

## **Anything New under the Sun of South African Old Testament Scholarship? African Qoheleths' Review of *OTE* 1994-2010**

**MADIPOANE MASENYA (NGWAN'A MPHAAHLELE) (UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA) AND HULISANI RAMANTSWANA (UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA)**

### **ABSTRACT**

*Prior argues that the book of Ecclesiastes "... presumes such a lively and competitive economic environment, full of risk, a somewhat arbitrary, rapidly changing world, where the new-rich of today could easily become the new-poor of tomorrow."*<sup>1</sup> *Indeed, the world portrayed by the book of Ecclesiastes, can be described as the world in flux, solid yet fragile, conscious of the plight of the poor yet detached, elite yet insufficient, pessimistic yet not without hope, politically aware yet resistant. Such contradictions are embedded in the work whose author/editors set(s) great store by the notion of "vanity of vanities." In the African Qoheleths' view, life is characterised by a chasing after the wind. Innovation and change seem to be resisted as "...there is nothing new under the sun" (Eccl 1:9b). In this article, the expression, "the nothingness of anything new under the sun" is used as a hermeneutical lens to cast a contextual glance at the history of (some)research carried out by South African(SA)OT scholars over the past eighteen years. To limit the scope of the article, the Qoheleths focus on the research articles published in the prestigious scholarly journal Old Testament Essays (OTE) during the period 1994-2010.*

### **A INTRODUCTION**

Among the topics that could have been addressed by presenters at the June 2009 Old Testament Society of Southern Africa's historic congress in Stellenbosch, was that of taking stock of the business of previous OT scholarship. The meeting took place in the context of the celebrations of 150 years of doing theology in South Africa. The African Qoheleths,<sup>2</sup> who will serve as the narrators

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<sup>1</sup> Prior, John M., "Ecclesiastes," in *Global Bible Commentary* (ed. D. M. Patte; Nashville: Abingdon, 2004), 178.

<sup>2</sup> The African Qoheleths are the gatherers who, informed by one of the themes of the Hebrew Bible Qoheleth, that is, "there is nothing new under the sun" (Eccl 1:9), collect some thoughts on some of the works of South African OT scholars over the past fifteen years. See Anthony R. Ceresco, *Introduction to Old Testament Wisdom: A Spirituality for Liberation* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1999), 91; Carole R. Fontaine,

in the present article, decided to take stock of some of the (research) business of South African OT scholars since the inception of the Old Testament Society of South Africa (OTSSA) about 52 years ago. However, to delimit the scope of the research, the Qoheleths decided to focus on certain aspects of the research conducted by scholars since the commencement of the democratic South Africa. The latter period was chosen on account of the significance to the country of the year 1994, which will stand forever in the annals of South African history as the year that ushered in independence, "liberation" and democracy for South Africa.

In 1993, Le Roux in his *A Story of Two Ways: Thirty Years of Old Testament Scholarship in South Africa*, noted that South African OT (SAOT) scholarship has for the most part been focused on the ancient text rather than on contemporary issues.<sup>3</sup> Nineteen years later the African Qoheleths wonder if "there is anything new under the sun" in SAOT scholarship. Does SAOT scholarship reflect a paradigm shift from being mostly focused on the biblical text and its original contexts to reflecting more on contemporary issues?

Reading the Bible in light of present day contexts both recognises and acknowledges the reader and her/his context. Our South African context is the social location from which we read the Bible. As SAOT scholars, we are socio-historically situated and socio-culturally conditioned, and interpret from within our special social location/s and with specific interests in mind. The traditional hermeneutical distinction between, on the one hand, the Bible as a source, and, on the other hand, our situation (to which the Bible is applied), has proved to be inadequate and even misleading. As a result, the 1970s saw "a development that calls into question the construct of a neutral and disinterested reader presupposed by historical criticism and followed in large part by both literary and cultural criticism... . This new development posits instead a very different construct, a flesh and blood reader."<sup>4</sup> With this shift, reading has come to be understood as a two way process – reading a text in terms of our experience and

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"Ecclesiastes," in *The Women's Bible Commentary* (eds. C. A. Newsom and S. H. Ringe; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992), 153.

<sup>3</sup> Jurie H. le Roux, *A Story of Two Ways: Thirty Years of Old Testament Scholarship in South Africa* (Pretoria: Verba Vitae, 1993).

<sup>4</sup> Fernando F. Segovia, "And They Began to Speak in Other Tongues," in *Reading from this Place: Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in the United States* (vol. 1; eds. F. F. Segovia and M. A. Tolbert; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995): 1-32, 28. This book comes in two volumes, both articulating the point of social location and biblical interpretation. The first volume pursues the discussion from a wide variety of the U.S. cultural spectrum, whereas the second volume does so from a global perspective. See also Fernando F. Segovia, "The Significance of Social Location in Reading John's Story," *Interpretation* 49/4 (1995): 370-78; David J. A. Clines, "Varieties of Indeterminacy," *Semeia* 71 (1995): 17-26.

reading our experience in terms of the text. As Kitzberger points out: "this means that critical biblical studies needs to include the assessment of both the way in which we interpret the text from the perspective of specific contexts and the way in which the texts interpret our contexts."<sup>5</sup> In this paradigm all interpretive models, retrievals of meaning, and reconstructions of history are viewed as constructs formulated and advanced by positioned readers, flesh-and-blood persons, reading and interpreting from different and highly complex social locations.<sup>6</sup> This shift is also in accord with key aspects of earlier works by some of the Western specialists in hermeneutics, especially Martin Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur.<sup>7</sup> In addressing the complex relation between the otherness of the text and social location of the interpreter, Gadamer states:

The interpreter seeks no more than to understand this universal, the text – i.e., to understand what it says, what constitutes the text's meaning and significance. In order to understand that, he must not try to disregard himself and his particular hermeneutical situation. He must relate the text to this situation if he wants to understand at all.<sup>8</sup>

In the broad African context since the 1960s, African OT studies has shown interest in African concerns and experiences, by focusing particularly on comparative issues between the OT and the supposed African parallels.<sup>9</sup> In the South African context, biblical scholarship historically exemplifies both the bad and the good interested readings of the Bible. During the colonial and apartheid eras, the Bible was used by white perpetrators to marginalise blacks; blacks, on the other hand, black theologians used the Bible as a liberative tool.

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<sup>5</sup> Ingrid R. Kitzberger, "Introduction," in *Personal Voice in Biblical Interpretation* (ed. I. R. Kitzberger; New York: Routledge, 1999): 1-11, 5-6.

<sup>6</sup> Segovia, "And They Began to Speak in Tongues," 31.

<sup>7</sup> See Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (London: SCM, 1962); Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (2nd ed.; New York: Crossroad, 1989); Paul Ricoeur, *The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays in Hermeneutics* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1974).

<sup>8</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 324.

<sup>9</sup> See Eric Anum, "Comparative Readings of the Bible in Africa: Some Concerns," in *The Bible in Africa: Transactions, Trajectories and Trends* (eds. G. O. West and M. W. Dube; Leiden: Brill, 2000), 457-73; Grant LeMarquand, "A Bibliography of the Bible in Africa," in *The Bible in Africa: Transactions, Trajectories and Trends* (eds. G. O. West and M. W. Dube; Leiden: Brill, 2000), 800-33; Knut Holter, *Tropical Africa and the Old Testament: A Select and Annotated Bibliography* (Oslo: University of Oslo, 1996); Knut Holter, *Old Testament Research for Africa: A Critical Analysis and Annotated Bibliography of African Old Testament Dissertations, 1967-2000* (BTA 3; New York: Peter Lang, 2002); Knut Holter, *Contextualized Old Testament Scholarship in Africa* (Nairobi: Acton Publisher, 2008).

In the post-colonial, post-apartheid era the African Qoheleths have observed that the Bible continues to be used in some (church) circles in a traditionally fundamentalist way to perpetuate the marginalisation of the "Other."

As the African Qoheleths continued to ponder on the use (or abuse) of the Bible, even post 1994, it dawned on them that Snyman has, in fact, published his inaugural lecture under the title: "Collective Memory and Coloniality of Being as a Hermeneutical Framework: A Partialised Reading of Ezra-Nehe-miah."<sup>10</sup> In the article Snyman analyses the continued use of the Bible to marginalise the "stranger," that is, "foreign women" in the mixed-marriages context of Ezra-Nehemiah. At the end of the main sermon examined by Snyman in the article, the white perpetrator of racism and sexism does not come under the judgment of the deity. No! Instead, the foreign woman, that is, the non-White/African(?) polygamous woman, does! Ironically and understandably, those who were historically marginalised by the use of the same Bible, "the heathens of the then and now," continue to be the objects of divine disapproval and fury. Why? Could it be that the Hebrew Bible Qoheleth was right when he asserted that "There is nothing new under the sun?" (Eccl 1:9).

The African Qoheleths – also informed by interactions with works of SA OT scholars, the web information on the theological (OT) offerings of some of the main South African universities, the new political dispensation in South Africa with its focus on, *inter alia*, transformation, as well as the apparent similarities between the world of Qoheleth's production and the present-day South African context – start their review. They will use, as a hermeneutical lens, one of the themes of the Hebrew Bible Qoheleth, that is, the nothingness of anything new under the sun. Argues the Hebrew Bible Qoheleth:

What has been is what will be,  
and what has been done is  
what will be done;  
there is nothing new under the sun (Eccl 1:9; NRSV).

As far as methodology is concerned, the African Qoheleths' text is cast in the form of a story, following the African story-telling approach.<sup>11</sup> The storytelling approach as used in this case is "reader-centered," in so far as the

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<sup>10</sup> Gerrie Snyman, "Collective Memory and Coloniality of Being as a Hermeneutical Framework: A Partialised Reading of Ezra-Nehemiah," *OTE* 20/1 (2007): 53-58.

<sup>11</sup> For more details on the African story-telling approach to biblical texts, see Madipoane Masenya, "Esther and Northern African Woman's Commentary," in *Other Ways of Reading: African Women and the Bible* (ed. M. W. Dube; Atlanta: SBL, 2001), 27-49; Musa W. Dube, "Fifty Years of Bleeding: A Storytelling Feminist Reading of Mark 5:24-43," in *Other Ways of Reading: African Women and the Bible* (ed. Musa W. Dube; Atlanta: SBL, 2001), 50-60.

African Qoheleths seek to tell a story of OT scholarship in South Africa since 1994.

