

RESENSIES/REVIEWS

P. Knox

AIDS, ANCESTORS AND SALVATION: LOCAL BELIEFS IN CHRISTIAN MINISTRY TO THE SICK

2008. Nairobi: Paulines. 284pp. ISBN 9966-08-369-3.

Taking his cue from the Kairos document, Knox engages Aids in the Southern African context, especially the context of Lesotho. The role of the veneration of the ancestors in seeking a possible solution to the challenges posed by dealing with the illness forms a substantial part of his discussion. A prophetic theology in line with the Kairos document's suggestions is then proposed.

The challenges of Aids is far-reaching. The implications for life, love, family and death are explained. Aids in South Africa receives full attention. He then continues to discuss serious theological questions. Issues of systematic, ethical and pastoral nature have to be evaluated. He focuses on the soteriology; the question of salvation.

In depth discussion of the ancestor cult follows. While there was a time in which it was driven underground, there is a resurgence of the cult. Christian missionaries were radically opposed to any form of ancestor veneration. Converts had to abandon all practices associated with it. He deals with the way in which this had happened in Lesotho. However, the situation changed. Decolonisation followed. The view towards ancestor veneration is now one of careful acceptance rather than outright rejection. Especially Vatican II represents a major shift in views on culture and inculturation.

Having explained all this Knox moves to the concept of Kairos. The Kairos document challenged state and church theology and called for prophetic theology. According to him the possibility to handle the Kairos challenge of Aids by the reconciliatory elements of the ancestor veneration, exists. The prophetic response is to reach out to people in dire need, to stand by them and soothe the pain by rituals of healing and reconciliation. He concludes that it is possible to turn to the traditional wisdom and rituals to deal with Aids.

Knox's approach is new and challenging. However, many questions remain unanswered. How can the hope in Christ be reconciled with that of the ancestor cult? How can the radical implications of being "in Christ" and dealing with life's crises be directed to the rituals of the ancestor veneration? Is it not in the end again a misconception to try to offer help which is not totally embedded in the belief in Jesus Christ? Finally, can we offer any other salvation than the salvation of the One on the cross?

Resensies/Reviews

When evaluating different views on salvation Knox tends to be superficial. He needed to have delved much deeper. It is also not possible to be critical towards e.g. Anselm for instance without taking the biblical view into consideration.

The book offers much information and also from the Roman Catholic view some important challenges and deserves to be read, but his conclusion should be vigorously debated.

Prof Pieter Verster
Head Dept Missiology
UFS