

BOTSA

*Bulletin for Old Testament
Studies in Africa*

8 • 2000



Bulletin for Old Testament Studies in Africa

Paper edition: ISSN: 1502-0819

Online edition: ISSN: 1502-0827

Website: http://www.misjonshs.no/publikasjoner/ot_afr/

Bulletin for Old Testament Studies in Africa (BOTSA) aims at being a forum for exchange of ideas and information about Old Testament studies in Africa. In brief articles *BOTSA* comments on pedagogical, methodological and research political questions related to Old Testament studies in Africa, and it also brings notices on research projects, teaching programs, books and conferences. The readers are encouraged to use it as a means of communication.

BOTSA is published biannually; in May and November. The paper edition is sent free of charge to African Old Testament scholars and African theological libraries (i.e. libraries in university departments of theology and religion, and degree granting seminaries and colleges). The annual rate for other subscribers is US \$ 10.00.

BOTSA is indexed in:

- ATLA Religion Database, published by the American Theological Library Association, 250 S. Wacker Dr., 16th Flr., Chicago, IL 60606, USA; e-mail: atla@atla.com, Website: <http://www.atla.com/>
- Old Testament Abstracts, published by The Catholic Biblical Association, 294 Leahy Hall, The Catholic University of America, Washington, DC 20064, USA.

From 1996 to 1999 (issues 1–7) *BOTSA* was published under the name *Newsletter on African Old Testament Scholarship* (paper edition ISSN: 0808-2413, online edition ISSN 1500-7383).

Bulletin for Old Testament Studies in Africa

Issue 8, May 2000

Knut Holter:

Editorial: New name, same vision! 1

André Kabasele Mukenge:

Association Panafricaine des Exégètes Catholiques 3

John O. Akao:

Nigerian Association for Biblical Studies 5

Herrie F. van Rooy:

The Old Testament Society of South Africa 7

Victor Zinkuratire:

Association for Biblical Scholarship in Eastern Africa 9

Knut Holter:

Is there a need for a non-denominational and pan-African
organisation for biblical scholarship? 10

Research Note 13

Conferences 14

Book Reviews 15

New name, same vision!

From a very modest start in 1996—eight pages with book notes and research information, distributed amongst some few colleagues and friends—*Newsletter on African Old Testament Scholarship* has grown into a (still very modest) journal that is read by several hundred Old Testament students and scholars in more than 30 countries throughout the continent of Africa, besides even a few in Europe and the US.

With the present issue, some changes have been made. First, the name has been changed from *Newsletter on African Old Testament Scholarship* to *Bulletin for Old Testament Studies in Africa* (abbreviated: *BOTSA*). Several readers and contributors have pointed out that the previous name did not communicate very well; the word “newsletter” was thought by some as too informal, and the word “scholarship” resulted in numerous applications for research scholarships! It is hoped that the vision of the journal is better communicated by the new name.

Secondly, I am happy to announce that four very competent senior researchers, representing various scholarly traditions as well as various geographical regions of Africa, have joined me as an editorial board for the bulletin: Prof Victor Zinkuratre (Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Nairobi, Kenya), Dr John O. Akao (University of Ibadan, Nigeria), Prof Willem Boshoff (University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa), and Prof André Kabasele Mukenge (Facultés Catholique de Kinshasa, Dem. Rep. of Congo). I wish them heartily welcome, and I trust that their academic skills and personal and institutional contacts will benefit the bulletin and its readers.

Let me in this connection emphasise that *BOTSA* is not a competitor or substitute to more traditional scholarly journals, for example *African Journal of Biblical Studies* (Nigeria) or *Old Testament Essays* (South Africa); it should rather be regarded as a supplement, operating at a meta-level. First, the profiles of the two are very different. The traditional journals focus on two particular genres of scholarly communication, the research article and the book review, and as such they are indispensable tools for dissemination of our research. *BOTSA* instead focuses more directly on networking, documentation, and metodological and research political discussion within one particular segment of the guild of Old Testament scholarship, the African one. Secondly, the sizes of the two are very different. The traditional journals are able to publish hundreds of pages each year. *BOTSA*, as part of its networking vision, and thanks to a generous grant from the School of Mission and Theology (Norway), is sent free of charge to African Old Testament scholars and African theological libraries (i.e. libraries in university departments of theology and religion, and degree-granting seminaries and colleges). For economic reasons it is therefore not able to publish more than 40–50 pages a year.

With the present issue we have started the fifth year of this publication. But its vision is still the same: to be a forum for exchange of ideas and information, a forum for interaction and networking amongst African Old Testament scholars as well as non-Africans interested in African Old Testament scholarship. It is my experience that there is a need for such a forum, and it is my hope that *BOTSA* can continue to serve this purpose.

Knut Holter

Association Panafricaine des Exégètes Catholiques Panafrican Association of Catholic Exegetes

André Kabasele Mukenge

La préhistoire de cette Association catholique est à situer dans le congrès tenu à Kinshasa (Rép. Dém. Congo) du 26 au 30 décembre 1978, réunissant des biblistes africains auxquels s'étaient joints quelques exégètes occidentaux. Le thème du congrès était ainsi libellé: *Christianisme et identité africaine: Point de vue exégétique*. La question principale débattue était la suivante: de quelle manière s'articule, au plan théologique, la continuité-discontinuité d'Israël, d'une part, et celle des nations, d'autre part, par rapport au Christ? Les actes de ce congrès furent édités à Kinshasa, en 1980.

