



# Centre for Bible Interpretation and Translation in Africa

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## Annual Report: 1 Jan - 31 Dec 2017

### 1. Introduction: Focal points in the light of the Centre's aims

The Centre's activities in 2017 were focused especially on the following:

- The next translation of the Bible into Afrikaans;
- The development of more effective teaching programmes for Biblical Hebrew and their integration into modules in OT;
- Upgrading the Centre's website.

The Mission Statement and Aims of the Centre that direct its activities may be read on: [http://www.cebita.org/About\\_Profile.htm](http://www.cebita.org/About_Profile.htm).

### 2. Staff

The Centre has no permanent staff members.

Management Committee:

Prof. CHJ van der Merwe acted as director in 2017.

Prof. I Cornelius acted as chair of the Management Committee, on which Professor AE Feinauer represented the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences; Prof. LC Jonker, AEJ Mouton, J Punt and MJ Nel represented the Faculty of Theology; and Professors I Cornelius, CHJ van der Merwe, PR Bosman and Johanna Steyn represented the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. Dr Masenyani Baloyi represented the Bible Society of South Africa and Mr H Raubenheimer the private sector. Dr NS Cezula functioned as co-opted member.

Collaborators:

Staff members of the Departments of Ancient Studies and of the Old and New Testament who are engaged in related research serve as collaborators in the Centre, as do Professors Extraordinary etc. who are associated with these two Departments.

### 3. Research output and PhD projects

The following articles and chapters in books directly related to Bible translation and interpretation were published in 2017 by members of CEBITA or by some of their students:

CEZULA NC. "Waiting for the Lord: The Fulfilment of the Promise of Land in the Old Testament as a Source of Hope". *Scriptura* 2017; **116/1**:1-15.

CEZULA NC. "The 'Fear of the Lord/God' in Context of the South Africa We Pray for Campaign". *Scriptura* 2017; **116/2**:15-26.

CEZULA NC. "A Comment on Ehud Ben Zvi's 'Total Exile, Empty Land and the General Intellectual Discourse in Yehud'". *Old Testament Essays* 2017; **30/3**:592-608.

JONKER LC. "Satan Made Me Do It!" The Development of a Satan Figure as Social-Theological Diagnostic Strategy from the late Persian Imperial Era to Early Christianity. *Old Testament Essays* 2017; **30/2**:348-366.

JONKER LC. What was Considered to be Apostasy by the Chronicler, and How Does it Relate to Deuteronomic Law? *Journal of Semitics* 2017; **26/1**:382-411.

LOCATELL CS. Grammatical polysemy and grammaticalization in cognitive and generative perspectives: Finding common ground in inter-generational corpora of ancient languages. *Spil Plus* 2017; **48**:239-253.

MOUTON AEJ. Postscript. Feminist Biblical Interpretation: How far do we yet have to go? In: *Feminist Frameworks and the Bible: Power, Ambiguity, and Intersectionality*. Edited by L Juliana Claassens and Carolyn Sharp. London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark 2017:209-220.

NEL MJ. The conceptualisation of sin in the Gospel according to Matthew. *In Luce Verbi* 2017; **51/3**:1-8.

NEL MJ. Authority in the Matthean atonement rituals. *Acta Theologica* 2017; **37/2**:104-124.

NEL MJ. Living in Act 5 – A proposal for an integrated missional hermeneutic. In: *Cultivating Missional Change – The future of missional churches and missional theology*. Edited by Coenrad Burger, Danie Mouton and Frederick Marais. Wellington: Bybel-Media 2017:296-305.

PUNT J. Engaging Empire with the body: Rethinking Pauline celibacy. *JECH* 2016 (appeared in 2017); **6/3**:43–66.

PUNT J. Believers or loyalists? Identity and social responsibility of Jesus communities in the Empire. *In die Skriflig* 2017; **51/3**, a2050. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ids.v51i3.2050>

PUNT J. NT as political documents. *Scriptura* 2017; **116**:1-7. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.7833/116-1-1280>

PUNT J. Religion, sex and politics: Scripting connections in Romans 1:18–32 and Wisdom 14:12–14. *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 2017; **73(4)**:1-8. a4673. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v73i4.4673>

PUNT J. Not child's play: Paul and children. *Neotestamentica* 2017; **51(2)**:235-259.

