Jeremy Punt
University of Fort Hare

Enscripturalised identity: Scripture and identity in Christian communities[1]

ABSTRACT

It is often claimed that the Bible as foundational document of Christianity functions is an important source of identity within that tradition and its religious communities, and even that it has contributed largely to the formation of the identity of Western culture and literature. This claim is investigated from the perspective of "enscripturalised identity", a notion introduced and developed here. Various aspects of possible criticism against enscripturalised identity in contemporary communities and life are entertained, concluding that this concept can have heuristic value for reflecting on (Christian) identity.

1. INTRODUCING ENSCRIPTURALISED IDENTITY

This is, in fact, one of the major functions of religious literature, whether that literature is the Christian Bible, the Jewish Tanakh, the Islamic Qur'ān, or the Hindu Upanishads. All of these literatures contain stories that tell the reader what the world is like, what constitutes good and evil, and what it takes to be a good and ethical person (Haas 1996:186).

The claim that the biblical documents are "the narrative texts of Christian identity" (Johnson 1981:8) is important, but not saying enough, since the Bible can be said to contribute in various ways to Christian identity.[2] The debate on the role of the Bible in this regard – the relationship between Scripture and Christian identity – is adequate reason to launch a more sustained

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1 An edited section of a paper, "Paul, freedom and character: Scripture and identity in South Africa", read at the annual AAR/SBL meeting in Boston, MA, 20-23 November 1999.

2 The notion of "identity" is a modern personalist construction, including not only psychological but also somatic and social experience. It has to be admitted though, that in postmodern thought identity is "not static, essential and clearly defined" but "a fluid, shifting perspective, which is generally context-dependent" (Tolbert 1995:310). Naturally the full range of human identities, and its combinations, cannot be considered here, such as ethic, political, sexual, etc identities; the emphasis here is on identity within the Christian tradition and community, although these categories cannot always restrict either the scope or the range of such identity. Perhaps the dangerous simplifications often found in identity politics – where identity is often not about persons or institutions, but about ideological subject-positions that reflect social interests and reproduce relations of oppression – require a shift in emphasis from identity to *identification* (cf Stokes 1998:736, 744) or identifying. Identity, therefore, is situated in ideology rather than substance. Another notion pertinent to perhaps a more elaborate discussion regarding religion and identity would be that of "conversion" as an identity-forming or -creating event and/or experience, as well as an identity rite of passage.

investigation rather than simply admitting that the Bible and other scriptures share in "the power of religion to impart meaning and significance to group life" (cf Neusner 1996:32). I want to argue that the formative and sustaining role of the Bible in fostering a sense of identity among believers and in communities[3] – and sometimes, beyond such communities, too[4] – can be described as enscripturalised identity.[5] In Christian communities,[6] Scripture generally becomes a mode of identity, as these documents contribute in different ways to open up new worldviews, to create new realities.[7]

Enscripturalised identity entails not only self-definition in communal and individual sense, but also the identification of difference, of the Other, through the interpretation and appropriation of the biblical texts. The Other is also scripturally – and often, textually – enscribed. The relationship between hermeneutical processes of identity and othering, and social identity and othering is worth noting, especially against the background of a pragmatist or interpersonal hermeneutic or reading perspective: Hermeneutical and social otherness is interrelated.[8]

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3 "Christian communities are constituted and reconstituted politically by Scripture, because Scripture provides the primary context for understanding what it means to live faithfully before God" (Fowl & Jones 1991:36).

4 Ricoeur argues for a wide spectrum of positions – "intermediary cases" – of religious identity, ranging between that of belonging and not belonging to the church. Important though is that Ricoeur relates the community's own sense of identity to the identity of the sacred text of the community. As the boundary line between the sacred text, on the one hand, and non-sacred and other sacred texts on the other hand, disappears, the community's sense of identity would also fade away (1979:274). In this regard "civil religion" as for example in the USA springs to mind, cf Gallup (1997:24-28); Carroll R (1995:193) observes that Christian communities are found amidst "complex social and cultural contexts" which influence Christian identity. For the influence of the Bible in Western literature, cf recently eg Jeffrey (1996); and in African culture, cf the contributions in *BCT* 4(3) (1997).

