

Book Reviews

GUILT FEELINGS: Help to Moral Growth, by Francis P Xavier, SJ; St. Paul's Publications, Bombay-400 050; 1995; pp. 104, Rs. 35.

One may wonder why the title of the book itself is chosen to underscore an unpleasant experience which everyone wants to overcome... But, in my view, the title is well put as it brings out the special contribution made by the author - namely how guilt feelings themselves can help moral growth and social awareness.

The author himself says in his foreword: "When I formulated my initial ideas about guilt feelings they were a bit negative! I thought that guilt feelings are unwieldy burdens which thrust us, as it were, down to earth. But now, after learning about guilt feelings, I am convinced that they are actually stepping stones to grow up further in life".

The book has three main sections: What are guilt feelings? Origin of guilt feelings; Guilt feelings leading to moral growth & social awareness.

The first exposes the different theories and various explanations offered about guilt feelings. The second deals with feelings from historical perspective, and particularly from the point of view of different religions - which is very relevant in our Asian context of pluralistic society. It throws light on understanding deeply the Christian concept of original sin. In the third, which analyses and offers help to grow, the author illustrates his insights with the experience of the Apostles who overcome guilt feelings through different stages. It also shows a similarity between grief process and conversion process.

The inclusion of "Social Awareness" is a sign of the author's integral approach to the subject and his concern for our contextual need.

Of course, as the work was originally done as a thesis project during theological studies, it has both, the advantage of a systematic and comprehensive treatment, and the disadvantage of trying to touch upon too many aspects of the topic. As a consequence, the reading is heavy and dispersed. Also, the illustrations given reflect more the European, particularly the German, context in which it was written.

However, the epilogue sums up the key ideas and practical steps to benefit from guilt feelings themselves. If one is serious about learning, the book helps to go through a process of self-help and self-transformation.

The message of the book can be thus briefly put: Guilt feelings help us to know ourselves better and to accept ourselves unconditionally as we are; and accepting ourselves as we are, enables us to accept others as they are, which in turn makes our life pleasant and peaceful.

As the author wishes, the book is, in fact, of much use to the reader, as he has shown the way to make the best of a common negative experience in our life. Hence it is a guide to make use of any negative aspect of our existence.

In fine, guilt feelings are shown as symptoms which call for our attention to recognise them, to diagnose them, to treat them, to transform them and to overcome them. They call for 'dialogue' with them in the process of overcoming them and making use of them for our growth-both personal and social. It has the added merit of a good bibliography on the subject for the reader.

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Leave the Temple : Indian Paths to Human Liberation
Ed. by Felix WILFRED. Maryknoll : Orbis Books, 1992.
pp. viii-200. Indian edition : Tiruchirapalli : Carmel Publications (Edamalai patti Pudur, Trichy-620 012), 1996. Pp. x-198. Rs. 50.

Liberation theology in India seems to have come of age if we measure its range by the theological output during the past fifteen years by Indian theologians, although Sebastian Kappen, one of the contributors of the present volume under review affirms, "There is as yet no distinctive school of thought among Indian Christians that may be called a theology of liberation" (p. 146). *Leave the Temple* is a phrase coined by the editor drawing inspiration from a celebrated poem of Tagore (*Gitanjali*, poem xi) who invites one to discover God not through meaningless practices but in active commitment of service to humanity.

Contributors to this volume include well known Indian theologians and activists. Interestingly, except the editor and Yvon Ambrose, who are diocesan priests, all other eight scholars whose essays are contained in the book are Jesuit priests. In fact, the latter are in the forefront of evolving an Indian approach to liberation theology. The volume covers a wide range of subjects whose titles are : A socio-historical perspective for liberation theology in India (Walter Fernandes); Oppression and liberation : a base for theological reflection on Indian experience (Yvon Ambrose); *Bhakti* and liberation theology for India (Walter Fernandes); Dominant trends in Hindu thought (Ignatius Puthiadam); Theology of liberation and Gandhian praxis : a social spirituality for India (T. K. John); The liberative pedagogy of Jesus : Lessons for an Indian theology of liberation (George M. Soares Prabhu); Interiority and liberation (Xavier Irudayaraj); Outside the gate, sharing the insult (Samuel Rayan); Toward an Indian theology of liberation (Sebastian Kappen); Liberation as an interreligious project (Michael Amaladoss); Liberation in India and the Church's participation (Felix Wilfred). As the

editor points out in the Introduction, "The book is exploratory in nature. It tries to interpret and reflect on the Indian situation of bondage and oppression, and attempts to open up avenues of liberation."

