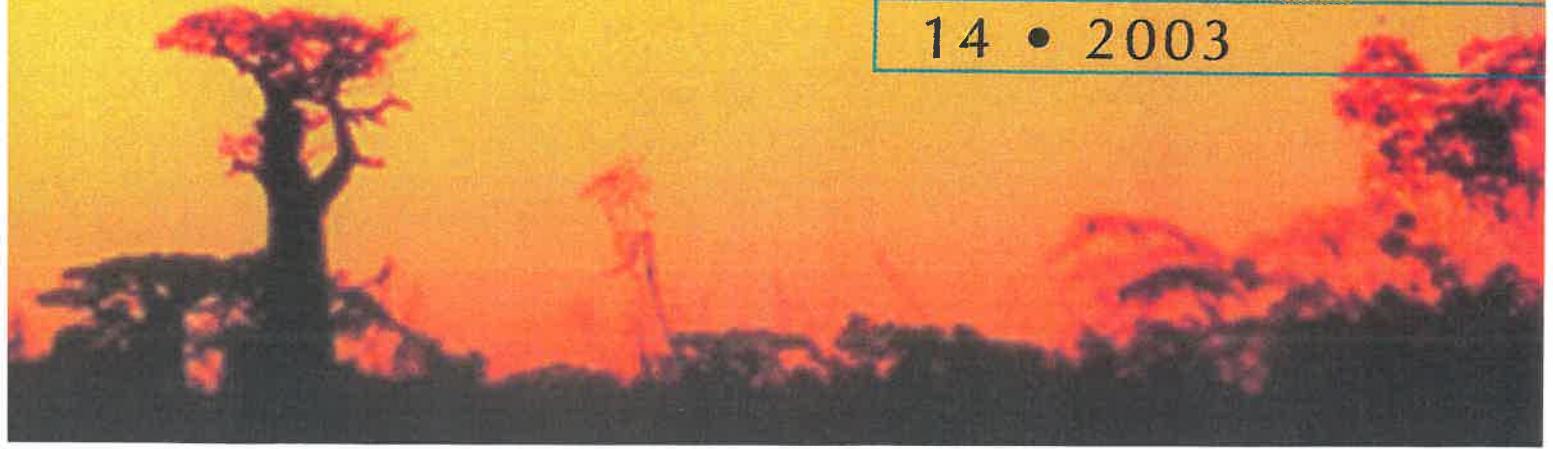


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Bulletin for Old Testament Studies in Africa (BOTSA) aims at being a forum for exchange of ideas and information about Old Testament studies in Africa. In brief articles *BOTSA* comments on pedagogical, methodological and research political questions 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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Bulletin for Old Testament Studies in Africa

Issue 14, May 2003

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Let the Discussion Continue!

A year ago (Issue 12, May 2002), this bulletin addressed some aspects of the contextuality of Old Testament studies in South Africa. Due to heavy response from the readership, the editorial board decided to let issue 13 (Nov 2002) continue the debate and now issue 14 (May 2003) conclude it. The present issue therefore lets *Bungishabaku Katho* respond to *Innocent Himbaza*'s article on contextual versus historical-critical interpretation in issue 13, with a brief answer from *Himbaza*. And *Jesse N.K. Mugambi* responds to *Willem Boshoff* and *Gerrie Snyman*'s articles on ‘White’ scholarship in issue 12, with an answer from *Snyman*.

The questions that have been touched in the recent issues of *BOTSA* are clearly not the kind of questions where one would expect any unanimous agreement. Still, I hope that the perspectives that have been voiced here may serve to clarify some of the positions, so that the debate can continue, although this bulletin goes on to other sets of challenges facing Old Testament studies in Africa.

Knut Holter

La légitimité de la contextualisation

Une réponse à Innocent Himbaza

Bungishabaku Katho

L'article d'Innocent Himbaza dans le dernier numéro de *Bulletin for Old Testament Studies in Africa (BOTSA)*, 13, November 2002, discute de la question de la contextualisation de la Bible en Afrique.¹ Himbaza semble exprimer une inquiétude concernant l'angouement actuel pour la contextualisation de la Bible en Afrique. Il pense que cette dernière risque “d'occuler la grande question de la recherche en sciences bibliques” (p. 2). Pour lui, la contextualisation est un cercle vicieux qui ne cherche à légitimer l'Afrique qu'aux yeux des africains. D'où, les chercheurs africains doivent sortir de ce cercle vicieux et s'engager plus dans les débats qui préoccupent tous les autres chercheurs et surtout dans des questions que se pose n'importe quel lecteur de la Bible. Il propose aux chercheurs africains d'imiter deux grands bibliistes de l'époque patristique, Origène d'Alexandrie et Saint Augustin d'Hyonne qui sont devenus célèbres non pas parce qu'ils étaient africains ou parce qu'ils ont pratiqué la contextualisation, mais “parce qu'ils ont travaillé sur la Bible et que leurs travaux ont fasciné et/ou convaincu plus d'un” (p. 6). Dans cet essai, je tenterai de démontrer pourquoi les chercheurs africains doivent continuer à s'investir dans la contextualisation de la Bible.

