

## BOOK REVIEWS

**Kuncheria Pathil, *Trends in Indian Theology*, Bangalore: ATC Publications, 2005, pages 177, ISBN: 81-7086-364-3.**

Kuncheria Pathil, the author of this book, is a well-known Indian theologian who knows the subject he deals with. *Trends in Indian Theology* is a very relevant and masterly work with a critical approach to theological developments in India, its various trends, agenda, and articulations. "Every new generation has to struggle and give an account of their faith in their own times, in response to their contexts and new challenges" (10). This is exactly what he has done through this book spread through six chapters. The first chapter is "An Indian Theology: A Historical Survey" which runs up to 50 pages. Divided in three parts (i. in the context of cultural, philosophical, and religious realities; ii. of socio-economic and political realities; and iii. of contemporary scenario of pluralism and convergence), this survey does a very praiseworthy work giving us a brief but very reliable account of theologizing in India. The author does justice to one of his own passing statements written down in this survey: "India's rich religious experience, our time-old tradition of harmony among the plurality of religion, the nation's resolve to construct a new society based on equal justice and freedom for all, and our strong commitment to eliminate poverty and misery, and solidarity with the poor and the marginalized, all these were seen as constituent parts of the 'new humanity' given in Jesus Christ" (42). Accordingly, this survey briefly comments on our time-old religious pluralism, philosophical heritage, beginnings of Indian Christian theology, Christian ashram movement, emergence of socio-economic consciousness, Indian theology of liberation, voice of the women theologians, and the dalit theology, etc. The survey concludes with a sad, yet hopeful, tone that our attempt to carve out various dimensions of Indian theology is not in its brightest sunshine due to several ecclesial or institutional limitations in the centres of theological formation; it is hopeful because of the emergence of new faculties of theology in India, new consciousness of human dignity and equality to all as a priority in all Christian agenda (60-61).

If we have a new consciousness, about which we are happy, and if we sincerely think that this will bring happiness to others, we will

spontaneously share this to others, that "our joy may be complete" (1 Jn. 1: 4). This is true with regard to the church. Hence, "the Church is missionary by its very nature" (63). In the second chapter, Pathil deals with our missionary call, along with its relevance and obligation, to see "the seeds of the Word lie hidden in the cultural and religious traditions of the people" (72; AG no. 11). The author quotes several papal documents on mission and proclamation and clarifies the mission's central role and its various paths, such as, witnessing, proclamation, dialogue, liberation, etc. "Evangelization or the mission of the church is one, namely, partnership in the realization of God's plan of salvation in history and beyond it. This one mission as well as its goal is reached through different paths" (78; *Redemptoris Missio*, nos. 41-60). Dealing with the priorities of the paths of mission in India, the author writes:

In the actual context of religious pluralism and the immense human misery and utter poverty, the primary path of the church's mission in India seems to be to enter into dialogue with all the major religions of the country in creating a just and better society based on the vision of Jesus and on the authentic human/Gospel/kingdom values. In such a context the proclamation of Jesus shall not be seen as something totally different from the kingdom values (87).

As I have mentioned in the beginning of this paragraph, real proclamation is the joyous sharing of one's transformed consciousness in Christ to others, consciousness of Jesus whom one has touched, experienced, and who has filled the heart with joy and will fill others' hearts also in the same way. Thus seen, the kingdom of God on earth is the shaping of a visible face of God on earth, first and foremost through the visible face of Jesus Christ, which is the "image of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15; *Redemptoris Missio*, no. 18) and through every human person who participates in the fullness of this grace. Naturally, you enter into anything which this consciousness demands, suffering, sacrifice, service, and even death.

The religious pluralism was touched upon in the Chapter 2 in connection with proclamation. The third chapter is exclusively devoted for that. The author traces three stages in the Christian approach to other faiths in which they are looked upon from different perspectives. They are: (i) "merely man-made, magic-dominated manipulation of the divine" (91), (ii) "they are accepted as containing truths and human values" and, hence, deserving a positive consideration, and (iii) they are "accepted as 'ways of

