

## BOOK REVIEW

**Paulachan P. Kochappilly C.M.I.,** *Celebrative Ethics*, Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 1999, pp. ix+511. Rs.200.00; US\$ 20.00 ISBN: 81-86861-12-2.

A very adequate definition of a person is that he/she is a celebrative being, one who has to live this and the after-life in celebration. Thereby human being becomes like god, His living image and likeness. Celebration, one may say, is the essence of Godhead. He is, to use the Indian terminology, *saccidananda*. The more one grows in the celebrative dimension, the more one becomes an authentic human being. Every sphere of human life is to be filled with celebrative joy and exultation. It is the merit of Dr. Kochappilly that he has rediscovered the celebrative aspect of ethics or moral theology, which generally has a melancholic face. Moral theology is usually understood as a compendium of rules and regulations, which puts in fetters the freedom of human beings. Hence the attempt of the author to delve into the celebrative depths of Christian life deserves unreserved appreciation and wholehearted laudation.

This is a doctoral dissertation defended at the *Academia Alfonsiana*, Rome in 1998. The director of the dissertation, P. Real Tremblay CSsR has all praises for this work. He finds the work an attempt to respond to the demands of the Vatican II in developing a morality rooted in the mystery of Christ and revealed in the celebration of the mystery of Eucharist. According to him the author has verified the christological and sacramental foundation of Christian morality examining specifically the ecological issues. The second director, Msgr. Basilio Petra calls the thesis a praiseworthy piece of work which elaborates Moral Theology with clarity and originality from an oriental perspective. He thinks that the author has demonstrated the potentiality of the liturgy in shaping appropriate attitudes in the celebrants to respond to the ethical challenges posed by contemporary world illustrating the ecological issues of our time.

"As one celebrates so one lives, as one lives so one celebrates" - this seems to be the motto of Kochappilly's life. He, one may say without exaggeration, tries to live this truth in its totality with an enthusiastic conviction and zealous vigour. One may find in his book his very soul. The author is indeed a celebrative man. Dr. Kochappilly, who is at present

professor of Moral Theology at Samanvaya Theology College, Bhopal and Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram, Bangalore, thus summarizes the main thrusts of the book: rediscover the celebrational foundation of Christian life; receive Christian ethics a support and guide to celebrate life; relive the mystery of Christ in order to be conformed to the mind of Christ; regain a sense of hierarchy of values in pluralistic society; revisit Christian approach to the ecological problem in the light of the celebration of the Eucharist; rejoice with the Lord of all creation and celebration. This target is indeed, very lofty and commendable. Let us try to have a survey of the contents of the book.

The study is divided into three parts. After the general introduction where the structure, scope and method of the study are pointed out, the author takes up the theme of Celebrative Ethics. His purpose is to find out a method and means of doing Moral Theology based on community celebration, which involves a "life-transmission of the community contained in the shared story for a present appreciation and appropriation of them, which may lead to a fundamental transformation of the participants" (p.28). In the first part a phenomenological study of three types of religious celebration, namely, the *Ramlila*, of the Hindus, the *Passover Seder* of Jewish religion and the *Syro Malabar Qurbana*, the liturgy of the St. Thomas Christians of India, is taken up. In these three celebrations the author finds some salient features: gathering, story of memory, pastness-presentness-futureness of the story, recalling-reliving-renewing, reconciliation-participation-thankfulness, mystery and withdrawal. According to the author these celebrations "constitute the participants in the community, offer them a sense of identity and perpetuate a tradition" (p.100). The focus in the first part is on the *Syro Malabar Qurbana*. Kochappilly shows that the "sacred liturgy in the Church is a corporate celebration of Christian existence" (p.225). Then he concentrates on the values of this liturgy and tries to draw a working definition on the theory of Celebrative Ethics. He offers a long and apparently complex definition of Celebrative Ethics: "an event of manifesting values, intensively and extensively, through live transmission, which leads to the transformation of persons participating in the celebration through appreciation and appropriation of them from within, springing from a lived and living tradition capable of facing the challenges of ever old and ever new circumstances, conferring on them a global

orientation and a particular perspective for decision making and moral action" (p.257).

Part II is devoted, to use the words of the author, "to put to the test this theory in the context of a moral issue in order to substantiate its veracity and applicability" (p.258). For this he undertakes a case study of ecological issues of our times. He begins with a survey of different paradigms offered by contemporary theologians of ecology. Kochappilly studies Thomas Berry, Sallie McFague, Sean McDonagh, Bernard Haering, and John Carmody, and evaluates their theories. He comes to the conclusion that most of these authors do not give due importance to the centrality of Christ and the revelation we have in him. Therefore, he attempts to propose a personal approach to the ecological issue based on "the insights of the triad, Nature-Neighbour-Other, having its radical rootedness in nature, horizontal openness to the human being and vertical oneness with the Other" (p.357). The author finds a symbol for his paradigm: the Cross of Christ which reconciles Nature-Neighbour-the Other.

