

Book Reviews

The Folly of the Cross – Festschrift in Honour of Prof. Dr. Varghese Pathikulangara, CMI, Edited by Paulachan Kochappilly, CMI, Bangalore: Dharamaram Publications, 2000. pp 371, Rs.250.

This festschrift, *The Folly of the Cross*, is a collection of 23 articles written in honour of Prof. Dr. Varghese Pathikulangara CMI on his 60th birthday by his students and friends. Both in the Forward and in the Preface the contributions of Prof. Dr. V. Pathikulangara CMI in the field of Syro-Malabar Liturgy and Liturgiology in general are recognized and highlighted. The Preface also contains a list of the works published by this eminent liturgiologist.

The articles in this volume mainly deal with various aspects of the theology of the cross, its importance in the liturgical celebration and its challenge to practical Christian living. There are a few articles on the theology of Liturgy and the celebrations of the sacraments in the Syro-Malabar tradition. Though this volume is a collection of articles written by different theologians a reader can easily find a systematic development of the theology of the cross beginning from the biblical sources culminating in the affirmation of proclamation of the power of the cross of Christ. The following review of the articles includes all of them but does not follow their order of in the volume.

G. Kaniarakath introduces the discourse on the Cross of Christ attempting to show the theological and literary expressions of the Cross in the Bible. He refers to the symbols of 'tree' and 'wood' in the First Testament which receive significance in the context of the Second Testament. He summarizes the theology of the Cross in the Synoptics, John and Paul, and finally at-

tempts to highlight the meaning of the Cross in the ecclesial context of St. Thomas Christians. Following the Biblical sources, the Fathers of the Church developed a rich theology of the Cross. I. Arickappillil cites the example of Mar Narsai, an East Syrian poet-theologian of 5th Cent. in his article "the Folly of the Cross and the Glory of Resurrection in Mar Narsai" to show how the fathers tried to comprehend the mystery of the folly of the cross by relating it to resurrection especially using the first Adam and second Adam typology. The rich meaning of the symbol of the cross was expressed also by other Syriac writers and mystics. T. Kollamparambil introduces some of them in his article "The Cross of Christ and Christian Life." The various imageries and symbols used by Ephrem, Aphrahat, Jacob of Serugh give us a deep insight into the significance of the cross as well as its challenge to Christian life. A[f]rahat's explanation of the meaning of the cross in context of the historical persecution and suffering of his people is the theme of the article "The Cross of Jesus Sweetens the Bitterness of our Suffering" by G. Mangara. In his article, "The Cross and Shepherding of Christ," A. Amarnad argues very cogently and systematically that a true Christian discipleship involves following the praxis of Jesus, the shepherd, who gave us a challenging model of true shepherding. He warns against the tendency in the Church to domesticate the radical Jesus and his praxis leading to the Cross through rituals, traditions, structures and spirituality. (p.70). The shepherding of the flock as missionary priests calls for a spirituality which has its foundation in the sharing of the paschal mystery of Christ that is celebrated in the liturgy. This is the main theme of the article, "Spirituality of Missionary Priests" by L. Arangassery.

Sophy Rose explains the importance of celebration of the Cross more as a sign of victory than of suffering and death in the liturgy of the Oriental tradition in her article "The Cross and its Ecclesial Implications." The Church originates at death of Jesus on the Cross as it was to 'gather together' all and it is a community of the redeemed sinners to live in unity as 'Bride at the Cross'. It must be said that a mystification of the Cross and the Church is inevitable in this approach to Ecclesiology from Liturgy. K.Perumpallikunnel proposes a way to overcome the negativity attached to the cross and the tendency of making it just an object of worship by discovering the richness of the *kenosis* of Jesus in his article "The Ascent on the Cross as Ascent to the Throne." He affirms that an insight into the kenotic dimension of God revealed in the cross of Christ liberates us to realize our potentialities through self-emptying. Christian experience of the mystery of the cross expresses itself in Christian ethical or moral living. P.Kochappilly articulates clearly in his article "The Cross and Christian Ethics" that the cross is the source, strength and style of Christian ethics as the Christian vocation is to 'live in Jesus Christ' and to live like Christ' (p. 179) with right relationship to God, humans and cosmos. How this Christian life is lived in the context of the St. Thomas Christians is explained by S.Kanniyakonil in his article "The Moral Foundations of Thomas Christians in India Re-Visited" (The title of the article is wrongly mentioned as 'Memorial Foundations' in the subsequent pages!). The author mentions biblical, liturgical and socio-cultural foundations of the moral life of Thomas Christians.

