

## Curriculum Vitae

- I was born in 1929 on a farm called Hoopwel (Hopewell) in the district Heilbron in the Orange Free State, South Africa, in a family with seven children. My father hoped and planned that I – being his only son and male heir – would succeed him. However, among other considerations, the wish of my mother – based on a pledge like the Biblical Hannah's – that I should be trained for the ministry, ultimately resolved my career.
- I attended the regional Primary School on a neighbouring farm, and the double medium Secondary School in Heilbron, where I passed the matriculation examination with distinctions in Latin, Mathematics, and Chemistry-Physics. In 1947 I enrolled at the University of Pretoria to study theology. In the Faculty of Arts, after three years, I was awarded the BA degree *cum laude*, having majored in Greek, Latin, and Hebrew. After three more years in the Faculty of Theology, I received the BD degree and qualified for the ministry in the Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika (Dutch Reformed Church of Africa: DRCA, to be distinguished from the other, better known, Afrikaner church, the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk: DRC).  
In December 1952 I married Lenie Spruyt, a fellow-student of Dutch origin, whose family had emigrated to South Africa after the Second World War. We were offered the DRCA vicarage in Brits, near Pretoria, where I worked as a temporary pastor while preparing for my MA-examination in Semitic Languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, Akkadian, and Ugaritic) with Professor A. van Selms as my tutor. In September 1953 we left for the Netherlands for advanced study.
- At the beginning of the academic year 1953-1954, I started my doctoral study at the State University of Groningen in the Theological Faculty and the Faculty of Arts. My main subject was Old Testament under the supervision of Professor Th.C. Vriezen, who guided me reading selected chapters from Tanakh and Akkadian cuneiform texts, such as the Epic of Gilgamesh, the Babylonian Epic of Creation and Babylonian Psalms. Together with Adam van der Woude, Vriezen's assistant at the time, I also read several texts from Qumran in unforgettable *privatissima* in Vriezen's study. Since Van der Woude also wanted to learn Ugaritic, the two of us read a number of Ugaritic texts. My first subsidiary was Religious Studies under the guidance of Professor Th. P. van Baaren, who also taught me a course of Egyptian. My second subsidiary was Assyrian-Babylonian in the Faculty of Arts under the supervision of Professor J.H. Hospers, who also taught me a course of Arabic. In November 1955, having passed the examinations and having written the required thesis (in Dutch), *The Use of the Divine Name in the Writings of the Prophets* (within the customary ten days), I was awarded my certificate *cum laude*. In the meantime my wife and I had followed courses in Italian, Danish, Norwegian and Swedish, and travelled all over Europe, soaking up the rich European culture.
- At the end of 1956 my studies stagnated due to Vriezen's move to Utrecht, the Suez crisis and the Soviet invasion of Hungary, not to mention my sky-high student loans. We returned to South Africa, where I was ordained minister of the DRCA in the town of Wolmaransstad, Western Transvaal. During our two years in the vicarage I wrote my MA thesis, *The Authority of the King over*

*Property in Ugarit*, under the supervision of Professor Van Selms, and was awarded the MA degree in Semitic Languages *cum laude* in 1959.

In the meantime we had moved to Pretoria where I started my academic career on 1 February 1959 at the University of Pretoria as Junior Lecturer in the Department of Semitic Languages in the Faculty of Arts. I was also appointed (by the DRCA) to teach Biblical Studies (Old Testament) at the nearby Normaalkollege, an institution for teacher training. This appointment was abruptly terminated when the church authorities began to realize that I was against apartheid, especially when I openly sided with Professor Albert Geysers and Professor Adrianus van Selms, the front-runners within the DRCA in the struggle against apartheid.

At the time, 1962, the church had already defrocked and sacked Geysers on the pretext of 'heresy', and Van Selms was publicly defamed for his stance on apartheid and particularly because he had written a pamphlet on the church and secret societies in which he exposed the mighty Afrikaner Broederbond, a secret organisation of which almost all prominent Afrikaners in leading positions were members. Since Lenie and I took it on us to distribute the pamphlets from our home address, I incurred their hatred.

- Three positive high points that year were: 1) the promotion ceremony in March, when I received my DD-degree, 2) the birth of our first child, our son Bart, in April, and 3) the upgrading of my post to that of Senior Lecturer. I was awarded the DD-degree *cum laude* on the basis of my dissertation under the supervision of Professor E.S. Mulder, *Die onvergelyklikheid van Jahwe in die Ou Testament* (revised and translated: *The Incomparability of Yahweh in the Old Testament*, E.J. Brill: Leiden 1966).
- The last eight years of my career in South Africa, 1960-1967, were marked by the struggle against apartheid, which was particularly bitter in the DRCA, especially after I became a member of the Christian Institute - an association dedicated to putting the evil of apartheid on the agenda of the churches - of which I was a co-founder in August 1963, a month before the birth of our daughter Trudie.

