



# A Bakhtinian re-reading of the Resurrection of Jesus discourses

Esther Mavengano  
English and Media Studies Department  
Great Zimbabwe University  
Simon Muzenda School of Arts, Culture and Heritage Studies  
[esthermavengano@gmail.com](mailto:esthermavengano@gmail.com) & [emavengano@gzu.ac.zw](mailto:emavengano@gzu.ac.zw)

Dr Tobias Marevesa  
Philosophy and Religious Studies Department  
Great Zimbabwe University  
Simon Muzenda School of Arts, Culture and Heritage Studies  
[marevesat@gmail.com](mailto:marevesat@gmail.com) & [tmarevesa@gzu.ac.zw](mailto:tmarevesa@gzu.ac.zw)

Dr Zorodzai Dube\*  
Faculty of Theology and Religion, University of Pretoria, Office 2-11, Crn Roper and  
Lynwood Road, Hatfield, Pretoria. [zoro.dube@up.ac.za](mailto:zoro.dube@up.ac.za)  
Orcid ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1859-2043>

Corresponding author\*

## Abstract

The process of reading and meaning-making is complex, ever-evolving and multi-faceted. This dynamism essentially displaces empiricism and its positivistic outlook. The Bakhtinian paradigm adopted in this article underscores the importance of new hermeneutic traditions that embrace the polysemantic nature of resurrection of Jesus narratives. In other words, Bakhtinian perspective problematises the idea of a single reality or monolithic reading, but rather embraces multiperspectivity and diversity in interpretive process. Furthermore, readers are central in reading and meaning interpretation of the resurrection of Jesus discourses pointing out the hermeneutical problem therefore the claim of universalism in meaning production is troubled in Bakhtinian theoretical framework. The reception and comprehension of meaning depend on readers. Most importantly, the claim of stable signification disregards subjectivity and variability that come with diverse readers and different contextual circumstances. Thus, the major thrust of this article is to explore and reflect on different point of views and meanings embedded in the resurrection of Jesus discourses in order to arrive at some understanding of the impossibility of constructing a single truth or reality.

**Keywords:** Bakhtinian paradigm, polyphony, dialogism, heterroglossia, resurrection discourses

## Introduction

The historicity of the resurrection of Jesus discourses in Christianity continues to be contentious even in the contemporary context. Most of the arguments and counter arguments claim centre stage on the possibility of establishing the Jesus of 'history' who died, buried and rose from the dead and the Jesus of 'faith.' Much of the New Testament scholarship has identified six prominent discourses which have established some perspectives to either rebut or validate the resurrection of Jesus. The article reviews the swoon, invention, imposition, wrong tomb, empty tomb and hallucination theorisations or perspectives in order to show semantic ambiguities and contestations in areas of convergence and divergence as scholars



grapple with the polemic resurrection of Jesus narratives. In this article, we are attentive to the dialogic, heteroglossic and polyphonic constructions of the resurrection of Jesus narratives with the intention to draw scholarly attention to the semantic multiperspectival nature of resurrection discourses. Due to the complicated and conflictual nature of the resurrection of Jesus discourse, throughout this article we examine it as locus of enunciating multivocality and multiperspectivity that have been so far been regarded as a hermeutical problem. It is thus essential that modern-day hermeneutics considers that human understanding of reality is mediated in socio-cultural contexts (Mavengano, 2020). Gadamer (1993) calls this historicity of language [and utterances] in sense-making. Much akin to post-structuralism, the findings from this article show that there are numerous ways of understanding New Testament discourses. There is always a plurality of meanings because there are no fixed meanings in any discourse. For Bakhtin (1984) reality, truth or meaning is not a single absolute but rather emerges from dialogic, heteroglossic and polyphonic constructions of discourse. The Bakhtinian paradigm subscribes to hermeneutic traditions that regard reading/ reception and interpretation of discourse as subject to contradictions and contestations over meanings. This article thus privileges Bakhtin's claim that social reality/truth which is projected through languaging in discourse (including the resurrection narratives), is heterogeneous and always contestable.

