AOSIS

Theologia and the *ideologia* of language, nation and gender – Gateway to the future from a deconstructed past

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The article is a contribution to the centennial celebration of the Faculty of Theology at the University of Pretoria. It forms part of the section in the programme titled 'Ethos – Critical perspectives on our past and a gateway to our future' and is dedicated to Yolanda Dreyer who was the first female professor appointed in the Faculty of Theology of the University of Pretoria. The article reflects on aspects of the present-day populist discourse in South Africa and globally, which is enhanced by neonationalistic separatism. The following issues are critically discussed: homophobia regarding sexual minorities, a lack of sensitivity for the negative effects of male domination and the objection to English as the lingua franca for teaching. These aspects are assessed against the background of the Derridean notion of 'deconstruction' and the contributions of the first professors employed in the Faculty of Theology since its inception in 2017.

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Frame of intent

In my country, the colours of the 'rainbow nation' seem to have dimmed as the *Zeitgeist* of populism and nationalism casts a shadow over what could have signified the rich potential of reconciling diversity and social cohesion. South Africa's president, Jacob Zuma, is an example par excellence of a populist. Leslie Bank, formerly Professor of Social Anthropology at the University of Fort Hare, and the current President of the Association for Anthropology in Southern Africa,[1] describes Zuma's efforts of reconstructing 'traditional leadership and chiefly power' as 'anti-intellectual Africanist populism' (Bank 2017:7). The centennial celebration of South Africa's oldest theological faculty in 2017 provides an opportunity to rethink the past and reimagine the future. With the inception of theological instruction and training at the University of Pretoria, the 'founding scholars' of the Faculty of Theology actively collaborated with their European peers. The aim of my presentation is to show how this international collaboration declined during the apartheid years. There was an increasingly exclusivist tendency in ecclesial leadership. Some theologians espoused nationalism, which led to ecumenical and academic isolation.

In post-apartheid South Africa, international collaboration resumed. However, the current dynamics of growing populism and the renaissance of (neo)nationalism could lure ecclesial leadership and believers into a new kind of civil religion that can again result in the decline of international cooperation in the Faculty of Theology. Theologians who pass through the gateway to the future should guard diligently against this.

Referring to the 'rise of nationalism' in the nineteenth century, Norwegian biblical scholar Halvor Moxnes (2012) demonstrates convincingly that:

> [e]arly nationalism represented a modernization of known forms of authority and politics, in that it aimed to transfer power from the monarchs and their bureaucracies to the people inhabiting a certain territory. These political reforms were based on philosophical discussions of the relationship between the sovereign and its people and citizenship, and on the notions of peoples and their unique cultures as manifested in language, art and folklore. (pp. 1–2)

1.Professor Leslie Bank was director of the Institute for Social and Economic Research (FHISER) at the University of Fort Hare, recipient of research fellowships from Fulbright, The Ford Foundation and the Oppenheimer Trust to Emory, Oxford and Cambridge Universities. He is currently deputy executive director of the Department of Economic Performance and Development of the Human Sciences Research Council, Cape Town. He also served as a research fellow at the African Studies Centre at the University of Leiden in the Netherlands. He is the author of *Home spaces, street styles: Contesting power and identity in a South African city* (Bank 2011).

In periods when identities were under pressure, they were often reshaped through contestations and discussions of 'hegemonic masculinities' …. A central component of such hegemonic masculinity was *respectability*, a norm that was closely related to nationalism, not only with regard to sexual morality but in all areas of social and individual life. [(p. 150, [*emphasis origina*])

The current renaissance of nationalism requires a diligent awareness of the potential for a 'reshaping' of male hegemony. Aspects of a populist discourse enhanced by neonationalistic separatism include homophobia regarding sexual minorities, a lack of sensitivity for the negative effects of male domination and the objection to English as the *lingua franca* for teaching. This presentation (1) considers my criterion for 'deconstruction'; (2) reflects briefly on the contributions of those I describe as the 'founding scholars'; (3) explains populist discourse in relation to the above concerns and (4) suggests ways in which to pass through the gateway and step into the future. The challenge is to deconstruct the past, to reframe theological and ecclesial discourse on gender, sexuality, race and language and to cast off the shackles of the ideologies of nationalism and populism.

Universities ought to be agents of change. In his contribution to this conference, the Dean of the Faculty of Theology, Professor Johan Buitendag (Buitendag 2017), refers to universities as 'places of debate and contestation which provide space for new knowledge to be created, intellectual activity and freedom of thought.' However, neonationalism, which flourishes alongside the ever growing populism, brings us to a *kairos* moment. The shadow side of gender, language and nation will be investigated by revisiting the legacy and wisdom of some founding scholars of the Faculty of Theology of the University of Pretoria. The contribution of four scholars[2], namely J.H.J.A. Greyvenstein, B. Gemser, A. van Selms and A.S. Geyser, will form the discursive framework of this article.