As the Christian life of faith is celebrated in the liturgy and popular devotions some of the articles of this volume attempt to elucidate the meaning of the cross in the liturgical celebrations and devotions. P. Maniyattu explains systematically the im-

portance of the cross in the liturgical celebration and liturgical architecture in his article "The Theological Significance of the Cross in the East Syrian Liturgy". S.Athapilly highlights some of the aspects of the Syro-Malabar Qurbana which appeal to the affective side of human beings from his own experience of celebration of the same in his article, "The Affective and Affectionate Dimensions of Syro-Malabar Qurbana." G. Aranjaniyil makes a comparative study of the symbols, rituals and forms of worship in Syro-Malabar Qurbana and Hindu forms of worship and attempts to show that they both appeal to the mystery sense of the humans in "Mystery-sense in Syro-Malabar Qurbana and Hindu Worship and Prayers,." The importance assigned to the cross in the celebration of the sacraments of initiation is explained by G.Pallikunnel in his article "Signing (*Ruṣma*) in the Sacraments of Initiation" and in the sacrament of reconciliation by R.Matheus in "Taksa D-Hussaya."

G.Thadikkat, in his article, "The Cross in Different Ecclesial Traditions" explains how the importance of the cross is expressed in various ways in different ecclesial traditions. It gives an insight into the mystery of the cross when various traditions articulate their experience of the cross from their own contexts of faith-experience. In the ecclesial tradition of St.Thomas Christians the cross is venerated on various occasions besides during the eucharistic celebrations. F.Thonippara explains the meaning of such devotional practices in "Veneration of the Cross among the St.Thomas Christians." A concrete example of the veneration of the cross is narrated by J.Vellian in his article, "Prayer at the Foot of the Cross at the Open-air at Kaduthuruthy." T. Man-nooramparampil attempts to show the historical development of the devotion to the cross and particularly the devotion to the *Mar Thom[m]a Sliba* or the St.Thomas Cross in "Devotion to the Cross in Syro-

Malabar Church.” He advances some arguments to show that St. Thomas Cross is not Manichean Cross though it may have some affinity to Buddhist symbols! He seems to presume that those who reject this cross has only one reason that they consider it as Manichean and not, perhaps, that it is a reaction to the high-handedness in suddenly imposing the *Mar Thomma* Cross rather than gradually introducing the same with proper catechesis. V.Pathikulangara’s own explanation about the various symbols of the *Mar Thomma Sliba* included in this volume is informative (pp.366-369).

The Church must proclaim her the faith experience of the cross and resurrection. The missionary spirit of the St. Thomas Christians expressed in preserving their faith and transmitting it to the future generations and influencing the lives of the believers of other religions was different from the western missionary spirit of evangelization. This is the theme of the article, “The Cross and Evangelization: The Legacy of St. Thomas Christians” by X. Kochuparambil. The Christian proclamation of the Gospel involves total commitment to the extent of giving up one’s life for the values of the Kingdom. A. Kochalunkal cites the examples of Sr. Rani Maria and Staines to prove this point in his article, “The Meaning of the Cross and Martyrdom and its Ecumenical Relevance in the New Indian Context.” The book under review includes also a translation of the homily of Narsai by P.Komban titled, “Second Reading about Joseph by Narsai.”

Though the editor may have his own reasons for arranging the articles in a particular order, the placing of certain articles as it is done in this volume does not seem to facilitate the thematic progression of the theme. The article on p. 48 on Syro-Malabar Qurbana, for example, breaks the theme under discussion in the preceding and the following articles. A glossary of Syriac

terms used in the articles could have been included to enhance a better understanding of the text by a reader who is not familiar with Syriac terminologies. Even the title of an article is in Syriac without a reference to its translation (p.280)! Maybe in the second edition of the book these minor deficiencies can be rectified. The articles in this *Festschrift The Folly of the Cross* dealing with the various aspects of the theology of the cross give us a deep insight into the mystery of the cross and its various challenges.

Jacob Parappally

The Councils of the Church: a Short History, Norman P. Tanner, The Crossword Publishing Company, New York, 2001, pp. xii-132.

This little but important book is an example of the art of compression by one of the authorities on the Councils of the Church today. Dr. Norman Tanner who teaches Medieval History in Oxford University and Church History in Heythrop College, London University, has lectured on the Councils of the Church in several institutions throughout the world. He has now in 132 pages traced the important stages in the development of the Church’s conciliar tradition spanning 2000 years. For those who cannot afford to go through the author’s own magisterial two-volume *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* (1990), this short introduction will give all the necessary information about the twenty-one important ecumenical and general Councils of the Church. Especially useful will this volume be to students who did not till now have such a short introduction in a simple and straight-forward style till today.

