

Distinctive African Readings of the Old Testament: A Review of D.T. Adamo’s Publications in *Old Testament Essays* 2003-2020

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ABSTRACT

Professor David Tuesday Adamo has published widely in various journals, and his contribution to Old Testament scholarship in Africa cannot be underestimated. This article focuses on his publications in Old Testament Essays since 2003. Adamo has been one of the loyal African contributors to our journal and is the first black African Old Testament scholar in Africa to be honoured in this way in this journal. Therefore, this article reviews Adamo’s contributions over the years, particularly focusing on the distinctive readings of the Old Testament that he brought to Old Testament Essays through his publications.

KEYWORDS: Adamo, African Readings, Old Testament

A INTRODUCTION

Professor David Tuesday Adamo published his first article in *Old Testament Essays* (*OTE*) in 2003. This places him among the pioneers of “black” African Old Testament scholars who published in *OTE* namely Madipoane Masenya (1991, 1997, 2001, 2002),¹ W. R. Kawale (1994),² Raymond R. Richards

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¹ Madipoane Masenya (Ngwan’a Mphahlele), “In the School of Wisdom: An Interpretation of Some Old Testament Proverbs in a Northern Sotho Context,” *OTE* 4/2 (1991): 171–191; “Redefining Ourselves: A Bosadi (Womanhood) Approach,” *OTE* 10/3 (1997): 439–448; “What Differences Do African Contexts Make for English Bible Translations?” *OTE* 14/2 (2001): 281–96; “‘...But You Shall Let Every Girl Live’: Reading Exodus 1:2-10 the Bosadi (Womanhood) Way,” *OTE* 15/1 (2002): 99–112.

² W.R. Kawale, “Divergent Interpretations of the Relationship between Some Concepts of God in the Old Testament and in African Traditional Religions—A Theological Critique,” *OTE* 8/1 (1995): 7–30.

(1994),³ D. N. Fabian (1998),⁴ Edwin Zulu (1998),⁵ Elelwani Farisani (2002),⁶ Sarojini Nadar (2002)⁷ and Maseyani E. Baloyi (2003).⁸ That article was the beginning of the journey to which Prof Adamo committed himself, as he continued to publish with us over the years. Prof Adamo's publication in *OTE* helped break the colonial boundaries that kept African biblical scholars apart from mainstream biblical scholarship.

Prof Adamo's links with South Africa, however, are not limited to publishing in *OTE*, as he is also a member of the Old Testament Society of South Africa and he has been one of the loyal African scholars who attend the annual conferences and present papers. In addition, he has established links with several South African universities. In 2002, he was a visiting scholar at the University of Pretoria; from 2010 to 2015, he was research fellow at the University of Stellenbosch and from 2009 to date, he has been a research associate with the University of South Africa. In terms of scholarship, Prof Adamo may be regarded as a South African academic citizen given his deep links with South African Old Testament scholarship.

This article is structured as follows. First, I highlight Adamo's publications in *OTE*. Second, I locate him in the context of the developments of Old Testament scholarship in Africa. Third, I reflect on his distinctive application of African biblical hermeneutics and lastly, I present a proposal for an Old Testament Society of Africa or a Society of Biblical Studies in Africa.

B ADAMO'S *OTE* PUBLICATIONS

I take as my starting point retired Prof Adamo's publications in *Old Testament Essays* over the years. He is a well-published scholar, with seven books and nearly a hundred journal articles. He has published the following eleven articles

³ Raymond R. Richards, "National Reconstruction and Literary Creativity in Ezra-Nehemiah: A Black South African Perspective," *OTE* 7/2 (1994): 277–301.

⁴ D. N. Fabian, "The Socio-Religious Role of Witchcraft in the Old Testament Culture: An African Insight," *OTE* 11/2 (1998): 215–239.

⁵ Edwin Zulu, "Reconciliation from an African Perspective: An Alternative View," *OTE* 11/1 (1998): 182–208.

⁶ Elelwani Farisani, "The Ideological Biased Use of Ezra-Nehemiah in a Quest for an African Theology of Reconstruction," *OTE* 15/3 (2002): 628–646.

