

African contextual hermeneutics

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Hermeneutics is the science of textual interpretation and comprises a wide range of disciplines, which helps to control subjective influences in the study of the Old Testament and Hebrew Scriptures. It is imperative to consider the context of any given text, as well as the context of the receiver in the interpretive process. This consideration, from the African point of view, is what may be referred to as African contextual hermeneutics. To see the effect different contexts have on the interpretation of an encountered text, using as an example 1 Chronicles 21, it was discovered that the changes in culture, religion, tradition, text and language affected the presentation of the new text, so much so that the writer made a lot of additions and subtractions from the original story in 2 Samuel 24. The diversity of the Old Testament texts requires that each text be studied within its historical framework. This also reflects the reality of life expressed by people in the African society. However, with hermeneutics in the Old Testament, the reader should be brave enough to throw off cultural ties and focus only on what matters. It requires reading the controversy and polemic in the text and not being influenced by it. What matters in any text is the relationship between God and humans, and this is what the interpreter should translate into the African context, not the culture or the controversy. There is a need for reassessment of the ancient biblical tradition and the African worldviews, cultures and life experiences, to correct the effect of the extraneous cultural and ideological conditioning. African biblical hermeneutics can be understood as the rereading of the Old Testament from a premeditatedly African perspective. African biblical hermeneutics is the principle of interpretation of the Bible that could lead to transformation in Africa. Africa's religious practice is mostly polytheistic. In the African religion, there are new allegories, images, figures of speech, ways of reasoning, etymologies, analogies and cosmogonies to gratify the intellect.

Intradisciplinary and/or interdisciplinary implications: The African contextual ideas of mysticism, tradition and initiation advance new theological inductions, astrophysical tales and ways to hypothesise moral behaviour. Nevertheless, the ideologically motivated text of 1 Chronicles 21 can still be relevant for Africa today if the following options can be taken into consideration. Israel was a confused nation, seeking identity after the exile. An author like the Chronicler wanted to give them direction by telling them that they can find identity in their relationship with God. This can be translated into the African context as a relationship with God. This means that people who are feeling confused about their circumstances and identity today can find certainty in their relationship with God, regardless of how and where they worship.

Keywords: hermeneutics; Africa; exegesis; religion; culture; tradition; language.

Introduction

According to Johnson (1999:8), every interpreter customarily brings subjective influence to the study of the Old Testament and Hebrew Scriptures. Johnson postulates that the subjective influences could come in the form of assumptions, theological biases, as well as individual premises. It is, for this reason, Johnson proposes that some kind of control is necessary for the study of the Old Testament and Hebrew Scriptures. The necessary control is hermeneutics, which is defined by Johnson as the science of textual interpretation of the Hebrew Scriptures. Johnson notes that hermeneutics seeks answers concerning the different questions surrounding a text, like, who wrote a given text and what was the occasion at the time of writing? Who was the text written to? What meaning did the writer intend to convey to the audience? Did the original meaning of the text have the same meaning for us?

Moreover, Johnson (1999:8) explains that the science of hermeneutics comprises a wide range of disciplines. It deals with theories of knowledge (epistemology), analysis of language and its expression of meaning, theories in the communication of verbal meaning, as well as the scientific study of language, which includes phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics. Also, the

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science of hermeneutics can be composed of historical studies that may include but are not limited to tradition criticism, literary form criticism, text criticism and redaction criticism.

According to Adamo (2015:60), the term hermeneutics is derived from the Greek word 'hermeneuo', which means 'to interpret'. Adamo defined the word as the theory or science of interpretation relating to the Bible. He further explains that 'it concerns itself with the very nature of language, meaning, communication, and understanding. It involves an examination of the whole interpretive process' (Adamo 2015:60).

The tool used for the historical aspect of hermeneutics is what is referred to as exegesis. In Steck's (1998:3) view, 'Old Testament exegesis is the endeavour to determine the historical, scientific, and documentable meaning of texts which have been transmitted in the Old Testament'. Steck portrays the understanding that the task of exegesis is to determine the meaning and purpose of statements in an encountered text.

Besides, Steck (1998:3) proposes that the task of exegesis should be done within the historical sphere of the origin of a text. Steck adds that the different phases of the Old Testament development should always be considered in the exegetical process, so that the historical character of the text can be manifested in the present context.

The task of exegesis, therefore, is a very important aspect of hermeneutics. One could say that hermeneutics is incomplete without exegesis. It allows interpreters to go back there, study the different historical aspects of an encountered text, study the different phases of the Old Testament development of the text and finally, garner its historical character.

