

BOOK REVIEWS

Joseph Pathrapankal, *Time and History: Biblical and Theological Studies*, Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2002, pages vi + 254. ISBN: 81-7086-287-6.

“The appointed time has come to pass. The kingdom of God has come in history. Repent! Believe the gospel!” (Mk. 1:15, translation according to Robert A. Guelich, *Word Biblical Commentary*). This statement of Jesus Christ provides the norm to appraise and appreciate, criticize and orientate the present history of the humanity and the universe. According to Jesus, the decisive movement of the time has come to pass, which has a lasting significance in history. The time is that of the kingdom of God which is inaugurated here and now. Thus humanity is granted to live in the kingdom of God on earth, the completion of which will occur at the end- times. This vision provides an optimistic attitude to the happenings in this world. At the same time it helps us to live in this world as the citizens of the kingdom of God.

The modern humans are encountering a crisis situation. Many are perplexed and tempted to look at the present time and history which has taken a dangerous turn towards self-destruction. Religious terrorism, erosion of values and disregard for human life are negatively affecting the younger generation. At this juncture the study *Time and History* by emeritus professor of Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram, Joseph Pathrapankal meets the need of the times. The essays of this book throw light on the biblical and theological understanding of the concepts of time and history. The author passionately pleads to build up our destiny and our future in and through time and history. He understands time as “the most precious gift humans have received during their pilgrimage on this planet earth” (iv). He shows in this study, which resulted from a series of lectures delivered in the Swedish Theological Institute in Jerusalem in 2000, that “time as such does not mean anything until we make use of it and make meaning out of it either for oneself or for others” (iv).

Pathrapankal exposes his vision in seven articles. The first one is entitled “Reflections on Time and History.” There he deals with the following themes: dynamics of time from a biblical perspective, time and

history in relation to eternity, dynamics of history, models of history with a critique, history and mythology, history and apocalyptic, living in time and committed to history, transcending time and open to eternity. These reflections serve the readers to understand the basic ideas concerning time and history.

Next the author turns to "World History and Salvation History." Here he rejects the dichotomic approach to history as sacred and profane. He argues for the complementary dimension of the sacred as associated with the salvation and the secular. This understanding of history provides a new approach to the action of God in the history. Pathrapankal studies the following dimensions: salvation history within world history, holistic understanding of salvation history, the biblical Israel encountering God in the world history, the sacred and secular in the New Testament, Spirit of God active in the world of matter, Church as the sacrament of God's presence in history, God and the fulfillment of history.

In the third essay the author deals with history and prophetic involvement. He studies the prophetic movement in the Bible: prophets in the history of Israel, prophets and their sense of history, prophets and the secular dimension of religion, prophetic leaders in the early Church, the Gospel for the wider world, Paul's prophetic stance in the early Church, prophetic persons in the Church: their role in our times.

Next Pathrapankal articulates his vision on the mission of the Church in the world. First, he invites our attention to the vision of Christ about the Church. Then he provides the portrait of the Church in the Acts of the Apostles. There follows the exposition on the Pauline understanding of the Church. The author's study of this biblical theme concludes with his reflections on the book of Revelation. In the light of the biblical vision he turns his attention to the role of the Church in the pluralistic world. For him the Church has to play the role of the servant in our world. He loves to designate Church as the "little flock" of Lk. 12: 32. Hence the Church has to shed off the garment of "triumphalism, exclusivism, and a certain attitude of superiority in its teachings, evangelizing activities and the styles of functioning of its institutions" (152). According to the author, Christianity should be basically a dialogical community, and not a monolithic and mono-cultural group of people. In the vision of

Pathrapankal the Christians have to become agents of reconciliation and harmony among the various religious groups of India.

In chapter five the author exposes his understanding of biblical interpretation, and invites our attention to chance and challenge it provides in our times. First he gives a brief historical survey of biblical interpretation. Then he argues that "the Bible as a divine word and the human author word is to be understood and applied in the context of the reader and the interpreter" (165). He calls for "a more relevant and meaningful hermeneutics to cope up with the social, cultural and religious aspirations of humans in our times" (167). He proves that "the inspired word of God has within itself a dynamism to take on new meanings and open us new horizons of ideas through its encounter with new contexts and situations in the process of history" (171). Taking Jn. 12:20-27 as an example, Pathrapankal undertakes a re-reading of that text. In the light of his interpretation of that text the author draws our attention for the need of a new focus in Christology.

Chapter six is entitled "Religious Maxims as Shaping History: A Study on Mt. 5:48." Pathrapankal designates that text as a *mahavākya*. He makes a thorough study of Mt. 5:48, its background, context, the inner content, and the message. According to him, here "Jesus is placing before the world the ultimate and convincing reasons why all religions must work together for the emergence of a new society... which transcends the barriers of caste, colour and creed" (220).