Although the contributors differ in their emphases and vantage points, there are some clearly discernible trajectories in their exposition. First of all, there is a clear perception that the multi-religious context of India is not just an adjunct but the essential matrix of theological praxis and discourse. As Kappen points out, the definition of theology as 'critical reflection on Christian praxis in the light of the Word' (G. Gutierrez) "makes little sense in India where the agent of theandric practice necessarily has to be a broader community comprising men and women of different religions and persuasions. It is as one inserted in such ecumenical communities that the Indian Christian does theology" (p. 151). The authors are aware that religions everywhere have often engendered unfreedom and slaveries of different kinds especially when they had entered into an unholy alliance with political powers (Wilfred, p. 2; Fernandes, pp. 26-29; Kappen, pp. 154-157; Amaladoss, pp. 160-162). But religions do possess an inner dynamism and force which need to be unleashed through a critical examination of the role they have played and are playing in society, re-interpreting themselves in the context of the present-day Indian situation. This re-interpretation cannot be limited to the so-called "great tradition" but should necessarily include the "lesser traditions" and "prophetic movements" (Fernandes, pp. 47-65; Kappen, pp. 154-157). It means that in the Indian context liberation is necessarily to be understood as "interreligious project" (Amaladoss, pp. 158-174).

The concern of the secular ideologies for the liberation of the oppressed needs to be critically appropriated (Fernandes, pp. 9-34). Here the Indian religious tradition in which liberation has always been understood as liberation of the individual from the psychic sources of personal or

societal bondage assumes great relevance. "This unwavering insistence on the need for personal freedom in any movement for social change is, I believe, the most significant contribution that Indian religions can make to any theology of liberation" (George M. Soares-Prabhu, p. 113). This does not mean that the Indian understanding of liberation needs no correction. There is always a dialectical tension between individual freedom and emancipation and the overcoming of economic, social, and political dependence, moving toward a qualitatively different society in which the human person will be free from all servitude.

Another perspective that emerges is that liberation is to be practiced and understood as holistic, integral, and ontic. The emancipatory praxis of Mahatma Gandhi and its relevance for an Indian theology of liberation assume enormous significance here (T. K. John, pp. 79-99).

Leave the Temple offers an excellent insight into the theological orientation currently gaining ground in India. It is not, and it is not meant to be, an introduction to or much less an exposition on an "Indian" theology of liberation; rather, what we have is, as the sub-title of the work indicates "Indian paths to human liberation". It is only as we journey together in a common pilgrimage, constantly interacting with our socio-religious and cultural context, that we will discover the authenticity of an "integral" liberation and the "paths" we have traversed.

The different voices heard in the book give us a glimpse of the emerging theology of liberation in India. Wilfred is to be congratulated on editing *Leave the Temple* which undoubtedly makes a significant contribution to an Indian theology of liberation which "wants to reflect the experience of the rising Indian masses and their search for fullness of life, fellowship, truth, and freedom" (Wilfred, p. 8).

V. Paul Leon

Theology of Liberation and Ideology Critique : A Study on the Praxis of Liberation in the Light of the Critical Theory : by Thomas KOCHUTHARA. New Delhi : Inter-cultural Publications (15A/30, W.E.A., New Delhi-110 005), 1993. Pp. xiv-283. Rs. 200.

There is a growing body of literature on liberation theology which engages in what may aptly be called the "third act" of theologizing. It is neither a naive enthusiasm over nor a wholesale condemnation of what may arguably be the most significant theological movement of the twentieth century. It is rather a critical appraisal of liberation theology through a process of dialogue and interaction with the religious, social, cultural and philosophical movements and theories which, as often acknowledged by the liberation theologians themselves, have served as stimulus, inspiration and background for their theological discourse. Kochuthara's book belongs to this category. He brings about an encounter between Latin American liberation theology and the Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School.

