

POSTCOLONIAL BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS AND EXEGESIS

Werner Kahl

Abstract: *The article traces the development of postcolonial Biblical hermeneutics and exegesis and he reflects on its significance as well as on problematic aspects. On closer scrutiny, it becomes clear that postcolonial Biblical hermeneutics and exegesis do not represent a unified approach to the Bible. It has been rather diversified and de-ideologized, especially due to contributions by scholars from the Global South. Traditional Western exegesis from a historical-critical perspective has been rather sceptical of the postcolonial paradigm, as is shown regarding the German exegetical discourse.*

Key Words: Africa, Bible, Exegesis, Hermeneutics, Postcolonial.

Introduction

Musa W. Dube from Botswana is one of the most influential representatives of post-colonial biblical hermeneutics. She prefaced one of her first contributions on the topic with a saying that is widespread in southern Africa: "When the white man came to our country, he had the Bible and we had the land. The white man said: 'Let us pray'. After the prayer, the white man had the land and we had the Bible."¹

The popular saying succinctly recalls the experience of the colonisation of southern Africa from the perspective of dark-skinned Africans who had lost their land to the light-skinned, self-proclaimed colonial masters from Western Europe. According to this interpretation, the loss of the land is attributed to a religiously staged deceptive

This article is a translation of my originally German version: "Postkoloniale Bibelhermeneutik und Exegese" *Zeitschrift für Neues Testament* 26, no. 52 (2024), 5-27. I included minor changes.

¹ Musa W. Dube, "Reading for Decolonisation (John 4:1-42)," in *Postcolonialism and Scriptural Reading*, ed. Laura E. Donaldson (Semeia 75; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1996), 37; cf. also Musa W. Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2000), 3. The story reflected by the saying, however, is in and by itself not unproblematic. It insinuates a certain naivety on the part of Africans and thus reproduces paternalistic clichés. I recall a lecture by Archbishop Desmond Tutu who used to serve as visiting professor at Emory University in the 1980s and 1990s. Obviously aware of its inherent problematic, he reframed the story, which he narrated with the addition of the following remark: "And do you know what? We have got the better deal!"

manoeuvre. In return, the inhabitants of the country received the Bible without being asked.

This short narrative about a complex historical development provides an example of the significance of the Bible in the context of colonial history in the modern age: It was used in various ways to generate an increase in power and significance on the part of the colonial powers, accompanied by a disempowerment of the colonised.

An important strand of post-colonial biblical hermeneutics is concerned with shedding light on this history of entanglement between colonialist aggression and the Bible, which – from this perspective – has historically functioned as an "imperial text."² This is true in two respects: Representatives of colonial powers and, in particular, missionaries felt that their readings of certain biblical passages from the 18th to the 20th century called them to "civilise" and "Christianise" people in distant regions of Africa, Asia and Oceania – ostensibly for their benefit.³ In this respect, these Bible readings acted as a motivating force behind the colonialist project. In addition, the Bible translations into indigenous languages of Asia, Oceania and Africa, which were produced at the initiative of missionaries, and the creation of dictionaries as part of the process of reducing to writing languages that had previously only been practised orally, also represented attempts to discredit traditional cultures and their religiosity, particularly through the demonisation of ancestral spirits and gods.⁴

One branch of postcolonial hermeneutics research that is widespread in the Pacific region and sub-Saharan Africa is dedicated to the critical re-reading of Bible translations produced during the colonial era, accompanied by projects for culturally sensitive retranslations of biblical writings into local languages. In this regard, *mother-tongue biblical hermeneutics* draws on local encyclopaedias – languages, cultures

² Anna Runesson, *Exegesis in the Making. Postcolonialism and New Testament Studies* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 226.

³ Cf. Werner Kahl, *Jesus als Lebensretter. West African biblical interpretations and their relevance for New Testament scholarship* (New Testament Studies on Contextual Exegesis, vol. 2; Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2007), 27-35.

⁴ Musa W. Dube, "Consuming a Colonial Cultural Bomb. Translating Badimo 'Into Demons' in the Setswana Bible (Matthew 8.28-34; 15.22; 10.8)," *JSNT* 73 (1999), 33-59; Birgit Meyer, *Translating the Devil. Religion and Modernity among the Ewe in Ghana* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999).

and traditions – as resources for an appropriate translation of the Bible.⁵ This applies to both the conceptualisation of what is meant in New Testament texts and to its current communication within certain reading communities. Due to experiences of colonialism concerning the imperial use of the Bible for the domination and cultural degradation of indigenous populations in the Global South, several postcolonial exegetes have undertaken a critical examination of biblical writings themselves to determine the extent to which imperial structures are positively conveyed in them or corresponding attitudes are adopted and colonialist instructions for action are recommended – whether as conscious strategies or as unconscious imitations of existing power structures (mimicry).⁶ On the other hand, the Bible can also be read and recognised for its potential for resistance from a postcolonial perspective. In fact, recent postcolonial studies increasingly register the presence of both system-stabilising and subversive tendencies in New Testament writings.

In addition to the history of the Bible's impact in colonialist contexts and a re-reading of biblical writings that is critical of colonialism, the third main field of postcolonial criticism is the critical analysis of traditional historical-critical exegesis as it has developed and established itself in the West since the end of the 18th century. In German-language biblical studies in particular, which was recognised worldwide in the 19th and 20th centuries as a yardstick for biblical exegesis, it was widely taken for granted until the end of the last century that exegetical methodology and its hermeneutical underpinnings had the aura of universal validity. Such a rather robust self-image was – and is – boosted by ignoring critical reflection on one's own theological and cultural position and interests on the one hand and by ignoring academic and popular interpretations of the Bible in other regions of the world, especially the Global South, on the other. Due to the history of Western domination of their countries and the discrediting of traditional cultures, postcolonial exegetes from the Global South usually

⁵ Cf. Frederick M. Ameenku and Isaak Boaheng, *Biblical Exegesis in African Context* (Wilmington – Delaware; Vernon Press, 2021), 79–98.

