

**Celebrating 40 years of the
Church History Society of Southern Africa in 2010,
and 40 years of the journal *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* in 2014**

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Abstract

In this article, in celebrating the 40-year existence of the Church History Society of Southern Africa (CHSSA) in 2010 and its journal *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* (SHE) in 2014, the focus is on the question whether both of them have developed positively during this time, and especially since 1991. After an introduction, attention is given to some of the major developments in the society between 1992 and 2010, such as the reorganisation of the society into a more inclusive and representative organisation, its conferences, and some of the major tendencies in the history of the CHSSA in the period since 1992. Then the society's journal, *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* (SHE), is examined and its academic acceptability is ascertained. Next some perspectives on the road ahead are provided. It is finally concluded from an involved insider perspective, and therefore not providing an official audit of the society, that both the society and its journal SHE have grown towards some level of maturity and that the prospects for the future are relatively positive.

Prologue

This article has the purpose of reflecting on the 40-year history of both the Church History Society of Southern Africa (CHSSA) and its journal *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* (SHE). The question under discussion is whether both of them have developed positively in this period of time. Having been quite deeply involved in both the society and the journal, my perspective is naturally that of an involved insider, and therefore it is not meant to be an official audit. To refrain from being self-congratulatory, one realises that the involved insider perspective calls for a very specific responsibility not to be

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subjective in analysis or in critical judgement. The challenge of providing a fair level of critique is of the utmost importance and is a goal that one strives to attain.

Besides the responsibility as an insider to “tell the story” of this society and its journal in recent years, specifically since 1991, I wish to recapitulate some of the issues I raised in my first historical overview of this society, which was founded in October 1970. In a paper delivered in 1991 during the 21st anniversary of the CHSSA, I discussed at the end the road ahead for the CHSSA (Hofmeyr 1991:1-13).

The following came into focus: There is something to be learnt by the CHSSA from the experiences of the societies which were formed to promote the study of general history in South Africa. I briefly referred to some of the highlights in this history. In 1956 the *Historiese Genootskap van Suid-Afrika* was founded, with the aim of encouraging the study of history among a wide range of people, particularly among high school pupils, university students and the general public. By 1960 disillusionment had set in in some circles of the *Historiese Genootskap* at its failure to cater for the needs of the professional historian. This society was criticised for allowing itself to be dominated by primarily Transvaal teachers' organisations and for favouring Transvaal writers in the allocation of space in the society's journal. Increasing numbers of leading Afrikaner historians came to the conclusion that positive steps should be taken to draw English-speaking academics into a national professional organisation. Eventually the South African Historical Society (SAHS) was founded in 1965. Conferences which were held biennially first focused on methodological issues and the development of new approaches to history, but they gradually began to reflect more directly on recent developments in historical scholarship: the history of frontiers; African societies and race relations; slave and free blacks; rural, urban and regional history; demographic history, culture and ideology. In general the principle of bilingualism was scrupulously observed. The founding of the SAHS could be seen to be part of the endeavour by Afrikaans and English-speaking South Africans in the post-republic period to find each other. The SAHS's journal, *South African Historical Journal*, proved to be very useful and successful in building up a strong community of historians in South Africa. It also managed to build high standards and a strong research output (Saunders & Le Cordeur 1986:7-23). In many ways the SAHS was actually setting a very good example for the CHSSA to follow if possible (Hofmeyr 1991:7-8). In later years a new work group was founded at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) called the History Workshop. The aim was to provide for the study and promotion of radical and revisionist historiography.

Some other issues as regards the future of the CHSSA also received attention at that stage. The role of women and blacks in the CHSSA was definitely not extensive though not totally negligible. Although women mem-

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bers of the CHSSA did not organise themselves into a formal subgroup, such as was happening in the American Society for Church History (with their subgroup called Women in Theology and Church History), they have on various occasions delivered papers at annual conferences, and one of these members (Christina Landman) was secretary of the CHSSA from 1984 to 1991. A small number of blacks became members of the society during the period 1985 to 1991. However, there seemed to be some discomfort among them about the somewhat exclusive Afrikaans and Reformed character of the society (Hofmeyr 1991:9).

