

NEW TESTAMENT INTERPRETATION, INTERPRETIVE INTERESTS, AND IDEOLOGY: Methodological deficits amidst South African methodolomania?

Jeremy Punt
University of Fort Hare

Abstract

Criticism of the methodolomania characterising South African New Testament scholarship is expressed by attending to the wider yet neglected setting of preoccupation with methodology: the need for an ethics of interpretation which addresses responsibility and accountability; the (overwhelming) irrelevance of biblical scholarship to the South African community on both ecclesial and socio-political concerns; and, issues regarding (institutional and socio-political) power and control related to methodologies in biblical interpretation. These three shortcomings are found contracted in the broader indifference towards our African context in South African New Testament studies. Until now ... Biblical scholars have concentrated so much on the 'how' question with regard to their interpretations, that they often forgot about the 'why' question (Smit 1994:272).

1. Introduction

It was argued elsewhere that New Testament studies are in South Africa notably characterised by a quest for methods and methodology, regarding the interpretation of texts.¹ In recent years particularly there has been a proliferation of new methods and theories of interpretation,² to the extent that it can be called, la Sandmel, methodolomania. Although present elsewhere, the methodological emphasis is particularly noticeable in the South African New Testament scholarship in the words of Hartin and Petzer (1991:1):

Questions on how to interpret the New Testament, ... have up to now and are still dominating South African New Testament scholarship.

1 Goldingay (1995:2) states that the 'hermeneutical problem' is 'intrinsic to the Christian faith', a faith which has its origins in the various attempts to understand Christ in terms of the Scriptures (of Israel), and a faith whose continued existence is determined by its ongoing and successful interpretation of 'its own experience in the light of the story of Jesus'. Cf. Croatto (1987:x): 'the more the Christian life and therefore theology area life and theology that renew the more they involve hermeneutics'; Jeanrond (1991:159-182): text interpretation is and must be a basic Christian activity elsewhere he calls the participation in the debate on adequate methods of interpreting texts theologically enriching (1992:219).

More generally, Schüssler Fiorenza (1991:117) argues that 'the crisis of modern theology' can be seen as a 'crisis of interpretation or, more specifically, as a crisis of the conception of theology as hermeneutical.'

2 As every discussion of NT interpretation is grounded in a particular chronological and socially determined moment (Green 1995:6), Segovia (1995:1) refers to the 'incredible diversity in models of interpretation', which he attributes to the 'demise of the historical-critical model' during the last three decades; so also e.g. Caldwell (1987:315-316); Harrisville (1995:206); Schneiders (1991:23); Soards (1996:93-106); Yee (1995:109-111).

Segovia and Tolbert (1995:ix) ascribe the 'major and momentous developments taking place in the theory and practice of biblical criticism' towards the end of the 20th century, to two factors: the realisation of the importance of 'perspective or standpoint' in interpretation; and, the 'increasing diversity and globalisation' in the field of biblical studies. Many other reasons can probably also be advanced for the multiplying of methods in NT scholarship!

Although Fowl & Jones' contention that the argument is not about methods but about different notions of meaning (1991:15) may be true, the argument is nevertheless seen clearly on the level of methodology.

Unfortunately methodology has become such a major preoccupation of New Testament scholars, especially in South Africa that little is done on the theological nature and content and especially the societal relevance of the texts on which the methods are tried out. But furthermore and of primary concern here the study of method in isolation has given rise to a new 'elite³ with its own vocabulary'. This has resulted in encumbering the conversation on New Testament texts and, (perhaps) even more importantly, the restraining of participation in discussions on the New Testament artificially creates a group of 'super-readers' with the accompanying ideological and other trimmings and trappings.

What follows refers primarily to the South African situation, but some of this will have bearing on the global context as well. This paper is concerned with South African New Testament scholars' general lack amidst a methodological preoccupation of self-critical reflection on this emphasis and its implications and results,⁴ indeed, failing to consider their own aims and interests in the interpretation of the New Testament texts. This is a modest call to all South African New Testament (and other biblical) scholars to be able not only to account methodologically for exegetical and hermeneutical endeavours, but also to be able *to account for our methodologies* and its role within our guild, the Church and society at large.

2. Method and New Testament scholarship

South African New Testament scholars have not pursued interpretive methods ignorant of their efforts. In addition to the discussion of proposed and preferred methodologies they generally also attempted to explain and account for their particular methodological choices, and in so doing to justify it. Sometimes South African New Testament scholars, in an attempt to account for and justify their particular methodological choices, implicitly and at times explicitly criticised the methodology of other scholars. In the end, it seems as if the statement of Jeanrond (1992:219) that due to the debate on methods of interpretation of texts scholars have 'become more careful about their claims and more self-critical altogether', is applicable. However, although South African New Testament scholars are indeed as a rule self-critical as far as accounting for the method as method is concerned, the same cannot be said for other matters pertaining to the *function and ideological implications* of methodology in the interpretation of texts.⁵

2.1 The international scene

In one sense the South African situation concerning methodology in New Testament scholarship is not so much different from the international scene. Stamps (1992:268ff) refers to

3 For 'elitist readings', cf. Wimbush (1991:93ff).

4 Another delimitation which needs to be mentioned from the outset is that in my references to methodolomania, I do not distinguish between 'interpretive or hermeneutical theory' (nature and criteria of human interpretation and understanding) and 'methodology' (study of methods) and 'method' (heuristic devices) naturally I do not deny either the existence or necessity of any of these aspects of interpretation, but question the preoccupation of SA NT scholars with (only certain aspects of!) interpretation. In another context the finer explanations of and contrasts between e.g. 'explain' and 'interpret' (Morgan & Barton 1988:2), 'read' and 'interpret' (Croatto 1987) and so on might be of value.

5 Elsewhere I have attempted a brief survey of some positions taken by such scholars my conclusion, as echoed here, was that although a wide variety of positions and attitudes exist as far as the oversupply of methods and the concentration on matters methodological are concerned, the existence of methodolomania among SA NT scholars is rather tacitly accepted.

the 'current interpretive landscape of New Testament studies' as pluralist⁶ and describes the quest for the 'allusive goal, meaning' in New Testament interpretation as a *war*, and as continuous *fighting* between different interpretive strategies.⁷

Behind this pluralism exists competing and uncomplimentary ways of understanding texts, meaning and truth (Stamps 1992:268).

There is even an uncanny resemblance between some reasons offered by international and local New Testament scholars for the exhausting emphasis on method.⁸

Methodomania is not only restricted to South African New Testament studies, but is found internationally

(p)luralism of goals, methods, and interpretations shows biblical studies to be thriving among the 'sciences' (Perkins 1988:14)

- however, whereas the international concern with method ranks amongst other preoccupations, it characterises South African New Testament studies.⁹

Davies (1986:61) views the increasing attention to 'the language, the literary forms, the symbols, myths, and stories' in the Bible (i.e. to methodology) rather than to theology in the Bible (i.e. to content-theological results) at least to some extent as

a result of despair at ever reaching historical and theological certainty about the central moments of the Bible.

The explosion of knowledge and a new pluralism contribute to the situation in biblical studies which is simultaneously exciting and positive as well as inhibiting and choking. However, the 'explosion' of knowledge can potentially create a 'logjam' of knowledge.

Grant (1984:151) in his preface to Tracy's short overview on modern interpretation of the Bible, bemoans the fact that

... much modern scholarship in biblical interpretation is devoted to methods and inferences ...

The reason for much of the proliferation of methods can be found in the search of New Testament scholars to retain the status of valued contributors to the theological debate.¹⁰

6 Cf. Perkins (1988:5-23) for some theological implications of this pluralism.

7 Various descriptions of and explanations for the many and diverse methods are offered: cf. Aichele et al (1995:12) who refers to 'a diverse host of literary and cultural criticisms' which have in recent years 'migrated into the land of modern biblical studies' - later they mention that some may view the migration as 'an invasion'; WA Beuken (1994) ascribes the 'still increasing plurality of methods' to the 'spiritual climate of postmodernity'; Clines (quoted in Perkins 1993:91) ascribes the 'rapid proliferation of methodologies' to 'the larger academic context in which scholarly work is conducted'; Rosenblatt refers in a book review to the 'methodological logjam' (1992:553-554); Schneiders (1991:153) argues along literary lines that the realisation of the 'surplus' of meaning in texts leads to methodological pluralism; Segovia (1995:1) writes about the 'incredible diversity in models of interpretation' (cf. above); Wright (1992:xvi) who, in the preface of the first volume of an envisaged five volume work, refers to 'so many confusions of method...'

8 For example like Vorster (1994a; 1994b) from SA, Schüssler Fiorenza (1991:127-128) and Schneiders (1991:20,154) argues that Cartesian anxiety initiates many methodological pursuits; and, Kourie (1995) from SA and Beuken (1994) ascribes the proliferation in methods to Postmodernism.

9 Cf. Du Toit (1993:790-797; 1994:531-545). As another example of how methodology weighs up in SA in contrast to the international scene, cf. e.g. Soards' article on 'key issues' in biblical (New Testament) studies which refers to the recognition of the value of using a 'multiplicity of methods', and attempts at syntheses and comprehensive studies on methods. However, the key issues identified by Soards are all concerned with the content matter of the New Testament (1996:93-106).

10 Houlden (1989:405-408) in pronouncing on the future of New Testament studies, reasons that the perception often exists that this field of studies is travelling the old paths, following the interests of its 'well-known teachers', and is on top of it all irrelevant and too esoteric.

2.2 A preliminary evaluation

Many South African New Testament scholars who have expressed themselves on methodology in their field, seem not only to account for both the plurality of and emphasis on method, but even to condone and justify this malaise of methods. The methodological emphasis in New Testament studies in South Africa correlates well with the notion of the 'universality of interpretation', the view that 'all aspects of human history, knowledge, and experience' are continually in need of interpretation (Schüssler Fiorenza 1991:122). However, it remains a question whether hermeneutics should be ascribed the position of 'over-arching and universal cadre' (Van Zyl 1992:159) for practicing New Testament studies in particular and theology and general (cf. Jeanron 1991:182).

Nevertheless, the emphasis on the all embracing nature of interpretation which rests upon the realisation of human subjectivity, similarly requires recognition of the limits of interpretation. Indeed, some dissenting voices from within and outside the guild of South African New Testament scholars have voiced concerns if not criticisms of this methodomania for a variety of reasons, e.g. Vorster (1994a; 1994b) feels uncomfortable with what he perceives to be a foundationalist quest for objective truth, and De Villiers (1989) argues against what he sees as a prolongation of irrelevant, 'ivory tower' matters. Ironically, criticism of the preoccupation with method often seems to be supplanted with arguments in favour for other, different methods, e.g. Vorster wants to promote Rhetorical Criticism and De Villiers Social-Scientific methods.

Another suggestion with which to, among other purposes thereof, break out of the methodological malaise is to opt for a multidimensional or integrated approach which boils down to a 'if you can't win them, join them'-approach. Rousseau (1988:409-421; cf. Mouton 1995) and Jonker (1993:100-115; 1996:397-411) recently advocated such a multidimensional approach for the New and Old Testaments respectively.¹¹

It is possible to argue that the preoccupation with methods is the proverbial tip of the iceberg when it comes to New Testament studies.¹² Not only is proper evaluation of the interpretive scene in New Testament studies scarce to the extent of lacking altogether. More importantly, what lacks in the above attempts to account for and justify South African methodomania in the study of the New Testament is the ethical component: an ethics of reading (accounting for one's handling of texts) or accountability (accounting for relevance of one's reading) have to be complemented by an ethics of the reader (cf. Beardslee 1990:15-32). The realisation of the importance of the reader's 'perspective or standpoint', his/her location¹³

11 Cf. Robbins' attempt to integrate the various elements involved in textual interpretation according to a socio-rhetorical model based on texture: inner texture, intertexture, social and cultural texture, ideological texture, and sacred texture (1996; and 1992:302-319); also the attempt of Even-Zohar (1990) to offer 'Polysystem Theory' as the solution to the interpretive malaise.

As a variation of such an integrated method, Goldingay (1995:7) argues in favour of an 'eclectic open methodology' which implies a 'critical pluralism', not 'unprincipled and casual eclecticism that makes method simply a matter of taste' he then suggests a genre approach with which to interpret the Bible. For genre and method in interpretation, cf. also e.g. Young (1995:93-110).

Schneiders (1982:53) blames biblical scholarship's inability to integrate new approaches to texts for the 'disarray of hermeneutical foundations' of the 'vastly improved methodology'.

