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Genesis 2-3

Our generation's search for an Africanized Old Testament scholarship has occasionally tried out various African perspectives on certain example texts. The best known case, I think, is the liberation (Mosala, Boesak, West) and inculturation hermeneutical (Oduyoye, Kabasele Mukenge) dialogue about the Cain and Abel narrative in Genesis 4, but there are other cases, too.

The following pages will present two interpretations of a neighboring text, the Eden narrative in Genesis 2-3. Both interpretations relate the text to the African context, but from different perspectives; whereas Anastasia Boniface-Malle uses the Eden narrative to interpret the African context, Sammy Githuku uses the African context to interpret the Eden narrative.

Knut Holter

**Africa is Formless and Void
and Darkness Covers the Face of Africa
Genesis 2:4b-25 and Portrayals of Africa**

Anastasia Boniface-Malle

Gen 2:4b-25 is traditionally considered by source critic scholars to be the work of the Yahwist writer, a Judean from the courthouse in the Davidic-Solomonic era. Along this line, it is thus regarded as one of the oldest creation stories. The preceding Gen 1:1-2:4a is considered to be the exilic version of the creation story attributed to the Priestly writer. The geographical, theological, sociological and world perceptions of these two schools were fairly different from each other. This should, at the larger context, attest for the different ways these stories are narrated. These two stories have been regarded mostly by the Judeo-Christian traditions as “creation stories/myths.” In fact, one cannot completely dispute this important affirmation which also finds support from the ecclesiastical creeds “God is the Creator.”

The second creation story attests (1) that God is the Creator, (2) the beauty and fullness of God’s creation, and (3) the connectedness and interdependence of God’s creation. By looking at African facade, the question to be considered is: Are these affirmations reflected in the daily lives of Africans? To respond to this question, I have decided to look at the Genesis story as a relational story rather than simply pinning it down as a creation story. I look at this story as the story of God’s relation with human beings and God’s relation with the rest of creation. It is also a story of human relationships, how humans relate to God and to each other in the institution of marriage, in the fall story, etc.¹ Furthermore, it is the story of how human beings relate or ought to relate with God’s larger creation. The relational aspect does not in effect reduce the creational value of the story; on the contrary, it expands and gives it a broader and more meaningful appropriation.

This relational aspect is the mirror, or rather, a conceptual framework in using Gen 2 to interpret Africa. Using this relational framework I have, for our purpose, come up with three portrayals/images that will highlight the levels and quality of relationships as lived in Africa. These portraits are in the realm of politics, gender and ecology. Our hermeneutical direction is framed around two significant surveillances: One, Africa is a continent with an enormous growth of Christianity, unlike anywhere else in the world. This is a reality which

does not need to be romanticized. Two, Africa is a continent in which many of its cultures revere creation of both animate and inanimate creatures as sacred and interdependent! With these background remarks, we shall now examine these three portraits below.

Political image

The creation of human beings enunciates two things: (1) the high status of the human beings, and (2) the sanctity of life. Our text for reflection is Gen 2:7 which reads,

And Yahweh Elohim formed the man dust from the ground. And blew in his nostrils breath of life and the man was a living being (a being with a life?).

In this verse God is portrayed as actively involved in creating humankind; here אדם is used generically to mean humanity. The verb יצר (“formed”) presents God as a potter, artistically making humanity. The same word is used in the creation of animals in v. 19; God forms both humanity and animals; the difference being that the forming of humanity is related to the dust of the ground. The Hebrew writer uses the play of words, אדם from אדמה. From the very beginning, humanity is placed in relation to the earth out of which it was taken (cf. below, Ecological image).

Human beings are the first creatures that Yahweh created in the second creation story. They are distinct from other creatures in respect to one thing only; they have God’s breath. Human beings like animals (vv. 19ff.) are created by God, but they are breathed with נשמת חיים (“living breath”). This is something corresponding to the “image” and “likeness” of God in Gen 1:27-28. Without this נשמה (“breath”), human beings are nothing but חיה (“beast”), like other animals, cf. v. 19. Apart from having a relationship with the earth (ground), humanity has a special relationship with their maker. These are two characteristics that animals do not possess. What does נשמת חיים imply? The idea of breath of life means to be endowed with characteristics that are God-like. These include glory and honour (Pss 8; 89:44b), righteousness, love, and justice (Ps 89:24, cf. 89:14). The idea of נשמה also indicates the ability to relate to God, to one another and to the cosmos. Furthermore, human beings are bestowed with royal status in creation. As kings and rulers, humanity is given responsibility to guard God’s creation against chaos and the threat of destruction. The rulers are made stewards to ensure the political well

being of the people they are entrusted with. However, rulers' authority is provisional and their rule is, ultimately, subject to God's wider plan to ensure wholeness, integrity, justice, equity and righteousness.

A quick glance at the face of Africa portrays nothing but enormous suffering of human beings from oppression, wars, various forms of injustice and loss of God's image and royal status, especially those millions of people living with HIV/AIDS. African leadership is a paradox; on the one hand, African leaders have played part in bringing human suffering, on the other hand, there are those who have not played their part responsibly in alleviating human predicaments. What has happened to that royal responsibility that is given to us in creation? Are churches in Africa living and upholding their biblical and cultural heritage that place human life and dignity at the center? Where is our Christian influence in promoting human life and dignity? Where is our African heritage of viewing life as sacred?

Gender relationship image

Gen 2 more than any other text of the Bible is used to elevate and denigrate relationships between men and women. Our verse that will lead our discussion in this section is 2:18 which reads,

Then Yahweh Elohim said, "It is not good Adam to be alone; I shall make for him a helper corresponding to him".

After this beautiful declaration God creates all sorts of animals and brings them to Adam, to see if Adam would find company. Adam names all animals, and at the end of it all, Adam was not happy. The narrator evaluates:

But for/to Adam there was not found a helper corresponding to him.

What seemed as almost a disheartening situation in essence gives the reason and justifies the urgency in the creation of Adam's true companion as described in verses 21-22:

So Yahweh Elohim caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man and the man slept, then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the Yahweh Elohim had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man.

