

Towards an Asian Multitextual Theology

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3

sttjakarta.ac.id. Abstract The

article criticizes some shortcomings of Asian contextual and liberation theologies that methodologically employ 'hermeneutical circle'. The method focuses on experience as the starting point of doing theology. Despite its powerful insights that enable theologians to engage with concrete human and social problems, the method can easily preserve a theologian's blind spot that hinders her/him from perspectives other than his or her own. I also criticize such an experience-based method as being too linear which can easily result in a methodological imperialism. In response to the weakness, I propose a multitextual theology, which on the one hand acknowledges the importance of perspectivism in any theology but also, on the other hand, celebrates theological freedom in viewing reality from 'manywheres'. Since reality provides plurality of texts, a multitextual theology can begin simultaneously from any text, without being trapped into a procedural rigidity as clearly demonstrated in contextual and liberation theologies.

1

Keywords multitextual – contextual – Asian theology – hermeneutical circle – experience – perspectivism – manywheres 1
The Experience-Centeredness of Asian Theologies Lecturers in contextual theology courses are likely to begin their classes by dealing with methodological issues, often seeking to demonstrate how contextual theology is to be done, in contrast to Western approaches. Such demonstration often illustrates the close affinity between contextual and liberation theologies. Both start with, and pay respect to, the concrete reality of human ©

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32

1572543X-12341313 experiences, especially those which have been devalued or dehumanized by unjust structures. Thus, methodologically, it is the primacy of experience over theory which provides the 'contextual' character of contextual theology. The Sri Lankan contextual theologian Aloysius Pieris repeatedly has argued that the uniqueness of Asian contextual theologies stems from two emblematic characteristics of Asia: 'overwhelming poverty' and 'multifaceted religiousness'.¹ Pieris's twofold characterization of the Asian context has been widely recognized by theologians for decades. Despite its valuable contribution, I believe Pieris's identification is no longer accurate or sufficient in describing the context for Asian theology. First, it does not take into account the fact that some regions in Asia are significantly free from poverty, such as Singapore and Japan. Secondly, the characteristic of multifaceted religiousness can no longer be said to be truly Asian. We are now living on a planet where no country can stay free of the reality of religious plurality. Also to be considered, thirdly, is a deeper objection from Namsoon Kang, an Asian feminist theologian. She argues that Pieris's characterization regards Asian theology

as 'a monolithic entity' and is therefore 'often misleading and even distorting'.

2

2 Kang's objection to Pieris's miniaturization of Asian theology is worth considering, since she believes that there are 'different types of Asian theological discourses'.³ In this article,

I want to demonstrate that the real issue is

30

not whether Asian theology is easily characterizable (Pieris) or diverse and therefore not easily defined (Kang). It is rather the methodological assumption of the primacy of experience or reality that must be questioned critically. Despite their differences, both Pieris and Kang seem to agree that Asian theology must begin with experience or the concrete narrative. Kang neatly summarizes her observation: The major methodologies that Asian woman theologians adopted for their theological articulation, especially when writing in English as a second language, were case studies and storytelling of grassroots people. Storytelling can be used constructively to enable women to talk about 1 Aloysius

Pieris, *An Asian theology of liberation*,

34

Maryknoll ny: Orbis Books 1988, 69. 2 Namsoon Kang, 'Re-constructing Asian Feminist Theology: Toward a Glocal Feminist Theology in an Era of Neo-Empire(s)', in: Sebastian C.H. Kim (ed.), *Christian Theology in Asia*, New York: Cambridge University Press 2008, 205.

5

3 Kang, 205.

personal experience. But it is meaningful only when such experience is placed in a wider theoretical and structural context.

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4 Kang concurs with Pieris in emphasizing people's experience. Moreover, like many other contextual theologians, she argues that experience must come first, before it

is placed 'in a wider theoretical and structural context'.

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Her way of thinking, therefore, is similar to many other contextual theologies. Interestingly, she is aware of the danger of normativizing experience, not in order to find another starting point for theological reflection, but to avoid the risk of marginalizing 'all experience

that does not fit the model of 'normative' Asian women's stories'.