In light of Johnson's (1999:8) definition of hermeneutics above, the exegetical study covers the aspects that seek answers concerning the different questions surrounding a text, like, who wrote a given text, the occasion at the time of writing, who the text was written to and what meaning the writer intended to convey to the audience. It is, therefore, only the last part of the definition of hermeneutics that is concerned with the question, which seeks an answer as to whether the original meaning of the text has the same meaning for us in our different contexts?

Because Old Testament texts went through different phases in their development, terms, therefore, may have different meanings at those different phases. Thus, the original meaning of a text may not mean the same for us as we continue to undergo different phases in our development as well. Put in another way, the immediate context of the receiver of an interpreted text may influence the meaning of the encountered text, to remain the same as the original or stray from it. The receiver's assumptions, premises and theological biases may subjectively influence the meaning of an encountered text.

Based on this understanding, it becomes imperative that as we seek answers to whether the original meaning of a text

has the same meaning for us, we may need to also consider our context in the interpretive process. This consideration from an African point of view is what may be referred to as African contextual hermeneutics. However, before we take a look at the effect African context may have on our hermeneutics, let us first have a look at the effect the different contexts had on the hermeneutics of an encountered text.

Based on an earlier definition by Johnson (1999:8), the science of hermeneutics comprises a wide range of disciplines. It is these disciplines that represent the different contexts, as well as present the different objectives that will allow us to see the hermeneutical effect on the interpretation of an encountered text. An example of an encountered text we are going to use in this article will be 1 Chronicles 21:1. The objectives then will be first to look at the effect on the encountered text by the changes in culture and religion. Secondly, to look at the effect on the encountered text by the changes in tradition. Thirdly, to look at the effect on the encountered text by the textual changes. Finally, the last objective will be to look at the effect on the encountered text by the changes in the language.

Chronicles 21:1

The study of the historical background of 1 Chronicles 21:1 made me understand that the book was written in the post-exilic era, and as such, the original receivers of the text, who were Judeans, experienced different cultural and religious changes. At first, they had to experience their own culture and religion before the exile. Secondly, they experienced the Persian culture and religion in the exile. Finally, they experienced the mixed culture and religion in the post exilic environment.

Changes in culture and religion

Concerning 1 Chronicles 21:1, Moreau, Netland and Engen (2000:293) also believe that the text was written after the Judeans returned from exile. In addition, the post-exilic Judean community experienced a multi-cultural environment in the other areas of the Persian Empire where they recently returned from. The post-exilic Judeans, also at this transitional period, were cohabiting with a multi-cultural population in Jerusalem. This multi-cultural population presented different cultural and religious ideas, which posed a lot of challenges to the Judean community. They struggled to understand what their relationship with God would be in their new situation. Some of these concerns motivated the Chronicler to present the history of Israel from a new perspective. It is presumed that the book of Chronicles was written to help the Judean community to find their identity in a confusing, difficult and multi-cultural environment (Moreau et al. 2000:293).

Cairns (2002:140) explains that the concept of dualism was one of the prevalent ideas in the post-exilic community. In Cairns' definition, dualism is the 'philosophic system which proposes two original and independent principles in the

universe, one good, and the other evil'. Ferguson et al. (eds. 1998:211) note that two substances or powers need to exist to have dualism, which can be distinguished from monism, in which there is only one substance of power. The Chronicler probably wrote to the post-exilic Judean community to challenge any form of dualism that compromises the understanding of Yahweh as the supreme power and authority over everything that exists. It is assumed that Chronicles was written to help the restoring Judean community understand Yahweh and know their identity in such a confusing, difficult and multi-cultural environment.

According to Zorn (1999:96), there were many simultaneous strains of religious thought in ancient Israel, which repeatedly swung from monolatrous to monotheistic and to polytheistic. Zorn states that this can be exemplified by, Yahweh in many eras having Asherah as his consort. In Zorn's view, the experience of the exilic period necessitated radical reconstruction towards monotheism. The increased exposure of the Judeans to the Assyrians and Babylonians provided the need for the emphasis on monotheism in this period.

In Fleming's (2014:64) view, the Chronicler chose and arranged his materials to impress on the returned captives, the importance of rebuilding the nation by emphasising the importance of the temple. Thus, Fleming states that the Chronicler portrayed the northern kingdom negatively because they were not associated with Jerusalem, but with places like Bet-El and Sechem. Simultaneously, the Chronicler focused mostly on the Davidic line of kings, who reigned in Jerusalem. According to Fleming, the deduction then is that the Chronicler regarded David's dynasty as the only legitimate dynasty in Jerusalem, the only legitimate capital, and the temple, the only legitimate sanctuary (Fleming 2014:64).