⁶ Cf. the contributions in Fernando F. Segovia and R. S. Sugirtharajah (eds.), *A Postcolonial Commentary on the New Testament Writings* (The Bible and Postcolonialism 13; London: A&C Black, 2009); and exemplarily the studies by Richard A. Horsley, *Paul and Empire. Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society* (Harrisburg, PA: A&C Black, 1997); Richard A. Horsley, *Jesus and Empire. The Kingdom of God and the New World Disorder* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002).

have a pronounced sensitivity for claims to interpretative power, as they have prevailed in Western exegesis for a long time and as they can still be encountered today. In particular, the diachronically orientated methodological steps of historical-critical exegesis, with its interest in the reconstruction of an original text, the ascertainment of an author's intention and the establishment of one correct interpretation based on supposedly universally valid theological truths, can appear suspect. Such an exegetical approach and attitude evokes memories of the colonialist project of mastering spatially (or temporally) distant (textual) bodies. From a postcolonial perspective, however, this similarity is no coincidence.

The emergence, development and implementation of historical-critical exegesis coincided precisely with the period of colonialism from the 18th to the 20th century. Even if the German Empire itself only appeared as a colonial power for a relatively short period (1884-1918/9), albeit with a long history of involvement of German actors as traders (including slave traders), mercenaries and missionaries in often exploitative relationships with distant countries, dating back to the 16th century, it is also a reflection of the German Empire's role as a colonial power. In this way, philosophical movements of thought, philological initiatives and anthropological studies by German-speaking scholars, especially in the 19th century,⁷ reflect the attitude of an enormous sense of superiority concerning people in distant regions of the world who were constructed as "the completely other" and who would have fallen far behind northern Europeans in terms of intellectual history and civilisation, becoming objects of Western research interests.⁸

In this respect, postcolonial exegetes from the Global South can accuse such Western exegesis of complicity with both the colonialist project of the past and neo-colonialism of the present. Publications by

⁷ Christian Koller, "Deutschland," in *Handbuch Postkolonialismus und Literatur*, ed. Dirk Göttsche, Axel Dunker and Gabriele Dürbeck (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 2017), 399.

⁸ On the racist constructions of Africans in Immanuel Kant and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel as well as on the widespread corresponding attitudes of German-speaking missionaries, see Werner Kahl, *Jesus als Lebensretter*, 27-33. On the interweaving of colonialism, orientalism, theology and biblical studies in the 19th century, see Suzanne Marchand, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire. Religion, Race, and Scholarship* (Cambridge – New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Simon Wiesgickl, *Das Alte Testament als deutsche Kolonie. Die Neuerfindung des Alten Testaments um 1800* (BWANT 214; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2018); Runesson, *Exegesis*, 67-71.

Western exegetes are subjected to postcolonial hermeneutics of suspicion. They are seen as an expression of a Eurocentrism that continues to be unreflectively passed on in biblical studies. Postcolonial exegetes reject the claim to interpretative power that is encountered here.

In addition, traditional Western exegesis with its research concerns and methods of analysis, including its theological and philosophical preconceptions, is widely regarded as irrelevant to contexts in the Global South. It has been recognised that Western exegesis owes its existence to a particular history and encyclopaedia. In this respect, Western exegesis is also a version of *contextual* exegesis, even if this was or is rarely recognised by its representatives, especially in the past, but also in the present. From a postcolonial perspective, it can appear as a suspect representative or even agent of Western power of domination and interpretation in the field of biblical exegesis, which ignores or excludes the voices of the non-privileged at the margins of the spheres of power – be it in relation to biblical writings, or to exegetes from the Global South, or to the needs and requirements of people who suffer from contemporary neo-colonialism.

Some prominent exegetes who have dedicated themselves to the post-colonial discourse share a political interest in changing local social and global economic structures to promote justice for those dependent on and left behind by the West, whether at the so-called margins of power in the Global South or within the so-called centres of power. From the perspective of some postcolonial exegetes, this kind of socio-critical interest aimed at change can be identified as the noblest function of a postcolonial and therefore "ethical" biblical hermeneutics.⁹

In this respect, postcolonial hermeneutics is not a historically backward-looking endeavour, but a committed and partisan programme to shape the present and the future. Some of its representatives localise themselves in an alleged struggle of 'their' respective people for economic justice and dignity. They do this with the awareness that colonial history did not come to an end with the independence of formerly colonised countries from around the middle of the 20th century, and that it continues to have an effect, particularly in the form of neo-

⁹ Cf. R. S. Sugirtharajah, "Introduction. The Bible, Empires, and Postcolonial Criticism," in *The Oxford Handbook of Postcolonial Biblical Criticism*, ed. R. S. Sugirtharajah (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018-2023), 1-2.

colonialism. The prefix "post" in post-colonialism signals a critical reflection and questioning of power constellations from the perspective of the colonised – formerly and in various ways also currently dominated by the West – with the aim of changing power relations in the present, including exegetical ones.¹⁰

While classical liberation theology of the 1960s to 1980s with its corresponding hermeneutics primarily referred to localised regions – such as Latin American countries or South Africa – postcolonial biblical hermeneutics since the 1990s has also focused on *global* power relations and injustices, as they were taken and perpetrated by the "West", i.e. ultimately by "white" men and women, theologically justified and exegetically underpinned. In a way, liberation theology lives on in a global perspective in post-colonial biblical hermeneutics and theology. This is also true concerning the political ideology of anti-imperialism in the Marxist tradition, as it is more or less openly advocated by several prominent representatives of postcolonial hermeneutics, who, interestingly, live, work and operate primarily at prestigious 'Western universities' or in the 'centres of power.'¹¹

Overall, however, it is not adequate to speak of a single postcolonial biblical hermeneutics. As explained above, the postcolonial field of research is highly differentiated, depending on the interest, the methodology used, the focus and the localisation of the exegetes involved. The spectrum of postcolonial biblical hermeneutics encompasses the following fields of work and positionings:

1. History of the impact of the Bible in colonialist contexts
 - a) Justification of the colonialist project
 - b) Bible translations
2. Re-readings of biblical writings critical of colonialism
 - a) Biblical writings as anti-colonialist, anti-imperial literature
 - b) Biblical writings as colonialist, imperial literature

¹⁰ Raj Nadella, "The Rise of Postcolonial Criticism in Biblical Studies and Its Current Status," in *Oxford Handbook*, 706.

¹¹ Cf. the careful presentation and critical discussion by Niall McKay, "Materialist/Marxist Interpretations and Postcolonial Biblical Criticism," in *Oxford Handbook*, 677-698.

