

Anything new under the sun of African Biblical Hermeneutics in South African Old Testament Scholarship?: Incarnation, death and resurrection of the Word in Africa

Authors:

Madipoane Masenya
(Ngwan'a Mphahlele)¹
Hulisani Ramantswana¹

Affiliations:

¹Department of Biblical and Ancient Studies, University of South Africa, South Africa

Correspondence to:

Hulisani Ramantswana

Email:

ramanh@unisa.ac.za

Postal address:

PO Box 392, University of South Africa 0003, South Africa

Dates:

Received: 15 Apr. 2014

Accepted: 20 Oct. 2014

Published: 25 Mar. 2015

How to cite this article:

Masenya (Ngwan'a Mphahlele), M. & Ramantswana, H., 2015, 'Anything new under the sun of African Biblical Hermeneutics in South African Old Testament Scholarship?: Incarnation, death and resurrection of the Word in Africa', *Verbum et Ecclesia* 36(1), Art. #1353, 12 pages. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/ve.v36i1.1353>

Copyright:

© 2015. The Authors.
Licensee: AOSIS
OpenJournals. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution License.

Read online:



Scan this QR code with your smart phone or mobile device to read online.

In this article, two lenses are used to engage the task of African Biblical Hermeneutics. The one lens is derived from African wisdom, *i shavha i sia muinga i ya fhi?*, in which there is a need for people to affirm their own roots. Drawing from the wisdom of the preceding proverb, we argue that, in their scholarship, African biblical scholars have to take seriously their own African heritage and thus do justice to their contexts rather than rely heavily on Western paradigms if their scholarship is to impact communities and also contribute towards shaping the face of biblical hermeneutics as a whole. The other lens is an analogy derived from the following events in Jesus' life: incarnation, death and resurrection. The task of African Biblical Hermeneutics has to be a three-fold process for the Bible to be 'gospel' in Africa: Firstly, the incarnation of the Word – the Bible as the Other has to incarnate into African contexts for it to become an African Word. Secondly, the death of the Word – this entails a critical engagement with the Word from multiple perspectives for it to be relevant to the struggles of African people. Thirdly, the resurrection of the Word – the biblical text has to be allowed to address and transform an African person in new creative ways.

Introduction

La go hlabela o le orele, ka moso le hlabela ba bangwe, literally, once the sun('s) (rays) has/have set on you, enjoy the moment as tomorrow, it/they will set on others. The rise of colonialism on the African continent forcefully replaced the rays of the African sun with those of the Euro-Western sun. In the process, Africans were indoctrinated on a large scale to accept Western frameworks and philosophies. The colonial mind-set became our lot.¹ Is it surprising that, in 2013, an African head of state would say: 'We can't think like Africans, in Africa, generally' (Zuma 2013).² Masenya (ngwan'a Mphahlele) (2004) postulated as follows regarding South African Old Testament scholarship:

[O]urs is a theological education characterized by one assuming role of an insider in one context and that of an outsider in another context. One becomes an insider as one is being trained as a student, an insider to the theologies which are foreign to oneself, an insider as one does research. If the research is not played according to the rules inside the game, it will not earn this 'insider/outsider' accreditation to the Western academic status quo, which itself remains basically an outsider to the status quo. (p. 460)

The demise of colonialism supposedly ushered back in the rays of the African sun. An African was supposed to sing: 'Yours this land and all its riches, yours the sun in the sky' (Césaire 1968:9). What is sad though is that the rays of the African sun shine on African land, riches and people burdened by a colonial mind-set.

In the present text, we reflect on the sun (rays) from the perspective of the discipline of African Biblical Hermeneutics (ABH) with a particular focus on selected scholars from South African Old-Testament scholarship. Looking at the history of the discipline and developments as well as trends discernible from the field, could we argue with Qoheleth in the Hebrew Bible that there is nothing new under the sun (of ABH) (Qoh1:9), or could we argue to the contrary? In our attempt to engage the preceding question, we plan to use two hermeneutical lenses to view the task of ABH. The first hermeneutical lens is derived from African (South African) wisdom: *Vhavenda vha ri, i shavha i sia muinga i ya fhi?* [The Vhavenda people say, if you run away from your own path, where

1.The words of Dube come to mind here: '... imperialism proceeded by denying the validity of the narratives and values of the victims, while it imposes its own "master narratives" on them' (Dube 1997:21).

2.President Jacob Zuma, speaking at the ANC Manifesto forum at Wits University on 21 October 2013. The president uttered the statement in an attempt to encourage the public to register for the e-tolling system on the Gauteng highways.

are you headed?]. Informed by the wisdom underlying the preceding proverb, we suggest that African biblical scholars have to stay put and be comfortable with who they are and what they have. They must be wary of running away from their African selves or identities and relying heavily on Western paradigms. If their scholarship is to impact positively on grassroots communities, African biblical scholars have to take seriously their own African epistemologies, philosophies and frameworks. In a nutshell, African context(s) need(s) to occupy centre stage in their scholarship. The second hermeneutical lens through which we engage our main research question is derived from the key events as they are linked to the person of Jesus in the Second Testament, that is, the incarnation, death and resurrection. In its engagement with the Christian Bible, which is a critical book within biblical studies in general, African biblical hermeneutists might benefit by employing the Bible as follows.

Firstly, the incarnation of the Word – the Bible as the ‘Other’ (cf. its package of colonial and missionary histories) has to incarnate into our African contexts in ways which will enable African people to identify with it. The Bible as a book of faith has to become an African Word by taking an African form in terms of language and conceptual framework, amongst others.

Secondly, the death of the Word is used to refer to the critical engagement with a biblical text through the lens of African philosophies, frameworks and the experiences of the struggles of African peoples. In our view, in the preceding interaction, there might be a possibility of mutual benefit between the two texts, that is, the text of the Bible and the African context as a text. Symbolically, we put to death the Word when we critically engage it from various perspectives. Thus, we become partakers in the death of the Word in Africa.

Thirdly, the resurrection of the Word is used to refer to room given for the biblical text to address and transform an African person in new creative ways, depending on the nature of the text being employed. As already noted, even Africa as a text has something worthy to offer to the biblical text.

Based on the preceding introductory remarks, the present article is premised on the following definition of ABH: The art of understanding and/or interpreting the Christian Bible by exegetes or interpreters who, though conscious and acknowledging the importance of the contexts of the production of various biblical books, approach the Christian Scriptures first and foremost informed by their identities as African people and their social location on the African continent. In line with the proverbial runner, the hermeneutists choose not to run away from their African identity and context(s). The struggles, joys, sorrows, positives and negatives of their African social location of necessity have to shape how they do Old Testament (Biblical) Studies, including how they do biblical hermeneutics.

I shavha i sia muinga i ya fhi?

As previously stated, one of the effects of colonialism on the African mind-set was that of an inferiority complex.

The latter complex meant that African people despised their Africanness and basically upheld (Euro) Western paradigms as the norm and standard. Looking at the history of colonialism and *apartheid* with their repression and imperialism, we wonder whether the colonial subjects had the option to stick to their own ways. For example, if the traditional forms of education became forcefully replaced by the Western mould of education, with the latter being the one which was positively rewarded, which option did our foremothers and forefathers have but to run away from their own ways in pursuit of ways which concretely promised rewards? In his ‘Africa and the future of our scholarly past’, Le Roux (2008:307–323) makes a plea to African scholars to appropriate the critical intellectual tradition of the West because, in his view, it has contributed significantly to the way in which we understand the Old Testament. Although we cannot dispute the significant contribution which the ‘critical’ Western tradition has made to scholarship, we are not convinced that its critical nature was exhausted enough, at least by the majority of South African biblical scholars then, and dare we say even today. If it was so, it would have enabled its proponents not only to critique the biblical texts and their contexts of production, it would have enabled the tradents to also be critical of the social injustices which were happening in *apartheid* South Africa, perpetrated by the use of the same Bible. In a recent article, Masenya (ngwan’ a Mphahlele) and Ramantswana (2012:634) argued that the tendency to regard the Western paradigms as the norm, which we all have to mimic in our contexts, results in mere duplication of the Western environments in the South African context. In our view, it is pertinent for African people to affirm their Africanness. We have a responsibility to cherish our African heritage in a global context, one which continues to demand that we redecorate ourselves according to Western norms and standards.