A criterion of deconstruction, ideology or discursive frame and the wisdom of the founding scholars

For Jacques Derrida, 'deconstruction' is neither a methodology nor a philological or literary method of exposition or exegesis to define the meaning of some objective entity. The process of deconstruction is like a journey through a gateway to the unknown. Its ethos is that of both discovery and discarding. The potentialities of differentiation (*différence*) are constantly explored. It is an archaeological process of excavating life – one's own included – and the various signatures of life. It leads to the realisation that *sameness* also refers to the *not identical* (Derrida [1968] 1982:1–28) and that what was intended for good, could become an instrument of damage – not only to the Other but also to the Self. A hammer can be

2.The Scottish Presbyterian professors, A.C. Patterson and E. Macmillan and the Dutch Graecist H. Th. Reinink as well as S.P Engelbrecht will not be brought into play. Engelbrecht's church history projects tend to be a self-glorification of the 'own' denomination while disparaging another. The denomination he criticised in this way has been a 'church partner' in the Faculty of Theology for the greater part of the Faculty's existence.

used to build or to destroy (Heidegger [1927] 1993:156; Käufer 2003:79–91). Likewise, technology that promises progress and infrastructure can cause misery for workers. Colonisation, intended to bring light to the so-called dark continents, could demoralise the morality and dispirit the spirituality of natives. Religious righteousness produces self-righteousness, the apostle Paul said to the people of his own race (Rm 9:3; 10:3; Phlp 3:9). He illustrated this tripping over the 'stumbling block' with examples from his own life (Rm 11:1; Phlp 3:4–6).

In 1940, the Old Testament scholar of the Faculty of Theology at the University of Pretoria, Berend J. Gemser, described Israel's self-righteousness as the '*troetel-ideologie van 'n oorwoekerende nasionalisme*' ['the pet ideology of an all-consuming nationalism']. New Testament scholar, Albert S. Geyser, concurred with this assessment. Even though present-day nationalism and populism may not be full-blown ideologies, they can be considered as discursive and rhetorical phenomena that nurture self-righteousness. In an article entitled '*Logos* en *ideologia*: *Woord en skynwoord*' [*Logos* and *ideologia*: Word and phantom-word], Geyser (1961:304) illustrates that *ideologica*, though related to *logos*, is actually rooted in words such as *idea* (regarding what is the 'own') and *eidolon* [divine image]. To me 'idolisation' as devotion to idol worship refers to the opposite of what the term *theologica* intends to mean. The word 'ideologica' and 'idolisation' are terms that are derivates of *idein*, that is, 'to see'. An *eidolon* represents 'the visible formation of un-truth' (*my translation of the Afrikaans 'sigbare vormgewing aan die onwaarheid'*). Nazism and apartheid are examples of a full-blown ideology, also in the sense of what 'idolisation' means – and therefore, 'theologically' seen, represent a heresy. They constitute a system of 'racist untruth' (*in Afrikaans 'n 'onverwerklikbare rasseleer'*).

Deconstruction of the past as a gateway to the future requires a hermeneutics of suspicion regarding the Self. This presupposes suspicion regarding the collective history and, as described by philosopher Jürgen Habermas ([1998] 2001; 2001:24), a 'commitology' to a postnational constellation. This includes the commitment to acknowledge the struggle for particularity, while deconstructing love, because love has the tendency to be self-love and solo-love (cf. Nolan & Kirkpatrick 1982:108–129). Authentic love is not self-directed. I am loved, therefore I can love. The first happens before the second (Jeanrond 2010:20). What Werner Jeanrond (2010) refers to as a 'theology of love' is formulated by Colleen Mallon (2010:211) as 'agapic love'. Such an authentic love is detached from power and self-interest: 'The agapic love of God in Jesus Christ transforms the human experience of otherness (*exteriorité*) and orders human relationships such that for Christians the other is no longer stranger but neighbour' (Mallon 2010:211). Mallon expands on Yves Marie-Joseph Congar's (1904–1995) reflection on ecclesial power and self-serving love. According to Congar ([1962] 1967):

Christianity could not but inspire a new order in the world, since it involved a new way of looking at life and the regarding of others as one's neighbours … [*a*] love that seeks not itself but gives itself, and for this very reason is directed towards the weakest and the most wretched. (p. 35)

Such an ecumenical theology was the core of the wisdom of the founding scholars (see Van Aarde 2017) – a disposition that was once lost and regained, but can be lost again if we accede to neonationalistic and populist discourse.

