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BOOK REVIEW

Suffering and Persecution: Rethinking Church in the 21st Century

Edited by Dr Myrto Theocharous, professor of Hebrew and Old Testament at the Greek Bible College in Athens. (Langham Publications 2024)

The Most Rev. Dr. Benjamin A. Kwashi ¹

According to the series Introduction,

“Rethinking Church in the 21st Century is an effort that began in 2021 to gather Christian leaders from a range of backgrounds and nationalities online in order to listen to what gratitude and concerns we had about the state of the church as seen from many different angles. We were all Protestants, broadly evangelical, deeply committed to the holistic gospel of Jesus Christ, in varying roles of theological, pastoral, organizational, and congregational responsibility.”

This has led to the production of an unusual book, *Suffering and Persecution*. From the Table of Contents the casual reader might be led to expect a comprehensive analysis and overview of the present situation in each of the selected countries. This, however, is not that sort of book. For each country mentioned, a particular book, chapter or paper, generally written by someone from that country, is highlighted, though it is unclear as to why that particular work was chosen. The reviewer, who is usually from a different country, then presents a summary of the chosen work, and responds to it, generally relating it to his own context and often providing discussion questions, a picture, a prayer or a poem and perhaps his own renewed commitment.

The result is an interesting patchwork of many different colours. Not only are the works reviewed different in nature and content, but the styles and expectations of the reviewers also vary. This leads to a mixture of biography, theological reflections, academic analysis, or an easy, direct style of writing. The chosen presentations and their reviews should, therefore, not necessarily be taken as being representative of the writings of their country, or as giving an overall picture of the situation in that country.

Suffering and persecution are situations which affect an increasing number of countries in today’s world. As the various contributions show, this may include almost unthinkable physical torture which only the Lord Jesus Christ could enable a human body to endure, or the persecution may be more psychological resulting from social

¹ The Most Rev. Benjamin Kwashi is former Archbishop of Jos in the Church of Nigeria, Anglican Communion.

conditions or peer pressure. It is important for the church in one country to be aware of the conditions in other countries. Histories, cultures, social conventions and legal requirements differ from place to place and it is easy for these to be shrugged off by outsiders who may not be willing or able to comprehend or appreciate the harsh reality of what is happening elsewhere. It is to be hoped that this book will go some way to helping Christians to understand one another more deeply, and thereby also to realise the significance of what may be happening in their own country now, or what may well face them in the future if they do not open their eyes and ears today. Churches, colleges, groups and individuals are strongly encouraged to read this significant and highly interesting book.