


The irrevocable pedagogical value of the Bible: Liberation transcends technology

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Dates:

Received: 07 May 2021

Accepted: 20 July 2021

Published: 23 Sept. 2021

How to cite this article:

Mdingi, H.M., 2021, 'The irrevocable pedagogical value of the Bible: Liberation transcends technology', *HTS Theologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 77(1), a6822. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v77i1.6822>

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The introduction of the Bible in Africa operated on two major frontiers, *firstly*, the oral tradition of the missionary who possessed both the Gospel message by word and in the written text (gadget). Conversion occurred through oral 'manipulation' that includes an oral negation of the native's history and worldviews. *Secondly*, the rise of missionary schools opened the door to the reading of the Bible. However, the black experience has revealed that the reading of the Bible by blacks, slaves and the oppressed gave rise to a new world of interpretation and, in some respects, quietened the oral, historical, political and spiritual disturbance of the missionary voice as the vanguard of the colonial master. It is not the gadget or the written word that is in dispute, even in the digital era, but what the Bible says about oppression, poverty, injustice, dehumanisation, equitable distribution of wealth and politics. Through the paradigms of liberative thought, namely, the hermeneutics of the oppressed, this study *firstly* will acknowledge the creative and existential interpretation of the Bible for particular goals. While laying out a brief history on Eurocentrism as superseding the Gospel. *Secondly*, the study seeks to look into Western Christian thought as expansion of the Western Empire. Therefore, arguing that shifts and progress under the guise of development maintain western values. *Lastly*, the study seeks to argue that despite any platform of biblical transmission, orally, the printing press and the electronic platform, the hermeneutical and epistemological pedagogy of the liberationist lens of the Bible persist; liberation transcends technology.

Contribution: This research will contribute in the dialogue between faith and technology within the paradigm of liberation theology. The study seeks to centre the pertinent theme of justice and liberation in the Bible as a critical witness that is relevant for the meaning and relevance of the Bible.

Keywords: Bible; technology; western; black people; liberation; pedagogy.

Introduction

The preamble and exordium of this study is that liberation whether from sin or chains is the major theme and essence of the message of the Bible. This theme seems to be an irrevocable pronouncement and characteristic of the Triune deity, both in theology proper (doctrine of God) and in Christosoteriological processes. The grasp of the biblical text especially considering the role of the missionary process, the conversion of blacks and the reception of the Bible presents the Bible as a pedagogical text. Biko (1978:56) noted that instruction of the missionaries and missionary schools resulted in conversion separating the natives between 'amaqobhoka' (the converted) in contrast to 'amaqaba' (the pagans). This was not an action of conversion alone but an acceptance of a foreign worldview that entrenches on faith and one's political context. Intrinsically, in Africa the Bible goes tandem with 'civilisation' and therefore serves as roots to the technological turn witnessed in the 21st century. The interpretation and translation of the Bible may be improper given varying intents and instances. However, if the Bible is the word or recorded revelation of God, instructing in ethics, justice, soteriology and the cosmos, then the Bible is pedagogical in terms of having instructions (learning) and ethical standards of God contained in it, especially with reference to the value of life and liberation. In fact, the reception of the Bible as the Word of God in Africa draws deep into the annals of African metaphysics, to the Swati people prophetic visions it was declared the message of *Mulenzengamunye* (God) as affirmed by the vision of King Somhlolo who informed the Swati people that they ought to study and understand the Bible (which he referred to it as *UMCULU*) because 'it will give you life and liberation' and belongs to *Mulenzengamunye* (Pheko 2014:1). Thus, in some sense through the Bible God has made a pedagogical call for liberation of humanity and the cosmos. This argument seems plausible when also viewing other dimensions of the lenses of the liberative paradigm, especially the interpretation of texts and praxis of Jesus. Luke (4) records the following words:

Note: Special Collection: Reception of Biblical Discourse in Africa, sub-edited by Itumeleng Mothoagae (University of South Africa).

The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. (vv. 18–19)

The preceding verses to the above citation assert that *Yeshua* came with the power of the Holy Spirit, preached and subsequently attended the synagogue in which after the citation of Isaiah declared that the prophecy has been fulfilled by Him, a mere carpenter. The reaction from those who gathered at the synagogue seems to bear witness to a pedagogical turn and interpretation that will unfold as praxis in Jesus's ministry, crucifixion, and resurrection. Therefore, the Bible has played a critical role in the history of humankind often vacillating into two extremes: *firstly*, the transformative and empowering message of the Gospel. *Secondly*, the domination that accompanies it when a race co-opts and coerces the Bible through cultural adoption, distortion of history, technological know-how and the economic drive, which divides humanity between the privileged and the condemned.

