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The Reconstruction of Forms of African Theology:

Towards Effective Biblical Interpretation

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by

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Abstract

This thesis sets out to investigate current reconstruction of forms of African theology that is taking place in parts of Africa. The specific interest is to identify emerging biblical interpretative modes from these theologies and seek to suggest ways of making them effective for the benefit of African communities of readers and the biblical academia as a whole.

After a brief consideration of the contribution of historical critical interpretation, this thesis then focused specifically on the development of African scholarly readings. The specific interest in these African readings is to provide the necessary criteria which will ensure that critical scholarly readings can both be differentiated and derived from popular readings. My interest in popular readings is because of the major role they play in the provision of contextual components or the missing links that can only be obtained from ordinary readers, that the scholarly reader needs in his/her reconstruction of African self-understanding. I have therefore looked at the attempts to structure the relationship between ordinary readers and scholarly readers and out of that has come the contribution to the theologies of reconstruction in Africa.

In summary, to respond to the quest for acceptable critical models of reading the Bible using African cultural texts and world view, it has become necessary to provide recommendations for African hermeneuts which would enhance their readings in order to make their contributions to scholarly biblical interpretation to the global community more effective. This is exactly what this thesis aims at achieving.

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Preface

This thesis is in three parts. Part (1) first, it introduced the foundations of biblical interpretation in Africa by giving a brief account of historical critical biblical interpretation in Nineteenth Century Germany. Particularly, F.C. Baur's approach to historical biblical interpretation and the resemblance between his approach and that of African biblical scholars in the Twentieth Century.

Secondly, this part examined scholarly readings in Africa, by analysing the understanding of Christianity's relation to other cultures in Africa in the Twentieth Century. This section also included the review of recent hermeneutical debates among African biblical scholars, such as the debate between inculturation and liberation hermeneutics. Lastly, there is a section on recent attempts being made towards the reconstruction of forms of African theology by the introduction of the theology of reconstruction which is all-inclusive and addresses some of the lapses in the theologies of resistance and inculturation and the hermeneutical practices that emerged from them.

Part (11) focused on popular readings in Africa and the West of Scotland. This was done by the collection and analysis of field work done among ordinary readers in Nigeria and Ghana, (West Africa), in Pietemaritzburg (South Africa), and in the West of Scotland. The collection and analysis of field work was not only to enable us to determine the general characteristics of ordinary readers but also to enable us to identify the evidence of socio-cultural influence on popular (ordinary) readings. This enabled us to see the extent to which the cultures of ordinary readers influence their biblical interpretation. This gave an indication of where ordinary readers and users of the Bible are at the moment in the selected socio-cultural contexts with respect to their usage of the Bible. This field work was done to enable me to evaluate contemporary models of interpretation and usage of the Bible by ordinary readers as well as to contrast ordinary and scholarly models of interpretation and usage of the Bible in contemporary Africa. This work therefore provided a matrix for the formulation of an agenda for the development of scholarly hemeneutical models. This would underscore the premise that

'it is the community of ordinary readers, which had the first words, as it proffered the ordinary readings' (Patte 1996: 278) in interpreting biblical texts.

Lastly part (111) focused on formulating recommendations for African biblical interpretation. In other words, this concluding section sets out recommendations for effective African biblical interpretation in Africa as well as the reconstruction of forms of African theology as a contribution to global developments in hermeneutics from the African context.

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Finally, I am most grateful to my parents and my brothers and sister for their moral support and love through the years.

Author's Declaration

I declare that this thesis embodies the results of my own special work, that it has been composed by myself and that it does not include work forming part of a thesis presented successfully for a degree in this or another university.
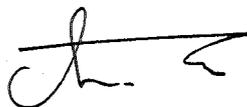
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Eric Anum

Introduction

My motivation to research into hermeneutical issues with respect to Africa started between 1992 and 1994, when I worked as the General Secretary of the Organisation of African Instituted churches (OAIC) in Nairobi, Kenya, in East Africa.[1] Over this period, I was particularly assigned to produce TEE materials for use by AICs throughout Africa. As part of my assignment, I facilitated TEE seminars in African Instituted churches in Eastern, Central, Southern and Western Africa. I also supervised the work of the Rural Development by Extension (RDE) and the Research and Communications Department (RCD) in the Organisation of African Instituted Churches (OAIC) responsible for producing materials on rural development, offering development assistance and carrying out research among the AICs in Africa.

My continuous involvement in biblical interpretation among ordinary readers in the OAIC got me interested in this research project. Week after week, as I prepared myself to meet with TEE groups in these AIC churches in Eastern Africa, I became increasingly concerned about the use of appropriate hermeneutical models in Africa. First, through these encounters with the AICs, I was made more and more aware of my own point of entry into biblical interpretation as an ordinary reader from Ghana (West Africa). I am using the term 'ordinary reader', in this particular context in reference to myself as one of many Two-Thirds World readers, 'who read from different cultural perspectives, those whose reading techniques are unrecognisable to the Western trained reader...whose standards are defined and seen through the structures that subordinate and marginalise differences' (Dube 1996: 12). As an African I had to struggle to make sense of the biblical texts in varied contexts and situations in which I live and work. As an ordinary African reader one is faced by Western scholarly biblical interpretative models from the dominant Western culture. This interpenetration of African and Western cultures is a result of the geographical and historical, as well as economic, social and political factors

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[1]The OAIC is an umbrella organisation that consists only of AIC churches in Africa. Its headquaters is in Nairobi Kenya from where it operates continentally.

in the African contexts in which I live and work as an African. This struggle to develop authentically African readings of the Bible was also that of African TEE course writers, which was noted by Freemont Regier and Sarah Regier who carried out an evaluation of Non-Formal Theological Education in Africa in 1994. Commenting on most of the TEE materials then in use on the continent of Africa including those of the OAIC, they found that

> Writers seem to have a natural bent for classical theology, a type of reflection that does not travel well across cultural barriers (Regier & Regier 1994: 39).

However, I would say that alongside their natural bent towards Western classical theology they also struggle to make sense of the text as 'ordinary readers' from a non-western context.

Second, I was also confronted with the situation where the ordinary readers in the AICs for whom I was developing materials and with whom I was reading the Bible in the TEE classes saw me as a 'scholarly reader' and not as one of them. The situation was worsened as they became more aware of my background as a mainline Protestant academic with Western missionary heritage. Thus, members of the AICs I worked among were conscious not only of the fact that I came from a dominant background but were also aware of the power relationship that existed between my background and theirs. Third, the use of critical tools in appropriating biblical texts for use in my work was more complex than just observing the differences in our backgrounds. It also involved such factors as the academic versus the non-academic, the literate versus the non-literate, textual versus oral or non-textual, urban versus rural differences between the members of the AICs in my TEE groups. My involvement in the facilitation of TEE workshops, training TEE workers or facilitators and the production of TEE texts for AICs made me more aware of the extent to which biblical interpretation is related to socio-cultural contexts. One of the OAIC TEE texts of particular interest to me is the one entitled 'Spiritual Leadership' which is a study of 1 Timothy. This TEE text was prepared by Augustin Battle, a Hispanic Presbyterian pastor from the US who also worked with the OAIC for ten years on secondment from the Presbyterian Church of the US. It is one of the popular texts that appeal to leaders and founders of the AICs because

of their interest in spirits and issues related to spirituality.[2] However, 1 Timothy 2 has always been a point of controversy as the leaders of these churches believe that they have received their call directly from the spirit to be leaders of their churches and therefore have a different approach to the reading of this text in comparison to the reading provided in the TEE material. Actually the impression they give seems to suggest that the reading of Battle is 'unspiritual'. Through these encounters, I came to the realisation that the gap between me and the specific AICs I was dealing with was not only in reading skills and geographical location but also in the whole area of my urban, elitist and textual approach to the text in contrast to their oral non-textual, rural and traditional approach to the text. This therefore marks one of my 'boundary crossing' (West 1996: 33) attempts. These experiences got me continually asking myself questions concerning the appropriate modes of appropriating biblical texts in the diverse African contexts where the perception of biblical interpretation which is preferred by most African scholars is that which is directly derived from the socio-cultural contexts of ordinary readers. The question that I was faced with was therefore, how to motivate scholarly readers to develop models of interpreting the Bible using the matrix of ordinary readers in the various African contexts for the academy. In other words, what are the more preferred hermeneutical practices in scholarly circles in Africa today? What suggestions are there to make them play their part within the context of the academy globally, by their unique contribution to interface readings that are done by scholars who are informed by ordinary readings? My target group is therefore the academy.

However, the move to carry out this research was specifically initiated by the first Glasgow meeting of the Bible in Africa Project between biblical scholars from Africa and the University of Glasgow which planned the process leading to the Glasgow consultation in August 1994. Questions related to the relationship between scholarly readers and ordinary readings that were raised at that first Glasgow meeting led to mandates being given to some scholars in the West of Scotland and in Port Harcourt Eastern Nigeria to conduct surveys among popular readers. The reports of the surveys carried out by biblical scholars among ordinary readers in the West of Scotland and Port Harcourt were presented at the Glasgow consultation in August 1994. A quantitative

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[2] That is the reason why the AICs are referred to as 'spiritual churches' in some parts of Africa.

survey done among ordinary readers in Port Harcourt [3] in Nigeria, West Africa stated in its report that, for many biblical scholars, in the West African sub-region, as far as hermeneutical practice is concerned, 'the need for this process currently referred to as inculturation is not in question. What is not certain is the best method to bring it about' (Port Harcourt Report 1994: 17). The report concluded with the following recommendation.

> Finally, from the evidence of this study, we recommend the pursuit of what we conceptualise here as a 'Survival Theology'. This is the methodological strategy for the use and interpretation of the Bible in the African context whereby the functionality of the Bible as a source of healing for the sick, food for the hungry, children for the childless and succour for all those in severe distress should be emphasised (Port Harcourt Report 1994: 17).

At the Glasgow consultation, the above-mentioned claim that socio-economic factors are more important dimensions of context than cultural beliefs and practices, caused a lot of questions to be raised by participants. Interestingly, at the consultation, the Institute for the Study of the Bible (ISB) from South Africa presented the Contextual Bible Study (CBS) hermeneutical practice which employed a liberation hermeneutical methodology more inclined towards addressing issues related to oppression, poverty and marginalisation, whilst Justin Ukpong from the Catholic Institute of West Africa (CIWA) employed the inculturation hermeneutical practice which is more inclined towards issues related to the world-view of Africans and the hermeneutical approach that is related to the African world-view. Among the questions raised at this consultation by biblical scholars is whether the liberation hermeneutical approach and the inculturation hermeneutical approach are mutually exclusive and therefore diametrically opposed to each other or whether they are somehow inclusive and inter-related.

My main objective in carrying out this research is to take this inquiry further. That is, first, by seeing the attempts made by scholarly readers in Africa as part of the world-wide or general evolution of hermeneutical models in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries rooted in classical historical critical exegesis in Germany. This is because I looked brief at how the classical historical-critical scholarly readings evolved out of their

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The Port Harcourt (Nigeria) survey which was carried out in 1994 among 50 households among in the Port Harcourt metropolis in Eastern Nigeria was co-ordinated by Justin Ukpong of the Catholic Institute of West Africa in Port Harcourt.

complex relationship with their social location (that is, how classical historical-critical readings evolved out of the church of their times), which in this context could be identified as the sphere of ordinary readers. It is the identification of and reflection on the Church and its relationship to other cultures and changes, as they develop an understanding and appropriation of biblical texts, that I used as my entry point into this thesis.

I therefore began this thesis by briefly looking at the relationship between cultural location and biblical interpretation as well as the evolution of classical historical-critical scholarly readings in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries in Germany. This is because African biblical interpreters are rooted in historical biblical interpretation through their theological training. I then turned my attention to the development of biblical interpretation in Africa in the Nineteenth and Twentieth centuries which is the focus of part one of my thesis.

Secondly, as a follow-up to the Bible in Africa Project's findings at the Glasgow consultation in August 1994, I have undertaken further qualitative, quantitative and critical research among ordinary readers in selected parts of West Africa, the Republic of South Africa and the West of Scotland. This field research gave me the opportunity firstly, to find out the diverse selective usage of the Bible by ordinary readers in these selected socio-cultural contexts. Secondly, the field research made it possible for me to evaluate and reflect on the hermeneutical models that are being used in the selected contexts with respect to both ordinary and scholarly readers. Furthermore, this evaluation allowed me to analyse the possibilities that are prevalent in the selected contexts for the development and enhancement of hermeneutical models through an interchange between scholarly readers and ordinary readers. Also, the quantitative and qualitative field work provided the necessary criteria which ensured that critical scholarly readings can both be derived as well as differentiated from popular readings. It also gave me the opportunity to identify some of the gaps that needed to be filled by scholarly readers by interacting with ordinary readers, some of the ways by which interactions between ordinary readers and scholarly readers can be initiated and sustained and how to get the best out of such

interactions for effective biblical interpretation and the reconstruction of forms of African theology. This was the focus of part two of my thesis.

Thirdly, in order to respond to the quest for acceptable critical models of reading the Bible using African cultural texts and world view, it has become necessary to provide criteria for developing viable African scholarly reading models for the benefit of the academic community, Church and society as a whole. Thus, the next section of the thesis was devoted to recommendations that evolved from the entire research, towards effective biblical interpretation and the reconstruction of African theologies. This is the focus of part three of my thesis.

Method

As noted above, there are two main issues that my research focused on; namely, the relationship between the cultural location or context of the biblical interpreter and his/her interpretative work and the evolution of scholarly readings and its relationship to the ordinary readers with whom scholarly readers have always shared common cultural location or contexts.

The theoretical basis which I will adopt in this research is similar to that found in Jürgen Habermas' work which appeared in his 'Review of Gadamer's Truth and Method'(1977) and also in his "On Hermeneutics" Claim to Universality' (1986). Habermas has rejected the universalisation of hermeneutics by Gadamer. Gadamer advocated that biblical interpreters must submit themselves to tradition but Habermas on the other hand argued that tradition was oppressive and domineering because it tends to be dogmatic and rigid.[4] Habermas therefore put forward a way of doing biblical interpretation which is based on two factors, namely, depth-hermeneutics and a theory of communicative competence. Habermas termed this approach to hermeneutics a *critically self-aware hermeneutics*. According to him a *critically self-aware hermeneutics*

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[4]Habermas criticised Gadamer's hermenutical approach by saying that, 'Clearly, insight into the prejudicial structure of understanding yields nothing when it comes to the pitfall of identifying the factually produced consensus with the true one. Instead, it leads to the ontologization of language and the hypostisation of the traditional context' (Habermas 1986: 314). For details see Habermas' " 'On Hermeneutics' Claim to Universality" . In *The hermeneutic reader*. Kurt , Mueller-Volmer (ed.), Oxford: Blackwell, 1986: 294-319.

...differentiates between insight and delusion, assimilates the metahermeneutical knowledge concerning the conditions which make systematically distorted communication possible. It links understanding to the principle of rational discourse, so that truth can be guaranteed only by that consensus which might be reached under the idealised conditions to be found in unrestrained and dominance-free communication, and which could, in the course of time, be affirmed to exist (Habermas 1986: 314).

Habermas' statement quoted above has a few problems with it. For Habermas, 'truth' can be realised when rational discourse takes place in an environment of uninhibited and *dominance-free* communication among a group of people who are searching together for truth. First, Habermas does not say anything about technical competence. The question is whether a group of people meeting together and having rational discourse without inhibition and restraint can possibly arrive at truth without any technical competence in analysing the material they are dealing with. Second, if it is assumed that the discussion is between technically competent scholarly readers and ordinary readers, is it possible then to have a *dominance-free* discussion or communication in practice? Whenever you have two groups of people together discussing something, the powerful (scholarly readers or church leaders) are inclined to dominate the powerless (ordinary readers, members of the church). Thus, I wonder whether it is possible to have a purely dominance-free communication which therefore implies that Habermas' integrative hermeneutics is unachievable since the conditions for it to happen are idealistic and hardly attainable in reality.

However, I find the principles behind his critical self-aware hermeneutics very useful. This is because of its attempt to address the issues related to ideological dominance and competent communication with respect to biblical interpretation. Here there is the assumption of a community engaged in rational discourse. Even though there is lack of clarity in Habermas' hypothesis as to how the participants engaged in rational discourse were brought together, it would still give the opportunity for both sides to speak to and be heard by the other. This means that those who are powerless would at least be heard by the powerful. It is therefore an attempt to work towards a condition closer to *dominance -free* rational discourse between the powerful scholarly readers and the powerless ordinary readers. Thus, first, the level of success achieved would depend on how effectively the powerful scholarly readers could work towards gaining the

confidence of the powerless ordinary readers. Second, the level of success will also depend on scholarly readers having the necessary skills to be able to engage in a meaningful dialogue with the powerless.

I find Habermas' theory valuable for my research for the following reasons. First, Habermas', theory struggled with the challenges that scholarly readers face in performing the task of biblical interpretation within the context of their own cultural location. His starting point for any hermeneutical activity is within the scope of the social location of the readers or interpreters. Habermas also identified what he referred to as 'natural language' which is the informal, unstructured dialogue in pre-linguistic[5] contexts which he conceived as open and flexibly used ordinarily for what he called 'colloquial communication' which has a very open system. He also identified what he called 'artificial language' which is in the post-linguistic[6] context by those with scholarly reading skills. This 'artificial language' is formal and structured and usually functions as a very closed system. The usage of the artificial language, according to Habermas, has the potential of leading to distorted communication and misunderstanding between the skilled user and the unskilled listener in the context within which the interpretation is taking place.

Habermas' theory is not only a critique of Gadamer but, implicitly, also that of the cultural linguistic hermeneutical approaches of Lindbeck and Meeks which appear in Lindbeck's book, *The Nature of Doctrine* and Meeks' book, *The First Urban Christians* and Meek's follow-up article, 'A Hermeneutics of Social Embodiment'. Both Lindbeck and Meeks employed what Lindbeck called 'Cultural- Linguistic Models of Religion' in their work which located biblical interpretation in a 'semantic universe'. (Chapman 1995: 63). The weakness with this kind of interpretative model is the possibility of it being reduced to a 'social system' through usage in a particular socio-cultural context which often leads to 'ideological distortions' within a period of time (Chapman 1995: 59). This is possible because of the conception that in any socio-cultural context, 'the community's symbolic life is not immune from the political processes of the construction of meaning' (Webster 1993: 107-108). Also, the cultural linguistic construction of

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[5] Pre-linguistic - meaning language which has not been scientifically analysed

[6] Post-linguistic - language which has been scientifically analysed

hermeneutics that both Meeks and Lindbeck talks about has the weakness of overlooking the possibilities which are there for the generation of diversities of interpretations in any cultural-linguistic context.

Thus, the issues that are of concern to me with respect to the methodology of Habermas are:

1. The influence of culture on biblical interpretation

Here, I looked at the extent to which the cultural context which Habermas referred to as the 'context of our own surroundings' which contains 'natural language' and involves 'colloquial communication' (Habermas 1986: 294), influences biblical interpretation.

2. The development of scholarly biblical interpretation

Habermas was also interested in the process by which the 'hermeneutical consciousness' of a particular context is raised by those who have artificially developed their 'communicative competence' (Habermas 1986: 294). According to Habermas, hermeneuts are those who possess the skills or capability of 'clarifying meaning of any configuration of symbols, however foreign and inaccessible it may at first be', (Habermas 1986: 294) with the objective of creating hermeneutical understanding from 'the context of their familiar surroundings' (Habermas 1986: 295). Habermas has argued that what the scholarly reader is skilled at doing is placing the objectified beliefs, practices, and observances of an ancient period and culture in an intelligible relationship with their own socio-cultural context. [7] Creating hermeneutical consciousness by the academic reader is similar to Gerald West's concept of 'reading with' ordinary readers. What West argued was that scholarly readers ought to make themselves available to the ordinary reader in order to be asked to give assistance rather than high-jack or impose their own frame-work on the conversation, making it a teacher-tell or top-down type of

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[7] According to Habermas in his differentiation between the scholarly readings and ordinary readings, the concept of scholarly biblical interpretation 'rests on a capability which belongs to the communicative competence of every speaker but can be artificially developed into a special skill...and hermeneutics take in hand the methodological training and development of natural capability' (Habermas 1986: 294). Thus, ordinary readers have just the natural capability whilst scholarly readers have gone further to develop or add unto their natural capability artificial capability of commmunicative competence which makes them scholarly readers.

discussion. This is evident in the following explanation concerning the way his institute (Institute for the Study of the Bible) organises workshops with ordinary readers –

> Typically, the Institute for the Study of the Bible (ISB) in Kwa Zulu-Natal, an interface between socially committed biblical scholars and ordinary readers of the Bible from poor and marginalised communities, is invited to work with particular Bible reading communities. The 'generative theme' (Freire) of the workshops is always determined by the community, and they usually choose the biblical texts (West 1996: 33).

This therefore implies that scholarly readers should see themselves as those who are ' *to be made use of'* by ordinary readers and not those who would *'make use of'* (Nolan: 1996: 217) ordinary readers in the reading process by placing their expertise and technical competence at the disposal of the ordinary reader.

Scope

Biblical interpretation has undergone a number of shifts over the decades in Europe. The Enlightenment ushered in the classical historical approach to biblical interpretation in the Eighteenth century. Subsequently, in the Twentieth century 'the uneasiness caused by historical uncertainties regarding questions of origin and authorship resulted in a shift from *history* to *structure*, that is, from the origins of the text to the text itself' (Lategan 1997: 117)[8]. According to Lategan, these developments led to reception theory that brought into sharp focus the reader-response approach to hermeneutics in Europe. Thus, even though literary criticism (that is, hermeneutics that places emphasis on the *literary structure* of the text (the so called 'New Criticism'), replaced classical historical criticism in the middle of the Twentieth Century, the scope of this work is limited to the earlier models of biblical interpretation in Europe, that is, classical historical critical biblical interpretation. This is because firstly, many African biblical scholars have been trained in the old classical historical critical biblical interpretative methods and mainly apply these in their scholarly readings. The result is that not many African biblical scholars are trained in the New Criticism and very few actually use the New Criticism or write on it. Secondly, it is easier to see the correspondences and transformations that occurred when biblical interpretation moved from the classical historical critical

approach to African hermeneutical approaches in their various contexts. In other words, it will be interesting to see how African biblical scholars moved from the historical classical critical to African biblical interpretative approaches that is; how they have been able to make the transition from their borrowed hermeneutical approach to their own approaches.

Secondly, since the classical historical critical scholar reads explicitly from a context and the African hermeneut also reads explicitly from the African context, I find it more relevant to start with the historical critical approach which has an explicit context rather than adopt the approach of literary criticism whose idea of context is not explicit.

With respect to classical historical-critical scholarly biblical interpretative models, this thesis limited itself to briefly looking at C.F. Baur's attempt to reconstruct German normative self-understanding by the employment of historicism due to the rootedness of Africa biblical interpretation in historical criticism. I then turned my attention to a specific focus on African readings within the context of the development of African theology/ies. This was done within the context of the understanding of Christianity in Western European culture and the interpretative models that evolved out of the struggle for an African Christian identity and African contribution to hermeneutics in general. This involved both scholarly and ordinary (popular) readers. The next step is an exploration of the relationship between Western European biblical interpretations and African ones that I have dealt with in this thesis (both scholarly and ordinary readings will be considered). Within the scope of this research, we also identified the relationship between scholarly readings and ordinary readings. The outcome of this is that I drew out recommendations for biblical interpretation in Africa which is also a contribution to biblical interpretation globally.

Conclusion

In summary, there are two main questions that I visited and revisited in various forms with my reformulated analytic theory of Habermas; which are the following:

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[8]Bernard has done extensive work on the development of hermeneutics in Europe in his 'Directions in Contemporary Exegesis: Between Historicism and Structuralism' in *Journa l of Theology for South Africa*, 25, 1978:18-30.

1. How prevailing scholarly views and socio-cultural debates have influenced the ways scholars have interpreted biblical texts in their respective contexts.

2. How scholarly readings is compared and contrasted with ordinary readings and how they have interacted with the Church.

Chapter one focused on the effect of the modern socio-cultural context on the development of classical historical interpretation of the Bible in Germany in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries. Also, I reviewed the profile of scholarly readings and scholarly readers and their relationship with ordinary readings (identified with the church) in modern Germany in the above-mentioned Chapter, by focusing on F.C. Baur. Similarly, Chapters two and three focused on the influence of Post-colonial and post-missionary socio-culture context influenced the interpretation of the Bible in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries in Africa. I also reviewed the profile of scholarly readings and scholarly readers in Africa in the Twentieth Century.

Chapter four explored the relationship between scholarly readings in modern Germany and that of contemporary Africa. This is to make it possible to identify the continuities and discontinuities between classical historical critical biblical interpretation and African biblical interpretative models. Chapter five analyses and reflects on ordinary people's usage and readings of the Bible in selected areas in West Africa from field work conducted in those areas. Chapter six focused on the evaluation of ordinary readers who participate in 'reading with' scholarly readers in the Natal Province in South Africa, using the Contextual Bible Study hermeneutical practice. Chapter seven also focused on the evaluation of the ordinary people in the West of Scotland's 'reading with' scholarly readers using the Contextual Bible Study hermeneutical practice which originated from South Africa. I ended that chapter by exploring the relationship between the ISB'S CBS programme and that of the West of Scotland, based on their evaluation reports. Finally, Chapter 8 is summary and recommendations for the reconstruction of forms of African theology and effective biblical interpretation in Africa which is adaptable in other contexts.

Part I

From Historical Theology to African Theology

Chapter One

1. The Roots of African Biblical Interpretation

Introduction

Historical critical biblical interpretation, as it developed in Western Europe had a dominant, widespread effect on religious groups in general as well as on scholarly interpretation of the Bible in particular. For this thesis, the development of historical critical biblical interpretation in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Germany and the relationship it maintained with the church and other cultures is of special interest. In the first place, most of the biblical scholars who are presently involved in biblical interpretation in Africa were trained in academic institutions in the West that upheld Western modern historical critical modes of interpreting the Bible.

Secondly, the remarkable growth of African Christianity derives in part from the appropriation of the Bible in Churches with strong roots in African culture. In consequence, African biblical scholars are increasingly concerned to develop their relationship with ordinary readers of the Bible and to develop modes of theology which can engage critically with these new forms of Church life. Thus, if I am to work on the reconstruction of forms of African theology and the development of effective hermeneutical tools for Africa, it would be valuable to consider the intellectual culture that produced the biblical scholars who would be or are undertaking this venture.

Thirdly, it would also be important to consider the contribution which historical theology in Germany made to the development of New forms of Christianity and Church life. Here only a brief treatment can be offered.

It would therefore be inadequate to study issues related to the church in Africa without looking at the theology from which they originated, which in this case was the dominant modern German theology.[9] Furthermore, it is important to understand the influence that culture had in the development of the historical critical model of interpretation in the modern era. It is also of interest to me to find out the kind of relationship that the scholarly readers maintained with the church as they continued to undertake biblical interpretation. In other words, how was the dividing line drawn between scholarly readers and the church or religious groups that they worked amongst; and, what were the points of convergence within the common social location that scholars shared with the church or ordinary people who read the Bible together (scholarly readers and ordinary readers) within particular socio-cultural contexts? Thus, using historical critical biblical interpretation in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries in Germany, (which most contemporary African scholarly readers are indoctrinated with) as my entry point will enable me to study the developments of biblical interpretation by biblical scholars in Africa more effectively. It is important to understand the processes of contextualisation and inculturation which have led to the development of Western theology. At the same time, we need to consider how far the historical tools which have been developed are transcultural.

In this section therefore what I will be doing is to see what views of culture are held by F.C. Baur, one of the key figures in the Western tradition and how far his writing of history is influenced by his own cultural environment in holding such views. Furthermore, we would look at the evolution of African theology from its historical critical roots.

1.1. Baur's views on biblical interpretation have been influenced by theological debates in his socio-cultural context.

The Tübingen School, that is identified with F.C Baur (1792-1880) and his followers was well known for pioneering the process that led to historical consciousness taking centre stage in biblical interpretation. The Tübingen school opposed the supernaturalist approaches to biblical interpretation of 'G.C. Storr and E.G.Bengel, who combined

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[9] The Basel Mission, which consisted of German and Swiss nationals planted the Basel Mission Church which later became the Presbyterian Church of Ghana in 1827 and also, established a theological seminary for the training of pastors in 1843. The Bremen Mission which is a purely German missionary organisation also set up their theological seminary for the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Ghana in 1853. This is well documented by Kofi .J. Agbeti in his *West African Church History II : Christian Missions And Theological Training (1842-1970)* Brill: Leiden, 1991.

Kant's critical philosophy with biblicism in a conservative apologetics and the Roman Catholic Tübingen School of the 1820s led by J.S. Drey, J.A. Moehler and J. Kuhn' (Morgan 1990a: 711).

Baur himself was described by Robert Morgan as

> a philosophical theologian, influenced by Schelling and Schleiermacher and specialising in the History of religions, before becoming a New Testament critic. He thus looked for meaning in the history he was reconstructing, and was helped by modern German idealist philosophy (Morgan 1990a: 711).

Hence, Baur is looked upon as one of the best illustrations of the use of history in biblical interpretation partly because he pioneered a method that combined historical research with a clearly articulated theological interest. His two volumes of *The Church History Of The First Three Centuries* which appeared in 1853 made a remarkable contribution to New Testament Studies. In his preface to the first volume, he stated his historical bias that his stand point

> is one word, the purely historical one: namely, that the one to be aimed at is to place before ourselves the materials given in the history as they are objectively and not otherwise, as far as that is possible (Baur 1878: P.x).

He therefore advocated the use of historical inquiry to trace the beginnings of Christianity. He described the process that he was going to use to achieve this goal as follows

> Every attempt to obtain accuracy and depth in the foundation, ... is the first requirement of the historian ... which no one can lay otherwise than as history herself has laid in her one unchangeable truth, to bring connection, proportion, and unity into the whole woof of the narrative (Baur 1878: Pxii).

The second requirement is for the historian 'to separate according to their different character, the various elements which here co-operate' (Baur 1878: P.xii) with each other.

The third requirement is related to the moving forces and principles that are operative through the centuries. According to Baur one needs 'to trace the action of these forces and principles upon each other and to unite as far as possible into one harmonious picture, all the characters' (Baur 1878: P.xii) of any particular era. Baur applied these principles to the first three centuries in his volumes on Church history and observed that it was a period that is 'so rich in life and movement' (Baur 1878: P.xii); and that the

first three centuries are the product of the action of 'the moving forces and principles' (Baur 1878: P. xii) of that era on each other. Thus, for Baur, truth can be arrived at through this gradual and dialectical process.

Baur proposes the use of historical causation to trace the origins of Christianity by contrast with the positing of supernatural origins and conceptions. He advocated the use of critical historical research in the development of New Testament Theology. This is because his main interest was to develop a history of theology. Even though he is still interested in using extra biblical sources and texts, his primary text was the New Testament. Thus his intention was to put himself at the point where Christianity enters into the realm of the world's history. His interest was to gain a general idea of Christianity's relationship to the other elements of the history of its time. Thus, one is to look for clues from observation of Christianity to see whether there are some things which are of its religious essence on the one hand, and also expressive of the age in which it appeared. These points of contact are taken into consideration in the kinds of interpretations given.

1.2. Baur's position with ordinary readers and the Church

According to Morgan, in order to put Baur's historical critical method into its right perspective with respect to the Church, it is useful to look at its roots in Schleiermacher. In the *Brief Outline on the study of Theology*,[10] Schleiermacher gave an outline concerning the direction that biblical interpretation should take in the modern era in Germany. In a sense, he is the father of what is referred to as *historical theology*. Schleiermacher's argument was that the challenge the Church faced in the modern era in Germany, was that of being able to articulate the traditional truths that it purports to hold in an intellectual climate in Germany, culturally conditioned and influenced by Nineteenth Century German idealistic philosophy and critical historical research. Thus, according to Morgan, Schleiermacher

> not only set the critical study of Christian origins on a sound methodological basis from which subsequent research could advance, but also integrated the science and philosophy of his time and place into his own understanding of Christianity. The resulting restatement of Christian faith was cast in the form of theologically interpreted historical investigations, including critical assessment of the contemporary scene (Morgan 1985: 261).

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[10] For more details, see Schleiermacher's *Brief Outline on the study of theology*. Translated with introductions and notes by T. N. Tice, Richmond: John Knox, 1966.

Hence, Schleiermacher explains historical theology by saying that 'Accordingly, historical theology is the actual corpus of theological study, which is connected with science, as such, by means of philosophical theology and with the active Christian life by means of practical theology' (Schleiermacher 1966: 26). Schleiermacher also further states that 'Historical criticism is the all-pervasive and indispensable organ for the work of historical theology, as for the entire field of historical studies' (Schleiermacher 1966: 49).

The work of Baur is therefore considered as a follow-up of the work started by Schleiermacher. This is because the Enlightenment era brought with it the dismantling of most of the central dogmas that the church had held for centuries. The supernaturalist conception of the origins of its faith was under serious threat because it was subjected to copious scrutiny. Thus, the timely intervention of Schleiermacher and Baur was not only to

> provide a credible reconstruction of the history but also because this reconstruction enshrined a new theological interpretation of the tradition...the old materials of the tradition were re-arranged in what was now perceived to be the historical order and were held together by the new metaphysical cement to replace the decayed foundations and fallen buttresses of belief in supernatural interventions (Morgan 1985: 265).

The question therefore is, how does Baur reconstruct Christianity against the background of supernaturalism on one hand and authoritarian traditions on the other with his historical and speculative tools that we have discussed in this chapter? Furthermore, what is the relationship between Baur's theological reconstruction and ordinary people in the Church of his day?

In his *A Study of Ferdinand Christian Baur: The Formation of Historical Theology (1966)*, Hodgson states that

> Baur fashions not only his theology of the Church, according to which its historicity exists at the juncture of divine idea and temporal manifestations, but also his conception of critical and speculative historical method, by means of which historical knowledge is able to penetrate from the subjective stance of the historian to the objective reality of the Church ....It must not represent a return to the perspective of either old Catholic supernaturalism, old Protestant dualism, or eighteenth-Century rationalism (Hodgson 1966: 160).

In order to achieve this goal, Baur employed certain categories which enabled him to reconstruct the meaning and understanding of Christian faith effectively. According to Hodgson, Baur employed four main groups of categories.

'A first group of categories makes clear that the historian's task is not that of measuring a phenomenon or explaining a process with generally agreed-upon criteria of great exactitude as is usually the case with the natural sciences. (Hodgson 1966: 167). It is rather the 'comprehension' or 'interpretation' (*Auffassung*) of the historically given in its pure objectivity, or the 'reasoning consideration' (*die denkende Betrachtung*) of the object (Baur 1863:vi-vii). The second set of categories indicates the importance of the role of the historian as a presenter of information. Baur's emphasis here is on the presentation of the interpretation. According to Hodgson, 'Baur makes, a systematic distinction between *Darstellung* and *Vorstellung*. The latter term, translated as 'representation', refers to subjective and arbitrary imposition of meaning on the data' (Hodgson 1966: 168) which Baur regarded as superficial and unreal. What Baur prefers is *Darstellung* which means the historical interpreter 'rethinks' and 'reproduces' the past and presents it in an objective manner to enable the appropriation of its meaning. The third set of categories involves the historian being an inquirer, engaged in carrying out an inquiry or investigation rather than inventing or creating things. This means that the 'historian is not primarily a creative artist but rather an investigator of what is already there, what has already happened' (Hodgson 1966: 169). The historical presenter is therefore required to 'follow' (*folgen*) or 'pursue' (*nachgehen*) the objective course of the subject matter itself; he must 'penetrate' (*eindringen, eingehen*) to the objectivity of the historical data. (Baur 1847: 29). The fourth set of categories suggest that the historical interpreter or presenter must 'take up' the objectively given in himself or allow it to reflect itself in his subjective consciousness ((Hodgson 1966: 168). This set of categories indicates the active, critical and reflective participation of the theologian in the interpretative process. This is partly because of Baur's option for an epistemological procedure which is speculative and at the same time critical. This comes out in the preface to his *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte* (1847) that

> Only the rawest empiricism can intend that one should surrender one-self absolutely to the materials, that the objects of historical consideration can be taken only as they lie before us. Any one who comes to history not without philosophical education must know that one has to distinguish between things as they are in themselves and as they appear to us, and that they come to appearance for us in that we can reach them only through the medium of our consciousness' (Baur 1847:xi-xii).

Hence, for Baur the interpretative process does not only involve the penetration of the past objectively but also the enlargement of the subjectivities of theologians through their encounter with the past and their personal self-description of it in the light of the present. Thus, with respect to Christianity,

> Baur fashions not only his theology of the Church, according to which its historicity exists at the juncture of divine idea and temporal manifestations, but also his conception of a critical and speculative historical method, by means of which historical knowledge is able to penetrate from the subjective stance of the historian to the objective reality of the Church (Hodgson 1966:160).

Robert Morgan's article on Baur which appeared in *vol.1* of *Nineteenth Century Religious Thought in the West,* (1985) edited by Ninian Smart explains the effect that the introduction of Baur's historical critical biblical interpretation had on his relationship to the church in Germany in the Nineteenth century. Morgan also explains the church's reaction to Baur's radical historical reconstruction of New Testament Theology. Lastly, Morgan assesses and comments on the church's response to Baur's 'purely historical' approach to biblical interpretation.

With respect to Baur's relationship with the church, he was said to have 'remained a theologian and a preacher' (Morgan 1985: 278) during his entire life. For instance, in Tübingen

> apart from teaching theology, Baur's other major nonacademic function was that of serving as morning preacher (*Frühprediger*) in the University Church (the Stiftskirche) on Sundays and festival days, an office to which members of the evangelical-theological faculty were officially appointed (Hodgson 1966: 19).

Baur justified his dual role at Tübingen as lecturer and preacher by saying that 'I am not merely a teacher of theology...but also a preacher' (Baur 1841 :4).This is due to Baur's view that

> the scientifically trained theologian, by virtue of his ability to distinguish the essential content of the Christian faith from unessential or superfluous forms, is especially equipped to serve a pastoral call' (Hodgson 1966: 19).

This comes out in Baur's perception of the dynamic nature of the task of the Church and the relationship between such a task and theologians. Thus Baur states that

> The congregation is destined not to remain standing in its faith in the same spot, but, so far as it is able, to make progress, in order that it may better learn to distinguish between essentials and unessentials in matters of faith. But how can

this happen other than through clergymen who possess the necessary scientific training alongside religious interest? (Baur 1839: 3).

This implies that there is the need for collaboration between the possessors of 'scientific theology', where 'science' in this context is 'understood as critical and speculative thought' (Hodgson 1966: 97) and ordinary people in the Church, who do not possess critical reading skills. This is because of the view that 'the religious life in general, even for the layman, is not possible without the discipline and direction provided it by scientific theology' (97). This therefore calls for the involvement of the theologian or biblical scholar with the ordinary people in the Church. This is because the theologian who possesses critical and speculative thought '*can help* (italics mine) the Christian discern more clearly the central foundations of his religious life' (97). In a sense, the theologian *can help* the Church by being a facilitator or enabler who enables the Church to reconstruct its self-understanding in a particular context.

The next question therefore is, how did Baur conduct himself in undertaking the task of working in collaboration with the concerns of ordinary people in the Church of his day?

According to Morgan

> *Religionsphilosophie*, which had found its most developed expression to date in Hegel's work replaced the traditional dogmatic theology for Baur. But it did not replace the standpoint of faith (Morgan 1985: 278).

Morgan explains the reason for this kind of relationship that Baur maintained with the Church by saying that for him, 'Hegelianism was a matter of "faith seeking understanding" (Morgan 1985: 278) which Baur puts across in the 'Anselmic echoes of the sentences of the '*Abgenötigte Erklärung*' (278)". What he did in the sentences in the above-mentioned document, which is known as '*Necessitated Explanation*', was to argue that historical research is a useful tool for dealing with 'untenable and irrational theology' (Morgan 1985: 264).

1.3. Conclusions

In summary, Baur's objective in undertaking his theological interpretation through historical research is not to undermine theological understanding but rather to provide objective interpretation by the usage of historical data. Morgan calls Baur's approach, a '"sympathetic hermeneutical" [approach], which provided a more "objective" (because

it is responsive to the object) history-writing' (Morgan 1985: 265). This was because of Baur's conviction that 'true science' is a product of life and is not alien to it; it represents the 'noblest spiritual side of life' (Baur 1839: 20-21).

Baur's positive contribution to Nineteenth Century Church life was the development of *Kulturprotestantismus* which according to Rumscheidt was the name adopted by von Harnack and other liberal theologians for their type of theology. Rumscheidt observed that 'it was not a theology of the church but one of culture' (Rumscheidt 1989: 41). Rumscheidt further explained the relationship between the name and liberal theologians by stating that liberal theologians wanted their theology

> to become the theology of the Church, a Church however, which had also chosen to be a Church in relation to modernity. The primary addressee was the cultured individual of modern times who sought, in freedom from any strictures which associating with the institutional Church was believed to bring, to be religious and cultured, a person of reason *and* faith (Rumscheidt 1989: 41).

Schleiermacher dealt with the relationship between modern culture and theology in his apology, *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers* (1958). Schleiermacher's message to the cultured despisers of religion was that 'Science is not your calling if you despise religion and fear to surrender yourself to reverence and aspiration for the primordial' (Schleiermacher 1958: 40). He tried to draw distinctions between science, religion and art and the inadequacy of any of them in the pursuit of understanding and meaning in life. Schleiermacher argues that Religion has to be 'Comprehended as an endlessly progressive work of the Spirit that reveals Himself in all Human history' (Schleiermacher 1958: 214).

He then goes on to relate his conception of religion to Christianity by saying that

> The original intuition of Christianity is more glorious, more sublime, more worthy of adult humanity, penetrates deeper into the systematic religion and extends itself further over the whole universe (Schleiermacher 1958: 241).

He further elevated Christianity by saying that it is a 'higher power of religion' (242). This is because of his contention that Christianity is 'most and best...conscious of God, and the divine order in religion and history' (242). Schleiermacher then went further to

lay the foundation for colonial ideology that Baur and others employed in their development of *Kulturprotestantismus* by stating that, with respect to Christianity,

> Almost its first work on appearing was to destroy the last expectation of its pious contemporaries, saying it was irreligious and godless to expect any other restoration than the restoration to purer faiths, to higher view of things and eternal life in God. Boldly it led the heathen beyond the separation they had made between the world of the gods and the world of men (Schleiermacher 1958: 243).

It is within the above mentioned contextual frame of reference that Baur's work sparked off the movement in biblical interpretation that led to the propagation of Western Protestantism as a superior religion that has the capacity to manifest truth. Baur's work led to the 'notion of a universal Church history [which] depends on a speculative comprehension of that history, in which a specific theological conception of the nature of the Church is brought to bear on the data in order to elicit from it its meaning (Hodgson 1966: 166). Furthermore, the reconstruction of this universal history was perceived by Baur solely as a 'Protestant phenomenon and ...a peculiarly Protestant science' (165). These developments in Western Christianity served as a bases for colonial ideology.

For instance, with respect to South Africa, John and Jean Comaroff argue that Protestant missions embarked on 'The colonisation of consciousness' (Comaroff & Comaroff 1992: 258) among the *Tswana* people. This (colonisation of consciousness)

> involved an overt effort to *convert* the Tswana, an argument of images and messages intended to convince them of the ideological content of Christianity. Here the evangelists tried to disseminate, in the heart of darkness, the Good News, a persuasive narrative of biblical morality and 'truth'. At a deeper level, only partially distinguished from the first, they set their sights on the total *reformation* of the heathen world; i.e. on the inculcation of the hegemonic forms, the taken-for-granted signs, and practices, of the colonizing culture (Comaroff & Comaroff 1992: 258-259).

This was the ideological framework from which most Nineteenth and Twentieth century Western Missionary enterprises operated in other parts of the World. Hence, Western Missionaries saw themselves as the sole carriers of 'the truth' and Protestant Christianity as 'the only true form of religion'. However, the positive contribution of Baur to the ordinary German reader in the Nineteenth century was Baur's commitment to the search for truth through historical reconstruction. Hitherto, truth was relayed to the ordinary reader through rational proofs and interpretations of dogmas and texts. However, that approach paid little or no attention to the relationship between historical

movements and truth or understanding. Baur's exercise, as indicated by Morgan above, is to argue that the manifestations of truth are beyond natural science; and that the historical developments and movements and its impact on self-understanding or truth cannot be overlooked in our search for meaning and truth. Thus, Baur's absolute commitment to truth and his understanding of the relationship between history and truth served as a major step forward for the Nineteenth century ordinary readers in enlarging their self-understanding and search for truth.

Furthermore, the conception and formulation of the relationship between truth and culture from Baur and beyond led to the entrenchment of Cultural Protestantism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth centuries in Germany. The development of *Kulturprotestantismus* in Germany and its adoption by the Church in Western Europe is of interest to me in this thesis because of the role it played in the historical reconstruction of truth in Africa. *Kulturprotestantismus* served as the basis for the formulation of colonial ideology and European value-setting for biblical interpretation in the non-Western world in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries which includes Africa.

Jean and John Comaroff's *Ethnography and the historical imagination* (1992) explains the adoption of *Kulturprotestantismus* by Western Protestant missionaries in South Africa by stating that

> The colonisation of South Africa - and many parts of the world - began with an ideological onslaught on the part of Christian missionaries, self-styled bearers of European civilisation. These men set out to 'convert' heathens by persuading them of the content of their theological message and, even more profoundly, by reconstructing their everyday worlds (Comaroff & Comaroff 1992: 258).

In summary, Baur's attempt to relate truth to culture based on his indebtedness to socio-cultural, economic and political situations led to the formulation of imperialistic hermeneutics which identified pure religion with the evolution of cultural Protestantism in the Nineteenth Century in Germany. Baur, therefore, is not conscious of the diversities in religions beyond the borders of Germany as having something to contribute towards the development of Christianity. In a sense, his main target was the bourgeois supernaturalist hermeneutics of his time. Hence, Baur's apologetics, which attempts to marry historical inquiry and a specifically Protestant superior theory of religion, lead to imperialistic models of interpretation which are incompatible with the

development of inculturation models of interpretation.[11] This is because culture and community become more and more important as one attempts to adapt religious beliefs and practices. Any attempt to adapt the gospel to the religious practices and beliefs of other lands must take into consideration the peculiarities of diverse cultural contexts and communities and their implications for undertaking such an adaptation.

In conclusion, the understanding of the relationship between history and truth on the one hand, and that of truth and culture on the other, which was initiated by Baur and which later led to the propagation of 'cultural Protestantism' by liberal theologians had implications for the development of theology in Africa.

This was because Hegel's philosophical history influenced the reconstruction of truth in Baur's day. Hence the type of theology that resulted from it was a type of inculturation theology that bought into its own culture- the price of which was imperialistic theology in which historical theology dabbled.

However, Comaroff & Comaroff see this stance as false-consciousness on the part of historical theologians. This is because of the view of the former that

> If we allow that historical consciousness and representation may take very different forms from those of the West, people everywhere turn out to have had history all along...European colonisers did not bring Universal History to people without it. Ironically, they brought histories in particular, histories far less predictable than we have been inclined to think (Comaroff & Comaroff 1992: 5).

This implies that every culture has its own historical moments and the movements of history in Europe, which was perceived as Universal History, have their own particularity which is European. Hence, historical truth, by definition, is that which rather encounters people in their own cultures and therefore its manifestations cannot be easily predicted.

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[11] The inclusive and open attitude of Vatican II to non-Christian religions was a further step forward for the development of the inculturation theology. Thus, Pope John Paul II declared that, inculturation '...involves seeing the whole of culture itself as the fertile soil in which the good news is planted, which it fertilises and from which it draws nourishment in a process of mutual enrichment' (Ad Gentes; 6). This implies that, inculturation is the intimate transformation of authentic cultural values through the integration into Christianity and the insertion of Christianity in the various human cultures (Abbot 1966: 592-593).

This criticism of Universal history also underlines Gadamer's 'Universality of the Hermeneutical Problem' (1986). Gadamer argues that with respect to historical consciousness

> there are innumerable tasks of historical scholarship that have no relation to our own present and to the depths of its historical consciousness. But it seems to me there can be no doubt that the great horizon of the past, out of which our culture and our present live, influences us in everything we want, hope for, or fear in the future (Gadamer 1986: 183).

Gadamer also states that 'It is not so much our judgements as it is our prejudices that constitute our being' (Gadamer 1975: 245). Hence, consciousness of the cultural tradition in which we stand helps us to understand who we are which in turn enables us to understand issues in our present context and their future implications. However, Gadamer's theory can lead to a situation whereby we see things through our historical tunnel, where each of us lives in her/his own historical context and interprets things through that tunnel.

Habermas' 'On Hermeneutics' Claim to Universality' (1986) criticises Gadamer's hermeneutical approach by saying that

> Clearly, insight into the prejudicial structure of understanding yields nothing when it comes to the pitfall of identifying the factually produced consensus with the true one. Instead, it leads to the ontologization of language and the hypostatisation of the traditional context (Habermas 1986: 314).

Habermas asserts, that is to say, that Gadamer has not broken free of Hegel's sense of teleology which locates discourse between people within the same tradition and thus sees the mediation of truth as lying within the confines of a particular cultural context or tradition, without any provision for cross-cultural or inter-cultural mediation of truth. The question is how truth can be mediated between different traditions and worlds of discourse. This in a sense is where Habermas' approach to the mediation of truth comes in.

Habermas puts forward a method of interpretation which is based on two factors, namely, depth-hermeneutics and a theory of communicative competence. Habermas

termed this approach to hermeneutics a *critically self-aware hermeneutics*. According to him a *critically self-aware hermeneutics*

> ...differentiates between insight and delusion, assimilates the metahermeneutical knowledge concerning the conditions which make systematically distorted communication possible. It links understanding to the principle of rational discourse, so that truth can be guaranteed only by that consensus which might be reached under the idealised conditions to be found in unrestrained and dominance-free communication, and which could, in the course of time, be affirmed to exist (Habermas 1986: 314).

For Habermas, 'truth' can be realised when rational discourse takes place in an environment of uninhibited and *dominance-free* communication among a group of people who are searching together for truth. Habermas is, therefore, of the opinion not only that we need to bring prejudices that we carry from our tradition to the truth but that truth can be arrived at through effective communication or dialogue. This type of dialogue could be at different levels. It could be dialogue between different religious traditions and the text or between the rich and the poor, the biblical scholar and the ordinary reader in the same cultural context or between different cultures in different geographical locations. In summary, this theory of Habermas that allows one to understand his or her traditional context but goes further to advocate an open search for understanding with others in a dominance-free dialogue is the theoretical framework that this thesis is interested in and will continue to be guided by it in its entirety. Habermas points to a greater cultural interchange between different readers and hearers - what becomes important is 'reading with' and 'listening to' each other. Thus, ensuing chapters will continue to look at biblical interpretation within frameworks that allow cultural interchange among different cultures as well as interchange among different groups within the same culture. For instance, chapters two and three focus on interchange among biblical scholars in Africa; dealing with hermeneutical issues within Africa in contemporary times. Chapter four however, deals with a contrasting of the hermeneutical approaches in Africa with that of Germany in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries.

Chapter Two

2. Biblical Interpretative models in Africa (1): Developing hermeneutical models in Twentieth Century Africa.

Introduction

As we have already noted in Chapter one, the Church in the age of modernity in Europe saw itself as the possessor of universal history-truth which it needed to take to non-European nations who being 'unable to master their environment, [they] lacked all culture and history' (Comaroff & Comaroff 1992: 268).[12] With respect to Africa, 'Christendom challenged local symbols, threatening to convert them into a universal currency' (Comaroff & Comaroff 1992: 5). This was because European missionaries saw themselves as the carriers of the truth to Africans, who they regarded as those without it. This was the setting within which Christianity operated in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries in Africa. However, towards the middle part of the Twentieth Century, there was an increase in awareness among Africans of their need for identity and self-expression. These developments were spearheaded by African nationalists and freedom fighters throughout Africa. The work of the nationalist movements and the kinds of awareness it generated affected the political, economic and social issues (which included religion) throughout Africa. Thus, with regard to religion the increase in awareness contributed to the formation of African instituted Churches who initiated a theologising process that was subsequently taken up by African biblical scholars, whose pre-occupation was basically to inculturate the Gospel within the African socio-cultural set up. With respect to the *Tswana* of South Africa, this development was

> precisely because the cross, the book, the coin were such saturated signs, they were variously and ingeniously redeployed to bear a host of new meanings as non-Western peoples - Tswana prophets, Naparama fighters, and others- fashioned their own visions of modernity (Clifford: 1988: 5-6).

Commenting on the response of the Tswana in South Africa to European mission work among them, Comaroff & Comaroff state that

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[12] This is a quotation from Terence Ranger's 'Taking hold of the land: Holy places in Twentieth Century Zimbabwe'. In *Past and Present* 117, 1987: 158-194.

> In the long run, ..the implications of evangelical imperialism were to be fixed by the wider context in which it was embedded, just as they were to be mediated by the responses of the Tswana themselves (Comaroff & Comaroff 1992: 37).

Comaroff & Comaroff further argue that 'because it is multiply motivated, social history...will always be both predictable yet subject to the innovative and the unforeseen' (37). For instance, the Tswana prophets and Naparama fighters (of South Africa) and others reconstructed their own visions of modernity using precisely the instruments of European modernity that had the capacity to facilitate such a process (*see* Comaroff & Comaroff's comments under section 1.3).

The mission schools established throughout Africa, for instance, helped most Africans to understand their own history and to start analysis and reflection of their histories in the light of its imperial domination. However, whilst operating these missionary schools, the missionaries were at the same time imposing European Christianity on Africans through imperialistic theology that they propagated in the Churches they established throughout Africa. Thus, European mission to Africa contains seeds of liberation at the same time contains oppressive elements.

Hence, 'the imperial mission, [was] an initiative moved by contradictory forces whose consequences differed radically from the stated motives of those involved' (Comaroff & Comaroff 1992: 36). The relationship between these contradictory European missionary activities in Africa and the striving for African self-understanding was that 'it was in the space between the liberal worldview of mission and the racist world of settler society that modern black nationalist consciousness was to take root' (37). Thus, the seeds of liberation sown by the missionaries was utilised by the Africans to subvert the European oppressive imperialistic theology. The subversion of Western imperialistic theology was a major step which led to the adoption of theologies related to culture and resistance by African theologians.

Thus, diverse theologies were formulated to respond to African cultural currents (that is, political, social and economic currents), as a result of the growing awareness generated within various parts of Africa in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, namely,

inculturation theologies and resistance theologies. This is summarised by Ukpong in his 'Theological literature from Africa' (1988))[13] in stating that

> African Theology or African Christian Theology, is a creative encounter between African Thought system and European Christian Thought system. Feminist theology addresses the issue of sexism; Black theology the issue of racism in South Africa; and Liberation theology addresses oppressive economic and political (civil and ecclesiastical) structures (Ukpong 1988: 67).

Ukpong categorises inculturation theology under the category of African theology, whilst feminist, black and liberation theologies are categorised under resistant theologies.

Also, alongside the above-mentioned theological developments in Africa, there was the adoption of various hermeneutical models by African hermeneuts in interpreting biblical texts. This chapter will focus on these hermeneutical models.

2.1. Hermeneutical developments in Africa

Christianity was vibrant in North Africa in the first five centuries of early Christianity. Thus, in early Christianity, Africa made a pioneering contribution to biblical exegesis through the Alexandrian tradition[14] of biblical interpretation initiated by Clement of Alexandria...which was largely allegorical and uncritical in the modern sense (Ukpong 1998: 1), and which 'lasted in the Western Church till the onset of the Enlightenment' (Ukpong 1998). However, in the Twentieth Century, the theological developments in Africa mentioned in our earlier discussions generated hermeneutical debates among biblical scholars in Africa. This led to the formulation and adoption of various hermeneutical practices by biblical scholars in Africa who are engaged in these hermeneutical debates that are suitable for their respective contexts. The general methodology or approach, adopted by most African hermeneuts in contemporary Africa, is in conformity with the one formulated by The Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOTS) at its consultation in Dar- es- Salaam, Tanzania in 1976 which states that the first step is that, 'Indeed, we must, in order to be faithful to the gospel and to our peoples, reflect on the realities of our own situations' (Torres &

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[13] Ukpong's comment was made in his article 'Theological Literature from Africa' in *Concilium*, 5 1988: 67-75.

[14] For details of this, see Joseph Trigg's *Biblical Interpretation: The message of the Fathers of the Church*. Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1988: 21-31.

Fabella 1978: 269) and then second step is 'to interpret the word of God in relation to these realities' (Torres & Fabella 1978: 269).

Detailed work has been done on the diverse approaches to biblical interpretation in Africa by Justin Ukpong who has formulated descriptive categories and names which specifically fit each of his categories as they are employed by African scholarly readers with respect to their respective contexts and concerns. This is found in his 'Models and Methods of Academic Biblical Interpretation in Africa' (1998).[15]

We would like to concentrate on the following categories which appeared in the above-mentioned article which are representative of the ones that are prevalent on the continent in contemporary times: 1.Comparative hermeneutical practice; 2. Evaluative hermeneutical practice; 3. Inculturation hermeneutical practice; 4. Liberation (Contextual Bible Study) hermeneutical practice; and, 5. Feminist hermeneutical practice.

The purpose of looking at the above-mentioned hermeneutical practices is to review the methods being employed by biblical scholars in interpreting the Bible in the African context from 1930 to the present. Particularly, I would like to focus on the following questions:

a. How has scholarly views of culture influenced the ways they have interpreted biblical texts in Africa? [16]

b. What are the implications of the above-mentioned developments in hermeneutics in Africa for the Church and for popular readers?

2.2. Ukpong's hermeneutical categories

2.2.1. Comparative Hemeneutical Practice

The comparative approach was developed against the background of the way the gospel was propagated in Africa by Western missionaries. Missionaries were greatly inhibited in their perception of both African religion and African humanity as a whole, by their

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[15] For more details, see Ukpong's 'Models and Methods of Academic Biblical interpretation in Africa' *The Journal of Inculturation Theology* 4:1, 1998: 3-31.

[16] See appendix I for details on the extent to which the developments in hemeneutics in Africa is a response to broad based socio-cultural, political and economic movements in African culture.

prejudices against them, and also by the then current evolutionary view of the human race and of the religions. In a sense, such missionary view are similar to the views of Bousset the German theologian who had both a historical deterministic and 'heroic' grasp of religious truth through a transcendent spirit.[17] This explains why conversion to Christianity had to involve

> the abandonment and renunciation not only of the traditional African ways of worship, sacrifices to the Supreme Being, communion with the ancestral spirits and other holy rites - but also the abandonment and renunciation of African cultural customs and practices including songs and dances. All of them together were referred to as 'things of the devil'. Almost the whole of the traditional African culture was seen as being under the kingdom of the Prince of Darkness, and the African peoples were summoned by the missionaries to come out of it completely, root, stock and branch (Kibicho 1978: 378).

The challenge to modern African biblical scholars was to reclaim the Bible for the African church that has hitherto been using Western missionary approaches which do not resonate with the concerns and questions of the church in Africa. They were to take into serious consideration the traditional African beliefs and practices which have been abandoned or overlooked in interpreting the Bible for use in Africa by the Western missionaries.

Hence, contemporary African biblical scholars found the comparative approach useful in achieving this goal. This approach postulates three levels of continuity or relationship between the Old Testament and African life and thought. These are: *religio-cultural, theological* and *interpretative* or *hermeneutical* (Dickson 1979: 99). The most dominant of these three levels of relationship or continuity with respect to the comparative model is the religio-cultural relationship. What the religio-cultural relationship aims at doing is to identify African cultural concepts and religious practices and correlate them with similar categories in the Bible. The rationale here is to ensure a 'cultural' continuity between African and biblical worlds through a comparative study of selected linguistic, religious, historical and cultural concepts in them. This is because several writers have suggested that at some time in the past there was physical contact between black

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[17] Bousset argument was that when Christianity moved from its Palestinian base into the Hellenistic world, it 'had to assume this form of the *kyrios* faith and the *kyrios* worship; it could not at all turn out otherwise' (Bousset: 1970: 151). He sees Paul as a formative force within early Christianity who 'makes the Pneuma into the element of the entire new Christian life, not only in its specially miraculous side, but in its total ethical and religious attitudes. As its fruits, he enumerates all the virtues of the Christian life (Gal.5: 22-23). The great gracious gift of Christian liberty is the work or the life-expression of the spirit (2Cor.3: 17). This is a complete '*metabasis eis allo genos*' (Bousset 1970: 163). For details, see Bousset,'s *Kyrios Christos: A history of the belief in Christ from the beginnings of Christianity to Iranaeus.* Nashville: Abingdon, 1970.

Africans and Jews who had come to the continent in search of trading partners. Thus, the proponents of this model have argued that, it is this contact that explains apparent resemblance between the Old Testament on one hand, and religion and life among Africans on the other hand. Generally, the comparative similarities between the Old Testament and African culture is of great interest to most African theologians and writers even without these (putative) common roots. Their main objective is to generate meaning and interpretation of the Bible by comparing it with parallel concepts in the African religio-cultural contexts. The point of this comparison is by and large, to legitimate African culture either by demonstrating its historical roots in the Old Testament or its similarity to it.

The pioneer work in this area is J.J. Williams' *Hebrewisms in West Africa: From Nile to Niger with the Jews* published in 1930. In his study of the Ashanti people of Ghana, Williams proposes that

> there is a far-reaching indication of the possible origin of the Ashanti, that carries
> us well on our way to the verification of the assertion ...that the Ashanti may trace
> their descent from distant Egypt (Williams 1930: 57).

Williams seeks to establish this in two ways. First, he draws attention to what he considers to be the similarities between Ashanti traditional religious beliefs and practices and Hebrew religion.[18] Secondly, he attempts to expose Jewish history with particular reference to migratory movements in Africa. This pace-setting work in African hermeneutics in the 1930s was fully worked up forty years later by Kwesi Dickson into what became known as comparative hermeneutics in contemporary Africa.

Dickson outlines his approach in his 'The Old Testament and African Theology' (1973), 'Hebrewism of West Africa-The Old Testament and African Life and Thought' (1974), and his 'Continuity and Discontinuity between the Old Testament and African Life and Thought' (1979) and *Theology In Africa* (1984) among others. He is of the opinion that, 'one could compare a considerable number of customs and societal arrangements found in the Old Testament and African life and thought' (Dickson 1984:160) [as] '...this will provide additional basis for evaluating what may be described as a cultural continuity'

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[18] Williams' work which laid the foundations for the comparative hermeneutics focused on the similarities in language structures, correlation in language sound as well as the similarities in the conception of the Supreme being and the practice of 'mixed religion' among both the Ashantis of Southern Ghana and the Israelites.

For details of Williams' work, see his *Hebrewisms in West Africa: From the Nile to Niger with the Jews*. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1930.

(160). As distinct from Williams' methodology of historical continuity, Dickson argues that such comparisons are never intended to imply direct cultural contacts or borrowings but merely to illustrate patterns of thought and feelings. Dickson has done detailed studies in this area pointing to what he calls the Old Testament 'atmosphere' that makes the African context 'a "kindred" atmosphere' (Dickson: 1973: 36). Thus, a number of religious themes, practices and rites are compared with each other. The selected themes that Dickson deals with are: 1. Nature, 2. Spirit possession, and 3. Corporate personality.

How Dickson's views on biblical interpretation have been influenced by theological debates among African scholars.

The land is identified as the major concept associated with creation in both cultures. Dickson operates on the hypothesis that there is continuity as well as discontinuity between Israelite religio-cultural practices and attitudes and those of Africa. With respect to discontinuity, he starts his analysis by contrasting Canaanite and Israelite ideas of the land. The Canaanites believed the land was infused with divinity. The death of Baal for instance, represented the time of the year when there was little vegetation and his revival, the appearance of vegetation and fruit. This Canaanite belief concerning land, according to Dickson was closer to the African understanding of the nature of the land as they considered the land to be divine whilst the Israelites do not. This means there is discontinuity in that respect between the Israelites and Africans with respect to the nature of the land. On the other hand, when it comes to continuity, 'the land, in Africa as well as Israelite thought, is the basis for group consciousness. Not only is the land not to be defiled, but also it plays a part in the African awareness of group inter-relatedness' (Dickson 1984: 166).

With respect to spirit possession, Dickson associates it with the prophets in both cultures.[19] In the Old Testament, Yahweh the national God was the source of prophecy and true prophetic inspiration. In Africa, seldom does possession originate from God. It is usually the lesser divinities and other spirit powers who possess people. However, Dickson indicates that despite the dissimilarities in origin, the person possessed in both cases, is required to do the spirit's bidding as for instance, 'The Nuer of Sudan speak of the spirit 'laying hold of' or "taking hold of" a person, much as the Hebrews did'. (Dickson 1984: 168). Spirit possession comes with a sense of dismay but with the Israelites, it is more from the sense of inadequacy and unpreparedness than the burden of the body of prohibitions which the person who becomes the agent of a spirit power

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[19] The association of spirit possession with the prophets is not true of the New Testament

invariably has to observe. African practice has much in common with the Old Testament in both the ecstatic state which may be induced through the use of music, and in cases of unexpected possession. During funerals or traditional festivals in Ghana, unexpected spiritual possessions are rampant. Also, Old Testament prophets are conscious of the fact that they are called to bring back erring people to God. Dickson states that, they saw themselves as the conscience of their people, charged with the responsibility of waking them up to spiritual realities and sharpening their conscience with respect to social inequities (Dickson 1984: 169). African prophets are also conscious of having been called to serve the people. However, their oracles are mainly aimed at maintaining the religio-cultural heritage on which society's equilibrium is believed to rest.

In summary, Dickson, argues that the major discontinuity is that the Old Testament prophets were critical of Israelite institutions in a way that prophecy in Africa is not. Also, prophecy in Israel embraced non-Israelite people whilst prophecy appears localised most often in Africa.

With respect to the sense of corporate community, Dickson starts by outlining the structures that perpetuate it in African societies. He cites the extended family, and the clan. This sense of belonging is stretched to embrace not only the living but also the unborn and the dead. With particular reference to the dead, he states that rites are performed for the departed to inculcate a sense of solidarity and security, through the integration of a worldview that constitutes a regulatory moral force. However, he also indicates that there is a place for the individual. Even though individuals are not expected to take decisions against the customs of the group, they are however expected to act responsibly and to ensure the success of their destinies by acquiring and maintaining good characters. Similarly, in Israel, according to Dickson, the family was extended. They had clans (*mishpachah*) which would consist of several families and the tribe (*shebet*) a collection of clans. Corporateness, was therefore a fact with respect to these structures. In his article, 'Continuity and Discontinuity Between the Old Testament and African Life and Thought' (1979), dealing with this same topic, Dickson mentioned that, with respect to the dead,

> the available evidence would seem to suggest that the dead, in consciousness with the living, were part of this corporateness. Officially, it would seem that no cult was paid to the dead; however, the dead were owed certain duties that were taken seriously (1Sam 31:12; 2Sam 21:13-14 etc.) and it may thus be said that they were honoured in a religious spirit (Dickson 1979: 104).

He further states that with respect to the unborn, it appears uncertain but he quoted two passages that indicated a possibility of such a belief (Gen 17), the blessing of Abraham by God of his descendants and (2Sam 7:1ff), the so-called Davidic or Zion covenant which speaks of succeeding generations from David's line. In both Israelite and African religion, community consciousness was paramount. Their awareness of acting in love towards their enemies was lacking because of their 'awareness of difference, and boundaries' (Cohen: 1985: 12)[20]. For instance, in the Old Testament, there is continual admonition to exterminate the non-Palestinian population. Similarly, in Africa, inter-community and sometimes, intra-community relations can often be bitter. However, Dickson identifies discontinuity between ancient Israel and Africa. He argues that, in the prophecies of Amos and Deutero-Isaiah, there is the teaching of the love of God that transcends the national boundaries of Israel. He stated that

> even if Israelite thinking was divided on this issue - and the division spills over into New Testament times when the church struggled with the question of Gentile admission - the very fact that there is this insistent strain of openness ensures that Israel's history could not be written without due prominence being given to this attitude, which to a certain extent marks a discontinuity with the traditional African understanding of the community (Dickson 1979: 105).

Dickson holds this view because of his pre-occupation with African ethnic communities and their community consciousness. Dickson, in the process, overlooks the African sense of identity that goes beyond ethnic boundaries which stresses an openness to others, especially, strangers or visitors. Dickson strengthens his methodology by stressing that

> the validity of the comparative method is that there is a sense in which one could speak of a religio-cultural continuity; and when it is realised that the New Testament shares the same propositions with the Old Testament, then this continuity embraces the whole Bible (Dickson 1984: 181). (*see* Appendix I for Dickson's debt to culture).

Dickson's position with the ordinary readers and the Church

Dickson states that

> to speak of a continuity is not to imply convergence of ideas, for there is also discontinuity between the two traditions; this dialectical relationship must be recognised if facile adoption of the Old Testament is to be avoided (Dickson 1984: 181).

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[20] For details on the relationship between boundaries and attitude to enemies by communites, see A.P. Cohen's *The Symbolic Construction of the Community*. London: Tavistock, 1985.

Surely, it is the failure to realise and understand the above-mentioned relationship which accounts in part for the misinterpretation of the Old Testament by some African Instituted Churches. Sometimes the desire to adopt a traditional practice had dictated the kind of interpretation to be given to a particular biblical passage. In his *Bantu Prophets in South Africa* (1961) Sundkler, for instance, notes that

> because the Bantu standard for testing Bible interpretation is accepted as self-evident...it is possible for the Zionists to quote Micah 4:13 in support of *isangoma* - divination (Sundkler 1961: 277).