The Tshivenda saying, ‘*i shavha i sia muinga i ya fhi?*’ is rendered literally: ‘*running away from your own path, where are you heading?*’ The underlying meaning of the preceding proverb is that people should not just abandon their own things and run after other people’s business because, as they do the latter, they undermine and undervalue their own esteemed and valuable things. In the context of Africa’s colonial history, the preceding proverb ought to be understood as a call towards de-colonisation and the revival and affirmation of our Africanness as well as our African heritage. As already noted, the colonial mind-set was an imposition from outside. In the process, Western paradigms became the norm, absorbing, ploughing under or pushing to the periphery African cultures (Cloete 2003:269). This reminds us of the words of Biko (1986) that:

... the black man [*sic*] has developed a certain state of alienation, he [*sic*] rejects *himself* [*sic*] precisely because he [*sic*] attaches the meaning white to all that is good, in other words he [*sic*] equates good with white. This arises out of his [*sic*] living and it arises out of his [*sic*] development from childhood. (p. 100)

The way out of the preceding conundrum is not a mere acceptance that we live in a postmodern era in which Africa is

recognised as one amongst many. In our view, fundamental change can only come as Africans assert and affirm their humanity. Such an affirmation begins not with the running away from the African self but with the coming to terms first and foremost with the African self and not with the other. Africans are amongst many others, and the latter are because we are.

The following aspects may be drawn from the proverb of our interrogation.

Identity

In affirming and/or asserting their Africanness, Africans rediscover their soul.³ According to Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013), the preceding statement needs to be situated within the understanding that:

[W]hat exist as African identity or identities are products of complex histories of domination, resistance, complicity, creolization, mimicry – all mediated by various vectors of identity such as race, ethnicity, gender, class, region and generation. (p. 123)

Although we acknowledge the complexity of defining an African identity, what is pertinent to us is more the affirmation of our African identity than its definition. Africans are who we are.⁴ An affirmation of our identity as Africans is an appreciation of our African selves. In his famous 'I am an African' address, Thabo Mbeki did not offer a technical definition of an African identity. Rather, Mbeki affirmed and asserted his African identity by associating himself with the land, its landscape, the animal kingdom, the history of the land and its people, amongst others. The latter history is located within the context of colonialism and slavery, institutions through which some came to the land whilst others had their lands taken away from them. An affirmation of our identity as Africans is an appreciation of our African selves. It entails pride in the African self, irrespective of our ethnicity, gender, skin pigmentation, nationality, social class, sexual orientation, region or geography and religion, amongst others.

What comes to mind here is the text of Jeremiah 13:23: 'Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots?' (Revised Standard Version [RSV]). The need to affirm our God-given skin pigmentation is also revealed by Biko (1986) when he said:

Black Consciousness ... takes cognizance of the deliberateness of God's plan in creating black people black. It seeks to infuse the black community with a new-found pride in themselves, their value systems, their culture, their religion and their outlook to life. (p. 49)

Inspired by the philosophy of Black Consciousness, as Africans we need to take pride in ourselves and be determined to rise and attain the envisaged self.

3.Thabo Mbeki also speaks about the rediscovery of the soul of Africa (see Boesak 2005:42).

4.The quest is for Africans to define their identity in their own terms.

Social location

To be African is to belong to a 'place' – it is to be socially located. We do not exist in a vacuum, nor do we live in a transcendental space. Ramose (2005:151) states: 'My place and space within a particular time are contemporaneously the inscription and description of my identity.' The African continent is our home, our dwelling place. Africa is our home not by choice, but by divine providence. The place in which we are, the one to which we belong, is the place from which we read. For us, Africa is the place from which we read and engage with the Bible. Reading from this place implies an acceptance of our socio-historic situatedness. The latter compels us to take seriously the concerns of the African people in all that we do, including our hermeneutical endeavours. Our immediate social location within the broader African context is the South African context.

An African mind-set

For former colonial subjects, thinking like Africans in Africa is both a restorative and a generative process. Decolonisation cannot be complete whilst Africans continue to depend on Western paradigms at the neglect of their rich heritage. The development of an African mind-set is a process in which those who were objects of Western paradigms revisit their knowledge systems and cultures to extract lessons for the current moment in a bid to become participants and producers of knowledge in a global context.

Thinking like Africans in Africa

The colonisers conceived of African persons as a *tabula rasa* which needed to be filled with knowledge necessary to enable the West to control them. Christianity, education and culture were instruments of control (Ntuli 2002:54). The African Renaissance's call for restoration and valuing of indigenous knowledge is the call to take pride in the heritage of our forefathers and foremothers. The desire to live in the moment does not require people of African descent to abandon their rich heritage such as the symbols, proverbs and myths inherited from their forefathers and foremothers. As Asante (2007:75) argues, '[I]t is the acceptance of classical African past, the rejection of self-hatred, the denial of nihilism, and the embracing of humanity that will lead to a new resurgence of African cultures.'

In our view, it is only when we think like Africans in Africa that we can hope to meaningfully address the challenges which face Africans today. Thabo Mbeki's call for 'African solutions to African problems', as Okolo (2010:105) notes: '... speaks to the African's initiative spirit and inventiveness: the fact that Africa should start playing a major role in its affairs.'

Thinking like Africans in a global village

For Africans to contribute meaningfully in the global village, they are not required to abandon their African optic lenses. Rather, it is through such lenses that they are called upon to contribute to the global intercultural theological or biblical hermeneutics table as equal partners.

Loyalty to Africa

The hermeneutical lens *i shava i sia muinga i ya fhi?* should serve as a reminder to African scholars to remain loyal to Africa. The loyalty to Africa should not imply a wholesale embrace or even deification of the pre-colonial past. Neither should it entail complete complacency with the current postcolonial environment. The current *status quo* of Africa is not paradisiacal. To be loyal to Africa is to be concerned with the plight of African people, to take the African agenda at heart and to seek the good of African people. The loyalty to our immediate socio-political contexts, be it South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya, Ghana, Zimbabwe, Egypt or the African Diaspora, amongst others, should not blind us to the struggles of the rest of Africa.

Telling our own stories

To heed the proverbial saying of our interrogation is to be committed to telling our own stories. In telling our own stories, the unwritten African stories become written. The full stories should be told, whether they are stories of various forms of oppression or the life-giving stories provided by the richness of our continent. The stories should be told with a view to providing a holistic transformation of the lives of African peoples.

One way of reading amongst many other ways

The proverbial saying also reminds us that our way of reading is not the only way. There are other ways of reading. The acknowledgement of other ways of reading gives room for engagement and dialogue. ABH does not necessarily have to be viewed as setting itself over other ways of reading. It does, however, set itself against missionary-colonial imperialism and mainstream biblical scholarship which is detached from the social and political issues of our time. As Segovia (2006:42) reminds us with regard to postcolonial biblical hermeneutics, the choice is to see and to represent postcolonial studies ‘... as *unus inter pares*, otherwise, we easily turn it into an imperial discourse itself’. The failure to recognise other ways of reading would be to turn ABH into an imperial discourse.

