Resources

From the Editor

Although a self-confessed atheist, Isaac Asimov once wrote, 'from my close observation of writers ... they fall into two groups: 1) those who bleed copiously and visibly at any bad review, and 2) those who bleed copiously and secretly at any bad review.'

As the editor of the journal of the South African Theological Seminary, such sentiments resonate with my experiences. I have learned to appreciate the emotional and spiritual turmoil that young authors experience upon the receipt of a critical and disparaging review from a senior scholar. Such feelings of inadequacy are not reserved to junior scholars alone. Numerous scholars experience feelings of inadequacy and disappointment after publishers reject their publication proposals. It is from within this academic context that two of the Seminary's most senior and seasoned authors penned two resource articles that may assist and encourage young academics to enter the academic arena and publish their work.

The first postgraduate resource, written by William Domeris, hopes to assist and embolden young scholars to turn their thesis into an academic article. The second resource was written by Dan Lioy, and it is aimed at those seeking to publish their theses or dissertations as an academic book or monograph.

Taking the Plunge: Turning a Thesis into an Academic Article

William R Domeris[1]

1. The Essence of an Article

The expression 'publish or perish' has never been truer for one's academic career than it is today. This is little consolation for the would-be academics who have yet to publish their first academic article. So, mindful of the challenges, I offer this article as an encouragement to such scholars. Since this is a personal reflection, and not an attempt at a definitive work on the subject, I will use examples drawn from my own writings.

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[1] William Domeris is Anglican Priest who works part-time for the South African Theological Seminary. Bill has a PhD in John's Gospel from Durham University, with degrees in Old Testament and Archaeology from the University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. He has taught at the University of Cape Town and the University of the Witwatersrand and most recently served as the principal of the Anglican College of the Transfiguration (Grahamstown). On the academic front he has published various books and articles including a book entitled, *Touching the heart of God; the social construction of poverty among biblical peasants* (2007). He has about thirty-seven entries on Hebrew words in the New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis (1997) and three chapters on Jeremiah in international collections of scholarly articles (1999, 2007, and 2011). In 2002, Dr Domeris was rated number one in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities (Wits) for his publications, in terms of volume of accredited points over the previous five years.

Academic articles need creative time. This may be very difficult, if you have a full teaching and administrative load, as young academics often have. Nevertheless, for the sake of your academic survival, you need to carve out a space where you can sit and reflect, write notes and eventually produce a fine piece of academia. So, take your diary and mark off a regular time of at least four hours per week, and guard it with your life. For every hour you spend actually writing the piece, you need about ten hours of thinking and reflecting, not counting the time spent reading and researching. That creative reflection, in my experience, is what turns a mediocre article into a good piece of academic writing.

What is an article? Or better still, what is the essence of a good academic article? Very few articles (less than two per cent, I believe) are ever quoted. When I consider those articles which I have read and which have been cited again and again by scholars, several facts stand out. The articles are often quite short (fewer than ten pages), with a single focus, well-argued, and they are original or they represent an original survey of existing academic writing on a narrow topic. Certainly, that has been true of my articles which have been cited. But for your first article, it is enough if it is well-argued and properly set out.

So, step one, examine your thesis for a potential article—an exercise which needs to be done within your creative space. God has given you the ability to write a thesis, and I am quite sure, his intention is not for it to spend all its days on a dusty shelf. Use your God-given ability to bring your ideas into the public domain.

2. Finding the Needle in the Haystack

The first and most critical moment in the birthing of an article is deciding what its major contribution will be. This can feel a bit like searching for the venerable needle in a haystack, especially if it is your thesis which you are perusing. It took me some time before I was brave enough to publish a short article on my PhD, but thanks to the encouragement of others, I took the step (1993).

What I did was simply summarise my thesis and present it rather like a legal court case. There were different academic views about what the title 'The Holy One of God' might mean in the context of John 6. I reviewed each of these opinions and argued for my own thesis, which happened to be closest to the view of R Bultmann (1971), and amplified by a significant article on the idea of agency by P Borgen (1968). Several years had elapsed since I had completed my thesis, and so I was able to add some fresh insights and bring in some more up to date reading.

One has a basic choice when turning a thesis into an article. *Choice one* is to take a single chapter and to revise that to form a comprehensive article. For example, you may have conducted interviews around your topic. Your article would refer to the questionnaires and select some of the trends which emerged from the answers. Or, you may have done an exegesis of a specific passage of the Bible, using the various commentaries to establish the outline of (hopefully) two or more interpretations. It would be sufficient to lay out these interpretations and then to end with a question—which of these is the correct interpretation? I could have done that with 'the Holy One of God', since no-one had done that before. That would mean, that I could then write a second article in which I argued for one of the different theories or

created (as I did) my own view. So it would be two articles for the price of one.

Choice two is to take the main argument and to summarise it over about ten pages. This is what I did with my PhD thesis. It takes courage to revisit a thesis that you have shed blood, sweat, and tears over, but the advantage is that at the time you are probably an authority on the topic and in the case of a PhD, a world authority. It is easier to write from fresh, rather than cutting and pasting, because it allows for your creativity to come to the fore. So, set the thesis on one side and write as if you were telling a colleague about your work.

