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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.

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Can 'White' South African Old Testament Scholarship be African?

Willem Boshoff

Ten years ago the late Professor Ferdinand Deist concluded a critical essay on the state of South African Old Testament studies (Deist 1992:319) with the following words:

> The 'new' South Africa and our new opportunities of contact with the rest of Africa put us before an enormous and fascinating challenge to rethink Old Testament studies. Hopefully we, as Old Testament scholars, will not simply be watching the African train departing from our Eurocentrist station. If we took up this challenge we could, through our unique contribution to international discussion, soon be able to repay Europe and the USA for their contribution to South African scholarship over a period of more than fifty years.

The 'new' South Africa Deist was anticipating has been part of history for almost a decade now. Many things have changed in the country, but possibly many more things have not changed at all. Due to the peaceful transition of power from the National Party to the African National Congress during 1994 the political revolution which took place was not accompanied by social revolution which ripped society apart.

After more than eight years of ANC government the question is often asked whether society in its entirety—business, education, sport, academia and other sectors—reflects the changes which took place in the political sphere. The answer to this question is constantly debated in the printed media.

We are concerned in this issue of *BOTSA* with a very small aspect of the debate on change and transformation, both in South African society and in individual people's minds. During a discussion of a lecture by Dr Mary Getui (Kenyatta University, Nairobi) at the University of South Africa (Unisa) in Pretoria, there was a short exchange of ideas concerning the 'Africanness' of 'White' South African scholars' participation to the debate. Dr Madipoane Masenya of Unisa remarked that 'White' South Africans can almost by definition not produce 'African' scholarship. Some of her colleagues engaged in discussion, stating that they have no other context to conduct their research in, they are African, even though they are not 'Black'.

This debate is furthered in the current volume of *BOTSA*. When I mentioned the debate to other members of the editorial board of *BOTSA* there was immediate interest. Dr John O. Akao (University of Ibadan, Nigeria) replied: "If a Christian can adequately and objectively handle Islamic Studies, what prevents a White scholar from adequately handling African biblicism? Whites, like their black counterparts, who were born and grew up in Africa with the proper orientation, should be able to think like the Africans apart from the colour differentia."

The two participants in this discussion, both colleagues at Unisa, were asked to pen down their ideas on the question mentioned above: "Can 'White' South African Old Testament scholarship be African?' In Akao's terms both of them were born and grew up in Africa, but possibly the point of discussion is what he calls the proper orientation. The two authors went about their task in different ways, but the reader will discover that for herself. Masenya discusses her experience as a student of Biblical Studies, during a career from her training as a teacher to a doctoral student and eventually senior lecturer at Unisa. She reflects on the influences she experienced and on her colleagues' motive for claiming their Africanness. Snyman, on the other hand, critiques the notion that all 'White' students were basically privileged and that they are not reflective of their personal and societal embeddedness in Africa.

This debate follows in the wake of the monumenal collection of articles *The Bible in Africa: Transactions, Trajectories, and Trends*, edited by Gerald O. West and Musa W. Dube, in which a scathing article by the late Robert P. Carroll was published (Carroll 2000:184-202). In his article, Carroll reminisces

on his first (and only) visit to South Africa during 1993 as the guest of the late Ferdinand Deist. This was not his first encounter with South Africans, having been host in Scotland to a few students referred to him by Deist. The critical way in which Carroll deals with some of the people with whom he had contact in South Africa and previously, opens the reader's eyes for what other, more sensitive, visitors possibly experience and even think, but for reasons of their own, possibly never publish. I believe it is partly a tragic misinterpretation of typical South African open door hospitality, something which is not typically European.

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Prof Willem Boshoff, Department of Old Testament, University of South Africa, P.O. Box 392, Pretoria 0001, South Africa; e-mail: boshows@alpha.unisa.ac.za

Is White South African Old Testament Scholarship African?

Madipoane Masenya (ngwana' Mphahlele)

I chose not to grapple with the above 'interesting' question in a 'scholarly', heavily foot-noted paper, lest I became tempted to theorise—as I was trained to—and not deal with the South African academic situation of white Old Testament scholarship realistically.

In my attempt to answer the above question, I will therefore start with an analysis of the word 'African', which will be followed by my personal academic journey in Biblical/Old Testament Studies. I am aware that this paper restricts the consumers/students of South African Old Testament studies to one racial group, African students. It is, however, necessary due to the history of the marginalisation of Africa in our South African past.

The fact that we must even bother to define the word 'African' in the present essay reveals that we are indeed in a 'new' post-apartheid South Africa. In apartheid South Africa, for example, such definitions would not have

been necessary because everybody knew who an African was. Needless to say, many non-Africans, including white South African scholars, did not want to be designated African. I guess that I will not be exaggerating to argue that even today, many white South Africans (including white South African Old Testament scholars) will not be comfortable to be referred to as Africans.

The situation was exasperated when even Africans themselves, the indigenous people of the land, had a tendency to look down upon themselves, even making efforts at looking less African and become more like whites! The reader should be reminded that the main racial groups in the country were not only Africans and whites, there were Coloureds and Indians, too. However, noting the fact that on the one hand, given the socio-political situation of the time, normative humanity was white, and on the other hand, the most denigrated racial group was African,[1] it makes sense that many members of the non-white groups would have desired to be white.

It is disturbing that South Africans should now start to argue about who an African is, that in our discourses we must even take pains to define what kind of Africans we are talking about: white Africans or black Africans. It is disturbing because in our attempt to regain what rightfully belonged to us, to recover that which we lost / were made to lose, to redefine who we really are, particularly given the negative portrayal that became our lot as Africans for many years, it becomes confusing if those who had the privilege to define us negatively, would now want to pose as though they were one with us and/or have been one with us all along.[2] Such a move will not advance our attempt at self-discovery, self-affirmation as an African people in any way. The word 'African' has become fashionable today: Parts for Africa, African Kitchen, Africa day, African Enterprises, you name them. Some Afrikaners even go to the extent of regarding Afrikaans—the previous language of the oppressor—as one of the African languages!