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5 Thus, in spite of her caution, Kang's proposal is still an experience-based theology. This writing intends to demonstrate that the future of Asian theologies must be open to the possibility of multiple textualities. Then we will have theologies which do not necessarily start from concrete experience. I have therefore begun with a discussion of how contextual theologies have thus far been dominated by a single-minded experientialism. In the next section, I will employ the critical tool of the 'pastoral circle' or 'hermeneutical circle' to demonstrate some methodological flaws inherent in such an approach. Finally, I will propose a better framework for thinking theologically, i.e., from the perspective of 'manywheres';⁶ hence, multitextual theology. The present article is strictly methodological and will not propose a specific Asian theology. In so far as it succeeds in demonstrating the possibility of constructing multitextual theologies as a more robust alternative to experience-centered ones, this paper will have achieved its purpose. ² The Pastoral Circle and Its Problems Borrowed from liberationists, the hermeneutical circle consists of four key steps, which must be followed in exact order. Such methodology has been popularized in Indonesia through the translation of Joe Holland and Peter Henriot's ⁴ Kang, 207; italics mine. ⁵ Kang, 207. ⁶ I am indebted to Richard A. Shweder for helping me see the importance of the idea of 'the view from manywheres' for my own writing. See

Richard A. Shweder, Why Do Men Barbecue? Recipes for Cultural Psychology, Cambridge ma: Harvard University Press 2003,

15

1-7. book, *Social Analysis: Linking Faith and Justice*.⁷ Calling their own proposed methodology the 'pastoral circle', Holland and Henriot acknowledge that such an approach has been inspired by Paulo Freire's 'circle of praxis' and Juan Luis Segundo's 'hermeneutic spiral'.⁸ However, it is not so much a 'circle' as a 'spiral', since 'a response of action in a particular situation brings about a situation of new experience', and therefore,

'each approach does not simply retrace old steps but breaks new ground'. 9 **The**

22

four steps which Holland and Henriot suggest

are: insertion, social analysis, theological **reflection and pastoral planning.** As demonstrated in 14
the **diagram**

used in the book, this four-step approach is obviously centered on experience, around which all steps run circularly (or spirally). Using Christian text as an interpretive tool does not enter into the process until the third step. Consequently, any process starting from the Christian text must be suspected as promoting a top-down, contextually-insensitive, or even ideological approach. Here we find the landmark of every Third-World theology. 2.

Social Analysis 3. **Theological Reflection EXPERIENCE** 1. **Insertion** 4. **Pastoral Planning**

14

diagram 1 Holland and Henriot's pastoral circle 7

Joe Holland and **Peter J. Henriot, Analisis sosial dan refleksi teologis: Kaitan iman dan keadilan,**

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translated by B. Herry Priyono, Pustaka Teologi, Yogyakarta: Kanisius 1986. 8

Joe Holland and Peter J. Henriot, Social Analysis: Linking Faith and Justice, 2nd **revised and enlarged edition,**

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Maryknoll ny: Orbis Books, 1983, 8. For Freire's 'circle of praxis' and Segundo's 'hermeneutic spiral', see their books:

Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, New York: Seabury Press 1973;

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Juan Luis Segundo, Liberation of Theology, Maryknoll ny: Orbis Books 1976. 9 Holland and

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Henriot, Social analysis, 9. Cf.

Volker Küster, A Protestant Theology of Passion: Korean Minjung Theology Revisited, Leiden et al.: Brill 2010,

19

8. In my own experience I have observed that the methodology proposed by Holland and Henriot has gained significant popularity among Indonesian theologians. For example, J.B. Banawiratma, an Indonesian Catholic theologian, has employed it extensively in many of his writings. Interestingly, he has creatively modified the circle in order to make room either for humanities and social sciences, or for non-Christian traditions.¹⁰ However, it is very obvious that Banawiratma's multiple revisions of the circle still maintain the essential fourfold moments of insertion-analysis-reflection-planning. He cannot and does not want to traverse the methodological boundary set by Holland and Henriot. The first two steps constitute an inseparable combination referring to the engaged reality. While the first step addresses the question of what (descriptive), the second deals with why (analytical). Put together, they try to (re-)present reality as clearly as possible. However, it is crucial to remember that no one can supply a fully objective portrait of reality. There is no such thing as a neutral or God's-eye perspective. Any description and analysis of a given reality must involve some sort of valuative decision. Holland and Henriot clearly recognize this when they maintain that any social analysis begins with a 'conversion . . . [and] a turning to values.'¹¹ For instance, they stipulate that the 'option for the poor' as the fundamental value is one which must be borne in mind by a social analyst while s/he describes and analyzes reality. This approach obviously raises a critical question: Does it not mean, epistemologically, that the pastoral circle begins from some doctrinal value or ¹⁰ Here are some of his writings that I could track down: J.B. Banawiratma, 'Beberapa catatan sekitar pengembangan teologi', in: J.B. Banawiratma (ed.),

