



CHILD THEOLOGY AS THEOLOGY

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To this point in time the Child Theology Movement (CTM)¹ has not come up with an agreed definition of child theology (CT). In the absence of such a statement, there are several theologies that sometimes go by this name.

This article describes one form of CT, and then explores how it draws from, critiques and contributes to not just contextual theologies, but theology in general.

The main source for describing this understanding of CT is the book *Entry Point (EP)*,² jointly written by the author and Haddon Willmer.³ A distinctive of all varieties of CT is, of course, that a child (childhood) is integral to the whole process. It is not therefore general dogmatic or systematic theology, although we try to work at it systematically, because it will not let go of this actual child or children. For those committed to this, there are different biblical starting points on offer. Some seek to draw out themes and conclusions from a survey of children in the Scriptures as a whole.⁴ Others seek theological validation and blessing for their efforts by, with and for children in the name of Jesus.⁵ The birth narratives of Jesus in Matthew and Luke seem to offer obvious starting points. And there is a case for seeing Incarnation, particularly as referenced in John's Gospel, as a valid base for such theological exploration.

The book *EP*, and this article, derive their primary inspiration from the action and teaching of Jesus, in Matthew 18, when he called a little child and placed her in the middle of a theological argument between his disciples.⁶ In rooting our investigation here, we did not assume that this is the only or even the best starting point. But one must start somewhere, and this is where our 12-year theological conversation began. As we embarked on our theological journey, the phrase "child in the midst" began to gain currency. Before long before it became clear to us that that this would not do. The

phrase trips nicely off the tongue and resonates with the spirit of the age. But the actual child in question is significant in the Gospel narrative because she was called and placed by Jesus, and then the subject of some specific, and very searching teaching.⁷

There is no indication that she was placed in the midst as an object of the disciples' gaze, or as a prompt to them to have compassion on her. Rather Jesus, teaching and living out God's will and Kingdom on earth, was nearing the last stage of his journey to the cross. Despite his best efforts, his followers did not grasp how the suffering of the cross and the glory of the Kingdom of God related to each other. The issue at stake takes us to the very heart of Christian theology: who is Jesus? What difference does Jesus Christ, with the child in the midst, make to how his followers understand what it is to serve him? What is the nature of the Kingdom of God? How do we enter it? How are cross and humility to be understood and lived by followers of Jesus?

Our contention is that the little child (about whom we know nothing) was called and placed by Jesus into the midst of an existing form of theology in order to challenge and change it. Jesus interrupted and challenged the beliefs and lives of any who sought to follow him. The call is not to change the disciples' attitudes to the child (although such attitudes most certainly will change if they get the point). Rather the child is invited into the unfolding story of Jesus as he proclaims, signs and seeks the Kingdom of God. In our view, there is no way the child can be abstracted (decontextualised) from the narrative of Matthew, the person of Jesus, the theological arguing of the disciples, the culture of the time or the nature of the Kingdom of God. The sign of the child in the midst is not self-evident in any time or culture, but rather chosen by God in Christ to challenge our theology and lives. It follows that theology that pays careful attention to the sign of the child can only be authentic when it pays scrupulous attention to the words of Jesus and the specific context of this pericope.⁸

¹ See www.childtheology.org for a history of CTM and material that it has produced and made available worldwide.

² Haddon Willmer and Keith J. White, *Entry Point: Towards Child Theology with Matthew 18* (London: WTL Publications, 2013).

³ The whole of this paper reflects, in some measure, the thinking of my friend and colleague Haddon Willmer, because it draws so heavily on *EP*, the book that we wrote together. And I wish readers to know that. However the final section draws substantially from his written response to earlier versions of this paper. This conclusion is, as I see it, the nub of the matter, and I am profoundly grateful to Haddon for helping me to see it.

⁴ Roy B. Zuck, *Precious in His Sight: Childhood and Children in the Bible* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2012).

⁵ The origins of CTM lie in a number of international "Cutting Edge" conferences, convened by Viva, which brought together Christian "child activists" from around the world. Several Christian initiatives focused on children worldwide have asked CTM to be involved (e.g. HCD Global Alliance; the Global Children's Forum; 4/14 Window Movement; WCC/ UNICEF). CT has been seeking to inform and support them, but also to challenge them theologically and prophetically.