PUNT, J. (Con)figuring gender in Bible translation: Cultural, translational and gender critical

intersections. In: *Postcoloniality, Translation and the Bible in Africa*. Edited by MW Dube and R Wafula. Eugene: Pickwick 2017:129-155. ISBN 978-1-4982-9514-7

VAN DER MERWE CHJ. Fronting and exhaustive exclusion in Biblical Hebrew. *Spil Plus* 2017; **48**:219-222.

VAN DER MERWE CHJ, NAUDE JA. *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar: Second Edition*. Bloomsbury T & T Clark, London, United Kingdom 2017:605 pp.

WENDLAND E. *Studies in the Psalms Literary-Structural Analysis with Application to Translation*. SIL International Publications, Dallas, USA 2017:538 pp.

WENDLAND E. The Forms and Functions of Disjunctive Parallelism in the Psalter, with Special Reference to Psalm 132. *Journal for Semitics/Tydskrif vir Semitistiek* 2017; **26**(1):123-157.

8 PhD projects that have direct implications for Bible interpretation and translation were completed:

BULUS TAKORE, Z (March 2017). 'Sin of the Fathers upon the Children to the Third and Fourth Generation': an Appraisal of Exodus 20:5 and Deuteronomy 5:9 in Relation to an African Understanding of Original Sin. (Supervisor HL Bosman)

CONRADIE, JP (December 2017) Die interpretasie van die vervullingsitate in Matteus aan die hand van ironie as pragmatiese taalkomponent. (Supervisor prof MJ Nel).

KASSA, FS (December 2017). Hospitality and its Ironic Inversion in Genesis 18 and 19: a Theological-ethical study. (Supervisor HL Bosman)

KIM, JG (MARCH 2017). How Faith Works in James 4:13-5:20: An Exegetical-Theological Interpretation. (Supervisor J Punt)

LOCATELL, CS (December 2017). Grammatical polysemy in the Hebrew Bible: A cognitive linguistic approach to *kî*. (Supervisor Prof. CHJ van der Merwe).

MULLER VAN VELDEN, NE (March 2017). When the lines are blurred: A gender-critical reading of the narratives of John 12:1-8 and John 13:1-17. (Supervisor J Punt)

ROJAS YAURI, B (December 2017). Cosmogonic Presuppositions in Hebrews and Its First-century Philosophical Context. (Supervisor J Punt)

STEGMANN, RN (March 2017). Male Gender Construction and Representation in Paul: Reading 1 Thessalonians through a Gender Critical, Postcolonial Optic. (Supervisor J Punt)

#### **4. New Afrikaans Bible translation**

The editorial committee for this translation, on which Prof. van der Merwe also serves, met four times during 2017. The committee has two major tasks, which are related. First, it must check whether the translation teams are complying with the translation brief, and second, it must ensure that expressions in the source text are translated consistently by all the translation teams. In 2017 the following sections were completed: Isaiah, Jeremiah and Job. An average of 25 000 words per five-day workshop were checked.

In 2018 the feedback from the church readers with regard to the Old Testament will be reviewed. The Bible Society envisages publishing the entire Bible in 2020.

## **5. Bible translation agencies and the Centre**

Dr Reinier de Blois from the *UBS (United Bible Societies)* visited Stellenbosch 19-22 April 2017. During this visit he and Prof. van der Merwe worked through a number of research articles written by the latter with a view to incorporating insights from them into the *Semantic Dictionary of Biblical Hebrew* (SDBH, see <http://www.sdbh.org/dictionary/main.php?language=en>). During the informal workshop a number of problems related to the structure of this electronic dictionary were also identified.

Over the years there has been a great deal of informal interaction between Dr de Blois and Prof. van der Merwe and his students (e.g. Dr de Blois acted as external examiner for a number of PhD projects undertaken in the Department of Ancient Studies). It was concluded at the informal workshop that it would be to the mutual advantage of both if a more formal relationship between the University and Dr de Blois could be established. An application was submitted to appoint Dr de Blois as Associate Professor Extraordinary in the Department of Ancient Studies.

## **6. Teaching the biblical languages and greater integration of contents with modules in Old and New Testament studies**

During the course of 2017 there were follow-up discussions between members of the Centre, representatives of the Departments of Old and New Testament, and/or representatives of churches that expect their students to have studied Greek and Hebrew. After a tentative timetable and course framework had been compiled, and potential lecturers identified, this opportunity was presented to potential candidates. In December 2017, however, Dr Eddie Orsmond reported that one student applied. The problem seems to be that most potential students work full-time.

