

## BOOK REVIEW

**Joseph Powathil, *Complete Works of Archbishop Joseph Powathil (Malayalam, Archbishop Joseph Powathilinte Kruthikal Samboornam)*, edited by Thomas Padiyath, Changanacherry, Archeparchy of Changanacherry, 2022, 7 volumes, pp. 3502.**

This seven-volume book contains the works of the late Mar Joseph Powathil (1930-2023), former archbishop of Changanacherry (1985-2007), India. It is a collection of Mar Powathil's complete works edited by Thomas Padiyath. It includes his books, articles, interviews, and some speeches and messages. It is edited by Thomas Padiyath. For the sake of easy reference, in this review, we refer to all of them as "articles." The content of the first six volumes is in *Malayalam*, and that of the last one is in English. Some articles are published originally in English, but in the present work (vols. 1-6) their Malayalam translation is also given. For an integral comprehension of Mar Powathil's vision, it is necessary to read all the volumes together with the introductory notes of the chief editor, Thomas Padiyath.

The English transliteration of the title of each volume, is useful for libraries to catalogue them. The 7<sup>th</sup> volume is in English. Although the transliteration appears to be an insignificant matter, it is important, because it helps library staff outside Kerala to register the transliteration in their catalogue. It would have been helpful for them to get also an English translation of the Malayalam titles.

The preliminary section of each volume contains the frontispiece with the specific title of the volume. It also contains a letter of Mar Powathil in which he briefly explains the sources of his inspiration for commitment, table of contents, etc. The presentation by the chief editor, given on p. 7 of each volume, is specific to the volume and concisely introduces the content of the volume and gives orientation to the reader. At the end of each volume there are two pages: "Milestones in the Life of Archbishop Joseph Powathil" and "Works by and Works in Honour of Archbishop Joseph Powathil." These two items are useful to get a glimpse into the life of Mar Powathil; However, a division between the works by Mar Powathil and those published in his honour would have been more convenient for the reader.

At the end of some articles, the bibliographical note of their original publication is given. In the case of speeches, the date on which they were given is mentioned. These notes are helpful for readers to understand the original publications' whereabouts. The chief editor states in the foreword that it has not been possible to give the bibliographical notes of all articles because some of them have not been published or some of them have been published in various books.

Through various introductions, forewords, presentations of the studies of Mar Powathil, the chief editor demonstrates his deep knowledge of those works which has helped him to arrange them in thematic order. That arrangement demonstrates that the compilation is not an arbitrary gathering of the articles of Mar Powathil; rather, there is a study behind their arrangement.

The chief editor says that some articles on educational, social and political issues may not be relevant today because of the changes taken place in those fields since their original publication. That may be true. On the other hand, there is an advantage in reproducing those articles' original version, because that would help us understand the need of that time and how Mar Powathil reacted to the situation. Thus, at a deeper level, the publication of their original version can help today's analysis of his timely contributions. The chief editor has recognised the difficulty in attributing a suitable place to some articles (vol. 1, 26). Some articles are multidimensional, and therefore, they could be placed under different themes. A few of them seem out of place under the themes where they are placed now. Perhaps, a volume for "miscellanea" could have contained them better.

An inconvenience readers may encounter, is that upon opening a volume, they will find the title of the volume (for example, in vol. 7, "The Ecclesial Milieu") displayed as the header on all its pages, following the preliminary section. A future edition would do well in giving separate headers for each article in vols. 1-6, and books in vol. 7. Diversified titling is useful for the reader to be better oriented when he opens a volume.

The first volume contains felicitations and the presentation of the work by Archbishop Mar Joseph Perumthottam. The chief editor gives certain criteria used in the collection and editing of the work, which is useful for a fruitful reading. The contents of the first volume, Syro-Malabar Church, are arranged under four themes: Mar Thoma heritage, Eastern Church tradition is an invaluable treasure, Syro-

Malabar Church and the global Catholic Church, and the Archdiocese of Changanacherry and some related topics.

The second volume is dedicated to ecclesiology. The chief editor notes that the ecclesiology of Mar Powathil is deeply rooted in the teachings on the communion ecclesiology of Vatican II. He observes that Mar Powathil's writings helped the development of the vision that the Indian Church is more a communion of three *sui iuris* Churches than a mere union of different dioceses. The contents of this volume are divided into seven themes: Church is a divine institution, Church communion, pastoral care, formation of clergy and religious, Syro-Malabar saints and their great examples, Church and family, letters to children.

