

Paulachan P. Kochappilly, Life in Christ: Eastern Perspectives on Christian Ethics, Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2010, pages 273, Rs. 200; US\$ 15, ISBN: 978-81-89958-34-3.

St. Paul was a man who was gripped by the person of Christ. Consequently, his whole life was centred on Christ. “It’s no longer I that live but Christ who lives in me. This life that I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave up his life for me” (Gal. 2:20). Like his namesake Paul, Paulachan Kochappilly CMI, too, has been inspired by the person of Christ and has spent a number of years reflecting and jotting down his reflections on what it means to be a Christian, living a faith-filled and ethical life, in the Eastern context. He has now published the fruits of his reflections in the new book *Life in Christ: Eastern Perspectives on Christian Ethics*. The book, as Paulachan explains, is a collection of essays published in different journals and books over a period of more than ten years and now organized in book form (xiii). The book is an attempt to develop an “Eastern” perspective of Christian ethics, which is fundamentally theological, Christological, Pneumatological, biblical, liturgical, ecclesial, and contextual in nature and approach (xiv). He has tried to develop such a perspective with special reference to the Syro-Malabar liturgical celebration (Qurbana). “Mār Tōma Mārgam (The Way of St. Thomas) of the St. Thomas Christians of India has a long lived and living tradition of following Christ congenial to the ethos of India, which is Indian in culture, Eastern in worship, and Christian in faith” (xii). In attempting to unravel this Eastern perspective, Paulachan has also used several rich Indian concepts in his reflections such as dharma, mārga, anubhava, darśana, etc. Paulachan holds that Christian life is primarily a way of life, walking the way of the Lord. It is a matter of having an anubhava jñānam (experiential knowledge) of the Lord, anugamanam

(following) of Jesus Christ, and avataram (performance) of the gospel of salvation. Consequently, Christians are those who celebrate their life in Christ and become an anugraham (blessing) of the Lord in the world, revealing the glory of God (xii). The book begins with the chapter, “Celebration of Life in Christ.” Celebration is the key to Christian ethics. Joy is the key to Christian living

and, therefore, joy is the key to Christian ethics. Ethics, in general, and Christian ethics, in particular, help people celebrate life. Christian ethics explores ways to make life faithful, joyful, and fruitful (10). In Chapter Two, Paulachan goes on to build a Christ-centred ethics in and through the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, based on the principle, “as you celebrate, so you live” (3). If the sacred liturgy is the source, centre, and summit of Christian life, then the principles of Christian life are to be found in the liturgy (19). The celebration of the Eucharist, for example, can shape the moral person from within – to what is true, good, and beautiful (satyam, śivam, sundaram) (44). The liturgical celebration supports and promotes the persons of the Christian community in discovering the image of God, leads them to a transformation of life in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit, for the glorification of God, in establishing peace on earth and extending hope to human beings through concrete acts of charity (6-7). Liturgy is related to life: “Life for all should be the goal of Christian ethics – especially to the least, the last, and the lost” (14). Christian ethics should help people to recover hope in this age of despair, depression, and destruction such as, for example, for the large number of farmers committing suicide, for the millions affected by the faulty SEZ policy of the government, for people facing the Maoist problem, etc. (31). In Chapter Three, the author shows the Trinitarian foundation of Christian ethics with special reference to the Syro-Malabar Qurbana. Introduced into

the Trinitarian Mystery by the sacrament of baptism, the Eucharistic celebrations in the Church help Christians to grow in the Trinitarian life. Growing in the mystery of the Trinity, Christians aspire and, consequently, march towards the ultimate goal of divinization. During this upward and forward march in the process of divinization or holiness the loving kindness of the Father, the grace of the Son and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit accompany and assist the faithful (109-110). A special chapter is dedicated to the Cross, which is the source of Christian ethics, the strength of Christian ethics, and the style of Christian ethics (147). Other chapters include: Christian Ethics as Walking the Way of the Holy Spirit; the Ecclesial Character of Christian Ethics; EthosEucharist-Ethics: Source-Summit-Support of Christian Life; and Walking the Way of Peace. The final chapter is, again, titled “Celebration of Life in Christ.” The focus, however, shifts to Christian ethics in the third millennium. Although there is moral degradation in every sphere of life there is no need to panic, for the situation is not altogether new. Degradation of values occurred age after age and, at the same time, there were privileged moments of restoration of values in the hearts of human beings. Our age at the turn of the millennium is one such privileged moment: “The dawn of the new century gives us a stimulus to accelerate our effort in re-establishing dharma” (258). One may find it a little difficult to digest all the contents of the book at one go, but taking in a little a time will greatly help to assimilate the rich ideas the author wants to put across to the wider public. However, a person who does not belong to the Syro-Malabar tradition may perhaps experience a little difficulty with a few portions of the book where the author specifically refers to certain formulations pertaining to the SyroMalabar rite. Paulachan Kochappilly has spelt out his ideas clearly, forcefully, and convincingly and we hope that the book would be a rich and wholesome fare to any Christian – Eastern or otherwise – who wishes to know, grow, and live

more fully and faithfully a celebrative ethical life transformed or transfigured into Christ – the goal of every Christian (271-272).

Anthony L. Fernandes