Editorial – Eben Scheffler Festschrift

HTS Theological Studies honours a dedicated scholar and a dear friend who has enriched our lives and our scholarship in many different ways. Eben Hans Scheffler was born on 16 February 1953 in Zoutpansberg (Louis Trichardt, Makado), South Africa, and historically fits into a very formative period in South African biblical scholarship between the beginning of the 1970s and the mid-1990s.

Scheffler was intellectually formed by this period. He appropriated what was scholarly of value but in the end viewed this movement with some scepticism. His scholarly contribution is varied, but from his books and articles we can distinguish at least five characteristics. Firstly, he is both an Old Testament and a New Testament scholar, which caused an interesting blending of views from both Testaments. Secondly, he illustrated the relevance of the Old Testament and New Testament for today by identifying present-day themes like suffering, poverty and inequality, which he investigated from a biblical perspective. Thirdly, he emphasised the importance of biblical archaeology for the understanding of the world in which the Old Testament and New Testament took shape. Fourthly, in many of his publications he also highlighted the importance of psychology and psychological concepts for the comprehension of the Bible. Fifthly, he will always be remembered for the joy he has taken in being a biblical scholar and for immersing himself in the constant study and research of the Old Testament and New Testament. (This can also be seen in the huge library he has built for himself over the years.)

Scheffler developed and matured as a scholar at two universities in Pretoria. One was the University of South Africa and the other, the University of Pretoria where he studied theology and in 1988 obtained the degree of Doctor of Divinitatis in New Testament (cum laude) with a dissertation on suffering in Luke’s Gospel, which was published by Theologischer Verlag, Zürich. He spent 2 years in military service and became a chaplain in the South African Navy. After military service, he joined the University of South Africa (UNISA) as a lecturer in 1980. From 1991 to 1992 he worked as an associate professor and from the end of 1992 until his retirement in 2018 he served as a full professor. He was also a guest professor at many institutions, such as St. Peter’s Seminar, St John Vianney Seminar in Pretoria and the University of Pretoria, amongst others.

A number of master’s and doctoral students have completed their theses under his guidance and he himself was an external examiner of many postgraduate students from different universities. He has served on the editorial board of distinguished journals such as Neotestamentica and Old Testament Essays, contributed many articles to these and other journals, and also authored and co-authored a number of books. He is a keen traveller and has visited Israel often, excavated at Hazor, and attended and presented many papers at South African and international congresses.

Eben Scheffler has a long and productive career and he has also touched the lives of many students, friends and colleagues, and we are extremely grateful for this.

When colleague and co-editor Christo Lombaard suggested that an Eben Scheffler Festschrift should be compiled, the response was immediate and warm. The editors, Jurie le Roux and Christo Lombaard, would like to express their sincerest gratitude to all authors who contributed and submitted excellent articles.

We are all greatly indebted to Prof. Andries van Aarde, the editor in-chief of HTS Theological Studies, who made this project possible, to all the reviewers for reading and commenting on the articles, and to the team of AOSIS for their exceptionally professional editing of all the contributions.

We all thank Eben Scheffler for his contribution to our scholarship and we wish him all the best for the years ahead.

Note: The collection entitled ‘Eben Scheffler Festschrift’, sub-edited by Jurie H. le Roux (University of Pretoria) and Christo Lombaard (University of South Africa).
Eben Hans Scheffler’s curriculum vitae

- Born 16 February 1953 in Zoutpansberg (Louis Trichardt, Makado), South Africa.
- School: Die Hoërskool Nelspruit.
- Married to Margaretha Scheffler (née Van Niekerk, Career Counselling Psychologist).
- Citizenship: South African, German.

Formal study

- Baccalaureus Artium (cum laude, 1973) from the University of Pretoria.
- Baccalaureus Artium Honores (combined degree in Greek and Semitic languages) (cum laude, 1975) from the University of Pretoria.
- Baccalaureus Divinitatis (1976) from the University of Pretoria.
- Postgraduate Diploma in Theology (cum laude, 1978) from the University of Pretoria.
- Non-degree purposes: Psychology III (cum laude, 1980) from the University of South Africa (UNISA).
- Examination Doctorandus in Theology (cum laude, 1980), University of Pretoria.

