

A lady with a lamp. A brief characterisation of Christian Spirituality theologian CET Kourie

Christo Lombaard
Christian Spirituality, Unisa
ChristoLombaard@gmail.com

Abstract

At the recent Third Joint Conference of Academic Societies in the Fields of Religion and Theology, held at the University of Pretoria from 11 to 15 July 2016, a special session of the Spirituality Association of South Africa (SPIRASA) was convened to honour Prof. Celia Kourie on her 70th birthday and for her pioneering work in the field of Christian Spirituality. This included establishing the new discipline while working within New Testament studies at the University of South Africa, which had been her initial academic home there, also as Head of Department, before going on to lead the discipline of Christian Spirituality. Kourie successfully merged these two disciplines too, publishing on for instance the mysticism of Paul and other aspects of the New Testament and Spirituality. At the special session, Kourie presented her recently published paper “Weaving colourful threads: A tapestry of spirituality and mysticism”, *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 71/1 (2015), 1-9, after which followed several invited responses as short papers, one of which is this. The characteristics of Kourie’s scholarship are outlined, and the intellectual process described with the new concept of a chain of spiritual communication. The experiential is emphasised, both in Kourie’s engagement with her subject matter and in reading her scholarship, with “deep” proposed as the existential *Leitwort* of her academic work.

Introduction

The oeuvre Kourie has always been characterised by the quest to write *deeply*. Behind this way of writing lies, clearly implied, a sense of the unsayable, with colleague Kourie’s writing reflecting the humility that goes along with pointing to what cannot be said. God-talk has long been recognised as being metaphorical, but its mode of communication is at most the whisper; at best, silence¹; its fullest reception, unknowing². Still, even in stillness, the academic enterprise requires words: that something unsaid³ about the unsayable *be said*.

¹ Cf. Celia Kourie, “Weaving colourful threads: A tapestry of spirituality and mysticism”, *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 71/1 (2015): 7-8 and Celia Kourie, “Mystical Consciousness in an Interspiritual Age”, in *Seeing the Seeker. Explorations in the Discipline of Spirituality: A Festschrift for Kees Waaijman on the Occasion of his 65th Birthday*, eds. Hein Blommestijn et al. (Leuven: Peeters, 2008), 618-619.

² Celia Kourie, “Mysticism: a way of unknowing”, in *The Spirit that empowers. Perspectives on spirituality* (Acta Theologica Supplementum 11) eds Pieter de Villiers, Celia Kourie and Christo Lombaard, 59-75 (Bloemfontein: University of the Free State Press, 2008).

³ Research must always be new (even though what constitutes such newness / novelty remains open to interpretation, as always it should). Though this may sound like a truism, it must be overtly said, because expectations of the discipline of Christian Spirituality from outside still carries, sadly, at times the expectation that only piety will be written. Rather, research in different modes – anthropological, theological, historical, hermeneutical, phenomenological: cf. Celia Kourie, “Spirituality and the university”, *Verbum et Ecclesia* 30/1 (2009): 158-166; Kees Waaijman, *Spirituality: forms, foundations, methods* (Leuven: Peeters, 2002); Sandra Schneiders, “Christian spirituality: Definition, method and types”, in *The new SCM dictionary of Christian spirituality*, ed. Philip Sheldrake (London: SCM Press, 2005), 1-6 – remains the call of the discipline – for a first local history of the academic discipline, see Celia Kourie, “Teaching spirituality at Unisa, 2000–2010: Some reflections”, *Missionalia* 38/1 (2010): 17–31 – as is true to the nature of all academic subjects. More generally, see e.g. Bernard McGinn, “The letter and the spirit. Spirituality as an academic discipline”, in *Minding the spirit. The study of Christian spirituality*, eds Elizabeth Dreyer and Mark Burrows, 25–41 (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005).

This is done by Kourie in three characteristic manners:

- logically, by the *topics* she addresses, which are aspects of spirituality and mysticism;
- paradoxically, by the *clarity* of her writing on such unusually unclear matters, which is with Kourie exemplary, serving precisely to formulate the elusiveness of meaning that is made⁴, respectively: received by others⁵;
- integrally⁶, by the *sincerity* of her contributions, which is enticing: her existential explorations exhibit an engaging integrity of being, in which an overwhelming (in a quiet rather than clamorous manner) sense of the divine is communicated⁷ not only with respect to the subject matter, but also from it: one is altered in encountering vicariously via Kourie the encounters with the divine of others⁸.

