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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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South Africa – once more

The previous issue of *BOTSA* (12, May 2002) made a brief visit to Old Testament studies in South Africa. One of the articles, Dr Madipoane Masenya's "Is white South African Old Testament scholarship African?" (pp. 3-8), is followed up in the present issue, as Dr Innocent Himbaza challenges her on her relationship to historical interpretation of the Old Testament and I ask her to clarify her definition of "Africa". Dr Masenya has kindly agreed to respond to the two of us, and our discussion should be of some interest even outside South Africa, I think. So is also another example of South African Old Testament scholarship presented in this issue of *BOTSA*, Professor Jurie le Roux' and Mr Christo Lombaard's presentation of graduate studies in the Old Testament via the Internet at the University of Pretoria.

Knut Holter

La recherche scientifique et la contextualisation de la Bible

Innocent Himbaza

Ces quelques lignes sont motivées par le dernier numéro de *BOTSA* 12, 2002. En lisant certains articles, spécialement celui de M. Masenya (Madipoane Maenya (ngwana' Mphahlele), "Is White South African Old Testament Scholarship African?", *BOTSA* 12 (2002) 3-8), je me demande si la question de la contextualisation des études bibliques ne risque pas d'occulter la grande question de la recherche en sciences bibliques.

Tout lecteur de la Bible se pose plusieurs questions à son sujet

Lorsque je lis n'importe quel passage biblique, plusieurs questions se posent à moi. J'en prends ici quatre questions qui me semblent regrouper le questionnement que l'on a habituellement. On peut se poser évidemment d'autres questions qui seront sûrement liées à celles que je pose, ou l'on peut subdiviser ces questions autrement. Que le lecteur ne me limite donc ni au nombre ni à la formulation de la question. Pour moi ces questions sont comme des fenêtres qui s'ouvrent sur le texte pour me permettre de mieux me l'approprier. Or, chaque fenêtre montre encore tout un vaste champ de recherche qu'on ne peut ignorer.

1) Quand, par qui et pourquoi est-ce que ce texte a été écrit? Une telle question me fait entrer dans l'histoire de l'écriture pour savoir les écritures qui existaient et dans quelles régions et à quelles époques elles étaient utilisées. Elle me fait entrer dans l'histoire des peuples pour savoir les peuples qui écrivaient et pourquoi. Pour un texte biblique, cette question me fait entrer dans le système des croyances pour savoir comment les autres croyaient, quelles étaient leurs habitudes à différentes époques, et quel rôle la croyance jouait dans tout cela. Cette question me fait encore entrer dans la manière dont on reconnaît les auteurs de différents écrits, à quelle préoccupation ils voulaient répondre, etc.

2) Que disent les autres témoins textuels? Cette question me fait entrer dans l'histoire souvent compliquée des sources textuelles. Y a-t-il un ou plusieurs textes en hébreu? Les fameux manuscrits de la Mer Morte apportent un témoignage textuel qui peut m'aider à aller dans un sens ou un autre? Quelle est la situation de la traduction grecque des Septante? Quelle est la situation du Syriaque, de la Vulgate, etc. Comment comprendre les différences textuelles s'il y en a? Une telle

question m'aide à mieux voir les contours du texte que je lis actuellement et les possibles effets que les méandres de l'histoire ont eus sur lui.

3) Comment est-ce que les autres ont compris ce texte? Cette question ouvre le champ des interprétations au cours de l'histoire. Pour un texte de l'AT, j'apprends comment les Juifs des époques différentes ont compris le texte. Je me rends compte que depuis longtemps, les chrétiens à partir des pères de l'Eglise ont interprété tel ou tel texte et comment la situation théologique conflictuelle avec les Juifs aboutissait également aux interprétations différentes de la Bible. Une telle question me permet de me poser une autre, celle de savoir si je peux interpréter aujourd'hui le même texte dans le même sens que tel ou tel commentateur de l'histoire.

4) Qu'est-ce que ce texte veut me dire aujourd'hui dans mon contexte? Il me semble que c'est après avoir ouvert plusieurs fenêtres sur le texte, après l'avoir bien cerné, criblé, compris son contexte et sa lettre, son histoire et son évolution, ses interprétations et sa réception, que je peux, le mieux, l'intégrer dans mon propre contexte. Je dois d'abord comprendre le texte d'un écrivain biblique qui n'a pas écrit dans ma langue maternelle, qui ne vivait pas nécessairement la même situation que moi, avant de m'approprier ce qu'il a écrit, ce qu'il a voulu dire et ce que cela peut me dire aujourd'hui.

Faut-il être blanc ou noir, homme ou femme?