With the African proverb as our hermeneutical lens, we contend that the starting point for ABH should be our African identity and the African context as our social location. Although we recognise the importance of the socio-historical contexts which produced biblical texts, we believe that it cannot be sufficient to do biblical studies in an African context by either remaining in the past of the biblical text and/or remaining at the level of its interrogation without letting it be incarnated in the lives of present-day flesh and blood Bible readers. This calls for a critical engagement with the African context, including both negatives and positives. We thus resonate with Mosala’s view that, in order to appropriate the Bible in any fruitful way, we have to begin with the ‘... critical appreciation of the history and culture of the hermeneuticians’ (Mosala 1989:98). The late Gunther H. Wittenberg (1991, 1993, 1996) emphasised the need for

biblical scholars to take the ordinary people in the grassroots communities as the dialogue partner when engaging the biblical text. In doing so, biblical scholars immerse themselves in the context of the poor, oppressed and marginalised with the aim of social transformation.⁵ Such an integration of the Bible with the daily struggles of people makes more sense in a context in which the Bible still enjoys its status as normative.

The incarnation, death and resurrection of the Word in Africa

In this part of the article, we utilise the following three concepts on the basis of the New Testament assertion of Jesus as the *Logos*, the Word in human form (Jn 1:1): incarnation, death and resurrection. So we can speak of the *Logos* or the Word in a threefold way: the incarnation of the Word, the death of the Word and the resurrection of the Word. In the Gospel according to John, the heavenly *Logos* became human, experienced human suffering and overcame suffering by coming to life again. We hasten to note, however, that the idea of the *Logos* in the Gospel of John is gendered – the masculine gender of the Greek term *logos* befits the male Jesus (Benages 2012:137). However, it is the concept of feminine *Sophia* that reverberates through the *Logos* concept (Johnson 1985:288). As Benages (2012:137) notes: ‘[W]e can affirm that in the prologue of John Jesus is not only the incarnate *logos* of God but also the incarnate *Sophia* of God.’

An analogy needs to be drawn between the *Logos* and the Bible, not just with the concept of incarnation as it is commonly done, but also with the concepts of the death and the resurrection of the Word.

Incarnational analogy

In Christian doctrine, incarnation is used to express the concept of God becoming human in Jesus Christ. Thus, Jesus is regarded as both God and human.⁶ In the gospel according to Matthew, Jesus is the Immanuel (God with us) – a messianic figure whose coming was regarded as symbolising God’s presence with humanity (see Mt 1). In the gospel according to John, Jesus is the *Logos*, whose coming to earth is regarded as symbolising divine presence (Jn 1:14).

The situatedness of the Bible in its ancient near eastern context

Incarnational analogy has been used by some to highlight the ‘situatedness’ of the Bible in its ancient near eastern context (Enns 2005; Sparks 2008). In ABH, the ‘situatedness’ of the Bible in an ancient context has to form part of preliminary understanding. The agenda of ABH is not simply with the incarnation of the Word *then*, but also with the incarnation of the Word *now*. If the Bible is to be meaningful in our African contexts, it has to incarnate into an African form – it has to

5. Wittenberg also established the Institute for the study of the Bible, which was later renamed Ujamaa, to function as an interface between academic biblical studies and grassroots, community-based Bible study (Farisani 2014:16).

6. The Christian doctrine of incarnation, as some tend to argue, privileges a male human being as the true model of humanity as well as God.

become an African Word. The Pentecost phenomenon has to become a living reality in our contexts. God understands and speaks our languages.⁷

The Bible as the Other in African contexts

The incarnation of the Bible in Africa does not call for the erasure of the memory of its Otherness. It is only when we recognise the Bible's Otherness that we can do justice to appropriating it for ourselves. The Bible came into being in space and time within the life of Israel, within Judaism, and the world of early Christianity. The erasure of this fact is to disembodiment the Bible of its form and vitality as a document of God's dealings with Israel in space and time. In its final form, the Bible is a product of a long history of development. In addition to the early presence of the Bible in North Africa, the Bible also came with the Europeans and was used as a tool to facilitate colonialism (see also Dube 2000:3).

Incarnational analogy implies that the Bible as the Other has to incarnate into our own African contexts in ways that African people can identify with it. The Bible has to come alive in our own African languages and cultures if it is to engage meaningfully with our African contexts. The understanding of the Bible as the Other and its 'situatedness' must be matched with the self-understanding of our languages and cultures into which it has to incarnate. As biblical scholars, we should not simply derive pride from knowing and understanding the biblical languages – Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek – and the cultures associated with the Bible whilst lacking knowledge of our indigenous languages and cultures.

The Bible in African languages

Bediako (2004:58) notes that the single most important element of Western missionaries was the translation of the Scriptures into African languages. Such translations meant that African people were able to access the Bible in their own languages, being conscious that God speaks their languages too. However, the Bible's translation by missionaries was not an entirely innocent process. Bible translation into African languages was also part of an endeavour to get Africans to dispose of their own cultures. Thus, in as much as Africans were gaining access to the Bible in their local languages, it was they who were the target of colonisation and Westernisation.

The Bible in African languages remains the most influential tool of rooting the Bible in African consciousness.⁸ If ABH is to have any influence, its influence should be felt most in Bible translations by enabling the Bible to incarnate into various African contexts. Mbiti's (1972) remark makes sense:

The Bible translation is not simply of biblical terms into equivalent African terms, but a translation of ideas, concepts, values and

7.As Ngugi wa Thiong'o notes regarding the role of vernacular language during the Reformation, 'Reformation as a whole could be seen as that which brought various European languages into the family of holy languages of Hebrew, Latin, and Greek, for which these languages could now lead the nationals directly to God. God understood vernacular' (Ngugi 2009).

8.We are also aware, however, of the limitations of foregrounding the Bible as written word within aural contexts such as ours.

thought systems from the Bible ... into African words, thoughts, worldviews and systems of thought. (p. 57)

Over and above the foundational phase of the translation of the Bible into indigenous languages by the missionaries, a need still remains for African biblical scholars, who are well acquainted with the cultures and languages, to engage in facilitating the Bible's incarnation process. This is particularly important when it is considered that there are about 150 complete Bibles which have been translated into indigenous African languages compared to about a thousand indigenous languages in Africa (Yorke 2012:166–167).

Death analogy

The enactment of the death at the Lord's Supper presents us with a viable model for conceptualising ABH. At the final supper with his disciples, Jesus took the bread and broke it and handed it to the disciples to eat. He also took the cup and handed it to them, and they all drank from it. The image that we need to have is of the disciples all partaking in the body and blood of Jesus. Similarly, the Bible is open for us all to partake in from our own perspective. Partaking in the body and blood of Jesus in some ways symbolised the disciples' participation in the death of Jesus.

This calls for ABH practitioners to partake in the Word through critical engagement with it from various perspectives, taking into consideration their own identity, social location and knowledge systems. In the process of this critical engagement with the Word, the oppressive and life-denying elements within the text should be put to death whilst simultaneously allowing the Word to carry the sufferings of Africa.