Du 31 juillet au 3 août 1984, le deuxième congrès des biblistes africains s'est tenu à Ibadan (Nigéria), sur le thème *Les Actes des Apôtres et les jeunes Églises* (édité à Kinshasa, 1990). Comme on le voit, le sujet retenu visait à considérer la situation des Eglises africaines à la lumière de celle de l'Eglise primitive qui était confrontée au problème de l'inculturation face aux Gentils.

Réunis du 27 juillet au 1er août 1987 pour leur troisième congrès à Yaoundé (Cameroun), les exégètes africains ont réfléchi autour du thème suivant: *Les écrits pauliniens et les jeunes Églises* (non édité jusqu'ici). C'est à cette occasion qu'ils ont fondé l'APECA (PACE), dont le siège est établi au Centre Biblique Catholique pour l'Afrique et Madagascar (CEBAM), à Nairobi (P.O. Box 24215 Karen-Nairobi, Kenya). L'Association se propose d'être "un haut-lieu de la réflexion exégétique, avec une attention particulière aux situations, aux problèmes et aux attentes de l'Église en Afrique, ainsi qu'aux enjeux de la société globale". Son objectif est donc, incontestablement, de faire une exégèse contextuelle, en évitant aussi bien la tentation d'une actualisation proche de l'allégorie, que celle d'un passage trop rapide aux synthèses proches de la théologie systématique.

La jeune Association a, par la suite, organisé les congrès suivants, avec le même souci d'actualisation et la même préoccupation de tenir compte de la situation africaine contemporaine: du 24 au 29 juillet 1989 à Nairobi (Kenya), sur *Les communautés johanniques* (édité à Kinshasa, 1991); du 16 au 23 avril 1991 à Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire), autour du thème

général: *Universalisme et mission dans la Bible* (édité à Kinshasa, 1993); du 16 au 20 juillet 1993 à Accra (Ghana), sur *Royaume de Dieu dans les Synoptiques. Conversion, Justice et Paix en Afrique* (édité à Nairobi, 1997); du 23 au 28 juillet 1995, à Nairobi, sur *Salut et révélation biblique*; du 19 au 27 juillet 1997, à Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso), autour d'un thème qui prolongeait le synode des évêques sur l'Afrique tenu à Rome en 1994: *L'Eglise-famille et perspectives bibliques*. Le même thème a été repris lors de la dernière rencontre à Abuja (Nigéria), du 25 au 30 septembre 1999: *L'Eglise-famille de Dieu*.

En parcourant les différents thèmes étudiés au cours des congrès successifs, on peut relever trois orientations majeures:

- l'effort de comprendre les exigences de l'évangélisation de l'Afrique à la lumière de la Bible. On le perçoit dès le premier congrès, mais aussi à travers la confrontation de l'expérience des Eglises africaines avec celle de l'Eglise primitive dans les Actes des Apôtres (2^e congrès) et dans la littérature johannique (4^e congrès), sans oublier le sujet traité au 5^e congrès: "universalisme et mission" (1991);
- la recherche d'un éclairage biblique afin de répondre aux défis actuels. C'est notamment le cas du 6^e congrès (1993) qui a examiné les thèmes de "justice et paix", à un moment où la plupart des pays africains se cherchaient des voies nouvelles d'organisation politique;
- l'accompagnement de la marche de l'Eglise. On voit ici que l'APECA veut être un instrument de réflexion biblique au service de l'Eglise particulière d'Afrique. C'est pourquoi les deux derniers congrès (1997 et 1999) ont analysé les fondements scripturaires et la richesse doctrinale du concept d'Eglise-famille, concept retenu par l'épiscopat au Synode africain.

Si elle poursuit ses objectifs avec rigueur, l'APECA peut devenir un lieu d'épanouissement d'une véritable lecture africaine de la Bible en élaborant peu à peu la méthodologie. On peut toutefois se demander si le caractère confessionnel de l'APECA ne constituera pas, à la longue, une limite, d'autant plus qu'en dehors des congrès organisés une fois tous les deux ans, il n'y a pas un organe régulier de liaison (revue, bulletin). Déjà, le congrès d'Abidjan (1991) recommandait l'amélioration de la quantité

et du rythme des publications par un système de diffusion représentatif et efficace, au niveau des Centres Universitaires de chaque pays. Mais jusqu'ici, les travaux de l'APECA n'ont pas encore obtenu une large diffusion.

L'APECA comprend trois catégories de membres: les *membres fondateurs*, les *membres effectifs* qui adhèrent aux statuts et qui doivent être détenteurs d'au moins un diplôme de licence en sciences bibliques ou d'un doctorat en théologie biblique; et enfin les *membres d'honneur* qui interviennent surtout dans le sponsoring. Néanmoins, les conférences de l'APECA sont ouvertes au public.

Dr Abbé André Kabasele Mukenge is Professor of Old Testament, Facultés Catholiques de Kinshasa, P.O.B. 1534, Kinshasa-Limete, Rep. Dem. du Congo.

Nigerian Association for Biblical Studies

John O. Akao

The Nigerian Association for Biblical Studies (NABIS) was born out of the desire to create a forum for biblical scholars in Nigerian universities, tertiary institutions and seminaries, to meet and exchange ideas, to disseminate results of scholarly investigations, and to discuss issues in biblical studies in general and those that relate to the religio-cultural milieu of Africa in particular.