Philips also mentioned in his book, *The Old Testament in the World Church* (1942) that, in 'both East and West Africa there are secessionist Churches which encourage polygamy insisting that it is permitted "in the Bible"' (Philips 1942: 7).

Dickson therefore, concludes his model in his book, *Theology in Africa* (1984), by saying that the great need of the Church in Africa today is a biblical hermeneutic which will take seriously the biblical story as read against its Ancient Near Eastern background as well as the particularity of the African situation. This implies that

> Biblical commentaries by African theologians could have a distinctive character; for, in addition to the relevant critical tools, they could utilise the continuity-discontinuity relationship to achieve interpretative realism (Dickson 1984: 164).

2.2.2. Evaluative Hermeneutical Practice

With respect to this model, according to Ukpong -

> the Bible is reflected upon from the perspective of African world-view, African social-historical situation and African experience of Christianity, and vice versa. Generally, the historical -critical method is used for the analysis of the biblical text, and an anthropological or sociological approach is used in analysing the African situation (Ukpong 1998: 3-4)).

Ukpong goes further to differentiate the evaluative model from the comparative model by arguing that, unlike the comparative model, the evaluative approach does not focus on African Traditional religions and its parallels found in the Bible but rather takes African Traditional Religions for granted and focuses

> on the theological underpinnings that result from the encounter of the Bible and African culture, and evaluates them in terms of each other....In the Comparative

model, discourse is at the level of comparative religion while in this model it is at the level of theology (Ukpong 1998: 4).

In other words, the comparative approach came up with some linkages between African concepts and biblical concepts. The evaluative method goes further to start deep theological reflection based on the dialogue that has been opened between the text and African cultural and religious concepts. Thus, according to Ukpong,

> the aim of this model is to understand African religion and culture in the light of biblical teaching, and the biblical message against the background of African culture and religion.... As a result of these researches, African culture and religion have been seen to be not just a preparation for the Gospel, as the comparative model, but *indispensable resources in the interpretation of the Gospel message* and in the development of African Christianity (Ukpong 1998: 4).

What Ukpong is pointing out here, is the fact that his notion of evaluative hermeneutics is that which sees African culture and religion as a dialogue partner in the interpretative process together with other partners like the text and its socio-cultural context which, therefore, gives African culture and religion a more active and dynamic role in the interpretative process than comparative hermeneutics has hitherto assigned to it. There is some resemblance between the evaluative hermeneutic and Baur's dialectic approach to the understanding of the manifestation of truth where truth evolves out of the encounter between two forces (*see* Baur's comments on dialectic approach to hermeneutics under section 1.2).

Ukpong gives five major ways by which the evaluative approach is being utilised for biblical interpretation in Africa by biblical scholars. These are the evaluation of African cultural concepts in the light of scripture, the evaluation of biblical texts in the light of African concepts and beliefs, *critique* of concepts in society using biblical themes or texts, erecting *bridgeheads* between African concepts and biblical texts by using either biblical concepts or African concepts that show continuity and lastly, critical studies of texts to discover biblical foundations for use in contemporary African contexts.

This approach is distinctively called an evaluative approach because it starts by looking at the historical critical readings of the text and evaluating them against a specific African context, after which implications are drawn for practical application of the text by taking out what is useful and persuasive and what is not. Two major works in this

respect are Fergus King's 'Angels and Ancestors: A basis for Christology'?[21] and Samuel Abogurin's commentary on *First Corinthians* on which we would focus our attention in this section [22].

One of the main characteristics of both Fergus King's and Abogurin's readings is that they do not strictly limit themselves to the evaluative approach as sometimes they employ comparative resources to interpret their texts or concepts. In other words, one notices that their approach is a combination of the evaluative and comparative hermeneutical approaches.

How Abogurin's views on 1 Corinthians have been influenced by the theological debates in Africa.

Abogurin begins his book with a general introduction, a study of the salutation (ch.1) in the Epistle to the Corinthians, and then deals with the different topics in it, such as: divisions (chs.1:10 to 4:21), moral disorders in the Church (chs. 5:1 to 6:21), marriage and divorce (ch.7), meat offered to idols (ch.8 and 10), the Eucharist (ch.11), the Holy Spirit (chs.12 to 14), and the resurrection (ch.15); and ends with the conclusion in chapter 16.

From the topics Abogurin studies, we would like to focus on two: the issue of divisions and meat offered to idols, since they are closely related to the relationship between theology, culture and the church in Africa, as well as some of the sociological issues that come out of the social setting of the text itself.[23] In chapter 3, verses 3-4, Abogurin tries to read the text in order to locate or focus as far as he can with reference to Paul and others mentioned in the text as follows: 'Are you not acting like mere men? For when one says: "I follow Paul", and another, "I follow Apollos", are you not mere men?' (Abogurin 1991: 41). He then rephrases those same verses with reference to the African situation, as follows

> today we can hear Paul crying down to us Christians in our unhealthy divisions in Africa, one saying "I am of Luther", another, "I am of Wesley", another, "I am of Babalola", another, "I am of Orimolade", etc. we can hear Paul saying "A plague on all your houses" ' (41).

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[21] For more details on Fergus King's Angels and Ancestors: A basis for Christology'? See Journal of International Association of Missions xi-i, 21, 1994: 10-26.

[22] Abogurin's *Commentary On 1Corinthians,* Ibadan: Daystar, 1991 was published as a result of the African Commentary Project initiated by West Africa Theological Conference (WAATI).

[23] Gerd Theissen's *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity.* Translated into English by J.K. Schutz. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1990 employed a sociological approach in looking at meat offered to idols and the issue of divisions in 1Cor.

Thus, for him, the kind of allegiance and solidarity of the Corinthians to the apostles and the disciples which has created factionalism and divisions can be equated to the kind produced by denominational and tribal allegiance in the Church in Africa, and if Paul were here he would scold the African Church in corresponding manner as he did to them. He goes further to take the verses related to the status of founding preachers and leaders in the Corinthian Church and (ch.4: 6-7), then relates it to his identified equivalence, with reference particularly to titles and labels that are given to Church leaders and founders as follows

> any of the founders make exaggerated claims for themselves or their followers make such claims for them. Africa today probably has the largest number of messiahs, apostles, and prophets. It is not uncommon to find most leaders giving themselves long titles, such as the most rev. pastor, superior elder, spiritual leader, prophet, father (mother) in Israel, doctor, bishop (Abogurin 1991: 46).

Thus, his reading can be compared to that of Clodovis Boff's hermeneutical mediation, which he calls 'correspondence of relations' with respect to the Latin American context in his 'Hermeneutics: Constitution of Theological Pertinency' (1991)[24]. This, he states in the form of the following equation -

$$\frac{\text{Scripture}}{\text{Its Context}} = \frac{\text{Ourselves (theology of the political)}}{\text{Our Context}}$$

Where '=' indicates signification of relations and not that of equality of terms. This approach, according to Boff,

> makes room for flexibility which allows one to use his imagination and creativity to draw analogies. This means we do not need to look for formulas from Scripture to copy, rather Scripture offers us models and types (Boff 1991: 31).

In Boff's opinion, this is what makes our hermeneutics effective, as we have the freedom to innovate and use our sense of judgement relatively. Similarly, Abogurin's handling of this particular text could be summarised in the following equation -

$$\frac{\text{Factions of allegiance \& solidarity}}{\text{Corinthian Context}} = \frac{\text{Denominational, tribal \& personal allegiance}}{\text{African Context}}$$

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[24] Details of Boff's 'Hermeneutics: Constitution of Theological Pertinency'. In *Voices from the Margins*. R.S. Surgirtharajah (ed.), Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991: 9-35.

The task of the evaluative exegetical approach to the exegete is that she/he needs to do a critical evaluative analysis of the issues raised by the text she/he is reading. However, like any other contemporary exegetical approach, the ancient past and the present are very different. Hence, one comes to the text with one's issues and seeks to appropriate the text from the ancient past for one's contemporary context.

Firstly, Abogurin is coming to the text with genuine issues from the Nigerian context. Secondly, he is making different kinds of relationships between it and the text. Even though these steps are unavoidable in the kind of hermeneutics that both Boff and Abogurin are involved in, the test of such an approach depends to a large extent on how appropriate one's analogical pairings are to the context or audience.

The solution to the problem of divisions in Corinth as interpreted by Abogurin is 'the cross' and 'the crucified Christ' as indicated by Paul in 1Cor.ch.1: 20. The cross is interpreted as the symbol of unity and reconciliation, whilst the crucified Christ is interpreted as the symbol of humility and lowliness, to deal with the issue of allegiance to personalities which he has associated with 'human reasonings' (41, 43, 46).

In reflecting on this interpretation, it is necessary to look closely at the type of allegiance Paul was referring to in the Corinthian context. In this particular context, it referred to Christian believers aligning themselves with the individuals who preached to them. However, the situation is made more complex in Africa with the presence of the AICs, conservative evangelical movements from the United States and the mushrooming of Charismatic Churches. There are therefore analogues to be utilised but there are also unique and complex issues in the Nigerian context that are different from the Corinthian context that should be taken into consideration in doing one's evaluative analysis. For instance, the solution to any form of unity based on 'the cross' should be treated in similar vein, as there are basic analogues as well as differences in the interpretation of this paradigm from denomination to denomination in Africa which are completely different from the Corinthian situation. African biblical scholars also have their own challenges, as far as the Christological and ideological questions are concerned, which do not necessarily produce competition, but diversity.

Also, the issue of divisions which he equates with allegiances to founding preachers and church leaders in Corinth needs thinking through. This is because the phenomenon of titles which he associated with it is unavoidable in Africa. Besides, titles are found in other societies and even religious organisations through out the world. One is even sometimes given titles at birth as part of one's name and identity. In most Ghanaian

communities, one is born and given names starting with the title 'naa' 'nii' 'nene' 'nana' which literally means 'ancestor' or 'ruler'. In Nigeria presently, the trend is for academics or professionals and businesswomen and men to be given the title 'chief' which is an elevation to mark one's social status. Adrian Hastings states that

> one practice much discussed in West Africa is that of title taking. Social status depends to a great extent upon the acceptance of certain chiefly titles within a local community (Hastings 1976: 45).

One, therefore, has to deal with the phenomenon of titles in the churches in that context. Perhaps, one needs to ask what types of analogues there are with respect to divisions mentioned in Corinth and the churches in Nigeria and how these are related to the status of the leaders of these churches. Furthermore, the analogy between titles and divisions in the church needs to be further explained. Now the major issue confronting this text is the interpretation of 'the crucified Christ' which is read by Abogurin as humility and lowliness, which is the solution for divisions, whilst 'human values and reasoning' is interpreted as the cause of the problem of divisions. Can we say that the cause of divisions is the positions that people take together with the titles that they assume in the Nigerian society? Maybe the question that is worth asking is, what can one gather from this particular text that can generate a reading in our world today? This is because titles and positions are never regarded or meant to be divisive, even though they could be misused to create divisions.

Another issue that Abogurin tackles is meat offered to idols. This is one of the major issues that Abogurin identifies as very relevant to the African context. The text concerns eating meat offered to idols. He identifies three groups of people that faced this challenge in Corinth, namely, the libertines, the ascetics and the conservatives (Jews). Thus, the Libertines are described as liberal and possess 'knowledge' that leads them into rationalising the whole issue of meat offered to an idol, and thus seeing no power or potency, or anything wrong with eating meat offered to them, whilst the ascetics and the conservative Jews see it as pollution and would not take part in it, as being religiously wrong. The libertines are portrayed as 'strong', while the ascetics and conservative Jews are described as 'weak'.

He goes on to make a comparison between the early missionaries to Africa and the libertines. The early missionaries are alleged to have had a liberal attitude to traditional practices and observances. Thus, they saw African traditional worship and sacrifice as being offered to powerless gods. On the other hand, they were concerned about sacrificing to them. Thus, unlike the libertines, they would not subscribe to eating meat

sacrificed to them, as they regarded that as demonic worship. This attitude of theirs, he calls a 'double attitude' (108). He also identifies most African Christians as living 'double lives', as they live lives with combinations of Christianity and eating meat offered to idols. (109). Thus, Abogurin identifies two major challenges to African Christians in this context. That is, their relationship and interaction with traditional practices, and also their participation in Muslim feasts. He was particularly concerned about the latter, especially during the 'Eide Kabir' or 'eidel Fitr', where the animals are ritually slaughtered.

Abogurin then takes the abstract theoretical line of saying that 'love' should take precedence over 'knowledge' and that whether we eat or drink, we should do it to 'the glory of God' (110). It is very interesting reading Khio-Khong Yeo's article, 'The Rhetoric of 1 Corinthians 8 and Chinese Ancestor Worship' (1991)[25]. After doing his rhetoric reading, he comes to a similar prescription that 'what concerns Paul is "Knowledge" and "love" (Yeo 1991: 295). He then goes a little further than Abogurin, by applying the concept of 'interpathy' from Ausburger's *Pastoral Counselling Across Cultures* ' (1986) to it with respect to the challenge facing Chinese pietists and ancestral worship. The approach of 'interpathy'

> is an intentional cognitive envisioning and effective experiencing of another's thoughts and feelings, even though the thoughts rise from another process of knowing, the values grow from another frame of moral reasoning, and the feelings spring from another basis of assumptions. In interpathic caring, the process of 'feeling with' and 'thinking with' another requires that one enter the other's world of assumptions, beliefs, and values and temporarily take them as one's own (Augsburger 1986: 29).

His conclusion, after that process, is that, taking the paradigm of love, in the context of the Chinese pietist, ancestral worship is the 'gospel of love' and to advise the Chinese not to practice ancestral worship, or not to offer meat to ancestors, is implicitly advising them not to love their parents and not to practice love. (Yeo 1994: 309). This is one step forward as it is a little bit more pragmatic and specific in doing a very contextual reading, that is, love as interpreted within the belief and values of the Chinese pietists. Thus, in the context of the reading of Abogurin, there is so much within the cultural context that needs some pragmatic identification and reflective reading so as to clarify what 'love' and 'to the glory of God' mean in this text and what 'knowledge' is in this contemporary context (where knowledge is being devalued in the text in question).

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[25] For details of Yeo's The Rhetoric of 1 Corinthians 8 and Chinese Ancestor Worship', see *Biblical Interpretation*, 2/3,1994: 294-311.

Abogurin revisits the issue of meat offered to idols again in ch.10. What comes to the forefront in this text is the close relationship between those who partake in meat offered to idols and their relationship with idol worship; which in this particular text is equated to demon worship. This is because eating that meat is taken as being in affiliation or union with demons. Thus analogically, it is also argued that the Lord's Supper is an equivalent meal that unites one with Christ. This shows a sudden turn round by Paul as the same person who in 8: 4-6 seems to be refuting superstitious beliefs as nothing and thus calling those Jews who held to it as 'weak', and now suddenly saying that they are related to demons that are competing with Christ for the communal affiliation with humankind. Thus, in 10: 11-22, superstitious beliefs seem to form the basis for the mystery surrounding the Lord's Supper. According to Abogurin, at the time of writing ch.10: 1-22, Paul had the conviction that the criticism of the Jewish Christians of the interaction between the gentile Christians with their fellow countrymen and women must be restrained. This brings to sharp focus the kind of struggles Paul is going through as he handles this whole area of Christian interaction and relationship with non-Christian situations. The Lord's Supper offers itself readily for that kind of comparison but it rather got Paul oscillating between the libertines and the Jewish conservatives, making what seems to be contradictory statements.

David Adamu has done a more elaborate work on this in his article 'The Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians' (1989) by saying that Paul had a very good understanding of Greek religious practices of belonging to as many cults as possible. Thus, he concludes that 'sharing food and drink means having communion with and commitment to the idol. Such communion and commitment is contradictory' (Adamu 1989: 46). Adamu is of the opinion that, contrary to the Greek view of having communion with and commitment to many religious cults, the commitment to communion with Christ does not allow any other commitments, as only one loyalty is acceptable. To re-enforce this point, he even appeals to the concept of 'the jealous God' in the decalogue. Thus, the conclusion of the readings of both Adamu and Abogurin is basically the same, that is, their attention is turned towards a single loyalty to Christ, to the exclusion of all other communions. However, the challenges of the Church today are the issues of dialogue with people of other faiths and the level of interaction that one can have in the midst of the various threats that we face together economically, socially and politically. Take the situation where your Muslim neighbour offers you her/his festive meal, what should be your response? There is also the threat to communalism in various churches in Africa, as the issue of 'commitment' and who 'qualifies' to come to 'the Lord's Table' is interpreted in

various ways that rather exclude than include in the way it is observed. Hence, a text that is supposed to communicate communion and community which is closely identified with African culture, becomes alien in its interpretation and practice in Africa because it is presented in abstract terms with care not to identify it with African phenomena, practice or interpretation of community and communion. (For comments on Abogurin's debt to culture and the relationship between Gospel and culture see Appendix I).

The position of Abogurin with ordinary readers and the Church

In his introduction to the book, Abogurin identifies the city of Corinth with some of the coastal cities in Africa. He does an excellent job by identifying it with Lagos, Accra, Freetown, Lome, Monrovia, Alexandria and Tripoli. Another point of identification was the word 'paganism'. This word was used to indicate the type of religion which Christianity encountered in Corinth. This term became a derogatory term which was used to describe the non-Christian and her/his religious practices in Africa, particularly the traditional practices. Thus, as stated by him, the greatest challenges that have confronted the Churches in Africa and Corinth are identical, the practice of Christianity in a paganistic, multi-cultural and multi-religious context, as he states that 'No New Testament book depicts the situation in missionary churches in Africa as 1 Corinthians does' (Abogurin 1991: 2). Thus, he can closely identify the Church in Corinth with churches founded by Western missionaries more than the African instituted churches founded by Africans themselves. He then goes on to evaluate the practices and challenges that the church in Corinth faces with those of African missionary Churches that he had already identified. In a sense, this implies a combination of comparative and evaluative approaches. It means that, divisions, moral disorders, marriage and divorce, meat offered to idols, the Eucharist, the Holy Spirit, and the resurrection are all read using this method. With respect to the evaluative method, Abogurin's approach can be summarised with the following equation -

$$\frac{\text{First Corinthians}}{\text{Corinthian Context}} = \frac{\text{Missionary Churches in Africa}}{\text{African Context}}$$

Hence Abogurin's commentary is directly related to the missionary churches within the wider socio-cultural and political context in Africa.

How Fergus King's views on biblical interpretation have been influenced by theological debates among African scholars

Fergus King deals with the ancestral belief system in Africa in his article entitled, 'Angels and Ancestors: A basis for Christology?' (1994). His aim in writing this article is to see how the New Testament used the concept of the exaltation of righteous men into heaven in their Christological formulations. He does this by looking at the belief system concerning the righteous men exalted in the inter-Testamental period as that was the belief system which was circulating among Jewish Christians at the time the New Testament Christology was being composed. His main interest in these righteous men is their exaltation and their function; that is, whether they played mediatorial or intercessory roles similar to those of African ancestors after their exaltation. His basic argument is that, in order to ascertain the functions that ancestors play, one must first investigate '...whether the roles that have been identified with them concur with the descriptions of the righteous men found in the inter Testamental and Pseudegraphical material' (King 1994: 12), who were elevated and exalted into heaven, and further, how the New Testament writers used available resources in their context (elevated righteous men in the inter-Testamental belief system), in their formulation of Christology. This, in effect, may serve as a model as to how one can make use of a belief system in one's context in formulating theological doctrines.

King analyses a number of Old Testament, inter-Testamental and Pseudegraphical texts that point to righteous men who have been elevated to heaven. Among these are: texts concerning Elijah in 2 Kings 2:11, *Jubilees* 1, texts concerning Enoch in 1 *Enoch* 12, 3 *Enoch* 4, the *Testament of Abraham* Recension B, Chapter 11, texts concerning Melchizedek in Genesis 14 and Qumran:11 *QMelch*, texts dealing with Abel in *Testament of Abraham* and in connection with Jacob, Joseph and Moses, the *Prayer of Jacob*, Joseph and *Asenath* and *Ezekiel the Tragedian* deals with them respectively. King argues that

> While it can be ascertained that there may be a tradition of righteous men being exalted, specifically from the Elijah, Enoch and Abel traditions, it is not possible to draw any more than the most basic conclusions. They are exalted into heaven by God, and their chief function there is connected with judgement (King 1994: 18).

King wants to see whether these patriarchs actually played mediatorial or intercessory roles. He observes that all the texts he utilised were silent concerning the playing of mediatorial or intercessory roles by the patriarchs mentioned in them. He therefore argues that

1. Whilst the ancestors play mediatorial and intercessory roles, the righteous men only act as judges.

2. Whereas the righteous men exalted play eternal roles, the ancestors play temporal roles limited to their own generations that can remember them. Thus, he states that 'The net effect of this is that an ancestor's power diminishes when no one living remembers him clearly' (King 1994: 19).

3. Whilst people are still dying and becoming ancestors in recent generations, the righteous men who are exalted into heaven are fixed and related to patriarchs who are not added to, in successive generations.

The above-mentioned are considered differences with respect to the righteous men and the ancestors. He also notes some basic similarities between ancestors and righteous men who are elevated into heaven. He states that, in both belief systems they are distinguished from God and that, 'Both sets of exalted can act as exemplars to their people' (King 1994: 19).

King then focuses his attention on the basic argument of his article. That is, how the New Testament writers used the belief system concerning righteous men exalted into heaven in their formulation of Christology. After examining key texts in this connection from the Gospels, the Epistles and Johannine writers, he observes that it seems the New Testament writers distanced themselves from the theology of angels when it came to their Christological formulations. Thus, he concludes that

> in the Gospels and the Pauline and Johanine writings, there appear to be no instances of righteous men theology being used as the key into Christology, since it is included in the wider sweep of angelology (22).

In his analysis of the New Testament, he maintains that the New Testament writers always made a clear distinction between Christ and angels. He suggests that the communion of saints is a type of the theology of angels which has been constructed in Christian Theology from the New Testament. He therefore states that with reference to Catholic theology, '...the saints are exalted into heaven and exercise an intermediary role. What makes them into exalted mediators is their living, dying and being raised with Christ' (22).

His concluding remark is that Christ does not fit into any existing belief system. This is because according to him, 'Christ transcends all categories' (23). With reference to ancestors, he remarked that, '...Christ may be recognised in the ancestral traditions, but his meeting with those concepts will transform them' (23). (*see* details of King's debt to culture under appendix 1).

King's position with ordinary readers and the Church

From the above article, one can deduce that Fergus King wanted to find out how the angelic tradition of the inter-Testamental period has influenced the development of Christology in the New Testament. He uses the New Testament in a normative or canonical way in doing his analysis. His findings are that the New Testament writers did not draw on angels at all in their Christological formulations.

In the first place, King's readings seem to be a historical analysis of the development of Christology from the inter-Testamental and pseudepigraphical literature and how its belief system was appropriated by New Testament writers. This means that it could be taken as a purely traditional exercise in investigating Christological formulation. On the other hand, it also has features of a non-traditional approach to Christology. For instance, like most non-traditional approaches, his starting point is an anthropological definition and description of what ancestors mean in the African context. It is after he has defined it in its context that he goes on to analyse the historical development of the concept of Christology and how it could possibly be a model for use by the African belief systems related to ancestors. In this sense, it has a lesson for African interpreters of the Bible. His conclusion, that since angelic tradition was not used in the formulation of Christology in the New Testament, we should take a cue from the New Testament writers and exercise caution in our use of our ancestral tradition in our Christological formulations, is a very important lesson for African biblical interpreters. This bears resemblance to the trascendental approach to the relationship between Gospel and culture by Bousset that we discussed in chapter one of our study. (*see* Bousset's comments concerning Gospel and culture under section 2.2.1.).

Fergus King's reading therefore indicates that since ancestors are not angels, through normative reading of the New Testament texts, we need to do more work in locating the whole concept of ancestors within the biblical models that are available to us. With particular reference to the New Testament, we have to be aware of the transforming effect that it has on any culture that it encounters as we undertake this exercise. King's interest, as we see in the article, is to do hermeneutics using texts from the old, inter-Testamental and Pseudepegraphical literature rather and evaluate them in the light of an

African traditional belief or concept. His article therefore, draws our attention to some ground rules that might be useful for doing evaluative hermeneutics.

2.2.3. Inculturation biblical interpretation

Inculturation hermeneutics is based on the fact that beliefs, practices, worldviews, needs and questions in a particular context inform interpretation of scripture. Inculturation hermeneutics differs from the evaluative and the comparative approaches. Inculturation hermeneutics starts from the context in which interpretation is being done, while evaluative and comparative hermeneutics starts from the text that is being interpreted. This means that, unlike inculturation hermeneutics, the attention of evaluative and comparative hermeneutics is more focused on the beliefs, practices and worldview of the text; inculturation hermeneuts are more informed by the concerns of the context within which interpretation is to take place. Also, inculturation hermeneutics rejects the notion that texts have a meaning which is unchanging through time and culture. Thus, inculturation hermeneutics have the freedom to generate interpretations based on their own questions and concerns from their own contexts; albeit a freedom constrained by the texts themselves.

The influence of hermeneutical debates in Africa on Ukpong's reading

Ukpong's 'Towards A Renewed Approach to Inculturation Theology' (1994b)[26] traces the faces that Inculturation Theology has gone through and concludes with the new direction that inculturation theology is going in contemporary times. According to Ukpong, the new direction of inculturation theology lies in the broadening of the conception of the realm of operation to include both what Ukpong calls the combination of the sociological and the anthropological realms of life. According to Ukpong

> this approach is so called because it combines the sociological understanding of culture as the totality of a people's way of life with the anthropological understanding as world-view and as a system of symbols and their meaning. It understands inculturation theology in terms not only of religious, but also of the social, economic and political relevance of Christianity. Unlike the philosophical and anthropological approaches, it seeks not just to *communicate* the Christian faith but to *interpret* it.... Its goal is the transformation of the existential social, political, economic and religious life of the people (Ukpong 1994b: 16)

This is based on the world view in most traditional African contexts that religious issues always have a secular dimension and that secular issues also have religious or spiritual

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[26] For details of Ukpong's 'Towards a Renewed approach to Inculturation Theology', see *Journal of Inculturation Theology*, 1, 1994b: 8-24.

dimensions and thus the religious and secular remain inseparable. Ukpong goes further in that article to set out the procedure and interpretative process by which this new approach to inculturation theology can function. The second article, 'Rereading the Bible with African Eyes' (1995)[27], is a further expatiation of this previous article. In this article, Ukpong focuses specifically on the development of the methodology for doing inculturation biblical hermeneutics. The third article, 'The Parable of the Shrewd manager (Luke16: 1-13): Essay in Inculturation Biblical Hermeneutic' (1996), is the application by Ukpong of the methodology of inculturation biblical hermeneutic to a specific text.

We shall now focus on the third article which is, 'The Parable of the Shrewd manager (Luke16: 1-13): Essay in Inculturation Biblical Hermeneutic' (1996). In his introduction, Ukpong states the perspective from which he would be reading the text. He states that he will

> read from the perspective of ordinary West African peasant farmers who live by the world -view provided by their traditional cultures, and who experience economic oppression at the hands of rich middle-men produce traders, the parable evokes an interpretation which differs from Western scholars (Ukpong 1996: 190).

Ukpong's purpose in reading the text this way is 'to offer an understanding of the parable from an alternative approach, that is, the inculturation hermeneutic' (190). Ukpong defines inculturation biblical hermeneutics as

> an approach that consciously and explicitly seeks to interpret the biblical text from socio-cultural perspectives of different people. This includes both their religious and secular culture as well as their social and historical experiences.... In other words, it seeks to make the different socio-cultural contexts the subject of interpretation (Ukpong 1996: 190-191).

Specific to this methodology is the use of what Ukpong calls an 'African conceptual frame of reference' in the interpretative process. The reading process itself involves the employment of historical critical tools and other scholarly reading tools as aids to the reading of the text. Hence

> with insights from the historical analysis of the text, the text is reread dynamically against the background of a contemporary context. This dynamic rereading of the text involves entering into critical awareness, and allowing it to invoke in us

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[27] Ukpong's 'Rereading the Bible with African Eyes: Inculturation and Hermeneutics is in *Journal of Theology For South Africa* 91, 1995: 3-14.

responses, reactions, and commitment appropriate to its message and our context. The objective of interpretation is the actualization of the text within today's context (Ukpong 1996: 191).

Ukpong's re-reading of this text focuses on the peasant palm producers (palm oil and palm kernel) and cocoa farmers in rural West Africa. He is particularly interested in these people because he says they live their lives by the world-view provided by the traditional cultures of the rural areas where they live and work. (*see* details of Ukpong's debt to culture under Appendix I). Ukpong states that, according to this world-view, generally

> there should be no room for the exploitation of fellow human beings. Material wealth is regarded as God's gift to which all in the community has a right. Hoarding of wealth and profiteering at the expense of others are to be abhorred (Ukpong 1996: 192).

He however, states that as

> money oriented-economy replaced a barter economy,....there arose a crop of rich middlemen produce traders who became rich by buying palm and cocoa produce from farmers at very low prices and selling them to exporters at very high prices. This was exploitation since they did not allow the producers to get the real values of their produce (Ukpong 1996: 193).

These middlemen produce traders, according to Ukpong had managers at various trading posts who transacted business for them. The managers sometimes gave loans to these farmers at very high interest rates using their farms as collateral. This, according to Ukpong 'was another form of exploitation which was very common in South Eastern Nigeria, Ghana and other parts of West Africa' (Ukpong 1996: 193). After a brief survey of current interpretations of the text, mostly by Western biblical scholars, he remarks that

> the parable of the shrewd manager has been interpreted from the perspective of the rich man in the parable. For this reason, attention has focused mainly on the manager. I contend that the parable has more to offer than a critique of the manager (Ukpong 1996: 196).

Ukpong also felt that most of the interpretations he reviewed failed to relate the parable to any of the great themes of Luke's Gospel. Ukpong then turned his attention to the text analysis of the parable. Ukpong argues that this parable focuses on 'Luke's presentation of Jesus' teaching on riches' (Ukpong 1996: 198). In his textual analysis of

the parable of the shrewd manager, Ukpong is of the opinion that the teaching of Jesus on riches here focuses on a critique of material wealth and of the rich. Ukpong cites J.D.M. Derrett's description of the economic situation of Palestine as reflected in the parable in his 'Fresh Light on St. Luke16: The Parable of the Unjust Servant' (1960). According to Derrett

> the parable reflects the Palestinian practices of agency and usury. A manager of an estate had the power to act on behalf of his master in transactions with third parties such as renting of plot of ground to tenant farmers, giving loans against a harvest, liquidation and reduction of debts, and keeping accounts of such transactions. Even though giving of loans with interest was regarded as usury forbidden by Jewish law (Deut. 17:7-8; 23:20 21; Ex. 22 :24; Lev. 23: 36-37) (Derrett 1960: 219).

With this background, Ukpong then attempts to explain why the rich man calls the manager unjust in verse 8a. This is because, according to Ukpong, '... the manager's acuteness is praiseworthy but his act of giving debt reductions to exploited farmers which he had power to do is seen by the rich man as "unjust" (Ukpong 1996: 203).

Ukpong argues that

> this depicts the exploitative economic system's concept of justice, which is giving to everyone their dues. Whatever a person has is their due, and nobody else's. There is no questioning how and where they got it. Thus, all the wealth and all the power which rich people have are due to them, and it should be given to them (no matter the extent of exploitation they engaged in to get rich) (203).

Thus, 'to give some of the rich people's things to the poor is to be "unjust"' (204). In his interpretation, Ukpong identifies with the peasant farmers in the story and views the situation from their perspective. This is due to his awareness of the peasant farmers in rural West Africa who are often exploited by middlemen through their managers. The parable is therefore viewed as 'a critique of the exploitative economic system of the society for that time and for today. It challenges Christians today to be catalysts for bringing about a new order of justice in the world' (Ukpong 1996: 208). He concludes his interpretation by stating that

> the rich man in the story is after all not the benevolent grand personage he is often thought to be, but the exploiter...the manager of the estate, is not the villain he is often thought to be, but the hero of the story, for having acted on behalf of the exploited peasant farmers (Ukpong 1996: 208).

He, therefore, concludes his reading by focusing on the peasant farmers in the story. The main lesson therefore seems to be the contrast between the rich man's concept of the 'unjust' and that of the peasant farmers in the story and in the end, that of the peasant farmers won the day.

Relationship between Ukpong's reading and the Church/popular readers

This model is an attempt by Ukpong to read from the standpoint of the popular or ordinary peasant reader of this text. This model could, therefore, be classified as an attempt to 'read for' the ordinary reader. This is because the issues raised and the connections made by Ukpong resonate with the concerns, questions and problems of the peasant farmer in West Africa. Ukpong offers an alternative reading of this text that focuses on ordinary people who are economically exploited and the hero of the story whose action is interpreted as the manifestation of truth is therefore the one who provided assistance to the economically exploited.

2.2.4. Contextual Bible Study Hermeneutical approach in South Africa

The types of hermeneutical methods used by Black biblical interpreters can be classified as: 1. The 'word of God' hermeneutical model.[28] 2. The materialistic hermeneutical model[29] and 3. The Contextual Bible Study hermeneutical model. The one that we would focus on in this section is the Contextual Bible Study hermeneutical model which is put forward by Gerald West.

The influence of theological debates in Africa on Gerald West's Reading

The background to this type of reading can be found in Gerald West's books *Biblical hermeneutics of Liberation: Modes of reading the Bible in the South African Context* (1991) and *Contextual Bible Studies* (1993) and Philpott's book *Jesus is Tricky and God is undemocratic: The kingdom of God in Amawoti* (1993). Like all the models of black

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[28] The 'Word of God' hermeneutical model was developed by James Cone. He has done detailed work on the 'word of God' hermeneutics in his books, *A Black Theology of Liberation* ibid. (1970) and *God of the Oppressed*, New York: Seabury, 1975. Cone, commenting on the basis for the 'word of God' hermeneutical model, argued that 'The black experience requires that scripture be a source of Black Theology' (Cone 1975: 31).

[29] The materialistic hermeneutical approach employs Marxist analysis of the text which is aimed at exposing ideological basis of the text and the application of liberation paradygms to the text. This approach emerged from Fernando Belo's *A Materialist Reading of the Gospel of Mark*, translated by Mathew, J. O' Connell Maryknoll: Orbis , 1981. For further discussion on materialist hermeneutics see also Clévenot's *Materialist Approaches to the Bible*, translated by William, J. Nottingham, Maryknoll: Orbis, 1985.

theology, contextual Bible study starts with the needs and concerns of poor and marginalised black communities in South Africa. The distinctive feature of this model is that

> it has been shaped in the interface between critical biblical scholarship and the readings of a variety of groups of ordinary readers (those who have no critical training in biblical studies and readers who are from poor and marginalised communities) (West 1995b: 60).

Like all liberation readings, the Contextual Bible Study model is interested in the standpoint of subordinates who are being dominated and oppressed. Gerald West, the chief advocate of this approach of reading the Bible has explained the nature of this reading from the standpoint of the relationship between subordinates and those who dominate them. Gerald West cites the view expressed by James Scott that

> subordinates offer a performance of deference and consent while attempting to discern, to read, the real intentions and mood of the potentially threatening power holder....whilst the power figure in turn, produces a performance of mastery and command while attempting to peer behind the mask of subordinates to read their intentions (Scott 1990: 3-4).[30]

Scott argues that there is, therefore, what he calls a 'hidden transcript' which every subordinate group creates, out of its ordeal, ...'that represents a critique of power spoken behind the back of the dominant' (Scott 1990: xii), whilst there is also a *hidden transcript* that is also spoken behind the back of subordinates by the powers that be. There is also what Scott calls the 'public transcript', which includes utterances, gestures and expressions by both the dominant power and the subordinate in the presence of each other in public. Scott is of the opinion that '...unless one penetrates the official transcript of both subordinates and elites, a reading of the social evidence will almost always represent a confirmation of the status quo in hegemonic terms' (Scott 1990: 90).

Gerald West agrees with Scott that

> the hidden transcripts of subordinates which appear in jokes, rumours, gossip, folktales, songs, gestures and theatre of the marginalised or more public infra politics of popular culture reveal forms of resistance and defiance (Scott 1990: 198).

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[30] Details of J.C. Scott's views that West refers to, see his *Domination and the arts of resistance: hidden transcripts.* New Haven & London: Yale University, 1990.

However, Scott states that whenever subordinates come out to resist the powers that dominate them, they tend to borrow heavily from the terms of the dominant ideology prevailing in the public transcript which ...'is capable of carrying an enormous variety of meanings, including those that are subversive of their use as intended by the dominant' (102-103).

With particular reference to written public texts, Scott states that, in order to discover some of these texts that subvert the dominant ideology, there is the need for 'a more nuanced and literary reading ...because the hidden transcript has had to costume itself and speak more warily' (165).

Gerald West is particularly interested in the elements of resistance in biblical texts. Hence, there is the need for a more nuanced and literary way of reading the text in order to bring out the hidden elements of resistance that the text contains. (*see* details of West's debt to the culture under Appendix I). West is of the opinion that this idea resonates with the work that is 'being done in the interface between socially engaged biblical scholars and the readers of the Bible in poor and marginalised communities' (West 1995a: 179). West cites situations in Brazil and South Africa where ordinary people find the need to read the Bible with biblical scholars and so call on scholars that they choose to come and read the Bible with them. West further states that the need for this contextual Bible Study process is therefore related to the commitment of organic intellectuals to study the Bible with and from the stand point of the oppressed and even though it is 'not all of these biblical scholars that are organic intellectuals, they all at least work closely with organic intellectuals' (West 1995a: 179). The need for the reading of the Bible by organic intellectuals with ordinary readers is further emphasised by West by arguing that

> a *critical* reading and appropriation of the biblical text is the primary concern from the side of (organic) intellectuals involved in the interface between an engaged biblical studies with its socially committed trained readers of the Bible and ordinary poor readers of the Bible (West 1995a: 180).

Lastly, West argues that, even though ordinary readers do have a general critical consciousness towards society and text, they do not have the historical, sociological, literary or symbolic tools to be critical of the biblical text as biblical scholar (West 1991: 198-200). Hence, the need for ordinary readers to read the Bible with biblical scholars.

The Contextual Bible Study hermeneutical reading practically attempts to fill in the gap between ordinary readers and scholarly readers by creating a forum where they can come together to interpret the Bible together. West has given guidelines as to how this model of interpretation functions.

1. The questions, concerns and concepts that inform the reading are those that of the ordinary readers. Thus, they are the ones that select what is to be read.

2. The trained reader assists the ordinary readers to identify and select texts which might be relevant to the chosen concept, theme, or issue to be dealt with. According to Gerald West, 'The relationship between trained and ordinary reader is subject to subject and not subject to object' (West 1995b: 65). Hence, the role of the trained reader is to read 'the Bible "with" and "for" ordinary readers' (West 1995b: 65). They are committed to a corporate or communal reading of the Bible. With this model, the trained reader is just another reader with different resources and skills and not better resources and skills. Their role in this communal reading process is to ask 'questions instead of simply providing information' (West 1995b: 66) so as to 'empower' the ordinary readers 'to construct their own critical and contextual readings' (West 1995b: 66)

3. They are committed to a critical reading of the Bible. West however, states that it does not really matter whether it is in front of the text, in the text or behind the text as all of them are critical options for the critical appropriation of the text. This critical analysis of the text is facilitated by the trained reader so as 'to delimit the text, and locate it historically', (West 1995b: 66) and to do a 'reconstruction of the sociological setting of the text' (West 1995b: 66). This is to enable ordinary readers to do a closer reading of text as they become practically aware of the contributions that critical resources could make in the reading of texts. This critical exercise, according to West, also 'prevents a simple correspondence of text and present context' (West 1995b: 67).

4. The contextual Bible study process then proceeds to inquire about the way in which the text is appropriated. West however, states that the lessons learnt from such a reading on the part of ordinary readers is different from that of the trained readers. His reason for this is that they 'come from different places and after the reading encounter return to...different places' (West 1995b: 67). However, West insists on the possibility of being partially affected by others by the communal reading of the text

as he argued that, part of the feature of this type of reading process is 'a desire to be partially constituted by those from other communities' (West 1995b: 67).

What the reading process of the Contextual Bible Study model aims at achieving is a critical reading of texts contextually by ordinary and scholarly readers coming together to generate readings that will lead to the transformation of their respective contexts.

As outlined above, the contextual Bible study process involves a back and forth movement between the readers and the text. This process is made possible by using questions related to community consciousness and critical consciousness. Questions related to community consciousness draw on the understanding of the community. For example, a question like, 'what did you learn from this text'? is related to community consciousness as it is aimed at leading the participants to relate the text to their own community. Textual questions that make them deal with the text in detail are critical consciousness-related. This is where, for instance, with respect to the Umtata women of the Natal province that West once had a programme with, they read behind the text to discover that the text is actually talking about two women.[31] Thus, the reading process involves small group discussions, plenary discussions as they go back and forth, that is, from the readers to the text using questions which are aimed at creating both community consciousness and critical consciousness among the participants of the Bible studies as they deal with the text.

Implications of Contextual Bible Study to the Church/popular readers

The Contextual Bible Study approach to hermeneutics is very necessary for most African contexts where there is the need to bridge the gap between critical scholarly readers and ordinary readers. This is because most of the ordinary readers live in townships, rural areas and homesteads with very few critical tools, experiences and exposures which will enable them do critical biblical reflection. Hence, the challenge to biblical scholars equipped with critical tools is to be able to facilitate a process that

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[31] This appears in Gerald West's article entitled "Constructing critical and contextual Readings with Ordinary Readers: Mark 5:21-6:1". Firstly, a textual question like 'what is this text about?', is to find out what the text is saying about whoever, or what ever they found the text to be focussed on. This question 'invited readers to probe behind the text to the society that produced the text' (West: 1995b: 63). This is one of the questions related to critical consciousness. Secondly, a contextual question like, 'what does this text say to you'? deals with the practical application of the text in the context of the readers. This question is to '...draw text and readers' context together in an act of appropriation' (West 1995b: 63). These types of questions are related to community consciousness. They read Mark 5:21-6:1 in small groups using the above-mentioned questions and observed that this text is about women with regard to the first question mentioned above.

would result in critical reading of texts by being part of a reading process that involves both the scholarly reader and the ordinary reader. The relationship of all this to the wider theological task is, that on the part of the scholarly reader, his/her involvement in the reading practice invariably leads to further reflection which results in the reconstruction of forms of African theology.

There are several strengths in the contextual Bible study hermeneutical approach. Firstly, it is an attempt to read in the gap between the scholarly reader and the ordinary reader. Thus the trained scholarly reader is given the opportunity to get alongside the ordinary reader for them together to grapple with the reading of scripture from their socio- economic and political contexts. Hence, if one participates in this type of reading, it is possible to learn to distinguish one's own subjectivity from that of others and sometimes to enlarge one's subjectivity. This type of mediating reading experience would go a long way to help both critical and uncritical readers to construct their own stories more effectively as they influence each other's subjectivity. Secondly, as Gerald West puts it, this is a reading process that enables the trained reader to empower the ordinary reader. It enables ordinary readers not only to understand what Scripture is saying to them but also to take action towards the transformation of their society. It therefore fulfils Gerald West's belief that scholarly readers have to read the Bible not only for the sake of on-going academic development but also with the aim of being in solidarity with and accountable to those who are under any form of oppression (West 1991: 70-71). West elaborates this same point by saying that the contextual Bible study approach equips the ordinary readers with a critical consciousness which fulfils certain requirements of ordinary readers in South Africa. He states that 'Critical consciousness requires that ordinary readers develop their analytical skill so that they can participate more fully in the reconstruction of South Africa' (West 1995b: 89). In other words, West's organic intellectual theologian and reader is more interested in training and leading the oppressed and marginalised people to liberation.

Thus, West is of the view that ordinary people need to develop a sense of confidence in their own ability to analyse both the biblical text and their context. So too ordinary people need to develop a sense of responsibility for their own present and future and this can come about by ordinary readers being equipped with critical skills.

In short, at the end of the reading, participants take various things from the study. According to Gerald West, what one captures is one's own perspective and various people can take, reject, or use them in various ways. West commented on the background to his process of reading Mark 5:21-6:1 'with' one of the groups which the Institute for the Study of the Bible (ISB) is working with, which he has published in the *Journal of Theology for South Africa* (1995b) by saying that

> the basic shape and substance of the reading emerged from a Bible study with a womens' group in Umtata. The group consists of a majority of black women, most of whom are from Umtata, with few from rural areas, and a few white women from Umtata. The theme of their workshop was on liberating ways of reading the Bible as women. The Institute for the Study of the Bible (ISB) was asked to facilitate the workshop (West 1995b: 63).

For Gerald West, on his part, states that, this reading was developed further at a workshop with a Masters class in the School of Theology, University of Natal, whose responses were allowed to re-shape the reading of the Umtata women.

He also states that

> the final stage in the development of the reading presented in this article included some additional systematic structuring and further textual and sociological support for the reading that had already emerged from the contextual Bible study process (West 1995b: 64).

This is just one product of the reading process. On the other hand, no one knows for sure what the ordinary readers are doing with their reading of this text. It is however, believed that what ever the ordinary readers have gained from the Contextual Bible Study would be part of their theology, which is emancipatory in the South African context.

However, there are some questions that we want to raise with respect to this particular reading practice in South Africa.

In the first place, there is the difficulty of the trained reader being 'an equal participant' in the reading process without becoming 'the controller' of the reading process. The trained reader who possesses the critical tools for handling biblical reflection has a difficult task in such a reading process. That raises questions as to the practical out-working of the process of reading 'with' the ordinary readers and not reading 'for' them.

In other words, the fact that ordinary readers are present as the reading process goes on does not necessarily mean that they are actively involved in the actual theological reflection taking place. There is the temptation for the trained reader to hijack the discussion and at the end produce a reading which is his/hers and not that of the entire group. So how does the trained reader facilitate the reading process as 'an equal participant', in this co-operate and communal reading process?

Secondly, the gap between the scholarly readers and the ordinary readers is not just in the area of reading skills but it also has a lot to do with the wide differentiations between the trained reader and the ordinary reader. Most ordinary readers are either completely illiterate or have very little education and belong to the working class social group, whilst most trained readers are from the educated elite and belong to the middle class social group. Also, most elite possess a scientific and rational outlook to life whilst the non-elite would prefer to employ traditional beliefs and practices which are mostly non-scientific. Thus, in dealing with a reading that involves the trained elite reader and the ordinary non-elite reader, one has to be aware of differentiations between them, elites versus non-elite, scientific and Western ways versus non-scientific and traditional ways, urban ways versus rural ways. This implies that, to be able to make headway in bridging this gap, it is not just a simple matter of those with critical tools of biblical reflection coming together with those with non-critical tools. This therefore raises the question as to how the trained readers are able to gain awareness of the differentiations between them and the ordinary readers as they need an awareness of these differentiations in order to be able to read more effectively 'with' the ordinary readers.

Thirdly, a lot depends on the ability of the trained reader to keep the creative balance between criticality and contextuality in order to be able to come out with a Bible reading which is both critical and contextual. There are the dangers of either going to the extreme of making the study so critical that there would be little left of its contextuality or romanticising the experiences of the non-critical readers to the extent that the reading loses its criticality.

However, the Contextual Bible Study hermeneutical model is a very good attempt at reading the Bible not only in the academy but to read it with one group of stake holders

that the academy is accountable to, that is the ordinary readers of the Bible. We have therefore raised a few questions for reflection about that model. The contextual Bible Study model needs to be evaluated to see how far it goes towards bridging the gap between the Black theologian and the ordinary reader in the South African context where it is being employed and to see what possibilities there are for adopting it in other contexts in Africa and other parts of the world.

2.2.5. Feminist hermeneutical Practice

One missing feature of the development of hermeneutics, in all the approaches that we have mentioned in Africa, is the concerns of women in the hemeneutical practices that have been adopted. Black hermeneutical practice in South Africa is also silent about the concerns, questions, and the marginalisation of women. In the United States, the silence of Black Theology regarding the concerns of African American women led to the development of womanist theology which appeared first in Alice Walker's book, *In Search of our Mother's Gardens* (1984) and later in the works of other African American theologians like Jacquelyn Grant, who also focuses on womanist theology in her works, *Black Theology and the Black Woman* and *White Women's Christ and Black Women's Jesus: Feminist Christology and Womanist Response* (1989). Also, the silence of black hermeneutics and other forms of hermeneutics practiced in Africa concerning women's issues led to the development of feminist hermeneutical practice which we shall look at in our next section. We shall particularly focus on Musimbi Kanyoro's Reading of Matthew 15:21-28.

The influence of theological debates on Musimbi Kanyoro's Reading of Matthew 15:21-28

Like their counterparts in other parts of the world, African women theologians are also engaged in reconstructing texts about women in order to generate meanings that would give fresh insight that reflects feminist perspectives. The interpretations of the African women are informed by the experiences, concerns, questions and problems that confront African women in their contexts. An example of such a reading is that of Musimbi Kanyoro, in her article entitled 'The Canaanite Woman (Matthew 15: 21-28)' (1996).[32] Kanyoro sees the basis of this story as the alleviation of 'human misery; the misery of

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[32] Kanyoro Musimbi's 'Canaanite Woman: (Matthew 15: 21-28)' is *In Theology, Ministry and Renewal*. Geneva: WCC, 1996: 51-70.

the ones close to us and the misery of others not close to us at all' (Kanyoro 1996: 56). In this article, Kanyoro's aim is to contrast the situation of the persistent cry of a single mother (pastor) for justice which was 'stifled in layers of rules and beliefs' (Kanyoro 1996: 52), that ended in her death, to that of the persistent cry of the Canaanite woman mentioned in Matthew 15: 21-28 that was ultimately heard by Jesus and which ended in healing or life-saving.

Her article deals with the following topics: 1. The context of the reader; 2. The socio-cultural context of the text; 3. Dialogue between Jesus and the Canaanite woman.

Kanyoro locates parallel characters in the Old Testament that the Canaanite woman can be compared with by citing Gail O'Day's comment in her 'Surprised by Faith: Jesus and the Canaanite Woman, Listening' (1989)[33] that

> the Canaanite woman stands fully in the tradition of Abraham and Moses who were not afraid to bargain with God (Gen. 18: 22-23; Numb. 11:11-15). She is profoundly linked with all the broken and needy petitioners who sang Israel's songs of lament, with all those who cling to faithfulness to the promise. She is not a Jew - nevertheless fully Jewish (O'Day 1989: 299).

She picks up the issues of discrimination and the oppression of women by contemporary socio-economic, political and ecclesiastical structures in her reflections on this text. This, she did in her reading by saying that this passage is about shaming our communities and churches into caring for '...single parents...and battered women in our communities' (Kanyoro 1996: 62) and like the example Jesus showed in this story, we could be persuaded to deny gender and cultural biases 'and to' shame our churches into striving to promote justice in our societies for all people by changing structures in the church and in the world (62). (For further elaboration of Musimbi's debt to culture and the relationship between Gospel and culture in her work, see Appendix I).

Finally, she contrasts the attitude of Jesus to that of the people in her context, who did not help the battered and divorced woman pastor and commented that unlike those in her context, Jesus showed solidarity in action by responding to the cry of agony from the Canaanite woman. She describes solidarity in the context of this text as '...standing with

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[33] Gail O'Day's 'Suprised by Faith: Jesus and the Canaanite Woman, Listening' is in *Journal of Religion and Culture* 24, 1989: 299.

someone at the time of their greatest need, not when they are dead' (63). What Kanyoro wants to communicate is that Jesus ended up relieving the misery of the Canaanite woman and her daughter by healing her daughter whilst the woman pastor in her context did not get her misery alleviated by her church and community which may have contributed to her death.

Implications of Musimbi's readings to the Church/ordinary readers

Feminist theology is very young in Africa. It has, however, taken off quite well by identifying issues of concern.

African feminist theologians have indicated that their hermeneutical approaches will deal with themes like polygamy, widowhood and other rituals and practices that degrade the humanity of women. Since this involves developing resistance hermeneutics that challenges not only the application of texts but also traditional beliefs and practices, one needs a double-edged sword to be able to develop hermeneutical approaches that take care of both the traditional beliefs and practices as well as the appropriation of biblical texts to deal with the situation.

The silence of churchmen to the issues of violence against women according to Oduyoye's 'Violence against women: a Challenge to Christian Theology' (1994b) led to feminist theological responses in Africa to challenge 'all Christian Theology and the hermeneutics by which we seek to understand scripture and the history of Christianity' (Oduyoye 1994b: 47) and their main task is to continually challenge and cause a rethinking of hermeneutics that condone violence against African women in their respective contexts.

Most women theologians in Africa are conscious of the fact that it is the stories and the predicaments of ordinary women whose experiences and questions they are trying to deal with using critical tools. This implies that most women theologians have to get closer to these women so as to gather the needed resources for their hermeneutical study. This, the women theologians admit they have not been able to do sufficiently and they would like to do more in future so as to be able to generate interpretations that relate closely to the concerns of the ordinary African woman. Kanyoro's reading of the

text we have discussed in this section is an attempt to read the text using the experience of an ordinary African woman.

2.3. Conclusions

In conclusion, I will contrast the hermeneutical approaches that evolved from the different theologies that emerged in Africa in the Twentieth Century with each other. I will also look at the implications of the above-mentioned hermeneutical practices for the Church/ordinary people in Africa.

The hermeneutical practices that we have mentioned are influenced by cultural currents in Twentieth Century Africa. The comparative hermeneutics of Dickson is in response to a particular crisis in the Church in Africa where the Church was regarded as 'a Church without theology'. (Mbiti 1969: 232)[34] in the post-missionary era. Dickson's work was therefore a search for a linkage by which African Christian identity could be established. The Old Testament provided the needed linkage with respect to the similarities between some of its beliefs and practices and those of Africa. This was a step in the right direction as, instead of seeing everything through European eyes, African theologians started to look at things through African eyes. However, moves towards inculturating the gospel in Africa took different forms. After the point had been clearly made that the gospel could be related and interpreted within African cultural contexts, the doors were opened for other hermeneutical practices to emerge. It is in this context that the evaluative hermeneutical approach was utilised by most African biblical interpreters. This was the most popular approach among African biblical scholars who having been trained in European theology, would still want to hold on to the traditional Western biblical exegetical approaches but relate it to the African situation. The evaluative approach is that which is linked to the totality of the influences that African theologians have undergone which then affects their interpretation of biblical texts. This includes their socio-cultural, political and economic influences, their missionary heritage as well as their training in Western theology and exegetical practices.

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[34] The statement 'Church without theology' was made by John Mbiti in his *African Religions and Philosophy*. London: Heinmann, 1969.

Fergus King's article is more of a historical critical Christological reading that requires us to critically relate the practices, rituals or beliefs with the normative biblical models that inform us in doing our readings within our socio-cultural context. This, in the end, comes out as a combination of the comparative and evaluative approaches, emphasising the role normative biblical models ought to play in biblical interpretation in Africa. Even though both Abogurin and King start their exegesis from a historical critical stance, their concerns are different. In contrast, while Abogurin is interested in producing a scholarly commentary that does justice to the African socio-cultural context, King is more interested in cautious and critical usage of normative biblical models in evaluative exegesis in Africa. The works of Dickson, Abogurin, King, West and Kanyoro have implications for the Church in Africa. The works of Dickson, Abogurin and King also had something to offer to popular readers. Dickson's work on the comparison between the Old Testament and African life and thought was in response to questions related to the interpretation and adoption of Old Testament beliefs and practices by African Churches that can easily identify with such practices. Dickson's work was particularly in response to the adoption and usage of Old Testament rituals and practices by African Instituted Churches. This comparative hermeneutical approach initiated a process by which African cultural concepts could be identified and contrasted with biblical concepts which are being used in the Church. Dickson's approach, particularly, generated a lot of discussion among popular readers concerning the adoption of Old Testament rituals and practices which have close equivalents in African traditional religions by African Instituted Churches. This attempt by Dickson seeks to address the problems associated with mis-representing or misunderstanding the relationship between the Old Testament and African life and thought in the African Instituted Churches (*see* Dickson's comment under section 2.2.1. above). Dickson even went further to write a series of pamphlets for ordinary readers called *The History and Religion of Israel* (1968), in three separate volumes which was later adopted as advanced level text books for GCE advanced level Old Testament course run by the West Africa Examinations Council.

Abogurin is concerned about the situation in mission-related Churches in Africa. He stresses that the situation in the Church in Corinth was just like those of the mission-

related Churches in Africa in contemporary times. Abogurin's major concerns were the organisational structure of the Churches, divisions and the issue of leadership. King was, however, concerned about ancestral veneration in the Church and would want Church people to think through the way they handle the whole issue of ancestors with regard to Christ. This has been, and still continues to be, one of the major issues that the ordinary African Christian continues to struggle with which is within the general area of the on-going tension between gospel and culture in an attempt to generate meaning through the encounter between them. West's focus is on reading the Bible with ordinary readers. The rationale is to provide a critical and contextual reading environment for the ordinary reader to appropriate biblical texts for her/his own context with the scholarly reader. West's Contextual Bible Study is aimed at providing critical resources as well as facilitation for the benefit of ordinary readers as well as the Churches among the 'organised poor' in the Natal Province of South Africa. West hopes that Contextual Bible Study will enlarge the consciousness of both the ordinary and scholarly reader and in the process, lead to ordinary people being able to construct their own theology as well as to implement their own action plans that emerge from the reading. It is hoped that the outcome of all will be extended to the various communities of the marginalised readers as they become more equipped for effective operation in the civil society both in the area of advocacy, democratic awareness and therefore lead to effective performance of their civil responsibilities.

An example cited in this chapter is the reading of Mark 5: 21-6:1 by Gerald West with Umtata women in the Natal province of South Africa and the action plans it led to among ordinary readers who took part in it (*see* West's comments under section 2.2.4. above).

Kanyoro stated that her reading of Matthew 15:21-28 is to shame the African Churches and societies concerning their treatment of single parents, divorced and abused women (see Kanyoro's comments under section 2.2.5. above). Her reading was published by the World Council of Churches for distribution and usage among its member Churches and their communities. This reading was aimed at conscientising the Church in Africa concerning the maginalisation of women in African Churches as well as in African communities. It is therefore in a sense a reading *'on behalf of'* African women.

Feminist hermeneutics of Kanyoro are in response to the oppression of women through both traditional beliefs and practices in the society as well as the Church, and the suffering that women undergo in African cultural contexts that are plagued with refugees, displacements and ethnic clashes, political instability and untold economic

hardships. It is an attempt to raise awareness concerning the Gospel stance in contrast to the cultural stance; by contrasting the violence against women by the latter and the liberation that women could derive from the former. Kanyoro addressed her 'reading on behalf of' ordinary people in the Church as well as the wider African community.

2.4. Reflections

In this section I shall categorise the different hermeneutical practices that I have discussed in this chapter. I will then highlight the importance of 'reading-with' to the wider inculturation project; that is the task of reconstructing African theology.

Categorisation of hermeneutical practices in Africa

1. Dickson's approach set in motion the confrontation between the Old Testament and African life and thought which hitherto has not been brought together in a dialectical relationship in such a manner. The approach used by Kwesi Dickson's comparative approach is classified as that which is based on dialectical relationships by Dickson himself (*see* Dickson's comments on dialectical relationship under section 2.2.1). This is evident in his 'continuity/discontinuity' process of seeking meaning and understanding from African life and thought on one hand and the Old Testament on the other. As we noticed in our earlier discussion, Dickson attempts to bring into confrontation African cultural issues and concepts and the Old Testament, and the outcome of that encounter is interpreted as the manifestation of truth.

2. The work of Abogurin, which is a combination of evaluative and comparative hermeneutics, can also be categorised as dialectical in nature. Abogurin, for instance, does a commentary on 1 Corinthians with the aim of producing a reading which involves a critical reflection on the encounter between the (1 Corinthian) texts in its context and the African Church in an African cultural context. The radical inculturation hermeneutics of Ukpong also adopted the dialectical approach. According to Ukpong, understanding is arrived at by the synthesis of the socio-cultural context of the text and the socio-cultural context of the context of interpretation (*see* Ukpong's comments under section 2.2.3). This approach bears resemblance to Baur's approach that also employed the dialectical process involving

the synthesis of conflicting situations in the history of Christianity to arrive at the manifestation of understanding and truth (*see* Baur's comments under section 1.2). This dialectical approach to theology continues to pre-occupy African biblical scholars in contemporary times as theologians continue to pursue more radical ways of inculturating the Gospel in Africa. Such approaches are much more concerned with contextualising the Bible in socio-cultural, economic and political contexts.

3. The hermeneutical approach adopted by King bears resemblance to the transcendental approach of Bousset. (*see* Bousset's comments under section 2.2.1). This can be observed in King's statement that Christ is transcendent over all categories. With reference to ancestors, he remarked that, Christ may be identified in the ancestral traditions, but his encounter with those concepts will cause their transformation. (*see* King's comments under section 2.2.2).

4. The hermeneutical approaches adopted by both Kanyoro and West bear resemblance to the hermeneutical approach adopted by Karl Barth. Karl Barth's reading process is outlined in his statement in his commentary to the Romans that one needs to penetrate the text until the separating wall between the text and the reader breaks down; and one can hear the text speaking to his/her context directly. Thus he puts this into practice in his *Epistle To The Romans* commentary. Commenting on his model of reading this text, he stated that one needs to penetrate it 'until the walls which separate the Sixteenth Century from the first become transparent. Paul speaks and the man of the Sixteenth Century hears' (Barth 1933: 7&8). Similarly, West stresses that trained readers are to read the Bible with ordinary readers in order to bring out the hidden elements of resistance that the Bible contains. Thus basically, Contextual Bible Study is engaged in critical appropriation of biblical texts through the back and forth analysis of the text and its context; and the context of the readers (i.e. ordinary readers). The product of this process of reading is the generation of meaning for the ordinary readers as well as the scholarly readers as they both hear the text speaking directly to them in their context. West talks of the 'Word of God' hermeneutical approach and the materialist approach and even though he pays particular attention to the poor and marginalised or the economically deprived people, his approach is closer to that of the 'word of God' approach which is

basically dialectical in nature. (*see* West's comments under section 2.2.4). Kanyoro's hermeneutical approach also bears resemblance to the 'word of God' approach that I have categorised in my earlier discussion as dialectical in nature. The only difference is that it focuses particularly on sexism and oppression of women in the African socio-cultural, political and economic contexts.

2.5. Highlights of the importance of 'reading with' with respect to the reconstruction of African theology

In summary, the reading practices that we have looked at in this chapter focuses on the attempts made by scholarly readers in Africa to adopt appropriate hermeneutical models for interpreting the Bible in their respective contexts. It is necessary at this point to identify who the scholarly reader is, what his/her relationship to his/her context is or ought to be, and some contemporary developments in theology in Africa which has implications for the African hermeneut.

The scholarly reader is normally identified with the academy as one who has been trained with academic critical skills, who is equipped with the different rules of reading, whilst the ordinary reader is identified as the person who reads the Bible in line with acquired or inherited beliefs. This implies that scholarly readers and ordinary readers have different rules and guides in their interpretation of biblical texts and concepts. In other words, scholarly readers are ordinary readers who have become more sophisticated by the acquisition of certain linguistic skills and tools in the analysis of ancient texts through academic training.

In other words,

> the critic steps back from the text to strike a magisterial pose of critical objectifying distance, whereas the reader tries to eliminate the distance between himself (*sic*) and the text to allow the merging of his being with that of the text (Fowler: 1992: 27).

The relationship between the ordinary reader and the scholarly reader is conceived either as an innocent one or as an ideological one. Thus, one can see the scholarly reader as a

technician who directs the ordinary reader to read biblical texts more efficiently or 'correctly' if the relationship between the ordinary reader and scholarly reader is to be perceived in a more innocent manner. This is because the scholarly reader has reading skills that the ordinary reader does not have.

On the other hand, one can also see the relationship between the ordinary reader and the scholarly reader in terms of power relations, characterised by ideological hegemony. This is a kind of power relationship, where the scholarly reader is the dominant/ elite /urban/ middle class and the ordinary reader is the dominated/illiterate/rural/ working/ class reader. Steiner used the terms 'critic' (scholar) and 'reader' (ordinary) with regard to the power relationships that exist between the ordinary reader and the scholarly reader. Steiner pointed out that from the start, one operated from the position of oppression and subjugation whilst the other operated from the position of authority and power. But according to J & J Comarroff, the scholarly readers do not always operate from a position of authority as they can also bring skills in assisting the ordinary reader in subverting official readings (*see* J & J Comarroff's comments under section 2). Perhaps that might query the role of the scholarly reader as an oppressor.

Hence, according to Steiner's distinction between the scholarly reader whom he referred to as the 'critic' and the ordinary reader that he referred to as the 'reader', 'The critic is judge and master of the text [while] the reader is servant to the text' (Steiner 1979: 449). That is, scholarly readers fail to use critical skills critically but rather use their training as a tool for playing a power game. This seems to be similar to the picture that you have in West Africa with respect to the relationship between Protestant/Catholic scholarly readers who most of the time see themselves as judges over African Instituted Churches with a lot of power and authority to pass judgement on the theology of African Instituted Churches. This has generated a lot of suspicion between African Instituted Churches in West Africa and African scholarly readers. This position of authority and power that theologians assume makes it difficult for genuine dialogue to take place between theologians and members of African Instituted Churches.[35] This is because the academy

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[35] I encountered this situation with my survey in Madina during my visits to the Church of the Lord, Aladura and the Musama Disco Christo Church. In the first place, I visited those Churches with some trepidation on my part as to how I will be received. On their part, even after a lot of explanations and negotiations with their leaders to allay their fears of my usurping their authority, indoctrinating their

most of the time serves as a forum for indoctrinating scholars who in turn go to the ordinary people to indoctrinate them and not necessarily to dialogue with them and the ordinary readers are aware of this.

In conclusion, the nature of the dialogue that we are talking of is that which is conscious of the fact that no ordinary reader comes to the text with an open mind. Each of them, including AICs, comes to the text with some prior interpretation that is located within the post-colonial, post-missionary African context. This may involve missionary heritage and legacy which might be lingering on from the colonial era, traditional cultural issues, issues related to the global economic and local economic issues, globalisation and modernisation, modern political trends and new religious movements and church movements in each context. This therefore implies that the task of theology in contemporary times involves the reconstruction of forms of post-colonial and post-missionary theology which is a wider inculturation project or resistance project. The challenge that the African theologian faces is therefore to read together with ordinary readers to fill in the gaps of the complex matrix that is required for the interpretative process to begin, and then go further on to reflect on the meanings of life that comes out of such a collaborative reading process.

Thus, what I have done in my conclusion to this section is to highlight the importance of the 'reading with' heremeneutical approach to the wider inculturation project. This is because in contemporary times there is an increasing desire by most African theologians to opt for approaches to biblical interpretation that involves collaboration with ordinary readers. This implies that all the hermeneutical categories mentioned in this chapter need to enlarge their hermeneutical horizon by getting more and more closer to ordinary readers and engaging more and more with those whose contextual experiences are needed by the scholarly reader in his/her interpretative work.

At this point, it is necessary to look at the most recent attempts made by African biblical scholars to interpret biblical concepts and texts in Africa. The next chapter which is the

members and causing them to deflect, my presence in their services seem to give an indication of an *intruder*. This created a tense atmosphere which surprisingly got diffused as I continued to participate in their services and programs week after week. But I must say that my first appearance at the meetings of the above-mentioned Churches as a researcher from a mainline Church was a very scary experience!!

second part of the hermeneutical models in Africa focuses on practical examples of biblical scholars either reading the Bible with ordinary readers or reading it from the perspective of ordinary readers. I did this by reviewing *Semeia* 73, which focuses on attempts by scholars to interpret the Bible with inputs from ordinary readers in various African contexts. The next chapter also looks at recent developments in African Christianity as scholars continue to formulate models of interpreting the Bible in their respective contexts.

Chapter Three

3. Biblical interpretative models in Africa (2): Contemporary examples of biblical interpretation and trends in African Christianity

Introduction

Firstly, this chapter reviewed *Semeia* 73 which is a volume devoted to describing and analysing specific scholarly attempts to interpret the Bible in specific African contexts in the 1990s, with ordinary readers, and the outcome of such attempts.

Secondly, this chapter looked at the rapid growth of Charismatic/Faith Gospel/Deliverance Churches in Africa and its implications for hermeneuts who are involved in the development of biblical interpretative models in the various African contexts.

Thirdly, this chapter looked at the move towards the theology of reconstruction in Africa in the 1990s.

3.1. Examples of readings by African scholarly readers- Review of Semeia 73 (1996)

As the title of this volume suggests, 'Reading with African Overtures', consists of examples of scholarly readings from various parts of the African sub-continent.

Diverse articles and responses explore reading models or strategies by which 'scholarly readers' were or ought to be involved in biblical exegesis with 'ordinary readers' in Africa. The articles can be classified into three groups.

Firstly, those that are specifically directed to scholarly readers concerning the way forward in developing hermeneutic models in Africa. Pobee's article entitled 'Bible Study in Africa: A Passover of Language' is one of such articles in the volume that

takes issues in African traditional religion and culture as 'hermeneutic' and suggests that they must be considered as such by biblical scholars in their exegetical endeavors. Also, Hinga's 'Response to "Reading With...": "Critical and Ordinary" Readings' agrees with Pobee's point that there should be

> a "Passover of Language", a shifting of epistemological centers so that biblical scholarship is done in a language that takes into consideration the cultural, historical, social, and political context as hermeneutically relevant (Hinga 1996: 279).

These comments are specifically directed to scholarly readers working in Africa, who are being asked to shift from their Eurocentric hermeneutical approaches to Afrocentric approaches to biblical interpretation.

