



Foreword Bible 200



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In celebration of the 200th anniversary of the Bible Society in South Africa, as well as the launch of the new Afrikaans Bible translation, *Die Bybel: 'n Direkte Vertaling*, the Theological School Potchefstroom organised an academic conference in collaboration with the Faculty of Theology of the North-West University. Academics and Bible translators, in particular, were invited to present conference papers on this occasion. The theme of the conference was 'The impact of the Bible on our society: past, present and future'. Several of the conference presentations were prepared to be submitted to this special collection. Eventually, 13 articles were accepted and published after peer review.

In keeping with the overall theme, the following sub-themes came to the fore:

Bible translation in South Africa and/or Africa

To translate texts written between 2000 and 3000 years ago requires specialist expertise. Various issues can be raised, for example which source texts to use; translation equivalents between source and target languages; translation types; time- and culture-oriented aspects of the ancient source texts versus the contemporary cultures of the target readers or listeners; translation methodology; and the production of translations in a variety of media. Therefore, the theory, methodology and practice of Bible translation deserved ongoing reflection.

The following six articles, all written by Bible translators, attend to some of the technicalities of Bible translation.

Gert Jordaan answers the question: 'The 2020 direct translation into Afrikaans: Why and how?'. The Bible Society of South Africa commissioned a translation of the Bible into Afrikaans which should be source-text orientated, but also easy to understand. The ways by which the translators put this commission into practice, is investigated in this article. The translators made a clear distinction between the linguistic characteristics and the textual characteristics of both the source and the reception language. This enabled them to make a translation that reflects the source text more directly without giving way to either formal or dynamic equivalence. Typical historic-cultural matters were not translated into modern terms in order to conserve the 'local colour' of the source text and to provide historical credibility to the translation. The translators took every effort to present a translation that reflects the source text more directly in a neat, stylistically meticulous and clear Afrikaans. Jordaan argues that the 2020 direct translation into Afrikaans can be regarded as a welcome addition to the already existing translations.

Given that the Bible was intended by the first authors to be understood by all believers, it is important to have an idea of the extent to which different translations succeeded in this respect. Jacobus (Koos) van Rooy noticed that some of the latest Bible translations in Southern Africa are inconsistent with respect to the translation policies they followed. He selected a number of theologically important terms from the Bible for the purpose of comparing the way they were translated in the different translations. He discovered that some of these translations consistently translated these terms according to the meaning, while other translations are very literal, and the rest are somewhere in between these methods. He found that some of these translations, particularly the 1983 Afrikaans translation, the Venda translation of 1998, and the Xhosa translation of 1996 consistently translated according to the meaning. Two of them, namely the latest Southern Ndebele and Zulu translations, were translated in a very literal way, and the remainder somewhere in between these methods: sometimes translating quite literally, and sometimes more meaningfully, but generally not consistent.

Sebastian Floor compares translation types to indicate how translations differ from each other on a continuum. He classifies translation types in two main groupings: more literal, and more dynamic with the following four subtypes: Corresponding translations, Resembling translations, Clarifying

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translations, and Simplifying translations. In light of this classification, five publications of the Bible in Afrikaans are compared to Bible publications in English and Dutch. He argues that translations from different types are not necessarily in competition with each other, as they complement each other to meet different end-user market niches. While translations do improve over time as translation theory and source language scholarship evolve, the validity of each type does endure.

Roelie van der Spuy evaluates the 2020 direct translation into Afrikaans according to its own criteria, the translation mandate and its self-proclaimed nature as 'direct' translation. He discusses the influence of the translator's loyalties and underlying translation philosophies on the translation choices. He argues that this translation can be categorised as a more literal translation. His view is that the 2020 translation is an honest and worthy attempt to a very difficult endeavour, namely to 'interpretively resemble' in good idiomatic Afrikaans all the communicative clues of the source text in the contexts of the source text audiences.

Karen Floor highlights the rationale for oral-based Bible translations. She explains the translation needs for oral-preference societies. In such communities, few people read or wish to read as their primary means of communication. Furthermore, in the case of the San family of languages, complex phonemic systems of up to 85 contrastive clicks have presented a challenge in developing 'readable' orthographies. She argues that the translation of Scripture for primary oral societies has added another dimension to the need for accuracy, beauty and clarity in Scripture translation. Orally crafted translations of Scripture passages have been recorded and made available to oral societies through a range of media. She postulates that insights from the emerging practice of oral-based Bible translation in Southern Africa provide valuable data for missiological approaches to communicating the gospel to modern oral societies.

June Dickie argues that psalms, being poems, need to be translated as poems using the poetic features of the receptor language. She addresses the issue that official translators are not always poetically sensitive, while many community members are highly skilled word-artists who are keen to participate in the translation process. Her article describes the results of an empirical study including Zulu youth, interested in poetry and music, in the translation of some praise psalms. Dickie proposes that engaging local communities beyond simply being 'reviewers' forms the key to effective translation of poetry. Furthermore, using oral performance to present psalms actively, engages the community, resulting in far higher acceptability, memorability and perceived relevance.

Bible interpretation and hermeneutics in the South African context

There have been many shifts in biblical hermeneutics over the past few decades. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, more text-oriented principles of interpretation were the order

of the day (e.g. the grammatical-historical methodology). In the post-modern and post-colonial era, hermeneutic principles became more reader-oriented (e.g. liberation theology, feminist criticism, post-colonial criticism). Although the effect of these shifts only later became evident in South Africa, it called for continued reflection.