In the 1980s an increasing number of church historians were becoming aware of the importance of philosophical and scientific theoretical reflection on their subject as a discipline. Formerly few questions had been asked concerning the ongoing development of this subject on the subcontinent of Africa. The question was also raised as to whether the traditional approach to church history or the European approach in which most South African church historians were trained was still relevant for the practice of this subject in the African context. Practical realities forced church historians to reformulate the needs of their task. Especially since the 1990s, strides have been taken in the evolution of church history as a well-defined scientific subject in South Africa, both by the CHSSA and by academic departments teaching church history in South Africa.

A weighty question with which church historians struggled at that stage was whether their subject should be practised as a theological discipline that included an interdisciplinary perspective and an openness towards religious history. Most church historians in South Africa as well as the CHSSA agreed, however, that church history should most definitely not be an evangelising tool but should be scientific, critical and as far as possible objective, and that the church, as object of study, should be examined honestly and theologically (also see Denis 1997:84-93).

According to the overview presented in that article (Hofmeyr 1991), the outlook of the CHSSA in 1991 was in some respects hopeful, in others not. Problems which urgently had to be faced included the challenge of representative membership (the society was still not representative of both the ecclesiastical and cultural spheres, in spite of initial recurring pleas and efforts to this end), and there appeared to be some lack of understanding between the different schools of thought represented in the society.

Another example of a lack of understanding was the great emphasis still placed on denominationalism in spite of the definite plea for ecumenical openness that had been made right from the beginning and throughout the 21 years of the society's history.

The society had possibly reached a very critical phase in its development. The choice was either to move towards a position of greater parochialism, exclusivism and particularism or otherwise to develop a greater

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level of respect and understanding for one another. Eventually the only hope for becoming a fairly representative and relevant academic society, characterised by mutual understanding, lay in the ability of the individual members and the society as a whole to affirm that nobody's particular perspective reflects the whole truth, that there could be a different view on any specific issue from that held by a particular individual or group, and finally that mutual understanding, respect, openness and cooperation could prove to be enriching rather than suffocating. The subject of church history, it was remarked at that stage, would be the loser if these aims could not be realised.

At that time it was felt that, instead of forming a new society, the current one needed to consider redeveloping itself to embrace a broader and more open outlook and to provide for different needs and areas of specialisation by using forum sessions (Minutes of the CHSSA, 1991).

Developments in the CHSSA moving towards a level of maturity

After a decision of the business meeting of January 1991, GJ Pillay (Unisa) travelled to Pietermaritzburg and Grahamstown to meet with L Jafra (Fedsem) and M Donaldson (Rhodes) respectively and on 17 June 1991 arranged a meeting in Pretoria with professors P Coertzen (Stellenbosch), B Spoelstra (Potchefstroom) and JW Hofmeyr (Pretoria) at which the views of the committee members were fully discussed.

The discussions on this issue were cordial and frank. After examining the history of the society it became quite clear that it had never been the intention of the society either to be a "Dutch Reformed Church gathering" or to be influenced by any racial consideration, even during the height of apartheid. For the greater part of its history, however, those who had attended were mainly from the Dutch Reformed churches. English church historians had made a strong contribution but did not always have the influence they deserved, there being only a few of them, such as Calvin Cook (Rhodes), David Whitelaw (Unisa), Margaret Donaldson (Rhodes) and Joan Millard (Unisa). Until that time there had been very few black church historians, and at most two had attended more than one annual conference. On the Afrikaans side, professors had often brought their graduate students along with them, and many former church history students in the DRC ministry had attended regularly. In the course of the society's development and history the Afrikaans contingent had naturally grown for these reasons.

It appears that the society at that stage faced a "catch-22" situation: it did not wish to be exclusive in any way, yet because it was predominantly Dutch Reformed and Afrikaans, those who were not did not feel attracted to it.

The January 1992 business meeting unanimously agreed that it must seek to be inclusive in every way and that the issue under discussion must be

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freed from any ideological consideration. The sole goal had to be the stimulation of church historical study and research in South Africa and the creation of a sound academic forum for all church historians in the country.