The Bible and Africa

The biblical text, in the African and in the Third World context cannot separate its mission from pedagogical convolutions and configurations that expand the West. Biko (1978:94) after considering black liberation theology for the salvation of Christianity by black ministers asserted that: 'A long look should also be taken at the educational system for blacks. The same tense situation was found as long ago as the arrival of the missionaries'. It is critical to note that the message of the Bible remains the same despite conflicting views within the text. The Bible is a world of its own that calls humanity into its world (Harker 2015:54), and perhaps through faith, salvation and practice calls humanity to the continual existential work for the betterment of their world. The Bible is not a text with singular narratives but varying stories pertaining, at least in Judeo-Christianity and theology, to the revelation of God in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Bible is also a covenantal¹ book that shows the covenant of God and humans, which climaxes in soteriological history and the eschatological hope in the *παρουσία* of *Yeshua*, *Meleḱ ha-Mašīah* from Nazareth. The Bible does not comprise of a monolithic view but views that are shaped by culture, politics, theology and history.² One can suggest that the conflicting views in the text are typical of the wisdom literature of the Near Ancient East, which comprises varying themes and therefore, gives a coherent and multifaceted whole; there is everything for everyone. Through the Gospel, at least through the hermeneutics, epistemology that informs the pedagogical apparatus/paradigms of praxis of liberation theology depicts the two contrasts of the meaning of the Bible, namely, the

transformative and the oppressive patterns. Pheko (1982:75) distinguished colonial 'Christianity' from the Gospel of Jesus Christ and argued: 'When obeyed, the Gospel has never failed to bring blessings to an individual, family, community or nation'. Pheko (1982:77) further argued: 'The Gospel accelerated the political awakening of Africans as a whole'. The colonialist, imperialist, institutionally racist and capitalistic slavery enterprise armed itself with the Bible (and technology) to an extent that these two became inseparable or indistinguishable to the receptors of the Bible, the imposed audience thus forced to listen to the European/white missionaries. The claim of Christianisation and civilisation became synonymous, and is a significant footprint to technology/digitisation, which remains largely a western monopoly. The preaching and interpretation of the Bible by missionaries were not simple oratorical pronouncements meant to engage in dialogue and convert the other, but it was severely compounded by cultural, ideological, political and economic interests. In fact, one can argue that biblical reception and discourse needs a serious decolonial framework and turn that will extend beyond the lexical misrepresentation to the psychological, spiritual and intellectual aspects, whilst noting that in Africa 'the interpretation' precedes the written text and this situation remains our heritage. The whispering by the missionaries of what the Bible means remains lingering deep in our psyche and ecclesiastical structures. Mugambi (1989:8) argued: 'The modern Christian missionary enterprise, originating in modern "Christian" Europe, was directed at "pagan Africa" and at those areas where European influence had not yet penetrated'. Biko (1978:102) argued that the missionaries were the vanguard of colonialisation under the pretext of 'civilisation' and 'education', and comprehension of the deity by the natives.

It is critical to argue that the black experience should not be condensed and removed from the massive project of western civilisation, inclusive of modernity, and the scientific era. In fact, missionaries conveyed a spearheading of western, Eurocentric and cultural authoritarian value systems, languages, technology and worldviews to be the norms for blacks (Gruchy 2004:2; Isichei 1995:82). Thus, technology is not an egalitarian isolated issue even in our current 'colourblind' globalisation culture, but explicitly the geopolitical and cultural consequence of Western expansion. Gruchy (2004:44) asserted: 'African culture was customarily rejected by missionaries, including men of the stature of Robert Moffat, as heathen or at least inferior'. This rejection does not find merit only in South Africa but is applicable to the whole range of varying geography and history of black people and the black experience. The impulse and need by the West to civilise, preach and practice the Gospel and to showcase the wide range of intellect and development meant that western society has slipped itself into every area of life, that is, religion, economic, politics and theology. Moore (1971:659) noted that at first the introduction of Christianity to blacks was a contested issue.

The rejection of African culture and in fact the humanity of black is turned into the positive when Biko (1978:51)

1.Christine Hayes discussed the covenantal aspect of the Old Testament in 'Forms of Jewish Identity: Biology, Covenant, and Memory', viewed 30 April 2021, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DfCpYpFJA4>.