⁶ παιδίον (a little child). We do not know whether this little child was a boy or a girl, so the latter is chosen as a reminder of this.

⁷ Chapter one of *EP* (19–46) deals specifically with this issue.

⁸ As indicated below, *EP* seeks to be attentive to context, historical and present, all through.

When the two words “child” and “theology” are placed side by side, as in CT, the intention is that they should be kept together. Now people can and do give a difference emphasis to one or the other, and where the child is the focus of attention and effort, then it might best be termed a “theology of child (hood)”. Where there is an attempt to listen to the presence and voice of the child, then perhaps a commitment to “children’s theology”, or “children’s spirituality”, is in evidence. As a matter of public record, since the inception of CTM, the movement has been alongside and in conversation with those engaged in such related activities and studies. But we are not seeking a deeper and more rounded understanding of child and children,⁹ or ground for making the church and world more child-friendly, though we are committed to both of these endeavours. The primary question for CT, as we understand it, is how this child placed in the midst by Jesus relates to theology, and vice-versa. Somebody needs to work seriously at this interface. And to do so inevitably invites comparison with contextual theologies that place other words (such as “black”, “poor” or “women”) alongside theology.

COMMON FEATURES OF CONTEXTUAL THEOLOGIES

Although it is notoriously difficult to articulate what contextual theology is, not least because all Christian theology is properly speaking contextual,¹⁰ there are forms of theology that have been chosen to call themselves, or are labelled by others, contextual or liberative, and we know what they are. Here are some of their common elements:¹¹

Praxis. This is the axiom that action is inseparable from theology. If it is separated, then at best it can only be “part-theology”. The Gospel of Jesus Christ must be lived in the world. There is a constant interplay, dialectic, even conflict between the “text of life” on the one hand, and the biblical text and theological traditions on the other. The text of life (personal and communal experience and context) is seen as logically prior to theology in that life is lived before theological reflection begins to take place.

The text of life. Part of this process involves a reflection on life, with reference to identified forms of oppression and injustice, which results in critiques of the dominant historical and contemporary realities and ideologies that have enslaved, marginalised and silenced the lives

and voices of certain groups of people. The process seeks to raise the consciousness of the subject group in question, to amplify their voices, and to challenge everyone else (who in large or small measure are seen to contribute directly or indirectly, consciously or unconsciously to the suffering and oppression of the subject group) to listen to what they are saying, to repent and change their ways.

Rereading Scripture. The processes described so far inevitably entail the revisiting of biblical readings and theological dogma in order to draw out some of the radical implications there (for example, the liberation of the Hebrew slaves from Egypt). Such revisitation also involves critiquing traditional biblical readings and theology to varying degrees. (Some find much of the biblical text indefensibly compromised by, say, patriarchal ideology.)

Context. Because specific places, cultures and contexts are important, these theologies wrestle with the challenge of how to connect local experiences, insights and action with realities and ideologies in other places and traditions. Is it possible for a white person to speak in a black liberation theology discourse, or a man in a feminist context? Are there universal truths and courses of action that apply in all instances?

Agents of change. Integral to these movements is the mobilisation of the oppressed groups to campaign for genuine and lasting change in social life that is fairer and more just. The overall aim is that they might have life in all its fullness. New forms of ecclesial community are essential for doing such theology, as well as outcomes of it.

REFLECTIONS ON CONNECTIONS BETWEEN CT AND OTHER THEOLOGICAL ENDEAVOURS

Before seeking to relate CT to five common elements of contextual theologies, there is a historical fact (perhaps accident) that should be borne in mind: child theology has come later than these contextual movements. They developed at least in their modern forms, from the 1960s onwards, in the context of a period of considerable intellectual and political ferment (e.g. civil rights in the USA; independence movements around the world; renewed insights into the power of patriarchy and hegemony), and they are children of their time. CT too is a child of its time, and

⁹ That there must be serious attention to real children in a range of contexts is evidenced in *EP* by the fact that the first chapter is called “Child”. It was worked at for over a decade with reference to real children in real situations, and from a range of different theoretical perspectives, including sociology and psychology.

¹⁰ This is developed below.

