

BOOK REVIEW

Amaladoss, Michael, S.J., *Life in Freedom: Liberation Theologies from Asia*, Anand, Gujarat: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1997, pp. 274, Rs.90; \$ 10.

Michael Amaladoss SJ is well known for his valuable and scholarly contributions in missiological and interreligious studies. *Life in Freedom* is his latest book, which is a survey of Liberation Theologies from Asia. The chapters of this book were originally lectures he delivered at *Lumen Vitae*, the International Catechetical Institute in Brussels, Belgium in 1993.

The book is divided into two parts. The first part introduces the various Liberation Movements and theologies in Asia, such as, the Minjung Theology of Korea, the Theology of Struggle in the Philippines, the Dalit Theology of India, and the Feminist and Ecological Movements and corresponding theological reflections. Minjung Theology emerged in Korea in the 1970s quite independent of the Latin American Liberation Theology. Minjung means the oppressed people. In South Korea during the dictatorship of Park Chong-hee, who was supported by the military and the secret service, the oppressed Christian masses led by their pastors and teachers of Universities, started a movement of resistance and liberation. They found theological resources in Christian faith, in the Scriptures and in their own history and tribal traditions to support their struggles for justice. Their reflections gave birth to Minjung Theology. A similar movement and theological reflections took place in the Philippines during the reign of President Marcos. It was the theological reflections of people who were actually struggling and it is known as "Theology of Struggle" which was in fact influenced by the Latin American Liberation Theology.

The Dalit Theology of India is another version of Liberation Theology. Strictly speaking the "Dalits" are not included among the traditional four castes; they are outcasts, the fifth caste. The Dalit population in India is about 125 million. They are oppressed, segregated and discriminated by the higher castes. Today they are organized and they have started a movement of liberation, and the Christian Dalits are developing a Dalit Theology. For them the Christian God is a Dalit God as seen in the Old Testament and in the New Testament, and Jesus also was a Dalit who lived with the poor and the marginalized and who was crucified like a slave outside the gates of Jerusalem. The Church has to be a counter-cultural movement and the sign of a new humanity.

The first part is concluded with introducing the different Feminist and Ecological Movements in Asia, which are also liberation movements. In today's world both women and nature, which are really the sources of life, are similarly exploited by men as objects of their greed and lust. We need a new society where the complementarity of men and women, and humans and nature, must be the guiding principle.

In the second part of the book the author examines the liberative sources of Asian religions like Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam by way of introducing the thoughts and liberation projects of some theologians who belong to these religions. From Hinduism, Mahatma Gandhi, Swami Agnivesh, and Periyar or E.V.Ramaswamy are

introduced. On the part of Buddhism, A.T.Ariyaratna of Sri Lanka and his movement of "Sarvodaya Sramadana", Bhikkhu Buddhadasa of Thailand and his Dhammic Socialism, Thich Nhat Hanh of Vietnam and his peace movement are vividly presented. The liberative works and thinking of four Christian theologians from Asia are included: Aloysius Pieris of Sri Lanka, and George Soares, Sebastian Kappen and M.M.Thomas from India. They are highlighting the specificity of the Asian context with its deep, traditional religiosity different from the Latin American countries. The Scholars and activists introduced from Islam are Mawlana Sayyid Abul A'la Mawdudi of Pakistan, Dr.Ali Shariati of Iran and Asgar Ali Engineer of India. All of them would like to show that the liberative tradition of Islam has its origin from the Prophet himself who wanted to free the poor and ignorant people of Mecca against the Colonial rulers. This part also contains two other chapters, one on the liberative resources of Confucianism and the other on that of the Primal or Tribal religions.

The concluding chapter is an attempt to articulate an Asian Christian Theology of Liberation. Asian reality is characterized not only by poverty but also by its religiosity. Asian religions contain liberative elements and potential, though they do play an ambiguous role. The prophetic traditions of all religions show this liberative dimension. Hence a mere Marxian social analysis and economic solution will not be adequate in Asia. Six elements must be considered in the analysis of Asian reality; economics, politics, person, society, culture and religion, and they must be taken together as an integral whole. The author concludes by pointing out that liberation in Asia should be an inter-religious project, and all religions must collaborate in the creation of a new Asian society. The readers are invited to explore further the Asian Liberation Movements and Theologies. For this purpose the author gives a select bibliography at the end of the volume which is important as well as interesting.

