

## BOOK REVIEW

Saju Chackalackal, ed., *New Horizons of Indian Christian Living: A Festschrift in Honour of Prof. Dr. Vadakethala Francis Vineeth CMI*, Bengaluru: Vidyavanam Publications / Coimbatore: Preshitha Communications, 2009. Pages xii + 932; ISBN: 978-81-905799-6-4; Price: Rs. 900, USD 50.

When philosophical and theological activities and education have a heart that is rooted in the heavens and fruition deeply and widely into the earth, it constantly touches the 'that' and 'what' of the given, due to the agent's intellectual honesty. One is then surely on the spiritual, or rather, mystical, path. Simplicity is the mark of such a person. Here is an example of the intellectual life leading the subject into its fruition, the mystical. Dr. Francis Vineeth, with his doctorates in Philosophy (Gregorian University, Rome) and Theology (Oxford University), has been for decades such a teacher of hearts to tens of thousands of seminarians and religious (at Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram, Bangalore) and also spiritual master to thousands of priests, religious and lay persons (as the founder and director of Vidyavanam Ashram).

The present work, in its 6 parts, consisting of 51 articles, introduces, reflects and celebrates this philosophical, theological and spiritual master and the many aspects of his contributions to the Indian and global Church. The editor of this Festschrift has effectively taken pains to make it a monumental beginning in pouring light into the life and work of such a widely known personage. The 51 articles, ranging from his life's ideals and experiences to his biblical, theological, missiological, spiritual, and philosophical concerns, reflect the sources and results of such a life of integration of Philosophy, Theology, and Spirituality.

Let me put in gist what the reader would find in this volume. Part One leads the reader into the principle and foundation of the dynamics of the search for the ineffable and the Indian Christian life in particular and in general, and then into the person, the mystic and the brother in Dr. Vineeth. One is, thus, prepared to perceive the mystic knowing-becoming possibilities offered by the Vidyavanam Ashram Chapel and then to delve into the concept of Ashram Spirituality and its revival by Vidyavanam.

Part Two is an exploration into Indian biblical interpretations of some themes dear to Dr. Vineeth: discipleship, the mystery of the Divine-Human as inspired in the Fathers of the Church, lowliness as the channel of Grace, the human family in creation, the concept of repentance epitomized

by Mary Magdalene, the Pauline cosmic Christology, and Indian Christian eco-spirituality.

Part Three presents in an interreligious way the fundamental comparative themes in the concepts of God, the nature of God, Incarnation and the modes of contact between God and human, and also reflects how Dharmaram has contributed to such an Indian Christian theological edifice.

Part Four deals with another group of themes that Dr. Vineeth has preoccupied himself with: how and why the Indian Churches inculturate themselves, cooperate among themselves and dialogue with other religions and, thus, create one and the same musical piece that attracts all Indian societies of the globalized world unto eternity.

Part Five, central to Dr. Vineeth's concerns, is a development of Spirituality into mystic living. The stress here has been on priests and consecrated persons and their holistic formation towards harmony with the Divine through integration with Nature. One must admit that this Part is a restatement of the evolutionary importance of the mystical over what one usually understands as spiritual.

Part Six is a unique philosophical synthesis of Christian life with the philosophical, theological, missiological, and spiritual sources of Christian life – the culminating point of Dr. Vineeth's thought. I suggest this part as a must for all readers who share the concerns of Dr. Vineeth.

The editor, with his knowledge and experience of the person and contributions of his confrere, Dr. Vineeth, has done well to produce a tribute of scholarly articles that not only reflect the latter's thought, but also is a source book in Spirituality, Theology, the Science of Formation and Philosophy in India. In this manner, this book of contributions from experts is recommended to scholars in all these fields as most quotable and valuable – *particularly if the readers would prefer being touched during its perusal by the spiritually formative methods, processes, and worth of Philosophy and Theology in Christian living.*

Anyone in the Indian seminaries and in the field of Spirituality and Mysticism in India knows the way in which metaphysics made Dr. Vineeth explore Theology and, finally, be lost in the Lord. Students, colleagues, and friends of Dr. Chackalackal know the intellectual astuteness and moral commitment with which he has planned and brought out this Festschrift. I invite experts as well as students of Theology, Spirituality and Philosophy to check the truth of these claims of mine from its pages!

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