## **B THE CONTEXT OF THE PRODUCTION OF THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES**

A brief word about the context of the production of the book of Ecclesiastes is in order at this stage. The African Qoheleths are both fascinated and frustrated by the Hebrew Bible Qoheleth's conviction that, in a risk-loaded context, a context in flux, in which big businesses/ corporations flourished unashamedly at the expense of small ones, those in power could be indifferent to change, change for the betterment of the livelihoods of the disenfranchised.<sup>12</sup> The Qoheleths are reminded of the assertion that the book of Ecclesiastes "...presumes such a lively and competitive economic environment, full of risk, in a somewhat arbitrary, rapidly changing world, where the new-rich of today could easily become the new-poor of tomorrow."<sup>13</sup> They wonder: Was Fontaine not right when she criticised the male elitist world of Qoheleth by saying: "Callous dismissals of the plight of the oppressed are symptoms of the same self-centered, elite male worldview" (4:1-3; 5:8-9)"?<sup>14</sup> The context of the Hebrew Bible's Qoheleth was one in which the smaller merchants could eventually be sold into slavery if they could not pay their debts. Says Ceresco: "In periods of drought or blight or low rainfall, many small farmers had to mortgage their property or sell it. Sometimes they even had to sell themselves and their families into slavery to obtain the necessary hard currency to pay the required taxes."<sup>15</sup> In that world, the righteous and the wise were not necessarily rewarded accordingly (2:14-17; 7:15; 8:14); the industry of the wise could easily prove futile, a *hebel*, vanity, a vapour, as it could eventually benefit the lazy and the fool (2:18-23). In that sense, the African Qoheleths struggle to make sense of the African saying: *Dibodu ke mašemo a ba bohlale*, (the) sluggards are the fields of the wise! In Qoheleth's world, just as in so many of today's capitalist environments, the violence-ridden context in which most of us live,

<sup>12</sup> Ceresco notes "[t]he gap between the small landowners and farmers, on the one hand, and the rich aristocratic class, on the other. This wealthy minority was composed of foreign officials based in the country itself or elsewhere. It also included their upper-class Jewish agents and collaborators. Many small farmers and their families were dispossessed of their properties. At the same time, the wealthy elite accumulated even larger tracts of land for themselves and/or as agents of foreign ruling powers, first of Persian, then of Ptolemaic kings and nobles. The dispossessed farmers and shepherders now worked the land as tenant farmers and day laborers." See Ceresco, *Introduction to Old Testament Wisdom*, 92; and also Prior, "Ecclesiastes," 175-76).

<sup>13</sup> Prior, "Ecclesiastes," 178.

<sup>14</sup> Fontaine, "Ecclesiastes," 154

<sup>15</sup> Ceresco, *Introduction to Old Testament Wisdom*, 92.

the wise do, in fact, become the fields of sluggards! Qoheleth's was a world in which the deity was very distant from the daily affairs of the people. The deity, thus detached, was to be approached, if ever, with caution (5:2). The view of the African Qoheleths, informed by the South African context in which the poor do not have the Hebrew Bible Qoheleth's "luxury" of a distant deity is in direct contrast with Ceresco's view that "[s]ometimes you must learn to live without explanations and allow God to be free to be God: 'God is in heaven and you are upon earth (5:2b).'"<sup>16</sup>

Given this disturbing context, the Qoheleths of our discussion continue their quest to examine the Hebrew Bible Qoheleth's conviction that there is nothing new under the sun, as they make an analysis of some of the works by South African OT scholars following the dawn of democracy.

### **C A RANDOM SELECTION? A GAZE AT SOME PUBLISHED WORKS**

The African Qoheleths' investigation is limited to a prestigious scholarly journal *Old Testament Essays* (from now on referred to as *OTE*). *OTE* was started in 1983 with the following aims:

- (i) to keep colleagues, students and other interested parties informed of the research we are conducting and permit them to share in the discussion;
- (ii) to stimulate new research into the interpretation of the OT, also in an African context; and
- (iii) to afford members of our Department, including our more youthful colleagues, an opportunity to offer their research for discussion beyond our own confined circle.<sup>17</sup>

Currently this journal's primary aim is stated as follows "to regulate and propagate the study of the OT in Africa."<sup>18</sup> In the initial aims of 1983, Africa appears as an afterthought "also in an African context," as if Africa was not the primary context; however, the current aim of the journal appears to set Africa as the primary context. Therefore, for a journal that purports to take Africa as its primary context, it is reasonable to expect issues of concern in the African context to feature prominently. In fact, the Qoheleths set out to investigate how scholars integrate the subject-matter of biblical studies/OT studies with the modern day readers' contexts, including African contexts.

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<sup>16</sup> Ceresco, *Introduction to Old Testament Wisdom*, 94.

<sup>17</sup> See Jasper J. Burden, "Foreword," *OTE* 1 (1983): iv-vii, iv.

<sup>18</sup> The primary aim is stated in the editorial note that started appearing in the *Old Testament Essays* under the rubric "Purpose and Scope" from 2009.

The *Qoheleths* will focus on the three issues per year and the special editions for the period 1994-2010 and will eventually examine fifty-three issues and a total of 682 articles. As previously noted, the main purpose of their investigation is to establish the extent to which the research conducted by South African OT scholars over the past eighteen years has been contextual, that is, Bible reader-conscious. The *Qoheleths'* preoccupation with the context of modern readers of the OT is not motivated by disapproval of the other methodologies used by scholars, but by the observation that the past history of the use of the Bible in South Africa shows many a scholar apparently taking "refuge" in approaches that left the status quo of South African inequalities undisturbed. The Bible (and Biblical Studies/OT Studies) could then be applied to support the status quo directly or indirectly, by separating such scholarship from the daily lives of the people and/or Bible readers. Remaining in the past historical context of biblical texts, or taking pleasure in interacting basically with the text alone, so that it had no bearing on the scholars' context(s), was/is not only comfortable, but also convenient. The African *Qoheleths* can thus not concur with Lombaard, who seems to be more concerned with seeking affirmation from the international scholarly community than with his present-day context, judging by his call to SAOT scholars to put more effort into what he calls the "exegetical-hermeneutical" methodologies.<sup>19</sup> In their view, there is nothing wrong with the scholars' employment of such methodologies, provided that at some point, the methodologies enable exegetes to interact constructively with the real lives of the flesh-and-blood readers of biblical texts, particularly those located in our contexts. As the African *Qoheleths* went through the scholars' published articles, the main concern was the extent to which a particular article addressed issues pertaining to the context(s)/social location(s) of twenty-first century modern Bible readers or people, whether these were present-day South African contexts (a context which, in the view of the *Qoheleths*, ought to have priority), the broader African context, or the global context. A review of their investigation is reflected below.

#### **D TAKING STOCK OF RESEARCH CONDUCTED BY SCHOLARS: OTE1994-2010**

Before proceeding with the analysis, the African *Qoheleths* note that in 1992, Deist in his article "South African Old Testament Studies and the Future" called upon his predominantly white colleagues to seek to give birth to "an indigenous South African tradition of Old Testament scholarship," as nothing that is typically South African had so far been produced.<sup>20</sup> As Deist notes, South

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<sup>19</sup> Christo Lombaard, "The Relevance of Old Testament Science in/for Africa: Two False Pieties and Focused Scholarship," *OTE* 19/1 (2006): 144-55, 145.

<sup>20</sup> Ferdinand Deist, "South African Old Testament Studies and the Future," *OTE* 5/3 (1992): 314-15. This article was again published under the same title in *OTE* 7/4 (1994): 35-51.

African biblical scholars up to the 1950s followed the lead of Amsterdam and Princeton, and have ever since been at the heels of their European and USA counterparts.<sup>21</sup> This resulted in South African OT scholarship duplicating Western environments as European and American scholarship was set as the benchmark. Deist also noted that at the time, the contributors' ratio of the Old Testament Society of South Africa was a shocking 155:3 white to black, which for him was a signal of the "non-contextual and irrelevant" approach by the scholars.<sup>22</sup> He concluded by calling upon OT scholars not to simply stand and watch the African train departing from their Eurocentric station, but to take up the challenge by making a unique contribution to the international discussion.<sup>23</sup> The African Qoheleths further note that in 1992 black membership in the Old Testament Society of South Africa was less than 2% and that by 1994 black membership was still estimated at no more than 2%.<sup>24</sup>

### **1      *OTE* 7/1 (1994) – (0/4)**

Four articles constituted this issue. None of the articles addressed the South African context at the time.

The African Qoheleths particularly note that this was a time when South Africa was preparing to hold its first democratic elections. The silence of SA OT scholars is appalling yet not surprising, as the majority of them were from the Afrikaner Reformed tradition which served to justify apartheid.

### **2      *OTE* 7/2 (1994) – (2/8)**

This issue included eight articles, only two of which addressed content relating to the South African context. These were:

Wessels, W.J. "Winds of Change: An Old Testament Theological Perspective"(205-30).

In the midst of the social and political changes in South Africa, Wessels was appealing to South African OT scholars to endeavour to make the OT as a religious document relevant to the changing South African context.

Richards, R.R. "National Reconstruction and Literary Creativity in Ezra-Nehemiah: A Black South African Perspective"(277-301).

In this article, Richards deals with some of the struggles which he experienced as a black male attempting to penetrate a white male dominated

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<sup>21</sup> Deist, "South African Old Testament Studies," 312.

<sup>22</sup> Deist, "South African Old Testament Studies," 319.

<sup>23</sup> Deist, "South African Old Testament Studies," 319.

<sup>24</sup> Raymond R. Richards, "National Reconstruction and Literary Creativity in Ezra-Nehemiah: A Black South African Perspective," *OTE* 7/2 (1994): 279.



arena. Richards estimated black membership of the Old Testament Society of South Africa to be about 2% at the time. He also noted that the absence of black voices within the Old Testament Society was not a result of lack of interest by blacks in the OT; rather, it was due to the following factors *inter alia*: white monopoly in the areas of research and funding at the exclusion of blacks,<sup>25</sup> the tendency to denigrate African modes of reading,<sup>26</sup> the racist attitude of white South African biblical scholarship,<sup>27</sup> and concern with Western reading approaches that were viewed as "neutral" and "scientific."<sup>28</sup> Richards, in the hope of seeing change in South African OT scholarship, wrote:

If Old Testament scholarship, as presently dominated, defined and practised in South Africa, fails to recognise alternative way(s)? of "reading" it will end up being a real white elephant in a South Africa whose population happens to be almost 90% black.<sup>29</sup>

In the African Qoheleth's view, Richards's article was an outcry against white male dominance in OT scholarship in South Africa at the expense of the marginalised "Other." For Richards the way forward was to do away with a separationist tendency, which up to that time had dominated OT scholarship.

Regarding his membership to the Old Testament Society of South Africa, Richards states:

I am very excited and enthusiastic, yet cautiously optimistic about this membership. It is my first academic "club" membership in South Africa. However, I must remind myself that I am a black member of a white-male controlled club.<sup>30</sup>

Eighteen years later, the African Qoheleth's wonder if there is "anything new under the sun." Is there a demographic shift within the Old Testament Society of South Africa or is it still pretty much the same?<sup>31</sup>

### 3 *OTE* 7/3 (1994) – (2/9)

This issue comprises nine articles. Only two articles address the Bible readers' contexts:

Van Niekerk, M.J.H. "Qohelet's Advice to the Young of His Time – And to Ours Today? Chapter 11:7-12:8 as a Text of the Pre-Christian Era" (370-80).

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<sup>25</sup> Richards, "National Reconstruction," 278.

<sup>26</sup> Richards, "National Reconstruction," 280.

<sup>27</sup> Richards, "National Reconstruction," 285.

<sup>28</sup> Richards, "National Reconstruction," 285.

<sup>29</sup> Richards, "National Reconstruction," 280.

<sup>30</sup> Richards, "National Reconstruction," 279.

<sup>31</sup> We will return to this subsequently.

Snyman, G. "Old Testament Theology: Fabulous Dreams of the Other Side of Time and Space" (435-65).

#### **4      *OTE* 7/4 (1994) – (39/39)**

This issue is a special edition that published some of the results from a symposium held on 5-6 September 1991. The edition is entitled: *Understanding the Old Testament in South Africa*. Thirty-nine articles are published in this special edition under the following rubrics: Orientation, Literary Understanding of the OT, Historical Understanding of the OT, Theological Understanding of the OT, and OT from Perspectives of Other Theological Disciplines.