12 Amidst the overwhelming notion that South African New Testament scholars have an undeniable preoccupation with methods, one needs to note the limits of methods which are 'based on contemporary academic divisions of disciplines' and thus 'they also tend to cut off the analyses where the material proves more recalcitrant to these divisions' (Bal 1988:6).

13 Tolbert (1995:311-317) argues cogently for the need to replace a 'politics of identity' with a 'politics of location' because the latter 'attempts to acknowledge both the complexity and mutability of each person's relation to world society by carefully analyzing the 'facts of blood and bread' and also the highly contextual nature in which those

(Lategan 1995:945; cf. Hartman 1990:175-188), is not only reason for methodological development (Segovia and Tolbert 1995:ix) but also requires the asking of some further questions.

Although one can hardly say that readily approaches dominate South African New Testament scholarship, there is an increasing awareness of and emphasis on the role of the reader in the interpretive process. However, the 'world in front of the text' is frequently short-circuited by deducing this 'world' from the text itself¹⁴ (cf. Aichele et al 1995:28-33; 38-51): failure to account for the reader's own culture, ideology and 'social place or location', as well as the almost consistent disregard for the history or tradition of interpretation of texts¹⁵ and this tradition's role not only in the 'production' of the meaning of texts but also in one's choice of methodology.¹⁶

In addition to the perceived lack of ethical considerations regarding South Africa New Testament methodology, it also remains a question whether there is a strong enough realisation that 'theories' and 'formal patterns' 'are never merely given', but

constructed by interpreters and maintained by communities (Perkins 1993:89).

South Africa is a country with massive human diversity, a diversity which is also experienced in religious terms and ultimately in biblical studies indeed, the Bible has become a 'site of struggle' (De Villiers 1993:1-28; Smit 1991:61, 1996:169; West 1995:3; cf. Rowland 1993:244-245). It becomes increasingly important to account for the various communities and institutions which (attempt to) exert power and control over the interpretation of the Bible.

Of the many issues involved in the preoccupation with methods, it seems as if especially the following areas of concern need attention:¹⁷ the ethics and accountability of reading; the issue of the relevance of New Testament studies; ideological matters related to the power exerted on and control of interpretation; and, finally, the neglect of the African context in New Testament studies.

'facts' are lived out in daily experience. We all create 'reality' from a particular perspective, but that perspective itself changes and shifts as one moves from one context to another, as we focus on one aspect or another of our very fluid and multiple 'selves'. In a related way, 'a poetics of location' attempts to account for the way that 'the site of reflection, its specificities, power dynamics, and goals, invite appropriate perspectives and dismiss others'.

- 14 For the 'worlds of the text' typology, cf. e.g. Barr (1995:2-18); Green (1995:6-9); Schneiders (1991); Tate (1991), West (1991). Variations in their positions do exist but the common denominator is reference to three textual worlds, emphasising three relationships with the text: author (and historical context) and the text; text as (literary) text; and the reader (within his/her historical context) and the text.
- 15 Cf. Georgi (1992:51-83) and Smit (1994:274) on the importance to see the history of the interpretation of texts as more than mere historical phases, but in a Rezeptionsgeschichtliche fashion to account for the socio-historical conditions and settings of these historical interpretations. Another equally important element, is to recognise and account for the lasting influence of (some of) these entrenched or traditional interpretations which, because of its general acceptance by scholars, prove very difficult to dislodge, or read against the grain.
- 16 Aichele and his co-writers argues for much more than these three issues, which can be summarised as their insistence on dissolving the 'reader-text dichotomy: the reader and interpretive conventions assume the status of autonomous controlling agents of 'meaning' texts no longer exists autonomously as deposits of meaning to be retrieved.
- 17 I am cognisant of the fact that these concerns are uppermost in my mind, and are as such reflective of my own position in society, the church and academy for which I make no excuses but, to the contrary, I regard as essential for reflections of this nature. Naturally I regard the following concerns as the primary issues to be addressed.

Other concerns include the need for a feminist and womanist reading of the New Testament; the contribution New Testament studies can make to human empowerment, reconciliation and other socio-economic and political issues in South Africa; the importance of New Testament scholarly work being done in multidisciplinary cooperation; discerning the role New Testament studies can play in a more religious-oriented (and less theology-centered) setup, including the interreligious debate; and so on.

3. Ethics, accountability and commitment? (how to?)

... under an ethics of New Testament interpretation I understand that the text must be read seriously, with all possible methodological sophistication and rigour ... not a renewed New Critical call for close reading, since the nature of reading and the reading process of necessity involves the text, the reader and the society ... does not exclude an 'ethics of historical reading' and neither ... an 'ethics of public accountability' (Botha 1992:193).

With the shift of the study of the Bible from the Church to the academy during the eighteenth century, Schwartz (1990:12) argues that biblical studies became driven by the theoretical concerns of scholars. As the academy increasingly came to shape those (scholarly) concerns, the real danger was that biblical studies may eventually be restricted to 'interesting readings' of the texts. It therefore becomes imperative for New Testament scholars to admit to the 'that' and the 'how', and the ways in which they were 'conditioned by own personal experience and social location' (Schüssler Fiorenza 1989:7). Lately then there has been a move to ask questions on the very nature and accountability of the interpretive process to recover and account for the specificity of the interpreter's purpose (cf. e.g. Pate & Phillips 1991:7-28; Pate 1995:35-55).

A few South African New Testament scholars consciously reflected on the 'ethics of interpretation', stressing various aspects involved in justifying the way in which the New Testament is appropriated (cf. e.g. Botha 1992; Craffert 1996; Mouton 1996; Smit 1988, 1990a, 1990b, 1994).¹⁸ It will be fair to say that these scholars all expressed concern for both a responsible hermeneutical approach to texts as well as the public accountability of such interpretation. Naturally these scholars disagree on smaller matters of emphasis.¹⁹

Internationally another aspect of an ethics of interpretation has recently attracted some attention, although it has always been implicit in academic theological work. It may soon become an issue as well in South Africa, as a proclaimed secular country with, on the one hand, a recently adopted Constitution and Bill of Human Rights which emphasise the equality of all people and thus also of their religious persuasions and affiliations, and on the other hand, with a government that subsidises the universities and other institutions where theology and religion are taught. The challenge for biblical scholars is whether to adopt a 'pluralist meta-perspective' (Watson 1996:11) or to accept the unavoidable theological nature of their work and restrict themselves to an isolated seminary-type existence, or to look for a third option.²⁰ The challenge

18 Recently Smit & Wessels (1996:125-138) argued that theological writing, as much as reading should be done ethically.

19 For example, Botha has argued for the need to incorporate an ethics of public accountability, responsible hermeneutics and serious consideration for the textuality (1992:169-194). An ethics of interpretation therefore consists of a number of elements in Botha's view, but after making it clear that he support the necessity of the social relevance or public accountability of interpretation, he argues that the aspect of an 'ethics of reading' deserves more attention than accorded to it by an important conversation partner of Botha, Schüssler Fiorenza (1988:3-17) she emphasises the former aspect of accountability.

20 This debate is currently conducted abroad not only with regard to biblical studies, but also to wider religious and theological studies; cf. Braaten (1996:142-155), D'Costa (1996:338-351) and Hann (1992:263-276) as examples of scholars abroad arguing for reintroducing theological commitment into religious studies at universities. Morgan & Barton (1988:26) describes the 'main problem for biblical interpretation' as one of 'contrasting frameworks within which the Bible is interpreted the historian (read biblical scholar, JP) on the one hand and the believer on the other.'

On the other hand, it will be a tragic day if Christian theologians with a misplaced apologetic sense, are to argue for and justify the removal of educational curricula in Christian theology in an attempt to serve the postmodern paradigm, secular society and an idealised non-sectarianism ultimately this can and probably will lead to the marginalisation of all religious belief, an event which is almost unthinkable in the African context. In this regard, the least one can do is to learn from other examples across the globe, with the North American situation

is not only initiated by a free and democratic dispensation in South Africa, but also by the wider ranging 'postmodern climate' which currently sweeps the globe.²¹ Accordingly, it is argued that a theological reading of Scripture is out of place in the academic sphere not necessarily elsewhere, as in the Church for example as that sphere has as its aim unfettered (without controls), scientific investigation with a postmodern emphasis on the pluralistic and non-foundational nature of all knowledge and 'truth(s)'.²²

One finds that while criticism is been leveled at a (Christian) theological approach to biblical studies, a defense of such an approach is also articulated. Watson (1996:3-16) recently leveled a well-formulated objection to the views of Philip Davies, who promotes a 'pluralist meta-perspective' in biblical studies, based on an emic-etic distinction with regard to engaging biblical texts this perspective requires emptying the discourse of any theological concerns at all. Davies argues for an etic discourse²³ to reign supreme in the academy, with the idea to accommodate a variety of different and opposing positions within a pluralistic structure. Watson argues to the contrary that a decidedly Christian approach to the biblical texts²⁴ is not only permissible but will also ensure the necessary climate for dissent, dialogue and thus be of benefit to the scientific process²⁵ (1996:7-8; cf. Brown 1995:1170-1179).

Watson's arguments in favour of allowing for a Christian appropriation of biblical texts in the academy includes the following: as much as the Church is situated amidst the structures of

providing perhaps the most magnanimous of examples (cf. recently Sack 1997:35-39). Cf. Geffr & Jeanrond (1994:vi) on the diminished standing of academic theology.

- 21 Cf. Keck (1996:133-134) on changes in the New Testament guild with relation to Postmodernism. However, to put Postmodernism up as antithesis to Modernism is not wholly adequate; e.g. as Gunton (quoted in Watson 1996:12, n12) argues, as much as Modernism is concerned with homogeneity (suppressing the particular through the universal), Postmodernism can be charged with the same offense although achieving it by a different route: 'to attribute all particulars essentially the same value.'
- 22 It is an interesting or perhaps ironic turn that while most postmodernists argue for accepting the pluralist nature of truth, meaning, in short, the whole of life, in the name of Postmodernism 'theological' readings of texts are disallowed on basis of the 'foundational' nature of such discourse, while reproaching Modernism for its quest for neutrality, objectivity and an inclusive, encompassing truth and meaning.
- On the other hand, as Cady (1991:81-98) points out, some theologians seize Postmodernism as an opportunity 'to legitimate their enterprise without confronting the need for basic changes in the genre of theology.' Another irony is that at least one 'foundational' element is required by Postmodernism, namely the disavowal of foundational elements!
- For the influence of Postmodernism on in biblical studies, cf. for a more positive evaluation Adam (1995) and on a less positive note, Keegan (1995:1-14).
- 23 That is, studying the biblical texts as 'outsiders' without any necessary faith commitments, or at least suspending such commitments while engaged with the texts a kind of methodological agnosticism (cf. Rowland 1993:243). However, the ability to relieve oneself of all commitments is probably only possible without consideration for the 'needs of the world' (244).
- 24 This approach to biblical texts should not be seen on level par with 'dogmatic and ecclesiastical controls and pietistic bias', but refers rather to the integration of 'biblical texts, history, and theology' (Schüssler Fiorenza 1989:8-9). Cf. Davies (1986:43-64) for the guiding (dominating?) role played by religious-confessional traditions in exegesis; Morgan & Barton's general claim that 'theological positions are involved from the outset when the Bible is read as Scripture' (1988:38); Van Zyl's argument for 'rethinking' New Testament studies as a 'theological discipline', which does not imply enslavement to doctrinal positions or reading as proof-texting (1992:154-158); and, Warden (1986:294-295) who argues that the 'Christian cannot be expected to look at the Bible with detachment'.
- 25 The inability of biblical studies to provide relevant 'theological' answers demonstrates more of its 'doctrinaire narrowness and inflexibility' than 'its academic credentials' (Watson 1996:7).

Watson does not approve of accommodating Christian concerns within a pluralist context and he credits Davies with recognising that approaching biblical texts with Christian concerns no longer allows for encountering the text as 'a neutral site' because as much as the commitment of a Christian reading of Scripture is found offensive by some, the 'neutrality' perspective is as a 'tacit reduction of the concept of holy Scripture to a possible but optional reading-perspective ... an act of betrayal' (1996:12).

the world, Christian theology is exposed in the academy to 'truth-claims other than its own' which makes for good debate and establishing the essential elements for maintaining 'Christian identity'; and, Christian theology is as committed to discourse and communication as other social and human sciences²⁶ and can therefore be included in academic biblical studies.