Antonie Greyvenstein

Jan Hendrik Jacobus Antonie Greyvenstein (17 March 1878 to 15 November 1967) was the first professor appointed at the University of Pretoria in 1917 for training ministers for the Netherdutch Reformed Church. He was a member of the Dutch Reformed Church in the Cape and studied at the Victoria College, which later become the University of Stellenbosch (see Van Aarde 1992:139–158). He completed his doctoral studies in Utrecht, the Netherlands, did a short stint as minister in the Dutch Reformed Church, and then accepted a call by the Netherdutch Reformed Church in Pretoria. His doctoral studies focused on the utilitarian ethics of Jeremy Bentham. Ethical behaviour remained important to him throughout his life. According to utilitarian ethics, right or wrong is directly related to the consequences of a person's choices (see Harsanyi 1977:623–625). Greyvenstein emphasised the universal character of the kingdom of God, as preached by Jesus. He was a staunch advocate of academic freedom and opposed Calvinist orthodoxy, especially the influence of Abraham Kuyper. He regarded this kind of Reformed theology as contrary to the Belgic Confession, which states in Article 7 that councils and synods should not take precedence over the Word of God.

Berend Gemser

Gemser (17 May 1890 to 15 November 1962) was born in the Netherlands. In 1926 he was appointed professor in the Faculty of Theology and took over the teaching duties of the then rector, Professor A.C. Patterson and the other Presbyterian lecturer, E. McMillan (see Duncan 2003:47–54). He lectured in Hebrew and Old Testament Studies in the Faculty of Theology as successor of Patterson and McMillan. He established the departments of Semitic Languages and Ancient Cultural History in the Faculty of Humanities. Until 1938 he served as head of all three departments. Renowned European scholars were his mentors, for example, H. Th. Obbink, F.M. Th. De Liagre Böhl and G. van der Leeuw (cf. *inter alia* Gemser 1948:48–58). He was the doyen of the academic study of Hebrew and other Semitic languages in South Africa and the driving force behind the establishment of the *HTS Theological Studies* in 1943, the oldest theological journal in South Africa. Thanks to his academic network, some prominent Dutch theologians published in the *HTS*. The motto of the University of Pretoria, *Ad destinatum persequor*, meaning 'With zeal and perseverance I strive to reach the goal', borrowed from Paul's letter to the Philippians (Phlp 3:14), was his inventiveness (see Labuschagne 2001:194–195).

Gemser was opposed to the trend in Afrikaans higher education institutions to practice science from the perspective of 'Christian philosophy' (see Gemser 1945:49–65). This partly contributed to the University of Pretoria's resolution to protect academic freedom (see Oberholzer, Van Zyl & Dreyer 1975). He also opposed the attempt of political powers to remove Hebrew as academic subject from the university because of their pro-Nazi inclination.[3] He was the first theologian in South Africa to advocate for a theological epistemology free from both fundamentalism and liberal modernism (Gemser 1945:54). He also insisted that the Afrikaans Bible translation should be free from doctrinal prejudice (Gemser 1945:53). Pointing out the dangers of German National Socialism (Gemser 1940:58–60), he was one of the first South African theologians to expose the growing nationalism in South Africa. He called it an ideology of 'race, blood and land' (see Geyser 1961:300). In the first issue of the *HTS* published in 1943, in an article on the prophet Amos, he criticised civil religion ('*die veruiterlike godsverering, die eie verering, die vermenslike godsdiens*') which leads to a 'politicised church': 'This ethnic [*volkse*], nationalistic and self-directed (*die nasionale en die eiene, die selfsugtige*) disposition transformed divine blessing into a curse which leads to death for the people [*volk*]' (Gemser 1943–44:17, 20). In two separate articles, written in 1961, Gemser articulated his strong resistance against the theological and biblical legitimation of apartheid (see Labuschagne 2001:195), titled '"Mabdiel" of "mekabbeets" ("scheidingmaker" of "bijeenbregenger")' (Gemser 1961a), and 'Een beskouwing over de kerk en het politieke apartheidsbeleid in Zuid-Afrika' (Gemser 1961b).

