

MARIOLOGY AS CHAVARA VIEWED IT

It may be perhaps surprising to the readers to see this article under the title "Mariology as Chavara viewed it". All the historical documents concerning our beloved father, available up to now, show that he has never attempted to write a book on Mariology. Neither is his beloved name mentioned along with the Mariologists of our day. Chavara lived in a land where the pagan mysteries were in great vogue. The so-called great heads of Ecclesiastical lore with whom he had his daily contacts were not concerned with such questions of abstract Mariology, but rather left themselves buried in questions of practical importance such as local administration and allegiance to the Holy See. As the cardinal questions then prevailing in Kerala were not Marian truths, neither history nor time demanded him to delve into the depth of these truths. He spent his days and nights finding solutions for the problems of his day trying to stem the undercurrents of the Rocosianism, the then prevailing schism in

Kerala, above all vigorously travailing to see an indigenous congregation sprouted and blossomed in the religious soil of India. Thus occupied all through the days of his life our father was not in a position to write down a treatise on Mariology. Still it is astoundingly consoling to behold that in the limited pages of his literature his fluent pen has attempted to record almost all the Marian truths with the words of immortal melody. Unintentioned though they were, once these off-hand references are put together, they seem to stand for a consistent whole. In these few pages we will try to see them together and have an idea how did our father view Mary in her totality. We hope that our readers will not vainly expect the cut and dry solutions for the long-discussed problems of Mariology, to be found in these pages.

1. Mary the Mother of God:

The first and the fundamental reason for all the glories of Mary is the fact that She is the Mother of God. It is the pivot on which hinges^e the rest of her gifts and dignities. Our Father expresses this truth as follows:

പെറ്റൊരു മനുഷ്യനെ ജന്മനേതുകൾ വാങ്ങി
കൊടുവെക്കുക എന്നതാണ് ജന്മനേതുകൾ ചെയ്യുന്നത്. (1)

It is by giving birth that woman becomes 'the mother' to a child. By the very fact that a child is born there begins to exist a two-fold relation, namely a relation from the part of the child to his mother and a relation from the part of the mother to her child. If Mary is said to be the Mother of God it is only because ~~that~~ there exists in Mary a real relation towards Jesus as in the case of any mother towards her sons (2). The foundation of this transcendental relation is the act of giving birth. Father Chavara in his pretty lines of poetry clearly expresses this fundamental truth: പെറ്റൊരു മനുഷ്യനെ ജന്മനേ

It was in fact a poetical replica of those words of Mark (3) which has for several times echoed and re-echoed in his mind, but presented in the form of an affirmative answer.

(1) ആത്മീയതാലോകനം: ed. 1959, p. 36

(2) P. Gabriel M. Roschimi, O.S.M., "Mariologia", Tom. II, sectio 3, art. 3, 1947, p. 167

(3) Mc. 6, 3: "Is it not the son of Mary?"

But when the question is of the divine nativity there is a strange difference to be noticed. Here the maternal relation from the part of Mary to Jesus is real, but the filial relation from the part of Jesus to Mary is real only as far as His human nature is concerned. As regards the person of Jesus the relation He owes to Mary is but rational (4). The reason of this distinction is the divine personality of Jesus. Although the son of Mary has got two natures completely and unconfusedly existing in him (5); Still He has got only one person and that is the person of the Divine Word (6). Our Father has tried to insinuate all these beautiful ideas in his two lines of poetry above mentioned when he said:

കൊടുക്കുകയില്ല നമ്മുടെ നെടുമുടി.

