12-31-1997

Contextualization A Development of a Theology and Examination of its Application

David Meggers
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, dvdmeggers@gmail.com

CONTEXTUALIZATION

A DEVELOPMENT OF A THEOLOGY AND

EXAMINATION OF ITS APPLICATION

A Seminar Paper Submitted to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Systematic Theology
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Sacred Theology

By

David L. Meggers

May 1997

Approved by Wayne E. Schmidt
Advisor

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to examine and critique "contextualization", a particular theological method which has seen development in what are often considered areas of World Mission. The aspect of this theological development with which we are most concerned has to do with the role of the Word of God as it relates to the development of theology and theological education. This particular examination consists of three parts; an introduction to the history and development of the term "contextualization", Contextualization and African Theology, and Contextualization and Latin American Liberation Theology. The portion devoted to African Theology will take a close look at the work of a particular theologian, John S. Mbiti. Latin American Liberation Theology wll be examined from a broader context of theologians due to the more prolific availability of authors and material in the area of Latin American Liberation Theology.

CONTEXTUALIZATION AND THE THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION FUND

As we begin it will be necessary to present a history of the development of a theological method known as contextualization. The term "contextualization" was first coined in 1972 by the Theological Education Fund (TEF) of the World Council of Churches. It was conceived as a funding agency with sub-committee status as it related to the World Council of Churches (WCC).[1] Specifically, the origin of the term is credited

---

[1]Stephen Bevans, "Models of Contextual Theology" Missiology 13:8.2 (April 1985), 185.

to Shoki Coe and Aharoan Sapaezian, former directors of TEF. They suggested that the term takes in all that is involved in indigenization[2] "but goes beyond it to take account of 'the process of secularity, technology and the struggle for human justice.'"[3] Essentially, "indigenization" can be thought of as efforts to take a given, in this case the Gospel, from one culture to another, from one context to another, in ways which allow it to speak its message as understandably as possible. "Indigenization" believes the Gospel always to be relevant.

"Contextualization" believes only that part of the Gospel which speaks to a given context to be relevant. The context norms the Gospel. It views traditional or what it terms "Western" Christianity as a result of its particular contextual development and demands that right for each context of mission. At its most extreme, it insists upon finding Christ within the already present salvific rites and beliefs of a local religion.

The development of the concept of contextualization takes place within the history and development of the TEF itself. As a funding agency, the TEF was responsible for assessing requests for funds as well as determining priority of fund allocations for the purposes of theological education in various world mission contexts. From its inception in the late 1950s, the ever-present problem was how to make such assessments and disburse limited funds appropriately. By 1972, the solution proposed by the TEF was "to use the

---

[2]Indigenization has to do with how to best take the Gospel across cultural boundaries so that it speaks to a given culture in ways that are most natural and understandable. It includes translation of scripture, writing of education materials, training of indigenous ministers and all that is involved in the mandate of making disciples.

[3]Bruce J. Nicholls, "Doing Theology in Context, Evangelical Review of Theology 11 (April 1987): 102.

level of contextualization of any program as the deciding factor."[4] The "TEF mandated that all requests for funds would be considered in the light of how well each applicant contextualized."[5] Such a criterion was not the original purpose. To get a picture of this development it will be necessary to look at TEF's early history, its first two mandates and its self-assessments during the course of its history up to and introducing the Third Mandate of 1972.

Early History and Development

In its report entitled Five Years: A Report from the Theological Education Fund, 1958-1963.[6], the TEF explains that it came about due to movements of events "both within and without the churches of Africa, Asia and Latin America" which served to emphasize two things: "the essential need for indigenous leadership and to underline the tragic deficiencies of theological education."[7] The TEF had in mind three post World War II developments which it felt necessitated such a Fund:

> A growing conviction that the training of the ministry is a matter of strategic priority in the World mission of the Church;
> An enlarged knowledge of the needs of the churches and of the theological seminaries in Africa, Asia and Latin America

---

[4]John Koch, "Contextualization and a Confessional Church" Lutheran Theological Journal 19.3 (December 1985): 131.

[5]Bruce C.E. Fleming, Contextualization of Theology: An Evangelical Assessment. (Pasadena: The William Carey Library, 1980), xi.

[6]Five Years: A Report from the Theological Education Fund, 1958-1963. (New York: The Theological Education Fund, 1963), 1.

[7]Ibid., 2.

A substantial body of expert advice and practical recommendations for the strengthening and development of theological education."[8]

Charles Ranson, General Secretary of the International Missionary Council (IMC), was the man to whom the founding of the TEF largely was due. He took the initiative of discussing with John D. Rockefeller, Jr. the possibility of assisting in the funding of such a venture.[9] In 1957, two months before the General Assembly of the IMC in Accra, Ghana, Ranson learned that Rockefeller was prepared to donate "$2 million for a theological education fund (later to be called TEF) on condition that within two years a similar amount would be raised by the missionary societies."[10]

Excited at the potential, Ranson sought and obtained the necessary commitment from the representatives of the following societies:

The division of World Mission and the Woman's Division of Christian Service of the Methodist Church
The Board of Foreign Mission of the Presbyterian Church in the USA
The American Baptist Foreign Mission Societies
The Board of Foreign Missions of the United Lutheran Church
The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (Congregational)
The National Council of the Protestant Episcopal Church
The United Christian Missionary Society (Disciples)
The Board of Foreign Missions of the Evangelical and Reformed Church[11]

---

[8]Ibid., 3.

[9]Harold E. Fey, ed., A History of the Ecumenical Movement, vol. 2, 1948-1968, World Council of Churches (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1970), 185.

[10]Christine Lienemann-Perrin, Christine, Training for a Relevant Ministry: A Study of the Contribution of the Theological Education Fund, (Madras, Spain: The Christian Literature Society, in Association with the Programme on Theological Education, WCC, Geneva, 1981), 18.

[11]Ibid., 19.

The proposal for such a fund did not meet with whole-hearted agreement at the Assembly. Never before had this Council established, much less administered, such a fund.[12] After much discussion on the pro's and con's of the proposed fund it was finally agreed in January of 1958 by the International Missionary Conference (IMC), Ghana to establish a "Fund for the advancement of theological education in Africa, Asia and Latin America"[13]

The First Mandate of the Theological Education Fund

With the $4 million in resources, the Assembly directed

a. That this amount should be spent in accordance with a five-year plan;
b. That not less than $1 million should be used for the improvement of theological literature and in the strengthening of libraries;
c. That approximately twenty major grants should be made to selected institutions, on the basis of the quality of their present work, their strategic importance in their particular regions and their potential growth in excellence and influence;
d. That the aim should be to encourage indigenous theological thinking, to strengthen the sense of responsibility for ministerial training among the churches and missions and to increase support for theological education.[14]

Operating principles were established so that

> Assistance was to be limited to training for the ordained ministry.
> Proposals for grants-in-aid must be presented by an institution or a group of institutions.
> There must be responsible backing and support from the churches and missions in the area concerned.

---

[12]Ibid., 23. The total IMC budget for 1958 was $148,700.

[13]Five Years, 4.

[14]Ibid., 4.

> The test of local confidence must be the willingness to provide supplementary resources in money and personnel, and to maintain such support in the future.
> The primary function of the Fund must be that of a catalyst and a junior partner rather than a dominant initiator.[15]

One very important result of the action at Ghana was that it gave Younger Churches (essentially those churches developing in the 1900s) more influence over western churches than had been previously possible. The reason is to be found in the power of funding. The special focus of the IMC was that this fund extend grants designed "to develop and strengthen indigenous theological eduation."[16] The purpose of this was to emphasize that the

> TEF must not simply apply western criteria for the standards of theological eduation, but must aim for "indigenous theological education" and "creative theological thought."[17]

The "existence of an ecumenical fund gave the Younger Churches the completely new possibility of sharing in the decision-making about the training of their pastors."[18]

Seeking to be ecumenical, indigenous, creative and locally initiated, the TEF operations were classified according to five major headings: Major Grants, Text Books Program, Libraries Program, Special Projects, and the Special Africa Program.

The TEF decided that the Major Grants portion of the Fund would be parceled out to 20 institutions which had already exhibited elements of excellence in ministerial training

---

[15]Ibid., 5.

[16]Lienemann-Perrin., 26.

[17]Ibid.

[18]Ibid., 20.

as well as potential for growth.[19] It was hoped that by limiting the number of grants, the long range benefits of such a fund, extended over a wide area would be greater than dividing up the grants into smaller portions. The main thrust of these grants was to be "in the direction of better standards of scholarship in ministerial training."[20] The Fund established the following criteria or guiding principles for determining the recipients of the Major Grants:

> Judgment of quality by theological as well as academic criteria;
> Interpretation of excellence in terms which fostered indigenous thought and experiment;
> Relevance as the test for an awareness of and concern for the total life and witness of the Church both in its own culture and the international culture of our time[21]

The goal of the Text Books Program was to provide "tools for theological study in the language of instruction".[22] The TEF thought primarily in terms of "basic tools" and "essential texts." Funding was provided for "basic tools" (i.e.,reference works) such as a Concordance, a Bible Dictionary, a one volume Commentary, a Bible Word Book, a Bible Atlas, and a Greek Grammar. The TEF definition of "essential texts" were those "offering a general introduction to one of the various branches of theological study and suitable for use by students in their class work."[23] In keeping with the principles of the Fund, local communities had the responsibility for determining the books needed based on those

---

[19]Fey, 185.

[20]Five Years, 13.

[21]Ibid.

[22]Ibid., 14.

[23]Ibid., 14.

which would adequately meet their particular needs. The local communities were to be responsible for locating those persons capable of and available for doing such work as writing and translating. Finally, the local communities were to submit to the TEF Committee their "detailed financial estimates" for completion of the project.[24]

Corresponding to the importance placed on texts and tools was the establishment of the Libraries Program. Its purpose was to assist "all theological schools engaged in training ordinands".[25] Such schools were invited to make selections for their theological libraries from "a comprehensive Theological Book List" prepared by Dr. Raymond Morris[26] or submit their own requests. Recognizing that a library is more than books, this program also funded library consultants who visited libraries assisting with organization, use of books and special problems.

