
EDITORIAL PREFACE

In May 1990 the Rand Afrikaans University hosted the ninth Annual Congress of the Biblical Studies Society of Southern Africa. Four of the five articles appearing in this edition of *Scriptura* were presented at this Congress and we offer them here with the hope that they will receive a wider attention.

The issue with which the Congress was concerned was *The Actuality of the Bible in a new South Africa*. The context of the conference was that of widespread optimism and even a certain euphoria. Recent events in South Africa with the unbanning of the ANC, the PAC and the SACP on February 2 1990, as well as the subsequent release of Nelson Mandela had given rise to the sincere hope that something new was soon to emerge from the ashes of *apartheid*-South Africa.

The Congress battled with the question regarding the role the Bible could or should play in the emerging new South Africa. From the papers read at the Congress four have been selected and merit the attention of those concerned with the actuality of the Bible for the new dispensation.

In *Methodological principles in interpreting the relevance of the New Testament for a new South Africa*, Hartin uses the thought of Hauerwas and Ricoeur in proposing five basic principles that should operate in attempting to view the way the New Testament could be of influence in a new South Africa.

Burden's paper *New creation and resurrection in the Bible and in a new South Africa: An Old Testament scholar's perspective* interprets the concepts of creation and resurrection in the light of culture, world-view and religion insofar as they have importance for a new South Africa. He has endeavoured to argue that such concepts should function not as normative principles, but as examples to evaluate practical conduct, as Africans would do.

Turning attention to the construction of syllabi for Biblical Studies, Deist in his paper *South-Africanising Biblical Studies: an epistemological and hermeneutical inquiry* argues that cultural, historical and political differences must be consciously taken into account in the construction of new Biblical Studies syllabi. He makes a plea for a more problem orientated approach 'to allow differently informed epistemologies and hermeneutical convictions to interact.'

Smit in his contribution, *The Bible and Ethos in a new South Africa*, examines a number of methodological and moral questions. He argues that different groups use the Bible in different ways. Consequently, the actual influence of the Bible is dependent upon the power struggles within these groups and their own relative power within the community. One should above all learn from what has happened in the past and avoid the evils that have been perpetrated in using the Bible to support a political ideology.

A final contribution by Domeris is entitled *Reading the Bible against the grain*. It is a paper which grew out of one that was read at the conference, but has taken on a totally new direction. Its importance lies in the fact that the author draws attention

to directions that some South African Biblical Scholars (such as I J Mosala) are using. He offers some valuable criticism of these approaches.

These papers are offered in the hope that they will contribute to the ongoing discussion of the place and relevance of the Bible in a new South Africa. This is no ivory tower discussion, but one that affects the lives of all who consider the Bible important for life and faith.

Professor Patrick J Hartin.

Editor for the Biblical Studies Society.