Panggilan gereja Indonesia dan teologi, Yogyakarta: Kanisius 1986,

31

126; 'Analisis sosial dan pembebasan: Refleksi teologis', in: J.B. Banawiratma (ed.), Kemiskinan dan pembebasan, Yogyakarta: Kanisius 1987, 124; 'Proses teologi sosial', in: J.B. Banawiratma (ed.),

Aspek-aspek teologi sosial, Yogyakarta: Kanisius 1988, 15; 'Teologi fungsional – Teologi kontekstual', in: Eka Darmaputera (ed.), Konteks berteologi di Indonesia:

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Buku penghormatan untuk 70 tahun

Prof. Dr. P.D. Latuihamallo, Jakarta: GPK Gunung Mulia 1988,

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54; J.B. Banawiratma (ed.), *Spiritualitas transformatif: Suatu pergumulan ekumenis*, Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 1990, 77; 10 agenda pas- toral

transformatif: Menuju pemberdayaan kaum miskin dengan perspektif adil gender, HAM, dan lingkungan hidup, Yogyakarta: Kanisius 2002,

16

40; see also

J.B. Banawiratma and I. Suharyo, Umat Allah menegaskan arah: Komentar atas arah dasar Keuskupan Agung Semarang 1990-1995, Yogyakarta: Kanisius

4

1990, 35. 11 Holland and Henriot, *Social analysis*, 96. tradition—usually overtly Christian ones¹²—and not from reality itself (see Diagram 2)? How do we choose such a value from within “the reservoir of meanings” available throughout Christian history? And why not some other value, such as the option for the women (who are possibly rich yet still abused by the male-dominated society), the children, nature, disabled people, or even some marginalized ethnic group (who are possibly not poor in terms of their economic position)? My point is simply that the pastoral circle has declared strongly the primacy of reality or experience when, as a matter of fact, it treats these only as having secondary importance, since they are dependent upon some preceding ideal, yet limited, values. The idea of having limited and particular values is the source of both strength and weakness for the whole process of the pastoral circle. On the one hand, it provides a strong impetus for the praxis of solidarity with the margin- alized. On the other hand, the same strength is also its weakness, because such limited values only address specific groups of people while leaving others untouched. In other words, this particular way of doing theology contains inherent blind spots with regard to whom it addresses in reality. This weakness occurs in every praxis-oriented theology that employs the pastoral circle or hermeneutic spiral. Both Asian and African-American male and female theologians, for example, have criticized liberationists in the West or in Latin 3. Social Analysis 4. Theological Reflection 2. Insertion EXPERIENCE 5. Pastoral Planning 1. Traditional or Value diagram 2 The pastoral circle revised 12 Since one’s

multiple identities are constructed by many sources, it is entirely possible that any claim that a value or tradition is 'Christian' might disguise the presence of non-Christian elements. America for having neglected the issue of cultural and racial injustice.¹³ Thus culture and race are the blind spots of the first generation of liberation theologians. In another setting, male Minjung theologians also have been accused by Korean feminists of overlooking key areas: they have failed to insert gender considerations into their social analysis and theological reflection, struggling only with the issues of economic injustice and cultural imperialism.¹⁴ For these male Minjung theologians, gender is their blind spot. Abuse and injustice are the experienced reality for Korean women, which makes them, in Hyun-Kyung Chung's words,

'the Minjung within the Minjung' and **'the han of the han'**. 15 **And**

27

the parade of theological blind spots goes on.¹⁶ It does not necessarily follow that this represents a weakness in the pastoral circle as employed by contextual theologies. Such an inherent characteristic is better called 'perspectivism'.¹⁷ Perspectivism allows us to think of every contextual theologian as being located at a specific place and holding a certain point of view. This should push her or him to acknowledge the historical and textual limits that they cannot surpass. However, such a characteristic constitutes a weakness insofar as the perspectival nature of theology is unrealized or ignored by the theologian, leading her/him to declare her/his proposal as the best way of approaching the whole experienced reality. Thus, we must be aware of the totalizing tendency of the methodology of the "pastoral circle." Interestingly, while this totalizing tendency operates precisely in our unrecognized inability to comprehend different ways of viewing complex reality, the 13

D. Preman Niles, From East and West: Rethinking Christian Mission, St. Louis mo: Chalice Press 2004,

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87-88; Pieris, 21-22;

Elina Vuola, Limits of Liberation: Praxis as Method of Latin American Liberation Theology and Feminist Theology, Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia 1997,

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93-113. 14

Hyun Kyung Chung, Struggle to Be the Sun Again: Introducing Asian Women's Theology, Maryknoll ny: Orbis Books 1990.