⁴ This may sound like the constructionist view of matters religious, of which Kourie is aware, but to which she does not subscribe: aware of the gains of post-modernism for the practice and the discipline of Christian Spirituality ("One of the reasons for the increased interest in spirituality is undoubtedly postmodernism" - Kourie, "Spirituality and the university", 152, with the seeds of this already present in Celia Kourie, "New Testament Scholarship on the Threshold of the Third Millennium", *Religion & Theology* 2/2 (1995): 173, which has been received with critical appreciation by e.g. Jeremy Punt, "'My Kingdom for a method': Methodological preoccupation in areas of South African New Testament scholarship", *Neotestamentica* 32/1 (1998): 142-143, 150; cf. further Celia Kourie, "Postmodern spirituality in a secular society", in: *Secular spirituality as a contextual critique of religion*, ed. Cornél du Toit and Cedric Mayson (Pretoria: Research Institute for Theology and Religion, University of South Africa, 2006), 75-94, the divine in her writings never comes across as mere projections (as found for instance in classic Greek thinking with Xenophanes, or in classical modern philosophy with Feuerbach, and in recent social constructivism). Though Kourie thus understands her work as enabled by the post-modernist context (cf. e.g. Kourie, "Spirituality and the university", 152-154), philosophically in its reappreciation of relationality and exegetically as one way of escaping the strictures of modernist exegesis (- her perceptive humour is shown by her appreciation of the characterisation of the dominant Reformed exegetical paradigm in 1970s-1980s South Africa as "sola structura"), I understand her more as a *post-secular* writer. This, drawing on Christo Lombaard, "A Next TIER: Interdisciplinarity in Theological Identity / Education / Research (TIER) in a Post-Secular Age". Paper presented at the School of Social Sciences Conference, 2-3 September 2015, Unisa, Pretoria, and at The Interplay between Theology and other Disciplines in Research and in Theological Education conference, 14-16 April 2015, Faculty of Theology, University of Latvia, Riga. Publication forthcoming: volume edited by Nikoloas Asproulis, Athens: Volos Academy for Theological Studies, 2017:

post-secularism entails the slowly dawning diminishment of the explicit marginalisation of matters related to faith. No religious revival in the sense usually found within evangelical or charismatic circles is therefore implied here. Rather, a return of the religious dimension of life as a normal part of life is facilitated, towards a more neutral, natural position in which faith (also non-faith and anti-faith) is publicly encountered in society.

And, from Christo Lombaard, "Sensing a 'second coming': An overview of new concepts in Sociology, Philosophy, Law and Theology on the re-emerging religious in private and public life", *Verbum et Ecclesia* 37/1 (2016): 2:

With a pendulum that may have swung from implicit bias in favour of expressed religiosity in pre-secularist times to implicit bias in opposition to expressed religiosity during the secularist phase in Western/ised societies, a more natural kind of balance is now being sensed, or sought.

An example of a recent publication that engages with spirituality matters in this manner, in this case related to another key theme in Spirituality Studies, love, is: Joeri Schrijvers, *Between faith and belief. Toward a contemporary phenomenology of religious life* (New York: SUNY, 2016). Related to Biblical Spirituality, in an intellectualised Calvinist mode, cf. Beat Weber, *Werkbuch Psalmen III. Theologie und Spiritualität des Psalters und seiner Psalmen* (Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 2010).

⁵ Though she does not engage with the current "meaning making" theme of research, e.g. that of Crystal Park, "The Meaning Making Model: A framework for understanding meaning, spirituality, and stress-related growth in health psychology", *European Health Psychologist* 15/2 (2013): 40-47, this is in some ways what she does.

⁶ This term here is deliberately chosen, to echo the influential work by a figure for whom Kourie has always shown great appreciation, Ken Wilber, *Integral spirituality* (Boston, MA: Shambhala Press, 2006).

⁷ Extending here and in the next paragraph the communications analysis of aspects of spirituality in e.g. Christo Lombaard, "Getting texts to talk. A critical analysis of attempts at eliciting contemporary messages from ancient holy books as exercises in religious communication", *Ned. Geref. Teologiese Tydskrif* 55/1 (2012): 205-225.

⁸ The self-implicatory nature of the discipline is well established – Elizabeth Liebert, "The role of practice in the study of Christian Spirituality", *Spiritus* 2/1 (2002): 30-49; cf. Kourie, "Weaving colourful threads", 3. Even though this communicative existential liveliness is not unique to the Spirituality disciplines, it is more pronounced, constituted in a different way, and is more acknowledged than in most other disciplines.

The image of *tapestry* has become popular of late with reference to the return to religion: cf. e.g. Hans Boersma, *Heavenly participation. The weaving of a sacramental tapestry* (Grand Rapids: William B Eerdmans, 2011),

The latter may, to expand on it somewhat, be described as sensing the divine encounter thrice removed⁹: 1.) the initial encounter in for instance a mystic experience, as directly-experienced divine communicative event; 2.) written down by the person involved, as relayed communicative event¹⁰; 3.) recouped in the Kourie text for its readers to gain a sense of the mystic event, indirectly, though not remotely; rather at a kind of familial distance. This sense is conveyed also in her methodological works, as these distill a wide range of what has here been numbered 1 and 2. The third, though different from the prior two, academically enabling communicative event, should not be understood as of a lesser third-order importance. Though different than its enabling events in this chain of spiritual communication, its familiarly distanced nature renders it no less authentic, combining as in all mystic instances various impulses which together contextually¹¹ constitute a transformative¹² experience¹³. This is one's experience also when reading Kourie.

The reason for the latter is that Kourie's spirituality is carried over in her academic work too. One senses, implicitly and engagingly, that the Holy cannot be found "out there", abstractly, with Kourie; rather, the Divine is experienced "in here" – an aspect of inner transformation she distinguishes in the biblical¹⁴ and the mystic¹⁵ authors.

popularised most prominently in South Africa by Jaco Kruger, "A Catholic-Protestant Future? – The Confessions of a Lapsed Protestant", public lecture at St Augustine College of South Africa, Johannesburg, 19 November 2014.

