

## **Hermeneutical Indices For A Postcolonial Critical Assessment Of The Hygienic Law In Deuteronomy 23:9, 12-14.**

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### **Abstract**

This paper examines the Deuteronomistic prescriptions of a hygienic environment for the pilgrim Israelites first as a pre-requisite for an on-going experience of the presence of Yahweh, and second as a condition for victory in the battles of life. It attempts to critically assess the text Deuteronomy 23:9-14 using a postcolonial critical hermeneutics with indices such as holism, inter-contextual, inter-textual and transcendentalism. Finally, it interprets the implications of such hygienic laws for an African context in which concepts of waste disposal regulations and disease control are at its rudimentary, oral and even non-legal stages.

**Key words:** environment, hygiene, postcolonial, victory, and Yahweh

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The hygienic rules prescribed in the Holiness Code and particularly in Deuteronomy were meant to help Israel live together peacefully, even as the people marched towards

possessing the Promised Land. A transliterated Hebrew and the Revised Standard Version (RSV) of Deuteronomy 23:9, 12-14 reads:

*Kitheseh machney al-oyebeka venishmaretha micol dabar ra..... veyad thiheyeh leka michoz lemachaeneh veyazatha shamah choz. veyathedi thiheyeh leka al-ezeneka vehayah beshibetheka huz vehaparethah bah veshabetha vekisitha eth-zeatheka. ki yehweh eloheka mith-halek bekareb machneka lehazileka velatheth oyebeka lepaneka. Vehaya machneka qadosh velo-yireeh beka arevoth dabar veshab meim adonav.*

You shall have a place outside the camp and you shall go out and you shall go out to it.....When you go forth against your enemies and are in camp, then you shall keep yourself from every evil thing. And you shall have a stick with your weapons, and when you sit down outside, you shall dig a hole with it, and turn back and cover your up your excrement. Because the Lord your God walks in the midst of your camp, to save you and to give up your enemies before you. Therefore shall your camp be holy, that he see not indecent thing and so turn away from you.

Interestingly, the above prescription specifically directs that human wastes must be disposed of properly, and if possible buried underneath the earth to avoid desecrating the camp or infesting it with excreta and urine. This paper is therefore intended to critically assess the Biblical prescriptions for a healthy and decent environment as a panacea for ill-health and as

a precursor to harmonious Divine – human interaction. The question to ask is if this prescription is of a universal application or is it applicable only to pilgrim Israelites? To answer this question, let us begin with methodological considerations.

## **2. METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Evidently, this paper had to make use of both primary and secondary sources for its analysis. Our primary sources included focus group interviews carried out among Ogba and Ekpeye participants in Rivers State during the period July – September 2009, and which results trails into the issues discussed in this paper. The participants were asked certain environmental, land and ecology related questions which they discussed and made their individual views known and these were both written down and recorded in tape recorders. According to some of the participants, the environment in native Africa beside being polluted by the industrial and chemical operations of multinational oil companies – Total, Shell, Chevron to name a few, are subjected to lack of proper hygienic care and maintenance by most of its inhabitants.

The participants were generally of the opinion that African standards for environmental hygiene are low compared to those of their counterparts in Europe or North America, especially in respect of the disposal of human and family wastes. During the interviews the author observed that even adults do urinate

anywhere provided they are not face to face with others. Moreover, even their children could defecate in very unusual places with minimum precaution.

This indiscriminate dumping of human waste has caused all forms of disease, infections, and even the out-break of epidemic. In the mid 1940s for instance it was recorded that the Ogba and Ekpeye witnessed one of the worst outbreak of diarrhea, yellow fever and jaundice (Chief Ajie 81 years, Obagi 5<sup>th</sup> January 2005). The outcome of the focus group interviews points to a self-understanding by the people that human wastes and urine should be disposed away from the immediate human habitations. It calls for the application of the hygienic prescriptions of Deuteronomy to environmental regulations among for instance the Ogba and Ekpeye.

Our methodology also involved the use of secondary sources. It is evident that Deuteronomy is generally considered as priestly material by many scholars. Budd (2004:300) cites for his example others like J. Wellhausen, A. Kuenen, H. Holzinger, B. Baentsch, and G.B.Gray. Interestingly, the priestly material in this pericope could be linked to the Deuteronomist during the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Budd (2004:300) is satisfied that a consensus of opinion ascribes the materials in this section to the Priestly editor (Ahiamadu 2011:292). Deuteronomy (23:9,12-14) portrays a legal prescription by Yahweh that under no circumstances must

the pilgrim Israelites pollute, desecrate or infest their surroundings with human wastes, because Yahweh has taken His place among them. Therefore must their camp be clean lest He see anything unclean and turn away from them. The prescription is presumably part of the Holiness code (Leviticus 13-15) given to Israel on the plains of Sinai as part of the Covenant code (Exodus 19-24) during the early years of the Exodus.