Multiple ways of partaking in the death of the Word

ABH should not be viewed as a monolithic project of engaging with the Bible. Rather, it should be viewed as an umbrella for various ways of partaking in the death of the Word in African-South African. Thus, various perspectives and methods can be utilised to engage both the biblical text and our contexts critically. The Bible has to suffer death in Africa through our critical engagement with it from various perspectives. In the South African context, at the dawn of the post-apartheid era, Deist (1992:312) called upon South African Old Testament scholars to give birth to 'an indigenous South African tradition of Old Testament Scholarship' rather than to simply follow on the heels of their European and American counterparts. As he reflected on black and African theology, Maluleke (1996:3–19) declared that it is '... a time to drink from our own wells'. In as much as we agree with Maluleke, we hasten to mention that it is also a time of digging more of our own wells. We focus specifically on the ways in which some of the works of South African Old Testament scholars have been partaking in the written *logos* since the dawn of democracy.

Bosadi hermeneutics (Madipoane Masenya [ngwan'a Mphahlele]): For Masenya (ngwan'a Mphahlele) (1997:439),

the socio-political context of African-South African women within which she moves and lives, given the history of marginalisation, is the lens through which she engages the text with the aim of bringing the text to bear on the current context. As Masenya (ngwan'a Mphahlele) (2005) states: 'I deliberately make my African-South African sisters' context the main hermeneutical focus.' This approach is critical towards both the Bible and the African-South African context as it challenges ideologies such as patriarchy, sexism, classism and racism. In this approach, the Bible is valued as a spiritual resource which women use to fight against life-denying elements and to embrace life-giving elements in the Bible and in the women's own cultural contexts (Masenya [ngwan'a Mphahlele] 2009:157–158). Masenya (ngwan'a Mphahlele) also continually draws from the rich resource of the Northern Sotho or Pedi proverbial wisdom in her engagement with the biblical text as a way of privileging the African conceptual framework in her scholarship.

Sociological hermeneutics (Elelwani Farisani): Farisani's sociological hermeneutics aims at analysing the ideologies embedded in the biblical text (Farisani 2002:643–646, 2003:27–50). In this approach, the world in which the text was produced becomes the hermeneutical focus to enable a successful socio-historical analysis of the text. For Farisani (2002:645), '... each and every text in the Bible is the product of its socio-historic context'. Farisani reads the Bible against the grain in order to retrieve the silenced and marginalised voices in the text. For Farisani (2002:645), an uncritical reading of the biblical text by simply accepting the dominant ideology perpetuates the exclusion and marginalisation of the oppressed and poor in the text. Farisani (2002:646) follows Mosala's view that biblical texts are coloured by the ideology of the author and, as such, not every biblical text is liberatory. Thus, for Farisani (2002:646, 2010:515), in order to avoid further oppressing the marginalised through the Bible, it is necessary to un-ideologise or engage in the de-ideologisation of the biblical text. The un-ideologisation or de-ideologisation is done by unmasking the oppressive ideology in the biblical text and by not perpetuating such an ideology in the current environment.

Postcolonial, post-apartheid Imbokodo hermeneutics (Makhosazana K. Nzimande): Nzimande (2008:223–258) appropriated the concept of *Imbokodo* from the 1965 South African women's struggle song against *apartheid* pass laws. In her view, the concept functions as a symbol of women's socio-political and socio-economic struggles. *Imbokodo* hermeneutics also draws from a variety of other approaches: Musa Dube's postcolonial feminist biblical hermeneutic, Mosala's historical and cultural-materialist hermeneutics in black theology in South Africa, African women's theologies and African-American Womanist theologies. In this approach, 'the black women's histories' are taken as the starting point of biblical interpretation. This hermeneutics is postcolonial and post-*apartheid* in orientation. It is concerned with the legacy of imperialism and colonialism which manifest through neo-imperialism and neo-colonial relationships that operate

within the globalisation framework (see Sugirtharajah 2006:7–44). In this approach, issues such as ethnicity, identity, class, gender and land, as they occur both in the biblical text and in the context of the modern day Bible reader, are dealt with critically from an *imbokodo* perspective.

Reading with Ordinary Readers (Gerald O West): In this approach, a socially engaged biblical scholar makes a deliberate move to take ordinary readers as key interlocutors. This approach is championed by Gerald West. Ordinary African readers, as West (2011:431–449) argues, take the Bible as a significant resource which they read and interpret as a written text. West (2006:321) takes his primary vocation as reading with the poor, the working class and the marginalised. Such a process of reading with the ordinary readers is what West (2006:321) refers to as being born again 'from below' for a biblical scholar. In this process of reading together, there is a sharing of resources between the two interlocutors in order to bring about social transformation (West 2011:448). This approach is one which West (2011:448) regards as 'contextual Bible reading' or 'contextual Bible study'.

Hermeneutics of Vulnerability (Gerrie Snyman): Snyman (2011a) describes this approach as follows:

Vulnerability refers to exclusion. Hermeneutics of vulnerability asks in what way the results of the reading of the Bible may lead to the exclusion of some people. The exclusion is based on the norm over which the excluded has no power, such as pigmentation, sexuality and gender. (p. 16)

He (Snyman 2005:34–55) locates himself as a 'colonial remnant' in a postcolonial, post-*apartheid* South African context. For Snyman, this new context demands of the colonial remnants with their loss of prevalence to construct a new identity, to adapt and to make their voices heard. The aim in this social identity is not to recover the lost position of prevalence, but the process of constructing a new social identity is problematised by the tendency to marginalise and confine the colonial remnants to the role of perpetrators. Snyman's hermeneutic of vulnerability also fits within the category of postcolonial approaches in that it seeks to unmask the privileged position of those who were in power in the dispensation of colonialism and *apartheid*. In doing so, Snyman seeks to unmask whiteness and the privileges it provided in history (Snyman 2011b:259–282, 2013). Snyman (2013) writes:

[W]ith whiteness ousted and its performers rendered shameful, a hermeneutics of vulnerability is suggested within an ethics of interpretation where readers become aware of readings that are exclusionary. In other words, when reading the biblical text now, a hermeneutics of vulnerability asks in what way the results of the reading of the Bible may lead to the exclusion of people. (p. 8)

This approach sensitises biblical interpreters to the ethical obligation that they have towards the other – not to destroy or violate the other (Snyman 2011a:17).

The various African approaches do not have to be viewed as mutually exclusive. Each of the approaches offers a

perspective on the text, yet there are blind spots to each approach. Each of these approaches has different rules governing its circularity and its claim for a centre. Each approach 'enriches as much as it impoverishes our perception of a text, heightening our awareness of a labyrinth of possible paths we may or may not take' (Sheppard 1988:60). The fallacy of supersession is unnecessary. The thread that runs through the approaches above is the deliberateness in taking the African context as the subject of interpretation. By choosing to make the African context the subject of interpretation, the formerly colonised and the former colonisers choose not to run away from their contexts. Rather, they engage the biblical text with the concerns of the African people in the much broader geopolitical context.

Dying of the Word unto itself: The oppressive elements in the text

Black Theology in South Africa problematised the biblical text in two ways: Initially, it was done through the recognition of the liberative elements within the text by focusing on liberation as a central motif with God on the side of the poor. Later, it was done through the recognition that there are oppressive elements in the biblical text. In the initial phase, the Bible was generally regarded as Word of God. The recognition of the oppressive elements in the text also brought to question the equation of the Bible with the Word of God. Such a critical view of the Bible was championed by Mofokeng (1988:34–42), Mosala (1989:18–20) and Maluleke (1996:10–12, 2005:481–484). The 'gender-sensitive biblical hermeneutics' in South Africa also share with black theology the critique of oppressive biblical texts, albeit with patriarchy as the main source of critique.

