

A Story of two Ways

*Thirty Years of Old Testament
Scholarship in South Africa*

J H le Roux



NEW SERIES

**OLD TESTAMENT
ESSAYS**

Supplement Number 2

A STORY OF TWO WAYS

OLD TESTAMENT ESSAYS

Supplement Series Number 2

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*Thirty Years of Old Testament
Scholarship in South Africa*

J H le Roux

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*Dedicated to South African Old Testament scholars —
past, present and future*

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Editor's Preface

In this monograph the author writes a history that spans over a period of thirty years (1957-1987) of Old Testament Scholarship in South Africa which he claims to be the 'golden age'. He deals with the work of the 'leading figures' determined by the following criteria: their publications, their influence on doctoral students and their national as well as international recognition.

In Chapter 1 (Prologue) the author explains his selection criteria. The following chapters deal with the understanding of the text (Chapter 2), the Pentateuch (Chapter 3), the Prophets (Chapter 4), the Psalms (Chapter 5), and Wisdom literature (Chapter 6). He concludes his research with an epilogue (Chapter 7) in which he discusses 'some aspects of Old Testament studies in South Africa'.

The editors of *Old Testament Essays* welcome this publication and congratulate the author on the manner in which he executed this important but difficult piece of research. We introduce it to a wider readership with the hope that scholars, students, libraries, ministers and other interested readers will use it extensively. Since a discussion of the author's own contribution to our fraternity is lacking, this publication is not fully complete. We trust that this matter will be rectified by somebody.

Hopefully the author will update this history after a decade or more to include the important contribution of an upcoming new generation of Old Testament Scholars in South Africa.

Prof J J Burden
Editor: Old Testament Essays
June 1993

Foreword

At the conclusion of this study I would like to thank the following persons and institutions:

Ferdinand Deist, who suggested a long time ago that a history of Old Testament science in South Africa should be written, and that I should do it. I am deeply grateful for our very many conversations over the years.

My colleague, *Willem (Riempies) Prinsloo*, who went out of his way to accommodate me so that this study could reach completion. His enthusiastic encouragement has meant a lot to me. Through his intervention, a generous contribution was received from the University of Pretoria to help meet the costs of the publication.

Elize Henning, for the large volume of typing done; *Jasper Burden* for reading the manuscript and for his very valuable criticism; *Beverley van Reenen* for her contribution in improving my English; *Eben Scheffler* for his interest and the very professional way in which he prepared the manuscript for printing; *Johan Lemmer* for his willingness to publish this work.

The *University of Pretoria* for a generous donation towards the publication of this work. The *University of South Africa* is also thanked for its contribution.

The *Old Testament Society of South Africa*, who commissioned me with the task. For this commission I shall be grateful all my life.

My wife, *Lynette*, and my daughters, *Lizelle and Jurné*, who make it possible for me to pursue a life of study and research.

And *Almighty God*, whose love fires me with enthusiasm for Biblical Science.

Jurie le Roux
Pentecost 1993

Chapter one

Prologue

The prologue and epilogue of this book resemble those of the book of Job. Both are very short, set the stage for the main section, can be understood separately and are nothing more than a brief introduction to and summary of our endeavours. Unlike Job's prologue and epilogue, it can be stated with certainty that the prologue and the epilogue of this book derive from the same author. Another difference lies in the fact that different genres have not been used. In this book the prologue consists of a few general remarks on Old Testament scholarship in South Africa and the epilogue merely functions to provide the reader with some concluding remarks.

This is a research history. It deals with the work of some South African Old Testament scholars and covers the period from 1957 to 1987. The year 1957 serves as *terminus a quo* because the Old Testament Society of South Africa was founded in that year. It was Albertus van Zyl who took the first step in this direction. After an overseas visit, during which he attended a congress on the study of the Old Testament, he approached Adrianus Van Selms and Barend Gemser with the request to establish a similar organisation in South Africa. They took things further and in December 1957 the Old Testament Society of South Africa was formed. Of course important work was done before that period, but this event gave a new impetus to Old Testament study in South Africa. Since that day in 1957 a vast number of books, theses and articles on the Old Testament have been published, and it was therefore decided to take 1987 as *terminus ad quem*. Thirty years of Old Testament study have thus been discussed. Perhaps one day these years will be called the 'golden era' of Old Testa-

ment scholarship in South Africa.

An attempt has been made to write a history and not a chronicle — not the mere accumulation of biographical or bibliographical information, but a history dealing with people and their views on the Old Testament. And the people we are writing about have all been or are members of the Old Testament Society of South Africa. Within these circles the study of the Old Testament has developed and flourished.

It soon became apparent that not all scholars can be discussed and not all the literature can be mentioned in this history. We have therefore decided to identify a few leading figures and build the history around them. They are the main representatives of Old Testament study and their work reflects the typical features of South African scholarship. To 'qualify' as a leading figure, high standards were set; publications (books and articles), his or her influence on doctoral students, in particular, and national as well as international recognition were taken into account. A thesis, or a single article or two on a specific topic, were not considered sufficient. Much more was required.

An important aim of this study was to present the reader as far as possible with a complete picture of the leading Old Testament scholars in South Africa over the past thirty years. Sections depicting their approaches and contributions can be found in this book. Some attention was also given to each one's academic context, and mutual relationships were also indicated. Trends were identified and elaborated upon. Put differently, intellectual portraits were drawn, including more than the mere record of the literature published. Some (cf Fensham and Deist) were even described in some detail in order to get an overall picture of their views. Of course, not everyone qualified for such treatment because not all published the same amount or have reached the same level of scientific reflection on or understanding of the Old Testament. It must, however, also be stated that this work is something of a chronicle because brief mention is indeed made of some scholars and their work.

For practical reasons, the author has kept strictly to the dates mentioned above. Within this context, the latest publications of the leading figures have been taken into account. In a few instances the work of scholars falling outside this period has also been included: John William Colenso's work and that of Johannes du Plessis made impor-

tant contributions to the study of the Pentateuch; Dalene Heyns and Ig Gouws shed important light on the construction of contexts by means of sociological and anthropological theories; Henk Potgieter's work on the prophet of Jonah widened the scope of the so-called immanent reading of the Old Testament; Barend van der Merwe wrote an excellent work on Deutero-Isaiah which is still regarded as authoritative.

At the outset it must be stated that this work is incomplete. It focuses on only a few areas of Old Testament study in this country — hermeneutics, the Pentateuch, the prophets, the psalms and wisdom. Excellent work has been done in these fields and a study of them renders a clear picture of South African Old Testament scholarship. In other words, the contribution of South Africans is praiseworthy but this book only highlights some areas (and scholars), in the hope of depicting the way in which we have typically studied the Old Testament. We regret being unable to discuss the very important work of biblical archaeologists (like Hannes Olivier, Dan Pienaar and Wouter van Wyk), that of scholars studying the Ancient Near East (like Andre Conradie, Isak Cornelis, Lukas Muntingh and Rassie Smit), that of linguists (like Walter Claasen, Christo van der Merwe and Wollie Cloete), that of Bible translators (like Bart Oberholzer, Albertus van Zyl, Pieter Verhoef and Jaap Helberg) and that of scholars who focused on other and different aspects of Old Testament scholarship (like J D W Kritzinger, J H Scheepers, P F D Weiss). The book's purpose, as well as the limits set with regard to length, dictated to a large extent its content. Unfortunately, choices had to be made and important scholars were left out. I nevertheless trust that this work, despite all its deficiencies, will grant the reader some insight into our scientific dealings with the Old Testament during the past thirty years.

A brief description of each chapter follows below. In the next (the second) chapter, the problems attached to a scientific understanding of the Old Testament text are investigated. First of all, the theological atmosphere prevailing during the sixties and the seventies is depicted by means of Ian Eybers's and Pieter Verhoef's views. A very important point in this research history is the speech Willem Vorster delivered in March 1971, which gave rise to the so-called immanent reading of the Bible. Jimmie Loader made this approach accessible to Old Testament scholars while Willem Prinsloo popularised it in the sense that the method was propagated aggressively to students (and

church members). These endeavours made it the dominant model of exegesis — especially in the north. Ferdinand Deist had a different view and contributed immensely to hermeneutical issues pertaining to the understanding of the Old Testament. This chapter concludes with some reference to the views of Ian Eybers, Albertus van Zyl, Piet Venter and Johann Cook with regard to textual criticism.

The third chapter is very long and deals with Pentateuch research. With a few exceptions all scholars discussed in this chapter have written extensively (books and articles) on the problems of the Pentateuch. It therefore speaks for itself that much attention had to be devoted to them. We have indicated that after Colenso (and to a large extent Du Plessis), Deist was the first South African scholar who approached the Pentateuch from a 'full-blown' historical-critical perspective. To deal with the many crucial issues of Pentateuch criticism and to highlight the message of the first five books, Fensham focused on the world of the Ancient Near East while Van Zyl re-interpreted historical criticism radically in order to make it acceptable. Van Selms, on the other hand, is difficult to place because his more artistic understanding of life and the text 'caused' a different kind of approach to the Pentateuch. Attention is also paid to other voices (Eybers, Vosloo, Van Dyk, Van Rooy) that were heard during this period.

The fourth chapter deals with the study of the prophets. In South Africa two broad movements can be discerned in this regard. That of Prinsloo, his students and others which followed an immanent approach. They have obtained a firm grip of the text and highlighted very important dimensions of the prophetic literature. On the other hand, Ferdinand Deist and his students illuminated the life context of the prophets. In this case the prophets were viewed as living people and their utterances related to life. Since not all scholars were part of these two trends, a separate section is devoted to the views of Barend van der Merwe, Ian Eybers and Adrianus Van Selms.

In chapter five the study of the psalms is discussed. In this regard Prinsloo and his students have made excellent contributions. Reference is also made to the views of Fensham and Burden. Some scholars have believed that the reconstruction of a psalm's context is either unnecessary or impossible and therefore we have included a short section on Ig Gous. He also focused on songs, namely the book of La-

mentations, and used sociological and anthropological theories to illuminate their wider context.

Chapter six describes the study of wisdom literature. In this regard Jimmie Loader dominated the scene. To him Israel's wisdom is a way of looking at life and the text.

The book concludes with an epilogue, discussing some aspects of Old Testament studies in South Africa.

Chapter two

The Text and its Interpretation

This chapter is devoted to a brief description of the events that have determined the specific features of South African Old Testament scholarship since the seventies. Since this period distinct 'immanent' and 'historical' approaches can be discerned. These terms serve as broad indicators that illuminate individual contributions, and the directions that Old Testament scholars have taken. In this chapter a section is devoted to Ferdinand Deist's hermeneutics. His contribution to hermeneutics in South Africa is so unique and his influence so profound that a separate discussion of his views seems imperative. A short section is also devoted to questions pertaining to canon and textual criticism. With regard to the origin and the growth of the Old Testament text there has been some progress: we have moved away from a one-sided search for the one original text to a position of there being many texts; the contexts in which these texts originated have also been elucidated.

A THE THEOLOGICAL ATMOSPHERE

In this book much is being made of the important developments since the seventies. Before that time and even during that period the dominant scholarly approach to the Old Testament can be described as confessional or conservative. To illustrate this point we shall briefly refer to the views of Ian Eybers and Pieter Verhoef. They are excellent examples of a specific mood prevailing during that time. In 1961 Ian Eybers delivered his inaugural lecture as professor in Old Testament at the University of South Africa and in 1973 Verhoef published his work on the method of exegesis. When these — as well as other works of Eybers and Verhoef — are examined, their approach to the Old Testament is evident. Although both reveal so many common fea-

tures that they can hardly be distinguished from each other, there are slight differences, which we can label 'confessional' and 'conservative'. The first term refers to Eybers' Christian confessional and the latter to Verhoef's reformed convictions which shaped their views on Old Testament scholarship. Whether this is an adequate distinction or not, it is important to note that Eybers and Verhoef epitomise an important trend among South African Old Testament scholars.

1 Ian Eybers: a confessional approach

Ian Heinrich Eybers made an important contribution to the study of the Old Testament in South Africa. Eybers taught Old Testament at the University of South Africa (Unisa) for more than twenty years and occupied the first chair in Biblical Studies in South Africa. He was a member of both 'Die Ou-Testamentiese Werkgemeenskap van Suid-Afrika' and 'The British Society for Old Testament Studies', and wrote many articles and books on Old Testament themes; he participated in archaeological excavations at Lachish for many years, introduced Biblical Archaeology as a subject at Unisa, lectured at the universities of Cambridge, London (King's College), Edinburgh and Manchester during 1975, and took part in many discussions on aspects of Old Testament scholarship in South Africa and abroad (cf Bosch 1982:4-6).

Eybers's views on Old Testament science reveal specific characteristics. To identify these features brief reference will first be made to the descriptive and the confessional methods in the study of the Old Testament. The *descriptive* approach is neutral and objective, enabling Jew and Christian, believer and unbeliever to cooperate in the common pursuit of a descriptive Biblical science freed of dogmatic preconceptions. The *confessional* approach is diametrically opposed to the descriptive method. A confessional approach implies a discipline informed by faith. It is a discourse about God from the point of view of revelation. The adherents of a confessional approach stated that the study of the Old Testament should be a 'Christian theological science' which applied 'theological standards' and is based 'on the ground of its Christian theological starting point' (Hasel 1972:40; Vriezen 1966:147).

Eybers's methodology must be viewed against this *background*. He was trained as a minister and moulded as a theologian at a time

when the theological atmosphere in South Africa was conservative. There are many possible reasons for this conservatism, but let us merely note that it greatly influenced the moulding of Eybers's theological views. Eybers therefore vehemently opposed theology as a critical science and wholeheartedly subscribed to a confessional approach to the Old Testament. Although he was acquainted with the critical works and at one time even studied in Germany, he devoted his whole life to a study of the Old Testament from the standpoint of (Christian) faith. He was firmly convinced that a Christian should avoid any critical study of the Old Testament and should rather adopt an approach based on faith. Through the years Eybers developed his own kind of confessional approach, the features of which are described below.

Eybers's approach is *Christ-centered*. This perspective affected his whole view on Old Testament Scholarship. The unity of the Bible, the problem of the canon, the introduction to the books of the Old Testament, the history and religion of Israel and the kerygma of the Old Testament are all approached from the perspective of Christ. The term 'Christ-centered' has a special theological connotation and is preferred to 'theocentric'. The main reason is that a Jew can explain the Old Testament theocentrically without reference to the New. Because Christian and Jew understand the term 'theocentric' differently it is best avoided and a 'Christ-centered' interpretation of the Old Testament is preferable. Although this approach can lead to Christomonism or excessive assiduity to trace Christ in the most minute fragments of the Old Testament, it remains a valid way of explaining the Old Testament (Eybers 1982:65).

Eybers clearly distinguished between *general canonic*s and *special canonic*s (so-called 'introduction'). Both can be described as theological disciplines which study the origin of the Old Testament as an authoritative book for the church. While special canonic concentrates on the individual writings of the Old Testament, general canonic studies the Old Testament as a whole and determines 'how and when the collection and ordering of the Old Testament took place' (Eybers 1982:54). In studying this collection and ordering of the books of the Old Testament one soon realises that the problems attached to the canon of the Old Testament are many and unsolved.

The only real solution which would satisfy *the Christian* is to ac-

knowledge as canonical those books to which *Christ referred* when he said, 'These bear witness to me'. This approach to the problem of Old Testament canon 'is based on a sound principle' (Eybers 1975d:116) and results in a Christian Old Testament canon. In accordance with the views of many members of the early church, the canon of Jesus and the apostles is favoured and viewed as the appropriate canon for Christians (Eybers 1968:11). This view is also supported by a historical scrutiny of the different documents at our disposal (Eybers 1969:12-20; 1975d:88-113).

Although Christ is the principle for determining the canon of the Old Testament *the work of the Holy Spirit* must not be overlooked or underestimated. Through the Spirit only those books which had been inspired by God from the beginning were acknowledged as canonical and were included in the canon of the Old Testament. The formation of the canon must be seen as the work of the Spirit and not of the church or the synagogue. Through the work of the Spirit the believers of the past recognised the canonicity of the books of the Old Testament. Even today the Spirit testifies in our hearts that these books are from God and convinces us of their divine authority and inspiration. This is an important aspect of Old Testament scholarship. Before one can embark on a scientific study of the Old Testament, its canonicity (which implies divine authority and inspiration) must be confessed. Without this declaration of faith the Old Testament is reduced to an ordinary human book (Eybers 1982:54; 1963:5-6).

The individual writings of the Old Testament form the field of study of *special canonicity*. This term, which is preferred to 'introduction', clearly indicates that the writings of the Old Testament belong to the canon and that a confession of faith underlies this discipline. Special canonicity must therefore be distinguished from a purely historical critical analysis of the Old Testament. Under the influence of Hermann Gunkel the emphasis in Old Testament scholarship has shifted to the study of the subsections, the different 'Gattungen' and forms in which the writings of the Old Testament were cast. Much attention has been devoted to category criticism ('Gattungsgeschichte') and form criticism ('Formgeschichte'). It is believed that knowledge of the history of a 'Gattung' sheds light on the life-situation ('Sitz im Leben'). This approach has given rise to transmission history ('Überlieferungsgeschichte') and redaction criticism ('Redaktionsgeschich-

te') (Eybers 1982:56; 1975c:3-18). According to this historical-critical method the Old Testament is no more than a Hebrew literary product, and great attention is being paid to the origins of the different books, the different parts and literary types, their prehistory, authenticity, style and literary merit. Such an approach is unacceptable and Eybers objected particularly to one aspect of this method, namely the theory of sources. It may have value, according to Eybers, but one must take cognisance of its many problems and shortcomings: there is great uncertainty about the identification of the different sources and their extent; many scholars have subdivided the Old Testament in such an absurd way that it has discredited this method; it contains a subjective element; fundamental to it is an evolutionary approach to the religion of Israel which virtually excluded the possibility of revelation; the differences in style and the divine name are over-emphasised, et cetera (Eybers 1977a:9-12). The historical-critical method in general and source theory in particular merely fragment the Old Testament into different sources, myths, sagas, cultic legends, literary types, et cetera. Whoever does this both refuses to view the Old Testament as a history of salvation expressing God's purpose for humankind, and fails to discern its real significance. More attention should be paid to the final form of the books of the Old Testament. It is in this form that the authors, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, expounded the divine message. And whenever the final form is emphasised it will soon be realised that the aim of the authors of the Old Testament was not to collect different sources or forms or traditions, but to establish a basis for faith and for life. Instead of dividing the Old Testament into different sources and literary types it must be approached as a unity which wants to convey a divine message directed towards human faith (Eybers 1977a:22).

A Christ-centered interpretation enables one to understand even *the most difficult passages* in the Old Testament. Joel is often accused of a narrow particularism because he proclaims the judgement of the Lord on the other nations while the people of God experience his blessing. This problematic Old Testament passage is solved by showing that, in a number of places in the New Testament, some people are saved while others are judged. In the light of this evidence 'we cannot describe Joel as being narrowly Jewish and nationalistic' (Eybers 1977a:15). The summons of God in the Old Testament to fol-

low him can also be linked with that of Christ. Haggai chastised the people for not building the house of the Lord. Because of their apathy they experienced crop failure, poverty and distress. God demanded that they should first devote themselves to his service before he would bless them, 'just as Christ later taught His disciples' (Eybers 1970-1971:17).

Israel's history forms another subdiscipline of Old Testament science. Despite archaeological evidence and increased knowledge of the Ancient Near East, the Old Testament still remains the most important source on Israel's history. This source must, however, be treated with great caution. Modern historical methods can of course be applied, but then the Old Testament is used as a historical document and historical questions are posed, all kinds of alleged deficiencies are pointed out, the real meaning of the Old Testament is obscured and the revelation of God is overlooked. The Old Testament scholar must realise that the history of Israel cannot be studied adequately by modern historical methods. This is because the Old Testament does not give an account of history for its own sake. It approaches historical data from 'a theological, or ... prophetic perspective' (Eybers 1982:67). From the viewpoint of faith Israel has constantly reinterpreted its history as the place where God intervened and performed great deeds.

Eybers adopted a confessional approach to the Old Testament. This implied approaching the Old Testament from the standpoint of Christian faith: the Old Testament (like the New) is the word of God and faith is required if it is to be understood. His approach has a Christological or Christ-centered basis and this was the starting-point from which he studied the different subdisciplines of Old Testament scholarship: a deep unity exists between the Old and New Testaments and the one must be explained in terms of the other; many problems are attached to the canon of the Old Testament and many solutions are offered. Christ is the only true answer and he determines one's ideas about the canon; *special canonic*s must not be concerned with historical-critical analysis but rather concentrate on the unity of the Old Testament writings, the description of each document's message and its fulfilment in Jesus Christ; a *history of Israel* must not be based solely on modern historical methods but must emphasise salvation history; the *exegesis* of the Old Testament is never complete if the Chris-

ological implications and the kerygma have not been determined. Such a confessional approach does not allow any descriptive, neutral or critical method. Eybers's work is not only a fine example of the confessional approach but also a severe attack on any critical method. His work gives the impression that no critical science should be tolerated.

2 Pieter Verhoef: a conservative approach

Verhoef was professor at the theological faculty of the University of Stellenbosch from 1950 until 1979. He was described as 'n ware Godsgeleerde en suiwer eksegeet in die beste Gereformeerde tradisie' (Odendaal 1980:4). He devoted a lifetime to a reformed understanding of the Old Testament and reformed theology (cf Verhoef 1980:6-7; 1968:5-20). As an Old Testament scholar he emphasised the function and authority of the Old Testament in a typical reformed way. Verhoef's reformed convictions also moulded his views on the kind of exegetical approach which had to be followed. This was expressed in a book (the first to be written in Afrikaans) on the topic of exegesis. Verhoef published this book in 1973 and revised it in the 1981 edition. He basically followed a grammatical-historical approach to the Old Testament (cf Verhoef 1980:53-65). To many South African scholars with a conservative outlook and a reformed approach to the Old Testament the grammatical-historical method was the most appropriate way to investigate the Old Testament.

Let us first focus on the *grammatical* aspect of this method. As a reformed scholar, Verhoef wanted to establish the theological message of the Old Testament and, to accomplish this, reflection on method was essential. The text has a message and the method is the instrument by means of which it can be uncovered. Verhoef (1981:10) compared exegesis to an assignment completed in a technically correct manner ('tegnies-korrekte werkstuk'). Reformed exegesis has something technical about it. Certain exegetical tools (textual criticism, Hebrew and Greek, the history of Israel, etc) must be employed to accomplish a 'tegnies-korrekte werkstuk' (Verhoef 1981:13). The exegetical process also consists of definite steps. All exegesis starts with the text, the text in its 'physical' form. As Verhoef (1981:16 — my emphasis) puts it: 'Dit lê *logies* voor die hand om in die *eerste plaas* seker te maak of die teks wat verstaan moet word, in alle opsigte *kor-*

rek is'.

According to Verhoef (1981:19) the reformed Old Testament scholar is engaged in a quest for the correct Hebrew text. Although reference is made to the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (Verhoef 1981:19) he mainly focuses on the *Biblia Hebraica*. Because Verhoef (1981:22-23) is convinced that the original text or at least the correct reading of the text can still be determined, he devotes much attention to the critical apparatus (of *Biblia Hebraica*) and other text witnesses.

The grammatical aspect of the text also includes an analysis of words, syntax, and especially a study of literary forms. Knowledge of forms contribute to our understanding of a text. Verhoef (1981:42) discusses four basic literary types (he uses the words 'literary type' and 'literary form' indiscriminately): narrative, prophecy, poetry and instruction. We briefly note his description of narrative. It seems as if he equates narrative and history writing: 'Die *verhaal* of die geskiedkundige gedeeltes van die Ou Testament....' According to Verhoef Old Testament history is never presented for its own sake but always has a definite aim: the proclamation of God's revelation in history. This history displays definite features. First of all, events and people are objectively described. The historical narrative contains true history. Historical facts confirm the reality of the events. Verhoef thus rejects the accusation launched against the Chronicler that he reconstructed history from an ideological point of view. Another feature deals with the miracle element. Israel's history is replete with miracles and this must be taken into account by the exegete. A third characteristic is that Old Testament historians used sources. This, however, did not in any way undermine the revelatory character of Old Testament history-writing. Lastly, Verhoef emphasised the free or loose way in which historical material is presented in the Old Testament. It must therefore not be approached in a strictly historical manner (Verhoef 1981:43-44).

Verhoef describes the *historical aspect* of exegesis as 'historical exegesis'. He links this 'step' very closely to philological exegesis. Both dimensions of the text are important for the understanding of the text and must not be separated: 'Tog is daar ook rede om ... die twee so te onderskei dat die filologiese eksegese meer op die formele en die historiese eksegese meer op die inhoudelike aspekte van die Skrif betrek word' (Verhoef 1981:81).

Verhoef's historical exegesis includes the following: knowledge of a text's origin, the identity of the author, geographical and archeological information and insight into Israel's socio-economic conditions (Verhoef 1981:81-86). A crucial aspect of Verhoef's historical approach is the emphasis on revelation history. Instead of the term 'Biblical Theology' he prefers 'History of the revelation of God'. There is a definite development in the revelation of God and the exegete must take that into account. In the Old Testament a development from promise to fulfilment can be discerned. This process is concluded in the New Testament. No exegete must therefore neglect the New Testament's importance for revelation history. It is actually his task to determine the stage in the revelation history that a text represents: 'By die uitleg van 'n Skrifgedeelte is dit nodig om rekening te hou met die *openbaringstrap* waarop dit staan.... Die metode om die *trappe* in die voortgang van die openbaring te onderskei, is uiteraard 'n vergelyking van Skrif met Skrif' (Verhoef 1981:88,92 — my emphasis).

Verhoef's views on the *historical critical method* are very important. Eybers was extremely negatively inclined towards historical criticism. His confessional approach just did not provide for a critical understanding of the Old Testament. Verhoef was more 'broad-minded' with regard to this approach. Although he did not want to follow this method he was open to its results. In his book on methodology he often stated this method's right of existence and encouraged students to take cognisance of its results (Verhoef 1981:52,56,57,58,64,65). It is interesting to note how Verhoef has described the steps of the historical critical method.

(1) According to him *literary criticism* still plays an important part in Old Testament research (Verhoef 1981:53,56). Its point of departure is the insistence that the Old Testament books consist of many sources. Consequently, the unity of the texts is denied and the diversity emphasised. By and large the results of this approach can be ignored: 'Die funksie van die literêre kritiek is dus, ten eerste, om die skêr te gebruik, dit wil sê om die samestellende elemente in die Skrifgedeelte te analiseer en dan, ten tweede, om te verduidelik hoe die elemente in die loop van die ontstaansgeskiedenis aan mekaar "gelym" is' (Verhoef 1981:53).

(2) Verhoef is, however, more positively inclined towards '*Formgeschichte*'. This approach with its emphasis on form and context can

indeed contribute to our understanding of the text. He nevertheless points out some dangerous aspects of 'Formgeschichte': it can lead to a further frittering of the text into many pieces and too much attention is paid to Ancient Near Eastern literature (Verhoef 1981:56-60).

(3) *Tradition history* can also enhance our understanding of the Old Testament. But, once again, Verhoef (1981:60-63) expresses severe criticism of this method. It is interesting to note that he has Noth's *Überlieferungsgeschichte* in mind when his points of criticism are listed: true history is undermined, the facts of the Old Testament are not taken into account, a one-sided reconstruction of the past is made, the figure of Moses is undermined and everything is extremely hypothetical. Tradition history can thus be used but with certain definite reservations.

(4) *Redaction history* is another approach at the disposal of the exegete. And, once again it can be profitable but '(ons) moet altyd daarteen waak dat ons die resultate van hierdie ondersoek nie onkrities aanvaar nie' (Verhoef 1981:64).

One may therefore conclude that Verhoef never rejected historical criticism. Its right of existence is stated and students often encouraged to become acquainted with its results. Although criticism is tolerated it must always be treated with great care. What he says about literary criticism can be applied to the historical critical method as a whole: 'Die skrywer van hierdie handleiding wil graag sy studente aanmoedig om van die metode en resultate van die literêre kritiek kennis te neem — al moet hy bely dat hy nie oor 'n orgaan beskik om hierdie gewerskaf te waardeer nie' (Verhoef 1981:56).

Verhoef's conservative approach thus consists of the following features: he wanted to be a reformed scholar; the authority of the Old Testament formed an essential part of his scientific approach; the revelatory nature of the Old Testament must be taken as starting-point for all scientific work; the divine origin of the Old Testament is stressed while the human aspect receives less attention; the text has a meaning which must be exposed by means of the right method; the method consists of a grammatical as well as a historical aspect; historical criticism is tolerated but never appropriated.

Both Eybers and Verhoef represented a specific kind of approach: Old Testament scholarship implied the definite confession of our Christian faith; reformed theology should be taken into account by

scholars of the Old Testament; historical criticism was opposed; emphasis was laid on a text's context but not in a historical critical sense; the grammatical aspects of a text were approached in a specific way. Events since the seventies placed this kind of approach under serious pressure.

B SOMETHING IS MISSING

Eybers and Verhoef are two excellent representatives of a certain kind of scholarship. For a long time this kind of approach, or at least some aspects of it, determined Old Testament studies in South Africa. Although Eybers, Verhoef and other scholars rendered an invaluable service to the study of the Old Testament in this country something seems to be missing. And the missing link is critical scholarship. To be more precise: the historical critical method passed us by and never became an integral part of our scientific approach to the Old Testament. Once again it must be stated that this method was never neglected by South African scholars: it was tolerated, and its results were at times taken seriously and even adapted to our situation. It will, therefore, be wrong to state that we took no cognisance of it. Furthermore we all know of the severe criticism which is now being launched against this method and that, according to some, it is on its way out. Historical criticism can and must therefore never return to its classical form. But we missed the critical attitude which moulded and shaped European theology for the past two centuries.

And this of course was not the fault of anyone but must be ascribed to historical circumstances beyond our control. The point is that we have missed the *Aufklärung*. More precisely, we did not experience Kant's Copernican Revolution and its effect on both theology and the understanding of the Bible. Kant stated that we should turn to the light of reason, and that we should investigate pure reason in order to determine what it is capable of and what not. He then concluded that absolute knowledge is impossible because an object conforms to the nature of our faculty of intuition and not the other way round. In other words, objects conform to our conceptions (Kant 1983:20-41).

This view affected theology and exegesis enormously. Out of the *Aufklärung* developed the historical critical method: 'Die historisch-

kritische *Wissenschaft* entsteht im Zeitalter der Aufklärung' (Kraus 1969:80). Consequently, extremely critical views about the Old Testament arose. Its unity was destroyed, its many inconsistencies emphasised, its long development accentuated, the problem of historicity highlighted, et cetera (Hasel 1982:18-19). In short: the humanness of the Old Testament was realised like never before in the history of exegesis. European theologians and Old Testament scholars, however, had no option other than to grapple with the critical results and to find solutions for the many problems (cf De Knijff 1980:56-145).

And we in South Africa missed all that. Instead of struggling with the historical critical views about the Bible, South African theologians took another direction. We never felt an urgency to address these problems. Or, to put it differently, we never experienced the pressure to come to grips with the historical critical method and its important results. Our context enabled us to put it aside. Between 1818 and 1836/clergymen of the Church of Scotland joined the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa. They had a considerable influence on the church and the religious life in this country. Scripture played a central part in their theology and they taught believers to cherish the 'Word' and to abide with it (Claasen 1990:397-406). This attitude, however, did not provide for any critical approach to the Old Testament.

Since the beginning of the seventies a decisive change took place with regard to the study of the Old Testament in South Africa. New avenues were opened and totally different dimensions of the text were discovered. The beginning of the seventies signalled the heyday of Old Testament scholarship in this country. A movement began which lead to the study of the Bible on a scale never experienced before. And the place of historical critical study? Never before was there such an openness and a willingness to grant this approach its rightful place in Old Testament scholarship. But (as will become abundantly clear in the rest of this book) in the final analysis it was either mocked or viewed as redundant. Let us now turn our attention to a day in March 1971.

C A DAY IN THE MONTH OF MARCH

On 3 March 1971 the Transvaal members of the New Testament Society of South Africa assembled at the senate hall of the University of

the South Africa in Visagie Street in Pretoria. This was a meeting of extreme importance. Something happened there and in the following months which had a far-reaching effect on the history of the New Testament Society. Willem Vorster read a paper in which he urged the New Testament scholars to take cognisance of the results of modern linguistics (Vorster 1971:139-148). His views were based on those of Jannie Louw, a professor in Greek at the University of the Orange Free State, who had already explored the possibilities of the newer linguistics. Vorster's lecture was nevertheless a trigger that brought a whole movement about. Vorster's paper reflected a specific approach (concentration on the final text and the rejection of information about the text's historical growth), as well as the terminology (diachrony, synchrony, structural analysis) that would be decisive for the future developments of biblical science in South Africa. Something really new was introduced, which set New Testament scholars in motion and resulted in a new approach that subsequently received the status of a 'normal science' (in the Kuhnian sense). Just how new Vorster must have sounded on that warm day in March 1971 can be gathered from the following extracts from his paper:

Dat die moderne linguistiek egter nog nie behoorlik deurgedring het tot die gebied van Bybelnavorsing nie, blyk uit die feit dat daar in die jongste tyd reeds stemme opgaan wat die aandag daarop vestig.... (D)ie feit dat Bybelnavorsers van ons tyd nog in so 'n groot mate onbekend is met die tegnieke van die moderne linguistiek.... Daar bestaan nog 'n ander belangrike onderskeiding wat ook op De Saussure teruggaan te wete die tussen sinchroniese en diachroniese taalkunde.... Sinchroniese taalbeskrywing kan egter onafhanklik van die diachroniese onderneem word.... Maar dit is nie so dat die voorgeskiedenis van 'n taal betrek moet word as 'n taal beskryf word nie. Die sinchroniese aspekte is baie belangriker vir die verstaan daarvan.... Struktuuranalise het al noemenswaardige resultate opgelewer.... Iets wat nie uit die oog verloor moet word nie, is die belangrikheid van die sinchroniese ondersoek waarby die diachroniese nie 'n rol hoef te speel nie (Vorster 1971:141,143,144,145,147).

D JIMMIE LOADER PAVED THE HIGHWAY

Perhaps one of the most important and influential articles that was ever written in our theological context came from the hand of Jimmie Loader (1978b:1-40). It described the method of structural analysis as

a means of interpreting the Old Testament correctly. He wrote with so much clarity, expressed himself in such a gripping style and explained the method so adequately that it shaped the thoughts of a new generation of scholars. When the article was published it met a long-felt need. After Willem Vorster's speech and its enthusiastic reception by many New Testament scholars, the new approach had to be 'converted' and made 'applicable' to the Old Testament. In this regard Loader played a decisive role. He explained the method, and its application to the Old Testament, to his students at the Department of Semitics at the University of Pretoria. His 'following' was great and many students were once and for all converted (in the Kuhnian sense) to the new paradigm. Loader's article was the outcome of some of these lectures which he presented in collaboration with Jannie Louw (who had moved to Pretoria in the meantime).

By the time this article was published Loader had already completed two theses (Loader 1974 & 1975), which were based on this method. He therefore spoke with authority and was already accepted as an expert who executed the method with great skill and efficiency. This contributed to the article's interesting *Wirkungsgeschichte*: it was read and re-read, interpreted and re-interpreted by many in different situations. Not only biblical scholars and students but also people from other theological fields viewed this article as a guide to the study of Scripture. There are at least two reasons for the article's success and the favourable response to Loader's views: he supplied the terminology to describe the process of understanding and he provided the scholarly community with a method which could be applied in a few easy steps.

Loader thus provided South African Old Testament scholars with the *terminology* or the *stock words or phrases* to describe their approach to, and understanding of, the Old Testament. The importance of this can never be over-emphasised. For the first time in the history of South African Old Testament scholarship did scholars and students have the vocabulary to express themselves clearly and plainly with regard to their exegetical approach. The terminology can today still be detected in many theses, books and articles on the Old Testament. The most important are the following (the original Afrikaans words and phrases are also given because they have become such an integral part of an immanent approach). This method has been called *structural*

analysis; it was viewed as a *controlled form* of exegesis ('gekontroleerde eksegeese'); the *linguistics* of Ferdinand de Saussure was taken seriously; the works of James Barr and Wolfgang Richter became essential for biblical scholars and students; a *plurality of methods* ('metodepluralisme') was striven for; *other methods* contain elements of truth which must be 'abstracted' and *incorporated* into the new method; these different methods thus become *aspects* of the *one immanent method* ('metodiese aspekte'/'metodefasette'). To state that the *nature of the text determines the method* is wrong; *all the facets* of the new method must be applied to the text; in this way the exegetical process is constantly *checked* and *verified*; a distinction must be made between *synchrony* and *diachrony*; synchronic work focuses on the *text as it stands*; the text must be understood *irrespective* of *historical information*; structural analysis thus is a *text-immanent* approach; diachronic work deals with the development of the text and its *historical background*; synchronic work *precedes* diachronic work; a diachronical study must be based on synchronical analysis; historical aspects must never form the *point of departure* for exegetical inquiry; historical inquiry only follows a synchronical examination and analysis of the text; modern linguistics taught us that *language utterances* must be *structured* to make sense; the meaning of language is not expressed in loose sentences but in *word relations carrying meaning* ('betekenisdraende woordrelasies'); sentences are therefore structured and combined in a specific manner; the unity with which the new method works is the *pericope* and not words; the author has conveyed meaning by means of the pericope ('dit is die eenheid waarin die outeur 'n bepaalde gedagtestrekking oordra'); a distinction is made between *surface structure* and *deep structure*; each part of the text contributes to its understanding ('elke deel van 'n teks is tekskonstitutief ... en dra by tot die geheel van die teks'); this method with its different methodological facets has a *built-in control system* which constantly checks the previous exegetical stages (Loader 1978b:1-19).

Another important aspect of Loader's article was the fact that he provided the scholarly establishment with a *method*. Consciously or unconsciously, Loader created (or re-confirmed) the notion that understanding was closely related to the right method; that this right method consisted of steps that should be executed in a precise sequence; that texts had meanings that could be procured using the cor-

rect method; that the right method became flesh in structural analysis; that this method dated all other methods (especially the historical-critical method); that this right method made commentaries based on older methods superfluous; that historical information was important but not essential; that the new approach even 'prevented' a historical (critical) reading of the text; that structural analysis was an objective method delivering objective results. Nevertheless, Loader supplied us with a method which he explained so clearly and so plainly that it became the dominant model of exegesis among South African Old Testament scholars (Loader 1978b:6-40). Although it has been adapted to different situations, the following basic steps remain:

First the texts must be *demarcated* by means of criteria regarding form and content. Secondly, a *text-critical* investigation must be launched. According to Loader each text element contributes to the text as a whole and even the smallest text-critical modification may result in a change of meaning. Text-critical operations must therefore be undertaken with the greatest of care and their effect on meaning must be taken into account. The third stage deals with the *structure* of the text. If the content of a pericope is expressed by means of word relations carrying meaning ("betekenisdraende woordrelasies") as well as by the linking together of sentences, the relationship between these units must be determined. In prose this unit is called a colon (a linguistic sentence) (Loader 1978b:19-21) and a stiche (a metrical unit) in poetry (Loader 1978b:22-26). The next aspect of the exegetical process is the determination of the unit's *literary type*. Questions pertaining to the 'Gattung' of a unit are very important and they can contribute to our understanding of the contents of a text.

Up to now we have worked synchronically. Two other aspects remain to be studied. One is the *traditions* embedded in the text. It is important to note that only at this stage does diachronical work receive a place. Only after the synchronical analysis has been completed can the text be illuminated with historical perspectives. As Loader so often said: 'Diachronie op grond van sinchronie' (cf Loader 1978b: 11). The other diachronical aspect and also the 'laaste metodefaset' is an inquiry into the *redaction* of the text. The possibility that subsequent editors re-worked the different units, attaching new meanings to the text, is investigated. Such a redaction-critical examination of the text must be based on synchronical criteria: 'Ons moet dus in die

teks, self die aanduidings vind waarop ons oordeel gebaseer word, en nie in subjektiewe idees oor wat moontlik kon gebeur het nie. Dus weer: Diachronie op grond van sinchronie' (Loader 1978b:11).

Loader's views had a great influence on Old Testament scholars, especially in the north. *Willem Prinsloo* of the theological faculty of the University of Pretoria was perhaps the most important mediator of the 'Loaderian method'. It must be stated, however, that Prinsloo made a meticulous study of the work of Wolfgang Richter and re-interpreted Loader in the light of this. He therefore had a re-adapted form of the 'new' method. Nevertheless it was due to him that this method became the dominant model for Old Testament exegesis at the Pretoria faculty for students of the Dutch Reformed Church. First of all, Prinsloo became acquainted with the method. In due course he was an authority on structural analysis, clearly illustrating the new method's 'possibilities'. He applied the method with such thoroughness that others were convinced of its value; he stressed that it was a great improvement on the historical-critical method with its one-sided focus on the growth of the text; he was convinced of this method's ability to illuminate the message of the Old Testament and he contributed to the view that good Old Testament scholarship should be accomplished along 'immanent' lines. Prinsloo's influence was so overwhelming that he shaped the minds of generations of theological students studying the Old Testament: he trained them to explain the Old Testament to their congregations by means of structural analysis. Preaching was to be based on the results of a structural analysis of the Old Testament. This method was also the only route to advanced study of the Old Testament for his post-graduate and doctoral students. At church meetings the influence of this approach to the Old Testament has been clearly visible.

Prinsloo compiled class notes on his method, which were unfortunately never published. These notes exerted a great influence on the students' thinking on method. The phrases which so characterised Prinsloo's approach, and which still occur in student assignments and doctoral theses, can be found in these notes. We mention only a few. According to Prinsloo his method was 'n werkbare en gekontroleerde en kontroleerbare metode'; he also stressed the importance of modern linguistics and its emphasis on structure. He especially accentuated the distinction between surface and deep structure. Surface structure refers to language as we hear and read it but 'agter die oppervlakte — die uiterlike — lê die dieptestruktuur waarin die eintlike bedoeling van die segging verskuil lê'. He also set a synchronical study over and against a

diachronical one; the exact sequence was important: 'Dit is 'n kwessie van die regte volgorde ... eers die sinkroniese aspekte dan die diakroniese'. We can continue quoting Prinsloo to illustrate the typical phraseology of his approach. It is important to note that these phrases can still be found in the work of his students. It has become customary to describe one's approach by means of typical words and phrases. Prinsloo's application of this method reached a climax in his work on the psalms.

This new method thus became the dominant model for exegesis among Old Testament scholars after 1971. There were at least two important consequences. On the one hand *absolutely new dimensions* of the text were discovered. Since the Old Testament was studied in a totally different manner new light was shed on the text. Old Testament science suddenly became an exciting and adventurous undertaking which encouraged young scholars to devote much time and energy to this new approach. On the other hand an *exegetical tradition* originated and developed. This happened for the first time in South Africa's history of theology. This tradition can be formulated (in Kuhnian terms) as follows: it was a paradigm that was shared by the scientific community of Old Testament scholars; it followed a definite (or single) reading technique or method; problems were solved in a manner that was acceptable to the scientific establishment; this form of inquiry received the status of normal science; the outcome of normal science is not so much the discovery of new knowledge as the further refinement of the existing method, and the improvement of the description of the findings.

E AND THEN CAME FERDINAND DEIST

It was a fine day for Old Testament scholars at Unisa and Pretoria when Deist joined their ranks in January 1977. Like Caleb, he had a different spirit (Nm 14:24). He was to mould the thoughts of many and to become a major intellectual force exerting a far-reaching influence on students as well as colleagues. By means of his many books, articles and study guides he shaped the minds of his students and equipped them theologically for a new society. Deist also exerted a great influence on his colleagues at Unisa and elsewhere. His writings were eagerly devoured and endlessly discussed during seminars, tea-times and other occasions. His thoughts were appropriated by many of us and we therefore often use typical Deistian terms, express-

ions, and reflect his views. To us he was like a forerunner (cf Heb 6:20) who constantly explored new avenues and introduced us to a new understanding of the Old Testament.

Deist's success as scholar, author and teacher can be ascribed to a few important factors. His great intellect: this enables him to understand easily and to formulate clearly. His exhaustive knowledge of the Old Testament and theology: this makes him respected by both scholars and students. His amiable personality: he is accessible to all and is one who communicates very easily. His gift for expression and narration: in writing his thoughts are clearly articulated, and in speech his ability for story-telling grips an audience. His capacity for hard work has enabled Deist to accomplish much.

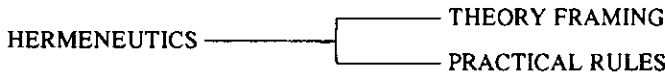
Some aspects of Deist's hermeneutics will be discussed below. Basically he was a historian. In other words, he was a theologian or an Old Testament scholar who approached the Old Testament from a historical point of view. His historical approach implied much more than the mere application of a method; history was a life style, a way of understanding reality, a way of giving meaning to life and a way of making sense of ancient writings. Due to this historical attitude Deist highlighted the broad life-context of the text, the method and the exegete.

1 Hermeneutics: the quest for understanding

Deist's main contribution was in the field of hermeneutics. Like no South African before him, he elaborated on this theme and indicated its importance. Hermeneutics received much consideration from Deist and his views in this respect are enlightening. Both a narrow and a broad view of hermeneutics can be discerned. During the sixties and seventies the South African theological establishment was still very much in the grip of the narrow view (Deist 1988a:50-52). According to the narrow perception, hermeneutics entailed the formulation of certain rules for the understanding of ancient texts. In recent years the term 'hermeneutics' has undergone revision and expansion (cf Thiselton 1980:11; De Knijff 1980:90-134). It is no longer restricted to rules for exegesis but comprises much more. Deist also stressed this broad view of hermeneutics and succeeded in opening up some important avenues to our biblical scholars. To him the two-sidedness of hermeneutics had to be taken seriously. On the one hand it has very

much to do with the formulation of rules for the interpretation of texts. Hermeneutics is thus really concerned with rules for exegesis. It has, however, another important side: a theoretical investigation into the philosophy underlying a method. Or, put differently: it involves a study of the context of the exegete, the text and the method (Deist 1978f:3).

We can put it this way: hermeneutics is connected with
 (a) the science of *formulating rules*, or THEORY FRAMING; and
 (b) the *practical stipulation of rules* for interpretation, or PRACTICAL RULES for interpretation:



The rest of this section is a discussion of Deist’s hermeneutics, focusing on the *theory* underlying a method as well as the *practical rules* involved in the process of interpretation. In other words, Old Testament study entails a thorough study of the context of the Bible, the method and the reader. But before we commence the following comments must be made.

First, although well-known in modern hermeneutics the above distinction was very effectively applied by Deist to the *South African situation*. Perhaps we can say that he re-interpreted and ‘adapted’ it for our circumstances. His contribution must therefore be viewed against our background. On the one hand there was the very unpleasant ‘Methodenstreit’. The so-called ‘immanent’ approach(es) (cf above) were in vogue and heated debates followed in which arguments in favour of this reading were put forward. This approach was always set over against historical-criticism, which was viewed very negatively. On the other hand there was a social (an apartheid and an anti-apartheid) reading of the text, which grossly neglected the original context of the text and was extremely ignorant of the influence of the reader’s context on the reading of texts.

Second, Deist widened the scope for reflection on *method*. Merely focusing on a method and its steps is hopelessly inadequate. Musing over method must take place within a much wider theoretical context. All kinds of theoretical considerations are involved in discussions of the method. In the light of this Deist would never allow a method to claim absoluteness and he found the struggle for the one correct method somewhat trivial. He could never share in the optimism of the

community of biblical scholars about the possibilities of one method, structural analysis or immanent exegesis, to determine the meaning of a text. Things were much more complicated.

Third, a method was merely supplying *data*, which had to be fitted into a specific frame of reference. It was therefore wrong to focus mainly on method while the framework within which this information should be interpreted was neglected.

Fourth, like no other South African scholar, Deist made us aware of the importance of *the science of theory*. Methods and their results had to be subjected to thorough theoretical inquiry. Philosophical considerations therefore became extremely important to South African Old Testament scholars after the seventies. This certainly did not imply that Deist wanted to 'corrupt' good and sound biblical exegesis with philosophy. It is not even possible to determine one clear and dominant philosophy or philosopher in the work of Deist. The voices of many can be heard in Deist's symphony of hermeneutics. He merely wanted to illustrate how philosophical trends and concepts can facilitate the description and critical appraisal of the hermeneutical task (cf Thiselton 1980:5-10).

Fifth, Deist's hermeneutics was intended to make us aware of the Lessing's *Garstige Grabe* (Deist 1979b:47-48). Biblical information is too easily applied to our situation. This yawning gap between the text and ourselves implies two things. On the one hand the Old Testament's otherness must be taken into account. It represents a pre-Christian form of religion, it contains practices which are abhorrent to modern man and it has 'corrected' itself in many ways. On the other hand the gap between the Old Testament text and ourselves is filled with history. Between the Old Testament text and our context there is a long history. Many things have happened (the New Testament originated, many forms of interpretation came into existence, etc), things which radically shaped the understanding of the Old Testament. When studying the Old Testament this must be taken into account (Deist 1981a:7-10).

Sixth, the development of a *critical hermeneutics* was one of Deist's important aims. Such a hermeneutics consisted of the following features: it has to be severely self-critical, set criteria to evaluate the different interpretations of the Old Testament and develop a strong historical consciousness.

Om mee af te sluit: Die interpretasie van die Bybel verg meer as maar net 'n resepe van die een of ander eksegetiese metode. Sover is dit nog relatief eenvoudig. Maar die interpretasie van die Bybel verg veral 'n skerp kritiese selfbewussyn wat gedoop is in die geskiedenis van die Christelike tradisie en boweal 'n onkreukbare eerlikheid (Deist 1981a:11).

2 The importance of theoretical reflection

While many were optimistic about an immanent reading of the Bible, Deist sounded words of warning. During the latter part of the seventies he even spoke of *the crisis in Old Testament study*. This crisis is similar to the intellectual dilemma that Husserl detected in European society: boasting about practical improvements while philosophical reflection was grossly neglected. Deist identified some factors which contributed to this crisis in biblical science such as a terminological confusion, a one-sided truth claim, a slavish application of one method only, no knowledge of a model's explanatory possibilities, an exaggeration of the results of a specific model, the inclination to combine many different methods, et cetera (Deist 1978a:1-2). Put differently, underlying this crisis is the lack of theoretical reflection because too much time and energy have been devoted to method and the rigorous execution of the different steps in order to determine *the* meaning. According to Deist, Old Testament scholarship in general has thus to 'some extent, perhaps even largely *failed to take cognisance of what has been going on in the field of epistemology*' (Deist 1988b:160 — my emphasis). The importance of theory of science will become abundantly clear in the further discussion of Deist's hermeneutics.

3 The total context of the Bible

Another very important contribution of Deist concerns his emphasis on *context*. The word 'context' refers to life in general. Life consists of people who live and work and think in a specific way. Each text is produced by one or more human beings; texts function in a context or community where they are heard or read (Deist & Burden 1980:37). Above we have said that science includes the 'overall context in which it operates'. This notion of an overall context is important for Deist's view of hermeneutics. And it also has a great effect on our understanding of method.

As far as the context of the Bible is concerned, two settings can be discerned: the one in which it originated and the one in which it lived and was interpreted — or: its origin and its existence. According to Deist's approach the *origin* of the Old Testament is of great importance. He closely links the understanding of the Old Testament to its origin: understanding implies historical knowledge or information (cf Deist 1988f:335-348; Deist & Le Roux 1987:46-100). More is, however, involved than the origin: there is also the *existence* of the Old Testament through the centuries. Three thousand years have elapsed since the Old Testament's origin and these centuries cannot be ignored. It cannot be treated as a blank page in the history of humankind and the Old Testament. It is filled with history, a history which thoroughly shaped our understanding of the Old Testament. Through the ages the Old Testament has been used to substantiate many theological views and this has influenced our understanding of the Old Testament (Deist 1979b:41-74; 1982g:9; 1983b:26-48).

Unless one is aware that one's reading and 'understanding' of the Bible are *codetermined* by one's tradition no scientific viewpoint is possible.... Hence any scientific understanding of the Bible demands that the church tradition, its dogmatic content, political orientation and affiliations, conceptions concerning the economy and the like should all be taken into account. Only when all these aspects are incorporated in our understanding can we pass a scientific judgment on any given interpretation and can we offer any scientific justification for our own understanding of the Bible (Deist 1982g:10 — my emphasis).

4 The total context of the method

A very important aspect of Deist's hermeneutics concerns this total context of a method. More is attached to a method than practical steps guiding the exegete. Each method is based on a philosophy while each philosophy is firmly rooted in a world-view. An investigation into a method's total context therefore comprises a study of the underlying philosophy and world-view. Allegorical exegesis, for instance, excellently illustrates this function of philosophy and world-view. This form of exposition rests on firm philosophical grounds: Platonic philosophy. According to Plato the observable world was not the real world; beyond this sensual world the real world exists. This world is therefore just a form of the real world or the idea. Allegorical ex-

exegesis was modelled on this philosophy and world-view: the physical text was only a form of the actual idea. And this actual idea was the spiritual meaning of the text. A world-view underlying a philosophy (that of the idea) shaped a specific method (the allegorical) and led to a certain type of exegesis (emphasis on the spiritual). To understand a method this total context must be taken into consideration (Deist 1984d:47-56; 1982g:14; 1980a:53-78; Deist & Burden 1980:34-55).

5 The total context of the exegete

It is important to note the way in which the exegete is being influenced by the context in which he lives. An exegete operates in a particular *ecclesiastical tradition* and this will drastically shape his angle of approach. Each exegete wears a specific 'pair of glasses' and these 'glasses' are 'tinted by the specific ecclesiastical tradition within which he operates' (Deist & Burden 1980:37). One's *economic position* in society is also likely to shape understanding. Liberation theology is accepted by a certain group and rejected by another. The 'difference between the proponents and opponents of this theological approach is chiefly socio-economic in character' (Deist & Burden 1980:37). Exegetes live in a particular *political dispensation* and this will surely influence their understanding of a text. Each exegete has certain *moral or ethical norms* which are actively at work in the understanding of texts. One is bound to these norms as well as to the society in which they are treasured. It is extremely difficult to transcend this context and therefore its interpretative force must be acknowledged. *Historical consciousness* is another element of the exegete's frame of reference. Each one has a specific view of the world he lives in, of the people or group he belongs to and of the way everything has developed. These views exercise a great influence on the way the Old Testament is read. Each exegete has a *specific method* by means of which the Old Testament is explained. Sometimes sound reasons for a specific method can be provided but mostly someone naively believes his or her method is correct and further explanation is unnecessary. And this method has an unconscious determinative influence on the ultimate product of exegesis (Deist & Burden 1980:37-38; Deist 1990b:7-22). Understanding thus implies the total context of the exegete and no one method can do justice to this.

(T)he exegete is by no means a sort of 'blank page' on which the words and sentences of the biblical text leave their imprint. When the exegete reads the biblical text, then knowingly or unknowingly he picks up from it those things which fit in with *his* frame of reference.... The words and the sentences of the biblical text are unconsciously absorbed into the exegete's own particular outlook of life (Deist & Burden 1980:38-39).

Deist compared this influence of the total context on the interpretation of the Bible with searching for a pearl in an oyster. Each is diligently searching for the pearl, and each claims to have found it. Upon closer scrutiny it is apparent that *the* pearl has not been found, but only that which each one thought to be pearl. This is also true of the 'Word of God'. It can never be described in definite terms because its content has always been determined by the philosophical, theological, sociological and other issues of the day (Deist 1979b:41). All interpretation is theory-laden and therefore the Word of God can never be established in fixed terms because it is always determined by the context. Deist amply illustrated this view with reference to the history of theology.

The *early church* shared the same Bible as the Jews but abstracted a different Word of God from it. The reason for this was the 'regula fidei' of the time, which regulated their reading of the Bible. This 'regula fidei' became the canon of biblical interpretation and shaped the early church's understanding of the Old Testament. It is important to note that the 'regula fidei' was itself dependent on apostolic tradition and contemporary Greek and Latin philosophy. Current philosophy thus shaped the 'regula fidei'. The importance of philosophy must never be underestimated. Arius was represented by a philosopher at his trial, Augustine's initial conversion was more due to his reading of Plato than the Scriptures, and so forth. Philosophy thus played a major role 'in defining, and substantiating, the items mentioned in the "*regula fidei*"' (Deist 1979b:43).

In the *middle ages* the 'regula fidei' was drastically re-interpreted and was used as the touchstone for the interpretation of the Bible, as well as the 'instrument' by means of which the Word of God was 'identified'.

During the *reformation* everything changed. Once again, the *regula fidei* was re-interpreted and this affected the manner in which the Bible was read. Luther had a specific understanding of Paul's Letter

to the Romans and this interpretation became the 'regula fidei'. It directed his exegesis and determined his understanding of the Word of God. Each reformer developed his own 'regula fidei'. Calvin emphasised the forensic principles of law and considered predestination as of crucial importance, and Zwingli emphasised theocracy as the most important Christian doctrine (Deist 1979b:47). The reformers thus emphasised one theological aspect which tinted their exegetical glasses, and which determined their exegetical results. These different 'regulae fidei' not only caused a breach among the reformers but also gave rise to the construction of many other rules of faith (Deist 1979b:46-47).

The *Aufklärung* had far-reaching consequences for the formulation of the 'regula fidei' and consequently for the interpretation of the Bible. Reason now became the sole authority for doing theology. Put differently, human reason now became the 'regula fidei'. And this reason was the product of contemporary philosophy. Naturally this approach caused many problems for theology and for biblical interpretation in particular. Semler attempted to solve the problem with his distinction between Holy Scripture and the Word of God. Holy Scripture contained all the books of the Christian canon while 'the Word of God' referred only to those sections which contributed to the moral and ethical improvement of humankind (Deist 1979b:48). Lessing (Deist 1979b:49) questioned the possibility of extracting eternal truth from historical texts. According to him (and Immanuel Kant) only two options were open to the theologian: complete scepticism or blind faith. Schleiermacher opted for the latter and created a new *regula fidei* which shielded the essence of faith from criticism. Schleiermacher retreated into the sphere of subjectivity and made the heart the organ of science. His 'regula fidei' constituted a religious awareness, a feeling of total dependence and it thus succeeded 'in safeguarding religious knowledge as a hard kernel of certainty' (Deist 1979b:50).

Many examples can be supplied of twentieth-century theologians who were shaped by their times. Only Barth is mentioned. *Karl Barth* was confronted with Schleiermacher's theology and the historical-critical method. Schleiermacher's emphasis on the subjective element in religion caused the belief in the objective existence of God and his revelation to become insignificant. Nineteenth-century theology robbed the Bible of its reliability and encouraged believers to depend on subjective religious feelings. On the other hand, Barth could not

ignore the results of the historical-critical method. As a result of this approach men were acutely aware of the Bible's human nature as well as the many problems attached to its origin and understanding (Deist 1979b:34). Modern man found it difficult to read the Bible and Barth wanted to encourage him to read it again.

Barth's starting-point was the objective existence of God. God should therefore be allowed to be God. A specific view of the Bible was also necessary: it is a human book burdened with many errors and contradictions but can nevertheless be used fruitfully. It is the outcome of Israel's confrontation with God and narrates many centuries of thinking about God. The Bible cannot arbitrarily be labelled 'the Word of God' because it is the work of man. And yet the Bible is the area where God reveals himself. Human words can be changed into the Word of God. Consequently the Bible must be read with the anticipation that God can reveal himself by means of these words. According to Barth the Bible must be studied in a historical-critical manner and as a human book. Only in this way can God reveal himself. When the human aspect of the Bible is fully grasped, the space is cleared for God to reveal himself (Deist 1979b:34). Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century theology drastically shaped Barth's theology. In other words, his context determined his options. And, to be a twentieth-century theologian, he re-phrased the *regula fidei* by stating that God was speaking here and now (Deist 1978f:202).

Many other examples can be supplied to illustrate Deist's point that the exegete is determined by his context in the interpretation of the Bible. Each explanation of Scripture is the outcome of social, economic, philosophical, theological and other influences.

(T)he phrase *the Word of God* has not, in the course of its history, had a constant, unique, referent;... its meaning has always been charged with ideas from contemporary philosophy, on the one hand, and the *regula fidei* of the day, on the other hand.... To call any of the answers (above) 'the Word of God' is blasphemous, unless such a pronouncement is immediately relativised in terms of the current problem, the current philosophy, the current hermeneutic, and the current '*regula fidei*' (Deist 1979b: 57-58).

6 The nature of scientific knowledge

Deist made some very important remarks on the *morality of scientific knowledge* (Deist 1979a:16-21). Scholars too easily describe their

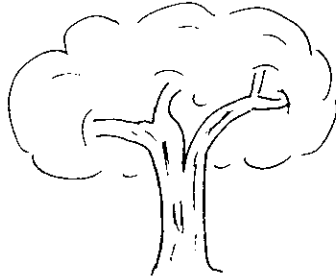
research as 'scientific' without considering the nature and morality of knowledge. If scientific knowledge is open to discussion and further inquiry it can be called 'moral'. Scientific knowledge is immoral if claims are made which cannot be met. This is especially true of an authoritarian approach to knowledge: statements are made which are beyond the range of scientific investigation. Knowledge which pretends to be absolute but which cannot be rationally justified in any way, is immoral (Deist 1982g:26).

A clear distinction must also be made between *scientific and unscientific theological statements*. There is a difference between 'God is love' and 'Jerusalem came to fall in 586 BC'. The first is couched in religious (or metaphorical) terms and the latter in scientific (or referential) language. These two statements are not of the same order and must be treated differently. Hockey, soccer and cricket are different games and cannot be played or evaluated according to the rules of rugby. We must also distinguish between different language games. Religious utterances ('God is love') are therefore totally different from statements concerning historical fact; a different language-game is at play in the two cases. If theologians, however, want to claim scientific status for their utterances, the 'ball' must be played according to the rules of the scientific language-game. Religious statements ('God is love') cannot be treated as scientific utterances. That would be totally against the rules of the scientific game (Deist 1982g:26; 1979a:17).

Deist constantly stressed the *hypothetical nature* of our knowledge. Not only some but all theological knowledge is hypothetical. Often the term 'hypothesis' has a negative meaning: it implies something subjective, false, not credible and something to be avoided. If the notion of an objective, unbiased and absolute description of reality 'as it really is' is rejected one has no option but to work with hypotheses. If positivistic science is abandoned all scientific knowledge becomes hypothetical. Deist cleverly illustrated this point by describing the way objects are observed. Knowledge of the way reality is perceived must undoubtedly result in the acceptance of the hypothetical nature of all (including theological) knowledge.

Observation takes place through the senses. What is observed is not an 'object' but stimuli which are interpreted by the brain as originating from a specific object. A cognitive image is then made of the

observed thing. Deist uses the following sketch to illustrate his point:



Ink lines are observed but the process does not stop here; the 'object' is named or signified. Some would say it is a tree and others a sketch of a tree. Both attempts are wrong; only ink lines are visible. This nevertheless accentuates that 'seeing' is a complicated procedure: it is a constant process of abstraction. 'Seeing' is also a matter of stimuli and cognitive or mental images. A concept of a tree (in the brain) cannot be equated with a similar object in reality. A concept is a cognitive or mental abstraction of a real-life object. It is therefore *impossible to establish a direct link between an 'object' and its cognitive image* (Deist 1979a:18). No method therefore gives direct information regarding the text, and what is observed by the application of a method is nothing more than a mental image or hypothesis about reality.

Up to now we have mainly concentrated on the cognitive images of an object. This, however, is only one of the steps in the acquiring of knowledge. Knowledge is only established when the different mental images are *related*. To obtain knowledge a link must be forged between the different cognitive images. And this process also takes place in the brain (so to speak) and not in reality. Knowledge can therefore not be directly linked to reality.

Kennis is dus 'n verdere abstraksie *aangaande* die werklikheid. Die verband tussen kennis en die werklikheid is dus nog meer abstrak as die verband tussen 'n mentale beeld en 'n 'saak'.... Kennis is mentale verbande tussen gereduseerde mentale abstraksies in terme van 'n bepaalde logika, en daarmee ver verwyderd van die 'werklikheid soos dit is' (Deist 1979a:18)

Science is a constant process of 'finding out'. Many lacunae exist and there are gaps in knowledge. This implies that science is compelled to use *hypotheses* (cf Deist 1980a:53-78). Links between cognitive images are established by means of hypotheses. All knowledge is therefore hypothetical. Never can scientific knowledge be authoritarian or absolute or a matter-of-fact statement about 'how things really are'. An informed scientist would not confuse statements about reality with reality itself:

Want hy is hom bewus dat

- a) elke vraag wat hy vra, uit onkunde, uit nie-weet-nie, gebore is en derhalwe 'n probleemveld markeer;
- b) elke vraag wat hy vra, 'n vraag is na moontlike samehange tussen gereduseerde abstraksies van die werklikheid; en
- c) dat die antwoord(e) op dié vraag noodwendig *hipoteties* van aard moet wees (Deist 1979a:19).

7 Structural analysis

This and the following sections are devoted to the other side of hermeneutics: the formulation of practical rules for exegesis. Instead of discussing these steps we are focusing on the two methods of exegesis, structural analysis (or the immanent approach) and historical criticism, which are prevalent in South Africa. As far as structural analysis is concerned Deist was convinced about its shortcomings but he also emphasised its importance: 'Dat die diskoersanalise 'n verhelderende bydrae tot die analise van tekste lewer, hoef nie meer betwyfel te word nie' (Deist 1978d:260). Because this approach was so over-emphasised in the South African context it was his intention to identify its most important weaknesses. Some aspects of his criticism are mentioned below.

The so-called immanent approach was actually *on its way out as prime method* when it was suddenly seized by South African scholars and became the dominant exegetical method (Deist 1973c:75-78; 1975:127-138). As Deist rightly indicated, it was accepted in many circles 'as a kind of new gospel' and viewed as a way out of the many problems created by historical criticism. Many held the historical-critical method to be 'vaguely devilish' if not 'demonic'. It was furthermore stated that historical criticism was undermining the authority of Scripture and was 'unscientific' and 'outdated'. All of a sudden the

Old Testament was hailed as 'literary art' and it became very 'with-it' to accentuate the 'final redaction' of a text as well as the predominance of synchronic over diachronic analysis. Exegetes suddenly showed no interest in the origin of the text, the author, the social context and other related issues any more (Deist 1983c:74).

Despite Deist's fierce attack on structural analysis, it must be mentioned that he was *well versed in this method and understood it very clearly*. Furthermore, he never wanted to reject an immanent reading of the Old Testament or to underestimate its importance (Deist 1978d:260). As a matter of fact he was not reluctant to work along 'immanent' lines himself (cf Deist 1975:127-138; 1986h:16-36; 1986i:69-102; 1984b:99-129). Deist merely cautioned the generations of the seventies and eighties not to overemphasise one approach to the Old Testament. As we have already said, things are much too complicated for a one-sided emphasis of one method.

Because of a *lack* of formal *linguistic training* many scholars developed one-sided views about this approach: it is the final answer to the problems of meaning and it is a technique which makes commentaries superfluous.

Daar bestaan 'n wesenlike gevaar dat die beoefenaars van diskoersanalise — soms vanweë 'n gebrek aan formele opleiding in die taalkunde — dié metode kan sien as 'n soort tegniek wat die gebruik van kommentare oorbodig maak, of dit as die 'uiteindelike' objektiewe metode beskou, asof daar nie ook saam met die metode 'n hele paar teoretiese veronderstellinge gaan nie. Só 'n nuwe gebruik van diskoersanalise kan alleen maar skadelik wees vir die eksegetiese gebruik (Deist 1978d:260)

As stated above the *philosophical framework* of a method is critical for the exegetical process. In the light of this it has often been remarked that the historical-critical method must be rejected because of the positivistic principle underlying it. Deist clearly illustrated that structural analysis is not exempt from the positivistic tendencies:

(1) The text is viewed as a fixed datum. Its constituting elements can be analysed and described, and its meaning can be determined by explaining the relationship between the parts of the text (Deist 1988a:42).

(2) The notion of 'structure' which is prevalent among structural analysts has been derived from generative grammar ('generatiewe

grammatika') which was shaped by logical positivism (Deist 1988a:43).

(3) The positivistic distinction between object and subject can also be found in structural analysis. A text (and its structure) exists outside the observer and the observer stands objectively over against the text; the exegete is the subject and the text object; a text can be known by an analysis of its parts and by verification: 'Ken hy die onderdeel en hulle funksionele samehang, ken hy die objek self, weet hy wat die teks beteken' (Deist 1988a:44).

(4) The typical positivistic view of causality also underlies structural analysis: because a text's structure can be indicated and its meaning can 'therefore' be determined. Comprehension of the structure 'leads' to meaning, structure causes meaning (Deist 1988a:43).

(5) Structural analysts believe that meaning exists. A text thus has meaning. And we have a method (structural analysis) to expose that meaning. Consequently, the text is a repository of meaning.

Structural analysis is therefore not as totally different from historical criticism as some believed. It is not correct to state that structural analysis operates within a totally different philosophical framework. Deist stressed that both are embedded in a positivistic philosophy. As long as an exegete is following an essentialistic view of reality he will continually search for the essentials of his object — in other words, the message of the text (Deist 1988a:50). As long as an exegete adheres to a positivistic epistemology he will discover these essentials by means of analysing and describing his object's features — in other words, the structure of the text.

With some sarcasm Deist has referred to De Saussure's *Cours de linguistique générale* as 'the Bible of the "immanent" approach'. According to this 'Bible' a sharp distinction must be made between *form and content*. First the exegete's attention is focused on the form (an analysis of the structure) and then the content is analysed: formal analysis is the 'first step' and is always followed by content analysis. Deist wanted to question this dichotomy. To illustrate his point he leaned heavily on Lyons's linguistics (Deist 1983c:75):

(1) *Utterances not only say but also do something*. According to the thinking of the 'immanent exegetes', the analysis of the structure will lead us to what is said in the text. The matter, however, is much more complicated. The context of an utterance is of utmost impor-

tance. In one context the structure may convey one message, but when the context changes a different message is being conveyed. The sentence 'the door is open' can be understood in many different ways; it can refer to a wooden object not in its proper place, it can be an order to someone who has just entered the room to close the door which he has left open, it can be understood metaphorically as an indication of someone's willingness to listen to others, et cetera. Due to the constant changing of contexts an utterance will have more than one illocutionary force (Deist 1983c:76). This is also true of the Old Testament. Although different contexts are ascribed to the one text by different scholars, the connection between text and context is important. Although the exact circumstances can never be determined, the link between text and context must never be severed. Knowledge about the concrete situations of a text can never be rejected.

This illustrates that the real world in which an utterance is made is important for its interpretation. It also illustrates that mere formal linguistic analysis of an utterance may lead us astray with regard to its meaning, or at least that such analysis may provide too narrow a basis for textual interpretation (Deist 1983c:77).

(2) *There is a difference between denotations and references.* Take, for instance, the word 'bank' in the sentence 'I am going to the bank'. It can refer to a specific financial institution or the bank of a river. A mere distinction between form and content will be of no avail in this regard. Information about the concrete situation seems indispensable. Unless the reader is informed about the context he will be unable to determine the meaning. Without reference to concrete reality it is impossible to speak of an utterance's meaning. Without knowledge of the context the reader can easily be misled about a text's meaning (Deist 1983c:78).

(3) *Textual cohesion and textual coherence.* Structural analysts often simply accept the textual status of a text without taking important criteria into account. Consequently, the status of a text can easily be ascribed to a non-text. Although formal features can determine a text as a text, extratextual factors can also define the boundaries of a text or supply reasons for viewing a number of sentences as a text. Things other than a formal structure may thus demarcate the limits of a text or may be the force holding the text together. A 'mere structural analysis will not suffice' (Deist 1983c:79). Deist summarised his

views as follows:

This means that, at least in some instances and some texts, formal analysis alone will not suffice and that therefore the distinction between form and content is not adequate for textual interpretation. In this case structural analysis can assist us to get at generalities (denotations) but not at the specifics (references) (Deist 1983c:81).

He concluded that a mere text-immanent analysis is *insufficient to determine textual meaning*. An analysis of a text's literary and stylistic structures is inadequate to establish the meaning of a text (Deist 1983c:86). Co-text and context, text and reality cannot be separated. Texts not only denote but also refer, they not only say something but also do something. On ideological grounds the real world is often deformed by texts in order to put a message across. This emphasises the importance of information of the real world of the text (Deist 1983c:86). To neglect the vital relationship between texts and their environment will lead to a misunderstanding of the text. If an exegete disengages text and context he will supply it with a context of his own world (Deist 1983c:85).

Perhaps the main point of criticism against structural analysts is a lack of *theoretical inquiry*. As stated above, knowledge of a method's philosophical framework determines the exegetical process. According to Deist too little attention has been given to this aspect by those adhering to structural analysis. This is, for instance, clearly illustrated by their rejection of historical criticism as positivistic, without their realising that structural analysis is suffering a similar 'deficiency' (see above) (Deist 1988a:42-45).

8 Historical criticism

Deist taught us the historical-critical method as no one else did (cf Deist 1986k:159-172). For historical reasons (cf Deist 1976a:136-147; 1984c:98-132; 1986a:36-65; 1990b:7-22) such a critical study of the Old Testament was not generally acclaimed in South Africa. Even now it is still being treated with very great scepticism (Deist 1976b:32-51). Those inclined to a more fundamentalistic view of Scripture and those convinced of the supremacy of an immanent approach usually view historical criticism as either dangerous or redundant.

When Deist thus stepped into the scene in the seventies he had to

deal with this enormous suspicion of historical criticism. He therefore set himself the task of accentuating its importance and value. It must, however, be noted that Deist never treated historical criticism as the one and only valid method. He was very much aware of its limitations and weaknesses. He always warned against the absolutising of one method or one kind of approach to the Old Testament. But, since he understood the Old Testament historically, and since structural analysts neglected historical questions, Deist was convinced that historical criticism could still play an important role. Therefore, soon after his arrival at Unisa (1977) he mobilised lecturers and students in biblical studies to make a thorough study of Barth and Steck's book on the historical critical method (cf Barth & Steck 1971). Although he never himself wrote a book on this method, Deist re-interpreted it for our circumstances and taught it to thousands of students in the course of many years. Over the next few pages the kind of historical-critical method with which we have become acquainted via Deist is described. We are mainly quoting from his study guides. But, first of all, some introductory remarks are in order.

a Introduction

The word *historical* in the term *historical-critical* stresses that this method is approaching the Old Testament from a historical point of view. This implies the following:

(1) The text is not a timeless object containing eternal truths written at one sitting. It originated in specific circumstances and is the product of its time.

(2) A historical investigation therefore focuses on the circumstances and the age in which a text originated as well as that in which it was transmitted.

The word *critical* does not refer to any critical judgement or evaluation of the exegete. It merely means 'analysis' and the term *historical-critical* describes the examination of a text from a historical point of view. Such an analysis implies the investigation of the process of origin as well as its function in the 'original' society (cf Deist 1982a:98).

Followers of a critical or a historical-critical approach to the Old Testament are often accused of neglecting the *text*, especially the text *in its final form*. According to them the text only serves as point of

departure for all kinds of (unnecessary) historical investigation. No real *text* study is done in this way. Deist clearly illustrated the untenability of such a view: all historical-critical endeavours commence from the final text and with the text the exegete primarily concerns himself with.

The historical-critical method is therefore not a *cut-and-paste approach*. It is, however, true that the text is taken apart, but at a certain stage of the exegetical process it is put together again. Passages are not detached without any purpose.

The historical-critical approach to the Old Testament is not mere *guesswork*, as is sometimes maintained. Certain well-defined criteria must be met and a fixed procedure has to be followed.

Deist also emphasised the *historical feasibility* of any historical-critical hypothesis. The growth of Old Testament texts should not only be closely linked to Israel's history, but their historical probability should also be illustrated. If one believes that a certain theological trend in text A originated during the exile one must also explain why that time in Israel's history was favourable for such a development. One must be able to illustrate why circumstances in Israel gave rise to such theological views. Theories about the origin and theology of texts must, in other words, be historically possible (Deist 1982g: 97,114,115).

The historical-critical method is no more than a working *hypothesis*. It is not *the* method and provides no description of how things really happened.

Rather than exegetical *steps*, Deist would speak of independent *stages* which can be applied separately. All these stages are historical: a historical enquiry into the text is made in order to understand the 'original' authors, their time and their experiences.

b The analytical stage

This stage can also be divided into two phases: literary criticism and oral transmission. *Literary criticism* investigates the text in its present form in order to determine its unity or underlying written sources (Deist 1982g:96). To achieve this aim two important criteria with regard to the text's content and the form must be met. Literary-critical divisions are only possible when both a text's form and content show divergencies (Deist 1982g:104). Literary criticism is an important

stage and it can clarify some important internal inconsistencies and contradictions. Deist also warns against excessive divisions and stresses strict adherence to literary critical criteria (Deist 1982g:107).

Transmission criticism traces the process still further to the oral prehistory of the text. The enquiry therefore continues beyond the written text and its written predecessors to the oral traditions underlying the present text. Regardless of the massive amount of literature which has been written on this stage of the historical-critical method, it is, according to Deist, still in its initial phase ('nog steeds in de kinderschoenen') and the results must not be over-emphasised. Some views also hamper the investigation of transmissions: the narrow or causal link between form and 'Sitz im Leben' and the notion that oral transmission was originally very brief. Both these views have, however, been severely criticised (Deist 1986k:167). Transmission criticism is, however, of great value to Old Testament research. It can assist us in the reconstruction of the history of Israel's literature and can shed important light on Israel's history and religion (Deist 1986k:166).

This analytical stage is an important precondition for the understanding of a text. It enables the reader to understand the inconsistencies, contradictions and repetitions historically. If the interpretation of a text is restricted to the perspective of the latest author only, it lacks historical dimension. Knowledge of the earliest text-forms sheds important light on the theological trends before the final redaction.

But if we could investigate the text as far back as its earliest recognizable form, we would learn more about the views and theological trends existing *before* the final redaction of the text. *Thus we can place the ideas and viewpoints of the final versions of the text in a historical context and understand them better* (Deist 1982g:112 — my emphasis).

c *The synthetic stage*

At this point the text lies in pieces, so to speak. Each component has been dated and described. Very often historical criticism is referred to as a 'cut-and-paste' job. This is a very one-sided view. Of course, the text *is* being taken apart but this is not the end of the exegetical process. The pieces are re-assembled and the historical development described. Synthesis is an attempt to trace the historical development

of the text from its earliest phase to the final redaction of the written text (Deist 1982g:113).

Like the analytical stage, the synthetic stage has two distinct phases: transmission history and redaction criticism. *Transmission history* works in exactly the opposite direction to that of tradition criticism. In the case of the latter the text is broken down into its constituent oral parts while tradition history reconstructs the developmental growth from oral transmission to the written texts. The value of transmission history is also very clear. Transmission history closely links the growth or development of the text to the history of Israel. The text is not viewed in a vacuum but as part of a dynamic historical process. 'The text's development is disentangled and re-integrated so that we may participate in its development and thus gain greater insight into its compilation' (Deist 1982g:116).

Redaction history examines the text's growth from the first written edition through all the stages of development, compilation and editorial commentary, to its final form. This comprises an explanation of the fusion of transmissions or traditions, the many additions and their influence on the text's final shape. In short, redaction history endeavours to organise and explain in terms of history. The importance of redaction history for the exegesis of the Old Testament is obvious. First, a theological framework of the final redactor is provided. At a specific point in time the final editor shaped the final text and conferred a 'final' meaning to it. Second, this meaning can be explained in terms of theological views of an earlier stage of development. In this way 'our historical insight into the narrative itself is deepened and the framework in which the document originally functioned becomes clearer' (Deist 1982g:118).

d The interpretative stage

This interpretative phase must be viewed in the light of the previous stages: an analysis of the text highlights an oral and a written phase while the synthetic stages describe the text's chronological and historical development. The interpretive stages are closely related to the above-mentioned, and are badly in 'need' of that data. With the available information an attempt can be made to determine the function and meaning of each phase of the text's history against its specific background (Deist 1982g:98).

This stage also consists of two levels: an investigation of traditions and of forms. First of all something about *traditions*. The term 'tradition' has a very broad field of application. Often it is described as a world-view or a view of life. A tradition expresses people's views on and experiences of reality — or people's understanding of God's involvement with Israel. Traditions can only exist when the same world-view can be found in different independent texts. According to Deist, Israel's traditions can also be studied from two perspectives: the end-product, analysed by tradition criticism and the process of development, investigated by tradition history: '*Traditie* geeft aan a) het proces waardoor een bepaald waardesysteem, een reeks gebruiken, opvattingen, een ideologie of ook een onderdeel daarvan van generatie tot generatie ... worden overgedragen, en b) het product van dat traditieproces' (Deist 1986k:163).

Tradition criticism inquires into the final product of the tradition. By means of a concordance, words, expressions and sentences are scrutinised in order to determine the type and nature of the tradition. *Tradition history*, on the other hand, examines the history of these traditions. Attempts are made to determine whether these traditions were repeated, criticised, and transformed, et cetera. Traditions are also studied in order to determine which stage of development is reflected in the relevant text (Deist 1982g:121-123).

Any investigation into the traditions of Israel is of great importance. Great insight into Israel's society, history and religion is gained from a study of traditions. It also sheds important light on the understanding of a text: '*Traditiekritiek en -geschiedenis* helpen ons het decor van een tekst uit de verf te laten komen' (Deist 1986k:169). This approach also has important limitations. Traditions can easily be constructed which never existed in Israel's history and they are only an aid to the explanation of the Old Testament: '*Traditiekritische bestudering van een tekst is derhalve een hulpmiddel, niet een zelfstandige methode*' (Deist 1986k:169).

Inquiry into *form* is the actual stage of interpretation. After all the 'steps' have been taken, the final question has now to be asked: what is the *meaning* of a specific text? A historical-critical inquiry into meaning entails a study of the form as well as the context of a text. A study of the form can also be divided in form criticism and form history. *Form criticism* tries to establish the specific form of a narrative.

Underlying such an attempt is the conviction that a perfect correlation exists between form and content. If the form is explained the content becomes more comprehensible. The thought underlying *form history* is the notion that forms have not remained unchanged and constant. New situations have introduced changes in form and therefore it is so important to understand a form against the background of its historical development. When circumstances changed not only did the form change but also its function (Deist 1982g:101).

Deist thus introduced us to a method with which the South African Old Testament establishment of the seventies was certainly not acquainted. Some knew some aspects of it and applied them in an adapted form. But Deist was the first to explain this method to us in such a manner that it could be applied to the text. Put differently, it is only since the time of Deist that full-blown historical critical studies of the Old Testament have been undertaken. It must, however, once again be stressed that Deist was not completely possessed by the historical-critical method or any other method; he constantly stressed the weaknesses of historical criticism. A method only supplies one with data; this data must still be incorporated in a specific frame of reference. Since Deist has a historical frame of mind the historical critical method (among others) can still render an important service.

9 Grammatico-historical exegesis: the synthesis

Deist thus criticised an immanent approach and explained the value of historical criticism. In no way, however, did he choose one and reject the other. He was all too aware of both the strong and the weak points of each method, and therefore wanted to retain both. That is why he pleaded for a marriage between the two. Each highlights one kind of question and one aspect of the text, and the two must rather complement each other.

If the literary or stylistic dimensions of a text are investigated an immanent approach seems to be the right method. If, on the other hand, questions about the origin or the author of the text are being asked, a historical critical approach seems to be the proper way. Instead of a one-sided concentration on one method or a total separation between an immanent reading and historical criticism, a marriage between the two is advocated. The one cannot exist without the other. The execution or the application of this 'combined method' is not an

easy matter. No well-defined method comprising definite steps exists. The emphasis must rather be put on an awareness of the structural as well as the historical indicators in the text, and the development of skills to integrate both elements (Deist 1983c:86).

Deist named this 'method' grammatico-historical exegesis. This, of course, is an old name for a 'new approach'. According to Deist, both aspects of the term, 'grammatical' and 'historical', must be taken seriously. 'Grammatical' refers to a critical awareness of everything that concerns the linguistic aspects of a text (e.g. transformations, classifications, structures, stylistics, literary devices) while 'historical' stands for everything which has to do with the historical embeddedness of a text (e.g. the author, the origin, the political, religious and social climate of the time) (Deist 1983c:87). It is, however, no guarantee that *the* meaning of the text will be defined precisely. In the hands of a competent exegete it merely leads to a hypothesis — but a hypothesis formulated in a specific way and covering a wide range of aspects of the text. For the sake of optimal clarity and verifiability this hypothesis or 'exegetical narrative' will be explained in terms of structure, style, plot, implied author, social context, religious world, and so on. When executed in this manner it still does not imply that *the* meaning has been established. It only implies that all the features of the text which constitute meaning have been taken into account by the exegete and expressed in a hypothesis (Deist 1989e:62).

10 A creative approach

Deist has set one important prerequisite for his grammatico-historical exegesis: it must in no way constrain a creative reading of the Old Testament. In other words, the method and its exegetical steps must be applied with great freedom. Rigorism of any kind must be avoided at all costs. A creative approach to the Old Testament is seriously hampered by a rigid application of fixed exegetical 'steps'. Students are being trained that exegesis entails a number of steps which must be completed in a specific sequence. And, if applied properly, flawless and 'objective' results can be obtained. The impression is created that exegesis is a kind of a recipe with a fixed procedure which must be followed carefully in order to determine the text's meaning. Consequently, exegesis has something mechanical, the exegete becomes a technician and the reader's creative input is severely curbed (Deist

1989e:57).

