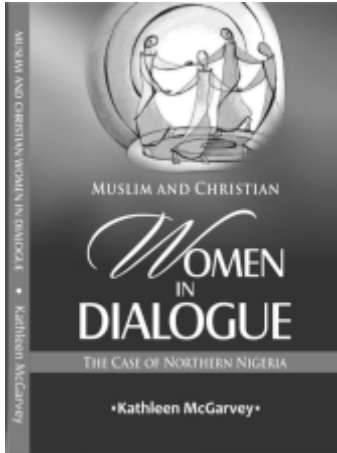


Book Review



Muslim and Christian Women in Dialogue: The Case of Northern Nigeria

Author: Kathleen McGARVEY

Publisher: Oxford: Peter Lang Ltd., 2009

Number of Pages: 450

Price: ₦1,200.00

ISBN: 1422-8998; 978-3-03911-417-7

Reviewer: Joseph SALIHU

Francis Clooney et al called for a moratorium on interreligious dialogue because theologians have gone full circle in the exercise and all they have to show for their effort is a multiplicity of sometimes conflicting models. In the face of this challenge, a lot of theologians have shifted their emphasis to the area of praxis. Liberation theology has been drafted in to rescue the exercise. It is becoming the prevailing position that it will shift the concerns of theologians from the traditional preoccupation with theory to praxis. Kathleen McGarvey has lent her voice to this debate from a different angle. Throughout the book, she is preoccupied with the question: "what implications does women's religious discourse have for interreligious dialogue in terms of theology and praxis?"

No doubt, even with its engagement with liberation issues, interreligious dialogue has so far not taken on board the concerns of women, specifically. The agenda of the poor is dominant. McGarvey's preoccupation with women's liberation in both the Islamic and Christian religious tradition provides a fresh perspective for the

exercise. She believes that as women struggle with their liberation, they could mutually explore their traditions bringing about the much desired dialogue. Being a realistic researcher, she grounds her findings within the context of Northern Nigeria, where Muslims and Christians are engaged in an unhealthy competition. She believes there are prospects for Muslim and Christian women to fashion a common liberative programme based on their respective traditions.

McGarvey was able to hold three disparate areas: feminism, Northern Nigeria and interreligious dialogue, together to affirm that women's discourse could open up the area of interreligious dialogue. It is a challenging and interesting book. The book however did not take seriously the role of detraditionalization in interreligious dialogue but rather takes it for granted that women are experiencing an epistemological crisis and asking questions of their religious tradition. It is worth noting that these women do not believe that their faith traditions are deficient in any way but that the deficiency lies with the interpretation of their tradition. This implies that they may not see the need to seek for answers in other religious traditions, which is vital for interreligious dialogue. On the whole, the book is a must read as far as interreligious dialogue is concerned. It does not merely rehash traditional positions, criticising them as is conventionally the case, but introduces a refreshing angle (feminism) on the theology of religions' agenda.