Mon expérience dans la contextualisation de la Bible

Je viens à peine de compléter la rédaction de ma thèse de doctorat à l'université de Natal, en Afrique du Sud.² Mes recherches dans ce coin de l'Afrique m'ont conduit à la découverte d'un fait important en ce qui concerne l'interprétation de la Bible: “le contexte de l'interprète est aussi important que celui du texte.” Désormais, j'étais en mesure d'établir une nette différence entre mon nouveau cadre de recherches et la philosophie de mon ancienne école, *Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology* (NEGST), où j'avais préparé deux maîtrises. NEGST m'a initié à la rigueur de l'exégèse mais le contexte africain dont on parle si souvent dans cette école n'est encore qu'apparente, plus particulièrement dans les domaines de l'interprétation de la Bible. Dans des mémoires des étudiants, ce contexte n'apparaît que comme un appendice, souvent dans un petit chapitre avant la conclusion, intitulé, “implications.” Ce qui

semble traduire que le désir pour la contextualisation est présent mais il manque encore une méthodologie appropriée ou peut-être le désir de “prendre le risque” afin de s’y engager résolument. Je parle du risque puisque la contextualisation demande qu’on s’écarte en quelque sorte du schéma traditionnel tracé par l’Occident, schéma qui, de nos jours, semble être accepté comme un standard.

Durant la rédaction de ma thèse, j’ai du apprendre à intégrer mon contexte congolais dans la rigueur de mon exégèse. Je dois confesser que c’était avec hésitation que j’avais commencé ce travail. Mais ces hésitations n’avaient pas duré longtemps à cause de l’encouragement reçu de mon promoteur, le professeur Gerald O. West. La plus grande contribution de ce dernier était de me convaincre qu’en tant qu’africain et congolais, je devrais prendre le risque de m’écartez de la méthodologie importée de l’Occident et de lire le texte de Jérémie avec un oeil congolais.

Ceci signifiait qu’il fallait intégrer mon contexte directement dans mon interprétation au lieu d’avoir un chapitre séparé, à la fin de mon exégèse, sur l’implication de ce que je venais de découvrir. Tout au long de cette interprétation, je me suis plusieurs fois servi de mon contexte congolais pour comprendre certains passages obscurs ou difficiles dans le livre de Jérémie, surtout là où je n’étais pas d’accord avec l’interprétation d’autres érudits occidentaux. Ce point est important puisqu’il nous montre que le contexte de l’interprète peut aussi éclairer le texte et non pas toujours le contraire, comme la méthode traditionnelle l’exige, et comme Himbaza le propose dans son article.

L’angouement actuel pour la contextualisation de la Bible en Afrique

La grande majorité de chercheurs africains dans le domaine biblique sont conscients du besoin urgent d’intégrer leur contexte dans leur interprétation. Par exemple, dans une lettre circulaire adressée à plus de soixante exégètes africains, les éditeurs de *African Bible Commentary* explicitement demandent aux contributeurs qu’il serait excellent de se servir “de n’importe quoi” (*make use of anything*) pour rendre ce projet vraiment africain.

En octobre 1999, j’ai pris part à une conférence internationale organisée à Nairobi sur l’interprétation de l’Ancien Testament en Afrique.³ Trois jours durant, plus de trente théologiens africains (et deux européens) qui s’intéressent à l’interprétation de la Bible en Afrique ont

débattu de l'importante question de la contextualisation de l'Ancien Testament en Afrique.

La 15^e conférence de l'association nigérienne pour l'étude de la Bible a plaidé pour une méthodologie authentiquement africaine et libérée du modèle conceptuel occidental (cf. *BOTSA* 13 (2002) 16). Beaucoup de conférenciers du Nigeria ont bien compris que cette nouvelle méthodologie doit absolument prendre compte de la culture africaine et de tous les problèmes socio-politiques de notre continent. Je me limiterai à ces trois initiatives. Faut-il peut-être ajouter en passant que l'Afrique du Sud peut être considérée comme la pépinière de la contextualisation de la Bible en Afrique à cause de beaucoup de publications dans ce domaine, mais aussi à cause de certaines organisations comme le *Institute for the Study of the Bible*, le *Institute for Contextual Theology*, sans oublier certains noms célèbres comme Albert Nolan, Gunther H. Wittenberg, Gerald O. West, etc.

Les raisons de cet engouement

Il me semble que la raison majeure de cette passion pour la contextualisation se trouve dans l'objectif même de nos recherches. Beaucoup d'entre nous sont arrivés à la conclusion que notre interprétation de la Bible doit être "engagée." Nous avons aussi constaté que la plupart de méthodes reçues de l'Occident sont caractérisées par une sorte d'objectivité, de neutralité, d'impartialité, etc. Pour la plupart de cas, ces méthodes ne nous conduisent qu'à des abstractions philosophiques ou à des réponses générales. Conséquemment, ces réponses servent l'académie au lieu de servir l'église africaine constituée en grande majorité des personnes qui ne sont pas très informées et partant incapables de comprendre les produits de nos éruditions. En plus, la plupart de ces éruditions n'ont pas vraiment de rapport direct avec la situation religieuse et socio-économique que beaucoup de membres de nos églises vivent.

