Interpreting the Old Testament in Africa

Papers from the International Symposium on Africa and the Old Testament in Nairobi, October 1999

Edited by
MARY GETUI,
KNUT HOLTER, &
VICTOR ZINKURATIRE

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Preface

This book is a collection of papers read at the International Symposium on Africa and the Old Testament, which took place in Karen, outside Nairobi, in October 1999.

As organisers of the symposium and editors of this book we would like to express our gratitude to those institutions and people that made it all possible. First, to our own institutions—Kenyatta University (Nairobi), the Catholic University of Eastern Africa (Nairobi), and the School of Mission and Theology (Stavanger)—for moral and economic support. Then, to the Norwegian Research Council (Oslo), for a generous grant to cover the involved expences. Also, to the Dimesse Sisters in Karen, for their patience and hospitality during our days in their convent and conference centre.

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Nairobi and Stavanger, June 2000

Mary Getui, Knut Holter, Victor Zinkuratire

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Introduction

Mary Getui, Knut Holter, Victor Zinkuratire

We had a symposium in Africa, at the foot of the Ngong Hills.

The question of localisation is important for Old Testament (OT) scholarship. One of the things biblical scholars have realised throughout the recent decades is that our interpretation of the Bible emerges from the encounter between the ancient texts on the one hand and us and our context on the other. When thirty scholars—from Eastern and Southern Africa, and even two from Norway—came together in the beautiful convent of the Dimesse Sisters in Karen, outside Nairobi, to discuss various aspects of the relationship between Africa and the OT, the question of localisation was therefore of vital importance. The Karen area, situated at the foot of the Ngong Hills, became to us an Africa in miniature: here we experienced some of the silence and freshness of the savannah, but here we also experienced some of the noise and pollution of the metropolis. And in this context of mixed experiences we repeatedly asked ourselves: what does it mean to interpret the OT in Africa today?

There is, of course, no plain answer to this question. The whole symposium—and now this book, a collection of the papers read at the symposium—is an attempt to answer. And this answer falls in five parts. The first part aims at mapping the context of OT studies in Africa: Jesse Mugambi draws some historical lines in the relationship between Africa and the OT—in the biblical texts themselves as well as in western and African interpretation of these texts. And Knut Holter discusses the current state of OT scholarship in Africa from three perspectives: its thematic preferences, its institutional structures and its interpretive contexts.

The second part aims at finding Africa in the OT: three papers analyse various aspects of the OT portrayal of Africa and Africans.

Marta Høyland Lavik surveys the relevant OT texts and the interpretations these have received from African scholars. Then Tewaldemedhin Habtu and David Tuesday Adamo analyse the OT portrayal of Egypt and Cush respectively. Habtu emphasises the dual concept of Egypt in the OT, whereas Adamo especially focuses on the alleged de-Africanisation the Cush-texts have experienced by scholars interpreting the texts from the Eurocentric perspective of traditional OT scholarship.

The third part aims at using Africa to interpret the OT: six papers analyse various aspects of how the African religio-cultural tradition can be used as comparative material in exegetical studies of the OT. The first two papers discuss some of the methodological questions raising from this encounter between Africa and the OT. Louis Jonker points out the methodological diversity of contemporary OT scholarship, and he challenges African scholars to contribute to the development of a "communal" approach for reading the Bible. Aloo Osotsi Mojola surveys some major methodological challenges and possibilities of using the social sciences in the interpretation of the OT in Africa. The next four papers examplify how the African tradition can shed some light on the OT. Hendrik Bosman analyses the relationship between African and OT concepts of time and history. Sammy Githuku suggests that certain Eastern African examples of a taboo against counting may contribute to our understanding of the narrative about David counting his men (2 Sam 24). Jonathan Gichaara analyses the relationship between Meru and OT concepts of name giving. And Joseph Muutuki argues that the traditional Kamba word for "covenant" has connotations that are very close to the Hebrew *bᵉrith*.

The fourth part aims at using the OT to interpret Africa: nine papers analyse various aspects of how the texts of the OT are experienced as relevant to their contemporary African readers. First there are three textual case studies: Madipoane Masenya compares OT and Northern Sotho proverbs, emphasising the potential for communication across cultures. Constance Shisanya makes a reading of the Hagar narrative in Genesis from the perspective of an African woman. And Bungishabaku Katho interprets Jeremiah 22 with special attention to the question of exercising power in Africa. Then follows two ecclesiastical case studies: Pauline Otieno gives a glimpse into the use of the OT in the Coptic Church of Kenya, and Philomena Mwaura does the same with regard to the Nabii Christian Church of Kenya. Further, there are two thematic case studies: Margaret Aringo discusses OT and African concepts of

work, and Anne Nasimiyu Wasike discusses the creation of man and woman. Finally, Mary Getui notices some aspects of the role of the Bible in African theology, and Serapio Kabazzi Kisirinya notices some aspects of the term "testament" in an African context.

Lastly, the fifth part aims at describing various aspects of the efforts of translating the OT in Africa today. Peter Renju outlines the strategies of the United Bible Societies for OT translation in Africa. Leonidas Kalugila discusses some central issues of OT translation in Africa. And Victor Zinkuratire argues that the morphological and syntactical correspondences between Hebrew and Bantu languages represent a major pedagogical challenge for Hebrew studies in Africa.

The editors have decided that all papers that were read at the symposium were to be included in this book. The reader will therefore notice that the papers vary with regard to length, depth, and academic profile. Still, what all papers have in common, is a determined will to reflect on what it means to interpret the OT in an African context. And further, taken as a whole, this collection of papers should give a fairly representative testimony of how the relationship between Africa and the OT is interpreted in universities and theological seminaries in Eastern and Southern Africa at the turn of the century.

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Mapping the Context of Old Testament Studies in Africa

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Africa and the Old Testament

Jesse Mugambi

While thanking you for the invitation to deliver a keynote address at this symposium on Africa and the Old Testament (OT), I request you to accompany me as we reflect on some of the challenging issues associated with this theme. There are no ready answers, but I have many questions. Together we can ponder over them and help each other in the search for solutions. This is the way knowledge is advanced. It is encouraging that African scholars are at last consolidating themselves into professional guilds for specialized research and publication in various disciplines. It is also encouraging that increasingly, scholars from other parts of the world appreciate the need to work with their African peers for mutual benefit, without the condescendence and paternalism that characterized earlier relationships. The papers and insights presented in this conference are an important sign-post in the long journey towards the maturation of African theological scholarship.

Background

There is a puzzling but exciting affinity between the African religious heritage and the way of life which the OT presupposes and takes for granted. This affinity is evident throughout the continent, from Cape Town to Cairo and from Somalia to Senegal, from Port Sudan to Luanda, and from Beira to Casablanca. How can this affinity be explained?[1] Missionary ethnography during the colonial period speculated that Africans must have copied their religious ideas from the Hebrews (cf. Williams 1930). However, the religious heritage of Upper Egypt is much older than that of the Mosaic Code. According to Gen 12:10–20, Abram migrated to Egypt when there was a famine in Canaan

and lived there at the pleasure of Pharaoh. He left only when Pharaoh ordered his deportation. It can be expected that during his sojourn in Egypt Abram learned a great deal, through both default and example.

The story of migration and settlement of the descendants of Abraham in Egypt is much more than a contrivance of fiction for entertainment or religious intrigue. It depicts an intimate and symbolic relationship between these peoples. The book of Exodus portrays Moses as a leader whose values were formed under Egyptian high culture. Having been brought up and educated as an Egyptian prince, Moses internalized the moral and religious values of his imperial Egyptian foster-parents before he became a liberator of his own ethnic community. The Exodus is the legendary story of a people whose ethos and ethic were formed in Africa. It is understandable, therefore, that during the hardships experienced in the Exodus across the wilderness of Sinai some of the migrants felt nostalgia for the bounteous life they had left behind in Egypt (Exod 16:1–3, 17:3).

The indebtedness of the Hebrews to Africa is acknowledged throughout the OT, from the perspectives of religion, economics, politics, military history, aesthetics, ethics, and kinship. Egypt is depicted as the country of refuge and bounty for Abraham and his descendants. Joseph, the son of Jacob, becomes the instrument for the rescue of his family from starvation. Eventually, the descendants of Abraham settle in Egypt, and the drama unfolds in the books of the Pentateuch.

Likewise, the New Testament (NT) opens with Joseph, Mary and Jesus taking refuge in Egypt. Simon of Cyrene (Africa) carries the cross of Jesus to Calvary (Mark 15:21; Luke 23:26), and the Ethiopian noble is converted by Philip (Acts 8:26–40). St. Paul's missionary journeys did not cover any part of Africa, but by the fourth century the strongest Christian community was in Africa—as indicated by the defenders of faith who came from Alexandria, Carthage and Hippo (cf. Bediako 1992). And Alexandria was the home of Philo, one of the chief spokesmen of Judaism at the beginning of the Christian era (cf. Russel 1941: 322ff.).

Whereas the sustained OT interaction with Africa begins with Joseph the son of Jacob going to Egypt as the forerunner of the rest of his family (cf. Gen 37–47), the Aramaic interaction with Africa in the NT begins with Joseph the father of Jesus taking refuge in Egypt in order to save Jesus from Herod the Great (cf. Matt 2:13–23). During the early Church, Africa was the home of the most staunch defenders of the

Christian faith (cf. Bediako 1992). Interestingly, in the OT Africa is depicted as the land of refuge, peace and plenty. Though it is later portrayed as the the land of bondage, the prophetic tradition takes these two profiles as an indication of divine control over human history.

The upbringing of Moses as a prince in the palace of Pharaoh complicates the profile of the sons of Jacob as an oppressed and exploited community in Egypt, showing the complexity of social and political relations in that society (cf. Exod 2). In view of this complexity, it is understandable that there would have been a sense of nostalgia among some of those in the Exodus when life became unbearable in the wilderness (cf. Exod 16:1–3). Thus according to prophetic wisdom, Pharaoh's power is not above divine providence, and Hebrew piety is not a guarantee against cultural arrogance (cf. Is 30:1–7). A similar relativization is articulated by St. Paul when he advises the Pharisees not to look down upon the Gentiles, boasting about their adherence to Mosaic Law. At the same time, however, he articulates the inadequacy of Graeco-Roman religiousness. Both the Jews and the Gentiles are in need of divine mercy, having fallen short of perfection (cf. Rom 3:1–31). It is in this context that St. Paul makes a distinction between Law and Grace as means of salvation.

Ethiopia has a special place in the OT. King Solomon obtained the timber for decoration of the temple from there, and he was visited by the Queen of Sheba (cf. 1 Kgs 10:1–13; 2 Chr 9:1–12). During the crucifixion, Simon of Cyrene helped Jesus carry the cross. Cyrene was in Africa (cf. Mark 15:21–28). In the embryonic period of Christianity, St. Philip encountered the Chancellor of Exchequer of Ethiopia, who was returning home from Jerusalem. The Ethiopian was reading the prophecy of Isaiah at the time St. Philip met him on the road to Gaza. St. Philip converted the Ethiopian to Christianity. Thus out of Palestine, Christianity became established in Africa before anywhere else (cf. Acts 8:26–40). The Church in Antioch was established through the initiative of Christians from Cyprus and Cyrene (cf. Acts 11:19–22).

These introductory paragraphs suggest that the affinity between Africa and the Bible is much more than casual and occasional. Without Africa and the participation of Africans, neither Judaism, nor Christianity, would make sense. This indebtedness has been acknowledged in the contemporary period by the invitation of tens of thousands of Ethiopians to emigrate to Israel.[2] The formative ideas of both Judaism and Christianity are derived largely, though not exclusively, from the African cultural and religious heritage. It is

difficult to imagine how the doctrinal debates in the early Church would have developed without the participation of the African bishops at the three formative Ecumenical Councils of Nicaea (AD 325), Constantinople (AD 381) and Chalcedon (AD 451).[3] The Donatist schism was not only doctrinal—it was also racial, cultural and political (cf. Neill 1964: 38).

Recent research by Martin Bernal and other scholars has shown that the prejudice and condescendence portrayed in European art and literature since the seventeenth century is the consequence of the imperial and mercantile expansion of European powers into Africa, Asia and South America (cf. Bernal 1987 & 1991; Snowden 1983). The European slave trade and imperial domination needed ideological and theological justification, and there was no lack of spokesmen for the purpose. According to Bernal, the documentary evidence of Europe's indebtedness to Africa was systematically destroyed between 1785 and 1985, during the period of Europe's imperial supremacy in the world. It is interesting that even such renowned philosophers as Kant (1724–1804) and Hegel (1770–1831) were prejudiced against Africans, whom they considered intellectually and morally depraved (cf. Masolo 1995: 3ff.). This destruction of evidence, however, has not managed to erase the appreciation of Africa by other peoples in the ancient world. African scholars will have to reconstruct the history of their culture, in the same way that scholars of other cultures have reconstructed their own in turn. This task cannot be delegated across cultures and across generations.

My intention in this paper is to highlight the various points of affinity between the OT and Africa, alluding to some of the research which has promoted a reconstructive approach to the mutual interaction between Africans and other peoples. The paper presupposes that religion as a social phenomenon can function only in the context of culture, and any abstraction of a religion from the cultural context in which it is manifested will distort its essential features. To comprehend and appreciate the biblical message, it is necessary to probe the various pillars of culture which the Bible takes for granted—politics, economics, ethics, aesthetics, kinship and religion. Thus the Bible is not merely a book about the dealings of a community with God; it is also a collection of texts which form an integral part of the cultural heritage of that community. It is for this reason that the Authorized Version of the Bible, and the writings of William Shakespeare, together constitute the most significant symbols of the literary achievements of Elizabethan England.

Oral tradition and African history

During the 1960s there was a strong wave of expatriate historians who insisted that Africa had no history prior to European colonization. They based their argument on the presupposition that literacy was a precondition for historical documentation. They also assumed that history was explicable only in terms of their respective imperial histories. This view had a strong foundation in Hegel's philosophy of history, which wrote-off the peoples outside the Caucasian cultural heritage as inferiors. In a book published in 1970, Ivor Wilks alludes to Hegel's idea that Africa is no historical part of the world; it has no movement or development to exhibit (cf. Wilks 1970: 7ff.). Wilks also alludes to Hugh Trevor-Roper, University of Oxford, who had argued that Africa has no history, only barbarous tribes in picturesque but irrelevant corners of the globe. Of this racist view, J.D. Fage comments (Fage 1970: 2):

> Of course this was nonsense. It is impossible for men to live together in any sort of a society without some recollection of its past, without some sense of its history. [...] Over two thousand years ago, there was the organized kingdom of Meroe in the upper Nile valley, while shortly after the Arabs established themselves in North Africa in the seventh century AD, they recognized the existence across the Sahara in West Africa, of such organized Negro kingdoms as ancient Ghana and Kanem. Kingdoms such as these, and many more, could not exist—could not regulate their internal affairs, could not deal with their neighbours, could not maintain their identities—without organized concepts of their history going back to the time of their foundation.

In refutation of this derogatory view, African historians embarked on research to show that Africans indeed are conscious of their own history, and this consciousness is sustained through a strong oral tradition. The Department of History at the University of Nairobi was one of the centres which nurtured a crop of such historians. Among them were Professors Bethuel Ogot, Gideon Were, Godffrey Muriuki, William Ochieng and H.S.K. Mwaniki.[4] Each of these historians conducted research focusing on the history of a particular community, using oral sources. They found that it is possible to construct written history from oral sources, as far back as fourteen generations—four

centuries. Thus they were able to reconstruct the population migrations of the peoples of eastern Africa from the fifteenth century.

This method, which has been standardized since the 1960s, is now widely used in the social sciences and humanities. Jan Vansina has written a book setting the guidelines for this research method (Vansina 1973; cf. also Vansina 1985), and he (1973: 1) advises:

> Oral traditions are historical sources of a special nature. Their special nature derives from the fact that they are "unwritten" sources couched in a form suitable for oral transmission, and that their preservation depends on the powers of memory of successive generations of human beings. These special features pose a problem for the historian. Do they *a priori* deprive oral tradition of all validity as a historical source? If not, are there means for testing its reliability? These are precisely the questions to which the present study seeks to find an answer, and I hope to show that oral tradition is not necessarily untrustworthy as a historical source, but, on the contrary, merits a certain amount of credence within certain limits.

In Biblical studies, orality has been given much respectability by the research of Professors Walter Ong and Werner Kelber (cf. Kelber 1979; cf. also Kelber 1983). In the Foreword to Kelber's book *The Oral and the Written Gospel*, Ong writes (Ong 1983: xiv; cf. also Miller 1994):

> A sophisticated oral hermeneutic opens the way to deeper understanding not merely of orality but of texts themselves. Textuality shows clearly its own distinctive, rich and complex psychodynamics, when it is set against orality, with which writing always maintains some sort of reciprocal relationship.

The written form of a text is always a reduction from its articulated form, whether the articulation is through orality or gesticulation, as is done in sign-language. There has been a tendency to regard literacy as an end in itself, especially among the literate elite. It is this tendency that led to the prejudiced view to which I have just alluded. Historians are interested in scrutinizing official records. It should be remembered, however, that those records are selections of texts whose composition is greatly influenced by the writer. The texts tell much more about the author than about the events they purport to describe. This fact indicates the ideological context of all written texts. The text does not explicitly state that context. The reader has to discern it.

None of the founders of the so-called "great religions"—Moses, Socrates, Siddharta Gautama, Jesus and Muhammad—wrote down their teachings; they were written down by their disciples and admirers. Great texts have been published with these leaders as the authors, and commentaries abound on these texts. Without the context in which these works were orally delivered, and without knowledge of the circumstances under which they were compiled in writing, it is likely that the texts themselves will be more the works of their respective scribes than a record of the actual words of the masters to whom they are attributed.[5]

The Bible as a library of written texts has reached us through a long and complicated process of selection, translation and interpretation. That process has been guided by a wide variety of ideological and theological considerations embedded in the texts but not directly accessible to the reader. It is important to remember, therefore, that the study of the relationship between the OT (or the NT) and Africa can best be appreciated by studying the wider context in which the peoples of the entire Mediterranean region interacted during the formative centuries when the biblical texts were written.

Misri legends and the political history of Tropical Africa

Archaeological evidence confirms that eastern Africa has been inhabited for millennia. Certainly there have been multiple waves of migrations in all directions within the continent, with intermarriage and settlement re-adjustments from one period to another. The peoples of eastern Africa whom European imperialism invaded trace their migration from the north. This oral history is documented among both Bantu-speaking and Nilotic peoples (cf. Neill 1964: 38). Professors Ogot, Were and Ochieng have observed the Misri legends among the Luo, Luhya and Gusii peoples, respectively. In turn, Professor Mwaniki has traced population migration of peoples around Mount Kenya to the Kenya-Ethiopia border, making this history continuous with that of the Oromo of Ethiopia. On arrival they found other peoples, with whom they intermarried and co-existed. The oral history in West Africa is similar. Thus the African cultural and religious heritage is multi-layered. The Biblical layer of that heritage is important, but is is neither decisive nor exhaustive.

According to legend, these peoples came from Misri (Egypt) and dispersed into the various areas both west and east of the Great Rift Valley. This legendary history is inconsistent with another theory, which suggests that eastern Africa was settled by migrants from Central Africa. The most that can be claimed without contradiction, is that over the last five millennia there has been considerable interaction between the peoples of this continent—so much interaction that Africa could be considered a homogeneous cultural region with minor variations here and there (cf. Diop 1967).

The cultural unity of Africa is so strong that during the struggle for Africa's decolonization there was great affinity between the nationalists from every region of the continent. The first Secretary General of the Organization of African Unity was Diallo Telli from Algeria. President Nasser of Egypt was a prominent leader during Africa's struggle against European imperialism in the 1950s. The first generation of Africa's heads of state were symbolically likened to Moses who led his people from bondage to freedom. The use of biblical imagery for political and ideological purposes was made possible by the affinity between Africa and the OT. Interestingly, missionary education did not approve the African interpretations of the Bible which affirmed this affinity.

Whereas Africans have regarded the OT as an affirmation of their cultural and religious heritage, Euro-American missionary education in Africa has tended to emphasize discontinuity between the Bible and the African heritage. In general missionaries working in Africa have emphasized the novelty of the biblical message, as the starting point in evangelization. African converts, having read or heard the biblical story, have discerned the continuity and affinity between the biblical way of life and their own. This explains why African converts choose baptismal names from the OT much more frequently than from the NT. The clash of biblical hermeneutics between missionaries and Africans was one of the major factors that contributed to the rise of African independent churches.[6]

African approaches to the OT

Professor Kwesi Dickson in his book *Theology in Africa* observes that Christians recognize and appreciate the continuity between their culture and the biblical heritage, to the bewilderment of missionaries from Europe and North America (cf. Dickson 1984: 145). Since the

Renaissance, Europeans have ideologically identified their cultural and religious heritage with that of ancient Greece and Rome, with the assumption that Graeco-Roman culture is the root of the North Atlantic civilization.

Recent research confirms that prior to the Christian era ancient Greece and Rome were closer to Africa than the European Enlightenment could concede (cf. Masolo 1995: 18ff.). While the ancient Greeks came to Africa to learn philosophy and geometry, European imperialism and the missionary enterprise brought with them a system in which Africans were expected to receive rather than reciprocate knowledge with Europe. Concerning theological education, Dickson observes (1984: 144):

> Up till now the study and interpretation of the Bible as done in theological colleges in Africa have simply been a regurgitation of Western methods and insights; it is often taken for granted that the task of theological education in Africa is merely to pass on Western theological scholarship to succeeding generations of African students. There is undoubtedly a great deal to be learnt from the researches done by Western theologians; it would be foolish to fail to recognize the importance of the contributions that Western theologians have made. However, should theological education in Africa simply assume the inviolability of Western patterns and insights? Should not the Church in Africa evolve ways of studying the Bible that would underscore its character as an expression, through particular historical circumstances, of God's dealings with mankind?

Dickson outlines three factors to explain the affinity affirmed by Africans towards the OT. These are:

- The political appeal of the OT, which has given Africans a frame of reference for their struggle against imperial domination.
- The legalistic moralism of the OT, which African converts have contrasted with missionary moralism.
- The similarity between the Hebrew and the African cultural and religious heritage, both of which are permeated with religion without separation between sacred and secular domains (cf. Dickson 1984: 148ff.).

These three factors have inspired a wide variety of African approaches to the OT. For some African Christians, the OT is a

"manual" to be used as the oppressed endeavour to survive under oppression and exploitation. Many independent churches have used the OT in this way. There is evidence that African independent churches refer to the OT much more frequently than the NT. In the NT, they refer much more frequently to the sayings attributed to Jesus, than to the philosophical and moralistic arguments of St. Paul.

For other African Christians, the OT is an affirmation of their traditional moral norms. The discrepancy between the normative teachings of missionaries and their actual conduct led many African converts to lose confidence in missionary instruction as far as morality was concerned. Since the NT does not contain elaborate norms of conduct, the OT became a source of authoritative instruction. In this way, African converts have been able to make a clear distinction between missionary teaching and biblical instruction. Whenever there was any conflict between these two sources of authority, African Christians have opted for the Bible. It is for this reason that there has been a direct correlation between the incidence of church independence and the availability of the Bible in an African language in a particular area.

The modern Christian missionary enterprise has originated from a culture which fragments life into the secular and the religious domains. Ironically, the missionaries who have come to Africa have often been critical of that separation, but in practice they have been children of their own culture. Thus the mission station became established as an island in the ocean of African culture. When missionaries left, the island was submerged into the ocean, occasionally appearing during the low tide. Whereas in Europe and North America Christianity became the norm of Christendom, in Africa Christianity has remained largely as an ointment for soothing various ailments. Deep in heart the African Christian remains an African, biblical hermeneutics has not yet facilitated a theology which appropriates the Bible to the African heritage and vice versa. Missionaries could not provide such a hermeneutic. It is the responsibility of African theologians to provide it without prompting from their mentors in Europe and North America.

These three factors are not mutually exclusive. They often operate in the rationalization of many African Christians. The most challenging task for African Christians in the third millennium, will be to articulate the Christian faith in such a way that it becomes an interaction between the Bible and African culture, rather than a mimic of missionary norms and instructions. Christianity in western and northern Europe became

vibrant after the reformation, when Roman imperial norms were challenged by local Christians and local churches emerged to critically affirm local cultures. Such a process is indispensable if African Christianity is to survive the onslaught of materialism in this era of "globalization" and "liberalization". The early Church survived a similar onslaught through appropriation of Graeco-Roman culture and philosophy.

The European reformation and renaissance became the engine of European regeneration and self-affirmation. Today, African Christianity continues to be a factor of cultural alienation, because it has not yet fully appreciated African culture as the root-stock upon which the Gospel can be grafted. St. Paul thought of Gentile Christians as the wild olive which had been grafted onto the real olive (Rom 11:13–24). This is the paradigm which the modern missionary enterprise has applied in Africa, with the result that African Christianity remained culturally alienated from the cultural roots of its converts. The analogies of Jesus in Matt 5:13–16 are much more realistic: the Gospel is compared with salt for flavouring and seasoning food, and with light for illuminating the world. Salt dissolves in food, and light illuminates a room. Both give quality to existence, without losing essence. Reconstruction is the word I have used for the process through which African Christianity in particular, and African culture in general, will be reconstituted from characteristically African frames of reference (cf. Mugambi 1995).

Theology of reconstruction and the Old Testament

In this section I shall illustrate how the theology of reconstruction can be applied to biblical hermeneutics with particular reference to the OT. Whereas the theology of liberation focused on the Exodus and Moses, the theology of reconstruction focuses on Ezra and Nehemiah in their post-exilic leadership roles. In terms of leadership styles, there is a great constrast between Moses and Aaron on the one hand, and Ezra and Nehemiah, on the other. Moses was a hero whose presence was indispensable to the people he was leading. His hand and his rod were symbols of divine presence among the people. He led more by inspiration than through managerial training and skill. Whenever he was present, the people were orderly. In his absence there was anarchy. Whenever his hand and his rod were raised the people would win a battle, otherwise they would lose.

Nehemiah, though deeply pious, was a well-trained civil servant, who had risen to the rank of Chief of protocol in the palace of the king of Babylon. Moses had been brought up as prince in Pharaoh's court, and did not have to prove his professional capability as a leader. Nehemiah, as an exile, had to have excellent leadership qualities to merit his position, which Babylonians undoubtedly envied. When Nehemiah heard the cries of his people, he conducted a feasibility survey which compares favourably with similar surveys today. In his leadership, he did not have to do the work himself; he encouraged and mobilized every member of the community to contribute whatever they could for the reconstruction of the city and the society. His leadership consisted more of encouragement than commanding. Moses was more of a commander than a leader. It is interesting that the likening of the first post-colonial generation of African leaders with Moses produced a style of leadership which could not be questioned, and whose public profile was more quasi-religious than socio-political.

For three decades between 1960 and 1990 the theme of *liberation* was dominant in progressive theological thought in Africa, Asia, Latin America and amongst African American theologians.[7] Theology of Liberation became a label associated with radical theologians throughout the so-called "Third World". To give this theology an institutional framework, the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT) was launched in a conference at Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, in August 1976. During that conference, the divergences and convergences between theologians from the respective regions were discussed. The Final statement expressed the convergences as follows (cf. Torres & Fabella 1978: 259–271).

> We, a group of theologians of the Third World gathered at Dar es Salaam, August 5–12 1976, having spent a week together in common study of our role in the contemporary world, are convinced that those who bear the name of Christ have a special service to render to the people of the whole world who are now in an agonizing search for a new world order based on justice, fraternity, and freedom.
>
> We have reflected from our life experience as belonging to the oppressed men and women of the human race. We seriously take cognizance of the cultural and religious heritage of the peoples of the continents of Asia, Africa and Latin America. We have expressed our view of history, our perspective on the churches, and our expectations for the future. We invite all persons doing theology in the churches to consider our presentations and participate with us and with all those

> who are struggling to build a more just world in order that the believers in Christ may truly be involved in the struggle toward the realization of a new world order and a new humanity.

In turn the divergences were outlined in the Final statement as follows (cf. Torres & Fabella 1978: 268–269):

> A new vision of a theology committed to the integral liberation of persons and structures is now being developed in the very process of participation in the struggles of the people. This takes different forms in different regions. In Latin America, the 'theology of liberation' expresses this analysis and commitment. In Cuba and Vietnam, Angola, Mozambique and Guinea Bissau, groups of Christians have been involved in the revolutionary struggles. In southern Africa some Christians are also in the center of the struggle for liberation. Christian rulers in countries like Tanzania and Zambia search for new ways of realizing the gospel ideals in the contemporary world. In Asia Christian groups have been in the forefront of the struggle for human rights, especially in South Korea and the Philippines.
>
> The study of traditional religions and the promotion of indigenous spirituality are preoccupations of Christian groups in Asian and African countries. In several parts of Africa and Asia serious efforts are being made toward the development of indigenous theologies and liturgies, especially theology of religions. The constitution of truly authentic local churches is a major preoccupation of many theologians in these countries. Latin America has generated new groups of witnesses to the radical gospel of liberation in almost every country of the continent. Various groups such as women, youth, students, workers and peasants are now contributing much to the renewal of the churches and of a theology relevant to their situations.

The theology of liberation in Latin America ran out of steam in 1986. Following the Vatican trial of Leonardo Boff that year, hardly any new insights were articulated. The military regimes within which the theology of liberation was born were replaced with civilian ones, but the economic conditions of the majority did not improve. Where did the liberation theologians go? What happened to their incisive analyses? In response to this question, a son of one of these theologians, himself a theologian, told me that the theology of liberation in Latin America was a "frustrated revolution". In his view, it failed to succeed because it was articulated by the elite without involving the ordinary peasants and workers. It was an integral part of the Anglo-Saxon intellectual heritage

to which both Karl Marx and Adam Smith belonged. The dialectic which the theology of liberation presupposed was derived from Hegel, and the logic was Aristotelean. It could not take root in the culture of peoples of a different cultural and philosophical pedigree.

The theology of reconstruction takes off from the premise that God has created each one of us in divine image, and that we are individually capable of contributing constructively towards the improvement of our social conditions. We do not have to "catch up" with anyone, except God. We are endowed differently and variously, and our contributions cannot be uniform. To those whom much has been given, much will be expected, and to those whom little has been given, little will be expected in proportion to their endowment (Luke 21:1–4). This was the principle which Nehemiah applied. The *Harambee* movement in post-colonial Kenya was based on this principle. Although the republican constitution presupposed a welfare state guaranteeing the abolition of poverty, disease and ignorance, it was understood that the state did not have the resources to provide "free" education, "free" medical care and "free" social security. The Harambee movement—derived from the African ethos of communitarian self-help—became a strategy for social mobilization. Many educational institutions and health centres were constructed through this initiative in the early years of Kenya's republican history. Later, this strategy was abused, when politicians began to use it for influencing voters.

Nehemiah's method of community mobilization was also not immune to abuse. Later in his leadership he found difficulty in managing transition and succession. The elite began to compete for the wealth created under his leadership. It was tempting for him to appoint his own relatives and friends as leaders, because he could not trust the elite who had been critical of his method all along. Ezra-Nehemiah is relevant as a paradigmatic text for the theology of reconstruction because of its applicability today, not because Nehemiah was a perfect leader.

In concluding this section, I would like to cite a paragraph from my book *From Liberation to Reconstruction,* which suffices as a summary of my perception of this theology (cf. Mugambi 1995: 40):

> African Christian theology in the twenty-first century will be characterized by these themes of social transformation and reconstruction. This shift form liberation to reconstruction involves discerning alternative social structures, symbols, rituals, myths and

> interpretations of Africa's social reality by Africans themselves, irrespective of what others have to say about the continent and its peoples. The resources for this re-interpretation are multi-disciplinary analyses involving social scientists, philosophers, creative writers, biological and physical scientists.
>
> Theology, as the systematic articulation of human response to revelation in particular situations and contexts, will be most effective in the Africa of the twenty-first century if, and only if, the social and physical reality of the continent and its peoples is accurately and comprehensively understood and re-interpreted.

In the same way that Nehemiah called on all sectors of the population to make their contribution to the reconstruction of the social and physical infrastructure—without unnecessary dependence from the metropolis—the theology of reconstruction takes for granted that Africa will have to mobilize its human resources, both within and outside the continent, for the reconstruction of its ruined infrastructure. For three centuries Africa suffered from brawn drain through the slave trade across the Atlantic. During the twentieth century the continent of Africa suffered exploitation through economies that were designed to serve the interests of imperial powers.

During the twentyfirst century Africa faces the risk of suffering from brain drain through enticement of highly qualified personnel to fill the places of the aging population in the North Atlantic. Will new Nehemiahs and Ezras emerge out of the African diaspora to encourage those in the mother continent to face the future with hope? Can the Bible (both OT and NT) become a text for encouragement and mobilization of individuals and communities in Africa? Missionary hermeneutics has alienated African Christians from their culture, teaching them to aspire to a cultureless "Christianity" or to abandon their own culture to adopt that of the missionary. Can African hermeneutics become a means to restore the confidence of Africans in their own culture and history? These are some of the challenges African biblical scholars ought to approach with determination and courage. The future is uncharted, and exciting for those who are willing to be creative and imaginative.

Reconstructive Biblical hermeneutics in Africa

It is instructive to note that South Africa has the largest concentration of missiologists and biblical scholars in the continent. What can the rest of

Africa learn from this fact? The Bible remained an important text in South Africa throughout the twentieth century, among both the beneficiaries and the victims of Apartheid. However, the OT meant different things for Apartheid's beneficiaries on the one hand and victims on the other. The Book of Exodus meant different things for Africans and Afrikaners.

Can the Bible be interpreted in such a way that it is not abused by some Christians to the disadvantage of others? If the answer is positive, of what would such a hermeneutic consist? What would be its underlying theoretical framework? I suggest that we should begin by affirming the cultural and historical unity of the continent as a whole. In the present conditions, political boundaries have become practically irrelevant, and cultural differences have become a luxury. The European Union has become a powerful political and economic entity without abolishing its internal borders. Cultural and linguistic differentiations remain within the European Union, but the greater differentiation is between citizens of the Union and outsiders. The British and French Commonwealths are no longer useful for Africans visiting Britain and France.

In the days of European empires, an African member of the British commonwealth or the French Commonwealth would pass through immigration controls through the respective Commonwealth Queue in the airport at the metropolitan capital, while "foreigners" would pass through another queue. Today, throughout Europe, the distinction is between citizens of the European Union and "foreigners". In view of the cultural and historical convergence of Africa, it is much easier for Africa to achieve this kind of practical unity than it has been for Europe.

The African renaissance will begin to bear fruit when this goal is achieved. Using the method of Nehemiah, every African nation ought to sign a protocol with its neighbours allowing the free movement of goods and persons. Cumulatively, these protocols should lead to a continental treaty. Regional integration may be useful in a limited way, but Africa will be truly free when it becomes possible for an African teenager to hitch-hike from Cape Town to Cairo, from Somalia to Senegal, from Luanda to Port Sudan, and from Beira to Casablanca, without any restrictions. Can the Bible be the basis for the reconstruction of Africa towards this heuristic goal? I have reason to answer this question positively.

The shift of paradigm from liberation to reconstruction in biblical hermeneutics makes this possible. The OT is a common text for Jews,

Christians and Muslims, though each of the religions have their specific interpretations of the text. In view of the arguments in this paper, it makes logical and practical sense for African scholars to re-visit the OT as a unifying text rather than a divisive one, as a text of affirmation rather than a text of negation with regard to Africa's culture and history. African scholars should not await the approval of North Atlantic exegetes to do what they are trained and paid for.

African biblical scholars will find this challenge easier to deal with if they organize themselves into a professional guild through which they can encourage one another while sharing their research and publications. In this information age, it should be possible for this guild to be linked through electronic networks, even though the technological capacity of most theological institutions is still very low. There is a wide variety of possible solutions to the technological limitation, if African scholars are determined to work together.

Further, it will be necessary for African biblical scholars to work closely with African professionals in other disciplines, to avoid a situation in which theologians operate in isolation. Biblical scholarship is related to other textual scholarship, even though the doctrine of inspiration is the starting point in Christian biblical studies. Insights gained from linguistics and philology should enlighten African biblical scholars as they seek to re-interpret the Bible in the context of the contemporary African communities of faith. Likewise, church history is an aspect of history, and should not be studied in isolation as is often the case in theological colleges today. Christian education is an aspect of education, and should be based on the principles of education that profession has cultivated. This multi-disciplinary cross-reference will help African theologians to move from their academic isolation into the general pool of African expertise. Thus the theology of reconstruction implies a re-definition and re-assessment of the task of African theologians as members of the elite in Africa and in the world.

Notes

1 Various explanations to this puzzle have been articulated, but none of them provides a conclusive answer; see for example, J. Ogilby 1670; K.A. Dickson and P. Ellingworth 1969; E. Mveng & R.Z.J. Werblowsky 1972; M. Oduyoye 1984; M. Bernal 1987 & 1991.

2 During the regime of Mengistu Haille Mariam in the 1980s, Israel received several thousand Falasha Jews from Ethiopia.

3 Cf. J.H. Leith 1982; J.P. Kealy & D.W. Shenk 1975.

4 Cf. B.A. Ogot 1967; G.S. Were 1969; G. Muriuki 1970; W. Ochieng 1973; H.S.K. Mwaniki 1974.

5 In the case of Socrates, it is debatable as to whether the texts attributed to him are his own, or Plato's. It is through Plato that we know of Socrates as a philosopher.

6 D.B. Barrett, in his book *Schism and Renewal in Africa*, observes that the availability of the Bible in an African language greatly increased the possibility of church independency among the people for whom that language was their mother tongue (Barrett 1968).

7 See for example: G.H. Anderson 1976; R. Gibellini 1979; G.S. Wilmore & J.H. Cone 1979.

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The Current State of Old Testament Scholarship in Africa: Where Are We at the Turn of the Century?

Knut Holter

At the end of a century, and even a millennium, it is appropriate to ask some of the basic questions of life: who are we, and where are we? Authors, journalists and politicians ask such questions these days, and so do scholars. Even Old Testament (OT) scholars want to know who they are, and where they are. Each of us has our own minor story to tell, and we know that our minor stories one way or the other are parts of the major story. It is therefore important for us to let our minor stories be related to this major story.

My paper is an attempt at asking some basic questions with regard to the state of OT scholarship in Africa now at the turn of the century. And the paper aims at relating the minor stories of OT scholarship in Africa to the major story, the story about who we are, and where we are. This attempt at asking such basic questions falls into four parts. I will first survey the current state of OT scholarship in Africa from three perspectives, discussing its thematic preferences, its institutional structures and its interpretive contexts. And I will then discuss a couple of aspects of interaction between these three areas.

Thematic perspective

The first perspective on the current state of OT scholarship in Africa is what I will call a thematic perspective, and I will here discuss some aspects of the thematic preferences reflected in the publications of OT scholars in Africa.

Let me start with a few words about the research tools we have at our disposal for a study of these thematic preferences. It must be admitted that studies of the research situation of OT scholarship in Africa have not been a favourite occupation of African or non-African scholars. Nevertheless, some initial work has been done, in the form of bibliographies and research surveys. On the bibliographical side, the launching earlier this year (1999) by the University of Stellenbosch (South Africa) of the online database *The Bible in Africa*, with approximately two thousand entries, will be of immense value for biblical studies in Africa on a general level, and indeed also for studies of historical and political research tendencies. In addition I would like to mention three other bibliographical works. One is Grant LeMarquand's *Africa and the Bible*. This general bibliography on African interpretation of the Bible was published in paper versions in 1995 (LeMarquand 1995a, 1995b), in *Journal of Inculturation Theology* (Nigeria) and in *Bulletin for Contextual Theology* (South Africa), and the latter is now available online. Another is my *Tropical Africa and the Old Testament* first published as a book in 1996 (Holter 1996), now about to be available online. This is not a general bibliography on OT scholarship in Africa as such; it rather concentrates on studies that explicitly relate the OT and the African context. A third, and even more specialised study, is my *Bibliography of Doctoral Dissertations in Old Testament Studies written by African Scholars*; this one is also about to be available online.[1] Turning to surveys of the research situation, the first ones came in the mid 1980s. John S. Mbiti, Samuel O. Abogunrin, and Nlenanya Onwu all emphasised the general interest for the OT in Africa, also in academic studies, and they surveyed some of the more important contributions and institutions (Mbiti 1986: 46–66; Abogunrin 1986; Onwu 1985). Throughout the 1990s similar surveys have been published; Justin Ukpong and Gerald West have noted the difficulties resulting from a massive western training of African biblical scholars (Ukpong 1995; West 1997), and I have analysed some research historical lines (cf. Holter 2000: 9–25) and different aspects of the relationship between OT scholarship in Africa and its interpretive context (Holter 1998a, 1998b, 2000: 51–60).