3. Defining the relationship to the historical-critical exegesis of the ‘West’
 - a) Application from a postcolonial perspective
 - b) Rejection, as irrelevant or harmful as part of the colonialist project
4. Ethnic cultures and traditional methods as resources for interpreting the Bible
5. Ethics of biblical interpretation
 - a) Giving a voice to the unheard, in the Bible, history and the present, especially in the Global South, on an academic and popular level
 - b) Political agenda for world change towards the realisation of global, especially economic, justice

The famous names of the main representatives of postcolonial hermeneutics (R. S. Sugirtharajah, Fernando F. Segovia, Kwok Pui-lan, Musa W. Dube, who are characterised by a certain political radicalism and who have shaped and dominated the international discourse in this regard due to the numerous publications they are responsible for in renowned publishing houses in the West) should not, however, obscure the fact that they *do not* represent postcolonial exegesis as it is currently practised *in* the Global South.

The vast majority of exegetes living in Asian, sub-Saharan and Pacific countries interpret the Bible differently due to specific problem situations and faith traditions, often also claiming to practice postcolonial exegesis.¹² Many of these exegetes, who are academically trained to doctoral level, have been sent by their churches to theological training centres or universities to serve as lecturers. Even as academic teachers, they remain committed to the church and their local faith communities. They generally share a high regard for the Bible as Holy Scripture with their parishioners. The methodological steps, questions and hermeneutical assumptions of classical, diachronically orientated historical-critical exegesis appear to be just as irrelevant here as the reading of the Bible under the postcolonial hermeneutics of a radical

¹² Cf. Werner Kahl, “Bibelverständnisse und Bibelinterpretationen im globalen Christentum – gegenwärtige Tendenzen,” *ÖK* 71, no. 1 (2022): 5-15.

suspicion of involvement in colonialist contexts. From this perspective, the following concerns are pursued in particular:

1. Synchronously orientated exegeses to illuminate the resistance potential of biblical narratives and positioning vis-à-vis colonialist oppression and injustice, for example in antiquity.
2. Rediscovering the cultural richness of the ethnic group considered to be one's own – in the inner perspective in English: "tribe" – and strengthening resistance to colonialist domination. From the perspective of ethnic, largely Christian minorities in north-east Indian states – e.g. Nagaland or Mizoram – neither the former colonial power Great Britain nor "the West" is identified as the "empire" to be shaken off in this respect, but rather Hindu India.¹³
3. Critical review and revision of the existing Bible translations into indigenous languages produced on the initiative of Western missionaries.¹⁴

2. The Emergence of Postcolonial Biblical Hermeneutics

The emergence of postcolonial biblical hermeneutics and exegesis must be embedded in other contexts such as globalisation, migration and, in particular, related developments in literary studies. From the 1970s onwards, English departments at universities in the USA and the UK began to reflect on novels of the colonial and post-colonial eras as part of *colonial studies*.¹⁵ From around the mid-1950s, literature written by natives in British colonies that had just come to an end or were coming to an end had emerged that represented counter-narratives to European constructions of life in the colonies, particularly as disseminated in European novels of the first half of that century. While the latter was associated with the clear tendency of Western

¹³ See, for example, the contributions by Indian exegetes to the Gospel of Mark and Luke, which appeared recently in the anthology *Tribal Hermeneutics. Biblical Reflections from North East India*, ed. B. Lalnunzira and A. Abeni Patton (Aizawl – Delhi: Christian World Imprints, 2023): Lalmuanpuii Hmar, "Jesus' Confrontation of Empire in Mark's Gospel and its Significance for Mizo Society," 143-151; Kennedy Poumai, "Postcolonial Reading of Luke's Gospel and Its Importance for Our Church," 165-174.

¹⁴ Cf. as examples the following two postcolonial contributions by exegetes from Samoa: Mosese Ma'ilo, *Bible-ing my Samoan* (Apia, Samoa: Piula Publication, 2016); Apineru Tavita, *Sufiga o le va in Romans 13:1-7. A Samoan perspective of postcolonial theory* (MA Thesis, Piula Theological College, Samoa, 2022).

¹⁵ Nadella, *Rise*, 704-717.

arrogance and prejudice towards people in India, in African or Arab countries, who were either presented as uncivilised, dishonest, childish and lustful or romantically glorified,¹⁶ literary voices from the colonies were now coming forward, focusing on natives as complex subjects who were faced with the task of having to find their way in a world in which traditional values and structures had been permanently shaken as a result of colonialism.¹⁷ Other authors dealt theoretically with the effects of colonialism, for example on the psyche of the people in the colonial territories.¹⁸

The emergence of the general postcolonial discourse at universities in the Anglophone West presupposed the mobility of students from the Global South. All three of the academics who provided the decisive impetus for the development of postcolonial discourse in the last quarter of the 20th century were literary scholars who were educated and taught in the West and who came from – former – British colonial territories: Edward Said (born in Palestine), Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Homi K. Bhabha (both born in India).¹⁹ Drawing primarily on post-structuralist and post-modern Western theorists such as Michel Foucault (Said: discourses of power), Jacques Derrida (Spivak: deconstructivism with a feminist twist) and the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan (Bhabha: mimicry, hybridity, ambivalence, third spaces),²⁰ they developed theories that aimed to "criticise discourses, strategies and the colonial legacy. In doing so, they incorporated impulses from the political and literary stages of post-colonialism as well as feminism and race theory."²¹

Overall, these authors draw attention to the fact that people and ethnic groups in large regions of the world have been marginalised, i.e. rendered insignificant, by the colonial project of the West, and how they react to this. This power relationship is analysed in a discourse-critical manner: The focus here is therefore on the complexity of any production of knowledge about the 'others', questions of colonial and

¹⁶ Nadella, *Rise*, 706-708.

¹⁷ Cf. Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958).

¹⁸ Cf. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Présence Africaine, 1963).

¹⁹ Cf. the excellent presentation and critical discussion of the drafts of these three theorists of postcolonial discourse in: María do Mar Castro Varela and Nikita Dhawan (eds.), *Postcolonial Theory. A Critical Introduction* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2020).

²⁰ Nadella, *Rise*, 709f.

