1 Introduction

“Het Oudtestamentisch Werkgezelschap in Nederland en België” has a long tradition of historical critical research into the Old Testament. In the last decade, the diversity in the methods of research used in this field has increased. In addition, the question persists as to how neutral the theological study of the Old Testament can and should be. It highlights the reality that people from various world-views and cultures are involved in projects to interpret the Bible.

In this article I will introduce two projects, the first regarding the twelve-part *Old Testament Study Bible*, published in 2004–2015, and then the project leading to the book *Theology of the Old Testament*, published in 2013. Next to my role as researcher and author, other professors and teachers of the *Christelijke Hogeschool Ede* (CHE) in Ede, the Netherlands, and the *Evangelical Theological Faculty* in Leuven, Belgium have been involved in these two projects. In this article I will point out specifics about the aforementioned publications and situate these projects in a historical perspective. Lastly, I will share plans for future publications.

Regarding my habitus in the field of Old Testament, I want to disclose the following. As a student at the University of Leiden, I have been influenced by Professor Piet A.H. de Boer in study of the Old Testament. He repeatedly pointed out the need to go ‘ad fontes’ and to be critical of any belief or theory. I learned a lot from him, even though we went down different roads theologically. He stimulated us as students to become acquainted with *Old Testament Studies* and *Vetus Testamentum* early on. In the 1970’s we were also allowed to attend one of the meetings of the “Oudtestamentisch Werkgezelschap”, which he had co-founded in 1939. Professor de Boer retired in 1978 and was

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* The locations of schools in the title of this article are named to distinguish our work from related approaches in Apeldoorn and Kampen, The Netherlands. I am grateful to Johan Hegeman for the improvement of the English language in this article.
succeeded by Martin J. Mulder, who supervised the writing of my dissertation, *Het Archimedisch punt van de Pentateuchkritiek*, concerning the reputed dating of Deuteronomy during the reign of King Josiah.¹

2 Studiebijbel Oude Testament

Shortly after my appointment as professor of Old Testament in the department of *Godsdienst Pastoraal Werk* (Christian Ministries and Church Work) at the Christelijke Hogeschool Ede, I was asked to chair the publication of a Dutch series of Bible commentaries on the Old Testament.² Previously, a series on the New Testament had been completed (17 volumes, including word studies). This project with the name *Studiebijbel Oude Testament* or Study Bible Old Testament (abbreviated SBOT) began in 2002. The objective was to provide the reader with as much information as possible from the original Hebrew and Aramaic texts, without needing to be familiar with these languages. Because the Hebrew text and an interlinear translation are included, the SBOT approach differs from ordinary Bible commentaries. The layout is also different from usual, for the left reading page contains the Hebrew text and interlinear spacing with transliteration and word-for-word translation. Strong’s numbers give the reader the facility to check if words are derived from the same verb and to check concepts in word studies. This page also contains a compilation of the most commonly used Dutch Bible translations with emphasis on differences. This allows the reader to see at a glance whether the information or the translation is fairly fixed, or whether multiple variations exist.

The explanation is provided on the right reading page in the main text, where also two or three explanations can be mentioned. The bottom of the pages contains notes explaining Hebrew words, other possibilities of interpretation and references to literature. Geographic maps and drawings are also


² In the intermediate years I contributed six pieces to W.A. VanGemeren (ed.), *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis (NIDOTTE)*, 5 volumes, Grand Rapids 1997.