

BOOK REVIEWS

Lucose Chamakala, *The Sanctity of Life Vs. The Quality of Life*, Dharmaram Moral Theology Series – 1, Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2005, pages 255, ISBN: 81-86861-81-5.

The Sanctity of Life Vs. The Quality of Life is a study on the mystery of human life which discusses different ethical theories and proposes a new theology of the Gospel of life and a new sanctity of life ethic in order to protect, preserve and promote the mystery and the dignity of human life, especially in the context of the emerging high-tech healthcare developments.

Concentrating on “the sacredness and inviolability of human life” and considering his “personal interest in the mystery of life” (11) Lucose Chamakala commences his study with analysing the positions of three authors, who represent three ethical approaches, namely, the natural law theory of Germain Grisez, the utilitarian ethic of Helga Khuse and the proportionalism of Richard McCormic.

Besides the general introduction and the general conclusion, this doctoral thesis of the author consists of four chapters. The first three chapters of the work undertake a discussion on the sanctity of life view of Germain Grisez, quality of life view of Helga Khuse and the sanctity of life view of Richard McCormick. The fourth chapter studies the deficiencies of the above three approaches and proposes a new theology of the Gospel of life and a new sanctity of life ethic integrating the positive, creative and liberative elements found in the theories examined.

The author constructs his theory on a solid foundation of “the reality of human life” (11). In his attempt, Lucose clearly and convincingly argues that the purpose of ethics is “to facilitate authentic human life” (11). In the light of the two distinct approaches on human life, namely, the sanctity-of-life and quality-of-life, the author undertakes an “expository, analytical, critical and evaluative” study of these theories “for a better understanding of the mystery of human life, for protecting human dignity and for serving human life better” (12).

Beyond any doubt the author makes his integrative and inclusive approach clear: “neither a sanctity-of-life approach which excludes all

quality-of-life considerations nor a quality-of-life approach which rejects the sanctity of human life can form the basis of a tenable moral approach” (213). While the author points out the obvious deficiencies in the natural law theory of Germain Grisez, utilitarian theory of Helga Khuse and propotionalist theory of Richard McCormick, the author highlights the need for “an integral moral approach which both protects human dignity and respects the inviolability and sacredness of life” (213).

A well-founded and balanced position concerning “the new sanctity of life ethic” is that it “must be based on the fact that every human life is intrinsically good and that no condition of life, however bad, can lessen its intrinsic goodness” (220).

The detailed bibliography and concise index of the book are of great help to the readers who wish to pursue their study in the area of the sanctity-of-life and the quality-of-life. In addition, this is the first volume in the new venture of Dharmaram Moral Theology Series to mark the beginning of the Masters Programme in Moral Theology at Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram, Bangalore. This volume definitely is a great source of inspiration and orientation to both students and scholars in moral theology.

It is a systematic, synthetic and scientific treatise on human life in the field of bio-medical ethics. The arguments are clear, convincing and compelling. *The Sanctity of life Vs. The Quality of Life* is a rational, laudable and pastoral approach on the mystery and dignity of human life. Lucose Chamakala, therefore, deserves appreciation for his excellent, praiseworthy and path-breaking contribution in the field of moral theology.

Paulachan Kochappilly

Joseph Alencherry and Scaria Kanniyakonil, eds., *Bioethical Issues and the Family*, Changanacherry: Cana Publications, 2005, Pages xxxii + 256.

Bioethical Issues and the Family is the inaugural volume of the Cana Publications Series, published from the John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family. The volume contains scientific papers presented

in the symposium on “Bioethics and the Identity of the Family” at the Cana Centre on January 23-24, 2004. There are 12 essays and a learned foreword by William E. May, a detailed Appreciation by Joseph Powathil and a General Introduction by the editors.

