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BOOK REVIEW

The Way of Life, Festsehrift in Honour of Prof. Dr. Varghese Pathikulangara CMI, ed. P.Kochappilly, G. Pallikunnel, J.V. Kureethara, Denha Services: Kottayam, 2011, ISBN 978-93-81207-00-0. Pages: xii+509.

"...Jesus continuous to live today through the holy Church... I, A *Mar Toma Nazrani*, encounter and experience God only in the details of my *own* individual Church, the *Mar Toma Nazrani* Church... her life is fully displayed, experienced and assimilated in her Holy *Qurbana* celebration..." - the book begins with these words (which give articulation to his person and mission) of Varghese Pathikulangra (henceforth VP), CMI. It is a tribute to him as he has completed seventy years of his life, and will be completing the Golden Jubilee of his religious profession.

First the editors give a very brief profile of VP, who according to them is "a Malpan of *Mar Toma* Christians, a martyr for the *Mar Toma Margam* and a man of *Mar Toma Sliba*." A meticulous list of his complete works is given (pp5-37). This is a very useful attempt, which will help the future scholars who would like to study the contribution of VP.

The book is divided into four parts: Theology, Liturgy, History, Ecclesiology, and Spirituality. This division sheds light on the fields of interest of the veteran scholar. The part on theology has a subtitle, the Scientific Reflection of our faith, commitment to Jesus. P. Kochappilly writes on *Mar Toma Margam: A Theology of the Way*. The author finds in *Mar Toma Margam* a confluence of *jñānamārga*, *karma mārga*, and *bhakti mārga*. According to him *Mar Toma Margam* is Indian in culture, Christian in faith and Oriental in worship. K. Kachappilly in his article designates Thomas as the doubting one, the believer, and martyr. He looks at two ways of communicating the *Mar Toma Marga*, the legislature's way (which is not an ideal and adequate way) and the preacher's way (which is the ideal one). G. Pallikkunnel finds the mystery of resurrection as the centre of his *Guru's* life, thinking and writings.

According to Sr. Rogit the Fourth Gospel can be summarised into two beatitudes, the admonitory beatitude (Jn.13:17) and the kerygmatic beatitude (Jn.20:29). For her, "the liturgical celebration is 'that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name'(20:31)." In the article "Affective Theology: Nature and Scope" Athappilly deals with rationalistic verses affective, heart and goodness, understanding rather than knowing, and subjective engagement. "The

primary material object of affective theology is God's goodness and selfgiving love in the gift of creation and ultimately in the gift of the incarnation, Eucharist and the sending of the Holy Spirit." Elavathingal finds in icons the visibility of the Invisible. They are windows on eternity. "An art work is a dynamic entity, radiating the waves of a transforming energy and creating a space of harmonious relationship." In Liturgy there take place deification (*theosis*) and the glorious manifestation of the Christ-image.

Kavattu studies apophatic conception of God in the Bible, its theological articulation, apophatic methodology, apophatism and mysticism. He calls apophatic theology the trade mark of Eastern Christianity. B. Nalkara in his article "Patior, Ergo Sum" builds up a theology of suffering from the short version of VP's family name Pathi. He unearths the spiritual dimension of the sufferings of the Malpan. This is an original contribution.

Part two, which exposes liturgy as celebration of human existence has six articles. P. Kalluveetil tries to enter into the world of *Qurbana*, where the divine *rahmē* unfolds. Sr. T.M. Kunnatt writes on the "The Experience of the Divine-Human Encounter in the celebration of the Holy Qurbana," which "effects in us in an exceptional way the shining of the immortal bridegroom in our body and soul." P. Maniyattu calls the Divine Liturgy the celebration of heaven on earth. The liturgical space is so arranged as to enable us to participate in the experience of heaven. The prayers of *Qurbana*, according to him are prayers with the heavenly hosts. This scholar tries to depict the eschatological dimension of the *Anaphora*. Liturgical actions are pregnant with heavenly symbolism. Eucharist is the heavenly banquet.