Now, what can these bibliographies and research surveys tell us; what have been the thematic preferences of OT scholarship in Africa? Let me roughly divide the material in two major groups; one consisting of studies that in some way or another relate the OT texts and the African

context, the other consisting of more general exegetical and text historical studies.

The first group has received most of the scholarly attention, at least if we consider published material alone. OT scholarship in Africa is indeed characterised by a strong interest in relating the ancient texts of the OT and the present or traditional context of Africa. The four major sessions of our symposium can serve as a fourfold subdivison of the scholarly approaches to Africa and the OT. First, there are studies aiming to find Africa in the OT. Here it seems that Cush or Ethiopia has received most of the attention; there is, actually, a surprising lack of interest in Egypt.[2] Secondly, there are studies aiming to use Africa to interpret the OT. The idea here is that there are so many parallels between culture, religion and world-view in the OT and in traditional Africa, that the African experience in one way or another may be used as comparative material in exegetical studies of the OT, and thereby function as a key into certain OT texts and topics. Thirdly, and with a focus opposite to that of the second, there are studies aiming to use the OT to interpret Africa. The idea here is that the many parallels between the OT and the African experience can provide some help for the interpretation of the lives of the contemporary African readers of the OT. And fourthly, there are studies of how the OT is being translated into African languages; these range from exegetical and linguistic to strategic studies.[3]

Also the second group, general exegetical and text historical studies, have received and continue to receive some attention. In 1986 John S. Mbiti claimed that Leonidas Kalugila's book on royal wisdom was "[...] one of the very few 'pure' biblical works by African scholars." (Mbiti 1986: 49). Whether this was an exaggeration or not in 1986, and whether it still is, depends on how Mbiti—or we—define the expression "'pure' biblical works". Let me try out three definitions of this expression. First, if we consider only published monographs, such as Kalugila's dissertation, then Mbiti certainly was right back in 1986.[4] And, what is more, Mbiti could probably have said the same today. Secondly, if Mbiti's expression "'pure' biblical works" is also taken to include unpublished doctoral dissertations, then he would have been able to find a few already in 1986, and today he would have found an increasing number. My preliminary studies of unpublished dissertations in OT studies, written by African scholars, seem to indicate that approximately half of those written in a western context and one third of those written in the African context are—in Mbiti's terminology—"'pure' biblical

works".[5] And thirdly, if Mbiti's expression is also taken to include journal articles, then he would have been able to find quite a number already in 1986, and today, of course, the number of exegetical and text historical studies is rapidly increasing.

Institutional perspective

The second perspective on the current state of OT scholarship in Africa is what I will call an institutional perspective, that is the relationship between the scholarship as such and its institutional context.[6] I will here discuss two sets of institutional structures that are basic to all scholarship, including OT scholarship in Africa.

The first set of institutional structures is the academic institutions themselves, with their programs and infrastructure. Although the number is still small, there is an increasing number of theological seminaries and university departments of religion or theology that develop postgraduate programs in OT studies; in most cases at a Master's level, but in a few cases, also at a Ph.D. level. The latter is especially the case in Nigeria, where the universities of Ibadan and Nsukka initiated postgraduate programs in religious studies in the 1960s and 70s (cf. McKenzie 1989: 101–102), and where the first Ph.D. in OT studies was awarded in the early 1980s. Very little—if anything at all—has until now been done with regard to analysis of the Master's- and Ph.D.-programs of these institutions. Still, on a more general level two important features can be noted. The first concerns the lack of outstanding centers for OT scholarship. When Samuel O. Abogunrin back in 1986 set off to describe the situation of biblical scholarship in Africa, he claimed that "[...] no university can yet be described as a centre for Biblical studies." (Abogunrin 1986: 11). More than a decade later, he would probably be able to say the same. Although countries such as Nigeria and Kenya have a proportionally high number of institutions and scholars, one can hardly say that any of them have developed any centers for OT or biblical studies. The second feature concerns the general level of the institutional infrastructure within which OT scholarship is working. And it must here be admitted as an unfortunate fact that most institutions provide their researchers with an infrastructure that is more or less counter-productive. Such is especially the case with regard to the library services. On the whole, the universities and theological seminaries are not able to give priority to the building up of libraries that can follow the current

publication boom (cf. Saint 1992: 7–14). As there are very few examples of inter-library services, most scholars are, actually, stuck in an institution without access to the scholarly sources and bibliographical tools of the guild. There are, however, some positive exceptions from this rather gloomy picture. A few larger cities—and Nairobi is probably the best example of this, with its many universities and theological seminaries—have several relevant libraries, so that the total offer is better than that of the individual institution (cf. Muutuki 1997). As few, if any, institutions will be able to build up their libraries to a level that is necessary for biblical research, the only solution is to be found in inter-library cooperation.

The second set of institutional structures is the different means of creating interaction amongst OT scholars. Interaction is basic to all research, so that the results of the research can be disseminated, and the questions and methodology be sharpened. Let me briefly comment on two levels of this interaction. First is the literary level, that is the interaction created by publication of research material in the form of books and journal articles. With regard to books, the most urgent need at present is probably not that of published dissertations or other kinds of monographs, as much of this can still be disseminated through journal articles. The urgent need is rather that of textbooks reflecting African scholarship and African concerns. Journal articles are at present and will in the foreseeable future continue to be the most important genre for dissemination of research results and scholarly interaction. It is therefore very unfortunate that *African Journal of Biblical Studies*—due to economic difficulties—suffers from a chronic near death experience, so that we at present lack a journal focusing on OT or biblical studies in the context of Africa.[7]

Secondly, the personal level, that is the interaction created by personal networking through organisations that initiate workshops and conferences (cf. Adamo 1997). All of us know and experience at present the usefulness of such meeting points, but there is a need for organisations that can facilitate them. And here, the situation differs throughout the continent. On a national or regional level, Nigeria has an organisation that brings biblical scholars together for annual meetings. And on a denominational level, the Panafrican Association of Catholic Exegetes brings Roman Catholic biblical scholars from the whole of Africa together for a meeting every second year. These organisations are very useful. The denominational one has the advantage that it is panafrican, and the regional one has the advantage that it can operate at

low costs. I would say that there is a strong need for more regional organisations, not least one for East Africa, and perhaps there is also a need for a panafrican structure binding the different organisations together.

Contextual perspective

The third perspective on the current state of OT scholarship in Africa is what I will call a contextual perspective, that is how it defines its interpretive contexts and relates to these contexts. I will here discuss OT scholarship in Africa vis-à-vis three sets of tensions.

The first of these sets concerns the relationship between religious and secular interpretive contexts. Through most of its history, the interpretation of the OT has taken place in the religious room. So, of course, is still the case; the OT is read and interpreted within the institutionalised realms of synagogue and church, and obviously related to their respective interpretive agendas. However, since the late 18th century, the OT has also been read and interpreted in western scholarly contexts with a more secular interpretive agenda, emancipated from the previously dominating denominational and doctrinal approach. Even though, on the one hand, subsequent OT scholarship continued to be part of a denominational training of clergy, it reflected and continues to reflect, on the other hand, an approach where secular methods rather than denominational and doctrinal questions are dominating. This dominance, of course, has been enforced in recent years, as the OT is now read and interpreted in an increasing number of secular university departments of religion or literature. However, one could still say that most OT scholarship, one way or the other, embodies the tension between religious and secular interpretive contexts.

From the perspective of OT scholarship in Africa, two aspects of this tension should be noted. First, in spite of the rapidly increasing number of theological seminaries in Africa, the relatively fewer non-denominational departments of religion in state universities play a more important role with regard to developing OT scholarship. To a larger extent than the seminaries, the university departments have structures and means allowing for institutionalised OT scholarship in the form of postgraduate programs. Secondly, however, there are great geographical variations with regard to the distribution of such non-denominational departments of religion in state universities, variations that often reflect

former colonial connections. Generally speaking, francophone Africa follows the French tradition of not allowing departments of religion or theology in universities controlled by the state, whereas anglophone Africa follows the more open tradition of British universities, including departments of religion (cf. Platvoet 1989), and, in some cases, even faculties of theology in state universities (cf. Fiedler & Ross 1996). In many ways it is an irony of fate that the French tradition of secularism has had such consequences for African academic structures, where this tradition more or less is lacking. Still, as a result, there are few, if any, structural possibilities in the state universities of francophone Africa for OT scholarship, whereas the opposite is the case in anglophone Africa (cf. Holter 1998b: 454).

The second set of tensions concerns the relationship between popular and professional interpretive contexts. Generally speaking, OT scholarship has traditionally been defined as a historical enterprise, focusing more or less exclusively on the background and historical function and meaning of the texts, whereas the function and meaning the same texts have today have been left for other disciplines—systematic theology, sociology of religion, etc. The development of a dichotomy between structures for studies of the historical and contemporary meanings of the texts is certainly understandable from an institution historical point of view; it has been the result of a necessary specialisation within academic studies of theology and religion. Still, an unfortunate consequence is that the professional interpretation of the OT texts, with its strong focus on historical approaches, has often been estranged from popular interpretation of the same texts.

OT scholarship in Africa seems to have a more open attitude towards bridging the gap between professional and popular interpretation of the OT (cf. Holter 2000: 52–56); this is partly due to an emphasis on the question of relevance, and partly, I would guess, due to a lack of access to the tools and sources that are necessary for historical studies. The historical approach to the OT will always be important for OT scholarship—and for the church in Africa and her theology, I would hope—but at the same time there is a need for studies of how the OT actually is interpreted and used by its contemporary readers. African scholarship acknowledges this, as the different sessions of the present symposium should demonstrate.

The third set of tensions concerns the relationship between local and global interpretive contexts. On the one hand, it is at present politically correct to talk about contextualisation of theology and biblical

interpretation; the interpretation of the OT is supposed to reflect the questions and experiences of the interpreter's context. However, on the other hand, it is at present just as politically correct to talk about globalisation; OT scholarship is indeed a global enterprise, and its participants are supposed to follow the global discussion, not only German or British scholarship, but also Australian and Brazilian.

This tension between local and global interpretive contexts has important consequences for OT scholarship in Africa, and two aspects of this should here be noted. First, there is at present a development with regard to the definitions of what counts as "center" and "margin" in OT scholarship.[8] Traditionally, German and British scholarship have been considered its center, whereas others, and not least African scholarship, have been considered its margin. However, the situation is not static; what belonged to the margin yesterday could be the center tomorrow. One should remember that the numerical center of Christianity has been drifting southwards throughout the 20th century, and I would argue that one consequence of this is that the center of interpreting the Bible at present is also drifting southwards—the center, at least numerically speaking, but eventually also academically speaking.

Secondly, there is a need for local or regional market places, which, to some extent, can operate on their own, with their own research political agenda and their own sets of infrastructure, such as academic programs and textbooks. Of course, any regional scholarly guild must keep up its dialogue with the global guild. Still, and that is my point here, at the same time as the scholarly world today experiences a massive globalisation, it also experiences—and should make the best out of—a regionalisation. OT scholarship is not merely a global enterprise, it is indeed also a regional enterprise, responding to regional demands for hermeneutical and exegetical reflection. Accordingly, one should not be surprised to find that the experiences and concerns of Africa are reflected in African OT scholarship. On the contrary, that is what OT scholarship in Africa is there for, and it is high time that its response to the experiences and concerns of Africa finds its way from the study chambers and journal articles into a new and regionalised set of textbooks.

Interaction between theme, institution and context

I have now surveyed the current state of OT scholarship in Africa from three perspectives. From a thematic perspective, I have noted the preference for approaches relating the OT texts and the African context, but also the growing interest for more traditional exegetical approaches. From an institutional perspective, I have identified and discussed some of the problems and challenges facing the development of an infrastructure facilitating an OT scholarship. And from a contextual perspective, I have discussed how OT scholarship in Africa relates to different aspects of its interpretive context. Each of these three perspectives have been discussed separately. However, as all three refer to the same phenomenon, OT scholarship in Africa, they are obviously closely related. Let me therefore briefly note two aspects of interaction between the thematic preference, institutional infrastructure and interpretive context of OT scholarship in Africa.

First, I would argue that the major characteristics of OT scholarship in Africa, its thematic preference for studies relating the OT texts and the African context, reflects its institutional infrastructure in two ways. Positively, it reflects deliberate education and research political priorities of universities and theological seminaries wanting to promote contextualised approaches. The latter half of the 20th century, politically characterised by a post-colonial focus on national development, has seen a dramatic growth in the number of academic institutions, and the idea of a scholarly africanisation has been emphasised in the humanities, in religious studies and theology, and even in biblical scholarship.[9] Negatively, however, the preference for studies relating the OT texts and the African context also reflects unfortunate consequences of the fact that most of the same universities and theological seminaries are constantly under-funded, and, consequently, do not manage to create structures that make interaction with non-African scholarship possible. Very often, therefore, the researcher is left on his or her own to work with the only material that actually is available, the African material.

Secondly, I would argue that the current institutionalisation of OT scholarship in Africa reflects its interpretive context. OT scholarship was indeed present in Africa throughout most of the 20th century (cf. Newing 1970); this, however, was an OT scholarship reflecting its traditional western context. It is probably not until the 1980s that one can talk about a breakthrough in OT scholarship that reflects the African context, realising that African OT scholarship as such has a particular

contribution (cf. Onwu 1985; Abogunrin 1986). It is increasingly experienced as a problem that most African OT scholars are trained in a western context, where the OT is read through an interpretive grid developed in the western culture. And the only solution to this problem lies in the establishing of structures for an OT scholarship in Africa, an OT scholarship proceeding from African experiences and concerns (cf. Ukpong 1995).

Concluding remarks

So, what can be said about the current state of OT scholarship in Africa; where are we at the turn of the century? In a summary I would say that the recent couple of decades have seen the establishing of an African OT scholarship. It is an OT scholarship, in the sense that its interpretation of the OT reflects its dialogue with the material and methodology of the global guild of OT scholarship. And it is an African scholarship, in the sense that its interpretation of the OT reflects its dialogue with the experiences and concerns of Africa.

Being a non-African I am certainly not entitled to advice African OT scholarship how it should approach the new century; my task is that of analysing, rather than advising. Still, I guess that many of you will agree when I suggest that the challenge facing African OT scholarship also in the foreseeable future is to do justice to both directions. In order to be an OT scholarship that is able to let its voice be heard within the global guild of OT scholarship, its interpretation of the OT must continue the dialogue with the material and methodology of this global guild. And in order to be an African scholarship, that is able to let its voice be heard within church and society in Africa, its interpretation of the OT must continue to reflect its dialogue with the experiences and concerns of Africa.

Notes

[1] For the web addresses to these online bibliographies, see K. Holter (compiler), *Old Testament Studies in Africa: Resource Pages*, http://www.misjonshs.no/res/ot_africa/

2 The most significant contributions have been given by David T. Adamo; cf. most recently Adamo 1998. For a discussion of Adamo's ideas, cf. Høyland 1998 and Holter 1997.

3 For a survey of literature relating to sessions two, three and four, cf. Holter 1996: *passim*.

4 It should be added that the first example of what Mbiti would have called a 'pure' exegetical monograph, written by an African scholar, was published already in the early 1970s; that is Laurent Monsengwo Pasinya's study of the expression *nomos* in the Septuagint version of the Pentateuch; cf. Monsengwo Pasinya 1973.

5 For a survey, cf. K. Holter, *Bibliography of Doctoral Dissertations in Old Testament Studies written by African Scholars*; for the web address, cf. note 1.

6 I have discussed this another place, cf. Holter 1998b, and refer to that work for a more thorough discussion and for further literature.

7 For a presentation of the situation for *African Journal of Biblical Studies*, cf. Abe 1997. One solution to the current crisis could perhaps be to continue the Africanisation of *Old Testament Essays*, published by the OT society in South Africa; more than other biblical journals, *OTE* has shown an awareness for interpreting the OT in the context of Africa. Being the editor of *Newsletter on African Old Testament Scholarship*, I would like to say that this publication is intended to be a supplement to other journals, rather than a full journal itself.

8 For examples of marginalisation, cf. Holter 1998a: 245–248. A recent example is Brueggemann 1997: 98–102, who, in his presentation of present positions in OT theology, mentions four examples of "efforts at the margin", of which one is Black Theology and Itumeleng Mosala, whereas other African voices are not even mentioned.

9 For a general presentation, cf. Ajayi & al. 1996: 76–143; cf. also Domatob 1996.

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Finding Africa in the Old Testament

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The "African" Texts of the Old Testament and Their African Interpretations

Marta Høyland Lavik

The purpose of this article is to present what have become known as the "African" texts of the Old Testament (OT) and to consider how these texts are interpreted by various African scholars. Of course, it is not possible within the scope of this article to make mention of all the passages in the OT that refer to the geography or people of Africa. Neither can I hope to be all-inclusive in speaking of "African scholarship". However, it is at least possible to offer some general comments which may sensitise readers to the particular hermemeutical understanding that African theologians are currently bringing to Old Testament studies.

OT texts about the geography and people of Africa tend not to be regarded as a priority within traditional western scholarship. Indeed, even when western interpreters have discussed references to Egypt, it is often assumed that this part of Africa is rather more Mediterranean than African in its culture. However, over the last 20–30 years, this exegetical situation has evoked a growing concern amongst African scholars who have become intent upon emphasising a truly African presence within the OT.[1]

The "African" texts

When I talk about "African" texts I mean those texts that refer to areas and/or individuals from the continent of Africa. I will not attempt to discuss references to the land and people of Africa found in extra-biblical

sources, as the present survey intentionally restricts itself to the text corpus of the Hebrew canon.

A further point of clarification is that the texts of the OT to which I refer are not "African" in the sense that they are necessarily written by Africans or by people of African origin. On the contrary, the authors of these texts more than likely originated from within the ancient Jewish community. Moreover, these texts are not "African" in the sense that they were directed to Africans *per se*. By being part of the Hebrew canon, they are considered an integral component of the Jewish religious heritage.[2] However, as will be made clear, some contemporary African interpreters argue that the ancient Jewish society was influenced by foreign nations and among these, the ancient African cultures.

Defining "Africa"

In the OT, there are several terms used to refer to the African continent. These terms can be arranged into three groups: (1) Egypt, (2) Cush, and (3) a number of different entities with fewer references or more uncertain location.[3]

What then is the relation between Egypt and Cush? There are approximately 680 references to Egypt and, numerically speaking, this nation is far more important than the nation of Cush (which carries only 56 references). However, in this presentation of the "African" texts of the OT, Cush will receive an attention equal to—if not greater than—that of Egypt. The reason for this is, firstly, because the OT portrayal of Cush goes beyond the geographical, cultural and anthropological borders of Egypt and further into Africa. Secondly, Cush is referred to as the nation of the borders of the known world (Esth 1:1, 8:9), and as a representative for the peoples far away who are supported by YHWH and connected to Zion (Is 18:1–2.7, Amos 9:7, Pss 68:32 and 87:4). Despite the numerical indifference of the Cush passages compared with the OT material about Egypt, the texts about Cush are thus of significant theological importance.

The land of Egypt

The portrayal of Egypt in the Pentateuch and the former prophets (Josh, Judg, 1–2 Sam, 1–2 Kgs) reflects a tension in the sense that this nation carries both negative and positive associations. On the one hand, Egypt is the place of suffering and humiliation (Exod 1–11) from which Israel was freed (Exod 12–14, Josh 24:5, 1 Sam 10:18). Yet, on the other hand, Egypt is an asylum for refugees (Gen 12:10; 47:1–12, 1 Kgs 11:40, 2

Kgs 25:26). Positively, Egypt is associated with richness and fertility (Gen 13:10, Num 11:5). Egypt is even regarded a coalition partner for the king in Jerusalem (2 Kgs 18:21.24). Negatively, in the latter prophets (Is, Jer, Ezek, the twelve minor prophets) Egypt is judged, first and foremost, in the so-called oracles against the nations. However, in the midst of these announcements of doom, Is 19 envisions a time of blessing for Egypt (Is 19:25).

The majority of references to Egypt in the writings (Pss, Job, Prov, Ru, Cant, Qoh, Lam, Esth, Dan, Ezra, Neh, Chr) reflect the narrative tradition of the Exodus. However, the contrasting portrayal of Egypt exists in this part of the OT as well. Egypt is thus positively referred to as bringing gifts to YHWH (Ps 68:32), and negatively as being judged by YHWH (Dan 11:42).

The land of Cush

References to Cush are found in all three parts of the Hebrew canon.[4] In the Pentateuch, Cush is included in the world map reflected in Gen 2:10–14.[5] Mention of Cush also occurs in the table of nations. Indeed, Cush is mentioned as the first of Ham's four sons (Gen 10:6.7.8).[6] Likewise, in Num 12, Moses is referred to as having a Cushite woman.

The former prophets have eight references to Cush, all found in different narratives. Cush is sometimes associated with military skills (cf. 2 Kgs 19:9). Other texts, however make mention of a Cushite presence in the land of Israel. This is particularly evident in 2 Sam 18:19–33, where the narrative refers to a Cushite officer in Jerusalem reporting the death of Absalom.

The 25 references to Cush of the latter prophets reveal different aspects of Cush and Cushites and here their military reputation is again central (Ezek 38:5, Nah 3:9). The narrative about Ebed-Melech gives the Cushite a central role in that he rescues the prophet Jeremiah (Jer 38–39). In Amos 9:7, the Cushites are related to Israel in a way that compares the exodus from Egypt with similar experiences of other peoples (Adamo 1992: 76–84). Is 18:1–2.7 offers the most thorough anthropological description of Cushites, whereas Jer 13:23 points to the dark skin of the Cushites. Isaiah warns against trusting Cush (Is 20). Indeed, Cush is seen as being powerful and wealthy (Is 43:3; 45:14). Yet it is also envisioned as one of the nations coming to Zion with gifts to YHWH (Is 18:1–2.7).

In the writings, the military ability of the Cushites is again emphasised (2 Chr 12:3; 14:9–15). In Esth 1:1 and 8:9, Cush is referred

to as the south-western border of the Persian Empire. Job 28:19 alludes to the wealth of Cush. And although Ps 68:32 is difficult, it probably refers to the OT motif that nations shall bring gifts to YHWH in Jerusalem.

Africa by another name

Even though Egypt and Cush offer the most relevant material to our survey of the "African" texts of the OT, there is a third group of texts to be mentioned, namely, references to African locations included within specific lists of places. Examples of such lists are the table of nations in Gen 10 and 1 Chr 1 (cf. the descendants of Cush and Mizraim), or more scattered lists of kings or nations (cf. 2 Chr 12:3, Jer 46:8–9, Ezek 30:4–5 and Nah 3:9). Some of these entities have an uncertain location, for instance Ophir (1 Kgs 22:49, Is 13:12, Ps 45:10, Job 22:24; 28:16 and 1 Chr 29:4). However, the entities that probably are to be located in Africa can be grouped into two. The first group are those that most likely have an African location, such as Put (Libya or Somalia—referred to in Gen 10:6, Nah 3:9, Jer 46:9, Ezek 30:5), Lubim (Libya—mentioned in 2 Chr 12:3, Nah 3:9) and Pathros (Upper Egypt—found in Gen 10:14, Jer 44:15, Ezek 29:14). The second group indicates nations that have ancient traditions in favour of an African location, for instance Sheba (according to Josephus, *Antiq* viii 6,5–6) and Seba (according to Josephus to be located in Meroe, *Antiq* ii 10,2). Sheba and Seba are both connected with riches, the former probably due to the narrative about the Queen of Sheba (1 Kgs 10:2, 2 Chr 9). Common to all these references to African entities other than Egypt and Cush are their connotations with wealth and military reputation.

Summary

In the light of this survey, it is clear that the continent of Africa and its inhabitants are indeed present in the OT. The "African" texts can be found in all three parts of the Hebrew canon: the Law, the Prophets and the Writings.

Being close to Israel, and being connected to Israel through the exodus tradition, Egypt is thoroughly reflected throughout the OT. In addition, being located in the north-eastern corner of the African continent, Egypt can also be seen as a bridge—geographically and culturally—between the Mediterranean areas and the continent of Africa. Textually, the African location of Egypt is made evident by some of the OT texts where Egypt and Cush are used synonymously.

Cush is the other great African nation carrying a considerable number of references within the OT. The OT portrays Cush as a strong, powerful, exotic nation at the borders of the known world, which is envisioned as one of the nations to come to Zion with gifts to YHWH.

The geographical entities with fewer references and/or uncertain location also make up a positive textual image of Africa and Africans. These minor entities are associated with riches and wealth.

The African interpretations

Having presented in outline the African texts of the OT, it is necessary to consider the meaning and relevance of these texts from an African perspective. Insofar as they may be considered examples of African hermeneutics, I shall briefly present the work of four contrasting scholars: E. Mveng (Cameroun), G.A. Mikré-Selassie (Ethopia), S. Sempore (Benin), and D.T. Adamo (Nigeria).

E. Mveng and the cultural richness of Africa in the OT

In his article from 1972 on the Bible and the black Africa, E. Mveng from Cameroun presents four places referred to in the Bible that he considers African: Cush, Put, Ophir and Sheba. (Mveng 1972: 23–39). Through brief textual examinations, Mveng points to the geographic, ethnic and symbolic significance of Africa in the OT.

He states that Cush in the OT represents one of the great powers of antiquity (Gen 2:13, Is 11:11). Cush is mentioned together with Egypt—almost synonymously—in several instances: Ps 68:32, Is 45:14, Ezek 29:10; 30:4–6.8–9, Nah 3:8–9. Put is portrayed as one of Egypt's allies (Ezek 27:10; 30:4–6; 38:5, Jer 46:9, Nah 3:9). Cush, Ophir and Sheba are associated with richness (Job 28:16.19, 1 Kgs 9:26–28; 22:49, Ps 72:10, Is 43:3–4; 45:14; 60:6). Common for Cush, Put, Ophir and Sheba, according to Mveng, is that they all reflect positive sides of Africa, such as its richness, merchandise and military ability.

G.A. Mikré-Selassie and the self-identification of Ethiopia in the OT

G.A. Mikré-Selassie from Ethiopia published an article entitled "Ethiopia and the Bible" in 1972 (Mikré-Selassie 1972: 190–196). Unlike Mveng, this is not about passages in the Bible referring to Africans. Rather it describes the relation between Ethiopia and the Bible, and how Jewish and later Christian belief was introduced to Ethiopia.

Mikré-Selassie opens his article with statements about the biblical texts concerning Africa, which he sums up as follows: "Generally, if we examine the Bible, we find many references to Ethiopia in the broader sense of the word. Among these, some of them are definitely about Ethiopia as its boundaries are today." (Mikré-Selassie 1972: 193). This quotation emphasises a strong Ethiopian tradition that perceives OT texts about Cush as texts about Ethiopia. As the term Ethiopia literally means "burnt face", black peoples were identified as Ethiopians by Greek historians—regardless as to whether they were from Abyssinia or from other areas. The term Ethiopia was then the natural choice of those who translated the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek in the third century B.C (i.e. the Septuagint). The other reason why the biblical references to Cush are associated with Ethiopia goes back to the introduction of Judaism into Ethiopia. The narrative concerning the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon (1 Kgs 10:1–10) is, according to this Ethiopian tradition, the inauguration of Judaism into Ethiopia.[7]

By defining Egypt as belonging to the continent of Africa, Mikré-Selassie shows that the continent of Africa "occupies a prominent place in the world of the Bible." (Mikré-Selassie 1972: 190). He lists several instances where Egypt is connected to important characters of the Bible (Jacob: Gen 46:1ff, Moses: Exod 2:1–10, Jesus: Matt 2:13–15). In addition, he demonstrates that Judaism and Christianity have been rooted in the continent of Africa from ancient times, and are not merely recent additions from the West (Mikré-Selassie 1972: 190–191).[8]

S. Sempore and the significance of Africa in salvation history

In 1993, S. Sempore from Benin published an article on "Black people and salvation in the Bible" in which he emphasises the relevance of African people throughout the biblical tradition, from the Book of Numbers to the Acts of the Apostles, (Sempore 1993: 17–29). He stresses the important role African individuals play in the texts, and presents the following: the Cushite woman of Moses (Num 12), the Cushite servant of Joab (2 Sam 18:19–33), Ebed Melech, the Cushite who rescued the prophet Jeremiah (Jer 38:7–12 and 39:15–18), and the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26–40). Sempore concludes by stating that the texts reveal that even from the beginning, the God of Israel included the Africans in his salvation history (from Num12 to Acts 8:26–40).

D.T. Adamo and the development of African nationhood in the OT

Finally, the Nigerian OT scholar D.T. Adamo ought to be presented. Adamo is probably the African scholar who has made the single most important contribution to this field. His dissertation from 1986, entitled *The Place of Africa and Africans in the Old Testament and its Environment*, provides us with the most thorough and comprehensive investigation to date of the "African" texts of the OT. A revised edition of his dissertation has recently been published under the title *Africa and the Africans in the Old Testament*. Besides this dissertation, Adamo has written several articles on the subject.[9]

The two central points of Adamo's works can be summarised as follows: first, the OT gives a positive portrayal of African nations and African individuals, and second, the Africans were important in the formation of the Jewish culture. The OT texts that refer to Africa and Africans are positive in the sense that they portray Africa and Africans as handsome, mighty, rich, and strong (Is 18:1–7; 43:3; 45:14, Job 28:19, 2 Chr 14:9). Cush is also portrayed positively in that the most remote and exotic nation of the south-western border of the known world (Esth 1:1; 8:9) is envisioned as bringing gifts to YHWH on Zion (Ps 68:32, Is 18:7). The OT description of the Cushites shows, in Adamo's view, that they were important for the formation of the Jewish culture in areas of economy, politics and religion. Likewise, references such as 2 Chr 14:9 show that the Cushites were recognised by the Israelites as highly respected because of their strength and might (Adamo 1998: 96–97 and 116).

Summary

From the presentation above, it is clear that each of these scholars regard the biblical portrayal of ancient Africa and its people as significant in a variety of ways. Firstly, these texts carry existential importance inasmuch as they seem to define, for some African readers, what it means to be human. Indeed, by locating the significant impact of their ancestors upon the cultural and historical milieu of the OT, it is as if they are able to discover a renewed sense of self-identity (cf. Mikré-Selassie 1972: 190–191). Secondly, the biblical texts about Africa and Africans are clearly considered to be historical records containing a valuable message to Africans of today (Adamo 1998: 106, Mikré-Selassie 1972: 192). Thirdly, the African interpreters seem to be driven by the conviction that Africa and Africans did play a significant role in the formation of ancient Israel. As Adamo clearly remarks, the Africans

"[...] would not have been mentioned so frequently had they not held an important place in Israelite life" (Adamo 1998: 169). Indeed, Adamo states that African nations are described by the ancient Israelites "[...] as one of the most ancient, most venerated and most mighty nations in the ancient Near East" (Adamo 1998: 168).

Conclusion and critical reflection

Given this growing body of knowledge from within the field of African OT studies, there is clearly much cause for reflection. However, there are also several areas of potential concern to which I want to briefly allude.

Firstly, from my perspective, I see a danger in considering the texts as existential in the sense that it may potentially divorce us from the original historical setting of the text. If the texts are considered mainly as theological messages for people of today, can this not lead to a situation of misunderstanding or over-interpretation? Secondly, in my opinion the texts of the OT do not necessarily demand to be read as historical facts. From the texts, we know nothing about how Africans related to Israelites at the time the described events refer to. Neither do we know how the relation between Africans and Israelites was at the time of the writing down of the texts. We simply know how the geography and people of Africa are portrayed by the biblical writers. Thirdly, in my judgement, not every "African" text of the OT portrays Africa and Africans as playing important roles. Sometimes, nations and inhabitants of Africa are one among several foreign nations or peoples mentioned (cf. the lists where African nations occur), and this needs to be reflected in the interpretation. Fourthly, in searching for the portrayal of Africa and Africans in the Bible, I see the need to take into consideration also the more negative images found in the texts. Although the majority of the texts portray the African continent and its inhabitants positively, there are some texts that can be interpreted in a more negative way (cf. for instance Ezek 30:5.9 and 2 Chr 14:9–15). In giving an adequate picture of the "African" texts of the Bible, this aspect also needs to be presented.

However, more positively, I share the opinion that texts about the geography and people of Africa found in the OT deserve to be analysed thoroughly. These texts do play a more significant role in the OT than traditional exegesis has suggested and there is undoubtedly a need for more studies on the African presence in the Bible. Indeed, one of the most exciting features of contemporary African scholarship has been the

extent to which it has demonstrated to us the way in which we bring our own history and set of cultural understandings to any reading of a text. Part of the ongoing task both for scholars from Africa and those of us from the West is to become more self-consciously aware of our own hermeneutics and framework of meaning. Only then will we be able respectfully to challenge one another and discover meaning in these texts that lies beyond our own cultural bias.[10]

Notes

1 Although it is not discussed here, it should be noted that African American OT scholarship speaks of a *black* presence in the OT, not an *African* presence. Underlying this terminological difference, there are some contrasting ideological differences between African and African American OT scholarship. Cf. Bennet 1971: 483–500, Copher 1993 and Jackson 1994.

2 Of course, some scholars might want to oppose me at this point, arguing that for instance the prophet Zephaniah could very well have been of African origin (cf. Zeph 1:1). My point at this stage, however, is simply to emphasise the fact that the OT came into being in an ancient Jewish setting, and that the texts reflect this reality.

3 For a thorough presentation of these terms, see Holter 2000: 93–106.

4 It should here be noted that not all of the 56 OT references to Cush necessarily refer to the continent of Africa. Other possibilities have been discussed, such as the Kassites in Babylon or a tribal group supposed to have lived on the south-western border of Judah. Cf. Holter 2000: 96.

5 It can be discussed whether Cush here has an African or Mesopotamian location. For the linking of the river Gihon to the Nile, see Ullendorff 1968: 2–3.

6 The genealogy of Ham has been used in order to oppress African peoples as the blacks were seen as destined to be slaves (Gen 9:26–27). For a discussion and critique of these views, see Wittenberg 1991: 46–56.

7 Cf. Ullendorff 1968: 131–145 for the traditions concerning the Queen of Sheba.

8 Mikré-Selassie argues here that, according to the tradition, the Septuagint came into being in Egypt. In addition, Alexandria was one of the cradles of Christianity, and some of the Church Fathers came from Egypt.

9 For a discussion of Adamo's arguments, see Holter 1997: 331–336. For an analysis of Adamo's works on Cush, and a complete listing of relevant articles published by Adamo on this topic, see Høyland 1998: 50–58. In

this article I intended to describe and evaluate Adamo's work on the Cush passages in the OT by delivering a constructive criticism of his analysis of these important texts. However, I am aware that in the scope of a few pages there is always the risk of stating one's views in a way that can be misunderstood. I would therefore like to clarify some points: (i) I agree with Adamo in that Africa and Africans are indeed present in the OT, and that Cush in most cases in the OT refers to an African nation. (ii) I also agree in that the "African" texts deserve a thorough analysis. (iii) However, my critical remarks deal with questions about how to approach these texts. As the texts vary in terms of both form and contents, every text needs to be read in accordance with its nature. Therefore, in our common concern for the "African" texts in the OT, it was my intention to respond to Adamo's suggestions as to how these texts can be analysed and interpreted.

[10] I wish to thank Dr David Willows for helpful comments on the essay, and for improving my English.

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The Images of Egypt in the Old Testament: Reflections on African Hermeneutics

Tewoldemedhin Habtu

In surveying the secondary literature with regard to the topic before us, one comes to realize that the place of Egypt in the Old Testament (OT) had, as it were, its own "ebb and flow". Here is how J.D. Currid (1997: 23) has put it: "Over the decades many books have been written regarding the relationship between the OT and Egypt. [...] most of the works that discuss Egypt and the OT were written not later than the early part of the twentieth century." At the present time, however, Egypt "[...] is no longer emphasized in biblical studies"; the reason, according to Currid, being that "[...] many scholars today are unconvinced that there are solid historical and cultural connections" with the OT. This posture of the scholars referred to comes as a surprise when one realizes that "Egypt", "Egyptians", and their cognates occur about 740 times in the OT (Copher 1984: 163). In fact, no other land is mentioned so often as Egypt in the OT. Why the bias then?

In digging deeper, one comes to discover that the problem has more ramifications to it beyond the non-emphasis of Egypt mentioned by Currid. The issue is complicated by the fact that Egypt is considered as part of the Ancient Near East, rather than part of Africa. Agreeing with Currid that Egypt has not been given the attention it deserves by biblical scholars,[1] R.C. Bailey expresses his misgivings at the subtle tendencies which make Egypt part of the Ancient Near East. He elaborates: "In modern maps, the de-Africanization takes place in presenting a map labelled the 'Near East'; these maps include African territories, thereby suggesting that these are not to be considered part of the African continent, but rather part of the Near East", (Bailey 1991: 166–67).[2] Is the depiction of these scholars intentional? Or, for that matter, are they saying that Egypt is not African or are they presenting the historical ties with the Ancient Near East as they are? Maybe we should give them the benefit of the doubt.[3] Although

associating Egypt with the Ancient Near East need not obliterate the African identity of the former, and although accepting the Ancient Near Eastern background of the OT does not necessarily mean that Egypt has nothing to do with the same, there is a sense in which the contributions to the study of the OT from these two sources could be said to be diverse.[4]

The question of whether Egypt is part of Africa or not, or, for that matter, whether Egypt is significant for biblical studies or not, is a foregone conclusion. Even Currid, after stating his concern cited in the foregoing, feels optimistic when he says: "Fortunately, biblical scholars today appear to be returning to the study of Egypt and her texts." (Currid 1997: 26). My interest in this paper is to try to understand the way Egypt is depicted in the OT and the impact this understanding may have in our interpretation of the Scriptures.

Chronological occurrences and depiction of Egypt in the OT

As mentioned earlier, the words "Egypt" and "Egyptian" occur about 740 times in the OT (Copher 1984: 163; cf. Even-Shoshan 1989: 700–703). The first occurrences come in Gen 10, verses 6 and 13 (cf. 1 Chr 1:8 and 11), and they have to do with the name of a person. The name indicates the ancestor of the people bearing that name. The two meanings that dominate the OT from Gen 12:10 onwards are the land (Egypt) and the people (Egyptians). Whether referring to the people or the land (considered the mother of its people in Hebrew understanding), the chronological occurrences and depictions of "Egypt" are adequately treated by Copher in his article referred to earlier. What follows here, therefore, is a rehash of that article, interspersed with my comments and additional biblical references where necessary.

Patriarchal era

There are 79 occurrences of the word Egypt between Gen 12:10 and the end of the book. In the context of these occurrences we are told that whereas Abraham went down to Egypt because of famine, Isaac was restrained by God when he tried to do so under the same circumstances. Joseph, in spite of his sale into slavery and imprisonment, was elevated to a position of power. Upon the invitation of Joseph, Jacob and his entire family went down to Egypt and settled there. The narratives that speak about Joseph "contain the largest number of references to Egypt in the book of Genesis" (Copher 1984: 164).

The narratives of the enslavement and the Exodus

The account of the enslavement begins early in the book of Exodus, where we are told that "The Egyptians compelled the sons of Israel to labor rigorously" (1:13; see also 3:8.9.17; 6:5.6). Egypt is mentioned 81 times in the account of the enslavement, Moses, and the Exodus. In describing the experience and when remembering the event or recounting it to later generations, Egypt is referred to as "the house of slavery" (13:3,14; 20:2).[5]

Later references to the Exodus

According to Copher, by far the largest group of references of a single kind to Egypt in the OT—135 in number—deals with the Exodus. The references occur in 20 of the 39 OT books, and the largest number appears in the book of Exodus. It is interesting to note how often the phrase "out from the land of Egypt" occurs (12:41.42.51; 13:3.9.14.16; 16:6.32; 18:1; 20:2).

Prophetic oracles

Egypt is mentioned about 183 times in 11 of the 16 prophetic books of the OT. Jeremiah, with 62 occurrences, heads the list, followed by Ezekiel and Isaiah. Although I do not agree with Copher (especially with respect to Daniel and Joel), in order of the chronology in which the prophets lived and when the prophecies were delivered or written, here is how he explains their references to Egypt:

Amos: The references here deal with God bringing the people out of Egypt, and compare that which will befall Israel with that which had happened to Egypt (2:10; 3:1.9; 4:10; 8:8; 9:5.7).