The mother, who is ready to pay homage to the son when she had brought forth, is conscious of the fact, that the fruit of her womb

- (4) P. Gabriel, M. Roscini, op. cit. p. 169
- (5) Concilium Chalcedonense (contra Monophysistas), Definitio de duabus naturis divini. D. 148
- (6) Concilium Ephesinum (contra Nestorianos) Definitio de Incarnatione. D. 111 a

(7)

is God himself. Four months back Elizebeth said her "Blessed is the fruit of thy womb"(7). It is this blessedness of Divinity that forced Chavara to depict our Lady as ~~p~~aying homage to the very fruit of her womb. Generally mothers are inclined to lull and caress their babies: and for a poet as Chavara it is quite natural to get the instinct of picturing it in beautiful verses. But Chavara presents the picture quite otherwise in order to express the full contrast of divine nativity. The term 'കൊടുങ്കുടിയൻ' (which means the Lord of kings) is a hint to the absolute independence of his divine personality. Still does it express fully that the new-born baby is really God ? It may be because Chavara himself doubted this, he immediately composed another verse in clearer terms:

അച്ഛാമുതലാകന്റെ സൂക്ഷിക്കാവെന്നു
 എപ്പോൾ ചൈതന്യത്തെ തൂലാദൈവത്തിങ്കലാക്കി.(8)

Again Mary is adoring her own Son. But here the poet has revealed to us the mind with which Mary performs the act. She is conscious

(7) Lc. 1, 41

(8) അച്ഛാമുതലാകൻ. loc. cit.

that her child is her own creator:

അച്ഛാഴ്വരകൾക്കു സൃഷ്ടിതാ വെണമു്

It is in these terms of creator that Chavara brought to light the Divinity hidden in the child of Mary. It is equivalent to say:

അച്ഛാഴ്വരകൾക്കു് 'ദൈവ'മിതെന്നാമു്. . . .
 മറ്റൊരാൾ വെക്കൽ തന്റെ രൂപാഭിമുഖീഭാവമല്ല.

Thus the divine maternity of our Lady, the fundamental basis of all her dignities is well expressed by our Father with words pregnant with meaning of theological signification.

2. Mary the Immaculate:

It was in 1854 that the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary was proposed to the faithful as a defined dogma of faith (9). Almost fourteen years later our Father wrote this piece of poetry (10):

ആദത്തിൽ സുതൽക്കു നിത്യനിമിത്തമാകിലും
 ദൈവത്തിൽ മൂലമായ ചാലത്തിൽ വിഴുൽ പോലും
 തിരിവുണ്ടാകാതെ നിന്നു വരികുപാദാൽ
 ചന്ദ്രൻ തന്റെ തലക്കെട്ടു് മണനാലൊ (11)

(9) Pius IX, Bulla 'Ineffabilis Deus', 8 Dec. 1854 (D. 1641)

(10) Recentmost discoveries show that Atmanuthapam was written by our Father in 1869. Fr Anselm, secretary to the Diocesan

(11) അച്ഛാഴ്വരകൾക്കു. ൧൮൭൭.

This was in fact a natural outflow of his faith, deeply engraven in his spotless soul. The theological import which these lines carry with them is worth considering. It seems ^{that our Father begins} this stanza with an idea of the necessity of contracting the original sin by all the sons of Adam.

Once the first parents had transgressed the law of God, it was the fate of man that he should be born with the stains of original sin. (12). Were not God working a miracle, Mary too would have been born in original sin (13).

He said: അദത്തിൻ സുതമാമിനി ജനിഞ്ഞൊക്കും

But immediately he presents Mary as a singular case of exception.

വേദത്തിൻ മൂലമാല ചാപത്തിൻ നിഴൽ പോലും
നിമിശ അനമാരെ

Yea our Father saw Mary so stainless and perfect that not even the slightest shade of sin

Historical Investigation Commission, says this in his preface to the new edition of 'Atmanuthapam', p. viii.

(11)

(12) Conc. Tridentinum, Ses.V, c.2 (D.784)

(13) Ceuppens, Theologia Biblica, vol. V, Mariologia, p. 59

could be found in her. Before him She was the 'columba' of which the Canticle says, "To-ta pulchra tu es et macula non est in te"(14)

The words immediately following give us an idea how our Father had understood this truth with its bearing to the protoevangelical message. He says:

..... ചാലത്തിൽ നിന്നുപോയ്ക്കിനില്പ-
 ജ്ഞാതാതെ നിന്നുവെക്കുകയാവാൻ
 പന്നിം നന്റെ പലതരങ്ങൾ ഉണ്ടാവാം.

