

Religious Education and the Missio Dei.

Thesen

von
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The following theses will be defended.

Part One

- that education can be thought of as an aspect of the mission of the church
- that the church can be thought of as an aspect of the mission of Christian faith
- that Christian faith can be thought of as an aspect of the mission of God
- that the mission of God represents the will of God as Creator and Redeemer turned in mercy towards life on earth.

Part Two

- that religious education as an aspect of education may be distinguished from Christian nurture.
- that Practical Theology has a direct relation with Christian nurture and an indirect relation with religious education.
- that this indirect relation is never the less capable of articulation in theological terms
- that the concept of the missio dei may make explicit this indirect relation.

Part Three

- that the theology of Irenaeus suggests an outline of such a practical theology of education in that it emphasises the Word of God present in all creation and incarnate in Jesus Christ as promoting the development of human beings towards the fullness of life.
- that according to Irenaeus this fullness of life is available in a genuine although not necessarily conscious form to all human beings in whom is the image of God and the life-giving energy of the Spirit of God.
- that although this redemptive revelation becomes explicit and more dynamic when it is knowingly focussed upon the model of Jesus Christ, in whom the divine purpose for human life is summed up, it never the less may take authentic forms even when remaining implicit.
- that secular religious education may thus be conceived as a redemptive activity in which the image of God in each person is increasingly revealed, and that it may be thus interpreted as an activity of the Holy Spirit.

Part Four

- that while it is the mission of the church to proclaim the Christ who is the image of God and bring people to awareness of this, it is also the mission of the church within the mission of God to foster and build up all activities which restore the image of God
- that in so doing, the church must respect the implicit character of the shape of Christ and allow other religions the liberty to construct their own distinctive understandings of the same process of religious education.
- that the above theses represent a legitimate Trinitarian basis for Christian participation in the secular diversity which is typical of contemporary religious education in Europe.

- that on this understanding, the church may co-operate fully with other religions and with the state in supporting a religious education the content of which is the religious life of humanity and the object of which is the furtherance of life.

Key Texts

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