

***Bosadi*, Biblical Hermeneutics and Pentecostalism in the Scholarship of Madipoane Masenya (Ngwan'a Mphahlele)**

MOOKGO S. KGATLE (UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA)

ABSTRACT

Bosadi, a theory coined by Madipoane Masenya (Ngwan'a Mphahlele), has been used in previous works as an approach to the biblical text. This current study sees bosadi as a contribution to Pentecostal hermeneutical approaches such as the hermeneutics of experience and the literalist approach. It unpacks first the main tenets of the bosadi as a biblical hermeneutical approach and then discusses the approaches to the Pentecostal reading of the Bible to identify its existing research gaps and how bosadi fills such gaps. This has some implications for a Pentecostal reading of the biblical text. The study argues that Pentecostals should read and interpret the Bible beyond fundamentalist, literalist and hermeneutics of experience approaches. Pentecostals should pay attention to the contextual, cultural and lived experiences of the people in doing biblical hermeneutics as proposed by bosadi. Data was collected by reviewing the works of Madipoane Masenya (Ngwan'a Mphahlele) on bosadi.

KEYWORDS: *Bosadi*, Biblical Hermeneutics, Pentecostalism, Madipoane Masenya (Ngwan'a Mphahlele), Pentecostal Hermeneutics

A INTRODUCTION

The reading and interpretation of biblical texts, including the Old and New Testaments, is not a simple task but one that requires proper hermeneutical tools. In the African context(s), this is an important task given the previous use of methodologies and theories that were rooted in Western epistemological paradigms. Therefore, the innovative task of developing new methodological and

* Mookgo S. Kgatle, Professor at the Department of Christian Spirituality, Church History and Missiology, University of South Africa, Pretoria. Email: kgatls@unisa.ac.za. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9556-6597>.

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theoretical frameworks relevant to the African context(s) is to be acknowledged and cherished, as it helps the next generation of biblical scholars decolonise and de-westernise biblical hermeneutics. In her scholarship, Madipoane Masenya (Ngwan'a Mphahlele) has contributed immensely to this task of decolonising and de-westernising the reading and interpretation of the biblical text, particularly the Old Testament, in the context of Northern Sotho women through her *bosadi* theorisation.¹ While Northern Sotho is sometimes used interchangeably with Bapedi, Pedi, or Sepedi, my choice here is inclusive of Balobedu, Bapedi, Batlokwa, and Bapulana. Nonetheless, we cannot limit the impact of the *bosadi* approach to only Northern Sotho women, as other women elsewhere in the continent and worldwide have used the approach. Besides the local issues addressed by *bosadi*, the approach is relevant to other contexts elsewhere on the continent and worldwide. Therefore, although coined from the local context of Northern Sotho, the global impact of *bosadi* should be acknowledged. We should also not disregard the commonality of the challenges faced by women in the global village.

The *bosadi* approach has been used by Madipoane Masenya (Ngwan'a Mphahlele) and others to address issues of health, particularly HIV/AIDS.² This became important in the last quarter of the 20th century and is still important now in the 21st century, given the continued challenges of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, which are still with us. The *bosadi* approach is also used to address the suppression and oppression of women in Africa.³ This makes this approach relevant in the context of theological liberation paradigms and as part of decolonial theories. Moreover, *bosadi* has been used to probe issues of environmental crisis, global warming, ecological justice and so forth, in what Masenya coined *ecobosadi*, the framing of *bosadi* to capture ecological issues.⁴

To a certain extent, also, *bosadi* has been used by Masenya to address the plight of women within the Pentecostal movement. This is visible in articles such as “The Sword That Heals! The Bible and African Women in African-South African Pentecostal Churches,” “The Bible and Poverty in African Pentecostal Christianity: The *Bosadi* (Womanhood) Approach,” “The Bible and Prophecy in African-South African Pentecostal Churches” and “Worshipping God the Spirit

¹ Madipoane Masenya, “Proverbs 31: 10-31 in a South African Context: A Reading for the Liberation of African (Northern Sotho) Women,” *Semeia* 78 (1997): 55.

