

KINGDOM CONCERNS

*A Biblical Exploration Towards
A Theology Of Mission*

Ken Gnanakan

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FOREWORD

The need for relevant and scholarly material has long been felt by Indian Churches. Although some worthwhile material has been published conservatives and evangelicals have lagged behind. Now TBT has stepped in and already made its mark with many publications to its credit.

Serving the AETEI and ATA constituencies, TBT is networked into some 300 theological institutions Asiawide and looking carefully into providing quality text books at affordable prices. A variety of books are planned, broadly under the following series:

Text Book Series: M.Div. and B.Th. level course-, text, work- and source-books, such as theological and biblical subjects, pastoralia, etc.

History and Biography Series: to create awareness of both Indian, Asian and other men and women in recent times, events, etc.

Theological Issues Series: dealing with religious issues such as pluralism, inter-religious dialogue, syncretism, and ideological issues like marxism, secularism, materialism, humanism, revolutions etc.

This present volume is the first in the Text Book Series. Though written primarily for Indian theological students at M.Div./B.D. level, the Series it has a greater circle of readers in mind. Each text book is consciously designed to help anyone, both Asian and non-Asian, who desires to study theological developments.

We heartily commend the third Indian edition of *Kingdom Concerns* by Dr. Ken. R. Gnanakan. Participating in numerous international missionary efforts and having taught the course for several years at various seminaries at a post graduate level, Gnanakan is well suited to write this as a text

book; in fact, we are pleased that this work is being used in a number of seminaries in and outside India. The author has done numerous corrections and additions, beside thoroughly checking spelling, style and format inconsistencies. Documentation has been upgraded and indexes and bibliography have been supplemented. The fresh, simple and readable approach of the book were appreciated both by students and teachers alike and so have been retained. We trust in the present form the book retains its usefulness for anyone interested in doing serious research in mission theology.

– *General Editors*

PREFACE

My real involvement in theology began with my theologising for the Indian context in 1979 with the implementation of the ACTS Institute – a vision the Lord had given me during my studies in London. The receiving of the vision was timely. Not only did it challenge my wholly academic involvement in theology, but brought me into a practical situation wherein I was able to understand and work towards God’s total mission. I continue to marvel at the fact of God’s gracious dealings with man.

Over the years of the growth of the ministry of ACTS Institute, and the opportunity to teach at the South Asia Institute of Advanced Christian Studies, I have sensed deeply the hand of God in the theology he was calling me to develop. The result is *KINGDOM CONCERNS*. Accordingly, this book is not just a writing project involving time and academic work but an outflow of the experiences in years of learning and ministering.

One of my prime concerns has been a “Biblical theology.” Having been involved in the Sixth Asia Theological Association Consultation in Seoul in 1982, particularly in the drafting of the Declaration, I remember the intense debate on the need for a theology that would be true both to the Bible and to our context. We had stated,

To be faithful to the Word of God and to be relevant to our cultures, all theological reflection should be patterned on ‘the Word made flesh’. . . [to] enable the Bible to speak relevantly to its context.

I had no doubt about the need to make our theology alive and dynamic, and to see it actually work in our everyday life. But my own struggle was with the overemphasis on “contextualization.” It gave so much of the impression of a human effort both in its presuppositions and its outworkings that I came away with a deep desire to search the scriptures for the kind of theology that would allow God himself to work

out his purposes through his people. And yet, this theology would take both the Bible and our context seriously. My own way of describing the integration is in the word “actualisation.” It may not be the fullest way of expressing all that theology ought to be, but makes the “Word made flesh” idea central to the whole process of theologising.

Writing *Kingdom Concerns* has been exciting. Studying the Bible afresh from the perspective of mission, and constantly relating it to the ministry God has given me, I have been able to write a theology which I am convinced should be central to our mission. I am praying that this attempt for an “actualised theology” will inspire others to write theology from their own missiological perspectives. It is this form of theologising that will add richness to the Church all over. I dedicate this book to all who seek to theologise for God’s mission in the world today.

I first wrote this book for Asian readers, but have discovered over and over again how much there is need for such material all over the world. I am grateful to IVP (UK) for their efforts to make this book available to a larger readership. Having this larger readership in mind, and having had some time to think through these insights, I have been able to make some revisions. However, the changes do not represent any shift from my earlier position. I am grateful to Beulah Wood and D. Jebaraj, my colleagues in TBT, for their assistance in making this third edition possible.

I am grateful to God for giving me the privilege of being involved in his mission. I could have remained a cold academic had it not been for his gracious intervention and the challenge to set up the ACTS Institute. And now these experiences are shared worldwide through my responsibility in ATA and the WEF-Theological Commission for which I praise God. My theologising is essentially an expression of my gratitude to God for the gift of his salvation.

– Ken R .Gnanakan
Bangalore June 1997.