RACIAL PERFORMANCE AND RELIGIOUS COMPLICITY:

RACIALISED DISCOURSE AND PERPETRATOR CULTURE

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Abstract

A review is presented of Kelley's (2002) Racializing Jesus. Race, Ideology and the Formation of Modern Biblical Scholarship*, in terms of the following question: "If the argument about Western culture's complicity in racism is taken seriously, how does one move forward towards a hermeneutic that is racially sensitive but not racist?" In terms of the current trend of African discontent with the role of Western hermeneutics in Africa, the article questions the validity of the (general) accusation of Western complicity in the perpetration of racism when the accuser as victim appears to exploit categories of Western hermeneutics.*

Keywords: Rhetorical Criticism, Hermeneutics, Afrocentrism, Eurocentrism, Racism, Biblical Studies.

Race as a Defining Factor

The dissolution of apartheid and the advent of true democracy in 1994 do not mean that the use of race or gender as a social construct has disappeared from South African discourse in 2005. In a very uncomfortable way, I have become much more aware of race, gender and culture. In my own church, the continuing exclusion of women from the pulpit has exposed male perceptions of female personhood (cf. Snyman 2002d). The political discourse at grassroots level has laid bare a rather chilling rhetoric of body politics where certain bodies are made normative and others marginal, even to the point of physical elimination.[1]

Culturally, there is a deliberate venture under way to uncover the rich variety of the long silent African theological voices. Definite attention is given to the theologies of several African preachers (i.e. Draper 2004). But there is also a strategy to lay bare those aspects of Western philosophical discourse that is thought, on the one hand, to marginalise the African body, or in some scholars' view, the "black" body, and on the other hand, to mask the power of the colonial, or white, body.

It is rather chilling to read some of the essays in *The Bible in Africa: Transactions, Trajectories, and Trends* (West and Dube 2000). The book gives its intended Western reader an etic perspective on how others perceived and indeed, experienced, the Western

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[1] Holocaust studies have shown how thin the dividing line is between marginalisation and elimination. A recent murder trial has brought that under our attention with the sentencing of a triple murderer who killed a baby, and raped and killed the baby's mother and grandmother. Before sentencing, and asked why he committed the crimes, he was reported to have said he did it because his victims were white (cf. Kalideen 2004, 1). By being white, and thus part of the perpetrator culture of apartheid, the victims are thought to have brought about the deserved cruelty of the crime. Cf. also Snyman 2002a.

cultural context (cf. Snyman 2003). For example, Adamo (2000, 339) argues that the religion British colonialism introduced in Nigeria did not reveal the secrets of Western power and knowledge, but only strengthened prejudice and oppression in support of colonialism. Yorke (2000) is much more upfront in labelling the influence of the Western cultural context. He (2000, 142) refers to the hermeneutical hegemony and ideological stranglehold of (white male) Western biblical scholarship. He (2000, 142) describes this brand of scholarship as a dispassionate and an objective Bible reading that carefully *disguises* the foregrounding of white men from European origins.[2]

To some, this foregrounding is written into the Bible itself. Felder (2002, 38-39) sees in the story of the conversion and baptism of the Ethiopian official in Acts 8 a circumstantial de-emphasis of a Nubian (African) in favour of an Italian (European). Felder thinks that Luke unwittingly gives the impression that Cornelius' baptism is more legitimate than that of the Ethiopian. For example, in the Ethiopian's conversion and baptism there is no reference to the descent of the Holy Spirit, whereas Luke provides an elaborate description of it in Cornelius' story. Felder (2002, 40) wishes to draw a racial implication from this kind of reading. Luke's editorialising de-emphasis of an African in favour of a European enables Europeans to claim that the biblical text demonstrates divine preference for Europeans. Felder (2002, 42) merely expresses the view of African scholarship in general when he claims that biblical scholarship trivialised the ancient contribution of Africa in the shaping of the peoples and cultures of the region.

Since I have never encountered a reading like that of Felder, I ask myself whether my "ignorance" relates to the masking of my own whiteness. I find Felder's allusion of racism at the very beginnings of the Christian tradition rather disconcerting. With an ethics of reading it is possible to distance oneself from Luke in the same way one distances oneself from the inherent violence in the Bible, but distancing becomes impossible when racialized discourse is thought to be part and parcel of Western hermeneutics. There is no running away. It is like original sin. There is no way out for a perpetrator culture.