⁷ Sarojini Nadar, "Gender, Power, Sexuality and Suffering Bodies in the Book of Esther: Reading the Characters of Vashti and Esther for the Purpose of Social Transformation," *OTE* 15/1 (2002): 113–130; Sarojini Nadar, "Re-Reading Job in the Midst of Suffering in the HIV/AIDS Era: How not to Talk about God," *OTE* 16/2 (2003): 343–357.

⁸ Maseyani E. Baloyi, "Where Does the Meaning of a Word/Phrase in a Text Reside—In an Author, Text or a Reader?" *OTE* 16/3 (2003): 573–580.

in *OTE* which reflect his particular interest in African biblical hermeneutics as well as his distinctive approaches to the Old Testament:

1. "The Historical Development of Old Testament Interpretation in Africa." *Old Testament Essays* 16/1 (2003): 9–33.
2. "The African Wife of Abraham (Gn 16:1–16; 21:8–21)." *Old Testament Essays* 18/3 (2005): 455–471.
3. "Reading Psalm 109 in African Christianity." *Old Testament Essays* 21/3 (2008): 575–592.
4. "Teaching the History of Ancient Israel from an African Perspective: The Invasion of Sennacherib of 701 B.C.E. as an Example." *Old Testament Essays* 23/3 (2010): 473–501.
5. "The Deuteronomist(s)' Interpretation of Exilic Suffering in an African Perspective", *Old Testament Essays (OTE)* 23/1 (2010): 9–27.
6. "Decolonizing Psalm 91 in an African Perspective with Special Reference to the Culture of the Yoruba People of Nigeria." *Old Testament Essays* 25/1 (2012): 9–26.
7. "The Nameless African Wife of Potiphar and Her Contribution to Ancient Israel." *Old Testament Essays* 26/2 (2013): 221–246.
8. "The Poor in the Book of Psalms and in Yoruba Tradition." *Old Testament Essays* 27/3 (2014): 797–815.
9. "The Task and Distinctiveness of African Biblical Hermeneutic(s)." *Old Testament Essays* 28/1 (2015): 31–52.
10. "The Extent to which OTSSA Journal (*OTE*) Reflects the Indigenous African Culture and Tradition from 2001–2016." *Old Testament Essays* 31/1 (2018): 42–65.
11. "Reading Psalm 35 in African (Yoruba) Perspective." *Old Testament Essays* 32/3 (2019): 936–955.
12. "The Unheard Voices in the Hebrew Bible: The Nameless and Silent Wife of Jeroboam (1 Kgs 14:1–18)." *Old Testament Essays* 33/3 (2020): 393–407.

Prior to 2003, Adamo had already attracted the attention of some Old Testament scholars. In 1998, Høyland published an article in *OTE* reflecting on Adamo's hermeneutics, particularly his interpretation of the Old Testament passages which refer to Cush.⁹ It was the distinctiveness of his approach that attracted the attention of others.

At the time Adamo published his first article with *OTE* in 2003, there was a significant shift within the South African context as *OTE*, which was primarily an outlet for the publications of white Old Testament scholars and their counterparts in Europe and America, gradually began to accommodate

⁹ Marta Høyland, "An African Presence in the Old Testament? David Tuesday Adamo's Interpretation of the Old Testament Cush Passages," *OTE* 11 (1998): 50–58.

publications by black African scholars in South Africa and other African countries. Deist's call for *O TE* to become contextual and relevant was to find new meaning through the accommodation of publications from scholars such as Adamo, who did not shy away from putting Africa and Africans at the centre of their scriptural enquiry.¹⁰

C LOCATING ADAMO WITHIN OLD TESTAMENT SCHOLARSHIP IN AFRICA

In Holter's timeframe of Old Testament scholarship in Africa, the first generation covers the period 1967–2000:

The 1960s and 70s, on the one hand, deserve the label "background", because the various attempts at establishing Old Testament studies in Africa in this period were quite sporadic. The 1980s and 90s, on the other hand, deserve the label "breakthrough", because this period more systematically developed infrastructural and hermeneutical contexts for an Africanisation of Old Testament studies.¹¹

Prof Adamo as a scholar emerges within what may be termed the second generation of Old Testament scholarship in Africa, which would roughly correspond with Holter's "breakthrough" period. However, others such as Adamo and Ukpong tend to regard this period as spanning from the 1970s to the 1990s.¹² Ukpong's periodisation is as follows:

Phase I (1930s–70s): reactive and apologetic, focused on legitimizing African religion and culture, dominated by the comparative method.