Secondly, there are quantitative and qualitative researches carried out by scholarly readers among ordinary readers that are reported, analysed and reflected upon and the implications for further development of hermeneutical models were put forward by some of the contributors to this volume. Examples of these are : Draper's research among selected Anglican congregations in South Africa entitled, 'Confessional Western Text-Centred Biblical Interpretation and an Oral or Oral - Residual Context', Megan Walker's research among women leaders in Mpophomeni in South Africa with respect to their reading of Marian texts entitled 'Engaging Popular Religion: A Hermeneutical Investigation of Marian Devotion in the township of Mpophomeni'. There is also Dube's research among Batswana AIC women in Botswana entitled 'Readings of Semoya: Batswana women's interpretation of Matthew 15:21-28'. Thirdly, there are articles in the volume that 'attempt to practice hermeneutical principles of reading the Bible' (Hinga 1996: 279) in specific African contexts. For example, West's article entitled 'Reading the Bible Differently: Giving shape to the discourses of the dominated' puts forward principles for 'reading with' marginalised people in the Natal province of South Africa, which he refers to as Contextual Bible Study and Ukpong's article 'The Parable of the Shrewd Manager (Luke 16:1-13): An Essay in Inculturation biblical hermeneutic' puts forward inculturation hermeneutical principles for reading the parable of the shrewd manager in Luke 16 from the context of poor and exploited peasant farmers in Nigeria in West Africa.

In reviewing the articles and responses in this volume, I would like to dwell on the following topics :

1. Identification of Ordinary Readers, 2. Identification of Scholarly Readers, 3. Commonalities between ordinary readers and scholarly readers, 4. Relationship between ordinary readers and scholarly readers, 5. Evaluation of articles and responses with respect to my project; and 6. Conclusion.

3.1.1. Identification of Ordinary Readers

The articles in the volume dealt with both the general and particular descriptions of the ordinary reader. According to West and Dube in their introduction to the volume.

> The general usage includes all readers who read the Bible pre-critically. But we also use the term 'ordinary' to designate a particular sector of pre-critical readers, those who are poor and marginalised (West 1996: 7).

However, a review of the articles in the volume indicates that certain characteristics are associated with ordinary readers.

Firstly, poor and marginalised groups are identified as ordinary readers. West identifies ordinary readers with 'ordinary people from poor and marginalised communities' (West 1996: 23) in the South African context. Dube and Mosala also make the same identification in 'Readings of *Semoya*: Batswana Women's Interpretations of Matt.15: 21-28' and 'Race, Class, and Gender as Hermeneutical Factors in the African Independent Churches' Appropriation of the Bible' respectively in the volume. However, Hinga reacted to characterising the poor and oppressed as 'ordinary readers', and scholars as 'critical readers' by asking whether 'material poverty reflects intellectual poverty'. In other words, why should the scholar describe herself/himself as 'critical' and the poor as 'ordinary'. Perhaps this characterisation comes from the social location and the harsh economic realities that are associated with it in the various African contexts. The harsh realities are that the poor and oppressed usually do not have much education and therefore lack the critical reading skills associated with class room

education, even though they might not necessarily lack argumentative and critical discursive competence.

Secondly, residual oral cultures and grass root groups are identified as ordinary readers. Draper identifies ordinary readers that his team of researchers dealt with in the selected Anglican congregations in South Africa as residually illiterate and therefore employs what he calls residual oral hermeneutic in their readings. Draper reports that his team of research assistants took part in revival meetings in which the groups they were working with participated, in order to collect additional data for their research because they discovered that their textual approach was inadequate among such groups. Thus, Draper observes that

> Transcriptions of the Revivals present more interesting data than do the textual studies. They seem to confirm my suspicion that the black communities we were working with in our research are still operating with a residual oral culture (Draper 1996: 69).

Draper further observes that the particular readers they were dealing with used non-textual strategies which were situational and also that they were not abstract in their readings of the Bible. Dube and Walker also agree with using residual oral methods in reading with the type of ordinary readers they were dealing with by proposing the development of hermeneutical models along lines that take orality into consideration. Ukpong's article identifies the context of peasant farmers from the grass roots locations in Nigeria as the subject of his exegesis of the parable of the shrewd farmer in Luke 16 who also lived in a predominantly oral culture. (*see* Ukpong's comments under section 2.2.3).

Thirdly, those described as 'real contextual readers' are identified as ordinary readers. In Lategan's response, 'Scholar and Ordinary Reader-More than A Simple Interface' in the volume, he cited Steiner's identification of scholarly readers as 'critics' and ordinary readers as 'readers' (*see* Steiner's comments under section 2.5). Thus, in this context, the ordinary reader is identified as the real subjective reader who reads the text directly from his social context or location whilst the scholarly reader is identified as the one who stands back and acts as an objective critic. Long explores these distinctions further in his article and attempts to employ it in his reading of Revelation.

Fourthly, ordinary readers are identified as spontaneous and subconscious readers. In Patte's 'Biblical Scholars at the Interface between Critical and Ordinary Readings: A Response' in the volume, he observed that the ordinary reader does her/his reading of the text and makes what he calls 'epistemological judgments' from her/his readings as well as making 'value judgments' that are relative and significant for her/his context (Patte 1996: 271). However, Patte is of the view that due to lack of time and critical resources, the ordinary reader reads the text sub-consciously and spontaneously for direct use in her/his social location. This is, in a sense, similar to the views of West and Dube stated in the introduction that the ordinary reader is the one who reads the text pre-critically. Patte bases his description of ordinary readers as spontaneous and subconscious readers on examples from the volume. For instance, he identifies Dube's work as the 'epistemological' frame of AIC hermeneutics which is the ....'*Semoya* framework', and also the inculturation hermeneutical framework of Ukpong which he identified with

> an epistemology based on the social and economic situation of West African farmers), and that of Walker, as the epistemology of popular religion expressed in Marian devotion (Patte 1996: 272).

Patte explains that the epistemological categories that are identified by the contributors mentioned above are spontaneous and subconscious readings that come from ordinary readers who read the text in order to ascertain how the text makes sense or 'does not make sense' to them (Patte 1996: 268).

3.1.2. Identification of the scholarly reader

Firstly, the scholarly reader is identified as an educated, middle class person. Judging from the contexts from which the contributors wrote, one can deduce that scholarly readers in the specific contexts they described were not only people that have skills for reading biblical texts but also people who belong to the middle class or elite class in their contexts. Most of those who are classified as scholarly readers are also urban dwellers who are Westernised by the influence of Western education and Western values that come with it. That is why West for instance identified himself as a white middle class male (West & Dube 1996: 9). Dube also admitted in the introduction of the volume, how estranged she feels (through the acquisition of Western education), from

her traditional and rural folks in the AICs among whom she carried out her research which resulted in the article in the volume.

Secondly, the scholarly reader is identified as an academic, literate and textual reader. This comes out in the research of Dube who declares that she is an academic scholar, whose biblical interpretation is informed by 'Western academic interpretative communities' (Dube 1996: 127) which is associated with textuality. But she also admits that she shares a common class with her ordinary readers who are dominated by imperialistic and patriarchal modes of reading. Thus, what she is doing as an academic is to search for 'modes of reading that are subversive to imperialistic and patriarchal domination' (Dube 1996: 127). Ukpong's reading is also another example of an academic working for the social class where he is located, that is the peasant farmers in Nigeria in West Africa, providing a reading of the parable of the shrewd manager in Luke 16 which not only takes the context of the oppressed and exploited peasant farmers as its starting point, but also as subject in his interpretative work. The academic readers that are identified here are therefore those who work mainly from a literary or textual approach which implies that they do their readings from a printed text, which they read and interpret.

Thirdly, scholarly readers are identified as objective/critical readers. Biblical studies is considered as an academic discipline in the humanities. Thus, the Bible, being one of the main resources for biblical studies has been the focus of scholarly attention as academics seek to present the Bible in its own terms by seeking to analyse the Bible as literature (literary criticism) and as history (historical criticism) (Hinga 1996: 277).

The scholarly reader is therefore identified as being involved in what Lategan calls 'critical activity'. Lategan states that

> The very critical activity which is the core business of the critic depends on an (ongoing) act of reading, and everything said about the text, its origin, background, and history (Lategan 1996: 243-244).

Thus, the scholarly reader is sometimes identified as the 'critic' and the ordinary reader as 'reader' by some biblical scholars like Steiner and Fowler. (*see* Steiner and Fowler's comments under section 2.4). Long's 'A Real Reader Reading Revelation' identifies the

dangers of the distancing of scholarly readers from the readings that they produce. This is because of the notion that the scholarly reader engages in objective and universal reading of texts. Thus, in this respect the scholarly reader has been given descriptions like the imaginary reader, informed reader, competent reader and the expert reader (Long 1996: 87) but not a subjective reader. Long challenges this notion because he is of the view that the scholarly reader is a real contextual reader.

Fourthly, the scholarly reader is identified as a facilitator or enabler of ordinary readers. In this particular volume, it is proposed that the role of the scholarly reader ought to be as a facilitator or enabler of ordinary readers. It is therefore suggested that scholarly readers should see themselves as those who are *to be made use of* by ordinary readers and not those who would *'make use of'* (Nolan 1996: 217) ordinary readers in the reading process. This comes from the argument that readings originate from ordinary readers and their contexts. Patte reflecting on Pobee, Nolan, Wittenberg, argues that the first and the last words with respect to readings lies with ordinary readers. Patte therefore argues that scholarly readers are to facilitate the process of reading by providing critical understanding to the epistemological judgments and values that ordinary readers cannot possibly achieve on their own. This idea of facilitation by scholarly readers is also emphasised by Wittenberg who advocates a theology 'from below' in his Old Testament Theology, for whom?', and also with Nolan's 'workers theology', which must be constructed by workers themselves in his 'Work, the Bible, Workers, and Theologians: Elements of Workers' Theology'. In the proposed theologies of both Nolan and Wittenberg, the role of the scholarly reader is to make her/himself available as an enabler or facilitator of ordinary readers.

3.1.3. Commonalities between Ordinary Readers and Scholarly Readers

Members of a community of readers

Generally, the idea of a community of readers has a wider usage in hermeneutical circles in contemporary times. For instance, with respect to identification and usage of literary forms, Stanley Fish's *Is there a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretative Communities (1980)* states that

> The act of recognising literature is not constrained by something in the text, nor does it issue from an independent and arbitrary will; rather, it proceeds from a collective decision that will be in force only so long as a community of readers or believers continues to abide by it (Fish 1980: 11).

Thus, Fish's community of readers have accepted conventions of reading. If we apply this to ordinary readers and scholarly readers, there we can also identify shared conventions between ordinary and scholarly readers. Firstly, both ordinary readers and scholarly readers see the Bible as the major source from which they as a community of readers work from. Secondly, there is the shared convention that the biblical texts or concepts are to be interpreted by reading communities through the encounter between the text and the readers (who in this case could be ordinary readers and their agenda or scholarly readers and their agenda).

With specific reference to the *Semeia* volume, John Riches' 'Interpreting the Bible in African contexts: Glasgow Consultation' argues that both ordinary and scholarly readers belong to 'a community of readers' (Riches 1996: 180). This is because firstly, both ordinary readers and scholarly readers are involved in the activity of reading texts. They therefore have a common objective of reading biblical texts which simply implies that they are both readers. Secondly, there is only one starting point for the reading of texts, that is, to start as an ordinary reader. This means that, scholarly readers also start their reading activities as ordinary readers. Lategan argues that biblical scholars became more and more identified as part of the community of 'real' readers by 'The shift of attention to the interaction between text and reader, away from the relationship between author and text' (Lategan 1996: 243). Lategan further argues that

> The world of the reader forms the inescapable context- also of the historical critic. He or she is part of it. The very critical activity which is the core business of the critic depends on an (ongoing) act of reading, and everything said about the text, its origin, background, and history, is reader and reading mediated (Lategan 1996: 244).

John Riches also challenges the sharp distinction that is made between biblical scholars and ordinary people with respect to Biblical interpretation. He argues that

> Those who are academics do not cease thereby to be members of a community of readers, just as those who are not academics are not wholly untutored in readerly skills or indeed in the techniques of biblical interpretation (Riches 1996: 186).

This implies that both the scholarly reader and the ordinary reader are involved in the act of reading and thus, constitute a community of readers within their particular socio-cultural realm, even if they work from different standpoints and perspectives.

Involvement in cultural readings

The articles in the volume show close relationships between the socio-cultural context in which readings (both ordinary and scholarly) are being done. South African biblical scholars like Gerald West, Mosala, Nolan and Wittenberg do their readings from the cultural perspective of a society that has a cultural history of race and class discrimination, where oppression and marginalisation of poor black people is the focus and so they exercise a hermeneutical option for the poor and oppressed. Ukpong also operates in a socio-cultural context of the exploited peasant farmers in West Africa and the unjust world economic order that affects most post independent West African countries and therefore takes to inculturation biblical hermeneutics that gives preference to the socio-cultural context of the reader who is exploited in the West African market place, as the subject of biblical interpretation and not the object. What these academic readers have done is to read from their socio-cultural contexts which is similar to what ordinary readers also do. Even though scholarly readers may use different reading models and focus on different questions in their readings, however, they are still selecting from the same cultural context that the ordinary readers in their community would also select and read from. According to John Riches, this cultural commonality between ordinary readers and scholarly readers became clear to him during the Glasgow consultation by making the following comment:

> What the consultation brought home to me, more than anything, was the realisation that there is no sharp division between cultural readings of the Bible and 'purely historical' readings or indeed any kind of readings (Riches 1996: 186).

Long also believes that the scholarly reader is not merely reconstructing biblical texts to produce objective and universal biblical interpretation. He believes that the academic scholar who embarks on a reading activity is doing so from a particular cultural standpoint and therefore she/he is an 'actual reader' just like the ordinary reader. He further identifies himself as an actual reader and gave the following explanation for his stance

> my interpretative stance has the aspect of self-disclosure, in which is revealed the complex, often contradictory, web of social relations in which I find myself (like everyone) embedded....These contradictions especially are painful to acknowledge to myself, let alone share with anyone else, but they will have definite effects on the way I enter the text and my engagement with it (Long 1996: 91 -92).

Long's argument is that both the ordinary reader and the scholarly reader are influenced by their socio-cultural context and cannot dissociate or disengage themselves from it in their interpretative activities. Thus, what happens when they get involved in reading a text is to undertake a cultural reading of the text, as their cultural context affects their point of entry into the text as well as the meaning that they seek from the text for their own specific purposes; that is, as critics or as ordinary readers.

3.1.4. Relationship between ordinary readers and scholarly readers

In Lategan's response to the articles in the volume, he expresses concern about the possibility of assuming that the relationship between the ordinary reader and the scholarly reader is simple and all that scholarly readers have to do as facilitators of the reading process is to make themselves available for ordinary readers to *make use of* them. This is true because ordinary readers and scholarly readers have different agendas but what normally happens when they come together is that they interact in such away that each contribute to working out of each others' agendas. Lategan therefore, indicates points of contrast between ordinary readers and scholarly readers. He comments that apart from the critical/ordinary there are also complex contrasts such as theoretical/emp-irical", "dominant/dominated", "male/female", , "text-centred/oral culture", "exegesis/ /theology", "North/South", (Lategan 1996: 244) and others between the ordinary reader and the scholarly reader.

Hence, some factors have been exposed by this volume that need to be taken into consideration in developing a hermeneutical model in the interface between ordinary readers and scholarly readers. Thus, in reviewing the articles, I have chosen to evaluate the following factors that are related to scholarly readers reading with ordinary readers:

Functional factors

The way meaning is sought and used depends to a large extent on the function that meaning is put to by the readers of the text. For example, the ordinary readers are said to be those who diligently read the Bible 'seeking the word of God for themselves and their circumstances' (Hinga 1996: 277), whilst the scholarly reader '...seeks to present the Bible in its own terms by seeking to analyse the Bible as literature (literary criticism)

and as history (historical criticism)' (Hinga 1996: 277). The function of the Bible for the ordinary reader seems to be more driven by the desire to make direct links between the text and the social location of the ordinary reader. This is because of their perception that the purpose of reading a text is for practical use in a socio-cultural context. However, the scholarly reader reads the text primarily to contribute to the academic progress in scholarly biblical interpretation even if he/she does it from her /his socio-cultural context. This is because the intellectual culture influences the way academics in general perceive the function of biblical interpretation which also affects the way hermeneutical models are developed by scholars and the way they are presented, in order to satisfy the standards and dictates of the academia, first and foremost. What is unique about this volume is that it advocates that scholarly readers should reflect more and more on how the Bible itself is perceived by ordinary readers in Africa in their hermeneutical work. Pobee indicates that the Bible is perceived as a magical book by most ordinary readers in Africa whilst scholarly readers would see it more as a literary document. This also affects the function that the Bible is put to by the academic reader and the ordinary reader.

Most ordinary readers would therefore see the Bible as functioning as a powerful book for dealing with problems whilst scholarly readers would see the Bible as containing texts that are interpreted and analysed on their own terms with respect to specific issues that they address. Perhaps, the most important outcome of the 'reading with' models of interpretation is what West indicates in his statement that at the end of the reading practice the subjectivities of both the ordinary reader and the scholarly reader are enlarged (West 1996: 37-38). In other words, the interchange between the ordinary reader and the scholarly reader influences the understanding of the text for both of them in different ways which hopefully would also affect the way the Bible functions in both the ordinary and the academic sectors of a particular socio-cultural context in which it is read. John Riches also comments that perhaps such corporate reading might go a long way in causing paradigm shifts in biblical studies in the academy. Thus, he states that

> what we need to discover is how forms of partnership within a particular local community may bear fruit both for academic and popular readings...part may be in opening up new perspectives and questions which can lead to paradigm shifts in scholarly academic readings (Riches 1996: 186).

I would also add that it might also improve the critical consciousness of the ordinary reader with respect to the critique of her/his context with respect to the encounter between biblical texts and issues in her/his socio-cultural context.

Power relationships

Lategan cites Steiner's use of the term 'critic' (scholar) and 'reader' (ordinary) with regard to the power relationships that exist between them and asks whether it is at 'all possible to rectify the power imbalance inherent in the terminology and the roles of critic and reader' (Lategan 1996: 245). (*see* Steiner's comments under section 2.5). Most of the contributors express concern about the position of power from where the scholarly readers operate; normally thinking of their interpretations of the Bible as the 'more elaborate and correct' ones which must be listened to, and adhered to by ordinary readers. Scholarly readers are also influenced by the ideological perspectives from which they operate; either as the functionaries of liberal theology or particular denominational biases, middle class and elite postures which the ordinary readers are very conscious and suspicious of, whenever they interact with scholars.

Sometimes ordinary readers will voice out their misgivings in the reading process but most times they will not. A very subtle case of protest voiced out by ordinary readers against domination by scholarly readings can be deduced from Dube's attempt to read Matthew 15:21-28 with Batswana AIC women in Botswana. She states that as the discussion progressed the respondents frequently pointed out that, '*Kana re bua ka dilo tsa Semoya*' that is, 'Remember, we are discussing issues of the spirit' (Dube 1996: 124). I suspect that as Dube read the text with the Batswana women, any time they sensed that Dube was attempting to high-jack the discussion towards a direction that they were not happy about, they then used this protest or caution to free themselves from domination by such attempts. The challenge therefore facing the scholarly reader is how the imbalance that exists between her/himself and the ordinary reader can be dealt with. The ideal solution to the problem is to level the ground so as to create an atmosphere of equal participation and discussion of biblical texts between ordinary readers and scholarly readers. It is therefore necessary to reflect deeply on the practical outworking of the 'reading with' hermeneutical models in socio-cultural contexts where there is clearly power imbalance to see how they are grappling with such imbalance. Take for example, the kind of intimidation and inhibition that members of an AIC in Natal province would feel whenever they are together with a middle class intellectual from a mainline church who is also lecturing at the University of Natal in South Africa.

Resources

Various resources have been mentioned by the contributors to this volume that could be used for biblical interpretation. John Pobee argued that proverbs, art, music, liturgy, poetry, stories which are part and parcel of the African religious and socio-cultural contexts, must be taken 'as the "hermeneutic" which provides the legitimate epistemology for African readings' (Patte 1996: 272-273, Pobee 1996:165). Music, liturgy, proverbs, stories are actually resources which are already being used by ordinary readers in their readings in most parts of Africa. Draper's article gives an example of the resources that ordinary readers use in reading the Bible. For instance in the Markan reading that he cites, Draper reports that after Mark 5:21-23 was read aloud by a trained reader together with ordinary women, 'the women responded with their own poem, song and role-play' (Draper 1996: 73). Also, there are other experiences of ordinary readers that they use as their interpretative resources within oppressive and working class communities. Nolan's article emphasises the point that there is the need for a workers' theology that cannot be formulated by the biblical scholar who has not had first hand experience of such a life. Nolan therefore argues that

> What the worker does have is experience of work, and what the Christian worker also has is faith. Out of this, and by simply hearing the stories of the Bible, an elementary, perhaps somewhat superficial theology, can be constructed. (Nolan 1996: 217).

Thus, what Nolan is saying is that readings that can emerge out of the economic exploitation and working experience of the ordinary working class reader are the main resource from which a workers' theology can be constructed. However, the question is, how does this kind of theology contribute towards different projects that are being undertaken in Africa?

With respect to scholarly readers, the resources that they possess are not necessarily superior but rather different. Firstly, they have historical critical skills and resources which most ordinary readers do not have. Most of the ordinary readers in Africa are described as illiterate so their interpretative models are driven by oral or residually oral models of interpretation. Some ordinary readers in Africa read the Bible in their mother

tongues or local language as there are various vernacular translations of the Bible and a lot of ordinary readers can read in their mother tongues or local language. In situations where ordinary reader cannot read, the literary skills can be used to assist the illiterate reader in hearing the text read to her/him by the scholarly reader who posses literary skills. Hence, reading the text aloud for the illiterate ordinary readers can go a long way to assist them in their biblical interpretation. For example, with respect to the Mark 5: 21-43 reading mentioned by Draper, he further reports that after the story had been read aloud by the trained reader, he then requested the women to identify key words in the story which the women did without any difficulty at all (Draper 1996: 73).

Secondly, the scholarly reader is described by some of the contributors to this volume as an 'expert' reader. This is due to the assumption that through her/his training, the biblical scholar has acquired certain skills and knowledge for dealing with biblical texts which the ordinary reader does not have. Nolan therefore argues that for the construction of a workers' theology that is not superficial theology 'but has real depth and consistency...workers must *make use of* the expertise and technical knowledge of academics' (Nolan 1996: 217). The only condition attached to the outworking of the skills and resources of the scholarly reader is that these skills should only be made available *for the use of* the ordinary reader and rather not to use the skills to dominate ordinary readers. This is because there is the tendency for scholarly readers often to think that they are the more competent readers and they are the ones that possess 'critical' skills whereas ordinary readers are incompetent and unskilled readers. This is because they are suspicious of the readings of ordinary untrained readers as there is the tendency for scholarly readers to feel that the readings of the untrained ordinary people are erroneous.

Thirdly, another skill that the scholarly readers ought to possess (according to some contributors to this volume) is that of facilitation. This type of skill is rare among scholarly readers. This is because scholarly readers find it easier to 'teach' or pass on information or 'instruct' others than dialogue with them. Facilitation is, however different as it is aimed at empowering other people to reconstruct their own ideas and views through a discursive or dialogical methodology. Therefore if a facilitation method is to be used, then the challenge to scholarly readers is that rather than being listened to, by ordinary readers as they talk down to them from their authoritative stance, they need

to possess the skills of those who can listen to and dialogue effectively with ordinary readers.

3.1.5. Evaluation of the views from the volume

In general, this volume is an attempt to point to the possibilities that are there for the adaptation of hermeneutical practices that would be all inclusive of both scholarly readers and ordinary readers in various African contexts. The writers have identified areas where they are inter-connected with ordinary readers. The contributors have also identified areas where scholarly readers differ from ordinary readers. However, the most striking point that I picked from this volume is the challenge that all the contributors put to scholarly readers in Africa to offer themselves as *hermeneutical servants* to the specific socio-cultural contexts from which they do their readings. This would involve approaches that do not operate from scholarly readers seeing themselves as superior or masters who impose their readings on ordinary readers, but to get alongside ordinary readers to assist in critical understanding of the epistemological choices ordinary readers make, the meanings and values they derive from their readings, and the uses that ordinary readers put their readings to. Another factor that comes out of this volume is the concern expressed by contributors that universalist hermeneutical approaches in the academy (in which most of the African biblical scholars are trained), does not respond effectively or fully to the contextual and socio-cultural hermeneutical needs of the African contexts, as they often turn out to be more Eurocentric than Afrocentric.

This therefore calls for the adaptation of hermeneutical models and practices by scholarly readers that are based on prevalent mediums of communication in the African contexts. For instance, poetry, songs, liturgy, proverbs are some of the mediums of communication mentioned. Also, the development of hermeneutical models that respond to residually oral/illiterate and oppressed groups are some of the realities that need to be considered by scholarly readers in Africa in the formulation of such hermeneutical models in Africa. In other words, African religious concepts, socio-cultural concepts as well as the economic, political and missionary heritage of the diverse African religious contexts must be taken into consideration in the adaptation of hermeneutical models in Africa. But to obtain information concerning these issues, the

scholarly reader needs to work hand in hand with the ordinary reader. The question therefore to ask is, how can scholarly readers have effective interchange between themselves and ordinary readers in their respective contexts? Among others, I have identified the following as some of the issues that scholarly readers have to consider in preparing to undertake readings 'with' ordinary readers.

Type of scholarly reader who qualifies to read 'with' the ordinary reader

Firstly, the scholarly reader ought to be socially committed to the socio-cultural context of the ordinary people that she/he wants to read with. As put by some of the contributors to this volume, the scholarly reader must be a socially engaged reader in order to be able to read with the ordinary reader. This implies that the scholarly reader must be committed to the socio-cultural context that they are working with. Secondly, West argues that the scholarly reader must be in the category of what Gramsci describes as an 'organic intellectual', who is described as an academic reader in his *Selected Prison Notes*. (1971). Gramsci identifies 'organic intellectuals' as 'the thinking and organising element of a particular fundamental social class' (Gramsci 1971: 1). Gramsci's theory is that every one, including oppressed and marginalised groups, qualifies to perform intellectual activities as we all possess intellect. He however, argues that there is the need to create a new intellectual, the 'organic intellectual' for the following reasons.

> The problem of creating a new stratum of intellectuals consists therefore in the critical elaboration of the intellectual activity that exists in everyone at a certain degree of development, modifying its relationship with the muscular-nervous effort towards a new equilibrium, and ensuring that the muscular-nervous effort itself, in so far as it is an element of general practical activity, which is perpetually innovating the physical and social world, becomes the foundation of a new integral conception of the world (Gramsci 1971: 9).

West argues on similar lines that the type of scholar who can effectively partake in reading with ordinary readers must be an organic intellectual or must somehow be linked with one. This means that the scholarly reader must have specialised critical skills to be able to function not so much as the only one with knowledge or understanding but rather be able to assist in 'organising and shaping the ideas of the social group' (Gramsci 1971: 9) that he is committed to working with and to which

she/he belongs. This is where West introduces the idea of a 'trained reader' who is either an organic intellectual or someone linked closely and working hand in hand with an organic intellectual in 'reading with ordinary readers'. Thus West states that

> A critical reading and appropriation of biblical text is the primary concern from the side of (organic) intellectuals involved in the interface between an engaged biblical studies with its socially committed trained readers of the Bible and poor and marginalised readers of the Bible (West 1996: 28-29).

Boundary crossing

There is the need to recognise that due to the different spheres and perspectives from which scholarly readers and ordinary readers operate, there is therefore the need for boundary crossing by scholars to be able to read with ordinary readers. Any attempt by scholarly readers to interact with ordinary readers starts from a lot of inhibitions, suspicion and uneasiness on both sides even if the initiative comes from the ordinary readers. According to Gramsci, the interaction between organic intellectuals and ordinary oppressed people 'is double and appears contradictory' (Gramsci 1971: 14). This is because an oppressed and marginalised person 'respects the social position of the intellectual...but affects contempt for it, which means that his admiration is mingled with instinctive elements of envy and impassioned anger' (Gramsci 1971: 14). Thus, this results in the coming into play of the two theories of what James Scott's *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcript* (1990) calls 'thick' and 'thin' forms of hegemony in the attempt by scholars to interact with ordinary people. This is because the scholar operates from a position of authority and power and either employs the 'thick' hegemonic version 'that claims that a dominant ideology works its magic by persuading subordinate groups to believe actively in the values that explain and justify their own subordination' (Scott 1990: 72), or adopts the 'thin' version 'which maintains only that dominant ideology achieves compliance by convincing subordinate groups that the social order in which they live is natural and inevitable' (Scott 1990: 72). In other words, the ideological hegemony of scholars can lead either to persuading ordinary people to accept the ideological stance that by-passes the predicament of the ordinary people, making them believe it is part of the natural order of things or to convincing Christians for instance, to accept the readings that sanction subordination as biblically mandated. According to Scott, this situation can lead either to a 'culture of silence' among ordinary people or create an underground language and reading which Scott calls a 'hidden transcript'.

According to West, Dube, Walker and Draper, there exists a 'hidden transcript' among ordinary poor and marginalised groups in Africa. What is therefore needed is scholarly readers who would cross the boundary between their class which is the class of the dominant to go and interact with the ordinary readers class which is that of the dominated. The purpose of this boundary crossing, according to Scott is to create a forum where subversive readings can take place as well as enabling the possibility for 'smuggling...portions of the hidden transcript, suitably veiled, on to the public stage' (Scott 1990: 227). According to West in his article in this volume, for the scholarly reader to be able to cross the boundaries, she/he must choose to be 'partially constituted' (West 1996: 38) by ordinary readers. This is because it is only when ordinary readers are convinced that a scholarly reader is genuinely committed to their cause that they can have the freedom to reveal portions of the 'hidden transcript' in their interaction with scholarly readers.

Can scholarly readers read 'with' ordinary readers ?

Some of the articles in the volume have indicated that scholarly readers who can effectively read with ordinary readers need some commitment and understanding of working with marginalised groups who not only work from a non-textual perspective but are also economically impoverished. Gerald West develops the concept of 'reading with' from Gayatri Spivak's concept of representation in her article 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' (1988). Spivak is of the view that the theoretician or intellectual cannot represent or 'speak for' the oppressed group. Her reason is that the two senses of representation must be fulfilled before any one who wants to do the job of representation can fully be said to have achieved it. This is because, in Spivak's view, the two senses of representation belong to each other. With respect to the intellectual, she argues that if one can only fulfill one sense of representation and not the other, then one cannot be depended upon to fulfill the task of representing the oppressed and marginalised groups. Spivak identifies the first sense of representation as being a theoretical advocate for the oppressed struggling masses, which she identified as, 'speaking for', which the theoretician or intellectual can do. But the other sense is re-presentation which she identifies as action or struggle and this cannot be done by the theoretician or academic. Spivak's reason for this is that

Since theory is also only 'action', the theoretician does not represent (speak for) the oppressed group. The subject is not seen as a representative consciousness (one re-presenting reality adequately) (Spivak 1988: 275).

This is because of Spivak's view that, when intellectuals attempt to represent the marginalised and oppressed group, 'the intellectuals represent themselves as transparent' (Spivak 1988: 275). In addition to Spivak's argument, West is also concerned about moving to the other extreme, that is, 'listening to' the oppressed and marginalised groups in such a way that leads to scholars romanticising the contribution of the marginalised groups without much critique. Gerald West therefore used the phrase 'speaking with' which he sees as a progression from both 'speaking for' and 'listening to' oppressed and marginalised groups by the intellectual. Thus, West uses the phrase 'speaking with' to point to 'the need to occupy the dialectical space between two subject-positions, without allowing either to become transparent' (Arnott 1991: 125). What West is therefore interested in is not necessarily crossing the boundaries to the other end, which is impossible, as a middle class scholarly reader cannot assume the status of a marginalised and oppressed reader whilst she/he still maintain her/his middle class status. It is also equally wrong to accept what ordinary people say without critiquing it. However, one crosses the boundary but operates within the gap between the dominant and the dominated. In other words, it is the scholar who chooses to commit her/himself to dialogue with the ordinary readers, and is aware that she/he is different and that the ordinary and oppressed group also know they are different, who can successfully and effectively 'read with' ordinary readers. This is because of West's view that difference should not be seen as a hindrance to the reading process but rather can enhance it. West however, situates this kind of hermeneutics which involves groups that belong to different social classes in the South African context by making the following remark,

> For us, reading the Bible and doing theology in this interface calls for dialogue and difference, 'a speaking with' which vigilantly foregrounds both readings and resources of biblical studies and the readings and resources of the poor and marginalised (West 1996: 26).

Thus, for West, and others who have contributed to this volume who subscribe to the 'reading with' hermeneutical practice, what happens when scholarly readers allow themselves to be partially constituted by the 'Other' which, in this case, is the ordinary

reader, is that different understandings would be generated, that is, the biblical scholar would take something different from this corporate readings. As has been indicated by John Riches, in his comments on the Glasgow consultation which appeared in *Semeia 73* that if scholarly readers read with ordinary readers, it may result in paradigm shifts in the academy. This is because, according to Riches, new questions and issues would be introduced into the academy through the interchange between scholarly readers and ordinary readers. This may happen if new questions or concerns emerge from the interchange between the scholarly readers and the ordinary readers, and the academic reflects on them.

Also, with regard to the paradigm shifts in the academy that we mentioned earlier as one of the benefits to the academy in reading with ordinary readers, this would also benefit ordinary readers. If for instance, the academics work on the concerns from their socio-cultural context through their interchange with ordinary readers, they would introduce it in the academy. However, subsequently the community might follow suit in appropriating readings that have come from their interchange with academics and which the academics have hitherto used their academic resources to work on and have already introduced to the academy. This is because it is possible for academics to be a little bit ahead in getting interpretative work done and introduced to the academy before the ordinary reader fully grasps and appropriates it. This can be compared to new discoveries in science or medicine by its professional. It takes time, for it to be introduced to the ordinary person whom the medicine or scientific discovery is ultimately meant to benefit.

3.1.6. Conclusions

This volume calls for more investigation into the socio-cultural contexts of both ordinary readers and scholarly readers in Africa. Firstly, given that all readings are cultural readings, then one ought to fully understand the cultural contexts from which the proposals for particular models of biblical interpretation are being made.

One of the key points that comes out in all the readings mentioned in this chapter is the relationship between scholarly readers and the context within which they undertake their

interpretative work. This means that scholarly readers need to interact with ordinary readers or ordinary readings in the process of interpreting biblical texts or concepts in their respective contexts. However, both the 'scholarly users' (that is, scholarly readers) and the 'non-scholarly users' (that is, the ordinary readers), of the Bible have two resources for their usage of the Bible; that is, <u>texts</u> and their own <u>cultural contexts.</u> With respect to texts and their usage, John Riches argues that both ordinary and scholarly readers belong to a community of readers [36] who are usually related in one way or the other to a common socio-cultural context. (*see* Fish's broader usage of the idea of a community of readers under section 3.1.3). One of the outcomes of the Glasgow consultation was the need to relate culture to economic context.

Thus, with respect to cultural contexts, the Bible itself is a cultural product of the ancient near East. If we consider the Hebrew Bible for instance, 'we find the literary expression of a people who have been clearly influenced by a range of cultures' (Brett 1996: 221).[37] The conception of 'culture' that I subscribe to is that which Fredrik Barth described in his 'Introduction' to *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organisation of Culture Difference*[38] (1969) in which he conceived of the 'culture' of a particular ethnic group as having both a past and a present; where the elements of the present culture of that ethnic group have not sprung from the particular set that constituted the group's culture at a previous time, whereas the group has continual organisational existence with boundaries (criteria of membership) that despite modifications have marked off a continuing unit (Barth 1969: 38).

Barth's concept of a 'culture' as *'continual organisational existence with boundaries'* (1969) is the perspective from which I perceive culture with respect to both ordinary and scholarly readers as cultural readers of texts not only because of their ethnic backgrounds but also within the wider context of their continual identification with their

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[36] For details, see John Riches' article 'Interpreting the Bible in African contexts: Glasgow Consultation'. In *Semeia* 73, 1996: 181-188.

[37] For details on this see Mark, G. Brett's *Ethnicity and the Bible* . Mark, G Brett (ed.), Leiden; New York: E.J.Brill, 1996.

[38] For details, see Fredrik Barth's 'Introduction'. In *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organisation of Culture Difference*. Fredrik Barth (ed.), Bergen-Oslo: Universitetsforlaget ; London: George Allen & Unwin, 1969: 9-38.

economic, political, religious and socio-cultural contexts. Thus I define culture not only as a given representation of the symbols, practices and world-view of a group but as being also the continuous reformulation and reconstruction of the symbols, practices and world-view of a particular group of people as they encounter new political, economic and social challenges from time to time and as they interact with other cultures.

Following from this definition of culture, the question therefore is, what actually happens when scholarly readers and ordinary readers undertake biblical interpretation?

D.F. Ford captured the following cultural influences that Karl Barth noted that he had gone through before the First World war, during the war and after the war by stating that 'Barth ascribed to the hymns of Abel Burckhardt, which he was taught as a child and which simply retold Gospel stories in local dialect, a naïvety' (Ford 1979: 57), in which the deepest wisdom and greatest power are located, which according to Barth, was then subjected to the influence of various intellectual, and socio-cultural theories and developments in his context through his studies and theological reflections as a theologian. Barth casts his mind back to his own journey simply as a reader who is subjected to various cultural influences whilst at the same time being conscious of his starting point but also aware of the changing socio-cultural, and philosophical tides that he has undergone by saying that he has gone 'through all the serried ranks of historicism and anti-historicism, mysticism and rationalism, orthodoxy, liberalism and existentialism' (Barth *Church Dogmatics* 1V/2 1958: 113).

This captures the general starting point of Barth as an ordinary reader from childhood, who has been influenced by ordinary readings through the hymns of Abel Burckhardt which was in his local dialect. As stated by Barth,

> I refer to Abel Burckhardt, who a hundred years ago - a contemporary of the famous Jacob Burckhardt- was the second pastor at the minster here in Basel. He composed and edited a collection of songs for children in the local dialect. This was the text-book in which, ...I received my first theological instruction in a form appropriate to my then immaturity. And what made an indelible impression on me was the homely naturalness with which these very modest compositions spoke of the events of Christmas, Palm Sunday, Good Friday, Easter, the Ascension and

Pentecost as things which might take place any day in Basel or its environs....For as these songs were sung in the everyday language, we were then beginning to speak, ... we joined in the singing, we took our mother's hand, and went to the stall at Betlehem (Barth Church Dogmatics 4/2 1958: 112).

Barth in becoming a scholarly reader is still conscious of the tension that exist between the culturally conditioned naïve hymnal readings of Burckhardt and the intellectual cultural influences that he had to contend with in his exegetical work in the academy. Herein lies the uniqueness of the German classical biblical scholarship, as the historical critical biblical interpreters were seriously interested in reconstructing theology using historical critical scholarship as a means of liberating faith from its authoritarian distortions. And so they tried to hold on to their culturally conditioned faith whilst undertaking their scholarly readings.

I agree with Long that

both the ordinary reader and the scholarly reader are influenced by their socio-cultural context and cannot dissociate or disengage themselves from it in their interpretative activities. This means that what happens when we get involved in reading a text is that we undertake a cultural reading of the text, as our cultural contexts affects our point of entry into the text as well as the meaning that we seek from the text for our own specific purposes' whether as critics or as ordinary readers (Long: 1996: 91).

Long therefore maintains that he can identify himself as a mixture of ordinary reader and scholarly reader in the same person, who is socially located in a particular cultural context. However, according to Long, what distinguishes these two aspects is that his, 'belonging to the Church encourages [him] to read through the eyes of faith, while the academy encourages [him] to separate faith from critical reading' (Long 1996: 91). Thus, what distinguishes these two aspects is the different modes of discourse and leading questions that one puts to the text. Lategan explained how the same person can play both roles in a particular socio-cultural context by arguing that the contrast between ordinary readers and scholarly readers is one more of *functions* within a particular set up rather than that of *persons* (Lategan 1996: 244).

However, despite the fact that both ordinary readers and scholarly readers are involved in reading texts and their readings are cultural readings, there are still some distinctive features that they each possess.

Secondly, one needs to evaluate epistemological judgments and epistemological values that come out of the various socio-cultural contexts in Africa. This means that there is the need to take a closer look at the epistemological categories with which ordinary readers are working in the respective contexts in Africa. This will include the general use of the Bible by ordinary readers in their daily lives, selective readings and choices that they make and why they make those choices. This should also include a comparison between such usages by ordinary readers and those of scholarly readers in the African contexts.

Thirdly, what are the models that are being employed by ordinary readers in reading the Bible in various African contexts? The volume has suggested the model of 'reading with', which entails scholarly readers reading the Bible with ordinary readers. Being conscious of the particular conditions that need to be fulfilled before such a model would work (as indicated by various contributors to the volume), it seems nevertheless to be a very promising model that is being tried in some African contexts. It is therefore necessary to recommend ways of strengthening this in practical terms in places where they are being practiced. Generally, my research project is in agreement with the theoretical formulations put forward in this volume, that is, the need to explore and put forward Afrocentric models of reading the Bible. This is because I accept the premise that all readings are cultural readings and there is the need for more African cultural readings.

However, a few questions remain unanswered by the *Semeia* volume. Firstly, considering the gap between ordinary readers and scholarly readers (urban/rural, male/female, African/European, marginalised/marginaliser, etc., how do we evaluate the difficulties of boundary crossing in these respects?

Secondly, the issue of socio-cultural commitment comes out very strongly. How can this be put into practice in practical terms? Considering the gap between the socio-cultural context of most scholarly readers and ordinary readers, how can this be achieved?

Thirdly, the indication given by *Semeia 73* is that the way forward for biblical interpretation in Africa is that which is done in the interface between ordinary readers and scholarly readers. The question therefore is, how far are African readings generated in conjunction '*with*' scholars?

3.2. Contemporary trends in African Christianity

The scenario in most African contexts is the presence of pastors, elders, church leaders, prophets/esses, ordinary/trained official readers who dictate the way biblical passages ought to be read and applied. These are people who might either be trained or untrained readers (most of the time, untrained readers) with powerful influence on ordinary readers. Some of these people are more tutored in church traditions, regulations and practices that keep the ordinary people on the straight and narrow with regards to usages and practices of the church. These official readers have developed readings of biblical texts through which they persistently dictate the way biblical interpretation should go. Thus, in a sense, the question that needs to be reflected on is, to what extent do these official readings generated by these official readers impose a powerful influence on ordinary readers in those contexts?

There is also the danger, with all scholarly readings, that they become separated from the community and hence a gap develops between the educated and the non-educated readers of the Bible. For instance, the challenge to inculturation hermeneutics is the Charismatic, Pentecostal and African Instituted Churches located in the suburban, urban and rural areas of Africa with their selective and literal reading of the Bible. They employ ordinary readings of the Bible to meet the needs of their cultural contexts. Faulty or non-enlightened as it may sound, one cannot overlook them and remain separated from them owing to one's commitment to scholarly readings of biblical texts. This is where it is necessary for instance, for scholarly readers to pay attention to recent

developments in Africa Christianity, particularly the domination of Charismatic/ Faith Gospel/Deliverance Churches in metropolitan and urban areas in some parts of Africa and its implications for Christian self-expression. These Churches were not represented by the *Semeia* volume even though they have enormous influence on ordinary readings of the Bible in the African socio-cultural contexts.

Thus, the next section of this chapter focuses on the Faith Gospel/deliverance/ Charismatic Churches. Secondly, this section will look at reconstruction theology, which is the most recent developments in theology in the 1990s in Africa. Africa's need for further development of its theologies was triggered by the 'new world order' and the end of the cold war in the 1990s. Furthermore, according to Jesse Mugambi, some of the limitations of EATWOTS contributed to the search for a new theological paradigm for Africa after the cold war. Jesse Mugambi argues that even though EATWOTS contributed immensely by stressing that the Non-European Christian community should be regarded as part and parcel of the 'theological Oikoumene' (11), however,

> Since its inception, [EATWOTS]...has tended to be *reactive* rather than *proactive*. The name it chose for itself indicated that theologians involved were reacting to the marginalisation they were suffering in ecumenical discourse. They chose to define themselves in terms of three 'worlds' which the cold war had created (Mugambi 1995: 11).

The notion of 'reconstruction' became popular in the 1990's as a result of Gorbachev's 'perestroika' (reconstruction), which resulted in the break-up of the Soviet Union. Commenting on Mugambi's main reason for his work in his 'Half a Century of African Theologies: Elements of the emerging theology for the Twenty-First Century' (1997) Maluleke stated that it was because of Mugambi's view that, 'Both inculturation and liberation theologians responded to a situation of ecclesiastical and colonial bondage which no longer obtains' (Maluleke 1997: 22). Hence, his contention is that in place of the inculturation-liberation paradigm, which was mainly 'reactive' we should install a 'proactive' theology of reconstruction.[39] Furthermore, Villa-Vicencio, on his part, advocates a 'liberatory theology' (Villa-Vicencio 1992: 8) of nation-building that will engage a serious encounter and conversation with democracy, human rights, law-

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[39] For details, see Jesse Mugambi's *From Liberation to Reconstruction: African Christian Theology After the Cold War* (1995)

making, and economics in order to restore human dignity in a post-apartheid South Africa. For example, with respect to political returnees in post-apartheid South Africa, Villa-Vicencio argues that

> The kind of theology of reconstruction demanded by this challenge is in every sense a post-exilic theology. It addresses the situation within which political exiles are quite literally returning home....It involves the important task of breaking-down prejudices of race, class and sexism, and the difficult task of creating an all-inclusive (non-racial and democratic) society built on the very values denied the majority of people under apartheid (Villa-Vicencio 1992: 7-8).

Mugambi has also stated clearly that the 'New World Order' set the stage for the usage of '*reconstruction* as new paradigm for African Christian Theology' (Mugambi 1995: 2). This is because of Mugambi's view that

> The concept should be of interest to African theologians of all doctrinal persuasions, considering that the task of social reconstruction after the Cold War cannot be restricted to any religious or denominational confines. At the same time, reconstruction is a concept with the social sciences, which should be of interest to sociologists, economists and political scientists. The multi-disciplinary appeal of reconstruction makes the concept functionally useful as a new thematic focus for reflection in Africa during the coming decades (Mugambi 1995: 2).

3.2.1. Faith Gospel/Deliverance/Charismatic Churches

According to Gifford, in his *African Christianity* (1998) the Faith Gospel 'characterises so many charismatic Churches [and] it is so widespread in Africa' (Gifford 1990: 39).[40]

According to Gifford, 'It is natural that the Faith Gospel should be so prevalent, because Africa's traditional religions were focused on material realities' (335). The main constituency of the Faith Gospel are however, urban dwellers who are mainly educated salary earners. In contrast to the AICs whose 'preoccupation was predominantly health-understandably in rural life where sickness was the most obvious and recurrent trial', the newer generations in the cities have slightly different needs; [their] concerns centre on employment, promotion, cash, accommodation, [and] transport (Gifford 1998: 336).

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[40] 'According to the Faith Gospel, God has met all the human needs of human beings in the suffering and death of Christ, and every Christian should now share the victory of Christ over sin, sickness and poverty. A believer has a right to the blessings of health and wealth won by Christ, and he or she can obtain these blessings merely by a positive confession of faith' (Gifford 1998: 39).

The Faith Gospel was imported from North America. It is has its roots from right wing American theologians like Kenneth Hagin, Kenneth Copeland and Oral Roberts who from time to time travel to Africa to hold crusades and evangelistic meetings for Churches, and also to hold leadership seminars for pastors and Christian workers particularly in urban and metropolitan centres. The Faith Gospel is also spread through literature, audio and video cassettes from the US.

So as to re-enforce the Faith Gospel, another element was added which is the element of deliverance. Thus Gifford says that

> This theology attempts to explain that faith does not always bring its reward; sometimes one is blocked, but with deliverance one can obtain everything that faith promises (339).

With respect to the relationship between African traditional culture and deliverance. 'This second element, the deliverance that must be superimposed on faith, was also to be found in traditional African religions' (339). Okot P'Bitek states that

> African religions are concerned with the good life here and now, with health and prosperity, with success in life, happy and productive marriage etc. They deal with the causes of diseases, with failures and other obstacles in the path of self-realisation and fulfillment (P'Bitek 62: 1970).

One of the characteristics of the deliverance theology is its emphasis on demonic activities and the means by which one can deal with demonic attacks and infiltration into one's life. Once again, this theology came from North America. According to Gifford

> This (implied) stress on demons is also an important strand in American Pentecostalism authors like Peter Wagner [and] Derek Prince cannot be ignored in any discussion of the contemporary formulation and legitimisation of Africa's contemporary deliverance theology (Gifford 1998: 339).

The Faith Gospel/ Deliverance Churches maintain links with sister Churches and pastors in North America and Asia, particularly Korea and other western European Charismatic Churches through exchange programs and visitations. The Charismatic

Churches in Africa also maintain loose contacts with each other through joint programs and exchange programs.

However, with respect to the expectations, Faith Gospel/ Deliverance Churches show very little indication of millennialism in their theology. Their theology bears resemblance to the *'Survival theology'* put forward by the Port Harcourt Survey. (*see* Introduction for comments on *'Survival Theology')*. This is evident in Gifford's statement that the type of Christianity that has emerged in the urban and metropolitan centres that he encountered in his survey in various parts of Africa

> was not concerned with renewed order or any 'new Jerusalem', but with a job, a husband, a child, a car, an education, a visa to the West. It was about succeeding in this realm through faith (or increasingly, at least in West Africa) through faith and deliverance from satanic blockages. We saw in many cases that success has become more central than healing (340).

Some of the reasons given for the drift to Charismatic Churches from AICs in Ghana are that

> The educated and enterprising youth have not been accommodated by the power structures of the AICs. The AICs provide few links with the outside world. Nor are they engaged in redefining Ghana's contemporary culture (95).

The strategy AIC leaders adopt in the urban areas where they are competing for members with the Charismatic Churches is to adopt charismatic preaching styles and vocabulary so as to survive. However, even though the Charismatic Churches have enormous influence in the metropolitan and urban centres in Africa, one cannot say that they have the same influence in rural areas where some of the AICs and Pentecostal Churches still have a lot of Churches. So one can not conclusively say that the Charismatic Churches have an overall domination as their influence is more evident in the urban and metropolitan centres than the rural areas at the moment.

With regard to the mainline Churches,

> The Charismatic explosion has not only spawned a raft of new churches and decimated the AICs. It has had an enormous influence on the mainline churches too, over and above taking their members. The attempts to accommodate charismatic pressure within the mainline churches cannot be said to have succeeded; for the most part they are inadequate and do not compare with the real thing available in the charismatic Churches, and have not stopped the haemorrhage (95-96).

3.3. Towards the formulation of reconstruction theologies

There is also the introduction of the theologies of reconstruction into the African theological arena which is aimed at improving the quality of life in the post-cold war era. This theology is still in its formative stages but seems to be related to issues that both inculturation theology and resistance theology will have to grapple with if they are to be relevant and contextual as the issues of reconciliation and reconstruction are issues that post-apartheid South African theologians are grappling with whilst issues of economic survival, democracy and human rights are challenges that theologians in other parts of post-colonial Africa are faced with. This is related to radical inculturation and other approaches in calling for a more inclusive, proactive and integrative hermeneutics approach that goes beyond inculturation or resistance. The next section of this chapter focuses on the theologies of reconstruction in Africa.

The relationship between reconstruction theologies and radical inculturation and resistance theologies is that reconstruction theology attempts to bring the key players in the various approaches(dominant/dominated, oppressors/oppressed) together for dialogue and cooperative reflection on their respective contexts.

The leading propagators of the theologies of reconstruction are Charles Villa-Vicencio of South Africa and Jesse Mugambi from Kenya.

In his *A Theology of Reconstruction: Nation Building and Human Rights* (1992), Charles Villa-Vicencio argues that the theology of reconstruction is more than a 'theology of resistance' (274) since it operates at 'the interface between theology and law, economics, political science and related disciplines' (8) with the aim of finding the causes of human suffering located within the structures and values of society and then dealing with them in order to build a just, democratic nation which promotes the sanctity and dignity of human life.

On his part, Jesse Mugambi's *From Liberation to reconstruction: African Christian Theology After the Cold War* (1995), states that

> By 1990, the superpowers had committed themselves to abolish the remaining colonial regimes in Namibia, South Africa and Western Sahara. This commitment brought an end to the process of decolonization. The logical outcome of this commitment would have to be a shift of gear on the part of contemporary African thinkers, from the emphasis on liberation to engagement in social transformation and reconstruction (Mugambi 1995: 40).

The Exodus motif was appropriate for African theologians in fighting colonial or imperial domination and apartheid. However, Mugambi is of the opinion that there is the need to review the Exodus motif in the light of the cultural, socio-economic and political developments in a post-cold war Africa. Mugambi therefore stated that

> the logical follow-up of Exodus is social transformation and reconstruction. If we were to opt for the Exile motif, the logical follow-up would still be social transformation and reconstruction, identified with Ezra, Haggai and Nehemiah' (40).

Furthermore Africa entered into the new world order in the post-cold war era with political instability, ethnic clashes and economic collapse in almost every corner of the continent. The decades of post-colonial ideological flirtation with Western Block or Eastern block have come to an end. Thus, 'there was no longer 'big brother' to turn to (207). Both Eastern Europe and Western Europe has little or no interest in a disintegrated Africa in the post-cold war era in the 1990s.

Reconstruction theologians compared the situation in Africa in the 1990s to that of post-exilic Israel and recommended that

> Just as in the days of Jeremiah, Africa needs to appreciate that only reliance on her own resources can help her people to cope with the challenges of the future (207).

This implies that there is the need for a paradigm-shift from the existing theologies of inculturation and resistance. The paradigm-shift that is proposed for the twenty-first century involves 'discerning alternative social structures, symbols, rituals, myths and interpretations of African social reality by Africans themselves' (40). The resources for this re-interpretation are the multi-disciplinary analysis involving social scientists, philosophers, creative writers and artists, biological and physical scientists' (40).

At this point, the question to ask is, what is the task of African theologians in the process of reconstruction in their respective contexts?

Mugambi identifies three levels of reconstruction, namely, personal reconstruction, cultural reconstruction and ecclesial reconstruction.

The Church in Africa is regarded as a key player in the reconstruction process. Thus even though the Church is placed under the level of ecclesial reconstruction, the Church is expected by reconstruction theologians to facilitate the process by which the other levels of reconstruction (personal and cultural) would be achieved in their respective communities. This is because the 'Church remains the most influential and the most sustainable institution' (225) in Africa in the Twenty-First Century in contrast to political groupings, pressure groups and civil organisations that lack stability permanency and universal appeal. Churches can therefore become 'viable reference points for social transformation, with the parish priest as the facilitator of social transformation' (225).

This calls for pastors who are re-trained and re-oriented so as to be able to confidently and effectively act as mediators in their parishes and communities in contemporary Africa in the 1990s which is religiously pluralistic, diverse and complex in its denominational outlook (i.e. mainline, AICs, Pentecostal as well as Faith/ Gospel/deliverance/Charismatic.Churches). Furthermore, there is also the challenges of globalisation that African pastors and theologians together with their Churches have to face in the 1990s.

This implies that both the Church in Africa and African theologians have key roles to play in the reconstruction exercise. Mugambi has outlined some of the tasks that both theologians and the Church ought to undertake in this respect.

Firstly, the book of Nehemiah is to be read 'critically, taking into consideration all the hermeneutical, exegetical, theological and ethical limitations associated with the reconstruction project of Nehemiah' (166). Secondly, 'African Churches must earnestly seek to promote dialogue and co-operation between theologians and scientists for the common benefit of the society served by religion and science' (171). This is necessary since the theologian needs not only to dialogue with the custodians of traditional culture who most of the time are residually literate but also with educated Africans who may be health experts or educators, medical experts, scientists, etc. who will have some contributions to make in the reconstruction exercise.

This involves 'the ability to welcome a variety of creative responses within a particular denomination' (68) by the theologian in facilitating this process of reconstruction. It also entails dialoguing with people with diverse religious view points, rural and urban

world-views, diverse denominational backgrounds as well as 'other pressures of modernisation and social transition' (29).

In conclusion, in the reformulation or reconstruction of forms of African theology, the biblical scholar is to 'be a catalyst-a facilitator - who makes it possible for the Church to adjust itself to the new social demands of the society to which its members belong' (17). This means African theologians are involved in facilitating a creative process or encounter which is geared towards finding solutions to Africa's socio-economic and political problems. In this respect, even 'though Africans do not need to invent the wheel (social or industrial)' (42), through the facilitation of the theologian, 'they may yet invent new uses for it, or discover new ways of making it'(40). This therefore is a challenge for African theologians to develop a conceptual framework for reconstructing forms of African theology in their respective contexts.

In summary, as Africa moves into the twenty-first century

> The theme of reconstruction is made attractive by the fact that it highlights the necessity of creating a new society within the same geographical space, but across different historical moments. This theme needs further development as a paradigm of Christian theological reflection in Africa (Mugambi 1995: 15).

In summary, there seem to be remarkable changes, fast growth and developments in the Church in Africa in this decade. One is overwhelmed by the numerical growth and liturgical innovations that have taken place. This has implications for the social, political and economic developments of the lives of people also. The challenge that scholarly readers face is to be able to catch up with such developments in the Church and society since biblical interpretation is lagging behind in this respect. The articles in *Semeia* 73 is a glimpse of that complexity that needs to be investigated further. This needs to be evaluated firstly, against the task facing African theology as we see it reconstructing a genuinely African Christianity. Secondly, the biblical interpretative approaches of scholarly readers in contemporary Africa needs to be evaluated against surveys and evaluations among ordinary readers to identify the types of ordinary readers and the problems of gaining access to them and the reasons for their resistance to certain readings and their acceptance of others.

3.4. Concluding remarks

In conclusion, chapter one provided a basis for understanding how historical theology has been appropriated in contemporary Africa. Furthermore, Chapters two and three dealt with the different types of theologies and hermeneutical models respectively, that emerged in Africa in contemporary times in reaction to Western imperialistic theology. The above-mentioned chapters also dealt with theologies and hermeneutics that have emerged in Africa in response to post-independent and post- apartheid socio-economic, political and religious structures in Africa.

In the next chapter, I will be making a comparison between the German attempts to understand the nature of truth and culture in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries and the way these topics have been dealt with in contemporary Africa.

Chapter Four

4. Relationship Between Western Scholarly Readings and African scholarly Readings

Introduction

There are continuities as well as dis-continuities between biblical interpretation in modern Germany and contemporary Africa in the Twentieth Century. This section will focus on the continuities as well as the dis-continuities between hermeneutical practices in Africa in the Twentieth Century and that of Germany in the age of modernity.

4.1. Relationship between Classical critical hermeneutics in Europe and Africa hermeneutics

Influence of classical historical critical interpretation on African interpretations

There are some continuities between classical historical interpretation in modern Germany and biblical interpretation in contemporary Africa in the Twentieth Century.

Firstly, as we have already noted, almost all African biblical scholars have been trained in the classical historical critical approach to hermeneutics. Thus

> Biblical scholarship in Africa today can therefore be rightly said to be a child of modern methods of Western biblical scholarship, and practically all African biblical scholars whether trained abroad or at home have been trained in the use of these Western tools (Ukpong 1997: 3).

Hence, since the inception of biblical interpretation in the middle of the Twentieth Century in Africa, classical historical critical interpretative approaches have been the main influence in academic readings of the Bible.

Biblical interpretation in Africa therefore started with borrowed biblical interpretative models from the West which came with the Western procedures and patterns for interpretation. This borrowing was of two kinds. In the first place, African scholars were trained in critical historical methods of enquiry, which could be used to effect against

dominant interpretations of texts. In the second place, African scholars in practice inherited many of the Western interpretations of biblical texts, many of which, as we have seen, were tainted with a particular kind of cultural imperialism. This is part and parcel of the contradictory legacy of Western historical theology in Africa; which on one hand lent support to programmes of cultural dominance but on the other hand was characterised by critical openness to Christian traditional concepts and texts. Thus African hermeneuts were able to make use of the critical openness of Western historical theology to subvert particular kinds of Western interpretations that were tainted by cultural imperialism in the beginning and continue to make use of it even today in their hermeneutical endeavours.

Search for cultural identity

Our study of classical historical biblical interpretation in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Germany has brought to light the relationship between theology, culture and the Church in Germany and for that matter, Europe as a whole in the modern era. Faced with the complex developments in late Eighteenth Century German philosophy, which can be loosely termed historicism, the German theologians had to find answers to how a Christianity of Western identity that responds to the new consciousness could be developed. For instance, John Riches' *'Lessing's Change of Mind'* indicated that Lessing's reading of Ferguson and Reimarus' works caused him not only to contemplate renewing his interest in theology but also '...represents a continuation of his search for national freedom and identity' (Riches: 1978: 135).

Baur wrote his two volumes of *'The Church History of The First Three Centuries* (1853) at a time when the German church was struggling to understand itself and articulate its self-understanding in a society increasingly fascinated by notions of national culture and of historical destiny and purpose.

In his introduction to *Ferdinand Christian Baur: on the Writing of Church History* (1968), Hodgson argues that Baur and other theologians of his day were to deal with the predicament that theology found itself in the early Nineteenth Century, that is

> the injunction laid upon it to develop a coherent "secular" theology, in which God and the world are neither identified nor separated into qualitatively incommensurable realms' (Hogdson: 1968: 8).

Baur together with Schleiermacher, Hegel, and others of his age, clearly recognised this need.

Also, Baur's work on the Gospels and his writings on Jesus' teaching and ministry

> coincided with a new emphasis upon the fundamentally moral character of the
> religious relationship between God and man and upon the freedom of the
> believing subject, as distinguished from a more conceptual and speculative,
> interests in the 'Hegelian period' (8)

For Baur, 'hermeneutical questions were not separable from the task of historical "reflection" *(Betrachtung)* or "comprehension" *(Auffassung)* which included both critical and participative response element' (8-9). This is because

> the critical quest for the *Sache* behind the text was occasioned and determined in
> part by the need to participate in and respond to the self-interpretation of the
> *Sache* for the present; the latter was possible only on the basis of the former
> (Hogdson 1968: 9).

Thus, Baur's theology does not merely give account of faith or religious consciousness but also involves a deep reflection on the 'history of the human spirit'. (9)

Baur turned to Hegel's philosophy of history as a means of mediating between received ideas of revelation and current beliefs in the contribution of particular, national cultures to humanity's developing apprehension of the truth.

As Pfleiderer puts it, in his *Development of Theology in Germany since Kant* (1909)

> Baur thought with Hegel that the development of the living religious spirit was
> identical with the dialectical development of logical categories, and that the
> growth of dogmas in the Church can be adequately rendered in the formulae of
> Hegelian terminology' (Pfleiderer 1909: 286).

Furthermore, Frei's *Types of Christian Theology* (1992) states that theology became 'an aspect of the self-description of Christianity as a religion' (Frei 1992: 20). The main task that German theologians occupied themselves with in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries was to inquire

> into the internal logic of the Christian community's language- rules, largely
> implicit rather than explicit, that are exhibited in its use in worship and Christian
> life, as well as in the confessions of Christian belief (20).

Hence, historical theology (which evolved from this process) offered a normative 'self-description' of Christian faith in Germany. In practice, it did this by rewriting church history in a non-supernaturalistic, historical mode. 'Pure history' pursued with all the skills of the academic historian, made possible a presentation of the development of Christian theology and practice which stressed the central importance of certain kinds of belief- Paulinism - in its development and could also provide historical justification for particular forms of contemporary Christianity over others. For instance, historical theology provided historical justification for liberal protestantism over supernaturalist orthodoxy and Catholicism.

The situation facing the African Church and its theologians is of course significantly different from that of Germany in the Nineteenth Century. The Church in Africa was implanted by European missionaries with strong colonial links. African culture has been significantly undermined by developments over the last one hundred and fifty years. This is evident by the way traditional beliefs, practices, usages, and ethics have been undermined in African communities over the years through colonial rule, Western 'civilisation' and missionary activities in diverse ways. Also, until very recently many parts of Africa were still subject to political forms of oppression (which are not yet by any means resolved). Particularly, until 1994, the Republic of South Africa was under the white apartheid regime which oppressed the South African blacks for decades. Responses to this complex situation were, appropriately, diverse. As Kwame Bediako's 'African Theology- Introduction: African Christian Thought in the Post-missionary Era' (1997) says

> Two principal trends emerged in African Christian thought in the post-missionary era, from the late 1950s to the late 1980s. One was the theological dimension to the struggle for the social and political transformation of the conditions of inequality and oppression in South Africa, and it produced 'Black Theology,' a theology of liberation in the African setting, in response to the particular circumstances of South Africa. The other was the theological exploration into the indigenous cultures of African peoples, with particular stress on their pre-Christian (and also pre-Islamic) religious traditions (Bediako 1997: 426).

This is what led to the development of African Theology/ies from the different African contexts. Due to the diverse contexts within African culture, there was the development of different local theologies to respond to the concerns of the Church and the

community in the respective contexts. That is why there were theologies dealing with African world-view and identity and others dealing with racism, oppression and gender issues in Africa. Thus, out of the struggle for cultural identity and liberation from oppression we had Inculturation theology, Black Theology, Liberation Theology and Feminist theology.

Inculturation theology focuses on the relationship between post-colonial Christianity and post-colonial African culture. The main task of Inculturation theology is to find renewed forms of both post-colonial Christianity and post-colonial culture in such a way that the former will transform the latter and vice versa. Black theology is resistant to imperial culture of racism and its ideological concepts. This includes political, social and economic oppression and marginalisation that emerged in South Africa during the apartheid years. Feminist theology also focused on issues related to oppression and marginalisation of women in contemporary Africa. In sum, inculturation theology is more interested in cultural liberation than in political liberation whilst black theology is more interested in political liberation than in cultural liberation and feminist theology is more interested in women's liberation. Inculturation theology seeks to address the ideological inheritance of colonialism which the Church in Africa continues to be saddled with even after the missionaries have left and African countries have become independent from colonial rule.

Inculturation theology is therefore not merely a romanticism of the African culture or a call to return to the African past. Firstly, it is about the recovering of a sense of dignity and self-hood which has been under-mined or damaged by colonial rule. Secondly, it is about the purification of African theology or repairing the ideological damage done to African Christianity by its colonial heritage and its consequences in the post-missionary and post-colonial era. This is because the problem is not only with the colonial heritage. We observe that even in post-colonial and post-missionary Africa, the ideological damage does not go away; when Africans wrestled power from the hands of the colonialist, they replaced the colonial governments and missionary leadership with indigenous ones who maintained dominant power (i.e. Church leaders, theologians, and politicians) relations with the ordinary people. Inculturation theology enables theologians and the Church to address the consequences of the ideological damage that

continues to exist in post-colonial and post-missionary Africa through dialogue between the dominant (Church leaders, African theologians) and the dominated (people who have developed new forms of African Christianity from a symbiosis of African Traditional Religions and missionary Christianity, e.g. members of African Instituted Churches).

Indebtedness to Western academic cultural procedures

The similarity between the approaches used by African theologians and classical historical interpretation by German theologians in the modern era is that they are both done first and foremost within the context of the academy. Scholarly readings in both Germany and Africa do not just use academic resources or require academic competence but also require literary ability to read and interpret biblical texts and concepts. This is what takes place in biblical studies departments both in Europe and Africa. (*see* Hinga's comments under section 3.1.2). The scholarly reader is therefore identified as being involved in what Lategan calls 'critical activity'. Lategan states that, 'The very critical activity which is the core business of the critic depends on an (ongoing) act of reading, and everything said about the text, its origin, background, and history' (Lategan 1996: 243-244). Almost all African scholarly readings at some point do a vigorous reading of the text in its original context as part of its procedures.

Thus, most of them use the historical critical method and literary criticism in doing this. This is unlike ordinary readings, which, as everywhere, tend to focus on providing answers to issues within the context of the ordinary readers. In Africa, however, the gap between ordinary readers who do not possess historical critical tools and scholarly readers who do is so wide that it poses certain problems generally with respect to the appropriation of biblical texts and Christian concepts. This type of gap is relatively wider in the African context than in the German context (or Europe generally) because the general literacy level and possession of reading skills is relatively higher in Europe than in Africa. Thus one of the major problems associated with the usage of historical critical tools by African theologians is the power relations that it has generated between scholarly readers and ordinary readers in Africa. Hence those who possess the tools for subverting dominant interpretations of texts and concepts (i.e. scholarly readers) are themselves concerned about the power relations that exist between them and the rest of the Church in Africa.

Context and tasks

It is important to reflect on the specific tasks that the German theologians undertook and to compare them to that of the Africans. Firstly, in Europe, Christianity is perceived as 'an aspect of Western cultural history' (Frei 1992: 34), which means that the theological developments that took place in Germany were part of national cultural developments. By contrast, in Africa, Christianity was a cultural implant which was imposed on the African culture. However, both German and African theologians were involved in developing contextual theologies in their respective contexts in reaction to certain oppressive structures.

The Enlightenment sought to break free from rulers who were backed by traditional forms of orthodox Christianity which was authoritarian. Thus, the German rationalist enlighteners embarked on a 'relentless criticism of religion, of the contamination of philosophy by theology, of the institutions of feudal absolutism, of feudal-religious precepts of mortality' (Lukács 1968: 36). The outcome of this exercise was autonomy, which provided freedom for the universities to engage freely in theological discourse which has not been religiously legitimised by the Church.

With respect to the universities in Germany in the Nineteenth and the Twentieth Centuries

> the integrity of the academy, its freedom from all intellectual authoritarianism and from all foreign institutional interference, is one of the great glories of the Enlightenment tradition of unfettered critical inquiry (Frei 1992: 95).