The African Qoheleths' attention was caught by one brief article in particular which appears to have particularly won the hearts of (white) OT scholars from 1991 to the present. This is an article by J.H. le Roux, "Historical Criticism – The End of the Road?" (198-202). In this brief article, Le Roux, in contrast to what the title of his article seems to be suggesting, was actually pleading for the opposite. Le Roux was calling for the beginning of the road for historical criticism in South Africa. For him, it was high time that South African OT scholars turned their attention to the "truth-behind-the-text" by employing the historical-critical approach, which had been neglected.

The need to cultivate the historical consciousness that Le Roux was calling for, resulted in the establishment of the ProPent project which is a joint project of the University of Pretoria and the University of Munich, a project which is spearheaded by him and Eckart Otto. The aim of this project is stated as follows:

Primo, to conform and to extend the existing western exegetical traditions (as reflected in Old Testament scholarship) in South Africa, and secundo, to disseminate the mainstream insights of Pentateuch research to the African community (in the widest sense of the word). For many years Biblical scholarship in South Africa was western by nature. This was shaped over a long period of time, influenced by a variety of sources and in due course became a dominant approach to the Old Testament and to the Pentateuch. This scholarly tradition is important for South Africa today. Therefore, this scholarly tradition cannot be abolished, it should much rather be cherished and cultivated for the South African academic community as a whole; the unique character of western Biblical scholarship in South Africa needs to be expanded. And this is exactly what Pro Pent wishes to achieve. Evidently everyone should benefit.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> See "OTNET: Old Testament Scholarship," n.p. [cited 20/01/2012]. Online: [http://www.otnet.net/home/pro\\_pent.html](http://www.otnet.net/home/pro_pent.html) .

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The Pro Pent project and the Old Testament Society of South Africa are forums in which "the" Western exegetical tradition (historical-critical approach) is cherished, as evidenced by the continual invitation of European scholars as keynote speakers in the annual meetings.<sup>33</sup>

## 5 *OTE* 8/1 (1995) – (2/8)

This *OTE* issue was made up of eight articles, one of which focused on the broad African context, and another on the South African context:

Kawale, W.R. "Divergent Interpretations of the Relationship between Some Concepts of God in the Old Testament and in African Traditional Religions – A Theological Critique" (7-30).

Loader, J.A. "Fools Can Explain It, Wise Men Never Try" (129-44).

Loader's article was the only one that dealt specifically with the South African context.

## 6 *OTE* 8/2 (1995) – (1/8)

Eight articles were published in this issue, with only one of them addressing the modern context:

Le Roux, J.H. "No Theology, No Relevance, No New South Africa" (167-90).

Although Le Roux in this article argued for the impossibility of an OT theology for the "new" South Africa which encompasses the whole nation, he does concede that (South African) OT scholars have neglected ordinary life. Le Roux concluded that

If theology of the Old Testament wants to be relevant to the "new" South Africa it must be *life-related*. In other words, authentic life-experiences must be reflected in these theologies... . A "new" South

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<sup>33</sup> As Le Roux states it, "Whoever wants to listen to Africa must attune his/her ears to receive many different and opposing views. Below one, and only one voice can be heard. It is that of a white South African male who was born in Africa and belongs to one intellectual tradition which may be called 'Western' or 'European'. Terms like 'we', 'our', 'Old Testament scholarship' are therefore not inclusive but rather refer to the intellectual tradition which has been developed at the historical white universities, which was continued, extended and refined in and around the 'Old Testament Society of South Africa' and which will (hopefully) still remain the intellectual framework to many South Africans studying Old Testament (and especially the Pentateuch) in future." See Jurie H. le Roux, "Pro Pent: A Project for the Study of the Pentateuch in South Africa," in *A Critical Study of the Pentateuch: An Encounter between Europe and Africa* (eds. E. Otto and J. le Roux; ATMod 20; Münster: LIT Verlag, 2005, 1.

Africa can only benefit from different creative readings of the Old Testament reflecting diverse but authentic and life-related issues.<sup>34</sup>

The African Qoheleths, however, noted that for Le Roux, it is existentialism, a Western philosophy, that "offers a new and better model, and an updated terminology for expressing the biblical understanding of man (sic)."<sup>35</sup> Whereas the African Qoheleths agree with Le Roux on the need for a life-related theology, they urge that, instead of simply looking up to Western models as if they are the standard, scholars have to start taking cognisance of the rich well of African wisdom and philosophy.

#### **7      *OTE* 8/3 (1995) – (3/9)**

This issue included nine articles. Only three were identified as relevant to the theme under investigation. They are:

Loader, J.A. "Die moontlikhede van Elihu: Wat in Suid Afrika met hom gedoen is/kan word" (356-59).

Strydom, J.G. "Redistribution of Land: The Eighth Century in Israel, the Twentieth Century in South Africa"(398-413).

Van Zyl, D. "In Africa Theology is Not Thought Out but Danced Out: On the Theological Significance of Old Testament Symbolism and Rituals in African Zionist Churches"(425-38).

Van Zyl expressed dismay about the fact that in the programme of the Old Testament Society of South Africa in that year, on the topic of the relevance of OT theology, writers like Mosala and Boesak, as well as documents like the Belhar Confession and the Kairos document, did not receive attention.

#### **8      *OTE* 9/1 (1996) – (2/8)**

Eight articles comprise this issue. Only two of them discuss content that impacts directly on the readers' contexts. The two that directly impact on readers are:

Gous, I. G. P. "Proverbs 31:10-31 – The A to Z of Woman Wisdom" (35-51).

Wyse, R.R. & W. S. Prinsloo. "Faith Development and Proverbial Wisdom" (129-43).

#### **9      *OTE* 9/2 (1996) – (0/11)**

Of the eleven articles constituting this issue, none focuses on the Bible readers' contexts.

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<sup>34</sup> Jurie H. le Roux, "No Theology, No Relevance, No New South Africa," *OTE* 8/2 (1995): 185. Emphasis in original.

<sup>35</sup> Le Roux, "No Theology," 185.

**10 OTE 9/3 (1996) – (3/10)**

Ten articles are published in this issue of which one directly addresses the modern context, whereas two indirectly address such a context:

The one directly attending to the modern context:

Le Roux, M. "'n Reënbooggod vir 'n reënboognasie? 'n Ou Testamentiese perspektief op 'n multi-religieuse samelewing" (400-22).

Two indirectly address the present day issues:

Olivier, J.P.J. "Money Matters: Some Remarks on the Economic Situation in the Kingdom of Judah during the Seventh BC" (451-64).

Van Heerden, W. "A Bright Spark is Not Necessarily a Wise Person: Old Testament and Contemporary Perspectives on Wisdom and Intelligence" (512-26).

**11 OTE 10/1 (1997) – (3/9)**

Of the nine articles comprising this issue, only one addresses the South African context directly, namely:

Jonker, L.C. "Bridging the Gap between Bible Readers and 'Professional' Exegetes" (69-83).

Jonker, drawing from his experiences as a professional exegete and pastor in the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa, notes that there are two prevailing perceptions: Professional exegetes, on the one hand, regard lay readers as having nothing to contribute to the area of biblical interpretation; lay readers, on the other hand, regard professional exegetes as taking away the Bible from the believing communities and enclosing it in the small world of academia. For Jonker, the roots of these perceptions are found in the objectivist-relativist dichotomy in which objectivists (lay readers) tend to read with "a child faith" believing at face value whatever the Bible as the Word of God says, whereas relativists tend to read the Bible with an emphasis on its human nature. This dichotomy, Jonker suggests, can be overcome through dialogue.

In South Africa, Gerald O. West is a strong advocate of a hermeneutical approach which seeks to bridge the gap between professional exegetes and ordinary readers.<sup>36</sup> This approach of "reading with" is a mutual one in which

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<sup>36</sup> Gerald O. West, "The Relationship between Different Modes of Reading and the Ordinary Reader," *Scriptura* 9 (1991): 87-110; Gerald O. West, "The Interface between Trained Readers and Ordinary Readers in Liberation Hermeneutics – A Case Study: Mark 10:17-22," *Neot* 27 (1993): 165-80; Gerald O. West, "No Integrity without Contextuality: The Presence of Particularity in Biblical Hermeneutics and Pedagogy," *Scriptura* 11 (1993): 131-46; Gerald O. West, "Difference and Dialogue: Reading the Joseph Story with Poor and Marginalized Communities in South Africa,"

both the horizon of the lay reader and the horizon of the biblical scholar will be mutually enriched. However, for West, not all professional exegetes engage in this approach as it demands a deliberate and conscious choice "to collaborate with" the ordinary readers in their plight for survival, liberation and life.<sup>37</sup>

Two articles address present day issues, albeit indirectly:

Firth, D.G "The Book of Esther: A Neglected Paradigm for Dealing with the State" (18-26).

Deist, F.E. "'To Love God and Your Neighbor': A Sociolinguistic Perspective" (7-17).

## **12 OTE 10/2 (1997) – (2/12)**

Twelve articles are published in this issue, two of which address the modern day context:

Heyns, D. "Space and Time in Amos 8: An Ecological Reading" (236-51).

West, G. "Finding a Place among the Posts for Post-Colonial Criticism in Biblical Studies in South Africa" (322-42). This article directly addresses the South African context.

## **13 OTE 10/3 (1997) – (7/12)**

The issue included twelve articles out of which seven articles focused on the South African context. These are:

Heyns, D. "Considering Aspects of History, Knowledge and Worldview: Is Old Testament History Relevant for South Africa?" (387-400).

Masenya (ngwan'a Mphahlele), M. "Redefining Ourselves: A *Bosadi* (Womanhood) Approach" (439-48).

The *Bosadi* approach propagated by Masenya (ngwan'a Mphahlele) is contextual in orientation, as the interpreter makes a conscious move to read the Bible with concerns of African-South African women at the grassroots. As Masenya writes elsewhere, "I deliberately make my African-South African

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*BibInt* 2 (1994): 152-70; Gerald O. West, "And the Dumb Do Speak: Articulating Incipient Readings of the Bible in Marginalised Communities," in *The Bible in Ethics: The Second Sheffield Colloquium* (eds. J. W. Rogerson, M. Davies and M. D. Carrol R.; JSOTSup 207; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 174-92; Gerald O. West, *The Academy of the Poor: Towards a Dialogical Reading of the Bible* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999); Gerald O. West, *Reading Other-Wise: Socially Engaged Biblical Scholars Reading with Their Local Communities* (Atlanta: SBL, 2007).

<sup>37</sup> West, *The Academy of the Poor*, 11.

sisters' context the main hermeneutical focus."<sup>38</sup> For Masenya it is not a matter of merely "reading with," as if it requires a Bible Study in order to read with; rather, the context of African-South African women is the framework in which she moves and lives.

Mitchell, G. "A Hermeneutic of Intercultural Learning: The Writings of John Colenso" (449-58).

Snyman, G. "On Opening Windows and Doors of Old Testament Studies in South Africa" (474-93).

Strydom, J.G. "Where Have All the Prophets Gone? The New South Africa and the Silence of the Prophets" (494-511).