Adrianus van Selms and Albert Geyser

Van Selms (22 January 1906 to 30 April 1984) completed his doctoral studies at the University of Utrecht in 1933 under the supervision of renowned historian of religion, H. Th. Obbink. As a student, F.M. Th. de Liagre Bohl of Leiden and Albrecht Alt introduced him to Palestine and the conditions there. Van Selms was a prolific researcher and erudite theologian. He lectured in Semitic languages in the Faculty of Humanities and in the Faculty of Theology. He was an active minister of the Netherdutch Reformed Church. Just as Greyvenstein and Gemser, he was wary of particularism and isolationism.[4] In his commentary on Ezra-Nehemiah (in the series *Tekst en Uitleg*), Van Selms (1935) pointed out that it could seem necessary for their own salvation that Israel should remain separate in order for God to prepare them for the coming of the Messiah. However, this meant that Israel kept the treasure to themselves, rather than bring salvation to the heathen. He emphasised the universality of the biblical message. In 1962, Van Selms left the Netherdutch Reformed Church for the Presbyterian Church. The build-up to this significant decision started in the 1950s when he supported Albert Geyser who had been charged with heresy.

3. In his contribution on the significance of Professor Gemser in the *Biografisch lexicon voor de geschiedenis van het Nederlands Protestantisme*, edited by Houtman et alia, 2001, pp. 194–195, Labuschagne (2001a) says: '*Te midden van zijn Afrikaanssprekende landgenoten heeft hij veel geleden onder de schaamteloze pro-Duitse houding van het merendeel der Afrikaners en onder de opleving van hun fel nationalisme en de daaruit voortspruitende apartheid*'.

4. Van Selms's criticism against apartheid was formulated in various publications (see Labuschagne 2001b:461–463), for example his article in the Dutch journal *Kerk en Theologie* 12 (1961), 'De Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika en de kleurscheidslijn'; his contribution in *Vertraagde aksie: 'n Ekumeniese getuienis uit die Afrikaanssprekende kerk*, namely '*De gemeenskap van die heiliges en die kleurvraagstuk*'; as well as his essays in *Pro Veritate*, journal of the Christian Institute (*Christelike Instituut van Suidelike Afrika*).

Geyser (10 February 1918 – 13 June 1985) was the successor of Greyvenstein. In 1955 Geyser and S.P. Engelbrecht (with the written support of Van Selms) were admonished by the moderator of the church, reverend A.J.G. Oosthuizen, for their public criticism of South African Prime Ministers D.F. Malan and J.G. Strijdom (cf. Dreyer 2016:p.2 of 10). The government's Separate Representation of Voters Bill changed the composition of Senate by removing the so-called 'Coloureds' from the common voters' roll in the Cape, thereby acquiring a two-thirds majority of the joint session in Parliament. This led to the establishment of the South Africa First Movement and to the Women's Protest March against the pass laws. Geyser became a member of the South Africa First Movement (cf. Van Selms 1960:36–47; 1961:151–165). On 24 April 1957, the Executive of the General Assembly of the Netherdutch Reformed Church of Africa officially supported the Nationalist government's more stringent Apartheid legislation (see, e.g. *The Separate Representation of Voters Act* of 1956; *The Immorality Amendment Act*, Act No 23 of 1957; *The Native Administration Amendment Act* No 42 of 1956; and that pass laws would also be enforced on black women). On 13 September 1960, the Executive of the General Assembly lambasted Geyser for not publicly supporting Article 3 of the Netherdutch Reformed Church's Constitution. Article 3 regulated exclusivist racial membership of the Church and denounced interracial marriage. Professors Geyser and Van Selms were prevented from compiling an independent report for the World Council of Church's Cottesloe Consultation (07–14 December 1960) in the wake of the Sharpeville Massacre, where 69 people were killed and 186 non-violent protesters were wounded on 21 March 1960. The Executive reaffirmed that apartheid was the official policy of the Netherdutch Reformed Church as codified in Article 3 of its Constitution. On 14 January 1961, Geyser and Van Selms were criticised by the Executive for their publication *Vertraagde aksie* [Delayed action] (Dreyer 2017), which reflected on Sharpeville and Cottesloe. The 53rd General Assembly of the Netherdutch Reformed Church endorsed Article 3 of the Constitution. It rejected Geyser's motion that a commission of exegetes be appointed to investigate whether Scripture was applied legitimately in both Article 3 and 'Delayed action'. On 03 July 1961, Van Selms published an article in a Dutch journal in which he explained the situation in the country and exposed the one-sidedness of the Netherdutch Reformed Church's memorandum to the Cottesloe Consultation. At its 53rd General Assembly, the Netherdutch Reformed Church endorsed Prime Minister Dr H.F. Verwoerd for withdrawing South Africa from the British Commonwealth. The Curatorium meeting of 03 October 1961 had to rule on the legitimacy and correctness of the heresy charge against Geyser. Van Selms pointed out that the charge was not legitimate, but his motion was rejected. As a result, he resigned as lecturer of the Faculty of Theology (Sec. A) on 01 August 1962. On 01 October 1962, Geyser resigned as University of Pretoria professor after having been found guilty of the charge of heresy. The Rector Professor C.H. Rautenbach, pressured by the church leadership, made it impossible for him to stay on. On 26 August 1963, it was