In the creation story, we find an interesting phenomenon: the narrator uses the preposition מן, “from”, in referring to all creation; see 2:7, where man is created מן־הָאֲדָמָה, “from the ground”, and 2:9, where also the trees are made מן־הָאֲדָמָה, just like the human beings. Moreover, in 2:19 all the animals and birds are made מן־הָאֲדָמָה. In the creation of the woman, the same preposition מן is used, but this time the raw material is taken from the man that was created out of the ground (2:21, 22). This shows the avenues of human relationships, man relates to God, animals, and to other human beings. This is followed by Adam’s response (v. 23), which confirms such urgency when Adam says,

Then Adam said, “This indeed is the bone of my bones and the flesh of my flesh. For this reason, she shall be called a woman (אִשָּׁה) because she was taken from a man (אִישׁ)

Without going into the semantics of two words עֶזֶר and כִּנּוּדוֹ, we have to ask ourselves, why did God create a helper for Adam? In the text, the issue is that Adam was lonely. The grandeur of the garden did not give him happiness. And the self-supporting garden did not give him pleasure, nor the gold or other precious stones provided by the rivers satisfied his inner longings for company. Adam was lonely; the animals brought to him by God could not provide such companionship; he only names them. It was after he saw the אִשָּׁה (“woman”; another play of words: אִישׁ vs אִשָּׁה) that he burst into excitement, “this indeed is the flesh of my flesh, bone of my bone”. Furthermore, we are not told that Adam needed someone to help him with work; there was no work in the garden, Adam was simply in the middle of the garden surrounded by all that he needed for living except “company.” In other words, the woman was not created to work for man but to give man a company that nothing else in creation could give him.

Adam was created “out of dust/ground” and so were the trees (v. 9) and every beast of the field and every bird of the air (v. 19). The woman was not created out of the ground. Why? If the woman was created for companionship, what would her creation from the ground imply? It could mean two things: (1) That she could become a companion to Adam after some time, as they got used to each other or perhaps even made some treaties of peace or some agreements as to what their relationship should entail; in other words, some kind of a conditional relationship. (2) It could also mean that the woman became man’s rival, that is a threat to Adam, who is solely given the garden to enjoy. But the woman was not

created out of a man; she was created from Adam's side/ribs, vv. 21-22. God uses the man's side to make a woman, and God brings the woman to the man. It is God who is involved in the beginning and in the final process of the creation of a woman. This indicates that God is involved in this companionship. A person that is created out of the man's side then becomes a true companion; an indication that their relationship is not a result from treaties or did not develop from gradual acceptance of each other. The two human beings are not rivals; their relationship is supposed to be a loving one. The ideal picture of this kind of loving relationship can be seen in the Song of Songs.

Now, back to the meaning of our two words עֶזֶר and כִּנְגֵדוֹ, "a helper corresponding to him". In the Iraqw Bible it is translated as follows: *Heé nee inós slaqmís un tleéhh, oo alee/iisaywós wa hariím*, "a person who resembles him (*slaqmís*) I will create, that one who fits to be his helper (*alee/iisaywós*).". Though the first part is back translated as the person "resembling", the second part indicates a sense of subordination. The woman so created is simply one who helps the man. We can compare this with other translations:

- A helper as his partner (NRSV)
- A suitable companion to help him (TEV)
- *Msaidizi wa kufanana naye* (SWU): a helper who resembles him
- *Msaidizi wa kumfaa* (SHN): a fitting helper
- A suitable partner for him (CEV)

Apart from CEV, other translations lean toward identifying woman as someone who is created to help a man; someone with inferior or less status and role but simply a helper. Without going into lengthy discussions, the phrase עֶזֶר כִּנְגֵדוֹ has been used by many African churches to support their cultural system that does not allow a woman to achieve full potential in the church community. The word עֶזֶר, "helper", is interpreted as someone who only occupies a minor position or someone who fills in when the superior is absent. The second word כִּנְגֵדוֹ is translated mostly as fitting, suitable, resemblance has also been given a diminutive meaning or appropriation.

Let us briefly look at the grammatical and semantic meanings of the two words:

עֶזֶר

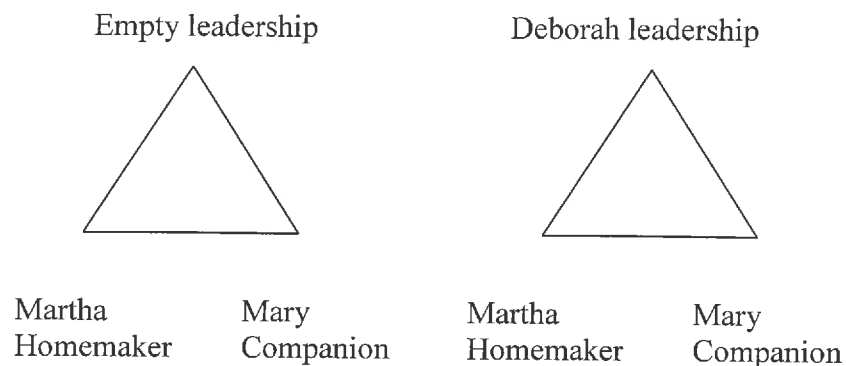
Outside Gen 2 we have several references to עֶזֶר, such as Exod 18:4; Deut 33:7, 26, 29; Pss 20:3; 33: 20; 70:6; 89:20; 115:9-11; 121:1, 2; 124:8;

146:5; Isa 30:5; Ezek 12:14; Dan 11:34; Hos 13:9. All references except Dan 11:34 use עֲזָר in reference to God. God cannot be a helper who is inferior to the one he helps (i.e. Israel or people).

כנגדו

The word is composed of three morphemes: prefix: prepositional כ, suffix: third person singular masculine ו, and the preposition נגד, which means “in front of”. In short, the word כנגדו gives more emphasis of companionship. The prepositional prefix כ itself is a prepositional of similarity or identity.

The beautiful image of the Creator creating a woman from a man has been used as a text to justify women’s subordination. It has become an oppressive text for women through translations and interpretations that are androcentric. This is reinforced by the patriarchal culture which is being shared by both the Old Testament context and the African culture. This subordination of women in Africa is more prominent in the division of labor as elaborated by two models below.



The two models show two different images/models of looking at woman’s role in Africa. The first triangle represents the model that is in operation in most spheres of life in Africa. Women occupy both the Martha and Mary position, the horizontal statuses. These are more or less ascribed statuses. The hierarchical ordering of statuses is called vertical status. Modes and means of moving up are set within the cultural parameters. Unfortunately, the Deborah position has to be achieved but the cultural parameters do not give place for women to always participate fully in that mobility because it is not expected of them. Even the companion status in many cases does not include mutuality but rather service to men (husbands, fathers, brothers, etc.) and for men. The cry of women due to oppression and discrimination is pervasive in the continent where Christianity grows at an alarming rate!