### **Bakhtinian Paradigm**

This section discusses the Bakhtinian theorisation of language and discourse adopted in this article. Qualitative research is deemed appropriate for answering the research questions asked in this study because it allows interaction of various disciplines in the analysis. Jupp (2006) argues that qualitative research is often based on interpretivism, while Goldkuhl (2012) explains that understanding of the subjective meanings is essential in an interpretive paradigm. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000:3) "discourse research is mainly qualitative because it is inherently interpretive since it seeks to make sense of phenomena in terms of meanings people bring to them." Silverman (2000) additionally observes that through qualitative research we can explore a wide array of dimensions of the social world. This makes it relevant to the present study since it takes a multidisciplinary approach in studying and interpreting Jesus' resurrection narratives (New Testament) from a literary/ linguistics theoretical framework, in an attempt to unravel potential multiple avenues of the meaning-making processes.

Throughout this research, the resurrection of Jesus narratives are viewed as complex sites of human discourses which are fluid, contested and never fully apprehended in interpretation. This allows readers to glean numerous standpoints that are captured in the resurrection of Jesus narratives. We find it most insightful and pertinent to the descriptions of the complex nexus of language and discourse. Another insightful observation is made by Holquist (1987) who states that Bakhtin sees language as "politics of representation" between the self and the other. Bakhtin (1981/1984) rejects rigid systems of thought (monolithic readings) but promotes pluralistic vision (dialogic and polyphonic readings) of reality which is embedded in the language practices of literary or New Testament discourse.

Clearly, Bakhtin is against any form of absolutism in reading of the novelistic discourse. Since the study advances the idea of polyphony or "unmerged" worldviews in narrative discourse, the discussion reflects the existence of many positions and angles of truths (Bakhtin, 1981). For Bakhtin, construction and conceptualization of truths is an on-going (unfinalised) process because the locus of meaning is ever shifting thereby generating a perpetual open-endedness that is maintained in the tension/s of Jesus' resurrection narrative/s. In a different but related context (Mavengano, 2020) poses that readers are dis/located within a range of socio-cultural and historical conditions hence there is need for a more nuanced approach to reading of the resurrection of Jesus narratives.



## **The hermeneutical problem in the resurrection of Jesus discourses**

Bakhtin's philosophical thoughts are insightful in drawing scholarly attention to the problematics of meaning and interpretation of any form of discourse including biblical and literary. According to Habermas (2001), the resurrection of Jesus is the Christian religion's belief that Jesus Christ returned to bodily life on the Sunday following the Friday on which he was executed by crucifixion (<http://www.garyhabermas.com/articles/cry-explainingaway/cry-explainingaway.htm> 4/27/2012). Habermas' definition could have some problems because, was Jesus' resurrection in bodily or in spiritual form? Resurrection is the pillar on which the Christian church stands, without resurrection belief there would be no Christianity and the Holy Eucharist would be meaningless (Nicolaides, 2009). This is in agreement with Hays (2005:80) who argues that, it is a central tenet which provides the much acclaimed theology of the Nicene Creed of 345 A.D. in order to sustain the growth of the Christian faith and its liturgy: "on the third day he rose in accordance with the with the Scriptures." Habermas (2001:3) Christians believed that Jesus died and resurrected and that Christians will also resurrect.

However, the central question which the New Testament scholars continue to grapple even today is: Did Jesus actually resurrect in time and place? Here, we are dealing with the question of historicity. Do we have empirical evidence to prove the historical Jesus? Some sceptical scholars have seriously questioned the historicity of the resurrection narratives for centuries. For example, the nineteenth and early-twentieth century biblical scholarship dismissed the resurrection narratives. A number of contemporary scholars, like Wright, 1994; 1997 and Hays (2005), have expressed scepticism about the historicity and truthfulness of the resurrection accounts. This is because the Gospels which contain such resurrection accounts are not biographical but rather heavily theological in nature. It is therefore difficult to utilise theology to prove the historical Jesus since theology deals with the transcendence. It is against this background that 19th liberal scholars have theorised in very diverse and sometimes in contradicting ways to explain the resurrection of Jesus thereby projecting multi-perspectivity in the reception and conceptualisation of the resurrection of Jesus narratives. Each narrative inscribes a subjective but valid worldview that contributes to the reading and understanding of the resurrection of Jesus discourse. In the following segments, some of those pertinent perspectives are reviewed.