decided that Van Selms's resignation as lecturer meant that he was also no longer an ordained minister of the Netherdutch Reformed Church. Geyser appealed to the Supreme Court against the Church's guilty verdict on the heresy charge. The judge ordered the advocates to negotiate a retraction of the Church's verdict. The Church agreed, and Geyser's status as minister of the Church was restored (see Van Aarde, De Villiers & Buitendag 2014). On 15 February 1967, Geyser and the Reverend Beyers Naudé brought a charge of defamation against Professor Adriaan Pont. According to Pont, they were communists and in collaboration with the World Council of Churches, in favour of violent revolution. On his request, Geyser addressed the Executive of the General Assembly of the Netherdutch Reformed Church on 03 September 1968. He accused the Executive of having misled the Church during the previous 12 years. They were responsible for the Church being presented to the outside world as a 'false church', which stands in opposition to both Scripture and the Confessions. He demanded a confession of culpability from the church leadership and pleaded for their conversion (NHKA 1968:131–135). Professor Geyser then announced his resignation from the Netherdutch Reformed Church.

Geyser's contribution as an academic was his brilliant and inspired interpretation of the Bible and his emphasis on spirituality and the mystic traditions of early Christianity. The practical formation of students for ministry was one of his teaching responsibilities. In his lectures, he emphasised that pastors should retain a balance between academic knowledge and personal holiness (cf. De Villiers 2016:2 of 7). In his exposition of the Bible, he unpacked the political, social and spiritual consequences of exegesis. He always stressed the universal implications of the gospel message in which there is no room for separatism, racism or sexism. Already in 1946, he pointed out that all people are the bearers of the image of God. In 1948, he formulated it as follows (my paraphrased translation from the Afrikaans):

> If the Church no longer confesses Christ it has lost its heart. The vacuum will then be filled by an ideology – that of political power and nationalism. Though this may be important to the nation, the church then sails under a false flag. The church is built on love. This is the core difference between church and state. Politics, the economy and social status do not constitute the lifeblood of the church. Though wealthy in the material sense of the word, the church is in fact poor. It loses its relevance in the world as well as its authority to convey spiritual values. A church that is sensitive to the interests of the nation is in danger of becoming populist – in Afrikaans circles, of becoming an elitist 'Boere-kerk'. A church that does not have a charitable heart rooted in Christ, has left the service of Christ to become a state employee without remuneration. (Geyser 1948:5–7)

Language, nation and gender – and populism

On 16 June 2016, the Soweto uprising was commemorated. In 1976, South African youth had protested the enforcement of one language on all in the name of nationalism. Forty years after the event, journalist Max du Preez recalls it as 'a

language of blood' ('*taal van bloed*') (Du Preez 2016).[5] In 1974, the Minister of the Department of Bantu Education (M.C. Botha) along with his Deputy (Punt Janson – an alumnus of the Faculty of Theology and Hervormde pastor before becoming a politician) declared Afrikaans to be the medium of instruction of mathematics, history and geography in all schools. This is rather ironic since, in 1943, the same Minister had protested against English becoming a compulsory second language in Afrikaans schools. He would not see 'Afrikaans culture sacrificed on the altar of British-Jewish imperialism (*Afrikanerdom … op die altaar van Brits-Joodse imperialisme opgeoffer*)'. Forty years after 16 June 1976, the journalist Du Preez puts it as follows:

> I think Soweto 1976 finally revealed the great lie to me in a concrete way: Apartheid was not the justifiable separate development it was purported to be. It was a violent, oppressive and racist ideology. Afrikaner nationalism was not healthy pride in one's own culture, language and history. It was aggressive, chauvinistic, intolerant and self-centred ... But there was obviously much to it. Apartheid was probably at its worst in the 70s, with strict pass laws, forcible relocation, extreme social segregation, and the like ... Most black adults kept their heads down, carried their passes with them, went to work and bore the brunt. But the children picked up on their parents' pain, anger and powerlessness. When Afrikaans was forced on them, they revolted. This was truly a youth revolution. After 1976 peace never returned to South Africa. There were quieter months and more violent months, but the unrest continued until the inception of the United Democratic Front in 1983. That was the beginning of the end of apartheid. Seven years later the negotiations began. In 2016 schools and campuses are burning again. Again there are anger, frustration, tear gas and aggressive police in the townships. This time apartheid and Afrikaans are not to blame. (Du Preez 2016:22–23, [*author's own translation from original Afrikaans*])

However, the framework of the discourse remains the same, namely nationalism and populism. The double irony is that a similar discourse comes from both sides. The United Democratic Front (UDF) motto was 'UDF unites, Apartheid divides'. I am convinced that it is an illusion to think that nationalism unifies. It carries the seed of populism and populism is divisive. It is also an illusion to think that fighting for the 'common people' is 'populism' and therefore populism is acceptable (cf. Muller 2016:23).

