interconnected, interdependent and integrated'.

Theology is a discipline of *homothymadon* [togetherness], which is the essence of *botho.* The *perichoretical symbiosis* (Father, Son, Holy Spirit dwelling together in harmony) of the Trinitarian God is the reflection of African interconnectedness and interdependence. It is all about relationships, as African worldviews see 'individualism as self-fatalism' (Resane 2017:97). For theology to be authentic and transformational, it needs to stand as the queen of sciences from which other subjects come and draw wisdom. It should not be a queen locked inside the castle, but one who moves around to greet, touch, converse and draw wisdom by listening to others regarding the menaces in the kingdom (cosmos) and how to address these menaces. That is why Resane (2017:99) is of the opinion that *ubuntu* 'emphasises synergy, cooperation, symbiosis and mutualism'. Theology cannot survive on its own. In the spirit of *botho*, it should consult ethically with other disciplines and see itself in symbiotic and mutualistic relationship with other social and natural sciences. When this is done dialogically in the spirit of *botho*, synergy can be expected. Whenever tension or conflict emerges, the community leader (such as the chief, captain, headman, etc.) rises and says: '*A e nne modiga!*' [Let there be peace!] or '*Tsie lala*!' [Let there be order!]. This call for order is exactly like that of the Speaker of the Parliament, when there is chaotic uproar in the chamber and she calls, 'Order!' Both Setswana idiomatic expressions are calls for peace, quietness or calmness to prevail. The calls arise because *botho* has kicked in, since it involves 'moral values and social structures, which involve caring, humility, fraternity and mutuality, which provide the basis for social harmony' (Ikuenobe 2017:14), that is, cooperation with each other for mutual and peaceful resolutions. This is expressed by the Dutch practical theologian Van der Ven (1996:249) as: '[*i*]f there is cohesion, it comes about because a certain person is addressing the masses, and his speech brings about order in an ideological and social sense'. *Botho* is interwoven with traditions, values and attitudes, hence its high potency in stabilising and calming the storms whenever social harmony and discipline are shaken. Even during theological dialogues, where there are emotional outbursts, *botho* kicks in to normalise the situation for the dialogue partners to return to normality and regain their sensibilities. The potency of this philosophy is identified by Mbigi and Maree (2005) in that it can help in developing practices of doing things together (*homothymadon*) and differently. *Botho's* innate togetherness possesses high potential for 'enhancing team spirit, sharing of skills and as well as ideas' (Ikuenobe 2017:150).

The New Testament book of Acts is not just the book on church history. It is a teaching manual on how to strategise for missions that result in church planting and church growth. It is a teaching manual on behavioural and ethical expectations on and during theological collaborations, dialogues and conversations. It reflects some theological behaviours of *botho* where and when opposition levelled against believers was met with humility and invitation to the table of dialogue. In fact, the apostles dialogued, debated and conversed in order to put their views across. Their confrontations with Epicureans, Stoics, Gnostics, Sanhedrin, Pharisees, politicians, etc. were through dialogues. Evangelistic dialogues were the weapons of Christians against their critics and for the salvation of the very same persecutors of Christians. For instance, the replacement of Judas with Matthias came out of dialogue, and the sermon on the day of Pentecost was because of some unfathomable incidences, and explanations needed to be given. All apostles' encounters with Sanhedrin or other religious or political formations were dealt with in conversations or dialogues. Many Bible readers are familiar with the Sermon on the Mars Hill (Ac 17), the Peter-Cornelius narrative (Ac 10–11), the Philip–Ethiopian eunuch encounter (Ac 8), etc. These narrative dialogues were in the spirit of *botho*, as they never resorted to the methods of the persecutors, such as imprisonment, bannings or beatings, but used dialogues to win opponents to the believers' side, resulting into many entering the kingdom of God. The spirit of *botho* calmed the emotions of both the persecutors and the apologists. No wonder Prinsloo (1998) views *ubuntu* as religious, expansive, transcendental and centrifugal. It has the power to take dialoguing parties beyond parochial and religious silos. Its basic values of caring, sharing, respect and compassion (Broodryk 2006) have the potential to enhance theology for better outcomes in addressing social errors such as disrespect and careless treatment of the socially disadvantaged and the victims of corruption and social justice.