### **The Swoon perspective**

This perspective was popularised by progressive liberal scholars in an effort to refute Jesus' resurrection as the swoon. The essence of this claim is that Jesus did not die on the cross but was unconscious and because of the coolness of the grave, he resuscitated and this was misunderstood as resurrection. This perspective was mainly advanced by Fredrick Schleiermacher (1768-1834), the German theologian who argues that Jesus' resurrection was simply a return to consciousness. According to the Catholic Encyclopaedia, if Jesus was anointed earlier, probably the sweet smelling spices and the coolness of the grave revived him, and when he gained consciousness he decided probably to run away to an unknown destination. However, this theory does not agree with the information that is recorded in the Synoptic Gospels. The scourging and the crown of thorns, carrying of the cross, the crucifixion, the three hours on the cross and the piercing of Jesus' side where blood and water gashed out of his body are regarded as evidence that he died by those who believe in resurrection discourse. The semantic conflict generated by available evidence is in line with Bakhtin's claim that truth is a nuanced phenomenon that arises in unmerged polyvocality in discourse and language.

### **The Invention perspective**

The invention perspective suggests that the resurrection of Jesus was an invention by the disciples of Jesus who wanted to carry on the mission which was started by Jesus. So it is claimed that they invented the story of the resurrection with the intention to convince people



that Jesus was alive. Suppose the disciples invented the story that Jesus resurrected really the truth could have reached the public that it was an invention. The invention theory was meant to rebut that Jesus did not resurrect by the Jewish and Roman authorities. Therefore, through the invention theory, readers get the voice and worldview of the authorities which however contested by other theories in dialogic interaction.

### **Empty Tomb perspective**

Habermas (2004:180) proposed yet another worldview which argues that, either the guards of Jesus' tomb and some other authorities moved the body of Jesus from its original tomb to a different one altogether. So on Sunday morning the disciples went to the tomb intending to anoint him with spices and when they did not find him they thought Jesus had resurrected. It can be questioned that, why would the guards or authorities move the body of Jesus to an unknown grave. If they did, those guards who were guarding the tomb of Jesus would have told the disciples on the Sunday morning where they had put Jesus' body. Further, this could have been known by the public that Jesus' body was moved and so he did not resurrect. This theory could probably mean a diversion discourse by the people who were against Jesus (Nicolaidis, 2014), and his teaching meant to discredit the story about Jesus' resurrection.

### **The Imposition perspective**

The imposition point of view was advanced by Hermann Reimarus (1994) who charged that Jesus' disciples stole his dead body from the grave and then proclaimed to people that their Lord had risen. Reimarus pointed out that, the disciples probably stole the body because they wanted to continue preaching the nomadic life (Habermas, 2005:4). He also explains that it could be that the disciples wanted to give him a decent burial. This theory was anticipated by the Jews who "gave a great sum of money to the soldiers, saying: Say you, his disciples came by night, and stole him away when we were asleep" (Matthew, 28:12). If the disciples stole the dead body of Jesus, in one way or the other, the story could have been known by the public that the disciples stole the body. The fact that we don't have evidence that the body of Jesus was reburied somewhere could imply that he rose from the dead. However, we subscribe to Bakhtin's (1981/1984) notion of open-endedness in sense making therefore every interpretation or understanding invites further re-reading and re-interpretation.

### **Wrong Tomb perspective**

Grant (1992:176) also suggests that the major witnesses of Jesus' resurrection were women. This theory posits that, there is a probability that these women went to a wrong tomb altogether and when they did not find Jesus; they thought that Jesus had resurrected. The Synoptic Gospels are in complete agreement that women were the earliest witnesses to the empty tomb, a simply remarkable report since female testimony was generally rejected in a law court for declaration on crucial topics in Palestine during the first century. Thus, spread of Jesus' resurrection story by the women as key witnesses most likely would serve only to have the case dismissed without hearing. Also, with time it will have been known that they went to the wrong tomb. It can be argued that those who knew where Jesus' body was would tell the women that they went to the wrong tomb. While this analysis is sound, the theory is just a perspective or single consciousness among other therefore cannot be regarded as comprehensive truth.

