
The Society for Old Testament Study

BULLETIN

2008

83rd WINTER MEETING
2nd–4th January 2008
University of Chester
Professor John Barton presiding

Professor John Barton (Oxford)

Presidential Address: Prophecy and Theodicy

One of the major concerns of the classical prophets was to show that the disasters they foretold for Israel were morally justified by the sins of the nation. This means that they had a primary concern with what would now be called theodicy, with demonstrating (in the words of Lamentations 1:8) that ‘the LORD is righteous’. But the histories are also written with this aim, as are many of the Psalms, and even some of the priestly legislation, if Mary Douglas is correct. The importance of theodicy in the wisdom tradition is widely acknowledged. Thus theodicy might be a candidate for the position of the *Mitte* of the Old Testament, which has been much discussed in works on Old Testament theology. At the same time as providing a satisfying account of what holds the Old Testament together, however, this hypothesis creates problems for the modern reader, for whom history and human life in general do not seem to be adequately accounted for in terms of divine reaction to human action: the world does not appear to most of us to manifest moral regularity. So we are left with a problem in assimilating the Old Testament’s message, while still being able to see it as resting on profound thinking about human life.

Professor David Clines (Sheffield)

Psalms 23 and Method

The interpretation of the psalm was approached through the use of seven different literary hermeneutical methodologies available today,

viz. rhetorical criticism, deconstruction, gender criticism, materialist criticism, postcolonial criticism, psychoanalytic criticism, and inter-textual criticism. It was argued, among other things, that the image throughout the poem is consistently that of a sheep and a shepherd, that the ultimate fate of the sheep deconstructs the underlying oppositions in the poem between life and death, and that the sheep is feminized and infantilized and a victim of solipsism, as well as representing the situation of a postcolonial people.

Dr Helen Kraus (Oxford)

The Story of Andrew and Zoë: Gender Issues in the Septuagint Translation of Genesis 1–4

The problems of Bible translation formed the topic of this paper, which took as its example gender issues in the Septuagint version of Genesis 2:7–4:1. It compared Hebrew and Greek semantic domains, examined specific renderings and asked what cultural influences may have been at work. Looking at linguistic links (such as that of Hebrew humanity with the earth), it attempted to identify what has been ‘lost in translation’, but also what has been ‘gained’. Further examples of ‘losses’ are the heat of the breath of God (2:7), the possibly divine aspect of the ‘helper’ (2:18), the architectural detail of the creation of woman (2:21), the association of nakedness with knowledge (2:25; 3:1), and the suggestion of eroticism in the wife’s relationship with her husband (3:16). ‘Gains’ seem to come about from the translators’ decision, often where Hebrew semantic domains are extensive; for example, God’s method of anaesthesia inducing ‘ecstasy’ rather than sleep (2:21), the ‘carnal’ aspect of flesh (2:23–24), stressing the physical process of childbirth (3:16a), and the woman turning to her husband as Lord (3:16b). The paper did not imply that the Septuagint translators sought to give new meaning to the text — quite the contrary — but urged an awareness of cultural resonances.

Dr Hywel Clifford (Oxford)

The Sense and Significance of Isaiah 43:10bβ

The interpretation of Isaiah 43:10bβ has varied according to the characteristic interests of its readers. The Arian claim that the sentence contradicts the temporal connotations of father and son was refuted in early Christian orthodoxy by assertions of the Son’s co-eternal unity with the Father (e.g. Quodvultdeus). Medieval rabbis similarly deflected the unwanted literalistic inferences that God is not eternal or that there might have been another creator god by responding that God alone is the eternal creator (e.g. Kimchi). Most moderns read the sentence as a prophetic polemic against Babylonian theogony (*Enuma Elish* 1.9ff.), that Yahweh has no parents or offspring, given the widely accepted exilic context of Isaiah 40–55 (e.g. Stummer). Since

these three very different readings all treat the sentence in isolation, an integrative interpretation was therefore proposed: (1) its language recalls the famous idol polemic within Deutero-Isaiah (esp. 44:10); (2) while it echoes ‘first’ and ‘last’ (41:4; 44:6; 48:12), the sentence’s rhetorical accent, as a negative counterpart to the positive ‘I am He’ (cf. 43:11-13), is rather more exclusionary and personal (i.e. ‘before *me*’, cf. ‘besides *me*’); and (3) its purpose, as with the pericope, is to provoke Israel to believe in Yahweh alone as active in national history. The distinction between sense and significance allows for both this interpretation (history) and the others (Christology, creation, theogony), provided that their different approaches, the literary and the atomistic, are borne in mind.

Dr David Firth (Calver)

*David and Uriah (with occasional appearances by Uriah’s wife):
Re-reading 2 Samuel 11*

Drawing on Gerard Genette’s theory of narration, the paper explored the ways in which information relevant to the interpretation of the events described in 2 Samuel 11 is progressively disclosed through the balance of 2 Samuel 12–20 so that subsequent disclosures force a re-reading of chapter 11 in terms of plot and purpose. Attention to these details, as well as the dynamics of the plot itself, indicate that rather than being a case of sin and attempted cover-up the whole of the chapter records a sustained attack by David on a perceived rival.

Dr Elizabeth Hayes (Bothell)

From Lowth to Kugel and Beyond: A Cognitive Linguistics Approach to Conceptual Categories and Biblical Hebrew Parallelism

Recent cognitive linguistics research offers a fresh paradigm for re-visiting Robert Lowth’s *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews* in order to reassess his categories from a conceptual perspective. This paper argued that Lowth’s tri-partite method of categorization is supported by a cognitive linguistics analysis. The cognitive linguistics approach used in this paper claims that categorization is fundamental for human reasoning and that prototype theory offers a fresh way to assess the criteria for analysing and describing Biblical Hebrew parallelism. Because this is the case, we can see that both Lowth’s original categorization of Biblical Hebrew parallelism and James Kugel’s recent response — there is one kind or a hundred, but not three — have each captured certain aspects of this fundamental cognitive process. While Lowth first notices two distinct categories, and then discovers a plethora of examples that fit neither, Kugel notes the overarching nature of the ‘neither’ category, and argues that all examples are actually members of that category. Furthermore, Kugel insists that the parallel lines are processed sequentially and that the B line in some way enriches the A line. Additionally, Conceptual Blending Theory

offers a unique resource for analysing and describing the complexities of parallel line forms, thus opening the way for further research.

