MODERN COMMENTARIES ON THE BOOK OF EXODUS AND THEIR APPROPRIATENESS IN AFRICA

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THESIS

The aim of this thesis is to explore the trends that are found in commentaries on the book of Exodus and their appropriateness in the African context. The study also seeks to move from a socio-political understanding of Exodus as liberation theology to the cultural understanding of Exodus as African theology. The following three trends are found in modern commentaries on Exodus as explored by this thesis: • Historical-critical approach – dealing with the world behind the text or author centred criticism. Commentaries found under this group include those of M Noth (1962), TE Fretheim (1990), N Sarna (1991), B S Childs (1977) and WHC Propp (1999). • Literary-critical approach – this deals with the text itself or it is text centred. Commentaries found in this category include: W Brueggemann (1994), J G Janzen (1997) and C Houtman (1993). • Theological-critical approach – deals with the world in front of the text. Commentaries of GV Pixley (1987), J Durham (1987) and G Ashby (1998) are good examples of the latter named approach. Exploration into the study of the above listed three trends and their corresponding modern commentaries show that the commentaries are not fully appropriate in the context of Africa (except Ashby). This is so because the above modern commentaries have not directly addressed the ongoing issues of poverty, political, economic, oppression, marginalization, HIV / AIDS, cultural and social issues, famine, racial and sex discrimination, religious crises, and other epidemics and natural disasters prominently found in Africa - particularly among the third world countries. The modern commentaries mentioned above are indirectly relevant for Africa since the topics which they address, resonate with the readers and interpreters of Exodus in Africa. This resonance is possible if readers and interpreters of Exodus in Africa find similarities between modern commentaries and their own current context. The study also shows that the three trends found in modern commentaries on Exodus are dependent on one another to bring forth a meaningful interpretation. Based on this working relationship between the three trends mentioned above, it is suggested that the three trends should be considered in close connection with one another. Biblical interpretation in Africa must do justice to the literary, historical and theological aspects of the Bible to be meaningful and appropriate in Africa.

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