salvation' to their believers" (92). Even a great saint like Francis Xavier was not free of the negative impression the missionaries maintained in the first stage. "When the great missionary Francis Xavier wrote, 'the true God cannot dwell among heathen or hear their prayers ... the idols of the heathen are of the devil and they must be destroyed at the first opportunity', he was only echoing the attitude and thinking of the church of his times" (91). Today's church has made great progress in its understanding of other religions. In this historical review, Pathil gives us certain glimpses of the biblical, the ancient, and medieval Catholic writers' views on other religions. The Protestants' formula *sola fide, sola gratia* and *sola scripturas*, as well as the well-known dictum "outside the church there is no salvation," are also discussed. Coming to the modern period, the schools of Theo-centrism and Christo-centrism are treated very briefly. In conclusion he says: "It is the task of Christian theology to continuously struggle to relate the revelation in Christ with revelation elsewhere in other religions, peoples and their cultures... All religions have to make a common pilgrimage and be committed to an open process of dialogue and collaboration for a better humanity and for the fullness of truth" (115-116).

In the fourth chapter, "Theology of the Kingdom and Christian Identity" is proposed for discussion. Three points are presented: (i) Theology of the Kingdom of God, (ii) Relation between the Kingdom and the Church, and (iii) Question of Christian Identity. The theology of the kingdom is developed from the use of the word 'kingdom' in the Old and New Testaments and Jesus' subtle correctives to the nationalistic and political over-tones given to the concept of the kingdom (122). "Kingdom of God is a present reality... However, kingdom of God transcends the present world and is also a future reality" (124). According to the dynamics of the kingdom, the present should always be judged and transcended by what was revealed in the past in Jesus and what we hope to come in future. It is in constant struggle for realizing God's will upon the earth that we could realize them. As an earthly reality, it is deeply related to the church and as our church is made of human individuals, finally, it is a question of our own Christian identity, which is well defined by the Council of Jerusalem as "'faith in Christ' and the presence of and 'obedience to the Holy Spirit'" (131; Acts 15). We need all other things discussed in the chapter, though most of them are subject to change.

Things that are subject to change are important, as far as the living church is concerned. Hence, Pathil treats the question of inculturation as something that should happen as the kingdom of God takes shape in any land. Fifth chapter is mainly a review of the historical process of inculturation down through the centuries, namely, from the period of intense inculturation (1-800 AD), the period of centralization (800-1600 AD), the period of cultural colonialism (1600-1900 AD), and the period of re-discovery (1900 AD onwards). In his concluding remarks on this chapter he rightly says: "inculturation happens spontaneously and naturally when a Christian community lives its faith in its own cultural settings in an open and dynamic relationship. Inculturation cannot be fabricated by some experts in some isolated liturgical centres or libraries. It is by and large the work of the entire Christian community, of course, members having different roles in the process" (153).

The final chapter is a "Re-thinking on Theological Education in India." This chapter begins with a discussion with the late theologian Sebastian Kappan whose writings have shed much light on some of the irrelevant aspects of our contemporary theological education and the need of re-thinking the same today. Three models are proposed for this purpose: (i) Socio-economic Contexts, (ii) Religio-cultural Contexts, and (iii) Ecumenical Contexts of India. In the third section, the sad story of divisions within the church is very concisely, yet touchingly, presented. Thus, the ecumenical context is vividly explained (167-174).

As I went on reading Pathil's work, one thought that continuously came to me is the struggle of the church to be faithful to its faith in Christ. Though individual errors and even misuse of power are possible in the church, there is a very painful, ongoing, communitarian search in the church to read what God has revealed to us in and through Jesus Christ. This search, humble yet determined, always seeks the assistance of the Holy Spirit which is promised to the church by the Lord. Once it is discerned, the church states it boldly, whether it is to the Patriarch of Constantinople, the centre of the eastern empire of Rome (168), or to a simple Jew who baptized himself. "Pope Innocent III (1206) instructed that his baptism is invalid. But he added that the rite or sacrament of baptism was not necessary for salvation. 'Man is saved not by the rite of baptism, but by the faith of which baptism is only a visible sign'" (110).