²¹ Nadella, *Rise*, 706f.

postcolonial representation and, in the case of Orientalism, the Western projection of ideas about the Orient for the purpose of establishing a hegemonic European discourse of domination.²²

Now, the Bible is also literature and one that has had a significant hegemonic function in colonial history. In this respect, it is anything but a coincidence that it was initially *exegetes* within theology who took up the impulses of postcolonial theorists. Also the initiators of postcolonial hermeneutics hailed from former British colonies. They also received their highest academic degree in the West and they were employed by prestigious academic institutions in the UK or the USA:

R. S. Sugirtharajah was born in Sri Lanka and most recently taught at the University of Birmingham in England; Musa W. Dube hails from Botswana, where she taught at the state university for many years until she moved to Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia; Kwok Pui-lan grew up in Hong Kong and also took up a teaching position at Emory University, after teaching at other US-American universities.²³

In this respect, the development of postcolonial theory in general and postcolonial biblical hermeneutics in particular are *diaspora phenomena*. The theorems developed and exegetically applied here, such as hybridity, mimicry, representation and third spaces, also reflect the biographical ruptures and experiences of these exegetes due to their diasporic existence.

²² Doris Bachmann-Medick, *Cultural Turns. Neuorientierungen in den Kulturwissenschaften, Reinbek bei* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 2010), 188.

²³ Other exegetes, such as the New Testament scholar Fernando F. Segovia originally from Cuba and teaching at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee, should also be mentioned in this context. However, what distinguishes Segovia from the three aforementioned exegetes in academic terms is that, unlike Kwok Pui-lan, Sugirtharajah and Dube, he has also focused on researching, teaching and publishing beyond an *explicit* postcolonial programme, particularly in the field of classical liberation theology and intercultural hermeneutics, cf. for example Fernando F. Segovia, "Intercultural Bible Reading and Liberation in the Steps of Dom Hélder Câmara," in *New Perspectives on Intercultural Reading of the Bible*, ed. Daniel S. Schipani, Martien Brinkmann and Hans Snoek, (FS Hans de Wit; Elkhart: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 2015), 7-37; Fernando F. Segovia, "Intercultural Bible Reading as Transformation for Liberation. Intercultural Hermeneutics and Biblical Studies," in *Bible and Transformation. The Promise of Intercultural Bible Reading*, ed. Hans de Wit and Janet Dyk (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2015), 19-51.

In the following, I will present selected programmatic contributions by the three main representatives of postcolonial hermeneutics from the early years.

R. S. Sugirtharajah's 1991 publication of the anthology *Voices from the Margin: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World* was the first to call for a reorientation within the exegetical study of the Bible, which overlaps in content with the contemporary postcolonial discourse in literary studies, albeit without yet presenting an elaborated and explicitly named postcolonial hermeneutics. The distinction between the centre of power and its margins, both in antiquity and in the present, is a prerequisite. The anthology represents an attempt to "decentralise the centre by questioning its interpretative agendas, concerns and epistemological assumptions, as promoted above all by historical-critical methods."²⁴

In his introduction to the volume and in a postscript, Sugirtharajah provides information about the programme he initiated for a reorientation of exegesis.²⁵ Following on from Latin American liberation theology and its interpretations of the Bible,²⁶ the view is now broadened to include the perspectives of the oppressed throughout the – then-so-called – Third World and within the centres of power (African-Americans, Native-Americans). The voices of those who are discriminated against based on class, "race" or gender are to be made audible in the global chorus around the interpretation of the Bible, namely – derived from the Gospel – as privileged voices.²⁷ A key aim of this project is to overcome the marginalisation of exegetical voices from the Global South in 'mainline biblical scholarship,' which has been dominated by 'male Euro-American scholars' to date.²⁸

Historical-critical exegesis with its methodology, its claim to neutrality, its individualistic orientation and theological abstraction should be replaced by consciously contextualised approaches to the Bible.

²⁴ Nadella, *Rise*, 714.

²⁵ R. S. Sugirtharajah, "Introduction," in *Voices from the Margin. Interpreting the Bible in the Third World*, ed. S. Sugirtharajah (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991), 1-6; R. S. Sugirtharajah, "Postscript," in *Voices*, 434-444.

²⁶ Cf. the differentiated overview in Thomas Schmeller, *Das Recht der Anderen. Befreiungstheologische Lektüre des Neuen Testaments in Lateinamerika* (NTA 27; Münster: Aschendorff, 1994).

²⁷ Sugirtharajah, "Postscript," 434: "Giving a voice to the voiceless."

²⁸ Sugirtharajah, "Introduction," 1f.

Only by referring to concrete life contexts does biblical exegesis make sense.

The alternative to the prevailing historical-critical paradigm described by Sugirtharajah as "hermeneutics of the marginalised" is characterised by the following features:

1. A repossession of the Bible by the 'ordinary' believers ('ordinary people').
2. Solidarity and performative interpretations to bridge the so-called hermeneutical gap, i.e. on the one hand the historical distance between biblical texts in their contexts and contemporary reading contexts, and on the other hand to overcome the division of labour between exegetes and pastors ("the greatest sin of historical-critical exegesis").²⁹ Exegetes are also called upon to show solidarity and to participate or take sides in the liberation struggle of marginalised population groups, whether in relation to biblical or contemporary contexts. Biblical hermeneutics is thus linked – in the tradition of Latin American liberation theology – with a decidedly socially transformative function. Sugirtharajah justifies this claim in a decidedly biblical-theological way by referring to the gospel narrative: "The biblical concept of resurrection only becomes clear when new hope and love are brought to people who have neither hope nor love. Jesus' proclamation of God's reign is only realised when the ideals of the kingdom of God – love, justice and mercy – are practised."³⁰
3. The underprivileged are the hermeneutical focus.
4. A productive fusion of liberation engagement and academic exegesis: Euro-American exegetes used historical-critical methods to "make biblical narratives meaningful to a secularised population that has become unsure of its faith."³¹ These methods should now be used to liberate the marginalised.³²

²⁹ Sugirtharajah, "Postscript," 436.

³⁰ Sugirtharajah, "Postscript," 436. I have deliberately quoted this theological justification derived from the Gospel. In all too many postcolonial studies, especially those that are guided by a hermeneutics of suspicion, the method seems to have taken on a life of its own, without the positioning being theologically reflected or tied back to any kind of understanding of Gospel.

³¹ Sugirtharajah, "Postscript," 437.