The concluding essay is devoted to the study of God's reign and world religions. By analyzing various texts from the New Testament, Pathrapankal proves that Jesus transcended the barriers and limitations of his own human and religious conditions of being a Jew. What Jesus wanted was "to make all humans rise above the limiting factors of a religious identity and build up a new humanity and a new society" (239). This visionary spoke of God's kingdom or reign, by which he meant "the active guidance and providence of God extended to the entire human kind and the cosmic order" (241). God's reign has got universal perspectives. For Jesus it was the central theme of his message. God comes in a definitive way into this world to bring the present state of things to an end, and to transform everything into a new reality. Pathrapankal studies in detail the theme of God's reign and the new humanity in the vision of

Jesus. According to him, the new community in Jesus' vision fosters "universalism, freedom and friendship and promotes justice" (249). The author finds here the inspiration to build up a new style of relationship between religions. All religions have to "engage themselves in a common programme of social involvement for the creation of better human society" (251). The author invites all religions to fight against all forms of exploitation whether at the national or international levels. In his opinion the concept of the reign of God "gives a new impetus and new vigour to consider the pluralistic structure of the world and of humanity from a new perspective of personalism and universalism" (253).

We have begun this review with the citation of Mk. 1:14-15 where Jesus declared the advent of the appointed time and the kingdom in history. Jesus has thereby connected time and history. The reflections of Pathrapankal may be understood as an elaboration of the ideas implied in this text. This creative and provocative work is a timely contribution for which the author deserves our unreserved and wholehearted applause and gratitude. It will help the Indian theologians to develop a genuine and contextual Christology. Further, it provides a biblical vision and impetus to engage oneself in dialogue with the religions from a Christic perspective.

Paul Kalluveettil

Norman Tanner, *Is the Church Too Asian? Reflections on the Ecumenical Councils*, Rome: Chavara Institute of Indian and Inter-Religious Studies, and Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2002, pages vi + 92. ISBN: 81-86861-48-3.

Norman Tanner is an authority on the Ecumenical Councils. He is the editor of the two-volume *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* and author of *The Councils of the Church: A Short History*.

The present work under review was originally a series of lectures (Placid Lectures) given by the author in Rome in honour of the late Fr. Placid Podipara cmi. The book has three chapters. The first chapter deals with the first seven councils. This chapter gives the reader an impression that the church is too Asian. The doctrinal development of the early church is beautifully dealt with in the chapter. Indeed, as the author rightly argues,

Asia has substantially contributed to the doctrinal development of the Church.

In the second chapter the main concentration is on the medieval councils, and it ends with the Council of Trent. The author concludes that there was little development in doctrines and that these councils were pre-occupied with church orders. The third chapter deals with two modern councils, Vatican I and Vatican II. The influence of Asia was felt much less directly in the medieval Councils, Trent, and Vatican I. However, Vatican Council II was a world council through the representation of bishops from all over the world. The council decrees give due importance to the cultural and religious pluralism of Asia.

The author concludes by saying: "The Church cannot be called too Asian – to answer the question provocatively posed in the book's title. On the other hand, the councils show that Asia has been well represented in this key dimension of the Church's history" (86).

Although we have a number of books on ecumenical councils and church history, the book under review looks at the history of the Church and of the Councils from a different perspective. This different perspective is the uniqueness of the book. Thus, this book is a must for all students of church history and history of the councils.

The book is beautifully printed and the language is very lucid. One omission may be John the Persian, bishop of the whole of Persia and Greater India, who attended the Council of Nicaea in 325. His name is not found in the book. Another observation is, since the book is the outcome of the Placid Lecture Series, the contribution of Fr. Placid in the Vatican Council II for the welfare of the Oriental Churches should have been developed. The freedom the Orientals in India enjoy today outside their proper territory is the greatest achievement of Fr. Placid as *peritus* in the Vatican Council II. These omissions do not, however, derogate the importance of the book. A map showing the places where the Councils were held would have made the book more attractive.

Francis Thonippara

Saju Chackalackal, *Unity of Knowing and Acting in Kant*, Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2002, pages xx + 615. ISBN: 81-86861-51-3.

Unity of Knowing and Acting in Kant is a commendable work of scholarship and a great contribution to Kantian studies. The work is characterized by clarity of thought, readable presentation, and a rigorous analysis of the sources. Basing on the primary sources themselves, particularly the three *Critiques*, the author unravels the thematic unity and the philosophical preoccupation that run through Kant's philosophical writings.

According to Chackalackal, human life always exhibits a dynamic unity of knowledge and action, the theoretical and the practical. The three *Critiques* of Kant beautifully unveil this dynamic unity. The *Critique of Pure Reason* inquires into the nature of knowledge and the transcendental conditions of acquiring true knowledge. Here Kant rejects any kind of dogmatic metaphysics, because true knowledge is possible only as *synthetic a priori*. However, Chackalackal sees the Kantian emphasis on the *a priori* structure of the knowing mind that paves the way for the *synthetic a priori* as the kernel of the transcendental philosophy. For him, Kant rejects an ontology of nature and substitutes it with an ontology of the mind.

In the *Critique of Practical Reason* Kant's concern is the practical, the ethical. The *a priori* conditions of morality are necessity and universality, and these conditions elevate the moral action to the status of a command of duty. The beliefs in God, immortality, and freedom are metaphysical doctrines, yet Kant reinstates them for practical reason. But the apparent gulf between the theoretical and the practical remains unbridged even in his critical moral philosophy.