Dr Trevor Dennis (Chester)

Unravelling the Mytheme of the Two Sons: Returning to Genesis from the Lukan Parable of the Father and the Two Lost Sons

The early chapters of Genesis establish a pattern in the imagining of God that is crucial for the development of the theologies of the whole Bible and that remains its dominant orthodoxy. In the story of Cain and Abel God accepts the younger brother and rejects the older, and the theme of God's favouritism towards a younger son is played out further in the stories of Ishmael and Isaac, Esau and Jacob, and Joseph and his older brothers. That favouritism would seem to be driving events, although Sarah, Rebekah and Jacob, and their feelings also have their part to play. The Lukan Parable of the Father and the Two Lost Sons (commonly known as the Parable of the Prodigal Son) seems to follow the mytheme of the two sons to an outrageous degree. However, the punch-line comes not in the middle, but at the very end, in the words of the father addressed to the elder son: 'Child, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours' (15.31). As Bernard Brandon Scott has made plain, at that point the mytheme of the two sons is effectively unravelled and its strands are left to blow away in the wind. The parable would have us perform some radical reworking of the tales of Genesis that weave the mytheme, and of their theology. The New Testament writers did not succeed in rising to that challenge, and even Luke himself did not quite come to terms with the parable's vision. The theology of a God who accepts one at the expense of another was too deeply entrenched, as indeed it still is in the contemporary Christian Church.

Professor Susan Ackerman (Dartmouth)

Women and Music in Ancient Israel

Women took responsibility for many kinds of musical performance in ancient Israel. This paper considered specifically women's roles as ritual musicians and more specifically still explored three arenas of women's ritual music-making in pre-exilic Israel: (1) women as ritual music-makers in conjunction with various life-cycle rituals (funerary rituals, young women's coming-of-age rituals, and, perhaps, marital rituals); (2) women as ritual music-makers upon the occasion of the celebration of the autumn festival of the ingathering, or Succoth; and (3) women as ritual music-makers who celebrate the victories of the Israelite god Yahweh in holy war. In the exilic and post-exilic period, however, women's responsibilities as ritual musicians seem to erode considerably; several exilic-era Isaianic texts, for example, divorce women from their traditional role as heralds who sing out the news of Yahweh's victories in holy war. The paper suggested that this dimin-

ution of women's music-making responsibilities is the result of certain levitical clans' assuming of the role of professional cultic musicians within, at least, post-exilic Jerusalem and its temple.

Dr Paul Joyce (Oxford)

The Prophets and Psychological Interpretation

This paper illustrated psychological issues 'behind the text' (by reference to the long debate over the mental health of Ezekiel), 'in the text' (verses including Ezekiel 18:19; 23:34; Amos 5:18; 6:3) and 'in front of the text' (the psychology and personality types of readers and interpreters). It reviewed questions of method in interdisciplinary work, and then reflected on the relationship between psychological biblical interpretation and 'mainstream' Old Testament study. Far from being a recent, 'trendy' development, psychological interpretation has antecedents in pre-modern theologians such as Augustine and Ignatius Loyola; moreover, in the modern period historical criticism flourished in the very era in which Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) was doing his groundbreaking work. Among shared features noted were the quest for aetiology and the application of a 'hermeneutic of suspicion'. There has been a steady succession of contributions to psychological interpretation of the Bible (including in the postmodern context), and yet such work deserves more attention. The paper closed with a call for the integration of historical and other critical questions within psychological interpretation, and for a pluralist approach that rejects all forms of reductionism.

Dr Andrew Mein (Cambridge)

Ezekiel 16 in Christian Interpretation

For many contemporary readers the treatment of women in the book of Ezekiel has proved the most problematic aspect of a highly problematic prophet. In recent years the prophet's extravagant use of sexual metaphor has come under considerable scrutiny, but little work has been done on the history of these texts' reception. This paper therefore examined the interpretation of Ezekiel 16 in four commentators from the patristic and early modern periods: Origen, Jerome, Calvin, and William Greenhill. All four repeat or re-imagine Ezekiel's polemic so that it is relevant to their own age. For Origen and Jerome, an allegorical understanding of idolatry aligns it with heresy, while for Calvin and Greenhill idolatry itself is the danger to avoid. As they replay the images of the text to meet their own crises, it is no surprise that they also reinforce the basic hierarchical view of gender relations that is implicit in the text. An important respect in which they differ from one another is the degree to which they choose to make female sexuality an explicit focus of their interpretation, with Calvin in particular exploiting the text's potential to describe the perceived faults of real women.

