

**Newsletter on**

**African  
Old  
Testament  
Scholarship**

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***Newsletter on African Old Testament Scholarship***

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*Newsletter on African Old Testament Scholarship* aims at being a meeting place where African Old Testament scholars and non-Africans interested in African Old Testament scholarship can exchange ideas and information. The newsletter will bring brief notices on research projects and teaching programmes, as well as books and conferences related to African Old Testament scholarship. It will also comment upon research policy and methodological questions. The readers of the newsletter are encouraged to use it as a means of communicating.

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*Newsletter on African Old Testament Scholarship* is (hopefully to be) published biannually; in May and November. It is sent free of charge to African Old Testament scholars and African theological libraries. Non-african subscribers will be charged US \$ 4.00 / NOK 25.00 per issue.

If you know other scholars or libraries that would be interested in receiving the newsletter, please inform the publisher.

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**Not another journal -?!**

For some years I have been working with African Old Testament scholarship; partly at a bibliographical level, where I have tried to see what African scholars in the field of Old Testament studies have produced, but partly also at a personal and institutional level, as I have been able to visit several conferences in Africa on Old Testament or biblical issues as well as a number of theological seminaries and university departments of theology or religion. This contact with African Old Testament colleagues has meant a lot to me. In contact with African scholars and scholarship I have met new and intriguing questions and approaches to the Old Testament, questions and approaches that have enriched my own understanding of the Old Testament as such, but also of what Old Testament scholarship is all about.

As a westerner interested in African Old Testament scholarship it is my impression that the present contact between African and western Old

Testament scholarship is at a minimum. I regret this, as I sincerely believe both parts would benefit from a closer interaction. Western scholars would surely benefit from a closer contact with their African colleagues and their experience of a contextual reading of the Old Testament. And African scholars would probably also benefit from a closer contact with their western colleagues and their tradition of textual analysis. However, not only is there an unfortunate lack of contact between western and African scholars, even the contact between African Old Testament scholars themselves is rare and often accidental. In spite of some positive exceptions where Old Testament scholars are brought together for discussion and interaction, such as for example by a regional body like the Nigerian Association for Biblical Studies or a denominational body like the Pan-African Association of Catholic Exegetes, the general rule is still that African Old Testament scholars work rather independently of each other. I have personally experienced a number of times that African colleagues are working with interesting and important topics related to the encounter between Africa and the Old Testament - without knowing that other scholars are doing similar studies elsewhere in Africa.

There is, accordingly, a need for closer interaction, not only between African and western Old Testament scholarship, but also within African Old Testament scholarship itself. The present launching of a *Newsletter on African Old Testament Scholarship* is an attempt at initiating and stimulating some of this interaction; although it of course is a very modest attempt, an informal newsletter of some few pages, published only twice a year, and certainly without any intentions of growing into a more ambitious journal.

Partly this informal and modest expression is a question of policy. The present need, as I see it, is not that of another journal for publication of papers and articles. Such journals already exist; in addition to the vast number of more or less traditional western journals focusing on Old Testament and biblical issues, there are also some African journals showing awareness of the encounter between Africa and the Old Testament, such as for example *African Journal of Biblical Studies* (Nigeria) and *Old Testament Essays* (South Africa). So, the present need, as I see it, is not that of another journal, but rather that of a meeting place, where African Old Testament scholars as well as non-Africans interested

in African Old Testament scholarship can exchange ideas and information.

But partly this informal and modest expression is also a question of money. By keeping production and postage costs at a minimum, the newsletter can be sent free of charge to African Old Testament scholars and African theological libraries. And this is obviously important, in order to avoid that this newsletter becomes just another example of those many publications which a majority of the intended readers cannot afford to buy or to subscribe to.

I believe there is a need for a newsletter on African Old Testament scholarship, and, having discussed the possibilities of initiating such a newsletter with colleagues from different parts of Africa, I have repeatedly been encouraged to do so. However, I obviously cannot sit up in Norway and produce news about African Old Testament scholarship; I need collaboration and contributions from the reader, that is from you! If this newsletter is to function as it is intended to, as a real meeting place, you have to provide me with news about research projects, books and conferences, as well as with brief comments on research policy and methodology in African Old Testament scholarship.

*Ex Africa semper aliquid novi*, the ancient Romans said. This certainly also concerns African Old Testament scholarship! You are therefore invited to let this newsletter be your means of following and participating in the interesting development of African Old Testament scholarship!

