

## Book Reviews

**Errol D'lima & Max Gonsalves (eds.), *What Does Jesus Christ Mean? The Meaningfulness of Jesus Christ amid Religious Pluralism in India*** (Proceedings of the 21st Annual Seminar of The Indian Theological Association, Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram, Bangalore, April 25-29, 1998), Bangalore: (Indian Theological Association, 1999), rep. . Dharmaram Pubs., 2001, 204 pp., Rs. 125.00.

This book has three parts: 1) papers presented at the meeting; 2) reports of workshops; and 3) the final statement. In "Is Christ the Unique Saviour? A Clarification of the Question", Michael Amaladoss explains the different ways the word 'unique' can be understood. But since uniqueness as historical implies an eschatological dimension (p. 12), I do not see how it is different from uniqueness as eschatological (p. 14). In his list he could also include other senses in which 'uniqueness' can be and has been understood: 'uniqueness as revelatory' ("Jesus Christ is unique because he has shown that suffering is salvific and death is not the end of everything" (p. 175), and 'uniqueness as moral/paradigmatic' ("the mandate of Jesus to make disciples would mean imparting the values and an ethic of life that Jesus taught" (p. 182). His observation that "very few people who speak about the uniqueness of Christ seem to explain the role of Jesus as saviour. Yet I think this is crucial" (p. 15), is very timely because there can be no Christology without a Soteriology, nor a Soteriology without a Christology.

In "The Significance of Christ in Christian Tradition and Christological Reflection in India", Jacob Parappally points out that the Christological development in the past was the attempt of theologians to relate to their context "of pluralism of religions, philosophies and cultures" (p. 24), and "the mission to the Gentiles" (p. 25). He also reminds us that an undue insistence on their individuality by the Individual Churches of India "hampers communion among them and the communitarian witness to the significance of Christ in India" (p. 41).

Jacob Kavunkal, examining the “Indian Views of the Significance of Jesus Christ”, informs us that “The earliest attempts to express the mystery of Jesus Christ in Indian terms were those of the Jesuits Thomas Stephens and Robert De Nobili” (p.51). A little later he states: “It is interesting to note that the first attempts at an Indian Christology came from a group of informed Hindu leaders” (p. 52). I am not sure what Kavunkal wants to say because the “attempts to express the mystery of Jesus Christ in Indian terms” were also “the first attempts at an Indian Christology.” Kavunkal states that “The initial expressions of the Indian Christian experience were more on the level of terminology borrowed from the Indian philosophical systems” (p. 53). He refers to Brahmabandab Upadhyaya (1861-1907). Perhaps the picture needs to be completed, because we also have Narayana Vaman Tilak (1861-1919) who, in his hymns, speaks of Jesus as the mother. Tilak has his roots in the Bhakti tradition of Maharashtra.

In “The Self-Understanding of the Church in India”, Kuncheria Pathil informs us that “in the development of the identity and self-understanding of the Church we could identify certain constants all through the history of the Church. Faith in Jesus Christ as fully man and fully God, acceptance of the Old and New Testaments as the Word of God... are some of these constants” (p. 97). An attempt at interpreting Jesus which implies a rejection of any of these constants would not be a legitimate development.

Joseph Pathrapankal examines “The Significance of Jesus Christ in the Context of Religious Pluralism: A Biblical Critique”. He maintains that “The faith commitment of the disciples of Jesus was such that for them it was at the same time a doctrinal commitment through which they tried to establish that Jesus of Nazareth was the unique and universal saviour of the entire humankind. That does not necessarily mean that it has metaphysical validity at all times, for all place, and for all” (p. 125). A little later he asserts: “For believers in Christ, Christ is absolute and unique for them. There is no question of changing their loyalty from one religion to the other. What they have accepted as their conviction must be safeguarded and valued as a treasure and there is no compromise possible in religious commitment” (p. 127).

Two questions come to my mind. a) If the acceptance of the traditional belief “does not necessarily mean that it has metaphysical validity at all times, for all place, and for all,” then does it have validity for us in India today? If the answer is in the positive, then how do have

this assurance? If the answer is in the negative, then would not a thorough inculturation require that we hold on to the values of Jesus, but abandon our confession of his person. b) Is the relation a Christian has *vis-vis* Jesus Christ different from the relation followers of other faith traditions have *vis-a-vis* their founders or God as understood by them? If the answer is in the positive then are not the Christians making a very special claim about Jesus? If the answer is in the negative, then were not our ancestors who accepted Jesus and his Church fundamentally mistaken? If so must we not return to the faith tradition which our ancestors followed before they became Christians, and correct a major historical mistake?

