

Editorial Introduction

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Theology is by its very nature contextual as those who do it are bound, among other things, by their location, language, intellect and the utter physicality of their state. For an idea or experience of God to be meaningful, whether generated by the 'imaginal' faculty or by revelation or by the combination of the two, it needs the contexts immediate to us. Prevailing Cultures and philosophies, gender, age, denomination, folk religion are some such contexts. As contexts are changeable, the fundamental concern of many theologians has been about how to remain faithful to the core and substantive elements of faith whilst recasting theology in relevant terms. Several works have appeared in recent times that do just that (E.g. Grenz & Franke 2000, Gorringer 1999, Harrison 2000, Sugirtharajah 2000, Torres & Fabella 1978, Fabella & Oduyoye 1988). The seven papers contained in this volume contribute to these and similar discussions on Christian theology in context.

Adrian Thatcher's paper explores the question of the position of children in Christian theology. Observing that theology often ignores children and family his paper makes a beginning at outlining a theology of/for children. Stratford Caldecott's paper identifies the two traditional mission emphases of the Catholic Church, Conversion and Search for truth, and argues for a third dimension, namely, the recognition of truth being transcendent. This dimension, to the author, has the potential to reconcile the needless polarization in mission and to unite mission efforts into a single process. Ian Randall's paper focuses on the context of European Continental Pietism, the Evangelical Revival in Britain and the Great Awakening in America that were responsible for the shaping of the Evangelical theology in the eighteenth century. The paper's originality is in recognizing Evangelicalism as a distinctive strand of Christian theology that holds the notion of personal experience of Christ at the centre of theology. Paul Miller in his paper recognizes the interface between

Evangelicalism and Catholicism, not least in the cooperative programmes that focus on evangelism and discipleship. Both traditions agree to work together in an effort to transform the other into a better representation of Christianity. Cathy Ross takes the context of the marginalization of women as the context for her reflection on the use of the language of 'separate spheres'. She examines how the idea of the home being the primary sphere of activity for women received its reinforcement from the nineteenth century women in collaboration with Evangelical theology. Bettina Schmidt takes the Afro-Caribbean religions as instances of the coming together of Catholicism and real or imaginary African folk traditions. Gene Early in his paper looks at the context of Christian leadership where knowing God and becoming more like Jesus is deemed as the 'deepest inner work' for Christian leaders. This work is said to be the means by which sanctification is achieved - that is - the very act of leading sanctifies leaders as they serve those under their care.

I do wish you would enjoy reading these papers.

References

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