In May 1967, a few days after my father died, I was summoned to appear before a special committee of the church to account for my membership of the Christian Institute. The DRCA had forced me and other dissidents to choose between membership of the church and the Institute. My refusal to comply led to my dismissal as a minister of the DRCA. This happened after the judicial verdict in the sensational court case in which Albert Geysers and the Reverend Beyers Naudé, at the time director of the Christian Institute, had sued Professor A.D. Pont for libel. I acted as their main witness, much to the chagrin of the leaders of the church. Pont was found guilty and had to pay all the costs and the highest fine ever exacted in South Africa. Soon after the verdict, the Moderator made a public appeal to raise money for a fund in support of Pont. That was the last straw that made our position untenable. Together with a number of other dissidents, I left that Church and found asylum in the Presbyterian Church, which awarded me and the other theologians the status we had been deprived of by the DRCA. We organized the dissident group to constitute an Afrikaans speaking community within the Presbyterian church of St Andrews in Pretoria, where I had the honour of leading the first service.

- Because of these events, my position at the University of Pretoria became precarious, without any prospects for promotion. Instead of accepting an offer

to join the Presbyterian schooling for ministers in Grahams Town, I applied for the post of professor of Semitic Languages at the University of South Africa (Unisa) in Pretoria, which happened to be vacant at the time. However, despite the unanimous recommendation by the committee, the Rector summarily blocked my appointment, obviously for political reasons. When later that day I received an invitation from the Theological Faculty in Groningen to come and teach there, I immediately accepted and we left the country. I was appointed as Lector (associate professor) in December 1967 and later became professor, where I taught until my retirement in 1991.

- Working and living in the Netherlands enabled me to devote my time and energy unhampered to scientific study of the Bible and to communicate the results to a broader public. In addition to my academic activities of teaching and research, I considered it my duty to translate and convey such deeper insights to people on the ground level. Through the years, in sermons, public lectures, articles, and books I have always tried to offer fellow believers an alternative to the traditional, naïve, fundamentalistic understanding of the Bible, urging them to benefit from the fruits of Biblical science and to integrate the new insights into their religious life. Some of such publications are to be found on the [internet](#) – see also my [bibliography](#),
- My most important contribution to Biblical Study in general is that I promoted and advanced the understanding of the Biblical writings as numerical compositions. To enlighten my colleagues and the general public, I wrote several articles and my book *Numerical Secrets of the Bible*, BIBAL Press, North Richland Hills, Texas, 2000, also [digitally available](#). A slightly revised reprint was published by Wipf and Stock Publishers, Eugene, OR, 2016 with the subtitle Introduction to Biblical Arithmology. Since 2001 I devoted all my time and energy to the *quantitative structural analysis* of the writings of the Hebrew Bible with the help of a computer-assisted program, to begin with, the book of [Psalms](#), the [hymns and prayers](#) outside the Psalter, and other [selected texts](#), which I published on my website from 2003 onwards. This project, which I regard as my Magnum Opus, was continued with the analysis of [Genesis-Kings](#), the books of the [Prophets](#) and the books of the [Writings](#). Several related articles were published on Academia.edu. The project was concluded in August 2016 with the publication of my analysis of Chronicles.
- Since the beginning of the new century I found time to research the history of my Huguenot ancestors. In the archive of the French church in Enkhuizen, the city archive in Leeuwarden, the VOC archive in The Hague, and especially in the municipal archive in Bergerac, exciting documents were found, which enabled me to reconstruct the history of the Labuscagne family in Bergerac and of Pierre Labuscagne in particular, the forefather of all the Labuscagnes, Labuscagnes and Labuschagnes in South Africa. My quest resulted in a number publications in Dutch, Afrikaans and English. See <http://www.labuschagne.nl/familie/familie.htm>.
- In 2009, forty two years after I left the Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika because of her support for apartheid, I received an offer of reconciliation and friendship from the church. I understood this as a first step towards rehabilitation and responded that I would accept the offer on one condition, namely that it would also apply to the late professor Albert Geyser and all the other theologians who supported him and that the church would in public

dissociate herself from her apartheid past. Meanwhile, in 2014, the church had complied with the latter condition and the Moderator intimated to me that the church would consider an official rehabilitation in the near future. Five years later I received a letter filled with remorse from the Netherdutch Reformed Church of Africa, dated [March 26 2019](#), informing me that all the dissidents of the nineteen sixties, including myself, have been rehabilitated.

- In December 2017 my wife and I celebrated, with our children and grand children, the fact that we have been married for 65 years and that we have been living at the time in the Netherlands for 50 years.