Choice three is to publish the whole thesis as a book, but I would only recommend this in extreme cases, where effectively you have a publisher already eager and waiting. In my experience that is rare.

Choice four is to use your thesis as a springboard for another idea. So on the basis of my study on John's gospel, the first article I wrote was on the gospel as a drama (1983). I had happened to come across a brief article on the gospel as a drama, and having studied Greek drama in Classics, I decided that I could write a different article, using the classical Greek plays as illustrations.

Whatever your choice, the decision regarding how you will move from your thesis into an article is the most critical decision you will make. I suggest that once that decision is made, everything else is downhill.

3. A Model Article

As I reflect over the articles which I have written, I realise that I have tended to create a pattern or model, which may be worth replicating. My articles tend to have about seven subheadings over about twelve

pages. In the opening paragraph (introduction, but using a catchy title if possible), I explain why I am writing the article. If this is an article based on your thesis, then you would explain how you came to choose the thesis topic—did it arise from particular reading, or an aspect of your professional work? In this way, you draw your audience into the article and hopefully arouse their curiosity about what you are about to say. Do not give too much away at this point—just enough to encourage them to read on.

Under your next subheading, you lay out the existing research and theories which have been suggested for your topic. Effectively, you are saying: this is the problem and these are some of the suggested answers. At this point, you do not take sides. There is nothing as frustrating as reading an article, and in the opening paragraphs you find that the author has completely dismissed any view but their own. They cite other ideas only to put them down straight away without any serious consideration. At this point you want to keep your readers guessing as to where this article will go.

If your article includes interviews, then this is where you add a brief overview of the interview process. You will also need to explain whether your chosen methodology is quantitative or qualitative and what your intention is behind the research. In the actual article, you would need to add comments on the various answers. Please ensure that in your publication you are not sharing confidential material and that ethics of such research have been upheld.

If your article is really a summary of existing research on a particular topic, then you would map out some of the debates which have taken place. It is important to give a chronological overview, so that the reader has some sense of how the debate has developed over time, as well as what the most recent thinking is on the topic. So, if you were

writing on the burial of Jesus, you would be sure to mention the recent archaeological finds on the sarcophagi of Caiaphas and of James, brother of Jesus. If you were writing on the dating of the Exodus, you would outline the three possible theories which are in vogue and include the most recent articles and books.

If your article involves using a new methodology in order to offer a new perspective on a passage of scripture or a doctrine, then it would be useful at this point to speak of how this method has been used and what it is capable of showing. I once wrote an article on Jeremiah (1999), using the method of socio-linguistics. Before I could begin to interpret Jeremiah, I needed to explain what the methodology was about and why it was appropriate to use on Jeremiah. Quite often, scholars introduce their methodology, but then fail to explain why it is appropriate to use in their chosen context.

Now that you have laid the foundation for your article, under your third subheading you outline the evidence related to the problem. I have another section below, where I discuss using the evidence properly, so here, I will simply say that you need to ensure a balanced representation of the evidence. At this point, you are not debating the evidence, but rather presenting a list of the evidence which you will consider. For example, if you were writing an article on the dating of the Exodus, you would describe the archaeological, historical, and literary evidence that has been used in the debate, as well as any additional evidence which you might think was appropriate.

Under subsequent subheadings, you would present your argument in full, using the evidence (primary and secondary) in your defence. This is the crux of your article, and so you need to write with great care and deliberation. This is also when you need those reflective times, to cogitate about what you have written. Using the analogy of building a

bridge, you need to support your argument every step of the way. Do not assume anything. Rather have too many references than too few and be careful not to miss a logical step. At each point, you ask yourself, 'what are the possible options?' and then deal with them properly before you move on to the next step.

For example, in my doctoral thesis on the Holy One of God (1983), I presented the various theories on the title, namely, did it mean the prophet, the high priest, the messiah, or the divine agent of God? This involved a thorough study of the Greek and Hebrew and a survey of Jewish and Greek non-biblical texts, as well as the biblical texts, with the emphasis on the Johannine writings. I, then, argued the case for each title and showed, in the light of John's christology, why only the last title was appropriate. In my article, I could follow the same outline, but I reduced three-hundred pages to about ten.

Whatever article I write, at various points in the process, I like to review my arguments. So, after each step in the chain of argument, I pause and ask 'what are the implications?' and 'what are the possible options or objections?' To assist me in this process, I draw up mind-maps (with circles and arrows) and spent hours studying these to ensure that the logic flowed throughout my debate.

Once you have argued the case, resist the temptation to repeat your views (appropriate in a thesis, but not an article). Instead, draw the article to a conclusion by spelling out some of the further implications. So, you might want to suggest further areas for research or make mention of some of the challenges which your thesis has thrown into relief. Remember, although your work will be scrutinised by others, the mood is generally positive as scholars look for material they can use in their own writings and teachings.

In an article I wrote on Shame and Honour in Proverbs (1995), I challenged some of the accepted ideas around shame and honour in biblical times. I had to be particularly careful because I was taking on some serious international scholars. However, it paid off and my ideas were quoted, with approval, in a recent major publication, with one small correction. As I read the article by DeSilva (2008), an American scholar, I was glad that I had done my homework and been careful in the way in which I expressed my criticisms of the other scholars. I strongly urge that in your article, you show respect for other people's opinions, deal properly with their arguments and using your evidence, and gently agree or disagree.