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See also, Rosemary R.

Ruether, 'The Emergence of Christian Feminist Theology', in: Susan Frank Parsons (ed.), The Cambridge Companion to Feminist Theology, Cambridge uk et al.: **Cambridge University Press 2002,**

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17. 15 16 Chung, 42. I am indebted to Bernard J.F. Lonergan's idea of blind spot or scotoma and apply it freely here to refer to the epistemological bias that narrows our view of the whole reality and darkens our ability to acknowledge other points of view as being equally legitimate to ours. See

Bernard J.F. Lonergan, Mark D. Morelli and **Elizabeth A. Morelli, The Lonergan Reader, Toronto** et al.: **University of Toronto Press 1997,**

10

116-117. 17 See

Merold Westphal, 'Onto-Theology, Metanarrative, Perspectivism, and the Gospel', in:

26

Myron B. Penner (ed.), Christianity and the postmodern turn: Six views, Grand Rapids mi: Brazos

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2005. Raimundo Panikkar gives an excellent metaphor of windows to argue for the importance of perspectivism: Raimundo

Panikkar, Cultural Disarmament: The Way to Peace, Louisville ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995,

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171-172. methodology itself is continually employed by those (e.g., female Asian theologians) who have complained that others (e.g., male Asian theologians) have abandoned their perspectives or interests. In short, the theological method explained in the pastoral circle fails when it tries to function as a one-size-fits-all approach to experienced reality. A second serious criticism must be raised against the pastoral circle. While its first two steps deal with the experienced reality, it is only after employing the third step ('theological reflection') that one can offer a solution (as the fourth or final step, or 'pastoral planning', in the words of Holland and Henriot) to the problem depicted in the social analysis. Thus, what seems to be a bottom-up approach actually disguises the same top-down approach it has roundly criticized. Action or praxis to resolve the non-ideal experience or reality occurs only after one does theological reflection. Worse, it is most likely the case that one uses, at this stage, the same tradition or value which has functioned as a part of the oppression while the social analysis was being carried out. Thus, the pastoral circle is basically an ideological enterprise, in which reality or experience is only used to justify the tradition or theological value chosen beforehand. At the end, Christian values or traditions become

the definitive words through which Christian praxis receives its authority. Again and again, as the cycle repeats itself – the values and traditions of the thinker constitutes the key determinants through which Christian praxis receives its authority. If my criticism is correct, the procedure can be represented in a different way through the diagram below. The terms ‘text’ and ‘context’ themselves illustrates the hidden primacy of the former. We acknowledge an experience or reality as ‘con-text’ since it surrounds a particular ‘text’. The assumption behind this distinction, which is apparent in many contextual theologies, is that we have an unchanging text (the Christian gospel) encircled with ever-changing context (reality). From TRADITION OR VALUE 1. Valuative conversion 3. Praxis 2. Theological reflection REALITY OR EXPERIENCE diagram 3 The primacy of the Christian text this assumption, we often talk about contextualization as a process of translating or adapting the Christian Gospel (text) into local cultures (contexts). In this sense, we decide the text first, and then, based on that decision, we define its con-text. Yet, the distinction is of course fallacious,¹⁸ since what we call con-text is also a text per se. A context is the joining or weaving together of multiple texts separated from the selected text. Thus, the argument that contextual theology must begin with reality or context is deeply mistaken, since we have to decide first the Christian values (text), before explicitly defining the experienced reality (con-texts). In reality, of course, we can freely choose to begin with the Christian text or the non-Christian texts (con-text). From the perspectivist point of view, either way must presume the existence of the other text. If one starts from the context, the thinker is one who has been nurtured by the Christian text. On the contrary, if he/she starts from the Christian text, he/she must acknowledge that his/her social-cultural identities have already informed and influenced his/her thinking. My final criticism relates to the necessity of following the method step-by-step closely without any possibility of changing the order. Contextual theologians have been trained to be methodologically fixated by starting their theology from reality or experience (steps 1 and 2) and being suspicious of any attempt to begin from the Christian text (step 3). As such, the pastoral circle functions as the meta-methodology of any contextual and liberation theology. Minor methodological variations are permitted only insofar as they do not betray this fundamental procedure. The procedure that must be followed rigidly is basically linear; the popular illustration of a circle or spiral is merely the curving of four linear steps, starting from context (insertion and social analysis) to text (theological reflection) back to context (through pastoral planning and praxis).¹⁹ Thus, not only is the alleged language of ‘circle’ or ‘spiral’ inaccurate, the procedural rigidity that it employs can easily lead us into a ‘methodological imperialism’.²⁰ 18 19