### **Hallucination perspective**

According to Habermas (2001:56), the resurrection of Jesus was a result of the disciples' hallucinations. He went on arguing that it was David Strauss (1835-1836) who popularized the hallucination theory. Goulder (1994) also argues that the hallucination theory can be applied to all of the chief participants in the earliest church, the disciples, Paul, witnesses and James, the brother of Jesus. It is clear that from the way Paul used terms like *ophathe* in Greek in 1 Corinthians 15:3 which means 'he appeared.' In this context Paul was speaking of actual sight, of his own active sensual perception ... "as well as that of other apostles. So Paul 'must have



expected the Corinthians to understand the term historically. Habermas (2001) concludes that hallucinatory visions are required, along with 'auditory features' that produced a 'stimulus enthusiasm' 'religious intoxication' and 'ecstasy.' So this experience spread to other disciples in what Hays (2005:76) calls "an incomparable chain reaction." This means that Paul, other apostles, 500 persons and James experienced collective appearances resulting in "mass ecstasy."

Kent (1999:6) had a different approach to Hays. He noted that, the disciples and women experienced what he calls 'normal, grief-related hallucinations.' on the other hand, it assumed that Paul experienced inward conflict over participation in the death of Stephen (Acts 7:54) and his persecution of Christians. Consequently, he underwent a 'conversion disorder.' Kent (1999) is different from Hays (2005) in that he avoided collective hallucinations. This approach is from a psychological point of view. Similar to Kent's insights, Goulder (1994:48) also applies a related explanation to Peter and Paul who experienced what he calls visions hallucinations which are associated with great stress, guilt and self-doubt. Peter had denied his Lord three times (Luke 22:62) and Paul had persecuted Christians. This was a new orientation to the life through a transformation leading to 'subsequent heroism and martyrdom.'

Although it appears that hallucination theses reveal some differences, there are similarities. It can be asked: Is it really possible for a group of people to witness the same hallucination? If it is true, it therefore means there were not hallucinations but the appearances of Jesus. In agreement Habermas (2005:3) pointed out that most psychologists dispute the reality of such occurrences. It is probable that hallucinations are private and individual events, then how could groups share the same subjective visual perception? It is more likely that the phenomena in question are either illusions or individuals hallucinations. An analysis of what we know about Paul and James is that, there is no evidence to suppose such a disorder. There is no indication that there was the slightest inner conflict, doubt, or guilt concerning their previous rejection of Jesus' teachings. It can be further argued that, to claim that these apostles were victims of conversion disorder simply does not fit the facts. It is clearly an over-reliance on a hypothesis which is not supported by data from the Bible. Yet, the hallucination theory remains valid and respected in Bakhtinian thought since it is a worldview of Other or another's utterance.

The idea of hallucinations or seeing depends on who initiated the seeing of Jesus. If the disciples made an initiative to see Jesus (that we saw Jesus) then, it would be hallucinations. But the evidence that we have is that, it is Jesus who appeared (*ophathe*) to the disciples and Peter. That was to show that *egegetai* a Greek term which means 'he was raised' from the dead. The fact that he was raised implies that there was God's involvement in his resurrection. That is to say, he was raised by God. It can be argued that his appearances to his disciples were a '*christotheophany*.' Another word which Habermas suggested is *exanastasis* a Greek word which indicates a resurrection of the body. So these Greek words should be used to understand the resurrection of Jesus. If Jesus was raised it means he did not raise himself but someone did that and this is God. It therefore means resurrection was the re-creation of Jesus.

According to Price, Lowder and Jay (2005), the Synoptic Gospels present us with the picture of the resurrected Jesus limping from the tomb in great agony which was completely physical. He was having fresh wounds. In other words, Jesus' resurrection was in bodily form. If we consider 1Corinthians 15, Paul is talking of a spiritual resurrection. He did not differentiate how Jesus appeared to the disciples and how he appeared to him. That means that Jesus appeared to Paul spiritually and so spiritually to others. The information that we find in the Gospels is misleading in trying to explain the resurrection of Jesus as physical resurrection. It can be asked: How did the concept of the empty tomb come about?

Scholars such as Habermas (2005) argue that the concept came when the Christians tried to explain resurrection and wanted to show that Jesus' body was not corrupted. They also wanted the resurrection of Jesus to make a logical sense in that Jesus could not be dead and alive at the same time. Thus, to make some logical sense, the disciples had to say Jesus



resurrected. Nevertheless, that was not the case since resurrection can only be understood spiritually. Jesus was qualitatively different when he resurrected. Therefore, the resurrection of Jesus should be understood theologically and to be related to his suffering and death.