5 "Enscripturalised identity" is not offered as the full extent of (determining) Christian consciousness and character: many other elements are involved in the formation of Christian identity (cf eg Fowl & Jones 1991:44-49, on the importance of "readings of the world"). Enscripturalised identity, however, is arguably one of the most important constituent elements of Christian identity as much as it does not require or imply a "totalising discourse" (Foucault). "Enscripturalising" may be an even better, if more clumsy, word to underline the dynamic and active nature of what transpires between community and Scripture.

6 In general, but more particularly so in Protestant traditions with their traditionally strong emphasis on the Bible, often expressed as *sola scriptura*. In Catholic countries, the Bible was often viewed as "forbidden Protestant propaganda": Hanks (1983:61) refers to Costa Rica where homes displayed signs to that effect as recently as 1963. However, Ricoeur contends that the Protestant insistence on the Bible interpreting itself, introduced a new "kind of magisterium: the reign of the theologians" (1979:274).

7 With this discussion, I am fully aware that I involve myself in the practice found in "most religious communities living scripturally", namely to formulate theories to explain to such communities why these scriptures are so important, and in the process (hope that it will!) nurture and strengthen a continuing involvement with these scriptures (Smith 1993:215). However, I also try to develop from, and for, my particular religious community and set of scriptures, a viable way of becoming a partner in dialogue with the other religions, with and without scriptural traditions, of this world. A brief but important word on hermeneutics will suffice. Acknowledging the presence of Scripture in the community, even society, does not accord it a fixed or stable text and/or meaning, and does not grant it the controlling power regarding enscripturalising identity. Indeed, Scripture is about sacred texts and traditions, communities and the transcendental; in short, it is activity (cf Smith 1993:239; and below, section 3). In this study, meaning is understood as the interactive relationship between readers, socio-political locations and texts, including their traditions. This is where the notion of "Scripture-shaped community" could be problematical: although probably not intended as such by Hays (1996:462-470), it creates the impression of Scripture as an fixed entity which forces itself on a community, essentially manipulating the members to assume a certain identity and actions.

8 But it is not only the Other which is ultimately described and prescribed by the text, as the text itself can become an Other (Segovia 1995:298; cf McDonald 1993:200ff). Apart from reckoning with the otherness of the biblical texts on historical and literary levels, the Bible can also become an outsider to Christian communities and individuals, when it is read over against us ourselves.

If the circular movement of interpretation is accepted, namely that while hermeneutical considerations are interrelated to and at times dependent upon worldviews, those very worldviews are the result of and prescribed by hermeneutics (Westphal 1997:65), our interpretations of the Bible cannot stand aloof from the configuration of our lives. Clearly enscripturalised identity entails more than using the Bible, perceived in an atemporal, asocial and ahistorical sense, as legitimating agent both for an assumed and historically developed identity, and for justification of the identification and vilification of the Other defined in terms of ourselves.[9] To the contrary, enscripturalised identity requires one to comprehend the Other on their own terms, to interact both with the Other, and their interpretation of the – same or other – text. That the text as the Other also contributes to identity, at times perhaps a "new" identity, is equally clear – a discussion which will be introduced elsewhere, from the perspective of the Pauline texts.

2. SCRIPTURAL COMMUNITIES AND ENSCRIPTURALISED IDENTITY

> There is a reciprocity between the reading and the existing self-recognition of the identity of the community. There is a kind of reciprocity between the community and the text (Ricoeur 1979:272).

The argument here is that enscripturalised identity is found in scriptural communities. The latter should be distinguished from a textual community which is "defined by shared devotion ... to an authoritative text or set of texts", to be sure, conceived of as material objects. Such a text constitutes this community's worldviews and provides the parameters or points of reference for everyday life. As foundational text, it regulates the community's life because it is adequately well-known and appropriated, and even "obviates the need for its perpetual rehearsal and citation at length", as it forms a "superstructure of agreed meaning, the textual foundation of behaviour having been entirely internalised ... it stands at the center of the community and also delimits its periphery". The textual community is therefore defined as much by its possession of the text, as by its reading or rehearsal and application thereof (Green 1985:53-54, 68). Whether such a community is "necessarily literate" (Green 1985:53), is doubtful since the emphasis is on sufficient knowledge of the foundational document which does not ultimately depend on literacy.