⁹ This draws indirectly on the work of Hennie Pieterse, *Praktiese Teologie as Kommunikatiewe Handelingsteorie* (Pretoria: RGN-Uitgewers, 1993).

¹⁰ According to Don Cupitt, *Mysticism after modernity* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1988), 61, all mysticism is written, which is accurate in the sense that it is only the writing that is bequeathed us from the initial mystic encounter as "directly-experienced divine communicative event", as it was called above, but that does not cover the full experience, namely of the initial event – Christo Lombaard, "Mysticism and/in the Old Testament: Methodological orientation and a textual example", *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 71/1 (2015): 1 and more fully considered, David Biernot and Christo Lombaard, "Religious Experience in the Current Theological Discussion and in the Church Pew", in *Reformation, Transformation and Change Agency* eds by Erna Oliver and Willem Oliver (Pretoria, Unisa Pess, 2016, forthcoming); cf. Agne Budriunaite, "Investigation into mysticism: Limits and possibilities", in *Spirituality in the 21st century: Explorations* eds. John Hochheimer and William Schmidt (Oxford: Inter-Disciplinary Press, 2013), 39–62 – nor the vicarious experience mentioned here.

¹¹ Mysticism too is foundationally determined by context, against the earlier academic sense that mystic experiences occur phenomenologically more or less "synonymously" across religious borders – Wesley Wildman, *Religious and spiritual experiences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 13.

Such contextuality is explored by Kourie in relation to her adopted continent in Celia Kourie, "Christian Spirituality in Africa: African Traditional Religion and the Spirituality of the African Initiated Churches", in *The Bloomsbury Guide to Christian Spirituality*, eds Peter Tyler and Richard Woods, 273–282 (London: New York: Bloomsbury, 2012).

¹² Transformation will always remain one of the key themes in Spirituality Studies – cf. e.g. Kourie, "Spirituality and the university", 166–169; Celia Kourie, "Transformative Symbolism in the New Testament", *Myth and Symbol* 3 (1998): 3–24; Celia Kourie, "Myth and Mysticism", in *Myth and Interdisciplinary Studies*, ed. Michel Clasquin, 109–131 (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1993).

¹³ Perhaps the key difference between Christian Spirituality and the other disciplines on the theological encyclopaedia, is the focus on experience. On the latter, from the Kourie circle, see Celia Kourie and Trevor Ruthenberg, "Experience: Its significance in contemporary Christian spirituality", *Alternation* (2009): 177–198 and Stephan Pretorius, "Understanding spiritual experience in Christian Spirituality", in *The Spirit that empowers. Perspectives on spirituality. Acta Theologica Supplementum* 11, eds Pieter de Villiers, Celia Kourie and Christo Lombaard, 147–165 (Bloemfontein: University of the Free State Press, 2008); also Kourie, "Weaving colourful threads", 6. Classically, see William James, *The varieties of religious experience. A study in human nature* (Philadelphia: The Pennsylvania State University, 2002 [1902]) and Rudolph Otto, *The idea of the holy: an inquiry into the non-rational factor in the idea of the divine and its relation to the rational* (second edition; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1923), from Rudolph Otto, *Das Heilige: über das Irrationale in der Idee des Göttlichen und sein Verhältnis zum Rationalen* (Breslau: Trewendt & Granier, 1917).

¹⁴ Cf. Celia Kourie, *En Christō in Ephesians*. MTh dissertation (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1980); Celia Kourie, "A Mystical Reading of Paul", *Scriptura* 101 (2009): 235–245.

¹⁵ Cf. Celia Kourie, Elizabeth Catez of the Trinity, 1880–1906: an interpretation of her mysticism. DTh dissertation (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1990); Celia Kourie, "Elisabeth Catez (1880–1906): A Mystic for the 21st

Examples from her work demonstrates this understanding by Kourie, with her train of thought here retraced representatively across various of her publications.

In general, as a starting point, Kourie¹⁶ namely agrees with her contemporaries¹⁷ on the inner transformation found with the biblical authors:

Schneiders offers three distinct meanings of the term ‘biblical spirituality’: firstly ‘spiritualities that come to expression in the Bible’, secondly, ‘a pattern of Christian life deeply imbued with the spirituality(ies) of the Bible’ and thirdly, ‘a transformative process of personal and communal engagement with the biblical text’ (Schneiders 1999:135-136; cf Donahue 2006:82). Working, therefore, between two poles, namely, a ‘reading of the biblical text that is faithful to its historical and literary context’ and ‘a realization that this is a sacred text, which leads to human transformation’ avoids a ‘distanced historicism ... (and) an ungrounded piety’ (Donahue 2006:83). Thus, in the words of Thurston (2005:68):

The pertinence of the New Testament texts for contemporary spirituality ... is not in static norms set down for future generations to follow, but in the witness they give to a cosmic dynamic... The Prime Mover of the universe ... is actively in love with us, seeking us out, extending to us the divine embrace. As both the New Testament and Christian history attest, some Christians dance into it, some run, some stumble, some fall headlong. The journey there is as individuated as one’s DNA. But then, as now, the basic movement of Christian spirituality is toward those extended, and wounded, arms. And it will ever be thus.