2.See Christine Hayes Lecture 2 on 'The Hebrew Bible in its Ancient Near Eastern Setting: Biblical Religion in Context', viewed 30 April 2021, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wRPqGywkCw>.

described black consciousness as a rejection of western values, anthropology, worldviews, materialism, and technological know-how, which has critical consequences for the meaning of being human and consequentially the meaning of the Gospel. Furthermore, Biko's rejection of western values is not because of the hatred of progress, but the inflating of power and its political, economic and cultural concentration of the matrix of power to one race, which has monopoly on developing, educating, translating and preaching to others, often to their detriment. Biko (1978:51, 106) argued that the western worldview is narrow, cold, obsessed with technology and based on power with no regard for the humanity of others. The Gospel and technology are about power. Black consciousness and black theology's outlooks are thus linked to pedagogical aspects. Biko (1978:30) saw the black experience as comprehensive, thus, linking the implications of modernity and faith in the struggle for liberation.

Translation and interpretation: A cultural and ideological play

The biblical discourse even in a digital age has serious fundamental roots in South Africa, which are worthy of mentioning to orientate the reading. This historical background is critical for a realisation of specific cultural outlooks and worldviews that underpins biblical reception, interpretation and application. It is at this point that the Bible is seen as a technological tool, a device not in a rigid and current etymological or lexical use/sense, but as a tool of 'human' extension with a specific cultural value. Biko (1978) argued:

Thus, if Christianity in its introduction was corrupted by the inclusion aspect which made it the ideal religion for the colonisation of people, nowadays in its interpretation it is the ideal religion for the maintenance of the subjugation of the same people. (p. 61)

Mothoagae (2018:4) noted that biblical translation in Africa, especially as seen in the context of Batswana people, has always been political. Furthermore, this process entails transmogrification of concepts such as healers been presented as agents of the devil or ancestors turned into devils (see Mothoagae 2018:1–2). In the United States, biblical translation factors in but with a twist of a binary between translation being interpretation and interpretation being translation. Both South Africa and North America suffer the binary of interpretation as translation or translation as interpretation, especially as a pedagogical tool to liberate, and transform psychological, historical, political and spiritual views in order to negate the intents and interests of the oppressor and the slave master. Hopkins and Antonia (2012:21) noted that the transplanted people's reinterpretation and synthesising of Africa, and the version of western Christianity produced a 'distinctively African-American religious consciousness', that produced *Shout* and *Spirituals*, which expressed loneliness and sorrow. Mothoagae (2018:2–3) noted that Robert Moffat described the Batswana people in similar

terms of land motif often designating the missionary and the west as the cultivators of consciousness and civilisation. The Batswana people were seen as godless, dirty people who were forced to change names after their conversion. It is significant to note that these garden metaphors and Moffat's description of African people as wild land in need of planting is indicative of what Van Dyk (2009:193) had noted in the search for an eco-theology concerning the fact that the Yahwist have a tendency of presenting the wilderness as something hostile, which only becomes relevant after irrigation and cultivation. This link in the context of Africa is a plausible evidence of why the land is exploited simultaneously with her people too. Mothoagae (2018) asserted:

A Bible in Setswana was one form of literature which would be a vehicle in the process of altering the cosmological, political and economic meaning of the world of the Batswana. It is essential to view the alteration of the Batswana cosmological worldview both politically and economically. (p. 7)

Mothoagae (2018:5–6) noted that translation is linked to the empire and its micropolitics, which then sets a tone to seeing translation as a form of violence, corruption of words, and meanings and religion. In the context of the Batswana people, Moffat seems to have focused first on the translation of the New Testament because the African religious system appeared to be Mosaic in form, therefore, creating a need to delay in the translation of the Old Testament. Erskine (1981:37) explained that the missionaries observed that Africans related and easily understood the Old Testament through seeing the Old Testament God-talk, atmosphere and agriculture as their own. Erskine noted that the Old Testament has an invaluable influence and impression on black people. Both Mothoagae and Erskine display the nexus and interchangeability of lenses of interpretation as translation and translation as interpretation. Through the liberation paradigm and the role of the *pneumatos*, I would argue, that neither interpretation or translation hinders any meaningful talk about God, especially to the oppressed. Neil, Anderson and Goodwin (1971:9) noted that the availability of the vernacular Bible became a point of reference to judge missions and missionaries. In fact, one can argue that there is a lack of the presence of the *Ruach hakodesh* (רוח הקודש) in missionary reading, interpretation and application of the Bible. Mofokeng (1987:6) made invaluable observation of the role of pneumatology as a cardinal point in the orientation and inspiration for black theology move towards liberation. Rhodes (1991:2) noted that white Christianity emphasised to blacks the otherworldliness instead of the current existential conditions, which prioritised liberation. The translators and interpreters seek to evade this essence and attempt to subdue *ontic-pneumatic* convergence between the souls and God in relation to the world in real existential time. Biko (1978) was correct in noting that:

The Church and its operation in modern-day South Africa has therefore to be looked at in terms of the way it was introduced in this country. Even at this late stage, one notes the appalling irrelevance of the interpretation given to the Scriptures. (p. 60)

While Boesak (2004:21) noted that the racist biblical interpretation ignored the sacred bond of fellowship of all humanity. Mothoagae (2018:5) noted that literary approach and use of the text by missionary was a technology of power, thus, revealing as suggested earlier something broader than etymological and lexical approaches in the meaning of technology.