Comme Himbaza lui-même l'a avoué, l'on cherche à répondre aux questions que n'importe quel lecteur de la Bible se pose. Je doute d'ailleurs que tout le monde se pose vraiment les mêmes questions (je préférerais plutôt parler des "questions d'ordre général"). En plus, une interprétation qui ne prend en compte aucun contexte précis ne peut pas répondre d'une façon adéquate aux problèmes qui nous criblent en Afrique. Puisque beaucoup de chercheurs pensent que la parole de Dieu peut porter solution aux multiples problèmes africains, ils pensent aussi

qu'une interprétation donnée doit viser un problème précis dans un contexte précis. C'est pour cette raison que les questions académiques comme le Jésus historique et autres, importantes soient-elles, n'attirent pas beaucoup de chercheurs africains.

La Bible est devenue un document universel, mais elle n'est pas a-contextuelle ou neutre. Elle n'a pas été écrite pour répondre à des questions philosophiques que se pose l'académie, mais pour répondre à des questions précises dans le temps et l'espace. Un seul exemple nous suffirait ici. Toutes les lettres de Paul sont contextuelles. Elles ont été écrites pour répondre aux problèmes précis qui se posaient dans les églises au temps de l'apôtre. Pour la plupart de cas, Paul s'est servi de l'Ancien Testament pour répondre à ces questions. Et pourtant, la manière dont Paul a interprété les Ecritures nous donne matière à réflexion.

C'est pour cette raison qu'il y a aujourd'hui beaucoup de travaux sur la technique d'interprétation de l'Ancien Testament par les auteurs du Nouveau Testament. Si Paul était notre contemporain, nous lui reprocherions soit d'avoir interprété certains passages sans tenir compte de leurs contextes originaux, soit d'avoir limité ses lettres seulement aux problèmes d'églises locales précises ou des régions précises, au lieu de formuler ses réponses de façons à répondre aux problèmes de tous les temps et de tous les âges. Pour reprendre l'expression d'Himbaza, on reprocherait à Paul de n'avoir pas abordé (en plusieurs endroits) des questions "que se pose n'importe quel lecteur de la Bible." Paul serait donc accusé d'avoir un esprit borné.

Je ne vais pas dire que les Africains doivent abandonner les autres questions de la Bible dans leur interprétation. Nous ne les avons pas abandonnées, puisque Himbaza lui-même l'a reconnu (p. 6). Mais il est question de la priorité dans nos recherches. La plupart de questions que nous adressons dans nos recherches sont des questions de vie ou de mort pour nos communautés. Les contextes dans lesquels nous évoluons nous obligent à ne pas nous limiter qu'aux questions objectives et académiques. Il est ridicule que l'Afrique soit le continent le plus christianisé au monde mais en même temps le plus problématique de tous.

Nous devons remettre en question les méthodes dont nous nous sommes servis jusqu'ici pour interpréter la Bible mais qui semblent n'avoir pas aidé à transformer l'église. Je m'imagine que si Himbaza était encore dans son Rwanda natal, il nous rejoindrait dans ce combat pour le changement (on voit ici combien le contexte dans lequel nous évoluons peut influencer notre domaine de recherche). Et dans ce combat, nous

nous inspirons des exemples d'écrivains bibliques comme Paul qui nous montre comment faire la théologie pour le peuple de Dieu. Les questions d'intérêt général sont importantes mais celles relatives à la pauvreté, à la démocratie, à la globalisation, aux dettes extérieures, au tribalisme, au crime, au génocide, au SIDA, à la réconciliation, à la foi superficielle dans nos églises etc., sont plus importantes encore et nous poussent à relire la Bible à la lumière de nos contextes pour tenter de trouver des réponses à ces maux.

Pour Himbaza, le danger de la contextualisation est qu'elle ne légitime l'Afrique qu'aux yeux des Africains. Je ne suis pas sûr d'avoir bien compris ce qu'il voulait dire, mais je suspecte qu'il s'agit ici à la fois du problème de l'orientation et de standard de nos travaux. En d'autres termes, il pense qu'il y a risque que nos travaux soient jugés non seulement trop limités dans l'espace mais aussi trop apologétiques et en dessous du standard de l'académie. C'est ici le piège dans lequel nous pouvons tomber. Mais alors, qui fixe le standard? Devons-nous continuer à penser que tout ce que nous faisons doit se conformer aux règles que les autres ont fixées? Ma réponse à la dernière question est simplement non. La question pertinente serait plutôt de savoir si la contextualisation comme méthode dans l'interprétation de la Bible répond adéquatement aux besoins de l'église africaine ou non. C'est par sa pertinence que cette méthode doit être jugée et non pas par comparaison à l'Occident.