The following five articles attend to such hermeneutical issues.

Johan Janse van Rensburg addresses the burning issue of the authority of Scripture and the way that it is currently used in the (postmodernist) Christian and theological community. Detecting a gap between academic epistemology and the use of the Bible in religious activity, he indicates how a different understanding of the authority and interpretation of the Bible caused a clear division in church and society, particularly in the Reformed churches. His research finds that philosophical systems, leading to the postmodern era, clearly prepared the way for an approach to search for the so-called true meaning of the text behind the text. He concludes by reflecting on the downward spiral of Christianity in South Africa.

Bradley Trout is of the opinion that the Bible is often poorly interpreted in South Africa, and that a better hermeneutic should be applied. Examining the nature of the misinterpretation of the Bible, Trout attempts to uncover the specific interpretive methods responsible for misinterpretation in the South African milieu, especially biblical fundamentalism. According to him, the primary problem with the fundamentalistic method is its failure to account for the reader's role in the interpretive process. In order to rectify this, Trout suggests the necessity of a more reader-centred approach to Scripture. He argues that a hermeneutic should be embraced that is firstly 'critical', that is, willing to interrogate ideological pre-commitments as well as a hermeneutic that focuses on 'eschatology' by considering Scripture based on its redemptive trajectory. In his view, such a hermeneutic provides a better approach to applying Scripture in the modern context, and reduces misinterpretation of Scripture in the South African milieu.

Douw Breed investigates the reliability of the apostles and their testimony according to 2 Peter 1:3-4 as well as its significance for the writings of the New Testament. The text of 2 Peter 1:3-4 indicates that the apostles were reliable witnesses of Jesus Christ, and that this reliability is the result of divine power. As eye and ear witnesses of Jesus Christ's divine power, they could reliably reveal the meaning of what they witnessed of him. Breed concludes by briefly reflecting on the significance of this for the reliability of the Bible.

In a subsequent article for the same volume, Douw Breed reflects on the significance of 2 Peter 3:1-2 for contemporary Christians with specific reference to views of the so-called New Atheists. The article found that Christians today, such as Peter's first readers, are still under great pressure because of atheists' hostile actions. Breed indicates that 2 Peter 3:1-2 provides guidance to Christians whose faith is under pressure due to the hostile actions of unbelievers.

Gerrie Snyman draws attention to the role of whiteness (and masculinity) of the reader in the Bible reading process in a period where people within the Reformed religious tradition must reposition themselves in a post-apartheid and decolonial society. He presents a hermeneutics of vulnerability in response to the experiences of those who suffered heavily under apartheid in an attempt to render accountable those who benefited from apartheid. He argues that, by acknowledging the negative influence apartheid had on the 'black Other', the white Bible reader is placed in the position of an implicated evildoer or a sinful human being. Snyman puts this 'awkward position' on the table by looking at Cain's position and whether there is any empowerment in his story (Gn 4). He links Cain's role to whiteness under apartheid and colonialism, and to the German adaptation of the Holocaust in World War II under the rule of the National Socialist Party in Nazi Germany. Such a reading makes the white male reader uncomfortable, but within a hermeneutics of vulnerability, it contributes positively to change. As part of a final word, he seeks to connect his interpretation to Reformed hermeneutics.

The impact of the Bible on societal structures (e.g. arts, science, literature, politics, teaching, etc.) and faith communities

The Bible affects every facet of human activity: it provides themes for scientists, poets, writers, filmmakers, artists and musicians, and it is a powerful factor in the moral development of humans. It is cited more than any other literature and has more influence on our languages, culture and laws than any other book. Elucidation of this on South African soil deserves ongoing research.

Two articles discuss the impact of the Bible on societal structures.

In Deuteronomy 16:18–20, Moses instructs the people of Israel to appoint judges and officials in their various towns

upon entering the Promised Land. Albert Coetsee investigates the passage to deduce the principles the community and its judges and officials were to embody in relation to justice. The article starts by investigating the possible literary, historical and canonical context of the passage by means of a detailed literature study and an independent exegetical study. Making use of these findings, the principles underlying justice in the passage were deduced. The findings revealed that the appointment of judges and officials was the task of the whole community; that judges and officials should have judged fairly; that the community had to appoint judges and officials who were wise; that the appointment of judges and officials was for the whole community; that the pursuit of justice should have been the aim of everyone; and that the blessing of the Lord would ensue where justice prevails. In conclusion some suggestions are given on how these principles can be applied to modern citizens and judiciaries, briefly reflecting on judicial progress and challenges in South Africa.

Fazel Freeks investigates the social issues of communities in the Christiana district, located in South Africa, with a focus on father absence. He proposes a Biblical Fatherhood Programme to lessen this problem. The programme was developed from a practical-theological study on fatherhood with the primary aim to train and equip participants with fatherhood knowledge. This article presents a reflective and community engagement strategy, based on the author's reflection of items that arose when a biblical fatherhood programme was presented to farm workers. Freeks argues that the Bible is not just an authoritative source of teaching, but it speaks of human fatherhood and serves as a guideline to enunciate the care of God the Father.

We trust that readers will find these articles both stimulating and edifying, and that they will contribute not only to continued discussion on the specialisation of Bible translation, the intricacies of hermeneutics and the impact of the Bible on society, but also to appreciate the dedication and expertise of Bible translators of whom some have also contributed to this special edition.