84th SUMMER MEETING
21st–24th July 2008
Wadham College, University of Oxford

Professor Friedemann Golka (Oldenburg)

Moses — the Bible, Thomas Mann, Michelangelo, and Jan Assmann

After finishing *Joseph and his Brothers*, Thomas Mann was required to write an introduction to a book by famous authors on the Ten Commandments. The book had a clearly political purpose in opposing the devaluation of all human ethical standards by the Nazis. Finally Thomas Mann's contribution appeared separately as *The Tables of the Law*. He regards the Jewish Decalogue as the foundation of a universal ethos, the ABC of human decency which the Nazis had rejected. Mann's Moses is clearly a lawgiver, as such an artist, a sculptor like Michelangelo, working on his unwilling people like a sculptor on resisting stone. This re-opens the question of the biblical Moses. Martin Noth had left him with a shortened Egyptian name, a foreign wife, and an unknown grave. Thus Noth had led research on Moses into a blind alley. More useful was the work of the ancient historian Eduard Meyer and the form-critic Hugo Gressmann to which one may go back. But ultimately the question of which Moses traditions are historically *genuine* or *non-genuine* is not very helpful. Jan Assmann in his *Moses the Egyptian* applies *mnemo-history* as part of the historical method to the *extra-biblical* Moses tradition. The present paper presupposed the application of this method to the *biblical* tradition. The question then had to be: Which groups in Israel and in Judaism respectively derived their authority from Moses by writing themselves into the Pentateuchal tradition? Who were the carriers of the tradition of Moses as leader, judge, prophet, priest, lawgiver etc.? This is an historical question, though not relating to the 13th century, but to late pre-exilic and early post-exilic centuries.

Professor Joachim Schaper (Aberdeen)

Presence in the Abstract: 'Grammatological Iconoclasm' in Ancient Israel

The Old Testament bears witness to the human desire to experience the presence of the divine. Many biblical passages make it abundantly clear that the God of Israel was thought, at least by some representatives of the tradition, to be physically present in temples, especially in the Jerusalem temple, and some texts of that tradition envisage the God of Israel as being present in cult statues. The paper dealt with some of the passages in question, e.g. Judges 17–19. It then explored

why Deuteronomy 4 turns so vehemently against this tradition of thinking about the presence of the Lord. The Hebrew Bible contains several concepts of divine presence, and it seems to be the case that there is something like a development from an archaic yet complex concept of a physical divine indwelling in the human world to more and more refined, more and more abstract concepts of presence. The rising importance of writing from the seventh century BC onwards seems to have played a decisive role here and seems to have had a special impact on texts like Deuteronomy 4. It laid the groundwork for a form of religious practice that became more and more text-centred and concentrated less and less on the divine presence in the temple cult.

Professor Johannes de Moor (Kampen)

Meaningful Silence: Some Remarks on the Significance of Empty Space in the Hebrew Bible

In oral communication silences play an important role. Already in early North-West Semitic documents silences were sometimes indicated by spaces in the text. However, the insertion of such blanks was an exception to the rule that lines had to be filled out completely. On the basis of what we now know about spacing in these ancient texts, it must be assumed that the Petuchah in Hebrew manuscripts has older roots than the Setumah. In contrast to the ruling of the Halakhah, Hebrew scribes did not distinguish rigorously between the two types of spacing. Also in the Hebrew scribal tradition spaces were inserted inconsistently. Apparently the scribes enjoyed a limited freedom to indicate their own understanding of Scripture by the use of empty space. As a result, differences with regard to spacing are greater than is commonly realised, but the degree of agreement is so high that an early common tradition may be assumed. Spaces often indicated the structure of the text and had an important rhetorical function. They are, therefore, relevant to biblical interpretation and it has to be deplored that variant readings with regard to spacing are generally ignored. Spacing in the Leningrad Codex is unreliable.

Dr David Lamb (Hatfield)

'I Will Strike You Down and Cut Off Your Head' (1 Samuel 17:46): Trash Talking, Derogatory Rhetoric, and Psychological Warfare in Ancient Israel

Trash talking, far from being an innovation of modern athletics, was a staple course in ancient military contexts, the prerequisite *hors d'oeuvres*, to whet the appetite for battle. Examples of derogatory military rhetoric can be found in Egyptian sources by Thutmose III, Sethos I, and Ramesses II, and in the Hebrew Bible by Ahab, Ben-hadad of Aram, Jehoash of Israel, and the Rabshakeh of Assyria. Trash talking in these contexts was used as a means of psychological warfare to

intimidate one's enemy. Confidence is crucial for an army to achieve victory in battle. If verbal assaults succeed in instilling fear in an opponent and courage in one's own troops, the battle is half-won before any blood is spilt. However, the most effective way to counter the intimidating effects of derogatory rhetoric is to reciprocate in kind, as is seen in the interaction between Goliath and David and in a series of exchanges involving Elijah, Jezebel and Jehu. David responds to Goliath's disdain by swearing that he will cut off Goliath's head. Elijah taunts, and subsequently slaughters, Jezebel's prophets so she orders a 'hit' on the prophet. After initially fleeing, Elijah eventually comes back at her with a divine judgment involving dogs eating her flesh. Jehu then breaks one of the unwritten rules of 'smack' and tells Jehoram his mother Jezebel is a whore. Recent sociological studies discuss the rules, patterns, roles and impact of trash talking in contemporary sports. An analysis of this type of psychological warfare in biblical literature elucidates some of the most colorful dialogue of the Hebrew Bible and provides an interpretive key to understanding the social dynamic behind these texts.

Dr Andrew Davies (Mattersey)

My Favourite Waste of Time? On the Dubious Ethical Utility of the Hebrew Bible

This paper examined the value and validity of traditional biblical approaches to ethics and moral thinking, beginning with the observation that the ethical code of the Hebrew Bible is inherently alien to contemporary Western society and therefore intrinsically of dubious relevance. It examined a few previously-proposed models, both popular and scholarly, for biblical ethics and showed, by applying them to some key texts, how they often fail to deliver as promised. The paper concluded with some comments on how, for all that it is a rather more contentious and uncomfortable task than is sometimes admitted, the Hebrew Bible might be considered a necessary starting point for ethics, and why the study of biblical ethics is by no means a waste of time and effort, for secular as well as faith-aligned scholarship.