Michael Amaladoss deserves congratulations for this significant contribution, though the book is only a brief introduction of Asian liberation movements and theologies. The author does not claim that the book is comprehensive, rather it is selective. While Periyar was almost an atheist, Sri Narayana Guru was a great Hindu religious reformer who led a great liberation movement in South India and his ideas have great impact today. But the latter is left out. There are many Christians in Asia who are committed to leftist ideologies and secular humanism and they are deeply involved in the grass-root liberation movements. Their contribution cannot be ignored by theology. Last year I visited South Korea and what I could find was only some vestiges of Minjung theology. It will be an uphill task to carry on with Minjung and Dalit theologies when Capitalism, Globalization and the Free Market are apparently winning the day in Asia!

Dr. Kuncheria Pathil cmi

Amruthanadan Joseph Thallapalli, *The Book of Wisdom 6:22-1):21: An Encomium of Wisdom and its Inculturation in the Indian Wisdom Tradition*, Excerpta ex Dissertatione ad Doctoratum In Facultate Theologiae Pontificiae Universitatis Gregorianae (Roma: 1998) pp. 191. Price is not indicated.

Our times are characterized by what is known as an explosion of knowledge at all levels, philosophical, theological, psychological, medicinal, and above all cybernetic. This new world of knowledge has opened before the humankind a rich variety of information, useful and useless, healthy and harmful, and people are just wondering

where this explosion would eventually lead them to. Even as we take pride in all our achievements through our knowledge, we are reminded of a big lacuna that separates us from the world of ancient wisdom found practically in all the religious scriptures of the world. For example, "Fullness there, Fullness here! From Fullness proceeds Fullness. When Fullness has proceeded from Fullness, Fullness remains. Om! Peace, Peace, Peace!": these words of *Isa Upanishad* enable us to have an awareness of the efforts made by the ancient sages who were trying to fathom the source of all wisdom, of which all our knowledge is only a feeble articulation. The present study of Thallapalli is an attempt to see the rich theology of wisdom contained in Wis 6:22-10:21, understood as an encomium of Wisdom/Sophia, which Pseudo-Solomon, the author of the book of Wisdom, presents as his response to the twin challenges of Hellenism and the Isis Cult.

What is important about the present study is the author's effort to see the wider implications of the concept of Wisdom with its emphasis on its role in creation, its openness to other faiths, its recognition of the feminine images of the divine, all of which are very relevant in the context of ecological discussions, researches in the field of religious pluralism as well as the emerging feminist theology. Above all, the author points to Wisdom as offering a healthy knowledge about the very meaning of life for our cybernetic society. The study is also trying to enlarge the horizons of wisdom as having reference to the search of wisdom in the Indian tradition, applying the principles of *Actualization* 'in time' for men and women of today and *Inculturation* 'in the diversity of places and cultures' in which the Word of God is announced. The author, as a member of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Instruction of St. Gabriel, founded by St. Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort, analyses the work of Montfort's *Love of the Eternal Wisdom* as an example of the *actualization* of the book of Wisdom. The bulk of the study (pp. 38-110) is devoted to this twin analysis and thereby some new and very useful insights are provided for the readers. The rich bibliography at the end (pp.111-142) is proof of the author's efforts to go through all the available literature on the topic of his study. It is hoped that at a later date the author will edit the entire work and make the fruit of his research available to all those who are interested in the study of Wisdom literature and its relevance for our times.

Prof. Joseph Pathrapankal,cmi

George Olivera, *On Toleration: From Theory of Social Praxis*, Bangalore, A.T.C., 1998, pp.191.

"Nobody is born tolerant, but everyone can be made tolerant by his own voluntary option" (p.176) is the basic idea on which Dr. George Olivera's recent book on *On Toleration: From Theory of Social Praxis* is based. Though the truth of this Hobbesian basic principle is yet to be established through psycho-social study of human psyche, the practice of the virtue of tolerance is an imperative need of our collective living.

The book has its origin from the existential question which arose from the turn of events in India in December 1992: "Is it possible to learn and cultivate the virtue of toleration in a pluralistic society such as India?" The author rightly states that the negation of toleration impedes social harmony between people, communities and nations and creates barriers for dialogue between people, religions, cultures and nations (p.1). Through a phenomenological and historical study of toleration in the human context in general the author tries to establish that it can be learned and cultivated by all people by

adhering to the basic truths of our religion and morals.