If that is the case, how African is Afrikaans? The latter, as we all know, was more heavily influenced by European languages than by any of the African-South African indigenous languages. As a matter of fact, one finds many borrowed Afrikaans words in the African languages of South Africa, one of the legacies of the apartheid history of domination and suppression. To those white South African scholars who 'correctly' want to claim to be 'African' all of a sudden because they argue that they were born and bred on the African continent, we ask this important question: when did these white South Africans become aware that they were born in Africa? If they are Africans, how *seriously* do they take the African context(s) in their scholarship? For those white Old Testament scholars who are, all of a sudden, attempting to take the African contexts into account in their scholarship, we ask: what is prompting them to do it in present day South Africa? Is it because of the national pressure to transform? Are they now aware that it is tragic to do Western theology/Old Testament studies in an African context without taking the needs of African people in different African contexts seriously? Yes, it is

tragic because what these scholars in most cases produce after many years of labour, are products which fail to benefit the local communities which they must ultimately serve. Theirs become ivory tower theologies detached from the real life situations of people on the ground. These are theologies typical of their producers: imported Western theologies.

In the light of the information in the preceding lines, it becomes understandable that an obvious, yet important, question being addressed in this essay, if it were asked in colonial and apartheid South Africa for example, would either have been irrelevant or would have had an obvious answer. It would be irrelevant because, due to our socio-political history, the South African whites, including Old Testament scholars, chose to maintain the status quo by offering a theology in a Western way to African students on the African continent. It is no wonder that even today very few of these scholars refer students to the works of African biblical scholars on the continent. It is not surprising that even today many of them continue to marginalise issues relating to African contexts. It is understandable that even today these scholars continue to invite basically white male Euro-American scholars (particularly European) scholars as visiting professors at universities that are in an African context: South African universities. Isn't this another proof that for many years and up to this day, these scholars have felt closer to Europe/America (the West) than they have been to Africa? Even their way of life is basically Western. Many of them have not considered being shaped by the African culture irrespective of the fact that they were born in Africa. Instead, the African culture was supposed to be shaped and continues to be shaped by Euro-American Western cultures. The answer is obvious because given the intensity of the racial division then, how could white/European South African scholars become African? As a matter of fact, important questions then would have been as follows: How could white South African scholars 'Europeanise/Westernise' African students? Is white Old Testament scholarship truly *Afrikaner*?

Having analysed the word 'African' against the background of this brief socio-political history of South Africa, one hopes that my reservations in tackling this kind of question have become clear. However, in my attempt to grapple with the question under discussion and to further highlight the academic contexts that gave birth to some of us, I will give my academic journey in Bible and/or Old Testament studies in South Africa.

I grew up in the early sixties. The socio-political context of the time was one of oppression and suppression. I grew up in a rural area, an area which then was and even now continues to be a lot for black people (though Africans who can afford living in the cities can do so today). In that setting, whites were the only group that had the privilege to live in the city and in the city's quiet decent suburbs while other non-whites (not so white?) groups (Indians and Coloureds) had the privilege to be on the city's outskirts. As a result of this set-up, one did not fully appreciate the crisis caused by the racial division between whites and

Africans in South Africa. This was the case because I did not rub shoulders with whites regularly. This lack of consciousness was aggravated by the fact that even the kind of education I received, the so-called Bantu education, including the then *only* Christian religious education, was of no use regarding contextual issues. The Christian churches, including theological faculties at universities, particularly the historically black and Afrikaner universities, were not helpful either. It is in such a context which black liberation theologians, being dissatisfied with Western theologies regarding their incapacity and/or unwillingness to challenge the oppressive status quo, emerged. We know very well that doing such theologies in those days could land oneself in prison! Yet, these were theologies that addressed the real needs of the African people.

It is in this context that I found myself taking Biblical Studies as one of my major subjects at a historically black university. I took the subject with the hope that it would enrich me 'spiritually'. At this historically black university, all the theology lecturers were white male professors, no women and no blacks! It is in this set-up that I found myself totally lost. In my own 'little' understanding, I thought I was spiritually depraved because of the critical approaches to Bible and theology; contextually empty because of the theology that had basically nothing to do with my African context! It is in this context that we would grapple with the biblical text; the emphasis being on the need for the knowledge of the original languages in order for one to be able to do 'proper' exegesis, the need to understand the *Sitz im Leben* of a particular text in order to be able to understand its relevance for our lives today. However, not attempting to move our finger an inch on how the relevance for the modern reader can be further unpacked. If we did, we would spiritualise it and thus leave many injustices on the ground intact. We would be referred to the works of theological European giants like Rudolph Bultmann, Karl Barth, Dietrich Bonhoeffer and so forth, works which had nothing to do with the African context.

It was only when I engaged in my Masters programme that an important shift occurred in my Old Testament studies. It is empowering and perhaps even ironic that for the first time in my academic journey, a white male professor encouraged me to consider a topic that would have a bearing on the African context, a fact revealing that not all white South African Old Testament scholars marginalised Africa in their academic efforts. In my Masters' dissertation, I interpreted Old Testament / Hebrew proverbs on parent-child relationships in a family context in an African/Northern Sotho Context.[3] For the first time, informed by my academic training, I found the subject matter of Biblical / Old Testament Studies not only interesting, but also context-related, a subject matter that could readily be ploughed back into my communities.

The reader should be reminded that these communities do not have the luxury (or are not even interested in studying) to study theology and Old Testament in the way it is done in our academic settings, full of sophisticated arguments which have no bearing on the daily lives of the people. For these

ordinary (for lack of a better term) Bible readers, studies about the Bible should not only end in 'the past' of the biblical text; these studies must address the whole African person in her/his totality: politically, spiritually, economically, socially, etc, as there are no such compartmentalisations in the African view of things. Elsewhere I have argued:

> Therefore return the Bible to me I pray!
> Allow my context to interact with my Bible reading,
> I have less interest in ivory tower.
> Having theologies and hermeneutics,
> can I afford that luxury?
> Neither do I have interest in theories and concepts!
> Isn't my thirst for a praxiological commitment to redress poverty,
> the oppressive status of women and blacks?
> I couldn't care more about the hidden meaning in the narrative.[4]

My doctoral research on Proverbs 31:10-31 in an African-South African Context and from a Bosadi (*womanhood*) perspective,[5] focused not only on the socio-historical context of the text of Proverbs 31, but even more importantly in my view, it focused on the contexts/social locations of African-South African female readers of biblical texts. Such a study not only enhanced my knowledge about ideological criticism relating to biblical texts, but it also deepened my knowledge about the important role that readers (in their different social locations) have in producing texts, thus undermining the myth of 'objective' and/or 'scientific' biblical scholarship we have been so deeply steeped in. Such a study has been helpful to me not only as I interact with socially engaged academics, but also with grassroots communities. This is in my view real Christian theology, when in our theologising / biblical hermeneutical endeavours people come to the realisation that God is actively involved in their lives.