In the third part of the study Kochappilly tries to verify the ethical theory of the Celebrative Ethics with a special reference to the celebration of *Syro Malabar Qurbana*. He concentrates on some of the decisive moments of that celebration and finds that "there is a progressive programmatic celebration of the Christian world view, commencing with the introduction to the cosmic mystery leading to thanksgiving to the cosmic reality" (p.407). According to him this liturgy offers the participants a programmatic celebration of the values of the Christian world vision in an ever progressive and transforming manner. In the last chapter the author focuses his attention on "Christen commitment in the world as a possible response to the challenging issue of the ecology and the celebration of the *Qurbana*" (p.454). He highlights the following values to overcome the present ecological problems: the Lordship of God over creation; inter-relatedness to the glory to God, peace on earth and hope to humans; a transforming world and growing friendship; a triad on Nature-Neighbour-the Other; the image of servant in service of and fellowship with creation for the stability and the prosperity of the world; commitment towards cosmic and eschatological dimensions of creation; justice towards beings; a vision of the sacrifice and a sense of moderation

in the use of goods; in the eucharistic approach; and to be a celebrant of creation. According to the author this cosmic vision of the *Qurbana* offers "a fitting and lively manifestation and transmission of Christian cosmic values", "which is capable of motivating humans to commit themselves in the world, maintaining mastery and mystery as celebrants of creation. After frankly admitting a possible criticism to this theory of Celebrative Ethics in *Qurbana*, the author who is zealous devotee of Orientalism concludes thus: "let the celebration of the holy mystery in the temple of the Lord, the house of the Father, enable us to recognize human beings as temples of the holy Spirit, creation as a temple of God, where God-with-us dwells and enables us to contemplate and encounter Him which will lead us to celebrate our life now and forever in giving glory to God, establishing peace on earth and hope to human beings" (pp.469-470). This is an adequate and appropriate concluding wish to this laborious and elaborate work.

Kochappilly deserves our appreciation and applause. He has unearthed an important dimension in Syro Malabar liturgy as well as in Moral Theology. Everyone may not agree to the theories and perspectives proposed by the author. At least one has to admire him for his passionate and wholehearted defense of his thesis. The author seems to revel himself in verbosity and articulation gymnastics, the victim of which is conciseness and lucidity of exposition. Perhaps he may have been unconsciously influenced by the Syriac syntactic style.

**Dr. Paul Kalluveetil, CMI**

**Thomas Kadankavil, cmi (ed.)**, *Little Traditions and National Culture*, Bangalore: Journal of Dharma and Dharmaram Publications, 2000, pp.325. Rs.250.00; US\$ 18.00.

M.G.S Naryan, veteran historian of India, has written a small book with the name *Cultural Symbiosis in Kerala* (1972). He emphasizes the harmony and cultural symbiosis that came to prevail in Kerala from very ancient times up to the advent of the Portuguese. Hindus, Jains, Buddhists, Christians, Jews, and later, Muslims both Indian and foreign, lived here in harmony.

This picture of Kerala is applicable to the whole of India. The age-old civilization of India is pluralistic. This country has been continuously sustained and nurtured by the diversity of its peoples, races, cultures, religions, traditions and languages, and all these have been an integral part of one nation. A cosmopolitanism has emerged through centuries-long experiments in this nation. India lives not only in villages, but it also has one of the world's oldest continuous tradition of the urban living, centering on some of the world's oldest cities. "These urban centres were always the sites of encounters, interactions and cultural confrontations among not only known communities and races that could be called distant neighbours but among strangers or alien communities from outside India..." (Ashish Nandy).

Even caste in some cases cuts across religions; for example, the Jats and Rajputs come in three varieties: Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. It is this kind of tradition to which Gandhiji thought of linking his personal fate, when he made his famous claim that he was Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian and Jew, and so were others. There are in India 430 communities, and 15% of the Indian communities have more than one religious identity.

Suddenly we find an affront to this pluralistic vision in what is called 'Hindutva'. It champions a monolithic religious nationalism based on one culture and one religion, the Hindu religion. This is a sort of tyranny of the majority community that challenges the rights of the minorities to have their distinctive identities.

This context seems to have arisen from a fear on the part of a section of educated Hindus that the secular model of governance of India had become, for political reasons, partial towards the ethnic, religious and other minority groups. These Hindus felt threatened not only politically and economically, but also culturally and religiously. This led them to believe that the Indian 'Nation' is a culturally homogeneous unit, and that the best way to integrate all sub-societies and communities is by imposing the so-called 'National' cultural forms and rules on all sections of the Indian people.

It is with this emerging dangerous context in view that the organizers of the book under review have collected a number of essays, and published

them in the present work. Of these essays by different authors (thirteen of them), many deal with subaltern or Dalit religious communities such as Paniyas, various groups of Adivasis, Vishwakarmas, Malayarayangans, followers of Ayyaveli, neo-Buddhists, and so on. Other essays comment on some biblical themes or current phenomena: protest, education and development, globalization, the least and the forgotten. The collection helps not only to update some of the available data, but more to highlight the problems that small groups ("little traditions") are facing to keep up their identity and at the same time belong to national culture. The book proposes cosmopolitanism as an alternative to the existing secular model of governance (which appears partial to minorities), and to the emerging nationalist model based on 'Hindutva'.

A.M.M.

**Sr. Cleopatra, cmc, *Poems of Life* (Enlarged Millennium Edition), Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2000, pp.76. Rs. 45.00; US \$ 3.00.**

Sr. Cleopatra, a scholar in and of English literature, has to her credit a number of books and poems, essays and articles in various professional journals and periodicals. She has edited a few journals, souvenirs and books. *The Novels of Robert Penn Warren* is one of her major contributions.

The book under review is an enlarged millennium edition of her earlier composition with the same title *Poems of Life* (1988). The original edition contained thirty poems, while this revised millennium edition has fifty. Each poem has picture illustration, which adds to the artistic quality and worth of the work. There is no indication as to what are new and what are old. The poems are simple and vivid presentation of human experiences, realistic, crisp and mystical. At the same time all are profound in thought. They touch one's heartstrings and make them reverberate. Once you begin to read the book you are tempted to read all the poems.

A.M.M.