Ecological image

The second creation story attests that human beings owe their existence both to God and to the earth. As such they have a special responsibility to both God and the earth (created cosmos). Moreover, biblical creation stories attest the sacredness of all creation. Furthermore, Gen 2 functions not only as a paradigm of this sacredness of God's overall creation but of their interrelatedness and interdependence. Most importantly, Gen 2 teaches us that when human beings relate to God, they relate to the creation. In other words, one can go as far as saying that our worship of God is void outside human relationship with the entire creation. Human perception of and relationship with the non-human world can be characterized by what C. Westermann says,

In creation declaration, people for the first time conceptualized the origin of humankind and the world as a whole. To speak of the creator is to speak of the whole. No one experiences and "knows" humankind as a whole or the world as a whole. They are not empirically accessible. It is only when seen in their source and origin, only when seen as creation, that they can be spoken of and conceptualized as a whole. Everything that is included in the world and humankind must therefore share in this origin from the creator.²

The Garden of Eden is God's garden, not a human garden. All that is placed in the garden belongs to and comes from God. The human being owes life to God and to the ground, אֲדָמָה (Gen 2:7).

And Yahweh Elohim formed the man from dust from the ground. And (Yahweh Elohim) blew into his nostrils breath of life. And the man became a living life (living being).

From both the theological and the linguistic point of view, there is a relationship between אָדָם ("earthling") and אֲדָמָה ("earth"), a relationship of interdependence since "earthling" is then given charge to take care of the אֲדָמָה. Adam depends for his livelihood on the אֲדָמָה and the אֲדָמָה depends for its upkeep on the Adam. In other words, the earthling is placed there to take good care of the garden as a faithful steward, see Gen 2:15 as our key text for this section.

So Yahweh Elohim took the man and placed him in the Garden of Eden to till it and to keep (watch/guard) it.³

The Garden of Eden portrays a picture of a wonderful, serene and well-managed creation. In this setting “man” or “earthling” (human creature) is placed in the middle of the garden. It is God who plants the garden and endows it with all kinds of pleasant and useful trees in all areas of life (vv. 8-9). Furthermore, it is showered with rivers to make the garden flourish. The “earthling” is put in the garden for a specific purpose as directed by God: to till it (the garden representing the entire creation) and keep it.

The verb עָבַד (“to serve”, “to till”) is an important and key theological term. It refers to service,⁴ as well as reverence or worship.⁵ Thus, “tilling” refers to service or work/labor, service mostly in terms of working for “something” or for “someone”. In working, we benefit from our work, and we also make others benefit. That is to say, these two terms underlie human relationship to the earth: we can only diligently and faithfully serve that which we revere. Our reverence should be seen in our gratitude to God and to nature.

Africa is a continent of vast growing Christian churches. Paradoxically, it is a continent of sheer cry when it comes to deforestation and abuse of creation, with rivers polluted, trees cut down, animals hunted and killed mercilessly, etc. We are faced with biodiversity loss, water scarcity, and land degradation among many other things. The earthling is no longer close to the animals he/she so named (cf. vv. 19-20). We do many things that threaten the earth’s eco-system through our acts of corruption and exploitation. As a result, ecological crisis brings widespread sufferings, environmental disarray, and threat of climate change. Human greed, self-centeredness, and egocentric pursuits are behind all these disruptions of creation.

According to His Holiness Pope John Paul II, lack of due respect to nature threatens the world peace.⁶ The human being is given vocation, some freedom as well as prohibition. How have we tilled (served) and revered the earth? How have we watched or kept it like God watches over the people? The idea of watching also implies guarding and defending. In an era where creation has seen corruptibility this guarding/defending paradigm leads us to the eco-justice issues. “Caring, serving, keeping, loving, and living by wisdom—these translate into justice in political, economic, social, and environmental relationships”.⁷ Creation requires an advocate; human advocacy for the creation is part of participating in the creation, in the evaluation of creation and in keeping the integrity of creation for the benefit of all God’s created Africa and the world as a whole.

Conclusion

Using the creation story as a mirror to look at the face of Africa challenges us with great responsibility and accountability. As Africans, God has endowed us with two great heritages that show respect and reverence for creation: the biblical heritage and our own African heritage. Apparently, suffering plagues Africa in many forms. Political ineptitude, corrupt leadership in both secular and religious spheres, war, pestilence, epidemic and pandemic diseases, human greed, etc., have all contributed in the sufferings of both animate and inanimate creatures.

Part of this suffering is because we have not lived our lives in terms of God's plan and purpose for the created world. We have shared in promoting gender imbalance and inequality in the name of religion. Our own understanding of creation sometimes has initiated or supported human suffering especially to women and people suffering with HIV. We have diminished God's image through stigmatization of the people living with HIV/AIDS. Creation as a whole in Africa continues to "groan in travail" (Romans 8:22), because creation still waits for the revealing of God's children.

Christians in Africa need to learn from the interdependence and interconnectedness of creation. God's intention in creation is to provide each living creature with life that is whole. Living in terms of God's plan means to be "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4), raised out of sin to a level where we could truly know God, enjoy eternal fellowship with Him and share God's incorruptible life.

Notes

1. I am convinced that one cannot read Gen 2 in isolation with Gen 3. So my reading of Gen 2 extends to or culminates in Gen 3. Both of the stories are composed by the same author (J) and both display a greater degree of coherence and continuity in terms of its literary and thematic features.
2. Cf. C. Westermann, *Genesis 1-11: A Commentary*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House (1984) 109.
3. The verb שָׁמַר in the Hebrew Bible is used widely and in variety of ways. This word is often interpreted and appropriated as justifying control, ownership, and power exercise. It is important to note that in the Old Testament the verb שָׁמַר refers to life giving/enhancing relationship. It is largely tied to faithfulness to covenant oath, i.e. responding positively to the relationship that God has started e.g. Gen 18:19; 28:15; Exod 19:5; Pss 78:10; 103:18, etc. What this entails is that human beings are to make sure that they do not become the cause for the covenant breach. Closely and theologically tied to this is the keeping/observing of the life enhancing laws/commandments e.g. on the Passover observance e.g. Exod 12:25;