¹¹ This is a deliberately indicative list. A CTM booklet that is work in progress has a much fuller summary of several forms of contextual theology.

there are parallels with, say, the study of children as agents, and childhood as a focus of attention in the discipline of sociology.¹²

CT has arisen in world history after the UNCRC (1989)¹³, at a time when child and children have come to exist as subjects and agents rather than being imbedded in other structures and power relations (e.g. family studies; socialisation; education). Some children are playing an active part in this process, but childhood is something experienced by and affecting us all: the whole community and society.

Because CT, perhaps appropriately given its name, arrived a generation later, led by some of those who had experienced the 1960s, it is therefore privileged in being able to reflect upon and learn from the histories, processes and developments of these other movements when seeking to shape its own way of working. It must be alert to ways in which it is being squeezed into a mould simply because it exists in the context of the here and now. It must shine critical theological light on prevailing analysis and ideologies, both within Christian and secular spheres. It pays particular attention to developments in child welfare and concepts of childhood. And its methods are deliberately designed to be bottom-up, locally rooted and yet globally connected.

One of the most obvious discoveries made during the process is the absence hitherto of reference to children in these liberation movements. Theologians have begun to realise this, and in the process find that bringing children into view and action challenges some of the most hallowed assumptions or principles to date.¹⁴ In our view, placing a child in the midst of contextual theologies requires fundamental new thinking, not just an additional chapter or appendix.

On the other hand, it began to dawn on us at a conference in Romania that where feminist/womanist theology had not begun to influence seminaries and churches, it was difficult for CT to make any headway in practice. If women and mothers are marginal or invisible in church or seminary, then it is unlikely that it is safe and ready for CT. Contextual theologies are a call to conversion, and they are cumulative and mutually reinforcing. The call to the Kingdom of God is one in

which all traditions and cultures are challenged in and through Jesus Christ, the Lord.¹⁵

PRAXIS, JESUS AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD

We believe that the Kingdom of God with a child in the midst transcends all theologies and perspectives. So, by definition, it is common to all forms of contextual theology. And *EP* has praxis at its very heart. There are two elements to the teaching of Jesus with a child in the midst. The first concerns becoming humble like the little children in order to enter the Kingdom of heaven; the second welcoming a little child in the name of Jesus. It is perhaps original to this book that the latter (that is, welcoming a little child) is seen as a primary way of becoming humble. The road to humility is not by theological or spiritual endeavour, but by stooping to take the action of welcoming a little child. In the book there is an example of how a mother who found that having a child interrupted her Bible reading and spiritual discipline was helped to see the welcoming of her own little child as integral to the process.¹⁶ The cross of Jesus Christ is arguably the central example of praxis in Christian theology, and *EP* aims to bring back cross and Kingdom humility by means of reflection on the action and teaching of Jesus in the context of his own calling, life and mission.¹⁷

THE TEXT OF LIFE

Integral to *EP* is the desire to do some justice to the life of Jesus, the lives of the disciples, and the life of the (anonymous) little child in context. So considerable effort and imagination went into trying to understand all three singly, and in relationship to each other, given the history and culture of their times in order to discover how the disciples needed to change or turn in order to see things, and therefore act, more consistently in line with God's Kingdom. It is for others to judge of course, but as authors we lived for twelve years with an increasing real child, increasingly understandable but misguided disciples, and a whole new understanding of Jesus as a human being seeking to pioneer a new way of living. The text of life undergirds and informs our endeavours. It is our view that CT can only function with

¹² The notion of "caring" for a child as part of her development may disguise the desire to serve the preservation of the status quo in society. "In this sense the development of the child may now instructively be viewed alongside the development of the Afro-American in the USA or the Black South African, or indeed, the development of women's consciousness in Western Europe. Care, in this sense, itself becomes hegemonic, it provides a moral and philosophical context for social relations which claims the assent of large groups of the people for a sustained period." Chris Jenks, *Childhood* (London: Routledge, 1996), 42.

¹³ The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989.

¹⁴ For example, a woman's body is her own, and so abortion is a fundamental human right for her. But what of the unborn child? Where does she figure in this, if equal in the sight of God?

¹⁵ I am grateful for this insight to Haddon Willmer, who wrote an unpublished reflection on a CT conference in Romania held in 2014.

¹⁶ Willmer and White, *Entry Point*, 172–73.

¹⁷ *EP* consists of seven chapters, the central one, entitled "Disciple" (105–18), dwelling on the cross.

integrity if it does justice to the realities and challenges of everyday life. By holding child and adult together, rather than seeing them as competing categories we believe we found ourselves closer to Jesus and the Kingdom of God.