West (1992:9) reminds us that '... the hermeneutic debate in South Africa requires that we acknowledge the ideological nature of the biblical text'. Acknowledging the ideological nature of the text does not necessarily amount to denying the value of the Bible and its normative status for the Christian community. For us, it is a commitment to challenge and resist oppressive ideologies both in the text, in our African-South African context and in our global context. As Burghardt (1987:74) notes: 'Biblical texts reflect diverse experiences in ancient cultures, they are not just liberating texts, but they also codify the oppressive structures and mindsets of these cultures.' ABH requires the death of the oppressive elements both in biblical texts and in our present-day contexts.

Death of the written logos: Carrying the burdens of Africa

Each of the various approaches to ABH deals in one way or another with putting to death, through the written *logos*, multiple forms of life-denying forces. These could be cultural, political, economic, gender, social, racial, class or ethnic oppression, amongst others. The new postcolonial, post-*apartheid* era does not render as done the struggle to put to death all life-denying forces. No! The struggle continues. Partaking in the body and blood of Jesus is not a once-off thing. It is a continual thing – over and over again, we break the bread and drink the wine in remembrance of his suffering

on the cross. We do not crucify Jesus again and again. We do, however, nail to the cross the various national and global oppressive forces under which many African people suffered and continue to suffer. It is when the written *logos* takes up all forms of burden, oppression and injustice that it can be embraced as normative and thus functions effectively within communities of faith. In doing so, the written *logos* directs us to the human *Logos*, the Lamb of God who takes away the burdens, sufferings and oppression of Africa (see Jn 1:29).

Resurrection analogy

In as much as the resurrection of Jesus in the New Testament is presented as a historical reality, it is also presented as a symbol of transformation, new era, new birth, new life, new creation and a guarantee for eschatological resurrection. Although the resurrected Jesus is portrayed as having ascended to heaven after 40 days, the symbolism of the resurrection continues to be lived out in the here and now. The significance of the resurrection should not simply be focused on the promissory note that is often offered at funerals to comfort the bereaved. This comfort is seen to be the resurrection of the dead on the basis of the eschatological pillar of Pauline resurrection theology at the neglect of the symbolic pillar on which resurrection is a current reality that is lived out by faith, one which declares: 'I am a new creation.'

Wright speaks of the resurrection as a 'transforming reality'. He (Wright 1999) writes:

The deepest meanings of the resurrection have to do with new creation. If the stories are metaphors for anything, they are metaphors for the belief that God's new world has been brought to birth. When Jesus emerged, transformed, from the tomb on Easter morning, the event was heavy with symbolic significance, to which the evangelists drew attention, without wishing to detract from the historical nature of what they were talking about. It was the first day of God's new week, the moment of sunrise after the long night, the time of new meetings, new meals, of reconciliation and new commissioning. It was the beginning of new creation. (p. 126)

Thus, without symbolic meanings attached to it, the resurrection of Jesus from the dead becomes solely a historical event with no significance beyond itself. It is the symbolism that transformed the unique historical event into an event of significances beyond itself.

The resurrection of the Word in Africa speaks to the many symbolic meanings given to the ancient biblical text, thereby transforming it into a living Word. The interaction between our various African contexts as a text and the ancient biblical text which came into being through certain processes in history transforms the Word into a living reality in the present. A reading of the Word which simply focuses on the original authorial intentions confines the biblical text to its historical epoch. The Word is transformed into a living Word in the present in the dialogic interaction of those who make use of it in their current contexts.

Resurrection is a symbol of new life, and so, ABH should entail reading the Bible for resurrection with a view to addressing the concerns of contemporary contexts. Thus, the resurrection of the Word in Africa implies that the biblical text has to be allowed to address and transform the African person and communities in new creative ways in a continent where resurrected African bodies still bear the scars of imperialism and colonialism. The resurrected African bodies are in the land, yet these bodies continue to linger in poverty and continue to be ravaged by pandemics such as HIV and AIDS. They are in the land, but most of them do not own the resources of the land under the dictates of neo-imperialism and neo-colonialism. They are in the land and yet not reaping the full harvest due to the corruption and greed of many African leaders. They are in the land, yet having to pay to use public, or should we say privatised, facilities such as roads. They are in the land, and yet, they are killing each other again due to religious intolerance. They are in the land, yet living in fear due to sexual violations and the abuse of women and children. Yes, they are in the land, yet again having to sell bodies into slavery for the promise of development and economic growth.

The efficacy of the Word in Africa has to be evidenced by its ability to bring about positive transformation in Africa. We agree with Dada (2010:160–161) that '[t]he Bible in Africa holds tremendous possibilities for social transformation and development in spite of its negative uses in the past experiences of the continent'. For Ukpong (1995, 2000), in order for the Bible as a book of faith to bring about personal and societal transformation, it requires the interpreter, on the one hand, to make the African context the subject of interpretation and, on the other hand, to actualise the theological meaning of the text within that context. However, we hasten to note that care should be taken as not all theological meanings derived from the text are life giving. In the South African context, the theology of *apartheid* is a crude reminder of life-denying and oppressive theological meanings derived from the text. Furthermore, an interpreter has to read against the oppressive and life-denying elements in the text. ABH as a reading for resurrection implies that an interpreter has to take seriously the needs and plight of grassroots communities. The uncovering of the original context of the text, the development of the text and the stylistic and aesthetic appreciation of the text are all worthwhile exercise, yet without taking seriously the plight of people on the grassroots, such an exercise cannot be sufficient to address the needs of the readers in a holistic way. Reading for resurrection thus requires African biblical scholars to make their African contexts central to their praxis of hermeneutics.

Psalm 8 and the notion of black beauty

Before we conclude, we would like to provide the reader with a practical example of how the analogy of the incarnation, death and resurrection of Jesus could be applied to an

examination of a biblical text such as Psalm 8, informed by Stephen Biko's slogan 'black is beautiful'.

Biko's notion of 'Black is beautiful': A reflection

Informed by the working definition of what we understand by ABH, namely a hermeneutics in which a biblical text such as Psalm 8 is approached first and foremost informed by the perspective of an African identity of Bible readers and their location on the African continent, we would embrace a reading of Psalm 8 informed by Stephen Bantu Biko's slogan: 'Black is beautiful'. As such a reading was done elsewhere at length by Masenya (ngwan'a Mphahlele) (2014), in the following lines we shall provide the gist of the reading in order to give the reader an example of what ABH could entail.

Cognisant of a particular concern such as a lack of self-esteem amongst many African-South African, we utilise the critical philosophy of Black Consciousness to incarnate Psalm 8 into an African form and to enable it to 'die' as it will be made to address one of the struggles of the community under investigation. As a point of departure, we first reflect on Biko's notion of black beauty.

Through his slogan, 'Black is Beautiful', Biko made an attempt to conscientise black South Africans in *apartheid* South Africa to defeat the temptation of running away from their own paths (cf. the main proverbial lens of the present article). In his view, the black masses had to be comfortable with whom they were, with their own paths. Elsewhere Biko (Woods 1978) argued:

That slogan serves a very important aspect of our attempt to get at humanity. It challenges the very roots of the black man's [*sic*] belief about himself [*sic*]. When you say 'black is beautiful,' what in fact you are saying to him [*sic*] is: 'Man [*sic*], you are okay as you are. Begin to look upon yourself as a human being. (p. 192)

Biko was convinced that, despite the inhumane conditions under which black people found themselves, their humanity was a fact. The slogan, 'Black is beautiful', was also meant to affirm the humanity of black people irrespective of their gender, social class, geographical location within South Africa and ethnicity, amongst others. In Biko's view, the battle against an inferiority complex, one which made black people wish to follow the paths of the allegedly superior white people, had to be fought first and foremost in the mind. A mind that was self-affirmed was bound to enable its owner to resist the temptation to look down upon himself or herself precisely on account of his or her blackness. In Biko's view, blacks had a responsibility towards their own affirmation and liberation. The slogan, 'Black is beautiful', makes perfect sense within such a context.