- 13:5, 10, 14; observing the Sabbath, Exod 34: 18; Pss 52:2; 56:6, where observing is tied to sanctification. Keeping of the commandments are widely used. Commandment and the covenant refer to the covenant relation and the purpose of observance is not just to maintain the relationship, but what purpose that relationship serves: to enhance life and wholeness for human beings cf. Josh 6:18. Most important, God is referred “keeper” of Israel, e.g. Pss 121: 3, 4, 5; 34:34:20.
4. In a noun form or phrase, עֶבֶד can also mean a slave, cf. Gen 9:25; 44:10; Exod 21:2; Josh 9:11, etc.
 5. The idea of עֶבֶד as worship is seen in many numerous places where עֶבֶד is combined with Yahweh, in a phrase עֶבֶד Yahweh or “your/my” (referring to Yahweh) servant”, cf. 1 Kgs 9:7; Isa 54:17; 65:15; 66:14; 1 Kgs 8:23; Isa 63:17, etc. Servant/s of God are worshippers of God, those who serve God in reverence.
 6. Message from his Holiness for the Celebration of the World Day Peace January 1, 1990, from www.acton.org/policy/environment/theology
 7. Evangelical Lutheran Church Statement on the Environment, from www.acton.org/ppolicy/environment/theology.

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The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil An African Reading of Genesis 2-3

Sammy Githuku

In Old Testament scholarship, the meaning of “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” in Gen 2-3, is an on going debate. To this day one can only speak of “endless discussions” (Westermann 1984:212). D.T. Adamo has rightly observed that in the past, most scholars turned to Mesopotamian literature for comparative material, and he proposes that it is now time that we rather turn to Africa. In this endeavour he summarizes some similarities between the creation account in Gen 2-3 and certain African creation stories (Adamo 1989:17). It would therefore be quite arrogant to claim that the following interpretation solves the exegetical problem of Gen 2-3. Still, there is a need to keep on reading the text in the light of possible African possible parallels. That is what this article seeks to do.

The “tree of life” and “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” are singled out of the rest of the trees in the garden (Gen 2:9, 17).¹ Prohibition is however only attached to the second tree: “but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die” (Gen 2:17). In Gen 3:3 it is called “the tree that is in the middle of the garden”, and it is simply called “the tree” in Gen 3:6.12. God refers to it as “the tree that I commanded you not to eat from” (Gen 3:11.17). God forbade the first couple not only to eat from it but also touching it lest they would die (Gen 3:3). On the contrary, the serpent knows that this tree imparts to the eater the knowledge of knowing good and evil (Gen 3:4). The fruits of the tree were a delight to the eyes and were good for food (Gen 2:9. 3:6). When Adam and Eve ate from the tree, their eyes were eventually opened and they knew that they were naked (Gen 3:7). Let us then, briefly, turn to some of the exegetical problems.

Interpretation of this tree is puzzling. First, because there are no sufficient parallels in the Ancient Near East (Walker 1996:1259). The exact Hebrew phrase *ועץ הדעת טוב ורע* is used only twice in the Old Testament (Gen 2:9.17). The tree is elsewhere in Gen 2 and 3 referred to simply as “the tree” (Gen 2:6, 3:11). This rare occurrence in biblical Hebrew makes it difficult to establish the meaning and the importance of the tree. The second problem is the identity of this tree. K. Budde claimed that it is the same tree as the tree of life (cf. Westermann 1984:212), arguing that the text is concerned with the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Only twice, at the beginning and at the end, is the tree of life mentioned (Gen 2:9, 3:22). C. Westermann concludes that the original narrative was about one tree in the middle of the garden but was expanded by a new motif from an independent narrative (Westermann 1984:212). Thirdly, there is an apparent contradiction between God’s promised judgment, the claim of the serpent and what actually happened after Adam and Eve ate from the tree. God said that “for the day you shall eat you shall die” (Gen 2:17). The serpent refutes God’s claim saying: “You will not die for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God knowing good and evil” (Gen 3:5). Upon eating from the tree, Adam and Eve do not die; rather, they have their eyes opened (Gen 3:7). In Gen 3:22, the narrator states that the serpent was right in saying that God meant to withhold from man the benefit of the tree of knowledge. The same intent is now attributed to Yahweh. Consequently, the Lord God says, “see the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil” (Gen 3:22). In the end the word of the serpent turned true and God effected a different punishment (3:24).

Probably to minimize the evident contradiction, some translations overlook the inf. absolute in the phrase **כִּי בַיּוֹם אַכְלֶךָ מִמֶּנּוּ מוֹת תָּמוּת** (2:17).² This interpretation understands God's command as "You will be mortal" rather than "you will die" (von Rad 1961:79).

G.J. Wenham has given a good summary of some of the suggested interpretations and here we need to mention only a few (Wenham 1987:63). One proposition is that the phrase "knowing good and evil" is simply a way of describing the results of obeying and disobeying God's commandment. Obedience would result in goodness while disobedience would result in evil. Another interpretation is that the "knowledge of good and evil" refers to sexual knowledge (Dragga 1993:4-11). This interpretation is based on the assumption that Adam and Eve were sexually ashamed after eating from the tree and they realized that they were naked (Gen 3:7). Furthermore the Hebrew root **יָדַע** in the phrase "the tree of knowledge of good and evil" often has a sexual meaning; cf. Gen 4:1, 19:8, Num 31:17.35 (Bailey 1970:145). This interpretation is weakened first on the basis of Gen 1:28, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth" and that it attributes human sexuality to God "See, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil" (Gen 3:22). Secondly, in the Old Testament nakedness is not understood in terms of sexual relationships (Bailey 1970:145).

G. von Rad interprets the phrase to be part of the binary formula found in the creation story presenting two extreme ends: heaven and earth, darkness and light, day and night. Good and evil, therefore, are two parts that make a complete whole meaning (von Rad 1961:79). This interpretation can be rejected because not everything God created was put in this formula. Another proposal is that the phrase means comprehensive knowledge. This interpretation is based on the fact that in 2 Sam 14:17, King David is said to possess the discernment of an angel. The weakness of this interpretation is that after eating from the tree Adam and Eve did not receive universal knowledge.

Each of these and other interpretations make a positive contribution to the mystery of the meaning and identity of the tree. One thing that is, however, common to all these interpretations is that no single reading addresses all difficulties in the narrative. The following African interpretation, based on the *Agikuyu* creation story and their figure of speech, faces the same dilemma.³ However, it seeks to propose the identity of the tree, the meaning of knowing good and evil and to resolve the apparent contradiction between the serpent and Yahweh on the benefits of eating from the tree.

