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READING THE NEW TESTAMENT STEREOSCOPICALLY

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Abstract

This article investigates how the reading of the Bible in the segregated spheres of church, society and academy has been institutionalised in the way Biblical Studies is taught at most state universities and seminaries in South Africa. It proposes that the way students are trained for ministry should be restructured so that they are encouraged to intentionally use the hermeneutical insights they have obtained in their biblical studies to create stereoscopic readings of the Bible for use in ecclesiological settings. A stereoscopic reading of the Bible directly challenges the clear distinction that is often made between the way in which the Bible is read in the sphere of the church in contrast to that of the academic sphere. Students must not only be taught the theory of source criticism, redaction criticism, tradition criticism, narrative criticism and other approaches to the study the Bible; they must also be taught how to create material with which to help others gain a deeper understanding of the biblical text by reflecting on its inter- and intra-texts, as well as the various pre-texts, final-texts and post-texts that all form part of what the church considers to be scripture.

Keywords: Hermeneutics; Stereoscopic biblical interpretation; Dwelling in the Word; John 15; Theological training

Introduction

The stated focus of the 2018 conference being on teaching the Bible in post-secular societies calls into question the value of contributions from a South African scholar, since my society as a whole cannot be characterized as a post-secular society.[1] Closer parallels for the Eastern European post-secular context are instead to be found in countries with a shared communist past (Müller, 2012:69-73). The focus of this contribution from a South African perspective is therefore not on the challenge presented by a post-secular context for teaching biblical studies. It is instead on the relationship between the distinct spheres of church, academy and society in which theology can be practised (Tracy, 1981) that has become the norm since the Enlightenment (Smit, 1998a:290-296), and the implications this has for biblical studies in both secular and

[1] According to surveys like the General Household Survey (2013), South Africans tend to be religious, with the Church occupying an important position within South African society (Schoeman, 2017:4-7). While there are indications that certain demographic groups are becoming increasingly secular, this is not true of South African society as a whole. Scholars like Punt (2012:29) identify both a secularising trend and a swing toward Pentecostal evangelicalism in post-Apartheid South Africa. In terms of Taylor's (2018:20) characterisation, the situation in some demographic groups can best be described as secularity 1 (in which the transcendent God has been displaced at the centre of social life).

post-secular societies.[2]This chapter will begin with a brief overview of the implications of this separation into distinct spheres, whereafter a proposal will be made for how a more integrative approach may be taken that allows for the greater use of an academic hermeneutic in the church sphere.

Biblical Studies since the Enlightenment

The result of the post-Enlightenment disagreement over what constitutes a valid reading of the biblical text in a specific sphere is that students who enrol in biblical studies[3] are invariably provided with a trifocal interpretative lens for reading the Bible. The lens is trifocal since it is comprised of three segments, each of which has a different interpretive refraction. These different refractions are required because the three spheres in which students operate each have their own problem-consciousness, methodology, logic of investigation, ethos and highest loyalties (Tracy, 1981:3-46). For the church, the Bile is its revelatory book, for scholars it is a classic document that must be studied as any other historical and literary text, and for many in the public sphere it is a cultural possession that has influenced art, morality and politics (Smit, 1998b:304). Since each of these spheres views the Bible differently, students are instructed during their biblical studies to adjust their hermeneutical gaze to seek out the appropriate segment of their trifocal lens for church, social or academic readings of the Bible.

The key in using a trifocal lens is that a reader can only look through one segment thereof at a time. The image of a trifocal lens thus highlights the fact that students are taught that a meditative reading of a biblical text for spiritual edification, for example, is a legitimate reading in a church setting, but not a valid one at an academic conference, or an appropriate one at a public gathering. They are also taught that the different trifocal readings are not compatible with each other. They therefore do not consider an academic reading of the Bible as being useful for discerning its meaning in a church or public setting for which different hermeneutic prescriptions are required. Since other theological disciplines in the academic sphere also tend not to read the Bible with the same hermeneutical segment used by biblical studies (their theological reading of the Bible tends to be closer to how the church reads the Bible), students, in following their example, also tend to neglect the hermeneutical segment of their trifocal lens provided by biblical studies (Smit, 1998a:294-295).