Hosea: The five types of oracles mentioned here deal with the fact that: God has been Israel's God since the enslavement in Egypt, that he brought Israel out of Egypt, that the prophet criticized Israel for seeking help from Egypt, and that Israel will return to Egypt because of her sins (2:15; 7:11.16; 8:13; 9:3.6; 11:1.5.11; 12:1.9.13; 13:4).

Isaiah: Copher focusses first on chs. 1–39, and mentions four anti-Egyptian prophecies and one pro-Egyptian prophecy: The anti-Egyptian prophecies pronounce doom on Egypt (19:1–17)—they are acted out symbolically by the prophet (ch. 20: Ethiopia is included in this judgement, the instruments being the Assyrians), they warn Judah from going down to Egypt to seek help (30:1–18), and they repeat the message of warning (30:1–3). The pro-Egyptian oracle (19:18–25) proclaims a day when the God of Israel will be worshipped in Egypt by the Egyptians, and when Egypt together with Israel and Assyria will be blessed: "Blessed is Egypt

My people and Assyria the work of My hand, and Israel My inheritance" (19:25). In chs. 40–55, Copher sees two oracles referring to Egypt. The first (43:1–7) is a message of comfort to Judah. According to this prophecy Egypt (along with Ethiopia and Seba) will be given to Cyrus, King of Persia, as a ransom for God's people who were in exile. The second (45:14–17) promises that the Egyptians (along with Ethiopians and Sabeans) will become subject to God's people and recognize their God.

Micah: The four prophecies here speak of: God having brought Israel out of Egypt; the Assyrians and Egyptians coming to Judah; God doing miracles as He did when He first brought Israel out of Egypt (6:4; 7:12.15).

Nahum: The only reference to Egypt in this book (3:8–9) equates the imminent destruction of Nineveh with the fall of No-Amon (Thebes).

Jeremiah: As mentioned earlier, the book of Jeremiah contains the largest number of references to Egypt among the prophetic books. The five prophecies directed against the Egyptians are: an accusation against the people of Judah for trusting in Egypt (and Assyria) instead of God (2:14–37) and that they will be put to shame; the inclusion of Egypt among the "uncircumcised" peoples who will be punished by God (9:25f.); a doom on Pharaoh and Egypt (43:8–13); an ill fate for Pharaoh Hophra (44:30); a doom of Egypt and Pharaoh Necho at the hand of Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon (ch. 46). A prophecy favorable to the Egyptians is found in 46:26b, stating that Egypt will be inhabited as before, after the destruction by Nebuchadnezzar. Two prophecies against Judah are found in 24:8–10 and 44:1–29, focussing on those who remained in Canaan and those who fled to Egypt.

Ezekiel: The 48 references to Egypt here refer to three types of prophecies: those that pronounce judgment against the people of Judah for their reliance on Egypt or the sin of idolatry of their ancestors while in slavery in Egypt; chapters 29–32, more or less, directed against Egypt; a brief oracle (29:13–16) that promises restoration of an Egypt that recognizes the Lord as God.

Haggai: The only reference to Egypt in this book (2:5) reminds the remnants in Jerusalem of the covenant made with them (the fathers) when they came out of Egypt.

Joel: This prophecy (3:19) asserts that Egypt (along with Edom) will be destroyed because of violence done to Judah.

Zechariah: The five references to Egypt here occur in passages that promise hope for the Jews: the exiles will be brought back from Egypt, while the latter's power will be destroyed (10:10–11); the Egyptians will be smitten with disease if they do not come to Jerusalem to worship the

Lord during the Feast of Booths (14:18–19).

Daniel: All the passages that mention Egypt are found in chapter 11: verse 8 refers to Ptolemy III who captured the fortress of Seleucia and brought back much booty to Egypt; verse 9 refers to Egypt and her king; verses 40–45 prophecy that Ptolemy will start a war in which Antiochus will conquer Libya, Egypt, and Ethiopia, but will himself perish along the sea coast.

Egypt in historical relations with Israelites-Judahites-Jews

Copher introduces "exclusive and inclusive" peculiarities in the discussion of this topic, with which I do not agree.[6] Be that as it may, he comes with 118 references to Egypt in the historical books after applying his "exclusive and inclusive" peculiarities. The occurrences in 1 and 2 Kings deal with the marriage of Solomon to the daughter of Pharaoh (1 Kgs 3:1; 9:16), Solomon's trade with Egypt in horse and chariots (1 Kgs 10:28f.), Hadad the Edomite's flight to Egypt and his return after David's death (1 Kgs 11:17–21), Jeroboam's flight to Egypt and his return to Israel after Solomon's death (1 Kgs 11:40f.; 12:1f.), Shishak's invasion of Judah (1 Kgs 14:25), Hosea seeking help from So, King of Egypt, against the Assyrians (2 Kgs 17:4), Rabshakeh chiding the people of Judah for their reliance on Egypt for help (2 Kgs 18:21ff.), Egypt's domination of Judah after the defeat and death of Josiah (2 Kgs 23:29–24:7), and the flight of the people of Judah to Egypt (2 Kgs 25:26; see also Jer 43:1ff.). An additional historical reference in Jer 37:5–7 reports the coming of an Egyptian army to help Judah against the Babylonians, whereupon Jeremiah prophecies that it is returning to Egypt.

Poetical wisdom literature

Six references "of great significance" mention that princes shall come out of Egypt (Ps 68:31), that Egypt is called the "Land of Ham" (Pss 78:51; 105:23.27; 106:21f.), and that the advice given to a young man to avoid the enticement of an adulteress whose bed is decked "with fine linen from Egypt" (Prov 7:16).

Focus on the dual image: Slave house/place of asylum

Before presenting my concluding remarks in the light of the chronological depiction of Egypt in the OT given in the foregoing summary, it is appropriate to mention that I subscribe to the position that the integrity of

the present literary and canonical form, as well as the historical veracity of the Bible should be maintained.[7] Thus, the one or two disagreements with Copher expressed earlier on in this paper.

Coming to my concluding remarks, I will not be far from the truth if I assert that Egypt's image in Scripture is defined by her relationship with or her treatment of the covenant people (Israel) and their God. K. Holter, in his article, "Africa in the Old Testament", refers to traditions portraying Egypt both positively and negatively. Tackling the negative portrayal first he says: "Starting with the pentateuchal portrayal of Egypt, we find that it is linked, first and foremost, to the traditions of Israel's sojourn in what is called 'the land of slavery' (see Exod 13:3) or 'the iron-smelting furnace' (see Deut 4:20)" (2000: 97). Then, he goes on to consider the positive portrayal of Egypt, noticing that "[...] Egypt [is] as an asylum for refugees who had to flee Israel due to famine or political problems" (2000: 98). T.W. Davis beautifully blends this dual role (or image) of Egypt in the following quotation:

> Throughout the Bible, Egypt fulfills a dual role both as a place of refuge and a place of oppression, a place to "come up out of" and a place to flee to. This role begins with Abraham. He seeks refuge in Egypt because "there was a famine in the land" (Gen. 12:10); yet he must leave when Pharaoh wants to place Sarah in the royal harem. This is also the first recorded encounter of the divine ruler of Egypt and Yahweh the God of Abraham (Davis 1996: 196–97).

Coming to the time of Joseph, Davis again clearly delineates this dual role of Egypt when he says "Egypt is a place of oppression, as Joseph is initially enslaved, eventually ending up in prison. Egypt is also a place of hope and refuge as Joseph is raised to be second in the land. From this position of great power he is able to provide a refuge from famine for his family" (Davis 1996: 197).

Once again, the land of hope and refuge becomes a land of slavery when "a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph" (Exod 1:8). The suffering of the Israelites in Egypt is given a proverbial description. As Davis puts it: "The harsh experience of the Israelites in Egypt colors all later references to the land. Throughout the course of the struggle between Pharaoh and Yahweh, Egypt comes to represent all that is opposed to God" (Davis 1996: 197). In fact the judgment that God unleashed on Pharaoh and Egypt is directed against the gods of Egypt (Exod 12:12). This verdict against the gods of Egypt reverberates even in the prophetic writings

through phrases like "the temples of the gods of Egypt" and "Egypt along with her gods and kings" (Jer 43:12.13; 46:25).[8]

As we saw in the foregoing summary from Copher, although the judgment motif dominates the prophetic literature, the few times when a ray of hope comes through with respect to Egypt have to do with Egypt's turning to the true and living covenant God of Israel (Is 19:21.25; Ezek 29:13; Zech 14:18).

The dual role of Egypt (place of refuge—and therefore resulting in blessing, and place of oppression—and therefore resulting in judgment) reminds one of the programmatic text in Gen 12:2–3: "And I will make you a great nation. And I will bless you and make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; And I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

This dual image of Egypt is again reflected in the New Testament in relation to the Holy Family. When Herod the king of the Jews wanted to kill the Child Jesus, an angel of the Lord told Joseph "Arise and take the Child and His mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you" (Matt 2:13). After the death of Herod, again "an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt saying, 'Arise and take the Child and His mother, and go into the land of Israel for those who sought the Child's life are dead'" (2:19). In the context of this "fleeing to" and "coming out of" Egypt of the Child Jesus, it is interesting to note how a reminder of the coming out of Egypt of the nation of Israel by Hosea is interpreted as a prophecy fulfilled in Jesus (cp. Hos 11:1 with Matt 2:15). W.M. Smith's comment in relation to this flight helps to highlight our topic. He says "I do not recall seeing this in any of the innumerable comments upon this flight into Egypt, but certainly the text emphasizes one fundamental truth that attaches to the significance of Egypt in the OT, namely, that Egypt was a place out from which the people of God must ultimately come out. It was no land of promise." (1978: 54). That is why Abraham, although forced to go down to Egypt due to famine, had to return to Canaan. That is why Jacob, although he died in Egypt, had to be buried in Canaan. That is why "Upon his death Joseph", in spite of his association with Egypt, "was embalmed but not buried in Egypt. His body was kept unburied in anticipation of the Hebrews' return to Canaan where his burial was to be" (Copher 1996: 65; cf. Josh 24:32). That is why the Israelites were told "You shall never again return that way" (Deut 17:16; cf. Exod 13:17–18; Hos 11:5).[9]

Although it may appear as a sweeping generalization, Egypt's dual

image tells us that our destiny as individuals, communities, or nations is determined by our relationship with or treatment of the God of creation and history and his covenant people. The flip side of this, as far as God's people are concerned, is that, as Egypt may be a temporary refuge but not a permanent home, likewise we are in this world, but are not of this world (John 17:14–19). We should, therefore, always be cognizant of the faith perspective which was the hallmark of those who went before us: "If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city" (Heb 11:15–16).

Notes

1 One strategy for achieving this is seen in the fact that for the past century the thrust of biblical scholars has been on Mesopotamia and Ancient Near Eastern studies (Bailey 1991: 165).

2 The discussion by past scholars as to whether "Cush" was in Africa or in the Ancient Near East could also be mentioned here.

3 Bear in mind the tremendous geographical barriers, e.g. the Sahara Desert. J. Bright underscores this fact when he says that: "Unlike Mesopotamia, predynastic Egypt enjoyed a remarkable isolation, essentially an accident of her geography", (1981: 32). And whenever contacts with the outside world were started, communication through the Mediterranean Sea, the so-called "Fertile Crescent", and the Nile Valley was easier. Even the Nile is not navigable throughout due to the several cataracts; and thus the comment by one scholar that "The Nile Valley was a tube, loosely sealed against important outside contact", (Wilson 1958: 12).

4 Cf. D.J. Wiseman (1980: 42), who argues that: "In Mesopotamia and Israel the overriding cultural factor was the concept of law and authority which ensured the vitality, stability and continuity of a highly developed civilization. [...] By contrast the religion and government of Egypt was authoritarian in that the pharaoh was himself regarded as a god and was thus the supreme authority. Since he could not be in competition with any other authority, personal and impersonal, this may explain the absence of recorded laws from that country." Although this may be true with respect to law, Currid (1997: 9) thinks that—especially with regard to creation—"[...] some features of the Bible have more in common with Egypt than with Mesopotamia."

5 Cogan (1996: 65) prefers the expression "slave house", based on the Hebrew, and adds the appellation "iron furnace" from Deut 4:20.

[6] These peculiarities are based on Copher's historical-critical or liberal approach to Scripture (see his discussion on pp. 165-66). Although the categorization of biblical scholars into water-tight liberal/conservative categories can sometimes be misleading, I put myself on the conservative side.

[7] This is not the place to elaborate on the merits and demerits of the historical-critical method in the study of the Bible, but I agree with K.A. Kitchen when he says that "One result of all this was the emergence of a marked scepticism not only towards traditions *about* the Bible, but also towards the historical veracity of the OT books and towards the integrity of their present literary form" (1966: 18).

[8] W.M. Smith (1978: 5) elaborates this point in his commentary on Isa 19:21–25: "It is significant that the first statement made regarding God's judgment upon Egypt involves her idols, a theme that will appear again and again in the prophecies we shall be considering in this volume—as far as I recall, there is no judgment pronounced upon any of the gods of any one nation in the Old Testament, except those of Egypt."

[9] Here is what Cogan (1996: 65–66) says with regard to this injunction: "This feeling [i.e. the feeling to forget Egypt and relegate it to history] was so strong that the Law of the Monarchy (Deut 17:14–20) restricted any future Israelite king from developing extensive trade in horses, 'so as not to return the people to Egypt [...] Only under one circumstance would Israel go down to Egypt again and its history, so to speak, be reversed: as punishment for breach of the Lord's covenant the Israelites would be transported to Egypt by ships, there to be put on the block and sold as slaves (Deut 28:68)."

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The Images of Cush in the Old Testament: Reflections on African Hermeneutics

David Tuesday Adamo

The purpose of this paper is to examine the various functions and meanings of the Old Testament (OT) term כּוּשׁ / *Cush* that have been put forward by Eurocentric scholarship. After a brief survey of some extra-biblical references (i), I will propose what I think should be the appropriate exegetical function and meaning of the term (ii), and then discuss how it should be translated and what implications the translation has for the churches in Africa (iii).

Extra-biblical references to Cush

The first people to use the term Cush were Africans themselves. The ancient Egyptians used the term *Kush*, *Kaushu* or *Kash* to refer to a limited area of land beyond Semna and Kerma. Later usage of the term included all the lands further south (see Maspero 1968: 488). The earliest reference known to us is an Egyptian document known as the inscription of Ameni, dated to the Sixth Dynasty, under Pepi II (see Breasted 1906: 251). The Annals of Thurtmose III inscribed on the walls of the corridor of the Temple of Amon at Karnak mention the term Kush, and the stelae of Thutmose IV recorded the encounter with the "Abominable chief of Kash". Menhotep I mentioned in his inscription that he sailed up the Nile to Kesh (for further references, see Adamo 1998: 11–13).

Assyrian records also discuss their encounter with an African nation called Kush. The annalistic text of Esharhaddon records their military encounter with Kushites and mentions specifically King Tirhakah who ruled Egypt during the so-called Kushite dynasty in Egypt (see Pritchard

1969: 292). In the Dog River Stele which Esharhaddon wrote to commemorate his victory over his enemy, he mentions Kusu and King Tirhaqar (see Pritchard 1969: 293; Luckenbill 1968: 285). Some other Assyrian texts relating to Kush include the Senjirli Stele, the Alabasta tablets, and the Rasam Cylinder of Ashurbanipal (Adamo 1998: 12–15).

The extra-biblical texts show that the history of Cush is incomplete without Egypt just as the history of the Egypt is incomplete without Cush. That is the reason why in most cases they are treated together in extra-biblical (as well as biblical) sources. They belong together as Africans, and they belong to one race (Adamo 1998: 12–15). Egypt is the corridor from which other Africans from south of the Sahara traveled outside their known world. A look at the map of Africa shows that the continent is surrounded by sea: south, north, east, and west. The Cushite gold and other minerals went out to the ancient known world through Egypt. That was the only place where the Cushites could travel by land to the ancient known world. This means that the Eurocentric propaganda that Egypt had no interaction with the so-called Africa south of the Sahara is part of the conspiracy to separate Egypt from the rest of Africa by making Egypt part of Europe.

OT references to Cush

The following survey of OT references to Cush is divided in three groups: Cush as a personal name, Cush as a geographical reference, and Cush as a reference to people of African descent. The survey will analyze the major references of each group, and particular attention will be given to the history of interpretation of the Cush-texts and the de-Africanization they have encountered from Eurocentric scholarship.

Cush as a personal name

According to the Table of Nations in Gen 10, Cush (see vv. 6–8) is the first son of Ham. His other sons were Seba, Havilah, Sabtecha, Raamah, and Nimrod who became mighty on earth with the beginning of his kingdom as Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh. It seems to me that Eurocentric scholars have missed the essential point and message of the Table of Nations, when they argue that it is a comprehensive survey of international relations of the author to tell the fulfillment of God's command to multiply and replenish (see von Rad 1972: 143). It is said to be a verbal map of the world (Brueggemann 1982: 91–92), and an early

ethnographical essay—written by a Jew for the Jews, only to reflect the countries the Jews had contact with (Rawlinson 1899: 168–169). I would rather argue that the message and purpose of the Table of Nations is to teach the unity of mankind. The fact that all people and nations of the world have one source and are one species, namely Homo Sapiens, is attested here. By this description, every nation known to the ancient world is covered and has one source and one place of origin. The classification of the so-called "varieties" of mankind is, therefore, very arbitrary and has no basis in Scripture.

Another occasion when Cush becomes a proper name is found in the Book of Zephaniah. Its writer carefully traces the ancestry of Zephaniah to the fourth generation, to a certain Hezekiah, whose grandson Cushi became the father of the prophet. One important aspect of this long genealogy is that it makes known to the readers that this prophet is a black man or has an African ancestry. Unfortunately, Eurocentric scholars have raised many objections to this interpretation with their usual attempt to de-Africanize the Bible. They have argued vehemently against this notion of African ancestry by saying that this particular section is a later addition, and that the name Cushi is a common name in Ancient Near East and so does not imply African ancestry. On the basis of chronology they have argued that Zephaniah could not have any relation with Hezekiah, king of Judah. All these arguments have no foundation if one honestly reflects on the history of the African diaspora, especially their interaction with the people of Ancient Near East (see Adamo 1998: 116–119). Israel stayed in Africa for 430 years, which means that most of the early generations of Israel were born in Africa, married Africans, took African names, ate African food, and lived African lives. During the eigth century, they were well known in ancient Israel. King Hezekiah depended upon Africans to deliver Israel from the powerful Assyrians. The naked truth is that no king of ancient Israel interacted with Africans like Hezekiah did. Since the genealogy of Zephaniah was traced to Hezekiah, king of Judah, the possibility is that he could have an African ancestry.

Cush as a geographical reference

Six times the term Cush appears as a geographical location. The first example is found in Gen 2:13, telling how the river Gihon flows around the land of Cush. Gen 2 describes the Garden of Eden where Adam and Eve lived originally. There are four rivers in this garden, Pishon, Tigris, Euphrates and Gihon. Scholars have no problem identifying two of the

rivers: Tigris and Euphrates. The two other, Pishon and Gihon, have proved to be more problematic. Pishon has been associated with canals such as Pallakopas in Mesopotamia, Phasis or Araxes Dowasir in Arabia, and even Indus and Ganges in India. Gihon has also been associated with Oxus, Shatt en Nil, Khosper Mesopotamia and Rum in Arabia, and the Nile in Africa. However, a close examination of the description of the two rivers, points to an African location. Pishon flows around the land of Havilah, which is the land of gold, bdellim, and onyx stone. In other passages (1 Chr 1:9, Gen 10:7) Havilah is the son of Cush. The truth is that Africa was recognized as a land famous for gold and minerals in antiquity. If Havilah is the son of Cush and Gihon surround the land of Cush, the most likely location of these rivers is Africa. The biblical records and the scientific discoveries that Africa is the origin of human race makes it possible that the Cush that is mentioned in Gen 2:13 is the African Cush and not Mesopotamia as some Eurocentric scholars have attempted in their de-Africanization of the Bible (see Adamo 1998: 56–57).

Other examples are found in the books of Esther and Isaiah. In Esth 1:1 and 8:9 Cush appears as one of the two extreme boundaries of the Persian Empire. Cush is here given an unquestionable African location, as Africa has earned the description of the far away country. In Isa 18:1, Cush is referred to as the land which lies beyond the Nile and sends her ambassadors through the Nile river. The Nile river is indeed in Africa. This is one of the places where Cush can be located in Africa with reasonable certainty. Despite the mention of the river Nile, some scholars still maintain that this passage (Is 18:1–7) refers to Assyrians and not Africans. The description of the people as tall and smooth, a nation feared far and wide, fits that of ancient Africa of that period. It was the period of the so-called Cushite dynasty in Egypt that was so powerful that Hezekiah put his trust in them to deliver Judah from the terror of the Assyrians (see Is 20:1–6). The prophet Isaiah vehemently opposed such dependence on African nations (Egypt and Cush) instead of Yahweh. With the mention of Egypt, the location of Cush cannot be any other place but Africa.

Cush as a reference to people of African descent

Num 12:1 records an incident where Moses' leadership is challenged by Miriam and Aaron, and it seems to be related to Moses marrying a Cushite woman. The interpretation history of this passage reveals a de-Africanization, not only in various commentaries, but even in the Bible

translations themselves. Some Eurocentric scholars have argued that the passage is not authentic, classifying it as an addition or supplement. Others have identified the Cushite woman with Zipporah, the Midianite. Others again have concealed her Cushite background by calling her "a desert woman". However, a close examination of the passage shows that the Cushite woman was one of the nameless women in the Bible—identified by the color of her skin and her ethnic origin. The fact that v. 1 repeats the term Cushite reflects the emphasis of the author: it is important to identify Moses' wife as Cushite. Eurocentric biblical scholars know that "behind every successful leader, there is a woman." To say, therefore, that an African woman contributed to the leadership of Moses appears absurd to them, so they try to de-Africanize the text of Num 12:1.

2 Sam 18:19–33 provides another example of a nameless person refered to as Cushite. This particular Cushite was one of the military men defending David—one of the most celebrated kings of Israel—against his enemy and son, Absalom. The Cushite is the one sent to David to tell him of the death of Absalom. The majority of Eurocentric scholars have no problem in identifying this Cushite: they agree that he is of African descent. However, they also tend to argue that since he is of African descent, he must be a slave, serving in David's army (see McKane 1963: 37–60; Ackroyd 1977: 172; Philbeck 1979: 129; Ullendorf 1968: 8; Copher 1985: 173; Smith 1910: 359). Against this I would argue that the Cushite cannot be a slave. If he were a slave, he would not have been the one sent to the king. During a crisis at the battle front, only a very high-ranking military officer would be sent to report a calamity to the king or president. The Eurocentric idea that the Cushite must be a slave does not make sense and it is, therefore, untenable. It appears that the only reason why they think he is of African descent is because he performs the function of being a messenger. This de-Africanization is also reflected in certain translations, of which the most terrible example is found in the Good News Bible which portrays the Cushite as a "Sudanese slave"!

A third example of Cush being used to express African descent is found in the narrative about Ebed-Melech the Cushite, who delivered the prophet Jeremiah, Jer 38:7–13. During the reign of Zedekiah, his nobles wanted Jeremiah's death. They took advantage of Zedekiah's weakness and threw the prophet into a pit to die. At this crucial moment, a Cushite called Ebed-Melech summoned the courage to challenge King Zedekiah for the wickedness of the nobles. He was given permission to rescue the

prophet. This Cushite rescued one of the greatest prophets of the OT from death. Eurocentric scholars do not have any problem identifying Ebed-Melech as having African ancestry, but his position in the court of Zedekiah is disputed. Ebed-Melech is described as a *saris*. Since this term can mean eunuch, Eurocentric scholars contend that Ebed-Melech must be a eunuch from Africa. This type of interpretation is based on the racial prejudice of the interpreters. The term occurs about forty-five times in the OT, and in most cases it does not mean eunuch since a eunuch is not permitted in the congregation of Israel. The truth is that the Hebrew term *saris* as used in the OT could also mean "officer," "prince," "commander of the army," "he who is at the head of the king," or "he goes before the king, one of his confidential advisors" (for documentation, see Adamo 1998: 112–114). Despite all these various meanings of the term *saris* in the OT, these scholars prefer to see Ebed-Melech as a eunuch instead of an officer or adviser to the king, probably because to them nothing good can come from Africa.

Translation and implications for the church in Africa

In the previous part I surveyed the OT references to Cush, and in particular I wanted to highlight how some Eurocentric scholars have feverishly and consistently pursued the policy of de-Africanization of the Bible. In this part I will discuss how the term Cush should be translated, and what implications it has for the church in Africa.

There has been much inconsistency in the translation of the Cush. Peter Unseth, Knut Holter, and a few other scholars have given brief surveys of various Bible translations' rendering of Cush (see Holter 1997; Unseth 1999). A close examination of various English versions of the Bible shows that Cush has been rendered "Ethiopia", "Sudan", and "Nubia". Other versions have simply transliterated the term. I have suggested that the term Cush/Cushite should be rendered Africa/African. This suggestion has been met with some criticism from several colleagues: Holter (1997), Unseth (1999), and Høyland (1998).

The most detailed contribution is Marta Høyland's article, "An African presence in the Old Testament? David Tuesday Adamo's interpretation of the Old Testament Cush passages". And this article seems to reveal her opinion about the presence of Africa and Africans in the OT; note that the title has a question mark. Referring to my work she argues:

> By analysing the texts he wants to elevate the African people and the African continent to the position he claims they had in ancient times. What, then, are the strong and weak sides in Adamo's approach? The strong side is obviously that he has placed the question for an "African presence in the OT" on the agenda. [...] However, Adamo's approach has also weak sides. One is that he becomes one-sided. In my work with Adamo's analysis of the Cush passages in the OT, I find that he always finishes with the same set of conclusions. It seems as if Adamo approaches the texts predisposed. He finds what he searches for, even though the texts vary with regard to both form and content. In his eagerness to put Africa and Africans to the fore, he exaggerates, giving no room for exegetical discussions, because he concludes before he asks. (Høyland 1998: 55–56)

Høyland's comments remind me of a time when I sent one of my articles on Cush to an editor of a journal and one of the assessors said that the author of this article is trying to smuggle Africa into the Bible. Any objective OT researcher should know that I am not trying to smuggle or to elevate Africa in the Bible. The honest truth is that already the people of ancient Israel acknowledged Africa and elevated Africa. The Bible is consistent about Africa. Africa is mentioned in every strand of biblical literature. Ancient Israel trusted Africa and depended on it. God made it possible for Africa and Africans to participate in the biblical drama of redemption. The only problem is that the Eurocentric scholars who consistently have dominated the translation and interpretation of the Bible do not want to bring it out to the open. What I am trying to do is to reveal what is already there in the Bible, or to do what Holter (1997: 336) describes: "[...] OT translators should inform their readers, in footnotes or glossary entries that Cush in most cases refers to an African nation that is well attested also in extra-biblical sources." Peter Unseth (1999), too, is clear about this, "[...] I think that the list shows that there is clearly a significant Black African presence in the OT, and that Israel and the Middle East had much awareness of and contact with Black Africa." Could Høyland's further comments on my exegetical suspicion be a typical Eurocentric scholar's way of suspecting anything good from Africa?

Although Holter (1997) agrees with my emphasizing of an African presence in the OT, he opposes the translation of Cush/Cushite to Africa/African. He rather advocates that the term should be transliterated—as Cush. His main reasons are the translation technical possibility of endless debates of whether all references to Cush in the

OT refer to Africa, and the ideological—both politically and theologically—connotations of the term "Africa". First, if the majority of references to Cush actually refer to Africa (with a clear identification), this problem of endless debate should not even come up. And secondly, ideological problems should not prevent us from rendering Cush with Africa. The truth is that only biblical scholars are concerned with such ideological problems when they read the Bible. Ordinary readers, who make up the majority of Bible readers, do not really care about such ideological problems. The suggestion by Holter to transliterate all references to Cush with addition of footnotes is untenable. Again the majority of ordinary readers are not concerned with reading footnotes. Real committed ones do not believe in footnotes, but in the very word of God in the Bible. More seriously, the transliteration still conceals the African identity of the reference to Cush. That is also the major strategic attempt of Eurocentric scholars: to conceal the African participation in the drama of redemption. Ordinary readers (especially those in Africa) do not know what Cush means in the Bible. The hermeneutical problem of transferring the idea of Africans being an enemy of the chosen people (see Holter 1997: 335–336), is not a sufficient reason for hiding the African identity in the Bible. The Cush passages, where this negative idea comes up, are very few and can be understood in their context by the ordinary readers.

As Unseth maintains, a rendering of the term Cush by the name of any single modern state in Africa, such as Ethiopia or Sudan, is untenable because it does not adequately represent the extent of the land of the black people refered to in the Bible. I understand the problem of having a perfect translation. It is impossible. What we need to do is to seek the most accurate, and with regard to Cush this means that it must not conceal the presence of Africa and Africans in the Bible. We should also seek a translation that will be understood by ordinary readers. I therefore hold firmly to my previous suggestion that where Cush refers to a geographical location, it should be rendered Africa, and where it refers to personal names or the of a people, it should also be rendered Africa(n). In Africa it is not unusual for certain persons to bear the names of their towns, districts, and countries. Moreover, the Alexandrian translators of the Septuagint did exactly this when they rendered Cush by Ethiopia (see Adamo 1998: 28–37).

The rendering of the term מצרים / *Mitsrayim* as Egypt—in English versions—is another example of the same phenomenon. If that Hebrew term can be rendered Egypt in English versions, there is no reason why

Cush cannot be rendered Africa. Another reason and advantage of rendering Cush as Africa is that there is no continent in the world whose achievement has been misunderstood, misrepresented and given to other nations like that of the continent of Africa. It seems to me that the agitation to continue to transliterate the Hebrew term Cush is part of an ongoing attempt to weaken the achievements of Africa. If Cush is rendered as I have suggested above, the implications are great. Africa and Africans will know that Yahweh has also done great things through their ancestors. It will destroy the satanic ideology that Christianity is a foreign religion. It will also disprove the racist ideas that some Eurocentric scholars have forced into the Bible in their interpretation. And it will further affect the growth of Christianity in Africa.

Conclusion

I still hold tenaciously to my position that the present negligence of the African presence in the Bible is a disservice to Africans and the African diaspora all over the world. The identity of the black people is concealed. There is a difference between footnotes and the real biblical text. I look forward to the day when a committee of African translators will come out boldly to retranslate the Bible so that it can reflect the presence of Africa and Africans. I believe that this will mean a new day for Africa and for black people all over the world.

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Using Africa to Interpret the Old Testament

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Towards a "Communal" Approach for Reading the Bible in Africa

Louis Jonker

Nobody would disagree with West's observation (1997: 104) that "Biblical scholarship in Africa is not monolithic." There are of course many factors contributing to what he calls "the wonderful diversity that is African biblical scholarship". When one includes South African Old Testament scholarship in the African picture, the diversity becomes even greater.[1]

In my book *Exclusivity and Variety* (1996: 17–35) I indicated that the normal tendency in a situation of methodological diversity is to claim exclusivity for one's own perspective or approach. These claims for exclusivity are not always ideological. Often they are just pragmatic. I (or we) stick to what works for me (or us). Such a situation of exclusivism, however, could be detrimental to our interpretations of the Bible. It could even lead to a point where we deliberately exclude other interpretational possibilities or methods.

At the dawn of African biblical studies (as West 1997: 115 has called it) one should be aware of the dangers of exclusivity. One should reflect on the question: "How could African biblical studies be prevented from making exclusivist claims?" I would therefore like to propose in this contribution that we in Africa should consider a "communal" approach in our intepretation of the Bible (and the Old Testament, in particular).[2]

Why a "communal" approach? Ukpong (1995: 8ff.) identifies certain aspects that are common to all African world-views and that belong to the root paradigm of African cultures. One of these aspects is the sense of community. He explains it as follows:

> [...] the life of the individual human person and also even of inanimate objects in the cosmos finds meaning and explanation in terms of the structure of relationships within the human community, and between the human community and nature. [...] *The individual defines his/her identity by the community to which he/she belongs* [...]. (my italics, LCJ)

It is in the spirit of this sense of community that I would like to suggest that a "communal" approach should be considered in African biblical interpretation, in order to preclude our developing tendencies towards exclusivism.

Preliminary considerations

Before I come to an explanation of such a "communal" approach, I would like to make two preliminary remarks.

(i) It is almost stating the obvious to remind you that an African hermeneutic is not an exegetical method as such. Some scholars speak of an African hermeneutic as if it were a method distinct from other (mostly western) methods of interpretation. An African hermeneutic is rather a hermeneutical stance or disposition according to which, and in the service of which, a whole variety of exegetical methods or tools are used. An African hermeneutic is therefore comparable to a feminist or liberationist hermeneutic. The implication is then that an African hermeneutic should not be contrasted to the historical-critical method (or any other scientific method) of biblical interpretation.[3] Often scholars describe an African hermeneutic as being contextually orientated, in contrast to the scientific methods, which are insensitive to the context of interpretation. Such a comparison would be a mixing of metaphors.[4] I am fully in agreement that the scholarly practices of these scientific methods in the European-American context often do not pay any attention to contextuality. However, it is not the methods that are insensitive to contextuality. It is rather the western hermeneutic according to which these methods are applied that is insensitive to contextuality. These scientific methods, when they are applied, for example, within an African hermeneutic, may just as well serve the purpose of exploring the contemporary context of interpretation.

(ii) A second preliminary consideration is the distinction between the different audiences in which theological and hermeneutical

discourses take place. David Tracy's (1981) well-known distinction between three publics, namely the academy, the church, and the society at large, is helpful in this regard.[5] When we are advocating an African hermeneutic, we should ask ourselves on which level this hermeneutical discourse takes place. Again we should be cautious not to mix metaphors. With its emphasis on contextuality, an African hermeneutic mainly contributes to the discourse in the church and in society at large. This does not mean, however, that the academic discourse should be neglected. On the other hand, the academic discourse (of which our methodological reflections form part) should not take place in an ivory tower without any implications for and contribution to the other levels of discourse.[6] A desideratum would therefore be an exegetical approach that facilitates the interaction among these three publics.

Towards a "communal" approach

My proposal for a "communal" approach is not an attempt at formulating yet another exegetical (super-)method. The proposal for a "communal" approach is rather a modest attempt at drawing a hermeneutical map of the dynamic process of biblical interpretation.[7] Such a map could assist in answering the following questions:

- Which elements of the interpretation process are the focus of interest in an African hermeneutic?
- What exegetical methods are required to study these elements of the interpretation process adequately?

The communality of this approach thus lies in its attempt to explain the identity of each hermeneutical perspective (such as an African hermeneutic), as well as the role of exegetical methods, in terms of the structure of relationships among the different elements of the interpretation process. This structure of relationships constitutes a communality among the global scholarly guild of biblical interpreters. A "communal" approach provides the opportunity of discovering how the hermeneutical and exegetical contributions from our own contexts enrich the (what one could call) communion of biblical interpretation.

Let me explain briefly how a hermeneutical map can help us to develop a "communal" approach.[8] In the process of biblical interpretation, one could distinguish between three basic elements of

communication, namely the sender (authors, compositors and editors), medium (the text) and receiver (ancient and contemporary hearers, readers and interpreters). Because we are dealing with ancient texts when we interpret the Bible, we should be aware that each of these communication elements could not only be described synchronically, but also diachronically. For example, the synchronic structure of the sender could be described with reference to the social, religious, political and economic conditions of the time during which the text originated. However, by distinguishing between authors, compositors and editors one is already suggesting that such a synchronic description of one sender level is not the whole story. Different hands created and reworked the texts in different circumstances. The sender could therefore also be described diachronically.

The same applies to the medium and the receivers. A synchronic study of the text would involve investigation into the grammatical, rhetorical, poetical and narrative structures in the text. The focus of a diachronic study of the text, however, would be on the process of textual growth. A synchronic study of the receiver would again involve a focus on the social, religious, political and economic conditions of the context within which the text is being interpreted. This description of the receiver could, however, be complemented by a description of the tradition of interpretation of a text in different periods of time (a diachronic investigation).

One should also note that the interaction between sender and medium, as well as the interaction between receiver and medium, is described in this hermeneutical map as a function of the synchronic structures of the sender and receiver respectively. Practically, this means that, on the one hand, the social, religious, political and economic circumstances during the time of textual production determined the content and structure of the texts. On the other hand, the social, religious, political and economic circumstances during the time of textual reception determine how a text is interpreted in a contemporary context.

African biblical scholarship and a "communal" approach

On which of these levels in the dynamic process of biblical interpretation can African scholarship contribute? Which elements on this hermeneutical map are the foci of an African hermeneutic? African

biblical scholarship has a valuable contribution to make with regard to the following:

(i) The synchronic description of the receiver: The main characteristic of African biblical scholarship is undoubtedly its sensitivity to the context of interpretation.[9] African biblical scholars remind us that there are numerous religio-cultural and socio-political factors to be reckoned with when the Bible is interpreted in an African context. However, this sensitivity to contextuality does not only benefit biblical interpretation in Africa. African biblical scholars can (and one may even say, have the responsibility to) help the global scholarly community to come to grips with the issue of the role of the ordinary reader and the aspect of relevance in interpretation.[10] Within a "communal" approach African biblical scholarship can contribute to the reflection on how the three publics of theological and hermeneutical discourse are related. In order to make this contribution African scholars should, however, be competent in using the different socio-scientific, socio-anthropological and religious-scientific methods.[11] The sensitivity to contextuality and relevance should be accompanied by a thorough scientific study of the context (the synchronic structure of the receiver). To my mind, further development in this direction is still needed in African scholarship.[12]

(ii) The diachronical structure of the receiver: Not only should the synchronic structure of the interpreting contexts be studied, but also the different historical contexts within which the biblical texts have been interpreted in the past. A study of these contexts can contribute towards the description of the trajectories that certain biblical themes followed through different historical periods until today. African scholarship is in an ideal position to indicate how the colonial and racist past of our continent determined the interpretation of the Bible. The task of African scholars would be to uncover the often neglected histories of oppressed people by means of thorough historical studies, and to show how these histories impacted biblical interpretation among those who were oppressed by these colonial and racist societies.[13] A scientific study of the history of interpretation is thus needed.

(iii) The interaction between medium and receiver: this aspect is closely related to the previous two. The interaction between text and hearers, readers and interpreters takes place within (and is being determined by) the context that has been described above. The recent trend in hermeneutics to reflect on the role of the reader in biblical intepretation[14] has sensitised us to the creative input of African readers

in biblical interpretation. African biblical scholars will not only do well to improve their competence in reception, theoretical and reader response methods, but could also contribute significantly to the development of these methods. Western scholarship, for example, has devoted limited attention to the reception of the Bible in non-literate[15] interpretive communities.[16] In this regard the contribution of African scholars would be valuable.

(iv) The synchronic structure of the sender: in recent years a new interest in the world-behind-the-text has developed.[17] This means that biblical scholars return to the analysis of the synchronic structure of the sender for a better understanding of the ancient texts. African biblical scholars, coming from societies with socio-cultural customs and values similar to those of biblical times, normally have a great interest and competence in the studying of the socio-cultural and religio-sociological structures underlying the biblical texts.[18] The often practised comparative method comes to mind in this regard. Using the terminology of the hermeneutical map that I am discussing here, one could say that the strong point of the comparative method is to indicate the parallels between the synchonic structures of the senders and those of the receivers. In this regard African biblical scholars have a major contribution to make within a "communal" approach. However, one should also mention that these comparative studies should be supported by thorough socio-scientific and socio-historical studies. These methods can prevent scholars from establishing illegitimate links between the biblical and African contexts by emphasising only the continuities and not acknowledging the discontinuities.