Theology and *botho* or *ubuntu* dialogue towards social cohesion

In this article, social cohesion is defined, according to Berkman (2000:180), as the 'strength of relationships and the sense of solidarity amongst members of community'. From the South African perspective (Njozela, Shaw & Burns 2017):

> Social cohesion speaks to the glue that binds us together, forging a common sense of identity and sense of belonging. It speaks to a willingness to extend trust to outsiders, to respect fellow citizens and uphold their dignity, and to be moved to action in the face of persistent inequality on behalf of those who are marginalised. (p. 30)

Social cohesion is when connected people and united members of a community willingly work and cooperate despite their ideological differences. Social cohesion involves enormous amount of dialogue within the community. It is an experience of *botho* sensed through belongingness that leads to harmonious relationships within community members. *Botho* within social cohesion fosters positive social mobility towards each other's well-being. The negative experiences of individuals in any community are as a result of inequality, which is exacerbated by unhealthy environments created by corruption in political spaces. This environment sears people's inner being of *botho* as it creates 'inadequate public services, socio-economic segregation and social injustice' (Ellison 1999:123).

These definitions entail relationships through social networks and social support. They speak of strong and solid relationships amongst the members of the community. The very essence of social cohesion 'is a common humanity as embodied in the notion of *Ubuntu*' (Njozela et al. 2017:30). These social networks are the source of support, especially emotional support and accessibility of resources such as opportunities of employment, health, housing, education and social protection (Oxoby 2009:10–11), as well as sources where one can obtain help of any sort. Social cohesion, with its innate composition of *botho* carried in interdependencies amongst neighbours, 'may act as buffer against the adverse effects of being single and poor on the wellbeing of older adults' (Cramm, Van Dijk & Nieboer 2012:148). Community cohesion fostered by *botho* enhances togetherness and neighbourliness. This African philosophy of life (*botho* or *ubuntu*) never deems any person to be an island. There is no member of the community who can engage in their usual chores and routines without interacting with someone. *Botho* fosters an individual's connectedness to the community, making social cohesion an ideal ambition and achievement. No person can exist on his or her own (Goleman 1997):

> A person alone is vulnerable to sways of emotion, or to blind spots arising from social prejudices, or to a failure to comprehend the complex consequences of a seemingly simple decision. (p. 180)

Cohesive society endeavours to build a just society where diverse members of society are fused together to work towards equity and economic survival. There are always some robust dialogues within the community with a maximum participation of every member possible, so that no one is left behind in community affairs for success. This is evidence that *botho* philosophy's central culture is communitarianism, when, according to Goleman (1997:162), 'the individual gives up his ego ideal and substitutes for it the group ideal as embodied in the leader'. Community activities are always inclusive in order to eradicate social fractures and inconsistencies, giving rise to African gregariousness because of this connectedness. They act in unison to cohesively assemble ideas and aspirations by sharing a purpose with others for common goals.

Social cohesion carries a notion of social inclusion, whereby any form of discrimination, inequality, social exclusion, economic marginalisation, etc. may be fought against. Cohesive societies are marked with political stability and economic growth because of the democratic freedom offered by the national constitution. *Botho* driven by constructive theology creates a vital context for harmonious coexistence. The connectedness of the historically polarised and fractured society is dependent on the embrace of *botho* philosophy in all development endeavours.