Hence¹⁸:

A mystical hermeneutic of scripture is one in which a direct experience of God, or Ultimate Reality, or the One is the end result. The difficulty of trying to express the inexpressible, to put into language that which is totally beyond language and even beyond thought, cannot be overestimated. Nevertheless this does not deter mystics of all traditions from attempting to describe their experience and to articulate its reality. In spite of the ineffability of the experience itself, mystics offer an array of texts in which the experience and its meaning are described. An interesting facet of a mystical reading of scripture is that whilst in certain cases, mysticism is clearly seen as an alternative to organised religion, on the other hand, there are telling examples of mystical experiences that resonate with the mystic’s religious tradition. In the latter case, there is a linkage of personal experience with revealed truth, in which what was known and described in the scriptures is experienced personally. A mystical reading of scripture witnesses to the life-giving power of the texts. The text breaks the spell of previously-held presuppositions, correcting and revising established views, and thus provoking a new self-

Century”, *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* XXIV (2008): 121-140; Celia Kourie, “Clare of Assisi (c1193-1253): mystical luminary”, *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 38/1 (2012): 147-163.

¹⁶ In Kourie, “A Mystical Reading of Paul”, 237.

¹⁷ Here drawing on Sandra Schneiders, “Biblical Spirituality: Life, Literature and Learning”, in *Doors of Understanding: Conversations in Global Spirituality in Honor of Ewert Cousins* ed. Steven Chase, 51-76 (Quincy, Illinois: Franciscan Press, 1999); John Donahue, “The Quest for Biblical Spirituality”, in *Exploring Christian Spirituality. Essays in Honor of Sandra M. Schneiders* eds Bruce Lescher and Elizabeth Liebert, 73-97 (New York: Paulist Press, 2006); and Bonnie Thurston, “The New Testament in Christian Spirituality”, in *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality* ed. Arthur Holder, 55-70 (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005).

¹⁸ Celia Kourie, “Reading Scripture through a mystical lens”, in *The Spirit that Inspires. Perspectives on Biblical Spirituality. Acta Theologica Supplementum 15*, eds Pieter de Villiers and Lloyd Pietersen, 141 (Bloemfontein: University of the Free State Press, 2011).

understanding, effecting transmutation of character and daily life. A mystical hermeneutic therefore concentrates more on the synchronic aspect of the text, rather than historical, linear, or mechanistic considerations. It can be classified as an *immanent hermeneutic*. The text is now more readily acknowledged as a mediation of meaning which takes place as event in the reader and provides as it were a “door” between different dimensions of consciousness. Often the journey into new dimensions necessitates entering into the silence, the void – the inexpressible. Word and silence are irrevocably intertwined. In the light of the fore-going, the thought of Paul will now be briefly examined through a mystical lens.

This translates, related to Paul¹⁹, to the following insights:

In-Christ, or some cognate expression occurs 164 times in Paul’s writings and it is my contention that this succinct phrase elucidates the core of Paul’s mystical thought. This is clearly demarcated in Paul’s well-known articulation of union with the risen and glorified Lord: ‘*I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me*’ (Gal 2:20). It can be seen as a crucial hermeneutical principle, by means of which the other major tenets of Paul’s teaching, such as reconciliation, salvation, eschatology, ecclesiology, etc., can be understood. The prominence given to this expression is itself an indication of the importance that Paul attributes to this concept. Clearly, Paul uses the expression with a certain flexibility, for example, in certain cases ‘in-Christ’ simply denotes ‘Christian’ (Rom 16:3; 16:9-10; 1Cor 4:10; Gal 1:22). In addition, ecclesiological, eschatological, and corporate interpretations have been assigned to the phrase.

Drawing on the standard insight in Spirituality Studies that the spiritual, and along with it the peak experience of mysticism²⁰, is no esoteric matter concerned with only the other-worldly, Kourie continues²¹:

Of crucial relevance is the fact that Paul’s mystical being ‘in-Christ’ is a practical reality; it encompasses the daily vicissitudes of life. Therefore, Christ-mysticism for Paul is not characterized by lofty peaks of spiritual excitement and ecstasy, visions and revelations, although these are not totally absent. However, in accord with the major mystical wisdom traditions, these are not seen to comprise the essence of mysticism. Paul’s mysticism is typified by self-giving love, by the cross: it is union with Christ in his suffering, death and resurrection (Dunn 1977:195). For a follower of Christ, suffering is unavoidable, since the Christian belief runs counter to the aspirations and ideals of the world. However, in Christ, spiritual fruitfulness is possible even amidst immense suffering. Paul’s experience of suffering, especially in Corinth, led to the understanding that human weakness is not an obstacle for God; on the contrary, it provides the ambience for divine activity (2 Cor 11: 23-33). This leads to his doctrine of power in weakness (2 Cor 4:7-11). Paul’s own afflictions are presented as a didactic model in several instances: he carries death in his body so that the life of Jesus can be manifested (2 Cor 4:10); he suffers to bring comfort to the Corinthians in order that they in turn might suffer and share in Christ’s suffering (2 Cor 1:5); he commends the Philippians for suffering as an example to their opponents (Phil 1:29-30) and

¹⁹ Quoted here from Kourie, “A Mystical Reading of Paul”, 241.

²⁰ See e.g. Kourie, “Mystical Consciousness in an Interspiritual Age”, 609-620.

²¹ Kourie, “A Mystical Reading of Paul”, 242, here drawing on James Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1977).

the Thessalonians for following his example in suffering. Such suffering is not in vain, but leads to transformation and new life.