The slogan, 'Black is beautiful', was thus a call to all black people to affirm their humanity. All people, irrespective of their skin shade (read: race), share a common trait: They are all human. In fact, within the African-South African context, a human being (*motho*) does not exist in isolation, hence

the expression, *motho ke motho ka batho*: a human being is a human being because of other human beings. In arguing for the unity in the racial diversity of South African black and white people, Biko (Woods 1978) could thus contend:

We know that all interracial groups in South Africa are relationships in which whites are superior, blacks inferior. So, as a prelude, whites must be made to realise that they are only human, not superior. Same with blacks. They must be made to realise that they are also human, not inferior. For all of us this means that South Africa is not European, but African. (p. 192)

For Biko and his fellow Black-Consciousness adherents, the fact of one's humanity takes priority over the fact of one's skin shade. Viewing the preceding observation in terms of priorities might enable us to argue that the slogan, 'Black is beautiful', was coined to affirm first and foremost the humanity of human beings with black pigmentation. The latter fact is revealed in Biko's sharp critique against the desire for white beauty on the part of black women (Woods 1978; cf. Arnold 1977:21–22):

The way they dress, the way they make up and so on, tends to be a negation of their true state and, in a sense, a running away from their color. They use skin-lightening creams; they use straightening devices for their hair, and so on. They sort of believe, I think, that their natural state is not synonymous with beauty, and beauty can only be approximated by them if the skin is made as light as possible and the lips are made as red as possible, and the nails are made as pink as possible. So in a sense the term 'black is beautiful' challenges exactly that belief through which someone negates himself [*sic*]. (p. 148)

What we find amazing though is why such a reasonable attack was levelled only at women whilst the use of skin-lightening creams then, and even today dare we say, cuts across people of both genders. The slogan, 'Black is beautiful', challenged self-negation – what Biko called a '... kind of feeling of self-censure within the black man [*sic*]' (Woods 1978:191). Whilst Biko believed that it was black people's responsibility to change their situation, including their perception of their own identity, he seemed to have believed that the Sacred Other could intervene (Wilson 2011):

I am also sufficiently religious to believe that man's internal insecurity can almost be alleviated by an almost enigmatic and supernatural force to which we ascribe all power, all wisdom and Love. (p. 81)

With the preceding background of Biko's notion on black beauty and the humanity of black people, as our pursuit to show one brief example of how a text from the Christian Scriptures can be made to interact with an aspect of reality such as self-affirmation within a specific African context, we now turn to Psalm 8.

Reading Psalm 8 through the lens of the slogan 'Black is beautiful'

A reading of Psalm 8 reveals that the psalmist was keen on revealing the central and elevated place of humanity within God's creation. The skin pigmentation of the human who is

celebrated is not depicted though. Within the exilic or post-exilic contexts, the inward-looking, exclusive views of the pre-exilic prophets seem to have been replaced by the more universal outward-looking, inclusive views of the post-exilic prophets, priests and scribes (cf. the universality depicted by Psalm 8 and the priestly editor of Genesis 1:1; 1:26–28 as examples).

In his reflection on the notion of 'enôš [child of 'ādām or human being] in the context of the other major works of the household of God, the psalmist could not but ask:

What are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them? Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with honour and glory. You have given them dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under their feet ... (Ps 8:4–6; New Revised Standard Version [NRSV])

The Hebrew word 'enôš, as it appears mostly in the poetic sections of the Hebrew Bible, refers to 'men' or 'male human beings'. It also refers to the generic 'men' in the plural form. The word can also be used to refer to 'man' in the singular form like in the phrase, *ben-'enôš*, which can be translated literally as 'son of 'enôš' (Holladay 1971:22). The word 'enôš has the connotation of 'weakness', 'wretchedness' and 'mortality'. Informed by Honsey's (2014) understanding of the word, we may add that such a connotation is not limited to human beings who belong to a particular race. All human beings, those of Caucasian descent included, are equally weak, wretched and mortal. Should Biko still have felt the need to protest after having been informed by the claim in Psalm 8, perhaps his slogan could have been: 'Humanity is beautiful.'

Biko argues (Woods 1978):

So, as a prelude, whites must be made to realise that they are only human, not superior. Same with blacks. They must be made to realise that they are also human, not inferior. (p. 148)

Within the context of Psalm 8:5, the use of the word 'enôš seems to reveal a singular form because it appears in a synonymous pair with *ben-'ādām*. The latter phrase can be translated as 'son of man' or more inclusively '(a) child of (a) human being'. The grain of the text of Psalm 8 persuades us to translate the word 'enôš as a human being, irrespective of her or his skin pigmentation. Also, in line with the apparent reliance of Psalm 8 on the text of Genesis 1:26–27 and his use of the designation *ben-'ādām* (son of 'ādām) as a synonymous parallel pair with 'enôš, we use the designation 'ādām to refer to a human being, irrespective of factors such as his/her race or ethnicity, gender, social class or age (cf. Mays 1994:67).

The reference made to 'babes' or 'suckling small human beings' by the Psalmist in verse 2, a verse immediately preceding the Psalmist's meditation on *ben-'ādām* (humanity), might have been intentional. God elevates 'enôš from her or his weak status to the divine status even as God is able to do 'military' wonders through babes, that is, powerless human

beings. In the view of the deity, neither the age nor the race of the human being in question seems to matter. In our view, depending on their availability, even the less esteemed human beings of Biko's era could be used by the Sacred Other to perform wonders.

Taken at face value, the psalmist's portrayal of the Sacred Other appears not to have been complacent with the status quo, hence the portrayal of the reversals notable in his meditation. Just as God can use minute human beings to bring to nothing the enemy and the avenger by silencing them, God can elevate a relatively small *'ādām* to the level of God!⁹ In Psalm 8, *all* human beings, irrespective of their age, race or ethnicity, gender, social class, sexual orientation or geography, amongst others, are included within the category of this god-like creature.

As one accorded kingship or queenship status, *'ādām* has been entrusted with the responsibility of ruling over other members of God's household: the sheep, the oxen, the beasts of the field, the birds of the air and the fish of the sea (Ps 8:6–7; cf. also Gn 1:28). Noteworthy is the observation that, unlike during the period of *apartheid* in South Africa, the exercise of dominion by human beings in Psalm 8 seems not directed towards fellow human beings. Also, as human beings exercise dominion over other non-human members in God's household, they ought to remember that the mandate given to them by the Royal One to have dominion over nature ought to be done within the context of stewardship and not tyranny and greed. To belong to royalty entailed shouldering certain responsibilities. The king, for example, was to be especially concerned about the poor and needy, the weak and powerless (Ps 72:12–14).

Unlike in an African context in which a royal status was and still is the preserve of a fortunate few, within the divine scheme of things according to the psalmist, *all* of humanity has been endowed with royal status. It can be argued that even the rulers (read: kings and queens) of the South African *apartheid* past would not have found a special place within God's household!