In Deuteronomy 23:9-14, the emphasis seem to support the ancient adage that “cleanliness is next to godliness”. A clean environment is a reflection of a god-friendly place. This is similar to the same notion of cleanliness stressed in the Holiness code in which emphasis is placed on the phrase “the Lord will walk among you.” (Lev.26:12). So the camp of God’s people should be clean so as to reflect, if not sustain His holy presence and power (Dt. 29:12-14).

Harrison (1999:593ff) calls it “laws governing hygiene” and he lists many of them including the distinction between clean and unclean animals (Lev. 11:1-47). The origin of such peculiar regulations he aptly traces to a Mosaic tradition because according to him these laws has no parallel in ancient life, “since the legislation in question is founded upon dietary principles unknown elsewhere in the Near East” (Harrison 1999:594). In the Graf-Wellhausen school, these regulations are considered 6<sup>th</sup> century, post-exilic materials. However, like most of the

Wellhausenian hypothesis now disproved, Harrison considers this view as belated and attributes the hygienic laws to an oral tradition which existed among the pilgrim Israelites but which were later written down by Moses. As says Harrison, if these precepts had emerged from the post-exilic period, as critical scholarship has long maintained, there would be clear indications in the text of the kind of situation that obtained in contemporary Babylonian medicine, where the empiricism of the code of Hammurabi had long succumbed to the influence of the magical practices inherent (for many centuries) in Mesopotamian therapeutics.

As it is, the dietary prescriptions are firmly grounded in attested procedures (Lev. 11:3f, 9f.), and it is to these, rather than to considerations of magic and sorcery, or the place that the proscribed species occupied in pagan religious practices, that the contents of the hygienic code, including Deuteronomy 23:9-14 must be related. In view of the tenacity with which this code was held in subsequent ages it is difficult to see how it could have emerged from a period subsequent to that of Moses without being recognized and dismissed as patently spurious and fraudulent. Not only is the materials from antiquity, but also the written form in which they have been preserved could not have derived from an age earlier than the late bronze age.

The same justification is also given by Harrison to other hygienic laws such as the regulations concerning leprosy, and the dietary prescriptions which to him were all originating from a period not transcending the era of Moses.

Our pericope however in its final form is the work of the Deuteronomist which is not earlier than the post-exilic 6<sup>th</sup> century period. Biblical scholars including maximalists like Harrison (1999:594) anticipated the existence of very highly organized medical material of various kinds known both in Egypt and Babylonia from at least the second millennium BCE onwards. There is no *a priori* reason why the hygienic code of Leviticus (which inadvertently could have informed the hygienic laws in Deuteronomy) cannot be confidently ascribed to Moses as its attributive author. In other words Biblical scholars especially of the maximalist camp would consider the autographic sources of Deuteronomy as being of a period earlier than Moses, even though the latter in turn became the agent for writing them down as from inspired oral traditions. Perhaps the law forbidding a desecration of the camp and the cleanliness required for moral, mental and physical health could have also been written during this same period and by the same author.

### **3. BIBLICAL CONDITIONS FOR AN ON-GOING VICTORY WITH YAHWEH**

In order for Israel to progressively experience an on-going victory in the presence of Yahweh, who ultimately is their Leader, two conditions must be met (Keddie 2002:35-37).

First, they must ensure an effective waste disposal system within and around their camp (vs.13).

Second, they must demonstrate a practical awareness that Yahweh – who is Spirit moves within and around their camp. Therefore the camp ought to be preserved so that not only is Yahweh’s presence adored and worshipped (vs. 14), but also His empowerment of Israel for their victory in the numerous battles which confront them would be realized (vs. 9). It is for that reason that Israel not only had to be separated to God, but also their encampments must be neat and clean to sustain an ongoing and growing awareness of the presence of Yahweh in their lives.

A hygienic environment creates an alliance with the God of victory, whose condition for victory is that His peoples’ camp must be clean in order to forge an ongoing experience of victory. Israel were God’s people, his saints, the people among whom He was present as their Father God. And the implications were tremendous for national and personal life: everything must be clean and dirt must go, for nothing that defiles must enter into the presence of this holy God.