Toutes les fenêtres qui s'ouvrent sur le texte demandent des recherches souvent poussées. On ne peut pas inventer le sens du texte, l'histoire des écrivains bibliques, les témoins textuels, ou encore la réception ou les interprétations des uns et des autres. Il faut les étudier. Et pour cela, on n'a pas besoin d'être blanc ou noir, on n'a pas besoin d'être un homme ou une femme, on n'a pas besoin d'être dans le contexte africain ou occidental. Seule la fenêtre sur la contextualisation du texte requiert la connaissance du contexte dans lequel on veut faire cette contextualisation. Il me semble donc que dans le cadre des recherches en sciences bibliques, on ne peut pas simplement se limiter à la quatrième fenêtre de contextualisation (le rang ne joue pas un rôle, c'est seulement une référence donnée à cette fenêtre). C'est parce que je comprends d'abord plus ou moins les contours du contexte du texte que je peux me l'approprier ensuite de manière plus ou moins adéquate.

Selon certains noirs Africains, les blancs d'Afrique du Sud ne connaissent pas vraiment ou ne tiennent pas vraiment compte du contexte

noir sud-africain, parce que, d'une manière générale, le contexte historique récent les met dans une position privilégiée et différente. Ce n'est pas à moi de juger une telle affirmation. Je pense cependant que cela ne devrait pas être le centre des débats. Même un lointain étranger peut étudier et comprendre un contexte donné comme celui de l'Afrique du Sud ou d'ailleurs.

Pour moi, il ne s'agit pas d'être blanc ou noir, homme ou femme pour comprendre et faire connaître aux autres les résultats de ses recherches bibliques. Et pour moi, on ne peut pas non plus limiter les recherches bibliques à la contextualisation, puisque les questions qui se posent au sujet de la Bible ne se limitent pas à ce seul sujet.

Mon expérience de chercheur en sciences bibliques

J'ai fait mes études au Rwanda, en Suisse et en Israël. J'ai participé et je participe toujours aux nombreux congrès et conférences sur la Bible. Partout, j'ai écouté les blancs et les noirs, les hommes et les femmes.

A Butare, Rwanda (contexte protestant) j'ai suivi des cours donnés par des hommes noirs (des compatriotes) et des blancs occidentaux, et des femmes blanches également occidentales. A Fribourg, Suisse (contexte catholique), j'ai suivi des cours donnés par des hommes blancs, la femme enseignait au niveau inférieur au mien. Le noir (parce qu'il y en a!) enseigne dans la section alémanique, alors que moi je suis francophone. A Jérusalem, Israël (contexte juif), j'ai suivi des cours donnés par des hommes et des femmes blancs (je n'ai pas vu un(e) enseignant(e) noir(e)). Dans les différents congrès et conférences, j'écoute tout le monde (qui veut et peut venir dire quelque chose sur le sujet).

Ma thèse de Doctorat, que j'ai soutenue à Fribourg en juin 1998, portait sur les questions de traduction de la Bible, spécialement AT, dans le contexte du Rwanda (cf. Innocent Himbaza, *Transmettre la Bible. Une critique exégétique de la traduction de l'AT, le cas du Rwanda*. Rome: Urbaniana University Press, 2001. Voir *BOTSA* 11 (2001) 24). Faire un travail de ce type dans une université occidentale et catholique, ne m'a semblé en aucun moment un handicap. Par contre j'ai profité des facilités bibliographiques—certaines documentations (y compris sur le Rwanda!) ne se trouvant qu'en Occident—des recherches récentes sur le texte biblique et surtout un regard différent du mien, qui m'aidait à mieux me situer. Evidemment pour juger la pertinence de ce que je disais au sujet de mon contexte africain, un expert Rwandais a été mandaté. J'ai donc

été enrichi par d'autres contextes et d'autres manières de voir, et je ne le regrette pas.

Le contexte occidental dans lequel j'ai travaillé ne m'a pas empêché de remarquer plusieurs rapprochements entre ma culture et la structure de ma langue avec la culture et la structure de la langue de l'AT. Dans mon travail, j'ai fait remarquer que certaines phrases auraient été mieux comprises si on les avait traduites tout à fait littéralement de l'hébreu. Lorsque j'ai été amené à comparer l'hébreu au Kinyarwanda et au Français ou à l'Anglais, j'ai constaté que dans certains cas, il est plus facile pour un Rwandais, que pour un Français ou un Anglais, de comprendre l'expression hébraïque. Cette remarque avait déjà été faite par un traducteur anglais de la première bible en Kinyarwanda (Two letters in one from Dr. Stanley Smith. Gahini, 16th April, 1939, *Ruanda Notes* 70 (1939) 24-25). Cependant, l'inverse est aussi vrai dans d'autres cas.

Actuellement, comme chargé de cours, j'enseigne et j'interprète la Bible dans des universités occidentales (à Fribourg, Suisse et pendant l'année 2001-2002 à la faculté protestante de l'Université de Strasbourg, France), et personnellement je ne pense pas que cela pose un problème de contextualisation, puisque la recherche en sciences bibliques ne se limite pas seulement à ce seul sujet. Je pense véritablement, parce qu'autrement je ne le ferais pas, que par mes autres publications qui ne touchent pas seulement la contextualisation de la Bible en Afrique, j'apporte ma modeste contribution aux débats des chercheurs et aux questions que se pose n'importe quel lecteur de la Bible.