² Madipoane Masenya, “Trapped between Two ‘Canons’: African-South African Christian Women in the HIV/AIDS Era,” in *African Women, HIV/AIDS and Faith Communities* (ed. Isabel Apawo Phiri, Bev Haddad and Madipoane Joyce Masenya; Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2003), 113–127.

³ Madipoane Masenya, “African Womanist Hermeneutics: A Suppressed Voice from South Africa Speaks,” *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 11/1 (1995): 149–155.

⁴ Madipoane Masenya, “An Ecobosadi Reading of Psalm 127.3-5,” in *The Earth Story in the Psalms and the Prophets* (The Earth Bible 4; ed. Norman C. Habel and Shirley Wurst; Plymouth: Pilgrim Press, 2001), 109–122.

'in Spirit and Truth' in Africa: One African Woman's reflections on John 4: 19–24."⁵ These publications will be reviewed to evaluate the work of Masenya in Pentecostal hermeneutics. However, Masenya's contribution to Pentecostal studies cannot be limited to these four publications. Although her contribution should be assessed through reflections on her other works, these four articles will serve as the main sources.

As part of the reflection on the contribution of Masenya towards Pentecostal studies, this current study pays particular attention to the contribution of *bosadi* to the current Pentecostal hermeneutical approaches such as the hermeneutics of experience and the literalist approach. While *bosadi* has been used to address the challenges faced by women as highlighted above, this study locates these challenges within the Pentecostal movement. This is an important point of reflection given the many challenges faced by women in the Pentecostal movement, particularly in the neo-Pentecostal sub-tradition. This article will first unpack the main tenets of the *bosadi* approach in the works of Madipoane Masenya (Ngwan'a Mphahlele) and then move to a discussion of the contribution of *bosadi* to Pentecostal hermeneutics. The last section will consider how *bosadi* could be used to address the issue of the manipulation of scriptures by some neo-Pentecostal pastors. The main aim of this study, therefore, is to evaluate the contribution of *bosadi* to Pentecostal studies. This reflection is important given the current growth of the Pentecostal movement and the development of Pentecostal studies. The next section reflects on *bosadi* as a biblical hermeneutical approach to the reading and interpretation of the biblical text in the works of Madipoane Masenya (Ngwan'a Mphahlele).

B BOSADI AS A BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICAL APPROACH

Bosadi, a Northern Sotho word for womanhood, is utilised by Masenya as an approach to reading and interpreting the Bible.⁶ Masenya explains that:

The Northern Sotho word *bosadi* (womanhood) is an abstract noun from the word *mosadi*, which means 'woman, married woman, wife'. The

⁵ There are several articles and book chapters in which Madipoane Masenya applied *bosadi* to African Pentecostal Christianity, for example, Madipoane Masenya, "The Sword That Heals! The Bible and African Women in African-South African Pentecostal Churches," *Journal of Constructive Theology* 10/1 (2004): 29–40; *eadem*, "The Bible and Poverty in African Pentecostal Christianity: The *Bosadi* (Womanhood) Approach," in *Religion and Poverty: Pan-African Perspectives* (ed. Peter J. Paris; Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 152–165; *eadem*, "The Bible and Prophecy in African-South African Pentecostal Churches," *Missionalia* 33/1 (2005): 35–45 and Madipoane Masenya, "Worshipping God the Spirit 'in Spirit and Truth' in Africa: One African Woman's Reflections on John 4: 19–24," in *Religion and Social Reconstruction in Africa* (ed. Elias Kifo Bongmba; Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), 35–43.

⁶ Madipoane Masenya, "Redefining Ourselves: A *Bosadi* (Womanhood) Approach," *OTE* 10/3 (1997): 439–448.

word *mosadi* comes from the root, *-sadi*, which has to do with womanhood; *bosadi*, for example may be translated as womanhood.⁷