To understand the true extent of the divide between how biblical scholars and others read the Bible it is important to note that they do not only use a different segment of the figurative trifocal hermeneutical lens for reading the biblical text than those used by the church, members of the broader society, and scholars in the other academic disciplines. They also read a different "text". The text studied by biblical scholars is not just different

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[2] Since the Reformation, the Bible has played an important role in the everyday lives of believers in shaping their world-view and the manner in which they conducted themselves (Smit, 1998a:288-289). The Enlightenment, however, increasingly led to the restriction of the reading of the Bible to the private and ecclesial spheres. In these spheres, Christians mostly read the Bible without paying attention to what scholars did or to what happened in society (Smit, 1998a:295). In the academic sphere, biblical interpretation was in turn undertaken in an analytical, rational, and historical-critical manner without much consideration for the church, Christian life, or for the public life at large.

[3] While Biblical studies intentionally grind the academic segment of the student's trifocal lens, their involvement in church activities and social interactions polish two other refractive segments that enable them to read the Biblical text in the spheres of the church and society.

because it is in its original languages while practical and systematic theologians often rely on translations. The text studied by biblical scholars is a far more complex diachronic and synchronic phenomena. According to Koog Hong's (2013) taxonomy, the biblical autographa can be considered to be final-texts. Most of these final-texts have a pre-text (oral and literary sources from which they were crafted).[4] Matthew, in his Gospel, for example, uses Mark and the hypothetical Q document as sources (pre-texts of Matthew), along with other material, to create his Gospel. Other Gospels, like that of John, have clearly been redacted so that the final-text of the Gospel of John differs from earlier editions. To study critically the different pre-text of a text, biblical scholars have developed historical critical methodologies, such as redaction criticism, source criticism and form criticism. These methodologies enable scholars to explain how the oral Jesus tradition was over time first written down on unconnected fragments before being combined into the narratives described in the New Testament. Along with these approaches, biblical scholars have also developed other methods like socio-historical and socio-scientific criticism that enable them to better understand the world in which a text was created (the world behind the text).

There is, furthermore, for biblical scholars not just a world behind a text, or a world in front of it where it is transmitted and read. There is also a world in the text, the mental images conjured up in the consciousness of the reader when reading a text. To study the world in the biblical text, scholars have developed approaches like narrative criticism and various structuralist approaches. Since readers also actively contribute to the meaning of a text, the contribution of different readers has been studied by ideology criticism and reception criticism, along with various reader-response methods. All of these focus on the world in front of the text, the world in which it has been read and transmitted since its creation, for biblical scholars are acutely aware that they are not the first readers of a text (the final-readers of the final-text). They are instead the post-readers of texts that were originally intended for other readers.[5] They are also not reading the exact same final-text that the intended readers did. They are instead reading a translation of a reconstruction of the Hebrew or Greek final text, which must thus be understood as a post-text.[6]

To be able to engage with the biblical pre-text (the source used by the redactors of the biblical texts) and post-text reconstruction of the final-text like NA[28] and BHS, a working knowledge of Greek and Hebrew is a requirement. This is, however, not necessary for reading the translations (contemporary post-texts) used by most non-biblical scholars, church and social readers. These readers are thus not reading the same

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4 The references to "pre-text", "final-text", "post-text", as well as "post-author", are based on the work of Koog Hong (2013:533-536). The taxonomy of Hong is useful since it, like most taxonomies, provides an interpretative framework for the multitude of hermeneutical approaches and methodologies to the Bible by identifying their underlying theoretical and ideological concerns (Punt, 2012:32).

5 The intended readers of the original Biblical texts, like the readers in Rome who read Paul's letter to the Romans, can be described as final-readers, since they were reading his completed letter which in turn can be described as a final-text.

6 It is not just translations of the final-text that are post-texts. Modern editions of the ancient texts like Nestle-Aland[28] and Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia are themselves also post-texts in that they are either an eclectic text crafted from more than one manuscript or fragment by a panel of scholars (who can be described as post-authors of the final-text), or a copy of a single post-text of the original text (Leningrad Codex in the case of BHS).

text as biblical scholars. Their readings also do not require the use of the sophisticated hermeneutical approaches and methods developed by biblical scholars, with the result that they are often neglected. In some instances, this neglect by the church is intentional due to its wariness of the presuppositions underlying the hermeneutics used in biblical studies. Conversely, biblical studies, initially developed within the sphere of the influence of the church, has increasingly chosen to occupy an independent, often highly critical, position against the church (Smit, 1998a:291).

