

P. A. H. DE BOER

On 5 August 1989, Pieter Arie Hendrik de Boer died at Oegstgeest after a long illness. His services to Old Testament scholarship, to the International Organization for the Study of the Old Testament, to *Vetus Testamentum*, and to the establishment and work of the Peshitta Institute have been outstanding. Tribute was paid to him in this journal when he reached the age of 70 (*VT* 30/4 [1980]); but it is fitting that the record of his achievements and the quality of the man himself should again be remembered.

He was born at Woubrugge on 14 June 1910, and spent the whole of his working life at the University of Leiden, where he held the Chair of Old Testament from 1938 until his retirement in 1978. He was also for a time Rector of the University. His first substantial publication was his doctoral dissertation, submitted in 1938 at his own University: *Research into the text of I Samuel I-XVI* (Amsterdam, 1938), a work which indicated his principal academic interest, the text and ancient versions of the Old Testament, an interest reflected in later years in sundry articles and more substantially in his critical edition of the Hebrew text of 1 and 2 Samuel for *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (1976) and in his edition of the Peshitta version of these books (1978). Specialization in textual matters did not restrict the range of de Boer's researches. The full list of his publications reveals a catholicity of interest and expertise. His literary production alone constitutes an important contribution to Old Testament study. Moreover, he edited *Oudtestamentische Studiën* from 1941 till 1969, *Studia Post-Biblica* from 1959 till 1970, *Vetus Testamentum* from 1951 till 1975, and its *Supplements* from 1953 till 1974. He also edited *The Old Testament in Syriac according to the Peshitta Version* from 1959 till 1980 and the *Monographs of the Peshitta Institute* from 1972 till 1981.

The wartime occupation of the Netherlands was for de Boer a period of acute difficulty and constant danger. He was arrested, imprisoned, and released. He then assumed the name Dominus Duyfhuis and continued to meet his students at clandestine locations.

When the war was over there was an urgent need to renew contacts and co-operation between scholars in different countries.

At an international meeting of Old Testament scholars organized by the Dutch Society for Old Testament Study and held at Leiden from 30 August till 2 September 1950, proposals were made and adopted for the establishment of the International Organization of Old Testament Scholars (the name was changed to its present form some years later) and for the publication of an international Old Testament quarterly, *Vetus Testamentum*, with de Boer as Secretary of its internationally representative Editorial Board. His energy and organizing ability were impressively evident in the furtherance of these decisions. The first number of *Vetus Testamentum* appeared just four months later. The first Congress of the new Organization was held in Copenhagen in 1953. Professor Aage Bentzen, who was to have been its President, died less than three months before it was due to meet. De Boer was one of the colleagues who took up the task of carrying Bentzen's plans through to completion. His flair for management and seemingly boundless energy contributed in large measure to the success of the Congress. These qualities were displayed time and again in his service to the Organization in later years.

The proposal that a critical edition of the Peshiṭta version of the Old Testament should be prepared was favourably received at the Copenhagen Congress. After some years of consideration in committee of how the undertaking might be initiated, de Boer was appointed editor-in-chief at the Oxford Congress of 1959. In the establishment of the Peshiṭta Institute in Leiden, the direction and co-ordination of the work of colleagues, in his travels in Europe and the Near East to visit libraries, churches, monasteries and private collections in search of additional manuscript material, and in his own edition of 1 and 2 Samuel, de Boer's contribution to the project was immense.

Honours came to him from various quarters. The Universities of St Andrews and Cambridge both conferred on him the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity. The British Academy awarded him its Burkitt Medal for special service to Biblical Studies. In his own country his merit was recognized by his being made Ridder in de Orde van de Nederlandse Leeuw.

In recalling Piet de Boer's distinguished work, many will remember also his staunch friendship, his readiness to help colleagues, and the warm and generous hospitality of his home. In everything that he did he had the devoted support of his wife Joop.

To her and to their family we extend our deep sympathy and the assurance that Piet's distinguished service to the International Organization for the Study of the Old Testament and to *Vetus Testamentum* and the Peshiṭta project is remembered with gratitude and pride.

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