This is what Kelley's (2002) book, *Racializing Jesus. Race, Ideology and the Formation of Modern Biblical Scholarship,* set out to illustrate. He traces the discourse from Herder through to Crossan, ending with the question whether the framework originating in the Enlightenment really can carry the antiracial or non-racial flag. In the end, so it seems, his argument is a conversation stopper, because racism's quality of all-pervasiveness is quite similar to the all-pervasiveness of original sin from which there is no real redemption.

The all-pervasiveness of racism was illustrated with acumen in a recent debate about the nature of South African biblical scholarship in *The Bulletin of Old Testament Studies in Africa*.[3] In the end, the question appeared to have become the following: Who can speak authentically in an African context?

Masenya (2002b) had two problems with "white" scholarship. First, she believed that their products did not benefit African communities at all. Their academic enterprise is limited to an ivory tower detached from real situations. Moreover, culturally they are also unable to speak with authority and legitimacy on the African context. Here she was helped

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[2]   Nash (2003, 27) sees talks of a disembodied absolute truth independent of daily experiences, a truth true for everyone at every moment in every place as wishful thinking. If there is a disembodied independent and universal truth out there somewhere, there is no way of accessing it. Nash (2003, 37) argues that if it does not enter through one of the five senses, it has no way to get into the imagination.

[3]   The debate was initiated by Boshoff (2002). Masenya (2002a) and Snyman (2002b) fired the initial salvos. In the debate Masenya was aided by Mugambi (2003) of Kenya. I responded to the debate in two other publications (Snyman 2002c and 2005).

by Mugambi's (2003) distinction between African and Africanist scholarship. "White" academics are outside the authentic African context and thus can only produce Africanist scholarship. The former simply lacks "contextual authenticity."

Masenya's (2002b) critique forced me to reflect on Western culture's complicity in racialized discourse. I am looking for a way out, in other words, an approach or reading with which I can redeem myself from racism. I did not find that redemption in Kelley's (2002) book. In fact, his arguments had a ring of familiarity with an earlier debate on racism with the Human Rights Commission's inquiry into racism in the media in 2000. After reading his book, I still sit with the question: "If I take the argument about Western culture's complicity in racism seriously, how do I move forward towards a hermeneutic that is racially sensitive but not racist?"

Kelley's (2002) book, *Racializing Jesus. Race, Ideology and the Formation of Modern Biblical Scholarship*, emerged from his research into the American Civil Rights movement and literature on the Holocaust. He (Kelley 2002, ix) observed that American anti-black racism and the Nazi anti-Semitism had remarkably similar intellectual lineages: They emerged around the same time out of the relatively rarefied world of elite learned culture. He deems both part of the modern project of social engineering: "Rather than growing out of ignorance and political manipulation, racism emerged from the very fabric of high, European culture." To Kelley (2002, xi), it was personally upsetting to discover that the fascination with all things Greek emerged as a process of European (i.e. white) self-definition.

I am equally upset and his (Kelley 2002, 3) main argument throughout the book "that racism is neither accidental nor peripheral to modern thought, that it permeates the perception and reasoning of many seminal modern thinkers and modern institutions," needs serious consideration. If it is part of your heritage, how does one take it into consideration without perpetrating again?

Kelley's *Racializing Jesus*

Entrapment

Kelley (2002, x) asks if racism is a modern ideology and not an irrational hatred erupting from the depth of the soul. His concern is that, if modern scholarship developed alongside this racial ideology and employed categories culled from it, did racial ideology in the end not spill over into modern biblical scholarship? He (Kelley 2002, 3) asks:

> [I]f racism is embedded deeply within the culture and political practice of modern European countries (as slavery, imperial conquests, and the Shoah imply), and if it is also embedded in the thought of the great intellectuals of the modern era (...), is it not reasonable to assume that racist thought has also found its way into the discipline of biblical scholarship?

He (Kelley 2002, 25, 28) answers in the affirmative: In the formative years of the critical study of the Bible in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the formation and institutionalisation of biblical studies coincided with the development of a complex racial ideology which infused most aspects of political and intellectual life.

Modern biblical scholars inevitably imported the category of race into biblical studies to the extent they took up the major intellectual movements (Kelley 2002, 4). Biblical scholarship became racialized in as much as it appropriated and participated in a series of racialized discourses irrespective of and even in opposition to the intention of some biblical

scholars. To Kelley (2002, 5), it is not a question of being racist, but rather modern biblical scholarship's *entrapment* by a racialized discourse[4] it employs.

What happened? Kelley (2002, 5-6) argues that as the (Christian) monarchies started to decline, a few nineteenth-century thinkers turned to race to give the social world of Europe a new foundation. The concepts of nationhood and people became racialized, so that each people was to live on its own land with its own unique culture: "The development of a healthy people required a double move: The nurturing of an authentic, pure, uncontaminated culture; and the expulsion of that which was alien, foreign, and corrupting."