Biblical Studies in South Africa

Due to the intimate relationship between most Afrikaner churches and the pre-1994 apartheid regime, the majority of contemporary mainline Afrikaans speaking churches in South Africa train their ministers at theological faculties that are part of state universities.[7] The result of training candidates for ministry at state universities is that theological training is largely theoretical in nature. This has prompted the partaking churches to establish parallel institutions that are responsible for instructing candidates for ministry in church-specific subjects while providing them with practical experience and spiritual guidance. The separation of the church, public and academic spheres in which theology can be practised since the Enlightenment has thus been institutionalised in the way students are trained.

The training of ministers for the Uniting Reformed Church of South Africa (URCSA) and the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) at Stellenbosch University can serve as an example of the above-mentioned arrangement. For their academic training,[8] DRC and URCSA students enrol for a four-year Bachelor of Divinity degree that focuses on providing them with a theoretical theological framework for their eventual church ministry.[9] The BDiv degree includes Greek, Hebrew, Old Testament, New Testament, Systematic Theology, Ecclesiology, Practical Theology and Missiology modules. Biblical studies, for which the department of Old and New Testament is responsible, introduces students to the world behind the biblical texts, their composition and theology, as well as reception. Students preparing for ministry are furthermore required to enrol simultaneously in the Seminarium of the URCSA and DRC located in the same building as the Faculty of Theology (Philander, 2019:235-238).

The training offered by the Faculty of Theology and the Ministerial Formation Programme offered by the Seminarium, while intentionally different in focus, is intended to be complementary. It is, however, questionable whether this is indeed the case in regard to the use of the Bible, for while the Seminarium program also engages with the Bible, it does so differently from how it is done by the department of Old and New Testament, which teaches biblical studies. The Seminarium, for example, instructs students on how to read the Bible devotionally by using practices like *lectio divina* and

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7 Examples are the Reformed Churches in South Africa at Northwest University; the Dutch Reformed Church at Stellenbosch University, Pretoria University and Free State University; and the Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika at Pretoria University.

8 After completing a BDiv degree both URCSA and DRC students enrol for a MDiv, and in the case of DRC students, a PGD in Christian Ministry before being licenced for ordination.

9 The faculty also offers a three-year BTh degree in which biblical languages are not compulsory. BTh students will thus only be able to engage with biblical post-text (translations).

Dwelling in the Word for spiritual discernment. Since the first is a well-known practice,[10] the manner in which the Seminarium uses the Bible will be illustrated by reflecting on the practice of *Dwelling in the Word* to indicate how the hermeneutical prescription of the segment of the trifocal lens it used often differs from the segment used in biblical studies.

The practice of *Dwelling in Word*, developed by Church Innovations from St. Paul, MN, in the USA (Ellison and Keifert, 2011), is usually done by a group reading the same text together over a period of time. The group begins each session by reading the text aloud, then individually in silence, whereafter each member reflects on the possible meaning of the text for themselves. In the next step, each member shares his or her insight with one person in the group. After discussing their respective insights, they then share each other's with the whole group, which after listening to each contribution discusses what commonalities they heard in how the text was understood by the group. Discerning the meaning of the text is thus the responsibility of the entire group instead of a few exegetical experts as would be the case in an academic setting. While the sharing of the initial individual readings with someone else in the group, as well as the group's reflection on all contributions, functions as filters for different interpretations of the text, *Dwelling in the Word* does not produce a reading of a text that will readily be accepted in the academic sphere.

Methodologically, the practice of *Dwelling in the Word* can be described as a repetitive communal,[11] reader-response reading of a post-text by post-readers. Whereas most academic readings of a text would attempt to maintain the historical and cultural distance between the text and contemporary readers, *Dwelling in the Word* deliberately eliminates this distance. It is, furthermore, a reader-response reading practised by "everyday" readers (in contrast to informed, "expert" readers who have received specialised training in reading ancient texts) of a post-text (Fowler, 1992:52). *Dwelling in the Word* can furthermore be considered to be a conservative reader-response approach in that it focuses on the various ways the text itself invites the reader into the production of meaning (Vanhoozer, 1995:307) instead of reading the texts primarily in terms of contemporary values.