(v) The diachronic structure of the sender: the hesitation in African biblical scholarship to engage in historical-critical studies means that it normally does not pay very much attention to the pre-stages in the biblical texts' development.[19] However, African biblical scholars who are well-informed about the dynamics of oral and non-literate societies can make a major contribution in this regard. It is generally accepted that many written biblical traditions were initially transmitted orally—sometimes for many centuries. The dynamics and impact of these oral stages are often only vaguely and speculatively described in tradition-historical studies. African biblical scholarship with its vast amount of comparative material can, for example, assist in determining how the conventions of oral societies and their orally transmitted traditions impacted the literary formation of biblical texts.[20]

(vi) The synchronic structure of the medium: related to the previous point is the contribution of African biblical scholarship towards the description of the synchronic structures in the biblical texts. Exegetical methods that analyse these structures (such as structuralist, rhetorical, narrative and stylistic methods) are normally formulated and practised in western societies, where the use of proverbs (and other poetic-stylistic techniques) and story-telling are not so well-developed compared to African societies. The conventions and function of these literary and stylistic devices are therefore studied without exposure to their contemporary practice. African biblical scholars, however, with their knowledge of and competence in these literary devices, can make a major contribution within a "communal" approach.[21]

The benefits of a "communal" approach

After focusing on the possible (and very much needed) contributions of African biblical scholarship, we can now turn to an evaluation of the "communal" approach being proposed here. What are the benefits of such an approach?

(i) When African biblical scholarship is practised with the hermeneutical map of a "communal" approach in mind, scholars are guided towards finding their identity within the global community of biblical interpreters. A "communal" approach can foster a sense of communality with other interpreters of the Bible in other contexts, helping biblical scholars to identify where their unique contributions are needed. Such an approach can assist African biblical scholarship to take up its position in the ranks of a global interpretive community.[22]

(ii) A "communal" approach can assist African scholarship to focus its research energy and resources on those areas where an African contribution is very much needed (such as the areas indicated above).

(iii) A "communal" approach does not seek to abandon diversity in biblical interpretation. It is not the intention of this approach to present scholars with a super-method for biblical interpretation that will dissolve all diversity. In fact, this approach even intensifies the diversity, but with the attitude of utilising the diversity for the benefit of the global scholarly community.

(iv) A "communal" approach strives to eradicate the individualistic and exclusivist tendencies in biblical scholarship. This approach does not abandon the exegetical methods that are used in Africa or in the

European-American world. It rather endeavours to show how these methods can help us to describe different aspects of the biblical communication process. It also indicates how the western methods are complemented by the often neglected methods of *inter alia* African scholarship.[23] The attitude of communality is thus presented as an alternative to self-centeredness.

(v) A "communal" approach opens the possibility of a discourse on our interpretations.[24] When biblical interpretation transcends the boundaries of isolation and exclusivism, we discover that discourse with others creatively opens new perspectives and meanings. Discourse then acts as a form of critical testing of our interpretations in order to broaden our perspectives and to refine our interpretations.[25]

(vi) A "communal" approach offers the opportunity of investigating the relationship between the three publics of theological and hermeneutical discourse. Although this approach mainly contributes to the academic discourse, it also creates an awareness of the role that communities of faith play in biblical interpretation, as well as for the transforming role of the Bible in the broader society. A "communal" approach takes these contexts of biblical interpretation seriously.

Conclusion

The interaction among biblical scholars from various backgrounds, stances, academic training and interests facilitated by a "communal" approach is not only of strategic value (i.e. to get to know each other's work and for the exploitation of additional resources). It is particularly of hermeneutical value. Not only African scholars, but also western scholars seriously need such a "communal" approach for the development and enhancement of our methods and approaches.

Notes

1 West (1997: 104) and Holter (1998b: 240ff.) are correct in asserting that the predominantly white South African biblical scholarship could hardly be called African. Holter (1998c: 459), when speaking of "African" biblical scholarship, defines it as Sub-Saharan Africa, but also north of the Limpopo River (i.e. excluding South African scholarship).

2 A "communal" approach does not differ from what I have called a "multidimensional" methodology elsewhere (cf. Jonker 1996 and 1998). The latter term focuses on the *multidimensionality* of the process of biblical interpretation as such, and suggests that the development and practice of our exegetical methods should take this multidimensionality into account. By calling this approach "communal" here, I would rather like to emphasise the *attitude* behind such an approach. The attitude of communality is not only familiar to African cultures, but is also a prerequisite for the functioning of such a multidimensional model for the interpetation of the Old Testament.

3 Ukpong (1999: 1) distinguishes between an intellectualist and a contextual stream in African scholarship. He comments: "It is important and necessary that both streams flourish in the continent. For one thing, the former links the continent with western research interests and concerns, and ensures Africa's participation in a global academic marketplace. It also facilitates dialogue between African scholars and their western counterparts for the mutual benefit of both sides. For another, the latter stream ensures that specifically African issues and interests constitute the key factors that shape the agenda of biblical scholarship in Africa. It also mediates Africa's contribution to global biblical research."

4 Opting for contextuality should obviously not exclude the use of critical exegetical methods. Cf. e.g. Høyland's (1998: 56) critique on Adamo's search for an African presence in the Old Testament.

5 Cf. also Lategan's discussions (1996 and 1999) of Tracy's distinction.

6 Cf. e.g. my contribution in this regard (1997).

7 Cf. Jonker (1996: 317): "One should be aware of the status of this model. It is only one attempt to describe the exegetical-hermeneutical landscape. Its role could be compared to that of a map. Other maps of the exegetical-hermeneutical landscape can, of course, be drawn. The status of each map is, therefore, always provisional."

8 Cf. Jonker (1996: 315–332) for an elaborate discussion of the proposed hermeneutical map, as well as a diagram that explains this map. This approach is similar to what is called "holistic interpretation" by Ukpong (1995: 8).

9 Cf. Holter (1998b: 248–249).

10 Cf. Holter's (2000: 52–55) comments on the popular context of interpretation.

11 Cf. Zinkuratire (1999: 4).

12 Cf. Ukpong (1995: 5–6).

13 Cf. also West's (1997: 102–103) plea in this regard.

[14] Cf. Ntreh's (1998: 3–4) comment on this development: "Personally, I am persuaded by the view that it is the reader that gives meaning and relevance to the text. From this perspective the text cannot be relevant for the African reader if he or she merely accepts the interpretation of people whose experiences differ from those of the African reader."

[15] Madipoane Masenya and Joseph Muutuki suggested in an oral conversation that I should rather use the term "non-literate" in stead of "illiterate". The latter term may have derogatory undertones.

[16] Cf. West's (1997: 105) reference to African art.

[17] Cf. Arendse in Conradie & al. (1995: 197ff.).

[18] Cf. e.g. the study of Kawale (1998).

[19] This is not (always) because of ignorance. Often African scholars deliberately opt not to engage in studying the pre-stages of the text.

[20] Cf. also West's (1997: 105–106) discussion of the relationship between textuality and orality.

[21] Cf. e.g. the study by Manda (1998).

[22] This is also the opinion of Ntreh (1998: 4): "[...] if we move out from our isolation, interact with one another and set common goals and agendas, also OT scholars outside our continent will have to reckon with our scholarship."

[23] Cf. Holter (1998b: 248): "[...] OT scholarship should be open to all kinds of approaches to the OT, hence being careful of defining only certain traditional approaches as 'scientific'. Such a methodological openness and plurality, I think, is of basic importance to any encounter between Western and African OT scholarship." Cf. also Zinkuratire (1999: 5): "African biblical scholarship has been using historical critical methods to analyse biblical texts in comparative studies, and I believe it should remain open to any method, past or present, that serves its purpose."

[24] This corresponds more or less to what Holter (2000: 59) calls the complementary model for interaction.

[25] Cf. Conradie & al. (1995: 36–41) where discourse as critical testing is presented as the second phase in an action-reflection model for interpretation. In the critical testing process the results of different exegetical strategies and hermeneutical perspectives are utilised to refine one's own interpretations.

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The Social Sciences and the Study of the Old Testament in Africa: Some Methodological Considerations

Aloo Osotsi Mojola

The use of the social sciences in the study of the Christian Scriptures is a relatively new development in this field. For example Ronald Clements' *One Hundred Years of Old Testament Interpretation* (1976), in which he examines the rise of critical methods—literary criticism, form criticism, tradition-history and redaction history—for the study and interpretation of the Old Testament, hardly mentions it. Even the widely used text book by Odil Hannes Steck, *Old Testament Exegesis: A Guide to the Methodology*, which carefully discusses such methods as text criticism, literary criticism, transmission historical criticism, redaction historical criticism, form criticism, and tradition historical criticism, hardly mentions the social scientific approach.

This of course does not mean that social scientific concerns were completely absent in the work of earlier scholars. A number of modern scholars have not failed to appreciate the foundational work of such pioneers as William Robertson Smith, Sigmund Mowinckel, Julius Wellhausen, Johannes Pedersen, H. Wheeler Robinson, S.H. Hooke, Shirley Case Jackson, Albrecht Alt, William Foxwell Albright and Martin Noth, among others. Many of these scholars were concerned with questions of social organization and social setting, and made use of insights from the young disciplines of sociology and anthropology. It follows therefore, as Keith Whitelam has observed, that the "[...] burgeoning interest in the 'social world of ancient Israel' or 'the social world of early Christianity' from the 1970s onwards, [...] was heir to this long tradition rather than a radical break with past scholarship" (Whitelam 1998: 35).

In their attempts to understand the backgrounds and social contexts that gave rise to the Bible these leading and influential scholars naturally drew from the societies they knew best, namely their own western societies. The Eurocentrism of these studies is undeniable. This is a point that is now widely conceded, even by many western scholars themselves. The point, however, is to transcend this ethnocentricism. Johann B. Metz (1985: 89) makes the observation that the church, which hitherto has been dominated by western cultural, economic and political forces, is now "[...] changing from a culturally monocentric church [...] to a culturally polycentric world church", and so spelling the end of "ecclesial colonialism" (Metz 1985: 90). It is to be hoped that the "cultural polycentrism within Christianity" will result in liberating the field of biblical studies from its silent participation in the silencing of other voices. The implications of this for our understanding of the theory and practice of methodology and hermeneutics is enormous.

The question of method

Generations of the few African biblical scholars that there are have been trained in the western tradition, and many have unquestioningly accepted the assumptions, biases and distortions of this scholarship. In essence this scholarship was/is dominated, by and large, by methodological questions relating to historical criticism, source criticism, tradition criticism and redaction criticism, but always with western Eurocentric social models and concerns in mind. Later on this tradition was expanded by a consideration of methodological questions relating to social-scientific, canonical and rhetorical criticism. However, more recently the tradition has been overturned or is being overturned by the emergence of new approaches and methodological questions arising out of structural, narrative, reader-response, feminist, liberationist and post-structuralist or deconstructionist criticisms or critiques (see for example McKenzie & Haynes 1993). Some scholars held/hold that each method could be practised on its own or that it was/is sufficient unto itself. This of course assumed that once a correct method or vantage point had been discovered or identified, it would henceforth act somewhat like Archimedes' lever or simply like a key that would unlock all doors and solve all conundrums of the text, supply answers to all questions, settle all disputes and lead to all truth. John Barton is right in excoriating this

methodological positivism and exclusivism, and its arrogance in denigrating "the 'ordinary' reader as 'non-critical'" (Barton 1995: 5).

We would certainly agree with Barton's view (1995: 5) that "[...] the quest for a correct method is, not just in practice but inherently, incapable of succeeding. The pursuit of method assimilates reading a text to the procedures of technology: it tries to process the text, rather than to read it." Moreover the reading of texts in everyday life is rarely governed by inflexible rules or unbending "scientific" procedures or a so-called "correct method". Preoccupation with method in this way denies a role to the ordinary reader who has no method, and gives the monopoly of reading the biblical text to the biblical scholar in the academy, in particular the current hegemonic western academy. In fact, it could be argued that the Holy Spirit, if indeed there is a Holy Spirit, is given no place in this methodological heaven! He/she is locked in a narrow methodological strait-jacket. Thus readings which are not consistent with the views of authorised readers in the academy, are dismissed offhand as inadmissible, unscholarly, subjective and false. In this way "correct" readings of the biblical text considered scientific by the academy have continued to be a preserve and a monopoly of mostly western Eurocentric scholars or those trained by them. Some members of the academy, however, such as Gerald West of South Africa, have registered resistance to this practice and are giving serious consideration to the intuitions and interests of the ordinary reader (see for example West 1999 as well as West 1995[2]).

It is strange therefore for an African biblical scholar, such as Emmanuel Obeng (1997: 22) to claim that: "The study of the Bible must be left to the theological schools and seminaries." Obeng, however, seems to contradict himself when he at the same time claims that these same biblicists in Africa "[...] have failed to make a lasting impact in the field of biblical studies in Africa", and that most of them have switched their scholarly energies and attention to the field of African Christian theology. Moreover, argues Obeng (1997: 22), those trained in the West are "[...] still under the influence of western scholarship, but they have not seriously reflected on how to make the knowledge acquired, relevant to Africa." The conclusion from this is inescapable. Clearly for Christians, the Bible is too important to be left to the experts; see also Magessa (1997: 25–39).

Meanwhile the readings of the western academy are themselves in crisis. Keith Whitelam (1998: 40), for example, puts his finger on a major problem which has frustrated and dominated attempts to explain

the social worlds of the Bible, namely the problem of how to understand the complex relationship between the biblical text and its underlying social worlds. He points out that developments in literary studies and the results of literary scholarship have contributed to undermining the widespread belief and assumption that the biblical texts unambiguously refer to an objective historical reality. For Keith Whitelam and others the biblical traditions should not be understood in a simplistic way as reflecting an earlier historical reality. "Rather they offer a valuable insight into perceptions of that reality from particular points of view at the time of the writers" (Whitelam 1998: 40). In other words, as claimed by Robert Carroll (1998: 52), the gap between the biblical texts and the underlying objective historical world referred to, remains unbridgeable. We cannot, according to Carroll (1998: 52), "[...] have access 'to a full and authentic past, a lived material existence, unmediated by the surviving textual traces of the society in question'." Carroll sees "such textual histories" as incompletely or inadequately offering access to the complete objectively lived reality to which they point.

The question of cultural hermeneutics

In the African context the emergence of the so-called African independent churches or the African instituted churches brought into open the hermeneutic that comes into play when ordinary readers begin to read the Bible in their own languages, unaided, on their own, and from the perspective of their own socio-cultural contexts and life worlds. David Barrett was among the first who documented this phenomenon. His *Schism and Renewal in Africa* (1968) offers an idea of some of the early characteristics of this movement. A number of detailed studies of the theologies of some of these churches have since appeared. What they all have in common is the grounding of their readings of the Bible and the theologies constructed from these readings on the cultural practices and traditional religious beliefs of these communities (see for example Nthamburi and Waruta 1997: 40–57).

If, as Brian K. Blount (1995: vii) claims, "[...] biblical scholars are influenced in their textual inquiry by their contextual presuppositions", how much more the ordinary reader. Moreover, according to Blount, every interpreter is influenced in his interpretation and in what he appropriates from the "vast potential of meaning" within the text by their specific social and cultural circumstances. In other words, Blount would

argue, even the very meaning or application that one obtains from the game of historical-critical and literary investigation "[...] says as much about them as it does about the biblical material they analyse" (Blount 1995: viii). Blount testifies that the interpretation of texts from the perspective of Eurocentric values did not meet the needs or resonate with the expectations and values of the African American inner-city youth group under his pastoral charge. He was trying to assist this urban youth group on the basis of the sociological and linguistic framework of Eurocentric biblical interpretation of his training and help them fit there, just as he himself adequately fits there. However, he found this Eurocentric perspective restrictive rather than inclusive, suffocating and imprisoning rather liberating and empowering. He accepted this perspective as the normative method of biblical interpretation, and he also accepted its self-representation "[...] as the only accurate measure of biblical interpretation"—the only valid method for use in academic scholarship, or for use in interpreting a text correctly and faithfully for a congregation. What was primary were not the social-economic or even linguistic contexts of one's audience, but the supposed scientific biblical perspective obtained by means of these methods. One's understanding of one's audience had to be modified to appropriately match the latter. Since the biblical perspective gained on the basis of this methods is "[...] 'scientifically' correct, it must remain static" (Blount 1995: 3). Many have sadly fallen prey to this methodological juggernaut and have been prevented from enjoying the full potential of meaning in Scripture relevant to their cultural context and situation.

In a recent volume edited by Mercy Amba Oduyoye and Musimbi Kanyoro, a number of African women scholars demonstrate the importance of reading the Bible not only from a female perspective but from their specific cultural experiences grounded in the African life and its religious practices and traditions (see Oduyoye & Kanyoro 1995). They examine African rites of passage such as birth, naming, circumcision, puberty and marriage, and such problems as polygamy, death, widowhood, sexuality, prostitution, matriarchy, priesthood and church ministry, liberation, etc., as they relate to women and society in general, by bringing African culture and the biblical text into conversation. In these texts the contributors, along with many African commentators on the biblical text, hold that (1995: 4) "The Bible was written in a culture similar to our African culture [...]", and they approach it both critically and creatively. This approach is given extended treatment by Mercy Amba Oduyoye (1995). Elsewhere

Musimbi Kanyoro (1995: 18–28) refers to this approach as "cultural hermeneutics". Of course cultural hermeneutics as already seen in the case of Blount are inclusive and focus on everyone in so far as culture impinges on everyone and affects all readings of Scripture. Consideration of questions of culture naturally leads to sociological or cultural-anthropological approaches to exegesis, also referred to as social-scientific criticism. In recent times a number of leading biblical scholars are increasingly making use of social scientific models and supporting their case with data from the social sciences, i.e. such disciplines as cultural anthropology, sociology, economics, political science or cultural studies. This has no doubt helped to expand our understanding of the social world of ancient Palestine, the Mediterranean as well as North Eastern Africa, despite what one scholar refers to as the "[...] problems of trying to model ancient economies on the basis of partial or insufficient evidence or data" (Whitelam 1998: 41).

The question of social-scientific criticism

The application of social scientific criticism to the study of the Bible was brought to the fore in the 1970s, highlighted by the writings of George Mendenhall and Norman Gottwald, when, as Gottwald (1992: 79) writes, "[...] biblical scholars began to recognize the role that the social sciences could play in the reconstruction and understanding of historical phenomena." Gottwald (1992: 79) saw this as involving (1) the use and practice of social scientific tools and criticism in dealing with Biblical materials. The methods, data, and theories from the social sciences are utilized to help clarify the complex relationship between the biblical texts and the ancient societies they refer to; (2) an attempt to understand the social organization of ancient Israel at each stage of its historical formation; and (3) the identification of certain types of social life treated in the Bible and believed to be special or of interest in today's world. In an earlier period the ideas of such leading sociologists as Max Weber, Emile Durkheim, Karl Marx, Karl Mannheim and others were widely assumed and employed by various early biblical scholars. Such scholars were however limited or handicapped by the rudimentary and often folkloristic and excessively ethnocentric state of the social sciences at the time. Happily the situation is no longer the same.

For John Elliot (1993: 7), another leading pioneer in the application of social scientific tools and models in the study of the biblical materials,

social scientific criticism is a sub-discipline of exegesis and complements all the other modes of the critical analysis of the biblical texts. He sees social scientific criticism as inextricably connected to the other tools of the exegetical enterprise. For Elliot the social scientific criticism of the Bible is to be understood as "[...] that phase of the exegetical task which analyses the social and cultural dimensions of the text and of its environmental context through the utilization of the perspectives, theory, models, and research of the social sciences" (1993: 7). In this enterprise social scientific criticism takes into account and incorporates research from the totality of the social sciences and related disciplines. Elliot's list includes such diverse fields as ethnology, history (economic, social, military, political, legal, and the like), economics (ancient economics, economic anthropology), classics, geography, archaeology, political science (and comparative politics), semiotics (perception and communication theory, socio-linguistics), sociology and its various orientations (structural functionalism, conflict theory, exchange theory, symbolic interactionism, phenomenological and ethno-methodological theory) and related sub-disciplines (the sociologies of language and literature, of knowledge, of religion, of sectarianism, and the like, and finally theology and its sub-disciplines (Elliot 1993: 15).

The common view is that the social sciences do not only compliment traditional tools or methods but that they also extend their scope and reach in the task of searching for a full and correct understanding of the social world of the Bible. The social sciences, in particular cultural anthropology or social anthropology, are said to "[...] have developed a body of theory and methods for studying pre-industrial societies and groups foreign to the cultures of the modern researchers" (Elliot 1993: 15), and should therefore be capable of moving traditional biblical studies beyond its earlier limitations to a new level of objectivity. The question is however often asked: if the western academy can be so wrong in its understanding, appraisal and judgement of non-western societies and peoples which or who are synchronic with it, is it possible for them to be so correct in their understanding of the ancient biblical social world which is not only non-western and non-European but also so distantly removed from it in time, i.e. diachronically, the use of social scientific tools notwithstanding?

Application of these tools is no doubt important. They have been applied extensively for example in the analysis of the social structures of the so-called tribes of Israel, the processes of state formation in ancient Palestine and neighbouring areas, the study of such phenomena as

charismatic prophetism and their social functions, to the study of sacrificial systems, scapegoatism, religious cults and practices, etc. A number of useful and incisive insights have been gained into the biblical texts and on some aspects of the practices, values and institutions referred to in these texts. The use of social scientific tools by itself does not, however, guarantee objectivity or truth. Neither does it eliminate ethnocentric biases and prejudices, even when practised under the auspices of scholarly practices termed "scientific". Susan Garrett has captured this point succinctly. For her, the claim by some people that the formulation of hypotheses and their testing is free of ethnocentric bias, is simply an illusion. In fact she would add: "One cannot escape it, and the very formulation of the hypothesis, of questions to apply to the data is already ethnocentrically biased. The data generated and collected is biased from the beginning, and there is simply no way out of that trap" (quoted in Martin 1993: 109).

One thorny problem in social scientific research concerns the use of models. For Bruce Malina (quoted in Martin 1993: 109) a social scientific model is

> [...] an abstract simplified representation of some real world object, event, or interaction constructed for the purpose of understanding, control, or prediction [...] a scheme or pattern that derives from the process of abstracting similarities from a range of instances in order to comprehend.

But as Dale Martin points out this term is ambiguous. For example he argues that it could refer to a classification system as "[...] abstract, rigid, and universalising as Mary Douglas's 'group-grid' construction" or to a conceptual construction as "[...] culturally specific, freely used, and content-oriented as patron-client systems or societal perceptions of honour and shame", such as those claimed for the ancient eastern Mediterranean and ancient Palestinian cultures. Disagreements over whether models should refer to "a carefully defined research practice or taxonomy" or to a "flexible appropriation of social-historical categories" or even to "the presuppositions of the exegete" are really disagreements about the conflicting theories, ideologies and presuppositions among the social scientists.

Working with the same tools or methods especially in the social sciences or the humanities does not guarantee agreement or consensus, perhaps because of the diverse starting points, interests, beliefs and

presuppositions and ideologies necessarily involved. It is interesting that John Elliot understands presuppositions and models to be synonymous or equivalent; holding them to be two ways of talking about the same thing. In an interview with Dale Martin, John Elliot is reported to say (Martin 1993: 108):

> I think another word for 'presupposition' is 'model' if by that we think of how we imagine the structure, population, activities, and dynamics of the first century world. That is a very large, abstract model. We have to be clear what implicit models we are using, then indicate what they are to one another so we can more adequately communicate with one another, then finally get to the critical point where we can evaluate one another's work.

If this is the case one may wonder what makes a model scientific in the first place.

In a certain sense then African biblical scholars working with models derived from African social systems, structures, processes, practices, values, etc. believed to have certain close affinities or similarities with those of the Biblical world can contribute as much to a better understanding of the social world of the Bible as anyone else. It could be argued that such an African scholar by virtue of his or her daily life experience or upbringing in a simple agrarian, peasant, traditional society is closer to the social world of the Bible than his or her western counterpart, brought up in an advanced, industrial, mostly highly urbanized secularised, individualistic, capitalistic and imperialistic society far removed from the world of the Bible. The contiguity of north and north-eastern Africa, both geographically, culturally and linguistically is often ignored by modern biblical scholars. In fact the majority of the languages of the Afro-Asiatic language family to which most of the languages of the ancient biblical world belong are still found in north and north-eastern Africa. It should be noted that this area spreads as far south as Ethiopia, Somalia, Kenya and Tanzania with their numerous Cushitic and Semitic languages, and even to some parts of West Africa.

All this is to say that the African biblical scholar has much to offer toward a better understanding of the biblical text if only he or she can take time to learn and benefit from the insights present in Africa's socio-cultural, religious and linguistic heritage and in turn apply these to the study of the biblical writing.

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All Past and Present But Little Future? African and Old Testament Concepts of Time and History

Hendrik Bosman

New trends in historiography allows theological reflection in Africa, and especially Biblical studies, to be grounded in history as the interpretation of the Bible is engaged in a renewed dialogue with African historical contexts. Believing communities across Africa must grasp the opportunity to interpret the Bible in response to their respective historical situations, making sense to their audiences within their own cultural frames of reference (Ross 1997: 94–98).

In this contribution it will be presupposed that a historical-critical approach to biblical interpretation has met with little enthusiasm in Africa. This historical approach to the exegesis of Scripture has been frowned upon as an eurocentric, elitist and alienating exegetical methodology by some theologians involved with African and Black theology. Other evangelical theologians rejected historical-criticism since it seems to create the basis for liberal and modernistic theology, which does not ring true to their own theological reflection (Parratt 1995: 62).

There seems to be a challenge facing biblical scholars in Africa to interpret the Bible. This is not only in its vernacular form but essentially in its Hebrew or Aramaic and Greek guise, in a creative and bold manner that will address the problems which believing communities have to grapple with every day (Maluleke 1997: 14–15). To face up to the challenge of the historical interpretation of Scripture, this paper suggests the acknowledgement that the understanding of time inevitably impacts on the comprehension of history and the subsequent development of historiography. This interconnectedness seems to be true in both the Old

Testament (OT) and in numerous African contexts, but it still needs concerted interdisciplinary research to clarify.

Concepts of history and time in Africa

During the 19th century the German philosopher of history, Hegel, stated that Africa "[...] is no historical part of the World; it has no movement or development to exhibit" (Wilks 1970: 7). Even during the 20th century Hugh Trevor-Roper (1963: 871), the Regius Professor of History at the University of Oxford, commented about the African past. Some of his much maligned remarks about African understanding of history can be briefly mentioned: "[...] there is only the unrewarding gyrations of barbarous tribes in picturesque but irrelevant corners of the globe [...]", and "History is essentially a form of movement, and purposive movement too [...]. Perhaps, in the future, there will be some Africa history [...] but at present there is none: there is only the history of the Europeans in Africa."

Hegel and Trevor-Roper stand at the beginning and the end of a period during which a colonialist approach to the history of Africa "[...] labored under the influence of the myth of white superiority" (Wilks 1970: 7). The logical conclusion of such an approach was that the only valid kind of African history was the history of European activities in Africa (Wilks 1970: 17). A "colonial" history of Africa in its worst form "[...] showed Africans as barbarians whose will and judgement were weak or ill-directed [...] and allowed Africans only secondary roles on the historical stage" (Curtin 1981: 59).

From the middle of the 20th century the decolonization of African history gathered momentum and it involved "[...] the treatment of African societies as ones concerned with the pursuit of rationally thought out ends [...]" (Wilks 1970: 9). During the first phase of decolonised African history only the value judgements changed and therefore Africans became innocent victims but they still kept their passive and submissive roles. The European colonialists were now depicted as exploiters but were still considered as the movers and shakers on the the stages of history (Curtin 1981: 59).

In the second phase of historical decolonization the rise of nationalistic movements indicated the ability of Africans to play a significant role in history, not only in the present but also in the past. African nationalism also had a distorting effect on the representation of

African history, since the triumph of nationalism was accepted as the culmination of Africa's historical development (Neale 1985: 11).

Within 30 years more than 500 professional historians engaged in African history have been trained up to a doctoral level and this has caused an explosion in the growth of the research about the African past (Curtin 1981: 64). Besides European and American History, the history of the Third World has been gaining equal standing in Northern Hemisphere universities (Curtin 1981: 70).

According to Boubou Hama and J. Ki-Zerbo (1981: 43) "Man [*sic*] is a historical animal, and African man is no exception. Just as everywhere else all over the world, he created his own history and his own idea of it." African time and history is both "mythical" and "social".

African historical thought as "mythical time" is characterized by its intemporality, and its essentially social aspect (Hama & Ki-Zerbo 1981: 44). Time is not duration as it affects the fate of the individual, but it is the rhythm of the breathing of the social group. One should be careful not to depict African thought about time and history as a river flowing in only one direction, from a known source to a known outlet. Traditional African time includes and incorporates eternity in both directions (remarkably similar to the Hebrew *'ôlam*). One example: ancestors are therefore not absent in the present since according to African understanding of time they remain contemporary.

Many ethnological studies seem to give the impression that Africans are submerged in mythical time, as if in "[...] a vast ocean without shores and landmarks" (Hama & Ki-Zerbo 1981: 43). It must also be recognized that a mythical approach to history is not unique to Africa but that "[...] a mythical approach lies at the origins of every nation's history" (Hama & Ki-Zerbo 1981: 46).

In Africa the historical process is everyone's business and this established the democratic nature of most Africans' conception of history. History is not only an account of what kings and leaders did since it amounts to what took place within a society as a whole. "The social nature of the African conception of history itself lends it a historical dimension, for history is the developing life of a group" (Hama & Ki-Zerbo 1981: 48–49).

What can an African understanding of history contribute to the interpretation of the OT? The social and democratic nature of African history is reflected in the account of society as a whole since the "little people" and the down trodden and the marginilized is also regarded.

We now turn to research about African concepts of time. Before we focus on the pioneering work by John Mbiti, a few general remarks must be made about existing socio-anthropological research concerning African concepts of time:

- P. Bohannan (1953), the Tiv of Nigeria: Among the Tiv time is indicated by the direct association of two events, such as:
  (i) the word for "day" refers to the period between sunrise and sunrise and is the same word used for "sun".
  (ii) the word for "moon" also applies to the period between two consecutive new moons, the approximate equivalent of "month".

  The role of genealogies among the Tiv is also significant for their understanding of time: it is more a notion of social space and time than one connected with countable generations of ancestors. Thus genealogies are told to explain social processes.
- E.E. Evans Pritchard (1940/1968), the Nilotic Nuer: Time is not a separate idea to the Nuer but an integral part of social activities, ecological and meteorological phenomena. Time is divided into a time for hunting (during the dry season) and a time for agriculture (during the wet season). It is clear that time has a strong social orientation in African thought.

The exposition by John Mbiti of the African concept of time as being as a two-dimensional phenomenon ("actual time" and "potential time") is shown to be controversial and not to be taken as representative for the whole of Africa (van Zuylekom 1989: 98; Imbo 1998: 61).

From his ethnocultural observations of the Akamba and from a linguistic comparison of Akamba, Gikuyu and English verb tenses, Mbiti (1975: 17) defines his key concepts by using two Kiswahili words *Sasa* and *Zamani*:

> [...] according to traditional concepts, time is a two-dimensional phenomenon, with a long *past*, a *present* and virtually *no future*. The linear concept of time in western thought, with an indefinite past, present and indefinite future is practically foreign to African thinking. The future is virtually absent because events which lie in it have not taken place, they have not been realized and cannot, therefore constitute time [...] *Actual time* is therefore what is present and what

> is past. It moves "backward" rather than "forward"; and people set their minds not on future things, but chiefly on what has taken place.

Sasa therefore consists of the present, the experienced past and a very short future; measuring the social activities of the individual and the group (Imbo 1998: 62). In *Zamani* everything comes from and ends in:

> *Zamani* overlaps with *Sasa* and the two are not separable. *Sasa* feeds or disappears into *Zamani*. But before events become incorporated into the *Zamani*, they have to become realized or actualized within the *Sasa* dimension. When this has taken place, then the events "move" backwards from the *Sasa* into the *Zamani* (Mbiti 1975: 23).

Furthermore, Mbiti interprets the absence of "end of the world" myths to mean that African time is cyclical, the history of its measure depending on the social activities of the group under consideration. Past events return eternally in the memories of the group under consideration (Imbo 1998: 63).

To my mind the image of a spiral is best suited to depict the essential elements of African concepts of time and history—an image which incorporates both linear and cyclical dimensions.

History and time according to the Old Testament

To understand the recounting of the past in ancient Israel according to the OT, one has to take brief note of its Mesopotamian background. In Sumer, Babylonia and Assyria three important types of historiographical texts can be distinguished (Grayston 1992: 205–206):

- *Royal inscriptions*: originally these inscriptions involved some form of building enterprise (i.e. the excavation of a canal or the construction of a temple) which was dedicated to one of the Mesopotamian gods. Later on it became a method of recording royal achievements, not only for the gods but also for future generations to take note of. In Assyria special emphasis was placed on the description of the military campaigns by their kings. In the Assyrian royal annals one can find year-by-year accounts of military campaigns in chronological sequence.

- *Chronographic texts*: is a generic reference to a wide variety of texts that by and large comprise of king lists or chronicles. Texts such as the Sumerian King List, the Assyrian King List and the Babylonian Chronicle series correspond in their mutual attempt to narrate or list information in chronological sequence.
- *Historical-literary texts*: this amorphous category includes historical epics, prophecies and pseudo-autobiographies and all of them constitute a description of historical events in a literary style.

From these examples of Mesopotamian historiography is seems clear that Sumerians, Babylonians and Assyrians were interested in their past and conscious of their cultural history. While Babylonian chroniclers record their own military defeats, Assyrian reports of military campaigns tend to be of a more propagandistic nature to stir the morale of their own people—they never lost a battle!

In Mesopotamian historiography past, present and future seem to be part of one continuous stream of events, both in heaven and on earth. Although numerous myths refer to a beginning somewhere in the distant past, there is no clear anticipation of how and when it might end in future. It is also important to detect an emphasis on the role of the king (as embodiment of his nation), with little or no reference to the "little people".

Though modern OT research uses terms such as Deuteronomistic or Chronist History, there exists no Hebrew word for "history" as such. This does not preclude the prevalence of an intellectual tradition that made critical religious comments on the past of Israel (Thompson 1991: 207).

Where do we find "history" within the pages of the OT? Primarily it is embodied in narratives, but it can also be inferred from legal texts (i.e. the theological framework of Deuteronomic instruction) and lyrical texts (i.e. the psalmodic references to the Davidic authorship and historical events). In wisdom literature the historical traces become very faint, but even in them references to Solomonic authorship and the prose framework of Job has a historical ring to it.

In Israel's view of the past, critical comments in prophetic literature play an important role. In poems and oracles, the kings and priests are condemned by the prophets for moral indifference, legal injustice, war atrocities, cultic hypocrisy etc. The focus of the prophetic literature is clearly not exclusively directed to the past, but as a whole the historical

references serve as justification for moral and cultic reform required by the prophetic critique.

There are numerous quotations from underlying historical sources in the OT. Some examples are the "Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel" and the "Book of the Wars of the Lord" in Numbers 21:14 (obviously similar to the Mesopotamian Historiography) or the "Book of Jashar" (Josh 10:13; 2 Sam 1:18).

Reading the OT from an African perspective can also lead to the reappreciation of genealogies; which are far more than mere lists of dead ancestors. The *toledoth* formula introducing OT genealogies is intended to remind the reader how allowed the fulfillment of the promise of offspring, even within the most dire of circumstances.

The prominence of stories of individuals (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses etc) in the OT plays an important part in biblical "history". Hermann Gunkel (1901: 4–6) is of the opinion that OT "history" (as biography) is democratic in so far as it articulates the point of view of ordinary people (shepherds, prostitutes etc). In *The legends of Genesis* Gunkel (1901: 5) concludes: "Genesis [...] contains no accounts of great political events, but treats rather the history of a family." Genesis consists of "[...] anecdotes of country life, stories of springs, of watering-troughs, and such as are told in the bed-chamber." While individuals like Abraham might qualify as one of the lowly people included in the history of the OT, he was important enough to enter into relations with kings and the pharaohs.

The OT might be seen as a collection of narratives about the "little people" but they are never presented as the playthings of a frivolous God. Due to a rationality in which cause-and-effect plays an important part, causation in OT historiography is more theological and moral than political and economical.

Although there is no consensus looming on the research horizon, there has been a broadening of the definition of history and historiography to include a wide range of prose narratives in the OT. Therefore documentary sources in the Pentateuch (J E D P), editions of the Former Prophets such as the Deuteronomistic History and compilations such as 1 Chronicles to Nehemiah are now interpreted as being part of Israelite historiography. These historiographical texts reflect a similar theological and historical frame of mind, but do not constitute a unique genre called "Israelite history". Israelite and Jewish theological reflection is characterized by a recurring concern for and judgement about Israel's past and this has coined the phrase: "Israel has

a historical faith". Historical references in the OT do not view history as a mere sequence of events. Most historical allusions consist of references to how God shaped the lives of his people.

Are all prose narratives in the OT historical? Obviously not, but how do you distinguish between fictional and historical narratives? Almost all prose narratives move chronologically through successive events, speak through a narrator and refer to the past. The difference between fictional and historical narratives lies in the referent as perceived by the author (Thompson 1991: 207):

> The referent of historiography lies within *a world of the past understood as true and real, and as probable in terms of evidence.* The referent of fictional literature, on the other hand, lies within a *conceptual realm, understood as valid and possible, in terms of the author's own making.*

Unfortunately the intention of biblical authors are not all that clear and explicit, and the high percentage of multiple authorship in the OT makes matters even worse.

The adoption of the well known definition by Huizinga (1963: 1): "History is the intellectual form in which a civilization renders account to its self of its past", tends to fictionalize prose narratives or at least redefine history and historiography. History now becomes the answer to questions such as "how do you explain the perception of past events?" or "what was perceived to happen?", and history is now not restricted to the traditional historiographical question "what did actually happen?" (Frykenberg 1996: 36–37). This allows us to ask: how do African perceptions of past events impact on our historical understanding and theological interpretation of the OT?

The term "salvation history" has been very popular amongst members of the "biblical theology movement". Salvation history must epitomize aspects of ancient Israel's view of the past ("what was perceived to happen?") and not be seen as an ontological statement about history itself! Strong traces of a theologically motivated reflection of past events can indeed be found in numerous biblical narratives. Although the term "salvation history" might reflect something of the reflection of Israel of past events, it does not prove that Israelites had a unique understanding of history, since the idea of historical events as divine actions was common in the ancient Near East (Albrektson 1967: 14).

Research on biblical words for "time" does not yield a uniquely different doctrine or definition of time in which one can clearly distinguish Hebrew or Semitic and Greek or Hellenistic modes of thought—contra O. Cullmann (1948) and T. Boman (1954). Supposed differences between "time as event" and "time as duration", the biblical concept of time as linear and concrete in contrast to the Greek concept as cyclic and abstract, has been convincingly disproved by James Barr (1962).

On the one hand the stereotyping of the Ancient Near Eastern understanding of time as being cyclic has been discredited, since it has been proven that substantial portions of Ancient Near Eastern literature had a linear understanding of the progression of time (Thompson 1991: 210). On the other hand the stereotyping of biblical historiography as being linear from beginning to end, constitutes also a misrepresentation of Israelite historiography. There is an obvious cyclic pattern in the OT that involves the movement from apostasy to judgement to restoration (i.e. time of the judges), from desolation to deliverance etc.

There are numerous corresponding features concerning time common to both Israel and her neighbors. Month names were first taken from the Canaanites and later from the Babylonians. The Israelites did not refer to seconds, minutes or hours since these concepts were taken over at a later stage from the Greeks and Romans (De Vries 1990: 918).

The Masoretic text of the OT has no generic term for "time" and likewise no special terms for past, present and future as categories of time. The division of time into past, present and future is expressed in Hebrew in different ways (Coogan 1993: 744). One of the more interesting expressions is a spatial metaphor since, contrary to western usage, the past is what lies ahead and is therefore known; the future is unknown and lies behind (Prov 23:18; 24:14; Jer 29:11).

One of the most significant terms used in Hebrew for time is *'et* (296 x OT) which expresses a specific point in time (Ex 9:18; 2 Sam 11:1), and corresponds with the Greek *kairos* in the LXX and the New Testament (Pinnock 1989: 852). In contrast to the English concept of "time", *'et* does not refer to a duration of time but to some definite point in time or period of time. Duration or a period of time is expressed by *yôm* and *yamîm* (usually "day" or "days"); while *'ôlam* (440 x OT) indicates the remotest point in time but not quite equivalent to "eternity" in English (Jenni 1997: 953).

Conclusion

The future of theology in Africa will be forged in the crucible of its history, i.e. how do we understand ourselves in terms of our past (Ross 1997: 97). Identity can only have a future if it is rooted in the past. The past is relevant in so far as it elucidates the present.

Time is a structural feature of humankind's historical experience, which inevitably reflects the culture of its origin (van Zuylekom 1989: 93). African Christianity will have to grasp the opportunity to communicate their religious experience in a way that makes sense within their society, physical environment and religious or philosophical frame of reference.

