

Book Review

Jacob Srampickal SJ, *Communications Can Renew the Church*, Delhi: Media House Publication, 2010. Pages: 328. ISBN: 978-81-7495-267-7.

Dr. Jacob Srampickal's new book: *Communications Can Renew the Church* is a classy analysis of Church in relation to Communication and Media. Teaching at the Gregorian, Rome heading the department of Communications and other related communications programmes Dr. Srampickal proves how his perspectives on communications have gradually turned Catholic and Universal or Global, in its fullest sense in this book. The challenging areas, dominant issues, disturbing elements, inspiring thoughts, evolving theology, wanting attitudes, possible reformations of the Church especially relating to present-day world of Media and Communications have been comprehensively analyzed with precision and clarity here. The basic vision and frame of references of this book are the official documents of Universal Church and deeper understanding about Jesus of Gospels.

The author's heart seems to be throbbing for the Church in India and he appears to be fully aware and alert about the styles and struggles of the Indian Church. His extensive travels and periodic teaching assignments in different Indian institutions seem to keep him well informed about the concrete Indian Church situations wherein he tries to target his observations, evaluations and creative suggestions. This book is not necessarily an effort at a highly theoretical exploration but a deeply practical application of the power of communication for updating and renewal of the universal church, more particularly that of India.

The phenomenon of Church becoming irrelevant and abandoned in the modern world is the backdrop of the whole study as Srampickal has chosen. So in the first part he makes a self-reflection and critical observation of the present day Church ministry styles and explores more into the background of mental attitudes and value systems sustained by the church leadership and zealous missionary workers.

The defective strategy and style of Church's communication is found as the root reason for this. The challenge and chances of developing a Communication Theology is the first part of his positive exposition. When the Church becomes a real communicating community the envisioned spiritual ideologies of Christ, will be accepted and appreciated by the global society. He observes that the Church has produced excellent documents regarding communications in the world. Only problem

he identifies is that they are practiced neither in the higher official levels nor in the ordinary practical levels. How can this be corrected through the smart and balanced utilization of modern media technology is elaborated in the second part. His thesis that 'Communications Can Renew the Church' is convincingly proved with ease and excellence in this book. For him communication is all about more participation of all in managing the church which can surely create a sense of belonging and intimate relations within the church.

Relying on Church documents and theological interpretations of renowned scholars, the author has made this study appear very authentic and convincing. The practical application of the various theories expounded is the main attraction to read this elaborate work in a short period.

A pastor or anyone who is seriously interested in updating the Church life based on the approved teachings and enlightened understanding of the scriptures will find this book really helpful. For priestly candidates and already pastors this is a guiding handbook in their planning and developing of meaningful engagement with the modern generation effectively.

Dr John Edappilly, CMI (johnedappilly@yahoo.com)

Dean, NISCORT, New Delhi

ASIAN

HO RIZO NS

Vol. 4, No. 2, December 2010

Book Review

A. Pushparajan & X.D. Selvaraj, ed., *Laity in the Church: Identity and Mission in India Today*, Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2010. Pages: viii+243. ISBN: 81-7086-544-1.

The Catholic Church, immediately after Second Vatican Council, witnessed an attempt to actualize the divinely inspired and well articulated paradigm shift in the self understanding of the Church as 'People of God'. Correspondingly the laity cherished a renewed self-understanding as the people of God. But gradually the new paradigm was side lined and not much attention was given to actualize the proposals of the council.

Every Year the Indian Theological Association (ITA) takes up relevant and appropriate themes and schemes for their theological updating and appropriation inspired by the Spirit and implemented by the theologians in India. To give flesh and blood to their concerns ITA's 29th annual seminar in 2006 selected the theme, *Laity in the Church: Identity and Mission in India Today*. This volume is an attempt to present in words their concerns, hopes, desires and aspirations in the concrete context of present day India. This volume contains eight well researched and articulated papers presented and discussed in the annual seminar, the ITA statement and reports and minutes. A. Pushparajan and X. D. Selvaraj have made a commendable work in editing the papers and presenting them for our consideration and appropriation.

The first article, "Biblical Perspective of the People of God: Identity and Mission" authored by the well known biblical scholar and preacher, Dr Augustine Mulloor, surveys both the Old and New Testaments thoroughly to present a strong foundation for the use and practice of the concept 'People of God.' He first raises a few fundamental questions about our situation in the society and then re-reads the biblical traditions, including their vocabulary and thus arrives at a clear redefinition of the identity and mission of the people of God in the context of India today.