As Fowl (1997:xxviii, n10) argues, it is possible to 'split the difference' between the views represented by Davies and Watson: allowing for a decided (Christian) theological approach to the study of biblical texts is certainly feasible,²⁷ although this is hardly the only feasible approach.²⁸ For biblical scholars to admit to certain insoluble theological positions or stances does not entail a superficial-naive or self-allotted interpretive-transcendent position. Acknowledgment of one's personal theological commitment and its interplay with (if not determination of) one's understanding of the text does not absolve biblical scholars of the need to be self-critical and conscious of ideological concerns in the interpretation of texts.²⁹ The need to take the ideological stances in the widest sense of the word³⁰ not only of texts³¹ but also of scholars (cf. Oosthuizen 1993:168-176) into account is to take the subjective nature of all human reflection seriously. But, furthermore, such ideological positions determine scholars' choice of method, as Goldingay (1993:8) argues:

the argument over method are fundamentally differences in assumptions and beliefs.³²

26 Musicians, philosophers, historians and sociologists are not expected to abort performance, their philosophizing, or deny their own historical and social embeddedness respectively, in order to practice in their fields (Watson 1996:7). Equally, political philosophers, anthropologists, social historians and historians of religion all use 'evaluation' in their studies: 'examine ideas in relation to their concrete contexts of feeling and action' (Brown 1995:1174).

27 'Personal involvement in understanding cultural texts which touch human life most intimately' indeed happens in other disciplines in the humanities and social sciences as well (Morgan & Barton 1989:23). Du Plessis (1990:33-47) argues for the biblical scholar's (and Christian theologian's) role as 'agent provocateur' in the academy at large, with its secularised consciousness. Classical Christianity should be the scholar's orientation point from which a constant dialogue is conducted with 'the modern secularist world view'.

28 The solution offered by Morgan & Barton (1988:1-43, cf. espec. 18-21, 35-39) is to opt for 'religious' readings which they trace back to Schleiermacher rather than theological ones. The difference is that religion is a 'more stable category' of the Bible's 'subject-matter', and a term which can be employed by scholars with and without certain theological or faith commitments. If one accepts that interpretation without presuppositions are impossible, the question remains: which or whose presuppositions will determine the interpretation? (cf. Braaten 1996:153).

Bell (1996:179-180,183,188) argues that the tension and debate between 'scientific-style attempts to investigate religion' and 'theological interests in maintaining the relevance of confessional perspectives' is decidedly modernist. She prefers more attention for addressing the challenges leveled at 'Enlightenment's naturalistic paradigm, at scientific or objective explanation, or at the generation of universal categories and bodies of knowledge'. As Bell succinctly puts it, that 'scholars of religion are a collectivity, a type of extended network that constructs facts, ideas, and realities' is not the problem; the problem is 'that we forget that we have constructed them', and even did so 'in our own image'! Cf. also Smit (1994:280) on the 'faith' and 'criticism' dialectic.

29 Although the argument of Morgan & Barton (1988:23-24) that 'it is possible to lay one's commitments aside for certain intellectual purposes' seems sound, it is questionable whether it is humanly possible to attempt the *tabula rasa*, or rather, whether it is the desired option. The assumed neutrality might prove more recalcitrant to adequate reading, especially with the increasing need to account for issues of interests, power and control in interpretation.

30 Cf. paragraph 5 below!

31 For the ideology of texts, cf. Oosthuizen (1993:172-174, texts here especially as 'the Bible'), and Yee (1995:117) on 'institutionalized ideologies of the methods'; for the denial of ideologies of the text, cf. Fowl (1995a:15-34).

32 So also Greenstein (1986:83,90); cf. Krentz (1993:355) on the 'person of the interpreter' being determinative for meaning; Morgan & Barton (1988:293) who argue that the 'principle or centre' by which a text is interpreted is 'ultimately decisive' for the text's meaning and not the text itself; furthermore, that the different aims of interpreters are not only legitimate but it and not methods also 'provides the best guide through the contemporary maze (sc. of methodology)' (1988:271). The fundamental division regarding interpretive aims is centered on

However, the plea that a committed reading of biblical texts should be allowed if not encouraged, is not equal to arguing for a 'subjectivist' reading which revels in the spurning of being fair to other views, and the dismissal of consensus views in short, interested readings are not (necessarily) solipsistic readings (cf. Bellis 1995:25-32).³³

The 'neutrality'-stance in reading the Bible in the academy³⁴ is no newcomer to the South African context, although the context of the debate might be somewhat different. Earlier reference was made to Vorster who argues that it stems from Cartesian anxiety, and especially from within the socio-political climate before 1994 in South Africa³⁵ a strong emphasis was put on 'objective' engagement with biblical texts it is an ironic twist that once again South African biblical scholars might be required to adopt a 'neutral' attitude to their studies, albeit for different reasons.

The interpretive dilemma for theology is that religious beliefs and practices do not exist as bare facts but have value, purpose, and interpreted meaning' (Schüssler Fiorenza 1991:139).

As much as theological beliefs are not empty of value or purpose, the assumed neutrality of biblical interpretation is equally in need of reappraisal.

Perhaps in fact the almost unchallenged assumption that the task of biblical scholars is essentially to *interpret* the text represents a systematic repression of our ethical instincts' (Clines 1993:87, his emphasis)³⁶

The realisation that a failure to read the Bible against the grain can result in being unfaithful to one's own ethical values and ideals persuades Clines to rather opt for biblical *criticism*, looking for evaluative criteria outside the text.³⁷

religious and non-religious readings of the Bible, in the contexts of religious communities and biblical scholarship respectively.

- 33 Not even if Bellis' contention (1995:25-36) that the hasty devaluation of all attempts at objectivity and neutrality creates a false dichotomy between those seeking 'objective biblical truth' which 'was and is not wrong in theory', and those who realise 'the value of various viewpoints', is not accepted. Cf. Schneiders (1982:53-58), who wants to retain both objectivity and subjectivity in biblical scholarship, for some necessary ontological, epistemological, and methodological distinctions; Schüssler Fiorenza (1989:7) who argues that critical biblical scholarship which includes historical concerns does not require 'political detachment, value neutrality and historical positivism', but rather 'an articulation of one's religious visions and political-ecclesial commitments'; and, West (1993b:3): 'Engagement, then, is not contrary to 'critical' understanding, but a component of it.' For a practical model of such interpretation, cf. Hess (1993:190-212).
- 34 For negative comments regarding assumed objectivity and neutrality in biblical studies on the international scene, cf. Brueggemann, Fewell and Schüssler Fiorenza quoted in Bellis (1995:25). Cf. Schüssler Fiorenza (1989:6) who accuses 'critical historical-biblical scholars' of insistence on 'value-free, disinterested inquiry into historical data.'
- 35 Regarding South African theology in general, cf. Villa-Vicencio's reference to 'abstract, academic theology' of white, liberal theologians who, although critical of the politics and practices of Apartheid, clung 'to a somewhat removed critical analysis of the Bible' leading to a destabilising of White political control and its theological foundations but more often leading to 'apolitical, non-contextual and irrelevant theological study' (1980:16-17).
- 36 Clines distinguish between acts of interpretation, (and understanding) as seeking 'to represent the text, to exegete and explicate it, to rehearse it in other words than its own', and, acts of criticism, 'which judge the text by a norm outside itself' (1993:86). The latter often happens in certain strands of feminist biblical interpretation, and some Black Theologians also advocate such a position.

Cf. West's insistence on both a critical consciousness (Mosala) involving the recognition of the text's ideological nature, the development of critical skill to analyse the text, and a 'theoretically well-grounded hermeneutic and critical methodology including the utilization of historical-critical methods and other methods of textual analysis developed in other academic disciplines (1993b:4). However, some of these elements create the impression of repetition, if not mutual exclusivity!

- 37 The whole matter of the Bible's authority now becomes involved, an issue which cannot be discussed here.

4. The audience on relevance (for whom?)

Because of the plethora of methods and paradigms offered in the market, we have lost sight of the real purpose of our exegetical trade. There is an urgent need to change the order of our questions. Instead of asking: 'What is the best method to use?', the first question ought to be: 'What is the object to be interpreted?'. This might sound like a small difference, but unless we regain a clear understanding of the phenomenon we are trying to interpret, we will not be able to choose or develop tools which are adequate for the task (Lategan 1988:68).

The matter which Lategan puts on the table is the question whether New Testament scholars still fulfill 'their purpose', because, as Perkins (1993:91) contends, '(i)nterpretation always has a strong element of *for whom*'. Whether or not Lategan can legitimately claim to know the purpose of New Testament scholarship, his point is that not the method but the result of the method is of primary concern. Although there is certainly room for methodological reflection, methods in New Testament studies are not to become ends in themselves (Goldingay 1993:17).³⁸

The principal objective of reading the Bible is not to interpret the Bible but to interpret life with the help of the Bible (Mesters, quoted in Corner & Rowland 1989:39)

This view on the interpretation of the Bible means relating the Bible's many ways of addressing the 'grave and urgent' questions of its day, to similar questions in our world (Rowland & Corner 1989:78).

Therefore,

(b)iblical interpretation is a serious matter, not primarily because it is academically respectable, but because it helps shape many people's religion, and so affects whole societies, including those in which religious practice has declined or is changing (Morgan & Barton 1988:21).

Although the interpretive frameworks are 'contested' (Morgan & Barton 1988:23) in the sense that some scholars prefer religious and others secular and still others hybrid frameworks, the interpretive work or results still issue forth.

Linking on to the previous section where the impossibility of neutrality at least in the absolute sense of the word was stressed, and where a plea was made for committed, 'interested' interaction with the biblical texts, it is important to notice that neutrality or then the quest for neutrality can become tantamount to irrelevance.

Those who teach biblical studies fail in their responsibilities if they, in the name of professional neutrality, refuse to consider the implications of the biblical text for today (Bellis 1995:33).

Indeed, West (1993b:9) contends

(i)ntegration is a necessity if their (sc. students') biblical training is to be of any use in the community.

Apart from the academic or university community, the following communities of readers³⁹ are important:

38 Cf. Goldingay (1995:17). Jeanrond (1992:221) refers to the same problem: 'by stressing the need for proper methods of understanding, the hermeneutical concern has at times overshadowed the practical concern' and created the 'illusion' that understanding is the final goal.

39 In no way are these communities related to Tracian three publics of the church, society and university monolithic but they harbour many 'sub-communities' with many differences: in believing communities different religious interests; in communities reading the Bible as book of society differences 'in perspective and emphasis'; and where the Bible is read in the academy, differences in institutional setting and methodologies (Smit 1994:274-

Believing communities and/or the Church

Hartin (1991:1-16) argues that one of the principles for reading the New Testament in a relevant way in South Africa is to view it 'from the context of believers' as this is the context where the New Testament 'receives life and meaning for it speaks from this context and to this context'.⁴⁰ As Clines (1993:77) almost reluctantly confirms

even though the church does not 'own' the Bible, biblical research would probably not exist certainly not in the form or to the degree that it does at present if it was not for the church.⁴¹

Clines continues to argue for the benefits derived from the symbiotic though tense relationship between the church and academy⁴² on the interpretation of the Bible: each wants to reserve the interpretive prerogative for itself. This tension is a creative one, where the church as more powerful institution than the academy especially in Africa has to shed some fundamentalist shackles and the notion of utilising the Bible 'as a tool for social control' (Clines 1993:76-78; cf. Morgan & Barton 1988:26).

Much of this anti-ecclesiastical control-sentiment is echoed in the confines of the New Testament guild,⁴³ but the creativeness of the tension found in the church and academy-relationship does not culminate only in benefits derived from it by the church. To the contrary, biblical scholars in the academy with all their self-mandated and vigorously defended scholarly independency will do well to consider the need for their work to address the lives and thoughts and beliefs of those who almost unquestionably accepts the authority and normativity of those texts mercilessly dissected by scholars in an almost sacred way. These readers, the 'religious majority of those interested in the Bible' (Morgan & Barton 1988:25), have an undeniable claim on the biblical texts and their interpretation.

Rowland & Corner (1989:37) argues that the 'enormous investment in biblical interpretation' in the academy delivers very little which can be considered of use in Christian ministry with regard to the 'foundation documents of Christianity'. In the words of Watson (1996:16):

The academic study of the texts of holy Scripture is gradually succumbing to theological paralysis.

A first step to remedy this situation can be found in the suggestion of Morgan & Barton (1988:277):

277). It is also important to recognise the different 'subject(s)' and 'modes' in which 'theology' is done in these 'publics' (Lategan 1995:946).

40 Goldingay (1995:8) goes as far as saying: 'Arguably any true biblical interpretation must eventually take the form of preaching, and vice versa, because "the Bible itself is preaching" (quoting Packer).