Propositions pour des perspectives des recherches bibliques en Afrique

Il faut sortir du cercle vicieux qui ne légitime l'Afrique qu'aux yeux des Africains. Un certain nombre de travaux de recherche sur la Bible en Afrique par les Africains touche effectivement la question de contextualisation ou d'apologie, visant à redonner à l'Afrique une image plus positive que dans certaines publications faites en dehors de l'Afrique (Voir Knut Holter, *Tropical Africa and the Old Testament: A Select and Annotated Bibliography*, Oslo: University of Oslo, 1996 (Faculty of Theology. Bibliography Series, 6); et "Old Testament researchers north of the Limpopo", *BOTSA* 9 (2000) 6-21).

Il est évidemment important que les Africains lisent la Bible dans leur contexte, il est important qu'ils réhabilitent l'Afrique s'il leur semble

qu'une lecture trop eurocentrique ne rend pas justice à l'Afrique. Je pense cependant qu'il ne faut pas créer un cercle vicieux qui ne peut faire émerger et légitimer l'Afrique qu'aux yeux des Africains. Faut-il remplacer une lecture eurocentrique de la Bible par une lecture afrocentrique? Que penser des remarques de Lavik à ce sujet (cf. Marta Høyland Lavik, "Some critical remarks to le Roux, Wambutda and Adamo", *BOTSA* 11 (2001) 15-16) ou du questionnement de Snyman (cf. Gerrie Snyman, "Playing the Role of Perpetrator in the World of Academia in South Africa", *BOTSA* 12 (2002) 8-20). La Bible est donnée à tout le monde, mais tel contexte africain ou occidental (qu'il faut d'ailleurs diviser en plusieurs) n'est pas le contexte de tout le monde. Or, la Bible peut être étudiée par quiconque le veut, croyant ou non, qu'il soit Africain ou pas. Il faudra ensuite, sans être idéologique, savoir la laisser nous parler et non lui faire dire ce que nous voulons.

Il faut élargir les horizons sur d'autres domaines que celui de la contextualisation. Je pense, comme d'autres le font, que les Africains sont à mesure d'élargir les horizons sur d'autres domaines sans se limiter à celui de la contextualisation. Si une lecture contextualisée de la Bible est nécessaire, il faut également reconnaître qu'elle est limitée à un seul contexte. Quelqu'un qui vit dans un autre contexte ne sera pas nécessairement intéressé par cette première. Par contre la compréhension, l'histoire et le contexte d'un passage biblique donné intéressent tout le monde, qu'il soit dans le contexte africain ou pas (Heureusement que les programmes des facultés de théologie en Afrique ne se limitent pas à la contextualisation. Voir André Kabasele Mukenge, "L'enseignement de l'Ancien Testament et des cours apparentés aux Facultés Catholiques de Kinshasa", *BOTSA* 10 (2001) 9-13). Quand je cherche une explication sur un passage difficile de la Bible, je cherche celui qui peut me donner cette explication, peu importe son origine. Quand je confronte les opinions des commentateurs, je cherche celui qui me semble plus convaincant que les autres, bien sûr en tenant compte de plusieurs paramètres, et non celui qui a interprété le même passage dans tel ou tel contexte d'un peuple ou d'une région donnée.

Je propose aux Africains de suivre deux des grands biblistes de l'époque patristique, Origène d'Alexandrie au 3^e siècle et père grec, ainsi que Saint Augustin d'Hyppone au 5^e siècle et père latin. Ces deux grands biblistes africains ne sont pas célèbres parce qu'ils sont africains ou parce qu'ils ont interprété la Bible dans le contexte de leur région, mais seulement parce qu'ils ont travaillé sur la Bible et que leurs travaux ont fasciné et/ou convaincu plus d'un.

En guise de conclusion, je ne pense pas que les Africains ne se satisfassent que de la contextualisation de la Bible. N'importe quel lecteur de la Bible, où qu'il se trouve, se pose plusieurs questions touchant différents domaines de la recherche en sciences bibliques. La tâche des chercheurs de tous les horizons est de trouver et de donner une réponse à ces questions. Que l'on soit blanc ou noir, on peut proposer une réponse tout à fait valable pour un contexte particulier.

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Is it necessary to be black?

Knut Holter

The Old Testament exodus/conquest narrative (Exod-Josh) has a double reception history in South African church and theology; the exodus part played some role in liberation theological circles a decade or two ago, whereas the conquest part played some role in the early development of the Afrikaner tradition. Both cases are indeed examples of a *contextual* interpretation, in the sense that they explicitly relate the biblical narrative to the social and political experiences of a certain interpretation community. However, taking into account their geographical location, I would like to ask an additional question: are both examples of an *African* interpretation too?

The question comes to my mind when I read M. Masenya's article "Is White South African Old Testament Scholarship African?" in *BOTSA* 12 (2002) 3-8. The definition of "Africa"—and indeed the right to define "Africa"—is central in her article, and I would like to challenge her to clarify her position at two points.