The Special Projects division of the First Mandate included funding for teaching scholarships and visiting professorships. In all of these areas the Theological Education Fund sought to abide by its principles. It was especially concerned with local initiation seeking to maintain a hands-off policy of administration for itself. The importance and power of the Fund itself was due to its mandate to approve or deny funds based on its developed criteria.

---

[24]Ibid., 15.

[25]Ibid., 16.

[26]See Raymond P. Morris, A Theological Book List, (England: The Theological Education Fund of the International Missionary Council for Theological Seminaries and Colleges in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the South West Pacific, 1960).

In its 1963 report, Five Years, the TEF recounted that "The last cent of the $4 million has been appropriated."[27] Recognizing the responsibility that accompanied such appropriation, the TEF undetook to assess itself. It established an advisory group with the purpose of engaging in a period of evaluation and self-assessment in order to determine whether or not the continuance of the fund was justified.[28]

The "Advisory Group" members responsible for evaluation and recommendation were: Dr. C.H.Hwang(Shoki Coe), the Rev. Erik W. Nielsen, Dr. Nathan M. Pusey, Dr. Charles L. Taylor, and Bishop Leslie Newbigin as Chairman.[29] Overall, their estimation of the effectiveness of TEF in meeting its goals was positive. They found that the Fund had

> had the effect of giving to theological teachers a new consciousness of their vocation, and to the churches a new sense of the importance of theological education. It can safely be said that the churches in the areas served by the TEFC are now concerned for theological education to a greater degree than before, and that theological faculties have been spurred to re-appraise their teaching and vocation, their role in the life of their people and their place in the midst of the World Christian Community."[30]

Not only had the Younger Churches come to realize their responsibility for theological training; the TEF was found to have a certain power of its own. The Advisory

---

[27]Five Years, 1.

[28]In 1963 the First Mandate was scheduled to terminate. The Council on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) at New Delhi in 1961, voted to extend the First Mandate for two years until 1965. $1,000,000 was contributed for the extension of the Fund. In this way limited numbers of projects were able to be supported during the period of evaluation between 1963 and the CWME assembly at Mexico City in 1965. Issues in Theological Education, 1964-1965--Asia, Africa, Latin America: A Report of the Theological Education Fund, (New York: The Theological Education Fund, 1965), 2.

[29]Ibid.

[30]Five Years, 65.

Committee found that the impact of the Fund on the Younger Churches was due to its having "a considerable amount of money at its disposal."[31] In addition, it was due to the existence of this new funding venture that a new "interdenominational and international co-operation of the Younger Churches was possible."[32]

The report was not entirely self-congratulatory. It was realized that there existed within the concept of the TEF a paradox. The Advisory Group members determined that in providing resources from outside the Younger Churches, "the impression can be given . . . that this is not their own immediate and essential concern."[33] The accusation was made that the TEF was content with the "development of western educational concepts in the Third World." Another criticism of the TEF parallel to that of "westernization" was the opinion of some that the Younger Churches had "not been sufficiently consulted about TEF projects."[34]

At this time, the whole concept of "westernization" was still developing and therefore rather indistinct. There were diverse opinions on what the term actually meant and whether or not there actually could be such a thing as a "westernization" of theology. Some of the Advisory Group responded to such criticism by noting that there were at the time, "no alternatives to the western view which the TEF could have promoted. The

---

[31]Lienemann-Perrin, 90.

[32]Ibid., 90-91.

[33]Ibid., 93.

[34]Ibid., 99.

alternatives could be expected to come only from the Younger Churches."[35] It was further reasoned that if "westernization" referred to the advancement of science and technology, then, "If science and technology are taking over the Third World, theological education will not be able to resist this trend."[36]

However, the Advisory Group showed that it had heard and was sensitive to this issue as raised in the evaluative process. Several suggestions were made for changes in the Second Mandate. It was proposed that fewer Major Grants to limited numbers of theological institutions be made. Instead, a more flexible program "to encourage a creative development towards a better quality of ministerial training"[37] might be initiated. The "more flexible programme was to include efforts involving "de-westernization" and a promotion of indigenous education. Efforts should be made to make students more "aware of the dynamics of social change and the Church's role in it." And more emphasis should be placed on theological instruction in indigenous languages.[38] As a result, the focus began to shift from that of theological education toward social and cultural concerns.

---

[35]Ibid., 101.

[36]Ibid.

[37]Lienemann-Perrin, 105.

[38]Miguez Bonino suggested that it would be a "much more 'creative venture' to help a seminary teach its students to become fully conversant with the Greek New Testament than to launch an adventurous study of local culture" and opposed "second-hand digest type theology coming from the West." Ibid., 111.

As the Fund approached the end of its first mandate, certain inclinations began to appear. It had been established with a view toward improving theological education in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. By dividing its operations into five parts, it was hoped that the greatest possible improvements could be made with the funds at hand. After four years, it was being asked and asking itself whether or not it had met its goals. At the same time that the younger churches were beginning to experience a growing sense of self, the fund was forced to recognize that it was a western begun project and was impelled to examine whether or not it could continue as it had been founded.

The Second Mandate of the Theological Education Fund

In August 1962, after examining the positives and negatives of the Fund and giving special consideration to the issues of "westernization" and more indigenous input, the Advisory Group condensed its evaluations into a report. The report was sent to the members of WCC Central Committee and all members of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME). Their recommendation was to re-establish the TEF in line with the following statement:

> The essential purpose is to respond wherever evidence is found of creative development promising the achievement of excellence in the training of the ministry. The excellence to be sought should be defined in terms of that kind of theological training which leads to a real encounter between the student and the Gospel in terms of his own forms of thought and culture, and to a living dialogue between the church and its environment. The aim should be to use resources so as to help teachers and students to a deeper understanding of the Gospel in the context of the particular cultural and religious setting of the church, that the church may come to a deeper understanding of itself as a missionary community sent into the world, and to a more effectual encounter with the life of the society.[39]

---

[39]Issues in Theological Education, 3.

There is a certain tension recognizable in this statement. The TEF was trying to come to grips with a Gospel that crosses cultural boundaries and how best to cross those boundaries as ministers of that Gospel. There is not yet, though, a clear distinction as to which should have the primary impact on ministerial training, the Gospel or the context. So far all that can be said is that there is a notable and even commendable concern for excellence in ministry, creativity, indigenization and even a contextualization that has a given Gospel encountering a particular societal context.

The Fund was to abide by essentially the same principles as the First Mandate. It was to "serve theological colleges in Africa, Asia, Latin America" as before with the addition of Oceania and the Caribbean. It was not to provide funding for maintenance or "normal upbuilding" of the schools. It was not to initiate, but only to assist the development of plans formulated by the schools themselves or their respective churches and councils. TEF funds were only to be used "where there is reasonable support from local sources and which do not involve an excessive burden when TEF ceases."[40] The Fund had no desire to develop "welfare" churches or instutitions that would perpetually rely on grants and subsidies. Finally, the Fund was to build upon already existing strengths. With these principles, the Theological Education Fund was authorized and funded by the CWME General Assembly in Mexico City in 1963 with $4,000,000 until June 30, 1970.[41]

---

[40]Ibid., 3.

[41]For more on CWME activities see Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, From Mexico City to Bangkok. Report of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism. (Geneva: WCC, 1972).

The TEF of the Second Mandate exhibited some changes as it evolved from the original mandate. In a sense this was essential to its nature and its task. One contrast of the new Fund was its international support. Whereas the First Mandate had been funded primarily by U.S. sources, Rockefeller and the eight mission societies with some support later from societies in Australia, Canada and Scotland, the new program was given funds "from nearly 100 donors on every continent of the world."[42]

In the Second Mandate there were no more Major Grants. Instead, more and smaller grants were allotted. This alteration was motivated by the emphasis on education appropriate to the local situation and the accent on creativity in the development of theological training. The TEF had a sincere desire to see and support changes, even experiments in theological education.

The TEF was to continue to act as a "catalyst for promising projects". It would also continue to evaluate and prioritize the funding of project requests as it had before. But the new report

> left the future staff of the TEF plenty of room to manoeuvre in that it could decide in every concrete situation whether academic excellence, or an experimentation which was relevant to the situation but academically risky, should have priority.[43]

By "experimentation" the TEF had an ever increasing vision for efforts at indigenization of theology. If the First Mandate could be characterized as "the attempt to

---

[42]Ibid.

[43]Lienemann-Perrin, 114.

raise the ministerial training as high as possible" in terms of "academic excellence",[44] the Second Mandate could be characterized as the quest for indigenization.

> What in 1958 had been only one point among others--namely, the strengthening of indigenous ministerial education--became the focus of the Second Mandate. Thus we see that in five years . . . an important step from the focus on western theological education to that of indigenization in the younger Churches was completed."[45]

But there was still the question and problem of the definition of "indigenous". Terms like "indigenization", "de-westernization", "creativity in theological thinking" were debated, discussed and defined with the realization that

> concrete notions and alternative proposals for ministerial training were lacking because the concept of "something other than western" education for a "western" pastorate in a "western" church was largely still lacking.[46]

In the second TEF report, Issues in Theological Education, 1964-1965--Asia, Africa, Latin America: A Report of the Theological Education Fund, the growing importance of indigenization is evident by the growing frequency of this term as descriptive of efforts at theological education in various locales. The Tamilnad Theological College of the Church of South India and Tainan Theological College of Taiwan[47] both are set forth as exemplary theological communities which skillfully blend

---

[44]Ibid., 120.

[45]Ibid., 114.

[46]Ibid., 119.

[47]TEF Advisory Group member, Shoki Coe (C.H. Hwang) was once president of this institution.

"indigenous forms in acts of worship that collect the life of the whole community."[48] In lieu of a definition of "indigenous" the TEF set forth these two as paradigms after which those who sought funding in the future would be able pattern themselves.

