

Good example of book review on comparison

[Parts of the World, Asia](#)



Article Review: African Theology - Roman Catholic, and Asian Theology - Roman Catholic in Global Dictionary of Theology: A Resource for the Worldwide Church

The two articles being reviewed and compared here are African Theology - Roman Catholic, and Asian Theology - Roman Catholic, both taken from the Global Dictionary of Theology: A Resource for the Worldwide Church, edited by William A. Dyrness and Veli-Matti Karkkainen.

Both articles begin with an overview of their interaction with diversity and it is at the very onset that the reader realizes that the two theologies vary greatly in their follower base. Despite its fundamentally diverse nature, Africa holds a distinct ethnic identity and hence, although the African theologies cater to a varied follower base, they share common elements. On the other hand, Asian Roman Catholic theology has been more greatly impacted by secularization, globalization and fundamental religious sentiment, as result of which, the theology struggles to adapt the Western theology to meet the different ways in which the diverse ethnicities of Asia view and have faith in Jesus Christ.

It is in response to this fundamental difference that the articles take separate approaches to understanding African and Asian Roman Catholic theologies.

The African theology article focuses on the growth and development of African theology in present times. The Asian theology article, on the other hand, focuses on major challenges in addition to tracing the development of the theology.

In tracing the development of African theology, the author introduces the reader to the basic, yet critical, cultural uniqueness that has defined the

ethnic DNA of Africa as a continent. The reality of the African society can be seen to reflect on its interpretation of the Christian tradition. The authors note that the three key features that influence Roman Catholic tradition in the region are: a) African liberation or independence, b) African women's liberation, and c) South Africa's anti-apartheid liberation. As a result, African theology has been developed on the foundations of societal reconstruction. With the entire continent being tied by the three common threads mentioned above, African Christian theologians seek to find unity through associating the salvation of the African people with the singularity of one almighty God, which is common both in African as well as Christian tradition. The motive of this approach was to draw on the strong bond that African held with their ancestry and connect them with their newly found Christian faith.

Asian theology has a completely different challenge to face. Its ethnic populations are not tied together by a common thread, as is the case of African populations. Instead, each Asian culture has its own unique, well defined set of traditions and way of life. As a result Asian Christian theologians seek to find symbols and traditions that can be imbibed into Asian cultures – what can be termed as inculturation. The motive here is not to unite, but to find a harmony or synergy under which different cultural theologies can co-exist without losing the essence of the Catholic Church . The author also notes that there are social challenges such as poverty and injustice that do provide a form of common ground between the different Asian cultures. Inter-religious dialogue is seen as a means of accomplishing a shared religious experience, thereby bringing the harmony that this theology seeks to accomplish.

The African Roman Catholic theology, more grounded in its aim to join a population under a universal religion, does seem more practicable and effective to me in the long term. In a region that has been plagued with severe social injustices and poverty for centuries, being able to unite the populace under one common theology, while embracing the diversity of the vast follower base, will lead to a stronger, more efficient administration in the future. On the other hand, the Asian Roman Catholic theology is far too focused on adapting to diversity. Considering that the region has been, continues to be, and is expected to be in a state of fast paced change, it will be a severe challenge to stay in step with the rapidly evolving beliefs and outlooks of the massive population. There is a risk of the overall Roman Catholic tradition becoming too diluted as it constantly tries to adapt to the unique traditions of different Asian ethnicities. Further, administration in such a scenario would prove to be extremely difficult, particularly in cases where ethnicities are further divided into sub-sects. As such, The African Roman Catholic theology holds greater appeal to me when compared to the Asian theology.

Critical Reflection

Both the articles were highly informative. They were easy to understand and, in their own right, put forth valid justifications for each of the two theologies studied. They enabled me to understand the history behind the development of Roman Catholic theologies in two regions of the world that are host to some of the fastest growing areas for Christianity. They also gave me a broader perspective on how globalization and diversity can have different influences on different cultures, and how theological approaches to need to

be adapted in order to address the unique needs of the follower base. The world today is becoming increasingly globalized and hence it has become an imperative for a minister to understand its implications for theology and faith. However, I believe that understanding the current and future needs of modern Roman Catholic theology is still in its initial phases and will greatly evolve in the times to come. The two articles have illustrated the vastly different paradigms that can arise from regions that are seemingly similar in their cultural make up, yet pose direly differed challenges to the administration of the Christian faith.

Diversity is an unavoidable part and parcel of globalization. I believe that, as I continue my ministry as a pastor, I will need to interact with people belonging to different Asian and African ethnicities. These articles have given me insight into the background that these Christians come from. This, in turn, will enable to me to devise more culturally sensitive ways in which to approach them. I believe that, following an approach the appeals more to these ethnicities will enable me to better convey the word of God and the teachings of Christ, allowing me to help these people become better Christians while becoming a better pastor myself.

Works Cited

Dyrness, William A., and Veli-Matti Karkkainen. *Global Dictionary of Theology: A Resource for the Worldwide Church*. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2008.