

Flemming, Dean E. *Contextualization in the New Testament: Patterns for Theology and Mission*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2005. 344 pp. Paper, \$26.00.

Contextualization is currently an important topic in Seventh-day Adventist missiology. Dean Flemming, writing from his own multicultural background and a Wesleyan-Arminian perspective, makes a major contribution to the understanding of this topic. He holds a doctorate from Aberdeen. He is currently a Lecturer in New Testament and Intercultural Communications at the European Nazarene College in Büsingen, Germany. He previously served on the faculties of the Asia-Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary and the Asia Graduate School of Theology. References to these settings pepper his book.

Flemming demonstrates a careful scholarship that blends together theological and missiological perspectives, never diminishing one or the other, yet asserting that intercultural mission is the cause of theological reflection. The community thus becomes a major setting for such reflection.

In his treatment of contextualization in Paul's letters, Flemming carefully works through the focus, framework, and formative elements of Paul's writing, taking note of the richness of Paul's vocabulary as evidence of Paul's contextualizing genius. Thus, "The diversity of metaphors and symbols expressing the meaning of Christ's death is perhaps excelled only when Paul describes the believer's experience of the new life in Christ. Paul's salvation language draws upon a wealth of images from both Scripture and secular culture" (107). The Apostle can use the same image in multiple ways, or with different emphases as the context demands. Thus Flemming maintains the authenticity of the entire Pauline corpus.

For Flemming, Paul's contextualization never takes place at the level of the basic content of the gospel itself, but rather when he articulates, interprets, and applies it in the light of real human needs. Thus the Pauline paradigm challenges the worldwide church to enable the gospel of a crucified Christ to address and transform people within their various cultures and times. "Only then will we have a truly missional theology."

The sole focus of the Gospels, for Flemming, is Jesus. Nevertheless, the Gospels were written with the cultural-historical milieu of the community in mind. When Flemming turns to the book of Revelation, he treats it as a radical contextualization, challenging twenty-first-century Christians to question seriously their own capitulation to the materialistic world, its rampant consumerism, and the "emperor worship" of the religious right. He notes the contextual differences between Paul (Rom 13) and John (Rev 13); both faced the reality of the Empire, but from differing perspectives. There are times when Christians are called to take a costly prophetic stand against the dominant order and times.

In the concluding chapter, Flemming proposes the tautology, "All theology is contextualized theology, from the creeds of the early church to the modern 'Four Spiritual Laws.' All theology is done from a particular location and perspective, whether we are conscious of it or not. Contextualization is not just desirable; it is the only way theology can be done" (208). He then raises two questions: "First, is there not a danger of Christian theology splintering

into a thousand different pieces? What holds these variegated theological reflections together? Second, how do we know which contextualized expressions are authentic and which have distorted the gospel?" Interactive, multicultural sharing is offered as a counterbalance to tendencies toward not only syncretism, but also ecclesial and natural individualism.

Active mission practitioners, missiologists, and theologians will benefit from and enjoy this excellent volume.

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BRUCE CAMPBELL MOYER

Terian, Abraham. *Macarius of Jerusalem: Letter to the Armenians, A.D. 335*. Avant: Treasures of the Armenian Christian Tradition, 4. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press and St. Nersess Armenian Seminary, 2008. 184 pp. Cloth, \$30.00.

Based on the work of the philosopher of science Karl Popper, Robert Taft has written, "knowledge in a field advances not by the accumulation of new data but by the invention of new systems; not by hypothesis verification but by hypothesis negation" ("An Essay in Methodology," in *Beyond East and West*, Robert Taft [Rome, 1997], 190). Former Andrews University professor, now professor emeritus at St. Nersess Armenian Seminary, New Rochelle, New York, Abraham Terian, in this translation and study of the famous document, "Of the Blessed Macarius, Patriarch of the Holy City Jerusalem: Canonical Letter to the Armenians concerning the Regulation of the Ordinances of the Catholic Church Which it Is Not Right to Transgress by Definition or Command," has advanced the field of early liturgical scholarship and early Armenian studies in both ways noted by Taft. That is, on the one hand, he has analyzed a document long viewed by scholars (due to the work by N. Akinian) to be a sixth-century document authored by Macarius II, and has demonstrated conclusively that this letter dates to the year 335, in Jerusalem, and comes from Macarius I in response to questions asked by Armenian bishops who had been in Jerusalem for the famous dedication of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in 325. Hence, there is a real sense in which this critical edition (Armenian texts in differing manuscripts), translation, and study *does* present us with the "accumulation of new data," a new source for study, an absolute rarity in the field of *Liturgiewissenschaft*. On the other hand, this is also a work of "hypothesis negation" in that the existence of this "new data" means that previous scholarly approaches and conclusions regarding the document are necessarily refuted and that what has been thought, for example, about the state of Jerusalem liturgy in the early fourth century must now be reevaluated critically.

With regard to early Jerusalem liturgy specifically, the contents of this letter indicate that already in 335—before Cyril of Jerusalem's *Baptismal Catechesis* (c. 348) and a long time before the *Mystagogical Catecheses* (attributed either to Cyril of Jerusalem in the late 380s or to his successor, John, even later)—there was in Jerusalem a Rom 6 theology of baptism, as well as both pre- and