Based on Fleming's viewpoint above, one can see that the changes in culture and religion have brought a change in the Chronicler's perspective, so much so that it has a hermeneutical effect on the interpretation of our encountered text, relative to the source text of 2 Samuel 24. The increased exposure of the Judeans to the Assyrians and Babylonians provided the need for the emphasis on monotheism in this period. The Chronicler emphasised the Jerusalem Temple, he made a shift from the Northern to the Southern perspective, he emphasised the kingship and worship of Yahweh.

These three elements: the city, Yahwistic religion and monarchy emerge in any discussion of the Zion tradition expressed in the Old Testament, which is mostly related to the Davidic Monarchy according to Boda and McConville (2012:907). All these shifts away from the perspective of the source text of 2 Samuel 24 appear to have influenced the Chronicler to change God from being the one that incited David to Satan/satan and has generated countless debates over the centuries amongst scholars.

The post-exilic book of Chronicles, therefore, experienced changes because of redaction of the source text of 2 Samuel 24,

and this was as a result of changes in culture and religion. The Chronicler's Judean culture and religion were influenced by the Persian cultures and religion, as well as by their cohabiting multi-cultural environment.

Changes in tradition

Changes in tradition can also introduce changes in an encountered text. Tradition constantly change, and this obviously will affect the way humans compose and interpret text at different points in development. Glassie (1995:395–396) notes that traditions die at some point, and another tradition replaces them. He maintains that continuing change in tradition, from one generation to another, is what historians describe as the moment in which a superior replaces an inferior. Historians need tradition, as it enables them to face the massive fact of continuity in any progressive society. Glassie (1995:398–399) proposes that tradition can be linked to culture. Together, they can be understood to be created by human beings going through change. Also, both are created by individuals out of the experience, and the reason for their actions entails change.

The continuous change in traditions cautions against reading and understanding of any text outside its unique historical context. One should always consider the different traditions the author/s engaged with, to understand the message of the text.

Tradition critical study creates the cognisance that some Old Testament texts can be polemic against the cultural relativism of the older traditions or other texts (Geyser-Fouché 2017:5). Hence, in reading Old Testament texts (as any other theological texts), it is important to keep in mind that one should be aware that texts are written for their specific contexts and that certain groups used texts to empower themselves. The core of all Old Testament texts is centred around the relationship between Yahweh and Israel. The fact that Old Testament texts deal with God concerning human beings includes a human aspect, and it is precisely this that makes people think and decide differently in and about the texts and the interpretation thereof at different times and in different contexts. It, therefore, remains essential for the texts to be read within context, as well as interpreted and then translated into the current context.

According to Boda and McConville (2012:99), so many traditions were expressed in the Old Testament that is part of Israel's history as well as theological and/or ideological framework. In their view, the concept of covenant was clearly outlined in the Pentateuch and was thought of as a simple pact or treaty between two or more people. However, God's covenant with his people is broader in focus and contains promises that God makes to his people.

The covenant tradition, in the view of Boda and McConville (2012:99), can be subdivided into universal, ancestral and national. The universal refers to the covenant that God established with creation after the universal flood in Genesis

6–9. God's servants and prophets speak mostly of the Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic and new covenants.

The Abrahamic covenant was used by the prophets to either encourage or exhort his people, who were Abraham's offspring. The significance of this covenant is that Abraham in his lifetime rejected false gods, in favour of the true God. This covenant is believed to be extended to all Judeans (Abraham's offspring) and was the start of a relationship between God and the Judeans.

According to Genesis 17:10–14, as a part of the covenant, God required Abraham to circumcise every male child amongst him. This applied to every male child, whether born in his household or bought with his money from a foreigner. Any uncircumcised male amongst Abraham and his descendants will be cut off from his people because he has broken God's covenant. Circumcision, therefore, was commonly observed as part of the Abrahamic covenant tradition.

According to Boda and McConville (2012:100), before the establishment of the Mosaic covenant, God reminds his people (Jewish people) of the covenant he made with Abraham. In Exodus 6:7, the covenant formula is repeated, I will take you to be my people and I will be your God. Reemphasising this formula demonstrates that what God desired is a relationship with the people. The Mosaic covenant was established at Sinai; thus, it can sometimes be referred to as the Sinai tradition and is the most prominent of God's covenants with Israel.

Boda and McConville (2012:100) understand the Mosaic covenant as a continuation of the Abrahamic covenant. In their view, there are similarities between the two covenants. The two covenants have the covenant formula and the land promise. The most important teaching of the Mosaic covenant is the Ten Commandments, and the covenant is the prominent tradition amongst the prophetic books of the Old Testament. The prophets always refer to the Ten Commandments to address the people, over keeping and breaking of the Mosaic covenant.

