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I have inserted the page numbers in bold and between square brackets in the text. Footnote 19, on the complex notion of 'secularisation', has been greatly reduced in the published version. Here its full version is retained. I have also made a few minor editorial changes in the text. I have added footnote 82 to explain the subtitle, *Water en Vuur*, of my contribution to the 'battle' at the Utrecht Faculty of Theology in 1974-1975. Footnotes 82-112 in the published article are therefore numbered 83-113 in this version. In footnote 113 and in the list of references, I entered the full bibliographic details of an article that was forthcoming in 2008. Several URLs (links to internet pages) proved to be defective or no longer operational. They have been removed or replaced by new ones that document the same data.

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## A BATTLE LOST OR WON? THE 1970-1975 UTRECHT ECUMENICAL EXPERIMENT IN ACADEMIC THEOLOGY

'The existential conditions of Europe and Europeans offer room for deep theological reflection'.<sup>1</sup>

This contribution in honour of John Pobee reports on a remarkable event in Dutch academic theology: the attempt, between 1970 and 1975, to develop an institutional setting at Utrecht University in which both the future ministers of four Protestant churches might receive their theological training as well as the future priests and pastoral workers of the Roman Catholic (RC) church. I have selected this event because a battle had been fought over it in 1974/75, in the very year in which John (and Elizabeth Amoah) and I first met. That was during the 13<sup>th</sup> IAHR<sup>2</sup> congress on The Nature and Destiny of Man at Lancaster University, UK, from August 15 to 22, 1975.

[50] That congress has a special place in the history of the study of the religions of Africa, for it was at Lancaster that, for the very first time in IAHR history, scholarship in the religions of

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<sup>1</sup> Pobee 1993: 194

<sup>2</sup> The International Association for the History of Religions (IAHR) was founded at Amsterdam in 1950 by scholars of religions from the Netherlands, Italy, France, Sweden and Israel as an umbrella for their then emerging national associations. Even though the large Japanese Society for the Study of Religions was admitted as early as 1955, IAHR has become a truly global association only since 1980, when e.g. the Nigerian Association for the Study of Religions (NASR) and the Association for the Study of Religions in Southern Africa (ASRSA) were also admitted. IAHR currently has 42 affiliates [50] (cf. <http://www.iahr.dk/associations.htm>). 38 are national associations. Four are continental affiliates: NAASR for North America; ALER for Latin America; AASR for Africa; EASR for Europe. AASR is the one IAHR affiliate that is both a continental and a global association, for its membership consists not only of scholars of religions from the continent of Africa but also of scholars of the religions of Africa worldwide. For IAHR history till 1995, cf. Platvoet & Olupona 1996: 8-10

Africa featured prominently at an IAHR international gathering, as Geoffrey Parrinder proudly remarked in his Opening Address as Honorary President of the British Association for the Study of Religions.<sup>3</sup> Thirty-two scholars of the religions of Africa attended:<sup>4</sup> seventeen from Africa,<sup>5</sup> twelve of whom read a paper, and fifteen from Europe and North America, of whom also twelve read a paper.<sup>6</sup> In addition, for the very first time in the history of IAHR congresses, a section was devoted to the indigenous religions of Africa. In that section, moderated by Andrew Walls, thirteen papers were read: seven by scholars posted in Africa: three in Nigeria,<sup>7</sup> one in Uganda,<sup>8</sup> and four in South Africa;<sup>9</sup> and six by scholars [51] posted in universities outside Africa.<sup>10</sup> Eleven more papers on the religions of Africa were read in other sections. John read his paper, 'Towards a Christology in an African Theology',<sup>11</sup> in section IV on Christianity, as did four others.<sup>12</sup> In section VII on Islam, also four papers on Islam in Africa were read,<sup>13</sup> and two were presented in section XI on Comparative Studies & Phenomenology.<sup>14</sup>

However memorable these papers were, it was on Wednesday 20 August, excursion day, that the foundation of a lasting friendship was laid when the three of us – John, Elizabeth and I – sat together on the long coach ride to and fro Edinburgh and walked through the city centre and up to the castle to enjoy the view of the town from Castle Rock, meanwhile discussing the study of

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<sup>3</sup> Parrinder 1980: 152

<sup>4</sup> The list of participants of the congress has 343 names (cf. Pye & McKenzie 1980: 172-179). So, the African and Africanist scholars constituted close to 10% of those taking part in the congress.

<sup>5</sup> Six from South Africa; four from Nigeria; three from Ghana; two from Uganda; one from Kenya; and one from Malawi.

<sup>6</sup> The 24 papers on the religions of Africa constituted roughly 13% of the 182 papers that were read in the fifteen sections (cf. Pye & McKenzie 1980: 13-144)

<sup>7</sup> By J.O. Awolalu on 'Sin and its Removal in African Traditional Religion'; S.U. Erivwo on 'Christianity and Traditional Religion on the Plateau'; and G.O.M. Tasié on 'God among the Kalabari of Nigeria'. In addition, Peter R. McKenzie (Leicester University) read a paper 'Sàngó: A Traditional Yoruba Cult-Group'. Cf. Pye & McKenzie 1980: 9, 13-15.

<sup>8</sup> By Abdu B.K. Kasozi on 'Why the Baganda Adopted Foreign Religions (Islam and Christianity)' (cf. Pye & McKenzie 1980: 17-18).

[51] <sup>9</sup> By N. Jonsson on 'Indications of Modern Man's Early Religious Awareness and Practice in the Light of Recent Palaeontological Research in Southern Africa'; J.P. Kiernan on 'Weapons, Water and Visions: The Development of Spiritual Powers among Zulu Zionists'; and P. Bolink on 'Macroanthropos: Its Religio-cultural Implications' (cf. Pye & McKenzie 1980: 19-22).

<sup>10</sup> By Peter McKenzie on 'Sàngó: A Traditional Yoruba Cult Group'; Walter van Beek on 'The Religion of the Kapsiki and Higi of North Cameroon and North-Eastern Nigeria'; Stanislav Swiderski on 'L'aspect socio-religieux de la drogue sacrée dans les sects syncrétiques au Gabon'; Tord Ollson on 'God and Mediator in Maasai Religion'; S. Bjerke on 'Order and Anti-order: Witchcraft among the Zinza'; and Alan D. Rogers on 'Malagasy Language and Thought: Some Problems of Communicating Religious Ideas' (cf. Pye & McKenzie 1980: 14-19, 22-23).

<sup>11</sup> It was published as a chapter in Pobeé 1979: 81-98.

<sup>12</sup> By P. Akpunonu on 'The Future of Christianity in Igboland'; T. Tuma on 'The Changes in Christian Leadership in Busoga Province of Uganda, 1960-1974'; Harold W. Turner on 'The Hidden Power of the Whites: The Secret Bible Withheld from Primal Peoples'; and I. Hexham on 'Calvinism, Secularization and the Origins of Apartheid' (cf. Pye & McKenzie 1980: 55-58).

<sup>13</sup> By Noel Q. King on 'The Position and Prospects of Islam in South Asia and Black Africa as Described by Ibn Battuta'; Abdu B.K. Kasozi on 'The Spread of Islam to the Rest of Uganda'; A. Esmail on 'Social Change, Religious Values and Leadership: The Case of the Ismailis of East Africa'; and Jan Knappert on 'The Religion of the Swahili' (cf. Pye & McKenzie 1980: 83-86).

<sup>14</sup> By Harold W. Turner on 'New Religious Movements in Primal Societies', and A. Rupp on 'Totenvorstellungen: vergleichende Bemerkungen zu ostafrikanischer Tradition' (cf. Pye & McKenzie 1980: 114-117).

religions, most likely Akan indigenous religion, but also the developments in academic theology at Utrecht University in 1974/75 reversing some of the ebullient ecumenicity in theology at Utrecht of the previous decade.

[52] I have also selected the 1970-1975 merger of Protestant and RC theological traditions at Utrecht because it is most appropriate to report on this unique ecumenical experiment in the history of Dutch academic theology in this Festschrift in honour of John. For John has been involved in the ecumenical movement throughout his life, and specifically in relation to theological education and the RC church. He was a member of an Anglican-RC International Commission. As Head of the Dept. for the Study of Religions of the University of Ghana, he negotiated an agreement by which students of RC seminaries in Ghana could take the degrees of the University. He was Associate Director of the WCC Programme on Theological Education from the mid-1980s to his retirement in 2002. And when he finally did marry, in 1994, it was to Martha Ama Akyaa, his RC spouse.<sup>15</sup>

This report is written from the curious double perspective of being at home in theology without engaging in it. By 1970 I had been schooled for over a decade in RC theology, had graduated in missiology, but was posted in a 'public' (actually Protestant) faculty of theology as a junior lecturer in the empirical study of religions. As such I viewed theology from the outside, as an object of study, rather than from the inside, as my subject, as do theologians. John, to be sure, has remained a theologian *pur sang* throughout his distinguished career, academic and ecclesiastical. Even so, he too is thoroughly attuned to the double perspective from which I report, for critical scholarship has been endemic in most theology as *fides quaerens intellectum*, as I will argue below. It was certainly at home in the theology in which John was trained, first, in the Dept. of Divinity of the University College of Ghana between 1957 and 1961,<sup>16</sup> and then in New Testament Studies in the [53] Faculty of Divinity of Cambridge University till 1966.<sup>17</sup> And he has practised this insight seeking theology ever since.<sup>18</sup>

My article has the following parts. I first describe the fusion of the numerous Dutch RC major seminaries into four institutions of RC academic theology between 1965 and 1970. In the second part, I present the history of the 'Gentleman's Agreement', as the attempt at demolishing denom-

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[52] <sup>15</sup> Cf. Pobee 1998: VI, x, 131-140

<sup>16</sup> Renamed Department for the Study of Religions in 1962 (Pobee 1976a: 3) after the University College had been granted full university status in 1961 ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University\\_of\\_Ghana](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Ghana)).