The above theories show diversity and semantic dissonance in the interpretation of the resurrection of Jesus narratives. From a Bakhtinian thought, all the theories about Jesus' resurrection are valid and unmerged leading to the realisation of multiple consciousnesses. Such understanding of discourse and language subverts monologism and absolutism which argue for a single meaning and truth. A Bakhtinian reading of Jesus' resurrection discourse, embraces democratic thought whereby every view is valid and respected. The New Testament discourse as captured in Jesus' resurrection narratives reflect dialogic, heteroglossic and polyphonic constructions.

### **The polyphonic interpretations of Jesus' resurrection discourses**

Our reading of Jesus' resurrection narratives in this section is influenced by Bakhtin's polyphonic notion. We interrogate the synoptic gospels' preoccupation with the construction and representation of multiple voices. Therefore, our reading here attends to various propositions and we observe that reading is temporal and always incomplete because socially constructed realities are always in a flux. In other words, we recognise the instability of the interpretations in this article and admit that there are other possible readings in other contexts or by other readers. We thus, cannot claim any finality since we have adopted Bakhtinian theorisation of discourse which reject assigning a fixed truth. This conception of Jesus' resurrection narratives has its share of problems, especially when considering the proliferation of other subversive meanings. The concept of polyphony is relevant in examining authorial presence and point of view.

The elusiveness of authorial intent is emphasised in Bakhtin's theorisation of discourse and our interpretations are open to the semantic ambiguities that arise from the problematic concept of narrative voice. The voice in Bakhtin's conceptualisation of discourse is the speaking consciousness that has a will and overtones behind it. The polyphonic and dialogic orientations disrupt authoritarian and officially sanctioned discourses. This destabilises the previous monologically constructed discourses that close down the voices of others. Bakhtin adds that characters/ texts as sources of voices must always be attentive to the other in interaction. His other central argument is that plurality of worldviews is an essential feature of the discourse because it does not privilege the writer's views. Bakhtin thus, argues that the text represents a polyphonic contestation of discourses whereby any form of signification is tentative.

What implications does this have on our reading of the resurrection of Jesus narratives? Bakhtin's reflections have implications for the understanding of resurrection narratives in this article. For instance, he underscores the plurality of independent voices and unfinalisability of utterances. This contests the absoluteness of truth of any word (*slovo*). The issue raised in his polyphonic theory is that reading should be undertaken in pursuit of different perspectives and our discussion of the resurrection of Jesus discourse in this article privileges the different readings of the same texts.

From a source critical perspective, the oldest manuscript of Mark pertaining to the resurrection of Jesus ended with Mark 16:8. Matthew and Luke differed from this point probably because they used different sources which were peculiar to each other since Mark was the primary source for Matthew and Luke. All the synoptic gospels agree that women were the first witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus (Matthew 28:1, Mark 16:1 and Luke 24:1). According to Luke, there were two men present (angels) in the tomb when the two women arrived. The two men/ angels announced to the women that Jesus had resurrected but Mark claimed that it was only young man in white implying an angel. In Matthew and Mark the angel(s) ordered women to tell the disciples to go and meet him in Galilee. Matthew is different from both Luke and Mark because he reported that there was an earthquake which forced the stone to roll from



the mouth of the tomb. After the instruction that the women got from the angels Matthew and Luke said the women hurriedly left the tomb in great fear and yet in joy. Yet, in Luke after receiving instructions from the angels, they bow their heads in worship of their Lord. From a reduction perspective, Luke wanted to upgrade the position of women who were regarded as minor in the Jewish culture. In previous analyses the differences in gospel narratives are viewed as the synoptic problem whereas in Bakhtinian framework this is a welcome manifestation of polyphony and semantic dissonance of the multi-voiced discourse.