³² This is, therefore, not yet a fundamental criticism of historical-critical methodology.

5. The consideration and appreciation of the social locality of biblical interpretations while at the same time rejecting exegetical claims to proceed in a value-neutral manner. In a world divided into rich and poor, privileged and underprivileged, hermeneutical neutrality is an illusion that also cements the status quo.
6. It is about the commitment to a transformation of the world towards the realisation of justice.

In her 1998 article “Reflection on Women's Sacred Scriptures,” the exegete Kwok Pui-lan identified the following main concerns of post-colonial biblical hermeneutics from an explicitly feminist perspective:

1. Challenging the claim to totality, objectivity and universality of Western exegesis.
2. Pursuing an anti-hegemonic discourse in exegesis by pursuing the strategy of tracking down hidden, hushed-up, overheard and anti-colonial voices in biblical texts and making them speak.
3. Interrelating biblical texts with non-biblical texts, traditions and contexts (intertextuality).
4. Promoting the participation of people on the margins of economic power centres in exegetical discourse: ethnic minorities, migrants and women in particular (intersectionality).
5. Orientation towards insights of post-structuralist literary theory and postmodern philosophy, in particular discourse-theoretical reflections on the relationship between power, language and theory.

These points largely coincide with the concerns listed by Sugirtharajah. Unlike Sugirtharajah, Kwok argues with terms and concepts that are indebted to the secular postmodern discourse in literary studies. At the same time, the liberation-theological impulse, which is of fundamental importance in Sugirtharajah's explanations, recedes in favour of discourse-theoretical reflections.

In her highly acclaimed study *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible* from 2000, the New Testament scholar Dube deconstructed

different readings of Mt 15:21-28 ("The Canaanite Woman").³³ Her sole criterion for analysing the biblical text and its interpretations is the question of whether they "promote and restore life in God's creation". From the perspective of the particular experiences of colonialism in southern Africa and its effects, Dube is concerned with the decolonisation of Christianity, including its interpretation of the Bible. The selected biblical text serves as a paradigm for uncovering the imperialist tendencies of both the Gospel of Matthew and its Western interpreters, including feminist exegetes.

Her comparison of Mt 15:21-28 with 8:15-30 ("The centurion of Capernaum") suggests that the implied author of Matthew's Gospel, writing in a situation of imperial occupation, may have challenged the religious leaders, competing with other groups for power and seeking to win the favour of the Roman Empire.³⁴

By favouring "journeys to distant and inhabited lands" for missionary work in the Gospel of Matthew,³⁵ "the Matthean model represents an embodiment of imperialist values and strategies."³⁶ This strategy of mimicry would, however, be overlooked by Western exegetes. "White, middle-class feminist readings of the West"³⁷ also remain bound to a cultural and economic imperialism that makes it impossible for them to grasp the power relations, negotiation processes and interests underlying the text passage. They thus participated in the hegemonic power of the West. What is at stake is the liberation of non-Western traditions from the captivity of economic power centres. As the Bible today belongs to the whole world and no longer just to the West,³⁸ a model of reading is needed that takes the presence of imperialism and patriarchalism seriously and is interested in a liberating interdependence "between genders, races, nations, economies, cultures, political structures, and so on."³⁹

³³ Cf. the more detailed account and critique of the book in Kahl, *Jesus als Lebensretter*, 95-100.

³⁴ Dube, *Postcolonial*, 182.

³⁵ Dube, *Postcolonial*, 154.

³⁶ Dube, *Postcolonial*, 155.

³⁷ Dube, *Postcolonial*, 182.

³⁸ Dube, *Postcolonial*, 39.

³⁹ Dube, *Postcolonial*, 39.

Dube sees such a liberative reading model realised in the practice of African-independent churches in Botswana, because here power oppositions such as man *versus* woman, old *versus* young, black *versus* white, written *versus* oral word, and Christian salvation *versus* African religiosity were largely abolished. Each and every individual would be recognised here as a person who could participate in the divine spirit. As in traditional African religiosity, church and theology are orientated towards preserving and promoting life. Human existence is perceived as a “liberating web of relationships.”⁴⁰ And according to Dube, this is precisely how the divine will is captured. The inclusivity of salvation assumed here is only concealed in the Bible; it is also only expressed in a fragmented form in the oral communications of women in African independent churches. Based on participant observations in those churches, Dube comes to the following conclusion:

The communication of the meaning of the passage was inextricably interwoven with the acts of interpretation (...): communalist interpretation, participatory interpretation through the use of songs, interpretation through dramatised narration and interpretation through repetition.⁴¹

The prevailing method of biblical interpretation in the West, on the other hand, is strongly text and logocentric. As such, it is declared irrelevant for African contexts.⁴²

3. Relevant Publications

Exegetical publications under an explicitly postcolonial banner have been published since the mid-1990s, almost exclusively in English. In terms of content, they partly overlap with studies that are known as “cultural exegesis,” which in turn owes its methodology to the linguistic and cultural turns in literature and the humanities and which somewhat precedes the biblical hermeneutics that explicitly appear as postcolonial. Postcolonial hermeneutics and exegesis also strongly valorise cultural approaches to the Bible, for example in marginalised ethnic groups, and can recommend their use as intertextual methods and resources. It differs from studies of cultural exegesis in its terminology, which is characterised by postcolonial discourse, and its

⁴⁰ Dube, *Postcolonial*, 186.

⁴¹ Dube, *Postcolonial*, 190.

⁴² Dube, *Postcolonial*, 40.

critical approach to imperialism, which often goes hand in hand with a fundamental, discourse-critical questioning of the methods and assumptions of Western exegesis and places the Bible itself under a hermeneutic of suspicion of involvement in colonialist exploitation. Cultural exegesis, on the other hand, is largely characterised by the fact that it expands the spectrum of possible readings of the Bible to include perspectives previously ignored in the West, without denying the relative value of Western exegesis – for Western contexts.⁴³

The following is a list of particularly important publications in the field of postcolonial hermeneutics and exegesis from the mid-1990s to the present day. I provide them with brief explanations for orientation.

