Message from the First Editor (1988-1995)

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The Old Testament Society of South Africa (OTSSA) was initiated by Professor A. H. van Zyl, the first general secretary in December 1957, which means we will celebrate by the end of this year 55 years of its existence. I hope it is not preposterous to compare our society with the happy and wise old man of Ps 1: *"He is like a tree planted beside a watercourse, which yields its fruit in season and its leaf never whithers: in all that he does he prospers"* (Ps 1:3). The papers delivered at the congresses held between 1957 and 1986 were published in separate congress. These volumes were edited by Andries H. van Zyl and WouterC. van Wyk, except for the one of 1981 that was edited by Ferdinand E. Deist and James-Alfred Loader and the one of 1986 by Jasper J. Burden.

Since 1988 Old Testament Essays (New Series) became the official journal of our society. The following general editors with their associate editors, editorial and advisory Boards were responsible for the publication of our congress volumes as well as contributions by members and interested scholars: Jasper J. Burden (1988-1995: vol. 1/1-8/2); Phil J. Botha (1995-2008: vol. 8/3-21/2); and Gerrie F. Snyman (2008-present: vol. 21/3-24/3, etc.). Since the introduction of the New Series it became necessary because of the extra contributions to publish each year at least three numbers. This means that we shall complete in 2012 the 25th year of the publication of Old Testament Essays (New Series). This we want to celebrate with great joy because there is good reason for doing so. The quantity of publications are enormous as is clear from the following numbers: 842 articles by 271 contributors and 449 reviews. There were also two lengthy supplements,¹ as well as obituaries for two outstanding colleagues: Ferdinand Deist and Willem Prinsloo, who were taken from amongst us at such a young age. A number of Festschrifts were also published for deserving colleagues. Five of our members published in the New Series more than 20 contributions each: 22, 23, 28, 31 and 44. Well done and thank you for your hard work. A number of our members meanwhile also retired – we appreciate your contributions and wish you well!

> With the completion of Volume 15 (2002) of **Old Testament Essays (New Series)** the editorial committee decided it would be appropriate to prepare an index volume of the articles and book reviews published during the first fifteen years, between 1988 and

¹ Théo Schneider, *The Sharpening of Wisdom: Old Testament Proverbs in Translation* (OTESup 1; Pretoria: OTSSA, 1992); Jurie H. le Roux, *A Story of Two Ways: Thirty Years of Old Testament Scholarship in South Africa* (OTESup 2; Pretoria: Verba Vitae, 1993).

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2002. We decided to add the articles published in the five volumes of the original **Old Testament Essays** which appeared between 1983 and 1987 at Unisa. This gives us an overview of articles and reviews published under the title **Old Testament Essays** over a period of twenty years.²

This is a direct quotation from *Old Testament Essays (New Series): Index Volume* 2002. The following members were responsible for the preparation of these indices: Willem Boshoff, Fanie Cronjé and Gerrie Strydom. They did a stirling job. This publication contains seven different indices with a great variety of information for researchers. **Index 4: Articles indexed according to categories as used in** *Old Testament Abstracts (OTA)* indexed all the articles published by *Old Testament Essays* according to the 17 divisions that are used by *OTA*. The first division carries 89 articles under *General* which includes *inter alia* 16 articles from an African context, an article on HIV/AIDS, one on women affairs, two on OT studies in South Africa in the future, *et cetera*.

During this foundation period it is clear that methodology, exegetical methods and hermeneutics were considered important topics within our society. At this point in time there are a number of study groups, *viz* on the Pentateuch, the Psalms and the early Temple period. I was astonished by the variety of topics in volumes 16-24 on contemporary issues such as homosexuality, gender, postmodernity, culture, Bible translation, ecology, faith and science, *et cetera*, which are "faithful to the text and useful to the church" to quote from a review. On this topic I want to state without any reservation: *Book reviews* are indispensable to our journal and very useful to academics and preachers. I hereby refer to a review by Leonard P. Maré,³ which says that the writer "… has this ability to fuel the imagination and to stimulate our thinking." About the publication he says,

(It) surely is one of the most exciting and thought provoking books ever written on the subject of preaching. He challenges ministers and listeners to catch up with today's changed social circumstances and suggests that by doing so, preachers will realise the urgency for new guidelines to deal with our changing society.⁴

He adds: "Brueggemann utilises the metaphor of 'exile' to indicate the position of the Church in the postmodern world we live in."⁵

² Willem Boshoff, Fanie Cronje en J. Gerrie Strydom, "Forword," *Old Testament Essays Index Volume* 2003:9-10.

³ Leonard P. Maré, review of Walter Brueggemann, *Cadences of Home: Preaching among Exiles, OTE* 14/1 (2001): 175-177.

⁴ Maré, review of Brueggemann, 177.

⁵ Maré, review of Brueggemann, 177.

Also astonishing is the increase in the number of African scholars who contribute to OT studies from an African context. Who are better equipped to do so than they? Unfortunately we are still grappling with issues around methodology and hermeneutics in this regard. I think we will find in F.E. Deist's last book enough useful material to guide us through these issues in a scholarly way.⁶ Deist refers specifically to the hurtful nature of anthropological studies of culture and the lack of interest from those who had been the 'objects' of earlier ethnological research. The reviewer closes his evaluation of Deist by saying:

...this publication revolves round the hermeneutic question of justifiable readings of the Biblical text, a field dearly cherished by Deist ... This time he not only challenges theoretically constructs, but provides a productive and comprehensive companion for the resolution of the intriguing dimensions of the Old Testament's socio-cultural world.⁷

In addition to Deist you may perhaps find another sympathetic and worthwhile publication in Klaus Nürnberger's, *The Living Dead and the Living God.*

May I close with a wish for the *Old Testament Society of South Africa* in the form of another tree metaphor:

I saw a tree of great height at the centre of the earth; the tree grew and became strong, reaching with its top to the sky and visible to earth's farthest bounds. Its foliage was lovely, and its fruit abundant; and it yielded food for all. Beneath it the wild beasts found shelter, the birds lodged in its branches, and from it all living creatures fed (Dan 4:10-12).

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⁶ See the following review: Philip J. Nel, review of Ferdinand E. Deist, *The Material Culture of the Bible: An Introduction, OTE* 14/2 (2001): 347-50.

⁷ Nel, review of Deist, 350.

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