In order to meet these goals, more than just “the language and denominational biases” needed consideration. The issue of inclusiveness on racial and gender issues also needed to be addressed. At a later stage P Denis also commented on and emphasised this extensively (Denis 1997:86-88). Besides, a new approach to the annual conference programme and the journal was suggested, the main items on the society’s Annual Programme. With this new approach, many of the problems discussed above could be resolved, and it did indeed prove to be successful in the course of time. Various proposals were tabled in this process.

Instead of the conference programme being decided together by the existing five working groups (patristics, medieval church history, Reformation church history; modern and general church history; South African church history; historiography and methodology; and church polity), each group would be given the opportunity every five years to suggest a conference theme to the society. This would ensure that each interest was still catered for. This theme would then be advertised and a call for papers made to the whole academic community (here and abroad). The immediate benefits of this move would be the opening up of the programme to general academic participation in church historical discussion. The sole condition would be that the participants would be contributing to church historical research and study (Minutes of the CHSSA, 1992).

Besides the possibility in future for each of the working groups to offer papers, their interests would be served at every conference in forum sessions. In order to encourage new membership and wider interest in church historical study, it was proposed that one session be set aside for forum papers in which completed postgraduate research would be presented. Master’s and doctoral students from the different universities who had completed degrees would present short papers on their findings. Their promoters could be invited to respond to their papers before these were discussed.

Regarding the language of communication at the conference, it was proposed that speakers be permitted to use the language in which they could best present their ideas but that the society should undertake (with the assistance of the author) to translate these papers into English and that these translations should be available at the conferences (Minutes of the CHSSA, 1992). Since the 2000s English has mostly been used as the *lingua franca*, and this reflects the geographical and ethnic diversity of the society.

With regard to business matters, the CHSSA managed to survive quite well and had a period of relative plain sailing. Although administration is not

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the most important part of an academic society's existence, without a smooth administrative existence its affairs would be so much more difficult.

Because of the fact that the society's journal managed to retain its position as an accredited journal, it constantly received the so-called subvention fees from the institutions to which authors were attached. This, together with membership fees, enabled the society to operate fairly positively and dynamically. The major expenses of the society related to the publication of the journal and the travel and other costs incurred for members attending annual conferences.

In the period 1991 to 2010 various people acted in leadership positions: CFA Borchardt acted as president from 1991 to 1998, JW Hofmeyr from 1998 to 2004, P Gundani from 2004 to 2008 and P Denis from 2009 up to the present. As secretaries during the above period, JW Hofmeyr, PJ Maritz, H Mogashoa, R Ntsimane, M Madise and E Oliver performed their duties with great diligence. Those who served as assistant secretaries were RM Britz, PJ Maritz, H Mogashoa, R Ntsimane and M Madise (Minutes of the CHSSA, 1991-2010).

As regards honorary membership, only two people were honoured in the period under discussion, namely CFA Borchardt and P Coertzen. This is a way in which the society can give recognition to those who provide the society with special service over a long period.

There seems to be some misunderstanding about the membership links of the CHSSA with the Commission Internationale d'Histoire et d'Etudes du Christianisme (CIHEC). For instance, in some circles it was thought that the CHSSA had been expelled from CIHEC in the 1980s. That is not correct because, as indicated in my earlier article of 1991, it was primarily for financial reasons and bad exchange rates that the CHSSA decided in January 1978 to withdraw after having been a member since 1971 (Hofmeyr 1991:7). It is, however, correct that in 1980 the patristician Prof WHC Frend once again invited the CHSSA to form a South African sub-commission of the CIHEC, provided that the officers of the sub-commission should be carefully balanced by race and tradition.

Many things can be said about tendencies in the circles of the CHSSA in the period 1991 to 2010. At this stage, however, a few remarks must suffice.

First, a reality of the society's history during this period is the fact that by 1995 it had lost a large number of its Afrikaans and Reformed members. The strategy of social, political and academic withdrawal was to some extent a common approach at that time by those who thought it would assuage their fear of being overwhelmed by majorities. Although some of these Afrikaans members may have felt estranged by the shifts in language, inclusiveness and ecumenicity, those who withdrew missed the opportunity of being positively involved in the following three respects: the building of a fairly strong church

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historical tradition in Southern Africa; participating in micro and macro discussions about the subject of church history as a fully fledged science; and building a strong Southern African theology.