[53] <sup>17</sup> Cf. Pobee 1985: VII

<sup>18</sup> John Pobee regards Christian theology as '*Wissenschaft*, the systematic quest for ordered knowledge, proceeding by investigation, questioning and inquiry' (Pobee 1993: 194), '[applying] itself to the study of the religious aspect of man's life' (Pobee 1973: 2). It is 'an articulate system of thought interpreting what is implied in the faith of [in?] Christ' (Pobee 1979: 29). He adds, it is 'an intellectual discipline [...] marked by intelligibility and consistency' (Pobee 1979: 32) that subjects the faith of a [Christian] community to 'a critical, descriptive, and interpretative analysis' (Pobee 1973: 5). He insists that 'biblical criticism has to be taken seriously' in African Theology (Pobee 1979: 20); and that the study of African indigenous religions must be done after the unbiased approach of phenomenology (Pobee 1979: 21). He is well aware of the historical contingency and 'contextual nature' of all theologies, being 'reasoned word[s] about God, [...] not the word of God', and 'an essentially human attempt to articulate an experience of God' (Pobee 1993: 195, 201). As merely 'a human construct', theology must be open and hospitable to new and other insights (Pobee 1993: 195). Cf. also Pobee 1973: 4-5, 7-8; 1979: 20-22, 24-34, esp. 29, 31, 32, 33; 1986: 3-5, 8, 10; 1993: 194-195.

inational separation between Protestant and RC academic theology at Utrecht between 1970 and 1975 was called. And in part three, how it was in part reversed in 1975. That caused a great deal of stir, proposals and counter-proposals in the academic year 1974/75, and generated six position papers on the ‘throbbing heart of theology’. I summarise five of them in part four, and in part five present an English version of my own position paper. One of the purposes of which was to uncover the contribution academic theology was making to the [54] secularisation<sup>19</sup> of Dutch

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[54] <sup>19</sup> I understand by ‘secularisation’ the complex set of social processes by which religion, defined as reference to, and presumed communication with, a postulated meta-empirical (and/or infra-empirical) realm, is increasingly weakened as a privileged (‘established’) institution in the modern societies of Western Europe and is disappearing fast from the minds and hearts of many of its members as a reality which they formerly sensed as ‘ever-present and ever-relevant’ (Gensichen 1976: 29). I define it therefore as a historical phenomenon in a distinct set of societies at a specific period of time. Cf. also Peters, Felling & Scheepers (2000: 183) who refer to the sociological definitions of secularisation by Dobbelaere as the process by which reference to the supernatural vanishes, and by Dekker as the decline of engagement with another reality [than the empirical world] which believers perceive as the decisive realm. Zinser (2007: 5) terms it the process of detachment from [the Christian] religion [in Western Europe]. Secularisation, however, is a multi-vocal concept by now that has been used in several senses. Zinser distinguishes the following meanings of secularisation: (1) the decline of religion because churches have lost their influence over society and their ability to direct the lives of their members; (2) a worldly orientation, the points of reference of which remain strictly within this world; (3) the de-sacralisation of the world by the substitution of a religious worldview with the explanations of the world and life which science provides; (4) the separation of religion from the public life of a society by the relegation of religion to the private lives of its citizens; (5) the merger of religion with the world, either by the transfer and adaptation of its beliefs and practices to the world (e.g. relinquishing its principles for a devout life), or by detaching its beliefs and practices from the transcendent and its revelations; or (6) as the complete opposite of (5): Hegel’s ‘transposition of the kingdom of heaven into this world’; (7) the functional differentiation of the spheres of life of modern societies (Luhmann) causes religion to become a private affair (Zinser 2007: 5-7). Three elements are usually emphasized: [1] the processes of institutional differentiation by which religion loses its earlier hold over society; [2] the processes of rationalisation by which religious prescriptions and norms are replaced with the logic of other domains of society; [3] an orientation towards the world and away from religious concerns (Zinser 2007: 6). Important earlier ‘secularisations’ are (1) *saecularisatio* in the meaning of Canon Law: the transfer of a sacred thing or person back to the profane state, e.g. church possessions to lay property; or an ordained person to the lay status; or a monk to the secular clergy (Zinser 2007: 9); (2) the gradual development of religious neutrality by states in Europe in the 17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries. States relegated matters of religious truth to the churches and guaranteed religious liberty to all their citizens. Thereby they accepted religious pluralism and enjoined their citizens to practise tolerance towards other denominations and religions than their own (Zinser 2007: 6). (3) States also reclaimed the ‘prerogatives’ of the church on e.g. education and health care (Zinser 2007: 10). (4) In early theories of religious evolution, a secularising drive is implicit. Comte postulated stages of human development from religion to philosophy to science, and Frazer from magic to religion to science. Weber’s much more detailed and critical analyses of the processes of bureaucratic rationalisation and disenchantment operative in the general history of the societies of humankind are the basis of modern theories of secularisation, but Weber also pointed to the need of humans for the charismata of e.g. founders of religions (Zinser 2007: 4-5). Cf. also his remark that secularisation, as the separation of church and state, presupposes an earlier sacralisation of the state, i.e. ‘without the multi-faceted alliances between the Christian churches and the state, a secularization – understood as the separation of state and church – would not have been possible. Secularization as a historical process therefore requires a process of sacralization’ of the state (Zinser 2007: 8). Zinser seems to suggest that secularisation is an event that is specifically part of European-Christian history, and feasible only in Christian, Jewish and Muslim societies because the radical separation of god and world is possible in them. It makes no sense, says Zinser, to apply secularisation theory to most other religions because they do not distinguish between the natural and the supernatural worlds: ‘In these religions the gods are a part of this world or, as in Buddhism, they belong to the Maya, to the realm of apparitions and illusions’ (Zinser 2007: 10). Zinser regards the separation of state and church as complete and closed, and the process of secularisation therefore to be complete and to have ended: ‘State and churches have agreed to solve all disputes in mutual consent’ (Zinser 2007: 11). He holds also that ‘The secularization thesis, insofar as it postulates a general and irreversible historical process, has outlived itself. Future relations between religion and society will not be determined

society. I conclude with an epilogue in which I present a few glimpses of the developments in Dutch academic theology after 1975.

### *1965-1970: from seminary to academy*

One sign that ‘de-pillarisation’<sup>20</sup> and secularisation were gathering speed in Dutch society in the 1960s was the massive drop in vocations to the priesthood in the Dutch RC church in the early 1960s.<sup>21</sup> The number of seminarians [55] taught in its thirty-two major seminaries,<sup>22</sup> with a teaching staff of 383 professors, had dropped to 1929 in 1963, and to 1550 in the academic year 1964/65,<sup>23</sup> i.e. to, on average, one member of staff for fewer than five students. A speedy reduction of the number of seminaries was therefore in order. Between 1964 and 1967 they were clustered, with the approval of the Dutch RC bishops, into four<sup>24</sup> *theologische hogescholen*,<sup>25</sup> or KIWTOs:<sup>26</sup> the [56] *Katholieke Theologische Hogeschool Amsterdam* (KTHA); the *Katholieke Theologische Hogeschool Utrecht* (KTHU); the *Stichting Theologische Faculteit* (STF) at Tilburg; and the *Hogeschool voor Theologie en Pastoraat* (HTP) at Heerlen. In 1973, the Dutch government granted them the right to apply for *aanwijzing*, i.e. for the right to confer degrees

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by the supposed disappearance of religion but by the principle of freedom, which contains freedom of religion. A struggle against religion contradicts the principles of modernity’ (Zinser 2007: 11).

<sup>20</sup> On the ‘pillarisation’ of Dutch society – its division into a number of confessional and ideological ‘pillars’ – between 1880 and 1960 and its ‘de-pillarisation’ (and secularisation) since 1960, cf. Platvoet 2002: 121-127.

<sup>21</sup> As a result, only 253 priests were ordained between 1971 and 1980, a dramatic low compared with earlier decades. E.g. as many as 458 priests, diocesan and regular, were ordained in The Netherlands in 1940. By 1961, the number of ordinations still stood at slightly over 300 *per annum*. The number of Dutch RC priests stood at slightly over 4.500 in 1965. It dropped fall rapidly after 1965, with over 2.000 priests opting out of the priesthood till 1980 (Smits 1975: 6; Bernts & Spruit 2000: 10-13; Peeters 2000<sup>1</sup>/2012<sup>2</sup>).

[55] <sup>22</sup> In 46 locations, because 14 seminaries had a *philosophicum* (a separate institute for teaching the two years of philosophy) as well as a *theologicum* (a separate institute for teaching the four year theology course) (Smits 1963: 5-6, 8-9; cf. also Koevoets 1975: 28-29; van Paasen 1966: 53). By 1950, 31 religious orders and congregations and 7 dioceses ran minor and major seminaries in The Netherlands. That exceptionally large number of seminaries was mainly due to the fact that in addition to the seven Dutch RC dioceses, 31 religious orders and congregations had minor and major seminaries in The Netherlands by 1950, virtually all of them having sought refuge in the southern parts of The Netherlands after 1880, when the French government had closed down their seminaries in France as part of its policy of laicisation of French education (cf. e.g. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French\\_Third\\_Republic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_Third_Republic) ; Cabanel & Durand 2005; Courcy 2006), as Bismarck had done in Germany during his *Kulturkampf* against the German RC church between 1873 and 1879 (cf. <https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kulturkampf> ).

<sup>23</sup> Koevoets 1975: 15

<sup>24</sup> Actually seven at first, but the three at Cuijk/Venray, Nijmegen-Albertinum, and Eindhoven soon fell apart because its participants opted to join one of the four other concentrations (cf. Winkeler 1992: 16-25; 126-127; Koevoets 1975: 9-10).

<sup>25</sup> At the time, *hogeschool* designated a one-faculty institute of academic learning, e.g. in agriculture at Wageningen, in engineering at Delft, in economics at Tilburg and Rotterdam (cf. also Jensma & de Vries 1997: 13-14), or in theology. The *Gereformeerde Kerken-vrijgemaakt* (GKv) changed the title of their *Theologische School* (‘seminary’) at Kampen, to *Theologische Hogeschool* in 1936 (cf.

[https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theologische\\_Universiteit\\_Kampen\\_\(Broederweg\)](https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theologische_Universiteit_Kampen_(Broederweg))), as did the *Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland* (GKN) in 1939 for its *Theologische School*, also at Kampen (cf.