The descending and ascending dimensions of liturgy – this is the theme of the article of G. Pallikkunnel. N.J. Kalambukattu studies Liturgy of the Hours, which is a response to the spiritual ideal of ceaseless prayer. G. Thadikkatt deals with the restoration and renewal of the *Syro-Malabar Liturgy*. According to him "the need of the time is to keep the unity, to strengthen co-operation within the Church, and march towards regaining the lost identity, always keeping up the real Gospel values.

Part three is devoted to History and Ecclesiology. Fidelity to the Church is seen as the key to authentic living faith. F. Thonippara's article serves as an introduction to this part. M.T. Antony, a medical doctor, finds in St. Thomas Cross a religio-cultural logo of St. Thomas Christians. He studies the different authors' accounts of crosses in South East Asia. According to him lotus, dove and cross are the unique features. The author tackles the controversial issue of Manichean cross. He argues that St. Thomas crosses are really inculturated crosses of Syro-Malabar Christian architecture.

J.V. Kureethara makes a critical analysis of the establishment of the Catholic Dioceses in India in the wake of the universal jurisdiction of the Oriental churches. Three chronological charts are added to his historical investigation. J. Chennattussery presents the contributions of CMI Congregation for the growth of Syro-Malabar Church.

Sr. M. Nainaparampil, in her brief exposition calls our attention to the daring step taken by VP to reawaken the monastic life in the *Mar Toma Nasrani Church*. In her study on VP's ecclesiology Sr. Sophy Rose concludes that "there is an intrinsic relationship between faith, liturgy, theology and Church." J. Palackal looks at the catechetical contributions of VP. J. Alumkal, an engineer tries to induce some interest in readers on E-catechism. Modern communication technologies are to be used in that field in the Syro Malabar Church. A. Amarnad provides an attractive articulation, "Gospelling in the Context."

In part Four the editors thus defines spirituality: God experience=Ecclesial experience=Liturgical experience. G. Ambalathil writes on the ascetical practices according to the sixth demonstration of Aphrahat. He pinpoints the major themes of this Syrian theologian, namely vigilance, fight with our adversary, Satan and women, holiness, avoidance of the female services, love of virginity, its merits and reward, fidelity to celibacy, rule of the community life, humility, presence of Christ, Holy spirit, and daily meditation. D. Neelankavil presents "Priest in the Church and for the Church". The author stresses the uniqueness of Orthodox-Catholic concept of priesthood.

L. Arangassery studies the shape of liturgical formation in India. He invites our attention to the problems in the field of liturgical formation created by Latin missionaries. Today there exist liturgical abuses due to indiscipline, ignorance, superficial and defective understanding of Liturgy. A. Keemattam focuses on Seminary formation. First the author looks at Jesus' model of formation and the Church's concern. The Syro-Malabar Church has to face challenges of priestly formation in the present context in India. "Christ-centred and Word based formation" - this is the theme of the article of S. Mullopparampil. The seminarians need to be built up closer to Christ. "The progressive identification with Christ can be achieved by being with him, being in his Eucharistic presence, dialoguing with him and receiving his mind and heart, being filled with the Spirit".

V. Painadath studies the theme of spiritual direction from a psycho-spiritual perspective. Since VP has adorned the position of a spiritual director for many years, the author first tries to explore the specific style of his *Acharya*. Then he explores the relationship between spiritual direction and psychological intervention. M. Anatharackal writes on the significance of spiritual direction in formation. According to him spiritual direction is distinguishable from counselling. "The spiritual director's approach to a directee should contain a genuine openness, unconditional acceptance and empathic understanding so that it can lead the directee to an awareness of himself and to a greater maturity."

M. Uppani exposes the relevance of the *Pshitta Bible* among the Syrian Christians of the Chaldean Rite. E. Thelly writes on Syriac language. T.M. Thalikaasthanam, a catechism teacher speaks on VP, *Malpan* of the *Mar Toma Nasrani Church*. "His life is an icon, a voice and a face of *Mishiha* in front of the people of God...Glory, honour and praise to *Alaha* who gave him to our

Church." The work concludes with a short note of A. Mekkattukunnel on VP's contribution to the periodical *Christian Orient*.

The editors of this beautifully brought out volume deserve our wholehearted commendation. Some articles are scholarly, while others have mediocre standard. *The Way of Life* prepares a banquet both for academicians and the ordinary faithful according to each one's taste.

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