The new culture, which blossomed in the wake of the Eighteenth Century, was not opposed to Christianity because it was a foreign missionary-implant, but because its authoritarian character had provided support for the Old absolutist regimes. This is underlined by John Riches in the following observation he made concerning Lessing with respect to the relationship between human freedom and Christianity

> For Lessing the road to freedom and autonomy could not simply by-pass Christian tradition. The alliance between orthodoxy and despotism, which was one part of the heritage of the Reformation, had to be broken before men could be freed to play their true role in the development and progress of society (Riches: 1978: 135).

Hence, the option that is opened to Christianity is a reconstruction of its theology to salvage it from its crisis. This option is perceived by German theologians within the context of a reconstructed Lutheranism. This is because

> The doctrines of original sin and total corruption were dangerous and destructive and must be challenged. But equally the Christian and indeed the Lutheran tradition itself, for all its distortion in the orthodoxy of...Goeze or indeed of the Neologists and Semler, contained an understanding of corruption and bondage, freedom and the spirit which made a deeper exploration of the tradition a hopeful as well as a necessary operation' (Riches: 1978: 135-136).

Hence the task of German theologians was to mediate between the new German culture and the inherited forms of Christianity. Thus, indigenisation of the Church in Germany in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries in a sense, involved modernisation of the Church to save it from its *cultured despisers* (*see* Schleiermacher's comments under section 1.3).

Theologians in Africa also had specific cultural issues that they reacted to in contemporary Africa. African theology has its origins in European missionary heritage. The heritage of the African theologian was not only foreign, it was two-edged. On the one hand, it brought ideas of liberation and theology which had deep roots in the Enlightenment struggle for freedom from autocracy; on the other hand it was a ready partner in the colonial enterprise of denigrating African culture and proclaiming the superiority of European forms of Christianity. (*see* Comaroff & Comaroff's comments under section 2).

Once African theologians saw the need to engage with traditional African culture various options were available. One way was to attempt to re-state Christianity in African cultural terms: this attempted to re-define Christianity in a normative way. Another way was to re-create or re-embody Christianity in an African conceptual framework.

In summary, German theologians in the Nineteenth Century seeking to recover a liberative form of Christianity were faced with a tradition where Christianity had been used to support absolutist rulers and inculcate a sense of class inferiority. Only rulers by divine right were free from the taint of original sin and hence above all criticism. Historical criticism and Hegelian philosophy of history together enabled theologians to reconstruct the Christian tradition in a way which justified liberal/bourgeois

Protestantism against other autocratic orthodoxies. Partnership with emerging bourgeois culture was decisive for this hermeneutical reconstruction.

In Africa, theologians are similarly faced with a Christian tradition which has been subverted by Western forms of cultural superiority, which has, through its alliance with colonialism, succeeded in undermining and distorting African Traditional Religions. The task is to regenerate African Christianity through a dialogue with newly emerging forms of African Christianity which are rooted in African Traditional Religions. In this dialogue, African theologians are assisted by their training in historical critical method. But their training also in a measure cuts them off from their own culture. In this respect, they particularly need to hear the voices of popular readers who may be more able 'to drink from [their] own wells'.[41]

What such a comparision brings out is that classical historical critical theology is more context-orientated, than it claims to be. It draws on a particular culture in its theological formulation. Even though it purports to be an objective universal theology, it draws heavily on the German socio-cultural context in its formulation and pursues its own socio-cultural goals through its historical investigations.

The task of biblical interpretation for African theologians

The task of German theologians in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries was to reconstruct theology in reaction to absolutist and supernaturalist forms of Christianity in dialogue with the enlightenment culture. Firstly, the German theologians had to rethink the notions of revelation that underlay orthodoxy and they did this with the help of Hegel and historicism. Secondly, they had to represent the history of the Church and the doctrine of the Church in ways which were consistent with the new understanding of truth which is through historical investigation. They therefore undertook their task by rewriting the history of dogma in order to unseat various forms of supernaturalism.

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[41] For details see Gustavo Gutiérrez,'s *We drink from our own wells: The spiritual journey of a people.* London: SCM, 1983.

Similarly, the task of African theologians is to challenge notions of orthodoxy which is put across by Western denominations that generally argued that there is only one form of Christianity that everyone is to adhere to. Western theological education on the other hand, does provide them with historical tools which make such a challenge possible. The main problem lies in the way historical tools have been used to present a picture of Western liberal Protestantism as the most developed and up to-date faithful manifestation not only of the Gospel but of religious truth in general and the consequent denigration of all other forms of religious culture. (*see* Schleiermacher's comments under section 1.3).

Confronted with the above-mentioned situation, firstly, African theologians approached their task by identifying the need to redefine orthodoxy in order to allow pluralism in theological reconstruction which ensures freedom to construct local theologies. Secondly, in constructing theology in Africa the process has to involve dialogue between those who are able to rethink Christian tradition (with historical and literary skills, and knowledge) and those whose roots in African culture are strong and vital but do not possess the skills and knowledge of the former (e.g. African Instituted Churches and those in the emerging African Churches with roots in African Traditional Religions and missionary Christianity as well as Faith Gospel/deliveranece/charismatic Churches). This kind of dialogue needs to be a free and open one- that is, free from ideological control and oppression by the dominant partner who could be either a Church leader or an African theologian. The objective of this process is to develop forms of Christianity that arise out of the dialogue between Christianity and African Instituted Churches and others who have developed new forms of African Christianity with deep roots in African Traditional Religions. This is particularly important with respect to the development of Christian self-understanding in Africa because of the gap that exists between the African theologian and the ordinary reader which is relatively wider than that of Western Europe. This is due to the wideness of the gap that exists in literacy and historical critical reading skills, between scholarly readers and ordinary readers in Africa.

Goba underlines this gap that exists between the black hermeneuts and the ordinary people by pointing out that many of the black theologians in respect to the theologies developed in Africa

> are remote from the every day experience of the black people. There is a gap between the black elite and the ordinary black man. We have allowed our acquired intellectualism to separate us from the ordinary people (Goba 1988: 94). [42]

Such a definition of the task facing African theologians clearly highlights the roles of different kinds of readers in the process and points up the need for hermeneutical reflection on these roles and their interplay.

African theologians are putting forward a fundamental approach which locates the process of theological reconstruction in a genuine dialogue between the African theologian (with historical critical tools) and the ordinary reader (African Instituted Churches and others developing new forms of African Christianity who are deeply rooted in African Traditional Religions).

Thus, African theologians therefore need to provide the conditions under which a dialogue can genuinely take place. This implies that what is needed is a hermeneutic that can provide the conditions for such a dialogue to take place.

4.2. The way forward: Habermas' dominance-free hermeneutics

Towards the development of dialogical hermeneutics

From the classical historical readings that we have dealt with in Chapter one, we can reflect on a few key points that actually made German biblical scholarship very distinct and well entrenched in the German context specifically and also generally accepted in Western European culture as a major contribution to European Christianity.

The challenge that confronted all the biblical scholars we studied, was how to situate Christianity in the wider European culture, and to reformulate interpretative models that would resonate with the concerns and issues that were specifically related to their own

specific German context. What recurs in all the writers we dealt with is, for instance, the issue of bringing Christianity to a modern age. Most of the theologians were preoccupied with what Christianity should be and they reconstructed Christianity by tracing its historical development and coming up with an idea of a kingdom with which they managed to situate Christianity within the European socio-cultural realm with its own distinctive European identity and its universal dimensions. In dealing with this issue, one notable thing about most of the German biblical scholars of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries was first their firm commitment to Christianity. They all see themselves as first and foremost doing something that is related to their own faith, and the faith of their own communities of believers. Thus, they saw their work as that which was aimed at their own self-understanding of the Christian faith within the context of their communities despite the considerable opposition that they encountered. These were the intentions of the German theologians.

Despite this, their intentions were always to construct a form of Christianty that would be liberative and would enable Christians to contribute freely to the development of German society and culture. Perhaps, this accounts for the reason why their formulations were of interest to the Church in Germany as well as the Church in Europe. Their work had a lot of influence because it showed its relatedness to the world-view and ethos of European Christianity from a stance of people who were dealing with issues related to a religion they were committed to and a culture they were also part of. Thus, in that context, I perceive the classical historical critical biblical interpreters in Germany as both ordinary readers from the German Church and also as critical - culturally sensitive trained readers. I would therefore define these German scholarly readers as those who were committed to the Christian faith and yet went further in using their academically acquired resources to look more closely and critically at the official readings of the Church as they took into consideration the cultural influences that the Church was undergoing. This is similar to Frei's notion of normative self-description by saying that western Christian theology is 'Christian self-description in the context of the community, responsible to it and to the God to whom the community itself is responsible' (Frei 1992: 54).

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[42] Goba's view was expressed in his 'Corporate Personality: Ancient Israel and Africa'. In *The Challenge of Black Theology in South Africa*. Basil Moore (ed.), Atlanta: John Knox, 1974: 65-73.

Firstly, scholarly readers perceived their role as that of reconstructing the theology of the Christian Church from era to era in order to sustain Christianity's identity within a European culture. Secondly, they were interested in providing persuasive and useful biblical interpretation that resonated with the issues and concerns of the specific contexts that they were dealing with. This was because it was not enough to come out with an identifiable Church in the wider European culture; there was also the need to provide context-specific readings that dealt with the issues that confronted them from their specifically German context. In other words, biblical interpretation in Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries in Germany did not overlook the world-view and ethos of the specific context that they were working with even if they critiqued it and there was separation between scholarly readings and ordinary readings to ensure freedom for scholarly readers to do their work without being subjected to the supernaturalist readings of the Church establishment.

Thus, in summary, for Europeans, the historical consciousness in their culture, which put considerable emphasis on historical inquiry and the role of the author, was the cultural posture that informed their work as European theologians in the modern era.[43]. This venture led to the 'cultural Protestantism' which developed from the constructions in response to the challenges in their respective contexts. Thus, this shows that all the theological formulations were in response to specific concerns and issues in the respective contexts of the biblical interpreters. With respect to the global context however, as we have already mentioned, owing to the imperialistic hermeneutical perceptions, coupled with the strong stance from Europe of a universalist theology, the European interpretative models were imposed on Africa through missionary societies.

At this point I would like to relate these happenings in Germany to the evolution of hermeneutics in Twentieth Century Africa. Given the task of reconstructing an African theology out of the inherited Christian tradition (with liberative and oppressive aspects) and the inherited (but eroded) African cultural-religious tradition with the historical-

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[43] For more on this see, W.S. Vorster's 'Through the Eyes of a Historian' in: *Text and Interpretation: New Approaches In the Criticism of the New Testament.* ibid. 1991: 14-43.

critical and literary skills available, the question is, what kind of hermeneutical reflections may help?

Clearly a full discussion of the history of hermeneutics is not possible. It will be convenient to relate our reflections to the work of Hans-Georg Gadamer and his critics.

This is because Gadamer's hermeneutical theory made a vital contribution to the issue of opening the text for continuous dialogue. Gadamer criticises European hermeneuts concerning their interpretative methods which are aimed at arriving at 'objective reality' by saying that the interpreter 'must seek to be aware of [his] pre-judgements and to control [his] own pre-understanding; [so as to do] away with naïve objectivism (Gadamer 1976: 27)[44]. Gadamer argues that

> It seems to be generally characteristic of the emergence of the 'hermeneutical' problem that something distant has to be brought close, a certain strangeness overcome, a bridge built between the once and the now. Thus hermeneutics had become aware of the temporal distance separating us from antiquity and the relativity of life- worlds of different cultural traditions (22-23).

Gadamer's *Truth and Method* (1965) states that 'Understanding is not to be thought of so much as an action of one's subjectivity, but as the placing of oneself within the process of tradition (*als Einrücken in ein Überlieferungesgeschehen*) in which the past and the present are constantly fused'(Gadamer 1975: 258). Thus, 'Tradition does not stand over against thinking as an object of thought, but is the horizon within which we do our thinking' (Thiselton 1980: 306).

For Gadamer 'The horizon is something into which we move and that moves with us. Thus the horizons of the past which exists in the form of tradition, is always in motion' (Gadamer 1975: 271). Thus according to Thiselton in his *'The Two Horizons'* (1970), for Gadamer

> Genuine understanding takes place when there occurs a fusion of horizons (*Horizontverschmelzung*) between the past and the present, or between the text and the interpreter (Thiselton 1980: 307).

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[44] For details, see Gadamer's 'On the Scope and Function of Hermeneutical Reflection' (1967). In *Continumm*, vol. VIII/85, 1970: 77-95 is also in *Hans-Georg Gadamer: Philosophical Hermeneutics.* Translated and edited by David E .Linge. 1976: 18-43.

Gadamer's two horizons suggest a reading within a relatively closed (and intact) tradition which is characterised by dialogue between the interpreter and the text within his/her traditional setting.

We may therefore approach texts with a consciousness of the good which comes to us in our tradition. Interpretation is therefore perceived as a sifting process which can be effectively undertaken by a 'hermeneutically trained mind' (Gadamer 1975: 238) who understands the principle of "effective history' (*Wirkungsgeschichte*), or the actual operation of history on the process of understanding itself" (Thiselton 1980: 307). Gadamer's hermeneutical process can be summarised as follows

> The texts are understood in terms of the horizons of history and the present, while tradition, as Gadamer puts it, is not merely a passive deposit but an effective process of hermeneutical engagment with the text in which unfruitful pre-judgments are (at least, ideally) discarded, and fruitful ones retained as part of the ongoing tradition (Thiselton 1980: 314-315).

Thus, hermeneuts need greater awareness or consciousness of *Wirkungsgeschichte* but then dialogue can occur only within a particular tradition.

However, there are problems associated with this approach. Firstly, traditions can be eroded and can also be subverted. Thus, even though *Wirkungsgeschichte* here can indeed help, dialogue needs to occur with voices outside the tradition, cross culturally. Secondly, there is greater need for reflection on relative positions of power held by those engaging in dialogue within a particular community. This calls for greater awareness of ideological manipulation and for the development of strategies for its overcoming. For instance, the influence of the 'hermeneutically trained mind' (Gadamer 1975: 238) on both the process and product of an interpretation cannot be underestimated.

So far, the approaches adopted by African theologians however, seem to have been dealing in a Hegelian fashion, with self-understanding and theological reflection within the African context by advocating the appropriation of meanings in specifically African historical moments. This comes out clearly in the works of Ukpong, Dickson, King and Kanyoro. It is only West who differs a little bit as he advocates dialogue between ordinary readers and scholarly readers within the cultural context of marginalised

ordinary readers. This means that most African theologians see themselves operating within their traditional settings, developing theologies *for ordinary readers* (except West) and not in conjunction with them. This is similar to Gadamer's hermeneutics that operate within one's traditional confines with very little or no dialogue with other voices. However, the concern of African theologians concerning their relationship with ordinary readers (which Goba talks of) goes beyond Gadamer's perception because Gadamer's approach excludes cross cultural and intra-cultural voices in the interpretative process (*see* Gadamer's comments under section 1.3).

This implies that the most suitable hermeneutical theories that ought to be adopted in African hermeneuts must be cross-cultural in nature as well as involving active participation of other voices in the interpretative process.

This is because, firstly, most African theologians feel the acute need for hermeneutical reflection between scholarly readers and ordinary readers which will thereby cause the scholarly reader to reflect on his/her role in the community especially in connection with the power relations that exist between the ordinary reader and the scholarly reader and what his/her role ought to be as a member of a community of readers. Secondly, hermeneutical reflection between ordinary readers and scholarly readers is advocated by African theologians because it makes it possible to hear all the voices in the reading process, which includes that of the ordinary reader. In the African context, the voice of the ordinary reader has a very important role to play. The ordinary readers have power to remind the scholar, who is influenced by Western scholarly culture, of parts of their cultural identity that has been suppressed by the Western theological training and orientation that he/she has undergone. If this type of hermeneutical reflection takes place, it will remind the scholarly readers of the gaps between them and ordinary readers which then calls for the scholarly readers to re-equip themselves to be able to contribute more effectively to their reading communities. This is because the Western academic training and theological education distances and isolates scholarly readers from their communities and from their own traditions. There is therefore the need for them to enlarge their self-consciousness by engaging in hermeneutical reflection with ordinary readers who are more in touch with African traditions and socio-cultural issues daily.

Thus, if we are to respond to the demands of the African theologians for hermeneutical reflection between ordinary and scholarly readers, then we need a reading process that allows cultural diversity in its construction. Also, there is the need for a reading approach that addresses the question of dominance between ordinary readers and scholarly readers. It is therefore necessary to adopt a hermeneutical theory which firstly

is reader-orientated and is willing to open up the reading for all the diversities of voices to participate actively. Secondly, there is the need for a hermeneutical theory which deals with the issue of power relations between scholarly readers and ordinary readers. Hence, I chose the hermeneutical theory of Habermas which attempts to address the issues that I raised in this section with respect to ordinary readers reading in conjunction with scholarly readers. Habermas' hermeneutical theory is the most appropriate one for this purpose because firstly, its aim is to ensure that there is no distortion in the communicative action by the interpreter which implies that there is the need for effective communication between the voices that undertake the interpretative action. If we apply it to the African context, it means that there is the need for effective dialogue between ordinary readers and scholarly readers in order to arrive at a representative and meaningful interpretation. Secondly, Habermas' hermeneutical theory aims at what he calls a 'dominance-free' dialogue between the discourse partners. Thus, considering the gap that exists between scholarly readers and ordinary readers, which we have already mentioned in this section, there is, therefore, the need for such a reading process that at least minimises the dominance of scholarly readers over ordinary readers.

This is what leads us to Habermas' proposals as a possible way forward in collaborative scholarly hermeneutics that not merely involves the scholarly reader, but becomes an interaction between the scholarly reader and other discourse partners in the hermeneutical process. We shall, therefore, turn our attention to Habermas' hermeneutics which he referred to as *'depth hermeneutics'* in his 'Review of Gadamer's Truth and Method' (1977)[45] and also in 'On Hermeneutics Claim to universality' (1986).[46]

Habermas' hermeneutical theory

Habermas' hermeneutical theory belongs to the category of theories that conceived of 'understanding as dialogue' (Klemm 1986: 30) between the interpreter and the other person, text or event. It is also related to the socio-cultural context of readers as well as the context of the text. Thus, this can only happen if there is effective consultation and communication between the biblical interpreter and the 'Other' (i.e. the ordinary reader) and the concerns and challenges that exist in that particular context of the ordinary reader.

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[45] For details, see Habermas' 'Review of Gadamer's Truth and Method'. In *Understanding and Social Enquiry*. F.R. Dallmayr & T. McCarthy (eds.), London: University of Notre Dame, 1977: 358-360

[46] For more details on this, see Habermas' 'On Hermeneutics' Claim to Universality'. In *The Hermeneutics Reader*. Kurt Mueller-Vollmer, (ed.), Oxford: Blackwell, 1986: 294-319.

Firstly, I would like to investigate Habermas' conception of the resources in the socio-cultural context and their adequacy and role in the formulation of hermeneutical models.

Secondly, I would like to reflect on the usage of the resources in the socio-cultural contexts and what could be judged as a more effective usage and a less effective usage.

Thirdly, what difference would depth hermeneutics and a theory of competent communication make in the formulation of hermeneutical models?

Fourthly, I would like to reformulate Habermas' *critical self-aware hermeneutics* based on depth hermeneutics and the theory of competent communication using the insights of Gramsci's 'organic intellectual' and Spivak's theory of *representation* [47]. The reformulation is to take care of the *'hidden transcript'* of the dominated and therefore create a climate where 'boundary-crossing' is possible for the organic intellectual to be able to engage in *competent communication* which would possibly result in a reading practice which is closer to a dominance-free approach. (*see* Scott's comments under section 3.1.5).

Resources in the Socio-cultural Context

Habermas has argued that 'the resources of natural language are, in principle, sufficient to clarify the meaning of any configuration of symbols, however foreign and inaccessible it may be' (Habermas 1986: 294). But Habermas things that, 'The intersubjectivity of the colloquial understanding is, in principle, fragmentary, because it can never be exhaustively constructed'(Habermas 1986: 295). This is because 'the long since understood context of familiar surroundings can at any time be revealed as something questionable; it is potentially unintelligible' (295). This emphasises the importance of language and linguistic activity in interpretation, as language is one of the mediums through which people interpret texts and this is why there is the need for an interpreter with technical competence in handling language comes in. This is because of Habermas' contention that even though 'the resources natural language' (294) are

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[47] This meant that the scholarly reader must have specialised critical skills to be able to function not so much as the only one with knowledge or understanding but rather be able to assist in 'organising and shaping the ideas of the social group' (Gramsci 1971: 1) that she/he is committed to working with and to which she/he belongs to, deals with the possibility of communicating on behalf of the oppressed which is related to Habermas' concept of competent communication. See also Gayatri C. Spivak's 'Can the Subaltern Speak' ? *In Marxism amd the Interpretation of Culture*. Carry Nelson & Lawrence Grossberg (eds.), London: Macmillan, 1988: 271-313.

supposed to be the main source of meaning and understanding, they are often in fragments and not well stratified and structured. However, the danger associated with linguistic activity in interpretation is the tendency to marginalise the custodians of natural language and colloquial understanding.

Take for instance, the activities of the German biblical interpreters in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries. Their concern was to render theology in a more structured, and intelligible manner by employing the historical critical biblical interpretative approach to save it from disintegration and fragmentation. However, even though the classical historical critical biblical interpretation employed language in its work, there was the tendency to solidify its language. Thus by solidifying its language, ordinary readers could not get in. This exclusive use of language was developed due to the immunisation of theology against reason and all sorts of philosophical attempts in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries in Germany to challenge its logicality, clarity and authenticity.

The process of solidification and immunisation marked further development of theological concepts by the employment of linguistic terminology to classify, categorise and clarify Christian dogma. Indeed, this movement started before the age of modernity that is, by the time of the Reformation by reformers like Luther and Calvin. According to Klemm, in His 'Introduction' to the *Hermeneutical Inquiry vol.1* (1986), 'In place of the multiplication of meanings, the reformers found univocity and clarity' (Klemm 1986: 11) which caused theology to immunise itself against reason and philosophical attempts to undermine it's credubility, validity and clarity. Also, according to Hans Frei in his *The Eclipse of Biblical Narative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (1974), 'The literal or grammatical meaning, primary for Luther and Calvin, was, for both men, usually identical with the text's subject matter, that is, its historical reference, its doctrinal content, and its meaningfulness as life description and prescription' (Frei 1974: 23-34).[48] This hermeneutical principle became more entrenched in the Enlightenment period, which was an age of criticality.

Furthermore, under 'the modern conditions, a new body of theoretical and practical tradition emerges. It was justified not by appeal to myth but by appeal to epistemology (theory of knowledge)' (Klemm: 1986: 15). The outcome of this development was a systematic, critical and epistemological approach to biblical interpretation which led to the formulation of 'hermeneutics as theory of interpretation' (Klemm 1986: 34) [49] in the

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[48] For more details of this, see Hans Frei's *The Eclipse of Biblical Narative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics*. New Haven: Yale University, 1974.

[49] Klemm has further explained the task of this in his 'Introduction' to the *Hermeneutical Inquiry vol.1* (1986) ibid. That 'Modern Hermeneutics arose as a general theory of understanding and interpretation

age of modernity that made it difficult for the ordinary reader to get in. However, if biblical interpretation is to be dialogue and conversation between the scholarly reader with the 'Other' which includes the ordinary reader, then the language of the 'Other' is very important in this exercise. With reference to Africa, Lamin Sanneh's *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture* (1989) argues that 'The flowering of Christian activity in modern Africa has taken place in ground suitably worked by vernacular translation' (Sanneh 1989: 4).[50] Kwame Bediako's 'Introduction: African Christian Thought in Post-missionary Era (1997)' adopted Sanneh's concept of translatability and makes a point concerning the importance of language in biblical interpretation. Here Bediako's focus is on translation of the Bible into African languages by missionaries. Bediako argued that the translation of the Bible into African languages created a dialogue between missionary interpreters and African people. According to him,

> Whenever Western missionaries made the scriptures available to an African people in that people's own language, they weakened, by the same token, whatever Western bias might have characterised their presentation and prescription of the faith (Bediako 1997: 435).

In other words, 'when the missionaries or mission societies made the Bible available to an African people in that people's language, their grip on the gospel was loosened and so too their proprietary claim on Christianity' (West 1997: 107).[51] According to Bediako, translation made the Bible 'an independent yardstick by which to test, and sometimes to reject, what Western missionaries taught and practiced' which provided 'the basis for developing new, indigenous forms of Christianity' (Bediako 1994: 252).[52] This argument highlights the hermeneutical significance of language. Thus, to begin a hermeneutical process that seeks to be inclusive of the 'Other', there is the need to cross boundaries, breaking down the solidified language barrier between the biblical interpreter and the context within which he/she is engaged in biblical interpretation.

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within the religious context of translating meanings in the Bible and the theological tradition across the centuries into situations vastly different from those of the original hearers' (Klemm 1986: 3).

[50] Lamin Sanneh advanced the concept of 'translatability' with reference to Christianity's involvement in vernacular translations as a Christian virtue and argued that 'The historian is thus confronted with a signal fact about Christianity in the sense that its continuous translatability has left it as the only major world religion that is peripheral in the land of its origin' (Sanneh 1989: 4). Sanneh did his work with modern Africa as the main focus. For details of his concept of translatability, see his *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact On Culture* Maryknoll: Orbis, 1989.

[51] This appeared in Gerald West's article entitled 'On the Eve of African biblical Studies: Trajectories and Trends' In *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 99, 1997: 99-115.

This calls for a breaking out of the difficult language zone of the scholarly biblical interpretation to enter into the language zone which is accessible to both communicating partners.

Usage of resources from the socio-cultural context

The usage which is termed 'the dogmatism of the traditional context' is seen as responsible for'...the repressiveness of a power relationship which deforms the intersubjectivity of understanding as such and systematically distorts colloquial communication' (Habermas 1986: 314). This creates a situation where the scholarly reader serves as an agent of indoctrination by pushing the ideological and hermeneutical interest of the contexts from which they received their theological and exegetical orientation. The relationship between the scholarly reader and the ordinary reader is that of the dominant and the dominated. It is also very difficult to have biblical interpretation which is free from ideological biases. Thus, the way to solve this problem of power relations and ideological biases, is for the biblical interpreter to become

> aware of his or her own hidden preconceptions or anticipations during the conversation. This occurs through listening to what the text or the other person is saying about the subject matter and by allowing what is said to call one's preconceptions into question by criticising their appropriateness for this situation (Klemm 19986: 23).[53]

Towards dominance-free communication

Habermas has outlined the outworking of his hermeneutical theory by calling it 'a critically self-aware hermeneneutics'. He argued that

> A critically self-aware hermeneutics...is one which differentiates between insight and delusion, assimilates the metahermeneutical knowledge concerning the conditions which make systematically distorted communication possible. It links understanding to the principle of rational discourse, so that truth can be guaranteed only by that consensus which might be reached under idealised conditions to be found in unrestrained and dominance-free communication, and which could, in the course of time, be affirmed to exist (Habermas 1986: 314).

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[52] This appeared in Bediako's "Epilogue' The Impact of the Bible in Africa" In *On Their Way Rejoicing: The History and Role of the Bible in Africa* Ype Schaaf (ed.) ibid.

[53] For more details on the dealing with the usage of the resources in the ordinary people's context, see D.E. Klemm's 'Introduction : Hermeneutical Inquiry: Encounters with the Other' In *Hermeneutical Inquiry vol.1: The Interpretation of Texts* D.E. Klemm (ed.), Atlanta: Scholars, 1986: 1-51.

This is the ultimate goal that Habermas aims to achieve with his theory of competent communication. I must admit that the ideal situation, being called for by Habermas, that is, an entirely dominance-free communication, would be very difficult to attain. I would therefore aim at a communication which is closer to dominance-free communication by minimising the factors that entrench power relations between the dialogue partners and encourage the factors that promote effective dialogue or conversation among them.

I see that the most important aspect of this kind of hermeneutic is that of the plane of communication where the hermeneutical activity takes place. However, there can be two different ways of representing the plane of communication between participants undertaking hermeneutical activity. This could be illustrated as follows:

biblical text & its context

dominant/scholarly readers

dominated/ordinary readers

Context of ordinary & scholarly readers

Fig.1

biblical text & its context

dominant/scholarly readers

dominated/ordinary readers
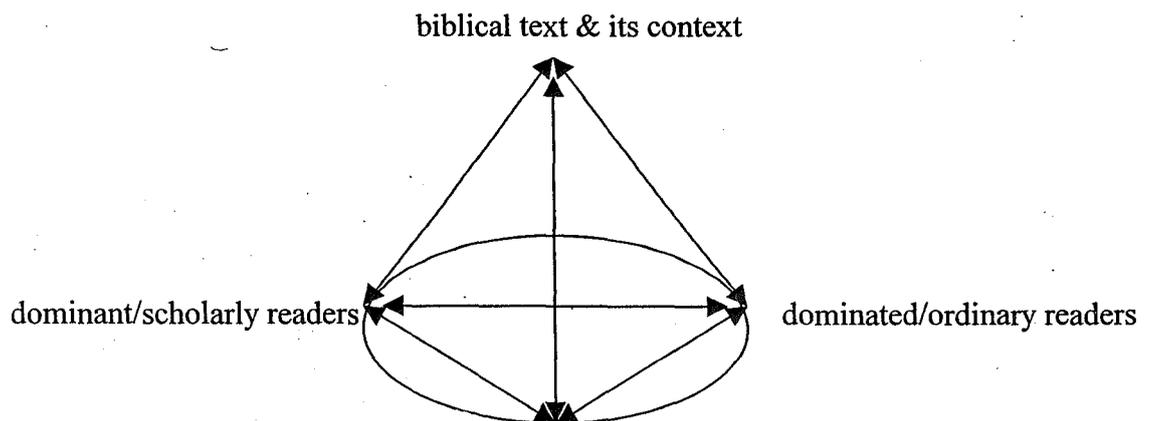
Context of ordinary & scholarly readers
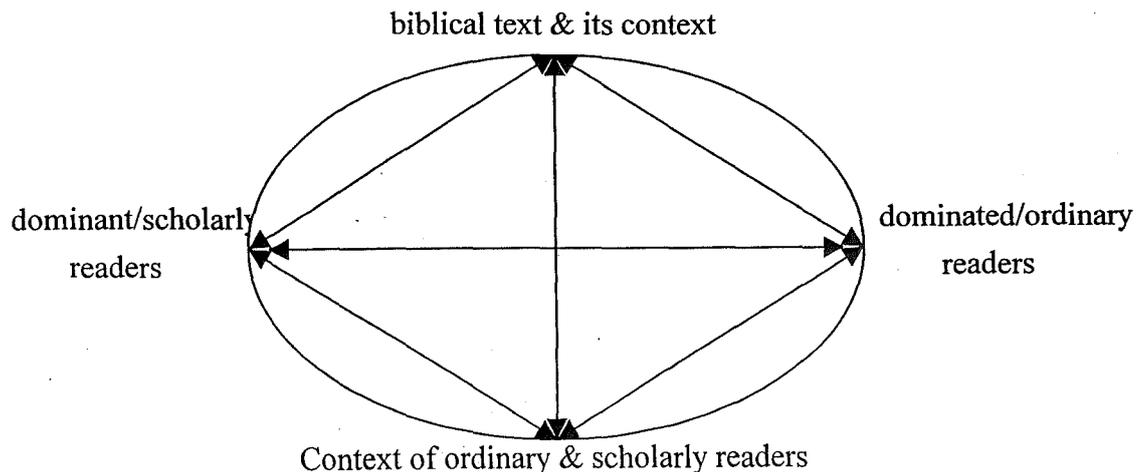
Fig. 2

In fig.1 above, you have a situation where the dominant and the dominated engage in sorting out their differences with respect to power relations before coming to the text. It emphasises the need for the levelling of the field and engaging in the interpretation of the texts together as 'equal partners'. The assumption here is that the text itself is a neutral resource which both the dominant and the dominated can come to after they have sorted out their differences and are ready to engage in a meaningful dialogue with each other (which is normally not the case as the text itself sometimes has biases of its own as they were also products of groups that consisted of dominant and dominated socio-cultural groups). This implies that it is not possible to sort out completely the differentials in power relations before engaging in a meaningful cooperative interpretative venture. What one can, at best, achieve is to open the communication lines between each other. In other words, it is important to create a community of discourse which would enable both sides to speak; that is those who are powerless to be heard by the powerful. This is therefore an attempt to establish 'a community of readers' which is nearer to being dominance-free through communicative action.

Fig.2 on the other hand, puts across a circle of readers with complex inter-relationships to each other and to biblical texts. In this diagram, the text itself is seen as one of the many participants or voices in the interpretative process. In the circle there are both the dominant and the dominated groups together with biblical texts on the same level. However, they both accept the authoritative relationship that the biblical text establishes with them which is different from the political power relations that exist among them. Thus, in the process of interpretation, a commonly accepted point of reference from the text may establish a plane of communication which is different from the political power relationship that they started from. This is because the texts themselves are multi-vocal voices in the reading process and not isolated from the community of readers. However, the texts can only become voices only if they are made to speak.

An example from recent African biblical interpretation may help to clarify the illustration in fig.2, of an approach which involves circular location of all the dialogue partners (text, dominant and dominated readers) in the interpretative process.

David Stewart Gillan's *Mayi buyi i Africa! : A grounded theology of Land Restitution in South Africa* (1996).[54] introduces what he calls 'relational hermeneutics' (Gillan 1996: 233). or 'hermeneutics on the ground' (Gillan 1996: 222) as the basis for discussions and dialogue by South African communities of the dominant and the

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[54] For details, see David Stewart Gillan' s *Mayi buye i Africa !*. Unpublished Phd. Thesis submitted to New College, University of Edinburgh, 1996.

dominated, blacks and the dominant Afrikaner whites who came together in committees to discuss their conflicts concerning land ownership.

However, he stated that for this type of hermeneutics to work, 'the challenge on the ground, then is to be intentional and proactive, making the inter-relationality work for the community and hopefully for all involved' (Gillan 1996: 223). One of the cases that Stewart cited in his work is that of the struggle of the Driefontein community in South Africa to resist forced removal under the apartheid regime in the 1980s. (*see* Gillan's case under appendix II).

The anticipated results of this reformulation are to act as the theoretical bases for the proposal of an agenda for the development of critical transformatory hermeneutical models through discussion and interchange with selected African socio-cultural contexts.

Fig.2 indicates a situation where various items are voices in the circle of conversation or dialogue partners. Hence what we have is 'an exchange of voices' (Klemm 1986: 30). Texts become multivocal voices. For instance, in a discussion on polygamy where all the multivocal voices in the Old Testament as well as the New Testament and the world-view and ethos came together with missionary heritage voices, Westernised/urbanised voices as well as non-urbanised/non-Westernised voices, theologian/non-theologian, men/women are also given equal chances, one would come closer to a dominance-free reading of the texts concerning polygamy.

However, one of the weaknesses of Habermas' theory and this approach in general is that he did not indicate the conditions that could make his competent communication achievable. Klemm has indicated that for competent communication to take place, 'good will must be between the speakers in order for dialogue to take place. Respect for the other provides the openness necessary for the other to take active part in the dialogue' (Klemm 1986: 30). Also, there must be trust and confidence in one another to do away with suspicion and inhibitions if this type of communication is to yield any meaningful results.

4.3. Concluding remarks

Reformulation of Habermas' hemeneutical theory

I am interested in the framework of Habermas' hermeneutical theory because of its emphasis on communicative action.

Firstly, the question that needs to be addressed is the role that technical competence plays in such a reading process where you have brought the scholarly reader together with the ordinary reader and you are striving to attain good conversation amongst them. The issue, that one has to come to terms with, is that good communication does not necessarily mean good reading of biblical texts. Much as one wants to deal with distortion in communication, one also has to deal with doing justice to the text which is also one of the voices or communication partners in the reading of process. Secondly, one has to do justice to the world-view and ethos of the community of readers which is also a reading partner in the reading. With respect to texts and communicative competence I would employ David Tracy's hermeneutics of 'retrieval and suspicion' which not only accepts plurality of texts and hermeneutical practices but also engages in what he calls 'critical conflict', which appeared in his *Plurality and Ambiguity: Hermeneutics, Religion, Hope* (1987). Tracy states that

> The strategies of both retrieval and suspicion, and often retrieval through suspicion, should also free religious persons and traditions to open themselves to other hermeneutics of critique and suspicion, whatever the source (Tracy 1987: 112).

Even though Tracy admits the complexity in employing the model of conversation for interpretative purposes, he argues that it still has something to offer interpreters by stating that

> There is, in every true manifestation, an intrinsic, that is dialogical, interaction between the object's disclosure and concealment and the subject's recognition. That interaction is conversation (Tracy 1987: 28).

Tracy further states that 'The attempt to understand remains an effort to interpret well. But to interpret as pluralistic, ambiguous, and important phenomena as religion is to enter into conflict' (Tracy 1987: 113) which is a kind of continuous dialogue and conversation and search for understanding that one cannot get out of. Tracy likens this

kind of conversation with a conversation with a classic by saying that 'Once the results of that conversation is communicated to others, it enters into another dialogue, in principle, with the whole community of competent readers' (Tracy 1987: 28).

This kind of conversation makes room for multivocal texts as well as multivocal contexts and methods which then highlight the need for technical competence.[55] Also, with respect to the definition of 'competence' in this respect, I would consider Gramsci's 'organic intellectual' who is socially located and engaged within the context where the conversation is taking place as the most competent person to play the role of the scholarly reader.[56] However, it seems so far we have given the scholarly reader so much prominence in the conversational process that if we do not balance it, we would soon end up with the one way traffic that we were trying to avoid. James Scott highlights the issue of the power relations between the scholarly reader and the ordinary reader which cannot be overlooked in a conversational reading process. Scott talks of the 'hidden transcript' and the 'public transcript' that comes into play whenever there is an attempt to foster communication between dominant and dominated groups.[57] According to Scott the role of the organic intellectual is to create a forum where subversive readings can take place as well as making it possible to bring out aspects of the hidden transcript into the public realm. This, then, entails a boundary crossing of the organic intellectual to engage in dialogue with the other dialogue partners who are not of the same social class and in some cases, ideological stance, as himself. (see West and Scott's comments under section 3.1.5).

In summary, the outcome of the reformulated depth hermeneutics of Habermas is firstly a number of voices in a multivocal 'Community of discourse'. This 'community of discourse' consists of texts, context of the texts, the ordinary readers, the context of ordinary readers and the scholarly reader, who gets involved in 'hermeneutical discourse analysis' (Tracy 1987: 65) together. The scholarly reader is an organic intellectual, socially located in the context of the ordinary readers, and has decided to be partially constituted to cross boundaries and read 'with' ordinary readers. The ordinary reader's world-view and ethos is the focus of the reading practice and he/she sees himself/herself as a dialogue partner in the communicative action. The anticipated result of this communication is a 'contextual and critical biblical interpretation by conversation' hermeneutical process. The anticipated product of this hermeneutical process is a

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[55] See David Tracy's *Plurality, and Ambiguity: Hermeneutics, Religion, Hope.* London: SCM, 1987 for more details.

[56] See Antonio Gramci's *Selected Prison Notes* . ibid. 1971, for more details.

[57] For more explanation on this see, James Scott's *Domination and the arts of resistance; hidden transcripts.* ibid. For more details.

<u>contextual-critical transformatory outcome</u> which would affect the subjectivities of all the dialogue partners and their constituencies in diverse ways. Thus, in this practice, any hermeneutical model can be employed. The only condition is that it must be done with reference to the world view and ethos of the context of the ordinary readers who are dialogue partners in the hermeneutical practice, one way or the other.

Re-definition of African forms of theology in dialogue with ordinary readers

In the previous chapters we looked at the relationship between Christianity and culture in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Germany. We concluded that there were various ways by which Christianity related to culture in the German context. Similarly, in Africa we saw that Christianity had to re-define itself in various ways with respect to culture. As we saw earlier in looking at the reconstruction of African theologies, there was the reconstruction of Christianity by theologians like Dickson who maintained that culture has to be superseded by Christianity. He therefore picked and used cultural concepts as vehicles for translating Christianity to Africans. There is also the views of African theologians like Ukpong who see the relationship between culture and Christianity in a dialectical way who advocate greater interaction between Christianity and African culture in developing African theology and the development of hermeneutical models.

The challenge to those involved in developing African theology using the dialectical approach is to ensure that they do not develop theology without critical reflection. Take for instance, the issue of healing, Umeagudosu for instance pointed to it in her article entitled 'The healing of the Gerasene demoniac from a specifically African perspective' (1994) and indicated that Catholic priests have opened deliverance centres but she did not go further to do critical reflection of it. It is therefore not enough to point to cultural readings without critical reflection. Dube's Semoya reading with the Batswana Independent women for instance had no evidence of critical reflection in the reading process. I also indicated this in my analysis of the usage of the Bible in West Africa were issues like healing, dealing with demonic attacks, childlesness and impotence are not critically reflected upon in the sermons that were preached in the Churches that the respondents from Madina, Jos, Mubi and Port Harcourt comes from. (*see* comments on survey findings under section 5.4).

The situation in Africa is made more complex by the current trends in what Gifford terms 'The 'Charismatic explosion' (Gifford 1997: 97) and the development of deliverance theology' (105) in the 1980s and the 1990s respectively in most urban cities in Africa. In Ghana, there is rapid growth of the Faith Gospel/deliverance type of

Churches which has most of its membership consisting of young educated urban elite. The leaders of these Churches show more awareness of Global trends. Even though most of them

> preached a Faith Gospel, which in the mid 1990s is being supplemented or overlaid by deliverance thinking, which although growing out of traditional conceptions is expressed in standard western Pentecostal idioms (Gifford 1997: 111).

Thus, if scholarly readers are going to reconstruct theology that is global and academic, what type of dialogue are they going to have with members of these faith Gospel/deliverance/Charismatic Churches with huge Churches and membership in the urban areas in Africa who more or less have taken the limelight from the African Instituted Churches in contemporary times in the West African contexts?

However, the question is, how is critical reflection to occur so as not to be seen as marginalising African culture in your reading practice? Furthermore, how can you reconstruct African theology without getting yourself into self-imposed apartheid by creating a theology which is seen only as applicable in an African context? In other words, how can biblical scholars draw on African tradition and at the same time maintain dialogue with the modern world in their interpretation of biblical concepts and texts?

In response to this question, I turned my attention to ordinary readings in selected parts of Africa and the West of Scotland. The focus unearths the kinds of communicative action that is going on between the text, the context of the text, the ordinary reader and the context or world view of the ordinary reader which is normally referred to as the context of interpretation and the scholarly reader. Some of the situations I look at involve evaluation of ordinary readers' reading with scholarly readers, and others who use the context of ordinary readers as the subject of their interpretation. In all the groups I look at, my focus is on the views of ordinary readers concerning the type of communicative action that is going on between them and the text, their own context and the context of the text. I also look at the types of ordinary readings that emerge out of their attempt at biblical interpretation with the objective of providing useful outlets for the usage of texts in their own contexts, the contexts in which the texts are used and the socio-cultural issues that influence their interpretative work. Also, I am interested in evaluating the kind of communicative action that exists between the scholarly readings and ordinary readings, especially with respect to reading practices that involve scholarly readers 'reading with' or in collaboration with ordinary readers (especially the

contextual Bible Studies in the Natal Province in South Africa and that of the Contextual Bible Study group in the West of Scotland). This evaluation should go a long way in bringing out views from ordinary readers which are often not heard in the academy and to also identify the 'distortions in communication' between scholarly readers and ordinary readers and make recommendations as to how those distortions could be dealt with to ensure effective collaborative hermeneutics. It is hoped that the recommendations that will evolve out of this research will generally contribute towards more effective reconstruction of African theology. It will also contribute towards African theology/ies which are free from the vestiges of colonial ideology. Lastly, the recommendations from this research will lead to a type of hermeneutical reflection which is freely open to dialogue in the African socio-cultural context.

Part II

Findings, Surveys, Reviews and Evaluation Reports and Analysis of Readings and Usage of the Bible Among Ordinary Readers

Chapter Five

5. Survey of Ordinary Readings of the Bible In Selected Areas In West Africa.

Introduction

The previous section of my thesis dealt with the various interpretative methods that are being used by hermeneuts in interpreting the Bible in Western and Eastern Africa. Reflection on these hermeneutical practices[58] led me to draw a few conclusions. Firstly, that the African biblical interpretative methods we have reviewed focus more on the communities receiving the Bible than on those that produced it. Secondly, that the hermeneutical models depend on the cultural contexts in which proponents situate their work and the way they relate them to the biblical text. Thirdly, the relationship between the scholarly reader and the ordinary reader is very important in developing hermeneutical models in Africa. One of the key observations from the previous chapter is that the task of the scholarly reader is not merely to inculturate the Gospel in an African context but also to reconstruct the Gospel in the complex contexts of ordinary readers (African Instituted Churches and others who are involved in developing their own readings) through collaborative hermeneutical approaches between scholarly readers and ordinary readers. Our attention in the next section of this thesis will be directed to the relationship between ordinary readers and scholarly readers, starting with this chapter.

The African theologians that we have discussed in the previous chapter identified and described ordinary readers and their modes of reading the Bible in Africa. This chapter

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[58] These hermeneutical practices are the Comparative, Evaluative and Inculturation hermeneutics which I dealt with in the previous section of my work.

will, however, focus on ordinary readers speaking for themselves by finding out their relationship to the Bible, the way they interpret biblical texts and concepts and some of the factors that influence their interpretation of biblical texts and concepts directly from them. This will be in the form of field survey among ordinary readers in selected parts of West Africa. This exercise will enable us to cross-check the perceptions that we have already gathered from scholarly readers (in previous chapters) with regard to the role ordinary readers are expected to play in biblical interpretation in Africa and the contribution they may make to it. Some important work has already been done in this field.

A very outstanding work directly done among ordinary readers is Harold Turner's *Profile Through Preaching: A Study of the Sermon Texts Used in a West African Independent Church* (1965)[59] which gives some hints concerning the usage of the Bible by ordinary readers in an African Instituted Church in West Africa. Turner set out to find out how the Church of the Lord Aladura, which is an African Independent Church, founded in Nigeria, with congregations in Ghana, Liberia and Sierra Leone uses the Bible. In undertaking this research Turner states that

> some eight thousand sermon texts were gathered, mostly from Sunday morning and evening services, as they had been recorded by the preacher. This represented preaching in many large and small churches, rural and urban, in all four countries, by all levels and kinds of ministers, and over all three decades of the Church's life (Turner 1965: 14).

The work of Turner involved the collection of ordinary readings in the form of sermons for the purpose of reconstructing forms of African theology. This he did by focusing on one of the major custodians of African theology, that is the Aladura Church, which is an African Instituted Church in West Africa.

With respect to the adequacy of the data collected, Turner stated that they 'have a comprehensive indication of the parts of the Bible which the ministry is reading and of the particular texts that appeal most strongly' (Turner 1965: 15). With respect to the research process, Turner states that 'To obtain the fullest value from such data, we

would need to compare it with a similar body of material from the older Churches in West Africa, or even the West' (Turner 1965: 15) which he did by having a "control group" of thirteen hundred texts secured from one of the largest and oldest Anglican congregations in Ibadan, selected in yearly groups at regular intervals over the same three decades' (Turner 1965: 15).[60] What he did with the data collected was to analyse the use of both the New Testament and the Old Testament, theological analysis of favourite texts and to draw some conclusions from such analysis. This research therefore gives me some background information of previous research concerning the use of the Bible by ordinary readers in West Africa, which includes Ghana and Nigeria, that I would be concentrating on in this section of my thesis. More recently, the Port Harcourt survey, carried out under the supervision of Justin Ukpong and Mark Anikpo in Nigeria, also carried out an elaborate research among ordinary readers in the Port Harcourt metropolis.

However, in contrast to Turner's strategy of collecting ordinary readings , the Port Harcourt Survey did not aim specifically at collecting readings of ordinary readers from a specific Church or group. It focused on collecting information concerning the factors that determine the hermeneutical options that ordinary readers take and the reasons why they opt for certain biblical concepts and texts and not others from several groups in a particular community. The Port Harcourt Survey also looked at some of the possible aids to biblical interpretation and the reconstruction of forms of African theology like proverbs and parables and the ways they can be employed as aids to biblical interpretation.

My field survey is specifically structured and planned on the same format as the Port Harcourt survey. In a sense, my survey is a continuation of the dialogical process started with ordinary readers in Port Harcourt. The critical reflection on the Glasgow findings with other discourse partners in Glasgow consisting both of African theologians from various parts of Africa and the University of Glasgow opened up other issues that

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[59] For details, see Harold Turner's *Profile Through Preaching: A Study of th Sermon Texts Used in a West African Independent Church.* London: Edinburgh house, 1965.

[60] Turner admitted the limitations of his 'control group' by saying that 'Unfortunately no such studies are known to us; we therefore had to be content with an admittedly most inadequate 'control group' (Turner 1965: 15).

needed to be clarified by going back to other parts of Africa for further research among ordinary readers to seek further clarification in discussion with them.

Thus my survey, is more or less an extension and testing of the Port Harcourt one[61].

Also, the rationale of the Port Harcourt survey was to find out how ordinary readers in Port Harcourt in Eastern Nigeria read the Bible through quantitative research among a sample groups of ordinary readers in the Port Harcourt metropolis in Eastern Nigeria. The Port Harcourt survey was the outcome of discussions between scholarly readers from Nigeria and Scotland in Glasgow in 1989 which subsequently led to the commissioning of this research which took place in Port Harcourt[62]. The rationale of that research is

> to provide insights for developing alternative scientific methodologies of biblical interpretation based on the African socio-cultural background and historical social experience as well as contemporary popular and scholarly approaches to the Bible in Africa, and to promote a specifically African contextual approach to the Bible at a scientific level (Port Harcourt report 1992: 1).

In order to achieve this objective, a research was designed, which

> involves research into popular uses of the Bible both literary and oral. [Which]...entails among other things, field work on popular oral interpretation of the Bible among mainline and African Instituted Churches. This also involves the collection and analysis of data on the use of the Bible by Churches in Africa (Port Harcourt report 1992: 1).

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[61] The Port Harcourt survey was presented at the Bible in African Project Consultation in 1994 in Glasgow . See introduction of thesis for more details.

[62] This discussions was held by the co-ordinators of The Bible in Africa Project which is a joint project between African biblical scholars and biblical scholars from the University of Glasgow. The project had three parts. 'Part 1 was to focus on 'Critical Review of the Socio-Cultural Basis of Current Methodology of Biblical Criticism' (Port Harcourt Focus Group Discussion Report 1992: 1) Part II - 'Contextual Biblical Interpretation in Africa' (1) and Part 111 was to identify 'Popular Uses of the Bible in Africa and in Scotland' (1). The Port Harcourt Survey is part of Part 111 mentioned above.

The Port Harcourt survey questionnaire was designed:

1. To determine people's knowledge of and attitude to the Bible.

2. To determine how people interpret and apply the Bible in their Churches, religious organisations, homes, offices, ceremonies and other aspects of life.

3. To determine any African cultural differences in the interpretation and use of the Bible in Nigerian Churches, religious associations and families.

4. To determine any aspects of the Bible which Africans in particular find difficult to understand and apply in their day to day lives, and also how they resolve the conflict.

5. To determine the differences in the interpretations and uses of the Bible which separate one Church from the another, (with particular reference to African Instituted Churches). (Port Harcourt Focus Group Discussions 1992: 2).

A structured interview questionnaire was developed. This structured questionnaire was arranged in five sections (A-E). Sections A-B dealt with background information of respondents and sections C-F dealt with: C. use of the Bible, D. interpretation of the Bible and; e. cultural influences. 'The purpose of the questionnaire was to collect from a study population data which will be amenable to coding and statistical verification' (Port Harcourt report 1992: 2).

My interest in using this particular survey is because of the issues it raised concerning the relationship between ordinary readers and the Bible when it was presented at the Glasgow consultation in 1994. It opened up a lot of questions related to inculturating the Gospel in Africa. The realization at the Glasgow meeting was that the relationship between the ordinary reader and the biblical texts and concepts needs more investigation. It appeared to challenge scholars' assumption about the need for inculturation and the 'theology of survival' (*see* comments on 'survival theology' under Introduction). This awareness which more or less re-echoes the concern of most African theologians (which we have mentioned in the earlier chapters) with respect to paying more attention to ordinary readers and learning from them is one of the reasons why I

find the Port Harcourt survey the most suitable material and format to use as my frame work for my survey.

Hence, my survey takes up the same themes, using the same questionnaire with some adaptations and additional questions. The only thing I did to the questionnaire was to re-arrange the sections by having section 1, covering the background of respondents, section 2, Biblical preferences, section 3, Diverse local interpretation, section 4, Influence of culture on interpretation, and section 5, Influence of context on interpretation. The purpose of this exercise is to check out the Port Harcourt questions to:

1. See how Representative their findings are with respect to other parts of Nigeria.

2. See how the Port Harcourt questions impinge on people's readings of the Bible by following up some of the general questions asked by asking specific supplementary ones in my questionnaire.

3. Compare the Port Harcourt (Nigeria) survey with another survey in Madina (Ghana) to see what commonalities and differences exist with respect to ordinary people's usage of the Bible in the West African sub-region and its implications for Africa as a whole.

The subsequent dimension which I added to the Port Harcourt survey was to probe more into what the survey tell us about the influences on popular readings of the Bible in West Africa. That is, firstly how the cosmological view of people affects their interpretation of the Bible.

Secondly, the extent to which popular African readings are influenced by earlier colonial view, openness to African culture (group consciousness and identity). Thirdly, the extent to which post-colonial, post-missionary factors continues to influence popular African readings. I decided to conduct these surveys in different areas in West Africa, extending the Port Harcourt survey so as to see what hints we could gather by doing the same survey with additional dimensions in different areas not only in Nigeria but also in

a selected area of Southern Ghana (Madina). I therefore selected two suburban areas in Northern Nigeria (Jos and Mubi to balance the Port Harcourt survey which is located in the eastern Part of Nigeria which consists mainly of urban Easterners. I also selected Madina in Ghana which is a multi-ethnic surburb of Accra in Southern Ghana which in a sense consists of different settlers from different parts of Ghana. This is aimed at getting views from a cross-section of the Ghanaian society (i.e. from northern and southern Ghana) to compare with the views from eastern and northern Nigeria. Madina therefore provided an additional dimension which is aimed at finding out what similarities and differences we can observe between the Port Harcourt findings and another West African group located outside Nigeria. (*see* comments on study design, under Appendix IV).

5.1. Data collection and analysis

A few points need to be made here concerning how I collected my data. One of the points that need to be made here is the issue of power relations. In contacting Churches for the survey, it was very difficult to get African Instituted Churches and Faith Gospel/deliverance/Charismatic Churches to participate in the survey in both Madina (Southern Ghana) and Jos and Mubi in Northern Nigeria. In Madina for instance, I contacted many AICs and deliverance Churches. I went in each case with a letter explaining the reason for my survey. In most cases, I was subjected to questioning to find out more about why I was engaging in such a research. The leaders of the Churches and groups I visited always wanted to be sure as to whether my interaction with them would enhance their power base or would undermine it. The Churches that I had much success or openings with were those that a prominent Church member knew me and gave verbal assurance to the leadership that allayed the fears and anxieties of those in authority. In cases where they have doubts, concerning my interests, permission was not granted for me to conduct the research in such a Church. Indeed, in some cases, they were aware that we had different interests and that we have different power bases. If they find away of manipulating the situation, for instance, by letting the Church members feel that they have an august visitor from the United Kingdom who is a

mainline theologian who they can gain popularity and influence from, then permission is given. I had opportunity in some cases to be guest preacher.

Another point that needs to be made is that, in the responses to my interviews and questionnaires, I felt that some of the answers given by the respondents were affected by their attempt to give me what they felt I was looking for, which in most cases are pietistic and official responses to my questions. This is because there was very little time to establish transparency and openness between me and the respondents. Furthermore, in most cases, the respondents who participated in my research were selected by the leadership of the selected congregations I worked with. This implies that devoted members of long-standing commitment to the traditions of these Churches were chosen by their leaders to participate in my research. These were mainly those who were well tutored in the official stance of their various congregations in most cases. I felt this would also affect the types of responses that I will receive from them. This is the reason why I cited cases from the respondents which included minority responses from the margins which might not be of statistical significance, but are representations of non-official views which point to new directions in the usage or readings of the Bible.

Another point is that concerning the focus group discussions. There were no AICs involved in that exercise. This is because, the AICs I contacted were reluctant to participate in a focus group exercise. This affected the kinds of questions that I asked and the way they were framed. Furthermore, even with the Churches that took part in the focus group discussions, I must say that there was always the attempt by some members to strive towards impressing me rather than coming out with their issues that I was keen to get to. Another flaw in the formation of the focus groups is that with respect to Northern Nigeria, where I used the leadership to determine what areas to focus on. It would have been better if I had collected views from ordinary Church members as most of the time the official concerns, issues and questions were the ones that the leadership is pre-occupied with, which are not necessarily the pre-occupation of ordinary people in their Churches (*see* comments on data collection, analysis, and background of participants under Appendix IV).

5.2. Main Findings

Significant percentages, comparison between the various groups and comments are presented under Appendix IV). Brief summaries of main findings and remarks are given below:

I. BIBLE READINGS PREFERED

5.2.1. Biblical Preferences of respondents

5.2.1.1. Percentages of respondents from the total sample population (1446)

Part of the Bible respondents read most and frequently use

Of the total sample of 1446 respondents, 77.2% read the New Testament most, while the remaining 22.8% read the Old Testament most. With particular reference to the New Testament, 48% of Ghanaian respondents mentioned that they read the Gospels more than other parts of the New Testament and 52% of Ghanaian respondents read other parts of the New Testament more than the gospels. By contrast, 80% of Nigerians mentioned that they read the Gospels more than other parts of the New Testament and 20% mentioned that they read other parts of the New Testament more than the Gospels.

Of those Ghanaians who read other parts of the New Testament more than the Gospels, 56.5% mentioned that they read the Epistles more than they read other parts and 43.5% of them mentioned that they read other parts of the New Testament more than they read the Epistles. On the other hand, of those Nigerians who read other parts of the New Testament more than the Gospels, 29.3% mentioned that they read the Epistles more than they read other parts of the New Testament and 70.7% of them mentioned that they read other parts of the New Testament more than they read the Epistles.

Favourite Gospel and/or Epistle texts selected by respondents (446)

Among Ghanaians the rank order of favourite Gospel texts was as follows: John 3:16 (32.7%), Matthew 6:33 (9.5%), Luke.4 (4.9%) and Mark 4 (1.0%) which means that the total percentage of gospel texts is 48.1 %. This compares with the rank order of John 3:16 (32.9%), Matthew 6:33 (37.9%), Luke 4 (7.1%) and Mark 4 (2.1%) among the Nigerian respondents which has a total of 80%.

Similarly, among the Ghanaians, the rank order of favoured Epistle was Rom 5:8 (10.8%), 1Cor.15 (5.9%), Phil.4:19 (12.1%), Eph.2:8 (3.9%) and others (23.9%) which means that 56.5% of all the Ghanaian participants favoured the epistles whereas, among their Nigerian counterparts, the order was Rom.5:8 (12.1%), 1Cor.15 (2.9%) and others (14.3%), with no mention of Phil.4:19 and Ephesians 2:8 which is only 29.3% in total.

Favourite text/passage/story from the entire Bible of respondents (446)

Analysis of the responses from 446 respondents, from Madina (Ghana), Jos and Mubi (Nigeria), but excluding those from Port Harcourt (Nigeria), showed that the rank order of their favourite text/passage/story from the entire Bible was John 3:16 (22.4%), Ps.121 (14.1%), Matt .6:33 (13.6%), Ps. 23 (11.4%), Others (11.2%), Phil.4:19 (5.8%), Rom. 5:8 (5.1%), Luke 4:16 (4.5%), Gen. 2:27 (3.6%), 1 Cor. 15: 24-25 (3.1%), Jer.29:11 (2.4%), Mk.4: 1-20 (1.3%) and Eph.4:8 (1.3%).

5.2.1.2. Representative Views of respondents

The Old Testament texts most frequently mentioned were Psalm 121, Psalm 23, Gen.1:27 and Jeremiah 29:11. The Old Testament quotations were rendered as follows: Psalm 121 *'assures me of God's protection and care from the enemy.'* Psalm 23 *'The Lord is my shepherd I shall lack nothing.'* Gen1:27 *'God the creator of the universe is still in control.'* Jeremiah 29:11 *'For God has a purpose and a plan for every person'* and *'Hope for the future'*.

The New Testament texts most frequently mentioned were Matthew 6:33, *'Seek first the kingdom of God and its righteousness and everything will be added to you'*, John 3:16 *'Man without God cannot make it in life'*, Mark 4:1-20, *'Jesus' parable of the farmer'*, Luke 4: 16-*19* *'Jesus preached with the power of the spirit to release us from bondage'*, Romans 5: 8, *'But God has shown us how much he loves us. It was while we were yet sinners that Christ died for us'*, Philippians 4:19, *'And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus'*, Ephesians 2: 8 *'For by grace are we saved and not by works'*, and 1 Cor 15: 24-25 *'Jesus will destroy all dominions and powers as they have all been put under his feet'*.

5.2.1.4. Concluding remarks

However, all the texts put together emphasize one thing, that is, the importance of life to the respondents. All the texts preferred have something to say about the creation, protection, maintenance or the sustenance of life. The preoccupation with issues related to life is closely related to the context from which the respondents come. The harsh economic realities in both Ghana and Nigeria cause church members to be concerned about their 'daily bread' and therefore pray for it. With many mouths to feed and very little or no income at all, most people turn to the 'promises' in the Bible to take them through each day. That is why Psalm 23 and Psalm 121 have high percentages among the texts that are preferred by the respondents.

The reliance on biblical texts to deal with daily economic pressures is not only a West African phenomenon. Zephania Kameeta of Namibia's readings of Psalm 23 and Psalm 121 in his book, *Why O Lord? Psalms and Sermons from Namibia* (1984) also shows a relationship between those texts and economic pressures in Namibia.

For instance, in Kameeta's reading of Psalm 23, he made the following remarks

> The Lord is my shepherd, I have everything I want....I know that your goodness and love will be with me all my life; And your liberating love will be my home as long as I live' (Kameeta 1984: 29).

Kameeta also makes the following remarks with regard to Psalm 121,

> I look up to the powerful of this world; will my help come from them, My help comes from the Lord ....He is on my side to protect me from all dangers. As I go away and come back to my home; in his strong hands I will be safe. With this assurance and faith I will live and die (Kameeta 1984: 44). [63]

In conclusion therefore, the preferred texts are those that respondents would want to rely on because of the relationship they feel exist between their socio-cultural, economic and political pressures in their daily lives and those texts. Whilst the Old Testament is seen as providing security, the New Testament is viewed as a tool for solving daily practical problems. Hence, my conclusion from the above mentioned findings is in agreement with Harold Turner's remarks concerning the Aladura church that he worked with in Nigeria. I agree with Turner that in opting for the New Testament, respondents have so far shown that their 'sights are set upon the nearer reaches of life where the present burdens lie, and where immediate blessings may be granted. This restricted apprehension is in full accord with its understanding and use of the Gospels and Epistles' (Turner 1965: 56).

5.2.2. Favourite Bible messages

5.2.2.1. Percentages from the total sample population (1446)

Respondents were next quizzed on their favourite Bible messages, sermons and addresses. The majority (42.9%) indicated that their favourite Bible message was the 'Love and Care of God', followed by 'Salvation' (28.4%). 11.5% favoured messages on 'Obedience', while 8.8% and 8.4% of respondents preferred messages on 'Sacrifice' and 'Humility', respectively.

5.2.2.2. Representative views from respondents

When asked why they preferred the above Bible messages, respondents replied with the following typical statements: 1. *'Man without God cannot make it in life'*, 2. *'God's love and mercy as a father'*, 3. *'Salvation plan' portraying the way to meaningful life,*

that is, "nkwa"', 4. *'Satan comes to kill and steal but Jesus gives us life in its fullness that is, "naano wala"'*, 5. *'Being holy and righteous before God'*, 6. *'The sacrifice of Christ which means we should also give our money and time to God'*, 7. *'The message that commands us to be humble and respectful to grown ups'*.

5.2.2.4. Concluding remarks

In conclusion, therefore, it seems the messages that respondents are interested in centre around:

1. Their craving for love and affection from God and others which is stated as 'the love of God' by respondents.

2. Divine release from spiritual and physical problems which is stated as 'salvation'.

3. The activities that ensure material prosperity and spiritual protection from evil forces, that is, spiritual exercises like prayers, fasting, worship which is normally associated with holiness and obedience to God's word, which is stated as 'obedience'.

4. The paying of tribute and allegiance to God as creator by sacrificing to God in the form of giving to the church for its work which is stated as 'sacrifice'

5. Lastly, being humble and respectful to the elders in your society which is stated as 'humility'.

Once again, the issue of life resurfaces in the biblical messages that respondents are interested in. This implies that, respondents are not only interested in reading biblical texts that are related to the vitality of life but also interested in receiving biblical messages that deal with life here and now.

5.2.3. Context of usage of the Bible

Respondents were questioned with particular reference to their daily usage of the Bible as well as occasional and/or special usage of the Bible. Data were analyzed and are here presented under these two categories.

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[63] For details, Zephania Kameeta's *Why O Lord? Psalms and Sermons from Namibia.* Geneva: WCC, 1984.

A. Daily usage of the Bible

5.2.3.1a. Percentages of the respondents (1446)

Most of the total number of respondents questioned indicated that they use the Bible daily for (1) prayer and devotion, (2) preaching, (3) expression of happiness/worshipping and singing, (4) protection, (5) moral guidance and swearing oaths. Table 5.1 summarises the incidence of usage for the above-mentioned purposes among the respondents.

Table 5.1: Daily usage of the Bible among the combined survey population

Usage	% Respondents
Prayers and devotion	67.2
Preaching	55.9
Happiness/worship/singing	44.5
Protection	43.5
Moral guidance and swearing of oaths	23.2

5.2.3.2a. Representative views

The representative views of the respondent are as follows: 1. *'Fasting and healing'*, 2. *'After morning devotion, we need our daily bread and there is no day I have lack'*, 3. *'During times of preaching in church'*, 4. *'When teaching others in church'*, 5. *'To celebrate, worship and fellowship with others'*, 6. *'For protection from devils'*, 7. *'To overcome all evil forces'*, 8. *'We use the Bible to correct our mistakes and for redirection in our involvement in activities both indoors and outdoors'*, 9. *'Forming code of Christian ethics'*, 10. *'To speak the truth, where there is a truth to be revealed. For example, swearing oaths'*.

5.2.3.3a. Concluding remarks

The usage of the Bible for daily prayers and devotion and for preaching came out as the majority views in this section. Firstly, the cases indicated by the respondents with

respect to daily prayers resemble the libation prayers in most West African communities that use prayers to solicit help from their deities. Secondly, the high percentage of the use of the Bible for preaching offers a good opportunity for a critical and closer reading of the Bible. If this opportunity is well utilized, it will lead to a critical reading of the text in response to the issues, questions, and concerns that the ordinary readers have in their respective contexts which they expect the Bible to respond to.

B. Special or Occasional Usage of the Bible

5.2.3.1b. Percentages of the respondents (446)

Table 5.2 shows the special instances and occasions for which respondents most commonly used the Bible. As can be seen, the most popular occasions were at ceremonies, in crisis and hard times, for deliverance, healing, and in times of material need.

Table 5.2:   Special/Occasional Usage of the Bible among respondents

Usage	% Respondents
Ceremonies	58.5
Crisis and hard times	45.3
Deliverance and healing	27.1
Material needs	22.6

5.2.3.2b. Representative views

Representative views of respondents were as follows: 1. *'For naming, wedding and funeral ceremonies'*, 2. *'To teach confirmation candidates'*, 3. *'In times of sorrow and death'*, 4. *'When I was burgled and when my son started associating with bad company'*, 5. *'In times when I have lost hope, was afraid and attacked by evil forces and needing deliverance and restoration'*, 6. *'When I was very ill and my child was also very ill'*, 7. *'When I needed money badly'*.

5.2.3.3b. Concluding remarks

In conclusion, it could be observed that the special usage of the Bible is either for ceremonial rites or for dealing with misfortunes or calamities. This means that the Bible is regarded as a special symbolic instrument for implementing the transitory stages of life as well as dealing with emergencies that occur in the lives of people as well as communities. Firstly, with respect to implementation of transitory stages in life, this is probably because of the socio-cultural influence of traditional rites of passage from one stage in life to the other (traditional rituals/ceremonies of out-dooring or naming, puberty, marriage and funerals) which has been adapted by Christians. Secondly, with respect to misfortunes and calamities, instead of consulting traditional deities in times of crisis like drought or epidemic outbreak, Christians will rather consult the Church for answers. This is because of the cultural world-view that occurrences in the physical realm have spiritual dimensions and therefore spiritual remedies ought to be sought for them.

In the next section we shall, therefore, see what kinds of expectations respondents have whenever, they go some where to hear or participate in Bible readings from other people either through sermons or prayers or teaching programs.

5.2.4. Expectations from Readings

5.2.4.1 Percentages from respondents (446)

As shown in Table 5.3, when questions about what benefits they expected to derive from their reading and use of the Bible, most respondents mentioned Spiritual Power, followed by Daily Spiritual Bread, Wisdom and direction for life, healing, and lastly, peace of mind.