Social cohesion is realised when theology and *botho* enter and engage through dialogue for the betterment of human dignity and social self-discovery. This turn of theology takes the direction of being a real public theology, when the theological voice becomes audible on the public platform, addressing public concerns. The renowned public theologian Paul S. Chung (2017:177) captures this notion when he states that the 'Christian self is shaped in the social, narrative character of selfhood, emerging out of dialogue with others'. This interaction is a confirmation that social cohesion does not come through a single strand into complexities of cosmic interweavings. Social cohesion is when humanity accepts the reality that it is a nexus of relationships where togetherness is the base of stability, strength and resilience during life's turbulence. Williams (2013:132) is correct that '[*f*]ull humanity is then not just expressed in the relationship to God, but also in other relationships'. It can therefore be concluded that social cohesion in the context of this discussion is when *botho* is socially situated, resulting in theology constructed through dialogue with both *batho* (people) in context and with other disciplines.

South Africa can grow towards the desired social cohesion when theology and *botho* intertwine to form a community that exists in harmony. When the two dialogue, communication becomes a channel towards the formation of a genuine community. Speck (1994:329) enlightens us that a genuine community 'is a group whose members have made a commitment to communicate with one another on an ever more deep and authentic level'. So when theology and *botho* communicate with each other, the results of social cohesion become authentically phenomenal. Communality is the outcome of genuine dialogue. Dialogues lead to togetherness – doing life together, which according to Kuscus (2021:111), 'is a communication intensive journey'. In this case, the dialogue is between theology and *botho.* The resultant community is not fluid or vulnerable. It is a *hupomeno* community that is committed and willing to 'hang in there' together when the going gets tough (Speck 1994:339). It becomes a community where members speak transparently, honestly and intimately to confess what is appropriate for the success of the community's intended goals.

Dialogical participation is not incompatible with the independence of each of the dialogical partners. It also does not imply the elimination of conflict between the dialoguing partners. However, it implies 'an element of

mutual trust and shared vision achieved through exchanges that are significantly distinct from the negotiations that dominate adversarial relationships' (Lewis & Naidoo 1999:228). Dialogue between theology and *botho* philosophy is not a guarantee for a conflict-free social setting, but it contributes towards social cohesion, which cannot be constructed or attained overnight. 'It will never be attained in the estimation of those who equate it with the eradication of conflict' (Lewis & Naidoo 1999:228). Dialogue is a process, not to find solutions but to understand, so that behavioural attitudes can be aligned with acceptance, which is *botho* par excellence, hence the popular statement: 'even if you do not recognise me, accept me'. It is one's appeal to be listened to, regardless of one's invisibility or insignificance. It is a fact that the dialogical task 'does not end with an accurate description of views, as necessary and important as that is in itself' (Kärkkäinen 2015:466). Its purpose is to understand in order to come closer. This is highlighted by Resane (2018:2), that 'engagement in dialogue should be an incessant theological deliberation undertaken in a transparent procedures and processes'. Theology and *botho* should engage on an ongoing dialogue in order to address the cosmic imbalances that threaten humans' quality of life.

Conclusion

The central focus of this paper is highlighted by McGrath (1999:49) that 'all advances and developments in a scientific understanding of the universe are to be welcomed and accommodated within the Christian faith'. Secular or cultural philosophies such as *botho* are to be theologically engaged dialogically for maximum influence towards positive contribution in human quality, integrity and dignity. Theology and *botho* can cooperate synergistically to produce a community that may harmoniously dwell together as a cohesive society. In a nutshell, it is a formula that stands as theology + *botho* or *ubuntu* = cohesive society. Engaging these two disciplines is both beneficent and benevolent. Beneficent actions are for the benefit of others out of a sense of duty with no charity as a driving force, whilst benevolent actions are the loving actions of love for the sake of others. In this case, *botho* is a beneficent approach, whilst theology is a benevolent approach. When the two are combined, the outcomes are phenomenal. The outcome is a harmonious and cohesive society. This can be achieved through continuous dialogue. Dialogue positions theology as an interdisciplinary inquiry that enables theologians to learn from both the natural and human sciences (eds. Lovin & Mauldin 2017). This is what makes theology a constructive discipline.

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