Understanding of the Bible is not preceded by some exegetical steps. The precise application of exegetical 'steps' is not a prerequisite for an understanding of a text. No one understands 'in sequence'. Exegetical 'steps' are just a post factum description of the process of understanding and their only purpose is to control the exegetical process. Rather, emphasis on the steps alienates one from the text.

Die 'stappe' waarin die resultate aangebied word, kom gevolglik by studente oor as 'n resep wat toegepas moet word, as 'n vaste stel reëls-in-volgorde. Maar as hulle dan dié reëls só gaan toepas, vind hulle meestal dat hulle met 'n klomp *onsamehangende* resultate sit.... Eksegese word 'n rasionele oefening in die toepassing van 'stappe' op 'n dooie teks.... Dit is dus nie eers die toepassing van eksegetiese prosedures op die teks wat betekenis voortbring nie.... Niemand verstaan 'in volgorde' nie (Deist 1989e:59,57).

Instead of a method consisting of exegetical steps, Deist accentuates the importance of the competent reader. Instead of following fixed steps the reader must be trained to become a competent reader of texts. Such a competent reader would be able to deal with the text in a creative manner. 'Maar daar is miskien 'n manier waarop eksegese ... aangebied kan word ... wat hulle sal help om, as kompetente lesers, werklik *kreatief* en met *verbeelding* met die teks om te gaan' (Deist 1989e:59 — my emphasis).

11 The history of Israel

The *contribution* of Ferdinand Deist to the study of the history of Israel was *immense*. He introduced us to a new way of thinking about Israel's past; suddenly we were confronted with a different way of understanding Israel's history; he succeeded in liberating us from a very positivistic way of history-writing; he showed us that objectivity, precision and exactness in a logical positivist sense are totally unnecessary; he persuaded us not to aim at describing the past in final terms; we came to realise the hidden philosophical trends underlying our views on history and history-writing; he illustrated that theory was essential before the Old Testament scholar could commence his investigation of Israel's past; he emphasised that Israel's past can only be reconstructed according to the paradigm peculiar to one group; unlike anyone before, he convinced us that historical facts do not exist

objectively and that they cannot speak for themselves; theories determine which 'facts' are observed; he painted Israel's past on a much wider canvas than we have been used to. Elsewhere in this work the 'practical side' of Deist's historical reconstruction will be illustrated and we therefore now restrict ourselves to some theoretical matters.

In the seventies a book (Van Zyl & Eybers 1977) appeared on the history of Israel, which largely reflected the way we still approached the history of Israel. The importance of this work must, however, not be underestimated. It was one of the first scientific studies of Israel to be published in Afrikaans (cf Du Toit 1966; 1967; Kroeze 1971). For many years it exerted a great influence on a large group of students.

Deist levelled severe criticism against this book. This criticism is of course of extreme importance. It not only highlighted the authors' 'philosophy of history', but also that of Deist. Put differently, the points of criticism launched by Deist were the typical defects that characterised the South African view on the history of Israel. He criticised the authors for not reflecting on the problems of history-writing; it was strange to him that they had included primaeval history in their history; he was astonished that the authors had misinterpreted the views of the historical-critical scholars; the historicity of the patriarchs had been accepted, while the discussion between the Baltimore school and the Leipzig school had been grossly neglected; the Exodus and Sinai had been related without taking the views of Alt, Noth and Von Rad into consideration; the Alt-Noth hypothesis regarding the entry had been totally ignored; the book abounded with positivistic terminology; the positivistic ideal of 'facts speaking for themselves' was clearly reflected by the authors (Deist 1978b:6-24). In the light of this criticism, the views of Deist were *fresh and new*.

Deist emphasised the importance of a *philosophy of history* consisting of two elements: history-writing and theoretical reflection. It is essential to take cognisance of the different phases of history-writing. A knowledge of these phases sheds important light on how myths, legends and annals are used to transmit historical 'facts', and it also illuminates how the idea of history is understood by successive generations (cf Deist 1976b:25-31; 1987a:5-17; Deist & Le Roux 1987:1-10).

Deist also confronted us with a wide variety of philosophers as well as the consequences of their philosophies for the history of Israel. This was of crucial importance for us in South Africa. Some found this philosophical interest disturbing but it was the only way to overcome some of the deficiencies mentioned above. Let us take the *Aufklärung*, for instance. Before Deist the relevance of the *Aufklärung* for history-writing was not recognised by South Africans. Deist,

however, made the establishment of Old Testament scholars aware of the impact of this period on the history of philosophy and humankind. It has drastically shaped the minds of men and women and changed their views about history (Deist 1976b:16,20-26). He demonstrated this with reference to the philosophy of Immanuel Kant. To explain the impact of this great philosopher's views, Deist highlighted Kant's conviction that the intellect supplied the categories of thought in terms of which the world as well as the past could be understood. In the light of this, an objective history would become impossible. Furthermore, categories like cause and effect were not derived from historical data but were supplied by the human spirit. It was therefore no longer possible to write a history of Israel without taking the *Aufklärung* and Kant into account (Deist & Le Roux 1987:11-12). (This also explains Deist's unhappiness with the existing South African books on the history of Israel — cf above.) The influence of the *Aufklärung* is not only restricted to the study of history but it has also formed us — and we must become aware of this. We are twentieth-century people who think and experience the reality around us in a particular way. We cannot be anything else, because we are the 'products' of a particular historical process (*Aufklärung*) (cf Deist 1976b:9-10).

Deist's readers will also notice the influence of philosophers like Herder, Hegel, Dilthey, Popper, and many others. Unlike anyone else, Deist made us aware of the importance of philosophy for writing and studying Israel's history. In other words, never would it again be possible to write a history of Israel without taking into serious consideration former and current philosophers and their philosophies. This was Deist's lasting contribution to the South African scene.

Before one sets out to write a history of Israel the *aim* must be clearly stated. In the past very little attention has been given to this kind of problem. There was previously only one aim — a revelation or salvation history based on the final form of the Old Testament text. Deist introduced the idea that other kinds of history could be written. Political, economic and social histories are all possible. In each case the aim will determine the approach as well as the type of information to be identified (Deist & Le Roux 1987:43).

After the aim has been settled, the *explanatory model* must be decided upon. Such a model will enable the Old Testament scholar to explain the historical data, to clarify the relationship between certain

events and to give meaning to the past. He must, however, take the interpretative power of such a model into consideration (cf Deist 1987e:125-148; Deist 1988e:23-31; 1990f:239). With a Durkheimian model religion will be interpreted as the outcome of sociopolitical forces. According to a Parsonian model religion must be treated as something independent from political and economic factors; a Marxian model, on the other hand, will explain the past in terms of a revolution caused by political and economic powers (Deist 1987f:15-30). The explanatory force of any of these models cannot be denied (cf Deist 1988f:335-348). However, each model presupposes a value judgement which will of necessity drastically shape the outcome of the results (Deist & Le Roux 1987:45-91). It is therefore impossible to present a 'positivistic' description of the past as it really was: 'Each and every explanation is theory-mediated and value-biased' (Deist & Le Roux 1987:43-44).

Models can never be *avoided*. Absolutising a model can distort the available data. This, however, should not create the impression that one can operate without a model. Deist has stressed the fact that no one works without a model. Even those who reject the idea of a model are unconsciously operating with one. No matter how primitive or unsophisticated the model, each scholar reconstructs Israel's history by means of a 'self-constructed' scheme. Deist explained the importance of models with reference to imagination: 'The imagination is a faculty of which any historian needs to make use, even generous use, from time to time; thanks to models, the imagination is furnished with a structure, and is subjected to a degree of verifiability, which would not otherwise be available' (Deist & Le Roux 1987:45).

It is of the utmost importance to understand the *nature* and the *type of source* we are going to use for history-writing. In the past the sources have been used uncritically without taking their nature into account. When writing a history of Israel there are three sources at the disposal of the Old Testament scholar:

(1) First, the Old Testament. In the past many South African Old Testament scholars merely accepted the historical reliability of the Old Testament. It was viewed as an accurate account of the events that really happened in the history of Israel. Without further investigation the Old Testament was accepted as the main source for writing history. Critical investigation has, however, completely changed this

view. No other South African highlighted the complicated nature of the Old Testament as Deist did. Instead of emphasising the unity of the text as has become customary in many quarters, Deist stressed the many discrepancies and contradictions in the text (Deist 1976b:5-8). Historical-critical, and especially literary-critical insights illustrated the Old Testament's complex nature. After Colenso, Deist was the first to accentuate this complicated nature of the Old Testament. And the important point that Deist wanted to make was that this nature of the Old Testament should be taken into account when writing a history of Israel (Deist & Le Roux 1987:33-36).

(2) The second type of source consists of written material, as well as works of art which originated in the Ancient Near East. Information from this material can be extremely useful when Israel's past is investigated. Since these sources are boastful by nature, they should be treated with the greatest caution and the historian should be able to identify the different exaggerations, white lies and inaccuracies (Deist & Le Roux 1987:36-37).

(3) Archaeology forms the third source for writing Israel's history. Deist accentuated two approaches to the text and archaeology — the Baltimore and Leipzig schools. According to the Baltimore school the Old Testament text was treated as the basic document, and archaeological evidence supplemented it to create the 'decor' of the text. This school was criticised for its uncritical treatment of the Old Testament text. The Leipzig school, on the other hand, was strong in its critical scrutiny of the text. It was thoroughly studied by means of the historical-critical method. Archaeological evidence was treated as a source of equal value but was also submitted to thorough critical investigation. In the long run, historians preferred this approach to that of the Baltimore school (Deist 1976a:126-135).

At present we may say that there are still two major trends in the use of archaeological materials: on the one hand there are those who are more or less in agreement with Leipzig School practice and, on the other hand those who prefer to operate with the archaeological materials exclusively and then fit these into one or another sociological or anthropological model so as to write a history arrived at independently of the Biblical text (Deist & Le Roux 1987:39).

Our attitude towards the source we use must be correct. It serves no purpose at all to cite the authority of the source to prove a point.

The source we use must be examined critically, and critical questions must be addressed to it.

(1) Was the source written at the same time as the event or much later? The patriarchal narratives, for instance, were written much later than the events in the history of Israel. They did not originate at the same time as the events, but are ideas about the patriarchs which circulated at a later stage. Viewed thus, they still have tremendous implications for the history of the patriarchs.

Even if we were to establish that the data in these texts did not provide particularly reliable information about the period whose story these texts purport to tell, it would still be true that they contained *valuable information about views and beliefs that were current in the quarters in which these texts were composed or compiled* (Deist & Le Roux 1987:40).

(2) Not all sources are at the same factual level. The factual value of a contemporaneous source is greater than one that originated at a later stage. A historian should be aware of this; he must compare his sources, and evaluate and arrange them according to their factual merits. Not all Old Testament documents (as sources of historical knowledge) can therefore be placed on the same level and approached as if they have equal factual value.

Deist also made some very important remarks regarding *fact and reality*. His views contributed to our understanding of the nature of history. Many wrote about Israel's past and treated the facts (which were abstracted from the Old Testament) as giving direct access to past reality. Deist had a different opinion:

(1) Fact is not synonymous with reality. For instance, facts about the patriarchs are not tantamount to reality. In the past the positivistic ideal had been 'to describe things as they actually happened'. This ideal could only be realised because fact and reality were supposed to be the same: historical facts could describe historical reality; facts could state exactly how things had happened. This of course is impossible. When something happens it is part of reality for the duration of its occurrence. A once-only event has now become a bygone reality. It cannot be repeated in reality. This history-as-reality can only be known in an indirect way — it cannot be dealt with directly. Now, what can we say about this bygone reality? What we can deal with

directly is a statement about the event. We are not dealing with the event itself, but with a statement which affirms that a specific event did occur. Historical facts are not the past event, but only symbols which will enable us to recreate it imaginatively (Deist 1976b:22-23).

(2) Formerly it was believed that facts spoke for themselves. The historian merely had to collect the facts and they would tell the story. In the process the historian was regarded simply as a passive collector. This view is not correct and Deist quotes Carr (1972) in this regard: 'The belief in a hard core of historical facts existing objectively and independently of the interpretation of the historian is a preposterous fallacy, but one which is very hard to eradicate' (Deist 1976b:47).

From this quotation two things are evident: facts do not speak for themselves, and *the historian or Old Testament scholar has a more active part*. Facts do not exist objectively and independently of the historian's interpretation: he interprets and arranges them. He is not only a collector, but also an interpreter.

In the process of collecting, interpreting and arranging facts the historian *reconstructs the past* in the form of a narrative:

To construct history is to narrate it. From its first existence it has consisted in narratives, that is, the telling of a succession of related episodes. Indeed, the essential work of the historian is to bring these episodes to light, to show the relations existing between events, and in relating to explain them. Thus it appears that history is the expository narration of the course of human societies in the past (Marsak 1970; Deist 1979b:47).

Another aspect is *historical validity*. A reconstruction of any facet of the past is hypothetical and based on argumentation. Everything the historian does must be corroborated by a convincing argument: 'Dit is uit die voorafgaande duidelik dat enige rekonstruksie van enige historiese faset van die verlede noodwendig hipoteties van aard is en daarom volledig op *argumentering* berus' (Deist 1976b:26).

12 Textual criticism

Deist also made an immense contribution to the field of textual criticism: he wrote two books on the subject (Deist 1978e;1988b), which were the first of their kind ever to appear in South Africa. He changed many of the conservative and outdated views of scholars concerning

the text during the seventies, he introduced new approaches to and ideas about the nature and task of textual criticism, he shifted attention away from a one-sided search for the original text to the context in which a text originated, he made us extremely critical of the text which we were using, and he convinced us of the preconceived notions underlying each text edition. Some aspects of Deist's views on textual criticism are highlighted below. Once again, the importance of theory of science and context is stressed.

a On the theory of knowledge

According to Deist, Old Testament scholarship in general and textual criticism in particular have to 'some extent, perhaps even largely failed to take cognisance of what has been going on in the field of epistemology' (Deist 1988b:160). According to him, two models prevailed: the *positivistic-inductive* model or the *idealist-deductive* model.

(1) According to the first model, knowledge is obtained from observation. Precise observation leads to the acquisition of facts. The (knowable) existence of a hard core of facts is therefore strongly emphasised; these facts are ordered through inductive reasoning. The theory emanating from this observation of facts is thought to be a picture of reality and its validity is established by means of verification; this approach belongs to an epistemological model of naive realism (theories are pictures of reality). This model also leads to a specific kind of theological or textual critical knowledge: accurate (objective) observation of facts (in the texts) automatically leads to a correct theory (text) (Deist 1988b:160-161). To put it differently: by means of precise observation of texts and the acquisition of objective facts a valid theory (a correct text) can be constructed.

(2) The second model underlines the importance of the ordering reason as the primary source of knowledge. Meaningful observation is constituted by the categories of reason. What is to be observed is determined by our thought categories. Reality is explained in terms of the categories of human reason; objectivity is related to the objectively-given categories of the human reason. This model can also be described as naive nominalism (theories are names for realities) (Deist 1988b:161).

According to Deist both these models 'cannot really serve sound scholarship'. Instead of an either/or approach he opts for a retroductive procedure. As with the above-mentioned models the *realness of reality* is accepted, but its observation is by means of *perception*. Our observations are therefore *coloured* by our receptive organs which are *shaped* by many *psychological and sociological factors*. We observe through the spectacles of *hypotheses*; our observations of reality are *theory-mediated*; reality can never be *objectively* observed in a positivistic sense; *verification* is no longer indispensable because positivistic correctness is not the aim; instead of objectivity or subjectivity, *inter-subjectivity* (knowledge shared by the community of scholars) is emphasised; scientific work concerns itself with the *detection of errors* in order to *better* a view or a theory and *progress in science* is made by the elimination of errors in theological conceptions or text-critical work (Deist 1988b:161-162).

Too many theories of the past were confused with reality itself, and therefore received a near to ideological status in some circles. Where this happens, progress is seriously hampered and co-operation ruled out. We should prevent this from happening again by making *the paradigm switch to a more critical realist view* on the status of scholarly hypotheses, and withstand tendencies towards absolutisation of this or that theoretical opinion (Deist 1988b:162 — my emphasis).

b The search for the original text started with the Reformation

The search for the original text has a long history (Deist 1988b:10-13). The process received *a strong impetus from the Reformation*. This event triggered the scholarly establishment to become engaged in an unending quest for the original text. Prior to the Reformation scholars were not so keenly interested in the original text. Origen's six-columned edition of the Old Testament, as well as St Augustine's exegetical works, clearly indicated the different readings of the text. No attempt was made to harmonise the different readings or to reconstruct the original (Deist 1988b:2). Any inquiry into the original or authentic text was the result of the Reformation. During this period the authority of the church in matters of doctrine was disputed. According to Roman Catholic theology, the church's doctrine was the canon for truth and the pope and church councils had the final authority in matters regarding Scripture. This was rejected by the Reformers: only the Word of God had final authority and it should serve

as foundation for all church doctrine. This theological attitude led to the Reformed principle of 'sola scriptura'. And this principle had a profound effect on the study of the Bible. If the Bible was the absolute authority for the church, certain fundamental questions arose (Deist 1988b:57). With regard to textual criticism the problem of the most original or authoritative text was emphasised. In the case of the Reformers, Erasmus's Greek New Testament and Daniel Bomberg's Hebrew text of 1517 as well as Jacob ben Chayyim's re-edition of it in 1524/5 became *the* texts of the Bible. In the course of time these editions were called the *textus receptus*, the 'received text' (Deist 1988b:3). These were the 'inspired' and the 'correct' texts.

The *sola scriptura* principle, even if it was not conceived of in the knowledge of all its consequences, thus gave birth to problems concerning inspiration, inerrancy and canon — all of which would in time play an important role in the way textual criticism was defined (Deist 1988b:3).

c Different views of the Scriptures lead to different approaches to the text

Views of Scripture and textual criticism are closely related. This can especially be seen in the two 'camps' with regard to textual criticism: the 'final text' group and the 'variety of texts' group (Deist 1988b:6). The first-mentioned was especially influenced by the *sola scriptura* principle. Where this notion was accepted it radically shaped the views of scholars on the text of the Old Testament and the task of textual criticism. Within this group orthodox views of canon, inspiration and inerrancy were held and textual criticism aimed at the optimal restoration of the authographa of the text of the Old Testament. Even Roman Catholic scholars tend to limit textual criticism to the restoring of the authographa of the Old Testament. The reason for this is that critical scholarship 'had been virtually non-existent in Roman Catholic circles up to the fifth decade of the 20th century'. And when it got started they leaned heavily on the work of Protestants, with the result that they generally subscribed to the *sola scriptura* principle as far as their view of textual criticism was concerned (Deist 1988b:5).

Where the *sola scriptura* principle is not accepted the idea of a pristine or *an* original was rejected. According to these scholars the reconstruction of a 'mother manuscript' was possible, but no single

text could serve as the origin or 'fountain' of all existing manuscripts. According to this reasoning our Hebrew text contains only *one* (textual) tradition which functioned in a specific faith community. It is impossible to restore *the* final or canonical text of *the* Old Testament because such a final text never existed. Neither is it possible to establish a proto-text from the many different manuscripts (Deist 1988b:6).

d Text and society are inseparable

Deist made an important contribution to the *relationship* between *text* and *society*. To really understand any textual tradition 'we will have to be much better informed about the communities who fostered these traditions' (Deist 1988b:57). Texts did not originate in isolation but were created in, by and for specific communities. In ancient times 'texts were perhaps more society-oriented'; they did not originate in seclusion but were created within a particular group in which they had a defined function. They were written, for instance, to legitimise the community's right to their land or their social arrangements, customs and beliefs (Deist 1988b:35).

Changes in society also *changed* the way in which *the texts* were read, and created the need for new texts. Thus, whenever society changed, its texts also changed. Many texts show signs of redactional operations in order to suit new literary demands and to serve the new needs of society. New texts did, however, not replace the 'mother' text. They were transmitted alongside each other (Deist 1988b:35).

It is therefore important to remember that texts were *living entities*. No laws protected the author and his work against any changes or additions. The text was constantly submitted to change and it was reworked again and again. Deist made a very important remark in this regard: the readers of these texts were convinced they were part of an unbroken chain of Israel's history and even believed they were an extension of the true Israel and therefore they had the right to work on these texts. This unbroken chain of true believers was bound by a mutual common faith, customs and traditions — and not primarily by the texts. These texts were instrumental to their common needs and served the ideals of the community. Texts were thus living, growing entities that originated in specific communities and served community interests.

We merely wanted to illustrate that we should refrain from thinking of manuscripts as dead objects 'out there' and rather think of them as witnesses to once *living* traditions of *living* communities. One should really think *historically* about such texts. That is, one should not take a *historicist* view of manuscripts, thereby believing that manuscripts can only tell how things really were at a certain *point* in time, but rather see manuscripts as part of the *flow* of history, part of ever 'moving' *traditions* (Deist 1988b:36 — my emphasis).

Text production was thus closely linked to *the dynamic flow of life* and the life situations of a dynamic community. Texts were thoroughly shaped and moulded by society and the changes in society. It is therefore wrong to over-hastily speak of 'errors' in a text. Each reading and also each different rendering should be viewed as a possible witness to a changing tradition, which is the result of a changing society. Deist clearly states that 'the very nature of *text production*, the very nature of the *communities that produced* these texts and the *very function* of texts as the *servants of tradition* in ancient societies lead one to *expect* that different texts would have evolved' (Deist 1988b:36-37 — my emphasis).

Perhaps the most telling example of society's profound influence on the shaping of a text can be seen in the Samaritan text (Deist 1988b:95-113). Deist clearly described how Samaritan society radically influenced the form of the text. To understand this process of text production, cognisance must be taken of this community's conception of itself:

(1) A distinctive view was held of the priesthood and the temple. Both the Samaritans and the Jews in Jerusalem linked their high priests to Aaron. According to Samaritan tradition its priests descended from the youngest son of Aaron, Ithamar, while Eleazar was the patron saint of the Jerusalem priesthood. From a Samaritan perspective the Zadokite priesthood of Jerusalem represented a rival group and had not been legitimately installed by Yahweh (Deist 1988b:96).

(2) The Jerusalem temple annoyed the Samaritans. (Not only the Zadokite priesthood but also the temple's illegitimacy were stressed.) The Samaritan tradition had a different view of the temple: according to this a temple had to be erected on Mount Gerizim, but Solomon had unlawfully built one in Jerusalem (Deist 1988b:96).

(3) The Samaritans adhered to the Law of Moses (Pentateuch) and interpreted these laws strictly: they not only refrained from work on the Sabbath, but did not even leave their homes; with regard to the Passover lamb more restrictions were imposed than were required by the law; the time set for the circumcision was painstakingly observed and no exceptions were made (Deist 1988b:97).

(4) The Samaritans venerated Moses and this also influenced their view of the canon. Some sections of the Former Prophets were incorporated in

their writings in revised form, but the so-called Latter Prophets were excluded. According to the Samaritan community the Messiah would succeed Moses. Elijah was therefore rejected and the other prophets treated as 'sorcerers' or fakers (Deist 1988b:97).

These basic theological tenets of the Samaritan faith community shaped their 'Bible'. This can especially be seen in the texts dealing with the temple. According to the Samaritan Pentateuch the tenth commandment directed the community to build a temple on Mount Gerizim. In other places the Samaritan text refers to 'the place that the Lord has chosen' while the Massoretic text reads 'the place that the Lord shall choose'. This emphasis on the Gerizim and not Zion as the site of the temple can also be illustrated in other sections of the Samaritan Pentateuch. Deist rightly warns against accusations of Samaritan forgery. Our need for one text should not lead to a denial of other witnesses.

One should not dismiss the Samaritan text's claims all that easily, or use the term 'forgery' without very good reason. The 'Samaritan text was *transmitted* in a *community* with a particular religious tradition, and so was the Massoretic text.... Here was a community that *understood* itself in this particular manner, and this self-understanding *led* them to *interpret* tradition in this particular manner' (Deist 1988b:107 — my emphasis).

No attempt was made during early Jewish history to create a correct or an authoritative text. When an official text did develop, this was the result of social and religious factors. The existence of an official text did not exclude other texts. Deist illustrated this point by referring to specific eras in Jewish history:

(1) Before the fall of Judah in 587 BC Jerusalem was the religious centre. The strong influence of Jerusalem prevented different 'texts' from developing. After the fall of the city the problem of sacred texts became acute.

(2) During the period of the *Knesset Gedolah* (539/8-333/2 BC) the *soferim* were responsible for the collecting and the editing of the existing sacred writings. Apparently they were not much interested in the establishing of a single standard text. A variety of readings must have existed, but the *soferim* were not greatly concerned about them. They focused their attention on the extraction of community rules from the different texts.

(3) The era of the *zugôt* coincided with the Greek and Hasmonean rule over Judaea (337-32 BC). It was also a period in which the Pharisees and the Sadducees played an important role. Both groups had a conflicting view of Scripture and the variety of texts caused no problems. The Sadducees did not regard the Torah as different from other writings while the Pharisees regarded the Mosaic Torah as 'canonical'. These views were also extended to other groups (cf Deist 1988b:62-64) and must have shaped their views on the text(s) of the Old Testament drastically. It is therefore very unlikely that all these different groups shared a common text or were much concerned about the variety. They even continued this state of affairs by transmitting the text(s) that functioned in their religious community.

(4) Within the Jewish community of Jerusalem the text form of the Pharisees became the 'official' one. That the Pharisaic 'text type prevailed was

thus not the *result* of some democratic decision, but the *outcome of a power struggle* within the religious community' (Deist 1988b:18 — my emphasis).

(5) 'Social' factors also determined the further vicissitudes of the 'Old Testament text'. During the era of the *Tannaim* a kind of a *textus receptus* was established. This again was the result of many different crises: the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70, the rise of heretical movements like gnosticism, the rise of Christianity and the persecution of the Jews.

(6) The origin of academies, and the dominant influence of some, contributed further to the shaping of the Pharisaic Hebrew text. Once again the acceptance of 'a standard text in the *Jewish* world came about through the dispersion of the Palestinian Jews during the third and fourth centuries AD In the end the Palestinian *textus receptus* received wide recognition as the text of the Hebrew Bible' (Deist 1988b:21).

(7) Other text versions containing different readings continued to circulate and function in different communities. The Jewish *textus receptus* thus reflects 'one recension'. At the time of its establishment 'many texts of a deviating nature were in circulation' (Deist 1988b:20).

e Biblia Hebraica (BHK)

Among many South African scholars both *Biblia Hebraica* and *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* are (still) treated as the original Hebrew texts. They are uncritically accepted and used as pure texts. Deist, however, levelled severe criticism against both editions.

The preface to Kittel's *Biblia Hebraica* creates some expectations. Among other claims it is also stated that BHK 'is a pure Ben Asher text based on *the* Massoretic text'. This, according to Deist, is impossible. BHK is a collated text and not a replica of Ben Asher. Gottfried Quell thoroughly revised the second edition of Kittel's *Biblia Hebraica* on the basis of Ben Asher. The reader of BHK therefore does not know whether he is reading Ben Asher or Quell (Deist 1988b:73).

The preface also states that 'obvious *scribal errors*' have been corrected. According to Deist these so-called errors have been dealt with in an unsatisfactorily manner. Some alleged errors 'clearly *are* errors in terms of traditional Hebrew grammar' (Deist 1988b:73). They are so illuminating that they should not have been corrected (Deist 1988b:73-74).

It is also claimed that BHK is a *pure Ben Asher text*. In the light of the above, this can hardly be claimed any longer. Furthermore, the claim is also made that this text presents a pure — 'perhaps *the* pure — Masoretic text' (Deist 1988b:72). The editor asserts that by means

of the Ben Asher text we 'can now go behind the hitherto accepted form of the Massoretic text.... We can now go to the original form as Ben Asher presented it' (Kittel 1929:xxvi). Deist criticised this point of view by stating that nowhere was the claim substantiated that this specific text would bring us nearer to *the* Masoretic text.

Of the various traditions within Tiberias the Ben Asher tradition represents only a *single* line. Against this background therefore, it is not advisable to speak of any text or school as being *the* Masoretic text of *the* Massoretes (Deist 1988b:75).

Although the *critical apparatus* of BHK has been thoroughly revised, Deist pointed to some grave problems. First, the *eclectic* nature of the apparatus is emphasised. Mostly the critical apparatus only cites those texts supporting the emendation, excluding those which might substantiate the existing reading. Second, the texts have not been well *sifted*. Readings from the same text-family and interdependent translations are presented as separate witnesses. Consequently the uninformed reader can be wrongly influenced to change the Massoretic text because of the text support in the critical apparatus. Third, the *categorical directions* may create the impression that the Massoretic text is wrong or unreliable and that it can therefore be emended freely. The last point of criticism deals with the *cross-referencing* of the critical apparatus. According to Deist, it is not adequate throughout and in some cases it is inconsistent (Deist 1988b:75).

According to Deist the exegete must exercise *great caution* in the use of BHK. He reminds us, though, that BHK is a *hand edition* and not a *desk edition*.

f *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (BHS)*

Although this edition is indeed an improvement, Deist nevertheless identified some very important shortcomings which had to be kept in mind by the reader. We mention only two.

Deist first of all focused on *the printed text*. The reader may have the impression that he is reading a reproduction of the Ben Asher text. This is, of course, not the case. In the Codex Leningradensis sentences were not divided into stichoi: prose and poetic sections have the same form. The division of stichoi and metrical units are the work of the editors of BHS. Furthermore, their work reflects a particular

theory of Hebrew poetry. The metrical units in *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* are the result of editorial intervention and manifest a modern view on Hebrew poetry. In this case it was that of Sievers. Other models of scanning also exist, but it is not explained why that of the Sievers model was accepted.

The point is that the editors of the edition nowhere indicate that these verse divisions are the work of the editors and do not appear in the manuscripts. A student may think that he or she is working with the 'original', while the 'versification' was only done about a decade ago (T)he user should be warned that he or she is dealing with two theories in Hebrew verse in the edition: *the Massoretic and the Sievers theory* (Deist 1988b:77 — my emphasis).

Secondly, Deist focused on the theological or theoretical views underlying the *critical apparatus* of BHS. The way BHS was edited reveals something of the editors' theological intention; their emphasis on 'words' instead of 'texts' reflects their orthodox theology. Furthermore, was the main intention of BHS's critical apparatus the establishment of a particular theological or ecclesiastical tradition?

And if so, does such a goal not flow forth from a *theological* conception of *sola scriptura*? And is this *sola scriptura* confession not perhaps still conceived of in an orthodox framework of concentrating on words rather than on *textual* meaning? (Deist 1988b:82).

13 Summary

(1) Deist's reflections on *method* were very important and illuminating. After the seventies many were caught up in the claws of one method (structural analysis) and one set of exegetical data. For many this method has canonical value and has been viewed as the only valid approach to the Bible. It was therefore imperative to break the cycle and become aware of other possibilities. In this regard Deist has rendered invaluable service to biblical scholarship.

(2) His contribution to the *theoretical side of hermeneutics* is important. It must be seen against the background of the South African controversy about the method. He shifted the emphasis from a mere narrow focus on method and its exact execution to the wide world of hermeneutics. Any discussion of method must take the following into account: the theory underlying it; the context of the Bible, the method

and the exegete; and the nature of scientific knowledge (hypothetical and relational).

(3) His *theoretical views on understanding* prepared the way for his ideas on method. The 'practical remarks' on structural analysis, historical-criticism and a creative reading are inseparably linked to his theoretical considerations.

(4) He was the first to criticise extensively and in a scientific manner the South African utilisation of *structural analysis*. This criticism in no way denied the value of this approach. It can indeed shed important light on the text. Deist merely criticised its one-sided application and the over-accentuation of its value. Much trouble has therefore been taken to indicate the shortcomings of this method.

(5) *Historical criticism*, on the other hand, has been very much neglected in our situation. Despite its shortcomings, Deist took great pains to explain and describe this approach.

(6) An interesting novelty was his *re-interpretation of the grammatico-historical exegesis*. By means of this synthesis he wanted to do justice to the linguistic as well as the historical aspects of the text.

(7) Deist's emphasis on *creative reading* is of utmost importance for the South African situation. Creativity rejects any absolutisation of a method or the rigid application of steps. In this way Deist opened up new avenues for the South African biblical scholar.

F THE CANON AND THE TEXT

Not much work has been done with regard to the text and canon of the Old Testament in South Africa. Perhaps the heavy emphasis on the text in its final shape has discouraged scholars from becoming interested in the historical growth of the text. Some contributions have indeed been made and we mention only a few. Since Deist's contribution has already been discussed, no further reference will be made to him.

1 Ian Eybers

Ian Eybers was interested in the *history of the canon*. It is interesting to note how his confessional approach determined his interpretation of the history of the canon. He focused not so much on the Old Testa-

ment era but on the period in which the Old Testament canon became 'accepted as such'. The term 'acceptance' instead of 'canonisation' was employed because the latter creates the impression of canonicity being bestowed on the Old Testament writings. Eybers was intrigued by the existence of the two forms of the Old Testament canon, the longer and the shorter one, and endeavoured to illustrate the authenticity of the latter. This was 'accomplished' by means of 'assured data' and 'facts' — once again highlighting Eybers' positivistic point of departure (Eybers 1975d:88-89).

Although the *early church* often quoted from the Septuagint, the shorter list of the Hebrew canon was followed. The reason for this is that the early authors quoted from memory and did not always know the identity of their source. Whenever definite lists of Old Testament books were given the Hebrew canon was followed. According to Eybers, a decisive rift occurred between Jews and Christians by about AD 70. It is therefore clear that this view of the shorter canon was not due to Jewish influence but to a common tradition shared by church and synagogue: 'The only facts that we can deduce are that up to the fourth century they (the Church Fathers) quoted freely from the Septuagint and related sources, but when lists of canonical writings are given, these essentially agree with the Hebrew Scriptures' (Eybers 1975d:92).

According to Eybers the Hebrew Canon was accepted as canonical or authoritative by the early church as well as by the Jews, before the Septuagint became the Old Testament of the church early in the second century and even before the schism of AD 70. Perhaps the Old Testament canon was already closed by the time of the rift. This would explain why the Christian Bible included all the books of the synagogue and why so many of the Christian writings reflect the Hebrew canon (Eybers 1975d:95).

Eybers rejected the notion of a '*synod*' fixing the exact number of books belonging to the Hebrew canon. No official meeting at Jamnia was ever held to decide on the Jewish canon. And the reason for this: an official canon already existed by AD 90 or 100. Prior to Jamnia a *de facto* Hebrew canon already existed although no official list of authoritative books was provided (Eybers 1975d:97-98; cf Eybers 1968a:9-15; 1969b:12-20; 1971d:26-45; 1977/78:33-52).

2 Albertus van Zyl

Van Zyl was the first to write a book on the history of the canon in Afrikaans. His work met with favourable response and was reprinted. A very important aspect of Van Zyl's work is his historical representation of the growth of the canon. It was a great improvement on that of Eybers. Van Zyl illustrated that the Old Testament originated over a very long time and that the process of canonisation was a long and a difficult one. Van Zyl can be criticised for not fully exploiting the possibilities of a historical understanding of the canon. His work was nevertheless regarded as an important contribution to a historical understanding of the Old Testament.

Van Zyl (cf 1983:44-47) wanted to determine the earliest period of canon formation and viewed *Moses* as the departure point for such a canon history. According to him, no canon can originate without authoritative words. Moses complied with this prerequisite; he recorded the authoritative words of Yahweh. Any history of the canon must therefore start here and illustrate how things developed from this point.

Voordat daar sprake kan wees van kanonvorming moet daar eers gesaghebbende woorde wees wat op skrif gestel is. Moses het geskrywe Hiermee is voldoen aan die grondvoorwaardes vir kanonvorming en daarom moet die kanongeskiedenis van hier af begin vasstel hoe hierdie oudste geskrewe oorlewering saamgegroe het tot 'n normatiewe geskrif vir Israel (Van Zyl 1983:50).

During the time of Moses a *nucleus of the canon* ('kern-kánon') existed which comprised of the Decalogue and the Book of the Covenant and some other regulations. Historical references were also included. This nucleus canon was not only written down but was also accepted as normative for the believing community (Van Zyl 1983:50-56,59).

Joshua also added some sections to the canon. These additions were made by people who were authorised to do so. The canon was thus enlarged by sections which were viewed with the same reverence, accepted with the same spirit and viewed as normative. This new canon formed the true canon of Yahweh and was accepted as such (Van Zyl 1983:56).

At the beginning of the period of the *Judges* the words of Moses and Joshua formed the written canon. *Samuel* also made some written

additions which became an integral part of the canon. A new element, however, originated with Samuel: the written records were placed in the sanctuary (Van Zyl 1983:58,62).

With the *prophets* a new era in the history of the canon began. The prophets believed they were the plenipotentiaries of Yahweh and that he was working with and through them. As in the time of Moses, he ordered them to record their messages. According to Van Zyl no essential difference existed between the words of Moses and the prophets. This was the reason why the prophetic canon could be incorporated into the existing canon (Van Zyl 1983:66-77).

By the *fall of Jerusalem* in 587 BC the following already existed in written form: the first five books of the Old Testament; the broad outline of the existing books of Joshua, Judges, Ruth, Samuel and Kings; the works of the pre-exilic prophets more or less as we know them today; many psalms; the greater part of the book of Proverbs (Van Zyl 1983:85-86).

Ezra played an important role in the development of the canon. During the exile he copied the writings existing among the exiles. These copies were brought to Palestine in order to teach their contents to the people. Now the written word became the norm and played an extremely important role in the religion of Israel (Van Zyl 1983:80-85). During *Ezra's* time the Pentateuch received canonical status. It became a closed book: '(dit het) 'n geslote boek geword in dié sin dat daar van toe af nie meer iets daarin opgeneem is nie' (Van Zyl 1983:87).

The *process of canon formation*, however, continued. The great historical work comprising the books of Joshua, Judges, I & II Samuel and I & II Kings was concluded during the exilic period. These books were included in the canon because their link with the Torah was emphasised. The sources underlying these books were totally lost but this so-called Deuteronomistic History received canonical status because its link with the Pentateuch was forged. After the time of *Ezra* Chronicles also originated but it took a while before they were viewed as canonical (Van Zyl 1983:87-90). In a similar way books like Psalms, Proverbs, Lamentations, Job and Qohelet received canonical status: they were practical comments on the revelation, the canonical law or the Pentateuch (Van Zyl 1983:114).

Van Zyl rejected the view of a synod at *Jamnia* who fixed the

canon of the Old Testament at about AD 90. In any case the term 'synod' is a Christian one and cannot be applied to a Jewish meeting. The tradition of Jamnia just wanted to emphasise that the Jewish scholars who gathered at Jamnia thoroughly discussed — among other things — the problem of the canon. Since the more liberal school of Hillel formed the majority, a more positive view was taken with regard to books like Qohelet, Song of Songs and Esther. It is, however, not true that an official process of canonisation took place at Jamnia. 'Hoe dit ook al sy ... die ou tradisies oor Jamnia (kan) nie geïnterpreteer word asof die kánon daar vasgestel is nie.... Van 'n of-fisiële "kanonisasie" deur die "Sinode van Jamnia" is daar nie sprake nie' (Van Zyl 1983:134-135).

3 Piet Venter

Piet Venter introduced new perspectives to the growth and the understanding of the text. He started with the *canon*. Any investigation into the Old Testament must commence from the final form of the text. In his study of wisdom, for instance (cf below), this canonical and final shape of the text also determined his approach to Israel's wisdom. Venter went a step further and also emphasised the *process* of canonisation. The final form of the text does not eliminate the previous stages of its development; the final text and the history of its growth are not mutually exclusive. Understanding the canonical shape of the text implies knowledge of its transmission history. This was an important contribution by Venter.

Dit is korrek om die finale teks as uitgangspunt te gebruik, maar dit moet hanteer word as die finale fase van 'n teks wat gegroei het in 'n kanonproses. 'n Dissipline wat as 'kanonkritiek' bestempel kan word moet ingespan word om met behulp van alle bestaande dissiplines hierdie kanonproses te beskryf (Venter 1989a:547).

According to Venter a *history of the canon* is therefore *indispensable*. Such a history must cover the period from the middle of the second millennium to the first century after Christ, and must be studied on three levels. On the first level the circumstances of those who transmitted the traditions must be highlighted. In this regard the political, economical, cultural and other aspects must be taken into account. The second level comprises a study of the formation of litera-

ture and its transmission. Attention must be paid to the communication of literature in specific circumstances. A last aspect of such a history of the canon deals with the community's motives and reasons for preserving, transmitting and canonising literature (Venter 1987a:767-768).

Although emphasis on the final text and structural analysis typifies Venter's approach to the Old Testament, his study of the canon incorporated *historical knowledge*. A history of the canon can never dispense with historical criticism and its insights: literary criticism must be used to investigate the earliest origins of the text; textual criticism can highlight the growth of the final text; tradition history contributes to our understanding of the transmission of traditions; form criticism can examine the different literary forms and their effect on the development of the canon; redaction criticism examines the text's final form (Venter 1989a:547-548; 1987b:21-24).

Venter had a much clearer picture of the *context* in which the canon took shape than any of his predecessors: the earliest forms received more attention, the Yahwist's history of Israel was discussed, Deuteronomy's different stages of development were taken into account, the influence of the northern and southern kingdoms on the formation of the canon were spelled out clearly, et cetera (Venter 1987b:31-52). And the reason for this is the fact that he took the insights of historical criticism and sociology more seriously. This can be illustrated by his discussion of Isaiah and the process of canonisation since the eighth century before Christ (Venter 1989b:27-35; 1989a:527-553).

Venter wanted to highlight the close relationship between canon formation and context and therefore commenced with a sketch of the *socio-historical situation* in eighth-century Judah. Assyria was the world power and brought severe pressure on the smaller nations. Imperial rule was carried out in three stages. First, an area was forced to become an Assyrian vassal. In case of rebellion or resistance the second phase was implemented and the local rulers were replaced by a pro-Assyrian ruler. The third step was to change such a country into a province of Assyria. Judah never became more than a vassal state of Assyria (Venter 1989b:27-28).

Within this context *Isaiah* lived and presented his people with an analysis of their predicament. Jerusalem was central to his theology.

Isaiah's religion was closely linked to the fate of Jerusalem. An Assyrian victory would also imply a victory of the Assyrian gods. For Isaiah the Yahweh religion thus became dependent upon the continued existence of Jerusalem. The fall of the city was inconceivable (Venter 1989a:535-536).

In these circumstances Isaiah's words were uttered. According to Venter there were certain factors which contributed to the formation of this book of Isaiah. One was Isaiah's ability to express his prophetic view into a workable paradigm which could enable the first hearers to understand their situation, and later generations to apply it in different situations. 'In the case of the prophetic paradigm of Isaiah it had an extraordinary long canonical "Nachgeschichte", as is shown by the addition of a "second" and even "third" Isaiah's work to that of Isaiah of Jerusalem' (Venter 1989b:33; 1989a:534-551).

Venter did indeed contribute to our comprehension of the history of the canon. He has laid the basis for a contextual understanding of the process of canonisation which has far-reaching consequences for the explanation of the Old Testament text and theology.

4 Johann Cook

Cook differed from his predecessors. He did not focus on the history of the canon, but on the text. He has devoted his scholarly life up to now to textual criticism. Within our context his contribution has been great; he has made an exceptional contribution to textual criticism in South Africa as well as abroad; he has made us aware of the importance of different text versions; he has persuaded us to take textual criticism seriously; he has opened our eyes for the theological possibilities of the Septuagint and the Peshitta; he has linked the theology of the Old Testament to textual criticism in a fascinating way and renders an invaluable service with the compilation of a computerised data base.

To a large extent *textual criticism* means to Cook the investigation of different text versions. He is also very optimistic about the possibilities of this field of research and indeed described the current state of textual criticism as 'a period of progress' (Cook 1988a:51). A striking aspect of Cook's work is his expert knowledge of the use of the computer and the many different computer programs that are available. His endeavours underline the fact that the compilation and

the use of a data base requires a sound knowledge of the computer. This is also clear from the way in which he has defined the term 'data base': 'A data base is simply the *electronic equivalent* of a *computerized lexicon/dictionary*, with one fundamental difference: the electronic version is an interactive, manipulatable and versatile grouping of data' (Cook 1988b:27 — my emphasis).

Cook himself is engaged in the creation of a data base for the study of the *Peshitta* and the *Qumran scrolls*. Although the use of the computer for research has been going on for some time, the importance of a computerised data base has not been realised by all. Cook has a very optimistic view about the possibilities of such a study. It can, for instance, enable the researcher to be more precise and exact (cf Cook 1988b:28).

Cook emphasised the importance of *sound theory* which must underlie text-critical research (Cook 1985a:201-205). Such theoretical inquiry does, however, not imply philosophical information or any theory of science but merely refers to a certain (theoretical) attitude towards the different versions of the text. So, for instance, prior to 1947 the Massoretic text, Septuagint and Samaritan Pentateuch were the three main streams of textual tradition. This view has been changed and Cook personally favours a textual theory of a multitude of texts. Such an approach 'opens the possibility for the methodologically correct interpretation of variants and deviating textual readings in comparison with their *Vorlagen*' (Cook 1988a:53).

Progress has also been made with regard to the *publication of the texts*. All existing and new text editions must, however, constantly form the object of text-critical reflection. Cook highlighted two major problems related to text publication. According to him, each problem is closely linked to the 'theoretical premises on which the respective textual critics base their research' (1988a:54).

(1) The first problem area concerns the *theoretical premises* underlying text editions. Basically there are two theories: the diplomatic text-concept and the critical text-concept. According to the first theory an existing text serves as basis for the collating of other relevant texts. The Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (BHS) and Hebrew University Bible Project (HUPB) are examples of the diplomatic text-concept: in the first case Codex Leningradensis and in the latter Codex Aleppo served as bases or as diplomatic texts (Cook 1988a:54). There are two

examples of the critical text-concept: the Göttingen Septuagint Project and the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament. No basic text was used but all the existing manuscripts, versions and patristic quotations were employed (Cook 1988a:54).

(2) The second problem area deals with *critical apparatus*. Once again two major views exist which Cook calls the 'too little-too much-theory'. The BHS is an example of the first. Although it is a useful edition and 'the only complete edition of the Hebrew text of the Old Testament' too little information has been given in the critical apparatus. Cook has even referred to the critical apparatus of BHS as 'subject to conspicuous weaknesses'. To illustrate his point he investigated the critical apparatus of the book of Genesis and highlighted the inconsistent, incorrect, unclear and incomplete usage of the different textual data (Cook 1988a:55). The HUPB, on the other hand, is an example of the too-much approach. An extensive critical apparatus is given and a wide variety of textual data is mentioned. This comprehensive critical apparatus is, however, 'its largest single drawback' (Cook 1988a:57). It hampers the speed of the researchers and delays the publication of the Old Testament as a whole.

To sum up this part of the discussion: the BHS edition is a vast improvement of former BH editions It is a handy tool for the biblical student. However, it does have one major disadvantage, the inconsistency of its text critical apparatus. The HUPB, on the other hand, is methodologically a sound undertaking. However, the fact that only a limited number of Old Testament books are available is a serious handicap (Cook 1988a:57).

Cook emphasised the close *relationship between textual criticism and exegesis* (Cook 1985a:205-207). He regrets the fact that so many South African biblical scholars view textual criticism as a preliminary stage of exegesis that is unimportant and dispensable. According to Cook this state of affairs has, inter alia, been caused by the so-called immanent text reading, which has underestimated the value of textual criticism. Cook warned against an exaggerated emphasis on the final form of the text (so-called structural analysis) and on reception criticism, because textual criticism is grossly neglected (Cook 1988c:362).

In short it boils down to a suggestion that the persons applying redaction-criticism (inter alia), on the one hand, and text critics, on

the other hand, should communicate with one another.... Formulated differently, a strict dichotomy should not be imposed between textual criticism, on the one hand, and literary-, redaction criticism, etc., on the other hand (Cook 1988c:364).

Cook is also very much engaged in the *computerisation of the Qumran scrolls*. More correctly, he is one of the world leaders in this regard. As the second holder of the Irvine Scholarship he studied at the Ancient Biblical Manuscript Center in Claremont. While he was studying in Claremont a congress was held in 1985 to discuss the possibility of a computerised data base for the Qumran scrolls. This event led to a joint article by Emanuel Tov and Johann Cook on the possibility of such a data base (Tov & Cook 1984:133-139). Consequently, a joint project between the above Center and Cook was launched to computerise the Qumran scrolls (Cook 1988b:27).

According to Cook there are many advantages attached to such a computerised data base. It will at least address the important difficulties which hamper the present study of the Qumran scrolls. Some of these problems are the following (Cook 1988b:28-29; Tov & Cook 1984:133-134):

(1) Although the volumes of the *Discoveries in the Judean Desert (of Jordan)* contain the Qumran publications, many other texts have been published elsewhere. This of course can cause a lot of serious difficulties for the researcher.

(2) Scrolls related to the same biblical book are printed in different volumes because they were found in different caves. If one is to investigate the texts related to one biblical book many and diverse publications must be consulted.

(3) Another problem deals with the system of orthography and linguistic characteristics of the different Scrolls as well as their inter-relationship.

(4) A last problem area has to do with the actual manipulation of the data in the different texts which are scattered over many publications.

According to Cook the computer can solve these problems to a large extent (Cook 1989:310-311). It is exactly the aim of this computerised data base to bridge the nagging problems experienced by the Qumran scholars. One of the important advantages of such a data base is its flexibility. It can easily be changed or information be added or

deleted (Cook 1988b:29).

Cook and his team at the Department of Semitic Languages at the University of Stellenbosch tackled the problem in a specific way. They have benefited from computerised data bases developed by other scholars. In their initial planning the research team opted for a program that already contained the Massoretic text, and a system that would allow for the easy addition of Qumran material. Although a few possibilities existed, they decided on Computer Assisted Tools for Septuagint Studies (CATSS), which is directed by R A Kraft of Philadelphia and E Tov of Jerusalem (Tov & Cook 1984:135). CATSS provides information on all aspects of the study of the Septuagint: its language, its grammar, translation technique, its relation to the Massoretic Text and the reconstruction of aspects of the Hebrew *Vorlage*. The research team removed the right column containing the Greek and inserted the Qumran variants. Cook, who is also heading a team compiling a data base for the Peshitta, encoded the Qumran scrolls in the same way as in the case of the Peshitta: every derivation in the text is recorded (Cook 1988b:31; 1989:311). Cook hoped that such a data base would enable the student of the Qumran scrolls to come to specific conclusions and not to be content with generalisations (Cook 1989:310).

With such studies as basis one could use the data to answer all sorts of questions, for example to classify the scrolls. The external details of the scrolls and the origin thereof could be examined The data base will certainly make it possible for us to take a look at the whole picture, founding our arguments upon representative material (Cook 1988b:39).

As stated, Cook has also become a principal partner in the *compilation of a Peshitta computerised data base*. He not only heads the Peshitta research team in the Department of Semitic Languages at Stellenbosch, but also works in close collaboration with international scholars. In 1983 he attended a congress of IOSCS in Salamanca. Many papers at this congress hinted at the development of a computerised data base for the Peshitta. According to Cook the decisive moment came when McKane, who chaired the Peshitta project of the IOSOT, emphasised the development of a Peshitta concordance. His call met with a favourable response and an editorial board was elected to investigate the matter further. Along with McKane of St Andrews and

M J Mulder of Leiden, Cook was elected as a member of this board (Cook 1985b:176). These deliberations resulted in the Stellenbosch project for the compilation of a computerised data base for the Peshitta (Cook 1985b:165).

The Peshitta Version of the Old Testament, as published by the Peshitta Institute of Leiden, served as textual basis. Up to now the data base consists of the encoded text of Genesis 1-30. It is also important to note that a concordance for these chapters has been compiled and is available on a floppy disk. Computer Assisted Tools for Septuagint Studies (CATSS) is once again going to play an important role because its Hebrew text is to be used in a parallel alignment with the Syriac text. For the near future the following is planned: a Hebrew-Syriac parallel alignment, an encompassing morphological analysis of the Syriac text, the variant readings of the Peshitta, a morphological analysis of the Hebrew text and an attempt to get the cooperation of other (international and local) scholars to speed up the research (Weitzman has already agreed to encode the book of Proverbs) (Cook 1985b:166-167). A long-term ideal — and this is very typical of Cook — is 'the reconstruction of the *Urtext* of the Peshitta' (Cook 1985b:147-168).

He investigated the composition of the Peshitta and highlighted the internal and external issues. According to Cook internal considerations dominated the translator(s)/redactor(s) of Genesis and Exodus. He attributed many additions to the harmonisation of parallel verses, the explication of subjects/objects and the insertion of absent material. It is not always easy to determine whether these changes were the result of internal considerations or whether they were caused by the Hebrew 'Vorlage' which has been used. Cook nevertheless concluded that the textual operations of the translator(s)/redactor(s) were rooted in a desire to make the Hebrew text understandable. He also stated that the translator(s)/redactor(s) must have been '(an) original, educated person(s) who interpreted various passages uniquely' (Cook 1985b:168).

Cook also focuses on the *Septuagint*. He is of the opinion that the study of the Septuagint is very relevant for theology. To illustrate his point he referred to three main areas: textual criticism may benefit from a comparison between the LXX and the MT. Exegesis can also be enriched from such a comparative study. Understanding of a text is

closely related to its history: 'dat die geskiedenis van 'n teks vir die verstaan van die teks belangrik is' (Cook 1983c:169). Septuagint studies can also contribute to the theology of the Old Testament, whether in a Hellenistic or Greek fashion. The Jews had an ambivalent attitude towards Greek philosophy: it enabled them to get a deeper understanding of Jewish faith and religion although Greek philosophy never became an integral part of their theology. This is clearly illustrated by Cook's discussion of views of creation in Genesis 1 and 2 (Cook 1988c:366-371). He concluded that the Septuagint has a Platonic view about creation. Any inquiry into the theology of the Septuagint can also contribute to Old Testament theology in general (Cook 1983c:169-175).

Cook wanted to determine the translation technique of the translator of the Greek Genesis. To accomplish this he investigated the Greek text by means of a few categories: word-consistency, minuses and pluses, and transpositions and inversions (Cook 1988c:367-368). First, word-consistency was examined and Cook illustrated that the translator followed the Hebrew text of Genesis neither slavishly nor freely. The amount of minuses and pluses strengthened the view that the Greek translation 'is a relatively literal translation' and followed a 'Vorlage' which did not differ extensively from the MT. This view has also been confirmed after the different transpositions and inversions have been scrutinised (Cook 1987:92-101).

Cook also investigated some ways in which Genesis 1-11 was translated. First of all, he referred to the additions and omissions in the Greek text. These may be ascribed to a varying Hebrew 'Vorlage' or to the translator who added and omitted in order to explain and to harmonise. As stated, the translation technique hinted at the translator's literal rendition of the Hebrew text, and therefore no clear-cut answer regarding the additions and omissions can be furthered. Cook suggested that a multidimensional approach should be followed with regard to the LXX and the MT. The Greek version must be analysed in close conjunction with the MT and other versions, in order to determine the exegetical approaches that have been followed (Cook 1988c:368-369; 1987:101-113). External influences on the translation can also be seen. This is exceptionally clear from the translation of the Cain passages in Genesis 4. A reason for the rejection of Cain's offering is sought and, according to the Greek translator, his disobedience

caused the rejection. According to this view Cain himself was responsible for this punishment. This theological view can be found in the Targumim and it must have influenced the translator of the Greek Genesis. A third aspect of the translator's work deals with the way in which chronological problems were treated. In some instances the translator did make an attempt to 'correct' the Hebrew *Vorlage*. Lastly, it is also clear that the translator revealed a tendency to avoid some human references to God (Cook 1987:114-119; cf Cook 1984:41-43). With regard to some methodological issues Cook came to the following conclusion:

The translator of Genesis tried to stay as near as possible to his Hebrew *Vorlage*. Consequently some readings which at face value seem to be the result of the translator's explicative approach, in fact reflect a varying Hebrew *Vorlage*. It was demonstrated that the translator used translation devices in order to clarify this text; for example, harmonization of parallel passages. In a few instances he also took external exegetical traditions into account in order to explain his parent text (Cook 1987:119).

G CONCLUSION

(1) Willem Vorster's speech in March 1971 was decisive. It can be described as the 'big bang' in South African biblical scholarship. From that day on scholars approached the Old Testament differently.

(2) It was Jimmie Loader who applied this new approach to the Old Testament and who explained it in such a manner that it became accessible to many. This is the reason for the popularity of his article on this approach. Even students and scholars in other theological subjects made use of it.

(3) Willem Prinsloo re-interpreted this method and made it the dominant model of exegesis for theological students at the University of Pretoria.

(4) When Ferdinand Deist came to Pretoria he had a different emphasis. He was a theologian who approached the Old Testament from a historical point of view. He exerted an immense influence and introduced us to many new ways of approaching the Old Testament.

(5) Ian Eybers, Albertus van Zyl and Piet Venter studied the history of the canon. Van Zyl was an improvement on Eybers because he sketched the process of canon formation in greater detail, but Venter

surpassed them all with his fine descriptions of the context in which books received canonical status.

(6) Johann Cook concentrated more on textual criticism. He highlighted the importance of the other text versions and contributed to the compilation of a data base for the Qumran Scrolls and the Peshitta.

The Study of the Pentateuch

For more than two hundred years Pentateuch criticism has been in the claws of historical criticism. That has been the dominant model of exegesis and it yielded many important results. It actually changed the face of Old Testament scholarship and led to a new way of thinking about the first five books of the Bible. As stated in the previous chapter we missed these developments in South Africa. It is therefore important to note how we have treated critical views pertaining to the Pentateuch. To a large extent Pentateuch study in South Africa is an excellent mirror reflecting not only the state of historical-critical studies in this country but also the manner in which the grave Pentateuchal problems were dealt with.

To illustrate this point we pick up our story in the previous century. *John Colenso* came to Natal as a missionary. His pastoral work led him to an intensive study of the Pentateuch, which resulted in a seven-volume work. He followed a critical line and by means of close reading identified all the inconsistencies in the first five books of the Bible. The origin and growth of the Pentateuch were also explained. Colenso's analyses are brilliant but he was totally rejected by the English-speaking community here and abroad.

Historical criticism did not receive much scholarly attention in South Africa until the nineteen-twenties and thirties. During this period some new developments were taking place among Afrikaners, which stimulated critical thinking. *Johannes du Plessis* introduced historical criticism to the Afrikaans community and urged the church to take cognisance of this approach. Du Plessis's endeavours, however, abruptly ended in a heresy trial.

In the post-Du Plessis era scholars tended to become more conservative or rather anti-historical-critical. This spirit prevailed for a few decades and in this context *Charles Fensham* and *Albertus Van Zyl* wrote important works on the Pentateuch. Both of them were con-

fronted with the results of historical criticism which could no longer be avoided. Each one dealt with the problem in his own way. Fensham opted for the ancient Near Eastern context as the background for Pentateuch research. Van Zyl on the other hand adapted the insights of historical criticism drastically, in order to make it acceptable to the church.

Ferdinand Deist was actually the first one who applied the historical-critical method to the Pentateuch fearlessly. He was well-versed in German thinking about the Old Testament, and especially the Pentateuch. He understood the representatives of this approach and explained their work in a clear manner. He was the first since Colenso to give a historical-critical account of the Pentateuch's origin and developments.

Adrianus Van Selms wrote two commentaries on the book of Genesis. He also took historical-critical results into account but to a certain extent his work is out of step. He had his own explanation of the issues relating to the Pentateuch and therefore 'twisted' critical results to suit his views. His work nevertheless remains charming and delightful to read. Van Selms was much more of an artist and highlighted the artistic dimension of the Pentateuch.

There were also those who rejected historical-critical investigations into the Pentateuch. *Ian Eybers* was vehemently opposed to this approach. According to him it undermined the essence of the Pentateuch. Others were not so negative towards this method but viewed it as totally insufficient to illuminate the true nature of the Pentateuch. They therefore suggested an immanent reading of the text. *Harry van Rooy* made a structural analysis of Deuteronomy, *Wil Vosloo* investigated the balanced structures of the patriarchal narratives and *Peet van Dyk* made a useful contribution to research into etiological narratives.

This chapter focuses more on a historical-critical approach to the Pentateuch (as well as reactions to it). And the reason for this must be sought in the fact that this approach dominated Pentateuchal studies for more than two centuries. As we have said above, historical criticism has not fully arrived in South Africa yet and this can clearly be seen from the way in which the Pentateuch is treated by South Africans. Put differently, historical criticism is something of a late-comer and has not fully 'conquered' or 'penetrated' our Old Testament scene yet. To illustrate this point we refer to the theses of *Hendrik Bosman* and *Joan Annandale*.

Hendrik Bosman was the first to submit, to the University of Pretoria, a doctoral thesis based on a historical-critical analysis of some sections of the

Pentateuch. And this only occurred in 1983 and it could only have happened with Albertus Van Zyl as promoter. To accomplish his aim Bosman had to break through many barriers of scepticism. These were those who deemed such an approach unnecessary, insufficient and an attack on the authority of the Old Testament. What makes his thesis so important is that it was submitted in a theological faculty of the Dutch Reformed Church.

Bosman was interested in Old Testament ethics and investigated the historical continuity between the pronouncements on adultery and the theological tradition in the Old Testament. He wanted to determine how this continuity affected the understanding of the decalogue (Bosman 1991:190-205). A distinction was therefore made between 'ethos' and 'ethics'. The first referred to the realisation of moral behaviour in concrete life and the latter to intellectual reflection. An investigation into Old Testament ethics does not merely focus on a study of the ethos but also on the ethical reflection which can be found in the Old Testament (Bosman 1983:10-15).

Bosman was interested in ethos and reflection as exemplified in the history of Israel. He was thus asking a so-called historical question and followed a 'full-blown' historical-critical method (cf 1988a:43-73; 1988b:21-30).

Aangesien die aanvanklike probleemstelling historiese vrae stel moet die eksegetiese metode wat na aanleiding daarvan ingespan word ook histories van aard wees. Die klem op die tradisiehistoriese ondersoek moet as deel gesien word van 'n meer omvattende histories-kritiese benadering tot die Ou Testament wat die sin en die betekenis van 'n teks binne sy oorspronklike 'sinshorison' of historiese konteks wil bepaal (Bosman 1983:18).

Broadly speaking, Bosman followed the basic method (of Barth and Steck) which was introduced by Ferdinand Deist to his Unisa students during the late seventies. In an important footnote Bosman also showed his gratitude to Deist 'vir die gebruikmaking van sy insigte, soos vervat in Unisa-studiegidse vir Ou-Testamentiese eksegesis' (Bosman 1983:23). At the time when Bosman wrote his thesis he was attached to the teaching staff of Unisa's theological faculty.

Although Bosman applied the method in his own way he also identified three stages. In the analytical phase the written sources and the oral transmissions underlying the specific adultery passages are investigated by means of 'Literarkritik' and transmission criticism. The second phase consists of transmission history and redaction history. This synthetic stage endeavoured to relate the oral and the written development of adultery to Israel's history. The last stage is of an interpretative nature and focuses on the meaning and the function of the adultery pericopes. To accomplish this, tradition-critical and tradition-historical, as well as form-critical and form-historical studies were launched (Bosman 1983:15-23).

Joan Annandale's contribution has not always been recognised. After the completion of her studies at the University of Pretoria she spent a few semesters with Otto Plöger at Bonn working on her doctoral thesis. In 1971 she wrote two articles on 'Formgeschichte' in Afrikaans which were the first to deal with this theme in this language. She was greatly influenced by the work of Klaus Koch on 'Formgeschichte' and also emphasised the importance of such a study for the Pentateuch. It is very interesting to note how she depicted this approach at the beginning of the seventies. According to her, a

study of literary forms highlights the essential structure of a section and also serves as a basis for correct exegesis (Annandale 1971a:5); the explanation of a pericope is very much dependent on the literary form (Annandale 1971a:7); any attempt to undermine the importance of form-critical study was rejected (Annandale 1971a:8); the development and growth of the different forms also contribute to meaning (Annandale 1971a:11); 'Formgeschichte' does not only imply the study of forms and their 'Sitze im Leben' but also comprises a study of the history of transmissions as well as redaction history (Annandale 1971b:93-100). Annandale must be credited for making us aware of the importance of 'Formgeschichtliche' for the understanding of the Pentateuch.

At a later stage in her life Annandale became interested in the history of research (cf Annandale 1987:152-197). Her thesis of 1984 is devoted to the views of Paul Volz (and his co-publisher Wilhelm Rudolph), Gerhard von Rad and John van Seters concerning the so-called 'Elohists'. It was one of the first theses written from a historical-critical perspective at Unisa. Her promoter was Ferdinand Deist.

She concluded that, although different methods were employed (Volz applied literary criticism, Von Rad the tradition-historical approach and Van Seters the combined literary-critical cum form-critical cum redaction-historical method), all three concluded that there was only one great narrator in the Pentateuch/Hexateuch/Tetrateuch and that was the Yahwist. They furthermore concurred that 'die "Elohis" net 'n redaktor van en *aanvulling* by die *Jahwis* is of 'n klein *variant* voor die *Jahwis*' (Annandale 1984:217). This view led to an elimination of the Elohist. Put differently, the prominent function of the Yahwist makes the existence of the Elohist superfluous. The Elohist 'is net 'n alternatiewe vertelling van daardie *Jahwistiese* konsep en is so nou met die *Jahwis* se werk verbind dat dit kwalik literêr-krities van die *Jahwis* geskei kan word' (Annandale 1984:219).

A JOHN WILLIAM COLENZO: A HERO OF A LOST CAUSE

On 20 May 1855 Colenso and a party of about forty arrived in Durban harbour. They had just completed a difficult and at times even dangerous voyage (Guy 1983:53-54). Among this group were labourers, artisans, farmers and other volunteers who joined Colenso's mission. A few days after their arrival the group went to Pietermaritzburg where Colenso was received as bishop of Natal. From there they moved to a place a few kilometres from Pietermaritzburg where both Bishopstowe, the residence of the Colensos, and Ekukanyeni, the headquarters of the mission, were built (Hinchliff 1964:62). Although Colenso returned to England a few times, he actually stayed in Bishopstowe for the rest of his life. There he investigated the Pentateuch and became notorious for his views.

Colenso falls outside the period discussed in this book. He is, however, just too important to be left out. In Colenso South Africa had a great missionary and an excellent Pentateuch scholar. He was the most important Pentateuch critic to ever work under our southern sun. His views on the Pentateuch were, however, the object of much talk and also caused a public outcry. He became infamous and was rejected by many. Colenso died a lonely man and an outcast in this remote British colony.

To place Colenso in a specific context some biographical information is provided below. Although he reacted against his times, Colenso was nevertheless a typical nineteenth-century Englishman who was moulded by his context. Some critical voices attacking the dominant theological mood stimulated his thinking, but it was Coleridge's philosophy in particular that enabled him to be a critical scholar as well as a missionary.

1 A brief biography

Colenso was born on 24 January 1814, the eldest of four children. At the age of fourteen his father's business collapsed and a year later his mother died. The young Colenso now had to carry the great financial burden of the family. Instead of going to university as he had hoped, Colenso worked as an usher at a school from five-thirty in the morning till eight at night. It was a desperate time for the young boy. He was lonely and always short of money and often physically exhausted. He wanted to escape his situation and with the assistance of some relatives he managed to visit Cambridge. Colenso was an excellent mathematician and had to give private classes in order to provide the wherewithal for living. Moments of leisure were extremely limited and he was constantly overworked. Despite his circumstances, his achievements were remarkable: 'His capacity for hard work, his ability to concentrate, and the self-discipline he developed in his youth were to remain with him and provide the basis for his many achievements' (Guy 1983:6).

After the completion of his studies Colenso moved to Harrow in 1839 as a teacher of mathematics. He was plunged into further financial problems when his house burnt down and he had a debt of five thousand pounds. Colenso was in a desperate position and there was no way of getting out. To relieve his burden he wrote books on math-

ematics. He often cherished the thought of entering the ministry and becoming a missionary. His vast debts made the probability of a career in the mission field remote (Hinchliff 1964:31).

In June 1842 something important happened which had a lasting effect on Colenso. He met his future wife, Sarah Frances Bunyon. They met when Frances visited her brother in Cambridge and were immediately attracted to each other. On 6 July 1842, a date which was always very significant to the couple, they declared their love for each other. The next year they became engaged and hoped to be married but due to Colenso's immense financial problems the wedding had to be postponed (Guy 1983:13). They were only married three-and-a-half years later when Colenso became a minister in Forncett. Apparently the love between them was real and deep. It was a love so complete and satisfying that it carried them through many crises. So devoted was Frances to her husband that she described her own life as a mere appendix to his and referred to the day of his death as the time when 'our dear Lord left us' (Rees 1958:374).

Things did, however, change for the better for Colenso. One day in 1853 he was offered an amount for the copyright on his books on mathematics. The amount was sufficient to 'arrange for the complete discharge of my obligations, principal and interest' (Cox 1888a:47). For the first time in his life Colenso was financially independent. And this allowed him to follow a mission call to Natal which he received in the same year (Guy 1983:34). Thus the bishop of Natal touched South African shores in 1855.

2 The first seven years

The first seven years of Colenso's stay in Natal were decisive. It was a time of immense labour. His capacity for very hard work stood him in good stead during those first years. Three months after his arrival he advertised a Zulu-English dictionary, a Zulu grammar and a Zulu version of the Gospel of Matthew. When his work is surveyed it can indeed be called 'truly herculean labour' (Hinchliff 1964:68).

During this period circumstances also forced his thinking to maturity. At the end of these first seven years Colenso had reached definite conclusions with regard to the origin of the Pentateuch and the nature of religious truth. He felt compelled to bring these insights before the public. By so doing he not only contributed to the religious thought of

his time but also roused the indignation of many (Guy 1983:54).

3 The question that sparked off a seven-volume answer

During the translation of the Pentateuch Colenso studied the text in its minutest detail. He also constantly had to discuss his progress with 'intelligent natives' (Colenso 1862:xx,18). Because of his knowledge of the Zulu language Colenso was able to discuss his findings in detail with these native workers whom he held in very high regard. According to him their way of life, customs and their Natalian countryside corresponded in so many ways to the physical culture of old Israel. The Zulu people and culture thus became an indispensable link between him and the text. Discussions with them illuminated the text in many ways. This close relationship between the Zulu and Israel enabled Colenso to understand the Old Testament more profoundly.

... therefore, compelled to discuss all the minutest details with intelligent natives, whose mode of life and habits, and even the nature of their country, so nearly correspond to those of the ancient Israelites, that the very same scenes are brought continually, as it were, before our eyes, and *vividly realised in a practical point of view*, in a way in which an English student would scarcely think of looking at them (Colenso 1862:xx).

Colenso's daily pastoral duties confronted him with two immense issues: the impossibilities of the Old Testament and its immoralities. With regard to the *impossibilities* Colenso was influenced by the work of sir Charles Lyell. Between 1830 and 1833 his *Principles of Geology* appeared and had a great impact on conventional religious views in England. Lyell investigated the many different theories with regard to the origin of the earth. He came to the conclusion that the formation of the earth and its inhabitants was the result of continual erosion and deposition which took place over long periods of time. Lyell remained an Anglican his whole life, and did not deliberately want to undermine the authority of the Bible. His geology, however, not only created 'the intellectual situation in which Darwin became probable' but his views also contributed to 'the conflict between geology and Genesis' (Chadwick 1971:6-7).

It speaks for itself that these views shook the traditional views on the origin of the Old Testament. Furthermore, the Mosaic cosmogeny was refuted and the traditional biblical views on the earth's origin se-

riously questioned. This tension between the natural sciences and the Bible continued for a considerable time and it was often emphasised that science especially in its Darwinistic form proved the Bible wrong (Chadwick 1971:7-23).

Colenso was confronted with these views while still in England but because of his parochial duties he had no time to pursue them further. It was in Natal, however, that 'they returned to haunt him' (Guy 1983:100). He became more and more troubled by the problems attached to the traditional views with regard to the cosmogony. The spark which caused everything came from a black assistant by the name of Ngidi. One day when they were translating the flood narrative the assistant black worker asked him whether he believed everything described in the narrative:

Is all that true? Do you really believe that all this happened thus ... that all the beasts, and birds, and creeping things, upon the earth, large and small, from hot countries and cold, came thus by pairs, and entered the ark with Noah? And did Noah gather food for them *all*, for the beasts and birds of prey, as well as the rest? My heart answered in the words of the Prophet, "Shall a man speak lies in the Name of the Lord?" ... I dared not do so (Colenso 1862:vii).

Colenso was also challenged by the Old Testament's *immorality*. Once again a black assistant took the initiative. They came across the following text: *If a man smite his servant, or his maid, with a rod, and he die under his hand, he shall be surely punished. Notwithstanding, if he continue a day or two, he shall not be punished: for he is his money* (Ex 21:20,21). According to Colenso, his black assistant protested against this verse. He had taught this black man to trust and adore God but the words of this text sounded immoral. He just could not reconcile the idea of a loving father with a horrible crime which can go unpunished. And how can the merciful God refer to a servant or a maid as mere 'money'. This filled Colenso's assistant with a feeling of revulsion: 'His whole soul revolted'. At that stage Colenso was in full accordance with his black servant: 'My own heart and conscience at the time fully sympathised with his' (Colenso 1862:9).

Colenso took these remarks of his black assistants very seriously. They drove him to a penetrating study of the Pentateuch. His commentary on the book of Romans was about to be published in London and he had some time at hand to scrutinise the first five books of the

Old Testament. Colenso worked extremely hard on this first volume on the Pentateuch. By March 1862 the essence was already completed and printed in Bishopstowe. He left Natal for England in order to renew old relationships and to be present for its publication. While writing Colenso realised its revolutionary nature. His views were so radical that he even considered the possibility of severing the links with the Church of England and to follow a different calling (Rees 1958:73).

At the time of his arrival in England many were already aware of a book on biblical criticism which was about to appear. The author was urgently requested to prevent publication and to discuss the matter calmly with some friends (Guy 1983:115). Colenso could not comply with their request and the book was published in October 1862. Although it sold very quickly it caused 'a tremendous commotion in the religious ... English world about it' (Guy 1983:126).

4 The errors in the Pentateuch

Before we discuss Colenso's criticism of the Pentateuch a few things must be taken into account. First, his views were born out of *pastoral concerns*. His duties as a village preacher and missionary confronted him with the problematic nature of the Pentateuch. Second, the 1862 edition was only the *first* volume. Colenso refined and elaborated his views in six further volumes. The last one appeared in 1879. Only the first volume was a financial success and the publishers became reluctant to print further editions. Third, Colenso worked from the *final text* 'as it now lies before us' (Colenso 1863a:163). The text's present form was scrutinised and he utilised the information obtained from the text. Fourth, he made a *close reading* of the text. His analyses of the text are absolutely remarkable and he had a keen eye for the smallest text detail. Fifth, it must always be kept in mind that Colenso was a *mathematician*. It is also noteworthy that in many instances he did not use grammatical or stylistic arguments so much, but concentrated rather on numbers and statistics.

Colenso's thorough investigation of the Pentateuch text brought him to realise the many *historical inaccuracies*. Things had not happened as they were described. In a clear and gripping way he stated his case.

Colenso investigated the size of the tabernacle's court to determine

whether it could accommodate the total number of the congregation. This inquiry was prompted by the continual reference to the assembly of Israelites who had to gather at the door of the tabernacle (cf Lv 8:1-4). According to Colenso's calculation this was impossible. There was not even adequate space for a small section of the assembly. Although it was extremely difficult to determine the size or the nature of this assembly Colenso nevertheless restricted himself to the numbers mentioned in Numbers 2:32: the Israelite warriors amounted to 603 550. They must have formed part of the assembly but definitely did not enter the tabernacle. The width of the tabernacle was 10 cubits or 18 feet and its length 30 cubits or 54 feet. If two feet were allowed for each man, only nine could have attended the meeting. If all the warriors were filed in ranks of nine they would have formed a line of more than 100 000 feet — 'in fact, nearly *twenty miles!*' (Colenso 1862:33).

Another possibility is that they gathered in the courtyard of the tabernacle. It was 100 cubits or 180 feet long and the breadth 50 cubits or 90 feet. Colenso then continues: 'And since the length of the Tabernacle, as above, was 54 feet, we have for the space left between the Tabernacle and the hangings of the Court, before and behind, 126 feet, that is 63 feet in front and 63 behind, or, perhaps, we may say, 84 feet in front and 42 feet behind Or, if we suppose them to fill the *whole width* of the Court, 90 feet ... still the whole body would extent to a distance of 6,706 yards, nearly *four miles!*' (Colenso 1862:34).

Colenso also attempted to establish the total number of Israelites: the 603 550 warriors were above twenty years of age (Nm 1:3); there were also 600 000 women above twenty; it is probable that there were also 300 000 men and 300 000 women under twenty; 200 000 old people can be added; the total number amounted to at least two million. This number equalled the total population of the city of London in the year 1851. Once again it was impossible to assert that Moses could have addressed the whole congregation. No human voice could reach a crowd as large as the whole population of London. Some countered this view by referring to a miracle or to the fact that only a small number of the Israelites attended these meetings. According to Colenso this kind of argument was an impeachment of the literal accuracy of the text (Colenso 1862:35-37).

The Israelites must have occupied an impossibly huge area. If 36 square feet or 4 square yards were allowed for each one, the Israelites would have been crowded together in an area of 8 000 000 square yards or 1652 acres. This must have caused insurmountable obstacles. Each day wood and water had to be obtained from outside the camp. And how was this possible in the wilderness? Furthermore all kinds of dirt and filth had to be removed from the camp on a daily basis because the camp 'must be holy, so that he (Yahweh) will not see among you anything indecent and turn away from you' (Dt 23:14). It is unlikely that this could have been accomplished and it is therefore 'itself a very convincing proof of the unhistorical character of the whole narrative' (Colenso 1862:39).

When the Israelites left Egypt they were issued with tents (cf Ex 16:16; Lv 23:42,43). If ten people occupied one tent 200 000 were needed for the two million. Where were they obtained from? Furthermore, how were they

carried? It was impossible to carry them on their shoulders because these were already laden with other burdens (Ex 12:34). Trained oxen could have been used for this purpose but then at least 200 000 were needed. It is impossible to think that the Israelite slaves possessed so many trained oxen in Egypt (Colenso 1862:45-47).

According to Exodus 13:18 the Israelites went out of Egypt armed for battle. This sounds impossible: 'It is, however, inconceivable that these down-trodden, oppressed people should have been allowed by Pharaoh to possess arms, so as to turn out at a moment's notice 600,000 armed men' (Colenso 1862:48). Such a mighty army would have revolted long before Moses and the exodus. Moreover the warriors formed a distinct class in Egypt and it is unlikely that oppressed slaves would have been allowed to join their ranks or to form a separate army. The marching of the Israelite soldiers would also have caused immense difficulties: if they had marched out of Egypt 'five in a rank', allowing one yard between the ranks, the troops would have formed a line of 68 miles. It is further explicitly stated that the Lord brought the Israelites out of Egypt by their divisions on that 'very day' (Ex 12:51). The impression is thus created that the 600 000 armed men left Egypt suddenly. This was totally impossible. Many days were needed to set up the different divisions and to leave the land of Egypt (Colenso 1862: 48-49).

The biblical rendering of the institution of the Passover also caused insurmountable problems to Colenso. Moses summoned the elders and instructed them to select and slaughter lambs and to prepare for Passover. They had to inform the whole of Israel to execute the orders for Passover exactly. Since it was a matter of life and death the notice had to be explained to each separate family carefully. A population as large as that of London had thus to be instructed in one day. Once again this seems impossible: 'And how could the order, to keep the Passover, have been conveyed, with its minutest particulars, to *each individual household* in this vast community, in one day?' (Colenso 1862:55).

A vast piece of land was needed for these flocks. We can form some idea of this by determining the total number of the lambs. If ten people consumed one lamb then 200 000 lambs would be required for the two million Israelites; if twenty individuals ate one lamb, 100 000 lambs would be required; if the mean of these is taken, about 150 000 were then needed. And since only year-old males without defect had to be chosen (Ex 12:5) we may assume that there were as many female lambs. Altogether thus 300 000 lambs for the first year. But the problem is more complicated. If all the 150 000 male lambs were killed in the first year no rams or wethers would be left for the increase of the flock. Instead of 150 000 we must therefore assume a total number of 400 000 lambs (200 000 male and 200 000 female) for the first year. If five sheep are allowed for one acre, the Israelites needed 400 000 acres land. It is incredible that the Egyptians would have granted the Israelite slaves 400 000 acres or twenty-five square miles of grazing land (Colenso 1862:54-60).

Colenso also investigated *other aspects* of the Pentateuchal narra-

tive, and again and again indicated the 'remarkable inconsistencies and contradictory statements' (Colenso 1863a:163). Although of an arithmetic nature, these arguments were sufficient to indicate 'the utter impossibility of receiving any longer this story of the Exodus as literally and historically true' (Colenso 1863a:169). Not even an alternation of the total of warrior numbers can solve the severe problems mentioned above. If, for instance, 60 000 instead of 600 000 must be read there would still be a group of 200 000 or 300 000 people and many of the problems will still remain. Even if the number is reduced to 6 000 some, but not all, of the difficulties might be solved. We would still have to imagine a town of 20 000 to 30 000 people. According to Colenso it is highly improbable that the total number of the warriors is wrong because it was repeated accurately each time (Colenso 1863a:163-164).

Colenso also furnished additional arguments signifying that the Hexateuch *originated much later* than during the time of Moses and the exodus. In the previous sections arguments of an arithmetic nature have been supplied, but historical reasons are given below. There were certain place names, customs, expressions, et cetera which were unknown to Moses because they originated long after him. Of the many only a few are mentioned.

In Exodus 30:13; 38:24,25,26 reference is made to a 'sanctuary shekel' and this before any sanctuary existed. This is clearly an error which probably originated from a later author. He used a well-known expression of his own age forgetting the circumstances in which the Israelites lived (Colenso 1863a:198).

Exodus 10:19 mentions that a 'strong west wind' caught up the locusts and carried them into the Red Sea. According to the Hebrew text 'wind of the sea' instead of 'west wind' must rather be read. Westerly winds from the sea, however, blew over Canaan and not Egypt. It thus speaks for itself that the term 'west wind' only became familiar after the Israelite settlement in Canaan (Colenso 1863a:199).

According to Deuteronomy 11:29-30 Moses told the people to proclaim the blessings and the curses on mounts Gerizim and the Ebal. This sounds strange because Moses had never visited Canaan before and was therefore not able to describe these places so accurately. Even more strange is Moses' reference to Gilgal. According to the book of Joshua this place only received its name after the entry into Canaan (Colenso 1863a:200).

Genesis 14:14 states that Abraham pursued the enemy as far as Dan. This place also did not receive its name until long after the time of Moses (Colenso 1863a:201).

Numbers 21:13-15 mentions that the Arnon river was the border between

Moab and the Amorites. According to Colenso neither Moses nor one of his contemporaries could have written this. First of all, the Book of the Wars, from which is quoted, only originated long after Moses and secondly, such a statement could not have been made in an earlier Mosaic age (Colenso 1863a:205).

Colenso also produced 'a number of minor indications' which pointed to a later date of origin (Colenso 1863a:209-222). Some examples can be given: the expression 'unto this day' was from a considerably later period than the time of Moses or Joshua (Colenso 1863a:209); references to Canaanites who *then dwell in the land* (Gn 12:6;13:7) also indicates a later date than that of Moses (Colenso 1863a:210); the reference to 'beyond the Jordan' came from a later age (Colenso 1863a:211); the words 'and if you defile the land, it will vomit you out as it vomited out the nations that were before you' (Lv 18:28) and 'while the Israelites were in the desert' (Nm 15:32) could not have been written by Moses (Colenso 1863a:213); many place names were often used familiarly which could definitely not be known to Moses because they did not exist during his time (Colenso 1863a:216-218).

5 The different sources of the Pentateuch

In many different ways Colenso thus asserted that the whole of the Pentateuch originated much later than the age of Moses or Joshua (cf Colenso 1863a:223). He continued this line of thought by insisting that *different hands* contributed to this great work. By following this option it 'will explain at once a number of strange and otherwise unaccountable contradictions' (Colenso 1863a:175). To illustrate Colenso's way of reasoning we will briefly highlight his views on the Elohist and Deuteronomy. His ideas may sound strange but they are actually extremely creative and based on a thorough analysis of the text. Colenso has the ability to grip the reader to the text, to open his eyes for the minutest detail and to entertain him with the most exciting theories about origin and authorship.

One of these authors was the *Elohist*. According to Colenso all the Elohist passages form a connected unity, only to be interrupted here and there by the Yahwist. The Elohist was probably the oldest of the Pentateuch authors and therefore formed the groundwork of the whole Pentateuchal narrative. The Yahwist used the Elohist as the foundation for further elaboration (Colenso 1863a:175-176). The Elohist can be found in about one half of the book of Genesis, a small part of the book of Exodus, still less in the book of Numbers, and a very small portion of the books of Deuteronomy and Joshua. About one sixth of the Hexateuch consists of Elohist sections (Colenso 1863a:228-229).

Although a complete list of typical Elohist features is lacking in the works of Colenso, he nevertheless did mention some (Colenso 1863a:174,

176): the Elohist has a preference for Elohim as divine name; the name El Shaddai is also used; the name 'Israel' is often employed as a personal name for Jacob; the names Padan and Padan-Aram are used for the mountainous regions of the Tigris and Euphrates, et cetera.

