WHAT DOES CHRISTIANITY LOOK LIKE?

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Category: Observations

Every now and then, I read a comment by someone saying that Christianity should not adapt to cultures or some such. As far as I am aware, the people who say this sort of thing don't wander around in robes, speaking Aramaic or Koine Greek, holding evangelistic meetings in the local synagogues or exactly following any of the other practices of the first generation of Christians.

The thing is the Christian message has always adapted to different cultural contexts, our styles of worship, evangelism, preaching... you name it, they have all varied at different points in time and space. Actually, what people generally mean when they say that the Gospel shouldn't adapt to different cultures, is that their own cultural expression of Christianity should be regarded as the correct one. My way of being a Christian, doing theology or worshipping God is the authentic one and everyone else should adapt to it.

In an excellent post, Onesimus shows the futility and, sadly, the prevelance of this sort of thinking:

> *Many seem to equate their theology with the truth. Contextualization for them means simply translating their right theology into the language of the unreached, or the theologically uneducated. We seem to think if we can transfer our understanding of salvation, and our understanding of discipleship, and our understanding of missions, and our understanding of church into this new context, then we have brought the gospel to these people...*
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> *...We think our inherited systems are the best, even the only theology. But in doing so we miss the point. Theology is not about engaging with ideas and who can build the best scaffolding (assuming that theology even at its best is not the reality). Theology is what God the Son did â€“ itâ€™s incarnational. Theology is God becoming accessible. For those human societies that do systems, then theological systems will undoubtedly work really well for them, so long as it is remembered that the system itself is not God (otherwise it becomes an idol). But for the vast majority of the worldâ€™s societies, where system and Enlightenment structures and organization are not valued and irrelevant, theology must take a different form. The goal of theology, of course, remains the same â€“ to facilitate our knowing God the Holy Trinity and loving him with all our heart and loving our neighbor. But how the Spirit calls that reality out of us may be very different from context to context.*
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> *Anyway, given the condition of Western Christianity, one wonders why anyone would want to export their issues to the rest of the world. But that doesnâ€™t seem to be a thought that troubles anybody, except of course the rest of the world.*

If you would like to see my take on the issue of contextualisation, watch this video.