[https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protestantse\\_Theologische\\_Universiteit\\_vestiging\\_Kampen](https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protestantse_Theologische_Universiteit_vestiging_Kampen)); and the *Christelijk-Gereformeerde Kerken* (CGK) in 1962 for their *Theologische School* at Apeldoorn (cf. van Genderen & van ‘t Spijker 1994: 48-49). [56] All these *hogescholen* became (one-faculty) universities under a new law on tertiary education in 1987.

<sup>26</sup> *Katholieke Instellingen voor Wetenschappelijk Theologisch Onderwijs*, ‘RC Institutes for Academic Theology’.

and to request government funding.<sup>27</sup> Which right and funding KTHA, STF and HTP received on 9 September 1974,<sup>28</sup> and the KTHU on 23 January 1976.<sup>29</sup>

They attained thereby an academic status equal in Dutch civil law to that of the *duplex ordo* faculties of theology<sup>30</sup> of the three *rijksuniversiteiten* [58] (public universities) at Leiden, Groningen and Utrecht and of the municipal University of Amsterdam; and also equal to that of the

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<sup>27</sup> Cf. <http://www.parlement.com/9291000/biof/01807>; Winkeler 1992: 80n106

<sup>28</sup> The text of the royal decree was published in *Staatsblad* 1974: 539; cf. also Koevoets 1975: 16-17. The right to confer degrees was granted in 1975 also to the GKN-, GKv-, and CGK-*theologische hogescholen* mentioned above in footnote 25. Of these, however, only the GKN-*theologische hogeschool* applied for, and received, full state subvention. The CGK-*theologische hogeschool* applied for, and was granted, a 49% subvention. The GKv-*theologische hogeschool* did not apply for funding by the state in 1975.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. *KTHU Studiegids 1976-1977*, 5-6.

<sup>30</sup> In these *duplex ordo* faculties of theology, the professors of dogmatic and pastoral theology were appointed by the *Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk* (NHK) or other church: Baptist, Lutheran, or Arminian, but they were remunerated by the Dutch state (Bos 1999: 152, 346), and by law placed in an annexe, termed *kerkelijke vakgroep*, that was not part of these faculties. They did, however, have certain rights in these faculties by law, such as that of advice, and the *ius examinandi*, taking part in examinations, and the *ius promovendi*, the right to confer doctorates (Kloos 1979: 12-13; van Koningsveld 1979a: 31, 36; Jensma & de Vries 1997: 268, 271) – though Kloos (1979: 19-22) and van Koningsveld (1979a: 36) contest that they did have the *ius examinandi et promovendi*. Church-appointed professors stressed these rights by speaking of the *duplex ordo unius facultatis*, ‘the double order of the one faculty [57] [of theology]’ (cf. Van den Brom 2003: 42n4). Which is remarkable because several church-appointed professors regarded the *duplex ordo* faculties as faculties of the secular study of religions rather than as faculties of theology (cf. Meuleman 1982: 4-6; van Koningsveld 1979a: 32-35). The members of staff of the faculty ‘proper’ appointed by the university to teach OT, NT, History of Christianity, History of Religions, Philosophy of Religion and Ethics, and recently also Social Sciences, were free, however, to pursue their research and teaching not only ‘in and for themselves’ without regard to the doctrines of their church (de Boer 1979a: vii; 1979b: 2, 3, 4, 10, 11; Evertsen 1979: 29; van Koningsveld 1979a: 35), but also as they saw fit (cf. Jensma & de Vries 1997: 269), i.e. in neutral as well as in religiously inspired ways. E.g., Prof. Hulst admitted in an interview that his OT exegesis was tied to his confessional theology: he regarded the Bible as the ‘Holy Scripture’ that must be proclaimed in the church (Van Houwelingen 1975b: 4-5, 7). Hulst, therefore, admired *Terzake* (cf. below note 81). The close interaction between secular and confessional scholarship in *duplex ordo* faculties of theology is also apparent from the many instances of professors appointed by a church (NHK, Baptist, Lutheran, Arminian, etc.) being subsequently or simultaneously appointed to a chair in the faculty (cf. Jensma & de Vries 1997: 273, 274, 276, 280, 283, 290, 291, 293, 295, 296, 304, 305, 306, 314, 318, 323, 328; Kloos 1979: 25-26; Bos 1999: 299); and *vice versa* of faculty staff being appointed by their church to teach also confessional subjects, as well as from the fact that virtually all faculty staff had been a minister in their church (Bos 1999: 305). This academic freedom and the intimate interaction between *duplex ordo* faculties and churches or modalities gave rise, apart from a lopsided attention to Christianity (Evertsen 1979: 27-28), to many shades of secular and theological scholarship in Dutch *duplex ordo* faculties of theology, blurring the disciplinary boundaries between (religiously inspired) Protestant theologies (mostly of the modality of the NHK-church or other church with which a particular *duplex ordo* faculty of theology was traditionally allied) and secular scholarship of Christianity and other religions. Which blurring had already been anticipated in 1875, when the law on Higher Education instituting the *duplex ordo* was being discussed in Parliament [58] (cf. Meuleman 1982: 18, 20, 29n83, 29n85). Though the blurring was common in Dutch *duplex ordo* faculties of theology (cf. de Boer 1979b: 4, 7), and also in *godsdienswetenschap* before 1960 (cf. Platvoet 1992, 1998a, 1998b), it seems irregular in view of the constitutional separation of church and state since 1795, the public character of these faculties, and two provisions in law: the one in the Law on Higher Education of 1876 for church-appointed professors of dogmatic and pastoral theology *at* (not: *in*) the *duplex ordo* faculties of theology; and the other, in the revision of the Law on Higher Education in 1905, for *bijzondere hoogleraren*: ‘special’ professors without *ius examinandi* and *ius promovendi*, who had been appointed to a chair in a public university by religious institutes, ideological organisations or other groups with a special interest in order that their views be represented also in public universities, and who were remunerated by them (Jensma & de Vries 1997: 268, 271). For further details on the *duplex ordo* and its origin, cf. de Jong 1968; de Boer 1979b: 2; Meuleman 1982: 6sq.; Bos 1999: 152, 360, 362, 427n87

*simplex ordo* faculties of the theology<sup>31</sup> of the two pillar-bound universities: the Free University of the *Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland* (GKN) at Amsterdam,<sup>32</sup> and the RC [59] University at Nijmegen.<sup>33</sup> This fast, vast and quiet revolution may rightly be regarded as the crowning achievement of five decades of ‘pacification politics’ by the ‘pillars’ into which Dutch society had been segmented vertically since 1880,<sup>34</sup> and as completing and concluding the emancipation of its RC and Protestant<sup>35</sup> minorities.

However, rather than stemming the decline of vocations (and ordinations) to the priesthood, the new institutions for RC academic theology soon contributed significantly to their further diminution. Though the KIWTOs were instituted primarily for the theological and pastoral training of future priests, they were meant also, other than the seminaries, to admit students who did not intend to become priests in order that lay persons be trained for certain functions in the RC church.<sup>36</sup> So, they opened their doors to female students [60] also;<sup>37</sup> and to the gradually growing number of middle-aged or elderly students, male and female, who registered because of a personal interest in theology, studied at a leisurely pace, and often part-time, or took part of the courses only, and often did not intend to put it to use for pastoral work in the RC church.<sup>38</sup> At the same

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<sup>31</sup> In Dutch *simplex ordo* faculties of theology, staff appointments had to be approved by the ecclesiastical authorities and all theological disciplines were usually, be it in varying degrees, of a confessional nature. That was explicitly so for the core disciplines of systematic (dogmatic) and pastoral (practical) theology, which held pride of place in *simplex ordo* institutes. Teaching might be subjected to scrutiny by the church authorities.

<sup>32</sup> The relationship of the Faculty of Theology of the Free University was more remote to the GKN-church than that of the Faculty of Theology of the RC University at Nijmegen to the RC Church. The Free University was founded in 1880 by the *Vereeniging voor Hooger Onderwijs op Gereformeerde Grondslag* (Association for Higher Education based on the Christian Reformed Faith) in order that it, and in particular its faculty of theology, might pursue academic studies, and in particular its militant theology, on the basis of the ‘Reformed’ – orthodox Calvinist – confession ‘without interference from state and church’. That is ‘free’ from the Dutch state, which it said had ‘debased’ the faculties of theology of the [59] public universities to faculties of *godsdienstwetenschap* in 1876 by ‘imposing’ the *duplex ordo* upon them; and ‘free’ from the synod of the ‘modernist’ NHK-church whose privilege it was to appoint the professors of dogmatic and practical theology (Jensma & de Vries 1997: 177-180; Meuleman 1982: 5-6; Bos 1999: 349-350). The Free University obtained the right to confer degrees in 1905/06, when Abraham Kuiper, its founder, served as Prime Minister (Jensma & de Vries 1997: 13, 194); or only in 1912 (Bos 1999: 449n196). It has been financed by *the Vereeniging* till 1970, and was governed by its Board. The Free University Faculty of Theology received full government funding in 1971. It is still governed by that Board and not by the Synod of the GKN-church, as was the GKN-*theologische (hoge)school* at Kampen till 2004, when the NHK-, GKN- and Lutheran churches fused into the PKN-church.

<sup>33</sup> The RC faculty had received full government funding in 1951 (cf. Platvoet 2002: 118-119).

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Platvoet 2002: 113-121. On this ‘democracy by consociation’, cf. also Knippenberg 2005a: 90.

<sup>35</sup> GKN, GK-v, CGK and other small Protestant churches of the orthodox or pietist kinds.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Commissie Hogere Studies PINK 1966: 12-13; Koevoets 1975: 84; Winkeler 1992: 19, 33, 43, 57; van Paasen 1966: 55. Van Paasen (1966: 56) argues that the teaching programmes of the KIWTOs were incompatible with the concept of the closed [clerical] church, the idea of theology as a [scholastic] system, and the ideological use of ecclesiastical authority that had been characteristic of the major seminaries. The KIWTOs, however, focused on the construction and transmission of a ‘lay theology’ in a democratic and secularised learning [60] environment. The Vatican office for RC education expressed misgivings about the ‘skanty’ (*spaarzaam*) environment the KIWTOs offered to candidates for the priesthood for their sacerdotal formation as early as 1969 (Koevoets 1975: 105).