Colenso held very interesting views about the author of the Elohistic passages. He ascribed this work to Samuel. Except for Deborah, no mention is made of any other prophet or school of prophets who could have laid the foundation of the Pentateuch. According to 1 Chronicles 29:29, Samuel was indeed engaged in historical research: *As for the events of King David's reign, from beginning to end, they are written in the records of Samuel the seer, the records of Nathan the prophet and the records of Gad the seer.* Although he distrusted the Chronicler (Colenso 1862:98-100), Colenso nevertheless accepted the common notion that the records of Samuel, Nathan and Gad were written documents. The Chronicler either had access to these books or knew them by tradition. The idea of Samuel as a 'writing prophet' is further strengthened by 1 Samuel 10:25: *Samuel explained to the people the regulations of the kingship. He wrote them down on a scroll and deposited it before the Lord.* It was thus not so far-fetched to envisage Samuel as an author and a student of the past (Colenso 1863a:223-224).

Colenso developed this notion further by stating that Samuel devoted his time and energy to study and writing only during the last twenty-five years of his life. At this stage of his career he had retired from public life and was heading a school for prophets at Ramah. This school resembles the 'modern college' where choice young people like Gad and Nathan assembled to be instructed by Samuel. Part of the 'curriculum' must have been the reading and studying of existing writings. Since not much was available, Samuel wrote the first edition of the Pentateuch or the Elohist for the instruction and advancement of these young students. This was merely an introduction and based on tradition and existing documents. Colenso said that Samuel was so absorbed in studying and writing that his family duties were severely neglected. His sons therefore 'did not walk in his ways. They turned aside after dishonest gain and accepted bribes and perverted justice' (1 Sm 8:3). Colenso later slightly changed his view with regard to Samuel as author. According to him great and good men like Samuel were responsible for the Elohist (Colenso 1863a:226-230).

Colenso held a very high opinion of the book of *Deuteronomy*. Its style and language are described in glowing terms. There are also great differences between Deuteronomy and the preceding books of the Pentateuch which were mainly occupied with histories, legends, detailed descriptions of the tabernacle or other cultic objects and endless repetitions of the ceremonial law. To Colenso the book of Deuteronomy is a long and magnificent poem or rather a collection of poems filled with noble thoughts and lofty expressions. It contains 'scarcely a single lengthy detail of a purely historical, artistic or ceremonial nature, but [is] wholly devoted to enforcing, in tones of earnest and impassioned eloquence — the paramount duties of morality and religion' (Colenso 1863b:393). Everywhere the book of Deuteronomy exhibits 'the spirit and energy, the fire of holy zeal, the warmth of imagination' (Colenso 1863b:393).

To highlight the *typical features* of Deuteronomy as well as the other books of the Pentateuch Colenso once again went about his task meticulously. He scrutinised the text for inconsistencies as well as typical forms of style and language. Consequently characteristic expressions or words in both the Tetrateuch and the book of Deuteronomy were identified. The differences were so dramatic and far-reaching that it was impossible to ascribe Deuteronomy to Moses or any other author of the Tetrateuch. Colenso assumed 'as a fact that has been proved' and stated without 'any doubt or uncertainty' that whoever wrote Deuteronomy 'was undoubtedly a different person from those who were concerned in writing the main portions of the rest of the Pentateuch' (Colenso 1863b:406).

The *author of Deuteronomy* was thus someone *totally different* from the authors of the first four books. The many differences make it impossible for Deuteronomy to be a continuation of these authors. Colenso also stressed that Deuteronomy originated after the completion of the Tetrateuch. This is confirmed by the many references to Exodus and the other three books. Since the Elohist and Yahwist did not complete their work before the time of Samuel, David and Solomon, the Deuteronomist 'must have lived not earlier — and, probably, later — than the age of Solomon' (Colenso 1863b:407).

Once again Colenso painstakingly illustrated the *late origin* of Deuteronomy. He first of all established a close connection between the Deuteronomist and the later prophets. Expressions and words in Deuteronomy which can only be found in the late pre-exilic and post-exilic prophets were identified. This agreement in phraseology not only confirmed Deuteronomy's late origin but also affirmed 'that *Jeremiah* may have been its author' (Colenso 1863b:412). Colenso's identification of the Deuteronomist with Jeremiah was not only brilliant, original and the culmination of hard and diligent labour, but it also enabled him to explain many difficult problems.

Colenso also investigated the *link* between Deuteronomy and the *reformation of Josiah*. An important starting-point was the description of the reformation of Josiah in 2 Kings 22-23. This reformation was sparked of by Hilkiah's finding of the Book of the Law. He gave it to Shaphan, the secretary, who read parts of it to the king. When the king heard the words he tore his clothes and sent Shaphan, Hilkiah and some other officials to inquire into their meaning. They consulted the prophetess Huldah, who proclaimed imminent disaster, due to Israel's sins. Upon hearing this news the king called the people together and they all pledged themselves to the covenant. The king began a thorough-going reformation with far-reaching consequences. Colenso used these basic narrative elements to establish the link between the Book of the Law and Deuteronomy.

Very typical of Colenso was his question about the fortunes of the *Book of the Law*. Where was it hidden all the time and how did the high priest, Hilkiah, 'find' it in the temple? Any solution linked to Moses has to be ruled out immediately. It would have been just impossible for such an important book to exist for more than eight hundred years without being discovered by some court officials or priests. The book could also not have remained in the ark all the time because 1 Kings 8:9 explicitly states that there was nothing in the ark save the two tablets of stone. On the other hand Colenso drew our at-

attention to a passage in Deuteronomy 31:26 where the Book of the Law and the ark are closely connected: *Take this Book of the Law and place it beside the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God. There it will remain as a witness against you.* Colenso then stated that this could not refer to a very early time in the history of Israel but that it related directly to the events described above. The writing of this Book of the Law, the placing of it beside the ark and the subsequent finding of it by Hilkiah were 'pretty nearly contemporaneous events'. Deuteronomy was written just before the reformation of Josiah and placed beside the ark in the temple. According to 1 Kings 23:25 there was no king before or after Josiah who followed all the laws of Moses (Colenso 1873:143-153).

Jeremiah's place in the narrative is interesting: he is totally absent. At the time of the discovery Jeremiah had already been a prophet for at least five years; therefore his absence is all the more striking. He was not included in the delegation to Huldah and neither was he consulted. Even if he had been in Anathoth and not Jerusalem at that time he could have been contacted within an hour. According to Colenso this was, of course, done deliberately: he wrote the book of Deuteronomy as well as the later book of Kings. He placed the essential book of Law in the temple 'with the knowledge and connivance of Hilkiah, and probably also with that of Huldah, to be found at this time' (Colenso 1873:149). And when it was discovered he kept a low profile and studied the events from a distance. According to Colenso he was part of the 'priests and prophets' to whom Josiah read the book (Colenso 1873:147). Especially during the first hours and days after the discovery Jeremiah refrained from any comment, so as not to jeopardise the process of reform (Colenso 1873:163,152-153).

Colenso knew that some would object against the notion of Jeremiah being the author of Deuteronomy and his active part in the discovering of the Book of the Law. Once again he insisted that Jeremiah's context must be taken into account. He was constantly perturbed by Israel's sins and Yahweh's imminent judgement. By writing the Book of the Law and contributing to its discovering and radical reforms were his attempts to save Israel. And this does not detract in any way from its spiritual value. Words such as the following, *Man doth not live by bread alone, but by all that proceedeth out of the mouth of Yahweh doth man live*, still remain true. They must still be accepted as coming from a loving Father who wants to nourish his children (Colenso 1873:152-153).

Colenso did, however, change his mind regarding the Pentateuch's authorship in the course of time. But, by the end of part six of his work, Colenso's views on the Pentateuch can be explained as follows: during the early years of Solomon's rule a narrative work stretching from Genesis 1:1 to the beginning of 1 Kings came about. It was compiled from narrative parts of the Elohist and the different Jehovistic layers, and it described Israel's history from the patriarchs, the exodus, the conquest of the land, the period of the judges and the reigns of Solomon and David. It remained in this form until the time of Jeremiah. He added to this basic narrative some parts of Deuteronomy. During the exile Ezekiel wrote Leviticus 18-20,26. He was followed in this by priests who compiled some legislative sections. The Pentateuch

'was almost complete by the end of the period of Ezra' (Rogerson 1984:231).

6 Two ways of understanding

Colenso's work was not intended as an attack on the Bible or Christian faith. He could be a critic of the Pentateuch as well as a good Christian because of the *philosophy underlying* his work. In this regard we are referring to Samuel Taylor Coleridge's influence on Colenso. Coleridge taught Colenso to understand reality and the Bible in two ways: the empirical and the spiritual way. Perhaps we must understand Colenso's critical stance in the light of Coleridge's philosophy. It was Coleridge who gave him the courage to be critical and to remain a missionary, and to criticise the most central beliefs of the church without feeling that the essence has been undermined. Coleridge enabled Colenso to investigate the Pentateuch critically without undermining its authority.

Nineteenth-century England experienced the immense importance of industrialisation, which affected the whole of society. Intellectuals did not escape its influence. *Two ways of understanding reality* developed in the course of time: utilitarianism and romanticism. Technology was set over against nature, inductive over against deductive methods of reasoning, those searching for truth in the material world over against those who denied truth to be found in physical things. In short, an empirical and an idealistic understanding of this world came into being (Guy 1983:22).

Coleridge was a representative of an *idealistic approach*. He exerted an immense influence and was even called 'the British Plato' (Vidler 1974:79). He spent a long time in Germany where he became acquainted with the historical-critical approach to the Bible and its results. He urged the English churches to take this approach seriously. According to him, British study of the Bible was still too uncritical. Nearly all the believers accepted the Bible to be inspired and this led to the notion of the historical infallibility of the Scriptures. This narrow view of Scripture had of course its advantages but in general it hampered a critical investigation and excluded the believing community from the results of this approach (Neill 1966:3). Coleridge's views were by no means intended as an attack on the Scriptures. He was a committed Christian and treasured the religious values of his church (Cooke 1979:173-232).

Underlying Coleridge's views was a philosophical idealism which placed faith and *knowledge of God* above and beyond the *understanding of the world*. A close relationship exists between understanding and senses. By means of our senses an understanding of the world is achieved. This is the realm of the science. In the realm of religion things happen differently. Through reason humans can comprehend God's existence. God calls his followers to an awareness of a spiritual reality. Humans have spiritual faculties which enable them to grasp spiritual things. Religious knowledge and worldly understanding are therefore two kinds of knowledge (Guy 1983:23). Understanding is related to the 'science of phenomena'; reason, the 'organ of the super-sensuous', is in search for ultimate ends (Reardon 1966:240). Faith is thus a matter of reason. Two types of knowledge can therefore be discerned: scientific knowledge based on experience and the senses and a spiritual knowledge which is more intuitive. Although faith cannot be proved empirically it is therefore not less true or less scientific. Spiritual truth can only be understood spiritually and independent of the senses (Reardon 1966:240).

In the light of this it became unnecessary to treat Christianity as a matter of external evidence. Christian religion and the authority of Scripture *must never be proved empirically* with references to miracles, myths, et cetera. It is also irrelevant to read the Bible literally in order to secure its authority. Neither must the view of Scripture be burdened by a view of inspiration and the historical infallibility which would prevent a critical understanding. The Bible must be read as an ordinary book and only then it will be realised that it is unlike other ordinary books. The authority of the Bible does not rest in its infallibility or its inspiration but in its power to change human lives. By means of this view Coleridge was preparing his generation for a historical-critical approach to the Scriptures (Vidler 1974:81).

It was Frances who introduced Colenso to Coleridge. From an early age she was dissatisfied with the existing religious mood. She needed more than just the one-sided reference to the fallen nature of humankind, Christ's atoning sacrifice, the fear for hell and the infallibility of Scripture. In Coleridge she found what she was looking for. And for Colenso *Coleridge was a godsend*. This convinced him that a critical scrutiny could in no way harm faith. Since faith is based on spiritual experience it is shielded from any scientific or historical-

critical attacks. All the inaccuracies that can be found in the Pentateuch and which Colenso so cleverly indicated must be viewed as empirical work and are related to understanding (in the sense of Coleridge). No empirical or mathematical knowledge can therefore exert any influence on reason (in Coleridge's sense). Both are different activities and cannot prove or deny each other. The empirical analysis of the text and the negative results which Colenso reached in no way cast a cloud of uncertainty on the spiritual value of the text.

This *dualistic view* of the Bible and science is very important. It enabled a missionary like Colenso to execute his parochial work and to investigate the Pentateuch critically. But it also became very typical of South African scholars in later years. As will become clear below, historical-critical study of the Pentateuch was impossible without the constant re-iteration of the Bible's authority.

7 A hero of a lost cause?

Colenso was a great Old Testament scholar. He mastered the Old Testament text in all its aspects and had a keen eye for detail. He succeeded in combining text analysis with creative imagination, scrutinised the final text so as to determine its imprecisions, found a way of linking faith and reason, illustrated that Pentateuch criticism does not undermine Scripture's authority, and exerted influence on Pentateuch critics like Kuenen. Once again it must be stressed that although his work extensively and efficiently indicated the inconsistencies of the Pentateuch it was never intended to distort the facts. After intensive study he concluded that the Pentateuch's rendering of events contained such 'remarkable contradictions, and involve such plain impossibilities, that they cannot be regarded as true narratives of actual, historical, matters of fact' (Colenso 1862:17). This in no way harmed his faith in God or his Word. It must always be kept in mind that he was a missionary and therefore convinced of the great truths of the Bible.

Colenso's views were, however, not shared by many. In the long run he was alienated from the church and rejected by many officials and members of the laity. Links with old friends were severed and family ties were put under great stress. One of the great tragedies of this great Old Testament scholar was that his work died with him, so to speak: no South African students followed him and his work was

therefore never re-interpreted and re-worked for our situation. Colenso was like a hero convinced of his views and who wanted to change the world for the better. But, in the end, he lost everything.

B JOHANNES DU PLESSIS: A CRITICAL ATTEMPT NIPPED IN THE BUD

1 A new spirit among Afrikaners

During the nineteen-twenties great developments were taking place in the Afrikaner community. Afrikaner intellectuals attempted to improve the quality of science and arts. It was an outreach beyond the existing boundaries in order to create and invent new ways of life. Afrikaners became more international in the sense that their study of art, philosophy, literature, et cetera, led to an appraisal of the outside world. Afrikaner poets, for instance, did not feel themselves bound anymore to the old and stereotyped forms and wanted to create new ways of expressing their innermost feelings. The Afrikaner's outreach beyond the existing affected all aspects of his intellectual life. As one Afrikaans poet said: 'Dit is 'n nuwe strewe na volwassenheid en selfstandigheid, wat van self verskeidenheid en spesialisering meebring. Dit is 'n oopgooi van die deure' (Opperman s a:1).

In the whole process theology would not go untouched. Existing Calvinistic views were severely criticised and a more critical attitude developed. It was in this context that Johannes du Plessis, a professor at the Kweekskool (the theological seminary of the Dutch Reformed Church in Stellenbosch), established a monthly journal, 'Het Zoeklicht', in 1924. This journal wanted to promote the discussion of theological questions (cf Opperman s a:26). His views did find some support but in the end he was rejected and everything ended in the Cape Town Supreme Court. Quite a number of Afrikaner intellectuals and writers supported Du Plessis because he accentuated certain basic values: the liberty of conscience and the freedom to search for truth without interference from outside (cf Du Plessis 1925:175; 1926d: 129-130; 1927g:365; 1928e:281-282; 1928f:290-291; 1929b:221-223; 1931b:246-247).

In those days Johannes du Plessis *confronted* the Dutch Reformed Church with the *historical-critical approach* to the *Pentateuch*. This

caused great confusion and he was accused of denying the inspiration and undermining the authority of Scripture. Du Plessis vehemently opposed this accusation and emphasised that the historical-critical method could be applied to the Pentateuch without desecrating it. He arrived at this conclusion by clearly distinguishing between the human and the divine nature of the Bible. It was, however, important to note that the two natures of Scripture must never be totally separated and that both must be taken into account in a scientific study. One could therefore focus attention on the human nature and study it critically without endangering the message which was divine and had to be accepted in faith. This view enabled Du Plessis to be a pious member of the Dutch Reformed Church as well as a scientific scholar, a sincere believer as well as a historical-critical scholar, a professor at a church institution as well as a critic of the Pentateuch.

It is extremely important to note that full-blown historical criticism without *emphasis* on the *authority* and the *nature* of the Bible was absolutely impossible in South Africa. Before he could investigate the Pentateuch critically, Du Plessis first had to reflect on the nature of the Bible. He first had to explain why critical study would not undermine the authority of the Old Testament. How he accomplished that is described below.

2 Thesis: the Bible is a human book filled with errors

To Du Plessis the *human nature* of the Bible was of extreme importance. Errors and mistakes are characteristic of the Bible and scholars must not shy away from them. Du Plessis rejected the notion that all the parts of Scripture are equally inspired and therefore infallible. There are mistakes which cannot be easily put aside (Du Plessis 1929c:322; 1933c:249-251). Du Plessis also indicated the different kinds of faults (Du Preez 1933a:88; Du Plessis 1926a:84-85; 1926h:217-220; 1926j:294; 1928g:337-343; 1929c:332-334; 1931d:261-265; Kerksaak 1932:59).

Exegetes must take cognisance of the Bible's human nature. Exegesis is primarily a human act. He criticised those 'vrome mense' ('pious people') who always substitute or avoid text problems by focusing on theology or the spiritual message. In these cases a scientific explanation of the Bible has been abandoned. Du Plessis opted for a scientific approach to Scripture instead, and this implied

the acceptance of historical criticism (Du Plessis 1928a:150-154; 1926k:233-239). It was an attempt by Du Plessis to come to grips with Scripture's human nature. Since the sixteenth century the human aspect of the Bible had been emphasised. It was, however, historical criticism that shed full light on the human nature of the Bible. According to Du Plessis, this origin and development of historical criticism was one of the greatest intellectual achievements of the nineteenth century (Du Plessis 1926j:295).

3 The antithesis: the Bible is the inspired Word of God

Both the human nature and the *divine nature* of the Bible must be fully recognised. The Bible is the inspired Word of God and has authority. Signs of divine inspiration can clearly be seen in the books of the Old and the New Testament (Du Plessis 1926a:83; 1926c:118-119; 1926e:148-150; 1926g:210-212). In a letter dated 31 January 1928 the curators of the Dutch Reformed Church accused him of undermining Scripture. As the intensity of the struggle against him increased the more he emphasised the inspiration. To many it was a contradiction to adhere to historical criticism and still confess Scripture's inspiration.

He maintained, however, that a Reformed doctrine of *inspiration* did not exist. A 'doctrine' was defined as a dogma formulated, accepted and taught by the church (Du Plessis 1929c:326). According to Du Plessis no such doctrine could be found in the Reformed confessions. All the churches of the Reformation were more concerned with the authority of the Bible than inspiration. Inspiration formed a secondary aspect of the church's doctrine and should never be elevated to a central position in the confession of faith. This view allowed Du Plessis great scope for a historical-critical understanding of the Pentateuch.

The Bible's inspiration must, however, be related to its *purpose* — that is, the proclamation of Jesus Christ as Saviour and the strengthening of people's faith (Du Plessis 1926b:100). Both testaments give witness to the salvation in Jesus Christ. This christological message of the Bible had to serve as criterion for questions pertaining to inspiration. According to Du Plessis the Bible was thus inspired! But this does not imply historical infallibility. Chronological and historical infallibility can never be guaranteed by a doctrine of inspiration (Du

Plessis 1929c:339). Put differently, historical-critical problems do not deny the Bible's authority and inspiration.

To this ... my answer is that I believe and teach that the Bible is inspired throughout but inspired for its purpose, which is to make us wise unto salvation. It is not designed to impart scientific, geographic or chronological knowledge. On such matters and on historical points which do not directly concern our salvation, I believe the Bible to be trustworthy, but this trustworthiness may not be interpreted as inerrancy (Kerksaak 1932:44).

4 Synthesis: the Bible is a divine and a human book

Never must the human and the divine aspects of the Bible be *separated*. They can be distinguished but never separated. Critical study must also respect this unity. Both parts must receive full attention. To illustrate this relationship Du Plessis referred to the two natures of Christ. He was verily divine and verily human. It is wrong to understand his humanity as mere appearance; it is wrong to separate the two and to focus on one aspect only.

Hoe het goddelike en het menslike in Christus naast elkaar te denken, gaat in menig opzicht onze verstand te boven.... Mischien zullen wij dit tweevoudig probleem nooit oplossen kunnen. Trouwens, er is maar één god-menselike Persoon in de ganse geschiedenis van 't mensdom geweest. Hij staat op Zichself: Hy is sui generis: geen ervaring kan Hom verklaren. En er is ook maar een god-menselik Boek in de geschiedenis van 't mensdom ontstaan. Dat Boek staat op zichzelf: het is sui generis (Du Plessis 1929a:138).

5 Historical-critical approach

Du Plessis's theoretical reflection on Scripture formed the basis for his historical-critical approach to the Pentateuch. His views on Scripture actually enabled him to apply the historical-critical method. Since the Pentateuch really has a human side this forms the object of scientific study. It can be approached critically; questions pertaining to the author, origin and development can be asked and traditional views can be questioned. Israel's history can be reconstructed differently and it can even deviate from the accepted picture. In short, the Pentateuch can — or rather, must — be treated scientifically, and historically-critically (Le Roux 1986:25).

According to Du Plessis we must clearly distinguish between

lower criticism ('kritiek van het lagere') and *higher criticism* ('kritiek van het hogere'). He illustrated his point by focusing on Van Riebeeck's journal. Questions like the following were asked: Is this a document by Van Riebeeck? Was the present text copied correctly? If other editions exist, how do they compare with the present text? Lower criticism thus deals with the state of the present text, while higher criticism focuses on the content. Who wrote the journal? Does it derive from the hand of Van Riebeeck or someone else? Did he make an entry every day or did a long time elapse? Does the author display a specific trend? (Du Plessis 1927b:200-201). Du Plessis also applied higher criticism to a seventeenth-century travel journal by Joan Nieuhof. Du Plessis concluded that Nieuhof possessed a 'Grundschrift' to which additions, reflecting later circumstances, were added in the course of time (Du Plessis 1927c:214-218).

Du Plessis' lower and higher criticism are *simple forms* of the historical-critical method. He only used the first two 'steps' of that method. No rules for his method are provided. Du Plessis did not indicate how literary-critical divisions could be accomplished or how the sources should be dated. Du Plessis's method is in no way a complete form of historical criticism.

Du Plessis also applied his method to the Pentateuch in general and to *Genesis* in particular. According to him, the Pentateuch has a composite nature which originated over many years and only reached its present form long after Moses. The authors thus added constantly to the existing material and the Pentateuch was therefore nothing but a compilation of sources (Kerksaak 1932). A good example illustrating the Pentateuch's nature can be seen in the creation narratives. Du Plessis described in detail the differences between them and criticised the 'Statenvertaling' for omitting the differences. The translators created the impression that everything in the Pentateuch came from one pen (Du Plessis 1927f:307).

Initially Du Plessis stated that the Hexateuch was compiled from four *sources*. The Elohist was the author of the first creation story. Then followed the Jehovist, the author of the second creation narrative. The Deuteronomist was responsible for Deuteronomy. The Junior Elohist was the fourth document, and united with the Jehovist. Later he slightly modified his view and referred to the Jehovistic book of history, Deuteronomy and the Priestly author. Still later he as-

cribed 1:1-2:4a to the Priestly code (Kerksaak 1932:55). According to Du Plessis, the Pentateuch contained very old material, some of which could indeed be from the time of *Moses*. He thus did not altogether deny the Mosaic origin of the Pentateuch: 'Ja, ek beweer dat daar 'n Mosaïese kern ... is'. He nevertheless wanted to emphasise the Pentateuch's long development (Kerksaak 1932:55).

En voorts is het hoogst waarskynlik, ja, een onontwikkbare gevolgtrekking, dat er zelfs in het late Priestergeschrift een kern van wetgeving is vervat, die van Mozes afkomstig is. Hoe anders kunnen wij de eenparige overlevering verklaren dat Mozes Israels grote wetgever is geweest? (Du Plessis 1927f:311).

Du Plessis thus propagated in a very mild form the importance of historical criticism during the third decade of this century. He was but a lonely voice and his views disturbed many. Two aspects of his teachings must, however, be taken into account. On the one hand he urged the church to take cognisance of historical criticism. He was of the opinion that the church could neglect these questions no longer. Much attention had been devoted to matters pertaining to church polity, missions and race relations, but in the long run the church neglected its intellectual obligations. Consequently the church had become ignorant of the developments in the field of biblical studies and this could not be tolerated anymore. An explosion of knowledge was being experienced and a new understanding of the Pentateuch and the Old Testament was imminent. Du Plessis even foresaw an intellectual Renaissance among Afrikaners which would be characterised by a passion for knowledge. Due to this many church members would be confronted with the results of historical criticism. The church should therefore take cognisance of this critical approach to the Old Testament. If not, the consequences would be disastrous (Du Plessis 1927e:276; 1927g:357-368). On the other hand he constantly comforted the members of the church with his conviction that historical criticism posed no threat: it was merely a neutral method which could not deny the supernatural element in the Pentateuch or undermine the main elements of Christian faith (Du Plessis 1927g:366; Kerksaak 1932:33-34).

In spite of his attempts, complaints were often heard. During the Dutch Reformed synod of 1930 things reached a climax. Du Plessis was requested not to vent his views anymore. In return he would re-

ceive his salary as well as some other benefits. Du Plessis could not comply with the resolutions of the synod and was technically jobless. He appealed to the higher court and on Friday 15 January 1932 the judge returned a verdict in favour of Du Plessis. For the Dutch Reformed Church in the Cape and the curators of the Kweekskool it was a serious setback. Du Plessis hoped to resume his duties at the Kweekskool but he never returned to the theological seminary again and died a lonely man on Saturday 16 February 1935 (Ferreira 1979: 181).

Thus an early attempt to read and understand the Pentateuch from a historical-critical perspective was nipped in the bud. It is difficult to determine the guilty one in this unfortunate heresy case. Du Plessis was indeed not blameless. In writing he had the inclination to express himself harshly and to shock people out of their wits. On the other hand, the church was also guilty of not showing sufficient understanding of the problem. Perhaps the main reason must be sought in the theological context of the time. Although many developments were taking place in the intellectual life of the Afrikaner, theological thinking remained virtually untouched. Consequently critical questions did not receive proper attention. In March 1930 the 'Guardian' of Manchester, England requested Du Plessis to formulate the essence of the heresy controversy. Du Plessis sent them a telegram and the opening sentences are extremely important:

The contest between the synod and myself arises from the conflict between the newer views on the nature and range of inspiration and traditional beliefs.... South Africa though an active participant in the political and economic movements of the age is *somewhat backward* in the domain of thought, especially *religious thought*.... Our *universities* are of recent institution and have not yet had time to produce a generation of scientifically trained minds.... The Dutch Reform Synod constituted as it is with half its members worthy elders from the *backveld* cannot be regarded as a tribunal competent to adjudicate on difficult points of doctrine (Du Plessis 1930 — my emphasis).

A South African church historian, Eddie Brown, stated in an interesting article that historical criticism or 'Hoër Kritiek' as he called it, was indeed tolerated in the post-Du Plessis era: 'Vanuit 'n belydenis-standpunt kon die insigte van die Hoër Kritiek en die histories-kritiese metode die Skrifondersoek bevorder'. According to him the positive aspects of the method were used and then he named two scholars:

Met 'n ingeboude teologiese voorbehoud word nie geskroom om van die winste van die Hoër Kriek gebruik te maak nie. Hiervan lewer ook die uitnemende taalkenners en Ou Testamentici, onder meer proff *F C Fensham* en *A H van Zyl*, bewys (Brown 1979:146).

Of course Brown is not wrong. But he is not altogether right either. These scholars did indeed grapple with historical criticism and its results. It is my contention, however, that neither of them followed a strict historical-critical line. Fensham avoided many issues by becoming a brilliant cultural historian while Van Zyl radically re-interpreted historical criticism in order to make it useful for our situation. Let us now turn our attention to these two scholars.

C CHARLES FENSHAM: A COVENANTAL READING OF THE PENTATEUCH

1 A brief introduction to his thought

Charles Fensham was professor in Semitic Languages at the University of Stellenbosch. He was an internationally recognised scholar. Perhaps no other South African before or even after him has enjoyed as much international recognition. He was acquainted with the important Old Testament scholars of his time, he visited congresses, lectured abroad, contributed articles to international journals and wrote commentaries in overseas series.

Broadly speaking, Fensham's theology reveals two typical features. He was first of all a *historian*. He wanted to approach the Old Testament from a historical point of view. Not so much historical-critical as historical-cultural. To him the ancient Near Eastern world was the widest horizon of the Old Testament. Against this horizon it has to be read and understood. Since the Old Testament forms an integral part of the ancient Near Eastern world it must be explained in terms of that context. Fensham's endeavours thus consisted in an endless search for parallels between the literature of the Old Testament and the ancient Near East. Another typical feature of Fensham was his emphasis on the *covenant*. Without his saying so explicitly, the covenant was to him the centre of the Old Testament. Through this lens the Pentateuch was investigated and the rest of the Old Testament understood. Attached to this notion of the covenant were issues like be-

nediction, malediction, and laws. We will discuss some aspects of Fensham's 'covenantal' interpretation of the Pentateuch below. How the Near Eastern parallels constantly illuminated his thoughts must also be noted.

Fensham's historical approach and his emphasis on the covenant enabled him to either avoid critical questions or to answer them in a unique manner. His historical interests were led in the direction of the Baltimore school. Not the approach of Alt or Noth but that of Albright became the dominant one in Fensham's scholarly life. He therefore went to Johns Hopkins, Baltimore and obtained a doctorate in 1958 with Albright as promoter.

2 Authorship of the Pentateuch

Although Fensham did not elaborate on the authorship of the Pentateuch his views may be construed from the scattered remarks that he made on the topic. His overall position may be described as 'conservative', but not in the sense of a total rejection of any critical study of the Pentateuch or a fundamentalistic approach to the Old Testament. He was opposed to the cutting of the text into pieces by means of literary critical analysis. Perhaps his own standing can best be described in his tribute to Albright. What was said about Albright might be just as true of him.

The most outstanding characteristic of Albright's studies of the Old Testament is his tendency to take a more or less conservative position. Thus the background of the stories of the Patriarchs are placed at the beginning of the Second Millennium BC. A far greater rôle is ascribed to Moses as historical figure than is admitted in certain circles of biblical scholarship. His emphasizing of the ancient form of the covenant-idea in Israelite history has resulted in various publications by his students (Fensham 1972a:3-4).

Although Fensham did not reckon with the Mosaic origin of the Pentateuch he nevertheless ascribed many sections to *Moses* or his time. Moses was indeed a historical figure who played a great role in the early history of Israel and the origin of the Pentateuch. He is therefore depicted as a central figure in the Pentateuch and this description is so true to life that its reliability can never be doubted. In the course of time many traditions about Moses developed which were later reworked and integrated by the author of the Pentateuch (cf

Fensham 1970c:19-29): 'Party van die vertellinge oor Moses is so lewenseg dat 'n mens nie kan twyfel aan die geloofwaardigheid daarvan nie' (Fensham 1982b:30).

Fensham opted for a *final author* or a *final editor* of the Pentateuch. Some references are indeed made to different sources but it was the final author who shaped and moulded the Pentateuch into its final form. Fensham called this author by various names: 'eindredactor' (cf Fensham 1970c:35,63,65,86,99), 'de auteur' (cf Fensham 1970c:43, 61,63,65,72,74,77,95,107,118,142,187,200), 'de schrijver' (cf Fensham 1970c:63,65,112,129,186).

This final author was *no mere collector* of traditions but went about his task *creatively*. He received complexes of tradition which he linked and elaborated by means of introductions, insertions and concluding remarks. Fensham identified at least four typical narrative features of this final author: dialogue, repetition, motifs, humour.

(1) The *dialogue form* was constantly used (Fensham 1970c:10-11; 1967a:59). Two people are constantly conversing with each other. When Moses met Yahweh at the burning bush only the two of them conversed and this set the pattern for all further discourse in the book of Exodus: 'Wanneer die Here 'n boodskap aan die volk het, dan spreek Hy met Moses. Moses op sy beurt spreek met die volk — so word die dialoog voortgesit, maar nooit opgehef nie' (Fensham 1967a:59; 1970c:23-27;93-98).

(2) *Repetition* is another important stylistic feature. These repetitions are usually found in the orders which Yahweh gave to Moses. It is interesting to note the important differences between an order and its execution. Often things are either added or left out. The following examples can illustrate this point. Exodus 19:10-13 contains Yahweh's order to the people to consecrate themselves and in verse 15 Moses added abstention from sexual relations. Exodus 25-31 describes the commands with regard to offerings, the tabernacle and the priestly garments while the execution is narrated in 35-40. When compared, remarkable differences are apparent which may even change the meaning (Fensham 1967a:60).

This brings us to the important point of the so-called sources J,D,E and P. Fensham did not reject the possibility of these sources but rejected repetition as a basis for literary critical analysis. Repetition was a typical literary device and could be viewed as definitive in

determining authorship:

Herhaling is eenvoudig die prosastyl van gedeeltes wat 'n bevel bied en die uitvoering daarvan. Weglating en toevoeging is tipies van hierdie styl wat nie soseer gesteld is op woordelike ooreenkomste nie, maar op die algemene betekenis en strekking van die verhaal. Die byvoeging word dikwels gebruik om die intensiteit van die bevel te verhoog.... Dit wil voorkom of die ou Semiete 'n behae daarin geskep het om sekere gegewens te herhaal. Deur dit te herhaal word die aandag daarop gevestig (Fensham 1967a:60; 1970c:118).

(3) Different *motifs* were also employed in the same narrative. While the author was describing motif A he would suddenly, and without warning, refer to motif B which was only to be discussed a few chapters further. Once again this is no sign of the author's clumsiness or weakness, and neither is it an invitation for literary-critical operations. It is, on the other hand, no indication of the final author's greatness (Fensham 1967a:60; 1970c:67,91,93,100).

(4) *Humour* was yet another characteristic of the final author's work (Fensham 1970c:17,46,213-215).

3 The long development of the Pentateuch: traditions

Understanding of the Pentateuch is dependent on knowledge of its origin. The Pentateuch was not the result of one man's endeavours, but developed over a very long time. Many people contributed to its development and shaped it in many ways. Fensham expressed this idea by employing the term *tradition*. Put differently, the traditions of Israel must enable us to understand the origin of the Pentateuch. It must, however, be stated that he did not use the term in the historical-critical sense (cf Von Rad) but merely to indicate something that was transmitted from one generation to another. He also substantiated the notion of 'tradition' in the Old Testament in a rather strange way. Although no technical term for 'tradition' exists, the idea can nevertheless be found. Two examples are then given to illustrate this point. According to Genesis 18:19, Abraham had to direct his children to keep the way of the Lord. In Exodus 12:27 it is stated that the Israelites had to tell their children about the Passover. This scanty information formed Fensham's point of departure for the study of traditions.

In albei hierdie gevalle moet die oorlewering op bevel van die Here geskied. Ons sou dus kan sê 'n tradisie is dit wat oorgelewer is van

geslag tot geslag om 'n bepaalde rede en 'n bepaalde doel. Aanvanklik is 'n tradisie net in verband gebring met wat mondeling oorgelewer is. Later is besef dat tradisie ook op die skriftelike oorlewering van toepassing is (Fensham 1979a:26).

As far as the Pentateuch is concerned there was an *original revelation* ('oeropenbaring') which sparked off the formation of tradition. In the course of time the original underwent drastic changes. New circumstances asked for a re-interpretation and a thorough re-working of the existing material. Consequently the tradition received shades of meaning that it had not originally possessed. The story of the exodus may serve as an example: in the book of Exodus it had a specific meaning, but a new exodus was expected during the time of Deutero-Isaiah. Yet another example can be found in the theophany at Sinai. This event gave rise to a constant re-interpretation of Israel's legal material (cf Fensham 1970c:117-129). Understanding the Pentateuch is thus closely linked to a history of its traditions, and not only one aspect but the whole development of the tradition must be taken into account (Fensham 1979a:32). Although it was Fensham's intention to investigate the history of the Pentateuchal traditions, not much was accomplished in this regard. Perhaps his limited definition of the term 'tradition' as merely something transmitted from one generation to the other was responsible for this. Furthermore the traditions of Israel did not form the main focus of his study. Fensham, however, *does* emphasise the long origin of the Pentateuch and he *does* take that into account when explaining the Pentateuch. Within the South African context he made some important contributions in this regard. A clear summons like the following was not often heard in our earlier context:

Dat tradisies in die vorming van die Ou-Testament 'n uiters belangrike rol gespeel het, staan soos 'n paal bo water. Dit is ook die plig van enige navorsers as hy dit ernstig wil maak met die Ou-Testamentiese boodskap, om die oorlewering van hierdie tradisies te bestudeer en vas te stel in watter mate dit suiwer in sy ou vorm bewaar gebly het of in watter mate dit by veranderde omstandighede aangepas is.... Hierdie soort studie is uiters moeilik omdat 'n mens nie altyd genoeg weet van dit wat op die agtergrond lê nie. Maar dit onthef ons nie van die plig om alles in ons vermoë te doen om tot die kern deur te dring met alle hulpmiddels tot ons beskikking nie (Fensham 1979a:26).

The *context* played an extremely important role in the understanding of the Pentateuchal traditions. Fensham took great trouble to highlight this close relationship between tradition and context (Fensham 1970c:144-180). Traditions grew out of specific living conditions. No tradition should be separated from the situation in which it originated and developed. The Pentateuch is a composite work and each constituent part (or tradition) originated in a specific life context. Each Pentateuchal tradition was formed and shaped by a life context and therefore tradition and *Sitz im Leben* are inseparable. Students of the Pentateuch must therefore attempt to reconstruct this living conditions (Fensham 1979a:29).

Fensham began with the *text in its present form*. He nevertheless took the composite nature of the Pentateuch into consideration and also investigated the pre-literary phases of the text. Different oral traditions underlie the present text and this had to be taken into consideration. At a specific stage these traditions were developed into greater units and still later were incorporated into a greater literary work. The individual texts as well as the smaller component units must be studied.

Wat die individuele teks betref, moet aanvaar word dat 'n mondeling tradisie dit voorafgegaan het. Dit is die plig van die navorser om na te gaan hoe die individuele teks of kleinere oorleweringseenheid uit 'n bepaalde lewensituasie gegroei en in 'n bepaalde konteks te staan gekom het.... Ten tweede is die individuele tekste ingevoeg in die groter literêre komponent (Fensham 1979a:33).

4 Ancient Near Eastern background and parallels

For Fensham the application of *Ancient Near Eastern parallels* formed a fundamental part of Old Testament scholarship (cf 1959a:160-161; 1959b:273-274; 1960f:292-293; 1962a:1-9; 1962b:429-432; 1962c:337-339; 1964b:251-254; 1969a:312-321; 1972b:86-87; 1973:58-62; 1975a:12-17; 1977a:23-41; 1977b:225-229; 1979b:153-161; 1982a:53-65). These parallels did not merely constitute a vague background but were of substantial importance. They formed an integral part of Fensham's approach to the Pentateuch. His understanding of the Old Testament (and the Pentateuch) was drastically shaped by the thought-world and literature of the Ancient Near East. This explains his aggressive search for and interpretation of parallels

between the Old Testament (and the Pentateuch) and the Ancient Near East. One can even say that Fensham understood by means of analogy. He unceasingly searched for parallels in the literature of the Ancient Near East that could shed light on any pericope, verse or word of the Pentateuch and the Old Testament. It was especially the similarities between the covenant of the Old Testament (and Pentateuch) and the Hittite vassal treaties which had a lasting influence on Fensham's work.

One can criticise his treatment of these parallels. Perhaps he used them too uncritically and perhaps he linked them too easily to the Old Testament. Fensham would have answered that the people of the Ancient Near East (including Israel) *shared a common background* and that the existence of parallels is obvious. This common environment radically shaped Israel. Ancient Near Eastern thought and literature left their imprints on Israelite literature and thought, and therefore the search for parallels is essential. This Near Eastern influence was not limited to words and sentences only but it determined Israel's understanding of reality and provided them with the concept (i.e. covenant) for describing their relationship with God. It is therefore important to note that parallels from the Ancient Near East can indeed illuminate the Pentateuch. Some examples from the Pentateuch are furnished below to substantiate this point.

Exodus 11:7 reads as follows: *But against any of the people of Israel, either man or beast, not a dog shall growl* (RSV). According to Fensham this verse has not satisfactorily been explained by any commentary, ancient or modern. He wanted to investigate this verse afresh by seeking parallels in the literature of the Ancient Near East. Fensham observed a similar expression in the ancient literature. Usually a transgressor of a contract was frightened by the thought that his body would be torn apart by dogs (Fensham 1970c: 48). Exodus 11:7 then states that, although the dogs would attack the dead bodies of the Egyptian first-born, the Israelites would be spared that. Fensham then concludes that because this curse can be paralleled in the Ancient Near East literature it is 'likely that we have in Ex xi 7 a curse negatively formulated or a blessing as a reverse of a curse' (Fensham 1966b:506-507).

The word אלהים in Exodus 21:6 and 22:7 is problematic. Various solutions have been proposed, but once again none have been really satisfactorily. Many, for instance, interpreted it as 'judges' or 'household gods'. According to Fensham 'new evidence' can, however, be found in the Laws of Eshnunna. A 'clearcut parallel' occurs which throws 'new light' on both Exodus 21:6 and 22:7 (cf Fensham 1970c:148). There is a 'striking similarity' between Exodus 22:7 and the Laws of Eshnunna with regard to the declaration of innocence. According to the former, recourse had to be taken to Yah-

weh and in the latter case an oath had to be taken. Essentially the same act is referred to. Such an oath was taken at the door of a sanctuary. This 'new evidence' from the Laws of Eshnunna suggests that אלהים must refer to the god of a sanctuary. According to the Laws of Eshnunna the god is Tishpak, but according to the book of Exodus it refers to Yahweh, the God of Israel (Fensham 1959a:160-161; 1970c:163-165).

Another problematic word is שבתו in Exodus 21:19. Since the beginning of the Christian era translators have experienced some difficulty with it. The Septuagint and the Targums exerted an important influence on the way it was rendered. According to the Targum Onkelos and the Palestinian Targum שבתו was interpreted as 'his sitting', 'his staying at home' with the secondary meaning of 'his loss of time'. Another solution is to derive שבתו from שבת, 'to rest', with the meaning 'his leisure'. This translation can also be found in the Septuagint. A 'new solution' was, however, suggested by those who utilised the 'new material' from Ugarit. According to Fensham they were moving in the right direction 'because there undoubtedly is a close parallel between the Hebrew and Hittite laws'. He therefore attempted to solve the problematic שבתו by comparing it to the Hittite word *peda*, 'place'. It may then be translated as follows: 'but he shall provide someone in his place' (Fensham 1960d:333-335; 1970c:154-155).

According to Fensham 'unexpectedly new light' can sometimes be shed on a word which had been interpreted without problems for many centuries. This was the case with the word ברעה in Exodus 32:17. Moses and Joshua were on the mountain to receive the laws from Yahweh. Suddenly they heard the people making a noise and then the word ברעה is added. Chains of scholars have derived it from the root in the meaning 'to shout'. In an Ugaritic text, No 3, RS 24.245 line 4, the word *r't* occurs in the meaning of 'thunder' (cf Fensham 1959b:273-274). This led Fensham to relate ברעה to a word which is 'perfectly parallel in form to the Ugaritic *r't* and this 'similarity is too obvious to be of no significance'. If רעה has the meaning of 'thunder' the following translation seems feasible: *when Joshua heard the noise of the people as thundering....* The idea of 'thunder' also fits perfectly in the context of Exodus 32. It may serve as a contrast between the thundering of Yahweh in Exodus 19 and the thundering noise of the people worshipping the golden calf (Fensham 1972b:86-87; cf 1970c:218).

The description of the burning, grinding and scattering of the golden calf in Exodus 32:20 creates some problems. If the calf was molten gold, how could it be burned? Two different answers were given. According to the one, the calf was actually made of wood and only lightly covered with gold. Others believed that the calf was indeed made from gold but that it rested on a wooden pedestal. Reference to the burning pertains to the wooden parts of the calf, while the gold was ground into powder. Mention is also made of Moses who scattered the powder on water and made the Israelites drink it. Some commentators stated that this act emphasised Israel's guilt (Fensham 1970c:218). Fensham viewed these explanations with some suspicion and therefore said that 'a parallel from elsewhere would be most welcome. Exactly such a parallel is produced by the Ugaritic texts' (Fensham 1966f:191). When text 49:II:31-36 is compared to Exodus 32:20 some interesting paral-

lels are observed.

With the sword she cleaves him,
with the fan she winnows him,
in the fire she burns him,
between the mill-stone(s) she grinds him
in the field she scatters him
his remnant the birds indeed devour (Ugaritic text).

And he burnt it in fire
and he ground it to powder
and he scattered it on water
and he made the Israelites to drink it (Ex 32:20).

At least three verbs are similar: burn, grind and scatter. Both also conclude with the same idea: the remnants of Moth are devoured by birds and in the Exodus story the Israelites drink them. All this probably refers to a ritual and a fixed form (burn, grind, scatter). Each act points to a curse: the burning of the idol or the god indicated that a curse of obliteration was brought over it; any form of grinding was a drastic form of a curse; scattering was also a well-known curse. These images indicate that a hostile god or idol was mutilated and obliterated in a similar way in both the Canaanite and the biblical world. Exodus 32:20 thus reflects a fixed ritual: 'The first step is to burn it, the second to grind it and then to scatter it for a cursed devouring ... (T)he parallel Ugaritic text throws light on the Hebrew text and shows that the Hebrew tradition could be very early' (Fensham 1966f:193).

One of the best books on *the history of Israel* ever written in Afrikaans came from the hand of Fensham. He narrated the story in such a manner that Israel was *inseparably linked to its Ancient Near Eastern context*. Like Pannenberg, history was to him the widest horizon of understanding; Israel's history is understood and retold as part of the great story of the Ancient Near Eastern people. Israel did not live in isolation but formed part and parcel of the Near Eastern context. The patriarchs must therefore be explained against the background and the customs of Ancient Near Eastern society. The depiction of the group of Semites on the Beni Hasan picture illustrates the clothes, form of transport, recreation, music, et cetera of the patriarchs (Fensham 1982b:36-50). Fensham also painted Israel's stay in Egypt on a very wide canvas, highlighting the links with the Egyptians, the Hittites, the Sea people and those groups described in the Amarna letters (Fensham 1968:1-8; 1982b: 51-63).

Omdat Fensham die geskiedenis van Israel met dié van die Ou Nabye Ooste verweef het, het hy daarin geslaag om die mense van wie die Ou Testament vertel, te laat leef. Hy het nie die geskiedenis in strakke heilshistoriese of openbaringshistoriese idees vasgevang nie, maar eerder op die lewe van die mense gefokus. Gewoonlik kon hy aan-

toon hoe God op die wieke van die eeue met gewone mense in gewone omstandighede sy doel bereik (Le Roux 1990:492).

5 Three different covenants

According to Fensham the covenant was *the heart of the Old Testament* as well as the *Pentateuch*. It was also the centre of his theology of the Old Testament/Pentateuch. He made a thorough investigation of the covenant in the Old Testament and in the Ancient Near East and came to very interesting conclusions. In the course of time Fensham became well known for his studies on the covenant. The covenant was like a key that unlocked the secrets of the Old Testament, as well as of the Pentateuch. Due to Fensham's covenant focus on the Pentateuch it was not necessary for him to grapple with all kinds of historical critical problems. He was so intensely moulded by covenant theology that the Pentateuch became a covenant book.

Fensham distinguished *three basic covenants* in the Old Testament: the covenant with Abraham (Gn 15), the covenant at Sinai (Ex 19ff) and the covenant with David (2 Sm 7). According to him, these covenants should not be viewed in isolation. The final author of the Pentateuch linked them in many ways. The close relationship is illustrated when the different promises are compared.

Die hele verbondsgedagte gaan verlore indien dit van mekaar verwyder en afsonderlik van mekaar verstaan word. Israel se verbondsdanke vertoon 'n eenheid en daarom moet ons die drie verbonde ook saamverstaan. Fensham verduidelik dat die finale outeur die drie baie netjies met teologiese 'draadjies' gekoppel het. Hierdie teologiese arbeid word baie duidelik gesien indien ons elke verbond se beloftes ondersoek. So 'n saamsien toon die teologiese 'draadjies' wat hulle saambind asook die veranderinge wat telkens in nuwe omstandighede ingetree het (Le Roux 1990:493).

a The covenant with Abraham

The following promises were made to Abraham: the promise of possession of land (Gn 15:7,18; 17:7), the promise of fertility and many offspring (Gn 15:5; 17:4-6), and the promise of an everlasting relationship between the Lord and Abraham as well as with his descendants (Gn 17:7).

The promise of a *close relationship* was fulfilled more or less immediately. Abraham constantly experienced the presence of the Lord.

The final author also narrated the patriarchal events in such a manner as to illustrate the Lord's interest in the affairs of Abraham and his offspring. This presence was also felt in Egypt when the Lord remembered his people and their suffering (Fensham 1967b:310). According to the author of the book Exodus the promise with regard to many *offspring* was accomplished during bondage in Egypt. In the first chapter it is stated that the Israelites became so numerous that they formed a constant danger to the Egyptians (Fensham 1970c:15-18). Only one promise was not fulfilled during Israel's early history: the *possession of land*. And this is one of the main reasons why the final author linked the covenant with Abraham to that of Sinai (Fensham 1967b:310).

The *parallel* between the covenant of Abraham and *Hittite treaties* is very interesting. A prominent parallel is the promise of land. In the Hittite treaties the vassal already possessed the land while it was still a future event, according to the Abraham narratives. Fensham thus called the Hittite promise realistic and the Hebrew one idealistic. In both cases the boundaries of the land are also described. Genesis 15:18-20 informs us about borders which were only realised during the time of David and Solomon. These parallels illustrate the common background of the covenant of Abraham and the Hittite vassal treaties. Promises in the one are not at all alien to that of the other. This also indicates the early dating of the Abraham narratives (Fensham 1967b:311).

b The covenant of Sinai

Fensham emphasised the close relationship between the covenant of *Abraham and that of Sinai*. To accomplish this the final stage of the text was taken as starting-point — thus ignoring the problems identified by historical criticism. This enabled Fensham to identify the threads with which the author had linked the two covenants (Fensham 1967b:309; 1970c: 118). He illustrated his point by focusing on the promises attached to both covenants.

(1) Prior to Israel's arrival at Sinai two promises to Abraham had already been fulfilled. One was the promise of many offspring and the other the assurance of the Lord's presence. It speaks for itself that the first became superfluous in the course of time. The promise of a continuing relationship formed the heart of the Abraham covenant and

could never be left out. Thus the final author of the book of Exodus also incorporated this promise in his rendering of the covenant made at Sinai. In this way he firmly linked the covenant of Abraham to that of Sinai.

(2) When the Sinai covenant was made the promise of land had not yet been realised. To the final author of Exodus it was therefore of the utmost importance to emphasise the validity of this promise at Sinai. The people had to be re-assured that it was still valid and that its fulfilment could still be awaited. That is why this promise was included in the Sinai covenant. As Fensham put it: 'It is exactly to the latter unaccomplished promise (of land) that the covenant of Sinai is connected by the narrator.... This promise connects the covenants of Abraham and Sinai' (Fensham 1967b:312).

(3) Important is the promise with regard to the conquering of the nations (Ex 23:22ff; 33:2; 34:11). This is a new element and is of course lacking in the covenant with Abraham. Israel's historical situation has changed considerably since the time of the patriarchs and some adjustments have had to be made. Any reference to the conquering of the nations would have been out of place in the Abraham covenant. It fits, however, the covenant of Sinai extremely well. It functions as a prelude to the entry into Canaan and the conquering of the nations by the tribes. Although this 'thread' caused some discontinuity with the covenant of Abraham it can nevertheless be fully explained (Fensham 1970c:178-180,223).

c *Covenant with David*

2 Samuel 7:1-17 narrates the covenant made with David and his house. Explicitly it is stated that *Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever* (2 Sm 7:16). This promise is preceded by a summary of the Lord's great acts in the history of Israel and David. This also occurs in the *Hittite vassal treaties*. The acts of the great king to the vassal are first of all listed. Another feature of the Hittite treaties is the promise of an everlasting dynasty to the vassal. These parallels once again emphasise 'that every one of the typical promises in Hittite vassal treaties could be paralleled by biblical promises in covenantal contexts. This shows that the covenant-idea pervades the most important part of Old Testament thought' (Fensham 1967b:315).

Fensham also stressed the unity between the covenant with *David and Sinai*. This of course was not so easy. Since the work of Leonard Rost (1926), the differences between the two have rather been emphasised. Accordingly, the northern empire was steeped in the Sinai covenant, while the people of the south built on the promises given to David. This of course was totally unacceptable to Fensham. He conceded the existence of two different covenant ideas side by side, but urged one not to overemphasise it. In the final analysis the covenant with David was based on the Sinai covenant. This is clearly illustrated by the parallels between the covenant of Sinai and the Hittite vassal treaties. According to this view David was bound to the stipulations of the Sinai covenant (Fensham 1971:87).

We must bear in mind that the Sinai-covenant formed the basis for the David-covenant. The David-covenant is only an extension of the Sinai-covenant. The David-covenant is the Sinai-covenant amplified, with certain promises to the royal generation. These promises are part of the Sinai-covenant. It is one of the basic characteristics of the ancient vassal-treaty that the minor king who would keep the stipulations of the treaty, receives promises of benedictions. While the Sinai-covenant is formed on basis of the ancient vassal-treaty, these promises to David are not in the least to be detached from the Sinai-covenant (Fensham 1964/65:36-7).

As said before, Fensham had a very keen eye on the *circumstances* which gave rise to the development of theological ideas. Theological conceptions can therefore not be separated from the contexts in which they originated. Differences which might have occurred between the two covenants made to Israel at Sinai and to David should therefore be explained historically. Israel's situation had radically changed since Sinai and the period of the judges. No longer did the loose federation of tribes exist and judges were no longer called to save the people from their enemies. A new state developed, a new form of civil organisation arose and the king now occupied a central position. These new circumstances led to a new kind of theology which culminated in the promise of an everlasting eternal Davidic dynasty. This promise was essential to the new state (Fensham 1967b:314-315).

6 Sacrifice and eating in the forming of the covenant

Sacrifice and eating formed an *integral part of covenant making*. Once again Fensham was very much influenced by ancient Near Eastern

covenant ideas. For instance, in a treaty discovered at Alalakh and describing a covenant between Abban and Iarimlim, mention is made of a sheep. Abban slaughtered the sheep while placing himself under the oath of Iarimlim. This act was intended as a sacrifice to the god. A similar deed can also be found in an inscription of Idrimi of Alalakh. A treaty was made between Idrimi and Sutarna and this was concluded by a sacrifice. Similar information can also be obtained from the covenant between the Hanaeans and Idamaras. In this case the covenant was formed by the sacral act of slaughtering an ass (Fensham 1964d: 54; 1965b:78).

The *meal* was a very important element of covenant-making. According to an ancient Arab custom a meal was prepared for the parties concluding a treaty. The mere fact of eating together indicated that a treaty existed between them (Fensham 1965b:79). This notion of a *sacrifice* and a meal is also contained in the Hebrew word for covenant. Fensham referred in this regard to Albright who found the word *biritu* in ancient Akkadian texts, which literally means 'to cut a covenant': 'Hierdie "sny" beteken dan letterlik die verdeel van 'n offerdier in twee dele waarvan een deel geoffer word en die ander by 'n offermaaltyd geëet word' (Fensham 1965a:79).

Although not explicitly said one may gather from some passages that *Israel was acquainted* with the concept of a sacrifice and a meal. According to Genesis 26:26-31 Isaac and Abimelech made a treaty. It is clearly stated: *Isaac then made a feast for them, and they ate and drank. Early the next morning the men swore an oath to each other. Then Isaac sent them on their way, and they left him in peace* (עלם) (Gn 26:30-31). A remarkable correspondence exists between these words and the Mari texts. According to the latter a donkey was slaughtered and sacrificed which brought peace ('sa-li-ma-am') between the Hanaeans and Idamaras (Fensham 1964d:54). An interesting parallel therefore exists between this Old Testament passage and the Mari texts. According to Fensham it again emphasises the great age of the Pentateuch. According to Genesis 31:51-54, a sacrifice was offered and a meal was enjoyed after Jacob and Laban concluded a treaty: *He offered a sacrifice there in the hill country and invited his relatives to a meal* (Gn 31:54). Exodus 18 describes a treaty that was made between the Israelites and the Kenites and once again mention is made of a meal (Ex 18:12) (Fensham 1965a:81).

The above texts refer to treaties made between equals. According to Fensham sacrifice and meal also formed an integral part of treaties made between *unequal partners*. This can clearly be seen in the way the covenant of Sinai was concluded. Both elements occur in this covenant and both were of great importance. Fensham highlighted the following verses:

Moses then wrote down everything the Lord said. He got up early the next morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain and set up twelve stone pillars representing the twelve tribes of Israel. Then he sent young Israelite men, and they offered burnt offerings and sacrificed young bulls as fellowship offerings to the Lord. Moses took half of the blood and put it in bowls, and the other half he sprinkled on the altar... Moses then took the blood, sprinkled it on the people and said, 'This is the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all the words. Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and the seventy elders of Israel went up and saw the God of Israel... they saw God, and they ate and drank' (Ex 18:5,6,8,9,11).

The *sprinkling of blood* over the people is strange. Some noted that this rite incorporated the people into the covenant. Fensham, however, stressed the connection between this rite and the expressions 'sacrifices, offerings' and 'ate, drank'. Reference to sacrifices and offerings highlighted Yahweh's superiority as covenant member and the altar indicated his presence. The blood rite and the communal meal bound the inferior members into a close unity. Sacrifices thus linked Yahweh and Israel, and the meal united the members.

Veral by die groot verbondsluiting by Sinai, waar 'n verbond gemaak is tussen God en sy volk wat eeue van Israelitiese geskiedenis sou omspan en die hartaar vorm van die hele Ou Testament, waar daar sprake is van 'n offer en 'n maaltyd, moet ons enigsins probeer verstaan wat dit beteken vir die verbondsvorming. Die offer wil blykbaar aantoon dat God die meerdere party van die verbond is, maar ook op tasbare wyse in die verbond betrek word deur die teenwoordigheid van die altaar... Die bloedritus, asook die gesamentlike maaltyd, slaan 'n onderlinge band tussen die lede van die mindere party. Dit voeg hulle godsdienstig, juridies en organisatories saam in 'n absolute eenheid. Die offer verbind Israel met die Here en die maaltyd verbind hulle onderling aan mekaar. Die verbond werk dus sowel vertikaal as horisontaal. Daarbenewens is dit absoluut bindend en omdat dit 'n verbond tussen 'n meerdere en 'n mindere vennoot is, kan die meerdere vennoot die verbond opsê. Die mindere kan dit alleen verbreek (Fensham 1965a:81).

7 Benediction and malediction

Closely related to the covenant idea in the Ancient Near East are clauses of malediction and benediction. Except for the Old Testament, *maledictions* were usually placed at the beginning of the vassal treaties. Maledictions were directed at those who violated the stipulations of the treaty. At least three different words were used in the treaties of the Ancient Near East to describe this act of unfaithfulness: 'to break off', 'not to honour' and 'not fulfilling' (Fensham 1962a:3). This once again illustrates that despite differences the same covenant ideas are conveyed by similar covenant terminology.

To express the maledictions the *casuistic style* was used: the 'if' clause, with the punishment described in the second part of the sentence. The exact content of the curses differs from one treaty to other. Some laid the emphasis on the destruction of the infidel and others on all kinds of calamities. It is important to note that the malediction can be expressed in either a longer or a shorter form. Deuteronomy 8:19 preserved the shorter and Deuteronomy 28:15ff the longer form. Fensham concluded that these two forms were generally used in the treaties of the Ancient Near East and that they existed from the time of the Hittites to the time of Josiah (Fensham 1962a:6). Sometimes the malediction was accompanied by a clause of *benediction*. It can be found in all the Hittite vassal treaties as well as the Akkadian texts of Ugarit. Traces of it can also be detected in the vassal treaties of Sefire. It was also couched in the same casuistic style as the malediction.

It is remarkable to note how the *faithfulness* of the vassal was expressed. The Hittite treaties used the word 'honour' and 'fulfil'; in an Akkadian treaty the word 'keep' or 'guard' is used from the stem *nasaru*; in the treaty of Sefire a word is used from the stem *nsr*. In Deuteronomy the stem שָׁמַר is used with almost the meaning of נָצַר: *for they observed (שָׁמַר) thy word and kept (נָצַר) thy covenant* (Dt 33:9). According to this verse the words שָׁמַר and נָצַר are closely related. The use of נָצַר in connection with the covenant is thus very important because it is very closely related to the same word in the Akkadian of Ugarit and the Aramaic of Sefire. According to Fensham: 'We have, thus, a *very close parallel in vocabulary* in this case between the various vassal treaties and the Old Testament' (Fensham 1962a:7 — my emphasis).

8 The laws of the covenant

Fensham has also made a major contribution to the study of the *laws* of especially the *Pentateuch*. While studying with Albright he completed a thesis on the Covenant Code which was unfortunately never published. To explain his views on Pentateuchal laws Fensham once again made extensive use of the mass of Ancient Near Eastern legal material (cf Fensham 1970c:144-180). He quoted a letter Albright addressed to him: 'We have just begun to exploit this material' (Fensham 1961a:18). Since the discovery of the Code of Hammurapi the Ancient Near Eastern legal material and the Old Testament have been constantly compared and a link has been forged from the beginning. Remarkable parallels were discovered and therefore some scholars maintained that the Covenant Code either directly borrowed or expanded some of these legal material. The similarities must rather be ascribed to a common background. Case law and customary law were approached similarly all over the Ancient Near East (Fensham 1982b:55). It was impossible for any group or nation to escape the contact and cultural dominance of the Ancient Near East. Israel therefore shared a common heritage with these people as is also evident from the legal tradition (Fensham 1982b:56).

These (Ancient Near Eastern legal) sources are mainly applied for parallelism. It must be borne in mind that in spite of local developments and divergences as a result of ethnological differences, a *remarkable parallel trend is to be observed in Near Eastern casuistic and civil legal material*. I do not think that we must always call this phenomenon borrowing, but a common background or the same living circumstances may be responsible for it (Fensham 1961a:18).

Despite these parallels Fensham also stressed the *inner development* or the *sociological context* (cf Fensham 1961a:19; 1960a:19-22; 1970c:144-146; 1977a:23-41). Israel also made an important contribution to the received legal tradition. They changed and shaped the material to suit their specific circumstances. Fensham called this a major creative event. To explain his view we are focusing on casuistic laws.

It is remarkable how often Fensham referred to Alt's 'form analysis of the legal material' (cf Fensham 1960b:60; 1961a:26; 1961b:143; 1960a:15-22; 1962d:135; 1970c:144; 1976b:272; 1982b:55). He regarded him as the 'first in making a breakthrough in identifying the

genre of the legal verdicts' in the legal material of the Old Testament. Alt distinguished two types of law: apodictic and casuistic law (Fensham 1970c:126). *Apodictic laws* are direct commands or prohibitives with almost no resemblance in subject matter to cuneiform law. These prohibitives or vetitives are short pronouncements which prohibit a certain way of life or conduct without stipulating any penalty. They are furthermore clearly connected to pronouncements of Yahweh and interspersed among the casuistic laws. Alt suggested that the apodictic laws derived from the time of Moses. Fensham on the other hand followed Gerstenberger who sought the *Sitz im Leben* of the apodictic law in the *Sippen* or the circle of kinship. These laws then formed the ethical norms of the nomadic clans (Fensham 1970c:126; 1976b:272; 1977a:25).

Although in full accordance with Alt's 'form analysis', Fensham disagreed with his views on the historical development of the *casuistic laws*. Alt held that this material was borrowed from the Canaanites after the entry into Canaan and identified the city-gates of the Canaanite cities as their original setting (Fensham 1970c:145). Fensham rejected this view and emphasised a much earlier origin as well as the Israelite character of these laws. Fensham advanced the following reasons for his view:

(1) The casuistic laws reflected a very *high moral and ethical standard* which stood in a marked contrast to the immoral and corrupt society of the Canaanites (Fensham 1960a:19).

(2) The sharp *contrast* between the *religions* of the Israelites and the Canaanites was yet another reason for the rejection of Alt's views. According to Fensham a close link existed between casuistic laws and religion. Casuistic laws were promulgated at Sinai when the covenant between Yahweh and Israel was made (Fensham 1960d:333-335).

(3) Fensham thus forged unity between the casuistic laws and *Sinai*. He came to this conclusion because of the existence of stipulations phrased in the casuistic style in the Hittite treaties, as well as in the treaties from Alalakh. These treaties contain many stipulations on the right of asylum, rights of persons, fugitive slaves, theft, loss of a person in custody, marauders, et cetera. All these stipulations were couched in the casuistic style beginning with *summa*, 'if' (Fensham 1961b:145).

These parallels made the occurrence of the casuistic style in the

legal material of the Sinai covenant highly feasible. This conclusion was also based on Fensham's acceptance of the historical reliability of the exodus from Egypt and the covenant-making at Sinai (Fensham 1970c:123-124; Fensham 1982b:51-63). He even hinted at the possibility that the Israelites already had some casuistic laws while in Egypt. At Sinai they were only re-instituted. These stipulations might also go back to the time of the patriarchs.

If we accept the basic historical fact of the covenant at Sinai and if we accept the fact that the Hebrew peoples, who were slaves in Egypt, were participators in the covenant, is it then far-fetched to assume that they already had casuistic laws to protect their community and internal affairs, and that these laws were reinstated at Sinai? (Fensham 1961b:145 — my emphasis).

Casuistic laws must therefore not be associated exclusively with the 'Kulturland'. The *period prior* to the *entry* as well as the nomadic life also had a formative influence. Probably the nomads' tent was the *Sitz im Leben* of a substantial part of the casuistic legal material. Even present-day nomads in Palestine and Arabia travel far distances to get a decision from a famous judge. Fensham emphatically stated: 'This is the very background of casuistic law' (Fensham 1961b:143). This perspective does not exclude the assimilation of many casuistic laws after the entry, because the Israelites constantly had to adapt themselves to a totally new situation (Fensham 1982b:80-96).

Fensham realised the *lack of logic in the arrangement* of the laws of the Covenant Code. This was because of a different set of legal principles which the people of the Ancient Near East employed. He nevertheless attempted to systematise the casuistic laws of the Covenant Code by focusing on transgression and penalty. Although he imposed a structure from outside some kind of unity was achieved and some underlying legal principles were discovered. Fensham also made extensive use of the legal principles of the Ancient Near East. His systematisation had of course a serious shortcoming: only case laws were investigated. The reason for this is, however, evident: transgression and penalty mainly occur in case law. The transgression is stated in the protasis and the penalty in the apodosis (Fensham 1977a:23).

When the *transgressions* in the Covenant Code are scrutinised it soon becomes clear that not all possible misdeeds are mentioned. This

has led some to the conclusion that the laws in the Covenant Code are incomplete or that this code of law originally formed part of a longer collection. According to Fensham a similar phenomenon can be found in the longer Mesopotamian and Hittite collections: some important collections have also been omitted. The different transgressions in the Covenant Code can be summarised as follows: murder, assault, theft, negligence and transgression of a moral or a religious nature (Fensham 1977a:25-26).

a Murder (Ex 21:12-14; 21:20)

Exodus 21:20 states that if a freeman beats his male or female slave to death with a rod, he must be punished. This stipulation is absolutely unique in the legal material of the Ancient Near East and illustrates Israel's humane attitude towards slavery (Fensham 1970c:154; Fensham 1977a:26-27).

b Assault (21:15; 21:18-19; 21:22-25; 21:26-2)

Fensham distinguished between the following forms of attack: the assault of parents (21:15); assault that leads to bodily harm (21:18-19); assault of a pregnant woman (21:22-25) and assault of slaves (21:26-27). In comparison to the Ancient Near Eastern legal material the Covenant Code once again reveals a much more humane attitude. Exodus 21:26-27, for instance, mentions a man's injuring his manservant or maidservant and then letting them free as compensation. This kind of deed was a misnomer in the ancient world because slaves were the property of their owners and compensation was therefore unnecessary (Fensham 1970c:157; 1977a:28).

c Theft (21:16; 21:37-22:3; 22:6-8; 22:9-12)

These laws may be divided into three sections: kidnapping (21:16), theft of cattle (21:37-22:3) and theft of movable property or cattle in custody (22:6-8; 22:12). Exodus 21:37-22:3 contains some difficulty: 21:37 describes the theft of cattle and the corresponding penalty; 22:1 refers both to breaking in during the night and to the severe penalty; verse 2 explains what happens if the burglary took place during the day; verse 3 states the penalty if the stolen animal is found alive in the thief's possession (Fensham 1970c:161). Burglary is widely dealt with in the legal material of the Ancient Near East, but only in the laws of Eshnunna and the Bible do we have the distinction between theft during the day and the night. Some therefore suggested that 21:37 must be placed just before 22:3. Fensham rejected this and accepted a certain progression in these verses: Exodus 22:3 is a later development of the stipulation in 21:37; reference to the 'donkey' was also inserted at a later stage (Fensham 1977a:30).

d Negligence (21:28-36; 22:4,5; 22:9-12; 22:13-14)

All forms of negligence were regarded as serious offences in the Ancient

Near East. The Akkadian word *egum* became a technical term for negligence. According to the Covenant Code the following cases are mentioned: negligence of guarding animals, wells and fields (21:28-36; 22:4,5) and negligence with animals given into custody or borrowed (22:9-12; 22:13-14). Special mention must be made of the goring ox. Reference to this ox can be found in all the laws of the Ancient Near East. According to Exodus 21:29, the owner is only liable if he has been warned beforehand. If the bull just gores somebody to death it must be killed, but the owner is not liable. This clear distinction was probably intended to limit blood revenge (Fensham 1970c:157-159; 1977a:32).

e Transgressions of a moral and religious nature (Ex 21:17; 22:15-16; 22:17; 22:18; 22:19; 22:20-23)

A wide range of transgressions are mentioned and it is therefore impossible to put them under one heading. Cases such as the cursing of parents, the seduction of a girl, the combating of witchery, and the maltreatment of the widow and the poor are discussed. When compared with the legal material of the Ancient Near East it is clear that most of these transgressions are unique to the Bible (Fensham 1977a:33).

It is extremely difficult to discover a system in the *penalties* prescribed in the Ancient Near East. This is of course the result of different circumstances as well as different approaches to transgression. According to the Middle Assyrian Laws, for instance, an extremely severe approach to punishment is revealed, which was the outcome of the Assyrian empire's decline and a corresponding feeling of uncertainty. Hittite laws have a more humane attitude towards transgression. It was, for instance, possible to substitute the death-penalty with compensation. When the various legal collections of the Ancient Near East are compared with regard to penalties, 'the level of sociological development of a society is important to note, e g there is much in common between the societies reflected in the Laws of Eshnunna and that of the Covenant Code' (Fensham 1970c:144-176; 1977a:34). Fensham endeavored to systematise the penalties described in the Covenant Code.

a Death-penalty

The death penalty was prescribed in the Covenant Code when someone was intentionally murdered (Ex 21:12,14), when an ox gored someone to death (21:29,31) and perhaps also when a slave died after an assault (21:20) or when a pregnant woman was seriously injured (21:23-25). The death penalty must not be viewed as rude or primitive. Blood revenge was a very common phenomenon in the Ancient Near East and could easily endanger the prosperity of a society. The death penalty then served the purpose of dis-

couraging homicide and restricting blood revenge (Fensham 1977a:34-36).

b Compensation

Two kinds of compensation existed. The one was a substitute for the guilty person's life (21:30,31). In the Covenant Code this was a later development of the death penalty. A second form of compensation was demanded in cases of loss of property or any kind of loss suffered by a person (Fensham 1977a:36-38).

c Restitution

Fensham described 'restitution' as payment in kind for damage done to the property of a person or loss of property. Once again two kinds of restitution can be discerned: the restitution of what is lost (e g the expected yield of a damaged field) or an aggravated restitution congruent with the kind of transgression (e g double payment or five cattle for one stolen one) (Fensham 1977a:38).

d Other punishments

At least two other kinds of punishment existed in the Covenant Code. In one case a person had to flee to an asylum after an unintentional murder. It is difficult to determine whether the asylum in Exodus 21:13 should be regarded as punishment or not. An asylum was perhaps a kind of acquittal or intended to prevent blood revenge. Secondly, a slave or slave-girl was to be set free after maltreatment. In this case the owner was 'punished' because he lost his property (Fensham 1977a:38-39).

In the light of the above Fensham came to certain important *conclusions*. Homicide was regarded a very grave offence in the Covenant Code and stern penalties were therefore prescribed. Kidnapping, irreverence to parents, negligence which resulted in someone's death, witchcraft, unnatural relationships with animals, and maltreatment of widows, orphans and aliens were also severely punished. It is noteworthy that the death penalty was demanded when a human life was taken, as well as for transgressions of a moral and a religious nature. Compensation and restitution were prescribed for the loss of property. 'This is evidence of the high value which was placed on the sanctity of a human life, and also on the restoring of equilibrium in the society when property was lost through theft and negligence' (Fensham 1977a:40).

9 Covenant light on three treaties

Fensham's covenant understanding enabled him to expound the cove-

nant nature of three treaties in the Hexateuch. Firstly, the events narrated in *Genesis 34* are discussed. In the Mari texts mention is made of the Turukkû tribes. They were nomads who were forced to roam because of a famine. On their travels they formed a treaty ('made peace') with the citizens of a certain village. They, however, did not keep their covenant promises, but killed all the men, took all the women and children, sacked the village and thereby brought upon themselves the disgust of many other people (Fensham 1975b:89).

According to Fensham this episode illuminates the events in *Genesis 34*. Jacob and his group were also nomads who lived near the city of Shechem. This city was inhabited by the Horites and ruled by Hamor. The name 'Hamor' and the expression 'sons of Hamor' point to the covenant idea (Fensham 1964c:97-98). According to the Mari texts, a donkey (*hârum*) was slaughtered to conclude a covenant. One day Shechem, the son of Hamor, defiled Dinah, the daughter of Jacob. Hamor realised the graveness of his son's offence and proposed a marriage between Shechem and Dinah. To the Israelite nomads he suggested staying in the city, to trade and to acquire property. The sons of Jacob insisted that the Shechemites should first of all be circumcised. It is interesting to note that when Hamor discussed the request with his men he referred to the Israelites as 'friendly'. This may perhaps indicate the willingness of the Israelites to contract a covenant with the people of Shechem. Through intermarriage a lasting agreement could have come about (Fensham 1975b:88).

The agreement was, however, breached. While the Shechemites were recovering from their circumcision the Israelites attacked the city, killed all the men and took the women and children. Some interesting parallels exist between the two events: both roamed in an alien country, a covenant was made which was broken after a while, a lot of animosity was caused and both had to leave the city. This event could have occurred anywhere in the Semitic world, but 'it is still surprising that these ... points of resemblance exist. This could not be mere chance, but points to similar circumstances in a roughly contemporary society' (Fensham 1975b:89).

Fensham re-interpreted the treaty between the Israelites and the *Gibeonites*. According to *Joshua 9-10* the Gibeonites deceived the Israelites into a treaty. This agreement is best understood in the light of the parallel material from the various Near Eastern treaties. When

read as a covenant 'narrative' the different 'covenantal' elements of the story become intelligible.

(1) The first element is the word *servant*. The Gibeonites called themselves the 'servants' of the Israelites. Two types of treaties occurred in the Ancient Near East: those between two equals and those between a great king and his vassalage. In the former the partners referred to each other as 'brothers' and in the latter the subject called himself a 'servant'. It is therefore possible that the Gibeonites presented themselves as the vassals of the Israelites (Fensham 1964c:97).

(2) It is further stated that Joshua *made a treaty of peace* with the Gibeonites. 'Peace' was the goal of covenant-making. In the Mari texts it is called *salimum* or 'prosperity' (Fensham 1964c:98).

(3) Thirdly, mention is made of a *meal* (Jos 9:14). At a certain stage the Israelites sampled the provisions of the Gibeonites. In the preceding verses the poor state of the food was asserted: *All the bread of their food supply was dry and mouldy* (Jos 9:15). Some scholars maintained that the Israelites sampled the food because they wanted to ascertain its quality. This act, however, was part of the covenant-making. As stated before, the sacral meal formed an integral part of the conclusion of the covenant (Fensham 1964c:98).

(4) Reference to an *oath* was yet another element of this 'covenant' story. The taking of an oath and the making of a covenant were closely connected. Such an oath could never have been changed or recalled. It compelled the partners to fulfil their covenantal obligations. This is exactly what happened when the Israelites discovered the dishonesty of the Gibeonites: they could not annul their oath and were obliged to keep the treaty (Fensham 1964c:99).

(5) The mention of *Yahweh* also contributed to the understanding of the covenantal character of this narrative. He was the protector of the treaty and safeguarded its contents. This is clearly illustrated in Joshua 10. When the five kings of the Amorites attacked the Gibeonites they sent word to Joshua: *Do not abandon your servants* (Jos 10:6). *Yahweh* then intervened and helped the confederation of Israelites and Gibeonites (Jos 10:11) (Fensham 1964c:99).

We may conclude that the treaty was of a defensive nature. According to many vassal treaties promises of military aid in case of an attack were made by the sovereign to the vassal. Similar promises were apparently made by Joshua and he was therefore obliged to aid

the Gibeonites in their battle against the five Amorite kings (Fensham 1964c:99).

Fensham also investigated the possibility of a covenant relationship between the Israelites and the *Kenites*. It is interesting to note that the existence of such a covenant is hinted at in 1 Samuel 15:6. Saul was on the point of attacking the Amalekites when he was informed about some Kenites among the Amalekite troops. He ordered them to depart and to refrain from fighting against the Israelites (Fensham 1964d:52).

A special kind of relationship existed between the Israelites and the Kenites. Some even thought that Israel derived its idea of Yahweh from the Kenites. According to Fensham this is a bit to far-fetched. Fensham followed Albright, who came to the conclusion that the word 'Kenite' means 'coppersmith' or 'metal-worker'. Moses settled among a Midianite group who specialised in metalworking. It may be concluded that the Kenites formed an integral part of a larger Midianite group. It is further attested in the Old Testament that there was always a very friendly relationship between the Israelites on the one hand and the Kenites and Midianites on the other. Inter-marriage could have been responsible for this situation, but Fensham suspected something more fundamental (Fensham 1964d:52). According to him, this relationship was the outcome of a treaty which existed between the two.

He based his view on Exodus 18. In this chapter the meeting between Moses and Jethro, his Midianite father-in-law, is described. Three important things are mentioned in this section which point to a treaty. First, Moses narrated the wonderful deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt. The further discussions between Moses and Jethro were conducted in the name of Yahweh. This indicates that Yahweh served as the witness to the forming of this covenant. Second, a sacrifice was made to Yahweh. As already indicated this was a very common element and a typical feature of ancient covenant making. Third, it is also clearly stated that both parties enjoyed a common meal. This was of course also typical when a treaty was concluded. All these common features of covenant-making can thus be found in Exodus 18 and one may thus conclude that a covenant relationship existed between the Midianites (Kenites) and the Israelites (Fensham 1964d:53-54).

The *covenant-idea* shaped Fensham's *understanding of the Old Testament* — not alone some dispersed passages but the whole of the Old Testament. Put differently, Fensham could not read the Old Testament without this covenant perspective. This can also be seen in many of his publications. He devoted many articles to a 'covenantal' interpretation of important as well as obscure passages in the Pentateuch and the rest of the Old Testament. Once again a few examples are provided to depict his 'covenantal' reading.

The *prophets* should also be viewed from the perspective of the covenant. To illustrate, we focus on the example of the so-called 'Heil-Unheil' prophecies. These prophecies form the core of the prophetic message, but uncertainty about their origin and background exists. According to Fensham they could be understood against the background of the covenant (Fensham 1962a:8). As stated above, malediction and benediction form an essential part of the covenant idea: salvation or protection is promised to those who keep the covenant while transgressors will experience all kinds of calamities (Fensham 1963b:155). And the prophets were steeped in this covenant-preaching. Israel was to suffer all kinds of misfortunes because of the breach of the covenant (Fensham 1963b:158-172). A blissful time with numerous blessings awaited those who were faithful to the covenant. This close relation between the covenant and prophecies of 'Heil-Unheil' also led Fensham to search for the origin of the Day of the Lord in the covenant idea. This was an important contribution because scholars sought its origin in the tradition of the holy war, or the festival of the enthronement of Yahweh, or Babylonian mythology. The real background of the Day of the Lord was once again the covenant: the Day of the Lord was a day of visitation and punishment for breaching the covenant (Fensham 1966d:90-96).

The covenant also shed light on the *psalms* (cf Fensham 1960f:292-293). This is clearly illustrated in Fensham's explanation of Psalm 21. According to him, this was (in the year 1965) a neglected psalm and no consensus existed with regard to its literary type and cultic function. He then made a very typical remark: 'In light of all these controversial opinions *new material for a fresh approach* must be welcomed. To my opinion a *new approach* is now possible in the light of *new material on the forming of covenant* and its different components' (Fensham 1965b:194 — my emphasis). He identified verse 8 as the axis of the psalm and highlighted its covenantal character. In this verse the covenant relationship between Yahweh and the king is described (Fensham 1965b:200). Fensham's covenant perspective also enabled him to describe the covenantal character of verses 2-7 and 9-13. The former is a thanksgiving prayer with general benedictions related to the vassal treaties and the Old Testament covenant. Verses 9-13 mention Yahweh's protection of the king and are closely linked to the maledictions in the treaties and the covenant (Fensham 1965b:195,202). The covenant idea also helped Fensham to identify the psalm's *Sitz im Leben*. It probably functioned during the annual festival of royal enthronement when the covenant between the king and Yahweh was renewed (Fensham 1965b:200).

It was especially the *relationship between the Old and the New Testaments* that benefited from a covenantal view (cf Fensham 1960e:1-2). Fensham concerned himself with this relationship and was well aware of the

different solutions which had been proposed (Fensham 1971:82-89). Although no single solution can unlock the mysteries of the relationship between the testaments, the covenant idea could shed some important light on the problem. Once again, the covenant served the purpose of clarifying and explaining old problems. Or, as Fensham remarked in a typical manner, 'When we propose a *fresh approach* to the relationship between the two Testaments in light of the *latest research on covenant-forms* in the Bible, it is only an attempt to focus our attention on another angle.... What is *fresh* in our approach is the application of the *latest research on the covenant* to this idea of an old and new *berith*' (Fensham 1971:86). Fensham's covenantal approach highlighted some important aspects of this relationship:

The *covenant-idea* as such was very dominant at the time of the New Testament. This is also clear from the Qumran writings, which originated more or less in the New Testament era. According to these writings, the Essenes regarded themselves as a covenant people. Concepts about the covenant were thus very powerful in the early Christian era and are useful for describing the relationship between the testaments (Fensham 1971:90).

Promises are an essential part of the covenant idea and can also be traced in the New Testament. The most important promises in the New Testament are the resurrection and the second coming of Christ (Fensham 1971:94).

The *covenant ritual* also shed important light on the problem. As stated above, the sacrifice and the meal formed two essential elements of covenant-making. This same ritual can also be observed in the New Testament. Mention is made of the covenant meal (the Last Supper), the sacrifice itself (Jesus Christ) and the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. When Jesus instituted the Last Supper he said: *This is the blood of the covenant* (Mk 14:24). It is beyond cavil that the New Testament describes a covenant ritual: by means of the covenant meal/the Last Supper and the sacrifice/Christ, a new covenant was contracted between the Lord and his people (Fensham 1971:92).

The connection between *curse* and cross is noteworthy. All kinds of calamities followed the breaching of the covenant. Christ was cursed on the cross as a violator of the covenant. The old covenant was breached and consequently the curses of that covenant came into effect. Christ took these curses upon himself and with his death formed the new covenant (Fensham 1971:92).

Charles Fensham has indeed made a remarkable contribution to the study of the Pentateuch in particular and the Old Testament in general. In a dark hour of Old Testament scholarship in this country he had the courage to create new ways of understanding and to propose a different way of answering historical critical questions.

D ALBERTUS VAN ZYL: A RE-INTERPRETATION AND RE-ADAPTATION OF HISTORICAL CRITICISM

1 His predecessor

Johan Kritzinger became Old Testament professor at the University of Pretoria (Section B: Dutch Reformed Church) in 1938. As a young student he had attended the Kweekskool at Stellenbosch where he studied under Johannes du Plessis. Later he studied at the Free University of Amsterdam where he obtained a doctorate in 1935, on the book of Joel under the supervision of Van Gelderen. Kritzinger was steeped in the reformed tradition and approached the Bible from a conservative point of view. In his thesis, however, he made two very small references to Du Plessis. In the one, Du Plessis is thanked for the interest he took in the young Kritzinger over many years (Kritzinger 1935:Voorwoord). In the second reference Kritzinger supported Du Plessis in his criticism of the translators of the Afrikaans Bible, who used the *textus receptus* (Kritzinger 1935:Stellings). These two innocent remarks were at the time enough to cast some doubt on Kritzinger's conservatism. When he became Dutch Reformed professor for the Old Testament in 1938 some still suspected him of Duplessism. Kritzinger, however, was in no way a follower of Du Plessis's theology. On the contrary. Although acquainted with radical works ('radikaal-kritiese werke') he usually sided with the 'behoudende Skrifverklaarders'. High scholarly standards were set but Kritzinger constantly avoided historical criticism, took his reformed theology seriously and followed a conservative line of thought (Groenewald 1965:4; Potgieter 1965:130). Unfortunately, Kritzinger was plagued by ill health and could not write much.