There was other evidence of this indiginizing trend. It was recognized by the TEF that in many circumstances the number of indigenous instructors was lacking. There was concern that if a political disruption were to cause the deportation of expatriate missionaries, the indigenous faculty would not be strong enough to withstand such an upheaval. Attention was devoted to "arrangements for training potential instructors" as well as to "the process of securing resources and policies for their appointment."[49] The result is exemplified by the African Staff Development Programme. The TEF set aside over $500,000 in resources for the sole purpose of training and placing "indigenous teachers on the faculties of African seminaries."[50]

The overall concern in all of the "Faculty" projects was focused on attempts to build faculties, increase the proportion of indigenous teachers or their amount of teaching time, and provide for faculty research. The degree to which this area of theological education had become a priority can be seen when it is realized that 6% of projects were concerned with graduate study in the First Mandate and 37% of its funds were allocated for the same in the Second Mandate. Both the local communities and the TEF saw the need for highly trained indigenous teachers. The TEF made doctoral research projects

---

[48]Issues in Theological Education, 9-10.

[49]Issues in Theological Education, 15.

[50]Ibid., 16.

viable by funding research at a theological institution. This made it possible for indigenous teachers to devote full time to research.

> By encouraging graduate study the TEF tried to replace the Europeans and Americans teaching in the theological institutions as quickly as possible with indigenous teachers who had been trained in Europe and the USA.[51]

It is reported that almost half of the approximately 400 TEF scholarship holders of the first two Mandates studied in the West and almost all returned to their home countries.[52]

"Rethinking the Curriculum" was also a newer focus of the Second Mandate. Westernization was an evident concern. It was thought that the theological courses of study in the Younger Church countries showed a too "rigid dependence upon forms created in the west."[53] Attention was devoted to altering the form which instruction took, the method of presentation, and the subject matter of theological education. Church history was a major focus. "The TEF encouraged research projects in church history as an important way to contribute towards the indigenization of theological thought."[54] Quite often, the church histories had taken little or no account of the local churches history, which could be in excess of 100 years old in some cases. In addition to "thin volumes produced as much for their missionary promotional value in the West as for their local

---

[51]Lienemann-Perrin, 128.

[52]Ibid., 129-130.

[53]Ibid., 32.

[54]Lienemann-Perrin, 135.

consumption"[55] funding was provided for research into the "scattered records, unused files and . . . memories of senior Christians."[56]

This concern for indigenous church history was accompanied by an interest in supporting studies in indigenous religions. The Younger Churches lived in a context which embodied a plurality of non-Christian religions. Recognizing this, seminary curricula began to offer more courses with emphases tilting more and more towards the study of non-Christian religions. For example, the "Islam in Africa" project, centered in Nigeria and serving seminaries "in the sensitive teaching of Islam" was supported by a TEF Africa Fund Grant of $10,000.[57]

The Second Mandate did not take on an entirely new face. As was mentioned, faculty enrichment, specifically graduate study was funded as before. The quality of academic training was still a concern. One of the ways in which the quality of ordinands was improved was the "institution of a pre-theological course for academically deficient students within the seminary itself."[58]

The TEF continued to fund the production of theological literature under the "Textbook Program." Most of the Younger church seminaries had no tradition of

---

[55]Issues in Theological Education, 37.

[56]Ibid.

[57]Ibid., 39.

[58]Ibid., 31. For example, The Lutheran Theological College in Umpumulo, South Africa received a grant of $16,800 to establish a two-year "pre-theological training scheme" in conjunction with the seminary.

indigenous staff authorship. Language-area editorial associations were funded, and surveys of existing theological literature conducted using TEF book lists as guides for identifying gaps and "strategies for production."[59] With the intent of producing indigenous theological instruction material, the Fund adhered to its principles by allowing each textbook committee to maintain "a thoroughgoing independence in selection and administration" of books and funding.[60] To enable those who were already theologically trained to publish and write, study leaves, lectureships, writers' workshops, prizes and co-operative writing ventures were funded. Approximately $10,000 in funding was devoted to these efforts at raising the quality of indigenous theological literature and accelerating its production. Grants were made to journals of theology for the purpose of providing a publishing forum for indigenous theologians. Funding for library book grants, consultants, courses in librarianship and supporting full-time libraries was also made available.

Proving itself to be one of the most ecumenical ventures was the funding of theological associations. This was a newer aspect of the Fund. With grants ranging from $1,000 to $11,000 these associations accomplished a "catalytic function" by helping to develop academic relationships beyond denominational boundaries and offering "counsel and criticism rooted in the local situation.[61] TEF funding made communication possible between theological institutions of the Younger Churches which had joined together in such associations. In fact, the majority of the more than 20 theological associations in the

---

[59]Ibid., 45.

[60]Ibid., 46.

[61]Ibid., 59.

Third World by 1970 "had been founded with the advice and financial aid of the TEF"[62] in the amount of $461,366. This indicates a tremendous impact on ecumenicity in the formative stages of theological development among Third World Christian churches.

The first three years of the Second Mandate saw the TEF making great strides toward indigenization of theology and theological education. Greater emphasis was placed on developing stronger and more numerous indigenous theological faculties. Curricula were being examined for overt western influence and were broadened to include indigenous church histories and religious studies. The TEF was still funding many of the same types of projects, such as the "Textbook" and related programs, but it was also proving to have a certain ecumenical influence through its funding of theological associations.

In 1968, the TEF issued a new report, Aid to Theological Education--Africa, Asia, Latin America: A Report from the Theological Education Fund, 1965-1967. At this point it was possible to report that approximately 1/3 of the resources which had been allocated had been spent. A total amount of $988,683[63] had funded 121 "strengthening the teaching faculty projects", 54 "seminary experiment" projects, 50 projects assisting "conferences and school associations", and 52 "tools for teaching projects."[64] Summarizing its

---

[62]Lieneman-Perrin, 137.

[63]There is some discrepancy here. The report indicates that 1/3 of the funds had been spent. The Fund had received $4 million for the Second Mandate. $988,683 is not approximately 1/3 of $4 million.

[64]Aid to Theological Education--Africa, Asia, Latin America: A Report from the Theological Education Fund (1965-1967), (London: The Theological Education Fund, 1968), 3.

operating principles, the report indicated that the "initiative in each TEF project" comes from local Christians seeking a local "advancement" and that "execution of each project" is also the responsibility of the local agency. "Support" comes from resources throughout the world. TEF is responsible for "developing these commitments and aligning them."[65] As to the projects themselves, they "primarily reflect a local reassessment of method, and first steps towards the improvement of teaching."[66]

In this assessment it was recognized by the Fund that there was both a need and a desire for new methods of teaching. But, as with any new venture, the unproven nature of the new methods made seminaries reluctant to channel already scarce resources to the support of the experimental method. The TEF solution was to be the provider of funds to support experiments for new types of ministry. In the final two years of the Second Mandate it supported experiments such as lay ministries, non-stipendiary ministries, and specialized ministries, experiments in the teaching of particular "disciplines" including Biblical languages, non-Christian religions, and the study of religion and society, and new efforts in continuing education involving in-service training and short-term residential courses.[67] The results of these types of experiments was that the study of theology was made accessible to people who never before had the chance for such training. Yet, the

---

[65]Ibid., 2.

[66]Ibid., 2.

[67]Ibid., 4-5. see Lienemann-Perrin, 134. It is reported that in Latin America, Theological Education by Extension was supported by TEF in the amount of $100,000 between 1965 and 1970. This type of experimental program might not have been possible without TEF funding.

TEF made a real effort to "support only those projects which did not cause the Independent Churches to become dependent."[68]

TEF continued funding to theological institutions. Most of the Fund's attention was devoted to "production of textbooks in the language of instruction."[69] This was part of the effort to "de-westernize" theology. The "Textbook Programs" subsidized work in 25 languages as of 1968. With an updated version scheduled in 1968, the Theological Book Lists continued to guide the acquisition policies of seminary libraries. At this juncture, the over-arching intent of the TEF was still improvement and indigenization of theology. It had not yet evolved into a theology of contextualization.

After Aid to Theological Education was published in 1968, the TEF entered the evaluative phase of its Second Mandate in order to determine whether a Third Mandate would be granted. Criticism of the Fund was rather harsh at this time. One criticism was that the TEF was primarily oriented to the "elite" in the way its strategies were set up and worked out. The director of the TEF, J. F. Hopewell was especially sharp in his criticism. He concluded that the TEF had not met the goal of the Second Mandate. He felt "TEF money was used mostly for unimportant, internal matters" and not enough was used for "revolutionary experimentation."[70] He further explained his belief that

---

[68]Lienemann-Perrin, 135.

[69]Aid to Theological Education, 5.

[70]As quoted by Lienemann-Perrin, 138.

> without substantial exception ministerial training had remained irrelevant--not only in relation to the society and the missionary task of the Church but also in relation to the spiritual and theological expectations of the students."[71]

Hopewell found some positive signs and hopeful notes in the funding of associations of theological institutions, the scholarship programme for theological teachers in Africa, the Textbook Programme, and visits of the TEF staff to training centers. He also concluded:

> Because the TEF responded equally to the requests of the conservative-evangelical and ecumenical institutions, it encouraged the mutual understanding of the two camps much more than any other agency within the WCC.[72]

Another critic of the efforts of the TEF was Steven Mackie. Mackie was assigned the task of examining forms of ministry and types of ministerial training around the world. He began the study in 1964. Mackie reported a growing idea that "between the ordained and the lay ministries there was only a functional difference." There was agreement forming that theological training could "no longer be reserved for candidates for the ministry, but must be available to `the whole people of God'."[73]

These developments were especially prominent in the regions of the world in which the TEF had its focus.[74]

---

[71]Ibid.

[72]Ibid., 139.

[73]Mackie, Steven G. Patterns of Ministry: Theological Eduation in a Changing World. London: Theological Education Fund, 1969.

[74]Lienemann-Perrin, 142. There was little concern with such forms in "western" churches. Lienemann-Perrin records rapid development of part-time ministry in Latin America, Asia and Africa between 1955 and 1965, but in "North Atlantic churches it had only been theoretically discussed and experimentally attempted."

