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**The Ideological and Cultural Function of Biblical Imagery
in the Work by South African Artist Azaria Mbatha**

In this paper, drawn in part from ongoing research on sacred art in South Africa, and KwaZulu-Natal in particular, I consider how local artists used Biblical themes in their work, in particular those derived from the Beatitudes,¹ in a response to trauma and social and political turmoil in late 20th century South Africa. The relevance of this discourse to the present, in what might be regarded as one of the many reiterations that constitute part of a post-capitalist nostalgia and subversion, has resulted in the repositioning of Biblical narrative in the present.