Conclusion

Il y a beaucoup de défis en matière de contextualisation de la Bible auxquels nous devons faire face en Afrique (nous aurons l'occasion d'en parler prochainement), mais je dois conclure cet essai en demandant aux chercheurs africains qu'au lieu de s'arrêter sur Origène et Saint Augustin comme modèles, nous devrions remonter plus loin et considérer très sérieusement les méthodes que Paul a utilisées dans son interprétation de l'Ancien Testament. Paul a su adapter, d'une façon adéquate, l'ancien texte aux nouveaux contextes afin de trouver de solutions aux problèmes d'églises locales et régionales.

Notes

1. I. Himbaza, "La recherche scientifique et la contextualization de la Bible", *Bulletin for Old Testament Studies in Africa* 13 (2002) 2-7.

2. Ma thèse s'intitule “To know and not to know YHWH: Jeremiah’s understanding and its relevance for the church in DR Congo”.
3. Les articles lus dans cette conférence ont été publiés dans: M. Getui & al. (eds.), *Interpreting the Old Testament in Africa: Papers from the International Symposium on Africa and the Old Testament in Nairobi, October 1999*. New York: Peter Lang, 2000 (Bible and Theology in Africa; 2).

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Contextualization ou pas? Le problème est ailleurs

Innocent Himbaza

Mon article “La recherche scientifique et la contextualization de la Bible”, *Bulletin for Old Testament Studies in Africa*, 13 (2002) 2-7, souligne essentiellement le fait que quelqu’un peut tout à fait comprendre un contexte qui lui est étranger à l’origine et proposer une lecture contextuelle de la Bible absolument adéquate pour ce même contexte. La question de la contextualisation est alors placée dans un champ plus vaste des recherches sur la Bible et des questions que pose sa lecture. Je propose donc au lecteur de ne pas me prêter telle ou telle intention différente de la mienne.

Dans un article du même numéro, M. Masenya, “Response to Himbaza and Holter”, pp. 9-12, note à mon sujet:

[H]e argues that these four “windows”, including the one on contextualization, can be studied irrespective one’s social location. (p. 9)

Or, je dis clairement que:

la fenêtre sur la contextualisation du texte requiert la connaissance du contexte dans lequel on veut faire cette contextualisation. (p. 3)

A-t-elle bien compris ce que je dis ici?

Pour réagir à l'article de B. Katho, je souhaiterais simplement qu'il relise bien mon article. Pourquoi m'inquiéterais-je de "l'engouement actuel pour la contextualisation de la Bible en Afrique" comme il le dit, alors que moi-même je fais la contextualisation de la Bible? D'ailleurs mon livre, *Transmettre la Bible. Une critique exégétique de la traduction de l'AT, le cas du Rwanda*. Rome: Urbaniana University Press, 2001, traite entre autres de cette question au niveau de la traduction en *kinyarwanda* du texte biblique lui-même. Et pour revenir à mon article dans *BOTSA* 13, je considère la contextualisation comme une des fenêtres importantes qui s'ouvrent sur la Bible (p. 3). Du même coup, ce que Katho me prête, comme ne pas tenir compte du contexte précis dans l'interprétation, se conformer aux règles que les autres (Occident) ont fixées, et d'autres, est complètement gratuit. Je dis qu'il est important que les Africains lisent la Bible dans leur contexte. Je dis qu'il est important qu'ils réhabilitent l'Afrique s'il leur semble qu'une lecture trop eurocentrique ne rend pas justice à l'Afrique (pp. 5-6). Katho a-t-il lu cette phrase? Je souhaite seulement qu'on ne remplace pas une lecture eurocentrique par une lecture afrocentrique. C'est ce remplacement qui légitimerait l'Afrique uniquement aux yeux des Africains. Je continue à penser qu'au niveau des interprétations bibliques, il faut d'abord laisser la Bible nous parler dans nos différents contextes et non lui faire dire ce que nous voulons.

Katho dit:

[...] les questions académiques comme le Jésus historique et autres, importantes soient-elles, n'attirent pas beaucoup de chercheurs africains.
(p. 5)

Il serait intéressant de savoir quelles sont ces "autres" questions. Toutefois, je trouverais dommage pour l'Afrique que cette phrase reflète effectivement la réalité des chercheurs africains.

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African and Africanist Scholarship¹

Jesse N.K. Mugambi

In this paper I make a clear distinction between ‘African’ and ‘Africanist’ scholarship. The scholarship conducted by ‘White’ academics commenting on the African situation is ‘Africanist’, not ‘African’. It is possible to make a distinction between ‘African’ and ‘Africanist’ biblical scholarship, in the same way that similar distinction is made between ‘African’ and ‘Africanist’ history.