The TEF was also aware of these changes. The staff saw these new forms of ministry developed in response to economic and social conditions. It was felt that "New forms of the ministry which were more relevant to the economic and socio-cultural conditions of the Younger Churches" were slowly being established."[75] But TEF also recognized that it had been responsible for great strides in the indigenization of theology and theological education. It had provided creative and experimental educational methods that otherwise might never have been attempted. If "new forms of the ministry" were being developed in local contexts, it could at least be said that TEF funding played a significant role in allowing their development through finances made available perhaps as much as a decade earlier.

The Third Mandate of the Theological Education Fund

After examining the evaluations, "in Dec. 1969, the CWME voted to extend the TEF for a Third Mandate, as the Advisory Group had recommended."[76] The Second Mandate would end in 1970 and a two year research period for the purpose of consulting churches and theological institutions was arranged. The Fund would be resumed in 1972 and continue to 1977.

The Third Mandate would focus on three main problem areas: "the widespread crisis of faith and search for meaning in life; the urgent issues of human development and social justice; and the dialectic between a universal, technological civilization and local

---

[75]Ibid.

[76]Ibid., 144.

culture and religious situations."[77] This last was in response to heavy inroads western industrialization was making into even the remotest parts of the continents. The TEF was to support projects which "stimulate a relevant and indigenous theological reflection," "examine the curricula and the educational methods and test them experimentally," "analyze the structure, financing and administration of the theological training centers and test them experimentally."[78] In defining the Third Mandate, Shoki Coe offered this definition of "contextualization":

> It (i.e., contextualization) means all that is implied in the familiar term "indigenization" and yet seeks to press beyond. Contextualization has to do with how we assess the peculiarity of Third World contexts. Indigenization tends to be used in the sense of responding to the Gospel in terms of a traditional culture. Contextualization, while not ignoring this, takes into account the process of secularity, technology, and the struggle for human justice, which characterize the historical moment of nations in the Third World.[79]

Summary

The ecumenical historian, Harold E. Fey called the Theological Education Fund a "new form of co-operative action" in which

> The resources of the fund, and in particular the services of its staff, were so wisely deployed over the ensuing years as to bring about a radical change in the quality and strength of the theological education in the younger Churches.[80]

---

[77]Ministry in Context, The Third Mandate Programme of the Theological Eduation Fund (1970-1977), TEF Staff, ed., (Bromley, England: The Theological Education Fund, 1972), 13.

[78]Lienemann-Perrin, 144.

[79]Ministry in Context, 20.

[80]Fey, 185.

If Fey had written five years later his assessment might have been less enthusiastic. The First Mandate established at the Ghana meeting of the IMC had as its purpose the raising of scholarship levels in the Third World. It sought academic excellence in Third World theological training. It did not question whether or not the Gospel was relevant to the context. It questioned how to overcome the barriers which the context erects before the Gospel.

The Second Mandate exhibited a missionary concern. It was concerned for creativity in order to satisfy the perceived need of a truly indigenous theology. It sought to establish particularly "that kind of theological training which leads to a real encounter between the student and the Gospel in terms of his own forms of thought and culture."[81] "Indigenization" was the watchword.

The watchword of the Third Mandate was "contextualization." The term was coined there. It was a mandate formulated in response to a context, the "spreading crisis in theological education" and a "search for renewal." Its goal was that the Gospel be expressed and ministry undertaken in response to "three major contemporary issues: a. the widespread crisis of faith; b. issues of social justice and human development; c. the dialectic between local cultural religious situations and a universal technological civilization."[82] No longer was the fund concerned for the training of an ordained ministry. No longer was there a concern for translating works from Europe or the U.S. Such works were considered too "western". Funding of theological literature was granted only to

---

[81]Lienemann-Perrin, 91.

[82]Ibid., 91-92.

indigenous works. But most important of all was the new role adopted by the TEF in the Third Mandate. It was now to be an initiator of projects. And it had determined that contextualization was to be the criterion for funding. If institutions, organizations, etc. wanted to be funded, they had to meet the criteria involved in contextualization. The TEF could form and determine the type of ministerial training and development of theology through the power of its funding. The Third Mandate sees a broadening of the interests of the TEF, the growth of contextualization as a theological method, and, by 1977, a complete structural change in the TEF as it becomes the Programme for Theological Education.

CONTEXTUALIZATION -- JOHN S. MBITI AND AFRICAN THEOLOGY

John S. Mbiti is an African theologian, born in Kenya. Though not well known in Lutheran circles he is a leading voice in Southern Churches and also in the Ecumenical movement. Mbiti completed his secondary education in Kenya and attended college in Uganda. He also attended College in the U.S. at Rhode Island where he studied theology and prepared for the ministry. That preparation culminated in a Doctorate in New Testament at Cambridge University, England. Since that time, he has served a parish, taught in the Department of Religious Studies at Makerere University in Kampala, and was a visiting professor at Union Theological Seminary in New York from 1972-73. He has also served as director of the Ecumenical Institute in Bossey, Switzerland, and is the

author of a number of articles and books which are largely concerned with African Christianity especially as it relates to the development of African Theology.[83]

African Theology is a development which is itself only 35-40 years old. African Theology's development has its roots in Christianity, specifically Western Christianity as it was brought by European and North American missionaries. Though most African states have thrown off the oppression of colonial powers, at least officially, there remains for many, including Mbiti, another kind of residual oppression which they are working to overcome, namely, the pre-dominance of western thought that pervades the thinking of foreign-missionaries and many African theologians.

Secondly, Africans have always been a religious people in the sense that they have always had religious customs and traditions. Western Christianity ordinarily forbad most of these customs, often without much thought as to their importance to a people. African Theology strives to maintain as much of that way as possible in an effort that could be called indigenous.

Finally, as witnessed by WCC documents and the writings of many African theologians, the African church itself is in the process of a search, a quest for selfhood and identity. African Theology seeks to explore what that means to Africa and to all of Christianity. Many translations of theBible have been made in many languages. Great care is taken so that these translations are made within the culture and take into account all that African culture offers its people.

---

[83]John S. Mbiti, "Theological Impotence and the Universality of the Church" Lutheran World 9 (1972): 54

African Theology asserts two forces as active in the last century or so. One of these forces was the realization in the African theater that Christianity had christianized Africa, but Africa had not yet "africanized Christianity."[84] Another force at work was the work of men such as Henry Venn and Rufus Anderson. These nineteenth-century mission strategists developed the concept of "indigenization" in which the "unchanging Gospel was transplanted into the static and generally 'primitive' cultures of non-Christian peoples."[85]

A third theological method exerting its influence on the development of African Theology is that of "contextualization".

Against this background (for it is within this context that Mbiti writes) we will examine Mbiti with regard to his views and position on the Bible as the Word of God. We will seek to determine whether he accepts the Bible as the Word of God and would follow an indigenous way of thought, whether he seeks to contextualize the Gospel (with the above definition of contextualization in mind), or whether he takes a mediating position.

The Bible as God's Word

When taking up indigenization and contextualization a question that arises is, "What is the source of theology?"

---

[84]John S. Mbiti, "Christianity and Traditional Religions in Africa." International Review of Mission 59 (October 1970): 430

[85]Bruce J. Nicholls, "Doing Theology in Context" Evangelical Review of Theology 11 (April 1987): 101.

Mbiti is primarily concerned with how theology has been and will be done in the African context. He relates an interesting "hypothetical" episode which illustrates his deep concern and personal struggle with just this issue. It is the story of a homecoming in which a young African theologian returns to his home. Armed with all of his learning, he is greeted by his very expectant friends and family. But to his own shame and their chagrin, despite all of his education, he is impotent in the face of a woman who falls down in a display of demonic possession. Why is he helpless? Because, says Mbiti, "Bultmann has demythologized demon possession."[86]

Mbiti then asks, ""Is a theology of healing irrelevant? Is spirit possession simply to be demythologized in African communities?"[87] These are not merely rhetorical questions for he has a true concern for the development of African Christian theology and students of theology. He fears that too many of them become "theologically circumcised" as they leave their homes for the universities of the West and take their advanced theological training. Mbiti is also concerned about what he sees as a divergence from this westernization which is proving itself unsatisfactory to the needs of the African church. Mbiti comments on the consequences:

> Thus we are driven to wider varieties and horizons of theological concerns, which may force us in the so-called younger churches to deviate from a great deal of Western theology . . . simply because we are driven to search for new meanings which are viable for our new concerns."[88]

---

[86]John S. Mbiti, "Theological Impotence and the Universality of the Church" Lutheran World 19 (21) 252.

[87]Ibid.

[88]Ibid.

Because African Christianity has come to the continent through so many different church bodies and their missionaries, the ecumenical movement, especially the World Council of Churches, (ie., the Theological Education Fund) has played and still plays a large part in bringing African theologians together and disseminating information among the churches. Mbiti sees, therefore, a need to approach the Bible and the teaching of the Bible ecumenically. Acknowledging that Christianity has a rich heritage, gathered through the centuries in the North (meaning Europe, North America and the then USSR) he asserts that the Bible has become ecumenical and "the teaching of the bible in ecumenical perspectives has to tackle the question of bringing the Bible to the Christian."[89] To further clarify his statement he explains that teaching the Bible with ecumenical perspective means that the Bible reads us: "they (the Scriptures) enter into our world as ecumenical Scriptures."[90] These statements stand in contradiction to a contextual approach which would see the Scriptures only as valid and meaningful if they were normed by the context. A contextual view would see the world entering into and informing the Scriptures, even shaping and forming them according to the context.

Bible translation is another prominent feature of the development of churches in Africa. In Bible and Theology in African Christianity Mbiti includes an entire chapter entitled "Bible Translation and Use in the Church." Mbiti speaks of the Bible as a complete whole. He is especially concerned that African churches get the whole Bible. In

---

[89]Mbiti, "An Ecumenical Approach to Teaching the Bible" Ecumenical Review 39 (October 1987) 404.