Having said that and even as I conclude this piece, I want to pose these hard questions to white South African Old Testament scholars: How many African-South African PhDs have they produced so far? Of the PhDs produced, how many have ended up being socially engaged scholars? How many of these graduates have these scholars succeeded to alienate from their African contexts? Whatever and whoever they have produced, how African have they been in their theological and hermeneutical endeavours? If we can openly answer these hard questions, we will hopefully answer the main question we have grappled with so far: is white Old Testament South African Scholarship African?

Notes

1 I deliberately avoid using the adjective 'Black' as in some circles (particularly in South African liberation theological discourses) it is meant to include other non-White groups, that is the Coloureds and Indians.

2 This, however, should not imply that there have never been a few white South African theological scholars who took the African context seriously in their academic endeavours.

3 M.J. Masenya, "In the School of Wisdom: An Interpretation of Some Old Testament Proverbs in a Northern Sotho Context". M.A. dissertation, University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa, 1989.

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Dr Madipoane Masenya (ngwana' Mphahlele), Department of Old Testament, University of South Africa, P O Box 2805, 0700 Pietersburg, South Africa; e-mail: masenmj@unisa.ac.za

Playing the Role of Perpetrator in the World of Academia in South Africa

Gerrie Snyman

A personal history

A recent visit by Prof. David T. Adamo (Delta State University, Nigeria) at our Department (Old Testament) at the University of South Africa impressed on me the current difficulty a Euro-African academic has in navigating the world of African academia. He or she is caught up in the conflict between the West as former imperial power and Africa as the former oppressed subordinates.

In this antagonistic climate, the Western intellectual frameworks are scrutinised and criticized, and sometimes even downright accused for all the ills and woes of African countries. The Euro-African is part of both worlds: intellectually completely Eurocentric (being trained in the thoughts of great Western thinkers), yet, by birth, geographically part of the African continent.

I am part of the offspring generated by an illicit affair of my ancestor, a Dutch soldier, with Groot Katrijn, a slave woman at the Cape of Good Hope in the late 17th century. For this affair, my Dutch ancestor spent two years on

Robben Island. What happened during and after his sojourn, I do not know. He never married Groot Katrijn, leaving support and upbringing to one Anthony of Bengali who subsequently married her and raised her son. That son married into the French Huguenots, thus ensuring that any further offspring became part and parcel of the class of colonists scraping a living at the southern tip of Africa.

I am not sure how much responsibility I have to bear in the current cultural and political confrontation, but I guess given the decision my ancestors made, I am sided, sometimes willingly, sometimes involuntarily, with the colonials, although I have no physical ties with the Netherlands or France. Yet this is how people from the West see me: a colonial residue in Africa.

Colonists have homes in far-away countries. I have none. Europe or Great Britain never was my home. South Africa is. I have never seen myself as a colonist. Nor do I see myself as those who became rich through the labour of others. Talking to my father, himself the second generation of urbanites, about life on his grandfather's farm outside Zeerust in the Groot Marico, the country of Herman Charles Bosman, I realised that the family did everything on that farm on their own. There was no cheap labour in the form of indigenous Africans working in the house or the lands. My father, aged 14, left school during the Depression to work in a stone quarry. It was demeaning work. He later succeeded to start as an apprentice sheet and metal worker. A blue collar worker his entire life, he suffered the same exploitation from capitalist hands and minds as many others. My mother was destined for greater things, or so she thought. A week before she was to attend university for the first time, her father put a stop to it, claiming it would be a waste of money since she would marry anyway and raise kids. The latter she did, and vowed to give her children an academic education. For my brothers and me, attending university was a privilege, not because I am white, but because my mother could never attend it. Frankly, I never felt imperialistic or colonial. What my parents achieved, was achieved through their own hard and honourable labour.

It is difficult for me to see myself as the postcolonial 'other' against which the current discourse is aimed, except, of course, on political level where general support for the National Party in the past translates into collective guilt for the systemic oppression through apartheid.

The current political climate

Recently, the remains of Saartjie Baartman returned from France to South Africa. She has become a precious symbol in the postcolonial discourse. Her fate embodies the fate many indigenous people suffered at the hands of Western exploitation. She was taken to France in the 18th century as an exhibition piece to Europe, where she died. Her brain, genitals and skeleton were preserved for posterity to be studied, and to be exhibited. As an object of interest in the development of the human being, she was displayed in the

Muséé de Jardim in Paris, until sufficient complaining forced the museum to remove her. She was then stored with 250 other skeletons, the remains of persons from other colonies who suffered a similar fate. When I told my children her story and what was done to her, they found the story incredulous. They pulled their faces in horror!

Gail Smith, a journalist who joined the historic mission to return the remains of Saartjie Baartman to South Africa, portrays the days in Paris during the packing of the remains, as follows (2002:1):

> The French seemed a bit bemused by the fuss we were making over the repatriation. Le Pen and the ascendance of right-wing xenophobia and racism were uppermost in their minds. At night, in my hotel room, I watched television and witnessed the fervour of a French populace realising how they had squandered their democratic right to vote. Nearly 200 years ago the bourgeoisie abandoned Paris in haste at the onslaught of the revolution. In fleeing, they abandoned massive collections of prized exotic animals, plants and artefacts, much of which formed the basis of the Musee's collection. Two hundred years later the natives, indigenes, Negroes and "others" they coveted so dearly are now being framed as the greatest threat to French safety and security by Le Pen. The average French person seems mystified by the "sudden resurgence" of racism, and the ascendance of the right, making little connection between the two moments in history and the nationalist ravings of Le Pen.