¹⁰ See Ferdinand Deist, "South African Old Testament Studies and the Future," *O TE* 5/3 (1992): 314–15. This article was again published under the same title in *O TE* 7/4 (1994): 35–51.

¹¹ See Knut Holter, "The First Generation of African Old Testament Scholars: The Geographical Hermeneutics of Their Academic Training," *Bulletin for Old Testament Studies in Africa* 17 (2004): 2–18; "The First Generation of African Old Testament Scholars: African Concerns and Western Influence," in *African Identities and World Christianity in the Twentieth Century* (ed. Klaus Koschorke; Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 2005), 149–164; *Old Testament Research for Africa: A Critical Analysis and Annotated Bibliography of African Old Testament Dissertations, 1967–2000* (New York: Peter Lang, 2002), 12.

¹² David Tuesday Adamo, "The Historical Development of Old Testament Interpretation in Africa," *O TE* 16/1 (2003): 9–33; for a broader focus than just Old Testament, see Justin S. Ukpong, "Development in Biblical Interpretation in Africa: Historical and Hermeneutical Directions," in *The Bible in Africa: Transactions, Trajectories and Trends* (ed. G. O. West and M. W. Dube; Leiden: Brill, 2000), 11–28.

Phase II (1970s–90s): reactive-proactive, use of African context as resource for biblical interpretation, dominated by inculturation evaluation method and liberation hermeneutics (black theology).

Phase III (1990s): proactive, recognition of the ordinary reader, African context as subject of biblical interpretation, dominated by liberation and inculturation methodologies.¹³

As characteristic of many during this period, Adamo turned to the West to pursue his further education. He attained a Master of Theology at Southern Methodist University, a Doctor of Religion at Indiana Christian University and a Doctor of Philosophy at Baylor University.

Of concern in Old Testament scholarship in the early phase was not just that African scholars were trained in Western institutions but that the scholarship that was produced did not address African realities.¹⁴ However, while Adamo attained his postgraduate degrees at Western institutions, his PhD research was particularly focused on Africa was titled, "The Place of Africa and Africans in the Old Testament and Its Environment" (1986).¹⁵ The focus on Africa and Africans in the Bible remained a constant feature of Adamo's scholarship. This hermeneutical focus is best summed up in his own words:

First, Africa and Africans have made a significant contribution to the religious life and the civilization of the ancient Near East, and particularly ancient Israel... Second, the important place occupied by Africa and Africans in the Old Testament and its environment is also evident in the in their political and military influence throughout the ancient Near East and Israel in particular... Third, Africa and Africans played some significant role in the economic life of the ancient Near East and Israel in particular... Fourth, it is remarkable that of all the nations and peoples known to the children of Israel, African and African are among the very few nations and peoples mentioned as representatives of far away nations... Fifth, the realistic fact that Africa

¹³ Ukpong, "Development in Biblical Interpretation," 12.

¹⁴ See John Mbiti, "Theological Impotence and the Universality of the Church," in *Third World Theologies* (Mission Trends 3; ed. G. Anderson and T. Stransky; New York: Paulist, 1976), 6–8; S.O. Abogunrin, "Biblical Research in Africa: The Task Ahead," *African Journal of Biblical Studies* 1/1 (1986): 13; Justin S. Ukpong, "Rereading the Bible with African Eyes," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 91 (1995): 3–14. For a comprehensive analysis of Old Testament Scholarship in Africa, see Holter, *Old Testament Research for Africa*; Grant LeMarquand, "A Bibliography of the Bible in Africa: A Preliminary Publication," *Bulletin for Contextual Theology in Southern Africa and Africa* 2/2 (1995): 6–40.

