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## **BOOK REVIEW**

**George Griener & James F. Keenan, ed., *A Lúcas Chan Reader Pioneering Essays on Biblical and Asian Theological Ethics*, Bengaluru: Dharmaram Publications, 2017. ISBN: 978-93-84964-72-6; Pages: xii+260**

The book under review, *A Lúcas Chan Reader Pioneering Essays on Biblical and Asian Theological Ethics*, is a praiseworthy contribution to honour the legacy of Yiu Sing Lúcas Chan, SJ (1968-2015), a gifted pioneer in the fields of biblical ethics and Asian theological ethics, who died on 19 May 2015. The book is a collection of the writings of Lúcas Chan. The preface is followed by his "Intellectual Autobiography" that he himself prepared and submitted to the faculty at Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin on April 15, 2014. George Griener provides an interesting introductory essay on Lúcas the theologian who emphasized the exigency of 'concrete human experience as a necessary source of theological enterprise' (p. 16). Jim Keenan furnishes the volume with a running introduction to the development of the work in biblical ethics and Asian theological ethics.

The essays are reprint from Lúcas Chan's *The Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes: Biblical Studies and Ethics for Real Life* (Rowman & Littlefield), and from various journals. Let me now whet the reader's appetite by selecting a few notable features of the volume. The first essay is on the fifth commandment from the Decalogue, and it reiterates the values that promote and respect God's gift of life. "The respect for life means respect for what is sacred and respect for God who is the creator and source of this sacred Life" (p. 39). The essay presents Christ as a model in respecting and promoting life, and stresses the social and communal aspect of the virtue of respect for life (p. 42). The second essay is on the first beatitude, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." The idea of "poor in spirit" is explained differently in the Christian history. It correlates with the virtue of humility and is perceived as an "antidote of pride" (p. 48). The exemplars are Jesus (Mt 11:29) and Mother Mary (Lk 1:46-55) and the notable saints like Francis Assisi who embraced poverty as his bride and Mother Teresa of Calcutta who served the poorest of the poor (p. 50-51). The third essay is on the second beatitude, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted." Mourning points to an other-orientedness and is "a truthful expression of the virtue of solidarity" (p. 57) and Jesus as the consoler

exemplifies the real meaning of mourning by his suffering and death on the cross. The mourning has a social and communal aspect: It is other-centred and is a manifestation of the protest against the evil and injustice; and is a demand for restoration of justice in the society (p. 60).

The following essay on “Hermeneutical Proposal” systematically presents the common characteristics (p. 1-73), four dimensions (p. 74), and issues of cultural and theological adaptation of virtue theory, as well as concrete instances of relating Scripture and virtue ethics. It points to the worthiness of virtue theory as a hermeneutical tool in doing biblical ethics (p. 91). The next essay is pertinent in the context of migration, as it is a reflection on the virtue of hospitality. Based on the exposition of the three dialogues in the Book of Ruth (2:4-16; 3: 815; 4:1-10) the qualities of Boaz’s hospitality (p. 105-107) are identified and finally on the basis of them the author structures his concluding reflection on the nature of the society it should be and how to acquire the same (p. 108-111). The article on “Biblical Ethics: 3D” proposes a three-dimensional analysis of the field of biblical ethics and looks at ‘integration,’ ‘collaboration’ and ‘innovation and beyond’ so as to obtain a more enhanced and comprehensive understanding. The next essay is the epilogue provided at the end of the book *The Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes*. The epilogue takes us from the West to the East, and approaches the Confucian ethics from the perspective of virtue ethics (p. 137). The essay is splendid as it highlights the conformity between the virtues of the Christian beatitudes and Confucian ethics (p. 142-146).

In the second part there are the Asian Theological Ethics essays. The first number on “Bridging Christian Ethics and Confucianism through Virtue examines the growing phenomenon of virtue ethics: The revival of virtue ethics and how it influences Christian ethics and its entry into Confucianism. The essay concludes with a warning: “We must learn to understand the local presuppositions upon which these texts are based. Otherwise after crossing one of these bridges, instead of truly reading new texts, we will find ourselves unknowingly staring into old mirrors, we will learn nothing new, and we will become lost” (p. 165). The next paper is on “As West Meets East: Reading Xunzi’s ‘A Discussion of Rites.’” In this, the author makes an experimental reading of Xunzi’s ritual theory and certain rites through the lens of contemporary Western ritual theories and approaches. He also hopes that this can “offer an opportunity for us to continue to reflect upon the future aspects of the Confucian way, as well as to engage in inter-faith dialogue through the common language of rituals” (p. 186).

The following essay on “Bridging Christian and Confucian Ethics: Is the Bridge Adequately Catholic and Asian?,” in three parts explores the strong evidence for a rich comparative dialogue between Christian ethics and Confucian ethics by using virtue ethics, the bridge between Christian

ethics and Confucian ethics, and in the third part raises the challenges encountered by East Asian Catholic ethicists. The following paper on “Catholic Theological Ethics: Some Reflection on the Asian Scenario” is a call to advocate an Asian Catholic theological ethics, engage in dialogue between Asian traditions and Christian faith (p. 224), interacts between East and West (p. 225) and to take up an interdisciplinary methodology as well (p. 228). The next article explains the three concentric circles of Christian values in human relationship, i.e., the moral self, the family and the society. The work contains also “The CTSA Panel Response: 3 Epochs” by Lúcas Chan and the “Last Words,” an excerpt from the homily preached by Lúcas at the Marquette University Jesuit Community Chapel on May 12, 2015, just one week before his untimely death. The index given at the end is very useful.

This edited work is a very relevant contribution and is really worth engaging. I confidently recommend this third number in the series of Asian Theological Ethics to both the teachers and the students of Bible and Ethics who wish to have an interdisciplinary approach to the subjects taught and learned. The editors, George Griener and James F. Keenan, who had personally known Lúcas Chan and had accompanied him in his academic life, deserve sincere appreciation for this remarkable contribution. May many make use of and benefit from this edifying work.

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