First, how "African" should Old Testament studies in Africa be? This is the central point in I. Himbaza's response to Masenya in the present issue of *BOTSA* (cf. above, pp. 2-7), and I would like to add my voice to his concern. We sometimes distinguish between (1) an "African Old Testament studies", which focuses particularly on the interaction between the ancient text and the contemporary interpreter's African

context, and (2) an “Old Testament studies in Africa”, which covers more general, historical and literary approaches. I would argue that academic studies of the Old Testament in Africa should include both, whereas Masenya’s article seems to indicate that she regards the latter as some kind of a westernization project. Is this a correct understanding of her position?

Secondly, who is the “African” interpreter; is s/he necessarily black? It is hardly an exaggeration to say that the role of traditional white, western-oriented scholarship is being reduced in Masenya’s vision of a new, post-apartheid Old Testament studies in South Africa. And, clearly, taking into account that race used to be the basic criterion for the discrimination of the non-white majority, South African Old Testament studies obviously has to acknowledge the race issue. However, what are the practical implications of this in a society celebrating a rainbow identity; isn’t it an Old Testament studies that acknowledges the various interpretation communities—Blacks as well as Indians, Coloureds as well as Whites—as capable of giving “African” interpretations? I get the impression that Masenya would agree to this. When she challenges her white colleagues to take their African context seriously (p. 4), and when she at the same time warns her black colleagues against being alienated from their African context (p. 7), I get the impression that she takes it as a question of hermeneutics rather than race. Is this a correct understanding of her position?

Let me conclude by saying that I don’t think it makes sense to label the old Afrikaner interpretation of Joshua as “African”. This interpretation reflects some of the unfortunate *past* of South Africa; a time when the oppression of the non-white majority to some extent was legitimized by reference to biblical texts. In spite of this, however, I would be critical to defining *contemporary* and *future* Old Testament studies in South Africa in a way that excludes the interpretive experiences and concerns of the non-black minorities from being “African”.

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Response to Himbaza and Holter

Madipoane Masenya (ngwana' Mphahlele)

My article "Is White South African Old Testament scholarship African", which was published in the previous issue of *BOTSA*, 12 (2002) 3-8, is followed up in I. Himbaza's and K. Holter's articles in the present issue. The following is then a response to their articles.

Himbaza raises four questions, which in his view are of basic importance in the interpretation of the Bible, and he argues that these four "windows", including the one on contextualization, can be studied irrespective one's social location.

- When, by whom and why is the biblical text written?
- What do other textual witnesses say about the text?
- How has the text been interpreted by others?
- What does the text want to say to the modern reader?

Let me begin by saying that any response to my article will do well to note that I addressed a *contextual* question, a question pertaining to Old Testament scholarship in *South Africa*, not Old Testament scholarship in general, but *white* Old Testament scholarship in particular. I guess, given our history, there is a reason why the co-ordinators/editor of the issue asked me to focus on white rather than black South African scholarship. The question was not addressed to the whole continent, but to this southernmost tip of the continent, South Africa. My response was therefore also based on my experiences of the kind of Old Testament scholarship typical of *this* context.

I do not think I have given any direct answer to that question other than giving the readers some insights into my experiences and interpretation of the situation. In the article, I am basically asking this question to white fellow Old Testament scholars in South Africa: Are they African? If they are, and indeed most if not all of them were born and bred in Africa, where is Africa in their hermeneutical endeavours and Old Testament studies? I do not have a problem with the concerns Himbaza raises about historical-critical questions, testimonies from other witnesses to the text and how the text has been interpreted by others. Hence elsewhere in the same article I said: "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 his/her totality: politically, spiritually, economically, socially, etc, as there are no such compartmentalisations in the African view of things” (2002:6-7, *italics mine*). The main concern I raise in the article is: if these approaches are studied as ends in themselves without any bearing on the African context, how helpful are these to African students/peoples, particularly given the history of colonialism and imperialism in Africa? How helpful are such approaches in our attempt to discover who we really are, as all along the question of who we are and what Africa is/should be has been defined by others?

A further related question which one could pose to Himbaza is: Could we, for example, also allow Africa and its methodologies to inform our Biblical and Old Testament studies or should Africans always be regarded as consumers of western methodologies and hermeneutical frameworks? As pointed out by the late F. Deist, “South African Old Testament studies and the future”, *Old Testament Essays* 5 (1992) 311-331, 319, a decade ago:

What would the history of Israel have looked like had it been written with a profound knowledge of African sociopolitical traditions? [...] How would we have appraised Old Testament poetry and wisdom literature had we read it against a backdrop of traditional African praise songs, work songs and funeral dirges? How would we have interpreted the book of Lamentations had we read it against the background of South African migrant workers’ songs? How would we have evaluated an interpreted Old Testament “myths” had we not been so fascinated by Western rationalist scepticism?