I look with delight at the brevity and clarity in Pathil's presentation. As regards the theological formation in India, I fully agree with him that

there is something very seriously wrong in our present formation programme and I do encourage the very relevant suggestions made at the end of some chapters. Moreover, I feel that something is seriously missing which is not properly addressed to in our contemporary theological discussions. This is the reality of a priest's or seminarian's personal relationship with Jesus Christ, his deep faith, intimacy with Christ, and absolute trust in and surrender to him. For this purpose priests and seminarians should have time to be with Jesus. Jesus said: "I have called you to be with me" (Mk. 3:13). It seems that in our heavy schedule of programmes, seminarians as well as priests in ministry do not have sufficient time to be alone with Jesus. Study on Jesus Christ, whether to make an Indian theology based on classical Indian works or to articulate liberation theology in answer to our social context, is only one of the paths we choose to realize Jesus in us. The cardinal point is that the priest or seminarian be one with Jesus in mind, heart, values, and life-style. This means a total transformation to the person of Jesus, and this cannot be replaced by Indian spiritual traditions or social contexts. This needs very deep faith, commitment, and a culture of meditation. Transformation takes place in the realm of faith, not in the realm of reason, though reason is very well used to explain and to expound. Only through faith we directly touch and experience God and this has a very personal and intimate dimension as well. Great saints of the church, like Francis of Assisi, John of the Cross, Teresa of Avila, or even the young Therese of Lisieux, some of whom are acclaimed to be the doctors of the church, invite us to a different experience. They have done great things in this world, the fruit of which we still enjoy and their books are some of the best sellers even in the contemporary spiritual world. Why most of our seminarians and perhaps also priests do not find sufficient time or interest in these kinds of writings or in any spirituality leading to mysticism. Can this be an ideal situation for India and its theologizing? This is only a question lingering in my mind and I earnestly think that our Indian Church is very poor in contemplative prayer and mystical traditions of the church. Pathil does make a couple of references to this, when he deals with the Ashram movement and the need of deeper faith. But faith, to be joyful and fecundative, should be deeply personal as Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane and in many other situations when he raised his heart spontaneously to his Father.

I very much appreciate what Pathil has said in and through this short but solid book. Pathil does not claim to have made any new discovery in this book. This is not the purpose. However, it opens our eyes and leads us through the real issues centring on or deeply pertaining to our theological issues in India. Each issue is treated first by a short and substantial appraisal of what has been done so far, and then by a smart and penetrative look into the present, all of which are well analysed, summarized, and documented, and are followed by insightful concluding remarks by way of suggestions or pointers for future discussion. The style of writing is lucid and clear and you do not need a second reading to follow his text. I find this a very good book, not occupying much space, but supplying us with a lot of information with regard to ecclesial and theological events in India, with accurate historical dates and ecclesiastical documents. I would recommend this as a book, handy enough, for immediate reference regarding many of our most relevant theological issues, much discussed in India today.

V. F. Vineeth

**Raimon Panikkar, *Christophany: The Fullness of Man***, trans. Alfred DiLascia, Faith Meets Faith Series, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2004, pages xxi + 214, ISBN: 1-57075-564-7.

*Christophany* is the translation of the Italian original, *La pienezza dell'uomo: una cristofania* (Milan: Jaca Books, 1999). It is noteworthy that the English title of the book has reversed the order of the original. The book contains an interesting foreword by Francis D'Sa under the title: "Fullness of 'Man' or Fullness of 'the Human'?" (xi-xxi). Here he notes that the core of the book is on the mystical experience of Jesus in terms of advaitic thought. Panikkar tries to interpret three important utterances of Jesus, namely: "Abba, Father," "The Father and I are one," and "It is good that I leave." A basic assertion of the book is that incarnation is "*incarnatio continua*."

The book is divided into three parts: The Christophanic Experience (part 1), The Mysticism of Jesus the Christ: The Experience of Jesus (part 2), and Christophany: The Christic Experience (part 3). The first two parts are divided into three chapters each, while the last part is divided into nine *Sūtras*. The book concludes with an epilogue (that employs poetic

language and some hymns), a final word (quotes from Jn. 1:6 and St. Bonaventure), a detailed glossary, bibliography, and a general index.

Panikkar's point of departure lies in traditional Christology. We cannot, however, fully agree with his comment that "Christology has been developed only within the framework of the Western world" (7), for Christology was developed also within the framework of the *Eastern* world. He further observes: "despite its Trinitarian soul, Christology has not really freed itself from the monotheism it inherited from the Abrahamic tradition" (7). This reflects his mind that Christology should have really freed itself from the Abrahamic tradition. This calls for a critical response, for Christology has no need of being liberated from the monotheism of Abrahamic tradition.