4. Taking Aim

Once you have your article in draft form, you need to make the next decision, namely, upon which journal are you going to set your sights. I was very fortunate because the Journal of Theology for Southern Africa was published in our department at UCT and I could simply speak to the editor, Professor John de Gruchy. Failing that, you need to identify the likely journals and to peruse the volumes of recent years, in order to get a sense of the type of article that is being published. Fortunately, most journals today carry instructions for contributors which you can follow. You, then, model your article on the journal you have chosen. This means, of course, that you then have to adapt the article, if you choose to send it somewhere else. Some journals are easier to publish in than others, and older scholars will be able to advise you in your choice.

5. Constructing an Argument

For me, the most important dimension of any article I read is the construction of the argument. In the early two-thousands, I spent time in

a Science Faculty department (Rock Art Research Institute, WITS) completing a Master's degree in Rock Art. I found the time invaluable, especially in learning to write for a more scientific and empirical discipline. It was there, also, that I came across a seminal article by Wylie (1989) on constructing an argument. Basically, what Wyle argues is that when faced with a pile of evidence and various theories based on that evidence, you are creating a logical chain and looking for a 'tightness of fit'. In other words, which theory makes the best sense of all the evidence? Too often, in building our argument, we select the evidence which supports our view and we ignore, or underplay, the evidence which supports the opposing view.

Let me illustrate with what is clearly a controversial example. In Romans 16:7, there is a reference to a certain Junia (so KJV and REB), who is described as 'eminent among the apostles' (REB). Since Junia is feminine, this suggests that here we have a woman who is an apostle. However, some modern translations (NIV and NASV) have the masculine form (Junias), which raises the possibility that that is the original reading. The difference depends on how one accents the Greek; an acute accent for Junias (m) and a circumflex for Junia (f). Since there were no accents in the original text, this creates an interesting problem.

Archaeology informs us that the name Junia is found to be commonly used by women in the first three Christian centuries, but the masculine Junias is unknown during the same time period. In addition, when the Byzantine scribes (in the 900s) began to accent the Greek, they invariably opted for the circumflex, and this is evident in the text of the King James Version (1611). So the femininity of Junia seems beyond controversy, but was she an apostle?

What does the Greek say? Can the Greek phrase 'eminent among the apostles' mean something different? Some scholars have argued for a

different reading, namely, that Junia was praised by the other apostles, but was not herself an apostle (Burer and Wallace 2001). This is a completely acceptable argument and so we have two views on this verse. View one holds that Junia was an apostle and that is what the Greek intends, even if it is rather unusual. View two holds that Junia was not an apostle, but was well-known and esteemed by them. The Greek can clearly be read in both ways.

We are at a stalemate and we need to ask if there is any other evidence of which we need to take notice? For example, what did the early Christians think? John Chrysostom (Patriarch of Constantinople 398–407) writes,

> 'Who are of note among the Apostles.' And indeed to be apostles at all is a great thing. But to be even amongst those of note, just consider what a great song of praise this is! But they were of note owing to their works, their achievements. Oh! How great is the devotion of this woman, that she should even be counted worthy of the appellation of apostle!' (Thirty-First Homily on Romans, written in Greek).

Clearly, the Greek-speaking Chrysostom believed the text meant that Junia was an Apostle, but was he right?

We need to ask; does this or that evidence have weight?; should it be incorporated or not? This leads to further questions; what about other New Testament texts which deal with women (in general or in leadership)? So the debate continues, until, finally, we reach a solution which makes sense of all the evidence and not just some of it; and we are able to achieve a 'tightness of fit'.

Evangelicals, it seems to me, are sometimes afraid of tackling the difficult questions and the evidence, which is hard to manage. Yet we,

of all people, should trust scripture and God's inspiration to lead us into his truth. I do not believe there are questions too difficult for us to tackle, provided we are honest with the evidence and are open to God's Spirit.

6. Imposed Limitations

We need to set limits on our work, especially in an article. All too often, we get side-tracked into secondary issues and debates, instead of sticking to our core topic. The wider we spread our discussion, the more chance there is of leaving gaps in our logic. There is nothing more enjoyable than reading a tightly-argued and well-focussed article. I remember reading an article on Bultmann's theory of the Gnostic Redeemer Myth, by a scholar named Colpe (1968). Colpe systematically shows how Bultmann pieced his myth together, from a variety of sources; yet not one of the sources carries the myth in its entirety. In other words, the myth was a creation of Bultmann's imagination. This is a devastating critique in a sharp, focussed article.

For me, the key question is this: is this point critical for this article or can it be left out? Sometimes, we add points just to show how clever we are, or how well-read we are. If it is not an integral part of the logical chain of argument, then leave it out or save it for another article. In writing a paper recently on the poor of the Old and New Testaments, I realised that I had uncovered what seemed to be a new interpretation of Jesus' cleansing of the Temple. This was a problem. Did I deal with this new interpretation, or did I leave it out and write a second paper on the Temple cleansing? I decided to leave it in, because there was an intrinsic connection between my discussion of the Old Testament material and my understanding of the events in the Temple. The two parts of the paper worked in harmony.