The Davidic covenant succeeds the Mosaic covenant and comes with promises from God to David, which includes those that will be fulfilled in David's lifetime (2 Sm 7:9–11a), and those that will find realisation after David's death (2 Sm 7:11b–16). Boda and McConville (2012:907) state that another tradition expressed in the Old Testament is the Zion tradition, which is mostly related to the Davidic Monarchy. Three elements emerge in any discussion of Zion tradition, that is, the city, Yahwistic religion and monarchy. Any discussion of the Zion tradition expresses the relationship between these three elements.

Holladay and Hayes (1982:85) note that the various themes that infuse the Abrahamic, Mosaic and Davidic covenants reveal the continuity that connects all of them. However, Holladay and Hayes explain that the ancient traditions in

Israel are not limited only to the above three. Many other traditions existed in ancient Israel. They are the exodus tradition, the Northern traditions, the temple tradition, the Southern tradition, the patriarchal tradition, the Sinai tradition, the promised land tradition, to name but a few. In Holladay and Hayes' view, the different traditions that existed in ancient Israel influenced the authors of the Old Testament literature.

The explanation that Boda and McConville (2012:907) gave of the tradition history seems to relate the Zion tradition mostly to the text of 1 Chronicles 21. The text focuses mostly on David, whose monarchy is related to the Zion tradition. The tradition expresses the relationship between the three elements of the city, Yahwistic religion and the monarchy.

Geyser-Fouché (2016:5) notes that the Chronicler portrayed David as the ideal King, not only in the genealogies but also in the narrative part about the Kings, as the patron of the temple. However, the only unfavourable reference to David was in the census he undertook in 1 Chronicles 21. Nonetheless, Geyser-Fouché states that the reason is the outcome, which is the indication of the site chosen for building the temple.

It is evident that the Chronicler's change in perspective from the perspective of those he used as his source, greatly influenced his writing. His perspective changed from North to South, Mosaic to Davidic, Shechem to Jerusalem. All these changes in tradition resulted in the Chronicler making use of different terms, relative to the source text of 2 Samuel 24.

The different traditions the Chronicler emphasised, depicts his ideology. In 1 Chronicles 21, he emphasised the Zion tradition, David (who is seen as the founder of the Jerusalem temple), the Jerusalem temple tradition, the Southern traditions and the concepts of temple rituals highlighted by an overemphasis on ritual practices. However, he omitted or underemphasised the following traditions – Moses, the Exodus, the Sinai tradition, the Northern traditions, the Northern Kings (referring to the Northern traditions), as well as the worship places associated with the Northern tribes, like Shechem and Bet-el.

However, what the Chronicler sought to achieve in his writing, was to encourage the restoring community, his post-exilic audience to find their identity in a multi-cultural environment, as God's people and heirs of the promises of David and to legitimise the temple as the only place of true Yahweh-worship, safeguarding the position of the temple elite.

Geyser-Fouché (2016:6) notes that the Chronicler did not mention the Mosaic covenant, as Moses was associated with Shechem (Dt 27) and a symbol of the Northern Kingdom. Also, the Abrahamic covenant is not mentioned either, because he is associated with Mount Gerizim, which is seen as a place of the Samaritans. The traditions that describe

Yahweh as the Lord of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are silenced in 1 Chronicles 21, as well as in the whole book of Chronicles.

Therefore, as a result of the influence from the changes in culture, religion and tradition, the Chronicler borrowed from the different traditions and omitted some traditions that existed alongside Israel's history. These changes in tradition made a huge difference in the Chronicler's text and the source text of 2 Samuel 24.

Textual changes

There is evidence of redaction activity in 1 Chronicles 21. The verse states that it was Satan who stood up against Israel and moved David to number the Israelites, whilst the source text of 2 Samuel 24:1 states that it was the anger of the Lord that was aroused against Israel and moved David to number his people.

The Chronicler seems to have detached the story from its former context. Firstly, he omitted the anger of God, and secondly, the incitement to number the Israelites was not attributed to God, but to another agent. However, many narratives in 1 and 2 Chronicles evidenced that evil, as well as good, originates from God.

Satan is not mentioned in any other chapters from 1 and 2 Chronicles. Thus, the Chronicler created an empty image of Satan/satan, which links with his belief that God is almighty and mightier than any other creature or symbol. Satan is, therefore, only a pawn in the Chronicler's narrative. The Chronicler's purpose was to promote his theology.