From these and other works by Kourie her thoughts on this matter may be summarised as: the divine may be sensed through the holy writings or through the writings of holy people; the direct encounter of these authors with God may be encountered by their readers too; this does not amount to a singleminded other-worldliness; the whole touches these writers in their lives and their readers in their lives in practical ways.

This is her central contribution on understanding these figures²², yet it is palpable in her own spirituality too²³, inevitably seeping through "between the lines" of her work, overwhelmingly. Careful prose and fine methodological poise effect in her contributions exactly the opposite of what one could perhaps expect from such scholarship, to be dry. Reading Kourie is, rather, an engagingly warm experience. This, precisely because of her refined sense of the spiritual "seeping through", nourishing her readers. Reading Kourie not only informs, but forms. Her *Leitwort* in her writings is "deep", a term that remains unexplained, and should remain so²⁴, because it points to the inexplicable, and more directly to the experience thereof – which itself lies beyond words, both phenomenologically²⁵ and historically²⁶, yet

²² The development of Kourie's thoughts can be traced as she moves between mysticism in the Bible and with the mystics, on to broader reflections on the former and the latter. Footnotes 13 and 14 note her work mysticism in the Bible and with the mystics, respectively. Her work in this regard has been noted with appreciation in both fields, locally and internationally – see e.g. Pieter de Villiers, "Turbulent Times and Golden Years: The First Twenty Five Years of the New Testament Society of South Africa (1965-1990)", *Neotestamentica* 39/1 (2005): 95, 103; Michael O'Sullivan, "Spiritual capital and the turn to spirituality", in *Spiritual capital. Spirituality in practice in Christian perspective*, eds Michael O'Sullivan and Bernadette Flanagan, 43-59 (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012).

As to the "broader reflections" mentioned, see Kourie, "Reading Scripture through a mystical lens", 132–153 and Celia Kourie, "Mysticism: A survey of recent issues", *Journal for the Study of Religion* 5/2 (1992): 83–103.

²³ Which is, additionally, characterised by an openness to the interreligious or the interspiritual – most pronounced in Celia Kourie, "Crossing boundaries: the way of interspirituality" *Religion & Theology* 18/1–2 (2011): 10–31, but in various ways also present related to the New Testament and to mysticism – cf. respectively e.g. Celia Kourie, "New Testament Scholarship on the Threshold of the Third Millennium", *Religion & Theology* 2/2 (1995): 171–178 and Celia Kourie, "Mysticism: a way of unknowing", in *The Spirit that empowers. Perspectives on spirituality. Acta Theologica Supplementum* 11, eds Pieter de Villiers, Celia Kourie and Christo Lombard, 59–75. Bloemfontein: University of the Free State Press, 2008. This "openness to the interreligious or the interspiritual" should not be understood as being in any way opposed to either the Christian community or to the everydayness of the experience of faith, as demonstrated respectively in Celia Kourie. "Mysticism: gift for the church", *Neotestamentica* 32/2 (1998): 433–455 and Celia Kourie, "Towards a spirituality of the ordinary", paper read at the *Ecumenical Pastoral Institute in Cape Town* (EPIC) meeting at the University of Pretoria, 23 March 2001.

²⁴ All scholarly / scientific language reaches a point of metaphor and allusion, which assumes an informed readership and, importantly, requires a sympathetic reading for the sake of contextual understanding, before critical engagement commences. Such initially sympathetic understanding seems sadly lacking as much in "reading against the grain" approaches in Bible exegesis as in dismissive pronouncements on mysticism. Kourie's appreciative readings of mystic figures in the Bible and in history (respectively noted in footnotes 13 and 14 above) illustrates well the value of sympathetic readings on which to build academic analyses. Moreover, in formulating at the margins of human understanding, and further, requires language that "pushes the boundaries" (– for once, this clichéd expression is apt). For two reasons, Christian Spirituality being a relatively new discipline and the nature of its field of enquiry – the Great Beyond and the Deep Within – such a scholarly "language game" is natural.

²⁵ The paradox of the spiritual / mystic experience remains that it is so overwhelmingly real, all-consumingly concrete that it supersedes all of "usual" reality; yet it cannot be formulated, recaptured within this reality. This paradox should not be surprising, though, since it deals, after all, with the divine, which lies beyond us, always. Reality here is not understood naively, nor as solely socially constructed, but along the lines of neo-realism – cf. Dudley Schreiber, "On the epistemology of postmodern spirituality", *Verbum et Ecclesia* 33/1 (2012): 1–8 – or perhaps new materialism – cf. Peik Ingman, Terhi Utriainen, Tuija Hovi and Måns Broo (eds), *The relational dynamics of enchantment and sacralization. Changing the terms of the religion versus secularity debate* (Sheffield: Equinox, 2016).

