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## BOOK REVIEWS

**James F. Keenan and Mark McGreevy, ed., *Street Homelessness and Catholic Theological Ethics*, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2019. Pages xxxiii+278. ISBN 978-1-62698-344-1.**

The volume *Street Homelessness and Catholic Theological Ethics* is the publication of the proceedings of a symposium on “Street Homelessness and Catholic Social Teaching” held in Rome from 30 November to 2 December 2017 intended “to promote global dialogue on street homelessness” (xvii). Besides the essays presented at the symposium, a few more essays are added to this collection. This book is a response to the absence of “any article or book by any theological ethicist anywhere in the world on the topic of street homelessness” (xvii). It is listed the eighth book under the CTEWC series (Catholic Theological Ethics in the World Church).

*Street Homelessness and Catholic Theological Ethics* is a timely publication discussing a tragic global phenomenon of street homelessness, especially when it increases alarmingly. The volume showcases a pathway to do contextual theology and immersive learning through compelling narratives of ordinary people on the street in search of a home, from the perspectives of practitioners, theologians, and social scientists committed to address the tragedy of homelessness.

This volume has two parts. The first part, “Accompanying the Homeless” has two sections: “Hearing the Voices of the Homeless” and “Encountering Particular Populations.” There are thirty entries in the book and they are structured as “to see, judge, and act” (xviii). Aptly, the volume is dedicated “to every homeless brother and sister of Christ sleeping on our streets tonight” (v). Index is reader friendly.

In the “Introduction” to the volume, James F. Keenan, makes a genuine and soul searching submission, echoing the hearts of many earnest theologians, “What’s worse, our business is to critically reflect on and respond to the situations of those on the margins, but these margins we ignored like otherwise preoccupied passers-by (Lk 10:31-32)” (xvii). In the “Foreword” on “Street Homelessness in the Time of Pope Francis,” Cardinal Peter Turkson says that homelessness is a

“tragedy most importantly because it is incompatible with our sense of *human dignity*” (xiii). The “Preface” to the book, “The Summons to End Global Homelessness,” by Mark McGreevy and Molly Seely gives a panoramic view of the issue under discussion. They opine that “ending homelessness is not a pipe dream, nor an idealist fantasy. It is a reality that is already happening, and can spread” (xxi). The authors outline three broad categories of homelessness: people without accommodation; people living in temporary or crisis accommodation; and people living in severely inadequate and insecure accommodation (xxiii). The appeal is loud and clear: “We should end homelessness because we can” (xxix), and “Our neighbour needs a ladder, and we have one; simply that” (xxx).

Part I, “Accompanying the Homeless” has two sections: “Hearing the Voices of the Homeless” and “Encountering Particular Populations.” Mary Scullion and Christopher Williams in their paper “Accompanying Each Other on the Journey Home” share their view that “None of us are home until all of us are home” (8) to address homelessness. They conclude their paper with a quote from Pope Francis, “We need to look at our cities with a contemplative gaze, a gaze of faith which sees God dwelling in their homes, in their streets and squares” (10). Carol Elizabeth Thomas begins recalling the birth of Jesus Christ and the homelessness that Joseph and Mary faced centuries ago (12). She admits, “Working among people living on the streets has always been a privilege” (12). Carlo Santoro attempts to survey the witnessing of the recent Popes in his article, “Friends of the Homeless.” The author lists celebrations of Pope Francis with the poor and the homeless (26). In his paper, “Eclipse” Paul Houston Blankenship discusses spiritual practices offering presence from a distance “that becoming present... requires actual practices that dip us regularly into the waters of unknowing” (29).

Elias Opongo in “Stateless-cum-Homeless Refugees: Hard Choices for the Future” presents the plight of those who suffer the double tragedy of forced migration and lack of recognized citizenship (36). Julie George examines “Violence, Violations, and Homeless Women” and contends that for women, “a home is not just a space that provides shelter; it is also a place of relationship, employment, security, safety, stability, and social interaction” (43). She maintains that “women, especially those who are homeless, are ten times more vulnerable than men” (51). Wilhelmina Uhai Tunu in her paper, “The African Elders,” narrates about “the African elderly and their roles in traditional African societies as figures of wisdom and upholders of values that ensure the society’s integrity” (53). Dennis P.