The notion of *scriptural* community shifts the emphasis to where it is properly found in many Christian communities:[10] Scripture, which is often, but not exclusively, inscribed textually. The emphasis on the textuality of Scripture effectively but inappropriately dislodges "non-readers" from the Christian tradition. However, as Smith argues – without noting this problem – even in "textual communities ... texts are no longer understood as records, but as 'sites' where facts are 'embodied' rather than simply recorded". And, "[w]hat distinguishes a textual community from an aural/oral community is a worldview shift, whereby texts become privileged sites of fact and authority; textuality is a new topology" (Smith 1997:56). Indeed, the emphasis on textuality only

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9   Indeed, one also seriously has to consider, apart from the question of whether or not the Bible is demonstrably linked to the construction of identity, whether all those implicated would necessarily countenance such a link. Cf eg Banana (1993:17-32); Camp (1993:154-171, especially 160): A relationship to the text to the extent that it is personified in the life of the individual or community, is decried by some feminist scholars.

10   With the oft-invoked contrast between traditional Roman Catholic groups, and "Bible-slapping" charismatic or Pentecostal churches along with fundamentalist approaches across the variety of Christian traditions of no serious importance for the argument.

results in the non-literate becoming illiterate, and as literacy equals rationality, illiteracy approximates irrationality. Although it might sound strange to the text-centered modern (Western) consciousness, the *textual* aspect is incidental[11] – if at times in history, foundational – to the scriptural, and is not the primary concern. The relative unimportance of textuality for the continuing presence of the scriptural tradition is emphasised in the biblical studies/cultural studies interface, showing how scriptural notions are propagated, elaborated and mutated in various forms of media, including art, and more recently films (cf various studies in Exum and Moore 1998). Put differently, textuality should not be deemed more important than the scriptural or "foundational" tradition.

Scriptural communities, like textual communities, are fragile, in the sense that the "ultimacy, primacy, and constitutive character" of the community's sense of Scripture can be corrupted or diminished. A community can depart from Scripture, sending Scripture on its way. Thus, Green's contention about textual communities namely that "the most threatening kind of otherness, [is] the otherness within" (1985:69), holds true for scriptural communities, too.[12]

3. SCRIPTURE AS ACTIVITY

> Scripture is a human activity ... Scripture are not texts (Smith 1993:18-19).

Perhaps it would be still more appropriate to replace "scriptural" communities with *scripturalising* communities. Smith concludes in his comparative study of Scripture that it is a human activity, but not only in the act of privileging certain texts as canon.[13] This is only a preliminary and perfunctory view of the total activity that constitutes Scripture. Scripture "begins with people's awareness of involvement in transcendence", an awareness which is then "*reduced* to speech or writing"[14] (Smith 1993:231, emphasis in the original). Scripture therefore exists in a trilateral relationship, consisting of the relationship or "engagement" between "text", the self (and his/her world) and the transcendent (Smith 1993:239).

Drawing out the implications of Scripture as human activity, various types of activity, which inherited texts received at a formative stage in Christianity, can be listed and described. Such activities, in "multifaceted and varied" form, continue to "extend across divisions within and between scripturalising communities and religions" (Rogers 1997:28-43). It is in worship and the liturgical use of Scripture in scripturalising communities that Scripture's role of "a people's symbolizing of the transcendent within and among and around them"[15] emerges, as one form of

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11 As indeed, it should be stressed, it is the case even in textual communities!

12 In matters of identity, the more immediate deviancy or danger always seems worse than the more remote threat. Cf Greeley, with reference to the relation between religion and ethnicity: "It is the neighbour who is almost the brother that we are most likely to kill" (1996:12).

13 Even more than canon as activity related to the "shaping element within any message", or the "texture of relationships undergirded by the desire in language signified by both its disseminative and its polyvalent dynamics"; still more than activity in the sense of "the unceasing activity of interpretation" (Schüssler Fiorenza 1994:10).

14 The emphasis on scripture as *written* text rather than *oral* "recital", "proclamation", "performance" or "recital" is a Western preoccupation – the result of which is the failure to recognise the experiential dimension of scripture (Smith 1993:7-10; cf Rogers 1997:29 n 6).

15 Eg from the Jewish context, the Hebrew term *miqra'*, generally translated as scripture, is used not so much for a form of written text (which would be the *Tenak*), but "the correct reading of the sacred words" (Mulder 1988:xxiii), or "a (liturgical) oral form" (Smith 1993:244 n 6).

such symbolising. But, the most important of Rogers' conclusions for this study would be his argument that differences in the perception of Scripture and its interpretation is related to different self-understanding: "[i]t is people's understanding of themselves and the transcendent in the world that is at issue in divergences of or over Scriptures" (Rogers 1997:43). That is, the notion of scripture – as privileged texts and/or tradition – is very much about people and their identity, both individual and communal identity (cf Punt 1998b; for Judaism, cf Cohen 1987:192-195).