Secondly, the society has gained not only by a more representative and inclusive membership but also by a broader perspective on previously neglected areas in the field of church history. Areas such as church reunification, oral history, church and apartheid, gender issues, the role of women, the African independent churches, and some new methodological and philosophical issues have come into stronger focus (Denis 1997:89-93). It is clear that the society is no longer struggling for acceptance, for an independent position within the framework of similar societies in South Africa or further afield, for relative inclusiveness and representativeness, or for upholding fair standards both at conferences and in the volumes of the journal of the society. It is also interesting to note that from 2005 onwards black scholars have formed the majority in the society, but women scholars have remained in the minority.

Thirdly, since about 2007 there have been certain negative developments in the history of the CHSSA, although it is in some ways difficult to pinpoint them. Some members of the society have felt somewhat estranged from the CHSSA. According to oral communications, some Afrikaans and English members (who did not wish to be identified) were of the opinion that they were no longer as welcome in the CHSSA as before. In some ways this could be related to differing personalities; on the other hand, it could be the reverse of what was experienced in the 1970s and early 1980s when the society was mostly white and Reformed in its makeup. It is important, however, to indicate that the society's membership should not be known primarily for representing South Africa's demography, but that it should reflect inclusivity and acceptance of one another as full members of the society, regardless of colour, race, creed or gender, and that members should be accepted and judged for their contributions on merit and not in relation to any other secondary issues.

Finally, the society realises its responsibility with regard not only to the role of the subject of church history but also to the society's membership in furthering better theologising in Southern Africa. More and more it is realised that bad theology in general can quite often be attributed to the weak historical exposure and weak historical formation of theologians in theological departments, faculties or seminaries in South Africa.

The journal of the CHSSA

In my 1991 article I indicated not only that the CHSSA was established in 1970 but also that the first volumes of *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae (SHE)* (which was published only annually) provided almost exclusively for the

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publication of papers delivered at conferences. The very first volume was published in 1975 and contained some of the papers delivered at the second and fourth annual conferences of CHSSA.

In the period 1991-2014, *SHE* was slowly but surely moving to a general position of academic acceptability. Initially, in the period 1970-1990, the journal consisted largely of annual volumes which, as mentioned, published mainly papers delivered at the society's annual conferences. Most of these papers were of average standard, with some exceptions, but the journal did demonstrate some sort of vibrancy within the circle of church historians.

From 1990 onwards the society published bi-annual volumes, which gradually paved the way for the development of a fairly well-prepared journal both in appearance and in content. The articles from then on were mostly reviewed, though they were sometimes of differing standards. However, at that stage the system of peer reviewing was not yet well developed, and there was no full guarantee of the quality of articles as such.

In the course of the past 40 years of the society's history (1970-2010) and the existence of its journal also for 40 years (1975-2014) many themes were addressed at annual conferences. As indicated in my 1991 article, the themes focused on between 1970 and 1991 included topics like church historiography and the theory, philosophy and methodology of church history. Other themes during this period were the African context, Third World church historiography, ecumenism, liberation, social involvement, violence, church and state, reconciliation, pietism and evangelicalism as well as issues related to church polity, such as its relation to Scriptures, the various forms of church government and different church orders. The society generally managed to retain a passable standard in its conferences from the beginning of its existence, and usually a specific broad theme was addressed at each of these events.

Some of the themes addressed since 1991 have included the following: Reform and renewal movements; thinking, believing and being; eschatology through the ages; education in the course of the history of Christianity (a term that was catching on more and more); gender and church history; migration movements in the course of church history; healing and health care in the history of Christianity; and various topics related to church polity.

It will be useful, however, to engage in deeper analysis of a few highlights, important selected themes and sets of papers from this period and consider how such papers together with other articles came to appear in different editions of the journal.