7. Master of One's Sources

A colleague of mine once applauded me for recommending to him, 'you need always to be the master of your sources'. I do not actually remember saying this, but it does make good sense. What this means is that you do not allow your secondary sources to determine the direction of your argument. Rather, you use your sources (and the evidence) to support your argument. This does not mean that you misrepresent your sources or ignore the vital evidence. Rather, I am suggesting that in bringing forward your academic references, you do so in an ordered and logical way, which leads ultimately to your conclusion. You use your sources, fairly and logically, to build up a clear defence of your position—a chain of reason, which will stand the test of time.

In constructing the academic support, one step at a time, it is valuable to use solid quotations, at critical moments, in the defence of your position—like the key pillars of a bridge. When I was writing my book on poverty (2007), I challenged the perception that poverty, in the time of Amos, was as bad as in the late post-exilic period. I raised various pieces of evidence and referred to several secondary sources. At the critical moment, I introduced a quotation from an archaeologist named Holladay (1998), who, on the basis of masses of evidence, shows that house-sizes in ancient Israel were basically the same for the duration of the period of the monarchy. By contrast, in the archaeology of the Hellenistic Period, there was plenty of evidence for peasant hovels and wealthy mansions. This was the capstone of my argument.

A good quotation, based on solid evidence, can be a deciding factor in your defence. In the same book (2007), I critiqued a scholar, who was using a Marxist typology to argue that increasing interest rates had led to a change in land-tenure. I quoted Karl Marx (1981) saying that debt, while painful, did not, in itself, cause a change in the modes of

production. So I used his chosen methodology against him. 'Know your enemies' might be a suitable maxim, in this case.

One of the things which I learned from my time in the Faculty of Science was the way in which such scholars reference their papers. Good scientists use far more references than their colleagues in the Arts and Humanities. Nothing is taken for granted and a single comment might have six or seven names attached to it. My suggestion, in your academic article, is to make sure that every point which you make has its support in brackets. In some cases, especially when you come to the heart of your argument, this might mean every sentence, in a paragraph, has its own academic reference. An average of eight to ten references, per page, would not be excessive over a ten to fifteen page article. Try to avoid citing the same scholar back to back, since this creates the impression you have limited your reading.

One of the classic errors of post-graduate students is to refer to several of the major players on different sides of the debate, but only when what they say is in support of the student's point of view. This, sometimes, amounts to a misrepresentation of the writers. Different points of view need to be fairly represented, including those in opposition to your own. Another tendency is to quote from several (even contradictory) sources and then conclude by giving one's own idea, but without dealing with the divergences or explaining the rationale for one's decision. The argument resembles a fruit salad with an unsliced cucumber on the top.

In dealing with sources which are critical of your own position, I have some suggestions to make. Explain the view briefly, and the evidence used in reaching that position. Using carefully chosen academic studies, mount your counter-argument, along with your evidence, while keeping an eye open for cracks in the opposing defence, which you can exploit.

For example, recently I was writing a study guide for TEEC and came across the debate on temple prostitution. There are two views—there were temple prostitutes in Israel in Old Testament times and there were not. The debate centres on a group of women, who were called 'holy ones' (Heb. *kidushin*), and various biblical texts (see Bird 1989). I was arguing against the existence of temple prostitutes and, therefore, was delighted to read one prominent scholar (Hess 2007:323–5), who argued that even though there is no external evidence for these women, nevertheless, they must have existed. This is precisely the kind of statement that allows you to critique a position and at the same time to bolster your own position—your opposition is saying categorically 'there is no evidence for their position'.

In looking for weaknesses (cracks) in the opposing position, I have found it useful to read the footnotes. From time to time, scholars tuck away evidence, or an opposing scholarly opinion, which undermines their opinion, in their footnotes. I read one article, where the author argued for a particular form of land-tenure for pre-exilic Israel. Then, in a footnote, he stated that the one piece of solid evidence dated from the post-exilic period. I was able to use his own footnote to undermine his entire thesis. The evidence was not valid for the pre-exilic period.

By the same token, scholars who read your article will be looking for cracks in your defences. So write carefully and logically; treat the evidence fairly and resist the temptation to bury contrary opinions in footnotes.

8. Choosing a Title

Quite often, the title chooses itself, but when the article is based on a thesis, you do need to find a separate title. It would be confusing to

have two separate studies existing under the same title, even where the one may be a summary of the other.

I find, when I reflect on my own articles, that sometimes the title simply summarises the contents—such as 'Jeremiah and the poor' (2007) or 'San Art, aesthetically speaking' (2005). At other times, I use a catchy title to make a point or to attract attention like 'The land claim of Jeremiah: Was Max Weber right?' (2011) or 'When metaphor becomes myth: A socio-linguistic reading of Jeremiah' (1999) or even 'Wise women and foolish men: Shame and honour in Proverbs' (1995). With the Internet, you need to be careful that you include key words in the title to benefit search engines.

9. Co-authorship

In the Sciences, few articles appear under a single name; but in the Arts and Humanities the opposite trend dominates. In the case of an article based on a thesis, it is common practice, worldwide, to publish under the name of the thesis writer and the supervisor, in that order. The order is important because, in the case of an article on a thesis, it indicates that the bulk of the work was done by the candidate, and that the supervisor, at most, offered his or her editorial suggestions.