2 A critical study of the Pentateuch

In 1966 Van Zyl succeeded Kritzinger. At that stage the ghost of Duplessism had faded, but an anti-historical-critical attitude towards the Old Testament and the Pentateuch prevailed. Van Zyl knew quite well that the insights and the results of historical criticism could not be denied any longer. But, to work critically, something was 'needed': a confession of faith. Van Zyl was able to unite two seemingly irreconcilable poles, namely critical science and biblical authority. This approach was very typical of South African scholars (even more so

after the Du Plessis era): to be able to take historical criticism seriously one had to make an overt confession of faith. The Old Testament could only be investigated critically as long as its authority was not endangered. Colenso and Du Plessis had acted in a similar way and Van Zyl had to follow suit. Faith and critical study had to be united, and the latter had to be kept in check by faith, so to speak.

I want to demonstrate that Van Zyl shaped his thoughts on the Old Testament by following his own course of scientific investigation, by interpreting and applying existing research in his unique way and by formulating his conclusions, with pastoral sensitivity, in the climate after the eventful Du Plessis dispute. He removed the sting, so to speak, from the critical approach to the Old Testament, making it subservient to the church and preaching. He largely demythologised the word 'critical' for the Old Testament society. In the north of the country in particular, a historical-critical study of the Old Testament was no longer a forbidden way of doing scientific research, but rather a necessity. A critical approach held that the Old Testament could be analysed thoroughly (as well as historical-critically) and that all problems could be brought into the open without fear of affecting Scriptural authority. Van Zyl's work bears testimony to a fearless grapple with critical Old Testament science. This grappling is manifested in his knowledge of existing research, the total rejection of unacceptable matters (cf literary criticism) and the application of that which was valuable.

3 Departure point: biblical authority as well as scientific investigation

The *reverence* with which Van Zyl has handled the Old Testament is clear from his works. It arises from his faith in the God of the covenant and his unconditional commitment to the Word of God. To him the Word is the revelation of God. Because God is love, it is his will that man should stand in a special relationship to him in order to experience this love. God made himself known so that man could get to know him and respond to his love (Van Zyl 1979:39). Van Zyl is so convinced that God speaks to man through the Old Testament that he cannot but view it as the book of the church (Van Zyl 1975:47-52). He continually emphasises that the sciences should bear this in mind (Van Zyl 1970a:186). His work on the Pentateuch serves as a good example of this. He pays ample attention to the introductory questions, but does not leave it at that. He makes a thorough analysis of the Pentateuch to explain its historical origin and he then utilises the results in order to reach its theological core. Critical science is

thus at the service of preaching (cf Van Zyl 1987).

This scientific study of the Old Testament is made possible by emphasising and accepting the *human aspect* of Scripture. It is true, though, that Van Zyl does not approve of the word 'critical'. It reminds him too much of 'higher criticism' with its negative connotation (Van Zyl 1972b:153; 1973:115-116; 1970a:186). He prefers to speak of 'scientific investigation'. By means of a few examples I want to briefly point out how his view of the human aspect of scripture influenced his practice of Old Testament study. Van Zyl considered the question of whether one should speak of 'special canonicity' or 'introduction'. The former implies no ordinary introduction to an ordinary book, but an activity concerning the authoritative canon of the Christian church (Heyns & Jonker 1974:282). This exactly is Van Zyl's problem. According to him, the term 'special canonicity' over-accentuates the 'divine authority', so that the human share in the coming into being of the Old Testament is lost (Van Zyl 1975:2). Another example concerns his view of history. History is a narrative relating events in a coherent form; it supplies a mere image and never a true replica of the past; this image is not a self-evident phenomenon, but is created by the historian who links up separate events and brings matters into proper relation. Even the history of the Old Testament came into being by means of an author who interpreted events from a particular perspective and then placed them in a greater context of meaning (Van Zyl 1979:41-42). The last example refers to the 'geheimsinnige manier waarop die samewerking tussen God en die mens in die opskrifstelling van die Woord plaasgevind het' (Van Zyl 1975:47). This cooperation cannot merely be explained by the term 'inspiration', since the matter is much more complicated. The Old Testament grew over a long period of time and, although it evolved under God's guidance, it happened in such a way that man's part in it cannot be denied (Van Zyl 1975:47-52; cf 1972a:65-76). This human aspect of the Word must not only receive theoretical acknowledgement, but must be fully accounted for by the sciences.

The fact that Van Zyl takes *both* the authority of Scripture and its human aspect seriously in his scientific pursuit (Van Zyl 1973:14) is very important. For decades the followers of the historical critical method have been accused of over-emphasising the humanness of the Bible, resulting in a denial of its divineness and authority. In reaction

to this method, Scripture got so caught up in faith categories that no critical questions were tolerated. It was furthermore alleged that historical or other discrepancies discovered in the Bible would undermine its authority. Van Zyl's standpoint intercepts both views: Scripture is authoritative because the Spirit persuades our hearts, but it also has a human side, able to undergo critical scientific study.

4 Historical approach

Van Zyl has a historical approach to the Old Testament (cf Van Zyl 1960). By this I mean that he perceives the Old Testament within a historical context. One reason for this viewpoint is his fear that some modern approaches to the Old Testament might isolate the texts from the world of ancient Israel (Van Zyl 1975:87). That is why he said a long time ago: 'Crawl into the skin of the Hebrew' (Van Zyl 1961: 26). In the process of entering into the world of the Hebrew, the long history underlying the origin of the Old Testament obtains a special meaning, because he wants to understand the different books against their respective historical backgrounds. During its process of growth the Old Testament saw many generations come and go and this, to Van Zyl, is a historical fact never to be ignored in Old Testament research (Van Zyl 1975:46). He remarked that it is a mistake to focus on the last phase only, regarding it as the phase of inspiration. When this happens, the work of God in the growth of the Old Testament is attenuated (Van Zyl 1975:49).

5 Historical criticism

Van Zyl's historical interest brings us to his viewpoint regarding *historical criticism*. In the South African context this is a rather contentious matter. As said before, since the Du Plessis dispute this method and its practitioners have been treated with suspicion. Van Zyl felt differently and he acknowledged the importance of some steps (Van Zyl 1973:114). One could indeed say that he treats it with a built-in theological reservation (Brown 1979:146) but I would like to define it in yet another way: because of his historical approach he could relate to many historical-critical insights. As said before, it is evident from his writings that he is well acquainted with the method and its followers, that he interpreted it and its results from his unique perspective, that he attached his own meaning to it, and that he made

it serve his own purpose. His opinion of Old Testament literature is not only in many respects a reaction against historical criticism but it reflects in as many instances its influence. I would like to briefly illustrate his standpoint concerning literary criticism, *Formgeschichte* and *Redaktionsgeschichte*.

Van Zyl has little appreciation for *literary-critical* labour with regard to the Pentateuch. It reminds him too much of 'higher criticism' and the negative connotation attached to it in this country (Van Zyl 1972b:153; 1973:115-116). His main objection is that literary criticism cuts up the text and in so doing disturbs the underlying unity. If one considers his concern for the unity of the text, one understands his constant uneasiness about text fragmentation (cf Van Zyl 1975:96,102,137,157; 1973:20). He formulated serious criticism against it:

(1) The occurrence of different divine names in the Pentateuch cannot serve as a reason for literary-critical text divisions. In the Septuagint and other versions the divine names were not consistently translated either. It was, furthermore, a common practice in the ancient Near East to indicate a god by means of more than one name. In one poem the god Baal is addressed as Baal, Dagon's son Hadad, or Hadad II. These different applications of the name do not in any way point to multiple authors. The alternation of the divine names is 'normal' in the Old Testament (Van Zyl 1975:82-84).

(2) Language variation is a poor indicator as well. The fact that language use differs from one region to another is a common phenomenon. Before speaking of 'regional language', the distinctiveness of a language first has to be proved by means of a comparative study — which is never undertaken by literary critics. It is therefore hardly possible to speak of a Yahwist having a typically southern or an Elohist with a typically northern style (Van Zyl 1975:84).

(3) Repetition is a fundamental feature of the Old Testament art of narration and served, among other things, to stress certain important matters. Whoever wants to apply repetition as a means for separating sources fails to appreciate a distinctive element of Hebrew narration (Van Zyl 1975:113,133).

(4) A change in style is not a sign of a different author. The nature of the subject matter certainly determines the style form to be employed. Legal literature generally displays a stereotyped style, genea-

logies an almost boring, and the priestly material a dry style (Van Zyl 1975:84-86).

(5) The ideology revealed by each source receives great prominence among literary critics. While one would, for instance, accentuate the anthropomorphic features of Yahweh, the distance between God and man is accentuated by another. From this perspective one loses sight of the fact '[dat] die drie pentateugbronne ... mekaar eerder aanvul en ondersteun as dat hulle van mekaar verskil' (Van Zyl 1975:87).

(6) The proponents of literary criticism are divided amongst themselves; with Noth the priestly writings receive prominence; Von Rad, on the other hand, elevates the Yahwist as the great founder of the Hexateuch; both Eissfeld and Fohrer deprive the Yahwist of his honorary position by focusing on the nomadic and lay sources (Van Zyl 1975:87-98).

Although Van Zyl takes a critical stance on literary criticism, his handling of form and redaction history needs mentioning. He has a great appreciation for these 'steps' of historical criticism, and their influence on his work cannot be denied. The way he uses them is interesting, though. He removes, as it were, the sharp edges that have caused so many problems and applies them to suit his purpose. Concerning *form history* it is said that it focuses the attention on forms by means of which certain truths are expressed. A great many literary forms are, according to Van Zyl, employed under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to transmit the 'revealed Word'. Van Zyl harbours a great admiration for Hermann Gunkel, the founder of this method. Gunkel's description of Genesis 1 as a saga opens many possibilities. Now the positivistic judging of the creation narratives as unreliable was left behind for good, and the narratives could be treated according to merit. Van Zyl emphasises that a saga must not be regarded as an inferior form of literature or an untruth. According to him, Gunkel regards a saga as a vehicle of a reliable religious message and it is furthermore 'n literêre vorm waarmee die antieke verteller onder die leiding van die Heilige Gees 'n bepaalde waarheid tuisgebring het en aan hierdie waarheid hou Gunkel vas' (Van Zyl 1972b:153). Another aspect of form history that impresses Van Zyl is the confrontation of the actual life situation of the text. Because of his historical interest he finds it valuable that data concerning the social and religious context

can be obtained (Van Zyl 1972b:154,156). The different literary forms fulfilled a particular function in the community: they confronted the people of the covenant with the God of the covenant 'en juis hierdie konfrontasie maak die Woord in sy verskeidenheid van literêre vorme vandag nog aktueel vir die gelowige' (Van Zyl 1972b:156). Whoever makes a study of the different forms in which the revelation is cast, and whoever realises with Gunkel that 'elke vorm sy eie aksente en koppeling aan die volkslewe, -kultuur en -godsdienst het', will penetrate deeper into the truths of Scripture (Van Zyl 1972b:153,155).

Redaction history has to do with the 'final hand', the creative contribution of the final author. This method brought an end to the literary-critical view of the Pentateuch being merely a compilation of different sources (Van Zyl 1973:120). Attention was now concentrated on the creative contribution of the final author. There was no more searching for seams in the text, scholars now focused on the final form. The exclusive contribution of the final author is ascertained by posing the following questions. Did the final author use the transmitted sources, unaltered, or did he transform them to suit his circumstances? How did he make a selection of the material and in what order did he use the selections to illustrate his message? However, no matter how important the redaction history, the exegete cannot manage with it alone. Van Zyl's remark in this regard is typical of his *modus operandi*: the exegete should not confine himself to the final author and redaction history, he should search 'na die voorgeskiedenis van sy teks in die "Formgeschichte" en die onderskeidings van tradisies' (Van Zyl 1973:125).

6 The origin of the Pentateuch

In the light of the preceding we may try to understand Van Zyl's view concerning the origin of the Pentateuch, because everything mentioned in the previous paragraphs influenced his Pentateuch theory. We cannot demonstrate that he strictly applied historical criticism in a step-by-step fashion to analyse the Pentateuch, but his work must be viewed against the background of its method and results. Although he often reacted sharply against this criticism, his grappling with historical-critical ideas radically influenced his mental attitude towards the Old Testament.

The Pentateuch's origin and growth can, according to Van Zyl, no longer be accurately described, but its vague contours are still discernible. In the following paragraphs we are going to highlight some aspects of this process.

(1) To describe the 'contours', we have to commence with the *oral transmission* handed down from one generation to the next (Van Zyl 1975:27-28). At first it had no fixed form and merely consisted of some basic particulars, short in extent and containing a central motif. By means of a few key words the essence was 'telkens as 't ware weer opnuut geskep deur die verteller' (Van Zyl 1975:44).

(2) These transmissions received a *fixed form, extent and content* as time went on. This was brought about, among other things, by the poetic form used in the process of transmission. The fixed form was regarded as a divine and therefore unalterable tradition (Van Zyl 1975:35), which however did not imply that no emendations were allowed. By means of lavish flights of imagination and improvisation the transmissions were continually transformed and supplemented in a creative manner. The basic particulars remained unchanged though, so that we may speak of a strong commitment to the essence of each tradition (Van Zyl 1975:35). In spite of all this, minor variations did occur. The difference in the wording of the rendering of Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5 is attributed to its having been transmitted in different areas. In spite of these variations, the essence corresponds (Van Zyl 1975:41).

(3) Being *placebound* was an important feature of a transmission, which did not mean that it was irrevocably tied to only one place. The patriarchs and Israelite tribes often moved about, resulting in transmissions concerning several central events being told at more than one place. Each time it was adapted to the peculiar circumstances of that particular place, so that the narratives received their own focal points. The final author incorporated them into his work without omitting these differing accents. He reproduced them unaltered and in so doing achieved a sounder and clearer image of the past (Van Zyl 1975:240).

(4) *Tradition circles* comprise an extremely important element in the process of transmission. By these are meant the circles in which the transmissions were preserved and formed. Van Zyl distinguishes the following: the family, the cult, the royal court, the wisdom teachers, the prophets and the priests.

(5) *Oral transmissions* fulfilled an important function in Israel: through constant repetition the past became a living past and they became one with it (Van Zyl 1975:228). Every new generation was singly linked to its ancestors and a continuity within history was accomplished. In the retelling of the mighty deeds of Yahweh the present audience experienced the past as a current reality. It seemed as if they were present in person. The actual event was not repeated, but its consequences were viewed in a serious light: anyone having experienced the past so realistically and having assumed its consequences (salvation, obligation) in faith, confirmed his participation in the covenant (Van Zyl 1975:32).

(6) In course of time a *tradition chain* came into being. This can refer to three things: the person or group of persons reciting the narratives from one generation to the other, the logical succession of the content, and the bond linking the various generations to each other (Van Zyl 1975:30).

(7) In due course the different oral transmissions were put into *writing*, although some transmissions circulated in written form from the beginning. Moses' desert itinerary serves as an example (Van Zyl 1975:40). It is important to note that Van Zyl regarded the oral and written transmissions as 'twee oorleeringsmetodes naas mekaar ... en soms selfs gekombineerd' (Van Zyl 1975:31). They did not exclude each other. The written document served as a means of checking whether the oral narratives had been transmitted correctly (Van Zyl 1975:41). Therefore, oral and written transmissions covering the same subject existed alongside each other. The creation narrative is an example of a narrative having been recited orally by a priest during some cultic festival. Van Zyl concludes this from the rhythmic language, the division of the material into seven separate sections, epic repetitions, alliteration, assonance, et cetera. There was a written version of the same story that served to control and bind the oral recitation (Van Zyl 1975:43).

We can briefly summarise the whole process of growth as follows: an event took place and notice of it is transmitted in oral form. We have to note that, according to Van Zyl, these events actually took place. They did not necessarily happen as described in the Old Testament, but the fact that the mighty deeds of Yahweh took place and that the historical figures actually lived is above contention (Van Zyl

1967b; 1975:168,171,181,184,194,195,227; 1979:39-50; Van Zyl & Eybers 1977:1-7). Israel regarded history as the terrain of Yahweh's actions and it therefore seriously concerned itself with the past (Van Zyl & Eybers 1977:1). During the process of reciting the great deeds of salvation from the one generation to the next, additions were made although the essence remained intact. In time they developed into a fixed form which was eventually put into writing. The great deeds of Yahweh were continually, actualised with the result that they were experienced as a present reality. The last phase of the growth process is represented by the final author who compiled material from diverse sources.

7 The 'reeds' constituting Genesis 1-11

To illustrate the views of Van Zyl on the authorship of the Pentateuch we will briefly describe the origin of Genesis 1-11. According to him, the final author of Genesis 1-11 gathered material from many different places, which he forged into a unity. Note the way in which Van Zyl has re-worked the notion of sources. He then made a very important remark which is essential for our further discussion.

When we were children we made long whips by plaiting short rushes. Just before the end of the first *reed* the next was introduced so that it was held firmly in place. While it was possible to see where the join was formed, it was actually difficult to determine where the first ended and the second began. This is the position here (in Genesis 1-11) too, and again further on we will encounter this method of *weaving* the narratives, which the final author used (Van Zyl 1976:101 — my emphasis).

The author's first reed was the *creation story* (1:1-2:3). Although its origin is vague Van Zyl linked it to the priestly circles attached to temples and sanctuaries. Signs of a royal court can be discerned in this passage but Van Zyl ruled out the palace as the place of origin. This section was shaped by 'the priestly-prophetic preaching in a temple or sanctuary' (Van Zyl 1976:103).

Genesis 2:4-3:24 was the second reed used by the author. According to Van Zyl this reed is not another creation story but a garden narrative. He noted the differences between this reed and the previous one. Except for the differences in style and form each section has its own goal. The garden narrative's goal differs totally from the section

on the creation: it focuses on man's sin and clearly reveals an interest in farming. And since many prophets were associated with the farming community it is likely that the garden story took shape in these prophetic circles. The final author, however, added this reed to the creation to illustrate what happened to the first people (Van Zyl 1976:106-108).

Another reed, the narrative of *Cain* in Genesis 4:1-26, was to highlight the subsequent vicissitudes of the human race. It was neatly joined to the previous section and highlights the extension of sin and the division of mankind into different professions. This narrative or reed is also a continuation of the agricultural interests of the previous story. In this case, however, it is viewed from the perspective of prophetic preaching (Van Zyl 1976:108-110).

As a result of the increase in sin, life on earth got worse. To encourage mankind, the final author used an interesting reed: an old *genealogy* of the family of Seth (5:1-32). This genealogy now serves as a divine guarantee to subsequent generations that he will keep his promises made in Genesis 1:28 and that the human race will always increase. This probably was an old tradition ('volksoorlewing') which was deposited in the temple archives (Van Zyl 1976:110-111).

Extremely problematic is the reed that can be found in *Genesis* 6:1-4. It narrates the descent of heavenly beings to the earth and their marriage with the daughters of man. This section has one foot in mythology but it was incorporated in the existing narrative in order to illustrate the increase of sin (Van Zyl 1976:111).

Another important reed is the story of the *flood* (6:5-9:29). According to Van Zyl, the narrative complex of Genesis 2:4-4:26 was not acquainted with the flood narrative. The narratives therefore originated at different times and in different places. A close relationship, however, exists between the creation and flood narratives (Van Zyl 1976:111-112).

To conclude the primeval history, the final author made use of three important reeds. Once again a *genealogy* stemming from the temple was used. Genesis 10:1-33 was cleverly linked to the previous section on the flood. The genealogy also functions much like the other genealogies: each time the population growth is endangered, the genealogy confirms that God's blessing (Gn 1:28) is still valid. To describe the climax of sin a reed about the *tower of Babel* (Gn 11:1-9)

found its way into the primeval history. According to Van Zyl this reed entered the country with Abraham. The last reed to be woven in the primeval history was the *genealogy of Shem* (Gn 11:10-32). By means of this pericope the final author wanted to show that God's work continues regardless of man's transgressions (Van Zyl 1976: 114-115).

Van Zyl summarised the contribution of the final author in the following words:

And even though many were involved in the prehistory of this work, it *acquired its remarkable format under the creative abilities of a final author* who was not simply a redactor gathering together isolated traditions. In the fullest sense of the word he can be described as an inspired writer, because it is clear that he has already made his own contribution to Gen. 1-11 (Van Zyl 1976:115 — my emphasis).

It is true that Van Zyl had his own view on the origin of the Pentateuch. It can, however, not be denied that his thinking was fundamentally shaped by historical criticism. Of course he had to put it in his own words but the emphasis on the long development of the Pentateuch, the notion of reeds (which was just another way of dealing with sources), and the idea of a final author (not Moses!) who assembled and compiled the material of the Pentateuch are but a few indications of how much Van Zyl was moulded by historical-critical thinking about the Pentateuch. Van Zyl had to take critical research with regard to the Pentateuch into account but he re-interpreted and re-adapted everything.

E FERDINAND DEIST: THE BREAKER OF THE HARD SOIL

After the death of Colenso many years passed without any one continuing his critical investigation into the Pentateuch. Because of the heresy case against Du Plessis the historical-critical method was treated with great suspicion. A really critical study of the Pentateuch could just not get off the ground. Of course, people like Fensham, Van Zyl and Van Selms made important contributions within our context but they all followed their own approach. Historical-critical insights were radically adapted and then incorporated into their own systems. Cognisance was indeed taken of the main representatives of this critical approach but their views were often re-interpreted in the

South African context. Many post-Colenso Pentateuch critics were thus not against a historical-critical study of the Pentateuch per se.

1 The forerunner

But Ferdinand Deist was different. Nearly a century after the death of Colenso he picked up the threads again. After Colenso he was the first South African who approached the Pentateuch in a really historical-critical manner. The academic year spent in Marburg (West Germany) with Otto Kaiser also shaped Deist's critical mind. Of Colenso it was said that he was the breaker of the hard soil. Our scholarly establishment was in need of just such a ploughman who could crack the hard surface of historical criticism. Deist was the one who performed this function in the South African context. Critical investigation of the Pentateuch was a rather risky undertaking during the seventies. Deist, however, swam against the 'immanent' tides and made us aware of the importance of a critical study of the Pentateuch. He had to endure a lot of criticism but, like a *πρόδρομος*, 'forerunner' (cf Heb 6:20) he paved the way for a more critical study of the Pentateuch. To put it differently, despite criticism he persisted in breaking the hard soil for his generation.

He was the first South African Old Testament scholar who fully appropriated and understood the *German critical or scientific mind*. He was not only acquainted with the method but also the philosophy or the theory of science underlying the German critical study of the Pentateuch. This enabled him to understand the Pentateuch critics and to penetrate their theories intellectually.

No other South African Old Testament scholar has immersed himself so completely in the *works of critical scholars* on the Pentateuch as Deist. He examined them thoroughly and understood the scholars' views. He did not merely repeat secondary or tertiary material on the problem. He investigated the text and read the works of these critics in the original. During his stay at Marburg he studied Pentateuch research since the Reformation and the Orthodoxy. This intense study not only made him an expert but it also equipped him with a kind of knowledge about the masters who shaped the views of the generation of the nineteen-seventies and eighties.

Deist's investigations resulted in a *book on the history of Pentateuch* research which appeared in Afrikaans (1976a) and in English

(1978, we quoted below from the 1988 edition) — the first books ever to have appeared on this subject in South Africa. Since then they have been reprinted and have been accepted with appreciation. It is very significant that Deist's first major contribution to our understanding of the Pentateuch was a *Forschungsgeschichte*. By means of this work he stressed one important point: an understanding of the critical study of the Pentateuch must be preceded by a thorough study of the main representatives of historical criticism and their thoughts. This book opened the eyes of many to the problems of Pentateuch research as well as to the different solutions which have been furnished in the course of time.

We have already mentioned Deist's *historical approach*. It is therefore noteworthy that he chose the genre of a research history to make his first major contribution to Pentateuchal study in South Africa. For the South African context this is rather important. Too many scholars have accused the Pentateuch critics without really understanding them or the historical context in which their views were shaped. Deist's book thus met a great need.

Deist's research history also *highlights his own views* on the study of the Pentateuch: the rejection of a fundamentalistic or non-scientific approach to the Pentateuch, the refusal to allow any rigid kind of dogma to hamper scientific investigation of the Pentateuch (cf Orthodoxy), the relevance of a historical-critical inquiry into the Pentateuch, the importance of a historical understanding of the so-called Pentateuch problem, the indispensability of a fundamental knowledge of the so-called masters of the Pentateuchal problem (Wellhausen, Gunkel, Alt, Noth, Von Rad, etc), and the search for the 'origin' of the Pentateuchal problem in the Reformation.

As we have already indicated, Deist was, unlike any other South African, very well acquainted with the *method* which had been used since Wellhausen to investigate the Pentateuch. He understood the historical-critical method, applied it with skill and made others aware of its importance. His knowledge of this approach emphasised one important point: no understanding of Pentateuch research is possible without an excellent knowledge of the nature of the historical-critical method.

Many have talked about the Pentateuchal sources but Deist's words have more *authority*: he knows how to isolate the sources in a

literary-critical manner. Perhaps it is no exaggeration to state that, after Colenso, Deist was the first South African scholar who was really competent enough to determine and investigate the so-called sources in the classical historical-critical way. The influence of Wellhausen, Gunkel, Von Rad, and others is clearly visible in the work of Deist.

Deist's *historical account* of the *origin and development* of the Pentateuch is also very important. Other South Africans have also referred to the Pentateuch's historical background, but Deist's survey is just that much more scholarly founded and credible.

2 The Reformation and Pentateuchal research

Deist closely *linked* the *Reformation* to the *critical research* of the Pentateuch. This was of course an excellent step in order to curb the harsh criticism of those who were engaged in a critical study of the Pentateuch and who rejected Mosaic authorship. Deist wanted to emphasise that something had happened during the Reformation which led to the critical understanding of the Old Testament. Any research history of the Pentateuch must therefore start with the Reformation. That event gave rise to a certain kind of Bible-reading which resulted in a historical (critical) understanding of the Pentateuch.

Long before the Reformation, critical questions about the Pentateuch had already been posed. Philo of Alexandria, Flavius Josephus, Ibn Ezra and many others challenged the sole authorship of the Pentateuch. Since the Reformation, however, Mosaic authorship was systematically investigated: 'Yet prior to the Reformation nothing in the line of proper *systematic* research was undertaken' (Deist 1988g:1).

This was brought about by the rejection of church tradition as normative for Scripture reading and the emphasis on the Word alone (*sola scriptura*). Scripture alone had divine authority and only Scripture should direct the church in matters of doctrine and ethics. In other words, no tradition or theology could normatively interpret the Bible for the church any more. Because the reformers were now deprived of an interpretative framework (the church tradition) they had to discover the Bible for themselves. This notion of *sola scriptura* was an incentive to research because it led to an intensive and systematic study of the Bible. An important hermeneutical question was, however, raised: *how* should Scripture be read? According to the

exegetes of the Middle Ages, the 'multiple meanings of Scripture' had to be taken into account. The reformers, however, insisted on the literal meaning (*sensus literalis*) (Deist 1988g:4). Put differently, in order to understand the Bible it had to be approached literally or historically; texts had to be understood against a specific historical background; texts had to be investigated historically in order to determine the correct text and the author. This sharp concentration on the text and its context was an important incentive for the later development of the historical-critical approach to the Old Testament.

In order to trace this everything that could cast light on the matter had to be marshalled. Their hermeneutic apparatus included the use of 'original' languages such as Greek, Aramaic and Hebrew; establishing the best reading in the event of more than one alternative; establishing *authorship* and the *circumstances* in which the authors wrote (Deist 1988g:4-5 — my emphasis).

3 Orthodoxy and Pentateuch research

Deist expressed some appreciation for the Orthodoxy but on the whole he was very critical of this movement. He applauded the reformers for their emphasis on the Bible as Word of God and their willingness to sacrifice everything in defence of Scripture (Deist 1988g:17). His criticism, on the other hand, was very harsh. Is it because he recognised in Orthodoxy some well-known South African theological trends? And is his criticism of Orthodoxy also directed against these orthodox groups that discouraged a critical study of the Pentateuch and the Old Testament? Be that as it may, it remains interesting to note the aspects of Orthodoxy that Deist focused on. He criticised Orthodoxy's objectification of revelation, according to which the scriptural datum was at the disposal of theologians which they had to approach rationally (Deist 1988g:9). He also launched an attack against Orthodoxy's search for *pura doctrina*. This degraded Scripture to a source book supplying theologians with the necessary texts to defend the dogmas of the church. To accomplish their task theologians emphasised divine inspiration as well as the flawlessness of the Bible (Deist 1988g:10).

This narrow-mindedness caused a sterile scientific context, which did not promote creative inquiry into the Old Testament. The human element in Scripture was ignored and in the long run Orthodoxy 'af-

forded little stimulus for biblical research' (Deist 1988g:17). The reformers left some leeway for reflection on Scripture and historical enquiry. Orthodoxy on the other hand separated the text and content of the Bible 'from the historical world of its origins and transmission by elevating it to a supranatural, supratemporal plane' (Deist 1988g: 11). Orthodoxy's dogmatism 'was so narrow that any meaningful scientific study of the *text* of Scripture became virtually impossible' (Deist 1988g:17). Doubts about the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch met with great resistance from Orthodoxy's narrow view of Scripture, rigid dogma and stagnated form of reformed theology (Deist 1988b:11-16). In Deist's negative evaluation of Orthodoxy his criticism of reformed fundamentalists who opposed a critical investigation of the Pentateuch can be heard; in his critical discussion of orthodox views Deist also attacked narrow-minded South Africans whose conservative attitude towards Scripture prevented a critical understanding of the Pentateuch.

4 A proper evaluation of the Pentateuch critics

Deist's evaluation of the German scholars of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is illuminating. As stated above, he was well acquainted with their works and could present their thoughts with great authority. His discussion of these Pentateuch critics had two important consequences: he made them *accessible* to us while his *appraisal* of them clearly reflects his own views on the Pentateuch.

Deist's positive rating of these scholars went directly against the spirit of the time in South Africa. His views directly confronted the existing mood with regard to the study of the Pentateuch. On the one hand he *challenged* the conservative minds that kept the German theologians at a distance. According to the conservatives, these critics had said important things but, on the whole, their views had no real significance and were merely hypotheses which often undermined the authority of Scriptures. Deist's resistance against this attitude caused his generation to look at the German Pentateuch critics, in particular, with new eyes. On the other hand, Deist '*saved*' these theologians from the 'immanent onslaught' of the seventies. In other words, when ahistorical structural analysis became the normative model for exegesis and viewed historical criticism as redundant, Deist emphasised the relevance of these scholars and he created an atmosphere for their

study.

The nineteenth century experienced an 'explosion' in Pentateuchal studies. Deist discussed many examples of Old Testament scholarship during this time (cf Deist 1988g:26-67) but no one received more praise and attention than *Julius Wellhausen*. This reflects Deist's life-long respect and admiration for this German scholar. In South Africa Wellhausenism was constantly and vehemently rejected (Deist 1988g: 115). Deist's appraisal of Wellhausen is therefore all the more significant. According to Deist, Wellhausen's literary criticism 'was monumental'; with 'almost superhuman perspicacity' he worked through the Pentateuch noting all kinds of tensions, contradictions, doublets, et cetera; he was a 'master of Old Testament science'; he 'criticised the work of other scholars very aptly' (Deist 1988g:35); Deist refuted the view that Wellhausen was 'a brilliant patchwork scientist' (Deist 1988g:39); Wellhausen had 'a masterly mind whose output crowned nineteenth century literary criticism'; his work must be 'regarded as the apex of nineteenth century research'; his *Composition des Hexateuchs* had 'crowned nineteenth century literary criticism' and set the 'seal on the historical criticism of this period' (Deist 1988g:40,41,49); Deist also doubted whether Wellhausen can be labelled 'a Hegelian outright' and declared that Wellhausen 'did more good than the damage he allegedly perpetrated' (Deist 1988g:51). Deist's confrontation with Wellhausen had a tremendous effect on his theology and approach to the Old Testament. The following aspects of Wellhausenian scholarship, in particular, left their mark on Deist: the thorough and meticulous analysis of the text, the importance of history, the existence of Pentateuchal sources (Deist formulated his own views) and the Pentateuch's long development.

Deist also greatly respected the work of *Hermann Gunkel*. He admired Gunkel for introducing a new era in the study of the Old Testament. His method enabled people to penetrate 'beyond the problems uncovered by literary criticism' (Deist 1988g:59). Before leaving for Germany, Deist completed a study on Gunkel's academic relationship with Wilhelm Wundt, which was submitted at the University of Stellenbosch as part of the requirements for a licentiate in theology. This excellent work was unfortunately never published. It was, however, the first work in Afrikaans devoted to Gunkel or any of the great 'classical' or critical Old Testament scholars. It clearly displays

Deist's ability to understand and formulate the main tenets of historical criticism and its representatives. This treatise, like all his other works, also illustrates that Deist's knowledge of critical scholars like Wellhausen, Gunkel, Alt, Noth, and Von Rad was never based on secondary literature or on preconceived notions but on a thorough study of the original works. This gave his work a certain authenticity and made him quite different from other South African scholars who never studied the original works but based their views on the biased judgments of others.

Let us return to the above-mentioned thesis. Much attention is devoted to Gunkel's use of sagas. Considering our theological situation, Deist emphasised the distinction between 'saga' and 'history'. History is closely related to the establishment of the state and the recording of important events by the state chroniclers. Prior to the state histories, everything was transmitted by means of sagas. Deist clearly points out that these sagas are not necessarily false or untruthful: 'Dit beteken *nie* dat hierdie verhale *onwaar* is *nie*' (Deist s a:7). Deist also highlighted the different types of saga, their history and development (Deist s a:8-26). Deist's description of the people (Wundt and Norden) who influenced Gunkel (Deist s a:33-57) is extremely valuable. It is done with so much skill, insight and learnedness that one is once again impressed by Deist's thorough knowledge of critical scholarship at a very young stage in his life.

The young Deist must have sensed that his work would not be popular amongst conservative theologians. It is therefore interesting to read the following sentence describing Gunkel's faith: 'Wat veral op sy studente indruk gemaak het, was Gunkel se teer geloof, sy Christenskap en die liefde en toegeneentheid vir sy werk, wat hy beskou het as diens aan sy kerk' (Deist s a:6). Was this 'confession' necessary in order to make his work acceptable to others? Does this not reflect badly on the Old Testament scholarly community in South Africa at the beginning of the seventies?

Deist also greatly respected the work of Alt, Noth and Von Rad. *Von Rad's* work on Deuteronomy 'opened up whole new vistas in Deuteronomic research ... [and] manifest[ed] a welcome trend' (Deist 1988g:78). He was also convinced that Von Rad's approach, which he followed in his theology, was the correct one. In many ways the influence of *Alt* and especially *Noth* can be seen in Deist's work (Deist 1988g:106-112). His conception of Israel's early history clearly reflects the influence of the so-called Leipzig school. From the time

of his earliest lectures Deist did not shun away from the findings of this school and made his students as well as the academic society aware of its importance.

One way of sidestepping the impact of critical scholarship in South Africa was through concentration on *archaeology*. Some Old Testament scholars believed archaeology to be the answer: what had been made wrong by historical criticism could be made right by archaeology. Deist rejected this view. Archaeology could in no way make any (historical-)critical approach to the Pentateuch redundant. He nevertheless held the work of the *Baltimore school* in high regard (Deist 1988g:109-113). There was, however, a clear distinction between this school and that of *Leipzig*. Deist refuted the accusation of alleged negligence of archaeology by the Leipzig school. Alt, Noth and many other German Old Testament scholars had indeed taken archaeology seriously (cf Deist 1988g:106-109). They had also carefully scrutinised the text in the light of archaeological evidence. The difference between the two schools lies in the manner in which the archaeological data were used. For the Leipzig school these data formed part of their historical-critical approach (literary criticism, form criticism, tradition criticism, etc.) while the Baltimore school, which was less inclined to critical investigation, based their views on archaeology. To phrase it differently, 'whereas the Leipzig school was primarily governed by literary-critical and *formgeschichtliche* methods, the Baltimore school's approach to the Pentateuch was based on archaeological data' (Deist 1988g:110).

Not only the approach but also the *outcome* of their work differed greatly. This can for instance be illustrated with reference to the problem of historical probability. The Baltimore school probed the historical background of the text in order to establish the historical reality of the events to which the texts referred. Great care was taken to investigate the historical background and to reconstruct a context against which the text could be understood. According to them the historical core of the Old Testament narratives could thus be accurately determined. The Leipzig school, on the other hand, was not convinced that the historical kernel could be established and rather emphasised the text's form, the history of traditions, the salvation-historical point of view which shaped the narratives, et cetera (Deist 1988g:113). Although the contribution of the Baltimore school should

be acknowledged and appreciated, Deist's preference still lies with the Germans. This can clearly be seen in the following:

The American scholars stressed the high degree of probability of the broad narratives appearing in the Pentateuch, thereby introducing a very necessary curb on the basic scepticism of some of the Germans. On the other hand the Leipzig school dealt more exhaustively with the Pentateuch as such, trying to smooth out the problems posed (e.g. the double account of the occupation of Canaan) by using literary criticism, history of tradition and folkloristics (Deist 1988g:112).

Deist also surveyed the views of *South African scholars* on the Pentateuch: Colenso, Du Plessis, Fensham, Van Zyl, Verhoef and Van Selms. His discussion and evaluation of these scholars is rather significant: he clearly reflects an affinity for the (historical-)critical line of approach to the Old Testament, yet appreciates those who have followed a different route. We can illustrate this point with reference to his discussion of Colenso and Du Plessis.

Colenso's contribution to the study of the Pentateuch was evaluated positively. Deist called him 'a searcher of great integrity' (Deist 1988g:54). According to Deist he forced scholars like Ewald, Bleek and Knobel to reconsider their theories on the origin of the Pentateuch (cf Deist 1988h:28). The 'great Wellhausen' indicated Colenso as the first scholar to have illustrated the unhistorical character of the Pentateuch. Colenso's contribution was 'only to be fully appreciated' by Abraham Kuenen (Deist 1984c:109-110). Deist particularly mentioned Colenso's view of Scripture. Colenso had to grapple with the problems attached to a critical understanding of the Bible. At times Deist was also attacked for his view on the Pentateuch and Colenso must have consoled him. He therefore found Colenso's thoughts on Scripture extremely consistent. Cultural relativism was taken seriously by Colenso, without his falling into the Semlerian dualism of Word of God and Holy Scripture and 'so he got around the major problems of scriptural interpretation formulated by Lessing' (Deist 1984c:121; cf 1979b:48-49). According to Deist, Colenso burdened the exegete with the task of substantiating his interpretation of the Bible with reference to his own context and that of the text. 'He "liberated" the Bible so that instead of being man's tool for manipulating God, it became God's tool for speaking to mankind in his own manner. Thus he remained true to the principle of the Reformation, namely that only God

is worthy of our absolute veneration' (Deist 1984c:121-122).

In his discussion of *Du Plessis*, Deist made a very moving remark. Any survey of twentieth-century Pentateuchal research in South Africa must start on a very sad note: the earliest traces of Pentateuchal study are to be found in the annals of the Supreme Court of the Cape. He is of course referring to Du Plessis. According to Deist, Du Plessis was 'the first reverberation of critical thought from Europe' since the days of Colenso. Du Plessis was clearly well versed in the Pentateuch problems while his opponents were not so acquainted with the facts. Although Du Plessis was also responsible for his predicament it remains 'a great pity' that yet another early South African attempt at critical research 'should have been nipped in the bud so ruthlessly' (Deist 1988g:114-115).

Deist also investigated the so-called conservative scholars. His evaluation of G Ch Aalders and R K Harrison, who were rather widely read in South Africa, is illuminating. According to him *Aalders* worked with great caution and thoroughness. Aalders must also be credited for the objective and emotionless manner in which he presented the views of those from whom he differed. Some important criticism can, however, be launched against Aalders. His arguments against historical criticism are 'occasionally shaky'; his attempts to explain the different names of God do 'not hold water'; his arguments regarding the sources are not always convincing; when he explains the doublets and the alleged double flood story 'he fails to persuade'; his rejection of the contradictions 'are too skimpy ... to shake [the] foundations' of literary criticism; his reasons for the differences between the decalogue in Deuteronomy and Exodus is 'a somewhat feeble argument' (Deist 1988g:95-96).

Deist accused *Harrison* of attacking a form of literary criticism which is outdated. Later approaches to the Pentateuch differ greatly from that of Graf and Wellhausen and therefore Harrison's quarrel with a specific form of source theory 'is actually conducted against an effigy of the past' (Deist 1988g:99). Harrison accused German Old Testament scholars of neglecting archaeology without noticing that the Germans employ archaeological data very differently. Although Harrison's work is extensive and well-documented, in general his work 'is disappointing'. He has an 'anachronistic picture of literary criticism' and often his arguments are 'so emotional that they repel rather

than persuade the reader'. His own solution is so 'unscientific that it is unlikely to attract many disciples' (Deist 1988g:102).

It is thus abundantly clear that Deist favoured a critical understanding of the Pentateuch. The German mind had made a great impression on him; Wellhausen exerted a lasting influence on him while Gunkel, Alt, Noth and Von Rad also shaped his views decisively. Deist was the first South African to make such a thorough study of German critical scholarship. His excellent knowledge enabled him to render their views with great credibility. Moreover, he nurtured an understanding and appreciation of critical scholarship among South Africans.

5 The Hexateuch's origin

South African Old Testament scholars had also accounted historically for the origin of the Hexateuch. Deist's attempt was different. It was much more specific, scientifically founded and reliable. He was not so much interested in the search for 'sources' because he realised the difficulty of such an undertaking. Emphasis must rather be laid on the 'layers of tradition in the material or, at least, of redaction layers' (Deist 1988h:31). These layers were, however, embedded in history and this historical link must be examined. According to Deist a very close *link* exists between the *Hexateuch and history*. The Hexateuchal sources or authors or traditions must never be severed from Israel's history. Put differently, the Hexateuch is a product of Israelite history and must be understood as such. Deist, however, explicitly states that such a historical survey is not the final word. In the light of his hermeneutics no authority for his description can be claimed: it is 'extremely provisional' and is only a 'more or less' rendering of what happened (Deist 1988h:29). Deist's historical explanation of the origin of the Hexateuch can be described along the following main lines.

(1) A very important starting-point is the *Jerusalem court during the Davidic-Solomonic era*. Like all Ancient Near Eastern courts the Jerusalem court had court historians and a court history. These historians attempted to link the early history of Israel to that of David. This can for instance be seen in the function of Hebron, a southern Palestinian city, in the Deuteronomist's 'History of the rise of David' (1 Sm 16 - 2 Sm 6:8) as well as in the Abraham narratives. By means of this city Abraham was therefore closely linked to the Davidic reign

and the southern kingdom of Judah (Deist 1988h:27).

In the course of time this Abraham figure grew and developed. Some narratives attached to Shechem in Northern Israel and the patriarch Jacob were transferred to the figure of Abraham. This happened when David united the northern and the southern parts of Israel. It is important to note that this 'extended' Abraham gave religious credibility to this political union. Stories about Abraham's meeting with Melchisedek and his attachment to Moriah 'legalised' the Jerusalem sanctuary. Since the Sinai tradition was closely connected to the Jerusalem cult the wilderness tradition was probably also rooted in Jerusalem (Deist 1988h:30).

In the north stories about Jacob-Israel, Ephraim and Manasseh continued to be transmitted and re-worked. This could have happened because the agreement between David and the northern part of Israel was such that it allowed for cultural independence and development (Deist 1988h:30).

(2) The *division of the united kingdom* of David and Solomon shaped the formation of the Hexateuch decisively. Two kingdoms now emerged which gave rise to two types of theology, which determined the Hexateuch's theology. The northern kingdom also needed theological legitimation. A court history also originated in this kingdom. Except for the Jacob-Israel, Ephraim and Manasseh stories which played an important part in shaping the northern 'identity', the entry tradition probably also originated in the northern part. In the south a different kind of theology originated. Power was centred in the throne and the theology of the south aimed at justifying this claim to power. The king and the Davidic dynasty were accepted as a gift of Yahweh.

According to Deist, two different types of Hexateuchal narratives originated in these two kingdoms. He alluded to 'possible "Yahwistic" stories', which originated in the south, and 'possible "Elohistic" stories' from the north. He further typified 'the southern (Yahwistic) theology as a priestly-supported dynasty-theology, and the northern (Elohistic) theology as a prophetic theocracy-theology' (Deist 1988h:31). Both of these theological features can be found in the Hexateuch. This can lead one to speak of a priestly-dynastic and prophetic-theocratic layer or tradition in the Hexateuch.

As a result of the antagonism between north and south, the dif-

ferent Hexateuchal narratives developed separately and independently of each other. In the north the Hexateuchal narratives had a different kind of development. After the 'victory' of Yahwism over Baalism the existing Hexateuchal narratives were re-worked. Perhaps an ethical dimension urging the formation of an egalitarian community was added to these narratives. This view can clearly be seen in the preaching of the prophets Amos and Hosea. It must have stimulated the Deuteronomic movement in the northern area in the ninth century and given rise to the 'egalitarian ethic of large parts of Deuteronomy'. A close connection exists between Deuteronomy and Hosea which accentuates the fact that some of the Hexateuchal stories circulating in the north were at a specific point in time, re-told from a prophetic viewpoint (Deist 1988h:32-33).

(3) *Samaria's fall* was another event which enhanced the re-working of the Hexateuch. Those who survived the crisis fled to the southern kingdom. There they reflected on the crisis and sought to understand the catastrophe. According to Deist this was the beginning of the Deuteronomistic movement. It is also interesting to note that during this time the first prophets of the southern kingdom made their appearance. At this stage a 'cross fertilisation' of the Hexateuch narratives of the two kingdoms took place. So, for instance, a link was forged between the northern enslavement-liberation tradition and the southern Abraham narrative (Gn 15:13-21). The Joseph story was also inserted in the Hexateuch complex during this time in order to link the southern stories of the patriarchs to the northern exodus-entry stories (Deist 1988h:33).

(4) The *fall of Jerusalem* in 586 BC was another decisive factor in the growth of the Hexateuch. During the exile the people needed comfort and a new direction. With this purpose in mind the existing Hexateuchal narratives were re-interpreted. The patriarchal stories, with their emphasis on the powerful God who saved his people from critical situations and who remained faithful to his promises, must have encouraged many; a 'spiritual' re-interpretation of their 'mission' (Gn 12:1-3) contributed to a sense of meaning and purpose. The universal trend in Genesis 2-11 enabled them to adapt to the crisis and gave them a new vision of themselves; the book of Deuteronomy reached its final form and served as a programme of action for the people's re-entry into the promised land. During this period the

stories of the Hexateuch were drastically edited: 'We could thus reckon here with a *final Yahwistic redaction* of the Hexateuch material, as well as with a *Deuteronomistic revision* of such material' (Deist 1988h:34 — my emphasis).

The priests in exile were deprived of the temple and the ritual. In order to compensate for this loss they began re-working and re-interpreting all the cultic and ritual material. All kinds of cultic laws were now worked out in the finest detail (Deist 1988h:34). The position of the priests in the post-exilic society was prominent. To unite the post-exilic community a priestly redaction of all the available material took place. This is immediately clear from the placing of Genesis 1 as the 'introduction' to the entire Hexateuch. In this final priestly redaction of the Hexateuch the Sinai event played a dominant role.

What we have attempted to do, is to present only a broad outline of a possible history so as to demonstrate that, although the final work of the rounding off of this narrative was definitely done during and after the exile, it had by that time already run a long history — a history which today still lies hidden in the text awaiting discovery (Deist 1988h:35).

6 The exodus narrative: the growth of a story

Until now we have discussed Deist's views on the Hexateuch in broad outline. This paragraph is devoted to a more specific topic: his thoughts on the origin of the exodus narrative. The importance of Deist's investigation of the exodus narrative cannot be overestimated: it is the first real historical-critical investigation of the exodus story since Colenso. He calls his approach text-historical. By that a literary-critical and redaction-historical investigation is meant (Deist 1986b:92 1988c:15-16).

According to Deist the exodus narrative went through three important phases. If the narrative is stripped of its priestly material it seems as if the Yahwist and the Deuteronomist were the other two 'main' editors of this narrative. A redaction-critical investigation reveals that the Yahwist and Deuteronomist's material included much earlier work which had been re-worked. Deist is aware that literary-critical work can become extremely atomistic and therefore he wanted, rather, to speak of a *Yahwist 'family'*, a *Deuteronomist 'family'* and a *priestly 'family'*. He was not so much interested in the exact history of the

text but in the modes of thinking. Although he declared to be 'of late [1986] inclined towards a post-Deuteronomistic dating of J' it seems as if the exodus narrative resists such an order and that the 'prior existence of J, which was then re-worked and supplemented by Deuteronomistic editors' has to be accepted. He therefore treats the narrative's 'component layers in the order J, Dtr and P, each of which reflects exilic to post-exilic (theological) thinking' (Deist 1986b:93).

It is important to note that Deist also formulated his historical critical views on the exodus narrative in a book for laymen (Deist 1988c). This book was initially written for a Bible study group in Pretoria which often assembled to study Exodus 1-14. In a popular way he introduced the reader to a critical inquiry of the text. If the South African context is once again taken into account this is a rather remarkable event. Colenso and Du Plessis' dreams of bringing the insights and results of historical criticism to the level of the layman came to full fruition in Deist's works in general and this book in particular.

a The basic narrative: the Yahwist version

It was during the ninth and eighth centuries BC that the basic narrative of the Yahwist took shape. This narrative, however, drew heavily on sources from the tenth and eleventh centuries BC and the author incorporated them in his own version. The basic narrative stems from the time of the prophets Hosea, Amos, Micah and Isaiah and can be found in the following places: Exodus 1:6,11,12,22; 2:1,2,3,5,6,11, 12-22; 3:1,3,4,7,8,16,17; 4:18,20,24,25,26,29,30,31; 5:1,2; 7:14, 15-18,21,23,24,25; 8:1,3,8,12,14,15,20,24,25,28,30,31,32; 9:13, 14,18,24,25,27,28,31,32,33,34; 10:1,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,13,14, 15,16, 18,19,28,29; 11:1,4,5,6,; 12:21,22,29,30,33,34,37,38,39; 14:5,7,9, 10,13,14,21,24,25,27,28,30.

The basic narrative sheds important light on Yahweh's involvement in the affairs of daily life. He is not only involved in spectacular events but also in ordinary things: the things that happen in nature, things in the world of fishes, frogs, flies, locusts, the weather conditions, et cetera. In all of these ordinary events Yahweh is present. This close involvement implies that Yahweh notices all kinds of transgressions and social oppression. Superficially it might seem as if events are following each other without any purpose. Yahweh, how-

ever, has everything under control (Deist 1986b:95-96).

Aan die ander kant is dit ook so dat God in die heel alledaagse dinge besig is om aan die farao te wys wie Hy is: in die drinkwater en in 'n skielike swerm paddas. Dis alledaagse dinge, maar nie daarom minder belangrik nie. God is nie net in die spektakulêre dinge besig nie, maar tot by die drinkwater is Hy gemoeid met die geskiedenis. En die verhaal wil sê: hou julle oë oop om God in hierdie klein en alledaagse dinge te sien (Deist 1988c:33).

b The second narrative: a Deuteronomistic re-interpretation

During the exile the basic narrative was re-worked and it can be found in Exodus 1:8,9,15-21; 2:4,7-10,23; 3:1,2,5,6,9-15,18-22; 4:1-17, 19,21-23,27-28; 5:3-24; 8:2,9-11,13,21-23,26,27,29; 9:1-7,15-17, 19-23,27,28,29; 10:1-3,4,6,11,13,14,17,20-27; 11:2,3,7,8; 12:23-28,31,32,35; 13:3-22; 14:5,6,11,12,15,19-20,31. The existing narrative was not rejected but adapted and elaborated to fit a new situation. According to Deist the exiles were badly in need of a new understanding of reality and history. In these circumstances they re-used the story of the exodus to interpret the suffering of the exile. This second interpretation was not something totally new: it was a fresh interpretation of the exodus event in the light of the conditions prevailing during the exile (Deist 1988c:42-43).

This 'new' edition is of course interspersed through the existing narrative and can of course only be isolated literary-critically. In the light of this Deist also indicated the *features* of this second version: it constantly refers to pharaoh as 'the king of Egypt'; the term 'God' is consistently used in the second narrative; Moses' father-in-law is called 'Reuel' in the first and 'Jethro' in the second; in this re-worked edition God does not intervene so directly as in the basic narrative; this second edition explicitly refers to the meeting place between God and Moses as 'the mountain of God'; Moses also plays a more important role here than in the first version; in the second two additional plagues are mentioned (Deist 1988c:67-68).

Apart from the above, some other important and new perspectives were introduced about God, the pharaoh and Moses. To illustrate this point we only focus on the second narrative's view of *Moses*. Moses is here depicted as a prophet. He is addressed like a prophet, he shunned the prophetic office initially, he sounded prophetic warnings, et cetera (Deist 1986b:97-99). Why this description of Moses as a

prophet? The answer can be found in the appalling conditions of the exile. During this period the exiles despaired and were searching for the cause of their predicament. According to the editors of this second narrative the people — and not God — were to be blamed for this calamity. This message concurs with that of the book of Kings. A very important point is also made: the tragedies of 722 and 586 BC did not overtake them by surprise; God's prophets warned the people in good time but without avail. This rejection of the prophets' message led to destruction. Something very interesting thus happened in this second edition of the basic narrative. A different situation arose which differed greatly from that of the original narrative. In this new context the exiles were plagued by a nagging question: who was responsible for their misfortunes? To answer the question the basic narrative was re-interpreted. Pharaoh came to represent the exiles. And this extremely arrogant pharaoh was not suddenly crushed; he was often warned beforehand (Deist 1988c:72-76). Similarly Israel's tragedy did not occur instantaneously but God's prophets repeatedly warned them about the imminent judgement but they hardened their hearts (Deist 1988c:69-71; 1986b:99-102,107).

c The final interpretation: the priestly edition

About sixty years after the second edition (or the first re-working of the basic narrative) the exodus narrative was edited for the last time. Afterwards, re-interpretations of the event occurred separately from the exodus narrative. During the last years of the exile, between 550 and 538 BC, a different group of people re-worked the story about the exodus. They were priests and their aim was to encourage the exiles in a 'priestly manner' (Deist 1988c:86-88). This priestly interpretation of the exodus can be found in Exodus 1:1-7,13-14; 2:23-25; 4:21; 6:1-29; 7:1-14,17-21; 8:5-7,15-19; 9:8-12,22,35; 10:12; 11:9-10; 12:1-20;40-51; 13:1-2,7,13; 14:1-4,8,16-18,21-27 (Deist 1988c:88-121).

Like the previous edition this is also a radical re-interpretation of the exodus event and exhibits some typical *features*. We will mention three. First of all, there is the editors' predilection for preciseness: people's ages are carefully described, Israel's stay in Egypt is calculated precisely, everything is described in its minutest detail, and so forth (Deist 1988c:121). Another feature deals with the editors' pref-

erence for genealogies (cf 1:1-5; 6:13-26). These genealogies focus on the whole of Israel who suffered in Egypt as well as in exile (Deist 1988c:122). Typical priestly elements can also be found in the description of the sacrifices and the different feasts (Deist 1988c:122).

We only highlight two very important aspects of this priestly theology: the reason for God's intervention and the power struggle underlying this rendition. According to the basic narrative (and to a lesser degree the first re-working), *God's interference* is the result of his decision. In this final rendition he heard Israel's groaning and he remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (2:24). The covenant 'caused' him to look on the Israelites and to have mercy on their sufferings (Deist 1986b:102-103). God thus made his promises good and met his covenant obligations. According to this view, God's rescue of his people is not so much a political as a religious event: God can indeed be trusted in all circumstances. Even in the bleak days of the exile he still remembers the exiles and the covenant made with their forefathers (Deist 1988c:124).

A *power struggle* between God and pharaoh can also be seen in this edition of the exodus event. The editors highlighted God's strength and described how pharaoh was outmanoeuvred. Once again this struggle was interpreted in the light of the 'present' exilic situation. In this exilic interpretation of the clash between God and pharaoh the latter receives a symbolic meaning: the pharaoh now represents all the evil powers threatening the exilic community. As the pharaoh and his men are crushed, so will all the enemies of the exiles be destroyed. By emphasising this struggle between God and pharaoh the editors wanted to encourage the exiles to cling to God and to believe in his supreme power (Deist 1988c:125-127).

The *liturgical character* of this edition is especially illustrated in the description of the Passover rite (Deist 1986b:104-105). Everything is sketched in the minutest detail: the preparation of the unleavened bread, the exact date of the feast, the clothes of the celebrants, the roasting of the lamb, et cetera. This liturgical interpretation of the exodus event was very important. By means of a feast God is praised for his presence in the midst of the people, and the celebrants are encouraged to persevere in faith (Deist 1988c:132).

The exodus narrative thus developed over *three hundred years*. In the course of these centuries many generations contributed to the

growth of the book of Exodus and especially to the understanding of the event. Deist highlighted three editions or re-workings of this event. In a very typical way he illustrated how the exodus experience was understood differently in different contexts. Each context had to meet different needs and therefore the text was interpreted differently. Each re-interpretation implied a major shift in the understanding of the event as well as of God (cf Deist 1988c:131-133). Deist's interpretation of the exodus event is an affirmation of his dictum: '... each new reader situation [brings] with it an opportunity of creative reading' (Deist 1986h:30). And 'each new perspective, by shedding a different light upon the situation, will represent the situation quite differently' (Deist 1986h:19).

It is typical of Deist that he did not stop at mere historical inquiry. The analysis of the text had to relate to the living context of present-day South Africa. He wanted to contribute to the ongoing debate on liberation theology. This was the time of the Kairos document, in which it was stated that God sided with the oppressed. According to Deist this was not the most radical political interpretation and it represents a long tradition of political interpretation. To illustrate his point he cited examples from liberation histories of the Afrikaner and other groups. Deist also explained the influence of the context in the process of understanding God, the Bible and reality (cf Deist 1988c:4-10).

Instead of siding with one group Deist illuminated the liberation interpretations of the Bible by means of a historical analysis of Exodus 1-14. Consequently, he placed the problem in a totally new perspective. He rightly asks whether the three different readings of Exodus 1-14 can be tolerated. This is quite a new idea among South Africans and will indeed cause many a problem to some. According to Deist the mere fact that the exodus event was interpreted thrice is an invitation to act similarly. We must become engaged in the ongoing process of interpretation and re-interpretation (Deist 1988c:134-143).

7 Israel's early history

Deist's specific view of Israel's early history was of course the result of his concept of the Hexateuch. His description of that period also clearly shows the influence of Alt and Noth. Space does not allow a detailed presentation of Deist's views on early Israelite history and therefore we only mention four issues with which he confronted South African scholars.

(1) Deist posed critical questions about the *person of Moses*. According to him many unsolved problems still surround the figure of

Moses. So, for instance, his request for the name of Yahweh is very strange (Ex 3:14). If he was a member of the Hebrew slaves in Egypt he would have known the name of the 'God of the fathers'. His petition could therefore indicate that Moses was not so closely related to the Egypt group as later generations wanted him to be (Deist 1982i:17). Another reason might be that different groups of Hebrew slaves existed in Egypt. All of them probably worshipped the 'God of the fathers' and by asking Yahweh's name Moses wanted to determine which God of the fathers was speaking and which group was involved. Does this imply that only a specific group left Egypt? (Deist 1982i:17).

To quote yet another problem. Moses is attached to a mountain where he acquainted Israel with Yahweh. Which mountain is meant? One tradition associates him with Horeb and the other with Sinai. According to Deist 'the Horeb tradition should enjoy precedence historically' (Deist 1982i:19). A few reasons can be supplied for this view. In the first place Egyptian copper-smelting-works were situated in the area of Jebel Musa and it is therefore likely that fleeing slaves would have avoided the Sinai route. A northern route through Midian seems therefore more probable. Another reason for Horeb's precedence lies in the nature of Yahweh's appearance at the mountain. According to Exodus 19:18, Yahweh's theophany is accompanied by fire, smoke and the trembling of the mountain. It creates the impression of a volcanic eruption. If this is the case Midian seems a more likely candidate because volcanic mountains can be found in that region. No such mountains can, however, be found in the vicinity of Jebel Musa. It is therefore more likely that 'Moses acquainted his people with Yahweh in the vicinity of *Horeb*' (Deist 1982i:20). Only at a later stage were Hebron and Sinai identified.

(2) Deist also accentuated the notion that *Israel was not always a unity*. It only became a unified group after many centuries. Many indications in this regard can be found in the text: a clear distinction is made between the patriarchs and the people who gathered at Shechem; the difference between the Joseph people and the Moses people is also emphasised; the early confessions of faith refer to the exodus and the conquest but no mention is made of the Sinai event; there are incongruities in the lists of the twelve tribes; the first six tribes are mentioned consistently while the last six are constantly 'changing places';

there is the contrast between Judah and Ephraim and the subsequent division into a southern and a northern kingdom. The later united people comprised groups from the patriarchal groups, those who had experienced the exodus and those who had encountered Yahweh at Sinai.

These kinds of facts resulted in scholars saying that Israel was probably not a unity right from the time of the exodus, but that the unity eventually arose in Palestine.... And they eventually came together in Palestine to form a 'nation'. And *there* their several traditions were bonded together (Deist 1982i:29).

(3) Deist also held a different view of the *entry*. If Joshua 1-12 is scrutinised it clearly shows that the story of the conquest was vastly adapted. It in no way reflects an exact historical account of the entry but was written from the perspective of the twelve tribes when Israel was already a unity. Joshua 1-12 describes the experiences of only one group, the Joseph tribe, which in due course became the common property of all the tribes.

The story of the conquest is ... probably a story which initially belonged to the tradition of only *one* of the groups which would constitute the later Israel. In due course, however, it was made applicable to the whole of Israel (Deist 1982i:33).

(4) Deist was also convinced of a *federation of tribes*. Although a twelve-tribe federation 'is thus also conceivable culturally and historically' (Deist 1982i:31), he opted for a federation of six tribes. If the radical differences between the northern and southern kingdoms, which persisted throughout the history of both kingdoms, are taken into account, it seems unlikely that these two groups were united before the time of David. A federation of the six northern tribes was more feasible. It was most likely formed during the time of the judges and its 'headquarters' were most probably Shechem. There the central sanctuary was presumably stationed and there the people gathered for the religious feasts. Shechem was a very important northern city. Abraham and Jacob were associated with it; the ark, the sign of Yahweh's presence, also remained in this city; important Israelite festivals were held there; it was centrally situated, et cetera. From 'a tradition-historical angle' it seems that Shechem fulfilled an important role in the history of Israel (Deist 1982i:30,31).

8 A last word on Deist

Deist's contribution to the critical understanding of the Hexateuch in South Africa can never be overestimated. Although his views on the Hexateuch have not yet been concluded, he has already accomplished one important thing: he made the Old Testament community aware of a critical approach to the Hexateuch. His history of Hexateuch research was a very important book. Conservative scholars were confronted with the idea that critical scholarship started with the Reformation. This history also reflects Deist's admiration and appreciation of Wellhausen, Alt, Noth, Von Rad and other German scholars. They have shaped his views decisively on many aspects of the Hexateuch. Deist conveyed his knowledge of historical criticism to the South African community in many ways. His attempts did meet with some resistance but Deist set himself against the exegetical tides and opened up new critical perspectives for us. He was indeed a breaker of the hard soil.

F ADRIANUS VAN SELMS: SOMETHING DIFFERENT

Van Selms was of Dutch origin and only emigrated to South Africa a few years before the Second World War. He was the head of the Department of Semitics at the University of Pretoria and was the author of many books and articles. He was educated in critical science but had a fairly idiosyncratic approach to the Old Testament. A man of great learning, he was much respected by his students; he had a thorough knowledge of the Hebrew language and impressed all with his extensive knowledge of the Ancient Near East as well as of ancient history and literature. In 1967 two important volumes by Van Selms on the book of Genesis were published. They were the first to appear in the series 'De prediking van het Oude Testament', whose original editors were Van Selms and A S van der Woude (Groningen, Netherlands). Some aspects of Van Selms's views on Genesis and the Pentateuch are discussed below.

1 An artistic interpretation of the Pentateuch

Van Selms was very much an *artist*. That was perhaps the reason why he did not adhere to only one specific method or approach. He made a

close reading of the text, noting all kinds of grammatical and historical peculiarities, while interpreting all text information imaginatively and artistically. He was led by an artistic feeling for the text and employed his creative imagination to explain it. This approach of course allowed him considerable freedom to formulate exciting theories. This must not lead to the wrong impression that Van Selms's work was superficial and not profound. Quite the contrary. He was an erudite man and his work is evidence of this. But he succeeded in blending creativity and knowledge. And therefore his work is extremely enjoyable; it has a certain lightness and gives more pleasure than scientific information about the origin of Genesis or the Pentateuch.

Art, and especially *Dutch literature*, shaped Van Selms's understanding of the author of the Pentateuch. By opening his heart to art and listening especially to the great Dutch authors, Van Selms was able to penetrate the lofty thoughts of the Pentateuch writer. Put differently, the author of the Pentateuch could only be understood in relation to the great men of letters. These men formed the backdrop against which the book of Genesis or the Pentateuch ought to be explained. Some examples can be furnished to illustrate this point. When Van Selms described the darkness at the beginning of the creation the Dutch poet Marsman supplied him with an interesting perspective: 'Zee, storm, duister/ en eeuwigheden breken in de nacht' (Van Selms 1967a:24). The most adequate commentary on the conclusion of the creation narrative is expressed by the angels in 'Prolog im Himmel' from Goethe's *Faust*: 'alle deine hohe Werke/ sind herrlich wie am ersten Tag' (Van Selms 1967a:41). To emphasise God's steadfast love towards his creation, Van Selms quoted A Roland Holst, who said something quite the opposite: 'God zei/ blij na bedroefd herdenken: de wereld is voorbij' (Van Selms 1967a:125). Perhaps the best example can be found at the beginning of his exposition of the Joseph narrative. Mention is made of Vondel and his works on Joseph. Van Selms acclaims Vondel as an excellent interpreter of the Joseph narrative and therefore poses the question whether the study of Vondel should not be a prerequisite for any interpreter of the Joseph narrative.

Het val moeilijk over een hoofdstuk te schrijven als het onderhavige,
dat door Vondel zo scherpzinnig en dramatisch verwerkt is in zijn

'Josef in Dothan'. Moeten de exegeet het lezen, voor hij aan het werk gaat? De onweerstaanbare macht der poëzie zal hem wellicht beletten tot een eigen beeld te komen. Moet hij het ongelezen laten? Hij berooft zichzelf misschien van kostbare inzichten en ontzegt zich in ieder geval een verheven genot (Van Selms 1967b:182).

It must also be noted that Van Selms has mastered the art of *story-telling*. He could re-tell the story in such a manner that the reader could re-live the events. He succeeded in creating an imaginative world which enabled the reader to understand the text. And this could only be accomplished by someone who crawled, so to speak, into the skin of the ancient Israelite and tried to understand his world. So many examples can be given to illustrate this point and therefore we restrict ourselves to one example. In this passage a priest explains the creation to the believing community:

Een roekeloos bestaan heeft ons ten val gebracht.

Vondel, *Adam in ballingschap*

DE SCHEPPING: De voorhof van een Palestijns heiligdom. Aan de ene zijde het tempelgebouw, blank tegen de strakblauwe lucht. Daarvoor het altaar; nog stijgt de rook van het offer op. De schare, van over de heuvelen bijeengekomen om het herfstfeest te vieren, hurkt in de schaduw der galerijen.

Tussen het altaar en de schare staat een priester. Heden begint een nieuwe jaarkring; nu moet het lied van Gods eerste werken voorgedragen worden, het lied van de oude wereld en haar ondergang.

De priester heft aan: In den beginne schiep God de hemel en de aarde.

Voor de ogen van de hoorders verrijst het beeld van de baaierd: een duistere massa, een kokende branding; onbestembare vormen, die in elkander overgaan; de werveling der oerwateren.

— Daar zij licht!

Op het klare roepen Gods treden zijn schepselen in het aanzijn: het licht straalt en verkondigt de eerste dag; het firmament des hemels welft zich als een wijde tent; zie, daar is reeds het goede akkerland, vruchtbare moeder van alle kruid. En aan de hemel stralen zon en maan en myriaden sterren; de zee wemelt van leven; over de aarde kruipen en draven de dieren; zang van vogels klinkt uit het woud.

Te midden van al deze heerlijkheid treedt de mens, geschapen naar Gods beeld. Want God heeft gezegd: Laat Ons mensen maken naar ons beeld en onze gelijkenis; zij zullen heersen over al wat in de zee en op de aarde is.

En zo is het geschied. God aanschouwt al wat Hij geschapen heeft; zie, het is zeer goed. De schepping is voltooid; God verlustigt zich in het werk zijner handen. Hoge rust heerst in de hemel en op aarde (Van Selms 1951:7).

2 The many interpreters of Genesis

When reading Van Selms one is impressed by the great and diverse *crowd of witnesses* which surrounded him. These learned men were not restricted to one period only, but they came from different ages. He had, however, an inclination to concentrate on the ancient or 'classical' authors. Perhaps this is one of the important shortcomings of Van Selms's work — that he did not take modern research seriously enough. He never entered into a debate with modern authors or discussed contemporary theories on the Pentateuch. Nevertheless, he introduced his readers to a variety of men and literature which in one way or another shed light on the understanding and the origin of the book of Genesis and the Pentateuch. Of all the ancient literature by far the most attention was given to the Babylonian and the Ugaritic sources (cf Van Selms 1967a:20, 21,23,24,26,29,30,33,36,41,94,95, 99,101,118,120,124,127,133,135,138,146,175,186,193,201,213, 215,231,244,224,225,241; 1967b:9,89,133,163,211,187). Of all the targums the *Jerusalmi I* was the most frequently quoted (cf 1967a:22, 24,28,33,72,79,113,174,187,189,206,236; 1967b:22,49,79,95,111, 136,146,163,187,198,278). The pseudepigraphical book of Jubilees (1967a:64,117, 174,190), Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (1967a:50,90,127; 1967b:80, 82,186), Homer's *Iliad* (967b:203), Horace (1967b:107, 197), Virgil (1967b:148), Pliny (1967b:91), Cicero (1967b:197), the gnostics (1967a:65), Flavius Josephus (1967a:243), Ibn Ezra (1967a: 24; 1967b:46), Augustine's *Civitas Dei* (1967a:105), Thomas Aquinas (1967b:148), the Muslim historian at-Tabari (1967a: 64), and many others voices of the past were united to contribute to the understanding of the book of Genesis. By following this road Van Selms has, among other things, illustrated to South African scholars the importance of the witnesses of the past. Scientific study of the Bible should not be restricted to a few modern commentaries or one method only. The many voices of the past should be listened to. Van Selms once again emphasised that the ancient authors belong among the giants of modern biblical research. It was important to Van Selms that these great men be heard in concert with Wellhausen, Gunkel, Von Rad and many others (cf Childs 1977:x).

3 Life's contribution to the understanding of Genesis

Our time has become very sensitive to the contribution of context to

the understanding of the Scriptures. Van Selms gave us many examples of the way his life's context aided him in understanding the book of Genesis. The customs of the Blacks in South Africa (Van Selms 1967a:235; 1967b: 60,114,135,196), the Afrikaans-speaking people (Van Selms 1967b:79,126), the Afrikaans language (Van Selms 1967b:274,275), observations made at the Kruger National Park (Van Selms 1967b:217,227), et cetera, influenced Van Selms's thinking in many ways. What influenced him perhaps most were the discussions with his son, a medical doctor, on the result of Jacob's wrestling at Peniel. Due to these conversations Van Selms was convinced that Jacob became an invalid (Van Selms 1967b:153,157,160,164,245, 247,250,257). The sartorial muscle was affected and this caused the paralysis.

Te zamen met zijn zoon, die medicus is, is de schrijver van deze commentaar tot de conclusie gekomen, dat daarmee de 'sartorius'-spier bedoeld is; bij bestudering van een schaapsbout vonden wij dezelfde spier.... Is deze spier verlamd, dan kan men slechts strompelen (Van Selms 1967b:142).

4 The historical critical method

As said before, Van Selms was of Dutch origin and educated in critical science, and therefore *steeped in the historical-critical* approach to the Old Testament. Acquainted with critical questions as well as the solutions offered, he realised that they could not be avoided. Each study of the Pentateuch had to grapple with these problems. While not neglecting them totally, Van Selms went his own way. The insights of this critical approach were used with restraint and at times even belittled. By ignoring some important scientific theories that had been established over many years Van Selms weakened his own views. In the final analysis it is however doubtful whether he really contributed to the historical critical understanding of the Pentateuch.

Van Selms *poked fun* at the historical method. At a certain point in his commentary he attempted to divide the text in a literary-critical way. He did not succeed and blamed it on the insufficiency of the method. He rejected any such attempts: 'wij geloven er niets van' (Van Selms 1967b:202). He also belittled those working along historical critical lines. He referred to them as 'bronnepplitsers' (cf Van Selms 1967a:131) and at one stage used the word 'childish' for any

division of Judah's (Gn 44:1-34) speech into sources (Van Selms 1967b:239). One of the main reasons for this sharp criticism must be sought in Van Selms's inability to understand this method or its different steps. One of his critics made a very interesting statement.

Het is duidelijk dat Dr Van Selms de bronnensplitsing een belachelijke zaak vind, want eenmaal (II, p 206) spreekt hij er zelfs over zich de scherts van een bronnensplitsing te veroorloven, wat niet getuigt van eerbied voor het vele, misschien soms al te minutieuze werk van vele generaties van oud-testamentici (Frankena 1969:79).

Perhaps we must state it again: Van Selms did not reject the historical method outright, and would even employ its insights and results. He revealed, however, a very negative attitude and failed to evaluate this method properly. To illustrate his *one-sided approach* we are referring to his treatment of the widely accepted theory that the flood narrative derived from different hands. Nowhere else did he discuss the problem of different authors in so much detail as in the *section on the flood* (Van Selms 1967a:129-132). As will be illustrated below, Van Selms was convinced of a single origin and resisted any division of the flood narrative into sources. Genesis was written by a priestly author who incorporated many different fragments into his work. The largest fragment included in the final narrative was the so-called 'boerenverhaal'. The 'boerenverteller' can, according to Van Selms, be found in Genesis 2:4-4:26;5:29;6:1-4;9:20-27;10:8-12; 11:1-9. Van Selms's arguments for the unity of the flood text and his emphasis on a single author display his very simplistic approach towards historical-critical matters. His views can be summarised as follows.

(1) According to Van Selms, the 'boerenverhaal' knew nothing of a flood (Van Selms 1967a:90,130). The peasant narrator related the inhabitants of Palestine, as well as some nomadic groups, to Cain. This could not have been done if the flood had swept away the whole of mankind.

(2) Nowhere in the flood narrative can the typical elements (word play, etiological explanations, etc) of the 'boerenverhaal' be found (cf Van Selms 1967a:48,49,60,78,90). On the other hand, the narrative displays all the characteristics of the priestly narrative style ('priesterlijke verhaaltijl'): repetitions, the sentences and words which recur very often, predilections for long descriptions of the

animal world, et cetera (Van Selms 1967a:130).

(3) The distinction between clean and unclean animals was very typical of the priestly author.

(4) The priestly writer, not the Yahwist, was especially interested in the altar and sacrifices. Genesis 8:20 should therefore not be ascribed to the Yahwist, but to the priestly author. The latter concluded his creation narrative with the sabbath and, in a similar way, his flood story aims at ending with the building of an altar (Van Selms 1967a:120).

(5) According to Genesis 8:21 the Lord smelled the pleasant aroma of the burnt offering. Many scholars assign this verse to the Yahwist, but it is typical of the priestly literature (Van Selms 1967a:121).

(6) In the description of the raven and the dove in Genesis 8:6ff prominence is given to the number seven. Since this number also forms an integral part of the creation story of Genesis 1:1-2:3, it is clear that this description also derives from the same priestly hand (Van Selms 1967a:118-119). The mere fact that a raven and a dove were sent out makes sense only in a priestly context: the good news should not be brought by an unclean animal (raven), but by a clean bird (dove) (Van Selms 1967a:131).

Van Selms was thus against any division of the flood narrative (and for that matter the whole of the Pentateuch) into different authors and sources. Generally speaking, Van Selms had a very limited view of literary criticism. He was reluctant to listen and evaluate more carefully. This caused a very narrow perception of the historical-critical method. Van Selms wrongly accused all literary critics of depriving his beloved priestly author of value and greatness. This is not the case and a remark like the following does an injustice to many a critical scholar:

Ten slotte moet ons nog één opmerking van het hart. De bronnen-splitters veroorloven zich allerhande diskwalificaties van de stijl van P. Op zijn zachts gezegd is dat uitermate onbillijk. Eerst ontnemt men hem het auteurschap van alles wat tekenachtig en aangrijpend is, en vervolgens verwijt men hem zijn droge en abstracte stijl! Er bestaan fatsoensverplichtingen, ook tegenover een auteur van drieduizend jaar geleden. Wij hebben reeds enige malen laten uitkomen, dat wij de grootste bewondering hebben voor het literair vermogen van deze schrijver. Mag dan het gebruik van herhalingen, refreinwoorden en refreinzinnen bij de hedendaagse prozaïsten ongebruikelijk zijn —

waarbij wij echter niet willen vergeten, dat auteurs als Multatuli of Marcel Proust er dikwijls een zeer gelukkig gebruik van maakten — wij mogen onze stilistische opvattingen niet aan oude schrijvers opleggen. Bedenkt men daarbij, dat het zondvloedverhaal niet zozeer geschreven is om gelezen dan wel voorgedragen te worden, dan krijgen de herhalingen hun volle zin. Allerlei in het oog van de schrijver waardevolle opmerkingen worden er zo bij de hoorders ingehamerd (Van Selms 1967a:131-132).

Let us conclude with yet another example: the *three descriptions of the patriarch's lie* about his wife. When Isaac stayed in Gerar the inhabitants asked about Rebekah and, like his father, Isaac said that his wife was his sister. Similar stories can also be found in Genesis 12:10-20 and 20:1-18. Van Selms compared these narratives and solved the problem in a very typical manner: he was reluctant to ascribe these events to different sources and therefore explained it from his 'unifying' and 'one-author' point of view.

When Genesis 12:10-20 (A), 20:1-18 (B) and 26:1-17 (C) are compared, certain definite and clear *affinities* become evident: the patriarch goes with his family to a foreign country; the settled lifestyle of the foreigners is contrasted with that of the patriarchs; time and again the patriarch is confronted with the foreign country's king; in self-defence the patriarch states that his wife is his sister; each time the deceit is discovered, and the patriarch reproached and ordered to leave the country.

Important *differences* can, however, also be noted: famine is the reason for leaving Canaan in A and C, but not in B; Egypt is the foreign country in A while Gerar is the destination in B and C; according to A and B the wife is ordered to take part in the deceit, but not in C; in A and B the wife married the foreign ruler, but not in C; intercourse took place in A but not in B and C; in A gifts were received before the deceit was discovered, in B after the discovery and in C no such rewards were given; God intervened in A and B, but not in C; mention is made of 'plagues' in A and B, but not in C; the patriarch is sent away in A, given permission to settle in B and requested to leave in C.

Van Selms should indeed be credited for a thorough and interesting investigation but the way in which he interpreted his results is unsatisfactory. He merely stated that the similarities between the three renderings of the same event should receive all the emphasis. It would

be of no avail to concentrate, like the source critics, on the differences and to explain them in terms of various sources. All similarities as well as differences should rather be ascribed to the priestly author's preference for parallels. These stories circulated orally and the priestly author utilised them to illustrate his point: in A the tradition is so depicted in order to relate Abraham's stay in Egypt to that of Israel much later; in B the relationship with the people of Gerar is highlighted; because the priestly author viewed Isaac as Abraham *redivivus*, C serves to illustrate that Isaac had dealings with the same people as his father (cf Van Selms 1967a:186-191;263-268; 1967b: 65,74-75).

Het is duidelijk, dat de punten van overeenkomst meer gewicht in de schaal moeten leggen dan de punten van verschil: het is merkwaardiger, dat twee of drie analoge geschiedenissen verteld worden dan dat er in de details der verhalen verschilpunten opduiken.... Beschouwt men de drie verhalen als 'doubletten', afkomstig uit verschillende geschreven bronnen, dan komt de onbeantwoorde vraag op, hoe een zo zorgvuldig auteur als die van ons boek juist bij deze stof, die waarlijk zijn hoofdpersoon niet tot eer strekt, in herhalingen veel.... Om deze vraag te beantwoorden, moeten wij opnieuw aandacht schenken aan wat wij tevoren reeds opgemerkt hebben ... 's schrijvers voorliefde voor parallellen.... Zo hebben A, B en C elk hun eigen plaats in de opzet van de schrijver (Van Selms 1967b:70-71).

Of course, Van Selms has made valuable observations. One cannot, however, escape the feeling that he oversimplified matters. There is more to historical criticism than just dividing the Pentateuch into sources or replacing the Word of God for that of man. It remains a pity that Van Selms was so overtly negative about historical criticism and its results. He was well equipped for the task of introducing the critical approach to the South African scholars. In the final analysis he rejected it one-sidedly and unfortunately its effect can also be seen in his commentaries on Genesis. Perhaps we can conclude this section with a comment of Otto Eissfeldt's on the work of Van Selms.

Wie diese Behauptung kaum das Richtige trifft, so werden auch die sonstigen literarkritischen und literargeschichtlichen Thesen, die im vorliegenden Kommentar vertreten sind, kaum auf Zustimmung rechnen können. Es wird vielmehr wohl bei dem bleiben, was Eduard Meyer einmal gesagt hat, dass jede Untersuchung der Komposition des Pentateuchs und damit der Genesis von vornherein zum Scheitern

verurteilt is, wenn sie sich, und sei es noch so kritisch, nicht von der mit Jean Astruc begonnenen Methode bestimmen lässt (Eissfeldt 1967:356).

5 The author of Genesis and the Pentateuch

Van Selms used different names to refer to the author of the Pentateuch: *de schrijver* (cf 1967a:95,107,113,114,115,120,123,135,154, 157,160; 1967b:31,34,42,47,56,58,71,73,100,101,105,116,143,152, 155,161,164,165,174,193,200,221,223,236,263,270,286,291,292); *de schrijver van Genesis* (cf 1967a:105,100,128); *onze schrijver* (cf 1967a:42,92,105; 1967b:25,28,29,72); *onze auteur* (cf 1967a:67,90, 92,118,120,142; 1967b:49,110,121,141,143,226,234,275,282); *de auteur* (cf 1967a:152; 1967b:62,65,156,162,209); *priesterlijke auteur/verteller/schrijver* (cf 1967a:98,99,103,107,108,113,122,124, 126,128; 1967b:35,137,142).

The author's name will *remain unknown* for ever. He stepped totally behind his work, seldom expressed his own views and refrained from comments on the events narrated. Even the message of the Joseph narrative is not proclaimed by the author himself, but by words laid in the mouth of Joseph. His work, however, does display some typical characteristics that accentuate his attachment to the priestly circles in Jerusalem. This priestly author was a contemporary of Solomon and a regular visitor to the court. Knowledge about the political relations with the Arameans, the Edomites and the Philistines was obtained from the court. Solomon's Egyptian wife and her entourage informed him about the situation in their country (Van Selms 1967b: 299).

The *author's theology* crops up in each of the four main sections of the book. The place of humankind in creation and Israel's place among the nations are explained in the prehistory (Gn 1-11). By linking the patriarchs with genealogies and by describing them in terms of father and son, Israel was provided with a common history (Gn 12-35). In the fourth main unit (Gn 36-50) the priestly author took great pains to accentuate the unity of Israel.

This priestly author was an *apologist* for the *political unity of Israel*. All the Israelite tribes joined Joseph in Egypt and they all participated in the exodus. Political tension existed between Ephraim and Judah during Solomon's time and, in Genesis 36-50 the priestly

author attempted to lessen the impact of that painful situation. Perhaps the author still experienced the tragic division of the united monarchy of David and Solomon (Van Selms 1967b:300).

The author of Genesis and also of the Pentateuch was, according to Van Selms, *exceptionally gifted*. He was extremely thorough (cf Van Selms 1967b:70), had insight into man's psychological conditions (cf Van Selms 1967a:67), was a master in the art of story-telling (cf Van Selms 1967a:42) and was a great artist (Van Selms 1967b:259). Sometimes mistakes were made but, according to Van Selms, they were 'stijlvlekjes' and of minor importance (Van Selms 1967a:246; 1967b:39). What critics called doublets, Van Selms described as parallels which were the result of the author's fondness for repetition. The writer incorporated them because he was influenced by the principle of 'parallelismus membrorum': confirmation by means of repetition (Van Selms 1967a:260). Consequently all the inconsistencies were explained in terms of the author's skilful stylistic and literary techniques. He intentionally created repetitions, variations, recapitulations and chronological disjunctions (Van Selms 1967b:299-300). Van Selms thus avoided the problems of literary criticism by regarding the Pentateuch and the book of Genesis as the work of one author who belonged to the priestly circles of Jerusalem and who can be regarded as a literary genius and one of the greatest writers of mankind. 'Hier moeten wij volstaan met op te merken, dat hij zich een van de grootste schrijvers van de mensheid betoont heeft; hoe meer men zich in zijn werk verdiept, hoe groter bewondering men krijgt voor zijn literaire vermogens' (Van Selms 1967b:300).