Professor Rudolf Smend (Göttingen)

Julius Wellhausen and Old Testament Scholarship: An Overview

This paper offered a condensed survey of Julius Wellhausen's work on the Old Testament, tracing that work according to its chronological sequence — a sequence which had an inner logic since, as a rule, Wellhausen did not let his objects of research be subject to any outside influence, but rather he took them up as they emerged for him of themselves, each one following on from the other. At the beginning was a dissertation on the development of messianic prophecy, submitted by the 19-year-old student to the theological faculty in Göttingen in the summer of 1863. Unfortunately, the dissertation itself has not

been preserved; all we have is the accompanying letter expressing Wellhausen's hope that the manuscript testifies that he 'did it with love'. This early comment is highly characteristic both of his life and of his work until his (also not preserved) swan song in 1913, which was devoted to his favourite book, Job, as had been the first lecture of the non-stipendiary lecturer 43 years before. Another characteristic of his work was his readiness for revision; if there were people who said '*Julius locutus, causa finita*', Wellhausen himself would not be among them.

Dr Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer (Aberdeen)

The Judahite Community behind Daughter Zion

This paper investigated the identification of Daughter Zion as portrayed in Isaiah 40–55. Daughter Zion is commonly identified with the Babylonian exiles, and understood as serving as a symbol of their conceptual destination. In view of much recent research that places the bulk of Isaiah 49–55, as well as substantial sections of Isaiah 40–48, in Judah during the early years of the Persian period, however, there is need of reassessment. This paper argued for a Judahite setting of most of Isaiah 40–55 and for an identification of Daughter Zion with the people of Judah. It focused on the interplay between Isaiah 40:1–11 and the rest of Isaiah 40–55, and it suggested that the focus on Jerusalem and its population in the opening section provides us with a clue as to how to read the following material.

Dr Anthony Gelston (Durham)

A Detection of Editors

Source criticism has given rise to many ingenious theories, but to very little in the way of assured results. Textual criticism, despite considerable outstanding uncertainty about the identity of the original text, at least enables work to be done on objective material (manuscripts and versions). The presenter's current work, involving much copy-editing of his volume of the Twelve Prophets for *Biblia Hebraica Quinta*, had concentrated his attention on editorial methods, and prompted a comparison of those of modern authors with those practised on the biblical texts. The paper concentrated on different kinds of footnotes in modern books, and asked what kind of counterparts may be detected in the biblical texts. A few references to other texts may be found, while a few sentences may be detected by modern exegetes as the equivalent of explanatory footnotes. Comparable with more extensive scholarly footnotes are more substantial passages which may be considered 'relevant digressions', detectable mainly by the subsequent resumption of the previous subject-matter. A particular example of this is the feature designated by Shemaryahu Talmon as 'repetitive resumption'. The paper ended with a caution that our ability to detect the work of the ancient editors is very limited.

Professor William Johnstone (Edinburgh)

Moses at Fairford: Typology in Medieval Glass

In the late mediaeval glass at St Mary's Parish Church, Fairford, Gloucestershire. (dated ca. 1500-1517), Moses appears in two typological sequences, a Marian and a Christological. In the 'typological window', the vivid green burning bush beside which a sheep grazes unscathed represents not Israel burning in the flames of persecution yet not consumed but, rather, Moses himself aflame with divine inspiration yet physically unharmed (so, e.g., Rashi). This representation can be paralleled consistently from early extant mediaeval glass (e.g. at St-Denis, Paris, ca. 1140) to late (e.g. at King's College Chapel, Cambridge, ca. 1530). It is used typologically to represent Mary conceiving by the Holy Ghost whilst her virginity is preserved intact. Moses thus reappears in the adjoining window on the presentation of the Virgin at the Temple. In the Transfiguration window, Moses, standing above Peter, holds the tablets of the Decalogue, on which, however, is inscribed the first clause of the Apostles' Creed. The same clause of the Creed surrounds Peter in the first of the three Apostles windows on the south side of the church. The correspondence between Moses and Peter is confirmed by the matching tracery of the most westerly windows in the side walls of the nave. The Christological typological system whereby such correspondence can be read consistently across the three biblical ages of human existence (before the law, under the law, under grace) is brilliantly expounded in the 'altarpiece' of Nicholas of Verdun at Klosterneuburg, near Vienna (dated 1181), and illustrated in the particularly fine Good Samaritan window at Sens (ca. 1210).

Professor Ernest Nicholson (Oxford)

'I Will Raise Up For Them Prophets Like You...' (Deuteronomy 18:18): Who Were These Prophets?

The answer to the question raised by this paper is that the Deuteronomistic author of the passage had in mind the series of prophets of whom we read in the Deuteronomistic History (DtrH), including such figures as Samuel, Ahijah, Elijah, etc. Taking up more recent suggestions, the paper argued that Deuteronomy 18:9-22 is partly based upon the call narrative of Jeremiah and that other prominent features in the book of Jeremiah, notably its theme of false prophecy, also influenced its composition. It was argued that the author of the passage included among the prophets here promised not only Jeremiah but also Isaiah, who alone is mentioned in DtrH, and the remaining eighth-century prophets (Amos, Hosea, Micah). Pursuing this line of enquiry, the paper concluded that the author of Deuteronomy 18:9-22, dated to the exilic or early post-exilic period, had in mind an emerging corpus of 'scripture' (though not a 'canon') that included not only the eighth-century prophets but also a number of the prophetic books of the

Hebrew Bible (Zephaniah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Obadiah), as well as parts of the Pentateuch, including Deuteronomy, which had already been incorporated into DtrH.