It is in the *Critique of Judgment*, according to Chackalackal, that the theoretical and the practical unite. A judgment of taste is not bound by concepts and it gives us the possibility of experiencing an object in the subjective unity (of the human mind). Put differently, in an aesthetic act one is not worried about how knowledge is produced and in what manner an object is related to a concept. But at the same time in a judgment of taste there is an interplay of all mental faculties. According to Chackalackal's interpretation, Kant indirectly shows that the ground of the

unity of knowing and acting is nothing else but ourselves. Every human being has the ability for aesthetic judgment and this common ground is the *a priori* element that gives necessity and universality to our aesthetic experience.

In all three *Critiques* Kant insists on the necessity and universality of our experiences and judgements. And these necessity and universality are possible because of the *a priori* conditions that exist between human beings. This should lead us to recognize our essential intersubjectivity and communitarian existence. It is only in the context of an inter-subjective framework of a community that we can legitimately speak of knowledge, morality, and aesthetic experience. Thus the unity that exists in the triple functions of the individual human being paves the way for a human community.

Chackalackal has argued his position very cogently, and I believe his book is a significant contribution in Neo-Kantian thought. Said this, I beg to differ with the author on two counts. First, for Chackalackal the great significance of Kant's philosophy consists in its emphasis on the mind, thereby abolishing the dependence of consciousness on the object and making the object depend on the *a priori* structure of human faculties. This had already been done by the rationalists, particularly Descartes. To me the merit of Kant's critical philosophy consists in its reconciliation of the empirical (*a posteriori*) and the transcendental (*a priori*). Second, the author appears to read too much of intersubjectivity and communitarianism into Kant. Kant's focus was on the autonomy of the individual. But some of the import of the Kantian thought could very well be developed into a philosophy of intersubjectivity. Perhaps this was the author's intention, as he himself views Kant's critical philosophy as a model for a genuine philosophizing and a task to be completed.

Joseph Kaipayil

M. Sivaramkrishna, *Hindu View of Life: A Contemporary Perspective*, Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2001, pages 184. ISBN: 81-86861-38-6.

The book is the fifth in "Dharmaram Endowment Lectures" of

Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram, Bangalore. Departing from the traditional systematic Hindu approach to life and reality through various concepts and patterns as seen in the Upanishads and the Six Systems, Professor Sivaramkrishna presents a 'contemporary' approach based on the teaching of his guru Sri Ram that "the truths found locked up in books are, in fact, live centers of cosmic consciousness." According to his perspective, the specific Hindu view on humans' embodied existence and on the world around them is a belief system that included faith in fate steered by one's own actions, an inherent and inborn faith in the unity of life, a generous and tolerant rapport with other ideologies.

Accordingly, he starts reinterpreting the four-limbed traditional methodology or *sadhana catustaya*: *Adhikara*, is not the psychological competence of the inquirer, as traditionally understood, but "faith in the possibility of ordering the rhythms of life in such a way that one balances *para* and *apara* domains of knowledge." *Sambandha* or connection is not the relation between experience and expression, but rather "the protean forms, frames and fashions in academic and intellectual fields that any study has to reckon with." *Vishaya* or object is not any table reality symbolized by Sanskrit, but "a perennial process of recovery, a process rooted in the multitude of cultural patterns indicated by switch over to English. *Phalasaruti*, or final goal is not realization of the really Real, but "literally listening to gains of an expository exercise," which surely is more exciting.

The second chapter of the book is discusses the religious situation in India today. It is that the quest for a deeper understanding has destroyed the distinction among religions. He quotes Raimnudo Panikkar: "On the intellectual plane, no religion can pride itself on having fully revealed the mystery of reality on the existential plane." Hinduism is no longer amenable to description which stem from classical or "foundation text." Along with Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity, Hinduism experienced nearly radical changes ... through which these religions felt the impact of 'modernity.' There is sustained inter-religious appropriation. Even in understanding religious texts and Christ himself it is said that we ourselves and our sensitivity are primary, that they are meant for our becoming higher than we are!

The third chapter is an enumeration of the many ways in which Hindu religion and Hindu texts have been misunderstood and misinterpreted especially by people from outside the tradition. The conclusion is "that the contemporary appropriation of the Hindu way of life is far too complex to be buckled within the belt of any one ideology or approach as inclusive of all" (100). The fourth chapter discusses religious pluralism. There are two main Hindu approaches: "One is the mystical or spiritual approach wherein the experience of the sages and saints affirms the essential unity of religions" (101). The other is "the reverence and exploration of the faith of the other, and, then, if need be, absorbing it without on the way getting dispossessed or denuded of anything that one is familiar with." Secularism that reduces religion to a private matter and makes public life controlled solely by sociology and politics does not do justice to reality. "Religions are very strong modes of perception in India and they inform several civil issues" (126). Conflicts do exist. "They can only be neutralized, but never totally annihilated. Pluralism and fundamentalism constitute together the truth of the eternal drama of good and not so good that goes on" (128).

The fifth chapter which studies the feminist problem has very little that is uniquely Hindu to present. "The tremendous psychological and spiritual implications of woman as a goddess and the goddess as a woman is a unique residue that is steadily surfacing in contemporary studies" both in west and east. Similarly the economics of globalization, ecology, and social justice studied in chapter six, touch a global problem. Though India has the social ideal of *vasudhaika kudumbakam*, the vision of humanity as one family, its view is mostly fatalistic, namely that the widespread poverty and squalor created by global programmes of development are inevitable as a 'cosmic autumn'!