What had once been a curiosity and an attractive freak show, has now turned into a threat. The Europeans, who imported exotic people from the colonies and who themselves moved to these colonies for economic reasons, currently are closing their doors on inhabitants of these very colonies who now move to Europe for similar economic reasons. If one understands that Europe's imperial legacy remained in the former colonies, in persons of real blood and flesh (in other words, the offspring of the colonists), then it becomes frightening to realise what will happen when the current anti-immigration sentiments in Europe spill over to Africa, as in the case of Zimbabwe.

How does one deal with the legacy of colonialism, especially when that legacy is persons of flesh and blood? Two weeks ago, the *Mail & Guardian* published an extract from Dinesh D'Souza's book *What so great about America* (2002:30-31), in which he granted two (not three!) cheers for colonialism. It is important to remember that D'Souza is of Indian origin, the third generation after Indian independence. His main argument is that the West did not become rich and powerful through exploitation, but through science, democracy and capitalism. Although he acknowledges that colonialism or British rule in India was a harsh regime (as experienced by his own grandfather who could never be excited about it), he is quite appreciative (much to the chagrin of the apologetes of postcolonial theory) of the fruits of colonialism, which he labels technology, education, freedom of expression, self-government, equality of rights, and universal principal of human dignity.

According to him, although colonialism was not based on philanthropy (the British came to govern and inflicted pain and humiliation), they introduced, despite their suspect motives and bad behaviour, a fair amount of infrastructures in the form of roads, harbours, railways, irrigation systems and government buildings. Given this eulogy, D'Souza indeed wonders where Asia, Africa and South America would have been today without colonialism. In fact, he argues that the current problems experienced in Africa are related to the fact that these countries had not been sufficiently Westernised.

As expected, a week later an African journalist retorted. John Matshikiza (2002: 28-29) took him to task by drawing a link between the wealth generated by the West during colonialism and the industries in the colonies set up by the colonists. Labour in these industries was not always voluntary. People were forced to work in the rubber plantations of the Congo. These products were shipped off to Europe where it facilitated the invention of the pneumatic tyre, which powered the motorcar or motorcycle, a cornerstone in Europe's industrial revolution. In other words, the colonies made the stuff that pushed Europe's development forward. The Netherlands is another striking example, according to Matshikiza. It developed from an 'unpromising mineral free area', with the help of the Dutch East India Company into a powerful trading empire with tentacles across the world. The discovery of precious metals further fuelled industrial development in Europe, so that colonisation went hand in hand with the exploitation of these resources, which had to be brought under Europe's control. I want to add: hence the Anglo Boer War. The British wanted access to the gold fields of the Witwatersrand. The biggest diamond found in the country glitters in the royal crown!

Given these two reactions, how should one act? Anger at the exploitation and a feeling of being robbed of one's own cultural traditions lie at the heart of the reaction of those closest to the exploitation. The opportunity to use the fruits of colonialism to one's advantage lies at the heart of the reaction of the subsequent generations. Time heals, so it seems. However, in this continuum, the position in South Africa is that we are still too close to the pain and suffering of the past.

The postcolonial condition

What then is the postcolonial 'movement'? D'Souza sees it as having at its core a theory of oppression that relies on the evilness of the West, the enrichment of the colonisers at the expense of the colonies, and the idea that the colonised people are worse off than before colonialisation.

R. S. Sugirtharajah, a scholar of Indian origin in Britain, gives another perspective. To him, the postcolonial condition is a *discursive resistance* against anything linked to imperialism. Postcolonial criticism, as a response to overt Eurocentric and American frameworks once imposed on the subjects of the imperial project(s), has several objectives (Sugirtharajah 1998:17):

- It intends to release the former colonised from the *margins* into which colonialism once pushed them.
- It aims to invigorate the former colonised with a *new identity* that differs from the one imposed by the coloniser.
- On an ideological level it wants to *unmask* the link between power and ideas behind the world of Western learning.

The criticism against Eurocentric or Western approaches is that they impose structures on reality as if they were universal and neutral. To the colonised, these structures (developed within the metropolitan centres of the West) are inadequate, lopsided and simply unsuitable to the African context. In South Africa, this was the main argument in Mbeki's AIDS letter (2000) to world leaders. It seriously questioned the cultural trappings of AIDS research in the USA imposed on an African context (cf. Snyman 2001a and 2002).

One of the empowering strategies suggested by postcolonial theory is to start with Africa. Thus, some scholars in Africa or of African origin look for evidence of Africanness within the Bible. For example, Randall Bailey (1998) finds it empowering for black racial pride to see Africanness in the biblical texts. It deconstructs what he calls 'white-supremacist' reading strategies enforced on black readers in the USA. The opposition created by contrasting Eurocentricity with Africentricity leaves me as a Euro-African somewhat bemused, yet intensely filled with terror.

- Bemused, because I see the rise of a neo-racism or ethnocentrism, a condition Eurocentrism is being accused of.
- Filled with terror, because if the rise in intolerance towards immigrants currently submerging Europe creates a similar effect in South Africa, my presence in Africa is seriously threatened. In this case, despite my ancestry, I will not be regarded as a Euro-African, but a European in Africa who must be forced out. The events of ethnic cleansing unfolding in Zimbabwe are very real and linked to the postcolonial condition.

Obviously, putting Eurocentric hermeneutics in the dock has lyrical appeal. It is an escape valve for many frustrations. Positively, it inaugurates the historical moment of Africa fulfilling its destiny and offering leadership. But it takes time. We have moved a far way since 1998 when Pres. Thabo Mbeki unveiled his plan for an African Renaissance. Currently, the programme for Africa's renewal is contained in a project called NEPAD.

Considering our history of colonialism, the feelings against Europe should not be underestimated. The current predominance of the Northern Hemisphere in world economical and political matters does not help either! It plays a major role in the negativity displayed against anything from Europe or the USA. One only needs to read Naomi Klein's book, *No Logo* (2000), to realise how corporate society is exploiting the developing world.