We would like to point out that faith in the Trinity is not at all a denial or substitution of monotheism as religion, but its radicalization; for both are based on the religious experience of God's revelation (Rahner). The monotheism inherited from the Abrahamic tradition not only can very well go hand in hand with the faith in a Triune God, it also does. Jewish monotheism has been really open to a Trinitarian faith: Jesus himself stands in this tradition. We do not deny the fact that Jewish monotheism has militated against a Trinitarian vision of God. The heresies of Monarchianism and Unitarianism are examples of this. The fault is, however, not with the monotheism of the Abrahamic tradition as such, but in the way this has been understood.

The new concept in the book is Christophany; the author explains and develops it in comparison with and contrast to Christology. It takes nothing away from Christology but is open to the reality of the Spirit; it takes into account the world's other religious traditions, and is open to a dialogue with them; moreover, it is more experiential than Christology.

The book is all about the mysticism of Jesus Christ. This is elaborated with the help of three select *mahāvākyas* (great assertions or statements) from the Gospels, namely, "Abba, Father" (Mk. 14:36); "I and the Father are one" (Jn. 10:30), and "It is good that I leave" (Jn. 16:7). Regarding the first, Panikkar argues that Jesus is a natural son of God not solely through his divine nature but also through his human nature (94f.). This implies that we too are God's natural children, not merely children by adoption. Panikkar clarifies further that Jesus is the natural son of God in a metaphorical sense. Here we have a natural metaphor, while the talk of adoptive sonship employs a cultural metaphor.

In the last part, Panikkar formulates nine thought provoking and insightful *sūtras*. In explanation of the first *sūtra* (Christ is the Christian symbol for the whole of reality) Panikkar affirms that the whole of reality could be called "Father, Christ, Holy Spirit." In this connection he speaks of the following difference between incarnation and *avatāra*. According to him, "the homeomorphic equivalent of Christ, in a comparative study, is not that of an *avatāra*, a descent of the divine," for, "an *avatāra* is not a real being in the world of the *samsāra* but a true manifestation of the divine in docetic form... Krishna is not a man; he is a God, a manifestation of God in human form. Christ ... is neither a member of the pantheon nor a realized, divinized individual; his divinization is not an accident. Christ is the very incarnation of God, his first-born" (146-7). The difference seems to lie in being a *real* being (incarnation) and taking an *apparent* form (*avatāra*). The difference seems to be, however, not crucial or essential, because the *avatāra* is recognized as "a manifestation of God in human form," "a true manifestation of the divine," so much so that "Krishna is a God."

It may be noted that when the author speaks of Christ he does not mean Jesus the Christ. We shall see below his ideas on the relationship between Jesus and the Christ.

Further, the following statement of the author presents certain difficulties: "Within a monotheistic theology, the incarnation ... represents ... a great difficulty. The Absolute cannot become man – nor can anything else. Within a Trinitarian vision, however, the centrality of Christ with respect to the whole of reality is a direct consequence of the incarnation" (147). As has already been pointed out above, we would like to maintain that monotheistic and Trinitarian theologies are not really contradictory, for monotheism is not the same as Unitarianism. Christian monotheism is neither monism nor monarchianism. In other words, Christian faith is monotheistic and Trinitarian; it is Trinitarian monotheism.

According to the second *sūtra*, "the Christian recognizes Christ *in* and *through* Jesus." Jesus of Nazareth is here the "revelation of Christ" (149). This implies that although Jesus is Christ, "Christ cannot be identified completely with Jesus of Nazareth" (150). For the author "Jesus is the symbol of Christ" (151). This leads us conclude that for Panikkar Christ is another word for the Logos or the Son. This seems to be corroborated by his description of the Trinity as Father, Christ, and Holy Spirit. The original meaning of Christ is here radically changed.



In the traditional understanding one could very well say that Jesus is the symbol of the Logos, for he is the incarnate Logos. At the same time, precisely because of the incarnation, the Logos himself is the very person of Jesus; Jesus and the Logos are, therefore, personally identical. We can, however, distinguish between Jesus, on the one hand, and the different stages and phases of the Logos and of Christ, on the other. In this special sense we agree with Panikkar that Christ cannot be identified completely with Jesus. The Christ of whom St. Paul speaks of in 1 Cor. 10:4, the glorified Christ, cosmic Christ, eschatological Christ, etc., are, of course, not completely identical with the earthly Jesus of Nazareth, although they are different forms of the *same* person. In an analogous way this holds true also of each human being with respect to the different stages of growth and development. What one is as an adult is different from what one was as a child; however, one is personally the same. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Heb. 13:8).

