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BOOK REVIEW

Shaji George Kochuthara, ed., *Moral Theology in India Today. The DVK National Workshop on Moral Theology*, Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2013. Pages: 648. ISBN: 978-81-89958-68-8

As the subtitle itself indicates, this is a collection of Papers that were presented at the Workshop on Moral Theology, organised by the Department of Moral Theology of Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram, Bangalore, India, under the title, "Moral Theology in India Today," from 12th to 15th July 2012. In a way, it fills a long-felt lacuna not only in the Indian but also in the Asian theological platform. Since the conclusion of Vatican II, Indian theologians have innovatively contributed to the construction of relevant contextual theologies in missiology, Christology, ecclesiology and even in scriptural studies. But in the area of moral theology, such contextualization has been sparse, scattered and sporadic. This is well illustrated in this book itself, in the fine lists of articles and books on moral theology by writers in India since 1960 which are compiled and produced as two Appendices by Thomas Srampickal along with his Paper on "Moral Theology in India: A Historical Perspective" (pp. 76-100). The editor Shaji George Kochuthara has taken a lot of initiatives in recent times to promote a contextual Indian moral theology not only in organizing seminars and conferences, but also in giving wide coverage to moral themes in Dharmaram journal of theology, *Asian Horizons* of which he is at present the editor. This book is yet another initiative by Kochuthara to promote an Indian (Asian) contextual moral theology.

The book covers a wide range of moral theological topics, mainly from an Indian perspective. Following the two Introductory Messages (which set the tone of the Papers that follow), the main contents are organised into five main parts under the subheadings, "Locating Moral Theology Today," "Foundational Matters," "Justice, Civil Society and the Common Good of India," "Sexual Ethics" and "Healthcare Ethics." Although at first sight, these sub-topics seem to be trite if not "usual" for any moral theological book in general, under each of them the reader is treated with a variety of contextual ethical issues such as

“Justice in Catholic and Hindu Traditions” (Charles Irudayam), “Ethics and Indian Politics” (Patrick Xavier), “‘Development’ from an Ecological and Ethical Perspective” (Saji Mathew Kanayankal), “Gender Perspectives in India” (Vimala Chenginimattam), “Healthcare in India” (Lucose Chamakala) and “Integration of Law and Virtue in Indian Bio-ethics” (Scaria Kanniyakonil).

Kochuthara’s opening definition of what theology is and the consequent description of what moral theology ought to be, in his very introduction to the book, gives an indication of the uniquely contextual contents that dominate the book: *“Theology, to be relevant and meaningful, should be contextual. Theology develops further and becomes meaningful when it reflects on the revelation - culminating in Jesus Christ and handed over to generations - in a particular historical, social, cultural milieu. This an on going process. This is especially true of moral theology. Moral theology should engage a constant dialogue with the life and experience of the people, living in a particular historical, cultural, religious, socio-political-economic context”* (p. 5). The indispensable theological obligation to be in dialogue with the three main Asian (Indian) realities (that is, the Triple Dialogue) as stressed so often by the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences (FABC), namely, to be in dialogue with the religions, cultures and multitudes of poor in Asia (India) is well attended to in the choice of the themes of the Papers. Thus not only the inter-cultural and inter-religious perspectives but also the concrete ethical issues to do with the poor, such as justice, politics, corruption, development and ecological issues are attended to. Thus, this work is surely a good effort that strives to construct a truly Indian contextual moral theology.

Unlike in the USA and some parts of the Western Europe, in Asia, theologians and moral theologians in particular, are still mostly the clergy and to some extent religious, as can be seen from the authors who have contributed to this volume. While appreciating their efforts and without denying the credit due to them in composing this present work, one would also dream for the day when Asian lay theologians (including women) would play a key role in the field of moral theology. In the same vein, one would have ambitiously expected some typically Indian (Asian) moral theological issues such as inter-faith marriages, selling of human organs for transplants, violence/terrorism incited by religious/communal fundamentalism, etc. also to have featured as

concrete main Indian (Asian) themes in a volume of this nature. Of course, it is in such particular moral areas that our Asian laity need to take the lead in theologizing. Moreover, since this a ground-breaking work in the area of Indian contextual moral theology, it would have been ideal if an index of key words were given at the end of the book; such an index would have served many a student/reader who would be interested in this area and who would have wished to do further research and study. All in all, this volume surely is a trail-blazer in working towards a genuinely Indian (Asian) moral theology today.

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