Makarand R. Paranjape, *Altered Destinations: Self, Society, and Nation in India*, New Delhi: Anthem Press, 2009, 21

130-131. I have demonstrated earlier, however, that the actual starting point is the Christian text as the lens for the theologian to see the context. He then reverts explicitly to the Christian text before finally attempting to change the context through praxis. 20 I borrow the term from

Paul Tillich, *Systematic theology, volume 1*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1973, 7

60. 3 A Multitextual Theology If my criticisms of the pastoral or hermeneutic circle, which has been predominantly employed within the Asian theological setting, are correct, the need to search for a new way of doing Asian theology is necessary. We need to take into consideration the complexity and multiplicity of our living reality in Asia. There is no single text (the Christian text) that is subsequently defined and surrounded by multiple contexts. Employed loosely, the Derridean credo, 'everything is text', seems applicable here in pointing out the equal status of each entity ('text'). One text is also a context for another text. Thus, text is context, and context is text. We therefore have the multiplicity of texts or the multitextual reality, since a single text is present only in relation to every other text. This intertextuality creates a web of meanings or a reservoir of values, from which we scoop up values we prefer and determine to be meaningful for our lives in connection with the larger community. I am not suggesting here a kind of unperspectival theology. I have already mentioned the significance of perspectivism within the pastoral circle of contextual theologies, one which must be maintained without apology and without question. However, it is conceivable that the circle can be stretched to the degree that we can have multiple perspectives simultaneously. This approach is similar to what cultural anthropologist Richard Shweder calls 'the view from manywheres', which has to be done 'by

staying on the move between different points of

33

views or frames of references'.²¹ Such an approach liberates us from incompleteness, incoherence, and emptiness.

'The knowable world is incomplete if seen from any one point of view, incoherent if seen from all points of view at once, and empty if seen from nowhere in particular.'

6

22 Doing theology from the perspective of 'manywheres' enables us to acknowledge our own limited Christian point of view and be open to the necessity of embracing and being embraced by other possible points of view. In so doing, we might not be able to cure completely the theological scotism which results in blind spots in contextual theologies, but we can manage such blind spots so that the tendency to abandon perspectives from other groups will be minimized. In so doing, we still can recognize the identity of Christian tradition as a unique perspective, but we celebrate its contributions only in mutual engagement with other perspectives. A multitextual theology also operates in non-linear ways. There is no fixed point from which we begin our theological processes. Since we view reality ²¹ Shweder, 6. ²² Shweder, 2. from 'manywheres', we can start from as many points of view as possible with a 'promise to visit' the rest later. There is no step-by-step procedure, similar to that which the pastoral circle suggests, since multitextual theology recommends simultaneous processes of reflecting and acting, engaging and rejecting, or hybridizing and discerning, the texts. In such a complex process, anything (the Christian Bible, poverty, gender inequality, other religious traditions, some specific Christian tradition, etc.) can become the primary text and others become context, para-text, syn-text, anti-text, dia-text, pre-text, post-text or manytexts, depending on their function(s) within our theological imagination. It is around those texts that the dynamic movement between reflection and action takes place. At a particular point in time, one could begin by reflecting on a primary text while

considering other alter-texts, then at another time one might start from action that will be continued with reflective process to be added later. Also, what has previously been treated as con-text or syn-text can become the primary text on another occasion. In short, we have no fixed pattern here but an irregular and fluid movement back-and-forth between action and reflection surrounded and 'besieged' by multiple texts at the same time, as demonstrated in diagram 4. Küster's criteria of identity and relevance²³ can be applied here in a different way from what he originally suggested. In multitextual theology, both criteria must be fully applied to non-Christian texts. Multitextual theology must ACTIVE REFLECTION TEXT Con-Text Dia-Text Para-Text REFLECTIVE ACTION diagram 4 Multitextual theology of action and reflection 23 As described in Küster, 8. Syn-Text be aware of the necessity to maintain the identity and integrity of all texts (criterion of identities of all texts), in which no dominant text can have the final word on other texts. It also asks to what extent non-Christian texts can be relevant to the Christian text and vice-versa (criterion of mutual relevance). In short, the new model I suggest assumes the importance of an open-identity of multiple texts and their mutual-relevance.²⁴ It will certainly appear as an irregular and un-systematic process, yet at the end the expected result is clearly promising, as Calvin Schrag describes its possibilities:

'a convergence without coincidence, an interplay without synthesis, an appropriation without total-ization, and a unification that allows for difference.'