In terms of Hong's meta-tool of the synchronic and diachronic dimensions of the biblical text, the following can be surmised regarding theological training at Stellenbosch University:

> In the biblical studies modules of the BDiv degree, students engage with the pre- and post- text forms (critical editions of the Greek and Hebrew texts as well as vernacular translations) of the biblical text. In practical and systematic theology

[10] *Lectio divine* is traditionally comprised of five movements: *silencio* (the quiet preparation of the hart), *lectio* (reading a text of the Bible), *meditatio* (meditating on the text read), *oratio* (responding to the reading in prayer) and *contemplatio* (contemplating the text and waiting on the presence of God) (Calhoun, 2015:168-171).

[11] It is precisely this communal reading of the Bible, as practised by *Dwelling in the Word*, which is of great importance in evaluating its use of the Bible (Nel, 2013:2-4). In *Dwelling in the Word*, every reader's understanding of a text is shaped by both their initial partner's understanding of what had been related to them and by the communal discussion of all the readings by the group. In practice, this tends to eliminate most esoteric readings of texts. This meaning-forming process is furthermore not a once-off occurrence but one repeated in different groups, times and spaces that facilitate a more refined reading of the Bible.

modules, however, they only use post-text in that they mostly use translations of the biblical texts.

In the Seminarium, students usually use the post-text (translations) created by post-authors (translators) though there are weekly reading classes which read the Hebrew and Greek post-texts of the Old and New Testament.

It is thus apparent that the hermeneutics and methodologies accepted and taught by biblical studies are not only different from that used in reading the Bible in the social and church spheres. They are also different from those used in the Seminarium program and by other theological disciplines in the academic sphere. This raises the question of whether it should not just be accepted that having a trifocal lens enables students to read the Bible in different ways, even if they cannot reconcile their readings with each other, and that the readings undertaken by biblical scholars are intended only for a few subject experts.

Reading the Bible stereoscopically

While it could be argued that Tracey's distinction between the three spheres and their distinct hermeneutical prescriptions justifies the use of different hermeneutical lenses, it in practice creates interpretive confusion for those who read the Bible in more than one sphere. Readings of the Bible by biblical scholars, for example, tend to be intelligible only to those with the same hermeneutical prescription, with the result that readings of texts, which are "clear" for biblical scholars, appear "blurred" for church readers when shared with them.[12]

A common response to the confusion caused by the different readings of the biblical texts within the academic and church spheres is that students on completion of their studies default back to the pre-critical manner in which they had read the Bible before they had started their academic training.[13] This rejection of the insights gained from an academic study of the Bible results in biblical studies in practice proving to be largely irrelevant for students working in the sphere of the church after completing their studies. The appeal is therefore often made in church circles that it should either abandon the academic study of the Bible or if it is continued, that it be conducted according to its own preferred ecclesial hermeneutic. Heeding any of these appeals would, however, be unfortunate.

If the reading of the Bible was only undertaken by the church according to its own hermeneutical prescription, it would sever it from the other two spheres, thereby preventing the church from participating in an active theological conversation with society and academia. The withdrawal of conservative scholars to their "bounded communities" or liberal scholars' uncritical acceptance of popular culture are also equally to be avoided since it would simply balkanise their respective interpretations of the Bible (Punt, 2012:39). It is for this reason important to ask if there is another

[12] The opposite is also true. Influential readings of the Bible within the ecclesial sphere often appear unsubstantiated to academics, or even offensive for those who interact with the Bible within a secular society (e.g. contemporary reactions to ecclesial debates on homosexuality).

[13] In the words of Smit (1998b:307) "On Sunday when you preach in your congregation, you do it according to the culture that the people there know and respect . (And you hope that your university lecturer in Biblical Studies will never attend the worship service!)."

possibility that can be explored that would enable students to use their academic hermeneutical prescriptions to obtain a deeper understanding of the biblical text than would have been the case if they had only used an ecclesial lens. This chapter proposes that consideration be given to a stereoscopic reading of the biblical text.

A stereoscopic image is produced by a stereoscope, a device by which two photographs of the same object taken at slightly different angles are viewed together, creating an image with more detail and depth than one viewed through only one lens. Unlike a bifocal or trifocal reading, which uses only one segment of a lens at a time to produce a clear image, a stereoscopic reading looks at the two images by using different lenses at the same time to produce a single new image. In line with this image, this chapter proposes that students should be trained to intentionally utilise the hermeneutical tools they have mastered in their biblical studies in ecclesial settings while engaging with broader society. The proposal is not that all academic institutions should be compelled to accept the claims of the church that the Bible is scripture or the word of God, since this is contrary to the secular nature of most state universities. This would be impossible to do in contexts like Eastern Europe, in which only some post-text, reader-response readings were tolerated by their previous communist governments. It is instead directed towards the church in terms of how it utilises the biblical studies training of candidates for ministry.