¹⁵ Adamo's PhD dissertation was later published as *Africa and Africans in the Old Testament* (San Francisco: Christian University Press, 1998; reprinted, Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2001).

and Africans hold an important place in almost every aspect of the life of the ancient Israelites if further demonstrated by the fact that Africa and African are frequently mentioned in virtually every strand of Old Testament Literature.¹⁶

In his latest publication in *Old Testament Essays*, Adamo, following the Septuagint, identifies the nameless and silent wife of Jeroboam in 1 Kgs 14:1–18 as Ano, one of the daughters of Pharaoh.¹⁷ This naming of Jeroboam’s nameless wife resonates with his concern to project the contribution of Africans to ancient Israel.

D AFRICAN BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS AND ADAMO’S SIGNATURE APPROACHES

Professor Adamo has been one of the key proponents of African biblical hermeneutics over the years. In his article, “What Is African Biblical Hermeneutics?,” he describes African Biblical Hermeneutics as his obsession that emerged when he was a visiting professor at the University of Edinburgh.¹⁸ Adamo uses several terms to define the task of interpreting the Bible in the African context—African biblical hermeneutics, African biblical transformational hermeneutics, African cultural hermeneutics, African biblical studies, African contextual studies. Thus, his understanding of African biblical hermeneutics (ABH) has several dimensions to it.¹⁹

First, it is a hermeneutical practice by Africans. For Adamo, any true practitioner of African hermeneutics must be an insider; the “interpreter must either be an African or live and experience all aspects of African life in order to perfect the work of African transformational hermeneutics.”²⁰ However, Adamo would later broaden his concept of being an African to embrace not only those living on the African continent but also descendants of Africans scattered around the world and those who embrace African culture, religion and traditions.²¹

¹⁶ Adamo, *Africa and Africans in the Old Testament*, 165–168.

¹⁷ David T. Adamo, “The Unheard Voices in the Hebrew Bible: The Nameless and Silent Wife of Jeroboam (1 Kgs 14:1-18),” *OTE* 33/3 (2020): 393–407.

¹⁸ Adamo, “What Is African Biblical Hermeneutics?” 59.

¹⁹ For recent reflections on Adamo’s approaches, see Peter O.O. Ottuh and Moses Idemudia, “Navigating Trajectories in African Biblical Studies: D.T. Adamo and the Future of African Cultural Hermeneutics,” *Ianna Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies* 2/1 (2020): 55–64; Madipoane M. Masenya (Ngwan’a Mphahlele), “Professor David Tuesday Adamo’s Biblical Scholarship on Women: Reflections from an African-South African Mosadi,” *OTE* 33/2 (2020): 348–362.

²⁰ Adamo, “What Is African Biblical Hermeneutics?” 69.

²¹ David T. Adamo, “The Task and Distinctiveness of African Biblical Hermeneutic(s),” *OTE* 28/1(2015): 32, DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.17159/2312-3621/2015/v28n1a4>.

Second, it is transformational in that it has as its goal the transformation of Africa. The transformative goal implies that the African hermeneut desires to see change happening within the African context, as poverty is overcome and any other form of oppression is broken including the colonial matrix of power which has continued after the political demise of colonialism.

Third, it is contextual in the sense that it takes the African social-cultural context as essential to an interpretation of the Bible. Thus, things such as African philosophy, worldview, cultures and experiences are viewed as key in interpreting the biblical texts.

Fourth, it is a form of resistance in that it seeks to dismantle Euro-Western hegemony in biblical scholarship by both distancing itself from Euro-Western hermeneutics and promoting African identity and culture.²² In this resistance, African biblical hermeneuts can still learn and draw from their Euro-Western counterparts but they differ from the latter by seeking to read and apply the Scriptures in a way that is relevant to the African context.

In terms of his own application of ABH, Adamo's work is not monolithic. From the articles published in *Old Testament Essays*, we can discern at least two different approaches to the biblical texts.

Adamo's greatest contributions pertain to his first approach, his study of Africa and Africans in the Old Testament. For Adamo, the participation of Africa and Africans in the Old Testament story and the redemptive story highlight the importance and influence of Africa and Africans. For Adamo, the Bible does not come as the *Other* in the African continent and he therefore reclaims the Bible as an African document that should not be associated simply with the Jews or Westerners but Africans when reading the Bible have to see themselves in the biblical story and thus take the biblical story as their story too. Adamo states regarding the Israelites:

One can say with great confidence that the people referred to as ancient Israelites were also Africans. That is why they are called African or Israelite because by the time they left Egypt or Africa after 430 years, having eaten African food, worn African clothes, danced African dances, spoken the African language, and immersed in African culture, it will be unrealistic for any scholar to deny the fact that they were African-Israelites.²³

In three of his contributions to *OTE*, Adamo's focus is on wives—the African wife of Abraham, the African wife of Potiphar and the African wife of Jeroboam. There are other essays in which Adamo focuses on African wives—the wife of

²² Adamo, "The Task and Distinctiveness," 35.