In 1991 the issue of non-violence and Christian dissent was discussed historically and very ably by GJ Pillay. This well-researched paper describes the development of the pacifist civil disobedience tradition in history. It

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concludes that the tradition of pacifist resistance, as an application of the Sermon on the Mount, is a Christian tradition much older than the more predominant just war tradition (*SHE* 1991(1):14-46). Also in 1991, the internationally renowned church historian Heiko A Oberman (Phoenix, USA) published an article in Afrikaans on “the matrix of Calvin’s Reformation”. After describing the decisive decade of 1525-1535, Oberman concludes with Calvin’s growing insight into the life-giving refuge with God. He concedes, however, that there are many obstacles in the way of anyone wishing to trace Calvin’s road to reformation (*SHE* 1991(2):123-152).

In the 1993 volumes of *SHE* the results of a conference that year on methodology and the practice of church history were published, as well as articles with a focus on women’s history. A number of crucial methodological considerations for the nineties, with a concrete and contextual emphasis, came to the fore. Examples of issues focused on were “How to write the history of a failure (the Dominicans in the Zambezi area (1577-1837))” by P Denis; “The nature of historical understanding” by JH le Roux; the important issue for Africa of the “oral tradition”, by various authors; and “Ecumenical church history” by CJ Botha. In that same year C Landman published a very interesting article on “Exploring religious women’s history”. The issue of women in the churches came more and more to the fore. It was said in the introduction of the 1993 volume that the CHSSA meeting of that year (1993) distinguished itself in its ethos: it boiled down to an unspoken challenge to seek out, to collect, to inquire and to record, without subjectivism or an obsession with theory to thwart the cause (*SHE* 1993(1):1). All along, the CHSSA and its journal *SHE* were growing towards some level of maturity.

In 1998 a number of other themes were discussed in the journal of the society, such as “Pentecostalism and the reconstruction of church experience in Africa (1970-1995)” by the US-based Nigerian Ogbu Kalu; “A Portuguese in South East Africa in the 16th century (João dos Santos)” by P Denis; and “Religion and democracy in South Africa” by LD Jafta. It was clear that Africa now received far more attention, and socio-political issues were a specific focus of the journal.

In 2000, issues that came to the fore included “The constitutional state: a turning point for the Christian churches in South Africa” by JM Vorster; “The founding of the Zimbabwe Council of Churches” by P Gundani; and “Vatican II: a council of reconciliation” by KB Roy. These once again bear witness to the fact that the society, its journal and its focus were constantly broadening.

Themes covered in the journals of the years up to 2005 included the following: the implications of the Reformation for Africa; histories from countries such as Malawi, Kenya and Nigeria; the African independent churches; women of faith in South Africa; history as biography and autobiography; history as a process; and histories of memory. Other articles worth

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mentioning are “Three South African perspectives on Calvin” by G Thom; “Processes surrounding the birth of the Justice and Peace Commission in Zimbabwe” by PH Gundani; and “Feminist responses to the historical and current influence of belief on sexual relationships” by MM Pieterse and C Landman. Some further topics of great interest in these volumes were the histories of children, histories of hurt, histories of (in)justice and histories of healing.

Themes of the CHSSA conferences from 2006 to 2010, which were eventually covered in some way in *SHE*, include the following: Church and Children (Stellenbosch, 2006); Methodology and African Church History (Johannesburg, 2007); Religious Freedom and Church History (Pretoria, 2008); Theological Education in Historical Perspective (Stellenbosch, 2009) together with a focus on Calvin and Calvinism during the 500th celebrations of Calvin’s year of birth; and Ecumenism: a Historical Perspective (Potchefstroom, 2010).

All of this reflects an even broader focus and understanding of the task of the ecclesiastical historian in Southern Africa: issues like the role of African societies, ecumenism, the role of women and gender, and a far more contextualised interest were clearly coming to the fore. In 2009, even the issue of the public face of female genital mutilation came to the fore in the journal. It was introduced by C Landman by means of a short historical overview. From analysing various articles, it has also become clear that the general South African approach and that of the CHSSA has tended to be critical, and that a sound relationship with missiology and history at large should not be neglected (Denis 1997:89-90). By the early 2000s it was slowly but surely becoming clear that the profile of authors of articles, and the focus of articles, was becoming more representative and inclusive, reflecting both white and black and male and female voices and perspectives.

