

## A story of two ways : thirty years of Old Testament scholarship in South Africa

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### Abstract:

This is a research history. It deals with the work of some South African Old Testament scholars and covers the period from 1957 to 1987. The year 1957 serves as tenninus a quo because the Old Testament Society of South Africa was founded in that year. It was Albertus van Zyl who took the first step in this direction. After an overseas visit, during which he attended a congress on the study of the Old Testament, he approached Adrianus Van Selms and Barend Gemser with the request to establish a similar organisation in South Africa. They took things further and in December 1957 the Old Testament Society of South Africa was formed. Of course important work was done before that period, but this event gave a new impetus to Old Testament study in South Africa. Since that day in 1957 a vast number of books, theses and articles on the Old Testament have been published, and it was therefore decided to take 1987 as terminus ad quem. Thirty years of Old Testament study have thus been discussed. Perhaps one day these years will be called the 'golden era' of Old Testament scholarship in South Africa.

An attempt has been made to write a history and not a chronicle - not the mere accumulation of biographical or bibliographical information, but a history dealing with people and their views on the Old Testament. And the people we are writing about have all been or are members of the Old Testament Society of South Africa. Within these circles the study of the Old Testament has developed and flourished. It soon became apparent that not all scholars can be discussed and not all the literature can be mentioned in this history. We have therefore decided to identify a few leading figures and build the history around them. They are the main representatives of Old Testament study and their work reflects the typical features of South African scholarship.

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