<sup>37</sup> Their number rose from 12 in 1965/66 to 36 in 1971/72 at the Faculty of Theology of the RC University at Nijmegen; and from 5 in 1968/1969 to 43 at the KTHU in 1974/75. The KTHA had 44 female students in 1972/73 (cf. Koevoets 1975: 30-32).

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Koevoets 1975: 84

time, six of the seven Dutch RC dioceses began to appoint lay pastoral workers after 1968<sup>39</sup> to supplement the rapidly dwindling number of priests.<sup>40</sup> That professional option caused most of the (quickly declining number of) young male students of RC theology<sup>41</sup> to opt for a career in the RC church as lay pastoral workers<sup>42</sup> rather than as ordained priests,<sup>43</sup> or [61] for one in 'religious education' (RE) in RC secondary schools, or social work, or the media, or some other lay profession, e.g. that of specialising as a lay theologian in one of the disciplines of (RC) theology for a research and teaching career in these new institutions of academic theology.<sup>44</sup>

### *1970-1975: the Utrecht Gentleman's Agreement*

The KIWTOS were eager to explore options for close collaboration with a faculty of theology as a means of upgrading their academic standards. The earliest attempt by a few seminaries to link up with the RC Faculty of [62] Theology at Nijmegen from 1964 to 1966 was unsuccessful.<sup>45</sup> HTP at Heerlen, however, concluded agreements with the Nijmegen faculty in 1967 and 1970 by which HTP-students might obtain degrees in theology with civil effect.<sup>46</sup> The KTHA approached

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<sup>39</sup> Cf. Winkeler 1992: 59, 65-66

<sup>40</sup> The number of RC priests had dropped to 2.750 in 1984, to 1.556 in 1996, and to 1.060 in 2000. By 2010, their number is expected to be as low as 675 (cf. <http://www.ecclesiadei.nl/rkstat/evaluations.html> , graph 16; Bernts & Spruit 2000: 10-13).

<sup>41</sup> By 1970/71, the total number of students at the four KIWTOS had already dropped to 725. 542 of them were looking forward to serve in a diocese as either ordained priest or lay pastoral worker (Winkeler 1992: 64) but most of them were reluctant to opt for celibacy and priesthood early on in their studies (Koevoets 1975: 82, 84). On the problems of the spiritual formation of future priests in the context of the KIWTOS, cf. Koevoets 1975: 78-92, 109; Zuidberg 1975).

<sup>42</sup> The number of lay pastoral workers, male and female, stood at 60 in 1974 (Koevoets 1975: 108), at 302 in 1980, at 485 in 1989 (Winkeler 1992: 89), and at 727 in 1996. By that time, 201 (permanent) deacons, most of them elderly and married and over half of them unsalaried, had also been ordained and were serving in pastoral teams together with priests and lay pastoral workers, each of which ministered a cluster of parishes. [61] The number of priests below retirement age available for service in 1.425 parishes had dropped to 741 in 2006 (KASKI, Report 561[1]; cf. <http://www.ru.nl/kaski/@709050/pagina/>

<sup>43</sup> The liberal theology being taught to them caused the ultra-orthodox bishop, Johannes Gijsen, appointed to the see of Roermond in 1972, to withdraw the approval his predecessor had granted to HTP and to establish, with the support of Vatican authorities, his own major seminary at Rolduc in 1973 in order to regain his sole right to determine exclusively in what kind of theology candidates for the priesthood in his (and other) diocese(s) were to be trained, to the exclusion of the other Dutch bishops, the superiors of the religious orders participating in HTP and other KIWTOS, their boards, their staffs, the students themselves and RC laity. Even though HTP was the KIWTO that emphasised training for pastoral work in its title and program, be it for ordained priest as well as for lay persons, male and female (cf. Koevoets 1975: 22, 49, 50, 60-62), HTP students were disqualified by Gijsen for pastoral work in the diocese of Roermond on the ground that HTP failed to comply with the directives of the Vatican office for their education (cf. Koevoets 1975: 118-132, esp. 125-130). Some 170 (highly traditionalist) priests have been educated at the Rolduc seminary since it was established in 1974; cf.

<http://www.rolduc.nl/nl/grootseminarie-rolduc/het-grootseminarie/>. The Rolduc seminary has maintained a strict isolation from the KIWTOS and the liberal academic theology developed in them till now. Pastoral workers were appointed in the diocese of Roermond only from 2005 onwards.

<sup>44</sup> The KIWTOS, therefore, soon began to de-clericalise, at first by some of the members of staff opting out celibacy (see below note 68), and after a decade or so by the lay theologians being appointed to research and teaching posts in the KIWTOS, males at first, but later also females. Cf. Van Schaik *e.a.* 1971; Winkeler 1992: 59-65, 91, 101; Sleddens *e.a.* 1974: 20-21.

[62] <sup>45</sup> Cf. Koevoets 1975: 10-11, 13, 14; Winkeler 1992: 126-127

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Koevoets 1975: 60. HTP obtained the right to confer degrees itself in 1974.

the University of Amsterdam and its (Protestant) Faculty of Theology in 1968 with a plan for a twin faculty, but was cold-shouldered.<sup>47</sup> The very name of SFT<sup>48</sup> expressed its aspiration to function as Faculty of Theology in the (RC) *Economische Hogeschool* at Tilburg. But it was admitted into its successor, Tilburg University, only in 2006, with a much reduced status.<sup>49</sup>

Only Utrecht University warmly welcomed discussions with the KTHU about a close collaboration. It proposed to explore whether the KTHU, though a *simplex ordo* institution, might for the greater part<sup>50</sup> be ‘integrated’ into the Utrecht Faculty of Theology after the *duplex ordo* model. As a preliminary step, the KTHU moved to *Transitorium 2*, a high-rise building on *de Uithof*, the new out-of-town campus of Utrecht University, on 1<sup>st</sup> September 1969, where it was allocated floors adjacent to those of the Faculty of Theology. A Gentleman’s Agreement was concluded in May 1970 by which KTHU-students became students of the Faculty of Theology on 1<sup>st</sup> September 1970, and the staff members of the KTHU in Biblical Studies (OT and NT), History of Christianity, *godsdienstwetenschap* (History of Religions, Sociology of Religion, Psychology of Religion), and in Philosophy & Ethics were appointed to the parallel *vakgroepen* (departments) of the Utrecht Faculty of Theology for a trial period of five years.<sup>51</sup> The KTHU systematic and pastoral theologians were grouped into an annexe to the faculty as the RC *Vakgroep Kerkelijke Vakken* (department of church-tied disciplines) after the model of the *duplex ordo*.

[63] It constituted the fifth such annexe to the Utrecht Faculty of Theology. The other four were first of all, by the law of 1876, the *Vakgroep Kerkelijke Vakken NHK* of the staff members for Systematic and Pastoral Theology and other confessional subjects, appointed by the *Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk* (NHK) for grooming its future ministers.<sup>52</sup> And secondly three seminaries of churches that had likewise decided in 1970 to have their future ministers trained in theology at the Utrecht Faculty of Theology:<sup>53</sup> the Union of Baptist Congregations in The Netherlands;<sup>54</sup> the *Oud-Katholieke Kerk*;<sup>55</sup> and the Federation of Free Evangelical Congregations in The Netherlands.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Winkeler 1992: 22, 35-36.

<sup>48</sup> *Stichting Theologische Faculteit*, ‘Foundation Faculty of Theology’

<sup>49</sup> As Department of Religious Studies & Theology in the Faculty of Humanities. The greater part of its theology section was fused with the Utrecht-based KTU into the School of Catholic Theology of Tilburg University in 2007 (cf. <https://www.tilburguniversity.edu/nl/over/schools/theologie/organisatie/>). Its Religious Studies section (and a few theologians) were fused in 2010 with *Taalstudies* (Linguistics) and *Cultuurstudies* (Culture Studies) into the Department of *Cultuurwetenschappen* (Culture Sciences); cf. <https://www.tilburguniversity.edu/nl/over/schools/geesteswetenschappen/dcu/profiel/>

<sup>50</sup> The different structures of the Utrecht Faculty of Theology, *duplex ordo*, and of the KTHU, *simplex ordo*, precluded a complete integration of the KTHU into the Utrecht Faculty of Theology (cf. van den Broek 1974: 26; Winkeler 1992: 36-37).

<sup>51</sup> For the text of the agreement, cf. Koevoets 1975: 105-106; Sleddens *e.a.* 1974: 3-4

[63] <sup>52</sup> As required by the law on secondary and tertiary education promulgated in 1876 that imposed the *duplex ordo* (cf. above note 30) on the Faculties of Theology of the public universities at Leiden, Groningen and Utrecht. The (Municipal) University of Amsterdam applied that model also to its Faculty of Theology.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. de Graaf *e.a.* 1974: 38.

<sup>54</sup> A federation, since 1881, of 90 autonomous Baptist congregations with some 30.000 members and some 60 ministers in 1997 (Hoekstra & Iepenburg 2000: 554).

This partial ‘integration’ of the KTHU into the Utrecht Faculty of Theology proved an exciting and rewarding experiment for both students and staff of the faculty and the KTHU in the next five years.<sup>57</sup> This was especially so in respect of research and teaching in the departments of Philosophy & Ethics, *godsdienswetenschap*, and New Testament Studies, in which the Protestant and RC staffs were fully merged and all students took courses and exams from irrespective any members of their staffs, whether RC or Protestant. The fusion was a bit less complete in the departments of History of Christianity<sup>58</sup> and Old Testament [64] Studies, and quite weak, if not close to nil, between the *Vakgroepen Kerkelijke Vakken* NHK, RC, and the three ‘seminaries’, which remained separate islands due to their ties with, and focus on, their particular churches. But the latter four were quite happy that their students were trained in the Utrecht faculty with its highly diverse student population and staff, which greatly reduced the deeply ingrained confessional and other misunderstandings, biases and mistrust between them.<sup>59</sup>

#### *1974/75: the battle*

There were also frictions, however. RC students were not happy with the faculty’s virtually exclusive preoccupation with the philological-historical approach to its various objects of study and its neglect of the social sciences. They also resented having to master Hebrew thoroughly in addition to Latin and Greek. The Protestant view of a minister as primarily an (academically trained) preacher (*verbi divini minister, predikant*) and teacher (*leraar*)<sup>60</sup> also did not sit well with the broader RC emphases on the liturgical, sacramental and especially the pastoral functions of a priest. Another tension was that between the preponderantly orthodox atmosphere of the Utrecht faculty which traditionally drew quite a large number of its students from the *Gereformeerde Bond* (GB),<sup>61</sup> the right-wing modality of the NHK-church with an outspoken anti-papist tradition, and the liberal theological mindset of the RC students and staff inspired by *la théologie nouvelle* of e.g. de Lubac, Daniélou, Rahner, Schillebeeckx, Vaticanum II, and more recently by ‘Marxist’ social criticism and liberation theology. Thereby they disproved and overthrew not only the views about the RC church as superstitious popery that were dear to orthodox Protes-

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<sup>55</sup> The *Oud-Katholieke Kerk* originated from an episcopal secession from the Dutch RC church in 1723. In 1997 it had some 10.000 members, two dioceses, 30 parishes, 24 priests and 5 deacons. It introduced Dutch as liturgical language in 1909, and abolished celibacy in 1922 (Hoekstra & Iepenburg 2000: 440-444).