**Knut Holter**  
editor

## Conferences

- \* The 1996 annual conference of the Nigerian Association for Biblical Studies (NABIS) has been postponed indefinitely due to the nation-wide strike of the Academic Staff Union of Universities. The theme of the conference was supposed to be "Christianity and economic emancipation in Nigeria".
- \* The 1996 annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion (AAR) and the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) took place in New Orleans, Louisiana, November 23rd to 26th. Amongst a large number of interesting events, we note two seminars from the "Bible in Africa, Asia and Latin America section"; Dr Teresa Okure, Catholic Institute of West Africa, Port Harcourt, Nigeria, read a paper on "Africans in the Bible: A study in hermeneutics", and Prof Gerald O. West, Institute for the Study of the Bible / School of Theology, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, read a paper on "The place of post-colonial biblical criticism in a post-apartheid, post-liberation, and post-modern South Africa".
- \* The University of Stellenbosch, South Africa, hosted three conferences in the beginning of September 1996:

September 1st and 2nd: International conference on reconciliation and restitution, arranged by the Theological Faculty. Amongst the contributions here, we note Prof Niels-Peter Lemche, University of Copenhagen, Denmark, "Are we Europeans really good readers of biblical texts and interpreters of biblical history?", and Dr Knut Holter, School of Mission and Theology, Stavanger, Norway, "It's not only a question of money! African Old Testament scholarship between the myths and meanings of the South and the money and methods of the North". The proceedings of the conference will be published in a conference volume.

September 2nd to 4th: The Old Testament Society of South Africa, annual conference, arranged by the Theological Faculty. Amongst the contributions here we note Me Magdel Le Roux, UNISA, Pretoria, "The Africanization of Old Testament traditions by Lemba communities"; Dr Madipoane Masenya, UNISA, Pretoria, "Ngwetsi: The Naomi-Ruth story read through the eyes of an African woman"; Prof Gerald O. West, Institute for the Study of the Bible / School of Theology, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, "Mapping the place of post-colonial criticism in Old Testament biblical studies in South Africa"; Rev Edwin Zulu, University of Stellenbosch, "Reconciliation from an African perspective: An alternative view".

September 4th and 5th: Colloquium on Bible translation in Africa, arranged by the Centre for Bible translation in Africa, which is established by members of the Department of Ancient Near Eastern Studies. Representatives from this centre as well as from the United Bible Societies and Wycliffe Bible translators participated.

## Research projects

- \* University of Nairobi, Kenya: Samson Gitau has just finished his PhD thesis *African and biblical understanding of the environment*. In this study Gitau has made a comparison between biblical and African (the Masai as pastoralists and the Kikuyu as agriculturalists) concepts of the environment. The aim has been to develop a theological basis for dealing with contemporary environmental problems. Supervisor has been Dr Douglas W. Waruta. (Address: S. Gitau, Department of Religious Studies, University of Nairobi, P.O. Box 30197, Nairobi, Kenya)
- \* Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya: Patrick Kaibung'a is working with a PhD thesis entitled *The translation of the Song of Hannah*

(1 Samuel 2:1-10) into Kimeru language poetry. A central problem in this investigation is how the poetical skill and techniques of the Hebrew text can be transferred into the poetical tradition of the Kimeru language of eastern Kenya. (Address: P. Kaibung'a, Department of Religious Studies, Kenyatta University, P.O. Box 43844, Nairobi, Kenya)

- \* University of Stellenbosch, South Africa: Winston Kawale (from Malawi) is working with a PhD thesis entitled *Ideological / Theological interpretation of the relationship between God and nature in the Old Testament and Chewa cosmogonies*. This study aims at establishing the impact of the interpretation of the theology and ideology of Genesis 1-3 on the Chewa of Malawi. Supervisor is Prof Hendrik Bosman (Address: W. Kawale, Faculty of Theology, Private Bag X1, Matieland 7602, South Africa)
- \* University of Stellenbosch, South Africa: Edwin Zulu (from Malawi) is working with a PhD thesis entitled *Theological critique of the role of ancestors within Israelite worldview and religion and African traditional religions*. This study intends to establish the function of the ancestors in the Old Testament and in the African traditional religions, and the implications for the function of the ancestors to modern Africa. Supervisor is Prof Hendrik Bosman. (Address: E. Zulu, Faculty of Theology, Private Bag X1, Matieland 7602, South Africa)