In an altogether different (pluralist) way and with different motivation (justifying theology amidst 'religious studies' and distinguishing 'academic theology' from 'religious and personal theology'), Brown (1995:1175-1178) argues that 'academic theology' should take its starting point from believing communities and their contexts: 'religious claims do not mean in general, they mean in context'.

41 Cf. Morgan & Barton (1988:25): 'the biblical disciplines owe their very existence and shape primarily to religious interests.'

42 Cf. the reference of Morgan & Barton (1988:17) to the 'continuing and sometimes painful relationship' between biblical scholarship and religious communities, 'whose self-understanding is at stake in the ways the Bible is understood'.

43 Especially with the sociological and demographic changes in the guild (Keck 1996:133). Cf. also Beardslee (1990:22); Morgan & Barton (1988:288); Van Zyl (1992:148-163). In South Africa WS Vorster was especially vocal on the need to escape ecclesial domination or control.

The reverse is also true: suspicion of the results of biblical scholarship in ecclesial context (Coggins 1993:163).

Treating the Bible as a historical source or as a literary artifact will, in a secular culture, yield religious meaning only if these rational approaches are linked (through some theory of religion and reality) to the religious reader's belief-system.

It is praiseworthy that the executive of the NTSSA has recently decided to announce its annual meetings in the print and broadcasting media, as well as to churches. It will be important to see whether these invitations will develop into more than simply courtesy visits by clergy and members of churches.⁴⁴ Is it possible to measure to what extent New Testament scholarship in South Africa influences 'what is preached in church', or to compare theological thinking in the church with the research output by New Testament scholarship, amidst the many and radically diverse sets of theological thinking in most churches? What are the implications, in any case, when the majority of New Testament scholars in South Africa are white,⁴⁵ for theological reflection in traditionally black churches? In contrast with an ecclesial context with a majority of female members, in New Testament scholarship by far the majority of scholars are men!⁴⁶

Society

It is a tragic consequence of the modernist era that the biblical texts which 'includes the political-economic dimensions as inseparable from the religious',⁴⁷ are taught in biblical studies contexts from an almost exclusively religious perspective. Lately,⁴⁸ however, there is the realisation that biblical studies need to escape its narrow religious orientation and have

to come to grips with its wider subject matter and this field as part of the humanities examining its relationship to the concrete power-relations of today's world (Horsley 1995:1128; 1144).

Because the Bible is 'a cultural artifact in our society, and not just an ecclesiastical object' it is important for biblical interpreters to reckon with the 'religious and ideological plurality of the society' (Clines 1993:76).

In South Africa, Bernard Lategan has been a staunch advocate of contextualising biblical studies especially for society at large. However, as far as the involvement of biblical scholars in South African society is concerned Lategan has to conclude that

(a) sustained and constructive participation in the public arena and in terms of the public debate to develop a common value system and an ethos that will sustain a democratic dispensation, is still sorely missing (1995:947).

Lategan ascribes this apparent inability of biblical scholars to participate in societal issues to a 'structural deficiency', an inability to relate to the 'third public'. He suggests as solution to this problem, 'an interactive, constructive mode of theological discourse in the public arena'.⁴⁹

44 Van Zyl (1992:161) has argued that SA NT studies should attempt to become involved in the life of the church on a practical level, e.g. by being included in church-related committees.

45 And only 17 out of the 250 NTSSA members listed at the back of *Neotestamentica* 29(2) of 1995 (the most recent membership list available to me), are black!

46 One also has to account for the almost academic-schizophrenic existence of (at least some of) those scholars teaching in church affiliated or -related institutions: the particular church's teachings and tradition often have to be suspended to various degrees to facilitate academically responsible scholarship.

47 Horsley (1995:1145) argues that the 'vast majority of texts we deal with are about conflict with the dominant political-religious order and/or are concerned with political-economic as well as religious affairs'.

48 Morgan & Barton (1988:16) argue that biblical scholarship is more attuned to the needs of 'contemporary culture' than it concerns itself with 'the religious uses of scripture'.

49 Following Gustafson's notion of 'policy discourse', such a mode of discourse would comprise of seven elements: non-prescriptive; inclusive; interactive, participatory; hermeneutically competent; serving; constructive; and, anonymous or 'secular' (Lategan 1995:955-957).

A renewed appreciation of the role played by the community in the interpretation of the Bible, as advocated by Fowl & Jones (1991) in their recent study in ethical decision making, can be a first step in readmitting the Bible to societal life (cf. Brown 1995:1167-1179). Theologically speaking Fowl & Jones point out that Scripture is not directed at individuals, but at communities. They then advocate the development of an 'ethos' rather than 'ethics', which will lead toward the formation of people of character in this the community as embodiment of a tradition's moral vision, plays a central role (1991: espec. 8-14).⁵⁰

As far as the relevance of New Testament studies in South Africa is concerned, it will be difficult to argue that such scholarship here really has a significant influence on either the second or third publics (Tracy), the Church or society, except a negative influence in the sense of making no impact at all in these spheres.⁵¹ Smit (1991:62-63) argues that biblical scholarship has stayed clear from the 'corridors of power', both on ecclesial and societal level. The reasons for this will again prove interesting, but falls beyond the scope of this contribution.⁵²

*Interdisciplinary cooperation*⁵³

New Testament studies need to become aware of the need to take other theological,⁵⁴ as well as human -and social sciences disciplines⁵⁵ serious and view them as conversation partners (Van Zyl 1992:148-163). Especially within the scope of theological disciplines Van Zyl encourages New Testament scholars to become involved in the broader debate, to popularise their research results and establish links with homiletics.

Smit (1994:277-283; cf. Lategan 1996:139-148) argues that with the awareness that other communities are reading the same New Testament texts as happens in the academy, decisions

50 Related to this is the increasing emphasis on the ecclesiological implications of interpretation: for the New Testament (Paul) already emphasises this aspect, cf. Hays (1989); for recent advocacy of this as contemporary strategy, cf. Fowl (1995b:408-409); Fowl & Jones (1991).

51 In South Africa, Van Zyl (1992:151) laments that while there is an increasing need for biblical scholars to show the relevance of the Bible for contemporary life, they busy themselves with historical and literary issues of the texts. Cf. Lategan (1995:947).

A similar accusation is leveled by McDonald (1992:425) at international biblical studies: 'We need to begin to do both (sc. theology and exegesis) in conjunction with 'the people in the pew' and if possible with 'the people of the land'. We are often hardly in sight of either!'

52 These reasons might include an attempt to retain neutrality amidst the Apartheid struggle, and the accompanying fear of governmental reprisals and effective sidelining (e.g. by means of retracting subsidies); or, a subdued and silent condoning of Apartheid ideology; or perhaps simply overactivity of New Testament scholars in SA in their guild's own corridors of power the latter activity would primarily concern methodolomania!

For the marginal status of theology in contemporary North American culture, cf. Grigg (1997:32-34).

53 To complete the picture of the three publics, it is questionable whether NT scholarship in SA ever really functioned interdisciplinary and as such contributed to the academia outside of New Testament studies. Even the ability of New Testament scholars to 'connect' with scholars from other theological disciplines has been questioned (Smit 1996:180-183; cf. Spangenberg 1994). The need for interdisciplinary awareness is stressed lately, however, cf. e.g. Combrink (1986:9-17; 1996:301); Lategan (1996:139-148); and, Smit (1994:277-283).

54 The fragmented nature of theological and religious study is well known, and with the increasing emphasis on specialisation our mutual dependence becomes crucial: we need a '(self-) critical borrowing of methods from other fields' (Horsley 1995:1140).

55 It is generally accepted that the majority of the (especially the more recent) methods derive from sources other than the New Testament guild itself. Although this 'interdisciplinary' even if one-sided effort is applauded, it naturally raises questions on taking serious the ideological baggage which accompanies borrowed methodologies but this will have to be addressed elsewhere.

For example, many of the newer methods derive from (what can be called broadly) Literary Theory. Selden (1985:1) argues that since the late 1960's 'students of literature have been troubled by a seemingly endless series of challenges to the consensus of common sense' (my emphasis). Common sense, of course, is not some indeterminate and neutral entity, but a 'cultural system' (Geertz, quoted in Meeks 1993:217 n5).

should be made on the nature of our community's response to the existence of the others. Of the three options available,⁵⁶ Smit advocates the third one of dialogue between the various communities. In this regard the statement by Lategan (1994:24, and echoed by Smit 1994:281)

(i)t is only when there is a will to a constructive reading of the biblical text that a constructive dialogue becomes possible

- becomes crucially important as our readings depend on our acceptance of our communities' codes and rules and different communities therefore easily question each other's readings.

One more prominent issue on the agenda should be how the study of the New Testament can contribute to interreligious or interfaith issues (Kourie 1995:176; Speckman 1996:145-147). Kourie refers to this as the need for 'a pluralist hermeneutic of Scripture', in which an interreligious approach to the understanding of the role played by various traditions and scriptures in different religions can be examined and compared.⁵⁷ This is possible notwithstanding the many differences between the religions and the roles allocated to the particular sacred scriptures, because the 'reception of scripture' is similar enough. Eventually such an exercise can contribute to a better understanding of a particular religion's view of Scripture.⁵⁸ Speckman's advocacy of New Testament scholars' involvement in the interfaith dialogue locates the importance in the role that the New Testament, and biblical studies in general, can (should!) play to foster a climate of inclusivity, tolerance and reconciliation in post-Apartheid South Africa (1996:146-147). The motivation for this call is 'the common humanity we all share'.

It is clear that biblical, including New Testament, scholars (should) serve a variety of constituencies. Clines (1993:81) argues that

(t)he biblical interpreter, in short, is in the business of serving some community or other, of meeting the needs of some group who will pay for the services biblical criticism can offer and continues that

in the end it is the customer who will determine whether the service and the goods are acceptable or not.

While there can be no disagreement about the first comment, it is at least arguable whether Clines' conclusion or rather his resolve regarding this observation to provide to the (paying) customers of biblical studies what they want 'the piper get to call the tune' is acceptable.⁵⁹ Here the ethical question reappears: is one of the implications of accepting pluralism in the interpretation of Bible necessarily a (crude) fabrication of meaning structured according and

56 The first two are: ignoring all other communities and rendering service only to the study of the New Testament and its guild; or, the advocacy option of selecting a particular community deserving of all our efforts. Of the latter, cf. the examples of Davies (service to the academic community) and Watson (service to the religious community) referred to above and Pixley and Schüssler Fiorenza (service to society) referred to below.

57 Cf. e.g. Brown's remark on the inconceivability for a Muslim scholar to study the Qur'an 'in the abstract or strictly internal terms': the starting point for such study is always the reception of the Qur'an in specific communities. Brown also refers to how the community is important for the Hindu scholar as well as the scholar of Native American tradition and religion (1995:1175-1176).

58 Kourie hastens to add that this not 'an argument in favour of a facile syncretism' but an expression of 'the postmodern ecumenical transformation of consciousness' (1995:176).

59 Perhaps Perkins' reading of Clines, namely his end-user theory entails being 'responsive to its cultural context', misses some of the force of Clines' conclusions (1993:92).

Jobling (1993:100-101) criticises Clines' lack of dealing with 'economic restraints' amidst his insistence on the internationalisation of biblical studies, and his initial 'economic innocence' which is later replaced with an 'apparently unquestioning acceptance of the market economy'.

made available to the liking of the highest bidder? Is the need for societal relevant biblical studies tantamount to offering a deliberately manipulated interpretation for the sake of gratifying 'authorities' in the various publics?

The above conclusion on the institutionalisation of biblical scholars (Clines), namely their compromising stance to their employers regarding the biblical-interpretive product, smacks of a displaced sense of ethics and commitment. With the living conditions of millions of people globally deteriorating rather than improving, amidst (because of?) the commercialisation of life and technology ever becoming more sophisticated, more voices are calling for biblical studies to address this situation. Pixley (1996:72-75; cf. Siker 1996) has recently argued that biblical scholarship must become 'militant' in attending to the needs of impoverished people the world over. Regarding biblical scholarship he argues:

Scholarship is a most important service to the Church and to the struggle, but only when and if it perceives itself as a second step⁶⁰ which makes no sense without the community and the struggle. (75)

Pixley clearly requires a 'hermeneutics of social embodiment' (Meeks 1986)⁶¹ which goes beyond the view of scholarship providing the means to people to acquire a worldview and lifestyle conforming to the values of the biblical texts⁶² now a commitment to the poor and disadvantaged becomes a prerequisite⁶³ to authentic scholarship (cf. Sugirtharajah 1991:434-444; West 1993b:10-11). Far from assuming equality between the 'power relationships' of (privileged) scholarship and the poor even for Gramsci's 'organic intellectual' it is critical to harness scholarly effort to serve the needs of the poor (Rowland 1993:239,241). Therefore, in the words of Jeanrond (1992:222; cf. Briggs 1990:277), we need an

integrated method of theological reflection in which our insights both into the biblical texts and the process of reading are mediated by our search for principles and strategies of political action.