I shall not comment on the Workshop Reports and the Final Statement. That will require another writeup. The fact that the book has been reprinted, means that it meets a need. Some books answer questions, others raise questions. This book does both.

***Subhash Anand***

**Joseph Kottackal, *Behold Your Mother: Mariological Studies*, Oriental Institute of Religious Studies, India, St. Thomas Apostolic Seminary, Vadavathoor, Kottayam, pages: 100. price: Rs. 45.**

This book is a clear and systematic introduction to Mariology. With a creative fidelity to the Biblical witnesses and the Patristic traditions of both East and West, and by dialoguing with the present day theological studies and exegetical findings on the theme of Mary in the salvation history, the author, J. Kottackal introduces both the Marian dogmas and related issues in Mariology in a simple and lucid style. This introduction to Mariology has eight chapters. In the first chapter itself the reader is introduced to the theological reflections on Mary by presenting a brief survey of the contributions of both Eastern and Western Fathers to the development of Mariology. In the second chapter the biblical foundations of Mariology are presented. The author affirms that the place of Mary in the Bible cannot be ascertained by searching for some specific verses and by analysing them using the historical critical method. In fact, Mary's place in the Bible must be seen in the context of salvation history. In the light of the NT articulations about Mary and her relation to Jesus certain passages and references in the OT, traditionally considered as the prophetic foreshadowing about Mary's role in salvation history, are meaningful. Matthew's interpretation of Is 7:14 (Mt 1:23) itself

gives an indication of the early Church's interpretation of the OT as foreshadowing the specific intervention of God in the incarnation of His Son and therefore the place of Mary in God's plan of salvation. Throughout this short introduction to Mariology, the author has taken care not to use the Scripture, as some others are tempted to do, to support any dogmatic statement by reading into the text interpretations which do not stand the test of correct exegesis. In the past the inclusion of such "proof texts" stunted the growth of Mariological reflections and did a great disservice to Mariology at the face of those of who oppose Marian dogmas and minimise Mary's role in salvation history. J. Kottackal, being a Scripture scholar, has also presented the problems with regard to certain traditional interpretations of the Scriptural passages in relation to Mariological reflection and has taken a convincing and balanced position with regard to Scriptural foundations for Marian dogmas.

The author discusses the themes of Mary's Divine Motherhood and her virginity in the third chapter. Besides the NT references to Mary as the mother of Jesus, a brief mention about the controversies that led to the declaration about the dogma of Mary's Divine Motherhood and the meaning of Mary's virginity in the context of her commitment to participate in God's plan of salvation are included in this chapter. Certain questions raised about Mary's perpetual virginity are reasonably answered by the author. However, being the central themes of Mariology, Mary's Divine Motherhood and the meaning of her virginity could have been treated a little more elaborately.

The fourth chapter deals with the theme, 'Mary the Type of Church'. This was a favourite theme of the Fathers who saw Mary as the embodiment of ideal Christian discipleship as well as the symbol of the Church, the community of New humanity in Christ. Mary's special place in the work of redemption is discussed in the fifth chapter. Both the maximalists' over enthusiasm to highlight Mary's role in the plan of salvation in such a way that it obscures or denies Christ's unique mediatorship and the tendency of the minimalist not to give adequate importance to Mary's cooperation in the redemption of humankind are two extreme positions. The author avoids both these extremes and in the light of various theological reflections on this issue concludes that Mary's mediatorship is to be understood on the level of the solidarity of all humans, their essential inter-relationship among themselves.

The chapters six and seven deal with the two Marian dogmas, namely, the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption. The author briefly explains the development of these dogmas both in the Eastern and

Western traditions. He introduces the reader to the deeper meaning of these dogmas for a better understanding of both the origin and end of Christian life and its implications for a committed Christian life. In the concluding chapter the author briefly explains the origin and developments of various Marian devotional practices and some information about Marian Apparitions.

J. Kottackal has succeeded in presenting in this short introduction a clear and systematic theological reflection on the Marian dogmas, their biblical foundations, a brief historical sketch on their development, controversies and questions raised with regard to these dogmas and related themes. The author makes adequate references to Eastern and Western Fathers and modern theologians and his concluding reflections to the themes discussed in each chapter are scholarly and balanced. This book is, indeed, a valuable introduction to Mariology.

*Jacob Parappally MSFS*

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