Errol D'Lima, an acclaimed theologian from JDV, Pune, attempts to evaluate the vocation, life and mission of the lay faithful in his article "Laity in the Post-Vatican Church ...". In the light of his insightful and critical reviewing of the documents of Vatican II, post Vatican and those of FABC, he establishes doctrinally that the laity's call today is not merely to animate the world with the spirit of Christianity but also to participate actively in the whole life of the Church.

In the next two articles, enquiry is made to evaluate how far the biblical and doctrinal notion of people of God is lived out in history. Dr Selvester Ponnnumathan makes a historical appraisal of the various efforts of lay participation, like pious associations in liberation, ecumenical and interreligious orientations. Dr Scaria Zacharia makes a study on ‘Palliyogam’ of the St Thomas Christian Church as an indigenous model of lay participation in the spiritual and material aspects of the Church.

“Lay Participation at Grassroots – Reality and Challenges: A Subaltern Perspective,” by A. Pushparajan is a concrete study of the present day contextual application of laity’s role from a subaltern perspective. The author notes that within the church participative values are rarely valued, fostered or promoted. Dr P. T. Mathew’s paper on “Sociological perspectives of the Charism and Structures in the Church and the Place of the Laity,” evaluates the efforts from the part of the Church to realize the teaching authority of the Church. He concludes that there has been the publication of enormous amount of literature in the Church on the theme of laity. But the discourse has remained by and large, theological and speculative, with little attention being paid to the underlying sociological factors. The author suggests some of the diverse models of religious leadership that could be taken up by the laity in the Church.

Lay spirituality is an important concern of the Church today. The last two papers are trying to focus on this concern and attempt to present a way for the laity to follow. In the light of his experience and expertise D.X. Selvaraj deals elaborately with the role the laity played in the past and analyses the triple mission of Christ and its relevance to the contemporary understanding of the vocation and mission of the laity. Thorough the analysis of the experience and practices of lay endeavours in the Church, in the fields of sacred and secular arenas, the author derives the type of spirituality most relevant and appropriate for the laity. In the last article, Dr Valarie D’Souza explores laity spirituality and touches upon the crucial foundations of a traditional spirituality of the laity. In this article special care is taken to analyze the Indian context of plurality of spirituality, with reference to women’s perspective.

This volume is an amalgamation of all the necessary ingredients for a fruitful existence, growth and fruitfulness of lay people in the life and mission of the Church. The articles in the book attempt to present a holistic vision for the integral growth and nourishment of the laity. The research that the contributors have done is praiseworthy and they have incorporated in it biblical, doctrinal, historical, contextual, sociological and spiritual aspects very judiciously. There are minor typographical and methodological errors which could be corrected for the perfection of the book. The order of the articles also could be rearranged according to the overall framework of the volume.

Siby Kavattu, CMI (kavattusiby@yahoo.com)

Lecturer (Theology), Faculty of Theology, DVK, Bangalore

ASIAN

HO RIZO NS

Vol. 4, No. 2, December 2010

Book Review

Thomas Kadankavil, *Changing Patterns of Thought: Philosophy as Interpersonal Communication*, Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2010. Pages: xx+136. ISBN: 978-81-89958-36-7.

This small but scholarly work of Prof. Kadankavil is the edited and enlarged form of the 'Dharma Endowment Lectures', which the author delivered at the Faculty of Philosophy of Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram (DVK), Bangalore in August 2010. It has seven chapters, namely, (i) Dialogical Philosophy of Plato, (ii) Philosophy in Process Track, (iii) Constructive versus Destructive Postmodernism, (iv) Interpretation of Religious Scriptures from Asian Context, (v) Fellowship in Religious Experience, (vi) Homogenization of Cultures and Little Traditions, and (vii) Dialogue or Conquest versus Cultures and Religions.

A word about the author: Prof. Dr. Thomas Kadankavil, CMI is an eminent thinker and academician both in Indian and Western streams of philosophy. A prolific writer and a distinguished teacher of philosophy, Professor Kadankavil is also an illustrious spiritual master. He has been Professor of philosophy at the Faculty of Philosophy of DVK for about three decades, and has also served as the President of DVK, and Rector of Dharmaram College. He has a special penchant and passion for the cause of the subaltern sections of Indian society. Studying and experiencing the little traditions and peripheral groups, their life-situations and existential exigencies had always been a devoted commitment for him. This concern gives his philosophical deliberations an extra vibrancy and urgency. His method of philosophizing exudes an earthiness and freshness, and is permeated by a predilection for a kind of theistic humanism and by an earnest yearning for a faith-centred egalitarianism in the societal life of humans.