Jonker (2013:136–137) notes that 1 Chronicles 21:1 shows an interesting departure from the source text in 2 Samuel 24:1, which he attributes to theological difficulty. The Chronicler omitted 2 Samuel 24:5–8a, which indicates the route that Joab and his commanders took when conducting the census. Instead, the Chronicler abbreviates the description in 1 Chronicles 21:4 and the direction of the route in 2 Samuel 24:2 which has 'from Dan to Beersheba', he reverses from the south (Beersheba) to the north (Dan). This, according to Jonker, is not merely an ordinary abbreviation of the source text, but a reflection of the Chronicler's Southern perspective. In other words, the Chronicler's background is rooted in the Southern tradition. By emphasising the Southern tradition, the Chronicler succeeded in emphasising the importance of the Jerusalem temple.

There is another allusion to the Judean tradition by the Chronicler to reflect his theological intentions. The Chronicler reworked the source text of 2 Samuel 24:25, in 1 Chronicles 21:26–27. Here, the Lord answered David with fire from heaven on the altar of burnt offering. The Chronicler added the 'fire from heaven' to his source material. This addition by the Chronicler could be said to be an allusion to the Mosaic tradition and the Sinai tradition. In the two cases, the appearance of Yahweh was often accompanied by fire, Moses

at the burning bush and the revelation of the Torah at Sinai. Therefore, it can be assumed that the Chronicler recounted the events this way to emphasise the importance of what was happening at the site of the temple. Jonker (2013:139) argues that the Chronicler attempted to overwrite Moses with David. This overwriting in Jonker's view entail an overwriting of the Northern tradition with the Southern tradition, an overwriting of Tabernacle tradition with Jerusalem temple tradition, an overwriting of the Sinai tradition with the Zion tradition and an overwriting of the exodus tradition with the monarchical tradition.

Furthermore, Jonker (2013:140) points out that 1 Chronicles 21:29–30 are without parallel in the source text. In Jonker's viewpoint, the Chronicler used this addition to achieve a contrast between the sanctuary that was at Gibeon and the newly established altar on the Jebusite threshing floor. The Chronicler seems to have used this addition to drive home his complete dependence on the Zion tradition. One can, therefore, see that the changes in culture, religion, tradition, ideology and theology have invariably led to changes in the original text by the Chronicler.

Changes in the language

A synchronic study of the text of 1 Chronicles 21 is concerned with the lower criticism of the text and seeks answers as per what the text says. It is focused on linguistic and structural characteristics. The linguistic and structural characteristics provide insights into the original desire of the statements of the texts. The objectives that can be accomplished in the study are the translation from Hebrew to English of 1 Chronicles 21:1–30, and the detailed analysis of the different words, phrases and sentences contained in each verse.

According to 1 Chronicles 21:1, a certain satan, an unknown adversary stood up against Israel and incited David to number Israelites. This generic view of an adversary is purely based on linguistic evidence, with the absence of an article to the name. 1 Enoch 40:7, similarly, points to an instance of a generic use of such terminology. In this instance, the term satan appears to designate an angelic being, whose function was to punish or to accuse those who live on earth.

From a linguistic point of view, Japhet (1993:373) notes that the figure of Satan is written in Hebrew without an article and therefore serves as a common noun and refers to an adversary. She argued that if such a significant theological development in the concept of evil and its origin were expressed by 1 Chronicles 21:1, we would expect to find it elsewhere in the book of Chronicles as well.

Additionally, a common noun in Japhet's view can transit to a proper noun without the article if the noun has completely lost its original meaning. The absence of the article in 1 Chronicles 21:1 raises doubts about understanding the noun as a proper noun. Therefore, based on linguistic considerations, the conclusion is that the figure of Satan serves as a common name and refers to an unknown adversary.

The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (Hornby 2015:303) defines a common noun as a word that refers to an object or a thing but is not the name of a person, place or thing. Based on the definition of a common noun, the Hebrew term (שָׂטָן) is not supposed to refer to a specific person. However, this is in conflict with the source text of 2 Samuel 24:1, which attributes the inciting to Yahweh. This linguistic change seems to be of theological importance.

The location of the temple site is believed to be the purpose of the narrative, as the site would be confirmed by the angel's command to David through Gad in 1 Chronicles 21:18, to erect an altar for God on the threshing floor. The threshing floor would become the site of the new altar and the future temple. The three elements of the Zion tradition become protuberant in this narrative, the site (the threshing floor at Jerusalem), the Yahwistic worship (the altar) and the monarchy (represented by David).