What happened was that the racially alien, the Jew, the Oriental, the African, the non-European, was expelled in order to create an authentic people. Moreover, slavery and imperial conquest were linked to the servile consciousness of the East and the a-rationality of savages and not to the brutality of the West (Kelley 2002, 32).

Hegel

Kelley (2002, 35) follows the idea of a racialised and nationalised people in Hegel, the Tübingen School of Baur, Heidegger, Bultmann, Funk and Crossan. His (Kelley 2002, 35) interpretation of racialized discourse starts with the socio-historical context of post French Revolution Europe. After the French revolution and Napoleon's humiliating defeat, the supremacy of the reason in the Enlightenment project was no longer attractive. It produced alienation, social unrest and state-sponsored violence. For those people who would eventually become Germany, the question then was the creation of authentic German states with an authentic German identity. Herder drew an explicit connection between a nation, its land and its culture: "Each single people has its own, authentic culture which stems from its own land and its own way of life" (Kelley 2002, 36). For a fragmented post French Revolution Germany the first step was the creation of an authentic culture in tune with the primordial core of the German spirit (Kelley 2002, 38).

Hegel's point of view is that reason reveals itself in the phenomenal world of history and culture. Kelley (2002, 41) says that if history was guided by reason and if history had a teleological destiny, Hegel had to incorporate culture and history in his own philosophical system. This he did by constructing the empirical events of world history into a coherent narrative that reveals the reasoned progression of history. The order that Hegel had to impose on world history left the door opens for racialized discourse to enter Hegel's system. He (Kelley 2002, 42) asserts a double teleology: The spirit's progressive movement from lower to higher levels of consciousness and a geographical movement from East to West. Each people embody a different level of consciousness. Spirit moves from the lower levels to the higher levels, from the lower peoples to the higher peoples. The end of history is the self-revelation of the absolute to the Europeans, those capable of philosophical self-consciousness. According to Kelley (2002, 42), race proves itself to be essential here.

The double movement has three distinct racial progressively advancing phases (Kelley 2002, 49): The non-Western Orient whose lower level of consciousness led to despotism and cultural atrophy, the Greco-Roman infancy of the West where spirit produced limited freedom and the Germanic or European phase where nature and spirit are reconciled in religion, absolute knowledge and true freedom. "Reason moves to Europe and then through European history, until it reaches its final resting place in nineteenth-century philosophy" (Kelley 2002, 50).

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[4]   Kelley (2002, 18) defines racialized discourse as that discursive field out of which racism emerges and whose discursive statements are infused with the category of race.

It is obvious that Hegel's grand narrative of world history has no place for Africa. His history begins in the Orient and moves to the West. Africa is the unhistorical undeveloped spirit still involved in the conditions of mere nature. Hegel was unable to credit Africa with humanity, rationality, civilisation or history (Kelley 2002, 51). Hegel's Africa is infantile. They even lack that level of consciousness and culture conducive to the creation of a despotic culture (Kelley 2002, 52)!

The Orient has the privilege to constitute the first stage of consciousness in Hegel's world history. It is a state of natural consciousness where there is no recognition of spirit and unable to allow the people to elevate themselves beyond the particular to the universal (Kelley 2002, 53). Thus, according to Hegel, Oriental culture is atrophied and static and Oriental religion sternly moralistic and lacking authentic worship.

The Jews (Kelley 2002, 56-59) played an important yet limited role in Hegel's narrative of world history. The Jews allowed the transition from Eastern despotism to Western freedom. Yet the Jewish people remained in the despotism and atrophy of the Orient. The ancient Greeks (Kelley 2002, 59-61) were the first to discover individuality, but their grasp on the true spiritual nature of freedom was too tenuous and immature. They were excessive in their freedom and one-sided in their subjectivity. The Roman Empire (Kelley 2002, 61-62) provided a synthesis for Hegel's move from the Orient's lack in subjectivity and the Greek's excessive subjectivity.

The Tübingen School

Kelley (2002, 64) credits the Tübingen school with the introduction of Hegel's racialized world history into biblical scholarship. In particular, he (Kelley 2002, 67) thinks Baur was instrumental in this procedure, in situating early Christianity within the advancement of world history and detecting within early Christianity the spiritual forces and conflicts that propelled it forward toward maturity.