A **workshop** on graduate-student work-in-progress was held at the Meeting:

Ms Jennifer Barbour (Oxford) presented on *'The Hebrew Bible's Historical Traditions in the Book of Qohelet'*. She considered whether and how this author may allude to the national story which formed part of his literary context. The fictional king is exegetically drawn to weave in the whole period of Israel and Judah's monarchic history: this Solomonic figure is a pastiche of biblical kings, making use of typologies and motifs such as the Chronicler's great works, building and planting. The two poems at 1:2-11 and 3:1-8 make historical arguments, in language suggesting a post-exilic reading of the canonical prophets. Echoes of Israel's historical traditions sound in the short parables of the poor wise youth at 4:13-16 and the besieged city at 9:11-18, while the cultic instructional passage 4:17-5:6 alludes to narratives about Solomon and Saul. The closing poem at 12:1-8 finds its closest literary affinities in the Hebrew Bible's city-lament mode, associated with the fall of Jerusalem, the central catastrophe in the collective memory of Qohelet's audience.

Mr Douglas Earl (Durham) presented on *'A New Perspective on חרם with Specific Reference to Joshua'*. There has been a tendency to 'flatten out' the different conceptions of חרם in the Old Testament via what have been, in practice, 'canonical' approaches to the category, where for example the חרם in Joshua 6-7 has been interpreted via its conception in Leviticus 27 together with other Priestly conceptions of 'contagion'. Moreover, the interpretation of חרם in Deuteronomy and Joshua has often been conducted with respect to a 'historicizing' frame of reference, where its significance and that of Joshua has often been addressed by seeking to understand the nature of a 'historical conquest' or the lack of such a conquest. As a consequence, understanding the conception of חרם as found in Deuteronomy and Joshua has been hampered. By separating a Deuteronomistic conception of חרם from others in the Old Testament and showing that it has been interpreted using inappropriate categories, and then demonstrating how literary and anthropological analysis suggests that the portrayal of חרם functions rhetorically and symbolically, but in different ways, in Deuteronomy and Joshua, a new perspective on the significance of חרם in Joshua, and hence on the book of Joshua, emerges.

Ms Melissa Jackson (Oxford) presented on *'The Comic Phenomenon in Hebrew Bible Narrative and Its Implications for Feminist Hermeneutics'*, with a case study of 'Shiprah, Puah and the Fool'. 'Comedy'

defies definition, largely because it is subjective and contextually-bound. Despite this complication, however, evidence of comedy exists in the Hebrew Bible. As an example, the narrative of Exodus 1:15-22 contains several comic features. *Irony* is evident as two slaves outwit the pharaoh of Egypt. *Wordplay* appears in the use of חיה: the children 'live', because the mothers are 'lively'. Ineffectual and easily duped, Pharaoh emerges as comedy's *stock character* 'the fool'. That only two midwives are able to serve the exploding Israelite population shows comedy's embracing of *exaggeration*. *Hiddenness* occurs in the midwives' deception of Pharaoh, hiding the truth of what they are doing. Comedy draws boundaries, creating an '*us versus them*' *mentality*, epitomized in the match-up of the powerful Egyptians against the enslaved Israelites. While comedy and feminist critique may seem incompatible, they actually share several points of contact. Two significant contact points exemplified in this story are *subversion* and *survival*. The midwives subvert the Pharaoh's power and ensure the survival of Israelite newborns. However, for feminist critique this subversion and survival cuts both ways: while the women prevail, in so doing they continue to serve the patriarchal agenda of the text.

Ms Alissa Jones Nelson (St Andrews) presented on '*Job in Conversation with Edward Said: Contrapuntal Hermeneutics as an Alternative to the Bridge between "Academic" and "Vernacular" Approaches to the Book of Job*'. The gap between academic and vernacular approaches to the interpretation of biblical texts has been widely acknowledged, less widely problematized, and inadequately addressed. This paper argued that an adaptation of Edward Said's concept of contrapuntal reading offers an approach to biblical hermeneutics with the potential to overcome the current impasse between academic and vernacular approaches, particularly as this divide is manifested pedagogically. To that end, the paper presented an example of contrapuntal hermeneutics through the juxtaposition of two interpretations of the book of Job, specifically Dan Merkur's academic, psychological perspective on Job in a North American context and Gerald West's vernacular, HIV-positive perspective on Job in a South African context. By means of this contrapuntal interaction, the paper aimed to explore certain aspects of the book of Job through these two particular lenses in the interest of mutual encounter, respectful criticism, ethical engagement, and a more comprehensive interpretation. The paper concluded with a discussion of the challenges contrapuntal hermeneutics presents to the field of biblical hermeneutics.

A **reception** was given on the first evening of the Meeting by the Faculty of Theology at the University of Oxford and by Oxford University Press.

A **musical performance** was given on the second evening by Ms

Madhavi Nevader and friends (Mr Rahul Satija, Ms Gabi Maas, and Mr Frank von Delft) in the Holywell Music Room: Johann Sebastian Bach's Cello Suite no. 1 in G Major and Ludwig van Beethoven's String Quartet op. 18 no. 1 in F Major.

An **outing** was made on 23rd July to St Mary's Church in Fairford, Gloucestershire, with a guided tour of the 16th-century stained-glass windows by Dr Athene Reiss (Oxford). Particular attention was paid to the main Old Testament windows, firstly a group of four scenes comprising the Fall (Eve standing in the act of disobedience to God, taking the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil offered by a blue serpent with woman's head and cat's paws), the Burning Bush (Moses beholding the presence of God in a bush which is not consumed by the flames as he gazes up at it), Gideon's Fleece (the Israelite judge being strengthened by the angel of the Lord as the dew-covered fleece lies on the dry ground), and the Queen of Sheba (the gentile queen offering a precious silver casket to King Solomon); and then the two Old Testament judgment hall windows comprising the Judgment of David (the king having effected the beheading of the Amalekite who had put Saul to death) and the Judgment of Solomon (the king settling the dispute between the two women who each claim to be the mother of a surviving child), these latter windows flanking the Great West Window depicting the Final Judgment.

The visit to St Mary's was followed by tea (served at the Bull Hotel) by invitation of the President.