In 1 Chronicles 21:26, David built an altar at the site as he was commanded and offered a burnt offering there. Then God answered him with fire from the heaven. The Chronicler added the fire here, which does not appear in the source text. This could mean an allusion to the Mosaic and Sinai traditions, respectively, that is, Moses at the burning bush, and the fire at Mount Sinai. This redaction activity suggests the overwriting of the Mosaic and the Sinai tradition with the Davidic tradition by the Chronicler as already noted above by Jonker (2013:140).

The source text of 2 Samuel 24 stopped at this point where God answered David after he offered a sacrifice at the new altar. However, the Chronicler in 1 Chronicles 21: 26b–30 further added other bits of information: the fire, the angel returning his sword into its sheath, David's offering of another sacrifice, explanation about the position of the former altar at Gibeon and the reason why David could not go to Gibeon to seek God.

The Chronicler could be said to have attempted with all these additions to overwrite Moses with David. The Chronicler's ideology, therefore, can be understood by the different traditions he emphasised. He emphasised the Zion tradition, David (who is seen as the founder of the Jerusalem temple), the Jerusalem temple tradition, the Southern traditions and the concepts of temple rituals. However, he omitted or under-emphasised the following traditions – Moses, the Exodus, the Sinai tradition, the Northern traditions, the Northern Kings (referring to the Northern traditions).

The analysis of the chapter was also done by different scholars (Japhet 1993:373389; Jarick 2007:133–149; Jonker 2013:136–141; Klein 2006:418–429) and Jamieson, Fausset and Brown (1997:260–261), based on linguistic as well as theological insights. It is a common understanding amongst all the scholars that the author/s of the narrative of 1 Chronicles 21 modified the source text of 2 Samuel 24 to suit his theological and ideological purpose. 1 Chronicles 21

made extreme use of 2 Samuel 24 but omitted some information and added other information. The Chronicler may have worked from another Hebrew text than the one preserved in the Masoretic Text of 2 Samuel 24.

Based on the redaction of the text in verse 1 according to the different scholars' viewpoints, David is held responsible for the events that follow. Also, a new figure was introduced, as a source of incitement for David to sin, rather than God, as stated in 2 Samuel 24. This figure demanded a detailed discussion. All the English translations assumed the figure to be a proper noun and refers to Satan that appeared in Job and Zachariah. The passages of Numbers 22:22 and Psalm 109:6 can be used as examples to suggest that this 'satan' was simply an angel of Yahweh. Some suggest that a supernatural tempter/accuser was intended by the passage.

Because of the theological difficulty in the source text, the Chronicler made Satan the instigator of David, whilst Yahweh remains the one exercising the punishment. Israel's earlier belief systems were not customarily supernatural dualism, with good and bad being attributed to Yahweh. This tendency started to develop in the late post-exilic period, probably under the influence of Persian Zoroastrian dualism. However, given the different considerations, theological as well as linguistic, the conclusion is that the figure of Satan serves as a common noun, and refers to an adversary.

The central episode of the narrative of 1 Chronicles 21 is events that led to the choice and dedication of the Jerusalem Temple. 1 Chronicles 21 demonstrates an example of God's wrath and forgiveness.

Japhet (1993:373) points out that The Chronicler redacted 1 Chronicles 21:28–30, which are without parallel in the source text. These verses are presumed to answer an implicit question of why David offered a sacrifice on the threshing floor when the tabernacle of God is at Gibeon. In other words, they were used to achieve a contrast between the sanctuary that was at Gibeon and the newly established altar at the Jebusite threshing floor.

Traditionally, there cannot be two places of worship in Israel. Yahweh's answer to David by fire from heaven on the altar of burnt offering indicates divine approval for the sacrifice and the altar. It could also indicate that this altar replaces the tabernacle that received similar divine approval when the sacrifice was offered at it (Lev. 9:24).

The Chronicler may have used this account to indicate that David had purchased the site for the future temple and had initiated sacrificial worship at the altar at the site. Furthermore, the Chronicler alluded to the different historical traditions of Israel to lend significance to this account as well as give credit to David's actions.

The author of Chronicles can be observed to have used exclusive language to emphasise and underemphasise, as

well as silence voices, to depict one specific ideology, which is the legitimisation of the Yahweh worship in the temple of Jerusalem (cf. Geysler-Fouché 2016:6).

According to Geysler-Fouché (2016:2), the term exclusive language can be explained by looking at the development of thought on language as an instrument. In her view, exclusive language is used in certain circumstances to strengthen a certain group's identity and to empower the group. Geysler-Fouché notes that exclusive language is not always of an emphatic nature but can also lie in what has not been said. She says that it can be seen in what is underplayed or what is left out in the narration. Applying this principle to our encountered text of 1 Chronicles 21:1, one can see that by emphasising the Zion tradition and the southern perspective, the Chronicler has used exclusive language to empower the Judeans while underplaying the Northern kingdom.

