

MODERN CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY : AN ANALYSIS AT DR KOSUKE KOYAMA'S PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Koyama's thoughts are really interesting for us to help understand the diversity in a culture. This paper will discuss how his thoughts are associated with the reality of modernity which is increasingly running fast. The results of the study of Koyama's thoughts when related to the realities of life, found that modern Christian theological thinking in Asia (in this case is the Thai context where Koyama lives) is related to the economic, social, and political situation in Asia which is still experiencing poverty, underdevelopment, and poverty. oppression from the rulers. In addition, Christians in Asia live side by side with adherents of other religions with natural interactions.

Keywords : Theology, Christian, Modern, Koyama

INTRODUCTION

Christianity in many Asian countries is faced with the context of poverty and lives among the majority adherents of other religions. In Asia, only the Philippines and South Korea have the majority of Christians. Meanwhile in some countries such as China, North Korea, Vietnam, Kampuchea, and several other countries, Christians face situations of pressure and difficulties. The continent of Asia has a very large area and the population is very dense. The plurality that characterizes Asia has also given rise to diverse theological approaches. In relation to the worldwide churches, the acknowledgment of God as Creator and the incarnation of God's Word in Jesus Christ has been the basis for many theological struggles over the centuries. The meaning of the main points of these confessions is wrestled for the sake of human peace in Asia. There are two aspects of plural theology in Asia, namely encounters with other religions and concern for the struggles of the poor (Drewes & Monjau, 2001).

This article will discuss the thoughts of Dr. Kosuke Koyama (Thailand). Kosuke Koyama was born in Tokio in 1929. After obtaining his first degree in Tokio he continued his studies in the United States and in 1959 obtained his doctorate from Princeton Theological Seminary. In 1961-1969 he was a missionary in Thailand and taught at the seminary there. From Thailand he moved to Singapore and became dean of the South East Asia Graduate School of Theology. In 1974 he went to New Zealand and taught religious studies at the University of Otago. Since 1979 he has taught at Union Theological Seminary in New York.

METHOD

This research is a literature review on Christian theological thinking in Asia, especially Thailand. Dr. Koyama's thoughts will be analyzed with a hermeneutic approach to find its existential meaning in the modern world. Koyama's construction of thinking will be faced with the contemporary empirical reality, namely modernity and an independent civil society. Religion then becomes an entity that is inevitable to meet the real world, even though religion often remains silent on the occult level. The meaning of thinking uses data reduction so that only data that is considered compatible with research needs will be managed.

DISCUSSION

God in Silent Culture

Koyama is best known for his book *The Theology of the Ox* (1974). On his way to the village church to preach he saw buffalo in the rice fields. It reminded him of how his people lived their lives. His sermon must start from his congregation. From a conversation about the situation of mankind, he then introduces God in this real human situation. He decided he had to put some of the great theological ideas like those of Thomas, Aquino and Barth in second place after some of the needs of the peasants. He prioritized the peasants over Aquinas and Barth, because he preached in Thailand and not in Italy or in Switzerland. There is a freshness to Koyama's theology, as can be seen from several of his chapter titles, for example: "Will the Rains Make God Wet?," "Aristotelian Pepper Mixes Salt Buddha;" "God's Wrath in the Culture of Silence." In this final chapter he discusses the difficulties of preaching about God's wrath in Thailand.

Just like ancient Greek philosophy, in Buddhist culture freedom from emotion and suffering and silence is considered the pinnacle of all that is good. The idea of an angry God, an anxious God because of man's sin is a stumbling block in that culture. Koyama's answer was not to ignore God's wrath, as many have made. Talks about God's love become distorted from the truth and shallow when separated from His wrath. Thai thought sees God as emotionless, incapable of suffering, because it places God beyond the boundaries of time and history, because Thai Buddhist thought ignores history. This thinking is further fostered by a fairly regular and good natural cycle in Thailand. There are rarely natural disasters such as earthquakes and typhoons. The doctrine of God's wrath can be used to challenge Thai thinking at this deeper level, and thereby state the doctrine of God involved in history.

Not so long ago Koyama wrote a book called *God At Three Miles Per Hour*, a collection of further Bible studies related to Southeast Asia. In the chapter with the same title as his book he compares the immediate efficiency of modern technology with the way God teaches his people. God took forty years to train them in the wilderness, at the speed of walking (3 miles per hour). In class Christians learn theory, but God teaches Christians through real life experiences. "Forty years in the wilderness" denotes God's basic educational philosophy. The whole Old Testament proves it. He states that God walks "slowly," because He is love. If He is not love, He will move faster. Love has a speed of its own, a spiritual speed. This speed is different from the speed of technology that is very well known to humans. It continues in the depths of human life, whether humans realize it or not, whether humans are being hit by a

hurricane or not. The speed is three miles per hour. That is the speed of walking and therefore the speed of God's love on foot (Tony, 2005).