In popular conversations, populism is erroneously regarded as an ideology and spoken of in negative terms. However, 'ideology' refers to a unifying system. The question is what the attributes of such a network of ideas that produce an 'ideology' would be. Nazism and apartheid can be taken as case studies.[6] To me, it is only of academic interest whether one 'defines' populism – or even nationalism – as an ideology or not. Yet, I deem neonationalism (distinct from but related

to the 'nation-state' of a former epoch) and populism as the kind of rhetoric which provides the language and the voice for ideational ambitions that serve self-righteousness. When these 'ideational ambitions' are mystified as primordial divine institutional or political constitutional rights, the rhetoric shows what a 'full' (or 'thick') ideological system looks like.

Primordialism is an ideological system. People's passionate commitment to these often irrational ideas bind them together. 'Primordialism assumes that a person's fundamental ethnic identity is fixed and cannot change' (Joireman 2003:19). Identity formation is based on family, territory, language, custom and religion. These are deep-rooted and involuntary, not a matter of rational choice, but of tradition and a common ancestry (Dreyer 2006:158). In such a discursive frame, for instance, '[*h*]eterosexual masculinity is seen as "normal", "rational" and "disciplined" whereas homosexuality is deemed "abnormal", "irrational" and "undisciplined"' (Dreyer 2007:11). Populist discourse strips sexual minorities of their privacy. Their sexuality is forced into the public domain by others. They are labelled, demeaned and discriminated against, because of homophobia, nationalism and populism.

It is of little consequence whether populism is considered a 'thin-centred' ideology, a 'full' ideology (see Mudde 2004:543) or only rhetoric that voices 'the will of the people' over against that of the 'corrupt elite' (see Aslanidis 2015:88–104), which could include the 'corrupt theologian'. Populists capitalise on the ostensibly democratic idea that the 'corrupt elite' has taken away our country, our culture, our language and our family values (such as marriage as a primordial and divine institution). In this way, populism is at odds with plurality and diversity. Under the guise of language that sounds democratic, it is in fact rather authoritarian. Though it criticises the 'corrupt elite', it actually fosters elitism by claiming that populist leaders alone represent the 'common people' and their 'true' interests (Muller 2016:84). Given sufficient power, populists exclude all who are not part of the own group. Homophobia (against feminists and sexual minorities) and xenophobia (against people with different skin pigmentation, phenotypical facial features or language identity) are attributes of populist and neonationalistic discourse. Populists often refrain from ecumenical engagement and are unable to deal with demographic realities. They cannot, for instance, distinguish between a sound postnational constellation and commonwealth on the one hand and a globalism endorsed by economic and neocolonial hegemony on the other hand. In the current religious and ecclesial discourse, populism takes the form of a kind of civil religion, which differs from that of the period of the upcoming nation-states. Populist religion endorses prosperity sectarianism and dogmatic fundamentalism. This further fuels the suspicions of secularists who are suspicious of all forms of faith and religion, as well as of ecclesial institutions. Populist religion contributes to economically self-directed ecclesial and social organisations. It uses culture, tradition and language to construct walls and boundaries to

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5.An offensive quote by Janson is the following: 'I have not consulted the African people on the language issue and I'm not going to. An African might find that "the grootbaas" only spoke Afrikaans or only spoke English. It would be to his advantage to know both languages' (see Du Preez 2016:22).

6.An ideology has a number of attributes (Freeden 1996:545–546): (1) a substantial internal integration, (2) a rich core attached to a wide range of political concepts, (3) the capacity to exhibit a broad range of concepts and political positions, (4) a reasonably broad range of answers to the political questions of society, (5) far-reaching ideational ambitions and scope, (6) a sufficiently cohesive and intricate ideological product and (7) unity among its producers.

keep migrants out. Hearts of stone are unmoved by the increasing poverty, human trafficking, spread of disease, neocolonial genocide and the condition of millions of children and other marginalised people.