<sup>56</sup> An association, since 1881, of 45 congregations with some 6.800 members in 1997 and 28 ministers (Hoekstra & Iepenburg 2000: 580-581).

<sup>57</sup> Cf. de Graaf 1973: 103-104; Reiling 1974: 3-4; van den Broek 1974: 24-26.

<sup>58</sup> Van den Broek, a lecturer in that department, however, praised the collaboration in research and teaching between Protestant and RC staff members in his department as ‘very stimulating’ and a ‘great enrichment’ for both. He strongly advised [64] against discontinuing the collaboration between the Utrecht Faculty of Theology and the KTHU that the Gentleman’s Agreement had made possible. The alternative, the Utrecht faculty and the KTHU collaborating as independent academic institutions would in his view be quite ‘a step backwards’ from the one that the Gentleman’s Agreement had made possible through the (partial) ‘integration’ of the KTHU into the Utrecht Faculty of Theology (Van den Broek 1974: 24-26).

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Reiling 1974: 3; van den Broek 1974: 25; de Graaf 1973: 103; de Graaf *e.a.* 1974: 40-42.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Bos 1999: 11, 14, 18, 43, 58, 70-72, 83, 104, 105, 108, 115, 119, 131, 137, 139, 148, *passim*, 363

<sup>61</sup> It had 180 students in the Utrecht faculty in 1974/1975. They constituted, however, only ‘a sizeable minority’, the Utrecht faculty having over 500 students at that time. Cf. Sleddens *e.a.* 1974: 33..

tants,<sup>62</sup> but also, by their reputedly ‘Marxist’ [65] social criticism, provided GB-students with new ammunition for battling what they perceived as an imminent RC take-over of the Utrecht faculty.<sup>63</sup>

The academic year 1974-1975 was an exciting one, full of tensions between the two camps: the majority<sup>64</sup> that strongly favoured that the ‘integration’ of the KTHU into the Utrecht Faculty of Theology be made permanent, and the GB-opposition to that integration and to the introduction of the social sciences into the Utrecht teaching programme in theology for fear the Utrecht faculty would shift from its traditional focus on the exegesis of the Bible in its original languages, Hebrew and *koinè* Greek, towards a theology infused by the social sciences teaching students to be critical of the unjust structures of modern human societies.<sup>65</sup> GB-opposition was voiced in particular by H. Jonker, professor of pastoral theology in the NHK *Vakgroep Kerkelijke Vakken*, who had a seat in the Faculty Council as an adviser by law.<sup>66</sup> His fears that the integration of the KTHU into the faculty and the introduction of the social sciences would fundamentally alter its character found a ready ear with two faculty members who held crucial positions in the Faculty Council in 1974-1975: the Dean, prof. A.R. Hulst, who chaired its sessions, and the [66] Secretary of the Faculty Council, prof. J.W. Doeve. Jonker’s views were supported, moreover, by the Board of the NHK-church.<sup>67</sup>

GB-opposition also found its case strengthened by external developments: the rise of discord among Dutch RC bishops after the appointment of two conservative RC bishops, Simonis to the see of Rotterdam in 1970, and Gijsen to that of Roermond in 1972; and rumours that Vatican authorities were increasingly alarmed at developments in Dutch RC theological institutions.<sup>68</sup> GB pleaded therefore that the ‘integration’ of the KTHU into the Utrecht faculty of theology be re-

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<sup>62</sup> Cf. de Graaf *e.a.* 1974: 104.

[65] <sup>63</sup> Cf. van de Graaf 1974: 106. J. van de Graaf was the Secretary of the *Gereformeerde Bond*. As its spokesman he incited opposition to the partial merger of the KTHU with the Utrecht Faculty of Theology. Cf. also Sleddens *e.a.* 1974: 9, 29-31

<sup>64</sup> The entire KTHU, staff and students, the greater part of the staff of the Utrecht Faculty of Theology ‘proper’ (cf. Sleddens *e.a.* 1974: 5-6, 9-11, 17-18; van den Broek 1974: 24-26; de Graaf *e.a.* 1974), and most of the students from the other NHK-modalities than GB and from the other churches (Kleyer 1975: 23). The chair of the Committee for the Integration reported in the meeting of the Faculty Council (*Faculteitsraad*) of 14.03.1974 that the survey it had conducted showed that ‘everyone was in favour’, but also pointed to quite a few ‘repressed reservations’ because the different sections of the faculty had been involved in the integration process in different degrees (*Areopagus: blad van de theologische fakulteit Utrecht* 7, 4 (July 1974), bijlage verslagen, p. 70; de Graaf *e.a.* 1974: 37.)

<sup>65</sup> Cf. *Areopagus* 7, 4/5 (November 1974), Bijlage verslagen: 30-38, 44-50; Sleddens *e.a.* 1974: 9, 16, 32-33.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. *Areopagus* 7, 4/5 (November 1974), Bijlage verslagen, 33-34, 38, 45, 46, 49; Sleddens *e.a.* 1974: 8; Winkler 1992: 76n91.

[66] <sup>67</sup> Cf. *Areopagus* 7, 4/5 (November 1974), Bijlagen verslagen: 30-38, 44-50; Sleddens *e.a.* 1974: 7-8, 11, 16-17

<sup>68</sup> One development was the increasing number of married priests (20) on the staffs (150) of the KIWTOs despite Vatican vetoes in 1971 and 1972; and in particular the much publicised case of Prof. H. van Luijk whom the KTHA tried to keep on its staff after his marriage in addition to the four staff members that had already married. It was, however, forced to dismiss him by bishop Simonis who threatened that he would withdraw his approval of the KTHA if it retained van Luijk on its staff after his marriage (Koevoets 1975: 97-102, esp. 98-100; Winkler 1992: 72-75). Another was the unfounded allegations by bishop Gijsen against unspecified HTP lecturers by which he gained Vatican approval for disowning HTP and for transferring the training of priests to his seminary at Rolduc (cf. above note 43). Vatican authorities, however, denied explicitly that they wished to see the KIWTOs terminated (Koevoets 1975: 108-109). On these developments, cf. also Van den Broek 1974: 27-28.

placed by co-operation between them as separate academic institutions in order that their distinct identities be safeguarded and protected.<sup>69</sup>

To forestall that staff and students were excluded from the policy discussions about the integration,<sup>70</sup> TSU<sup>71</sup> invited a eight members of staff and students in late 1974 to write brief position papers on the question whether the disciplinary and denominational diversity of theology as taught at the Utrecht Faculty of Theology was compatible with its students being trained for the ministry in their different churches. It wondered whether theology as taught [67] in the faculty did have a ‘point of integration’, a centre that served as its ‘throbbing heart’. It requested that the contributors indicate whether, in their view, theology had such a ‘point of integration’; and if so, what it was, or where it might be found.<sup>72</sup> By framing the problem that way, TSU was actually using the discussions on the future of the Utrecht ecumenical experiment in academic theology to ask the contributors to address once again the perennial problems of the encyclopedia of academic theology and the *duplex ordo*.<sup>73</sup> Six contributions were published.

### *The six position papers*

Two were by J.M. Hasselaar, professor of Dogmatic Theology in the NHK *Vakgroep Kerkelijke Vakken*. He held that ‘obedience to revelation, i.e. to the word of God’, is the point of integration and ‘throbbing heart’ of [Christian] theology.<sup>74</sup> The crucial point in his view was, therefore, whether or not humans will allow God to address and command them. Unlike the other sciences, theology, he wrote, is not free to determine its object and method, for it has received them [from God]. Even so he held that theology is a real science, *Forschung*, ‘research’, because both dogmatic and historical-critical theology should always be ready to have their finds tested. And the *duplex ordo* was fine as long as research on one side presupposes research on the other side. True theology, he wrote, mirrors the liberating truth revealed in the Lord.<sup>75</sup>

The third paper was by Antoon Vos, junior lecturer in the Dept. of Philosophy & Ethics. Deploring [Christian] theology’s ‘epidemic disintegration’, he located its point of integration in ‘God-in-Christ and God-with-us’. He contended that theologians had failed to achieve a critical renewal of theology and a creative consensus about how to do theology because they were absorbed in historical-critical research and had not kept up with developments in philosophy and science. However, he regarded the link, and alliance, between methodological and ideological

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<sup>69</sup> Cf. Wegman 1974: 5; Sleddens *e.a.* 1974: 8, 9-10, 20

<sup>70</sup> Cf. Sleddens 1975: 16-17, 26

<sup>71</sup> *Theologische Studievereniging Utrecht*. TSU is the umbrella organisation of the debating societies of students of theology at the Utrecht Faculty of Theology and of its entire multi-denominational student body. It publishes *Areopagus*, organises conferences on topics of interest for the entire student body as well as sports events, and other activities.

[67] <sup>72</sup> Van Houwelingen 1975a: 6-8; Hasselaar 1974: 22.

<sup>73</sup> Hasselaar 1974: 22; van Houwelingen 1975a: 6-7.