The advantage of co-authoring, with a recognised scholar, is that the journals might be more inclined to take your work seriously. Unfortunately, journal editors receive so many badly-written articles, that they may become jaded and suspicious of new writers. Moreover, with the advent of the Internet, plagiarism has become a massive problem and no journal wants to be accused of publishing plagiarised work. Editors, therefore, find some safety in established writers. On the other hand, there are some journals which actively encourage young or

unpublished writers, which means that you need to do your homework in your choice of a journal.

Many South African scholars are willing to co-author articles, provided that they have a final say in the manuscript—to protect their academic reputation. Depending on the amount of work I do on an article, I might insist on being the first author; but most often, I do little more than check the final draft and then, logically, prefer to be the second author.

Along with co-authoring, there is an additional advantage firmly utilised by our Science colleagues, namely, the practice of offering draft articles to colleagues to read and comment. Then, in a footnote at the beginning of the article, there is a brief reference thanking these colleagues for their helpful comments and insights. This practice is far more inclusive than the Arts and Humanities, where we tend to sit in splendid isolation and share only once we have published something. What are we afraid of, I wonder?

10. Your Bibliography

When you condense your lengthy thesis bibliography into an article-length work, you need to make some important decisions. One possibility is simply to include the cited works. The downside of that is you might lose some of the key reference works in the process. So, in addition to the works cited, you should make sure that you add in key writers to your first draft. In particular, you should select the most recent studies in the area, along with a few of the older, recognised authorities in the area.

One of the first things I do when I preview an article for publication is to check the bibliography for works less than five years old; and the books or articles which, I consider, would be essential to a balanced

presentation; that all happens before I read a single word of the article. So, cast a critical eye over your bibliography, before signing off on your article.

11. Conclusion

My purpose, in writing this article, was to encourage you to take the plunge and to turn your thesis into an article. This is not simply a case of writing for the sake of writing, but rather, using the talents which God has given us to contribute to Christian understanding of the Bible and related Christian doctrines. So pick up the metaphorical pen and start writing.

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Guidelines for Converting a Thesis or Dissertation into an Academic Book or Monograph

Dan T Lioy[1]

1. Introduction

Biblical studies and theology students in masters and doctoral programmes often spend countless hours and several years toiling away in isolation to research and write acceptable theses or dissertations. (In this essay, the preceding two terms are used interchangeably.) It is only natural for them to consider how they might share the fruits of their labour to a wider academic readership. After all, the investigative undertaking is a social enterprise in which students become members of a scholarly community.

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1 Dan Lioy is an ordained evangelical who serves in the Postgraduate School at SATS. Dan has a PhD dealing with the Christology of the Apocalypse from North-West University. He is also a professor in the School of Continuing Theological Studies at NWU, and holds faculty appointments at George Fox Evangelical Seminary, Marylhurst University, and the Institute of Lutheran Theology. Dan's publications include over thirty books and scholarly monographs, such as *Evolutionary creation in biblical and theological perspective* (2011), *Axis of glory: a biblical and theological analysis of the temple motif in scripture* (2010), and well over twenty scholarly articles, such a as, Jesus' resurrection and the nature of the believer's resurrection body (1 Cor 15:1–58), *Conspectus* vol. 12; Spiritual Care in a Medical Setting: Do We Need It? *Global Journal of Classical Theology* (2002), including numerous entries to encyclopaedias and dictionaries (e.g. *Concise dictionary of the occult and the New Age*; *The complete biblical library: the Old Testament. Hebrew-English dictionary, Aleph-Beth*).

Academic books and monographs are the established ways to disseminate the results of one's research. This remains the case, even though other popular venues have arisen over the past two decades (e.g. e-journals, blogs, and so forth, made available over the Internet and accessed using a variety of mobile devices, including tablets and smartphones). Junior scholars need to recognise that the process of converting their graduate or postgraduate research into publishable form is neither easy nor straightforward. Expressed differently, it is not simply a matter of delivering the manuscript (perhaps completed a few years back) to a publisher, who then designs an appropriate cover before sending off the unaltered volume to the printers. Instead, the task is often labour-intensive, time consuming (on average, one to three years), mentally exhausting, and filled with uncertainty.

To set the stage for the guidelines appearing in the latter portion of this essay, the next section considers the distinctive nature of biblical and theological research. This is followed by a discussion of the complexities involved in revising one's research findings. Then, the deliberation shifts to the benefits arising from the effort to rework one's thesis or dissertation. Next, a comprehensive, though succinct, cluster of recommended steps is put forward for converting the capstone graduate or postgraduate project into an academic book or monograph. After that are observations about selecting a publisher and preparing the book proposal. The concluding section offers some final thoughts about the arduous process detailed in this essay. There is also a brief list of recommended resources for further reading on this subject.

2. The Distinctive Nature of Biblical and Theological Research[2]

Biblical and theological research is the systematic process of gathering and analysing the information needed from scripture and secondary sources, in order to answer a question and thereby solve a problem. This definition implies that the rigorous study of God's Word is not the mere gathering of information. Neither is it the rote transcription of facts. More importantly, the endeavour involves the interpretation of the pertinent biblical and extra-biblical data in order to increase one's understanding of the issue being explored. The formal research report (e.g. a master's thesis or doctoral dissertation) is an established format to communicate one's findings to interested readers.