As a body it physically came into existence in 1985 when its inaugural session was held at the Institute of Church and Society in Ibadan. The dream of the founding fathers was that as a body it would not only stimulate and re-awaken interest among African biblical studies practitioners in their various fields of endeavour, but also contribute to making the fruits of research relevant and available for Africa in her concerted effort at mapping out the modalities and logistics for an African theological enterprise. Its distinctive trait, determined by the type of goal it has set for herself, makes it imperative for the association to focus mainly on biblical scholarship, and this to a large extent determines its membership.

NABIS meets for three or four days at an annual conference whose venue is rotational. Membership, though open to all higher institutions of learning, is as a matter of course restricted to biblical studies practioners irrespective of denominational label. Postgraduate research students are admitted as part of their orientation and initiation into the academic venture, though with special consideration in terms of membership fees and dues. At the annual conferences members are treated to a number of scholarly presentations of commissioned papers while provision is made for individual presentations on the general theme chosen for the conference. The following topics have been fcused:

[1985	Inaugural session]
1986	Christianity in African context
1987	The concept of the people of God in African context
1988	The biblical conceptions of God in African context
1989	The biblical conceptions of the Holy Spirit in the African context
1990	Covenant in the Bible and in African context
1991	Biblical perspectives to leadership role in nation building
1992	Biblical perspectives of ethics and morality in nation building
1994	The biblical concept of salvation in African context
1995	Biblical principles and moral foundation for Nigerian society
1998	Christianity and economic emancipation in Africa with special focus on Nigeria
1999	Reading the Bible in Nigerian perspective
2000	Current biblical hermeneutics in Africa

In some cases the commissioned papers and other presentations editorially adjudged publishable are put together in a volume of the association's journal. In other cases the association has to put her proceedings together in a book form. This practice we hope to continue, as funds are available.

NABIS publishes *African Journal of Biblical Studies*. The journal is published twice a year, and it has as its peculiar hue the aim of relating the interpretation of the Bible to the life situation in Africa and African societal problems. *AJBS* tries to encourage biblical scholars to look afresh at the Bible with an African insight, and to try to relate their interpretation to the past and the prevailing circumstances of the church in Africa. As the information organ of NABIS it constitutes a useful source material for research and teaching of biblical studies, and also a

reference material to encourage a rethinking and a rereading of the biblical scriptures.

Foreign scholars who share the association's objectives are welcome to attend its annual conference.

Dr John O. Akao is Senior Lecturer at the Department of Religious Studies, University of Ibadan; at present he also serves as editor of *African Journal of Biblical Studies*. Address: Department of Religious Studies, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria; e-mail: akao@niser.org.ng

The Old Testament Society of South Africa

Herrie F. van Rooy

The Old Testament Society of South Africa (OTSSA) was established in December 1957, after the initiative was taken by Professor A.H. van Zyl of the University of Pretoria. He previously discussed the possible establishment of such a society with Professors A. van Selms and B. Gemser. Both of them were Dutchmen who played an important part in the development of Semitics and Old Testament studies in South Africa. The influence of these two, who both taught at the University of Pretoria, and Professor J.H. Kroeze, who taught at Potchefstroom, may not be underestimated. It is interesting to note that Professor A. van Selms was also one of the founding fathers of the Dutch Society of the Old Testament before the Second World War. One of the original members of the Society is still active in the annual meetings after forty-two years, Professor J.L. Helberg of Potchefstroom.

The Old Testament Society of South African was formed by less than twenty members. The society's membership has grown to more than two hundred members from all over Southern Africa, Europe and the USA. Professor A.H. van Zyl was the first general secretary, followed by Professor W.C. van Wyk, also of the University of Pretoria. In more recent years, the society was chaired by Professor F.E. Deist, initially from the University of South Africa, and later from Stellenbosch. He was followed by Professor W.S. Prinsloo. After his untimely death during 1997 Professor H.F. van Rooy of the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education took over as chairman of the society.

The Old Testament Society suffered the loss of some of its most influential members during the last couple of years. Professors F.E. Deist of the University of Stellenbosch and W.S. Prinsloo of the University of Pretoria died during 1997. They were both previous chairpersons of the Society and both in their early fifties. During 1998 Professor J.P.J. Olivier of the University of Stellenbosch also died after a long period of illness. During this period another prominent Old Testament scholar, Professor J.A. Loader of the University of South Africa, moved to the University of Vienna in Austria.

The OTSSA has an annual congress, each year at a different venue. The annual business meeting of all members is also held during the congress. The society is organized in several interest groups: viz. Old Testament Theology, The text of the Old Testament, Theoretical and hermeneutical questions, Wisdom, Poetry, Prophets, History, Gender, Archaeology and Geography. Usually the congress is organized by one of the interest groups around a central theme. The meeting of 2000 will be hosted by the University of South Africa and deals with Archaeology. In 2001 the congress will be held in Potchefstroom and the group responsible will be the Gender Studies group.

A journal, *Old Testament Essays*, edited by Professor Phil Botha of the University of Pretoria, is published three times per year. Members receive the journal as part of their membership benefits. The journal can be ordered by individuals and libraries from:

The Editor of OTE: Prof Phil Botha, Department of Ancient Languages,
University of Pretoria, 0002 Pretoria, South Africa, e-mail:
lombard@libarts.up.ac.za

Anyone interested in the Old Testament Society of South Africa is welcome to contact the chairperson or secretary.