<sup>74</sup> Hasselaar 1974: 22; 1975: 14

<sup>75</sup> Hasselaar 1975: 13-14

atheism as the most pernicious recent development, for it had virtually eliminated the concept of God from [68] the arsenal of scholarly notions and caused scholars to view theism as falsified.<sup>76</sup>

The fourth contribution was by Otto J. de Jong, professor of History of Christianity. He regarded [Christian] theology as thoughtful reflection on how one might assist one's fellowmen in the practice of humaneness. His discipline's purpose was to enable students to meet the great Christian thinkers of the past as their inspiring teachers. He viewed church history as world history shaped by the message of the Bible.<sup>77</sup>

The fifth was by W.J. Veldhuis, a junior lecturer in systematic theology in the RC *Kerkelijke Vakgroep*. He regarded [Christian] theology as *fides quaerens intellectum*: faith founded on God's revelation but with human critical rationality and scholarly reflection built into it. It is faith in search of intellectual perspicuity by a thorough reflection on the contents of the faith and their scholarly articulation. Theology must be part of modern communities of faith, because scientific thought is an integral part of modern humankind. The [Christian] faith is a multidisciplinary object of research and reflection in biblical studies, church history, etc., because it consists of numerous coherent insights and structures that need to be tested. Theology should not [merely] identify with past expressions of the faith in esoteric ways. Rather, it should be part of, and at the service of, modern men in a self-reflexive, critical manner. Veldhuis distinguished three points of integration of theology. He located the first point in the faith of the modern Christian communities as inspired by the witness of Scripture and the tradition of the church and as focusing on God revealing Himself in human history. He set the second one at a deeper level: in God Himself, theology being the 'science of God'; and in Scripture as testimony to God's original revelation in human history. Veldhuis, therefore, also stressed that theology must be obedient to God's revelation in history and Scripture. Systematic, or dogmatic, theology serves in his view as the third point of integration of multi-disciplinary theology.<sup>78</sup>

### *My position paper*

Mine was the sixth contribution. It addressed the questions put to us from the external point of view of *godsdienstwetenschap*, the empirical sciences of religion(s). I was, however, also very much concerned with the metaphor of the 'throbbing heart' of theology, introduced by Hasselaar in October 1974, for two reasons. One was Hasselaar's contention that something above and [69] behind 'a dialogue of methods, disciplines, dogmatic treatises and churches' and scholarship in religions, to wit obedience to revelation, should be the emotionally charged centre that breathes life into the study of theology and unifies its disciplinary diversity. However correct that thesis was from the point of view of Christian dogmatic theology, it ignored in my view the real problems Utrecht students of theology were facing in their study, not merely in terms of how to integrate the disciplinary and denominational diversity of the Utrecht programme of study into a

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[68] <sup>76</sup> Vos 1975: 8-10

<sup>77</sup> de Jong 1975

<sup>78</sup> Veldhuis 1975.

coherent whole by and for themselves, but also of squaring it with their personal faith,<sup>79</sup> the shifts in it,<sup>80</sup> their own denominational backgrounds, and their goal to be a minister, priest or pastoral worker in their own churches. The other reason was that the metaphor of the ‘throbbing heart’ was also used in the discussions then raging in the faculty as a strategic device by GB to disfavour the integration of the KTHU into the Utrecht Faculty of Theology. It implied by it that theology should be governed by the confessions of particular churches rather than by academic learning in the ecumenical setting of a public faculty of theology; and that academic learning poses a threat to ‘theology proper’, as water does to fire. Though I was sympathetic to this anti-intellectualist claim, I argued in my paper that the blame should not be laid with academic learning but with theology itself as *fides quaerens intellectum*.<sup>81</sup>

### EMPIRICAL STUDIES AND THEOLOGY: WATER AND FIRE?<sup>82</sup>

The editors of *Areopagus* request that I formulate a few thoughts about two sets of questions. First, what is theology? Does it have a point of integration, [70] a throbbing heart? If it does, where might that be located, and how might it be found? Secondly, how do the several disciplines of a faculty of theology relate to that ‘theology’, and in particular, how do the empirical sciences of religions relate to ‘theology’? Can they be integrated into ‘theology’, or are they at loggerheads with it? Or, from the point of view of students of theology: do the empirical sciences of religions deepen, enrich and broaden the study of theology in harmonious ways, or are they an alien body that one must reject if one is intent on forestalling that one’s own theology and faith disintegrate?

In respect of these two important complexes of problems I can present only a few strictly personal thoughts [first on ‘theology’, and then on ‘theology and the empirical study of religions’], mostly of the [non-theological] kind an empirical scholar of religions would develop. They do not formulate what the other members of the department of the Sciences of Religions<sup>83</sup> [of this

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[69]<sup>79</sup> A case in point is the *Theologisch Werkgezelschap Terzake* (Theological Study Group For-the-Sake-Of [Holy Scripture]) founded on 16 May 1975 by a number of Utrecht students of theology in protest against the historical-critical exegesis of the Bible they were taught in the Utrecht faculty which they could not reconcile with their view of Scripture as proclamation (cf. *Areopagus* 8, 4 [juni 1975]: 52-53).

<sup>80</sup> Cf. below, and van Koningsveld 1979b: 38-39.

<sup>81</sup> Platvoet 1975. I have kept the English translation as close to the Dutch original as the idiosyncrasies of the two languages will allow. The few changes I made are indicated by square brackets. They are mostly precisions required by the methodology of the study of religions I have developed in the course of my career.

<sup>82</sup> The Dutch saying *ze zijn water en vuur* (‘they are [like] water and fire’) is rendered in dictionaries as ‘they are at daggers drawn’, or as ‘they are at each other’s throats’, and by similar metaphors, all expressing an irreconcilable opposition between persons, parties or points of view.

[70]<sup>83</sup> In Dutch: *godsdienstwetenschap*(*pen*); in German: *Religionswissenschaft*. This designation was used throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the continental universities of Europe. It is not adequately translated by Religious Studies after the model initiated by Parrinder at Ibadan University in 1948, because, especially in Anglophone Africa, Departments of Religious Studies are much closer to Christian theology than are Departments for Science(s) of Religion(s) in the universities of (continental) Europe, at least after 1960 when methodological agnosticism emerged as the major paradigm of the academic study of religions in continental Europe. The theological nature of Religious

faculty] hold about them. And their aim is merely to shed a weak light on your and mine existential predicament to have to think in both empirical and theological ways. It is most likely that other scholars will be able to illuminate the field of problems much better than I do.

*'Theology'*

Theology is the systematic and reflective articulation<sup>84</sup> of a religion, i.e. of the network of mutual relationships which exist, according to the believers, between themselves and the being(s) which they believe to exist because [they believe that] that or those being(s) have revealed him-, her- or themselves to them. The [postulated] communication with that or those beings is expressed in all [71] religions in rites and in certain other kinds of prescribed behaviour. The believers also tell at least a few stories about that being or those beings, and interpret events that occur [in their lives] as blessing from him, her or them, or as punishment. We notice that the beliefs about who is revealing himself, herself or themselves and what he, she or they desire were gradually developed into doctrine by specialists in a few religions in the past, when these had acquired the ability to formulate important parts of a religion in consistent ways; and that their teaching was handed down, orally or in written form, from one generation to the next when they had succeeded in formulating it succinctly. Among religions with well-developed doctrine one finds some that became the religion of one or several highly developed societies, [economically, politically and intellectually] with numerous specialisations, often of peculiar kinds, also in the formulation of doctrine and in reflection on it. Those proto-theologians and theologians were found in particular, though not exclusively, among the priests of temples, especially in temple schools, in the communities of monks and mystics, and among those of the upper ten of a society who had a philosophical inclination.

Theology has the following marks. First, it is the attempt to link up closely with systematic-reflective or 'scientific' thought in as far as that had been developed at a particular time and in a particular society. Secondly, it fosters the founding of schools: theologians train their disciples in their own manner of systematic reflection and in their own conceptual apparatus, and these develop them further and pass them again on to their pupils. Thirdly, it engages in polemics between schools and in schools about the correct formulation [of doctrine]. A theologian is never completely satisfied with the manner in which his abstract thought portrays the warm reality of the web of religious relations as lived by the believers. But he perceives even more sharply how imperfectly, or even clearly wrong, other theologians, or other schools of theologians, formulate the religion, his religion.

Fourthly, theology creates a huge distance between the more or less inarticulate religion of 'common' believers and the religion of theologians. Their systematic-reflective thought affects

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Studies in Anglo-Africa is apparent from e.g. the Welcome Address of Professor Akpenpuun Dzurgba of the Dept. of Religious Studies of Ibadan University at <http://arts.ui.edu.ng/welcomereli> where he refers to the department as, on the one hand, as 'a true community of scholars', and on the other speaks of the 'secular-*divine* nature of Religious Studies or *Theological Studies*' (my italics; cf. also Platvoet 2006).

<sup>84</sup> I understand by 'articulation' the lucid presentation of connections in a complex system by which the coherence of that system is made transparent.

the way they believe. The important differences that emerge between their religiosity and that of common believers may generally speaking, though perhaps a bit too sharply, be opposed as the *fides maiorum* to the *fides minorum*. But it is clear that the study of theology [at the university], especially its first phase, is a big transition that contains elements of a crisis and may cause deeply felt doubts, for it forces students to relinquish some of the certainties they had cherished till then. A sense of security is lost at a time when one is still far away from a new synthesis.

[72] Fifthly and finally, a fundamental tension between theology as articulation of belief and theology as a science is revealed in the praxis of theology. For science has always a double goal: to make the reality in which we live intelligible by discovering the meaningful and significant relations in it which enable us to dwell in a world we understand, which is meaningful to us, not absurd, and which we can experience and furnish as our world; and to test the relations that were discovered. Are the connections discovered actually present in our factual world(s)? Are they not illusionary mirages? As scholarship grows more critical in testing the meanings that are imposed on connections discovered, and demands more insistently that they be proved in verifiable ways, theology gets stuck in an uncomfortable straightjacket. For theology articulates belief in patterns of relationships with beings that are not perceptible. Their existence [and activity] can neither be verified nor falsified in conclusive and unambiguous ways. Moreover, theology founds its system of meaningful relationships on belief in 'revelation', i.e. on either one specific revelation or a number of revelations in the historical and/or mythical past, to which the believers attach normative purport with respect to how they should model their relationships with the beings in the existence [and activity] of which they believe. But the contents of these normative (or canonical) revelations are also by their very nature inaccessible to scientific verification.