Although Rogers does not in particular argue the case, the importance of Scripture in moulding or at least contributing to identity emerges in especially two of his characterisations of "scripturalising activity". Such activity can be found among professionals such as theologians and clergy, but also in the larger Christian community and beyond. As far as the "scripturalist" acts as a "codifier devising a rule for faith and practice", "this creative manner of scripturalising is crucial for establishing and maintaining the identity of a community whose faith and practice are grounded in its inherited texts" (Rogers 1997:37-38). Similarly, when the role of the "scripturalist" takes the shape of "a commentator gazing in a mirror on the present", "[t]he world reflected in Scripture *is* the world of the commentator, and Scripture makes it possible to understand the world and one's place in it" (Rogers 1997:39, 41). Within communities that attach such considerable importance to Scripture, it becomes possible to argue a case for the enscripturalised identity of the community and individuals, as self-consciousness (largely) provided, described and moulded by Scripture (Punt 1998b).

In Christianity, as in the other religions of the book, Scripture is one of the symbols used when "religion defines a metaphor to explain the character and standing of a social entity"[16] (Neusner 1996:35).

4. AGAINST ENSCRIPTURALISED IDENTITY

> Maybe in Christianity there is no sacred text, because it is not the text that is sacred, but the One about which it is spoken (Ricoeur 1979:271).

One self-evident difficulty attached to the notion of enscripturalised identity concerns the variegated nature of the content and character of Scripture. Various and often quite different perspectives are found on a wide range of issues in the Bible, from eschatology and apocalypticism to the community of faith and its relationship to the world. One way of addressing this problem, at least to some extent, is by attending to a single document or set of documents, since a canon-within-the-canon approach is often determinative in scriptural communities. On the other hand, scriptural communities have through history shown itself very capable of distilling from the diversity that characterises the Bible, an integrated whole, sensible and contextually relevant to many of the needs of such communities.

Historically speaking, according the New Testament a privileged position in raising matters related to identity in the early days of Christianity, raises another problem. Müller (1995:649-658) emphasises as an "unparalleled discovery" (Grundtvig), the acknowledgement that "the Church was there from the beginning with its creed and sacraments, and that the New Testament did not

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16 It is important to note that when Neusner attempts to describe how religious identity – as "Israel" – is formed and maintained in Judaism, he constantly makes use of Scripture (1996:35, 36-42). Israel is therefore not only "a social entity that is made up of those who share a common conviction" (1996:36); it has to be added that that conviction derives from the Jewish scriptures: "Israel becomes Israel through the Torah" (1996:37).

come into being until later" (1995:650). Rather than seeing the pre-New Testament existence of the church as a debilitating factor for the position of Scripture, it needs to be noted that "[t]he constituent elements of the life of this Church therefore form the context in which these writings are to be understood". But this may not count so much against enscripturalised identity, as helping to explain the concept: The New Testament understood this way demystifies Scripture and allows for a rereading, cognisant of the dominant socio-cultural patterns of the day. In a way, the New Testament texts did not so much contribute to the construction of early Christian identity, but the texts are rather a reflection of the latter in its hybrid and hyphenated ways.[17] On the other hand, it is reasonable to assume the presence of reciprocity between early Christian traditions, in oral and other formats, and the formation of communities ascribing significance and authority to those traditions.

Along similar lines, Johnson has recently argued that New Testament scholarship constantly misses out on the religious dimension of early Christianity. Asserting the strong religious experience of the church during the time of the New Testament, Johnson castigates the contemporary church for its emphasis on institutional power, particularly as legitimated by texts, that is, the Bible. "One reason why scholarship has privileged formal religion is that religious studies originated among scholars comfortable in the world of clerical religion, not least because *it is centered in legitimized texts* and predictable routines", adding that "[t]he dual bias in favour of the *textually defined* and the theologically correct has profoundly affected the academic study of earliest Christianity" (Johnson 1998:2-3, emphasis added). It is ironic, however, that Johnson's argument on the "religious experience" in earliest Christianity is still derived from the biblical texts. So, perhaps the problem is not primarily that the *texts* are privileged, but rather a particular(ist) *understanding* of them?