²³ Adamo, "African Biblical Hermeneutics," 8.

Moses,²⁴ the wife of Joseph²⁵ and the wife of Solomon.²⁶ Masenya in her recent contribution to *OTE* examines closely Adamo's "African biblical women" or, to follow Adamo's titles, "African wives." Adamo, with his focus on wives, does not draw attention to African women who are not attached to men through marriage or whose humanity is not defined through male characters. Masenya concludes that "gender as a concept does not feature in Adamo's scholarship on women. Instead in his commitment to argue about the presence of Africa and Africans in the Old Testament, Adamo has focused on what he has called African biblical women."²⁷ While certain biblical characters such as some women or wives are identified as African, Adamo would also identify the ancient Israelites as Africans.²⁸

This view of Africa and Africans in the Old Testament is a text-centred approach with a two-fold aim. On the one hand, it aims to reclaim the Bible as an African document by pointing out the historical links between Africans and the Israelites/Jews, by identifying Africa or African locations and the role the locations play in the biblical story as well as by identifying Africans and their roles in the biblical story. On the other hand, it is to correct the skewed Euro-Western readings of the biblical story, which deliberately minimised and marginalised Africa and Africans.²⁹ As Adamo argues,

... the assumption prevails that the ancient world in Africa was limited to Egypt and that sub-Sahara Africa had no historic past before the Portuguese colonization. The aforementioned assumptions about Africa have affected the attitudes of not only historians, but also theologians in their examination of the Bible and Africa and Africans, to the extent that they have produced a doctrine of inferiority of black people all over the world.³⁰

In so doing, Adamo seeks to affirm African humanity and dignity in the face of the colonial mentality which disparaged Africa and Africans. Furthermore, it

²⁴ David T. Adamo, "The African Wife of Moses: An Examination of Numbers 12:1-9," *ATJ* 8/3 (1989): 230-237.

²⁵ David T. Adamo, "The African Wife of Joseph: Asenath (Gn 41:45, 41:50, 46:20)," *JSem* (2013): 409-229.

²⁶ David T. Adamo, "The African Wife of Solomon (1 Kings 3:1; 9:16; 7:8; 11:1)," *JSem* 23/1 (2014): 1-20.

²⁷ Masenya, "Adamo's Biblical Scholarship," 361.

²⁸ David T. Adamo, "African Biblical Studies: Illusions, Realities and Challenges," *In die Skriflig/In Luce Verbi* 50/1 (2016): 1-10, a1972. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/ids.v50i1.1972>; see also his "A Mixed Multitude: An African Reading of Exodus 12:38," in *Exodus and Deuteronomy* (ed. G. Yee and A. Brenner; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012), 67.

²⁹ Adamo, "Historical Development," 19-20.

³⁰ Adamo, *Africa and Africans in the Old Testament*, 1.

necessitates the decolonisation of biblical scholarship by appreciating anew the historical links between Africa and ancient Israel.³¹

His second approach is to read the Psalms culturally and as a source of power. Four of Adamo's contributions to *OTE* are focused on the book of Psalms. In his reading of the Psalms, his focus is either on African cultural hermeneutics or on the use of the Psalms or the Psalter as a source of power within African communities and African indigenous churches.

In African cultural hermeneutics, Adamo's focus is on culture as a subject of interpretation, which implies that he reads the biblical text through the lens of the African worldview, culture and experience. In most of his writings which utilise this approach, the Yoruba culture is the subject of interpretation. Therefore, from this perspective, Adamo interprets the text as an insider to culture.