Parallel with other Old Testament texts is an underlying prescription that indecency or “sin must be put away” from among God’s people (Num.5:1-4). In practical environmental terms “therefore your camps must be clean (holy)” (Deut. 23:14b). The NIV, KJV, and RSV indeed uses the word “holy” to depict the requisite condition of the camp bringing the state of the camp to the same condition of holiness as the individual spiritual lives of the pilgrim Israelites!

In the Holiness Code this ritual cleanliness involves keeping persons with bodily infections away from the camp. This includes persons who are afflicted with certain bodily infection of any kind, including infectious skin diseases or a discharge of any kind. It also means keeping away from the camp those who were unclean ceremonially as a result of contact with a dead body. Leviticus 13 – 15 provided the means by which cleansing and re-admittance into the camp could be secured. Equally clearly, this does not by itself approach an answer to the question as to why such regulations were laid down. The answer lies in two directions.

The first is that God was in their midst. They must put out those so afflicted, “so that they will not defile their camp”, where (Yahweh) dwell among them (Num.5:3). God was to be revered at all times and nothing that defiles His perfect holiness was to be brought near to Him. This is identical to the

argument advanced in the New Testament for the necessity of maintaining the purity of the church. The church is the temple of God, indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, God will destroy those who seek to destroy His temple (1 Cor. 3:16-17). Practical personal godliness is the only acceptable behaviour in the presence of the Lord. The Psalmist puts it more succinctly “Lord, who may live in your sanctuary? Who may live on your holy hill? He whose walk is blameless and who does what is righteous...” (Psa. 15:1-2).

The second reason is to be found in the ceremonial nature of the defilement. Why did God single out personal wastes and defecations as sources of personal and group defilement which must be properly disposed outside the camp in order for the camp to be ritually clean? Why does he put that on the same ritual level as the separation of persons with certain diseases and the handling of dead bodies? It is true that there were sinful minds in the camp all the time? The answer to these questions come from the Biblical text itself; namely, that unclean thoughts, words and deeds of the Israelites, defile the camp as much as their physical wastes and defecations, bodily diseases and even their dead. The latter must be removed out of camp early enough to avoid ritual pollution or uncleanness, even though the inner thoughts of the hearts could just be as defiling. As pilgrim Israelites and prior to the final redemption brought about by the

Lord Jesus Christ – the physical outward show of purity and cleanliness would be prelude to the new life of spiritual and moral cleanliness that is envisaged in the ultimate manifestation of the Christ.

As the sole spiritual Leader of the pilgrim Israelites, the Lord knew very well that His people were sinners and that in real terms the sins of the heart were far, far more significant than, for instance, preparing dead body for burial (which was not a sin at all)! But the law focused on ceremonial uncleanness for the reason that these were clear instances of defilement, in that it was self-evident and obvious that disease and death were contradictions of what is good and healthy in normal experience. These visible afflictions provided suitable symbols of invisible realities relating to the holiness of God and the sinner's condition and need for redemption. The open, observable and highly practical isolation of the ceremonially defiled was a parable for the people of God about the issues of life, which proceeds from the heart of men and women and concern their relationship to the Lord (Prov. 4:23). It taught the Israelites to prepare their hearts before God and recognize the real pollution, of which defecations, disease and death were but symptoms and the evil fruit.

New Testament scholars would relate the foregoing critical analysis to the fact that these ceremonial laws has passed away.

True, but its lessons remain forever to guide our attitude to the things of God. We are to be holy as God is holy (1 Pet. 1:16; Lev. 14:44, 45; 19:2; 20:7). The church as a body is also to be cleansed of scandalous sin through appropriate discipline by the elders (1 Cor. 5:1-5; Lev. 13-15), and the consequences of neglecting discipline and purity are the spread of great evils and the courting of lost eternity (Heb.12:15; Ps.9:17). The Lord is determined to save His people from their sins. In order to achieve that fundamental purpose He sent His only begotten Son to be the Saviour of all those who believe in Him. In the Great Day, when He raises the dead and gathers the living, He will make His people perfect in holiness (Rev. 21:27). In the meantime, sin must be put away (1 Cor.5:7-8; 2 Cor. 6:14-18). Obviously, the message of Deuteronomy 23:9-14 filters through in New Testament parlance.