Three years following the first democratic elections in South Africa, Strydom was troubled by the silence of the so-called prophets who rightfully condemned the apartheid regime. For Strydom what is required is to continue the prophetic voice which is also critical towards the present democratic regime.

Wessels, W.J. "Reflections from the Book of Micah" (528-44).

Van Heerden, W. "Proverbial Wisdom, Metaphor and Inculturation" (521-27). This article addresses the broader African context.

#### **14** *OTE* 11/1 (1998) – (3/12)

Twelve articles are published in this issue, three of which address the modern context:

Høyland, M. "An African Presence in the Old Testament? David Tuesday Adamo's Interpretation of the Old Testament Cush Passages" (50-58).

Viljoen, J. "'n Psigologiese verstaan van die boek Job: 'n Beskouing van W Brueggemann se bydrae tot 'n psigologiese verstaan van die boek Job, in die gesprek rondom psigologiese skrifverstaan" (115-27).

Zulu, E. "Reconciliation from an African Perspective: An Alternative View" (182-208).

#### **15** *OTE* 11/2 (1998) – (4/8)

Of the eight articles which make up this issue, three are identified as focusing on the modern context; however, of the three, one article addresses the readers' context indirectly. Those directly addressing the theme are:

Fabian, D.N. "The Socio-Religious Role of Witchcraft in the Old Testament Culture: An African Insight" (215-39).

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<sup>38</sup> Madipoane Masenya (ngwan'a Mphahlele), "Struggling to Find 'Africa' in South Africa: A *Bosadi* (Womanhood) Approach to Biblical Texts," *SBL Forum* (2005), n.p. [cited 20/01/2012]. Online: <http://sbl-site.org/publications/article.aspx?articleId=402> .

Holter, K. "It's Not Only a Question of Money! African Old Testament Scholarship between the Myths and Meanings of the South and the Money and Methods of the North" (240-54).

Holter particularly notes the gap that exists between Western OT scholarship and African OT scholarship due to a number of factors. First, there is a low participation of African OT scholars in the international arena due to economic reasons. Second, publications by African scholars are hardly recognised, as African scholars hardly publish their work in Western journals and as Westerners hardly read African journals. Third, there is a tendency in the West to brand the traditional approaches as "scientific," which tends to exclude the African approaches that emphasise relevance to present day contexts and pre-occupation with comparative materials.

Masenya (ngwan'a Mphahlele), M. "A *Bosadi*(Womanhood) reading of Genesis 16" (271-87).

The one that addresses the modern context indirectly:

Rudman, D. "Reliving the Rape of Tamar: Absalom's Revenge in 2 Samuel 13" (326-39).

## **16 OTE 11/3 (1998) – (4/17)**

This issue was made up of seventeen articles. Only four could be identified by the African Qoheleths as addressing the readers' contexts:

Holter, K. "The Institutional Context of Old Testament Scholarship in Africa" (452-61).

Spangenberg, I.J.J. "Op pad na 2000-oftewel, oor al die dinge wat gebeur het" (534-66).

West, G. "Biblical Scholars Inventing Ancient Israel and 'Ordinary Readers' of the Bible Re-Inventing Biblical Studies" (629-44).

For West, a socially engaged biblical scholar is a servant of the poor and marginalised, as in so doing the socio-political realities of the present day receive great attention. A socially engaged biblical scholar would thus take the ordinary readers as the primary dialogue partners. This hermeneutical stance, according to West, would allow for a conversion from below on the part of the biblical scholar, that is, the willingness to be used by the poor and the marginalised in the interdependent and collaborative reading of the Bible. The ordinary reader as a primary dialogue partner can also enable biblical scholars to see the text in new ways.

Wessels, W. J. "Nahum, an Uneasy Expression of Yahweh's Power" (615-28). This article is less direct.



**17** *OTE* 12/1 (1999) – (2/10)

Ten articles are included in this issue, two of which address the modern context:

Efthimiadis, H. "Is There a Place for Women in the Theology of the Psalms? Part I: An Investigation into the Female Imagery of the Ancient Hebrew Psalter" (33-56). This article indirectly addresses the present day context.

Naude, J.A. "A Descriptive Translation Analysis of the Schocken Bible" (73-93).

**18** *OTE* 12/2 (1999) – (0/7)

The issue contained seven articles, none of which engaged with issues that are pertinent to the contexts of present day readers of biblical texts.

**19** *OTE* 12/3 (1999) – (3/16)

Sixteen articles made up this volume. The African Qoheleths could identify only three that were relevant to their theme, two specifically dealing with the South African context, and one dealing with the context of the general Bible reader:

Gous, I.G.P. "Reason to Believe: Cognitive Strategy in the Acrostic Psalm 34" (455-67). This article indirectly deals with the context of the reader.

The following articles directly address the modern day context:

De Villiers, P. "The Psalms and Spirituality" (416-39).

Spangenberg, I.J.J. "Die Suid-Afrikaanse navorsingsgeskiedenis van die boek Daniel en die eksegetiese spel" (591-608).

**20** *OTE* 13/1 (2000) – (1/7)

Seven articles were published in this issue and only one of them addressed issues pertaining to the South African context:

Strydom, J.G. "Being a Prophet in the New South Africa: Can We Learn from the Old Testament Prophets?" (103-18).

**21** *OTE* 13/2 (2000) – (2/6)

This is one of the two shortest issues consulted in this study. Of the six articles making up the issue, only two could be identified as addressing issues affecting present day Bible readers. These are:

Anderson, W.H.U. "Historical Criticism and the Value of Qoheleth's Pessimistic Theology for Post-Modern Christianity through a Canonical Approach" (143-55).

Mare, L.P. "Psalm 100: Uitbundige lof oor die Godheid, goedheid en grootheid van Jahwe" (218-34).

**22** *OTE* 13/3 (2000) – (1/8)

Eight articles are included in this issue with only one dealing with readers' contexts:

Van Deventer, H.J.M. "Die speel gaan voort: In gesprek met Prof IJJ Spangenberg" (380-95).

**23** *OTE* 14/1 (2001) – (2/8)

This issue is comprised of eight articles, two of which address today's issues:

Fischer, S. "1 Samuel 28: The Woman of Endor – Who is She and What Does Saul See?" (26-46). This article deals with the broader African context.

Stiebert, J. & J. T. Walsh. "Does the Hebrew Bible Have Anything to Say about Homosexuality?" (119-52).

**24** *OTE* 14/2 (2001) – (1/9)

Of the nine articles comprising this issue, only one dealt with issues relevant to the African context:

Masenya (ngwan'a Mphahlele), M. "What Differences Do African Contexts Make for English Bible Translations?" (281-96).

**25** *OTE* 14/3 (2001) – (3/11)

Eleven articles constituted this issue, only three of which engaged with issues pertaining to the readers' context:

Boshoff, W. "Archaeological Publications and the History of Ancient Israelite Religions: Primary and Secondary Publications on the Archaeology, History and Religion of Ancient Israel" (371-91).

Gous, I.G.P. "The 'Tell'-Tale of the Mind: About Cognitive Archaeology" (404-18).

Viviers, H. "Body and Nature in Job" (510-24).

**26** *OTE* 15/1 (2002) – (13/18)

This volume is made up of eighteen articles, nine of which directly address the issue of gender, albeit from a variety of perspectives, while four address the topic indirectly. In the former, direct, category are the following articles:

Coetzee, J.C. "The 'Outcry' of the Dissected Woman in Judges 19-21: Embodiment of a Society" (52-63).

Landman, C. "References to the Old Testament in Women's Stories of Suffering" (85-98).

Masenya (ngwana' Mphahlele), M. "...But You Shall Let Every Girl Live': Reading Exodus 1:2-10 the *Bosadi* (Womanhood) Way" (99-112).

- Nadar, S. "Gender, Power, Sexuality and Suffering Bodies in the Book of Esther: Reading the Characters of Vashti and Esther for the Purpose of Social Transformation" (113-30).
- Sakenfeld, K.D. "At the Threshing Floor: Sex, Reader Response and a Hermeneutic of Survival" (164-78).
- Snyman, G. "Narrative Rationality, Morality and Readers' Identification" (179-99).
- Van Dyk, A.C. & P. J. van Dyk. "HIV/AIDS in Africa: Suffering Women and the Theology of the Book of Ruth" (209-24).
- West, G. "Reading Abused Female Bodies in the Bible: Interpretive Strategies for Recognizing and Recovering the Stories of Women Inscribed by Violence but Circumscribed by Patriarchal Text (2 Kings 5)" (240-58).
- Williams, J. "And She Became 'Snow White': Numbers 12:1-16" (259-68).

The theme of gender is treated, albeit indirectly, in relation to present-day readers in modern contexts, by the following four scholars:

- Brenner, A. "Gendering in/by the Hebrew Bible – Ten Years Later" (42-51).
- Efthimiadis-Keith, H. "Text and Interpretation: Gender and Violence in the Book of Judith, Scholarly Commentary and the Visual Arts from the Renaissance Onward" (64-84).
- Stiebert, J. "The Woman Metaphor of Ezekiel 16 and 23: A Victim of Violence, or a Symbol of Subversion?" (200-208).
- Yaron, S. "The Politics of Sex: Woman's Body as an Instrument of Achieving Man's Aims" (269-92).

## **27** *OTE* 15/2 (2002) – (1/15)

Fifteen articles were published in this volume.

- Dickson, C. "Response: Does the Hebrew Bible Have Anything to Say about Homosexuality?" (350-367).

This article addresses one of the burning issues pertaining to the context of the global community, albeit indirectly and briefly, and is thus the only one addressing the present readers' context.

## **28** *OTE* 15/3 (2002) – (6/15)

Fifteen articles are published in this issue. The following six articles impact on the modern day Bible readers' contexts:

- De Villiers, F. T. "Psalm 100:3 – A Short Note" (616-19).
- Cook, J. "NETS - A New English Translation for the Septuagint" (600-615).
- De Villiers, G. "Where Did She Come From, and Where Did She Go To? (The Queen of Heaven in Jeremiah 7 and 44)" (620-27).
- Farisani, E. "The Ideological Biased Use of Ezra-Nehemiah in a Quest for an African Theology of Reconstruction" (628-46).
- Loader, J.A. "The Finality of the Old Testament 'Final Text'" (739-53).
- Snyman, G. "'Who Has the Moral Right to Speak?' A Reflection on a Discourse within the Old Testament Studies" (799-820).

In this article, Snyman responds to an article by Masenya (ngwan'a Mphahlele) in the *Bulletin of Old Testament Studies in Africa* (12, 2002). Snyman is troubled by what he regards as exclusivism and subordination of white South Africans in Masenya (ngwan'a Mphahlele)'s article. Similar sentiments are expressed by Jonker in his "'Contextuality' in (South) African Exegesis: Reflections on the Community of Our Exegetical Methodologies."<sup>39</sup> For Snyman, Masenya views white South Africans as hopelessly non-African as they are not black. In this paradigm "black" or "African" becomes the normative humanity, a role that in the colonial and apartheid era was fulfilled by "whites" or "Westerners." Snyman detects what may be regarded as reverse racism in which whiteness becomes the category of the "Other," who is excluded and devalued. For Snyman the way forward has to be by preventing the mirroring of the previous system of racialisation by overcoming the binary opposition of "Western" and "African," of "black" and "white" or "us" and "them" by breaking down objectivism and essentialism.