In the absence due to ill health of the current President, Professor John Barton, the sessions of the Meeting were chaired by the Retiring President, Professor Philip Davies, and the President-elect, Professor Lester Grabbe.



MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Among **honours** received by members of the Society: Mrs Margaret Barker has been awarded a Lambeth DD; Professor John Barton has been elected a Foreign Member of the Norwegian Academy of Arts and Sciences; Professor David Clines has been elected President of the Society of Biblical Literature for 2009 (the first SBL President from outside North America); Dr Kristin De Troyer has been appointed Professor of Old Testament at the University of St Andrews; Dr Alastair Hunter has been elected President of the University and College Union for 2009-10; Dr Nathan MacDonald has been awarded the Sofja-Kovalevskaja-Preis by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation to lead a research project in Göttingen; Professor Tryggve Mettinger has been awarded the Thuréus Prize for outstanding scholarship in the humanities by the Royal Society of Sciences at the University of Uppsala; Professor Hugh Williamson has become a Corresponding Member of the Göttingen Akademie der Wissenschaften; and Professor Nicolas Wyatt has been awarded a DLitt by the University of Edinburgh.

The Society has learned with regret of the **deaths** of Professor Robert Cate, Most Revd Maurice Couve de Murville, Dr S.B. Gurewicz, Revd Canon Colin Hickling, Revd Michael Maher, Professor Robert North, and Revd Edmund Randall.

The following have been **elected to membership** of the Society. At the Winter Meeting: Dr Cynthia Engle, Professor Hallvard Hagelia, Mr Stephen Herring, Dr Kristin Joachimsen, Professor Won Lee, Dr Robert Merez, Ms Alissa Jones Nelson, Mrs Viv Randles, and Revd Dr James West. At the Summer Meeting: Dr Robert Barrett, Dr Richard Briggs, Revd Paul Cook, Ms Carly Crouch, Dr Katie Edwards, Dr Florentina Badalanova Geller, Ms Kathryn Harding, Dr Ingrid Hjelm, Ms Melissa Jackson, Ms Irene Jones, Mr Will Kynes, Dr Joel Lohr, Mr David Morgan, Mr Jonathan Stökl, Mr Christopher Thomson, Revd Paul Winchester, and Professor David Wulstan.

The **current Honorary Members** are Professors Bertil Albrektson (1983), Athalya Brenner (2002), Walter Brueggemann (1997), Henri Cazelles (1972), Frank Moore Cross (1988), Menahem Haran (1981), Sara Japhet (1999), Otto Kaiser (1992), Bernhard Lang (1997), Avraham Malamat (1976), Tryggve Mettinger (2003), Johannes de Moor (2004), Eduard Nielsen (1988), Kirsten Nielsen (2000), Rolf Rendtorff (2006), Helmer Ringgren (1973), Rudolf Smend (1979), Jan Alberto Soggin (1992), and Erich Zenger (2005).

MISCELLANEOUS NOTICES

The **Winter Meeting 2009** will be held on 5th–7th January at Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge, and the **Summer Meeting 2009** will be held on 27th–29th July at the University of Lincoln, both meetings under the Presidency of Professor Lester Grabbe. The Summer Meeting will be the 14th Joint Meeting of the Society and the (Dutch–Flemish) Oudtestamentisch Werkgezelschap, and members will also have the opportunity of extending their conference participation into the meeting of the European Association of Biblical Studies taking place in Lincoln at that time.

The Society is looking to facilitate a suitable **centennial project** to mark the SOTS Centenary in 2017. This is to be a substantial project that will make a worthy contribution to Old Testament scholarship, perhaps an edition of texts or a digitization project, but in any event something that will be of lasting benefit to the field. The project is in addition to a planned commemorative volume of essays. Proposals or suggestions for the centennial project should be sent to the President or the (Home) Secretary.

The Society has resolved to change its rule on **eligibility for life membership**. Formerly, Rule 7 included the phrase that ‘no further subscriptions shall be required from those Members who have paid thirty annual subscriptions *and have retired from their employment*, who thus become Life Members’; the words given here in italics are to be deleted from the Rule, subject to confirmation of this decision at the forthcoming Winter Meeting in Cambridge.

The Society has also resolved to change the nomenclature of the Officers formerly styled as ‘**Home Secretary**’ and ‘**Foreign Secretary**’, who will now be styled as ‘Secretary’ and ‘Secretary for Honorary Members’ respectively. As this is not a rule change (Rule 17 of the Society specifies only that there be ‘one or more General Secretaries’ and not what they be called), the matter does not require confirmation at a later Meeting but has already become effective.

A new volume has appeared in the **SOTS Monograph Series**, namely *Amos and the Cosmic Imagination* by James Linville. Linville reads the book of Amos as the literary product of the Persian-era community in Judah and investigates its representations of divine–human communication in the context of the ancient writers’ role as transmitters and shapers of religious traditions. All volumes in the series are available from Ashgate Publishing Direct Sales, 130 Milton Park, Abingdon OX14 4SB (tel. 01235 827730, e-mail ashgate@bookpoint.co.uk).

The **proceedings** of the SOTS/OTW Joint Meeting at Apeldoorn in August 2006 have been published: Bob Becking and Eric Peels (eds.), *Psalms and Prayers* (ODS, 55; Leiden: Brill, 2007).

The Society has made a **submission to the HEFCE** (the Higher Education Funding Council for England), in response to a consultation document on the proposed 'Research Excellence Framework' (REF). The view was expressed that bibliometric data are insufficiently robust at present to provide a reliable quality indicator in our subject area; while the use of such data should continue to be explored, they should not play an unduly prominent role in the final formula. In terms of a light-touch peer review of research excellence, any simple measurements of quantity which do not involve an assessment of quality, or which rely too simplistically on the variable peer-review systems employed by journals, publishers, and research-grant committees, should be resisted. The quantities of material to be considered might be reduced by greater flexibility in the number of items required for submission, particularly given the emphasis within the humanities upon the writing of books, instead of the strong focus upon articles more typical of the sciences. The Society welcomed the proposals for expert review panels composed of subject specialists as the best means of assessing research quality.