Table 5.3. **Benefits expected by Respondents from reading the Bible**

Expected Benefit	% Respondents
Spiritual power	39.9
Daily bread/needs	21.3
Wisdom/direction	21.3
Healing	18.6
Peace	5.6

5.2.4.2. Representative views of respondents

Representative views of respondents are as follows: 1. *'Divine protection and good health, that is, no accident, no malaria or any other sickness'*, 2. *'For God to take absolute control over my family in the following areas: (a) shelter (b) food (c) long life'*, 4. *'I expected God to solve a very pressing financial problem for me'*, 5. *'Help my wife to bring forth a child since we have been married for thirteen years without an* issue', 6. *'To get a job'*, 7. *'Security of our family and healing of our sick son'*, 8. *'For my pregnant wife to deliver our child safely'*, 9. *'I expected God to restore peace in my family'*.

5.2.4.3. Concluding remarks

The expectations of the respondents are related to issues that will enhance both their physical and spiritual lives. Most of the respondents expect their needs that would contribute towards the enhancement of their practical lives now.

The next question addresses the actual benefits they gained from church. This is to enable us to compare the expectations of participants with their gains from readings in church.

5.2.5. Benefits or gains from Church/readings in church

5.2.5.1. Percentages from Total Respondents (446)

As summarized in Table 5.4, roughly equal numbers of respondents cited 'Hope and Salvation' and 'Spiritual Power' as the main benefits/gains they received from church/reading of the Bible. Other popular benefits/gains were 'Deeper Fellowship', 'Healing/met needs' and 'Moral Challenge'.

Table 5.4.   Actual benefits/gains received by respondents from Church/readings

Actual Benefit/Gain	% Respondents
Hope & salvation	40.1
Spiritual power	38.1
Deeper fellowship	28.7
Healing/needs met	16.1
Morality challenged	15.5

5.2.5.2. Representative views from Respondents

The representative views from respondents are as follows: 1. 'That all is not yet lost and had new ray of hope in life as the preacher emphasized that the Bible gives preservation and security', according to a respondent, whose expectation was that of getting a job and had not yet got one but was hopeful that God would save him from that situation to enable him enjoy a more secure and good life. 2. 'Hope for a prosperous and successful home is attained through love and obedience for each other in the home', by respondent, whose expectation was to receive God's protection for his family. 3. 'God's protection and healing', 4. 'Got spiritually healed' (even though his expectation was to get a job). 5. 'Jesus over-powered Satan'. 6. 'Revival and encouragement from the Lord'. 7. 'Cleanness and holiness'. 8. 'Mutual fellowship and caring for one another as women since it was the women fellowship day in my church', according to a respondent whose

expectation in going to church was for the security of her family and the healing of her sick son. 9. 'I gained from a sermon which said, *"Denominational differences weaken Christian universal unity as there are no denominations in the kingdom of God"'*, by a respondent whose expectation was 'to give my wife an issue after we have been married for 13 years without an issue or child'.

5.2.5.3. Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, in the West African context, that we are dealing with, there is a need to think of ways of gathering information that is related to the ordinary people who the sermons are meant to benefit by being aware of their needs, concerns, fears and expectations rather than using Western stereotype lectionaries which at times do not inspire critical engagement with the biblical text and the context of the ordinary reader of the biblical text. Most of the expectations expressed are related to the socio-economic and cultural concerns and issues that the ordinary West African reader is faced with. However, when you take a look at the readings that they hear regularly at Church, it seems most of the readings are pietistic and not directly related to the issues that the hearers are expecting. This situation therefore does not ensure a critical reflection on the issues that ordinary readers are faced with. This is necessary as it seems that the demands of the respondents give the impression that all that the Bible is to be used for is to satisfy their needs and not to sometimes challenge the basis of their demands. This attitude even pervades special deliverance, healing and revival services that are specifically held to address these issues. This is in agreement with the remarks made by Prof. John Pobee at the Glasgow consultation of the Bible in Africa project concerning pietism that:".... our inherited legacy must be trained to our needs. The 'critical' element is non-negotiable, for the word of God, as *logos,* must contain the element of rationality" (Minutes of Glasgow consultation: 1994: 13).

II. DIVERSITY IN INTERPRETATION

5.2.6. Local and Diverse Interpretations

Respondents were questioned with particular reference to (i) the language in which they read and understood the Bible best, (ii) their ability to identify biblical concepts and their parallels in their own cultural context. Data were analysed and are here presented under these two categories.

A. Language of biblical understanding

5.2.6.1a. Percentages from Respondents (446)

60.1% of the respondents from the entire survey population indicated that they read and understand the Bible in their mother tongue/local language better than in the English language. 39.9% read and understand the Bible better in English language. 62.3% of the 306 respondents of Madina read and understand the Bible in their mother tongue/local language whilst 37.6% read and understand the Bible better in English language. This compares with 55.0% of the 140 respondents of Jos/Mubi who read and understand the Bible better in their mother tongue/local language and 45.0% who read and understand the Bible better in the English language.

5.2.6.2a. Representative Views

With respect to mother tongue/local language, the following are the representative views of the respondents: *'Being my mother tongue, it enhances understanding for its clarity'*; *'Because Hausa is a common or a street language for easy communication'*.[64] With respect to the English language, the following are the representative views of respondents: *'Because Bible study and preaching is done in English language in my Church'*; *'Because I cannot read my mother-tongue or any local language'*.

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[64] *Hausa* is a common local language spoken in large parts of the Northern belts of both Nigeria and Ghana in West Africa.

5.2.6.3a.   Concluding Remarks

Language is regarded by respondents as a vehicle for communicating biblical interpretation. This means that for ordinary readers to benefit effectively from what they read or what is read and interpreted to them, it must be in the language they are conversant with and understand most. This is why for instance, in response to the question concerning why there are different interpretations of the Bible today, one respondent stated that the 'main reason is to let every body understand the Bible in his or her language'. This confirms the feeling of the respondents that their most effective medium through which they understand the Bible is their mother tongue.

B.   Identification of selected biblical concepts with parallels in cultural context

5.2.6.1b.   Percentages from Respondents (446)

Table 5.5 gives a summary of the common biblical concepts with which respondents could easily identify parallels in their cultural context. It is interesting to note that in over two-thirds of the concepts explored, over 50% of the respondents could easily identify cultural parallels

Table 5.5.   Respondents' identification of Biblical concepts with cultural parallels

Concept	% Respondents
Spirits in general	73.3
Kingship	68.8
Priesthood	65.4
Life after death	62.6
Spirit possession	56.7
Prophecy	51.6
Holy Spirit	32.1
Resurrection	29.1
Son of God	22.6

5.2.6.2b. Representative Views

Representative views with respect to spirits is as follows: *'Spirits that inhabit mountains, rivers, trees'*; *'Spirits that posses mediums and ancestral spirits'*; *'Spirits that inhabit witches and wizard';* *''Water spirits' that inhabit lakes, lagoons and the sea, like 'Mamiwata'*; *'Spirits that cause madness and epilepsy'*. With respect to kingship: The *'Omanhene' 'Ashantihene', 'Nene', 'mantsemei'* which are the local rulers or chiefs of the Ashanti, Adangme and Ga people of Southern Ghana were mentioned by the Madina respondents and the *'Lamido'* of Adamawa was also mentioned by respondents from Northern Nigeria. With respect to priesthood the following were identified: Priests and priestesses at local shrine named included the following: *'Okomfo'*, *'wulomo'* and *'wontsemei'* by respondents of Ghana. *'During rituals or offering of sacrifices there is always 'middleman' who always acts on behalf of the community who is a priest'*. With respect to life after death, respondents stated that people in their *localities 'believe in life after death and that is why a person is buried with a handkerchief and money to buy water on his/her journey to the land of the dead'*[65]. Some respondents also compared life after death to reincarnation and therefore stated that, *'We believe in a form of reincarnation as we believe you can be reborn into your extended family again'*.

With respect to prophets/prophetesses, the Ghanaian respondents identified them with *'odeyefo'*, *'gbaloi'* which means revealers, who function, (according to one respondent) by *'telling people what would happen to them and what they should do about it'*. With respect to Nigeria one respondent stated that, *'In Nigeria, there are prophets who are seers in every clan'*. *They are those who prophecy what will come to the people and what they should do in response to it'*. Another respondent also stated that *'prophets are part of the spiritual figures of the community that both provide guidance for both present and future life endeavours'*. With respect to spirit possession the following were identified by respondents: *'spirits of the dead that come to possess people to reveal the cause of their death'*, *'spirits of ancestors do possess members of the family'*, *'Fetish priests/tesses, mediums which are related to various shrines which come to possess people who then are able to divine people's future'*, *'spirits of demons do possess some*

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[65] The Akan of respondents of Ghana called it *'asamando'* and the Ga respondents of Ghana called it *'gbohiiadzen'* which literally means, ' the land of the dead'.

people which some times causes madness and epilepsy', 'there are spirits of witches and wizards that kill innocent people'. Very few people had any local parallels that they identified with the concept of the Son of God. A few Ghanaian respondents mentioned traditional myths that talk of the first born Son of God, which were *'Nyankopon ba okotoko', 'Nyonmo bi Tete'* which literally means the first created being by God. Some Nigerian respondents identified God with the lesser gods whilst others identified God with prophets. The Holy Spirit who was identified with *'samanpa'* (Akan of Ghana's term for good ghost) that almost acts as a guardian angel or *'hum hum pa' or good spirits that give support and assistance to people who call upon them when they have problems'.*

5.2.6.3b.   Concluding Remarks

Contrary to the concluding remarks by the Port Harcourt survey that

> it is obvious from the responses of respondents...that...African parallels to existing biblical images are too scanty, and in many cases where they exist, they are a bit farfetched (Port Harcourt Report 1994: 11),

the Madina and Jos/Mubi survey showed that respondents saw clear parallels between biblical and traditional African concepts like spirits, kingship, priesthood, life after death, spirit possession and prophecy. However, they found few parallels for biblical concepts like Holy Spirit, son of God and resurrection while some of their ethnic parallels mentioned by both the Madina and Jos/Mubi respondents were farfetched.

5.2.7. Reasons for diverse interpretations of the Bible today

5.2.7.1. Percentages of Respondents (1446)

when asked why there are such diverse interpretations of biblical texts today, respondents replied that this was due, among other things, to selfishness (53.4%), cultural differences (409.7%) and lack of understanding (39.3%)

<u>5.2.7.2.</u>   <u>Representative Views</u>

The representative views of respondents were as follows: 1. *'People are selfish, as they want more people in their churches so they adopt different interpretations of the Bible'*; 2. *'The love of money, greed and selfishness'*; 3. *'The main reason is to get every one to understand the Bible in his or her own language'*; 4. *'We are all coming from different places and ethnic backgrounds. For instance, I could see God seated on the throne as I could see myself sitting on the queen mother's throne in my town in Agona'*; 5. *'It is lack of knowledge, that is, lack of understanding of the Bible that has caused the different interpretations of the Bible'*.

<u>5.2.7.3.</u>   <u>Concluding Remarks</u>

It is very interesting that selfishness and greed is regarded as one of the foremost reasons for different interpretations of the Bible by the respondents. The reasons given for this answer is that of the struggle for membership and the love of money. This therefore raises questions as to whether the churches themselves are involved in the struggle for survival. Thus, 'selfishness and materialism that pervade the use or interpretation of the Bible in contemporary society are here admitted by most of the respondents' (Port Harcourt Report 1994: 9). The second reason given for diverse interpretation is that of cultural differences. Diverse languages and cultural backgrounds were cited as important factors that contribute to this state of affairs. The example by a respondent of seating on the queen mother's throne is given as a key to interpreting Christian leadership in her context. This indicates the extent to which cultural conditioning can directly or indirectly influence biblical interpretation.

5.2.8. Reasons for moving from one church to another

<u>5.2.8.1. Percentages of Respondents (1446)</u>

Of the 1446 respondents in the survey, as high as 56.8% said that they had moved from one church to the other, whilst the remaining 43.2% had not moved. The reasons and factors behind this phenomenon were then explored.

5.2.8.2. Representative Views

Representative reasons given by respondents for moving from one church to another included the following: 1. *'Lack of spiritual means of assisting members with their problems'*; 2. *'Spiritual healing can be performed for the sick'* (in his present church); 3. *'Bible made relevant to everyday life'*; 4. *'Visions can be seen in present church'*; 5. *'Hiding prophesy from members in previous church'*; 6. *'Baptism by immersion and not sprinkling'*; 7. *'Infant dedication instead of baptism in my present church'*. 8. *'Speaking in tongues and Holy Spirit baptism is not practiced in my previous church'*.

5.2.8.3. Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, one can observe that the reasons for people moving from one church to the other are more related to social, religious, economic and cultural issues rather than to doctrinal issues. Also, the area of doctrinal dissatisfaction of respondents is related to the mode of performing certain rituals and the realm of spirit possession and operation in the church. Examples of these mentioned by respondents were baptism of infants and baptism of the Holy Spirit.

A few conclusions can be drawn from the above mentioned findings. Firstly, they would like the Church to deal with their economic issues that are more related to physical and material needs like unemployment and security of jobs which they feel their previous churches were not dealing with. This is therefore related to material or physical survival.

Secondly, the next category of reasons are related to obtaining spiritual help in the areas of baptism of infants, baptism of the spirit, speaking in tongues, visions and spiritual healing. This is therefore related to people leaving their churches because they feel they need for spiritual survival which their previous churches were not adequately providing to them.

They are not interested in inculturating the Gospel by re-locating it merely within their traditional cultural heritage. They are more interested in reconstructing or recreating it to

respond to their socio-cultural needs. This means that their missionary heritage for instance, is not to be overlooked despite its weaknesses. There is also the additional dimension of the influx of right wing Evangelicals/Pentecostal and Charismatic movements from North America that takes advantage of the search for spiritual security and survival which commands a large following in Africa. These new missions also affect biblical interpretation as they also undermine traditional cultural practices because of their anti-traditional cultural emphasis.

III CULTURE AND BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

5.2.9. Influence of ethnicity on biblical interpretation

5.2.9.1.   Percentages of Respondent (446)

When questioned about the possible influence of their ethnic background on interpretation of Biblical texts, 34.5% of the 446 respondents replied in the affirmative, 50.9% replied in the negative, while the remaining 14.6% were not certain.

When asked why they thought that their ethnic background influenced their biblical interpretation, 24.5% of the 'Yes' respondents replied that this was because (i) language/ and culture are interpretative vehicles (4.8%), and (ii) ethnicity is similar to biblical world view (19.7%), whereas the remaining 65.5% did not consider these factors applicable.

On the other hand, 65.5% of the 'No' respondents said that ethnic background should not influence biblical interpretation, either because the Bible is transcultural/universal (38.1%) or that ethnicity can corrupt or contradict interpretation (27.4%).

5.2.9.2.   Representative views

Representative views is as follows: 1. *The Bible is a universal book and its interpretation should not be influenced by one's ethnic background*'; 2. *'You cannot use your culture to interpret the Bible. It is the word of God. You can use your culture to*

influence some one's culture and not the Bible'; 3. *'Familiarity with ethnic background is the vehicle for real mental processing of information'*; 4. *'Biblical interpretation by non-theologians is made through cultural screens instead of biblical backgrounds'*; 5. *'There are some true stories in my native language that reflect that of the Bible'*; 6. *'Ethnic influence is what we use to make sense of the Bible and transport it to the things we do for God. For instance, I see my place sitting on the seat of God as prophetess of God in my Church as parallel to my sitting on the queen mother's throne'.*[66]

5.2.9.3.   Concluding remarks

The response to this question indicates the kind of identity crisis that the respondents in both Madina and Jos/Mubi are facing. That is, with regard to the part their ethnicity ought to play in the reformulation of Christianity in their respective contexts. This is evident in the response given by the 'no' respondents and the 'don't know' respondents.[67] This is an indication of the wider problem concerning cultural identity and biblical interpretation in a non-Western context.

The prevailing situation of the Church in Africa is very complex. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, in the post-missionary era you still have the establishment of new missions by right wing evangelical /Pentecostal and Charismatic groups mainly from North America which introduces new ways of under-mining traditional culture and also employ new ways in reading the Bible that is anti-cultural.

5.2.10. Influence of experiences and exposures on biblical interpretation

5.2.10.1.   Percentages of Respondents (446)

When asked whether their experiences and exposures influenced their interpretation of Biblical texts, 57.6% of the 446 (Madina & Jos/Mubi) respondents replied in the affirmative, 32.5% replied in the negative, while the remaining 9.9% were not sure.

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[66] The respondent who gave this answer is heir to the queen mother's throne in her town in the Agona area in Southern Ghana

[67] Looking at the 'no' respondents (50.9%) and the 'don't know' respondents (14.6%), one realises that a significant percentage of respondents are suspicious of ethnic influences on biblical interpretation or are not sure whether it ought to be allowed to influence interpretation.

32.7% of the 'Yes' respondents considered their experiences and exposures as the basis for biblical interpretation, and another 24.9% were certain that experiences and exposures do transform and reform interpretation.

On the other hand, 42.4% of the 'No' respondents said that personal experiences and exposures should not be allowed to influence biblical interpretation because they are imperfect human limitations.

5.2.10.2. Representative Views

Representative views of respondents were as follows: 1. *'Life experiences relating to growth through adulthood, marriage, parenting challenge interpretation principles'*; 2. *'My experiences build a perception and world view which often consciously or unconsciously process other information through it'*.

5.2.10.3. Concluding Remarks

The effect of experiences and exposures on biblical interpretation calls for a definition of culture that includes not only ethnic heritage but also experiences and exposures of people. This is because even though more respondents indicated that ethnicity should not influence biblical interpretation, the majority of them indicated that their experiences and exposures influenced their interpretation of the Bible. And since one's cultural context is dynamic and is all-inclusive of both ethnic traditions and beliefs as well as the experiences and exposures that one undergoes in one's cultural context, they must all be taken into consideration in the definition and description of culture.

IV CONTEXT AND BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

5.2.11. Influence of context on biblical interpretation of respondents

With respect to the influence of context on biblical interpretation, the Madina and Jos/Mubi respondents were questioned about the views on (i) polygamy, (ii) women

covering their hair in church, (iii) democratic practices in the Church, (iv) Divine healing and The Lord's Supper, (v) Jewish and European influence of the Bible, and (vi) Parables and Proverbs. Data were analysed and only the salient points are presented here.

A. Polygamy

5.2.11.1a. Percentages of Respondents (1446)

When asked whether polygamy should be allowed by the Church, 17.0% of the 446 (Madina & Jos/Mubi) respondents replied in the affirmative, 81.1% replied in the negative, while the remaining 1.9% were not certain.

Among the reasons given by the 'Yes' respondents, 8.4% of them indicated that polygamy was practiced in Old Testament; 8.6% said polygamy is not a sinful practice in their culture exposures and the remaining 83.0% did not find the above-mentioned reasons tangible for polygamy to be accepted by the Church.

On the other hand, 62.2% of the 'No' respondents said that polygamy is not scriptural, 20.8% indicated that polygamy must not be allowed by the Church because it generates family problems and the remaining 17.0% did not find the above-mentioned reasons for the non acceptance of polygamy acceptable.

5.2.11.2a. Representative views of respondents

The representative views of the respondents is as follows: '1.*In the beginning God created Adam and Eve and not Adam and Esther and Bernice*'. 2. '*Polygamy is not scriptural*'; 3. '*Polygamy brings family problems*', 4. '*Practiced in the Old Testament*', 5. '*Not sinful in my culture*', 6. '*If he/she is already married into a polygamous marriage before becoming a Christian he/she should be accepted*' 7. ' *In monogamy the wife will do all sorts of things to the husband knowing fully well that he will not marry an additional woman*', *Some polygamous families are more peaceful and loving than monogamy*' 8. '*My father got married to many wives and they all lived peacefully, but*

the European background which the Bible teaches stress one man one wife which gives problems to Christian men'.

5.2.11.3a.   Concluding Remarks

With respect to the issue of polygamy, even though the majority of the respondents responded in the affirmative, the reasons given by the 'No' respondents are very interesting. The question here is whether the 'Yes' respondents were not giving me the 'official transcript', which is the official (denominational line) with respect to polygamy which they think I want to hear, whilst the 'No' respondents were rather giving me the 'hidden transcript' of the participants from which new readings can be generated. Furthermore, one notices the influence of the missionary heritage on most of the respondents and not their cultural beliefs and practices. Gerald West has observed that even with Bible study groups when ever questions are put to ordinary readers concerning issues like polygamy, 'the first response is often the "missionary response" or the dogmatically correct "response" (West: 1995b: 66).

B.   *Women covering their hair during religious worship*

5.2.11.1b   Percentages of Respondents (1446)

When questioned whether women out to cover their hair during religious worship, 74.3% of the 1446 (Port Harcourt, Madina & Jos/Mubi) respondents replied in the affirmative, 21.0% replied in the negative, while the remaining 4.7% were neutral.

43.9% of the 'Yes' respondents indicated that women covering their hair during religious worship is a biblical tradition that must be adhered to whilst 30.4% said that it was a mark of respect for God/husband and the remaining 25.7% were not sure of the reasons given for women covering their hair during religious worship.

However, 25.7% of the 'No' respondents indicated that hair is covering is an African tradition being imposed on women in the Church and therefore not biblical and the

remaining 74.3% were not certain of the reason why hair covering must not be compulsory for women during religious worship.

5.2.11.2b   Representative views

1. '*Women do not treat their hair like men. If they do not cover it during worship it means disobedience to God and husband*' 2. '*1Cor.11:15 says the hair is given to the woman as a covering not scarf or duku*'[68] 3. '*God looks at the heart and not the outward appearance*'. 4. '*Unscriptural and traditional*'.

5.2.11.3b   Concluding remarks

The issue of head covering was also picked up in the South African evaluation of the ISB's work among its groups in Amawoti which I have dealt with in my survey in South Africa. However, in contrast to the South African context, even though the issue is still concerned with traditional rules made for women to appear with head covered and the ISB's teaching portrays it as oppressive and therefore tries to liberate the South African women through Contextual Bible Study from it, in the West African context, it seems, the traditional view is being enforced by the employment of selective reading and interpretation of biblical texts. The only opposition one gets is from the evangelical and charismatic young men and women who are not having feminist views but purely having Westernised anti-cultural views which is brought to bear on the Bible to free them from the rules of hair covering that they term as unscriptural and traditional. However, since most respondents are males, it is not surprising that there is an overwhelming majority of respondents who indicated that women should cover their hair during religious worship in both Nigeria and Ghana.

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[68] *Duku* is the traditional head gear that Ghanaian women are expected to wear in public.

C. Democratic practices and biblical interpretation

5.2.11.1c.   Percentages of respondents (446)

When asked to mention the biblical basis for democratic practices in societies, among others, 41.7% of the 446 (Madina & Jos/Mubi) respndents indicated that the Old .Testament. proof of God's interest in kingship, whilst 27.8% of the respondents indicated that the casting of lots in the New Testament was an example of the Bible's interest in democratic practice and the 30.5% participants left indicated that they had no views on democracy.

5.2.11.2c.   Representative views

1. '*The Bible supports democracy because it is God who appoints kings*', 2.' *No view on democracy*', 3. *Democractic elections are neither biblical nor not biblical. It just developed through human institution. However, who ever wins such an election is considered as appointed by God, based on the Bible's teaching of the sovereignty of God and that all authority is from God*'. 4. '*Casting of lots in Acts*'.

5.2.11.3c   Concluding remarks

Participants answering this question were not concerned about modern democratic means of electing leaders but rather traditional methods and their interest was more of participating in the choice of leaders.

Another issue that comes out of this response is whether one can deduce from this finding that there is limited political awareness of the respondents with respect to their roles in democratic exercises in their respective contexts.

D. Biblical basis for healing and the Lord's Supper

5.2.11.1d.   Percentages of respondents (1446)

When asked to whether there is any biblical basis for divine healing and the Lord's Supper 82.6% of the 1446 respondents indicated that there is strong biblical basis for the former and 98.2% indicated that there is strong biblical basis for the latter.

5.2.11.2d   Representative views

Representative views with respect to healing were as follows: 1. *'Healing is God's provision for the church as stated in James 5:14-15'* 2. *'It is part of the example of Jesus for us'* 3.*' No clear basis from Bible'*

Representative views with respect to Holy Communion were as follows: 1. *'It is part of the tradition of the church as stated in 1Cor.11'* 2. *'It is part of the demonstration of unity and oneness as Jesus showed us by eating with Zaccheus'* 3. *'Not sure of biblical basis'*

5.2.11.3d.   Concluding Remarks

With respect to divine healing, when respondents were asked whether there is any biblical basis for healing, most respondents responded that there is strong biblical basis for it. Majority of the respondents backed their stance with James 5:14 -15, followed by those who said that healing is part of following the example of Jesus in the Gospels. The world view concerning religious activities of prophets/prophetesses and priest/esses which is geared towards the well-being of people in their community is being implied here as the Church is also expected to cater for both the spiritual and physical well being of its members and others in their communities. Also, with reference to the Lord's Supper, most respondents indicated that it is part of the tradition of the church. This is followed by those who are of the view that it is a meal that emphasises oneness and unity of sharing Christ's love with others. Hence, one respondent says, the Lord's Supper is to 'Show brotherly love just as Jesus ate with Zaccheus'. In some churches today,

there is the tension between the conception of the Lord's Supper as a commandment which stems from the church's tradition, whilst others feel that it is a fellowship meal that indicates love and unity with one another.

E. Jewish and European influence of the Bible

5.2.11. 1e. Percentages of respondents (1446)

When asked whether the Bible has Jewish and European influences or not 21.6% of the 1446 (Port Harcourt, Madina & Jos/Mubi) respondents replied in the affirmative, 73.0% replied in the negative, while the remaining 5.4% were not sure.

Among the reasons given by the 'Yes' respondents, 18.2% of them said that the Bible has Jewish/European symbols which are strange and alien to them and the rest of the Yes respondents are not sure whether the reasons given above holds for the Jewish/ European influence on the Bible.

On the other hand, 54.0% of the 'No' respondents were of the view that the Bible is universal, 27.8% indicated that they identify with Jewish culture in the Bible and the remaining 18.2% of the respondents stated that they were not sure of the reasons given for the Jewish or European influence of the Bible.

5.2.11. 2e. Representative views

The representative views of the participants is as follows: 1. *'Most of the texts in the Bible are closer to my culture and can be applied to it. For example the idea of the mercy ground and the removal of sandals in church as we remove our sandals when entering a king's room'* 2. *'The Jews are a different race, have cultural practices that are different from those of Africa because the Jews have different traditions'* 3. *'The Bible is universal'* 4. *'I identify with Jewish symbols and practices because they are closer to my culture'*. 5. *'Some of the symbols and customs in the Bible are strange and alien to me'*.

5.2.11. 3e   Concluding remarks

The identification of certain Old Testament concepts with cultural analogues is invoked here, particularly the African Independent Churches. Also, the conception of scripture as a transcultural document for all people is behind the responses that emphasises the universality of scripture. Some conclusions can be drawn from these findings. There were widely varying views. Firstly, African Instituted Churches will readily relate to the Old Testament in developing new forms of African Christianity which are pro-traditional culture. Secondly, evangelical, Pentecostal Christians who are also involved in the same exercise are rather anti-culture and will like to appeal to the universality of scripture and are not so keen on identifying with Old Testament or Jewish concepts (Madina). Thirdly, the respondents of Mubi/Jos also identify with the Old Testament not mainly because of its cultural analogues but because of their interest in the legalistic elements of the Bible. This illustrates the different and varied issues that ordinary readers consider in their choice and usage of biblical texts and biblical concepts. This implies that the scholarly reader needs to read in collaboration with the ordinary reader who is more involved in direct encounters with these issues in the African contexts, on a daily basis in different ways, in different contexts if he/she (scholarly reader) is interested in a more effective biblical interpretation. This is because of the fact that scholarly readers are most of the time detached from some of the realities of the African contexts. The scholarly reader needs to be aware of the different influences that affect ordinary readers in their use of the Bible. The scholarly reader needs to be aware of who he/she is dealing, that is, whether he/she is dealing with AICs, Evangelical/Pentecostal /Charismatics or dealing with Protestants or Catholics. Also, the scholarly readers needs to be informed both by traditional culture as well as modern socio-economic presures that the ordinary readers is struggling to cope with. This is because the major task of the African biblical scholar is to help people to cope with the spiritual and economic survival in the African socio-cultural context.

F.   Parables & Proverbs (1446)

<u>5.2.11. 1f. Percentages of respondents</u>

When asked whether parables are difficult aids for explaining biblical texts or not, of the 446 respondents, (of Madina and Jos/Mubi) 32.6% of the respondents responded in the affirmative (i.e. that parables are difficult aids to biblical interpretation), 58.5% of the them replied in the negative (i.e. that parables are not difficult aids or resources to biblical interpretation) and the remaining 8.9% of the respondents were neutral .

Similarly, with respect to proverbs, when asked whether they are dificult aids for biblical interpretation, of the 1446 respondents (Port Harcourt, Madina & Jos/Mubi), 16.0% of respondents responded in the affirmative (i.e. that proverbs are difficult aids for biblical interpretation), 74.6% responded in the negative (that is, proverbs are not difficult aids to biblical interpretation) and the remaining 9.4% were neutral.

<u>5.2.12.2f.   Representative views</u>

Representative views of the participants were as follows: '*Parables and proverbs are easy ways of expressing texts as later story is clearly explained*' 2. '*Parables are practical illustrations of texts*' 3. '*Some proverb and parables are too deep*'. 4. '*Some proverbs and parables use strange symbols*' 5. '*Some parables and proverbs are difficult to understand*' 6. '*Some parables and proverbs use alien and strange symbols*'.

<u>5.2.11.3f.   Concluding remarks</u>

Lastly, with respect to interpretative tools, as we have observed, it was accepted by most respondents that proverbs and parables can be employed for interpreting the Bible because they explain things clearer and practically, using local illustrations. Turner, commenting on his findings in his *Profile Through Preaching* (1965) observed that:

'...the parables and figures of speech which challenge the insight of the hearers, stand nearer to the stories, proverbs and riddles in which so much West African wisdom is embodied' (Turner: 1965: 36).

5.3. Analysis

5.3.1 Biblical Preferences of the respondents

<u>Preferred text</u>

Firstly, the most striking feature of the preferred texts is the observation that the majority of the respondents generally prefer to read the New Testament rather than the Old Testament. One would have expected that more respondents would prefer reading the Old Testament to the New Testament. However, the Old Testament texts mentioned are those that are geared towards given them general support and security (e.g., Psalm 121, Psalm 23 and Jeremiah 29:11) just as the New Testament texts are geared towards providing practical support (Matthew 6:33, John 3:16, Philippians 4:19) Probably their general confidence in the Old Testament texts as sources of security and assurance that God is in control of their lives and care about their problems makes them rely on it for general support. But they specifically turn to Jesus' life, miraculous deeds and sayings in the New Testament as their weapon for solving immediate problems; and for practical support. This is evident from the New Testament texts that are referred to. Matthew 6:33 is a saying of Christ in that respect, John 3;16 is about the life of Christ and what it offers to humankind and Philippians 4:19 is indicating what Jesus can give. Generally, the concerns about 'life' as put by the Akans as 'nkwa' and 'wala' by the Gas of Madina in Ghana seems to preoccupy most of the respondents. However, texts related to the kingdom and apocalypse were not chosen by respondents as their favourite texts.

The question therefore is what happens to African Independent Churches that have strong mission statements that emphasises kingdom and millenarian ideals? What about the many songs and choruses that are sang that portrays the kingdom? Is it the case that the struggle to survive sometimes overshadow the millenarian tenets of some these Churches?

Context of usage of texts

The context within which the Bible is read is either for daily concerns or special concerns. Daily prayers and devotions are held which is believed to be equivalent to the libation prayers for food protection, healing, and bareness. The Bible is specially used also for ceremonies of various transition rituals of rites of passage as well as preaching, expression of joy, appreciation to God and for swearing oaths. Again the question to ask is, why the favourite texts of the respondents are rather New Testament texts and not Old Testament texts. Take for instance, the issue of bareness. Is it not appropriate for the respondents to rely on the Old Testament stories concerning Sarah and Abraham, or Hannah as better choices than the New Testament ones? Interestingly, the ordinary readers know these stories and sing and converse about them. In the Ghanaian context, there are so many songs and sayings concerning Sarah and Abraham in particular. The women always talk of '*Abawa Sarah*' and '*Abraham Nyame*' but when it comes to texts concerning usage for practical support they turn to the New Testament. Could it also be that their missionary heritage directs their attention to the New Testament as the section that contains the appropriate texts that can deal with their practical problems and issues? Is it the case of the ordinary reader using what James Scott calls a 'public transcript' which comes from the New Testament whilst maintaining a 'hidden transcript' that comes from the 'Old Testament'? (Scott: 1990:4-5). Could it also be that their missionary heritage directs their attention to the New Testament as the section that contains the appropriate texts that can deal with their practical problems and issues?

When you come to the issue of swearing of oaths, there is another added dimension. The respondents in Nigeria that use the Bible for swearing are the same people that uses the Gospel of Matthew most. However, there seems to be a contradiction between the use of the Bible for swearing oaths as a means of telling truth. On the other hand, in a cultural context where there are no sophisticated police and investigative machinery, swearing of oaths as a means of revealing truth becomes more important. It is also known that in some parts of Ghana and Nigeria, during cases of theft and lost of items the Bible is

used as a means of getting people to state their innocence by swearing with the Bible in hand. It is believed that if one is guilty and swears with the Bible that he/she has not committed the offence, it could result in divine punishment which could be death.

The special usage of the Bible indicates also the cultural dimension of the context of usage, that is, for the performance of issues related to the rites of passage as well as the dealings with praise singing, protection from malevolent spirits, crisis and when in need. All these shows the relationship between cultural identity and the context of the usage of biblical texts. In other words, the cultural identity of a particular group of people would not only determine the particular texts they would like to use but also, their context of usage of biblical texts.

Also, when we look at the expectations and which of them are really met, we realise what is going on. Whilst there is the attempt to present issues of spiritual importance to the respondents by those who read with or for them, the respondents rather seem to be looking for other things which are more related to issues concerning their day to day life. For example, their prayers and devotions are done within the cultural framework where they are just offering the libation prayer for sustenance, provision and protection from any protagonist. This therefore calls for deeper reflection on how the hermeneutical needs can be met in such a context. What is vital to the respondents is life that is, 'wala' or 'nkwa' as stated in both Ga and Akan in Ghana respectively. Hence, the search for secured life which is expressed as salvation is actually understood in terms of the cosmological world view which is traditionally prayed for in the libation prayers daily and is expressed in the ceremonial libation liturgy of both the Akans and Gas of Ghana for new born babes during their outdooring or naming ceremony.

The expectations gives us an indication concerning what hermeneuts ought to take into consideration in their hermeneutical practice. That is, in order to meet the expectations of the respondents with respect to the usage of the Bible, it seems that issues related to cultural beliefs, practices, experiences and exposures as well as economic pressures that prevail in the cultural realm of the respondents are to be considered. Probably, an integrated hermeneutics which is mutually inclusive of both cultural beliefs and economic needs would be more appropriate in the contexts of the respondents. What

concerns the respondents is for instance, how they can deal with issues related to the security of their jobs, unemployment, theft and exploitation (economic) as well as childlessness and how they can deal with malevolent spirits like witches and wizards that seek to destroy them (cultural beliefs).

5.3.2. Diverse and local interpretations

Most of what is understood as parallels are concepts like spirits, kingship, priesthood, prophets and life after death which are mostly related to traditional concepts that are prevalent within the cultural context of the respondents. Generally, respondents are mostly familiar with the concepts of spirits, political rulers and religious leaders. The close relationships identified between these African concepts is very important. They could be used for the interpretation of texts related to those concepts in the Bible. But the scanty parallels cited between the Holy Spirit and the son of God implies that more work has to be done in those areas to bring those biblical concepts and practices home to the ordinary reader.

5.3.3. Influence of culture on interpretation

Issues dealt with under cultural influence were the influence of language, ethnicity, experiences and exposures on interpretation. Firstly, language was put forward as one of the cultural vehicles for understanding the Bible. That was evident in the majority of respondents saying that they read and understand the Bible better in their mother tongue or local language. Secondly, ethnicity (which is used to denote traditional culture in this survey) was played down by respondents as a means of interpretation as they argued that the Bible is universal and that its interpretation should not be influenced by any ethnic group. It is however, not too clear whether it is entirely true that interpretation is not influenced by ethnicity. This is because as we have seen earlier on, the preferred texts and contexts of usage are to a large extent influenced by ethnicity. However, the implication from this stance of the respondents leads us to start thinking of engaging in reading practices that would not only look out for cultural parallels but also go further on to engage in reading that would challenge and critique negative ethnic elements in

the context which sometimes hinders the progress of members in that ethnic group. Thirdly, the issue of experiences and exposures are seen by the majority of the respondents as having an influence on their interpretation of biblical texts. This therefore means that we not only take the ethnic heritage of respondents into consideration but also, the totality of their involvement with life issues. This would include their cultural beliefs and practices, socio-economic and political influences, as well as their missionary heritage and experiences. However, the evidence of enormous influence of traditional culture on West Africans that we have observed in the data calls for a hermeneutical approach that takes their cosmological world view into consideration in handling biblical texts so as to make the texts resonate with the needs of ordinary West African readers.

However, in considering the cosmological worldview, there is the need for an ethos, that would check the imbalances and excesses undermining traditional practice by modernity. This is because there is no culture that is without loopholes. But then the loopholes of any culture is dealt with by the employment of relevant ethos to deal with destructive or negative elements in that particular culture. Granted that sometimes issues of cosmology and ethos overlap, however, that shows the complex structures with its norms and expectations that needs further investigation if it is to be used for hermeneutical purposes.

5.3.4. Influence of Context on Biblical interpretation

From the results of this section, I observed that a number of factors that are prevalent in a particular context can influence biblical interpretation. Secondly, people in a given context are exposed to various influences. I observed that, there was no consistency in one particular influence always influencing their interpretation of texts. This is probably due to the complex voices that are involved in the interpretative process in most African contexts. For instance, there are voices which echo the traditional culture, the missionary heritage, post-colonial and post-missionary economic, political and social issues, globalisation, and new right wing evangelical, Pentecostal and Charismatic missions that are involved in different ways in different contexts in Africa in the

interpretation of biblical texts and contexts in. Thus the task of biblical interpretation by ordinary readers involves complex negotiations between biblical texts and concepts and diversities of influences that ordinary readers are exposed to in their respective contexts. Take for instance, women covering their hair. From the response obtained one can observe that the traditional concepts and beliefs concerning women wearing scarves as a mark of womanhood has strongly influenced their interpretation of the practice of women covering their heads during religious worship. However, when it comes to polygamy one notices the influence of the missionary heritage on most of the respondents and not their cultural beliefs and practices. The question therefore is, how do we deal with such inconsistencies that we have observed in the readings of ordinary readers? As I have already mentioned earlier the complex interaction of missionary heritage, traditional culture, post colonial and post-missionary voices has to be taken into consideration in dealing with issues related to ordinary readings of the Bible in Africa. However, these inconsistencies indicate the difficulty of the task that the ordinary reader has to undertake in arriving at meaningful, relevant and accurate biblical interpretation of biblical texts. This is where there is the need for the scholarly reader to be part of the 'negotiating team' by making himself/herself available to the ordinary readers *to make use of* as an organic intellectual, 'reading with' ordinary readers. Even though the inconsistencies will not go away, at least technical competence can be brought into the reading process to clarify certain issues.

5.4. Implications from analysis

From the above survey, a few implications could be drawn from the analysis that I have made from the data collected.

1. In the first place, in contrast to the South African context that places emphasis on Exodus and liberation, interestingly, there is little mention of liberation or even the text or theme of liberation similar to what we have in the South African hermeneutical practice. Even though there is still the concept of the search for hope and better economic and social well being of the respondents, it is not located per se

within the context of a Moses taking the West Africans through an exodus experience from the hands of oppressors.

2. Secondly, a closer look at the findings from this survey, reveals that its result is closer to the conclusion and recommendation of the Port Harcourt survey which stated that

> Finally, from the evidence of this study, we recommend the pursuit of what we conceptualise here as a Survival Theology. This is a methodological strategy for the use and interpretation of the Bible in the African context whereby the functionality of the Bible as source of healing for the sick, food for the hungry, children for the childless and succour for all those in severe distress should be emphasised (Port Harcourt Report 1994: 17).

The similarity between the Port Harcourt findings and my findings in Madina, Jos and Mubi is that most of the issues that concern the respondents relate to how they can find answers to the existential problems that face them by using the Bible.

However, what the Port Harcourt survey failed to capture is the relationship between the cultural identity and world-view of the participants and the Bible. This follow up survey has brought this relationship to light. Thus our findings show that even though the respondents acknowledge that their world view is closer to the Old Testament world view, they nevertheless use more of the New Testament to find solutions to their problems. This happens when we consider our findings in a wider context which leads us to discover that the solutions the respondents are looking for transcend their cultural identity. Perhaps the solutions they are looking for with respect to their survival can be easily located in the New Testament, that is healing, daily provisions and other issues related to the continuity of life which can be found in the New Testament. Thus, even though the respondents locate their identity within the Old Testament, they look up to the New Testament to provide answers to their problems of survival in a wider context which is similar to the concluding remarks of the Port Harcourt report which terms that kind of search as survival theology.

In summary, in the West African context, that we are dealing with, there is the need to think of ways of gathering information that is related to the ordinary people who the

sermons are meant to benefit by being aware of their needs, concerns, fears and expectations rather than using Western stereotype lectionaries which at times don't inspire critical engagement of the biblical text and the context of the ordinary reader of the biblical text. Most of the expectations expressed are related to the socio-economic and cultural concerns and issues that the ordinary West African reader is faced with. However, when you take a look at the readings that they hear regularly at church, it seems most of the readings are pietistic and not directly related to the issues that the hearers are expecting. This situation therefore does not ensure a critical reflection on the issues that ordinary readers are faced with. This is necessary as it seems that demands of the respondents gives the impression that all that the Bible is to be used for is to satisfy their needs and not to sometimes challenge the basis of their demands. This is in agreement with the remarks made by Prof. John Pobee at the Glasgow consultation of the Bible in Africa project concerning pietism that I referred to earlier on in this chapter which calls for a hermeneutic that is critical and contains an element of rationality. Hence, the clash between needs and rationality, what the gospel is saying and culture must be held in creative tension in the adoption and use of any hermeneutical approach in West Africa. The call therefore is for a more nuanced form of reading that does a critical reading of the context of the West African.

5.5. The Way Forward

My interest in doing this field work is to find out whether the interpretative methods being used in West Africa actually deal with the concerns, questions and problems of the recipients, that is, the ordinary West African at whom the reading is first and foremost aimed . Secondly, to see the role that traditional beliefs and practices play in the use of the Bible by ordinary readers. That is why I set my objective at looking at the issue of identity and the influence of the cosmological world view of the ordinary West African Bible user on his/her biblical interpretation. My findings leads me to deduce that, most of the issues raised by the ordinary readers like: concepts of life, sacrifice, witches and wizards are very much related to the culture and traditions from which they come from. Also, their expectations from readings are almost like the libation prayers for good will at the various shrines in West Africa. This implies that hermeneutics that

takes the traditional practices and concepts into consideration are the appropriate ones to use. Hence, the challenge facing the hermeneut in West Africa today is how he/she can use traditional resources to interpret the Bible so as to make it accessible to the ordinary reader. Secondly, one notices that, there were concepts that have either no cultural equivalents or that majority of the respondents have no knowledge of. This lack of insight of participants comes out in their response to the questions related to the Holy Spirit and the Son of God. Most of them indicated very little association or equivalence to cultural concepts that they are aware of.

Hence, such concepts as the Holy Spirit, the Son of God and the Trinity need to be developed in such a way that the ordinary reader can associate with them. Thirdly, the question of survival and the satisfaction of the economic needs of respondents comes out very strongly from the response that we received from the ordinary readers. Hence, there is the need to develop interpretative approaches that will not only relate to the usage of traditional practices and usages but also, deal with the political, economic and social life of the ordinary man or woman. The comparative hermeneutical approach faces the greatest challenge as it is more related to dealing with the cosmological issues without dealing effectively with the issue of ethos. Inculturation hermeneutical approach on the other hand, holds a lot of promise in their interpretative methodology because it places a lot of emphasis on the cultural context of the readers of the text. But also, the evaluative approach can also operate alongside inculturation hermeneutics, as long as inculturation hermeneutics is not locked into past cultural resources and evaluative hermeneutics is not also locked into short circuiting or doing historical criticism and stopping there but going further on to appropriate the text in its interpretative work.

Where as the Port Harcourt survey tend to talk as if there is a tentative uniform pattern of African culture, the additional survey in Jos, Mubi and Madina indicates that it is more complex than that. This is because of the outcome of my survey that shows that with respect to ordinary Africans, different people from different traditional cultures, different missionary heritages and theological affiliations perhaps have different ways of reading the Bible.

The next chapter of my thesis is an evaluation of ordinary people's use of the Bible in a selected part of South Africa.

Chapter Six

6. Evaluation of the Institute for the Study of the Bible's (ISB) Contextual Bible Study Hermeneutical (CBS) practice

Introduction

For the most part of the imperial and post-imperial period of the political, social, economic and religious history of the people of South Africa, particularly from the era of the *Great Trek*,[69] when 'The founding fathers of Afrikaanerdom brought to the Cape the basic tenets of Seventeenth Century Calvinism'(Leatt, Kneifel & Nürnberger 1996: 80) to challenge that of the British, the Bible has played and continues to play a major role in the life of most South Africans.

Afrikaaners saw themselves as a chosen and covenanted people like Israel in the Old Testament. This belief enabled Afrikaaners to presume a divine mandate to keep the heathen people in their subservient position as hewers of wood and drawers of water and in the Twentieth Century gave rise to and justified the unequal and racist character of modern Afrikaaner-dominated South Africa (Leatt, Kneifel & Nürnberger 1996: 80).

These developments together with racist legislation under British rule eventually led to the establishment of the apartheid regime in South Africa. From the apartheid era onwards, political violence became rampant in most provinces in South Africa. For instance, in Kwa-Zulu-Natal, it is noted that, 'During the late 1980s, political violence ravaged Kwa-zulu-Natal with people dying daily' (Sibeko & Haddad 1996: 15). However, since South Africans (both oppressed and oppressors) use the Bible in their

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[69] *The Great Trek* is conceived by Afrikaaners ''as the 'exodus' to the promised land, the struggle against blacks on the frontiers and against British imperialism as 'sacred history' replete with victories, defeats, concentration camps and martyrs'' (Leatt, Kneifel & Nürnberger: 1996: 77). For details of this, see James Leatt, T. Kneifel and Klaus Nürnberger (eds.), *Contending Ideologies In South Africa*. Cape Town & Johannesburg; Grand Rapids: David Philip;Erdmanns, 1996.

political, economic and social lives, Sibeko & Haddad note that the 'Communities directly affected were asking,

What is God saying to us in this situation?' Trained biblical scholars and those reading the Bible in these communities met in an attempt to discover together what God was saying to us in this situation (Sibeko & Haddad 1996: 15).

The outcome of these deliberations and collaboration between trained readers and ordinary readers in some of the communities directly affected by this violence and murders in the Kwa-zulu-Natal province led to the formation of the ISB in 1990. The ISB was therefore established mainly to serve as a community development and research institute for the poor and marginalised communities in the Kwa-Zulu-Natal area. The institute 'is linked to the School of Theology at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, and to a number of church and community organisations in South Africa' (Sibeko & Haddad: 1996: 15). The main objective of the ISB, '...is to establish an interface between biblical studies and ordinary readers of the Bible in the church and the community that will facilitate social transformation' (West 1993: 87).

The ISB works with marginalised groups through workshops, seminars, courses and regular Bible studies. However, in each case, the Contextual Bible Study (CBS) methodology is employed as a hermeneutical tool in doing Bible readings with the groups that they are committed to, with the goal of empowering them for the attainment of social transformation in their communities.

I visited the ISB in Pietermaritzburg in South Africa in order to observe their CBS hermeneutical practice. This is against the background of my review of liberation hermeneutics in South Africa. In a broader perspective, my visit was also an attempt to assess the contribution of the CBS hermeneutical practice to the reconstruction of African theology. Particularly, I was interested in this evaluation in order to see how the CBS hermeneutical practice measures up to a genuine dialogue between ordinary readers and scholarly readers and the extent to which it satisfies the interest of both discourse partners (i.e both scholarly and ordinary readers). This exercise is necessary because of the premium that is put on dialogue between ordinary readers and scholarly

readers in Africa with respect to biblical interpretation. The CBS is therefore being evaluated to see whether it provides the means for effective dialogue.

I had the following questions [70] concerning the adoption of the CBS hermeneutical process which I would be seeking for answers through its evaluation:

1. How feasible is it for the trained reader to be able to play the role of an 'equal participant' in the reading process?
2. To what extent are trained readers able to gain awareness of the differentiation between them and ordinary readers?
3. To what extent are trained readers able to keep the balance between criticality and contextuality in the CBS reading sessions?
4. What are the particularity and peculiarity of this reading process that differentiates it from other reading methodologies?

Generally, the above-stated questions are informed by Habermas' theory of dominance-free hermeneutics based on communicative action.

To start with, I looked at the ISB's Contextual Bible Study hermeneutical methodology which is stipulated in the commitments of the ISB to this reading practice. I observed that all we have in connection with the CBS hermeneutical practice is what the trained readers has stated from their point of view in their methodology and their perceived outcome of such a reading practice. I therefore proceeded from the stance of the trained reader to evaluate the ISB's CBS hermeneutical practice this time, from data collected from the marginalised and oppressed participants in the ISB's program. In other words, my evaluation concentrated on the ordinary readers and not the trained readers. I went further to draw some observations from the analysis of the data collected from the ordinary readers in South Africa. The next step I took was to reflect on my findings. Lastly, I contrasted it with t readings from the West of Scotland and then drew some conclusions from them, stating the implications of my review for the adaptation of the CBS hermeneutical practice in other marginalised contexts.

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[70] *See* comments on questions listed above under section 2.2.4.

6.1 The ISB's Hermeneutical Methodology

The ISB uses a reading methodology which involves four commitments. Firstly, the ISB is committed to reading the Bible from the perspective of the organised communities of the poor and oppressed in the South African context. 'It is essentially a commitment to begin with the perceived reality of the poor and oppressed' (Sibeko & Haddad: 1996: 15). The organised poor that the ISB is committed to is identified by Gerald West as those groups that 'are socially, politically, economically or culturally marginalised and exploited' (West 1993: 13-14).

Secondly, the ISB is committed to reading the Bible in community. This commitment emphasises the relationship between the trained reader and the participants that she/he is reading the Bible 'with'. As explained by Sibeko & Haddad, the commitment to reading the Bible in community

> is a recognition that the contributions of both trained and ordinary readers are different but equally significant. In recognizing the subjectivity of both groups, all the readers become active participants and not just the biblical scholar (Sibeko & Haddad 1996: 15).

The third commitment of the ISB is to a critical reading of biblical texts. This commitment emphasises the significance of the development of 'critical consciousness' among readers. This particular commitment is necessitated by the ISB's stance that 'Bible reading is not devoid of ideology which results in political, cultural, economic and gender bias' (Sibeko & Haddad 1996: 15) which

> is to be unmasked in order to ensure that the hermeneutical process is liberatory and not oppressive. Sharing critical resources with ordinary readers to facilitate this unmasking is a particular contribution trained readers can offer to the teaching process (Sibeko & Haddad: 15).

This is the commitment that assists the ordinary readers to challenge conventional and dominant readings of the church establishment that normally maintains the status quo and does not resonate with the concerns and questions of the oppressed and downtrodden in the South African society. Fourthly, the ISB is committed to 'personal

and social transformation through the contextual Bible study process' (15). This transformation is meant to be holistic as it is to include all the spheres of life of the readers that is, 'the existential, the political, the economic, the cultural, and the religious spheres of life' (West 1993: 24). Also, according to West, in order for this commitment to be effective, there is the need for an 'ongoing dialogue between the text and its context on the one hand and the participants and their context on the other hand ' (76). This implies that in order to obtain critical transformatory results from the CBS readings, there is the need for a commitment to engage in a continuous dialogue with the Bible which '...consists of constructing a relationship between the Bible and its relationship with its context and ourselves and our relationship with our context' (76). This commitment of the ISB is a key factor with respect to the facilitation process of the CBS hermeneutical approach as it introduces us to a dialogical, discursive and conversational approach to hermeneutics which is not only a dialogue between the readers and the text but also between ordinary readers and scholarly readers.

What the ISB aims at achieving is the generation of liberative readings together with the dominated ordinary readers that they are engaged in reading the Bible with.

The role of the ISB in the reading process is to be a midwife. That is, to enable the process of generating meaning to take place by facilitating it. In a sense, the ISB is playing a *maieutic* role in animating the process of the generation of meaning together with the marginalised groups that they are involved in reading the Bible with. The ISB is also committed to continuing the dialogical process by academic recording of the product of their discussions with the organised poor that they are reading with.

The ISB's methodology differs from that of Turner, the Port Harcourt survey and my surveys in Madina in Southern Ghana and Jos/Mubi in Northern Nigeria. This is because whilst the above-mentioned surveys in West Africa focus on collecting information or data from ordinary readers and their contexts, the ISB aims at generating readings through corporate reading practices between ordinary readers (marginalised groups) and the ISB's trained readers. The end product of the reading process could also be academic reporting by the scholarly reader to bring to the notice of the scholarly context the outcome of the conversational reading between the trained readers and

ordinary readers in poor and marginalised communities. The scholarly reader does critical reflection on the readings generated with ordinary readers as part of the process of academic reporting of the generated readings. This is done in order to bring the discussion that has taken place between the ISB and the marginalised groups to a wider context for further dialogue and discussion.

The CBS Reading Process

The reading process in both contexts (that is, the context of the trained readers and the context of the groups that the trained readers are working with) involves reading the text together and then the trained reader who is leading the CBS session may give a little background information concerning the text. The background information usually consists of the historical, social and literary context of the text. This is followed by questions which are then discussed in small groups, and then reported back to a plenary session for questions and clarification by all the participants together. The process of reading the text is the back and forth discussions in both small groups and plenary sessions, using questions and clarification that are aimed at ensuring a critical and contextual reading of the text. The product of this kind of reading is therefore the summary of all the reports from the small group discussions and their clarification at the plenary session and the critical impact that it makes on the context of the participants.

Questions

The most important component of this reading process is the discussion questions. Questions are designed firstly, to enable the participants to read the text communally and closely. Secondly, they are designed to assist the participants to draw out the relationship of the text to their context as well as the context of the text itself. The questions are normally discussed in small groups. Participants then feed the questions back from the small groups to the plenary. It is during the plenary discussion that the trained reader can make contributions from his/her prior historical-critical understanding of the text to the discussion.

6.2. Evaluation of the Institute for the Study of the Bible's Contextual Bible Study hermeneutical practice

The ISB does both continuous and one-off CBS programs among marginalised groups. The ISB's work with three of the groups it has been working with is currently being evaluated externally. The groups being evaluated are the Amawoti project, the Kenosis Lutheran Women's project at Bishopwe and the Mbale community project.

I undertook the review of the ISB's work among marginalised groups as a participant observer. I focused on the ISB's one-off program with the Natal West Methodist synod at Newcastle in South Africa and its continuous programs with the Kenosis Lutheran Women's Community at Bishopwe and the Amawoti community for this particular review. The issues that I dealt with in my review of the ISB's CBS among the above-mentioned groups are as follows:

1. Analysis of evaluation reports from Groups
2. Examples of Readings from Groups
3. Observations
4. Reflections
5. Conclusion

6.2.1. Analysis of evaluation reports

I would, first, concentrate on the Kenosis and Amawoti groups. This is because evaluation work among the Amawoti and Kenosis groups was completed by external evaluators working on them during my visit to the ISB. I would therefore focus on those two groups with respect to the outcome of their evaluation and its implications for the questions that I have concerning the ISB's use of the Contextual Bible Study methodology in reading the Bible with these groups. Secondly, I would turn my attention to the one-off program the ISB had with the Natal West Methodist synod which I participated as a participant observer during my visit .

Kenosis and Amawoti evaluation

The evaluation of the ISB's program is being done under the supervision of Rev. Sipho Mtetwa who is the co-ordinator of the Contextualisation project of the School of Theology, University of Natal. He is working with four student research assistants who are also full time students at the School of Theology (one female, one male student were attached to each of the communities that the ISB is working with).

Evaluation Methodology

Oral interviews were used by student research assistants with the guide of structured questions. Language used for the oral interviews was predominantly Zulu but in few cases English language was supplemented.

The evaluation process involves the following steps:

1. Collecting data from the oral interviews

2. Analysing the data collected from oral interviews

3. Interpreting and presenting the data in the form of a report.

Objectives that Sipho Mtetwa and the student researchers set themselves are as follows:

1. To find out the **expectations** of the participants

2. To find out the **context** that influences their interpretation. That is, the impact of the ISB on the groups as well as the individuals that they are working with.

3. **Practical usefulness** of the CBS reading practice. That is, to find out the impact of the CBS participants (in Amawoti and Kenosis) on their churches and communities. That is, to find out whether the impact of the CBS participants has been transformatory on their communities and churches or not.

4. The role of trained readers in the CBS reading practice. That is, to find out the views of participants concerning the ISB's **facilitation** process. This would take into account, the drawing of the agenda for meetings, formulation of themes, choosing of the themes and texts for the CBS, formulation of discussion questions for the CBS sessions, giving of critical historical, social and literary input, and the type of facilitation theory and ideology that the facilitator employs.

5. To evaluate the extent to which participants in the ISB's CBS program become well equipped to act as **trainers of trainers**. That is, to ascertain whether the ISB's CBS program has a **self-extending** effect on participants.

Research plan

My research plan is to:

1. Visit the two communities, that is, Amawoti and Kenosis in order to familiarise myself with the types of communities that the ISB is dealing with.

2. Participate as a participant observer at some of the CBS sessions of the two groups (that is, Kenosis and Amawoti communities) in order to understand the practical outworking of the CBS reading process as well as its products.[71]

3. To receive reports from Rev. Sipho Mtetwa concerning the oral interviews that have been carried out among the participants by him and his team of student researchers.

4. To receive both verbal and written reports from student researchers concerning their work among Amawoti and Kenosis communities.

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[71] I was a participant observer in six sessions of CBS at Kenosis women's community for the entire period of their readings on rape , which was based on the David Bathsheba story in 2 Samuel 11: 1-25. I also attended a CBS session on the Lord's prayer at Amawoti.

5.   Reflect on the evaluation reports in the light of the questions that I have already mentioned concerning the ISB's CBS hermeneutical practice in general.

6.2.1.1.   Kenosis Lutheran Women's project

Composition of Kenosis women's community

The Kenosis community or institution consists of young women between the ages of 20-30 taken from various parishes of the Lutheran church in South Africa for a year's training in the Kwa-Zulu-Natal province. Within the year, they are trained to go back and serve their families, communities and churches with the knowledge and experience that they have acquired at Kenosis.

The rationale is to teach these young women to read the Bible critically to empower them and to enable them to interpret it in their churches and communities to empower other women also in their churches and communities.

Structured questions were used by the research students in carrying out their oral interviews[72]. The following are the structured questions employed abd the responses that were received by the research assistants:

Expectations

1. What are your expectations in participating in the CBS program of the ISB?

Most of the interviewees indicated the following as their expectations:

i.   To make us trainer of trainers in order to be able to introduce others to the CBS practice in our churches and communities.

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[72] Structured questions focused on the expectations, CBS framework and themes, impact, facilitation, self-extension and set-backs of the CBS of the ISB with the Kenosis women's community.

ii.   To assist us improve our literacy levels.

iii. To assist us to improve our knowledge construction that is, to improve our ability to be able to understand and articulate biblical themes and texts more critically in order for us to be able to:

a.   Defend biblical nuances

b.   Understand biblical hermeneutics

c.   Know how to practically conduct Contextual Bible Studies on women issues

iv. For women empowerment which is aimed at liberating women from oppression that they experience in their communities. It was hoped that the CBS readings that were organised by the ISB at Kenosis would go a long way towards creating equality between women and men. In order words, the women empowerment is aimed at democratisation of the relationship between men and women. This is because majority of the people who attend churches are women. Lastly, there is the need to train more women to take up leadership roles in their communities and churches to deal effectively with issues related to women.

Contextual issues or themes

What are some of the themes or contextual issues that you have dealt with recently at your CBS sessions?

The themes mentioned were as follows:

1. Forgiveness, 2. communication, 3. reconciliation, 4. women empowerment and

5. organising and running contextual Bible Studies.

What other topics or themes would you like the ISB to discuss with your group?

Themes mentioned by respondents were as follows:

1. Teenage pregnancy, 2. Drug addiction , 3. Practical women leadership skills in the church and community, 4. More literacy and the art of practical presentation and communication as most of us have literacy problems and thus are unable to construct our knowledge practically and present it effectively to our churches and communities and 5. Mediating courses for imparting gender issues in church and community.

Facilitation practice

What do you like about the facilitation practice?

Interviewees mentioned the following in answer to the above mentioned question:

1. Freedom to speak our minds.

2. The CBS process has generated effective group dynamics which enables the shy ones to come out both in the small group discussions and plenary sessions.

3. It is very practical and ensures that we look at texts and stories and scrutinise and critique them thoroughly.

4. It also ensures focusing on the text and formulating good questions from them which then leads us into very practical discussions.

5. Action plans and role plays are very meaningful to us as they make us understand the texts better.

What ought to be improved in the facilitation practice of the ISB ?

The response of the interviewees to the above-mentioned question is as follows:

1. 'Difficulty in understanding the historical critical input given by the trained reader'.

Firstly, as one of the respondents put it, 'Biblical criticism is very complex and hard to understand at times'. This implies that there is the need for reflection on the mode of communicating the historical critical and literary material that is given to the ordinary readers. Considering the fact that none of the participants is trained in reading skills and the historical critical reading methodology, it is therefore necessary for the trained reader to aim at providing simple but adequate, historical critical as well as literary input that would be easily understood by the largely semi-literate ordinary readers with very little or no theological background.

2.   Secondly, they are clear about how to identify problems associated with oppression of women but they need 'more tools in the analysis of problems and how to find solutions to them'. This is related to the development of the facilitation skills of the participants by the trained reader. This indicates a problem with the method being used by the facilitator in the fulfillment of their expectation of the ISB program to equip them to be trainer of trainers in the CBS hermeneutical approach.

What are some of the setbacks in the ISB/CBS Facilitation methodology at Kenosis?

The main set back is clearly stated by one respondent who indicated that, 'Women empowerment courses are very feminist but then when we go into the patriarchal community with these wonderful ideas, we hit a brick wall. This is because there is no bridging courses as to how we can use the feminist knowledge we have acquired in the community or church'. The interviewees cited one example to illustrate their point. The participants indicated that the Lutheran church which they belong to is very patriarchal. Men do not recognise women as equals in most aspects of ministry in the church but their CBS session on 1Tim.2:8 led them to the awareness that 'they are free to speak their minds and not to be silent in church' in contrast to the conventional interpretation of this text by the church establishment that admonishes women to be quiet and play secondary roles to men in the church. Moreover, one participant indicated that, with respect to their reading of 1Tim. 2:8, 'Issues related to women's ordination have become very clear to me'. In the Kenosis context, the young women have two options open to them; that is, they can either choose to work within the established Lutheran structure or try to revolutionise the system by advocating changes to it in the light of their rereading

of 1Tim. 2:8. Since they don't know how to work within the system with the knowledge they have acquired, they tried to adopt the latter and the men then became defensive and then shut the door of ministry opened to the Kenosis women. The Kenosis women indicated this situation as a set back that needs to be redressed. That is, how these young women could market their ideas in such away that the men will not feel threatened but welcome them. In other words, there should be a course that can ease the participants into the community or church instead of throwing them to the deep end. This means that, the ISB program gives the women the knowledge but does not give them the know-how which could enable them to gain acceptance in their context in order to be integrated into their churches and communities to enable them to impart the knowledge that they have acquired from the ISB to their communities and churches.

Thus, it seems as if in the process of reading the Bible differently with the ISB, the biblical understanding of the Kenosis women is completely changed as their subjectivities is influenced by the CBS reading practice. However, the Kenosis participants have the problem of how to transfer their skills as they are expected to work with or under the supervision of the traditionally trained pastors after their training and empowerment by the ISB but the pastors these young women are to work with in many cases have no idea of what the women have learnt with respect to both the process and product of their CBS training by the ISB. Thus conflicts arise between the reading of the Bible between these empowered young ladies and their pastors and elders that they are expected to work with. The reason for this conflict is that the pastors have been trained to maintain the status quo and uphold the interpretative methodology of the Lutheran church establishment which in most cases marginalises women and does not resonate with the concerns, questions and issues related to women, whilst the ISB's readings 'with' the Kenosis women is geared towards reclaiming the Bible for the marginalised women by doing liberative readings that sometimes challenge church readings that marginalise women. Rev. Sipho Mtetwa summaries the situation of the Kenosis women in his analysis by saying that, 'The teaching has so raised their critical consciousness that they are ready to go and teach but there is the buffer zone, that is, the women on the one hand, Bible studies in the middle and traditional style of leadership in the church on the other hand'. Also, the Kenosis participants see the need for more tools in analysing problems and finding solutions to them. This is expressed by the participants by saying

that, they '... have acquired skills in knowledge construction and we are trying to apply them in our congregations but lack the know-how and opportunities to pass this information on to others in the church or community'.

The concern of both Rev. Mtetwa and the student researchers is whether these young women can survive in their communities and churches. This is because they would like to critique the power dynamics in both church and society; especially, in the area of the subjugation of women in their communities and churches. Subjugation of women normally takes place by their male dominated contexts employing traditional beliefs and practices as far as the community is concerned, and using conventional readings of the church establishment as far as the church is concerned. This leads to the situation where the CBS trainees are by-passed by the church hierarchy by not being given the opportunity to use their acquired skills and knowledge in the church.

What was your view concerning gender consciousness before your interaction with ISB?

The interviewees responded that their gender consciousness was misguided and limited because of the teaching they received from their church establishment.

Practical usefulness

What have you gained as a group in the CBS reading practice ?

The following themes/topics were listed by participants as gains from the CBS reading process:

1. Leadership skills. 2.Gender consciousness 3. Empowerment 4. Running contextual Bible studies and 5.Tools/skills to support women in dealing with their own issues.

In summary, the women stated that, theoretically, they are taught how to read the Bible critically with understanding. Practically, they are taught helpful modes of reading the Bible. That is, how to construct appropriate contextual hermeneutics which enables them to discuss issues, questions and concerns that relate directly to their context and

then go further to impart this methodology to other women in order to empower those women too.

Self-extension

Are you confident in training others to read the Bible using the ISB-CBS methodology?

This question is connected with the issue of self-extension of the Kenosis group in their community. That is, whether they are able to train other women to take up the CBS in their own contexts. The participants indicated that they can partly train others to use the CBS methodology. This is because they now know how to identify problems. One respondent made an observation to that effect by saying that,

> we have observed that, even though women are vulnerable and can be marginalised in their churches, our studies have highlighted how influential we can be in our churches, given the appropriate and relevant know-how and opportunities. This has happened as our involvement has spilled over into our churches and communities.

One of them indicated that the outcome of her involvement in the CBS with the ISB has led her into working with young women, at Sobantu,[73] by empowering them through CBS reading sessions.

6.2.1.2.   Amawoti Community Evaluation

Composition

Amawoti is a suburban shanty town. The majority of the people in Amawoti are semi literates. Amawoti township consists of a mixture of people with different backgrounds. It consists of people with some traces of urban life in the form of western values as well as people with rural life with traces of traditional African values. Some of the people in Amawoti are in the working class, mainly working as labourers, industrial factory hands and domestic helpers in Indian and European homes. The majority of the people are, however, unemployed. The situation is worsened by the fact that there is insufficient

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[73] Sobantu is a black settlement near Pietermaritzburg, in the Kwa-Zulu-Natal province of South Africa.

land for farming. Individual homes lack basic amenities. For instance, most have to go out to fetch water from public standpipes as they don't have taps in their homes. Amawoti is filled with African Instituted churches which are popularly referred to as Zionist churches in South Africa and the ISB is working with these poor and marginalised churches in a very deprived society, whose leadership has little or no theological or western education at all.

The Amawoti group contacted the ISB to come and start Contextual Bible Study with them in 1990. The ISB decided to be involved in doing Contextual Bible Study with the group in Amawoti on a regular basis in their own community. The ISB also decided to hold training programs for the church leaders in the community to equip them for ministry in their own community. Lastly, the ISB is involved in a biannual women's seminar for the women in Amawoti.

Expectations

What are your expectations in participating in the CBS hermeneutical process?

The following expectations were listed by participants from the Amawoti community:

1. Knowing different ways of studying and appropriating the Bible in our lives.

2. Social transformation of our community

3. Women empowerment

4. To be able 'to write our own Bible', that is, to have an interpretative process and product that draws its resources from African traditional religion. When asked they explained that they will like to deal with texts that focuses on Africa Traditional concepts like sacrifice and ways of relating to God.

Contextual issues or themes

What are some of the themes or contextual issues that you have dealt with in the CBS sessions that you have participated in so far?

The Amawoti CBS program has covered a lot of themes over the years. These themes/topics could be put under three major headings, namely, cultural and traditional, community and development and social justice. Firstly, with respect to cultural and traditional themes, marriage and its rituals, menstruation rites, challenges that the hierarchy faces in modern society, the contextualisation of death and prophecy were those that were mentioned by the interviewees. Secondly, concerning community and development, the themes mentioned were, community development, liturgical issues and blending of life in the community between Christians and non-Christians, blending of biblical and African traditional religions were those mentioned by interviewees. Thirdly, with respect to social justice, gender issues and women empowerment were mentioned by interviewees as themes that they have dealt with.

