

Editorial:

A Tribute to Prof Herrie van Rooy

GERRIE SNYMAN (UNISA)

The collection of essays in this volume of *Old Testament Essays* is presented to prof. Herrie van Rooy on the occasion of his 65th birthday and subsequent retirement from the Faculty of Theology of the Northwest University, Potchefstroom Campus. Reading through these essays and the tributes paid to him one realises the integrity of his research as well as his integrity as a person. Herrie gave important research direction in his own research of the prophets, Psalms corpus and the Syriac Psalms. And when one differed from him, in the words of Gerald West, his ideas served as a contrapuntal soundboard for different views that is brought into dialogue with one another.

Gerald West interrogates Western hermeneutics by looking at the final phrase in the book of Jonah from a postcolonial and contrapuntal perspective. He concludes that this final phrase is a reminder of the otherness of the other: God and Jonah, each in their own way, are trying to make the Ninevites conform to their perspectives; similarly, Jan van Riebeeck as representative of the Dutch East Indian Company in the 17th century strived to make the indigenous peoples of the Cape fit their frame.

Drawing on Herrie's humanity Madipoane Masenya provides an African woman's meditation on Psalm 8. She shares with Herrie van Rooy a patriarchal context, but differs in terms of coloniality of being. The impetus for her meditation was Hosi (chief) N'wamitwa II's struggle to obtain her rightful place as ruler after the death of her father. She refers to the patriarchal context of the psalm but chooses to understand the reference to man in Psalm 8:5 in its interconnectedness with Gen 1:26 in terms of rulership.

Bénédicte Lemmelijn provides an overview of wisdom in Jesus Sirach as it relates the Old Testament. Her approach is quite accessible for students and would certainly give readers not that knowledgeable on Jesus Sirach an introduction to the work which is dated between 200–170 B.C.E.. She discusses both in terms of righteousness, fear of God or respect for God (the Dutch and Afrikaans word is much more descriptive: *ontzag/ontsag*) and blessing. She concludes that wisdom in the Old Testament as well as in Jesus Sirach is expressed in terms of righteousness, its orientation is towards respect for God and its result is being blessed by the Lord, something she sees in Herrie van Rooy's life.

Hennie Viviers continues on the wisdom theme initiated by Lemmelijn. He argues that the book of Proverbs is an illustration of those pro-social mental tools that provided the human being with social intelligence to live peacefully

amongst one another since the early dawn of modern humankind. Altruism, fairness, honesty, self-control and deference for authority as moral embodiments are all reflected in the ancient wisdom book of Proverbs.

Hans Ausloos argues that textual criticism and historical-critical scholarship are intrinsically interwoven, not least due to important developments within the field of textual criticism itself with the discovery of new manuscript. He illustrates this relationship by reading Judges 6 and the absence of vv. 7-10 in 4QJudg^a. In Judges 6, these verses constitute an interruption. Its absence here indicates an earlier stage in the development of the Judges text, as argued by Trebolle Barrera with his notion of multiple texts. Despite the critique of Barrera's arguments, Ausloos thinks his position is still worthwhile pursuing.

Lombaard links up with Ausloos's pairing of two methods and Lemmelijn's subjacent spiritual perspective on wisdom. Whereas Ausloos links historical criticism to textual criticism, Lombaard links historical criticism to Biblical Spirituality in his understanding of the Psalm corpus and reading of Psalm 1 to whose composition he ascribes a religious impulse defined in terms of a particular spiritual conviction as well as a contentious theological position.

Related to the references to historical criticism above, Jaco Gericke argues that the trend to construct the HB as philosophical discourse is not that rare in the context of HB scholarship, because it already has happened to a rather significant extent within the context of the so-called biblical "minimalism" with its main exponents (Thompson and Davies) countering the minimalism with a philosophical maximalism. Gericke accedes that the question whether the HB is ancient philosophy is an essentially contestable issue.

Lombaard sees in Psalm 1 a whispering of certain theological impulses, such as Wisdom, the Torah, and the prophets. Bosman sees in the last two, which he terms a word pair ("Law and Prophets") a particular perspective that could have redefined what he calls the supposed communication between the deity, the mediator of the communication (diviner or prophet) and its audience. He argues that there is a difference when the communication is mediated by either a diviner or a prophet as can be seen in the Balaam narrative.

Danie O'Kennedy picks up on the issue of prophets. He looks into Hag 2:20-23 and asks whether this section constitutes a call to rebellion or to eschatological expectation. He continues with the discussion in which Herrie participated in 1988 in an article he wrote. O'Kennedy concludes that if one focuses on vv. 20 and 21, the text can be read as rebellion, but if the focus falls on v. 23, escathological concerns come forward.