Among the *Agikuyu*, as in many other societies, trees were life. In a modified way, the garden motif is found in their creation story. *Ngai* (God) from the top of Mount Kenya showed *Gikuyu* (the first ancestor) the beautiful land below as his possession.⁴ The initial home was a spot at the center of the land crowded with wild fig trees (*Mikuyu*)⁵ called *Mukurwe wa Gathanga*. This is the “*Agikuyu* Eden”. From here, whenever in need, *Gikuyu* sacrificed and called on God (Kenyatta, 3). Since then *Mukuyu* (*Ficus capensis* or *sycamorus*) has been a Kikuyu sacred tree. However, in its absence a *Mugumo* tree (*Ficus natalensis* or *thoningii*) is used (Leakey 1977:1079). To this day, once either of these trees is dedicated it becomes *Muti wa Ngai* (the tree of God). The *Agikuyu* believed that God is all pervading and was found everywhere. However, there were special abodes. A dedicated sacred tree was one such place. No person may under any circumstances break any branch, cut down, taste its fruits or clear the bush around it (Leakey 1977:1080). A pioneering missionary among the Kikuyus reports of *Agikuyu* Christians who dared fell a dedicated *Mugumo* tree for firewood. He writes: “The poor fellows did not end the year alive, but paid dearly with death for their boldness” (Cognolo 1933:28). The sacred tree was also a place of refuge. If, for example, a person committed a crime that warranted his being put to death and while being pursued by his executioners took refuge in the bush under the sacred tree, the criminal was not executed. He was asked to leave the “*Agikuyu* country” and never to return again. The convict would leave and take refuge among other peoples far away and would never return (Leakey 1977:1016).

Our interpretation is further aided by the *Agikuyu* figure of speech. A wise and mature adult is described as one who *umenya irio na iteyo*, “one who can discern that which is edible or not”. In this figure of speech underlies the ability to know what is good or bad, perceive right or wrong, moral or immoral. This, however, does not refer to supernatural knowledge. A child, an ignorant person, mentally retarded and senile old people are described as *utangimenya irio na iteyo*, “one who cannot know or discern what is edible or not”. Knowledge, intelligence, wisdom, maturity is figuratively spoken of in terms of ability to discern what is or is not edible. These Kikuyu words are derived from the verb *kumenya*, which means “know” or “experience”. On the other hand, humiliation or shame is spoken of in terms of nakedness. Children’s nakedness is accepted as normal and is not understood as humiliating. However, it is disgraceful for an adult to be naked before children or seniors. A shameful evil act that instills guilt when disclosed is figuratively spoken

of as *kuruta mundu njaga*, “to strip someone naked”. To save someone from shame is spoken of as *kuhumbira njaga*, “to cover nakedness”.

Let us now use this *Agikuyu* creation story and its figurative language to shed light on the interpretation of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. In Gen 2 and 3, everything is transposed in human terms. Even God is spoken of in anthropomorphic terms. The *Agikuyu* interpretation supposes that the drama of eating from the tree, interrogation by God and the consequent condemnation and expulsion takes place under *muti wa Ngai*, “the tree of God”/“the sacred tree”. This is so because, first it is the contact place between God and humanity, and secondly, Adam and Eve cut *mathangu ma Mukuyu*⁶ (fig tree leaves) and made themselves loin clothes (Gen 3:7). The tree of knowledge of good and evil, therefore, becomes a sacred tree in the Garden of Eden, in a Kikuyu reading. This interpretation also elucidates the reason why God did not effect the death penalty as alluded to in Gen 2:17. When Adam and Eve realize that they are naked, they hide themselves in the bush under the sacred tree. Since this tree offers amnesty to those who seek refuge under it, God cannot effect the death penalty; rather, he expels them from the garden (Gen 3:23). This interpretation safeguards God from being accused of threatening man with death to withhold from him the benefit of the tree and of the serpent telling the truth.

Using the *Agikuyu* figure of speech above, to acquire “the knowledge of good and evil” is to be endowed with the ability to *kumenya irio na iteo*, “to know that which is edible or not”, that is, acquiring physical and spiritual maturity, and wisdom that enables one to discern between good or evil, right and wrong. This interpretation reads better other verses in which the phrase “good and evil”, is used. Deut 1:39 reads “your children who today do not yet know right from wrong”, which would correctly be understood as unable to discern good or evil, right or wrong. Similarly, 2 Sam 14:17, where David is described as being “like the angel of God, discerning good and evil” would be understood as David being a wise, mature man fully developed in all aspects of a human being who can correctly perceive right and wrong. This interpretation would also be true for 1 Kings 3:9 and Isa 7:15-16.

Taking from the forbidden tree, *muti wa Ngai*, “tree of God”, Adam and Eve are encroaching on the divine right. No sooner have they eaten, they realize that they are not fully like God. Guilt, shame and fear overwhelm them. Their action “strips” them naked (*kumaruta njaga*, “unclothed them”), and hence their attempts to make themselves aprons. The pair becomes aware that their trespass into the divine domain damages their relationship with God. They lose their innocence, and the

awareness of the futility of their action is the opening of their eyes. They discern that their will to be like God, although it brought new awareness it leads to breaking a relationship. This is an experience which human beings encounter in their daily lives.

Reacting to the recent scientific discoveries on cloning, Bill Clinton the former president of United States said: "Today we are learning the language in which God created life. We are gaining ever more awe for the complexity, beauty, the wonder of God's most divine sacred gift". In the same vein, Francis Collins, the Head of Genome Project of the United States National Institute of Health said: "Today we celebrate the revelation of the first draft of human book of life. I experience a sense of awe at the realization that humanity now knows something only God knew before" (*East African Standard*, [Nairobi], June 27, 2003). Behind these exclamations of joy, one hears seductive language of the serpent that led Adam to eat from the tree. The race for these discoveries is motivated by the search for scientific knowledge and behind it, also, lies the "quests for fame, profit and power" (Wagura 2003:26). However, despite these great human discoveries, the scientists do not know how many genes humans have and whether there will be gene mutation in future and its consequences. The fact that these scientists work on material that God has created and that the product of cloning is humanity in the image of humanity reduces the efforts to "playing God" (Wagura 2003:17). In the end these scientific discoveries will dehumanize humankind and strip it naked. Certain knowledge is a right of God and God shares it only meagerly with humanity. Partial knowledge, no matter how advanced in the human eyes cannot make us like God in the full sense of divinity.