Successful research does not just happen. It requires some sort of plan to guide the individual through the process. A good plan will include knowing the kinds of material one will need, how to find that material, and how to use that material. Once the materials are collected, the researcher makes use of them, not in a haphazard way, but rather, in a deliberate and intentional manner. The individual seeks to fashion a report using an approved scholarly apparatus that answers a particular question or set of questions, or resolves a particular issue or set of issues. All the materials gathered are used to fulfill this objective.

A research problem reflects incomplete knowledge or flawed understanding about a particular subject area (whether the latter is connected with academic reading or arises from a real-life

[2] Portions of what follows in this essay are a revision of material appearing in my online course titled, "Introduction to Integrated Research: MIT5301" (available on the SATS e-Campus website). Used by permission of SATS. All rights reserved.

circumstance). The origin of the problem can be either a practical shortcoming involving concrete situations or theoretical issues dealing with the realm of abstract concepts. A research problem, then, strives to gather enough information on a particular topic that has scriptural and doctrinal importance so that the issue under investigation can be clarified and better understood.

The assumption is that by doing the latter activity a greater good (namely, something more important) will be achieved. Expressed differently, by investigating topic 'A', a larger and more important matter will be clarified. In pure (or entirely academic) research, the consequences are conceptual, and the rationale defines what one wants to *know*. In applied (practical) research, the consequences are tangible (or concrete) and the rationale defines what one wants to *do*. The final, approved draft of the investigative endeavour is called a thesis or dissertation.

3. The Complexities of Revising One's Research Findings

Successfully converting one's thesis or dissertation into an academic book or monograph does not just happen. Making the necessary structural and stylistic modifications from one genre to another requires some sort of plan to guide the aspiring writer through the process. A good plan will include recognising the distinctive nature of one's research findings, the target audience, and the intended publisher. It is within this specific context that graduates of masters and doctoral programmes rework their capstone project into a publishable form that others both within and outside the academy will *want* to read (as opposed to being *required* to read).

Having a plan is crucial, but so is being flexible. A plan is similar to a road map. It provides direction and guidance. Yet, it is not infallible. There are times when the would-be author must modify the plan and alter the original objective(s). This change might be due to an encounter with unanticipated difficulties or unexpected variables surfacing in the manuscript revision process. The main point to remember is that the task of altering the capstone project typically follows a crooked path, takes unexpected turns, and can even loop back on itself.

4. The Benefits of Revising One's Research Findings

Given the complexities of revising one's research findings, why would anyone bother to do so? On a personal level, the endeavour can prove to be fulfilling and challenging. For those who are intellectually curious, the tasks of gathering information from primary and secondary sources, organising it into a coherent form, and reporting/interpreting/analysing it reliably and persuasively brings immense satisfaction. On a community level, research can advance the field of scriptural and doctrinal knowledge in a particular area of interest. It can make a substantive contribution to the literature base of data, which, in turn, can prove useful to practitioners in that field of expertise.

The time-consuming task of converting one's research findings to a publishable form (whether the changes are cosmetic or comprehensive) helps the aspiring writer better to understand what one has found and to clarify the relationships among one's ideas. This is the natural result of arranging and rearranging the results of one's research. In the process, one might notice new connections and contrasts, complications and implications that would otherwise be missed. The writing process helps the potential author to see larger patterns of meaning and significance,

and this, in turn, helps one to gain a more coherent perspective on just what is being thought and felt.

The basic task of revising one's thesis or dissertation helps immensely to improve the quality of one's prose. It enables the junior scholar to be more objective, rigorously logical, faithful to the evidence, and willing to question various findings from differing perspectives. Reworking one's manuscript highlights one's desire to enter into a thoughtful conversation with a broader group about what one has done. It says that the aspiring writer cares about what others think and how they respond to what has been discovered. This emphasises a fundamental but often overlooked aspect of scholastic undertakings in biblical and theological studies, namely, it is a social activity involving oneself and others. The academic book or monograph is written is such a way that even non-specialists will be able to follow it without confusion. Choosing to make the discourse as accessible and readable as possible to a wider audience says one strongly desires others to be a part of the work one has done in research.

Interested readers bring clear suppositions to their reading of an academic book or monograph. For instance, they expect the opening chapter to begin in a clear manner with a sense of where the material is going, and why the writer wants to take them there. Readers also require the opening chapter to explain what question the manuscript answers, what problem it deliberates (whether scholarly or practical), and how the treatise addresses the issue. Readers expect the remaining chapters of the publication to be developed in a coherent, sequential fashion. One chapter should build upon the previous ones, and all in turn should help address in a cogent way the primary concern raised in the opening chapter.

The goal, then, in revising one's thesis or dissertation is not just to compile facts about a topic and offer a bland summary or drab report concerning them. It is to engage readers in a thoughtful conversation about a biblical or theological topic of mutual interest. As a result of having achieved this goal in the main body of the academic book or monograph, the final chapter should provide a satisfying and convincing ending to the discourse. This includes stating whether the hypotheses broached in the opening chapter have been supported and making recommendations for further study. Readers want to know how the findings and determinations detailed in the manuscript will change their thinking and beliefs. In short, they want to be told why the research is significant.