Baur's contribution is summarised as follows by Kelley (2002, 79-80): From Herder, he took over the idea that each group of people is animated by a single spiritual principle. From Hegel, he took over the idea that these spiritual principles are ordered into a narrative of progressive development. He then distinguishes three major spiritual principles linked to different groups of people who prepared the way for Christianity.

- The Oriental Jews lacked spiritual inwardness, but gave the world in a moment of brilliance, monotheism, although tinged with nationalism, particularism, externality and sensuality.
- The Western Greeks possessed spiritual freedom and subjectivity, but it lacked an objective foundation in monotheism.
- From the Romans Christianity received universalism, allowing Christianity to unite the objective and subjective in an absolute religion.

Jesus takes over and purifies the essential spirit of Judaism and Greece, creating in the process the absolute religion which is appropriate for the whole world, or, at least, for certain white European gentlemen of the nineteenth century. Jesus' supporters followed their own spiritual natures. The Hebrews (the apostles) clung to the fleshly form of Jesus. The Hellenists, Stephen and Paul, adhered to Jesus' authentic spirit of a revolution of consciousness. The Acts of the Apostles provides the synthesis between the Hebrews and the Hellenists: Catholicism.

According to Kelley (2002, 81-82), Baur bequeathed two principles that became crucial for the racializing of biblical scholarship: First, the principle that the New Testament should be interpreted in the light of the reconstructed history of the early Christian church, and second, that this history is fuelled by the conflict between the Eastern servile legalism of Jewish Christianity and the Western Gospel of Pauline freedom.

Heidegger

Kelley's focus then moves to Heidegger, who tried in the shadow of Husserl's phenolenology to recapture the glory of Hegel that fell out of favour. Heidegger is of course important, given his support for one of the most destructive regimes of modern times. Kelley (2002, 95) argues that embedded in Heidegger's purely formal ontology lurks a privileged mode of existence that is aligned with anti-Judaism, racial anti-Semitism and *völkisch* nationalism. He (Kelley 2002, 126) ties Heidegger's racism to his quest for pure, uncontaminated origins and essences. His quest for purity is connected to his quest for organicity. It is this quest that leaves the door open for racialized thinking in Heidegger, according to Kelley. He sees it as a short step from aesthetic purity to racial purity.

Organicity seeks a harmonious or mystical union between language, nature and the people (Kelley 2002, 100). It leads to an aestheticised version of blood and soil racism that seeks to distinguish between what is healthy and what is corrupting for each particular people. The health of the German people then depends on the cultivation of authentic German culture and the expulsion of those cultural forces which are impure, alien and corrupting.

Authenticity means being in the world and inauthenticity means being autonomous and cut off from the world. Heidegger (Kelley 2002, 98) illustrates it with the peasant in his workshop on the farm: He works authentically when he picks up the hammer and uses it. Inauthentic living means that he speculates and theorises about the nature of the hammer. Using the hammer reveals an organic relationship between the user and the object, a lived experience. A person absorbed in hammering is authentic. He or she is rooted, grounded, and maintains an organic relationship with the world (Kelley 2002, 106). Theorising about the hammer reveals an inauthentic objectifying experience. The individual absorbed with other human beings is inauthentic as the flit from conventional topic to conventional topic and carelessly circulate ideas (Kelley 2002, 107).

What Heidegger did not realise, according to Kelley (2002, 107), is that his perception of the contextual nature of authenticity (peasant life in his native region) brings with it particular political and ideological commitments:

> This romantic revolution against urban modernity was conceived in racial, as well as economic terms. The hammerer is not just a precapitalist, he is also a German peasant rooted in the soil. The "They" (rootless, degenerate, intelligent but abstract, parasitic circulation) is not just urban, it is Jewified urbanity or Jewification itself. Rootlessness, degeneration, and circulation were designated as clear signs of Jewification by a century and a half of *völkisch* thinkers.

According to the German right, inauthentic society, governed by principles of liberalism, Jewification and self-interest, was to be found in cities. Authentic community, controlled by faith and heritage, was to be found amongst the peasants (cf. Kelley 2002, 115).

And as Germany rethinks its identity with the rise of National Socialism, Heidegger, in miming Herder and Hegel, turns to the Greeks. But his turn is a radical turn, excluding African, Asian and Christian from the world of philosophy (cf. Kelley 2002, 117). The Greeks are forerunners of the Germans and the Romans a pale caricature of the Greek

beginning. Heidegger wanted to repeat the Greek beginning in a new authentic German way (Kelley 2002, 119). His history of the West is a Greco-German West, where Africa, Asia and the Jews are absent as dialogue partners (Kelley 2002, 120).

