

For Jesus plays a
central role in
mediating



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For many years the question of “ what is the heart of Christianity?” has lingered in the minds of many believers. This has led to new ways of seeing Christianity and what it means to be a Christian to emerge.

These new ways of understanding Christianity differ from the dominant way that has been in existence for many years, this means that Christianity is in a time of conflict. This has led to the emergence of two paradigms on how Christians see the Bible, God, Jesus, faith, and the Christian life. According to the earlier paradigm, the bible is a divine book; it is the “ Word of God” (Borg 7). This paradigm has over the years become less compelling. There is no doubt that it nourished the lives of many a fact that the author believes that it was the spirit of God working through it. The emerging paradigm on the other hand sees Christian life as “ a historical, metaphorical, and sacramental way of seeing the bible” (Borg 13).

It sees Christian life in a different perspective. According to it, Christianity entails a life of relationship and transformation that one does not need to believe in Christianity in order to be a Christian but rather, one should relate with God well in order to change the current circumstances. These two paradigms are usually suspicious of each other. The earlier paradigm sees the emerging paradigm as a reduction of Christianity where as the emerging paradigm sees the earlier paradigm as anti-intellectual and selectively moralistic (Borg 15). They both agree on the common focus of the bible and Jesus, and how Jesus plays a central role in mediating man to God.

Many see the earlier paradigm as being static, an obstacle and therefore feel that their relationship with the Supreme can be nourished in a different way.

The most important aspect here is functionality, if a paradigm works for you, well and good, it does not mean it is the only right way (Borg 18).

Making the Connection among Liberation Theologies around the World

We learn from this book that liberation theologies in the world do not share a single perspective; each theology has its own distinctive view point. For instance, the past two decades have seen emergence of views in the Christian cycles.

People around the world have risen against the social, economic, political, and religious structures that exist. These groups began new Christian practices and new ways of being the church. They led to the birth of new theologians with the knowledge in the life and practice of their groups. The book tries to show that all theologies are contextual and therefore, have limits, just like Anna Karenina put it, “ each society, like each family, is unhappy in its own way” (Engel & Brooks 3). Theologies cannot be heaped together because they are not interchangeable.

They all have their own unique interests, viewpoints, aims as dictated by the society they exist in. This book depicts theologians as voices responding to and accountable to their groups and their context. Contextuality can be understood as one’s shared location. Each location has its norms. Michel Foucault wrote that “ Each society has a regime of truth, its ‘ general politics’ of truth” (Engel & Brooks 6). This means that truth is a function of what a particular society accepts to be true. Liberation theologies do not split faith

and life, theology and politics, and do not impose abstract principles upon the life of faith.

They aim at social transformation towards greater justice for all people. They also work towards the empowerment of individuals. We also see that these theologies exist in suspicion of each other. Each sees others as furthering the dominant mode of oppression. They therefore call for the liberation of Christian theology from concepts and structures that are oppressive (Engel & Brooks 9).

Faith Seeking Understanding: Chapter 1

The author of this book stresses that asking questions is the nature of human beings and to be Christian entails asking tough questions in the light of the grace of God in his son Jesus Christ.

He asserts that theology is not just the repetition of church doctrines nor ostentatious system building, but it is about faith asking questions and seeking their understanding. Faith and inquiry cannot therefore be separated. The freedom and responsibility of Christians to inquire about their faith in God is the mother of theology. Theology is a continual process because questions are asked over and over (Migliore 12). The author also argues that just like faith, theology is not a bundle of doctrines and symbols from which people can select at will and organize them as they wish.

Christian theology has doctrines that form a coherent whole. Theology teaches that every disturbed ear should be listened to. Today's needs call for Christians to faithfully serve the gospel instead of endorsing the cultural forms in which it is mediated uncritically. He reiterates that today's theology

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calls for thinking through and living out the faith as it relates to new experiences, problems and possibilities. I agree with Migliore that despite the difficult task of theology, there is no escaping the questions about the wholeness, the truth, the intelligibility, and the concrete practice of the gospel (Migliore 19).

Catholicism: Faith, Theology and Belief

The author begins with a brief description of the problem that is brought about by the failure of many Catholics to understand the differences among faith, theology and belief. These are identified as the elements of the problem. The first element is faith, which is defined as the personal knowledge of God.

It is not primarily the belief in revealed truths to humans by God through the bible and the church, but it is how people come to know God as God. The second element is theology which has been defined as the process by which Christians bring their knowledge and understanding of God to the level of expression. The third element is belief. This is something that is accepted to be true without evidence.

It is therefore a formulation of the knowledge that Christians have of God through faith. The final element discussed is religious education. Religious education helps individuals understand, respond and be transformed by God's presence in their lives and work towards the continued transformation of the world in respect to the understanding of God (McBrien 24). This text shows that teaching religion is not just about the faith as it is done by Catholics, but should also allow for the teaching of modern theologies. We

have just seen that the four elements relate to each other and therefore must be incorporated in religious teaching in order to dispel the misunderstandings in the Christian realm.

The “ Why and the what of Christians feminist theology”

Many questions arise from this book in relation to the humanity of women. This brought out by Christine de Pizan who was concerned with women’s humanity because being male was equated to being human.

Women were seen as lesser beings. Using her book, “ the book of the city of ladies”, Pizan argues that women are human just like men and therefore do not need guidance and protection from men. She goes on to say that if given a chance, women can perform better just as men. She was so concerned with this issue to the extent that she never used the word feminism in her work until the 19th century. It was in 1882 by Auclert to depict the struggle for women to get political rights. In the same century, female organizations emerged. They started speaking publicly about this issue in churches. These efforts saw many countries attain rights for women such as New Zealand, Finland, and eventually Russia, Canada and Great Britain in the 20th century (Clifford 1).