This paper was occasioned by three articles that appeared in the *Bulletin for Old Testament Studies in Africa (BOTSA)*, Issue 12, May 2002. Three South African Scholars, two ‘White’ men and one ‘Black’ woman, addressed themselves to the question whether ‘White’ South African scholarship can be ‘African’. These scholars were Willem Boshoff, Gerrie Snyman and Madipoane Masenya, respectively. That this question should arise at this time in South Africa’s history, is indicative that the reconstruction of national social consciousness has hardly begun in that country. The *BOTSA* issue containing those articles was published more than a decade after the dramatic release of Nelson Mandela from life imprisonment under apartheid, on 11 February 1990, having suffered twenty-seven years of incarceration. Two years after that event, in 1992, Professor Ferdinand Deist concluded an essay with words that opened Willem Boshoff’s article in *BOTSA*:

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 the contribution to South African scholarship over a period of more than fifty years.²

Looking back for a decade after Deist’s essay, W. Boshoff has observed in the *BOTSA* article:

Many things have changed in the country [South Africa], but possibly many more things have not changed at all. [...] 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.³

During preparation of the first draft of this paper, I received Issue 13 of *BOTSA*, November 2002. Two scholars, Knut Holter and Innocent Himbaza, challenged Madipoane Masenya against her insistence that ‘White’ scholarship is not ‘African’. My intention in this paper is to help in providing some conceptual clarity to this discourse. Certainly, anyone can study and conduct research on anything. However, the quality and orientation of such study and research is determined and influenced by the researcher’s ontological starting points and ideological presuppositions. There are no ‘objective’ scholars anywhere, and there never have been.

Contextual background

To help the reader appreciate the context, in which I write this response, I shall narrate one incident among many in my professional career. Shortly after Kenya’s achievement of national sovereignty in 1964, the Ominde Commission was appointed to review the colonial system of education and make recommendations for a new Education Act. During the colonial period schooling in Kenya was conducted under the British Education Act of 1944, and all major examinations were overseen by the Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate. The Ominde Commission accomplished its work within four years, and in 1968 the new Act was passed, which is still operative.

Under the Act, the entire colonial curriculum was overhauled. New syllabi in all subjects had to be formulated. I was appointed member of the Joint Religious Education Panel, comprising both Catholics and Protestants. The entire Panel had about thirty members. There were four Kenyans, two Catholics and two Protestants. The rest were missionaries from Europe and North America. Each brought his or her tribal and denominational idiosyncrasies into the debates, which the four of us found immensely interesting and revealing. The Kenyans in the Joint Panel were convinced that African Religion and Culture should become the core of our curriculum, in the same way that the Greek and Latin Classics have been the core of European schooling since the Renaissance.

At the beginning, the missionaries were unanimous amongst themselves that African ‘heathenism’, ‘paganism’ and ‘primitivity’ should not be taught in a ‘Christian’ syllabus. I replied that if European ‘paganism’ could form the core of the entire North Atlantic education edifice (including Christian theological training), it was inconsistent of

the missionaries to deny Africans the right to make their own cultural and religious heritage the core of their own education system. After three years of debating, (1969-1972) we reached consensus, and a Syllabus was approved under the title ‘African Religious Heritage’. One important clause in the Preamble stated: ‘The African Religious Heritage should be presented as it is, so that other religions can meet it on its own terms’.

When the time came for the Joint Panel to commission authors of textbooks for the syllabus, several missionaries were very keen to be commissioned, because they believed they ‘knew’ the African religious heritage and how it should be taught. Those who initially had been most opposed to introduction of this syllabus into the curriculum, became the ones most interested in writing the textbook for a course to which they were ideologically antagonistic. It would have been a tragedy if the Joint Panel had commissioned them for the task.

The Kenyans in the Joint Panel were convinced that the textbook for this syllabus ought to be authored by Kenyans, as members and partakers of the African heritage, not by missionaries whose interest was peripheral, exotic and condescending. During this debate, two of the missionaries who were eager to be commissioned, pointed out that they were much older, and had lived in Kenya much longer than any Kenyans that might have the necessary qualifications to write the Textbook. One of them proudly announced that in the 1940s he had been initiated as an ‘elder’ of one of the African communities in Kenya, in the course of his missionary duties. Therefore, he argued, he was also an ‘African’ and a ‘Kenyan’.

The Kenyans in the Joint Panel replied that none of the missionaries were qualified to write the textbook for this particular syllabus, irrespective of age, denomination or length of service in Kenya. In the end, two Kenyans were commissioned, and wrote the textbook that became very successful, despite missionary efforts to undermine it. One of the Kenyan co-authors eventually became a university professor, and the other an archbishop.

Implications for African and Africanist scholarship

In the discourse running though the three *BOTSA* articles, I have discerned similar dynamics. The concerns of Madipoane Masenya are on quite a different plane from those of Willem Boshoff and Gerrie Snymann. Masenya is concerned about the contextual authenticity of academic pursuits. Boshoff and Snymann are interested in the power to

name and describe ‘the other’. These two ideological positions are irreconcilable. In his book *Ethics of Biblical Interpretation* (1995) Daniel Patte reminds us of the necessity for every Bible reader (clerical, academic or lay) seriously to take ethical responsibility for the interpretation one renders to a set of biblical texts.⁴ Too often, however, biblical scholarship has tended to be conducted as a mere academic exercise, without any moral or contextual application on the part of the scholar.