The book is typical of the attitude and outlook of contemporary Hindu philosophy which has lost the sense of its own roots and is competing with the west. There is no real dialogue between the two, since the west is least interested in such a dialogue but, as A. N. Whitehead remarks, still continues to write footnotes to Plato. The west started with the mysticism of Parmenides, Plato, Plotinus, Ps. Dionysius, and Evagrius Ponticus, and reached modern day rationalism, while India started with the rationalism of the Upanishads and the systems and ended with the

mysticism of Ramakrishna and Aurobindo. In spite of all quarrels with the "meta-narratives" of the classical period, Post-Modern philosophy of the west has not still found its own identity. After trying pragmatism, logical positivism, liberationism, and other ephemeral fads, western philosophers are returning to the firm grounds of Modernity and classical metaphysics. What Sivaramkrishna presents as 'contemporary' in the Hindu view is just the borrowed Post-Modernity of the west. As Daya Krishna and Paul Gregorios rightly complained, contemporary Indian thinking failed to draw from its own ancient sources.

There are obvious over-simplifications like "The religious texts of Christianity were primarily written and the Hindu texts were revealed" (62), Hindu Scriptures are too complex to be understood by interpretation, as if other Scriptures are all simple (66-75). "The experience of sages and saints shows the essential unity of all religions! (101). One should not deny that divine revelation is perceived differently by different traditions, as intuition by Hindu sages who expressed that intuition in human words, as tradition by Buddhists who transmitted the teachings of Buddha in three baskets, as revelation of a heavenly book in Islam and as divine inspiration of the writers in Judaism and Christianity. Perhaps what is missing is the well-known difference between east and west, both in the basic problem as well as the specific method: west always deals with the human bafflement with the phenomena of nature, flux and multiplicity, while India always dealt basically with human suffering. Greeks sought the Form of all forms as the formal and efficient cause, while east looked for the material or maternal womb of things.

Perhaps there is confusion about the understanding of philosophy itself. One cannot present the mystical 'madness' of Sri Ramakrishna, psychic perception of the author, or the highly personal instructions of Sri Ram, the author's personal guru, and the intuitions of sages as philosophy. Though helpful to philosophy, these are not philosophy itself. As systematic discussion of the ultimate causes of life and reality it is meaningful discourse. In this the Hindu classical texts are enduring models of philosophical discourse.

John B. Chethimattam

Christopher Key Chapple, ed., *Jainism and Ecology: Nonviolence in the Web of Life*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Centre for the Study of World Religions, 2002, pages xxx + 252. ISBN: 0-945454-34-1.

Jainism and Ecology is a collection of well-studied papers written by ten specialists in Jainism exploring the ecological insights and teachings of an ancient Indic religion, edited by Christopher Key Chapple with an informative historical "Introduction." A "Preface" by Lawrence E. Sullivan, the General Editor of the Series, *Religions of the World and Ecology* of the Center for the Study of World Religions, Harvard Divinity School, and a "Series Foreword" by Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim (Series Editors) add their own rethinking over the "World Views and Ethics" and the appropriate "Methodological Concerns" of the new Series of the Study of World Religions add special glamour to this volume, and I guess so about the other six volumes of the Series as well, dealing with the "Ecological Ethics" explored in the other important world religions. Ecological ethics is the "New Resource" in the comparative study of religions in inter-religious dialogical perspectives.

The present volume under review has four parts. Part I is titled, "Jain Theories about the Nature of the Universe," having articles with the titles of "The Jain Worldview and Ecology" by Nathmal Tatia, "Jain Ecological Perspectives" by John M. Koller, and "The Nature of Nature: Jain Perspectives on the Natural World" by Kristi L. Wiley, respectively. Part II is titled, "Challenges to the Possibility of a Jain Environmental Ethic," having articles under the titles of "Green Jainism? Notes and Queries Toward a Possible Jain Environmental Ethic" by John E. Cort, "The Limits of a Jain Environmental Ethic" by Paul Dundas, "The Living Earth of Jainism and the New Story: Rediscovering and Reclaiming a Functional Cosmology" by Christopher Key Chapple, and "Ecology, Economics, and Development in Jainism" by Padmanabh S. Jaini. Part III has the heading, "Voices within the Tradition: Jainism is Ecological," having articles, "The Environmental and Ecological Teachings of Tīrthankara Mahāvīra by Sadhvi Shilapi, "Ecology and Spirituality in the Jain Tradition" by Bhagchandra Jain 'Bhaskar', and "Jain Ecology" by Satish Kumar. Finally, Part IV is titled "Tradition and Modernity: Can Jainism Meet the Environmental Challenge?" with a single long article with the title, "From Liberation to Ecology: Ethical Discourses among Orthodox and Diaspora

Jains" by Anne Vallely. At the end of the volume there is a very useful acknowledged Appendix, "The Jain Declaration on Nature" by L. M. Singhvi, and is followed by a Select Bibliography and Index.