²⁶ Cf. Philip Sheldrake, *A brief history of spirituality* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007) and Jurie le Roux, "The nature of historical understanding (or hermeneutics and history)", *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* XIX/1 (1993): 35–63.

which touches us still²⁷. Kourie's appeal is that she entices one to see differently, past the obvious and beyond the superficial; to look more deeply - anew; renewed. There is an authenticity in her engagement with her subject matter that translates into her engagement with her readers that convinces one that *here* is something surreally real: Real. As Kourie writes about this *reality* of spirituality²⁸:

Spirituality, therefore, refers to the *raison d'être* of our existence, the meaning and values to which we ascribe. In this sense, everyone embodies a spirituality in the wider sense of the term; it can be nihilistic, materialistic, humanistic, or religious. Its referents can just as much be power, success, money, sex, pleasure, or a way of life oriented around an ultimate reality and meaning which transcends ego- orientation (Griffin 1988:1). Spirituality is an 'innate human characteristic'; the human spirit is 'human consciousness, a constitutive (fundamental) dimension' of being human (Perrin 2007:20, 21). Therefore, it is a reality that we all share:

Spirituality, whether or not it is linked to a belief in God, struggles with the mystery of the deep questions around the meaning of human life. The human spirit remains open to the search for authentic truth within the varied experiences of life, establishes normative values, exercises reasoned judgment, and involves the entire human being on the path to self-determination'. (Perrin 2007:20)

These senses of depth, authenticity and reality become more pronounced over time in Kourie's work, but are already present in her dissertations²⁹. However, the maturity of scholarship attained not only through her lived spirituality³⁰ but also through her lived academia show most engagingly when she later writes about her subject, and *writes* the subject.

The intellectual space she created for herself by establishing Christian Spirituality as a discipline in own right at the University of South Africa (Unisa)³¹, reflects Kourie being true to her intellectual self, sensing the changing tides of our time³². At the same time, she had by such institutional initiatives³³ created a legacy for all of us who have benefitted from working in this discipline at Unisa³⁴. In many ways –

²⁷ The "familial" metaphor as cross-generational linkage suggested above...

²⁸ Quoting here from Kourie, "Weaving colourful threads", 2, in which she draws on David Griffin, *Spirituality and society: Postmodern visions* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1988) and especially on David Perrin, *Studying Christian spirituality* (London: Routledge, 2007).

²⁹ Kourie, *En Christō* in Ephesians; Kourie, Elizabeth Catez of the Trinity.

³⁰ On this central concept related to Biblical Spirituality, cf. Huub Welzen, "Contours of Biblical Spirituality as a Discipline", in *The Spirit that Inspires. Perspectives on Biblical Spirituality. Acta Theologica Supplementum 15* eds Pieter de Villiers and Lloyd Pietersen, 37–60. Bloemfontein: University of the Free State Press, 2011.

³¹ Kourie, "Teaching spirituality at Unisa", 17-31; the roles in this of the then dean of the Faculty of Theology at Unisa, Klippies Kritzinger and of her doctoral supervisor and colleague Kobus Krüger, must be stressed. On the dynamics of Christian Spirituality as university subject at a distance education university, see Christo Lombaard, "E-soteric learning? When technology and humanity are blended: teaching spirituality electronically. Perspectives from an African mega-university", in *INTED2015 Proceedings: 9th International Technology, Education and Development Conference Madrid, Spain; 2-4 March 2015* (Madrid: IATED, 2015) / <http://library.iated.org/view/LOMBAARD2015ESO>, in which the conclusion is reached that a discipline such as Christian Spirituality has much to contribute to the institution of the university too, in remaining a true university, rather than one of its less able derivatives.

³² Celia Kourie, "The 'turn' to spirituality", in *The Spirit that moves. Orientation and issues in spirituality. Acta Theologia Supplementum 8*, eds Pieter de Villiers, Celia Kourie and Christo Lombaard, 19-38 (Bloemfontein: University of the Free State Press, 2006).

³³ Kourie also played a leadership role in establishing SPIRASA, the Spirituality Association of South Africa. Her co-editorship of the most substantial work on Christian Spirituality in South Africa is further evidence of the academic direction she has provided in her field: Celia Kourie and Louise Kretzschmar (eds), *Christian Spirituality in South Africa* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2000).

³⁴ Cf. Christo Lombaard, "'Let's get Together and Feel All Right' (Bob Marley – 'One Love'): A Response to Prof. Dirk van der Merwe": 3, <http://hdl.handle.net/10500/13541>.

intellectually, institutionally, spiritually, and more – Celia Kourie has been shining a guiding light to our benefit, in some metaphorical ways parallel to what a countrywoman of hers had in another time been in southern Africa too: a lady with a lamp³⁵.

References

- Biernot, David and Lombaard, Christo. "Religious Experience in the Current Theological Discussion and in the Church Pew". In *Reformation, Transformation and Change Agency* edited by Erna Oliver and Willem Oliver. Pretoria, Unisa Pess, 2016 (forthcoming).
- Boersma, Hans. *Heavenly participation. The weaving of a sacramental tapestry.* Grand Rapids: William B Eerdmans, 2011.
- Budriunaite, Agne. "Investigation into mysticism: Limits and possibilities". In *Spirituality in the 21st century: Explorations* edited by John Hochheimer and William Schmidt, 39–62. Oxford: Inter-Disciplinary Press, 2013.
- Cupitt, Don. *Mysticism after modernity.* Oxford: Blackwell, 1988.
- De Villiers, Pieter. "Turbulent Times and Golden Years: The First Twenty Five Years of the New Testament Society of South Africa (1965-1990)". *Neotestamentica* 39/1 (2005): 75-110.
- Donahue, John. "The Quest for Biblical Spirituality". In *Exploring Christian Spirituality. Essays in Honor of Sandra M. Schneiders* edited by Bruce Lescher and Elizabeth Liebert, 73-97. New York: Paulist Press, 2006.
- Dunn, James. *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament.* London: SCM, 1977.
- Griffin, David. *Spirituality and society: Postmodern visions.* New York: State University of New York Press, 1988.
- Ingman, Peik, Utriainen, Terhi, Hovi, Tuija and Broo, Måns (eds). *The relational dynamics of enchantment and sacralization. Changing the terms of the religion versus secularity debate.* Sheffield: Equinox, 2016.
- James, William. *The varieties of religious experience. A study in human nature.* Philadelphia: The Pennsylvania State University, 2002 [1902].
- Kourie, Celia. "Weaving colourful threads: A tapestry of spirituality and mysticism". *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 71/1 (2015): 1-9.
- Kourie, Celia. "Christian Spirituality in Africa: African Traditional Religion and the Spirituality of the African Initiated Churches". In *The Bloomsbury Guide to Christian Spirituality*, edited by Peter Tyler and Richard Woods, 273-282. London: New York: Bloomsbury, 2012.