## Books

- \* Friedmann W. Golka, *The leopard's spots. Biblical and African wisdom in Proverbs*. Edinburg 1993 [German version: *Die Flecken des Leoparden. Biblische und afrikanische Weisheit im Sprichwort*. Stuttgart 1994 (Arbeiten zur Theologie; 78)]. In this book Dr Golka, who is professor of Old Testament at the University of Oldenburg, Germany, disputes the traditional claim



of Old Testament scholarship that biblical proverbs were literary works of art, much influenced by the civilizations of Egypt and Mesopotamia. By comparing biblical proverbs to those of tribal societies of Africa, he concludes that the proverbs of the Hebrew Bible derive from a tribal society - that of Israel in the period of the Judges. (The book can be ordered from the publisher, T & T Clark Ltd, 59 George Street, Edinburgh EH2 2LQ, Scotland)

- \* Ype Schaaf, *On their way rejoicing. The history and role of the Bible in Africa* (with an epilogue by Kwame Bediako). Carlisle, UK / All Africa Conference of Churches, Nairobi 1994. Rev Schaaf, who has been working within Bible societies in Africa and the Netherlands since the late 1950s, and who now serves as editor of the interconfessional missiological journal *Wereld en Zending*, has in this book given a brief and journalistic account on the history and contemporary role of the Bible in Africa. (The book can be ordered from All Africa Conference of Churches, Theology and Interfaith Desk, P.O. Box 14205, Nairobi, Kenya)
- \* Aloo O. Mojola, *150 years of Bible translation in Kenya: 1844-1994*. Nairobi 1996. This is the first of three volumes on Bible translation in East Africa, prepared by Dr Mojola, at present UBS translation consultant in Tanzania. The two volumes to follow will deal with the translation history of the Bible in Tanzania (1866-1996) and Uganda (1896-1996). (The books can be ordered from Bible Society of Tanzania, P.O. Box 175, Dodoma, Tanzania, or Bible Society of Kenya, P.O. Box 72983, Nairobi, Kenya)
- \* Knut Holter, *Tropical Africa and the Old Testament. A select and annotated bibliography*. Oslo 1996 (University of Oslo. Faculty of Theology: Bibliography Series; 6). Dr Holter is at present Associate Professor of Old Testament, School of Mission and Theology, Stavanger, Norway. In this bibliography he has focused on literature that explicitly relates Tropical Africa *and* the Old Testament. 232 books and articles are abstracted, and there

are indexes on Old Testament references, geography and languages, and key words. (The book can be ordered from Faculty of Theology, University of Oslo, P.O. Box 1023, Blindern, N-0315 Oslo 3, Norway)

## **Book projects**

- \* Dr Leonidas Kalugila, previously Professor of Old Testament at Lutheran Theological College, Makumira, Tanzania, now a UBS consultant in Nairobi, is about to finish his book *African understandings of the Old Testament: A comparative study*, and he is presently looking for a publisher (any suggestions -?). The book will include chapters on the study of the Old Testament in Africa, African history in the Old Testament, parallels between the African traditions and the Old Testament, Hebrew words leated to Swahili words, and African views concerning the message of the Old Testament. (Address: Dr L. Kalugila, P.O. Box 21360, Nairobi, Kenya)
  
- \* Dr Gerald O. West, Professor of Old Testament at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, and director of their Institute for the Study of the Bible, has been asked by Brill Publishers in Leiden, the Netherlands, to co-ordinate and edit a book on "The Bible in Africa". The book, which is planned to be a comprehensive volume of about 800 pages, will include essays on the history of the Bible in Africa, reflection on how the Bible has been received and used over the time and in different regions. There will also be essays on the interfaces between biblical studies / Bible readings and indigenous African religions and Islam, as well as the interface between biblical studies and ordinary readers. The relationship between western and African biblical scholarship will also be discussed. (Address: Prof G.O. West, School of Theology, Private Bag X 01 Scottsville, Pietermaritzburg 3209, South Africa)

the 1990s, the number of people in the UK who are aged 65 and over has increased from 10.5 million to 13.5 million (13.5% of the population).

There is a growing awareness of the need to address the needs of older people, and the Government has set out a strategy for doing this in the White Paper on *Ageing Better: A New Vision for Older People* (Department of Health 2000). The White Paper sets out a vision for older people, and a strategy for achieving it. The strategy is based on the following principles:

- Older people should be able to live independently and actively in their own homes.
- Older people should be able to participate in the life of their communities.
- Older people should be able to live in good health and be free from pain.
- Older people should be able to live in dignity and respect.

The White Paper also sets out a number of key objectives for the Government, including:

- To ensure that older people have access to the services and support they need to live independently and actively in their own homes.
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