



THE DISCOURSE ON THE EMMAUS WAY (LUKE 24: 13-49) AND DECOLONISING AFRICAN BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS

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Abstract

Much attention has been given to mission, evangelism, and the 'Table Fellowship' in Luke 24:13-49. However, little attention has been given to how Jesus used his language and cultural background to reveal to the depressed, the sad, and the doubters around him that he is the Messiah. Some Christians find it difficult to use elements from their African local languages to convey the Gospel message. Hence, it seems that the needs of some elderly people who appreciate the local languages are not met during worship. The younger generation thinks that the local languages are 'demonic' and should not be used especially while praying. These younger ones prefer 'speaking in tongues' (glossolalia) and the use of the English language while praying. Such elderly prefer, most times to stay at home especially when they are on visitation to their children. Anchored on Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the study attempts a narratological analysis of Luke 24:13-49 to understand the dynamics of biblical lessons and how to practice the dynamics actively. Findings reveal that Jesus used elements from his language, sacred book and culture to proclaim his message. African Christians can use elements from their language, and probably, ATRs to preach the Gospel. This article recommends that Christians should emphasise, and imbibe the use of the local vernacular for the progressive propagation of the Gospel message.

Keywords: CDA, Decolonisation, African language, Sociocultural practice, Gospel message

Introduction

Jesus' resurrection is a cultural reality, and this implies that the narrative is culturally conceived with the corresponding cultural entities. This cultural influence, in no doubt, wields so much influence on the language and the interpretation of the resurrection narrative in contemporary society. In Luke 24:13-49, much attention has been given to mission, evangelism, the 'Table Fellowship', the identity of the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, why Jesus presented himself as a stranger, and source. However, little attention has been given to how Jesus used his language to reveal to the depressed, the discouraged, and the doubters around him that he is the Messiah. Hence, the nature of God disappears in an attempt to translate the language into English. Language is an important aspect of expressions of African spirituality, and one of the strategies that will enable contextualisation of the gospel message in Africa is "...using the language of the people being reached and not European languages in interaction with them."

The study examines the combination of correlating culture-critical and narratological concerns in Luke 24:13-49 vis-à-vis its literary art, theology, ethics, and spirituality (narrative theology) and relates it with contemporary concerns, using Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) theory for textual analysis. It concerns itself with the social and linguistic webs of a text with its co-text, intertext and context. Fairclough's three-dimensional framework of description, interpretation, and explanation involves "the whole process of interaction of which a text is just a part" since language shapes who we are and where we are going.

This study aims toward the proper understanding of words that are not clear in the passage. It assists in a clear understanding of the logic and meaning of the text. The message can be presented clearly and simply using elements from the local language of the audience. It helps to understand the dynamics of biblical lessons and how to practice the dynamics actively.

Research Method and Theoretical Framework

This study is a narratological analysis of Luke 24 :13-49, premised on Fairclough's three-dimensional framework to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional framework to CDA (sometimes called Textually Oriented Discourse Analysis or



TODA) is description, interpretation and explanation. The description (discourse-as-text) involves analysis of the text. It is also the stage of structural analysis, the order of discourse. The interpretation (discourse as discursive practice) is the relationship between the text and interaction (interactional analysis). This stage is also called the discursive practice and involves the process of text production, distribution, and consumption (interdiscursive analysis). It takes note of the economic, political, and institutional settings of the discourse. Fairclough calls this stage recontextualization. The explanation (discourse-as-social-practice) examines the relationship between the interaction and the social context, as well as considering the social effects of such interactions. The descriptive stage identifies the genres and words, the interpretative stage identifies the meaning of the word and why the usage, while the explanation stage focuses on the wider social context and the effect on the groups within the society. Fairclough avers that CDA can be used to analyse language, visual images, and body language within social life, cultural, economic, political, and everyday life. Language is a form of social practice and a mode of action. Summarily,

The Fairclough model discourse links micro texts to the context in which texts are produced, that is, society at a macro level. The practical level of discourse is used to see meso-socially the relationship between the text and the production and consumption of the text. At the initial level, the text in this model is analyzed linguistically, by looking at vocabulary, semantics, and sentence structure. He also included coherence and cohesiveness, how between words and between sentences are combined to form understanding.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is interested in 'who benefits' in a conversation, concerned with words on the page, and asks why the words are spoken, to other texts (social context). It concerns itself with the social and linguistic webs of a text with its co-text (what comes before/after a text), intertext (the linguistic echoes), and context (the socio-cultural scripts provided by the narrator to understand the stance of the audience).