Chairperson: Prof H.F. van Rooy, School for Biblical Studies and Bible Languages, Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education, 2520 Potchefstroom, South Africa, e-mail: sbbhfvr@puknet.puk.ac.za

Secretary: Prof H.L. Bosman, Department of Old Testament, University of Stellenbosch, Private Bag X1, 7602 Matieland, South Africa, e-mail: hlb1@akad.sun.ac.za

Association for Biblical Scholarship in Eastern Africa

Victor Zinkurature

The idea of founding an association for biblical scholarship in Eastern Africa was brought up and discussed at the International Symposium on Africa and the Old Testament, which took place in Nairobi in October 1999. On that occasion a steering committee of five members was elected and mandated to study the idea further and to prepare for and organize a general meeting to launch the association. The members of the committee were: convenor: Dr Victor Zinkurature (Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Nairobi), Dr Mary Getui (Kenyatta University, Nairobi), Dr Joseph Muutuki (Daystar University, Nairobi), Dr Leonidas Kalugila (United Bible Societies, Nairobi), Dr Serapio Kisirinya (Makerere University, Kampala), and then Prof Jesse Mugambi (Nairobi University) as a co-opted member.

When the committee members met in November 1999, they fixed March 24 as the date for the general meeting, and sent out a letter of invitation to the university departments of religious studies and/or theology, and to theological colleges and seminaries in Eastern Africa. Anyone interested in the idea of a biblical association in those institutions was invited to participate in the general meeting. On 24 March the turnout was quite good: about thirty-five people from Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania came to the one-day general meeting in Nairobi.

The first item on the agenda was the name of the association and, after many proposals were discussed, the members agreed to call it Association for Biblical Scholarship in Eastern Africa (ABSEA). Several suggestions were made regarding the purpose of the association, and the following activities were agreed upon: 1) holding annual meetings at which papers will be read, 2) publishing proceedings from these meetings, 3) publishing a biblical journal, 4) organizing occasional activities, such as symposiums, training sessions, etc. 5) publishing a regular newsletter to keep members informed about the association and any news of interest.

As for membership in the association, the following categories of members were distinguished: 1) full members: these should have a minimum of an MA in Biblical Studies or the equivalent; 2) student members: these should have a minimum of a BA in Biblical Studies or

General studies and engaged in biblical research; 3) associate members: those with MA degrees in fields closely related to the Bible; BA holders in professional settings involving the Bible, such as Bible translators, pastors, etc., and those outside the Eastern African region; 4) institutional membership: those institutions of higher learning which offer at least a BA in Biblical Studies and have been credited.

The next stage will be for the Steering Committee to write the Constitution of the Association, which will then be discussed and approved by the members at the next general meeting. The committee members are still those who organized the first general meeting, but the new convenor is now Dr Joseph Muutuki of Daystar University, who may be contacted for any information regarding the Association: Dr Joseph Muutuki, Bible & Religious Studies Department, Daystar University, P.O. Box 44400 Nairobi, Kenya, e-mail: jmuutuki@umsg.org

Dr Victor Zinkuratire is Associate Professor of Old Testament, Catholic University of Eastern Africa. Address: Catholic University of Eastern Africa, P.O.B. 24205, Nairobi, Kenya; e-mail: victor@cuea.edu

Is there a need for a pan-African and non-denominational organisation for biblical scholarship?

Knut Holter

The present issue of *Bulletin for Old Testament Studies in Africa* focuses on scholarly networks: four different professional organisations for biblical scholarship in Africa are presented, of which three operate at a regional and non-denominational level (NABIS: Nigerian Association for Biblical Studies; OTSSA: Old Testament Society of South Africa; ABSEA: Association for Biblical Scholarship in Eastern Africa), and one at pan-African and denominational level (PACE: Pan-African Association of Catholic Exegetes). In the following lines I will make some remarks to two aspects of the experiences of these organisations: (i) their impact on the research of their members, and (ii) their funding. With this background I will then (iii) make some remarks on whether there is a

need for yet another organisation, a pan-African and non-denominational organisation for biblical scholarship.

(i) It seems that the establishing of professional organisations for biblical scholarship, generally speaking, plays a significant role as a catalyst for post-doctoral research and publication. Many scholars have experienced that heavy burdens of lecturing and administration wait for them immediately after they have completed their doctoral studies, and that amidst all this it is difficult to find time for further scholarly development. With this background, the challenge to present a paper to fellow biblical scholars at the annual meeting of a professional organisation for biblical scholarship, and then publish a revised version of this paper in the journal of the organisation or in a conference volume, represents a most valuable impetus to further research.

Some of the organisations have launched journals or a book series for publication of the research of its members, and their importance can hardly be overestimated. NABIS launched its *African Journal of Biblical Studies* in 1986, and—although economic constraints forced it to pause from 1994 to 1998—it has been a major instrument for promotion and documentation of Nigerian biblical scholarship. The first volumes were unfortunately not analysed by international indexing and abstracting tools, but it has now been included in *Old Testament Abstracts* (USA). Likewise, the book series *Proceedings of the PACE Congresses* has specifically intended to stimulate and promulgate biblical research within Catholic circles in Africa. *Old Testament Essays* was originally initiated by members of the Old Testament department at the University of South Africa, and then eventually taken over by OTSSA. This widely recognised journal is not only a major exponent of South African Old Testament scholarship, throughout the years it has also shown an openness for the particular questions of doing Old Testament scholarship in the wider context of Africa.