The purpose of this paper has been to give an African reading of "the tree of knowledge of good and evil" in Gen 2-3, based on *Agikuyu* tradition. This tree has been identified with a sacred tree that physically and symbolically has a divine prerogative (*muti wa Ngai*). Since the tree is the meeting point between God and humanity, human beings may draw near it, but eating from it is an encroachment on the prohibited divine realm. The quest for knowledge to make man like God is always desirable, but in the end man is like God only in one respect, of knowing good and evil. Irrespective of the knowledge gained, it will always strip humanity of its dignity. The אדם is created and must remain a creature.

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Notes

1. English translations follow the Revised Standard Version.
2. See the New Revised Standard Version and the Revised Standard Version.
3. The Kikuyu is one community living in Kenya. *Agikuyu* is the proper native name. These two words are used interchangeably in this presentation.
4. It is from the first ancestor Gikuyu that the community gets its name Agikuyu.
5. *Mikiyu* is the Kikuyu plural for *Mukuyu*
6. This is the Kikuyu translation of the Hebrew phrase **וַיַּחַפְרוּ עַל־הָאֵנָה** that is used in the Kikuyu Bible

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Two Recent Research Contributions From Kinshasa

Knut Holter

Nearly two decades ago, in a programmatic article on biblical research in Africa, Samuel Abogunrin (Nigeria) argued that no African university can yet be described as a centre of biblical studies.¹ Abogunrin's observation was correct in the mid-1980s, and it is correct today. This lack of a single center is of course a good sign; it reflects the fact that academic studies of the Bible is not a special interest of some marginal group; rather, it is found throughout the continent, mainly in church-related seminaries and universities, but to some extent in state universities too.²

Nevertheless, some geographical concentrations are indeed detectable. Nigeria is clearly a center of Anglophone West African biblical scholarship, with its large number of (both state and church) academic institutions, and its well-established Nigerian Association for Biblical Studies. A counterpart in East Africa is Kenya, and then especially Nairobi, with its many academic institutions, and its recent attempt at organizing an Association for Biblical Scholarship in Eastern Africa.

As far as Francophone Central Africa is concerned, the role of DR Congo should in particular be mentioned. Any bibliography of African biblical studies will include a number of contributions from—Catholic as well as Protestant—Congolese scholars. One example could be my analysis of Old Testament doctoral dissertations, written by African scholars in the period 1967-2000, where DR Congo is the second largest provider of dissertations, next to (but clearly behind) Nigeria.³ An illustrative example here is (now Archbishop) Laurent Monsengwo Pasinya, whose famous dissertation on the Greek version of the Pentateuch was the first Old Testament doctoral dissertation by an African scholar to be published (1973).⁴

This tradition is now followed up, as researchers attached to the Catholic Faculty in Kinshasa have been able to publish two important research contributions in Old Testament studies in 2003. The first book is a revised version of Fr Etienne Ung'eyowun Bediwegi's doctoral dissertation, accepted by the Catholic Faculty in 1999, and directed by Professor Abbé Buetubela Balemba.⁵ The dissertation is an interpretation of Jeremiah 1:4-19, with particular attention to the inculturation potential of this passage in contemporary Africa. After a brief introduction, with

the expected research historical survey and problem statement, the book is divided in two parts. First comes a close reading of the passage; very close, in fact, in the sense that it offers a lexicographic word-by-word analysis. Based on this analysis, the author is able to conclude that the passage has the function of a prologue to the book of Jeremiah as a whole, a prologue that introduces major themes that eventually are to be further elaborated throughout Jeremiah.

The second part of the book then relates the passage to various contextual challenges. One is a new translation of the passage into Lingala. Another is a discussion of Jeremiah's vocation (cf. vv. 4-14) in relation to the phenomenon of prophets in contemporary African Christianity. A third is the question of idolatry (cf. v. 16), which is related to examples of contemporary de-humanisation in Africa. A fourth is the question of war (cf. v. 15), emphasizing a call to the church to speak prophetically in today's society.

The number of Old Testament doctoral degrees awarded by African academic institutions is very low, and less than a handful of the dissertations have been published. On this background, and certainly also because of its exegetical and contextual analyses of the Jeremiah text, the publication of Fr Ung'eyowun Bediwegi's book ought to be noticed.

The second book is a collection of essays written by Fr André Kabasele Mukenge, who is Professor of Old Testament at the Catholic Faculty in Kinshasa. The author has previously published heavy exegetical material,⁶ as well as more popularised biblical interpretation, and the present essay collection includes both.⁷ The common denominator of the essays is the challenge of establishing an Africanized interpretation of the Bible, and it includes surveys of African theology and African biblical interpretation, as well as studies of the use of the Bible in Negro Spirituals and of the biblical concept of solidarity.

Of particular interest, I think, is an essay on how to read the narrative about Cain and Abel in Gen 4, from an African perspective. The author presents a reading which proceeds from the famous liberation hermeneutical dialogue, based on this text, between Itumeleng Mosala and Allan Boesak (South Africa). However, by relating the narrative to traditional Congolese folklore, he is able to show that this text has a wider contextualised interpretive potential. As a whole, the book offers fascinating glimpses into important inculturation hermeneutical questions. There is a scarcity of such books, and this contribution is indeed to be welcomed.

Both the Catholic Faculty and the two researchers are to be congratulated for these two books. They set an example for others. Good

dissertations *should* be revised and developed into books; the fruit of the doctoral research ought to be shared with others. And good lectures and papers, too, should be published. There is a desperate need for contextualized textbook material, and it should be a prioritized task for institutions and researchers to disseminate some of the insights gained by years of hard work.