These all-too-human ideologies were the motivation behind the Chronicler's reconstruction of the past. It is striking that the only unfavourable reference to David mentioned in the book of Chronicles pertains to the census he undertook. The reason for mentioning the census is the result, namely to indicate the site for building the temple. It seems that the Chronicler changed the language of the source text from 2 Samuel 24 to suit both his ideology and theology that includes his image of God.

Remarks regarding the possible contemporary relevance of this text

The Jerusalem Temple represented the Chronicler's theology and his image of God – which was that Yahweh is only to be worshipped in the Jerusalem Temple and that He has chosen the site as the place for worship and dwelling. The Temple also represented the ideology of the Chronicler, because by emphasising the temple, he succeeded in securing the temple elite's position as the ruling officials.

In finding out that this text is theologically driven and ideologically loaded, the question arises – what impact does it have on our understanding of this text, and can it still be relevant today? It seems that the real question here is hermeneutical. In addressing this issue, a few key concepts relating to a person's hermeneutical options should be considered.

The Bible, especially the Old Testament, does not contain a central theme or one theology. This makes it essential that each text should be understood and read within its unique historical framework. The diversity of the Old Testament reflects the reality of life as expressed by people in Africa, in different times and contexts, but also their testimony of the relationship between God and humans. The diversity of the Old Testament is a mirror image of the African society in which we live. Old Testament texts function side by side and not opposite to each other. It requires flexibility in thinking to interpret texts as having different purposes and therefore being relevant in the different African contexts.

In the Old Testament hermeneutics, the reader should be brave enough to throw off cultural ties and focus only on what matters. It requires reading the controversy and polemic in the text and not being influenced by it. The controversy and polemics in the text are directed against a particular text or culture at a particular time and can therefore not be taken as law or gospel. That is why, it is important to read and understand a text within context. What matters in any text is the relationship between God and humans, and this is what the interpreter should translate into the African context, not the culture or the controversy.

In an attempt to create a personal interpretation of how the ideologically motivated text can still be relevant for Africa today, the following options can be taken into consideration.

Israel was a confused nation, seeking identity after the exile. An author like Chronicler wanted to give them direction by telling them that they can find identity in their relationship with God. Although he has used the ideologically loaded symbol of the temple, it can be translated into the African context to a relationship with God. This entails that people who are feeling confused about their circumstances and identity, today, can find certainty in their relationship with God, regardless of how and where they worship. The flat character of Satan/satan links with the Chronicler's belief that God is almighty and that no other creature or symbol can be mightier than God. The notion that the whole of Israel is only the persons worshipping in Jerusalem, might seem like the exclusion of persons but can also be linked to how the Chronicler tried to give security to a confused nation and can also be translated in African contexts to our relationship with God, regardless of where, how and with whom we worship.

Considering the varying principles garnered from the study of a text, we should not focus on the culture or the controversy, rather on the relationship between God and humans.

The African contextual hermeneutics

As mentioned in the introduction, it is imperative that as we seek answers to whether the original meaning of a text has the same meaning for us, we may need to also consider our context. This consideration from an African point of view is what may be referred to as African contextual hermeneutics.

In Adamo's (2015:59) view, African contextual hermeneutics can be denoted as African biblical hermeneutics and is a methodological resource, which makes its subject of interpretation, the African socio-cultural contexts. Adamo notes that Africans have been subjected to the business of biblical interpretation, by extraneous cultural and ideological conditioning. Therefore, he proposes the methodology as a reassessment of the ancient biblical tradition and the African worldviews, cultures and life experiences, to correct the effect of the extraneous cultural and ideological conditioning (Adamo 2015:59).

Serequebehan (1994:3) in an attempt to explain hermeneutics, from a philosophical point of view, asserts that in the African

context or otherwise, hermeneutics is a 'situated critical and systematic interpretative exploration of our lived historico-cultural actuality'. Serequeberhan further asserts that hermeneutics is a presupposed and reflexive discourse. In the African context, it is the critical and systematic reflection on the lived antecedents of contemporary African existence and thought. He assumed that the reflection, in this case, gives Africans the courage to make the truth of their presupposition and call into question, the realm of their own goals.

Adamo (2015:59–61) understands the African biblical hermeneutics as the rereading of the Old Testament from a premeditatedly African perspective. In addition, he maintains that the principles of interpretation of the Bible that could lead to transformation in Africa are what African biblical hermeneutics is all about.