Another concern needs to be noted when the Bible and matters of identity are juxtaposed. It is a commonly accepted, as Archambault and Tinker (1995:300) demonstrates boldly from a Native American perspective, that the Bible as "Word of God" was used in a hegemonic way to destroy cultures and identity. The Bible was often in the past – as sometimes seen in the present, too – employed as imperialist document. In South Africa, Archbishop Desmond Tutu's saying about the colonial exchange of land for the Bible – the ultimate metaphor for not only Christianity but also the whole of Western culture – springs to mind.[18] The ambivalence of the biblical-based traditions in general and the Bible in particular in the construction and deconstruction of cultures and peoples has long been noted and reference to enscripturalised identity is not an attempt at romanticising or idealising the influence of Scripture on human life and thought. However, the abuse of the Bible at the level where it is perceived as more or less a mechanical tool for inculcating a specific set of values and attitudes,[19] points besides the implicit imperialism in an ironic way also at the potency

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17   Yet selectively so as from one perspective the formation of the New Testament canon was informed and contained by, and aimed at the consolidation of the Roman empire and the church. "The Christian canon represents the collective experience of the early church whose boundaries it defines. Hence it is clear the that canon is a normative social symbol system of the 'patristic' church" (Schüssler Fiorenza 1994:5-12, 13 n 11). On the other hand, however, anti-imperial discourse of much of the NT has to be considered, eg the apocalyptic language in the Pauline letters (Horsley 1995:1157; 1998:167-168).

18   "When the white man came to our country he had the Bible and we had the land. The white man said to us 'let us pray'. After the prayer he had the land and we had the Bible." But, Tutu adds his own twist: "and we [in Africa] got the better deal" (cf Punt 1997:24). Cf also Punt (1998a:5-8, 11-21).

19   Cf recently the attempt by the Secretary General of IMF, Camdessus, to legitimise structural adjustment and other programmes by making recourse to the inaugural sermon of Jesus in Lk 4 (Hinkelammert 1997:41-42).

of the biblical texts. Clearly, as much as people, on the one hand, *understand* biblical language and relate to it as part of the broader Western culture,[20] they, on the other hand, attach certain allegiances to the Bible, by paradoxically accepting its attributed authority. Failure to account for the efficacy of scriptural traditions in sustaining imperial patterns hardly puts an end to such patterns and practices.

From a literary perspective, Ricoeur argues that in as far as the Bible is read critically it ceases to be a "sacred text, because it is no longer the text which the community has always regarded as sacred;[21] it is a scholar's text" (1979:271; cf Botha 1998:39).[22] The same argument is offered from a canonical-theological perspective. "In a word, the term 'story' is not strong enough to support the function assigned to the Bible. Indeed Christians have always believed that we are not saved by a text or a narrative, but by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ in time and space" (Childs 1992:665; cf Swartley 1994:xiii n 1). From these two, different, perspectives a similar objection is offered, namely that the Bible is at best the conduit for encountering the Sacred, for experiencing the transcendental. However, against such a notion it can be argued that only by denying the involvement of language in constructing human worldviews and reality(-ies) and, concurrently, by accepting some form of unmitigated metaphysical experience, is the significance of Scripture in identity processes repealed.

To argue that the "sacramental" character of the Catholic Church relegates enscripturalised identity to a concern of Protestant Christianity with its emphasis on the Word, fails to reckon with the modern context, on the one hand, and the post-Vatican II situation, on the other hand. Schneiders argues that all Christians participate in the establishing of the context of faith in which the authentic witness of Scripture comes to light "because the interpretation of scripture is carried out not only in formal situations of biblical research and magisterial teaching but in the ongoing liturgical, spiritual, and ministerial life of the church" (1991:84; cf Thornhill 1996:27).

An accompanying danger to the very notion of enscripturalised identity is of course that of a solipsistic argument. Scripture is believed to be the community's warrant or authorisation of identity, rendering thus enscripturalised identity. Yet, in order for enscripturalised identity to function, it presupposes that the community has already granted Scripture such a foundational place in order to enable such identity processes. In other words, in as far as Scripture underwrites and supports it, Scripture is seen as warrant for a community's identity. The community's enscripturalised identity engages in a process of continuing enscripturalising momentum, crediting Scripture with an identity-formative role deriving from having in the first place accorded Scripture the ability to do so, ostensibly on the basis of enscripturalised identity. Such thinking about

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20 Cf Morgan & Barton (1988:28) on the Bible as the most important text in Western culture, and recently Jeffrey (1996); Davies (1986:52ff) on biblical symbols penetrating even non-Western cultures.