Both Matthew and Luke agree that the angel (s) confirmed to the women Jesus' resurrection as he had previously announced to the disciples during his life time but Mark is silent about this. This is in line with Bakhtin (1986) who state that multivocal discourse is achieved through contradictory and unmerged consciousnesses as projected in resurrection of Jesus narratives of the synoptic gospels. Matthew only reported that Jesus appeared to the women on their way to tell the disciples. In Matthew it is Jesus who instructed women and disciple to meet him in Galilee. Luke only recorded that after hearing from the women that Jesus had resurrected the disciples did not believe. Peter went to tomb but could not find Jesus. Luke's resurrection narrative presents a shift from the other two gospels, Matthew and Mark. According to Bakhtin (1981/1986) language in discourse including biblical is populated with voices leading to projection of numerous views and polysemantic nature of such texts. It is in Matthew only where the guards who were guarding Jesus' tomb were terrified by the appearance of the angel. According to Matthew's gospel the guards were bribed by the soldiers so that they claim that Jesus' body was stolen by his disciples. This narratives was significant to the Jews and Roman authorities who wanted to contest and discredit Jesus' resurrection narrative. While Matthew and Luke captured post-resurrection appearances Mark did not record that because "no part of the gospel story that shows less fixity than the accounts of the appearance of the risen Jesus" (Hayes, 1946:269).

### **Dialogism and Semantic dissonance in Jesus' resurrection narrative**

From a Bakhtinian point of view, a dialogic reading of the resurrection of Jesus narratives needs to realise the contradictory voices embedded and projected in the construction of the texts. Expanding this idea, Wheelock (2008) explains that a dialogic reading refuses to assuage a text's lacunae, tensions or inconsistencies. This reading embraces a dialogic sense of truth which has plurality of unmerged voices and multiple "consciousnesses" and the disparate voices are critical to dialogic interaction. Bakhtin's central idea in *Discourse in the Novel* is that language and discourse cannot ever have been monological. Although Bakhtin was referring to the novelistic discourse, his ideas are essential and applicable to the reading of the New Testament discourse. He affirms that the multiplicity of conflicting worldviews is realised in the realm of language. Dialogism recognises the multiplicity of voices and subtleties of the relations between individuals and society (Holquist, 2001). Bakhtin (1986) contends therefore that the meaning of an utterance is always half someone else's. This insight undermines the idea of a point of view by blurring and muddling the individual views and creates indistinctness and ambiguity as to whose thoughts are ultimately communicated.

The claim that all utterances are part of a matrix of utterances creates a hermeneutical complexity that inaugurates resurrection of Jesus narratives as remarkably complex and sophisticated inscriptions. In Matthew, Mark and Luke there is no single perspective pertaining to the interpretation the resurrection of Jesus narratives. For instance, Matthew writes as a Jew and addresses the concerns of the Jewish people. A number of scholars such as Bacon (1930), Fitzmyer (1973) Brown (1997) and Kee (1983) talk about the Jewishness of the Book of Matthew in comparison to Mark and Luke. Probably this is because the Jewish people were adherents of the Mosaic Law which was constantly violated by Jesus. This is in line with Bakhtin's dialogic conception of discourse where dialogism refers to the possibility of more than one perspective embedded within a single text or discourse but the perspectives remain unmerged. For instance, the authorial voice does not dominate in a dialogic work but instead forces readers to contend with the challenging and irresolvable interaction of diverse



discourses. This implies that all the viewpoints contribute to a full comprehension of the resurrection of Jesus narratives. The other gospels recorded the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus yet, there is "...no part of the gospel story that shows less fixity than the accounts of the appearance of the risen Jesus" (Hayes, 1946:369).

### **Heteroglossia/Multilinguageness in the three narratives of the resurrection of Jesus**

Heteroglossia refers to conflict between discourses or "different speechedness" in the same language. Bakhtin (1984) argues that language is always *languages* since there are many ways of using the same language. He explains in *Discourse in the novel* that all languages in a heteroglot narratives are specific points of view about the world; they are forms of conceptualizing the world, specific worldviews and each is characterised by its own objects, meanings and values. These ideas are relevant to the reading and interpretation of Jesus' resurrection narratives. Discourse construction involves combining various elements that are heteroglottal, "multi-voiced, multi-styled and often multi-linguaged." Such speech constitutes a special type of double-voiced discourse. Heteroglossia, once incorporated into the discourse, is another's speech, in another's language, serving to express authorial intentions but in a refracted way. The reading of Jesus' resurrection narratives as heteroglot constructs means considering the various languages and voices of the texts in order to describe the effects of "doubleness" and (or) multiplicity. In Jesus' resurrection narratives Greek and English are utilised to construct and language heteroglossia. For instance Greek lexical items *ophathe*, he appeared. *egegetai*, 'he was raised,' *christotheophany*, 'that is to say, he was raised by God and *exanastasis* which means a resurrection of the body.