This approach is at a crossroads with other women's discourses, including feminism, but its uniqueness should be highlighted. The *bosadi*, particularly its function as a biblical hermeneutical approach, helps mitigate the weaknesses of other female discourses. *Bosadi* should be acknowledged as an approach to the Bible that helps to contextualise the biblical reading. The fact that it is an approach cooked in African pots, with the Northern Sotho area as a point of departure, makes it relevant for contextualising biblical reading and interpretation. However, as pointed out in the introduction, *bosadi* started from a local context but cannot be limited to its original locality.⁸ This assertion is based on several issues: First, scholars from different contexts have engaged *bosadi* in their reading of the Bible in their contexts. Secondly, the *bosadi* approach has gained global recognition, which speaks to its local relevance and global impact. In her own words, Masenya has warned against the misconception of "*bosadi*" as "being culturally oriented, preoccupied only with 'ethnic' concerns."⁹ Therefore, it is correct to point out that while *bosadi* is relevant for addressing contextual issues, it is also not confined to a particular contextual reading of the biblical text.

Bosadi is an approach that can uplift the African culture in the reading of the biblical text without the idolisation of the same. This theory can point out the positive aspects of African culture on the one hand, but also the cultural practices that may be inconsistent with the scriptures on the other.¹⁰ In other words, *bosadi* acknowledges the African culture, but at the same time, points out the discontinuities with the biblical message. On the other hand, the approach also highlights cases in which the biblical text is being manipulated to undermine the African culture, for example, the oppression of black people in South Africa.¹¹ The acknowledgement of African cultures in *bosadi* hermeneutics should not be misinterpreted as being local and ethnic. Confining *bosadi* to an ethnic reading of the biblical text is considered by Masenya as an attempt to retain biblical reading and interpretation within Western forms of knowledge to retain their power and influence.¹² Therefore, the next generation of biblical scholars and others interested in biblical hermeneutics should reject this notion of confining

⁷ Masenya, "Redefining Ourselves," 442.

⁸ Madipoane Masenya, "An African Methodology for South African Biblical Sciences: Revisiting the Bosadi (Womanhood) Approach," *OTE* 18/3 (2005): 741–751.

⁹ Masenya, "An African Methodology," 745.

¹⁰ Madipoane Masenya (Ngwan'a Mphahlele), "Navigating a Foreign Terrain? Ruminations on Old Testament Studies from African-South Africa," in *Black Scholars Matter: Visions, Struggles, and Hopes in Africana Biblical Studies* (ed. Gay L. Byron and Hugh R. Page Jr.; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2022), 27.

¹¹ Masenya "An African Methodology," 746.

¹² *Ibid.*, 746.

bosadi to a particular ethnicity or locality. Masenya points out that the "coinage of the *bosadi* concept was done not only with national and continental concerns in mind but also with global concerns."¹³ However, this could not have been done without the foundation of Northern Sotho culture and the consideration of other African cultures on the continent.

Lastly, *bosadi* is a unique approach to the reading and interpretation of the biblical text in ways that affirm rather than undermine and discriminate against women.¹⁴ Therefore, in reading the biblical text, women from diverse contexts in Africa and elsewhere in the world can bring their lived experiences to bear on their reading and interpretation of the Bible. This, in a way, makes Bible reading through the use of *bosadi* a unique experience among women, not only from Northern Sotho but also from other cultural and ethnic groups. Through *bosadi* hermeneutics, women are able to identify the biblical passages that speak to their issues and clarify their role in society. However, *bosadi* not only acknowledges the challenges of women in society but also addresses issues of race, class and identity. Therefore, we should not make the same mistake of confining *bosadi* to only women's issues in the same way as those who want to confine the approach to a particular locality.

Further, by pointing out issues of class, *bosadi* is not only able to address the oppression of women in society but also deal with the challenges of gender inequalities and gender disparities, including those experienced by women in churches and the corporate world. Therefore, *bosadi* helps the reader to unmask, for example, areas where the Bible has been used to encourage patriarchy and the oppression of women. Masenya points out that "it is the responsibility of the interpreter to spot such elements and reject them for they will not be in line with the words of life which the Bible proclaims."¹⁵ Hence, the importance of the *bosadi* approach is that it helps the reader to see such elements and highlight them. This, in my view, is another unique contribution of *bosadi*. In summary, the distinctiveness of the *bosadi* approach, as evaluated here, includes its focus on the contextual reading, the African cultural reading and the womanist reading of the Bible. These would be applied later to Pentecostal hermeneutics, but first, I introduce the approaches that exist in the Pentecostal framework.