Van Selms stressed the priestly author's *artistic style*. This can, for instance, be illustrated with reference to the creation narrative (Gn 1). Instead of the ordinary narrative style the author employed a kind of artistic prose, 'kunstproza'. This allowed him to keep midway between a historical style and poetry of a hymnic nature. The final product is the work of a great author, a master of the 'kunstproza'. Van Selms explicitly states that his views on the so-called priestly author differ greatly from other scholars. Previous generations had a very negative view of this great writer and described his work as dull. As we have stated above, Van Selms emphasised that this author must rather be viewed as one of the great authors of all time (Van Selms 1967a:42). To describe this creation event, he employed epic repeti-

tions, parallelism, chiasms, alliterations, assonance, et cetera.

Onze schrijver gebruikt bij zijn behandeling van de schepping daarom ook niet de gewone verhaalstijl, maar een soort kunstproza dat het midden houdt tussen historische stijl en hymnische dichtkunst. Hij werkt met epische herhalingen, met parallellisme en chiasme, met alliteraties en assonanties. Zijn taal is in hoge mate ritmisch, al lukt het niet om dit deel metrisch te scanderen. Bij de verklaring moet men met dit half-dichterlijke karakter rekening houden (Van Selms 1967a: 19).

This author of course made use of *many sources*. He had access to a variety of oral and written sources. The most important among the written sources was the so-called 'boerenverhaal' (peasant narrative) 2:4-4:26; 5:29; 6:1-4; 9:20-27; 10:8-12; 11:1-9. Van Selms was reluctant to identify separate sources or authors which were included in the book of Genesis but nevertheless considered the following as independent units: from the priestly circles in Jerusalem came a document which circulated independently and which can still be found in Genesis 14; a collection of sayings about the tribes was utilised in Genesis 49:2-27; Genesis 25:21-34 and 27:1-45 probably existed independently and were incorporated without much alteration; in Genesis 31:46-54 and 36 documents were re-worked to such extent that the original can no longer be determined; Genesis 10 and 25:13-18, rather, reflect the knowledge of the author's day which was skilfully used in his story. As a result of his close connections with the court of Solomon much interesting information was also obtained and included in his work (Van Selms 1967b:296-298).

6 The 'boerenverhaal'

Let us now consider the 'boerenverhaal' by referring to sections from Genesis 1-11. According to Van Selms *Genesis 2:4-4:26* originally formed a separate unity which was only at a later stage incorporated into the work of the author of the book of Genesis. Despite certain similarities, Genesis 1:1-2:3 differs greatly from 2:4-4:26 (cf Van Selms 1967a:62-63). All of a sudden there is no longer any trace of 'kunstproza' with all its artistic devices anymore. Genesis 2:4-4:26 is written in a very simple narrative style which Van Selms called the 'boerenverhaal'. The author was an ordinary peasant who took a keen interest in life and agriculture. His concern for human life is reflected

in the narration of the human struggle (Van Selms 1967a:73-74,83), the depiction of birth pains (Van Selms 1967a:72-73) and the illustration of the awful destiny of the nomad (Van Selms 1967a:86-88). Interest in the land can be seen in his mention of the rain and the abundance of water in the garden (Van Selms 1967a:52-55) as well as the earth as the origin of humankind, as well as the place where the curse of the Lord is felt (Van Selms 1967a:73,83).

Genesis 9:18-29 deals with Noah and his sons. Once again we have here a description of the 'boerenverteller'. His hand can be seen in the expression 'a man of the soil' (Gn 9:20) and the reference to the curse (Gn 9:25). According to the 'boerenverteller' three curses occurred in Genesis 1-11: the curse in the paradise, the curse against Cain and his children and the last one against some of Ham's descendants. This peasant author did not compose the story freely, but was dependent on sayings (cf vv 25-27) that existed in oral tradition. These sayings were, rather, preserved correctly by the 'boerenverteller'. In Genesis 9:18-29 the peasant author described how Noah took up the original task which had been given to humankind, namely to cultivate the land. Humankind had lost this 'original task' when Paradise was left behind. During Solomon's time the final author of Genesis used this section of the 'boerenverteller' as a conclusion to the flood narrative. In this regard the author was very much influenced by the Babylonian flood narrative ascribing some important sayings to the hero of the flood. The author of Genesis used it of course in a unique way. In the Babylonian narrative the sayings were used when the hero entered the company of the gods. Quite the opposite happened in the work of the final author of Genesis: ironically it is stated that Noah is an ordinary man who became drunk (Van Selms 1967a:135-140).

Genesis 11:1-9 also derived from the 'boerenverteller'. The reason for this assertion is in the expressions 'make a name for ourselves', 'scattered abroad' and 'sons of men', which were very typical of the 'boerenverteller' (Van Selms 1967a:162-164). During the time of Solomon the author of the book of Genesis incorporated this section from the 'boerenverhaal' into his narrative. He thereby indicated the two 'reasons' for the existence of many nations: one is the outcome of a natural process of growth while the other is the result of God's judgment. According to Van Selms, the tension between Genesis 10

and 11:1-9 is over-stressed. It is not necessary to arrange the chapters in such a way that Genesis 11:1-9 precedes chapter 10. The present arrangement once again highlights a typical characteristic of the final author's style: first of all his own account is given (1:1-2:3 the creation; 10:1-32 the division of mankind), then his views are elaborated upon by the addition of narratives from the 'boerenverhaal' (2:4-25 the creation of man and woman; 11:1-9 the scattering of the nations) (Van Selms 1967a:160).

Van Selms thus had a (literary) critical eye for the text and he could easily 'see' the problems in the text. After close scrutiny of Genesis 14 he concluded that this chapter clearly falls out of place. It is only loosely linked to the previous chapter. Names and expression occur in this chapter which are lacking in the rest of the book of Genesis and the Pentateuch. The composition technique also differs from the rest of Genesis. This indicates that Genesis 14 is from a different hand. Van Selms called this author 'een machteloze ploeteraar' (Van Selms 1967a:205) and 'hoogst onhandig' (Van Selms 1967a:208). This chapter served the purpose of linking the patriarch to Jerusalem and can therefore be dated at a time after David's conquering of Jerusalem. At that stage many an Israelite still brought his tithes to the local sanctuary. This was of course unacceptable. It was thus the function of Genesis 14 to persuade the people to bring their tithes to Jerusalem (Van Selms 1967a:211).

7 The Joseph narrative

Van Selms regarded *Genesis 36:1-50:26* as a unity. Usually these chapters are called the 'Joseph narrative', but Van Selms named this unit the 'Story of Jacob'. The Joseph narrative starts with Genesis 37 but Van Selms made chapter 36 the beginning of the story. Although the expression תלרת יעקב 'the account of Jacob' only occurs in Genesis 37:2, a close link exists between 37:1-2a and 36:6-8 (Van Selms 1967b:171). If taken as a Jacob narrative it is of course logical for this main unit to start at Genesis 36 because it contains a genealogy of Esau.

According to Van Selms the Jacob story narrates the history of Joseph and it is much more of a *unity* than the previous chapters. The narrative progresses uninterrupted, and each section forms an integral part of the whole. This Jacob narrative offered Van Selms the best opportunity to prove his artistic abilities. He had a sensitivity for the artistic qualities of this narrative and was very much led by his artistic intuition in interpreting it. Van Selms therefore went to great

lengths to identify the narrative units, to explain how the different narrative elements follow each other logically and to demonstrate their interrelatedness. It is very interesting to note how, according to Van Selms, this narrative was used to solve some important political problems among the tribes in the days of Solomon.

An important contribution by Van Selms is the parallels he saw between *Joseph and Solomon*. According to him, this was because of the priestly author's fondness for parallels. Joseph was his hero and Solomon his favourite king, one for whom he had great admiration — and this led to some interesting parallels. There are thirteen:

- (1) Both were the children of the best-loved wife, who was not the first;
- (2) Both were born much later than the other brothers;
- (3) It is also stated that Joseph 'had been born to him (Jacob) in his old age' (Gn 37:3);
- (4) Both had fathers who were invalids and not able to exercise any authority;
- (5) Both had an elder half-brother who demonstrated his claim to the inheritance of the father by entering the harem of the father (Gn 35:22; 2 Sm 16:22);
- (6) Both fathers intended their sons (Joseph and Solomon) to inherit the portion designed for the eldest;
- (7) Both fathers prayed at their deathbed;
- (8) Dreams played an important part in the lives of both;
- (9) Both were men of insight and wisdom;
- (10) Both married Egyptian women given to them by the pharaoh;
- (11) Both appointed regional inspectors (Gn 41:34; 1Ki 4:7-20);
- (12) Both built places to store food;
- (13) Both levied extremely heavy taxes (Gn 47:13-26; 1Ki 12:4).

As we have said, the Joseph narrative flows very smoothly, which emphasises the artistic mastery of the priestly author. These chapters must be treated as a unit, which derived from one author (cf Van Selms 1967b:171). Van Selms thus rejected the idea of *Genesis 37* consisting of two narratives: according to the one, Reuben proposed that Joseph be thrown into the cistern and that is where the Midianites found him; the other account stressed the position of Judah who told his brothers to sell him to the Ishmaelites (cf Von Rad 1970:348,359). This, of course, poses a very important problem, but Van Selms solved it in his own particular way: Vondel's dramas illustrate that it could have happened as it stands: 'Het is waar, dat ons verhaal, zoals het er ligt, zeer gecompliceerd is, maar Vondels dramatisering bewijst, dat het zich so afgespeeld kon hebben' (Van Selms 1967b:188).

In many ways the Joseph narrative illustrates the *artistic abilities* of the priestly author. This can, for instance, be seen in the great speech of Judah in Genesis 44:1-34. It was addressed to Joseph after the silver cup was found in Benjamin's sack. Judah not only recounted their history, but also informed the viceroy about his father's emotions. He offered himself as a substitute in order that Benjamin could return to Jacob. The speech highlights the interesting position of Judah amongst his brothers — an important element in the further course of the narrative. According to Van Selms this discourse of Judah is a masterpiece:

Aan deze rede valt niets te verbeteren, niets weg te laten of toe te voegen. Ze is als een klassiek beeldhouwwerk, dat men van alle kanten beschouwen kan en altijd bewonderen moet. En tegelijk past zij volkomen in het geheel van de vertelling, springt daar niet uit als een opgepoets sieraad, maar doet ons beseffen, met welk een kunstenaar en mensenkenner wij in de schrijver van het gehele boek te doen hebben (Van Selms 1967b:238).

Many a modern reader regards Genesis 45:1-28 as the climax of Joseph's history. The plot has apparently unravelled and the story is heading for a happy ending. This is, however, not the case. The priestly author still had to deal with another important problem: did all the tribes go to Egypt, from where they were delivered (Van Selms 1967b:250)? It was the priestly author's explicit aim to furnish Israel with a *common history*. A history not only of a few disparate tribes, but one in which the whole of Israel participated. It was therefore of the utmost importance to illustrate that all the tribes and clans of Israel went to Egypt. The list of tribes in Genesis 46:8-25 thus fulfills this purpose. It also bridges the gap between the sojourn in Egypt and the exodus: all the tribes of Israel went to Joseph in Egypt and the whole group experienced the exodus from Egypt and the events at Sinai. In the mid-sixties Van Selms was of course well aware of the problem as to whether the group who had left Egypt had also experienced the events at Sinai. Without specifically referring to the problem, Genesis 46:1-47:12 and especially the list of the tribes (Gn 46:8-25) must be viewed as Van Selms's oversimplified answer to the problem.

Een van de doelstellingen van het boek Genesis is ... om aan het volk Israël een gemeenschappelijk verleden te schenken. Daartoe was het

nodig om duidelijk te maken, dat alle voorouders der israëlitische stammen en clans te zamen met Jozef in Egypte waren geweest, zodat alle onderdelen van Israëel ook deel hadden aan de wonderdadige bevrijding uit Egypte en allen in de personen van hun voorouders bij de Sinai het verbond met zijn eisen en beloften aanvaard hadden. Daarom moest de auteur hier wel nadrukkelijk zeggen, dat alle broers van Jozef naar Egypte gegaan waren en dat geen van hun zoons of kleinzons, hoofden van toekomstige clans, in Kanaän achterbleven (Van Selms 1967b:258).

Although one can criticise Van Selms for grossly neglecting critical scholarship, his work on the Pentateuch remains charming and delightful. It is not intended to contribute to our understanding of the origin or the growth of the Pentateuch or the book of Genesis. In no way does it want to explain or contest modern views about the development of the Pentateuch. It is merely a creative interpretation of the first book of the Pentateuch. Although Van Selms closely scrutinised the text and illuminated its many grammatical and historical peculiarities, that was not his principal aim. He wanted to shape all the information about the text creatively into a meaningful unit. Like the potter he wanted to form his clay (all information about the text) into a piece of art which would glorify God. In this manner Van Selms highlighted other aspects of the text and contributed to an artistic understanding of the Old Testament.

G SOME OTHER VOICES: REJECTION OF HISTORICAL CRITICISM

There were also those other voices which were heard during this period. Some rejected any historical critical examination of the Pentateuch. This approach was regarded as redundant, insufficient, dangerous, outdated, et cetera. Others believed that a historical-critical approach should be replaced by an immanent reading of the first five books of the Old Testament. These voices were not always very loud but they made their point. Below we focus on four. Eybers opted for a study of the final text but vehemently rejected any critical approach. The other three emphasised different aspects of an immanent reading: a structural analysis (Van Rooy), balance structure (Vosloo) and an investigation into etiological sagas (Van Dyk).

1 Ian Eybers: the rejection of any critical approach

Eybers had definite views about the Pentateuch. Above we have explained his confessional attitude and indicated its influence on his approach to the Old Testament. This can also be seen in his view of the Pentateuch. He revealed feelings of extreme animosity towards historical criticism. Before his untimely death in 1981 Eybers often expressed his dislike for the historical-critical method as a means of studying the Pentateuch. The work of the German critical scholars in particular (for instance Alt, Noth, Von Rad), was vehemently opposed. A critical assessment of the dominant (historical-critical) approach was therefore a prerequisite for the study of the Pentateuch.

It is very important to note Eybers's views on historical criticism: they are so typical of South Africans during the sixties and seventies. His views are one-sided and this seriously hampered a critical understanding of the Pentateuch. Consequently he also did not understand the scholars working according to that paradigm.

Eybers had problems with *Form criticism*, due to its terminological vagueness: *Gattung* refers to small parts while larger sections are also used to determine forms. Furthermore, the different forms are not defined in the same way. Form-critical results always create the impression of subjectivity and do not further the understanding of the text. According to Eybers, this approach is overestimated and it is incorrect to state that a text cannot be understood without a study of the form and its *Sitz im Leben*: 'Teen hierdie ondersoek is daar tereg die beswaar ingebring dat 'n rekonstruksie van die oervorm op grond van 'n model altyd hipoteties moet bly, maar veral moet daarop gewys word dat hierdie ondersoek *wegvoer* van die teks wat voor ons is en wat tog eintlik verklaar moet word' (Eybers 1975c:5).

The *history of traditions* is another overrated approach. Too many parts of the Pentateuch are regarded as traditions. Such an approach can have a detrimental effect on the prophets because their claim of divine revelation is seriously undermined when studied from the perspective of traditions (Eybers 1975c:8).

According to Eybers *transmission history* highlights the Pentateuch's growth from the oral to the written stage. Some scholars maintain, according to Eybers, that a text can only be understood in terms of this growth process. Two aspects of this approach can be discerned: the demonstration of the text's reliability and the understanding of its final form. From the research of scholars like Noth, Eybers concluded that transmission history is unable to determine the historicity of a text. Neither can it contribute to our understanding of the text: 'As dit so is, word 'n *überlieferungsgeschichtliche* ondersoek met die doel om die *betroubaarheid* van 'n berig vas te stel 'n twyfelagtige werkwyse.... As hierdie studie egter gedoen word om die *verstaan* van die teks te bevorder, kan ons net daarop wys dat dit dan nie nodig

is om die geskiedenis van die oorlewering vas te stel nie, want die huidige outeur wend dit in 'n bepaalde konteks aan vanwaaruit dit alleen verstaan kan word' (Eybers 1975c:9-10).

According to Eybers *redaction history* can indeed be of some importance because the exegete focuses on the final form of the Pentateuch: 'Dit is immers glad nie altyd so maklik om te bepaal of 'n bron gebruik is of nie.... Dikwels komponeer 'n skrywer van die Ou Testament ook só dat daar volslae onsekerheid heers oor die vraag of hy 'n bron gebruik, en indien wel, watter bron dit was' (Eybers 1975c:11).

According to Eybers, it was important to identify the *deficiencies* in *Pentateuchal criticism* (cf Eybers 1978a:45-81). His views can be phrased as follows:

(1) He pointed at the uncertainty regarding the identification of the sources and their extent. The subdivision of sources, in particular, has 'become quite absurd, thereby helping to discredit this method' (Eybers 1977a:9).

(2) Subjective judgment usually guides the Old Testament scholar in determining the sources. Literary criticism can therefore not be separated from theological, historical and religious presuppositions. The ideal of objectivity is thus undermined and all source divisions are the result of preconceived notions.

(3) The evolutionary approach to the religion underlying the theory of sources is problematic. This view of evolution excludes the possibility of revelation, rests on incomplete knowledge of the ancient Near East, ignores archaeological evidence emphasising the trustworthiness of the Pentateuch and neglects the fact that many Ancient Near Eastern documents highlight the reliability of the Old Testament (Eybers 1977a:10).

(4) The dating of the sources is problematic. Some, for instance, date the D source at 622 BC, and this forms the fixed point to date other sources. It is, however, not possible to accept this dating for D any longer and therefore the dates of the other sources seem dubious (Eybers 1977a:10-11).

(5) The differences in the divine name cannot serve as an indication for source division. In the Koran two names for the godhead are also used, while the name 'Elohim' occurs in the J source and 'Yahweh' or 'Yahweh Elohim' in E and P (Eybers 1977a:11).

(6) Differences in language, style and imagery are overemphasised, according to Eybers. Such judgments are completely subjective

and they discard the possibility that the differences might be purely coincidental (Eybers 1977a:11).

(7) A very important point of criticism deals with exclusion of the Old Testament as an oriental book. If this oriental nature of the Old Testament is taken into account many arguments of the source critics will fall away: 'In fact, the compilation of a book along the lines posited by the (source) theory is absolutely unknown in oriental antiquity' (Eybers 1977a:12).

Eybers had his own views about the *origin of the Pentateuch*: it was anti-critical and anti-historical; the final text was taken as starting-point; the different books of the Pentateuch were as far as possible linked to Moses; arguments were not sufficiently substantiated and are at times even superficial; no debate with critical scholars took place, et cetera.

(1) According to Eybers, the author of *Genesis*, 'whoever he might have been' (Eybers 1977a:20), made use of sources, especially oral traditions. Sections from the book clearly resemble Babylonian stories and these have been transmitted orally since the time of Abraham. Some written traditions preserved at certain shrines and the temple archives were also used by the author. He rendered the contents of these writings 'fairly accurate', resulting in differences with regard to style and verbal usage. Although it is very difficult to determine, this author has nevertheless left his theological imprint on these writings (Eybers 1977a:20). Eybers also indicated the time of *Genesis*' origin: 'The peaceful, progressive administration of Solomon would have been a particularly appropriate time for the production of such a book, in which case the irenic tone of *Genesis* would be a reflection of the spirit of the author's age' (Eybers 1977a:21).

(2) The book *Exodus* came from the same author as *Genesis*. The differences between the two books must be ascribed to the different sources which have been used. In *Genesis* the author relied more on oral sources while written sources were used in *Exodus*. These written sources did indeed derive from Moses. Though the extent of this material cannot be determined, 'it is obvious that the writer did make use of such (Mosaic) material' (Eybers 1977a:26).

(3) To highlight *Leviticus*' Mosaic origin Eybers had to accentuate its otherness. All laws are timeless but in *Leviticus* they are even more so. Its laws are quite different from those in *Exodus* and Num-

bers — hence the possibility that they did not originally belong to the same corpus. According to Eybers, there is no clear or objective evidence against the Mosaic authorship of Leviticus — or at least the essential parts of Leviticus. There are, on the contrary, many indications in the text pointing to Mosaic authorship. It is therefore 'quite possible that the contents of Leviticus, at least in substance, derived from Moses' (Eybers 1977a:31).

(4) *Numbers* and *Exodus* were written by the same author. In the case of *Numbers* the author made use of sources, some of which were derived from Moses (Eybers 1977a:36).

(5) Eybers also wanted to forge a link between Moses and the book of *Deuteronomy*. There were, however, sections which were clearly from another hand. *Deuteronomy* 1:1,5; 3:8; 4:41,46,47, 49 were written by someone from the west of Jordan where Moses had never been. In the light of this, Eybers concluded that 1:1-4:49 was the work of someone else. *Deuteronomy* 31-34 is also problematic and was also not written by Moses (Eybers 1977a:40-41). Moses thus did not compose the entire book of *Deuteronomy* but 'the question remains whether and to what extent he could be regarded as the author of some parts of the book' (Eybers 1977a: 41). Eybers now scrutinised *Deuteronomy* 5-30 for traces of Mosaic authorship. His views in this regard are not clear and in a difficult sentence he alluded to the possibility of Mosaic origin:

In this section (5-30) we encounter a text (11:30) which refers to the area *west* of the Jordan as 'beyond the Jordan', which could be interpreted as an indication that this (5-30), the oldest part of *Deuteronomy*, originated east of the Jordan and could therefore even be ascribed to Moses (Eybers 1977a:43).

Eybers had a very negative attitude towards historical criticism and he wanted to undermine its results. His anti-critical attitude was, however, more emotional than substantial; his criticism of the representatives of historical criticism was one-sided; he grossly neglected the important aspects of a historical-critical inquiry into the Pentateuch. Eybers's views were so typical of an earlier generation. This prevented them from making an original and significant contribution to the study of the Pentateuch.

2 Herrie van Rooy: a structural analysis of Deuteronomy

Van Rooy was the first to undertake a *structural analysis* of one of the books of the Pentateuch in the mid-seventies (cf Van Rooy 1977). He focused on the book of *Deuteronomy* and endeavoured to determine its structure and message. As a reformed scholar Van Rooy stressed the close relationship between one's *view of Scripture* and exegesis. His own concept of Scripture exerted a fundamental influence on his choice of method. Following the seventh article of the Belgium Confession he depicted the Bible as containing the will of God, providing adequately for the salvation of man. The Bible is therefore no ordinary historical book and history only serves to reveal God's salvation to mankind (Van Rooy 1977/1978:162-163).

This influenced his idea of exegesis radically: a method had to be sought which could do full justice to his view of Scriptures. No system could be imposed on the Scriptures from outside (Van Rooy 1977/1978:164). Historical methods are indeed important but they only highlight a text's origin and do not provide 'a responsible method of exegesis which can do justice to the Bible as the word of God' (Van Rooy 1977/1978:166). Because the Bible is the word of God 'one can do nothing else but use the present texts of the Old and the New Testament as the object of study of exegesis' (Van Rooy 1977/1978:166). This attitude almost automatically leads to structural analysis: the method which focuses on the text's final form and which accentuates the Bible as the Word of God.

Van Rooy was convinced of the importance of structural analysis. It sheds light on the text because the *smallest constituent part of the text* is taken into consideration. The exegete moves from the whole to the parts, thus determining the function of the smallest component of the book. Van Rooy's search for the structure of Deuteronomy was, according to him, no imposition of an 'extraneously conceived structure' on the book. His guiding principle was the structural markers that can be found in the book itself (Van Rooy 1977/1978:166).

When Van Rooy therefore studied the book of Deuteronomy no attempt was made to determine sources, authors or traditions by means of literary criticism. The *content* is scrutinised and structural markers are identified. Such markers only indicate the basic division of the book while further divisions, as well as the interdependence of the parts, are often dictated by the content (Van Rooy 1977/1978:167-

168). According to Van Rooy the first basic marker can be found in Deuteronomy 1:1-5. It is a long introduction which presents the speaker, the date and the place of the author. This is the beginning of a very long section which only concludes with Deuteronomy 28:69. The entire section of Deuteronomy 1:1-28:69 thus consists of a heading and a subscript. Deuteronomy 4:44-5:1 is, however, an important subdivision in the unit stretching from 1:1-28:69 (Van Rooy 1977/1978:169).

Deuteronomy 29:1 is another structural marker introducing a new section of the book stretching to 34:12. Van Rooy thus determined the basic divisions of the book but continued to investigate the smaller parts in order to establish the book's structure. He is also very confident that with the 'aid of this analysis every part of the book, even single verses, can be seen in the precise context of that part in the total framework of the whole book and this is a great help in the explication of the parts' (Van Rooy 1977/1978:174).

Van Rooy's optimism with regard to his newly found method is clear. *Historical-critical investigation* has revealed a lot of problems with regard to the book of Deuteronomy but, according to Van Rooy, this can easily be solved by means of structural analysis. His point can be illustrated by a few examples.

(1) Historical-critical investigations highlighted the problematic nature of Deuteronomy 1-4: it is not a unity, and must chapter 4 be linked to 1-3 or 5-11? Van Rooy clearly states that structural analysis 'offers the exegete the *solution* of the problems' (Van Rooy 1977/1978:175 — my emphasis). From an analysis it is clear that Deuteronomy 1:1-5 forms the introduction to the book, that 1:6-3:29 motivates the renewal of the covenant historically while 4:1-40 summons the people to uphold the covenant.

(2) There is also some doubt with regard to the position of Deuteronomy 27: to which part of the book must it be linked? Once again, structural analysis *reveals* that it belongs to the first part of the book. Once again, structural analysis 'offers a *meaningful point of departure*' for further exegetical investigation (Van Rooy 1977/1978:175 — my emphasis).

(3) According to historical-critical scholars Deuteronomy 29 and 30 constitute part of the covenant itself. Structural analysis has once again clearly illustrated that these chapters belong to the first section

of the second part of the book and that they refer back to the covenant in the fields of Moab (Van Rooy 1977/1978:175).

(4) The 'new' method also illuminates difficult verses like Deuteronomy 6:1-3. Some historical-critical investigations depict these verses as the conclusion of Deuteronomy 5. Structural analysis, on the other hand, reflects '*the precise function*' of these verses as the conclusion of Deuteronomy 5.

(5) Structural analysis also sheds light on difficult words and concepts. In Deuteronomy 28:8 (MT) the term 'the covenant' can be found. According to some this refers to the covenant in subsequent chapters. From the analysis it is, however, clear that 28:8 refers to the first part of Deuteronomy. This is, according to Van Rooy, an excellent example 'of the mutual dependence or interaction of exegesis and structural analysis' (Van Rooy 1977/1978:176).

Van Rooy hinted at a new direction in Pentateuchal studies but it never happened. His alternative to historical criticism was indeed substantial, but a thorough structural analysis of the Pentateuch was never undertaken. His work remains the only analysis of a book of the Pentateuch. It seems as if structural analysts did not find the Pentateuchal narratives a suitable field for their method.

3 Wil Vosloo: balance structure and narrative art

Vosloo was more positively inclined towards *historical criticism* but also stressed the importance of the text in its final form. Historical-critical investigation accentuated the origin and formation of the text while the text in its latest and final edition was neglected (Vosloo 1978a:15). He nevertheless acknowledged the importance of historical criticism and also wanted to take its results and insights into account (Vosloo 1978a:14-17).

Vosloo was interested in the structures of the final text. A structural analysis was not his aim, but the so-called *balance structures*. He investigated the Abrahamic promises in the Abrahamic narratives and highlighted the balance structure of each section or pericope. According to him the structures in the narratives play an important role: they bind the diverse material of the different sections into a unity. It is, however, important to note that Vosloo was not interested in structural analysis as such but in balance structures (Vosloo 1978a:18). He examined the balance structure of each unit in order to determine the

function of the promise and its theological meaning (Vosloo 1978a: 97-130).

The term 'balance structures' refers to the description of the *structure* of a part of the Bible. It consists of two components of proportionate and disproportionate extent, but with parallel content or form which are in a state of balance.

'n *Ewewigstruktuur* is die beskrywing van die bou van 'n Skrifdeel wat saamgestel is uit twee komponente van eweredige of oneweredige omvang, maar met parallelle inhoud waardeur 'n balans, hetsy deur ooreenkoms, hetsy deur teenstelling tussen die twee komponente verkry word (Vosloo 1978a:31).

Some depict balance structures as chiasmus, introverted parallelism, correspondence, concentric structure, et cetera. These are not different from balance structures but only *types* of it (Vosloo 1978b: 48). Different types of balance structures exist: a plain chiasmus (A-B-b-a), an enlarged chiasmus (A-B-b-a), an extended chiasmus (A-B-C-D-d-c-b-a), an inclusion (A-B ... a-b), and a concentric structure (A-B-S-b-a), et cetera (Vosloo 1978a:32-36, 135).

In his later years Vosloo adopted a *narratological approach* to the Pentateuch. This implied a non-historical approach and the avoidance of any reference to historical aspects: 'Om die teks as 'n verhaal te lees, beteken egter dat daar vir 'n nie-historiese benadering gekies word' (Vosloo 1988:159). The views of literary critics (amongst others the well-known Afrikaans author, André P Brink) shaped Vosloo's narratological understanding of the text. A narrative is a story being told in the form of (prose) language by someone to someone in particular circumstances. Each narrative also has specific features referring to time, space, events (intrigue), figure (characters), narrator's point of view, style, motif, theme and meaning. Vosloo illustrates his point by investigating Genesis 2-3 (Vosloo 1988:159). It is important to note that historical references suddenly become superfluous and unimportant. Narratological elements in the text facilitate understanding. Some of these narratological elements of Genesis 2-3 are highlighted below. It is also important to note that Vosloo does not view Genesis 1 and 2 as two descriptions of the one creation but as a story about a garden.

(1) *Time*: The opening words of the narrative (ביום עשות יהוה) (Gn 2:4) transfer the reader to the primeval era which cannot be ex-

amined historically. Reference to people is extremely vague and the location of the garden and rivers cannot be determined. And what happened in the garden is an event repeating itself everyday in the life of people (Vosloo 1988:160).

(2) *Space*: Vosloo distinguishes two types of narrative space. The first is the concrete narrative space.

The first space (outside the garden, 2:4b-7) alludes to a dry and uninhabited land signifying sterility and lifelessness.

The second space (inside the garden, 2:8-3:22) is quite different from the previous one. Everything is characterised by fertility, life and abundance.

The third space (outside the garden, 3:23-24) reflects a curse, dryness, infertility, pain and death.

The abstract narrative space is the second space and reflects the confrontation with the fertile religions of the Ancient Near East (Vosloo 1988:162).

(3) *Characters*: There are four actors (God, man, woman, snake) in the garden story. First of all God: He is depicted as creator and the One who cares. Man's description highlights two typical aspects of human life: as ruler he has a commanding position in nature but his weaknesses are also clearly depicted. The woman shares in the man's essence and was created to be his helper. Her transgression of set limits makes her a very interesting character. Although the snake does not develop as character he still fulfils an important role (Vosloo 1988:163-164).

(4) *Author's perspective*: The author's view is also very important. According to Vosloo there are three places where the author's perspective can be seen: 2:10-14 (the reference to the rivers emphasises God as the source of all fertility); 2:24-25 (God's approval of the sexual relationships between man and his wife); 3:20-21 (something of a reconciliation can be detected); 3:1 (the craftiness of the snake is contrasted with man's innocence) (Vosloo 1988:165).

(5) *Style: diction*: Style refers to the different techniques which the author uses in the creation of an event. In the garden narrative the occurrence of specific words is very important. The word 'eat' is used twenty-three times and can be found in all the crucial episodes: the laying out of the garden, the orders given to man and his wife, the transgression of God's command, the interrogation and judgement of

the two transgressors, and the conclusion of the events. This word is perhaps the most important 'Leitwort' in the garden story. A close link exists between 'eat' and 'dead/life': by eating man can live and by eating he can also die (Vosloo 1988:166).

(6) *Meaning*: Vosloo made a revolutionary remark (for our context) with regard to meaning. He did not pinpoint the text to one meaning only. *The meaning does not exist. A text may have different meanings*:

Betekenis is dit wat die verhaal vir die leser be-teken. Dit word eerstens bepaal deur die aard van die teks self.... Maar uiteindelik word dit bepaal deur die mate waarin die leser homself aan die teks prys-gee.... Al hierdie betekenisne gaan uit van die veronderstelling dat ons te doen het met 'n afgehandelde, permanent gefikseerde objek. 'n Verhaal soos die tuinverhaal is egter iets wat lewe, of liewers, dis 'n gebeurtenis wat die leser meevoer in 'n dinamiese proses van herskepping.... Dit kan met die tuinverhaal gebeur wanneer dit nie meer gesien word as beskrywing (histories of mitologies) van wat gebeur *het* nie, maar as 'n beleving van wat *gebeur*; wanneer daar nie oor die geskiedenis heen na die persone in die verhaal gekyk word nie, maar wanneer die persone in die verhaal hierdie geskiedenis binnetree; wanneer die leser nie net homself in die verhaal ontdek nie, maar ook die God van die skepping (Vosloo 1988:172-173).

Vosloo's investigation of the balance structures of the patriarchs was not continued either by himself or by other scholars. It was nevertheless an interesting answer to historical-critical analysis. Whether Vosloo answered all the questions or not is not sure. More important is his narratological investigation of the Pentateuch. This approach can indeed open new avenues to South African scholars.

4 Peet Van Dyk: the problem of etiological narratives

Van Dyk has made an excellent contribution to the study of etiologies in the Pentateuch. He investigated etiological narratives and came to far-reaching conclusions. According to him, Gunkel's view of etiological narratives as explanations of specific phenomena was widely accepted. Much debate has been devoted to the nature of etiological narratives and two aspects have received much attention: the historical reliability of etiological narratives as well as the chronological relationship between a narrative and its etiological element. Scholars were so engaged in discussions that the possibility that Gunkel was wrong did not cross their minds.

And this was the issue that Van Dyk wanted to consider. He started with an interesting *history of research* highlighting the main issues:

(1) Etiological narratives explain the existence of particular phenomena. According to Van Dyk almost 'all Old Testament scholars accepted this definition' (Van Dyk 1985a:3; 1985b:81).

(2) Etiological narratives provide answers to questions posed by children. According to Gunkel children asked all kinds of questions about phenomena and the etiological narrative was the manner in which the ancient people dealt with the problem. Van Dyk stated that although this question and answer scheme may have appeared in the Old Testament it is totally lacking in the book of Genesis (Van Dyk 1985a:4-5; 1985b:81).

(3) Etiological elements were only secondarily attached to narratives. The importance of the historical reliability of the etiological narratives made it important to define the relationship between the narrative and the etiological element. If the etiological element was the original element, and if it gave rise to the narrative, the historical reliability of the narrative is suspect. If, on the other hand, the narrative was original and the etiological element only a secondary addition, the historical nature of a narrative would not automatically be treated with suspicion (Van Dyk 1985a:5-13; 1985b:82-85).

(4) Etiological elements illustrate the relative historical reliability of narratives. The point is whether etiological narratives can be used as sources for history writing. Members of the so-called Leipzig school were sceptical about the historical reliability of etiological narratives and were 'therefore very reluctant to use information contained in such narratives for historiographical purposes' (Van Dyk 1985b: 86). Scholars from the Baltimore school on the other hand defended the possible historical reliability of at least some of these etiological narratives. According to them each narrative had to be scrutinised in order to determine its historical value (Van Dyk 1985a: 13-16; 1985b: 86).

(5) Etiological narratives can also legitimate some state of affairs. So much emphasis was laid on the explanatory function of etiological narratives that its legitimisation function was obscured. It must also be taken into account that etiological narratives can also legitimise and substantiate certain ideas or phenomena (Van Dyk 1985a:16-17;

1985b:86).

(6) Etiological elements serve as didactic or mnemonic aids. An important contribution was the view that the etiological elements must rather be viewed as a device to stimulate the memory of the storyteller or the listener (Van Dyk 1985a:17-18; 1985b:87).

In the light of this research history, Van Dyk came to the conclusion that the debate 'seems to be caught up in a vicious kind of circle today, due to the uncritical perpetuation of Gunkel's conception of these narratives' (Van Dyk 1985b:87). The debate was a *one-sided concentration on the historical reliability* of etiological narratives. Van Dyk therefore suggested that the debate should be re-opened and his works were 'n poging om die dooie punt te deurbreek' (Van Dyk 1985a:20). Such a fresh approach must meet three requirements:

(1) Questions pertaining to the historical reliability of etiological narratives must be bracketed. All attention must be focused on the literary aspects of these narratives.

(2) Etiological narratives must be treated as literary constructs. Every element in the narrative must be investigated from a literary point of view.

(3) The rhetorical function of etiological elements in etiological narratives must be investigated.

Van Dyk held a *folkloristic approach* and investigated the Yahwistic patriarchal narratives. He first of all scrutinised the text historical-critically in order to determine the Yahwistic sections. Only after this had been accomplished did he investigate them as folklore. According to him, many Old Testament narratives can be described as folklore.

Such a folkloristic approach illuminates the etiological element in narratives (Van Dyk 1990:20). Van Dyk investigated many aspects of folklore and concluded that the many so-called etiological elements are only rhetorical devices. On closer 'inspection, however, it seems that many of these elements are not etiological at all, but rather should be seen as rhetorical devices' (Van Dyk 1990:26). If certain conditions prevail, etiological elements are rhetorical devices with the aim to affirm or to entertain: if these elements fall outside the plot they serve some other rhetorical function; if the narratives contain important messages some affirmation techniques may be used; if the so-

called etiological elements can be included or excluded at will, some rhetorical function may in some cases be probable (Van Dyk 1990: 27).

To illustrate his point Van Dyk investigated Genesis 16; 19:30-38; 25:21-26; 26:17-22,23-33; 28:10-22; 31:44-32:1; 32:23-33 (Van Dyk 1985a:78-176). Van Dyk first of all studied the text from the perspective of text criticism and literary criticism. He then investigated the plot. In each case it is clear that *the so-called etiological elements do not form part of the plot*. One can therefore conclude that the whole narrative was not compiled to explain the existence of phenomena contained in the etiological elements. Van Dyk thus made a far-reaching conclusion:

From these examples it is clear that many of the so-called etiological narratives in folklore and in the Old Testament are not etiological (in the sense of wanting to explain a phenomenon) at all. In the two examples the so-called etiological elements fall outside the plot of the narratives; more than one etiological element is present; in the case of the fountain Lahai-roi the phenomenon is probably in a remote area and not very well known; both narratives contain important symbols for the community; and last but not least rhetorical analyses have shown that these elements can convincingly be interpreted as rhetorical devices (Van Dyk 1990:33).

H CONCLUSION

Important work has been done with regard to the study of the Pentateuch in South Africa. Since the nineteenth century we have been grappling with historical criticism. It is still treated with great scepticism in this country. *Colenso* and *Du Plessis* were rejected for their historical-critical studies of the Pentateuch. People like *Fensham* and *Van Zyl* had their own peculiar ways of handling the problem. *Deist* was the first South African since *Colenso* who really knew how to apply the historical-critical method to the Pentateuch. He was also well-versed in the thoughts of the Pentateuch critics. *Deist* really opened a new and historical understanding of the first five books of the Old Testament. *Van Selms* had a different approach and highlighted the link between the Pentateuch text and works of art. *Eybers* rejected historical criticism without suggesting a substitute. People like *Van Rooy*, *Vosloo* and *Van Dyk* contributed to an immanent reading of the Pentateuch.

Chapter four

The Prophets

This chapter could also be called: 'A story of two ways'. Since the seventies two clear ways of studying the prophets have been discernible among South African scholars. There were those who approached the prophets in an immanent way and those who were more historically inclined. One group focused on the structure of the text and limited their study to a mere analysis of the final text. Among these Willem Prinsloo and his students played an important role. Others outside this group also contributed to an immanent reading of the prophets. There were also those who studied the prophets historically. By means of studying the text, all possible historical information about the prophets was assembled and a context reconstructed. The prophets were depicted as human beings who formed an integral part of a specific life context. It was especially Ferdinand Deist and his students who gave impetus to this approach.

This chapter is devoted to a discussion of these two ways of studying the prophets. But let us first examine a few scholars who cannot be fitted into this scheme.

A SOME IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTIONS

This paragraph is devoted to the work of other South African scholars who made an contribution to our understanding of the prophets. We first of all focus on Ian Eybers, then on an important Afrikaans thesis submitted in the fifties and conclude with an interesting view of Jeremiah.

1 Ian Eybers: a romantic view of the prophets

Ian Eybers wrote extensively on Israel's prophets. Two books and many articles were devoted to this theme. He had an overarching view

of the prophets and his conceptions can be called romantic. To illustrate this point, some typical features of his approach are illustrated below.

He held a very *conservative attitude* towards the prophets. As stated above, he was trained in a theological environment which treated a critical approach to the Old Testament with scepticism. We also called him a confessional theologian who rejected the historical-critical method. Critical views with regard to the prophets were taken notice of, but constantly 'solved' in a conservative manner. Eybers never appropriated the so-called immanent approaches which have been so strongly propagated since the early seventies. Although later generations have a more reliable picture of the prophets, Eybers's pious interpretation reveals his deep respect for the Word of God.

In nearly all cases the prophets were viewed as *pious individuals*. Eybers's prophets were therefore men of a very high moral standing and devoted to their calling. This romantic view led him to 'paint' the prophets in the most beautiful colours and to 'defend' them from any unfair criticism. According to him this was no difficult undertaking because the relevant 'data' can easily be abstracted from the prophetic books. A very idyllic picture of Amos was construed. He was self-supporting but modest, a herdsman but not illiterate. As owner of livestock and connected with the cultivation of sycamore-figs, Amos became an independent farmer who sustained himself adequately. Eybers's depiction of Tekoa's influence on Amos is fascinating: it shaped him into a prophet. As a herdsman in the dry countryside near Tekoa he became acquainted with silence, loneliness and a simple life style. This moulded him into a keen observer, deep thinker and a hardy person. Many an image was derived from farm life: the cart laden with sheaves, the remains of the lion's meal, the good conditions of the cows of Bashan, et cetera. Despite this rural background Amos was, according to Eybers, an educated man. This can clearly be seen from his knowledge about the stars, the politics and the socio-economic conditions of the Northern Kingdom (Eybers 1974b:5-8; 1977a:157-158). Habakkuk, on the other hand, was a totally different prophet (Eybers 1969a:50-59). Some accused him of being a professional prophet and therefore ecstatic. Eybers defended him against these accusations. According to him the explicit reference to Habakkuk's prophetic office served a specific purpose: it wanted to stress

that Habakkuk did not resort to all kinds of devices to work himself into an ecstasy 'but that he prepared himself spiritually for a revelation and then had to await its coming' (Eybers 1977a:193). He also guarded Haggai and Zechariah from any attempt to link them to a realised eschatology or the frustration of hope. According to Eybers, Haggai did indeed encourage the post-exilic community to rebuild the temple, but his emphasis on renouncing all impurity and the dedication to a holy life must also be noted (Eybers 1975b:23). Zechariah, on the other hand, paid even less attention to the rebuilding of the temple (Eybers 1971a:32-34). He did utter some promises in connection with the rebuilding of the temple, 'but it seems even more appropriate to conclude that in Zechariah the building activity as such recedes into the background because the prophet expects more from God than from any human effort' (Eybers 1975b:16).

The prophets, the authors of the prophetic works, *really lived* and were no mere mythological figures. Jonah, for instance, existed concretely in a specific time and place. When the prophets are approached 'without preconceptions' (cf Eybers 1977a:154) their historicity and real existence cannot be doubted. This conviction caused Eybers to devote a section called 'the prophet and his times' to each of the prophets in his work. The reconstruction of a prophet's historical background was of great importance to Eybers. According to him, this constituted an important reason to study an 'introduction' to the prophets (and the rest of the Old Testament). Knowledge about a prophet and his times could shed important light on the contents of a prophetic book (Eybers 1969a:50).

The historical reality of Israel's prophets cannot be denied. All prophetic books can therefore be treated as *reliable historical documents* about the prophets. In spite of all the problems attached to the book of Hosea 'we may safely assume that the entire book of Hosea is a reliable record of his preaching' (Eybers 1977b:4). The book of Jonah can also be depicted as 'a record of actual events' (Eybers 1971b: 214-215). Jonah and all the events described in the book can be accepted as historical facts. One of the reasons for this view is that 'the Lord Jesus' accepted them as factual. Jesus accepted the historical fact that Jonah lived and that there were people in Nineveh who responded positively to the preaching of the prophet (Eybers 1977a:173-174). The accuracy of the caption in Micah 1:1 need not be doubted and it

serves as a means to date the prophet accurately. The book of Haggai gave an 'undoubtedly reliable interpretation' of the events during the building of the temple (Eybers 1975b:17).

Eybers's romantic view also led him to describe the prophets' *literary output* in glowing terms. In these descriptions Eybers's admiration for the prophets reached its climax. At times this view sounds incredible and one wonders whether Eybers is describing humans or celestial beings. Eybers states that one may conclude from Joel's style that he was a sensitive and an imaginative observer. He communicated his message 'with succinct, telling descriptions in thrilling, plastic images'. Joel also reveals a colourful, fresh and vital tone. His 'poetry is among the best in the Old Testament' (Eybers 1977a:152). Obadiah's style can be described as 'forceful poetry and literary skill'. His choice of words is 'vivid and appropriate, his imagery striking, interspersed with pithy exclamations'. By means of language he reveals his deep anger and grief (Eybers 1977a:167). The book of Jonah is a narrative and it has an 'absorbing style' which grips the reader. His depiction of characters and scenes is lively and the portrayal of the main events of the narrative 'makes this a literary gem' (Eybers 1977a:174). Micah expresses 'exalted ideas' in 'direct and forceful formulations'. His descriptions are 'vividly graphic' and display an 'acute observation and intense feeling' (Eybers 1977a:185). Nahum's prophecy can be counted among 'the finest of Hebrew poetry'; it is 'clear and vivid'. Eybers concurs with those who said that Nahum's 'graphic and powerful' style is 'unrivalled' in Old Testament literature and has 'seldom been surpassed in any literature'; his sentences are succinct and evocative; his description of events conjure up 'vivid pictures in the mind's eye' (Eybers 1977a:190). Malachi has a 'lucid and simple, direct and forceful' style with a 'fluid structure' (Eybers 1977a:221). According to Eybers Malachi's language is 'strikingly pure' for the period in which it originated (Eybers 1977a:222).

In the light of the above, it is clear that Eybers emphasised the *unity of the prophetic books*. He did not reject the possibility of later interpolation or additions to a prophetic book (Eybers 1977b:161; 214-217) but this would have been the exception rather than the rule. Generally speaking, the prophetic books were written by the prophets whose names appear on top and these books reveal a definite unity

and authenticity. Although this unity was vehemently defended, Eybers's arguments were not always convincing. The unity of the prophetic books was a very serious issue to him but in many instances he oversimplified the matter. He ascribed, for instance, Isaiah 40-66 to the prophet Isaiah but did not argue his case satisfactorily. Some reasons were provided but 'the main reason for ascribing the contents of chapter 40-66 to Isaiah appears to be that the New Testament' accepted the authorship of Isaiah (Eybers 1977a:106).

Also very typical of Eybers's approach is the fact that the essence of the prophet's message must be understood in the light of *Jesus Christ*. With regard to Hosea's Gomer, no one can cast a stone, 'for Jesus solemnly declares that the harlots who believe in Him will enter the kingdom of God ahead of many religious leaders' (Eybers 1977b: 7). Obadiah's expectation is that the day of Yahweh 'will only dawn with the advent of Jesus Christ, the perfect Minister of the Lord' (Eybers 1977b:30). Haggai's call for the re-building of the temple was often viewed with some mistrust but, according to Eybers, a christological interpretation gives new dimensions to this prophet's message (Eybers 1977b:63-64).

2 Barend van der Merwe: an important thesis in Afrikaans

Barend van der Merwe was not granted a long academic life. He died young, and South Africa lost one of his most promising Old Testament scholars. In his short life he left us one important work. This is his thesis on the Pentateuchal traditions in Isaiah 40-55. He completed this work under the supervision of Th Vriezen of Groningen, the Netherlands, in 1955. It is an excellent thesis and one of the best Old Testament works in Afrikaans. Today Isaiah scholars still regard it as a very fine study. We will therefore briefly highlight Van der Merwe's views.

According to Van der Merwe, many *references* to the *Pentateuch* can be found in *Isaiah 40-55*. Van der Merwe investigated Deutero-Isaiah in the light of five Pentateuchal traditions: the creation story, the so-called paradise motive, the flood tradition, the patriarchal narrative and the Mosaic tradition. It was his intention to determine the nature of the relationship between Isaiah 40-55 and these Pentateuchal traditions. Was the one derived from the other? How did the Pentateuchal traditions shape the theology of Deutero-Isaiah? We can il-

illustrate Van der Merwe's reasoning by focusing on the following.

First, the *creation tradition* and Isaiah 40-55. He investigated Isaiah 40:12,18ff,22,25ff; 42:5; 44:24,27; 45:7,12,18; 48:12b,13 and concluded that the creation tradition functions in a specific way in Isaiah 40-55. Often it is used as an *argument* in disputes: the prophet uses the creation to emphasise the overwhelming power of Yahweh which can accomplish everything; it is also used to stress that Yahweh is totally different from the hand-made gods; by means of the creation tradition the prophet also answers the people's complaints about Yahweh's apparent neglect of his people (40:27). Creation theology is also applied in order to *legitimise* the servant's mission (42:5). In 51:9f it is employed as motive in a *prayer*. Often it is used as a *hymnic* extension of the name of Yahweh. According to Van der Merwe, Deutero-Isaiah used this creation in a specific way. Deutero-Isaiah did not want to confront us with a dogma about the creation, but incorporated the idea of creation into a much wider context where it had 'n dienende funksie: hetsy as onbetwiste stelling in 'n twisgesprek, hetsy as hymniese uitbreiding van die naam Jahwe' (Van der Merwe 1955:7).

Van der Merwe investigated the relationship between *Genesis 1-3* and Deutero-Isaiah in order to determine whether the first served as source for the second. He scrutinised the text and then concluded that no direct relationship existed: 'Hierdie oorsig toon dat daar wel sekere herinnerings aan Gen. 1-3 in die skeppingstradisie by Deutero-Jesaja is. Die herinnerings of aanrakingspunte kan egter as betreklik vaag en onduidelik getipeer word in die sin dat ons nêrens sondermeer direkte afhanklikheid kan konstateer nie' (Van der Merwe 1955:10).

Van der Merwe also investigated Isaiah 51:3 in the light of the *paradise tradition* of Genesis 2. Especially the words 'Eden' and 'garden of Yahweh' in Isaiah 51:3 were studied in close connection with Genesis 2 and other sections of the Old Testament. Van der Merwe concluded that more than one view of paradise existed: according to Genesis 2 a garden was constructed for man in the land of Eden; in Ezekiel 28 it is a garden of God; Ezekiel 31 also speaks of a garden of God with many nice trees. Isaiah 51:3 probably draws on the same tradition as Ezekiel 28 and 31, where Eden is described as a garden of God. A great difference thus exists between Genesis 2 and Isaiah 51:3: in the one the garden serves as the space for human existence and in the other it is God's abode (Van der Merwe 1955:39-45): 'Die

verhouding tussen die paradysvoorstelling in Gen. 2v. enersyds en die 'paradysvoorstelling' of, beter gesê, die verwysing na Eden en die godstuin in Gen. 13:10; Jes. 51:3; Eseg. 36:35 en Joël 2:3 andersyds is 'traditionsgeschiedtlich' nie so te sien dat Gen. 2v. die oerbron bevat nie, maar dit is veeleerder op dieselfde vlak' (Van der Merwe 1955:50).

Isaiah 54:9 was examined in the light of Genesis 8:20ff and 9:8-17. Both sections from Genesis form part of the *flood narrative* (Gn 6:5-9:17) and the first can be attributed to the Yahwist and the second to the priestly author. Van der Merwe stated that Isaiah 54:9 followed the language and the ideas of the priestly author in Genesis 9:8-17 more closely. Both the priestly author and Deutero-Isaiah knew a tradition about Yahweh's covenant with the Noachic world after the flood. In Deutero-Isaiah this view of a universal covenant functioned in a specific manner. The author searched for an event in the history of Israel that could be compared with the destruction of Zion and the disastrous effects of the exile. The story of the deluge met this need: the flood was an excellent example of God's devastating judgement, which was followed by a universal and eternal covenant (Van der Merwe 1955:74-89).

Although many allusions to the *patriarchs* can be found in Deutero-Isaiah, not all references are based on the Genesis stories (Gn 12-52). For example, Isaiah 48:8b is not derived from Jacob's birth history but from the views of Hosea, Jeremiah and Ezekiel on marriage as a symbol for the relationship between Yahweh and his people; Isaiah 49:21 is also influenced by Hosea, Jeremiah and Ezekiel and their view of childlessness as punishment by God; the notion that Israel's election is based on Abraham's election must be related to deuteronomistic preaching; the promises of a great nation are too wide and general to ascribe them to a specific tradition (Van der Merwe 1955:143-145).

Van der Merwe (1955:146-246) devoted a long section to the relationship between Deutero-Isaiah and the *Mosaic traditions*. According to him, Deutero-Isaiah drew heavily on these traditions: the sojourn of Israel in Egypt, the plagues, the crossing of the Red sea, the hardening of Pharaoh's heart, Yahweh's accompaniment of his people in the desert, the history of the provision of water, et cetera. Although this relationship has many different aspects we refer to just one, ac-

tualisation. The great events featuring Yahweh and Israel in Egypt and the desert were actualised in new situations. This process of actualisation was accomplished by the adaption and the generalisation of the traditions. The words of the 'original' tradition were adapted to serve a new purpose. By the omission of historical and geographical data, traditions were generalised (Van der Merwe 1955:265).

It is thus apparent from the work of Van der Merwe that not all the allusions in Deutero-Isaiah to creation, the patriarchs, the flood, et cetera were taken over from the Pentateuchal traditions. Although Deutero-Isaiah borrowed from the Pentateuchal traditions, this was accomplished in a specific way. He used them very freely, he refrained from direct quotations from the Pentateuch, and he re-worked and re-interpreted the words and thoughts which were borrowed.

The application of the old traditions by Deutero-Isaiah is marked by two features especially, viz. it is theocentric and actual. By alluding to the traditions Deutero-Isaiah especially wanted to teach his people what Yahweh had done in the past and to strengthen the belief that Yahweh was able to do this again.... The traditions of the Pentateuch are not used by him as a scheme or pattern for the acts of Yahweh in the future. The tradition is not idealised. Deutero-Isaiah was well aware of the sin and disbelief of his people in the past and he was opposed to an abuse of the old traditions. It may be said that Deutero-Isaiah especially used the traditions of old to explain and illustrate the nucleus of his message: Behold your God (40:9) (Van der Merwe 1955:267).

Before 1971 three other important theses appeared in Afrikaans. These works were clearly written in the 'old paradigm'. In other words, they did not yet benefit from the new discussions on methodology which only started in 1971.

In 1954 *Egge Mulder* submitted a thesis at the University of Groningen under the supervision of Th C Vriezen on the theology of the Isaiah apocalypse. Mulder investigated many aspects of Isaiah 24-27 and concluded that the poet's thoughts focused on two aspects: the immanent judgement of the world as well as the destruction of a city. This city played an important role and Mulder identified Moab as the city of wrath (Mulder 1954:78-93). With regard to the eschatology of Isaiah 24-27, Mulder concluded that many aspects of Old Testament eschatology were united in these chapters. The author of these chapters made use of the prophetic writings 'maar dra ook in sy werk voorstellinge van die apokaliptiese eschatologie in' (Mulder 1954: 121). Despite these apocalyptic motives 'vind ons hier nog nie die fantastiese en spekulatiewe wat karakteristiek is vir die Apokaliptiek wat in die tweede voor-christelike eeu opkom nie' (Mulder 1954:121).

Bart Oberholzer completed a thesis in 1966 on the servant of the Lord in the Old Testament. It was his contention that the servant figure in Isaiah 40-55 can only be understood when the term עֶבֶד is investigated in the Old Testament as a whole. According to Oberholzer עֶבֶד primarily describes a relationship. Important light is shed on this relationship when the religious as well as the non-religious use of עֶבֶד is investigated.

With regard to the religious function of עֶבֶד Oberholzer distinguished between a singular as well as a plural form. Among the individual servant figures the patriarchs, the psalmists, Job and Daniel can be discerned; these individuals embody or represent the people of Yahweh. The other servant figures like the prophets form a different category; they are more the trusted servant who perform certain definite functions. Deutero-Isaiah's servant belongs to the latter group; he is called a servant because of his position between Yahweh and Israel on the one hand and Yahweh and the nations on the other; he is a mediator with the task of re-establishing the relationship between Yahweh and his people, and the one who must bring the other nations into relationship with Yahweh.

In his summary Oberholzer depicted the servant as follows:

He is simply the servant who wants to perform his task in obedience to his Lord. His knowledge of the acts of Yahweh toward his people since the earliest times provides him with the forms in which he proclaims the future salvation. Like the patriarchs who lived before the Lord as the representatives of the people He was to bring into existence, like Moses whose function was placed in the commencement of a totally new dispensation for the people, like Samuel who stood on the border between an old and a new dispensation, so this servant stands before the Lord as the representative of the people in the dawn of a new dispensation. In this new dispensation the hopes of the past is [sic!] to be fulfilled and the promises of the Lord to be realised.... He understood the history of the acts of Yahweh toward His people in such a way that the conclusive act was on hand... Therefore the servant as here depicted is at the same time a figure of the future. He is the servant of eschatological hope' (Oberholzer 1966:274-275).

Wouter Van Wyk (1966) wrote an excellent thesis on Amos's views on God, people and man. He sketched Amos as standing between God and his people; between the God who elected his people and those who neglected their election. Amos and Israel had two different views of Yahweh: Amos emphasised Yahweh's sovereignty; he is the God of Israel as well as the nations; Israel must therefore fit into his plans for the nations. In the light of this basic theological premise Van Wyk investigated some sections from the book of Amos. On the possibility of salvation in the book of Amos he made the following important comment:

Al is Amos se prediking feitlik uitsluitlik onheilsverkondiging, is die doel daarvan die terugkeer na Jahwe. Hy is die profeet wat ter efferder ure met sy prediking van die onafwendbaarheid van die gerig juis die gerig wil afwend. Alleen so is die optrede van die profeet sinvol. In die skynbare geslotenheid van die Amosboodskap, skyn die resgedagte as ligstraat. Die res is die kiem van die nuwe Israel wat uit die gerig te voorskyn sal kom. Maar die vryheid

van beslissing oor genade en gerig kom slegs Jahwe toe. Daar is niks outomaties aan die beloftes van God nie. Israel het geen reg of aanspraak nie. By die aanvaarding van die feit dat elke profeet naas onheilsprofeet ook heilsprofeet kan wees, word die slot van die Amosboek vir Amos gehandhaaf (Van Wyk 1966:171).

Franz Hecht (1971) wrote a thesis on the relationship between eschatology and ritual in some Old Testament prophets. According to him the prophets' criticism of the cult must be treated cautiously. The prophets did not reject the cult, but only specific features in it. When the cult criticism of the prophets is scrutinised, some important light is shed on eschatology and the nature of the cult in the religion of Israel.

3 Adrianus Van Selms: a new look at the prophet Jeremiah

Van Selms's commentaries on Jeremiah were published in 1972 and 1974. Like those on Genesis and Job they appeared in the Dutch series 'De prediking van het Oude Testament'. By this time Van Selms was already in his late sixties and still actively involved in the writing of commentaries - his commentaries on Job and the Psalms had not yet been published. His three-volume commentary on Jeremiah is an enjoyable piece and a sign of thorough research and textual analysis. His views on the origin of the book are briefly discussed below.

Like his work on Genesis, Van Selms's commentaries on Jeremiah are different from those of other scholars: current issues are often neglected and his own views are not always substantiated sufficiently. These works nevertheless reflect the typical features of Van Selms's approach and make for delightful reading. Put differently: they are beautifully written in the true Van Selmian style. They manifest his great *erudition*. He has the ability to use his vast knowledge of ancient and modern literature in order to understand the text; it is remarkable how he used Dutch authors to illuminate the biblical text (cf 1972:42; 1974a:43,82,89,219). Compared to South African scholars' extreme sensitivity for the correct method, his works look rather methodless. Van Selms' *method*, however, consisted of a 'close reading' of the text, sharp philological and historical observations, and intelligent guesses. These works also illustrate Van Selms' *creativity*: he created many new possible interpretations of the text. Closely related to this is Van Selms's ability to *narrate*. By means of his lively and vivid narration the ancient world of the text came alive. Van Selms used the text (and his imagination) to construe an authentic *historical context* of Jeremiah: it differs from a historical-critical or sociological construction but has a flavour of authenticity. His works are *truly human*, especially in the directives for preaching; scientific knowledge and personal experience are united, so to speak (1974a:122-123,132-133,156-157,178-179).

Van Selms took the origin of Jeremiah seriously. To understand the book of Jeremiah, it was of paramount importance to determine its origin and growth. Van Selms formulated a theory with regard to the *person of Jeremiah* and the *development* of the book, which served as a heuristic principle for the analysis of the text. According to him Jeremiah was only thirteen when he received the call to be a prophet. Van Selms (1972:20) thus rejected the general view that Jeremiah was born in 650 BC and that he became a prophet twenty-four years later in the year 626 BC. Jeremiah is called a נָעַר and in the ancient world this term referred to a boy whose voice had not yet broken. If the term was applied to an adult it indicated someone in a position of subordination. It was never applied to an adult male. If this early dating of Jeremiah's calling is accepted, important light is shed on some difficult passages: the prohibition from marrying is only mentioned in 16:2 because Jeremiah could not marry before that time; it explains why the prophetess Huldah was consulted on discovering the law in 622 BC: Jeremiah was still too young; it also clarifies Jeremiah's ten years of silence: as the son of a priest he had to fulfil certain obligations at the temple between his twentieth and thirtieth year; these years spent in the 'orders' shaped his views on the malfunctioning of the temple ideology. In short, the theory of the prophet Jeremiah's early calling has some advantages for the understanding of Jeremiah's text (Van Selms 1972:22-23; cf Oberholzer 1978:70-80; 1985:252-259).

Van Selms admired Jeremiah the *poet*. According to him, Jeremiah acquired his poetic skills at a very early stage. Soon after his call to be a prophet Jeremiah joined the ranks of the wandering prophets ('straatanger') who roamed the streets of Jerusalem. From early times prophetic utterances were transmitted in poetic form and Jeremiah also couched his sayings in this form (Van Selms 1974b:85). Although he employed prose in his later life these early poems serve as an important indication for the dating of Jeremiah's prophetic utterances. His poetic style was limited and not as lively as that of Isaiah, but was held in high regard by Van Selms: 'Als dichter kunnen wij Jeremia het best waarderen, waar hij elegische tonen aanslaat. Zijn stijl is ... eerder schilderend ... maar vooral klagend-muzikaal' (Van Selms 1974b:85).

The role and the function of *Baruch* are extremely important in

Jeremiah's life, as they are in Van Selms's commentary. According to Van Selms, Baruch played a decisive role in the compilation of the book of Jeremiah and this must be kept in mind when the text is expounded. It was in 605/4 BC that Baruch joined Jeremiah as secretary. He probably wanted to follow a career in the civil service but then his way crossed that of Jeremiah. According to Jeremiah 36:26, 32 he was a scribe and therefore well-equipped for his task as assistant to Jeremiah. Apparently this was no minor position, because he became the final editor of the book of Jeremiah. After Jehoiakim destroyed Jeremiah's scrolls Jeremiah immediately dictated a new version of his early prophecies to his secretary (Van Selms 1974b: 140,141). The next scroll contained even more than the first: *And many similar words were added to them* (Jr 36:32). According to Van Selms this happened in a specific way. When the scroll was full a new strip of papyrus was added and the new words were just written on it. Baruch enlarged this second edition by constantly adding prophecies of Jeremiah as well as the circumstances under which they were received. These appendices, which can be found from Jeremiah 26 onwards, were to a large extent of a biographical nature: 'Men zou ze bijna een dagboek kunnen noemen' (Van Selms 1972:13).

This close relationship between Jeremiah and Baruch grew more firm, and was also continued when the 'secretary' followed his master to *Egypt* after the death of Gedaliah (Van Selms 1974a:192-201). There the words of Jeremiah were re-worked and re-interpreted in many ways (cf Van Selms 1974b:88-89). In Egypt the final version of the book of Jeremiah was compiled. Van Selms's theory in this regard is extremely interesting. At a certain point in time Baruch decided to prepare a copy of Jeremiah's words for the exiles in Babylon. He therefore re-worked his original notes and sent the new edition to the exiles. His original copy or draft was, however, kept safely and it served as rough work ('klad'). According to Van Selms, Baruch held the version that was sent to the exiles as the final edition of the book: 'het voor de Judeeërs in Babylonië bestemde afschrift beschouwde Baruch als de definitieve uitgave van het boek' (Van Selms 1972:13).

Baruch nevertheless constantly re-worked his rough copy: it was elaborated, new words were added, the style was improved, the theological contents was refined, and so forth. It is, however, interesting to note that Baruch never supplied the Egyptian Jews with a copy of

the prophet's words. Like Jeremiah he did not expect much from the Jewish exiles in Egypt (Van Selms 1974a:195). Baruch nevertheless kept his notes. After his death these notes were discovered and safely stored. Later it formed the basis for the translation of the *Septuagint* (Van Selms 1972:13-14). The rough copy therefore contained more words and this is the reason for the great differences that exist between the Massoretic text and the *Septuagint*. Two editions of Jeremiah's prophecies can therefore be distinguished: a Babylonian edition from which the Massoretic text, the Targum, the Peshitta and the Vulgate sprang, and an Egyptian edition which formed the basis for the *Septuagint*. The existence of two different versions of Jeremiah's prophecies poses the question as to the more reliable text. According to Van Selms Baruch would have answered as follows:

Natuurlijk aan de babylonische kopie! Die bevat het boek zoals ik het na rijpe overweging zijn definitieve vorm gegeven heb. De andere kopie es een klad; ik heb er veel in te verbeteren en menigmaal iets aan toe te voegen gehad. Dikwijls moest ik bij het eerste neerschrijven mij haasten; ik wil niet verantwoordelijk zijn voor snel en vluchtig werk. Het is ook alleen de babylonisch kopie die ik bestemd heb voor openbare voordracht. Dat egyptische klad kunt ge wel vergeten (Van Selms 1972:14).

B PRINSLOO, HIS STUDENTS AND OTHERS: PROPHETIC UTTERANCES ARE WELL STRUCTURED

1 Willem Prinsloo: we understand by means of structures

As we have said above, Prinsloo's method exerted a great influence on his students as well as other scholars. He also investigated the prophets from his perspective and made a substantial contribution in this regard. We will briefly illustrate his kind of approach by focusing on his study of the book of *Joel* (cf Prinsloo 1979b:146-151; 1981b:432-433; 1983:255-256; 1985a:260-270; 1985b; 1986a:410-416; 1987d:223-232; 1987e:233-240; 1987f:241-250; 1987g:278-383; 1987h:284-289; 1988d:337-343; 1989b:11-19; 1989d:987-993; 1989e:994-1000; 1990; 1992:66-81). Prinsloo received a scholarship from the prestigious Alexander von Humboldt Institution which enabled him to study at the University of Tübingen during 1982/83. During this stay in Germany Prinsloo made a thorough study of the book of *Joel*. His thoughts on this prophet culminated in a book on

Joel's theology which was published as *Beiheft* to *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*. This work appeared exactly fifty years after Kritzinger's thesis and clearly shows the progress in Old Testament scholarship since the thirties. Prinsloo also wrote a commentary on Joel as well as articles published in local and international journals, dealing with different aspects of Joel.

Prinsloo's approach to the prophets and especially to Joel exhibits familiar *features*: concentration on the final text as the starting-point of all exegesis; structural analysis as the most logical and most appropriate method of investigating the text in its final form; immanent exegesis as an objective and an empirical science yielding objective information which can be verified; the negative evaluation of historical criticism and its depiction as hypothetical and as something superimposed on the text; the avoidance of all forms of subjectivity in favour of a 'technical' examination of the text lying before us, et cetera. It must, however, be noted that Prinsloo's method enabled him to obtain a firm hold on the text. His approach also enabled him to describe and evaluate the work of other scholars critically.

Methodological reflection formed an integral part of Prinsloo's approach to the prophets. The reading of the text in its final form and everything that went with such an approach were the result of deliberate hermeneutical and exegetical choices. Put differently, Prinsloo's conscious choice for structural analysis and his rejection of a historical-critical understanding of the prophets were the result of much research in hermeneutics and exegetical methodology.

Prinsloo took the work based on historical criticism very seriously, although severe criticism had been launched against it. Scholars who approached the prophetic texts from a historical-critical perspective have indeed contributed to a better understanding of the prophets. Prinsloo nevertheless systematically identified the weaknesses of this approach and constantly elaborated on its shortcomings. His perception of this method can clearly be seen from the following statements. Historical criticism is shaped by nineteenth-century positivism, which was the epistemology of the natural sciences; it is causal and explains events evolutionistically; it pretends to be objective, '[maar] dit [het] tog geblyk dat dit tog ook maar deur sekere *voorveronderstellinge* gelei word' (Prinsloo 1988a:203). In addition, historical criticism focuses more on the origin and the growth of the text, the author and his context than on the text's final form; the text is primarily viewed as something composite with a long history which should be determined in order to understand the author's intention. According to Prinsloo such a reconstruction of the text's history is an impossibility. Historical criticism is thus

extremely speculative. Another objection raised against historical criticism is its atomistic approach: that is, the dissection of the text into many different sections. Underlying this atomistic approach is the conception 'dat tekste eintlik maar deelt tekste is wat saamgestel is uit kleiner tekste, wat op hulle beurt weer sy eie wordingsgeskiedenis vertoon' (Prinsloo 1988a:204). In short, historical criticism can be accused of devoting so much time to historical reconstruction that the text in its present form is totally neglected (Prinsloo 1988a:203-205).

Although historical criticism is treated with scepticism, structural analysis is not accepted uncritically. Prinsloo is aware of all its limitations and deficiencies. But, in spite of this, he claims that structural analysis has definite advantages over historical criticism: 'dan bly die winspunt van die struktuuranalise nog steeds dat dit die groot leemte van die histories-kritiese metode ondervang het, naamlik om die teks soos wat dit nou voor ons lê in die sentrum te plaas' (Prinsloo 1988a:205). It is this view of historical criticism and structural analysis that Prinsloo has passed on to many of his students and which is clearly reflected in the theses of his doctoral students (see below).

As is apparent from the *research history* of the book of Joel, historical criticism overlooked the final form of the book and gave rather more attention to its development (Prinsloo 1985b:1-8). Bernhard Duhm (1911) is an important exponent of this movement. In a typically literary-critical manner the book of Joel was 'peeled off in layers' until an 'Urschrift' was arrived at. Duhm furthermore considered that only the first two chapters of the book could have been written by the prophet Joel, while the rest came from the hand of a priest with an apocalyptic perspective from the Maccabean era. This type of approach led to all sorts of extremes, of which four or five redactions have been identified. Prinsloo rejected this approach.

Duhm's hypothesis was extremely popular and many subscribed to his views (Prinsloo 1992:67). This kind of approach resulted in the fragmentation of the book. In the course of time it provoked serious reaction from those emphasising the unity of the book (Prinsloo 1987e:236). According to Prinsloo most of the commentaries and scholarly articles on the book of Joel accepted the book's unity. Although the book's unity is generally accepted Otto Plöger (1962) remains an exception (Prinsloo 1985b:5). He accentuated Joel's long redaction history and, according to Prinsloo, Plöger 'is somewhat out of step' with the current trends in the Joel research and he has only a few followers (Prinsloo 1992:68). Redditt's (1986) construction of Joel's origin resembles that of Plöger. According to Prinsloo, Redditt's attempt 'consists of imposing an extratextual paradigm on the text'. He is furthermore accused of causing 'a hypothetical growth' of the book of Joel (Prinsloo 1992:69).

Oscar Loretz's colometric analysis of the book of Joel (Loretz 1986) was also severely criticised. His effort is described as 'a highly speculative at-

tempt' (Prinsloo 1992:69). Loretz furthermore creates the impression that if the unity of the book is accepted the unity of authorship is also implied. The unity and authorship must be kept apart according to Prinsloo. In general he states that Loretz' colometric analysis 'is too hypothetical' and that no 'truly convincing solution is afforded with regard to the book's unity' (Prinsloo 1992:69).

Wolff's study of Joel (Wolff 1975) is of great importance according to Prinsloo (Prinsloo 1985b:4). Wolff speaks of a 'nahezu vollendete Symmetrie der beiden Teile'. Although much is to be appreciated in the work of Wolff, Prinsloo nevertheless criticised it (Prinsloo 1987e:237). In order to illuminate the symmetrical nature of the book, 2:18 was identified as the turning-point in Joel. Prinsloo indicated that this was not possible and described Wolff's symmetry as 'a relative one' (Prinsloo 1992:73).

Prinsloo also referred to the work of Van der Meer (1989) who devoted an entire dissertation to the structure and the unity of the book of Joel. Although Prinsloo applauded his work he nevertheless stated that Van der Meer's 'outline of its structure fails to convince'. In the final analysis, Van der Meer's study of Joel 'is extremely speculative and hypothetical' (Prinsloo 1992:75).

This brief history of Joel research once again illustrates the way in which Prinsloo has evaluated the scholars who differed from him. Those who followed the wrong way have been severely criticised and their work branded as hypothetical. It seems as if structural analysis as well as the text theory accompanying it (see below) operate as the fixed point from which Prinsloo judges the different studies on the book of Joel.

Prinsloo vehemently opposed any dissection of the text and considered himself part of a movement that stressed the unity of the book of Joel (Prinsloo 1983:255-256; 1985b:2-5; 1987e:235-237). In Prinsloo's case the choice was not a coincidence, it was related to a *particular textual theory* or perspective on the text. Unlike in historical criticism, where the 'seams' in the text are noted and their origins traced, Prinsloo 'saw' only the final form of the text in its unified form. From this final form he began working at studying the book in its present form, in its entirety and as a unit; furthermore, the relations between the various pericopes were determined, and the meaning of every individual pericope was determined in the light of the whole. Prinsloo concurs with Childs's statement that '[t]he crucial issue now turns on how one reads the book in its present form' (Childs 1983:392). There is therefore no question of working backwards to the smallest textual unit, its historical context and development. Instead, all one's attention is focused on the text in its final form. The historical critics' romantic view that the oldest text is the most authoritative, and that no stone should remain unturned to estab-

lish this, has been 'replaced' by a completely new view of the text. The authority of a book does not, after all, depend on the search for an *Urschrift*. In fact, such a reconstructed original text is 'vir ons van geen wesentliche waarde nie' (Prinsloo 1983:258). We are concerned with the book as it is today, and the message in this final form that needs to be determined.

A textual approach such as this 'needs' a corresponding *exegetical method*. And in 'hierdie opsig het die teksimmanente eksegetiese 'n belangrike funksie om te vervul' (Prinsloo 1983:258). We can get closer to it than this: structural analysis is the method that does justice to the text in its final form.

The exegetical process must start synchronically. After all, one can only begin with the text as it stands. The content of a demarcated text can be established by means of structural analysis.... It does mean... that structural analysis should be applied according to objective, formal, syntactical criteria. The structure exposed in this way will provide an objective framework which permits both content and historical aspects to feature (Prinsloo 1981b:432-433).

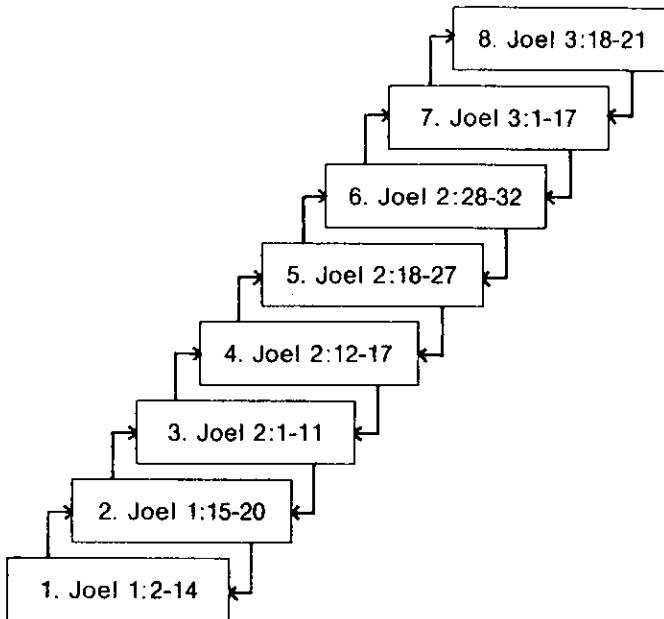
Prinsloo's view arose from developments in the field of language and literary science. He adopted Ferdinand de Saussure's idea that language is structured — that is, it forms a coherent whole, and synchronic aspects deserve priority and exegesis should consequently begin in a synchronic way (Prinsloo 1984i:4).

Prinsloo's method brought into being a *particular vocabulary* which has formed part and parcel of many students' theological language: concepts such as 'synchronism' and 'diachronism' have now become very important, the text is regarded as an 'autonomous premise' ('outonome gegewe'), structural analysis is emphasised as being a scientifically responsible and objective method (Prinsloo 1979a: 210), much is made of the controlled angle of incidence ('gekontroleerde invalshoek') (Prinsloo 1984i:4), and so forth (see above). Each of these words or expressions communicates only one thought: the final form of the text is the focal point of structural-analytical exegesis.

It is in *the field of exegesis* in particular that Prinsloo made his greatest contribution. His work on the Psalms is particularly outstanding and we shall discuss this below. Prinsloo generally followed the same exegetical procedure. The section was first identified and text-critical questions were answered. He was at his best when analysing

structure. The writer of the book of Joel deliberately, artistically and systematically built up both the smaller units and the whole. If we want to understand the book it is essential for us to understand this structure and construction of the book: '[Die] beste controleerbare manier om die struktuur te bepaal, is om uit te gaan van objektiewe grammatikale beginsels' (Prinsloo 1982b:3). Prinsloo used structural analysis to determine first the surface structure, and then the semantic content. The colon, consisting of a verbal and a nominal part, forms a linguistic unit and the relations between the various cola, as well as the structure of a pericope are determined by means of syntactic criteria. The surface structure indicates how the writer wishes to present his message. The surface structure carries great value for semantic information. The structure must be analysed so that the content can be understood (Prinsloo 1977/78:110-129; 1980a:331). To achieve his purpose, Prinsloo treated every word and phrase in the book of Joel seriously. He investigated the repetition of words, metre, wordplay, various stylistic devices, et cetera. In the end each pericope is well knit, and the message of the whole and its parts is clear. The book of Joel is thus a fine work of art.

According to Prinsloo the book of *Joel is a unity*. When the book's final form is studied it is clearly 'a meaningful whole' (Prinsloo 1985b:88). The book has a logical and 'a conscious planned unity' (Prinsloo 1987e:233). Prinsloo thus depicted the unity in such a manner that the different pericopes were interrelated in a step-by-step progression wherein each separate pericope constituted a 'Steigerung' on the previous pericope. All the pericopes referred in one way or another to previous pericopes. Furthermore, the different pericopes did not merely refer backwards or forwards but they were all integrated into a whole, which clearly reveals an ascending pattern. The final pericope must be treated as the climax of the book (Prinsloo 1985b:123). In his work on Joel Prinsloo thus pointed out how neatly, very neatly, the pericopes link with one another, step by step and climatically, and how every passage progresses from the foregoing one. Almost every pericope reaches back to an earlier one or forward to a subsequent one by the repetition of words and phrases. This structure of the book can be depicted as follows:



This diagram can be explained as follows: *1:2-14* may be treated as a call to a national lament. Following a plague of locusts the people were summoned to humble themselves before Yahweh. *1:15-20* elaborates on the previous section and also intensifies it. To accomplish this, various words and phrases from the previous section are repeated in this pericope. These verses are no longer a summons to lament, but the actual lament itself. No talk about Yahweh any more, but the cry itself. *2:1-11* constitutes the third pericope and also reveals a progression: all the inhabitants of the land must now tremble because of the imminent day of Yahweh. Once again, words from the previous pericopes are used. *2:12-17* stands in contrast to the previous section: instead of the alarming effects of the day of Yahweh the people's repentance is now emphasised. This contrast is 'effectively heightened' by the repetition of words and phrases from the other verses. *2:18-27* mentions the answer of Yahweh. The hope aroused in the previous pericope is now realised. Once again, the repetition of words and phrases occurs and serves to highlight the contrast: Yahweh will once

again provide abundantly. 2:28-32 clearly elaborates on the previous section: a new era of bliss is about to dawn which will be preceded by the outpouring of the Spirit and the occurrence of all kinds of cosmic events. 3:1-17 continues the previous pericope's view on salvation for Yahweh's people. A new element has, however, now entered the description: the nations will be judged. Israel will thus experience salvation and the nations disaster. 3:18-21 forms the climax of the whole book and elaborates on the notion of salvation. Repetition of words and phrases from the other pericopes occurs, which achieves 'a purposely planned contrast between the beginning and ending of the book'. Judgement has been changed into salvation, drought and catastrophe into abundance and blessing. The book thus ends on a triumphant note (Prinsloo 1985b:11-121; 1987e:233-235; 1992:75-81).

Prinsloo's exegetical endeavours thus aim at the illumination of Joel's unity. According to him the different pericopes 'link-up with each other climactically like ascending steps'. Thus each pericope progresses from the previous section. Prinsloo clearly indicates that each pericope reaches backwards to former pericope(s), and forwards to the following pericope. This is accomplished by means of the repetition of words and phrases.

Prinsloo also followed this procedure in his treatment of *Haggai* 1:4-11. Many denied the original unity of these verses and attempted to go behind the text in order to determine the different stages of the tradition. Prinsloo rejected this approach and emphasised that 'each of them operates on the basis of a hypothetically reconstructed setting of the text', which can never be inferred from the text. These scholars pay more attention to the prehistory of the text 'than to the pericope as it stands'. Once again, he states that he is not denying the importance of historical information, but he argues that 'the final version of the text' must be the 'primary basis of research'. The 'only objective data' that we have is the text of *Haggai* in front of us (Prinsloo 1988d:337-338).

Prinsloo analysed *Haggai* 1:4-11 according to syntactic, formal and substantive criteria and arrived at a different picture. According to this approach 1:4-11 is a coherent unity and has a climactic rather than a concentric structure (Prinsloo 1988d:338-340).

Prinsloo's particular approach to texts thus enabled him to explain many of the problems posed by historical criticism. By making the final form of the text his starting-point, he found a way of dealing with these problems scientifically. To illustrate this point once again, we conclude with two brief examples. According to Prinsloo, the book of *Habakkuk* presents the scholar with insurmountable introductory problems. In spite of this, he nevertheless states that the 'book forms a logical unity' (Prinsloo 1987g:278). With regard to

Habakkuk 3, some serious problems have been raised with regard to its inclusion and position in the book. Viewed from Prinsloo's immanent perspective, this chapter 'in its present form fits in very well with the rest of the book' (Prinsloo 1987g:279). The book of Zephaniah also 'forms a planned whole' which has 'a chain-like structure' (Prinsloo 1987h:284). This unitary approach not only allowed Prinsloo to deal with difficult problems but it also enabled him to explain all the aspects of the texts in great detail.

Prinsloo did not want to neglect *historical questions*. He continuously stressed that exegesis should not be practised ahistorically. The Old Testament did not drop from heaven, finally edited — it underwent a long and complicated process. It is therefore obvious that a 'volledige eksegetiese model ook histories-kritiese vrae sal vra' (Prinsloo 1987c:4). Prinsloo makes a plea for a complementary exegetical model in which the historical dimension will also have a place. Yet, historical inquiry with regard to the book of Joel has a minor role. All historical questions are subservient to the final text. Historical-critical approaches to Joel's text have also shown that diachronic data are too easily brought into the text from outside. For example, a 'hypothetically reconstructed' view of history can become the 'subjective eyeglass' through which the Joel text is read. Although a text's historical context is very important, one must abandon historical inquiry if the text does not furnish such information. Someone once said that all that the historian needs is a document and imagination. The past must be constructed using historical imagination (De Vleeschauwer 1974:3). This was impossible for Prinsloo, with his particular view of the text and his objective and testable method. Only historical information that, as it were, could be objectively abstracted from the book of Joel could be used. Moreover, these historical data as such are of no real importance and historical information about Joel and his work must only function within the 'raamwerk en na aanleiding van die sinchroniese studie'. All diachronic questions must be judged in the light of the final text. The historical dimension certainly does not form the essence of the exegetical process; at most it performs a helping function. All 'historical facets' are, in Prinsloo's view, 'only a help' in the attempt to understand the final text better (Prinsloo 1984i:4). In the light of the above, historical inquiry into the book of Joel is thus strikingly lacking in Prinsloo's work.

Questions of *dating* have seldom arisen in Prinsloo's work. It is of interest that when he first mentioned the dating of the book of Joel, he

did so in a footnote (Prinsloo 1985b:35). With this almost perfunctory reference he wished to stress that it was not necessary to settle questions of dates before the Joel text could be understood. Prinsloo thus did not wish his work in Joel to centre on historical questions. The understanding of a text is certainly not dependent on its dating. Prinsloo naturally also made historical remarks, but these were infrequent and did not form the essence of his work.