The attempt of African hermeneutics to define itself over and against Western hermeneutics has led Snyman to develop what he terms a "hermeneutic of the perpetrator" or a "hermeneutic of vulnerability." The problem, however, with such a hermeneutic is that it falls prey to its own criticism of the other as it also defines itself against African hermeneutics.

## **29** *OTE* 16/1 (2003) – (4/9)

Nine articles were published in this volume. Four of them, amounting to almost 50% of the volume, integrated the subject matter of their enquiry with issues affecting the contexts of twenty-first century communities, be it nationally, continentally or globally. The articles were:

Adamo, D.T. "The Historical Development of Old Testament Interpretation in Africa" (9-33).

Kruger, Joubert L. "Narrative Aggada, the Church Fathers and Narrative Theology: The Transformative Power of Wisdom Inspired by Old Testament Narratives" (47-57).

Van Dyk, P. "Violence and the Old Testament" (96-112).

Williams, D.T. "Old Testament Pentecost" (125-40).

## **30** *OTE* 16/2 (2003) – (5/21)

This issue is comprised of twenty-one articles. Only five of these interact with issues pertaining to the modern day context:

Maré, L.P. "Psalm 58: A Prayer for Vengeance" (322-31).

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<sup>39</sup> Louis Jonker, "'Contextuality' in (South) African Exegesis: Reflections on the Community of our Exegetical Methodologies," *OTE* 18/3 (2005): 637-50.

Masenya (ngwana' Mphahlele), M. "'A Small Herb Increases Itself (Makes Impact) by a Strong Odour': Re-imagining Vashti in an African South African Context" (332-42).

Nadar, S. "Re-Reading Job in the midst of Suffering in the HIV/AIDS Era: How Not to Talk about God" (343-57).

Wessels, W.J. "Facing the Challenges of Disrupted Societies: Interacting with Micah 7:1-7 from a Perceived South African Context" (489-501) and

\_\_\_\_\_. "The Tip of an Iceberg: Leadership and Leader Interaction in the Book of Haggai in a Time of Resettling and Reconstruction" (502-18).

### **31** *OTE* 16/3 (2003) – (4/15)

This issue is comprised of fifteen articles, only four of which address present day Bible readers' contexts:

Baloyi, M. E. "Where Does the Meaning of a Word/Phrase in a Text Reside – in an Author, Text or a Reader?" (573-80).

Snyman, G. "Fear, Violence and Racism: Can Religion Help Us Outlive the Past in South Africa?" (690-716).

Van Heerden, W. "The Rhetoric of Using Proverbs in Conflict Situations: The Cases of a Biblical Text and an African Proverb" (730-744).

Wessels, W. J. "Engaging the Book of Haggai in Leadership Issues" (766-83).

### **32** *OTE* 17/1 (2004) – (3/7)

Seven articles were published in this issue. Only three of them could be identified in the category under discussion:

De Villiers, F. T. "Symptoms of Depression – A Note on Psychological Exegesis" (9-14).

Dorey, P.J. "Genesis 2:24:Locus classicus van monogamie in die Ou Testament? 'n Literêr-historiese ondersoek na perspektiewe op poligame huwelike in die Ou Testament" (15-29).

Katho, B. "Knowledge of YHWH and True Glorification: A Contextual Reading of Jeremiah 9:22-23" (78-102).

### **33** *OTE* 17/2 (2004) – (5/11)

This issue contains eleven articles. Five do attend to the contexts of present day Bible readers.

Efthimiadis-Keith, H. "Is there a Place for Women in the Theology of the Psalms? Part II: Self-Expression and the 'I' in the Ancient Hebrew Psalter" (190-207).

Kotzé, Z. "Women, Fire and Dangerous Things in the Hebrew Bible: Insights from the Cognitive Theory of Metaphor" (242-51).

Loader, J.A. "Theologies as Symphonies: On (Biblical) Theology and Aesthetics" (252-66).

Stiebert, J. "The Inculcation of Social Behaviour in Proverbs" (282-93).

Wendland, E.R. "Bible Translation as 'Ideological Text Production' – with Special Reference to the Cultural Factor and Psalm 137 in Chichewa" (315-43).

**34** *OTE* 17/3 (2004) – (4/9)

The issue contained nine articles, of which only four addressed matters pertaining to the readers' contexts, including both the South African and the broader African contexts. These are:

Gous, I.G.P. "A Close Shave with God" (404-15).

Farisani, E. & D. Farisani. "The Abuse of the Administration of Justice in 1 Kings 21:1-29 and Its Significance for the South African Context" (389-403).

Maré, L.P. "Psalm22: To Pray like Jesus Prayed" (443-54).

Masenya (ngwan'a Mphahlele), M. "Teaching Western-Oriented Old Testament Studies to African Students: An Exercise in Wisdom or in Folly?" (455-69).

**35** *OTE* 17/4 (2004) – (1/12)

Articles on this special issue were in honour of Wouter Cornelis van Wyk. This special issue contains twelve articles out of which only one addresses contextual issues:

Groenewald, A. "Once Again Methods: Is there a Method in the Madness?" (544-59).

It is noteworthy that the paper addresses the issue of the exegetical landscape in South Africa; however, focus is on white OT scholarship. The following exegetical approaches are identified within this landscape: confessional or conservative approach – before and during the 1970s; the immanent, synchronic, structural analysis – the new era began in 1971 with Willem Vorster's groundbreaking paper delivered at the meeting of the New Testament Society of South Africa; historical critical approach – Ferdinand Deist's emphasis was on the historical critical approach to the biblical text. This paper clearly reveals that white OT scholarship is Western in its orientation and is more inclined to Western approaches.

A comparison between this paper and Adamo's paper in *OTE* 2003(16) reveals that white South African OT scholarship and African OT scholarship by scholars of African descent, are not riding on the same train; if we presume that it is the same train then they are on different coaches.

**36** *OTE* 18/1 (2005) – (6/9)

Nine articles were published in this volume. Five draw the readers' attention to matters relevant to our present day contexts:

Claasens, L.J.M. "I Kill and I Give Life: Contrasting Depictions for God in Deuteronomy 32" (35-46).

Farisani, E. "A Sociological Reading of the Confrontation between Ahab and Elijah in 1 Kings 21:1-29" (47-60).

Gericke, J.W. "Sounds of Silence: An Anti-Realist Perspective on YHWH's *Ipsissima Verba* in the Old Testament" (61-81).

Kalman, J. "Biblical Criticism in the Service of Jewish Theology: A Case Study in Post-Holocaust Biblical Exegesis" (93-108).

Katho, B. "The New Covenant and the Challenge of Building a New and Transformed Community in the DR Congo: A Contextual Reading of Jeremiah 31:31-34" (109-23).

Gertenberger, E.S. "Life Situations and Theological Concepts of Old Testament Psalms" (82-92).

### **37** *OTE* 18/2 (2005) – (9/18)

Eighteen articles comprised this volume. Nine of them, amounting to 50% of the volume, were identified:

Gous, I.G.P. "Lamentations 4 in the Light of Poetry Therapy" (223-39).

Grohmann, M. "'The Word is Near You!' (Deut 30:14): Reader-Oriented Inter-Textuality in the Jewish and Christian Hermeneutics" (240-52).

Le Roux, M. "African Light on the New Moon Ceremony" (281-95).

Masenya, (ngwan'a Mphahlele), M. "The Optimism of the Wise in Israel and in Africa: Helpful in the Time of HIV/AIDS?" (296-308).

Scheffler, E. "In Praise of Canticles: A (Male) Reaction to the Second Feminist Companion to the Song of Songs" (209-322).

Snyman, G. "Constructing and Deconstructing Identities in Post-Apartheid South Africa: A Case of Hybridity versus Untainted Africanity?" (345-55).

Strydom, G. "Israel and South Africa in Unity: The Same Old Di(ve)r(si)ty Tricks, as Narrated by the Prophets" (356-76).

Van Heerden, W. "Norman Habel se interpretasie van Genesis 1:1-2:4a binne die raamwerk van die Earth Bible Project" (371-93).

Spangenberg, I.J.J. "Constructing a Historical Context for the Ruth Novelette: Dovetailing the Views of JA Loader and R Albertz" (345-55).

### **38** *OTE* 18/3 (2005) – (4/30)

This issue is comprised of thirty articles out of which four do attend to the present contexts of the readers:

Adamo, D. T. & E. F. Eghwubare. "The African Wife of Abraham (Gn 16:1-16; 21:8-21)" (455-71).

Du Toit, J.S. & L. Beard. "'Room of Requirement': The Interplay of Visual and Conceptual Space in Biblical Literature for Children" (567-78).

Human, D. "Homoseksualiteit – Perspektiewe uit die antieke Nabye Ooste" (629-36).

Jonker, L. "'Contextuality' in (South) African Exegesis: Reflections on the Communality of our Exegetical Methodologies" (637-50).

Jonker weighs in on the debate on contextuality in South African OT scholarship, this following the debate that erupted in *BOTSA* in 2002 of which the main proponents are Willem Boshoff, Madipoane Masenya (ngwan'a Mphahlele) Jesse Mugambi, and Gerrie Snyman. Jonker makes a distinction between a variety of levels of contextuality: (1) productive contextuality – the different contexts in which biblical literature was produced; (2) rhetorical con-

textuality – the realities which are constructed in the biblical texts; (3) literary contextuality – the various literary contexts in the biblical texts; (4) canonical contextuality – the context from which we have the final formation of the Bible; (5) meta-theoretical contextuality – the exegetical methods that reflect the systematised ways in which biblical scholars devise reading strategies. For Jonker what Masenya (ngwan'a Mphahlele) and Mugambi are calling for is understandable, but it would be reductionistic to simply focus on the (South) African context at the ignorance (expense) of various other contexts. The way forward for Jonker is to have a multidimensional approach which allows for interaction of the different kinds of contextualities.

The African Qoheleths, however, wonder if indeed contextual integrity can be achieved by such a flattening out of the various contexts instead of acknowledging the imbalance which has been evident in South African OT scholarship. Contextual integrity cannot be achieved by readings of the Bible that fail to recognise the integrity of the reader, the reader's own socio-political, socio-economic, and socio-religious contexts, among others.

### **39 OTE 19/1 (2006) – (8/18)**

The issue consists of eighteen articles. Seven of them address the issue under investigation directly/consciously, while three address it to some extent.

The following articles can be classified in the first category:

Gericke, J. "Realism and Non-Realism in the Old Testament Theology: A Formal-Logical and Religious Philosophical Assessment" (47-57).

Lombaard, C. "The Relevance of Old Testament Science in/for Africa: Two False Pieties and Focused Scholarship" (144-55).

In this paper, Lombaard regards the call for "Africanisation/contextualization/relevance" to be a "false piety" for the following reasons: first, there is a tendency to reduce being "contextual" and "relevant" to political correctness and a danger of biblicism – what Lombaard refers to as "blind spot"; second, it reflects the insecurity of black academics as they seek biblical affirmation for their identity and culture; and third, it is an impossible enterprise: there is nothing uniquely African even in those studies that tend to move towards this direction; in Lombaard's view, what these studies merely are, is scholarly contributions of what is accepted as scholarly in the international academic arena. For Lombaard, the heart of South African OT science lies in exegesis for which the object of study is the text, theology, languages, history, cultural background and related matters, and it is by focusing on exegesis that university, church and society are best served.