Review of Related Literature

Backgrounds to Luke 24: 19-49

The Gospel of Luke is anonymous but, tradition ascribes the authorship to Luke, the physician and one of the companions of Paul (Philemon 2:4; Col. 4:14; 2 Tim. 4:11). The early church fathers such as Eusebius, Papias and Origen gave the Gospel an early recognition to have been written by an apostle, or follower of an apostle in the public

ministry of Jesus as seen in the Galilee 'Release' (4:1-8:56), 'Exodus' Journey (9:51-19:44), and the Final Journey (23:54-24:51). The main theme in the Gospel of Luke is salvation through Jesus who came to fulfill his divine role of (4:18-19) social, economic and political liberty. The author emphasizes the interconnections between the Old and the New Testaments through the words and deeds of Jesus Christ as the harbinger of salvation to Israel and the world at large, and the passage leads to a new understanding of the Old Testament, the parts form the whole, but the whole defines the parts of the written text. In Luke 23: 55-56, a group of women (cf. Luke 24:10) who beheld the tomb of Jesus returned, and prepared the spices and ointments needed to preserve and honour Jesus. This they could not do on the Sabbath. They rose up to do it immediately after the sabbath (Luke 24:1-12). However, the stone was rolled away and the tomb was empty. In their troubled time, two angels came and reminded them of Jesus' words about his death and resurrection (Lk. 24:7). The women believed, but the eleven and the rest of the disciples disbelieved. They called them 'idle talkers.' Historically the disciples in this passage extended beyond the twelve. It consisted of two Judean residents, women, and others referred to as 'our companions' (verses 22 and 24 respectively). The presence of multiple traditions concerning the empty tombs is an indication that the tomb was indeed empty.

Huffman and Ehrhardt opine that the passage was originally, not part of the Gospel of Luke and that it was a later insertion. Leifeld and Betz assume that the story is a myth while Bovon sees the story as emanating as an oral tradition that the author of the Gospel of Luke found useful to be included in his gospel. Nevertheless, considering the literary, thematic and vocabulary, Yahya avers that the story belongs to Luke and that the shorter version of the story in Mark 16 derives from the Lukan version. The identity of the two disciples is not known despite the various speculations that Cleopas might be Clopas of John 19:25, or Simon, son of Clopas, the second bishop of the church at Jerusalem, and the name only occurs in the Lukan pericope.

Luke 24:19-49 in context:

The second volume of Luke-Acts, Acts 1:3 reveals that Jesus did appear to his disciples for over forty days until the ascension, and unlike the other Gospels, occurred in Jerusalem. France opines that this scheme in Luke has a special purpose. Luke Chapter 24: 13-49 is the account of the resurrection appearances of Jesus and the commission to the disciples which are peculiar to Luke, and can be divided into three parts. The first



is the appearance on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-33). The passage tells about the two disciples who were travelling from Jerusalem to Emmaus (24:13-16), how Cleopas was narrating the suffering and death of Jesus in the hands of the Jewish authority, the women's narrative about the empty tomb, the women's encounter with the angels and how the stranger explained issues relating to the death and resurrection of the Messiah from the Scriptures. The disciples invited the strangers to their house and had table fellowship where they eventually recognized that the stranger was Jesus. Jesus disappeared and the two disciples returned to Jerusalem.

