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BOOK REVIEW

Naiju Jose Kalambukattu, ed., *Theologizing in Context: A Hermeneutic of Living Dialogue between the Word and the World* (Samanvaya Contextual Theology Series 6), Bengaluru: Dharmaram Publications, 2019, Pages: xxiv+243. ISBN 978-93-84964-57-3.

Men and women created in the image and likeness of their Creator, fix their quest for contextualization in God and in the Scriptures, where a ubiquitous God manifests and relates contextually to his people in time and space. Church always struggled to be faithful and steadfast in interpreting and living the divine revelation contextually, making its mission historically relevant. The aggiornamento cry of the Second Vatican Council reinvigorated contextualization of theologising and priestly formation; and several initiatives began to appear everywhere, including India.

Samanvaya Theology College, Bhopal was one among them launched and thrived with a pioneering spirit. The book under review should be viewed and assessed from this context. This book is both a retrospection and a forward gaze of those engaged in the agonising challenge of contextualization of theology and seminary formation carried out in Samanvaya Theology College. The sharing of their knowledge and experience acquired through involvements in various contextual situation with the readers makes the work a literary treat worth relishing. Naiju Jose Kalambukattu, the editor, has successfully and ingeniously collected, edited and arranged eighteen scholarly papers into a single book that presents information about various aspects of contextual theology and formation in a coherent fashion.

This paperback, attractive, and beautifully edited book is a moderate volume of 250 pages, good for easy but also serious reading written in simple language comprehensible to all, and is available at an affordable price. There is little doubt that this work is one of the best reference materials to libraries and to the teachers, students and formation personnel of seminaries and theological faculties. Formators and others connected with theological education or

priestly or religious formation should read it at least once. The Foreword by Benny Thettayil, Message by Bishop Joseph Kollampampil and the Preface by Josey Thamarassery set the tone of this book. Introduction by Naiju Jose Kalambukattu, the editor of the book, explains the dialectical interaction between the Word and the World presented in this book.

The opening paper of the book by Naiju Jose Kalambukattu depicts how theologising in tribal context of Bastar assisted Samanvaya in developing a satisfactory paradigm of contextualization, achieving a theological integration out of a hermeneutic of living dialogue between the Word and the World (pp. 7-16). Efforts for contextualizing Christian theology should be a dialogue between the Word and the world, ascertain scholarly Bible professors of Samanvaya in the four articles found in the work (pp. 17-83). Through a scholarly article that exegetically and hermeneutically scrutinises Psalms 29 and 104, George Kaniarakath brings to limelight a daring Psalmist who contextualizes and acculturates Hebrew faith in the ubiquitous presence and action of the divine Spirit; he converted a hymn to the Canaanite god Haddad (Ps 29) and the hymn to the Egyptian sun god Aten (Ps 104) and transcended them into hymns that praise the mystery of omnipotent Yahweh's omnipresence (pp 17-25). Reading between the lines another scholarly article included in this volume, Thomas Srampickal asserts that Gospels were formed due to contextual adaptations of the Jesus-event and the teachings of Jesus by the apostolic Church (pp. 27-46). Readers of this book must not in any way miss the next article given in this book, which is a passionate, ingenious, original reading of Jesus' teaching on violence and the Kingdom of God in Matthew 11:12. It is an exegetical as well as hermeneutic reading of the Bible by Benny Thettayil within the '*Naxalite*' context of the tribal people of Bastar (pp. 47-70). In an effort to establish scriptural roots, another article by Thomas Srampickal explains how the Letters of Paul contextualized and adapted the religio-cultural context of the time. This Pauline model turned Early Church remarkably contextual but universal as well (pp. 71-83). Thomas Kollampampil argues that critical studies on ancient Christian writers and the Fathers of the Church will prompt one to say that they played a pioneering role in contextually forming Christian theology and dogmas of Christian faith (pp. 85-99).

The rest of the book narrates how the visions and dreams for contextualized theology and priestly formation was implemented and realised by Samanvaya Theology College during the past 25

years. Paul Kalluveetil describes that Samanvaya was established with ambitious dreams and vision, which were very novel at that period (pp. 121-126). According to John Eattanial, being faithful to the initial inspirations, Samanvaya played a pioneering role in evolving a credible model for contextualization, an *Atmasakshatkara* pattern, integrating also insights from other models current in contextual theologising (pp. 101-120).

One of the positive contributions of this book is that it gives special attention to the subaltern context of Bastar, drawing inspiration from the spirit and vision of Vatican II and of instructions on priestly formation from magisterial teachings and of episcopal bodies of Asia and of India particularly. "Relevance of Subaltern Bastar for Theologizing" by Louis Malieckal is an excellent study presenting and analysing this context (pp. 121-140). Samanvaya toiled hard to sketch a suitable roadmap for contextualization applying the subaltern hermeneutics of the Tribal culture, explains Jose Chittooparambil in his article "Tribal Culture on Limelight: Subaltern Hermeneutics" (pp. 141-150). The next article, "Celebrating Life in Christ with the community of Creation: Theological Education in the Tribal Setting of Bastar" by Paulachan Kochappilly will convince readers that an inculturated liturgy, cult, and art is inevitable in contextualized theological learning and priestly formation (pp. 151-175).

The chapel in Samanvaya at Jagdalpur is a *devgudi* that in a monumental way witnesses to the ability of Samanvaya to osmose in a Bastar Adivasi religious ambience, contextualizing and celebrating life in Christ in the community of creation in Bastar. Art and aesthetics are always constituent or fundamental to Christian theology and liturgy; more so to contextual theology. "The Aesthetics of Contextual Theology" by Sebastian Elavathingal, an artist and theologian, magnificently ascertains beauty, splendour and brilliance seen in the aesthetic dimension of contextual theology (pp. 177-191). Sebeesh Vettiyandan narrates how the learners in Samanvaya perceive the ambience and the art works depicted in Samanvaya *Devgudi* as theo-artistic method of theological education (pp. 195-204).

In "Immersion in the Rural and Tribal Context," Naiju Jose Kalambukattu delineates the Samanvaya method of exposure-immersion programme, which is "rural, pastoral, social and experiential in nature" (pp. 205-216). Francis Pereira in "Witchcraft and Persecution of the Innocents: Indian Scenario" addresses a pertinent issue particularly in the tribal communities in India,

namely, the superstitious practice of witchcraft, as well as the persecution of innocent persons who are falsely and unjustly accused of practising witchcraft (pp. 216-225). In the concluding article, Cyril Kuttyanikkal discusses the contours and nuances of a tribal Church (pp. 227-237).

In a nutshell, this book leads the readers to the Samanvaya experience of integration leading them into the *devgudi* of theo-artistic ambience of the nature, time and context open to a Church incarnated into the universe together with Christ who is the Word made Flesh.

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