Bultmann

Bultmann, Heidegger's contemporary, is said to have created a useful Heidegger and passed him along to biblical scholarship (Kelley 2002, 131). Bultmann was convinced that the early Heidegger uncovered the purely formal structure of human existence (Kelley 2002, 132). Kelley (2002, 142) identifies instances where Heidegger's racialized thinking could have found their way into Bultmann's thought. The vocabulary of Bultmann's existentialist morality tale contains terms that disturbingly echoes Jewification and the escape from it (Kelley 2002, 141). The use of terms such as inauthenticity, conventionality and fall ensure that Bultmann's reconstructions are racialized irrespective of his intentions, argues Kelley (2002, 142). Moreover, Bultmann's reconstruction of early Christianity echoes the Tübingen reconstruction of the legalistic Eastern Judaism phase, the radically free Western Hellenism and the compromised universalist early Catholicism (Kelley 2002, 142). Bultmann's existentialist morality tale has three stages: Inauthenticity, encounter and fall, resulting into a reconstruction in terms of inauthenticity and late Judaism, existential encounter and Paul and fall and early Christianity.

In Late Judaism God was no longer the God of history, a vital factor in the present. Subsequently, late Judaism fell into idle, apocalyptic speculation about the cosmic events at the end of the world. In Bultmann's eyes (cf. Kelley 2002, 144), what remained was legalism described with the ensuing stereotypes: Alienation, ritualism, stunted spirituality, formal disobedience rooted in fear. In short, the Jew became for Bultmann the embodiment of sin and inauthenticity. According to Kelley (2002, 145) the circle was closed:

> Heidegger created the category of authenticity with the help of secularised anti-Jewish stereotypes, culled from biblical scholars, philosophy and traditional theology. Bultmann then, in taking up Heideggerian existentialism, appropriates these secularized anti-Jewish categories and applies them to Judaism itself. Jews are inauthentic and inauthenticity is Jewification.

Hellenistic Christianity, and Paul in particular, provides the antidote to legalism and inauthenticity. Christian authenticity is diametrically opposed to Jewish legalism (Kelley 2002, 148). For Kelley (2002, 149), Judaism and the Jew represent in Bultmann's theology the highpoint of human delusion, sin, self-assertion and pride. Bultmann's Christianity is Hellenistic, Western, forward-looking, dynamic, eschatological, authentic and free. Inauthentic Judaism is Eastern, backward-looking, alienated, static, decayed, apocalyptic, inauthentic and servile (cf. Kelley 2002, 150). However, Christianity is tempted to return to the security provided by Judaism. In other words, Heidegger's possibility of falling back always lurks in the background. Bultmann thought that the pure freedom and radicality of Paul were tamed by later generations of Christians. The emergence of the church as an institution signals such a fall from the heights of the Pauline gospel.

Kelley (2002, 154) sees in Bultmann's theology the longing for a pure Western essence untainted by the corrupting spirits of the East or of Rome. Given his reliance upon the philosophy of Heidegger, he employed those same intellectual resources in his theology and exegesis. Here is the problem for Kelley (2002, 157): "These intellectual resources, which emerge from a discourse which is racialized, limit his ability to repudiate, in a comprehensive manner, the central tenets of Nazi racism and anti-Semitism. His intentions

are praiseworthy, but his intellectual resources severely limit the kind of critique he is able to launch." His theology is indebted to the Heidegerian categories of authenticity and the "They." Both these notions have strong traces of anti-Judaism and racialized anti-Semitism. Bultmann's critique of Nazism becomes contradictory and divided.

Bultmann's programme of demythologising the New Testament is viewed as a spiritual political and noble act to bring about authentic freedom in a troubled modern world (Kelley 2002, 162-163). But his view of freedom renders his thoughts problematic, as freedom is the defining essence of the Hellenistic Christian West. The alien resembles "unfreedom": Since the beginning of the eighteenth century, the alien, particularly the alien Jew, has been identified as the source of and embodiment of servility and despotism; and there is little in Heidegger that encourages the followers of Bultmann to see things any differently (Kelley 2002, 163).