Farmers and Religion

Koyama emphatically stated that the message of Christ must be conveyed by presenting objects that can be recognized and understood by the listeners (in this case the Thai peasants). He placed the needs of the peasants above the theology of Aquinas, Barth and others, and used vivid images rather than abstract ideas in communicating the gospel. Koyama bases his theological approach on the Bible, quoting I Corinthians 9:22-23. "To the weak I became like the weak, that I might save the weak. To everyone I have become everything, so that I may win over some of them as much as possible. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, so that I may share in it." He also emphasized that it is his duty to "read the Bible and theological works with your (Muangthai peasants) needs in mind. According to Koyama, the Bible and the great theological works by Aquinas, Calvin and Barth will not be successful unless they can be interpreted and understood clearly (Adams, 2015).

This means that theology for North Thailand started and grew in North Thailand, nowhere else. The North Muangthai theology will surely come true if we dare to make decisions like this. It was in this decision that the beginning of a theology for North Thailand and for Asia. It is important to state here that Koyama is not against systematic theology, he only wants to use theology to interpret the Christian message to those who are not used to thinking in abstract categories. Also Koyama emphasized that the main concern of a theologian is not religion or culture, but people who practice a religion and live in a culture. So, people who study other religions and cultures are not for their own sake, but to be able to better understand people and religions and cultures (Adams, 2012).

As my relationship with Buddhists improved and my understanding of language increased, I realized that the real issue was not a set of so-called Buddhist doctrines, but people or people living according to Buddhist doctrine or perhaps I should say those trying to live by Buddhist doctrine. Because of that my attention turned from the teachings of Buddhism to people who are Buddhists. Koyama points out that Buddhism does not suffer, does not sweat, does not feel hungry and does not desire possession of things. But a Buddhist is involved in all these things because he is a human being. Therefore, Koyama emphasizes on Buddhists and not Buddhism (Adams, 2012).

Some principles of biblical interpretation can be seen in the basic methodology of Koyama's theology (Adams, 2021):

1. The science of interpretation is like the Christian Bible, paying attention to humans, not to ideas or ideological systems.
2. Academic theology, which is necessary for the pastor and lecturer in theological schools, is always read with the clear understanding that what he reads will be interpreted in the context of the people who are served by someone. The usefulness of theology is determined by the question of how useful it is to the people.
3. Interpretation does not only begin where the interpretation exists, but also begins with the special situation of those who accept the interpretation, because each person is

unique. Therefore Koyama makes use of simple but lively general images in everyday life in Thailand.

4. Koyama's exegesis requires that the interpreter, whether he is an evangelist, priest or theologian, must first get rid of his personal prejudices, in order to understand the prejudices of the people for whom the interpretation has been made. Koyama calls this "The crucified mind". In a sense the interpreter is called to be a personal incarnation, so that the gospel message may be communicated with meaning and power.
5. Engagement in a particular culture is the only ground where theology can flourish. Culture forms a common context for theological reflection, including customs, language, social attitudes and patterns of thought. Thus all theology is contextual theology. Just as the Apostle Paul used Hebrew tradition in serving the Jews and Greek philosophy to serve the Gentiles, so our contemporary interpreters must use the image and traditions of North Muangthai in serving the people of North Muangthai.
6. Theology is based on the Bible. East and West may differ in philosophy, theology and traditions, but all Christians use the same Bible. In the Bible we find a universal source for theological views, practical instruction and worship inspiration. Therefore contextual theology is not only rooted in history and culture, but also in the Bible.

CONCLUSION

Based on the description above, it appears that the theological thinking of Dr. Kosuke Koyama focuses more on the field of dogma theology, which describes the main teachings of the Christian faith. Especially in the field of Christology, which discusses what and who God is, what and who Jesus is called the Christ. In this field he seeks to convey the doctrine of God from the Bible in the context of Thai culture and Buddhism. Therefore, he tries to theology according to the Thai context and subordinates to conveying the theology of Aquinas and Karl Barth which is very famous. Because he thinks he delivered theology in Thailand, not in Italy or in Switzerland.

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