



Curriculum Theologiae

Contextualization in Theological Formation

One German's Perspective

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Contextualization in theological Formation – One German’s Perspective

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1. Introduction

Since I am speaking about contextualization at a conference in India, it goes without saying that my perspective will be a very limited one. It’s a German perspective and I will focus on formation, assuming that formation is (has to be) holistic (as opposed to a content-based theological instruction, whereby one learns solely through hearing).

In addition to my own research and experiences I will be referring to a survey on the ministry of foreign priests in Germany. The Survey was commissioned by the German Bishops Conference in 2007 and was published in 2011.¹ It indicated that issues such as language capability, psychological training, adaptability and sensibility to cultural and religious issues are crucial for this kind of contextualization.

2. Context: Cultures and subcultures in the times of globalization

2.1 Analysis of the present with an understanding of the past

In order to understand the present, a solid knowledge of developments in the past is needed and must be accompanied by critical self-scrutiny as well as scrutiny of others and society. To achieve the necessary objectivity human sciences are helpful. Therefore contextual theology is interdisciplinary.

Formation must foster one’s ability to explore cultural backgrounds and to question preconceptions.

Principle: understanding before judgment and action.

2.2 Global and local

Modernity is shaped by an acceleration of all aspects of life. Globalization seems to cause a homogenization of world culture (some speak of a worldwide „McDonaldization“). It is because of that development that local traditions become important again. Some German scholars therefore call for “Glocalization”.

Formation is aimed to foster the competence of thinking and acting in both directions: global and local („Think global, act local“).

2.3 Beyond the boundaries of oneself

Contextual teaching is always by example. Therefore for **formation** evoking and fostering competencies and models of thinking is much more important than transmitting encyclopedic recall.

3. Theology

With regard to **formation** a theology is demanded which reveals its developments and its cultural dependencies. By that it enables students on the basis of a deep knowledge (of theological content) to merge into other models of thinking and understanding with benevolence and respect.

4. Person (Student and Formator)

In addition to the competences mentioned above **formation** is aimed at leading students to realistic self-evaluation. This calls for teachers experienced in intercultural enterprises, willing to share their experiences with others and to be questioned by them.

¹ Karl Gabriel/ Stefan Leibold/ Reiner Achtermann, Die Situation ausländischer Priester in Deutschland (Forum Weltkirche – Entwicklung und Frieden 13), Mainz 2011.

For online abstracts in German see:

- <http://www.dbk-shop.de/de/DBK/Die-Situation-auslaendischer-Priester-in-Deutschland-2011.html> (23.8.2013);

- http://www.christ-in-der-gegenwart.de/aktuell/artikel_angebote_detail?k_beitrag=2647626 (23.8.2013).