From a contextual perspective Madipoane Masenya pleads for such ethical commitment. If the Bible is read like any book of fiction, poetry or mythology, it is of no value to the community of faith that claims the Bible as its source divine guidance. Such ‘secular’ or ‘scientific’ reading ought to belong to Literature and Classics, not to Theology. In this debate about ‘White’ and ‘Black’ readings of the Bible, which community of faith does each category of readers presuppose? Only the scholars concerned can personally answer this question for themselves and for posterity. If they wish to study the Bible merely as literature or as mythology, without any ethical obligation, perhaps it is time to make an academic emigration to the appropriate ‘home’ of their specialisation.

Notes

1. This is a brief excerpt from a much longer paper that BOTSA could not publish in its entirety.
2. F. Deist, “South African Old Testament Studies and the Future”, *Old Testament Essays* 5 (1992) 311-331, 319.
3. W. Boshoff, “Can ‘White’ South African Old Testament Scholarship be African?” *Bulletin for Old Testament Studies in Africa* 12 (2002) 1-3, 2.
4. D. Patte, *Ethics of Biblical Interpretation*. Louisville: John Knox, 1995; cf. also his *The Challenge of Discipleship*. Harrisburg: Trinity Press, 1999.

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Being Haunted by the Past

A Response to Prof Jesse N.K. Mugambi

Gerrie Snyman

I find Prof Jesse Mugambi's arguments penetrating, yet deeply problematic in terms of its exclusionary tone. The following remarks led to that experience:

- Scholarship conducted by 'White' academics commenting on the African situation is 'Africanist' and not 'African'.
- Dr Masenya is concerned about contextual authenticity of academic pursuits whereas Prof Boshoff and Prof Snyman are interested in the power to name and describe 'the other'.
- If they [scholars] wish to study the Bible merely as literature or as mythology, without any ethical obligation, perhaps it is time to make an academic emigration to the appropriate 'home' of the specialisation.

He addresses a similar issue raised by Edward Said in his book *Orientalism* (1985), but just from another geo-political and historical perspective. The issue is that of Africanism, the image Western society constructs of Africa when dealing with African issues.

Identity is one of the central questions posed by postcolonial theory. It sprung from the resistance to a prescribed identity enforced by the colonizers and from a need to reformulate and voice an identity that is taking shape with the departure of these colonizers. Edward Said (1985:3) refers to the notion of Orientalism, a discourse that enabled European culture to manage and produce the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically and imaginatively. But to Said the notion of Orient and West (Occident) are *ideological fictions* from which one should get away. Said does not want to think of identity in terms of essentials. In fact, he argues that it is nonsense for Arabs to defend their identity against the onslaughts of the West (cf. Said 2002:3).

In the terms set by Said's notion of Orientalism, Africanism suggests an Africa produced by non-Africans in a way that suits certain ideologies. It is an Africa produced politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically and imaginatively. It is an ideological construct. The problem is that these constructions are used as if they are objective reality. It becomes difficult when someone purports to speak *for Africa* without recognising or acknowledging his or her own

ideological bias and without asking Africans what they think. Does this mean that every non-African speaking about Africa is *per se* an Africanist? Does it mean that those ‘outside’ of Africa cannot speak truthfully about Africa, because they do not possess insider information? The Africa constructed by the insider is equally an ideological construct. The insider can repudiate the Africanist view, but should not fail to admit and declare his or her own ideological bias in turn.

Prof Mugambi says that Prof Boshoff and I are interested in the power to name and describe the ‘other’. Personally I am not interested in naming and describing the ‘other’. Having lost considerable political power my interest is more in the way the ‘other’ describes me. As long as that description takes place along those racial and ethnocentric lines that once defined apartheid, the danger of perpetuating in an inverted form the same old racialist essentialisms looms large. How should I then understand ‘contextual authenticity’? In terms of the arguments proposed by Prof Mugambi an Africanist cannot achieve contextual authenticity with African students. They are ‘outsiders’. Does contextual authenticity simply mean an African teaching another African? If this so, how does the notion of contextual authenticity differ from the policy of separate development of the apartheid state? If contextual authenticity is based on being in the same cultural tradition, how can one then make authentic propositions about the Bible, a set of documents originating from a completely different cultural and historical tradition?

In her response to Dr Himbasa, Dr Masenya (2002) asked which of the two interpreters she has projected is likely to do more justice to the context and who speaks with more authority and legitimacy about the context. Prof Mugambi narrates an anecdote in which this question is answered. In this post-colonial power game it is obvious that the missionary has to lose out. Colonial states were gatekeepers states, controlling the intersection between the state and the outside world. Its main source of revenue is duties on goods entering and leaving its ports. As gatekeeper the state decided who would leave for education and what kinds of educational institutions can enter. When the colonial regime left, the new political elite took over the function of gatekeeping. In terms of Dr Masenya’s question and Prof Mugambi’s anecdote, the answer is clear: the new gatekeeper acquires the newly acclaimed authority and legitimacy.