In our part of the world, the issue of language in the populist and neonationalistic discourse is relevant. In the past we experienced the damaging effect of language as ideology. This could also be seen elsewhere in the world, as in Europe for example (see Blommaert & Verschueren 1992:355–375). Language is part of social identity. However, it becomes harmful when demographic realities are ignored. Afrikaans was proclaimed the only medium of instruction at the University of Pretoria in 1932. At the time, 32% of the students were of British descent and the majority of Afrikaans-speaking students preferred bilingual instruction. However, politicians refused this because of their aversion to the British Empire (Union of South Africa in the 1940s) or the German Empire (in Namibia after the Second World War). Black learners in schools were instructed by medium of Afrikaans simply because Afrikaner nationalists had the political power to enforce it. In the same vein, a disregard for the professional needs of students who train to serve as pastors in Afrikaans-speaking congregations would amount to populist intolerance. The recognition of the role of English as *lingua franca* is demographically necessary and economically and pedagogically wise. In a recent study on English as *lingua franca*, Alesia Cogo and Martin Dewey (2012) wrote:

> In the past 20 years or so the phenomenon of globalisation has had a profound effect on the profusion of English in the world. Recent technological and demographical developments have contributed to the ongoing internationalization of the language, ultimately changing not only the way it is used, but also the way it is conceptualized. Like any other language, English is involved in natural processes of variation and change, but the conditions under which these currently occur in English have intensified as it comes into increased context with other languages and is spoken by increasingly diverse users across many varied communities. The context to which the language has diversified on a global scale is entirely unprecedented. (p. 1)

At the Faculty of Theology, with its diversity of church partners, instruction in English for students from the Nguni, Tswana, English and Afrikaans language groups is a practical necessity, even though it presents a pedagogical challenge. It should not to be part of the church's mission to participate in the 'ideational ambition' of language purists. A prophetic voice should be heard when language becomes an instrument of populist hegemony that divides and excludes. The use of English as *lingua franca* can contribute to internationalisation, which is necessary for excellence in research and global collaboration. However, to eliminate Afrikaans from all classrooms and all educational models would alienate those church partners whose members are mostly Afrikaans speaking. Reconciling diversity is rather a better way of thinking in a multicultural environment. The quest for decolonisation of the epistemological content of educational curricula will not be achieved when people are alienated by means of hegemonic disputation. In his 'Inaugural

Humanities Lecture' of the Academy of Science of South Africa on 20 October 2016, titled 'Has Rhodes fallen? Decolonizing the Humanities in Africa and constructing intellectual sovereignty', African anthropologist Kwesi Kwaa Prah (2016) says:

> [*T*]he emancipation and the development of mass society are not achieved by the mere replacement of white faces by black ones. If this was the case development would have come to Africa soon after the end of colonialism, a half century ago … Africanization in itself without cultural reinforcement … in as far as the post-colonial record demonstrates leads in all spheres of social life into deeper multi-dimensional dependency or engendered cultural forms derived from the metropolitan centres of culture and power in the contemporary world. (p. 2)

> Knowledge production and the education which goes with it, is not advised by abstract, universalistic ideals, but socially defined and perceived needs. (p. 15)

Therefore, to accede to either the current Afrikaans-driven populist separatism or to an African populist demand that Afrikaans be eradicated as medium of instruction for students who train for professions in an Afrikaans-speaking environment can blot out the footprint of those founding scholars whose academic and political heritage already opened a gateway to a more respectful and inclusive future.

Gateway to the future

A future without acceding to populist demands requires resistance to all forms of hegemony, be it on the level of politics, religion, gender, language, ecclesial denomination or sexual orientation. Therefore, male domination with regard to sexuality, religion and marriage should be opposed. Such opposition should manifest in both the attitudes and actions of faith communities and church organisations.

For me, Allan Boesak is a role model. At this Conference on a Gateway to the Future from a Deconstructed Past, I wish to honour him for his venerable contribution over the course of many years. Professor Jürgen Moltmann has been one of the most influential voices in the ecumenical circles of the World Council of Churches, an organisation which shapes leading minds to spread God's universal love for all and to resist self-righteousness and discrimination. Similarly, Allan Boesak has been one of the most influential voices in the Reformed ecumenical world, the only South African who has received all three Martin Luther King Jr. awards. The third award was bestowed on him on 30 March 2017. He was formally admitted to the Martin Luther King Jr. Board of Preachers of Morehouse College. This great honour is bestowed on theologians who, through their preaching, theology and activism take part in the struggle for justice, peace and human rights through non-violent resistance and, by doing so, honour the legacy of Martin Luther King Jr.[7] In 1983, Allan Boesak was the driving force behind the formation of the UDF, the non-violent and non-racial organisation that contributed to bringing about the demise of the apartheid regime in 1994. Boesak, as leader of the ecumenical World

