

Nürnberg, K 2005 – *Martin Luther's message for us today*

Publisher: Cluster. 326 Pages. Price: Unknown

Reviewer: Prof I W C van Wyk (The Africa Institute for Missiology)

Klaus Nürnberg is professor emeritus and honorary research associate at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. He also lectured Systematic Theology at the University of South Africa for many years.

The book originated from the lectures and papers he presented to various audiences in Southern Africa over many years. Martin Luther's work reflects his response to the conflicts and predicaments of his time and what Nürnberg does is to present us with a similar approach to theology. This book is a collection of Lutheran responses to the questions, problems and predicaments the South African situation posed over the past three decades. These responses are not only intellectual responses, but are responses of living faith. Although Nürnberg responded to our challenges in a typical Lutheran way, he is ecumenically accommodating, co-operative and inviting. In this sense, I think, his book is a good and typical South African contribution to Christianity.

According to Nürnberg, Luther's theology is the prototype of an existential, experiential, contextual theology. He therefore allows Luther to be heard on a number of South African issues. He explains that the proclaimed Word is God's redemptive response to our actual needs, that social transformation should be the consequence of our acceptance by God and that the fruits of our justification are freedom and responsibility. As people who are justified by grace, we could deal with the demands of African Traditional Religion, the challenges of Modernity and the inhumanness of hedonism.

Although academics will find this book to be fruitful reading, it is actually meant to be a textbook for students. The language is uncomplicated and should be understood by most junior students. Each chapter closes with a few questions that will help students in reading and studying the chapter. The chapters also have recommendations for further reading by senior students, ministers and theologians.

The success of this book as a textbook lies in the fact that Nürnberg has the ability to explain the main Lutheran theologoumena in such a manner that the average South African church member would be able to appreciate the wisdom of these dogmatic decisions. For instance, his explanations of the functions of the law, and the distinction and relationship between law and gospel are illuminative.

I find Nürnberg's approach to our existential problems, such as the HIV crisis, very useful. He gives, for instance, an explication of Luther's *Treatise on the plague* of 1528. He then "contextualizes" the main arguments in such a manner that it makes concerns and duties we have very clear to us.

The book consists of two parts:

Part I: Luther's experiential theology:

- The Word of God – light in the darkness of life
- The gift of faith – a new motivation
- Predestined to be damned – God's open future
- Sources of the Word of God – Scripture and tradition
- The gift of righteousness – law and gospel
- The ordained ministry – empowering God's people
- Baptism – initiation into the body of Christ
- The Lord's supper – celebrating our reunion with God

Boekbesprekings / Book Reviews

Part II: Lutheran contextual theology

- Responsibility for God's world – Luther's political ethics
- Prophecy or confession – a Lutheran response to social injustice
- Acceptance in action – a Lutheran approach to the HIV pandemic
- Conclusion – a theology for our times?

As can be expected from a well-known Lutheran scholar, Nürnberger is well versed in international Luther-research. However, some might criticize him for ignoring certain recent German publications on Luther. What is more important though, is that he brings African theologians into discussion with Lutheran theology. In other words: He gives exposure to African voices in the Lutheran academic world.

The sub-title is important. It is "a perspective from the South". This is a development that should be appreciated by all Christians. Because the centre of gravity of Christianity has shifted from the north to the south, theologians from the south must show more intellectual and academic leadership. This publication by Nürnberger could be appreciated as one of the important contributions in this regard.

Every South African student in Dogmatics, Ethics and Church History should buy this book. Every responsible minister, whether Lutheran or Reformed, should read this book. To foreigners we say: We present you with something proudly South African!



Moltmann, J 2006 – *Jürgen Moltmann Eine Lebensgeschichte, herausgegeben von W Raum*. Publisher: Gütersloher Verlagshaus. 384 Pages. Price: Unknown

2008 – *A broad place: An autobiography, translated by M Kohl*
Publisher: Fortress Press. 406 Pages. Price: Unknown

Reviewer: Prof I W C van Wyk (The Africa Institute for Missiology)

It is not often that one receives a book for reviewing that one cannot put down once you have started reading it. The story of the world-famous Jürgen Moltmann's life is one of those books. It is one of the most interesting books I have ever read. Anyonewho is interested in Moltmann as a theologian and as a human being should read this book. Likewise, those with an interest in German history, the German academic world, famous German theologians and the ecumenical world should also read it. This autobiography is not only fascinating, but is inspiring too. It serves as motivation for all lesser theologians to aspire to academic excellence.

Moltmann provides the reader with an amazing account with detailed information on his life and work. It is astonishing that someone could keep so much detail stored in files and on computers for so many years. He recalls the names of his childhood neighbours, the children in his catechesis classes and of the people he met all over the world, including those he met during his visit to South Africa. He deals with what happened to him and his family during the War and with their move from Wuppertal to Bonn in detail. He also provides detail about his colleagues, the subjects they lectured and during which semesters they lectured.

The 57 photographs in the book in itself depict a life-story. The pictures tell the story of Moltmann, the world-famous theologian, the church leader, the family man and the friend of thousands around the globe. The pictures put faces to the works of people like Hans Küng, Wolfhart Pannenberg, Ernst Wolff, Eberhard Jüngel, Dorothee Sölle and Moltmann's wife Elizabeth Moltmann-Wendel. From the photos it is apparent that Moltmann was always very