In the foreword May clarifies first the Catholic and, then, a widespread understanding of the human person in contemporary bioethics. The latter distinguishes between being a *human being* and being a *human person*. A human person, according to the exponents of the distinction, has developed at least incipiently exercisable cognitive capacities and abilities. That means, being a human being has of itself no significance and May offers a critique of the dualistic anthropology which is behind it. May’s evaluation is based on sound theology and mature reflection. In the Appreciation, Joseph Powathil takes up the themes of sterilization, contraception, artificial fertilization, cloning, abortion, organ donation and transplantation, euthanasia and suicide and offers valuable insights, often culled from established theologians and magisterial teachings. General Introduction by the editors and the first article by Alencherry, “Family: The Victim of Biomedical Experimentations,” initiate the reader into the area covered in the book. It is contended that recent developments in bioethics have endangered the family in its traditional sense and as a result ‘life’ is no more the sacrosanct treasure enshrined in the family. This book discusses those issues and tries to present a Catholic appraisal.

In his contribution on “Contraception and the ‘Culture of Death’,” May convincingly argues that contraception actually serves the culture of death (6-36). It is at the same time thought provoking that even those who abhor the ‘culture of death’ find the use of contraceptives acceptable! May’s argumentation is based on reflection of the underlying anthropology and moral methodology leading to the conclusion that contraception is a choice against life. In the words of May it is anti-love and anti-life. In the next article Jacob Koippally deals with “Morality of Contraception” (37-51). The author approaches the issue from two angles – of magisterial teachings and of theological discussion. Quoting Pope John Paul II, the author claims that to become aware of the intrinsic evil of contraception, “the couple should be evangelized in the depths of their being” (Pope Paul VI).

The article by Hormis Mynatty treats “Certain Moral Considerations of In-Vitro Fertilization and Related Issues” (52-80). The practice of IVF

involves not only clinical, legal and moral issues but also the problem of solving the curse of infertility. The author discusses the morality of homologous IVF at length and the relevant bio-medical researches. Thomas Srampickal presents “Catholic View of Human life and Abortion” (81-99). His study begins with an exposition of the Catholic view of human life and, then, proceeds to the problem of abortion. The author is very much dialogical and his treatment is integral.

The next two articles are on cloning. The first article is by Vincent R. P., who has written on the “Scientific and Ethical Evaluations of Human Cloning” (100-118). The second article is authored by Aleyamma Abraham and is entitled “Morality of Therapeutic Cloning” (119-141). While Vincent discusses the benefits and ethical problematic of cloning before making a scientific and ethical evaluation, Abraham treats the morality of cloning, human embryonic stem cell therapy and human adult stem cell therapy. Both limit themselves to their subject matter and bring their arguments in defense of the dignity of human life and mutuality of conjugal commitment in marriage. Felix Podimattom discusses “Human Genome Project and Gene Therapy” in another article (142-170). He introduces the layman into HGP and GT and provides us with a treatment of the ethics of the latter in a readable manner. The author also discusses the theological problem of immortality which is only a theoretical possibility now.

The next article is written by Kris Dierckx and is titled “Genetic Privacy and the Family: A Moral Theological Approach” (171-184). He begins with the HGP and proceeds to discuss the specific individual character of genetic information and the problems emerging from genetic engineering practised without any ethical consideration. Will the confidential character of the information be kept? How will be the reaction of the family members handled? Such and other questions need to be addressed.

The article by Scaria Kanniyakonil on the “Ethical Appraisal of Living Organ Donation and Transplantation” (185-208) is the result of serious study and reflection. Kanniyakonil discusses different types of transplantation and donations and treats in detail their social, legal, moral, and theological aspects. The case of organ selling in poorer sections of the society for monetary gain is also taken notice of. The book contains one more contribution of May. It is on “Euthanasia, Assisted Suicide and Care of the Dying” (209-237). It is an abridged version of another research on

Bioethics. His treatment of the themes is sufficiently detailed. His critique of the idea of human autonomy behind the voluntary active euthanasia is logical and is based on the principle of intrinsic good of human life and the evil of intentional killing. The act of euthanasia and assisted suicide cannot be but immoral as they deprive the ‘victim’ of the dignity and worthiness of human life.

The last article is “General Conclusion: Bioethics and the Identity of the Family” (238-251) by Jose Noriega Bastos. He makes a thorough evaluation of family as the cradle of life. An individual is not an island. He is a relational being. Science, though in itself neutral and indifferent, has such wide ramifications so as to control the destiny of an individual and may have dimensions which are beyond the scope of science. Hence, family should be respected as the sanctuary of life where its mystery is lived and unfolded.