Here our Father refers our Lady born immaculate to that unique woman who was predicted in the paradise as crushing the head of the diabolical serpent. This prediction of enmity between the woman and the serpent has got a very great theological value. The greatest scriptural argument ever proposed by the theologians in favour of the Immaculate Conception of our Lady is the argument taken from this proto-evangelical passage. Cursing the serpent and imposing a life-long penalty for its wicked deed, God says to it, "I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed. She shall crush thy head and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel"

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(14) Canticle of canticles, 4,7

(15) Gen. 3,15

If we refer back the age-old writings of our Fathers we could easily see that many of these Fathers drew arguments for the Immaculate conception of our Lady, from this text. It was in Mary's immaculate conception that they saw the fulness of this enmity. Holy Father Pius IX refers to this fact in his celebrated encyclical "Ineffabilis Deus" (15). The late Holy Father of immortal memory repeats it in his encyclical 'Fulgens Corona' (16). It seems that our Father Chavara too had a similar idea regarding Mary's Immaculate Conception. Just preceding the stanza quoted above he puts in verse those promising words of God uttered in the sorrow-stricken silence of Paradise, and the fulfilment of which he attributes to Mary as her everlasting encomium:

നിന്നുടെ ജ്ഞാതാർക്കു മുമ്പാകെ
നിന്നുടെ നന്മയെപ്പറ്റി പരക്കെ
പറഞ്ഞു നൽകിയതെല്ലാം
എന്നുള്ള വേദ വാക്യം നിന്നാലെ സമാപ്തിയായ്
മനസ്സിലാക്കേണ്ടതാകുന്നു.

(15) Pius IX, Bulla 'Ineffabilis Deus'

(16) Pius XII, 'Fulgens Corona'.

(17) ന്യായസാരം. ൧൧൦൦ ൨൭.

It is true that our Father makes a small discrepancy from the order that is followed in S. Scripture. "I will put enmities between thee and the woman", and thy seed and her seed" is expressed in the simple verse:

നമ്മുടെയും അവളുടെയും ഇടയിൽ

But this accidental change is immaterial, especially when it is to be expressed in definite metres. But inspite of the metric style he followed, he has succeeded in keeping up the idea perfectly intact.

It is commonly agreed that taken in the literal sense the woman mentioned in Genesis 3,5 is Eve. But taken in its fuller sense (sensu pleniori) Mary is supposed to be the woman because the predicted enmity is perfectly verified in her (18). And it is precisely in this perfect verification of the enmity that theologians see the convenience for immaculate conception. Our Father too had understood the text in the same way. In his poetry mentioned above he puts these words

(18) Ceuppens, Theologia Biblica, vol.V,
Mariologia, p. 1 - 23

in its correct biblical context as if the woman mentioned is Eve herself (19). But immediately he refers to Mary, to see the fulfilment of the prophesy (20). This gives us an idea how he had understood this text. In its literal sense he attributes it to Eve and in its fuller sense (*sensu pleniori*) he attributes it to Mary. Although he did not directly propose this as an argument for the proof of the Immaculate conception, nevertheless, his words taken in its totality seems to be doing so. He presents the proto-evangelical events as a preamble to his addressing of Mary whom he calls Immaculate.

(19) ഉന്നതൻ സഭയ്ക്കു ശാൻ ചന്ദനത്തിനെനോക്കി
മന്ദിര നിർവ്വീര്യത്തിങ്കം പൂജി നി നക്കിത്തീരും
മന്നരൂപ പെജ്ജ ശേഷം അദിവന്ദനവെചാത്തു
നിന്നുടെ സുന്ദര മുഖവിവരം ശരഭമുദരം
നിനിൽനിന്നുളവാകും (ആ.താ. പുറം. ൨൭)

(20) See the verse quoted above.

The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception was one which he had lived rather than speculated. It had entered into the innermost depths of his soul. He was proud of calling her Immaculate. Does not the very name of his Congregation signify his deep faith and the filial love of this doctrine ?

- Rev. Francis J. Vadakethala.

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