C PENTECOSTAL HERMENEUTICAL APPROACHES

As in any other Christian tradition, Pentecostal theology cannot be done in a vacuum but within specific theological disciplines. Indeed, as Warrington puts it, many Pentecostals around the globe do not think theologically but

¹³ Ibid., 746.

¹⁴ Ibid., 747.

¹⁵ Madipoane Masenya, *How Worthy Is the Woman of Worth? Rereading Proverbs 31: 10-31 in African South Africa* (Bible & Theology in Africa 4; New York: Peter Lang, 2004), 24.

experientially.¹⁶ Thus, it is important for Pentecostal scholars to conceptualise the spiritual experiences of Pentecostals into sound Pentecostal theological paradigms. Pentecostalism is indeed a movement of encounters rather than one of theory, but these encounters still need to be theologised. In recent times, according to Martin, Pentecostal biblical scholars have begun a journey into developing frameworks for Pentecostal reading and interpretation of the Bible. Pentecostal Bible interpretation draws on two main approaches: the fundamentalist-literalist reading and the experiential Pentecostal hermeneutic. Martin explains that, even though these approaches to reading the Bible have been developed recently, they have been presented from the inception of the Pentecostal method.¹⁷ Again, this speaks to the same idea of Pentecostalism, for even if its theology arrived much later, its practices have been there since its inception. The pneumatological experiences of the early Pentecostal movement determined how early Pentecostals approached the Bible. This means that the experience of the Holy Spirit and the initial evidence of speaking in other tongues informed the understanding of the Bible in a way that did not happen before such an experience. Pentecostals do not approach the Bible empty-handed but take their experiences, particularly, of the works of the Holy Spirit, along.

The fundamentalist-literalist reading pays attention to the exact meaning of the word in the biblical texts. Le Roy explains that the early Pentecostals adopted the literalist reading of the Bible, which, in a way, collapsed the distance between the reader of the Bible and the context.¹⁸ The fundamentalist-literalist reading of the Bible is based first on the notion of taking the Bible as the word of God and then moving towards taking everything written in the Bible in the literal sense without engagement or criticism.¹⁹ The fundamentalist-literalist reading of the Bible in Pentecostalism is informed by the notion of taking the Bible as authoritative and therefore not seeing the need to criticise it or engage it critically.²⁰ Fundamentalist-literalist reading, according to Lysisk “also places undue stress upon the inerrancy of certain details in the biblical texts, especially in what concerns historical events or supposedly scientific truth.”²¹ However, the perception of the Bible as the “word of God,” “inerrancy of scripture” and the authoritative role of scripture has the potential to result in some form of anti-intellectualism in the Pentecostal tradition. It has been argued that these

¹⁶ Keith Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology: A Theology of Encounter* (London: A&C Black, 2008).

¹⁷ Martin, ed. *Pentecostal Hermeneutics*, 3.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ David Lysik, ed. *The Bible Documents: A Parish Resource* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 2001), 158.

²⁰ Kenneth Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic for the Twenty-First Century: Spirit, Scripture, and Community* (Journal of Pentecostal Theology Supplement Series 28; London: T&T Clark, 2004), 17.

²¹ Lysik, *The Bible Documents*, 159.

conservative approaches to the biblical text have the potential to impose a non-scientific approach on the scripture.

We also need to ask bold research questions, such as, is the Bible indeed the word of God; or should we rather say some words of the Bible are inspired by God? Nonetheless, a fundamentalist-literalist reading is also an approach to the biblical text that ignores the historical-critical method of probing the historical background of the Bible. Similarly, this method also ignores the grammatical-historical method that is supposed to synthesise the text by looking at its grammar and history. Hence, some Pentecostals tend to engage in proof-texting, which refers to picking popular biblical texts and quoting them without synthesising or exegeting them. The latter is used by some neo-Pentecostals when they desire to prove a certain doctrine by quoting related biblical passages without looking at their context and historicity.