This tension between the bestowal of meaning and its critical testing is further increased by theology's inveterate habit of incorporating any reliable, critically tested knowledge that the other sciences offer into its contemplations, even if that means, as it often does, that quite a few familiar and significant connections postulated by one's faith turn out not to be as meaningful as one presumed, or [even not tenable at all, so] that one, with pain and regret, must take leave of them completely.

Such discoveries may be that painful, and leave-taking may cause so much insecurity, that a particular theology may opt to shield itself from them and retreat into isolation for some time. It may then be practised exclusively for the fortification and defence of the familiar system of meanings for a period, and a moratorium may be imposed on their critical testing, and on the communication with the sciences that contribute to that critical testing, as well as on the communication with other schools of theology. That isolationist theology then turns into vehement apologetics and becomes polemic, like a mother animal fiercely defending its lair and young when attacked.

These five marks may be summarised as follows. Theology is the reflective, systematic and critical articulation of the religion a theologian confesses. Theology certainly has a vibrant heart in the concern to formulate, or reformulate, the beliefs the theologian him/herself and his/her co-believers entertain in order that they may (continue to) feel securely at home in them and be [73]

at ease with them. That concern demands that the beliefs be exposed to whatever surfaces as a critical test of them. Theologians must think through, live through and undergo that confrontation with all their faculties [and in particular their intellect], in order to be able, from this *passio*, – in the double meaning of suffering as well as passion –, to formulate, or reformulate, the belief system not only systematically and critically, but also authentically. That vibrant heart is, therefore, also a tense heart. In theology's heart itself we find the tension between the reflectively and systematically formulated system of meanings, or 'doctrine', and its critical testing. If, and when, that tension becomes too much to bear for that heart, then it may be banned for some time. But theology will always seek out it again because it exists for the sake of it, by it and from it.

### *Theology and the empirical study of religions*

I must be brief about the second set of questions to forestall that this contribution becomes oversized. I make two remarks only.

The first is that it is clear from what I have remarked above about the tense heart of theology, that the empirical sciences of religions are clearly not, in my view, an alien body in the study of theology. They do not introduce a new stress into theology. But it is also clear that they may, and often do, cause the pressure inherent in theology to mount considerably, for they contribute many well-tested data that force students of theology to abandon some of the views about other religions they cherished in the past. The other religions prove far less dissimilar, far less foreign or barbaric than it had been convenient for them to assume (and at times for reasons far less respectable). The empirical sciences of religions also proffer much reliable knowledge about how religions, foreign as well as one's own, are conditioned and constrained by their [historical, cultural, social, political, intellectual, academic, etc.] environments or contexts. And here again students may find to their dismay that matters often prove to turn out to be different, or more complex and finely tuned, than theology had so far presented them.

The other is that, though the mounting of this tension is not illegitimate, it is quite a real pressure, as I know from personal experience and from what several students tell me. Some patently seek liberation from formulations of their faith, which, they feel, are obsolete or inadequate. These students are very receptive to the scientific study of religions, at times in an uncritical manner. Other students are greatly disturbed by it. On top of the several quite taxing transitions overtaking them, one of which is the academic study of theology itself, they have to face information about extra-Christian religions that overthrows their views of these religions and moreover affects their perception of their own religion. Because 'state' and 'confessional' subjects are [74] separated in our faculty, and especially because its departments fail to signal these problems and to enter into consultation about them, students must cope with them, existentially and theologically, by themselves or together with their fellow students.

Even though I am well aware that, in the final resort, students need to solve these problems themselves in their own way, I still think that the faculty (the confessional department included) should also explore this field of problems and provide counsel to students who are in need of help. The initiative for organising such help might best be taken by the student body. It might

drop the problem with either the Curriculum Committee or some of the departments of the faculty. That committee or these departments might begin by organising a consultation in which, apart from students, lecturers from the department of the Empirical Study of Religions and the confessional department should take part as well as the missiologist. I am aware that such a consultation will not be able to provide solutions at short notice, for lecturers in the faculty entertain quite diverse views about the scientific study of religions and other religions. It will be difficult to get the consultation going and to keep it on course. There is no need, however, that those who take part develop a unified theological view on the empirical study of religions and other religions. What is, however, necessary is that one learns to understand [the views of] the other [participants] and is ready to jointly explore this problem and coach students in coping with it.

### *In conclusion*

Quite a number of relevant points have not been discussed in this contribution. E.g. what place and task does the empirical study of religions have in the study of theology, and how useful is it for theology, and for a student's future professional practice, e.g. as a minister in a church. These matters could not be covered in the space allotted.

Odiijk, February 9, 1975

### *1975-now*

The final outcome of the battle about the partial integration of the KTHU into the Utrecht Faculty of Theology was, at first, a big deception for its many champions in the faculty and the KTHU. In view of the strong GB-opposition, recent developments within the Dutch RC church, and the strong reservations of a few faculty members in crucial positions,<sup>85</sup> the *Curatorium* [75] (Board of Governors) of the KTHU concluded reluctantly in April 1975 that it should no longer press for a pact with Utrecht University by which the partial integration of the KTHU into the Utrecht Faculty of Theology might be made permanent.<sup>86</sup> Instead it also filed the formal application with the Dutch government for *aanwijzing* – the right to confer degrees and receive state subvention – in 1975,<sup>87</sup> as the other KIWTOs had done in 1973. After *aanwijzing* had been granted by royal decree of 23 January 1976, it signed an agreement with the Utrecht Faculty of

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<sup>85</sup> They rejected the unanimous report of the Committee for Integration and replaced it with their own proposals that the faculty and KTHU remain separate but co-operate closely in research and teaching (cf. Winkeler, *Om kerk en wetenschap*, 76; Kleyer, 'De enquête "pasen 1972"', 24; Hans Vossenaar & Marian Wisse 1975, [75] 'Verslaggeving van de ontwikkelingen in de afgelopen vijf maanden omtrent de samenwerking tussen de theologische fakulteit en de KTHU', in *Areopagus* 8, 7 (december 1975), [21-26], 21, 22).

<sup>86</sup> Vossenaar & Wisse 1975: 23. Other objections reported were that the Dutch RC bishops opposed it for fear of losing control over the appointments of part of the KTHU staff by their integration into the Utrecht Faculty of Theology; and that the Dutch government refused to fund parallel chairs in Biblical studies and History of Christianity in the Utrecht Faculty of Theology for the KTHU professors in those subjects. Neither of these objections were essential, however, for procedures were available in Dutch civil law by which they might have been nullified or circumvented.

<sup>87</sup> Cf. Freeman 1975: 17.

Theology on 20 December 1977 by which the intimate co-operation in research and teaching of the 1970-1975 period was continued virtually unimpaired for nearly two more decades.<sup>88</sup>

In this way, the champions of integration did carry the day after all.<sup>89</sup> Since 1975, they have continued to contribute significantly to the invigoration of scholarship in Dutch academic theology; to the significant weakening of confessional divides in it;<sup>90</sup> and to the laicisation of RC academic theology, in the double meaning of clerical professors being increasingly succeeded by married laity, male and female; and of theology being part of, subject to, and contributing to, the rapid secularisation of the Netherlands. Below, I will describe first how it was hit by secularisation; and then how part of it contributed, part of it resisted secularisation.<sup>91</sup>

[76] Dutch academic theology has been hit hard by secularisation on, in market terms, its two most essential fronts: its ‘customers’, the mainline churches, which it supplies with trained ministers; and its intake, the students registering to read theology for the ministry in a church. The mainline churches have shrunk ever more rapidly since 1975 by massive defection and de-registration of its members.<sup>92</sup> They are now a ghost of their former selves. But the number of students of theology has declined at a rate that exceeds even the shrinking of the mainline churches.<sup>93</sup>

That has set fusions of institutions of academic theology in motion. The five RC ones – the four KIWTOs at Amsterdam, Utrecht, Tilburg and Heerlen, and the Faculty of Theology of Radboud University at Nijmegen – were reduced to three in 1991,<sup>94</sup> and to one *Faculteit Katholieke Theologie* (FKT, Faculty of RC Theology) for ministerial training at Utrecht in 2006.<sup>95</sup> The [77]

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<sup>88</sup> Major elements of this co-operation were already in place in 1975. One of them was that all the KTHU members of staff who had been appointed to a department of the Utrecht Faculty of Theology in the 1970-1975 period remained members of those departments, be it formally as ‘advisers’ (Freeman 1975: 19; Vossenaar & Wisse 1975: 25).

<sup>89</sup> Cf. Winkeler 1992: 77.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. Platvoet 2002: 127-128.

<sup>91</sup> I will present more ample data on how academic theology has fared in Dutch secularising society since 1980 in a forthcoming article (other than the one noted in footnote 112).

<sup>92</sup> In 1970, 75% of the Dutch were members of a church; in 2000, only 40%. There seems to be a causal relationship between the theology a church espouses and the rate at which it shrinks: the more liberal its theology, the faster the defection. Between 1970 and 2000, the three liberal churches (Arminians, Baptists, and NPB) lost 61% of its membership. In the same period, the three churches that now constitute PKN (NHK-, GKN- and Lutherans), lost 51%; and the RC church lost 16%. The defection from the RC church is, however, much larger than 16%. RC believers do not de-register. They merely cease to attend. The number of the Roman Catholics that attend church regularly is down to 8%. The state of the RC church is much more apparent from the dramatic decline of the number of convents, the fusion of parishes because of the rapid decline of the number of priest (cf. above notes 21, 40-43) and the sale and demolition of church buildings (cf. Knippenberg 2005: 88). There is also growth on the religious market: Evangelicals and Pentecostals increased their membership between 1970 and 2000 by 138%. However, their growth signifies no turning point in the de-churching of Dutch society, for Evangelicals and Pentecostals constitute only 2% of the Dutch population, and 5% of the Dutch that are members of a church (van den Berg & de Hart 2008: table 2.7).

<sup>93</sup> I will present more ample data about this decline in the article mentioned in footnote 90. Students reading theology are, however, so few that theology was reported recently by the daily paper *Trouw* to be the surest way to a job for university students.

<sup>94</sup> The students and staff of the KTUA – the former KTHA – at Amsterdam were moved to the KTU – the former KTHU – at Utrecht; and those of UTP – the former HTP – at Heerlen were fused with the RC Faculty of Theology of the (RC) Radboud University at Nijmegen.