Willie Wessels, in turn, looks at the prophecy of Nahum. His focus is on the poetic nature of the text. He reads it as resistance literature, similar to resistance poetry and resistance songs that function in oppressive contexts. He finds the contents of the book rather disturbing in terms of violence and gender. Nonetheless, the rhetoric of the book serves the purpose of enticing the Judean people to imagine victory through the intervention of YHWH in spite of their oppression and victimisation by the Assyrian forces.

Eric Peels too draws on Herrie's expertise regarding prophets. Whereas Herrie focused on Ezekiel, Peels's expertise went into Jeremiah. In his essay he looks at the prophecies against Egypt in Jeremiah 46, especially vv. 25-26 which create problems in the structure of the text. Peels concludes that vv. 25-26 not only summarise the previous section but also provide an explanation of what is happening: God's judgment that will strike Egypt from top to bottom, in other words, in its entirety.

Fanie Snyman similarly parallels Herrie van Rooy's interest in the prophets. Snyman provides a theological appraisal of Malachi. He detects four dimensions: the theological that is rooted in history, the cultic and the ethical that are intertwined, and the eschatological.

Marius Terblanche also weighs in on the discussion of the prophets. As is the case with Peels, his focus is on Jeremiah. His argument is that there is an intertextual link between Jer 27:5 and 32:17, which readers need to consider when looking at the portrayal of the prophet Jeremiah. His purchase of ancestral land as an act proclaiming the restoration of the land should not be placed on the same level as the acts of Hananiah.

Picking up on Masenya's relating of Gen 1 to Ps 8, Hulisani Ramantswana, a former student of Herrie, looks into the relationship between creation and conflict. He argues that conflict comes through the process of creation. He explores two conflicts: the conflict at sea with Leviathan/Rahab (Pss 74:12-17; 89:9-14), and the conflict on land with the serpent and humankind (Gen 2:4b-3:24). In the former conflict the serpent is slaughtered, in the latter conflict the serpent is cursed.

In another study on Genesis, Sakkie Spangenberg narrates his story of change as it relates to his understanding of Gen 1-3. Spangenberg, who studied in Stellenbosch, shares specifically his story with Herrie van Rooy, his contemporary who studied in Potchefstroom. They share the Reformed tradition, but their training necessarily resulted in different interpretations. Spangenberg's own story would be contrapuntal to Herrie's story.

In Sias Meyer's essay one encounters self-reflection about his ideas of ten years ago on the subject of the Jubilee laws in Leviticus 25 and 26. Meyer no longer finds his own argument that the Jubilee laws are related to the

returning elite wanting their land back convincing. He contributes his hesitance to the problem of dating, as a later date is more suggestive of an unjust distribution of land.

Peet van Dyk's essay adds to its importance of Gen 1-3 alluded to by Spangenberg in looking into the arguments about the location of the Garden of Eden. Van Dyk locates the Garden of Eden on the eastern horizon in mythical space. The eastern horizon is the edge of the world. Being the place where the three tiers of the cosmos (heaven, earth and underworld) came together, it was of great magico-religious significance.

Whereas Van Dyk looked into the locality of the Garden of Eden, Pieter Venter uses the concept of spatiality to explore the three journeys narrated in 1 Enoch. In each journey, one scene after the other, the revealed truth is linked to space—revelation gets associated with specific places on earth as well as to cosmological space. God's cosmic management of the world is revealed to Enoch in terms of allocation of space. Venter concludes that place and space embody the keys to God's decision in heaven.

Related to Masenya's contextual inquiry, Knut Holter attempts to draw some lines between the Psalm corpus which is quite significant in Herrie van Rooy's research and the context of the contemporary reader of these Psalms. He looks into the role of Psalms in healing within a particular Nigerian context. Holter introduces the term "glocal," a combination of the words "global" and "local" in order to break the perceived stranglehold of Western Biblical Hermeneutics.

In Eben Scheffler's tribute to Herrie, he takes his point of departure in a life-related theme such as violence which seems to be common to both the ancient audience of the text of Deuteronomy and present-day readers in South Africa, Germany and Israel, all with a legacy of violence. Scheffler sees in the book notions of maximum violence in all its viciousness.

Phil Botha pays tribute to Herrie's role in the study of the Psalms in the Hebrew Bible as well as those in the Peshitta in analysing the exegesis and polemical use of Ps 110 by Ephrem, a leading thinker and author within the Syriac-speaking Christian church of the Fourth Century C.E.. Botha draws several conclusions: (a) in ascribing Davidic authorship to Ps 110, Ephrem was able to claim that Jesus Christ was the son of the Father which David called "Lord"; (b) Ephrem utilises Ps 110 to refute the Arian doctrine that Jesus is not divine and to shape his anti-Jewish polemics; (c) Ps 110 becomes a key to understand Proverbs 30:4, turning Solomon into a witness for the divinity of Christ.

Gerrie Snyman, Editor, Old Testament Essays. April 2014. Email: snymagf@unisa.ac.za or ote-editor@otwsa-otssa.org.za.