



Contextualization in the New Testament: Patterns for Theology and Mission

By Dean Flemming



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Winner of a 2006 *Christianity Today* Book Award! Honored as one of the "Fifteen Outstanding Books of 2005 for Mission Studies" by *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* From Cairo to Calcutta, from Cochabamba to Columbus, Christians are engaged in a conversation about how to speak and live the gospel in today's traditional, modern and emergent cultures. The technical term for their efforts is *contextualization*. Missionary theorists have pondered and written on it at length. More and more, those who do theology in the West are also trying to discover new ways of communicating and embodying the gospel for an emerging postmodern culture. But few have considered in depth how the early church contextualized the gospel. And yet the New Testament provides numerous examples. As both a crosscultural missionary and a New Testament scholar, Dean Flemming is well equipped to examine how the early church contextualized the gospel and to draw out lessons for today. By carefully sifting the New Testament evidence, Flemming uncovers the patterns and parameters of a Paul or Mark or John as they spoke the Word on target, and he brings these to bear on our contemporary missiological task. Rich in insights and conversant with frontline thinking, this is a book that will revitalize the conversation and refresh our speaking and living the gospel in today's cultures, whether in traditional, modern or emergent contexts.

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Editorial Review

Review

Active mission practitioners, missiologists, and theologians will benefit from and enjoy this excellent volume. (Bruce Campbell Moyer, Seminary Studies, Autumn 2009)

. . . a fresh, timely and much needed resource. . . a must-read for those who desire to reach persons--in their own contexts--with the gospel. (Michael Halcomb for Stone Campbell Journal, Fall 2007)

Flemming has provided an excellent resource which will prove useful to both those preparing to work in other cultures and those engaged in gospel work in today's "postmodern" and increasingly globalized societies. (Douglas N. Campbell, Dumisani Theological Institute, South Africa, Themelios 32/3)

"*Contextualization in the New Testament* is a welcome addition to New Testament and missiological scholarship for several reasons. First, Dr. Flemming has brought current New Testament scholarship into an effective dialogue with missiological and cultural specialists. Second, in a balanced way he has rightly taken contextualization as a New Testament missional concept for Paul and his first-century colleagues beyond the neutral sense of communication of the gospel into the realm of proclamation as an intentional engagement with cultural and political discourses. Third, this move promises some very fruitful rethinking of what, in the context of conflicting cultural and religious 'stories,' doing mission meant then and indeed what it should mean now. Finally, Dr. Flemming's lucid style allows easy access to a profound discussion that will impact our understanding of the church's gospel task both ancient and present." (Philip H. Towner, Director of Translation Services, United Bible Societies)

"The past generation of biblical scholarship has served us well in providing an abundance of volumes rooting the source of the theological convictions of the various New Testament writers in the Old Testament and Second Temple Judaism. In the process, however, many have neglected to grapple with how the New Testament writers shaped their messages in a sensitive and relevant way to their specific cultural contexts. Dean Flemming has taken up this question and has produced an exceedingly helpful and convincing volume. This book is a must read for anyone who teaches the Bible." (Clinton E. Arnold, Chairman, Department of New Testament, Talbot School of Theology, Biola University)

"This is the mature work of a careful and caring teacher who has worked in the Philippines as well as in Europe and is well-qualified to handle the questions of how to set the Bible free to speak to different audiences and how we can follow the example of the first missionaries in the settings in which we find ourselves. This is a fine example of biblical scholarship serving the church in its task of holding fast to the apostolic gospel while presenting it in a sensitive, contextualized manner to our contemporaries." (I. Howard Marshall, Honorary Research Professor of New Testament, University of Aberdeen)

"An outstanding and needed book in which Flemming wrestles with New Testament contextualization from the position of deep engagement with New Testament scholarship. He brings to the table the right instinct for missiological issues together with the depth of New Testament study that missiologists are often lacking. This is a must read!" (Scott Moreau, Editor, Evangelical Missions Quarterly, Chair, Intercultural Studies, Wheaton College, and Managing Editor, Network for Strategic Missions KnowledgeBase)

From the Publisher

Features & Benefits

- * Helps us speak and live the gospel in today's varied cultural settings
- * Examines how the early church contextualized the gospel
- * In-depth study
- * First book of its kind
- * Applies contemporary New Testament scholarship to a contemporary missiological task

About the Author

Dean Flemming (Ph.D., University of Aberdeen) is professor of New Testament and missions at MidAmerica Nazarene University in Olathe, Kansas. A missionary educator for more than twenty years, he formerly taught at Asia-Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary in the Philippines and European Nazarene College in Buesingen, Germany. He has written extensively on the subject of contextualization, as well as the New Beacon Bible Commentary on Philippians. He is an ordained minister in the Church of the Nazarene and has pastored churches in Ohio and Japan.

Users Review

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Jose Carr:

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