What are some of the themes that in your opinion ought to have been tackled by the ISB?

The concern of most of the interviewees is in the area of African traditional values and norms. Among the themes mentioned by interviewees that they feel need to be discussed by the ISB in this area are; African rituals, African social norms and sacrifice. Other topics that they indicated that need to be tackled are; Church organisation and management, salvation and the Holy Spirit.

Interviewees also mentioned some expectations that are not practically met. Firstly, since it is a very poor community and has some developmental and self-help projects, the participants expect the ISB to help them to get these projects off the ground.

Secondly, they raised the issue of giving them certificates that are recognised nationally and also, licensing them so as to issue marriage certificates just as the ministers in the

mainline churches do. This is the situation where there is the feeling of social or legal marginalisation. Simply because they are members of Independent churches and not members of the established churches, they are considered as inferior and are therefore not legally licensed to marry their own church members and would want to use the ISB's involvement with them to deal with this inequality. This particular theme has to do with empowerment of independent churches that feel discriminated against legally by the political establishment that gives more recognition to the mainline churches than them.

Facilitation that you recommend

Which aspects of the CBS facilitation process do you recommend?

Three aspects of the CBS facilitation practice were recommended by the participants of the Amawoti community. They are as follows:

1. The Amawoti participants approve of the discursive characteristics of the CBS process that gives opportunity to participate freely in both the choice and discussion of themes and questions related to the text together with the trained reader or facilitator.

2. CBS facilitation practice makes them able to accept criticism of their points of view and be free and able to critique other people's interpretation. This sometimes gives them the freedom to go on to even subvert conventional interpretations that oppress and marginalise them as churches and as a community. In other words, it has created critical consciousness amongst them which implies that they are prepared not only to critique other people's interpretations but also to subject their own context to critical appraisal in their hermeneutic practice.

3. It has generated a sense of equality among the participants as a group as they continue to read the Bible together. In other words, the facilitation process has generated a kind of group dynamics that has constituted them into a community of

equals who are reading the Bible together.[74] Considering the fact that the Amawoti program consists of people from different churches and backgrounds, the CBS facilitation practice has broken down the denominational and other social barriers that exist between participants. This break through has enabled them to read the Bible together as equals and as a community.

Which aspects of the ISB Contextual Bible Study facilitation process do you feel ought to be changed?

This question is related both to aspects of the facilitation process that they dis-recommend and the changes that the participants would want to be effected to make the facilitation practice more effective.

Some of the interviewees mentioned the issue of drawing of the agenda for their seminars and workshops by the ISB.

The ISB draws up the agenda from which the Amawoti group would have to choose their themes. Sometimes they find themes that are empowering to them but other times they find that some of the themes do not resonate with their needs and concerns. However, according to Mtetwa this issue of '...drawing the agenda for the selection of a theme is a power dynamic and yet the participants are not part of it'. Mtetwa further argues with respect to the Amawoti participants that, 'If what is plaguing them on the ground is not part of the agenda items from which they would choose, then hard luck as they are made to limit themselves to the agenda which is already drawn for them'. This means that, there is the need to look into the issue of the selection of agenda items even before one considers the themes and texts to be chosen and the questions to be formulated for the CBS sessions. This is because of the comments by interviewees that some of the themes dealt with at the CBS sessions are relevant whilst others are alien to the Amawoti community. This is because there was no prior communication between the ISB and the Amawoti community before the agenda was drawn up. Perhaps facilitation in this respect will work better if the trained readers and the Amawoti

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[74] This equality does not seem to include the facilitator even though the process is initiated by him/her.

participants or even their representatives come together to draw up the agenda for the selection of themes for the CBS sessions.

Also, there is the feeling of some of the Amawoti participants that European ideas are being imposed on them by the ISB through the trained readers. In this regard, one of the interviewees reiterated that, 'Africans must write their own Bibles and stop receiving European ideas'. He further explained his stance by saying that, '...we would like to deal with texts that relate to concepts like traditional rituals and social norms and particular issues like sacrifice, ways of relating to God, etc'. In summary, to write their own Bible means to draw from African traditional religious culture in their biblical interpretation. This is a challenge to the ISB trained reader in connection with the role contextuality play in their interpretative practice and the broader task of reconstructing forms of African theology.

Apart from the aspects of the facilitation process which they dis- recommended, interviewees also indicated some negative outcomes of the ISB's work among the CBS participants at Amawoti. With particular reference to the biennial women's workshops, interviewees indicated that even though it has had an impact on the critical and community consciousness, of the participants, it has also produced some negative results. Interviewees argue that even though the biennial women's workshop has transformed the women, it has also generated conflicts between the participants (women) and other women who are not pre-disposed to the CBS program. This happens when the CBS participants try to challenge the traditional stereotypes of women in the Amawoti community. Also, they cannot transfer what they have learnt from ISB to the traditional level at home as their husbands are not trained in that way. Thus, the community ethic militates against the changes and so do the cultural power dynamics within the family as husbands cannot accept the new ideas that their wives are taught at the CBS. An example that the Amawoti participants gave is in connection with women covering their hair with scarves.

For example, Zulu women are not allowed by their society to expose their hair. It is therefore expected by the community that Zulu women wear head gear. However, the ISB has exposed the issue of women wearing head gear as an oppressive mechanism

against women as it is prescribed by men. The workshop spoke against it as subjugation of women by men as men prescribed what women should wear and not wear. If, for instance, married women decide to kick against wearing headgear at the family and community levels, they come up against the pressure to wear it by their community and their husbands. And if they do not wear the headgear, then conflict develops between them and their families as well as their communities. This then leads to an impasse in the transference of their acquired knowledge at the ISB workshop to their own families and community at large. Moreover, the teaching on non-head gear wearing is contrary to the teaching in their churches. Even if women are divorced, they can go around the community without head gear but at church they are expected to wear the head gear which is part of the prescribed uniform of the women by the women's groups in their churches.

Even though among the CBS participants at Amawoti there is a sense of equality and they can accept critique and understand these liberative readings among themselves, the issue is the community within which they live. As put in the words of one participant who was interviewed by the researchers, the ISB is therefore

> seen as oiling the system of conflicting value systems between its constituency and their communities at large. The participants appreciate the contribution of ISB but they have realised that it is isolating them from socially accepted values and societal norms.

Practical usefulness

What is the impact of the ISB on your community?

The interviewees stated that the CBS of the ISB has raised their critical and community consciousness. An example in this respect is the reading of Mark 5:21-6:1 with the women at one of their Biennial workshops by Sibeko and Haddad, which is published in their article entitled ''Reading the Bible 'with' women in poor and marginalised communities in South Africa" (1996). As argued in that article, the rise in the critical consciousness of the Amawoti women at this workshop is evident as 'through the Bible study process the readers began to question the interpretative distortion of the church

leadership' (Sibeko & Haddad 1996: 17) and their community consciousness is also raised when as a result of the reading process the women could identify with the unnamed bleeding woman mentioned in the text to such an extent that, 'The faith of the bleeding woman becomes the source of faith for these women in their daily lives of cultural, economic and ecclesiastical oppression' (17).

Also, some of the interviewees stated that they have acquired hermeneutical skills for interpreting the Bible through continuous participation in the CBS sessions. Amawoti is one of the communities that the ISB has worked in for more than four years. Presently, they are running their own CBS program which is no longer facilitated by the ISB but by one of the participants who has acquired the facilitation skills through continuous participation in the ISB's program over the years.

The CBS has been transformative for them in their Churches and communities, and also to them as individuals. The generation of ecumenism and the breaking down of barriers have been notable transformative effects of the ISB's programme in the Amawoti community. Thus, even though the Amawoti community consist of a mixture of people from both rural and urban backgrounds and different churches that come together for the CBS sessions, they are still able to discuss the Bible together. Also, the ISB's aim of social transformation is somehow being achieved. This is because the CBS process has not only generated more co-operation and enhanced ecumenism but it has also generated more co-operation among workers at the Amawoti community's brick making and farming projects. These projects are done by people in the Bible Study group together with others in the community who are not members of the Bible study group.

The CBS has also empowered the women, particularly, through the biennial workshops for women. With reference to one of the biennial workshops facilitated by Sibeko and Haddad in the Amawoti community, in their reflections on this particular CBS session as follows:

> Meeting together as women, to study a text facilitated by women, enabled the readers (and the facilitators!) to explore the oppressive effects of menstruation on their lives, perhaps for the first time publicly in a group. The contextual Bible

Study process became liberatory as it enabled women to speak unspoken words (Sibeko & Haddad 1996: 18)[75].

Self-extension

Are you confident in training others to read the Bible using the ISB-CBS methodology?

The Amawoti respondents indicated that they are able to facilitate the CBS sessions themselves without the assistance of an ISB trained reader. However, they are not yet confident in training others to use it but they can use it themselves in their community at the moment.

In conclusion, when asked about the future of their relationship with the ISB, the Amawoti interviewees stated that they would want the CBS to continue. Among other things, they would want it to be institutionalised or formalised and also given formal recognition as they see their collaboration with the ISB leading into the establishment of training facilities and opportunities for interaction between churches that are at the margins of the South African society and an institution of critical biblical studies.

In summary, comparing the practical usefulness of the CBS programme among Amawoti and Kenosis participants, it seems both groups are clearer about the practical usefulness of the programme than what they call the theoretical usefulness of the CBS programme. This is what is stated by one of the interviewees from Kenosis that,

> ...theoretically we are taught how to read the Bible critically with understanding and practically we are taught how to construct appropriate hermeneutics from our own context. We however, have no problems with the practical appropriation in our context but have a lot of problems understanding the theoretical aspects of the CBS.

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[75] An example of the unspoken words that the women spoke was when the issue was raised concerning women not being allowed to wear their church's women's guild prescribed uniforms during menstruation and thus are forced to sit at the entrance of the church and one woman spoke out saying that if the church would behave like that, then they should not bother to go to church when they are in their menstrual period and 'just stay at home' (Sibeko & Haddad 1996: 16).

6.2.2. *Examples of Readings*

Introduction

As I have indicated earlier, the ISB's Contextual Bible Study reading process involves both plenary and small group discussions. There is however, no rigid formula as far as the programme is concerned. The trained reader is free to plan her/his programme. Except that it should involve a discussion and conversational approach between the trained reader and the ordinary untrained readers. The product of the reading is the final outcome of the reading practice that involves the action plan which is the practical resolutions that the readers decide to make from their co-operate reading of the text together. In this particular instance, I would like to look at readings done at the Newcastle circuit of the Methodist Church in South Africa and analyse the discussions at this CBS session. I focused on this particular example because it is the only CBS session that I have attended so far that employed mission statements, poems, role plays etc. as aids for Bible studies. It is also the only CBS session that gave the ordinary readers the freedom and motivation to employ what ever means they deem fit to generate biblical interpretation on their own, in their own small group discussions without the watchful eye of the trained reader and present it to at the plenary discussion.

6.2.2.1. *'Reading' Luke 17: 11-19 at Newcastle (South Africa).*

CBS at the Natal West District of the Methodist Church of South Africa 's Synod.

Introduction

I attended the Natal West district synod of the Methodist church of South Africa which was held in Newcastle in South Africa. The ISB co-ordinator, the Rev. Malika Sibeko who herself is a Methodist minister was asked to conduct a Contextual Bible Study at this synod. The participants were over 50 in number which included both male and female pastors and elders of the Methodist church of South Africa.

The Text for the CBS was Luke 17:11 -19. After the participants read the text in both English and Zulu, the facilitator asked her first question to the plenary which was the following:

1.   **What is the text about?**

The response from the participants concerning what they think the text is about are as follows:

1. Healing of the lepers, 2. Ingratitude of 90% of those healed, 3. Foreigners' response to healing, 4. Breaking barriers, and 5. Crying for help.

After the opening plenary discussion based on question 1, participants went into five groups for small group discussions. The trained reader gave them questions to go and discuss and report back to the plenary session.

Report Back from groups

2a. Why did the lepers stand at a distance from Jesus?

The summary of the reports from the groups indicated that, the lepers stood at a distance from Jesus firstly, because they knew their own social situation as outcasts. Secondly, the lepers stood at a distance from Jesus because the lepers respected him.

2b. What does this say about those who suffered from leprosy?

This question is a follow-up of the previous question (that is, question 2a), which is in connection with the leper's decision not to come closer to Jesus. The summary of the report from the groups indicated that firstly, the lepers feel they were rejected people. Secondly, the lepers did not see themselves as whole people as their self-image has been affected by the rejection their society subjected them to. In such a state of rejection, the lepers felt the need to seek help from Jesus to provide them a solution to their predicament without necessarily getting too close to him.

3. Do you think Jesus was afraid to go closer to the lepers (Luke 5:12 -15)?

The summary of the reports from the groups concerning this question was that, firstly, Jesus was not afraid as there were no barriers between him and the lepers. Secondly, Jesus did not want to intrude into the situation of the lepers but he rather took them as they were. It is by that action that Jesus broke the barriers between him and the lepers. The groups argued that Jesus was rather confident but not afraid of the lepers.

4a. Do you know of similar illnesses that people are suffering from in your community/church as above?

The illnesses listed by the various groups included: Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD), Tuberculosis, Cancer and AIDS.

4b. What was your church/ community's reaction to them?

The groups reported that, their community isolated and rejected such people who suffer from the above listed illnesses because of fear of infection, ignorance, mis-information and prejudices. However, some communities sometimes provide medical assistance for sufferers of the above-listed illnesses.

5a. What do you suggest your church or community should do for now and in future for those suffering from such illness?

It was stated by the groups that people who suffer from the diseases listed above, do not only need medical help but also need to be touched and given support which will go a long way to touch their souls. This implies that people suffering from such illnesses need emotional and spiritual support from their communities. This means that the churches and communities must be training their leaders to be well informed about these diseases so that they can assist their members more confidently. Leaders should also be able to provide counseling services to those suffering from these illnesses. Also, it was stated that if training is to be offered to the community, it should start from

childhood so that children would understand things better whilst they are still young as that will make it easier for them to learn to support such people suffering from such illnesses from childhood. Also, the process of training should be all inclusive of both ministers and members of the congregation if it is to take place in a congregational level. This is because, if the minister is well informed and equipped to assist people suffering from such illnesses, then there is a better chance for her/him to encourage her/his parishioners to assist such people.

5b. What would be your contribution as an individual to some one suffering from such illness?

Members of the groups indicated that as individuals, they would break the barrier that separates them from those suffering from these illnesses so as to make it possible for sufferers to get the opportunity to talk freely to them individually in confidentiality without inhibitions.

As individuals, they will also visit sufferers from such illnesses and encourage them.

6. Members were asked to present an action plan in the form of a role play, poem or mission statement or any other form of visual presentation of their action plan that they deem suitable.

There were some role plays, a poem and a mission statement from the groups that were presented to the plenary as action plans.

Group 1 had a role play on togetherness and unity in the community without separating those suffering from diseases. They illustrated togetherness and unity by first holding their hands together, leaving out those who are sufferers from AIDs. Later on, they decided to embrace everyone including Aids sufferers.

Group 2 read a mission statement which stated that

We must identify the needs of people around us, and make ourselves available by responding to them in a positive and constructive way. It is the whole person that needs to be dealt with. With faith in our Lord and trust in him, we can share his love.

Group 3 had a role play on showing interest in those suffering from AIDs. A pastor was not interested in Aids education and action so his congregation was also not interested. The pastor is portrayed as someone who did not pay attention to a talk on AIDS and so his congregation members also did not pay attention to the speaker.

Group 4 wrote a poem in Zulu which they read to the plenary which goes as follows:

Woo! Ngaze ngenzeka,

Nganenwa yilesisifo,

uvelaphi sifo Na?

Wena ongehlu kanise Nomagane

Wami no dade wethu nomfo wethu.

Ngidla Nngedwe

Ngolala Ngendwa

Nginesi zungu tsingapheli

Kufa wewa wofika Nini Ungithathe

Wena Nkukunkulungiya kwazi

Ngo wami, Ngeke Ungilahle

Uyongeemmukela Njalo,

Ngemukele mgiyeza kuwe

Umhlaba ungilahlile

nesifo Singidile

Nguwe kuphela themba lami

Kukufa kodwa okuyo

Ngibe Nawe Njalo

Ngi phumule kuwe

Ncinlili!!Ncinlili!!!

which when translated into English would be:

Oh! I have a problem, I'm trapped

By being affected by this disease

Where do you come from disease?

You who separated me from my friends,

My brother and my sister.

I eat alone

I sleep alone

I'm lonely

Death when are you coming

to take me

God, I know you,

you are mine,

You won't leave me

you'll always welcome me

Welcome me

I'm coming to you

The world has left me

The disease has affected me

you are my only hope

Only death can free me

for us to meet

Be with you and rest

for ever !!! and ever!!!

Group 5 did a role-play that firstly, emphasised the need for acceptance of Aids victims in our churches. Secondly, the role-play indicated that doctors should be more sensitive to Aids sufferers. Thirdly, that the community/church should assist the families of those dependent on an AIDs sufferer.

After the action plans had been presented, the trained reader gave the final input to clarify issues that were not clear concerning the historical, political, social, economic, religious, as well as the literary setting of the text.

Summary

This seminar with the Methodist church was very well appreciated as shown by the response of the participants who had to choose between a seminar on spirituality and another seminar on AIDs and yet majority decided to participate in the CBS session.

Talking with some of the participants after the CBS session they indicated that it is a new idea to them. They feel it has a lot to offer the church as it uses questions and group discussion as a means of reading the Bible. Some were also interested in the historical critical and literary input given by the trained reader at the end of the session. Others also appreciated the role plays, poem and mission statement presented by the various groups as they think they were very effective ways of getting most participants to participate and understand the text better.

6.2.2.2. *Analysis of questions*

In this particular reading practice, formulation of questions is very important. In most cases, the questions are framed by the facilitator who may or may not be a trained reader. We would therefore look at the various questions that were used by the New Castle participants.

Questions 1, 2 and 3 are related to the historical, social and cultural background of the text, whilst questions 4 and 5 are related to the appropriation of the text in the context of the readers. The first three questions therefore gave the opportunity to the participants to explore both behind the text and the text itself to see what its background really is. After that has been done, they then went into how the text can be critically related to their context. Here too, one notices that, it appears that what brought clarity to the participants were questions 4 and 5. Answers to question 1 show that there is little clarity at that point. This implies that the type of application questions one asks is very important in this type of reading process. Also, the role-plays, poems, and mission statement gave opportunity for further conversation and dialogue with the text. These aids to biblical interpretation facilitated the generation of meaning and understanding by

the ordinary readers themselves which then generated more discussion between the discourse partners (ordinary readers and scholarly readers).

In summary, the analysis of the above-mentioned questions has brought to light that the purpose of questions in the CBS reading process is not only to provide uninhibited discussion but also to bring out the key issues that the trained reader together with the ordinary readers would like to focus on.

6.2.3 Observations

I would like to make a few observations from the review of the CBS hermeneutical practice in South Africa.

With respect to **expectations**, the groups generally expect the ISB's CBS programme to provide them with critical resources that would lead to an enhancement of both their critical and community consciousness.

Furthermore, the participants expect that the CBS hermeneutical methodology will enable them to read the Bible in such a way that its appropriation will resonate with their fears, anxieties and uncertainties as marginalised and oppressed people so as to reclaim the Bible as a source of hope for them in their **context**. They also expect empowerment and transformation in their respective contexts in **practical** terms.

Lastly, the participants at the ISB programmes in South Africa expect that they would be trained in knowing how to acquire the CBS hermeneutical skills so as to enable them apply this type of methodology in their own contexts and in other contexts as **trainer of trainers**.

However, as stated by the interviewees, some of the expectations of the participants were not met by the ISB programme. There is the issue of the Traditional African religious and social issues like sacrifice, and ways of relating to God were mentioned. Also, the women said they lacked mediating courses that would enable them to pass on

the knowledge they have gained from the ISB's Contextual Bible Study programme without getting into conflicts with their church leaders and people in their communities.

With respect to the **contexts** of the three groups that I evaluated, participants have no doubt that their contexts influence their interpretation of the texts and for that matter the types of issues they dealt with in the CBS reading sessions. For instance, the Kenosis women's community is interested in creating more gender consciousness, women empowerment, and the provision of leadership skills for women whilst the Amawoti group is more interested in issues that would liberate them from poverty. But also, these were not mutually exclusive as you come across issues related to gender consciousness being dealt with at Amawoti at their biannual women's seminars.

With respect to **facilitation**, the participants at the ISB Contextual Bible Study sessions see the facilitation process generating group dynamics that create the atmosphere for free interaction and dialogue between the text and the context of the readers on one hand, and the trained reader and the participants on the other hand. Furthermore, the participants recommend that the critical background information concerning the texts being read which is usually given by the trained reader should continue. This is because in the South African context it is only the trained reader who possesses the historical critical and other critical resources and thus must be prepared to give it at the appropriate time to enhance the corporate reading of the text without hijacking the whole discussion. However, they are also concerned about the way the critical resources are to be used by the trained reader so as to be beneficial to the participants. For instance, the theoretical input that is to be given by the trained reader to clarify the historical critical, socio-cultural and literary aspects of a text to ordinary readers has to be simple and clear to make it easier for them to understand rather than complicate their understanding of the text.

Also, the South African participants in the ISB programme are not in favour of a situation where the trained reader draws the agenda for the CBS sessions without consulting them. They would like to be part of the reading process from its beginning to its end.

With respect to **practical usefulness**, the ISB's Contextual Bible Study programme is said to have broken down barriers between people of different backgrounds and churches. It has therefore brought the community together. It has also improved the ecumenical relations between the different participating churches. With respect to individuals, it has trained them to be able to construct their knowledge more effectively in being able to embark on critical appraisal of their own context in the light of the texts they have been reading. They have also gained hermeneutical skills and thus, can undertake CBS in their own communities.

An example of this is evidenced in the Amawoti community where the CBS is being facilitated by one of the participants who has acquired the hermeneutical skills through his involvement in the CBS reading practice of the ISB over the years and therefore has become a trained reader.

With reference to **self-extension**, participants have also gained empowerment as individuals and as put by one woman participant from Kenosis, they are 'no longer the same'. The women also speak of gaining leadership skills which will enable them empower other women in their churches and communities.

6.2.4. Reflections

I would like to reflect on the evaluation of the ISB in South African with respect to the questions I had concerning the adoption of the CBS hermeneutical practice which I started with in this chapter to see what sort of answers I have obtained from the my evaluation.

i. How feasible is it for the trained reader to play the role of an 'equal participant' in the CBS reading practice?

Most of the ISB's work that we have reviewed consists only of marginalised and oppressed poor people. The Newcastle group and the Kenosis community consisted mainly of literates, but the Amawoti group consists mainly of illiterates and semi-

literates. Also, the trained reader in most cases is the only one trained in historical critical studies and possesses reading skills, whilst the others have little or no reading skills at all and have little or no formal theological training as well as training of any kind in historical critical studies. On top of all that, the trained reader is trained in the contextual Bible Study hermeneutical practice. The question now is whether the trained reader is able to play the role of 'an equal participant' in the reading practice in such a situation where there is such a noticeable gap between her/him and the ordinary readers she/he is reading the Bible with. Perhaps the awareness of the South African groups of the marked inequalities that exist between them and the trained readers, explains why they have requested for more participation in the reading process. That is probably why the respondents are interested in a much earlier involvement in the reading process than that of participating later in the selection of themes (i.e. the preparation of agenda).

Also, there is the feeling expressed by the participants from Amawoti in South Africa that the ISB programme is an imposition of Western European ideas on Africans and that more texts that relate to African Traditional Religious norms and issues like sacrifice and rituals should be discussed at the CBS sessions. This also indicates a feeling of an imposition of the trained reader's views on the participants. Even though the trained readers are most of the time Africans, the feeling expressed is that European ideas are being spread through the trained readers. This implies that there is the need for scholarly readers to understand the differences that exist between them and ordinary readers. Here, scholarly readers are being called upon not only to gain exposure to the concerns of ordinary readers but also to create a forum for ordinary readers to express their views and interests from the very beginning of the program that is, the selection of agenda issues to be dealt with by the CBS group. This means that the South African participants will like to participate in the preparation of the agenda, choice of themes and the framing of questions for the CBS sessions.

Also, as we saw in the analysis of the questions, I observed that the more open-ended the questions are, the more effective they are handled when it comes to the response of the participants to them.

Also, in the South African context, there is always the danger of teaching rather than facilitating, as a lot is expected from the trained reader by the participants in the provision of critical resources in the reading process. However, despite the inequality in reading skills and the training in the historical critical method between the trained reader and the ordinary readers, it is still very important to note that the ordinary readers are still adult learners with a lot of experiences and a wide knowledge of the scriptures (even though sometimes distorted!) which they use most of the time. So what the participants need is skilled facilitation of the reading process that would enable them to look more closely and critically at the texts which they have been familiar with for decades without effective liberative appropriation of such texts.

ii.   To what extent are trained readers able to gain awareness of the differentiation between them and the ordinary reader ?

In South Africa, particularly, in the groups that the ISB is working with, there is a wide differentiation between the educational and social backgrounds of the trained reader and the ordinary readers. The gap between the trained reader and the participants who are marginalised people from poor and deprived shanty towns is very wide, which means that issues like literacy, rural versus urban, creates a wide gap between the trained reader and the ordinary readers. This gap in socio-economic and educational levels is further made wider by the possession of theological training which most of the people that the ISB is reading with do not possess. In this context, it is therefore important for the trained reader to know the strengths and weaknesses of the type of ordinary readers he/she is dealing with and therefore know how to facilitate the reading process. For example, there are reservations expressed as to the lack of understanding of the historical critical and literary theoretical input that is normally given by the trained reader. Perhaps, it is worth considering the possibilities of simplifying those inputs for the ordinary readers to understand and benefit from them more than they have been doing in time past.

The trained readers in South Africa have some awareness of the differentiation that exists between them and the ordinary readers but they still need more exposure to some of the issues that marginalised people are concerned with; which scholarly readers are

not exposed to by virtue of their socio-economic status. The challenge posed by the interviewees in this review is embodied in the comment by one of them from the Amawoti community that, 'Africans must write their own Bibles and stop receiving European ideas', which he further explained by saying that, 'to write our own Bible means to draw from African Traditional religious culture in our biblical interpretation'. This means that for genuine conversation to take place, every effort must be made by the trained reader not only to be conscious of the differentiation but be prepared to find creative ways of ensuring that there is dialogue between the context of the marginalised and the text which can be achieved only by a better understanding of the poignant issues and concerns in the context of the marginalised people and embodying them in the entire hermeneutical practice of the CBS hermeneutical process.

Perhaps the statement that Africans must write their own Bible raises some fundamental questions concerning the objectives that the ISB aims at achieving through the CBS hermeneutical practice. What does the ISB hope to achieve with its heremeneutical process? Is the ISB only concerned about empowering marginalised people towards social transformation through liberative readings? In addition to the above-mentioned goal, is the ISB also interested in undertaking the broader interest of the ordinary readers with respect to the reconstruction of forms of African theology since this is one of the expectations expressed by the respondents?

The issue is therefore not simply one of an imbalance of educational skills but of cultural formation. By controlling the agenda and setting the questions those formation which is (albeit critical) western- dominated are in danger of aborting the conversation that is required for the reconstruction of local theologies in Africa.

iii. To what extent does trained readers manage to keep the balance between criticality and contextuality in their reading practice?

One of the concerns of the ordinary readers in South Africa is that of the difficulty in understanding the historical critical, socio-cultural and literary aspects of the CBS process. This is what is expressed by one of the interviewees from Kenosis by saying that, '...theoretically, we are taught how to read the Bible critically with understanding

and practically we are taught how to construct appropriate hermeneutics from our own context. We however, have no problems with the practical appropriation in our context but have a lot of problems understanding the theoretical aspects of the CBS'. The danger therefore in the South African context is to overlook the historical critical background of the text and move very quickly into the contextual appropriation of the text. This is because ordinary readers can readily identify connections between their context and the text they are dealing with; which if properly used, is not a bad thing. This same observation is made by Draper & West in their article 'Anglicans and the scripture in South Africa' (1989) by stating that ordinary readers " 'believe, hope and act' with little or no 'expert' biblical knowledge" (Draper & West 1989: 40).

However, there is the need for trained readers to ensure that there is no short-circuiting by ordinary readers by enabling them to pay adequate attention to the historical background of the text before going into applying it in their own contexts. It is when this background information is made available that one can then confidently proceed to appropriate it or even subvert it to resonate with one's contextual needs.

The difficulty here is in connection with the tendency for theologians to solidify their language in their employment of criticality, which cuts off ordinary readers in the reading process. This then leads to the distortion of the communicative action which Habermas advocates as a necessary condition for dominance-free interpretation to take place. This therefore needs further reflection as to how criticality can be employed in a dialogical interpretative process between elite hermeneuts and ordinary readers with little or no western education at all without cutting the ordinary readers off from the discussion.

Also, the question with respect to contextuality is that, how can trained readers deal with oppressive cultural issues together with ordinary readers where in most cases, there are irreconcilable differences between the ordinary readers and the scholarly readers due to differences in their backgrounds?

iv.   What are the particularity and the peculiarity of the CBS hermeneutical practice that differentiates it from other practices ?

The particularity of this reading practice is its focus on the downtrodden and the marginalised in society. We went through the types of groups that the ISB is dealing with, that is, women that are being empowered, people in shanty towns with poverty and economic hardships being encouraged and given hope and even with the Newcastle reading which was a one-off session, the emphasis was still on the marginalised and despised in their society that is, those suffering from abominable diseases like Aids. It is very important for the trained reader to develop a relationship of trust between herself/himself and the ordinary readers. Also, it is important for the ordinary readers to feel that the trained reader genuinely identifies with their cause to such an extent that there is the possibility for the trained reader to operate 'in the gap' between the himself/herself and the ordinary readers. This would enable the trained reader to provide what is referred to as 'a more nuanced literary reading of the written text in order to bring out the hidden elements of resistance that it contains' (Scott 1990: 160). Furthermore, there is the issue of communication as this reading process involves discussion and conversation. It is therefore very necessary to generate an atmosphere of free uninhibited communication among participants by putting them at ease to be able to freely express their opinions during the CBS reading sessions.

6.2.5. Conclusions

The ISB's Contextual Bible Study evaluation has revealed that there are aspects of it that need to be noted if the CBS hermeneutical approach is to be adopted in other marginalised contexts. In contrast to Western Europe, in South Africa most people take the Bible as 'an icon' which they use in various ways in their daily lives. This is what is re-echoed with respect to the South African context by James Cochrane, based on recent studies with respect to the construction of an indigenous theology of work by arguing that, '...the primary source of the Christian mythos', the Bible 'is probably the only source of theology for most members of our churches. It is, as some have said, the people's book par excellence' (Cochrane 1991: 181). This means that the task of reclaiming of the Bible is not one of overcoming lack of confidence in it but rather one of reclaiming it from the oppressors who used it as a tool of oppression. The participants are therefore at home with the Bible but are looking for ways by which it could be read

to respond to their questions and concerns more effectively. This includes not only reading the Bible with ordinary readers in South Africa but also enabling them to read it more closely and critically themselves, and to go and read it with others in their community.

An example of this is stated by Graham Philpott, concerning the outcome of his CBS programe at Amawoti that

> A pamphlet was produced containing the group's reflections on the Lord's prayer in the midst of violent upheaval in the community. This pamphlet was produced by members from the Bible study group and was used in Amawoti, as well as in Church groups outside of Amawoti. Arising out of the Bible studies an Easter march was organised in the community and a video of this event was produced...to disseminate the understanding emerging from within the group (Philpott 1993: 27).

Another interesting feature of Philpott's CBS sessions among the Amawoti community was that the participants had the freedom to dialogue with the text. This is evident in their discussion concerning the *kin-dom* of God as they try to relate God to the practical realities of their situation specifically, by commenting that

> God does not function democratically, but imposes his will on people. This was particularly seen in the very sensitive position of Joseph and Mary. 'I don't see any negotiation between God and Joseph about his wife pregnant; God does not even tell Joseph first, but tells the wife first'. Within the context of the struggle for democracy, this is definitely not the correct way for God to function....Positively there is no majority vote about participation in the kin-dom of God....In our situation we use majority vote, but with God it is different' (Philpott 1993: 54).

However, there is the feeling that there is still more work to be done in fulfilling this goal. Some of the work that needs to be done is expressed in the unfulfilled or unrealised expectations both in the facilitation process (that is the issue of power dynamics) between the trained reader and ordinary readers, particularly in the area of the participation of ordinary readers in every aspect of the reading process. Also, the ordinary readers need to be taught ways of imparting what they have learnt to their societies to make the reading process self-extending.

It is when one has identified the marginalised groups in one's context, their concerns and questions that one will be able to develop a relevant CBS program for them.

Furthermore, if the CBS is to be successfully applied in various contexts then we need not limit ourselves to only economic marginalisation. One has to keep himself/herself open to diverse ways that a group can feel marginalised. For instance, one of the key issues raised by the South Africans is the fact that they feel that they are not only economically marginalised, but also their cultural identity is undermined and marginalised by the imposition of western European methodology and forms of reading on them. They therefore advocate readings that are based on what they call African Traditional Religious values and norms. Does this mean that even in the South African context, the issue of liberative readings transcends the satisfaction of the material needs of the oppressed people in South Africa? Furthermore, if this process has to be adapted in a Western or Eastern African context, the most pertinent issues that would be raised would be more in the area of cultural liberation than of economic liberation.

Another concluding remark that I would like to make concerns the creative and varied processes used in the CBS reading practice. The ones that are worth mentioning are the use of role-plays, poems and mission statements by the various groups in presenting their understanding of the text to the plenary in the South African context. Within a period of one hour, a group reads, discusses the texts and then prepares very creative presentations that captures their discussion in its entirety. This is a very important part of a reading process that is aimed at communal participation in the reading process. The re-creation and re-enactment of the text heightens the involvement and interaction between the participants and the text. Also, it gives participants the opportunity to re-read the text in their own context as they put their understanding of the text together in the form of role plays or poems or mission statements. It also frees them from the control of the trained reader as they create their own understanding without his direction and guidance and then present it to the plenary.

Also, as we can observe, the issue of an 'Action plan' is part of the ISB's Contextual Bible Study hermeneutical practice. Hence, they sometimes put it in the form of a question which usually appears last, or just ask participants to put forward a proposal of

what their action plan is from reading a particular text. However, action plans ensure that the text is put into practice by the readers in their practical lives which in most cases is related to the transformation that takes place when one's critical consciousness and community consciousness has been influenced by a particular text. However, it is hoped that, each participant's subjectivity would be enlarged differently (this includes the trained readers). This means that, despite, the action plans that are presented, which are just proposals, or suggestions, each participant will still have to go home and decide on what to do with what he/she has got from the reading process; that is, what he/she would want to take or reject from the reading process. This situation is summarised by Sibeko & Haddad in their statement concerning their conduct of a CBS with the women in Amawoti on menstruation as follows

> As facilitators it would be arrogant to suggest that these women readers have been definitively transformed and empowered through this particular Bible Study....The effects of the reading did not end here. In the weeks that followed, some of the women in dialogue with a facilitator continued to reflect on the issues raised by the study. They acknowledged to her that in beginning to appropriate the text they needed to initiate dialogue on the matter with the male church leadership. They acknowledged their collusion. And so, perhaps, the most significant effect has been the cognitive dissonance that has been created through the process of reading the text contextually (Sibeko & Haddad 1996: 18).

This statement shows the struggles that ordinary readers, particularly, in South Africa go through in their attempts to put the CBS reading into use. There is therefore the need to be conscious of the relationship between the action plan that is arrived at the end of the study, and its implementation in the communities of the ordinary readers so as not to create a situation where the ordinary readers feel that they have been given false hopes. In this particular case, the issue of menstruation is related to African Traditional Religions where women are considered 'unclean' during their menstrual period and therefore are excluded from participation in specified religious rituals in various parts of Africa. The reading process is therefore a long drawn communal process - it is not enough to raise awareness of the women as the women has to convince their communities with respect to the change that can be effected. The question therefore is whether dominance-free discourse is able to achieve this objective. In other words, can we say that once we have discussed the issue freely, and both the ordinary reader and the scholarly reader are satisfied, then justice has been done to the text? For instance, with

respect to the issue of menstruation, are there irreconcilable differences between the scholarly urbanised elite women readers and the ordinary traditional African women readers? If there are, then how can scholarly reader 'read with' ordinary readers effectively in such a situation?

Another issue which is a follow up on the point already made above is the influence that the trained readers have on the reading process. This is because we cannot run away from the fact that the mere presence of the trained reader at the reading session affects the entire reading session. We need to be aware that there would be the feeling by the ordinary readers that the trained reader has his/her understanding of the text which in the case of the South Africans could be rightly or wrongly perceived in various ways. Some may think that his/her views are 'elitist', others may think they are 'European' others may think they are 'intellectual' and others may think they are 'rationalistic'. However, which ever way the ordinary readers look at it, there is the possibility of the silencing of the voice of the ordinary reader by the trained reader as the trained reader 'intrudes' into the reading session of the ordinary readers. This is because he/she would be seen as a policeman or woman at the discussion session. It is therefore very important for the trained reader to defuse those prejudices so as to be able to genuinely dialogue and be in conversation with the ordinary readers. This can happen only when a relationship of trust and confidence is built between the trained reader and the ordinary readers. This relationship is possible only if the trained reader makes a deliberate decision to be partially constituted by the context of the marginalised people that he/she wants to read the Bible with. Another way forward is to think of creative ways of training people who themselves comes from the community of a particular marginalised people to take up the facilitation of the CBS process whilst the trained reader indirectly provides the critical resources that is needed for the CBS reading process to take place without his physical presence at the CBS sessions. Of course, the trained reader would receive regular feed backs from the facilitator. Indeed this has started in Amawoti, where one of the ordinary readers is facilitating the reading process at the moment. However, one wonders what is going to happen as he has no theological, historical critical or any form of reading skills apart from being conversant with the CBS hermeneutical practice.

Perhaps this calls for further reflection on what the CBS process is required to achieve. Is it solely aimed at producing liberative readings? Is its outcome only related to the transformation of marginalised communities? Do the organic intellectuals recognise their involvement as part of a broader project of reconstructing forms of African theology?

Finally, one of the issues that have been highlighted in the ISB's Contextual Bible Study is the dialogue between the discourse partners. As mentioned above by Sibeko & Haddad, the CBS reading process generates a dialogue between the text, ordinary readers and the trained readers. West calls it an 'on going dialogue'. I would go further to say that, the dialogue therefore generated is not only between the text and the participants but also at other levels, or should be between the ordinary readers and the trained reader and also between the ordinary readers themselves (on their own) and I would even say that if there is more than one trained reader at that particular reading session, there would be another dialogue between the trained readers also (on their own).[76] This therefore implies that the whole process is based on effective dialogical methodology at all these levels. For the CBS methodology to be effectively adapted in any context, the dialogical or discursive principles have to be put in place.

Hence dialogical facilitation skills are an essential element in facilitating the CBS hermeneutical practice if the ISB is to achieve its goal of being a midwife in enabling the birth of liberative and regenerated forms of readings. Also, since the ISB is committed to recording their corporate readings with marginalised readers by engaging in academic reporting, there is a need to ensure that that what is reported is equally owned by the communities that they are reading with.

Also, the academic reporter needs to be sure of what to report and how to report it. This is because it is necessary for him or her to separate official readings that may surface in the corporate reading sessions from new forms of readings that come from the corporate dialogical process.

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[76] The issue of trained readers dialoguing or discussing themes (on their own) happened to the trained readers I went with to do the readings with the West of Scotland groups as well as the South African groups as in each of these cases, there were more than one trained reader at those CBS sessions.

Chapter Seven

7. Evaluation of the Glasgow Contextual Bible Study Group's readings with ordinary readers and its relationship to the ISB's Evaluation.

Introduction

Firstly, this chapter which is part of the review of the CBS reading process, will evaluate the CBS group's work among ordinary readers in Scotland. The rational in doing the evaluation of the CBS group in Scotland is to use it as a control group to check my findings from my evaluation of the ISB's CBS in South Africa, by comparing the work of the CBS group in the West of Scotland with that of the ISB in the Natal province of South Africa.

Secondly, this chapter examines the relationship between the ISB's CBS evaluation and the Glasgow group's evaluation.

We will then start by looking at the Glasgow CBS's evaluation.

7.1. Formation of The Contextual Bible Study Group In Glasgow (CBS)

Prof. West's visit to Glasgow in 1995 and the discussions it generated led to the formation of the Contextual Bible Study (CBS) Group, consisting of biblical scholars from the University of Glasgow and volunteers who are mostly trained readers, who are interested in reading the Bible with marginalised groups in the West of Scotland.[77]

Their objective is to identify marginalised groups and to use the Institute for the Study of the Bible's (ISB) hermeneutical methodology of Contextual Bible Study in South Africa to read the Bible with those marginalised groups in the West of Scotland.

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[77] Gerald West is the Director of the Institute For the Study of the Bible (ISB) at the University of Natal Piertermaritzburg in South Africa.

The **'marginalised'** were identified as:

> 'Those who are disabled, homosexuals, lesbians, prisoners/ex-prisoners, women, ethnic minorities. The marginalised are therefore those alienated socially and legally' (CBS minutes:1996).

This indicates a broader conception of poor marginalised people that are both socially and economically deprived identified by the CBS group in their initial discussions is characteristic of the United Kingdom as indicated by John Vincent and Chris Rowland in the *book* co-edited by them entitled, *Liberation Theology in Britain 1970 -1995*.

The CBS group also set out a mission statement to direct their work. Their mission statement says that:

> ·CBS group is a group of trained readers of the Bible who wish to read the scriptures critically and in community with:

1. Organised groups of marginalised people

2. Those who seek to be in solidarity with them for the purpose of empowering people towards liberation and social transformation' (CBS minutes: 1996).

This mission statement implies that the CBS group is committed to reading the Bible with marginalised groups as well as groups who are working with marginalised people for the empowerment, liberation and social development of marginalised people. Some how, there seem to be an omission in the mission statement as nothing is mentioned concerning the 'poor', even though their preliminary discussion towards the formation of the mission statement talked about their 'relationship with the poor and marginalised' (CBS minutes: 1996: 1).

7.1.1. The Reading Process

With respect to the CBS sessions, the Glasgow CBS employed the same reading process and questions as that of the ISB (*see* comment on CBS reading process under section 6.1.).

7.2. Review of the Glasgow CBS Group

The same questions that I had in connection with the ISB's CBS which I have already mentioned and commented on were used in the evaluation of the Glasgow CBS. (*see* comments on questions concerning CBS under sections 2.2.4 and 6 .2.4).

The following are the groups that the CBS have connections with: Rainbow House Group, Hopeful Mens' Group, Craig Institute, Episcopal Church Justice and Peace Committee, Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement of Glasgow and St. Colomba's Episcopal Church.

Apart from these groups, the CBS group is also involved with contextual Bible study with ex-prisoners and have also honoured invitations from groups who contacted them for a one-off contextual bible study programs with them.

In collecting data for this research, I selected three of the groups that the Glasgow CBS group is working with; which were their one-off programs with the Student Christian Movement (SCM) and their continuous programs with St. Colomba's Episcopal Community, in Clydebank (a suburb of Glasgow) and the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement LGCM in Glasgow. The reason for choosing those three groups was that generally they represent the broad spectrum of groups that the CBS group is working with. For instance, the SCM group represents the one-off groups that they are dealing with, St. Colomba's Episcopal Church represents the Church groups that they are dealing with whilst the LGCM represents marginalised non-Church groups that they are dealing with. However, there is a limitation in labelling the SCM group as a maginalised group as they do not fit into the same category of a marginalised group or marginalised community as compared to the St.Colomba's Episcopal Church and the LGCM. Another factor that was taken into consideration in the choice of groups is to make sure that I participate in groups that would not feel inhibited by my presence at their meetings. In all, 27 respondents formed the sample census, from the above-mentioned groups who completed questionnaires I gave to them at their meetings. Since this evaluation is a check on the ISB's CBS, the questionnaire was designed and based on the same objectives as those of the ISB's evaluation project. (*see* Sipho Mtetwa's comments on the objectives of and the student research assistants under section 6.2.1) [78].

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[78] The fifth objective related to self-extension was left out because it is not stated as one of the goals of the Glasgow CBS group.

7.2.1. Analysis of Data

Attendance at the meetings of the groups sampled is averagely between 5-10 members. This means that they are not very large groups and that explains why the sample population for the research is only 27. Secondly, the SCM group has the largest number of respondents followed by the St. Columbas Community and lastly, the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement of Glasgow. This is bound to affect the results of my research when I apply frequencies but I also embarked on cross tabulation of data collected by the groups that the participants belonged to. This will enable me to compare the responses of the respondents from each group (that is, groups with large number of respondents and fewer number of respondents) to ensure effective identification and representation of significant differences of opinion expressed by the respondents. I use frequencies for my analysis mostly in situations where there is unanimity in the responses of all the groups. After analysing my findings based on the responses to the questionnaires by the 27 respondents, I made the following observations:

7.2.1.1. Expectations

The 27 participants' expectations prior to the session and their actual experiences and observations are summarised in Tables 7.1., 7.2. and 7.3 below:

Table 7.1. Initial Expectations of Participants

Expectations	Percentage
Make text relevant to context	37.1%
Provide information on historical, political and social context	29.6%
Don't Know	25.9%
Challenge conventional interpretations	7.4%

Table 7.2. Actual Outcomes : Experiences and observations of Participants

Actual Experiences	Percentage
Make text relevant to context	62.9%
Provide information on historical, political and social context	7.5%
Challenge conventional interpretations	29.6%

Table 7.3. Specific actual experiences that CBS have had on participants

Actual Experiences	Percentage
Hope for marginalised	33.3%
Addressed power dynamics in the Church	29.6%
Not sure	29.6%
Addressed the issue of homelessness	7.5%

My interest here is to find out: 1. Prior expectations of the respondents before participating in the CBS reading process. 2. Actual outcomes or experiences from their participation in the CBS program, and 3. Subsequent expectations that participants feel need to be met by the CBS group. Lastly, how the reading process can be improved to address this issue more effectively.

This can be done by analysing the indications of respondents stated above through identification of the expectations that have theoretically been met and those that are not yet met. From the responses I received, from differentials of tables 7.1 and 7.2, there is an increase in the percentage of responses for 'make text relevant to context' whilst there is a decrease in the percentages of 'don't know' and provide information on historical, political and social context' after participants has participated in the CBS programme.

With respect to mentioning specific contextual issues that paticipants think the CBS has addressed, three responses that featured were: 'Hope for marginalised people', 'Homelessness' and 'power dynamics in the church'. Another expectation emphasised by respondents from the Student Christian Movement is 'to challenge conventional interpretation'. This implies that, they expect the CBS hermeneutical practice to enable them break the hold of conventional readings that has been the monopoly of a few people in the church establishment over past decades. This is what we see in table 7.3.

In summary, probably the above-mentioned response from the respondents is an indication that the CBS hermeneutical practice has something new to offer the respondents which they did not anticipate, which are the context-oriented actual outcomes mentioned by the respondents (that is, hope for the hopeless, homelessness, and power dynamics in the church).

Hence, the sense of the immediate situation of these marginalised groups is built up within these groups by shared narratives or shared experiences.

Thus, sharing their immediate contexts then leads to a critical appraisal of their own contexts in the light of the texts that they are dealing with, which results in contextual readings of the text.

7.2.1.2. Influence of Respondent's Context on Interpretation

The 27 respondents' views concerning the influence of **context** on their CBS reading were also evaluated. When asked to indicate, on a scale of 1 to 3, whether (i) their own context, or (ii) no specific context influences their interpretation of the Bible most, the rankings indicated in order of influence by respondents were as shown in Table 7.4 below:

Table 7.4: Participants' ranking of the influence of their context on interpretation

	Mean Rank Influence of Context	
	Own context	No specific context
Entire Group	2.19	1.3
SCM	2.00:	1.5
St. Colomba's	2.40	1.4
LGCM	2.70	1.5

where strong influence=3, some influence=2 and weak influence=1

The analysis of the data indicated that, participants' 'own context' has 'some influence' on the interpretation of the Bible where as, 'no context' has 'weak influence' on the interpretation of the Bible. This therefore shows the awareness of the importance of context in the interpretation of the Bible amongst the respondents. The response of the respondents also indicate that respondents from the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement(LGCM) are the ones that relate their interpretation of the Bible to their own context most, followed by St. Colomba's community and the last on the list is the SCM respondents. This probably indicates that the more people are aware of their marginalisation, the more they become aware of the influence that context has on the interpretation of the Bible.

7.2.1.3. Direct Relevance of CBS to Participants' Context

Table 7.5. summarises the participants responses to the question as to whether they felt that the CBS was addressing issues in their context. As can be seen, a majority of respondents answered in the affirmative.

Table 7.5. Direct relevance of CBS readings to participants' context

	Relevance of CBS readings to own context	
	Yes	No
SCM	55.6%	44.4%
St. Colomba's Church	100%	0%
LGCM	100%	0%

The few SCM participants who indicated that the CBS was not addressing their context at all listed the following as the issues that they think the CBS ought to be addressing in their context:

'More information on the historical, political and social context of the text' was indicated by most SCM respondents in this category, followed by 'More contextual and post-modern theological explanation and usage of texts', and 'Scottish self-determination' were indicated as issues that the CBS ought to address .

7.2.1.4. The Role of Trained Readers

Participants were also questioned about the desirable and undesirable roles of Trained Readers or Facilitators in the reading process. Participants' responses to the question, 'What role do you think the facilitators should play in the reading process?' are summarised in Table 7.6. below:

Table 7.6: Desired Role of Trained readers

Desirable Role	Percentage
Assist in understanding difficult texts by clarifying problem areas	55.6%
Formulate good discussion questions	18.5%
Encourage all participants to participate in the discussion	14.8%
Keep discussion focused on the theme	11.1%

In response to the question, 'Mention aspects of the CBS facilitation process that you would not recommend or needs improvement', 70% of participants indicated that the Facilitators "Must not come to the CBS with a 'hidden agenda' to impose upon us but come with open minds to discuss the Bible critically with us", and another 20% said that "Trained readers should not impose their questions and views on the participants"

In analysing the above statements, it seems as if in one respect, the respondents see the need for good questions to be formulated but in another respect, they would not want questions to be imposed on them by the trained reader.

However, in the present CBS set-up the questions, text, and theme for discussion are chosen by the entire CBS group which most of the time includes the trained reader and the trained reader uses them to facilitate the reading process. This therefore raises the wider question as to who should choose the questions, text and theme for the CBS reading process? If the questions are formulated by the entire CBS group, then the challenge that they face is to formulate 'good questions' for discussion in such a way that the group would not be seen as imposing their questions on the participants through the trained reader who is facilitating the reading process. Also, with respect to the trained reader, the onus falls on her/him as to how she/he can clarify difficult issues and keep the discussion focused on the theme without being seen as having a 'hidden agenda' which she/he wants to impose on the participants. The trained reader ought to be able to use his/her technical competence in formulating these questions without stifling and inhibiting free discussion of the text by the participants.

Practical Usefulness

Participants' assessment of the practical usefulness of the CBS reading process to themselves and to the community is summarised in Tables 7.7 and 7.8.

Table 7.7: Participants' view of the practical usefulness of CBS to the community

Desirable Role	Percentage
Gets us looking at the Bible more critically	33.3%
Makes us examine how the Bible affects and challenges our community's context	33.3%
Broken down barriers and has constituted us into a community that is closer to each other	18.6%
Rejection of power-centric readings	14.8%

Table 7.8.   **Participants' view of the practical usefulness of CBS to themselves**

	Percentage		
	SCM	**St Colomba's**	**LGCM**
Enables me identify the relevance of the text to my life today	37.0%	14.8%	3.7%
Motivates me to read the Bible as part of a group	29.6%	0%	3.7%
Helps me to have the input of others to reflect on	0%	3.7%	3.7%
Has enabled me to relate sexuality to spirituality	0%	0%	3.7%

Concerning the **practical usefulness** of the CBS reading practice to the participating groups, the two topmost views expressed by the respondents was that the CBS reading practice 'gets us looking at the Bible more critically', and that 'the CBS makes us examine how the Bible affects and challenges our community's context today'. In their opinion, this helps in 'clarifying thoughts and understanding of the relevance of the Bible to the group's own issues'. For instance, some of the respondents from the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement (LCGM) indicated that the CBS has enabled them to relate sexuality to spirituality. This practical usefulness therefore indicates the important role the CBS reading practice plays in critically addressing the context of the respondents. This is followed by the respondents that indicated that, the CBS reading practice 'has broken barriers and has constituted us into a community that is closer to each other than before', [hence], '...providing a sense of community'. This is followed by the respondents that indicated that the CBS reading practice '...liberates them from what they call, "power-centric" readings that usually marginalises them'.

With respect to the practical usefulness of the CBS reading practice to respondents as individuals, most of them indicated that the CBS reading practice causes them to identify 'the relevance of the text to my life today'. One respondent indicated that this awareness of the relevance of the text to his life brought about by the CBS reading practice 'is therapeutic'.

This is followed by respondents who indicated that the CBS reading practice 'motivates me to read the Bible as part of a group', followed by the view that 'the CBS helps me to

3a. How do we remember experiences of righteous anger in our lives?

b. How did we relate to other people in this anger?

Righteous anger is said to be anger that comes from a motivation of love and not revenge. Participants could not remember instances of righteous anger but recounted instances where they have suffered injustice from some people in the church or society which they find very difficult to deal with.

Most participants indicated that these experiences of injustice are not one-off but keep on resurfacing again and again and asked what one must do in such a situation

4. Can righteous anger motivate us to change ourselves and society?

Righteous oppression in our society. This is differentiated from petty anger which is personal, vengeful and self-centred. In summary, righteous anger, was therefore identified with the good standards that motivate people to speak out against injustice and oppression in society. Examples given of such motivations were anger towards slave trade, and poll tax. In other words, one must be ready to challenge the status quo and laws that do not serve the society but rather oppress it. However, it came out through the discussion that one is able to take such a stance for justice by allowing one's self to be partially motivated by righteous anger which then can result in individual transformation of our selves and our societies. Righteous anger was described by the group as the situation where one speaks out against injustice, marginalisation and oppression in one's society and the world at large.

Analysis of the questions

It is necessary at this point to analyse the questions that the participants dealt with in the example of readings that we dealt with above (ie, Mark 11:15-19). This is being done so as to see the extent to which these questions inhibited participants or assisted them in reading those particular texts.

The questions that are listed from Mark 11:15-19 suggest that a theme has been chosen and the text is therefore being read in the light of that theme which is righteous anger. This theme and the questions that have been asked by the trained reader are all formulated by the trained reader together with other members of the CBS group. This is

7.3.   Example of Readings

Apart from having contextual Bible study with the groups they are committed to, the CBS group also have similar Bible studies together whenever they hold their preparatory and debriefing meetings.[79]

I would like to focus on the LGCM as my sample group for the purpose of looking at examples of readings that the CBS group does with the groups that they are committed to. I selected the LGCM as my sample group because it is a sample of a marginalised group that the Glasgow CBS is working with on continuous basis which also demonstrated some trust and confidence in the trained readers. With regard to the reading process, the texts were read in small groups and in plenary sessions. The following is a product of one of the readings that emerged from the CBS sessions that I participated in with the LGCM:

'Reading' Mark 11:15-19 with the LGCM in Glasgow.

Study Questions & Group Responses:

1.   Why is Jesus angry in the text?

Jesus was angry in the text because of oppression, exploitation and marginalisation by temple officials in the temple.

2. How does Jesus relate in his anger to other people and how are other people relating to him?

Jesus spoke out because of love for those being marginalised and was violent towards the exploiters and marginalisers.

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[79] The CBS group meets from time to time to report back and plan together for their work with the groups that they are committed to. I attended some of these meetings. I also participated in both the preparation for, and reading Philipians 1: 15-18, 20-30 'with' the SCM, and the LGCM.

have the input of others to reflect on' and lastly, 'the CBS has enabled me to relate sexuality to spirituality'. This shows the commendation that the respondents give to discussion and dialogue in the CBS reading practice.

However, practical usefulness in a sense, is the practical aspect of the actual outcomes of the reading practice. This is the area that we realise the action plans and the transformation that takes place with the CBS reading practice. However, unlike the ISB, CBS hermeneutical process, the Glasgow CBS group does not directly deal with the action plan in most situations even though it might be indirectly implied in some of their readings. We see the reading process firstly, breaking barriers and bringing communities together. With respect to breaking barriers, most of the respondents who indicated this are from the St. Colomba's community. Secondly, the reading practice is seen challenging individual values in life. This relationship between the CBS and personal life is also emphasised by most respondents from the St. Colomba's community. Thirdly, one notices a sense in which practical usefulness of the CBS indicates the situation where the text is being claimed for the marginalised groups who for a long time see the Bible as completely taken over by a set of church readings. The third actual outcome of the reading practice, which is the reclaiming of the Bible for marginalised people is expressed by most of the respondents from the SCM group which comes out in their statement that the CBS helps them 'to reject power-centric readings'. This is because respondents use to feel that the conventional Bible readings done by the established church does not resonate with their experiences, questions and issues directly. What the CBS methodology is enabling is an interaction between the subjects of the participants, their context (that is the context of the marginalised) and the text being read is most of the time the interactive medium within which the reading takes place. Thus, in the end, the hold of established or conventional readings is broken, making the text resonate with the practical life experiences, questions, and issues related to the marginalised groups that the trained reader is reading it with.

a situation where participants could say that the trained reader has come to the CBS session with a 'hidden agenda'. Perhaps, if they were given the chance to participate in selecting the themes and formulating the questions, they might end in selecting a similar theme and formulating similar questions. But once the marginalised readers were not consulted, they would feel inhibited and controlled somehow by the questions formulated by the trained reader and his/her group. On the other hand, there is also the possibility of the marginalised readers choosing a completely different theme and therefore arriving at different questions from this text. A typical example is the response to this text when I presented it in the form of a sermon in an African Instituted church at Amawoti (a shanty township near Durban in South Africa), using the same theme of righteous anger with a few adaptations. However, the response to this sermon by five members of that church including the pastor did not dwell on my theme at all but rather on issues that concerned them. They were more concerned about abuse of women and children which they deduced from their position in the temple cult, purity of the sanctuary which must not be corrupted by any injustice or corruption by its members in their day to day lives. Does this therefore indicate that perhaps a different theme and therefore a different set of questions would have been asked if the participants were involved in the selection of the theme and the formulation of the questions? Is it also the case that the system works differently in different contexts and so care must be taken in formulating questions taking the context one is dealing with into serious consideration? This is because, as one can see from the types of issues being dealt with in South Africa (purity of the sanctuary, abuse of women and children etc.), in contrast with the issue of righteous anger, from the West of Scotland, one notices the differences in which the reading practice works in the two different contexts. In the South African context, participants tend to identify connections between the text and their context more freely and therefore they connect the text more freely and quickly to their context than the West of Scotland's context where people are more conscious of what happened in the text two thousand years ago and therefore tend to spend a lot of time on the historical critical background of the text and therefore tend not to connect the text readily and quickly with their context.

However, looking at the questions themselves, they seem to be well framed to get the participants to discuss the theme thoroughly. Question 1 gets them to locate the theme

within its historical, political and socio-cultural context. Question 2 enables them to read the *text itself* very closely to understand the literary aspects of the concept of righteous anger as rendered in the text itself. Lastly, questions 3 and 4 relates the text to the context of the participants. They are questions related to reading *in front the text*. These are asked to enable the participants to do critical comparison of their context in the light of the discussions they have already carried out concerning their selected theme, which is righteous anger, from their selected text which is Mark11: 15 -19.

In summary, the above-mentioned analysis has brought to the forefront a few issues that need consideration in the CBS reading practice, namely,

i. Framing questions in such a way that it will enable free and uninhibited discussions by the participants.

ii. Getting the participants involved, if at all possible, in deciding the theme, concerns and questions of participants that needs to be considered in the formulation of the questions.

7.4. Final Observations

In sum, I observed that the Glasgow CBS group is committed to *helping* marginalised groups and people working with marginalised groups to read biblical texts. In other words, the Glasgow CBS focuses more on enabling or facilitating ordinary readers or marginalised groups to generate their own forms of contextual readings. Their trained readers therefore play more of the role of midwifes or a *maieutic* role in the reading process. However, there is no academic recording done by the Glasgow CBS group. This means at present, their role in the reading process does not go beyond the *maieutic* one. This is because they are not yet involved in academic recording and critical reflection in order to enable them relate their work to a wider audience than the groups they are working with.

7.4.1. Reflections

In reflecting on this research in connection with the questions that I have concerning the CBS hermeneutical practice in general, a lot will depend on (1) The credibility of the **product** of the readings that take place between the trained reader and the non-trained

reader, and (2) The power dynamics and the atmosphere in which the reading **process** takes place.

7.4.2. Concluding remarks

In summary, the evaluation of the Glasgow CBS group gives us an indication of the extent to which the Glasgow CBS group have been able to achieve dominance-free communication between trained readers and ordinary readers in the West of Scotland by analysing data collected from groups that are taking part in the CBS program.

Lastly, since the Glasgow CBS group's evaluation is serving as a control or check, the findings from it's evaluation will be compared with that of the ISB's CBS' evaluation in the next section in order to complete the review of the CBS hermeneutical practice from the two major locations that it is being used at the moment.

7.5. The relationship between ISB's CBS evaluation and Glasgow CBS group's evaluation

Introduction

Since I have looked at the ordinary readings in selected areas in Africa (including the Contextual Bible Study in South Africa) and the Contextual Bible Study in the West of Scotland, I would like to compare and contrast the CBS reading practice of the CBS group in the West of Scotland with that of ISB in South Africa. This would bring out the relationship between the cultural context of ordinary readers and ordinary readings that normally take place in a socio-cultural context (that is, a European socio-cultural context and an African socio-cultural context).

7.5.1. Identification of marginalised people

As we have already stated, the CBS reading practice is generally aimed at reading the Bible 'with' marginalised people. This implies that both the CBS group in the West of Scotland and the ISB are committed to identifying marginalised people in their respective contexts for this purpose. If we compare and contrast the list of marginalised people that both groups are working with, we notice a sharp contrast between them. Even though both groups accept the fact that marginalisation is orchestrated by both

economic and social factors in their contexts, surprisingly, most of the groups that the West of Scotland group is working with are more socio-culturally marginalised than economically marginalised.

In South Africa, marginalised people are identified as those who neither possess nor control material wealth. That is why the ISB is working mainly in shanty towns and with economically exploited and oppressed groups in South Africa. In conclusion therefore, does this probably imply that the very nature of oppression in different contexts would determine the types of liberative readings that need to be done? This is because surely, in the West of Scotland ethnic minorities, lesbians and gays are not poor and would therefore not be so much concerned about their economic status. They would be more concerned about their social and legal status and hence about liberation from the social and legal oppression that is perpetuated in the dominant conventional readings of the established church, than about economically oppressive readings. This therefore means that liberation readings cannot be limited only to economic oppression but also to socio-cultural types of oppression. The larger question that this conclusion raises is whether economic description of marginalisation is adequate to liberation theology, or, for that matter, to liberation hermeneutics. One's task in these marginalised situations (in both Africa and Western Europe) is to undertake readings to liberate the marginalised people from the oppressive readings in their contexts at the same time reconstructing theology in those contexts. The differences however that may occur depend on the nature of each context and the kinds of concerns, questions and issues to be faced in each respective context. Thus, by applying liberation hermeneutics to a variety of marginalised contexts we broaden the scope of liberation hermeneutics as a reading methodology which is therefore no longer regarded as being related solely to people's economic status but to people's social, legal, psychological and cultural status as well. This is very much in the tradition of Western Europe too as we have already discussed in our earlier chapters. The work of liberal theologians like F.C. Baur was to liberate people from oppressive relationships by attacking orthodoxy. (*see* Baur's comments under section 1.2).

As we have noted in our evaluation of the ISB, apart from the liberative goals of the ISB, there was also the wider need for the reconstruction of African forms of theology. This was expressed by the ordinary readers. This is an issue that therefore re-defines the commitment of the organic intellectual and trained reader as one who ought not to be concerned only with liberative readings but also actively involved in and committed to the development and formulation of local theology/ies in the context of the marginalised people he/she is operating.

7.5.2. Identification of the organised poor.

The ISB is not only committed to working with poor and marginalised communities but also 'to working with organised communities or groups' (West 1995: 64). These groups that the ISB is working with are referred to as the 'organised poor'. In the South African context, there is no difficulty at all in identifying the 'organised poor' in the black shanty townships and informal settlements. However, what is needed is the establishment of prior trust and commitment to the cause of maginalised people. These groups readily approached the ISB to come and start CBS programmes in their communities because of their prior trust in the ISB based on the ISB's option for the poor and marginalised groups. In contrast to the South African context, the CBS group in Glasgow initially encountered difficulties in identifying 'organised poor' groups in the West of Scotland to work with. They therefore accepted offers from organised groups that approached them to do CBS with them. Some of these groups are not necessarily marginalised groups but rather groups committed to working with marginalised people. Some groups are situated for instance in communities where marginalised people live.[80] The rationale behind this move is the assumption that if the Bible is read with organised groups working with and interested in marginalised people, it will, firstly, open their eyes to the text differently and create more awareness with respect to the plight of marginalised groups. Secondly, it will affect their bonding and solidarity with marginalised people and hopefully lead to the liberation and transformation of marginalised people and their communities. An example of such an effect was the Glasgow CBS program which they conducted, using James 2:14-17 as their text, with resource persons from the St. Mary's Episcopal Church's people connected with soup kitchen run by the Woodlands churches housing initiative, members of two housing associations, the local centre for the unemployed and the Clydebank District Council 'with' members of the St. Columba's Episcopal community which created awareness concerning the plight of homeless and unemployed people in Clydebank which, led participants advocating a publication on homelessness in Clydebank in one of the daily papers to bring this to the attention of those concerned. One can observe from the above outcome of the reading of James' epistle that it had made an impact on the theology of the members of this CBS group by redirecting it towards a theology that is interested in the concerns of under-privileged people. This is because the outcome of their reading indicates that they have started thinking more specifically of the text in terms of the social responsibility of their community to the

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[80] An example of such a group is the St. Columba's community that is situated in the housing estate of Clydebank near Glasgow.

poor and marginalised homeless people in their midst which probably was not given much attention prior to that particular CBS session.

7.5.3. The role of the ordinary reader

In contrast to the groups that the CBS in Glasgow is working with in the West of Scotland that consisted of literates, most of whose educational background is on a similar level to that of the trained reader, the groups that the ISB is working with has little or no western educational background at all as most of them are illiterates or residually literate. Also, with regard to the South African groups the trained reader in most cases is the only one trained in historical critical studies and possesses reading skills, whilst the others have little or no reading skills at all and have little or no formal theological training as well as training of any kind in historical critical studies. On top of all that, the trained reader is trained in the contextual Bible Study hermeneutical practice. Thus, in contrast to the CBS participants in Glasgow CBS group's programme, the gap between the trained readers and ordinary readers in the South African context is wider than that of the West of Scotland. The question now is whether the trained reader is able to play the role of 'an equal participant' in the reading practice in such a situation where there is such a noticeable gap between her/him and the ordinary readers she/he is reading the Bible with (particularly in the South African context).

Perhaps the awareness of the South African groups of the marked inequalities that exist between them and the trained readers, explains why they have requested for more participation in the reading process than the participants from the West of Scotland. For instance, whilst the West of Scotland participants want to participate in the framing of discussion questions, the South African groups are interested in a much earlier involvement in the reading process than that (i.e. the preparation of agenda).

7.5.4. The task of the trained Reader

From the above-mentioned description of marginalised groups and the type of organised groups that the CBS group in the West of Scotland is dealing with, the question therefore is, what then, is the task of the trained reader? As we have already observed, firstly, the type of trained reader needed to read 'with' people working among marginalised groups in the West of Scotland would be different from that needed in South Africa. For instance, some participants in the West of Scotland may posses critical and reading skills whilst in most cases in South Africa, it is only the trained

reader who possesses such skills. Secondly, the expectations and actual outcomes or experiences from the readings surveyed in the West of Scotland indicate that there is the need for a particular type of trained reader. In the South African context, the task of the trained reader is to challenge conventional readings that are used by oppressors to subjugate politically marginalised groups who are economically oppressed and poor. On the other hand, even though in the West of Scotland context the trained reader is expected to reclaim the text for the marginalised people, his/her task is not related to people's economic status mainly; it includes other forms of marginalisation that are socially and legally conditioned and have generated dominant church readings that do not resonate with the needs and concerns of the type of marginalised people that have been listed by the CBS group of the West of Scotland.

In conclusion, therefore, can we say that the task of the trained reader would vary from context to context, depending on the nature of the oppression or marginalisation prevalent in the context that he/she is dealing with? This is why it is very important for trained readers to have a high degree of awareness of the marginalised groups they are working with. Comparatively, the ISB in South Africa seems to display more awareness of the context of the marginalised groups they are working with than the CBS in the West of Scotland.

7.5.5. Dealing with conventional readings of biblical texts

One of the expectations emphasised by respondents from the Student Christian Movement (from the West of Scotland survey) is 'to challenge conventional interpretation'. This implies that they expect the CBS hermeneutical practice to enable them break the hold of conventional readings that have been the monopoly of a few people in the church establishment over past decades. The ISB which is committed to liberative readings of the Bible is also aimed at challenging these conventional readings, against the background of South Africa where the Bible was used to legitimise apartheid and oppression. Here the emergence of liberative readings was geared towards regaining confidence in the Bible and reclaiming it for the oppressed blacks in South Africa. In each case, the church establishment was used as the instrument of marginalisation of the poor and under-privileged (that is, in the West of Scotland as well as in South Africa). Even though the Bible is not used as an oppressive tool in the same way in Western Europe, it was also seen as oppressive in a different way. In most cases, official readings are seen as inhibiting and oppresive by groups like Lesbian and Gay Christians. Also, as noted by the SCM group, 'power-centric' readings by the established Church could be categorised as oppressive to the ordinary Western European Christian.