But this new gatekeeper simply continue to use the framework of the past, such as the binary oppositions created by terms such as African and Africanist, White and Black and Western versus African.

Subsequently, the modernity that gave birth to colonialism, simply continue in another format.

However, there are indications that since 1990 we are confronted with a new world order, a new ‘empire’ as Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri claims in their book *Empire* (2000). South Africa emerged just as the world started its passage to this new empire. The new empire, according to Hardt and Negri (2000:xii), has no territorial center of power or fixed boundaries or barriers. The modern dialectic of inside and outside has been replaced by a play of degrees and intensities, of hybridity and artificiality. The binaries that used to define conflict have become blurred.

If this idea of a new empire holds sway, are the current parameters of the debate still valid? The world is no longer divided into two or segmented camps but rather defined by innumerable partial and mobile differences. The debate thus far has been set in terms of binary structures and a new sovereignty that can rule over the past colonial or apartheid sovereignty. Is the debate perhaps not fixated on an old form of power with strategies that are effective on the old terrain? Has the time not arrived to relinquish colonial boundaries and modernist classification systems? Classification sets things *apart*, it cuts things off from each other and preserve them in discrete *segregated* containers. To classify in terms of African or Africanists, of White and Black, is to involve acts of inclusion and exclusion, acts that are central to the practice of racism (cf. Goldberg 2002:98). Dawn Duncan (2002:321) suggests postcolonial scholars should rethink the danger embedded in the constricting racial definition that is so easily accepted within postcolonial criticism.

Finally, Prof Mugambi argues that scholars who read the Bible in terms of mythology and literature (secular and scientific readings) should migrate to the relevant disciplines, as theology is preserved for reading the Bible for faith communities in order to draw from it divine guidance. This stance reminds me of the absolutist religious attitude of Christian Fundamentalism. Regarding the ethical obligation, I rather opt for Schüssler-Fiorenza’s (1988) double ethics of reading: an *ethics of historical reading* and an *ethics of accountability*.

My problem is how faith communities draw divine guidance from the Bible. A recent example is Pres. George W. Bush’s Bible reading that started a war against Iraq. He merely sees himself as God’s vehicle of punishment. Siker (2003) poignantly illustrates how Bush used John 1:4-5 in order to make America the Word made flesh, the one God sent to the world. These ideas are brewed in what Siker calls a para-church setting in the White House.

Not so recently the apartheid community drew divine guidance which said it is fine to segregate and to discriminate. The results were disastrous. What are the checks and balances in a faith community's reading? Other kinds of readings, *inter alia* those which do not find a place in Prof Mugambi's version of theology, serve as checks and balances. They scrutinise the biblical text and they do not hesitate to read against the grain. If someone in the apartheid community was able to say it was wrong of Israel to keep themselves apart and to discriminate against other peoples, apartheid would not have received theological justification. But to have said that then, would have boiled down to Bible criticism, which did not find any favour in Calvinistic thinking.

Currently, the role of women in the church and society receives attention. To argue that the Bible originated from patriarchal culture is to express a critique on a substantial part of the documents. I doubt it whether Dr Masenya with her womanist stance would escape Prof Mugambi's axe. In her retelling of these religious stories, a critique of the norms of the Bible is inevitable. As I write this response, I cannot help to think of Dorothee Sölle who just died. With her activism and engagement for Africa and her criticism of the Bible she never succeeded in obtaining a professorship in Germany. She was excluded by a similar axe.

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The ‘Africanization of Old Testament Studies’ Project

Knut Holter

A new research project on Africanization of Old Testament Studies was launched in August 2002, and content as well as organizing of this project is probably of some interest to the readership of this bulletin.

The project grows out of the Network of Theology and Religious Studies, a network of seven universities and theological seminaries (Cameroun, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Norway, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda) engaged in graduate and postgraduate studies in theology and religion. The network was established in November 2000, and Old Testament studies was already from the beginning pointed out as a discipline that needs special attention. In spite of a general interest for Old Testament studies in Africa, it was argued, African university departments of religion and/or theology, as well as African theological seminaries, face severe difficulties with regard to the development of an Old Testament scholarship that reflects African experiences and concerns, and also with regard to African staff recruitment to senior positions.

Objectives

In response to this challenge, the project focuses on Africanization of Old Testament studies from two perspectives: staff development and scholarly approaches.