In 1996, two publications appeared that established the paradigm of a biblical hermeneutics explicitly labelled as postcolonial: Sugirtharajah published the article “From Orientalist to Post-Colonial: Notes on Reading Practices,”⁴⁴ in which he “explicitly brought postcolonial criticism into dialogue with biblical interpretations.”⁴⁵ As the title suggests, he drew on Edward Said’s critique of Orientalism. Sugirtharajah counters the ostensibly Western exegetical tendency to silence voices, texts and methods of biblical interpretation from the Global South with the postcolonially underpinned demand for an intertextual interrelation of Hindu and Christian texts as an exegetical method.

In the same year, the anthology *Postcolonialism and Scriptural Reading* was published in the *Semeia* series of the *Society of Biblical Literature*.⁴⁶ It was edited by Laura E. Donaldson, who herself has an American-Indigenous background. From different local and cultural perspectives – Musa Dube from Botswana is also represented here

⁴³ Cf. Brian K. Blount, *Cultural Interpretation. Reorienting New Testament Criticism* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995); Fernando F. Segovia and Mary Ann Tolbert (eds.), *Reading from this Place; Vol. 1: Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in the United States* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995); *Reading From This Place; Vol. 2: Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in Global Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995).

⁴⁴ R. S. Sugirtharajah, “From Orientalist to Post-Colonial: Notes on Reading Practices,” *Asia Journal of Theology* 10, no. 1 (1996): 20-27.

⁴⁵ Nadella, *Rise*, 715.

⁴⁶ Donaldson, *Postcolonialism*. In the same year, by the way, appeared the related volume Gerald West and Musa W. Dube (eds.), “*Reading With: An exploration of the interface between critical and ordinary readings of the Bible. African Overtures* (Semeia 73; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1996).

with a contribution on John 4:1-42 – colonialist tendencies are traced both in biblical interpretations and in biblical texts themselves.⁴⁷

In 1998, a new book series was launched in which a whole series of important studies on postcolonial biblical hermeneutics and exegesis have been published over the years: *The Bible and Postcolonialism*.⁴⁸ The first volume was entitled *The Postcolonial Bible* and was edited by Sugirtharajah. The contributions in this anthology analyse how colonialism was also promoted through biblical exegesis. In addition, different ethnic and cultural perspectives are presented as resources for contextually relevant interpretations of the Bible.

This theme is further elaborated and deepened in the second volume of the series entitled *Vernacular Hermeneutics*, again edited by Sugirtharajah in 1999. The question of the postcolonial significance and the benefits of an exegesis that draws on indigenous traditions and encyclopaedias in indigenous languages is explored.

The collection of essays *Postcolonial Biblical Criticism: Interdisciplinary Intersections*, edited by Stephen Moore and Fernando Segovia in 2005, also appeared in this series. The articles collected here explore the relationship between postcolonial biblical hermeneutics and exegesis on the one hand and feminist, ethnic, post-structuralist and Marxist perspectives on the other, and they do so at a high level of reflection.

A special event was the publication of *A Postcolonial Commentary on the New Testament Writings* in 2007, edited by Fernando F. Segovia and R. S. Sugirtharajah.⁴⁹ The commentary on all New Testament writings is introduced by a comprehensive contribution by Segovia (pp. 1-68). Here he analyses the commentaries comparatively, using the following criteria: 1. postcolonial configurations; 2. exegetical approaches; 3. positioning between New Testament writings and early Christian faith communities on the one hand and the socio-political reality in the Roman Empire on the other; 4. the relationship between these positionings and the respective exegetes. As a result of his

⁴⁷ Musa W. Dube, “Reading for Decolonisation (Joh 4:37-60),” in *Postcolonialism*, 37-60.

⁴⁸ R. S. Sugirtharajah, *The Postcolonial Bible* (The Bible and Postcolonialism, 1; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998).

⁴⁹ For an Old Testament equivalent, see Hemchand Gossai (ed.), *Postcolonial Commentary and the Old Testament* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020).

analysis, this commentary presents a broad spectrum of partly contradictory hermeneutical definitions, approaches and positionings within postcolonial biblical hermeneutics and exegesis.

The volume ends with a short essay by Sugirtharajah, who considers the next phase of postcolonial, biblical interpretation in a rather provocative way (pp. 455-466). Because of an ostensibly belligerent neo-imperialism in the name of democracy, humanity and liberation, he calls for a postcolonial penetration of exegesis, which has not yet been completed and in some cases not even begun, as well as the broadening of the horizon of postcolonial biblical hermeneutics in the direction of a (self-)critical analysis of terrorist attacks in the name of Islam and the phenomenon of asylum seekers.

The *Oxford Handbook of Postcolonial Biblical Criticism*, edited by Sugirtharajah, was initially only available online or as an e-book from 2018. The hardcover version was not published until the beginning of November 2023, with individual articles having been silently updated in the meantime. An introduction by the editor ("The Bible, Empires, and Postcolonial Criticism", pp. 1-21) is followed by 30 articles under the following headings: Biblical Empires in the Hebrew Scriptures, Inter-Testamental Writings; the New Testament, and the Christian Apocrypha; Modern European and Asian Empires; Empires and Translations; Postcolonial Social and Ethical Concerns; Postcolonial Biblical Criticism and Cognate Disciplines; Postcolonialism, Biblical Studies, and Theoretical Orientations.

The publication of this handbook once again impressively demonstrates the breadth of the spectrum of postcolonial biblical hermeneutics and exegesis. Now that this research perspective with its diverse methodology has been recognised by renowned Anglophone publishing houses, the question now arises as to its reception within German-language exegesis – where the canon of historical-critical exegesis was once developed and where it has dominated the field of biblical exegesis almost undisputed until recently.

4. On the Reception in German-language Exegesis

In German-language exegesis, the studies of postcolonial-oriented exegetes have so far only been recognised marginally and with a

considerable time lag. In this respect, postcolonial hermeneutics and exegesis have fared no differently than previous changes in perspective over the last 50 years, which also began in the English-speaking world and called into question research findings, hermeneutical and theological preconceptions and attitudes that were previously believed to be universally valid: Be it in relation to a differentiated perception of ancient Judaism, the related New Perspective on Paul, feminist exegesis, exegesis based on literary and cultural studies, criticism of the two-source theory and more.