³⁵ Florence Nightingale was interested in mysticism too – cf. Gérard Vallée. *Florence Nightingale on Mysticism and Eastern Religions. Collected Works of Florence Nightingale, Volume 4* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2003).

Kourie, Celia. "Clare of Assisi (c1193-1253): mystical luminary". *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 38/1 (2012): 147-163.

Kourie, Celia. "Crossing boundaries: the way of interspirituality". *Religion & Theology* 18/1-2 (2011): 10-31.

Kourie, Celia. "Reading Scripture through a mystical lens". In *The Spirit that Inspires. Perspectives on Biblical Spirituality. Acta Theologica*, Supplementum 15, edited by Pieter de Villiers and Lloyd Pietersen, 132–153. Bloemfontein: University of the Free State Press, 2011.

Kourie, Celia. "Teaching spirituality at Unisa, 2000–2010: Some reflections". *Missionalia* 38/1 (2010): 17–31.

Kourie, Celia. "Spirituality and the university". *Verbum et Ecclesia* 30/1 (2009): 148–173.

Kourie, Celia. "A Mystical Reading of Paul". *Scriptura* 101 (2009): 235-245.

Kourie, Celia. "Mystical Consciousness in an Interspiritual Age". In *Seeing the Seeker. Explorations in the Discipline of Spirituality: A Festschrift for Kees Waaijman on the Occasion of his 65th Birthday* edited by Hein Blommestijn et al., 609-620. Leuven: Peeters, 2008.

Kourie, Celia. "Mysticism: a way of unknowing." In *The Spirit that empowers. Perspectives on spirituality. Acta Theologica* Supplementum 11, edited by Pieter de Villiers, Celia Kourie and Christo Lombard, 59-75. Bloemfontein: University of the Free State Press, 2008.

Kourie, Celia. "Elisabeth Catez (1880-1906): A Mystic for the 21st Century". *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* XXIV (2008): 121-140.

Kourie, Celia. "The 'turn' to spirituality". In *The Spirit that moves. Orientation and issues in spirituality. Acta Theologia* Supplementum 8, edited by Pieter de Villiers, Celia Kourie and Christo Lombard, 19-38. Bloemfontein: University of the Free State Press, 2006.

Kourie, Celia. "Postmodern spirituality in a secular society". In *Secular spirituality as a contextual critique of religion* edited by Cornél du Toit, CW and Cedric Mayson, 75-94. Pretoria: Research Institute for Theology and Religion, University of South Africa, 2006.

Kourie, Celia. "Towards a spirituality of the ordinary". Paper read at the *Ecumenical Pastoral Institute in Cape Town* (EPIC) meeting at the University of Pretoria, 23 March 2001.

Kourie, Celia and Kretzschmar, Louise (eds). *Christian Spirituality in South Africa*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications. 2000

Kourie, Celia. "Mysticism: gift for the church". *Neot testamentica* 32/2 (1998): 433-455.

Kourie, Celia. "Transformative Symbolism in the New Testament". *Myth and Symbol* 3 (1998): 3-24.

Kourie, Celia. "New Testament Scholarship on the Threshold of the Third Millennium". *Religion & Theology* 2/2 (1995): 171-178.

Kourie, Celia. "Myth and Mysticism". In *Myth and Interdisciplinary Studies*, edited by Michel Clasquin, 109-131. Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1993.

Kourie, Celia. "Mysticism: A survey of recent issues". *Journal for the Study of Religion* 5/2 (1992): 83–103.

Kourie, Celia. Elizabeth Catez of the Trinity, 1880-1906: an interpretation of her mysticism. DTh dissertation. Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1990.

Kourie, Celia. 1980. *En Christō* in Ephesians. MTh dissertation. Pretoria: University of South Africa.

Kourie, Celia and Ruthenberg, Trevor. "Experience: Its significance in contemporary Christian spirituality", *Alternation* (2009): 177–198.

Kruger, Jaco. "A Catholic-Protestant Future? – The Confessions of a Lapsed Protestant." Public lecture at St Augustine College of South Africa, Johannesburg, 19 November 2014.

Le Roux, Jurie. "The nature of historical understanding (or hermeneutics and history)". *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* XIX/1 (1993): 35-63.

Liebert, Elizabeth. "The role of practice in the study of Christian Spirituality". *Spiritus* 2/1 (2002): 30-49.