The distinction between Christ and Jesus in the above sense does not mean any personal separation. To state that Christ cannot be fully identified with Jesus does not mean that there are others who are also Christ in the same way. In other words, we cannot hold that the Christ (or Logos) has many incarnations other than in Jesus of Nazareth. However, to speak of other possible and actual "manifestations" of the Christ (Logos) in the sense of Panikkar is a different matter.

The sixth *sūtra* runs as follows: "The protological, historical, and eschatological Christ is a unique and selfsame Reality, distended in time, extended in space, and intentional in us" (165). This contains valid insights on deeper meanings of religion, the world, and incarnation. The author expounds it interestingly. The seventh *sūtra* deals with incarnation as inculturation. In the ninth *sūtra* Panikkar comes back to his celebrated "cosmotheandric" or "theanthropocosmic" intuition and sees in Christ the "conjunction" and reconciliation between the divine, human, and the universe.

The book with its Christophany reads like a mystical poetical vision rather than a systematic treatise on Christology or Trinity. It contains, at the same time, many valid insights and novel ways of thinking combined with Panikkar's early reflections on Christ. It contains also a powerful appeal to social justice and solidarity. The meditations are at once Trinitarian and non-dualistic (advaitic). Certain passages contain, however,

ambiguities and confusions. This does not minimize the value and originality of the work.

**Sebastian Athappilly**

**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 and technological 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 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**

**Basudev Mishra, *Ritualistic Culture of Sri Jagannātha: As Revealed in Nīlādrimahōdaya*, Puri: Utkal Sanskrit Research Society, 2005, pages viii+140.**

*Ritualistic Culture of Sri Jagannātha* is an outstanding study on the cult of Jagannātha as revealed in the purāṇic *smārta* text, *Nīlādrimahōdaya* (NM). The name, a combination of *Nīlādri* (blue mountain) and *mahōdaya* (advent [of the Lord]), has an auspicious significance, as the Lord of the blue mountain refers to Sri Jagannātha. The work begins by narrating the story of Lord Jagannātha and gives detailed description of the festivals and rituals associated with the Jagannātha worship. It gives a descriptive picture of the injunctions in respect of rituals of Sri Jagannātha observed daily, monthly, and yearly relating to various occasions.

Unlike many texts relating to the rituals of the Jagannātha temple the author has succeeded in shedding new light on the rituals and their origin relating to Sri Jagannātha in the present work. This work is divided into seven chapters. The first chapter skilfully brings out the salient features of the NM along with a critical introduction while the second chapter deals with the evolution of Lord Sri Jagannātha, pointing to the evolutionary nature of the cult of Jagannātha before the NM and the establishment of Sri Jagannātha in NM.

While analyzing the festivals and rituals in the third chapter of the book, Mishra claims that the rituals adopted in the Jagannātha are much prior to that of the festivals celebrated in other regions. He asserts that the rituals of Jagannātha are influenced by the *tantras* whereas the festivals are influenced by the purāṇic *smārta-dharma*. In the fourth chapter an attempt is made to ascertain the influence of historical incidents upon NM and, thus, to base the originality of NM in connection with Jagannātha cult.

The impact of NM on the traditions and customs of Orissa is emphasized in the fifth chapter to the extent of considering NM as the functional source of customs of the region. The sixth chapter is centred on the philosophical basis of rituals and festivals of the Jagannātha cult. In the final chapter, the author concludes that the Jagannātha cult has been the greatest source of inspiration behind the cultural efflorescence of Orissa and has left its indelible imprint on all types of cultural activities. The author finds the cult of Jagannātha that transcends all the bounds of caste and creed as a true reflection of Indian society – social order, ethical character, and general consciousness of the people.

This research, attempting to codify, interpret, and clarify the significant rituals performed as part of the Jagannātha worship, as enshrined in the *Nilādrimahōdaya*, is a pioneering one. I appreciate the serious attempts made by the author in this regard.

**Sebastian Alackapally**