If in the previous article, I appeared to have put more stress on the need to contextualise Old Testament studies to the African context (to the extent that Himbaza was quick to caution us not to limit biblical interpretation to contextualization!), it was precisely because of the pattern which has always been followed in the past: Africa has always been viewed as a recipient of western products and not the other way round. Could the West, for example, learn from Africa? Could we have a holistic study of the Old Testament in line with the holistic view of life in Africa? Could the African world-view serve as point of departure for the studies of the Old Testament or should the western methods in which many of us have been trained, always be the starting point? If we opt for the latter, how reliable have these always been? The historical-critical method can serve as case in point here. Through this methodology we were reminded of the need for objectivity in Biblical/Old Testament studies. Yet, I agree with W. Brueggemann, *Texts under Negotiation: The Bible and Post-modern Imagination*. London: SCM (1993) 9, that:

We are now able to see that what has passed as objective, universal knowledge has in fact been the interested claim of the dominant voices who were able to pose their view and to gain either assent or docile acceptance from those whose interest the claim did not serve. *Objectivity is in fact one more practice of ideology that presents interest in covert form as an established fact.* [italics mine]

In biblical scholarship, women liberation scholars' discourses have brought the truth in Brueggemann's words to light.

Himbaza argues that all the windows to the biblical text, including the contextual one, can be studied systematically irrespective of one's social location. I agree with him that one can study the first three windows more successfully irrespective of one's social location. Even the fourth window, can also be studied systematically from an outside position/location. Indeed, many have written about the African context on the continent without having been to Africa. The question however is: Is such an approach capable of doing justice to this long neglected window, particularly as it relates to the African context?

An example will suffice in this regard: Scholar A critiques patriarchy in the African culture, being a white man based in Europe. He has never been to Africa, never interacted with African peoples but he reads a lot about Africa. With the help of these sources, he systematically critiques patriarchy in this culture in his attempt to re-read Old Testament texts in a life giving way to African women Bible readers. Scholar B does the same thing though she is an African woman living on the continent. She does not only read about patriarchy from scholarly works, she experiences it, in the Northern Sotho proverb we would say: *Ke leho la go tšwa pitseng*, translated, "she is the wooden spoon which comes directly from the pot on the fire". Which of the two interpreters is likely to do more justice to the context? Who will speak with more authority and legitimacy about the context?

Let me then turn to the questions and concerns raised by K. Holter. First, Holter asks whether the two interpretations of the exodus/conquest narrative can both be labelled "African". The question which comes to the fore again here is who and what is "African"? In my previous article, I deliberately did not go into that question because in South Africa that question is not an issue; if it appears to be one at the moment, it is fairly recent. Historically and even now, South Africans know fairly well the people who are designated as Africans. They also know fairly well what is meant by "Africa". I cannot regard an interpretation as "African", which justified the plundering of the land of African peoples in the name

of God. In my view, only that interpretation, which is in the best interest of Africa and its peoples can qualify to be “African”.

Secondly, Holter asks how “African” Old Testament studies in Africa should be. This is answered to in my response to Himbaza. And thirdly, Holter asks who the African interpreter is; is s/he necessarily black? If one reads between the lines of my article, one would notice that I acknowledge that not all South African white Old Testament scholars have marginalised Africa in their Old Testament scholarship. I also pointed out in my autobiography that it was actually a white Afrikaner man who conscientised me about the need to study the Old Testament informed by my own African context, Professor J.J. Burden. I would therefore say that my main concern in that article was not more of a race question (though given our political history in South Africa, race will always be key to discussions of this nature), but of pressing us hard to be true to our claims as scholars. I am basically arguing that if as scholars we claim to be African, how African *are* we in our scholarly endeavours? Where is Africa in our content, methodologies and teaching?

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**The Old Testament in a new medium
Graduate studies in the Old Testament
via the Internet at the University of Pretoria**

Jurie le Roux and Christo Lombaard

The University of Pretoria has over the past few years embarked on an ambitious project to make most of its courses available by telematic means.¹ That means that courses taught to on-campus students are

¹ See particularly T.H. Brown (ed.), *Fokus op die kliënt: Die toekoms in met fleksieleer*. Pretoria: Universiteit van Pretoria (Dept. Telematiese Leer & Onderwysinnnowasie), 1999; and T.H. Brown (ed.), *University-wide Education Innovation: Points of Departure and Guidelines*. Pretoria: Universiteit van Pretoria (Dept. Telematiese Leer & Onderwysinnnowasie), 2000.

complemented by course materials made available over the Internet. The main focus at present is on graduate courses, a focus that is shared by the Faculty of Theology, which will in time have all of its graduate degree programmes available by telematic means. This means that not only on-campus students can benefit from these Internet-based programmes, but so could students in any part of the world.

Old Testament Science is at the forefront of this process. At present, three graduate programmes in the Old Testament are available by telematic means. These are the PhD in Old Testament Science, the MA (Theology) with specialisation in the Old Testament, and the BA (Honours) programme in Old Testament Science.

The latter programme needs explaining. The Honours degree in South Africa differs from the Honours degree in e.g. the United Kingdom. In South Africa, the Honours degree is a first graduate qualification, establishing a bridge between degree studies and independent research degrees. This bridge-function has proved beneficial to many students. Entry to the Honours degree is normally gained upon completion of a three-year degree (or an equivalent qualification) which includes, for our purposes here, a major in the Old Testament or in Biblical Studies. Normally, a 65% average or higher mark in this major is required to gain entry to the Honours; however, in certain circumstances special entry examinations may be arranged.