[90]Ibid.

his examination of preaching and the Bible, which he admits is not conclusive, he is pleased to note "at least the people are exposed to the whole Bible; it is brought to them more or less in its entirety."[91] Admitting that it is difficult, if not impossible to know what the content of that preaching is, Mbiti affirms "the Bible is the basis of African preaching as many of us can testify from our own experiences."[92]

Mbiti's estimate of the importance of Bible translation and the placing of previously oral-only languages into written form is further affirmed as he remarks that often the "publication of the Bible in part or in full is the first major publication in these languages."[93] This publication is also received with joy and Mbiti labels it a "crucial landmark in the history of the church in any particular language area."[94] Mbiti also says of the reception of the Bible in translation that "They now have full access to the Word of God. Now God speaks their language--and the Bible is now their Bible. . . . In this way, the Bible in the local language becomes the most directly influential single factor in shaping the life of the church in Africa."[95]

Mbiti evidences a strong subjection to the authority of the Scriptures as he unfolds for his readers the importance of the Bible in Africa. Not only does he state that the

---

[91]Mbiti, Bible and Theology in African Christianity. (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1986) 40.

[92]Ibid. 52.

[93]Ibid. 24.

[94]Ibid.

[95]Ibid. 28

Scriptures exert "an authority which penetrates deep into their spiritual, social, cultural and relational welfare" but he confesses his own belief that this authority of the Scriptures is what gives African churches a "form of liberation from ready-made and imported Christianity."[96] And, yet, while it frees the African churches, Mbiti also states that the Bible is what unites people in Christ for it is "the one book and the most central book that breaks down the walls that separate us, and brings us closer to one another in Jesus Christ our Lord."[97]

Mbiti is not seeking to be anti-western when he speaks of the importance of the Bible in translation. Regarding the efforts of missionaries, catechists, pastors and others with theological degrees he writes, "But none of these agents can exert or has exerted as great an impact upon the church as the Bible in the local language."[98] He indicates that when Africans (and the assumption is that he includes himself) read and hear the Bible in their own language as opposed to hearing a translator, they "see and hear descriptions parallel to those of their own traditional life" that were previously somehow obscured by the barrier of a foreign language.

He concludes his chapter by summing up the importance of having the Bible in one's own language saying,

> With the Bible in the hand, even if in only less than one third of Africa's languages, the way is sufficiently paved for the evolution of modern African Christianity. The

---

[96]Ibid. 32.

[97]Ibid. 33.

[98]Ibid.

> Gospel, backed as it is by the scriptures in local languages, is growing into African peoples and they are growing into it.[99]

Affirming in this statement the power of the Gospel, Mbiti has also written of the Gospel and Scriptures. While believing that African traditional religions can offer some degree of preparation for the Gospel, Mbiti, writing in opposition to those who would seek the Gospel within those religions writes, "We can add nothing to the Gospel for this is an eternal gift of God."[100]

Before we leave our examination of Mbiti and the Word of God we need to look at what he has to say regarding Scripture and Revelation. In "Christianity Tilts to the South: a New Challenge for Christian Ministry and Theological Education" Mbiti writes concerning the sources of doing theology in Africa. He indicates that in the North (meaning pre-dominantly Western Christianity) the sources have largely been the Bible and the tradition of the Church. Not having that long tradition, Mbiti explains that African theologians have to take into account additional sources, "the riches of our religions, our cultures and histories, as well as the experiences of the Church in its day-to-day life."[101]

In the above article he calls the Bible "an important source of doing theology."[102] Is he saying that God has another revelation of the Gospel elsewhere, perhaps within African traditional religions? He comments on this subject in his later Bible and Theology

---

[99]Ibid. 44.

[100]Mbiti, "Christianity and Traditional Religions in Africa" 438.

[101]Mbiti, "Christianity Tilts to the South: a New Challenge for Christian Ministry and Theological Education" The India Journal of Theology 33 (1974) 6.

[102]Ibid.

when he also discusses the development of African Christian theologies stating "nothing can substitute for the Bible."[103] In it he also calls for a guarding against anything like the writing of an African Old Testament "or sentiments that see any final revelation of God in the African religious heritage."[104]

And, though not as clean as we might like it to be, he quotes a Ghana conference communique in his own conviction that "The Bible is the basic source of African theology, because it is the primary witness of God's revelation in Jesus Christ."[105] We might wish it would simply say "the Bible is the source and norm of all Christian theology because it is God's revelation in Jesus Christ." As it is, the statement leaves room for God to have supplied other "witnesses" and possibly also room for universalism. He does believe that the Bible is the Word of God for he is very clear when he says of the Bible, "Obviously, the Bible does not contain blue-print answers and solutions to religious questions, but as the Word of God it gives the kind of light which is needed in the search for meaningful Christian answers."[106] And in his reviews of some of the African works on theology, he notes that in these there is considerable interest in Christology. He comes very close to confessing the Bible as God's revealed Word to us when he says, "It is only right and proper that interest should focus on Jesus Christ who is both the source and fullness of

---

[103]Mbiti, Bible and Theology in African Christianity 59.

[104]Ibid. 59.

[105]Ibid.

[106]Ibid.

life. He is the center of Christian theology, and the Bible speaks more about him and God than about any other theme."[107]

Mbiti and Theological Method

As a student of the west and a child of Africa, Mbiti has made a point of recording his observations regarding what he calls a tilt of Christianity to the south. He speaks not only of numbers of Christians but also of the shift of method. He states, "The method of doing theology is rather different in the south where theology is lived first and then written down later, starting out of practical ministry and moving into reflection."[108] These reflections are manifest in what he calls the cries and songs of the people and in the reading and hearing of God's Word in their own languages.

He sees these developments standing in contra-distinction to the theology he learned in the west in which he describes theology as "hitherto" locked up in libraries and archives. Mbiti would see African theological development move away from those shelves and into a theological language that "should be the language of the ministry, and it should bear the features and authority of the first Pentecost (Acts 2:11)."[109]

Mbiti laments the fact that during the course of their theological training, African students become "theologically circumcised" (an oft occurring phrase) in the west. They

---

[107]Ibid. 51.

[108]Mbiti, "Christianity Tilts to The South" 4.

[109]Ibid. 4.

lose contact with the life and death concerns of their own people. This circumcision he does, however, see to have a motivating effect:

> Thus we are driven to wider varieties and horizons of theological concerns, which may force us in the so-called younger churches to deviate from a great deal of Western theology . . . simply because we are driven to search for new meanings which are viable for our new concerns.[110]

Mbiti's perception of the theology of the west is that it is very lacking when it comes to Africa. He asserts that Africans must be sensitive to the strengths and weaknesses of the west and that theology must "strive for a meaningful balance between extreme over-reaction to and the blind aping of the theologies and theologians of older Christendom."[111] However, it is not clear whether it is lacking because it nas not been indigenous or because it does not meet the needs of Africans in their context.

Operating with Scripture

As one examinies Mbiti and how he operates with Scripture we have to look at what he says about how African theology operates with the Bible. While holding the Scriptures up highly as to their role in developing churches, he notes that Bible translation has not been without its problems.

> Both within mission churches as well as in independent churches, the Bible in African languages is causing a religious restlessness. It drives Christians to examine imported forms of Christian and church life, with a view, consciously or unconsciously, to criticizing, questioning, abandoning, modifying, and affirming a wide range of teachings and practices.[112]

---

[110]Mbiti, "Theological Impotence and the Universality of the Church" 257.

[111]Mbiti, "Theological Impotence . . . " 258.

[112]Mbiti, Bible and Theology 41.

He reveals that Christians in Africa are searching for what may best shape their Christianity in Africa, and "the Bible is their light in this search."[113] His words make one believe that he operates with a high degree of belief in the Scriptures as the Word of God, and therefore, as the shaper of African Theology. He feels very positively about Scripture as a superior authority over western theologies. He happily reports that

> more and more Christians would rather listen first to the Bible in their local language than to the church authority speaking from overseas centres, in matters that concern the life and death of the church, the Body of Christ in a given area.[114]

We can also say that Mbiti does not wish to see African theology develop in such a way that it is based only on parts of the Scriptures. He finds great significance in the fact that African Christianity is based on and is using the entire Bible "where the whole Bible is available in a local language, the whole People of God, the Body of Christ, are being nourished with the whole Bible."[115] He is, in fact, rather critical of a western theology which, through its obsession with scientific thought, has robbed much attention and significance from the Scriptural accounts of miracles and wonders.

> For example, the realm of miracles and wonders is given greater attention in African congregations than is generally the case in European or American congregations which have long become numbed by a scientific explanation of the world. But for the Africans, this interest points to a picture of God as the God of wonders and miracles, who makes happen what is humanly impossible or uncommon.[116]

---

[113]Ibid.

[114]Ibid. 42.

[115]Ibid. 43.

[116]Ibid.

Perhaps Mbiti best reveals how he operates with Scripture when he is speaking specifically of the importance of the Bible to the African, for that, after all, is what he is. To again refer to Bible translation, Mbiti indicates that when the Bible is in a people's own language, its authority replaces the authoritative missionary. This is a recurrent theme throughout much of his work. He states, "Instead (of a missionary) they have full access to the Word of God in their own language, without intermediary, without foreign accents and without grammatical errors, speaking with full force and full authority."[117] Thus Mbiti exhibits a rather strong equating of the Bible as the Word of God and the importance of operating with it in theology as the Word of God.

He strengthens this opinion when he goes on to compare the results of the translation with what happened at the first Pentecost, when people likewise heard the Gospel in their own language.

> The church is born afresh, it receives the pentecostal tongues of fire. As in Acts 2, the local Christians now for the first time 'hear each of us in his own language . . . we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God' (Acts 2:6-11). The Spirit of God unlocks ears and people hear the Word of God, speaking to them in its most persuasive form. Local Christians cannot remain the same after that.[118]

Another indication of how Mbiti operates with the Scriptures is found in his critique of other African scholars and theologians. He examines how the Bible in their hands is being utilized, especially in the articulation of African theological thought. Mbiti

---

[117]Ibid. 26.