The third volume is on liturgy. According to the chief editor, Mar Powathil gave orientation to the reformation of the Syro-Malabar liturgy rooting himself in the theology and intuition which the Vatican II fathers gave on the liturgy. The contents of this volume are divided into six themes: liturgical year, holy Qurbana and other sacraments, liturgy-based spirituality, liturgy-based catechism, liturgy's restoration and reformation, and feast celebrations.

In the fourth volume, the education-related issues of the writings of Mar Powathil are presented. The chief editor presents him as a visionary in the field of education, who has imbibed the spirit of the Catholic education policy and fought for the right of the Church in Kerala to help the growth of education field at all levels for the service of all people regardless of their religion and caste. The contents of this volume are divided into six themes: religion and education, Kerala and minority rights, higher education, right of admission, fee-structure and rights, and right of appointment of teachers and of the formation of textbooks.

The fifth volume, on the Church, media and politics, is a testimony of Mar Powathil's creative and critical responses on these issues. The chief editor presents Mar Powathil's responses in these fields as mainly his interventions in defence of human rights. He took firm stand in this regard from which he never had to change. He was deeply aware of his rights, as of any citizen, to criticise media and politics in view of the establishment of a media and political culture which support human rights. The contents of this volume are divided into eight themes: media and society, journalism as a service, Church and media, democracy, election and some relevant thoughts, politics

and boundaries in religious-social field, against class struggle and communalism, religion and atheism, Church and politics.

In the sixth volume, on Church, social and cultural issues, Mar Powathil wrote amply. The chief editor observes that Mar Powathil's theological reflection deeply embraced social and cultural issues. He was alert to the movements in society, and that became the subject matter of several of his writings, because he found them integrally part of the Church's mission. The contents of this volume are divided into four themes: Church and society, a response to the opponents of the Church, minority and morality.

The seventh volume contains two of his published books. The first is *The Ecclesial Milieu: Ecclesial Vision & Historical Interventions*, which deals with Mar Powathil's ideas of communion ecclesiology, ecumenism and liturgical theology; it also testifies to his interventions for the cause of the Syro-Malabar Church for getting all-India jurisdiction, and the promotion of the inter-ecclesial relationship. The second is *Church as the Mystery of Communion*. It is a tribute to the ecclesial vision of Fr. Placid Podipara CMI, whose commitment and scholarship were a guiding light in the life and ministry of Mar Powathil. Both books have three appendices each.

In the foreword and an extensive introduction, the chief editor outlines the life, vision, and contributions of Mar Powathil. In these introductory sections, he conducts a thorough analysis not only of Mar Powathil's writings but also of his lifestyle and activities, especially in the realm of administration. Drafted in simple style, they prepare the reader to understand the contents of all the volumes.

These introductions sketch Mar Powathil as a courageous leader and a dedicated scholar, a source of inspiration to many, a visionary and intelligent man, a reformer rooted in the gospels and Church-teachings, a person committed to just causes, a vocal critic of corrupt politics and the negative aspects of the prevailing media culture, an open and efficient ecumenist, convinced and proud of his ecclesial identity and an efficient transmitter of the same, an influencer of truth and identity seekers, a faithful guardian of justice, and above all a deep believer in God and a true son of the Syro-Malabar Church. They bring out Mar Powathil's ability to deeply analyse theological, ecclesial, social, economic, political and media issues, relating them to the mission of the Church, and demonstrate that his writings on a very wide variety of themes are studies with analysis, and not pious advices. Although respectful of popular piety, his teachings are

centred on Christ and the Church; and he would not accept any piety that was self-centred. He is presented as an able communicator even with children (see his letters to children in vol. 2). They introduce Mar Powathil not only as a protagonist of liturgy, but bring out some lesser-known aspects of his life – a man deeply committed to the enrichment of cultural and social life, his attention and creative response to the contemporary social situation, a strong supporter of the youth and of the laity and many other aspects. The chief editor says that the significance of Mar Powathil and his writings will continue to grow with the passage of time. I am sure that it is this conviction that has made the authorities of the Archdiocese of Changanacherry to undertake the effortful task of this publication. As Mar Perumthottam asserts, this book serves as a golden gateway to the profound vision of Mar Powathil.

This edition is done with a good vision and expertise in publication field. The preference for Malayalam in this publication deserves special appreciation because it is a clear sign of the effort of the editorial team to make Mar Powathil's writings available above all to the local people. However, it may be good to translate these works into English from which many more people can profit. It is a treasure which cannot be held hidden under bowl, but put on a stand (Mt. 15: 15). Congratulations and thanks to the chief editor and his associates for making available this treasure to the public through which, I am sure, Mar Powathil will continue to live and influence many people. In this way, the present collection stands as a meritorious tribute to Mar Joseph Powathil and a service to humanity.

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