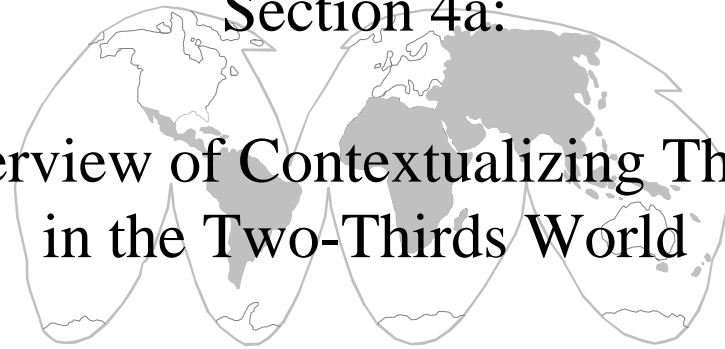


Section 4a:

An Overview of Contextualizing Theology in the Two-Thirds World



Some Basic Figures
(from Barrett, World Christian Encyclopedia)

Area	Christians in 1900		Christians in 2000 (est)		Number of Countries
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
First (Western) world	471 million	84	592 million	29	35
Third world (now including Communist world)	87 million	16	1428 million	71	188

1. Commonalities of non-evangelical third world theologies (synthesized from Battung, "Commonalities: An Asian Perspective"; Bonino, "Commonalities: A Latin American Perspective"; and Chikane, "EATWOT and Third World Theologies")
 - a. Contextual commonalities
 - i. The reality of poverty: struggle for life in a system of death
 - (1) The struggle for justice
 - (2) The recovery of the historical memory and identity of the people
 - ii. Experience of colonialism and neo-colonialism
 - (1) Neocolonial (dependent) economy
 - (2) Continued external aggression
 - (3) The challenge of modernity
 - iii. Political reality
 - iv. Ideological struggles
 - v. Popular movements
 - b. Theological/methodological commonalities:
 - i. The reflection on theology from their very real experience of physical, economic, and cultural oppression.
 - ii. They share in common that they are suspect theologies in the West--they are in "theological bondage" to Western theologies, and want theological liberation!
 - iii. The use of tools of social analysis as complimentary to (and sometimes replacing) biblical exegesis

- iv. The recognition that two-thirds world theologians have not only been the victims of oppression, but have also oppressed themselves! (the 'irruption within the irruption', see Chikane's analysis)
2. Emerging agenda from evangelical two-thirds world theologies (Conn, "Contextual Theologies", pp. 60-62)
- a. Areas which emerging theologies from the two-thirds world have in common with Western models:
 - i. They are intentionally contextual and occasional.
 - ii. There is also a sense that this occasional, local character of theology is crucial if Christianity is to survive in its particular settings.
 - iii. We share together an inability to break ourselves free from our cultural preunderstandings.
 - b. Areas which emerging theologies from the two-thirds world do not have in common with Western models:
 - i. There appears to be a more conscious awareness of the human, cultural context and contextuality as a key in the process of theologizing.
 - ii. There also appears to be a deeper appreciation of the social and cultural dimensions of the historical context than one finds elsewhere.
 - iii. There also appears to be a deeper interfacing with non-Christian religions.
 - iv. There is a new recovery of the missiological nature of theology. Samuel and Sugden note: "We regard it as highly significant that the breeding ground of current theological trends is not the university or theological colleges where scholars are refining the answers to yesterday's questions. It is in the mission field where the issues of Christian obedience are being hammered out as the church seeks to witness to the gospel in varied social, economic, and political contexts. This is how it should be. This is what the daily reading of the Bible by people in different contexts should be producing." (Samuel and Sugden, Current Trends in Theology, p. 33)
 - v. "In particular today, Third World Christians are seriously questioning those interpretations of the scripture which deny that Jesus had any socio-political or economic stance or message." (Ibid., p. 5).
 - vi. A key question for theological reflection is not *how* to interpret the scriptures, but *who* is to interpret them (Ibid., p. 14).