The Pentecostal hermeneutics of experience emphasises the role of the Holy Spirit in the reading and interpretation of the Bible, which results in pneumatological hermeneutics. Pentecostal reading of the text is pneumatological in the sense that the Holy Spirit is given priority in the understanding of the scripture in addition to the scientific method. Hence, one of the leading Pentecostal scholars, Amos Yong, refers to the Holy Spirit as the hermeneutical Spirit that helps readers interpret the biblical text.²² Hence, Pentecostals around the world emphasise the baptism in the Holy Spirit. In the context of the Pentecostal reading of the Bible, the Holy Spirit not only helps with pneumatic experiences, such as speaking in tongues, healing and prophecy, but also with the reading and interpretation of scriptures. This, too, has the potential to move Pentecostals towards adopting an anti-intellectual approach to the Bible in the name of hearing from the Spirit. This calls for the Pentecostal hermeneutics of experience to be merged with the biblical scientific methods of the scriptures. As much as the Holy Spirit is important to Pentecostals, other methods such as historical and grammatical interpretation, narratology and exegesis should be given credence as well.²³ This is important in the development of a Pentecostal reading of the biblical text, such that Pentecostal hermeneutics will not only be founded on fundamental teachings of Pentecostalism, such as Spirit baptism, but also on scientific methods of interpretation as well. In the next section, I look at the contribution that *bosadi* can make to Pentecostal hermeneutics.

D BOSADI IN PENTECOSTAL HERMENEUTICS

In the *bosadi* approach, the gap between the reader's context and the original biblical context is bridged as opposed to the literalist Pentecostal reading of the

²² Amos Yong, *The Hermeneutical Spirit: Theological Interpretation and Scriptural Imagination for the 21st Century* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2017), 1.

²³ Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic*, 17.

Bible. This is because *bosadi* is a contextual reading of the Bible that highlights the context of ordinary women in relation to the context of the biblical text. Masenya explains that "Such an interest in the context of the reader and that of the text, reveals that for the *mosadi* reader, the context that produced the text (cf. historical-critical approaches) and that of the readers (reception criticism and contextual approaches) are significant."²⁴ In a *bosadi* reading, the context of the powerless is brought out as opposed to the fundamentalist-literalist reading of the biblical text which tends to ignore it.²⁵ Masenya points out that reading the biblical text while ignoring its context and the harsh realities of people on the ground can result in serious dilemmas.²⁶

Masenya further argues that if an African context is othered, we may find ourselves unable to claim complete liberation in a post-democratic South Africa.²⁷ This means that the *bosadi* approach is better placed to complement the fundamentalist-literalist reading of the Bible by highlighting the context of the reader. In other words, Masenya points out that we cannot be so concerned about and oriented towards the biblical text that we completely forget the context of the biblical readers.²⁸ This is the mistake of the fundamentalist-literalist reading of the Bible, which ignores both the context of the Bible and the context of the contemporary 21st-century reader. When following the latter, we are unable to address the challenges an average woman faces in her daily life. However, Masenya cautions us that in relating our context to the Bible, we should not manipulate the Bible just as we do not want the Bible to be biased against our contexts.²⁹

Bosadi hermeneutics is also important in the sense that it can address the lived experiences of ordinary women in the reading of the Bible. Masenya points out that:

The major hermeneutical focus of the *Bosadi* biblical hermeneutics is the unique experiences of an African-South African woman, with a view to her liberation. It is first and foremost, an African woman's liberation hermeneutic. African women, facing such multiple life-denying forces as sexism in the broader South African society, inherited from the legacies of colonialism and apartheid, sexism in the African culture, post-apartheid racism, classism, HIV/AIDS, and xenophobia, are made the main hermeneutical focus.³⁰

²⁴ Masenya, "Redefining Ourselves," 446.

²⁵ Masenya, "An African Methodology" 742.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 742.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 744.

²⁸ Masenya, "Redefining Ourselves," 440.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 446.

³⁰ Masenya, "An African Methodology," 747.