There are obvious similarities (societal and democratic dimensions, wholeness of past-presence-future; spiral metaphor for time that includes cyclical and linear aspects) between the historical conceptualization in the OT and in many parts of Africa. These similarities should help to facilitate a theological discourse rooted in contextual exegesis that provides African readers of Scripture with a sense of who they are. Mbiti was correct that the African conceptualizations of time and space are closer to the biblical frame of reference than modern western interpretations of the Bible (Masolo 1994: 114–115).

African concepts of history and time do not amount to a "primitive mentality" that inevitably leads to a deficient reading of the Bible. On the contrary, modern study of the OT is in need of more readers that perceive and interpret Scripture as a response to African historicity!

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Taboos on Counting

Sammy Githuku

> But David's heart smote him after he had numbered the people. And David said to the Lord: "I have sinned greatly in what I have done. But now Lord, I pray Thee, take away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly." (2 Sam 24:10)

The narrative in 2 Sam 24:1–10 tells that David counts his fighting men, and then confesses the census as a sin. This is probably quite difficult to understand for the present generation. Today censuses are part of our economic planning. The counting of people in order to find out their numbers, age, sex, what they do to make a living, and often many other facts, is an imperative exercise for any government in order to manage its resources and effectively plan for the future.

However, the narrative may also serve to illustrate certain similarities between ancient biblical culture and traditional African culture. In most African cultures, it is a taboo to count human beings or domestic animals. Instead, different mathematical methods of asserting the total, other than a literal and explicit counting to establish the numerical total are used. With this background the following paragraphs will explore a possible explanation of the sin committed by David from an African reading of the text.

Let us first briefly examine the text. V. 1 lets the narrator tell us what led to David's action. God incited him. In v. 2 David commands his general Joab to number the people that he may know how many they are. Joab seems to be aware that this is wrong. He protests against the king's plan by figuratively asserting a non-numerical total in an attempt to avoid numbering the people: "May the Lord your God add to the people, a hundred times as many as they are while the eyes of my lord the king still see it; but why does my lord the king delight in this thing?" (v. 3). In

spite of his objection, the king's command prevailed. Joab obeyed it and carried out the exercise (v. 4). Verses 5–8 describe how Joab and the military officers under him carried out the census. After completing the exercise, Joab gave the total sum of the numbering of the people to the king (v. 9).

When David received the numbers, his "heart smote him". He became aware that he had sinned and immediately he confessed his sin to the Lord and asked for forgiveness (v.10). Despite his confession, David is punished for his action. Seventy thousand people die through pestilence (v. 15). The drama ends with David sacrificing for the expiation of his sin (v. 25).

This passage poses several problems. First, the parallel passage in 1 Chr 21 likewise presents the numbering of the people as a sin. It brought guilt to Israel (1 Chr 21:3). However, whereas the Samuel version lets the Lord be the one who incites David, the Chronicles version lets it be Satan. According to D. Gunn and D.N. Fewell, the narrator may have used the name of God as one who incited David as an irony to demonstrate the king's weakness (Gunn & Fewell 1993: 126). Still, David unfortunately failed the test, and whatever led David into committing this sin lies outside the whole drama.[1]

The second problem is that the text does not say what was wrong in carrying out the census. There are records of other censuses in the Old Testament where the organisers are not held guilty (see for example Num 1:22, 26:53; Exod 30:13–16). However, throughout this narrative about David's census, we are not told why God was angry with David. The prophet who is the spokesman of God is silent on the reason, too.

Thirdly, although David accepts the responsibility for his action, the punishment is not effected on him, but on the innocent subjects. David notices this injustice of God and complains about it: "Lo, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly, but these sheep, what have they done?" (2 Sam 24:17). Considering the information we find in the Old Testament, no satisfactory explanation has been given to these problems. It is imperative therefore that we seek for solutions elsewhere.

Let us now look at some of the traditional African ways of enumeration. They may help us come up with some suggestions on why David is held responsible and punished for this census. As pointed out above, according to many African cultures it is taboo to number human beings or domestic animals.[2] David's action would have been met by the same severity of punishment if he had been an African. One may wonder how any group of people may live without numerically counting to assert

the numerical total. Although many African societies do not count, they assert the total number of their population or animals. However, they have their own methods of asserting the totals. The following are some of the ways they go about it.

Among the Kikuyus, for example, it is taboo to assert the total of people or domestic animals by explicitly counting—one, two, three, four—in order to establish the total number (see Leakey 1977: 214). The Kikuyus believe that misfortune will befall the counted people or animals. They will fall sick or die. A good example is seen in how the Kikuyus count their clans. There are ten Kikuyu clans. In counting the number of the clans of the tribe, the Kikuyus will say: *mihiriga ni kenda muiyuru*, "there are nine-full clans", meaning there are ten clans of the Kikuyu (see Cagnolo 1933: 21). Through this formula, the total number is asserted without counting or mentioning it. The speaker is safe from the consequences of breaking the taboo. To assert the totals without counting, general adjectives are used to describe the total in diminishing manner: *no tutu, twi ho* (literal meaning: "just these few ones"), or *ciho* (literal meaning: "they are numerous"), but never mentioning the numerical total number. Questions like the following ones are never asked: "How many children do you have?"; "how many people are in this meeting?"; "how many goats have returned from the pastures?"

A similar belief is held among the Nuer of Sudan. They also do not count human beings or domestic animals. To avoid counting, they show the insignificance of the number. For example, having several children will be described as *deijiokni*, literally meaning "small children of a dog" or "puppies". This means that they are few and insignificant. Counting to assert their total number would be a threat to their life.

Among the Kipsigis, counting to establish the total is also a serious taboo. It is forbidden for people or for domestic animals. Like the Kikuyus they believe that the people or animals that are counted will die. The serious observance of this taboo is demonstrated in the avoidance of mentioning the number two for a mother who has given birth to twins. For a woman who has given birth to one child they will say *kogesich lakwet*, literally meaning that "she has given birth to one child". However, if a woman has given birth to twins, they will say *kogesich simotonik*, literally meaning "she has given birth to blessings". This way they are able to avoid the inevitable mentioning of the number two. The Kisiis also use the singular to describe twins as though they are one child, *omwana*. The Kikuyus use the adjective *mahatha*, literally meaning "two in one", to avoid the number two.

There are other common methods used in Africa to avoid literal numerical counting in order to assert the total. People are identified by names. Counting is done by identifying who is absent rather than by how many are present. The animals too are known by names, colour or marks. Counting is done by checking which mark or colour is missing. Relationship is also used to identify the missing person or animal, "the daughter of so and so", "the calf of so and so".

One common thing with this taboo among different African cultures is that it is the counted people or animals that die. Domestic animals are the most vulnerable. They may be counted without the owner knowing. To solve this problem, lending of animals among relatives, friends and neighbours is practised. If a person is impressed by a large number of domestic animals of another person and is tempted to count to assert the total, the arithmetic will be wrong and hence the animals will be out danger.

We have observed that in African culture, counting to establish the numerical value is prohibited. It is a taboo whose violation is death to the animals or the people counted, according to African belief. Let us now consider why David's action is punishable in the African culture.

The Old Testament tells that when a census is carried out, a levy is charged on those counted to protect them from plagues (see Exod 30:11).[3] M. Noth describes this levy as an "atonement of life" (1962: 236). According to Josephus, David desired to know the number of the people but forgot the law of Moses (see his *Antiquitates Judaicae* vii:318f.). He did not charge this levy and hence the anger of the Lord came over him. David violated the taboo by having the people counted and disobeying the set law, and hence seventy thousand of the counted people died.

What lies behind this taboo? One reason why Africans do not count is to avoid self-glory. Counting a large numerical value may undermine the individual's humility, dependence on other members of the community and, ultimately, on God. In the Kikuyu culture, if a man's herd increases to one hundred cows, he is required to slaughter a bull to be eaten by his relatives and other members of the community before he is allowed to drink any milk (see Cagnolo 1933: 186). If he fails to do this and drinks milk, he has broken a taboo, and his animals will die. This is not only a gesture of kindness, but also a means by which conceit and jealousy from other members of the community is suppressed. This taboo therefore aims at controlling pride and self-exaltation because of the large numbers. David's sin probably lies here. He took pride in large

numbers. This was interpreted as reliance on his large national population rather than on God. According to G. Robinson, David's action was sinful because it was seen as a reliance on human might rather than God. Robinson bases his argument on the fact that David seems to have carried out the census for military or tax purposes (1993: 283).

We have noted above that it is the counted people or animals that die, both in the Old Testament and traditional African culture. They are to die, as they are the source of the illegitimate pride. To deal with this sin, the cause is removed. In David's census, seventy thousand people died. The Luos have a superb way of avoiding counting large numbers that might result in self-pride. In their language, a large herd of cattle is referred to as *dhuang*, literally meaning "one" instead of *dhok,* which means "many". Joab should have said to David, "You have *dhuang* man" ("You have one man"), meaning that he had a populous nation. The large numerical figures of the people must have made David boast of numbers.

In conclusion, the African taboo prohibiting counting is not meant to hold the African against mathematical computation. It is a religious norm guarding the individual and the community against self-importance and egoism and instead, enhance humility of the individual amongst the community and God. This was David's sin.

Notes

1 For a broader background, see W. Brueggemann's discussion of the hiddenness of Yahweh, 1997: 333–358.

2 It is a taboo to count human beings and domestic animals numerically to get the total among the Masai, the Luo, the Kisii, the Akamba, the Hutus, to mention a few.

3 The Old Testament is silent on whether it was a taboo to count domestic animals. However, David refers to the suffering people as "These are but sheep" (2 Sam 24:17), and it is therefore probable that it was also a taboo to count domestic animals.

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What's in a Name?
African Versus Old Testament Nomenclature

Jonathan Gichaara

The purpose of this essay is to engage in a comparative study between the significance of names or name giving in the Meru African heritage and in the Old Testament (OT). By way of methodology, I will use past tense when presenting our two cases. This is not because these practices are no more or that the communities in question have become extinct. The reason is that these two communities have, with the passage of time, undergone drastic changes.

Name and existence

The custom of *Guciita Ritwa* (name giving) is rooted in the cosmogonic myths of all African communities. The African person, it is believed, is a creation of the Maker's handiwork alongside the rest of creation. The fact that one is connected with cosmos determines one's personality and social rank. It is at this point that the whole idea of name and name giving comes in. For the Meru community in giving a child a particularly chosen name, a name that links the child with the environment, they are *ipso facto* "enacting the existence of the child" (Imunde 1984: 14). The Africans in this very practice of name giving are establishing a relation between the name (label) and the object (the child). Name giving for the Africans, generally and among the Meru in particular, takes the form of a ritual act. In it the child to be named is at once distinguished and identified as an individual apart from other human beings, while at the same time being united with the wider corporate body of which he/she is an integral component (Imunde 1984: 14). Thus name-giving becomes a

construct in mediating the philosophical axiom that "to be is to be known" (Wiredu 1982: 124 ff).

Similarly, in OT thought, the name is inextricably bound up with existence. Nothing exists unless it has a name. Hence the act of creation is not complete until all creatures have received a name (Gen 2:18–23). Naming is part of creation dynamics. It is not a mere label of identification, but an expression of the essential nature of the bearer of the name (Abba 1962: 501). In the Meru-African cosmology and in the OT, personal existence was regarded as continuing posthumously through the name that is perpetuated by one's descendants. The Meru, like the Jews, believed in "life after life". One's personal immortality did not mean the end of life. One was said to have "slept" with the ancestors. Therefore the Hebrews and the Africans hated the idea of one dying without begetting children who were expected to perpetuate one's name. The Meru had a name for one dying without children. He/she was called *Muumbi*, something invoking the image of a 'dry tree'. The Meru always sought to marry and to bear children so that one's name would be perpetuated.

Name and personality

In the cultural heritage of the Meru people, the name given to a child was tied to the personality and identity of the child's namesake (*Ntakuu* or *Ritwa-we*). The name of a person in the Meru cultural economy was a synonym for values and morals the namesake upheld. The name of the individual in this community could best be described as a mirror image of the character traits of the child's namesake. Thus if one misbehaved or went against the accepted norms of the community, he/she would be chided *Menyeera Ritwa*, meaning "take care of the name by which you are known". One's name in this sense was as it were a "loan" from the namesake.

Unlike in the OT, where the name expresses the ontological essence of the personality so named, in the Meru cultural milieu, newborn babies took the name that was descriptive of the character, behavior, personality or attributes of the baby's namesake. For example *Mwiti* stood for a person who traveled much; *Mugambi* stood for a person seasoned in the art of oration, arbitration, even-handedness, soundness in judgement and eloquence. This was a respected personality in the council of elders. *Mwini* stood for a woman who was good at singing and who often led

other women-folk in traditional songs and dances. *Gacheri* and *Nkatha* (*Nkirote*) stood for a hardworking and a virtuous woman, respectively. Sometimes the name given to a child would be reflective of the namesakes age-set. Thus *Mbaine, Gichunge, Kubai* are names of the first age-set of the Meru people when they came from the mythical Mbwaa (Benardi 1959: 56–62).

Animal names were given to symbolize that the child born before the one named had either been stillborn or had died in infancy. Hence names like *Irai/Iruki* (monkey) for boys or *Kalai* (diminutive for monkey) given to girls are common. Other such names that are common include *Kathia* (deer), *Mbogo* (Buffalo), *Mbiti* (hyena) or *Mari* (beast). The idea here was to ward off death by giving a baby a beastly name! If the child was to be named after a person who had died, this was in itself a way of "resurrecting" the dead person. In such a case the child was called *Muriuki*—meaning that the child's namesake has symbolically come alive through the child. Imunde (1984: 16) helpfully observes that:

> By being named after someone who himself/herself had been called after an ancestor somewhere along the family line, the baby was *ipso facto* inextricably linked to the dead, living and by virtue of being a connecting link along this line, those not yet born [...].

Thus the young person was always seen in this sense as a concrete representation of all his/her fore bearers.

In the Meru worldview, the name one acquired as a baby was not the name one used for life. The childhood name gave way to an adulthood name during initiation. The ritual of circumcision was at this stage very important (Gichaara 1999: 1ff.). The name chosen for this class of "babies", for that is what these ritual neophytes were, was not this time chosen by a would-be-namesake (*Ntakuu*). This time around, the candidate's biological father if a boy, or biological mother if a girl, was the one consulted by the candidate's ritual father or mother *(mugwati* or *mutiiri*) as the case may be (Rukunga 1993: 19). The names so chosen would be reflective of the biological parent's inborn qualities, their achievements, social standing or the parents' age-set. A medicine man, for example, may choose to call his initiate son *M'mugaa (*medicine man). *M'imathiu* on the other hand, was in reference to a father who had a lot of cattle. *Mathiu* is a euphemism for herds of cattle. The prefix *M'* denoted the name of a man who had gone through traditional rite of circumcision into adulthood. Among the women, a prefix *Cia* or *Cio*

was used before their ritual adulthood name. For example, a mother might want to call her daughter *Cia-baikiao. Kiao* denoted a kindly and generous person.

Following the discussion outlined above, there are points of similarities and differences between name giving as practiced by the Meru vis-a-vis the OT practice. In the OT the name of a person sought to emphasize the innermost being or the essence of the personality bearing the name (Abba 1962: 500). Among the Ameru, the name sought to emphasize the essential characteristics, qualities or attributes of the namesake of the baby or biological parent during the adulthood initiation ceremonies. In Gen 27:36, Esau says of his unscrupulous brother,

> Is he not rightly called Jacob? For he has supplanted me these two times.

And in 1 Sam 25:25, Abigail makes excuse for her husband saying,

> As his name, so is he: *Nabal* (Fool) is his name, and folly is with him.

Again, in the OT a change of name accompanied a change of character. This is clearly seen in the change of the patriarch's name from Jacob to Israel. This indicated a change in the personality of the person so concerned (Gen 32:28). This is dissimilar to the Meru practice where the name was in a sense a "loan" from one's namesake and therefore one had to (*Ku-menyeera Ritwa*) take care of the name.

From the foregoing discussion, it is obvious that the name of a person was much more than a label. It stood for the character qualities of either the bearer of the name or the giver of the name as the case may be.

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Using the Kamba Culture to Interpret Old Testament Covenants

Joseph Muutuki

A lecture I held in a local area in Kenya earlier this year was all I needed for my fears to be confirmed. The lecture was on covenant blessings in the church today. Since my audience was Kamba, I needed to use the correct Kamba word for covenant. The closest word is *muma.* However, I was faced with a problem. This word was commonly used and publicized by the Kenyan Mau Mau freedom fighters. They covenanted to keep whatever information they shared. In the church, the word is considered heathen and has been replaced by a more moderate word, *utianio.* The purpose of this short paper is to point out that the Kamba word for covenant, *muma,* is the correct one and not *utianio.*

It is a well-established fact today that the Hebrew word *bᵉrith,* translated "covenant" in the English bibles, has a heathen background. The Hebrew people were not the originators of covenant treaties. As far back as in the early 1950s, G. Mendenhall found similarities in covenant making between the God of Israel and the suzerainty type of international treaty covenants in the Ancient Near East (1954: 50–75). These similarities can be found in documents, ceremonies of ratification, and in the modes of ratification. Later on the notable Old Testament scholar J. Bright noted the existence of the suzerainty treaties between the Great King and his vassals during the Hittite empire of the 18th century BC (1981: 151). Such treaties were not used among the Hittites only, but were representative of the Ancient Near East in the second millennium BC. G. Berry (1999) explains that, "[...] the etymological force of the Hebrew *bᵉrith* is not entirely certain. It is probable that the word is the same as the Assyrian *biritu,* which has the common meaning, 'fetter', but which also means 'covenant'." Therefore, the historical idea

of covenant is that which binds together the parties. According to Berry, the word "[...] *b'rith* had an ordinary use when both parties were men, and a distinctly religious use between God and men. It is only later that the religious use came from the ordinary, in harmony with the general custom of the time."

Therefore, I would like to propose that the etymology of the word "covenant" is not exclusively biblical or religious in origin. As pointed out by Berry, it can be argued that the origin of biblical covenant is heathen and pagan. The reason lies in the premise that the Hittites and the Assyrians were considered heathen, and excluded from the covenant of Israel. This being the case, as I am led to believe, the Kamba word for covenant, *muma*, which was traditionally used for covenant making (Penwill 1951: 65), can as well be given a religious meaning today.

The word *muma* has been a key word used in covenant making among the Kamba people of Kenya. Another word that is used, although it has a negative connotation, is *kithitu* (Somba 1979: 26). The Kamba people always entered into covenant relationships and swore to an oath called either *kithitu* or *muma.* This was done in a ceremony whereby each person swore never to go against the wishes of the others. After a formal covenant was made, the parties involved considered themselves as one. The colonial government of Kenya during the Mau Mau period recognized this fact. A group of Kamba people would go to war and swear to an oath called *kithitu.* According to D.J. Penwill, "[...] the people swore to become one in the task before them, allowing no clan or *utui* differences to divide them, and to stand by one another in the battle before them" (1951: 66). In order to make the Kamba covenant binding, a specialist who slaughtered an animal and cut it into pieces prepared the oath. Penwill's explanation is valid since in order to prepare the oath a bull was slaughtered and a piece of meat was cut from each portion of the carcass. The heart and the tongue were especially important portions. These pieces were put inside the stomach bladder into which blood was poured and the animal's neck bone inserted as a stopper. It is remarkable to note that the main elements involved in covenant making among the Hittites or between God and the Israelites are present here. Among the Kamba, an animal had to die and blood was shed, before the people entered into a solemn compact, which was known as the *muma* oath (Penwill 1951: 66). It is my contention, therefore, that the Kamba people had a very elaborate way of making covenants, and that these need to be re-examined with the goal of contextualizing the whole covenant

theology so that the Kamba people can understand it (cf. Holter 2000: 52–55).

A Kamba person knew that there was a supernatural power at work when making a covenant, especially because of the elements used and the words spoken. The Kamba people did not question this power, the power was just there. Mbiti (1969: 22) rightly observes that "[...] the belief behind the oaths is that God, or some power higher than the individual man will punish the person who breaks the requirements of the oath or covenant." In other words, even when the Kamba were not a people of the covenant in the biblical sense, it can be argued that they believed that the power to enforce an oath lay with God. The biblical understanding of covenant was that whenever God made a covenant in Scripture he would make a promise. The promise was given in the form of a covenant as in Gen 15. When this promise was given, the status of the covenant took on the force of a sworn oath (Tucker 1965: 487). As among the Kamba, when Abraham asked God for some assurances of how the covenant would come true, God responded with an oath. God swore to uphold the promise eternally; cf. Gen 12:1–2, 13:14–17, 15:18. God did so by a self-maledictory oath which was symbolized by the slaying of animals; cf. Gen 15:9 ff. The Kamba people always knew that the *muma* oath was a binding force in covenant making. If a person broke the oath of a covenant, he died within a year, followed by his wife and lastly the children until everybody in that family was dead (Somba 1979: 26). Therefore, a person who participated in the covenantal meals would not want to go against the wishes of others. It was known among the Kamba people that once a clan or *utui* entered into an oath or covenant it reduced crime, adultery and injustice in their communities.

The early translators of the Kamba Bible did not know the word *muma*, or they ignored its use. In an effort to purge incorrect language from the Bible, the Kamba word that was instead used to translate "covenant" was *utianio*. This is usually the same word used by a Kamba person when parting company with another. As one might guess by now, the relevance (cf. Bosman 1999: 1–2) of *muma* as an important theme that could have been explored came to naught. Thus, the verb meaning, "to agree", *kutiania*, is used when one says, "I will see you tomorrow". As one can tell, there is no binding effect to the two parting company. One may or may not see each other. Even if one does not see the other, nothing bad would happen to the one who does not keep the promise. The only Kamba word that was believed to have a binding effect was *utiiwa*, "inheritance". When the father of a homestead was about to die,

he called his sons and gave his older son *utiiwa.* Whether or not an animal was killed to seal the whole promise can be debated. The one very important element involved in covenant making was that the parties involved were bound together to keep their promises by the shed blood (Robertson 1980: 4). In Scripture, when God entered into a covenant with a person, it became a serious relationship that involved life and death; the animal died to symbolize the seriousness.

Similarly, among the Kamba people, the effectiveness of *muma* was in the shed blood. How then shall the Kamba people understand prophecies like that of Is 42:6, "I, the Lord have called you in righteousness, I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles." In this reference, the person mentioned functions as a covenant.

The covenant made in Is 42:1–9 is obviously unusual. My purpose here is not to discuss who the servant/person is at this point but to raise an issue that will need some further discussions. Since in covenant making blood had to be shed, as we have seen, how is Is 42:6 to be understood? My contention here is that the covenant in Isaiah is an important one for the Kamba people if they are to accept this prophetic word as the word of God for them. The person mentioned in the passage becomes the bond. T. McComiskey (1980: 90) makes an interesting observation regarding Is 42:6 by saying that, "[...] the covenant in view here is best understood as the promise-oath, which is called a covenant in Gen 15:18."

Is it possible that the terms of that promise are mentioned in the Isaiah passage? Or could it be that the servant functions as a covenant in this passage? Could God's promises be fulfilled in the nation of Israel? Is 42:6 seems to indicate that the servant is the instrument that assures the inclusion of Gentiles in the promises of God. In our case, the Kamba people need to know how they become part of the promise made. I would like to point out here that since a Kamba person understands the implications involved in a *muma* oath, a Kamba would also accept any form of a covenant that has been made. A Kamba simply knows that there are consequences involved in covenant making, and there is always a fulfillment of a covenant made. Equally, God is seeking to enter into a covenant relationship with the Kamba people. The message that needs to be made known to the Kamba people is that the biblical covenant is like the *muma,* that it has relevance in their culture, and that it is not a foreign message as they have been made to believe.

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Using the Old Testament to Interpret Africa

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Wisdom and Wisdom Converge: Selected Old Testament and Northern Sotho Proverbs

Madipoane Masenya (ngwana' Mphahlele)

I have been given the topic "Old Testament Proverbs: A key into the African culture", and this topic presupposes that there is a relationship of some sort between the Old Testament (OT) and Africa. Indeed, many studies in the past (cf. Burden 1982; Dickson 1981; Masenya 1989; 1996) have shown that there are resemblances between the OT and Africa. However, it can be argued that it is easier to grapple with the question of the apparent similarities between the OT and Africa than to handle the question of why there are similarities between the two.

I find this topic to be too broad, and I will therefore delimit it for the purposes of the present paper. Although it must be acknowledged with Mbon (1987: 9) that there are similarities in worldviews between various African tribes, for fear of making generalisations on Africa that are too broad, this paper will focus on a select group, the Northern Sotho people of South Africa. The initial topic is therefore reformulated as follows: Wisdom and wisdom converge: selected OT and Northern Sotho proverbs.

In trying to unlock the reality of the African (Northern Sotho) culture through OT proverbs, we might benefit by asking ourselves the following questions:

- Are there similarities between the two apparently different cultures?
- Can statements from one culture when uttered by members of another culture be understood and accepted equally (cf. Deist 1983: xi)?
- If such statements are understood and accepted by members of the recepient culture, can the latter incorporate these statements into their culture?

In light of these questions, the main enquiry of this paper could therefore

be phrased as follows: can the OT wisdom sayings (proverbs/aphorisms) on family relationships unlock the same reality with success in a Northern Sotho context? This question is not only a contextual question, it is a hermeneutical question dealing with communication across cultures.

Cross cultural communication

The concept of culture is important in contextualization. This concept acquires a variety of definitions depending on the discipline that defines it. Culture consists of explicit and implicit patterns of or for a particular behavioural pattern acquired or transmitted by symbols. Its essential core consists of traditional ideas and especially a system of values attached to them. These values are significant in the organisational function of culture (cf. Kraft 1979: 46). On the one hand, culture systems may be taken to be the products of action, and on the other, as elements which determine further action. Every individual is bound to a particular culture. Individuals find themselves conditioned to follow, conciously or unconciously, the demands of their own culture. Culture therefore organises one's thoughts (Kraft 1979: 46–47).

What is important in cross-cultural communications (cf. the exercise to be carried out in the present paper) is the cultural world-views of the people involved (Burden 1982: 74). World-view shapes a people's culture: "[...] the world-view may be seen as the organiser of the conceptual system taught to and employed by the members of that cultural sub-culture" (Kraft 1979: 53). Its five basic functions are explanation, evaluation, reinforcement, integration and adjustment (Deist 1983: 9; Kritzinger 1983: 13). Worth noting and relevant for the present discussion is the fact that world-view is the starting point for interpreting the OT in an African context. Burden's remarks are worthy of note: "What is important is not a common cultural milieu, or corresponding pivotal points, common customs or even a common belief in a Supreme Being, but rather common elements in their world-view, a relationship of spirit" (Burden 1982: 74).

The OT shares a common world-view with Africa: an optimistic, simplistic outlook on life. According to this world-view, there is an order arranged by God (for Israel) and the ancestors (for Africa), an order to which people must adhere. Those who fail to submit to its demands would be punished while those who adhere to it would be rewarded. A review of the OT and Northern Sotho proverbs dealing with family relationships (cf. in particular parent/child relationships) shows that these proverbs are

comparable on the basis of the following criteria, of which, for the purposes of this article, only the first and third will be discussed:

- Proverbs and world-view
- Proverbs as language
- Similarities in subject matter (cf. Masenya 1989)

Proverbs and world-view

This theme can further be sub-divided into two sub-themes: (i) world-view and the order in creation (optimistic outlook), and (ii) world-view and procreation (value of children). My point of departure is the common world-view of Israel and Africa (Northern Sotho people) because world-view is of great importance in any contextualisation of the OT in an African or any other context. As we have noted previously, a world-view of a culture organises that culture. It is, so to speak, its "central control box" (Kraft 1979: 53), and therefore it is basic to the criteria mentioned in the preceding paragraph. We now turn to the first sub-theme:

World-view and the order of creation: an optimistic outlook
The following proverbs from the the Hebrew and Northern Sotho cultures will serve as examples in this category:

בן חכם ישמח־אב ובן כסיל תוגת אמו	*More wo o babago o tšwa lešiteng.* (Rakoma 1983: 194)
"A wise son will make a glad father. But a foolish son is sorrow to his mother." (Prov 10:1, cf. also 23:24)	"Sour 'medicine' comes from a sour tree." Commentary: If a child is ill-behaved, it means that he/she learned such a behaviour from his/her parents for they are the ones who are supposed to train him/her in the right way. (Rakoma 1983: 194)

The above two proverbs reveal the optimistic world-view shared by both the Israelites and the Northern Sotho people. It is a world-view that is simple and uncritical. According to this simplistic outlook on reality, what a child or parent does, necessarily affects the other resulting in this: a foolish child, on the one hand, will cause sorrow to his/her parents, and a

wise child will cause them delight, whereas, on the other hand, the good or bad behaviour of a child comes from the wise or foolish approach of parents. In both the Northern Sotho and Hebrew cultures, there is slight room given for the possibility of the child being bad while his/her parents are good or a good/wise child who makes his/her parents sorrowful. The main reason one would argue, for both cultures to hold such an outlook on life, is their shared mentality of an order that was supposed to be satisfied by people in their daily lives. Both the Israelites and the Northern Sothos had the conviction that if it was not satisfied, an imbalance would be caused and that of necessity had to be balanced accordingly. Such a view, as we noted earlier on, reflects on the religiosity of both groups. In both cultures, children were thus expected to adhere to the order set by God or ancestors and therefore make their parents happy. If that was not the case, they could expect punishment.

World-view and procreation: the value of children
The following proverbs from the the Hebrew and Northern Sotho cultures will serve as examples in this category:

עטרת זקנים בני בנים ותפארת בנים אבותם	*O kgalemetše morwa Ngwato'a Šiko* *Mpheng wa robega, selepe se tlo šala.* (Rakoma 1983: 214)
"The crown of the aged are the grandchildren and the glory of the sons are their fathers." (Prov 17:6)	"Congratulations, son of Ngwato'a Šiko, if the handle is broken, the axe will remain." Commentary: To have a child is a blessing, for after the parents' death, it ensures their continuance (Rakoma 1983: 214)

The above two proverbs highlight the value placed on children in both cultures. Children are regarded as a blessing from Yahweh and the ancestors. As God's valued gifts, the Hebrews understood that they had to train the children in the fear of Yahweh (Prov 22:6). Just as with the Hebrews, the Northern Sothos value children basically because of their capacity to ensure the continuity of the line. The sons were particularly valued in this regard. It is interesting, in line with the patriarchal natures of both societies, to note how both proverbs (at least when read superficially, cf. particularly the Northern Sotho one with a tenor which is inclusive) highlight the role of the malefolk in this regard. In the OT

proverb/aphorism, the first line highlights the significance of having grandchildren. At face value, it appears to be inclusive. On reading the second stichos however, in line with the paralellism that characterises so many of the aphorisms in this collection, it will not be an exaggeration to assume that the aged and the grandchildren of the first stichos are male.

Even with the Northern Sotho proverb, though the tenor is inclusive, the vehicle is wrapped with male language. The one who is being congratulated for having children is a man. The question worth asking is: given the significant role women play not only as mothers of children, but as people who continue male lineages, why are they not included in these proverbs? Whithout taking this discussion too far, the point at issue in the present discussion is that both the Hebrew and the Northern Sotho people set great store in the value of children.

Similarities in subject matter

As we noted earlier on, proverbs from the Hebrew and Northern Sotho cultures are also comparable on the basis of thematic similarities. A study of the Hebrew and Northern Sotho proverbs on parent-child relationships in a family context reveals remarkable points of similarity between the two cultures in terms of themes.

The responsibility of parents: education
The following proverbs from the the Hebrew and Northern Sotho cultures will serve as examples in this category:

שמע בני מוסר אביך
ואל־תטש תורת אמך
כי לוית חן הם לראשך
וענקים לגרגרתיך

"Hear my son the chastening of your father and do not forsake teaching of your mother. For they are a garland to your head and necklaces for your neck." (Prov 1:8–9)

E kitimile kgale thamaga le mmala wa yona ke wo mokhunou. (Rakoma 1983: 129)

"It is long that a red ox has been running, its colour has even changed."

Commentary: A parent is honoured when s/he has brought the children to respect seniors in adherence to societal norms and values (Rakoma 1983: 129).

נצר בני מצות אביך
ואל־תטש תורת אמך
קשרם על־לבך תמיד
ענדם על־גרגרתך
בהתהלכך תנחה אתך
בשכבך תשמר עליך
והקיצות היא תשיחך

"My son, keep your father's commandment. And forsake not your mother's teaching. Bind them upon your neck always tie them about your neck. When you walk, they will lead you. When you lie down, they will watch over you; and when you awake, they will talk with you." (Prov 6:20–22)

Rutang bana ditaola le se ye natšo badimong. (Erasmus s.a.: 100, Rakoma 1983: 225)

"Teach your children (to use) divining bones and you must not take them (the bones) to the ancestors."

Commentary: Parents are supposed to provide their children with proper education (societal norms and values), then even after their death, their children will be able to survive. (Rakoma 1983: 225)

The above four proverbs have one commmon teaching: Hebrew and Northern Sotho parents had the responsibility of educating children according to their societal traditions so that they could be better adults. However, as can be expected from two different cultures, the presentation of the theme is different. The Hebrew proverbs are Yahweh-oriented (cf. particularly 1:8–9) which is said in the context of 1:7 which speaks about the fear of Yahweh. Therefore, the authoritative teaching of the father, his commandments and the law of the mother, had religious overtones. A child had to copy good ways from the father/mother who also had the aim of immitating Yahweh in their ways.

The responsibility of Hebrew parents to educate their children with their God-fearing wisdom makes more sense in the post-exilic milieu. Having tasted the punishment of God through the exile, basically because of their disobedience to the law of God, they were now more concious of the fact that as co-creators with God, they should teach their children the law of God, their norms and traditions. This makes even more sense as we consider with Camp (1985) that in the post-exilic period, the family gained importance as the locus of divine revelation. She argues:

> The themes and organization of the book of Proverbs thus reflect and support the renewed recognition accorded to the importance of the family in the kingless sociological configuration of the exilic and post-exilic period (Camp 1985: 253).

It is no wonder that family relationships and the position of women in the family are some of the main subjects of focus in the Book of Proverbs.

The Northern Sotho proverbs on the other hand, are devoid of God. According to Hambrock (1981: 116) God is so far away among the Pedi that they cannot approach him directly through prayer. The ancestors (*badimo*, cf. the second proverb) instead, serve as intermediaries for the high God (*Modimo*). This accounts for the reason why the Northern Sotho proverbs rarely mention *Modimo*. Both parents, as with the Hebrew ones, had the responsibility to instruct their children on societal norms and values, not basically for the ancestors (cf. the Yahweh-orientedness of the OT proverbs), but to be good members of society. Such good members would lead better future lives and also cater for the needs of their old aged parents. However, it can also be argued that due to the Northern Sotho holistic outlook on life, this submission to the norms and values of society was ultimately done to satisfy the ancestors (cf. the order set by the ancestors).

Another difference between the presentation of the theme of parents' responsibility to educate their children is that the Hebrew proverbs foreground the children while the Northern Sotho ones put emphasis on the parent. Such differences between these two cultures show that even though there are apparent similaraties between the cultures, they remain different unique cultures.

The four proverbs above have a common lesson to teach: parents should educate their children according to accepted social precepts in order for them to be good adults in the future. A study of the Hebrew and Northern Sotho proverbs reveals that it was not only parents who had a responsibility in the family relationships: children as well, had a role to play.

The responsibility of children: respectful behaviour

The following proverbs from the the Hebrew and Northern Sotho cultures will serve as examples in this category:

בן חכם מוסר אב ולץ לא־שמע גערה	*Ngwana magana-go-botšwa o wetše dikomeng a re dikoma ke tšešo.* (Ziervogel & Mokgokong 1975: 890)
"A wise son [hears] the instruction of the father. But a scoffer does not listen to rebuke." (Prov 13:1)	"A child who refuses to listen to instruction landed at initiation schools and said: initiation schools belong to my family." Commentary: A child who refuses to heed the advice of his/her elders will land in trouble (Ziervogel & Mokgokong 1975: 890).

Each party in the Hebrew and Northern Sotho families had a role to play. The main responsibility of children depicted in the above proverbs was to submit absolutely to the authority of their parents. The latter did not include only their blood parents, but all members of the senior generation. This was the case because of the corporal mentality shared by both societies. In both cultures, an individual was a member of the community. He/she could never stand on his/her own. He/she always understood him/herself as part and parcel of the community (Burden 1982: 77). Children who were respectful were held in esteem. They could be praised, and given gifts, receive Yahweh's blessings (according to the Hebrew world-view). Disobedient children on the other hand, children who according to these proverbs were characterised by, among others, unteachability, were held in disrespect. They would not escape the punishment to compensate for the imbalance they would have caused by their unbecoming actions. The OT proverb under discussion does not mention punishment, it can however be inferred from other proverbs dealing with the same theme that punishment would be exacted.

Wife-husband relationships in the family

What about the relationships between husbands and wives in the family in the Book of Proverbs? In order to get a glimpse of these relationships as they are revealed in some of the proverbs, we might benefit by taking a brief look at images of women in the Book of Proverbs. It is worthy to note that even though these images are about women, they are not penned by women themselves, but by men!

Earlier on, we noted that the family regained power as the locus of divine revelation in the post-exilic period. With the family as the point of

focus, it becomes reasonable that the book (which was written by males and is therefore male-oriented) would have emphasised the need for good rather than bad wives. Good wives would obviously contribute to the proper management of the family and also enhance their husbands' status (Prov 31:23). The emphasis placed on the need to get a good wife is revealed in what others have called the Book's envelope/coda (McCreesh 1985, Whybray 1994): chs. 1–9 (cf. the warnings against a strange woman) and ch. 31 (cf. the words of Lemuel's mother and in particular, a poem about the Woman of Worth).

According to Bird (1974: 57), in the Book of Proverbs, the wife is depicted in a more varied and ambivalent light. The "good" wife, a "woman of quality", is described as the crown of her husband (literally: "master") and she is contrasted with the wife "who brings shame", that is, the one who degrades rather than enhances the reputation of her husband (12:4). She is also described as prudent (19:14) and gracious (11:16), with honour as her gain (11:16). Such a wife is deemed God's gift (cf. also Swidler 1979: 124).

Wives are not only viewed in a positive light, there are negative images of women in this book too. Bird (1974: 58) argues that a bad wife is identified basically in terms of a single trait-contentiousness. The contentious woman is likened to a "continual dripping on a rainy day" (19:13). It is better to live in a desert land or in the attic than to share a house with her (21:9.19, 25:24, so Swidler 1979: 127). The bad wife is described as "one who causes shame" (12:4), who disgraces not only herself but her husband. The latter point according to Bird, is the main point of admonition.

From the preceding information, one is tempted to imply that a Hebrew view of a good wife was that of the one who acted in silence and subordination: the one who would not challenge her husband's views because doing that would probably have qualified her as being contentious and thus as being bad. It is a pity that the picture of women given in the Book of Proverbs is from a male point of view. Fontaine (1992: 142) is right when she argues that in this book the positive and negative roles of women are viewed basically from the viewpoint of what they provide for the men involved. She holds that: "[...] the male authors and collectors made their view of women felt by what they chose to include and leave out" (1992: 150). It can be argued that if women had had an opportunity to share in the writing of the book, we would probably have had a different picture of a woman. For example, what men describe as contentiousness might be viewed differently by women.

In the same way, women are portrayed both positively and negatively in the Northern Sotho proverbs. A good wife is characterised by, among others, diligence, submissiveness, and fidelity. All these are facts revealing that her significance is basically determined by what she has to offer to her husband. The following proverbs will bring this fact to light:

- *Mosadi ke tšhwene o lewa mabogo.* "A woman is a baboon, her hands are eaten." Its underlying meaning: The beauty and delight that a woman can cause is shown by her diligence in fulfilling her domestic duties and also taking care of her husband (Rakoma 1983: 856).
- *Monna ke peu ga a swarwe manenolo.* "A man is a seed, punishment must fit the crime." A woman should honour her husband (Ziervogel & Mokgokong 1975: 856).
- *Motho ga se more ga o fehlwe.* "A human being is not a tree, s/he does not get spoiled." The tenor of this proverb is that a wife should stop complaining when her husband visits concubines, she must bear in mind that when he comes back to her, he will find her still intact for she cannot be eaten up (by moths) as she is not a tree.