Crossan

Bultmann's students took his ideas further in the New Hermeneutic. Kelley (2002) discusses two in particular, Funk and Crossan, whose ideas entered the American context. According to Kelley (2002, 11), Funk took over many of Bultmann's racialized ideas: Authenticity, temporality and the "They," turning the parables into primary examples of authentic religious language. Crossan is said to have taken over Funk's framework, adding a romantic aesthetic. Kelley (2002, 11) thinks that Crossan's Romanticism chains biblical scholarship to the aestheticised and racialized ideology of organicity. It is the latter ideology that permeates the thoughts of Herder, Hegel, and Heidegger. Kelley (2002, 12) subsequently concludes that in translating the existential core of the New Testament to authenticity, Funk and Crossan ensure that Jesus' teaching is understood through the eyes of Heidegger's racialized thinking. Even when challenging the religious and racial chauvinism of New Testament scholarship, Crossan remains indebted to the category of race.

Heidegger's omniscient presence in modern biblical scholarship poses a problem for Kelley. Many theologians resist racialized thinking, yet they are indebted to Heidegger. Kelley (2002, 171) asks what the cost is of embracing Heidegger, especially with the emergence of a much more critical view that renders Heidegger disreputable and intellectually problematic. Kelley (2002, 175) argues that biblical scholars downplay or ignore the fact that Heidegger's view on language is culturally and nationally specific. For Heidegger, authentic language is rooted in German soil and in the German language. In Heideggerian biblical scholarship Kelley sees traces of Heidegger's racialisation: The "They" is linked to Oriental Jewification that corrupts the modern West whereas aestheticised authenticity represents Western Hellenistic freedom.

Racialized aesthetics banishes the alien (Eastern, Jewish, African, Latin) and nurtures a primordial essence (Western, Hellenistic, European, Germanic). For Funk then, the authentic core of the Christian faith is buried under the debris of two millennia of inauthentic language. In order to recover a Christian core, this debris must be scraped away (Kelley 2002, 176). Crossan poses to Kelley a challenge. Kelley (2002, 192) argues that Crossan's intentions are at odds with his intellectual resources. He (2002, 192) asks: "Are these good intentions strong enough to overcome the disturbing ideological commitments buried deep in Crossan's intellectual resources?"

The answer is no. Not even Crossan's criticism of the casual denigration of rabbinical and Pharisaic Judaism saves him! He does not elevate Jesus' parables at the expense of the rabbinic narratives and he rejects the picture of the Pharisees as uncaring, and legalistic hypocrites (cf. Kelley 2002, 204). But in asserting that the Pharisees are merely able to

communicate conclusions drawn from their own spiritual experiences, whereas Jesus' parables help other to experience the Kingdom of God, Kelley (2002, 205) thinks Crossan makes rabbinical didacticism inferior to Jesus' articulation of immediate poetic experiences. He sees this denigration in Crossan's distinction between parables and allegories, where the former is positive and the latter held in contempt. The Pharisees may be fine moral teachers, he (Kelley 2002, 206) says, but not only is their moral teaching itself suspect, they are aesthetically challenged. Even for Crossan, in the end, authenticity belongs to the West, maintained by pure Hellenistic Westerners who refuse to compromise with the spirits of the east of Rome (Kelley 2002, 208). The parables of Jesus takes over the role of the Western Hellenistic primordial encounter and Eastern Palestinian and Pharisaic Judaism remain the embodiment of the "They."

There is No Escape

Kelley confronts one with the depth of the perpetration of a culture from which one wants to escape, only to find there is no way out. If what he says makes sense, his arguments elucidate the reasons why our discourses in the country remain racialized. Despite good intentions, the plausibility structures and thought frameworks continue to be influenced by racialized thinking whose origins lie in the eighteenth century.

If racist thinking permeates the entire Western philosophical system, the consequences are far-reaching. First, it means that even in those instances where the missionaries in Africa set up schools and universities, racialized thinking was sort of embedded in the learning institutions. Second, every student that received learning from these institutions, was corrupted by the inherent Western philosophical system on which it is based.

Thus, when Mugambi (2003, 9-12) talks about "contextual authenticity," one may indeed hear Heidegger clapping his hands behind the curtains. Even those who bore the marks of racialized discourse in the British colonial era cannot escape the structures of the learned culture in which they were once trained. As Crossan[5] is regarded by Kelley (2002, 209) as unable to transcend racialized discourse, the victims of racism too remain trapped. Kelley's basic thesis lingers: Modern biblical scholarship is trapped in racialized discourse.