The book has three chapters, dealing with the Councils of the Early Church, the Medieval Councils, and the Councils of the Modern Era with a useful introduction to

each chapter. There is a very helpful glossary which clarifies some important concepts and an index. The titles of the chapters point to the author's mind regarding the concept of the "Ecumenical Council." The Councils of the early Church are called "Ecumenical Councils of the Early Church" but the other Councils are called Medieval Councils, and Councils of the Modern Era. In the second Chapter one gets an explanation for this necessary distinction between the Ecumenical Councils and the general Councils of the western Church. But I don't think that it is easy for every student to make this distinction because officially one still speaks of the twenty-one Ecumenical Councils of the Church although it would have been better if some of those Councils were never convoked at all!

Another helpful thing about this little book is the importance it gives to the disciplinary decrees of the Councils. Generally one thinks that the Councils were mainly meant for doctrinal clarifications, and manuals on the Councils usually concentrate on doctrines. But the practical life was an equally important concern for the Church, especially in the Middle Ages. Today one is rather amused by the disciplinary legislations of some of those Councils like, for example, of Lateran IV, which, unfortunately is the only one dealt with in some detail in the book. The author's opinion on another medieval Council, the Council of Constance, is an example of the balanced judgment that he has maintained throughout the book: "In my opinion the Council of Constance should be considered a general Council of the western Church and its three major decrees be taken as authentic" (p. 70). Considering the conflicting positions that have been taken regarding the validity of this Council and its controversial decrees, this view is commendable.

The Councils and synods are pointers to the democratic tradition that existed in

the Church from very early times, even from the New Testament times, and there is large number of Christians who still value this important tradition as sacred. They allow nothing to override the Councils. The Catholic Church too has maintained this tradition intact in spite of the aversion of some of the popes toward Councils in the wake of conciliarism, and they have stood the Church in good stead. The Councils came to the rescue of the Church in crisis situations and when the Church was in need of renewal. Otherwise we would not have had the good fortune to experience the renewal brought about by Vatican II. To keep this memory alive, it is important that one is familiar with the conciliar traditions of the Church and this book by Norman Tanner is by far the best introduction to it that I have come across so far.

Isaac Padinjarekuttu

Behold Your Mother: Mariological Studies Dr. Joseph Kottackal, Oriental Institute of Religious Studies, Kottayam, 1999, pages 100, Rs. 45.00.

Behold Your Mother is a useful handbook that covers many major areas of Mariology in a systematic manner. The style is simple and makes for easy reading.

In the opening chapter, the author has made quite an extensive survey of the first five centuries which are the most decisive period for the development of Marian faith. Particular reference is made to the significant contributions of the early Church Fathers on Mary. The second chapter on 'Mary in the Bible' situates Mary's symbolic presence from the beginning to the end of salvation history in the light of contemporary biblical scholarship.

With this backdrop of the two foundational sources for the development of an integrated Mariology, the author's study ex-

tends to some important mariological themes such as the divine motherhood of Mary and her Perpetual Virginity, Mary, the Type of the Church and her unique place in the work of salvation. A systematic exposition of Mary's divine motherhood from a biblical and patristic perspective provides a basis for understanding the other thesis on Mariology. The last two Marian dogmas, namely, the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption of Mary also find their rightful place in the book.

The fourth chapter enquires into the relationship between Mary and the Church. The author presents Mary as the type of the Church in female symbols: woman, mother, spouse of Christ, New Eve, Virgin Church and as the model of its pilgrim life of faith. Mary, as the pre-eminent member of the Church, embodies an exemplary life of faith, hope and discipleship.

The fifth chapter retraces the centrality of Christ's mediatorship and situates Mary's special place within the redemptive work of Christ. Mary is no longer considered in idealized isolation but in her theological role within the community of believers. The author has made a commendable attempt to explain the various Marian dogmas. However, he has not effectively drawn the theological significance of the dogmas and their relevance for the believing community in today's context.

In the last chapter a rather inadequate reference is made to Marian devotions and apparitions, subjects that invite many questions and much discussion among contemporary Christians and students of theology. This slim book of 100 pages will serve as a useful guide in Mariology to students of Theology and the laity.

Evelyn Monteiro

Dimensions of the Word, Joseph Pathrapankal, CMI. Dharmaram Publications, Dharmaram College, Bangalore 560029 First Published 2000. PRICE: Rs. 250.00 / \$ 18.00. Pages: xvi + 343.

The expertise that Fr. Joseph Pathrapankal CMI brings to his writings enables him to deal with the Word of God in a competent, credible and pastoral way. This book has been written to mark the golden jubilee of the author as a religious. In *Dimensions of the Word*, Fr. Pathrapankal addresses himself to the task of making the word of God active and effective in the concrete lives of persons: "Times are gone when the exegetes spent their time in literary, historical and textual criticism and in philological analysis bringing out some dry and insipid arguments and doctrines which did not mean anything for the people in their everyday struggle of life. Now it is a question of re-reading, reconceiving, actualizing, exploring the *dhvani* meanings of biblical passages, complementary approach in the study of religious scriptures of world religions and enriching each other, inculturating the message of the Bible into the manifold areas of human life and thereby making the word of God living and dynamic" (xiii).