These are African women who have also had an encounter with the Holy Spirit, which means there is a need, therefore, to revisit the Pentecostal hermeneutics of experience through the lenses of the Pentecostal women's lived experiences, which have been ignored in the past, for example, because of patriarchy, which also exists in this glorious movement of the Spirit. In other words, the Pentecostal hermeneutics of experience should not only concentrate on the experiences with the Holy Spirit and leave out the experiences of real women on the ground. Put differently, the hermeneutics of experience should not only be confined to the encounter with the Holy Spirit but also include the realities of women in and outside the walls of the church, that is, the hermeneutics of experience should not only be pneumatological but also take into cognisance the lived experiences of ordinary women in various communities.

A *bosadi* reading of the Bible is important in Pentecostal hermeneutics so that the move of the Spirit does not overlook the African culture. Instead of being dismissive when it comes to issues of African culture, *bosadi* is able to bring out the positive as well as the negative elements of culture in a more nuanced way. Masenya explains that, "Just as the *Bosadi* concept revives the positive elements of the African culture, it criticises the culture's oppressive elements. It presupposes that African culture was sexist even before colonialism. The latter only served to reinforce the androcentricity of the African culture."³¹ Masenya further quotes Oduyoye, who says:

It is too easy to lay blame solely at the feet of Westernization. We know that within the African religio-cultural heritage are to be found the seeds of the objectification and marginalization of women. Colonial policies simply helped the process along, and it succeeded to the extent that it was advantageous for African men.³²

It is therefore clear that African culture is upheld and criticised in the *bosadi* approach in a balanced way. Similarly, the growth of the Pentecostal movement in the global south is informed by its ability to bring a balance between cultural practices and Christian faith. Therefore, a Pentecostal reading of the biblical text should also strike a balance between culture and Christian practice. The *bosadi* is such an approach to the biblical text that appreciates African culture without idolising it. Masenya points out that "At the same time, though the *bosadi* concept is an attempt to resuscitate the African culture from the ashes, it does not idolize the culture."³³ In a way, this theory is relevant for the balance between culture and the Bible in the sense that there is no glorification of one at the expense of the other.

³¹ Masenya, "Redefining Ourselves," 448.

³² *Ibid.*, 444.

³³ Masenya, "An African Methodology," 748.

E *BOSADI AND THE MANIPULATION OF SCRIPTURES IN NEO-PENTECOSTALISM*

Some pastors in the Pentecostal movement, particularly neo-Pentecostals, do use the fundamentalist-literalist reading of the biblical text to manipulate scripture to perpetuate the abuse of women. For example, Cheryl Zondi,³⁴ who was allegedly raped by Tim Omotoso, recounted in court how Omotoso would ask her, after an encounter, to recite Ps 51 to avoid facing the wrath of God.³⁵ This is another way of reading a biblical text from a fundamentalist, literalist point of view, where the context of the text and the context of the reader are taken out of context. Omotoso seemed to claim that because David committed a sin and asked for forgiveness, he, too, could continue to abuse women and ask for forgiveness. Some are also quick to point out the submission of a woman in Eph 5:21-33 without paying attention to the demand for husbands to love their wives in the same text. This also points to a fundamentalist-literalist reading of the biblical text without reflecting deeply on the context of the reader. For example, in a marriage in which a woman is abused, we cannot continue to preach obedience by using Eph 5:21-33. Doing so would be tantamount to the manipulation of the biblical texts for the perpetration of women's abuse.

Some pastors also claim that they are untouchable because Ps 105:15 states, "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm."³⁶ This scripture is sometimes read in a fundamentalist, literalist way to protect the wrongdoing of some neo-Pentecostal pastors because they are anointed. Who is anointed? In the Pentecost narrative in Lukan-Acts, all who were gathered in the upper room received the Holy Spirit, which implies that they received the anointing. Therefore, anyone who has been filled by the Holy Spirit is equally anointed, including women, men and children. Anointing is not reserved for male pastors to the exclusion of ordinary men and women in Pentecostal churches. However, such scriptures are taken out of the context of both the biblical text and the reader by some neo-Pentecostal pastors to push a patriarchal agenda that perpetuates the abuse of women.

³⁴ Cheryl Zondi is a young woman who testified in court of how she was allegedly abused by a male pastor Timothy Omotoso while serving in the church, Jesus Dominion International.