The second and third appearances are to Peter in Luke 24:34 and the other disciples in Luke 24: 35- 43). The disciples became witnesses of what had happened, how Jesus appeared to Peter, and then revealed himself to the two disciples in the breaking of bread. The disciples continued to doubt, and Jesus repeated the process as he did with the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, allowing them to physically touch him, and eat with them. There was the problem of Ancient Gnosticism that developed independently of Christianity but became a sect of Christianity.

The third section, Luke 24: 44-49 contains Jesus' commission to the disciples. Jesus emphasises the importance of the Old Testament and the need for the prophecies therein to be fulfilled. The prophecies would not be fulfilled until the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, the disciples would continue to be witnesses to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

African Christianity and Decolonisation

African Christianity has been viewed as an offshoot of the Western forms of Christianity, which presents African culture and religion negatively. Abogunrin believes that this could be a result of the fact that Africa was already stigmatised as a "dark continent" by the time the Western missionaries came. Some Western missionaries thought that Africans needed to be Westernized before becoming Christians, thereby living double lives. African Biblical scholars, therefore, advocate for African Cultural Hermeneutics, Inculturation, and Intercultural Hermeneutics. Abioje, nevertheless, insists that African religions, and by extension her cultures, are not demonic; they actually demonstrate high moral values in such a way that may not be practised in Islam and Christianity.

However, the approaches and the views mentioned above cannot be effective without doing biblical interpretation from the Socio-

Rhetorical perspective. Megbelayin holds to the literary dimensions of the text and their bearing on the socio-cultural location and the "identity of power in the discourse." Vernon Robbins identifies inner texture, intertexture, social-cultural texture, sacred texture and ideological textures as five parts of the Social-Rhetorical method. The inner- texture involves the analysis of the text's syntax, semantics and rhetoric, and the five aspects of the texture, according to Robbins are Repetitive (words and phrases), Progressive (progression of words and phrases), Narrational (the characters and their relationships in the narrative of the text), Opening-middle-closing (the delimitation of discourse for analysis) and the argumentative texture which explores the internal logics in the discourse. This is a piece of evidence that each aspect of part of the language is important in understanding the whole scene or discourse.

Internal evidence from the New Testament reveals that Jesus and his disciples made good use of the language to proclaim the Gospel. Tracing the importance of the use of Language in the Gospel proclamation, Tresham opines that it would be wrong to limit Jesus to using only Greek, Aramaic or Hebrew Language because the language he spoke at different times depended on the language understood by his audience. The disciples of Jesus made good use of the languages within the empire, not only the *lingua franca*, koine Greek to proclaim the Gospel message, depending on their audience. The use of language in understanding the Gospel cannot be overemphasised.

Narratological Analysis of the Emmaus Discourse (Luke 24:13-49) Anchored on Norman Fairclough's CDA

The stage of description

This stage in Fairclough's theory is also called the Linguistic analysis. Luke 24:13-49 can be cast in three scenes; the dialogue between the two men on the Emmaus Road (Luke 24:13-14), the dialogue between Jesus and the two men on the Emmaus Road (Luke 24:15-35), and the dialogue between Jesus, the two men on the Emmaus Road, the Eleven disciples and those with them (Luke 24:36-49). However, Luke 24:13-49 cannot be discussed without referring to Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James and Peter (Luke 24:10-12). Most of the goal of the processes performed by the actions is a location. For instance, the different disciples (including the women and Peter) go to "the tomb" to check Jesus' body; Jesus goes to Emmaus, amongst others. The frequency of the material process is followed by the relational process. This is the process of being which relates to the attributes of the



characters in the passage and the relationships that exist between them. For example, "The Lord has risen indeed..." (vs. 34a)

A great number of the sentences used in the passage are declarative sentences. This is because the passage itself is an account of what happened after the death and resurrection of Jesus while detailing what was said by each character in the passage. Jesus opens the conversation with an interrogative sentence, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?" (verse 17). This ushers us into an account of the conversations among the characters in the passage. Verses 19, 37 and 41 function as enquiries, while the interrogative sentence in verse 25a functions as rhetorical questions. In other words, they have already known, based on what the prophets have spoken that Christ would suffer and enter his glory.