Ironically, the NEPAD-programme that aims at building up Africa needs the consent of Western leaders in order to be successful. It is as if we cannot get away from Western dominance, the very perception that led Pres. Mbeki to question the link between HIV and AIDS. The juxtaposition of Eurocentrism and Africanism makes for more subtle ironies. Malegapuru Makgoba (2000), the president of our Medical Research Council, castigated Mbeki's view that HIV does not cause AIDS. Makgoba, an African trained in Western medicine, yet open to the African context, accepted that HIV causes AIDS. He argues that knowledge knows no boundaries. When an African stands up for science in the way Makgoba did (at great personal cost, and rest assured, he is no admirer of the West, cf. Makgoba 1997), it then becomes difficult to take seriously those who accuse Western culture of perpetuating the predominance of Europe or America in Africa's intellectual thoughts, prohibiting the blooming of a new indigenous intellectual tradition.

Some even go so far as to regard writing and literacy as a means of indoctrination leading to what is believed to be 'whiteness' (Mazama 1998:14). If writing and literacy is a 'white' indoctrination, it means that Bailey's endeavour to look for 'Africanness' in the biblical texts will remain, ultimately, a textual approach to the Bible, infused with the doctrines of literacy. It continues 'Eurocentrism', if you wish! However, in my view, the African experience of orality and stories can lay bare the stranglehold of the literate view on the Bible within a Eurocentric approach. It already has changed my view on the origins of the biblical text and the way it is received by readers (cf. Snyman 1998).

Instead of labelling approaches in terms of ethnic tags, the relativity of literacy can be laid bare by an inquiry into the role of orality. In this way, an African cultural hermeneutics starts to make inroads into Eurocentric hermeneutics without the current ethnocentric viciousness that is characteristic of both sides of the postcolonial debate. For example, Matshikiza successfully takes D'Souza to task for suggesting that the West invented science, democracy and capitalism. He argues that the world is not a series of completely isolated societies developing in a vertical direction, but rather an intertwined sequence of lateral relationships that cause some to grow and some to wane at different times in history. To Matshikiza, knowledge is a two-way street. The origins of ideas are not the kind of thing to which purity happens easily. The characterisation of an idea as purely Western or purely African can be very illusory (2002:29).

But if Matshikiza is correct here, is the juxtaposition of African hermeneutics and Eurocentric hermeneutics then not illusory? Africentricity is aimed against what can be called the trap of Eurocentricity, namely the claim of cultural universalism that can so easily become a variation of cultural imperialism or ethnocentrism (Noé 1995:46). The universality of approaches has been successfully questioned by the Bible and Culture Collective's *Postmodern Bible* (1995). I have the impression the universality African

scholars condemn as 'Eurocentric', has perhaps more to do with the common sense realism truth claims of the missionaries of the previous century where the interpretation in writing and reading is ruled out in favour of a natural judgement that tells one how to understand. In other words, the current discomfort with 'universality' is a discomfort with a particular brand of Christianity, a brand that other Christians in the West also find highly problematical.

South Africa, an African country, is said to have the most liberal constitution in the world at the moment. It embodies all the ideals of democracy spawned by ancient Greece and early Christianity. Our constitution proclaims a compliance with the programme of democracy and human rights. However, with its call for an African Renaissance, South Africa is also defending itself against the dominance of Europe in the name of self-determination. Does our compliance with the programmes of democracy and of human rights not constitute an internalisation and unexamined self-submission to European cultural imperialism (cf. Held 1995:15)? Or have we perhaps moved beyond Eurocentrism? After all, for the last 150 years people have used the concepts of freedom and equality born of the French Revolution to inspire revolutionary struggles all around the world (cf. Boggs 1990:14).

Can we move beyond postcolonial rhetoric? Is the latter merely the excessive violence of postmodern identity politics? The Western world is accused of objective excess, of mechanically imposing a universal law without any regard for the subject. But it is as if this excess is supplemented by subjective excess, the irregular, arbitrary exercise of whims (cf. Zizek 1998:1000). On the one hand, it is a structural violence inherent to globalisation against which Pres. Mbeki created a response with his concept of an African Renaissance (2001a and 2001b). On the other hand, there is the violence of the newly emerging ethnic fundamentalism of Africentricty, which views itself as the tragic victim of socio-political conditions.

Is there more behind Africentricity than beating up a Eurocentrist and being irritated by his or her presence? I would like to think that the posing of a binary opposition of Eurocentricity and Africentricity can be part of a process that moves towards what can be called a *trans-modernity,* a term proposed by Dussel (1993). It is a condition where victim (Africa) and perpetrator (the former colonial powers) co-realise themselves in a process of mutual creative fertilisation. Dussel speaks of trans-modernity as a project of political, economic, ecological, erotic, pedagogical, and religious liberation that constitutes a *co-realisation* of that which modernity is incapable of accomplishing namely an incorporative solidarity between the centre and the periphery.

This solidarity is still far away, given the accusations and counter accusations. My question is whether the focus on being African (as opposed to being European) is not still an influence of a Modernity (albeit waning) and its emphasis on modern nation states? Dussel makes an important remark, namely

that Modernity appeared when Europe affirmed itself as the centre of the world history it inaugurated. Europe's self-definition could only take place in a dialectical relation with the non-European alterity (Dussel 1993:65).

For example, Habermas uses Africa as the paradigmatic mythical world against which he establishes the modern rationalist world (1984:43-74). Africa is present only as a negative case. In a critique of Habermas' view on Africa, Eze (1998:143) says that in order to render the difference and superiority of the Western worldview, Habermas had to construct an Africa that was as antithetical to the West as possible. Eze (1998:144) asks whether Africa's otherness and strangeness does not result from Europe's attempt to constitute and maintain its self-image and identity by fashioning, as a precondition, a deserving enemy.

Modernity was born when Europe was in a position to pose itself against an other. Europe could only do that by exploring, conquering and colonising an alterity that gave back its image to itself. Africa now needs Europe in exactly the same way in order to identify herself, hence the focus on Africentricity as opposed to Eurocentricity. Are we now dealing with Africa's entrance into Modernity?