As far as postcolonial perspectives are concerned, the fact that there is no significant diaspora presence from former German colonial territories in this country that could introduce postcolonial impulses into theology and exegesis is a further complicating factor in contrast to the Anglophone world. It is only in recent years that the situation has begun to change somewhat in this respect, especially through students with an indirect African migration history who are pursuing postcolonial studies and are committed to combating racism, albeit mostly outside of theology.⁵⁰ Global migration movements in recent decades, which have led to a diversification of the local population, have only very recently led to a reflection on the phenomena and significance of migration, diaspora existence and interculturality in theological disciplines.⁵¹

Contributions to postcolonial hermeneutics and exegesis in Germany were initially recognised and published primarily *outside* of New Testament scholarship.⁵² In German-speaking theology, biblical

⁵⁰ Significantly, neither the Bible nor postcolonial exegesis are mentioned in the comprehensive handbook Göttsche, Dunker and Dürbeck, *Postcolonialism and Literature*.

⁵¹ Cf. Ulrich Winkler, Christian Boerge and Joel Klenk (eds.), *Von Peripherien und Zentren, Mächten und Gewalten* (Jerusalem Ansätze für eine postkoloniale Theologie, JThF 41; Münster: Aschendorff, 2021); Ciprian Burlăciou (ed.), *Migration and Diaspora Formation. New Perspectives on a Global History of Christianity* (AKG 152; Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2022); Gregor Etzelmüller and Claudia Rammelt (eds.), *Migrationskirchen. Internationalisierung und Pluralisierung des Christentums vor Ort* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2022); Malte Cramer and Alena Höfer (eds.), *Schriftauslegung im Plural. Interkulturelle und kontextuelle Bibelhermeneutiken* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2023).

⁵² Doris Bachmann-Medick was one of the first to refer to the exegetical work of Musa W. Dube, Fernando F. Segovia and R. S. Sugirtharajah in Germany. See Doris Bachmann-Medick, *Cultural Turns. Neuorientierungen in den Kulturwissenschaften* (Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch, 2010), 208, 229 et seq; cf. my detailed presentation and analysis of Dube, Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible, in Kahl, *Jesus als Lebensretter*, 95-100, as well as the explicit appreciation of postcolonial hermeneutical approaches in Stefan Akier, *Neues Testament* (UTB basics; Tübingen: Narr Francke Attempto, 2010), 67-72 and W. Kahl, "Akademische Bibelinterpretationen in Afrika, Lateinamerika und Asien angesichts der Globalisierung," *VF* 54, no.

hermeneutical contributions by the important postcolonial exegetes Kwok Pui-lan, Fernando F. Segovia and R. S. Sugirtharajah were first introduced in 2012 in the thematic issue on *Postcolonial Theology* of the journal *Interkulturelle Theologie*.⁵³ This was followed in 2013 by a text edition expanded to include further theological and exegetical contributions, for example by Musa Dube, again under the responsibility of the missiologist and ecumenical scholar Andreas Nehring, this time in collaboration with the Old Testament exegete Simon Wiesgickl.⁵⁴ Both published a follow-up volume in 2017 with reactions from German-speaking theologians, including exegetes.⁵⁵

In their initial reactions, some German-speaking New Testament scholars reacted rather irritated and generally dismissively to the drafts, concerns, approaches and claims of postcolonial exegetes. Even though postcolonial exegesis is also worthy of criticism, an astonishing arrogance – in view of the partial questionability of the methods and the rapid decay of some of the results of Western historical-critical exegesis – comes to expression here, which once again impressively confirms the hegemonic claim of Western exegesis, as it has been named and criticised by colleagues from the Global South.⁵⁶

11 (2009), 45-59; W. Kahl, "Gottesgerechtigkeit und politische Kritik – neutestamentliche Exegese angesichts der gesellschaftlichen Relevanz des Evangeliums," *ZNT* 31 (2013), 6-8.

⁵³ K. Pui-lan, "Making the Connections. Postcolonialism Studies and Feminist Biblical Interpretation," *Interkulturelle Theologie* 38, n. 1-2 (2012), 34-62; Fernando F. Segovia, "Interpreting Across Borders: Postcolonialism Studies and Diaspora Studies in Historical-Critical Biblical Exegesis," 110-135; R. S. Sugirtharajah, "A Postcolonial Investigation of Collusion and Construction in Biblical Interpretation," 136-162. These contributions are presented as German translations of original English-language articles from the 1990s and 2000s.

⁵⁴ Andreas Nehring and Simon Tielech (Eds.), *Postkoloniale Theologien: Bibelhermeneutische und kulturwissenschaftliche Beiträge* Religions (Kulturen 11; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2013).

⁵⁵ Andreas Nehring and Simon Tielech (Eds.), *Postkoloniale Theologien II. Perspektiven aus dem deutschsprachigen Raum* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2017).

⁵⁶ Cf. the assessment by Ulrich Luz, *Theologische Hermeneutik des Neuen Testaments* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014), 279-281. Lukas Bormann, "Gibt es eine postkoloniale Theologie des Neuen Testaments," in *Postkoloniale Theologien II*, 186-204 is probably the first essay by a German New Testament scholar to deal exclusively with postcolonial theology or hermeneutics: Bormann's arguments are at times problematic and highly reductive, for example when he erroneously refers to the volume of essays *Still at the Margins*, edited by Sugirtharajah in 2008, as a 'compendium' and, by pointing to the lack of names of some Western exegetes in the volume's index, implies that postcolonial exegesis "does not deal with theological exegesis in a scholarly way" (201). In fact, authoritative publications in the field of postcolonial exegesis have dealt with the works of representatives of classical exegesis from the very beginning, for example already in the first edition of *Voices from the Margin* from 1991 (C. K. Barrett, F. F. Bruce, R. Bultmann, E. Haenchen, J. Jeremias, G. von Rad, G. Strecker, G.

However, the picture here is beginning to change: Some New Testament publications in very recent years indicate a growing interest in postcolonial hermeneutics and exegesis. They are characterised by the ability to take a differentiated view of this research perspective and its methods, and they know how to combine it productively with classical exegetical approaches to the New Testament.⁵⁷

5. Appreciation of Postcolonial Hermeneutics and Exegesis

It was primarily New Testament scholars in the West with biographical connections to countries of the Global South who founded and promoted the paradigm of postcolonial hermeneutics and exegesis in the last decade of the 20th century. This field of research has become highly differentiated due to the various interests of exegetes who have joined the discourse over time – be it at universities or seminaries in Africa, Asia, Latin America or Oceania, be it in the USA or Great Britain. Due to colonial history and its aftermath, the postcolonial paradigm has proven to be adaptable in one way or another for theologians and exegetes in many regions of the world.