From these proverbs, we may conclude that a wife in the Northern Sotho culture has the responsibility to work hard for the family, take care of her husband and honour him (note resemblances with wives in the Hebrew culture). She is not expected to complain even if her husband's actions appear to be out of order (e.g. getting involved with concubines—the latter is acceptable as long as it is done by a man). Such complaints would probabably qualify her as being a contentious wife (cf. the kind of wife reflected in some of the Hebrew proverbs). It is interesting to note parallels with the Hebrew mentality regarding adultery. In Israel, extra-marital relations were considered sinful if they were committed by virgins and married women. According to Camp (1996), to her knowledge, Prov 5:15–18, which urges a young man to drink water from his own cistern, is the only text in the Hebrew Bible which urges men to monogamous sexuality. The fact that there are passages in Prov 1–9 warning young men against the attractions of an adulteress also bears witness to the observation that in Israel (cf. also in Africa), adultery caused concern if it was committed by a woman. One is tempted to ask the following questions: What about men who seduced women? What about married men who were unfaithful to their wives? Why, except for a few texts like Prov 5:15–18, do we not have many texts exhorting men to be faithful to their wives, particularly in view of the fact that the texts were basically written by men for male audiences?

Questioning the husband is deemed insubordination, and in the patriarchal Northern Sotho culture, such insubordination could be beaten out of her as is revealed in the following proverb:

- *Tšhwenegatšana o matepe, ge o bitšwa ke boroto o a gana.* "Female baboon you are proud, you do not respond if you are called by a male baboon." If a woman does not obey her husband, she is usually punished (Ziervogel & Mokgokong 1975: 1516).

The above material on images and expectations of wives (in relation to their husbands) in both the Hebrew and Northern Sotho cultures has revealed resemblances between these cultures, a fact revealing that the OT proverbs can unlock the reality of the African culture in terms of relationships between wives and husbands. In both cultures, there are negative and positive images about wives: good wives are characterised by the following qualities among others: hard work, being respectful, quietness and fidelity. Bad wives are "contentious", disrespectful, unfaithful and so forth. As we noted previously, in the Book of Proverbs (cf. also with the Northern Sotho proverbs) we are confronted with male talk about females from a male perspective. An example will suffice: man's definition of a "contentious" or "quarrelsome" (מדינים) wife (cf. Prov 21:9, 19:13) may not be similar to that of a woman. One of the problems with regard to a trait like this, particularly if it is a definition from the powerful opposite sex, is that we are not informed about the cause of the "quarrelling/nagging". A look at proverbs dealing with "contentious" women from both cultures might prove helpful:

טוב לשבת על־פנת־גג מאשת מדינים ובית חבר	*Mosadi o botse bokgarebe, a nyalwa le lešilo.* (Rakoma 1983: 184)
"It is better to live in a corner on the housetop than in a house shared with a contentious wife." (Prov 21:9)	"A woman is beautiful while she is still a virgin, once married she becomes a fool." Commentary: A woman is kind and gentle before marriage, after marriage, she becomes ill-mannered and brings trouble to her husband. The latter ultimately finds it necessary to divorce her as he begins to

realise that she married a fool (Rakoma 1983: 184).

טוב שבת בארץ־מדבר
מאשת מדונים וכעס

"It is better to live in a desert land than with a contentious and fretful wife." (Prov 21:19)

Mmetla mpheng wa kgadi a betle wo motelele gobane kgadi le ka moše' a noka e a lema. (Rakoma 1983: 184)

"The one who carves the handle of a hoe of a paternal sister must carve a long one because she hoes even at the other side of a river."

Commentary: If a boy has many sisters, he must learn to be patient because in future, as they get married, they will always have squabbles/quarrels in their family; he must be ready to come and help settle them (Rakoma 1983: 184).

One thing that the four proverbs have in common is this: in marriage, the source of trouble is always women due to their capacity to thrive through "quarrels". As quarrelsome partners, they make life difficult for the malefolk. As a result, the latter may feel justified to divorce them (cf. the tenor of the first Northern Sotho proverb) or to "separate" from them (cf. the OT proverbs). As can be expected in patriarchal cultures like the Hebrew and Northern Sotho ones, nothing is said about the cause of the "quarrels". Fontaine is right when she observes:

> While there are many proverbs about the misfortunes of living with a quarrelsome woman, there are no balancing sayings about the dreadful plight of being matched to an abusive, violent man. (1992: 150).

What is important it seems, is the need for a "good" wife who will make life comfortable for her husband. While there is nothing wrong in wives making the lives of their husbands comfortable, it becomes problematic if it appears that much is always expected from one of the parties in marriage. Such a state of affairs will obviously lead to an imbalance which will need to be balanced. The question worth asking is: How many of those who are benefitting from the status quo are willing to balance what needs to be balanced?

Conclusion

At the end of this short journey through the two different yet similar cultures, one may argue as follows: if the OT wisdom appears like a thick forest to those from the west, to Africans, it is more like a plain. If many of its myths, sagas, stories and its many other forms cannot easily make sense to the western mind, the African mind grasps these easily. This is because of the realism that traditional Africans experience as they interact with the OT, because it has the capacity to unlock the African reality. If present day Africans still find it difficult to be at home with the OT, they might need to watch out to see if they have not lost their Africanness in one way or the other.

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A Reflection on the Hagar Narratives in Genesis Through the Eyes of a Kenyan Woman

Constance Shisanya

Africans prefer reading the Old Testament to the New Testament due to the similarity between Jewish and African culture (Holter 1998: 242). African women's understanding of the Bible either makes them identify with its ideals and characters, thereby accepting their roles in the society as God-given, or to rebel against the texts that marginalise them as humanity's creation. The latter have joined other women interpreters of the Bible who intend to liberate the word of God (Russell 1985: 12).

Hermeneutical reflection on the relationship between the contexts of ancient text and contemporary readers enables appropriation of the biblical message to the contemporary situation. One example is African American women's reading of the Bible, which is influenced by their history and culture (Weems 1991: 59). Another example is African women's reading of the Bible, which is likewise influenced by our cultural beliefs and practices. To elaborate on this, the present paper attempts to re-read the two Genesis narratives about Hagar, by contextualizing them into the culture of the Abaluhya of Kenya.

Gen 16:1-16: The independent Hagar

The first Hagar narrative, Gen 16:1-16, tells how Hagar, the Egyptian slave-girl, was handed over to Abraham to conceive a child on behalf of her barren mistress Sarah (verses 1–3). The Abaluhya people interpret Sarah's barreness as her inability to procreate. Abaluhya men are never blamed for childlessness since close relatives secretly sire on behalf of sterile men. Women, on the other hand, are blamed for childlessness and have internalised these accusations to the extent that they equally blame

themselves. However, unlike Sarah who believed that God was responsible for her condition, Abaluhya women blame witchcraft, curses from relatives, breaking of taboos and failure to observe rites of passage. Consequently, they seek solutions like approaching indigenous healers and leaders of African Instituted Churches with healing powers. In some cases, women invite their younger sisters to procreate on their behalf like what Sarah did to Hagar. In other African communities, like the Abagusii and Akamba, woman to woman marriages are practised to enable childless women to get children of their own. Therefore, Sarah symbolizes African mothers full of desire for children. However, we would criticize the Abaluhya emphasis on the women's reproductive role—which renders childless women incomplete, and also places a preference on male children—which makes some women bear too many off-spring at the expense of their health.

Still, on the issue of children, Hagar was promised a son with many descendants and enemies (verses 10–16). Surprisingly, Hagar's child was to relate badly with his environment. Such a promise is contrary to the Abaluhya world-view where children, especially boys, are regarded as blessings. However, we would oppose the marginalization of girls who are denied equal opportunities with boys for education and inheritance of property. Unfortunately, the biblical narratives about children being hated and abandoned may lead some people to abuse and neglect their children. The father of Hagar's child is portrayed as a man of great faith, yet he slept with a concubine in search of a son. Like Abraham, some Abaluhya men engage in extra-marital and polygynous relationships in search of sons.

Barreness also refers to the lack of renumeration for Hagar's work, which corresponds to the economic deprivation of Abaluhya women by men. Some Abaluhya men use their wives as sexual objects since payment of bridewealth gives them complete control over a woman's sexuality (Shisanya 1996: 61). Yet, fathers and brothers are the beneficiaries of bridewealth but not women. Women also loose everything they worked hard to acquire in the event of divorce or demise of their spouses (Shisanya 1993: 286). Barrenness is further comparable to the failure of being morally and spiritually productive through life supporting actions. Although Sarah has been positively presented (Teubal 1993: 239), we posit that she disregarded humanity's value by keeping Hagar as a slave. Among the Abaluhya, a morally upright person rises above the state of barrenness to that of fulness in life by supporting the needy both materially and spiritually.

After conceiving, Hagar was proud, prompting Sarah to mistreat her until she fled (verses 4–6). Like Abaluhya women, Hagar was proud of carrying a child; still, she did not realize that she was being used. Sarah mistreated Hagar so as to retain Abraham's recognition in a patriarchal setting. Similar practices are evident in Africa, where women do not support each other and fight against their common problem of subjugation. For instance, in Kenya, Abaluhya women refused to vote for a female presidential candidate, Charity Ngilu, in 1997, because they had been socialised to believe that only men should lead. Besides, President Daniel Arap Moi had the advantage of advanced age that Abaluhya expect in a leader.

Hagar was abandoned by Abraham the way most Abaluhya men make women pregnant with promises of marriage only to abandon them. However, her fleeing makes us suspect that she had some independence in decision making. Such an independence is absent among Abaluhya women, who are expected to live under the authority of their fathers and brothers until they are handed over to their husbands in marriage. In case of problems, married women are not expected to go back to their natal homes unless the bridewealth is returned in full. Unfortunately, it is usually expended by the male receivers, thereby forcing women to stay in abusive marriages.

While in the desert, the angel of God commanded Hagar to go back to Sarah (verses 7–9). This is one of the painful experiences that show the religio-cultural struggles of blind obedience. Among the Abaluhya, widows are expected to keep vigil over their deceased spouses' bodies without taking time off to rest. Widows are threatened with supernatural punishment should they fail to perform their roles, although there is no logical reason for what is expected. The command to Hagar is usually quoted to women who threaten to disobey their cultural expectations. Consequently, they endure experiences like abusive marriages that sometimes lead to death. One wonders why God gave such a command that makes women suffer. Nevertheless, God's presence shows his support for the oppressed like the Abaluhya belief in spirits with profound influence on the living (Shisanya 1993: 177).

Gen 21:9-21: The dependent Hagar

The second Hagar narrative, Gen 21:9-21, tells how Sarah commands Abraham to chase Hagar and Ishmael so that Isaac could inherit

everything (verses 9–10). Here, Sarah makes decisions that destroy Hagar's life, by denying her basic needs. Among the Abaluhya the senior wife may make decisions with similar results, like delaying the harvesting.

Ishmael was chased so that Isaac alone could inherit property. The selection and promise of Isaac, a second born son, does not make sense to the Abaluhya who value seniority (Shisanya 1993: 130). According to the Abaluhya, Ishmael ought to have been given his share of inheritance before Isaac. The Abaluhya therefore fail to comprehend when the church gives leadership responsibilities to a second son, born by a married woman, instead of the first son, born out of wedlock, since they expect the first born to lead. Another striking aspect in the narrative is that inheritance is based on the mother's background alone. Among the Abaluhya, male children are totally incorporated into their fathers' families—irrespective of their mothers' backgrounds—through a hair shaving ritual. Thereafter the boys qualify to inherit land and other property. In the absence of marriage, this condition is not healthy, neither for mother nor for child, as they are separated when the baby still needs her/his mother. Unfortunately, most Abaluhya women are ignorant of the legal position that allows them to retain minors until the age of eighteen. Still, the practice assures the child of a home instead of facing the danger of being abandoned by its mother.

In verses 11–14, God tells Abraham to obey Sarah, and this leads to the departure of Hagar and Ishmael. We blame Abraham for having failed to make the right decision with regard to Sarah's request. Although the text exonorates his action as obedience to God, he should not have condoned the action. The fact that God was behind Abraham's decision makes us wonder whether the God of Abraham is a God of justice. Does he sanction the suffering of Abaluhya women the way he did in Hagar's situation? Sarah's decision divided her family, and it lead to an individualism that has also eventually penetrated African communities and resulted in less care for others. Surprisingly, Hagar is very dependant on Sarah's decisions unlike in the first narrative. Nevertheless, the same decision frees Hagar from her bondage of slavery and lack of choice of an intimate partner. She is, however, likely to face rejection in her community as a single mother like in the Abaluhya community where such women are buried behind banana plantations (Shisanya 1993: 138).

Conclusion

The two narratives about Hagar show injustice against Hagar. Still, Hagar's final liberty shows that God hates social domination in relationships and wants Abaluhya and other African men to value women as really human instead of humiliating them through painful cultural beliefs and practices.

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Jeremiah 22: Implications for the Exercise of Political Power in Africa

Bungishabaku Katho

The prophet Jeremiah lived during the last and most difficult days of his nation, Judah. His tasks consisted, among many others, of addressing the leaders of Judah by showing them that the cause of her decay as a nation was the abuse of power by those in leadership. That denunciatory tone towards the kings of Judah is particularly clear in chapter 22.[1] This paper is an attempt to analyse (i) the relationship between use and misuse of power/authority and the breakup of national life, according to Jer 22:1–9 and 13–23, and (ii) its implications for the exercise of political power in Africa.[2]

Jeremiah 22

Vv. 1–9: statement of principle

The first section, vv. 1–9, is a reminder of the standard by which the Israelite king is expected to rule (cf. Deut 17:14–20). In vv. 1–3 the king is reminded that he must make justice his primary responsibility. According to v. 4 the result of obedience will be a blessing of the dynasty, and in vv. 5 and 6 we read that the consequence of the disobedience of the king to establish justice will be judgement upon the monarchy in terms of a destruction of the city and her dynasty. V. 7 adds that Yahweh will be the principal actor of that destruction, and that enemies of Israel will be but simple instruments in the hand of God himself. In vv. 8 and 9 the prophet associates social injustice in Israel with idolatry. In other words, unless the leaders of Judah follow God's

law, they will not be able to rule justly and, as a consequence, God will put an end to the monarchy and he will also destroy Jerusalem.

Vv. 15b–16: the right use of power

The section vv. 15b–16 addresses King Jehoiakim. The prophet takes King Josiah as the model of a good leader which his son should have followed. Jeremiah briefly enumerates the elements that constitute the right leadership of Josiah: he ate and drunk, he did justice and righteousness, and he pleaded the cause of the poor and the needy.

The exact implication of the first two verbs (eat and drink) is difficult to understand. But I see a relationship between eating/drinking on the one side and doing justice on the other. To eat and drink represent the comfort of the king. When the comfort is exaggerated, it brings poverty and suffering upon the people, producing it for their king. In other words, the king's comfort does not come from a vacuum, it must be taken from somewhere: the common people. Malina (1986: 88) talks about the fact that goods are limited in the world. According to him, all goods in the world exist in finite quantities and there are no ways to increase one's available quantities apart from wielding power, behavior that always takes place at the expense of the other individuals or groups.

In v. 15b the prophet demonstrates that Josiah had enough food and drink (not too much), but that this did not affect the economic condition of the people of the land because he cared both for his palace (as a king) and for his subjects. The result of eating and drinking and, at the same time, doing justice and righteousness is that "it was well (it went well) with him" (v. 15). This is the fulfillment of the promise given in Jer 22:4.

In v. 16 the prophet again adds that "it was well". Craigie & al. (1991: 311) note that the lack of the prepositional phrase "to him" following "it was well", as in v. 15, indicates the broader scope for good. The implication might be that the whole nation enjoyed the good brought about by justice and righteousness of the king who feared Yahweh. At the end of v. 16, the prophet asks rhetorically: "Is not this to know me?" This is the central issue in the whole chapter, if not in the whole book of Jeremiah, or even the entire prophetic corpus. How well one knows Yahweh determines how one lives or, in the case of a king, how well he knows Yahweh determines how he leads his country. According to Jeremiah, helping the poor, the needy, doing justice, etc., is dependent on the king's relationship with Yahweh.

Vv. 13–23: the abuse of power

The passage starts with a "woe" (v. 13), which introduces a series of accusations against King Jehoiakim. There are in total three charges against him, all connected with the building project: he builds his house "by unrighteousness" and his upper room "without justice", and he makes his neighbours work for nothing or without paying them their wages.

In v. 14 the king is portrayed as saying: "I will build for myself [...]". The declaration shows the intention of the king. The project was not for any national interest but rather for a personal one, with a negative impact on the whole nation. It was a kind of private villa for the king. In this way he could have two or more villas like all the other Near Eastern monarchs of his day. Therefore, for Jehoiakim, to be a king meant among many other things to become very rich. And, having several palaces and enslaving his subjects, were some ways to show his wealth.

The climax of the accusation against king Jehoiakim begins in v. 15. The passage starts with a question: "Do you reign because you compete in cedar?" This question takes us back to the role of the Israelite king, especially to his use of power. Put in other words, Jehoiakim is asked: "why do you reign?", or "why are you a king?" And Jehoiakim's answer, according to the passage, is: "I reign because I have the best houses in Judah, I reign because I can force my subjects to work for me without any pay, I reign because I am the richest person in the nation, etc." This is probably how Jehoiakim and most of the evil kings of Israel and Judah understood the monarchy. The prophet then compares Jehoiakim with his father Josiah, the good king of Judah. The same question can be asked to the father: "Why do you reign, Josiah?" The answer would probably be: "I reign to do justice and righteousness, and to plead the cause of the poor and the needy." To reign for Josiah meant to serve Yahweh and his people, but for Jehoiakim it meant to serve himself and to be served by the people. Jeremiah declares in the second part of v. 16 that what Josiah did proves that he knew God. In other words, the deeds of each of the two kings were dependent on whether they knew God or not. Josiah knew God, and as a result, he used his power properly by defending the cause of the powerless. This was God's will for the covenant-king. But in v. 17 the prophet tells us that as a result of not knowing God, Jehoiakim had his eyes and heart on dishonest gain, on shedding innocent blood, and on oppression and extortion.

Jeremiah announces judgment on Jehoiakim and the whole nation. First, the king will not be mourned at his death (v. 18). Second, he will

have the burial of a donkey (v. 19). Third, in vv. 20–23 God has decided to break all the political allies of Jerusalem and leave her defenseless and vulnerable. Fourth, in v. 23, all the leaders of Israel will be lead away and the common people will be left groaning in their pain when the destruction will come, because of the sin of their leaders.

Power issues in Africa

Africa is in a state of grave crisis. The crisis is both political, economic and social. But so far there is no agreement about the strategies to solve the crisis. Africa has not yet reached any agreement concerning the most destructive causes of the crisis in the continent. My argument is that the real problem of Africa—as was the case in Judah during the time of the prophet Jeremiah—is the abuse of power or authority by African political leaders.

What we read from the book of Jeremiah is that Israel's social and political ordering was authorized by Yahweh's sovereignty through his law, and that it did not necessarily reflect the will of any particular political ruler. That is why God first gave the law and then sent prophets like Jeremiah, so that they might function as checks against idolatrous political practices in the Israelite society. In comparison with the African situation, there are at least three lessons we can learn from Israelite government as far as the exercise of political power is concerned. (i) The unifying and guiding element of any nation is law or constitution and not the governement itself. (ii) The law is not made by the king to fit his selfish ambitions, but it is given by God to guide the governement. In other words, the law is above the government. (iii) The law reflects the will of God in that it teaches both the fear of God and justice in the society.

From what precedes, we can argue that the root of the problem in our continent is twofold. First, African leaders have not yet understood the nature of their power/authority and, therefore, how to use it. Most of them think of themselves as possessing absolute and unchallenged power, they behave as if there is no law to control them. This is why, whenever African political leaders (at least the majority of them) come to power, they either change the constitution in order to fit it to their purpose or they suspend it and then rule by decrees.

The second problem with African leadership is human pride and the tendency to self-glorification. In Jer 22:13–23 we see that Jehoiakim

works for his own glorification and, by so doing, he takes God's glory and works against God's purposes. This is what I would like to call political idolatry, for which Jehoiakim is condemned.

The situation is not better in Africa. Kinoti (1994: 28) drives the point home when he writes that "[...] for many of our leaders to become a president or a king means more likely to become a demigod to whom every knee must bow and whose praises every tongue must sing." My argument is, therefore, that the history of African suffering and decay starts with the history of the death of God in Africa. God has been killed so that our leaders may take his seat. That is why we have too much of self-glorification and personality cult in African leadership.

It is the responsibility of the church to take this challenge. And this can be done in two ways: first, we must help the people not to misread history by thinking that abuse of power and any other failure in our society is an imperfection of human being and that the way to deal with it is only by education, multipartism, or democracy. Rather, the church must confront our leaders by showing them that any kind of abuse of power is rebellion against the One who is the source of all power. Moreover, the church must teach the people to learn to read historical events like the many civil wars, the endless flow of refugees in the continent, the utter poverty in most of our countries, etc., with an eye of faith, that is, as the act of God's judgement because of our sins and mostly because of the misuse of power by our political leaders. Second, there is a need to de-sacralize human power in Africa by presenting an alternative: the power of God.

Before concluding, I must caution against the danger of making exaggerated claims for the role of the church in Africa. The African church has not become the Kingdom of God, consequently, it will be wrong to think that the church must produce a state in which total *shalom* will reign. It seems to me that such a claim is pure utopia, as the word of God teaches us that total peace will come on earth only when the devil will be destroyed and when the Kingdom of God will come. As I think about Jeremiah, I realize that despite his powerful ministry, the kingdom of Judah did come to decay. The true role of the African church is not, therefore, to transform human kingdoms to the Kingdom of God but, as Bediako (1995: 11) sees it, "[...] the Christian church in Africa has the responsibility of raising Africans to consciousness." The church must help Africans to participate in the building of a better nation by practicing in daily lives what the word of God teaches them, by resisting all kinds of wickedness in any oppressive government, and by

understanding that they are responsible for the kind of government in power, because their destiny is linked to the kind of leadership they have accepted to rule over them. This must remain one of the priorities for the church of Christ in Africa.

Notes

1 Morgan (1931: 120) gives the title "False rulers" to the passage, probably referring to the abuse of power and authority of Judah. Eissfeldt (1965: 365) says that the passage gathers threats against the kings of Judah. Carroll (1986: 404) argues that "Jer 22:11–23:6 is designed to associate the royal leadership with the fall of Jerusalem in such manner that responsibility for disaster may be laid at the door of the royal house." Thompson (1980: 3) also recognizes that the theme of Jer 21:1–22:30 is judgment on the monarchy.

2 This paper is built on my M.Theol. thesis in OT studies, Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology, 1999; my tutor was Dr Tewoldemedhin Habtu.

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Interpreting the Book of Psalms in the Coptic Orthodox Church of Kenya

Pauline Otieno

St. Mark is considered to be the founder of the Coptic Church in Egypt in 61 AD.[1] The Coptic Church in Kenya was established in 1976 by Bishop Antonios Marcos. There are 12 churches countrywide with a total of about 8000 members.

Generally speaking, Coptic Orthodox Christianity is not well known in sub-Saharan Africa. Books on it are very rare indeed, if not non-existent in most parts of the continent. Therefore, many people, including scholars of religion, are unaware of its historical importance as the first African church and its great contribution to both African and world Christianity. They are also unaware of its wealth of tradition, its liturgy and theology, its survival, especially in predominantly Islamic Egypt where it has co-existed, albeit as a minority, and its determination to adapt itself to the contemporary scene. While discussing the role of the Bible in African Christianity, John S. Mbiti (1986: 14) writes on Coptic Christianity:

> It would be an enormous but exciting task to draw from this ancient strain of African Christianity, out of its riches of wisdom and experience [...].

This paper wants to respond to Mbiti's challenge by examining how the Coptic Church in Kenya interprets and uses the Old Testament (OT), and then in particular the Book of Psalms, in its various liturgies, ceremonies and feasts.

Let me first mention an important aspect of the hermeneutical tradition of the Coptic Church. Bishop Kallistos (1993: 767) raises the concern that most western biblical scholars have adopted an analytical

approach in the interpretation of the scriptures in which connecting links in the Bible are unraveled and the Bible is broken up into isolated units. The Coptic tradition, like other Orthodox traditions, prefers to use a "typological" rather than an analytical style of hermeneutics, whereby the Bible is read and interpreted as an integrated whole with Christ as the bond of union. The Coptic Church, therefore, interprets the OT in the light of the New Testament (NT) and vice-versa. An illustrative NT example of a typological interpretation is the rock that flowed with water in the wilderness in Sinai (Exod 17:6, Num 30:7–11), which is seen as a symbol of Christ (1 Cor 10:14). However it is important to note that not all "types" in the OT have parallels in the NT (*Orthodox Study Bible* 1993: 832).

Throughout the centuries, the Book of Psalms has nurtured the life and faith of the Copts, and the Coptic Church—also in its Kenyan version—uses the Psalter in three primary ways (cf. *Orthodox Study Bible* 1993: 635):

- In the daily cycle of prayers in which certain psalms are "fixed". There are psalms for morning prayers, evening prayers and prayers for the hours (*Agbeya*).[2]

	Morning Prayers	Evening Prayers
Sunday	Psalm 5	Psalm 70
Monday	Psalm 90	Psalm 143
Tuesday	Psalm 101	Psalm 141
Wednesday	Psalm 3	Psalm 130
Thursday	Psalm 63	Psalm 130
Friday	Psalm 103	Psalm 17
Saturday	Psalm 5	Psalm 51

- In the weekly order of the matins (morning) and vespers (evening) services. When these are done in their entirety all 150 Psalms are chanted in the course of the week.

- In the observance of the church year, particular psalms or verses are selected for special feasts, most being prophetic statements concerning the work of Christ for us. The Coptic Church draws a lot from this category.

Let us take a closer look at some aspects of these three ways of using the Psalter. First, the liturgical use: In ancient Israel, Ps 5 was the prayer of the priest preparing to offer sacrifice. This is followed up in the Coptic Church, where v. 7 is often prayed by the priest when he enters the church prior to his vesting for the Divine Liturgy. Ps 26:6 is prayed by the priest just after he has put on his vestments, as he washes his hands prior to the Divine Liturgy. Ps 34 is read to accompany the receiving of the Holy Communion with v. 8 seen as describing the act of receiving the Body and Blood of Christ. Ps 51 is a prayer recited by the priest as a sign of repentance while he censers before the Great Entrance (cf. *Liturgy of St. Basil*, 1991: 9).

Secondly, the feasts: Ps 27 is sung on the eve of the Epiphany (the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord Jesus Christ). During the Feast of the Ascension which comes 40 days after the Lord's resurrection, Ps 68:32–34 is read for Vespers, 68:18.19 for the Matins and 24:9.10 for the Liturgy. Pss 47 and 108 are also read during this period. Ps 112 is used during days of the Commemoration of the Saints. At the Feasts of the Saints, Ps 64:10 is used in the commemoration of St. John the Baptist, and all the martyrs, and it is a psalm of preservation for the oppressed. At the Feast of the Transfiguration of Christ, Ps 84 is read. This is a psalm of the longing for the presence of the Lord. During the Nativity of Christ, Ps 111 is used as a Christmas psalm.

Pss 45:9–17 and 132:11 are seen throughout the church as a reference to the Theotokos (The mother of God) and therefore these passages are sung on all The Feasts of St Mary. Ps 21 is a royal psalm and vv. 1–6.13 are used in the Divine Liturgy on the Feast of Pentecost on Sunday. It is understood by the church as the triumph of Christ in his ascension when the exalted Lord sends the Holy Spirit.

The Book of Psalms has been widely used during Palm Sunday, Passion Week and Easter services in the Coptic Orthodox Church. Ps 8 is used as a communion hymn on Lazarus on Saturday (the day before Palm Sunday) and it is also sung on Palm Sunday Matins. Jesus teaches that this prophecy (v. 2) is fulfilled by the children praising Him on Palm Sunday as He enters Jerusalem (Matt 21:15–16). Pss 22, 24, 31, 35, 38, 41, 55, 69, 102, 109 are read during the Week of Passion and Easter service. Ps 22 is the most explicit prophetic psalm of Christ's passion in the Psalter and is fulfilled in Christ's suffering and death. This psalm is used throughout the Matins, First Hour prayers and Vespers on Good Friday and also on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross. Ps 41 predicts Christ's betrayal by Judas. Ps 24:7–10 is proclaimed as the priest knocks

on the door of the church on Easter morning signaling the triumphant entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven through Christ's resurrection. Pss 66–68 are used as Paschal Psalms throughout the Easter services. Ps 68 speaks of Christ's resurrection. Verses 1–3 are sung throughout the Paschal season with the refrain, "Christ is risen from the dead".

Thirdly, the sacraments: Ps 12 is normally said in a marriage ceremony as the prayers for the preservation of the union between a husband and a wife. Ps 27 is a song for the newly baptized during the sacrament of Baptism while Ps 32 is a psalm of forgiveness sung when the newly baptized are brought up out of the water and given their white garments. It is the promise of sins being fully and utterly forgiven in Christ (vv. 1–7). In this connection it should be noted that the Coptic Church does not ordain women, nor are they allowed to participate in the Bible readings during worship. The church is a holy place, especially the inner sanctuary, so are also the instruments of the Eucharist. The officiating of the liturgy is the exclusive prerogative of holy people, whereas women are seen as ritually unclean during the time of menstruation, cf. Lev 15:19–30.

Fourthly, other uses of the Psalms: Ps 93 is a psalm of enthronement of God as King. It is sung every Saturday evening at Vespers to inaugurate the Lord's Day, proclaiming Christ as King and ruler over all. Sunday worship starts at sundown on Saturday with a service that Orthodox Christians consider of great importance. Pss 120–134 were sung in Israel as pilgrimage songs while the people came to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover. In the Coptic Church they are sung by the faithful every Wednesday and Friday during Lent as they make their pilgrimage to Easter with Christ the Passover.

In conclusion I would like to emphasise the need for further studies on the way the Coptic Church reads and interprets the OT. There is still a lot to be done. And, as Mbiti (1986:14) suggests, it will be an exciting task to draw from this branch of Christianity because of its rich traditions.

Notes

[1] The word "Copt" means literally Egyptian. It comes from the ancient Egyptian name "Hakuptah" and the Greek name "Aegyptus". Since the Arab conquest in 641 AD and until today, Copt refers to the Christian Egyptian.

[2] *Agbeya* is the Book of Hours which contains the seven canonical prayers and which have their roots in the Psalms.

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The Old Testament in the Nabii Christian Church of Kenya

Philomena Mwaura

To the African Instituted Churches (AIC), the Bible—the Old Testament (OT) as well as the New Testament (NT)—is of central importance and significance. The Bible constitutes the basis for doctrine and expression, speaking to the existential realities of the communities. Its authority is undisputed since it is regarded as the primary witness of God's revelation. However, it seems that the OT is more popular with the AICs. Its cultural milieu is consistent with that of the African people. The AICs readily appropriate the message of the OT to their life experiences and they have been credited with succeeding in indigenising Christianity in the African context.

This paper attempts to examine the understanding and use of the OT in the Nabii Christian Church of Kenya (NCCK), a charismatic church particularly emphasising healing practices. The paper will focus on how healing is understood in the church and how Ps 35 is being used in the healing services.

The origin and nature of the NCCK

The NCCK is one of several AICs in Kenya. These are churches that have emerged in Africa throughout a history of more than hundred years of interaction between western Christianity and African culture. Partly these churches have arisen as a result of secession from western founded missionary churches, but partly also from spontaneous initiative of charismatic African leaders.

The emergence of these churches is characterised by a number of sociological, theological, political, economic, cultural and other factors. These factors vary in concentration in any particular one of the churches. Nevertheless, there are a number of common key features of the AICs: their leadership and membership is indigenous African, the strong emphasis on the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the church, great emphasis on the authority of the Bible as God's word and as the yardstick of doctrine and morals, and the building of a community of faith patterned on the traditional African community structure of kinship.

The NCCK arose in western Kenya in 1983 after its founder, Petro Mavia, had a charismatic experience. Its membership comprises of people of all walks of life who flock to the church in search of healing in every aspect of life. The church's doctrine and church life center on the manifestation and working of the Holy Spirit through dreams, visions, prophecy and healing. Although they accept the centrality of Christ and his saving mission, there is evidence of great focus on the OT. This is quite evident in their healing beliefs and practices.

Healing in the NCCK

Healing plays a major part in the NCCK belief and practice. It takes place in churches and in the homes of the prophets. Healing is seen as part of the much wider need for salvific healing which finds its principle source in the word of God. Although the church does recognise the organic nature of illness, they subscribe to the OT belief that disease is a punishment from God due to sin or disobedience. It is also seen as the work of the devil (see Job 2:7).

Since in the OT, sickness and misfortune like early death or poverty (see Deut 28:6–16) were attributed to spiritual causes, healing is also a spiritual matter as supported by Yahweh's declaration "I am the Lord your healer" (Exod 15:26). The Bible, particularly the OT constantly implies that there is a strong correlation between sin, sickness, misfortune, forgiveness and health.

In the NCCK therefore there is great emphasis that health can only be restored by observance of the ten commandments, constant confession of sin and keeping oneself ritually pure. Sickness is interpreted using both OT and traditional African understanding in a wide sense to cover social, physical, psychological, spiritual and cosmic dimensions. It is seen as a lack of balance in all these aspects. Restoration of health

implies a balance in these realms of being. Bad health therefore ranges from effects of witchcraft, family discord, disease and unexplainable misfortunes.

Using Psalm 35 in healing

Ps 35 is one of the psalms used in a healing ritual of desperate and hopeless cases, involving conflict at the relational level at home or work place. The supplicant is asked to prepare for the ritual by confessing his/her sins and sometimes by fasting. One is also asked to bring 24 candles of white, blue, yellow and green colours together with a certain amount of money depending on the severity of the problem. The ritual takes place in the prophet-healers' homes because they have permanent altars.

During the ritual, a circle is drawn on the floor next to the altar. The candles are placed on the circle line and lit and the supplicant is asked to stand inside the circle. The supplicant is then given a bible to hold, on which is placed an envelope containing some money, a list of people who have caused his/her distress, relatives who have died, and the Psalm to be read.

The prophet-healer, wearing a green or red cassock and cap, then reads the Psalm and asks the supplicant to repeat after him the following words:

> Dear Lord, I come to you humbly and in pain to accuse before you those responsible for my suffering. Please fight this battle for me. Confuse them and frustrate all their plans against me. Close all their "doors". Deliver me and when you triumph over them, I will give glory to you and continually praise you. I ask all these in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

The prophet healer then says a concluding prayer of pleading with God on behalf of the supplicant. He also prays for the suppression of the dead who could be responsible for the supplicant's distress.

Ps 35 is a lament psalm, a prayer for deliverance in which the psalmist asks for protection against friends who have turned into enemies. It uses martial language (vv. 1–3) depicting Yahweh as a warrior. Yahweh is asked to avenge and deliver him/her from his enemies (vv. 4 ff.).

In reading the Psalm, the prophet-healer is using the weapon of prayer to rebuke and accuse the evil doer before God. This is a spiritual warfare which only God can fight for the victim. It is a call for protection, and a curse on the enemies so that they can fall into the trap they have laid for the person of God. These traps are seen as those set through witchcraft, and other sources of evil. As the prophet prays using the Psalm, God sends the Holy Spirit to intervene in the situation and provides a solution (oral interview Philip Ngaira Nov 1998). Through this Psalm, there is promise of deliverance and victory for God's truth and righteousness. The Psalm ends with a final vow of thanksgiving.

It is interesting to note the symbolism of colour and light in the healing ritual. These also have their basis in the OT (Exod 39:1–43). White symbolises holiness, blue faithfulness, green hope and yellow light. Evil spirits are said to be scared off by the red colour, hence the prophet's red attire. The ring of fire is also a protected area where evil spirits cannot harm the supplicant. It is obvious that the OT cosmology has been reinforced by the African one.

After this ritual, supplicants testify later to victory over their enemies. They claim that healing usually occurs and they attain peace and reconciliation. The way this Psalm is interpreted to speak to the supplicant's situation is what Mosala calls, the "hermeneutic of mystification" (Mosala 1989: 17–19). This implies that the Bible is seen as a symbol of God's presence and power. The word of God is a mystery and has a magical power. It delivers and protects and promises victory over evil. The Bible is also sometimes placed on ailing parts of the body as part of the healing process.

Conclusion

The Bible—and not least the OT—plays a crucial role in the lives of members of the African Instituted Churches, as for example the Nabii Christian Church of Kenya. The Bible offers healing and hope and speaks directly to situations in their lives. The AICs find in the OT a similarity with their own culture and world-view. However, it is important in appropriating the Scriptures to guard against reading into the text ideas that are not consistent with the biblical message.

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Work in the Old Testament and in African Tradition: Implications for Today

Margaret Aringo

The meaning and value of work in contemporary Africa has changed drastically from that of traditional Africa, and it certainly differs from that of the Old Testament (OT). People today tend to regard work as monotonous and unrewarding, and workers in both public and private sectors demand shorter hours of work and higher pay. With this background, the present paper aims at discussing the theological foundation of work, its importance and value in the OT and in the African tradition, and the challenges this offers to contemporary Africa.

From a theological perspective, work is a human activity rooted in God. It is the centre of humanity. The Hebrew terms *ml'kh* and *'bdh* denote action, work and achievement. The Septuagint translates *ml'kh* with *ergon*, which is used to express any useful activity which involves skills like commerce, agriculture and craftsmanship. The Septuagint *ergon* may be used to mean physical labour and toil which is laborious, whereas *'bdh* is restricted to physical labour. The term *ml'kh* covers a wide range of meanings, from general "work" to specific aspects and extensions of the work concept such as craftmanship, manufactured objects, business, and commission (see Milgrom & Wright 1997: 326–330).

The Priestly creation narrative (Gen 1:1–2:4a) uses *ml'kh* to express God's creation activities (see Gen 2:2–3). Creation is God's skilled work and labour. Everything that came into being was skilfully worked out, planned and executed by God. Just prior to this, in Gen 1:27–28, God is depicted as creating human beings in his own image and commissioning them to be his collaborators, and even to continue the work of creation. The Yahwistic creation narrative (Gen 2:4b–25) makes an anthropomorphic presentation of Yahweh: he moulds human beings out of clay

(Gen 2:27), forms the woman from the man's ribs (Gen 2:21–22), and initiates work, giving duties to human beings that were created and commissioned to carry them out. God becomes the instructor of humankind and gives them authority over all created things.

The practical approach towards work and use of skills is reflected in the Wisdom literature. Proverbs (see Prov 12:14) shows how human activity is the work of the human hand. People are seen managing their affairs and business, and serving the kings (see Prov 1:5, Wis 7:16, 13:10, Sir 38:3–9). Through skilled work, products are manufactured, and people continue to toil and labour with accompanying frustration and weariness. Toil is exhaustive. It wears people down physically. Still, the wisdom literature also condemns laziness (Prov 18:9, 12:27), as a lazy person is a disgrace to the society.

Turning to the African tradition, one notices common values with those of the OT concerning work. Also African tradition describes God as a skilled worker. God the Creator is a worker, who like a carpenter carves the world, gives it different forms and shapes (see Mbiti 1969: 39). The Akamba of Kenya call God Mumbi (Creator) and Mwatuangi (Maker). The name Mwatuangi is taken from the human act of slicing meat with a knife or splitting wood with an axe. It is in the same way that God creates, originates, moulds and makes the shapes and adds the necessary details, distinctiveness and character.

According to African tradition, work creates self-satisfaction, respect, prestige, acceptance and wealth. It is an economic activity. All normal persons are expected to work. Laziness is not accepted. There is no dirty work and there is no work below human dignity. People work according to age, sex and social status. Work is a social activity centred in human activity and religion, and it is sacred. Skilled work is manifested through different skills: art and design, agriculture, blacksmith, craftsmanship, medicine, ivory and wood carvings. Work also includes protecting the natural resources: rivers and lakes, mountains and forests. Taboos regarding destroying nature enhance their preservation.

Physical labour and toil are manifested during construction and farm activities. Land is a source of livelihood—it was never sold—and therefore a Luo saying goes: "a hoe does not go hungry". The community plans how to use the land fruitfully. They also plan the sowing, weeding and harvesting seasons. Like in the OT, work relates to people's wisdom, knowledge and intelligence, which enhance their plan of action, and enable them to solve community problems and needs.