A stereoscopic reading of the Bible in the sphere of the church requires that ecclesial readers intentionally utilise the methods that the academy has developed to study the Bible. The use of these methods implies that the church will need to accept most of their underlying presuppositions regarding the origin of the biblical text, which in turn compels the church to broaden its understanding of what it considers to be scripture. In this regard, it is important to keep in mind that according to Martin (2008:78), "… Christian theologians insist that no physical embodiment of Scripture can be identified as Scripture itself, the word of God. The Bible isn't Scripture simply in and of itself. It is Scripture, the word of God, when it is read in faith by the leading of the Holy Spirit." This understanding of scripture has two important implications.

The first is that being scripture is not a quality inherent to a given text. It is instead the appraisal of a text that is the result of an interactive relationship that exists between it and a faith community (Punt, 2019:56-57).[14] Since the Reformation, the biblical text has furthermore been the scripture of each faith community in a slightly different way due to the division of the church sphere into numerous smaller spheres that each have their own traditions, confessional formulations and collective identities (Barr, 1981:26).

A second implication is that the texts accorded the status of being scripture are not a specific unchanging object. A particular translation of the Bible is, for example, not the sole embodiment of scripture. Instead, various translations, even when they differ from each other, can be considered scripture. Nor can the original language source texts used by translators be considered exclusively to be scripture since they are either copies of the

[14] Punt (2019:56-57) notes that scripture has in the past often been described in essentialist terms by compiling a checklist of items that characterise it. These items included beliefs about divine origin, being powerful and inviolable; authoritative in communities; having a closed and fixed form; used by community members in religious or ritual contexts; and testimony to what is considered ultimate. Alternatively, scripture can be understood as a relational concept in that it refers to the matrix of and the nature of the relationships engendered by people's interaction with certain texts.

original texts or reconstitutions thereof. Many of these texts also contain intertextual quotations, allusions and echoes to various pre-texts used by their authors. In the academic sphere, the documents that comprise the Bible are thus read synchronically as well as diachronically,[15] and not just synchronically as is often done in the church sphere. The various pre-texts (sources) and post-texts (copies and translations of the autographa) are studied synchronically in terms of the historical contexts in which they were created along with their development over time.

The church therefore needs to broaden its understanding of scripture to include the inter-texts and sources with which the various biblical texts converses. In this sense, scripture can be described as an ongoing dialogue about the nature of God contained in the numerous pre- and post-texts that form part of the biblical tradition. It is of this dialogue between different traditions in the biblical texts and their reinterpretations at later stages[16] when heard anew through the work of the Holy Spirit that the church confesses that it is scripture, the inspired word of God. To hear it anew, the church needs to join the conversation encoded in the biblical text as well as the debate evoked by it. It therefore needs not only to read the Gospel of Mark but also to listen to how the author of Matthew engaged with Mark's work or how the Chronicler engaged Samuel–Kings. The task of biblical studies needs to equip students to fruitfully participate in this conversation.[17]

The various stereoscopic readings that this chapter will briefly discuss are drawn from the sphere of the academic study of the Bible. They intend to invite readers of the Bible in the church to engage with the pre-text, final-text and post-texts of scripture (John 15:1-17). The idea is that the practice[18] of *dwelling in the Word* be retained but that material

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[15] In line with Hong's (2013:534-539) taxonomy, a synchronic reading refers the interpretation of a text in a specific historical context and a diachronic reading to the analysis of how it evolved over time between different historical contexts.

[16] The Bible has not only prompted reformations or reinterpretations during its reception history; it also bears witness to an ongoing process of reformation and reinterpretation in its growth over centuries. It was, for example, not only characteristic of Jesus to reinterpret previous interpretations of the Law (Matt 5:21-48). The re-interpretation of the Law is already reflected in the Old Testament in the differences between texts like Exodus 21:2-7 and Deuteronomy 15:12-18.

