


African contextual hermeneutics

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Hermeneutics comprises the science of (textual) understanding. Biblical hermeneutics lets this science focus on the understanding of biblical texts, while African Contextual Hermeneutics takes the African context seriously in this textual endeavour.

In the processes of reading and understanding biblical texts there are at least three angles of incidence to approach the understanding processes: the world *behind* the text (historical contexts or *Sitze im Leben*), the world *in* the text (textual exposition), and the world *before* the text (reader's context). These processes then allow for diachronic, synchronic and reader-response analyses. In the case of African Contextual Hermeneutics, the 'African' exegete and the different 'African' socio-political, economic and religious contexts provide the spectacles through which texts are interpreted and understood.

In addition to Western and European emphases on reading and understanding biblical texts, the African Contextual Hermeneutics places a special focus on the actual and relevant life-issues of people from different African contexts. The exegete's eye and senses are seriously seeking the overlap in biblical and contextual themes and contexts in the reading process. Robust dialogue between biblical contexts and cultures with contemporary circumstances not only leads to the realisation of alienation to the ancient world(s) but also to discovering of the 'self' and theologising relevantly in African context(s). In this process the importance of African scholars, African literature, African discussion partners and African contexts plays a pivotal, but not the only role. In sum, Sam Ndogo summarises while saying that 'Africanization is a reader centered approach of the text to address the reader facing similar circumstances to derive meaning from such an exercise'.

This project focuses especially on texts from the Old Testament or Hebrew Bible. These texts provide the incubator for analysing and contemplating contemporary African circumstances and readers. A variety of themes are connected to texts such as Genesis 37–38 (seduction and male abuse), Deuteronomy 22:13–21 (female virginity), Ruth 1:1–5 (migration), Isaiah 2:1–4 (insecurity and non-violence) and Zechariah 1:8 (a mysterious Hebrew word).

Readers of the Special Collection on African Hermeneutics will enjoy scholarship on a wide-range of relevant and actual contemporary issues that lively contribute to contextual sensemaking of our deep Christian heritage on our African continent.

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