

## Book Review

**Naiju Jose Kalambukattu CMI, ed., *Spirit and Creative Imagining: Festschrift in Honour of Prof. Dr Sebastian Elavathingal CMI*, (Samanvayam Contextual Theology Series -13), Delhi: ISPCK, 2022, ISBN: 978-93-90569-75-5**

Rev. Dr. Sebastian Elavathingal CMI, “an erudite teacher, accomplished writer, innovative thinker, creative artist, gifted musician, composer, and above all a man of authentic simplicity and humanity” (as testified by Dr. Joy Philip Kakkanattu CMI in his forward), has been an extra-ordinary gift not only to the Universal Church but to the secular world also. His contributions to the world of art and music as a gifted artist as well as to the field of priestly formation as the Dean and Rector of the *Samanvaya* Theology College for more than a decade are incomparable. The book *Spirit and Creative Imagining*, edited by Naiju Jose Kalambukattu CMI on the occasion of the golden jubilee of Dr. Elavathingal’s religious consecration, is a token of respect to him from the theological world. Besides the forward, preface and introduction by Dr. Joy Philip Kakkanattu CMI, Dr. Benny Thettayil CMI and Dr. Naiju Jose Kalambukattu CMI respectively, this book comprises of 20 well studied articles dealing with three important areas related to his ministry and mission – Art and Music, Ministry of Formation and Contextual Theology.

As a Festschrift, it has a perfect beginning in the articles by Dominic Nattunilath CMI and Davis Varaliyan CMI. The first article gives a detailed narration of the life of Dr. Sebastian enumerating every minute detail of his inspiring life – family background, missionary aptitude, formative innovations, artistic skills, etc. Besides, as the chief editor of the International Journal ‘In Christo’ since 2004, Dr. Sebastian is presented as revealing the amazing complementarities of artistic creativity and spiritual formation in priestly and religious life. Fr. Dominic also enlists the books, articles and editorials written by Dr. Elavathingal in about four pages. In the second article, Dr. Davis concentrates on the creative contributions of Dr. Sebastian. According to him, Dr. Sebastian’s

“prominent contribution to *Samanvaya* Theology College is contextualizing the academic programmes ... through a method of encounter and insertion, experience and reflection and interpretation and action.” The discussion is concluded by Biju Thekkekara CMI with a beautiful exegesis of two important biblical passages. He writes on how St. Stephen’s vision in the Acts of the Apostles and the Lukan episode of the presentation of Jesus in the temple share the same spiritual background and invites us to direct all our exoduses to the Lord as Dr. Elavathingal has done.

Eight of the remaining seventeen articles discuss on the themes related to art and music in connection with different branches of theology. The article by Sabeesh Jacob Vettiyadan establishes how the Indian Philosophical concept of ‘Darśan’ goes in conformity with the Orthodox (Eastern) theology which is a visual theology with its two obvious indicators – theology in colours (Icons) and theology in acts (Liturgy). Then Paulachan Kochappilly continues the same line of thought by presenting the Eucharistic liturgy as a treatment to our senses taking us to the realm of divine-human meeting ground through signs and symbols and encompassing the mundane, human and divine domains. Naiju Jose Kalambukattu adds force to this discussion through his two well prepared articles. First he presents icons as means of divine revelation and Christ as the ‘Icon of the Father’, also narrating the historical background of the development of Iconography. And in his second article Dr. Naiju deals with the liturgical music presenting it as a treasure of the Church and the heart of the liturgy.

Then Anto Amarnad makes a serious discussion on the concept of mystagogy where God, the greatest mystery, is presented as the supreme mystagogue and the source of all revelations. The attempt of Fr. Lawrence Thomas is to establish the importance of art and music in catholic tradition as well as in the ecclesiastical responsibility of catechesis. Finally while Henry Angel in his article “Aesthetics and Morality: Some Reflections” brings to light the fascinating interplay between art, aesthetic experience and morality, Jerin Pandanath’s article “*Via Pulchritudinis* as a response to the Ecology Crisis” invites the readers to perceive the cosmos through ‘the way of beauty’.

The next three articles are on three different dimensions of formation. While Viju Painadath Devassy underlines the indispensability of an

integral nature of formation and Shepherd Thelappilly concentrates on the aspect of transformation in the formees reflecting on the holistic and creative vision of formation, Syam Vettikulangara contextualizes the theme giving more importance to the missionary dimension of formation in the North-Indian context.

The third group of articles – on Contextual Theology – begin with Abish Perumbully's attempt to give a biblical model for inculturation of Christian proclamation in India making St. Paul's speech at Areopages as the type to follow. Jose Chittooparampil's article on the theme 'Mission and Contextualization' insists the mission of Indian Church in bringing transformation and change for a better India. Cyriac Kuttiyanickal points out the necessity of stressing the significance of different contexts of people in the pluralistic context of India. Then Josin George Kaithakulam corrects the present type of development, proposing a culture of frugality against consumerism. While Johnson Vadakkumcherry indicates the necessity of the preservation of local cultures in the context of cultural globalization, Joby Jose Kochumuttam elaborates the theme in a Christian context in his article on Palliyogam – the indigenous pattern of administration existed among St. Thomas Christians. This article gets special attention in the present day discussion on 'Synodality'.

The book *Spirit and Creative Imaging* is a festschrift as well as a feast of theological discussion. All the 22 authors behind this collection of articles being universally renowned professors and theologians, its reading will surely provide the readers with authentic information about different dimensions of Christian life. A subject index at the end of the book also leaves room for a selective reading of the themes of interest. The editor of the book, Naiju Jose Kalambukattu, is to be specially congratulated for the excellent selection of topics as perfectly related to the theological interests of Dr Sebastian Elavathingal. In short, this book, as the 15<sup>th</sup> publication in the Samanvayam Contextual Theology Series, keeps universal standards not only in its external appearance, perfect binding and paper quality but in the novelty of its content also.

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