It is beyond doubt that stem cell research will usher in a revolution in medical sciences and influence the treatment of diseases like Alzheimer’s, Parkinson’s, juvenile diabetes, etc., which involve cell-based therapies. Embryonic stem cell research holds the key to such a revolution. Such embryos are called “clusters of cells” (!) and the best usage they may be made available to is research (*The Hindu*, July 3, 2005, 14). An adequate treatment of stem cell research with the basic problem of the status of the embryo would have made the book more complete (Mynatty and Podimattom mention them).

This work is firmly based on the teachings of the church on procreation and life. The editors have done a marvellous job and one can read the book with profit and it is, perhaps, the first book on such a relevant theme to be published in India. The book is aptly dedicated to the memory of Pope John Paul II, the apostle of the “culture of life.” Though bio-medical experimentations are in their infancy in our country we cannot remain immune to the developments in this field, in the global village. The conflict of values is more acute in the field of biotechnology than in any other area of research because what is dealt with is life, which is human, alive, and dynamic. Hence, the need of setting clear limits. For example, the manipulation of genes began not with humans but with the nature, of vegetables and cereals. One who follows the discussion on such matters in the European Union or the USA will wonder why the theologians and thinkers in our country keep silence in these matters.

In this context one should appreciate the publishers of this book. All the essays are written by erudite scholars and they have done justice to the respective topics. Each essay is humanely refreshing as well as scientifically challenging.

George Kudilil

Joseph Palackal, ‘*Qambel Maran*’ (2002), Compact Disk with Monograph Booklet on Christian Musical Tradition of India.

Joseph Palackal, holds a doctorate in Musicology and has been among those who pioneered the movement to integrate Indian classical music and *bhajan* traditions in the devotional music of Indian Christians. He is currently engaged in bringing out a book on Indian Christian Musical Traditions and heads the Christian Musicological Society of India.

The production and its accompanying literature constitute a valuable contribution to various fields, as it is an exploration into the history of a significant segment of the multi-cultural Indian society. It is also a rare documentation of some of the various mutually influencing strains of the present Indian culture and music, especially the religious cultures of South India.

The phrase “*qambel maran*,” quite familiar to generations of Thomas Christians of the West Coast of India, literally means “receive, Oh Our Lord!” The Malayalam rendering of the same is quite familiar to the Syro-Malabar Christians as “*kaikkollaname*,” with which begins one of the most emotive and evocative hymns in the rites for the departed.

The compact disc *Qambel Maran* is very unique and significant on several counts. First, it is a unique collection, of four distinct traditions: (i) of the liturgy of the hours on the ancient Syrian tradition as had been in practice in Kerala from a time as far back as the first millennium; (ii) of the solemn form of Syro-Malabar (or, specifically Syro-Chaldean liturgy); (iii) of the rites for the departed in the same tradition; and (iv) the unique interface in music which shows the Latinizing influence on Indian (read, *Malayali*) Syrian musical tradition. Second, it is more of a historical document, an archival discovery or collection of an ancient and almost

extinct tradition, hitherto unrecorded, and available only to the memory of a small circle of singers of a generation that is gradually disappearing into oblivion. Third, as a record of musical history, it has included, belatedly though, the once vibrant and sonorous voices of a few great men, which would remain as a document for further studies in the style of rendition in Indian Music, in general, and Indian Christian music, in particular. Fourth, this is the only published record of a voice, to the owner of which, the Church of Kerala owes the most, as a single most commonly used source of its rites and rituals, and to whom the modern Christian Musical Movement is indebted, for its origin – the late Reverend Father Abel, a confrere of the Carmelites of Mary Immaculate (CMI).

In short, this can be said to be an archaeological contribution of the author to the field of Indian Christian music, history, and culture. That it is added with relevant music takes away the tedium of dealing with archaeological stuff, when dealt with by lay people in the field. For the scholars of the science of music, this is a valuable piece of documentation of a distinct tradition, and its varied influences.