#### **4. A POSTCOLONIAL CRITICAL ASSESSMENT OF DEUTERONOMY 23:9-14**

In this article a distinction is made between firstly, post-colonial as a spatial and political concept, and secondly, postcolonial (i.e. without the hyphen) as a theoretical critical stance. In the latter sense the concept of postcolonialism is understood as a methodological tool for a corrective, dialogic and liberated interpretation of texts using African lenses. A postcolonial critical exegesis of Deuteronomy 23:9, 12-14 is here using four

inter-related indices: *holism*, *inter-contextuality*, *inter-textuality*, and *transcendence* (cf. Moore and Sergovia 2005:97).

#### **4.1 Holism**

The postcolonial critical optic posits a holistic view of the Biblical text. The question is this: can Deuteronomy for instance subscribe to a postcolonial critical re-reading? From our earlier preliminary considerations the answer is “yes”. The view is expressed by Raymond Brown (1990:57, 70-71) that “Deuteronomy is the understanding of law possessed by God’s people individual or groups advanced with the passing of time in the oral traditions which stood behind the second law.” It is an oral tradition which had been passed on from one generation to another across several millennia until it finally was written down and latter canonised. To the extent of its canonicity, at least in Judeo-Christian circles can it be said to subscribe to a postcolonial critical hermeneutic.

Moreover, in subscribing to a postcolonial hermeneutics, Deuteronomy 23:9-14 should be seen as prescribing hygienic laws as commonly understood today. It does describe how the pilgrim camp should be ordered, in order for the health of the people to be secured and sustained. Thus Deuteronomy describes hygiene as a holistic reality in which all constituent members of the camp are obliged to watch out for the elimination of all sources of irritation, disease and death. The sacredness of the

camp endorsed in Deuteronomy 23:9-14 as well in parallel passages in the Holiness Code literally challenges areas in which African traditions – be it Akan, Bini, Igbo, Yoruba, Ogba or Ekpeye – fall short of an “eco-theology” of environmental cleanliness that treats the camp sites of God’s people as sacred – particularly the people and land (cf. Oduyoye 1998:33-51)<sup>1</sup>.

A careful look at Deuteronomy in general and at Deuteronomy 23:9-14 in particular will show the encouragement to present day environmental ethicists who believe that the earth has been delivered into the hand of humans as a sacred trust because of this close identification with Deity right from creation. Therefore humans can perpetuate in a natural or God-given way, an order of which humans have been given the capacity to keep their environment clean and tidy. A second indices for a postcolonial critical reading of our pericope is inter-contextual dialogue.

#### **4.2 Inter-contextual dialogue**

In the course of our analysis we identified certain traces of dogmatism, dilemma and dualisms which marked the history of interpretation of this unique text in Western hermeneutics. There are three ways in which these inadequacies have been remedied. The first remedy is to re-read the Biblical text in an inter-contextual dialogic manner, which presupposes that

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interpretations should not be done in isolation of the contexts of the text. In other words, the source context and the reader context must be brought into dialogue. Similarly, the textual tradition itself should be in constant dialogue with the hermeneutical context of the interpreter. We all bring our own presuppositions to the reading and interpretation of a text, and so our own contexts engages the text and its context in a dialogic process. Such an ongoing process paves the way for continued dialogue with not only the text and other disciplines, but also with the context in which the text has been shaped and the context of interpretation (Dube 2002:65).

Apparently its implications for our postcolonial critical hermeneutics are enormous (Dube 2002:65). Several allusions have been made to the priestly context of Deuteronomy which contributes to shaping our understanding and appreciation of the text. On the other hand there is a way in which the context of a developing society like Nigeria, with a missionary history that is dating from about the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, provides a heuristic in-culturative basis for further sounding the interpretation of our *pericope* (Ukpong 2004:77). In this regard the resonance of African traditions with those in Biblical cultures becomes very helpful in expounding meanings of concepts such as “camp cleanliness” and “victory over enemies”.

It makes it possible to highlight the salient message of Deuteronomy 23:9-14 from as it were the “margins” (Sugirtharajah 2001:61-62). With its century-long experience of missionary Christianity (Falk 1993: 357), Biblical scholarship in Nigeria and indeed Africa is still contending with a colonial hermeneutics that is unable to address Africa’s environmental and community health problems (Adamo 2005:3). It reverberates into all sectors of her national life, particularly in the economic sector where exploitation of natural and human resources is being pursued at the expense of the personal and group hygiene of host communities particularly in the Niger Delta, an act described as “terrorism” by Fretheim (2005:40).