Culhane and Ann Elizabeth Montgomery disclose the issues related to “Homelessness among Military Veterans” and propose that “the United States experience can provide some guidance” (68) in addressing the veteran homelessness. Mary Mee-Yin Yuen tells the story of “The Poor Workers in an Affluent City” from her experience of homelessness in Hong Kong, caused by “surging property prices, the huge wealth gap, rising rent, and low income” (74). Alejandro Crosthwaite in “Youth and LGBT: Homeless, Overlooked, and Underserved,” invites the attention of faith communities “to rethink their teaching, preaching, pastoral outreach... so that they may provide parents of LGBT youth with the religious, spiritual, moral, and pastoral guidance for offering their LGBT children unconditional spiritual embrace” (85). In the next paper on “Addiction: Drink and Drugs,” Tobias Winright suggests a “ministry of presence and accompaniment” (96).

Part II, “Working to End Homelessness,” has three sections: Global and Ecclesial Strategies; Theological-Ethical Foundations; and Local Responses. Kat Johnson in her paper on “Homelessness and SDG 1” proposes “End Poverty in All Its Forms Everywhere (103) is seriously considered.” Rosanne Haggerty asks to “ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages” (111) in her paper, “Homelessness and SDG 3.” Toussaint Kafarhire, in “Homelessness and SDG 11: A Neoliberal Paradox?,” traces homelessness to “the disruption of the African traditional family system and cultures” (124). Dame Louise Casey analyses “Strategies from Above: Government” and emphasizes “a combination of structural and personal factors” (135) in solving homelessness. Pat Jones examines “Strategies from Above: Caritas and Beyond: Getting our Ecclesial Act Together” and advocates “constructing a narrative that connects theological insights, ethical principles, and social realities in particular places” (145). William T. Cavanaugh presents his insights on “Strategies from Below: Subsidiarity and Homelessness.” The author sounds a wakeup call, “We need to think small in remembering that each person experiencing homelessness is a person with a different story, and our solutions need to be personalist as well” (155). Kelly S. Johnson in her paper on “Strategies from Below: The Catholic Worker: Building the New within the Shell of the Old” sees the Catholic worker as a movement and an organism rather than an organization (157).

María Teresa Dávila discusses “The Ministry of Accompaniment among the Unhoused: Reconceiving the Spiritual Works of Mercy.” She suggests that “an integral development requires accompanying the pursuit of material development with attention to spiritual well-being” (166). James F. Keenan reflects on “Blessed are the Poor in

Spirit,” in “A Response to the Homelessness by a Reading of Matthew’s Beatitudes” and points out the call to serve the homeless is “a call to become truly able to serve them precisely by becoming like them, humble and persecuted” (185). Daniel Franklin E. Pilario in “Homelessness and Hospitality on the Ground: A Methodological Proposal for Catholic Social Teaching” underscores housing is “not only a human right; it is a door to the most basic of human rights—the right to life” (195). In her article on “Human Rights, Human Flourishing, and the Right to Housing,” Ethna Regan outlines the parameters of human rights discourse: as “fundamental—and universal—human equality founded on human dignity; the basic goods—including housing... essential for the development of human capabilities” (206-7). Meghan J. Clark writes on “Modelling a Personal Solidarity in a World of Exclusion.” Meghan states that “Solidarity is both an invitation to become more fully human together and to more deeply ponder the mystery of the incarnation in which the word was made flesh in solidarity with humanity” (216). “Hospitality” by Joseph McCrave distinguishes two modes of hospitality: “the receiving church” and “the sending church” (220-221). “In hospitality as reception, the host awaits, receives, and incorporates the guest into a particular home or community” (223).

Joseph L. Mben in his paper on “Finding a Home: The Experience of Street Children at the ‘Household of Hope’ in Yaoundé, Cameroon” states that “The Household of Hope gives a sense of home and hope to street children in the city of Yaoundé” (238). “Seeing the ‘Invisible’: Responses to Homelessness in India” by Shaji George Kochuthara lists a number of initiatives to address homelessness in India and concludes that “it is important to advocate for and defend the equal dignity of all human beings... and to recognize that adequate housing is essential for ensuring human dignity” (251). Anna Kasafi Perkins in her article on “Moving *Again*: Women, Catholic Social Teaching, and Disguised Homelessness in Jamaica” informs us that homelessness in Jamaica has “a gendered face, with more males being counted in the group” (255). Hence her clarion call to the authorities to take note of this anomaly and “to address the immediate needs of these women and their children” (262).

