Introduction

It is with a sense of joy and accomplishment that we present this Volume of Honour to Professor John Henry Roberts.

It is also fitting that this volume can be presented to him in his sixty-fifth birth year, traditionally the year of presenting a Festschrift. Since one of the themes on which he reflects in his research is the church, we thought it well to centre this collection of articles around the theme: The church, one yet multifarious—a study from many perspectives. This theme is understood to encompass issues such as: the interpretation of the phenomenon ‘church’ in the New Testament; the forms of the believing communities in the New Testament; the developments indicated by extra-Biblical sources in early Christianity as well as ecclesiological themes from the New Testament. From the contributions it is clear that the spectrum of these possibilities has been covered, and there are various reflections on the church and cognate themes. As is Neotestamentica's custom, the contributions are arranged alphabetically according to their authors.

John Henry Roberts, or ‘Johnnie’ as he is known to most of us, in various ways played a role in the careers or academic formation of many South African students of the New Testament. This is so, among other reasons, on account of his long career at the University of South Africa, first as senior lecturer (1970–1973) and as professor since October 1973. He completed a term as head of the Department of Old and New Testament and also served as acting dean of the Faculty of Theology. He retired on May 31, 1994. During his career Johnnie contributed extensively to the development of the department, formally as well as informally by establishing an interest in the academic study of the New Testament. In fact, much of the current Department of New Testament at Unisa, its infrastructure and conception, can be said to reflect his influence.

Not only inside the confines of UNISA but also outside he shaped the thinking of many colleagues in New Testament Studies: nationally, as founder member of the New Testament Society of South Africa (now an honourary member), and internationally, as member of the Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas. The care and precision with which he approaches his research, and the well-reflected way in which he presents his arguments, renders him a formidable scholar. Even when individuals do not agree with him, his honesty and straightforwardness remain respected. Although it is clear that his ‘first loves’ must be the ecclesia worshipping Jesus the Christ and the Letter to the Ephesians, his list of publications indicates that his interests undoubtedly stretch much wider.

‘Professor Roberts we acknowledge and salute you. May you still experience many and enriching years of research in the New Testament and related fields.’

On behalf of all contributors.

Richard Lemmer
Johannes Vorster
Pieter Botha