(ii) The funding of professional organisations is always a problem, and organisations for biblical scholarship in Africa are certainly no exception. Two things should be noticed here. First, the very existence of a professional organisation may have a positive impact on fundraising. Donors will normally find it easier to support a project—e.g. a textbook project, a journal project, an international meeting, etc.—if it is part of an organisational structure. Secondly, as for the costs of the activities of the organisations, the experiences vary. On the one hand, PACE is an

example of a high cost organisation that depends on external funding. The pan-African structure of PACE means that its congresses intend to bring together Catholic biblical scholars from various parts of the African continent, and this, of course, costs a lot of money. In practice, most of the congress participants come from the country or region where the congress is held, and only a few—some of the established ones—are able to come from the rest of the continent. On the other hand, NABIS is an example of a low cost organisation, without such a need for external funding. The participants at the annual meetings are expected to raise money for travel expenses and accommodation themselves, but since most of them come from the same country, it is possible to do this at a low cost level. With a couple of exceptions, NABIS has therefore managed to meet every year since it was founded in 1985.

(iii) The question of establishing a new organisation, a pan-African and non-denominational organisation for biblical scholarship, has been discussed informally many times. And I guess that the question will come up again at the 2000 World Congress on Religion in Cape Town, July 24–28, where the Society of Biblical Literature and the Old Testament and New Testament societies of South Africa are amongst the arrangers.

There is nothing static with regard to professional organisations; they are set up and closed down according to the needs of their members. Later this year, the European Association for Biblical Studies convenes to its first meeting (Utrecht, The Netherlands, August 6–9). Some European biblical scholars have obviously felt that there is a need for such an organisation, although it will compete—at least in Europe—with existing organisations like the Society of Biblical Literature and the International Organisation for the Study of the Old Testament. Should then a corresponding organisation be established in Africa? My answer would be both yes and no. Yes—it would of course be very interesting to have an organisation that could bring together biblical scholars from various geographical regions of Africa, as well as various scholarly and ecclesiastical traditions. But no—I doubt that it is possible to fund the bringing together of scholars like this on a meaningful scale. The experiences of PACE demonstrate how difficult this is, even within one particular tradition.

On the one hand, there is, to put it bluntly, no need for another organisation that only would enable a jet set of very few established researchers to continue their world-wide travelling, whereas the majority

of biblical researchers in Africa would be excluded from participating. On the other hand, however, there is certainly a need for new organisations that operate on a regional and low cost level, and thereby make it possible for all specialists in that particular region to participate; all professors, lecturers and doctoral students. The experiences of NABIS show that this is possible, and the recent forming of ABSEA is an important step in the same direction.

This does not mean that there is no need for a pan-African and non-denominational structure for biblical scholarship in Africa. However, rather than forming a brand new organisation with the ambitious plan of arranging pan-African meetings, one should instead, I would argue, establish a more informal network amongst the existing regional and denominational organisations, a network that could share ideas and even resources. As the Society of Biblical Literature, in spite of its American dominance, still is the only global organisation for biblical scholarship, one could hope that it could take such a networking initiative; perhaps already at the congress in Cape Town in July later this year – ?!

Dr Knut Holter is Associate Professor of Old Testament, School of Mission and Theology, Stavanger. Address: Misjonsvegen 34, N-4024 Stavanger, Norway; e-mail: kh@misjonshs.no

Research Note

Cheltenham and Gloucester College of Higher Education, United Kingdom: Rev. James Sellee (Liberia) is doing doctoral research on “African biblical hermeneutics”, and he uses the Joseph narrative in Genesis 37–50 as a case text. He is interested in all kinds of interpretations—from an African perspective—of this text (commentaries, exegetical and hermeneutical works), and encourages anyone who have something to contact him. Address: Rev James Sellee, 62 Hanover Street, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, GL50 4HE, United Kingdom; e-mail: JSELLEE@chelt.ac.uk

Conferences

Ibadan, Nigeria: The 2000 annual conference of the Nigerian Association for Biblical Studies (NABIS) will take place 11–14 July: ECWA Guest House, Challenge Area, Jos, Plateau State. The topic of the conference is “Current Biblical Hermeneutics in Africa”. Eight commissioned papers will be delivered: “Situation theology as a recipe for African theological exploration” (S.O. Abogunrin), “Biblical theology in Africa and the issue of poverty alleviation” (J.O. Akao), “Theology and ecological problems in Africa” (G.O. Abe), “Biblical hermeneutics in Africa: the journey so far” (D.N. Wambutda), “Current trends and vision in contemporary African biblical scholarship” (C.U. Manus), “Interpreting prosperity gospel in Africa” (D. McCain), “The search for Africanness in the Bible” (D.T. Adamo), “The merit and demerit of theological inculturation in Africa” (J.S. Ukpong). For further information, please contact the secretary of NABIS, Revd. Caleb O. Ogunkunle, Department of Religious Studies, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria.