However, the difference between usage of the Bible among marginalised people in Africa and Western Europe is that whilst in Africa there is a strong belief in the symbolic acceptance of the Bible as a whole as an *icon* of their hope for life, on the other hand, in Western Europe there is the general feeling that the Bible has been lost to the status quo and the established churches through their conventional interpretations that do not meet the needs of the underclass and the under-privileged. Hence, the challenge that each context faces (as I have already noted earlier) is to re-define the role of the Bible as a dialogue partner in dealing with issues within their respective socio-cultural contexts. This re-definition of the role of the Bible must ensure that biblical interpretation is not the monopoly of one sector of the society. Hermeneutical practices must be developed that would make it possible for the Bible to be reclaimed by those who feel maginalised by previous reading practices.

7.5.6. Connections between context and text

We also observed that in the reading process of the surveys with respect to the West of Scotland, participants spend more time on the historical critical reading of the text and are only willing to connect it with their own context when they are sure that they have got this right, whilst in the South African context participants readily make connections between their context and the text they are reading. In conclusion, is it probably because of the differences in the attitude of marginalised people in Africa and Western Europe towards the Bible? With regard to Africans, Yorke has argued that the resilience of the African culture best explains their approaches towards the Bible which he refers to as ' literalist and quasi-magical' (Yorke 1997: 152). Thus, the Bible as a whole, 'is generally regarded as an instrument capable of facilitating psychological and cultural liberation' (Yorke 1997: 155). This implies that the sheer context of marginalisation which is part of the African religious heritage in pre-colonial and post colonial-periods (Mugambi 1988: 52), has contributed towards an attitude towards the Bible as an instrument for recovery of identity and resistance but this is done within the context of the religious belief that the Bible itself has the power and moral fibre to do so and not to fulfill the agenda of the wicked oppressors. Whilst the task of the trained reader in South Africa starts with a general acceptance of the Bible as a powerful book that needs to be used for liberation by the participants, in Western Europe it starts from recapturing and creating the awareness that the Bible is indeed capable of liberating the marginalised, by making them aware of how liberative readings can reclaim the Bible for them and thus make the Bible resonate with their concerns and needs. Thus, the trained reader has a lot to do before any connections can be made, as the participants together with the trained

reader are conscious of the historical distance that exists between their context and the context of the Bible, whilst those in Africa start with a Bible with which they are at home and therefore would not want to spend too much time getting its historical and literary background right as they can easily relate issues that are raised to their context without any inhibitions. Indeed there are merits and demerits in each case.

For instance, in the South African context, there is the danger of short-circuiting and making false pairings between text and context, whilst in the West of Scotland context, one can get stuck in the historical critical discussion without having the opportunity to connect the text to the context of the participants. In each of these cases, the expertise of the trained reader is needed to use his/her skills to facilitate the reading process so as to be critical as well as contextual largely depending on the nature of the context they are dealing with.

7.5.7. Relationship between culture and interpretation

As we have observed from the beginning of this thesis, the cultural heritage as well as the cultural changes that a particular group of people undergo in a particular place at a particular time influence their hermeneutical practices. As we have observed, the classical German culture influenced the types of hermeneutical practices that they developed to respond to their socio-cultural contexts. There is a similar trend in Africa, where the socio-cultural context has determined the types of hermeneutical approaches that evolved in Twentieth Century Africa. There were continuities as well as discontinuities with historical critical interpretation, even though all the African biblical scholars were trained in historical biblical interpretative approaches.

However, when you come to ordinary readers, a few general comments could be made from a comparison of the Contextual Bible Study with marginalised groups in the West of Scotland and South Africa.

Firstly, from the definition of who the poor and marginalised are, one notices that one is operating with different cultural heritage and cultural changes. One is basically a Western European culture and the other is an African culture. For instance, whilst in the West of Scotland the marginalisation of Lesbian and Gay Christians is a major cultural issue, in South Africa it is comparatively not so. And whilst women covering their hair during religious worship is a major cultural issue in South Africa, it is comparatively not a major cultural issue in the West of Scotland.

Secondly, the expectations from the Bible are different among ordinary readers. Even though they are basically involved in ordinary readings with the desire to obtain something from it for their contexts directly, due to the differences in their cultural contexts, the issues and questions that they name as expectations are those that resonate with each cultural context in which that biblical interpretation is taking place. This is evident in the expectations mentioned by the participants.

Thirdly, the expectations arise from within the conceptual framework of the group in question. Basically, the conceptual framework with which the West of Scotland Contextual Bible Study is working is a Western European frame of reference. Thus, their attitude to the Bible, their engagement in interpreting texts and the practical usefulness to which they put biblical texts, is related to the Western European world view and ethos as the basic theoretical assumptions that inform both ordinary and scholarly readers in their interpretation. Similarly, the expectations of ordinary readers in Africa arise within the context of an African frame work. The question that this poses therefore with respect to African scholarly readings is, how do we handle the expectations of ordinary readers which comes from an African conceptual frame work, in a situation where you still have a group of trained readers who have been trained in Western European frame work and are detached from the African frame work? How will they be able to fulfill the task of assisting in the development of liberative readings and also deal with oppressive cultural issues?

What we have observed is that there are complex influences (socio-cultural, political, religious) that affect biblical interpretation in Africa. The task of the trained reader is to be exposed to these complex situations through his/her interaction with the custodians of these influences who are the ordinary readers in order to be able to participate effectively in the development of liberative readings and the reconstruction of African forms of theology.

7.5.8. Relationship of biblical interpretation with historical critical readings and literary context of the text

As we have already noted, most of the African biblical scholars were trained in the historical critical approach to biblical interpretation. However, since the historical critical and literary approaches were developed within the Western context, both the trained readers and the ordinary readers in the West of Scotland utilise it relatively more than the trained readers and the ordinary readers in South Africa. That is why one of the concerns of the ordinary readers in the West of Scotland is not to get so stuck into the

historical reading of the text that they do not get beyond it to apply the text to their own context. They would therefore like to partake in a reading that would go beyond that stage. On the other hand, the challenge of the trained readers, reading with ordinary readers in South Africa in this respect, is rather the danger of getting stuck in the context of interpretation without being able to deal adequately with the context of the text (historical critical and literary dimensions of the reading process).

7.5.9. *Conversational reading and participation in the reading of biblical texts*

Some of the concerns expressed by the West of Scotland respondents concerning the process of facilitating the Contextual Bible Study were that

'Trained readers must not impose their questions and views on the participants'
'Trained readers must not come to the CBS with a "hidden agenda" to impose upon us but come with open minds to discuss the Bible critically with us'.

Also, according to the ISB (South Africa) evaluation that we carried out, the respondents would want to be part of the reading process from beginning to the end. They would like to take part in drawing the agenda for the ISB Contextual Bible Study workshops and seminars. This includes the selection of themes, formulation of questions etc. However, it is not only in the planning stage of the program that ordinary readers would want more participation but also in interchange that takes place during the reading itself. For instance, the Kenosis women's community indicated that some of the things they cherish concerning the facilitation process of the CBS are the following:

1. 'Freedom to speak our minds'

2. 'The Contextual Bible Study process has generated effective group dynamics which enables the shy ones to come out both in the small group discussions and plenary sessions'

When we come to the West of Scotland survey, it has also been expressed by respondents that the CBS reading practice 'motivates me to read the Bible as part of a group and this helps me to have the input of others to reflect on'. This shows the commendation that the respondents give to discussion and dialogue in the CBS reading practice. However as we have already noted, for the groups in the West of Scotland, for the concept of reading 'with' the marginalised groups to be effective, the process of

reading must be dialogical and discursive. This in a sense assumes that the trained reader is there to facilitate the reading process. He/she should therefore see her/himself as a participant in a co-operative reading practice. Thus, even though it is similar to the CBS reading practice Gerald West speaks of; that is, reading the Bible 'with' marginalised people, what is emerging from its practice in the West of Scotland is the importance attached to its cooperative, discursive and dialogical reading process. This perhaps is in West's mind when he states that Contextual Bible Study 'is committed to corporate and communal reading of the Bible in which the trained reader is just another reader' (West 1995: 65).

This involves consultation from the drawing of the agenda in the preparatory stage and also the employment of a conversational reading methodology during the CBS sessions.

7.5.10. Action Plans

With respect to the ISB's work among the poor and marginalised, the action plan is normally the expected outcome of the reading process. Since the reading process is aimed at the empowerment and transformation of the marginalised people, at the end of the reading it is expected that it would lead them to an action plan that is empowering and transformatory. However, even though empowerment and transformation may be taking place in the readings in the West of Scotland, it is not stressed and emphasised directly, in contrast to the South African context. For example, in Gerald West's readings of Mark 5:21-6:1 with the Umtata women in South Africa in his 'Constructing critical and Contextual Readings with ordinary Readers' (1995b), a question directly related to the action plan is, 'In what way does this text speak to us today?' (West 1995b: 62). The response to this question as stated by Gerald West is that

> In one group, for example, women began to explore ways of lobbying the new government to make health care for women a priority. In another group, the women decided to design a series of Bible studies that would make men in their congregations more conscious of the structures and attitudes that oppress women (West 1995b : 63).

This means that, in the small group discussions, action plans are discussed and then shared when they come together in the South African CBS plenary sessions whilst it is not part of the Glasgow CBS to discuss action plans directly and to seek a formulation and implementation of corporate action plans.

7.5.11. Outputs of the Reading Process

As I have already mentioned in the conclusion of my observations concerning the Glasgow CBS, the output of their reading process is limited to assisting or helping people to appropriate biblical texts for their own contexts. In contrast, to the ISB's reading practice which not only involves scholarly readers generating readings with ordinary readers but also involves documenting the outputs of the conversational readings, the Glasgow CBS stops at the point of generating readings. There is no continuation of the discursive process by critical reflection and academic recording by the Glasgow CBS group. The Glasgow CBS group needs to embark on the above-mentioned practice. This is necessary because, the academic recording and critical reflection of the ISB's CBS makes its output more accessible to a wider context than that of the Glasgow CBS.

7.5.12. Conclusion

Hence, as the above concluding remarks have shown, there are similarities as well as differences between the CBS practiced in South Africa and that practiced in the West of Scotland. This highlights the influence of context on the CBS hermeneutical practice. Firstly, this implies that, even though the underlying factor, marginalisation, is common to all the groups that the CBS is working with in South Africa and the West of Scotland, there are diverse ways that people are marginalised and the type of marginalisation determines the types of issues, questions and concerns that one would want to raise in Contextual Bible Study. Secondly, for effective use of CBS, the trained reader is to be conversant with the issues, questions, that concern the marginalised group with which she/he wants to read the Bible. This would assist in the formulation of more informed questions for the group to focus on in their discussions. Thirdly, the participants ought to be part of the reading practice from beginning to the end. This means that there is the need for participants to be consulted in the preparatory stage in the choice of themes, topics or texts for the CBS process and also should be part of the formulation of questions and action plans of the reading practice. Fourthly, dialogue, discussion and conversation has emerged as crucial elements in the CBS reading process. This approach, (that is, the dialogical and conversational approach) will go a long way in establishing transparency and openness among the discourse partners (i.e. ordinary and scholarly readers).

Finally, it seems to me that the peculiarity of this reading practice is the choice made by trained readers to be partially constituted by marginalised groups for a liberative reading

practice. This implies that there is the need to look at what might be the possible outcomes whenever scholarly readers are partially constituted by ordinary readers and marginalised groups.

In sum, two main issues emerge from this chapter. Firstly, the issue of the transferability of hermeneutical models from one context to the other. We observed that even though it was possible to transfer the CBS model from South Africa to the West of Scotland, there were a number of structural adjustments to be made before it could be adopted in the Scottish context. Secondly, the issue of relationships between dialogue partners also comes up very strongly. For instance, the relationship between the Bible and Scottish people is different from the relationship between the Bible and South Africans. Also, the relationship between ordinary readers and scholarly readers is also different, as the gap between South African ordinary readers and scholarly readers is wider than that of the Scottish.

In the light of the issues, mentioned above, I would like to make some recommendations towards effective biblical interpretation in Africa, which is based on the interaction between ordinary readers and scholarly readers in the concluding chapter of this thesis.

PART III

Suggestions For Effective Biblical Interpretation In Africa.

Chapter Eight

8. Towards effective biblical interpretation and reconstruction of forms of African theology: The task ahead and some recommendations.

Introduction

The previous chapters of this thesis have already looked at the development of hermeneutical practices in Africa. The task that the African biblical scholar and theologian has undertaken in the past and what ought to be done to make it more effective in contemporary times have been raised in our review and analysis of the hermeneutical practices that evolved in various parts of Africa. We have also looked at current trends in African christianity and the move towards the theology of reconstruction in contemporary times. We have also evaluated and surveyed how ordinary readers use the Bible and the control that leaders maintain over the diverse usage of the Bible in various Churches by looking at the Port Harcourt Survey and carrying out additional surveys in Jos/Mubi (Northern Nigeria) and in Madina (Southern Ghana). Furthermore, we have looked at how ordinary readers may interact with scholarly readers by evaluating the CBS programs of the ISB in South Africa and the CBS group in Glasgow.

This is necessary because according to Bernard Lategan, the collaborative hermeneutics between scholarly readers' and ordinary readers' context is the way forward in hermeneutics in Africa.[81] He argued that

> Once the constitutive contribution of the receiver or audience and its role in co-determining the meaning of the biblical message are accepted, the rise of various forms of contextual theology becomes understandable and even predictable (Lategan 1997: 117).

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[81] Bernard Lategan made this comment in his article entitled 'Possible Future trends From the perspective of Hermeneutics' which was published in the *Journal of Theology for South Africa, 99,* 1997: 116-121.

Lategan's argument is that the shift of hermeneutics from *history* to *structure*, that is, from the origins of the text to the text '...in turn, brought reception theory and reader response criticism into sharp focus' (Lategan 1997: 117). Thus, the hermeneutical practices that African hermeneuts have adopted can function effectively only if they are carried out within a context where ordinary readers are not just recipients but also dialogue partners in the reading process from beginning to end.

It is therefore necessary at this point to draw together my findings by focusing on the following questions:

1. Who are the partners in the reconstruction of African theologies and what are their agenda?

2. What kinds of methodology/ies do they employ in their theological reconstruction?

3. What are or should be the outputs or products of their attempts to reconstruct forms of African theology?

This then leads to the final section; which is the recommendations that this thesis makes towards effective biblical interpretation and the reconstruction of forms of African theology.

8.1. Who are the partners in the reconstruction of African theologies and what is their agenda and expectations?

8.1.1. Profile of discourse partners

One way of constructing the profile of ordinary readers is by looking at the points of view from which they read the Bible. Our surveys and evaluations in parts of West Africa and South Africa have indicated that we have a great diversity of ordinary readers: Evangelical/ Pentecostal ordinary readers, African Instituted ordinary readers, Mainline orthodox ordinary readers as well as *faith Gospel/deliverance*/charismatic[82] ordinary readers.

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[82] The message of the *faith Gospel Churches* was basically 'that faith will bring you health, success, plenty and power' (Gifford 1997: 85) in the 1980s which has come to be dominated by *deliverance theology* in the 1990s.'The basic idea of deliverance is that the Christian's progress and advance can be blocked by demons who maintain some power over him despite his or her coming to Christ' (97). For details see Paul Gifford's *African Christianity: Its Public Role* (London: Hurst, 1998).

Each of these groups is, in very different ways, in debt both to their cultural heritage and missionary heritage. The social and economic situation of these groups is also varied: urban poor, rural poor, elite, literate, non-literate, etc., which also have bearings on their usage of the Bible[83].

8.1.2. Agenda of discourse partners

The agenda of ordinary readers in Africa is diverse. The findings of the Port Harcourt survey indicated that survival was the main agenda of ordinary readers in their usage of the Bible, addressing problems of health, employment, fertility etc. However, my evaluations and surveys in Madina in Southern Ghana, Jos/Mubi in Northern Nigeria, ISB in South Africa indicates that there are other agenda items that ordinary readers are interested in. There are ordinary readers who are interested in survival theology. But there are those who are also interested in exorcism. There are those preoccupied with spiritual deliverance and physical deliverance. There were also those interested in using the Bible as a moral code for regulating life, especially in Jos/Mubi in Nigeria. Others see the Bible as a vehicle for re-enforcing certain cultural values whilst others see the Bible as transcending their cultural heritage and therefore as a means for influencing the development of their contemporary context. Thus, the agenda of ordinary readers with respect to their usage of the Bible is diverse and not only related to material satisfaction but to a wide spectrum of concerns and contextual issues.

Scholarly readers can be identified as African theologians in post-colonial and post-missionary Africa who also have diverse denominational backgrounds, missionary heritage, traditional cultural heritage, are elite, middle class urbanised and part of a global net-work of theologians. Scholarly readers are equipped with academic critical skills. This is where according to J & J Comaroff, the legacy of western academic theology with which African theologians are trained becomes a useful tool for this exercise as that type of training is a double-edged sword which can be used to undermine African culture as well as to subvert imperialistic or alien forms of theology (*see J &J.Comaroff's comments on imperialist theology under section 2*). However, one

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[83] However, with the influx of deliverance and faith ministries in the large metropolitan and urban cities, there is a large proportion of the urban elite who belong to these churches who can be classified as ordinary readers.

of the notable characteristics of scholarly readers in Africa is their sense of detachment from ordinary readers. This is captured by Musa Dube's statement after her return from her theological studies in Durham and Vanderbilt as follows

> I had read many illuminating theories of excellent biblical scholars. But the journey was one that took me further from home. I was by and large in dialogue with Western reading communities, who constitute the majority of the academy.... Meanwhile, I knew little or nothing about biblical readers whom I heard interpreting the Bible loudly as I walked down the streets of my home. I had taken no pains to learn the techniques of reading employed by biblical readers, whom I heard during the night, burning their midnight oil, reading the Bible poetically, dramatically and loudly (Dube 1998: 1).

The definition of the African theologian as detached from the popular context of African self-description implies that his/her active interaction and dialogue with ordinary readers is necessary if the theologian wants to be involved in effective theological reflection and reconstruction in his or her context.

Scholarly readers have varied agendas. For instance, there are inculturation agendas as well as liberation agendas among scholarly readers in Africa.

In more recent times, the need to seek a more comprehensive agenda has led to the theology of reconstruction which addresses diversity of concerns of ordinary readers and can therefore draw on their reworkings of tradition. Contextual theology has a certain agenda that is related to its own tradition. The agenda of African theologians in the post-colonial and post-missionary era is to reconstruct African theology/ies in their own context/s. Thus, specifically, African theologians are looking for African forms of theology which are inculturated, which also encompass its cultural history as well as the economic and political realities of Africans.

In order to implement this agenda, scholarly readers are of the opinion that there is the need for them to interact closely with ordinary readers, whom they regard as the ones who possess the contextual inputs, (specifically in terms of agenda: resources, ability to create new readings, subvert official readings), which is needful for the reconstruction of forms of African theology. For most African theologians believe that there are gaps in their contextual experience and exposure that can be adequately filled only by ordinary readers.

In a sense, the task of the African theologian is perceived in similar vain as Schleiermacher's perception of theological reflection as normative self-description of faith within the parameters of one's own context. [84] African theologians therefore need to be in tune with what is happening in their contexts in order to be able to undertake any meaningful theological reflection which will be classified as the normative self-description of the Christian faith in their communities.

Thus, scholarly readers will like to read with ordinary readers, giving due consideration to the agendas of the ordinary readers. However, in most cases, even though scholarly readers feel they are fulfilling the agendas of ordinary readers by reading with ordinary readers, they are actually fulfilling their own agendas. This is because there can be conflicting agendas between ordinary readers and scholarly readers as we observed in some of our surveys in West Africa and South Africa.

For instance, in the South African context, whilst the scholarly reader expects the product of the reading process to be an action plan which will lead to liberation in their respective contexts, the ordinary readers expect a bit more from their interactive reading with the ISB. In some cases, they expect the product of the reading practice to lead to recognition and the power to perform certain functions that they were not allowed to perform previously. For instance, most of the young women from the Kenosis community are primarily concerned about the ability to develop the confidence and ability to work with others in their communities. They are less interested in appropriating liberating readings that may lead them into conflicts in their communities. For instance, to raise issues about women covering their hair during worship in a cultural context that defines womanhood by hair covering is to involve themselves in conflict that they would find difficult to manage.

Also, in Port Harcourt, in Nigeria, Ukpong's agenda was that of using inculturation methodology to read the Bible in the Nigerian context. This, he believed, would be the way forward in the usage of the Bible among ordinary readers. On the other hand the Port Harcourt survey indicated that survival methodology was what the ordinary readers were looking for to deal with issues related to childlessness, joblessness, illnesses etc. Furthermore, additional surveys from Jos and Mubi in Nigeria indicated that ordinary readers in Nigeria are pre-occupied with additional agendas like moral code, exorcism, deliverance etc.

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[84] For details on theological reflection as normative self-description, see Schleiermacher's *The Brief Outline on the study of Theology*. Translated with introductions and notes by Terrence N.Tice. Richmond: John Knox, 1966.

The survey of the usage of the Bible in Madina (Ghana) and Jos/Mubi (Nigeria) also showed conflicts in the agendas of ordinary readers and those who read with them (i.e. Pastors, biblical scholars etc.). Most readings received by ordinary readers are pietistic readings from scholarly readers, pastors and trained readers. In contrast to my findings from Madina, Jos and Mubi, some of their expectations are based on African world view and ethos, (e.g. issues related to the traditional conception of life as 'naanowala' 'daa nkwa' as expressed by the Akans and Gas in Madina in Southern Ghana. Other expectations are directly related to economic necessities (e.g. obtaining one's daily bread and getting a job etc.), expressed by both Madina and Jos/Mubi participants. Thus, the ordinary readers were expecting something more than the pietistic readings that they received from those who read with them.

Hence, there are complex agendas of ordinary readers that the scholarly readers who are supposed to be the dialogue partners of ordinary readers do not realise or comprehend fully.

8.2. What kinds of methodology/ies do ordinary and scholarly readers employ in their theological reconstruction?

At this point, it is important to look at some of the methods and approaches that involve ordinary readers and scholarly readers in a communal discourse.

8.2.1. Dialogical methodologies and approaches to biblical interpretation

In contemporary times, African theologians often opt for reading models that give privilege to the concerns of the ordinary reader by allowing ordinary readers to shape the conversation with these concerns in one's interpretative process. (Examples are the CBS reading process of the ISB in South Africa, Dube's Semoya readings, Ukpong's readings from the stand point of peasant farmers in West Africa etc.). This is where Gerald West proposed that the collaborative reading process should give epistemological privilege to ordinary readers. In West's view, the ISB is committed to the above-mentioned principle in its reading practice as the scholarly readers and trained readers in the ISB have chosen to be partially constituted by ordinary readers.

However, these readings did not go far enough to indicate how practically these reading practices are perceived by the ordinary readers themselves. My evaluation of the ISB's

CBS and the Glasgow CBS group shows that the ordinary readers would want to be involved in every aspect of the reading process. This means that ordinary readers are asking scholarly readers to give them greater 'epistemological privilege' in the reading process as they do not seem to be satisfied with the privileges they enjoy in the reading process. Thus, in both the ISB and the Glasgow CBS group, there is the feeling by most respondents that the scholarly readers are either imposing their agenda and their views on them or have a 'hidden agenda'. What the ordinary readers are looking for is equal participation in the reading process, from beginning to the end and not to be merely present at the reading practice. Thus, the roles the ordinary readers are looking for are not merely *making use* of scholarly readers but rather being equal discourse partners as indicated by the surveys and evaluations. For instance, most of the issues dealt with in the *Semeia* volume 73 which we reviewed earlier in this thesis are basically the agenda items of scholarly readers which they presume are the agenda items of ordinary readers.

8.2.2. Power Relations

In all the reading practices that we have looked at, one will not fail to observe that there are always unequal power relations between dialogue partners (i.e. ordinary readers and scholarly readers). Consider members of the ISB going from the University of Natal to Amawoti, for instance. There is always bound to be unequal power relations between them. Particularly, if Gerald West, a male, middle class white theologian goes to Amawoti to read with uneducated members of African Instituted Churches in Amawoti on one hand, the feeling of the participants that West has the power to unlock scriptural truth to the AIC members cannot be ruled out. The question is, how do you achieve a dialogical situation that will enable the dialogue partners in such a situation to achieve dominance-free discourse ?

The solution to this issue of power relations is to try to optimise dialogue but not to give total epistemological privilege to one group or the other. That can be done by scholarly readers and ordinary readers giving respect that is appropriate to the views of one another. Also it is important to make sure that the medium of communication is that one which ordinary readers feel comfortable with. It must not be a foreign language as most ordinary readers feel more comfortable with their mother tongues. Also, solidified language loaded with theological jargon ought to be avoided by scholarly readers as that causes distortion in the communicative process.

However, even after scholarly readers have taken all the precautions we have discussed in order to optimise dialogue, it still does not guarantee that there will be a dominance-

free dialogue. That is, how do you achieve a dialogical situation that will enable dialogue partners to achieve dominance-free discourse ? This is because ordinary readers in most African contexts can choose to agree to everything that the scholarly reader says not because they genuinely accept those things but because of lack of openness between the ordinary readers and the scholarly readers. For instance, because of the economic power that the scholarly reader most often possesses in Africa, ordinary readers will agree with the views of the scholarly reader so as to ensure that they do not loose out being in partnership with an economically stronger person or institution which the scholarly reader is representing. Also, the economically weaker partners (the oppressed and marginalised ordinary readers) have their own way of manipulating the collaborative reading process and relationship as a whole. This can be done by ordinary readers manipulating the scholarly reader by making the scholarly reader feel that they are actually making progress in their appropriation of the outcome of the reading process by agreeing to most of the things that the scholarly readers put across to them whilst in actual fact ordinary readers are not. Ordinary readers can decide to tell the scholarly reader what they think scholarly readers wants to hear. Also, in situations where the scholarly readers have long standing relations with each other, ordinary readers will prefer to keep the relationship going by not differing from the scholarly reader's views. This is because, considering the fact that they are poor and marginalised people and with little or no academic and theological education, they feel proud and elevated by having a relationship with middle class theologians from a higher economic class. I observed this during my visit to the ISB. The criticisms and misgivings that both the Kenosis women and the Amawoti women have concerning feminist readings that they were collaboratively undertaking with the ISB was not voiced out until the external evaluation exercise conducted by Sipho Mtetwa and his team of research students indicated that even though the ISB assumed that they were dialoguing with the Kenosis and Amawoti women on women's liberation, actually the women participants had their reservations concerning its particular out-working in their community.

The question therefore is, how can existing methodologies cope with dominance? In a sense, if a middle class theologian enters an African Instituted Church, it will in a way constitute the undermining of the power of the Church officials in that Church as he/she will be viewed as some one coming from another power base (mainline, academic, urban etc.) with perhaps the air of superiority. In some cases there is the fear by Church leaders that the academic theologian's influence can lead to indoctrinating members which can lead to Church members revolting against the authority and teachings of their Church leaders or officials.

Also, in situations like Amawoti where there are unequal power relations, we observed that a different story is being told (as ordinary readers are not actually coming out with what they actually think and feel for fear of loosing a long standing relationship with a superior power) which means that there is a sense in which unequal power relations are masking or obscuring the reading process.

What is needed to make the reading process effective is for scholarly readers to embark on a confidence building exercise between themselves and the ordinary readers. This will take some time to achieve. This is because it will take time to breach the barriers that exist between poor and marginalised people in order to start coming out with their 'hidden transcript' which is related to their genuine concerns and views when reading 'with' the scholarly readers instead of the 'public transcript' which is normally the superficial and official views which ordinary readers who are conscious and lack confidence in scholarly readers normally think scholarly readers wants to hear.

Our surveys and research in West Africa and South Africa have pointed up the tensions that exist between ordinary readers and scholarly readers. With respect to my own experience, I found my visits to some of the African Instituted Churches, Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches in Madina to be full of tension and suspicion as to what an African theologian from a mainline Church studying in the United Kingdom is looking for in an African Independent/Pentecostal/ Faith Gospel/ Charismatic Church. I felt strange and scared from the start and they were very suspicious and it therefore took several days of visitation to those Churches, a series of meetings with elders and pastors to establish a rapport between us. In some cases, pastors had to seek permission from their head office and senior pastors before permission could be given. In some cases permission was not granted.

Also, during my evaluations and visits to the CBS groups in Glasgow and South Africa, there was sometimes the uneasiness of ordinary readers, and lack of confidence in the trained reader, especially in the one-off programs. In contrast, the groups that the CBS groups in Glasgow and South Africa have worked with on long term basis are relatively more relaxed and display some degree of confidence in the trained readers.

In conclusion, the most effective methodologies and approaches to collaborative reading between ordinary and scholarly readers will be the ones that have confidence building mechanisms built into them. This is because of the gap that exist between ordinary readers and scholarly readers, the power relations between them and sometimes even the language barrier between them (Vernacular/ English, French, Portuguese, Spanish etc.).

8.2.3. Different modes of theological reconstruction

We now turn our attention to the different modes by which forms of African theology can be reconstructed. In trying to face up to this task mentioned above, it is necessary for scholars to be closely in touch with ordinary readers. This means that scholars need to be interactive with the diverse readings that occur among ordinary readers in various parts of Africa. It is therefore not enough for theologians to identify what kind of readings need to be done with African Instituted Churches or with those involved in *faith gospel or with deliverance* movements. The theologian has to go in there and work with those people in order to reconstruct theology from 'below' or from the ordinary readers. This implies that the theologian has to be aware of the different approaches to reading the Bible that are being employed by ordinary readers in the diverse contexts in Africa. In one single context in Africa for example, you are bound to have *faith gospel/deliverance readings*, mainline, and African Instituted readings of biblical concepts and texts.

For instance, Musa Dube reading the Bible with African Instituted Church women in Botswana will be different from her reading the same text with ordinary readers of the Anglican Church in Botswana or congregational Church women in Botswana. This is because one is contending with issues like missionary heritage (with regard to mainline churches), post-colonial, post-missionary heritage and its legacies that linger on in most African contexts, traditional cultural issues, economic and political issues, and the charismatic explosion among the urban elite in various parts of Africa.

If one is to reconstruct theology in dialogue with the different Churches and groups, it means that the different voices of ordinary readers have to be heard in the reconstruction process.

Thus, the challenge that scholarly readers in Africa are faced with in contemporary times is to find methods by which they can actually penetrate these complex layers of influence on biblical interpretation in order to be able to read with ordinary readers.

In summary, my study has made the varieties of hermeneutics in Africa more apparent. What becomes more and more apparent is that as people seek to reconstruct African theology they are going to pay greater and greater attention to the varieties of hermeneutical models that are around. This makes it more imperative to get people talking to each other and being aware of each other's agenda. Thus, the more scholarly readers are aware of the varieties of African theology the more they will find it necessary to get people involved in these theologies (i.e. both ordinary and scholarly readers) to talk to each other. Different theologians and ordinary readers respond to different situations and different needs but there is still the need for theologians to talk to each other and also to talk to the ordinary readers.

8.3. What are/will be the most appropriate outputs or products of the attempts by scholarly readers to reconstruct forms of African theology?

With regard to appropriate outputs or products of scholarly theological reconstruction in Africa, we will focus on 1. academic reporting and; 2. Collecting and analysing popular readings.

8.3.1. Academic Reporting

One of the out-puts or products of the collaborative reading practice is academic reporting of both the reading process and product. Thus the role that scholarly readers play in this respect is to compile, systematize, analyse and present a report of their collaborative readings with ordinary readers in an academic format for the academy.

With respect to the Contextual Bible Study and other forms of reading 'with' ordinary readers, in a sense, the reading that would be presented is just part of the story which is the story of the scholarly reader. The ordinary readers would also take theirs away with them to put into practice or act upon corporately or individually in their own communities. However, the presentation that the scholarly reader makes is still an outcome of the communicative action between him/her and ordinary readers but directed to the academy to which the scholarly reader also belongs. It is therefore crucial for the scholarly reader to learn to present his/her readings in such a systematic way that it would be acceptable in the academy. This would entail copious note-taking, transcribing and restructuring so as to make it meaningful for the academy. Gerald West's presentation of his reading with the Umtata women is a well structured reading.

For Gerald West, on his part, states that this reading went through a workshop with a Masters class in the School of Theology, University of Natal, whose responses were allowed to re-shape the reading of the Umtata women. He also states that-

> The final stage in the development of the reading presented in this article included some additional systematic structuring and further textual and sociological support for the reading that had already emerged from the contextual Bible study process (West 1993: 64).

This is an attempt by Gerald West to do an academic reporting of his readings with ordinary readers.

With respect to the use of such academic reports, firstly, it is to generate awareness among academic readers concerning liberative readings that can take place between ordinary readers and scholarly readers, which then becomes one of the approaches to biblical interpretation that can be adapted by others in other contexts. Academic reporting of the liberative type can also lead to uncovering what James Scott's calls the 'hidden transcripts' of poor and marginalised people which can lead to subversive readings of official readings of texts and concepts that have been used to marginalise and oppress people.

Also, in the academic reporting of Musa Dube with respect to her Semoya reading, there is the reconstruction of a framework for reconstructing African theology which can be adapted and applied in other contexts. This could be a way forward in the development of African cosmology which will be of use in the reconstruction of forms of African theology. This is because if scholarly readers are to succeed in reconstructing forms of African theology, then there is the need to identify different modes of discourse that could be employed in this reconstruction.

Also, most of the ordinary readers from Amawoti who are leaders of African Instituted Churches will like the outcome of the CBS or of their engagement with the ISB to lead to their being able to officiate the marriages of their members, which hitherto, they were not permitted to do but the mainline pastors are permitted to do so by the civil authorities. This will be in the form of documents they collect and certificates that are awarded that will give them authority to practice more effectively in their communities and churches.

8.3.2. Generating, collecting and analysing popular readings

There are various ways by which scholarly readers can have access to ordinary or popular readings without necessarily having direct discussion with ordinary readers. Firstly, this can be done by scholarly readers encouraging ordinary readers to produce their own materials and readings. This can be in the form of music, poems, art.

In some cases, scholarly readers can read 'with' ordinary readers, utilising the mediums of communication of ordinary readers as aids to the reading process. For instance, poems, role plays, mission statements can be composed by ordinary readers as aids to Bible Study with scholarly readers which can be sources of theological reflection by scholarly readers.

Secondly, scholarly readers can collect available ordinary readings which also find expression in music, art, and drama. Also popular reflections on biblical concepts or texts can be collected by scholarly readers. These popular readings are to be vigorously analysed, using cultural anthropological skills in order to give account of how they generate faith. Furthermore, these popular readings can be reflected upon by scholarly readers, by setting them alongside official readings and seeing how they help to reshape official discourse of the Church and how they are drawn from the Bible.

An example of this is Gerald West's 'Difference and Dialogue: Reading the Joseph Story with Poor and marginalised communities in South Africa (1994)' which is based on West's collection of the artistic presentations of Genesis 37-50 by Azariah Mbatha, a South African artist. According to Gerald West

> The African narrative reading of the Joseph Story by South African artist Azariah Mbatha offers us a resource for both the mode of reading (a close literary reading) and the theme of our reading (the presence of power)' (West 1994: 162).

Popular readings of Psalms and Proverbs could also be collected and analysed by scholarly readers in their respective contexts. An example of this is the readings of selected Psalms by Kameeta of Namibia which I have cited in this thesis with regard to the popular usage of Psalms by ordinary readers in Africa (*see* Kameeta's comments on Psalms under section 5.2.1.4).

Collecting, generating and analysing materials from ordinary readers gives the scholarly readers the opportunity to reflect deeply on them, paying much attention to the issues raised in them.

An example of output of a collaborative reading process which utilised the resources of ordinary readers as aids is the ISB's CBS program with the Natal West Synod at Newcastle in their reading of Luke 17-11-19 which led to deep reflection on the text and its association with AIDs sufferers. The small group discussions came up with poems, stories, mission statements and role plays based on the text. Firstly, it led to action plans which gave indications of the responsibilities of ordinary readers towards AIDs sufferers and how they can carry out their civil responsibility to those cast away and rejected by their society because they are suffering from AIDs. This gave them the confidence to seek ways of addressing the isolation that AIDs sufferers face in their societies. Secondly, this led to critical reflection on the text by the trained reader together with the entire group as Sibeko (the trained reader) utilised these popular expressions of the text in her final exegesis.

On the part of the scholarly reader, he/she has both a *maieutic* and a reflective task in the collaborative reading process.

The engagement of the scholarly reader with ordinary readers is in order to enable the birth or generation of contextual readings, which indicates the role of the scholarly reader as a midwife which can be described as a *maieutic* task. This *maieutic* task of the scholarly reader should not be limited to one set of voices (e.g. ordinary readers in AICs or deliverance/faith Gospel Churches only). This is because the conversation ought not to stop there. The scholarly reader should consult again with other voices like educated African experts who might bring different contributions to the conversation. For example, if the scholarly reader undertakes dialogue with ordinary readers in either AICs or Faith Gospel/deliverance groups concerning issues like AIDs, epilepsy, madness, childlessness, bareness which are health-related issues, the scholarly reader should proceed to discuss that particular health-related issue with educated medical or health experts (medical practitioners, nurses, etc.) in Africa so as to continue the dialogical process which the scholarly reader has initiated. This means that, the conversation does not stop with one dialogical dimension but it continues from one group to the other as more voices are enabled to participate in the reading process by the facilitation of the scholarly reader. The theologian or scholarly reader acts as the producer of these conversations by documenting and providing the forums for the discussions to take place among the different voices.

Alongside the *maieutic* task of the scholarly reader there should be a reflective task. This involves giving clarity as to where African theologies are going, based on the on-going conversations between theologians and diverse voices of ordinary readers in the diverse African contexts.

8.4. Conclusions

In conclusion, the question is, if scholarly readers are going to reconstruct a theology that is global, academic, and collaborative with ordinary readers in the complex African socio-cultural contexts, then what are some of the suggestions for undertaking such a task ? In response to this question, we will like to make some recommendations towards effective biblical interpretation and reconstruction of forms of African theology.

8.5. Recommendations

In summary, this study has brought to light a number of issues that perhaps could contribute to the enhancement of biblical interpretation in Africa and further draw attention to some of the pertinent issues that need to be considered by biblical interpreters globally.

In order to be able to achieve the collaborative readings that we have talked about in this thesis, there is the need to put a few things in place in order to strengthen already existing avenues for scholarly readers to engage in reading with ordinary readers and also to give indications to scholarly readers who would want to develop models of reading with ordinary readers in Africa. The final section of this thesis consists of recommendations which could enhance biblical interpretation in Africa.

8.5.1. Agendas and expectations of discourse partners

From the surveys carried out in the various contexts, we discovered that the agenda that ordinary readings put forward for the use of the Bible in many cases are not the same as those set by scholarly readings. This came out both in the processes of interpretation as well as the products of interpretation. This therefore means that the African scholarly

readers have some re-adjustments to make if they would still like to maintain their stance that the most suitable hermeneutical practices in Africa are those that are done with ordinary readers' world view and agendas as focus. In this respect, Gerald West suggested that scholarly readers ought to give *epistemological privilege* to ordinary readers.

The issue of *epistemological privilege* was raised by West in his proposal concerning the attention that one ought to give to the views of ordinary readers in the CBS reading practice. However, our surveys indicated that there are different ways that theologians have handled their interaction with ordinary readers or readings and the limits that they set on the *epistemological privilege* given to ordinary readers. However, it is difficult to perceive of giving complete *epistemological privilege* to ordinary readers. Firstly, because as we have noted, *epistemological privilege* has its limits. This is because certainly there can be situations where ordinary readers also need to listen to the views of scholarly readers and not for scholarly readers to accept all that ordinary readers say to them. The nearest that we have of an attempt to give complete *epistemological privilege* is that of Margaret Umeagoduso's readings of the Gerasane demoniac. Umeagoduso concluded her reading by saying that we should accept the usage of the Bible by healers and miracle workers in Africa without any comments because, they were 'not mere icing of the cake but the real thing'. This shows unquestioned acceptance of the stance and literary readings of Church officials, pastors and preachers.

The question is, with reference to the interaction between ordinary readers and scholarly readers, is it not more appropriate to talk about *epistemological respect* rather than *epistemological privilege*? In that respect, I will suggest that *dialogical privilege* is given to ordinary readers so as to ensure that their beliefs are listened to and taking seriously by scholarly readers whenever they read together. This *epistemological respect* ought to be taken into consideration in attempts to reconstruct forms of African theology by biblical scholars. Thus, *epistemological respect* ought to be given particularly to the custodians of ordinary readings (to African Instituted Churches, Faith Gospel/ Deliverance Churches etc., with due differentiation) so as to feel the gaps in the contextual experience of scholarly readers that can be filled only by these ordinary readers.

The way forward for theological reconstruction is for scholarly readers to take all the perspectives of ordinary readers including that of the Faith Gospel/ deliverance Churches into consideration in their theological reflection. This is because the above-mentioned Churches have a large urban and middle class membership and have taken

the place of the African Instituted Churches in the urban centres. This implies that *dialogical privilege* has to be given to the above mentioned Churches by being in conversation with them at the same time giving them *epistemological respect.*

The question to ask is, if conversation is to take place between scholars and the Faith Gospel/deliverance Churches, then what kind of a conversation would this be? Perhaps one has to listen and see how the above-mentioned Churches relate to traditional cultures. It is important also to find out what their conception of the Gospel is. For instance, what is the relationship between their conception of the Gospel to right wing American conservative and Charismatic view-points? Furthermore, what is the relationship of their conception of the Gospel to African traditional religious beliefs? What about their healing and deliverance practices; are they prevalent among people that are without alternative forms of healing and respite and therefore have little or no choice but to result to these Churches for help? Perhaps, the solution to this is the active participation of theologians in the radical reconstruction of society rather than allowing the break down in health facilities and economic necessities to drive the Church in Africa into resulting to thaumaturgical forms of Christianity to solve the problems of ordinary people who desperately need help.

The point here is for the scholarly reader to play a mediating role between western scientific approaches to issues like health and cultural approaches to it. This is because the contemporary approaches to health and wealth (which are closely related to traditional culture) in the African Instituted Churches and the Faith Gospel/Deliverance Churches can sometimes lead to disastrous consequences for ordinary readers (some times it results in death that can be avoided if given medical attention).[85] Infertility, epilepsy, mental illness, are a few examples that could be better tackled by scholarly readers working hand in hand with Church officials who are directly in contact with ordinary people in their communities who consult these Church officials frequently for solutions to their problems related to health, childlessness, job, etc.

The recommendation is to work together with these Church officials and community leaders, focusing on such issues in the community together as partners who all have something to offer in the collaborative reading process. This is because in most cases, these Church officials and community leaders know what they are about as they have a lot of input to give concerning the plight of people in their communities as they are

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[85] The writer's cousin died on the way to hospital after being kept at a healing centre during complications in pregnancy. Also a lot of healing centres in Ghana keep mental patients chained which is gross mistreatment.

directly involved in tackling the problems of people in their communities with the limited resources and biblical understanding that they have.

This implies that the dialogue between the ordinary reader and the scholarly reader ought to be structured in such a way that their involvement in the commencement of the process or planning stage is outlined, their role in the discussion sessions are also ensured through group dynamics and good facilitation practice by the trained reader and also the product should show clear representation of both the interaction between ordinary readers and scholarly readers.

Hence, one of the recommendations is that of equal participation in drawing agendas for the reading of biblical texts or concepts. This could be in the form of a preparatory meeting together with the entire group (if it is a small one) or representatives (if it is a large one) or leaders of Churches and groups of ordinary readers and scholarly readers to decide on agenda issues that are of common interest together, which will then form the basis for the listing of Bible Study themes to be dealt with together; prior to the commencement of a collaborative reading program.

What this implies is that there must be a conscious effort made by trained readers and ordinary readers to come to some common agreement as to what texts or concept are to be read together.

Concerning the issue of expectations of dialogue partners, it will be difficult to avoid clash of expectations due to the fact that ordinary readers and scholars have different agendas as the two are closely linked. For instance, if the scholarly readers interest and agenda is liberation as we observe, in the case of Gerald West and the ISB, then the expectation is emancipatory readings that ends up in an action plan. On the other hand, if it is cultural appropriation, then the interest will be in looking at a theological model with which to reinterpret biblical texts or concepts with respect to the cultural issues that the scholarly reader is interested in. My recommendation here is that there must be a mechanism for scholarly readers and ordinary readers sharing and negotiating on their expectations with each other from time to time. This will ensure openness and understanding as to what each expects from the reading process, what one can realistically obtain from it and what one cannot obtain from it, what one can offer to it and what one cannot offer to it. For instance, marginalised groups in oppressed situations in South Africa some times expect material benefits directly from the ISB, whilst the ISB will rather be thinking of empowering the people to be able to transform their communities themselves.

8.5.2. Power relations

Ordinary readers can have false hopes and expectations which need to be redressed to avoid mistrust which can lead to stalling the dialogical reading process. This is due to the unequal power relations that exist between ordinary readers and scholarly readers. Thus, a more transparent strategy involving regular sharing and negotiations on expectations of the discourse partners can go a long way towards saving the situation. This can be done by bringing out goals and interests into the open by both ordinary readers and scholarly readers. Questions like why are you (scholarly readers) here, and what do you expect from us (ordinary readers) ? Why do you want us (scholarly readers) to come and read with you (ordinary readers) or continue reading with you (ordinary readers), need to be visited and revisited periodically to clarify the issue of goals and interests. This is because bringing goals and interests into the open brings in some level of transparency between the discourse partners. However, we cannot rule out the fact that transparent relationships can also be oppressive. For instance, in an interaction between a dominant and a dominated person or persons, the dominant partner can openly declare that his/her goal or interest is to maintain an unequal relationship with the dominated. The advantage in open declaration of goals and interests is that it can be used as a basis for trust even though that in itself is not going to do the job of maintaining a dominance-free dialogue or relationship between them. Eventually, after clarifications and agreement on the goals and interests of both partners (i.e. ordinary readers and scholarly readers), these goals and interests can be further considered in the drawing of agendas by the discourse partners.

8.5.3. Methodologies and approaches to biblical interpretation by discourse partners

The first recommendations are related to structuring of the program that ordinary readers and scholarly readers will undertake to ensure maximum involvement in the structure as a whole.

This set of recommendations will specifically focus on the approaches and methods that will ensure effective group dynamics and participation during the reading sessions themselves.

Our findings and surveys in this thesis concerning collaborative reading methodologies and approaches between ordinary and scholarly readers led us to the conclusion that in

some cases, there is suspicion and the scholarly reader is not able to interact freely with the ordinary readers in order to be able to do any meaningful reading with them. There is therefore the need to build confidence for instance between an elite theologian from a mainline Church and members of African Independent Churches in the shanty township of Amawoti in South Africa in order for effective collaborative readings to take place between them. Also, the medium of communication itself needs to be seriously looked at to take care of solidification of language that tends to cut off ordinary readers from the discussion process and thus make it difficult for them to continue to communicate with the scholarly readers. Theologians have the tendency to use theological jargons that are difficult for an ordinary reader to understand when they are involved in collaborative Bible Study, workshops or seminars with ordinary readers. It is therefore important for scholarly readers to be aware of the fact that during their reading sessions, workshops or seminars with ordinary readers, they are dealing with a residually literate population so scholarly readers should take care not to solidify their language as that will exclude the ordinary readers they want to read with.

For instance, it is a good idea to think of reconstructing a workers' theology as advocated in *Semeia* volume 73. However, it is equally then on also important to make sure that the workers theology that is formulated by African theologians is not solidified by the language used in such a way that the African worker on whose experience this theology is reconstructed is excluded from its use as indicated in Habermas' theory of communicative action.

Also, one of my concerns is in connection with the types of language that scholarly readers ought to employ in communicating with ordinary readers. Scholarly readers must not employ language that ordinary readers cannot speak well or feel confident in communicating in reading together with scholarly readers. My experience with the Kenosis women's group for instance, where English is supposed to be the medium of communication with the trained reader, I find that most of the young ladies do not feel confident in communicating in English as they have limited English. I observed that whenever, they switched to Zulu, which is their mother tongue, there is a lot of heated debate among themselves. Of course those of us who do not understand Zulu get lost in the discussion not knowing what is going on. When I ask about what the heated debate is about, the answer is 'the participants were making very interesting contributions to the discussion'. If necessary, there should be an arrangement for an interpreter to assist in breaching the language barrier between the trained reader and the ordinary readers so as to give the ordinary readers the opportunity to express themselves freely and fully in cases where the scholarly reader is not a native speaker.

Furthermore, there is the need for scholarly readers to explore the possibilities of employing some of the resources that ordinary readers posses as aids for collaborative readings between ordinary and scholarly readers.

Jonathan Draper and Musa Dube decided to use sermons as one of the ways of utilising the resources of ordinary people for interpreting biblical texts in their articles which appeared in *Semeia* 73 volume. Dube's observations were that-

> Most of the interpretations were largely grounded on the assumption that 'a story well told is a story well interpreted'. This traditional method of interpretation capitalises on recalling, narrating and dramatising without explicitly defining what it means....Repetition as another mode of interpretation emphasised a particular theme (Dube 1996: 120-121).

However, Dube admits that her Western training has oriented her toward text-centric interpretations and leaves her 'less equipped to give an in depth understanding of oral interpretations' (Dube 1998: 15). This therefore means that since we are dealing with largely residually-literate and oral societies we do not only have to use their resources but also be able to understand and analyse them. I therefore recommend that since the majority of the ordinary readers are more comfortable in using oral interpretative methods, scholarly readers be equipped with the ability to understand and analyse oral interpretations. This means that they have to learn how to be a dialogue partner in an oral interpretative context without being relegated to the level of spectators.

In summary, because of the collaborative reading methodologies or approaches preferred in Africa, I suggest that there must be established a community of discourse in a circular form where the voices of both ordinary readers and scholarly readers are all on the same level together with the text as the dialogue and conversation goes back and forth between the discourse partners. In the reading process, the text should be multi-vocal and yet the voices of the readers (scholarly and ordinary together) ought to be free (within the context of the text) to even undertake subversive readings if for instance, the 'official' reading of the text proves oppressive or on the side of the oppressors. However, at the end of the reading each dialogue partner should have his/her subjectivity enlarged differently since they belong to different contexts as well as having general satisfaction that they have been prominent voices in the reading process. This will go a long way towards conflict resolution among dialogue partners by each having their own voice in the one of the many voices of the text.

8.5.4. Use of the Bible in missionary history

Another issue that is closely related to the approaches and methodologies to biblical interpretation in Africa is the use of the Bible in missionary history. This is because in order to reshape biblical interpretation in contemporary Africa, it is necessary to place the use of the Bible in its historical continuum.

This means that it is necessary to reflect on the exegetical practices that the missionary enterprises to various parts of Africa employed in their translation, presentation and teaching of the Bible. This is because according J& J Comaroff in their statement concerning the Setswanas in South Africa-

> Those who chose to peruse the Setswana Bible learned more than the sacred story, more even than how to read. They were subjected to a form of cultural translation. Comaroff & Comaroff 1991: 311) .[86]

The task of the African theologian is to reflect on the complex realities of the African Church life fully in reconstructing forms of African theology. This is very important because, the survey of ordinary readings in West Africa has generally indicated that no ordinary reader comes to the text without a particular reading which normally is the official reading which has been handed down to him or her from powerful official readers. Even in Amawoti in South Africa, among African Instituted Churches or Zionist Churches, some kind of official readings of texts are already circulating and the moment a text is mentioned, the participants go straight to that reading that they have already been taught and apply it to their situation in the same way as they have been taught either by their pastor, elder, founder or preacher, which is then passed on from one to the other. This sort of influence persists within the church and even outside the church within a particular socio-cultural context. A typical example, in Southern Ghana in West Africa is the interpretation of Jesus' saying 'Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's'. The interpretation given to that verse is to perform the rituals required of you in the Church and also to perform the rituals that are required of you in your traditional religious context. Another example that I have often head in most parts of Africa is the wisdom saying 'spare the rod and spoil the child' in the Old Testament. The interpretation given to that verse of scripture in most parts of Africa is

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[86] For details, see Comaroff, J & J. Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism and Consciousness in South Africa. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1991.

that children are to be caned or severely punished one way or another whenever they misbehave in order to enable them grow up as good and disciplined children.

In dealing with the missionary heritage in the use of the Bible, the technical competence required by the theologian is not just a kind of historical expertise which enables you to give authoritative versions of the faith. It is about reconstructing theological traditions just as Baur reconstructed liberative forms of theology in Nineteenth Century Germany to rescue German theology from authoritarian structures. Similarly, African theologians in post-colonial and post-missionary times are trying to reconstruct African theology in their own context. Contextual theology has a certain agenda that is related to its own tradition. Thus, as I have indicated earlier in this chapter, the agenda for African scholarly readers is to develop forms of African theology which are located in its cultural history as well as the political and economic realities that Africans are facing up to in their various contexts.

This calls for critical reflection and analysis of the reception history of the Bible from its missionary times. For instance, what were the missionary agendas, which of them are liberative and which of them are subjugative? How has the Bible been handed down? Where has it come from? How was it used to put people in their place. This means that there is the need to look carefully at the missionary heritage of Africa during the era of colonialism, with regard to missionary societies and their usage of the Bible and what their emphases were, which have led to the cultivation of the kind of Christian self-understanding/s that we presently have in Africa. How can this legacy, which still lingers, be reshaped in a post-colonial and post-missionary contemporary Africa?

This exercise is necessary because even though the contemporary readings like that of the ISB will lead people to finding the God of life, the question then is, how far will such a reading take us ? In other words, what effect does the contemporary reading have on our inherited beliefs (acquired from our missionary heritage) and how can we reshape our missionary heritage in the light of our contemporary readings? For example, the missionary heritage of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, is acquired from the Basel Mission (from Switzerland but consisting of both German and Swiss missionaries). Thus, if theologians want to reshape readings of those who have Basel Mission heritage in contemporary times, it is necessary to look critically at the readings of the Bible that the Basel mission brought and used in the Basel Mission congregations that they established. This is because, the Basel Mission was involved in pioneering Bible translations into Ghanaian languages, the selection and translation of European hymns

(mainly German ones) into Ghanaian languages and the setting up of the first theological seminary in Ghana.

In summary, some of the questions that will guide such a study is rightly put by Musa Dube in her 'Consuming a Colonial Cultural Bomb' (1999) with respect to the readers of the Setswana language of Botswana, concerning translating *Badimo* into Demons in the Setswana Bible by stating that-

> It is hard to avoid thinking about the Setswana readers/hearers who first read the Setswana Bible in 1857 and those who continued to read it for the next 150 years that followed: Did these Setswana readers/hearers discover their own *Badimo* as devils and demons ? Did the written Setswana Bible prove to them that they were lost and knew no God so much so that they venerated demons and devils as sacred beings? (Dube 1999: 42).

This is an attempt by Musa Dube to reflect on the missionary usage of the concept of demons in the Gospels, particularly Matthew's Gospel in Botswana[87].

More work still needs to be done concerning the reception of the Bible from missionary organisations in the various African contexts and missionary biblical interpretative modes and theological heritage that still lingers on in diverse ways throughout Africa.

8.5.5. *Outputs and products of the communication practice*

We concluded that the outputs of the reading process will result in academic reporting, as well as generating, collecting and analysing popular readings.

With respect to academic reporting, sometimes ordinary readers are a little uncomfortable with the influx of scholars into their communities and Churches, collecting and reporting on their interactions and readings with them. As some of them remarked when I recently visited South Africa, 'You (referring to scholars) all come here to hold Bible discussions with us and then you end up writing your books and pamphlets from it through which you become important people; What will we (meaning the ordinary readers, their Churches and communities) gain from these discussions we

hold with you'? Thus even though the report is reshaped by the scholarly reader, it ought to be regarded as the work of both the ordinary readers and the scholarly readers. Even though control over what goes into the report and what does not go into it is exercised by the scholarly readers, both the ordinary reader and scholarly reader should have rights over what is produced. This will ensure a sense of joint partnership and ownership of the product which will then enable the ordinary readers to see themselves as joint owners, with equal rights to the material that they took part in producing.

On the part of the scholarly readers, there is the need to differentiate what ordinary people are telling them from the official views that they think scholars need to hear. There is therefore the need to be some reading of the views of ordinary readers put against the official views in the context of the ordinary readers that the scholarly reader is reporting on. This implies that the scholarly readers need to be aware of the official stance and be discriminative between what is official discourse and what is generative of new forms of African theology. In other words, academic reporting of collaborative readings with ordinary readers should be *analytic* and *discriminative*.

With respect to generating and collecting materials from ordinary readers, there can be several ways of doing it. Some of these materials that can be used as aids to Bible reading can be collected, reflected upon and published as part of the on-going process of reconstructing forms of African theology. An example of this kind of work is that of John Kirby, a Roman Catholic priest working in Northern Ghana who collected appellations, lyrics, proverbial sayings, of an old Ghanaian woman which he published as *Jesus of the Deep Forest: Prayers and praises of Afua Kuma* (1980) [88]. However, the problem that some scholarly readers, the types that we normally called '*Dada ba*' [89] in the Ghanaian context will encounter is lack of familiarity with and understanding of proverbial language and its usage by ordinary readers.

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[87] For details, see Musa Dube's 'Consuming A Cultural Bomb: Translating *Badimo* into "Demons" In The Setswana Bible (Matthew 8.28-34; 15.22; 10.8)' *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 73, 1999: 33-59.

[88] For details see Afua Kuma's *Jesus of the deep forest: Prayers and praises of Afua Kuma* first published in *Twi* , the vernacular language of the Akans to which she belonged to, Accra: Asempa, 1980, translated into English language by John Kirby, Accra: Asempa, 1980.

[89] '*Dada ba*' refers to the children of elites who are brought up in the cities in Ghana who are brought up with European manerisms.

This is an area that scholarly readers need to work on considering the fact that most scholarly readers are not in direct contact with these resources and they would therefore need to be in dialogue with ordinary people in rural areas where most of these resources can be harnessed, and put into local languages for reformulation and interpretative purposes, together with the ordinary people who are the custodians of these resources.

Secondly, another resource that we can think about is that of music. That is, Hymns, gospel music /lyrics, which could be used as aids to transmitting biblical interpretation in Africa. Presently, take for instance, the 'Ebibidwom' of the Methodist Church of Ghana, which is purely a compilation of *Fante* lyrics using scriptures which could be utilised as sources of insight into emerging forms of African Christianity which in a sense serve as an oral inspiration for new forms of theology. What about the choirs and gospel groups and their massive compositions of music in vernacular languages in various parts of Africa. With respect to the Ghanaian context, Paul Gifford states that-

> Some of this gospel music is Western, or heavily Western -influenced, like soul, rap, and performed in English, but much is genuinely Ghanaian, in local Fanti, Ga or Twi languages or even pidgin. This 'gospel' has become a significant expression of Ghanaian culture, not in a fossilised sense but in a contemporary form, in contact with the modern world of the west (Gifford 1998: 90).

These can also be collected reshaped and presented as joint readings owned by both scholarly and ordinary readers from whom it is generated or collected and reformulated.

However in reshaping and analysing materials generated or collected from ordinary readers, scholarly readers need to be *analytic* and *discriminative*. This is because sometimes parts of the materials collected like Hymns or poems for instance may represent official stance or pietistic reconstructions which have very little to contribute to the reformulation of African theology. The scholarly reader needs to sift through the materials collected from ordinary readers in order to fish out materials that will be useful in the reconstruction of forms of African theology by being discriminative against materials that will not be of much use in his work.

The next step is for the scholarly reader to think of the general frame work within which to present his/her reshaped/reformulated readings.

Thus, finally, we turn our attention towards general frame work for reconstructing and presenting African forms of theology.

8.5.6. Towards frame work for biblical interpretation and the reconstruction of forms of African theology

Ukpong has expressed concern with regard to what he calls, 'the conceptual frame work' with which African biblical scholars do their biblical interpretation. Ukpong explains what he means by conceptual framework by stating that-

> It is now acknowledged that the current exegetical methodologies have been developed from perspectives that are specifically Western; that they do not reflect the perspectives and concerns of other cultures; and that each culture has something to contribute to the understanding of the Christian message. As an approach to biblical interpretation, the inculturation hermeneutic seeks to make the different cultural perspectives in biblical interpretation, and to bring the contribution of various cultural resources to our reading of the Bible. In other words, it seeks to make the different socio-cultural contexts the subject of interpretation (Ukpong 1996: 191).

One of the recommendations that we can draw from Ukpong's argument concerning the usage of African frame of reference is to locate a general conceptual framework and see how it can be utilised for doing biblical interpretation in Africa. Indeed there already exists some preliminary work that needs further investigation and development.

Some of these attempts have led to the writing of African commentaries. However, some of the commentaries produced are loaded with historical critical products with African illustrations and therefore do not quite satisfy the objective of developing an African interpretative framework.

From my study, the issue of spirit came up very strongly. There seem to be a conception of spirit as an integral part of what happens in the physical life of participants.

Perhaps Dube's *Semoya* hermeneutics of the spirit is worth some work by utilising the African framework of spirits but in respect of itsrelationship to the physical dimension of life.[90]

This *spirit* type of hermeneutics and the hermeneutics related to the African concept of *community* are worth the attention of biblical interpreters.

Even though Musa Dube has identified a conceptual framework that African theologians can work with, the task of the theologian is not just identifying the conceptual framework that he/she can employ but also being aware of their role in the process of reconstructing effective biblical interpretation and forms of African theology. It is important for the theologian to know that for effective reframing, restructuring and reproducing forms of African theology, they have to continue to provide the forum for dialogue among different groups of ordinary readers in their respective contexts. This will involve both semi-literate Church members with rich traditional cultural inputs as well as educated Africans with scientific and medical inputs and any other voices that the scholarly readers finds appropriate and relevant to the reading process. This implies that the role of the scholarly reader is to keep the communication lines for dialogue open so as to keep the clarification of forms of African theology in progress for continuous reconstruction as the conversation continues with diverse voices.

Gerald West's Contextual Bible Study is an attempt to identify the God of life in marginalised communities through liberation theology. Also, from the survey in Madina in Southern Ghana which I reported in this thesis, there emerges the framework of life (*wala*, in Ga in Ghana and *nkwa* in Akan in Ghana) which is used to interpret the totality of life, which includes physical well-being as well as the concept of salvation (see Port Harcourt, Madina and Jos/Mubi survey in chapter seven) could be used in giving account of Christian cosmology from the African perspective.

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[90] Musa Dube's '*Semoya* reading is a framework that since its historical beginnings witnesses to God's agent, the spirit, empowering people of different religions, cultures, classes, races and gender. This framework, refuses to accept defeat, rejection, imperialism and unemployment, breakdown of relationships or any form of incapacity....Thus a *Semoya* reading relies on the direct agency of the pirit, which by its revelations and power equips different people to participate creatively in the daily process of restoring and empowering God's diverse creation to its fulfilment' (Dube 1996: 127).

With regard to the scholarly reader, he/she will be preoccupied with picking out points of interest, reflecting on them, reshaping them and coming out with a reconstructed reading of that text or concept that he/she discussed with the ordinary readers. This therefore calls for critical reflection that is prepared to accept and promote good traditional practices in civil society and critique and reconstruct those that do not promote the interest of civil society in contemporary times in our contexts.

Hence, the type of biblical interpreter that is needed in contemporary times is the one who is prepared to be involved in a communal theology together with ordinary readers, acting as <u>participant observer</u> who is part of a multi-vocal dialogue. The ordinary readers have a different agenda and the scholarly readers also have a different agenda. The scholarly reader is there to read with the ordinary readers as an active participant, contributing to the discussion but making sure he/she does not hijack the discussion. The question is, how can this communal theology contribute towards the promotion of civil society?

In the first place, it can help ordinary readers to make their voices heard in the civil society and participate in democratic processes in their respective contexts as they learn to speak out and voice out their views. On the part of the scholarly reader, he/she is caught between different pulls from western theology and globalisation on one the hand, and African culture and socio-economic and political pulls on the other. The task of the African theologian is therefore to play a mediating role between the different pulls from western theology and globalisation on the one hand and African traditional culture on the other.

In conclusion, the move towards effective biblical interpretation and reconstruction of forms of African theology cannot be fully realised without the active participation of ordinary readers who are the custodians of the complex factors of cultural heritage, missionary heritage, Faith Gospel/deliverance theology, as well as the political, economic realities in the African contexts. A genuine search for Christian self-description therefore ought to be based on reflections on multi-vocal dialogue between scholarly readers and ordinary readers, who are the custodians of the complex factors mentioned above who are mostly members of African Instituted Churches in rural areas, and Faith Gospel/deliverance Churches in metropolitan, urban centres in Africa as well as educated African experts (scientists medical or health experts etc.), which is made possible by the *maieutic* and enabling initiatives by scholarly readers mediating between the diverse voices continually in the reading process. This means that the contextual

gaps can readily be filled from AICs and Faith Gospel members. However, due to globalisation, there is the need for the scholarly reader to continue the dialogue with educated African experts, who may be health experts, scientists, etc., so as to bring in other voices into the conversations that have vital contributions to make to the debate on what ever issue is at stake.

In summary, for effective biblical interpretation and the reconstruction of forms of African theology, I suggest that there are two major steps that must be undertaken by scholarly readers. The first step involves scholarly readers having a dominance-free discourse with ordinary readers to fill in the contextual gaps that exist in the contextual understanding and experience of scholarly readers. Having a dominance-free discourse means enabling a communicative process whereby scholarly readers and ordinary readers could take part in a genuine dialogue. The task of the scholarly reader is to enable genuine debate to occur between himself/herself and ordinary readers. Also, the scholarly reader is to enable diverse voices to come out into the open as the facilitator or enabler of this process, be it voices associated with gaps from the traditional cultural context or educated and scientific experts, medical experts etc. in Africa.

The second step involves critical reflection on the material collected by scholarly readers from their communal and corporate reading together with ordinary readers. This is not an isolated process as it involves the scholarly reader getting involved in another form of dialogue by writing up and analysing his dialogue with ordinary readers. Also, the dialogical process does not stop with the documentation of the scholarly reader. He or she continues to have further conversations with other voices who in this case might be educated Africans with some scientific or medical knowledge or expertise that will dialogue further with the materials and readings that the scholarly reader has done with a previous set of voices. This implies that the conversation never stops as through the scholarly reader's activities as a facilitator, the forums for conversation is made possible among diverse voices. To enable the conversational process to continue, the scholarly reader needs to put together and clarify the progressions and the directions that the dialogue is going so as to make the diverse discourse partners (AICs, FaithGospel/deliverance groups or educated scientific experts or medical experts etc.) aware of what is going on and to cause the cross-fertilisation of ideas in the exchange of

view points among them. This type of exercise of continual dialogue among diverse voices will go a long way in enlarging the subjectivities of the discourse partners. The scholarly reader takes a reflective record of these conversations which then clarifies and indicates the directions that African theologies are going. The process itself (i.e. the continuous diverse dominance-free dialogues on one hand, and continuous critical reflective clarification of the outcome of the dialogues on the other hand,) is the way forward for effective biblical interpretation in Africa.

Appendices I - IV

Appendix I

1.The Debt of culture to African theologians

1.1. Dickson and culture.

The Comparative method was a response to the wrong conception of African Traditional Religions and culture as satanic and paganistic, needing to be totally abandoned if Christianity was to thrive in Africa. Thus, what Williams and Dickson tried to do was to identify similarities between the biblical world and African religio-cultural practices and use their scholarly and scientific tools to show the relationship between African Traditional Religions and Christianity. The outcome of this model is the thesis that, African Traditional Religions constitutes a *praeparatio evangelica.*

Dickson does not forge any historical relationship between ancient Israel and Africa. Rather he bases his comparison of Africa with ancient Israel on the understanding that various elements in the African religio-cultural ethos recall ancient Israelite beliefs and practices. This implies that a great number of similar attitudes, ideas and customs are discernible. He cites areas of social organisation and religious thought where similarities exist. However, Dickson also sees African traditional religion as a preparatory ground for the full revelation of the gospel. He states this in his closing statements in his article, 'Continuity and Discontinuity Between the Old Testament and African Life and Thought' (1979) that

> the continuity between the Old Testament and African life and thought should be exposed to the cross-event, which for Christians is the judgement on whatever insights might be gained by looking at the Old Testament and African life and thought together. And the radical nature of the cross-event spells discontinuity (Dickson 1979: 107).

However, comparative hermeneutics was attacked by some African writers. Okot P' Bitek's *African Religions in Western Scholarship* (1970) argues that what the comparativists like Dickson end up doing in their hermeneutics is to 'dress up African deities with Hellenistic robes

and parade them before the western world to show that Africans were as civilised as Europeans' (P'Bitek: 1970: 80). This argument seems to go too far as it goes to the other extreme of entirely rejecting possible connectors between African culture and Christian beliefs and practices. However, it highlights the fact that, African traditional beliefs and practices are more than just *preparatio evangelica* as they become part of a complex historical and sociological vehicle that is used in mediating the gospel.

Liberation theologians have also criticised the comparative approach. The criticism that was levelled against the comparative method by most liberation theologians in the past was related to the fact that the comparative method seems to be more concerned with "cultural" and "spiritual" concepts to the neglect of political and contemporary socio-economic concepts' (Cone 1993: 396).[91] However, this position has been revisited. South African readers have come to acknowledge that concerns for culture are political and about liberation. This is because as I have stated in my introduction, it was a response and resistance against colonising approaches that denigrated all African culture and called all who were Christianised to be Western. Similarly, some African scholars have come to show more commitment to class issues in recent times. Emmanuel Martey from Ghana in his *African Theology: Inculturation and liberation* (1993) [92] has shown that the real hope for meaningful biblical interpretation in Africa lies in the dialectical relationship between theologies related to class, gender and those related to cultural beliefs and practices in Africa as they are all conceived in the context of resistance to dominant hermeneutics from the West.

