

Jacobus Naude

From: Jacobus Naude
Sent: 03 July 2016 08:28 AM
To: John Kutsko
Cc: Adina Moshavi; Tania Notarius; John Cook
Subject: RE: LBH resolution

Dear Dr. Kutsko,

Thank you for your letter of 20 May 2016 with the response to our appeal of 14 April. The members of the Steering Committee of the Linguistics of Biblical Hebrew (LBH) section share the Program Committee's goal of improving the Annual Meeting and enhancing its contributions to Bible scholarship. While we appreciate your efforts to resolve our situation, we are deeply concerned with the actual and possible outcomes of your decision and want to propose a compromise path going forward.

(1) We must admit that we are very confused about the proposed process of the re-evaluation in 2018: how we are to proceed to prepare for such a review, and what form would it take? We note that there is no provision within the Program Unit Chairs Handbook for such an extra review in the middle of a term. Your letter indicates that future review of the status of LBH as a section will be based upon (point 6):

- a. the extent to which the unit has demonstrated collaboration
- b. the representation of sessions filled via an open call for papers (at least one session each year), and
- c. the unit's plan for continuing collaboration (with philology and other units) and broad participation for the remainder of its term.

In our understanding, we are already working according to these criteria. Concerning points (a) and (c), we have laid out our plan for collaboration with other units in our initial application for renewal last September and we agree that joint sessions can be fruitful. For 2016 we have arranged a joint session with Biblical Poetry section; we are looking forward to the planned sessions with Philology and Hebrew Scripture (PHS) section in 2017 and 2018, and we are currently working to put together the 2017 joint session with the Qumran section on "Linguistics and Qumran Hebrew." The past track record of our section with regard to collaboration should be irrelevant to the Committee's decision. SBL requirements concerning section status have never indicated that joint sessions are required or are even a desideratum for sections. With regard to point (b), we regularly receive large numbers of proposals from researchers from a variety of demographic backgrounds, for both topical and open sessions. We expect to hold multiple sessions with excellent attendance in the coming years, as we have consistently done in the past. If "representation" has some other meaning that we have not intuited, we would appreciate clarification of this point.

Furthermore, we are deeply concerned that the requirements for the renewal of LBH and the status of LBH on the program change each time we ask for clarification. First, we were told that we must show impact, but once we demonstrated impact, it is now no longer a concern of the program committee. Then, we must show collaboration to remain a section, but when we asked for clarification as to the kind of collaboration, we were made into a seminar. The terms of your letter represent a further change in both the requirements for renewal and the status of LBH on the program. Considering all this we are troubled by the requirement that LBH must re-apply to SBL at the end of 2018. The midterm reevaluation would force us to go through a very time-consuming and exigent process. The situation which LBH is facing is unique, unprecedented, and therefore unfair.

(2) We want to unequivocally object to a requirement of constant, ongoing collaboration between LBH and PHS, and certainly to a future integration of the two sections. We have provided extensive documentation and statements from the most prominent philologists in the field against the notion that linguistics is not a valid discipline on its own and must be subsumed under philology. Both we and the Steering Committee of PHS are in agreement that the two sections have different orientations and address different scholarly issues. Prof Jeremy Hutton, one of the co-chairs of PHS, has stated that PHS would not want to have linguistic topics in their section on a regular basis because it would side-track them from their main work, and because they do not have the necessary expertise or interest to consider linguistic issues. We wish to reiterate our concern that the Program Committee's approach that linguistics must be subsumed under philology reflects a problematic agenda and is not in accord with the scholarly viewpoints of philologists or of Biblical Hebrew linguists. In practice this strategy will lead to the complete removal of Biblical Hebrew linguistics from the SBL Meetings' schedule, which will be a loss for everyone – Biblical Hebrew linguists, Hebrew philologists, the program committee and the SBL membership as a whole.