How should one then read Africa's self-affirmation (Africentricity) vis-à-vis Europe's self-affirmation (Eurocentricity)? It is a reminder to Europe that they cannot think of themselves without considering Africa. And the postcolonial project aims to empower the former colonised not to be hapless consumers of imperialised interpretations. However, this objective proves to be more difficult, as an African approach partakes in the theories developed in the Western world in order to formulate their stance against what is perceived to be Eurocentricity. Where does this discussion of postcolonial theory and criticism leave me as a Euro-African? At the moment, it forces me politically, socially and culturally into the position of a perpetrator.

Being branded a perpetrator and the problematisation of whiteness

It is clear that Western presence in Africa has become awkward, problematic, and recently, even life-threatening. In South Africa, the bodily presence of the descendants of the first Dutchmen and Dutchwomen, who commenced the current postcolonial comedy by setting foot on South African soil in Table Bay, followed by the French Huguenots, the British Settlers, and other Europeans settlers, is now only 'traces' left behind. In terms of the present view of globalisation and a concomitant Western political, economical and technological dominance, some would be inclined to regard this trace as a track left behind by Western exploitation, a track that should be wiped off African soil. Others may regard the trace, although indelibly link to exploitation, as a mark of industrialisation and therefor of a better life, a mark that should remain as part of history.

In Zimbabwe, white bodily presence on farms has been rendered immoral and offensive, 'soilful'. Maybe the day of reckoning with past Western (British) exploitation has arrived. But who is answering for the sins of the past? Is it a case of the fathers who ate sour grapes and their sons' teeth setting on edge? The traces left by colonial imperialism, colonists unwilling to have eradicated their footprints in African dust are left to answer for what has gone wrong.

We have just moved from a racist regime to a non-racial social order. Reading the Bible for Africanness or blackness leaves me with an impression of a process of familiar ethnic stereotyping my culture is being accused of. I have that distinct feeling that David must have had when Nathan told him that he was the man (2 Sam 12:7)! I also feel the ambiguity many of my peer group feels, as expressed by an SABC journalist, Chris Louw (2000) after the brother of the former State President F W de Klerk (Willem de Klerk 2000) said we should keep our heads down while the rest of the country forgives us our trespasses:

> I am stained with gun oil, the sweat of the parade ground and the blood of black children ... What is left for me? I am too old to be completely innocent and too young to be absolutely guilty. I am too innocent to offer apologies. I am too old to wash my hands of everything.

In all this it came as a psychological shock to realise that whiteness could be rendered problematical. On the one hand, I feel myself being marked and consigned, 'othered' to oblivion. On the other hand, I am forced to see a self that has been suppressed by the public transcript of colonial privilege.

The identity of whiteness is today no longer a condition (once assumed unproblematically by those of European descent) to be cherished. An African public transcript is rendering it problematical. In this manner the power of the now liberated colonised can be manifested vis-à-vis the former colonisers, who are forced to shift from filiation or biological continuity to social affiliation, engaging a new meaningfulness of ethnic tags.

The demise of apartheid did not constitute the demise of ethnic tags, however, it requires a disaffiliation from whiteness which is bound up with privilege and economic power. Whereas, in advanced societies where whiteness as a category is masked, in communities where the material effects of institutionalised racism still linger, not everyone wishes to abandon the racial tag. Ethnicity still testifies to a vast contrast between people.

My mask of whiteness is continuously being pulled off. However, the process in which I find myself, is still very much a process of 'othering', where modernistic binary oppositions which are sought to be overcome, are only reinforced with zest. I guess that the moment one can put a label onto something, one can control it and be master over its employment. The terms 'white' and 'black', 'Western' and 'African' are such labels. They serve no other purpose than to divide people who want to reconcile their different

members with one each other. These terms qualify and quantify people in terms of colour, yet they do not relate anything biological, genetic or historical. They are used arbitrarily in the language of power that divides the people and one has no choice to side with the group that fits the physical appearance. Are we not confronted with a fascist tendency that opposes self-identification (cf. Snyman 2001b)?

The concept of race is without any redeeming social or scientific value. Whiteness, if I can use the words of Wicomb (2001:159), is no longer a 'nice' word:

> Whiteness does not collocate with the key words of our narrative of freedom and thus there is no potential for discursive appropriations or refiguration of its general field of meaning. As a construct, whiteness cannot be fully addressed; indeed, it appears to be only from within and bound up with the meaning of a specific ethnic group that a revision can emerge; in other words, it must literally be deconstructed.

How does one, branded as a perpetrator, react or read the Bible? I do not find anything in the Bible that helps me. In the Old Testament, those branded as perpetrators are left out or killed. In the New Testament, they may claim salvation in Jesus Christ, but they still have to confront the horrific past so that the salvation remains a pie in the sky.

I keep on thinking being in the same boat as those German soldiers who fought for Nazi Germany, not because they subscribed to National Socialism, but because they were drafted and forced to go to the war front. And their offspring has no monument to commemorate them. The only monuments are those who overturned the events and who were victims (cf. Snyman 1999).

In Germany after the war, in what has been called the *Historikerstreit*, historians provided a sanitised version of their history. It was observed as a repressing and relativisation of potentially disruptive elements in the cultural tradition and historical experience (cf. Pensky 1999:354). Past cultural traditions were appropriated selectively and unreflectively. Nazism was reduced to prejudice and an outbreak of irrationalism (Eley 1988:174). The past that provoked criticism and rejection was morally neutralised.

The focus on whiteness prohibits the masking of the past. It forces one to inquire into the conditions that allowed something like apartheid to have flourished. Apartheid caused a break in civilisation in South Africa, so that one cannot continue with previously held doctrines and methodological presuppositions.

In an essay on the Holocaust and doing theology in the face of the perpetrator, Bjorn Krondorfer (2000:95) distinguishes between doing a Christian theology that emerges from the past of a perpetrator culture and a subsequent response coming from a community that was severely victimised. Any lack of difference would make the Holocaust a historical misfortune among others, whereas in reality it was an event that shook the foundations of

doing theology in the land of the perpetrators. He says (2000:96) obliterating or downplaying one's identity enables one to employ universalising language without rooting oneself in one's own historical context. In doing this, one removes oneself from being socially, morally or biographically implicated in a culture that continually struggles with coming to terms with having perpetrated a crime against humanity (cf. Krondorfer 2000:102).