This negative view was partly the consequence of his research findings regarding the dating of Joel (Prinsloo 1985b:5-8; 1983:255-263). He indicated that researchers date this prophet and his book between the second and the ninth century BC. Prinsloo finds a span of seven centuries unacceptable. Although each scholar explained the validity of his own view with confidence, this made little impression on Prinsloo. According to him it only emphasised the 'relativity and subjectivity of attempts at dating the book' (Prinsloo 1985b:109). Preconceived ideas played a far greater role in the dating of Joel than some scholars would admit (Prinsloo 1985b:92). Prinsloo was on his guard against views that were 'over-subjectively' linked to the book (Prinsloo 1985b:40-41) and a dating that 'depends on the presuppositions of the particular exegete' (Prinsloo 1985b:35). This by no means implied that the dating was not important. He found it a 'useful instrument' to understand a text. One cannot, however, close one's eyes to the fact that the dating of Joel is spread over a period of seven centuries and that it would be an impossible task to date the book merely on the basis of its content. This does not mean one should consciously read the text ahistorically, only that one should acknowledge that the dating of the book is impossible and it should therefore in no way become the exegete's focal point (Prinsloo 1985b:92). Prinsloo therefore does not make a case for a particular period: '... dit lyk sinnelees om by die horde dateringsvoorstelle nog 'n (subjektiewe!) poging by te voeg' (Prinsloo 1983:262).

Prinsloo has a tendency to ridicule the results of historical criticism. This can for instance be seen in his treatment of the so-called eighth-century passages from the book of Isaiah. Prinsloo clearly states that the 'importance of reconstructing the historical framework' of a text can never be denied. Historical information can indeed be 'a major aid' in the understanding of a text (Prinsloo 1989b:11). But since an exact reconstruction cannot be accomplished the exegete must rather refrain from such an undertaking. The term 'context' is complicated to the extreme and its reconstruction an unattainable dream (cf Prinsloo 1989b:11). He illustrated his point by means of a short

research history of Isaiah 28:1-6: no consensus exists with regard to the historical context of these verses. A synopsis of the different views reveals the following picture (Prinsloo 1989b:12-16):

(1) Isaiah 28:1-4 could have been derived from the prophet Isaiah while verses 5-6 must be ascribed to a post-exilic author.

(2) Isaiah 28:1-6 in its entirety is from the hand of the prophet and must be dated in the eighth century. According to some scholars it must be dated before the fall of Samaria (725/724), and to others before the siege of Jerusalem in 701 BC.

(3) Isaiah 28:1-6 does not stem from Isaiah and must therefore not be treated as an eighth-century prophet. Many also prefer a post-exilic dating of these verses.

(4) Isaiah 28:1-6 forms part of 28:1-13 which was written by Isaiah and which reflects the last years of the northern kingdom.

(5) Isaiah 28:1-6 refers to the eighth century BC but was composed in the seventh century, during the reign of Josiah.

From this short outline Prinsloo made some important observations with regard to the dating of prophetic utterances. In other words, his typical views on historical information are clearly reflected in the following. First, it is *impossible to determine precisely* whether Isaiah 28:1-6 or any other section can be dated in the eighth century. Too many accept matters pertaining to dating and context uncritically. Second, since no direct reference to a specific time is reflected in the text, scholars 'should *refrain* from making categorical statements and basing their entire exegesis on a supposed dating' (Prinsloo 1989b:16 — my emphasis). Third, the dating of a text or the construction of a specific context is *determined* by the scholar's own *presuppositions and method*. A text is dated in a specific time because it 'accords with the exegete's assumptions' (Prinsloo 1989b:16). Fourth, Isaiah 28:1-6 can be *understood without* dating the text or constructing a context for it.

Isaiah 28:1-4 may be described as a critical text while verses 5-6 should rather be treated as a comforting or an encouraging text. When the two sections are joined, Isaiah 28:1-6 is a persuasive text: 'one which seeks to persuade the reader or hearer to trust exclusively in Yahweh's indestructible crown.... Whether this makes Isaiah 28:1-6 an eighth-century text I cannot say' (Prinsloo 1989a:17).

The main task of the exegete is rather, therefore, through immanent exegesis, to determine the *theology* or the *message* of a particular portion. By theology Prinsloo understands 'what the book ... tells us about Yahweh' (Prinsloo 1985b:2). To practice theology implies the systematisation of what the Old Testament has to say about Yahweh (Prinsloo 1987a:40). How the Old Testament scholar performs his task of systematisation is a difficult problem. Despite the many attempts, so much uncertainty still prevails. One can even speak of a crisis regarding the basic writing of a theology of the Old Testament. One bright aspect is that we can learn from the history of Old

Testament theologies which routes are impassable and will take us nowhere, and which can be followed fruitfully (Prinsloo 1987a:40). Thus we can no longer speak of one particular theology and we can no longer hope for systematisation of the material associated with a centre. The emphasising of one particular theme leads to the underemphasis of another, and one has to find one's way between one-sided or ahistorical focus on the canon in its final form and an overcritical approach in which the unity is lost. To get out of this cul de sac, Prinsloo proposes an important point of departure: we should first determine the theology of each separate book or a group of similar writings in the Old Testament (Prinsloo 1979b:146-151; 1980a:330-341). A 'synthesis' is only possible after each separate writing or group of writings has been studied with regard to the theology it contains (Prinsloo 1987a:39). Prinsloo is uncertain whether such a synthesis is indeed practicable or desirable, but before one gets to that it is most important that one should begin with the theology of the smallest unit, the single Old Testament book. Only then can one begin to consider the possibility of synthesis.

Prinsloo makes another important comment: the *differences* between Old Testament writings should not be glossed over. We must accept that in the Old Testament there are theologies which at times can differ radically from one another. We should regard the various writings in the Old Testament as a collection of paintings of the same landscape. Each interprets truth in its own way, which is why there are different paintings of the same scene. No attempt should be made to fuse the different interpretations into a unit; each should be appreciated separately. In this way Prinsloo makes a plea for us to respect the variety. And his view that the respective books should first be studied in their final form also suggests a method for dealing with the differences: rather than try to deny the variety or conceal it fundamentalistically, we should point out the relations as well as the tensions between the different theologies, and carefully note their function (Prinsloo 1987a:39). Doing this makes it possible to understand the theology of each individual book better.

In the light of the above, the importance of Prinsloo's work on Joel should not be underestimated. It serves as the *first step* to the writing of a theology of the Old Testament. The single book's theology forms an indispensable element of a theology of the Old Testa-

ment. To form a book's theology, Prinsloo sets an important prerequisite: 'To form a picture of the theology of the entire book one needs to *survey its overall structure and the interrelationship* of the various pericopes' (Prinsloo 1985b:122 — my emphasis). Only when this has been accomplished can a book's theology be determined. And this is exactly what Prinsloo wanted to achieve with his work on Joel. The investigation of the book's structure must logically lead to an understanding of Joel's message. One can say that Prinsloo wishes to determine the message of a book in an empirical and objective manner which can be tested. Some aspects of Joel's message can be summarised as follows (Prinsloo 1985b:122-127):

(1) It is clear from Prinsloo's close scrutiny of the text that the book of Joel moves from a lament to a promise of salvation, from a time of crisis and catastrophe to a future full of hope. Throughout the book it is stressed that Yahweh is the One who accomplishes catastrophe and salvation.

(2) Joel's use of the expression 'the day of the Lord' must also be seen in this light: it is a judgement which moves into the direction of salvation. Initially Yahweh is punishing his people but Israel's fortunes are reversed 'into a day of salvation for the people of Yahweh and a day of judgement for the nations' (Prinsloo 1987e:239).

(3) The plagues must also be seen in the framework of 'judgement-to-salvation'. A plague of locusts which really existed was theologically interpreted in order to forewarn the people about the imminent day of the Yahweh and to call them to repentance. Once again it must be stressed that Yahweh is the active One who caused the change from judgement to salvation.

(4) No causal relationship exists between the nation's repentance and Yahweh's merciful actions. Yahweh is not 'forced' by his people's conversion to bless them. The possibility of repentance is rooted primarily in Yahweh's mercy, love and compassion. Yahweh is powerful and able to effect both salvation and doom.

(5) The book ends victoriously: calamity has been changed into deliverance. The author emphasises the link which exists between the presence of Yahweh among his people and the concrete blessings which they have experienced. Hence 'the book ends on a triumphal note: Yahweh dwells in Zion. The judgment is past, the catastrophe averted' (Prinsloo 1985b:127).

The book of Joel is primarily a message of salvation for a disconsolate post-exilic Judean community. Its aim is to say that Yahweh still rules, that there is still hope and that Yahweh will punish the nations that brought Judah to shame during the exile. It was a book of encouragement for the discouraged post-exilic community who felt that they had no future (Prinsloo 1987e:239).

In summary we can say that Prinsloo starts with the Joel text in its final form, wishing to discover its meaning by means of immanent exegesis; he only attends to historical issues in terms of the final text; he regards an Old Testament theology as the object of exegetical work and he wants to start writing a possible theology of the Old Testament from the separate Old Testament writings; his work on Joel is thus a first step in the direction of a theology of the Old Testament.

2 Prinsloo's students: the structural approach continued

As we have said before, Prinsloo had a great influence on his students. He not only encouraged them to study the Old Testament but he also provided them with the method and important terminology to accomplish their scholarly task. When reading his students' work, one is struck by how often they echo their master's voice. This point is illustrated by focusing on two of his doctoral students.

Fanie Snyman devoted a few studies to the book of Malachi. His attitude to the text was similar to that of his 'master'. The following clearly reveals Prinsloo's profound influence.

(1) A clear distinction was first of all made between a *synchronic* and a *diachronic* approach. Snyman is in full accord with the view that this insight was a major breakthrough in our understanding of language. A synchronic approach works with the final text as it stands. Exegesis has no starting-point other than the final text — 'die gegewe stuk literatuur (wat) voorhande (is)' (Snyman 1985:15). A diachronic understanding of the text, on the other hand, deals with a historical perspective and focuses on the origin and the development of the text (Snyman 1985:15).

(2) Like Prinsloo, Snyman also believes that a synchronic study of the text *precedes* a diachronic one. The latter only follows on a synchronic investigation. Never must the history of a word's meaning be determinative for its understanding in a specific literary context. A diachronic study is of course important but the exact sequence must be respected: 'Diakroniese ondersoek is nie onbelangrik nie — dit gaan om 'n volgorde van sinkronie-diakronie en nie om 'n rangorde nie' (Snyman 1985:16).

(3) Snyman also followed the dictum that *language is structured*. Put differently, for language to communicate it must be structured. An author does

not express himself by means of loose or separate words or phrases; they are related and so structured in order to convey meaning; it is the exegete's goal to investigate these 'betekenisdraende woordrelasies' to establish meaning (Snyman 1985:18). In the light of this, structural analysis becomes the ideal means of unveiling the message of a text.

(4) Snyman also distinguished between a *surface* and a *deep* structure. The first refers to language as being heard or read. Behind the surface structure lies deep structure which 'contains' the real meaning: 'Agter die oppervlaktestruktuur lê die dieptestruktuur waarin die *ewige bedoeling* van die segging verskuil lê' (Snyman 1985:19).

(5) These theoretical considerations persuaded Snyman to follow a text-immanent approach. In this regard the influence of Prinsloo is evident. Snyman's *method* consists of steps which must be executed in a particular sequence (Snyman 1985:22-40). First of all, the text must be *demarcated* into pericopes. This step is closely related to *Literarkritik* and determines the extent of a text. *Textual criticism* forms the second step. Different text editions exist and the exegete must establish the most accurate reading. Texts must be reconstructed in such a manner 'dat dit die naaste aan die oorspronklike teks kom' (Snyman 1985:26). According to Snyman, the third step deals with the text's structural composition. By means of syntactical and stylistic criteria a *structural analysis* is made. This is followed by a study of the *Gattung* and its function. *Tradition-historical* study attempted to identify the different traditions and their function. According to Snyman this was an important step because it prevented an ahistorical reading of the text: 'dit weerhou 'n eksegeet daarvan om a-histories te werk by die eksegese' (Snyman 1985:39). Finally the *message* of the text is determined. It is important to note that the message is shaped by the previous steps. These steps supply the exegete with much information which will enable him to describe the message (Snyman 1985:40).

In a thesis under the supervision of Prinsloo Snyman investigated the *antitheses* in the book of Malachi on the level of syntax, style and content. Since this theme has not received thorough treatment before, Snyman has indeed made a fine contribution. He wanted to identify the antitheses and to determine their influence on the message of each pericope in the book. Antitheses are defined in a specific manner: 'when at least two issues and/or elements and/or concepts and/or persons, and/or groups of persons are contrasted with each other on the level of syntax, style and content, an antithesis is formed' (Snyman 1985:222). At a syntactical level the antitheses occur in word couples (such as love:hate, blessing:curse, good:evil), the occurrence of the antithetical 'waw', change of pronouns, et cetera. Stylistically viewed, the book reveals quite a number of chiasmi — a technique by means of which two opposites are contrasted (Snyman 1985:214,215, 223). According to Snyman the *Gattung* of all the pericopes is that of

a 'Disputationswort': the author deliberately used this form to convey his message by means of antitheses (Snyman 1985:216,217,223). The function of all these antitheses is very important: they are employed by the author in order to emphasise certain aspects of the message.

Snyman also inquired into Malachi's *eschatology*. He understood the term 'eschatology' as something which is to happen in the 'future and implies a complete new state of events, brought about by Yahwe' (Snyman 1988:64). In the light of this description possible eschatological texts like Malachi 1:2-5; 1:11; 3:6-12 are not treated as full-blown eschatological texts (Snyman 1988:71-73). Snyman also identified eschatological themes that were lacking in the book of Malachi: references to Zion, a king and a messiah. He nevertheless scrutinised Malachi 2:17-3:5; 3:22-24; 3:13-21 and made some interesting remarks with regard to Malachi's eschatology: it was a unique contribution to the eschatology of the Old Testament that a messenger would prepare for the coming of the Lord; this messenger would also purify the cult from all kinds of evil; Elijah as the counterpart of Moses would be the last prophet before the coming of the terrible day of the Lord; he would come to restore family and other social relations; in the light of these eschatological expectations familiar terminology would be re-interpreted: in the older sections of the Old Testament the term, מגלה, referring to the whole of the people, was, in the light of the coming events limited to only a few (Snyman 1988:64-71).

Snyman was also interested in a *theology* of the Old Testament (Snyman 1987:95-106). He shared Prinsloo's view that the time of the great theologies (like that of Von Rad) had perhaps passed and 'dat daar eerder in die rigting van monografieë oor afsonderlike Ou-Testamentiese boeke gewerk word' (Snyman 1990:204). He wanted to contribute to a theology of the Old Testament by indentifying four theological trends in the book of Malachi: a theological dimension (Yahweh loved his people and expected their love in return), a cultic dimension (the cult's place in the life of the people), an ethical dimension (faithfulness to one's spouse, love of one's neighbour), and an eschatological dimension (see above) (Snyman 1990:206-210).

Marius Swanepoel completed a thesis on the theology of Ezekiel 33-39 in 1987. With regard to methodology the influence of Prinsloo can clearly be seen. Like his 'master' he also opted for the *final text* as the starting-point for his exegetical work and levelled severe

criticism against historical criticism (Swanepoel 1987:3). The text should be approached *synchronically*, and *diachronic* observations can only be made in the light of synchronic results: 'diakronie (kan) alleen op grond van sinkronie bedryf word. Sinkronie word dus deur diakronie voorafgegaan' (Swanepoel 1987:7). Swanepoel has a very *optimistic* view of his method. He is convinced that texts have a meaning which can be unlocked by the most appropriate method: 'Die metode behoort die *volle betekenis* van die individuele teks te ontsluit' (Swanepoel 1987:5). Exegesis can be executed *objectively*. Subjective and preconceived notions should not penetrate and influence the exegetical process (Swanepoel 1987:6). *Verification* also plays an important part in Swanepoel's exegesis: 'Watter metode ook al gebruik word, dit moet *kontroleerbare resultate oplewer*' (Swanepoel 1987:7). His *method* closely resembles that of Prinsloo and Snyman, and includes the following: the demarcation of the pericope, textual criticism, structural analysis, *Gattungskritik*, tradition criticism, redaction criticism and a theological synthesis.

Swanepoel closely examined Ezekiel 33-39 in order to determine each pericope's theology. *Pericope 1* (Ezk 33) is a 'security pericope'. In this section it is emphasised that Yahweh's word has effective power, and that it will indeed come to pass (Swanepoel 1987:viii,49-53). *Pericope 2* (Ezk 34) elaborates on the previous chapter's image of security. In this chapter Yahweh is depicted as a shepherd who loves his own flock and judges those who do not follow his lead (Swanepoel 1987:ix,75-80). In the *third pericope* (Ezk 35-36:15) the 'eschatological high tension from 33 to 39' is continued and the imminent crisis described. The crisis demands a decision for or against Yahweh (Swanepoel 1987:ix,101-105). It is clearly stated in *pericope 4* (Ezk 36:16-38) that Yahweh changes people inwardly (Swanepoel 1987:127-130). Swanepoel distinguishes between *pericope 5.1* (Ezk 37:1-14) and 5.2 (Ezk 37:15-28). In the first the all-powerfulness of Yahweh is described in terms of the 'spirit', which comes from the corners and which breathes life into dry bones. According to the latter pericope, Yahweh's expectation of a new and living nation is accentuated (Swanepoel 1987:ix,144-146,156-160). The *last pericope* (Ezk 38-39) 'proceeds in a dramatic eschatological form, with Yahweh as the Producer ... and Gog and Israel as the actors' (Swanepoel 1987:ix,192-197).

Andries Breytenbach and Wally da Silva were not students of Prinsloo but they had the same approach.

Andries Breytenbach focussed on the book of Hosea (cf 1979; 1985:1-14; 1987:732-740). In his thesis (1979) the connection between the different prophetic utterances was scrutinized. Any possible developments with regard to the book's contents were also investigated (Breytenbach 1979). Below we briefly refer to his rendering of Hosea's redaction history.

At the outset it must be stated that Breytenbach's sketch was the result of thorough exegesis. And to him this implied a text immanent approach. Put differently: the text was approached synchronically 'aangesien dit die beste waarborg is dat willekeur so ver as moontlik uitgeskakel word by die uitleg' (Breytenbach 1979:iv). Wolfgang Richter's views were applied in a simplified form and certain 'familiar steps' were followed: the demarcation of a pericope, the treatment of text critical problems, the determination of the form, et cetera. Of special importance was the analysis of the structure. Diachronical information also served some purpose but took a subordinate position (Breytenbach 1979:iv-viii).

Breytenbach's close reading convinced him of Hosea's unity. Because he followed the immanent approach to the text the book's unity was stressed. Hosea did not originate over a long time but received its present form quite soon. Some insertions were indeed made but these were restricted to a few additions. Basically we can sketch its origin as follows. Firstly, the redaction by the prophet and his disciples. All the prophecies were gathered and ordered chronologically (Breytenbach 1987:739). This was probably executed by people closely related to the prophet in one way or another. One reason for this is the use of the first person in Hosea 3:1-4. Another reason is the poetic nature of the book. Breytenbach emphasised the role of the 'digter-profeet'. Prophecies were recorded in poetic form, which enabled the prophet to remember them long after they were first uttered. These 'prophetic poems' were very carefully composed, and it is probable that they were written down long before their recitation in public. According to Breytenbach, '(dui) die literêre kwaliteit van die gedigte in die boek Hosea daarop dat dit waarskynlik van die begin af op skrif gestel is' (Breytenbach 1987:738). There are thus indications that Hosea's 'profeetse werksaamheid baie gou te boek gestel is' (Breytenbach

1987:739).

Since the book of Hosea originated early, only a few additions were made in the course of time. From the wisdom circles came the introduction and conclusion. Hosea 14:10 concludes with a proverb and this points to wisdom influence.

Hierdie spreuk is kennelik bedoel as 'n slotwoord wat die belang en die waarde van die voorafgaande onderrig beklemtoon. Wanneer 'n boek in die Ou Testament só voorsien is van 'n duidelike herkenbare inleiding en slot, kan daar geen twyfel wees dat 'n redaktor uit die wysheidskringe die boek Hosea op 'n stadium hanteer het nie (Breytenbach 1987:735).

During the eighth century, and perhaps in the time of Hezekiah, the book of Hosea reached Judah. By that time it was already a complete book. A Judean editor also contributed to the book but this contribution was of a very limited nature. These additions, which probably came from Deuteronomistic circles, were intended to actualise Hosea's prophecies for the people of the south (Breytenbach 1987:734). During the exile or shortly afterwards the book of Hosea received its final touches from the Deuteronomists (Breytenbach 1987:732).

Wally da Silva investigated the function of the creation traditions in the book of Jeremiah (cf 1985:208-232; 1987a; 1987b:741-754). It is a thorough work, employing the exegetical insights of his time. First of all, the synchronical aspects of the text were discussed. This included the demarcation of pericopes, textual criticism, structural analysis and detailed analysis (Da Silva 1987a:13-14). Typical of the time, a diachronical study only followed the synchronical: 'Nou eers kan die diachroniese arbeid aan die beurt kom' (Da Silva 1987a:17). Da Silva made a fine analysis of the passages referring to creation. Like the other so-called 'immanent exegetes', he obtained a firm grip on the text. Some of his conclusions are as follows:

(1) At the time of Jeremiah well-defined views about Yahweh as creator and sustainer of this world already existed (Da Silva 1987a:239-241).

(2) Yahweh's acts of creation implied two things. Firstly, his creation of heaven and earth. Secondly, Yahweh's continual acts of creation become visible in the regular birth of the human race, the granting of rain, the continual change of day and night, et cetera (Da Silva

1987a:243).

(3) The notion of an ever-present Creator was closely linked to the covenantal God. The God who elected his people, made a covenant with them, guided them in the desert, and brought them into the promised land, was the same One who cared for them in the promised land.

(4) In the book of Jeremiah the creation tradition never existed as an independent unity but was always closely linked to other and different traditions. In this way it supported many other themes about God (Da Silva 1987a:248).

(5) During his earlier period Jeremiah proclaimed Yahweh as a Creator working-in-the-present, sustaining his covenantal people in the land that he promised to them. During the latter period of his activity, with the preaching of the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile of many people, Jeremiah spoke about Yahweh as Creator and Ruler of this world (Da Silva 1987a:257-258).

3 Henk Potgieter: a literary understanding of Jonah

Potgieter launched a narratological investigation into the book of Jonah. As head of the department of Semitics at the University of Pretoria, Potgieter has contributed to the consolidation and the elaboration of the so-called immanent reading of the Old Testament. Put differently, he contributed to the fact that structural analysis became the dominant model of exegesis among many students and scholars. In his work on Jonah, Potgieter, however, went a step further and incorporated the insights of literary criticism into his approach. The names of prominent literary critics like Andre P Brink, Ina Gräbe, Mieke Bal, Rimmon-Kenan and Genette constantly crop up in his book on Jonah. The views of Genette, especially, were used to analyse and decode the narrative structure of the book of Jonah (Potgieter 1991:7). Potgieter's approach enabled him to direct the spotlight on the 'unknown' or 'concealed' aspects of texts, to include a wider range of text-related issues and to highlight perspectives of the text which are not yet studied by the immanent scholars. He broadened the basis of the existing approach in order to include more. Put differently, Potgieter's approach embraced more, and he therefore 'received' more information about the text. Perhaps he has indeed improved on the current structural approach. Be that as it may, one thing is clear:

within the South African context Potgieter's work on Jonah was a great step forward. Some aspects of his Jonah interpretation are discussed below (cf also Breytenbach 1983:135-140; Barkhuizen 1988: 55-70; Loader 1987e:123-127).

Potgieter identified three *problem areas* with regard to the book of Jonah. First, the composition of the book causes some problems. Historical criticism has fragmented the book and denied its unity. Second, many different and divergent views with regard to the book's literary type have been put forward. Third, diverse views with regard to the message also exist. It was Potgieter's aim to shed new light on these problems by means of perspectives derived from literary critics (Potgieter 1991:1-5).

Die uitgangspunt van hierdie studie is dat die boek Jona 'n vertelling is en dat dit daarom narratologies geanaliseer en geklassifiseer behoort te word. 'n Verdere doelstelling is om, nadat die onderskeie samestellende dele deur 'n struktuuranalise geïdentifiseer is, die narratologiese funksie van die onderskeie onderdele ten opsigte van die geheel te bepaal.... 'n Laaste doelstelling is om in die lig van die resultate van eersgenoemde twee doelstellings, die boodskap van die verhaal onder die loep te neem (Potgieter 1991:5).

Faithful to the exegetical tradition that he established, Potgieter began with a *structural analysis* of Jonah. To understand a text one should take note of the choice of words, syntax and its entire construction. A prerequisite for decoding a text is that it should be read synchronically. In this way the meaning will be exposed via the surface structure of the text. For Potgieter it is therefore imperative to begin with an analysis of the surface structure. This will also point out the relationships between letters, words and sentences and show how everything forms a whole. For him, such a synchronic analysis of the surface structure is not a goal in itself, 'maar 'n metode om op 'n gekontroleerde wyse bymekaar te bring wat bymekaar hoort' (Potgieter 1991:9). After his structural analysis Potgieter concludes that the book of Jonah shows a formal build-up, which also has implications for its meaning (Potgieter 1991:16).

Potgieter's handling of the *prayers* in Jonah 1:14, 2:3-10 and 4:2-3 is interesting. They are generally regarded as later additions. Potgieter's view of the text as a unit would not, however, allow this. According to him, the prayers formed an integral part of the narrative

structure. Moreover, they stand at the front of the narrative structure and function as breaks to delay the narrative events (Potgieter 1991: 17).

It is important that Potgieter handles these different prayers from a poetic viewpoint and analyses them as *poems*. To him they have both a formal and a stylistic aspect. Formal in the sense that a poem is divided into lines of verse, strophes and stanzas; stylistic in the sense that a detailed analysis should be made of the style and the identification of the metaphorical and parallel constructions. Furthermore 'word die onderlinge verbande tussen die individuele kunsgrepe aangetoen' (Potgieter 1991:18).

Potgieter also wishes to determine the *genre* of the *prayers*. According to him there is too much generalised talk about the genre and for that reason a more 'duidelike gemotiveerde klassifikasie' is needed (Potgieter 1991:32). After thorough analysis he claims, in contrast to Westermann and others, that the prayer in Jonah 2:3-10 fulfils 'al die vereistes vir 'n klaaglied' (Potgieter 1991:34).

Jonah 4:2-3 is often regarded as a piece of prose. Although it is treated as a prayer, translations render it in prose. The poetic nature of Jonah 2:3-10 is determined by, among other things, style and phrase similarities with certain psalms. Such poetic markers are however lacking in Jonah 4:2-3. Potgieter nevertheless 'discovers' certain poetic characteristics in these verses and typifies them as the counterpart of Jonah 2:3-10. Potgieter puts it in an interesting way: 'Wanneer die Psalm in Jona 2:3-10 egter 'n fyn saamgestelde gedig blyk te wees, noop logika 'n mens om ook die teenhanger daarvan in Jona 4:2-3 in 'n nuwe lig te beskou' (Potgieter 1991:36). According to Potgieter, Jonah 4:2-3 and 1:14 are both individual laments and they belong to the category of *'anah* prayers. These three prayers also play a very important role in the narrative: 'Globaal gesien is hierdie gebede binne die totaalstruktuur van die Jona-verhaal 'n afwyking, wat die aandag van die leser trek' (Potgieter 1991:45).

Potgieter also investigated the relationship between narrative texts and the story on the basis of time (sequence, duration, frequency), characterisation (secondary narrative world, intentional narrative world) and space (interests and scope). In illustration, we take note of the whole matter of frequency and characterisation. In Old Testament science the occurrence of the *repetition* of events and words would ap-

pear to be very suspicious. It is often a good reason for the literary critic to divide the text into sources, authors and traditions. In other words: repetition is often a good indication of a later addition or redaction. In Potgieter's textual and literary view, repetition is no reason for literary-critical separation; rather, it binds the narrative elements together. He finds repetition a positive element and he would prefer to determine its purpose and function. Potgieter mentions the following forms of repetition:

(1) In Jonah there is the repetition of *Leitwörter*. The most simple form occurs in Jonah 1:7, where the verb פלג is used. This repetition is a technicality and it does not disturb the course of the narrative (Potgieter 1991:59).

(2) *Motifs* can also be repeated. This means the repetition of a concrete image, an observation of particular events, and it is often associated with a *Leitwort*. A good example of this is the word גר which appears three times in the first episode (Jnh 1:3; 1:5). This emphasises a descending trend in Jonah's life: it begins with his going down to the port of Joppa, after which he goes down to the ship, then he descends to the hold of the ship 'totdat dit 'n klimaks in die gebed bereik waar hy tot by die fondasies van die berge afdaal' (Potgieter 1991:60). The narrative metaphorically tells how Jonah went down to his lowest point, the realm of the dead. Through the repetition of the verb 'word vier episodes met mekaar verbind om 'n eenheid van Jonah se fisiese afdaling, of nog beter, agteruitgang tot by sy laagtepunt uit te beeld' (Potgieter 1991:60).

(3) A *theme* can also be repeated. 'Theme' means an idea (moral or theological) that forms an integral part of someone's value system. By means of such repetition the prevailing idea is, so to speak, brought to the surface. An example of this is in the supplication 'that we will not perish' (Jnh 1:6; 1:14; 3:9) and this occurs in different contexts: it is uttered first by the captain, then by the sailors and then by the King of Nineveh. According to Potgieter the repetition indicates the importance of this theological idea and this is the reason it appears in every episode of the narrative (Potgieter 1991:61).

(4) Repetition of *events* is very important. The presentation of one event also intensifies the previous one. A good example of this should be sought in the miraculous events. According to Jonah 2:1, the availability of the fish is a positive event and the prophet therefore

reacts positively to it. A little tree, according to Jonah 4:6, is made available to the prophet to keep him cool, literally and figuratively. The prophet reacts to this with great happiness. In Jonah 4:7 we read of a worm that stings the vine, causing it to wither. Yahweh also sends a scorching desert wind to make things even worse for the prophet. The prophet responds by asking to die. There is therefore an interesting course of development: from positive to negative, from happiness to misery.

Binne die triade is daar 'n ontwikkelingsgang van positief na negatief, van groot blydschap tot doodswens. Die positiewe gesindheid wat die wondergebeure in Jona 2:1 ontlok, het dus 'n teenpool in die negatiewe reaksie wat die gebeure in Jona 4:8-9 tot gevolg het. Dit is dan ook hierdie pessimistiese stemming waarby God 'n aanknopingspunt vind vir sy slotrede in Jona 4:10-11 (Potgieter 1991:62).

(5) Potgieter also refers to the *type-scene*, meaning the repetition of a significant event in the life of a character. In the case of Jonah, the repetition of the prophetic calling is an example. It illustrates that the calling of the prophet is a decisive moment in the life of the prophet (Potgieter 1991:63-66).

(6) Yet another form of repetition is what Potgieter calls the '*growing phrase*'; specific phrases are expanded upon by the addition of a word or words (cf Jnh 1:5,10,16). A phrase is repeated with an addition, three times. Jonah 1:5 mentions only the fear of the sailors; in Jonah 1:10 their reaction is intensified by the addition of 'great' to their fear; the climax of this fear is arrived at in 1:16 with the words 'the men greatly feared the Lord' (Potgieter 1991:67).

True to his immanent tradition, Potgieter does not place Jonah within a *historical context*. Any historical information is mediated by means of his theory: it is through his literary theories that certain information is 'publicised'. There is no question of historical-critical concern with the text. Potgieter considered such an exercise futile for many reasons. The concept of 'characterisation' offered him the opportunity of presenting Jonah in a broad historical perspective. We shall mention only some aspects of this 'historical sketch'.

According to him, no explicit or implicit *physiological* information is given about Jonah. We know no more than his name 'Jonah' and that he was male. The latter is confirmed by the form of the verb. Potgieter also speaks of *sociological* data regarding Jonah. (Note that

his view of sociology differs radically from others such as Dalene Heyns and Ig Gous). According to these data, he was the son of Amitai and he was probably a prophet by profession. This information is deduced from the type of prophetic calling in Jonah 1:1-3 and 3:1-3. This deduction is confirmed by a reference to Jonah, the son of Amitai, in 2 Kings 14:25. One can thus conclude that the Jonah of Kings and the protagonist of the book of Jonah are one and the same person. On the basis of this, Potgieter considers that we can typify Jonah as a referential character. In other words: he was a historical figure (Potgieter 1991:74). *Religious details* regarding the prophet are mentioned. At one stage Jonah says that he fears Yahweh. In this way he wants to declare that he knows God, but that there is not a special relationship between them. There is only a formal relationship and he acknowledges Yahweh only as Creator God. Without stating how he arrives at the conclusion Potgieter says that this formal relationship was typical of the Persian era. A *psychological dimension* is also described by Potgieter. He claims that, as far as the character Jonah is concerned, the emphasis falls on the psychological dimension. In the story of Jonah the reader gains a special insight into the emotional life and the inner nature of the prophet (Potgieter 1991:75-86). In short, Potgieter apparently accepts the historicity of the figure Jonah, but it is interesting that the historical context that has been created in a 'literary way' looks completely different from one that has been, for example, constructed sociologically. Moreover, the concern with Jonah's past certainly does not form the axis of Potgieter's thinking: 'Hoewel die Jonafiguur volgens 2 Konings 14:25 'n historiese persoonlikheid was en Nineve ook 'n bekende stad in die antieke tyd was, word dit binne die Jonaverhaal aangewend as narratiewe materiaal vir 'n fiktiewe verhaal' (Potgieter 1991:108).

Potgieter also wanted to determine the *genre* of the *book of Jonah*. It is extremely important to note that the designation of the genre was the result of long and detailed analyses of Jonah (Potgieter 1991:106-108). In the light of all his research Potgieter concluded that Jonah meets all the requirements of a short story: 'Die boek Jona voldoen dus aan al die vereistes wat vir 'n verhaal, maar meer spesifiek vir 'n kortverhaal gestel word' (Potgieter 1991:108). Although some described Jonah as a novel Potgieter nevertheless emphasised that it is a short story. He advanced the following reasons for his view: the

length of the book which must be measured in terms of verses instead of pages; the number of characters and events mentioned in the book of Jonah are rather limited; the character of Jonah does not develop but is rather exposed in many different ways (Potgieter 1991:107).

This short story is also the work of *one author*. He derived some of his narrative material from elsewhere but he merged them into a unity, that is the book of Jonah in its final form: 'Hoewel hierdie verhaal van motiewe en temas uit volksvertellings soos die wonderverhale gebruik maak, is dit in sy *finale gestalte* die *produk van bewustelik skeppende werk* deur 'n enkele outeur. Hierdie outeur slaag uitnemend daarin om die verskillende boustene wat hy in sy verhaal gebruik, tot 'n eenheid te integreer' (Potgieter 1991:108).

The last 'stage' of Potgieter's investigation of Jonah consists of the formulation of the book's *message*. Once again it must be noted that this is the culmination of all the previous 'steps'. Only after the literary conventions in the story have been identified, described and their mutual relationships determined can their communicative value or message be ascertained. Potgieter took all the previous attempts to explain Jonah's message into account and concluded that Albertus van Zyl's depiction of 1967 is still valid:

The idea stressed throughout the book of Jonah is the concept of Yahweh doing as it pleases Him. Therefore it may be surmised that the final words of the prayer uttered by the mariners before they did the 'inhumane' deed of throwing a fellow traveller overboard in the midst of a fierce storm at sea, contain the theme of the preaching of the Book of Jonah (Van Zyl 1967a:104).

Jonah's basic theme then is the all-powerfulness of Yahweh. Potgieter elaborated on this basic concept by incorporating elements from other descriptions of the message. There were especially three which Potgieter mentioned. The first one is that of Fohrer and Weiser, who highlighted the breakthrough of narrow Jewish particularism as well as the universalistic view of Yahweh's grace. According to Clements, Jonah is rather a story about God and his relationship with man. A last possibility is that of Van der Woude, who said that the book's theme is the relationship between God and his prophet.

Al drie bogenoemde beskouings bevat elemente van die waarheid, wat binne die sentrale tema van die vrymag van God verdiskonteer moet word. Dit kan inderdaad gedoen word indien die sentrale tema

op drie vlakke toegepas word. Op die eerste vlak moet die vrymag van God op die nasionale of volkswak erken word, met ander woorde God se heil strek verder as Israel en daarom kan Hy 'n (nasionalistiese) profeet soos Jona na die vyande van Israel (die mense van Nineve) stuur.... Op die tweede vlak word Jahwe se vrymag daarin gemanifesteer dat Hy in beheer bly van sy woord en dat sy profeet nie die beskikker van hierdie woord word nie.... Op die derde vlak word Jahwe se vrymag ook in sy verhouding tot die mens gerealiseer. Daarom is Hy geduldig nie net met die heidene nie, maar veral met Jona en gaan Hy tot die uiterstes om die mens, Jona, tot erkenning van sy vrymag te bring (Potgieter 1991:110).

4 Pieter Verhoef: a conservative perspective on the prophets

Earlier we have referred to a few Afrikaans theses on the prophets which appeared in Afrikaans before 1971. To this list must also be added Verhoef's work on the so-called unfulfilled prophecies in Isaiah 1-39. This must have been the first or one of the first theses on the prophets which appeared in Afrikaans. Below some aspects of this work are to be discussed. It must, however, be noted that Verhoef contributed commentaries on Haggai and Malachi to two international series.

Verhoef's work on the prophets reveal some interesting features. He is *thorough* and consequently his commentaries (Verhoef 1972 & 1987) are examples of outstanding scholarship, meticulous investigation of the text and an excellent knowledge of the secondary material. As Old Testament scholar he took his *reformed confession* seriously. He completed a doctorate under G Ch Aalders of the Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam, and shared with him the ideal of a reformed approach to the Old Testament which could counter the influence of radical and critical scholars. Verhoef also prescribed Aalders' book on the introduction of the Old Testament for many years at the theological faculty of the University of Stellenbosch. His work on the prophets can therefore be called *conservative*. The Bible was viewed as the Word of God, its revelatory character confessed, the text's unity respected, et cetera. These convictions thoroughly shaped his approach to the prophets. This can be seen in his attitude towards the *historical-critical* results with regard to the prophets. He did not reject these results out of hand but treated them with great caution. Verhoef is an *internationally acclaimed* scholar and contributed commentaries on the prophets in the series *Prediking van het Oude Testament* and *The new international commentary on the Old Testament*. Verhoef is also a man of the *church*. Many of his scholarly insights found their way into major reports of the church on apartheid and race relations. His works on the prophets must also be read as an attempt to make the prophecies of the Old Testament relevant for the church.

In his 1950 thesis, Verhoef investigated the problem of unfulfilled

predictions in Isaiah 1-39. He was vehemently opposed to two major theological trends with regard to unfulfilled predictions: *critical scholars* and *chiliastic writers*. Critical scholars highlighted the discrepancies between predictions and their actual fulfilment. According to them, the prophets were clearly mistaken with regard to their own predictions and therefore these prophecies should rather be regarded as unfulfilled (Verhoef 1950:30-44). Chiliastic writers on the other hand dealt with these predictions in a different manner: they expected a separate dispensation at the end of time, and projected all predictions to that period (Verhoef 1950:32-35).

His thesis was not only an adequate refutation of chiliastic interpretations but also a scholarly attack on critical scholarship's low opinion of predictions and their fulfilment. He investigated many predictions and came to some very important conclusions.

(1) Most of the *Assurfrendliche* predictions were fulfilled in outline, and others in great detail, between 735 and 701 BC. Some of these predictions even have a plus with regard 'to their concrete fulfilment in the historical facts' (Verhoef 1950:339; cf 104-145). As regards the *Assurfeindliche* predictions all were essentially fulfilled and even in striking detail in the events described in Isaiah 37:36-38 (Verhoef 1950:156; cf 146-163).

(2) Predictions directed to the other heathen nations pose some problems which Verhoef attempted to solve (Verhoef 1950:164-212). He stated that these predictions had indeed not been fulfilled in a strict literal sense: 'Ongetwyfeld is dit 'n opvallende feit dat die oordeelsdreiging teen die verskillende vreemde volke nie op ooreenstemmende wyse, streng letterlik vervul is nie' (Verhoef 1950:210). He gave a few reasons for this. On the one hand, these predictions are expressed in the style of poetical hyperbole and therefore not 'destined' to be fulfilled literally. On the other hand, these predictions are closely associated with Israel and when the words about Israel were fulfilled these prophecies concerning the heathen nations were also fulfilled in essence (Verhoef 1950:211-212).

(3) Verhoef also dealt with the predictions about Israel (Verhoef 1950:213-260). Predictions of judgment were fulfilled in the events of 586 BC and the exile. Predictions referring to future restoration were fulfilled in many different ways: all the words concerning Jerusalem's protection came true, promises about the 'rest' referred primarily to

the 'ecclesia invisibilis' among Israel and not to a political unity; all the promises about the return from exile were fulfilled, et cetera (Verhoef 1950:258-260).

A very interesting feature of Verhoef's commentaries is his use of *structural analysis*. It differed considerably from others using the same method: he deliberately avoided theoretical reflection on the nature and function of this approach, he apparently did not want to become involved in the endless discussions on the relationship between structural analysis and historical criticism, and he was seemingly not interested in the debate concerning an immanent and/or historical approach to the text. He viewed structural analysis as one of several methods and used it in a 'moderate' way to highlight the salient points in the text (Verhoef 1987:171). All kinds of technical jargon and detail were sidestepped in order to establish a broad structural outline of the pericope (Verhoef 1987:20).

Verhoef also viewed structural analysis as an '*antidote* for deliberately dismembering a literary unit' (Verhoef 1987:25 — my emphasis). We can explain this with reference to Haggai 1:1-11. According to Eissfeldt these verses do not seem to be in order. Verses 5-11 give the impression of being overloaded: verses 5-6 are parallel to 7,9-11. The problem can be solved by deletion (of 7 or 7b) and by transposition (of 7a, 8 after 11). Perhaps we have here a combination of two collections: a memorial to Haggai and a collection of his sayings. Haggai 1:1-6,8 thus formed part of the memorial and 1:7,9-11 part of the collection of sayings (Eissfeldt 1974:428). Verhoef was very much against this kind of dissection of the text. To him the unity of the text was important and structural analysis rendered an important service in this regard. In the light of the literary-critical analysis by Eissfeldt (and others), Verhoef clearly stated that the problem would not be solved by emendation or a combination of various sayings but 'by applying a structural analysis to this section' (Verhoef 1987:15). He did exactly that and 'proved' the unity of Haggai 1:1-11.

According to Verhoef, a structural analysis amounts to the following: Verses 1 and 2 form the introduction to 1:1-11 and are also directed to the leaders; verses 3 and 4 are an extended parallel to verse 2; verses 5 and 6 are closely linked to the preceding verses because the people's adverse circumstances (6) are connected with the ruined temple (4); verses 7 and 9-11 form a literary unit and are described as an extended parallel to verses 5-6; verse 8 stands apart 'and thus forms the parenthetic focal point of the whole

section' (Verhoef 1987:21).

Verhoef did not operate with an either/or with regard to structure and *history*. Both were important to him. His 'prophets' were real figures who lived in a specific context and were to be understood against that historical setting. Every historical reference in the text was explained in detail (Verhoef 1987:45-56,58,61,72,88,92,93,95-98) in order to construct a context in which the prophets could be placed and studied. Israel's prophets must therefore not be viewed apart from reality or, as Verhoef said many years ago: 'The writer of this thesis deems himself fortunate to belong to those who accept the authority of Scripture in acknowledging the objective reality of the prophetic revelation. This is his principal bias!' (Verhoef 1950:337).

C FERDINAND DEIST AND HIS STUDENTS: PROPHETIC UTTERANCES ARE LIFE RELATED

Those who followed an immanent approach to the prophets were not much interested in historical questions. Consequently there was very little interest in the context of the prophets. According to them the reconstruction of such a context was not essential because prophetic texts could be understood immanently and without any reference to a historical background. They furthermore stated that such a reconstruction was impossible, due to the scanty historical information that we possess.

1 Deist's view of a total context

Once again, Ferdinand Deist and his views made the difference. He wanted to understand the Old Testament historically and contexts therefore played an important role in his theology. He made us aware of the life-setting of the prophets and its influence on their theology. Deist's students subscribed to his views and they treated 'context' as an indispensable element in the understanding of the prophets: prophetic text and prophetic context are inseparable; knowledge of the context of the prophets became a constituent factor in understanding the prophets.

In this chapter we are referring to two of Deist's students. We also want to mention the work of two other pupils: Adrian Auret and Willie van Heer-

den. Auret investigated the Immanuel-pericope and the Messiah problem in Isaiah 6:1-9:6. He had a literary-critical and redaction-critical approach and he wanted to uncover the re-interpretations of these pericopes (Auret 1989). It is his contention that whenever the context changed these texts were re-interpreted. In the case of Isaiah 7:14, for instance, a re-identification of the Immanuel figure took place whenever the circumstances changed (Auret 1991:67-84).

Willie Van Heerden investigated the models of rationality underlying the question of historicity. With regard to the book of Jonah he highlighted the importance of naive realism. According to this model, scientific theories are accurate descriptions of reality 'as it is'. If applied to the Jonah narrative the latter is a literal description of things as they really happened (Van Heerden 1990:71-91).

a Some general remarks

Deist thus wanted to reconstruct the life context of the prophets. As we have already said he was not the first to focus on the context. Other scholars also studied the world in which the prophets worked, but Deist enlarged the notion of a 'context'. Some aspects of his views on context are mentioned below.

First, the reconstruction of the prophetic context is *essential*. Prophetic texts have originated under specific circumstances and are intimately related to those contexts. Prophetic texts also reflect the social events which have radically shaped the minds and thoughts of the prophets. Text study can never be separated from context study. Context construction is therefore crucial for the understanding of the prophet's words and theology. Once again: prophetic texts cannot adequately be understood if the relationship with their life contexts is severed.

Second, Deist illustrated that such a context *could* be reconstructed. As often stated above the immanent scholars denied the feasibility or the possibility of such a reconstruction. One of their reasons was that little or no direct historical information could be found in the text. Context construction is therefore a very limited undertaking because very few facts can be abstracted from the text to depict an objective picture of the past. This is of course a very restricted view of history-writing. Deist has illustrated how an authentic context can be construed creatively.

Third, Deist's demand for the reconstruction of the prophetic context highlights a shift in the concept of history and history-writing

among South Africans. He contributed to a *freer, more open and more creative* view of history writing. Context construction is therefore not an enterprise which is cold, clinical and objective. And the Old Testament scholar is not constantly on a fact-finding mission in search of direct facts that can be verified, and by means of which an objective picture of what really happened in the prophetic communities can be established. An Old Testament scholar is furthermore not discouraged if the text does not 'reveal' direct historical information because knowledge about the context can be obtained in different ways.

Fourth, context construction implies *thorough exegesis* of the text. It is not true that historical inquiry removes one from the text. Meticulous study of the prophetic text must precede any construction of a social context. Everything starts and ends with the text. It must, however, be noted that the text's nature must be taken into account for context construction. This can, for instance, clearly be seen in Deist's study of the prophets Elijah and Elisha as well as his reconstruction of Isaiah's theological context (see below).

Fifth, Deist did not follow a specific *sociological* or *anthropological* model but had a feeling for the a social context and its importance for the study of the prophets. He studied many different social theories which shaped his view of ancient society as well as the relationship between text and context. Put differently, Deist developed a keen eye for the social markers in the text.

In an essay on Paul Hanson's approach he remarked: 'I would prefer to call it (a sociological interpretation of the Old Testament), an ideological critical investigation' (Deist 1982a:18). Deist expected a sociological inquiry into a specific phenomenon (like apocalyptic) to uncover the many and different sociological forces which shaped this phenomenon. Such a sociological investigation should also identify and describe the specific atmosphere which gave rise to the human attitudes and actions which shaped a particular phenomenon (Deist 1982a:19).

Sixth, according to Deist the *methods* by which the contexts of the prophets are to be reconstructed must also be *critically examined*. It is so typical of Deist that he wanted to make us aware of the philosophy underlying the study of the prophets. *Traditionsgeschichte*, for instance, is based on a specific philosophy and this must be taken into account. Too often *Traditionsgeschichtliche* information is uncritically accepted and used to date prophetic oracles. *Traditionsgeschichtliche* results must be understood and accepted in the light of the

theory of science underlying it.

According to Deist *Traditionsgeschichte* is based on an idealistic philosophy. According to an idealistic understanding reality does not exist 'objectively' outside of man but 'subjectively' inside. Reality's structure must not be sought for objectively in the real world but in the idea: 'The structure of reality is already given in the structure of the idea itself' (Deist 1980a:57). Reality's meaning is therefore predetermined by ideas. Any explanation of things like history or religion or prophetism must be done in terms of the idea of history or the idea of religion or the idea of prophetism.

Everything is also to be understood 'from within' the specific system of ideas. Hegel's philosophy of history explains this approach. According to Hegel history must be understood 'from within' and is therefore described in terms of the evolution of the Absolute Spirit or Idea. History must not be understood in the light of external factors but as the evolution of the Idea (Deist 1980a:58-59).

Any *Traditionsgeschichtliche* explanation of the prophets is based on an idealistic philosophy and will take place from an idealistic framework of understanding.

Seventh, he has *broadened* the scope of the term 'context'. Too often a few general and vague remarks about the context are made and then treated as sufficient background for the understanding of the text. Construction of the prophetic context must be explicit and must include the following: religion, economy, politics, geography, demography, social stratification, urbanisation, tribal villages, job differentiation, different and opposing groups, et cetera. It is, however, very important to note that all these aspects of society are interrelated. Any inquiry into ancient society must take this interrelatedness seriously. Religion, for instance, cannot be studied in isolation from the other aspects of society. This was an important correction of the narrow view of context prevailing among South African scholars.

Eighth, when a context is constructed it must be *authentic*. Put differently, such a context must be life-related and credible. Deist's broad perspective enabled him to paint the prophet's context so realistically and true to life that they just have to step out of history and on to the scene which he has 'prepared'.

Finally, Deist's views of the prophets differed from the *normal* South African picture. One of the main reasons for this is his 'contextual understanding' of the prophets. Because he viewed them as part of a specific social context their true human nature was highlighted. They were no holy figures with a halo around the head. They were not just religious people wandering the country and preaching

the 'gospel'. Neither were they pious people in the sense that their main concern was the true religion with little or hardly any political or economical links. Deist's prophets are human and extremely ordinary, who were shaped by society and also wanted to shape society radically. To accomplish their aims they were politically involved and wanted to reform all aspects of life.

b A paradigm switch in sight?

It is clear that Deist propagated a social understanding of the prophets. By means of meticulous text study and the insights of social theories the context of the prophets must be reconstructed. Although more and more scholars are emphasising similar views the study of the prophets is still very much in the grip of the traditional view of prophets. Deist nevertheless posed the question whether we are not heading for a paradigm switch with regard to the 'scholarly appreciation of the Old Testament prophets and the so-called "writing prophets" in particular' (Deist 1989f:1).

To explain his view on a possible paradigm switch Deist made ample use of the ideas of Thomas Kuhn. Since the middle of the eighties a 'Kuhnian invasion' was experienced in South Africa (cf Van Huysteen 1986). Many biblical scholars began understanding their discipline in Kuhnian terms (cf Mouton & Van Aarde 1988). Ferdinand Deist became acquainted with Kuhn's philosophy much earlier and mediated his views to us. This philosophy also enabled him to pose the question with regard to a possible paradigm switch regarding the prophets. To evaluate the situation he employed the typical Kuhnian framework and terminology: normal science, paradigm, scientific revolution, paradigm switch, et cetera (Deist 1989f:1).

Deist stated that the preoccupation with the prophets during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was influenced by Christian scholarship. These scholars contributed to a certain *reading* or *interpretation* of the prophets which, in the course of time, became the dominant paradigm. According to this paradigm the prophets were studied from a historical-critical angle; this method was based on an idealistic philosophy; it can also be called a romantic-idealistic model; the prophetic texts revealed the authentic words ('ipsissima verba') and the genuine thoughts of the prophets; the prophets themselves were unique, as well as spiritual giants who were *the* makers of Israel's religion (Deist 1989f:1-3).

According to Deist this existing or dominant paradigm about the

prophets was being undermined. He also mentioned the factors contributing to the deterioration of this dominant paradigm. One factor was *new evidence* which might come to light. This was exactly what had happened to the 'normal' approach to the prophets. First, evidence from archaeology highlighted the fact that prophetism was a widespread phenomenon in the Ancient Near East and that Israel's prophets were not so unique. Second, continued historical-critical research shed new light on oral transmission, on the possibility of exilic or even post-exilic 'Verschriftlichung' of pre-exilic prophetic traditions, and on the ongoing process of redaction of prophetic literature. Prophetic literature was now the outcome of many redactions which took place over a very long time. Knowledge of this eroded the idea of prophetic originality or authenticity (Deist 1989f:7-9).

Another important factor dealt with the *changing assumptions* of the scholarly world. Events during the sixties and seventies of this century had severely challenged the dominant paradigm. Demands by European students for 'democratisation', movements which emphasised social involvement, the gradual realisation of the harmful effects of colonialisation and decolonialisation on the lives of millions, the disillusionment with the effects of capitalism, et cetera shaped the views of many Bible students. Biblical (and prophetic) studies now had to be made relevant to the problems of society. This 'emphasis on the creative role of everyday social realities was a major factor in the emergence of a *real* alternative to the dominant model of rationality' (Deist 1989f:11). It was now believed that ideas did not shape a people's socio-political destiny but that socio-political realities shaped ideas. Prophetic texts were the result of socio-political forces.

New questions about the prophets had been posed which the dominant model could not answer. Knowledge of the society was now essential and since the existing model was not studying a text from the social realities, the dominant paradigm was put under great pressure. Inquiry into the 'Sitz im Leben' had been 'far too narrow a scope to answer these questions' (Deist 1989f:12).

The *disappearance of the proponents* of the existing model also made a paradigm switch likely. German scholarship no longer dominated Old Testament studies and the old masters like Alt, Noth, Von Rad and Eissfeldt had disappeared from the scene. English scholars came to play an important role and urged the academic establishment

to apply the insights of sociology and anthropology to the study of the Old Testament.

It thus seems as if the dominant paradigm is under great pressure. Although it is unlikely that the existing model is going to disappear it is nevertheless already viewed as incapable of answering the new questions. Questions about the prophets are badly in need of sociological or anthropological insights.

If we have traced the history of Old Testament research correctly it shows all the signs of a fundamental questioning of a dominant paradigm.... Since the concern of these questions is with the relevant *societies* and (changing) *societal structures* of Old Testament times and with the everyday *socio-economic life* of those days, another strategy is called for to answer them. And the necessary strategies are being supplied by sociological and anthropological models (Deist 1989f:16 — my emphasis).

c *The context of Elijah and Elisha*

According to Deist we are thus moving in the direction of a new understanding of the prophets. Social, political, economic, religious and other concrete realities shaped the thinking and the work of the prophets and this must be taken into account when they are being studied (cf also Bronner 1964 & 1967). To illustrate this point we are briefly focusing on Deist's depiction of Elijah and Elisha. He succeeded in creating *an authentic social context*. His reconstruction must, however, not be questioned in a positivistic sense by asking whether a correct picture of the two prophets was sketched. We must rather have an eye on what and how Deist was painting on his canvas. He wanted to create an authentic context in which the prophets could become alive. Once again, he wanted to recreate a society consisting of people of flesh and blood who were involved in all of kinds social, political and religious activities. And on this canvas Elijah and Elisha were painted in such a manner that they formed an integral part of his painting. Put differently, without this life-related context Elijah and Elisha are interpreted in a very narrow sense.

Deist constructed this context after a *close scrutiny of the text*. As we have already said, context investigation does not exclude the text: thorough text study and context construction are mutually dependent and inseparable. To create the life context of Elijah and Elisha the book of Kings was the main source. The nature of this source must,

however, be critically examined. It must be noted that it is the product of a long process of redaction, it was written with a specific theology in mind, it tends to blame Ahab for many things in order to absolve the Jehu dynasty, it makes Jeroboam I an archetype of a bad king, it contains fictional sections, it forces many events into a cause-and-effect scheme, et cetera. All this must be taken into account when the book of Kings is being used as source for history-writing. What it boils down to is that 'the source materials which are at hand today (in the form of the *final* redaction of the Book of Kings) require to be approached with circumspection and to be critically analysed', if we want to write a history of Elisha and Elijah (Deist & Le Roux 1987: 54).

Deist made some very important remarks with regard to the construction of the contexts of the prophets Elijah and Elisha. Such an undertaking was extremely difficult because he had no direct access to that ancient society. This was also the problem of the author of the first book of Kings. He wrote about these prophets while he was far removed from them in time. According to Deist his *only gateway* to that ancient society is *through (theoretical) construction*. In other words, Deist can only reconstruct that context by means of his own imaginative creations.

Once again the author of 1 Kings (who lived long after Elijah and Elisha) could only create Elijah's and Elisha's world by means of the *sources* which he had access to when writing and his own *theory* of what had happened in the time of the two prophets. In other words our ancient author also depicted a society according to his own views.

According to Deist (who also wanted to reconstruct that society), he could not just take the author of Kings for granted and repeat what was written. His own model implies much more than the ancient author's narrow religious perspective. Deist's model involved social, economic, strategic and political perspectives and his context will therefore 'contain' much more. In the light of all this Deist said: 'I am *using another paradigm* for my *reconstruction*. And that is why I have to *retell* the story' (Deist 1988f:336).

In the ninth and eighth centuries BC there were three levels of *religious life*: the personal, local and national. In the personal context one worshipped the gods of the family or the clan; local religion was practised in the group of clans which lived in a specific area; the last form of religion functioned on national level when all had to participate in the religious festivals which united the different groups. It was thus possible to worship Yahweh on a personal level while Baal was praised as the national god. To such an approach there were many dangers. Perhaps the most dangerous was the fact that characteristics of one level were carried over to another. In the whole process Yah-

weh was relegated to a secondhand kind of god (Deist & Le Roux 1987:61).

Especially dangerous was the so-called nature religion. According to this religious view, the vitality of life was not restricted to humans alone. Man felt himself one with nature. His relationship with nature was an I-thou relationship and not an I-it relationship. Man and nature shared the same life and man approached nature as if it was another human being. They shared in the same process of living. Just as man felt himself part of a community, so did he feel himself indissolubly linked to nature. The gods symbolised in many ways the processes of life, and images of them were no mute or cold objects: they were living parts of the reality they referred to. It was therefore real to the worshippers of these gods that they controlled life and death, fertility and barrenness, rain and drought (Deist & Le Roux 1987:59).

The religious situation was of course severely complicated by other factors such as the changes which were taking place in the community and the existence of different groups. Not all the problems of a changing society can be mentioned but we restrict ourselves to the problem of *urbanisation*. This was a special problem confronting the state authorities of the ninth and eighth centuries BC. Many reasons can be given for this situation: the population had increased to a such an extent that the existing small farms just could not provide for all anymore. The shrinking sizes of the farms and the ever-growing population caused people to live below the bread line. This caused people to seek other forms of livelihood in the city. Another reason for the move to the city was the fact that the existing land was wrongly utilised. The farmers lacked sophisticated methods of agriculture in order to overcome the vast problems. All these factors contributed to the flow to the cities in the hope of an improvement in living conditions (Deist & Le Roux 1987:79). It must be taken into consideration that this state of affairs had a detrimental effect on the traditional views of Israel and also posed a real danger to their Yahweh religion. Syncretism or the mixture of elements of Yahweh and Baal became an ever-increasing possibility. This whole situation must have had an alarming effect on the Yahweh alone people.

The over-population of the cities *minimised job opportunities*. A variety of small industries arose in Israel. What is important about these industries is the fact that they settled in places where the natural

resources were available and in many cases these industries flourished at shrines and sanctuaries. These developments changed society radically and contributed to demolishing the existing society. In the past the members of the family had manufactured everything that was needed. There was a subsistence economy and people provided for themselves. This mode of production created a specific type of community, a specific form of family life, a definite form of religion, a specific way in which legal cases could be settled, labour stratification, et cetera. These processes changed the face of what had been the traditional community. Furthermore, the traditional Yahweh faith was at stake. More rural people now lived in the cities, they became detached from their traditional religious views, and more acquainted with the national religion of Baal (Deist & Le Roux 1987:70-91).

Deist also emphasised the *clashes* between the *Israelites*, the *Canaanites* and a *third group* without strong ties, who can be called 'foreigners'. According to Deist this was an ethnic distinction which had a profound effect on society. When Omri took over the power this division was extremely acute. After the death of Omri's predecessor, Zimri, there was no king for four years. There were two governments: one under Omri and one under Tibni. It is more than probable that this reflected the major divisions of society. Omri was of Canaanite origin and Tibni an Israelite. After Omri came to power he dealt with these divisions by choosing a neutral capital and hoping to unite the people (Deist & Le Roux 1987:70-73). Omri was succeeded by his son Ahab, who had to deal with a deeply divided society. Great social and religious differences existed and Ahab decided to follow a policy of 'segregation': Samaria was the religious centre for the Canaanite section of the population while the Yahweh people worshipped at Jezreel. For the Canaanite section of his people Samaria became the religious centre, while Jezreel was the place for those who worshipped Yahweh. Ahab also propagated a policy of religious tolerance. He set the example by marrying a Baal worshipper while giving his children Yahwistic theophoric names. 'But this was not a gesture to be reciprocated with tolerance by the monoyahwists. To them it was rank idolatry. One can well picture Jezreel therefore, being a centre of Yahwism, as becoming also the *cradle of opposition* to the policy of tolerance' (Deist & Le Roux 1987:76 — my emphasis).

Into this *context* stepped Elijah and Elisha. They were the champions of the Yahweh faith, opposing Baalism vehemently and cherishing the ideal of Yahwism becoming the national religion. In other words, Yahwism was to be 'elevated' from the local to the national level. To accomplish this they became politically involved. Elijah's religious activity only became the thin end of the wedge. He knew well that the march of syncretism could be halted, the wrongs of the changing society undone, and the tides of history reversed only when the state was eliminated. Elijah set himself to accomplish this aim. King Ahab became the object of his attack. It was probably in Jezreel that the resistance and the revolution against the monarchy took shape (Deist & Le Roux 1987:76). Elijah succeeded in making the struggle against the king and his wife a religious one. Everyone had to make a decision: one was either for or against Ahab, for or against Yahweh or Baal. The prophet mustered all kinds of support in order to overthrow the existing order. A revolutionary situation was created which was extremely dangerous (Deist & Le Roux 1987:87-88).

Elijah was just waiting for the *right time* to act. This did not occur in his lifetime or in the lifetime of Ahab. Ahab was succeeded by his son Ahaziah who did not rule for long and was replaced by his brother Joram. In a battle against Hazael of Aram, Joram was wounded and went to Jezreel to recover. Elisha, the successor of Elijah, saw this as the right time to act. One of the sons of the prophets took a jar of oil and anointed Jehu, the son of Nimshi, as the new king. Many scholars are of the opinion that Elisha instigated the whole revolution. In later traditions both Elijah (1 Ki 19:16) and Elisha (2 Ki 9:1-4) are remembered as the initiators of this revolution. Whether or not these two prophets had triggered this revolution, 'that the revolution had originated in prophetic quarters is fairly certain. Indeed, it had virtually become tradition for prophets to be involved in coups d'etat in the Northern Kingdom' (Deist & Le Roux 1987:89).

d The theological context of Isaiah

Our next example is the prophet Isaiah. He differed from the two prophets mentioned above. And the reason for this must be sought in the different context. Isaiah lived and worked in an environment with a different theology that dramatically shaped his thoughts. So intense was this influence that it controlled his thinking about society and the

state. Once again Deist has sketched someone of flesh and blood with ordinary human feelings.

Isaiah's life context was that of the *southern kingdom*. He was firmly attached to the theology of the south. To illustrate this point, let us first of all focus on the Davidic theology. David had to accomplish the impossible: two peoples with divergent views on many things had to be united; two different traditions of Ephraim and Judah had to be blended. The time of David and Solomon was one of great literary activity and it seems plausible that the Yahwistic source could have originated in this era. It was a national epic which had to motivate and legitimise the newly founded unity of states. In the light of the Ephraimite (or Northern) tradition the Davidic or Judaeen dynasty had much to explain: David was a secular and not a charismatic king; the principle of a dynasty was a rather secular affair; his relationship with the patriarchs had to be clarified; the problems connected with a place of worship had to be settled; the two priestly traditions also had to be explained. It was of the utmost importance for the Davidic dynasty to deal with these problems in order to legitimise its existence. Put differently, they needed an ideology to legitimise the new Davidic dynasty. The existing traditions were then re-interpreted and re-worked in such a manner that the credibility of the Davidic kingship would be beyond any criticism (Deist 1980a:64-65).

In the course of time the David-Zion theology developed some important *features*: the permanence of the Davidic dynasty, the central position of David and Zion in Israelite 'history', the unique position of Israel among the nations, the importance of the Jerusalem temple, et cetera. This formed the *context* of Isaiah's theology. He was steeped in this Davidic theology and it was a formative element in his life. He understood Yahweh's dealings with Israel from this perspective. He grappled with this theology in order to understand its true nature and how it should be applied to the everyday life of the Israelite.

Isaiah's theology was, however, put under great pressure. Southern theology was crumbling and Isaiah feared that the city (Jerusalem) would be destroyed, the temple demolished and the Davidic line discontinued. Deist described this state of mind as *cognitive dissonance*. To solve the problems of cognitive dissonance, four possibilities exist: withdrawal (refusing to think about the problem), denial (of the existence of a conflict), avoidance (of the company of people who

highlighted the discrepancies) and lastly rationalisation (despite disappointment much has nevertheless been accomplished).

Isaiah followed two routes. On the one hand he *withdrew* from public life and once again enjoyed the company of his friends and disciples. On the other hand, he *rationalised* about his predicament and came to two conclusions. First, the reason for the failure should be sought for in the people. They had violated the commandments of Yahweh and Yahweh had therefore delayed the fulfilment of his promises. Secondly, the prophet re-evaluated his calling in the light of events and concluded that he had been sent not to call people to repentance, but to proclaim destruction. In this way the prophet succeeded in resolving the dissonance (Deist 1980a:65-69).

It must be noted that Deist was the first Old Testament scholar to introduce these historical-critical reconstructions of the prophets to our South African scene. These prophets were no longer holy men living apart from the mainstream of daily events. They formed an integral part of their context and wanted to contribute to its change. Deist to a certain extent revolutionised our views with regard to the life contexts of the prophets.

e The existence of different groups

Deist also opened our eyes to the existence of different groups, who approached life from different angles and who vehemently opposed each other. He furthermore indicated how these different groups shaped the views of the prophets.

This can be illustrated by referring to Deist's concept of the dawn of *apocalyptic* (Deist 1982a:13-38). He is in full accord with Paul Hanson's depiction of the dawn of apocalyptic as the result of exilic and post-exilic struggles within the Judaeian community. Deist nevertheless objected to the existence of only two groups, the hierocrats and the visionaries. According to him this was too limited a base. This sixth-century BC struggle was the result of a very complicated pre-history (Deist 1982a:21). It was exactly this long historical development that Deist wanted to illuminate.

Deist took the existence of *northern* and *southern tribes* and *kingdoms* as the starting-point for his description. North and south were different, which resulted in two different kinds of societies. Each society was shaped by its social, political and economic forces. Each

also exhibited typical characteristics. Initially things went slowly in the north. The tribes were slow to unify and were involved in fierce clashes with the Canaanites. Saul succeeded in accomplishing something of a unity but it did not last very long (Deist 1982a:21).

Things went differently in the south. *David* was more successful in developing a unity among the tribes. He accomplished this by appointing two high priests in Jerusalem: one from the south and one from the north. The one was standing in a southern Aaronite-Hebronite tradition and the other in a northern Mushite-Shilonite one. This was, however, not sufficient to protect the relationship between the north and the south from further pressure. In Jerusalem the unconditional Davidic covenant effectively replaced the northern Mosaic covenant (Deist 1982a:21). This step must have horrified the people of the north. Due to *David's* strong leadership it was, however, impossible to revolt. *Solomon* contributed to this state of affairs: he sacked *Abiathar* in favour of *Zadok* and this was interpreted as a rejection of the Mosaic traditions of the north. In order to provide for the palace the country was divided in twelve districts which all fell in the northern part of the country. Northerners were also forced to build the temple; 'northern people got the blue-collar jobs and the southern people the white-collar jobs' (Deist 1982a:44; cf 1976c). Although *Solomon* succeeded in holding together the two sections of his kingdom, things changed rapidly after his death.

After the *division* both kingdoms developed their own identity. Social, political and religious realities moulded these kingdoms into two totally different societies. Each had a different view of God and reality. In one the Moses covenant and *Yahweh's* great deeds with his people in Egypt and the desert formed the core of religious life. In the southern part the Davidic covenant was essential for understanding everyday life (Deist 1982a:24). Two different types of theology thus developed in each of these kingdoms. And the prophets of these kingdoms held opposing views. The north shaped the theology of people like *Elijah* and *Elisha* (see above). They were very much against the northern government and vehemently opposed it. *Isaiah* on the other hand was a prophet of the south and supported the rulers of the day (see above). Once again: two environments and two kinds of prophets; two contexts and two opposing religious groups (Deist 1982a: 23,25).

With the *fall of Samaria* many people fled from the north to the south. Among them were pro- and anti-monarchy groups, Levites and Mushites. These groups were later supported by a Deuteronomic-Deuteronomistic movement which favoured the charismatic prophets like Elijah and Elisha. Many bitter clashes must have occurred with the Zadokites and the other functionaries of the establishment. Jeremiah probably belonged to a group of devoted Deuteronomic-Deuteronomistic believers which were anti-temple as well as anti-monarchy (Deist 1982a:27). By the time of the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC there were thus many different groups in the Jerusalem.

There were thus a variety of parties in and around Jerusalem at the time of the exile: namely, at least the Zadokites, the Deuteronomic-Deuteronomistic (antimonarchal) group, the disciple circles which held Isaiah's views and the circles of Jeremiah. The most powerful of them all were the Zadokites who had won every possible confrontation with the other groups in the past, from the times of Isaiah up to the time of Jeremiah. The other groups — each with its own background and history of frustration — were all marginal groups (Deist 1982a:27).

Deist thus clearly illustrated that the opposing groups were not the result of events during the exile and post-exile. Since the early days of Israel's history tensions between different groups had been visible. In the north and south conflicting views were held about many things. And these differences were not merely superficial but deep-rooted and dramatically shaped the two societies and their understanding of reality. Deist appreciated Hanson's attempt to identify the social conditions which formed the apocalyptic outlook but wanted to broaden his notion of groups. It was his contention that the thought patterns and mentalities giving rise to the emergence of apocalypticism had been the continuation of pre-exilic developments.

2 Willie Wessels: the context of Jeremiah

Wessels, a student of Deist, wrote a thesis (1985) on Jeremiah's views on kingship. A limited part of his investigation also included a construction of Jeremiah's context. Although the latter was not Wessels's primary aim, he nevertheless contributed to our understanding of the prophet's world. It was his contention that this context shaped Jeremiah's thinking.

a Text investigation precedes context construction

As a student of Deist, Wessels first of all devoted much time to the exegesis of some texts in the book of Jeremiah. The text had to be thoroughly analysed and scrutinised before any discussion of the context could take place. The *first 'step'* was a form-critical, literary-critical and redaction-critical investigation of the text. This procedure was followed because Wessels wanted to ascertain Jeremiah's words. He was convinced that Jeremiah's words could indeed be determined: 'Careful analysis of the text, however, makes it possible to expose the genuine Jeremian words and the part of those who re-worked the book' (Wessels 1987:140). To accomplish this the so-called 'immanent' methods seemed totally inadequate. Wessels explicitly stated that these were ill-suited because they focused on the text as a unity and no extra-textual references were allowed. He therefore resorted to elements of the historical-critical method (Wessels 1985:2).

Die eerste stap sal wees om die Jeremiaanse woorde te isoleer. Om dit te kan doen, is dit noodsaaklik om van 'n *toepaslike metode* gebruik te maak. Dit sou 'n *oorvraging* van 'n 'immanente' metode wees om dit hiervoor te gebruik, aangesien dit primêr met die teks as eenheid werk en nie belang het by buitetekstuele verwysings of die outeur agter die teks nie. Vir dié tipe vraagstelling is aspekte van die histories-kritiese metode meer geskik (Wessels 1985:2 — my *emphasis*).

He then analysed the *contents* of the different pericopes in order to determine the meaning of the words and sentences within a larger context. This, according to him, entails exegesis of texts. At this stage of the exegetical procedure Jeremiah's views had been fixed (Wessels 1985:3). The next 'step' was to determine the *thought paradigm* in which Jeremiah's views of kingship were embedded. In this regard he relied very heavily on Kuhn's views on paradigms (Wessels 1985:5). The last stage of his approach was an *ideological-critical* investigation. It was his aim to indicate the close relationship between Jeremiah's theology and his historical and sociocultural context (Wessels 1985:6-7).

b Anathoth and Jerusalem

Wessels highlighted an important element in context construction: the influence of a particular *place*. Whenever a context is constructed the

towns and cities mentioned in the text must be studied closely. That is why Wessels focused on Anathoth and Jerusalem.

(1) To describe Jeremiah's convictions his place of birth and its influence on him must first of all be determined. He was born about 650 BC in *Anathoth*. It was situated on the border between the Northern Kingdom and Southern Kingdom. The town's location brought him into *contact with Jerusalem*, the capital city of the Southern Kingdom. News about important events could easily have reached the people of Anathoth. This short distance from Jerusalem also enabled Jeremiah to become acquainted with the Southern Kingdom's theology (Wessels 1985:176). Anathoth was also the place allotted to the *levitical priests*. According to tradition this was the place to which Solomon banned the high priest Abiathar. This contact influenced Jeremiah in two ways: it brought him into contact with the levitic priests and it strengthened his northern theology. Wessels, however, rightly states that the importance of Anathoth must never be overemphasised. Knowledge about the town and Jeremiah's attachment to it does, however, shed some important light on the prophet Jeremiah and his theology.

There is certainly an element of truth in the view that his association with Anathoth formed his thinking, but one must be wary of over-emphasising this. The sad events concerning Abiathar took place centuries before Jeremiah's time, and one cannot say with certainty that this sentiment, especially in the proximity of Jerusalem — was carefully handed down.... However, Jeremiah's origin in Anathoth and the possible traditional sentiments of this town need to be taken into account if one is to understand him, because no person develops in isolation from his community (Wessels 1987:142).

(2) In *Jerusalem* Jeremiah became attached to *Shaphan* and his family. Shaphan was Josiah's secretary and also in charge of the temple. When the law book was found in the temple he took it to the king and read parts from it to him. He also played an important part in Josiah's reforms. Through Shaphan and his family Jeremiah, the man from Anathoth, became acquainted with the law book, the reforms, the temple and the royal court. This contact shaped Jeremiah's theology in many ways (Wessels 1987:144).

Not only the place but also the *religious group* to which Jeremiah belonged was established. According to Wessels there were the Yahweh-only-worshippers and the syncretistic Yahweh worshippers. Jere-

miah found himself among the Yahweh-only-worshippers (Wessels 1985:169-171).

Jeremiah had many a *clash* with his fellow *priests* and *prophets*. According to 19:14-20:6, Jeremiah stood in the court of the temple and announced Yahweh's coming punishment on the cities and villages of Judah. The priest Pashur heard this words. He had Jeremiah beaten up and put in the stocks. Jeremiah's views also brought him into conflict with Hananiah (Jr 28) who proclaimed that the exiles would return in two years (Wessels 1987:144).

According to Wessels there were at least two *political camps*: the pro-Egyptians and pro-Babylonians. Jeremiah, and perhaps Shaphan, belonged to the latter. Jeremiah had sharp clashes with the pro-Egyptian Jehoiakim and during Zedekiah's reign he openly expressed his political views on voluntary submission (Wessels 1985:171-176).

3 Dalene Heyns: the context of Amos

Heyns was also a student of Ferdinand Deist and wrote a thesis (1989) on the social conditions during the time of Amos. This is an excellent work and she has really contributed to our understanding of Amos' context. We must especially take cognisance of the following: no other South African has constructed such a thorough and complete social context of Amos; she illustrated how a prophetic context can be construed by means of social theories; she demonstrated that context construction and text study are inseparable; she achieved a fine symbiosis between text and context. Some aspects of Heyns' context construction are discussed below.

a The text and nothing but the text

Heyns accentuated the importance of *text study* for an analysis of the ancient society. As we have said above, context construction and text study can never be separated. It is just not true that Heyns's social reading of Amos removed her from the text. Under all circumstances the text (of Amos) remained the centre of focus; it served as point of departure as well as the fixed point to which she always returned. In order to reconstruct the social conditions of Amos's time she thoroughly investigated her primary source (Amos) and scrutinised the text for information.

The book of Amos does not contain pure historical facts about the

prophet which can be abstracted easily to determine his 'ipsissima verba'. Heyns took the results of historical-critical study, emphasising the long process of origin and growth, seriously. Any history of Amos and his times must take this into account. This does not, however, reduce the importance of the text as a source for history-writing. The *text* remains the *only gateway* to the past and a close study of it a prerequisite for historical construction.

Social information about Amos can thus only be obtained by means of a *close reading* of the text. Historical study therefore does not alienate the historian from the text but actually binds him to it (Heyns 1989:11-60).

In breë trekke kom dit daarop neer dat die teks van die boek Amos nie met feitelike historiese gegewens gelyk gestel kan word nie. Vanuit die betekenis van die boek soos dit in die literêre struktuur na vore kom en die betekenis van sleuteltekste en -woorde, beelde en metafore, is die informasie afgelei oor die sosiale konteks en omstandighede waarin die teks gefunksioneer het (Heyns 1989:151).

Heyns scrutinised a few pericopes in order to determine the information necessary for the construction of the social system of the eighth century BC: the visions (1:1;7:10-17), the narratives about Amos (7:10-17), Amos's rhetoric (3:3-8), the structure of Amos 4:6-12, the central position of 5:1-17, the doxologies of Amos 4:13; 5:8-9; 9:5-6, and some remarks on Amos 1:2. After careful analysis, Heyns concluded that no historical or biographical information about Amos could be obtained from these sources. They do, however, inform us about the *circumstances* in which the *text originated*. An Amos tradition existed which was transmitted by people who valued his words. The book Amos thus reflects the views and the time of those who transmitted the book (Heyns 1989:17-20).

It is, however, very important to note that the above pericopes reflect a certain *social reality* and inform us about the concrete existence of people in that reality. An attempt was made by the editor(s) to relate the events to one person (Amos) who was located in this social reality with regard to space (Tokoa, the north) and time (eighth century BC). Of course this is the work of the editor(s), but a social reality is disclosed which can be studied and which can enable the historian to construct eighth-century society (Heyns 1989:58-60).

b The social colouring of her exegetical glasses

Heyns used *sociological* and *anthropological models* to reconstruct the context of the eighth century. She admitted that these perspectives served as a conceptual framework. According to her, no historical information can be obtained from a text or arranged without a conceptual framework. Such a framework adapts the lenses of the historian in order to identify and gather the relevant historical information. Each researcher has such a theoretical framework, whether it is explicitly stated or not. This is an extremely important point which she formulated as follows: 'In die eerste plek moet daarop gewys word dat dit nie moontlik is om historiese gegewens s nder 'n konseptuele raamwerk te orden nie — selfs nie eens te vergader  f raak te sien nie' (Heyns 1989:157).

Heyns was especially influenced by the structural-functional model of *Talcott Parsons* (1971 & 1977). This served as an overarching social framework which directed her understanding of Amos and his time. This model enabled her to arrange the information about Amos and to evaluate his behaviour (Heyns 1986:18-32).

Parsons shaped Heyns' understanding of society. Issues like the following enabled her to describe the life-context of Amos.

(1) Society consists of many members but they all contribute to the well-being of society. Stability is an important characteristic of society; dysfunctions do occur but they resolve after a time or become institutionalised.

(2) Society is regulated by a value-component; it keeps society together and is realised in human lives; social integration is accomplished when all the members of society agree on such a set of values. Parsons also emphasised the function of values and norms during the evolution of societies. By means of these views she was able to relate Amos to a 'value crisis': the lack of those values that direct inter-personal relationships.

(3) All elements in society are interrelated and are continually in a state of interaction. A social element must always be viewed in relation to other elements which constitute society as a whole. In the case of Amos his personal relationship with Yahweh determined all others. Yahweh called Amos to prophesy in the north and that 'included the human facet of his own socio-economic, political and religious position, as well as that of the people of the kingdom of Israel' (Heyns 1990:304).

(4) The notion of an 'ultimate reality' is provided for in Parsons' social theory. Religion plays a special and central role in his system. Its function is that of regulating and controlling social action (Heyns 1989:159-160).

c *Amos the farmer of Tekoa*

On her huge canvas, Heyns painted a detailed picture of the agricultural context during the eighth century BC. Amos' position and function became clearer in the light of her social reconstruction. Once again it must be stressed that no other South African scholar has described the conditions of the eighth century so extensively, so clearly and so thoroughly as Heyns. In our situation her Amos study is therefore a valuable piece of work. Only a few aspects of Amos' context can be mentioned.

First of all, something about Amos. Those who transmitted the traditions about Amos stressed the fact that he was a *farmer*. Only from this angle can he be truly understood. His protest against the leaders of the north only comes alive when viewed from an agricultural perspective. Amos was therefore not a prophet and his words must not primarily be treated as such (Heyns 1989:70-71, 32-36, 85-88).

According to the Amos tradition he was a קִנֵּן . And this does not indicate an ordinary sheep-farmer. Amos was apparently much more than that. In Akkadian and Ugaritic texts the term refers to an official of high rank and he is even listed with priests and scribes. On account of this, some have thought that the קִנֵּן was attached to the temple where he tended to the flock necessary for the daily sacrifices. Amos would then have been a cult prophet. According to Heyns this was not possible. In the context of the subsistence economy prevailing in the eighth century Amos was rather 'a notable stock-breeder' and belonged to a class of 'stock-owners [who] were rich with extensive households and many subjects' (Heyns 1990:305). The mere fact that Amos is remembered as a קִנֵּן indicates that he 'had an authoritative and responsible position in the farming community to which he belonged' (Heyns 1990:306).

With regard to the *physical-ecological nature* of Tekoa, Heyns investigated the rainfall and concluded 'dat landbou in dié streek 'n hoë-risiko bedryf was' (Heyns 1989:74). She further surveyed the different types of *soil* in the Tekoa region and indicated its poor soil. An inquiry was made into the *vegetation* and *climate* of the area and she described it as very similar to present conditions; the types of *insects* and *plagues* of that region were also referred to (Heyns 1989:73-76). Heyns' depiction of the Tekoa region's *subsistence economy* is very interesting. Although many agricultural options were possible, there

were two basic forms: stock-farming ('veeteelt') and agriculture ('akkerbou'). These two forms of farming were closely related (Heyns 1989:99).

Heyns also investigated the *social structure* associated with a subsistence economy. Tekoa's form of subsistence economy created a certain kind of social structure (Heyns 1989:81-84). And Amos filled an authoritative position in the whole social setup. He probably joined the elders in the city gates for discussions on the well-being of the community. This might have included political, social, economic and especially agricultural issues. Agricultural planning and structuring comprised things like the co-ordination of labour, harvesting strategies, allocation of pasture lands, patterns of grazing, et cetera. In short, Amos was probably involved in top-level discussions concerning agriculture and perhaps also responsible for the execution of the agricultural policy in the Tekoa village (Heyns 1990:306).

A *fine balance* thus existed between stock-farming and agriculture in the eighth century BC. This relationship was, however, severely disturbed and it consequently weakened society. When Tekoa's physical-ecological conditions changed, this profoundly affected the social system. This change was primarily brought about by the intervention of the state in agricultural affairs (Heyns 1989:88-104). The farmer's position was suddenly and drastically transformed: he was not an independent farmer any longer, but a state farmer; he was forced to submit to the state's agricultural policy; he had to plant what was prescribed by state officials; he was compelled to apply foreign or strange farming methods; he had to pay heavy taxes in the form of agricultural products; he no longer had a surplus, because the state confiscated everything; he had to work extremely hard because he had to provide for the needs of the state as well as his community; because of the emphasis on production lands were overburdened and fallow periods became impossible; the pressure on agriculture limited the grazing areas of the stock-farmer; in the long run the soil became poor and the position of the farmer and stock-breeder extremely delicate. Amos, who tended the flocks of the community, knew the detrimental effect of the state policy: it threatened the whole of society and caused social structures to crumble (Heyns 1989:88-104).

Aangesien die Amostradiese klaarblyklik moeite gedoen het om Amos as boer te tipeer, is die omstandighede van boere op die Judese hoog-

land ondersoek. Die ontleding het getoon dat bestaansboerdery in die agtste eeu toenemend só onder druk geplaas is, dat dit waarskynlik verreikende gevolge vir die fisies-ekologiese omgewing ingehou het. Dié bedreiging was hoofsaaklik die gevolg van staatsinmenging in die boerderypatroon van bestaanslandbou, wat volgens etno-argeologiese en ander historiese getuienis, altyd op die lange duur tot ineenstorting lei. Argeologiese inligting dui daarop dat die Judese platteland aan die einde van die agtste eeu so 'n aftakeling beleef het (Heyns 1989: 104).

d And why did Amos preach in the north?

Heyns also shed light on the reasons why Amos from Tekoa went to the north. First of all, Tekoa's *location* must be taken into account. It was primarily a border town which gave rise to a border mentality. Not much attention was, however, given to borders in those days. Borders were not patrolled and people were not prevented from crossing them. Tekoan farmers thus took advantage of this situation and often crossed the borders in search for pasture. They probably all followed the same route: down to the low-lying region of the Jordan valley and from there to the north. In this way Tekoan farmers got involved in the affairs of the north (Heyns 1990:308-309). 'It therefore seems possible that sheep-farmers from the region of Tekoa were, for a certain part of each year, directly involved in Ephraimite affairs and could even have been dependent on these circumstances for the keeping of the flocks' (Heyns 1990:309).