Such an approach can contribute to 'the development of programmes for the transformation of this world', and simultaneously give accreditation to the contribution of Christian (biblical) scholars to matters global.

60 Cf. Rowland & Comer (1989:41): theology is a 'second-order task', namely 'one of critical reflection on life and practice'.

61 Referring to Lindbeck's cultural-linguist approach, Meeks argues that 'a hermeneutical strategy entails a social strategy ... texts do not carry their meaning within themselves, but 'mean' in so far as they function intelligibly within specific cultures or subcultures ... (p)erhaps it is not too much to say that the hermeneutical circle is not completed until the text finds a fitting social embodiment' (1986:183-184).

62 Cf. Meeks (1986:184): 'The goal of a theological hermeneutics in the cultural-linguist model is ... the formation of a community whose forms of life correspond to the symbolic universe rendered or signalled by the text.'

However, whereas Lindbeck locates this symbolic universe in the text through his intratextual approach, Meeks argues in favour of construing it through historical studies and with reference to the early Christian communities and to a certain extent in contemporary communities (for the latter, cf. Fowl & Jones 1991).

The important issue is that it is not an abstract 'meaning of the text' which is sought but the direction suggested by the Bible to people in their concrete and specific circumstances (Rowland & Comer 1989:39). Therefore, Jeanrond (1992:219-221) argues for understanding as the one leg and praxis or action as the other leg of (Christian) theology.

63 Because, in the words of Croatto (1987:60-65), the Bible 'pertains' or 'belongs' to the poor. Cf. Briggs (1990:277).

5. The power and politics of reading (who decides?)

It becomes imperative that those voices excluded from dominant discourse become introduced to the discourse (Schüssler Fiorenza 1991:136-137; cf. Cormie 1991:175-179; Rowland 1993:236,245).

The actual decisions about which versions of the Bible to use, and which interpretations to admit, are partly political decisions (Morgan & Barton 1988:291).

Schüssler Fiorenza (1991:125) argues that the 'universality of interpretation' is counter-balanced by the limits of interpretation, namely the realisation that

language not only mediates meaning and freedom but also oppressive power. Not only is reality experienced as interpreted ... but what is experienced is ... also the lack of meaning, the absence of truth, and the force of domination.⁶⁴

It is not only a matter of choosing certain criteria as embodied in various methods by which to interpret, nor is it sufficient to ask who choose the criteria that are to be used, but also why other available criteria were not used. This boils down to the need to account for the ideological setting of interpretive practices.⁶⁵

The insistence of a 'hermeneutical privilege of the poor' ... as well as ... a 'feminist critical hermeneutics' recognizes the social position of the one who confronts the biblical text as crucial to how it is understood (Briggs 1990:276-277).

With the danger of singling out any particular scholar⁶⁶ because very rarely South African New Testament scholars account for their involvement in exerting or boosting control of biblical texts a good example of this failure to account for the power and politics of biblical interpretation is the recent attempt to set up some 'principles' for making the New Testament relevant in South Africa. In this repertoire none of the seven principles reckons with the recognition of or accounting for the ideological control of interpretation (Hartin 1991:1-16).

The need to take the 'world in front of the text' into serious consideration, especially regarding the lasting impact of the tradition of interpretation of texts,⁶⁷ is emphasised by Cormie (1991:186-188) with reference to how ancient elites 'long ago'

learned to manage tradition and authority in their interests.

This is, however, not a practice which can be relegated to the past but because it still continues,

64 The need for critical awareness of scholars' construction of history, meaning and 'truth' is occasioned not only by the possible negative uses of such constructions, but is continuously of critical importance in order to evaluate one's own assumptions and interests (Horsley 1995:1144).

65 As Speckman (1996:136) correctly argues, biblical scholars do not choose their methods naively, but to 'advantage their particular ideologies'. He fails, however, to describe the relationship between context and method and the undergirding philosophical framework clearly, especially on where the 'philosophical framework' fits in. Through all his insistence on the ideological baggage of methods, he fails to investigate either his counterpart's (Kourie) or his own; ironically, the impression is created that he fails to accord his own methodological concerns any ideological attention by never addressing it.

Rowland & Corner (1989:53) has suggested that the value of liberation exegesis is exactly its ability to 'awaken the exegete to the context of his or her reading of the Bible'.

66 Many other examples can be pointed out: for all the obvious dedication in Van Zyl's call for a careful use of new methodological approaches and the eventual need of incorporating one or two of these in a theological student's general exegetical preparedness (1992:158-159), he fails to explain which methods will be selected, on what basis and by whom!

67 Cf. Morgan & Barton (1988:292): 'the tradition and life of communities provide some guidance about what meanings are appropriate'.

(i)n the modern context, it is quite appropriate to speak of the manufacturing or production of traditions, a process managed by elites in their effort to manage society as a whole in their interests, drawing heavily on techniques developed in the production, advertising and sale of commodities.

The urge to control the reading of the Bible and to suggest which readings are good and acceptable readings is visible in the way in which academic discussions are regulated according to the prevailing 'orthodoxy': themes of and papers read at conferences, articles accepted for publications in journals, and so on.⁶⁸ In the words of Perkins (1993:88), academic communities can become:

institutionalized forms of shared commitment to particular research paradigms.

In a yet broader sense, the tradition or history of the interpretation of texts can become a powerful tool for controlling the meaning of texts, especially by 'professional middle-class culture and sensibilities' (Cormie 1991:190).⁶⁹ Cormie argues, however, that in the case of the Bible all is not lost, in the sense that the Bible does not only contain (potentially) oppressive material. In order to be able to access the liberatory aspects in the Bible the voices of the oppressed in contemporary society must be allowed to speak out. This creates the impression that Cormie is perhaps not taking the established interpretive traditions imposed on texts seriously enough, namely that these traditions are in fact capable not only of obscuring the meaning of those texts, but also of forcing a certain preferred (by some) interpretation on (the interpreters of) the texts.

In this regard Briggs' contribution (1990:276-303) on the relationship between 'the politics of identity' and 'cultural hegemony' is important. Categories such as race, class and sex are

68 Cf. Clines (1993:71) who insists that international travel and conferences perhaps reinforce rather than break down 'national and methodological differences'; and, Coggins' reference to Robert Carroll's expression, 'the guilds which are keepers of the text' (1993:173).

Mazamisa (1995:12) argues that the problem lies in the academy's devotedness to literacy or textuality: 'The bible as text is appropriated by scholars and employed to entrench the norms and values of the upper classes thereby creating their exclusive ideological institutions like journals, manners, and morals.'

However, while admitting to some truth in Mazamisa's attack on textuality and the account of its disadvantages, one feels that he fails to reckon with textuality's ability to indeed continue and enlarge a tradition through the very same distanciation Mazamisa so derides, i.e. 'written language becomes abstract and anaemic ... loses touch with the living roots of sensuous experience ... oral traditions ... suddenly become sterile and dead when they are translated into writing'. However, distanciation 'potentially enriches a text by enabling it to transcend the coordinates of its production and function in very different later situations' (Schneiders 1991:142-144 with reference to Ricoeur Mazamisa 1995:13 also refers to Ricoeur, but naturally to the latter's emphasis on textuality's dialectic nature).

Cf. Chidester (1995:21-27) for 'power relations' and their role within religion: 'Strategic negotiations of power involve claims made on the symbolic discourses, practices, and forms of association that comprise a worldview'; also on the African Independent Churches' desire to 'control' the Bible: 'Controlling, owning, and operating the Bible, therefore, has become strategic appropriations of power to be deployed against a white man's faith that has systematically disempowered blacks in South Africa.'

69 Speckman (1996:139) fails to realise or at least acknowledge that his proposal of a meta-perspective or -model in textual interpretation the African philosophy of ukugqibelela merely adjusts the level of control. In this sense his criticism of Kourie's proposed 'multi-model' as an overarching structure for enabling adherents of different methods to be able to communicate turns to irony.

For an acknowledgement of the importance to take the history or tradition of interpretation of texts into consideration, cf. e.g. Babcock (1990) for the interpretive legacies surrounding the Pauline texts; Fowl (1995b:394-410) on the importance and ambiguous nature of the history of interpretation; Luz (1994) for the 'history of effects' in the context of Matthew's gospel; Risnen (1992a:303-324; 1992b:337-347) on 'effective history' as a challenge to biblical scholars; and, Sawyer (1995:152-168) on the ethics of comparative interpretation.

social constructions and filled with value by the dominant group in society, which since the advent of this era has been white, male, middle-class, not too young not too old people (1990:284). 'Actual society' is 'one controlled and developed in the interests and in the image of a white male middle class' and claims to equality and universal humanity all suffer subordination to that group and its interests. Society's past is mediated to us as tradition by the cultural hegemony. In order to demythologise the past and tradition, one needs a hermeneutics of social practices which will expose the political nature of identity and cultural hegemony for what it is.

It is, therefore, important to investigate the ideological concerns related to the origin of the biblical texts,⁷⁰ and of their subsequent canonisation, and even of the centuries of interpretive interaction with the Bible. But this is not enough as it is equally important to

go on to ask the further ideological question about how the ideology of the Bible is being used by modern society and especially the church to promote the interests of particular groups (Clines 1993:85; cf. Smit 1991:63-64).⁷¹

As Clines correctly argues, the answer to this question will illustrate how the authority of the Bible is subordinated to the interests, concerns and 'power of those groups that promote it and profess to be governed by it'.⁷²

In this regard the ambiguous nature of the hermeneutical enterprise surfaces: on the one hand it is shunned for recognising (in the books of some, creating) gaps of understanding, boundaries of difference between then and now, establishing a guild (or perhaps cult) of 'superreaders', and so on. On the other hand, hermeneutics can be and is indeed applauded for its ability to encourage

the discovery of systemic distortions in communication, the often hidden interests in the process of understanding, and the particular ideologies operative in our Christian discourse (biblical and postbiblical) (Jeanrond 1992:221).⁷³

Schüssler Fiorenza (1991:133-139) contends that three concerns are of crucial importance in alleviating the crisis of hermeneutics in Christian theology and to (re-)establish Christian identity these are of equally grave concern for biblical studies. In the first place, solidarity with suffering implies a 'commitment to a transformative practice' and challenges the justification of interpretive practices contributing to suffering. Secondly, the inclusion of all communities of discourse, especially those previously excluded, is necessary because interpretation 'takes place

70 '... in whose interest these ideas came into being and which groups stood to benefit from them' (Clines 1993:85).

71 More broadly, Speckman argues that since the Constantine era Christianity has survived by 'force and coercion' (1996:146), which is a generalisation and probably not a wholly adequate explanation of the resilience of Christianity.

72 Especially from the side of Liberation theologians, but also from elsewhere, the appeal to the academic community is that the situatedness of interpretation be realised; e.g. 'we have to accept the fact that the historical-critical project owes everything to the interpreter and the interpretive culture of which he or she is a part' (Rowland & Comer 1989:37, my emphasis). Cf. Morgan & Barton (1988:291).

73 Another dimension is always present, namely that the 'existence of a shared world of social and moral meanings' for all of humanity is presupposed by those involved in the discourse. This shared world is 'the process of cultural hegemony' and criticism of it and in it can become little more than 'self-correction and therefore maintenance of the cultural hegemony' (Briggs 1990:292).

This criticism can naturally be leveled at this contribution as well, although in fairness I have implied the need to accept the constructional nature of reality, the need to have the 'dominant discourse' challenged by excluded and marginalised voices and so on the level to which it is successful only my readers can determine. Like Briggs (1990:299) I do believe that as much as interpretation (of texts as well as social reality) is inescapable, (re-)interpretation of the biblical texts by those 'stigmatized by their identities' can be a form of resistance to cultural hegemony.

in relation to pre-understandings rooted in different life experiences and practices', and especially previously excluded communities ('repressed or silent voices') need to be included in order to prevent the continued existence of 'limited or distorted interpretations'.⁷⁴ The third concern is the necessity of 'integrity as reconstructive principle'⁷⁵ which presupposes an ethic of accountability and relate decision-making to 'priorities, principles, and paradigms' rather than to uniformity and harmony the latter which would be required by a decision for consistency and coherence as opposed to integrity as interpretive principle:

These decisions about priorities lead to a postinterpretive, reconstructive or reforming stage beyond initial understanding' (1991:139).