The Society also made a **submission to the IUSC** (the parliamentary Innovation, Universities and Skills Committee), in response to a call for submissions to their enquiry on the government proposal to withdraw funding from 'equivalent and lesser qualifications' (ELQs). The submission noted concerns about the impact which the proposed legislation might have on students studying the Old Testament as part of ordination courses at an 'ELQ' level.

A **biography of F.F. Bruce** (1910-1990), SOTS President of 1965, has been commissioned by Paternoster Publishing. The biographer is Dr Tim Grass, Associate Tutor in Church History at Spurgeon's College, London, and author of *Gathering to His Name*, a history of the British Brethren. Dr Grass would be pleased to hear from anyone with recollections, letters, copies of obscure articles, photographs, or manuscript material, and to learn about the impact which Bruce and his writings made on people in various parts of the world. He would also like to know if you are willing to be interviewed regarding your recollections of Bruce. The contact details are Dr Tim Grass, 21 Laughton Road, Horsham, West Sussex RH12 4EJ (tel. 01403 273697, e-mail grass.family@tesco.net).

The Society's website now includes a media page, a news box on the home page, and a revamped resources page. The website is located at:

www.sots.ac.uk

ACCOUNTS FOR 2007

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT for the year ended 31st October 2007

	<i>Bursaries</i>	<i>Book List</i>	<i>Confer- ences</i>	<i>General Fund</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>2006</i>
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Income						
Subscriptions and donations	35	—	—	8552	8587	8539
Income tax recovered	—	—	—	849	849	863
Book List sales	—	48	—	—	48	51
Conference income	—	—	25087	—	25087	24477
Dividends, interest and royalties	248	—	—	3005	3253	2233
Gain on disposal of investments	—	—	—	3540	3540	—
Legacies	—	—	—	4000	4000	—
Other income	—	—	—	50	50	102
Total income	283	48	25087	19996	45414	36265
Expenditure						
Printing and stationery	—	—	—	3191	3191	2290
Postage and administration	—	476	—	1348	1824	1089
Equipment	—	—	—	1	1	1481
Book List production	—	3000	—	—	3000	3000
Committee costs	—	—	—	135	135	793
Conference costs	—	—	26819	325	27144	23926
Accountancy	—	—	—	529	529	499
Bursaries	551	—	—	—	551	735
Bank charges	—	—	—	311	311	324
Total expenditure	551	3476	26819	5840	36686	34137
Net surplus/(deficit)	(268)	(3428)	(1732)	14156	8728	2128

BALANCE SHEET at 31st October 2007

	<i>2007</i>	<i>2006</i>
	£	£
Assets		
Fixed assets (note 1)	—	1
Debtors	2100	1834
Bank accounts (note 2)	65099	55553
Investments at cost (note 3)	—	1053
	<u>67199</u>	<u>58441</u>
Liabilities		
Sundry creditors and reserves	(529)	(499)
	<u>66670</u>	<u>57942</u>
Represented by		
Accumulated surpluses and reserves (note 4)		
General fund	65272	56426
Bursary fund	1398	1516
	<u>66670</u>	<u>57942</u>

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS for the year ended 31st October 2007

1. Fixed assets	<i>Computer Equipment</i>		
Cost at 1st November 2006			984
Cost of disposal			(984)
Cost at 31st October 2007			–
Depreciation at 1st November 2006			983
Depreciation on disposal			(983)
Depreciation at 31st October 2007			–
Net book amount at 31st October 2006			1
Net book amount at 31st October 2007			–
2. Bank accounts	2007	2006	
Barclays Bank plc: Current Account	73	293	
Higher Interest Business Account	65026	22050	
National Savings Bank Investment Account	–	33210	
	<u>65099</u>	<u>55553</u>	
3. Investment at cost			
549.6863 units, Friends Provident Stewardship Growth Fund retail accumulation shares (market value £4072.10 at 31st August 2006)	–	1053	
The shares were disposed of during the year, generating proceeds of £4593.			
4. Accumulated surpluses and reserves	<i>General Fund</i>	<i>Bursary Fund</i>	<i>Total</i>
At 1st November 2006	56426	1516	57942
Surplus/(deficit) for the year	8996	(268)	8728
Transfers	(150)	150	–
At 31st October 2007	<u>65272</u>	<u>1398</u>	<u>66670</u>

PRINCIPAL ACCOUNTING POLICIES

The accounts have been prepared under the historical cost convention.

The principal accounting policies of the Society are substantially unchanged from the previous year and are set out below.

Subscriptions and donations received: these represent amounts received during the year and no account is taken of any subscriptions due but unpaid at the date of the balance sheet.

Income tax recoverable: no account is taken of income tax recoverable but not yet received in respect of subscriptions under Gift Aid or investment income received during the year.

Stocks: no account is taken of unused stocks of book lists or general stationery.

Fixed assets and depreciation: fixed assets that have no resale value are fully written off in the year of purchase; depreciation on other assets is calculated on a straight line basis and aims to write down the cost of fixed assets over their expected normal lives; the rate applicable is 20% per annum.

Investments: investments are included in the accounts at historic cost and no account is taken of unrealised investment gains and losses; the Society's investments are held in the Friends Provident Stewardship Growth Fund Retail Shares and any distributions due are now being reinvested in the fund.

Accumulated surpluses and reserves: the recognition of separately designated funds is primarily for the purpose of administration and control, and any accumulated surpluses shown are part of the general reserves of the Society and, as such, are unrestricted in application.

ACCOUNTANTS' REPORT

We have prepared the accounts and notes for the year ended 31st October 2007 without audit. We confirm that the accounts are in agreement with the books and information supplied to us.

