

RE-THINKING CHRISTIANITY: Keith Ward

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We have reinvented ourselves continuously in response to history and trend is towards pluralistic and critical, but some groups get stuck to historic phases. This book takes us through arguments from each 'change' in history.

Biblical development:

Not possible to hold faith today exactly as NT wrote it – history was different. Johannine Spiritualization of Messiah role.

The Epistles begin process of new perspectives and demand our allegiance.

Pauline - Jewish Movement to Eucharistic Community.

Creeds:

E & W debate Trinity in different languages.

Language not to be hard and fast when we talk of Mystery.

Difference is not contradiction. "Xt has Died, Xt Risen, Xt will come again!"

Jesus' human nature was not obliterated by divine ~ what does his life then say about God now? NT interprets Jesus for its own time.

Medieval Latin Church

Papal authority is claimed; inerrant truth against Damnation ~ keys.

NT is unsystematic collection yet it is made to be systematic arbiter of faith.

Protestant Reformation

After these human attempts to formulate correct beliefs – but saved by grace!!

Protestantism is Liberal encouragement of personal assent – through grace rather than a central teaching authority.

German Liberalism

Modernist liberalism said human error does not lead to death of the soul. Vat2 Morality not set of rules but as encounter with transcendent personal moral will, which demands concern for all sentient beings.

Confusion of our understanding of revelation with the revelation itself. But liberals failed to remember incarnation and atonement.

Chapter 11: Christianity in a global context

We have grown with Empire – Roman Spanish American, European/British. Where imperialism was combated, less Christianity.

Western values of individualism/competition, acquisitiveness/conquest. (Capturing the market)

- Kant said Reason was absolute. The categorical imperative.
- Protestant assertion of conscience as absolute.
- Human species above all others – 'in God's image'.

No one philosophy now as in former times so Existentialism focussed on human condition ~ sin, fear, angst, pointless. Salvation as meaning.

Many religions

Semitic: covenant, transcendence, practice.

Buddhism: wisdom, compassion, bliss vs. self-centredness.

Hinduism: liberation from wheel of suffering – ground of all beingness.

Monism: social virtues, sacredness of life, compassion.

Christianity – divine love has no limits!

- Character of Divine Love in life of Christ
- Power of Divine Love in resurrection
- Path to sharing Divine Love in actions of Holy Spirit

Chapter 12 From Liberalism to Liberation

But Christianity wants to make **propositional claims** against eg atheism.

Claims come from shared Xn experience – many and various voices, but also major narrative themes are agreed by most (Primacy of existence of God)

This conceptual framework is flexible but not infinitely so.

It need not exclude or repress other understandings.

Not an exclusive society of the saved but fellowship to serve the world. (Kgdm)

“See only in a mirror, then face to face” I Cor 13:12

Rise of non-Western Christianity

New imperialism subjugates religion to the personal & exports idolatry to 3w.

- At liberation, Churches became conservative allies of ruling elites.
- Attempts at integrating/allying with indigenous cultures
- Growth Pentecostal movements – undercut hierarchies and dogmatics

Liberationists want to untie Church from elites of State power and act for oppressed. Societies are not all on path to harmony so talk of tolerance is to bow to oppressor. No guarantee of Kingdom but demand command to try.