EP AND THE BIBLICAL TEXT

Whatever criticisms may be made of CT as exemplified by *EP*, it could hardly be said that the authors did not attempt a serious and sustained engagement with the biblical text: the whole book revolves around just a few verses of one Gospel!¹⁸ It does this by setting the discussion within the biblical and Christian theology, traditional, historical and contemporary. Both writers have been actively engaged with one or more forms of contextual theology.

And the result is a suggested rereading not only of the pericope of Matthew 18, but of the humanity of Jesus (one needing company and support), and of conventional commentaries that do not allow the presence of an actual child to challenge the perceived wisdom of the adults (the disciples). In critiquing the commentaries, the book also throws light on systematic theology for its adult-centric and patriarchal tendencies. This was not attempted in the name of a new contextual theology, but rather to discern the nature of the Kingdom of God and how to realign our lives as followers so that we might be part of its growth.

LOCAL AND UNIVERSAL

EP takes seriously the local context and the dominant ideologies and power structures, and in doing so seeks to work towards an understanding of how the action and teaching of Jesus at that time and place can be interpreted more faithfully in our own time and place.

Although the authors are male, white, middle class and Oxbridge educated, the work was set in the context of consultations and conversations around the world involving men, women, young people, and sometimes children, across the world.¹⁹

The fact that CT and CTM developed after various forms of contextual theology helped us to draw from their insights into and exposures of a range of ideologies. Whether it has done so effectively or appropriately is for history to judge, but there could hardly have been

an environment more conducive to awareness of competing cultures and ideologies.

CHILDREN AS AGENTS

We come finally to what seems to have been for critics the most controversial aspect of CT: whether children have been appropriately listened to, mobilised and their voices amplified as part of the process of change. We do not pretend that the way things have been done is beyond reproach, but we can explain how and why we have gone about our task.

Had we seen CT as another form of contextual or liberative theology with children as its subjects, then we would have joined the movement and organisations devoted to facilitating their well-being and agency. As described above, CT and CTM have been unstintingly supportive of such endeavours. But there were distinctions to be made. For a start, little children are not like adults in every respect, nor should they be.²⁰ They are fully human of course but this does not mean that they are adults or should be encouraged to see themselves as such. They deserve to be allowed the safe space to be children, to play, dream, work as children.

For adults to engage them in rigorous theological discussion therefore is likely to be inappropriate at best, and abusive at worst. Far from marginalising them, the CTM approach refrains from seeing “mature adulthood” as the mainstream of society, and childhood as of inferior status. Rather it conceives of human existence as constituted by relationships as in a village, where there are different roles and modes of being.

In the text of Matthew, the little child is “silent”, and Jesus makes no attempt to encourage the child to speak, or adults to listen. But the child is called and placed precisely as an agent of change by remaining a little child in role. This is not to belittle the child, but rather to give proper attention to the nature of childhood. CT has drawn attention to the marginalisation of children in theology and church, but by being sensitive to the lives and wishes of real boys and girls. We do not envisage the silent child as in any way normative, because we both have first-hand experience of babies and very young children and know that children choose when to engage with adults, and when to dwell in their own world and thoughts. Adults have a responsibility to protect and safeguard children and childhood as such (including how they go

¹⁸ It should be emphasised that we have not seen it as our role or place to critique the biblical text. Rather we were seeking to receive and apply the example and teaching of Jesus as recorded by Matthew.

¹⁹ There are reports of most of these consultations. We considered carefully and continuously whether and if so how to involve children in these conversations. There was direct involvement by children in some, but the wisdom that prevailed worldwide was to engage them by listening to them in our daily lives, and by imagination drawing sometimes though not overmuch on our own childhoods, and knowledge of our children and grandchildren.

²⁰ Back to the παιδίον in Matt. 8 so as not to include teenagers and young adults in the category.

about education and church), and there are proper and inappropriate ways of going about this.

This account risks seeming defensive and reactionary, when CT and CTM are actually committed to fundamental change and radical new forms of living and relating in the name of Jesus. CT has been alongside seminaries helping them to reimagine themselves in the name of Jesus and with a child in the midst, and has been in sustained conversation with those seeking to reimagine church and Christian education in a similar way. Jesus was instrumental in creating a new form of ecclesial community, brotherhood, sisterhood, and it is our conviction that where CT influences Christian theology and practice, it will be supportive of non-hierarchical, divisive, competitive institutions and power structures.