1.2. Abogurin's debt to culture

Looking at Abogurin's readings, one notices a very promising future for evaluative hermeneutics in Africa. Firstly, because of its direct focus on issues, questions and concerns in the African context as the basis for a scholarly commentary on 1 Corinthians. This would make many African readers feel at home in reading this particular commentary. This is because they can identify with the issues, questions and concerns from the African context that Abogurin cites and evaluates. Secondly, this commentary is one of the few scholarly readings that offers a critique of the African context. Abogurin does not overlook the weaknesses of the African church, its leaders and society as a whole. Thus, Abogurin does a self-critique of the African context which is lacking in most of the African readings that one comes across. Abogurin's

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[91]See Cone's 'Black Theology and Third World Theologies' In *Black Theology: A documentary history volume II 1980-1992.* Maryknoll: Orbis, 1993: 388-398.

reading emphasises the fact that in attempting an evaluative African reading, one needs to do social analysis within the historical context of the text concerned and thus, see how the text functions within that setting. That would then give indications as to which aspects one can employ and which aspects one cannot employ in doing her/his reading in the selected context. The anticipated result of this endeavour is to arrive at an actualising interpretation that is both relevant to the setting in question and the social context of the text.

We can therefore hope to avoid some of the pitfalls or dangers that could arise from short-circuiting in our interpretation of texts, by looking at what kind of readings have been generated, what kind of social analysis and social anthropological work has already taken place, and what kind of popular readings are being done and what could be the resultant proposals for African scholarly reading that would be relevant to the African context. However, the positive point of the evaluative approach is that it goes beyond the ancient social context of the text by making evaluative connections with the contemporary context of the reader.

1.3. King's debt to culture

The issues that King focused on in his search for meaning and understanding through the inter-relationship between Gospel and culture were: i. The concept of ancestors in African Traditional belief system; ii.The righteous men's elevation in the inter-Testamental and Pseudepegraphical literature; and iii. Integration of righteous men's exaltation into Christology.

(i) Like most people who have written about ancestors, King also agrees with the description that ancestors can be described as dead people who are still alive. King argues that the changes that they undergo after death, are

> seen as giving the ancestors a closer access to God or the Supreme Being....The personal relationship of the ancestors to the living also helps what we might call the 'downward' communication in which they engage as mediators: their position makes the ancestors more familiar with the petitioner as well as the Supreme Being. Communication is enhanced in both directions (King 1994: 11).

King therefore sees them as playing both mediatorial as well as intercessory roles as they have gained the capability of interacting with God and their close living human relatives; acting as a communication link as well as giving assistance to his/her relations. As to the approach to ancestors, King is of the opinion that they are not worshipped but they are rather venerated in African Traditional Religion, just as in

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[92] See Martey's *African Theology: Inculturation and liberation.* Maryknoll: Orbis, 1993 for more details on this.

Western rituals concerned with death (King 1994: 15). However, with respect to the relationship between Gospel and culture, King is of the view that the Gospel transcends culture as he argued that, 'The theology of ancestors before encounter with Christ will not remain the same: it will be transformed' (23).

1.4. Ukpong inculturation hemeneutics' debt to culture

Inculturation hermeneutics seems to be a very bold attempt to develop an alternative interpretative model which is not just comparative or evaluative western methodologies.

However, there is a basic problem that inculturation hermeneutics would have to deal with by virtue of the contemporary debates going on in connection with developing new models of biblical interpretation. On the one hand, some hermeneuts tilt the balance of biblical interpretation towards culture by saying that the word of God should allow itself to be interpreted in a culture. Their argument is that, if the Bible is a product of its own culture, then biblical interpretation should be culturally determined and not an imposition from another culture. This, in a sense partially defines the stance of inculturation hermeneutics. Ukpong's response to this issue is thatt inculturation hermeneutics is aware of this problem and that is why there is insistence on understanding the text in its own context before one embarks on interpreting it in one's own context.[93] Ukpong's point is that the interpretation is not located in the context of the interpreter or in the text or with the interpreter but rather it is the back and forth dialogue between them that yields interpretation.

On the other hand, there is the other side of the argument that emphasises the transcultural aspects of Christian faith. The major concern here is that one should be careful in doing biblical interpretation in order not to surrender the unity and truth-content of Christian faith (Watson 1994: 39).[94] This school of thought will argue that the Bible is meant to cut across cultures and that biblical interpretation should transcend the cultural givens of one's situation or context. This means that inculturation hermeneutics needs to find ways of dealing with the trans-cultural arguments with respect to biblical interpretation. This is a control mechanism for inculturation hermeneutics as inculturation hermeneutics would make sure they are faithful to the truth-content

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[93]See Ukpong's Parable of the Shrewd Manager' where he insists that the text needs to be located in its context before contextual interpretation proceeds by saying that 'insights from the historical analysis of the text' (Ukpong: 1996:191) is employed in rereading the text in the context of the interpreter.

of the text and that is why Ukpong would insist on an elaborate textual analysis of any text in its own context before undertaking any interpretation of the text in the context of interpretation. This would therefore cater for the truth-element in the text.

In simple terms, if the Bible is to be seen or regarded as the source of renewal of life which is going on in Africa, then one needs to read it more closely by detecting what the culturally specific tools in the Bible are; and how to work with them as well as making it critique society. Also, one needs to come to terms with the trans-cultural nature of the Bible so as to help facilitate a situation where people will appreciate the ability of the word to transcend cultural situations, where hearers can hear something that the preacher has not said and thus, both preacher and hearers would have the ability to transcend the cultural givens of their situation and therefore have their subjectivities enlarged.

Finally, the new trend that inculturation theology has taken in the use of an approach to a world - view that sees the religious and the secular as inseparable has certain implications for the development of hermeneutics. That is, by maintaining that what ever happens in the religious realm has secular dimensions and what ever happens in the secular has religious dimensions is a step in the right direction as it moves inculturation theology from its preoccupation with religious concepts to be also concerned with economic, and political issues as they see them as dimensions of whatever religious issues they are concerned with. Hence, the inculturation hermeneutical reading of the parable of the shrewd manager by Ukpong is an example of an inculturation biblical interpretation that deals with economic issues among peasant farmers in West Africa. This shows the move towards what Ukpong calls the social-anthropological approach to inculturation which deals with a world view which is concerned with the religious as well as the secular dimensions of life. However, after reading the text within a secular or economic frame work, Ukpong does not go further to bring out the religious dimension of it. That would have made the reading holistic.

1.5. The debt of Gerald West's Contextual Bible Study to Culture

The hermeneutics of resistance practiced in the apartheid era by black theologians in South Africa used the liberative interpretative paradigms that were effective and relevant to the South African Blacks under the apartheid regime. This is what Gerald West's Contextual Bible Study particularly utilised in the formulation of its reading practice. However, 'In view of the changed

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[94]This comment of Francis Watson appears in the Report of the Bible in Africa 's Glasgow consultation in 1994.

political situation (from apartheid to multi-racial system) black hermeneutics (in South Africa including contextual Bible Study) will have to re-access its approach and emphasis. There is the need for Black hermeneuts to take into consideration increasingly some of the issues raised by inculturation hermeneuts. This is because the realities of the South African blacks today involve more than just economic and social well being but also cultural issues that relate to people's world views and traditional practices. Hence, some people are now speaking of 'the plausibility of...a paradigm-shift...that would involve ... concrete models of cultural analysis, their theological pertinency and the place of the socio-economic' (Schrijver, Boeve, and Damen 1995: 40)[95] realities within the South African context. Martey's book, *African Theology: Inculturation and Liberation* (1993) argues that it is plausible to have such a paradigm-shift as there is the need for liberation hermeneuts to take into consideration some of the issues that inculturation hemeneuts are concerned with in their hemeneutical approach.

1.6. Kanyoro's debt to culture

This approach does re-readings of texts from their socio-cultural contexts, using the historical critical insights as Teresa Okure comments in her 'Women in the Bible' (1989) that, they do a 'close reading' of texts related to the concerns, questions and problems of African women 'in their literary and cultural contexts' (Okure 1989: 49). This critical evaluative approach was employed by Kanyoro in her reading of the Canaanite woman in Matthew 15: 21-28.

The second challenge is their relationship with the global feminist movement. Even though it is agreed that one can use any model at all in one's hermeneutical work, one wonders what happens when one uses models that others feel contradict the feminist theological stand of the humanity of women. For instance, the positive adoption of the model of motherhood by most African women theologians goes against the negative conception of motherhood by other feminists outside Africa who see it as an inappropriate model for the liberation of women from stereotypes.

However, one notices the absence of direct rejection of patriarchal oppression or total condemnation of it. Most feminist hermeneuts in Africa would not adopt a radical feminist stance in their interpretative work. Kanyoro states that the reason for this is because 'While African women acknowledge the oppression of men, they do not use the direct method of

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[95]For more details, see G.L. De Schrijver, F.Boeve and Damen's 'Paradigm-shift in Third World Theologies of Liberation: From Socio-economic to Cultural Models'. In *Intersectiones* 3, 1995: 40.

throwing stones, reasoning that this would pose a major threat to women's solidarity' (Kanyoro 1995: 22). Oduyoye also expresses concern about radical feminism by saying that

> Although the inexorable drive in Africa toward patriachalization of structures and attitudes is obvious, certain types of contemporary feminism do pose a problem for African women. African women want to explore traditional matriarchal values to determine which aspects might be woven into new forms of relationship between men and women (Oduyoye 1994a: 176). [96]

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[96]Amba Oduyoye's concern was expressed in her 'Feminist Theology in an African Perspective'. In *Paths of African Theology*. R. Gibellini (ed.), London: SCM, 1994a: 166-181.

Appendix II

2. Stewart Gillan's case cited from his thesis *Mayi buye i Africa!* :

A grounded theology of Land Restitution in South Africa (1996).

The background to this case was that the people of Driefontein in South Africa were facing ejection from their land from the apartheid government of South Africa.

At a meeting, to discuss this issue together in Pretoria with the then Aid to the Minister of Co-operation and Development, Piet Koornhof, in 1983, Shadrack Mkhize was interrupted by Koornhof when Shadrack mentioned Naboth's name and likened the 'attempt of the apartheid state probably to remove people from their land, to the violent seizure of Naboth's ancestral land by king Ahab' (Gillan 1996: 229). [97] Koornhof said that he knew the story of Naboth's vineyard and that if the removal of the people of Driefontein is a Naboth Ahab scenario then he would have nothing to do with it. Kornhoof argued that

> The Israelites did not want to leave Egypt, they had to cross the Red Sea. We have all got to move sometimes. Let us do it in as pleasant a way as possible and take each others hands and accommodate each other' (230). However, Mkhize reminded the minister that his brother had been killed by a white policeman concerning the same issue and the killer had been acquitted 'even though there were many witnesses and international outcry' (230).

Mkhize went ahead to state that they will not move from the land by invoking the justice of God by saying that

> we truly believe in God; the creator of everything, he placed us in Driefontein....The Governor General signed that we should belong in Driefontein for generations. All people believe God to be there, let him be the judge (231-232).

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[97] Desmond Tutu's *Hope and Suffering: Sermons and Speeches'* (1983) section entitled 'The Vineyard of Naboth and Duncan Village' throws further light on the appropriation of this story in South Africa. With respect to the people of Duncan village in South Africa, Tutu says: 'You were threatened with removal some time ago....You are being asked to abandon your South African citizenship and take on that of Ciskei ....And it is almost as if you are being stoned to death as a community, just like Naboth' (Tutu: 1984; 43). With particular reference to the issue of land, Tutu comments that- 'There is enough land for everybody in South Africa. It is just that some people are greedy and at the moment they are also powerful, and so they can satisfy their greed at the expense of others whom they think to be unimportant and without power. But these are they whom God supports. South Africa, please remember the story of Naboth's vineyard' (42).

Koornhof's response was to appeal to obedience to authority by saying that

> I am here also, a believer in God, discussing a very complicated issue with you. There is the highest authority- his will is that such authority be instituted. He teaches us to obey authority and teaches authority to obey his words and authority not to place a yoke on the people (231).

Koornhof went further to say that God 'has told us not to kick against the tentacles' (231).[98]

Shadrack Mkhize's response to this is

> I have read the Bible and I know it well, the Old Testament and the New Testament. And in Kings we read the story of a man named Naboth - Piet Kornhoof (interjecting): This is not at stake! This is not the case of Naboth's vineyard! I know the story of Naboth's vineyard. If it was such a case, I would not want anything to do with it (Gillan 1996: 231).

At the end of the day, surely, the minister of Cooperation and Development had nothing to do with the seizure of the land from the people of Driefontein as they refused to move and the minister decided not to remove them due to the reading of the Naboth text which was introduced into the discussion and according to the account Shadrack Mkhize was nicknamed 'Naboth' after this incident. In his analysis of this case study, Gillan stated that with particular reference to the text, 'there were two points of contact with the Naboth's story' (230) which were asserted by Mkhize that is 'murder and dispossession' (230) by the apartheid regime. With respect to the theology of land Gillan poses the question as to whether

> we can speak for example of a relational rationality in the transpiration of meaning involving personal engagement and participation with a wide embrace of actors, including the Holy Spirit, biblical actors, the spirits of ancestors, the members of one's family, community and society and the land itself (Gillan 1996: 234).

In conclusion, he advocates relational hermeneutics which involves 'inter-community engagement and participation' (235) where 'socio-economic and political analysis is done within this inclusive multivalent rationality' (235).

As we observe from the above discussions, for such a dialogical and corporate reading to work, there must be shared recognition of the Bible as authoritative among participants. Thus, the introduction of the text of Naboth's vineyard into the discussion, establishes a relationship amongst them which is different from the political power relations that exist among them, that

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[98] 'To "kick against tentacles" may refer to resistance of the community to the proposed forced removal' (Gillan 1996: 231).

would lead to a different communicative action among the discourse partners. This text, which is a commonly accepted point of reference resulted in the establishment of a plane of communication different from political power relations that they started from. Hence, in this particular instance, this led to a corporate decision not to dispossess the people of Driefontein whose family heritage the land originally was.

Appendix III

A

Evaluation of Report of Glasgow CBS participants

<u>Objectives of the evaluation</u>

3.1. EXPECTATIONS

To gather a picture of the current expectations of the participating groups and compare it with the expectations that the CBS set itself when the program was set up.

3.2. CONTEXT

3.2.1. To evaluate the awareness that participants have of the influence of their contexts on the reading process.

3.2. 2. To evaluate the extent to which the contexts of the participants are critically addressed in the reading process.

3.3. FACILITATION

3.3.1 To find out what is judged as good facilitation practice by participants.

3.3.2 To find out what is also judged as bad facilitation practice by participants.

3.4. PRACTICAL USEFULNESS/RELEVANCE

3.4.1. To discover directly practical outcomes or actions from the CBS readings by individuals and groups.

3.4.2. To obtain views on the most useful contexts for CBS.

B

CBS sample evaluation questionnaire for participants

I. EXPECTATIONS

1. What do you think the CBS reading process is aiming at achieving? (Please state your answer in the space provided)

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2. After taking part in the CBS, how have your expectations been affected made?--------

3. Mention specific expectations that the CBS has addressed in your opinion? -----------

II. CONTEXT

4. Please rank the following contexts in terms of their strength of influence you consider they have on the CBS readings that you have participated in? Where 'weak influence'=1, 'some influence'=2 and 'strong influence'=3). Please mark only one box for each question out of the three boxes provided for each question.

	Strong influence	Some influence	Weak influence
(a) Your own context	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
(b) No specific context	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

5. In your estimation, has the CBS been addressing relevant issues in your context?

Yes [   ]   No[   ]

6. Please mention at least one issue in your context that you think the CBS ought to have addressed critically in the space provided --

III. FACILITATION

7. What role do you think the facilitators should play in the reading process (please specify in the space provided). ---

8. What are some of the activities of facilitators that you dis-recommend ?------------------------

IV   PRACTICAL USEFULNESS

9. What is the practical usefulness of the CBS to your community ?----------------------

10. What is the practical usefulness of the CBS to you as an individual?----------------

Appendix IV

A.

Madina, Jos and Mubi Survey Report

4.1. Study Design and Analysis

Research subjects in Nigeria and Ghana

In Ghana, the field work in Madina took a sample of the 57 Churches that have already been surveyed by Margaret Peil and Kofi Asare Opoku in their work, 'The development and practice of religion in an Accra suburb' (1994), published in the *Journal of Religion in Africa.* [99] Eleven of the churches in Madina were selected for the survey in Madina. In the Central belt of Northern Nigeria, the Reverend Jorg Staehler who has been working in the area with the *Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria,* assisted me in the selection of sample Churches. I was in Northern Nigeria (Mubi and Jos) and Ghana (Madina) to do field research among ordinary readers as a follow-up of the Port Harcourt survey. I chose Northern Nigeria, particularly, Mubi and Jos to broaden the survey carried out in Port Harcourt. I also, chose Madina in Southern Ghana because it is a community that has a broad spectrum of ethnic groups since it is a suburban settlement for people from diverse ethnic groups in Ghana. However, Madina, Jos and Mubi are more of suburban communities in comparison with Port Harcourt which is a big metropolitan city.

Questionnaires were used to interview respondents among 14 churches. Each church was asked to give a sample of its members for this survey. The total sample population was 446 among the total of fourteen denominations in Ghana and Nigeria all together. However, to enable me make comparison between my findings with a similar survey that has already been carried out in Port Harcourt in Eastern Nigeria, I cross-tabulated my sample population with that of the Port Harcourt survey which was carried out in 1994 in Nigeria by Justin Ukpong of the Catholic Institute of West Africa, with Prof. Mark Anikpo, a sociologist from the University of Port Harcourt, as research consultant. This means that, the total sample population that we would be

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[99] For more details, see Peil and Opoku's 'The development and practice of religion in an Accra Suburb'. In *Journal of Religion in Africa.* XXIV/3, 1994: 198-227.

looking at, all together would be 1,446 since the Port Harcourt survey had 1000 respondents from 50 households. However, there are a number of questions that appear in my survey that do not appear in the Port Harcourt survey since there were some issues that I decided to pursue further or introduce which the Port Harcourt survey did not concern itself with.

4.2. Data collection and analysis

4.2.1. Data Collection

As I have already indicated above, I collected my data from Ghana and Nigeria. Specifically, I collected data from Madina in Southern Ghana, and Mubi and Jos in Northern Nigeria and cross-tabulated it with data collected from Eastern Nigeria (Port Harcourt). Madina is an immigrant township which has a large proportion of people from Northern Ghana as it started as a settlement for Northerners with a very conspicuous Moslem population. However, Madina, being a suburb of Accra, the capital city of Ghana, has grown more and more to be inhabited by Southerners from Akan and Guan ethnic groups who are working in Accra.[100] Most of the churches and religious organisations are therefore set up to cater for the religious needs of an immigrant population, who are mostly Akans, Guans and Northerners. Hence, of the 306 respondents that completed the questionnaires in Madina, 67.0% are Akans, Guans and Northerners, 24.5% are Gas and Adangwes and 8.5% are Ewes. However, unlike the Ghanaian respondents, most of the 140 respondents that completed the questionnaires from the central belt of Northern Nigeria (Jos and Mubi) are not settlers but actually Northerners from various ethnic groups[101] in the central belt of Northern Nigeria (87.1%) and few settlers from Southern Nigeria (12.9%).

The Port Harcourt survey used both Focus Group Discussions (FGD) among 30 church groups that the Port Harcourt research team set up and *base line* survey through the administration of questionnaires among 50 households. According to the Port Harcourt report concerning their research methodology, the information obtained from the FGDs was analysed and used to prepare a questionnaire for the general survey of the Port Harcourt metropolis and therefore, the major research instrument for this particular survey is the questionnaire (Port Harcourt Survey 1: 1994).

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[100]Madina is seven miles from Accra.

[101] Language and ethnic groups represented in the survey include, Kilba, Margi, Bura, Higi and Fali.

My field work in Madina (Ghana), Jos and Mubi (Northern Nigeria) is, however, intended to widen the scope of the Port Harcourt survey by doing some more field work in Northern Nigeria and Southern Ghana. I am therefore using the same research methodology. However, when it comes to focus groups and the formulation of questions for the questionnaire, I chose the groups and formulated the questions for the questionnaire in such a way that they would be more relevant and suitable to the contexts I am dealing with.

Focus Group Discussions were held with some groups that have been using the Bible in Madina to provide some data as to their modes of reading the Bible. Bible study groups, Musical Groups and, Preachers were sampled in four churches in the Madina area for this purpose. These are the Assemblies of God Adult Sunday School leaders group, The Emmanuel Presbyterian Church Bible Study and Prayer group (BSPG), World Miracle Church International (Ritz Hotel cell group) and Apostolic Church of Ghana adult Sunday school group. Information collected from the FGDs was used in the preparation of the questionnaire for the main survey among the groups that I would be working with in Madina, Jos and Mubi. The major set back here is that I did not have FGD with the Northern Nigerian groups. However, I discussed my draft questionnaire with a cross section of Nigerian church leaders and workers, who suggested some changes to it to suit the Northern Nigerian context before I went ahead and used it in Northern Nigeria.

4.2.2. Data Analysis

Unlike the Port Harcourt questionnaire that used mostly closed-ended questions, the Madina (Ghana), Mubi and Jos (Nigeria) questionnaire had a lot of open-ended questions. The open-ended questions were to allow the respondents much freedom to give answers to the questions on the questionnaire. A coding scheme was then prepared based on the answers given by respondents. This coding scheme was then used to code all the responses from respondents. SPSS, which is a statistical package which has the facility which allows you to determine frequencies and cross-tabulations among study populations was then used to prepare a syntax, which made it possible to enter the data, tabulate the data and cross-tabulate to determine the frequencies of certain views among the respondents from the participating churches at the same time as comparing and contrasting them with other views from data collected from the Port Harcourt survey. These views were processed in the form of percentages in relation to the number of participants and deductions and conclusions were drawn from the percentage distribution in each case. This means that in each case, the tabulated frequencies, and

percentages are commented on, indicating the conclusions drawn from the output received from the respondents which has been processed and analysed, using SPSS.

4.3. Background of participants

With respect to gender, the majority (63.5%) of the 1446 respondents are males. With respect to educational background, majority of the respondents have attained secondary education (45.6%) followed by tertiary education (33.5%) which is then followed by elementary education (20.9%). Regarding occupation, most of the respondents are civil servants (31.1%) followed by those who are unemployed (27.9%), followed by those who are in business or some form of trading (24.0%), followed by professionals like lawyers, doctors, accountants (9.7%), followed by artisans like carpenters, electricians, seamstresses, bakers and fitters etc. 7.4%). With respect to denominational backgrounds, most of the respondents are Protestants (32.4%), followed by Pentecostals and evangelicals (24.3%), followed by African Instituted Churches (23.1%), followed by Catholics (17.6%) and lastly, Charismatic Churches (2.7%). Thus, the background information from the respondents therefore indicates that most of them are literate civil servants who have attained secondary level education Most of the respondents are also males which does not fully reflect the membership of the churches from which respondents come. This is because the churches from which the respondents come consist of more females than males. Also, the majority of the respondents are Protestants. It is necessary to take note of this denominational bias of the survey as it would affect the kinds of responses we would get from the respondents. However, there is a slight variation concerning the denominations between the responses from Madina in Ghana and those from Port Harcourt, Mubi and Jos in Nigeria. Generally, in contrast to the Nigerian respondents, the majority of the Ghanaian respondents are Pentecostal/evangelical (37.6%) followed by African Instituted Churches (36.3%), followed by Protestant churches (18.3%), followed lastly by the Charismatic Churches (7.8%). But with Jos and Mubi, the majority of the respondents are Protestants (67.9%), followed by Pentecostals (32.1%) and Port Harcourt also follows the same trend as majority are Protestants (31.7%), followed by African Instituted Churches (22.3%), followed by Pentecostals/evangelicals (19.1%), followed by Catholics 17.6% and lastly, Charismatics (1.5%). Despite the upsurge of charismatic churches in Ghana and Nigeria, very few of them participated in this survey. There were also no Catholic respondents in Madina and Jos/Mubi samples. However, the high percentage of African Instituted Churches in all the surveys would go a long way to make their views felt in the survey.

Tables of significant percentages & comments of the Port Harcourt, Madina, Mubi and Jos
Surveys.

The tables in this appendix contains significant percentages which came out of my follow-up
survey of the Port Harcourt survey. Where the sample population is 1446, it means it is the
survey for Port Harcourt, (Eastern Nigeria), Madina (Southern Ghana), Jos and Mubi
(Northern Nigeria). Where the sample population is 446, it means the survey was carried out
only in Madina (Ghana), Mubi and Jos (Northern Nigeria). Each table is followed by some
comments.

4.4. Biblical Preferences

Table 4.1. : Favourite text/passage from the entire Bible (446)

Text	Madina	Jos/Mubi	Total
John 3:16	15.7%	2.7%	22.4%
Ps. 121	13.5%	0.7%	14.1%
Matt.6:33	3.3%	9.6%	13.6%
Ps. 23	10.1%	1.3%	11.4%
Others	7.4%	3. 8%	11.2%
Phil.4:19	5.8%	0.0%	5.8%
Rom. 5:8	2.2%	2.9%	5.1%
Luke 4: 16	2.2%	2.3%	4.5%
Gen. 1:27	2.0%	1.6%	3.6%
1Cor.15: 24-25	2.2%	0.9%	3.1%
Jer.29:11	1.1%	1.3%	2.4%
Mk. 4:1-20	0.6%	0.7%	1.3%
Ephe.4:8	1.3%	0.0%	1.3%

4.4. 1. Comments

The majority of the entire sample population (1446), that is, Ghanaian and Nigerian respondents
from Madina, Jos/Mubi and Port Harcourt, indicated that they prefer reading the New
Testament to the Old Testament. The majority of the respondents of the Madina, Jos/Mubi
survey indicated that their text of preference is John 3:16 (22.4%).

It seems that respondents' favourite texts re-affirm their pre-occupation with life which, in this case, they see as coming from God's sacrificial act in John 3:16. As put by one respondent, 'Man without God cannot make it in life'. This emphasis on the provision, sustenance, and maintenance of life seems to have also been the observation of Harold Turner in his work among Nigerian churches. He therefore observed with regard to the choice of the John 3:16 that-

> there is the appeal of the Johannine emphasis upon life, now and in eternity, as an alternative to the ground- theme of Jesus' teaching in the Synoptics, the kingdom of God."...there is no special interest in the teaching on the kingdom: life, abundant and vital, is one of the religious blessings with strong attractions for African Christians (Turner 1965: 25).

This implies that, what is of importance to most of the respondents that chose texts that deal with life, is more of the vitality of life now and not the issue of the coming kingdom of God. This preoccupation ran through all the twelve passages that have been chosen by the respondents. Psalm 121 is seen as a prayer to God to deal with the antagonistic evil forces that are in the form of witches, wizards and other malevolent spiritual forces that attack one. Psalm 23 for instance, indicates God's blessings and provision for people who rely on God as stated by one respondent, that 'when I read Psalm 23, I am assured that the Lord is my shepherd, I shall lack nothing'. Also, in circumstances 'where enemies, spiritual and human abound, where malice and envy are feared, and where ethnic and tribal divisions run deep' (Turner 1965: 25), people most of the time tend to crave for love and turn to other places where they can obtain such love. This is perhaps the reason why there is the emphasis on Romans 5:8, which emphasises the unconditional love and care of God. Gen.1:27 also reaffirms the power of God as the creator of all things and therefore the ultimate owner and controller of the universe. This reaffirmation is a reminder that the rain, sunshine, thunder and the vegetation is all controlled by God. This affirmation according to respondents gives them hope that God is in control of nature and would therefore see to it that it is of benefit to them and that assurance gives hope for living in God's world which is created, controlled and maintained by God. Lastly, Jeremiah 29:11 is in connection with God giving people a good future which could be in terms of prosperity in business and a guarantee of a happy and secured future life. It is almost like what the Akans of Ghana calls 'nkrabea' or 'destiny', This type of confidence in God is what is expressed also, as 'hope for the future' by some of the respondents.

The Port Harcourt survey did not ask their respondents questions concerning the favourite Bible passage of the respondents or their text of preference. This question was asked only to the 446 respondents of the Madina, Jos /Mubi survey. Thus any comparison between Ghana and Nigeria

would involve a comparison between Madina in Ghana and Jos/Mubi in the central Belt of Northern Nigeria.

More Nigerians read the Gospels than the Epistles whilst more Ghanaians read the Epistles than the Gospels. Matthew 6:33 is the favourite Gospel text of the Nigerians, whilst John 3:16 is the favourite Gospel text of the Ghanaian respondents. The favourite Epistle text of the Ghanaians is Philippians 4;19 whilst that of the Nigerians is Romans 5:8.

The high interest in Matthew's Gospel by Nigerian respondents was also noted by Harold Turner in his research among members of the Church of the Lord Aladura in Nigeria. Turner concluded that the teaching of Matthew's Gospel '...in general is to the Church's cast and thought' (Turner 1965: 24). Turner went further in his concluding remarks with respect to the use of Matthew's gospel to state that: 'The presentation of the Gospel as a new Law, or as a final edition of the old law, appeals to a church that has legalistic emphasis and an Old Testament interpretation of the Gospel' (Turner 1965: 24). The findings from the Nigerian respondents that I surveyed is similar to the outcome of Turner's work among the Aladura Church founded in Nigeria. When you come to the Ghanaian context, they are more interested in reading John 3:16 than any other texts. Perhaps, the observation that can be made here is that the Nigerian respondents are more interested in texts that are legalistic in nature whilst the Ghanaian respondents are more interested in texts which are 'spiritual' in nature that is why they are interested in John's Gospel. Perhaps this difference in interest in Gospel texts could be partly due to the differences in the composition of the respondents from Ghana and Nigeria. For instance, there was a majority of Protestants and Catholics among respondents in Nigeria, whilst the majority of the Ghanaian respondents were Pentecostals/Evangelicals.

However, Turner's conclusions based on his work among the Aladura church, which is an African Instituted Church founded in Nigeria points to the conclusion that perhaps the interest in Matthew's Gospel by Nigerians goes further than denominational interest. Also, there is evidence from another part of the survey to re-affirm the interest of the Nigerian respondents in legalistic aspects of the Bible. The majority of Nigerian respondents, particularly in Jos/Mubi, indicated that they use the Bible for daily moral and ethical guidance (59.3%). On the other hand, only 19.9% of the Ghanaian respondents indicated that they use the Bible for moral issues and for swearing oaths. The following cases which are related to the use of the Bible for moral issues and swearing were mentioned by some of the Nigerian respondents: 'We use the Bible to correct our mistakes and redirection in our involvement in activities both indoors and outdoors', 'Moral building', 'Forming code of Christian ethics' and 'Where truth is to be

revealed for example in swearing oaths'. The above-mentioned cases indicate the daily usage of the Bible as a legal instrument for regulating and directing the lives of the Nigerian respondents. This therefore supports the view that their interest in Matthew's gospel is because of their interest in using the Bible as a manual that contains the legal instructions for directing and redirecting their daily lives and that they see the Bible as itself a sanction/power against evil-doing.

Table 4.2:Favourite Bible Messages (1446)

	God's love	Salvation	Obedience	Sacrifice	Humility
Madina	8.4%	36.9%	20.3%	16.0%	9.8%
Jos/Mubi	10.0%	25.0%	10.0%	46.4%	8.6%
Port Harcourt	55.4%	26.2%	9.0%	1.3%	8.1%

4.4.2. Comments

Those who chose love were more into finding their identity and continued existence in terms of God's power and his continuous care, concern and provision for them.

Some of the respondents who chose salvation found the word 'salvation' as a near equivalent to their conception of 'life' ('nkwa', 'wala' in Akan and Ga of Ghana respectively) that is, life free from physical and spiritual forces that would seek to destroy it.

Those who chose the message of obedience are more into finding out the ways by which they can benefit from God, by doing something, that is, by maintaining some kind of moral uprightness. This kind of moral uprightness could be construed as 'being holy' which in some churches means obedience to church regulations and practices. It could also be related to participation in religious activities like fasting, prayers, and worship and in some cases rituals of cleansing. In other words, obedience to God's word is seen more in the form of undertaking spiritual exercises commanded by God in the Bible. The respondents who chose sacrifice linked it to Christ offering himself as a sacrificial lamb to save humankind from perishing. The concept of sacrifice resonates with the traditional concept of animal sacrifice at the various shrines and during festive occasions in most parts of West Africa. However, there is the need for more development of the theme of sacrifice to make it more relevant and meaningful to the West African Christian who knows what traditional sacrifice is but he/she is not too sure about how it is related to the sacrifice of Christ mentioned in the New Testament. The most frequent

interpretation of sacrifice is the giving of money to the church to use for its work. The message of humility was related to being humble towards others in their societies, especially to elders. This seems to re-echo the concept of respect to older people in the traditional societies of the respondents. This is because their societies place a high premium on respect and humility towards elders in the society.

As shown in the percentage above that listed the percentages of significance of Madina, Jos/Mubi and Port Harcourt separately, one would notice that there are differences between the various groups of respondents with respect to what their favourite message is. With respect to the Ghanaian context, their most important message is related to the concept of life in Akan and in Ga communities which is life referred to as 'nkwa' or 'wala' respectively, which means life free from all the physical and spiritual forces that seek to destroy it, which is identified with salvation. The Port Harcourt survey on the other hand, gave the reason why the issue of love is stated as the favourite message of the majority of its respondents. The Port Harcourt report stated that:

> the scores reflect the yearnings of those who use the Bible. The high premium placed on love and salvation is really revealing. Love and salvation are particularly important, not necessarily because they are apt descriptions of what the bible is all about, but also because that is what the people need (Port Harcourt report 1994: 7).

Jos/Mubi chose sacrifice, which is a concept that most African traditional societies are conversant with. However, the reason for the respondents at Mubi and Jos placing a lot of premium on sacrifice could probably be related to the fact that Jos and Mubi are rural and suburban localities compared to Port Harcourt which is more of an urban locality. Hence, the issue of sacrifice would therefore appeal more to those in rural settlements than those in urban settlements. This is because rural towns and settlements are more closely involved in traditional sacrificial practice than urban cities. This is because African Christianity is exposed to modernity in the urban areas which tends to undermine traditional institutions like sacrifice among urbanised African Christians.

Table 4.3: Daily usage of the Bible

	No=1446, No &(%)		No=1446, No & (%)	
	Oaths		**Protection**	
	Mentioned	**Not mentioned**	**Mentioned**	**Not mentioned**
Madina	61(19.9%)	245(80.1%)	45(14.7%)	261(85.3%)
Jos/Mubi	83(59.3%)	57(40.7%)	52(37.1%)	88(62.9%)
Port Harcourt	192 (19.2%)	808(80.8%)	532(53.2%)	468(46.8%)

4.4.3 Comments

Prayers in this context includes fasting, as a respondent in an African Independent church puts it that the Bible is used daily by him for 'fasting and healing'. This is a healing church, that has days in the week that they routinely fast and heal; consultations are held on those days for sick people to come for consultation, deliverance and healing. Linked very closely to the usage of the Bible for prayers is what most respondents call 'daily bread'. Thus, it seems the routine prayer and fasting is to ensure the physical well-being of the individual as well as of the community. Perhaps, this bears some resemblance to the libation prayers in most West African contexts for daily provisions and well being of families, clans, ethnic groups as well as individuals.

The issue of daily devotions and prayers and the usage of the Bible daily for preaching and Bible studies is mentioned here. This indicates the importance of preaching and group Bible discussions in the West African context as in other contexts. As indicated above, the Bible is used sometimes as the sole input for preparing sermons without any other resources. This is because most of the people who preach regularly either have no access to commentaries or cannot use them, as they normally preach in their local languages which in most cases, have very little or no commentaries or Bible dictionaries available in them.

Another routine usage of the Bible is for enforcing moral values and for swearing oaths. The examples given by respondents above indicate the conception of the Bible as a manual for the regulation of one's conduct. Also, there is the relationship between the Bible and being truthful. It is assumed that if one swears using the Bible then one should necessarily tell the truth. In most West African contexts, there is the belief that if one should swear using the Bible and tell lies then one stands to face divine punishment for that. The punishment could be in the form of a strange illness or even death in some cases.

With respect to the various groups of respondents, some of the percentages follow similar trends whilst some of them follow different trends. The use of the Bible for normal prayers, preaching, and worship/ happiness follows similar trends as the total sample noted above so, there is no comment to be made concerning them except to say that the three groups of respondents show similarities in their percentage distribution in those four areas of the daily usage of the Bible. However, when it comes to the area of moral guidance and swearing and the daily use of the Bible for protection, there are differences between the three groups. The majority of the respondents in Port Harcourt mentioned that they use the Bible for protection (53.2%) whilst the minority did not mention the use of the Bible for such a purpose. On the other hand, the minority in both Madina (14.7%) and Jos/Mubi (37.1%) mentioned that they use the Bible for protection, whilst the majority did not mention that they use the Bible in both Madina (85.3%) and Jos/Mubi 62.9%) for such a purpose. Also, with respect to moral guidance and swearing oaths, whilst the majority of respondents from Jos/Mubi mentioned that they use the Bible for moral guidance and swearing (51.3%), the minority of the respondents from Jos/ Mubi did not mention that they use the Bible for such a purpose. On the other hand, the minority of the respondents from Madina (19.9%) and Port Harcourt (19.2%) mentioned that they use the Bible for moral guidance and swearing whilst the majority Madina (80.1%) and Port Harcourt (80.8%) did not mention that they use the Bible for such a purpose. Once again, we see the emphasis on legality in Jos/Mubi which is in line with the Nigerian context that conceives of the Bible as a manual for the regulation of one's behaviour in society.

Table 4.4: Special or occasional usage of the Bible

	No.=446, No. & (%)		No. =446, No. & (%)	
	Crisis & Hard times		Deliverance & Healing	
	Mentioned	Not mentioned	Mentioned	Not mentioned
Madina	161(52.6%)	145(47.4%)	106(34.6%)	200(65.4%)
Jos/Mubi	41(29.3%)	99(70.7%)	15(10.7%)	125(89.3%)

4.4.4 Comments

Firstly, the ceremonial use of the Bible could be linked with both the rites of passage and initiatory rites which most communities practiced. For instance, mothers of new born babes will feel more at ease if their children are taken through a kind of rite to integrate them into the community through the naming or outdooring ceremony or baptism or dedication ceremony.

Also, with churches that perform confirmation ceremonies, the ceremony is seen as part of the rite of the transition from puberty to adulthood. This is because most people who are confirmed are normally in their teens and therefore at their puberty stage. This is partly the reason why such churches frown on girls who become pregnant before they are confirmed, as girls are supposed to wait and go through the confirmation rites before they get married and start having children. Marriage is likewise seen as leaving single life into marriage life and death is seen as leaving the life of the living to that of the dead. In each of these situations, the Bible is used as a religious instrument that stipulates; why these ceremonies should be done in a particular way, who qualifies to partake in them and how these ceremonies should be done.

Secondly, another special usage of the Bible is when calamity or some misfortune strikes some one or a community. This is seen in situations where some one looses every thing that he/she has through armed robbery. Apart from the trauma of it, there is also the reality of the situation where the stolen things are not insured and so there is no way of regaining them.

The Port Harcourt survey did not ask any questions with respect to the special usage of the Bible. Hence, our comparison is limited to the Madina and Jos/Mubi research. As indicated on the percentages with respect to the Madina and Jos/ Mubi surveys taken separately, we notice that the issue of the use of the Bible for ceremonies and the use of the Bible during times of great need was not stated. This is because the percentages of those two issues follows the same trend as the total sample of Jos/Mubi and Madina combined so there is no differences between the percentages of Jos/Mubi and that of Madina. All I can say is that their percentages are similar. However, there are differences between Madina and Jos/Mubi as indicated in their percentages of the usage of the Bible during crisis and hard times. A majority of respondents in Madina (52.6%) use the Bible during crisis and hard times, as opposed to only a minority in Jos/Mubi (29.3%). Also, when it comes to the use of the Bible for deliverance and healing, a significant percentage of the respondents from Madina (34.6%) mentioned that they use the Bible for such a purpose whilst only (10.7%) of the respondents from Jos/Mubi mentioned that they use the Bible for deliverance and healing. This is probably because the majority of respondents from Madina belong to evangelical and Pentecostal Churches and has a significant percentage of respondents belonging to AICs where special deliverance and healing services are held frequently so people attend those Churches specifically for those purposes. This is not the same in most Protestant Churches across Africa including Nigeria. So since the majority of respondents in Jos/Mubi are Protestant, that perhaps explains why there is a lower percentage of respondents who see the Bible as an instrument for healing and deliverance

Table 4.5 : Expectations from readings

	No. =446, No. & (%)	
	Spiritual Power	
Locality	**Mentioned**	**Not mentioned**
Madina	101(33.0%)	205(67.0%)
Jos/Mubi	77(55.0%)	63(45.0%)

4.45. Comments

The majority of the respondents expect spiritual power from their participation in readings in church.

There seem to be no expectation that Bible reading might lead them to challenge or critique structures in the socio-cultural context that might have contributed to the struggle for survival that the respondents are involved in. All they so far expect is solutions for their spiritual struggles with hostile forces and their daily physical problems of health, barrenness, food, shelter and peace to be made available to them through their participation in the readings at church. Their approach seems to point to a thaumaturgical usage of the Bible with little or no interest in millenarian/apocalyptic texts. For instance, texts related to the kingdom of God was seldom mentioned. This then raises a question with respect to millenarian AICs [102] who hold on to certain apocalyptic and millenarian beliefs and Christian traditions. The question therefore is whether their traditional theological stance is over-shadowed by the daily pre-occupation with survival ?

The Port Harcourt survey did not ask a question concerning the expectations of the respondents from the readings that they participate in. This means that any comparison in this respect would be limited to the Madina, Jos/Mubi survey.

Taking the expectations mentioned by the respondents, one notices that with the exception of the expectation concerning spiritual power, all the others follow the same trend as the percentages of the sample population of 446 respondents taken together. This means that with

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[102] In his *Essence of Theology* (1977) Diengenda -Kuntima, who once led the Kimbanguist Church in Zaire in Central Africa states that ' Jesus Christ is the king of kings whose dominion is eternal.... Jesus will come again and receive the faithful into his kingdom' (Diengenda-Kuntima 1977: 224-250). Of

respect to their daily bread/needs, healing, wisdom /direction and guidance and peace, there are similarities between the responses of the Madina and Jos/Mubi respondents. However, when it comes to the issue of spiritual power, there are differences between the respondents from Madina and those from Mubi/Jos. The majority of the respondents from Mubi/Jos (55.0%) indicated that their expectation for participating in Bible readings is spiritual power. Only a minority of the respondents from Madina (33.0%) mentioned that spiritual power is their expectation from readings. This implies that expecting spiritual power from readings is of more importance to respondents from Jos/Mubi than from Madina. *Spiritual power* is used in this context to denote spiritual upliftment or a kind of invigoration that one obtains in participating in a Christian activity that enables one to worship God more effectively and also to overcome one's spiritual adversaries. This seems to be a more acceptable terminology and experience that most Protestants in Africa prefer to use other than terminologies like healing and deliverance. This is because healing and deliverance are normally associated with exorcism and dealing with physical infirmities by healing Churches (AICs, Pentecostals and some evangelicals) but spiritual power is not normally used to refer to those who are either physically or spiritually ill. There are even deliverance experts who have established Churches solely for that purpose in various parts of Africa.

This is probably the reason why respondents in Jos/ Mubi, who are mostly Protestants, mentioned spiritual power, and a minority of those from Madina (mostly Pentecostal and evangelicals) mentioned it as the former, prefer spiritual power at Church, whilst the latter will prefer healing and deliverance at Church as spiritual power does not go far enough for the latter.

Table 4.6.: Table 15.2: Benefit from readings

	No. =446, No. & (%)		No.=446, No & (%)		No. = 446, No. & (%)	
	Hope & Salvation		Morality challenged		Spiritual power	
Group	Mentioned	Not mentioned	Mentioned	Not mentioned	Mentioned	Not mentioned
Madina	92(30.1%)	214(69.9%)	23(7.5%)	283(92.5%)	164(53.6%)	142(46.4%)
Jos/Mubi	87(62.1%)	53(37.9%)	46(32.9%)	94(67.1%)	38(27.5%)	102(72.5%)

course the faithful' here stands for members of the Kimbanguist Church as 'heaven will be filled with people from every nation who will have become Kimbanguists' (Schrag 1992: 12).

4.4.6. Comments

Most respondents indicated that they gained salvation and hope in life from readings in church.

In comparing the *expectations* from Bible readings that respondents participated in with the *gains* from Bible readings, one notices that some of the expectations were met as they were noted as gained by the respondents whilst some expectations were not met. The expectations of most respondents is spiritual power whilst the gain of most respondents is salvation or hope in this life. Even though spiritual power is mentioned as a gain, it is not the one with the highest percentage in the gains of respondents. Salvation, on the other hand, only appears in the gains of respondents but not the expectations of respondents. Daily bread, which is the second highest response in the gains of respondents does not appear in the expectations of respondents. The issues of peace and direction or guidance are expectations which are not met as they are not mentioned at all as gains by the respondents.

Instead, issues of morality or holiness and deeper fellowship are mentioned as gains which were however not mentioned as expectations. Healing is mentioned in both the expectations and gains responses. Hence, there seems to be a situation were respondents do not sometimes get what they expect from their participation in readings in church. The reason for this might be probably because those who give the messages to the respondents come with diverse messages to their hearers which do not sometimes resonate with the expectations of their hearers. For example, salvation is preached most of the time to people who, for instance, are thinking of obtaining a job, healing or childless couples who have problems with child birth. However, it seems this problem is not only related to the West African context as I came across a similar situation with the ISB in Pietermaritzburg in South Africa. In South Africa, the participants in Amawoti and Kenosis also indicated that some of their expectations where not met by the Institute for the Study of the Bible (ISB). The participants in the Contextual Bible Study (CBS) with the ISB therefore suggested more involvement in the planing of the agenda and the selection of themes for the CBS programs.

As the Port Harcourt survey did not ask a question concerning the benefits respondents derive from participation in readings, the comparison among groups is therefore focused on the Madina, Jos/Mubi survey. As indicated by the percentages concerning the separate groups, it is observed that the issues of healing and deeper fellowship follow the same trend as the total sample population of Madina and Jos/Mubi which is 446. This implies that Madina and Jos/Mubi has similar percentage trends and there is therefore no significant changes or

differences between them. However, there are significant differences when it comes to hope and salvation, morality challenged, and spiritual power. With respect to hope and salvation, the majority of Jos/Mubi (62.1%) indicated that their expectations were met whilst only a minority of the respondents from Madina (30.1%) indicated that their hope and salvation needs had been met. When it came to the issue of morality, 32.9% of the respondents from Jos/Mubi, which is a significant percentage, indicated that their morality was challenged when they participated in the readings at church.

However, in Madina, only (7.5%) had their morality challenged. This implies that more people indicated that they had their morality challenged in Jos/Mubi than in Madina. Lastly, when it comes to spiritual power, (53.6%) of the respondents from Madina indicated that they gained spiritual power from sermons and other biblical activities in Church whilst in Jos/Mubi, only 27.5% indicated that they have gained spiritual power in going to church. This is probably because of the attempts being made by preachers in AIC, evangelical and Pentecostal Churches to emphasis spiritual upliftment which they hope will turn the attention of their members from depending on them for healing and deliverance (exorcism) every time they come to Church or participate in a Christian activity. Of course this does not mean that, it matches with the expectations of members from the above-mentioned Churches.

4.5. LOCAL AND DIVERSE INTERPRETATIONS

4.5.1.1. Language

There are no percentages of significance. Results follow similar trends in the entire sample.

The majority of the respondents read and understand the Bible in their mother tongue or in a local language that they speak and understand. However, there is the problem of increasing illiteracy in local languages as some of the young ones these days attend schools where English language is the language of instruction and so they cannot read write, or express themselves properly in their own local language. The situation is made worse by the establishment of churches that solely use English language for their readings of the Bible. Thus, vernacular speakers in those churches are obliged to do their readings in English language.

There is no question with respect to language in the Port Harcourt survey. However, there is no significant difference in percentages between the respondents from Madina and those from

Jos/Mubi even though the percentage of those from Madina is slightly higher than those from Jos/Mubi.

Table 4.7.: Percentages of significance of spirit possession

	No. =446, No. & (%)					
	Mentioned	Mentioned	Mentioned	Mentioned	Mentioned	Not mentioned
	Witchcraft	Spirit of the dead	Mediums	Madness	Total mentioned	Total Not mentioned
Madina	20(6.5%)	87(28.4%)	103(33.7%)	0(0.0)	210(68.6%)	96(31.4%)
Jos/Mubi	0(O.0%)	13(9.4%)	28(20.0%)	2(1.9%)	43(30.7%)	97(69.3%)

Comments 4.5.1.2.

As one would observe, very few respondents had local equivalents of biblical concepts like the resurrection, son of God and the Holy spirit. However, with respect to resurrection, mention is made of local stories of people who have resurrected or are expected to resurrect. The Ashantis of Ghana mentioned Okomfo Anokye, who is a famous high priest of the Ashantis who died and promised to resurrect on the third day but did not resurrect. There are several reasons given by the Ashanti respondents why Okomfo Anokye did not resurrect. The most popular reason/story is that Okomfo Anokye said that he will resurrect only if no one weeps three days after his death but unfortunately, a woman wept before the third day and that was the reason why he could not resurrect. Life after death is related to ancestral reincarnation by most respondents. The son of God is identified with the son of a king, prophet, or the first born child of God. Lastly, the Holy spirit is identified with good spirits or helpful ghosts.

As mentioned above, there are significant differences between the respondents from Madina and those from Jos/Mubi. The majority of respondents from Madina indicated that spirit possession has parallels in their contexts whilst only a minority in Jos/Mubi indicated that spirit possession has parallels in their contexts. Among the parallels mentioned, most of the participants from both Madina and Jos indicated that mediums at shrines are the parallels of spirit possession in the Bible.[103] However, the association of spirit possession to witchcraft was only mentioned by

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[103]The Port Harcourt report also indicated that, "Some respondents indicated that the behaviour of some native medicine men or ritual priests when they go into a trance.and voice out incantations can be likened to the behaviour of the apostles when the Holy Ghost descended on them" (Port Harcourt Report: 1994: 11).

the Madina respondents, whilst its association with madness and epileptic fits was only mentioned by the Jos/Mubi respondents. With respect to the remaining biblical concepts mentioned above, there were no significant differences between them and their parallels mentioned by both the Madina and Jos/Mubi respondents. One of the issues that needs serious attention by biblical scholars is the association of physical illnesses like epilepsy and madness with evil spirits.

Table:4.8: Reasons for diverse interpretations of the Bible today

	No.=1,446 No. &(%)		No. =1446, No. & (%)		No. =1446, No. & (%)	
	Cultural Differences		Lack of Understanding		Selfishness/greed	
Group	Mentioned	Not mentioned	Mentioned	Not mentioned	Mentioned	Not mentioned
Port Harcourt	387(38.7%)	613(61.3%)	491(49.1%)	509(50.9%)	648(64.8%)	352(35.25)
Madina	123(40.2%)	183(59.8%)	49 (16.0%)	257(84.0%)	89(29.1%)	217(70.9%)
Jos & Mubi	78 (55.7%)	62 (44.3%)	29 (20.7%)	111(79.3%)	37(26.4%)	103(73.6%)

4.5.2. Comments

Among the reasons given by respondents, who subscribe to the view that cultural differences have contributed to different interpretations of the Bible is that most people now read the Bible, in their own languages.

This indicates the importance of the use of vernacular scriptures and its effect on biblical interpretation. Another reason for different interpretations of the Bible by respondents who subscribe to cultural differences is the view that they are all coming from different localities and ethnic backgrounds which implies that their biblical interpretation is culturally-conditioned by their diverse geographical and ethnic backgrounds. Secondly, this indicates the influence of different ethnic backgrounds[104] in biblical interpretation. The minority of respondents stated that it is lack of understanding of the Bible that has caused the different interpretations of the Bible (39.3%). The respondents who chose lack of understanding are of the view that the different

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[104] In this survey *ethinic background* stands for cultural heritage.

interpretations of the Bible is due to ignorance and lack of theological training. This is related to the issue of dominance by 'official church readers' and theologians who use their position to dominate the ordinary reader who they normally categorise as 'ignorant', 'lacks understanding' and 'lacks knowledge'. It is most likely the minority that gave this indication are Church leaders, preachers, teachers and theologians .

However, if you compare the responses of the respondents from Port Harcourt with those of Madina, Mubi and Jos, the picture changes. Taking Port Harcourt separately, Madina separately, and Jos and Mubi separately, you get the response of only Port Harcourt opting for selfishness and greed as the topmost reason and Madina and Mubi and Jos opting for cultural differences as their topmost reason for interpretation differences. Perhaps, the reason for the differences is due to the differences in the location of the respondents. The respondents from Port Harcourt are located within an urban or city context where you see churches competing with each other for more members as there is the influx of numerous and diverse churches in urban and commercial centres like Port Harcourt. However, in places like Mubi, Jos and Madina which are either suburban or rural localities, cultural differences are bound to be found as the most important reason for diverse interpretation differences rather than selfishness and greed of the leaders. This is because the importance of culture in the day to day life of most people diminishes as one moves from rural and suburban localities to urban localities. This indicates the different worlds in which African urban dwellers operate, with less emphasis on traditional values and usages and more emphasis on modern scientific ideals and the rural dwellers who operate with more emphasis on traditional practices and usages and less emphasis on modern scientific ideals. This means that cultural practices are eroded by continuous encounter with globalisation and modernity in urban and metropolitan cities in Africa.

Table 4.9.: Movements from one Church to the other

Group	No. =1446, No. & (%)		
	Material/spiritual needs	Doctrinal needs	Not applicable
Port Harcourt	637(63.7%)	20(2.0%)	343(34.3%)
Madina	113(36.9%)	22(7.2%)	171(55.9%)
Jos/Mubi	19(13.6%)	12(8.6%)	109(77.9%)

4.5.3. Comments

There is remarkable difference between the Port Harcourt respondents and those of Madina, Jos and Mubi with respect to movement from one church to the other. The Port Harcourt survey indicates that the majority of its respondents (65.7%) have changed from one church to another. On the other hand, a minority of 44.4% in Madina and only 22.1% in Jos/Mubi have changed Churches. The possible reason why more people in Port Harcourt have defected from their churches to other churches than Madina and Jos/Mubi might be due to the fact that the sample population that was used for the *baseline* survey of the Port Hacourt area is different from the sample population for the Madina, and Jos/Mubi survey. Whilst the Port Harcourt survey got their sample population from households, the Madina Jos/Mubi survey took its sample population from representatives from the Churches represented in their localities. This means that, in most cases in the Madina and Jos/Mubi survey, only stable Church members of long standing relationship with their respective churches would be selected to represent their churches whilst in Port Harcourt, Church membership and long affiliation or commitment to a church was not, an issue that determined who should take part in the survey or not since the selection was done on household basis. Here the household survey has shown up a more accurate result. A further probe into the reason why the minority of the respondents moved from one church to the other with regard to the Madina, Jos, Mubi survey indicated that most of them moved to other churches because the Bible is not being interpreted to satisfy their personal needs by their previous churches (21.8%), whilst few of them moved from their churches because of dissatisfaction with some of the doctrines of their previous churches (6.7%).

However, the reasons given by those who have moved from one church to the other in Madina, Jos and Mubi is similar to the reasons given by the respondents of the Port Harcourt survey who have also moved from one denomination to another. These reasons are stated by the Port Harcourt survey as follows:

> There are several cases of people who move from one church to another and later (perhaps after moving into more church groups) return to their original church denomination...(almost two-thirds of these floaters reveal that they had personal problems (especially health) for which they sought cure through prayers. Other 'personal problems' indicated by respondents include 'protection from harmful evil persons', 'to get children', and removal of all obstacles towards 'success in life'. In which ever church a person believes he/she has got what he/she has been searching for, the person feels obliged (for the sake of gratitude) to remain in that church (Port Harcourt 1994: 8).

4.6. INFLUENCE OF CULTURE/EXPERIENCE/EXPOSURES ON INTERPRETATION

Tables 4.10 & 4.11: Influence of Ethnicity on biblical interpretation

Table 4.10 : 'Yes' response to ethnicity and interpretation taken separately

	No.=306; No. & (%)	No.=140; No. & (%)
Reasons	Madina	Jos/Mubi
Language/culture vehicles	35(11.5%)	46(33.0%)
Ethnicity similar	27 (8.8%)	17(12.0%)
Not applicable	244(79.7%)	77(55.0%)

Table 4.11: 'No' response to ethnicity and interpretation taken separately

	No.=446, No. & (%)		
Group	Response	Response	Response
	Bible transcultural	Ethnicity corrupts interpretation	Not applicable
Madina	146(47.7%)	62(20.3%)	98(32.0%)
Jos/Mubi	60(42.9%)	17(12.1%)	63(45.0%)

4. 6.1. Comments

The respondents who indicated that ethnicity should not influence biblical interpretation put forward acultural, biblicist and universalist reasons for their answer. Perhaps this result is due to the fact that a significant percentage of the respondents are from Evangelical and Pentecostal churches, particularly, from Madina in Southern Ghana.

However, when we look at the percentages of significance where we consider the respondents from Madina and Jos/Mubi separately and cross tabulate, we find that, those from Jos/Mubi have a higher percentage of those who feel that ethnicity influences biblical interpretation than that of the Madina respondents. Perhaps the reason for these results is because the majority of the respondents from Jos/Mubi are from Protestant denominations who will therefore be more culture-oriented than the Pentecostal/Evangelical groups in Madina who most of the time tend to be anti-traditional culture.

Comments 4.6.2.

There are no significant percentages as with respect to the influence of experiences and exposures on biblical interpretation. Responses however, indicates the conception of culture that both the Nigerian and and Ghanaian respondents had.

4.7. INFLUENCE OF CONTEXT ON BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

Table 4.12: The acceptance of Polygamy by the Church

Table 4.12.: Reasons given by 'no' respondents to polygamy

	No. 446, No. &(%)		
Group	**Response**	**Response**	**Response**
	Not scriptural	**Family problems**	**Not applicable**
Madina	191(57.8%)	83(32.7%)	32 (9.5%)
Jos./Mubi	87(72.1%)	38(15.0%)	15(12.9%)

4.7. 1. Comments

This is one of the areas where most people would clearly state the Bible's position and yet find themselves trapped when it comes to actual practice within their own socio-cultural context. Some people are non-communicants of their Churches because they are in polygamous marriages.

Furthermore, some churches, especially some African Instituted Churches allow polygamous men and women to be full members in their congregations. Some of the Bishops, pastors and church elders in some of the African Instituted churches are themselves in polygamous marriages.

Even though the majority of respondents in both Madina and Jos/Mubi indicated that polygamy is not scriptural, the percentage that indicated that it is not scriptural in Jos/Mubi is higher than that of Madina. The reason for this might perhaps be because of the strong influence of the missionary teaching concerning this issue in Northern Nigeria where it is not only the traditional culture they are dealing with but also Islam which accommodated polygamy. This is also a situation where the Church in Northern Nigeria in a post-missionary era has to continue to re-define its identity. Polygamy is therefore to be confronted by the post-missionary Church in

Nigeria which continues to struggle with it even in the post-missionary and post-colonial era as they continue to face the challenge from another religious belief (Islam) in their context that sanctions polygamy.

Tables 4.13 & 4.14: Women covering their hair during religious worship.

Table 4.13: Reasons given 'yes' respondents

	No.=446, No. &(%)		
Group	Response	Response	Response
	Biblical Tradition	Respect for God/Husband	Not applicable
Madina	135(39.2%)	96(28.4%)	75(32.4%)
Jos/Mubi	62(55.0%)	44(37.9%)	34(7.1%)

Table 4.14: Reasons given by 'no' respondents

	No. =446, No. &(%)	
Group	Response	Response
	Hair is covering	Not applicable
Madina	75(32.4%)	231(67.6%)
Jos/Mubi	34(7.1%)	106(92.9%)

4.7.2. Comments

With respect to covering the hair it seems more respondents from Jos/Mubi indicated that women should cover their hair during religious worship than those from Madina in Ghana as we gather from the percentages of significance. Probably, the reason for this is the high percentage of evangelical respondents from Madina.

Table 4.15: The Bible's view on democratic practices

	No.=306; No. & (%)	No. =140; No. & (%)
	Madina	Jos/Mubi
No view on democracy	104(34.0%)	32(23.0%)
O.T. proof of God's interest in Kings	101(33.0%)	85(60.7%)
Casting of lots	101(33.0%)	23(16.3%)

4. 7.3. Comments

With respect to democratic elections, most of the respondents associated it with kingship. This shows how the traditional world view of kingship has influenced the conception of democracy of the respondents. But the second highest number of respondents indicated that they have no view on democracy. This is however, a view that shows passivity, by leaving everything to God without taking responsibility for one's involvement in the democratic practice. Another point of interest mentioned by some respondents is their association of the casting of lots in Acts of the Apostles as a proof of the Bible's support for democratic practice.

The respondents from Madina in Ghana shows a very large percentage (one third) of respondents indicating that they have no view on democracy. However, the story is different with respect to Jos/Mubi where the majority of respondents indicated that God is in support of democracy because of his interest in kingship in the Old Testament. There is no clear majority with respect to the Madina respondents as the responses are evenly divided among the three responses equally.

Tables 4.16 & 4.17: Biblical basis for divine healing & The Lord's Super

Table 4.4.4. : Percentages of biblical texts on which divine healing is based

	No.=446, No. & (%)		No.=446, No. & (%)		No.=446, No. & (%)	
Group	**Response**		**Response**		**Response**	
	Provision James 5:14-15		**Jesus' e.g. in Gospels**		**No biblical basis**	
	Mentioned	**Not mentioned**	**Mentioned**	**Not mentioned**	**Mentioned**	**Not mentioned**
Madina	182(59.5%)	124(40.5%)	94(30.7%)	212(69.3%)	38 (12.4%)	268(87.6%)
Jos/Mubi	80(57.1%)	60 (42.9%)	26(18.6%)	124(81.4%)	34 (25.0%)	106(75.0%)

Table 4.17: Percentages of significance of the biblical basis for the Lord's Supper

	No. =446, No. & (%)					
Group	**Response**		**Response**		**Response**	
	Church tradition		**Unity & Oneness**		**No biblical basis**	
	Mentioned	**Not mentioned**	**Mentioned**	**Not mentioned**	**Mentioned**	**Not mentioned**
Madina	148(48.4%)	158(51.6%)	155(50.7%)	151(49.3%)	6(2.0%)	300(98.0%)
Jos/Mubi	39(27.9%)	101(72.1%)	101(72.1%)	39(27.9%)	2(1.4%)	138(98.6%)

4.7.4. Comments

The question concerning mentioning specific biblical passages for healing and the Lord's Super did appear in the Port Harcourt survey. The Port Survey wanted to know whether there is biblical basis for these practices in their context. However, the Madina and Jos/Mubi survey followed up with the question on specific biblical support for these practices.

The outcome is that respondents of both Jos/Mubi and Madina are unanimous in their response that healing has strong biblical basis. However, when it comes to the Lord's Supper, a greater percentage of the respondents in Jos/Mubi mentioned it as a meal for unity and oneness compared to the respondents from Madina. With Madina, almost half of the participants mentioned that it is a meal for oneness and unity whilst the other half did not mention it. The picture is the same when you come to the Lord's Supper as a tradition of the Church from ICor. 11. This is probably because respondents in Jos/Mubi are clearer in their minds concerning the biblical basis for the Lord's Supper than those from Madina.

Table 4.18: Reasons of the 'no' respondents on Jewish & European Influences on the Bible.

	No.=306; No. & (%)	No. =140; No. & (%)
Group	**Madina**	**Jos/Mubi**
Bible is universal	154(50.3%)	57(40.7%)
Identify with Jewish culture	31 (10.1%)	31(22.1%)
Not applicable	121(39.6%)	52(37.2%)

4.7.5.. Comments

Even though the universality of scripture is indicated by most respondents, it appears the percentage that indicated universality in Madina is higher than that of Jos/Mubi; and the percentage of Madina respondents that would identify with Jews is relatively lower than those of Jos/Mubi. This has implications for the higher recognition of Old Testament texts in Jos/Mubi than Madina.

Table 4.19: Respondents views on whether proverbs are difficult ways of expressing biblical messages

Group	No.=1446, No.&(%)		
	Response	Response	Response
	Yes	No	Undecided
Port Harcourt	795(79.5%)	186(18.6%)	19(1.9%)
Madina	196(64.1%)	30(9.8%)	80(26.1%)
Jos/Mubi	87(62.1%)	15(10.7%)	38(27.2%)

Table 4.20: Respondents views on whether parables are difficult ways of expressing biblical messages

Group	No. =446, No. &(%)		
	Response	Response	Response
	Yes	No	Don't know
Madina	100(32.7%)	179(58.5%)	27(8.8%)
Jos/Mubi	12 (8.6%)	126(90.0%)	2(1.4%)

4.7.6. Comments

There is no significant differences between respondents concerning the usage of parables and proverbs as aids to biblical interpretation.

However, as indicated in tables 4.19 above, the percentages of Proverbs in Port Harcourt is higher than that of Madina. Table 4.20 also shows that the percentages of parables in Jos/Mubi is higher that that of Madina. Does this suggest that the Nigerian respondents are more at home in using parables and proverbs than the Ghanaians ?

B.

Madina, Jos and Mubi Survey Questionnaire

Background of Participants

Specify ethnic background : 1.1. Ghana ( ) Akan/Guan/North ( )

                                   Ga/Adangme ( )

                    1. 2. Nigeria ( ) Northern Ethnic( )

                                 Southern ethnic( )

2. Gender: male ( )   female ( )

3. Educational background :   Elementary ( ) Secondary ( ) Tertiary ( )

4. Occupation of respondents:

                   Civil Service   ( )

                   Trading/Self-employed businessmen/women ( )

                   Artisan   ( )

                   Professional jobs   ( )

                   Unemployed   ( )

5. Denominational background:

Protestant ( ) Catholic ( ) Pentecostal/Evangelical ( ) African Instituted ( )
Charismatic ( )

I Biblical Preferences

6. Do you prefer reading the Old Testament or the New Testament most? -------------------------- --

7. Do you prefer reading texts from the Gospels or from other parts of the New Testament ? --- ---

8. Which text in the Gospels do you like reading most------------------

9. Do you prefer reading Epistle texts to reading other parts of the New Testament ?

Yes ( ) No ( )

What is your favourite Epistle text---

10. Mention your favourite text, passage or story from the entire Bible ---------------------------- ------------------------------

11. Mention the favourite message that the Bible conveys to you --------------------------------------- ---

12. Please mention a specific purpose for which you use the Bible---------------------------- ---

13. Mention special occasions on which you use the Bible---------------

14. What do you expect to gain from the messages, preaching, and reading of the Bible when you last went to Church-----------------------

15. What did you actually gain from the messages, preaching and reading of the Bible when you last went to Church-----------------------

II LOCAL DIVERSE INTERPRETATIONS

16. In what language do you read and understand the Bible's message best?------------------------

Give reasons for your answer---

17. What examples (if any) exist in your ethnic group or community for the following Bible images:

Kingship-----------------------------------Priesthood-----------------------

Spirit in general--------------------------life after death--------------------

Spirit possession----------------------------prophecy-----------------------

Holy Spirit---------------------------------Son of God--------------------

Resurrection---

18. What is the main reason for different interpretations of the Bible that we have today---------- ---

19. Have you changed from one Church to the other? Yes( ) No( )

Please if you have moved from one Church to the other, indicate the reasons why you moved.--

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III. INFLUENCE OF CULTURE/EXPERIENCE/EXPOSURES ON INTERPRETATION

20. Do you think your ethnic background has influenced your interpretation of the Bible? Yes ( ) No ( )

If yes, give reasons for your answer---------------------------------------

If no, give reasons for your answer---------------------------------------

21. Do you think that the things you go through in life influence your interpretation of the Bible?

Yes ( )   No ( )   Not sure ( )

If yes, give reasons for your answer ---------------------------------------

If no, give reasons for your answer---------------------------------------

IV INFLUENCE OF CONTEXT ON BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

22. In your opinion should Christian Churches allow polygamy?

Yes( ) No( )

If , yes give reasons for your answer---------------------------------------

If no, give reasons for your answer---------------------------------------

23. Do you think women should cover their hair during worship?

24. Yes( ) No( ) Neutral( )

If yes, give reasons for your answer---------------------------------------

If No, give reasons for your answer---------------------------------------

24. What do you think the Bible's main teaching is on holding democratic elections?--------------

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25. What do you think the biblical basis for the performance of the following functions in Church are:

1. Healing--

Give biblical text on which your response is based----------------------

2. The Lord's Supper---

Give biblical text on which your response is based----------------------

26. Do you think the use of Jewish and European symbols and customs in parts of the Bible affect its clarity and relevance to you?

Yes ( ) No ( ) Don't know ( )

If yes, give reasons for your answer--------------------------------------

If no, give reasons for your answer--------------------------------------

27. Are parables and proverbs difficult ways of expressing biblical messages?

Parables: Yes ( ) No ( ) Don't know ( )

Proverbs: Yes ( ) No ( ) Don't know( )

If yes, give reasons for your answer--------------------------------------

If no, give reasons for your answer --------------------------------------

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