Hardcastle Burton, 90 High Street, Newmarket, Suffolk CB8 8FE

OFFICERS AND COMMITTEES FOR 2009

President: Professor Lester Grabbe, Department of Theology, University of Hull, Hull HU6 7RX (tel. 01482 465997, e-mail l.l.grabbe@hull.ac.uk).

Retiring President: Professor John Barton, Oriel College, Oxford OX1 4EW (tel. 01865 276537, e-mail john.barton@theology.ox.ac.uk).

President-elect: Professor Cheryl Exum, Department of Biblical Studies, University of Sheffield, Sheffield S10 2TN (tel. 0114 222 0503, e-mail j.c.exum@sheffield.ac.uk).

Treasurer: Dr Janet Tollington, Westminster College, Cambridge CB3 0AA (tel. 01223 741091, e-mail jet40@cam.ac.uk).

Secretary (formerly known as the 'Home Secretary'): Dr John Jarick, St Stephen's House, 16 Marston Street, Oxford OX4 1JX (tel. 01865 613 512, e-mail john.jarick@theology.ox.ac.uk).

Secretary for Honorary Members (formerly known as the 'Foreign Secretary'): Professor David Clines, Department of Biblical Studies, University of Sheffield, Sheffield S10 2TN (tel. 0114 222 0505, e-mail d.clines@sheffield.ac.uk).

Membership Secretary: Mrs Vivienne Rowett, The Vicarage, Beck Hill, Barton-upon-Humber DN18 5EY (tel. 01652 632202, e-mail vivrowett@aol.com).

Hospitality Secretary: Ms Elizabeth Harper, Flat 4, 69–70 Crossgate, Durham DH1 4PR (tel. 0191 375 7091, e-mail e.a.harper@dur.ac.uk).

Book List Editor: Professor John Day, Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford OX2 6QA (tel. 01865 274380, e-mail john.day@theology.ox.ac.uk). Matters for the 2010 *Book List* should be directed to the Editor-elect, Dr Deborah Rooke, King's College, Strand, London WC2R 2LS (tel. 020 7848 2393, e-mail deborah.rooke@kcl.ac.uk).

Information Officer: Dr James Aitken, Faculty of Oriental Studies, Sidgwick Avenue, Cambridge CB3 9DA (tel. 01223 335139, e-mail jka12@cam.ac.uk).

Committee: The above Officers of the Society plus Dr Eric Christianson, Dr Charlotte Hempel, Dr Ann Jeffers, Dr James McKeown, Dr Andrew Mein, Professor Mary Mills, Dr Francesca Stavrakopoulou, and Dr Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer.

Programme Sub-Committee: The President, President-elect, Secretary, and Secretary for Honorary Members; plus Ms Elizabeth Harper, Dr Andrew Mein, and Dr Stuart Weeks.

Publications Sub-Committee: The *Book List* Editor (Convener), Dr Margaret Barker (as Monographs Editor), Dr Adrian Curtis (as Guides Editor), and Professor Hugh Williamson (as SOTS representative on the OTS Board); plus Professor Robert Gordon, Dr Walter Houston, and Dr Nathan MacDonald.

Editorial Board of the monograph series: Dr Margaret Barker (Editor), Mr Edward Ball, Dr Eryl Davies, Dr Katharine Dell, and Dr Paul Joyce.

PAST PRESIDENTS OF THE SOCIETY

1917-19	William Bennett	1967	Donald Coggan
1920	Archibald Kennedy	1968	Matthew Black
1921	Robert Kennett	1969	John Schofield
1922	George Gray	1970	Arthur Herbert
1923	George Box	1971	Edward Ullendorff
1924	Arthur Peake	1972	Peter Ackroyd
1925	Stanley Cook	1973	James Barr
1926	William Stevenson	1974	Dafydd Ap-Thomas
1927	David Simpson	1975	Eileen de Ward
1928	Theodore Robinson	1976	Douglas Jones
1929	Henry Wheeler Robinson	1977	Ronald Williams
1930	Claude Montefiore	1978	William McKane
1931	William Oesterley	1979	John Emerton
1932	William Lofthouse	1980	Donald Wiseman
1933	William Wardle	1981	Raphael Loewe
1934	Adam Welch	1982	Norman Whybray
1935	William Emery Barnes	1983	Roy Porter
1936	John Battersby Harford	1984	Wilfred Lambert
1937-38	Godfrey Driver	1985	Ronald Clements
1939-40	Herbert Loewe	1986	Barnabas Lindars
1941-45	Henry Wheeler Robinson	1987	Robert Murray
1946	Theodore Robinson	1988	Ernest Nicholson
1947	Cuthbert Lattey	1989	John Rogerson
1948	Edward Robertson	1990	William Johnstone
1949	Christopher North	1991	Anthony Gelston
1950	Harold Rowley	1992	Andrew Mayes
1951	Samuel Hooke	1993	Richard Coggins
1952	John Barton	1994	John Gibson
1953	David Winton Thomas	1995	Gwilym Jones
1954	Norman Porteous	1996	David Clines
1955	Alfred Guillaume	1997	Rex Mason
1956	Aubrey Johnson	1998	Margaret Barker
1957	Norman Snaith	1999	Robert Carroll
1958	Leonard Elliott-Binns	2000	Joseph Blenkinsopp
1959	John Mauchline	2001	Michael Goulder
1960	Cuthbert Simpson	2002	John Bartlett
1961	Jacob Weingreen	2003	Robert Gordon
1962	Hedley Sparks	2004	Hugh Williamson
1963	George Anderson	2005	Graeme Auld
1964	Bleddyn Roberts	2006	Robert Hayward
1965	Frederick Bruce	2007	Philip Davies
1966	Gwynne Henton Davies	2008	John Barton