

**Kleetus K. Varghese, *Michelangelo and the Human Dignity: An Anthropological Reading of the Sistine Frescoes*. Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2005, pages 336, ISBN: 81-7086-367-8.**

The book *Michelangelo and the Human Dignity* by Kleetus K. Varghese dwells on the anthropological interpretation of the Sistine Frescoes of Michelangelo. In this book, the author describes the works of

Michelangelo as capable of enhancing human dignity.

The book has two parts along with a general introduction. First, he undertakes a detailed study on the human dignity in the basic works of Michelangelo. The second part has two parts: a study on the human dignity in the basic works of Michelangelo and the anthropological reading of the Sistine Chapel. The first part is divided into four chapters, which starts with a biographical note on Michelangelo Buonarroti.

In the first chapter, he gives a brief description of Michelangelo's life. Michelangelo Di Lodovico Buonarroti, the greatest artist of all times, was born in the small town of Carprese in rural Tuscany, Italy on sixth March 1475. Michelangelo receive his first lesson in stone and marble carving from his father Lodivico Buonarroti, who was the local governor. Apart from the biographical details, in this part, the author also deals with Michelangelo's connection with Renaissance period. In fact, the root or foundation of Michelangelo's thought and artistic conception is located in the Renaissance period. In mid-fourteenth century, Italy was engaged in a rediscovery of Plato and Neo Platonism and the revival of stoicism and scepticism. Renaissance period is said to have facilitated the rebirth of literature and devotion to classical learning and style.

The Renaissance period gave more emphasis to dignity of human person: in fact, human person is taken to be the measure of all things. The concept of man is more important and richer than that of the human individual. According to Christian philosophy of that period, reasonable soul is the reason for the dignity of the human person. Renaissance philosophers discuss the vision of the human person based upon the Book of Genesis. Human being, according to the biblical tradition was created in the image and likeness of the God. The renaissance philosophers gave more importance to immortality of the soul, God-man relationship, etc. In the next chapter, the author deals with the different types of works of Michelangelo. The main work of Michelangelo is divided into four categories: sculpture, architecture, paintings, and writings. According to Michelangelo, sculpture is superior among all other arts. In the third chapter, he deals with human dignity in the sculptures of Michelangelo. The main sculptures studied are Madonna Della Scala, Battle of the Centaurs, Santo Spirito crucifix, Hercules, Pietas, Madona, Twin Statues, The Slaves on the Victory, Dying Slaves, Rebellious Slave, Night and Day, Twilight and Dawn, David, St. Mathew, and Moses. Detailed description is given for the most famous and largest work David and Moses. In same

chapter, the author deals with the architecture of Michelangelo by studying the tomb of the Julius II, the façade of St. Lorenzo in Florence, the Lorentian library, the Medici chapel in Florence, the Capitoline Piazza and palaces, and the new basilica of St. Peters in Vatican.

In the fourth chapter, he develops and interprets human dignity in the writings of Michelangelo. The writings are divided into two, i.e., family and business. His poetry is about love and death, eternity of ideal beauty and caducity of its earthly manifestations and loss and disappeared desire. In the same chapter, he discusses the dignity of human person in the frescos. His paintings are beautiful and all of them speak about human dignity very loud. In the fifth chapter, he deals with the anthropological readings of the Sistine chapel. The author deals very descriptively about most of his frescoes in the Sistine chapel and his individual paintings. Sixth and seventh chapters survey the Sistine ceiling and last judgment. The eighth and ninth chapters deal with the iconological study of frescoes; they are analyzed by iconological methods. Thus, he sums up the anthropological readings of Sistine chapel in the following words: human being is a creature, created by God; he is created in the image of God. Thus, according to Michelangelo, every human being has the duty to search and reach God.

This book is a product of serious research held by the author for his doctoral dissertation. It contains beautiful photographs of most of Michelangelo's works. It is very useful to artists as well as scholars who are interested to know more about Michelangelo and his works. The book, as a whole, is a helpful tool to know the methods in carving and painting that Michelangelo had adopted. It is, indeed, commendable to note that the book, *Michelangelo and the Human Dignity*, provides a reader with a complete idea both on the person of artist Michelangelo and his masterpieces.

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