Bringing the analogy of the incarnation, death and resurrection of the Word to bear on our reading of Psalm 8, the following aspects are noteworthy: The Word became incarnated and took an African form in that a particular issue within our African-South African context (cf. a lack of self-esteem based on one's race) first and foremost informs our reading of Psalm 8. Specific concerns within our African settings therefore serve as lenses through which the Word is

enabled to become incarnated and thus, so to say, assume an African form. Our reading of Psalm 8 revealed that the theme of humanity is approached by the psalmist in a generic, universal and affirming way. Consequently, we reckoned that, in a context like South Africa, a context in which the humanity of black people has historically been contested and still remains contested to date, our employ of Biko's notion of black beauty could be useful as a hermeneutical lens through which to approach a psalm which also has affirming possibilities regarding the definition of humanity. In that way, Psalm 8 is made to fit into with a particular African context and thus becomes incarnated as an African Word. Where applicable, and depending on the context in which our reading happens, the psalm would not only be read from indigenous translations (cf. the Tshivenda and Sepedi or Northern Sotho, for example), but the interpretation of the psalm would also occur through those languages as media.

Regarding the death of the Word analogy, we have chosen to read the text of Psalm 8 from the perspective of the philosophy of Black Consciousness. Biko's slogan, 'Black is beautiful', appealed to us as a slogan which affirms black human beings irrespective of their skin pigmentation, amongst others. In a context typified by a lack of self-esteem on account of a mind-set which had been 'bewitched' by a context which dictated that white skin pigmentation is the norm, we, in our attempt to let the Word die, chose to use an affirming philosophy to reread Psalm 8 in a critical way. In that way, the Word (read Ps 8) is made relevant to a specific struggle within the lives of African-South African people. Such a critical engagement with the psalm can enable the Word to bring the needed transformation (cf. the resurrection analogy). If reread through the preceding hermeneutical lens, Psalm 8 has transformative potential as the Word re-surrected assures African persons that they are the image of God, they are royalty, not by virtue of their coming from a royal lineage biologically but by virtue of their being created a little lower than God. Irrespective of their skin pigmentation, one which has been contested through the years, African persons are not only human. They are also royal! In our view, the preceding designation is indeed transformative.

Conclusion

Now, to the initial question of this article, we respond: Yes, there is something new under the sun of African Biblical Hermeneutics. It is revealed in the African vigour not to abandon the African way of thinking in an environment which dictates otherwise. It is the willingness to think like Africans in Africa by facilitating the incarnation of the Word in ways which do not require Africans to look down upon their African self, by partaking in the death of the Word through critical engagement from various perspectives and by resurrecting the Word through breathing new life in our African context. However, we remain cautiously optimistic even if the neo-imperial and neo-colonial environment dictates otherwise.

⁹According to Lombaard's review of Brueggemann's (2002) book on the spirituality of Psalms, in particular the Psalms of orientation (Pss 1, 8, 14, 15, 19, 24, 33, 37, 104, 131, 133 and 145), a different view is held. For Brueggemann, Psalm 8 reflects the opinions of those who were socio-economically powerful: 'God's acts of creation and maintenance offer theological and social certainties, and these Psalms both reflect and create that reality liturgically. These Psalms hence reflect the values of a powerful social class, and for them serve the purpose of dominance. For those dominated, these Psalms may however express hope, even eschatological expectations' (Lombaard 2006:909–929, 914–915, italics authors'). In our view, in its affirmation of the humanity of *all* human beings and not only that of the powerful social class, Psalm 8, at least at face value, seems to offer hope to the less powerful, including those who have been marginalised on the basis of their race, not only in the *eschaton* but already in the here and now.

The rising of Africans from the dead with Christ means to rise to live in the hybrid mix of Christianised-civilised or Westernised Africa and still being able to affirm their identity as Africans. In this new life, Africans should seek 'African solutions for African problems'. However, the task should not be simply that of solution seekers in an attempt to overcome the problematic legacy of the previous and present-day life-denying systems. It should also include working on the production of knowledge. The survival of African Biblical Hermeneutics depends on African biblical scholars digging more wells from which Africans will quench their thirst. The Vhavenda people say: *Thonga ya kule a i vhlulai nowa*. Literally, it means that the staff that is far away does not kill a snake. Thus, African Biblical Hermeneutics as the staff to which we have access is one through which we can put to death the life-denying realities that continue to face the African people.

Acknowledgements

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no financial or personal relationship(s) that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

Authors' contributions

The article is the product of research conducted by both authors, so ideas and thoughts of both authors filter through the whole article.