Liberation: Interpretation as a pedagogical truth

In order to discuss the relevance of the Bible in Africa or the Third World in the digital era, it is critical that reflections do not merely begin with gadgets, devices and technological development, but through the reception of the message of the Bible in Africa and the Third World. This study maybe subjective to this fact that the progress of technology and the transformative power of technology and foreign worldviews fails to address basic existential and historic demands of the oppressed. In this sense, technological development is in the same hands that brought the Bible, stole the land, bastardised cultures and caused cultural estrangement, distorted history and indigenous and technological systems/knowledges and fundamentally possesses the responsibility of civilisation and modernisation. Vaccari (2002:2 & 17) noted that technology is intrinsically linked to western culture and describes the West's various relationships with technology. Vaccari (2002:1-2) argued that technology is part of the human in that it is an expression of the human, this is visible in how humans saw tools as extensions of themselves. Vaccari (2002) argued:

The appearance of artefacts, techniques and the dawn of the human are one and the same moment. Even the very structure of our bodies, as Leroi-Gourhan has argued, is the result of a long history of technological incorporation (see Leroi-Gourhan 1964 [1993]). Throughout our discussion the term 'technology' gathers certain events by way of connections that might seem natural to us, but which remained scattered and meaningless in the experience of the actors concerned. And likewise, some connections that certain people took for granted might seem to us curious, strange or astonishing. (p. 2)

It is no wonder then that the Bible before digitisation could have been a tool, thus, a technology to control, convert, extend and oppress others. Discussion around the relevance of the Bible in a technological future is critical if seen through a different set of eyes. The main problem that confronts us and is exclusively directed to black Christianity and black theology is the question of interpretation and production (see West 2018:237-244). West (2018:247-248) has made this connection between Cone and Mosala (247-248). West (2018:244) asserted:

Cone's work is replete with references to the Bible. But it is the Black experience of the lynching tree in America that summons the Bible (and theologians) to speak. Cone adopts a hermeneutic of trust in the Bible, especially in its central metaphor, the cross. The cross (in the Bible) can and does speak a liberating political message to the lynching tree. Cone recognises that the Bible has been abused by White Christians (Cone 2011:116, 151), but claims its central message for Black Christians. He argues that the Bible's message is 'found' – as in identified and forged – in its clearest and fullest manifestation in the cross. The cross has a

'message' of justice in the midst of powerlessness, suffering, and death. The cross, as a locus of divine revelation, is not good news for the powerful, for those who are comfortable with the ways things are, or for anyone whose understanding of religion is aligned with power (Cone 2011:156).

West (2018:245) noted that Mosala's accepts Cone hermeneutic that sees the black experience as epistemological, that is, God of liberation. But Mosala rejects the 'non-ideological Word of God' and views it as part of the crucible of class struggle among Israelite tribes. This dialogue of interpretation in black Christian systematic theology and black biblical studies in relation to black theology is a pedagogical dialogue between systematic theology and biblical studies with irrevocable consequences for both faith and praxis, and their relation to liberation. On both accounts of Cone as a black systematic theologian and Mosala as black biblical scholar and theologian, we encounter frontiers that sees the primacy of interpretation not merely as a scientific stance but for existential and ontological experience. It is a dialogue that is not mere lexical semantics but is compounded reflection by both the black experience and Christianity. Mosala's hermeneutical rejection of Cone's second hermeneutics (the witness of the Bible) is fundamental, however, interpretation, at least through a systematic theological paradigm is also a decolonial turn in the text. In John (14: 26) Christ declared:

I have told you this while I'm still with you. However, the helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything. He will remind you of everything that I have ever told you.

The decolonial turn is the fact that when the Holy Spirit comes he will remind us of all things and in the book of Acts 2 when the Spirit came, the disciples were able to interpret Scriptures anew. In John (2: 19-21), *Yeshua* spoke about destroying the temple; it also reoccurred during the scorn of the masses during the crucifixion (see Mt 26: 61, 27: 40 & Mk 14: 58, 15: 29), and later his disciples understood it as reference to his body and resurrection. Furthermore, when re-examining the book of Luke 24, the Son of Man had been handed over by the priestly class whose rabbinical theology rejected the peasant king because of biblical and ideological interpretation, which is not in congruence with reality as a literal sense and presence. In the encounter of Emmaus, the accomplice of Cleopas and her reinterpret Scripture to the one who fulfilled the scriptures, 'the Crucified'. In Luke (24: 32) after their epistemic and existential embarrassment they asked: 'Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?' Furthermore, in Luke (24:44-45) the text records:

And he said unto them, these are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures.