Through work, people reconstruct their society. Work is a corporate as well as a creative activity, which brings about unity among its members. Leisure is part of the community and is highly observed. It helps to guide people from over-work and from burning out their energy in continuous work.

The contemporary change in Africa of attitude towards work came about with industrialisation and colonisation. The colonialists emphasised physical work and they forced labour and toil to supply man-power to plantations, industry and commerce. Lands were taken away from their traditional users, and the users were rendered land-less and thus they were conditioned to sell their labour cheaply to the colonialists.

With the introduction of formal education and training, Africans sharpened the skills they needed in the service sector, namely: management and office duties, work with electronics and mechanical industries, agriculture and advanced technologies, etc. The advanced technology and use of machines have improved the quality of work although there are still some areas where manual labour is highly in demand. In fact, most Africans still toil and labour in order to earn their livelihood. But today unemployment, early retirement, retrenchment and privatisation have affected attitudes towards work, which are crucial issues to grapple with. Other factors like embezzlement, corruption and bribery have affected people's work and their attitudes. There is a hunger for quick money, material wealth and acquisition of property, and there is a temptation to multiply jobs in order to double the income and acquire property. The grabbing culture of public premises is a common phenomenon. Communitarian labour has vanished and individualism is in full operation.

In this perspective the OT and African tradition challenge modern Africans to appreciate work as a human activity that is at the centre of humanity. People are to direct their skills towards self-employment where salaried jobs fail, and to find joy in their task. The rich should share their property and wealth with the poor and the marginalised. There is a need to challenge the evil structures which have failed to give workers their rights to work, just wage, fare work conditions, housing and rights to join trade unions to defend them and equal work contribution between men and women. There is need to encourage co-operatives and self-help projects.

To conclude, work is used in various dimensions: toil, labour, and production, in both the OT and in traditional Africa. The challenge

facing the people of Africa today is to change the attitude towards work, to work in order to earn their living, and to enjoy their work. They are called to be God's co-creators and to make their environment different and worthy to live in.

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Genesis 1–2 and Some Elements of Diversion From the Original Meaning of the Creation of Man and Woman

Anne Nasimiyu Wasike

As we stand on the threshold between the 20th and the 21th centuries, there is much discussion on the place of women in church and society. The Bible has been used to defend the status quo for Christians, and some African scholars have referred to their traditional cultural and religious heritage to justify the inferior status of women in society.

With this background, the aim of this paper is to investigate (i) the creation myths in the book of Genesis and what they say about the place of woman and her relationship to man, and (ii) how this is and should be reflected in today's perspective. As we embark on this task, we have to be aware that there are several views on how to understand the biblical teachings. Still, as M. Evans (1984: 10) states:

> In a changing world [...] it is vitally important that we re-examine the biblical material not to alter it, not to ignore it and not to fit it in with the ideas of modern society, but to make sure that we have got it right and that our ideas and practices really are biblical and not just reflecting the philosophical presuppositions of our contemporary society.

The place of women in Genesis 1–2

When examining the relationship between women and men in the Old Testament (OT), it is important that we start with the relationship in the creation accounts.

In Gen 1:26, when God creates the human beings, a particular formula which engages a counsel is used: God says "let us make man". The distinction between the creation of the human being and other beings is quite pronounced. Humanity is created as a result of a particular deliberate decision on the part of God the creator. What is very unique is that human beings are created in "the image and likeness of God", both male and female. Thus, the distinction between male and female is a foundation intrinsic in the idea of humanity. M. Evans (1984: 12) has stressed this idea by emphasizing that the creation of humankind as male and female is an integral part of God's decision to make humanity. This clearly shows that the idea of humanity has its full meaning in woman and man, and not man alone. In other words, the human personality has to be expressed in either female or male form. In this creation narrative, the sexual distinction is quite clear. There is no indication of subordination of one sex to the other. Humankind is created both male and female and entrusted with stewardship over the rest of creation.

There has been a great deal of theological debate about what it means when it is said that humanity is created in the image of God. M. Evans says that there are three theological opinions that have emerged for understanding humanity as the image of God. In the first place the image is seen in a direct and positive relation between humanity as a whole and God. It is a unique dynamic relationship. Hence the totality of humanity is needed in order to express the image of God.

Secondly, the image of God is seen in each individual person, male or female. St. Augustine sees this image of humanity as the "Triune God in the intellectual nature of the soul and its three powers memory (God the Father) intellect (God the Son) and will (God the Holy Spirit)." Gen 1:27 shows a connection between humanity as created in the image of God and humanity as male and female. However, the traditional church view completely neglects this point. Thomas Aquinas, for example, whose theological influence in the Catholic Church still lingers on, does not mention the male/female relation in any of his nine theological discourses which deal with the divine image. Rather, he attempts to understand the concept of "image and likeness" in ontological categories.

The final theological option sees the image of God only in the male and female together, they assert that it exists between them rather than as part of either (see Evans 1984: 13). Does this mean that only in marriage do people reflect God's image? What about unmarried people? Ps 8 further illustrates the link between the divine image and likeness in humanity, and the human authority over the rest of the creation. Both

women and men participate in this image equally. The divine "image and likeness" is not physical similarities but it involves spiritual qualities.

Let us turn over to Gen 2, the Yawhist account of the creation of humanity. This text has given rise to four main arguments in support of the subordination of woman to man. These arguments are articulated by M. Evans (1984: 14) as follows:

- Woman was created after man and is therefore secondary to him.
- Woman is 'taken from man' and is therefore secondary to him.
- Woman is named by man and is therefore subordinate to him.
- Woman is created to be a 'helper' for man and as such is subordinate to him.

Let us examine these arguments one by one. Does being created first imply superiority of being or function? If so, animals that were created before the human beings in Gen 1 are more superior than both man and woman. The face of this argument is lost and Gen 2 does not give any special significance to temporal priority. Now, in 1 Tim 2:13 Paul refers to the fact that Adam was created before Eve. However, Paul's assertion that woman was second in order of creation is not a strong argument in favour of her subjection. It is necessary that we interpret creation narratives in their historical context.

The second argument is that woman is subordinate to man because she was "taken from the man". Gen 2 indicates that without the woman, man is incomplete. The emphasis here is not on the differences between male and female but on their relatedness. In the first instance when Adam recognized Eve, he exclaimed: "This one at last is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh". Adam identifies himself with Eve rather than seeing her as different from him. By creating woman from the man's rib we have to understand this as God's creative act, building up the rib rather than the man's rib itself (see Schüngel-Straumann 1997: 67). The woman is taken from the man but her primary contact is with God the creator. As M. Evans (1984: 15) says:

> Man has no part in making woman. He is neither participant nor spectator nor consultant at her birth. Like man woman owes her life solely to God. For both of them, the origin of life is divine mystery.

Therefore derivative cannot be an argument for subordination. By saying that a woman owes her existence to man, it can also be said that man

owes his existence to dust. Here we see that both man and woman are portrayed as created unequivocally or directly by a purposeful creative act of God.

The third argument is that man names the woman. In the OT, naming implied dominion over the named. In Gen 2:19 both the verb "to call" and the noun "name" are found together. Adam names the animals which were brought to him, but in the case of the woman he calls her "woman" to denote gender and not her name. Gen 2:23 can be interpreted as something other than the Old Testament understanding of official naming.

The fourth argument that woman is created to be helper to man has been used to subject women to men. To be a helper is to be a helpmate, a complement, a mutual partner and fundamentally to be an equal. To help does not mean to be subordinate to the one helped. For example, when a medical doctor helps a patient, does this mean that the medical doctor is under the patient's authority? It is also important to investigate what "helper" means as described in the Scriptures. The word is used 19 times in the OT, of these three are used of man, fifteen are used of God, and one is the verse in question now. The word "helper" in our case could be interpreted as suggesting superiority but on the other hand the accompanying words like "fit for him", "worthy of him" remove this idea. Thus the use of word "helper" of itself does not in any way imply inferiority or subordination. The helper that is fit for man means one who is his counterpart, his mutual partner, his companion, his co-worker and his ally, "bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh". There is no proof or demonstration to support some of the negative theories that have developed around this word "helper"; for example St. Augustine's theory in that the woman is a helper only in childbearing. This view could be seen as contradictory to the teaching of Gen 2.

The sexual hierarchy is not present in the text, this has only been read into it. The creation narratives of both Gen 1 and Gen 2 show that humanity is made up of two parts, the male and the female. They also teach about the unity and dissoluble indebtedness of man and woman to one another. They teach that the human life can be lived fully in every sphere when male and female co-operate together. In Gen 1 and 2 man and woman are presented as different but united, they compliment each other and are in harmony. This relationship is disrupted and the relationship between man and woman is full of conflict and tension.

The place of women in contemporary Africa

For centuries male scholars have gone to the Scriptures and selected those texts that support their male-dominated views on women. With regard to human creation, Gen 2 has been read as masculinity begetting femininity. The church fathers selected and canonized Scripture and this lead to textual and historical marginalization of women.

Traditionally, African women have enjoyed economic independence. They have worked the land to grow food for their children and the surplus was battered for the commodities they did not grow or had. The latter was done in consultation with the husband. However, some patriarchal African ethnic groups held women in inferior status. They were/are presented as people who have to fulfil their destiny by being wives and mothers. A barren woman was considered a dead end, despite any outstanding gifts or talents she possessed. Such a woman learned to suffer in silence and to weep in secret. Some ethnic groups restricted women by taboos, subjecting them to dehumanizing rituals e.g. female genital mutilation, widowhood cleansing and enslaving girl children to the shrines to serve the shrine priest.

In matrilineal communities, a women's full humanity, her growth and contribution to the society was safeguarded (see Oduyoye 1986: 39). With the advent of colonialism and Christianity to Africa, there was a gradual "erosion of the customary rights of woman and the entrenching of colonial ones that work towards the same goal" (Oduyoye 1986: 37).

When this form of Christianity was brought to Africa, the African woman lost the power she had in the religious sphere. Traditionally African women were religious leaders, for example prophets, mediums, seers, diviners, medicine persons and priests. As religious leaders they were respected and treated in the same way the male religious leaders were treated. The Gospel is supposed to be good news for the African women. However, instead she has received more subjection and alienation. This happened in various ways, for example the loaded interpretation of certain biblical texts and the male centred church ministries and institutions.

In conclusion, Christianity has failed to reflect the restoration message of the Gospel. It has alienated and marginalized African women in the church. It is no wonder that Africa is leading in emerging church movements which are seeking wholeness, healing and recognition of women's leadership. Therefore women have to question the patristic interpretation which does not allow them in leadership roles beyond

household management. We need a theology that affirms restoration in Christ Jesus, one that supports our uniqueness as persons—male and female, made in the image and likeness of God. The man-made barriers that restrict human freedom, especially women's freedom, have to be torn down to enable each and every child of God to fulfil their God given gifts and talents.

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The Bible in African Theology

Mary Getui

In an attempt to analyze "The Bible in African theology", the following two issues will be considered: (i) African views of the Bible, and (ii) African recommendations regarding the Bible.

In themselves these issues are wide and complex, not to mention the geographical, linguistic and cultural vastness of Africa. This compels us to limit our context of operation to East Africa. Our main point of reference is the book *The Bible in African Christianity: Essays in Biblical Theology* (Kinoti & Waliggo 1997). This is the sixth volume in the African Christianity Series, which is sustained by the Ecumenical Colloquium of Eastern Africa Theologians (a consultive forum, which since 1987 has been commited to the promotion of contextual theological reflection on Africa). Most of the twelve essays in the sixth volume address issues that are of relevance to this article. Still, I would like to emphasize that the present article is not a duplication on what is covered in the book. The book focuses on the Bible in African Christianity, with each author pursuing a specific sub-theme, whereas the present article focuses on the Bible in African theology.

African views of the Bible

This sub-section is dedicated to highlighting some views of what the Bible means to Africans. The views represent a random selection from various African theologians, as they have observed and gathered from the wider society.

The Bible is regarded as the ultimate source of authority for African Christians. It contains words that are supposed to have come directly from God, and it is thus held in high esteem. The Bible provides the

basis for the Christian faith, and it also remains a uniting factor of the various denominations and secterian divides that are a major characteristic of African Christianity (Obeng 1997: 8; Kinoti & Waliggo 1997: 4; Nthamburi & Waruta 1997: 43, 50).

Many Africans, whether Christian or not, are quite familiar with the Bible, since it is one of the most widely translated and read texts in Africa. Reference to and use of some of its personalities is common. For example, the sides of buses and *matatus* (a Kenyan term for the small public transport vehicles, so popular in African cities) are dotted with biblical words, messages and texts (Nthamburi & Waruta 1997: 49). The Bible is also viewed as containing messages that are relevant and applicable to the African context, messages that touch on all aspects of life: the cultural, the social and the spiritual. In other words, the Bible serves as a manual of life (Kinoti 1997: 112).

Another view of the Bible is that its interpretation has made it a divisive factor in African Christianity (Kinoti & Waliggo 1997: 4). This is in line with the observation that one of the factors responsible for the springing up and mushrooming of denominations is the interpretation of the Bible.

It is also important to notice the relationship between Bible knowledge and spirituality (Waliggo 1997: 180): Bible knowledge or lack of it may not necessarily determine one's spirituality. One could be well informed biblically, without being spiritually formed, or one may achieve high spiritual growth with little Bible knowledge.

What one gathers from these selected views is that in Africa the Bible is esteemed and central in the experiences of Christians as well as non-Christians, to laity as well as to the academic and the theologian, and yet it is not a determinant measure of spiritual growth. It is also clear that the Bible is a double-edged tool which unites and divides, which promotes life and oppresses at the same time. That the Bible is considered infallible is yet another characteristic. Despite this loadedness and ambiguity, what is evident is that the Bible directly or indirectly is part and parcel of African spiritual and general reality.

African recommendations regarding the Bible

Many books have been written on African theology, as have definitions of the same been given. For our purposes we would like to summarise G.H. Muzorewa's (1985) analysis. He notes the sources of African

theology broadly, as African traditional religion, the 19th and 20th century missionary movements, the emergence of African Instituted Churches, Pan-Africanism and the self-understanding of the churches. According to Muzorewa, African theology:

- draws from biblical and African traditional beliefs, and formulates a theology that is relevant to the experience of the African people
- turns to the everyday life of African Christianity and African traditional religion
- translates Christianity into genuine African categories, a translation that speaks to African believers at the point of their religiosity
- is expressed through African symbols, art, colour, music and scripture, employing the African cultural matrix
- draws from the value of community
- must be contextual: the African Christian theologian should not be merely based on the continent but should have a genuine African outlook
- contains the experience of the African people as they know God and Christ

Going back to the analysis of African views of the Bible, and linking it to Muzorewa's analysis, we can consequently arrive at the view that there are (or there should be) points of convergence between the Bible and African theology. For example it is clear that the Bible is considered a pillar of Christianity for both main line and African Instituted Churches. It is also clear that the Bible penetrates into all aspects of life, including the cultural aspect which is one of the sources of African theology.

Eastern African theologians have raised concerns on the Bible and its impacts on the society, a few of which we now turn to. But before raising these concerns it is important to draw attention to L. Magesa's (1997: 32–36) view that there are anti-life forces at work in Africa—oppression, exploitation, marginalisation and desperation of humanity—and that the Bible and theology/theologians may serve as perpetrators or as redeemers of the situation. This aspect should be borne in mind as we consider the concerns and recommendation of the theologians. Again, these concerns are a random few, used to strengthen our argument.

While there has been considerable contribution towards Bible translation (Getui 1997: 89–91), the manner this has been done is not satisfactory. Local Christians have not been involved, thus what is

produced are literalist translations rather than translations of meaning (Kinoti & Waliggo 1997: 1–3). Some translations are obsolete, and the distribution machinery is not far-reaching (Getui 1997: 91). Nevertheless, the translated word—however inadequate and inefficient—played a major role to the early African converts to Christianity. According to Nthamburi & Waruta (1997: 42), people felt that God addressed them in their own language through the translations. And further, they experienced that the God speaking to them in the Christian scripture was the same God whom they knew from their forefathers. They could therefore identify with this God and they felt at home with his written word. In this connection note should be made of J. Mugambi's (1997: 68) observations:

> [...] the involvement of Africans in translation work is becoming appreciated as essential, because language is always a cultural medium which, at best, is understood by those who have internalized the culture that produced it.

This aspect of translation and distribution of the Bible needs to be concluded with J.M. Walligo's (1997: 191) caution that:

> The quality of Christianity in Africa should be measured by the lives of the people transformed, never by the number of copies of Bibles or catechisms printed and distributed.

Another major concern raised by many theologians has to do with hermeneutics or—in simpler terms—interpretation of the Bible. Some of the bones of contention include that there has been a misuse, naiveness, value-free, internationalized, privatized, elitist, academic and theological approach in hermeneutics, which ignores adjustment and application to the African context. This cuts off and away the very people who are the stakeholders, thus rendering the Bible almost meaningless and discerning to the African people.

The remedy for this concern has been echoed by several theologians. L. Magesa (1997: 30), for example, refers to J.L. Cox, who points out that the need is not a new Bible but a new hermeneutics, and also to F.J. Verstraelen, who talks about not changing the texts but reading them from the concrete situations and contexts. The same challenge is pointed out by Mugambi. He argues that church leaders and theologians throughout Africa should shift from a literalist approach to

the Bible to a critical and contextual discernment of the implications of the Gospel in our respective situations. And then he continues (Mugambi 1997: 82):

> The challenge cannot be generalized. Each leader and theologian must search for a *consistent synthesis*, using critical tools availed through ministerial formation, library research and personal involvement.

This recommendation underscores Magesa's (1997: 26) concern that "[...] there are few, if any, centres of learning that specialize in scripture studies other than biblical theology". There are indeed very few scriptural scholars in Eastern Africa, and this leads to a faminization of biblical interpretation; for, without a foundation in the original biblical languages—Hebrew and Greek—how can proper interpretation be arrived at?

The other aspect Mugambi's interpretation underscores is that of promoting production of Bible commentaries and dictionaries (see also Nthamburi & Waruta 1997: 50), possibly also in the local languages (see Ndungu 1997: 66). On the question of personal involvement for church leaders and theologians it is also important to draw attention to ordinary peoples' use of the Bible through Bible study sessions in fora such as the Small Christian Communities, which is an organization within the Catholic church whereby believers in the same locality meet formally and regularly to study the Bible and to have fellowship with each other.

An aspect that needs to be highlighted is that of segregation hermeneutics. Z. Nthamburi & D. Waruta (1997: 40) refer to C. Banana's (1983) observation that in some places, in particular South Africa, the Bible has been distorted to designate racism and sexism, where because of color and gender some members of the society are relegated to second class status. This situation is not unique to South Africa alone but is widespread through the continent.

Another pertinent recommendation with regard to the use of the Bible in Africa is to make recognition of rampant illiteracy (Getui 1997: 95). While this situation persists there is need to turn to the cultural aspect of oral tradition. On this point Waliggo (1997: 180) has noted:

> Africans are people of oral orientation. Even the Western-educated African elite read very little. [...] They quickly interiorise what has been personally communicated, especially when it has been presented

> in the forms they appreciate: story, proverbs, songs, drums, dances, plays, ceremonies, real life situations.

Walligo then goes on to recommend that it is important and more effective to combine the written and the oral.

It is hoped that these examples help to bring to the fore that African theologians are concerned about various issues to do with the Bible. It is noteworthy that they have also come up with recommendations, some of which are closely linked with a methodology towards making the Bible life promoting.

Conclusion

In the introduction to the book *The Bible in African Christianity* (Kinoti & Waliggo 1997: 1), the editors have made reference to three approaches to a critical evaluation of the impact the Bible has had on African societies, cultures and peoples. One approach sees the Bible as an entirely new divine revelation of the people of Africa, who before the arrival of the Bible lived in "darkness". Under such an approach whatever good has happened in Africa since then can only be attributed to the power of the Bible. A second approach is that long before the Bible was introduced in Africa, Africans already knew and practiced the Biblical message found in every society. Most of the social, cultural, political and religious institutions elaborated in the Bible were in existence in Africa, and sometimes in a much richer manner. A third approach is to study the interaction between African cultures and religions on the one hand, and the Bible on the other. In an interaction each side receives and gives something. It is a dialogue. The biblical content cannot be presumed to be swallowed wholesale, neither can the African cultural content remain fully as it was before the introduction on the Bible. Under this approach the central focus of evaluation is to discover the nature of the interaction and response.

Without much ado, the second and third approaches reflect the direction African theologians should be heading. Getui (1997: 87) refers to J.S. Mbiti, who argues that the Bible's influence and potential in shaping African theology and Christianity is tremendous. Mbiti (1979: 90–91) further elaborates:

> Any viable theology must and should have a biblical basis. [...] As long as African theology keeps close to the Scriptures, it will remain relevant to the life of the church in Africa and it will have lasting links with the theology of the church universal. African theologians must give even more attention to the Bible than is sometimes the case. As long as we keep the Bible close to our minds and our hearts, our theology will be viable, relevant and of lasting service to the church and glory to the Lord to whom be honour, dominion, and power into the ages of ages.

Waliggo (1997: 190–191) airs similar sentiments that African Christianity needs an ecumenically inclusive, critically consistent and contextually tuned approach to the Bible utilizing the latest tools of biblical analysis. And to the theologians past present and those to come, Mugambi (1991: 41) adds:

> In the coming generations, theology is going to be an important new frontier, which Christians as individuals and communities of faith must take very seriously. The effective consolidation of Christianity in Africa will depend directly on the effectiveness of authentically African theological articulation.

From the foregoing discussion it is clear that the Bible is part and parcel of African theology, but without theologians the two are at limbo. The African theologian is the link point, the bridge.

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Interpreting the Old "Testament" in Africa: Last Will, Contract or Covenant?

Serapio Kabazzi Kisirinya

The term "testament"—as used in "Old Testament" (OT, cf. 2 Cor 3:14) and "New Testament" (NT, cf. Jer 31:31)—goes back to the Hebrew term ברית, the Greek translation of ברית by the term διαθήκη, and the Latin translation of διαθήκη by the term "testamentum". The Hebrew term ברית has a wide range of meanings: besides "last will"/"testament", it also means "contract" and "covenant". In the following lines I will discuss this Hebrew term from the perspective of how it is rendered in Eastern Africa, with special attention to the Ganda ethnic group in Uganda.

(i) *Last will* is one meaning of ברית. In the context of Africa, the last will is very much respected. It is considered more binding than more traditional contracts, because it is enjoined with God and the ancestors. The fulfillment of the terms of the last will earns blessings, whereas the failure or disregard or misappropriation of the terms of the last will procures curses on the offender. The last will is the solemn wish of an adult person. Its context is normally the dying person towards his/her children/relatives. Such wishes are strongly believed to be morally and religiously binding, and they are tabooed statements to be respected under threat of death or other fatal consequences.

In the OT we have several instances of similar concepts and practices: Gen 24:1–9: Abraham vs his oldest servant, concerning Isaac's marriage; Gen 47:27–31: Jacob vs his son Joseph, concerning Jacob's burial place; Gen 48:1–22: the dying Jacob blessing Ephraim and Manasseh; Gen 49:1–29: Jacob vs all his sons; Gen 50:25–26: Joseph vs his brothers; Tob 4:1–21: Tobit vs Tobias. And further, the entire Book

of Deuteronomy reflects the concept of a last will (cf. especially chs. 27–30).

Clearly the general purpose of the last will is to ensure stability and continuity in the family. Particularly in the case of Deuteronomy, the purpose is to ensure continuity in the people of God and to remind them of their common origin, experience and mission. One point, however, must be noted: to call the last will as "old" or "new" is very arbitrary, because it can make the OT misunderstood or meaningless. The last will never grows old, rather it keeps on binding and so is the blessing.

(ii) *Contract* is another meaning of ברית. In the OT the term "oath" may for practical purposes be synonym to ברית, because it is the act which formally constitutes a binding contract (cf. e.g. Gen 26:3.28; Josh 9:20). The "oath" seems to be the constitutive element which made covenants binding. However, it must be underlined that a contract is a formal agreement that is *legally* binding. It is mainly secular or legalistic in nature. Being so, its binding force is more or less external, that is it does not, so to say, bind the heart or the spirit. It must be understood here that even though the Torah contains legal codes (cf. e.g. Exod 20:1–17), and even though it is referred to as the Law of Moses or simply as the Law, in the Jewish tradition the Torah is first and foremost "instruction".

From what I have said about the understanding of the term "contract", it is clear that the concept of "last will" is theologically richer than that of the "contract", as one bequeaths a testament to a confidant or to somebody whom one loves or trusts. And as I noted above, the last will binds the heart, and is believed to be sanctioned by the ancestors and God, and it is therefore morally and religiously binding.

However, many African translations, if not all, take a different perspective: because of an inherited legalistic Christianity that is "made in Europe", they embrace the term "contract" in referring to the two major parts of the Bible. In my mother-tongue, Luganda, instead of referring to the two major parts of the Bible as *Eddaame Ekkadde* ("Old Testament") and *Eddaame Eppya* ("New Testament"), or *Omukago Omukadde* ("Old Covenant") and *Omukago Omuggya* ("New Covenant"), we refer to it as *Endagaano Enkadde* ("Old Contract") and *Endagaano Empya* ("New Contract").

Last September (1999), I conducted a Bible seminar for over 75 religious nuns belonging to all religious congregations working in Uganda, but with some of their members coming from all over East Africa. These nuns represented over 20 languages spoken in East Africa. It is noteworthy that in all these languages it is the term "contract" which

has been used to refer to the two major parts of the Bible. This observation could be tested on a wider scale in the many African languages in which the Bible has been translated. All the same, this observation is quite telling.

The point I want to make here is that without a deeper biblical background and explanation, African Christianity runs the risk of expressing legalistic or contractual concepts, when it refers to the OT and NT as "contracts".

(iii) *Covenant* is a third meaning of ברית. It is in fact richer in meaning and implications than the two other meanings, last will and contract. And it is central to the understanding of both the OT and African society.

There are many examples of human and divine covenants in the OT. We have for instance the human covenants between Abraham and Abimelech (Gen 21:22–32), between Jacob and Laban (Gen 31:43–54), between David and Jonathan (1 Sam 18:3–4), and between Ahab and Ben-Hadad (1 Kgs 20:23ff.). We also have divine covenants, such as the Adamitic covenant (Gen 2), the Abrahamitic covenant (Gen 15:1–21, 17:1–27), and the Sinaitic covenant (Exod 19–24). According to the OT, God's covenants with people were renewed several times in the history of Israel: Deut 29–30 (beyond the Jordan in Moab), Josh 24, and Neh 8–10. Basically, we can say that covenants in ancient Israel were an exceedingly important means for the regulation of behaviour, so that some measure of trust and harmony could be introduced into social, political and economic life.

Traditional African religion too, as D.W. Shenk (1983: 45) rightly notes, "[...] has developed socio-religious devices for attempting to enhance or recreate harmony in the community. Covenant is the deepest and most profound level of personal and community recreation." In the different ethnic groups in Africa, the covenant is concluded with various rites, but common to every rite is an emphasising of the heart-conditions. This also implies lineage (cf. Mbiti 1969: 104).

Therefore a covenant is a formal ratification of a relationship between two parties. It underlines an exchange of rights and duties. It reflects the creation of a new community of people with definite moral obligations and moral claims, a new sense of being and belonging. Thus, D.W. Shenk further underscores that African societies are permeated with many covenants: fiendship covenants, blood covenants, sister covenants, kinship covenants, covenant by adoption, marriage covenants, land covenants, peace covenants, etc. (cf. Shenk 1983: 53–70).

So in an African context, "covenant" seems to be the best and most comprehensive term to render the deepest implications of the two major parts of the Bible. In my mother-tongue, Luganda, the term used for "covenant" is *Omukago*, and it is my contention that the Luganda translation of the Bible here has found the best and most expressive term to refer to the two major parts of the Bible: *Omukago Omukadde* ("Old Covenant") and *Omukago Omuggya* ("New Covenant").

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Translating the Old Testament in Africa

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United Bible Societies' Strategies for Old Testament Translation in Africa

Peter M. Renju

Let me begin this presentation with a citation from an article of Dr Philip Noss, the United Bible Societies Translation Coordinator for Africa (Noss 1999: 63):[1]

> Bible translation in Africa is an integral part of the history of Scripture translation, a history in which Africa has not been isolated and is not to be found wanting. Though scattered accounts and records exist, the story remains to be told, and in the telling, the full dimension of the impact of the translators and their translations on the life and theology of the Christian church in Africa needs to be understood and revealed.

The story, from the point of view of the United Bible Societies' (UBS) activities, cannot be fully told in a short paper like this one even by limiting ourselves to one region—Africa, and to one testament—the Old Testament (OT). Furthermore, it would be incomplete to say anything at all about this organization and its translation strategies without including something about its *raison d'être*.

The UBS is a world fellowship of Bible societies, united for consultation, mutual support and action through partnership with all Christian churches in the common task of achieving (Macdonald 1999: 1): [2]

- the widest possible, effective and meaningful distribution of the Holy Scriptures
- in languages which can be easily understood and are faithful to the original texts
- in formats which meet the needs of recipients

- and at a price which recipients can afford

It was for these goals that the Bible society movement was founded in 1805, after which in 1946 we had the establishment of a world federation of Bible societies that is now known as the UBS. Most of the strategies mentioned below are global, that is, they hold for UBS' activities worldwide. Some are specific to the region (Africa), but even these bear the same global goals of supplying Scriptures for the world communities.

Bible Translation in Africa

Bible translators in Africa have one thing to be proud of to begin with. The first ever-complete translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into another language, the Greek Septuagint, took place on African soil. Again, translators in Africa may take note with pride that the second known translation of the Scriptures, this time from the Septuagint, also took place in Africa, in Carthage, North Africa. This is the so-called Old Latin version of about 160-220 AD. African translators also take pride in the fact that around the 4th Century AD we had the translation of the Bible into the Sahidic and Bushairic Coptic languages of Upper and Lower Egypt, again on African soil. The Bible, including the OT, was translated into Geéz in the 5th–6th centuries AD. This version, as many of you know, contains 54 OT books. From that time, Africa had to wait until the year 1835 to have the next OT, the Malagasy Bible. The other Bibles that followed are the Amharic 1840, the Tswana 1857, the Xhosa 1859, the Ga 1866, the Efik 1868, the Twi 1871, the Duala 1872, the Sotho and Zulu 1883. For some vested interests I skip the rest just to come to our area (East Africa) where the Swahili language is undoubtedly the most widely spoken language. The first ever OT publication in this language dates to the year 1885. This publication was in the so-called "Swahili: southern dialect", also known as "Swahili: Kiunguja", spoken in those days mainly in Zanzibar and adjoining mainland. It was a distinct dialect different from the "Swahili: central or Mombasa dialect". This latter had its OT, again without the New Testament (NT) published in 1914. A reprint of this appeared in 1935.

The first ever complete Bible in the Swahili language is the publication of *Biblia ndio Maandiko Matakatifu yote ya Agano la Kale nayo ya Agano Jipya katika msemo wa Kiswahili*, translated by Dr K.

Roehl and published in 1937 by the Württemberg Bible Society, Stuttgart. Another complete Bible in the Swahili language appeared in 1952. This is the so-called "Swahili Union Version", a publication that was supposed to be a union of the central and southern dialects.

These two bibles are rated as literal and therefore not easily understood in many aspects. A note given in *The Book of a Thousand Tongues* (1972: 410), says the following: "Union Swahili, like many other union versions of languages described in this book, was developed to accommodate speakers of a number of dialect or closely related languages." It is clear that accommodating speakers of related dialects does not mean taking into account the way speakers of the dialects use the language in their everyday communication.

In conformity with the UBS strategy that the Word of God should be provided in the language that speakers use in their day to day communication activities, the UBS, with a request from the churches, decided to initiate a common language translation of the Bible. This resulted in a publication of the Bible in 1995. The unique nature of this publication is that it was produced in two editions: The first, the Standard Bible (that is without the Deuterocanonical books), and the other: the Bible with Deuterocanonical Books, a publication that meets the needs of the Catholic constituency in the area.

It is not possible even in a very concise form to outline the activities of the UBS in matters of translation of the Scriptures. For a more or less complete view of this one would have to go to the UBS World Annual Reports. In the report of 1997, for example, the UBS listed the following for the Africa region: "14 Bibles were published: an Afrikaans Study Bible; Baoulé in Côte d'Ivoire; Chichewa with and without deuterocanon in Malawi; English Good News for Africa; Kiryol (regular and large prints) in Guinea Conakry; Mashi in Dem. Rep. of Congo; Moore (Catholic) in Burkina Faso; Nzema in Ghana; Oromo (Latin Script) in Ethiopia; Swahili with Concordance for Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda; Taita in Kenya; Tigrinya in Eritrea; and Venda in Zulu (new orthography plus large print) in south Africa."[3] A report like this is given every year and demonstrates in part to the world Christian communities what is happening within the fellowship of bible societies.

The UBS' strategies on translation of Scriptures

The UBS' strategies for OT translation of the Scriptures should at best

be examined from the point of view of its overall strategies of the Bible as a whole. It is in very few cases that Bible societies limit themselves to providing translations only for the NT. This is in conformity with the needs of the churches that use the entire body of Scriptures for the evangelization of its believers. To achieve the aims and goals that the UBS has established for its program, certain basic structures were established with regard to translation of the Scriptures:

Working with the churches

This is by far the most important strategy of the UBS and permeates most if not all its activities. The UBS stresses close cooperation with the churches. This cooperation is manifest especially in the area of translation of the Scriptures. In practically all translations of the Bible done by the Bible societies in Africa, translators are, as a matter of procedure, assigned to the projects from the churches which are stakeholders of the projects. This is perhaps the most important strategy of UBS' translation program although it is not explicitly stated as I have put it. The book we handle is in many ways the handbook of the church.

The UBS is at the service of all churches with regard to translation, publication and distribution of the Scriptures. Are the Bible societies able to meet the needs of the churches with regard to Scriptures? In order to meet these needs, the UBS has to employ various strategies including training of its personnel such as translation consultants and translators.

Translation consultants

The UBS has established a team of experts whose task is to train and assist translators in the various problems that they are bound to face as they work with the source languages. These translation consultants are men and women who are either biblical scholars or linguists. The UBS requires these people, because of the nature of their work, to be holders of a Ph.D. in their respective disciplines from recognized universities. Translation consultants are given the mandate to train translators in the art of translating Scriptures, and they monitor and check their translations for accuracy and naturalness. At the moment of writing this paper there are about fifteen translation consultants serving Bible societies in various parts of Africa. In order to train translators to levels where the high quality of translations required by the Bible societies can be met, translation consultants, as part of their continuous training, participate in annual workshops involving various aspects of translation

theory and practice. Every three years they also meet with colleagues all over the world to share ideas from the field and study new findings.

Furthermore, the UBS has instituted resources that play the same role of training these people. One is *The Bible Translator*, a quarterly periodical for translators, containing articles on biblical, linguistic and other subjects related to translation, with special reference to the Bible. It appears in two series: technical papers published in January and July, and practical papers published in April and October. The periodical is very useful and a must for any interested persons who may want to know more about trends and views on language and translation. Another resource is the UBS' Translation Information Clearing house and its *Newsletter*. The clearing house was set up in 1987 with the aim of providing services to UBS translation personnel and others involved in Bible translation, and developing bibliographies on topics and developments to their research interests.[4]

Translators' training

The UBS require translators to be mother-tongue speakers of the language into which they are translating, and to be trained in biblical studies, including if possible the biblical languages; they must also "learn to write adeptly in their own languages and must acquire translation skills" (Noss 1999: 73).

For Africa, and in view of OT translation, which always results in the publication of the whole Bible, the UBS has put in place specific strategy of training translators to enhance the training given by translation consultants. At present we sponsor a training program at the Bible Institute of South Africa near Cape Town, and we are participating with Summer Institute of Linguistics in establishing a training program in Abidjan for francophone translators. In these institutions translators are informed about the problems of translations of Scriptures, they learn about the original source languages and how to handle them, they are shown the importance of observing the means of communication in their languages, etc. Furthermore, in connection with these strategies of training translators, the Bible Society of the Netherlands has for some years now been sponsoring a chair on bible translation at the Free University of Amsterdam. Here a one-year postgraduate Bible translation program is offered for those candidates presented by our regional translation coordinator. The program includes Bible translation studies, linguistic analysis of texts, biblical Hebrew, OT studies etc. Translation of the OT is beset with various problems connected with

culture, language and worldview. Translators frequenting these institutes will have the advantage of seeing the differences and compare with the world view of their own area so as to be able to select the proper lexical items that best present the meaning of the original. Translators have sometimes noted the many similarities that exist between the way the original texts express various thoughts and the way the same is expressed in Africa. African translators therefore are encouraged to find these similarities in their own languages and use them whenever these will convey the message of the original accurately so that the word of God may find home in their own languages and cultures.

Tools of the art: The Hebrew Bible

The first and most important tool for the translation of the OT is of course the Hebrew Bible. The text used by the UBS is the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* published by the Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft in Stuttgart. With this in mind one understands why it is required of translators to have a working command of the Hebrew language. In the case of an absolute failure of this, translators are offered a text in a language they know which is a literal rendering of the Hebrew as a base text. An example for English is the text of the *Revised Standard Version* while for French speakers it is *La Traduction Oecuménique de La Bible.* The reason for this is that translators are enabled to see the idioms and figures of language of the original so as to be able to find equivalents of the meaning of the original in their own language.

Managing information technology in translation science

Another strategy set by the UBS is that of the use of information technology. Most important in this aspect is the program known as Paratext. With this program, translators can view on the computer screen multiple translations for comparing, check their own translation for consistency, examine how they have effectively rendered key words, etc. This program has proven very useful particularly for the OT translation. It is not possible to delineate in this brief presentation the advantages of this tool. It is in conjunction with this that nowadays the practice in UBS with regard to drafting the text of the Bible for translation is computerized right from the first stage instead of the earlier period when everything was first written by hand and then typed using a typewriter.

Translator's helps

These are series of UBS' handbooks that provide exegetical, historical,

cultural and linguistic information on the books of the Bible. In order to equip translators in their work, the UBS has published manuals of this kind for many of the OT (and all the NT) books. These manuals present to the translators various problems of the books and how to handle them in translation. So far we have handbooks (OT) of Genesis, Leviticus, Joshua, Ruth, Esther, Job, Psalms, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Lamentations, Daniel, Amos, the books of Obadiah, Jonah and Micah in one volume, Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah in one volume. Work continues on other OT books.

1996 UBS' program

Last but not least, the UBS, during its World Assembly held in Mississauga, Canada in October 1996, set for itself a program that needs to be cited here with regard to OT translation of the Scriptures. The statement cited below belongs to section III.3.1:

> To pursue a translation program in cooperation with others which by the year 2010, will ensure that through a first, new or revised translation: the entire Bible is available in an easily understood version in every language with more than 500,000 speakers. (UBS 1997: 135)

This statement means in reality that a lot of work will have to be done on the OT. This is because many of the languages that fall within the 500,000 speakers may be the ones which posses only the NT and work on the OT is yet to be done. This is also consistent with the wishes of the churches in Africa that are increasingly requesting OT translations. However, this also raises a question. Are the theological institutions in Africa today training pastors and theologians to use the Bible in their own language? If not, how can the Bible truly be the handbook of the church as we have said above? Another pertinent question also is that of meeting the needs of our audiences.

Conclusion

I do not claim to have said all that is given or even proposed as a UBS' program toward the translation of the OT in Africa. We have not even touched on specific issues. While meeting the needs of churches in the translation of Scriptures, the Bible societies are also increasingly aware of various needs that require special attention. It is because of this that

text committees are constituted or established. For example, The New Readers Text Committee studies and researches ways of providing Scriptures for newly literate persons; The Human Concerns Text Committee's task is to advise on production of Scriptures for specific human concerns such as national events, etc. Children also should not be forgotten and for this Bible societies are studying ways of producing Scriptures for children that include materials from the OT.

While seeking to provide helps to readers of Scriptures on the continent, the Bible societies have now embarked on the preparation of Study Bibles. One such Bible, the Afrikaans Study Bible in South Africa was published in 1997. A Swahili Study Bible for the three East African countries, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda is almost completed. A Chichewa Study Bible for Malawi and areas that speak the language has also been initiated. And there are plans for other languages on the continent, such as Amharic (Ethiopia) and Hausa (Nigeria).