This book presents that the belief in Jesus Christ anchors theology and sets the horizon to unearth the much needed approach, attitude, and action plans towards the question of street homelessness. The narratives in the book are live-stories and informative, and at the same time, transformative. The volume reiterates the significance of storytelling in doing theology and in moulding the mind of the

faithful for right action. The book not only offers an informative reading on street homelessness, but also helps the readers have a prick of conscience through statements like, “None of us are home until all of us are home” (8). This is a model of contextual theology – where the Text and the Context interact and interpret each other to empower people to accompany the homeless in a concrete and profound sense of truth. The articles in the book present their findings in humility and openness, yet convincingly and passionately, to accompany closely these unfortunate homeless in order to offer a home of their own as a witness to the living faith in Christ, who was born in a manger and died on the cross, having nowhere to lay his head.

**Paulachan Kochappilly, CMI, DVK** (paulachan.kochappilly@cmi.in)

**Thomas Kollamparambil, CMI, *Syriac Christian Theological Expositions***, Bengaluru: Dharmaram Publications, 2020. Pages: xi+192. ISBN: 978-81-945798-5-4

The book *Syriac Christian Theological Expositions* is a collection of Syriac Christian Theological musings by Dr Thomas Kollamparampil, CMI. Theology developed in the Church on four foundational pillars: Sacred Scripture, Authentic traditions of the believing communities, Writings of the Fathers of the Church and Contextual interpretations stemming from these and from the life experiences and the *sitz-im-leben* of the believers. Theology as interpretation is always contextual and there is no one theology valid for all times and spaces.

Syriac Christian tradition, with its unique Semitic-Asiatic thought patterns, symbolic and typological modes of biblical exegesis and the meditative, insightful and descriptive theological reflections carries a great ancient resource that is yet to be unearthed. This is a necessary Eastern Christian ingredient for complementing the rational, analytical, abstract and definitive Greco-Roman theology.

In *Syriac Christian Theological Expositions*, Thomas Kollamparampil opens a window to the variety of typical patterns of the early Syriac Christian theology. The polyvalence and polysemy of the symbols, types and figures with which Syriac theology interprets and transmits faith and opens the doors of mystical theological meditations adds beauty and depth to the Christian world view. It serves as a paradigm for various modes of theologizing, as symbols and types of scriptures and nature are ever dynamic and inspirational to all ages and peoples irrespective of their religious and cultural affiliations.

The ten essays of Fr Thomas are very interesting, illuminative and deeply theological and mystical and they deal with some of the key

elements in Syriac Christian Theology such as Salvation, Covenants, Cross, Paradise, Kingdom of God, Church, Mystical Vision, Shepherding, Christian life, Mystery, etc. Thus, these essays give the basic orientations and road maps in the Syrian Christian ways of theologizing and further, they give us a real picture of the way in which the Gospel message fully engaged with the Syriac world of the time of the Fathers with sacramental and mystical characteristics that exceed the Greco-Roman world of theology.

With respect to religious matters the Eastern mind holds on to the mystery aspect more explicitly as the metaphysical realities can only be described and not be defined. Since the divine sphere of mystery is so vast and immense with respect to human comprehension and assimilation, there is no single way to interpret the divine sphere and at no time is it exhaustive. Thus, mystery being the object of religious belief and practices, the East does not hold on to any single system as the only possible system of theological approach and it is open to multiple approaches. Hence, the East witnesses multiple ways and approaches of theologizing. The author finds this basic truth in the writings of the most important figure of the Syriac school of thought, St Ephrem: "Single is Your nature, but many are the ways for interpreting it" (Hymns on Faith 10:3). Fr Thomas finds this same truth reflected in the articulation of Indian sages: "The reality is one. The learned speak it in many ways' (*ekam sat viprah behudah vadanti*, Rig Veda I.164.46). Fr Thomas writes: "As God's self-revelation is multifarious, the human approach to them and the understanding of them also have to be in multiple ways. Thus, on the journey of theological pursuits one has to breathe in the logic of plurality and the fact of needed multiplicity of approaches to the divinity."

Fr Kollamparambil's book successfully describes the Eastern modes of theological reflection with a special focus on the symbolic-typological-sacramental-mystical awareness of the divine-human engagement. This engagement is a never-ending process in the history of salvation. The readers of this book are privileged to taste the rich treasures of Syriac spirituality and will be grateful to Fr Thomas for his unique contribution. This work is very scientific, systematic, scholarly and profound. The ten essays are presented in a reader friendly and research-oriented way which is simultaneously useful for both seekers and scholars of Syriac Christian Theology and way of life. "Index of Biblical References," "Index of Syriac Texts" and "General Index" given in the book are very helpful for researchers.

**George Edayadiyil** CMI, DVK (george\_edayadiyil@hotmail.com)