In this light, the text is suggestive of a hermeneutics and epistemology for interpretation that is rooted into being a rubric of a *pneumatic-ontic* lenses to interpretation. The Holy Spirit as

the epistemological person is present with the lowly church against the Empire, its sympathisers and the priestly class that colludes with the powerful. *Yeshua*, and the Helper who is the Holy Spirit, as persons of the mystery of the Triune God set ablaze the 1st century's class, rabbinical schools and theology because of interpretation and fulfilment. The fact that personhood in the form of the Holy Spirit (as with Christology, Christ two natures), the third person of the Godhead is present is ontologically significant because he is a Person to those deemed non-person and epistemologically it is relevant for the action of interpretation itself that will be carried out by the lowly, firstly, the Galilean disciples then the oppressed of the world in revolt to a theology of subjugation, civilisation, class and oppression. Thus, blacks can draw the Holy Spirit as a person and epistemological motif as a pneumatological and ontological significance concerning the text and themselves, and this may affirm the *pneumatic-ontic* lenses as a liberationist paradigm/perspective and as a decolonial turn, which has far-reaching implication for Christology. While noting that the ideological production of the text as noted by Mosala in its final analysis after the hermeneutic dialectic affirms the value of interpretation and praxis.

In light of the black experience, assumptions and interpretations, which are embedded in history and the physiological and ontological attack of the humanity, intellect and bodies of blacks possibly becomes the ambience of the encounter with the God of the oppressed and real Christianity. It was not white Christianity and white academic theology that opened the minds of blacks to the false interpretation and biblical eclecticism of whites. Instead, it is the encounter of blacks with Christ spiritually, intellectually, historically, theologically, experientially and existentially and the pneumatological and Christological aspect that is established. Cone (1997:169) asserted black faith and intellect could not reconcile God with bondage. Furthermore, mere fishermen are opened to what even rabbinical Judaism of the first century had never thought, for blacks this pneumatic epistemology serves also as ontological significance and is a new set of eyes, *pneumatic-ontic* eyes of interpretation, faith and praxis. Therefore, we must account for a literal reading of the text specially around themes and motifs of justice, and knowledge (God's explicit revelation as the incarnated poor and oppressed class king in history). The Bible myriad readings are literal in considering oppression, justice, liberation, etc. In the context of African Christianity, Mosala correctly noted that there is a need to hold together the Bible with retention of the land without losing the Bible (see West 2018:247–248).

Interpretation is critical epistemologically and hermeneutically in order to facilitate a pedagogical structure, which is the architectural structure of fundamental truth; a work for the oppressed in thought and action. Interpretation also has its class divides as in the case of those who interpret justice without equitable redistribution of the wealth or those who preach domination imbued with racial, cultural, ethnic and individualistic economic logic despite a perquisite and

principle of the human identity in God as *Imago Dei*. Therefore, while interpretation is valuable, it must account to predispositions that are not in the literal text but the literal world and audience to which the Bible is read in. In this sense we can account that even if development occurs, which is of a technological nature what remains is the role of interpretation and praxis. The Bible has been made into a device to oppress people but it has also been instrumental in liberating people. New set of eyes reinterpret the life experience of the incarnated and the cross. To this end, Cone (1997:33) rightly argued that 'blackness and divinity are dialectically bound together as one reality'.