[118]Ibid.

is especially critical of two types of theologians in particular, those that approach the Bible with a strong liberation theology bias, and, those who do not use what he terms sound scholarship of the scriptures. He has high praise for the work of Professor Kwesi Dickson, The History and Religion of Israel, and of Professor Harry Sawyerr, Creative Evangelism, noting them to be "based on sound scholarship of the scriptures" and "very biblically grounded".[119]

Mbiti, having been a part of the development of African Theology for roughly 30 years is really a pioneer. The situation in Africa is such that there are a relatively small number of African theologians who have been trained in biblical studies at a university level, however, Mbiti notes that the number is increasing rapidly. He also advocates the need of such growth noting that

> while the Bible is a very popular and highly valued book, it has its profound side which requires a certain amount of learning, in order to understand it more deeply. African Christianity needs this learning, in order to understand and use the Bible more meaningfully.[120]

Within the scope of how Mbiti operates with Scripture, we need to take a brief look at three remaining issues: oral communication, Liberation theology, and the ecumenical movement. These have all had a more than passing influence on Christianity in Africa and Mbiti lives and breathes in a theological climate that is still permeated by them.

---

[119]Ibid. 47

[120]Ibid. 46.

Oral communication was in many cases and for a long period of time, the only communication of the Gospel many Africans encountered. Mbiti, while very supportive of the Bible in written form, finds what is for him a satisfying parallel in the development of the early Christian church. He notes that "In the first fifteen to twenty years after the death and resurrection of our Lord, the early Christians circulated stories of his life and teaching largely through oral communication."[121] Yet, while noting this parallel, Mbiti neither advocates an "African New Testament" based on oral development, nor is he saying that the Gospels were written based on these stories or early oral traditions of the early church. Likewise he does not call for a contextualizing of the Gospels with context as the starting point. It seems that his point is simply to make his readers aware of the importance of oral communication both then and now.

As was mentioned briefly earlier in his critique of some theologians, Mbiti is familiar with Liberation theology themes, especially those which are seeking a place in the development of African theology. We noted earlier that contextualization is one of the manifestations of Liberation theology in Africa as its proponents seek a freeing from the "oppression" of western thought, in some cases including the Bible since its development is seen as primarily western. Mbiti offers a caution concerning the development of this and other Liberation theology:

> One must, however, point out that even though there is much biblical basis for this theme, African discussion of liberation has so far continued without, or with few, scriptural references. This neglect of the biblical backing to the theology of liberation in Africa is a very alarming omission which calls for urgent correction,

---

[121]Ibid. 54.

> otherwise this branch of African theology will lose its credibility and respectability.[122]

Mbiti is subject to not only Liberation theology influences but also to the ecumenical movement. Stressing the impact of the Bible on the church, he references a conference of African theologians held in Accra, Ghana in December 1977. The final conference communique affirmed:

> The Bible is the basic source of African theology, because it is the primary witness of God's revelation in Jesus Christ. No theology can retain its Christian identity apart from scripture. The Bible is not simply an historical book about the people of Israel; through a re-reading of this scripture in the social context of our struggle for our humanity, God speaks to us in the midst of our troublesome situation. This divine Word is not an abstract proposition but an event in our lives, empowering us to continue in the fight for our full humanity.[123]

As we can see from this statement, with which Mbiti is in agreement (a portion of which we quoted earlier) there is an affirmation of the Bible as the source of African theology, a binding of theology to Scripture, and a denial that the Bible is a merely historical book about a particular people. This would indicate that Mbiti, at least, would not study the Bible as any other book.

Critical Analysis

Mbiti strongly affirms in more than one of his writings and more than once within a writing, that Scripture is the Word of God. What we cannot say to a full degree of certainty is to what extent he considers Scripture to be the Word of God. For, while he

---

[122]Ibid. 55.

[123]Kofi Appiah-Kubi and Sergio Toprres, eds., "African Theology en Route" (New York, Orbis Books,, 1979) 192f.

does offer praise for those places in which the Bible is available in full, and he does indicate that it is God who is speaking now in the language of the people, there is left an uncertainty as to the authorship of the Scriptures. Does he believe the writers were divinely inspired and wrote by the Holy Spirit? Or, does he believe that the Gospels were compiled by "editors" some time after the oral communication of the gospel had been circulating?

On the one hand it is reassuring to hear him affirm the Bible as God's Word and chastise western theologians as being too scientific in their treatment of the study of Scripture. Yet, it is disturbing to hear him speak, as recently as 1987, of the Bible "as the sacred book of one religious tradition out of many religions."[124] This statement in particular leaves him open to at least an accusation of sympathy, if not alliance with, contextualizing theologians.

Such inconsistencies seem most evident when Mbiti is writing under the umbrella of ecumenism. When he is sticking to the Bible, he seems to uphold it very highly, treating the Scriptures, not at all as ordinary writings, nor as one among many words of God, but as the powerful Word of God that is creating Christians in Africa and, especially when present in a people's language, causing the dramatic growth of the church. In addition he affirms that Jesus is God's Son and that the Scriptures testify of this when he uses words like "primary witness". Yet, the mere word "primary" leaves one to wonder if he also believes there are other revelations of Jesus Christ.

---

[124]Mbiti, "An Ecumenical Approach to Teaching the Bible"

This is the tangential point of contextualizing theological method. If Mbiti believes there is another revelation of Christ, then the question becomes, "where is that revelation?" One answer would be that Christ is revealed somehow, some way within the religions that have always been present in Africa. The task of a theologian, then, would be to take the witness of Scripture (as a word of God), and to take the witness of African traditional theologies, especially as they reveal likeness to Christ, or liberation, or mercy or grace, and blend these into a distinctive African theology.

However, Mbiti's critique of liberation theologians prevents us from labeling him a thorough-going contextualizer. It is important to recall the "context" in which Mbiti works. Mbiti and African theology have been "hit" with the Bible and western theology in a rather all at once fashion, relatively speaking. We, on the other hand, have had the Bible for 2,000 years of western history. He seems to have a much more difficult "sorting out" task to undertake.

Allowing for the difference in history and development, the best we can perhaps say is that while Mbiti seeks to be faithful to Scripture as the Word of God, and encourages a method more in line with indigenization, he is inconsistent in his view of the Bible and its use. While advocating its use, he would maintain it to be God's Word and His revelation to us of His Son Jesus Christ. He insists that Christ is the center and even asserts that we can add nothing to the Gospel. But he leaves room for universalism and contextualization. We are left unsure (despite his critique of some theologians above) as to whether he finds more gospel outside the Scriptures, as to whether God has revealed

himself in other religion's writings, and these uncertainties are consistent with one who advocates contextualization as a viable theological method.

Mbiti does leave us hoping, however, that the above inconsistencies are at least happy ones for the future of theology in Africa. Concerning the promising development which he sees in African theology he calls for African scholars to give more attention to the Bible and leaves us with this commitment to the Scriptures, "As long as we keep the scriptures close to our minds and close to our hearts, our theology will render viable and relevant service to the church, and adequately communicate the Word of the Lord to the peoples of our times."[125] It is this type of statement that leaves us to assess Mbiti as one who operates with Scripture as that which enters and informs the context, rather than a contextual approach that sees the context as that which informs and enters and norms the Scriptures.

CONTEXTUALIZATION AND THE LATIN AMERICAN CONTEXT

Though the term "contextualization" came out of a predominantly African context, the principle of "context as norm" is one which runs across all forms of liberation theologies, including our next area of examination, Latin American Liberation Theology. Whereas earlier we examined a particular theologian, our attention turns now to that of a particular movement. We will examine contextualization through the eyes of several Latin American Liberation Theologians.

---

[125]Mbiti, Bible and Theology. 63.

Context may be likened to the soil or seed-bed of Liberation theology. While not claiming the exclusive right to its production, Liberation theology as it has been developed, grows out of specific contexts as they are found throughout the world. In the words of Rosemary Ruether, a feminist liberation theologian, "The theology of liberation today stands in a global context."[126] In other words, not only is contextualization part and parcel of the method of Liberation theology, as a method Liberation theology began and grew out of the modern global context.

Ruether astutely assesses the unique position of Latin American Liberation theology within the realm of contemporary theologies. It is unique in the sense of its context. And, while overall, theology of liberation does stand in a global context, it is within the context of Latin America, specifically, that it has taken root and grown.

It is within the "modern global context" that Ruether sees in Latin American Liberation Theology (henceforth, "Liberation Theology") the fulfilling of a distinctive role in its relationship to all contemporary theologies of liberation, feminist, black, African, etc.

> For Christians, Latin America has a very special role in the development of a theology of revolution or a theology of liberation. It is in Latin America that the political theologies of hope, or liberation or of revolution, which European and American theologians, such as Jurgen Moltmann, or Harvey Cox have been developing, may take real root.[127]

---

[126]Rosemary Ruether, Liberation Theology: Human Hope Confronts Christian History and American Power (New York: Paulist Press, 1972), 175. Ruether, a feminist, provides an illustration of how contextualization cuts across various Liberation theologies. Writing as a feminist, she recognizes the debt that is owed to Latin American Liberation theologians who were among the first to argue and act for a theology that has its roots in the context of its people.

[127]Ruether, 176.

We must ask why it is in Latin America that this ripening of European and American theologies into something distinctive has taken place. The answer, according to Liberation theologians, is to be found in the unique Latin American context. And primarily, that unique context is one in which Christians are engaged in Marxist revolutionary movements in an economy that is by and large "third world." In the words of Ruether, "the contribution of Latin America is unique because it is the only region in the world where a predominately Christian people are aligned with the revolutionary developments of the Third World."[128]

Gustavo Gutiérrez assesses the Latin American context as one of underdevelopment and dependence. He understands this context as not resulting from mere happenstance. In his estimation the underdeveloped context of Latin America is "the end result of a process."[129] It is an end result which Gutiérrez feels necessitates its study historically in relationship to those who are developed, namely "the great capitalist countries."

> The underdevelopment of the poor countries, as an overall social fact appears in its true light: as the historical by-product of the development of other countries.[130]

Through these eyes, underdevelopment is then seen as "historical by-product" of the developed countries. Developed nations (synonymous with capitalist nations) are

---

[128]Ruether, 176.