The BA Honours degree in the Old Testament may be completed in one year, full time, or over two years, part time. Successful completion of this degree, again normally with a 65% average or higher mark, gives entry to the MA (Theology) with specialisation in the Old Testament. The Honours degree is however not the only way to enter this Masters programme. A four-year degree may also offer entry, as may a range of other possibilities. Applications for entry to the MA (Theology) in Old Testament Science are therefore assessed on an individual basis, and prospective students are welcome to contact us in order to discuss different possibilities.

The MA (Theology) programme can normally be completed in two years. This qualification, as well as any other Masters degree in the Old Testament or a related field (such as Biblical Studies or Hebrew), again normally if completed with a 65% average or higher mark, gives entry to the PhD in Old Testament Science. The PhD programme consists of a research dissertation, the topic of which is negotiated with a doctoral supervisor. Prospective PhD students should therefore give an indication, however broad, of their research interest when first making contact. This will facilitate the process of advising students well.

The Department of Old Testament Science at the University of Pretoria offers a wide range of specialisms. The graduate programmes include thorough study of aspects of Old Testament Science such as hermeneutics, the history of the religion of ancient Israel, the literature of the Old Testament, etc. Students who have good command of biblical Hebrew have, of course, a wider range of research options to choose from, such as exegetical and interpretative questions related to a chosen passage from the Old Testament. However, students who do not read Hebrew are accommodated by negotiating research topics that may rely on commentaries.

The high academic standards and research excellence of the Faculty of Theology at the University of Pretoria have received many endorsements.² First, more and more churches are training their ministers at this Faculty and refer their ministers here for graduate studies. Second, the standing of the Faculty and its Department of Old Testament in particular has been affirmed again by the annual international *ProPent* conference it hosts; that is the *Project for the Study of the Pentateuch*, which focuses on the ever-recurring debates on the Pentateuch theories.³ Third, the Department of Old Testament Science already has a number of graduate students following the telematic programmes, from countries such as Zimbabwe, Korea and the European Union. Fourth, the ever growing subscription to the electronic *Old Testament Newsletter*⁴ (currently around 300 subscribers) and the planned *Electronic Bible Journal*⁵ has put this Old Testament Department on the international forefront of bringing the Old Testament home in the Internet age. These

² For more general information on the Faculty of Theology at the University of Pretoria, see: <http://www.up.ac.za/academic/theology/>

³ Cf. *Old Testament Newsletter* no 13.

⁴ Back issues of the *Old Testament Newsletter* may be found at: <http://www.up.ac.za/academic/theology/news/otnuus.htm>. Subscribing to the Newsletter is done by e-mailing a subscription request to jlroux!@mweb.co.za

⁵ As soon as this journal has been established, it will be announced here too. Excerpts from two other journals published by the Faculty of Theology at the University of Pretoria are available at present: *Verbum et Ecclesia*, at <http://www.up.ac.za/academic/theology/generalint/skrik.htm>, and *Hervormde Teologiese Studies*, at <http://www.up.ac.za/academic/theology/generalint/hts.htm>. The *Electronic Bible Journal* will, in keeping with the Internet culture and as an indication of its intended audience, have an international outlook from its inception. This will be given expression, among other ways, by publishing articles in a range of languages (in alphabetical order): Afrikaans, Dutch, English, French, and German. Requests for publication of articles in other languages will be given serious consideration.

and other reasons have made the University of Pretoria a focal point for the study of the Old Testament in South Africa, on the African continent and in the larger academic and church world.

The flexibility that is offered by telematic education is an extension of these positive features. The Internet has meant that international borders simply fade away as far as academic studies are concerned.⁶ Furthermore, the financial, family, ministry and other difficulties associated with studying in another country are substantially eased when one studies from home by telematic means. The Department of Old Testament therefore feels itself privileged to open its doors to prospective students who want to avail themselves of these new possibilities.

In addition to the academic integrity that the University of Pretoria's Faculty of Theology offers, it has also proven itself a comfortable academic home to a range of church traditions. Students from Calvinist, Lutheran, Orthodox, Catholic and Evangelical backgrounds have found their traditions respected precisely because of the academic integrity found here. Because Old Testament science has historically proven itself open to such an ecumenically wide-ranging group of participants,⁷ perhaps more so than many other fields of theological enquiry, students find the enrichment they experience from such an openness personally affirming.

It is a long way yet before Old Testament Science in particular and the academic study of theology in general will find its proper place on the World Wide Web. The WWW itself is still in its infancy. Yet, by using this potent new medium critically for the purposes of researching the Old Testament, we will at once be advancing our field of study and giving shape to the way the Old Testament finds its place on the Internet.

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⁶ The Internet is of course not without its educational-ethical implications; see e.g. C. Lombaard, "Teaching Theology via the Internet: Some Ethical Dimensions", forthcoming the *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, and the literature cited there.