CT AND THEOLOGY IN CONTEXT

It is hopefully obvious that CT has much in common with liberative and contextual theologies, but that the nature of what it is to be a little child, and how CTM has gone about its work, renders it distinctive in some respects, as identified. It draws from and challenges such theological endeavours and praxis. But how much it has in common with these is not a primary consideration. More important is its desire to be faithful to the calling and teaching of Jesus, and the dynamics and nature of the Kingdom of God. It is our contention that this is at the heart of anything that purports to be genuine Christian theology and that the call of Jesus demands radical reformation of heart, mind and social relationships.²¹ And this process of change is from various forms of slavery into a new way of living characterised by freedom. Contextual theologies make a claim for their constituencies that they should have freedom: to be themselves and all that is implied in that. Their common principle is not abstract freedom, but concrete relevant liberation. They are theologies for change, not merely theologies articulating values.

But if this is the principle, can it be limited in its application? Can we argue for freedom for us and not freedom for all? When it is spoken of theologically, so that God is liberator and liberation is to God, God's koinonia and partnership in God's action, then no group has privilege against others, since God is of all and for all.²² When a group looks for liberation with and from God, it finds itself not as a privileged beneficiary, but as a sign of God's will and working life for the liberation of all the children of God (e.g. Rom. 8) and as called to be

partners with God for others. To be freed by God is to be given something to be shared and passed on. It only exists for me and my group if we share it.

The liberation of God is thus highly dynamic, reaching out to the ends of the earth, in a chain reaction of liberations. Wherever the chain starts, whoever we are, we only have it if it reaches out to some other. There is no fixed order here. That is, the liberating action of God in the world does not follow, and is not dependent upon, the order of recent theologies: black, liberation, feminist, Dalit. And the liberating action of God does not come in separate boxes marked out from each other, because they belong to specified constituencies. As Haddon Willmer argues elsewhere in this *Anvil* volume, it may be that theology relating to those with disability (differently enabled) could be a close companion of CT in that it goes beyond calling for human action, towards new forms of companionship that help the enabled to discover themselves in a new light. To see those with disability simply as a constituency is to miss the illumination of all human being and relationships that comes from God in Christ.

EP is deliberately not contextual theology in the sense of being modelled on theologies called contextual, in the contemporary fashion. It is not interested in being a branded theology of a certain type. Theology is "talking about God" as *EP* says, and so is free and varied human activity in explorative response to the presence of God, who is the boundless context and heart of human being.

EP pays attention to context in appropriate ways, as all human discourse must. Words always carry with them hidden and dormant loads of meaning that wake up to surprise us. Poetry works because it draws from wide and deep contexts, not in the analytic ordered way found in contextual theology, but in exposure to the capricious emergence of new shoots from unsuspected seeds in the dark earth. *EP* came out of this way of practising contextuality. It is a friendly way, not organised, engineered or policed, for when friends converse, their talk and attention darts here and there, making connections of various kinds between themselves and "contexts". A theology that is truly personal (i.e. not individualistic let alone solipsistic or narcissistic) will find itself repeatedly taken through the defined person to the world, for a person is not an item in a context but a context-finding and -making and -fleeing agent.

One reason for being wary of "contextual theology" is that the academic labelling dulls, or even precludes,

²¹ Although the whole of this paper represents in some measure the thinking of my friend and colleague Haddon Willmer, because it is dominated by *EP*, the book that we wrote together, this final section draws substantially from his response to earlier versions of this paper. This conclusion is, as I see it, the nub of the matter, and I am profoundly grateful to Haddon for helping me to see it.

²² This assumes of course that Christian theology has not misunderstood the nature of God and his relationship to his creation and creatures.

attention to the inescapable contextuality of human being, a contextuality *lived* before and more richly than any theoretical specifications of context yield.

Reasoned and practical talk, which *EP* aspires to be, will be contextual, in the sense that it will be aware and respectful that all things have contexts (often more than one). Things, and persons, have meaning and value by connection, and connection implies context. Contextual discourse does much more than report what is alongside or around the subject, as though it is merely “there”. It is worthwhile only when there is connection, so that two-way conversation and interaction grows between context and subject, in ways appropriate to the particularities of each side.

