PROLOGUE

The contributions in this volume were originally presented as papers at a symposium on the Bible and Spirituality, held at Glenfall House, Cheltenham from 4-6 May 2010 and hosted by the University of Gloucestershire.

Initiative for the symposium was taken by Pieter G.R. de Villiers of the University of the Free State and Lloyd Pietersen of the University of Gloucestershire. The meeting was the result of personal contact between the two of them over a number of years to discuss their common interest in Biblical Spirituality and to promote the discipline at their academic institutions. They wish to express their appreciation to Bible Society and to Dr Shelley Saguaro, Head of the Department of Humanities at the University of Gloucestershire, for their support which enabled the symposium to take place.

The symposium also continued the existing co-operation between scholars in Biblical Studies and in Spirituality from the Netherlands and South Africa that took place as experts' meetings on several occasions. The symposium presented the first opportunity for colleagues from Gloucestershire to join this group and participate in their deliberations. The aim of the co-operation was to reflect on the discipline of Biblical Spirituality.

Eleven papers were read and discussed at the symposium. The discussions revealed some common ground between the papers, but also provided interesting material for future research and discussion.

A number of these papers addressed general, hermeneutical and methodological issues. In his insightful contribution on Biblical Spirituality and an "other" reading, Waaijman discusses two strategies of reading the Bible that both reflect a dialogical process. He analysed seven paradigms to illustrate the polar tension between author-text and reader. The first strategy according to which the reader responds to the author-text is only part of the reading process. The reader also acts towards the text. Using the categories of pragmatics, indifference and non-indifference, he points out how important it is to move beyond the first strategy as mere meditative approach on the contents of the text, as it happens in, for example, the historical critical approach in order to come to an orative reading which brings the reader into the God-human process of transformation. The text informs, but also plays a role in transforming the reader.

In his two contributions, Welzen also addresses hermeneutical and methodological issues in Biblical Spirituality. The underlying question in his first contribution is whether a spiritual reading of the Bible requires a particular method. His important paper, having carefully analysed and evaluated four readings of Luke 1:26-38 concludes that there is no such method and that existing, well established historical-critical ways of reading the Bible also offer

spiritual insights. Much depends on the openness of the scholar to spiritual dimensions of the reading process. Welzen thus points out the relevance of the researcher's predisposition in his/her scholarly work. The person of the researcher as subject of her/his scholarly work cannot be ignored. It has, however, to do with more than choices. His contribution thus spells out the inevitable role of the subject in the process of interpretation and the need to account for that in an adequate, scientific manner.

In his second contribution, Welzen used three approaches, taken from Spirituality as a discipline, to define Biblical Spirituality. Utilizing insights developed by Waaijman in his study of Spirituality, Welzen shows how readers attribute meaning guided by the text, how Biblical texts contain many spiritualities and terms, before he defines Biblical Spirituality as a transformative relationship between the divine and human which is part of an on-going process. He also points out how intertextuality helps to understand the spiritual process in reading biblical texts. His contribution underlines the need to retain the close link between Biblical Spirituality and Spirituality as a Discipline.

In his paper, Lincoln provides material which would be of value to scholars as they explore Biblical Spirituality. He argued that Taylor's thinking in his widely read publication, *A Secular Age,* would inform scholars about the present context in which there is a growing interest in spirituality. He spelled out some implications for how Biblical perspectives on spirituality may be studied, with special reference to Taylor's category of the social imaginary and the notion of fullness. With this contribution Lincoln shows how Taylor offers insights in the contemporary context within which Biblical Spirituality functions and some helpful notions that would appeal to those who study and benefit from the discipline.

Most of the other contributions focussed on the spirituality in Biblical texts and thereby move beyond the theoretical and introductory issues to a study of Spirituality in the Bible. Of these, one paper focussed on Old Testament material, and, specifically the Psalms. McConville investigates how happiness is depicted in them, points out how it is linked with key concepts such as freedom and justice and then compares these concepts with Greek ideas. He finally shows how the person at the centre of the Psalms, seen from the perspectives of speech itself, the notion of the "soul" and praise, is depicted as a fulfilled human being. With this article McConville focuses on the content of Spirituality, whilst he also develops transformation as a key concept in Spirituality. Of interest are his remarks about the transformative role of worship, the place of the inner being of a human being in the Psalms and its relationship to outward life.