The Bible and digital space: Theological concerns

After laying the historical background to the reception and role of the Bible in Africa and the epistemological turns in the reading of Bible, this section focuses on the Bible and the digital space. Harker (2015:52) noted that the word of God has become digital and screens have become ubiquitous, and the western culture is *technopoly*. He, also stresses the need for scrutiny of the implication of technology for the church and Bible. Harker (2015:53) further argued that technology makes humans unlimited, challenges traditional beliefs and changes cultures for better or worse. In light of the black experience and Harker's position of the western society as technopoly, the latter is possible if the Bible in the digital space causes euphoria that negates history and the liberative and confrontational instruction of the Bible in the world, a call towards justice. Harker (2015:53–54) dispelled the one-sided aspect of technology by pointing to the fact that technology will also compete for our attention, time, money, and worship. Whereas, the Bible is able to reshape us even in a device and reminds us of our limitation as it decentres self-interest. Harker (2015:54) has discussed what he calls the device paradigm, which means a saturated life with devices that mediate our everyday experience, thus, revealing that technology is not neutral because it orientates and shapes behaviours and manners. The device paradigm technology dictates our perception of reality. This point is critical especially with millennials that often find comfort in devices and show no interest towards the history of dehumanisation that runs parallel with technological development (Biko 1978). Technology changes the way we think, what we care about with regards to morals; the Bible thus becomes another device and in this paradigm the Bible may cease being a living text (see Harker 2015:54–55). However, Hutchings (2014:25) noted that the Bible as an App has led users to have regular biblical engagements because of the easy access to the Bible; the technological development of the Bible as an App or in a digital device is driven by Christian agency of Scripture. Hutchings (2017:206) noted that the digital Bible can remain Evangelical and digitisation of the Bible is a historical process, for example, from scroll, letter, codex illuminated manuscript and the printed book. Another, aspect inseparable to the digitisation of the Bible is the meaningfulness of the Bible message to the believers

(Hutchings 2017:207). Hutchings (2017:212, 215) noted that the digital Bible is a persuasive technology and represents a fluidity of the text.

In discussing the role of the Bible in a digital age; it is fundamental to reflect on the theological aspects that relate to the themes in the biblical text and the digital age. Efiang (2015:1) noted that the 21st century sees institutions aligning themselves with IT (information technology) and theology, and the Christian ministry is affected by the techno-culture. Le Duc (2016:1) noted that digital age and information age means a sociological reality where human society is run by a computer-based technology. Furthermore, the introduction of the Internet changed the industrial age and the Internet has become ubiquitous. Rumbay (2020:16) argued that digital space leads to unlimited access to information and communication, digitisation drives all dimensions of activity and it has an anthropological impact in terms of mental and spiritual form. Rumbay (2020) argued:

Religion never absents during the shifting ages of the world due it is a reality to human context and determines the social environment. Even more, religion is facilitated by theology to be engaged with cultural matrix. As a consequence, religion and the whole context of the world are inseparable, including theology, as part of religion structure, always potentially relates to every age. (p. 16)

Efiang (2015:2) noted that the early televangelist used radio and TV to reach millions, however, theologians are bothered by the place of God in technology. However, Le Duc (2016:1) argued that theology is not done in a vacuum, theology has always been contextually based on peoples' varying experiences. The evidence is clear with the history of Judaism and the New Testament contextual theology expressed in the Epistles, therefore, there is a theological imperative that is contingent on context and theology that reflects its time (see Le Duc 2016:2). Efiang (2015:3) argued that theology is a science of religion with themes of God, humanity, salvation, and eschatology. While Le Duc (2016:2) pointed out that contextualisation of theology does not mean a new theology. Le Duc (2016) further asserted:

Classical theology is seen as an objective science of faith that makes use of two theological sources – scripture and tradition. These two sources are seen as above history and culture. However, by asserting that theology is contextual, the theologian wishes to affirm that the present human experience, which is defined by culture, life events and notable social changes, constitutes an important source for theological reflection. In this manner, both the past as contained in the scripture and tradition as well as the present as reflected in the context are accounted for in the theologizing. (p. 2)

The view of contextualising theology stresses the various focus of each generation concerning God and theology. There are varying theologies, such as, natural theology (God and the universe), biblical theology (biblical revelation with the Bible as the main source of its theology), dogmatic theology (theological truths, practical theology, theology proper (doctrine of God)). Plato and Aristotle are associated with the term theology. Plato saw theology as describing the mythical

and pedagogical values for the state (see Efiang 2015:3–4). The same framework explains varying theologies because of sociological setting, for example, gender (see Le Duc 2016). The reality of context is not merely based on existential concerns and experiences, but in the context of technology has far-reaching implications, as technology is part of the prehistoric human. Le Duc (2016) asserted:

Although technological development has been a part of human society ever since prehistoric man managed to control fire, the development of computer technology in the last part of the twentieth century and in the beginning of the new millennium has taken human society to unprecedented heights, especially in the area of communication. (p. 3)