But how does one do it? Is it a reading of the Bible as a perpetrator under the confronting gaze of survivors and witnesses? Krondorfer suggests that the voices of the victims, survivors and witnesses are equal to the reader's own voice. The outcome of such a reading process is the discovery that what one hears could very well be incompatible with one's theological assumptions. It is a dangerous enterprise, and certainly unpopular amongst victims and perpetrators, or their descendants.

I guess one needs to strike a balance between recognising one's religio-cultural roots in a tradition that did not question the abuse of human rights, yet keeping a critical distance to the mentality of apartheid. It is not a question of becoming a good perpetrator. To focus only on the victim, says Krondorfer (2000:103), raises hermeneutical dilemmas about textual choices and cultural perspectives at risk of being misappropriated and falsely identified with. It can easily lead to triumphalism where the struggle against apartheid is uncritically appropriated by the perpetrators as a symbol as if it belongs to their own gallery of martyrs. Does the recent unveiling at the Voortrekker Monument of the statue of Danie Theron, a Boer freedom fighter during the Anglo Boer War, by Nelson Mandela deny this difference?

What is my role then?

I am trying to understand my own position in a country transforming itself at rapid speed. Sometimes I cannot identify with the kind of West that is criticised. I feel comfortable in its intellectual and cultural products, and do not always see the evil it is accused of. I understand the pain and suffering colonialism have caused, the uprooting of communities and the annihilation of cultures. I may have lost out on it too, given where I come from.

The fruits of colonialism, now that the colonial period has gone, are no longer reserved for a privileged few. However, I think we are still too close to the hurtful experiences of the past for people to be able to transcend it. Nor do I have any moral right to demand that people should transcend the past.

I am left with few options. One aspect I cannot escape is that I am morally and socially implicated in the events of the past. I am not even sure I can claim biographical innocence. What I have to deal with, is collective guilt and responsibility. Is the only way of redemption to play the role of the perpetrator with appropriate humility? It is not easy and definitely not a role I play voluntarily.

Literature that is shaping my role

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Prof Gerrie Snyman, Department of Old Testament, University of South Africa, P.O. Box 392, Pretoria 0001, South Africa; e-mail: snymagf@unisa.ac.za

Conferences

Port Harcourt (Nigeria): The 15th Annual Conference of the Nigerian Association for Biblical Studies (NABIS) will be held 9–12 July 2002 at the University of Port-Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria. The theme of the conference is "Christology in African Context". Six commissioned papers will be read: "The apocalyptic concept of the messiah and the concept of vicarious sacrifice in African Traditional Religion" (J.O. Akao), "Messianism in Israel and the Suffering Servant of Deutero-Isaiah" (G.L. Lasebikan), "Matthew's understanding of the Immanuel prophecies in First Isaiah" (C. Umoh), "The priest and the victim according to the Epistle to the Hebrews" (O.O. Obijole), "Proclaiming the lordship of Jesus in a religiously pluralistic Africa" (R. Olajubu), "Christology and the contemporary church in Africa" (S.O. Abogunrin). Other paper proposals are welcome. For information: Dr Caleb Ogunkunle, Secretary of NABIS, c/o Department of Religious Studies, University of Ibadan, Nigeria, Oyo State, Nigeria; e-mail: Calebogunkunle@yahoo.com

Toronto (Canada): The 2002 annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion (AAR) and Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) will take place in Toronto, November 23–26. For further information: Society of Biblical Literature, 825 Houston Mill Road, Suite 350, Atlanta, GA 30329, USA; e-mail: sblexec@sbl-site.org or you can visit the SBL website: http://www.sbl-site.org/Congresses/index.html

Book Reviews

Guide to Higher Education in Africa. Published by the Association of African Universities and the International Association of Universities. New York: Palgrave Publishers Ltd, 2002, second edition. £50.00. ISBN: 0-333-99324-1. Xvi + 530 pp.

The second edition of this very handy and useful guide contains detailed and (it seems to me) reliable information about the current situation for higher education in Africa. More than six hundred institutions in fourty-six countries throughout the continent are presented, and details of national education systems are also offered. There are, however, no articles analyzing higher education in Africa as a whole from more general perspectives, and no general statistics. Each national entry has the same structure: (i) a presentation of the institutional context of higher education: institution types and credentials, structure of education system, national bodies, admission regulations, student life, grading systems; and (ii) a presentation of the individual institutions: universities (public and private) and other institutions (public and private). Each institution is presented with name, postal address, telephone, fax, e-mail, website, list of faculties and institutes, information on academic year and admission regulations, degrees that are offered, size of academic staff, student enrolment, principal academic and administration officers. The book demonstrates that a number of state universities in Anglophone Africa have departments of religious studies. Not least is this the situation in Nigeria. However, from the perspective of theological education and biblical studies, the book is a disappointment. As it is edited and published by African and international university associations, only those few theological institutions that are members of these associations are included; in Kenya, for example, Catholic University of Eastern Africa and Daystar University are presented, so is also (but this is an exception from the general tendency) Scott Theological College, whereas Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology is not presented. The publishing of this guide, therefore, demonstrates the current

need for a corresponding guide to theological institutions in Africa, for example an updated version of ACTEA's membership directory.

J. Ayodeji Adewuya, *Holiness and Community in 2 Cor 6:14-7:1: Paul's View of Communal Holiness in the Corinthian Correspondence*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2001 (Studies in Biblical Literature; 40). xvii + 230 pp. ISBN: 0-8204-5557-1. SFr 83.00.