[129]Gustavo Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation. trans., ed. Sister Caridad Inda and John Eagleson, 15th Anniversary Edition. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), 51.

[130]Gutiérrez, 51.

guilty of developing at the expense of those who are relatively underdeveloped. Gutiérrez's dynamics of a capitalist economy includes those at the center, i.e., the developed nations, and those at the periphery. It is his claim, but not uniquely his, that Latin America was born on the periphery. It was born in a context of dependency. That context of conception was the era of colonialization. It is Gutiérrez' thesis that one must start from "this initial situation of dependence"[131] if one is to gain a true understanding of the unique Latin American situation.

It is not enough, however, to simply study this situation in an academic manner. Gutiérrez maintains that the "situation of dependence" contributed to a different social structure than that of those countries at the center. One must be a part of that structure. And the structure of the "situation" must be examined from point of view of the dominated countries. In the opinion of Gutiérrez and other Liberation theologians, this is a perspective previously overlooked. It was non-contextual. The new perspective should lead to discovering "a reformulation of the theory of imperialism,"[132] not dependent on the theories of those studying it from the perspective of the "center".

This, then, is the unique Latin American situation of which Ruether speaks. According to Gutiérrez, this resultant theory of a Latin American dependence necessitates liberation. Liberation is necessary for the "authentic development of Latin Americans."[133] And to be authentic and complete, liberation has to be undertaken by the oppressed, those

---

[131]Gutiérrez, 51.

[132]Gutiérrez, 53.

[133]Gutiérrez, 54.

on the periphery themselves and stem from values proper to them.[134] This means it must be generated by the context and from the context.

This contextual situation is the vantage point from which Liberation theologians like Leonardo and Clodovis Boff view theology. In their words Liberation theology is "more than just a theology." It is a sociology, a psychology, an economy, and more. It means, as Gutiérrez says, "to see the becoming of humankind as a process of human emancipation in history . . . where humanity is the artisan of its own destiny".[135] It is the building of a NEW humanity and is everything that goes into liberation from a de-humanizing situation to a reality that is fully human.

> It represents the Church of a whole continent--a Church caught up in the historical process of a people on the move. There are people behind liberation theology, there is struggle, there is life. The theology of liberation is sympotomatic of a process, a process at once ecclesial and social. Behind liberation theology stand not books, but people. What is at stake is that "telltale difference" between theory and practice.[136]

As a "process" we should read it as extra-biblical theology. Its starting point is not that which comes down from above, that is, God's Word as revealed in the Bible. Rather, the starting point is the South American continent, the Latin American experience, people. It is contextual. The reality of a theology that is grassroots and "of the common people," a theology that is involvement and "speaks of the concrete life of the people" especially in terms of liberation is not only commended but is congratulated.

---

[134]Gutierrez, 57.

[135]Gutiérrez, 56.

[136]Leonardo and Clodovis Boff. Liberation Theology: From Confrontation to Dialogue. trans. Robert R. Barr, (San Francisco: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1986), 6.

> It is perhaps the greatest merit of the theology of liberation to have succeeded in doing with theology what Socrates did with philosophy. As Cicero tells, Socrates `brought philosophy down from the clouds to earth.' In other words, he made it walk on its own feet.[137]

But who determines what those feet are? Are they the feet of Jesus? In the mind of the Liberation theologian, the answer is yes. From a critical standpoint, we respond, "no". The determiner is the context. Jesus' feet are stood upon only in so far as His feet are judged worthy to stand upon based on the context. The reality is that contextual theology truly is a "grassroots" theology, a theology growing up from below rather than a theology that is from above. The question used to be, "How can I get it right in my struggle with God?" The question now is more likely, "Where is God in the struggle of man?"

Methodology and Contextualization

To apply Gutiérrez' theory of dependence, it is necessary to make known this "reality" of dependence. The reality, according to Liberation thought, is that the people are not aware of their situation. The task is to "conscientize" them to a grasp of the true reality which is the situation of dependence. This "making known" has been called a "pedagogy of the oppressed."[138] It seeks to link theory with praxis so that the oppressed perceive and modify their relationship with the world. This is "conscientization." It means rejecting an oppressive consciousness, recognizing the real situation and formulating a

---

[137]Boff, 8.

[138]This term is taken from the title of Paulo Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed. trans. Myra Bergman Ramos, (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970).

language that is contextual and relevant. By nature it is ever changing, non-static, because it is always responding to the situation.[139]

The theory of conscientization is based upon the educational theory of Paulo Freire. Freire's work is not primarily theological but pedagogical. Developing a theory of education for the illiterate, Freire proposes a "dialogical" method over and against the more traditional method of education which he labels "antidialogical" and oppressive. The "Freireian" exercise is dialogue with the underlying assumption that there is not one truth which results in a "monologue." Rather there are truths which through dialogue are synthesized into a truth. Says Freire, "Dialogue is the encounter between men, mediated by the world, in order to name the world."[140] "Naming the world" means using words, language to change the world. Change is a necessity of human existence and, according to Freire, speaking transforms.

The Freire method is contextual in that the synthesized product is a result of dialogue which has its roots in the culture and experience of the speaker. In this method, great emphasis is laid on developing a "language" which, because it is contextual, will be able to transform. The transformation is not one which comes from without, but is transformation from within.

Based on Freirean pedagogy, the brothers Boff have developed a three part methodology. The first level is called "Dialectical Structuralism." Another way of speaking is to call it "seeing." It exhibits itself as a movement from (1) structure to (2) a

---

[139]Gutiérrez, 57.

[140]Freire, 76.

radical critical awareness to (3) liberation. By structure, the Boffs mean the prevailing relationships between "those who hold capital and the rest of society."[141] Radical critical awareness is the gaining of a consciousness that grasps the interplay of the structure. It is sometimes called "conscientization."

> Radical criticism calls for a new form of organization for the whole of society, an organization on other bases--no longer from a point of departure of the capital held in the hands of a few, but an organization of society based on everyone's labor. . . . And this is called liberation.[142]

The second level is called "Hermeneutic Mediation" or "Judging." "Hermeneutic Mediation" means to interpret or build a bridge between now and the Word of God.[143] Briefly, it is the Liberation theology theory that the Bible speaks from a given context, a context of liberation, but a context of different mentalities and words. The task is to comprehend the Word of God so that it serves to guide action. The ingredients are "faith, scripture, and tradition." The task of comprehension is three-fold: the evaluation of "a situation in terms of salvation history," "reading our faith-tradition in terms of a liberating critique or criticism," and engaging in "a theological reading of the whole of human activity."[144]

The final level is the "Mediation of Pastoral Practice: Acting." This is the step in which all that has gone before is now put into action that is necessitated by the context.

---

[141]Boff, Salvation and Liberation, 8.

[142]Boff, 8.

[143]Ibid., 9.

[144]Boff, 9-19.

The theologian and the church seek to take an account of the interaction of all social, economic and political forces in order to identify how the church "can perform liberating activity".[145] The Church must "articulate" in its catechesis, liturgy, and practice in terms of and in the direction toward liberation.

In this dialectic, the question that must be asked, is "what is finally the norm or rule of theology?" The answer comes back: the norm is the context. Only that "theology" which meets the criteria of the context will be accepted as a valid theology. This means that there will be as many theologies as there are contexts. With a hermeneutic that is basically "scripture and context" with context as the rudder that steers the method, the avenues for development are multitudinous. Boff exhibits an awareness of this aspect/problem of context and theology. "The critical point seems to me to reside mostly in the first moment, that of the socio-analytical interpretation of historico-social reality."[146]

Letty Russell summarizes this methodology with its analyses that are individual, numerous and most probably divergent by calling it "experimental."

> They (liberation theologies) try to express the gospel in the light of the experience of oppression out of which they are written, whether that be racial or sexual, social or economic, psychological or physical.[147]

She recognizes it as truly contextual. Because it is primarily an inductive approach and experimental (in the sense that it follows a rather scientific methodology of

---

[145]Boff, 11.

[146]Boff, 13

[147]Letty M. Russell, Human Liberation in a Feminist Perspective--A Theology. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1974), 54.

hypothesis, data gathering, experimentation, conclusion, re-hypothesis, etc.) it is "very much dependent on the corporate support of the community of faith and action out of which it grows."[148] In the case of Latin America, that corporate identity is the small communities of faith, or base ecclesial communities. This is where theology is done. This is where Liberation theologians insist it must be done, from within the context as part of the context.

Though potentially divergent, common themes do emerge according to Russell. Prominent among them is that of humanization. "Each culture or subculture, each ideology, each religion explains the reality of human nature in its own way."[149] This is the result of engaging in the Boffs' first level, "Dialectical Structuralism: Seeing." Another theme, and this corresponds to the second Boff/Freire level is "conscientization" which emerges out of the "analysis of the world as history." According to Freire conscientization is an "ongoing process of learning to perceive social, economic and political contradictions and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality."[150] The third theme which emerges is one of dialogue and community-building. This is the "Mediation of Pastoral Practice: Acting" stage. It is where the theologian most specifically carries out the pastoral role. That role is to move the church onward toward liberation through the dialogue of this "experimental" method.

---

[148]Russell, 55.

[149]Russell, 63.

[150]Freire, 19.

There remain at least two more common themes running through Liberation theologies. Because Liberation theology is contextual, it cannot be merely academics. "Liberation theology cannot be understood merely by reading books and articles."[151] One must engage oneself in the context. The context holds the key to theology. Books will naturally be written but these must be books "connected with the soil of the Church and of society, from which these writings have sprung."[152]

Secondly, Liberation theology cannot apply to, be applied or understood by those outside of the context.

> "the theology of liberation can be understood only by two groups of persons: the poor, and those who struggle for justice at their side. . . . Conversely liberation theology is not understood, nor can it be understood, by the satiated and satisfied--by those comfortable with the status quo.[153]

The Effect of Contextualization on Theological Development

Liberation Theology asks the "basic question," "What is God for a continent of the poor such as Latin America? How does God reveal himself to the oppressed?"[154] The implication is that He goes about it differently in different contexts. Indeed, we have seen the Boffs declare that "The theology of liberation tries to bridge the gap between the Mystery of God and the history of human beings" through the method outlined above.[155]

---

[151]Boff, Liberation Theology, 10.