⁷ For broader perspectives on ecumenism and the Bible, see C. Lombaard, "Ecumenism and the Bible", in C. Lombaard (ed.), *Essays and exercises in ecumenism*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications (1999) 26-41.

Reports from conferences

Port Harcourt (Nigeria): The 15th annual conference of the Nigerian Association for Biblical Studies was held between the 9th and 12th July, 2002, at the University of Port-Harcourt, Port Harcourt, Nigeria. The theme of the conference was “Christology in African Context”, and the conference was attended by biblical scholars from Nigerian universities and theological seminaries.

The conference was declared open by the Rivers State Governor, Dr. Peter Odili, who charged participants to profer biblically based and Christocentric principles, that will lead Nigeria, and Africa in general, out of her myriad socio-political crises. The governor was of the view that the person and works of Christ are central to moral regeneration and national rebirth. He argued that it is only trained biblical scholars that can take the lead in articulating Christ’s relevance in the African context. Also the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Port-Harcourt, Professor A. Briggs, spoke in the same vein in his keynote address.

Lead papers were delivered by eminent biblical scholars and clergy, like Professors C.U. Manus, S.O. Abogunrin, J.O. Akao, R. Olajubu, and C. Winoh. Apart from these, there were about 35 papers presented by scholars and clergymen across the country. Basically, these papers focused attention on the method, form and content of Christology in the African context. Some scholars believed that Africans must evolve a methodology that can be seen to be free from western conceptual models, and that categories for Christology should be derived from our African context. As far as the content of Christology is concerned, some of the papers then suggested that African culture and contemporary socio-political conditions must be considered. Relating Christ to the African culture is an attempt to make him acceptable to the people. The efforts of highlighting his relevance in contemporary socio-political situation is an attempt to further assert his Lordship over the sacred and secular space.

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Toronto (Canada): The 2002 Annual Meeting of the AAR/SBL (American Academy of Religion & Society of Biblical Literature) took place in Toronto, Canada, November 23-26. Amongst a large number of groups and consultations, its African Biblical Hermeneutics Consultation focused on “AIDS/HIV and the Bible in Africa”. The consultation gathered 56 people and it was presided by Dr D.R. Mbuwayesango (Hood Theological Seminary, USA).

A first paper was read by Professor G.O. West (University of Natal-Pietermaritzburg, South Africa): “HIV/AIDS and the Bible in South Africa”. A

Bible study for HIV/AIDS positives was here presented as part of a “Solidarity Program” in South Africa. A second paper, written by Dr D. Akoto (Trinity Theological Seminary, USA), was then read by Dr M. Masenya: “HIV/AIDS and the Bible in West Africa”. The vision of the dry bones in Ezek 37 was here analysed, and some lines were drawn from the text and to the situation of HIV/AIDS affected people. And then a third paper was read by Dr Jean-Samuel Toya (United Evangelical Mission): “HIV/AIDS and the Bible in central and East Africa”. Some practical aspects of myths related to the origin of HIV/AIDS were here focused.

Dr M.W. Dube (University of Botswana) responded to all three papers. She emphasized that HIV/AIDS is not about Africa or individual immorality, rather it is a global epidemic and a global crisis. Finally, Dr Mbuwayesango closed the discussion by asking whether such a consultation actually serves to stigmatise Africa, or if it can open up for a scholarly discussion of how to deal with this huge—and global—problem.

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Upcoming conferences

Cairo (Egypt): The 11th Congress of the Panafrican Association of the Catholic Exegetes (PACE) is programmed to take place from September 1st to 11th 2003 in Cairo, Egypt. At the 10th Congress in Sébikhotane (Senegal), from July 25th to August 1st 2001, the principal theme was determined and the secretariat has fixed it as following: “Prophecy and prophets in the Bible. Necessity of the prophetism in the midst of the Church as Family of God”. Topics for the congress are: (i) “The prophets and the religious cult in the midst of the people of God”; (ii) “The prophets of Israel and the question of social justice”, (iii) “The prophets towards the political power of their time”, (iv) “The role of the prophets in the international relationships”, (v) “The accomplishment of ancient prophecies in the New Testament”, (vi) “What is new in New Testament prophecy?”. One should remember that the PACE congresses have the task to unite the scientific rigour with the inculturation. The papers should show evidence a highly scientific exegesis, but contextualized. Thus, for the paper to be ready for publication in the 11th PACE Congress Proceedings, attention should be paid to critical exegesis, theology and their application in the African context. Participants are asked to register as soon as possible, to Abbé Jean-Bosco Matand, B.P. 3258 Kinshasa (RDC), Tel.: +243 81 812 0831, fax: +231 88 44 948, e-mail: apecapace@yahoo.com

Cambridge (England): The 2003 International Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature is held in Cambridge, England, in the period 20-25 July 2003. Proposals for papers are due by 15 December 2002. For 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-site2.org/Congresses/IM/IM_Index.php3

Book reviews

Knut Holter, *Old Testament Research for Africa: A Critical Analysis and Annotated Bibliography of African Old Testament Dissertations, 1967-2000*. Peter Lang Publishing: New York, 2002, viii + 143 pp. ISBN: 0-8204-5788-4 (Bible and Theology in Africa; 3).