The author argues in the book that there is marked paradigm shift in the vocation of philosophising today from that of the ancient and classical periods of philosophy. Philosophy as mere abstract and abstruse, theoretical and academic, meta-worldly and supra-normal speculation has little relevance and significance today. Philosophy should get out of the grips of some illuminati who find joy in arid intellectual acrobatics around some abstract concepts, which have no bearing to life and its multifarious troubles and tribulations. Philosophizing should emerge from the actual human conditions, especially from the awareness and experience of the unwholesome predicaments of human existence. The awareness of miseries, pains, wants and

helplessness of the poor and marginalized, the oppression, persecution and injustice inflicted upon the defenceless people by the oppressive structures of the society, etc., should also become the springboard for further philosophical activity.

Prof. Kadankavil says: “The new way of doing philosophy is to place ‘human beings’ instead of ‘being’ in the centre. The philosophy thus returned to the concrete, to the human being, is not something in the abstract; is not a process of understanding in some hypothetical state of pure nature, but is a task of self-constitution of the subject.” Therefore, to discriminate a person on the basis of birth is an abomination, and philosophy, by cogitative processes and right ratiocinations, has the right and duty to dive deep into the causes of this malaise and challenge the oppressive structures of the society. The author says, “hence the realm of non-philosophical, all forms of subaltern or periphery existence has become a significant field of philosophical analysis. The new wine gets its vigour from a radical criticism of directing all truth to the singular one centre. ... The attempt to erode the autonomy of centre is an attempt to restore the space of the periphery.”

It is high time that the Indian philosopher turns his/her serious attention to Asia, to Asian cultures, religions and philosophies. Asian realities should also provide the tools and raw materials for an Indian philosopher to do philosophy. There is an urgent need of rewriting the history of philosophy, giving due importance to Asian philosophies.

Another feature of the present work is that it tries to project philosophy as interpersonal communication. As the author states, “interrelatedness and dialogical spirit are the sign of our times.” If philosophizing becomes context sensitive, life oriented and human centred, then one inevitable consequence is that it has to become creatively and effectively communicative. The act of philosophizing expresses itself in the process of interpersonal, intercultural and also interreligious communications. Communication is always contextual and the other-oriented. Positive interpersonal communication has to be mutually supporting and mutually enriching. Action is to ensue from this kind of dialogical communication.

The first chapter of the book is ‘Dialogical Philosophy of Plato’. Among other things, it analyses Plato’s idea of dialogue based on his work *Republic*.

This dialogical philosophy deals with Concept of Justice, Philosopher-King, The Supreme Good, and Fine Arts and Philosophy. The chapter concludes with the statement that Dialogue is a way of life of philosophy. The last chapter of the book is on ‘Dialogue or Conquest versus Cultures and Religions’. It deals with some of the enemies of dialogue, like Fundamentalism, Radicalism, Terrorism, etc. The work concludes with a pessimistic note: ‘Liberation: A Mirage’. It would have been great if the author has gone deeper into the nature and dynamics of dialogue and interpersonal communication and their philosophical foundations, and their applications in the present-day scenario of the world. Indian Christian philosophizing needs to take dialogue more seriously. What the Federation of the Asian Bishops’

Conferences (FABC) said about the triple dialogue, namely, dialogue with the poverty of Asia, dialogue with its cultural diversities and dialogue with its religious pluralism, could be a guiding principle for philosophizing.

(The Church has to be) a Church incarnate in a people, a Church indigenous and inculturated. And this means concretely a Church in continuous, humble and loving dialogue with the living traditions, the cultures, the religions - in brief, with all the life-realities of the people in whose midst it has sunk its roots deeply and whose history and life it gladly makes its own. It seeks to share in whatever truly belongs to that people: its meanings and its values, its inspirations, its thought and its language, its songs and its artistry - ; Even its frailties and failings it assumes, so that they too may be healed. For so did God's Son assume the totality of our fallen human condition (save only for sin) so that He might make it truly His own, and redeem it in His paschal mystery.¹

Philosophizing in India should too definitely engage in this triple dialogue with the triple Asian realities.

Dr Augustine Thottakara, CMI (thotaka@bgl.vsnl.net.in)

Professor Emeritus (Philosophy), Faculty of Philosophy, DVK, Bangalore
