

The Africanisation of Biblical Studies in Zimbabwe: Promises and Challenges

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ABSTRACT

As African biblical studies expand by way of having more practitioners and investigating new themes, the challenge of Africanisation continues to loom large. In its simplest form, Africanisation (in relation to biblical studies) speaks to the quest to ensure that African scholars in biblical studies approach their subject matter from a decidedly African stance. Africanisation must be located within the politics of knowledge, wherein predominantly European and North American scholars have dominated biblical studies. This has given the impression that the questions, methodologies and proposals of scholars from the global North have come to be accepted as normative. On the other hand, Africanisation challenges this hegemony of Euro-American scholarship in biblical studies. It is built on the conviction that African scholars do not have to adopt the “follow my leader” approach to biblical studies. Instead, African scholars must assert their intellectual autonomy and pursue biblical studies “the African way”, without feeling that they need endorsement or approval from scholars from the global North. In this article, I approach the theme of Africanisation from the context of Zimbabwe. In the first section of the article, I outline the key issues surrounding the concept of Africanisation in biblical studies. In the second section, I summarise the growth of Zimbabwean biblical studies. In the third section, I analyse efforts at Africanisation within Zimbabwean biblical studies. I assess challenges emerging from the quest for Africanisation in the fourth section. In conclusion, I argue that Zimbabwean biblical studies scholars have made a significant contribution to the struggle for Africanisation.

Introduction

In a recent article, Ezra Chitando, Tapiwa P. Mapuranga and Nisbert T. Taringa explored the reaction by scholars in theology and religious studies to the Zimbabwean crisis (2000-2008). In the article, the authors acknowledged the rapid expansion of the field. They drew attention to the extent to which scholars in Zimbabwean theology and religious studies addressed pertinent issues such as

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