Academic positions and professional activities

- 1978: University of South Africa: Research Assistant at the Research Institute for Theology and Religion
- 1979: Minister (Chaplain) in the South African Navy (forced military service)
- 1991–1992: Associate Professor in Old Testament and Biblical studies, UNISA.
- 2001–2003: Guest Professor: St. Peter’s Seminar and St John Vianney Seminar in Pretoria (two hours per week, History of Israel, and History of Israel’s literature).
- Study leader and co-study leader of seven completed master’s dissertations.
- Regular peer reviewing of academic articles (about five per year).
- 1985–2017: Periodical member of various committees of the Faculty of Theology at UNISA: Bursary Committee, Public Relations Committee, Steering Committee of the Research Institute for Theology and Religion, Steering Committee for the Discussion Group for Experimental Theology and Faculty Research Committee.
- 1993–2000: Member of the Senate, UNISA.
- 1990–2017: Chair of research committee at the Department of Old Testament, UNISA.
- 2005–2018: Member of Higher Degrees Committee, Department of Biblical and Ancient Studies, University of South Africa.

Membership of and activity in scholarly societies

- Missiological Society of South Africa.
- South African Society for Jewish Studies.
- Pro Pent Seminar (for the study of the Pentateuch; occasional assistance in organisation).
- European Association for Biblical Studies.

Academic visits

- 1992: Research (early history of Israel) at the University of Heidelberg, Germany: Interaction with Prof. Manfred Weippert and Helga Weippert, and Axel Knauf.
- 1995: Participation in archaeological excavations at Nahal-Tilah (Director T. Levy) and extensive visits to
archaeological sites in Egypt, Israel and Jordan (e.g. Cairo, Luxor, Jerusalem, Jericho, Bet-Shemesh, Dan, Hazor, Megiddo, Sephoris, Caesarea, Dor, Beersheba, Arad, Qumran, Massada, Lagish, Acco, Gerasa, Amman, Tell-Hesbhan, Petra); Research in Jerusalem (Ecole Biblique, intensive interaction with Prof. Hartmund Stegemann on Qumran).

- 2001: Visit to archaeological sites in Greece (e.g. Acropolis, Olympia, Delphi, Mycene, Meteora, Sparta, Epidauros and Corinth).
- 2002: Stellenbosch: Postgraduate Seminar; Guest lectures (Poverty in Dt 15; Poverty in Lk 16).
- 2004: Munich: International Pro Pent Seminar (presented a paper on poverty in Dt 15).

- 2010–2012: Three times participation in archaeological excavations at Hazor (director A Ben-Tor). Visit to archaeological sites (Chorazin, Capernaum, Magdala, Megiddo, Dan, Jericho, Jerusalem, Qumran, Massada and Aradand Beersheba).
- 1977–2018: Regular participation in NTSSA.
- 1980–2018: Regular participation in all international SBL and EABS conferences.

Public and social service
- Minister in the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa (occasional preaching).
- Occasional participation in television debates on current religious themes.
- Popular public lectures in various congregations and the C.B. Powel Bible Centre (UNISA).
- Tourist Guide (Gauteng, South Africa).

Publications

Books (sole author)
- 1996, Prediker se positiewe raad, UNISA, Pretoria.

Books (editor or co-editor)

Books (co-author)


Articles in accredited scholarly journals


Unpublished papers


- 2016, ‘Putting Qumran, Jesus and his movement into relief’, HTS Theological Studies 72(4), 1–10.
- 2017, ‘Royal care for the poor in Israel’s first history: The Royal Law (Deuteronomy 17:14–20), Hannah’s Song (1 Samuel 2:1–10), Samuel’s warning (1 Samuel 8:10–18), David’s attitude (2 Samuel 24:10–24) and Ahab and Naboth (1 Kings 21) in intertext’, Scriptura 116(2) (Special edn.), 160–174.

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Author(s) contributions

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