<sup>95</sup> Though located at the out-campus of Utrecht University [and now (2016) in the city of Utrecht], FKT was incorporated into (the RC) University of Tilburg. This curious construct is but a part of a [77] much more complex

NHK-church reduced its four *Kerkelijke Vakgroepen*, at the *duplex ordo* faculties of theology at the universities at Leiden, Utrecht, Groningen and Amsterdam, in 2000 to two: at Leiden and Utrecht. The GKN-church likewise reduced its two institutions for ministerial training, the Faculty of Theology of the Free University at Amsterdam and its Theological University at Kampen (ThUK), in 2000 to the one at Kampen by rescinding the treaty that had defined the special relationship of the Free University to the GKN-church in the past century. And after the NHK-, GKN- and Lutheran churches had merged into the *Protestantse Kerk in Nederland* (PKN) in 2004, this church founded its own (*simplex ordo*) *Protestantse Theologische Universiteit* (PThU) at Kampen, Utrecht and Leiden in 2007 as a merger of ThUK at Kampen and the two *Kerkelijke Vakgroepen* at Leiden and Utrecht.<sup>96</sup> Hardly anybody noticed that this signified the death of the *duplex ordo*.

The latest developments, however, were not merely a response to the dwindling numbers of students of theology opting for a career as minister, priest or pastoral worker in their church. They were also meant to address another growing concern of the RC and PKN-churches: their worry about the *vergodsdienstwetenschappelijking*<sup>97</sup> of academic theology and the need they perceived, therefore, to ‘re-theologise’ the theology taught to their future ministers. The invigoration of scholarship throughout Dutch academic theology in the last four decades has promoted significant shifts in the balance, traditionally prevailing, between theology ‘proper’ – theology that is at least in part inspired by the faith a theologian confesses and ‘has God for its object’<sup>98</sup> – and the neutral study of religions in all major institutions of Dutch academic [78] theology, towards ‘theology’ that does not have God for its object of study, but the faith(s) of humans in God or gods.<sup>99</sup> Those shifts, of various kinds and degrees, caused much of academic theology to become neutral and secular,<sup>100</sup> and to contribute to the secularisation of Dutch society by its scholarly detachment and rationality. Though this shift from ‘theology proper’ to *godsdienstwetenschap* (the unbiased study of religions) is, in my view, inherent in theology,<sup>101</sup> it was also correctly perceived by ecclesiastical authorities, RC and Protestant, as the gradual but continuous ‘de-theologisation’ of academic theology, and as one which over which they either had no control – in the *duplex ordo* institutions –, or as one over which their control was constantly being eroded – in

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reshuffle. The RC Radboud University at Nijmegen opted out of the fusion of Dutch RC institutions of academic theology proposed by the Dutch RC hierarchy in 2004/2005. It still has a Faculty of Theology, but students graduating from it no longer qualify directly for ministerial service in the dioceses by Dutch bishops. The number of its students is rapidly declining. Its members of staff have also been appointed to the new Faculty of Religious Studies, which Radboud University founded in 2005. The number of students of RS faculty is steadily increasing and exceeds now by far those of the Faculty of Theology. The former STF at Tilburg was at long last incorporated into Tilburg University on 01.01.2006 as its Faculty of Theology but was relocated in its Faculty of Humanities as Department of Theology & Religious Studies when the KTU at Utrecht became the Faculty of RC Theology [FKT] of Tilburg University on 01.01.2007. FKT has since been renamed as School of Catholic Theology; cf.

<https://www.tilburguniversity.edu/nl/over/schools/theologie.htm>

<sup>96</sup> Cf. <http://www.pthu.nl/>

<sup>97</sup> ‘transformation into science of religions’.

<sup>98</sup> Denaux 2006: 10

[78] <sup>99</sup> Denaux 2006: 10-11

<sup>100</sup> ‘Theology is changing at a fast pace into *godsdienstwetenschap* (the neutral study of religions)’ (Denaux 2006: 9)

<sup>101</sup> As I argued in my 1975 position paper.

the *simplex ordo* institutions. The FKT at Utrecht and PThU at Kampen/Utrecht/Leiden were founded in 2006 explicitly as institutions of church-supervised confessional theology for the purpose of ‘re-theologising’ theology, and of restoring the primacy of confessional dogmatic theologies in the *simplex ordo* institutions in which future ministers of the RC and PKN churches were to be trained.<sup>102</sup>

The reconsecration of this part of Dutch academic theology has widened the gap between the re- and de-theologising parts of Dutch academic theology and has made it more manifest institutionally. Not only did the (former) *duplex ordo* faculties of theology clearly drift towards, or transform into, faculties, departments, or institutes of *godsdienswetenschap*,<sup>103</sup> many [79] of the latter have moreover recently lost their status as faculties<sup>104</sup> and were relocated as departments or institutes in the new Faculties of Humanities,<sup>105</sup> an environment that both institutionalises their de-confessionalisation and will further enhance it.

### *In conclusion*

In an early article, John Pobee put up a spirited defence of theology as an academic discipline against those Christians who suspect it of undermining ‘the faith’ and regard it as a road, not to Heaven but to Hell.<sup>106</sup> Though the latter is certainly an outrageous polemical overstatement, the data and analysis presented in this article may perhaps cause John to reconsider his view that religions in general, and Christianity in particular, are in need of critical testing by theology, and that theology must therefore have a place in a modern, secular university;<sup>107</sup> and also his view

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<sup>102</sup> For the FKT, cf. Denaux 2006; and Schoot 2007. For the PThU, cf. the clause in its Mission Statement that staff and students must be personally involved in the Christian tradition in their practice of scholarship ([https://www.pthu.nl/Over\\_PThU/Over\\_ons/missie-en-visie/](https://www.pthu.nl/Over_PThU/Over_ons/missie-en-visie/)). The PThU-President, van der Sar, read psalm 146 at the opening of the academic year 2008/09 in order to state publicly and clearly that the God praised in that psalm is the object of theology at PThU [link removed from PThU website].

<sup>103</sup> The RUG Faculty of Theology at Groningen changed its title to *Faculteit Godgeleerdheid & Godsdienswetenschap* (Faculty of Theology & ‘Science of Religions’/Religious Studies) as early as 1988. Its Religious Studies section has [79] currently many more students than its Theology section. Candidates for the ministry in the PKN-church can no longer do their full training in this faculty since the faculty lost its *Vakgroep Kerkelijke Vakken* in 2000. The Faculty of Theology of the University of Amsterdam (UvA) was closed down in 2002 because the number of its students declined severely after it had lost its *Vakgroep Kerkelijke Vakken* in 2000. Part of it was transferred to the UvA Faculty of Humanities as Institute of Religious Studies. The Faculty of Theology at Leiden University changed its title to *Faculteit Godsdienswetenschappen* (Faculty of the ‘Sciences of Religions’/Religious Studies) in 2006. On the institutional changes at Radboud University at Nijmegen, and at STF at Tilburg, cf. above footnote 94.

<sup>104</sup> Four universities (still) have a faculty of theology: the Free University at Amsterdam; Radboud University at Nijmegen; the University of Tilburg; and RUG at Groningen. However, the Free University must send its candidates for the ministry in the PKN-church to PThU at Kampen for the final part of their training. Those of Radboud University do not qualify for the ministry in the RC church at all. The Faculty of Theology of Tilburg University is the Faculty of RC Theology at Utrecht. For the RUG Faculty of Theology & Religious Studies, cf. note 102.

<sup>105</sup> Apart from the relocations of the Faculties of Theology at Amsterdam and Tilburg Universities as Departments or Institutes of Religious Studies in their Faculties of Humanities (cf. above footnotes 94 and 102), two more transfers must be mentioned. The Faculty of Theology of Utrecht University became Department of Theology in the Faculty of Humanities in 2006. And the *Faculteit Godsdienswetenschappen* of Leiden University has been incorporated into the Leiden Faculty of Humanities on 1.09.2008 as *Leids Instituut voor Godsdienswetenschappen* (Leiden Institute of Religious Studies).

<sup>106</sup> Pobee 1973: 1

<sup>107</sup> Pobee 1973: 2

that every single Christian ‘has a theological vocation’.<sup>108</sup> His long sojourn in Europe made him aware that the Enlightenment has had a great impact upon academic theology and caused it [80] to become ‘rather humanistic and agnostic in tendency’.<sup>109</sup> As an academic discipline, theology is governed not only by obedience to a revelation but also by the rules of *Wissenschaft*. Therefore, ‘there is no getting away from the scientific method’.<sup>110</sup> Theology must be ‘captive to the scientific method’.<sup>111</sup> As a historian of religions, I suggest that even though theology has been a great asset to (the intellectual elite of) a very few religions, the foremost being Christianity, history proves it, as ‘scientific discipline’,<sup>112</sup> also to be a severe liability to them as soon as societies begin to secularise rapidly.<sup>113</sup>

In view of this outcome, the question may be asked again, which of the combatants in the 1974/75 battle did carry the day after all? Is the confessional(ist) GB the victor, or have the ecumenically inspired students and staff of the Utrecht Faculty of Theology and KTHU eager to merge RC and Protestant theological traditions into a high quality academic theology that aimed to transcend denominational separation emerged as champions? I refuse to declare a winner, for there are gains and losses on both sides. But it is certainly significant as well as ironic that it is the KTHU which has been re-confessionalised into FKT now; and that the former Utrecht Faculty of Theology, now Department of Theology in the Faculty of Humanities, is in a limbo between ‘theology’ and *godsdienswetenschap*, the neutral study of religions, now that the *duplex ordo* theology has passed away quietly.

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<sup>108</sup> Pobee 1993: 196

[80] <sup>109</sup> Pobee 1993: 194.

<sup>110</sup> Pobee 1993: 195

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<sup>114</sup> The link <http://revacern.eu/press-and-media/studies-and-lectures/zinzer-en.pdf> to Zinzer's paper at the REVACERN conference is no longer operational, c.q. defective. But cf. <http://www.fu-berlin.de/vv/de/1v/236454?m=199458&pc=125656&sm=181709> on a lecture course on secularisation Zinzer taught at the Free University of Berlin in the winter semester 2015-2016.