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GLOBAL HERMENEUTICS?
Reflections and Consequences

Volume Editors:

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Proposed Introduction

The XIXth Congress of the International Organisation for the Study of the Old Testament (IOSOT) was held in Ljubljana, Slovenia from 15–20 July 2007. It was the first time that this esteemed international Old Testament society held its meeting in Eastern Europe. Except for the 1986 meeting in Jerusalem, all the previous seventeen meetings took place in Western Europe.

The President of the IOSOT during the term 2004–2007 was Prof. Jože Krašovec, a professor in Biblical Studies at the Theological Faculty in Ljubljana. His firm commitment to making this conference accessible to particularly Eastern European scholars was complemented by his invitation to Prof. Dr. Knut Holter to put together a special session on “Global Biblical Hermeneutics”, which would be scheduled as part of the programme. His desire was that reflection on the impact of the global world on our biblical interpretative endeavours should be stimulated by this special session.

The papers included in this volume, the first proceedings in the newly-established International Voices in Biblical Studies (an initiative of the International Cooperation Initiative of the Society of Biblical Literature), are the deliberations of a handful of international scholars who participated in, and contributed to, the special seminar at the Ljubljana IOSOT conference. They are offered here as a first volume in the new publication series, since this new series has the same objective as the Ljubljana session, namely to stimulate reflection on biblical hermeneutics on a global scale.

The volume covers three aspects in different sections, reflecting the structure of the original session at the Ljubljana conference. Firstly, the paper by Prof. Knut Holter provides an overview of the geographical and institutional context of our global hermeneutical endeavours. A second section offers some case studies from different parts of the world. Dr. Gerlinde Baumann from Germany grapples with the position of women and violence in biblical interpretation, Prof. Roy May addresses the issue of land in biblical interpretation in Latin America, and Prof. Mary Jerome Obiorah engages with women readers of the Bible in her Nigerian context. The third section explores the consequences of the global hermeneutical context for biblical interpretation (particularly in the paper by Prof. Louis Jonker) and Bible translation (in the contribution from Dr. Aloo Mojola). Since all scholars who participated in the mentioned conference session are specializing in Old Testament / Hebrew Bible the illustrative materials are mainly taken from the Old Testament.

When one reads the contributions in these first three sections, one becomes aware of the fact that the global context or globalization as such, is valued in different ways. In some papers (particularly those of Holter, Baumann, Obiorah and Jonker) globalization is described very positively as the context that provides the opportunity to challenge contexts of oppression, and to invite different

methodological approaches and ideological viewpoints to a liminal space of communality and inter-contextuality. In other essays (such as those of May and Mojola) globalization is closely associated with the project of imperialism. There, a negative evaluation of globalization is given. When biblical scholars talk about globalization some dissonances can be detected.

In an afterword Prof. Knut Holter therefore reflects on why this might be. He comes to the conclusion that contemporary biblical interpretation is part of the modern globalization project from at least two perspectives: The first perspective acknowledges the fact that we today face a global distribution of communities that interpret the Bible, whereas the second perspective acknowledges—and in some cases tries to counteract—the fact that these globally distributed interpretative communities tend to prolong the traditionally Western hegemony of biblical interpretation.

The papers included in this volume have been peer-reviewed by two internationally renowned scholars in the field. Our gratitude goes to them for helping to ensure the academic quality of this work, as well as to the contributors who made their work available for publication in this volume.

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