Cape Town, South Africa: 2000 World Congress on Religion, Cape Town, July 24–28, 2000. The congress is cosponsored by the Society of Biblical Literature, the American Academy of Religion, the South African Academy of Religion, the Old Testament Society of South Africa and the New Testament Society of South Africa. Mailing address: 2000 World Congress on Religion, Society of Biblical Literature, 825 Houston Mill Road, Suite 350, Atlanta, GA 30329, USA, fax: 1-404-727-3101. E-mail: mscolli@emory.edu, Web: <http://www.sbl-site.org/Congresses/IM/2000/2000-IM-Call.html>

Nashville, USA: The 2000 annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion (AAR) and Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) will take place in Nashville, Tennessee, November 18–21, 2000. Amongst a large number of sections, groups, seminars, and consultations, one notices that the Section on Bible in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean will focus on liberation biblical hermeneutics; in 2000 and 2001 the section will address the double focus of (i) the history of interpretation of liberation, and (ii) the emerging agenda of such interpretation for the new millennium. Of related interest are the sections on bible translation and on African-American hermeneutics. For information: Society of Biblical Literature, 825 Houston Mill Road, Suite 350, Atlanta, GA 30329, USA; e-mail: sblexec@emory.edu or you can visit the SBL website: <http://www.sbl-site.org>

Rome, Italy: The 2001 International Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature will be held in Rome, Italy, 8–12 July 2001, in the Pontifical Biblical Institute and the Pontifical Gregorian University. For information: Society of Biblical Literature, 825 Houston Mill Road, Suite 350, Atlanta, GA

30329, USA; e-mail: sblexec@emory.edu or you can visit the SBL website: <http://www.sbl-site.org/Congresses/IM/2001/>

Basel (Switzerland): The XVIIth Congress of the International Organization for the Study of the Old Testament (IOSOT) will be held from 5–10 August 2001. President of the congress is Prof Ernst Jenni, and Congress secretary is Dr Beat Huwyler; e-mail: IOSOT2001@ubaclu.unibas.ch

The following accompanying congresses will be held: International Organization for Masoretic Studies (IOMS): 6 August; International Organization for Qumran Studies (IOQS): 5–7 August; International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies (IOSCS): 3/4 August; International Organization for Targumic Studies (IOTS): 2/3 August.

Book Reviews

Paulin Poucouta, *La Bible en terres d'Afrique. Quelle est la fécondité de la Parole de Dieu?* Paris: Les Editions de l'Atelier / Editions Ouvrières, 1999, 144 pp. (85 FF / 12,96 Euro).

Prêtre de Pointe Noire (Congo-Brazzaville), actuellement professeur à l'Institut Catholique de Yaoundé, P. Poucouta est connu du public francophone. En matière de lecture contextuelle de la Bible, il a publié naguère un ouvrage remarqué: *Lettres aux Eglises d'Afrique. Apocalypse 1–3*. Paris, Karthala, 1997; et un article d'hommage à Engelbert Mveng, jésuite camerounais assassiné: *Engelbert Mveng: une lecture africaine de la Bible*, dans *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 120 (1998) 32–45. L'ouvrage que nous présentons ici est plutôt une réflexion sur l'importance et le rôle de la Bible pour l'Afrique. L'auteur part du célèbre texte de Ac 8, 26–40, la rencontre entre Philippe et le chancelier éthiopien, sous l'action de l'Esprit Saint. Ce texte est considéré comme paradigme de la rencontre entre un homme, un peuple, et la Parole de Dieu. En s'appuyant sur le texte long (texte occidental), l'auteur, sans s'attarder aux questions de critique littéraire, s'attache à la signification théologique de l'épisode pour comprendre les exigences de la rencontre entre la Bible et l'Afrique. Partant des réflexions émises par les participants au deuxième congrès de l'Association Panafricaine des Exégètes Catholiques (APECA) consacré au livre des Actes des Apôtres, Poucouta admet que ce livre biblique pose au mieux le problème de l'inculturation et y apporte des solutions exemplaires.

D'autres biblistes africains ou africanistes avaient déjà été attirés par le même texte. Citons: P. De Meester, *Le pèlerin d'Ethiopie. Essai d'une*

interprétation "africaine" des Actes 8,26–40, dans *Telema* 18/2 (1979) 5–18 ; A. Nkoumbou, *Quand le récit devient évangile. Approche narrative d'Ac 8,26–40*, Rome, Pontificia Universitas Gregoriana, 1993; Atal Sa Angang, *L'Eunuque éthiopien (Ac 8,26–40) ou le Destin de la Mission chrétienne en Afrique*, dans *Universalisme et mission dans la Bible*. Actes du 5^e congrès de l'APECA (du 16 au 23 avril 1991 Abidjan), édité à Kinshasa, 1993.

L'intérêt pour l'épisode du chancelier éthiopien évangélisé et baptisé par Philippe montre que la lecture africaine de la Bible veut plonger ses racines dans l'histoire même de l'évangélisation, car il s'agit également d'une histoire d'interprétation de la Parole. En effet, Philippe relit et actualise le poème d'Isaïe pour l'Éthiopien, son interlocuteur. C'est l'insertion dans ce mouvement séculaire de relecture et d'actualisation que vise la lecture africaine de la Bible. Dans cette mesure, elle est une chance pour l'Afrique, elle ouvre à des rencontres libératrices, mobilisatrices, fécondes.

André Kabasele Mukenge

Facultés Catholique de Kinshasa, P.O.B. 1534, Kinshasa-Limete,
Rep. Dem. du Congo

Gosbert Byamungu, *Stronger than Death: Reading David's Rise for Third Millennium*. Rome: Urbaniana University Press, 1996 (Pontificia Universitas Urbaniana: Varia; 59) (xii + 311 pp., IL 29.000).