The main highlights of this volume on Jainist Ecology are the following: In the Jain worldview *ahimsa* (nonviolence) commands the most important place as "the ethical maxim" (*Ahimsā paramo dharmah*), and as a "categorical imperative" (8). Abstaining from any kind of injury, in thought, word, and deed (*manasā-vācā-karmaṇā*) to any kind of living being, immobile or mobile, is *ahimsā*. This is actually the most foundational ecological principle and attitude to nature and all living beings therein. Humanity is the most developed species of living beings, but, according to Jainism, is not a privileged species in any sense. "Human reality is not the center of things, with the right to conquer and subdue nature, just as in modern astronomy the earth is not the centre of the universe with planets, the stars, and the sun all circling round it" (3). "Jainism, like Hinduism and Buddhism, is *centered on life*, not on the human person. These traditions differ from the religions that regard humankind to have been created by God in his divine image. Jainism gives reverence to all life, irrespective of its place in the biological hierarchy" (4).

The second most important principle of environmental ethics, according to Jainism, is generally worded as "mutual support of all living creatures" (*parasparopagraho jīvānām*). This principle has been drawn from the ancient texts of Jainism as well as from the recent *Jain Declaration on Nature* (219). This is otherwise recognized in general within deep ecology as the "Principle of Interdependence." It is rightly observed in this book that Jainism provides one of India's most thorough attempts to encapsulate a comprehensive worldview or cosmology that integrates the place of the human person within the continuum of the universe. It attempts to explain the place of the human being in a great continuous reality, and it further emphasizes hierarchy and vitality within its vision of the cosmos (121-122). It is also rightly observed that, according to Jainist cosmology, all things share a commonality in their aliveness, which must be acknowledged and protected. Through respect for life in all its forms, including microorganisms and the elements, one can ascend to a higher state of spiritual sensitivity (122).

From a religious point of view, one of the distinguishing features of Jainism is that there is no belief in a creator God. Hence, Jains do not believe that everything in the world, including plants and animals, was created by an intelligent first-cause for mankind's benefit and consumption. However, Jains do believe in and propose to all followers of the teachings of the Tirthankaras spiritual *sādhanās* for the attainment of enlightenment and liberation from the chain of the repeated cycle of birth-death, and rebirth. This liberation is not achieved personally by anybody depending on the grace of a deity but by one's own exertion and personal dedication to the path of spiritual purification as taught by those who have already ferried this ocean of mutation and transmigration. In the words of Ācārya Mahāprajāna,

Lifestyle embedded entirely in materialistic consideration doesn't provide a basis for living in harmony with nature. And a lifestyle based exclusively on a spiritual foundation does not provide adequate for the journey of life. In order to make our lifestyle complete in every sense we need a new outlook on life. A harmonious method of material, economic, and spiritual development can be devised on its basis. Such a method can never ignore the balance between intellectual and emotional needs (153).

To conclude this review, let me share the Jain wisdom together with the learned contributors of this volume, that, in the context of today's craziness for fast development by all means, it must be a reminder from the Jain perspective, that decisions regarding development need to follow the criteria of "least harm to innocent creatures," "conservation of resources for the next generations," and "to strike a balance between the spiritual needs and the material prosperity of the human" always in communion with their fellow beings for mutual survival.

I recommend *Jainism and Ecology* for a wider public who are really interested in applying "olden insights" into "golden practices" in planning and life without the least disrespect to the ancient maxim, "Old is gold" as applied to the maxims of ecological ethics according to Jainism.

Thomas Manickam

James H. Kroeger and Peter C. Phan, *The Future of the Asian Churches: The Asian Synod and Ecclesia in Asia*, Quezon City, Philippines: Claretian Publications, 2002, pages viii + 206. ISBN: 971-501-936-6.

James Kroeger and Peter Phan are well known authors, and in this book, along with the contributions from other authors, they introduce the *Asian Synod* (held in Rome from April 19 to May 14, 1998) and its final document, "Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*" (promulgated by the Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, at New Delhi on November 6, 1999). The book has three main parts: (1) Sharing the experience of the Synod by those who participated in it. There are nine reflections in this part by various participants of the Synod. (2) Commentaries and critical observations on the Synodal Document, *Ecclesia in Asia*. It includes ten contributions by different authors. (3) In the third part the full text of *Ecclesia in Asia* is given with notes, followed by a detailed index which enables ready access to the themes and issues of the Synodal document.

In the Asian Synod, held in Rome, 252 participants deliberated for about 26 days on the theme, "Jesus Christ the Savior and His Mission of Love and Service in Asia," and this book is one of the pioneering works to gather the fruits of the intense and prayerful work of the Synod. As the authors have pointed out, the Asian Synod was an 'event' and a "moment of Grace" for the Asian Churches and for the entire Church of Christ. It needs to be still 'received' and its significance for the Asian Churches to be further reflected upon. At this historical juncture, when the Asian Churches are searching for "new ways of being Church in Asia," the Synod's evaluation of the Asian realities, its common witness and proclamation of faith in Jesus Christ, and its insights, suggestions and recommendations are very valuable guidelines for the Asian Christians. The unique event of a special gathering of Asian bishops, along with their fellow bishops from the other continents, to listen to each other, to share one another's experience in the context of the living realities of Asia, and the frankness and the courage shown by the Asian bishops, constitute, indeed, a moment of extraordinary grace and a new Pentecost for the Churches in Asia.