The control exerted by the 'elitist' group of the New Testament guild is found in its leverage to determine the dominant discourse, methods and funding of research. The control of the in-group is strengthened by means of publications and selected areas of specialisation (Adam 1995:4,8,13-14,21,34-35). In South Africa the problem is compounded by geographics and historically established patterns of funding: two centres (located in and around the Johannesburg-Pretoria, and Cape Town surroundings) and Historically White (Advantaged) Universities (Institutions) are privileged above the rest. The powerful arguments of Eagleton (1983:194-217) on the inevitable political and ideological nature of Literary Theory are of value also when South African New Testament scholarship and their emphasis on methodology is examined, because here too the lines of power and politics are clearly visible.⁷⁶

The recent argument by Clines (1993:67-87) referred to above, namely that biblical scholars should settle for fulfilling the needs of their customers an end-user theory of interpretation should be taken into consideration here. Should the realisation of the influence of his/her location on the biblical scholar require abandonment of attempts to interpret the biblical texts with as much scholarly accountability, and ecclesial and societal relevancy as possible? Clines' proposal can be seen as not so much an acceptance of the inevitable given the pluralist nature of biblical studies but perhaps rather as a tragic relinquishing of the responsibility which is required within biblical scholarship.

Such a guild of scholars as exists amongst South African New Testament scholars needs to be 'opened up', and Bellis (1995:33-34) suggests the way to do this is by including as many people from other 'backgrounds' as possible. She does not see this as an invasion of the guild as the 'older' and 'newer' views would make mutual concessions and serious attempts to understand each other's views.⁷⁷ This will 'defuse much of the philosophical and political

74 Cf. Schüssler Fiorenza's argument (1989:10) on the inclusion of women and other 'non-persons' (Gutierrez) in theological scholarly discourse: they are not only to become 'subjects' of this discourse, but also 'agents for its systemic change'.

75 Cf. Smit (1994:277) who argues that the consideration of the historical situation and social position of South African New Testament interpreters in the hermeneutical arena, concerns the 'integrity of what we are doing'.

76 Ironically, as in the case of those literary theorists who disavow method for ideological purposes, the residing in as opposed to using of method in SA NT scholarship can equally lead to professed innocence in reading the NT, emphasising the first part of the Gablerian (or Stendahl) 'meant-meaning' approach (or dichotomy) recently strongly advocated by e.g. Rasnen (1990).

Gerald West has consistently argued (e.g. 1991) for the need to take especially two dialectical relationships in regard to biblical scholarship in South Africa seriously: interested as opposed to interesting readings, and trained as opposed to ordinary readers. On the gap 'split' between the 'hermeneutically sophisticated theologians' and the 'uncritical applications of the biblical texts', or the 'fundamentalists', cf. Jeanrond (1992:222) who stresses the fact that the 'vast majority of Christians' fall in the second group (cf. also Morgan & Barton 1988:25; Smit 1994:279-280,282).

77 Cf. Jobling (1993:107, quoting Rendtorff) on the importance of dialogue between old and new, and his criticism of Clines' self-imposed restriction on 'his chosen local structures of signification'. Cf. Beardslee 1990:30) on the need for conversation between communities: 'uninstructed readers and scholars, humanists and activists'.

hostility that pervades the field of biblical studies' and will also enable 'positive energy for creative scholarship'.⁷⁸

6. The African context⁷⁹

All three concerns addressed above (ethics, audience and ideological or power issues) contract into the single prism which has so far received very little attention, if at all, from South African New Testament scholars: our shared African context. The position of the interpretation of the Bible in Africa is of course a complex and multifaceted issue⁸⁰ which will not be addressed here in full, but it is important to indicate within the methodological debate the need for a broader hermeneutical approach which will facilitate the reading of the Bible in Africa.⁸¹

Our colleagues in Old Testament studies have a mixed blessing in the sense that the Old Testament texts are often assumed to be more 'relatable' to Africa if not considered to espouse 'traditional African values'. The New Testament documents, to the contrary, are often viewed with suspicion and antagonism, as though these documents if not in content then at least in setting and context are only with the utmost difficulty, and then only in part, of value to African readers of the Bible. The Greek New Testament with Paul as ringleader, is seen as Hellenistic and as such often viewed as philosophically imbibed with all the individualistic trappings and emphasis on otherworldly things commonly believed to have been harboured within Hellenism (cf. Punt 1997).

However, as Martin (1994:117-141; cf. Horsley 1995:1152) argues at length, Hellenistic culture for example, far from being imbued with an overriding concern for individualism, can be characterised as anti-individualistic. Not only were the classical figures of typical individualism like Alexander the Great and Alcibiades reproached by philosophers, but Hellenistic ethics were controlled by a social care-morality. That this anti-individualist disposition of Hellenistic culture rubbed of on the early 'Christian' communities can be seen in the way the Lukan gospel⁸² opted for employing the Socratic care principle. In the end the ascribing of individualism as trademark of Hellenistic culture seems to have more to do with the nineteenth century caricature of it, and that century's own distinctive bias towards individualism.

There is indeed a need for the investigation of the New Testament within the African context, ranging from its reception in Africa, to matters of shared concern in the New Testament and traditional African practices and beliefs. However, the way in which the African context, as indeed the rest of the Third World, has become a fashionable element in scholarly,

An important spin-off of 'the skills of critical analysis learned in biblical studies' is the usefulness thereof for 'engendering critical reflection on historical experience and a systemic analysis of it' (Schüssler Fiorenza 1989:12).

- 78 Briggs' resolve to address the problem of the negative influence of cultural hegemony and stigmatised identities is not to go back in history and resurrect the 'potential existences' of the marginalised of the past. However, we are to 'reverence the dead' by our commitment to the living who are excluded from meaningful participation in society through reinterpretation of the biblical texts, social reality and our identities, but especially through 'transformed social relationships' (1990:300).
- 79 A first problem encountered is the difficulty of defining 'African', especially with the continuous changes of and in 'culture' and with the existing 'syncretic and synthetic culture' of twentieth century Africans in an industrialised world (Speckman 1996:143,149 n32).
- 80 It is not altogether fair of Kourie (1996:175-176) to characterise the contribution made by African biblical exegesis as a search for similarities between the biblical and African thought worlds regarding the supernatural it is, however, an important component of it.
- 81 Recently a number of specific African hermeneutical strategies were proposed: e.g. Mazamisa (1995), Ntrelh (1990), Punt (1997), Speckman (1996), Ukpong (1995); cf. also e.g. Onwu (1985), Wambudta (1980).
- 82 Cf. the importance of *εὐαγγέλιον* (care) as found e.g. in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Martin 1994:129-131).

also biblical studies, should not be underestimated. Jobling (1993:99) point to the strong competition among First World institutions to secure the tenure of the 'best Third World scholars', who end up teaching 'Third World issues to Third World students' far from the sites of struggle. True indigenisation of New Testament studies will in South Africa also not depend on us white, male scholars, but as stressed above on the inclusion of those marginalised by the New Testament guild (Clines 1993:69-73,75; Jobling 1993:100). Serious investigation of the appropriateness of our methodologies are also important as much suspicion accompanies the use of methods derived from Western European or North American scholarship (cf. Harrisville 1995:206; Jeanrond 1992:221; Mekoa 1996:33-57).

It can be argued that as the majority of Bible readings in Africa happens 'in front of the text'⁸³ and whether this strategy is justified or not is not the point here there seems to be woefully little engagement with such practices from the biblical studies or New Testament guilds. The majority of scholarly readings still concern themselves with matters historical or literary, and even readerly approaches fail to account for the formative (and often normative) influence of the tradition of interpretation bearing upon texts.

7. Conclusion

Philosophers have interpreted the world in various ways; the point, however, is to change it (Marx; cf. Briggs 1990:276; Jeanrond 1992:225):.

Clearly a plea for less output on methodological 'niceties' and 'eccentrics' and for forsaking an overemphasis on methods an abjuring of methodomania does not constitute a repudiation of methodological accountability in the scientific, academic enterprise. The plea is not for methodlessness,⁸⁴ because uncritical reflection especially the lack to account for the presuppositions and role of the interpreter and his/her methodology on biblical texts is at least as futile as overconcentration on method.⁸⁵

However, the temptation to shake off the responsibility of taking theological, societal and other considerations into account in their interpretive practices is real also for South African New Testament scholars.⁸⁶ The lure of interpretation without checks and balances, reinforced perhaps by the work of so many international colleagues in secular(-ised) contexts, will increase in the new, secular and postmodern South Africa. However, as attractive as this option of 'interesting' readings may seem, it will be fatal to both the believing community in all its various forms, as well as to biblical scholarship, because in the end these two for all the tension are inseparable.⁸⁷

83 Cf. Combrink (1996); LeMarquand (1995:6); Mosala (1989). West (1993a:36-40) states that such a reading 'concentrates on discerning the predominant themes, metaphors, and symbols ... which form the focus of the reading process'.

84 Another element of the discussion and an important reason perhaps for the proliferation of methodology is the confidence-loss in theory and method which is so characteristic of the (Postmodern) present. Cf. already Sontag (1972:652-660).

85 The sentiment expressed by Marcus Barth (quoted in Villa-Vicencio 1980:15) that 'hermeneutics is the death of exegesis and methodology the death of theology' probably echoes some of the frustration with the over-emphasis of method experienced by many biblical scholars. This statement, however, also has to be criticised for its apparent lack of self-critical reflection and the obscuring of vested interests in the interpretive process.

86 Cf. Smit's reference (1996:183) to Hauerwas' argument that the depoliticisation of the Bible by scholars' insistence on objective meaning entails a repoliticisation 'by giving unchecked power to some interpreters over Scripture without such power being justified'.

87 Cf. Houlden (1989:408) 'Many people will continue to want both to study the New Testament with integrity and give allegiance to its central figure'; West (1993b:7). As Markham (1991:267) also argues, students who study the New Testament inevitably do so from certain theological perspectives, and this emphasises the need to allow for, investigate, critique in short, engage theological readings of the Bible. For 'theological readings' of the Bible, cf.

The notion that theologically-unfettered interpretation is the ideal, recalls a modernist fetish without which New Testament scholarship can do. Rather than striving towards providing generic and timeless readings, New Testament scholarship will be enriched by admitting the variety of scholarly, personal and theological/religious interests which exists among scholars and which can stimulate debate and creative new answers.⁸⁸ However, as Schüssler Fiorenza (1989:7) argues on New Testament studies internationally

the discipline today still continues its academic discourse between masters and students and between schools of interpretations without ever asking how our theology or historical interpretation is conditioned by our own personal experience and social location, and without ever articulating the political functions and ethical implications of our scholarship, one has to admit that is largely true of the South African scene as well.⁸⁹

Furthermore, as biblical or New Testament scholar one has no other option but to desist from continually developing theories of biblical interpretation without linking them to 'programmes of responsible action' (Jeanron 1992:225): 'studied neutrality and Olympian detachment are out' (McDonald 1992:423). This is of course not a novel idea, but the expression of an age-old belief among Christians: the importance of linking the 'theological exercise' with 'ethical concerns' (1992:226).⁹⁰

It is indeed true that (post-)modern Christian theology is characterised by what Schüssler Fiorenza calls 'the crisis of hermeneutics',

a crisis affecting the conception of the theological task and the very nature of theology (1991:118).⁹¹

Schüssler Fiorenza (1991:126) argues that it is exactly on the notion of the limits of interpretation that a sharp divide sets in between Modernism and Postmodernism.⁹² Whereas

e.g. Fowl (1997:xiii): 'that practise whereby theological concerns and interests inform and are informed by a reading of Scripture'; Morgan & Barton (1988:273-276).

88 For some spinoffs on both sides, cf. Morgan & Barton (1988:272).

89 Clines (1993:73) argues that the scholar's 'methodological location' is more important than his/her 'national or geographic location'.

90 It is however only a first step to acknowledge as biblical scholar one's responsibility towards ecclesial and societal concerns in addition to academical matters. A complicatory issue in this regard, however, is which concerns to address, how to address these concerns, and in what capacity to address it may I address this matter or only that matter? Is it a prerequisite to biologically or physically measure up to the group whose concerns one wants to address? Does it really always 'take one to know one'? Should gay issues be the sole interests of homosexuals? Or feminist issues those of women, 'that kind of women' at that? Or the really tricky one in South Africa: can a white scholar address issues in and of the black community? It is not to argue for paternalistic and petty reasoning, neither for the assumption of crusade-like personalities and/or cultures. Rather, the important issue at stake is the attempt at classifying and categorising in terms of sameness and otherness, and again as in the past I believe all for the (similar?) wrong reasons: methodological 'purity'; subdivision of human life into extremely artificial categories; and so on.