³⁵ Fundiswa Kobo, "Spirituality Trapped in Androcentric Celebrity Cults in South Africa Post-1994." *HTS Theologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 75/3 (2019): 1–7; Mookgo Solomon Kgatle, "God-Talk Rhetoric and the Abuse of Women in Neo-Pentecostalism: Developing the Pentecostal Theology of Hearing from God," *Pharos Journal of Theology* 105/2 (2024): 1–9.

³⁶ Phillip Musoni, "'Touch not Mine Anointed!...': An Enchanted Worldview within the Millennium African Pentecostal Churches (MAPCs)," *Alternation Special Edition* 38a (2021): 483–502.

Bosadi is important in that it addresses the manipulation of scripture, particularly, to justify the abuse of women. Masenya points out that it is the responsibility of the Bible scholars in Africa to guard against the use and abuse of the Christian Bible to perpetuate the abuse of women.³⁷ We cannot allow a situation in which a few biblical texts are selected by some neo-Pentecostal pastors to perpetuate abuse. In the same way that biblical scholars were so critical of the use of the Bible to perpetuate, for example, apartheid, in post-democratic South Africa, we should be cautious of those who use the Bible to perpetuate Gender-Based Violence or any form of violence. Masenya, in her use of *bosadi*, also proposes the reading of the Bible that is anti-patriarchy.³⁸ Therefore, it can be reiterated that for Masenya, just as we Africans do not want to be manipulated by the biblical text, we should also do our best not to manipulate the Bible to push our agendas.³⁹ Therefore, it can be summed up that the *bosadi* approach is relevant in guarding against the manipulation of the biblical texts by some neo-Pentecostal pastors in the African context and elsewhere in the world.

F IMPLICATIONS OF *BOSADI* FOR THE PENTECOSTAL READING OF THE BIBLE

The findings in the preceding sections have some implications for the Pentecostal reading of the Bible. We can no longer continue to approach the reading of the Bible through a fundamentalist, literalist approach and a Pentecostal hermeneutics of experience alone. The Bible should not be read without paying attention to its context and the context of the real reader in the 21st century. We should not only be interested in what the text says but also in what the reader thinks about the text. Another implication is that culture is important to the reading of the biblical text, but we should also be able to identify the negative aspects of culture besides the positive ones. Thus, we cannot uphold African culture in the reading of the biblical text when it perpetuates patriarchy, classism and or even racism. The last important implication is that the Bible should not be read by paying attention only to the experiences of the Holy Spirit, as is the case with the hermeneutics of experience and ignoring the lived experiences of the women in different communities. These lived experiences should form part of an understanding of what the Bible means for the real reader in the 21st century. *Bosadi* is a relevant framework for bringing out such lived experiences, not only for the Sotho women but also for women in other African contexts.

G CONCLUSION

This article has evaluated the *bosadi* approach of Madipoane Masenya (Ngwan’a Mphahlele). The article reviewed the literature on the contribution of *bosadi* to

³⁷ Madipoane Masenya, “‘For Better or for Worse?’ The (Christian) Bible and Africana Women,” *OTE* 22/1 (2009): 126–150.

³⁸ Masenya, “An African Methodology,” 748.

³⁹ Masenya, “Redefining Ourselves,” 448.

biblical hermeneutical discourses. The study found a gap in the evaluation of the *bosadi* approach and its contribution to Pentecostal hermeneutical approaches such as the hermeneutics of experience and the literalist approach. There is also a gap in the evaluation of the *bosadi* approach and its potential to address the challenges faced by women, specifically, in the Pentecostal movement. These challenges include Gender-Based Violence, Gender Inequality and women's abuse within the movement. This study attempted to fill this gap by engaging Madipoane Masenya (Ngwan'a Mphahlele)'s works on *bosadi*. The findings are: *bosadi* hermeneutics is relevant for the discourse on the hermeneutical methods in Pentecostal studies. *Bosadi* is also relevant for dealing with the manipulation of scriptures by some neo-Pentecostal pastors. It is recommended that Pentecostal hermeneutics be done not only through the hermeneutics of experience and literalist approaches but also with the recognition of the *bosadi* approach. Therefore, future studies in Pentecostal hermeneutics, particularly of women's issues, should consider engaging this approach.

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