- Staff development: The project trains staff in three Eastern African institutions: (i) Department of Religious Studies, Makerere University, Kampala, Uganda; (ii) Makumira University College, Tumaini University, Usa River, Tanzania; (iii) Lutheran Graduate School of Theology, Fianarantsoa, Madagascar. The training is organized as three Th.D. projects.
- Scholarly approaches: It is a primary aim of the project to develop Th.D. theses that relate Old Testament studies to the hermeneutical concerns of the African context of the researchers (the project’s major perspective). Besides this, it is a secondary aim of the project to analyze critically the presuppositions and potentialities of the concept of an Africanization of Old Testament studies (the project’s meta-perspective).

Organizing

The project was developed by Dr Serapio Kabazzi-Kisirinya (Uganda) and Prof Knut Holter (Norway), and it is funded by the Norwegian Council for Higher Education. Prof Holter serves as project coordinator, and the project is organized as a sandwich model:

- where the two partner institutions which developed the project and applied for its funding, Makerere University (Uganda) and School of Mission and Theology (Norway),
- together with two more partner institutions, Makumira University College of Tumaini University (Tanzania) and Lutheran Graduate School of Theology (Madagascar),
- go into an organized cooperation with an institution outside the Network of Theology and Religious Studies, namely the University of South Africa, in order to make some use of its institutional infrastructure and supervision capacity.

On a practical level this means that the Th.D. students are enrolled as doctoral students at the University of South Africa: they have a main thesis promoter from this university, and they make use of its institutional infrastructure. In addition, the project co-ordinator in serves as co-promoter for all three theses; his special responsibility is the African research context of the dissertation projects.

The Th.D. students stay in their home institutions, and they do their full time research there, in close contact (via e-mail) with their thesis promoters. For annual periods of four months the Th.D. students will come together for courses, supervision and bibliographical research, partly in Stavanger (School of Mission and Theology): the first, second and fourth year, and partly in Pretoria (University of South Africa): the third year. In connection with these annual periods of four months there will also be:

- annual one-week colloquies, where Th.D. students, thesis promoters, and project coordinator discuss the individual Th.D. projects (the major perspective of the Africanization project),
- annual one-day workshops, where the presuppositions and potentialities of the concept of an Africanization of Old Testament studies are critically analyzed (the project's meta-perspective).

Dissertation projects

The project started up in August 2002, and the first semester was used to general reading and project development:

- Lechion Peter Kimilike (Makumira University College of Tumaini University, Tanzania): *An African Perspective on Poverty Proverbs in the Book of Proverbs: An Analysis for Transforming Possibilities*. The project proceeds from the observation that Old Testament and African proverbs reflect apparently parallel patterns of world-views and social structures. Against this background, the project aims to develop an interpretive model allowing African proverbial material on poverty to be used as an interpretive entry to corresponding Old Testament material. Main promoter: Dr Madipoane Masenya, University of South Africa.
- Georges Razafindrakoto (Lutheran Graduate School of Theology, Madagascar): *The Use of Old Testament Texts in the Malagasy Religio-Cultural Context*. The project proceeds from the observation that there is an increasing tendency within various religious movements in contemporary Africa – both within and outside mainstream Christianity – of making use of Old Testament related rituals. Against this general background, the project aims to develop an interpretive model based on four cases in Madagascar where Old Testament related rituals have been introduced in recent years. Main promoter: Dr Magdel leRoux, University of South Africa.
- Philip Lokel (Department of Religious Studies, Makerere University, Uganda): *The Importance and Challenges of Finding Africa in the Old Testament: The Case of the Cush Texts*. The project proceeds from the observation that the so-called “African presence” in the Old Testament, which is met with great interest within certain African and African-American popular contexts, is more or less ignored by traditional western biblical scholarship. Against this background, the project aims to develop an interpretive model to this “African presence”, from historical-critical as well as interpretation historical perspectives, and with particular reference to the Old Testament references to the African nation of Cush. Main promoter: Prof Willie van Heerden, University of South Africa..

Each of these three dissertation projects will exemplify major perspectives on African Old Testament interpretation, and together they will improve our understanding of how the Old Testament is and can be interpreted in contemporary Africa.

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Upcoming Conferences

Ilishan-Remo (Nigeria): The 16th Annual Conference of the Nigerian Association For Biblical Studies (NABIS) convenes at Babcock University in Ilishan-Rem, Oyo State, Nigeria, in the period 15-18 July 2003. The theme of the conference is “Biblical Healing in African Contexts”, and there will be commissioned papers by Prof D.T. Adamo, Rt Rev Dr J.A. Oladunjoye, Dr A.M. Okorie, Mrs Dupe Owanikin, Dr A.O. Igenoza, and Dr C.O. Ogunkunle. Biblical scholars who wish to present papers at the conference are free to choose topics of their own which relate to the theme. For information: Secretary of NABIS, c/o Department of Religious Studies, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria.

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 religous 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: apeca_pace@yahoo.com

Atlanta (USA): The 2003 Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion (AAR) and Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) will take place in Atlanta, November 22–25. Amongst a large number of sections, groups, seminars and consultations on exegetical, theological and hermeneutical issues, one should especially notice the Consultation on African Biblical Hermeneutics. 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>

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

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