21 Registering concern about the qualifier but for different reasons, Lash (1986:42) contends that it is not Scripture, but people who perform Scripture, that are *holy*.

22 It is not clear why a critical approach to a religious text would necessary detract from the sacrality of such a text, unless the acceptance of a text as sacred is deemed to imply an a-rational (irrational?), a-historical, and a-temporal evaluation of the text. In addition, considering the process of canon-formation as the result of tradition which is always temporally and spatially defined and wherein texts are attributed a certain status, would imply that the canonical status of a text is not inherent. The modernist insistence on the objective scholar has long since been dispelled as whimsical at best and coercive at worst (cf eg Segovia 1995:281-285). In short, a critical approach to a sacred text does not necessarily diminish the status of the text, nor would the text impose or require a less critical stance because of the status attributed to it by certain communities.

enscripturalised identity is, however, fraught with difficulties. Enscripturalised identity is a process and thus dynamic, fluid, participatory and developmental in nature – as are all processes of identity – and should not be seen as simply an example of mechanistic social causation. Indeed, trying to pin down the chicken or the egg in the relationship between Scripture and identity is simply not the question, as much as it is not even the problem – at least not for the argument here. The emphasis is on the *relationship* or the dynamics of the interaction between Scripture and identity.

Scripture cannot force itself on communities as its very existence is due to the authority granted to it by the community ascribing to it – enforcing Scripture on a community may happen, sure enough, through over-zealous co-believers. At the end of the day, however, enscripturalised identity is assumed by the community and its members. Scripture is accorded the ability, function and status to contribute to identity in very much the same way Scripture was accorded canonical status in the first place.

5. ENSCRIPTURALISED IDENTITY, IN SHORT

> Various kinds of cultural "cleansings" demand of us to place identity and otherness at the center of theological reflection on social realities (Volf 1996:17; emphasis in the original).

Enscripturalised identity is not an essentialist notion about claiming an absolute identity legitimated by biblical prooftexts, but is a helpful heuristic device to deal with the investigation of Scripture's contribution to the hybridity or hyphenated nature of identity (cf Walters, Martin & Cochrane 1999:81-83), primarily in Christian communities but to some extent also in its role in broader socio-religious patterns and constellations,[23] local and global. The social construction of cultural, national and ethnic identities – "not god-given or natural artefacts" (Said 1991:11) – is taken serious when entertaining the notion that Scripture plays a role in and contributes to identity in Christian communities in particular.

With enscripturalised identity is therefore not meant inscribed identity, or narrative identity, a palpability of personality or individuality. Depending on what is meant by these concepts, enscripturalised identity may even include such notions but goes beyond them, to the involvement of language and literature in the construction of reality. More particularly, in this study identity was perceived in relation to the socio-cultural formation of groups of people, and is primarily related to the dynamics that obtain in the interrelation of socio-cultural formation and sacred texts in general, and the Christian Bible in particular.

However, enscripturalised identity is only as ambiguous as it is inevitable in Christian communities and societies wherein such communities have a measure of influence. It is common knowledge that the same Bible has been used to declare war and to proclaim peace, to justify oppression and to support struggles for human freedom, and so on. It is equally important to realise how influential the Bible has been through its presence in political, economical, sexual, cultural and other areas of human thought, especially in the Western world – and there where the West made its presence felt. The modernist privilege of postponing or even putting off value-judgements

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23   Cf Beyer (1994:226-227) on "the search for self-description" within a global society where religious culture on global scale still allows for "subglobal and particular systemic religion and religious culture".

is therefore a luxury and ill-afforded when dealing with the role and significance of Scripture in the formation, maintenance and transforming of human identity.[24]

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24 Left out of consideration here are other important and related matters, eg *how* people (Christians) today are influenced by and develop "enscripturalised identity" (as for example through sermons, liturgy, religious literature, "private" and group Bible study activities, etc). Cf eg homiletic studies such as Achtemeier (1980:22-30) on biblical preaching offering essentially a new image or language world. Space also neither permits any serious discussion of the nature of religious discourse and language *qua* discourse and language (eg Stiver 1996); nor the relationship between language and the perception of reality, or between literacy and social organisation (eg Stock 1983:88-240); nor the debate on whether the "word" or the "text" has primacy (cf respectively eg Smith 1997:61 n 44 and Lindbeck 1989:95 n 9).

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