The society, though indirectly, was also involved in the globally based conference of the “Currents in World Christianity Project”, which took place at the Hammanskraal campus of the University of Pretoria in July 2001. This having been the most inclusive and best represented church history conference ever in the world, it was a momentous and inspiring event and still bears various fruits, such as the publication of the book *African Christianity: an African story* (edited by OU Kalu, JW Hofmeyr and PJ Maritz).

The quality of articles as well as the editorial work improved under the editorship of GJ Pillay between 1992 and 1997, JM Vorster from 1998 to 2004 and C Landman from 2005 onwards. While GJ Pillay from Unisa was the editor, the journal was published by the Unisa Publications Department. When the very able JM Vorster from Potchefstroom took over, with the assistance of P Denis from the University of KwaZulu-Natal, the journal was privately produced by a publisher in Potchefstroom. Under Vorster’s diligent and committed leadership, the journal gained further respect within the

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theological world in Southern Africa. When C Landman from Unisa took over in 2005 as a very capable editor, she was the first woman to hold this position and she set high standards for the period ahead. She was assisted by P Gundani as co-editor and Nonnie Fouché as a very able administrative assistant. As had already started happening in the past, articles now had to undergo initial pre-reviewing by the editor, and obviously problematic cases were referred to the sub-editor. After that, articles were sent for more rigorous blind peer reviewing, a process which is now fully in place, and this naturally benefits the quality of articles and the journal as a whole. To critically analyse the quality of articles published in *SHE* would require a separate study and even an external audit. Without too much fear of contradiction, however, it can be stated that the serious process of peer reviewing helps to ensure that the general quality of articles is not below average.

Because of Christina Landman's ties with the Research Institute for Theology and Religion at the University of South Africa, the journal is currently published with this institute as its base. The content of *SHE* in the last decade has mirrored the following three tendencies, as indicated by Landman as editor and Wessel Bentley as guest editor of a supplement to volume 39 (August 2013):

Firstly, peer-reviewed papers read at the annual conferences of the Church Historical Society of Southern Africa (CHSSA) have been published (this was the prime aim of *SHE* in the early years of *SHE*'s existence up to 1989). Secondly, since 2008 supplements of *SHE* were published on relevant historical themes. Thirdly, *SHE* has published (in this period of time) three Festschriften, honouring (the work and influence of) three great South African theologians: Simon Maimela (2010), Philippe Denis (2012) and in the 2013 issue, Cornel du Toit (2013). Only one of these scholars is a historian of Christianity, namely Philippe Denis. While the other two are systematic theologians, they are honoured by *SHE* for the historical significance of their theological labours. (*SHE* 39, Supplement, August 2013:xv).

It is also important to focus briefly on the supplements of *SHE* which have been published in the course of time. In 2008 a supplement on the histories of women and faith was published, which was quite rightly described by the editor, C Landman, as "a celebration of women of faith and the contributions they have made to Africa, its spirituality, its quest for gender justice and the well-being of its communities of faith" (Landman 2008, Supplement: editorial note). In 2009 essays on theological education in Africa were published. These supplements attracted a large number of women and other

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scholars from all over Africa and substantially expanded the authorship of *SHE*. A further three of the supplements contain the papers read at Pan-African conferences held in South Africa on the Norwegian missions in Zululand (2010), on the manifestations of Empire in the history of Christianity (2011), and on the histories and futures of the voice and voicelessness (2012). All these publications attracted a vast and varied scholarship, especially of African scholars, locally and in the diaspora (*SHE* 39 Supplement, August 2013:xv).

SHE was externally audited in 2012 by the Academy of Sciences for South Africa (ASSAF) and it was recommended that its accreditation should be continued. Although there are always areas in which improvement is possible, *SHE* was seen by ASSAF as the dynamic journal of a dynamic society. Two concerns were raised, however. Firstly, the journal is too inwardly focused and should be broadened and expanded on an interdisciplinary level to include areas such as sociology, anthropology and history. In this respect the journal and the society ought to be proactive by introducing specialists in the above fields to *SHE* during their conferences or by means of individual contacts. Secondly, *SHE* is not known enough in libraries and among scholars, both locally and abroad. Members should therefore be ambassadors for the journal in different academic circles.