Dr Gosbert Byamungu, originally from Tanzania, works at the Ecumenical Institute in Céligny, Switzerland. The book, which is built on his Th.D. dissertation at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome (1996, promotor: Charles Conroy), analyses the narrative about David's rise for power (1 Sam 16 ff.)—from the perspective of seeing how certain biblical characters (especially David and Saul) can serve as “models for life” for contemporary readers of this narrative. The author divides the textual material in four groups: “born to win” (David vs Saul), “Michal's pitiful image” (David vs Michal), “the golden thread of friendship” (David vs Jonathan), and “triumph of good over evil” (David's triumph). Based on a close reading of the texts, the author is then able to present two “anthropological paradigms”: the Saul paradigm of isolation, failure and despair, and the David paradigm of patience and humility, goodness and success.

The book is indeed a rare flower in the garden of academic readings of the Old Testament. The author acknowledges the post-modern context of contemporary biblical scholarship, realising that the traditional vision of a disinterested search for objective truth is an illusion, and he also subscribes to the idea that the question is no longer: what does the text mean, but: what does the text do? In spite of the author's methodological and hermeneutical awareness, the project could easily have ended up in the genres of pre-critical hagiographies or semi-critical “sermons with footnotes”. However, it does not. In constant discussion with contemporary literary readings—and to some

extent also historical critical readings—of the Old Testament, the author has succeeded in creating a consistent literary study which probably will manage to challenge its readers.

Knut Holter
Misjonsvegen 34, N-4024 Stavanger, Norway, kh@misjonshs.no

John O. Akao, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew*. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books, 1999 (xi + 139 pp.; US\$ 35.00).

Alas, there has appeared, after much too long in Nigeria, a manual for teaching and learning Biblical Hebrew in tertiary institutions where such a discipline is taught. Dr John O. Akao's *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew* (1999) represents the fulfilment of a need on the part of many priest-students and the laity who wish to make a career in religious and theological studies. The work, among other things, will satisfy the average Nigerian student struggling to acquaint herself or himself of the skill and a working knowledge of an ancient language which is ever tasking to learn. Indeed knowledge of Hebrew opens a great vista to penetrating into the wealth of ideas about one of the most ancient civilizations of the world.

The work makes a fair attempt to illumine the grammatical subtleties of an old language whose orthography more often than not causes students much stress. Dr Akao has tried to explain with great dilligence and expertise the gradual learning processes of the language. The author's experience and mastery of the language appear uniquely reflected in the manner in which he has explained the steps the user might adopt in the learning process. To my mind, the tradition of providing the simplest possible lines, as advised by Prof R.M. Gwynn in his forward to Prof Weingreens *Practical Grammar for Classical Hebrew* (Oxford, 1959), sets the pace for understanding this book.

The merit of the work is notably visible in the linguistic and syntactical explanations the author offers after each lesson unit. Besides, the lesson-after-lesson exercises are practical aids to an easy internalisation and appropriation of the lexical structures of a language that is otherwise so abtruse in learning and comprehension. In this way, Dr. Akao has made the study of Hebrew rather attractive to African students who wish to acquire the essentials of the grammar and real familiarity with the text of the Hebrew Scriptures.

However, the weakness of this manual is its inability to demonstrate reasonably well the problem of the weak verbs such as עזב ("to leave"), טב ("to be good"), and נפל ("to fall"), where a root-letter impels the verb to become different from the normal type. Besides, this reviewer is suprised by the near absence of a translation advice of English sentences into the line of thought of a Hebrew thinker. Apart however from these observations which do not detract from the worth of the work, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew* is a useful handbook tailored to the interests of Nigerian and African students. It is

highly recommended to teachers, libraries of African universities, seminaries and theological colleges.

C.U. Manus

Dept. of Religious Studies, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria;
cumanus@oauife.edu.ng

R.S. Sugirtharajah, *Vernacular Hermeneutics*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999 (The Bible and Postcolonialism; 2) (148 pp., £12.95).

Dr Sugirtharajah, a Senior lecturer in biblical hermeneutics at Selly Oak Colleges and the University of Birmingham, has repeated his previous success of collecting and binding together essays by different authors. The common topic this time is vernacular biblical hermeneutics—that is a hermeneutic that acknowledges vernacular culture and language as an authentic place of interpreting the Bible, and the essay collection aims at placing vernacular hermeneutics among the interpretive movements of our time. Two contributions are directly related to the African context. One is David T. Adamo's (Nigeria) analysis of how the Book of Psalms is used in certain African Instituted Churches—for protection, therapy and success. The other is Gerald O. West's (South Africa) analysis of local resources for biblical interpretation, with a discussion of the relationship between the academy and the ordinary readers.

Knut Holter

Misjonsvegen 34, N-4024 Stavanger, Norway, kh@misjonshts.no

André Kabasele Mukenge: *L'unité littéraire du livre de Baruch*. Paris: J. Gabalda et C^{ie} [Rue Pierre et Marie Curie, 18], 1998 (Université Catholique de Louvain: Collection des dissertations présentées pour l'obtention du grade de Maître à la Faculté de Théologie ou à la Faculté de Droit Canonique. Série iv. Tome vii) (504 pp.).