K. has organized his study in 14 chapters besides a brief Introduction. The first five chapters lay the foundation and in a way prepare the ground for a fruitful dialogue between Latin American liberation theology and the Critical Theory. The origin and development of liberation theology (ch. 1), the emergence of the Critical Theory of Frankfurt School which comprises attempts by social thinkers like Horkheimer, Adorno, Habermas and Marcuse to study and analyze modern industrialised capitalist society, to unmask its mechanisms of enslavement in the light of insights gained from diverse disciplines like sociology, history, philosophy, psychology and cultural anthropology (chs. 2-4) are discussed somewhat in detail. An initial but fundamental dialogue between liberation theology and Critical Theory takes place in ch. 5. The author introduces the "method of suspicion" and explores the various dimensions of hermeneutics, hermeneutic circle and its use by liberation theology.

The following three chapters deal with emancipation and liberation in three realms : labour (ch. 6), social structures (ch. 7) and religion (ch. 8). Thus the three levels of liberation proposed by theologians like Gutierrez (1. economic, social and political liberation; 2. towards the creation of a new man in a new society of solidarity; 3. liberation from sin and entrance into communion with God and with all people) are discussed in turn in dialogue with Critical Theory. The author observes that "liberation theologians have assimilated into their thinking the findings of other sciences which have deepened the concept of emancipation through their critique of Marxism" (p. 160). Almost as an after thought the author takes up the theme of religion in the following chapter (ch. 7 : "Relevance of Religion"). Critical theorists "think that the industrial society is capable of achieving its integration and stability without the assistance of religion as an ideology, and hence religion can be dispensed with entirely" (pp. 168-169). Habermas holds that religion as an interpretive system is superseded by a practical philosophy of communicative practice and the normative function of religion is replaced by an explicitly self-conscious process of communication free from domination. Religion is reducible to a historically formulated concern of human communication. But Helmut Peukert has shown "for a situation of ideal communication the reality of God is to be posited, which points to the irreducibility of religion" (p. 182). It would seem here that K. is too optimistic in identifying a common ground between liberation theologians and critical theorists. He affirms, "Critical theorists envisage a society which has overcome distortions in the fields of labour and social structures, i. e., a society of ideal communication. Similarly, political theologians and liberation theologians envisage a society which also can be called a society of ideal communication, for its distinguishing mark is communion among individuals and between man and God. Therefore, the essential characteristic of this society envisaged by theologians is also communication. Thus, the point of convergence is communicative practice" (p. 178).

Chapter 10 is somewhat loosely organized in that the dialogue shifts ground. Here the partners are no more liberation theology and critical theory but the former and other types of theologies (secularisation theologies and political theologies). The author merely points out that secular and political theologies (Cox, Metz and others) "have learned much from the critical theory and have, at the same time, tried to answer the challenges posed by the latter to religion" (p. 189).

Under the title "ecclesiology in liberation theology" K. examines three main issues: basic Christian communities, problem of violence, and alliance with Marxists (ch. 11). Here again there is no coherent argumentation, it would seem. K. reasons that "the basic Christian community is very close to the society of ideal communication envisaged by Habermas. For the formation of such a society what Habermas proposes is the use of reflection in order to avert oppressions that come from internal forces. In liberation theology the proposal for the formation of the society of brotherhood among men is also to use critical reflection" (p. 218). The problem of violence is not analyzed in depth but the author believes, "liberation theologians are adamant to show that they have no allegiance of Marxism, a demonstration which is futile because of lack of sufficient argumentation". He suggests that liberation theologians should take note of "the inadequacies of Marxism with the help of the analysis made in the Frankfurt School" (p. 228).

The understanding of God as the liberator of the oppressed is explained in ch. 12. Although the author affirms, "The atheistic secular demands of man, as for example, expressed in the society of ideal communication, falls (sic!) in line with a society of communion with God" (p. 239), he does not show how a society of ideal communication envisaged by Critical Theory could accommodate a liberator God.

Is there a place for aesthetics in liberation theology? K. thinks so. In ch. 13 titled "A language of rapture and enchantment" he remarks, "when liberation theologians speak of overcoming the inadequacies in society and achieving emancipation, there is a rapture and enchantment in their style... The sense of beauty contained in the enchantment and rapture that characterises their theology cannot be reduced to secular level as understood by Lukacs or implied by the critical theorists" (pp. 254, 255). This chapter does not make any substantial contribution toward the dialogue between liberation theology and critical theory. The final chapter consisting of eight pages offers a good summary of the entire work.

The interdisciplinary study undertaken by K. has all the characteristics of a doctoral dissertation. It is systematic, neatly arranged and comprehensive. Some of the repetitions could have been avoided. It can serve as an excellent introduction to the study of Latin American liberation theology and the Critical Theory of Frankfurt School.

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