The following suggestions and requests from post-colonial perspectives seem to me to be of particular importance for New Testament exegesis in Western countries in view of globalisation, migration and

Theissen and C. Westermann; cf. Westermann); cf. Christopher Stanley (ed.), *The Colonised Apostle. Paul in Postcolonial Eyes* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2011), theologies by R. Bultmann, N. T. Wright and J. Dunn; *Postcolonial Commentary on the New Testament Writings* from 2007 (e.g. in the contribution on the Epistle to the Romans by Neil Elliott: e.g. C. K. Barrett, H. Bartsch, F. C. Baur, J. C. Becker, R. Bultmann, J. J. Collins, J. Dunn, D. Georgi, E. Käsemann, H. Räisänen, G. Theissen, F. Watson). For Bormann, the criterion for evaluating postcolonial approaches is “historical-critical exegesis.” He does not reflect on the demand of postcolonial exegesis for a critique of ideology, especially of the historical-critical canon of methods.

⁵⁷ Cf. Christian Wetz, “Die zweite Meile. Mt 5,41 in postkolonialer Perspektive – ein exegetisches Experiment,” in *Postkolonialismus, Theologie und die Konstruktion des Anderen. Erkundungen in einem Grenzgebiet/Postcolonialism, Theology and the Construction of the Other. Exploring Borderlands*, ed. Britta Konz, Bernhard Ortman and Christian Wetz (STAR 26; Leiden - Boston: Brill, 2020), 100-119; Markus Lau, “Der fremde Exorzist (Mk 9:38-40) – zweifach gelesen. Beobachtungen zum Potential postkolonialer Theologie für historisch-kritische Exegese,” in *Von Peripherien und Zentren*, 31-59; Ingeborg Mongstad-Kvammen, “Ein Ritter und ein Bettler. Jakobus 2,1-4 in postkolonialer Perspektive,” *ZNT* 50 (2022), 69-84. See also the presentation of postcolonial hermeneutics by Arie W. Zwiep, “Bible Hermeneutics from 1950 to the Present. Trends and Developments,” in *Handbuch der Bibelhermeneutiken. Von Origenes bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. Oda Wischmeyer and Michaela Durst (Berlin – Boston: De Gruyter, 2016), 999-1000.

the shift in the centre of gravity of world Christianity towards the Global South:

1. A critical reflection on exegesis concerning its theological and ideological preconceptions.
2. The acknowledgement of the contextuality of Western exegesis and the provisional nature of its results.
3. Discarding the hegemonic claim to absoluteness in Western exegesis.
4. Examining the contribution of particular cultural exegeses to the elucidation of possible dimensions of meaning in New Testament texts.⁵⁸
5. The analysis of the meaning of the Gospel in the face of power relations in the Roman Empire and the differentiated survey of early Christian positionings in power constellations.
6. Paying attention to constructions of the "own" versus the "other".
7. Develop an ethics of interpretation about biblical texts and contemporary, academic and popular readings, centred on justice and mercy as core gospel values.

Like all other exegetical approaches, postcolonial approaches are not beyond criticism. This seems to me to be particularly the case regarding a widespread ideologisation in the name of decolonisation,⁵⁹ as advocated in a prominent strand of postcolonial hermeneutics. The demand for decolonisation directed against spheres of influence of the West at times goes hand in hand with the romanticisation and idealisation of ethnic cultures. It minimises the agency of people, e.g. from African cultures in the past and present and thwarts postcolonial concepts of agency, hybridity and the interconnectedness of cultures.⁶⁰ The anachronistic equation of colonial or imperial power relations in

⁵⁸ Cf. Esther E. Acolatse, *Powers, Principalities, and the Spirit. Biblical Realism in Africa and the West* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018); Eve-Marie Becker, Jens Herzer, Angela Standhartinger and Florian Wilk (eds.), *Reading the New Testament in the Manifold Contexts of a Globalised World. Exegetical Perspectives* (NET 32; Tübingen: A. Francke, 2022), as well as the volumes of the series *New Testament Studies in Contextual Exegesis* (Frankfurt) and *Bible in Africa Studies* (Bamberg); see Blount, *Cultural Interpretation*.

⁵⁹ Cf. the critical remarks of the Nigerian philosopher Olúfẹ́mi Táíwò, *Against Decolonisation. Taking African Agency Seriously* (London: C. Hurst & Company, 2022).

⁶⁰ Cf. Anke Graneß, *Philosophy in Africa. Herausforderungen einer globalen Philosophiegeschichte* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2023), 34-37; cf. also Simon Wiesgickl, "Postkoloniale Theologien. Positionen und Potentiale," *ThLZ* 10 (2022), 903-916.

modernity and the present with those in antiquity, which can be found in some postcolonial studies, is problematic. The Roman Empire with its claim to be a guarantor of peace requires a differentiated – and not a stereotypical, binary – analysis.⁶¹

Overall, postcolonial hermeneutics has provided important impulses that New Testament exegesis in Western countries – the same applies to its Old Testament counterpart⁶² – will only be able to ignore to its detriment in the age of globalisation. In the intercultural exchange about possible interpretations and meanings of biblical texts, frictions arise due to the different world knowledge systems involved, which can prove to be mutually productive.⁶³

The development of intercultural hermeneutics from a postcolonial perspective, which also reflects on such a productive interrelation of different hermeneutical and exegetical approaches from a discourse-theoretical perspective, appears to be an urgent task for contemporary New Testament scholarship.

Werner Kahl

w.kahl@em.uni-frankfurt.de
Evangelische Theologie Fachbereich
Goethe-University Frankfurt
Frankfurt am Main (Germany)

⁶¹ Cf. critically Alkier, *Neues Testament*, 203-209.

⁶² Cf. Wiesgickl, *Das Alte Testament*.

⁶³ Cf. Runesson, *Exegesis*, 130-131. Cf. as an example Abraham Boateng, *New Testament Miracle Stories in Ghanaian Mother-Tongues. Case Studies and their Hermeneutical Implications* (Studies of the Bible and Its Reception 25; Berlin – Boston: De Gruyter, 2024), based on his doctoral thesis at Goethe-University Frankfurt.