Lombaard, Christo. "A Next TIER: Interdisciplinarity in Theological Identity / Education / Research (TIER) in a Post-Secular Age." Paper presented at the "School of Social Sciences Conference", 2-3 September 2015, Unisa, Pretoria, and at "The Interplay between Theology and other Disciplines in Research and in Theological Education" conference, 14-16 April 2015, Faculty of Theology, University of Latvia, Riga. Publication forthcoming: volume edited by Asproulis, A., Athens: Volos Academy for Theological Studies, 2017.

Lombaard, Christo. "Mysticism and/in the Old Testament: Methodological orientation and a textual example". *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 71/1 (2015): 1-5.

Lombaard, Christo. "E-soteric learning? When technology and humanity are blended: teaching spirituality electronically. Perspectives from an African mega-university". In *INTED2015 Proceedings: 9th International Technology, Education and Development Conference Madrid, Spain; 2-4 March 2015*. Madrid: IATED, 2015 / <http://library.iated.org/view/LOMBAARD2015ESO>.

Lombaard, Christo. "'Let's get Together and Feel All Right' (Bob Marley – 'One Love'): A Response to Prof. Dirk van der Merwe". <http://hdl.handle.net/10500/13541>, 1-5.

Lombaard, Christo. "Sensing a 'second coming': An overview of new concepts in Sociology, Philosophy, Law and Theology on the re-emerging religious in private and public life". *Verbum et Ecclesia* 37/1 (2016): 1-6.

Lombaard, Christo. "Getting texts to talk. A critical analysis of attempts at eliciting contemporary messages from ancient holy books as exercises in religious communication". *Ned. Geref. Teologiese Tydskrif* 55/1 (2012): 205-225.

McGinn, Bernard. "The letter and the spirit. Spirituality as an academic discipline". In *Minding the spirit. The study of Christian spirituality*, edited by Elizabeth Dreyer and Mark Burrows, 25–41. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005.

Michael O'Sullivan. "Spiritual capital and the turn to spirituality". In *Spiritual capital. Spirituality in practice in Christian perspective* edited by Michael O'Sullivan and Bernadette Flanagan, 43-59. Farnham: Ashgate, 2012.

Otto, Rudolph. *The idea of the holy: an inquiry into the non-rational factor in the idea of the divine and its relation to the rational*. Second edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1923.

Otto, Rudolph. *Das Heilige: über das Irrationale in der Idee des Göttlichen und sein Verhältnis zum Rationalen*. Breslau: Trewendt & Granier, 1917.

Park, Crystal. "The Meaning Making Model: A framework for understanding meaning, spirituality, and stress-related growth in health psychology". *European Health Psychologist* 15/2 (2013): 40-47.

Perrin, David. *Studying Christian spirituality*. London: Routledge, 2007.

Pieterse, Hennie. *Praktiese Teologie as Kommunikatiewe Handelingsteorie*. Pretoria: RGN-Uitgewers, 1993.

Pretorius, Stephan. "Understanding spiritual experience in Christian Spirituality". In *The Spirit that empowers. Perspectives on spirituality. Acta Theologica Supplementum 11* edited by Pieter de Villiers, Celia Kourie and Christo Lombaard, 147-165. Bloemfontein: University of the Free State Press, 2008.

Punt, Jeremy. "'My Kingdom for a method': Methodological preoccupation in areas of South African New Testament scholarship". *Neotestamentica* 32/1 (1998): 135-160.

Schneiders, Sandra. "Christian spirituality: Definition, method and types". In *The new SCM dictionary of Christian spirituality* edited by Philip Sheldrake, 1–6. London: SCM Press, 2005.

Schneiders, Sandra. "Biblical Spirituality: Life, Literature and Learning". In *Doors of Understanding: Conversations in Global Spirituality in Honor of Ewert Cousins* edited by Steven Chase, 51-76. Quincy, Illinois: Franciscan Press, 1999.

Schreiber, Dudley. "On the epistemology of postmodern spirituality". *Verbum et Ecclesia* 33/1 (2012): 1–8.

Schrijvers, Joeri. *Between faith and belief. Toward a contemporary phenomenology of religious life*. New York: SUNY, 2016.

Sheldrake, Philip. *A brief history of spirituality*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007.

Thurston, Bonnie. "The New Testament in Christian Spirituality". In *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality* edited by Arthur Holder, 55-70. Oxford: Blackwell

Publishing, 2005.

Vallée, Gérard. *Florence Nightingale on Mysticism and Eastern Religions. Collected Works of Florence Nightingale, Volume 4*. Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2003.

Waaijman, Kees. *Spirituality: forms, foundations, methods*. Leuven: Peeters, 2002.

Weber, Beat. *Werkbuch Psalmen III. Theologie und Spiritualität des Psalters und seiner Psalmen*. Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 2010.

Welzen, Huub. "Contours of Biblical Spirituality as a Discipline". In *The Spirit that Inspires. Perspectives on Biblical Spirituality. Acta Theologica Supplementum 15* edited by Pieter de Villiers and Lloyd Pietersen, 37–60. Bloemfontein: University of the Free State Press, 2011.

Wilber Ken. *Integral spirituality*. Boston, MA: Shambhala Press, 2006.

Wildman, Wesley. *Religious and spiritual experiences*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.