As aspiring writers draft their report, they endeavour to accomplish the following tangible goals: (1) to introduce new knowledge or a significantly altered or expanded view of already existing knowledge; (2) to challenge deeper beliefs being held by the readership; and (3) to clarify an enigma, solve a problem, or initiate an action. The greater the shift one wants to produce in the readers' thinking, the harder junior scholars will have to work to be convincing.

5. The Recommended Steps for Converting the Thesis or Dissertation into an Academic Book or Monograph

It can be disheartening for graduates of masters and doctoral programmes in biblical studies and theology to submit their capstone project to various publishers, only to receive back one rejection letter after another. As was previously noted, if would-be authors want to see some aspect of their thesis or dissertation published, they need to invest the time and effort to revise it (in some cases resulting in an entirely new work). This entails converting the manuscript into a form that is

more accessible and inviting to a wider group of readers than just the two or three members of the examining committee who supervised their research. What follows are some recommended steps to accomplish this task.[3]

To begin, the opening chapter will almost always, without exception, need to be heavily reworked. For instance, longwinded explanations and circuitous rationale statements should be taken out. Also, language that is stiff, formal, and pedantic must be replaced by an engaging, cogent, and cohesive narrative voice. As a substitute, think about inserting more personalised opening remarks and stating why the topic is of interest to you. You might also consider recapping how your enthusiasm for the subject arose and what motivated you to undertake your research and writing endeavour. Be sure to explain why the treatise is important, not just to you, but also to the academic guild and the broader church community.

Many graduate and postgraduate reports have an entire chapter devoted to a rigorous assessment of the pertinent literature in their field of study. The intent is to demonstrate convincingly to one's supervisors that one is familiar with the state of the scholarly debate connected with one's chosen topic. Recognise that the situation is completely different for an academic book or monograph. Often, interested readers take for granted that the author is sufficiently qualified to write at length on the subject being exhaustively deliberated in the manuscript. In this case, a detailed, painstaking, and obtuse literature review is unnecessary. This material, then, should be either discarded or reduced to a few succinct

[3] As a disclaimer, in light of the wide variety of academic presses in the publishing industry, it is difficult to make hard-and-fast generalisations here. Discerning readers should take the recommendations that follow with that caveat in mind.

paragraphs. If the latter option is chosen, the material could be included in the first or the second chapter of the book or in an appendix.

Typical graduate and postgraduate capstone projects will contain chapters that are divided into main sections and various subjections. It is common for the latter to extend to two, three, or even four levels of demarcation. On the upside, this signals to one's supervisors that one knows how to logically organise and sequence one's material. On the downside, it results in a composition that is chopped up and disjointed. For this reason, the multiple layers of subsections should be removed and replaced by appropriate connecting statements and brief transitional phrases. The result is an academic book or monograph that readers find more fluid.

In many theses and dissertations, each chapter will contain one or more introductory paragraphs in which the junior scholar restates what was covered in preceding chapters, rehearses what will be covered in the present one, and conveys the rationale for doing so. Then, in the intervening sections and subsections, various aspects of the opening statements are reiterated in an increasingly complex manner. Finally, the closing section dutifully restates the same information. All this repetition, though, can seem unbearably pedantic to readers of an academic book or monograph. For that reason, the compulsion to endlessly backtrack material should be broken.

There are numerous occasions in which graduate and postgraduate students will feel obligated by the stringent demands of their supervisors to include formal citations for practically every statement made in their research project. These citations could number in the hundreds, if not thousands. While they might look impressive to a team of external examiners, all these citations end up being superfluous for an academic book or monograph. After all, the general readership will

assume that the author is a legitimate specialist in the field of study. In light of the latter, unnecessary and gratuitous citations should be removed. In turn, this will help to make the discourse more readable, since there will be far fewer distracting and interruptive references for non-specialists to trudge through.

Drastically reducing the number of formal citations also leads to paring back the bibliography (sometimes by as much as two-thirds). What is left is a leaner and more focused list of works actually referred to in the academic book or monograph. Often, the bibliography will be a straightforward alphabetical list. On other occasions, in order to make the bibliography of greater use to readers, the junior scholar might consider categorising the listings by subject, especially as it pertains to one's research topic. A related option is to separate primary and secondary sources from one another. Also, print and Internet sources could be delineated. In any case, the main goal is to figure out the most suitable way to make the bibliography as architecturally coherent and user-friendly as possible to one's target audience.

The manuscript should be read with a critical eye, and this includes recognising the benefit of thoroughly editing the document. Editing is sharpening a thought to a gemlike point and excising useless verbiage. Choosing one's words precisely helps to clarify one's writing. It eliminates foggy thought, jumbled statements, and lifeless phrasing. It is best to use simple words, concrete nouns, and active, expressive verbs. Shorter, more succinct sentences tend to work better than long, contorted ones. Aspiring writers should be alert to modification, as misplaced phrases and clauses can create havoc with the thoughts being conveyed.

As the thesis or dissertation is revised, excessive amounts of information should be spotted and drastically reduced. Other areas,

where an issue is insufficiently treated should be revisited and expanded accordingly. If there is newer information that is pertinent to the would-be author's discourse, the findings of that research should be judiciously incorporated into the treatise, especially to add fresh insights to the study. Keep in mind that only material that advances the discussion or illustrates a point being made should be included.