Economic factors can also explain Amos' association with the north. During the eighth century BC settlements on the Judaeon highlands increased, but they decreased in Ephraim. As a result more pastureland became available in the north. These events 'increased the probability that the sheep-farmers from the area of Tekoa, in need of grazing, would direct their attention to the northern and eastern parts' (Heyns 1990:310).

Perhaps *political factors* also contributed to the fact that Amos preached in the north. It seems feasible that Judah, and also Tekoa, its southern border, were dominated by Jeroboam II of Israel during the time of Amos. Second Kings 14:28 gives the impression that Uzziah and Jotham were two very incompetent kings. They were dominated by the stronger Jeroboam and were therefore dominated by Israel until the Syro-Ephraimite war. Although the Chronicler has a more favourable view of Uzziah and praised his many deeds (especially his

agricultural policies) this picture only refers to the first part of his reign. Perhaps the great deeds of Uzziah must rather be ascribed to the policies of Jeroboam, which also affected the lives of the farmers in Tekoa. And because Jeroboam had such control over the southern regions it was possible for Amos to experience northern agricultural policies in his own town. When he thus criticised the rulers in Samaria he 'may well mirror the experience the inhabitants of Tekoa had with Jeroboam's officials manning the administrative operations and military fortifications in their town' (Heyns 1990:311-312).

Amos was probably more inclined to the northern kingdom's *theology*. Great differences existed between the two kingdoms. Judah had a strong national consciousness and its history was built on worldly, national and religious origins. This also explains why the typical prophetic activity of the north only occurred in the south during the eighth century, and why no judges like those in Israel can be found in Judah. In the southern kingdom the dynastic principle also took precedence over the religious. Where 'Judah was more of a political and ethnic than a religious entity, Israel was a religious entity, built on mutual religious commitment' (Heyns 1990:313). According to Heyns Amos had a much stronger alignment with the theology of the north. This can, among other things, be seen in his criticism of social injustices, which is deeply rooted in northern theology (Heyns 1990: 312-314). Once again the border mentality played an important role: because Amos was a border farmer he was not so emotionally attached to the Davidic theology and this allowed him to align himself with the convictions of the north.

D CONCLUSION

(1) It seems as if two perspectives with regard to the study of the prophets have prevailed in South Africa. According to the one, prophetic study was 'de facto' limited to a thorough investigation of the final text's structure. Willem Prinsloo, his students and people like Henk Potgieter have made an excellent contribution to the understanding of the prophetic text. Aspects of the text which were neglected in the past have been highlighted.

(2) Although much has been contributed by the 'immanent' scholars, the context has been grossly neglected. Ferdinand Deist and his

students filled this gap. Due to their endeavours the life-relatedness of the prophetic words has been realised. With the help of social theories a context has been constructed in which the prophets have become flesh-and-blood human beings. It is important to note that these scholars clearly indicate that context construction and text study are closely linked.

Chapter five

The Psalms

A INTRODUCTION

Hermann Gunkel's (1926) contribution to the study of the Psalms can never be overestimated. He dominated the scene and radically changed the way in which the psalms were studied. At the beginning of the fifties his influence was described as follows:

In so far as the study of the Psalter has made any progress during the generation which has passed since the foundation of the Society for Old Testament Study, it is largely due to the influence of one man — Hermann Gunkel. Accordingly any satisfactory understanding of the developments which have taken place during the period under review must be based upon a survey of the conclusions which he reached (Johnson 1967:162).

South African scholars also took notice of Gunkel. During 1963 the Old Testament society assembled at Potchefstroom for a congress on the Psalms. In his paper *Kroeze* mainly referred to Gunkel. According to him, Gunkel had endeavoured to determine the 'innere Ordnung' of the psalms as well as their mutual relationship. *Gattungsforschung* and the search for the *Sitz im Leben* thus became the basic elements of psalm study (Kroeze 1963:40). Kroeze described Gunkel's work as impressive, but also raised some objections. His criticism is important because it reveals a type of theology or an approach to the Psalms which was very much in the vogue among some South Africans at that time: all insights resulting from the historical critical method were viewed with typical scepticism.

According to Kroeze, Gunkel built his views 'on a few facts'. Consequently the psalms were interpreted 'in terms of his system!'. Gunkel therefore 'makes' this 'innere Ordnung' himself. Although Gunkel highlighted the 'innere Ordnung' there is no indication that the psalm collectors ever desired such a structuring. Gunkel thus

looked for 'something outside the intention of the compilers of the Book of Psalms'. Criticism was also launched against Gunkel's literary approach, according to which the psalms were literary phenomena and their literary qualities were highlighted. According to Kroeze 'the point of departure should be the *contents*; for Gunkel it is the *form*. Although *important*, *form* is not *essential* in studying the Bible'. Much can be learned from Gunkel, but in the final analysis his work *doesn't* 'make him a *reliable guide* to a better understanding of the psalms' (Kroeze 1963:41,42,43 - my emphasis). Once again a very typical reaction from conservative circles: critical science is not rejected outright, but its results and insights are viewed negatively and grossly underestimated.

Ian Eybers was milder in his evaluation. Gunkel's divisions are very important, but represent only one possibility. Eybers also identified some grave shortcomings. To mention but one: the distinction between a lament and a song of thanksgiving is not always clear because many laments change into thanksgiving songs, and vice versa. He expressed the view that our 'teoretiese onderskeidings nie in staat is om die rykdom en bekoring van die Psalms in netjiese kompartemente in te dwing nie.... Gunkel se aandrag op klassifikasie van die Psalms [het] die studie van dié Bybelboek baie gestimuleer.... Samevattend kan gesê word dat Gunkel se aandrag op klassifikasie van die Psalms die studie van dié Bybelboek baie gestimuleer het en tot baie nuwe insigte gelei het, maar dat die indeling nooit 'n doel op sigself kan wees nie. Ook moet die *relatiewe betroubaarheid en waarde van enige indeling* steeds in gedagte gehou word' (Eybers 1978b:30-31).

A historical-critical inquiry into the Psalms was thus not possible in South Africa. Colenso made an attempt in this regard without any success. As we have already said his line of thought found no continuation in South Africa. We have therefore to a large extent missed the developments in psalm research since the time of Gunkel. Fensham partially compensated for this loss with his emphasis on a covenant interpretation. It was especially those 'immanent scholars' who emphasised a different approach. Jasper Burden highlighted the literary aspects of the psalms. But it was once again Willem Prinsloo (and his students) who took the lead and opened new ways of understanding the Psalms. In the long run the context was neglected. We therefore conclude this section with the views of Ig Gous who set out to create a life context for Old Testament poetry.

B CHARLES FENSHAM: A COVENANT INTERPRETATION

Fensham's view of the Old Testament was shaped by the concept of the covenant to such an extent that it even determined his approach to the Psalms. This is clearly illustrated by his exposition of *Psalms 21*. The reason for his studying this psalm was expressed in a typical Fenshamian manner: no article dealing with this psalm in an adequate way had yet been published and he therefore decided to examine it closely (Fensham 1965b:193). Furthermore no consensus existed at that stage (1965) on important issues such as the literary type of the psalm and the 'Sitz im Leben'. Although many solutions had been offered, no progress had yet been made. Also very typical of Fensham was his view that covenant theology could contribute to the solution of many of these problems. 'In the light of all these controversial opinions new material for a fresh approach must be welcomed. In my opinion a new approach is now possible in the light of new material on the forming of the covenant and its different components' (Fensham 1965b:194).

By means of close reading Fensham identified verse 8 as the Psalm 21's *focal point*. He also emphasised the covenant nature of this verse: the king puts his trust in Yahweh, while Yahweh's unfailing love supports him. This important verse is thus the axis around which the other two parts (2-7, 9-13) revolve (Fensham 1965b:195).

The first part (vv 2-7) is a prayer of thanksgiving to Yahweh for his guidance and protection. This prayer includes various *benedictions* bestowed on the king. Fensham in a typical manner related this to the ancient Near Eastern vassal treaties. Blessings formed an integral part of these treaties. Usually a long life is bestowed on the king while his wife, sons, cities, vineyards, cattle, sheep, et cetera are blessed in many ways. Benedictions were common in vassal treaties and therefore they can also be found in the covenantal Psalm 21:2-7 (Fensham 1965b:195,196).

Verses 9-13 also reminded Fensham of the *maledictions* in these vassal treaties. All kinds of curses were directed at those who were unfaithful to the covenant. Verse 10, for instance, threatens the enemy with a consuming fire. This idea was common and often mentioned in the vassal treaties. In the vassal treaty of Essarhaddon reference is made to the destruction of the transgressor and his seed by means of

fire. All this once indicated the existence of a covenant theology that existed internationally and which also shaped the covenant idea in the Old Testament (Fensham 1965b:199).

C JASPER BURDEN: A LITERARY APPROACH

Burden was a student of Fensham and completed a thesis on treaty terminology in the Old Testament. Later he became interested in a literary approach to the poetry in the Old Testament. In the case of Burden this did not imply a structural analysis of the Psalms. He merely wanted the insights of literary critics to shape our explanation of the Psalms. Modern literary theories should be used to highlight the literary nature of the Psalms and contribute to understanding them. To illustrate his point we are focusing on his contribution to the study of *parallelism* in the Psalms.

There are two other contributions by Burden to the study of the Old Testament which must be briefly highlighted. On the one hand there is his contribution to the *teaching of the Old Testament*. He is a professor at Unisa where thousands of students are enrolled for Biblical Studies. Burden has had a great influence on the improvement of the Department's teaching. He emphasises that teaching involves interpretation and understanding and therefore primarily constitutes a hermeneutical problem. Questions pertaining to the teachers' or the students' understanding of Scripture and to the means of conveying knowledge to others are therefore hermeneutical in nature. For this reason a lecturer should carefully analyse the material to be taught and scrutinise his or her own understanding of the subject matter. Second, the teaching method should receive attention. Third, the frame of reference of the students, coming from different cultural backgrounds, should be taken into account in formulating a teaching strategy (Burden 1979:22-48). Burden's views have caused considerable changes in the department. Study guides are no longer mere compilations of a series of (sometimes unrelated) lectures, but are to be carefully planned. Educational objectives have been clearly formulated; great pains have been taken to present the lectures in a comprehensible form; questions for the purpose of testing whether the educational objectives have been obtained are added at the end of each lecture. All this has been done to improve the standard of Old Testament teaching in South Africa.

Another important aspect of Burden's contribution deals with the *African world-view* and its importance for understanding the Old Testament (Burden 1982:55-89). A dominantly western European theology is being taught at South African universities while a considerable number of students are black. Burden has made us aware of the 'African' view of reality. This view explains the growing interest of Africans in the Old Testament since it is

grounded 'in a common experience of reality'. This affinity for the Old Testament is not so much based on theological concepts, religious customs or practices, but on a 'kindred' atmosphere and common elements in the way of thought. Burden often quotes Kwesi Dickson, who said 'that it is the "atmosphere" of the Old Testament, rather than the matching of isolated areas of religio-cultural expression in the Old Testament and the African "counterparts", which makes the Old Testament a source of reference in matters of faith and practice for some. It is this sensing of a "kindred" atmosphere which gives way to detailed comparisons' (Burden 1983:56). Each lecturer teaching the Old Testament should therefore take this 'common ground' into account when teaching to African students. Burden stressed the need for us to become acquainted with African hermeneutical assumptions, which are to a large extent determined by a particular world-view. Burden is 'convinced that world-view is the starting point for the interpretation of the Old Testament in Africa' (Burden 1986c:109). The importance of the 'world-view' can hardly be overestimated, because it lies at the very heart of a culture and since it is from this vantage point that reality is interpreted. Many examples can be quoted in this respect but we only refer to the mythical understanding of the past. Africa also has creation myths describing the creation of man from clay, depicting the original people as having been immortal, and as having lost immortality as a result of a mistake. Therefore, from 'his conception of the mythical past, the African has ... little difficulty in accepting the primeval history of Genesis 1-11' (Burden 1986c:105).

It must, however, be noted that it is very difficult for a 'Westerner' to get into the skin of an African. Burden had the advantage of serving for many years as a missionary in Transkei. Later he became professor of the Old Testament at the theological school at Decoligny, where Xhosa students are trained for the ministry. He is thus well equipped to understand the African perspective. Burden has nevertheless touched on the burning issues awaiting the Old Testament Society in the new South Africa.

A student of Burden, *Christopher Mngadi*, completed a master's degree on the significance of blood in Old Testament sacrifices, and its relevance for the church in Africa. The importance of Mngadi's thesis is twofold. On the one hand, he provides some insight into the African approach to the Old Testament. African churches have a more literal understanding of the Old Testament and this can clearly be seen in some of their customs. African culture can indeed enhance the understanding of the Old Testament (Mngadi 1981:134-154).

On the other hand, he once again stressed the tension between Christian and African beliefs. Many Africans combine some aspects of Old Testament sacrifices and indigenous elements. One gets the impression that Mngadi encourages all attempts to link the Old Testament and African cultures more closely. According to him, most African Christians are removed from the roots of their culture. They are aware that a return to the life of their forefathers is impossible. This is, however, 'no reason why we should not appreciate what was good in our culture. Westernisation has left an ugly scar on the face of Africa' (Mngadi 1981:153). He therefore concludes his dissertation with the following words:

In this dissertation we have probed into one of the most controversial subjects today: the relationship between Christianity and the rôle of blood in African culture. We have shown that blood is one of the essentials of African as well as Old and New Testament religion. Therefore, similarities may be used to make the Gospel more relevant to Africa (Mngadi 1981:161).

When the phenomenon of parallelism is investigated a *comprehensive theory* is a prerequisite. According to Burden psalm study cannot go without thorough theoretical reflection. For hundreds of years scholars had studied the occurrence of parallelism but the formulation of a specific theory was still lacking. He therefore rejoiced in the work of W G E Watson who 'is the first scholar that I know of that has provided a comprehensive theory for the interpretation of classical Hebrew poetry' (Burden 1986b:151; Prinsloo 1991g:64-71).

Burden mentioned Watson's dependence on Widdowson's distinction between linguistics and literary criticism. A linguist explains how a piece of language exemplifies the language system. In this regard literature is treated as a text. The literary critic searches for the underlying significance and literary works are being treated as messages. According to Watson his discipline of stylistics lies in between linguistics and literary theory: 'Defined in this way a literary critic studies the way in which elements of literary writing function in communication' (Burden 1986b:151). And this is exactly what Burden wanted to do. He wanted to identify these elements and to describe the way in which they function. Parallelism is but one of these literary devices that Burden investigated.

Burden illustrated how, from the time of Lowth, parallelism was viewed as *the* typical feature of Hebrew poetry (Burden 1986a:50-53; 1986b:141-150). In the light of Watson's contribution this assertion must now be doubted. Watson related parallelism to mathematical concepts and stated that parallelism belonged to a larger group of mathematical analogues (Burden 1986b:154). Burden followed Watson in this regard but also levelled some criticism against this view. According to Burden, this view was based on the philosophy of Descartes and truth was being viewed as something absolute. Such an 'empirical' approach to literature was no longer feasible. He rather suggested Einstein's theory of relativity 'that does not operate with such absolutes even in mathematics, not to mention literature' (Burden 1986b:162).

Burden also made some important remarks with regard to the *life-*

relatedness of parallelism. He emphasised the close connection between the literary structures and the mental structure of a people. The way in which they perceive life is reflected in their literature. Put differently, the thought patterns of people will also be revealed in their literary products. Burden's view also enabled him to relate parallelism to Israel's life context. Balance is typical of parallelism, and this should correspond to Israel's emphasis on equilibrium. Israel's strife for stability or balance can, for instance, be seen in the concept of the *ius talionis*: restitution was necessary in order to restore the balance. The entire sacrificial system rests on this system: the disturbed relationship between Yahweh and Israel must be restored. This search for balance can even be seen in the compilation of some books of the Old Testament. Two different traditions regarding the creation were put next to each other, events being described in prose and then in poetry (Ex 14 & 15) and following each other; sometimes the contents were enumerated or arranged in complementary or in opposing pairs. These examples highlight a specific kind of thinking that corresponds with a specific kind of perceiving and understanding of reality (Burden 1986a:50-51; 1986b:171-172).

Burden stressed that this balancing is not related to mathematical precision but to the notion of *approximation*. Burden was convinced that Einstein's theory provided him with the philosophical basis to explain parallelism. He nevertheless wanted to expand this theoretical framework to include more. Due to his philosophical relativity Burden also moved beyond Lowth's triad. He opted for 'a hundred sorts' of parallelism. So many possibilities exist and this literary device should not be restricted to only a few. It is therefore suggested that all the books of the Old Testament be scrutinised in order to determine and evaluate the full measure of parallelism. All aspects of the text — structural, grammatical, syntactical, semantic and phonetic — must carefully be investigated (Burden 1986b:173).

All Burden's work reveals a strong literary approach. Modern theories about the text have been eagerly devoured and in many ways applied to the poetic sections of the Old Testament. This can be illustrated by means of the following examples:

In his work on the *Song of Songs* (Burden 1987b:56-81) he investigated all the literary aspects of these songs: the poetic word, the poetic image, the poetic rhythms, the form of the songs and their unity. This investigation into the different aspects of the text not only gave him a firm grip on the text but

also enabled him to formulate the meaning in literary terms (Burden 1987b: 77-81).

The book of *Lamentations* was examined in terms of its structure and *Gattung*. Burden once again illustrated how this literary approach to poetic literature enhances the understanding of the book (Burden 1987c:150-163).

He also investigated the recent interpretations of *Proverbs*. In a very informative article Burden introduced us to the latest research on paroemiology, the science of proverbs (Burden 1990:341-359). He emphasised that future study of the proverbs must be undertaken from a literary point of view. Put differently, text analysis must be comprehensive. In this regard Burden advocated a combination of the structural and contextual approaches which also incorporate linguistic insights (Burden 1990:355). As we have already said, Burden wanted to relate Old Testament research to the African context. He therefore stated that for 'those of us in Africa paroemiology cannot remain a mere academic endeavour.... More has to be done to understand not only the proverbs of the Old Testament but also those of Africa' (Burden 1990:355-356).

In a very fine article Burden investigated the exchange of popular proverbs between *Job* and his friends (Burden 1991b:37-65). He concluded that the author of the book of *Job* used popular proverbs in order to defuse the tension between *Job* and his friends. In order to understand a popular proverb the situation of interaction during which the saying was transmitted — also called Proverb Performance — must be understood; a contextual or interactional model 'proves successful for the analysis of a proverb to determine its interaction situation, its proverb situation and its social situation' (Burden 1991b:63).

D WILLEM PRINSLOO: SING UNTO THE LORD IN A STRUCTURED MANNER

Prinsloo has made a major contribution to the study of the Psalms. In recent years he has regularly published articles on the Psalms and by and large this has been noted with appreciation. Although he has not yet covered all the psalms he has followed a definite approach. What strikes one first is that he breaks away from the long-established historical-critical method of explaining psalms. He has approached the Psalms in a different manner. Prinsloo was the first South African to study such a large number of psalms so consistently, by means of a clearly defined method. Every psalm is studied using this method and he has thus made an exceptional contribution to psalm study in this country. Prinsloo has also had a great influence on his students, and their approach to the Psalms has been shaped by means of his method.

It is interesting to note how Prinsloo himself regarded his work on the Psalms. His work must not be treated as just another book or article in the popular tradition, but must be taken very seriously: 'Hierdie werkie is nie bedoel om as ontspanningslektuur ge lees te word nie. Dit is bedoel om ge lees te word met die vinger op die Hebreuse teks. Die Hebreuse taal, eksegese en preekmaak verg inspanning!' (Prinsloo 1984a:3; 1991g).

1 Approach to the Psalms: the text and not history

For a time, the study of the Psalms was caught in the grip of the *historical-critical method*. As we have said, Prinsloo's psalm research differs from it, but he wanted to be in a continuous dialogue with this method. It is important to note that Prinsloo does not reject the historical-critical method. On the contrary, he declares that the results of historical criticism with regard to the Psalms may never be underestimated. During the past two hundred years it has made a tremendous contribution to the study of the Bible. Besides, we cannot imagine ourselves without the results of the historical critic (Prinsloo 1988a:203). Prinsloo wants to use this method to complement his purpose. The text indeed has an origin and a history and must be taken into account (Prinsloo 1984a:1-6; 1988a:205-206). Prinsloo's psalm study is nevertheless a total breakaway from the historical-critical method. The text-immanent understanding of the text is most important, because it is 'ons eerste en belangrikste invalspoor' (Prinsloo 1988a:206). Although historical insights are important for the understanding of the psalms, they may never form the starting-point of exegesis (Prinsloo 1988a:207). Historical information has a meaning only when it enlightens the text in its final form. Put differently, historical study only fulfils an incidental function to understanding the text in its present form. Seen like this, the meaning of a psalm text is not at all dependent on any historical information. On the contrary, the meaning of the Psalms could also be described without historical dimension.

The way in which Prinsloo reviews the historical-critical approach to the Psalms is very interesting. It is interesting to note which aspects of historical criticism Prinsloo opposed, because this highlights something of his own approach to the text. He wanted to accomplish just the opposite of historical criticism. In the first place, the positivistic base of this method is unacceptable. The emphasis on that historical data in the psalms which can be fixed and controlled has been re-

viewed negatively. In this regard the demand of the natural sciences for exactness and preciseness is obvious. Secondly, objectiveness is pursued, but in reality this method rests upon certain presuppositions. A third, but very important point for Prinsloo, is the speculative nature of historical criticism. As will be seen, any speculation with regard to dating and the context of the psalm, which is not based on certainty, goes totally against Prinsloo's scientific grain. In the fourth place, the historical-critical emphasis on the author is also sharply under the barrage of Prinsloo's criticism. In the historical approach a lot of trouble is taken to reconstruct the original context of the author. Seeing that it can never be determined with certainty, it does not deserve so much attention. Another important point that Prinsloo is against, is the text theory underlying historical criticism. It focuses on the origin and growth of the text of the Psalms. In an atomistic way the text is split, and the origin of each section, as well as its growth, is described up until the final text. Prinsloo rejected this view of the text. A final matter deals with the actualising of the text. So much attention is given to the history and growth of the text that the meaning for the present is left aside (Prinsloo 1988a:202-204).

Prinsloo's exegesis of the Psalms is intended as a *critical dialogue* with the historical-critical method. Over against a historical approach Prinsloo sets an immanent reading of the text. According to this view, the text forms the main point of focus (Prinsloo 1980b:162; 1984a:4-5) and the primary task of the Old Testament scholar is to explain it in its present form. In the past the Psalms were too often subjected to a historical-critical inquiry and the text of the Psalms was neglected. And when the psalm text (and not historical reconstructions) receives full attention it implies primarily a text-immanent analysis (Prinsloo 1987c:4).

This *attitude* to the text has some important consequences for the study of the Psalms: the autonomy of the psalm as a work of literature is stressed; in the place of the origin or the history of the psalm, the text in its final form is central; the focus has moved from the author, from the dating and *Sitz im Leben* of the psalm to the meaning of the text. Although this method of working also has its dangers, 'bly die winspunt van die struktuuranalise nog steeds dat dit die groot leemte van die histories-kritiese metodes ondervang het, naamlik om die teks soos wat dit nou voor ons lê, in die sentrum te plaas' (Prinsloo

1988a:204).

An insight of De Saussure forms the basic point of departure of Prinsloo: on the one hand language is *structured* and on the other *synchrony* is more important than diachrony (Prinsloo 1984a:4; 1988a:204). This approach resulted in discourse and structural analysis. By way of stylistic, syntactic and semantic criteria, the structure of the psalms' text is described. Such a structure forms a controllable framework for the exegetical process (Prinsloo 1988a:205). In his psalm research Prinsloo determines each psalm's structure which is an indispensable requirement for its understanding. Such a structure is the objective framework in which, or the key with which, the contents of the psalm can be understood or unlocked. Thus the form and content of the psalm are not separated. The syntactic and the semantic study of a psalm supplement one another. Knowledge of the structure of a psalm throws light on its contents, and content-criteria can also help to determine the structure (Prinsloo 1980b:162).

In his 1991 work on the Psalms, Prinsloo stated that the study of the psalms was experiencing some kind of an upheaval. This led to an increasing awareness of the problems attached to psalm study. To emphasise this point, Prinsloo quoted the following words on a page at the beginning of his book: 'It is never easy to understand a poem' (Prinsloo 1991g). As a result of constant reflection Prinsloo now for the first time depicts his method as 'sinkronies-teksimmanent' (synchronic-text immanent).

Because the communication model had been used by many scholars Prinsloo also expressed his views on this very briefly. If the communication process of the written text focuses on the author, text and reader then his work highlights the text. To decode a text all the literary conventions must be explained and, to accomplish this, Prinsloo devoted himself (with some others) to the more recent work on Hebrew poetry. The aim of his work on the Psalms nevertheless remained the same: 'Al die fasette word aangewend ten einde die teks te probeer dekodeer om dit sodoende te probeer verstaan' (Prinsloo 1991g: Ter inleiding). Put differently, the Psalms have meanings which can be decoded by means of the correct method.

Since his first book on the Psalms in 1984, the debate about a historical (critical) understanding of the Psalms has increased. Prinsloo, his students and other scholars working synchronically have been accused of neglecting history, of killing the imagination, of being clinical, et cetera. Prinsloo took this criticism seriously and briefly answered it. He rejected the accusation of working ahistorically and neglecting historical issues; he furthermore states that a structural analysis is a creative undertaking and also very imaginative. When the Psalms are, however, being investigated the texts must restrain the exegete's imagination. Prinsloo expressed himself in the following way: 'Só 'n sinkroniese benadering moet egter nie as 'n akroniese of a-historiese lees gesien word nie. Die teks as sodanig is immers 'n historiese gegewene en is

die resultaat van 'n *historiese proses* (maar dit is) nie altyd moontlik om die historiese proses te rekonstrueer nie.... 'n Sinkroniese benadering is *nie minder verbeeldingryk* as byvoorbeeld 'n histories-kritiese benadering nie. Dit is egter *meer gekontroleerd*. Hiermee word nie gesê dat die sinkroniese lees van 'n teks 'n *eksakte, objektiewe, kliniese proses* is nie. Dit is nie 'n stuk *positiwisme* nie. Om 'n teks sinkronies te lees met inagneming van al die literêre konvensies is 'n *kreatiewe daad* en vra *verbeelding* van die eksegeet. Die eksegeet wat die psalms (of enige teks van die Ou Testament) interpreteer mag sy verbeelding egter nie vrye teuels gee nie. Hy word "beperk" deur die teks' (Prinsloo 1991g: Ter inleiding — my emphasis).

2 The synchronic study of the Psalms

Prinsloo then *starts* with the text as it presents itself (Prinsloo 1981a: 80). He constantly states that he wants to work objectively and that objective criteria will be used. As will be seen below he rejects any speculative intercourse with the text. In time he realises that objectiveness is not that easily attained (Prinsloo 1984j:357). It must nevertheless remain an ideal and the exegete must strive after it. Prinsloo wants to treat the text of the psalms empirically: an objective method is applied in such a way that valid results can be reached; other scholars must also be able to verify the results (cf Prinsloo 1988a:205).

However Prinsloo's way of working, his *comprehensive control* over and *sturdy grip* on the psalm-text demands great respect. The smallest textual detail is examined and used to establish structure and content. Prinsloo's comprehensive approach and his close scrutiny of the text have trained his eyes to detect the minutest detail and to incorporate every bit of information into a meaningful framework. Such intercourse with the text requires a lot of concentration as well as an excellent knowledge of the Hebrew language. Prinsloo is at his best in the first part of the exegetical process when the synchronic aspects are brought to light.

In the diachronic section, Prinsloo wants to work with the same preciseness and objectivity, but historical questions cannot be handled in such a way; more about this later. Prinsloo's exegesis of the Psalms follows a *fixed* and *definite* procedure. He follows 'n wetenskaplike verantwoordbare volgorde van eksegetiese stappe asook ... 'n pluralisme van metodes wat aangewend moet word om die volle inhoud van 'n teks te probeer te bepaal' (Prinsloo 1980b:162). According to him he is thus using a method which is scientifically justified and which consists of a sequence of exegetical steps. Every psalm is

analysed by means of the same exegetical steps. Although it is somehow predictable it has nevertheless great value: it grants his work a particular distinction that helps the reader to follow him to the end. In this way he comes close to his ideal of preciseness and clarity. Basically the following steps are followed:

(1) First, the psalm is *marked off* in 'pericopes'. In the case of the Psalms it is easier because in most cases each one forms an independent unit. Psalms 1 and 2 create a problem. Since the earliest times these two psalms have been read as a unit. An important reason for this is the word conformity that is found in both psalms. According to the rules of literary criticism these similarities would confirm the unity of the two psalms. For Prinsloo this is not satisfactory. The structure must speak the final word in these cases. And since Psalm 1 forms a structured unit it is impossible to connect it with Psalm 2 (Prinsloo 1981a:80-81; Prinsloo 1984i:8-9).

(2) Next, the psalm is *text-critically* examined and for this purpose the critical apparatus is used. Although the original texts are no longer available, it is still possible to reconstruct a meaningful text with the help of text criticism, so that it is not an illusion to talk about the text of the Old Testament (Prinsloo 1987c:4). With objectivity, preciseness and certainty Prinsloo reconstructs the text as far as possible. He has a preference for the MT and does not emend the text easily. If he gets the impression that text-critical proposals are rather subjective (Prinsloo 1984b:9) they are rejected immediately; a proposal is only accepted so as to obtain a meaningful text (Prinsloo 1984c:25; 1987b: 232); 'die winspunte van die nuwe semantiek' as well as external text witnesses play a decisive role in the solving of text-critical problems (Prinsloo 1984e:73). In short, no text emendations are made without empirical grounds.

(3) After the psalm is demarcated and the best reading of the text established, a *structural analysis* can be undertaken. Here also Prinsloo endeavours to create a structure in an objective manner and with the help of formal criteria, which will form a controllable framework for the later discussion of the content of the psalm (Prinsloo 1981a: 81-82). First the external form is investigated. Gradually Prinsloo moves from the external or ornamental points to the internal or syntactical structure. In the case of the Psalms, metre is the first ornamental point attention is given to. Although the metre is some-

times difficult to ascertain, this is nevertheless an indispensable step because it plays a vital role in determining the connections of the structure (Prinsloo 1980b:163). Other ornamental aspects typical of Prinsloo's analyses of the psalms are sound effects (Prinsloo 1984g: 117), alliteration (Prinsloo 1981a:83), repetition of words — which strengthens the cohesion of the psalm (Prinsloo 1988b:121), *inclusio* — which highlights the rounding off of the psalm (Prinsloo 1984g: 119; 1984h:136; 1988b:121), et cetera.

(4) Next we turn to the *internal form*. In the case of the psalm the stiche is the starting-point. A stiche is not a linguistic unit, but a stylistic one. It is the unit that the psalm-writer used himself and by means of the stiche the poet gives us the structure on a tray (Prinsloo 1980b:163; 1984a:5). In order to fix the structure Prinsloo works syntactically. Every word is analysed and its function explained in the light of the whole. For Prinsloo the words of the psalm form the point of departure. It seems as if the Hebrew words almost have a fascination for him and therefore the structure and content can only be determined by means of the Hebrew text. Verbs are an important point of orientation: the form (prophetic perfect, imperfect, participia), its position in the verse and its relationship to the whole, the changing of the subject, and the reasons for doing so are thoroughly examined. All the nouns are also of extreme importance: their position in the sentence, as well as the suffixes or any other deviation, and their relation to the verbs are noted. Prepositions and particles are very important: great trouble is taken to determine the function and influence of each. Every verse or pericope is searched for 'Leitwörter' and their contribution to the structure and content is determined. Special attention is given to figures of speech. Anadiplosis (when the word or group of words with which the verse ends is repeated in the first part of the next verse), contrasts (with which certain effects are obtained), anaphora (when the same word appears at the start of two consecutive sentences), et cetera get identified regularly. In his psalm study Prinsloo makes much of parallelisms and chiasmi. We could almost say that he utilises the possibilities fully to determine the structure and to enlighten the content. Prinsloo has a sensitive eye for any possible grammatical deviation and its 'possibilities' are fully investigated (Prinsloo 1981a:82-86; 1984b:8-11; 1984c:26-29; 1984e:73-80; 1984f:103-106; 1987b:232-235; 1988b:117-122).

3 The diachronic study of the Psalms

If Prinsloo is at his best when toiling synchronically with the text, the situation is different with regard to the diachronic aspect. By no means does this imply that his method is unhistorical or that he does not have an affinity for Israel's past. He believes that historical context must be taken into account if the message of the present text is to be understood (Prinsloo 1982a:18). Although it involves a great deal of trouble and effort, a study of the period, the culture and the world image of Israel is indispensable for an understanding of the Old Testament (Prinsloo 1984j:354). Thus — as is clear from his study of the Psalms — Prinsloo is far from unwilling to acknowledge historical material. The problem lies on a different level. Prinsloo now has to move from the text to the context, from empirical study of the text to a speculative historico-critical reconstruction of the context, from certainty about the text to uncertainty about the history, from objectivity to a field which cannot be reconstructed without subjective flights of imagination, from lucidity and clarity to historical uncertainty and ambiguity. Although historical information is important, Prinsloo finds it just too hypothetical and uncertain a foundation on which to build anything. Prinsloo's method simply does not allow for the use of speculative historical data. One or two historical certainties are all he permits himself to use and even these are deployed in a certain manner: at most to provide the decor for synchronic information. Indeed, all the psalms can be understood just as well without history. A vital aspect of Prinsloo's method is to point out the untenability of the historico-critical results and then to tear them to shreds. Historical information that does not fit in with his exact understanding of the text itself is mercilessly criticised. Reverberating across the multiplicity of contradictory products of historical criticism, his judgments pronounce them to be unsubstantiated and hypothetical reconstructions.

(1) In past decades research into Psalms has concentrated on the matter of *dating* and it goes without saying that Prinsloo would be part of this activity. However, the essential difficulty he faced was that it was impossible to determine these dates precisely. One of the psalms he wished to date was Psalm 2. Typically he began by describing the numerous suggested dates. The psalm has been placed anywhere from the Davidic period to the Maccabean, a span of approximately nine hundred years. He set out not only to indicate the confu-

sion but also to make the whole matter of dating a little ridiculous. There are simply too few historical data and for this reason the exercise is rather futile. Referring to Psalm 2 he claims that it is, after all, impossible to arrive at a precise date. Sometimes this psalm is associated with some New Year festival that might have existed in Israel. For an objective scholar like Prinsloo this is a completely unacceptable procedure: besides the fact that it cannot be proved, it is 'unjustified' to 'introduce' extraneous elements. Hypothetically reconstructed periods and contexts may even be dangerous because in the majority of cases the subjective historical framework becomes the norm by which the text is expounded. Psalm 2 may be understood without trying to reconstruct the historical background (Prinsloo 1984c:34-36). This highly negative attitude to dating and the historical context may be found in every one of his expositions of the Psalms. Consider the following examples: since Psalm 13 provides no concrete data it is rather presumptuous to try and date it (Prinsloo 1984d:63); the historical context of Psalm 46 should be discussed with 'greater delicacy', because far too many attempts have already been made to 'read' a specific period 'into' this psalm 'thus manipulating the course of its exposition' (Prinsloo 1984e: 83); it is also inadmissible to use 'a hypothetical historical or cultic Sitz im Leben' to 'force' the exegesis of Psalm 121 'to take a biased turn' (Prinsloo 1984f:103); since it is impossible 'to fix an exact date' for Psalm 15 (Prinsloo 1987c:14) and there is 'nothing direct' in Psalm 126 to suggest a 'precise date' (Prinsloo 1987b:237), it is better to admit the fact in each case, and leave the matter there. One could continue in this vein, showing that Prinsloo repeatedly uses almost exactly the same words and expressions to voice his negative judgement of the dating and context of almost every psalm, or to question its value for understanding the text.

(2) To be fair, one needs to re-emphasise that, basically, Prinsloo is not averse to ascertaining the time and context, and that in fact he also indicates certain '*methods*' of executing this type of historical endeavour. Language can determine the period and assist in disclosing the context. The presence of Aramaisms in a psalm may be an indication of a postexilic dating; in no way signifying a precise date, they are at most vague indications of a broad period (Prinsloo 1984h:141; 1984g:123). 'Quotations' from the rest of the Old Testament are vital aids. Their presence means that the psalmist must have had at his dis-

positional material already in existence. It is easier to date a psalm that is something of an anthology if one can determine the period from which the quoted sections originate (Prinsloo 1984h:141). Psalm 126 is an excellent example of this. Prinsloo has convincingly shown that the author quoted copiously from the book of Joel. The terminology and use of words in this psalm are so similar to Joel that they may not be ignored. Elsewhere Prinsloo went into great detail to show that the book of Joel dates from after the erection of the second temple (Prinsloo 1985b:108-112). If the psalmist actually used this book as a source, then Psalm 126 must have originated after the time of Joel (Prinsloo 1987b:238). Elements of wisdom literature in a psalm can also be indications of its date. For instance, a vague date for Psalm 101 has been obtained from elements such as the following: the expression 'walking with integrity of heart', the combination of 'base' and 'blameless', the description of self-exaltation using the expressions 'haughty looks' or 'arrogant heart', the theme of slander and the contrast between the righteous and the ungodly. The occurrence of such elements of wisdom literature indicates a postexilic dating (Prinsloo 1988b:125-126; 1984b:14-15; 1987c:12-13).

(3) The way Prinsloo handles the *headings* is of exceptional importance. He assumes that they originate from postexilic times and that the Levitic priests had a large share in them. Although the headings are later additions, they do not forfeit authority or meaning (Prinsloo 1984d:62). While it is true that the headings do not refer to the psalm's original period of origin, they may not be viewed as unnecessary addenda (Prinsloo 1986b:78-79; 1988b:14). Prinsloo is constrained by his view of the text to 'accept' the headings as '(a) vital part of the text' (Prinsloo 1984e:88). In reality, from a historical point of view, the headings have certain limitations but they are indispensable to an immanent reading of the Psalms. Although, for example, the heading of Psalm 3 casts no light on the original period, it imparts an exceptional depth to the text as we have it. The heading provides a concrete example of Yahweh's deliverance from adversity. Since the study begins with the text 'as it has come down to us', the unhistorical heading should be 'used ... to maximal advantage' (Prinsloo 1989a). Headings should not be used to initiate inquiry into what lies behind the text or into its origin but should be read immanently, in conjunction with the text. Used in this way, the headings will

definitely enrich the clarification of the psalm (Prinsloo 1986b:78; 1987c:14; 1989b).

(4) *Gattung* determination also forms an important component of a historical-critical approach to the Old Testament. In this area too, existing research does not meet Prinsloo's requirements for exactness and preciseness. Indeed, he is acutely opposed to the one-sided aspects found in the work of Gunkel and later researchers into the Psalms. Prinsloo maintains that time and again a brilliant hypothesis is taken over mindlessly. In the history of research into the Psalms, this has been the case particularly with Gunkel's views. Over and over again there have been attempts to 'force' a psalm inappropriately into one of the existing *Gattungen* as well as into a 'hypothetically reconstructed' *Sitz im Leben*. This tendency has had such a dominating influence that, in the process, the text has been neglected (Prinsloo 1988b:117). If, for example, it had not been for Gunkel, countless scholars would not have described Psalm 101 as a king's psalm, with the corresponding creation of a *Sitz im Leben*. Although there is a sketchy concord between both *Gattung* and *Sitz im Leben*, there are vigorous differences about the details of this psalm. It is interesting to note Prinsloo's reaction to this: these divergent opinions that were 'uncritically' based on 'Gunkel's hypothesis' and which were then 'read into the psalm', are unjustifiable. The mere existence of such a large number of views prompts Prinsloo to comment: 'For this reason one cannot just accept the general hypothesis that the psalm we are dealing with is a king's psalm. Accepting a hypothesis like this would determine the exegesis of the entire psalm. It is remarkable that those who subscribe to the hypothesis, have usually adopted it from someone else, taking it for granted without actually thinking it through' (Prinsloo 1988b:125).

In his 1987 inaugural lecture he once again attacked the one-sided approach to *Gattung*; with regard to Psalm 15 he vehemently opposed the attitude to force this psalm into 'n *voorafgefabrieseerde Gattung-hokkie*' and to influence its interpretation by means of 'n *hipotetiese Sitz im Leben*'. Each psalm is a unique piece of literature 'wat nie noodwendig in 'n *Gunkeliaanse Gattungsaaanduiding* hoef in te pas nie' (Prinsloo 1991a:12 — my emphasis). The interpretation of the Psalms must primarily focus on 'die poëtiese rekonstruksies van die *huidige teks* en nie ... die *teoretiese rekonstruksies* van 'n *veronderstelde agtergrond* nie' (Prinsloo 1987b:12). This once again illustrates Prinsloo's attitude to the text. He rejected the accusation of being anti-historical and neglecting historical information. But, when it comes to

the concrete reconstruction of a context or *Sitz im Leben* of a psalm, he is reluctant to risk an imaginative or creative leap into the unknown past. Because of his view of the text nothing is undertaken that cannot be determined by an objective or empirical scrutiny of the psalm. Put differently, only direct historical information can be used. The following (with regard to the *Sitz im Leben* of Psalm 136) is a very typical sentence from Prinsloo: 'In die teks self is daar *geen direkte verwysing* na die tyd waarop dit geskryf is nie' (Prinsloo 1991e:103).

(5) Instead of dividing the Psalms into 'prefabricated *Gattung* compartments' and confining our understanding of them to a 'hypothetical *Sitz im Leben*', Prinsloo wishes to take a different route (Prinsloo 1987c:12). He prefers to acknowledge the text's *uniqueness* and to determine its *function*. For example, he finds it inappropriate to force Psalm 121 into one of the existing *Gattungen* since this adds very little to its meaning. Much more can be achieved by explaining its comforting function during the difficult years of exile (Prinsloo 1987b:237). The function of Psalm 15, on the other hand, is persuasive: to compare the godly with the ungodly, thus presenting the reader/hearer with an option and attempting to persuade him to choose Yahweh (Prinsloo 1987c:13; cf 1988b:126; 1984c:31-34; 1984d:61-64; 1984e:81-84; 1984f:107-109; 1986b:77-78).

(6) The only type of history that Prinsloo considers to be indispensable is the 'Heilsgeschichte'. This refers to the mighty deeds of Yahweh at the creation, the patriarchs, the exodus, Sinai, the entry into the promised land and the promise to the house of David. Through the history of traditions these deeds acquire an important place in Prinsloo's study of the Psalms. As he expounds a psalm, he determines any traditions that may appear and indicates their value for its meaning. Here, too, Prinsloo has his own way of going about things. He does not treat tradition history in the traditional historico-critical fashion. Not a word is spoken about the history of the traditions or the contexts in which they were handed down. For him each tradition has a basic significance and he uses it to elucidate the present text. In other words, exegesis is not undertaken for the sake of the traditions: the traditions merely reinforce the meaning which has already been established through an immanent method of reading (Prinsloo 1980b: 165; 1984f:106; 1984g:123-124; 1984h:142-145; 1987c:13-14; 1987b:238).

We can illustrate Prinsloo's use of traditions with reference to Psalm 136.

Questions about possible traditions are only posed after the 'immanent steps' have been executed. A few traditions are then identified and discussed in terms of its contribution to the understanding of the present text.

Mention is made of the *creation tradition* which plays an important role in this psalm. The terminology used in this psalm reminds Prinsloo of the priestly writer in Genesis 1. Although the creation tradition may signify many different things it highlights the message of the final text in Psalm 136 in two ways. First of all, it has a hymnic function and motivates people to praise Yahweh. Secondly, it serves a polemic function: God is depicted as the only and true God over and against the other gods.

The *exodus tradition* plays a prominent role in this psalm. Many themes of the exodus can be found: the death of the first-born (10), the exodus itself (11), the crossing of the sea (13-14) and the destroying of the Egyptian king and his army. Everything contributes to the idea that Yahweh always intervenes on behalf of the weak.

Reference to the *desert tradition* is also made and it stresses that Yahweh guides his people (16). Traditions about the entry and the promises regarding the land can also be found in the psalm. Their function is to emphasise that Yahweh destroys all the enemies of his people. Even allusions to the holy war tradition are present in Psalm 136 and they serve to illustrate that Yahweh himself was involved in Israel's wars and that he conquered the nations for the sake of his people (Prinsloo 1991e:104-105).

4 Church of Christ and a christological interpretation

To many the christological interpretation of the Psalms is extremely important. Prinsloo is, however, opposed to this. While, in his study of the Psalms, he takes the church of Christ very seriously, he emphatically rejects any form of forced christological interpretation. Prinsloo's passion for the congregation is evident in every exposition of a psalm. He never explains without applying his exposition. The implication of studying the Psalms is that the message will be actualised for the congregation. Prinsloo wishes to bridge the gulf between then and now, text and congregation, and is even prepared to grant latitude for depth psychology (cf Prinsloo 1984f:112; 1986b:81; 1987b:239; 1984j:354-357). Prinsloo's exposition of Psalm 137 is a typical example of his concern for the congregation. He himself acknowledges that it is one of the 'most difficult' psalms in the Old Testament. There are many who have difficulties with it, yet the matter is seldom broached. Nevertheless, Prinsloo declares that this psalm has a poignant message for the congregation and he goes to great lengths to point it out. He uses this psalm to illustrate the various ways in which Christ's church is still suffering today. Christians who read Prinsloo's exposition of

Psalm 137 will also be called to show their undivided loyalty to Jesus Christ (Prinsloo 1984g:130-131).

All this in no way presupposes a christological interpretation of the Psalms. Prinsloo's view is best illustrated in his exposition of Psalm 110. No psalm is quoted more frequently in the New Testament than Psalm 110. It would seem from the quotations that the New Testament writers consistently interpreted this psalm christologically — but not uniformly. This gives rise to the question of whether twentieth-century exegetes should view the New Testament treatment of Psalm 110 as a norm: 'The answer to this is a very simple "NO!"'. Prinsloo makes two important comments in defence of his point of view. First, these quotations take on a totally different significance in the New Testament and each of them should 'once again be read with its own literary, historical and theological context and intention'. The New Testament writers read Psalm 110 'with Christ in mind', thereby giving it a totally different meaning. The result was something far removed from what was intended by the original psalmist. The New Testament writers understood Psalm 110 with the aid of contemporary exegetical methods but this in no way commits twentieth-century exegetes to do the same. Second, the New Testament interpretation of Psalm 110 certainly does not revoke its original Old Testament meaning. The Psalm has a unique message that may be understood without the New Testament. Hence, whoever understands the psalm in a prescribed christological way 'is guilty of an unwarranted, mechanical use of Scripture' (Prinsloo 1988c:178-184).

5 Prinsloo's students

Prinsloo shaped his students' reading of the Psalms. In this section we mention only two. In many ways the influence of Prinsloo can be seen in the work of these two students. This not only illustrates his influence as a scholar but also the fact that his approach to the Psalms and his method met with so much intellectual approval that they were perpetuated.

In 1986 *Phil Botha* completed a thesis on the theological function of the semantic field of 'Torah' in Psalm 119. This was an excellent thesis which shed new light on Psalm 119. New dimensions of the text were spotlighted and utilised to illuminate the function of Torah in Psalm 119. Like his promoter, Botha had an excellent grip on the

text and investigated linguistic elements in the minutest detail.

With regard to *text theory* Botha's view also resembles that of Prinsloo: he appreciates the insights of historical criticism but 'n uitsluitlike-historiese benadering' must be rejected. This insight is based on an understanding of language as a structured unity. Meaning is determined by the relationship between the different signs; consequently all attention is now focused on the final form of the text 'en (is) die metodologiese voorrang van sinkronie en 'n teksimmanente benadering verseker'. It is not the history and the growth of the words (etymology), or the text (redaction history), but the text 'soos hy voor die ondersoeker lê' that must form the point of departure. And the method to be used must be scientific in the sense that the exegetical process can be verified (Botha 1986:9-116). His *method* comprises the 'familiar steps': literary criticism, textual criticism, structural analysis, form and Gattung criticism, motive and tradition criticism, 'woordveldondersoek', transmission history, composition criticism, redaction criticism, dating, authorship and finally the formulation of theological views. Like Prinsloo, Botha does not pay much attention to historical questions. When he reaches this stage in the exegetical process the 'essential meaning' has already been established and the impression is created that his historical inquiry is merely an addendum (Botha 1986:319-325). It is thus clear that Botha was steeped in the method and the text theory of his promoter. His method nevertheless enabled him to scrutinise the text of Psalm 119. Each word was investigated and explained in detail. The many tables in the thesis witness to a thorough investigation of the text.

Botha has come to the conclusion that the term 'Torah' consists of two components: an *instruction* and a *word component*. The instruction component is more directed at the conduct of man. In this regard the Torah serves as a means to distinguish between the pious and the wicked (Botha 1986:305). According to Botha the word component refers to Yahweh's intervention in man's distress. This component was more important to the author of Psalm 119 than the other one (Botha 1986:304,306-311). Botha finally concludes that emphasis on the Torah in Psalm 119 in no way indicates a form of legalism. The term 'Torah' does indeed refer to certain cultic instructions but it is also related to Yahweh's merciful intervention in the life of man.

Wanneer die outeur dus sy toewyding aan die Torah by herhaling en

in ekstreme terme beskryf, praat hy nie van iets anders as sy liefde vir Jahwe nie. In die taal van sy tyd definieer hy hom as 'n vrome in onderskeid van die goddeloses wat hulle nie aan Jahwe — en daarom ook nie aan sy Torah — steur nie. Vir die psalmis is die toewyding aan die Torah nie 'n doel op sigself nie. Dit word duidelik wanneer die bede dat Jahwe hom die Torah moet leer ... in aanmerking geneem word. Die Torah is sy beloofde land ... sy rykdom ... en sy lig op sy pad. Die Torah is Jahwe se genadige bemoeienis met die mens (Botha 1986:382).

Johan Coetzee investigated the tension between the 'hiddenness' of God and his 'saving intervention'. Once again the notion of polar structures or tensions is apparent. He also referred to Loader's work on the polar structures in the book of Qohelet (Coetzee 1986:12-13). According to Coetzee, Yahweh is experienced in terms of contrasts. He moves between two extremes: the revealing God who intervenes in human life and the hidden One (Coetzee 1986:8). Coetzee based his study on the tensions between Yahweh's hiddenness and his intervention in some penitential psalms: 9/10; 13; 22; 27; 44; 69; 88; 102; 143. All these psalms contain a Hebrew expression which hints at separation from God (Coetzee 1986:3). It is important to note that the penitential psalms reflect on this concealment of Yahweh as well as Israel's reaction (Coetzee 1986:5-7). Coetzee examined the function of the elements of tension which occur in the above-mentioned psalms.

Because this tension between contrasting elements is created by means of stylistics, syntax and semantics (Coetzee 1988:2), much attention is paid to the literary side of the text. Coetzee's method clearly resembles the influence of *Loader* and *Prinsloo*. He explicitly refers to Loader's article on controlled exegesis as well as Prinsloo's work on the Psalms. The final text therefore serves as starting-point and Coetzee aims at objective and scientific results. Synchronic study precedes diachronic investigation. To accomplish this Coetzee follows a very definite method which consists of definite steps which are basically the same as those of Prinsloo. He thus wants to limit any outside influence and exclude subjectivity. Coetzee's text approach is clear from the following:

Metodologies word daar veral by die benaderingswyses van Loader en Prinsloo op Suid-Afrikaanse bodem aansluiting gevind. 'n *Sintese* van die *teksimmanente* en *historiese benadering* is dus aan die orde.... Hoewel daar nie altyd 'n rigiede volgorde van metodestappe is

nie, is daar tog 'n prioriteitsvolgorde wat die navorsing stelselmatig laat ontplooi.... Hier is dit belangrik om altyd *eers* aan die *sinkroniese* en *daarna* aan die *diakroniese* aspekte aandag te gee. Hierdie *volgorde* is *onomkeerbaar*, aangesien die gevaar andersins bestaan dat historiese perspektiewe van *buite af* op die teks *afgeforseer* word.... Met behulp van dié stappe word gepoog om so *objektief* as moontlik die betrokke psalms te ontleed vir *betroubare, wetenskaplike gefundeerde* resultate (Coetzee 1986:13-16 — my emphasis).

Coetzee thoroughly examined the above-mentioned penitential psalms and graphically illustrated the *nature* of the tension (cf Coetzee 1986:270). Yahweh's hiddenness caused polarised communication between the supplicant, Yahweh and other people. This hiddenness is the sole cause of the supplicant's suffering. Only Yahweh can solve this tension by intervening and saving.

God se 'verborgte wees' is vir die bidder die primêre probleem in sy lewe en hy ervaar dit as die oorsaak van siekte, vyandsbedreiging en gebroke verhoudinge met God en sy medegelowiges. *Slegs God kan sy 'verborgte wees' ophef* deur sy 'ingrype om te red', om sodoende al die spanning op te hef en die lewensverhoudinge van die bidder te herstel (Coetzee 1986:271).

6 A last word on Prinsloo

To be sure, there is criticism of the above-mentioned immanent approach. It includes points such as the following: historical understanding involves more than just the immanent use of coincidental historical information, but can also become the broadest horizon within which Old Testament theory functions; the pursuit of objectivity, lucidity and clarity are overemphasised. But that is not the main issue here. The point is that Willem Prinsloo has mapped out a fixed course for himself and his students, and they have a thorough understanding of the psalms in particular. However one may appraise his work, one cannot but respect the consistent way in which he applies his method and the results he has thus far achieved.

E IG GOUS: A SOCIOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION OF A SONG

As we have said above Prinsloo and his students were not interested in the creative reconstruction of a psalm's context. Although they

were not against such an undertaking, they protested when a psalm was forced into a prefabricated background. Observations about the context of a psalm must be based on direct historical evidence in the text. They furthermore stressed that a close study of the text, focusing primarily on structural analysis, was sufficient for the understanding of a text. In this regard Ig Gous was different. Although he took the text in its final form very seriously, and followed a method closely resembling or imitating that of Prinsloo and others, he also wanted to highlight the social embeddedness of the text. Put differently, Gous is convinced that a sociological reading of the text can contribute to its understanding. Structural analysis or an immanent reading of the text was to him not the end of the road. Such a reading only gave 'the raw material for further research' into the socio-religious function of the text (Gous 1987:103). Gous calls his method 'sociological exegesis' and it consists of three phases: first, a *literary analysis* of the text is made, then the results of the text analyses are interpreted from a *social-anthropological* perspective emphasising the social religious function of the text, and, finally, the text is placed into a *specific tradition* (Gous 1987:102). Gous and Dalene Heyns are two South African Old Testament scholars who have really contributed to a sociological reading of the text. To describe Gous's approach we will highlight his study on the origin of the book of Lamentations (Gous 1987 & 1988). Although a literary analysis precedes a social-anthropological explanation we are changing the order for the sake of clarity.

1 Social-anthropological interpretation of the book

Gous used the views of Clifford Geertz (1973) on religion to explain the social function of Lamentations. Geertz made some very important remarks on religion, which formed Gous's interpretative framework. All the information supplied by an immanent reading was explained and described by means of this framework. Some important aspects of religion are mentioned below. It must be noted that Gous's understanding of the origin of Lamentations was fundamentally shaped by these views.

Religion is an *indispensable element* in society. It is the result of man's efforts to give *meaning* to his life. By means of religion he can interpret many events in his life, and he can also model his behaviour on religion (Gous 1988:7). If the book of Lamentations is thus studied

from this perspective it is an attempt to understand the predicament of the exilic community.

It must also be noted that religion is a *system of symbols*. Religious people 'translate' their views, experiences, thoughts, beliefs, et cetera, into symbols (Gous 1991:8). Symbols must not be treated as revealing something literal.

What is symbolised is the *intellectual life*, which includes religion. Intellectual life is also symbolic because it is expressive (as opposed to instrumental). It 'says' rather than 'does' (Gous 1988:39-40). Symbols convey information about people, society and the world (Gous 1987:106). When Lamentations is exegetically scrutinised its 'symbolic language', so to speak, must be identified.

According to Geertz, religion is a *cultural system* with a world view and a corresponding ethos. This distinction forms an integral and essential aspect of Gous' reading of the text (Gous 1987:105). 'Etos verwys na die aard, karakter en kwaliteit van hul lewe, die morele en estetiese styl en stemming, terwyl wêreldbeeld verwys na die prentjie wat mense het van hoe dinge in werklikheid is, hul mees algemene idees van orde' (Gous 1988:41).

Religion thus creates a *world-view*. This attitude towards life or a view of reality has a great effect on the believer. It will determine what is right or wrong, good or bad. Furthermore a person's view of God and his relationship with the world is also shaped by a specific world-view (Gous 1988:42-43).

Closely related to the above is the notion of an *ethos*. Religious convictions direct a person's life. As a result of a specific view of life a person will act in a specific way, will pursue certain goals, and will espouse certain practical projects while neglecting others (Gous 1988:42).

Religious symbols have the capacity to *synthesise* or *integrate* world-view and ethos. Consequently a specific ethos and world-view or 'a particular way of life and a particular metaphysics sustain one another by virtue of the borrowed authority of the other' (Gous 1987:107-108).

In the light of the above Gous concludes as follows: 'Geertz's view of religion is therefore that it satisfies an inescapable need for *meaning* by formulating a world view and an *ethos* and *synthesising* the two, sustaining each other with the borrowed authority of the other. The origin and function of religion are studied by *examining* the symbols used in religion and *relating*

them to symbolic systems of which they form part' (Gous 1987:110 — my emphasis).

2 An investigation of Lamentations I

To illustrate Gous's approach we are focusing on the first chapter of the book of Lamentations. Underlying his approach is the view that literature and society, the literature of the Old Testament and the history of Israel are closely related. The one must not be understood without the other.

To explain the relationship between literature and the sociology of Israel Gous made use of *Brueggeman's tradition-historical studies* (Brueggeman 1979:161-185). According to the latter, two traditions or views with regard to the covenant exist: a Mosaic and a Davidic conception. Although Gous accepted this distinction he nevertheless critically examined the views of Brueggeman and suggested several corrections and also improved on them by means of the views of Geertz (Gous 1988:45-70).

According to Gous each trajectory has specific characteristics. The *Mosaic* trajectory originated in the northern kingdom and had a specific theological emphasis: Yahweh intervened to liberate his people from Egyptian bondage and entered into a covenant with them; the covenant demanded obedience from the people before the blessings of the covenant could be experienced. The Mosaic covenant was thus conditional. The *Davidic* covenant, on the other hand, originated and took shape in the period of the united kingdom. According to this, Yahweh made an eternal and unconditional covenant with David.

The Mosaic covenant stressed what Geertz would call *ethos*: the believer should obey the commandments because they formed the basis for blessing. Emphasis on ethos was essential because it was the precondition for the group's existence. World-view was important but had a secondary function. The Davidic trajectory, on the other hand, accentuated what Geertz would call *world-view*. This was essential for the southern kingdom's existence while ethos had a subservient role.

Gous re-interpreted Brueggeman's distinction by means of Geertz's general notion of order: reality is ordered and both trajectories emphasise different aspects of this order.

According to Gous the Mosaic trajectory focuses on the human order and emphasises humankind's contribution to the ordering of reality. The Davidic trajectory, on the other hand, focuses on the God-given order which exists

without human intervention.

This world-view also had a corresponding ethos. The Mosaic trajectory 'beklemtoon die mens se rol en verantwoordelikheid om 'n goeie orde te weeg te bring'. The Davidic trajectory, on the other hand, 'beklemtoon die feit dat die mens suksesvol moet inskakel by die gegewe orde' (Gous 1988:65-66).

3 The origin of Lamentations 1

Thus far Gous has used Geertz's view of religion (world-view, ethos) to re-formulate Brueggeman's notion of the two covenants or trajectories (cf Gous 1992:184-205). Both have different features but both share in the idea of order. They have, however, two different views of this order which can be depicted by Geertz's terms of 'ethos' and 'world-view'. Gous now links each of Brueggeman's trajectories to either 'ethos' or 'world-view'.

Indien dit (die boek Klaagliedere) uit die wêreldbeeld, dit wil sê die godsbeeld, tradisies en die wyses waarop die tradisies funksioneer, asook uit die etos blyk dat die klem op mensgemaakte orde val, stam Klaagliedere uit die Mosaïese trajek. Indien dit egter uit die simbole blyk dat die klem op die Godgegewe orde val, stam die boek uit die Dawidiese trajek (Gous 1988:86).

4 An immanent reading of the text

With all this in mind, Gous approached the text. Once again it must be stated that he used the method with which South African Old Testament scholars are well acquainted: 'I apply a procedure based on that followed by Richter as elaborated and adapted to the South African context by Loader' (Gous 1987:102-103). His exegesis therefore reveals the typical features of an *immanent reading*: textual criticism, demarcation of the text, analysis of structure, content and Gattung. Like those 'immanent scholars' Gous also gained an excellent grip on the text. He also investigated the text in its minutest detail and showed his skill with the so-called immanent reading of the text. And, finally, Gous approached the text in its final form.

It is, however, important to note that Gous did not stop at the point where structural analysts usually complete their work. He wanted to continue and determine the *social dynamics* of the text. Gous thus aimed at establishing the context in which Lamentations could have originated. And his immanent reading of the text provided

him with the material to do exactly that. All the information thus obtained was then interpreted within Geertz's social-anthropological framework and elaborated on by Brueggeman in its re-interpreted form. The importance of this undertaking cannot be overemphasised. Prinsloo and other scholars limited their study to an immanent reading of the final text and were cautious about historical questions. Gous used the same method and broke the barrier.

Gous's exegesis indicates that Lamentations 1 deals with the problem of *suffering*. An inquiry is made into its causes and a conclusion is reached. Geertz classified the problem of suffering under the quest for order. In Lamentations 1 two perspectives with regard to this 'order' are possible: an attempt to restore an old world-view and an explanation of suffering as a result of sin or a bad ethos. Although references are made to sin, Gous believes that Lamentations 1 is primarily concerned with the perpetration of a world-view. Especially two reasons can be furthered in this regard. Firstly, references to transgressions are made but not specified. This seems strange if the authors were members of a school emphasising the importance of ethos. Secondly, there is no call for repentance and a new life which would be typical of the Mosaic trajectory. Lamentations 1 does not thus focus on a new ethos but on a restored world-view:

Die katastrofe het die digters gedwing om van die prediking van die profete wat op sonde klem gelê het, kennis te neem en 'n sondebewustheid te ontwikkel, maar dit is *ingebou in die Dawidiese wêreldbeeld* waar die uitgangspunt steeds is dat God vir mense sorg ten spyte van hul oortredings.... God self het die versteuring van die orde herstel *deur die sonde te straf* (Gous 1988:114 — my emphasis).

According to Geertz, world-view and ethos are integrated in *ritual*. Lamentations 1 (like all the other songs in the book of Lamentations) were performed in the cult on the days of remembrance and on these occasions the Davidic world-view of order and the ethos of waiting upon Yahweh were integrated, 'thus solving the religious predicament created by the catastrophe' (Gous 1987:124).

5 The placing of the song in a specific tradition

In the light of the above it is possible to classify the song of Lamentations 1 to the Abrahamic/Davidic/theology of the Zion trajectory and not to the Mosaic trajectory. Not ethos but world-view is emphasised.

The people viewing reality from a Davidic perspective were indeed confused by their calamities and had to re-interpret their situation by making much of sin. Gous's point is that it happened by means of the Davidic world-view: 'Die onverwagse ervaring ... word nuut geïnterpreteer en verklaar, maar *met behoud van die basiese (Dawidiese) uitgangspunte*' (Gous 1988:114).

F CONCLUSIONS

A historical-critical investigation of the Psalms has never been promoted in South Africa. We have thus missed a great deal. South African scholars must be grateful to scholars like Burden and especially Prinsloo who introduced us to new ways of reading the Psalms. Prinsloo taught his students how to obtain a firm grip on the text. Due to their immanent approach the context has unfortunately been neglected. Gous has made a fine contribution to the understanding of the social aspects of a song. He at least showed us a way to get behind a song or a psalm and to determine its social context as well as its social function. It is important to note that he read the text immanently.

Chapter six

Wisdom literature

This chapter is devoted to the study of wisdom in South Africa. Compared to the publications on the Pentateuch and the prophets, South Africans have not written so much on Israel's wisdom. Their contribution, however, is of great importance and has also received international recognition. Some important trends are briefly sketched below.

A JIMMIE LOADER: WISDOM AS A MEANS OF UNDERSTANDING LIFE AND TEXT

1 Introduction

Wisdom study in South Africa is closely linked to Jimmie Loader. He has dominated the scene and also exerted a great influence. His contribution consists of the following features:

(1) A thorough examination of Israel's wisdom. Loader has dedicated the past twenty years of his life to a painstaking and profound investigation of Israel's wisdom literature. He has set high standards for the study of wisdom in South Africa.

(2) The incorporation of Israel's wisdom theology into his own theology. To Loader wisdom study is more than a clinical analysis of texts. Israel's wisdom has strongly shaped his views about God, the world, and nature. His own theology is to a large extent based on Israel's wisdom theology.

(3) An 'ethical approach' to wisdom literature. Loader's general theological design was very much shaped by Dutch ethical theology. This overarching theological structure served as a general framework for the understanding of Israel's wisdom. Perhaps we should rather speak of a two-way direction: Loader's ethical approach shaped his study of wisdom while Israel's wisdom supplied the contents, the resources for his own theology.

2 Dutch ethical theology

Knowledge of Dutch ethical theology is a *prerequisite* for understanding Loader's wisdom interpretation. Ethical theology was prevalent during the latter half of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century in the Netherlands. In a doctoral dissertation (his third!) Loader (1984a) focused on two Old Testament scholars, J J P Valeton and Gerrit Wildeboer. Different reasons exist for Loader's interest in ethical theology. One is the discovery of his own theological roots in the ethicists. Another is related to his predilection for tensions: contradictions and inconsistencies are identified, set over against each other and then resolved. And since ethical theology provides tensions (e.g. faith and reason) it seems quite natural that Loader would become attached to this theology. A final reason might be that ethical theology supplied Loader with an important way of thinking about God and humankind, and a way of solving many theological problems.

The name 'ethical theology' was derived from *Chantepie de la Saussaye*, one of the founders of this movement. It does, however, not stem from the Latin 'ethica' (ethics) but can be traced back to the Greek 'ethos' (character, essential being) (Loader 1984a:1-5). According to De la Saussaye's interpretation of the term no distinction was made between truth and life, and this led to a much greater awareness of human feelings as well as the affinity between the revelation of God and the human spirit. Truth was thus not a rigid dogma but something very personal which could be encountered and experienced. De la Saussaye was very much influenced by the views of the Swiss scholar, Alexandre Vinet, and Schleiermacher. He was attracted by Vinet's view of conscience as the centre of the spiritual life and Schleiermacher's emphasis on religious feeling (Loader 1984a: 177-179).

Important *precursors* of ethical theology were the members of the so-called Groninger school. During the eighteen-thirties a group attached to the theological faculty of Groningen shared views which formed a definite trend within the Dutch theological context. One of the important leaders was the famous Petrus Hofstede de Groot. Two views, in particular, of this group exerted a great influence on the ethical theologians. Firstly, their emphasis on history and revelation: all revelation was actually history because divine revelation was

manifested throughout history. Church history as well as the Bible were equal organs of revelation and both could be used in matters of doctrine. Secondly, the notion that feeling was the centre of religion and that dogmas are not complete formulations of the truth also impressed the ethicists (Loader 1984a:173-175).

Ethical theologians also felt an affinity with some views of the so-called *Vermittlungstheologie*. They concurred with these theologians' Protestant attitude, their sincere piety, their critical approach to the dogmas of the church and their mediation between traditional Protestantism and science (Loader 1984a:185-187; 1985b:18-20).

Ethical theologians thus experienced influences which shaped their view of theology. Some of the most important *characteristics* of this view can be formulated below. The importance of this for Loader's theology can never be overemphasised. This moulded his theology to such an extent that Loader can never be understood apart from this theology.

(1) The most outstanding feature of ethical theology is its emphasis on the ethical nature of *truth* (Loader 1987g:47-57). Truth can never be expressed in absolute and rigid propositions. As we have said, truth can be experienced or rejected but never conceptualised. God alone possesses truth and humans become aware of it as a result of the affinity between their spirit and God. Truth can thus only be experienced inwardly. Loader quotes Valeton who said: 'Dat de door God geopenbaarde waarheid ethisch is, wil zeggen dat zij zich richt tot het *hart* en niet in de eerste plaats tot het *verstand* van den mensch' (Loader 1984a:1).

(2) The second peculiarity of ethical theology flows from the above. Despite the fact that truth cannot be objectivised, *propositions* about truth and God are, however, indispensable. No church can exist without doctrines, and communication among believers implies a rational discussion of their faith. It is, however, important to note that doctrines of faith are only approximations of truth and that only relative accuracy can be assigned to them. Once again Loader quotes Valeton:

Eigenlijk bestaat het verschil alleen hierin, dat de ethische richting aan de leer die voor haar alleen een approximatief juiste uitdrukking van het geloofsbezit is, niet die vrij wel absolute waarde kan toekennen die de orthodoxie er aan hecht ... (dat) aan geen enkel dogma als

zoodanig meer dan relatiewe juistheid, maar dan ook meer dan relatiewe betekenis toekent (Loader 1984a:19).

(3) The third feature derives from the second and states that two kinds of *knowledge* can be discerned: the one scientific and the other religious. These separate forms of knowledge open new paths to the study of the Old Testament. Since scientific knowledge cannot destroy the authority of the Bible the historical-critical method is not viewed as dangerous. Since only approximations of truth exist it is unnecessary to shield the Old Testament from science. This notion of two different kinds of knowledge was a very typical tenet of ethical theology (Loader 1985b:21).

(4) In the light of the above, the fourth characteristic is intelligible: a *critical study* of the Old Testament is indispensable. The ethical theologians' view of knowledge allowed them to make full use of the historical study of the Old Testament. Like the modernists, they were diligently engaged in the critical study of the Old Testament.

So het Wildeboer hom verantwoord oor die betekenis van die woord 'kritiek'. Vir hom beteken dit nie 'afbrekendheid' of 'verwaandheid' nie. Die kritiek is nie 'n 'meesteresse' nie maar 'n 'dienaresse'. Dienooreenkomstig beteken dit nie dat die kritikus hom uit die hoogte aanstel oor die Bybel om te besluit wat 'waar' is en wat nie 'waar' is nie. Liefde en eerbied vir die Bybel *duld* nie alleen die kritiek nie, maar *vereis* dit. Dit is so omdat die kritiese metode die enigste weg is om vas te stel hoe die geskiedenis van die openbaring daaruit sien (Loader 1984a: 105).

(5) A final feature of ethical theology was its concept of *revelation*. This concept displays some important peculiarities but we focus on only the following two (Loader 1985b:22-27). Like truth, revelation is not propositional. God did not reveal himself by means of rigid doctrines about himself. Revelation is rather *experiential*: God has revealed himself and therefore revelation implies the possibility of experiencing God (Loader 1985b:22). Another characteristic of revelation is the fact that it is *historical*. Revelation reaches us as part of a tradition which was constantly interpreted. Because of this historical character a progression can be discerned in revelation (Loader 1985a:25).

Loader's study of ethical theology had far-reaching *consequences* for his theology in general and the study of Old Testament wisdom

literature in particular. As we said above, tensions played an important role in Loader's thought. Perhaps this constant tension between apparently different poles (science/faith) in ethical theology was one of the reasons why Loader was so attracted to it. What was perhaps even more attractive was the resolution of these tensions. The ethical accommodation of reason or a rational component and faith or a meta-physical component into a single theory, was very important to Loader. By uniting faith and reason into one theory the ethicists showed the way to a critical as well as a theological interpretation of the Old Testament. Both elements (faith and reason) are of the utmost importance to Loader. Especially in South Africa, where the tension between faith and reason is at times still acutely felt. This ethical view forms a substantial and an integral part of his work on Israel's wisdom (cf Loader 1987a:147-171; 1987b:24-31).

Critical investigation of wisdom literature was indispensable. A high level of research was set and a thorough critical analysis was an imperative. From this it follows that both scientific criticism and theological interpretation are not only possible but also necessary. The human and the historical aspects of revelation can best be dealt with by means of critical analysis. To shun critical results is unnecessary because (according to the ethical option) critical scholarship can in no way endanger the Bible's authority. It is, however, important to note that, according to Loader, Old Testament scholarship cannot stop at critical analysis: theological interpretation forms an essential part of Old Testament investigation. Theological interpretation on the other hand concerns itself with the 'ultimate questions' about God and faith. Much must be asked in order to make the Old Testament relevant and meaningful for our day. Loader, however, emphasises that theological understanding 'must always proceed from a rational, that is a critical basis'. But the task of the Old Testament scholar does not stop at critical analysis. He must also press through to theological interpretation. It is not necessary for the Old Testament scholar to concentrate mainly on the inner circle (reason) while leaving the outer one (faith dimension) to systematic theologians (Loader 1985b:29-30). Wisdom study thus does not concentrate mainly on critical analysis while the theological or faith dimension is left to systematic theologians (Loader s a: 30-31; 1985a:233-251; 1985b:29-30; 1986a:148-166; 1990:159-170).

Wisdom study thus implied the unity of faith and reason. Loader

made a further contribution by describing the relationship between the two. Both occurred in ethical theology as well as in Reformed Orthodoxy, but functioned differently. Loader illustrated this by means of two concentric circles (we will return to this later). In the case of orthodox theology the irrational forms the inner circle and the rational the outer, 'into which all the rest must fit and according to whose determinable rules everything must operate. This is to fix and delineate God and the divine inscrutability'. In ethical theology the situation is totally reversed:

Here the rational, reflective, intellectual component is again present, but as the inner circle. The outer one is the irrational acceptance of the mystery and the numinous. Hence the ethical approach implies a rational basis for theology. It does not conflict with the acknowledgement of a surrender to the unrestricted transcendent element. Such conflict results only when the relationship between the two components is inverted as in the orthodox model (Loader 1985b:27).

3 What is wisdom?

Loader's description of Israel's wisdom clearly exhibits the main features of the ethical theologians. His theology constantly moves between two opposing poles: the then and the now, reason and faith, the rational and the religious, theory and praxis. The tension never becomes a 'garstige Grabe' but an abyss bridged by ethical theology. Loader's definition of wisdom below also displays this tension: definite *reflective* and *practical* sides are discerned, but both are accommodated in one theory.

'Wisdom' refers to the reflective outlook by means of which ancient Orientals sought to find their bearings in and their way through the world. On the one hand they reflected on the nature and meaning of life and world, and on the other hand they laid down guide-lines on how to harmonise one's life accordingly (Loader 1986c:108).

Wisdom's double-sidedness is immediately clear. On the one hand *scientific* or rational work is stressed. It is interesting to note how Loader described this rational aspect. This is carried out by wisdom teachers whom Loader calls 'philosophers' - just another way of emphasising the rational task of the wisdom teachers. They reflected on life's nature and were engaged in a 'quest for knowledge of the grand design of the world with its manifold phenomena and situations'

(Loader 1986c:108). Their intellectual endeavours led the philosophers to the conclusion that there was order in creation. This is the handiwork of God and no mere coincidence. Reflection then served the purpose of discovering this divine order by means of wisdom or philosophy (Loader 1986c:108-112).

Wisdom also had a very *practical* side. The philosophers not only penetrated human life intellectually but also gave practical instructions for this life. Practical wisdom consisted of guidelines on how to live and how to operate successfully in this world. These rules enabled one to fit into God's order and to live a harmonious life. The philosophers of Israel were very optimistic that human beings could determine God's purpose for this life and that they were totally able to act wisely. Humans are credited with the ability to create a harmonious life by means of wise action. Once again, the typical ethical 'solution' becomes evident: not just scientific work or practical considerations, but both must be incorporated in the one 'theological' action. Or, as Loader puts it, 'We may say that the wisdom perspective is made up of both a religious and an intellectual component' (Loader 1986c:109).

Underlying this theoretical and practical side of wisdom is Loader's view on *man* and *God*. Put differently, his thought pattern is also visible in his views on human knowledge and divine control. Tension exists between human ability to control one's destiny and God's intervention. If humans act wisely they are able to create prosperity and a long life for themselves. The ancient philosophers counterbalanced this with the notion of divine control. God is the creator and the sustainer of life and therefore the One determining human fate. The impression is thus created that two conflicting types of wisdom exist: the one 'humanistic' and dealing with human abilities, and the other 'religious' — which has to do with God. Once again, Loader does not suspend the tension by focusing on one aspect only. Both poles are maintained! He explains this in terms of 'less and more overt religious convictions'. Both types of wisdom stress the order of God as well as the idea of humans as the controllers of their own destiny. The only difference between the so-called 'secular' and 'religious' wisdom is that the religious element is expressed more explicitly in the one than in the other (Loader 1987d:43). Human knowledge and divine control are therefore not mutually exclusive. Says Loader, 'This insight may plausibly be claimed to be the cornerstone of the

wisdom outlook of life.’ (Loader 1986c:109). This two-sidedness can clearly be seen in the stories of Joseph and Esther: by his own brilliance Joseph saved the lives of many, but at the same time Yahweh was glorified; Esther and Mordecai made their own plans, but the narrator suggests that Yahweh is also at work (Loader s a:2-31; 1988a: 99-106).

4 The history of wisdom

To Loader, knowledge of the wisdom movement was very important. He distinguished at least three basic stages of this history. In nearly all his works on wisdom literature this division constantly appears and it serves as an important framework of understanding. Loader summarises these three stages thus: ‘Aanvankelijk een waardering voor *de relatie tussen het optreden en de juiste tijd*, dan een verlies van dat tijdsbewustzijn, zodat er *een dogmatisch systeem* ontstaat, en ten slotte *een protest tegen deze verstarung*’ (Loader 1984c:17).

First, there was a *non-problematic* phase of wisdom. During this stage much emphasis was laid on the right action at the right time. A very unproblematic unity was forged between act and consequence: right actions had good and wrong actions bad results. No consideration was given to the fact that things might be different.

De eerste fase van de wijsheid kent dezelfde waardering voor *het juiste optreden op de juiste tijd*, dat wil zeggen het verband van de wijsheid met tijd en omstandigheden.... Door hieraan uitvoering te geven, voegt de mens zich in bij de orde van God en kan hij harmonie in zijn leven verwachten (Loader 1984c:16,17).

Die eerste stadium van die wysheid word die *onproblematiese fase* genoem. Dit beteken dat die wysheidsleraars nog nie aandag gegee het aan allerlei probleme wat uit hulle opvattinge kon voortvloei nie (Loader 1989e:688).

Second, the next phase was characterised by a trend towards *absolutising*. There was a constant danger of the deed-result linkage becoming a rigid dogma. A narrow-minded view about humankind also developed: there were only the righteous and the wicked. Or, to put it differently, outward success and suffering became visible indications of good or bad conduct.

Hierdie veranderde benadering word die *verstarde fase* in die wys-

heidontwikkeling genoem.... Wat gebeur het was die volgende: Waar 'ou' wysheid alleen konkrete dade beoordeel het aan die hand van die vraag of hulle in bepaalde omstandighede gepas het, het daar nou 'n neiging ontwikkel om hierdie verband te ignoreer. Dit het tot gevolg gehad dat die belangstelling verskuif het van die dade en *optrede* van mense na die *tipes* mense wat in die lewe te vind is (Loader 1989e: 688).

Third, when rigidity prevails, *protest* is inevitable. Job and Ecclesiastes are examples of this sapiential protest. In this third phase the limitations of wisdom are emphasised and a warning is directed against any theological rigidity and religious self-complacency (cf Loader 1979:117-131; 1984b:18-24; 1984c:16-19; 1986c:125-129; 1987e:44-45).

5 Wisdom literature

The most important aspect of Loader's contribution to wisdom study in South Africa is his investigation of the wisdom literature. Some aspects of this contribution are highlighted below. But, before we highlight Loader's literary output, two considerations must be taken into account:

(1) Loader followed an 'inclusive' approach to wisdom literature. Sapiential thought is not limited to a few books, but can be found in other parts of the Old Testament as well. Although the wisdom perspective is most prominent in the Books of Proverbs, Job and Ecclesiastes, the stories of Joseph and Esther can also be viewed as wisdom narratives. Loader also identified wisdom elements in the Succession Narrative. To identify chokmatic elements Loader emphasised the notion of 'convergence of evidence'.

(2) As we have stated above, Loader's *method* exerted considerable influence. In the seventies he played an essential part in the discussions about methodology. Like the New Testament scholars he applied the insights of modern linguistics to the Old Testament. He wrote a number of articles, which were later published as one article under the title 'Gedagtes oor gekontroleerde eksegeses', and which definitely shaped the views of many (Loader 1978b:1-40). Loader's methodological considerations clearly found expression in his study of Israel's wisdom literature. The starting-point of his investigation was *the final text*. Loader clearly distinguished between *text-immanent* and

historical approaches. He was vehemently opposed to any reconstruction of the *historical background* as the *first step* in understanding wisdom literature. *Form and content* should *first* be analysed and only after this can historical questions be asked: 'As in linguistics, *diachronic work may not precede synchronic work* in literary analysis' (Loader 1979:1 - my emphasis). This approach enabled him to emphasise the *unity* of the wisdom books. What was said of Qohelet, in particular, can be applied to wisdom literature in general: it is not 'an unplanned assortment of detached thoughts' but all the separate units were ordered and grouped together in a meaningful way (Loader 1987e:48). By means of careful *structural analysis*, the wisdom texts were studied and explained (cf Loader 1979:29-111). It must, however, be noted that the later Loader was much more historically inclined and less interested in structures. Structural analysis served as a kind of 'shorthand', indicating how he had mastered the text.

a The Joseph narrative

In 1975 Loader read a paper on the Joseph narrative at the Randse Afrikaanse Universiteit during a meeting of the Old Testament Society. The importance of this article cannot be overestimated. It already revealed very typical elements of Loader's method of work: a command of the text and the essential secondary material, a clear style and a clarity of expression, an ability to indicate new avenues of study and the emphasis on the narrative's importance 'for actual practice' (Loader s a:30).

The *significance* of this study must be understood against the backdrop of South Africa in the mid-seventies. Critical investigation of the Pentateuch was treated with great scepticism. Loader nevertheless admitted the importance of literary-critical investigation (Loader s a:19). Put differently, his ethical option allowed him such a statement. Critical investigation cannot harm faith or the Old Testament's authority. He therefore clearly illustrated the many instances of unevenness in this narrative. These and other tensions in the text cannot just be smoothed away, and therefore the existence of sources cannot be denied: 'The commonly held view that different sources lie at the root of all this to me seems too strong to be abandoned' (Loader s a:25). Although he admitted the existence of these sources he rejected the manner in which they were isolated and described. Instead

of a dissected text Loader preferred the unity of the text and he admired the masterly work of the novelist (Loader s a:25-30).

To indicate the chokmatic nature of the Joseph narrative Loader employed the idea of the *convergence of evidence*. By this is meant the listing of evidence to determine the nature of something. In this case Loader gave thirteen reasons to illustrate the chokmatic nature of the Joseph narrative. This procedure can of course become very problematic. How much evidence must be furnished for convergence to take place and a text's 'nature' to be determined? This 'technique', however, became popular among Loader's students.

b The book of Esther

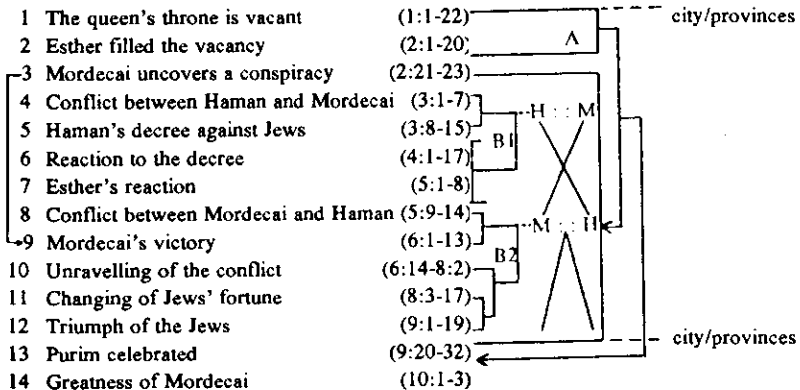
Loader also made a very fine contribution to the study of the book of Esther (Loader 1978a:417-421; 1988c:114-121). His commentary on Esther was published (1980) in the well-known Dutch series 'Prediking van het Oude Testament'. In 1978 he wrote an article with a very interesting opening sentence: 'I think the baffling problem of the theological stance of the Book of Esther can be solved' (Loader 1978a:417). This not only reveals the author's self-assurance, but also his confidence in the 'chokmatic' approach to Esther. The understanding of the book is facilitated by a wisdom perspective. In this regard Loader was influenced by Dommershausen (1968) and Talmon (1963). Dommershausen referred to Esther as 'veiled wisdom theology' without describing its nature. Talmon also stressed the strong chokmatic character of the Esther novel (Loader 1978a:417). According to Loader they did not elaborate their views. This was exactly what Loader intended to do. He therefore linked up with them and developed their views further.

According to Loader the book of Esther belongs to the genre of a 'novelette'. Because of its chokmatic nature it can also be called a *wisdom novelette*. Since the royal court also plays an important part in the book it can further be designated a 'court novelette'. The criteria for determining the genre 'novelette' are noteworthy: 'Verhalen ... (die) een groter aantal *verhaaleenheden in een diepere eenheid integreren*. Deze onderdelen of perikopen volgen elkaar op in een *dwingende orde*, laten een *grotere beweeglijkheid* in ruimte en tijd toe, en bieden de mogelijkheid dat een *groter aantal figuren* aan de gebeurtenissen deelneemt dan in het kortere verhaal mogelijk is'

(Loader 1980:10-11). Once again, is sufficient evidence supplied to identify the book as a novelette? These distinctions nevertheless played an important role in Loader's work and also influenced his students (cf Wessels 1984 & 1989).