Toleration is based on the end or purpose that calls for treating other human beings as end in themselves rather than as means to one's own end. Starting with the question, what is toleration, the book deals with toleration on different levels in five chapters. In an interpersonal level relationship, toleration can be articulated on different levels: the level of co-existence, the level of recognition, the level of dialogue, the level of co-operation and the level of harmony. Our historical evidence suggests that what is anti-thesis to toleration more often gains upper hand in our Social Praxis. Taking this situation-awareness in the minds of all people of good will, the author states that an option to be tolerant should be their responsible choice so as to shape a tolerant character, to have a tolerant behaviour, to cultivate tolerant attitudes, to foster tolerant feelings, to be directed by tolerant motivations, to be regulated by tolerant beliefs in order to be tolerant persons in the society of today. If this work could achieve even a moderate measure of its goal, that would certainly be a great service to humanity.

Dr. Thomas Kadankavil

Lott, Eric, *Healing Wings: Acts of Jesus for Human Wholeness*,. Poems by Jane Sahi. Drawings by Jyothi Sahi., Asian Trading Corporation, Bangalore, 1998.

Healing Wings of Eric Lott presents paradigms of wholeness, instances of the healing touch of Jesus and the instantaneous recovery of the sick to health and hail, strength and life. This book of prose, poetry and painting aroused in me a beautiful experience I had while I was in Europe. My friends Vera Kunkel and Thomas Shubert have a beautiful house on the bank of river Main in Germany. Both of them will go every morning to work in their counseling centre. Left alone, I was working on my thesis. My room was in the first floor of the house and I could see the river flowing elegantly making a U-turn. Often a white swan floated on the river surface. Once the sawn covered the U-turn, it would fly back and slide down the river, and thus continuously repeated the action. On the background of the colourful setting sun and the lush green vegetation in a summer evening, the long necked big bird, flipping its wings above the silent river echoes in every page of the *Healing Wings*.

This book is a continuum of prose, poetry and painting, which makes it an inextricably interwoven whole. In the *Healing Wings* these three modes of the expression of thought elucidate the healing power of Jesus.

This book is also an outcome of the healing process the three authors had undergone. The main author Eric Lott, who wrote the sixteen instances of the healing acts of Jesus in a deeply touching manner, suffered from depression for many years and passed through the travails and tribulations a disease brings with it. The descriptions of the sixteen instances of healing were originally shared by the author to a group of people in Leicester, England. The belief in the healing power of Jesus helped him to understand thoroughly these healing instances.

This is also an attempt by the author to underline the inadequacy of the Western concept of medicine. The Western system is based on the concept of the unwanted entry of microbes to the body system and medicine is something that empowers the body system to attack and subdue it. This concept has achieved definitely success.

However it is not always successful and has many side-effects. Hence, many people are now looking forward to alternative ways of healing. Some of these alternatives are from India. The balancing system of Ayurvedic medicine is the most important among them. The element of spirituality is as important as medicine. This is the key element emphasized in the *Healing Wings* by the author. It is emphasized today that every disease is psychosomatic and the inner healing is accomplished with the outer healing. Physical problems causes mental strain and mental or spiritual tension causes physical ailment. Jesus healing ministry takes into account these two dimensions and the author stresses this double nature.

Jane Sahi, who wrote the poems and Jyothi Sahi, who painted the swan in the sixteen modes of cure, were saddened and bereaved by the sickness and the eventual death of Shanthi Sahi. The paintings of Jyothi Sahi are impressive. The welcoming, caring, curing, healing hands of Jesus are depicted through the beautiful symbol of Hamsa - Swan. Jane Sahi's poetry is condensed feelings. She looks at the act of healing from the perspective of a woman and it gives the book a touch of wholeness.

The sixteen instances start with the healing of Simon's mother-in-law. The touch of Jesus healed her and she was ready to serve the community instantaneously. Jane sees the worn out and the ridiculed womanhood in the character of Simon's in-law. The healing touch rejuvenates her and helps her to be worthy of her self again. The *Paralyzing Power of the Past* depicts the trust of the paralyzed and his relatives in Jesus and shows how the inner condition is inextricably interconnected with the physical life. Jesus absolves the past sins of the paralytic before he cures him. As a sign of the inner healing, Jesus asks him to take his cot and walk away.

These numerous biblical instances reach at a *zenith on the healing Tree*. The wounded healer, the dead man-resurrected is the symbol of meaning and new life. God and man, earth and heaven, finite and infinite sublimates to wholeness through the tree.

This book deals with human wholeness and is presented holistically. Art, poetry, spirituality, sickness, reflections, personal experiences all are woven around Bible readings. This book is definitely attractive to those who are interested in Bible, spirituality and healing.

Dr. Mathew Chandrankunnel,cmi