While Efiang (2015:6) argued for a biblical base for technology in Scriptures such as Colossian (1:16–17) with Christ being a creator/medium for creation. Efiang (2016:7) further argued that any future existence of technology is rooted in the authority and knowledge of God; through this analysis technology is in the mind of God and God is involved in technology by reaching the uttermost part of the world. Rumbay (2020:20) notes that if God is creator of all things that realisation becomes the foundational relationship with technology as the creature unfolds God's creation inclusive of technology. Rumbay (2020:20) noted that the mediatorship of Christ bears the nature of commune love, which reaches even the modern society. Therefore, the modern society, cyber era and digitisation are subservient to the divine meaning and intention. Christ's mind as the foundation of all existence reveals his authority over cyberspace. There is however another dimension concerning the technological spectrum and the anxiety that technology bring upon morals, although theological schools of thought are divided among the positivist and the pessimists (see Efiang 2015:7–6). The era of cyberspace is seen as a broad space for human engagement and anthropological space in which cyber theology and its intelligence becomes faith in the cyber age (see Le Duc 2016:5–6). According to Le Duc (2016:6) cyber theology is a nexus between theology and the modern age of digital communication and is a contextual theology. As a contextual theology, cyber theology does not have ethnic and cultural reality with special change brought by modern digital technology. Le Duc (2016) stated:

In cybertheology, all the traditional topics on God, humanity, sin, and redemption, etc. must be reflected in light of the digital context present to us. Moreover, in this digital age that sees ongoing devastating environmental destruction, a cybertheology must also consider human relationship with nature and how promoting mutual well-being can be carried out. Indeed, this new context based on immaterial digits of ones and zeroes may give us important insights on our relationship with God, with fellow human beings, and with the natural environment around us. (p. 6)

Rumbay (2020:16) has presented us with an interpretation of Christology that fits within the digital paradigm, however, stressing the historical role Christ plays as a person and in being a device for salvation and the fact that theology in every generation is a digital native. Theology is cyber space because it has digital attributes, for example, doctrines,

which impact the digital space with its divine order. Rumbay (2020) asserted:

The term cybertheology is offered as a way to combine and link contradiction attributes of theology and digitalization, it is a critical reflection of faith and intelligence evaluation of beliefs in the cyber age which is influence theological exercise.¹⁶ Theological contextualization in digital society bears the sense of spiritual and faith in the essence by covered and formed with modernism appearance. Theology adapts to the digital environment, where the public square and communication connected by internet, modern devices. The highlight of cybertheology is the tremendous social change, systematic reflection of faith to the transformation of digital age. (p. 18)

Rumbay (2020:19) pointed out that the Christological aspect entails the fact that Christ is not for a certain context, but for all nations. The death of Christ through the cross enters even the digital space, thus, cyberspace is a human desire for infinite (the divine) and the mediatorship office of Christ is the meeting place of the Father and humans. Rumbay (2020) argued:

Christ cannot be placed simply as a historical person with no significant role for modern society, rather his present exist since the beginning, known comes from the eternity, and supplies influence for each period of the universe. This knowledge enables Christology owns rich contribution for modern age. Previously, before the redemption event in the cross, he held the office with the Father and Spirit as the creator, afterwards, he becomes the central attention as he crucified as the offering to redeem sins of human being. Therefore, his endowment is able to be contextualized in the digital, online environment. (p. 19)

This point is critical in validating the fact that the Bible is a message and mode of communication that God uses to speak to humanity. Therefore, the main thesis of the Bible cannot be subdued by interpretation, translation, and now even in the digital space. Rumbay (2020:16) emphasised on the historical grounds of Christology and the varying contexts it will still have for the black liberation theology Yeshua as liberator. Le Duc (2016:7–10) noted that the digital space can distort the true meaning of neighbour or follower as cyber space replaces presence because of a lack of relationship paradigm; cyberspace and its relationship paradigm still requires the need to be a neighbour. Furthermore, the culture of death is not limited to humanity alone but to nature as well, therefore cyber theology can bring sensibility to nature and the value of human-nature relationships. While the consideration of a new paradigm of comprehending existence is a good sign and an inkling to a different metaphysics and world separate from atoms (see Le Duc 2016:76), the looming reality, which must be confronted with the Bible being digital or in the digital space is the divisive and diverse ways that it has been as a tool.

Bible and technology? Concluding remarks

Stockley Carmichael³ argued that the Whiteman's burden should have not been preached to black people in Africa.

³This was in an interview with Mike Wallace in 1966, The CBS NEWS Special: 'Black Power/White Backlash'.