In reading the Psalms as a source of power, Adamo's focus is on how the Psalter is used in the church, particularly the African independent churches. The use of the Psalter as a source of power stems from his belief that the Bible is the Word of God which has inherent power to heal, protect and bring success in life:

It is certain that the culture of the ANE makes one believe that the words of the Psalter were memorised and recited not for fun or aesthetic or scholarly purposes, but for the faith behind the recitation or singing or chanting of the Psalms, with the expectation that they would achieve a desired effect. In ancient Israel, those words were *potent* and *performative* words that sought to invoke a particular result. Like the ancient Israelites, who were the original authors of the Psalter, many African biblical scholars see the Psalter as divine, potent and performative. They can be used to protect one from enemies; they can heal diseases and bring about success.³²

For Adamo, engaging in ABH is a process of blackening the Bible, which is achieved through an Afrocentric approach that "places Africa and Africans at the centre of the biblical world and our biblical interpretation."³³ The blackening of the Bible is a task of not only (black) Africans but also Africans living in diaspora and of any other interested parties willing to engage the biblical text based on the concern of Africa and Africans. As I have cautioned elsewhere, being black or African does not automatically imply that one is interpreting or reading the Bible from a position of epistemic difference.³⁴ The blackening of the Bible is a

³¹ *Ibid.*, 165.

³² Adamo, "The Task and Distinctiveness."

³³ Adamo, "African Biblical Studies," 8.

³⁴ Hulisani Ramantswana, "Decolonising Biblical Hermeneutics in the (South) African Context," *Acta Theologica Supplement* 24 (2016): 178–203, DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/actat.v36i1.11S>.

task that goes beyond just identifying oneself as black or African and beyond social location. It is an act of resistance against hermeneutical practices which marginalise Africa and Africans. The blackening of the Bible is thus a decolonial option that places the agenda of the oppressed at the centre as a way of realising their humanity in its fullness.

E INCOMPLETE DECOLONIAL PROJECT—ENVISIONING AFRICAN OLD TESTAMENT SOCIETY OR AFRICAN BIBLICAL STUDIES SOCIETY

Old Testament scholarship—or, even more broadly, African biblical studies in Africa—has evolved over the years. In his article “Decolonizing the Teaching of the Old Testament in Africa,” Adamo proposes some of the ways in which African Old Testament scholars may decolonise the teaching of the Old Testament:³⁵

- a) Planning a curriculum that reflects African perspectives, which pays attention to the following: Africa and Africans in the Old Testament, the history of ancient Israel from an African perspective, an introduction to the Old Testament from an African perspective, and African cultural hermeneutics;
- b) Teaching the Old Testament from African culture and religion;
- c) Writing textbooks that reflect African perspectives;
- d) Comparative study of African and Old Testament culture and religions.

What Adamo has proposed are tasks that cannot be regarded as concluded; rather, scholars must continually reflect on them and thrive to embrace them in their teaching of the Old Testament. The noble tasks proposed by Adamo also must be supplemented by strong collaborative efforts by African biblical scholars in the light of the marginalisation of African scholarship at the global level. As Mbuvi also highlights, African biblical scholarship continues to suffer from the Western bias, racism, colonialism and imperial tendencies evident in the failure to recognise African scholarly contributions:³⁶

Most works by African biblical scholars have been confined largely to the SBL’s experimental journals (*Semeia*), European journals (*JSNT*, *BOTSA*, *NovT*, *VT*, *Exchange*), African journals (*AJET*, *AJBS*, *JABS*, *JAT*, *JTSA*, *Neot*, *OTE*, *Verb. et Eccl.*, *Scriptura*), Asian journals (*ATA*,

³⁵ David T. Adamo, “Decolonizing the Teaching of the Old Testament in Africa,” *BOTSA* 19 (2005): 3–5.

³⁶ Andrew M. Mbuvi, “African Biblical Studies: An Introduction to an Emerging Discipline,” *Currents in Biblical Studies* 15/2 (2017), DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1476993X16648813>.

AJT), and essays in volumes (e.g., Dube 2001; Dube, Mbuvi and Mbuwayesango 2012).³⁷

While it is essential that African biblical scholarship be recognised as valuable in the international arena, it is more important for biblical scholarship in Africa to gravitate towards unity. African Old Testament or biblical scholars hardly come together on the African continent. African (black) scholars meet their fellows only when attending conferences outside of Africa in Europe and the United States. While the Old Testament Society of South Africa does have members across Africa, only a few are able to attend the annual meetings in South Africa. As (black) African biblical scholars, we are for the most part still operating within the confines of colonial boundaries. It is time that African biblical scholars across countries and the scholarly societies operating therein started seeing each other and recognising each other.