Will the Asian Synod be a major event in the life of the Asian Churches engendering renewal, change, new dreams, and visions for the mission of the Church in Asia? Will it be a turning point in evolving an Asian face for the Church? Has the Synod succeeded in evolving an Asian understanding of Evangelization? Will the Synod give a new direction to the Church in Asia? As bishop Thomas Menampampil rightly comments, it will be for the history to tell what the Synod has achieved for Asia (32). The key issue the Asian Christians are facing is this: How to present Jesus Christ and his message of salvation to the Asian people in the context of the plurality of Asia's numerous, powerful, and living religions. The exclusive language of 'uniqueness' and of "the only mediator" is very strange for the Asian religions, and the Asian Churches must evolve a new language for proclaiming Christ and his message, which is meant for all. The Synod by and large left this crucial question unanswered.

If one carefully listens to the voices of the Asian bishops in the Synod Hall, we could observe a new and hopeful development, a movement towards the rightful autonomy of the local Churches in Asia. The Japanese bishops found it very strange that they have to wait for the approval of Rome for the Japanese translations of their liturgical textbooks. An Indonesian voice was heard for the legitimate autonomy of the local Churches in Asia along the pattern of the Eastern Catholic Patriarchates, which have their legitimate autonomy and functional independence. The authors and contributors of the book have to be congratulated for highlighting these and many other issues that emerged in the Asian Synod. Hope this book will be widely used in Asia as part of an ongoing process of 'reception' of the Synod, and it can function as a catalyst and a turning point in the life of the Asian Churches in their search for "new ways of being Church in Asia."

Kuncheria Pathil

Selva J. Raj and Corinne G. Dempsey, eds., *Popular Christianity In India: Riting between the Lines*, State University of New York Press, 2002, pages xx + 284. ISBN: 0-7914-5520-3.

It is true that the foundations of Christianity in India at two epochs of

the Indian history have different backgrounds. The foundation of Christianity in India was laid by Apostle Thomas in the first century, and a tradition known as "Thomas Christian Tradition" started from 52 CE. Quite often this tradition is misinterpreted and the Christians are often called "Syrian Christians" instead of "Thomas Christians." The western Christianity has a different origin in India during 16th century. The western church presented itself as a triumphant church in every aspect with its economic, political, and military power. The colonial masters and foreign missionaries formed a church after the western model in every respect, namely, in liturgical celebrations, celebrations of the feasts, liturgical vestments, church administration, etc. After the Independence of India in 1947, the colonial powers have been moved away from the church administration. The Christianity in India, both oriental and western, began to feel and experience the 'Indianness' more deeply, and began to enjoy the internal and external influence of the Indian religiosity, which, in turn, has greatly affected the popular Christianity. Thus, we come across the true meaning of the title of this volume *Popular Christianity in India*.

This volume contains 10 essays and a very interesting Introduction by Seva J. Raj and Corinne G. Dempsey who are the editors of the volume. Wendy Doniger gives a fitting Foreword capturing the central theme of these essays and Vasuda Narayanan, an Afterword from her perspective of a Hindu scholar. The essays are arranged in three sections, namely, "Festivals and Rituals: Forging Hybrid Christian Identities," "Saints and Wonderworkers: Healing Disease and Division," and "Visionaries and Missionaries: Redefining Religious Authority." Essays in the first section illustrate the role of the public religious expressions and explain the role of the identity in a direct way. The Chariot procession in the Tamil Christian tradition expresses the celebrating layers and dimensions of Hindu-Christian practice and symbolism. The devotees feel a sort of oneness in the celebration of these festivals and such feasts become instrumental in going beyond the boundaries of religious divisions. Similar is the case of the celebration of the feast of Our Lady of Velankanni in Tamil Nadu. Festivals of such a type help the devotees to integrate and assert the indigenous, Indian side of themselves and their traditions. In fact, the ritual performances like these serve as vehicles and mediums for dialogue between Indian Christians and their Hindu neighbours.

The second set of essays "Saints and Wonderworkers" focuses on the role of healing in the local Christian contexts to illustrate the tension between the lay spirituality and institutional character of the Church. In Dempsey's study of the three Christian shrines of Kerala, she notes how one saint attains his powers from demons; another claims healing a Muslim boy, and yet another third Christian saint is a 'Jew'. The characteristic of these shrines is primarily the saint's reputation for miracles, not any particular religious allegiance. The final set of articles in this volume examines alternative forms of leadership within the realm of Protestant Christian practice. Distinct from Catholic and Orthodox Christianity, Protestant traditions typically avoid any syncretism, and, thus, do not test any parameters of hybrid affiliations. This does not mean that protestant Churches in India do not attempt any experiments or challenges exposed by foreign missionaries or religious elites. In John Webster's essay, he argues that the shaping of the Christianity in India, typically seen through the eyes of the missionaries, can be understood differently when viewed in the light of the lived experiences of Indian Christian converts.

All these essays are excellent, and demonstrate the vibrant face of the popular Christianity in India. They are neither homogeneous nor uniform but essentially plural and diverse, formed by caste, region, time, and earthly and spiritual needs. In significant ways, this plurality reflects the cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and religious diversity of India. India is a land of many religious traditions and different cultures. In spite of the differences, there is, indeed, an element of 'oneness' as the kernel of all these differences, which can be termed as 'experience' (of God), according to Indian traditions. Almost all essays in this volume converge to this basic aspect of Indian religiosity and the readers will certainly appreciate this character of the volume. The volume will help both Indians and foreigners to understand Christianity as a religion fully adapted and incultured to the particular situation in which it is planted and flourishing.