'Subliminal Racism'

When I read Kelley's book, I was reminded of a report commissioned by the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) on the issue of racism in the media. At stake was what is called "subliminal racism." Subliminal racism is a term used to describe an unconscious view that denigrates those who are different, especially in terms of skin colour,

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[5]   It seems that even a new movement based on the results of the latest biblical scholarship, would then not escape this trap. The movement, called *The New Reformation Network*, takes seriously the scholarly work of Funk and Crossan. In press reports regarding their founding on 25 July 2004, it was reported in a Sunday newspaper that this organisation's point of departure was not only Jerusalem, but also Athens (cf. De Vries 2004). It was explained in terms of religion's talking about God, as well as putting the cultural heritage in terms of music, art, literature and science on the table. They will not only be spiritual, but the mind will also play a role. If one bears in mind that the churches out of which this group originate, the polarity of mind and spirituality makes sense. Of particular interest to me was the introduction of Athens into the discourse just as I was reading Kelley. In the speaker's mind, Hellenistic Greece in the Western philosophical tradition implied mostly authenticity. Does this negative difference bring a racialized discourse to the surface, underscoring our own entrapment? Or is the allusion to the origins of Western culture made under the scrutinizing black gaze of an unmarked African body? Or does the reference simply reflect the speaker's own body of knowledge? He is, after all, a classical scholar.

religion, and language. It is something that goes on below the threshold of consciousness. It involves stereotyping.

In that report, commissioned by the SAHRC as part of the inquiry into race in the media, Braude (1999, 57) refers to subliminal racism as a sub-text concealed below the surface and within the structure of a text. *Radio Pretoria* and *Die Afrikaner*, both extremely right wing media components, established for her the critical framework through which she considered subliminal racism in the context of mainstream news coverage (cf. Braude 1999, 57): "It provided the discursive context by which to consider the manner and extent to which mainstream coverage was potentially continuous with explicit white supremacist interpretations of transitional South African society; and its potential reliance on white supremacist assumptions, albeit without explicit reference to race."

Radio Pretoria and the newspaper *Die Afrikaner* are like volcanoes that erupted, bringing forth evidence of what was pressurised inside. Braude (1999, 136), seeing the volcano, then looked for evidence of similar eruptions in other media hills. From their appearance on the outside she wanted to infer what is going on in the inside. Her observations of *Radio Pretoria* and *Die Afrikaner* were extrapolated to other newspapers, leading her in the end to interpret a photograph taken in Uganda and published in *The Star* as evidence for subliminal racism, since she saw that it integrated anxieties about decaying urban infrastructure with fears of incursions from Africa.

The photo consists of two birds, a crow and a stork with a city refuge container. The photo was taken in Uganda, Kampala. Braude (1999, 136) did not see any significance in the photo itself, but contextualised it in relation to the previous day's reports about the municipal structure's apparent lack to deliver proper sewerage service. Referring to Cornel West's view on white supremacist linkage between blacks and dirt, the photo receives a particular significance in terms of Gauteng under the premiership of Shilowa: A break down of civilisation as represented by dysfunctional sewerage systems.

In as much as white supremacists identify non-Europeans with dirt, odious smells and feces, the attention the press gave to the item of sewerage in the budget the previous day and the photo of the refuse container published the next day, seemed to have underscored for Braude a subliminal white supremacist discourse. The focus suggested to Braude (1999, 139) the view that those running the show in provincial government are incompetent, unable to run a first world economy and a subsequent reduction in standards and performance.

The problem in the Braude report was the manner in which a correspondence was assumed between the overt white supremacist views in the media of the far right and media reports in the mainstream media that do not openly espouse such supremacist views. The question is how does one uncover a hidden agenda within a public transcript that professes not to be racist? One has then to look into official ideological statements of the owners of the media and question the journalists in those media regarding their racial views. The impression left in that report was that what was an assumption became the hypothesis, a problem common when writing a doctoral thesis.

Kelley too saw racial sublimity in biblical scholarship. But he traced the philosophical framework that gives rise to racialized discourse. Braude took the discourse and assumed it to be racialized and started looking for evidence. The photo of the refuse bin and storks was then placed within the textual context of a newspaper in very much the same way an essentialist approach towards the Bible talks about context, that is, the texts before and after a particular text one reads. On the basis of her ingenious interpretation of this photo, she reaches a conclusion about the essence of the mainstream media, already bracketed in her study as "white-owned." To declare the media "racist," she needed the philosophical frame-

works with which the newspapers are produced and with which the articles in question were written and the photo in question taken.

The media inquest, however, gave a ring of purpose to it, turning the racialized discourse in the newspapers and radio stations into evil and a *deliberate* action on the part of the owners of the media. In certain instances, it could very well be the case. But if Kelley's arguments are true, our discourse is racialized because of how we think and the philosophies we support and use. We continue racialized discourse *unknowingly*.