Those who are novices at academic writing in the areas of biblical and theological studies are prone to face the following common shortcomings: spending too much time simply repeating what others have said; spending too little time analysing, synthesising, and evaluating the material of others and the data being collected; failing to organise the information gathered in research in a clear, coherent fashion; failing to correct a lack of flow in communication; failing to interact and document interaction with relevant, credible, and scholarly outside sources; excessively using quotes from outside resources (which come across as raw, undigested data); failing to understand that academic books and monographs are not a compilation of other people's views, acting as ventriloquists for the writer; failing to comprehend that many and extensive quotations can detract from the professional quality of a manuscript, and can point to the author's inability to render original work.

There are numerous ways to overcome the preceding pitfalls. At all times, it is important for junior scholars to stay in control of their argument and let their own authorial voice speak for them (e.g. in an unpretentious, engaging, and personal tone). They should include ideas from other sources only when those ideas add weight to their argument. They must also select quotes carefully. In general, they should not select quotations that only repeat points they have already made. Moreover, authors should ensure that the line of argument is theirs,

made up of their ideas and in their 'voice'; yet these ideas must be informed by what other specialists have to say on the subject. In turn, this information should be presented objectively and scientifically, in the sense that writers are arguing from a broad knowledge of the subject, and can support what they say through the well-chosen references they make.

6. Selecting the Academic Publisher and Preparing the Book Proposal

Once the preliminary revisions have been made to the thesis or dissertation, time needs to be spent considering which academic publisher to choose. Guidance can be obtained from one's supervisors, other respected specialists, and trusted professional peers. This advice should be augmented with information obtained from the publisher websites. The pertinent data includes recently released titles that are in one's general and specific fields of study, along with the overall reputation of the publishers under consideration. If a particular publisher has a relevant series of interest, the series editor or acquisitions editor are likely individuals to contact.

Take into account whether a subvention (or subsidy) is charged to defray the production costs (including evaluating, editing, designing, printing, marketing, and distributing the completed work). In some cases, this can run into the thousands of dollars. Also, find out about the marketing and distribution services provided by respective academic publishers. This includes whether an effort is made to display new titles at applicable conferences and getting monographs reviewed in respected journals. Learn what the turnaround time is for the review and acceptance/rejection process of a manuscript proposal (or prospectus). The typical range is three to six months.

In preparing the proposal, make the prose as readable as possible. This includes describing the work in terms that are readily understandable to non-specialist marketing staff. For example, avoid using obscure, overly technical words, cumbersome phrases, and tortuous sentences. Put together a clear, discursive table of contents, a few representative sample chapters (rather than the entire manuscript; e.g. a strong introductory chapter and one or two substantive chapters from the main part of the book), and a series of well-crafted short summary statements of the manuscript's contents. Be sure to communicate how much of the envisioned treatise is done and approximately how long it will take to finish the entire work.

Make the effort to tailor the proposal to the specific publisher to whom it will be sent. Academic presses post their author guidelines on their websites, so be sure to review and follow their instructions carefully. Often, acquisition editors want to know the title of the book, how it makes a significant contribution to the field of study, and in what way it reflects competent scholarship. They want to see whether the manuscript represents a unified whole, how it compares to other books currently published in the field that might offer competition to the work under consideration, and whether the latter could serve as a text or assigned reading in a college or university course. Each of these factors helps to determine whether the project has sufficient academic merit and is economically viable.

Remember that the proposal is a formal way of signalling to a prospective publisher that one's academic book or monograph is intellectually valuable and worthy of being made available to a wider readership (including both scholars and non-specialists). An acquisition editor and the editorial board of the press will want to know why they should publish this manuscript (typically resulting in a print run of only

a few hundred books). For instance, what new discoveries does it present and/or what new information does it put forward? In what specific ways does this proposed publication add to or expand the existing field of knowledge? It is best to remain as objective and truthful as possible. Discerning editors and reviewers can spot when an aspiring writer is overstating the prospects for the work under consideration.

7. Conclusion

Here are some final thoughts about the arduous and time-consuming process of converting one's thesis or dissertation into an academic book or monograph. Begin with prayer, especially for oneself, one's motivation, and God's glory. Also, try to stay enthusiastic and persistent. This includes planning carefully and being resourceful when things go wrong.

Furthermore, allow plenty of time to revise the manuscript for publication. For instance, if it is has been several years since the completion of the capstone project, the junior scholar might have to make several additional visits to the library to update the research. This includes taking one's time while at the library to thoughtfully and carefully access the pertinent up-to-date sources of information. Moreover, aspiring writers should be prepared for obstacles—books that are checked out, online searches that do not seem to work, and sources that are not what one thought they would be. Keep in mind that these sorts of issues are all part of the revision process.

Recommended Resources for Further Reading

Domeris WR 2013. Taking the plunge: turning a thesis into an academic article. *Conspectus*. 15:245–263.

Harmon E *et al*. (eds.) 2003. *The thesis and the book: a guide for first-time academic authors*. University of Toronto Press: Toronto.

Germano W 2001. *Getting it published: a guide for scholars and anyone else serious about serious books.* University of Chicago Press: Chicago.

Germano W 2005. *From dissertation to book.* University of Chicago Press: Chicago.

Luey B (ed.) 2008. *Revising your dissertation: advice from leading editors*. University of California Press: Berkley.