This defense for the *status quo* which is prevalent in white South African scholarship reflects, on the one hand, the inclination towards a Western slogan that goes back to the Reformation period: *ad fontes* (back to the origi-



nal), and, on the other hand, the Enlightenment paradigm of scientific objectivity. It has to be realised that exegesis is not unaffected by assumptions, commitments, and philosophies of the exegetes. As Bultmann reminded us when he asked "Is Exegesis without Presuppositions Possible?" Bultmann's response to the question is in the negative, as he views it as impossible for the exegete to approach the text as *a tabula rasa*.<sup>40</sup>

Snyman, G. "The Rhetoric of Shame in Religious and Political Discourses: Constructing the Perpetrator in South African Academic Discourse" (183-204).

Van Steenberg, G.J. "World View Theory and Bible Translation" (216-36).

Wendland, E.R. "The Structure, Style, Sense, and Significance of Haggai's Prophecy concerning the 'House of the LORD' – With Special Reference to Bible Interpretation and Translation in Africa (Part II)" (281-306).

Jonker, L. "Reading with One Eye Closed? Or: What You Miss When You Do Not Read Biblical Texts Multi Dimensionally" (58-76).

West, G. "The Vocation of an African Biblical Scholar on the Margins of Biblical Scholarship" (307-36).

One indirectly addresses the present context:

Usue, E. "Theological Perspectives on the Concept of 'Yahweh's People' in Ezra and Nehemiah during the Early Post-Exilic Period (539-350 BC) – Part II"(205-15).

#### **40 OTE 19/2 (2006) – (16/23)**

This was among the more sizeable issues investigated by the African Qoheleths. It comprised a total number of twenty-three articles. It was a special issue whose Section A, with thirteen articles, was devoted to the subject matter of the OT and Africanisation. An introductory article by K. Holter introduced the research project: "Let My People Stay! A Research Project on Africanization of Old Testament Studies." This was followed by four articles in which the authors used Africa to interpret the OT:

Masenya (ngwan'a Mphahlele), M. "Challenging Poverty through Proverbs: An African Transformational Hermeneutics" (393-404).

Kimilike, L. P. "Using African Proverbial Lore to Understand the Holistic Poverty Eradication Framework in the Book of Proverbs" (405-17) and

\_\_\_\_\_. "The Poor Are Not Us': An Exploration into Possibilities of Old Testament and African Proverbs on Poverty" (418-28).

Van Heerden, W. "It's on the Old Mat that One Weaves the New One': The Dialogue between African Proverbs and Biblical Texts" (429-40).

In the second section of this issue devoted to Africanisation and OT studies, the authors use the OT to interpret Africa:

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<sup>40</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, "Is Exegesis without Presuppositions Possible?" in *New Testament Mythology and Other Basic Writings* (ed. S. M. Ogden; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984) 145.

Le Roux, M. "Using the Old Testament to Interpret Africa: The Malagasy Religious Context" (441-54).

Razafindrakoto, G. "The Old Testament and the Malagasy *Famadihana* Ritual" (455-72) and

\_\_\_\_\_. "The Old Testament Outside the Realm of the Church: A Case from Madagascar" (473-85).

Masenya (ngwana' Mphahlele), M. "Killed by Aids and Buried by Religion: African Female Bodies in Crisis" (486-99).

The last section in this category deals with the authors' attempts to find Africa in the OT. The section includes:

Lokel, P. "Previously Unstoried Lives: The Case of Old Testament Cush and Its Relevance to Africa" (525-37); and

\_\_\_\_\_. "Moses and His Cushite Wife: Reading Numbers 12:1 with Undergraduate Students of Makerere University" (538-57).

Le Roux, M. "The Lemba, the 'People of the Book' in Southern Africa" (548-57).

(13/13!)

However, in Section B, which would normally have been the standard *OTE* issue, the situation is different. Of the ten articles presented in this volume, only three fall into the Qoheleths' category:

Gittay, Y. "Literary Criticism versus Public Criticism: Further Thoughts on the Matter of Biblical Scholarship" (633-49).

Loader, J.A. "Reading and Controlling the Text" (694-711).

Naude, J.A. & T. J. Makutoane. "Reanimating Orality: The Case for a New Bible Translation in Southern Sotho" (723-38).

(3/10)

Although at face value, the African Qoheleths could have been tempted to assume that the issue as a whole foregrounded matters pertinent to our (African) contexts, they nevertheless remain cautious, because this was a special issue that predominantly addressed the topic of Africanisation and the OT.

#### **41     *OTE* 19/3 (2006) – (5/19)**

This issue was dedicated to Prof Jurie Hendrik le Roux. The issue is comprised of twenty-nine articles. Three articles specifically deal with Le Roux's contribution in the field of OT, whereas twelve address modern day contexts:

Human, D. "Jurie Hendrik le Roux – deernisvolle mens en veelsydige akademikus" (801-19).

Vos, C. "Drie gedigte vir Jurie le Roux" (820-22).

Lombaard, C. "Teks en mens. J H le Roux se lees van die Bybel binne die konteks van hoofstroom-eksegese in Suid-Afrika" (912-25).

De Villiers, G. "Oor eksegese en metodes: Die reëls van die spel" (823-30).

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- Holter, K. "Interpreting Solomon in Colonial and Post-Colonial Africa" (851-62).
- Klopper, F. "Reflections of a Feminist Scholar from the Threshold between Africa and European Biblical Exegesis" (882-91).
- Snyman, S.D. "Help Levitikus 18:22 en 20:13 die (NG) Kerk in debat oor homoseksualiteit?" (968-81).
- Spangenberg, I.J.J. "Reformation and Counter-Reformation or, What Are Old Testament Scholars Doing at Universities in South Africa" (982-92).
- Vorster, J. "Why Opting for Foolishness is Wise: Ambiguity and the Rhetoric of Gender Enquiry" (1005-31).
- Wessels, W. J. "Old Testament Theology: Uniqueness, Modes of Interpretation and Meaning" (1032-51).
- Coetzee, J.H. "'Yet Thou Hast Made Him Little Less than God': Reading Psalm 8 from a Bodily Perspective" (1124-38).
- Gericke, J.W. "The Quest for a Philosophical YHWH (Part 2): Philosophical Criticism as Exegetical Methodology" (1178-92).
- Greeff, C.J. & Boshoff, W. S. "Tsāra'ath in die Hebreuse Bybel. Vertalingsvoorstelle om die stigma wat aan melaatsheid kleef te besweer" (1193-1214).
- Naude, J. A. "A Socioconstructive Approach to the Training of Bible Translators" (1225-38).
- Wendland, E. R. "Communicating the Beauty of a Wise and 'Worthy Wife' (Prov 31:10-31): A Hebrew Acrostic Hymn to a Tonga Traditional Praise Poem" (1239-74).

#### **42**     *OTE* 20/1 (2007) – (5/10)

This was also a special issue, as it included, over and above the ordinary contents of an *OTE* issue, three inaugural lectures. All of them dealt, in one way or another, with issues pertaining to the (South African) context(s). The articles in the latter category include:

- Boshoff, W. "Die klippe swyg! Artefakte, ekofakte, tekste, godsdiens en geskiedenis: Argeologie en die bybelwetenskappe as gespreksgenote" (10-33).
- Gous, I.G.P. "Meaning – Intelligently Designed Keeping the Bible in (a Modern) Mind" (34-52).
- Snyman, G. "Collective Memory and Coloniality of Being as a Hermeneutical Framework: A Partialised Reading of Ezra-Nehemiah" (53-83).

Snyman's concern is to build a new hermeneutical framework which seeks to overcome the legacy of colonialism in the South African context by having the memory of apartheid form the necessary part of the framework. The key in this hermeneutical framework is an attempt to move beyond racialisation both in black discourse and white discourse, which will allow for black discourse not to merely define itself in terms of its relationship with the West, and allowing white discourse to reconstruct itself, so as to overcome the bad memories of its association with apartheid.

In Section B, which would have been the standard *OTE* issue, ten articles were published, but only two readers' context-conscious articles could be identified by the African Qoheleths:

- Mondriaan, M.E. "Mythological Eve: Progenitor of Mankind and Prototype of Women" (170-84).  
Stassen, S. "Traumatised Women and Men in Discourse with Oprah as Role Model" (215-35).

### **43** *OTE* 20/2 (2007) – (7/14)

This issue contained fourteen articles, five of which consciously addressed issues affecting the contexts of the modern Bible-reading communities:

- Ademiluka, S.O. "A Study of the Patriarchal Narratives (Gen12-50) in an African Setting" (273-82).  
Akoto (nee Abutiate), D.B. "Hearing Scripture in African Contexts: A Hermeneutic of Grafting" (283-306).

For Akoto, approaches of African biblical scholars, the contextual biblical interpretations, are best viewed as the "hermeneutic of grafting." The grafting is on two levels: first, Scripture itself is grafted into the history or micro-histories of African peoples. As such, Africa is a social location from which Scripture is read by Africans, the people of this part of the world. Second, there is a blending of Western and African cultural contextual elements, a process which neither involves supersession nor condescension of the other. For Akoto it is imperative for Africans to read Scripture through their own African lenses.

- Lai, B. L. "Psalm 44 and the Function of Lament and Protest" (418-31).  
Thiem, A. "No Gendered Bodies without Queer Desires: Judith Butler and Biblical Gender Trouble" (456-70).  
West, G. "The Bible and the Female Body in *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*: Isaiah Shembe and Jephtha's daughter" (489-509).

In two articles, the issues affecting modern Bible readers are addressed indirectly:

- Coetzee, J.H. "Where Humans and Animals Meet, Folly Can Be Sweet – Jonah's Bodily Experience of Containment the Major Drive behind his Conduct" (320-32).  
Lemmelijn, B. "Not Fact, Yet True: Historicity versus Theology in the 'Plague Narrative'" (Ex 7-11) (395-417).

### **44** *OTE* 20/3 (2007) – (11/20)

This issue contains twenty-two articles of which eleven articles address the modern context:

- Coetzee, J. "'n Diere-vriendelike lees van die boek Jona" (567-85).

- Dada, A. "Rereading the Naaman Story (2 Kings 5:1-7) in the Context of Stigmatization of People Living with HIV and Aids in Africa" (586-600).
- Dorey, P. "The Garden Narrative (Gen 2:4b-3:25): Perspectives on Gender Equality" (641-52).
- Gericke, J. W. "The Quest for a Philosophical YHWH (Part 3): Towards a Philosophy of Old Testament Religion" (669-88).
- Gitay, Y. "On the Foundation of Human Partnership and the Faculty of Speech: A Thematic and Rhetorical Study of Genesis 2-3" (689-702).
- Kamuwanga, L. "Exile and Suffering: Reading Psalm 77 in African Context" (720-35).
- Le Roux, M. "Power, Sexual Status, and Religion in the Promised Land" (742-55).
- Masenya (ngwan'a Mphahlele), M. "Invisible Exiles? An African-South African Woman's Reconfiguration of 'Exile' in Jeremiah 21:1-10" (756-71).
- Scheffler, E. "Criticising Political Power: The Challenge of Deuteronomy 17:14-20" (772-85).
- Usue, E.O. "Restoration or Desperation in Ezra and Nehemiah? Implications for Africa" (830-46).
- Van Dyk, P. "So-called Intelligent Design in Nature: A Discussion with Richard Dawkins" (847-59).

