

Book Review

Hrangkhuma, F and Thomas, Joy. *Christ among the Tribals*, FOIM, 2007, pp. 290, price not mentioned.

Christ among the Tribals is the XI Volume of the series of FOIM (Fellowship of Indian Missiologists) publications and it contains the papers presented in the Biannual Mission Studies' Research Seminar and General Body Meeting of FOIM, held at Bangalore from April 26 to April 29, 2006. The present volume represents one of the contextual missiological issues discussed from various perspectives and it covers various areas of history and contexts.

The book has three parts. The first part deals with the presence of Christ among the tribals. The first article begins with an overview of Christianity among the tribes in India by the first editor, F Hrangkhuma. He discusses the cause of tribal's relative openness to Christianity; both the contributory factors of their responsiveness and the more pertinent reasons for their conversion. In the context of the Mizo and Naga tribals, the en masse conversion to Christianity is discussed and commented upon.

In the second chapter scholars Julian Saldhana, Selvister Ponumuthu and Joe Mattam trace the presence of the tribal Church in Maharashtra, Kerala and Gujarat. Concentrating on the Warlis, who live in the hilly tracts of Maharashtra and Gujarat, Julian Saldhana traces the strengths and weakness of the mission among them. Joe Mattam analyses the history of tribal mission in Gujarat and points out some of their defects and vigour. Selvister refers to the 48 tribal groups found in Kerala, paying special emphasis on their economic and social development.

The next chapter by Linus Kujur deals with the tribal churches in India today. After defining the notion of tribals, he analyses the tribal mission in Chotanagpur and Assam. Similarly Agapit Tirkey studies on the question of inculturation among the tribal church. He holds that inculturation has been achieved by charismatic individuals and have

not reached the level of structures. The next article by Sebastian Vazhapally deals with the anthropological framework or worldview as a conceptual category for theologizing on the tribal situation.

The second part of the book deals with three case studies related to the tribal Church. P. Kuriakose takes up the issue of development as mission and tries to correct two major misunderstandings: (i) that Christianity is incompatible with tribal religions and (ii) that tribals were Hindus from time immemorial. In the next article Clare Purakary describes the concerns and experiences of Orissa tribals and suggests various ways in which the Church can respond meaningfully to their suffering. In the final article of this section, Daniel Katapalli deals with the development and transformation of the Savaras tribes of Andhra Pradesh, brought about mainly by the Christian message.

The third part deals with larger Indian and global scenes. L. Stanislaus first views comprehensively the tribal movements in India from a historical perspective. Joseph Patumury highlights the significance of tribal spirituality which can appreciate Christianity better than the traditional Brahminic spirituality. He pleads that tribal spirituality be preserved, since it represents a very ancient tradition. The next chapter by Joseph Puthenpurakal talks of Jesus as a tribal. He argues that the tribal Jesus represents the best qualities of all the tribal people. Jesus is here portrayed as a tribal who goes beyond his tribal world and embraces the whole of humanity to transform it, while remaining loyal to his tribal roots. It is significant that he brings out the exploitation of the tribals and relates them to the person of Jesus (pp 236f). The last chapter by J. A. B. Jonganeel portrays the encounter of Jesus with the primal traditions around the world. The positive response of the tribal societies to Jesus Christ as Lord of history and Saviour of humanity is affirmed in this article. The highlighting of 16 issues by way of conclusion (eg: Meet God everywhere, p. 256) is an apt conclusion to the book.

On the whole the book is well planned and executed. That they have been able to deal with a relevant topic is a credit both to the organizers of the seminar and to the editors. The fact that the future of the Church in India will be largely based on the tribal areas adds urgency to a book of this kind. At the same time, I wonder, if sufficient attention has been

given to the diverse characteristics of the tribal traditions in different parts of India. This book is highly recommended both to the tribal Church as well as the non-tribal Church who will profit a lot by coming to know of the tribal spirituality and way of life.

Kuruvilla Pandikattu

Please note that the index (both title and author) will be printed in the next issue of this Journal.

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