[17] Karl Kuhn (2008) has proposed that the Bible must be understood as both a sacred dialogue between God and believers, and as one among the believers who produced it. The dialogical nature of the Bible is evident in that it contains discussions between God and characters like Moses (Exodus 32) as well as intense debates between believers about God's will (Acts 15). It is noteworthy that in the latter case, different points of view were included in the Bible and not just the ones that were eventually accepted by the various communities. The Bible is thus not silent on the debates that led to certain confessions or decisions. It clearly testifies to the inevitability of debate about the will of God. In the Bible, the will of God is not simply revealed by him declaring it as is depicted in Exodus 20. It is instead often revealed through the various debates among believers that at times are not resolved, resulting in a plurality of traditions in the Bible. Many of these debates were also resumed at later stages when earlier conclusions were reinterpreted and applied to new contexts. This process of reinterpretation is evident in the Old Testament and the way it was reinterpreted in terms of the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus in the New Testament.

[18] The manner in which *Dwelling in the Word* is practised strengthens the following skills, attitudes and behaviours: Group members practice reaching out and sharing their faith with people they do not necessarily know well; Interpreting the text becomes the responsibility of all in the community, and not only of those considered experts in exegesis; Members practice the skill of listening to others and articulating their conversation partners' insights; The communicative playing field is intentionally levelled; Those who are naturally reluctant to speak in groups are helped to do so by not having to share their own personal thoughts, whilst those who tend to dominate discussions are constrained by their having to share the insights of others; Strong emotions are negated as all insights are stated in the third person; Word-dwelling develops the skill of interpreting the Word with others and provides a language for sharing thoughts with each other (Ellison,

be developed that enables a different stereoscopic of the text. Most of these examples are taken from historical critical approaches to the biblical text (e.g. redaction criticism, narrative criticism, source criticism) and therefore presuppose that information on the world behind the text will be provided to the group reading the text.[19] The different suggestions can be implemented in a church setting by providing study groups with handouts that enable them to read the same Biblical text stereoscopically differently over a period of time. They can, for example, begin by reading a passage in Matthew along with its parallel in Mark (Matthew's pre-text), and then they can read it with the Old Testament texts it alludes, quotes or echoes (its inter-text), before reading it with other passages in Matthew (its intra-text) in which the same or related themes occur (for example, the concept of "reward"). The intent of the different stereoscopic readings is to enable readers within the church sphere to gain a deeper understanding of the conversation about and with God contained in the texts considered to be scripture.

Examples of stereoscopic readings of John 15

Dwelling in different post-texts (translations)

The first stereoscopic reading, the reading of two different translations of the same texts, is often utilised in multilingual groups participating in the practice of *Dwelling in the Word*. In the South African context, it is often Afrikaans and English translations that are compared.[20]

> **John 15** [1]"Ek is die ware wingerdstok en my Vader is die boer. [2] Elke loot aan My wat nie vrugte dra nie, *sny Hy af*; maar elkeen wat vrugte dra, snoei Hy reg, sodat dit nog meer vrugte kan dra. [3] Julle is alreeds reg gesnoei deur die woorde wat Ek vir julle gesê het…[7] As julle in My bly en my woorde in julle, vra dan net wat julle wil hê, en julle sal dit kry. [8] My Vader word juis daardeur verheerlik dat julle baie vrugte dra en my dissipels is." (1983 Afrikaans Translation)

> **John 15** [1]"I am the true vine and my Father is the gardener. [2] *He takes away* every branch that does not bear fruit in me. He prunes every branch that bears fruit so that it will bear more fruit. [3] You are clean already because of the word that I have spoken to you… [7] If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you want, and it will be done for you. [8] My Father is honored by this, that you bear much fruit and show that you are my disciples. (New English Translation)

The effect of juxtaposing different translations of a biblical text in the same language or in two different languages on the same page is that its readers are alerted that they are dwelling in post-texts. For readers who can understand both languages, the text they dwell in effectively becomes a synopsis of the two texts. This encourages their critical

2009:92, 98); The sharing with another is a filter for esoteric interpretations of scripture; Honest reporting and fair access to the conversation builds trust in the new community (Ellison & Keifert, 2011:11).

19 Since *Dwelling in the Word* is a reader response method, the world in front of the text also needs to be taken into consideration.

20 Both the South African and Eastern European contexts have the advantage of being multilingual contexts which support the reading of the Bible in more than one language.

reflection on the meaning of various words and phrases in a manner that reading a single post-text (translation) would not. The differences between the Afrikaans and English translations of John 15, for example, could result in the group reflecting on God's role in relation to those who do not do the will of God ("take away" vs. "sny Hy af" / "cut off"). Does God just respond to those who had already cast themselves of from the true vine by removing them, or does he actively cut them off? It can also be asked if the Afrikaans "verheerlik" (glorify) and English "honoured" have the same meaning. A stereoscopic dwelling in different post-texts of the same text thus alerts the readers to the interpretations already made by the translators thereof and deepens their engagement with the text.