With regard to indexes on articles published in *SHE*, an important index covering the 30 years from 1970 to 2000 was included in *SHE* of 2001. P Denis and some assistants were the compilers of this important index. In 2013 an overview of all articles published in *SHE* between 2005 and 2013 was provided (*SHE* 39(2):399-418). These overviews are of very great value not only in providing a broad perspective on the areas and themes covered by the journal and society, but also in reflecting the relatively high standards and level of acceptability attained by the CHSSA and its official publication in recent years. More and more articles by younger scholars (most under 40), by women and by people of colour have also been published in *SHE*. In fact more than half of the articles currently published are authored by women and people of colour. According to Wessel Bentley, the guest editor of the 2013 supplement (*SHE* 39), the journal has also given a:

... voice to the ongoing discourses in church history, particularly but not exclusively located on the African continent. It has also told the stories of those who have made an impact, and are still making an impact on the unfolding story of the church" (*SHE* 39 Supplement, August 2013::xi).

Nonnie Fouché of the CHSSA has ensured that all articles published in *SHE* between 2005 and 2013 have been placed on open access by means of the Unisa Institutional Repository. Furthermore, the articles published in *SHE*

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will also shortly be listed on the Scielo platform. Currently more and more articles in *SHE* are also being cited on a worldwide scale.

Recognition is due to all the editors and assistants mentioned above who through very diligent and constant work and commitment have been responsible for the improving quality of this journal (*SHE* 1991-2014). It would prove to be an interesting and valuable exercise to compare the quality of *SHE* with other South African theological societies' journals (such as *Missionalia* and *Old Testament Essays*) and with some other local and international historical and ecclesiastical history journals (such as the *South African Historical Journal* or the British-based *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*), but this falls outside the scope of this article.

Epilogue: what does the future hold for the CHSSA and *SHE*?

From the above it is extensively clear that the CHSSA and *SHE* have developed positively and have gradually succeeded in becoming fairly inclusive and empowering during the period under discussion here.

Where exactly the CHSSA is heading is naturally difficult to say. In 1997, after an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of South African religious historiography, Philippe Denis stated that "South African religious historiography has several limitations ... But it also has strong points" (Denis 1997:84). I have the view that although the CHSSA has indeed shown several limitations, it has also assisted in developing some strong points in religious historiography. As Denis indicates, some of the fields that are most dynamic at this moment would be "missionary anthropology, the history of the churches' response to apartheid, and the African independent churches" (Denis 1997:84). The CHSSA has come a fairly long way towards relative academic acceptability. In this journey, however, the CHSSA can learn from various other theological and academic societies in Southern Africa and also elsewhere in the world. In some ways it did follow the examples being set by the South African Historical Society (SAHS), as explained earlier on, but in some ways it was not all that successful. Sadly it is often mostly individual members of the CHSSA who would be involved in building relationships between these two societies rather than the CHSSA as a whole.

Areas which the CHSSA needs to attend to are to continue building inclusiveness and representativeness both in membership and in the journal, and also building interdisciplinary bridges with other subjects like sociology, anthropology and general history. Other challenges are to build a higher level of personal understanding, acceptance and tolerance within the membership and to build higher academic standards. Furthermore, I believe there is also a great need for the history of Christianity to develop a theological understanding and critical interpretation of historical facts in a broader theological context.

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Where the journal *SHE* is heading is equally difficult to say. What can be stated, however, is that as one of the oldest and most established theological journals of a South African academic society, it has acquired a relatively dynamic character and has great potential to develop even further as a recognised theological journal in Southern Africa, and even Africa as a whole.

Finally, in this year of celebration (which has already been preceded by the publication of seven interesting articles in the last volume of *SHE* in 2013, inter alia histories of ecclesial resistance, struggle stories of women of faith, and biographies of renegade missionaries), I believe we have two very specific responsibilities. Besides our responsibility to critically “tell the story” of this society and its journal, which have both developed positively, we should at the same time also express the hope that this society will develop further as a relevant academic society of high standing in the years to come, having an impact both locally and further afield.

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