Discriminating conversational discourse is to be found in *EP*. Contextuality is practised appropriately rather than schematically.

Chapter one explores the contextuality inherent in the child.²³ The key phrase “the child in the midst” shows the book is not about the abstract “child alone, in herself”, but child in context. The difference between the child in the midst and the child placed by Jesus in the midst is discussed to explore the contemporary context in British culture, where the child is seen and treated mostly in secular terms, thus squeezing out theological understanding and vision. The book *EP* is well aware of its own contextuality. We can thus see that contextuality is not the one-sided determination of theology by the non-theological but is a conversation between the presence and power of the non-theological, both secular and religious, and the vision and intention that is theology. Theology is not an inert and mostly ancient and redundant knowledge but is the articulation of human reception of God in God’s self-showing, and of faith and obedience as human response. Theology generates conversation, even though it feels weak, starting from a disadvantaged position.

EP is essentially a reading of Matthew 18:1–10. It is not a commentary but a reading that brings the text into conversation with our contemporary concern with children. It listens to the text, letting it guide the conversation, rather than being cannibalised to serve our concerns and norms. The text confronts us with what is culturally alien to us, maybe even offensive. This is obvious in chapter five, on humility. Humility was once a basic virtue, the human stance before God and on the earth. In the west it was “dethroned” centuries ago and it is not a “natural characteristic” of human being.²⁴ Yet if God, as God is in Jesus, is respected,

humility, as profoundly signalled by the death of Jesus, is called for. The contextuality of the Word of God as witnessed in Scripture, the contextuality of that Word in God is disturbingly strange to the context provided by our religious and non-religious ways of hearing it.

The call to humility, as discussed in *EP*, comes to its sharpest when the child is put in the midst. Jesus was trying to get the unhumble, ambitious disciples to change, so he put a child in their midst as a sign of the only way into the kingdom of God. The child was available for Jesus for this purpose, because there was common acceptance then that a child was in a socially humble position. We no longer accept that assumption.²⁵ When the child is treated as lower in any way, it is denounced as abuse, cruelty and an infringement of rights. Only a small minority of Christians dissent, in theory and practice, from the prevailing high view of children. Adults now do not aspire to humility and they do not expect their children to do any differently.

Here then is a major contextual question that is recognised and discussed in the text. There is conflict between two major historical cultural contexts of humility, and some decision must be made. Some simply work within the assurance of modernity and dismiss the ancient text as redundant. A few still try to live under the authority of the ancient text, as though they do not live in a different age and culture. *EP* refuses the stark alternative, the choice between two unworkable possibilities, and so goes in quest of a better understanding of humility. It hopes to be able to be true to the text that brings to us the witness and call of Jesus, and to live positively in the present that insofar as it is good is a good gift of God and not to be refused. And so, four kinds of humility are distinguished: come-down, which the proud disciples are called to; put-down, which is often malign humiliation; look-forward, as a child does, who is at the opening of life, as the entry point; and look-up humility, which takes the lower place, not as a put-down but as a child of the Father in heaven (Isa. 57:15).²⁶

The last point brings us to a crux in any theology that claims to be contextual. The relevant context is not only the human situation of the theologian, nor the human context of those of whom, or for whom, he speaks. God is the one in whom “we live and move and have our being”, creator and lord of life, the beginning and the end. God is not in the world as an ancient god was in the city’s temple. The world is in God, as well as by God, for God and with God. That is part of Christian confession

²³ Willmer and White, *Entry Point*, 23ff.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 123, 126.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 127.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 133–45.

of faith. Consequently, a contextual theology may not leave theology to the systematic theologians and concentrate its attention on human beings and their situation in society. Such contextual theology then easily slides into being the study of religion, or into political and social analysis and action: all valuable and necessary activities, but quite easily done with a methodological or practical atheism.

The truth is that to think and live with God as the ultimate context of the world and our lives is testing, because it is not at all obvious (it calls for hard, imaginative thought), and it is not at all easy to live in the world as it is. Good contextual theology has “the Lord always before me”, not as a background pious feeling, but as what is to be thought, articulated and practised. *EP* is an attempt at that sort of contextual theology.

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