It is my conviction that with the cooperation of the churches and in collaboration with other agencies, the entire Bible in various forms will be accessible to people in Africa in their own languages. But is that possible? The question is not unmotivated. We are told that over half of the entire world population is unable or even unwilling to read (and write). The percentage of such people, at least of the type that are unable to read is definitely much higher if we consider the African continent. Without doing something therefore, the aim of providing Scriptures for all peoples of the world will remain at least only on paper. What should the Bible societies do? One new inspiration to take care of this huge problem, even if partially, is to provide Scriptures in non-print media. Programs of this nature are now being initiated by Bible societies in Africa. The idea is to have audio, video Scriptures. One such initiative, in the case of the Swahili language, was started some years back by the Bible Society of Kenya and resulted in the publication of the "Faith comes by Hearing Program". The whole NT in this form was published early this year. We hope the Bible societies will also consider providing the OT in this same format to meet the needs of those who cannot read or are unwilling to read but are definitely willing to hear. While it is not explicitly stated that the UBS has a specific strategy for OT translations, it is clear from its program that this is implied. The word of God as a whole should be provided to peoples in the language they can understand and at a price they can afford.

Notes

[1] For me, the observation by Philip Noss is a great encouragement. Translators in Africa can indeed appreciate the fact that they are continuing the tradition of translations that began on their own continent.

[2] The Annual Reports of the United Bible Societies give annual information on its activities. The information given covers not only translation but also publication and distribution of Scriptures. These reports are very useful as they reveal the aims and goals set by the Bible Societies and how they have been achieved.

[3] The report of 1997 for the year 1996 gives six Bibles launched of which five were first publications and thereby underscoring UBS strategies on Old Testament translations.

[4] The newsletter is available online at *http:www.ubs-translations.org/*

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Central Issues of Old Testament Translation in Africa

Leonidas Kalugila

Bible translation in Africa has been important in the past years, is still important today and will be important in the future.

Dr Renju's survey of Bible translation in Africa from a historical perspective demonstrates that this has not been an easy work (Renju 2000: 196–197). The translators have faced various problems. Some knew the source languages, i.e. Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek, but some did not, and had to depend on various European translations. Some were mother tongue speakers of the languages into which they were translating, but others were not. This caused a lot of confusion in rendering the right terms, the poetry passages, the idioms, the proverbs, etc. Therefore, most translations of the past were literal ones. Such translations could not be well understood by readers, and some were even rejected.

The translators of the Old Testament (OT) into Geez—the first translation of the Bible into an African language—used the Septuagint, and not the Hebrew text as the source text. However, which version of the Septuagint was used? Mikre-Sellassie (1998: 10–11) points out that since the first missionaries to Ethiopia came from Syria, the textual basis for the translation of the OT was the Lucian recension of the Septuagint, then widely used in Syria. This explains the fact that the Geez OT has several examples of Syriac loan-words. The circumstances around the Geez translation is representative for many translations even today.

There is a lot to be said about Bible translation in Africa, and the following topics will be discussed: (i) questions related to the source languages; (ii) certain cultural problems, such as terminology, customs and rituals; (iii) different linguistic structures and figuers of language; (iv) the problems of rendering names; and (v) some concluding remarks.

General problems

There are many problems which a translator encounters during his or her struggle. From the beginning, it is therefore necessary for a translator to follow Nida's general guidelines (Nida 1964: 241):

- analysis of the source and receptor languages
- analysis of the source text
- analysis of the possibilities for appropriate equivalents (Kalugila 1988: 111)

Nida's guidelines are important. The translator should first of all have a good grasp of the linguistic structures of the source and receptor languages. As for the latter, the translator should know the language as it occurs in contemporary usage, and also its historical background and traditional usages. Above all the translator, Nida emphasizes, "[...] must be both sensitive to and capable of producing an appropriate style, whether in spoken or written form." (Nida 1964: 242). Once the correct form of the text has been determined, its meaning must be studied, this can be done by taking the following into consideration: lexico-grammatical features of the immediate unit, discourse context, communicative context, cultural context of the source language, cultural context of the receptor language.

Textual problems

Scribal changes

The early scribes used pens (cf. Jer 8:8) and ink (cf. Jer 36:18). They wrote on skins (or papyrus), and these were joined to scrolls (cf. Jer 36:13–14; Ezek 2:9; Zech 5:1). However, the script written on these scrolls is different from the script we find in our Hebrew bibles. This is demonstrated by the Siloam inscription (700 B.C.), the Gezer Calendar (8th to 7th centuries B.C.), and the Lachish Ostraca (590 B.C.). The old Hebrew script resembles the old Phoenician and Moabite script as seen on the Moabite stone of King Mesha. The Samaritan script of the Pentateuch has continued the old Hebrew script, though with some modifications.

The old script continued being in use for a long time. After the Babylonian exile it was gradually superceded by the Aramaic script.

According to *Talmud Sanhedrin* 21b, it was Ezra who made this change. A good example of the problems caused by this is what happened to some personal names: a certain *Haleb* occurs in 2 Sam 23:29, whereas he reoccurs in 1 Chr 11:30 under the name *Heled.* The last letters *b* and *d* were written interchangeably in the old Hebrew.

Also divisions of words caused problems. The Samaria ostraca and the Siloam inscription have dots—and sometimes also strokes—in order to show the division of words. This way of division was also used in the inscription of the Moabite stone and in the Phoenician inscriptions. An illustrative example of what happens when two words are read as one, or one read as two, is found in Amos 6:12: should the Bible translator here follow the Masoretic tradition and read בבקרים as one word, which gives "will one plow there with oxen?", or should it instead be read as two words, בבקר ים, which gives "does one plow the sea with oxen?" A survey of various Swahili translations shows that both readings have been followed:

> The Swahili Union Version:
> *Je! Mtu atalima na ng'ombe huko?* ("Will a person cultivate there with oxen?")
>
> Habari Njema:
> *Je, watu huilima bahari kwa ng'ombe?* ("Do people cultivate the sea with oxen?")
>
> A translation of 1914:
> *Jee, mtu atalima na ng'ombe hapo?* ("Will a person cultivate at that place with oxen?")
>
> Roehl's translation of 1937:
> *Au mtu atapalima kwa ng'ombe?* ("Or will a person cultivate there with oxen?")

This should suffice to demonstrate that difficulties in the Hebrew text create difficulties for the translator.

Repitition

When one reads the OT one discovers that many texts are repeated. Some are identical, word by word, and others are parallels with very few alterations. The following are a few examples:

The death of Saul	1 Sam 31:1–13	1 Chr 10:1–14
David's son born at Hebron	2 Sam 3:1–5	1 Chr 3:1–4

David captures Jerusalem	2 Sam 5:6–10	1 Chr 11:4–9
The ark brought to Jerusalem	2 Sam 6:19–23	1 Chr 16:43
David's psalm of deliverance	2 Sam 22:1–51	Ps 18:1–50
David's charge to Solomon	1 Kgs 2:1–9	1 Chr 22:2–19
The death of David	1 Kgs 2:10–12	1 Chr 22b–30
Solomon's prayer for wisdom	1 Kgs 2:46–3:15	2 Chr 1:1–13

Many African translations render the related passages differently. This happens if the translator does not take time to study the text carefully.

Textual corruptions
Textual corruptions have occurred throughout the copying of the text. Some scribes never wrote clearly, therefore other scribes were mislead to think of different letters.

Khetib/qere
We have seen above that the Hebrew texts reflect problems on different levels and from different perspectives. However, it should still be acknowledged that the Masoretes strongly wanted to preserve the text as it had been handed over to them. They emphasized that that no changes should be made in the received texts. The Hebrew and Aramaic texts were regarded as authoritative, referred to as *khetib*, "written". Still, since it was accepted that scribal changes, repetitions and omissions existed, the Masoretes agreed that if corrections were to be made, then they should be only written in the margin or below the *khetib*. This is referred to as *qere*, "to be read". A knowledge of *khetib* and *qere* is important also for translators working in an African context.

Cultural problems

Let us the leave the textual problems, and proceed to problems created by cultural differences between Africa and the OT.

Terminology
There are many terms in the Hebrew texts that are not clear to African translators. An illustrative example, discussed by Mojola (1998: 15–29), is the Hebrew term שֵׁבֶט, traditionally rendered as "tribe". The translation of שֵׁבֶט into African languages has lead to much confusion. According to Mojola, the early Israelites constituted one single ethnic group, in the

same way as the Philistines, the Canaanites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Edomites and all the other dwellers or peoples of that region. In this sense the Israelites can be referred to as a "tribe", but then only one tribe, not twelwe. The so-called "twelve tribes" are probably best described as "clans", and Mojola gives the following definitions:

- בני/עם ישׂראל: tribe in the African context
- שׁבט and מטה: clan in the African context
- משׁפחה and אלף: lineage in the Africa context
- בית and בית אב: the extended family in the African context

In East Africa we have the following grouping of people: *taifa* "nation"; *kabila* "tribe"; *ukoo* "clan"; *shina* or *eihiga* (Haya) "stem"; *jamaa* "family": this includes father, mother and children of the same mother (Haya: *banyinemo*) or of the same father (Haya: *baishemo*) in case the father is a polygamist. It is possible that there are similar terms in other parts of Africa, therefore a translator in Africa ought to be careful in giving renderings of the term שׁבט and its related terms.

Customs

There are many examples of parallels between OT and African customs. Still, there are also many differences. One example is the custom of bowing down. To the Israelites this meant showing respect or homage (cf. Ps 72:11, Is 45:14) or, if the object is a god, worship (cf. Is 46:6, Dan 3:5.10.15; cp. Matt 4:9, Luke 4:7, Rev 4:10). Some Africans have this custom, for example the Haya and Ganda peoples, but to some Africans this custom is not common. It has therefore been debated whether it would be better to render this expression by using another way of showing respect, for example standing.

Another example is the custom of kissing: kissing was common among the Israelites; we read in Gen 27:27 that Jacob drew near and kissed Isaac his father, and in Gen 45:15 that Joseph kissed all his brothers. According to 1 Sam 20:41 Jonathan and David kissed one another, and Ps 85:10 says that righteousness and peace will kiss each other. In Africa there are some cultures where this custom of kissing is unknown, whereas others are familiar with it. Therefore, translators working in contexts where the custom is not known have debated whether it is possible to use expressions such as "greet politely" and "touch another person" (Ellington 1990: 409–416).

Rituals

There are also certain OT rituals which cause difficulties for the African translator. One example is the ritual of mourning. The Israelites had to wear sackclothes (cf. 2 Sam 2:31, 2 Kgs 19:1–7) during mourning, lamenting or repenting, and they also had to lie in ashes (cf. Esth 4:1.3, 2 Sam 13:19, 1 Kgs 20:38, Job 2:8, 42:6, Is 61:3, Lam 3:16, Dan 9:3, Jonah 3:6). In most African cultures this ritual of mourning is not common, therefore, a literal translation does communicate the right meaning. When, for example, the Maasai youths are in training (initiation process), they smear themselves with ashes. This ritual has nothing to do with mourning; therefore, the Isrealite ritual does not fit into theirs. Also, the Israelites were ordered to shave their head and beard during the ritual of mourning (cf. Job 1:20, Is 7:20, Jer 7:29); to some Africans this ritual is common but to oters it is not, therefore, the best would therefore be to find another kind of ritual which is common and which conveys the message to the people concerned.

Other rituals are related to sacrifice. An illustrative example is the regulation in Lev 16 of sending away a goat to Azazel. Lev 16 introduces Azazel without further presentation, and the meaning of the word remains uncertain. Different interpretations have been suggested, for example "evil spirit", "removal", or "devil". Interestingly, among the Chagga (East Africa) the same ritual is found. Here, however, the goat is not sent to Azazel but into the wilderness (Kalugila 1991: 76–78; Mojola 1999: 57–83).

Names

Names of God

The OT has many names for God: *El*, *Yahweh*, *Adonai*, etc. In many Swahili translations the name *El* is translated as *Mungu*. In some other languages different renderings are given, for example among the Chagga *El* is called *Ruwa*, among the Pare *El* is called *Iruva*, among the Maasai *El* is called *Engai*, and among the Haya *El* is called *Katonda* or *Ruhanga*.

Many African names for God are related to the names of the sun (Mbiti 1970; Harjula 1969; Kalugila 1998: 48–49). One example is the Chagga, where the sun is called *Eruma*, and where we have seen that God is called *Ruwa*, that is a name for the sky, which is regarded as the dwelling-place of God. The comment of Millroth (1965: 25) is here important:

> The Chagga do not think of God himself as living on the other side of the blue vault of the sky. [...] His abode is rather between earth and heaven. They also call the whole heaven *Iruva* and they say that God, as it were, embraces the whole human world; the firm vault of the sky which, according to their belief, is made of stone, they call *ngina*. The upper world, however, as opposed to the earthly world, is called *Iruva* or mostly in the locative: *iruve-u*, i.e. with God.

When the Hebrew name *El* is to be rendered in an African language, an analysis of the beliefs of the people concerned is demanded. Many African cultures have stories or myths about the creation, and from a thorough analysis the translator will be able to get the right rendering. This can also apply to the name *Yahweh* (von Rad 1962: 139–165, 355–459; Jacob 1958: 43–55). For example, the Haya people call God *Nyakubao*, "He who is there always". This name can of course be used to render the Hebrew name *Yahweh*, which is interpreted as "I am who I am" by Exod 3:14. There are similar names in many African languages, and these should be explored and used.

Personal names

There are some personal names in the OT that create confusion. One example is אדם (Reyburn 1994: 417). It is not clear whether this has to be simply transliterated as Adam or to be translated as "man" or "mankind". But there are also other examples of symbolic names. One is שאר ישוב Is 7:3; should it be transliterated as Shear-Jashub or should it be translated as "A remnant will return". The same applies to several other names, cf. Hos 1:6.8.9, 2:1.

Names of plants

Many of the plants that are referred to in the OT are not known in parts of Africa. Some examples here are almong (Exod 25:33–36), almug (1 Kgs 10:11–12), aloes (Ps 45:8), aspalathus (Qoh 24:15), balm (Ezek 27:17), barley (Hos 3:2), bdellium (Num 11:6.7), hyssop (Ps 54:7; 1 Kgs 4:33), cassia (Exod 30:22–25), cedar of Lebanon (Ezek 31:3.5), chestnut (Gen 30:37), cinnamon (Exod 30:23), cockle (Job 31:40), fir (Is 60:13), sycamore (Am 7:14), wormwood (Lam. 3:15.19), figtree (Gen 3:6.7), olive (Gen 8:11, Exod 23:11, Deut 6:11, 24:20), etc. It is difficult to give the right tree names in African languages. One solution is to give related names (Koops 1995: 423–427), another is to transliterate the Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek names, and then have explanatory footnotes.

Names of animals

There are also many animals that are mentioned in the OT which are unknown in parts of Africa. Some examples are hind (Ps 18:33, Hab 3:19), horse (Gen 47:17, Is 28:24–29, 2 Kings 23:5.11, 9:14–37, Esth 6:8.10.11), camel (2 Kgs 8:9), mule (Lev 19:19), etc. Also some names of mythological animals are complicated, for example is *Leviathan* transliterated or translated as follows in Swahili bibles: *nondo wa baharini* ("a snake of ocean"), *mamba* ("crocodile"), and *dude* ("a big animal"). It is complicated to get the right names of the animals that are not common; perhaps one should use transliterations here too, and then give explanations in footnotes.

Different syntactic structures and figures of language

There are many idioms and figures of language in the OT that are confusing to the translator in Africa. Here are some examples: In Gen 4:1 it is said that וידע קין את אשתו. Here the verb ידע can be translated as "perceive", "become informed", "aware of", "feel", "know carnally", "recognise", "acknowledge" or "regard". Many translators render the word in its most usual meaning: "to know", and the reading then becomes "And Adam *knew* his wife". To some African languages the word "knew" does not make sense here; therefore, the translator has to find a word which will not confuse the reader. Another example is found in Gen 29:17, which reads ועיני לאה רכות. Here the word רכות is confusing; its root means "tender", "young", "object of care", "effeminate", "weak", "timid", "gentle", "tender-eyed". It is possible that her eyes were "gentle", thus she was good looking, but not as beautiful as Rachel. In other words, an appropriate word in the receptor language is needed.

Of particular importance is the question of how to render poetry. A translator in Africa struggles to get the right parallelisms (Reyburn 1988: 81–112)—that is synonymous (cf. Pss 15:1, 24:1–3, 1 Sam 18:7), antithic (cf. Ps 37:9, Prov 10:1, 11:3), and synthetic (cf. Ps 19:8–9). There are acrostic poems too that have to be taken into consideration (for example Pss 9–10, 34, 37, 119, Prov 31:10–31). Proverbs and other didactic poems are also complicated: a translator has to be careful when translating them (Masenya 1999: 225; Kimilike 1999: 9–10; Holter 1999: 11–15). This applies to various parts of the OT: Job—which is dramatic, and Ecclesiastes—which contains didictic poetry and prose. It is not easy

for any translator in Africa to give the right rendering in the translation; one has to make careful analyses of the receptor language in order to give a good translation.

To this section we can also add various linguistic structures. One is rhetorical expressions, for example Ps 78:36 and Ps 63:8; such expressions ought to be studied carefully (Nida 1982: 325). Another is direct and indirect speech. According to Noss (1988: 131), in Gbaya the ambiguity is avoided by use of the logophoric pronoun *wi*, which refers in indirect discourse to the original speaker; usually in the third person, but occasionally in second person.

Conclusion

In this paper it has been argued that Bible translation is important in Africa, and that a knowledge of the source languages is vital. Furthermore, various examples textual problems and cultural problems have been discussed, and so have problems related to names and to different linguistic structures and figures of language. There is a lot to be done with regard to translating the Bible into African languages. I will therefore conclude this paper by making some proposals:

1. Biblical languages should be emphasized in theological colleges and seminaries in Africa; some of today's students will be tomorrow's biblical lecturers and translators.
2. Those theological colleges and seminaries which lack specialized biblical scholars should invite scholars from other continents.
3. Translators without knowledge in the source languages should be thoroughly trained in Bible translation skills.

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Morphological and Syntactical Correspondences Between Hebrew and Bantu Languages

Victor Zinkuratire

In a session on translating the Old Testament in Africa it is surely not out of place to draw attention to some features of the Hebrew language that have close equivalents in Bantu languages.[1] This is what I will attempt to do in this paper. It is almost entirely based on my own discoveries as far as the Hebrew language is concerned, and on consultation with colleagues and friends as far as the Bantu languages referred to are concerned.[2] This is why there is no bibliography as such but only a few primary source references.

In the course of my teaching Hebrew to Graduate students at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa over many years, I came to realize that it is useful for the teacher to refer to African languages and see if there is something that can help students to understand certain features of Hebrew grammar. The English language, which we use as the medium of teaching, is very different both from Hebrew and from Bantu languages. Many times there were cases where students found a Hebrew grammatical or syntactical feature rather strange and difficult to understand. But frequently we discovered that many of these peculiar features in Hebrew seemed difficult only because we were comparing them with English grammar and syntax. When we tried to compare them with some Bantu languages we were often amazed to discover that what had seemed so strange, when seen from the English speaker's point of view, was perfectly normal to speakers of Bantu languages. Out of curiosity I, together with my students who come from various countries of Eastern Africa, decided to do a little comparative study between a number of Bantu languages and Hebrew. The languages selected were: Runyankore-Rukiga from Uganda; Kikuyu and Luhya from Kenya;

Bemba from Zambia, and Kiswahili from Tanzania and East Africa as a whole.

In this paper, which is only exploratory, I will give some examples of certain morphological and syntactical correspondences between Hebrew and Bantu languages that we discovered. I will only give a few that come to mind but I am sure that a more systematic search would discover many others. I would therefore encourage African teachers and students of Hebrew to look in the Hebrew Bible for more examples of these correspondences and similarities.

I shall begin with the examples based on morphology and taken from one very important area of Hebrew grammar, namely the Hebrew verb system or conjugations. It will not be necessary to cover all the conjugations although every one of them contains examples. After the morphological examples I shall give some syntactical ones. A couple of examples will be about "redundant" pronouns and adverbs of place. A final example of comparison will be taken from a very common feature of the Hebrew language, namely the *qatal+wayyiqtol* (perfect+ imperfect) verb sequence used in past tense narrative. Basically this will be a comparison between Hebrew narrative, in which the *waw*-consecutive is prominent, and Bantu language narrative, which uses a special past tense, also called the consecutive tense and somehow comparable to the Hebrew *waw*-consecutive.

Morphological correspondences

One of the most difficult features of Hebrew grammar that a beginning student faces is the Hebrew verb system or what grammarians sometimes call "conjugations" for lack of a better term. I shall also be using this term in what follows. These conjugations are: *Qal, Piel, Hiphil, Niphal, Hithpael, Pual and Hophal. Qal* refers to the simplest form of a verb. The rest of the conjugations are forms which derive from the *Qal* and whose basic form they modify in one way or another to express related meanings of the same verb. For example they may change the verb from the stative or intransitive mood to the factitive or transitive, from active to either causative or reflexive or passive, from a simple action to an intensive or repeated one, and other grammatical and semantic modifications of this nature.

Examples from the Piel Conjugation

The *Piel* form expresses the intensive meaning of the simple form. For example שׁבר *shabar,* is the *Qal* form of the verb to break. The *Piel* form of this verb is *shibber* from the same root and it means to smash or shatter. The basic meaning of the *Qal* form is intensified by the *Piel* form. In such cases the English language normally uses either a different verb or a phrase to express the intensive meaning, e.g. to "smash" or "break into small peaces". Bantu languages on the other hand use the same verb and simply give it a different form like in Hebrew. For example to break is *kwata,* in my native language. To smash is *kwatagura.* The same verb is used with a morphological modification, just like in Hebrew where *shabar* becomes *shibber.* In this case it is easy to explain to a Bantu speaking student the difference between a *Qal* and a *Piel* by simply referring to this similarity instead of giving abstract explanations. Some examples from other Bantu languages using the same verb, to break:

Simple form, like the Hebrew *Qal*: Intensive form, like the Hebrew *Piel*:

Kikuyu:	*Kuraga*	*Kuraganga*
Bemba:	*Ugutoba*	*Ugutobaula*
Kiswahili:	*Kuvunja*	*Kuvunjavunja*

There are times when the *Qal* form of a verb is either stative or intransitive, whereas the *Piel* form is transitive. For example טהר *tahar,* means to be clean (stative) but the *Piel* form *tihar* means to make clean or to cleanse. In my language the equivalent of the *Qal* is *kwera*, to be clean, and the *Piel* equivalent is *kweza*, to cleanse. In this case the English is forced to use an adjective "clean" because it does not have an equivalent stative verb as in Hebrew and Bantu languages.

Another example is the verb יראּ *yare'*, to be afraid or to fear (stative). Its *Piel* form *yireh* means to make afraid or to terrify. In my language to be afraid is *kutiina* (stative) and to terrify is *kutiinisa* (transitive). Exactly the same verb is used with a morphological change, just like in Hebrew. Here the English uses either the adjective "afraid": to be afraid and to make afraid, or two different verbs: to fear (stative) and to terrify (transitive).

We give an example using the same verb from other Bantu languages:

Stative-intransitive verb	Transitive form of the same verb
Kikuyu: *Gwitigira*, to fear	*Gwitigirithia*, to frighten
Bemba: *Ukutina*, to fear	*Ukutinya*, to frighten
Kiswahili: *Kuogopa*, to fear	*Kuogopea*, to frighten
Luhya: *Khuria*, to fear	*Khurisia,* to frighten

Sometimes the *Qal* form of a verb is active whereas its *Piel* form is causative. For example למד *lamad*, means to learn whereas *limmed* means to cause to learn, to teach. In my language to learn is *kwega* (active, corresponding to *Qal*) and to teach is *kwegyesa* (causative, corresponding to *Piel*). It should again be noted that the English has to use a different verb or a phrase, unlike in Hebrew and Bantu languages where the same verb is used with the appropriate morphological adjustment. This makes it a little easier for the Bantuphone students to understand the meaning of the Hebrew conjugation *Piel.*

Examples from the Hiphil Conjugation

Another Hebrew conjugation that can be easily explained to Bantu speaking students is the *Hiphil*. This has some semantic overlap with the *Piel*, especially in the causative mood. Some examples of this are: the *Qal* form אכל *'akal*, to eat, becomes האכל *he'ekal*, to feed, in the *Hiphil* form. In my Bantu language to eat is *kurya*, which corresponds to the Hebrew *Qal*. In the causative it becomes *kuriisa*, to feed, and corresponds to the Hebrew *Hiphil*. Another verb is שוב *shub*, in the *Qal* form, which means to return (intransitive). Its *Hiphil* form השיב *heshib* means to cause to return, i.e. to bring back or restore. In my language the verb *kugaruka* means to return i.e. come back, and corresponds to the Hebrew *Qal*, and *kugarura*, which corresponds to the Hebrew *Hiphil*, which means to cause to return, i.e. to bring back or restore, just as in Hebrew. Examples from other Bantu languages, with a transitive verb and an intransitive one:

Trans. verb, cf. Hebrew *Qal*	Causative verb, cf. Hebrew *Hiphil*
Kikuyu: *Kuria*, to eat	*Kuriithia*, to cause to eat, to feed
Bemba: *Ukulya*, to eat	*Ukulisha*, to feed
Kiswahili: *Kula*, to eat	*Kulisha*, to feed
Luhya: *Khulia*, to eat	*Khulisia*, to feed

Examples of an intransitive verb from other Bantu languages:

Kikuyu: *Gucoka*, to return	*Gucokia*, to return
Bemba: *Ukubwela*, to return	*Ukubwesha*, to bring back
Kiswahili, *Kurudi*, to return	*Kurudisha*, to bring back
Luhya: *Khukalukha*, to return	*Khukalusia,* to bring back

An example from the Hithpael Conjugation

My final example is taken from the *Hithpael* conjugation. The verb הלך *halak*, in the *Qal* form, means to walk or to go. The *Hithpael* form of this verb is התהלך *hithalek,* and it means to walk around repeatedly or to roam. In my language to walk is *kugyenda*, and it corresponds to the Hebrew *Qal* form. To walk around is *kugyendagyenda*, corresponding to the Hebrew *Hithpael*. It is interesting to note that the Hebrew conjugation *Hithpael*, which makes this verb iterative, i.e. expressing a repeated action, is morphologically longer than its *Qal* form. This is exactly the same with the equivalent verb in my language: from *kugyenda* to *kugyendagyenda*, the root of the verb being simply repeated to express the repetition of the action. Other Bantu languages behave the same way, as the following examples show:

Kikuyu: *Guthii*, to walk	*Guthururuka*, to walk about
Bemba: *Ukwenda*, to walk	*Ukwendauka*, to walk about
Kiswahili, *Kutembea*, to walk	*Kutembeatembea*, to walk about
Luhya: *Khukenda*, to walk	*Khukendakenda*, to walk about

I would like to point out that the above examples of morphological similarities between Hebrew and Bantu languages are not isolated cases. They are quite common and consistent and can be found in all the Hebrew verb conjugations. It is therefore important for teachers and students of Hebrew to know how to exploit them for making the study of Hebrew a little easier and more interesting for Bantu-speaking students.

Syntactical similarities

There are also certain similarities of syntax between Hebrew and Bantu languages. The first example is what appears to be a redundant use of a pronoun in relative clauses. For example in Hebrew the phrase על הארץ אשר אתם ישבים בה (Num 33:55), "in the land where you dwell", is

literally "upon the land which you dwell in it". The Hebrew *bah* בה (in it) can puzzle students when seen from the point of view of English syntax. But as a matter of fact Bantu languages use similar "redundant" suffixes or infixes. In my language, for example, the above is translated as "*omuri egyo nsi ei mutwiremu*". The last syllable *mu* of the last word corresponds exactly to the Hebrew בה. Even the word order is remarkably the same. Something similar is המקום אשר אתה עומד עליו (Exod 3:5). The literal translation is "the place where you are standing *on it*". My language puts it exactly the same way: *omwanya gu oyemereireho.* The *ho* corresponds to the Hebrew עליו. Even here the word order is the same.

The phrase in Num 33:55, translated in English as "in the land where you dwell" is rendered in Kikuyu as: *o kuu bururi ucio mutuurite.* In the verb *mutuurite* the last syllable *te* corresponds to what I describe as the Hebrew redundant pronoun in a relative clause. The same phrase in Kiswahili is *katika hiyo nchi ambayo mwaiketi.* Even here the seeming pronominal redundancy is found in the relative term *ambayo* where the last syllable *yo* refers back to the *nchi*, land. The verb itself contains another seemingly redundant adverb of place which is infixed between the personal pronoun *mwa* and the verb *keti*: *mwa*-i-*keti*, and this adverb of place is what really corresponds to the Hebrew preposition-*cum*-pronoun בה in it. These syntactical features in Hebrew and Bantu languages are not real redundancies except from an English speaker's point of view. The English literal translation of the above phrase, both from Hebrew and Bantu languages, reads something like: "in the land where you dwell *there*" or "in the land where you dwell *in it*".

Another example is the seemingly redundant adverb of place. In Genesis 13:3: "to the place where his tent had been" is expressed in Hebrew as עד המקום אשר היה שם אהלה = "to the place where his tent had been *there*". In my language it is translated as *omu mwanya ogu eihema rye ryabaire ririmu.* The suffix *mu* in the last word *ririmu* is the adverb of place translating the Hebrew שם *sham* ("there"). The literal translation from my language is "in the place where his tent had been *in there*". This is exactly like in the Hebrew. In Kiswahili the translation of our example would be: *mahali pale palipokuwapo hema yake.* The last syllable *po* in *palipokuwapo* corresponds to the Hebrew adverb of place *sham*, "there". A very literal translation of the Kiswahili might read like: "the place where his tent had been *there*". In the English translation the last word is redundant because it is already implied in "where".

The next example of a syntactic correspondence between Hebrew and Bantu languages is found in Hebrew narrative texts. Here the Hebrew uses what is known as *waw*-consecutive or *waw*-conversive. At the beginning of a narrative a normal past tense is used, but the subsequent verbs are put in a special narrative tense until the conjunction *waw* "and" in the *waw*-consecutive form becomes, for one reason or another, separated from the *wayyiqtol*, i.e. the imperfect form of the verb. In this case a normal past tense is resumed in the introductory sentence of the next episode and then followed once again by the *qatal*+*wayyiqtol* (perfect+imperfect) verb sequence. This is a very common feature in Hebrew narrative, especially in the historical books. But it is often very puzzling to beginning students of Hebrew. The reason for this is that the English language does not have any special narrative tense. It uses a normal past tense preceded by words like "and", "so", "then" to indicate the succession of events.

In Bantu languages, on the other hand, past tense narratives use a sequence of special tenses exactly corresponding in function to the Hebrew *waw*-consecutive. It is interesting to note here that one Kikuyu Grammar (Gecaga 1994: 59) uses the expression "consecutive tenses" to describe the narrative tenses we are dealing with. It is precisely these "consecutive tenses" that correspond to the Hebrew *waw*-consecutive. The examples are abundant in the historical books of the Old Testament. We shall give an example from the story of the marriage of Isaac and Rebecca in Genesis 24, and another one from the Book of Ruth.

Gen 24:1 opens with a past tense: "Abraham was old and Yahweh had blessed him". The English narrative continues with the normal past tense in the rest of the story, using "and", "so", "then", to indicate the succession of events. But in Hebrew and Bantu languages the past tense is used only in v. 1. From v. 2 onward the *waw*-consecutive (in Hebrew) and a "consecutive" tense (in Bantu languages) are the ones used, except when there is a transition to a new episode in the story or when the succession of events has been interrupted, e.g. by dialogue. In this case the normal past tense is used to introduce the next episode or to resume the interrupted narrative. In Gen 24:2, the *waw*-consecutive takes over: *wayyomer abraham* = ויאמר אברהם "and Abraham said". The normal past tense, which Hebrew grammar calls the perfect, would have been אמר *amar*. Similarly in my language we say: *Aburahamu yagambira*: *yagambira* is the narrative or consecutive tense corresponding to the Hebrew *waw*-consecutive *wayyomer*. The normal past tense would have been *akagambira*. It is this consecutive tense that is mostly used

throughout the story except at the beginning of a new episode in the story or after some interruption in the sequence of events when the normal past tense is used to resume the narration. The Bantu speaking readers can easily check this out for themselves. Even those who do not know Hebrew will note that a special narrative tense in their language, with no equivalent in English, is normally used. The difference between Hebrew and Bantu languages in this regard is that the Hebrew *waw*-consecutive is much more consistently used than the Bantu consecutive tense.

The same use of a special narrative tense is found in the Kikuyu language. In Gen 24:1 the narrative begins with a normal past tense: *Na riri, Iburahimu niaakurite...; ningi Jehova niaarathimite Iburahimu maundu-ini mothe*: "Abraham was old... Yahweh had blessed him". From v. 2 the consecutive tense takes over: *Nake Iburahimu akiira ndungata yake...*: "And Abraham said to his servant" (v. 2). *Nayo ndungata io ikimuuria*: "Then the servant asked him" (v. 5). Other clear examples can be seen in Ruth 2. *Nake Ruthu ucio Mumoabi agikiira Naomi*: "And Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi" (v. 2). *Nake agigithii*: "And she (Ruth) went" (v.3). It is this tense that is mostly used throughout the chapter.

The Hebrew *waw*-consecutive corresponds to the Kiswahili narrative tense characterized by the *ka* element in the verb, instead of the *li* element which characterizes the normal past tense. For example, Ru 2:1 opens with: *Basi huyo Naomi alikuwa na ndugu ya mumewe*: "Naomi *had* a kinsman of her husband's." This is the beginning of the narrative where the normal past tense is used: *alikuwa*. But from verse 2 onwards it is the *ka* tense used: *Ruth akamwambia Naomi*: "And Ruth the Moabite *said* to Naomi": *Basi akaenda, akaja akaokota masazo*: "So she *went* and *came* and *gleaned*" (v. 3). *Na tazama, Boazi akaja kutoka Bethlehemu akawaamkia wavunaji, akasema*: "And Boaz *came* from Bethlehem and *greeted* the harvesters and *said*" (v. 4). The same narrative tense continues in the rest of the story. The above examples will suffice for our purpose.

Conclusion

The discovery of these similarities and correspondences has, in my view, important implications. First of all, for those who teach Hebrew through the medium of English to Bantu students, a comparison with the Bantu languages will quite often facilitate the explanation and understanding of

certain features of biblical Hebrew. From my teaching experience I know that there are cases when students have problems understanding some of the issues I have mentioned simply because English grammar and syntax stand in their way. Anyone contemplating writing a Hebrew Grammar for Bantu speaking students would therefore do well to include such comparisons.

Secondly, there are implications also for Bible translation into African languages. Some African students of Hebrew will later on be involved in translating the Bible into Bantu languages. When they are already aware that there are certain grammatical and other similarities between Hebrew and their language they will exploit them to the full. For example on the morphological level the Hebrew piel form of the verb (intensive) or the hithpael form (iterative) will easily find the exact intensive or iterative Bantu equivalents, as we have indicated. In this way the translation will be enriched because the nuances of the Hebrew verb will not be lost in the target language.

Perhaps the temptation of African translators of the Bible is to depend too much on English (and other European) translations. This is quite understandable because that is what they are most familiar with. For those who do not know biblical languages there may not be any alternative to such translations. But for someone who has studied Hebrew it is very useful always to go to the Hebrew text first and examine the grammar and the syntax of the verse to be translated and then compare it with that of the target African language. The translator will sometimes be surprised to discover that it is so much easier to translate straight from the Hebrew into a Bantu language without going through a European language. Obviously this requires a high degree of proficiency in biblical Hebrew, which most African translators do not possess as yet. In any case it is the text of the original language that must always be the primary basis of any translation. Other translations can only play a subsidiary role.

This paper is primarily meant to draw the attention of African Old Testament scholars and students to the possibilities of African languages, the Bantu group in particular, as an auxiliary medium for the teaching of biblical Hebrew. It would be interesting for the other non-Bantu African groups of languages to make the same kind of comparative study with the Hebrew for finding out any correspondences. It is most likely that the Hamitic and Nilotic groups of languages would yield a still closer and more radical resemblance with Hebrew than the Bantu languages.

The existence of such correspondences and similarities between Hebrew and African languages might even have other implications beyond their usefulness for teaching Hebrew and translating the Bible. They could encourage African Old Testament scholars to examine the potential of using mainly African Bible translations (instead of European ones) in conjunction with the Hebrew (and Greek) Bible. I believe that this might prove to be one promising route towards a genuine African biblical exegesis that will facilitate a more contextualized interpretation of the Bible for Africans.

Notes

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2 The term "Bantu" used here is internationally accepted as a designation for a group of languages spoken by some 200 million people living in equatorial and southern Africa.

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List of Contributors

David Tuesday Adamo
Dept of Religious Studies
Delta State University
Abraka, Nigeria

Margaret Aringo
Tangaza College
P.O. Box 15055, Nairobi, Kenya

Hendrik Bosman
Dept of Old and New Testament
University of Stellenbosch
Private Bag X1
Matieland 7602, South Africa

Mary Getui
Dept of Religious Studies
Kenyatta University
P.O. Box 43844, Nairobi, Kenya

Jonathan Gichaara
Dept of Religious Studies
Kenyatta University
P.O. Box 43844, Nairobi, Kenya

Sammy Githuku
St Paul's United Theological
College, Private Bag
Limuru, Kenya

Tewoldemedhin Habtu
Nairobi Evangelical Graduate
School of Theology
P.O. Box 24686, Nairobi, Kenya

Knut Holter
School of Mission and Theology
Misjonsvegen 34
N-4024 Stavanger, Norway

Louis Jonker
Dept of Old and New Testament
University of Stellenbosch
Private Bag X1
Matieland 7602, South Africa

Leonidas Kalugila
United Bible Societies
P.O. Box 21360, Nairobi, Kenya

Bungishabaku Katho
Nairobi Evangelical Graduate
School of Theology
P.O. Box 24686, Nairobi, Kenya

Serapio Kabazzi Kisirinya
Dept of Religious Studies
Makerere University
P.O. Box 7062
Kampala, Uganda

Marta Høyland Lavik
School of Mission and Theology
Misjonsvegen 34
N-4024 Stavanger, Norway

Madipoane Masenya
University of South Africa
P.O. Box 2805
0700 Pietersburg, South Africa

Aloo Osotsi Mojola
Bible Society of Tanzania
P.O. Box 175
Dodoma, Tanzania

Jesse N.K. Mugambi
Dept of Religious Studies
P.O. Box 30197, Nairobi, Kenya

Joseph Muutuki
Bible & Religious Studies Dept
Daystar University
P.O. Box 44400, Nairobi, Kenya

Philomena Mwaura
Dept of Religious Studies
Kenyatta University
P.O. Box 43844, Nairobi, Kenya

Pauline Otieno
Dept of Religious Studies
Kenyatta University
P.O. Box 43844, Nairobi, Kenya

Peter Renju
Nairobi Translation Centre
P.O. Box 42726, Nairobi, Kenya

Constance Shisanya
Dept of Religious Studies
Kenyatta University
P.O. Box 43844, Nairobi, Kenya

Anne Nasimiyu Wasike
Dept of Religious Studies
Kenyatta University
P.O. Box 43844, Nairobi, Kenya

Victor Zinkuratire
Faculty of Theology
Catholic University of
Eastern Africa
P.O. Box 24205, Nairobi, Kenya

This book is a collection of papers read at the International Symposium on Africa and the Old Testament in Nairobi, October 1999. Thirty biblical scholars and theologians—mainly from Eastern Africa, but some also from South Africa and Europe—came together to discuss what it means to interpret the Old Testament in Africa today. Their contributions fall in five parts: (i) a mapping of the social, historical, and academic context of Old Testament studies in Africa; (ii) exegetical studies of how Africa is portrayed by the Old Testament; (iii) examples of how the African socio-religious experience can serve as comparative material for interpretation of the Old Testament; (iv) examples of how Old Testament texts are experienced as relevant to contemporary African readers; and (v) various aspects of the efforts of translating the Old Testament in Africa today.

The three editors of the book—who were also organizers of the symposium—come from different theological and scholarly traditions, but all three have for several years been engaged in research and networking within African theology and biblical scholarship. **Mary Getui** earned her Ph.D. from Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya (1994), where she now works as Senior Lecturer. **Knut Holter** earned his Th.D. from the University of Oslo, Norway (1993), and is now Associate Professor at the School of Mission and Theology, Stavanger, Norway. **Victor Zinkuratire** earned his Ph.D. from the University of Cambridge, United Kingdom (1987), and is now Associate Professor at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Nairobi, Kenya.