Dwelling in the intra-text of John 15 (The Gospel of John)

Participants in the practice of *Dwelling in the Word* usually only read a single pericope of a Biblical text. The pericope is furthermore often physically separated from its literary context by being printed on a handout. The text thereby becomes a fragment isolated from its intra-text, in the case of John 15 from the Gospel of John. From a biblical studies perspective, which emphasises that texts are to be interpreted within their literary context, this is not a responsible reading of a text. A stereoscopic reading of a text therefore intentionally reads a pericope within its intra-text.

Since it is, however, impossible to read an entire text the length of the Gospel of John at every opportunity, a specific inter-text needs to be created for this approach. One way of creating an intra-text is to emphasise the intra-textual links that exist between a specific pericope and the longer text in which it is embedded. Frederic Bruner (2012:878-887), for example, notes how the Greek verb μένω ("remain") is entangled with the motif of discipleship in the Fourth Gospel. An intra-text handout can therefore be prepared which links the passages where this entanglement is evident in John by noting where the verb μένω is used with the notion of dwelling.[21] In the prepared handout, the link can be made explicit by consistently translating the verb μένω with "dwelling."

> **John 1 -** [35] The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. [36] When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look, the Lamb of God!" [37] When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. [38] Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, "What do you want?" They said, "Rabbi" (which means "Teacher"), "*where are you dwelling (staying / ποῦ μένεις)*?"[39] "Come," he replied, "and you will see." So they went and *saw where he was dwelling (staying* /μένει*)*, and they *dwelled* (*spent* / μένει) that day with him (ἔμειναν τὴν ἡμέραν). It was about four in the afternoon. (New International Version).
>
> **John 4 -** [39] Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I ever did." [40] So when the Samaritans

[21] According to BDAG, the verb μένω can have the following possible meanings: **1. 'be in a situation for a length of time'**, *remain, stay,* intr. —a. of being in a location, whether geographical site, dwelling, or person, or thing Mt 10:11; Mk 14:34; Lk 8:27; J 7:9; 8:31; 12:46. —b. of continuing in a state or condition—α. w. focus on sameness J 12:24; Ac 27:41; 1 Cor 7:20.—β. w. focus on existence J 12:34; 1 Cor 15:6; Phil 1:25; Hb 7:24; 1 J 2:17; Rv 17:10. —**2. 'stay in a place for the presence/arrival of' someone**, *await, wait for,* tr. Ac 20:5, 23.

> came to him, they urged him to *dwell* (stay / ἠρώτων αὐτὸν μεῖναι) with them, and he *dwelled* (stayed / ἔμεινεν) two days. [41] And because of his words many more became believers. [42] They said to the woman, "We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world." (New International Version)

What becomes apparent from dwelling stereoscopically on John 1 and 4, the intra-text of John 15, is that Jesus in John takes the initiative in establishing the relationship. It is because Jesus, according to John, chose to dwell with others that they could dwell in him. The urge to dwell with Jesus in John is furthermore depicted as a response to proclamation. In John 1 the proclamation is by a prophet who cleanses Israel and in John 4 a Samaritan woman who proclaims Jesus to her village. In John 15:4, the invitation comes from Jesus in the last of seven of the "I am sayings" when he asks his disciples to dwell in him (μείνατε ἐν ἐμοί). For John, this indwelling is possible because Jesus has chosen to dwell with others. It is also apparent that his followers dwell with Jesus by keeping his command to love each other (John 15).

There are also other possible intra-texts for John 15 that can be included in the handout to enrich reader's understanding of what it means to dwell in Jesus. For example, John 6:56 and 8:31-32.

> **John 6:56** - Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood *dwells* (remains) in me (ἐν ἐμοὶ μένει), and I in them. (New International Version)

From this intra-text it is clear that believers do not only dwell individually with Jesus. They instead dwell with Jesus through the meal that they feast on with their faith community.

> **John 8:31-32** - To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you *dwell* in (hold to my) Word (teaching) (ἐὰν ὑμεῖς μείνητε ἐν τῷ λόγῳ τῷ ἐμῷ), you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (New International Version)

According to John, believers dwell with Jesus by continuing in his Word. To dwell with Christ is to obey Christ. The opposite is true of the opponents of Jesus.