Adamo (2015:62) observes that there are a wide variety of approaches to engaging with biblical texts. All the methods, in his opinion, are honest attempts by scholars to understand the Bible in their different worldviews or cultures. However, he believes that they do not effectively meet the needs of the African people. He further explains that they do not address so many issues found in African religion and culture. Therefore, Adamo proposes African 'peculiar hermeneutics, with the task of interpreting the Bible in ... ways to meet their needs'.

According to Adamo (2015:64), there is no universal, uniform or absolute interpretation of the Bible, because every interpreter brings in his or her own bias, consciously or unconsciously on the way the message is perceived. He then went on to characterise African contextual hermeneutics to be liberational, transformational and culturally sensitive.

Africa is a continent endowed with so many cultures, religions, traditions and languages. The question then is, how do we apply biblical principles within the contexts of African culture, religion, tradition and language?

Asanta and Mazama (2009:22) note that African culture and religion are sometimes viewed as an afterthought in the eyes of authors, particularly from the West, and other world cultures. It is, therefore, necessary to research and acquire enough information, which will help the Africans rediscover for the world the beauty and magnificence of African culture. These exercises will also help to correct the notion of the Western world that is outmoded.

Asante and Mazama (2009:22) maintain that most of the knowledge about Africa's contextual hermeneutics is grounded in the perceptions and attitudes of missionaries and merchants, who have occupied the continent of Africa through religion, trade and guns. In their view, Africa could contribute enormously to the ideas of religion, spirituality and ethics. They propose a solution that will entail a reflection on African religion, culture, traditions and language. This will subsequently enhance our understanding of the African

worldview and possibly provoke new research for comparative studies.

Asante and Mazama's (2009:xxx) objective is to present a major reference work that will help to advance research into the core beliefs and rituals of African culture. They argue that their work now presents a comparison that was non-existent. Their work can be compared to many other sources, references, from other scholars who have demonstrated commitment to the African voice. Their work helped to demonstrate the density, texture and beats of the African religion and tradition.

Bongmba (ed. 2012:21), who is the editor of the companion to African religion, introduces research on the religious imagination and experience in the African context. He asserts that in the companion, there was the exploration of different topics, which presented transdisciplinary exploration of African religious experiences. In addition, there is an analysis of major religious traditions, religious practices and ideas in Africa. The contributions in the companion provided valuable resources on information, on 'historical trajectories, current research, and future perspectives while engaging in lively conversation on methodological, theoretical, interpretive perspective' (ed. Bongmba 2012:21).

Lugira (2009:9) expresses the fundamental truth about the character of the African religion. He notes that Africans rely on the supernatural for their needs. Adding that they turn to God for their needs but could go directly or indirectly, through lesser gods. This type of religious practice is polytheistic.

Mawere and Mubaya (2016:10) presented a study that consists of findings of African countries where African religion is practised. They discovered that 33% of the African population is polytheistic. In their view, the African communities developed their traditions, cultures, religions and languages. However, they believe that waves of exploration and modernisation have had much impact on the traditional African way of life. Nonetheless, many Africans in their understanding continue to live by the spiritual influences of their Ancestors.

Asante and Mazama (2009:22) contributed to the area of intellectual inquiry by staking out new areas of knowledge. They provided new allegories, images, figures of speech, ways of reasoning, etymologies, analogies and cosmogonies to gratify the intellect. Their work presents African contextual ideas of mysticism, tradition and initiation whilst advancing new theological induction, astrophysical tales and ways to hypothesise moral behaviours.

However, I think like the Old Testament hermeneutics, we should be brave enough to throw off cultural ties and focus only on what matters in the African contextual hermeneutics. It is important to read and understand a text within context. What matters in any Old Testament text is the relationship

between God and humans, and this is what the interpreter should translate into the African context, and not the culture or the controversies.

The biblical principles can be translated into the African context to a relationship with God. This entails that Africans who are feeling confused about their circumstances and identity, today, can like the Judeans find certainty in their relationship with God, regardless of how and where they worship.

Even though Africa has many cultures, religions, traditions and languages, African contextual hermeneutics should focus on given security to the confused situation in Africa and point our hermeneutics towards a relationship with the almighty God.

African contextual hermeneutics will task us with finding how to apply biblical principles within the African contexts of culture, religion, tradition and language. Proper application of biblical principle will make our hermeneutics relevant to the African context and will require the study of a people, within a particular nation, inside Africa. Through this study, we can gain more knowledge on how the influence of a nation's culture, religion, tradition and language within Africa may affect the understanding and application of biblical principles.

However, the study of the culture, religion, tradition and language of a particular nation within Africa will generate some ethical issues, as human samples will be taken. Therefore, these objectives will be featured in another article, which will employ a more qualitative methodology.

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E.C.C. is the sole author of this article.

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