91 Keegan (1995:1-14) sounds an ambiguous note on the influence of Postmodernism in biblical studies: deconstructing dominant readings in the sense of recontextualising he advocates, but feels uncomfortable with postmodernism's denial of the transcendental. Hinging on a distorted view or caricature of Postmodernism's indeterminacy of meaning and the consequent disavowal of identifying true and false readings, Keegan cautions that Postmodernism should not become an excuse for 'interesting' readings. For such caricatures of Derrida's and deconstruction, cf. Aichele et al (1995:62). At any rate, Porter argues that the 'heyday of deconstruction' has already passed (1994:101).

Postmodernism has some political limits which are related to two obstacles according to Tolbert (1995:309): the realisation that postmodern criticism is 'complicitous critique' 'radical acknowledgement of one's own collusion in the very structures of power one is attempting to dislocate'; and, postmodernism challenge 'the notions of self that have served as the basis of recent identity politics', i.e. notions which connects identity to 'essence'.

Modernism still attempts 'to complete the project of Enlightenment and modernity' by seeing 'the recognition of the distortion and domination' as a 'reflective step on the way to the emancipation of the subject', Postmodernism from the outset accepts the 'indeterminacy of signification'.⁹³ In a postmodern context therefore it remains important to stress the need for *responsible* methodology in reading and interpreting the New Testament, because the neglect of sound methodology can and in the past indeed has led to unacceptable readings of Scripture.⁹⁴ Scholars have to assume responsibility in accounting for method qua method, but more than that, also for the particular choice of method and its usefulness. In a postmodern world the supposed 'disinterestedness' of people is severely questioned, especially in the scholarly world.⁹⁵

De Villiers (1991:155) argues that Postmodernism requires scholars to 'account for the fact of *Christianity*', as well as for the diversity and pluralism within Christianity, and

... the nature of the hermeneutical enterprise which claims to find continuity in Biblical texts and which wants to reconstruct the uniqueness of Christianity. But postmodernism also calls for the investigation of vested interests in the interpretation of the Bible (emphasis added).

92 The one major difficulty regarding Postmodernism is the definition of this phenomenon, the existence of which is not in dispute. Exactly the inability (even admittedly so!) but still unceasing and widely varying attempts to define Postmodernism, can be seen as substantiation for its existence.

Cf. Adam (1995) who discusses the implications of three 'tenets' of Postmodernism for biblical interpretation: Postmodernism is anti-foundational (leading to reading practices like deconstruction), antitotalising (implying polycritical and ideological critical approaches), demystifying (requiring transgressive readings).

93 Cf. De Villiers: 'The theological question whether postmodernist thought is in total opposition to hermeneutics will be with us for some time' (1991:154).

94 In all forms of theology from the so-called revelation theology through hermeneutic theology to contextual (liberation) theology. Cf. Villa-Vicencio (1980:6-9).

95 The insistence of some New Testament scholars to study the Bible without any of the trappings of theological or ecclesial traditions or without accountability to society, will continue to cast serious doubt on the unaccounted ideological entrapment of such efforts, and will in the end preclude any kind of constructive dialogue.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adam, AKM. 1995. *What Is Postmodern Biblical Criticism? Guides to Biblical Scholarship*, ed. Via, jr., DO. Minneapolis: Fortress.
- Aichele, G, et al. 1995. *The Postmodern Bible. The Bible and Culture Collective*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press.
- Babcock, WS, ed. 1990. *Paul and the Legacies of Paul*. Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press.
- Bal, M. 1988. *Death and Dissymetry. The Politics of Coherence in the Book of Judges*. Chicago Studies in the History of Judaism, eds. Goldscheider. Chicago / London: University of Chicago Press.
- Barr, DL. 1995. *New Testament Story. An Introduction*. 2nd ed. Belmont: Wadsworth.
- Beardslee, WA. 1990. *Ethics and Hermeneutics*. In ed. Jennings, TW, 15-32.
- Bell, C. 1996. *Modernism and Postmodernism in the Study of Religion*. *Religious Studies Review* 22(3): 179-190.
- Bellis, AO. 1995. *Objective Biblical Truth Versus the Value of Various Viewpoints: A False Dichotomy*. *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 17(1): 25-36.
- Beuken, WAM. 1994. *The Present State of Old Testament Studies in Europe and Foreseeable Directions for the Future*. *Old Testament Essays* 7(4): 25-32.
- Botha, J. 1992. *The Ethics of New Testament Interpretation*. *Neotestamentica* 26(1): 169-194.
- Braaten, CE. 1996. *Scripture, Church, and Dogma*. *Interpretation* 50(2): 142-155.
- Briggs, S. 1990. *'Buried With Christ': The Politics of Identity and the Poverty of Interpretation*. In ed. Schwartz, RM, 276-303.
- Brown, D. 1995. *Believing Traditions and the Task of the Academic Theologian*. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 62(4): 1167-1179.
- Cady, LE. 1991. *Resisting the Postmodern Turn: Theology and Contextualization*. In ed. Davaney, SG, ed, 81-98.
- Caldwell, LW. 1987. *Third Horizon Ethnohermeneutics: Re-Evaluating New Testament Hermeneutical Models for Intercultural Bible Interpreters Today*. *Asian Journal of Theology* 1(2): 314-333.
- Chidester, D. 1991. *Worldview Analysis of African Indigenous Churches*. *Journal for the Study of Religion* 2: 15-29.
- Clines, DJ. 1993. *Possibilities and Priorities of Biblical Interpretation in an International Perspective*. *Biblical Interpretation* 1(1): 67-87.
- Coggins, R. 1993. *A Future for the Commentary*. In ed. Watson, F, *The Open Text: New Directions for Biblical Studies*, 163-175. London: SCM.
- Combrink, HJB. 1986. *The Changing Scene of Biblical Interpretation*. In eds. Hartin, P and J Petzer, *A South African Perspective on the New Testament: Essays By South African New Testament Scholars Presented to Bruce Manning Metzger During His Visit to South Africa in 1985*, 9-17. Leiden: Brill.
- Combrink, HJB. 1996. *The Reception of Matthew in Africa*. *Scriptura* 58:285-303.
- Cormie, L. 1991. *Revolutions in Reading the Bible*. In eds. Jobling, D, PL Day and GT Sheppard, *The Bible and the Politics of Exegesis. Essays in Honor of Norman K Gottwald on his Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, 173-193. Cleveland: Pilgrim.

- Craffert, PF. May 1996. 'From Apartheid Readings to Ordinary Readings of the Bible. Did the Ethics of Interpretation Change?' Paper read at the annual congress of the South African Society of Biblical Studies, 17-18 May 1996, Bloemfontein.
- Croatto, S. 1987. *Biblical Hermeneutics. Toward a Theory of Reading as the Production of Meaning*. Maryknoll: Orbis.
- D'Costa, G. 1996. The End of 'Theology' and 'Religious Studies'. *Theology* 99(791): 338-351.
- Davaney, SG, ed. 1991. *Theology At the End of Modernity. Essays in Honor of Gordon D Kaufman*. Philadelphia: Trinity.
- Davies, WD. 1986. Reflections on Thirty Years of Biblical Studies. *Scottish Journal of Theology* 39: 43-64.
- De Villiers, PGR. 1989. New Testament Scholarship in South Africa. *Neotestamentica* 23(1): 119-124.
- De Villiers, PGR. 1991. The End of Hermeneutics? On New Testament Studies and Postmodernism. *Neotestamentica* 25(1): 145-156.
- De Villiers, PGR. 1993. The Bible and the Struggle (for Power). *Scriptura* (45): 1-28.
- Du Plessis, JG. 1990. Die Teoloog as Akademiese Saboteur. *Gedagtes oor die Verband tussen Bybelwetenskap en Lewensmondering*. *Skrif en Kerk* 11(1): 33-47.
- Du Toit, AB. 1993. Die Opkoms en Stand van die Nuwe-Testamentiese Ondersoek in Suid-Afrika: Deel 2. *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 49(4): 786-809.
- Du Toit, AB. 1994. Die Opkoms en Stand van die Nuwe Testamentiese Ondersoek in Suid-Afrika: Deel 3 - 'n Kritiese Evaluasie. *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 50(3): 531-545.
- Eagleton, T. 1983. *Literary Theory. An Introduction*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Even-Zohar, I. 1990. Polysystem Theory. *Poetics Today* 11(1): 9-26ff.
- Fowl, SE. 1995a. Texts don't have Ideologies. *Biblical Interpretation* 3(1):15-34.
- Fowl, SE. 1995b. The New Testament, Theology, and Ethics. In ed. Green, JB, 394-410.
- Fowl, SE ed. 1997. *The Theological Interpretation of Scripture. Classic and Contemporary Readings*. Blackwell Readings in Modern Theology. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Fowl, SE and LG Jones. 1991. Reading in Communion. *Scripture and Ethics in Christian Life*. *Biblical Foundations in Theology*, ed. Dunn, James GD & P Mackey. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Geffr, C & W Jeanrond. 1994. Why Theology? How Theologians Today Understand Their Work. *Concilium* 6: vi-x.
- Georgi, D. 1992. The Interest in Life of Jesus Theology as a Paradigm for the Social History of Biblical Criticism. *Harvard Theological Review* 85:51-83.
- Goldingay, J. 1993. How Far Do Readers Make Sense? *Interpreting Biblical Narrative*. *Themelios* 18(2): 5-10.
- Goldingay, J. 1995. *Models for Interpretation of Scripture*. Grand Rapids / Carlisle: Eerdmans / Paternoster.
- Grant, R and D Tracy. 1984. *A Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible*. 2nd ed. Philadelphia: Fortress.
- Green, JB. 1995. The Challenge of Hearing the New Testament. In ed. Green, JB, 1-9.
- Green, JB, ed. 1995. *Hearing the New Testament. Strategies for Interpretation*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Greenstein, EL. 1986. Theory and Argument in Biblical Criticism. *Hebrew Annual Review* 10: 77-93.
- Grigg, R. 1997. Theology as a Marginal Discipline. *Religious Studies Review* 23(1): 32-34.

- Harrisville, RA. 1995. A Critique of Current Biblical Criticism. *Word & World* 15(2): 206-213.
- Hartin, PJ. 1991. Methodological Principles in Interpreting the Relevance of the New Testament for a New South Africa. *Scriptura* 37: 1-16.
- Hartin, PJ and J Petzer, eds. 1991. *Text and Interpretation. New Approaches in the Criticism of the New Testament.* New Testament Tools and Studies. Leiden: Brill.
- Hartman, L. Is the Crucified Christ the Center of a New Testament Theology? In ed. Jennings, TW, 175-188.
- Hays, RB. 1989. *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul.* New Haven & London: Yale University Press.
- Hess, E. 1993. Practical Biblical Interpretation. *Religious Education* 88(2): 190-212.
- Horsley, RA. 1995. Innovation in Search of Reorientation. *New Testament Studies Rediscovering Its Subject Matter.* *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 62(4): 1127-1166.
- Houlden, JL. 1989. Today and Tomorrow in Biblical Studies. III. A Future for New Testament Studies. *Expository Times* 100(11): 405-408.
- Jeanrond, WG. 1991. *Theological Hermeneutics. Development and Significance.* London: MacMillan.
- Jeanrond, WG. 1992. Biblical Criticism and Theology: Towards a New Biblical Theology. *Journal of Literature and Theology* 6(3): 218-227.
- Jennings, TW, ed. 1990. *Text and Logos. The Humanistic Interpretation of the New Testament.* Scholars Press Homage Series. Atlanta: Scholars.
- Jobling, D. 1993. Globalization in Biblical Studies / Biblical Studies in Globalization. *Biblical Interpretation* 1(1): 96-110.
- Jonker, L. 1993. 'Text' in a Multidimensional Exegetical Approach. *Scriptura* 46: 100-115.
- Jonker, L. 1996. On Plotting the Exegetical-Hermeneutical Landscape. *Scriptura* 59: 397-411.
- Keck, LE. 1996. The Premodern Bible in the Postmodern World. *Interpretation* 50(2): 130-141.
- Keegan, TJ. 1995. Biblical Criticism and the Challenge of Postmodernism. *Biblical Interpretation* 3(1): 1-14.
- Kourie, C. 1995. New Testament Scholarship on the Threshold of the Third Millennium. *Religion and Theology* 2(2): 171-178.
- Krentz, E. 1993. Biblical Interpretation for a New Millennium. *Currents in Theology and Mission* 20(5): 345-360.
- Lategan, BC. 1988. Why So Few Converts to New Paradigms in Theology. In eds. Mouton, J, A Van Aarde and W Vorster, 65-78.
- Lategan, BC. 1994. Aspects of Contextual Hermeneutics for South Africa. In eds. Mouton, J & BC Lategan, *The Relevance of Theology for the Nineties.* Pretoria: HRSC.
- Lategan, BC. 1995. The Function of Biblical Texts in a Modern Situational Context. In eds. Fornberg, T & D Hellholm, *Texts and Contexts. Biblical Texts in their Textual and Situational Contexts.* Oslo: Scandinavian University Press.
- Lategan, BC. 1996. Styles of Theological Dialogue. *Scriptura* 57: 139-148.
- LeMarquand, G. 1995. A Bibliography of the Bible in Africa: a Preliminary Publication. *Bulletin for Contextual Theology in Southern Africa and Africa* 2(2):6-40.
- Luz, U. 1994. *Matthew in History. Interpretation, Influence, and Effects.* Minneapolis: Fortress.
- Markham, I. 1991. Teaching Theology in a Modern University. *Theology* 94(760): 260-267.