### **Conclusion**

In light of the above, as a way of concluding, we agree with the observation that Bakhtin's dialogic, heteroglossic and polyphonic discourses resist monolithic perspectives which privilege 'a single story' telling. This observation is apt and relevant because Jesus' resurrection discourse a just like poetics is a platform for enacting multiple voices that articulate diverse and sometimes contradicting worldviews. The study emphasises the need for a reconceptualisation of sense-making in line with Bakhtin's theorisation of discourse that refutes empiricist and objectivist models of languaging and interpreting the truth/s. Dialogism and polyphony challenge "regimes of truth." Thus, Bakhtin's theorisations of discourse and language show a shift from perceptions about reading and meaning making. In addition the analyses in this study demonstrate that writers, the synoptic texts as well as readers have no monopoly to meaning/s. Language in discourse is dialogic by nature and using language is participating in making sense of the world. The analyses and discussions of the resurrection of Jesus narratives in this article revealed that biblical discourse is a site that captures nuanced meanings.

### **References**

- Bacon, B.W. (1930). *Studies in Matthew*, Holt, New York.
- Bakhtin, M. (1981). *Discourse in the novel* (C.Emerson and M.Holquist. Trans.) In M. Holquist (Ed), *The Dialogical Imagination: Four Essays by M.M. Bakhtin*, (pp. 259-422) Texas University Press, Austin.
- Bakhtin, M.M. (1981). *The Dialogic Imagination*, University of Texas Press, Austin.
- Bakhtin, M. M. (1984). *Problems of Dostoevsky's poetics*, (C. Emerson, Trans.), Manchester University Press, Manchester.
- Bakhtin, M. M. (1984a). *Rabelais and his world*, (Trans.) Indiana University Press, Bloomington.



- Bakhtin, M. M. (1986). *Speech and genres and other late essays*, (V. McGee, Trans), University of Texas, Austin.
- Brown, R. E. (1997). *Introduction to the New Testament*, Doubleday Dell, New York.
- Fitzmyer, J. (1979). *A wondering Aramaean*, Scholars Press, Missoula, Mont.
- Goulder, M. (1994). *Resurrection: Essays in Honour of Leslie Houlden*, SPCK, London.
- Grant, M. (1997). *Jesus: A Historian's Review of the Gospels*, Collier, New York.
- Habermas, G. (2000). *Resurrection Research From 1975 to the present: What are Critical Scholars Saying?* Available online at <http://www.gayhabermas.com/article/j-study>, accessed April 2020.
- Habermas, G. (2000). *Explaining away Jesus' Resurrection: the recent revival of hallucination Theories*, Available online at <http://www.gayhabermas.com.articlr/crj>, accessed 27 April 2020.
- Hayes, J. H. (1946) *Introduction to the Bible*, Westminster John Knox Press, Philadelphia.
- Hays, R.B. (2005). *The Conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel's Scripture*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Philadelphia.
- Kee, H. C. (1983). *Understanding the New Testament*, Prentice Hall, New York.
- Kent, J. (1999). *The Psychological Origins of the Resurrection Myth*, Open Gate, London.
- Price, R., Lowder, M. & Jay, J. (2005). *The Empty Tomb: Jesus beyond the Grave*, Prometheus Books, Amherst.
- Mavengano, E. (2020). *A stylistic Analysis of selected Zimbabwean and South African fictional narratives (2000-2015)* Unpublished PhD Thesis submitted to the North West University, Mafikeng.
- Nicolaidis, A. (2014). Jürgen Habermas on the value of religion, *Philosophia* (Philippines), 15 (2), 236-251.
- Nicolaidis, A. (2009). The Significance of the Eucharist in Orthodoxy, *Australian E-Journal of Theology*, 13(1).
- Reimarus, H. S. (1994). "Resurrection Narratives" in R. J. Coggins and J. L. Houlden (eds.) *A dictionary of biblical interpretations*, SCM Press, London.