Loader thus approached the book as a literary work and was vehemently opposed to the description of Esther as a *chronicle* or *history writing*. He also listed reasons why the designation 'historiography' was to be rejected: it was historically improbable that the leaders of the empire should feast for six months (1:1-3); the king's decree that the man must be head of his home also sounds improbable (1:22); there was never a Persian queen with the name of Vasti or Esther; queens were only elected from the seven noble Persian families, which excluded Esther immediately; the appointment of a Jew as viceroy is unlikely; the most fanciful element of this narrative is the king's permission to start a civil war (Loader 1980:8-9).

With regard to *exegesis*, Loader once again followed the same approach: synchrony must precede diachrony. If one proceeds from a historical study such 'an approach would, in fact, keep us from arriving at the meaning of the novel'. A synchronous investigation must first be undertaken. This implies the final text as starting-point. Such an approach is primarily interested in the novel as a literary composition and it also proves the book of Esther to be one of the 'finest literary products' in the Bible: 'All the scenes are well motivated, every element is functional, there is a mounting line of tension that is discharged on the appropriate moment, figures of style are used carefully, and so on' (Loader 1978a:417; 1980:7-11).



From this sketch the close *unity* of the book is apparent. Different units are carefully planned, constructed and built into the whole of the story. Each unit is closely linked to the preceding one, and they follow each other in a definite order. Each one has a specific function and contributes to the understanding of the narrative. In the first clash between Haman and Mordecai (4) for instance, Haman triumphs (5) but in the second (8) Mordecai is the victor (9). These clashes are also linked to each other: the first causes some reaction (6 and 7) which led to the second and the second clash also gave rise to certain reactions (10,11,12). According to Loader pericopes 4 to 12 form a main section consisting of two parts (B1 and B2). Pericope 3 motivates 9 and they form one of the most important 'spanningsbogen' in the novel (Loader 1980:146).

To determine the *theology* of the book of Esther, Loader fully employed the chokmatic elements. Knowledge of these wisdom features led him to understand the book's different levels of meaning. In the discussion below we are going to focus on the novel's sapiential nature and how this contributes to its theological understanding.

(1) Some of the *main characters* in the Esther novelette can only be fully understood in the light of Israel's sapiential traditions. The king is quite the opposite of a wise man. From the beginning of the narrative he is depicted as an 'onchokmatische koning' (Loader 1980:62). He is a weakling, easily manipulated and unable to keep silent or speak the right word at the right moment (Loader 1980:28,81,82). Esther, on the other hand, represents the antithesis of the king. She behaves correctly and knows how to act at the right moment (Loader 1980:38,43,82). Haman is an excellent example of folly. Old wisdom warned against presumptuousness but Haman took no notice of it. He thus typifies all that is anti-chokmatic. Because of his arrogance, Haman fell into the trap he had set for others (Loader 1980:54,89,99,110).

(2) The radical *reversal* of the existing situation is very prominent in the book of Esther and it is expressed by means of a chiasmus (Loader 1980:88,99,152-154). This x-pattern is not merely a literary device but also emphasises the chokmatic nature of the novel. In the first clash between Haman and Mordecai it was Haman who triumphed. During the second clash Mordecai gained the upper hand and the situation changed totally. This conflict was then extended to the

relationship between the Jews and their enemies: 'The "chiastic" x-pattern in the relation Haman-Mordecai, Mordecai-Haman is extended to a "chiastic" x-pattern in the relation of the Jews over against their enemies' (Loader 1978a:418). Initially the destruction of the Jews seemed inevitable, but then the situation was reversed and they triumphed. This idea of the reversal of the situation is of course a very dominant theme in the Old Testament. In the book of Esther this x-pattern of fortunes not only forms the backbone of the whole novelette but it also highlights one of the basic tenets of wisdom thought: the situation constantly changes, depending on wise or foolish behaviour (Loader 1978a:419; 1986c:115).

(3) Perhaps the most notable chokmatic feature is the view that *human knowledge* and *divine control* are not mutually exclusive. This two-sidedness in wisdom thought 'may plausibly be claimed to be the cornerstone of the wisdom outlook of life' (Loader 1986c:109). Loader must be credited for the way in which he has worked out this chokmatic notion in his study of the book of Esther. His explanation of the nature of God's presence is especially illuminating. Loader was aware of the negative treatment this book had received over the centuries. It was never popular among Christians. Because explicit references to God are lacking it became an embarrassment to the church. Furthermore the elements of violence and vengeance also contributed to its unpopularity. Many therefore denied it a place in the canon and it was also omitted from the early canonical lists (Loader 1986c:119). Loader aimed at elucidating its literary as well as *theological* qualities. He was convinced that the novel reflected the presence of God, albeit in a veiled form. With great clarity he illustrated God's real but concealed presence in Esther. According to Loader the novel 'is (thus) expounding a highly distinctive version of wisdom theology' (Loader 1986c:126).

(4) Loader insisted that the Esther novel was not void of *theological* or religious *suggestions*. He listed some of these references (Loader 1980:151-152). The reference in Esther 4:14 is well known. Mordecai told Esther that relief and deliverance would come from 'another place' if she was reluctant to help. Mordecai's words suggest the presence of some kind of power (Loader 1980:69). There are also a great number of coincidences in the book: Esther became queen at exactly the right time, the king was sleepless at the right time, he

opened the right book, he read about Mordecai's deeds at the right time, Haman made his appearance at exactly the right moment. These are not mere coincidences but suggest the working of a hidden power. The Jewish law and separation to which Haman referred to in Esther 3:8 can only mean the Torah and religious isolation. The victory of the Jews over their enemies (Es 8-9) linked these events to the ancient war traditions of Israel where God always intervened on behalf of his people. These religious motifs are indeed disguised but are nevertheless a reality. In Esther they have a very prominent function: 'they are made to function in such a way that any theological significance is immediately veiled again' (Loader 1978a:418).

(5) Loader was convinced that the Esther novel was modelled on the *exodus* narrative. Both these stories share a vast number of common features. Similarities exist between Moses and Esther: both were adopted children whose true identity remained unknown, both landed in the royal court, both shrunk away from the task laid upon them and both accomplished much for their people. In both narratives there are two main characters (Moses/Aaron and Esther/Mordecai); one is active and the other more passive. While Moses remains silent Aaron is the mouthpiece; in a similar fashion Mordecai is the silent strength behind Esther. As the exodus story concludes with the Passover, the Esther novel concludes with the Purim festival. The x-pattern or the reversal of situation also appears in both narratives. Once again these correspondences have more than literary meaning. They highlight the divine presence in history: just as Yahweh had saved Israel from the Egyptian predicament, so would he save them from the Persian danger. These similarities between the exodus story and the Esther novelette illustrate God's involvement in the lives of his people. By means of the exodus model the author of Esther suggests the presence of the Lord but at the same time he also veils it. Once the reader has grasped this he understands the concealed presence of God (Loader 1978a:418; 1980:42,46,74,81,148-151; 1986c:117).

De aanwezigheid van het 'exodusmodel' in het boek is niet te loochenen en is zo fundamenteel dat dit model een grondlaag verteenwoordigt. Het religieuze element van de verlossing door de uittocht word echter 'ontheologiseerd', zodat het *exodusstratum op verhulde wijze aanduidt dat God zijn volk uit de perzische nood heeft verlost, zoals Hij vroeger uit de egyptische nood verlost had*. Met andere woorden: de toespelingen op Exodus vormen een *theologou-*

menon dat onder de oppervlakte functioneert. Deze verholde theologische kwaliteit correspondeert met de verhulling van vele religieuze elementen in het verhaal (Loader 1980:150-151).

(6) The similarities between the Esther and *Joseph* narratives not only highlight Esther's chokmatic qualities but also illuminate the nature of Yahweh's action. As indicated above, the chokmatic quality of the Joseph narrative cannot be denied. Joseph was an unbearable young man who acted contrary to wisdom prescriptions. Consequently he was humiliated and rejected. He then started to act according to wisdom prescriptions, which resulted in success. This x-pattern can also be found in the book of Esther. Haman acted like a fool and therefore experienced all kinds of bad things. Mordecai, on the other hand, was promoted to a higher rank because he behaved wisely. Certain formulations are similar in both books: 1:21/Genesis 41:37; 3:4/Genesis 39:10; 4:16/Genesis 43:14; 5:10/Genesis 41:42; 5:10/Genesis 43:31; 8:6/Genesis 44:34 (Loader 1980:46,54,89,99,112,121,154-155). What is important, however, is the light that the Joseph narrative sheds on the nature of God's involvement in history as well as the relationship between human endeavours and divine control. On the one hand we have Joseph's 'famous dictum' that God and not his brothers must be credited for the fact that he (Joseph) landed in Egypt. On the other hand, it is stated that the emergency situation was only overcome as a result of Joseph's own planning, wisdom and initiative.

Once again the link with — and the similarities between — the Joseph and Esther stories have a deeper meaning: they suggest God's presence. As God was present in the life of Joseph and delivered his people from Egyptian bondage, so will he intervene in the Persian crisis. Furthermore, the Esther narrative exhibits the same two poles as the Joseph story: 'God is present and he intervenes to save his people.... But when he does that, he does not inhibit human wisdom, planning and initiative. Men do not become mere puppets. In order to express this, the presence and intervention of God is veiled in our novel' (Loader 1978a:421).

The *wisdom nature* of the Esther novelette thus enabled Loader to determine its theological meaning. To put it differently, his knowledge of the sapiential tradition led him to distinguish sharply between human effort and divine control, and to describe God's veiled pre-

sence with exceptional clarity. In the light of the above, Loader came to the conclusion that the Esther novel is multi-layered. The first or surface level merely describes the story of conflict, violence and triumph which concludes with the institution of the Purim festival. This is, however, not the only level constituting meaning. The typical sapiential view of both humankind and God's endeavours operates as two further levels of meaning. Loader brilliantly summarised it as follows:

Thus the book becomes a multi-layered narrative because its meaning moves on more than one level. However, precisely because we have to do with one integrated literary product, the different possibilities also help to balance each other. We may present the combined effect as follows: *God's intervention in and control of human history does not take place in a superficial or spectacular way, but is concealed in an undercurrent, and human responsibility for sensible action is not, therefore, made redundant.* If this is brought into relation with the feast of Purim then it implies a *profound interpretation of the meaning of this feast*: a feast where there should be no talk of hate and vengeance, but where God's people must become aware of the fact that their deliverance is related to the divine guidance contemporaneous with human responsibility (Loader 1988c:119).

c *The book of Job*

Loader devoted his inaugural address on 3 March 1983 to the book of Job. Many aspects of Job were highlighted and discussed, but only his clever explanation of the relationship between Job and his friends is mentioned here. Once again his knowledge of ethical theology stood him in good stead.

According to Loader, the relationship displays a 'rational' as well as an 'irrational' pole. It is not true that the friends represent one pole and Job another: the poles are present in both parties. The difference lies in the order of occurrence. In the friends' case the irrational forms the inner circle. This circle is circumscribed by an outer one, which is the friend's rational view of God and the way he acts: 'Everything has to fit into this scheme and operate according to set rules, as in the doctrine of retribution. Orthodoxy seeks to get hold of God and the mystery of his greatness and bundle him into its rational theological schemes' (Loader 1984b:26).

In the latter part of Job the order is quite the opposite. In this case the inner circle consists of the intellectual or the reflective element.

This is surrounded by the outer circle indicating the irrational or the element of faith. True theological reflection takes place within the context of the mystery of God. Job's friends attempted to penetrate the mystery of Yahweh by means of their theology. After a long struggle Job realised its impossibility: human thought must always be limited by the mystery of God.

In this way the book demands a right to critical reflection and a rational basis for theology. This does not clash with a recognition of and surrender to the transcendent, for this one cannot engage. A conflict does arise, however, when the same two components stand in a reverse relationship. Everything therefore depends not on the presence of these two particular components in a theology but on their relationship (Loader 1984b:27).

Loader's predilection for polar tensions can also be seen in his treatment of immanence and transcendence in the book of Job. It is also typical of him that an either/or situation is avoided and both elements are united. Job had a *transcendental* view of God while his immanent presence was doubted. This view was of course the result of a specific theological development. As we have already noted, Israel's wise men believed in a specific order underlying this world. Wise behaviour implied integration into this world order and resulted in all kinds of prosperity. Fools disrupted the order and this led to punishment. According to Loader this unproblematic view of wisdom could have led to an immanent view of Yahweh. Quite the contrary happened: the-deed-and-consequence idea developed into a very rigid dogma and Yahweh was removed from this earth. Instead of Yahweh the doctrine of reward became immanent in this world (Loader 1992: 348-349).

To illustrate the awesomeness of God, Loader highlighted a few sections from the book of Job: Job 9:5-10 is a lament in the form of a hymn which expresses alienation from the powerful and unapproachable God (5-6); in Job 26:5-14 the transcendence of God is stressed in such a manner that even the dead fear him; 36:27-37:13 and 37:14-24 accentuate the overwhelming awesomeness of God by referring to his presence in the storm, thunder or lightning. In all these examples nature serves as a means to emphasise the estrangement between God and humans. The distance between the transcendent God and Job is so great that Job's case seems hopeless (Loader 1992:349-353).

Loader also explained Job's view of the *immanence* of God. Job discovered the immanence of the transcendent God. After God's address to him, Job changed. Something must have happened: Job experienced the immanent presence of God. From the dialogues of Job it is clear that he wanted to meet this God and often expressed this desire. In the storm he saw God with his own eyes and discovered the transcendent God to be immanent.

That can only mean one thing: he has seen God in nature. Earlier he heard propositions *about* God, doctrines, concepts and the like, those of his friends as well as his own. But now he has encountered God himself. If God himself is encountered in nature, he is the *immanent* God, the accessible God, the God to whom humans can relate. Job has found the far-off God quite near ... we need to realise that the God of the Divine Speech is at once the God who transcends creation, since he is the architect, builder and sustainer of nature *and* the God who is immanent everywhere in nature (Loader 1992:358).

Job thus had the same concept of God as his friends: God was majestic and aloof, far off and unapproachable. Though convinced of God's transcendence, Job nevertheless yearned for an immanent God. He was in need of a sympathetic God with whom fellowship was possible. Immanence and transcendence are thus set over against each other. Tension is created, but resolved. It can best be explained by reference to the example of the concentric circles mentioned above. Once again there are two circles (immanence and transcendence) and once again their relationship is very important. Instead of a concentric relationship where the circles never make contact we must rather refer to a syllogism where the circles indeed intersect each other. Transcendence and immanence represent two different circles which are related syllogistically: God's transcendence and immanence are not standing over against each other, but intersect each other at stages. Both elements occur separately in the book of Job, but are also closely related; both aspects are present and together they contribute to the understanding of its message.

d The book of Qohelet

One of Loader's major contributions to the study of wisdom literature is his examination of polar structures in the book of Qohelet. This work appeared (Loader 1979) as a 'Beiheft' to the *Zeitschrift für die*

alttestamentliche Wissenschaft. Loader's interest in this theme is striking. We have already noticed his predilection for tensions, and his interest in Qohelet's polar structures therefore seems quite natural. It must also be mentioned that Loader's commentary on Qohelet was published (1984c) in a well-known Dutch series.

The starting-point for his investigation was the *final text*. Qohelet's thought patterns were not abstract ideas but found expression in the text. This text formed the deposit of his thoughts and was therefore the object of analysis. As stated above, Loader had very specific views on method. A clear distinction must be made between text-immanent and historical approaches. He was opposed to any reconstruction of the historical background as the first step in understanding Qohelet. Form and content should first be analysed and only after this can historical questions be asked. The familiar dictum was once again mentioned: 'As in linguistics, diachronic work may not precede synchronic work in literary analysis' (Loader 1979:1).

Loader followed certain steps. First of all the individual pericopes were *demarkated*. Secondly their *forms* ('outward' and 'inner') were studied. 'Outward' forms focused on figures of style, metre and ornamental techniques and 'inner' forms on the relationship between units in a pericope. Typical forms or *Gattungen* were identified. Each pericope's *contents* was then interpreted. At this stage it was possible to determine the *composition* of the whole book. *Historical* investigation formed the very last step of inquiry (Loader 1979:2).

Loader distinguished certain figures of *style* in the book of Qohelet. They are not restricted to wisdom literature but are very typical of this 'Makrogattung'. Some of the figures of style which are identified are parallelism, chiasmus (ordinary chiastic units, 'chiasmus chiasmorum', metrical chiastic units), paranomasia, anaphora, hyperbole, et cetera (Loader 1979:9-18; 1984c:14-15). Although Qohelet utilised the typical wisdom figures of style he filled them with his own contents and then used them against the chokma in general. In the hands of Qohelet they served a different purpose. His predilection for the chiasmus is understandable: it was an excellent literary device to express tension. The literary effect of chiasmus 'is counterposition and polar tension' (Loader 1979:115).

Qohelet also used typical sapiential forms or *Gattungen*. Forms or *Gattungen* are 'operational categories' and not to be confused with the

structure of a literary unit (Loader 1979:18). Qohelet utilised typical chokmatic *Gattungen* by building them into his pericopes. Once again they were used in such a manner to strengthen tension.

Although not all utterances in the book of Qohelet can be assigned to a *Gattung*, Loader distinguished the following (Loader 1979:18-28):

- (1) The *Gattungen* of royal fiction (1:12-2:11)
- (2) The *Wahrspruch* and maxim (cf 1:14; 2:1; 2:11; 2:17; 2:19; 2:21; 2:23; 2:26; 3:19; 4:4; 4:8; 4:16; 5:9)
- (3) The 'better than' saying (4:3; 4:6; 4:9; 5:4; 6:3; 6:9; 9:16; 9:18)
- (4) The comparison (2:13; 7:6; 7:12; 9:12)
- (5) The metaphor (3:5; 7:1; 7:26)
- (6) The parable (9:14-15)
- (7) The allegory (12:3-4)
- (8) The observation (1:13-14; 1:17; 2:12-14; 2:24; 3:14; 3:16; 3:22; 4:1; 4:4; 4:7; 4:15; 5:12; 5:17; 6:1; 7:15; 7:25; 8:9-10; 8:16-17; 9:11; 9:13)
- (9) The self-disclosure (1:16; 2:1; 2:15; 3:17; 3:18; 7:23)
- (10) The woe-saying and benediction (4:10; 10:16; 10:17)
- (11) The antilogion (7:16-17)
- (12) The rhetorical question (2:2; 2:15; 2:19; 2:25; 3:9; 3:21; 3:22; 4:8; 5:5; 5:10; 6:8; 6:11; 7:13; 7:16) and
- (13) The admonition (4:17; 5:1; 5:5; 5:7; 7:9; 7:10; 7:21; 8:2; 8:3; 9:7).

Loader emphasised that these 'Gattungen' should not be confused with the form of a literary unit. He illustrates this point with reference to 11:1-6. This unit contains three admonitions, two *Wahrsprüche*, a maxim and a comparison. These typical chokmatic *Gattungen* were built into his literary units to create a polar relationship with the general wisdom (Loader 1979:27-28).

Loader made very important remarks on the *composition* of the book Qohelet. He had to find his way between two extremes. According to some, the utterances in Qohelet are unplanned and without any organic unity. Others again maintain that a logical unfolding and development of thought can be found in Qohelet. Loader rejected both views but nevertheless illustrated the unity of the book. It is not 'an unplanned assortment of detached thoughts' but all the separate units were ordered and grouped together in a meaningful way (Loader 1987e:48). Loader came to this conclusion as a result of his structural analysis of Qohelet. A survey of the different structural units is given below, and their relation to each other is also indicated (from Loader 1979:112).

1	Heading		
12-11	Prologue		I
112-226	Worthlessness of wisdom	Self-introduction	II
31-9	Eventualities of life (<i>‘et</i>)		III
316-15	Labour without product		<i>‘et</i> <i>‘et</i> ; formulary conjunction formulary conjunction formulary conjunction formulary conjunction motif of the eventualities
316-22	The inhuman human		
41-3	The inhuman human		
44-6	Labour without product		
47-12	Labour without product		
413-16	Worthlessness of wisdom		
417-58	Talk and silence		IV
59-69	Worthlessness of wealth		V
610-12	Talk and silence		VI
71-4	Life and death		motif of human ignorance motif of wisdom/folly; <i>tōb</i> <i>tōb</i> -formulation motif of wisdom/folly; <i>tōb</i> <i>tōb</i> introduction formula with <i>kol</i> introduction formula with <i>kol</i>
75-7	Worthlessness of wisdom		
78-10	Talk and silence		
711-14	Worthlessness of wisdom		
715-22	Worthlessness of wisdom		
723-81	Worthlessness of wisdom		
82-9	Political power(lessness)		VII
810-15	No retribution		VIII
816-17	Worthlessness of wisdom		formulary introduction ignorance of <i>h'kāmim</i> <i>h'kāmim</i> (v. 1); ignorance
91-10	No retribution		
911-12	Worthlessness of wisdom		IX
913-101	Worthlessness of wisdom		formulary introduction
102-7	Worthlessness of wisdom		
108-11	Worthlessness of wisdom		
1012-15	Talk and silence		X
1016-20	Talk and silence		
111-6	Risk and assurance		XI
117-128	<i>Carpe diem</i>		XII
129-14	Epilogue		

I The prologue forms the introduction to the whole book. Many themes to be discussed later are already present in this unit. The *hebel*-declaration which can be found in 1:2 and 12:8 is noteworthy. The book thus begins with this declaration and ends with it. It also occurs abundantly in the rest of the book: 'It is obvious and certain that this *one conviction* of emptiness and senselessness is the dominant motif in the book' (Loader 1979:9 — my emphasis).

- II The section 1:12-2:26 opens the set of reflections. Its 'Gattung' has been described as that of 'royal fiction' and it is just natural for it to precede the other pericopes.
- III Despite different themes the units of this section are closely linked: because of similar themes two passages on the inhuman human and two on labour without fruit are grouped together; 3:10-15 develops the theme on the eventualities of life further; the last passage also refers to the eventualities of life and this was probably the reason for its inclusion into this group; the term חָכְמָה also linked some passages together.
- IV The section 4:17-5:8 deals with talk and silence stands on its own.
- V The section 5:9-6:9 focuses on the worthlessness of wealth and these verses are grouped together because all have the same theme.
- VI These passages are grouped together because the motif of wisdom is the common factor.
- VII The section 8:2-9 stands by itself.
- VIII The sections 8:10-15 and 9:1-10 are grouped together because they complement each other. In between, a passage on the worthlessness of wisdom has been inserted. This was done on purpose: wisdom is worthless because no retribution can be effected.
- IX The section 9:11-10:11 deals with the same topic and is linked to the previous one by means of 9:11.
- X Both passages deal with talk and silence and were therefore joined together.
- XI The section 11:1-6 stands by itself.
- XII These passages wrap up the basic elements of Qohelet's thought.

Extremely important are Loader's remarks on the *content* of Qohelet. He stressed the counterpoising of different ideas in Qohelet. Constantly the one thought is set over against the other, creating tension. 'This continues without the tension ever being resolved. This is the medium whereby the message of the book as a whole is brought to expression' (Loader 1987e:51). This is so typical of Qohelet that it was called the most dominant trait of the book. Although scholars did refer to these tensions and polarities a thorough investigation into the matter was still lacking (during the seventies). Loader therefore endeavoured to scrutinise the text for these tensions, to describe their nature and to explain their existence (Loader 1979:1). He highlighted the polemic function of these polar structures: by means of them Qohelet was engaged in a controversy with traditional wisdom. Although this tension is visible throughout the book, we shall focus on a few examples.

- (1) *Ecclesiastes* 1:12-2:26 narrates a royal experiment. Wisdom

(A) as well as folly (B) are to be investigated and the value of each is to be formulated. First of all, wisdom is put to the test. The conclusion: all human endeavour, including wisdom, is senseless. According to the prevailing view, wisdom is acquired with great pain. The relationship between pain and wisdom is evaluated very positively but Qohelet turns it upside down. Pain is only increased by wisdom, which means that general wisdom is ironically turned against itself. Traditional wisdom 'is now equated to nil.... It is an impressive negation of the value of wisdom' (Loader 1979:39). Qohelet also put folly to trial and comes to a similar conclusion: 'But that also proved to be meaningless' (Ec 2:1). The tension between the pole of wisdom (A) and the pole of folly (B) is described differently. If wisdom is to be compared to folly, wisdom has a certain advantage; if both are related to the eventualities of life both are meaningless (Loader 1979:35-42; 1984c:29-40). This polar structure can be sketched as follows:

Pole: General wisdom Contra-pole: Folly.
 Tension: General wisdom has relative advantage.
 And:
 Pole: General wisdom Contra-pole: Occurrences of life.
 Tension: Worthlessness of wisdom.

(2) *Ecclesiastes 3:1-9* does not merely describe the occurrence of events or prescribe when one must act. It states the inevitability of certain events and human helplessness. In each stichos of this symmetrical composition the pole of life and conservation (A) is set over against the pole of death and abandonment (B). Humans are trapped between these poles: the \aleph just falls over them and nothing can be done to control it; if the right time occurs for something to happen, it just happens (C). This was quite the opposite of traditional wisdom. According to optimistic wisdom, humans were able to gain control over their lives and prevent abandonment and destruction. Qohelet, however, emphasised the uselessness of this wisdom. The two poles and the tension can be explained as follows (Loader 1979:29-33; 1984c:41-46):

Pole: Life, conservation (A) Contra-pole: Abandonment, death (B).
 Tension: No security exists and one must surrender helplessly to the eventualities of life (C).

(3) *Ecclesiastes 4:17-5:8* deals with the theme of talking (A) and

silence (B). This was of course a very familiar theme in wisdom literature. Constantly warnings were uttered against talkativeness because it causes folly. Qohelet took over this topos but used it differently. As regards cultic matters silence was preferred. A passive and reserved attitude is prescribed because cultic action can be very dangerous. Speech is, of course, admissible but prayers are not to be said rashly and vows are not to be made. Qohelet clearly emphasised the advantage of silence over talking. Behind this view is the notion of the dangerous presence of God. According to Qohelet God is far-off and unapproachable and Qohelet is therefore convinced of the awesome distance between humankind and God. In his presence it is better to remain silent. Two clear poles are thus distinguished: talking and silence. A tension is created between the two which can be described as the awesomeness of God (C). Once again it can be illustrated as follows (Loader 1979:73-76; 1984c:68-71):

Pole: Talk is admissible (A) Contra-pole: Silence is preferable (B).
Tension: Danger of God's awesomeness (C).

(4) *Ecclesiastes 9:1-6* clearly states the common human destiny. The righteous and the wicked, the good and the bad, the clean and the unclean, those who offer sacrifices as well as those who do not, share a common fate. No distinction is made between the good and the bad, the wise and the fool. Everything is predestined, God acts without discrimination and the religious behaviour of people has no effect on their fate. This was indeed a revolutionary conclusion. In 9:1-6 wisdom and wise behaviour (A) and bad people and bad conduct (B) are contrasting poles, set against each other. Tension (C) is created because no reward exists for the wise. This tension emphasises the emptiness and the worthlessness of life because wise actions are not compensated for (Loader 1984c:121-123). Schematically it can be explained thus:

Pole: Wise conduct (A) Contra-pole: Wrong conduct (B).
Tension: No retribution (C).

These polar structures appear throughout the book. Constantly tension arises, whether in religion, wisdom, speech and silence, or anything that is being referred to. Qohelet therefore comes to the conclusion that the best must be made of the unsatisfactory and tension-filled

situations. The emptiness and worthlessness of life constantly drives him to this conclusion. This type of thinking is called the *carpe diem* conclusion. In at least five places in the book Qohelet resorts to this thinking. According to 3:12-13 nothing is better for humans in this worthless life than happiness; death is no real solution and therefore humans should enjoy themselves where and whenever they can (3:22); since there is no reward in the sense of traditional wisdom, the only 'way out' is to make the best of enjoyment amid the daily toils and tribulations (8:15); toilsome labour can also be part of the enjoyment of life (9:7-10);

Loader also wanted to understand Qohelet in a much wider *historical context*. We have already described Loader's view on historical inquiry: the final text and not the context must serve as starting-point for the study of Qohelet's thought pattern. Attention must first of all be paid to form and content — which must be studied by means of structural analysis. Only after this has been done can historical questions be asked and their relevance be determined. Loader therefore devoted only the latter part of his study on Qohelet to historical perspectives. The function of this historical data is noteworthy: it merely affirms his conclusions. By the time he has reached the 'last step' concerning 'the examination of the historical perspectives' definite conclusions have already been reached. The rest is just an addendum (although important) to what has already been said about Qohelet's thought pattern.

Loader also determined Qohelet's place in the *history of wisdom*. Developments in Egyptian and Mesopotamian wisdom shed some important light on Qohelet. In both cases definite stages can be discerned. Initially a close connection between wisdom and real life situations existed. All the wisdom sayings were related to life. At a certain stage these wisdom dicta were written down and applied to a variety of situations. The written precepts were removed from real life and became petrified. It was expected of young men to follow a dogmatic system blindly. Many reacted vehemently against this dogmatism but in many instances dogmatic wisdom won the day. The issue of retribution and the rightful sufferer, for example, was approached dogmatically and very unsatisfactory answers were given (Loader 1979:120). Something similar can be observed in Israel's wisdom: 'Aanvankelijk een waardering voor *de relatie tussen het op-*

treden en de juiste tijd, dan een verlies van dat tijdsbewustzijn, zodat er een dogmatisch systeem ontstaan, en ten slotte een protest tegen deze verstarring' (Loader 1984c:17 — my emphasis).

As we have said before, the first phase of Israelite wisdom was thus very closely linked to time and situation. The connection between deed and consequence, as well as the reward for good conduct, was also positively evaluated. At a certain stage Israel's wisdom had been systematised and dogmatism was inevitable. This can clearly be seen in the theology of Job's friends: dogmatised wisdom furnishes oversimplified answers to the problem of suffering. Reaction also occurred and it manifested itself in the issue of reward or retribution. And it was in this context of *critical wisdom* that Qohelet operated. As we have seen Qohelet constantly reacts against and rejects general wisdom, and tears some of its well-known topoi apart. He tackled the doctrine of reward and won. He not only refuted dogmatic wisdom's explanation of suffering and retribution but all 'human endeavours-at-success'. In 'one powerful stroke' the notion of retribution is completely denied. Qohelet's theology emphasised the tense relationship between protesting wisdom and dogmatised wisdom.

In Babylonian as well as in Old Testament wisdom this tension is time and again discharged.... Here Qohelet's distinctiveness is clearly visible. In spite of all he has in common with the rest of protesting literature, *the crisis never results in tension being discharged but always in its maintenance....* When the two poles of doctrine and protest are counterpoised in the ancient Near Eastern wisdom, the headache is always followed by relaxation — but in Qohelet's head the migraine throbs continually (Loader 1979:123ff — my emphasis).

e The succession narrative

Loader's overarching wisdom approach logically led to the identification and description of the sapiential nature of other sections in the Old Testament. The Succession Narrative may serve as an example of Loader's method of working. According to Loader this narrative was not merely imbued with some scattered wisdom motifs, but it exemplified a fundamental sapiential theme (Loader 1986b:167) which had been worked out meticulously (Loader 1986b:175).

To illustrate his point the notion of '*convergence of evidence*' once again played a fundamental role. In this case it implied a careful comparison between the Succession Narrative on the one hand and wis-

dom books like Proverbs, Esther and the Joseph narrative on the other. Attention was paid to sapiential motifs, different stylistic devices, meaning, et cetera. By gathering sufficient comparative evidence it became possible to describe the Succession Narrative's chokmatic nature (Loader 1986b:170-174). This enabled Loader to establish the message of the book.

If the (book of Proverbs and the) stories of Joseph and Esther can be shown to share with the Succession Narrative the same *concentration of typical sapiential motifs* there would be good reason to suspect that we do have a story-type which could be called 'wisdom tale' or 'sapiential narrative'. If, in addition, it could be shown that the narratives *share a common stock of stylistic devices and compositional features*, the argument would become stronger. And if, finally, there proves to be a *basic similarity in their meaning*, the existence of such a literary type would be *established* and the thesis that the Succession Narrative is a sapiential story would be *proven* (Loader 1986b:174 — my emphasis).

Loader's first step was to compare the typical chokmatic motifs of the book of *Proverbs* with those of the Succession Narrative. The evidence highlighted the chokmatic nature of the Succession Narrative (Loader 1986b:170-174).

(1) According to the book of Proverbs wisdom must be expressed in the form of good or practical counsel. This view is exemplified in the Succession Narrative because counsel and counsellors played an important role.

(2) The well-known wisdom view of retribution pervades the Succession Narrative. David's life can for instance be viewed as the result of his adultery and murderous deed.

(3) The wisdom perspective of Yahweh as the controller of human destiny can also be found in the Succession Narrative.

(4) The sparse reference to the cult is very typical of the Succession Narrative as well as the book of Proverbs.

(5) Revenge, according to the book of Proverbs, is foolish and Absalom's behaviour illustrates this point very clearly.

A close relationship also exists between the *Joseph narrative* and the Succession Narrative. Both these narratives share the motifs and the world-view very typical of wisdom literature. When the Succession Narrative is compared to the Joseph narrative its chokmatic nature is explained (Loader 1986b:174-177).

(1) The Succession Narrative reflects the sober and mundane atmosphere of the Joseph narrative and the book of Proverbs.

(2) Both the Joseph narrative and the Succession Narrative share an

'Egyptian connection' and both have parallels with the Egyptian wisdom.

(3) The Joseph narrative is set in the royal court and this obviously tallies with the Succession Narrative and the many proverbs sharing the same context.

(4) Wise behaviour implies the ability to speak well and this is very much appreciated in the Succession Narrative.

(5) The Joseph narrative stresses the wise person's control over his sexual passions. The disastrous consequences of failing to comply with this precept are clearly illustrated in the Succession Narrative.

(6) Self-control was another important wisdom virtue. Joseph was a very fine example of a man who could control himself under all circumstances. David on the other hand was the essence of foolishness because he was carried away by his lust.

(7) Respect for authority was also emphasised by the wisdom movement. A wise person is humble and submits himself to authority. The Joseph narrative exemplifies this wisdom precept while the Succession Narrative depicts men of pride as well the destructive results of their behaviour.

The Succession Narrative was also related to the *Esther story*. Loader indicated the latter's sapiential character and could therefore shed light on the nature of the Succession Narrative.

(1) In both stories the kings were counselled by courtiers. Ahasveros, like Absalom, was led astray; both stories relate the unwise conduct of some courtiers.

(2) Like Haman, David was unable to say the right thing at the right moment.

(3) Both stories illustrate that the fool fell into the pit he had dug for someone else.

(4) Haman and the sons of David are typical examples of anti-sapiential pride.

(5) Absalom's and Haman's acts of revenge are examples of foolish behaviour.

(6) Like the book of Esther, the Succession Narrative also exhibits a mundane and secular spirit.

(7) Some important stylistic features were also pointed out which could be found in both the Esther story and the Succession Narrative: the devices of veiling, contrasting, retarding and accelerating.

Loader's method thus consisted of a comparison between the Succession Narrative and other wisdom books. A great number of sapiential motifs, themes and stylistic features were traced which accentuated the Succession Narrative's chokmatic nature. All the evidence converged at a point which clearly reflected the typical wisdom features of the Succession Narrative (Loader 1986b:182). Loader does reckon with opposite viewpoints, but stresses that the parallels cannot merely be ascribed to chance. Everything must be attributed to a great

author who deliberately linked the Succession Narrative to wisdom literature and made a sapiential reading possible (Loader 1986b:198).

It may be said that the convergence of evidence in favour of reading the Succession Narrative as sapiential literature is very strong. In my opinion it would be asking too much of coincidence to write off the many wisdom motifs and themes that we have found in the Succession Narrative to have in common with Proverbs and other Israelite and Egyptian wisdom literature. It would be asking the impossible to expect Fortuna to have arranged all the parallels ... the possibility of a 'sapiential reading' should be attributed to the *greatness of the author* (Loader 1986b:197).

6 Loader's students

Over many years Loader exerted a substantial influence over his students. His clear way of thinking, his method, his firm exegetical hold on the text, his approach to wisdom in general, his inclusive view of wisdom literature, his preference for tensions and his ethical option attracted many a master and doctoral student. In different ways their work reveals something of the essential Loader. To illustrate this point the work of some of his students is briefly discussed.

Jaap Wessels, a master's student, focused on the Joseph story as a wisdom novelette. His thinking was not only heavily influenced by his promoter, but Wessels also elaborated on some of Loader's views in his (cf Loader s a:2-31) paper on Joseph. Wessels's thesis is a fine contribution not only to the study of wisdom literature, but also the understanding of the Pentateuch.

Wessels accepted the literary unity of the Joseph narrative as his starting-point. Although he rejected a 'Quellenbessenheit' the results of literary criticism were accommodated: 'Hence, I believe that both an investigation of the sources behind the story and the study of the story as a whole have a legitimate place in the research of Genesis 37-50' (Wessels 1984:58; 1989:15).

Wessels (1989:15-35) determined the literary quality of the Joseph story by describing the plot, the construction, the tension, the characters, the technique of composition, et cetera. By comparing the Joseph narrative to books like Ruth and Esther, Wessels established its Gattung as a novelette (Wessels 1984:42). Wessels also highlighted the Egyptian context of this narrative (Wessels 1984:49-51; 1989:50-52).

A very important part of Wessels's work deals with the chokmatic features of the Joseph story. The influence of Loader in this regard is once again clear. To illustrate his point Wessels listed 'wisdom' evidence and indicated its relationship to the Joseph story. 'Die Josefs-verhaal vertoon dus nie net afsonderlike wysheidsmotiewe nie, maar die hele basis of grondpatroon wat die raamwerk uitmaak waarbinne die verhaal funksioneer, is deur die ou wysheid daargestel' (Wessels 1984:50).

Izak Spangenberg investigated eleven poems in the book of Qohelet dealing with death (1:2-11; 1:12-2:26; 3:1-9; 3:15-22; 4:1-3; 5:9-6:9; 7:1-4; 7:15-22; 8:2-9; 9:1-10 and 11:7-12:8). By means of structural analysis each poem was carefully investigated. He focused on the demarcation of the poem, text-critical problems, the structure of the pericope and the views about death reflected in it (cf Spangenberg 1986:52-133). In this way Spangenberg not only obtained a firm hold on the text, but he also made some very important remarks on Qohelet's view on death. Also of importance is Spangenberg's attempt to account for these views historically (cf Spangenberg 1986:152-163).

Qohelet has a radical view on death. To illustrate this point, Spangenberg distinguished between an earlier and a later view of death. According to the earlier view Israel accepted death with resignation (Spangenberg 1986:51; 1988:30-32). During the fourth century this view of death was replaced by hope in the resurrection of the believer (Spangenberg 1988:32). Although the book of Qohelet originated in the third century BC no mention is made of the resurrection of the dead. This led scholars to describe Qohelet's views on death as conservative. According to Spangenberg this was not the case. Qohelet's thoughts were at variance with both the earlier as well as the later view on death. He had a very radical view of death (cf Spangenberg 1988:34-35).

Martin van Niekerk (1989) wrote a fine thesis on the 'carpe diem' concept in Qohelet. Although he followed his own line of thought the influence of his promoter was visible. The mere fact that Qohelet was singled out as an object of study, as well as the awareness of tensions, the methodology, the reference to Qohelet as a 'philosopher', et cetera, clearly illustrated Loader's influence. Van Niekerk contributed to the study of Qohelet by examining seven poems (1:12-2:26; 3:10-15; 3:16-22; 5:9-6:9; 8:10-15; 9:1-10 and 11:7-12:7-8) and describ-

ing the place and function of the 'carpe diem' thought in the book (Van Niekerk 1989:34-104; 105-114).

According to Van Niekerk, Qohelet's view on life is very closely related to his 'carpe diem' thought. Situations in life were evaluated in terms of the advantage they might contain. Qohelet's views on life have, however, a double-sidedness. At times life is worthwhile, but matters can change instantly for the worse. Van Niekerk stressed the fact that Qohelet understood reality 'in pairs' (Van Niekerk 1989:13). To put it differently, Qohelet understood life from two vantage points. A situation is evaluated both while it prevails and after it ends. According to Qohelet the only positive aspect occurs in situations where the pleasant still prevails. Viewed retrospectively, neither the pleasant nor the unpleasant yield any advantage (cf Van Niekerk 1989:9-19, 113).

Johan Burger devoted his thesis to a study of the so-called sapiential psalms. In one respect this work clearly reveals Loader's influence: the radical application of the notion of convergence of evidence: 'The overarching principle for the isolation of wisdom psalms thus is the *convergence of relevant evidence*' (Burger 1985:x).

Burger (1985:1-2) launched a search for sufficient evidence to determine the chokmatic or sapiential character of some psalms. An important obstacle was the establishing of evidence (or criteria) by means of which wisdom psalms could be identified. To overcome this problem Burger investigated the views of some prominent scholars on the psalms and abstracted criteria from their work. By studying the work of Gunkel, Mowinkel, Von Rad, Crenshaw, Scott, Kuntz, Whybray, and Murphy, he distinguished typical wisdom features which formed the basis for his own search (Burger 1985:4,14).

Burger (1985:14-15) thus based his criteria (formal and concerning content) on 'secondary' material. He nevertheless 'verified' them by comparing them to wisdom books like Job, Proverbs and Qohelet (Burger 1985:15-36). These wisdom books thus served as a check for Burger's criteria. If a criterion was well attested to, it was accepted as adequate evidence to determine and isolate wisdom psalms (cf Burger 1985:32-36). By means of these criteria Psalms 1, 32, 34, 37, 49, 112, 127 and 128 qualified as wisdom psalms. It is, however, important to note that a psalm had to display a number of features before it was labelled as sapiential (Burger 1985:37-98; cf 1987:38-39; 1989:75-95).

B THE STUDY OF PROVERBS: VENTER, NEL AND WITTENBERG

South African scholars have made an important contribution to the understanding of the book of Proverbs. For the purpose of this article the works of Piet Venter, Philip Nel and Günther Wittenberg are singled out.

Piet Venter's contribution to the study of wisdom literature can be summarised as follows:

He wrote extensively on the *history of wisdom research* (Venter 1981:1-118). A very important result of this history is the link that was forged between wisdom and Old Testament theology. This became a very important aspect in Venter's views on wisdom. Wisdom research logically concludes with its relationship to Old Testament theology; the history of research on wisdom automatically leads to a study of problems concerning Old Testament theology; this research history reveals something of the struggle to determine wisdom's relationship to the rest of the Old Testament and Old Testament theology: 'Die navorsing na die wysheidsliteratuur van die Bybel en die nadenke oor die metode waarmee 'n Teologie van die Ou Testament geskryf moet word, het 'n ontmoetingspunt bereik gedurende die agste dekade van die twintigste eeu.' (Venter 1981:1)

An important consequence of the above is Venter's emphasis on the *canon*. The canon is an important cornerstone in Venter's understanding of the Old Testament and Israel's wisdom. This emphasis on the canonical shape of the Old Testament is of course characteristic of the modern search for unity. Within diversity unity exists. Stress on the canon is therefore very 'modern'. Different divisions like the Law, the Prophets, the Writings and the wisdom do exist, but the unifying elements must be searched for (Venter 1981:29).

From the beginning '*something*' influenced the shaping of the canon. This '*something*' eventually brought about the unity of the Old Testament. Old Testament scholars constantly search for this '*something*' which must be described and elaborated upon in an Old Testament theology (Venter 1981:116). This view of Venter has of course some very important consequences for the study of wisdom literature. No section from this literature, not even the smallest, can be studied in isolation. Each section's relationship to that '*something*' must be

stated. The mere existence of wisdom literature stresses its correspondence to that 'something'. Without this correspondence it would never have been included in the canon (Venter 1981:120-122; s a:59).

Elke afsonderlike eenheid ... wentel om een of meer gedagtes, wat in ooreenstemming is met hierdie sentrale 'iets', wat die aanvaarbaarheid of afwysbaarheid bepaal het van elke stuk nuwe literatuur in die kanonvorming. Die aanwesigheid van die kleiner eenhede is die bewys dat elke eenheid die bestanddele bevat wat hom aan daardie 'iets' laat voldoen het (Venter 1981:123).

The starting-point of Old Testament *theology* is the canon. By means of theological exegesis, Old Testament theology attempts to relate each part of the canon to the whole. In this way Old Testament theology is sensitive to wisdom and its relation to the canon as a whole. To summarise: because Old Testament theology works with the whole of the canon, the canonical contents of Israel's wisdom must also be taken into account; and this link is especially made possible by the history of wisdom research (Venter 1981:3): 'Moontlik gemaak deur 'n lang pad van veral literêre navorsing is die wysheidsliteratuur dus gereed om in te beweeg in die ruimte wat die huidige tendens in die navorsing van die Ou Testamentiese-Teologie vir hom oopmaak.' (Venter 1981:3).

The concept or principle of canon also determined *the scope of wisdom literature*. A clear distinction was made between wisdom literature in the canon and apocryphal wisdom. Venter's views on the canon actually forced him to treat the wisdom of the Old Testament as different from that of apocryphal wisdom. The wisdom literature of the Old Testament stands in a specific canonical context and in a definite relationship to the other books of the Old Testament. Apocryphal wisdom literature is of course excluded from this (Venter 1981:105; s a:60-61).

Daar moet 'n verskil bestaan tussen kanonieke en apokriewe wysheidsliteratuur wat van wesenlike belang is vir die kanoniseitsvraagstuk. Na hierdie verskil moet gesoek word.... Bestudering van die apokriewe wysheidsliteratuur ... kan moontlik lei tot 'n beter beskrywing van die gegewe samehang tussen kanonieke wysheidsliteratuur en die res van die kanon (Venter s a:61).

The history of research, and especially his views on the canon,

determined Venter's *exegetical* approach to wisdom literature. Emphasis was laid on the final physical form ('die finale fisiese vorm'). Canonical status was ascribed to the final form of the text and it therefore served as a starting-point for all exegetical labour. Historical observations had to be limited and treated as of secondary importance (Venter 1981:121). Venter's approach is clearly illustrated in his thorough analysis of the structure of Proverbs 1-9 (Venter 1981:131-280; 1985:306-324).

These chapters were divided into twenty-one units. A very careful analysis of each one was made and the structure of each determined. Venter's canonical view 'forced' him to relate his findings to the rest of the Old Testament (cf Venter 1981:117-118). In this way he hoped to determine the proper place of wisdom literature within the literature of the Old Testament and the theology of the Old Testament.

Philip Nel worked on the structure and ethos of the wisdom admonitions in Proverbs. His results were printed as a 'Beiheft' to the *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* (Nel 1982). This excellent study shed light on the structural and the form-critical features of the wisdom admonitions (Nel 1982:7-82; 125-127; 1977:53-66). He emphasised the literary aspect of wisdom and in this regard the opening sentence of his book is enlightening. Here he typified 'wisdom' as 'a collective literary phenomenon in the Ancient Near East' (Nel 1982:1). Wisdom study is therefore text-study which has to be approached text-immanently. Nel's investigation of the wisdom admonition is a major contribution to the study of wisdom in general and the book of Proverbs in particular.

In his work Nel has made some important remarks on the *nature of wisdom*. Since he does not give a systematic exposition of Israel's wisdom, and since he has a very terse style, Nel's statements are scattered all over his book. Below we shall highlight only a few aspects of his views on the nature of wisdom.

(1) God created order and this is comprehensible to the created human being. Wise men have devoted themselves to a close scrutiny of this order. It was their aim to gain some knowledge of reality and experience of the world (Nel 1982:97).

(2) The order was not merely a scientific object of wise reflection, but had an existential meaning: it was the living space where human existence found its real destiny (Nel 1982:96).

(3) Knowledge of created reality also included information about the plants, birds, humans and other beings. According to the wise men, these things did not exist chaotically, but were determined by a divine order. Each one has its place in the created order (Nel 1982: 106). Nel described this as the first attempt at 'cognitive systematisation, which we could call scientific' (Nel 1982:97).

(4) There is a close relationship between wisdom and law. Or, to put it differently, according to the wisdom perspective no tension exists between faith and reason. When Israel became more aware of the cosmic majesty of Yahweh much attention was then given to the relationship between the cosmic order and the will of God, the created order and the order of salvation, reason and revelation. They could only solve the problem by stating that wisdom and law are not contradictory and that both constitute *the* truth. The God who proclaimed his will to Israel also created the world (Nel 1982:96).

(5) Nel's emphasis on the association between wisdom and the 'fear of the Lord' is very important. In the wisdom context the 'fear of the Lord' has a very specific meaning and function. It is not the main element of wisdom or the sum-total of all the wisdom teachings. The 'fear of the Lord' leads, rather, to wisdom; it is the scope and the sphere in which wisdom becomes possible; it is only within the context of the 'fear of the Lord' that wisdom can be realised; the recognition of the 'fear of the Lord' brings about real wisdom; ethical demands can only be realised when the 'fear of the Lord' is accepted; within the 'fear of the Lord' wisdom finds its limits and its goal.

The recognition of the principle of the *yir'at Jahweh*, brings about real wisdom.... The *yir'at Jahweh* of Proverbs usually evaluated as the religious and the ethical aspects of human conduct, now becomes the very manner of religious existence: In other words, it becomes the overriding existential. It is the mode of real existence (Nel 1982:100).

(6) According to Nel the term 'fear of the Lord' also unites the concepts of wisdom and revelation, reason/philosophy and revelation. Since the 'fear of the Lord' underlies all wisdom, the pursuit of knowledge becomes a very meaningful undertaking. The wise person now penetrates, intellectually, every aspect of created reality and sees God in everything. Without the 'fear of the Lord' true knowledge is impossible. To put it differently, the 'fear of the Lord' constitutes the

unity of the created order and therefore no tension exists between wisdom and religion or revelation (Nel 1982:101,106).

(7) Nel warns against a one-sided interpretation of wisdom's optimistic character. A definite optimism does exist: good and bad actions can be described, the consequences of good or bad conduct can be determined and the ability of humans to accomplish the good and avoid foolish behaviour is emphasised. Optimism is, however, wrongly understood when connected to a strict dogma of deed-consequence. Never must optimism be viewed as a strict system, a causality. Such a view is impossible in the light of the absolute majesty of God (Nel 1982:113-114).

(8) Nel's view of wisdom also takes into account a very important aspect: ethical behaviour. True knowledge implies correct behaviour. The ultimate aim of all wisdom instruction is the equipment of human to meet the requirements of their ethical existence. The importance of wisdom education is also emphasised by the central position of the term 'listen' in wisdom literature. Wisdom instruction must be taken very seriously because it provides one with knowledge of the ethos to be followed. When wisdom is taken seriously it guards one against evil. The acceptance of Dame Wisdom's invitation does not merely imply the acquisition of cognitive knowledge, but also the acceptance of a new life style. Acceptance of wisdom has great ethical consequences (Nel 1982:107).

(9) Nel also explained this point by referring to the kind of knowledge expressed in wisdom. It is a knowledge of the created order and therefore also of God. Ethical behaviour therefore implies a life in total harmony with the created order: 'Knowledge and ethos do not mutually exclude each other, but presuppose one another. The ethos of wisdom demands an orderly existence in harmony with the created order. Thus the ethos can be qualified as an ethos of subordination to the divine order' (Nel 1982:115).

(10) Ethical commands are thus accomplished by an act of personal subordination to wisdom. To put it differently, wisdom ethos does not emphasise human sovereignty, but the submission to the order of Yahweh (Nel 1982:113). Real piety implies the constant protection of one's ethical existence in this world (Nel 1982:108).

(T)he ethos of wisdom is not a rigid system of morality or a form of legalism. It is the religious existential - it is the way of living in

harmony with the knowledge of the created order and therefore in harmony with the order of God. Without the knowledge and understanding it would have been an abstract system of morality (Nel 1982:111).

(11) According to Nel 'order-oriented thinking is the pulse of wisdom'. This can also be seen in three important concepts: **צֶדֶק**, **מִשְׁפָּט**, and **מִשְׁרִים** in Proverbs 1:1-7. These terms are 'very difficult to explain without a concept of order' (Nel 1982:109). The **צֶדֶק** represents the ideal order: it is the order of true existence in which the righteous attempt to live in harmony. The realisation of the **צֶדֶק** implies a life in accordance with the real order. The **מִשְׁפָּט** is the action or the activity which materialises the **צֶדֶק**. It is also possible to say that the **מִשְׁפָּט** is the explication of the **צֶדֶק**. The **מִשְׁרִים** is the inner or personal righteousness (Nel 1982:110). We 'are therefore inclined to maintain the concept of order as a basic premise in the discipline of wisdom: An order of existence given by God requiring materialization, both officially and individually' (Nel 1982:110).

Wisdom also has a *literary side*. According to Nel wisdom literature reveals one's first endeavours to order one's knowledge of experience and to formulate one's findings by means of gnomic sayings. This was of course a very important step because knowledge of the created order now became available to others: 'This process is, however, not one of abstract speculation. No, it is the recognition of inherent laws of order and an attempt to reveal them in a cognitive sense. Man is obliged always to accept this knowledge, because it constitutes orderly human conduct' (Nel 1982:86).

Wisdom has been explicated in the form of *proverbs*. All our knowledge of the world has been gathered in the form of proverbs. By means of this elementary literary form we express our experience of the world. This experiential knowledge of the world, conceived in the form of gnomic sayings, is called **מִשְׁלִים**. Nel contributed to the **משל**-debate by criticising attempts to determine one 'basic meaning' of a **משל** which is then forced into every context. It cannot be described as a genre because several genres or *Gattungen* can be identified as a **משל**. The context will determine the particular genre of a **משל**. The interpretation of a **משל** therefore depends on its context (Nel 1982:7-9).

Nel emphasised the inseparability of *motivations* and admonitions.

In this literary unity, motivations played a very important role in the admonitions. Motivation clauses are not unique to wisdom literature but also occur in lawsuits as well as prophetic sayings. In the latter, motivations usually refer to the actions of Yahweh, his righteous and salvation history. Motivations in lawsuits referred to Israel's salvation history, the imminent salvation or disaster, the sacredness of the people or Yahweh and the social order. No reference to the *Heilsgeschichte* is made in wisdom literature and a small number of religious motivations can be found. According to Nel (1982:83-85), the majority of motivations in admonitions are substantiated by means of reference to experience and logic. Motivations thus reveal wisdom that was experienced in everyday life.

A very important question deals with the *reason* why motivations were indeed attached to admonitions. A very popular answer has been that they served didactic purposes. Although motivations were indeed very important in the educational situation, this was not their only function. Motivations illuminated the truth and validity of admonitions and this was conveyed in many ways. Nel mentioned the following:

(1) By means of its *reasonable* character it made an appeal to reason to accept certain important truths. In a reasonable way reference was made to empirical and verifiable observations and this served as a basis for certain behaviour (Nel 1982:86).

(2) By means of its *dissuasive* character the final consequences of certain types of behaviour are illuminated. Closer scrutiny reveals the deed-consequence dogma: certain kinds of conduct led to destruction and others to the experience of Yahweh's blessings (Nel 1982:87).

(3) By means of its *promissory* character the value of wisdom is stressed. Motivation in the form of a promise not only sheds light on prophetic and deuteronomistic influence, but is also indicative of a new concept of wisdom which originated during the Persian period (Nel 1982:88).

Some scholars have attempted to link the *authority* of wisdom admonitions to certain institutions such as the family or the school. Nel stressed the fact that the authority lies in the admonition itself. It is not dependent on any authoritative institution, but on its own intrinsic truth. Imperative to such a view is the coherence of admonition and motivation. The admonition has no authority when separated from the

motivation. If the admonition depends on its own truth, the motivation makes it explicit. It is the motivation clause that provides the reader with authority: 'It is the truth of the wisdom, expressed in the motivation, which comprises the imperative to obey the demand. The very nature of the motivation embraces an effective appeal to reason and observation, because the cosmic order and the ethical order are not contradictory' (Nel 1982:91).

Nel is convinced that genre cannot be determined by focusing only on the form. Other features must also be taken into account. According to him, the proper manner in which the *life-setting* must be determined is to trace the ethos-related ethics of each saying. The ethos expressed in a saying cannot strictly be limited to one institution:

(1) A *family* ethos can be found in Proverbs 10:1; 15:20; 17:25; 19:13, 18, 26; 12:1; 13:1; 21:19; 21:19; 23:12-25; and 29:15. These sayings emphasise obedience to the instruction of the parents. Not only is the orderly functioning of the family stressed, but also its orderly co-existence with its surroundings, the community and Yahweh. The family must also reflect the order at large. This wisdom was not restricted to the family, but was also inserted in the 'study' material of other institutions (Nel 1982:79).

(2) A *school* ethos can also be discerned in the contrast between the wise and the foolish (cf Pr 12:15,16; 13:1; 14:8; etc), the wise woman and the wicked woman (cf Pr 14:1; 12:4; etc), the poor and the wealthy (Pr 10:15; 14:20; etc), the willing and the sluggard (Pr 12:9; 16:19; etc). Modesty and wise counsel were also important topics. It is, however, very difficult to determine an exact school ethos because school wisdom includes many different collections (Nel 1982:80).

(3) An *official* or court ethos is reflected in Proverbs 31:3,4,5,6-7; 24:11-12,27,28, et cetera. Topics such as just weights, sound administration, and the behaviour of the king were popular. Every topic highlighted the orderly functioning of the king and other important officials (Nel 1982:80).

(4) A *priestly* ethos (Pr 13:14,20; 18:10; 28:4; etc) was mainly concerned with the sacral law and cultic obligations (Nel 1982:81).

(5) A *prophetic* ethos is manifested in Proverbs 1:20-33. This illustrates the influence of prophetism and that the wisdom and prophetic traditions did not exist in isolation (Nel 1982:81).

(6) An *individual* ethos can be found in Proverbs 30:1-9, which originated from an individual devout person or sage (Nel 1982:81).

Philip Nel has indeed made a fine contribution to our understanding of wisdom and wisdom literature. From what has been said we gain the impression that he has already reflected greatly on wisdom and its typical features. His treatment of wisdom literature has indeed opened up new ways of interpretation.

Günther Wittenberg has a sensitivity for the social dimensions of the text (cf 1978:141-152; 1986:40-85; 1987:1-23). Much attention is paid to the poor and the oppressed and their sufferings are treated with great compassion. He wants the Old Testament to contribute to a more just and righteous society. This was the reason for his investigation of the book of Proverbs: its attitude towards poverty and affluence had to be determined. Only one aspect of his study is illuminated below.

Wittenberg suspected a shift in the wisdom teacher's views about wealth. According to him this can be seen from the 'two almost identical sayings' in Proverbs 22:2 and 29:13. The first says the following: *Rich and poor have this in common: the Lord is the Maker of them all.* According to 29:13, *the poor and the oppressor have this in common; The Lord gives sight to the eyes of both.* A noteworthy re-evaluation of wealth has taken place. According to the first, the rich are still viewed favourably but in 29:13 the rich one becomes an oppressor. Wittenberg was intrigued by the possible reasons for this shift and ascribed it to socio-economic factors (Wittenberg 1987:3).

To determine a social context for the proverbs on wealth and poverty is extremely difficult. The book of Proverbs has a certain timelessness and this hampers any historical construction. Since Israel's proverbs are related to life, such a task must nevertheless be endeavoured (Wittenberg 1987:2). From the beginning, wisdom thinking was embedded in Israelite society. Egyptian wisdom was directed at the officials but, in Israel, 'a much closer connection between the life and the people in general' can be discerned. While 'Egyptian instructions are concerned with the profession of royal officials, Israelite aphoristic wisdom praises agriculture' (Wittenberg 1987:8). This close link between life and proverbs thus encouraged Wittenberg to make social constructions.

According to Wittenberg things went wrong during the latter part

of the Judean monarchy. Society changed and this brought about a new way of understanding poverty and wealth (Wittenberg 1987:10). In the cities a wealthy upper class developed. They obtained their money in dishonest ways and lent it to the poor at excessive interest rates.

Consequently the agricultural ideal, which was nurtured by the wisdom teachers, was undermined. According to them agriculture was the real profession instituted by God. Trade and commerce, on the other hand, were sinful practices. Of course, wealth can be accumulated through hard work and diligence and this was also appreciated by the wise. Severe criticism was nevertheless launched against those who got rich quickly by means of dubious mercantile and financial transactions. In Proverbs 28:19 these pursuits are described as worthless: 'He who tills his land will have plenty of bread, but he who follows worthless pursuits will have plenty of poverty' (Pr 28:19).

Wealth which is sound, stable, self-perpetuating and will not perish, is the one obtained through diligent work with flocks and herds and in agriculture. Money quickly made through commerce and trade and other financial transactions, is dissipated with equal rapidity (Wittenberg 1987:14).

Oppressive measures during the latter period of the monarchy robbed the farmer of a living and many social injustices prevailed. Suddenly the rich became the wicked. They were the merchants and the moneylenders who manipulated and maltreated the farmer by means of all kinds of money transactions involving interest and usury. They impoverished the farmer and weakened the agricultural ideal.

Proverbs' harsh criticism of the oppressor can especially be seen in the admonitions against surety and pledges.

*He who puts up security for another will surely suffer,
but whoever refuses to strike hands in pledge is safe (Pr 11:15).*

*A man lacking in judgment strikes hands in pledge
and puts up security for his neighbour (Pr 17:18).*

*My son, if you have put up
security for your neighbor,
have given a pledge for a stranger,
if you have struck hands in pledge for another,
if you have been trapped by what you said,
ensnared by the words of your mouth,*

*then do this, my son, to free yourself,
since you have fallen into your
neighbour's hands (Pr 6:1-3).*

*Do not be a man who strikes hands in pledge
or puts up security for debts;
if you lack the means to pay,
your very bed will be snatched from under you (Pr 22:26-27).*

These quotations suggest a developed money economy. People of the Ancient Near East were acquainted with excessive interest rates levied by money lenders. Israel was also familiar with these practices and its grave consequences. In the course of time the wisdom teachers reacted against these forms of malpractice. They were not a means of helping the poor, but a means of gaining unrighteous wealth. Socio-economic conditions thus changed the wisdom teachers' views on surety and pledges (Wittenberg 1987:11-12). The more the wicked were identified with the moneylender, the merchant and the usurer, the more the peasant became identified with the righteous. Proverbs 13:4 and 13:25 clearly link laziness and wickedness on the one and diligence and righteousness on the other hand: *The sluggard craves and gets nothing, but the desires of the diligent are fully satisfied (Pr 13:4)* and *The righteous eat to their heart's content, but the stomach of the wicked goes hungry (Pr 13:25).*

C THE STUDY OF JOB: KROEZE, VAN SELMS AND BEZUIDENHOUT

The contributions of Kroeze, Van Selms and Bezuidenhout to the study of Job can also briefly be mentioned.

J H Kroeze was of Dutch origin and later became professor in Semitic Languages at the University of Potchefstroom. In 1960 and 1961 he published two commentaries on the book of Job. Both appeared in two well-known Dutch series on the Old Testament: *Korte verklaring der Heilige Schrift* and *Commentaar op het Oude Testament*. The former was meant for laymen and the latter was of a more scientific nature. Kroeze used these two types of commentary in a complementary manner. What seemed unfit for the one was discussed in the other (cf Kroeze 1961:41).

Although these commentaries contributed to our understanding of

the book of Job, Kroeze missed the exegetical discussions in South Africa in the seventies and therefore had a 'traditional' view of the text. Perhaps we can call it a 'grammatical-historical' approach. Meticulous attention was paid to the book's language and valuable historical information was communicated. Unfortunately the wisdom context of the book was not sufficiently explained.

Kroeze's work is perhaps a fine specimen of Reformed scholarship in South Africa. Historical-critical scholarship was rejected, language (or word) study encouraged, the (revelation) historical dimension of the text accentuated and the status of the text as the Word of God strongly emphasised. It forms part of revelation history by means of which Yahweh wanted to reveal a message to us. This view enabled him to integrate the New Testament into his explanation of the book of Job (Kroeze 1960:15-20; 1961:23-38).

Adrianus van Selms wrote a few commentaries on the book of Job (Van Selms 1982, 1983, 1984). Like his commentaries on Genesis and Jeremiah, the Job commentaries were also published in the Dutch series *Prediking van het Oude Testament*. In 1984 another commentary appeared in the series *Tekst en Toelichting*. These commentaries attempted to explain the book of Job to modern church members and to a large extent they succeeded. Van Selms, however, did not reflect much on the South African context and wisdom approach (cf Van Selms 1984:22-30). He followed his own method and contributed to our understanding of Job by highlighting the literary qualities of the text.

Jimmie Loader was a student of Van Selms and over many years a close relationship developed between them. Van Selms had a formative influence on Loader and those of us knowing both could clearly detect some typical characteristics of the older in the younger: the love of art, intellectual clarity, scientific thoroughness, the mastering of a vast field of Old Testament and ancient Near Eastern scholarship, meticulous text study and many other academic and personal features. In his Job commentary, however, it was the master who paid special tribute to his gifted pupil (Van Selms 1983:194). With reference to Loader's inaugural address Van Selms said the following moving words:

Op 22 Maart 1983 hoorden wij onze oud-leerling J.A. Loader zijn inaugurale rede als hoogleraar aan de 'Universiteit van Suid-Afrika'

uitspreken: *Job - antwoord of enigma?* en de palma nobilis ging naar onze jonge vriend. Als deze rede als publicatie van genoemde universiteit verschenen is, kunnen wij enkel zeggen: Ite ad bibliopolas, tollite, legite! (Van Selms 1983:255).

To Van Selms the *unity* of the book of Job was of utmost importance and this was one of the reasons why he felt such a close affinity with the work of Kroeze. He appreciated Kroeze's focus on content and meaning as well as his reluctance to search for additions: 'Het was een verademing samen met een man te reizen, die zich niet toespitste op het ontdekken van "glossen" en "invoeingen", maar zijn vernuft op inhoud en betekenis richtte' (Van Selms 1983:255).

According to Van Selms, everything started with a *Job saga* which narrated the story of a pious man who lived in pre-historic times and who had experienced all kinds of calamities. Although the book of Job only originated in the Persian era the impression is created that the 'Job event' occurred in the time of the patriarchs. No references are therefore made to the lawgiving at Sinai and the exodus; Job sacrificed like the patriarchs without the intervention of a priest; Job's prayers for his friends were answered just as those of Abraham for Abimelech (Gn 20:17); the term used to describe the 'piece of silver' which Job received from his friends (Job 42:11) occurs only in the stories of the patriarchs (Van Selms 1983:226).

During the *Persian period* this basic theme of the Job saga was re-interpreted and re-worked by the author of the book of Job. Basically this Job saga contained the story of a righteous man who, although he was provoked by the 'Aanklager', remained steadfast amid many adversaries; his wife and friends described his situation as beyond redemption; because this man remained faithful God restored him to his former glory (Van Selms 1983:227): 'Waarschijnlijk sprak deze overlevering zowel van Jobs vroomheid als van de rampen die hem troffen, en ook van de uiteindelijke keer in zijn lot, *dezelfde stof dus als wij in de proloog en epiloog van ons boek vinden*' (Van Selms 1982:33).

This Job saga circulated orally and its original content is difficult to determine. Much of the original can, according to Van Selms, still be seen in the *prologue* and the *epilogue* of the present book of Job. Since the names in the prologue and epilogue cannot be explained symbolically and are also foreign to Israelite nomenclature, Van

Selms suggested that they had been derived from the oral Job saga. The figure of the 'Aanklager' is not an invention of the author of the book of Job but he 'found' it in the saga (Van Selms 1983:226).

Van Selms thus did not separate the prologue and epilogue from the rest of the book. The prose and poetic sections were composed by the same author (Van Selms 1983:230). Both forms are used interchangeably in the book of Job. So, for instance, the prose form was used to introduce some of the speeches between Job and his friends (cf Job 3:1,2; 4:1; 6:1, etc). According to Van Selms, prose and poetry also occur in the book of Qohelet and prophetic books like Ezekiel and Zechariah (Van Selms 1982:39; 47-48; 62; 1983:53; 75). In all these cases the different forms do not imply different authors (Van Selms 1983:230).

Van Selms also rejected the view that the *words of God* were originally one section but were later divided into two. It was the original intention of the author to present the words of Yahweh as two separate speeches. Both complement each other. There is, for instance, something in the reaction of Job to the second speech which does not occur in the first: in the latter his insignificance is admitted while he confessed in the second that limits have been exceeded and that he must therefore repent. Another reason for the original existence of the two speeches of Yahweh must be sought in the Old Testament 'custom' of repeating important sayings (Van Selms 1983:191). Job's suffering took place in two stages (cf Job 1,2) and the very important Yahweh words, '(Y)ou have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has', are repeated in Job 42:7,8 (Van Selms 1983:232). It is thus clear that the author of the book of Job intended to present us with two speeches of God.

There were, however, at least two great sections which Van Selms treated as later interpolations. The one is *Job 28*. According to Van Selms this section differs greatly from the previous chapters: the second person is not used, no mention of the addressees is made, a description instead of an argumentation can be found, the mere acceptance of the idea that God alone knows the mysteries of life contradicts the protesting Job of the previous chapters. No link therefore exists between this chapter and the previous ones (Van Selms 1983:62-72). Although it falls out of step, *Job 28* was nevertheless composed by the author of the book of Job. It is a poem written separately which was

incorporated into the greater work later.

According to Van Selms the author of the book of Job was a member of the so-called 'wisdom circle' and was well versed in that theology. At an early stage in his life he started to doubt the validity of wisdom theology. He argued against the existing theology by stressing the inaccessibility of true wisdom. The poem contained in Job 28 was therefore an early poetic verbalisation of his criticism against the prevailing wisdom theology. When the author later compiled his great work this poem was also inserted without any further reflection on its position in the book (Van Selms 1983:71).

The words of *Elihu* (Job 32-37) also do not fit into the present composition of the book. They are clearly not from the hand of the author of Job and were probably written about a century after the book (Van Selms 1983:123-125). Although these chapters have highlighted some very important aspects like the pedagogical value of suffering (33:14-30) and God's freedom with regard to the forgiveness of sins (34:4), the author nevertheless adhered to the outdated and stagnant tenets of wisdom typical of past generations (Van Selms 1983:234).

Thus, except for the Elihu words, the book of Job derives from *one author*. Under no circumstances must we separate the prologue and epilogue from the rest of the book or ascribe them to different hands. One author created this marvelous work which Van Selms preferred to call 'de dichter' ('the poet'). With regard to his identity Van Selms made the following interesting remark: 'Verder is het werk, behoudens die Elihu-redevoeringen ... het eigendom van een geniale geest, wiens naam alleen bij God bekend is' (Van Selms 1983:230).

Van Selms's commentaries on the book of Job reveal typical Van Selmsian features, such as a display of great erudition, a fine feeling for and a grip on the text, and a creative reconstruction of events. In this paragraph we highlight one typical aspect of Van Selms's approach: his use of *great authors* to illuminate the text of Job. This remains one of the charming aspects of Van Selms's exegesis and makes his commentaries a delightful reading experience.

As we have said before, Van Selms was very much of an artist. When reading the text the first impressions were apparently important to him and they determined his way of working. His artistic feeling and creative imagination then facilitated his explanation of the text.

And the great literary works of the world enabled him to define Job's message more clearly. By opening his heart to art and listening especially to the great Dutch authors, Van Selms was enabled to penetrate the lofty thoughts of the book of Job. A great number of authors were therefore constantly mentioned in his work: Goethe (1982:23,140, 165; 1983:103); Seneca (1982:31); Shakespeare (1982:61; 1983:54); Jan Greshoff (1982:119); Homer (1982:127,189; 1983:100); Keats (1982:167); Vondel (1983:114); Bilderdijk (1983:125) and many others. To illustrate:

(1) Van Selms stressed the fact that Job resisted God, and God apparently allowed this rebellion. To explain this, Van Selms quoted a verse by Jan Greshoff: 'Zegen o Heer, de scheefgetrokken mond / van hem die eenzaam is en uit de grond / zijns hárten godverdomme zegt / eenvoudig, hunkerend en oprecht' (Van Selms 1982:98).

(2) From the discussions with his friends it is clear that Job accused God of having added misery, pain and tears to his predicament. To illuminate Job's feeling, Van Selms (1983:103) referred to Goethe's Prometheus: 'Hast du die Schmerzen gelindert / je des Beladenen? / Hast du die Thränen gestillet / je des Geängsteten?'.

(3) To give expression to the greatness of Job 28, Van Selms (1983:71-72) quoted two passages from Sophocles' *Antigone*: 'Veel is geweldig, groots, doch niets / is geweldiger dan de mens.... / Ook aller goden moeder, de Aarde, / de eeuwige, nimmer vermoeibare, woelt hij steeds / jaarlijks opnieuw met de telkens zich wendende / ploegen om door rossenkracht'. And right at the end of this tragedy these words can be found: 'Van alle bezit, dat geluk ons verleent, / is de wijsheid het hoogst; voor der goden gebod / past eerbied en schroom'. According to Van Selms, Sophocles focused on the greatness of humankind as well as the 'praktische Vernunft', the obedience of the divine precepts. This is also the theme of Job 28: 'De mens is een aards wezen en kan alleen de aarde doorgronden; dat doet hij dan ook en men kan zijn moed en volharding daarbij waarderen.... De hemelse dingen, het Godsbestuur, ook over de aarde, doorgrondt de mens niet' (Van Selms 1983:72).

(4) In Job 32:19 Elihu says the following: '... inside I am like bottled-up wine, like new wineskins ready to burst'. According to Van Selms 'de fraaiste parafrase' of this verse can be found in Vondel's unforgettable 'Roskam': 'Maar wat op 's harten grond leit, / dat

welt me na de keel; ik word te stijf geparst, / en 't werkt als nieuwe wijn, die tot de spon uitbarst' (Van Selms 1983:114).

In conclusion once again a brief remark on Van Selms's use of world (and especially Dutch) literature. One gains the impression that knowledge of this is indispensable for the study of the Old Testament. Sensitivity for literature cultivates a sensitivity for the Old Testament text. To understand Genesis, Jeremiah, Job or any other Old Testament book one must take the other great masters of the word seriously (cf Van Selms 1961b:65-68; 1962a:57-59; 1962b:67-70; 1963a:66-68; 1963b:47-49; 1964a:52-54; 1964b:50-54; 1964c:65-68; 1965a:65-68; 1965b:66-68). The continuous presence of these great authors gives a certain charm to his work and makes it extremely pleasant to read. In this regard he has introduced something with which the majority of South African Old Testament scholars are not acquainted - but something we are badly in need of. Quite often exegesis is a matter of life or death where only one reading is right and the other wrong. We are in such dead earnest and our work often lacks an elegance and a lightness. Art can help us in this regard. It implies of course that some time must be found to familiarise ourselves with art in all its dimensions. Van Selms used Sunday afternoons for this:

Op Sondagmiddae neem ek graag een van die meer herdrukte sewentende eeuse Nederlandse digters ter hand. Van sistematiese studie is geen sprake nie; 'n kenner van die sewentende eeuse letterkunde mag ek my sekerlik nie noem nie. Maar as 'n mens jare lank vir sy genoeë die ou perkament- of kalfsleer-bande hanteer, kan dit gebeur dat hy hier en daar iets teenkom wat aan die amptelike bestudeerders van die Nederlandse literatuurgeskiedenis ontsnap het. Dit is my bedoeling om van tyd tot tyd hiervan iets mee te deel (in *Standpunte*). Dit sal nooit meer as kleinighede wees nie, maar die kennis van die sewentende eeu is vir die kulturele agtergrond van Suid-Afrika van so 'n groot belang dat ook hierdie kleinighede wellig party van ons lesers kan interesseer (Van Selms 1961a:60).

Louis Bezuidenhout devoted a study to the structure and the meaning of the book of Job (Bezuidenhout 1986). It is interesting to note that the whole book of Job was investigated. Bezuidenhout reflected the typical South African text-immanent approach: the final text forms the object of study, historical issues are of no substantial importance and the text is approached as literature (Bezuidenhout 1986:8).

Typical of this view of exposition is the emphasis on the unity of

the book. Bezuidenhout was therefore convinced of Job's well-constructed design. Although the structure of the book of Job is very complex, tensions can nevertheless be accommodated. Bezuidenhout explained this by referring to Yahweh's acts: Yahweh's dealings with humankind are extremely complex, but nevertheless reveal a well-planned structure which could accommodate life's many paradoxes. In a similar way, the well-structured and well-planned book of Job accommodates the many different paradoxes (Bezuidenhout 1986:7).

D CONCLUSIONS

South African scholars have made an important contribution to the study of wisdom literature over the past twenty to thirty years. It is also interesting to note how many works were published in international series or magazines. This serves as an indication of the high standard of work that has been attained. In this regard the work of Jimmie Loader will remain an intellectual climax in the history of Old Testament study in South Africa.

Wisdom study clearly displays the exegetical developments in South Africa since the early seventies. Nearly all scholars shared a common approach to the text. Texts were analysed text-immanently; the final text or its canonical shape served as the starting-point for any analysis; the unity of the book (or part of it) was a basic assumption; the (one) author and his greatness were a construct that played a vital role in the understanding of the text; the insights of critical scholarship were in most cases not totally rejected, but cautiously used; results endangering the text's unity were especially unacceptable; historical (diachronic) investigation was of some importance, but took a secondary position. Too little attention, however, has also been paid to the history of wisdom theology. Nearly all authors did of course reckon with a development in Israel's wisdom, but no thorough study has been devoted to such a *Theologieggeschichte*. Another field for future study deals with the historical context of wisdom utterances.

Chapter seven

Epilogue

In the previous chapters we have highlighted the main aspects of South African Old Testament scholarship during the past thirty years. Instead of repeating everything we are restricting ourselves to a few brief remarks.

(1) Perhaps there will never again be an era such as the one described in this book. These thirty years may well be described as the flowering of Old Testament scholarship in South Africa. Economic developments and social circumstances created job opportunities which allowed many a young scholar to enter the academic life. These events had, of course, far-reaching consequences for the study of the Old Testament in South Africa. A younger generation now had the opportunity of devoting their lives to a study of the Old Testament. With enthusiasm they set themselves to their task and accomplished much over many years. In the long run they have contributed to the growth and development of an exegetical and theological tradition. Before that time this was impossible. A limited number of theological faculties, to which only a few Old Testament scholars were attached, existed. These lecturers had to teach the whole field of Old Testament study leaving very little time for research and publication. Present-day South African Old Testament scholars must always keep those who carried the burden under difficult circumstances in high esteem. But it was the generation of the sixties, seventies and the eighties who had the privilege of contributing to and enjoying the fine fruits of a flourishing South African science of the Old Testament. South Africa is, however, now standing on the verge of radical and far-reaching social and political change. These events will certainly cause dramatic changes to the university system and the nature of its staff. The possible lowering of standards and the adaptation of courses in order to address the grave social and economic needs of Africa may endanger the good work of the past thirty years. Radical changes may lead to

the lack of a second and a third generation to continue the progress of the past three decades.

(2) Historical criticism has clearly not been accepted or digested by the South African theological establishment or community of scholars. Often it is still viewed with scepticism and as something which must either be rejected or treated with great caution. This unfortunate attitude has also affected the South African society at large. South Africans still view and experience reality as a unity which is inviolable and indissoluble. Because of this view biblical texts are treated in a similar way: a text is a unity and its meaning can easily be determined by the right method. Because we have missed historical criticism the feeling of alienation between text and reader was never experienced. Estrangement resulting from the 'Garstige Grabe' between text and reader has not occurred yet. To a large extent the theological community still operates with a seventeenth-century hermeneutics, allowing it to oscillate unproblematically between ancient text and present-day context.

(3) The events since March 1971 can never be overestimated. A new way of understanding Scripture originated and subsequently developed, which had far-reaching consequences. It must be conceded that the so-called 'immanent' scholars changed the face of Old Testament (and New Testament) science in South Africa. Never would the study of the Old Testament in this country be the same. A new method with a new language came into being and new academic standards were set. Each student who enrolled for courses in Hebrew and the Old Testament was now confronted by a new and scientific method of exegesis which radically shaped his thinking and understanding of the Old Testament. The contribution of these scholars can be summarised as follows:

(i) For the first time in the history of Old Testament science in South Africa, tradition formation took place. An exegetical method was 'discovered', refined and applied with great success to the Old Testament text. This became the dominant method accepted by the majority of Old Testament scholars (especially in the north) and diligently taught to their students. Each scholar was aware of this approach and its compelling nature. And if one wanted to become accepted by the scholarly community he had to 'submit' to this dominant method which has now prevailed in South Africa for more than

two decades.

(ii) Because these scholars only focused on the text in its final form they had an extremely fine grip on it. They highlighted dimensions of the text which were unknown to previous generations. No matter how they are evaluated, their mastery of the text deserves our greatest respect and praise.

(iii) This method was popularised in the sense that it was conveyed to theological students who used it in their ministry. It was, in other words, not merely a scientific approach restricted to academic institutions only. Perhaps the great success of this approach lies in the fact that it stepped beyond the narrow boundaries of the university to become part and parcel of the clergyman's daily ministry. A specific way of reading Scripture was thus established which shaped the young minister's understanding of text and reality.

(iv) Due to this immanent approach's extremely thorough reading of the Old Testament text, more overseas scholars became interested in the work of South Africans. More and more articles were published in international journals and some were invited to contribute to international commentary series. To a large extent it is these scholars who have contributed to a greater recognition of South African Old Testament scholarship by the international community.

(4) Many dangers are, however, also attached to this dominant reading model.

(i) Perhaps the most important is the destruction of man by the heavy structures of the text. To post-modern man, language has become the prevailing model of rationality. And where language dominates, man disappears. This can especially be seen in the a-historical and anti-historical-critical attitude among Old Testament scholars. A historical understanding of Israel as well as the Old Testament text was neither kindled nor developed. And the reason for this must be sought in the dominant model of exegesis: where the interest in man is lost, no great history can be developed. Put differently: history only originates from a love of man and his past.

(ii) Closely related to the previous paragraph is the thought that in many cases the so-called immanent scholars have become so abstract that they have merely become 'text mechanics'. Exegesis was restricted to things within the texts while the world or the life context of the text was neglected.

(iii) In one way or another God has also become 'structuralised', so to speak. He now speaks through the fixed structures of the text. As a result of the immanent reading God became more and more an abstraction from the text and was separated from life.

(5) Some important work has already been done with regard to the social context. Much more must still follow. Perhaps one day a new generation of Old Testament scholars, tired of structures and more interested in life, will give a new impetus to the study of Israel's past. Perhaps they will illuminate more fully the sensitive relationship between humans and their environment, Israel's theology and life, Old Testament text and context. This 'new approach' will, however, never replace the 'old' (immanent) reading of the Old Testament. Due to our proud scholarly and exegetical tradition those interested in the context will always be confronted with the excellent text studies of the immanent scholars. These studies will forever remain the conscience of our South African Old Testament science: they will always serve as a check and as a reminder that the text and nothing but the text must serve as starting-point for any study of the Old Testament, and that thorough text investigation is the mark of a good South African Old Testament scholar. To a certain extent future generations will always have to measure their own work in the light of these studies.

To conclude: the past three decades' work, which is of an exceptionally high standard and importance, has been executed by an enthusiastic generation of Old Testament scholars. Those neglecting this intellectual accomplishment will forever remain theologically poor. Whether this high level of research will be continued depends on us and future generations. Let us therefore pray the following prayer:

יברכך יהוה וישמרך
 יאר יהוה פניו אליך ויחנך
 ישא יהוה פניו אליך וישם לך שלום

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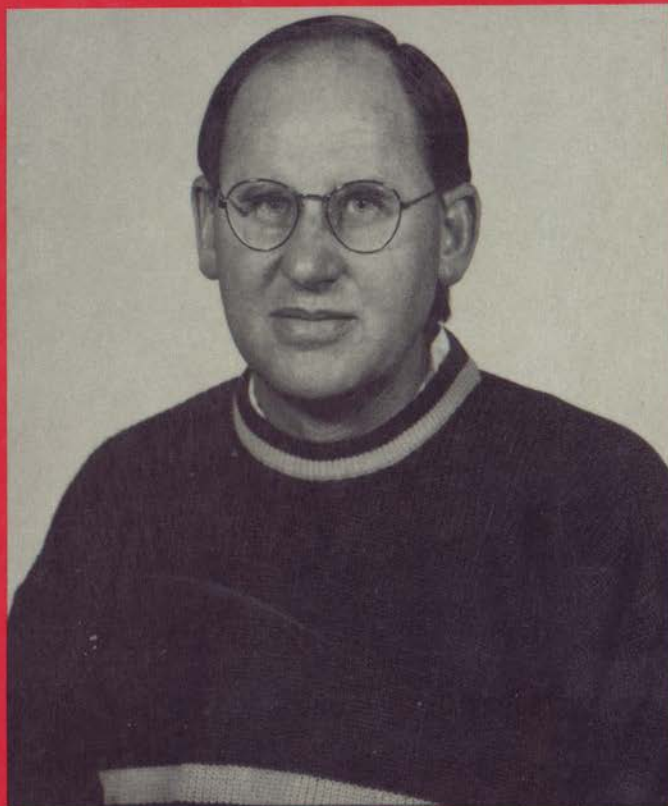
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Jurie le Roux completed his theological training in 1970 at the University of Pretoria. He joined Unisa's Department of Old Testament in 1971 where he became associate professor in 1981 and professor in 1985. Since the beginning of 1987 he is professor in Old Testament at the University of Pretoria. He is also a minister of the Dutch Reformed Church and for the past twenty years he serves as a part-time minister. The author holds a master's degree in sociology as well as doctorates in Church History and Old Testament. He is a member of the Old Testament Society, the New Testament Society and the Society for Church History.

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