

Literarische Berichte und Anzeigen

Allgemeines

Haight, Roger: *Christian Community in History*. Vol. 1, Historical Ecclesiology New York/London: nContinum, 2004, Pp. 438. ISBN 0-8264-1630-6; Vol. 2, Comparative Ecclesiology, New York/London: nContinum, 2005, Pp. 518, ISBN 0-8264-1631-4.

The book *Jesus the symbol of God* got its author, the American Jesuit Roger Haight, in bad books with the Congregation for Catholic Doctrine. Luckily this has not deterred the author from publishing two volumes on *Christian Community in History: Historical Ecclesiology and Comparative Ecclesiology*. The first volume comprises the history of the church's self understanding from its origins in the Jesus' Movement to the late Middle Ages. The second volume begins with the Reformation and ends with the twentieth century. Here he deals with seven distinct ecclesiologies that have developed since the Reformation.

Haight's theological position reflects the views and questions raised by renowned theologians both catholic (Karl Rahner, Edward Schillebeeckx, Bernhard Lonigan, David Tracy and Joseph Komonchak) and protestant (Paul Tillich, Schubert Ogden, and James Gustafson).

Christian Community in History is an essay in Ecclesiology written in the spirit of Vatican II. It deals with the history of ecclesiology rather than with church history (1:1). The purpose of this work is not merely to sketch the various ecclesiologies that have emerged in the course of history but also to offer systematic and constructive reflections on the dynamic process which brought forth diverse ecclesiologies. The focus is on the structure of the church and its self-understanding. It tries to be faithful to the historical reality of the church in each period. (1: 2)

The four step approach which Haight employs in the first volume is revised in the second. The historical development of this work consists of four logical moments.

The first schematically puts forward the historical situation of the church. It pays

attention to the situation, context, particularity and distinctiveness of the works of important authors.

The second offers an analysis of the key texts of theologians who have played a vital role in the history and development of the church, keeping in mind their context, theological content as well as their ecclesial and social significance.

The third works out a comprehensive statement about the theology and mission of the church while not neglecting the sociological structure as represented by these classic works.

Finally the fourth formulates a set of particular theological and ecclesiological principles, axioms, distinctions, and constants that derive from these classic texts and that are at work in the developments of the church.

In the second volume Haight deals with comparative ecclesiology that is based on the plurality of ecclesiologies that were present during the Protestant Reformation. Comparative Ecclesiology does not undermine the basic trust of historical ecclesiology but makes it more interesting by sharpening its tensions.

The first step describes the historical development of an individual theologian's ecclesiology. In the second step this is followed by analysis. The third step reflects on the key factors at work. And the fourth articulates the principles that have been derived from the investigation.

In volume two Haight revises his four fold approach. In the later chapters he presents the analysis of two or three positions and principles drawn from these positions.

For Haight six approaches characterize an ecclesiology from above:

One, it offers an ahistorical context of the church with regard to its nature, essence and structure.

Two, it sees a specific confessional church as the object or principle for interpreting the universal church and describes the Roman catholic church as the one true church.

Three, it is founded on the authority of the magisterium, councils, other traditional teachings and on scripture.

Four, the origin and development of the church are understood in terms of doctrines.

Five, it is Christocentric because a high Christology is frequently operative.

Six, it adheres to a hierarchical approach to church structures and ministries, power and authority.

Haight identifies six 'historical and cultural forces' that challenge these six approaches. Based on these approaches he develops an ecclesiology from below:

One, it takes into consideration the post-modern context, historical consciousness, global pluralism and the role of the social imaginative construction.

Two, its object is the whole Christian movement.

Three, it is founded on experience and praxis.

Four, origins are understood in historical terms.

Five, it is spirit-centered.

Six, it is functional in its approach to structures and new ministries.

Each chapter in the two volumes is developed according to its corresponding approach. Volume one treats the formation of the church in three chapters: 'Genesis of the Church', 'The Pre-Constantinian Church', 'The Post-Constantinian Church, 300–600', followed by two chapters on the Middle Ages: One featuring the 'Gregorian Reform and the New Medieval Church', and other 'Conciliarism and the late Medieval Church'.

Volume Two following the methodology of Volume One covers the history of Christian community from the sixteenth century, i.e., the time of the Reformation to the present: Martin Luther, John Calvin, and the Church of the England, followed by a chapter devoted to Anabaptist, Baptist and Roman Ecclesiologies. Haight then moves over to nineteenth century views of Friedrich Schleiermacher and Johann Adam Möhler. This is followed by two chapters on twentieth century currents: The first on the ecumenical movement and the World Council of Churches, Vatican II and its aftermath, and liberation theology; the second on the Orthodox views of John Zizioulas, Pentecostal ecclesiology, and Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry from the World Council of Churches. Developing various ecclesiologies from the time of the Reformation to the present time Roger Haight is of the view that the church has become a multicolored tapestry of ecclesiologies and that it is simply not possible for a single church to carry the full flow of Christian life in a single organizational form. (2:7)

The aim of Haight's work is to present a historical and developing church with multiple ecclesiologies and to develop a set of principles

and axioms culled from the history of ecclesiology. Haight's magisterial work does not intend to provide a sweeping view of the church as a developmental and pluralistic movement' (1:7). The larger intent of this work is to show the richness, vitality and creativity of the whole church as it moves through history, adjusting to new times, places and cultures (2: vii). He says that very few people study the history of the church with a critical eye and are aware of its twists and turns. He draws attention to the logic of change that is operative there. Since change is inevitable, the church in history can never settle down completely and fully. Hence there can be 'no established' church apart from the eschaton (1:7).

Haight intends to discover the continuity amid the sharp changes history produces across time. While discovering the continuity of the Christian community in history the theologian should take into account the social, historical and theological context that is at work in history in order to develop a constructive ecclesiology. Discovering unity in diversity will help the theologian to deal with pluralism more constructively than we have done so far.

The two volumes of Christian Community in History make interesting and insightful reading both for Christians in general and for Catholics in particular. The work understands ecumenism in a specific sense. It *presupposes* Christian unity but a Christian unity made more apparent by the pluralism of religions in the midst of which we all exist. Haight's contribution will be especially helpful to students of theology to get an overview of the church in history. It does not concentrate on presenting historical facts or the ecclesiology of a particular church; rather it provides a significantly and imaginatively different framework for understanding the church and the development of the whole Christian movement. Ecclesiology from below begins with the genesis of the church, analyzes the sociological dynamics and offers an integrative theological understanding of the church.

As a summary the reviewers take with them two memorable sentences of Roger Haight: "Just as Christology is the theology of Jesus of Nazareth, so too ecclesiology is the theology of the Christian community in history." And, "Just as Christology demands a restoration of Jesus of Nazareth to the imagination as he in whom God was incarnate, so too ecclesiology demands a consideration of the concrete, social, and historical community and institution of the church as that in which God acts in grace." (1. ix)

Tübingen Cinthia Pinto – Bernd Jochen Hilberath