13

25 4 Some Inconclusive Conclusions The model of multitextual theology that I propose in this article is still in the process of constructing both imaginatively and theoretically. There are many critical issues that must be addressed in order for such a model to have its fruitful future. To conclude inconclusively, however, there are three issues that I would like to discuss. The first issue deals with the question as to whether we are still doing 'Christian' theology at all. The entire argument of this essay focuses on the issue of methodology in Asian theology. As such, theology must be seen as a second-order critical reflection of all reality from the perspective of many- wheres, while the search for Christian identity in the whole process should take place in the Christian spirituality of the journey towards the Triune God. It is through the participation of all creation in the liberating economy of the Triune God that we find our confidence in doing our multitextual theology. 24 The case of multicultural life and multiple religious belongings of Raimundo Panikkar can be an example, par excellence, of the multitextuality of religions, cultures and other texts, in whom we find out how open-identity and mutual-relevance of the texts can operate beautifully. Describing his spiritual pilgrimage in crossing over multiple religious traditions, he writes: "I 'left' as a Christian, I 'found' myself a Hindu and I 'return' a Buddhist, without having ceased to be a Christian." See:

Raimundo Panikkar, The intrareligious dialogue, New York: Paulist Press, 1978, 2.

28

This personal testimony expresses the preservation of multiple religious texts in Panikkar's life, without any of them dominating others. We can examine how his theology flourishes irregularly, yet un-erratically, some time from one text to another, and some other time from multiple texts simultaneously. 25

Calvin O. Schrag, The resources of rationality: A response to the postmodern challenge, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992,

12

158-59. Schrag proposes a particular form of rationality called “transversality,” which is similar to the reasoning process I use here. Secondly, the title of this article, ‘Asian Multitextual Theology’, raises up a problem of Asianness. The precise question would be: What is Asian (multitextual) theology? What makes Asian theology truly Asian? I believe the answer is not to be found in a theologian’s ethnic identity. A native Asian-born theologian could perfectly be a theologian doing non-Asian theology, if one does not root one’s theological enterprise on Asian soil with its multitextual complexity. On the contrary, one might be a non-Asian-born person, but still being an Asian theologian insofar as one immerses oneself into Asian living “texts,” creatively and passionately. The comparative theology done by Francis X. Clooney, for instance, is one of many examples we can demonstrate here. His primary focus is on the Sanskrit and Tamil traditions, in which he has spent many years of scholarship and spiritual passing-over and performs multitextual theology creatively by comparing Hindu and Christian traditions. In so doing, we could safely say that Clooney is an Asian theologian although he was not born as an Asian. Lastly, how this multitextual theology can be operative, especially in my Indonesian context, is the homework left by this introductory work. I have a deep belief that the complex and diverse realities in Indonesia, in terms of religious, social, political, cultural, and other dimensions, would benefit from my proposal. Indonesian theologians struggling with very diverse issues have unlimited possibilities in doing their theology in response to their own respective situations. It is the task of theological education in Indonesia as well as in other countries, through their open, multidisciplinary curricula, to cultivate the creative confidence in future theologians to engage with such unlimited possibilities. Any theologian, however, needs to be aware of the fact that such a multitextual perspective would be fruitless unless it deals with the problem of power embedded in the interactions of multitextual realities. To be sure, it can be a painful and challenging yet exciting enterprise. Joas Adiprasetya (b. 1970) is the President of

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3

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3

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3

120 Adiprasetya Towards an Asian Multitextual Theology 121 122 Adiprasetya Towards an Asian Multitextual Theology 123
124 Adiprasetya Towards an Asian Multitextual Theology 125 126 Adiprasetya Towards an Asian Multitextual Theology 127
128 Adiprasetya Towards an Asian Multitextual Theology 129 130 Adiprasetya

Towards an Asian Multitextual Theology 131 **Exchange 43** (2014) **119-**

1

131 Exchange 43 (2014) 119-131 Exchange 43 (2014) 119-131 Exchange 43 (2014) 119-131 Exchange 43 (2014) 119-131
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


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