The book is a revised version of a Ph.D. dissertation directed by Frances Young and accepted by the University of Manchester, United Kingdom. The author comes from Nigeria, and at present he serves as a missionary in the Philippines, where he also teaches at the Asian Seminary of Christian Ministries, Makati. The book is an analysis of the relationship between "holiness" and "community" in 2 Cor 6:14-7:1. First, the socio-historical context of this text is discussed, then follows a close reading of the text with particular attention to its relationship to the Holiness Code in Leviticus, and finally, the text is related to its broader literary context of Pauline literature. The main thesis of the book is that the concept of holiness in 2 Cor 6:14-7:1, as well as in the Pauline corpus as a whole, is not satisfactory explained in terms of the individual, but only as the individual stands in relation to the community of faith. Taking into account the author's African background, one would expect, I think, that this main thesis would draw on African concepts of communality. However, so is not the case, at least not on an explicit level. Even where the author talks about "the prevalent individualism that has plagued Western life" (p. 167), references to literature on African communal traditions and experiences are more or less absent. I find this quite surprising, and I would argue that his main thesis would have benefited from a more explicit use of African material. In spite of this, the book is a clear-cut and convincing advocacy for a communal understanding of the concept of holiness in the Pauline literature, and it will be of interest for New Testament lecturers and postgraduate students.

Edwin M. Yamauchi (ed.), *Africa and Africans in Antiquity*. East Lansing, Michigan: Michigan State University Press, 2001. xv + 324 pp. ISBN 0-87013-507-4. US$ 28.95

This essay collection goes back to a conference on "Africa and Africans in Antiquity" in March 1991 at Miami University, Oxford, Ohio. The conference brought (mainly US) scholars from various disciplines together to re-examine textual and archaeological material from northeastern Africa, an area that is well documented for antiquity by texts, monuments, and archaeological excavations. Let me briefly mention the various essays, to indicate the broad approach of the book: C.T. Hodge (linguist) examines the linguistic relations

of northeastern Africa; F.J. Yurko (egyptologist) analyzes the relationship between Egypt and Nubia; E.R. Russmann (art historian) reviews the ascendance of the Kushites to dominace over Egypt (716-656 B.C., the 25., so-called Kushite dynasty); S.M. Burstein (historian) describes the history of the kingdom of Meroe; W.Y. Adams (anthropologist) analyzes the Ballaña kingdom; R. Bullard (geologist and archaeologist) examines the Berbers of the Maghreb and ancient Carthage; D. White (arcaeologist) surveys the archaeology of the Cyrenaican and Marmarican regions of northeastern Africa; F.M. Snowden (classicist) analyzes attitudes towards blacks in the Greek and Roman world; K.A. Bard and R. Fattovich (archaeologists) compare parallel developments of state formation in ancient Egypt and Ethiopia; and M.W Swanson (historian) discusses various attempts to explain the ruins of Great Zimbabwe. Let me then single out a couple of essays for a closer presentation. One is F.M. Snowden's interesting analysis of attitudes towards blacks in the Greek and Roman world. It is pointed out that Greek and Roman sources use the word "Ethiopian" ("sun-burnt face") when referring to dark- and black-skinned people south of Egypt, and that their literary and artistic representations include not only references to skin color, but also to physical characteristics such as wooly hair, broad noses, thick lips. Whereas earlier scholarship tended to see these characteristics as reflecting color prejudice, Snowden (here, as well as in his well-known 1970 monograph on the same topic) argues that the Greeks and Romans regarded black and white skin as accidents without any necessary stigma attached to them. This includes early Christian writers such as Augustine and Origen. Another very interesting essay is M.W. Swanson's discussion of attempts at explaining the ruins of Great Zimbabwe. Various kinds of "outside" influence were suggested after the "discovery" of the ruins in 1871, stretching from Old Testament Israelites to ancient Phoenicians and Arabs. Swanson is then able to demonstrate how these "outside" perspectives in reality reflect late 19th century European, colonizing interests: Great Zimbabwe was interpreted as an example of how Africa also in ancient times benefited culturally and economically from "outside" influence! The book is a handy and useful introduction. Most of the contributors are well-known specialists in their respective fields, able to provide balanced and bibliographically updated (until 1990) discussions. As such the book should be accessable at graduate and post-graduate levels in African theology and biblical studies.

Joseph G. Prior, *The Historical Critical Method in Catholic Exegesis*. Rome: Pontificia Università Gregoriana (Tesi Gregoriana: Serie Teologica; 50). 346 pp. ISBN: 88-7652-825-3. US$ 22.50.

The book is a revised version of a Th.D. dissertation accepted by the Gregorian University in Rome, and the author is an American Catholic priest, who at present teaches at St. Charles Borromeo Seminary, Philadelphia. The book

analyzes the place of historical-critical concerns in Catholic exegesis in two periods: (i) exegetical literature from patristic and medieval times, and (ii) ecclesial documents from modern times, 1893-1943, 1943-1965, 1965-the present. The major perspective of the book is that the hermeneutical basis of the modern historical-critical approach, as well as several of its more practical-exegetical procedures, to some extent go back to the biblical interpretation of the early church. The book concludes that in spite of certain limitations, the historical-critical method is needed in Catholic exegesis, (i) to determine the literal sense of the text, (ii) to promote reading and translation of the original texts, (iii) to determine the original reading from the numerous textual witnesses, (iv) to address problems due to the historical setting of the text, (v) to deal with issues of interpretation raised by the biblical text, and (vi) to facilitate ecumenical discussion. The book provides an interesting case study of how Catholic exegesis throughout the last century buildt its way in constant tension between dogma and tradition on the one hand and an increasing historical awareness on the other. It is interesting to notice how church tradition actually protected Catholic exegesis from following some of the more radical tendencies of the historical-critical method during its hight in the 19th and 20th centuries. As for the major perspective of the book, that the hermeneutical basis of the historical-critical approach to some extent goes back to the biblical interpretation of the early church, I would argue that it deserves further attention. One should of course not neglect the obvious epistemological presuppositions of the historical-critical method in post-reformation rationalism. Still, its emphasis on the historical and literal meaning of the biblical texts indeed reflects a pre-rationalistic legacy of biblical interpretation, a legacy that must be taken seriously also in circles, African as well as western, that do not share all the epistemological presuppositions of what presently counts as the historical-critical method.

The book reviews are written by
Dr Knut Holter, Misjonsvegen 34,
N-4024 Stavanger, Norway, e-mail: kh@mhs.no

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 Zinkuratire, Catholic University of Eastern Africa, P.O.B. 24205, Nairobi, KENYA; e-mail: victor@cuea.edu
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