Notes

1. Cf. S.O. Abogunrin, "Biblical research in Africa: The task ahead", *African Journal of Biblical Studies* 1/1 (1986) 7-24, 11.
2. For a survey, cf. K. Holter, "The institutional context of Old Testament Scholarship in Africa", K. Holter, *Yahweh in Africa: Essays on Africa and the Old Testament*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing (2000) 41-50 (Bible and Theology in Africa; 1).
3. Cf. K. Holter, *Old Testament Research For Africa: A Critical and Annotated Bibliography of African Old Testament Dissertations, 1967-2000*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing (2002) 65-67 (Bible and Theology in Africa; 3).
4. L. Monsengwo Pasinya, *La notion de nomos dans le Pentateuque grec*. Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1973 (Analecta Biblica; 52 / Recherches Africaines de Théologie; 5).
5. E. Ung'eyowun Bediwegi, *La vocation du prophete des nations: Une lecture africaine de Jr 1,4-19*. Kinshasa: Editions Le Sénéve [B.P. 1800, Kinshasa, DR Congo], 2003. No ISBN. 234 pp.
6. Cf his *Habilitationsschrift* [Louvain, Belgium]: A. Kabasele Mukenge: *L'unité littéraire du livre de Baruch*. Paris: J. Gabalda et C^{ie}, 1998 (Université Catholique de Louvain: Collection des dissertations présentées pour l'obtention du grade de Maître à la Faculté de Théologie ou à la Faculté de Droit Canonique. Série iv. Tome vii). 504 pp. The book is reviewed in *Bulletin for Old Testament Studies in Africa* 8 (2000) 18-19.
7. A. Kabasele Mukenge, *La Parole se fait chair et sang: Lectures de la Bible dans le contexte africain*. Kinshasa: Médiaspaul [B.P. 127, Limete-Kinshasa, RD Congo], 2003 (Bible et Pastorale, 2). ISBN: 2-7414-0177-2. 176 pp.

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Reports from conferences

Ilishan-Remo (Nigeria): The 16th Annual Conference of the Nigerian Association for Biblical Studies took place from 15-18 July, 2003, at Babcock University, Ilishan-Remo, Ogun State, Nigeria. This prestigious association was established in 1985, and since then it has been holding annual conferences in order to meet some of the objectives of the association. These include “Providing a forum for discussion and exchange of information and ideas on current issues on biblical research”, and “Relating the interpretation of the Bible to the life situation in Africa and African societal problems”. This means that contextual study of the Bible is the basic objective of the association.

The theme of the 2003 conference was “Biblical Healing in African context.” Eminent biblical scholars presented many commissioned papers, such as the Rt Rev Dr J.A. Oladunjoye, Dr A.M. Okorie, Dr C.O. Ogunkunle, and Rev Prof D.T. Adamo. Apart from the commissioned papers, many other papers were presented too, at the plenary sessions. These papers will be edited and published as books according to the usual practice of the association. Conference participants started arriving on July 15th. At about 5 pm registration and the 1st plenary session took place. On the 16th were the 2nd to 7th plenary sessions and the formal opening ceremony of the conference. The representative of the Vice-Chancellor of Babcock University and the main speaker of the opening ceremony, addressed the audience. On the 17th were the 8th to the 12th plenary sessions.

The Nigerian Association for Biblical Studies has *African Journal of Biblical Studies* as her official journal. It is published twice a year and it is dedicated to the contextual study of the Bible in the African context. This year, the association is committed to making sure that the journal gets a wider international circulation. The journal is at present indexed in *Old Testament Abstracts*, *New Testament Abstracts*, *Theology in Context* and *Ulrich Index*. We are also committed to indexing this journal in other major theological indexes. This places on us the burden of making sure that more good quality articles are published in the journal. We want to use this opportunity to invite colleagues to send us quality articles that reflects the African context. We also wish to appeal to our colleagues to endeavour to introduce our journal to their universities and seminaries for subscription in their libraries. We also appeal to philanthropists, financial institutions, and others to sponsor our annual conference and the publication of our journal. This will enable us to provide a quality journal for our readers.

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Caire (Egypt): Le 11^{ème} Congrès de l'Association Panafricaine des Exégètes Catholiques (APECA) a eu lieu au Caire, du 6 au 12 septembre 2003, au Foyer Sacerdotal Saint Etienne du Patriarcat d'Alexandrie des Coptes Catholiques, sur le thème : *Prophétie et prophètes dans la Bible. Exigences du prophétisme dans l'Eglise Famille de Dieu en Afrique*. Il a été présidé par S.E. Mgr Cornelius Fontem ESUA,

Evêque de Kumbo et Président de l'APECA. Vingt membres de l'association, venant de plusieurs pays (Bénin, Cameroun, Congo Brazzaville, Congo Kinshasa, Egypte, Iles Maurice, Nigeria, Ouganda, Sénégal, USA), y ont pris part.

La messe d'ouverture a été concélébrée en rite des Chaldéens Catholiques sous la présidence de S.E. Mgr Youssef Ibrahim SARRAF, Evêque du Caire des Chaldéens Catholiques, en la Basilique Notre Dame de Fatima d'Héliopolis. A la cérémonie d'ouverture, le mot de bienvenue a été prononcé, au nom de Sa Béatitude STEPHANOS II GATTAS, Patriarche Cardinal d'Alexandrie des Coptes Catholiques, empêché, par le même évêque, S.E. Mgr Y. I. SARRAF, lequel a mis en relief deux aspects qui font de l'Egypte une terre spéciale dans l'histoire de l'humanité en tant que terre prophétique et terre biblique. Le président de l'APECA, quant à lui, a prononcé le discours d'ouverture, tandis que le secrétaire général, Abbé Jean-Bosco MATAND BULEMBAT, a présenté le thème général.

Treize conférences ont été tenues, suivies de débats enrichissants. Chaque conférencier, conformément aux finalités de l'association, proposait aussi des orientations pour une interprétation contextualisée de son analyse. Ainsi, dans le cadre de l'Ancien Testament, on a eu les interventions suivantes : Paulin POUICOUTA, *Une théologie de la vie: la vision des ossements (Ez 37,1-14)* ; Emmanuel NWAORU, *A New World Order in the Light of Isa. 11:6-9* ; Victor ZINKURATIRE, *Israel's Prophets as Defenders of Pre-monarchic Yahwism: A Model for Prophetism in the African Church as Family of God* ; Protus O. KEMDIRIM, *Amos 5: 7,10-12: The Issue of Women's Legal Right in Nigeria* ; Margaret A. UMEAGUDOSU, *Justice and Righteousness for the Oppressed in Isaiah 1:17 in Relation to the African Situation* ; Etienne UNG'EYOWUN, *L'interprétation du terme "gôyim" en Jr 1,5. Le rôle du prophète Jérémie dans le contexte international* ; Teresa OKURE, *'Assyria, the Rod of My Anger' (Isa 10:5): Prophetic Ambivalence in Israel's Relationship with Other Nations* ; Moïse ADEKAMBI, *Paroles sapientielles et paroles prophétiques: le cas de 2 S 16,23*.