One literary device that is prominent in the passage is allusion. The characters frequently alluded to past events. Jesus, particularly, alludes to what has been written in the scriptures before His coming. This is evident in verses 25, 26, 44, 46-49, amongst others. Dramatic irony is a literary device where the audience knows more about the true meaning of events than the characters in the story. This device is used from verses 15 to 30 where Cleopas and his counterpart's eyes are not "opened" to the fact that the person whom their conversation is about is their counterpart in the conversation – Jesus. The eyes of the audience are however "opened" to this fact from the beginning of the passage. Imagery is the use of descriptive language to create vivid mental pictures in the reader's mind. Jesus, as a character, appeals to his audience's senses of touch and sight to create a sensory experience of his death and resurrection in verse 39.

The stages of Interpretation and Explanation

The stages of interpretation and explanation are referred to as the intertextual analysis stage. Here Jesus used various forms of sentence structures, making references to Old Testament passages to elicit the information and imagery he is passing across to his disciples. These can be found as discussed below:

1. And it came to pass', *καί γε ωετο*, of verse 15 is translated as 'now' in some versions of the Bible as an infinitive phrase to reveal its activeness. The 'talking and discussing', *εντωομιλειωαντους και συζητειν*, literally means reasoned or dialogue together. *ομιλειω* is the word transliterated homiletics, meaning exegesis or exposition'
2. In verse 17, Jesus was assertive of the fact that the two men who

were on their way to Emmaus were sad as they were walking. The verb εστε (you are) is in the active voice. He was declarative in his statement towards them.

3. The "What thing?" of verse 19 is a noun phrase. Jesus was expressive here, like someone who laments, wanting to know more about their discussion and how forgetful and 'dull' they were.
4. The two men made wide use of the metalinguistic verbs, reporting and recounting the events after the resurrection of Jesus in verses 20-24; "he was a Prophet", and "... was going to redeem Israel". Verses 20-24 are indirect characterization. The two men narrated the story so that Jesus might decide their story. They could not decide because they seemed not to understand what had happened. The clause, 'which said that he was alive', οὐ λεγουσιν αὐτοὺς ζῆν, is an indirect discourse. The two men could have said he is alive
5. Intertextuality is demonstrated in verses 25-27 where Jesus reminded the two men of what they ought to have known from the scriptures, the Old Testament, reminding them of the message of Moses, the Prophets and the intended suffering of the Messiah as enumerated in Isaiah 53. The phrase, καὶ αὐτοὺς εἶπεν πρὸς, 'and he said to them', (verse 25a) is not just an ordinary sentence, it is emphatic because of the addition of 'and' in the. The Greek word, *ωανοητοι* (cf. Romans 1:14, Galatians 3:1, 3; 1 Timothy 6:9 and Titus 3:3) is translated variously as 'O fools', 'unintelligent', 'foolish men', 'unwise', 'inconsiderate', 'O senseless', 'O dull of apprehension', 'O thoughtless men', 'O men sluggish in mind', etc. The contemporary Christian would want to interpret and understand it as if Jesus is abusing the two men, or using the phrase in an insulting manner. However, a Yoruba of Southwestern Nigeria will not see the phrase as if Jesus is abusing the two men. Among the Yoruba, the phrase *ωανοητοι* is expressive of the pain Jesus felt for the two not to have understood or comprehended the whole events since they had the scriptures and were witnesses (verse. 48) of the events in the life of Jesus. The Yoruba word *òpònú* can be literally translated 'O fool', 'foolish', 'unwise' or 'O dull of apprehension'. It can be used to abuse someone. However, it can also be used to express exclamation, especially when one expects an individual to act wisely or understand a situation.
6. In verses 44- 47, Jesus pointed out that they were aware of the whole events from the Scriptures. Jesus claims, "This is what I told you...." (v.44a). The Law, the Prophets and the Psalms that Jesus refers to in verse 44 indicate the first five books, the historical



books, the Major and minor prophetic books and the wisdom literatures of the Old Testament. Luke presents Jesus as the center of the whole of Israel's Scriptures