> **John 5:38** – Nor does his word dwell in you (καὶ τὸν λόγον αὐτοῦ οὐκ ἔχετε ἐν ὑμῖν μένοντα), for you do not believe the one he sent. (New International Version)

These few examples indicate how the understanding of themes underlying John 15:1-17 is aided by stereoscopically looking at other texts in John linked to it by common themes and words.

Dwelling in the inter-text of John 15 - The Johannine corpus as inter-text

The Gospel of John is part of a family of texts with which it has a clear literary connection. Reading passages linked by common words, phrases and comments within this Johannine corpus enables readers to deepen their understanding of any Johannine

text they dwell in. It is therefore possible to create different handouts for groups that contain John 15 and examples of its Johannine inter-texts so that they can read them stereoscopically.

> **John 15** - [1]"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. [2] He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. [3] You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. [4] *Remain in me*, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. [5] "I am the vine; you are the branches. *If you remain in me* and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. [6] If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. [7] If you *remain in me* and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. [8] This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. (New English Translation)
>
> **1 John 2:24** - As for you, see that what you have heard from the beginning *remains in you*. If it does, *you also will remain in the Son and in the Father*. (New English Translation)
>
> **1 John 4:16** - And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. *Whoever lives in love lives in God,* and God in them. (New International Version)

Dwelling in the Johannine inter-texture alerts us to the emphasis these text place on mutual indwelling.

The Old Testament as pre-text

The Old Testament can be described as the pre-text of John 15 in that it intentionally draws on it as a source for his text. Even a cursory reading of the Old Testament reveals that the image of a vine is often applied to Israel (cf. Hosea 10:1–2; Isaiah 5:1–7; Jeremiah 2:21; Ezekiel 15:1–5, 17:1–21; 19:10–15; Psalm 80:8–18). It is thus possible to create a handout which contains Isaiah 5:1-7 and Hosea 10:1-2 as Old Testament inter-texts for John 15. Dwelling in these Old Testament inter-texts alerts the reader to God's care for Israel as his vine and his disappointment with Israel over her lack of fruit. Every Old Testament text that describes Israel as a vine refers to their failure to produce the fruit God expected. The inter-texture of John 15 thus warns the reader of the very real nature of God's threat to withdraw his care if the vine does not produce fruit that could easily be missed if John 15 is read in isolation.

Conclusion

In this chapter, it has been argued that the reading of the Bible in the segregated spheres of church, society and academy has been institutionalised in the way the Bible is taught at most state universities and seminaries in South Africa. This chapter proposes that the way students are trained for ministry should be restructured so that they are encouraged to intentionally use the hermeneutical insights they have obtained in their biblical studies

to create stereoscopic readings of the Bible for use in ecclesiological settings. A stereoscopic reading of the Bible thus directly challenges the clear distinction that is often made between the way in which the Bible is read in the sphere of the church in contrast to that of the academic sphere.

A stereoscopic approach understands scripture as a centuries-long conversation about and with God that they can only rejoin if they interpret it not only synchronically but also diachronically.[22] The biblical text must thus not only be studied in its original context or read in the present. The various ways in which the biblical text has developed over the period of its creation and transmission must also be taken into consideration, since this enables students to understand how the conversation encapsulated in the biblical text was conducted over centuries. Students must however not only be taught the theory of source criticism, redaction criticism, tradition criticism, narrative criticism and other approaches to the study the Bible. They must also be taught how to create material with which to help others gain a deeper understanding of the biblical text by reflecting on its inter- and intra-texts, as well as the various pre-texts, final-texts and post-texts that all form part of what the church considers to be scripture.

To be able to create the different materials needed, students must develop a sound understanding of a variety of approaches and theories that have been developed by biblical studies. These include semantics and pragmatics (Silva, 1983; Black, 1988; Campbell, 2015) as well as an understanding of intertextuality, source criticism and redaction criticism. The use of the hermeneutics and methods developed in the academic sphere within that of the church therefore necessitates that specific modules be developed that help students pedagogically with this integration within theological faculties or their associated seminaries.

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[22] In this regard, the difference between the South African and Eastern European contexts should be noted in that it will be extremely difficult to re-integrate the diachronic study of the Bible with synchronic readings in the Eastern European context after a long period of suppression.

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