Twenty years ago, when Holter recognised the need for a pan-African and non-denominational organisation for biblical scholarship in Africa, he reasoned that rather than establish a new organisation, it might be better to simply establish informal networking of existing regional and denominational organisations.³⁸ Since then, the conditions of Africa have improved through technological advancements and a better transport network. The global pandemic, COVID-19, from which is emerging the new normal of connecting and networking with each other technologically, has made the ground fertile for an establishment of such a new organisation. We simply cannot rely on global organisations such as the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) to facilitate networking initiatives in Africa. I have attended several SBL meetings and presented at the African Biblical Hermeneutics Group. The harsh reality is that we travel all the way to the USA to network as “black” Africans with hardly any others attending our meetings—we are the accommodated *Other* in that organisation. While we appreciate that the SBL plans to have its International Meeting in South Africa in 2023 (3–7 July at the University of Pretoria), such should motivate us to set the bar high for ourselves to envision new possibilities for African scholarship. It is time that we as Africans took ownership of our scholarship and work towards building a reputable organisation for biblical scholarship in Africa which is not bound by the colonial boundaries which aimed to weaken us and condemn us to perpetual reliance on others outside of Africa.

Scholarly societies in Africa such as the Old Testament Society of South Africa, the Society of Near Eastern Studies (South Africa), the New Testament Society of South Africa, the Association for the Study of the Septuagint in South Africa, the Ghana Association of Biblical Exegetes, the Pan-African Association of Catholic Exegetes (PACE), the African Society of Evangelical Theology

³⁷ Mbuvi, “African Biblical Studies,” 156.

³⁸ Knut Holter, “Is There a Need for a Pan-African Non-denominational Organisation for Biblical Scholarship?” *BOTSA* 8 (2000): 13.

(Kenya), the Nigerian Association for Biblical Studies, the Association for Biblical Scholarship in Eastern Africa and other denominational organisations must start recognising one another’s presence. Kwame Nkrumah’s vision for a united Africa does not simply have to be reflected in trade agreements or such institutions as the African Union. We should move beyond talk and start working towards an Old Testament Society of Africa or perhaps more broadly, the Biblical Studies Society in Africa.³⁹

There are several other benefits which are likely to emerge from the flow of such a pan-African organisation: a) an accelerated knowledge exchange on the African continent; b) accelerated collaborative efforts among African biblical scholars, institutions and religious bodies; c) recognition of excellence in African biblical scholarship; d) promotion of African-oriented publications to serve the scholarly and religious communities; e) fostering of projects that promote African scholarship in Africa and across the globe. Such an organisation will promote the creation of African knowledge for the benefit of Africa and humanity in general. In my view, the more we can work together at a continental level, the more will be the visibility and dissemination of African knowledge beyond the confines of our states.

F CONCLUSION

In their separate reviews of *Old Testament Essays* publications, Masenya and Ramantswana as well as Adamo raised concern that the reviewed publications reflected mainly Euro-Western paradigms.⁴⁰ It has been the contributions of scholars such as Adamo and others which have rocked *OTE* from within and pushed it to be a journal that reflects Africa and showcases African knowledge production. It is our hope therefore that this journal will reflect more and more something new under the sun of African Old Testament scholarship.

³⁹ See also Hulisani Ramantswana, “Past the Glorious Age: Old Testament Scholarship in South Africa—Are We Moving Anywhere Close to Blackening Old Testament Scholarship?” *Scriptura* 11/3 (2020): 1–19, DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.7833/119-3-1769>.

⁴⁰ Madipoane Masenya (Ngwan’a Mphahlele) and Hulisani Ramantswana, “Anything New under the Sun of South African Old Testament Scholarship? African Qoheleth’s Review of *OTE* 1994–2010,” *OTE* 25/3 (2012): 598–637; David T. Adamo, “The Extent to which OTSSA Journal (*OTE*) Reflects the Indigenous African Culture and Tradition from 2001–2016,” *OTE* 31/1 (2018): 42–65.

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