References

- Arnold, M. (ed.), 1977, *The testimony of Steve Biko*, Maurice Temple Smith, London.
- Asante, M.K., 2007, *An Afrocentric manifesto: Toward an African Renaissance*, Polity Press, Cambridge.
- Bediako, K., 2004, 'Understanding African theology in the twentieth century', in K. Bediako (ed.), *Jesus and the gospel in Africa: History and experience*, pp. 49–62, Orbis, Maryknoll.
- Benages, N.C., 2012, *The perfume of the Gospel: Jesus' encounters with women*, Pontifical Biblical Institute, Rome.
- Biko, S., 1986, *I write what I like: Steve Biko: A selection of his writings*, ed. A. Stubbs, Harper & Row, San Francisco.
- Boesak, A., 2005, *Tenderness of conscience: African renaissance and the spirituality of politics*, Sun Press, Stellenbosch.
- Brueggemann, W., 2002, *Spirituality of the Psalms*, Fortress, Minneapolis.
- Burghardt, W.J., 1987, *Preaching: The art and craft*, Paulist Press, Mahwah.
- Césaire, A., 1968, *A season in the Congo*, transl. R. Manheim, Grove Press, New York.
- Cloete, G.D., 2003, 'Rainbow hermeneutics and St Paul's Letter to the Galatians', in J.M. Court (ed.), *Biblical interpretation: The meanings of scripture: Past and present*, pp. 268–283, T&T Clark, London.
- Dada, A.O., 2010, 'Repositioning contextual Biblical hermeneutics in Africa towards holistic empowerment', *Black Theology: An International Journal* 8(2), 160–174. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1558/blth.v8i2.160>
- Deist, F.E., 1992, 'South African Old Testament Studies and the future', *Old Testament Essays* 5(3), 311–331.
- Dube, M.W., 1997, 'Towards a postcolonial feminist interpretation of the Bible', *Semeia* 78, 11–26.
- Dube, M.W., 2000, *Postcolonial feminist interpretation of the Bible*, Chalice, St Louise.
- Enns, P., 2005, *Inspiration and incarnation: Evangelicals and the problems of the Old Testament*, Baker, Grand Rapids.
- Farisani, E., 2002, 'The ideologically biased use of Ezra-Nehemiah in a quest for an African theology of reconstruction', *Old Testament Essays* 15(3), 628–646.
- Farisani, E., 2003, 'Use of Ezra-Nehemiah in a quest for an African theology of reconstruction', *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 116, 27–50.
- Farisani, E., 2010, 'Black Biblical hermeneutics and ideologically aware reading of texts', *Scriptura* 105, 507–518. <http://dx.doi.org/10.7833/105-0-169>
- Farisani, E., 2014, 'Tribute to Prof Gunther H. Wittenberg: 5 April 1935–29 March 2014', *Old Testament Essays* 27(1), 15–16.
- Holladay, W.L., 1971, *A concise Hebrew and Aramaic lexicon of the Old Testament*, Brill, Leiden.
- Honsey, R.E., 2014, 'Exegesis of Psalm 8:3–6 (4–7 in Hebrew)', viewed 24 March 2014, from www.wlsessays.net/files/HonseyPsalm.rtf
- Johnson, E.A., 1985, 'Jesus, the wisdom of God: A Biblical basis for non-androcentric Christology', *Ephemerides theologicae lovanienses* 61(4), 261–294. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2143/ETL.61.4.556282>
- Le Roux, J., 2008, 'Africa and the future of our scholarly past', in H. de Wit & G.O. West (eds.), *African and European readers of the Bible in dialogue: In quest for meaning*, pp. 307–323, Brill, Leiden. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/ej.9789004166561.i-434.132>
- Lombaard, C., 2006, 'Four recent books on spirituality and the Psalms: Some contextualising, analytical and evaluative remarks', *Verbum et Ecclesia* 27(3), 909–929. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/ve.v27i3.194>
- Maluleke, T., 1996, 'Black and African theologies in the new world order: A time to drink from our own wells', *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 96, 3–19.
- Maluleke, T., 2005, 'Half a century of African Christian THEOLOGIES: Elements of the emerging agenda for the twenty-first century', in O.U. Kalu (ed.), *African Christianity an African story*, pp. 469–493, University of Pretoria, Pretoria.
- Masenya, M. (Ngwan'a Mphahlele), 1997, 'Redefining ourselves: A *bosadi* (womanhood) approach', *Old Testament Essays* 10(3), 439–448.
- Masenya, M. (Ngwan'a Mphahlele), 2004, 'Teaching Western-oriented Old Testament studies to African students: An exercise in wisdom or folly?', *Old Testament Essays* 17(3), 455–469.
- Masenya, M. (Ngwan'a Mphahlele), 2005, 'Struggling to find "Africa" in South Africa: A *bosadi* (womanhood) approach to Biblical texts', *Society of Biblical Literature Forum*, viewed 10 November 2013, from <http://sbl-site.org/publications/article.aspx?articleid=402>
- Masenya, M. (Ngwan'a Mphahlele), 2009, 'The Bible and poverty in African Pentecostal Christianity: The *bosadi* (womanhood) approach', in P. Paris (ed.), *Religion and poverty: Pan-African perspectives*, pp. 152–165, Duke University Press, London.
- Masenya, M. (Ngwan'a Mphahlele), 2014, 'Black (humanity) is beautiful!: Reading Biko and meditating on Psalm 8', *Theologia Viatorum, Journal of Theology and Religion in Africa* 38(1), Forthcoming.
- Masenya, M. (Ngwan'a Mphahlele) & Ramantswana, H., 2012, 'Anything new under the sun of Old Testament scholarship in Africa: African Qoheleth's review of OTE 1994–2010', *Old Testament Essays* 25(3), 598–637.
- Mays, J.L., 1994, *Psalms*, Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville. (Interpretation).
- Mbiti, J., 1972, 'The growing respectability of African traditional religion', *Lutheran World* 19(1), 54–58.
- Mofokeng, T., 1988, 'Black Christians, the Bible and liberation', *Journal of Black Theology in South Africa* 2, 34–42.
- Mosala, I., 1989, *Biblical hermeneutics and Black theology in South Africa*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids.
- Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S.J., 2013, *Coloniality of power in postcolonial Africa: Myths of decolonization*, CODESRIA, Dakar.
- Ngugi wa Thiong'o, 2009, *Something torn and new: An African renaissance*, Basic Civitas, New York.
- Ntuli, P.P., 2002, 'Indigenous knowledge systems and the African renaissance', in C.A.O. Hoppers (ed.), *Indigenous knowledge and the integration of knowledge systems: Towards a philosophy of articulation*, pp. 53–66, New Africa Books, Claremont.
- Nzimande, M.K., 2008, 'Reconfiguring Jezabel: A postcolonial *imbokodo* reading of the story of Naboth's vineyard (1 Kings 21:1–16)', in H. de Wit & G.O. West (eds.), *African and European readers of the Bible in dialogue: In quest of a shared meaning*, pp. 223–258, Brill, Leiden.
- Okolo, B., 2010, 'African renaissance, African conflicts and the regional security complex', in K.G. Adar, M.K. Juma & K.N. Miti (eds.), *The state of Africa 2010/11: Parameters and legacies of governance and issue areas*, pp. 103–118, Institute of South Africa, Pretoria.
- Ramose, M.B., 2005, 'Philosophy: A particularist interpretation with universal appeal', in J.O. Oguejiofor & G.I. Onah (eds.), *African philosophy and the hermeneutics of culture: Essays in honour of Theophilus Okere*, pp. 145–159, Lit Verlag, Münster.
- Segovia, F.F., 2006, 'Biblical criticism and postcolonial studies: Toward a postcolonial optic', in R.S. Sugirtharajah (ed.), *The Postcolonial Biblical Reader*, pp. 33–44, Blackwell Publishing, Malden.
- Sheppard, G.T., 1988, '"Blessed are those who take refuge in Him": Biblical criticism and deconstruction', *Religion and Intellectual Life* 5(2), 57–66.
- Snyman, G., 2005, 'Social identity and South African Biblical hermeneutics: A struggle against prejudice', *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 121, 34–55.
- Snyman, G., 2011a, 'Empire and a hermeneutics of vulnerability', *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 37, 1–20.
- Snyman, G., 2011b, '"n Etiek van Bybelles en 'n hermeneutiek van weerloosheid', *In Die Skriflig/In Luce Verbi* 45(2), 259–282.
- Snyman, G., 2013, 'The interpellation of whiteness: Some thoughts by a colonial remnant reading the Biblical text', viewed 07 November 2013, from <http://www.inter-disciplinary.net/critical-issues/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/G-F-Snyman-Draft-paper.pdf>
- Sparks, K.L., 2008, *God's word in human words: An evangelical appropriation of critical Biblical scholarship*, Baker, Grand Rapids.
- Sugirtharajah, R.S., 2006, 'Charting the aftermath: A review of postcolonial criticism', in R.S. Sugirtharajah (ed.), *The postcolonial reader*, pp. 7–44, Blackwell Publishing, Malden. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/9780470775080.ch1>

- Ukpong, J., 2000, 'Developments in Biblical interpretation in Africa: Historical and hermeneutical directions', in G.O. West & M.W. Dube (eds.), *The Bible in Africa: Transactions, trajectories, and trends*, pp. 12–28, Brill, Leiden.
- Ukpong, J., 1995, 'Rereading the Bible with African eyes', *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 91, 3–14.
- West, G.O., 1992, 'Some parameters of the hermeneutic debate in the South African context', *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 80, 3–13.
- West, G.O., 2006, 'The vocation of an African Biblical scholar on the margins of Biblical scholarship', *Old Testament Essays* 19(1), 307–336.
- West, G.O., 2011, 'Do two walk together?: Walking with the other through contextual Bible study', *Anglican Theological Review* 93(3), 431–449.
- Wilson, L., 2011, *Steve Biko*, Ohio University Press, Ohio.
- Wittenberg, G.H., 1991, *I have heard the cry of my people: A study guide to Exodus 1–15*, Institution for the Study of the Bible with Cluster Publications, Pietermaritzburg. (Bible in Context 1).
- Wittenberg, G.H., 1993, *Prophecy and protest: A contextual introduction to Israelite prophecy*, Institution for the Study of the Bible with Cluster Publications, Pietermaritzburg. (Bible in Context 2).
- Wittenberg, G.H., 1996, 'Old Testament theology: For whom?', *Semeia* 73, 221–240.
- Woods, D., 1978, *Biko*, Random House, New York.
- Wright, N.T., 1999, 'The transforming reality of the resurrection', in M. Borg & N.T. Wright (eds.), *The meaning of Jesus: Two visions*, pp. 111–127, HarperCollins, New York.
- Yorke, G.L., 2012, 'Bible translation in Africa: An Afrocentric interrogation of the task', in M.W. Dube, A.M. Mbuvi & D.R. Mbuwayesango (eds.), *Postcolonial perspectives in African Biblical interpretations*, pp. 157–170, Society of Biblical Literature, Atlanta.
- Zuma, J., 2013, Address at the ANC manifesto forum at Wits University, 21 October.