#### **45** *OTE* 21/1 (2008) – (2/13)

This issue contains thirteen articles with only two articles addressing the present day Bible readers' contexts:

- Cook, J. "Translation Technique and the Reconstruction of Texts" (61-68).
- Klopper, F. "Lament, the Language for Our Times" (124-35).

#### **46** *OTE* 21/2 (2008) – (9/19)

This issue contained nineteen articles, eight of which addressed issues pertaining to present-day contexts:

Seven articles directly address present day contexts:

- Gericke, J. W. "Why is There Something Rather than Nothing? Biblical Ontology and the Mystery of Existence" (298-309).
- Holter, K. "'A Negro, Naturally a Slave': An Aspect of the Portrayal of Africans in Colonial Old Testament Interpretation" (373-82).
- Kotze, Z. "The Witch in Psalm 59: An Afro-centric Interpretation" (383-90).
- Snyman, G. "David and Shimei: Innocent Victim and Perpetrator?" (435-54).
- Swart, C. & D. Human, "Hoe bruikbaar is Levitikus 18 en 20 in die homoseksualiteitsdebat?" (455-81).
- Van der Spuy, R. "Hebrew Alphabetic Acrostics – Significance and Translation" (513-32).
- Venter, P.P. "Salvation for Earth? A Body Critical Analysis of Psalm 74" (533-45).
- Viviers, H. "'Who Really Created?' Psalm 19 and Evolutionary Psychology in Dialogue" (546-63).

The one article that indirectly addresses the present day context is by:

Coetzee, J.H. "Psalm 104: A Bodily Interpretation of 'Yahweh's History'" (298-309).

**47** *OTE* 21/3 (2008) – (6/9)

This issue is comprised of nine articles, six of which directly address the twenty-first century Bible readers' contexts:

Adamo, D. T. "Reading Psalm 109 in African Christianity" (575-92).

Claassens, L.J.M. "'To the Captives Come Out and to Those in Darkness be Free ...': Using the Book of Isaiah in (American) Politics?" (618-34).

Kamuwanga, L. "Prayer for Protection: A Comparative Perspective on the Psalms in Relation to Lozi Traditional Prayers" (670-91).

Michael, M. "Old Testament Angelology and the African Understanding of the Spirit World: Exploring the Forms, Motifs and Descriptions" (692-712).

Van Deventer, H. "Did Someone Say 'History'? In Africa We Say 'His Story'! A Study in African Biblical Hermeneutics with Reference to the Book of Daniel" (713-28).

Van Deventer suggests that what some scholars engage in under the banner "Africa" does not exhibit an authentic African legacy, but appears to be an implicit Eurocentric approach. Some African scholars, according to Van Deventer, tend to ignore African epistemology, as they unwittingly open themselves up to Western epistemologies. Van Deventer calls for an authentic African hermeneutic that draws from the various myths and oral traditions, rather than using "African" to return to Western fundamentalism.

Wessels, W. J. "Prophet, Poetry and Ethics: A Study of Jeremiah 5:26-29" (729-44).

**48** *OTE* 22/1 (2009) – (6/11)

Eleven articles are published in this issue, six of which address issues pertaining to the modern context:

Ademiluka, S.O. "The Sociological Functions of Funeral Mourning: Illustrations from the Old Testament and Africa" (9-20).

Klopper, F. "Interpretation is All We Have. A Feminist Perspective on the Objective Fallacy" (88-101).

Le Roux, M. "*Ngoma Lungundu*: An African Ark of Covenant" (102-25).

Masenya (ngwan'a Mphahlele), M. "'For Better or for Worse?' – the (Christian) Bible and Africana Women" (126-50).

Van Dyk, P. "Challenges in the Search for an Ecotheology" (186-204).

Wessels, W.J. "'n Verkenning van tendense in profetenavorsing" (205-27).

**49** *OTE* 22/2 (2009) – (8/14)

This issue is comprised of fourteen articles, eight of which address the present day Bible readers' contexts:

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- Snyman, G. "Editor's note: *Alterität*, the Reader and Historical Consciousness" (245-52).
- Branch, R.G. "A Case of Spousal Abuse? A Study of the Marriage of Jeroboam I (1 Kings 14:1-18)" (253-80).
- Gericke, J.W. "'Brave New World' – Towards a Philosophical Theology of the Old Testament" (321-45).
- Martin, L.R. "Yahweh Conflicted: Unresolved Theologies in the Cycle of Judges" (356-72).
- Nadar, S. "Beyond the 'Ordinary Reader' and the 'Invisible Intellectual': Shifting Contextual Bible Study from Liberation Discourse to Liberation Pedagogy" (384-403).
- Van Dyk, P. "Creation, Temple and Magic: A Magico-Mythical Reading of Genesis 1" (422-36).
- Viviers, H. "Creating Science and Theology through a Cultural Lens" (437-55).
- Wittenberg, G. "Knowledge of God: The Relevance of Hosea 4:1-3 for Theological Response to Climate Change" (488-509).

**50**     *OTE* 22/3 (2009) – (7/14)

This issue contains fourteen articles, half of which address the modern context:

- Ademiluka, S.O. "An Ecological Interpretation of Leviticus 11-15 in an African (Nigerian) Context" (525-34).
- Deysel, L.C.F. "King Lists and Genealogies in the Hebrew Bible and in Southern Africa" (564-79).
- Holter, K. "Did Prince Cetshwayo Read the Old Testament in 1859? The Role of the Bible and the Art of Reading in the Interaction between Norwegian Missionaries and the Zulu Elite in the Mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century" (580-88).
- Lübbe, J. "A New Bible Translation: 'The Syntactic Translation'?" (605-17).
- Spangenberg, I.J.J. "Darwin, Du Plessis, Dooie Seerolle en demokrasie: Stroomversnellings in die studie van die Ou Testament in Suid-Afrika (1859-2009)" (662-76).
- Van Heerden, S.W. "Taking Stock of Old Testament Scholarship on Environmental Issues in South Africa: The Main Contributions and Challenges" (695-718).
- Van Rooy, H.F. "Dr. P.C. Snijman: A Forgotten Old Testament Scholar" (719-32).

**51**     *OTE* 23/1 (2010) – (7/10)

This issue contains ten articles, six of which do attend to present day Bible readers' contexts:

- Adamo, D.T. "The Deuteronomist(s)' Interpretation of Exilic Suffering in an African Perspective" (9-27).
- Efthimiadis-Keith, H. "Genesis 2:18-25 from a Jungian and Feminist-Deconstructionist Point of View" (44-65).
- Katho, B. "Faire la théologie de l'Ancient Testament en Afrique aujourd'hui: Défis et perspective" (82-102).
- Mare, L. P. "Psalm 137: Exile – Not the Time for Singing the Lord's Song" (116-28).

Scheepers, C.L. "Ethnicity, Cultural Diversity and Poverty in South Africa: Archaeological Perspectives from Iron Age Palestine" (161-77).

Scheetz, J. "Daniel's Position in the Tanach, the LXX-Vulgate, and the Protestant Canon" (178-93).

**52** *OTE* 23/2 (2010) – (2/10)

This issue is comprised of ten articles out of which only two pay attention to the modern context:

Gericke, J.W. "Descriptive Varieties of Philosophical Commentary" (261-82).

Miller-Naudé, C. L. & Naudé, J. A. "The Translator as an Agent of Change and Transformation: The Case of Translating Biblical Proverbs" (306-21).

**53** *OTE* 23/3 (2010) – (11/23)

Twenty-three articles are published in this issue out of which eleven pay attention to the present day Bible readers' contexts:

Adamo, D.T. "Teaching the History of Ancient Israel from an African Perspective: The Invasion of Sennacherib of 701 B.C.E. as an Example" (473-501).

Bailey, R.C. "Why Do Readers Believe Lot? Genesis 19 Reconsidered" (519-48).

Bergers, U. "The Book of Isaiah as Isaiah's Book: The Latest Development in the Research of the Prophets" (549-73).

Farisani, E.B. "Kuhumbulele, Divhazwakale na Mahumbulwa a Thalutshedzelo: U Saukanya ho Dzhenelaho ha 1 Dzikhosi 21:1-16 Bivhilini ya Tshivenda" (597-626).

Gericke, J.W. "Old Testament Theology and Philosophy of Religion: A Brief History of Interdisciplinary Relations" (627-51).

Klopper, F. "Rape and the Case of Dinah: Ethical Responsibilities for Reading Genesis 34" (652-65).

Masenya (ngwan'a Mphahlele), M. "Parental Instruction in Differing Contexts: Using Hermeneutical Phenomenology to Understand Selected Biblical and African Proverbs" (728-51).

Mtshiselwa, N. "How the Methodist Church of Southern Africa Read Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 in View of Homosexuality" (769-87).

Van Dyk, P.J. "Eco-Theology and Losing the Sacred" (822-33).

West, G. "Unstructural Analysis of the Bible Reinforcing Unstructural Analysis of African Contexts in (South) Africa?" (861-88).

Berges, U. "Obituary: Prof. Dr. Erich Zenger (5.7.1939 – 4.4.2010)" (913-16).

The total number of articles studied is 682, while the total number of articles addressing the contexts of the modern Bible readers is 268. Thus, less than 50% of the articles published from 1994 to 2010 address the present day contexts. The majority of contributors are white South Africans with only a few regular black South African male and female contributors. Although it may be argued that since 1994 the number of black contributors has increased, it is easily noticeable that their number is still very low as compared to that of white contributors. The number of Africans from elsewhere on the continent has also



significantly increased; however, with the exception of D. T. Adamo, B. Katho and E. Usue, many of them are one time contributors. The number of female contributors both black and white still remains very low. The notable regular female contributors are M. Masenya (ngwan'a Mphahlele), M. le Roux, S. Nadar, L.J.M Claassens, and H. Efthimiadis-Keith.

The low contribution of black African scholars is perhaps also evidence of their low membership within the society. As already pointed out, in 1994 black membership of the society was estimated at less than 2 percent. In 2001 the membership of OTSSA was 203 at a ratio of 191:12 white to black. In 2010 the membership of the society stood at 236 at a ratio of 200:36 white to black in a country and a continent which is predominantly black. Out of the thirty six black African members, nine are South African, three females and six males. Black membership in the OTSSA has grown through the years from less than 2 percent in 1994 to approximately 18 percent in 2010. It should be noted, however, that black membership still remains relatively low. Richards's words still ring true sixteen years later as the Old Testament Society of Southern Africa appears to continue, to use Richard's jargon, to be a "white elephant" in a country and a continent that is predominantly black.<sup>41</sup> Is there anything new under the sun? This situation could perhaps have been remedied if the society had heeded Deist's call almost twenty years back to overcome the non-African, non-contextual, irrelevant approaches to the OT.<sup>42</sup>

After 18 years of independence in South Africa, research conducted by South African OT scholars, as reflected in the reviewed *OTE* volumes, remains, to an extent, out of touch with the issues pertaining to our modern contexts. This becomes even more pertinent when it is considered that some authors wrote more than one article. That is to say, if an author had been deliberately addressing contextual issues at the dawn of independence, s/he was still doing so, even up to 2010. By examining all three issues in each year, the African Qoheleths clearly detected such a pattern of context-oriented South African OT scholarship. Even so, it is unfortunate that detachment from the everyday lives of the people, irrespective of how desperate/risky such contexts can be (cf. the Hebrew Bible context of Qoheleth), appears to typify our business as OT/biblical scholars in general. Is there anything new under the sun? The African Qoheleths' review of the findings continues.

