

Two thoughts came forcefully to my mind as I read through these chapters: firstly, a call to Western missionaries to respect the growing pains of the local church, by allowing the local clergy, and their own people, to decide the best forms of worship with regard to the customary religious practices for the purpose of liturgical adaptation. This means, in any primitive pagan lands, due respect must be given to wholesome traditional religious beliefs and practices, so that the local people will be able to feel Christianity is a way of living, not something which is imported entirely from outside, which they wear, as clothes to church, so, after the Sunday service, these are discarded when they return home and they put on another garment for their own traditional worship. Christianity must be seen as their way of life, just as their own ancestral religious rituals are one and the same with their everyday life. The other point is the book is presented as evidence in self-defence to his accusers, the fellow priests, and the Vatican, that he was on God's side in what he did. And Mona MacMillan has expertly reiterated Milingo's intentions through her running commentaries throughout the book. It seems to me that the main criticism by Milingo's accusers arose from the misguided and misinformed generalisation, that, his fellow priests claimed, the cases of possession by evil spirits were not genuine, but only instances of emotional disturbance. What is more, the methods of exorcism employed by Milingo were not officially approved by Rome, and were evil.

This is a book for the local and the Western missionaries, priests, pastors, and Christian church workers.

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SONG, Choan-Seng, *Theology from the Womb of Asia*, Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1986, 241 pp.

It is refreshing to come across a book written in a genuinely Asian idiom, without apology, and with sureness of touch. This is

especially helpful at a time when young theologians throughout the Pacific are beginning to ask how they could achieve the same thing in their own cultural contexts. Song believes that theology should begin with the experiences of the five senses, creating images which relate these experiences to faith. He complains that “poetry has been abandoned by our theologians. There is no sun, moon, and stars in our theological books. That is why theology has become arid and dry. It has become largely a matter of the head. It has lost the heart – the heart that feels, embraces, and communicates” (pp. 12-13). He points out: “Ours is a culture shaped by the power of imaging, not by the capacity to conceptualise” (p. 61). Whether this necessarily entails the rejection of logic, specialisation, and systematic thinking in theology, as Song seems to imply (cf. pp. 26-27), is a question that needs further discussion. But Song’s programme of “imaging theology”, set out in chapter 5, offers a challenge to both Western and Asian/Pacific theologians.

Melanesian theologians will also be interested in the way Song quite unabashedly uses Asian stories as his medium of theological reflection. He compares Buddhist, Christian, and Jewish parables of the love of a father for his son (pp. 46ff), and he uses both Buddhist and Christian versions of the image of the mustard seed (pp. 137ff, cf. p. 183). He introduces the Buddhist notion of *karma* (the effects of present wrongdoing on future generations or incarnations) to shed light on the story of the man born blind in John 9 (pp. 129ff), and he explores the implications of the Buddhist conception of suffering, the Noble Truth of *dukkha*, in deepening our Christian understanding of compassion (pp. 135ff). He deplores the denial of the Buddha’s doctrine of non-violence in recent Asian wars, symbolised by the headless Buddha statues left behind by looters (pp. 146ff). Great as is his openness to the religious traditions of Asia, he is, nevertheless, forced to conclude that “a *theological* study of these religions has hardly begun” (p. 152). Surely the same is true of Melanesian traditions.

It is impossible to summarise the richness of Song’s treatment of imagination, passion, communion, and vision, the four headings under which the book is organised, as they bear on the contemporary

tasks of peace, development, liberation, and justice. If Song's approach were as reflective as it is inspiring, the book would be more satisfying, because it would be more conscious of the interrelation of its many fragmentary insights. Can this be done without substituting Western formal logic for the logic of Asian – or Melanesian – images? I believe it can, and this is one of the main challenges facing the authors of contextual theologies.

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WITVLIET, Theo, *A Place in the Sun: An Introduction to Liberation Theology*, Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1985, 182 pp.

Liberation theology has found its appropriate historical context in Witvliet's book, translated from the Dutch (1984) by John Bowden. This book, of only 182 pages, is a fascinating recipe for liberation theologies in the so-called "Third World" countries. The book is very rich in a number of ways.

First, unlike too many theological works by theologians, who place too much emphasis on theological "assumptions", and let such assumptions dictate the meaning (indoctrination?) of the context, the author carefully selects and summons the historical situational contexts, and lets liberation theology speak from within the context: in Latin America, liberation theology speaks against economic and military oppression; in USA and South Africa, it speaks within the context of racism and apartheid, respectively; and in Asia, liberation theology speaks in the midst of many religions. The author's first chapter, "The Historical Context", where he provides "contact contexts" between the "West" and the "Third World", is particularly helpful as a historical background to the book as a whole.

Second, the book is simple enough to be read and understood by both the theologian and the laity. Although the book is carefully selective in its treatment of history and liberation theology in each region, and does not claim to be highly documented for academics,