Carmichael's point is a position of a deliberate pedagogical and epistemological disjuncture to the whole enterprise of manners of learning for a particular civilisation, which includes technological developments that are geopolitical leaps thrusting western civilisation at the centre of history and as the true emblem of being human. Technologies that are fundamentally and in essence white. The insistence of preaching and civilising the savage cannot be ignored even in the digital space. The relationship of blacks with the digital age is defined by such parameters, an acknowledgement of technology as first descriptive of ideas and varying devices that entail a secondary aspect, which necessitates modalities of embodiment. A triad of idea, device and practice, in the context of black people is white supremacy, black bodies as devices and as praxis (labour). Ali (2019:210) has noted that whiteness is rooted in the triad of being Christian, European, white/Western. In the context of the Bible, missionaries, interpretation and translation with interpretation preceding translation, the ideas of white cultural supremacy underpin the Gospel as being used as mechanics responsible for the architectural building of blacks, in the continent and diaspora primarily as cheap labour (device). The lenses of the liberation paradigm simultaneously see the biases of this mechanics and through interpretation in an existential milieu become responsible for the architectural work of building a humanity of liberation, which becomes the major premise of translation. In this sense, interpretation and translation are interchangeable realities for the black believers. Their bodies have become devices. They have shared the same fate as a device harkening to the dictates of the programmer, the word of God is inscribed in the body as is in the devices, however, what remains is the question of meaning to which liberation is unavoidable as the major theme of the biblical text. A message of the Gospel that invades the digital footprint, the ubiquity of technology, cyberspace and the eschatological hour is problematic.

Another aspect in a discussion about the digital space entails the theological concerns that digitisation brings with it. Peters (2018:1) noted that technology is a serious danger to our theological concerns especially in the areas of transhumanism. He noted that transhumanist believe that the post-human will be a highly super intelligent and a deathless cyborg. Thus, a challenge to *imago Dei* found in then New Adam and the eschatological hope.

It is critical to note especially from a liberation paradigm that the challenge and disregard of *imago Dei* and ontology has occurred with blacks. Peters (2018:2–3) noted that genetic engineering cannot replace spiritual discipline. Similarly, he notes that contrary to the Adam of Genesis the New Adam represents a life headed towards the resurrection, which transforms the meaning of being human defined in light of death, transforming corruptibility and mortality. Furthermore, the resurrection is an eschatological dimension of the definition of being human. Peters (2018:4–5) noted the transhumanist account for deification and apotheosis through wanting to cheat death by radical life extension and cybernetic immortality. Christian theology, which is rooted in Christian anthropology

points to a fallen humanity that cannot be fixed by technology, instead, the hypostatic union expressed in Christology entails death and $\theta\acute{\epsilon}\omega\sigma\iota\varsigma$ (the indwelling of the Holy Spirit), and is not the deification or proposals of superbiology that will bring about transcendence (Peters 2018:5–7):

The human anticipatory impulse has led to a chain reaction in technological advance over recent centuries. Technological dreams of a better humanity and a better world now waft through our culture like the aroma of baking bread. We can almost taste the future. The Christian realist, like the innovative techie, thirsts for each new opportunity for transformation. Yet, realism maintains a stubborn awareness that every dramatic technological transformation carries with it human fallenness, the potential for self-destruction right along with the potential for healing. Only God's final act of redeeming grace will relieve us of such self-destruction. (p. 8)

To avoid a sense of evasiveness in the theological and digital debate, the role of race cannot be ignored as it applies to preaching, missionary work, translation and interpretation. Ali (2017:1) noted that posthumanism is a recognition of the image of the white man. He (Ali 2017:2) further asserted that techno-scientific post-human has asymmetric power relations between the human (white) and the subaltern other, and transhumanism is a techno-scientific articulation of whiteness. Cave and Dihal (2020:686) asserted: 'Race and technology are two of the most powerful and important categories for understanding the world as it has developed since at least the early modern period'.

Ali (2019:209) also argued that a 'White crisis' is a modern racial phenomenon with premodern religious beliefs and has proposed that Apocalyptic AI is an existential risk and strategy for maintaining white hegemony. Ali points are critical in order to avoid thinking about technology and the digital space as nuanced and objective developments. Ali (2019:210) brings our attention to note that race relates to the formation of the world system and goes as far back into the Middle ages with the proto-racism found in the ancient Greeks. Ali (2019:216) also noted that Apocalyptic AI as salvation is rhetorical and presents a narrative shaped by 'white saviour'. Thus, technology and digitisation of the Bible at least through the liberationist paradigm cannot deter the existential quest for justice and liberation as an irrevocable condition of the Bible. Technology is not paradise but ambience of possible fortune or peril; blacks must remain on guard.

Acknowledgements

This article is dedicated to the church, society and the oppressed of the world who must never think that technology is nuanced. This study is part of a contribution of Christian witness from a liberative paradigm affirming liberation as the major theme of the biblical text in both soteriological and political terms.

Competing interests

The author declares that he has no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced him in writing this article.

Author's contributions

H.M.M. is the sole author of this article.

Ethical considerations

This article followed all ethical standards for research without direct contact with human or animal subjects.

Funding information

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.

Data availability

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated agency of the author.

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