- Martin, LH. 1994. The Anti-Individualistic Ideology of Hellenistic Culture. *Numen* 41(2-3): 117-141.
- Mazamisa, W. 1995. Re-Reading the Bible in the Black Church: Towards a Hermeneutic of Orality and Literacy. *Journal of Black Theology* 9(2): 1-26.
- McDonald, JIH. 1992. Review of Rowland, C & M Corner. 1989. *Liberating Exegesis. The Challenge of Liberation Theology to Biblical Studies*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox. *Scottish Journal of Theology* 45(3):423-425.
- Meeks, WA. 1986. A Hermeneutics of Social Embodiment. *Harvard Theological Review* 79(1-3): 176-186.
- Meeks, WA. 1993. *The Origins of Christian Morality*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press.
- Mekoa, I. 1996. Current trends in Biblical Hermeneutics: a Black Theology Critique. *Theologia Viatorum* 23: 33-57.
- Morgan, R and J Barton. 1988. *Biblical Interpretation*. Oxford Bible Series. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Mosala, IJ. 1989. *Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology in South Africa*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Mouton, AEJ. 1995. 'Reading a New Testament Document Ethically: Toward an Accountable Use of Scripture in Christian Ethics, Through Analysing the Transformative Potential of the Ephesians Epistle.' Unpublished D.Th dissertation (UWC).
- Mouton, J, A Van Aarde and W Vorster, eds. 1988. *Paradigms and Progress in Theology. HRSC Studies in Research Methodology, vol. 5*. Pretoria: HSRC.
- Ntreh, BA. 1990. Toward an African Biblical Hermeneutic. *Africa Theological Journal* 19(3): 246-254.
- Onwu, N. 1985. The Hermeneutical Model: The Dilemma of the African Theologian. *Africa Theological Journal* 14(3): 145-160.
- Oosthuizen, MJ. 1993. Towards an Ethics of Interpretation: The Use of Scripture in Three Recent Christian Documents. *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 49(1-2): 167-187.
- Patte, D. 1995. Acknowledging the Contextual Character of Male, European-American Critical Exegeses: An Androcritical Perspective. In eds. Segovia, FF and MA Tolbert, 35-55.
- Perkins, P. 1988. Theological Implications of New Testament Pluralism. *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 50(1): 5-23.
- Perkins, P. 1993. Canon, Paradigms and Progress? Reflections on the Essays By Rendtorff, Sugirtharajah and Clines. *Biblical Interpretation* 1(1): 88-95.
- Pixley, J. 1996. Toward a Militant Biblical Scholarship. *Biblical Interpretation* 4(1): 72-75.
- Porter, SE. 1994. Reader-Response Criticism and New Testament Study: a Response to AC Thiselton's *New Horizons in Hermeneutics*. *Journal of Literature and Theology* 8(1): 94-102.
- Punt, J. 1997. *Reading the Bible in Africa: Towards a Hermeneutic of Ubuntu*. Submitted for publication.
- Robbins, VK. Using a Socio-Rhetorical Poetics to Develop a Unified Method: the Woman who Anointed Jesus as Test Case. In ed. Lovering, EH, *Society of Biblical Literature 1992 Seminar Papers*. Atlanta: Scholars.
- Robbins, VK. 1996. *Exploring the Texture of Texts: a Guide to Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation*. Pre-publication draft.
- Risnen, H. 1990. *Beyond New Testament Theology. A Story and a Programme*. London/Philadelphia: SCM/Trinity.

- Risnen, H. 1992a. Die Wirkungsgeschichte der Bibel. Eine Herausforderung für die exegetische Forschung. *Evangelische Theologie* 52(4): 337-347.
- Risnen, H. 1992b. The Effective 'History' of the Bible: a Challenge to Biblical Scholarship? *Scottish Journal of Theology* 45: 303-324.
- Rosenblatt, M-E. 1992. Review of Brawley, RL. 1990. *Centering on God: Method and Message in Luke-Acts*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox. *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 54(3): 553-554.
- Rousseau, J. 1988. The Bible, Communication and Reality: Paradigms and Our Struggle for a Cosmologic Perspective. In eds. Mouton, J, AG Van Aarde and WS Vorster, 409-422.
- Rowland, C. 1993. 'Open Thy Mouth for the Dumb'. A Task for the Exegete of Holy Scripture. *Biblical Interpretation* 1(2): 228-245.
- Rowland, C and M Corner. 1989. *Liberating Exegesis. The Challenge of Liberation Theology to Biblical Studies*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox.
- Sack, D. 1997. Struggling for the Soul of the American University: Studies on Religions and Higher Education. *Religious Studies Review* 23(1): 35-39.
- Sawyer, JFA. 1995. The Ethics of Comparative Interpretation. *Currents in Research: Biblical Studies* 3: 152-168.
- Schneiders, SM. 1982. The Paschal Imagination: Objectivity and Subjectivity in New Testament Interpretation. *Theological Studies* 43: 52-68.
- Schneiders, SM. 1991. *The Revelatory Text. Interpreting the New Testament as Sacred Scripture*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco.
- Schüssler Fiorenza, E. 1989. Theological Education: Biblical Studies. In eds. Browning, DS, D Polk and IS Evison, *The Education of the Practical Theologian: Responses to Joseph Hough and John Cobb's Christian Identity and Theological Education*, 1-19. Atlanta: Scholars.
- Schüssler Fiorenza, F. 1991. The Crisis of Hermeneutics and Christian Theology. In ed. Davaney, SG, 117-140.
- Schwartz, RM, ed. 1990. *The Book and the Text. The Bible and Literary Criticism*. London: Basil Blackwell.
- Schwartz, RM. 1990. Introduction: On Biblical Criticism. In ed. Schwartz, RM, 1-15.
- Segovia, FF. 1995. 'And They Began to Speak in Other Tongues': Competing Modes of Discourse in Contemporary Biblical Criticism. In eds. Segovia, FF and MA Tolbert, 1-32.
- Segovia, FF and MA Tolbert, eds. 1995. *Reading From This Place. Vol. 1: Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in the United States*. Minneapolis: Fortress.
- Selden, R. 1985. *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory*. Brighton, Sussex: Harvester.
- Smit, DJ. 1988. Responsible Hermeneutics. A Systematic Theologian's Response to the Readings and Readers of Luke 12:35-48. *Neotestamentica* 22(2): 441-484.
- Smit, DJ. 1990. Ethics and Interpretation - and South Africa. *Scriptura* (33): 29-43.
- Smit, DJ. 1990. Ethics and Interpretation - New Voices From the USA. *Scriptura* (33): 16-28.
- Smit, DJ. 1991. The Bible and Ethos in a New South Africa. *Scriptura* 37: 51-67.
- Smit, DJ. 1994. A Story of Contextual Hermeneutics and the Integrity of New Testament Interpretation in South Africa. *Neotestamentica* 28(2): 265-289.
- Smit, DJ. 1996. Saints, Disciples, Friends? Recent South African Perspectives on Christian Ethics and the New Testament. *Neotestamentica* 30(1): 169-186.

- Smit, DJ, and F Wessels. 1996. An Ethics of Writing? On Writing as Social Activity. *Scriptura* 57: 125-138.
- Soards, ML. 1996. Key Issues in Biblical Studies and Their Bearing on Mission Studies. *Missiology* 24(1): 93-106.
- Sontag, S. 1972. Against Interpretation. In ed. Lodge, D, 20th Century Literary Criticism. A Reader, 652-660. Essex: Longman.
- Spangenberg, IJJ. 1994. Paradigmaveranderinge in die Bybelwetenskappe. 'n Bydrae tot die Gesprek Tussen die Bybelwetenskappe en Sistematiese Teologie. *Religion and Theology* 1(2): 144-184.
- Spangenberg, IJJ. 1995. Paradigm Changes in the Bible Sciences and the Teaching of Biblical Studies in the New South Africa. *Scriptura* (52): 1-10.
- Speckman, MT. 1996. Beyond the Debate: An Agenda for Biblical Studies in the New South Africa. *Religion and Theology* 3(2): 135-151.
- Stamps, DL. 1992. Rhetorical Criticism and the Rhetoric of New Testament Criticism. *Journal of Literature and Theology* 6(3): 268-279.
- Sugirtharah, RS. 1991. Postscript: Achievements and Items for a Future Agenda. In ed. Sugirtharajah, RS, *Voices from the Margin. Interpreting the Bible in the Third World*. Maryknoll: Orbis
- Tate, WR. 1991. *Biblical Interpretation. An Integrated Approach*. Peabody: Hendrickson.
- Tolbert, MA. 1995. The Politics and Poetics of Location. In eds. Segovia, FF and MA Tolbert, 305-317.
- Ukpong, JS. 1995. Rereading the Bible With African Eyes. *Inculturation and Hermeneutics. Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 91: 3-14.
- Van Zyl, HC. 1992. The Future of New Testament Studies Within the Theological Curriculum. *Acta Academica* 24(1): 148-163.
- Villa-Vicencio, C. 1981. The Use of Scripture in Theology. Towards a Contextual Hermeneutic. *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 37: 3-22.
- Vorster, JN. 1994a. Creatures Creating Creators: The Potential of Rhetoric. *Religion and Theology* 1(2): 118-135.
- Vorster, JN. 1994b. The Epistemic Status of Rhetoric. *Neotestamentica* 28(2): 469-493.
- Waetjen, HC. 1995. Social Location and the Hermeneutical Mode of Integration. In eds. Segovia, FF and MA Tolbert, 75-93.
- Wambudta, DN. 1980. Hermeneutics and the Search for Theologia Africana. *Africa Theological Journal* 9(2): 29-39.
- Warden, D. 1986. The function of Critical Methods in New Testament Interpretation. In eds. Kearley, FF, EP Myers & TD Hadley, *Biblical Interpretation: Principles and Practices*. Grand Rapids: Baker.
- Watson, F. 1996. Bible, Theology and the University: A Response to Philip Davies. *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 71: 3-16.
- West, GO. 1991. *Biblical Hermeneutics of Liberation. Modes of Reading the Bible in the South African Context*. Cluster Monograph Series, vol. 1. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications.
- West, GO. 1993a. *Contextual Bible Study*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster.
- West, GO. 1993b. Engagement, Criticality, and Contextualization: Core Concepts in the Teaching/Learning of Biblical Studies in a South African Context. *Scriptura* (S11): 1-17.

- West, GO. 1995. Reading the Bible in Africa: Constructing our Own Discourse. *Bulletin for Contextual Theology in Southern Africa and Africa* 2(2):1-5.
- Wimbush, VL. 1991. The Bible and African Americans: an Outline of an Interpretive History. In ed. Felder, CH, *Stony the Road We Trod. African American Biblical Interpretation*. Minneapolis: Fortress.
- Wright, NT. 1992. The New Testament and the People of God. *Christian Origins and the Question of God*, vol. 1. Minneapolis: Fortress.
- Yee, GA. 1995. The Author/Text/Reader and Power: Suggestions for a Critical Framework. In eds. Segovia, FF and MA Tolbert, 109-118.
- Young, F. 1995. Interpretive Genres and the Inevitability of Pluralism. *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 59: 93-110.