## **E REVIEW, ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH FINDINGS**

As noted previously, a general lack of contact with what happens on the global scene, in the African context in general, and in the South African OT scholars' context in particular, can be discerned. The Qoheleths of the present text

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<sup>41</sup> Richards, "National Reconstruction," 280.

<sup>42</sup> Deist, "South African Old Testament Studies and the Future," 319.

speculate that, if the South African context were to be taken seriously in our scholarship, issues such as the dynamics of the power reversals in the post-apartheid era, identities, post-coloniality, violence against women and children, xenophobia and ecology, to name but a few themes, would have been integral to the subject matter of our Biblical and OT studies. As scholars, we would make such a deliberate inclusion, notwithstanding the variety of methodologies we employ in our OT teaching/pedagogy and research. Such a stance would reveal our commitment to the transformation of our contexts. But that does not seem to be the case, the Qoheleths of this narration think. The African Qoheleths recall the title of an article written by West some twelve years earlier, "Biblical Scholars Inventing Ancient Israel and 'Ordinary Readers' of the Bible Re-Inventing Biblical Studies."<sup>43</sup> This said, what the African Qoheleths found commendable is the fact that some SA OT scholars whose works formed part of this research refused to see history repeat itself. They were therefore refuting the Hebrew Qoheleth's claim that there is nothing new under the sun. Such scholars have chosen to challenge the *status quo* with its refusal to regard as scientific any biblical or OT scholarship that chooses not to foreground traditional approaches, such as the historical-critical methodology. They have chosen, even at the risk of negative branding by their peers, to be lauded first and foremost, not by their European-American peers (cf. the critique on Lombaard above), but by the South African community, particularly those community members on the margins.

The African Qoheleths disagree with Snyman who regards the call for SA OT scholars to take their South African context seriously in their writing as a process of racialisation in which whiteness becomes the category of the marginalised "other."<sup>44</sup> For Snyman, Masenya's plea for contextual authenticity turns out to be a boundary marker between insider (African/black) and outsider (European/Western/White), which forces him into a position of perpetrator.<sup>45</sup> For the African Qoheleths, the negative self-portrayal as "perpetrator" by Snyman serves to locate oneself as the victimised "Other" in the post-colonial, post-apartheid context at the neglect of the negative realities that continue to stare the majority of South Africans, particularly the historically marginalised, in the face. Furthermore, Snyman's view that contextual authenticity can be

<sup>43</sup> West, "Biblical Scholars Inventing Ancient Israel."

<sup>44</sup> Gerrie Snyman, "Playing the Role of Perpetrator in the World of Academia in South Africa," *BOTSA* 12 (2002): 8-20; see also his "Social Identity and South African Biblical Hermeneutics: A Struggle against Prejudice," *JTSA* 121 (2005): 34-55.

<sup>45</sup> Snyman, "Playing the Role of Perpetrator," 15-18; Snyman, "Social Identity and South African Biblical Hermeneutics," 38-43; Snyman, "Collective Memory," 53-83, esp. 67-70. See also Madipoane Masenya(ngwan'a Mphahlele)'s article, "Is White South African Old Testament Scholarship African?" *BOTSA* 12 (2002): 3-8, which invited Snyman's criticism.

achieved by doing away with binary oppositions such as African and Africanist, White and Black, and Western versus African, requires proper scrutiny, as doing away with the binary oppositions cannot be equated with overcoming diversity which is essentially part of our nature and being.<sup>46</sup> Snyman's call to do away with ethnic tags, seems to be a genuine call to uphold one of the key policies of the current South African government of non-racialism; however, the problem is when claims about non-racialism, are used, or are viewed as being used, to maintain the *status quo* and to conceal the ongoing glaring inequalities among South Africans, by denying the effects of racialisation.<sup>47</sup> South African scholarship is still white male-dominated as evidenced by the current membership of the Old Testament Society of South Africa, and the staff profile in South African universities. The black female and male, and, for that matter, white female, are still the "Other" in SA OT scholarship. This cannot be overcome by creating a "colour blind" or "gender blind" mental construct in which there is no more "Western" and "African," "black" and "white," "male" and "female" at the neglect of the life-denying realities on the ground. Some of the latter realities were inherited from patriarchy, *apartheid*, and colonialism among others. In addition, if we claim to be African, this should be reflected in the content, methodology, and teaching of Biblical and OT Studies.<sup>48</sup> This demands a conscious move by scholars to engage with their African-South

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<sup>46</sup> Snyman, "Collective Memory," 67.

<sup>47</sup> As Steyn and Foster observe, the challenge for white South Africans is to adjust to "post-apartheid South Africa, an environment where political pressures militate against perpetuation of the taken-for-granted privileges conferred on them by the colonial and white supremacist past." For Steyn and Forster, the central question for whiteness is: "how to maintain its advantages in a situation in which black people have legally and legitimately achieved political power." One of the ways in which this is done is by putting the best forward that carries no risk by tapping into the democratic principles. The principle of non-racialism "is transmuted into the liberal power evasive colour blindness ... that becomes ubiquitous in white discourses internationally... . When, however, race is acknowledged as an ongoing factor in the society, White Talk draws on other key democratic values in *NSAS [New South Africa Speak]* such as fairness and non-discrimination, to sustain the status quo. Rhetorically this is managed by false parallels that flatten out and conceal profound, ongoing inequalities that need to be acknowledged and redressed if one's intention is to bring about a fairer situation." See Melissa Steyn and Don Forster, "Repertoires for Talking White: Resistant Whiteness in Post-Apartheid South Africa," *Eth&RacSt* 31/1 (2008): 25, 26, 29.

<sup>48</sup> See Madipoane Masenya (ngwan'a Mphahlele), "Response to Himbaza and Holter," *BOTSA* 13 (2002): 9-12, 12; Madipoane Masenya (ngwan'a Mphahlele), "Struggling to Find 'Africa' in South Africa: A *Bosadi* (Womanhood) Approach to Biblical Texts," *SBL Forum* (2005), n.p. [cited 20/01/2012]. Online: <http://sblsite.org/publications/article.aspx?articleId=402> .

African contexts lest we produce material that is irrelevant and out of touch with the realities on the ground.

Another disturbing discovery resulting from the research findings was that of certain trends that the African Qoheleths noticed by going through the works. If a particular scholar had been (reader) context-conscious since, for example, 1994, this pattern continued right up to 2010. The recurrence of the names of particular scholars in the preceding section clearly evidences this. Such a trend might prove that the African Qoheleths' claim of the absence of anything new under the sun, is correct. However, the possibility should not be ruled out that a writer's context-oriented works could have been published in some of the issues not captured in the present sample, or in different journals. It is also noted that a number of the articles had been written by non-South African visiting scholars or research associates attached to particular institutions in South Africa. In the African Qoheleths' view, these scholars could also have addressed burning issues affecting their local communities or the broader global community.

The African Qoheleths ponder another possibility. If the South African OT scholars who were committed to the contexts that produced the texts of the Hebrew Bible were cognisant also of their special situatedness/social location on the African continent,<sup>49</sup> this would naturally be reflected meaningfully as an integral aspect of their works. An interesting yet disturbing pattern observed in the preceding category, is that very few SA OT scholars engage pertinent issues (be these positive or negative), affecting the African continent. Such concerns are addressed mainly by OT scholars from other parts of Africa, a tendency which, in the African Qoheleths' opinion, begs enquiry. What are they to make of all this? Are they to presume that many scholars of the OT in South Africa, like the Hebrew Bible Qoheleth, still take comfort in their philosophies and academic debates, even when their context is as risky, unjust and violent as that of Qoheleth's world? As has already been noted, transformation appears to be a "swear word" to the Hebrew Bible Qoheleth. In the view of this elitist aristocrat, things have always remained unchanged (Eccl1:1-11). Despite all the hard labour, the wisdom and the many pleasures humans can enjoy, if they are still breathing, says Qoheleth, there is nothing new under the sun!

What has been is what will be,  
and what has been done is  
what will be done;  
there is nothing new under the sun. (Eccl1:9)

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<sup>49</sup> See Deist, "South African Old Testament Studies and the Future."

## F CONCLUSION

The nature and pattern of OT studies since the inception of Theology/OT in Stellenbosch some 152 years ago seems, to the African Qoheleths, to remain essentially unchanged. From the perspective of the African Qoheleths, Deist's call to abandon the Eurocentric station has not been heeded; rather Le Roux's call to pursue the historical critical trajectory appears to have captured the hearts of SA OT scholars. We, SA OT scholars, in choosing to remain at the Eurocentric station, do not simply alienate ourselves from our African-South African contexts, but we end up attempting to enforce Western paradigms on our context. Just as the Tshivenda proverb says, "*hu si halwo lukunda a lu kokomedzwi lwa kokomedzwa lu a thara*";<sup>50</sup> rendered literally, "do not force a bracelet where it does not belong, if it is forced it gets damaged." The point of this proverb is that it is destructive to try to force something in a situation where it clearly does not fit or belong. There is nothing wrong with SA OT scholars engaging with Western paradigms; however, when Western paradigms are regarded as the norm that we *all* have to mimic in our context, the result is a mere duplication of the Western academic environment in our context.<sup>51</sup> Such an academic enterprise impoverishes the South African grassroots communities who are supposed to benefit from such academia.

As scholars we continue to engage with smart technicalities, including our constant tendency to speculate in, around and about (the history of) the biblical text, even as we appreciate the different tools that we as OT and biblical scholars were trained to use and continue to use. Like the Qoheleth of the Hebrew Bible, for us it is business as usual in a world resembling that of the biblical Qoheleth. Many of our clients continue to engage with the same text in their own small way, trying to make sense of a deity far from all their struggles. They struggle to make sense of, *inter alia*, the Bible, amid the mood of glaring pessimism into which we all have been thrown by the global economic recession. We all find ourselves located socially in the South African post-independence context, where the gap between the rich and the poor continues to increase apace, while the Black middle class elite becomes ever further entrenched. Ours is a context in which Euro-centric epistemologies remain the order of the day, where all facets of transformation, including how most of us conduct our scholarship, sets in, if ever, very slowly. As they ruminate on all this, the African Qoheleths suddenly remember that many South African OT scholars chose not to prophesy during the period of *apartheid* in South Africa, a path on which we continue today, 18 years after independence. Perhaps, speculate the

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<sup>50</sup> *Lukunda* is a traditional wire bracelet that a woman would put on her ankle or wrist.

<sup>51</sup> Deist, "South African Old Testament Studies and the Future," 314.

Qoheleths of our text, the readership of our published works is as elite as ourselves. Perhaps, indeed, there is nothing new under the sun!

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Prof. Madipoane Masenya (ngwan'a Mphahlele) University of South Africa.  
Department of Old Testament and Ancient Near Eastern Studies. P. O. Box  
392, Unisa, 0003. *E-mail*: masenmj@unisa.ac.za.

Dr. Hulisani Ramantswana, Department of Old Testament and Ancient Near  
Eastern Studies, University of South Africa. P.O. Box 392, Unisa, 0003, South  
Africa. *Email*: ramanh@unisa.ac.za.