(3) Our most immediate concern, however, is your decision that LBH is to be converted to a seminar in 2017 and 2018 pending re-evaluation. You cite the Program Committee's assertion that the LBH unit "fits the model of a seminar more closely than a section." This characterization implies that LBH is the work only of a few marginalized specialists. We respectfully disagree with this assessment. The format of the seminar, which according to the SBL website deals with "long-range collaborative research topics/papers that require active participation and well-defined research topics or projects," is not suited to the work of LBH. Biblical Hebrew Linguistics does not deal with a single research topic; rather, it is a discipline which comprises a variety of research topics within Biblical Hebrew. The website states further that in seminars "unit chairs collect papers before meeting and distribute to participant group." This will not work for our sessions, which regularly attract audiences of sixty people or more, whose identities are not known to us ahead of time. The very large number of proposals received this year by LBH for 2016 additionally evidences its relevance for the broad scholarly community. In short, we are deeply concerned that conversion of LBH to a seminar, even on an interim basis, will eradicate any real chance to reestablish our section status and cause serious harm to our field. We are convinced that it is not in the interests of the Annual Meeting or the larger SBL membership.

(4) In the light of all of the above, we propose the following compromise course of action:

- a. LBH remains a section for the entirety of its term until 2021, when it will re-apply in the normal cycle. We are not ready to consider the possibility of a midterm full-scope re-application in 2018 in light of the unclear and constantly changing set of criteria by which LBH has been evaluated thus far, as noted above in (1).
- b. As we proposed as a part of a compromise in our letter to you of 14 April and as you agreed in your letter, the two sections, LBH and PHS, will have joint sessions in 2017 and 2018 (organised by both steering committees); in 2018 the steering committees will meet at the annual meeting to evaluate the success of these sessions on the basis of their contribution(s) to the advancement of both disciplines. We suggest to consider this evaluation meeting of two steering committees as a substitute for the mid-term re-evaluation that you suggest in your letter. In the event that the joint sessions are not considered *by the two sections* as worthwhile for our respective disciplines, the Program Committee's requirement of future joint sessions will be discontinued.

Please note that this arrangement provides a true compromise – LBH holds joint sessions with PHS and evaluate the possibilities of cooperation and the Program Committee agrees to allow us to remain a section (rather than a seminar).

As you know, the LBH section of the Annual Meeting has existed for over thirty years as a vibrant section on the program. Our sessions are an important and unique forum for the presentation of innovative work in the field of Biblical Hebrew linguistics. They also present an indispensable opportunity for scholars and students who are not linguists to learn more about the importance of our field to biblical studies. We hope you will accept our compromise proposal so that our section can continue its important work in the world of biblical scholarship.

Thank you very much for your time and attention to this matter.

Respectfully yours,

Jacobus A. Naude

Adina Moshavi

Tania Notarius

John A. Cook



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Transforming lives.*

*Inspireer uitnemendheid.
Verander lewens.*

From: John Kutsko [mailto:john.kutsko@sbl-site.org]

Sent: 11 May 2016 06:47 PM

To: Jacobus Naude <naudej@ufs.ac.za>

Subject: LBH resolution

Dear Jacobus,

Thank you for your patience as I reviewed the materials you sent alongside the correspondence regarding this matter from the Annual Meeting Program Committee. Attached please find the resolution to this matter following that review. I feel this is a good compromise that helps support the work of the LBH unit and its important contribution to the Annual Meeting and the discipline.

With all best wishes,

John

John F. Kutsko
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Jacobus Naude

From: John Kutsko <john.kutsko@sbl-site.org>
Sent: 08 July 2016 04:17 PM
To: Jacobus Naude
Cc: Adina Moshavi; Tania Notarius; John Cook; Charles Haws; anselm.hagedorn@rz.hu-berlin.de
Subject: RE: LBH resolution

Dear Jacobus,

Thank you for your response. What you propose is not a compromise but a declaration of your own terms. The options before the Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew unit are what I laid out in my previous letter. You appealed to me, and after my careful review of the issues and the correspondence, the 10 May resolution is the final decision. Should you not find that option a satisfactory compromise, the unit can choose to dissolve at the conclusion of the 2016 Annual Meeting. That would be a shame, however, since it is my judgment that the Annual Meeting Program Committee, with my compromise, has sought to continue the unit's work.

Sincerely,

John

John F. Kutsko
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Visit the public face of SBL: Bible Odyssey at <http://www.bibleodyssey.org>

From: Jacobus Naude [mailto:naudej@ufs.ac.za]
Sent: Sunday, July 3, 2016 2:28 AM
To: John Kutsko
Cc: Adina Moshavi; Tania Notarius; John Cook
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