These continued in the 19th century in the US where women were seen as subordinates and dependent on their male counterparts. Men exercised sovereignty in many areas. Women on the other hand were morally superior but seen to delicate to actively participate in public affairs. Feminist movement emerged to fight oppression discrimination and violence against women and for equality and dignity.

There also emerged the second wave feminists. These included the liberal feminists, who fought for the civil rights for women, cultural feminists who emphasized the moral superiority of women, radical feminists who sought to eradicate patriarchy, and finally, the socialist feminists who fought to end economic dependence of women upon men. The book ended by looking at the types of feminist theology (Clifford 1).

Experience, Knowledge, and Wisdom

According to Ford, there is no distinct way of understanding and knowing theology. To experience, understand, and know theology needs wisdom which helps in shaping life and making it sensible despite its diversity, fragmentation, and also the fragility of beauty, truth, and goodness. He shows that theology is all about the world, the self and the language, elements that are in an endless interplay. He has discussed about epistemology, a branch of philosophy dealing with the nature of knowing. Topics discussed here included extreme objectivism, extreme subjectivism, and the view of the world as a construct of languages (Ford 1). Through this book we get to understand why theology fails. The author has shown that oversimplified and inappropriate conceptions make theology to suffer. To truly understand and know God, Christians need unwavering wisdom.

Because theology is all about questions, the type of questions will show an individual's valid interest in the particular subject. To answer these questions requires valid methods of knowing to serve the particular interest. First people have to understand that knowledge is both social and individual. Individually, every person experiences understanding and judging. Socially, individuals have to appreciate other people's experiences, understandings, <https://assignbuster.com/for-jesus-plays-a-central-role-in-mediating/>

and judgments. Knowledge can be instantaneous but mostly it takes time. Humans use their knowledge and language to construct reality.

This is what theology is all about. And if humans understand that things can go wrong then there is nothing wrong with improvements because knowledge keeps on growing (Ford 1).

Genesis 1-3

This text shows God as an interactive being with already existing creatures. This is what theology is all about, interaction, coexistence with others in the understanding of God's word. There is also the issue of knowledge, the humans ate from it and committed sin. Knowledge is the ability to discern good and bad. The response from God is not a punishment but consequences that reflect the time and context in which they existed. Adam sees everything to be fine but he has no one of his kind, he is lonely until a woman (Eve) was created.

This is how important women are in the society. They should be treated equally and given equal opportunity with men because they are all equal in the eyes of God (Genesis 1).

An introduction to the Bible: A journey into three worlds

In this text we learn that the bible is a collection of books, which did not attain authority at one time. They were accepted through canonization that happened in three stages as revealed by the tree divisions of the canon. These were the Torah, the Prophets, and the writings.

This text agrees that Christianity is centered in the bible and that it is undergoing changes as seen in the two paradigms. It says that the bible is historical, metaphorical and sacramental (Hauer & Young 1).

Feminist perspectives on the bible

For a long time the bible has been a point of contention when it comes to the place of the woman in society.

It is such issues that saw the emergence of feminist movement like the one initiated by Stanton “ The woman’s bible project”. Women came up with the idea that if men could revise the bible, why not them? This book talks about women and the bible trying to bring out their perspectives. It tries to find out why the knowledge of biblical women is so scanty. It sees the patriarchal attitudes of men as the cause of the neglect of women in liturgical readings and religious instructions. This is why feminist biblical scholars like Stanton embarked on biblical research to change it. I think these women were justified to fight for their right because scripture teaches that all are equal in the eyes of god (Clifford 66).

Comparison of the Various Authors

Borg in his book, “ The heart of Christianity in a time of change” says that Christianity has gone through changes, which he puts into two paradigms. Engel and Brooks in their book, “ Making the Connection among Liberation Theologies around the world” tells us that because Christianity involves asking endless questions, there has emerged many theologies. These authors agree that there is no single paradigm or theology that is better than the other; they all work for the best of each group that is using it. Migliore, in

the book, " Faith seeking understanding" agrees with Brook and Engel that theology is about asking questions. He also believes that Christians should be given a chance to inquire about their faith. These sentiments are also echoed but Ford in the book, " Experience, Knowledge, and Wisdom".

McBrien in his book, " Catholicism: Faith, Theology and Belief", argues that Christians should have faith, which is the knowledge of God.

Then they should be able to express their knowledge of God to others. He agrees with Migliore up to this point that faith and theology are inseparable, but differs with the others on the issue of belief. Belief entails accepting something without evidence, but others think that Christianity should be a way of life, a continual process of inquiry to gain knowledge and understanding of one's faith. Clifford in the " Why and the What of Christian feminist theology" talks about women and Christianity, he shows how women reformation has come about over the years. He argues that women are equal to men in the eyes of God, sentiments that he also brings out in the book, Feminist perspectives on the bible. In think that Christianity should not be about faith, believing the teaching, traditions and systems put in place to be true without question as some Christians do. I agree with some of the authors that Christianity should be a way of life, a continual process of inquiry into one's faith to get a better understanding of the Christian teachings. This is because the world is not static, it involves events and situations that keep on changing and their Christians should embrace the changes by accepting the different theologies depending on the situation and context they are in.

am also a strong believer in equal opportunity for all and therefore everyone including women should be allowed to participate in the Christian way of life in all spheres.

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