Consequently, there has emerged a motley of ordinary and scholarly re-reading of texts, both in the church and in the academy with a persistent effort at decolonisation of Biblical interpretation in Africa, which in Nigeria is spearheaded by African Independent Churches along with their counterparts within the academy.<sup>2</sup> It challenges traditional Western interpretations of Biblical text and necessitates a re-reading of such texts in the light of pressing environmental and hygienic problems.

#### 4.3 Inter-textual Dialogue

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In applying a postcolonial critical hermeneutics to the Biblical text, the principle of inter-textual dialogue is of primary importance (Dube 2002:57ff). By its inter-textual and interdisciplinary nature, it questions the problems in the text and in the disciplines as the case may be and deals with such problems in a way that brings the voice of the margin to the core of the discourse (Gugelberger 1995:582). This is true of our application of it in this article, as it is of the way we re-read the Deuteronomy text for instance. With respect to the text, it means that inter-textual dialogue will revolve around the explicit meaning of the text, as it will the implicit meanings. In a postcolonial critical reading of this nature, implicit meanings can only be unravelled on the authority of comparable texts; otherwise meanings that are implicit are allowed to remain so (Wendland 2004:192). This principle was applied in earlier methodological considerations.

As would be recalled in that section, scripture was interpreted with Scripture in contexts in which implicit meanings should be made explicit (Manus 2005:283). Not only will this attempt address the dogmatism which relativises the reading of texts such as Deuteronomy 23:9-14, but which has its roots in Roman Catholic theology and has infiltrated orthodox and reformed theology. A postcolonial critical hermeneutic satisfies the

Biblical scholar's quest for a functional, dynamic meaning-based reinterpretation of the text in post-colonial contexts such as Nigeria in particular and Africa in general (Nida 1986:76). This is a crucial step in answering to the accusation that Biblical religion does not show enough interest in matters such as environmental sensitivity and the disposal of wastes in human communities. The accusation goes further to say that in so doing, Biblical religion instead fostered human indiscriminate disposal of industrial and chemical wastes, as well as the wild exploitation, pollution, plunder and piracy of the natural environment (Wybrow 1991:140-141). A critical postcolonial critical re-reading of Deuteronomy 23:9-14 uses the indices of inter-textuality to restore confidence in the Biblical text in post-colonial contexts such as Nigeria in particular.

#### **4.4 Transcendence**

There is a transcendental concept of human's role in an earth that is already fully formed and which is well established in African concepts of God and creation. Ukpong's project of reading the Bible with lay people, proves this point (Ukpong 2001:11-28). The readings proved that Africans think of God in transcendental terms, and they attempt to read the Bible in this way, even when confronted by motley of human problems. For instance a person would place a Bible under his or her pillow while sleeping

because the book has got transcendental power of warding off intruding demons, the same way amulets were worn in pre-Christian times. By this they emphasize that humans are not helpless when it comes to dealing with capricious deities or demonic forces (Gottlieb 2003:117).

Under such circumstances it is believed that humans are linked to transcendence or to God's power and that this is because humans are the crowning effort of God's creative power. It is a power which expends itself transcendently in what has become "the image and likeness" of God (Ukpong 2001:11-28). Secondly, humans are not only connected to transcendence, but are capable of engaging consciously in constant dialogue with their Creator (Psa.8: 4-5, 6-9). Being in communion with their Maker who is spiritual, would of necessity entail that a text such as Deuteronomy 23:9-14 be brought into focus both within the academia and ecclesia. It could be used to address the massive environmental and unhygienic hazards that confronts the inhabitants of Nigeria, particularly in the Niger Delta (Ahiamadu 2011:77; Beisner 1997:178). As so aptly depicted in Fretheim words (2005:39) "As God breathes God's own breath of life into the nostrils of a human being (Gen.2: 7), something of the divine self comes to reside in the human – and in an ongoing way". Therefore, the cleanliness of camps both at academic

convocations and ecclesiastic conventions could not be overemphasized.

In the relatively short period of Nigeria's Christian history of a century and half, uncritical reading of the Biblical text has created a pattern of interpretation of health and hygiene that totally ignores this crucial Biblical text (Deuteronomy 23:9-14). The result has been the lacking of an ongoing dialogue between the Biblical text on the one hand and the traditional world views in respect of environmental hygiene (cf. Adamo 2005:2-3). This process has been corrected by our postcolonial critical hermeneutic using the indices of a transcendental view of God, of humans and of nature.

