

## **MODELS OF CONTEXTUAL THEOLOGY**

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(Orbis 1992, expanded in 2002)

(Ch1) **static imported theology is oppressive** – e.g. pouring water over Masai woman's head curses her to barrenness.

God became particular flesh – revealed more in concrete reality than ideas!

Theology reveals God's presence in a sacramental world.

God's offer of relationship can only be in the other's context.

A Catholic Church must respond to every culture – witness to *pleroma* Christ.

### (Ch2) **Experience & Tradition are poles in dialogue**

Theology in USA may be a paper; Africa discussion on proverb; India Dance.

The People are best contextualisers, outsider though may see something new.

- Creation orientation – analytical and positive. [ see Forrester's Aristotle]
- Redemption orientation – dialogical and correctional. [Forrester's Marx]

'Contextualisation' includes economic, cultural, political.

'Indigenisation' mostly cultural and not critical nor transformatory.

(But guard against cultural romanticism)

### **MODELS OF CONTEXTUAL THEOLOGY to be described later**

Anthropological/ Indiginisation

Transcendental/ Subjective

Praxis/ Faith seeking

Synthetic/ Parallels between cultures

Translation/ adaptation

Countercultural/ engagement

#### **(Ch4) TRANSLATION MODEL (adaptation model)**

##### ***focuses on Christian identity in continuity***

Core Gospel message is unchanging deposit of truth.

Brush off the husk and put this Kernel into new terms to suit culture

Truth is culture-free and is put into cultural husk so humans can understand.

Church Planting. 'Insertion'.

*Can we discern an agreed kernel as propositional? Naïve about cultures?*

#### **(Ch5) ANTHROPOLOGICAL MODEL (indigenisation model)**

##### ***focuses on Christian identity in particular context***

Categories of human life become the criteria since God in everything.

God here before us so take off our shoes in another culture. (Max Warren)

Theologian is a treasure hunter – creation is good with grandeur of God.

Attentive listening – meditation. Meet God in the midst, don't impose ideas.

Evangeliser is changed too as Gospel takes on new shapes.

*Culturally naïve & romantic?*

#### **(Ch6) PRAXIS MODEL**

##### ***focuses on Christian identity in ever-changing social context.***

**Was identified with Liberation Theology but now used in emerging discipline called 'practical theology'.**

Context is a changing thing so: God is found in culture but also history. Therefore has a future motive. Revelation is presence of God in history.

*[could we not give equal prominence to space/place?]*

“not only hear the word but do it” (James1:2)

'Praxis': in Frankfurt School of Horkheimer, Adorno, Habermas & Freire

'Orthopraxis': To interpret and change the world.

The lost coin was that Bible is story of struggle for transformation in society and in our relation to God. *“Faith seeking intelligent action”*<sup>73</sup>

*“We reject as irrelevant an academic type of theology that is divorced from action. We are prepared for a radical break in epistemology which makes commitment the first act of theology and engages in critical reflection on praxis of the reality of the Third World.”* Dar es Salaam, Tanzania 1976. 3<sup>rd</sup> World Theologians (73)

*“a person becomes a theologian by living, by dying, and by being damned, not by understanding, reading and speculating.”* Luther 82 [“Vivendo, immo moriendo et damnando fit theologus, non intelligendo, legendo aut speculando.” WA 5.162.28]

Spiral: 1)doing the truth 2)analyse actions 3)reread tradition – to create a new theory which cuts through to the heart of things. 4)action once more into a new first step.  
*[so Segundo may be wrong and theology is in all four steps]*

This action/reflection is a better epistemology

People today are more interested in living like Jesus than credal formulae.

Examples hard to find [no!] Leonardo *“Boff is certainly aware of the importance of praxis in the theological enterprise, but several of his books do not immediately reflect the method of praxis at the heart of their construction.”* 79

**(Ch7) SYNTHETIC MODEL** (Aylward Shorter & Robert Schreiter)

**A synthesis of all the models, which dialogues with other cultural perspectives. Two parallel tracks not a spiral.**

Hegelian creative dialectic – an analogical, conversational model.

Every culture is a unique composite which in turn shares something with other cultures; and we learn our identity by conversation with other cultures.

Shorter starts with local culture but brings the Xn tradition strongly into play.

### **Not so much a theological method as the art of cross-pollination**

#### Schreiter's method/art map

- Listen for patterns
- Analyse culture to see its system of symbols (thick description)
- Theological themes thus surfaced are put into dialogue with Gospel tradition

[Might sell out and be wishy-washy?]

#### *Waterbuffalo Theology & Mt Fuji and Mt Sinai*

– Kosuke Koyama

Tends to see a supracultural gospel – universal word, but treats Buddhist theology with respect.

Asian cyclic history vs Western linear history = spiral of history

God on periphery of life with the poor

God is impassioned (not eastern non-involvement)

#### *The Resurrection in the Filipino Context* essay,

– Jose de Mesa

a suffering Christ, beaten and humiliated. So 'resurrection' is not much stated but God's triumph is seen in Xt the King, Ascension, vindication, Parousia.

## **(Ch8) TRANSCENDENTAL MODEL or SUBJECTIVE MODEL**

### **Kant, Rahner, Lonergan, Aquinas: modern subjectivity.**

“bringing to speech” who I/we really are in our context of particular history.

**This subject experiences God.**

**As ‘self in context’ and ‘self in God’ interact (blades of scissors) so the self addresses Tradition and Experience.** (like an artist seeking understanding)

Many cultures but one human mode of subjective thought.

Many artists, musicians etc operate this way – action then follows.

Jesus uses parables in this way – to shock awareness (Sally McFague) McFague uses new metaphor to seek new insights into God – friend, mother, lover, the world as God’s body – explicitly helpful to our historical predicament.

### (Ch9) **COUNTERCULTURAL MODEL or ENGAGEMENT MODEL**

#### ***An alternative world view – Prophetic mode***

*“If it is truly revelation, it will involve contradiction, and call for conversion, for a radical metanoia, a U-turn of the mind”* Lesslie Newbigin *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture* (London SPCK, 1986) p6

Anti-Christian nature of Western culture ~ cf Kairos Document 1985.

OT is strongly counter-cultural. Tertullian, “What has Athens to do with Jrm?”

Anabaptists, Dorothy Day.

Not anti-cultural, Culture is not an evil, but it must be led by Gospel.

So St John uses thought forms of Hellenistic era but forcefully critical of them.

Not western abstracts of justice & virtue but beatitudes of Gospel.

**Practice is crucial:** communal prayer and study, worship and witness. Unmasking the powers.

1. recognise authenticity of Christian Story
2. engage with whole world, not withdrawal

We have ceased to be chaplains to the culture which has relegated faith to the private sphere. Resident aliens (IPeter)

*Missional Church* ed Darrell Guder :

Look at culture through Christian lens

Allow church to be a sign or foretaste of Kingdom – charter is Beatitudes

Apostolic succession means a church shaped for this mission – no compromise with state which keeps oppressed in place.

Gandhi ~ “non-cooperation with evil is a moral duty”

Danger of exclusivism since it must purify itself of its surrounding culture.

#### CONCLUSIONS:

Use praxis for radical social change.

Use Translation for guarding the doctrinal expression and inserting.

Use Transcendental for critiquing the translation into our culture.

Use Anthropological for situations where local culture is ignored

Use Synthetic for capturing complexity of a downtrodden identity