A decision was taken to pursue this further in 2018. An attempt will be made to design alternative structures to meet the need for training in Greek and Biblical Hebrew for second-career theology students.

## **7. Centre for the Interpretation of Authoritative Scriptures (CIAS).**

Prof. Jonker along with Professors Jeremy Punt, Marius Nel and Xolile Simon and Dr Ntozakhe Cezula submitted a successful application to the NRF for funding for this project. In addition, the Vice-Rector (Research) also made a significant contribution. About R1,2 million is available over the next three years (2018-2020) to establish such a centre. The largest portion of the funding has been granted for postgraduate student bursaries and well as a postdoctoral fellowship. These students and a junior researcher will help to develop a theoretical basis for the future centre.

The following excerpt from the successful NRF application explains briefly the matters to be addressed by the new centre:

The interpretation of authoritative scriptures in the three monotheistic religious constituencies in SA (namely Christianity, Islam, and Judaism) play a very important role in the SA society. These scriptures (the Old/New Testaments in Christianity; the Qur'an in Islam; and the Hebrew Bible in Judaism) not only serve a more restricted function in defining the rituals and customs of these religious communities, but also have a more general impact on the world views, beliefs, ethical values, and ideological positions of members of these religious communities. Inevitably, these views, beliefs, values etc influence the moral fibre of SA society, and contribute towards social cohesion and/or social conflict.

These scriptures are studied in various ways within the separate religious and theological traditions. Various institutions in SA (ranging from madrassas to religious/theological schools and university faculties/departments of religion and/or theology) contribute to this end. However, there are not many, if any, institutions endeavouring to bring these three interpretative traditions into discourse with one another, with the intention to contribute to greater social cohesion in SA.

The proposed project will therefore investigate the possibility of establishing a Centre for the Interpretation of Authoritative Scriptures (CIAS) at Stellenbosch University. The focus in such a centre will be on studying (i) the origin of these scriptures and their becoming authoritative (including the relationship between the formation of authoritative scriptures and imperial ideology); (ii) the historical traditions of interpretation and re-interpretation within and among these scriptures; (iii) the hermeneutical traditions that dominated the history of interpretation of these scriptures; (iv) the role of these hermeneutical traditions in the SA society; and (v) the possibility of bringing these traditions in discourse with one another.

The centre envisages focusing on the following research areas:

1. *Scriptures becoming authoritative*: Research on the canonical formations in the three monotheistic traditions, as well as the socio-historical circumstances in which those processes took place;
2. *Authoritative Scriptures and Empires*: Research on the relationship between scriptures becoming authoritative and imperial power relations, in ancient times, but also in contemporary societies;
3. *Re-interpretation within and between Authoritative Scriptural Traditions*: The dynamics of re-interpretation and re-appropriation of older scriptural traditions in the formation of new traditions in changed and changing socio-historic conditions;
4. *Places / Figures of Memory in Three Traditions*: The appropriation of various sites or figures as *lieux de memoire* in the three monotheistic traditions;
5. *Dialogical Interfaces between Authoritative Scriptural Traditions*: Developing hermeneutical interfaces of dialogue between the scriptural traditions in the three monotheistic traditions.

The centre envisages offering the following:

1. Granting a number of postgraduate bursaries to students who wish to undertake research on the abovementioned themes;
2. Organising multi- as well as inter-disciplinary workshops on related themes;
3. Organising workshops on inter-religious dialogue in public and educational contexts.

The collaboration of a number of South African specialists in this field will be sought, as well as working with, among others, the following international bodies:

- Research School on Authoritative Texts and Their Reception (ATTR), Oslo;
- Centre for Muslim-Christian Studies, Oxford;
- Institute for Missiology and Religion Studies at Humboldt University, Berlin;
- International Qur'anic Studies Association (which meets annually with the SBL/AAR).

This new development regarding CIAS means that it will be necessary to reflect on the relationship between the new centre and CEBITA. A proposal will be submitted to the annual general meeting in 2018 to plan accordingly.

## **8. Finances**

The Centre's short-term finances are sound. The details appear in the financial statement for 2017. The report is attached.


## **9. Acknowledgements**

The Centre wishes to thank the Management Committee and the Executive Committee for their support.

.....19 April 2018

Prof. Louis Jonker

Acting Chair: Management Committee



Prof. CHJ van der Merwe

Director