Francis Kanichikattil

Joseph Peruma, *The Motherly Earth: An Ecological Ethics of Human-Nature Relationship*, Bangalore: Claretian Publications, 2002, pages xiv + 242. ISBN: 81-87804-28-9.

Joseph Peruma, in his book *The Motherly Earth: An Ecological Ethics of Human-Nature Relationship*, proposes an environmental ethics taking into account a land ethics, an ethics of sustainable development, and an ethics of partnership. The author wishes that the readers travel on a "road to cosmocentrism" (vii).

In this era of ecological crisis, *The Motherly Earth* is another volume on ecological ethics, synthesising some of the major findings in the field of environmental ethics, which will be known for its mythical, philosophical and scientific vision and passion. A theoretical exposition coupled with practical suggestions on ecological issues by Joseph Peruma is a laudable work, for it is another milestone in understanding and appreciating the motherly earth and living with her in harmony.

It is a synthetic, systematic, and progressive presentation of ecological ethics, which is global in appeal, feminine in attire, maternal in nature, friend in character, and earth as the focus and centre.

The Motherly Earth has an introduction and six chapters. However, conclusion is missing. It could have been of great use, had there been an index for the book. Needless to say that the section on selected readings is very scanty.

In the introduction of the book, the author outlines the reasons and objectives of his work. He finds fault with philosophy and religion for the present ecocrisis and traces the failure in the consideration of "the world less than real and compartmentalized reality into dichotomies" (viii). It is the result of man's attempted mastery over nature. Hence the author invites his readers to the need for a new vision, a sense of universal kinship. The new vision consists in its earthliness. This, according to the author, imparts a holistic vision. Our worldview becomes earthly, "when it provokes us to see our right place in the world and to live in harmony with everything." The author points out that "We are the earth, with consciousness, with soul, with spirit."

There is also a discussion on the solution to the ecological crisis. The foundation of any solution must start with a new vision of life. The author lists a few valid and interrelated fundamental values in view of solving the ecological problems. It is in rediscovering and reiterating the universe as a communion; reality is a web of interrelationships; to be is to be relational; a relationship in terms of mother-offspring; humans having a new identity as co-creators; a cultural shift from material earth to maternal earth.

The attempt of the author in dealing with eco-ethics is global. The aim of eco-ethics, in the words of the author, is "at ushering in such values that can sustain and nourish peace and harmony within the human family and between humanity and nature" (xii). It knows no boundaries. It takes us to a new ethics of connectedness, an ethics of partnership. It challenges us to learn to revere and love life in all its manifestations; it promotes us to be agents of cosmogenesis rather than exploiters and consumers.

The author, in the first chapter, discusses the ecological crisis as the result of disharmony between human beings and nature. The symptoms and reasons of ecological crisis are enlisted in this chapter. Along with the ecological crisis, the social dimension of the problem is highlighted. The different values attached to conservation, namely, survival, scientific, economic, aesthetic, and ethical are emphasised. "Human well-being depends on the quality of the environment" (24), argues the author. In taking stock of the prevailing environmental situation in India, the author goes through the shift in the governmental policies and landmark judgement of the Supreme Court of India. Nobody can miss the primary ethical concern in the first chapter: "Being ethical, humans have the duty to maintain the integrity of nature and to respect the right of all things to exist and prosper" (30).

The second chapter is on ecosophy. It is presented as a new vision of reality. This involves an experience of the world as an extended self and its story as our own extended story. "Ecosophy entails non-possessive and non-manipulative love for nature. We love nature not to subjugate and manipulate, but because it is lovable and is part of our being" (39). Reality is to be seen as one. In the opinion of the author, cosmogonic myths, advaita philosophy, and holistic science support and substantiate this view. He observes, "The universe of space and time and elementary particles and energies, is then an *Avatāra*, the materialization of primal mind" (58).

Joseph Peruma invites his readers to see the ground value and intrinsic value of all things. Since world is the symbol of the Divine, everything exists in God and God in everything. World is the Body of God. Therefore, "We can no more speak of God as worldless and world as Godless" (72).

Chapter three focuses on motherly earth. This is an open invitation to shift human approach towards the earth, from material to maternal. Earth is feminine. It is motherly: it has the capacity to generate, sustain, and nurture all forms of life. "Earth is mother and humans are her offspring" (78). The reason for the eco-crisis in our times is the objectification of mother earth. "Man no more considers nature as the mother in whose womb he is formed, at whose breasts he is nourished, and in whose bosom he finally comes to rest, nature has become an object which is to be investigated, weighed and measured in his analytic intelligence" (79). The ecological crisis, opines the author, is "at its root, the death of feminine principle" (79). The author discloses the feminine conceptualization of nature which is a significant characteristic of the Indian cultural ethos. "The feminine *śakti* inherent in nature is at play in the incessant flow of generation, growth and decay" (105). The imagery of a Mother Earth will help people transcend anthropocentrism and all its trappings.