7. Personal email from Allan Boesak to Andries van Aarde on 17 March 2017.

Alliance of Reformed Churches, was also the driving force behind the Ottawa Declaration of 1982 that condemned apartheid as heresy. This led to the suspension of two Reformed churches that are partners of the Faculty of Theology at the University of Pretoria. He was also the driving force behind bringing the Reformed Church of which I am an ordained minister, back into the global Reformed family. On his recommendation, Professor Yolanda Dreyer, the first female professor appointed in the Faculty of Theology, was invited to become a member of the Global Network of Theologians of the Word Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC), even when her church, the Hervormde Kerk, was not a member. She will be part of the group of Hervormde Kerk representatives at the Leipzig meeting of the WCRC in June 2017. The present President is our colleague at the Faculty, Professor Jerry Pillay. At this meeting of the Hervormde Kerk, the oldest church partner of the Faculty, will be welcomed again as an official member.

In 2007, Allan Boesak, as the representative of the WCRC (the then WARC), attended the General Assembly of the *Hervormde Kerk* when the present Dean of the Faculty of Theology, Professor Johan Buitendag, was the Moderator. The H.C.M. Fourie Prize for theological contribution to the Reformed tradition was bestowed on me at this meeting. In 2011, Boesak resigned from all church offices in his own denomination, the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa, which is also a church partner of the Faculty. His resignation followed the rejection by the church at its General Assembly on 02 October of his plea that the Belhar Confession – he had been instrumental in its compilation in 1986 – should also be applied to defend the full rights of gay people. At the General Assembly of the *Hervormde Kerk* in October 2016, a resolution was passed to acknowledge the full rights of gay people.

On 23 March 2017, Allan wrote to me in response to my inquiry about the relationship between the Christian Institute (CI) and the UDF. The CI was founded in 1963 by Professor Albert Geyser of the Faculty of Theology, University of Pretoria, and the student chaplain, Reverend Beyers Naudé. Naudé was the first director. The Prime Minister of South Africa, B.J. Vorster, banned the CI in 1977. Allan says: '[T]he CI's ecumenical nature and participation in the struggle for justice has always been an inspiration for that which I wanted to bring into realisation' (Allan Boesak, [*author's own translation of the original Afrikaans*]).[8]

We are in the time of Lent. The seven weeks of Lent consist not only of crying to God in our suffering (*invocabit*), remembering past mistakes (*reminiscere*), looking to God with tearful eyes as we pray to be delivered from evil (*oculi mei*) or praying for the vindication of the one who suffers (*judica me*) (Ps 42:1–2). There is also the liminal in-between station of rejoicing (*laetare*) in the promise to be surprised by hope. God has heard our regret and our longing for renewal (see Is 66:7–12). In this liminal space of conversion,

transformation and rebirth, we anticipate the joy of Easter. We have been given the grace to deconstruct a self-serving past and to make new commitments that are commensurate with the righteousness Jesus requires of us.

On 11 March 2009, five theologians of the *Hervormde Kerk*, Johan Buitendag, Yolanda Dreyer, Jimmie Loader, Ernest van Eck and Andries van Aarde, issued a 'Declaration on Apartheid in Church and Politics'. Four of these theologians were then and are still formally attached to the Faculty of Theology. The other, Emeritus Professor James Alfred Loader, is attached to the Protestant Faculty of the University of Vienna. He is an alumnus of the University of Pretoria. As a consequence of the Declaration, the Hervormde Kerk could re-enter the WCRC as a full member. The hope is that the Church will also become a member of the World Council of Churches in the near future. This was a kairos moment when the choice had to be made to deconstruct the past and pass through the gateway to the future. History came full circle: what began with the founding scholars and their international colleagues a long time ago came to fruition. The Declaration concluded with a prayer that I see as an authentic gateway to the future:

> Conscious of living and breathing in the presence of the most holy God, we pray: Lord, have mercy. We confess our sins before you and before all who have been dehumanized by us. Teach us to hate what you hate, and to love you with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind and with all our strength, and to love others as we love ourselves. We want to love as you do. Strengthen us when we shy away from that love. May your kingdom manifest itself in what we think and do. Let us be true to your gospel message and grant us the courage not to compromise it. We do not want to be ashamed of your gospel. Your will be done wherever we live and work. Renew us, God. Amen.

Acknowledgements

Competing interests

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8. Personal email from Allan Boesak to Andries van Aarde on 23 March 2017: '*Ek persoonlik kan wel se dat die CI se ekumeniese aard en die strewe na geregtigheid altyd inspirasie was wat ek ook … wou verwerklik.*'

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