Complicity

However, there is also something disparaging to Kelley: If it is true what he says, then how does one get away from racialized discourse? Moreover, if it is so pervasive, then even those who are verbally excluded in these philosophies (Africans, Orientals, Jews, etc.) participate in racialized discourse if they received their training in the West. Although Braude (2000) may claim in a discussion document of the African National Congress (*Uprooting the Demon of Racism*) that there was no inherent racism in traditional African society, did the missionary work in South Africa, their establishment of schools and universities, not bring racism into their thought structures so that it functions subconsciously in the same way as with their non-African compatriots?

Kelley highlighted the problem of complicity. Complicity is associated with the assumptions of essentialism and expressed through its dualistic thought structures and action (cf. McPhail 1994, 31). In a world characterised by separate and distinct entities in a hierarchical relationship of power that remains fixed and intact, such relationships are circumscribed by negative differences. Subsequently, the construction of social reality from a dualistic point of view and a static order boils down to mutual exclusive physical and social beings and processes: Separate nations, different religions, clearly demarcated groups in terms of politics, economy and race. Each separate entity thinks it lives a separate life. This illusion leads to endless conflict and confusion. In fact, an essentialist theory persuades its adherents that they are indeed separate and distinct entities that enable them to create systems of symbolic interaction that reify and perpetuate that reality (McPhail 1994, 34).

Essentialist thinking in racialized discourse continues, even aggravates the problem, as those who engage in such discourses, even to highlight the problem of race, only help to perpetuate the very ideologies they oppose. The illusion that we are separate and distinct entities is a significant issue in race and gender studies. To contemplate "the other," one invariably makes use of the language that has created "the other." Ironically, one accepts the theory of knowing and calling into question at the same time. In focusing on women-centered or Africentric approaches, distinctions are drawn that perpetuate the divisions one tries to transcend. McPhail (1994, 34-35) says:

> We accept the existence of an "other" in order to define it out of existence, to free ourselves from the social and political tyranny it creates in human interaction, to resolve distinctions between "us and them" through the articulation of a common epistemic and ontological ground. And yet, we continue to affirm the negative differences of judgment of essential knowledge by placing these theories of knowing and being at odds with the "dominant" paradigm, with "male," "Eurocentric," "philosophical" reality.

McPhail (1994, 33), in a doctoral dissertation on racism refers to Asante's formulation of "Afrocentric" rhetoric in contrast to "Eurocentric" rhetoric which runs the risk of simply replacing one oppressive discourse with another. Good intentions do not alleviate the continuous nature of the oppressiveness of such a racialized discourse. Underlying this

discourse is the assumption of distinct and separate entities and a belief that things exist in and of themselves, essentialism. Belief in the ontological essence is an axiomatic tenet in Western epistemology. A distinction between Africentric and Eurocentric approaches, black and white, male and female, continues to enhance the plausibility structures of racialized discourse. It perpetuates a language of negative difference that makes it very difficult for one to transcend the negativity in discourse.

Conclusion

Post-apartheid South Africa did not mean the end of race in discourse and the social construction of reality. In a sense, the issue of race has become a potent instrument in establishing a political and moral hierarchy (cf. Snyman 2002c). Race continues to be constituted performatively in speech acts, policies and actions, but within a typical postcolonial power structure. What could be a process of resignification and rearticulation seems to have rather followed the rules of the game as initiated by what Kelley in his book calls the fabric of high European culture. Here in Africa, the latter, despite a postcolonial drive towards authentic African identities, appears to remain influential. After all, European culture was part of the educational mother's milk on the educational institutions erected by the missionaries that educated the African ruling elite in the first part of the previous century. Moreover, a number of those members of the younger generation in the second half of the 20th century found solace in Western education: American and British.

Racial identity is intimately inflected by ideas how the body signifies in a contemporary South African context that continues to privilege certain kinds of bodies over others. If it is impossible to see the body in a culturally or social neutral way, if the body is always already immersed in culturally constructed meanings, racial or gender identity as a performative act succeed to subvert the identity construction within a perpetrator culture.

A focus on the rhetoric of the body in politics and in the Bible introduces a transformative hermeneutics whereby the discursive practices of a perpetrator society that maintain a particular oppressive body politics can be countered by a discursive practice that acts as an agent of change and liberation.

From a postcolonial perspective, the effects of colonialism linger on long after its demise in that the interaction between the colonial and the colonised will reflect the frameworks of the past, especially the rational frameworks with which arguments are set up. Apartheid and patriarchy are the result of an objectivistic framework of thought and its subsequent racism and sexism based on essentialism. Neither party in this conflict has escaped this influence in terms of the totalising claims that merely reify gender and racial binaries.

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