The fourth chapter is dedicated to a discussion on the need for a shift from anthropocentrism to ecocentrism. In order to overcome the technological consciousness as objectivizing, atomizing, alienating, power dominating, desacralizing, there is the need of land ethics, cultivating a sense of gratitude and respect in our use of the land. "It implies fellow feeling and a genuine sense of kinship" (128). What is advocated in this chapter is a synthesis of religious and technological world-views, celebrating the interconnectedness of reality and the intrinsic value of all that exists. "Ecocentrism gives primacy to the *oikos*, the household; the household that consists of life and its environment, rather than life in isolation from the environment" (138).

Chapter five is a treatise on the ethics of sustainable development. It is a development envisaged on ecologically and socially sound principles. A balanced economic and ecological consideration is the need of the hour. It is to build up an enduring economy, which differentiates between needs

and wants. Ethics of sustainable development proposes a progress for all, "not just for human species but also for all creation" (191).

The final chapter is on the ethics of partnership. This is a discussion on the underlying cosmic principle of communion. Ethics of partnership is a call to follow the metaphor of friend or befriending earth. Based on the teachings of Jesus Christ, the author argues, "We have constructed for ourselves the metaphor of 'Lord'. However, this alienating, dominating metaphor has to give way to a gracious one – 'friend', so that humans become friends to all creation." (194).

The call to replace anthropocentrism with ecocentrism may mislead the readers and end up in chaos, for want of orientation or direction in the practice of ecological ethics. The author seems to present an alternative universal model, i.e., a global environmental ethic founded on *oikos* at the expense of *theos* or God or the Ultimate Reality in the treatise. Though mention is made of *cosmotheandricism*, there is no sufficient space and importance given to the focal point for a balanced and healthy relationship with earth.

It seems to me that the author uncritically follows the comment of Lynn White Jr. (see pages ix and 198), which is the point of departure in the book. In any case, the comment of Lynn White Jr. is concerning the western form of Christianity. One shall not forget or neglect the eastern Christian traditions recognising, respecting and responding to the world creatively and positively, always faithfully continuing the biblical approach towards creation.

The Motherly Earth comes at a right time for a better cause, which is to be welcomed by people of all walks of life. Its simple and direct style makes the book readable and accessible to all. All is healthy, all is holy and all is happy, when the inherent web of interrelationship is perceived, preserved and promoted through a process of integration. That is the book all about.

Paulachan Kochappilly

John E. Sequeira, *Discipline of Dialogue: An Appraisal of Gadamer's Hermeneutics*, Mysore: Dyanavana Publications, 2002, pages xiv + 349. ISBN: 81-901250-1-X.

The work, though a revised edition of the doctoral research completed in 1999, even with the thorough rearrangement of the original text, still carries the impression of a research study with its sixty three pages endnotes (235-298) and forty seven pages (299-346) Bibliography. These references are, indeed, a veritable help to those who want to study the teaching of Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002) in depth.

The primary problem in philosophical investigation for Gadamer is the pre-understanding for every understanding. Author writes: "Understanding is arrived at primarily within the context of a tradition, through a dialogical process between a written text and the interpreter. In this dialogical process the gulf of time between the text and the interpreter is bridged, thus arriving at a 'fusion of horizons'" (2). Understanding has to be seen as an interpretation expressed in language and so language presents the central issue of Gadamer's universal theory of hermeneutics.

Man lives by language, responding with words to the claims of Being, and thus man's nature itself has to be defined as linguistic. The author quotes the following as expressive of the central operative principle of Gadamer's hermeneutic philosophy: "All understanding is linguistic and linguisticity of understanding is the concretion of the effective historical consciousness" (3).

The three chapters of the first part "The Grounding of the Philosophical Hermeneutics" expose the theoretical claims of Gadamerian hermeneutics, grounding it in its historical context of the romantic hermeneutics of Schleiermacher, and in the ambitious plan of Dilthey to establish hermeneutics as the universal methodological basis of social science. It is, however, in Heidegger's phenomenological hermeneutics of situated nature of *Dasein* that Gadamer finds support for his theory of hermeneutic understanding in the foreconceptions of understanding. For this purpose he rehabilitates prejudices, traditions, and authority as prerequisites for every understanding. This situatedness in tradition is thoroughly linguistic and that makes understanding dialectical in character.

Language for Gadamer is not only a medium of hermeneutic experience, but it also determines the hermeneutic object and the hermeneutic act.

The special feature of this work is that Gadamer is also presented in the polemic of the hermeneutics that is taking place today, with a special reference to Gadamer-Habermas debate. Habermas opposes Gadamer's hermeneutics of tradition with his critique of ideology. He holds that by asserting tradition too positively, Gadamer has driven out critical authority out of the field of hermeneutic altogether.

In a salient criticism of Gadamer, the author affirms that his reliance on Augustine and Aquinas also cannot be justified. Concerning this the author writes: "He expressly accepts his indebtedness to Augustine speaking about the *verbum interius* as the foundation for his language of philosophy. However, when one goes through the works of Gadamer in detail one finds that Gadamer does not follow either of them in their linguistic conclusion. Rather, he uses those aspects of their philosophical thought which are useful to arrive at his own conclusions. In doing so he not only does injustice to the thought pattern of Augustine and Thomas but fails seriously to give a comprehensive theory of language of his own." (222-223).

The work under review is a lucid exposition of the hermeneutic philosophy of Gadamer evolving it in terms of its proponents and opponents. It is certainly a useful and remarkable addition to the field of hermeneutic philosophy.

Thomas Kadankavil