The aim of the author is "to analyse the various dimensions of the word of God as it is encountered in the pluralistic society of our times" (xiv). In the space of 14 studies, he has dealt with various tasks that have an important bearing on the believing Christian in the Church. He begins by inviting theologians and exegetes to accept history in its broader dimensions and to focus on a "realistic understanding of evangelization" (xv). A special effort is made to see the person and mission of Christ in the context of today's religious pluralism. An enlightened view of evangelization is presented and the crucial function of the Church is portrayed from the vantage point of New Testament perspectives. Mary, "a model disciple in the

New Testament,” represents all that “Jesus Christ expects from his followers.”

Pluralism is given much importance in the author’s considerations. He claims that the “kenotic dimension of the Christian message has greater credibility when the very reality of the Church is approached from a perspective which respects and promotes culture and cultural characteristics of each nation, a point which is being emphasized in recent documents of the Church” (xv). The secular dimension of the word of God is highlighted when considering Paul’s apostolic ministry “as closely related to assisting the poor members of the Church of Jerusalem.” The holistic approach to the kingdom of God offers an opportunity to examine religious life as “a life of discipleship” that must be envisaged from “not only biblical but also Indian perspectives” (xvi). Finally, the author considers what leadership entails in today’s Church.

The different studies are based on personal research and offer a meaningful understanding of the word of God as incarnated in everyday life. Fr. Pathrapankal has endeavoured to translate the advice that he proffers to the theologians and exegetes in general into each of the individual studies. The results are substantial. For instance, in his first study of “The Profile of the Theologian,” Fr. Pathrapankal shows how Matthew’s gospel presents a message for Palestinian Jewish Christians who have broken with official Judaism. In turn, Fr. Patrapankal proposes a new *dharma* that is didactic and pastoral and “which should characterize the life and mission of every disciple of Jesus” (p. 6). Hence, it applies to all Christians. This study ends by pointing out how the theologians perform their tasks as stewards, responsible to and for the household of God.

In the tenth study, the focus is on the Church and culture: “Church and Culture: Some Biblical Reflections.” Fr. Pathrapankal

avoids a Biblicism that makes the text in the bible the sole point of reference for interpreting life. He accepts the insights found in the text but marries it to the cultural context in which it must unfold itself. To this end, he offers a short historical overview of the Church and her meeting with culture and highlights the strong support that Vatican II gave to efforts at inculturation and interculturalism. The “fuller content of interculturalism” must be probed if inculturation is to continue. “The fear that in this approach Christianity would lose something and that it will be mistakenly understood as one religion among others comes not from theological concerns; rather they come from the age-old complex that Christianity has only to give and nothing to receive.”

In each of the studies, Fr. Pathrapankal uses a persuasive tone that is reflective. The reader can identify with the concerns of the author and becomes enlightened, as he/she perceives the relevance of his thinking to life’s concrete situations. The studies are meant to enlighten the mind, touch the heart and bring one to a greater awareness of his/her identity as a Christian. Varied audiences will find in “Dimensions of the Word” sufficient matter to satisfy their different expectations—building a Christian attitude of mind and heart, actively participating in the life of the Church and understanding the authentic imperatives of the gospel.

A more detailed examination of the text would have succeeded in removing the mistakes made in the use of language. However, the book remains a substantial contribution to Christian texts that refuse to be “simplistic” and “pietistic.” Rather, it enables today’s believer to be nourished by the word of scripture and to carry out courageously the task of Christian witnessing. Modestly priced, the book is recommended for Christians who base their life on a solid spirituality.

Errol D’Lima SJ

SATYA NILAYAM

CHENNAI JOURNAL OF INTERCULTURAL PHILOSOPHY

Satya Nilayam Faculty of Philosophy, Chennai, launches a New Journal from 2002. It appears twice a year in February and in August. The first volume has the theme NEW ONTOLOGIES. This initiative is taken in collaboration with the Vienna Society of Intercultural Philosophy, Austria.

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Job Kozhamthadam (ed.)

Contemporary Science and Religion in Dialogue Challenges and Opportunities

ASSR Series Volume-1, ASSR Publications, JDV, Pune 411014, 2002. pp.
240 + xx

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Pune Journal of Religious Studies

The next issue (July 2002) of *Jnanadeepa* will deal with *Religion, Ideology and Violence*. There is reason to believe that there is a connection between religion, ideology and violence in the world today. We wish to explore the nature of the relationship between religion, ideology and violence.

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