In his contribution, De Villiers leans heavily on existing research on mysticism in antiquity and a new understanding of apocalyptic texts. He points out apocalyptic perspectives in Luke's description of the resurrection of Jesus and their mystical implications. Luke regards Jesus' resurrection as an entry into glory, which is a mystical motif in Hebrew Scriptures as well as in Jewish and Christian apocalyptic texts. His contribution points out that the category of mysticism, central to Spirituality, should be approached from a contextual perspective, taking into account with what language and concepts mysticism in antiquity articulated the conviction that there is an intimate, close relationship between God and humanity. He argues that it is seminal to understand that this relationship is portrayed in terminology characteristic of its own time and that Biblical Spirituality should not read the Biblical texts anachronistically with modern mystical notions.

In her contribution, Kourie also pays attention to a mystical approach to Biblical texts. She, however, takes as point of departure contemporary insights of Catez to read Paul through a mystical lens, though she points out that such insights go back as far as those of Origen. Her contribution complements those of Welzen and Waaijman in stressing that the text can no longer be read simply as an historical artefact. She takes Welzen's remarks about the significant role of the researcher in spiritual readings of the Bible further by focussing on an analysis of the experience of those who read the Bible. The experiences of readers show the polysemous nature of the Bible.

Pietersen also pays attention to a particular text in order to determine its relevance for an understanding of Biblical Spirituality. Drawing on both Taylor's understanding of the social imaginary and Waaijman's understanding of spirituality, he examines Dibelius' well-known contention on the prevalence of good citizenship in the Pastoral Letters. For this he revisits the concept of *eusebeia* (godliness/piety) in the light of the lived experience of pagans, Jews and Christians in first-century Ephesus. He too, therefore, takes seriously the context in which Biblical texts should be understood in order to determine its relevance for Biblical Spirituality. This contribution challenges scholars in Biblical Spirituality to reflect more on the contents of Spirituality since piety, as Waaijman argued, is one of the four key words in Spirituality.

In his careful textual analysis Tolmie joins the other scholars by paying attention to a particular text in order to investigate its spirituality. Drawing on his expertise as a specialist in Galatians, he reads the letter as a whole in terms of the hermeneutical model of Waaijman. He reads Galatians from the perspective of Spirituality as referring to the divine-human relationship and to the notion of transformation to come to some useful insights for Biblical Spirituality. Tolmie's informative textual analysis illustrates the need for basic, close readings of Biblical texts in terms of perspectives from Spirituality. Before one can argue in more depth about the spiritual implications of a Biblical text,

its form, nature and contents as a spiritual text need to be spelled out – as is done in his contribution.

In his interesting contribution Decock discusses the transformative potential of John's Apocalypse through the wisdom it offers by way of various symbols. His article therefore focuses on the spiritual impact of a text on its readers and, thus, on pragmatics. These symbols help the hearers to see themselves and their world in new ways and empower them to discern between the divine and evil ways. This transformation affects not only the individual temporarily, but is cosmic, social and divine-human. It especially empowers the hearer to persevere in her/his witness and holding on to the work of Jesus.

After all the articles on the spirituality in particular Biblical texts, Huls explores another approach to Biblical Spirituality when he researches the use of the Bible in later Spirituality authors and texts. His contribution illustrates how useful this approach is for the study of Biblical Spirituality. He analysed a sermon by Conrad of Saint George on the worthy reception of the Sacrament as a paradigm for the allegorical mode of reading in the Middle Ages. Through relating the Bible to life, this mode places the relationship with God in a central position. The text is an expression of a divine address. Subsequently the whole of the text is read from the perspective of the mystagogic moment as the reader's personal transformation process. In this way the historical context falls away and the development of the spiritual path becomes central. This shows that the allegorical mode of reading has its own logic and cannot be dismissed as human fantasy. This mode of reading is characterized by a great precision and a pure orientation on God's action. Modern readers will have to discover anew the divine address in the text, again and again. Huls's essay not only reveals how important the Bible is regarded and how extensively it is used by later authors, but it shows how the understanding of the Bible is enriched by drawing on later receptions. His insightful and significant contribution represents a noteworthy approach to Biblical Spirituality.

With these contributions three major areas of research within Biblical Spirituality are investigated: spiritual hermeneutics, spirituality in the Bible and the Bible in spirituality. As any reader will realise, they represent a point of departure for future discussions and research. They do, however, provide material with which the nature of the discipline can be researched further.

Finally it is a pleasure to point out that with this volume, a third contribution to the field of Spirituality is being made as supplement to Acta Theologica. The others appeared as Acta Theologica 8 and 10. Whilst the earlier volumes explored introductory issues regarding Spirituality, this volume is the first on in which Biblical Spirituality as a discipline is in focus.

We wish to thank the editors of Acta Theologica, Prof. Hermie van Zyl and Dr Lyzette Hoffman for accepting this volume in the series and for their sterling work in preparing this volume for publication.

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