[152]Boff, 10.

[153]Boff, 10.

[154]Boff, 24.

[155]Boff, 24. See also above.

But the context is not merely the point of departure for the method of doing theology, the context is also the destination. As Liberation theology goes about the task of developing a contextual language or "history," it will no longer be God who writes history, but men and women. This is "humanization" at its fullest. Rubem Alves believes first of all that the vision of human liberation will become historical "by the powers of man alone."[156] He elaborates:

> Humanization is man's task. It is a form of optimism that combines a confidnce in man's vocation for freedom, his determination to create a new future, and a confidence in the openness of history to this activity of man.[157]

Applying his theory to the Bible, he believes that Israel had no dogmatic idea of God prior to the development of their history. Rather, due to their determination to be free they experienced their history.

> From the historical reality of the liberating facts, a new language emerges as something aposteriori [sic] that speaks about God as the power of human liberation which expressed itself in and through the formative events of the life of the community.[158]

Thus God has life only because and as the community has life. God belongs to them because He is their history as formulated by their language.

The same is applied to the biblical communities of the New Testament. As their consciousness "emerged from and was bound to historical events, a new way of using the

---

[156]Rubem A. Alves. A Theology of Human Hope. (St. Meinrad, IN: Abbey Press, 1975), 86.

[157]Alves, 86.

[158]Alves, 90.

powers of reason was created."[159] The Christ was born in this context. Jesus, rather "the figure of Jesus" is the Word of God assuming "not just Human nature in general . . . but the human nature of a particular human being in an altogether determinate social condition."[160] Jesus' context was that of a poor laborer who demonstrated a preference for the poor. Jesus is "the historical victim of a plot laid by the mighty of his time. . . . It was by this route, death on a cross, that the Son of God revealed and realized the salvation of human beings."[161]

As in African contextual theology, the Christ of this Christology is not the Christ "who was crucified, died and was buried and on the third day rose again." This is a universal "Christ-ness" that is understood to be present in each context, perhaps germinally, waiting to be grown into a full-blown contextualized and thus, a supposedly more relevant Christ than that of the Bible as it has been westernized.

In the words of Jon Sobrino, "Wittingly or unwittingly every Christology is elaborated within the context of a specific situation."[162]

This is not to say that there is NO connection between the contextualized and the historic Jesus Christ. The historic Jesus is paradigmatic for the Christ of the context. "The kind of hermeneutics used in Christology must do justice to two realities. First, it

---

[159]Alves, 91.

[160]Boff, 27.

[161]Boff, 27.

[162]Jon Sobrino, Christology at the Crossroads: A Latin American Approach. trans. John Drury, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1978), 347.

must do justice to the real situation today so that Christ will really be comprehensible."[163] Here we have the hermeneutic judged by the context. "Second, it must do justice to the history of Jesus himself so that the now comprehensible Christ is not simply a wraith conjured up by present-day Christians."[164] It must be a responsible Christ, responsible to Scripture and to the context.

CONCLUSION

The Christ and/or gospel of any contextualized theology leaves one very unsatisfied, uncertain of one's relationship with God, and with hope only in the self. There is no certainty. Such theologies lack the objectivity in which we find so much joy when we cling to the Christ of the Scriptures as revealed in the Scriptures alone. But a study of contextualization can prove valuable in several ways.

One valuable lesson to be learned is that of appreciation. The world in which we live is multi-cultural. We are not the only ones who possess the Scriptures, nor are we the only ones who struggle with their interpretation and application. Through the study of men like John Mbiti, who also struggle with the theological task in very different contexts, including ecumenical influences, liberation theologies, and traditional tribal religions, we learn to appreciate and understand the enormity of their task. We also grow to appreciate the value of the work of the theologians (especially those who are confessional and

---

[163]Sobrino, 349.

[164]Sobrino, 349.

scriptural) who have gone on before us and have handed down such a wealth of knowledge to us.

A second value of such a study is the opportunity to observe the development of a particular heresy within the church. Contextualization did not suddenly spring upon the scene. It began with good intentions, intentions that sought to be faithful to the Great Commission of our Lord (Matthew 28). But as it developed, it shifted or was shifted from a foundation on the Word to a whole new foundation; namely that of context. And, if one were to press the development a bit further, we might ask "What is the final context?" And the answer would ultimately be the context of one, the context of self, so that in the end what is essentially developing is not new at all. It is just the religion of Eden, the religion of Adam and Eve who replaced God's will with their own will. Only now the sin bears a new name, "contextualization" and comes dressed in the language of theology.

And, finally, one can learn to apply the lessons of contextualization to issues that are not only third world. Such a study prompts one to ever be aware of what the true foundation of any new movement or theology might be. With "context awareness" one can examine the issues of church growth, missions, or radical feminism to mention a few. It would be a very interesting further study to apply the concept of contextualization to those theologies that deny infant baptism or the real presence in the Lord's Supper. One could ask two diagnostic questions as an approach to any of the above:

How do I apply what has been given, namely God's Word as given, to this issue?

How do I apply my context (sexuality, theology, issue,etc.) to sripture?

If the second question is that which steers us, then we are in danger of contextualizing. However, if it is the first question that steers our study, then we are on the firm foundation of God's Word. It is not we who inform God. It is God's Word that informs us.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

CONTEXTUALIZATION

Aid to Theological Education--Continued--Africa, Asia, Latin America: A Report from the Theological Education Fund, 1968-1969. London: The Theological Education Fund, 1970.

Bevans, Stephen. "Models of Contextual Theology." Missiology 13:8.2 (April 1985).

Commission on World Mission and Evangelism. From Mexico City to Bangkok. Report of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism. Geneva: WCC, 1972.

Ecumenical Responses to Theological Education in Africa, Asia, Near East, South Pacific, Latin America, Caribbean. Progress Report on the TEF Third Mandate Programme. A Report from the Theological Education Fund, London: The Theological Education Fund, 1973.

Five Years: A Report from the Theological Education Fund, 1958-1963. New York: The Theological Education Fund, 1963.

Fleming, Bruce C.E. Contextualization of Theology: An Evangelical Assessment. Pasadena: The William Carey Library, 1980.

Hwang, C.H. (Shoki Coe). "A Rethinking of Theological Training for the Ministry in the Younger Churches Today." South East Asia Journal of Theology 4.2 (October 1962): 7-24.

Issues in Theological Education, 1964-1965--Asia, Africa, Latin America: A Report of the Theological Education Fund. New York: The Theological Educatin Fund, 1965.

Koch, John. "Contextualization and a Confessional Church." Lutheran Theological Journal 19.3 (December 1985): 131-141.

Lienemann-Perrin, Christine. Training for a Relevant Ministry: A Study of the Contribution of the Theological Education Fund. Madras, Spain: The Christian Literature Society, in Association with the Programme on Theological Education, WCC, Geneva, 1981.

Mackie, Steven G. Patterns of Ministry: Theological Eduation in a Changing World. London: Theological Education Fund, 1969.

Ministry in Context, The Third Mandate Programme of the Theological Eduation Fund (1970-1977). TEF Staff, ed., Bromley, England: The Theological Education Fund, 1972).

Nicholls, Bruce J. "Doing Theology in Context." Evangelical Review of Theology 11 (April 1987): 101-106.

Morris, Raymond P. A Theological Book List. England: The Theological Education Fund of the International Missionary Council for Theological Seminaries and Colleges in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the South West Pacific, 1960.

TEF, Aid to Theological Education; Africa, Asia, Latin America: A Report from the Theological Education Fund, 1965-1967. London: The Theological Education Fund, 1968.

The South East Asia Journal of Theology 17.1 (January 1976): i-ii.

World Council of Churches, Central Committee. Uppsala to Nairobi 1968-1975: Report of the Central Committee to the Fifth Assembly of the World Council of Churches. gen. ed. David Enderton Johnson. New York: Friendship Press, 1975.

World Council of Churches, Central Committee. Nairobi to Vancouver 1975-1983: Report of the Central Committee to the Sixth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1983.

World Council of Churches, Central Committee. Evanston to New Delhi 1954-1961: Report of the Central committee to the Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches. World Council of Churches: Geneva, 1961.

Zorn, Herbert M. Viability in Context: A Study of the Financial Viability of theological Education in the Third World--Seedbed or Sheltered Garden? London: The Theological Education Fund, 1975.

AFRICAN CONTEXT

Appiah-Kubi, Kofi and Sergio Toprres, eds. African Theology en Route (New York: Orbis Books, 1979.

Mbiti, John S. Bible and Theology in African Christianity. Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1986.

_____. "Christianity Tilts to the South: a New Challenge for Christian Ministry and Theological Education." The India Journal of Theology 33 (1974): 3-8.

_____. "Christianity and Traditional Religions in Africa." International Review of Mission 59 (October 1970): 430-440.

_____. "An Ecumenical Approach to Teaching the Bible" Ecumenical Review 39 (October 1987): 407-412.

_____. "Theological Impotence and the Universality of the Church" Lutheran World 9 (1972): 253-260.

LATIN AMERICAN CONTEXT

Alves, Rubem A. A Theology of Human Hope. St. Meinrad, IN: Abbey Press, 1975.

Boff, Leonardo and Clovis. Liberation Theology: From Confrontatioon to Dialogue. trans. Robert R. Barr, San Francisco: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1986.

Freire, Paulo. Pedagogy of the Oppressed. trans. Myra Bergman Ramos, New York: Herder and Herder, 1970.

Gutiérrez, Gustavo. A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation. trans., ed. Sister Caridad Inda and John Eagleson, 15th Anniversary Edition. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988.

Russell, Letty M. Human Liberation in a Feminist Perspective--A Theology. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1974.

Sobrino, Jon. Christology at the Crossroads: A Latin American Approach. trans. John Drury, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1978.