In verse 45, the minds of the disciples were opened. This should be compared with ...,they were kept from recognizing him, *εκρατουντοτουμνεπιγνωσιν* of verse 16. Jesus had not discussed much with them in verse 16 where *επιγνωσιν* is a passive verb. Robertson opines that the phrase *εκρατουντοτουμνεπιγνωσιν* is ablative and Jesus purposely restrains the two from seeing him. Hence their minds have not been appealed to. However, Jesus had asked them questions and reminded them of what they had been told, by Jesus and the Scriptures. Hence their minds need to be opened at this time. This phrase, *τοτεδιηνοιξεναυτωντοννοον*, 'then opened he their understanding (45a), is an active verb. The Yoruba people would say, '*iyè e wón sí*'. The heart is the most important thing in all conversations. Jesus used both oral and written rhetoric to motivate and stimulate his audience. He also used repetition in verses 45-49 to reinforce his claims

7. In Luke 24:13-49, the two men were retelling the resurrection events and made direct references to what Jesus had taught them. Jesus, on the other hand, explained the whole situation by taking them back to the Old Testament, sampling what the scriptures said concerning the whole event. The two men understood, and were excited that Jesus "...opened the Scriptures..." to them,

Discussion and Recommendations

Most times, many African people are brainwashed to forget almost everything about their culture, language, norms, mores and values when they become Christians. Their belief, most times, is that these are demonic and Christians should dissociate themselves from everything African. In Luke 24:13-49, Jesus used elements in his language, sacred books and even his culture to proclaim his message. The material and the verbal sum up to 63%, while relational and mental processes are just 37%. The implication of this is that Jesus strongly used his local language in the discourse. The Yoruba people would say, '*orò ni omọ eléti ñ jẹ*' meaning words are better interpreted and understood using one language. Jesus would not condemn the nitty-gritty of his language while proclaiming the Gospel. Besides, unlike what some Christians would want people to believe, Jesus held the Old Testament in high esteem. He would always call for the best interpretation of the Old

Testament Scriptures. In Mathew 5:17 he warned his people against thinking that he wanted to destroy the Law and also reaffirmed his commitment to fulfil all the Law. Here, Jesus retained the good aspects of the Jewish religion. Contemporary Christians are also practising some aspects of Judaism (the Law, the Old Testament) as revealed in the doctrines and teachings. Also, Jesus used aspects of his culture wisely. He intentionally ate with them. No one would want to dine with a stranger, both in Jewish tradition and many African cultures. Eating with someone is showing an act of love to the extent that the enemies at times would want to hide under this act to do evil! Unfortunately, many Christians would not want to have anything to do with the 'sinners', yet they want to preach to them. Many aspects of the African cultures have been disregarded and thrown away because Africans, through decolonization believe that such cultural aspects are bad, or rather demonic.

In light of the above, this study recommends that the contemporary Christians:

1. Uphold the good aspects of their traditional cultures in proclaiming the Gospel. This will also aid in the transmission of good virtues to the younger generations
2. Employ the use of their local language, its idioms and structures to convey the Gospel message just like Jesus did. This will allow the elderly to understand the nature of the Gospel better.
3. Retain the aspects of their traditional religion that are not harmful, morally good and ethically sound. This becomes necessary because most African societies are pluralistic, and this is an age of media and technological advancement. Hiding anything good from the Christians or youth could be disastrous because access to the media, print or social is very easy now, and it is easier for the contemporary Christians to be caught in the webs of every wind of doctrine.

The above recommendations become imperative if the contemporary society would be void of hypocrisy and consist of Christians who are open, willing to learn and at the same time, upholding the teachings of Jesus, the Christ.

Conclusion

Language is the vehicle of communication. "Language is not a neutral medium through which we speak, but is itself the speaker. Humans are the medium through which language speaks." Just like Jesus used his language, and in fact, elements from his religion, Judaism to



proclaim the Gospel message, African Christians can use elements from their language, and probably, ATRs to preach the Gospel message.

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