The accompanying booklet is a brief, but methodically researched description of the Syrian tradition of Christianity in India, with special reference to the four traditions of music mentioned above. The beauty of the documentation lies in the recognition of the flaws in pronunciation and rendition, and apparent lack of gender perspective, and yet, retaining them as an authentic documentation of the tradition, rather than an idealistic presentation. However, the world of Music and Christian community of India would stand to benefit from a version of these rich tracts, which would adequately focus on the various aspects of rendition. Hope the ‘excavation’ of these rich traditions would lead to newer derivations in the field of music.

The author deserves appreciation for the painstaking effort at researching, documenting, and describing the meaning and the background of each of the compositions. The booklet itself is a very handy material of scholarship. It has also included a good collection of photographs depicting the ancient Christian Art of Kerala, prominent among them being the mesmerising mural of the “Coronation of Mary” in the sanctuary of the ancient church of Pallipuram, incidentally, the author’s own parish church.

This is a ‘must have’ for all centres of learning of Christian traditions – the centres of theological formation, dialogue, culture, chairs of Christian studies, and all libraries linked to the teaching of Indian History and Church History.

Johnson Palakkappillil

Norman A. Hjelm ed., *Faith and Order: Towards a North American Conference (Study Guide)*, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005, pages x+50, ISBN: 0-8028-2914-7.

More than ever before, the Christian communities are becoming conscious of the urgent need of visible unity among the followers of Christ if they are to become effective witness to Him in the world. Due to the alarming speed of scientific advancements, the world is shrinking into a global village, and in this context, the divisions among the followers of Christ are, indeed, scandalous stumbling blocks for the unity of hearts among the nations and cultures. The bold steps taken by *Faith and Order* to accelerate the process of unity among the various Christian communities are a matter of hope, primarily to all the believers who are looking forward to visible unity, and to the world at large where unity and peace are often threatened by the divisive forces. The study guide *Faith and Order: Towards a North American Conference*, edited by Norman A. Hjelm, outlines the goal and purpose of the forthcoming encounter between members of different Christian Traditions in a prayerful and reflective environment.

The introductory statement, signed by the members of the conference, belonging to various Christian traditions, presents the hopes and aspirations of this reunion, and explains clearly the theme selected for the conference: “The Church: Its Faith and Unity.” Through the long years of its existence, the goal of the movement has gradually evolved from greater mutual understanding among the churches to the restoration of visible unity. The modern trends in ecumenism have enabled the Christians to listen to the call of the Lord to unity with greater urgency. The final prayer of the Lord can be a reality only when there is visible

unity among the Churches, so that the world may believe the authenticity of our mission in the world.

The Planning consultations for the envisaged Conference brings to light the right mentality and approach every follower of Christ should have: while remaining faithful to one's own history and traditions, every Christian should be prepared for a repentant transformation, to respond to the Holy Spirit, the promoter of *koinonia* that we may feel hunger and thirst for full communion. The diversity of cultures in which the Word of God was preached, indeed, adds to the richness of Christian Heritage. At the same time, tragic divisions among Christians constitute a scandal to the world. Jeffery Gros, while presenting *Faith and Order* from a historical perspective, is hopeful that the envisaged conference will surely provide ample resource for the renewal of the church in unity, in its pilgrim journey. George Vandervelde, in his article on "Unity in Identity," clearly expresses the view that the unity engendered by the conference does not jeopardize the identity of the individual churches which is the fruit of the unique tradition and Christ Experience of a particular community; rather, it aims at an ongoing approximation to the true and full identity of the church as the church of Christ. Then, the church in the modern world will be capable of witnessing to Jesus Christ and his Gospel as it was handed over to us by the Apostles, argues Donna Geernaert.

As Norman A. Hjelm rightly points out, the purpose of this small book is to "foster awareness of the issues surrounding the Faith and Order Movement" and this booklet is meant "for use by laity and clergy in study groups, in congregations, seminaries and variety of ecumenical contexts." Indeed, this endeavour of the *Faith and Order* will be instrumental to quench the thirst for unity among the Christian communities and, thus, to become a true witness to Christ and His message in the world.

Wilson Edattukaran