Dr André Kabasele Mukenge, currently Professor of Old Testament at the Catholic Faculty of Theology in Kinshasa (Dem. Rep. of Congo), established himself as a specialist on the book of Baruch with his 1992 Louvain (Belgium) doctoral dissertation (cf. the two spin-off articles on Bar 1:15–3:8 in *Le Muséon* 106 (1993) 211–236, and 108 (1995) 211–237). The present book, a monumental study that was accepted as a *Habilitationsschrift* at the University of Louvain in 1998, demonstrates that Dr Kabasele Mukenge has continued his Baruch-studies, with success. He sets out to examine the question of literary unity in Baruch, and the bulk of the book is made up of a detailed analysis—with particular attention to structural (parallel and concentric patterns) and lexical (key phrases, repetitions) features—of the various parts of Baruch (1:1–15aα, 1:15aβ–3:8, 3:9–44, 4:5–5:9). On this background, it is argued that Baruch is the product of a scribe, whose aim is to reread and actualise the book

of Jeremiah to a Jerusalem audience in the 2. century B.C. The literary peculiarities of the different parts of the book are said to reflect literary features in the different Jeremiah texts that are reread, rather than different stages in the development of the book. In conclusion: this is an impressive study by a competent scholar.

Knut Holter
Misjonsvegen 34, N-4024 Stavanger, Norway, kh@misjonshs.no

John O. Akao, *A History of Early Israel*. Ibadan: Sam Bookman Publishers, 1999 (viii + 88 pp.; US\$ 25.00).

This is one of the most valuable works on Biblical studies emerging from Nigeria in recent times. The book is divided into eight chapters, with a rich bibliography in Old Testament historiography. There is also an appendix which contains the structures of the Priestly and Deuteronomic History.

The first chapter gives the supposed background history of the Hebrews, the ancestors of some of the groups that made up the people of Israel. The book then traces the origin of the Hebrews from the middle Bronze Age to 1550 B.C., highlighting the beginning of Israel as a people, starting from the Aramean tribe and the Hyksos who conquered Egypt in about 1800–1600 BC. He examines the various common traits of the Arameans consisting in their nomadic life and the value placed on the human and communal life. Of special interest is the early Israelite concept of man as part of a corporate community, whose existence extends from this physical earth plane to the spiritual plane dominated by the ancestors: since my family exists, I also exist. This biblical idea is related to the traditional African context.

How the nomadic Arameans later interact with the sedentary Palestinians, the Canaanites, Hivites and the Amorites and how the Israelites absorbed them into their groups and all eventually resulted in the formation of an Israelite nation is carefully explained and critically analyzed. Chapter One affords the reader the spectacles with which to read the other sections of the book with full understanding. Chapter Two discusses the three main approaches to the study of Israelite history in contemporary scholarship, labelled by the author as: the conservative approach, the archaeological approach, and the traditio-historical approach.

Throughout the remaining chapters of the book the author combines all three approaches in discussing the chronological reconstruction of the early history of Israel as contained in the Patriarchal narratives, the Exodus from Egypt, the Wandering in the Wilderness and the eventual arrival at Canaan, the Promised Land.

The author examines the situation of the people of Israel in Canaan, especially how it was able to establish itself in the land in the midst of the original—and hostile—occupants of the land of Canaan. This they did through conquest or peaceful negotiation. The author expresses the view that most of

the narratives cannot withstand historical analysis and empirical verification, but concludes that the narratives are nothing short of theological interpretations of the historical accounts. Israel gradually moved from a loose theocratic federation into a monarchical theocratic system, and the nature of this is fully explained.

On the whole, the book is a concise survey of the early history of Israel. It covers all that is required in the study of this aspect of the Old Testament in tertiary institutions. Thus, it is a book which both scholars and students at this level of study will find quite useful. The book is a foundational companion for both the general reader of the Bible and Old Testament scholars. In this era of dearth of academic books in biblical studies in Africa, one can say that the author has made available a foundational material for both scholars and students in the area of the Old Testament.

The bibliography will acquaint the reader with some of the most recent works in this area. The appendix is also a most valuable aid in classifying and identifying the sources of the Pentateuch narratives into J, E, and P. It also identifies the materials used by the authors cum redactors of the history of early Israel as contained in the Old Testament. I subscribe to the view that the author's compact but incisive style makes the book a compulsive text of considerable scholarly merit, which will equally serve the needs of the general reader with an interest in Old Testament studies.

Michael Y. Nabofa

Department of Religious Studies, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria

BOTSA is edited and published by Dr Knut Holter.
All editorial and business correspondence should be
addressed to:

- Dr Knut Holter, School of Mission and Theology,
Misjonsvegen 34, N-4024 Stavanger, NORWAY,
tel.: (+47) 5151 6227, fax: (+47) 5151 6225,
e-mail: kh@misjonshs.no

Editorial board:

- Prof Victor Zinkurature, Catholic University of Eastern
Africa, P.O.B. 24205, Nairobi, KENYA;
e-mail: victor@cuea.edu
- Dr John O. Akao, Dept of Religious Studies, University of
Ibadan, Ibadan, NIGERIA; e-mail: akao@niser.org.ng
- Prof Willem Boshoff, Dept of Old Testament, University
of South Africa, P.O.B. 392, Pretoria 0001,
SOUTH AFRICA; e-mail: boshows@alpha.unisa.ac.za
- Prof André Kabasele Mukenge, Facultés Catholiques de
Kinshasa, P.O.B. 1534, Kinshasa-Limete, Rep. Dem. du
CONGO

As the very idea of *BOTSA* is to be a forum for exchange of
ideas and information, the editor constantly needs response
from the readers. Other scholars working with the Old
Testament within the context of Africa are interested in your
ideas and meanings, your research and book projects, your
meetings and conferences.

BOTSA is part of the
«Africa & Old Testament Program»
School of Mission and Theology, Stavanger
Website: http://uhuru.misjonshs.no/res/ot_africa/

MIHS

1843

MISJONSHØGSKOLEN

School of Mission and Theology