Dans le cadre du Nouveau Testament sont intervenus : Patrick FABIEN, *La parabole comme discours prophétique* ; Camillus UMOH, *Matthew's Reinterpretation of the Prophetic Tradition: A Challenge for African Exegetes and Theologians* ; Grant LEMARQUAND, *The Mocking of Jesus as Prophet-Messiah in Mark 14:65: Understanding a Text with African Help* ; Patrick ADESO, *Prophets Today for Africa. Exegesis of Acts 2: 14-2* ; Jean-Bosco MATAND BULEMBAT, *Prophétie ancienne et nouvelle prophétie chez l'apôtre Paul. Analyse littéraire de 1 Co 14, 20-25*.

A côté des conférences, les participants ont profité des visites guidées du Musée du Caire, des Pyramides et du Vieux Caire, pour voir, de leurs yeux, les splendeurs du patrimoine culturel de l'humanité que l'on trouve au Caire et qui témoigne des croyances religieuses, de l'ingéniosité ou de la technicité de l'homme depuis la nuit des temps. Par ailleurs, parlant de la vie et des perspectives d'avenir de l'association, les membres ont décidé que le prochain congrès se tiendra en Ouganda, en 2005, dans la première quinzaine de septembre (dates et lieu précis à fixer ultérieurement). Ce 12^{ème} congrès aura pour thème général : *Sagesse biblique dans l'Eglise Famille de Dieu en Afrique*. Les membres se sont mutuellement invités à prendre déjà à cœur ce rendez-vous, à s'y préparer par des études de haute facture scientifique et à y intéresser d'autres personnes.

La réussite du congrès a été garantie grâce aux subsides reçus des relations personnelles de S.E. Mgr Laurent MONSENGWO PASINYA, archevêque de Kisangani,

et des organismes suivants : Missio Aachen, Missio München et Jungschar Österreich. L'APECA leur dit un sincère merci, ainsi qu'à ceux qui, de l'une ou de l'autre manière, ont contribué à ce succès.

Dr Jean-Bosco Matand Bulembat, Secrétaire Général de l'APECA
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Upcoming conferences

Leiden (The Netherlands): The 18th Congress of the International Organization for the Study of the Old Testament (IOSOT) will take place at Leiden University, Leiden, August 1-6, 2004, under the presidency of Prof Arie van der Kooij; cf. the website of the congress: <http://www.leidenuniv.nl/gg/iosot2004/>. For further contact: Dr K.D. Jenner, Faculty of Theology, Leiden University, P.O. Box 9515, 2300 RA, Leiden, The Netherlands; e-mail: iosot2004@let.leidenuniv.nl. Amongst a large number of main papers and short papers, one should especially notice a seminar on World Christianity and the Study of the Old Testament, with contributions from Yuet Shun Ho (Hong Kong), André Kabasele Mukenge (Kinshasa), J. Severino Croatto (Buenos Aires), and John Barton (Oxford). In conjunction with the IOSOT congress, the following congresses will be held: International Organization for Targumic Studies (IOTS): July 29-30, International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies (IOSCS): July 30-31, International Organization for Masoretic Studies (IOMS): August 2.

Groningen (The Netherlands): The 2004 International Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) will take place in Groningen, The Netherlands, July 25-28, 2004, cf. the website of the meeting: <http://www.sbl-site.org/Congresses/>. For further contact: The Society of Biblical Literature, The Luce Center, 825 Houston Mill Road, Atlanta, GA 30329, USA; e-mail: sblexec@sbl-site.org.

Book reviews

Peter T. Nash, *Reading Race, Reading the Bible*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003 (Facets). ISBN 0-8006-3633-3. xiv + 72 pp. US\$ 6.00.

The major point of this booklet is that race is an anthropological construct rather than a biological reality, and that race in spite of this, or better, because of this, really matters in biblical interpretation. The author has for a couple of decades taught Biblical Hebrew and Old Testament studies in universities, seminaries and colleges in

the US and in Brazil, and to some extent even in Africa and Europe, and the booklet reflects his journey – as an African-American – into the relationship between race and biblical interpretation. After a general discussion of the growth and fall of race as a biological category, this insight is related to Old Testament interpretation. It is argued that the traditional historical-critical preference for searching for interpretive parallels to the Old Testament in Arabia and (a de-Africanized!) Egypt, rather than in Africa, historically speaking reflects race concepts. But it is also pointed out that the recent development of an African Old Testament scholarship changes the face of the field of Old Testament studies. The booklet reflects the author's American (US and Brazilian) context. Still, when it challenges biblical scholarship to take the race question seriously, and as part of this discusses Africa's role in biblical interpretation, it obviously touches a concern of African biblical scholarship too.

Knut Holter

Magdel leRoux, *The Lemba: A Lost Tribe of Israel in Southern Africa?* Pretoria: University of South Africa Press, 2003. ISBN 1-86888-283-7.

Dr Magdel leRoux' long-standing research focus on the Lemba, the so-called Black Jews of Southern Africa (cf. her article in *BOTSA* 11 (2001) 2-8), has now resulted in a most interesting and thought-provoking monograph, a revised version of her 1999 doctoral dissertation, University of South Africa.

The subtitle of the book indicates its major focus, the relationship between early (pre-monarchical, 1250-1000 BCE) Israel and the Lemba community of Southern Africa, and the underlying questions are whether, how, and in what ways the Lemba in any meaningful way can be said to be one of the lost tribes of Israel. Now, Africa, of course, is full of groups claiming to be one of the lost tribes of Israel. What is special, though, about the Lemba, is that they have a strong oral tradition about their being the children of Abraham, a chosen people, and about their coming from the north and crossing the sea by boat.

The book starts with three introductory chapters, presenting and discussing the project, the context (other examples of Old Testament reception in Southern Africa), and accounts of the possible Semitic history and origins of the Lemba. Then follow six chapters comparing various examples of life and religion in early Israel and amongst the Lemba (social practices, religious experience, myth, rites, law/ethics, oral tradition). And a final chapter concludes that the Lemba self-identification as "children of Abraham" evidences and conceals an old and complicated religious identity, offering abundant echoes of ancient Judaism.

LeRoux' book will gain interest from two perspectives, which both are of relevance for the development of African theology and an Africanized biblical scholarship. First, when the perspective is to let the Old Testament interpret Africa, her analysis will provide material for an African inculturation of biblical concepts and an Africanization of Old Testament teaching and research. This is the main emphasis of the book. Secondly, when the perspective is to let Africa interpret the Old Testament, leRoux' analysis—regardless of the difficult questions of historical interaction—will also contribute more generally to Old Testament interpretation.

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