In the introduction of this book, Professor Holter discloses his goal: African biblical scholarship lacks bibliographical and historical perspectives and the book aims to fill this void. Chapter two is a bibliographical analysis. The author discusses the geographical delimitation, and for pragmatic reasons he excludes dissertations written by South African scholars. In the annotated bibliography, which is the second and the main part of the book, 87 doctoral dissertations are listed alphabetically, according to author's family name, and analysed according to title, institutional data, advisor, publication title (if published), keywords, key texts and abstract. In chapter three, the dissertations are studied statistically. Many of them were produced in a Western context, especially in Rome, Italy. Nigerians have written nearly 40% of all the 87 dissertations. More than two third are written in English, the remaining in French. Until 2000, only 18 out of the 87 dissertations were published, and one notices that only one is published in Africa.

Chapter four offers a thematic analysis. The dissertation material is grouped into comparative and exegetical studies. Some dissertations use Africa to interpret the Old Testament, others use the Old Testament to interpret Africa, and some analyse the problems of translating the Old Testament in Africa. In the exegetical studies, some dissertations analyse certain parts of the biblical texts and the Apocrypha, others are thematic and lexicographic studies, and some focus on ancient translations, like the Septuagint and the Targum. The author argues that the texts and the motifs chosen are often related to experiences and concerns within the African context of the researchers.

The author concludes his book by pointing out that it is the first of its kind. He hopes that it will be a resource further research and for pedagogical presentations of African Old Testament scholarship. The discussion partners of

the first generation of African Old Testament scholars were mainly western scholars, and the author warns the second generation against neglecting their African research context, an approach which “[...] would continue the more general tendency of marginalizing African Old Testament scholarship”. At the end of the book, a bibliography and indexes of authors, biblical references and subjects are provided.

I hope this very useful book, which may be questionable in some small details, will reach its goal. I think that beyond expressing a pessimistic view on Old Testament scholarship in Africa, Professor Holter urges African scholars to really take their place among the general Old Testament scholarship in the world. It is a challenge to African scholars, especially for these coming years, to bring African Old Testament scholarship out of its marginalization.

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John R. Levison & Priscilla Pope-Levison (eds.), *Return to Babel: Global Perspectives on the Bible*. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999. ISBN 0-664-25823-9. US\$ 19.95.

This book is an exciting experiment! Ten biblical texts are interpreted: Genesis 11:1-9, Exodus 20:1-17, Psalm 23:1-6, Ecclesiastes 3:1-8, Isaiah 52:13-53:12, Matthew 5:1-12, John 1:1-18, Acts 2:1-42, 1 Corinthians 15:1-58, and Revelation 21:1-22:5. Each text is given three interpretations, reflecting Latin American, Asian, and African perspectives respectively, and each interpretation follows the same structure: context, text, and reflection. The result is a collection of thirty essays, none previously published. Some of the essays are brilliant, others are probably included simply to complete the pattern of the book. Nevertheless, as a whole the essay collection is very valuable, as it provides the reader with relevant comparable material. In a time focusing on contextual theology and biblical interpretation it is most useful to have one single volume offering ten such sets of interpretations, each set reflecting the same three geographical and sociological perspectives. The African contributors—Solomon Avotri (Ghana), Hannah W. Kinoti (Kenya), Timothy G. Kiogora (Kenya), Francois Kabasele Lumbala (Dem. Rep. of Congo), and Patrice M. Siyemeto (Zambia)—succeed in letting African experiences encounter the biblical texts. Let one example serve to illustrate this. Hannah W. Kinoti’s interpretation of Psalm 23 manages to find a good balance between traditional and current African experiences. The metaphor of the shepherd certainly appeals to people living close to their domestic animals, sometimes having to protect their flock against hyenas and lions, but it also serves as a source of comfort in the face of current insecurity in Africa. The editors are both professors at Duke University in the United States. They have

provided what will prove to be a valuable source book for lecturers and graduate students concerned with contextual biblical interpretation, whether in Africa or elsewhere.

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K.J.N. Owan, *Woman's Rights in Human Rights*. Enugu: The Ambassador Publication, 2000, 64 pp. ISBN: 978-049-104-x (African Proverbial Wisdom Series; 1).

K.J.N. Owan, *Moments for Meditation*. Enugu: The Ambassador Publication, 2001, 52 pp. ISBN: 978-049-077-x (African Proverbial Wisdom Series; 2).

Father Kris J.N. Owan is trained in Rome (Biblicum and Urbaniana), and at present he serves as Professor of Biblical Studies at the Catholic Institute of West Africa (Port Harcourt, Nigeria). In these two booklets he has selected proverbs from various parts of Africa, and these proverbs are used to relate biblical texts and African experiences. Owan's brief meditations touch various aspects of life and faith, and his background in biblical studies enables him to find relevant texts.

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from the readers. Other scholars working with the Old
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ideas and meanings, your research and book projects, your
meetings and conferences.

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