A postcolonial reading of Deuteronomy's unique and universal message stands the best chance of filling that, which is implied in indigenous concepts of environmental hygiene. Postcolonialism frees our mind into a creativity of speech and action which aligns us to the will of the Deity (Perdue 2005:327). There is an ongoing process of interpretation of Biblical texts in both the church and academy today of which Deuteronomy 23:9-14 is one, which hopefully can influence and in turn is influenced by ever changing socio-economic and environmental circumstances.

## **5. IMPLICATIONS OF SUCH HYGIENIC LAWS FOR AFRICA**

It is noteworthy that cultural similarities exist between ancient Israelite culture, and culture as it is known in contemporary Africa (Adamo 2001:347; Ahiamadu 2006:294; Nwaoru 2002:56). Everyone who has been to a Christian camp in Nigeria for instance will know how much attention is paid to order and cleanliness in the camp. The site for the tents is carefully chosen and neatly arranged – and the latrines are set up down-wind and at a distance (vs.12). The reasons are the same as those for proper sanitary arrangements in permanent dwellings. Health and wellbeing are at stake. Disease is as much a threat today as it ever was in the past, and therefore all waste and garbage has to be disposed of as efficiently as possible. We may too easily take for granted the modern facilities we have for these purposes, but we lose sight of the underlying principle to our peril: if we are to live a healthy life, to be clean is in, and dirt must go!

The Deuteronomist legal prescriptions for a clean and hygienic environment certainly have very profound implications for the African context. The primary sources consulted by the author included focus groups in which African self-understanding of environmental cleanliness and ecological integrity were discussed. The immediate context of the focus groups was among the Ogba and Ekpeye peoples, and these were unfortunately

contexts in which concepts of waste disposal regulations and disease control are at its rudimentary, oral and even non-legal stages. In most of the communities visited the author found that refuse dump sites in villages and semi-urban towns existed on the outskirts. Moreover, the disposal of human excreta and urine fared no better as these were usually dumped in bushes close to the homes! That certainly made room for young people and children defecating at road sides, back-yards, and in very unusual places such as public squares, shrines, and plantations with the result of occasional outbreak of epidemics.

Although the Bible has been read in Africa for more than 100 years now, the hygienic laws have not formed part of church doctrines or dogma, neither do preachers refer to them from the pulpit (cf. Shemesh 2010:110). Churches such as the Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) and other semi-Judaist congregations rigorously observe the dietary regulations of Holiness Code (Lev. 13-15), but scarcely do they provide toilet facilities for their members different from the ones the rest of the community members use.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, our methodology paves way for a scholarly engagement both primary and secondary sources in order to bring Deuteronomy 23:9-14 to the centre of environmental and

ecological theology. In other words, the Biblical text when brought into dialogue with the realities, even the deficiencies of environmental and hygienic practices in Africa can save the latter from further deterioration. Biblical scholars generally endorse this need to evolve a postcolonial interpretation of not only the Biblical text in particular, but of religion in general (Perdue 2005:293; Ukpong 2001:11-28). As has been intimated, this is done by creating an encounter between the Biblical text and Africa's religious context using a hermeneutics that ignores historical theology and focuses on postcolonial criticism (Ahiamadu 2006:103). This is what Ukpong (2004:77-91) has described as:

A hermeneutic of appropriation which in Africa, is concerned to make a specifically African contribution to Biblical interpretation and actualize the creative power of the Bible in African society.

## Endnotes and References

<sup>1</sup>See L.G. Perdue 2005 *Reconstructing Old Testament Theology - After the Collapse of History* Minneapolis: Fortress press, p.285  
Sugirtharajah 2001:61-62

2. The Nigerian Association for Biblical Studies (NABIS) has published a whole series on *“Decolonisation of Biblical Interpretation in Africa”* in which various Biblical issues were thrashed out, using a purely African Biblical postcolonial hermeneutics. According to the series editor: “The commonest

thing is that the interpretation of the Scripture is influenced by each people's (Christians, Jews, historians and Orientals) cultural viewpoint...the colonial era was a time of injustice and a time of misinterpretation of the Bible. The Africans were taught to despise everything African at the time of conversion. The reason for decolonising the church and biblical studies have really led to the foundation and spread of African indigenous Churches (in an attempt to bring Christianity close to the local people, interpreting the bible (has to be) in the light of African cultures. (We) make (ourselves) relevant to the local people by employing cultural concepts in interpreting the Bible." See S.O. Abogunrin (ed) 2005 *Decolonization of Biblical Interpretation in Africa*, Ibadan: NABIS, p.1, 4, 7.

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