

Title **BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS AS A TOOL FOR
INCULTURATION IN AFRICA: A CASE STUDY OF THE
PÖKOT PEOPLE OF KENYA**

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Publisher Creations Enterprises, 2007

ISBN 9966050469, 9789966050465

Length 436 pages

Abstract

The choice of this topic, Biblical Hermeneutics as a Tool for Inculturation in Africa: A Case Study of the Pökot People of Kenya, is based on the conviction that the Bible is not just another principle or mere starting point of inculturation but the very foundation or bedrock of inculturation. As the ultimate goal of this study, this study seeks to suggest the way forward towards developing an African hermeneutic theory that can be fruitfully used to achieve the important goal of inculturation. The supposition is that home grown biblical hermeneutics is the most effective tool with which to stimulate a relevant process of inculturation that can deliver the Word of God home in a meaningful and fruitful way. Hence there is need to develop a hermeneutic theory based on the practical way of bible interpretation among the Pökot. When working with the different classes and categories of people, therefore, it is not helpful to try and call them back to where they were or call them to where one is, but such an effort requires the rare “courage to go with them to a place that neither you nor they have ever been before” (Donovan 2004: xiii). “The goal of biblical hermeneutics” then, as Thiselton (1993: xix) has observed, “is to bring about an active and meaningful engagement between the interpreter and the text, in such a way that the interpreter’s own horizon is re-shaped and enlarged.” Where there is proper and relevant hermeneutics, one that directly addresses people’s needs, fears and aspiration, the Word of God is likely to take root and become part and parcel of the day-to-day undertakings of those who receive it. Thus, it tends to be ‘more effective’ (Mosala 1989: 3) in the mission of evangelisation. On the same token, a form of hermeneutics that seems to be biased against the recipients of the gospel can easily brainwash people through manipulation or, worse, destroy the very faith the preachers are trying to nurture. A clear case in history is what happened in the apartheid South Africa (Baur 1994: 191-192) and the Latin American (Hopkins 1999: 167-172) situation, as well as in many other developing nations. Here the Bible was used to justify the position of the oppressors, to intimidate or even silence those who questioned the status quo (Tihagale and Mosala 1986: 185). A direct consequence of this is inhibited resentment and silent opposition (or at times, outright rebellion) that has, in some cases, ended up in schisms. This study will, therefore, use ethnographic research to find out the way the gospel is preached among the Pökot people (of Kenya) and how they receive the same; and then suggest a form of hermeneutics that appeals to their worldview and imageries.